

EARLY BUDDHIST STUDIES

STUDIES IN  
*ĀGAMA & VINAYA*  
LITERATURE

Bhikkhu Anālayo



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EARLY BUDDHIST STUDIES series

Studies in *Āgama* & *Vinaya* Literature

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Āgama Research Group

Department of Buddhist Studies, Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts

700, Fagu Road, Jinshan District, New Taipei City 20842, Taiwan, Republic of China

[arg@dila.edu.tw](mailto:arg@dila.edu.tw)

&

Aditya Prakashan

2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi, 110002, Republic of India

[contact@adityapublishers.com](mailto:contact@adityapublishers.com)

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## Introduction

The present book for the most part collects revised versions of my more recently published articles related in one way or another to *Āgama* and *Vinaya* literature and its oral transmission. It thereby complements similar collections of articles presented previously in book form as *Madhyama-āgama Studies* (2012g), *Samyukta-āgama Studies* (2015l), *Ekottarika-āgama Studies* (2016c), *Dīrgha-āgama Studies* (2017b), and *Vinaya Studies* (2017i).

### Contents

By way of introduction to this book, in the first chapter I explore the notion of “early Buddhism”, as a way of setting the stage for the ensuing collection of already published articles, which often refer to this concept. The actual collection of articles then begins with an overview of the topic of “women in *Āgama* and *Vinaya* literature”, that is, a survey of passages relevant to assessing the position of women in early Buddhism. My research on this topic has been based on comparative study of the relevant textual material transmitted by different reciter traditions, which forms a continuous theme throughout most of the remainder of the book. In the second chapter, titled “the transmission of teachings by a nun”, I translate and compare the Chinese and Tibetan versions of a detailed doctrinal teaching given by a nun, examined from the view of the transmission lineages of these two discourses. Based on this comparison, in the third chapter I discuss the relationship between Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda transmission lineages of *Āgama* texts, in particular from the viewpoint of “oral transmission and school affiliation”.

The next chapters deal with specific aspects of the early Buddhist oral transmission, beginning with three chapters dedicated to exploring “the

dynamics of abbreviation”. My exploration of such dynamics begins by taking up the first fascicles of the *Samyukta-āgama* as an occasion to chart the terrain, in the sense of exploring how abbreviation is used and how much text overall is present only in abbreviated form. The next two chapters then pursue the same topic in relation to the first fascicles of the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama*, each time proceeding from a survey of the use of abbreviation to specific cases of its usage, such as the gradual path and descriptions of the Buddha’s awakening.

From the topic of abbreviation as a form of absence of text I proceed to studying another type of absence, namely “the function of silence in *Āgama* literature”. This is the first of three chapters that explore antecedents to notions or forms of practice that became prominent in some Mahāyāna traditions. In the present case, my exploration leads me to proposing a distant antecedent, found in a particular instance of the Buddha reportedly remaining silent in reply to an inquiry, to the type of meditation practices commonly known under the Japanese name koan. The next chapter takes up the topic of “skill in means”, which leads me to a Pāli discourse that appears to reflect an approach that could be reckoned proto-tantra. The third of the three chapters related to the topic of antecedents to aspects of the Mahāyāna traditions is based on studying something of considerable relevance to comparative study, namely when a discourse has no parallels in other reciter traditions. In the course of examining one such case in the *Ekottarika-āgama*, I propose that a Pāli discourse appears to foreshadow an approach prominent in Pure Land Buddhism.

The next chapter then turns to the significance of “the first three *aṅgas*” (in the traditional listing), critically examining the suggestion that these served as an early scheme for assembling discourses. This chapter forms the beginning of a series of studies that are for the most part concerned with replies to criticism. In view of the large number of studies I have produced in the course of the last twenty years, and the new perspectives resulting from these, it is only natural that some of my proposals require further discussion. This is an integral part of academic progress and I value such input as a way of offering me an opportunity to reflect and reconsider my posi-

tions. However, when such criticism has been based on misunderstandings or a misreading of my work, the need arises for clarification.

Three chapters are dedicated to “the role of pericopes and formulas” and “the role of memorization”, in particular in reply to criticism of my work raised by Eviatar Shulman; the first of these three chapters also discusses a recurrent reference to the group of six, which functions as something of a pericope in *Vinaya* literature. Another two chapters take up principles of the “text-critical study of *Āgama* literature”, in reply to criticism voiced by Alexander Wynne.

In reliance on the text-critical comparative method, I have developed a distinct perspective on the “beginnings of Abhidharma” thought, this being the title for a chapter in which I defend my position in this respect against criticism. The two ensuing chapters concern *Vinaya*, in particular “the notion of monastic communion” and the story of “the founding of the nuns’ order”. This brings me full circle to the topic with which the book began, with the conclusion of the circle being a chapter that presents my defense of “the legality of *bhikkhunī* ordination”, in reply to criticism by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro.

Given the prominence of debate in the second half of this book, it seemed appropriate to include in an appendix an article on this topic in a later text, in the form of a comparative study of the Chinese and Pāli versions of the opening “debate in the *Milindapañha*”. A second appendix takes up the debated topic of the usage of “the name Theravāda”. Similar to a previous contribution of mine on this topic, which became the concluding chapter of a volume with my *Ekottarika-āgama* studies,<sup>1</sup> the present volume also covers this topic as its final contribution.

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<sup>1</sup> Anālayo 2016c: 497–522.

## Titles of the Original Publications

“Abbreviation in the *Ekottarika-āgama*”, see below p. 158ff.

“Abbreviation in the *Madhyama-āgama*”, see below p. 135ff.

“Assessing the Field of Āgama Studies in Twentieth-century China: With a Focus on Master Yinshun’s 印順 Three-*aṅga* Theory” (with Stefania Trava-gnin), see below p. 217ff.

“The Case for Reviving the *Bhikkhunī* Order by Single Ordination”, see below p. 413ff.

“Comparing the Tibetan and Chinese Parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*”, see below p. 37ff.

“An *Ekottarika-āgama* Discourse Without Parallels: From Perception of Im-permanence to the Pure Land”, see below p. 205ff.

“Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin’: Oral Transmission Lineages of Āgama Texts”, see below p. 73ff.

“The Name Theravāda in an Eighteenth-Century Inscription: Reconsidering the Problematization of the Term”, see below p. 459ff.

“On the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*”, see below p. 357ff.

“On the Two Paths Theory: Replies to Criticism”, see below p. 331ff.

“The Opening Debate in the *Milindapañha*”, see below p. 445ff.

“*Pārājika* Does Not Necessarily Entail Expulsion”, see below p. 383ff.

“*Peyāla* in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, Contraction and Expansion in Textual Transmission”, see below p. 97ff.

“The *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* and the *Anupada-sutta* in Relation to the Emer-gence of Abhidharma Thought”, see below p. 369ff.

“Understanding Early Buddhist Oral Narrative”, see below p. 233ff.

“‘Visions of the Buddha’: A Critical Reply”, see below p. 259ff.

“Women in Early Buddhism”, see below p. 13ff and p. 391ff.

In order to facilitate cross-referencing, in the chapters below that are based on previously published material I use square brackets in subscript to provide the pagination of the original articles, as well as square brackets in superscript for their footnote or endnote numbering, whenever these differ from the present annotation.

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Bhikkhu Aggacitta, Mark Allon, Bhikkhu Brahmāli, Chris Burke, Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā, Lilian Handlin, Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Michael Running, Peter Skilling, Oskar von Hinüber, and Yao Fumi for comments and suggestions made in regard to one or more of the articles collected in this volume.



# I

## Early Buddhism

In this opening chapter, I briefly explore the term “early Buddhism”—to which I refer recurrently in this book—in an attempt to clarify its meaning and explore the significance of what it designates. This exploration is meant to serve as a backdrop to references to this term in the collected papers found in the remainder of this book.

With the expression “early Buddhism” I intend to refer to the earliest period in the development of Buddhist thought and practice, spanning from its inception to about the time of the reign of Aśoka in the third century BCE.<sup>1</sup> The time of inception is difficult to determine with certainty.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the period of early Buddhism can be taken to comprise, very roughly speaking, about two centuries.

The proposed temporal frame for early Buddhism requires a reconsideration of the definition of the ensuing “Middle Period of Indian Buddhism”, which Schopen (1995/2004: 94) locates at “the beginning of the Common Era”. His dating is based on taking this middle period to correspond to the formation of the *Vinayas*. These presuppose the existence of well-organized monastic buildings, and “we know from archaeological sources that such an ordered and well-developed monastery did not exist before the beginning of the Common Era.”

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<sup>1</sup> Here I follow Griffiths 1983: 56: “By ‘early Buddhism’ we mean, broadly speaking, pre-Aśokan Indian Buddhism.”

<sup>2</sup> See Bechert 1995.



A potential problem with this suggestion is that there may be a need to allow for the possibility that the type of monastic organization and structures reflected, for example, in the Pāli *Vinaya*, could have been in existence already earlier but been based on wooden construction materials. An example in case is the equipping of buildings with doors and keys, one of several things that, according to Schopen (1995/2004: 94), characterizes what he refers to as “an ordered and well-developed monastery”. Yet, references to a door-opener—that is, a key with which a locked door can be opened from the outside—already occur in several Pāli discourses.<sup>3</sup> The use of such a door-opener appears to involve a construction made entirely of wood and rope, material that will hardly appear in the archaeological records.

This is just one example, of course, and more research would be required to ascertain the nature and possible dating of other items in the list of what makes for an ordered and well-developed monastery. For the time being, however, the example of the door-opener suffices to show that the basis for determining the beginning of the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism may not be as straightforward as it can appear at first sight. To echo a well-known dictum, it seems that in this case, too, absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. It follows that the period of the gradual formation of the Pāli *Vinaya*, to stay with the above example, could already have been well under way before the beginning of the Common Era.

As already pointed out by Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā (forthcoming), it may be preferable to adjust the opening date of the Middle Period so as to allow it to include the period from the reign of Aśoka to the beginning of the Common Era. Adopting this helpful suggestion would result in a meaningful division between the period of early Buddhism—a time that relies entirely on oral modes of textual production and transmission, the results of which are reflected mainly in the material common to the Pāli discourses and their *Āgama* parallels—and an ensuing period characterized by a gradual shift toward an increasing employment of writing for the formation and

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<sup>3</sup> Examples are MN 124 at MN III 127,24+28, SN 22.90 at SN III 132,17 and 133,25, and AN 9.11 at AN IV 374,12; see in more detail the discussion by von Hinüber 1992: 14–17.

diffusion of Buddhist texts, a shift that must have had a considerable impact on textual transmission.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding the impact of writing, McMahan (2002: 96f) reasons that because the written manuscript frees the reader from being locked into the temporal flow of the recitation and to the particular place where the recitation is performed, it lends itself to appropriation in ways very different from those that are possible in either the performing or hearing of oral recitation. Since the manuscript is present in its entirety, rather than constantly passing away in time, as is the case with oral utterance, a greater degree of analysis and reflection upon the material is possible. A reader can move back and forth through a text at will.

The phase in the history of Indian Buddhism subsequent to the inception of a gradually increasing reliance on writing for religious purposes witnesses the development of Abhidharma thought expressed in works existing in their own right, rather than being dependent on and subordinate to the early discourses.<sup>5</sup> Soon enough the appearance of these works was joined,

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<sup>4</sup> On the relationship between writing and orality see also Anālayo 2024. Regarding the notion of “early Buddhism” as the period reflected by the Pāli discourses and their *Āgama* parallels, this much would seem to be in line with the position taken by Schopen 1983/2005: 190 when he uses the expression “early Buddhist *sūtra* literature” (or at times just “early Buddhist literature”, e.g., p. 213) as an alternative to “*Nikāya/Āgama* literature”, even though we differ regarding the probable date of closure of this literature and therefore of the early Buddhist period.

<sup>5</sup> Mizuno 1961: 65 refers to “the period during which Abhidharma became an independent collection or *piṭaka*, detached from the two other *piṭakas* of Sutta and Vinaya. This was the period of compilation of the fundamental texts of the Abhidharma and may be assigned chronologically to extend from about the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C. to the beginning of the Christian era.” However, the dating given by Frauwallner 1971: 106 for the compilation of the canonical Pāli Abhidharma literature, except for its earliest nucleus, is rather from the second century BCE to the second century CE. A dating of the beginnings of Abhidharma to the third century BCE could result in a bit of an overlap with the final part of the period of early Buddhism, unlike a dating to the second century

ostensibly in response to some of the doctrines they promote,<sup>6</sup> by the emergence of the first formulations of *Prajñāpāramitā* thought as predecessors to the texts still extant today in Gāndhārī and Chinese translation dating to the first to second century of the Common Era,<sup>7</sup> as well as by the beginning stages in the evolution of other early Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

All of these are significant developments, originating before the Common Era and continuing for several centuries, which the designation “early Buddhism” would not be able to accommodate without incurring a substantial loss of meaning and clarity. Such developments would find a better placing under the designation of being part of the “Middle Period of Indian Buddhism”. This Middle Period of Indian Buddhism, characterized by the gradually increasing impact of religious writing on the formation and transmission of Buddhist texts, can thus best be considered to set in once textual transmission no longer relies exclusively on oral means.

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BCE. Even such an overlap would not be problematic, however, as it could be taken to exemplify that there is an interim period of correspondence in the development of later strata of *Āgama/Nikāya* literature and early strata of Abhidharma texts. Some *Āgama/Nikāya* discourses in fact show evidence of incipient Abhidharma thought (Anālayo 2014c). Conversely, early Abhidharma texts can be seen to stand in a close relationship to the discourses. This is particularly evident in the case of the *Puggalapaññatti* and the *Śaṅgītiparyāya*, belonging to the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma collections respectively. The same applies still, though to a somewhat lesser degree in comparison, for the *Vibhaṅga* and the *Dharmaskandha*, again combining an example from the Theravāda Abhidharma collection with one from its Sarvāstivāda counterpart. With other, later works in these two Abhidharma collections, however, the same no longer holds. In sum, although the main evolution of the canonical Abhidharma texts does seem to have taken place in the post-Aśokan period, their first beginnings would already have set in earlier.

<sup>6</sup> See Bronkhorst 2018.

<sup>7</sup> See Falk 2011: 20 on the radiocarbon dating of the Gāndhārī manuscript and T 2145 at T LV 47c8 on the time of completion of the *Prajñāpāramitā* translation by Lokakṣema. Harrison 1993: 139f comments on the translations by Lokakṣema in general that “their level of development, both in form and in content, shows ... that the Mahāyāna reached China in full bloom, with perhaps several centuries of growth behind it, while the texts with which it made its initial impact there, far from being the first outpourings of the movement, represent a fairly advanced stage in a long literary tradition.”

From the viewpoint of an entirely oral tradition, the main challenge is textual transmission, as maintaining the texts in existence requires much time and sustained effort. This in turn would make it natural if a gradually increasing reliance on writing would have served to address this challenge first of all, in the sense of offering support to the transmission of texts by recording in writing what up to then had been only maintained in memory.

On this premise, then, perhaps the first testimony to the onset of the use of writing to record any part of early Buddhist oral literature could be taken up, just for the sake of establishing a reference point in time and space. A relevant instance would then be a written reference in the Calcutta-Bairāt or Bhābrā edict of Aśoka to seven named Buddhist texts.<sup>8</sup> This is of course only a written record of titles of Buddhist texts and not yet an instance of writing employed in the actual transmission of these texts. Nevertheless, it may perhaps do as a first reference point that at least can be placed in time and space with more confidence than is the case for most of Indian Buddhist texts. Using the onset of writing as a reference point in this way has the advantage of avoiding the circularity of periodizing developments in Indian Buddhist doctrine and practice based on the onset of these same developments and at the same time involves a factor that can safely be assumed to have had a more substantial impact on these than an increase in the level of organization of monastic buildings and structures.

Needless to say, the attempt to draw a line of distinction in this way between “early” and “middle period” Indian Buddhism is of course not meant to set these time periods strictly apart as two separate boxes that are unrelated

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<sup>8</sup> Bloch 1950: 154,8: *vinayasamukkasā aliyavasāṇi anāgatabhayāni munigāthā moneyasūtte upatissapasine e cā lāghulovāde* qualified as *bhagavatā buddhena bhāsīte*; see also Falk 2006: 106–108. According to the *Dīpavaṃsa* 20.20f and the *Mahāvaṃsa* 33.100f, Oldenberg 1879: 103 and Geiger 1958: 277, the Pāli *Tipiṭaka* was committed to writing during the reign of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya in the early part of the first century before the Common Era; see also Bechert 1992. Oral transmission appears to have continued in India for a long time alongside a gradually increasing reliance on writing, evident from the report by the Chinese pilgrim Fāxiān (法顯) that, at the time of his visit to India in the early fifth century, *Vinaya* texts were still passed on by oral means and he had difficulties procuring written manuscripts to be taken back to China for translation; see T 2085 at T LI 864b18.

to each other. Instead, the idea is only to attempt to provide a reference point for developing a meaningful historical perspective on what in actuality were continuous developments.

In sum, it seems best to employ the designation “early Buddhism” just for the first two centuries of development in Buddhist thought and practice as the common ground from which the different Buddhist traditions developed and which they all took as their central inspiration.<sup>9</sup>

Such “early Buddhism” is no longer a living tradition, simply because it refers to an early stage in the development of Buddhism that by now is long over. It would not be meaningful for anyone nowadays to call themselves “early Buddhists”, just as it would not be meaningful for anyone nowadays to call themselves “ancient Greek philosophers”. Certainly, someone can take inspiration from early Buddhist thought or else from the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers, but this will invariably be influenced by the context set by that person’s present worldview and cultural-social conditioning, which needs to be clearly acknowledged. In other words, “early Buddhism” is a precious fossil from bygone times; it can provide much inspiration, but it cannot be revived.

Besides not being identifiable with—let alone being the sole property of—any extant Buddhist tradition, “early Buddhism” is also not identical

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<sup>9</sup> Delimiting the term to just these first two centuries would provide a perspective on the problem noted by Skilling 2021: 60 (with note 120) when Li Shengai 2012: 34 uses and then problematizes the term “early Buddhism” as a referent to “Indian Buddhism that existed before the rise of [the] Mahāyāna Buddhist movement as well as that form of Buddhism that continued alongside the Mahāyāna after the latter has arisen.” The second part of this definition is indeed problematic. The qualification “early” should be used only for what is indeed early and not for the middle period of Indian Buddhism. Later traditions may well be inspired by early Buddhist thought, but that does not make them “early” themselves. The problem here is not just an accurate usage of the qualification “early”. In addition, it needs to be acknowledged that Buddhists of the middle period will not be able to sidestep the viewpoint of their particular exegetical tradition and for this reason cannot become early Buddhists, however much they may appreciate early Buddhist thought. For this reason, it is important to employ the designation “early Buddhism” with a clear understanding of what it can and what it cannot designate.

with the “word of the Buddha”, in the sense of the words spoken verbatim by the founder at some time in the fifth century BCE in India. The situation is similar to the so-called “Socratic problem”, in that we do not have direct access to the teachings of Socrates, who also lived in the fifth century BCE. All we know about his teachings stems from reports by others. Similarly, we do not have direct access to the teachings of the historical Buddha, as all we know about his teachings stems from texts that are the final result of centuries of oral transmission, with all its strengths and with all its challenges and vicissitudes.<sup>10</sup>

It follows from the above that the question of authoritativeness cannot be tied exclusively to derivation from the historical Buddha’s mouth.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the early Buddhist textual collections themselves include teachings given by disciples, at the explicit request of the Buddha or without such a request, endorsed by his explicit approval or without such approval. Clearly, the credibility of the teachings was from the outset not entirely confined to what the Buddha was held to have said himself.

The situation that emerges from a full appreciation of the dynamics of early Buddhist oral transmission undermines any claim to having direct access to the true words of the Buddha in their definite form. Instead, we only have access to the results of what has been passed down by generation after generation of Buddhist reciters in the belief that they were passing on the word of the Buddha.

Even though the definite words of the historical Buddha are beyond reach, the records of what the first generations of his disciples believed he had taught are within reach. It is precisely these records that made him a lasting inspiration for subsequent generations of Buddhists. In other words, although the Buddha living in ancient India is beyond reach, the Buddha living in the memory of the first generations of his disciples is within reach.

Through comparative research on early Buddhist texts, it becomes possible to assess what the Buddha was believed to have taught some two centuries after his actual teaching activity, which forms the common ground of the

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<sup>10</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2022d.

<sup>11</sup> This in a way foreshadows issues related to the notion of *buddhavacana* in later tradition, for a recent study of which see Nance 2022.

different Buddhist traditions. These textual memories are as close as anyone will ever be able to get to “the words of the Buddha”. This is definitely closer than later texts, of course, but at the same time not close enough to be able to make definite claims that such and such a statement was spoken in exactly this way by the historical Buddha.

For this early period in the history of Buddhism, the primary source material is almost entirely textual.<sup>12</sup> This is not without its drawbacks, as interpretations based on textual material only, without contact with a living tradition or at least its archeological and iconographic remains, can at times be misleading. Moreover, there is a pressing need to avoid a tendency that emerged in the nineteenth century in the study of Buddhism in the West, namely the construction from texts of a supposedly pure form of Buddhism, set in opposition to allegedly inauthentic or even degenerate manifestations of Buddhism on the ground in Asia.<sup>13</sup>

Another and related problem is a preoccupation in the nineteenth century in Europe with a search for origins.<sup>14</sup> However, researching what is early need

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<sup>12</sup> The relevant textual sources are mainly the four *Āgamas/Nikāyas*, together with smaller collections (mainly of poetry) whose Pāli version is found in the fifth *Nikāya*, namely *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, *Itivuttaka*, and *Suttanipāta*. On the *Āgamas/Nikāyas* see Anālayo 2015a and on the historical value of this type of texts Anālayo 2012f.

<sup>13</sup> According to Almond 1988: 33 and 40, this took the form of creating “an ideal Buddhism, a Buddhism constructed from textual sources increasingly located in and therefore regulated by the West. As a consequence ... Buddhism developed as a ‘something’ primarily said in the West, delimited and designated by virtue of its ideological containment within the intellectual, political, and religious institutions of the West. Buddhism as it manifested itself in the East could only there be *seen* through the medium of what was definitively said about it elsewhere ... the image of decay, decadence, and degeneration emerged as a result of the possibility of contrasting an ideal textual Buddhism of the past with its contemporary Eastern instances. Simultaneously, this provided an ideological justification for the missionary enterprises of a progressive, thriving Christianity against a Buddhism now debilitated. The Victorian creation of an ideal textual Buddhism was a key component in the rejection of Buddhism in the East.”

<sup>14</sup> Almond 1988: 95 reports that “there was the obsession throughout the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century with the quest for origins—biologically, geologically, and historically. Underlying the historical quest for origins was the assumption that the

not be equated to obsession with origins. For one, such an obsession can also manifest in relation to later times. An example is the claim that the very construct of “Buddhism” originated in nineteenth-century scholarly writings in the West. This claim is an instance of the search for origins, here mistakenly attributed to the nineteenth century, based on ignoring all Asian antecedents.<sup>15</sup> This example shows that just avoiding the early period of Buddhism does not take care of the problem of obsession with origins, for this same tendency can also manifest in relation to later times. In the case of early Buddhism, a quest to pinpoint origins with precision is in fact rendered impossible due to the very nature of the source material.

In addition to the above problems, there is also the understandable wish among some contemporary scholars to distance themselves from nineteenth-century beliefs that the Pāli canon represents the sole authentic form of Buddhism, having preserved the word of the Buddha with precision.<sup>16</sup> This seems to have led to a tendency in Buddhist studies to avoid the period of early Buddhism.<sup>17</sup>

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original was the essential ... A discourse of ‘pure’ versus ‘corrupt’ Buddhism was developed on the foundation of the historical priority of Pali Buddhism and the posteriority of Mahayana Buddhism.”

<sup>15</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2021d: 108–113 and below p. 489f.

<sup>16</sup> Salomon 2018: 56 explains: “Early scholars of Buddhism in the West, especially in the English-speaking world, had assumed that the Pali canon represented *the* true original scriptures of Buddhism ... This view prevailed mainly because the Pali canon of the Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia happened to be the only one that survived complete and intact in an Indian language, and because it came to the attention of Anglophone scholars at a relatively early date as a result of the colonization of Sri Lanka by England. This led to the illusion that the Pali canon was the only true Buddhist canon, and the misconception was reinforced by the self-presentation of the bearers of that tradition, who were the early European scholars’ main points of contact with the Buddhist world. But it is now clear that the seeming primacy and authority of the Pali Tipiṭaka is only an accident of history.”

<sup>17</sup> This fairly prominent tendency can perhaps be exemplified with the advice given by Collins 2017: 26: “So, where should we start? *Not*, I strongly suggest, from the first period: we know, and will always know, far too little to produce more than evaluative and pre-



Yet, it seems to me that sidestepping the early period is not a particularly promising approach to solving this problem. Instead, misconceptions related to early Buddhism can best be clarified based on research guided by the historical-critical method. When carried out with the proper methodology and attitude, studying early Buddhism need not result in demeaning later forms of Buddhism.<sup>18</sup>

Take the case of the evolution of species. We know relatively little about the early period of life on this planet, simply because due to the intervening prolonged time span and the simplicity of life forms at that time there is little fossil evidence. Yet, some things we know for sure, such as, for example, that there were no dinosaurs at that time. We know that because life forms underwent considerable development before dinosaurs came into existence. Having that knowledge does not require that we try to identify a particular individual animal as ‘the first dinosaur’ in order to chart the development that led to their appearance. The recognition that dinosaurs had not yet developed during the early period in the history of life on this planet is also not a value judgement; it does not mean that dinosaurs are somehow better or worse than other species. It is simply a historical fact that dinosaurs were not in existence at that time.

In the same way, although the evidence for reconstructing early Buddhism is limited, and we are moreover unable to pinpoint with precision an ‘original’ or ‘Urtext’, we know for certain what came into being later, due to considerable development taking place over time. This holds for Abhidharma just as much as for Mahāyāna thought and practice. The historical

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judicial fantasies.” In a criticism of Gombrich 2009, Collins 2017: 21 then speaks of the “*reductio ad absurdum* of the entire ‘early Buddhism’ mania. Let us, as historians, remain more sober, less pathological.” Without thereby intending to endorse the positions taken in Gombrich 2009, I have difficulties trying to reconcile the call for scholarly sobriety with the immediately following strongly polemic tone adopted by Collins 2017 when disqualifying the writings of another scholar—his former academic teacher, in fact—as “pathological”.

<sup>18</sup> Pace Collins 2017: 19: “Any picture of ‘early’ Buddhism, which can only be extracted from texts composed and redacted centuries after that time, will tend inevitably to see actually-existing Buddhism as some kind of degeneration from an ideal.”

perspective that emerges in this way does not entail a value judgement in itself; it does not imply a devaluation. Instead, it provides a necessary foundation in order to be able to understand later Buddhist traditions properly.

Take, for example, a study of the “golden age” of Indian Buddhist philosophy. Would this topic not require a survey of early Buddhist philosophy, on a par with attention dedicated to the philosophical traditions of the Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, and Yogācāra?<sup>19</sup> There are quite substantial differences between early Buddhist philosophy and Abhidharma thought, so that the former is not implicitly covered by a study of the latter.

Moreover, comparative study of the texts of early Buddhism can provide a range of significant perspectives and offer helpful contributions to our understanding of the beginnings of Abhidharma just as much as of the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal.<sup>20</sup> Even Pure Land and tantric approaches can be shown to have distant antecedents among Pāli discourses.<sup>21</sup>

It seems to me that the time has come to step out of the pattern of reacting to problems caused by nineteenth-century scholarship and arrive fully in the twenty-first century by putting early Buddhism in its proper place on an equal footing with other periods and Buddhist traditions, neither more nor less. After more than a hundred years have passed since the translations and interpretations of nineteenth-century scholars such as T. W. Rhys Davids were published, perhaps now there is no longer a pressing need to distance oneself from their work. Their presentations could simply be viewed as a product of their time,<sup>22</sup> with the hope that future generations will do the same with our own writings.

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<sup>19</sup> An adoption of the approach of not granting early Buddhism a treatment in its own right in a monograph study of “the golden age of Indian Buddhist philosophy” appears to be motivated by the in itself understandable wish of Westerhoff 2018: 11f to distance himself from the quest for the “original teachings” or “original thinking” of the Buddha, exemplified by Gombrich 2009.

<sup>20</sup> See Anālayo 2010b, 2014c, and 2017a.

<sup>21</sup> See below p. 196ff and 210ff.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, according to Almond 1988: 66: “In contrast to most, Rhys Davids found that the legends and myths had an intrinsic value ... But only rarely do we find echoes of his

Perhaps the time has also come to proceed beyond an attitude that some thirty years ago has been characterized by Reat (1992: 139f) as an “entrenched, uncritical agnosticism regarding the nature of earliest Buddhism.” This takes the form of asserting “that virtually nothing can be attributed with any certainty to earliest Buddhism. For many Western scholars, this position has become an indisputable maxim.”

Although the early discourse can indeed “appeal to Western rationalism on a preconscious level”, there can be a “similarly preconscious and uncritical resentment which these same scriptures inspire in those Westerners who are bent upon defining and discussing religion in terms of belief in a Supreme Being.” The early discourses can in this respect be “unsettling whether the bias of one’s predisposition is for or against religion, because ... [they] render religion simultaneously more difficult to define and more difficult to refute.”

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opinion among his contemporaries.” Perhaps this can help to put to rest any urge to castigate him for his way of presenting/promoting Pāli Buddhism.

## II

### Women in *Āgama* and *Vinaya* Literature

In this chapter I explore aspects of the situation of women as reflected in *Āgama* and *Vinaya* literature,<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to explore the multi-vocality that has pervaded and continues to pervade attitudes towards women in the Buddhist traditions. I begin with a Buddhist evolution myth and its implications for gender. Then I survey attitudes towards sexuality and towards the body as being sexually attractive, as well as regulations on sexual matters for laity and monastics. From a survey of the rules on celibacy for the latter I proceed to an exploration of what a breach of this requirement entails as well as to a brief look at the *Vinaya* narrative reporting the first instance of a monk having sexual intercourse. This case study serves as an example of the type of information that *Vinaya* narrative can, and cannot, yield.

Differences in the rules covering sexual matters for monks and nuns then lead me to the history of the founding of the order of nuns and the different voices regarding women that emerge in this narrative. The impact of this tale on later tradition manifests in particular in relation to attempts to revive or create an order of nuns in the Theravāda traditions of South and Southeast Asia and in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition of the Himalayan regions. Here I briefly survey the legal problems involved and possible ways of solving these, which relate to the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, “princi-

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\* Originally published in 2019 under the title “Women in Early Buddhism” in the *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 16: 33–50.

<sup>1</sup> The main part of the present study was originally written for a handbook of Buddhism, a project that was eventually abandoned.

ples to be respected” by nuns. According to the traditional account, these were set by the Buddha himself as a pre-condition for founding an order of nuns.

The same foundation history affirms the ability of women to reach awakening, conforming to a position taken in general in other early Buddhist texts. I contrast this with a trend that emerges in relation to the bodhisattva ideal, according to which the more advanced stages of the spiritual career aimed at the achievement of Buddhahood are the sole reserve of men. From the bodhisattva ideal I turn to the Buddha himself, in order to ascertain to what degree his depiction in the early texts conveys nuances of androgyny or masculinity. [34]

## Evolution and Sexuality

A natural starting point for exploring the situation of women in early Buddhism is an evolution myth found in the *Aggañña-sutta* and its parallels. According to this myth, at an earlier stage in the history of the world, before humans came into existence, there were only luminous ethereal beings, which fed on joy. With the materialization of the earth, some of these luminous beings were motivated by greed to taste and then eat from a flavorful substance that at that time had coagulated on the surface of the earth. As a consequence of partaking of such material food, they gradually came to acquire material bodies, which eventually became distinct female and male bodies.<sup>2</sup> The manifestation of the distinction between females and males then led to the arising of sexual desires and to engaging in sexual intercourse.

The myth can be seen to offer two significant indications. One indication is that the description of the evolution of the human species does not involve the postulating of an inherent superiority of males over females.

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<sup>2</sup> DN 27 at DN III 88,24, DĀ 5 at T I 38a3, T 10 at T I 219a10, MĀ 154 at T I 675a24, EĀ 40.1 at T II 737a18, Up 3104 at D 4094 *ju* 194a6 or P 5595 *tu* 221b5; see also, e.g., Schneider 1957, Ariyasena 1981, Collins 1984/1993, von Simson 1986, Meisig 1988, Nattier 1991: 11–13, Gombrich 1992, Gethin 1997, Schmithausen 2005, and Cabezón 2017: 20–34.

The fall from the previous superior condition is not the result of female temptation. Instead, it is rather occasioned by the greedy disposition of the beings themselves. The other indication is that sexuality arises as part of a decline, once greed for sensual enjoyment has led to the loss of a superior condition of asexual luminosity.

Although perspectives on sexuality in the Buddhist traditions are not uniformly negative,<sup>3</sup> the early discourses often contrast the inferior pleasure of sensuality to the superior non-sensual pleasure experienced in meditative states that are seen as mirroring the living conditions in higher celestial realms. In contrast, sensual indulgence is considered to be comparable, for example, to a hungry dog that gnaws a meatless bone, unable to satiate its hunger.<sup>4</sup> In other words, sensuality cannot yield lasting satisfaction.

Another image illustrates the situation of someone who pursues sensuality with the example of a leper who cauterizes his wounds over a fire.<sup>5</sup> The temporary relief experienced comes at the cost of an overall exacerbation of his condition. The situation differs substantially for someone free from sensual desire, which is likened to a healed leper who with all his might would resist being dragged close to the fire that earlier, [35] when still afflicted by leprosy, he had so eagerly sought. This imagery reflects the position taken in the early texts that a fully awakened one is incapable of engaging in sexual intercourse.<sup>6</sup>

Faced with the dire repercussions of a degeneration from asexual luminous beings to grosser material embodiments filled with sexual desire, it is not surprising that Buddhist jurisprudence sees sexuality as something to be restrained. Monastics are expected to adhere to celibacy and lay followers, who ideally might adopt the monastic model of celibacy for special days of religious observance, are required to abstain at least from forms of sexual intercourse that involve harm for others. Examples would be adultery or sexual intercourse with those who are still under the protection of their families.

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<sup>3</sup> See Langenberg 2015.

<sup>4</sup> MN 54 at MN I 364,12 and MĀ 203 at T I 774a20.

<sup>5</sup> MN 75 at MN I 507,1 and MĀ 153 at T I 671b25.

<sup>6</sup> DN 29 at DN III 133,16, fragment 285v6 in DiSimone 2016: 93, and DĀ 17 at T I 75b17.

At the same time, however, if an adult unmarried female, for example, willingly engages in sexual intercourse, then this does not necessarily involve a breach of her precepts as a Buddhist lay disciple.<sup>7</sup> The same would hold for prostitution, apparently a well-known phenomenon in India at that time and in later times.<sup>8</sup> The Buddha himself is on record for having no qualms about accepting invitations to meals offered by the beautiful courtesan Ambapālī/Āmrpālī who, at the end of her successful career, went forth as a Buddhist nun.<sup>9</sup>

### Embodiment and Sensuality

In line with the notion of a fall from an ethereal condition to a gross material body under the influence of sensual greed and also in line with the depiction of sensual indulgence as similar to a hungry dog gnawing a meatless bone or a leper cauterizing his wounds over a fire, Buddhist soteriology singles out the perception of the sexual attractiveness of a human body as something to be deconstructed and eventually overcome. For this purpose, a traditional practice employs an analysis of the human body into its anatomical parts in order to arouse disenchantment. A particularly dramatic tale depicts a group of recently ordained monks engaging in this type of exercise with such fervor and lack of balance that many of them ended up committing suicide.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, however, Buddhist attitudes towards the body cover a spectrum of different perspectives and the emphasis on the human body's lack of sexual attraction is only one of these. The same texts also recommend training oneself to become anchored in the body through what appears to be an embodied form of mindfulness, and this in turn <sup>[36]</sup> can serve as a foundation for cultivating a pervasion of the whole body with the bliss and happiness of meditative absorption.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the deprecation of sensual

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<sup>7</sup> Collins 2007: 268.

<sup>8</sup> Perera 1993: 213–226 and Young 2004: 105–132.

<sup>9</sup> Malalasekera 1937/1995: 155.

<sup>10</sup> See Anālayo 2014h.

<sup>11</sup> Anālayo 2014k.

indulgence and the deconstruction of the body's sexual allure stand on a continuum that is meant to lead to the experience of higher forms of happiness, felt also on the level of the body. Besides, the bodily conduct of a monastic can also function for others as a visible embodiment of virtue.<sup>12</sup>

### Celibacy in the *Vinaya*

The expectation that Buddhist monastics observe celibacy finds expression in reckoning a fully ordained monk or nun who willingly engages in sexual intercourse to have incurred a breach of a *pārājika* rule, the most serious violation of monastic discipline possible. As a result of such a breach, the offending monastic loses communion, *saṃvāsa*, in the sense of being no longer fit to assume the legal functions and privileges pertaining to the status of being a fully ordained Buddhist monastic. This is irreversible in the sense that, whereas a monastic who has disrobed without having offended against a *pārājika* regulation can always take full ordination again, when loss of communion results from a breach of a *pārājika* rule, it is no longer possible to regain one's earlier position of full communion.

Loss of communion needs to be differentiated from residential rights in a particular monastery, where not only fully ordained monastics but also novices and at times laity can live. In other words, the notion of being no longer in communion refers to the community of the four directions, in the sense that, by willingly engaging in sexual intercourse, the monastic in question has lost full membership in the monastic Community in general.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the one who has lost communion in this way might continue to live in the same monastery as before, albeit in a different role within the monastic hierarchy. In fact, loss of communion does not even necessarily result in an act of expulsion, which is only required when the culprit does not admit the moral breach and instead pretends to be still entitled to full communion.<sup>14</sup> Apparently in order to render the option of freely admitting

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<sup>12</sup> Mrozik 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Anālayo 2016g, *pace* Clarke 2009c.

<sup>14</sup> See below p. 383ff.



a breach of a *pārājika* more attractive, several *Vinayas* created the *śikṣā-dattaka* observance. This situates the offender at a place in the monastic hierarchy between a fully ordained monastic and a novice and thereby still in a condition of no longer being in full communion.<sup>15</sup>

The first recorded case in the different *Vinayas* of such a breach of celibacy involves a monk by the name of Sudinna, who at the request [37] of his parents had intercourse with his former wife in order to ensure the continuity of their family lineage. Closer comparative study of the accounts of this episode in the different *Vinayas* brings to light significant variations, which show the evolution of the basic tale within a monastic teaching context.<sup>16</sup> Some versions enhance the dramatic tension between monastic renunciation and the brahminical notion of a man's duty to procreate, which underlies the trope of his parents' request to ensure that there is an heir to the family line. Such enhancement takes the form of an apparent integration of material taken from another tale that features an exemplary monastic. This tale describes young Raṭṭhapāla/Rāṣṭrapāla, son of the wealthiest family in town, who is so keen to go forth that he goes on hunger strike for several days until his parents finally consent to his plans.<sup>17</sup>

Once these narrative elements have become part of the Sudinna episode, the resultant tale's function in a monastic teaching situation becomes substantially improved. In order to warn a newly ordained monastic against excessive intimacy with the former family or against taking too lightly the need to accord priority to renunciation over family-related responsibilities, what better example to give than that of a monk of such sincere aspiration that he is willing to go on a hunger strike for days just to be allowed to go forth? Once even such an exemplary monastic is shown to have fallen from the ideal of celibacy, the dangers of incurring a *pārājika* breach will remain vividly imprinted in the mind of the monastic listener and will serve the purpose of the whole teaching enterprise within which the tale is to be used,

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<sup>15</sup> Anālayo 2016g, *pace* Clarke 2009b.

<sup>16</sup> Anālayo 2012a.

<sup>17</sup> Anālayo 2011c: 451–466.

namely inculcating vigilance against breaking one's celibacy and thereby losing one's communion with other fully ordained monastics.

An important ramification of the suggested evolution of this tale is that *Vinaya* narrative, however much taken as factual by tradition, does not function in a way comparable to a record of case-law precedents in modern judicial proceedings. Instead, *Vinaya* tales need to be understood in terms of their teaching function and as an integral part of the monastic project of inculcating moral values, such as celibacy. This explains why tales of the *jātaka* and *avadāna* type can be found in the different *Vinayas*, simply because these serve a similar purpose of edification in a teaching situation.<sup>18</sup>

This in turn circumscribes the uses to which such *Vinaya* narrative can be put by the modern scholar, in the sense that, although this material can certainly serve as a source of information about monastic ideas, [38] attitudes, and fantasies, the chances that it offers an accurate reporting of actual events occurring on the ground in ancient India are limited. Confirmation of this impression can be found in the variations of sexual intercourse described in the part of the Pāli *Vinaya* that offers a commentary on the *pārājika* rule concerning a breach of celibacy. As part of its general mission to clarify the exact legal meaning of the terms involved in the rule, this part of the Pāli *Vinaya* moves through a range of different possible scenarios for sexual intercourse. One of these describes a case of self-sodomy, making it clear that such descriptions cannot be records of actual events.<sup>19</sup> Instead, this 'case' story must rather be a product of fantasy, inspired by the attempt to cover all possible cases monastic lawyers could possibly conceive of.<sup>20</sup> Although *Vinaya* narrative can certainly yield significant information on material culture and local customs as well as usages, a reading that takes *Vinaya* texts to be factual accounts of actual events would reflect a misunderstanding of their nature.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Anālayo 2016k.

<sup>19</sup> Perera 1993: 150.

<sup>20</sup> Kieffer-Pülz 2001: 63.

<sup>21</sup> Faure 1998: 78f.

The need to avoid naïvely reading *Vinaya* texts as if these present accurate records of historical events is also of significance when evaluating how monastics were expected to negotiate relations with their former spouses. Here it is important to note that a depiction of Buddhist monasticism as requiring a severing of all contact with former family members is inaccurate,<sup>22</sup> apparently the result of a general trend in the early days of scholarly study to imagine the beginnings of Buddhist monasticism as being dominated by the solitary wandering recluse who, through living in total isolation, exemplifies an inner condition of being freed from all ties.

At the same time, however, the evident impact of imagination on *Vinaya* narratives also makes it clear that caution is required with particularly dramatic stories, often found only in one or a few *Vinayas*. Such episodes can hardly be taken to imply that Indian Buddhist monasticism already resembled married priesthood of the type found in Newar Buddhism or among Buddhist traditions in Japan.<sup>23</sup> To argue for such similarities fails to do justice to what the sources actually convey.<sup>24</sup> Such an approach can result in a portrayal of the situation as unbalanced as the earlier romantic depictions of the solitary monastic. In fact, a continuous relevance of the monastic ideal of celibacy in later times seems to be evident even in relation to tantric sex, which tends to be depicted in an explicitly-drawn contrast to normative monastic conduct.<sup>25</sup> [39]

## Gendered Rules

Fully fledged sexual intercourse is not the only way in which a breach of monastic discipline can be incurred. Whereas loss of communion through consenting to sexual intercourse holds similarly for male and female monastics, with other sexual regulations differences emerge. Irrevocable loss

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<sup>22</sup> See Clarke 2014.

<sup>23</sup> On the former see, e.g., Gellner 1992 and von Rospatt 2005, and on the latter see, e.g., Jaffe 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Anālayo 2014h: 30–42 and Ohnuma 2014, *pace* Clarke 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Gyatso 2005: 288.

of monastic status can be incurred by a nun if she consents, out of lust, to being touched by a lustful male at any place of her body between collar-bones and knees.<sup>26</sup> If a monk has lustful bodily contact with a female, however, this does not result in loss of communion, but only in temporary suspension.<sup>27</sup> Although this example forms part of a general tendency of regulations for nuns to be more stringent than for monks, masturbation in the case of a nun is an offence that only requires being acknowledged,<sup>28</sup> whereas a monk who masturbates incurs temporary suspension.<sup>29</sup> In sum, *Vinaya* regulations are evidently not based on the premise of invariably providing an equal treatment for male and female monastics.

In fact, some degree of discrimination is already built into the stipulations concerning eligibility for ordination, which for both males and females requires going through a process of inquiry to ascertain the candidate's fitness for higher ordination. Among possible stumbling blocks in this respect feature sexual abnormalities, such as when one has incomplete or deficient sexual organs. Being a *paṇḍaka* also bars one from ordination. The implications of the term, often translated as “eunuch”, are not entirely straightforward. Nevertheless, it seems clear that it does not just refer to homosexuals.<sup>30</sup> In fact, homosexuality as such does not seem to have been an issue from the viewpoint of Buddhist ethics. Maintenance of celibacy is clearly the central concern, no matter who the potential partner may be. One case even involves a mother and son, both gone forth as Buddhist monastics, engaging in sexual intercourse with each other.<sup>31</sup>

Besides various forms of intercourse, including incest, the texts also recognize a phenomenon known as change of sex. This refers to the belief that a male might suddenly change into a female or else a female become a male. The depiction of one such instance involves a male becoming a female

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<sup>26</sup> See Kabilsingh 1984: 55.

<sup>27</sup> See Pachow 1955: 79f.

<sup>28</sup> See Kabilsingh 1984: 113 (not found in all *Vinayas*).

<sup>29</sup> See Pachow 1955: 78f.

<sup>30</sup> Anālayo 2015g: 439–443.

<sup>31</sup> Silk 2009: 126–128.

and then having children.<sup>32</sup> This shows that such change of sex was envisaged as involving the acquisition of fully functioning sexual and reproductive organs. From the perspective of monastic law, such cases are adjudicated without according a value judgement to whether the change involves becoming a male or rather a female. Attitudes change with later exegetical tradition, however, where becoming a female is presented as the result of bad karma, whereas becoming a male is in turn <sup>[40]</sup> conceived of as a promotion due to good conduct.<sup>33</sup> From the viewpoint of ancient Indian society, the arising of such an evaluation is not entirely unexpected, since becoming a female would indeed have resulted in a loss of opportunities and personal freedom.

A similar shift of attitude from early to later times obtains for menstruation. The relevant regulations in the *Vinayas* do not imply a negative evaluation,<sup>34</sup> whereas in later tradition a fear of pollution manifests.<sup>35</sup>

## The Foundation History of the Order of Nuns

Besides dealing with matters of sexuality, *Vinaya* literature also conveys distinct attitudes towards women in general. This is particularly the case for the story of how the Buddhist order of nuns came into existence. In light of the observations made above regarding *Vinaya* narrative in general, none of the textual versions of this event can reasonably be expected to have preserved an accurate historical record of how this happened. Nevertheless, the very fact that such an order came into being can hardly be disputed, and the body of evidence at our disposal makes it also fair to conclude that this must have happened at some point during the ministry of the Buddha (see also below p. 391ff).

A close study of all extant accounts, based on the historical-critical approach of comparative study, brings to light the following chief elements

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<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., Appleton 2011: 46, Ohnuma 2012: 17, Kieffer-Pülz 2018: 33, and Dhamma-dinnā 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Anālayo 2014f: 111–114.

<sup>34</sup> Langenberg 2016: 171.

<sup>35</sup> See Anālayo 2015e: 123f and 2016e: 22.

common to the different versions of this story:<sup>36</sup> Motivated by the wish to live a celibate life dedicated to progress to awakening, the Buddha's foster mother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī requests permission for women to go forth. The Buddha refuses. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers nevertheless shave off their hair, put on robes, and follow the Buddha on his travels. The Buddha's attendant Ānanda intervenes on their behalf, raising the argument that women are in principle able to reach awakening. The Buddha then gives permission for women to join the order. This permission is accompanied by injunctions on how the newly founded order of nuns should be hierarchically subordinate to the order of monks and cooperate with the latter in matters of communal transactions, resulting in a set of eight *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, "principles to be respected". [41]

These injunctions follow the model of the protection a woman could expect from her male family members, presumably in an attempt to avoid nuns being considered fair game by lecherous men in the ancient Indian setting; in fact, rape of nuns appears to have been a recurrent problem.<sup>37</sup> On being informed of these *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī accepts them reverentially. This act of acceptance serves as her ordination and constitutes the beginning of the Buddhist order of nuns.

The basic storyline summarized above seems to have undergone various transformations in the course of its transmission in different *Vinaya* traditions. An indication still found in some versions of the foundation history, according to which the Buddha's original refusal occurs together with an alternative suggestion for women to live a celibate life, survives in other versions only in the form of the report that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers did actually shave off their hair and don robes. According to this probably early indication, the Buddha permitted Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers to cut off

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<sup>36</sup> Anālayo 2016d.

<sup>37</sup> Perera 1993: 107f.

their hair and wear robes, apparently so as to live a celibate life in a more protected environment at home. This in turn conveys the impression that, at an early point in the evolution of the narrative, the Buddha's refusal to grant women the going forth would have been an expression of apprehensions that conditions were not yet suitable for this move. In other words, it would have reflected concerns regarding how to accommodate women living the holy life in celibacy as homeless wanderers at an early stage in the development of Buddhist monasticism, when safe dwelling places for Buddhist monastics were still scarce and public recognition not yet widespread.

Another significant narrative element is the tendency in some versions to identify the existence of an order of nuns as the culprit for any lack of support and respect experienced by the monastic community as a whole. Several of these outbursts of negativity incorporate a reference to five impossibilities for women.

These five impossibilities also feature in the *Bahudhātuka-sutta* and several of its parallels, where a comparative study makes it fair to conclude that their occurrence results from an integration of later material into a text that originally was not concerned at all with drawing a line between what is possible for a man and what is possible for a woman.<sup>38</sup> The line drawn in this way concerns leadership roles in the ancient Indian setting. A woman is held incapable of occupying the heavenly position of a Brahmā, Māra, or Sakka/Śakra, or else of being a universal emperor or a [42] Buddha. The last does not imply an inability to reach awakening as such, but only the inability to become a Buddha while still being a woman. I will come back later to the question of maleness as a requirement for the bodhisattva path.

Returning to the foundation history, a focal point for negative attitudes towards women, found in all versions, takes the form of a prediction of decline, according to which granting ordination to women has resulted in halving the duration of the Buddha's dispensation. Such association of the existence of an order of nuns with decline stands in direct contrast to a range of other passages. Closer study of the relevant texts, in particular of the conflict

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<sup>38</sup> Anālayo 2009b.

between this prediction of decline and other passages reporting that the Buddha planned from the outset to have an order of nuns, makes it probable that this narrative element would have originated as part of the textual account of the first *saṅgīti*. Probably best translated as “communal recitation” rather than “council”, the first *saṅgīti* was, according to tradition, held soon after the Buddha’s demise. The very convocation of this *saṅgīti* is related to apprehensions of an impending decline. Such apprehensions, once they had come to be associated with the tendency to cast the nuns in the role of scapegoat, might in the course of the oral transmission of the texts have turned into statements attributed to the Buddha himself.

The first *saṅgīti* also throws into relief a shift in attitudes, where the faction upholding ascetic ideals has gained the upper hand and asserts increasing control over the transmission of the Buddha’s teaching. This shift in attitudes appears to be a central driving force behind the various negative appraisals evident in all versions of the foundation history of the nuns’ order.

### Attitudes Evident in the Foundation History

The foundation history in its fully developed form exhibits attitudes towards women that in one way or another are pervasive in the Buddhist traditions up to the modern day. The main patterns in this respect could be captured by employing three categories coined by Sponberg (1992). These are:

- soteriological inclusiveness
- institutional androcentrism
- ascetic misogyny

The notion of *soteriological inclusiveness* refers to the affirmation of women’s potential to awaken, in the sense that one’s sex, just as one’s caste, is not seen as a barrier to reaching liberation. In the foundation history <sup>[43]</sup> this attitude finds its expression in the explicit affirmation that women are capable of reaching the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhist thought, a position also taken in other texts. The same finds confirmation in the foundation history itself in the very fact that, in the end, an order of nuns did come into being. Given that from a normative perspective



going forth as a monastic has as its main rationale progress on the path to awakening, this would be an instance of soteriological inclusiveness. In fact, those held to be incapable of awakening, such as matricides, for example, are barred from ordination.

*Institutional androcentrism* asserts that women's pursuit of the monastic path to awakening must be situated within an institutional structure that preserves the pattern of male hegemony and control prevalent in ancient Indian society at large. A subordination of women within Buddhist monasticism comes consequently to be seen as a necessary element in the attempt of the entire tradition to negotiate its survival as a mendicant community in the face of public opinion. In the foundation history this element of subordination is evident in the eight *garudhammas/gurudharmas*. In the form in which they have come down in the texts, these *garudhammas/gurudharmas* require the order of nuns to operate under the supervision of the order of monks. Monastic observances and procedures such as, for example, ordination, can be carried out by the monks on their own, but the nuns require the cooperation of monks in order to grant ordination. Moreover, the paying of homage according to seniority of ordination among monks does not apply across the male/female divide, so that even a nun of long standing and high seniority is expected to pay homage to a monk ordained that very day.

*Ascetic misogyny* problematizes the existence of women as such, whose role is to serve as the scapegoat for any problem or setback experienced. Here the male ascetic defines the value of his monastic conduct by the distance kept from anything female, perceived as having an intrinsically polluting and deluding nature. Women tend to be cast unilaterally in the role of Māra's daughters, set to lure innocent males into the pitfall of sexuality. The different accounts of the foundation history share an expression of this attitude in the prediction of decline, to which some versions add other articulations of similarly misogynist sentiments.

These three different attitudes interweave to create the multi-vocality on women in the texts, practices, and social realities of the different Buddhist traditions. [44]

## Buddhist Nuns

Inscriptional evidence establishes the continuity of the lineage of Buddhist nuns in India up to the eighth century and in Sri Lanka up to the eleventh century.<sup>39</sup> In India the disappearance of the order of nuns appears to have been part of a general waning of Buddhism in its country of origin.<sup>40</sup> In Sri Lanka a period of political turmoil that decimated the entire monastic community seems to have brought an end to the order of nuns. To the best of our knowledge, the ordination lineage for nuns had not been transmitted to the Himalayas or to Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and Burma.

However, Sri Lankan nuns had travelled to China in the fifth century and conferred ordinations there.<sup>41</sup> Before their arrival, Chinese female aspirants to monastic life had received ordinations from monks only. At that time several *Vinayas* were in use in China, but eventually the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* prevailed.

Lacking an order of nuns, female renunciation in the Himalayas and Southeast Asian countries has come to be situated in a space between monastic and lay life, with women taking some renunciate precepts and wearing distinct clothes, yet falling short of being able to live a full monastic life with its incumbent privileges and opportunities in the way these are available to men.<sup>42</sup>

This imbalance has inspired attempts to revive or create anew an order of nuns in these traditions, and by now such attempts have met with success in Sri Lanka and are also gaining ground in Thailand and other Theravāda countries. In the Tibetan tradition, first steps have been taken in the same direction. Nevertheless, such revival continues to face resistance, an appreciation of which requires an examination of the legal intricacies that surround it.

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<sup>39</sup> Skilling 1993: 33f.

<sup>40</sup> See Verardi 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Guang Xing 2013.

<sup>42</sup> Anālayo 2017g: 340–342.

## The Legal Dimensions of the Revival of an Order of Nuns

At first sight, a revival of the defunct Theravāda order of nuns or the creation of such an order in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition can appear to be simply a matter of overcoming male prejudice, given that an order of nuns is still in existence in China (as well as Taiwan), Korea, and Vietnam. Why not simply take ordination from them? In particular for the Theravāda tradition, this would merely seem to be an act of reconnecting to a lineage that was originally brought by Theravāda nuns to China. <sup>[45]</sup>

Closer inspection shows that the situation is not as clear-cut as it may seem on the surface, and resistance to such revival needs to be understood as not merely an expression of misogyny and fear of competition by patriarchal monks. This can best be illustrated with the example of the Theravāda tradition, keeping in mind that traditional Tibetan monastics of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition have similar concerns.<sup>43</sup>

Lacking a central authority comparable to the pope in Christianity, legal acts in the Theravāda tradition acquire validity by being based on consensual performance of procedures and rituals as codified in the Theravāda *Vinaya* and explained by commentarial exegesis. From this viewpoint, a valid ordination requires the proper pronouncement of specific Pāli formulas, carried out by a quorum of monastics who are in communion, and performed in a ritual space enclosed by a boundary, the *sīmā*, that through the appropriate ritual acts has previously been designated as such.<sup>44</sup> Failure in any of these respects is considered to invalidate an ordination, which holds independent of whether this involves female or male candidates.

The Dharmaguptaka order of nuns employs different formulas for ordination and for the designation of the *sīmā*, which are of course also not in Pāli. Even the very code of rules to be observed by a nun differs from the corresponding Theravāda set of rules. From a strictly legal viewpoint, this makes it impossible for Dharmaguptaka nuns to confer ordination that will be recognized as valid by Theravāda traditionalists.

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<sup>43</sup> Kieffer-Pülz 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Chung and Kieffer-Pülz 1997.

The situation could be compared with secular law. A public prosecutor or a constable can only take legal action within the jurisdiction for which she has been authorized; her authority does not extend beyond that and is not valid in a different country that has a separate government and laws. The same holds for monastic law. Therefore, resistance against taking ordination from the Dharmaguptaka order of nuns in order to revive or create such an order in the Theravāda or Mūlasarvāstivāda traditions needs to be understood for what it is, namely a genuine legal problem rather than a lame excuse.

Nevertheless, a solution can be found by resorting to ordination given by monks only. This solution relies on the *garudhamma/gurudharma* on ordination in both the Theravāda and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayas*. <sup>[46]</sup>

### The *Gurudharma* on Ordination

In the case of the Theravāda *Vinaya*, the relevant *garudhamma* stipulates that ordination of a female candidate is to be conferred by both communities, that is, a community of nuns and a community of monks.<sup>45</sup> The *Vinaya* narrative continues by reporting that, having accepted the set of *garudhammas* and thereby become a nun, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī returned to the Buddha and inquired how to proceed in relation to her followers, who had come with her in quest of ordination. In reply, the Buddha promulgated an allowance that the monks ordain them.

In the Theravāda *Vinaya* narrative, the Buddha had asked Mahāpajāpatī Gautamī to accept a *garudhamma* that she was from the outset unable to carry out, since as a single nun she could not form a community of nuns to fulfil the stipulation that ordination of female candidates be done by both communities. From an emic perspective, this implies that the narrative thread in this *Vinaya* inevitably leads to a situation where the Buddha has to pronounce a rule on how to proceed when ordination by both communities is impossible. This thus serves as a precedent for present times. Although this ruling is followed by other rules that concern ordinations to be carried

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<sup>45</sup> Vin II 255,19.

out by both communities, it has not been revoked or implicitly rescinded and remains a valid permission applicable to the situation when an order of nuns is not in existence.<sup>46</sup>

The fact that this option has not been recognized as a valid possibility could be related to the depiction of the transmission of the order of nuns from India to Sri Lanka. According to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, when the king of Sri Lanka asked the recently arrived Indian monk Mahinda to confer ordination on the newly-converted queen, Mahinda refused, stating that it is not allowable for monks to ordain nuns.<sup>47</sup> This was correct in that situation, since an order of nuns was in existence in India and therefore the proper procedure was to invite nuns from India to start the Sri Lankan order of nuns. According to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, this is indeed what happened. Presumably the reply by the highly respected arahant Mahinda was taken too literally by later generations of monks, resulting in the firmly entrenched belief that it is impossible for monks to revive a defunct order of nuns.

In the case of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, the *gurudharma* on ordination states that female candidates are to be ordained by the monks. This differs from the Theravāda version by not stipulating the need for [47] both communities to participate in the ordination. The ordination manual in this *Vinaya* tradition then offers details on ordination carried out in both communities and continues by enjoining that, with the ordination completed, the *gurudharmas* should be announced to the new nuns. This in turn implies that, from a strictly legal perspective, the *gurudharma* on ordination by monks only is being reaffirmed subsequently to the description of ordination by both communities and thus remains a valid option.<sup>48</sup>

In this way, the creation of an order of nuns through an ordination ceremony conducted by monks only would be a legally valid action in both traditions. In relation to this solution, it is intriguing that one of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, which in academic and popular writings are regularly

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<sup>46</sup> Anālayo 2013c, 2014i, 2015g, 2018a, and below p. 413ff.

<sup>47</sup> Dīp 15.76.

<sup>48</sup> Tsedroen and Anālayo 2013.

singled out for their discriminatory nature, can provide the legal basis for reviving or creating an order of nuns and thereby improving the situation of women by enabling them to embark fully on a monastic life rather than keeping this as the sole preserve of men.<sup>49</sup>

## Awakening and Buddhahood

From a normative perspective, as briefly mentioned above, embarking on a monastic life has as its main rationale progress on the path to awakening. In fact, in the foundation history of the order of nuns the affirmation that women have the potential to awaken comes in close association with granting them the right to ordain. The same affirmation is a recurrent feature in other early Buddhist texts. The only passage in this textual corpus to call into question women's ability in this respect attributes such notions to Māra, whose role here is to impersonate prejudices held in contemporary society. The nun he addresses embodies the appropriate Buddhist response of dismissing such notions as deluded.<sup>50</sup>

The early discourses feature a list of outstanding female disciples comprising both monastic and lay, whose members are reckoned exceptional in qualities highly esteemed in Buddhist thought. Several of the nuns mentioned in this list are on record for having reached the acme of awakening as well as of meditative abilities,<sup>51</sup> confirming that the soteriological potential of women was generally acknowledged. Images of accomplished female saints continue to be of relevance in subsequent tradition,<sup>52</sup> and their poems have been preserved as an individual collection in the Pāli canon.<sup>53</sup> [48]

A different voice regarding women's spiritual abilities makes itself heard with the gradual emergence of the bodhisattva path. The *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* states that an advanced bodhisattva leaves behind womanhood for

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<sup>49</sup> Dhammadinnā 2016b: 94f and Anālayo 2018b.

<sup>50</sup> Anālayo 2014d: 138.

<sup>51</sup> Anālayo 2014j and 2022b.

<sup>52</sup> Collett 2016.

<sup>53</sup> See, e.g., Murcott 1991.

good and will not be reborn as a female again.<sup>54</sup> The Pāli commentarial tradition states that receiving the prediction of future Buddhahood, which consecrates one's status as an advanced bodhisattva, requires the possession of a male genital organ.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* narratives do not invariably present predictions of Buddhahood as requiring the male gender.<sup>56</sup> In fact female bodhisattvas are at times mentioned,<sup>57</sup> and there are also valued and empowering female images in Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the multi-vocality that emerges already in the early period continues in later tradition.

A proper appreciation of such multi-vocality requires finding a middle path between two trends in studies of women in Buddhism.<sup>59</sup> One of these two results from a propensity of early generations of scholars studying women in Buddhism to emphasize the freedom allowed to them,<sup>60</sup> a leaning that still continues among some academics in Buddhist countries. The other main tendency, more prevalent in subsequent writings, tends to focus instead predominantly on negative aspects and instances of misogyny in Buddhist texts and traditions,<sup>61</sup> where at times closer inspection of supposed instances of discrimination reveals that the assessments made are based on misunderstandings.<sup>62</sup> Even the standard mode of address employed in the texts by the Buddha, who is regularly shown to address his audience with the vocative “monks”, does not imply that the Buddha's teachings were only meant for male monastics, as sometimes assumed. Instead, the address chosen serves as an umbrella term for male and female auditors.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Wogihara 1930: 94,4.

<sup>55</sup> Jā I 44,20.

<sup>56</sup> Dhammadinnā 2015, 2015/2016, and 2018.

<sup>57</sup> Ohnuma 2000 and Dimitrov 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Paul 1979/1985, see also Gross 1993.

<sup>59</sup> Collett 2006 and 2009.

<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., Horner 1930/1990.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Wilson 1996.

<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Anālayo 2014a.

<sup>63</sup> Collett and Anālayo 2014.

The potential drawbacks of the two approaches described above calls for a broader perspective and for closer attention to details, be these textual or the religious and historical conditions at play, in order to appreciate the complexity of the situation and the different voices articulated in early Buddhist discourse on women. [49]

Although the transmission of textual material did remain predominantly in male hands, as a result of which the textual evidence has inevitably come to reflect male predilections, close attention to details and comparative study of parallel versions does enable discerning stages in the historical development of attitudes towards women. For example, a close study of the *Nandakovāda-sutta* brings to light several indications that the Pāli version expresses a more negative attitude towards women than its parallels and that this is probably the result of later developments.<sup>64</sup>

### Masculinity and the Bodhisattva Ideal

The perceived need to be a male in order to carry the career of a bodhisattva to its successful completion seems to be related to one of the strands that contributed to the arising of the very notion of such a career. This is the influence exerted by *jātakas*, tales believed to record past lives of the Buddha. Such tales often have their origin in parables and fables taken from the ancient Indian narrative repertoire and employed for Buddhist story-telling, based on identifying one of the protagonists as a past life of the Buddha.<sup>65</sup> Such identifications can involve a range of different individuals, including animals. When selecting a protagonist in a particular story to be identified as the Buddha in a former life, it would have been natural to opt for a male among different possible choices. Maleness would have served to string together diverse past lives of the Buddha and provide at least one element of continuity in what otherwise are widely disparate personalities.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Anālayo 2016d: 15–38; see also below p. 391ff.

<sup>65</sup> Anālayo 2010b: 55–71 and 2016k.

<sup>66</sup> Anālayo 2015e: 96–103.



Once the notion had arisen that becoming a Buddha requires a particular type of conduct in past lives, such past-life stories of the Buddha must have served as a chart for the bodhisattva path. The circumstance that in such tales the bodhisattva is almost exclusively male could easily have given rise to the notion that progress on this path requires leaving behind birth as a female. In other words, the belief that for progress to Buddhahood one needs to be a male could be an unfortunate consequence of the influence of *jātaka* tales on the evolution of the bodhisattva ideal.

The Buddha himself is portrayed in the early sources as somewhat androgynous. This can be seen, for example, in a standard description of his physical beauty as manifesting in thirty-two special bodily marks. These bodily marks seem to have been originally conceived of as mere nuances, perceptible only to the keen observer skilled in the lore of<sup>[50]</sup> detecting such marks. Due to a process of cross-fertilization between textual descriptions and depictions in art, the marks appear to have evolved in such a way that some are not easily made sense of in the way they are described in the texts.<sup>67</sup>

Most of the marks do not seem to convey either masculinity or femininity. Two marks, related to the Buddha's torso and teeth, employ a comparison with a lion, and his private parts are compared to those of a horse. These convey a sense of maleness. However, the Buddha's legs are compared to those of an antelope, his eyelashes to those of a cow, and his voice to that of a cuckoo. These illustrations evoke rather associations of femininity. In fact, the comparison of the voice to that of a cuckoo features also in the description of the beautiful courtesan Ambapālī/Āmrpālī,<sup>68</sup> already mentioned earlier.

This goes to show that in the early sources the Buddha was not depicted as a "bull of a man"; in fact, even this epithet, when considered in context, conveys nuances of leadership rather than of mere masculinity.<sup>69</sup> Depictions of the Buddha's youth in later hagiography, extolling his physical prowess,

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<sup>67</sup> Anālayo 2017a: 15–69.

<sup>68</sup> Thī 261.

<sup>69</sup> Ciurrtin 2010/2011: 341–343, *pace* Powers 2009.

need to be read as by-products of the apotheosis of the Buddha, instead of being taken out of context as tokens of the Buddha's masculinity.

Even the standard description of the Buddha's genitals allows for an interpretation that de-emphasizes maleness. The phrase employed to describe the nature of his private parts conveys the sense that these are in some way concealed or enclosed in a sheath. The comparison of his private parts to those of a horse suggests that the point at stake might have been that he was able to retract his genitals.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, comparative study confirms the assessment by Sponberg (1992: 8) that soteriological inclusiveness "arguably is the most basic and also the most distinctively Buddhist attitude regarding the status of women". At the same time, however, as Sponberg (1992: 12) adds, "the notion that early Buddhism was doctrinally egalitarian is potentially quite misleading." In fact, institutional androcentrism appears to have its roots also in the early tradition, even though, in the words of Sponberg (1992: 13), it would "have become important only once the early community had become established within the broader social milieu". In contrast to these two, ascetic misogyny seems to be clearly identifiable as a late development.

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<sup>70</sup> Anālayo 2017a: 131–133.



### III

## The Transmission of Teachings by a Nun

In this chapter I translate and compare section by section two parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (MN 44), which features a discussion between the nun Dhammadinnā and the lay follower Visākha on various intricate and deep aspects of the teachings. The two parallels to this discourse are found in the *Madhyama-āgama* (MĀ 210) extant in Chinese translation and as a discourse quotation in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (Up 1005) extant in Tibetan translation. As the former can, with a considerable degree of certitude, be identified as a collection transmitted by Sarvāstivāda reciters and the latter is a collection of quotations reflecting the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition,<sup>1</sup> the comparison serves as a case study in exploring the relationship between Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda oral transmission lineages of *Āgama* texts and thereby as a window on the wider topic of the bearing of school affiliation on the early Buddhist discourses.<sup>2</sup>

The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* has already been translated and compared with the Pāli version by Thich Minh Chau (1964/1991: 269–278) as part of his comparative study of the *Madhyama-*

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<sup>1</sup> Anālayo 2017e and Dhammadinnā 2020.

<sup>2</sup> On this topic see also Anālayo 2022d: 15–20 and below p. 73ff.

*āgama* and the *Majjhima-nikāya*. A comparison of the Chinese and Tibetan versions has been undertaken by Schmithausen (1987: 338–343). In my comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya* in the light of its various <sup>[2]</sup> parallels, I compared all three versions (Anālayo 2011c: 276–286), and in an article published in the same year I translated the Tibetan version (Anālayo 2011b). Building on the groundwork laid in this way, in what follows I provide a full comparison and translation of the Chinese and Tibetan versions (for ease of communication, I will refer to the three versions simply by the language in which they have been preserved). My presentation proceeds passage by passage, combining my earlier translation of the Tibetan version (marked as Up 1005) with new translations of the corresponding part in the Chinese version (marked as MĀ 210),<sup>3</sup> followed by comments. Abbreviated references to the *Majjhima-nikāya* version come with a paragraph numbering in parentheses that corresponds to the numbering used by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995/2005) in their translation of the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, in order to facilitate a comparison with the Pāli version. For example, “(= MN 44.1)” intends to convey that the counterpart to the passage in question is found in the first paragraph of the English translation of MN 44.

## Comparative Study

### Up 1005 (= MN 44.1)

The Blessed One was dwelling at Śrāvastī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. At that time, the nun Dharmadinnā was residing in the nunnery Rājākārāma. At that time, the honourable Viśākha approached the nun Dharmadinnā.<sup>4</sup> Having paid respect with his head at the feet of the nun Dhar-

<sup>3</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 6b2 or P 5595 *tu* 7a7 and MĀ 210 at T I 788a16.

<sup>4</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 6b3 or P 5595 *tu* 7b1 speaks of *tshe dang ldan pa sa ga*, yet the next sentence introduces him as a lay follower, *dge bsn̄yen sa ga*, an expression used throughout the remainder of the discourse. The qualification *dge bsn̄yen* makes it clear that *tshe dang ldan pa*, corresponding to *āyasma* in Pāli, in the present context cannot have the meaning of marking someone off as a monastic. In fact, the use of the corres-

madinnā, he sat down to one side. Sitting to one side, the lay follower Viśākha asked the nun Dharmadinnā: “Noble lady, if you would have the time to explain questions, [I would] <sup>[3]</sup> inquire about a few subjects.”

“Honourable Viśākha, I shall listen to know [your] questions.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.1)

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was dwelling at Śrāvastī, staying in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park.

At that time the female lay disciple Viśākhā approached the nun Dharmanandā, paid homage with the head at her feet, stepped back, and sat to one side. She said to the nun Dharmanandā: “Noble one, I would like to ask a question. Am I permitted to ask it?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Viśākhā, ask what you wish to ask. Having heard it, I will consider it.”

### Comment

A noteworthy difference is that the two versions disagree on both participants in the discussion. Whereas according to the Tibetan version (Up 1005) the respondent was the nun Dharmadinnā, corresponding to Dhammadinnā in the Pāli version, the Chinese (MĀ 210) speaks of the nun 法樂, “Delight in the Dharma”. In evaluating this difference, it needs to be kept in mind that the translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* was undertaken by an Indian, rather than involving a Chinese translator in collaboration with an Indian who just read out or recited the text, as is often the case elsewhere. This makes it fairly probable that the reference to 法樂 is not the result of

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ponding *āyasma* to address laity can also be found in several regulations in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, see Vin III 216,15, 218,35, 220,2, and 259,11, where the parallel versions preserved in Sanskrit similarly employ *āyuṣma*, see the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya*, Tatia 1975: 14,11+19+27 and 18,3, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Banerjee 1977: 26,10, 27,2, 28,14, and 30,11, and the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, von Simson 2000: 186,14, 187,11, 191,7, and 198,4. In the case of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, the Tibetan version uses the corresponding *tshe dang ldan pa*; see Vidyabhusana 1915: 67,2+13, 69,17, and 73,3. In such contexts, the translation “venerable” would not fit and instead another term, like “honourable”, is required.

the translation process, but that the Indic original had indeed a different name, be it Dharmanandā or Dharmanandī or whatever else.<sup>5</sup> A rendering reflecting an Indic original similar to the Pāli version would rather have been 法施, which occurs as the name of a nun in an otherwise unrelated discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama*.<sup>6</sup>

A different Indic original seems also probable for the *Madhyama-āgama*'s reference to the female lay disciple Viśākhā, contrasting to the agreement between the Tibetan and the Pāli versions that the questioner was a male. The same difference recurs between the *Vibhāṣā* translations<sup>[4]</sup> by Xuánzàng (玄奘) and Buddhavarman. In a quote from the present discourse, the former speaks of the male Viśākha whereas the latter has the female Viśākhā.<sup>7</sup> This confirms that the presentation in the *Madhyama-āgama* is not just a translation error. Judging from the way other discourses depict the female Viśākhā, she would not have been the kind of person to feature as the one who asks the profound questions formulated in the present discourse.<sup>8</sup>

According to the Pāli commentary on the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, the male Viśākha was the former husband of Dhammadinnā.<sup>9</sup> The story which, according to the Pāli commentarial tradition, provides the context for the discussion between the two is that Viśākha had earlier progressed to non-return, the third of the four levels of awakening recognized in early Buddhism. In the course of the present discussion, he was trying to discern the

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<sup>5</sup> Minh Chau 1964/1991: 24 suggests Dharmanandī. My adoption of the alternative Dharmanandā in the translation is not meant to convey any certainty about the Indic original but is simply a matter of convenience.

<sup>6</sup> EĀ 49.9 at T II 803c23.

<sup>7</sup> T 1545 at T XXVII 780c7 and T 1546 at T XXVIII 337b7.

<sup>8</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2007: 32–34.

<sup>9</sup> Ps II 355,29; see also Bode 1893: 562–566, Foley 1894: 321f, Rhys Davids 1909/1989: 12, Malalasekera 1937/1995: 1142f, Talim 1972: 117f, Murcott 1991: 62, Pruitt 1998/1999: 26–30, Krey 2010: 21, and Collett 2016: 23–25; and on the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*'s account of Dhammadinnā's going forth see Panglung 1981: 197, Finnegan 2009: 156–162, 180–185, and 201–209, Muldoon-Hules 2010: 237–241, Clarke 2014: 48–50, and Yao 2015.

depth of Dhammadinnā's wisdom who, unknown to him, had in the meantime reached full awakening. Such a scenario would fit the type of questions asked much better than the presentation in the Chinese version that the questioner was the lady Viśākhā.

Alongside such disagreements on the identity of the two main protagonists, the Tibetan and Chinese versions agree that Viśākha/Viśākhā first politely asked permission to pose questions, which the nun Dharmadinnā/Dharmanandā granted. The Pāli account instead sets in right away with the first question (MN 44.2).

Up 1005 (= MN 44.2–4)

“Noble lady, identity has been expounded, the arising of identity, and the cessation of identity. What is identity, what is the arising of identity, and what is the cessation of identity?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the five aggregates of clinging are reckoned as identity in the higher teachings of the noble Dharma. What are the five? The bodily aggregate of clinging, the feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... and the consciousness aggregate of clinging. <sup>[5]</sup> The arising of ⟨identity⟩ is [due to] delight and attachment in relation to future becoming,<sup>10</sup> together with ⟨craving⟩ that relishes here and there.<sup>11</sup> The cessation of identity is accomplished through the removal of delight and attachment in relation to future becoming, together with ⟨craving⟩ that relishes here and there; through their complete renunciation, exhaustion, fading away, cessation, and pacification.”

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<sup>10</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 6b7 or P 5595 *tu* 7b5 speaks of *'jig tshogs la lta ba*, “identity view”, instead of just mentioning “identity”. Since the inquiry was just about *'jig thogs* and afterwards the discussion continues speaking just of *'jig thogs*, the present reference to the corresponding view is probably a transmission error, caused by the circumstance that later on the subject of identity view will be broached. Hence in my translation I emend by deleting *la lta ba*.

<sup>11</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 6b7 or P 5595 *tu* 7b5 reads *srid par dga' ba'i 'dod chags dang lhan cig pa'i srid pa ste*, where in my rendering I follow the emendation of the second occurrence of *srid pa* to *sred pa*, proposed by Vetter 2000: 122f.



## MĀ 210 (= MN 44.2)

The female lay disciple Viśākhā in turn asked: “Noble one, ‘identity’ is spoken of as ‘identity’. What is ‘identity’?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The Blessed One has taught the five aggregates of clinging to be identity. The bodily form aggregate of clinging, the feeling tone ... perception ... formation ... consciousness aggregate of clinging, these are reckoned to be the five aggregates of clinging taught by the Blessed One.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

## Comment

The Pāli version takes up identity, its arising, its cessation, and the path to its cessation as separate question-and-answer exchanges (MN 44.2–5). Here the Tibetan parallel has counterparts to three out of these four topics, namely identity, its arising, and its cessation (hence it corresponds to MN 44.2–4). The Chinese parallel only has the first topic on *satkāya* itself (corresponding to MN 44.2). This seems to be the result of a transmission error, as at a later point a question about the cessation of identity occurs <sup>[6]</sup> in the Chinese version (see below MN 44.8).<sup>12</sup> This stands a little out of context and appears to be a remnant of an earlier examination of the arising and cessation of identity.

## Up 1005 (= MN 44.7)

“Noble lady, how does identity view arise?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a foolish ordinary person, who is not learned, regards form as truly being the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as being in the self, or regards the self as truly abiding in form; and likewise regards feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as truly being the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or con-

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<sup>12</sup> MĀ 210 at T I 788b12: 云何滅自身耶.

sciousness as being in the self, or the self as abiding in consciousness. Thus identity view arises.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.7)

She asked further: “Noble one, how is there identity view?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “An unlearned ignorant worldling who does not visit good spiritual friends, does not know the noble Dharma, and is not disciplined in the noble Dharma, sees form as the self, or sees the self as possessing form, or sees form as contained within the self, or sees the self as contained within form; sees feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... sees consciousness as the self, or sees the self as possessing consciousness, or sees consciousness as contained within the self, or sees the self as contained within consciousness. This is reckoned to be identity view.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Chinese version reports that Viśākhā praised each of the answers received and only then asked the next question. Whereas on the occasion of the first exchange this has a parallel in the Pāli discourse (MN 44.2), here such praise occurs only once and not throughout the discourse. [7] In the Tibetan account, such praise is not even found once.

The somewhat unwieldy procedure in the Chinese version seems to reflect a recurrent pattern in the *Madhyama-āgama*, where repeated praising also occurs on other occasions.<sup>13</sup> One such instance involves King Pasenadi in discussion with the Buddha. At a particular point in their discussion, the Buddha gave a reply that failed to provide an answer to what the king had in mind. Whereas in the relevant *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse and a parallel found in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* he directly in-

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<sup>13</sup> An example is the next discourse in the collection, which also involves a question-and-answer exchange between two disciples (here both are monastics). The first instance of the praise is in MĀ 211 at T I 790b21.

formed the Buddha of this,<sup>14</sup> in the corresponding *Madhyama-āgama* discourse he first praised the reply given by the Buddha in the same way he praised him throughout their discussion for other replies that did provide an answer to his inquiries.<sup>15</sup> It seems fair to conclude that the praise of a reply that failed to address the king's question is the result of the insertion of a pericope without proper consideration of the context.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.8)

“Noble lady, how does identity view not arise?”

“Honourable Viśākha, a noble disciple, who is learned, does not regard form as truly the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as being in the self, or the self as abiding in form; and does not regard feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as truly the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as being in the self, or the self as abiding in consciousness. Therefore, identity view does not arise.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.8)

She asked further: “Noble one, how is there the absence of identity view?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A learned noble disciple who visits good spiritual friends, knows the noble Dharma, and is well disciplined in the noble Dharma, does not see form as the self, does not see the self<sup>[8]</sup> as possessing form, does not see form as contained within the self, does not see the self as contained within form; and does not see feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness as the self, does not see the self as possessing consciousness, does not see consciousness as contained within the self, and does not see the self as contained within consciousness. This is reckoned to be the absence of identity view.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

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<sup>14</sup> MN 90 at MN II 128,9 and D 1 *kha* 88b5 or P 1030 *ge* 82a2.

<sup>15</sup> MĀ 212 at T I 793c18.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the cessation of identity?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “It is the remainderless abandoning of clinging to the form aggregate, its giving up, disgorging, eradication, non-pollution, cessation, appeasement, disappearance; it is the remainderless abandoning of clinging to the feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness aggregate, its giving up, disgorging, eradication, non-pollution, cessation, appeasement, disappearance. This is reckoned to be the cessation of identity.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The additional reference to the cessation of identity in the last part of the Chinese version appears to be the displaced remnant of the discussion found in MN 44.3 and the Tibetan parallel, mentioned earlier.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.6)

“Noble lady, the aggregates and the aggregates of clinging have been expounded. Noble lady, how is it, are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging, or else are the aggregates different from the aggregates of clinging?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the aggregates of clinging are the very aggregates, [yet] the aggregates are not [necessarily] aggregates of clinging. How is it that the aggregates of clinging are the very aggregates, [yet] the aggregates are not [necessarily] aggregates of clinging? <sup>[9]</sup> Honourable Viśākha, form that is with influxes and clinging, feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness that is with influxes and clinging, these are aggregates as well as aggregates of clinging. Form that is without influxes and without clinging, feeling tone ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness that is without influxes and without clinging, these are aggregates, but they are not reckoned aggregates of clinging.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.6)

She asked further: “Noble one, the aggregates are spoken of as ‘the aggregates that are clung to’ and the aggregates are spoken of as ‘the aggregates of clinging’. Are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging and are the aggregates of clinging the same as the aggregates? Or do the aggregates differ from the aggregates of clinging?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Either the aggregates are the same as the aggregates of clinging or else the aggregates are not the same as the aggregates of clinging. How are the aggregates the same as the aggregates of clinging? If there are influxes and clinging to form, if there are influxes and clinging to feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness, then the aggregates are reckoned to be the same as the aggregates of clinging. How are the aggregates not the same as the aggregates of clinging? If there are no influxes and no clinging to form, if there are no influxes and no clinging to feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... to consciousness, then the aggregates are reckoned not to be the same as the aggregates of clinging.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

In the Pāli version the inquiry is whether clinging is the same as the five aggregates of clinging or else is different from them. In reply, Dhammadinnā rejects both options. Judging from the parallels, the placing of this exchange in the Pāli version could be the result of a shift of text. In the Chinese and Tibetan versions, the discussion of the arising and <sup>[10]</sup> cessation of identity has brought up the topic of the five aggregates of clinging, hence it fits a natural flow of conversation if the precise relationship between clinging and the aggregates becomes the next topic. In the Pāli version, in contrast, the preceding topic is the noble eightfold path (MN 44.5). The transition from that to the distinction between clinging and the aggregates (MN 44.6) is abrupt and gives the impression that some shifting around of text has occurred.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.10–11)

“Noble lady, regarding the [relationship between] the three aggregates—the aggregate of morality, the aggregate of concentration, and the aggregate of wisdom—and the noble eightfold path; how is it, noble lady, is the noble eightfold path encompassed by the three aggregates, or else are the three aggregates encompassed by the noble eightfold path?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates; the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path. How is it that the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates, and the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path? Honourable Viśākha, in this regard right speech, right action, and right livelihood have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of morality. Right mindfulness and right concentration have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of concentration. Right view, right intention, and right effort have been assigned by the Blessed One to the aggregate of wisdom. Honourable Viśākha, therefore it should be understood that the noble eightfold path is encompassed by the three aggregates, whereas the three aggregates are not encompassed by the noble eightfold path.”

“Noble lady, is the path conditioned or unconditioned?”

“Honourable Viśākha, it is conditioned.”

“Noble lady, is cessation of the same nature?”<sup>16</sup>

“Honourable Viśākha, it is not of the same nature.” [11]

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.9–11)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the noble eightfold path?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The noble eightfold path is right view ... *up to* ... right concentration; these are reckoned to be its eight [parts], these [together] are reckoned the noble eightfold path.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It

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<sup>16</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 8a1 or P 5595 *tu* 8b7: *’gog pa ’dra ba yin nam*; which corresponds to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* quotation from this discourse, Pradhan 1967: 4,7 (1.6): *asabhāgo nirodha*.

is well, it is well, noble one!" Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: "Noble one, is the noble eightfold path conditioned?"

The nun Dharmanandā replied: "It is like this, the noble eightfold path is conditioned."

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: "It is well, it is well, noble one!" Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: "Noble one, how many aggregates are there?"

The nun Dharmanandā replied: "There are three aggregates: the aggregate of virtue, the aggregate of concentration, and the aggregate of wisdom."

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: "It is well, it is well, noble one!" Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: "Noble one, does the noble eightfold path encompass the three aggregates, or do the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path?"

The nun Dharmanandā replied: "The noble eightfold path does not encompass the three aggregates; [rather] the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path. Right speech, right action, and right livelihood, these three path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of virtue. Right mindfulness and right concentration, these two path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of concentration. Right view, right intention, and right effort, these three path factors are encompassed by the noble aggregate of wisdom. The noble eightfold path does not encompass the three aggregates; [rather] the three aggregates encompass the noble eightfold path."

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: "It is well, it is well, noble one!" Having praised it, the female lay disciple <sup>[12]</sup> Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: "Noble one, is there a counterpart to cessation?"

The nun Dharmanandā replied: "Cessation has no counterpart."

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: "It

is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Tibetan version lacks a request for a definition of the eightfold path, found in the Chinese and the Pāli discourses (MN 44.9). The Chinese and Tibetan versions agree in taking up the topic of cessation, not mentioned in the Pāli discourse. They also agree in placing right effort in the aggregate of wisdom, whereas the Pāli version allocates it to the aggregate of concentration (MN 44.11). These different categorizations are doctrinally significant,<sup>17</sup> hence it is telling that in this respect the Chinese and Tibetan discourses concord with each other against their Pāli parallel.

From the viewpoint of the discourse as a whole, a case could be made for the Pāli version’s placement. In a subsequent section (MN 44.12), the three parallels present the four right efforts as the power or equipment of concentration. Such a presentation would support placing right effort in the aggregate of concentration, rather than in the aggregate of wisdom.

Up 1005 (≠ MN 44; see MN 43.19)

“Noble lady, how many factors does the first absorption possess?”

“Honourable Viśākha, it possesses five factors: [directed] comprehension, [sustained] discernment,<sup>18</sup> joy, happiness, and unification of the mind.”

MĀ 210 (≠ MN 44; see MN 43.19)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many factors does the first absorption have?”<sup>[13]</sup>

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The first absorption has five factors: [directed] awareness, [sustained] contemplation, joy, happiness, and unification of the mind. These are reckoned to be the five factors of the first absorption.”

<sup>17</sup> For occurrences of this variation in other texts see Anālayo 2011c: 280 note 76.

<sup>18</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 8a1 or P 5595 *tu* 8b8: *rtog pa* and *dpyod pa*, which in the present context function as counterparts to the absorption-factors *vitarka* and *vicāra*.



Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The topic of the factors of the first absorption is not covered at all in the *Cūlavedalla-sutta* and instead occurs in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*, another question-and-answer exchange which instead has two male monastics as its protagonists.<sup>19</sup> In the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the *Madhyama-āgama*, these two similar discourses occur adjacent to each other, making it easily understandable if during oral transmission a topic discussed in one of them should have migrated to the other.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.12)

“Noble lady, regarding concentration, the cause of concentration, the power of concentration, and the development of concentration; noble lady, what is concentration, what is the cause of concentration, what is the power of concentration, and what is the development of concentration?”

“Honourable Viśākha, wholesome unification of the mind is concentration; the four establishments of mindfulness are the cause of concentration; the four right efforts are the power of concentration; the undertaking of these very dharmas, their full undertaking, the abiding in them, practising and applying oneself to them is the development of concentration.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.12)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is concentration? What is the sign of concentration? What is the power of concentration? What is the achievement of concentration? What is the development of concentration?”<sup>[14]</sup>

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “If a wholesome mind attains unification, this is reckoned to be concentration. The four establishments of mind-

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<sup>19</sup> MN 43 at MN I 294,28.

fulness are reckoned to be the sign of concentration. The four right efforts are reckoned to be the power of concentration. The four bases of supernatural power are reckoned to be the achievement of concentration. If one develops all of these wholesome states,<sup>20</sup> repeatedly and energetically cultivating them, then this is reckoned to be the development of concentration.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Chinese version stands alone in taking up the topic of the four bases of supernormal power as the achievement of concentration. It thereby covers four aspects of concentration, whereas the Pāli and Tibetan discourses only have three such aspects.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.13–15)

“Noble lady, regarding formations, [what are reckoned to be] formations; noble lady, what are these formations?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, there are bodily formations, verbal formations, and mental formations; these are the three.”

“Noble lady, what are bodily formations, what are verbal formations, and what are mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, exhalation and inhalation are reckoned to be bodily formations; [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment are reckoned to be verbal formations; perception and intention are reckoned to be mental formations.

“Noble lady, why are exhalation and inhalation reckoned to be bodily formations? Why are [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment reckoned to be verbal formations? And why are perception and intention reckoned to be mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, exhalation and inhalation are bodily factors, [15]

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<sup>20</sup> The translation is based on adopting a variant reading without 服.

they depend on the body, are related to the body, depending on the body they completely enter its [domain]; therefore exhalation and inhalation are reckoned to be bodily formations. On having examined and discerned with [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, one speaks; therefore [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment are reckoned to be verbal formations. Perception and intention are factors arisen from the mind, go along with the mind, depend on the mind, are related to the mind, and depending on the mind they completely enter its [domain]; therefore perception and intention are reckoned to be mental formations.”

### Comment

The whole discussion about the three formations is not found in the Chinese discourse. The Pāli version proceeds similarly to the above-translated part of the Tibetan discourse, with the difference that for mental formations it mentions perception and feeling tone.<sup>21</sup>

Up 1005 (≠ MN 44; see MN 43.24–25)

“Noble lady, at the time when the body has been abandoned by these factors, when it is like a log, bereft of the mind, how many are the [other] factors that have been abandoned at that time?”

“Honourable Viśākha, life [force], heat, and consciousness, these are the three. At the time when life [force], heat, and consciousness have been abandoned, the body is like a log, bereft of the mind.”

“Noble lady, the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation, are these to be considered as distinct, are they different?”

“Honourable Viśākha, the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation, these are considered as distinct, they have a number of differences. Honourable Viśākha, on the occasion of passing away and dying, the bodily formations have ceased, the verbal formations [have ceased], and the mental formations

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<sup>21</sup> MN 44 at MN I 301,21: *saññā ca vedanā ca cittasaṅkhāro*.

have ceased. Honourable Viśākha, the life [faculty] and heat leave [the body], the faculties become otherwise, and consciousness departs from the body. On entering the meditative <sup>[16]</sup> attainment of cessation, the bodily formations have ceased, the verbal formations [have ceased], and the mental formations have ceased. Yet, the life [faculty] and heat do not leave [the body], the faculties [do not] become otherwise, and consciousness does not depart from the body. Honourable Viśākha, thus the occasion of passing away and dying and [the occasion] of entry into the meditative attainment of cessation are considered as distinct; they are different.”

MĀ 210 (≠ MN 44; see MN 43.24–25)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many are the states of the living body, with whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “There are three states of the living body, with whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood. What are the three? One: vitality, two: heat, and three: consciousness. These are reckoned to be the three states of the living body on whose passing away the body will be discarded in a cemetery, insentient like a piece of wood.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who is dead and one who has attained the concentration of cessation?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The vitality of a dead person has completely ceased, the heat has dissipated, and the faculties have broken down. The vitality of a monastic who has entered the concentration of cessation has not completely ceased, the heat has not dissipated, and the faculties have not broken down. This is reckoned to be the difference between a dead person and one who has attained the concentration of cessation.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

## Comment

This is another case where a topic covered by the Chinese and Tibetan parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* has, in the Pāli tradition, its <sup>[17]</sup> placing rather in the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*.<sup>22</sup>

Notably, the Tibetan version is the only one to take a position on what happens with consciousness during cessation attainment.<sup>23</sup> It also differs from its Chinese counterpart by bringing in the cessation of the three formations.

### MĀ 210 (≠ MN 44)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who has attained the concentration of cessation and one who has attained the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception.”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “[When] a monastic enters the concentration of cessation, perception and knowing cease; [when a monastic] enters the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception, perception and knowing do not cease. This is reckoned to be the difference between one who has attained the concentration of cessation and one who has attained the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the difference between one who emerges from the concentration of cessation and one who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation does not think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation.’ A monastic who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception thinks at that time like this: ‘Do I have perceptions or do I not have perceptions?’ This is reckoned to be the difference between one who emerges from the concen-

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<sup>22</sup> MN 43 at MN I 296,11.

<sup>23</sup> See also Schmithausen 1987: 339.

tration of cessation and one who emerges from the concentration of [neither-perception-nor-]nonperception.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully. <sup>[18]</sup>

### Comment

This topic is not covered in either the Pāli or the Tibetan versions.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.16+18)

“Noble lady, how does the attainment of cessation take place?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, a monastic who enters the attainment of cessation does not think: ‘I enter the attainment of cessation.’ The mind has previously been developed in such a way that, having been previously developed in that way, one will fully dwell in [entering] it.”

“Noble lady, how does the emergence from cessation take place?”

“Honourable Viśākhā, a monastic who emerges from the attainment of cessation does not think: ‘I emerge from the attainment of cessation.’ Yet, the mind has previously been developed in such a way that, having been previously developed in that way, one will fully dwell in [emerging from] it.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.16+18)

She asked further: “Noble one, does a monastic who enters the concentration of cessation think at that time like this: ‘I am entering the concentration of cessation’?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who enters the concentration of cessation does not at that time think like this: ‘I am entering the concentration of cessation.’ Instead, it is because the mind has previously been cultivated in this way that it proceeds accordingly.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, does a monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation?’”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “A monastic who emerges from the concentration of cessation does not think at that time like this: ‘I am emerging from the concentration of cessation.’ Instead it is because of the body, the six senses, and the life faculty that one emerges from this concentration.” [19]

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Pāli discourse agrees with its Tibetan parallel in simply asking how emergence from the attainment of cessation takes place, rather than querying what an attainer of it thinks. These two versions also agree in indicating that such emergence depends on previous development, rather than attributing it to the body, the six senses, and the life faculty, as proposed in the Chinese version.<sup>24</sup>

### Up 1005 (= MN 44.17+19)

“Noble lady, when a monastic enters the attainment of cessation, which factors will cease first: the bodily formations, the verbal formations, or the mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākha, when a monastic enters the attainment of cessation, the verbal formations will cease first, then the bodily and mental formations.”

“Noble lady, when a monastic emerges from the attainment of cessation, which factors will arise first: the bodily formations, the verbal formations, or the mental formations?”

“Honourable Viśākha, when a monastic emerges from the attainment of cessation, the mental formations will arise first, then the bodily and verbal formations.”

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<sup>24</sup> See also Schmithausen 1987: 342.

## Comment

This topic is not covered in the Chinese parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, although it is taken up in the Chinese parallel to the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*. This Chinese discourse differs from the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* and its Tibetan parallel, as it stipulates that bodily formations cease first on entry into cessation and also arise last on emergence from it.<sup>25</sup> The \**Mahāvibhāṣā* quotes this topic as a discussion from the discourse that in <sup>[20]</sup> the Pāli tradition is known as the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* and agrees with the Pāli and Tibetan versions on the sequence in which the three formations cease.<sup>26</sup>

Up 1005 (= MN 44.21)

“Noble lady, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, where does the mind incline to, where does it flow to, where does it move to?”

“Honourable Viśākha, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, the mind inclines towards seclusion, flows towards seclusion, moves towards seclusion; it inclines towards liberation, flows towards liberation, moves towards liberation; it inclines towards Nirvāṇa, flows towards Nirvāṇa, moves towards Nirvāṇa.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.21)

She asked further: “Noble one, [when] a monastic has emerged from the concentration of cessation, in what does the mind delight? Where does it tend to? Where does it incline to?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “[When] a monastic has emerged from the concentration of cessation, the mind delights in seclusion, it tends towards seclusion, it inclines towards seclusion.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

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<sup>25</sup> MĀ 211 at T I 792a9 and 792a15.

<sup>26</sup> T 1545 at T XXVII 780c25; see also Schmithausen 1987: 340.



### Comment

The Pāli version just mentions seclusion and thus agrees with the Chinese discourse.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.20)

“Noble lady, when a monastic comes out of the attainment of cessation, what contacts does one contact?” <sup>[21]</sup>

“Honourable Viśākha, [one contacts] imperturbability, nothingness, and signlessness.”

### Comment

The Pāli version mentions emptiness instead of imperturbability. The present topic is not covered in the Chinese parallel to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, but instead in the Chinese parallel to the *Mahāvedalla-sutta* (which has imperturbability instead of emptiness).<sup>27</sup> A quotation of this discussion in the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* agrees in allocating this topic to the discourse known in the Pāli tradition as the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*.<sup>28</sup>

Up 1005 (≠ MN 44)

“Noble lady, to enter the attainment of cessation, how many factors does a monastic develop?”

“Honourable Viśākha, this question should have been asked first. I will nevertheless reply to it now. To enter the attainment of cessation, a monastic develops two factors: tranquillity and insight.”

### Comment

This discussion is without a parallel in the Pāli and Chinese versions.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.22)

“Noble lady, how many [types] of feeling tone are there?”

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<sup>27</sup> MĀ 211 at T I 792a19.

<sup>28</sup> Lamotte 1936: 195 (28a) and T 1609 at T XXXI 784b4.

“Honourable Viśākha, there are three [types]: pleasant, painful, and neutral.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.22)

She asked further: “Noble one, how many feeling tones are there?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “There are three feeling tones: pleasant feeling tone, painful feeling tone, and neutral feeling tone. Because of what do they exist? Because of contact they exist.”<sup>[22]</sup>

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Chinese version is the only one to relate feeling tone to contact.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.23+25)

“Noble lady, what is pleasant feeling tone, what is painful feeling tone, and what is neutral feeling tone?”

“Honourable Viśākha, bodily and mental pleasure or happiness that arises from contact experienced as pleasant is reckoned as pleasant feeling tone. Whatever bodily and mental displeasure or pain that arises from contact experienced as unpleasant is reckoned as painful feeling tone. Whatever bodily and mental neutral or equanimous experience that arises from neutral contact is reckoned as neutral feeling tone.

“Noble lady, what increases with pleasant feeling tones, what increases with painful feeling tones, and what increases with neutral feeling tones?”<sup>29</sup>

“Honourable Viśākha, desire increases with pleasant feeling tones, aversion increases with painful feeling tones, and ignorance increases with neutral feeling tones.”

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<sup>29</sup> Up 1005 at D 4094 *ju* 9b4 or P 5595 *tu* 10b6: *rgyas par 'gyur*, whereas the parallel versions MN 44 at MN I 303,7 and MĀ 210 at T I 789c7 speak of an “underlying tendency”, *anusaya*/使.

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.23–25)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is pleasant feeling tone? What is painful feeling tone? What is neutral feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “What arises born of being touched by a pleasant contact and is felt as bodily or mental pleasure and wellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be pleasant feeling tone. What arises born of being touched by a painful contact and is felt as bodily or mental pain and unwellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be painful <sup>[23]</sup> feeling tone. What arises born of being touched by a neutral contact and is felt as bodily or mental neutrality and neither wellness nor unwellness, such feeling tone is reckoned to be neutral feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, with pleasant feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence?<sup>30</sup> What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency? With painful feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence? What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency? With neutral feeling tone, what is pleasant? What is painful? What is its impermanence? What is its danger? What is its underlying tendency?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “With pleasant feeling tone, its arising is pleasant, its persistence is pleasant, its change is painful, its danger is impermanence, and its underlying tendency is desire. With painful feeling tone, its arising is painful, its persistence is painful, its change is pleasant, its danger is impermanence, and its underlying tendency is aversion. With neutral feeling tone, not knowing it is painful, knowing it is pleasant,<sup>31</sup> [its

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<sup>30</sup> The query after “its impermanence” appears to be a transmission error; in fact, it does not receive a reply, as only the subsequent query after “its danger” leads to the clarification that it is precisely its impermanence that is the danger.

<sup>31</sup> The translation is based on an emendation that disregards the negation in the second case; according to the original reading, not knowing neutral feeling tone would be pleasant. The formulation makes little sense and can safely be attributed to a textual error.

danger] is impermanence, which is change, and its underlying tendency is ignorance.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

The Tibetan version has the topic of what is pleasant or painful in the case of each of the three feeling tones at a later point. It agrees with the Chinese version in taking into account also the arising of the respective feeling tones, whereas the Pāli discourse only covers their persistence and change. [24]

Up 1005 (= MN 44.26+28)

“Noble lady, do all pleasant feeling tones increase desire, do all unpleasant feeling tones increase aversion, and do all neutral feeling tones increase ignorance?”

“Honourable Viśākha, not all pleasant feeling tones increase desire, not all unpleasant feeling tones increase aversion, and not all neutral feeling tones increase ignorance. There are pleasant feeling tones with which desire does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned; there are unpleasant feeling tones with which aversion does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned; and there are neutral feeling tones with which ignorance does not increase, but [instead] is abandoned.”

“Noble lady, with which pleasant feeling tones does one not increase desire, but [instead] abandons it?”

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple, being free from sensual desire and free from bad and unwholesome states, with [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, and with joy and happiness arisen from seclusion, dwells having fully attained the first absorption. With the stilling of [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, with complete inner confidence and unification of the mind, free from [directed] comprehension and [sustained] discernment, with joy and happiness arisen from concentration, [the noble disciple] dwells having fully attained the

second absorption. With the fading away of joy, dwelling equanimous with mindfulness and comprehension, experiencing just happiness with the body, what the noble ones reckon an equanimous and mindful dwelling in happiness, [the noble disciple] dwells having fully attained the third absorption. With such pleasant feeling tones one does not increase desire, but [instead] abandons it.”

“Noble lady, with what unpleasant feeling tones does one not increase aversion, but [instead] abandons it?”

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple generates an aspiration for supreme liberation: ‘When shall I dwell fully realizing that sphere which the noble ones dwell in, having fully realized it?’ With the mental displeasure and painful feeling tone [due to] that aspiration, that pursuit, and that longing one does not increase aversion, but [instead] abandons it.”

“Noble lady, with what neutral feeling tones does one not increase ignorance, but [instead] abandons it?” <sup>[25]</sup>

“Honourable Viśākha, here a noble disciple, leaving behind happiness and leaving behind pain, with the earlier disappearance of mental pleasure and displeasure, with neither happiness nor pain, and with completely pure equanimity and mindfulness, dwells having fully attained the fourth absorption. With such neutral feeling tones one does not increase ignorance, but [instead] abandons it.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.26+28)

She asked further: “Noble one, do all pleasant feeling tones have the underlying tendency to desire? Do all painful feeling tones have the underlying tendency to aversion? Do all neutral feeling tones have the underlying tendency to ignorance?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “Not all pleasant feeling tones have the underlying tendency to desire. Not all painful feeling tones have the underlying tendency to aversion. Not all neutral feeling tones have the underlying tendency to ignorance.

“What pleasant feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to desire? When secluded from sensual desires, secluded from evil and unwholesome states, with [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation,

with joy and happiness born of seclusion, a monastic dwells having attained the first absorption. This is reckoned a pleasant feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to desire. Why is that? Because desire is being abandoned by it.

“What painful feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to aversion? When, on seeking the joy of supreme liberation, that seeking and aspiration worries one again and again, giving rise to sadness and affliction. This is reckoned a painful feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to aversion. Why is that? Because aversion is being abandoned by it.

“What neutral feeling tone does not have the underlying tendency to ignorance? [When] with the cessation of pleasure and the cessation of pain, and with the earlier cessation of joy and displeasure, with neither-pain-nor-pleasure, and with purity of mindfulness and equanimity, one dwells having attained the fourth absorption. This is reckoned a neutral feeling tone that does not have the underlying tendency to ignorance. Why is that? Because ignorance is being abandoned by it.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple <sup>[26]</sup> Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

### Comment

A noteworthy difference is that the Tibetan version brings in the second and third absorption when discussing pleasant feeling tone, whereas the other two parallels agree in only mentioning the first absorption.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.24)

“Noble lady, what is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to pleasant feeling tone? What is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to unpleasant feeling tone? What is pleasant, what is unpleasant, and what is the danger in regard to neutral feeling tone?

“Honourable Viśākha, the arising of pleasant feeling tone and its abiding is pleasant, its transformation [into another feeling tone] is unpleasant. Upon [manifesting] its impermanence, because of that, then the danger in

regard to it [manifests]. The arising of unpleasant feeling tone and its abiding is unpleasant, its transformation [into another feeling tone] is pleasant. At the time when it [manifests its] impermanence, then the danger in regard to it [manifests]. Being unaware of neutral feeling tone is unpleasant, the arising of awareness of it is pleasant. Whenever it [manifest its] impermanence, then the danger in regard to it [manifests].”

### Comment

This is the part that was earlier missing in the Tibetan version. As its placement in the parallels is more natural, it appears to have been accidentally shifted to the end of the discussion.

Up 1005 (= MN 44.29)

“Noble lady, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone?”

“Unpleasant feeling tone.”

“What is the counterpart to unpleasant feeling tone?”

“Pleasant feeling tone.” <sup>[27]</sup>

“What is the counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tone?”

“Neutral feeling tone.”

“What is the counterpart to neutral feeling tone?”

“Ignorance.”

“What is the counterpart to ignorance?”

“Knowledge.”

“What is the counterpart to knowledge?”

“Nirvāṇa.”

“Noble lady, what is the counterpart to Nirvāṇa?”

“Honourable Viśākha, you are going too far, you are really going too far; this is the end of it, it is not possible [to go further]. Following the Blessed One is for [the sake of] Nirvāṇa, the final goal of the pure holy life is Nirvāṇa and the eradication of *duḥkha*.”

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.29)

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to pleasant feeling tone is painful feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to painful feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to painful feeling tone is pleasant feeling tone.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to pleasant feeling tone and painful feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to pleasant feeling tone and painful feeling tone is neutral feeling tone.” [28]

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to neutral feeling tone?”

The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to neutral feeling tone is ignorance.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to ignorance?” The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to ignorance is knowledge.”

Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to knowledge?” The nun Dharmanandā replied: “The counterpart to knowledge is Nirvāṇa.”



Having heard it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā praised it, saying: “It is well, it is well, noble one!” Having praised it, the female lay disciple Viśākhā delighted in it and received it respectfully.

She asked further: “Noble one, what is the counterpart to Nirvāṇa?” The nun Dharmanandā replied: “You are wanting to ask without limit about matters. Regarding the matter you are asking about, however, you cannot reach a limit on my side. Nirvāṇa is without a counterpart. Nirvāṇa, being without bonds, transcends bonds. It is the complete cessation of bonds. For its sake one practices the holy life under the Blessed One.”

### Comment

The Pāli version does not have an inquiry into the counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tone, and it presents deliverance as the counterpart to knowledge and then Nirvāṇa as the counterpart to deliverance. Whereas in these two respects the Tibetan and Chinese agree, <sup>[29]</sup> the Chinese version has a statement not found in any of the other versions, according to which Nirvāṇa, being without counterpart, is also without bonds and transcends bonds.

### Up 1005 (= MN 44.30–31)

At that time the lay follower Viśākha rejoiced in the exposition given by the nun Dharmadinnā. He paid respect to the nun Dharmadinnā by prostrating and left. Not long after the lay follower Viśākha had left, the nun Dharmadinnā approached the Blessed One. Having approached him, she paid respect with her head at the feet of the Blessed One and sat down to one side. Sitting to one side, the nun Dharmadinnā reported to the Blessed One the whole conversation she had been having with the lay follower Viśākha.

The Blessed One said to the nun Dharmadinnā: “Well done, Dharmadinnā, well done! If the lay follower Viśākha had asked me these matters in such words and with such expressions, I would have answered on these matters in just such words and expressions as you did, explaining it just like this.”

The nun Dharmadinnā fully rejoiced and delighted in what the Buddha had said.

MĀ 210 (= MN 44.30–31)

Then, having heard what the nun Dharmanandā said, the female lay disciple Viśākhā received it well and retained it well. Having memorized it well, she rose from her seat, paid homage with her head at the feet of the nun Dharmanandā, circumambulated her three times, and left.

Then, not long after seeing that the female lay disciple Viśākhā had left, the nun Dharmanandā approached the Buddha, paid homage with her head at the Buddha's feet, stepped back, and sat to one side. She told the Buddha the whole conversation with the female lay disciple Viśākhā and, extending her hands with palms together towards the Buddha, she said: “Blessed One, speaking like this and answering like this, have I not misrepresented the Blessed One? Have I spoken what is true? Have I spoken what accords with the Dharma, speaking what is Dharma in accordance with the Dharma? In what accords with the <sup>[30]</sup> Dharma, have I created no contradiction? Is there anything to be criticized, anything to be blamed?”

The Blessed One replied: “Nun, speaking like this and answering like this you have not misrepresented me. You have spoken what is true. You have spoken what accords with the Dharma, spoken what is Dharma in accordance with the Dharma. In what accords with the Dharma, you have not created any contradiction. There is nothing to be criticized or blamed.

“Nun, if the female lay disciple Viśākhā had come and asked me in these phrases and these words, I would have replied to the female lay disciple Viśākhā using this meaning, these phrases, and these words. Nun, as you have explained this meaning, you should remember it like this. Why is that? Because this explanation is the meaning of it.”

Thus spoke the Buddha. Having heard what the Buddha said, the nun Dharmanandā and the monastics were delighted and received it respectfully.

### Comment

According to the Pāli version, it was rather Viśākha who reported the question-and-answer exchange to the Buddha. Whereas in this respect the Tibetan and Chinese agree, they differ insofar as only the Chinese account reports Dharmanandā expressing her concerns about having potentially

misrepresented the Buddha and inquiring if anything she said could be criticized. Another minor difference is the depiction of Viśākhā circum-ambulating Dharmanandā three times, a recurrent pericope used in the *Madhyama-āgama* when describing respectful departures.<sup>32</sup>

## Summary of Comparison

The overall impression that emerges from the above juxtaposition of the Chinese and Tibetan versions points to a considerable degree of complexity. This in a way quite fittingly reflects the nature of oral transmission.

Nevertheless, from a structural viewpoint the Chinese and Tibetan versions agree closely. This is in fact what has enabled me to present both together without any shifting around of their respective passages. That is, [31] although in my presentation I alternate between translating a passage from the Tibetan and a passage from the Chinese, with both discourses I have not altered the sequence of their respective passages in any way. The rare cases where this would have been opportune involve instances where a displacement of text has happened within the respective discourse. In these cases, even without any recourse to a parallel, this can easily be detected because the passage in question occurs out of context.

The procedure I adopted for comparing the Chinese and Tibetan would not have worked with the Pāli version unless I were to shift some of its passages around. In order to convey an impression of this fundamental difference in sequence, below I list the sequential structure on which the Chinese and Tibetan versions agree, by way of providing the corresponding paragraph numbering of the Pāli version:

1–2, 7–8, 6, 10–11, (MN 43), 12, (MN 43), 16, 18, 21–23, 25–26, 28–31

The sequence above shows that, from the viewpoint of the Pāli version, after an initial agreement on the first two paragraphs, the two parallels continue with paragraphs seven and eight, then return to six, and after that have paragraphs ten and eleven. Then they go completely their own way by

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<sup>32</sup> See Anālayo 2011c: 21.

having instead something from the *Mahāvedalla-sutta* (MN 43), return to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* paragraph twelve, and again take up something from the *Mahāvedalla-sutta*. The remainder still involves several differences and a point of agreement comes only with the final three paragraphs of the concluding section.

Just as it would not have been possible for me to include the Pāli version in my paragraph-wise presentation, due to the divergence in sequence, so it would also have been impossible for the reciters of the Indic originals of these three discourse versions to perform group recitation together. Attempting to do so would have resulted in chaos, as after the second paragraph they would have been reciting different portions of text.

The impression that the Pāli version differs substantially from the other two receives further support from considerations of content. The Pāli version stands alone in taking up the path to the cessation of identity (MN 44.5). Unlike the Pāli discourse, the Chinese and Tibetan versions allocate the path factor of right effort to the aggregate of wisdom and then proceed from the eightfold path to the topic of cessation (MN 44.11).

Both discuss the factors of the first absorption and the condition of being dead, which in the Pāli tradition are rather topics covered in the previous discourse (MN 43.19 and MN 43.24–25). The Chinese and Tibetan <sup>[32]</sup> versions also add the arising of feeling tones to a discussion that in all three versions covers their persistence and change (MN 44.24). Moreover, they inquire about a counterpart to pleasant and unpleasant feeling tones, not found in the Pāli discourse, which also differs from these two in presenting deliverance as the counterpart to knowledge (MN 44.29). They agree that the nun reported the discussion to the Buddha, whereas in the Pāli version this was done by her visitor (44.30).

Compared to the above cases where the Pāli version differs from the other two, there are only a few instances where the Tibetan version differs not only from the Pāli version but also from its Chinese parallel. The Tibetan discourse lacks a request for a definition of the eightfold path, found in the Chinese and the Pāli versions (MN 44.9). It also stands alone in taking up the necessity of tranquillity and insight for entering the attain-

ment of cessation, and it appears to have suffered from a displacement of a discussion of what is pleasant and unpleasant in relation to each of the three types of feeling tones (MN 44.24). In its discussion of pleasant feeling tones, the Tibetan discourse also mentions the second and third absorptions, in addition to the first absorption taken up in all three versions (MN 44.28).

So far, the situation seems fairly unsurprising. It is indeed to be expected that representatives of Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineages differ in several aspects from their Theravāda counterpart, be it in content or in structure. The instances where the Tibetan version goes its own way are too few to be really significant.

The situation changes, however, when cases are considered where the Tibetan and the Pāli versions agree, but the Chinese discourse differs. Already the first of these involves a substantial difference, as in the Chinese version the interlocutor has become a female and the respondent has a different name (MN 44.1). The Chinese discourse also appears to have suffered from a displacement of a reference to the cessation of identity; judging from the two parallels this should have been broached after identity had been defined (MN 44.4).

In the course of a discussion of concentration, the Chinese version stands alone in referring to the four bases of supernormal power as the achievement of concentration (MN 44.12). It also does not cover at all the topic of the three formations (MN 44.13–15), which the Pāli and Tibetan versions list and explain (with a divergence between them in the definition of mental formations). [33]

The Chinese discourse distinguishes between the attainment of cessation and of neither-perception-nor-nonperception, a topic not covered in its two parallels; it attributes emergence from cessation to the body, the six senses, and the life faculty, whereas the Pāli and Tibetan versions agree that such emergence takes place due to previous cultivation (MN 44.18). The Chinese discourse lacks a discussion of the sequence in which the three formations (bodily, verbal, and mental) vanish and arise again when entering and subsequently emerging from cessation attainment, a topic covered in the Pāli and Tibetan versions (MN 44.17+19). It also does not have a

discussion of the type of contact experienced on such emergence (MN 44.20), a topic broached in both the Pāli and Tibetan discourses, although expounded in somewhat different terms by each. Instead, the Chinese discourse proceeds from a distinction of the three feeling tones to the topic of contact, a topic not taken up in the corresponding part of its two parallels (MN 44.22).

## Conclusion

In view of the number and magnitude of differences that emerge in this way between the Chinese and Tibetan versions, it seems fair to conclude that they no longer represent the same transmission lineage. Although they clearly share a common ancestry, by the time they were committed to writing they must have been transmitted separately. Given that the *Madhyama-āgama* extant in Chinese translation appears to stem from a Sarvāstivāda transmission lineage and Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* can be taken to represent a Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage, the present study is of direct relevance to the question of the identity or difference between these two lineages, a topic I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.



## IV

### Oral Transmission and School Affiliation

In this chapter I argue for the meaningfulness of distinguishing between Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda oral transmission lineages of *Āgama* texts. I begin by taking up relevant observations by Hartmann (2020) and Enomoto (2000). This leads me on to exploring the significance of the term *nikāya* and its relation to the recital of the monastic code of rules. Next the relationship in general between *Vinaya* and *Āgama* texts comes into view, followed by an examination of differences between *Madhyama-āgama* discourses and their parallels in quotations in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharma-kośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. A brief consideration of the term Theravāda serves to provide an additional perspective on the question of oral transmission lineages vis-à-vis *nikāyas*, after which I turn to the apparent provenance of the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) from Sri Lanka.

The overall conclusions I propose are that differences between the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Samyukta-āgama* extant in Chinese translations point to distinct transmission lineages. The identification of such distinct transmission lineages makes it reasonable to employ the term Mūlasarvāstivāda to refer to the *Samyukta-āgama* extant in Chinese translation as T 99, as its transmission lineage appears to be close to quotations in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.

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### Problems with the Term ‘Mūlasarvāstivāda’

Hartmann (2020: 362) expresses his “grave doubts about the heuristic value of terms like Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda with regard to texts from the *Sūtrapiṭaka*”, querying (p. 363):

What then do they denote in present usage apart from the underlying implication that an *Āgama* text thus referred to is in Sanskrit and follows certain conventions in the diction and the stock phrases?

The tendency in previous scholarship to use the two terms to set apart bodies of texts based on formal differences in diction and stock phrases is indeed problematic. Hence Hartmann (2020: 371) is quite right in suggesting <sup>[391]</sup> “a possible alternative understanding of phenomena that we are used to explaining as school-specific distinctions. They may equally well represent regional differences.”

Directing attention to the impact of regional differences on diction and stock phrases is indeed commendable and meaningful. Yet, in my view it does not follow from this that, in relation to *sūtra* material, “the endeavor of distinguishing Sarvāstivāda from Mūlasarvāstivāda texts loses its foundation” (Hartmann 2020: 371). This would follow only if this distinction were just about conventions in diction and phrasing, which does not appear to be the case. I also venture to disagree with Hartmann (2020: 380) when he reasons that

provided that Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins used different *Prātimokṣa-sūtras* and different formulas for their *vinayakarmas*, the respective ordination is never of any discernible relevance in the context of the *Sūtrapiṭaka*.

I contend that ordination tradition can be of relevance, since it tends to be related to distinct transmission lineages. Before exploring this in more detail, however, I first need to take up the seminal contribution by Enomoto (2000) on “Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin”.

Yìjìng (義淨) and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*

Enomoto (2000: 239) prefaces his study with the following queries:

are the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins really different?  
In other words, do the textual words ‘Sarvāstivādin <sup>[392]</sup> (Sarvāstivāda)’ and ‘Mūlasarvāstivādin (Mūlasarvāstivāda)’ or their Tibetan and Chinese translations indicate different sects?

Here the employment of the term ‘sect’ as a reference to Buddhist *nikāyas* seems problematic. In a survey of different nuances of the English term ‘sect’, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971: 361) offers the following definition:

a body of persons who unite in holding certain views differing from those of others who are recounted to be of the same religion; a party or school among the professors of a religion; sometimes applied *spec.* to parties that are regarded as heretical, or as least as deviating from the general tradition.

However, as pointed out by Bechert (1982: 67f),<sup>1</sup>

the use of a rather inadequate translation for the term *nikāya*, i.e. “sect”, has obscured the facts [just discussed]. A *nikāya* has nothing in common with a “sect” in the accepted understanding of this word, if used in the context of the history of Christianity. A *nikāya* is a group of monks who mutually acknowledge the validity of their *upasampadā*, and consequently, if staying within the same *sīmā*, can commonly perform *vinayakarmas*. The early *nikāyas*, therefore, represent groups of monks who had accepted identical interpretation[s] of the rules of *vinaya*. It was <sup>[393]</sup> only in the course of subsequent developments that certain dogmatic opinions were asso-

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<sup>1</sup> Bechert 1973 still employed the term “sect”, which goes to show that the clarification he offers in his 1982 contribution required a rethinking of the terminology inherited from his predecessors. See also below note 14 for the need to step out of this long-established type of terminology.

ciated with particular *nikāyas* ... however, many *nikāyas* of Indian Buddhism remained communities defined on the ground of *vinaya*.

In the same vein, Schmithausen (1987: 305) clarifies that his employment of the term “school” refers primarily to a monastic unit that recognizes the same canon, in particular the *Vinaya*, and not, or at least not primarily, to a group of followers of the same dogmatic position.<sup>2</sup> Again, Boucher (2005: 292 note 10) comments that

the word “sect” is used among sociologists of religion to denote a movement that has broken from its parent body (the “church”) and remains in tension with it, often with overt hostility to existing social institutions with which the church has accommodated itself. Buddhist *nikāyas* are monastic ordination lineages which overlap hardly, if at all, with such a definition.

Keeping in mind the significance of *nikāyas* as *Vinaya* ordination lineages is helpful for assessing a passage from the travel records of Yijing, in which the eventual translator of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* into Chinese offers the following assessment:<sup>3</sup> [394] “However, the ‘*Vinaya* in Ten Recitations’ is also not of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *nikāya*.”

Enomoto (2000: 243) considers this statement to imply that “the ‘Mūlasarvāstivāda’ sect does not exist apart from the ‘Sarvāstivāda’ sect.” Now the ‘*Vinaya* in Ten Recitations’ (T 1435) is clearly different from Yijing’s translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (or from the version of this *Vinaya* extant in Tibetan translation).<sup>4</sup> This leaves little ground for Enomoto (2000: 244) to conclude that “the *Vinaya* of the ‘Mūlasarvāstivāda’ sect translated by Yijing is nothing but the *Vinaya* of the ‘Sarvāstivāda’ sect.”

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<sup>2</sup> “Den Begriff ‘Schule’ verstehe ich natürlich hier primär im Sinne einer monastischen Einheit, die ein- und dieselbe Fassung des Kanons, besonders des *Vinaya*, anerkennt, nicht oder jedenfalls nicht primär als Gruppe von Vertretern gleicher dogmatischer Positionen.”

<sup>3</sup> T 2125 at T LIV 206c3: 然十誦律亦不是根本有部也。

<sup>4</sup> See the survey in Clarke 2015.

As already noted by Wynne (2008: 246), the formulation in the passage translated above rather shows that Yījīng “was aware of a Sarvāstivāda Vinaya that did not belong to the Mūlasarvāstivādin sect ... [his] statement, properly understood, provides no support for the identification of Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin.”<sup>5</sup> [395]

### Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda *Nikāyas*

It seems to me that Yījīng’s statement can be understood better if it is kept in mind that connotations carried by the term “sect” do not necessarily reflect what is implied by the corresponding term *nikāya*. Here the sharing of doctrinal beliefs between Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins needs to be distinguished from ordination lineages.

The same distinction might also provide a solution to the problem identified by Hartmann (2020), in that a doctrinal background (or regional preferences in diction and stock phrases) need not be the sole rationale for distinguishing Sarvāstivādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins from each other. The distinction is first of all about *nikāyas* as monastic communities with distinct ordination lineages.

These might at times correspond to doctrinal differences and even to regional conventions in diction and stock phrases. But such differences and conventions are secondary derivatives of the phenomenon in question and not in themselves decisive.<sup>6</sup> Instead, ordination lineage is decisive. From the normative viewpoint of *Vinaya* law, monastics ordained according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* would not perform legal acts together with

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<sup>5</sup> The observation that the statement by Yījīng in T 2125 implies that the ‘*Vinaya* in Ten Recitations’ (T 1435) is *not* Mūlasarvāstivāda has already been made by Yao 2007 (I am indebted to the author for a summary of the article, as my inability to read Japanese prevents me from consulting it myself); see also Skilling 2002: 375, who comments that Enomoto’s position in this respect “seems forced”.

<sup>6</sup> The lack of relevance of differences in diction could be illustrated by the examples given by Pāsādika 1994: 129 of quotations in Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts that exhibit variations in this respect, which obviously do not reflect doctrinal divergences.

monastics ordained according to the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (or any other *Vinaya*), however much they might be holding the same doctrinal view.

The situation could perhaps be illustrated with the example of public prosecutors from different countries. Although this example <sup>[396]</sup> involves secular law and a different time and place, inasmuch as the basic functioning of law is concerned, it might help to illustrate aspects to be kept in mind when evaluating the impact of ordination lineages on the oral transmission of texts in ancient India.

Even though public prosecutors from different countries might hold the same political view, they are only able to take action in cases in their own respective country, not elsewhere. In order to take into account the issue of regional language variations as well, the simile could be applied to prosecutors in different countries in Hispanic America. A prosecutor from Mexico, for example, will differ from a prosecutor from Argentina in the pronunciation of Spanish and the use of certain indigenous terms. Yet, just as with their respective political opinions, this is only a secondary aspect of the situation. What counts is the legal dimension. If someone born in Mexico should migrate to Argentina and become a prosecutor there, the legal sphere of action would now be within the confines of Argentina, no matter how much this prosecutor still speaks Spanish with a Mexican accent and independent of any political opinion he or she may hold.

Similarly, the question of *nikāya* affiliation is primarily a legal and an institutional one. Doctrinal opinions or the use of certain linguistic features are a result of that. Different *nikāyas* can share doctrinal opinions and linguistic usages; conversely, even within a single *nikāya* these can differ, especially if its members are spread over different regional areas.

### The Recital of the Code of Rules

One of the legal acts to be undertaken regularly every fortnight is the recital of the code of rules (*prātimokṣa*). The performing of such <sup>[397]</sup> recitation by a group of monastics requires having basically the same text as its foundation. Moreover, the concluding sections of the different codes of the monastic rules enjoin that all of the assembled monastics should train in con-

cord in these rules.<sup>7</sup> This requires having the same rules. Substantial differences in sequence and formulation of the main rules will conflict with the harmonious performance of such recital and impede training in them in concord, thereby jeopardizing the perception of intra-group homogeneity that is so crucial to the very continuation of the institution of textual transmission itself.

A central purpose of the recitation of the code of rules is precisely to serve as an affirmation of communal harmony and institutional identity. In the words of Gombrich (1988: 110), “the *pātimokkha* ritual’s communal function ... was the one thing which held the Sangha together.” The recital of the code of rules shares this feature with group recitation in general.<sup>8</sup> For example, the *Śaṅgīti-sutta*, in agreement with its Sanskrit fragment and Chinese *Dirgha-āgama* parallels, accompanies a list of doctrinal terms and categories with an emphasis on the function of agreement on such a listing to [398] ensure communal harmony.<sup>9</sup> Tilakaratne (2000: 175) explains that

the fundamental purpose of ... events described as *saṅgīti* is the assurance of the unity of the Buddhist monastic organization ... the key activity was to recite together the Dhamma and the Vinaya ... [which], first and foremost, was meant to be a public expression

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<sup>7</sup> Dharmaguptaka, T 1429 at T XXII 1022b11, Kāśyapīya, T 1460 at T XXIV 665a19, Mahā-sāṅghika-Lokottaravāda, Tatia 1975: 36,2, Mahīśāsaka, T 1422 at T XXII 199c19, Mūla-sarvāstivāda, Schmidt 1989: 92,9 (fol. 37R, this part has been omitted by Banerjee 1977), Sarvāstivāda, von Simson 2000: 258,9, and Theravāda, Pruitt and Norman 2001: 110,9; see also Pachow 1955: 214 and Schmidt 1989: 34–35.

<sup>8</sup> Allon 2018: 234 reasons that “group recitation requires that the wording of the text and the arrangement of the textual units within a collection be fixed; otherwise you would have complete chaos ... a text—a *sūtra*, verse or textual unit or a collection of them—is fixed as long as it is memorized, repeated and communally recited without being intentionally changed, which of course allows for unintentional change.”

<sup>9</sup> DN 33 at DN III 211,17: *tattha sabbeheva saṅgāyitabbaṃ na vivaditabbaṃ*; Stache-Rosen 1968: 45 (I.1): *taṃ v(a)yaṃ saṃhitāḥ samagrāḥ saṃmodamānā bhūtvā saṃsāyā(ya na vivadā)m(a)h(e)*; DĀ 9 at T I 49c22: 當共集之, 以防諍訟. The statement quoted occurs after the first item in the list has been mentioned. Another parallel, T 12, does not have a comparable formulation.

of one's allegiance to the organisation which was represented by the Dhamma and the Vinaya.

### Different Codes of Rules

Actual instances of recital need not always comprise the entire code but can focus just on the main rules. As a recital of the entire code of rules takes a long time, such time-saving modalities of recital can confidently be assumed to have been resorted to, even though from a normative perspective they are not the ideal way to proceed.

This in turn means that variations among minor rules, especially the *sekhiya/saikṣa* rules, would have fewer repercussions on such a recital, simply because in actual practice they will not invariably be recited.<sup>10</sup> But at least the main rules of the *pārājika* and *saṅghādisesa/saṅghāvaśeṣa* type would [399] need to be the same in order for a group of monastics, ordained in the same *Vinaya* tradition, to perform even a shortened version of the fortnightly recital of the code of rules together.

In fact, had legal acts by those ordained in *Vinaya* traditions with different codes of rules been a regular occurrence, the obsession evident in the different *Vinayas* to regulate the most minor details can safely be expected to have led to providing guidelines for such situations. At the time of the recital of the code of rules, which version should be recited? The one known to the most senior monastic in the assembly? Or rather the one followed by the majority of monastics in the assembly?

Suppose a monastic participates in the recital of a code of rules that contains a regulation this monastic hears now for the first time, because it is not part of the code of rules of the *Vinaya* tradition in which this monastic ordained. What behavior should be adopted if the monastic has not kept this particular rule? Is it appropriate for this monastic to ignore this rule, even though the whole idea of participating in the recital of the code of rules is to express one's maintenance of conduct in accordance with the

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<sup>10</sup> For variations among minor rules in the *Prātimokṣa-sūtras* from Gilgit see Emms 2012; on stipulations regarding shortened recital of the code of rules see Anālayo 2022d: 15.

rules that are being recited? Or should the monastic acknowledge a breach of this rule, even though a breach requires in principle that one has first undertaken to observe the rule in question?

Or else suppose a monastic has broken a rule that is part of the code of rules in this monastic's ordination lineage. Participating in the recital of a different code of rules that does not contain this rule, is the monastic still under an obligation to acknowledge this breach to a fellow monastic? If so, how does the fellow monastic accept the acknowledgement of a breach that, from the viewpoint of the fellow monastic, is not a breach at all?

All such questions would have provided excellent occasions for the promulgation of additional regulations, had it been a regular occurrence <sup>[400]</sup> that legal acts were carried out across different ordination traditions. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, no such regulations are found in Indian texts. Moreover, individual *Vinaya* traditions do not even explicitly recognize the existence of other *Vinaya* traditions with different sets of rules.

The ability to afford such ignoring makes it rather improbable that mixing of different *Vinaya* traditions for legal acts was a common occurrence, otherwise the conceit that one's own *Vinaya* tradition is "the *Vinaya*", in the sense of being the only one to be taken explicitly into account, could hardly have been kept up.

This of course does not mean that cross-tradition legal acts never happened at all. The situation on the ground, especially when different Buddhist traditions spread to new areas, might well have led to all kind of idiosyncrasies. But such exceptions to the norm need to be distinguished from what can be assumed with reasonable probability to have been the regular situation in the ancient Indian setting, as far as the evidence at our disposal allows us to judge.

The need to have basically the same rules in order to be able to function as a legal body is fundamental to *Vinaya* law and practice and therefore relevant to evaluating variations between *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* texts.<sup>11</sup> In addition to examining philological and paleographical features, it

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of such variations see von Simson 2000: 2–15 and Wille 2009: 49–51.



can be helpful to keep in mind the function of this type of text as well. An example in case is the Bajaur *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* manuscript studied by Strauch (2014).

In this case, apparently the same scribe used a piece of birch bark to record one version of the *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* on the one side and another on the other side. As noted by Strauch (2014: 824), the overall impression is that “the scribe conducted a comparative analysis <sup>[401]</sup> of both versions.” Given that according to Strauch (2014: 821) “both versions follow different orthographical conventions and represent phonologically distinct versions,” it seems fair to assume that dearth of writing material led to reuse and explains the current state of the manuscript.

This is a phenomenon well-known from other Gāndhārī manuscripts, where at times different texts are written on the same piece of birch bark.<sup>12</sup> Once “manuscripts with blank verso sides were recycled by later scribes who used them to record other texts, unrelated to the original one on the recto,” as observed by Salomon (2018: 81), it would not be surprising if the same procedure was adopted by the scribe of the fragment in question. In other words, finding two different texts on the two sides of a manuscript might only reflect the constraints of the medium, in terms of dearth of writing material, and need not imply that these two texts were actually employed in the same oral performance by the same reciters.<sup>13</sup> <sup>[402]</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the combination of *Dharmapada* verses with *pūrvayoga* texts, written down by different scribes using the same manuscript, studied by Lenz 2003.

<sup>13</sup> The same holds in my view for an error of omission that apparently occurred during writing, where according to Strauch 2014: 824 “the scribe noticed this blunder. But instead of inserting the missing text where it was missing, he inserted it into the parallel rule on the obverse, probably mainly due to the fact that there was sufficient space on the top of the manuscript.” The procedure adopted by the scribe gives the impression that the manuscript was meant for personal study and not to serve as the basis for the *uposatha* ceremony. Such insertion in the ‘wrong’ place could have been motivated by a lack of writing space and hardly justifies the query by Strauch 2014: 825: “does this also mean that the monastic community had changed its school affiliation?” From a legal viewpoint, this would require a re-ordination of all of its members, a rather improbable scenario.

Whatever may be the last word on the significance of this intriguing manuscript, its textual idiosyncrasies do not imply that it can be suspected that “mainly the writing down of these texts paved the ground for a harmonized and coherent *Prātimokṣasūtra* text tradition within one school,” *pace* Strauch (2014: 820). It seems to me that such a suggestion underestimates the significance of oral tradition and the need for the members of a monastic community to avail themselves of a coherent *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* during the centuries that preceded the writing down of the texts.

### *Vinaya* and *Āgama* Texts

The function and purposes of group recitation is one of several features shared by *Vinaya* and *Āgama* texts. These cannot be completely separated from each other, simply because they were transmitted by the same body of monastic reciters. Monastic ordination lineages, *nikāyas*, naturally stand in a close relationship to oral transmission lineages. In fact, different ordination lineages quite probably came into existence due to the accumulation of regional variations during the oral transmission of the *Vinaya* texts.<sup>14</sup> Once such variations had built up sufficiently to reach a critical mass, so to say, in the sense that a few minor ‘corrections’ were no longer sufficient to enable group recitation, different <sup>[403]</sup> recitation lineages and therewith different ordination lineages would have come into existence.

Needless to say, the manifestation of variations is not a one-time event, but something that must have kept occurring during successive stages of oral transmission. Hence, to some degree such variations can be expected to have manifested continuously even within a particular ordination lineage, once this had formed. These would not have conflicted with group recitation as long as they occurred only regionally. This would help to explain differences among *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* fragments apparently pertaining to the same *nikāya*.

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<sup>14</sup> Wynne 2008 and Sasaki 2018 discuss the impact of regional differentiation on the formation of Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda *Vinayas*. Both keep speaking of “sects”, however, which leaves me with the impression that the implications of the clarification proposed by Bechert 1982 have not yet been fully taken on board.

Once distinct ordination lineages had come into being, differences between their respective corpora of orally transmitted texts would have tended to increase, due to a substantial diminishing of opportunities for ‘correction’ during group recital. Reciters ordained in a particular *nikāya* will perform the recitation of the *pātimokkha/prātimokṣa* with their peers and thereby naturally be prone to do the same also for other texts. In this way, distinct monastic ordination lineages are likely to be related to different oral transmission lineages.

Of course, this does not result in a rigid and impenetrable separation of transmission lineages according to *Vinaya* ordination. Such is hardly possible, given the fluidity of oral transmission. In fact, the whole question of distinguishing between Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda is not meant to promote the idea of a watertight distinction between two exclusive entities. It is more about using such terms as orientation points for recognizing different currents of oral transmission.

It also does not mean that monastics of one *Vinaya* tradition might not at times have approached a famous teacher ordained in a different *Vinaya* tradition to receive Dharma teachings. But it does imply general trends of collections of texts to be orally transmitted by groups of reciters who belong to the same ordination tradition.<sup>[404]</sup>

Understood in this way, the so-called ‘school-affiliation’ of *Āgama* texts, besides not just originating from doctrinal dissents pertaining to ‘sects’, is perhaps best viewed as the somewhat accidental result of transmission lineages forming themselves regionally and along the lines of ordination lineages.

Notably, concern with the ‘school-affiliation’ of *Āgama* texts is, to the best of my knowledge, not attested for the period of their oral transmission.<sup>15</sup> From the viewpoint of oral transmission, it is hardly surprising that

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<sup>15</sup> The same pattern can also be seen in the case of *Vinaya* manuscripts. As noted by Skilling 2010: 9, “when we describe the Sanskrit *vinaya* recovered from Gilgit as ‘the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya*’, or the Turfan manuscripts as ‘Sarvāstivādin’, we should remember that we are voicing hypotheses. The manuscripts do not identify themselves ... only certain translations into Tibetan or Chinese specify the school of the text.”

*Āgama* texts are not identified by way of the *nikāya* of their reciters. The oral performance of an *Āgama* text will begin with the recitation of the introductory formula “thus have I heard.”<sup>16</sup> The implicit claim is that the oral recitation is based on a text that has been passed on “thus”, that is, in exactly the way it is presently being recited, by successive generations of reciters. In this way, the oral performance begins with an assurance that what is about to be recited is an accurate reflection of what the Buddha (or his chief disciples) originally said.

In light of this core textual dimension, it would to some degree become self-defeating if the reciters were to acknowledge explicitly that the text is much rather the product of a particular *nikāya*. It would run counter to the whole thrust of the oral performance of a text “thus heard” (rather than “thus revised”), as the reciters would in this way divest themselves of the advantage derived <sup>[405]</sup> from the strategies of authentication adopted by all of their predecessors.

A tendency not to perceive *Āgamas* in terms of *nikāya* affiliation extends even to the early centuries of translation activities in China. The circumstance that the *Dīrgha-āgama* brought by Fǎxiǎn (法顯) from Sri Lanka was not translated into Chinese is quite probably due to a lack of awareness on the side of the Chinese that this collection differed substantially—precisely because of having been transmitted by reciters of a different *nikāya*—from the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* that had already been translated into Chinese (Anālayo 2010c: 69–74).

Although the four *Āgamas* presently included in the Chinese canon stem from distinct lineages of reciters, these *Āgama* translations have generally been considered by Chinese Buddhists to be a homogeneous textual set, an idea already expressed by Dào’ān (道安) as early as the fourth century (Zacchetti 2016: 82f). This demonstrates the traditional perception of the *Āgamas* as a textual corpus independent of ‘school affiliation’, not only in India but also in China.

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<sup>16</sup> On the significance of this phrase and its relation to what comes next see below p. 104 note 17.

The significance of a lack of explicit recognition of *nikāya* affiliation of an *Āgama* could be illustrated with the example of a lack of public disclosure of hidden motivations by someone in a political leadership position, which does not imply that such motivations never influence the actual performance. Similarly, due to the nature of oral transmission, it seems reasonable to assume that *nikāya* affiliation had an impact on the oral performance and hence the transmission of *Āgama* texts, even though this is not publicly disclosed.

Closer inspection shows in fact a considerable degree of interrelation between *Vinaya* and *Āgama* texts. This is evident, for example, in the fact that *Āgama* texts regularly contain *Vinaya*-related material (Anālayo 2014h: 27–30), and that some *Vinayas* in turn provide cross-references to *sūtras* (Yao 2020). [406]

### Mūlasarvāstivāda Āgamas

In an article dedicated to the *Sūtrapīṭaka* of the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins, de Jong (1968/1979) notes a difference between the way *sūtra* quotations are given in the Chinese and Sanskrit Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* and how they appear in their Tibetan counterpart. Whereas the Chinese and Sanskrit versions provide cross-references, the Tibetan text incorporates the respective text. This led him to the idea that the reciters of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* drew on the *Āgama* collections of the Sarvāstivādins, since if the Mūlasarvāstivādins had their own collections, there would have been no need for the texts at some time to become absorbed into the *Vinaya*.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, the very existence of Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* suggests that the Mūlasarvāstivādins must have had access to their own *Āgama* collections. Whether such access was to their own independent transmission or to collections copied from the Sarvāstivādins, it seems improbable that lack of availability motivated the absorption of *sūtra* material into the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. In fact, the *Dharmacakrapravartana-sūtra* is

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<sup>17</sup> After surveying such cases, de Jong 1968/1979: 235 reasons that “cet exemple suggère que les *Āgama* auxquels le *Vinaya* des Mūlasarvāstivādin renvoie faisaient partie du *Sūtrapīṭaka* des Sarvāstivādin. Probablement ces *Āgama* n'auraient pas été absorbés par le *Vinaya* des Mūlasarvāstivādin si ces derniers avaient possédé leur propre *Sūtrapīṭaka*.”

found more than once in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (Anālayo 2015l: 348f),<sup>18</sup> and that holds for its Chinese as well as its Tibetan versions. This could hardly have been motivated by the lack of availability of the respective *Āgama* collection only.<sup>[407]</sup>

Instead, the absorption of *sūtra* material seems part of a general trend of textual growth of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* by incorporating a range of narrative material, a development probably best considered on a par with the example provided by the *Mahāvastu* as quite definitely a ‘*Vinaya*’ text (Tournier 2012).

Actually, de Jong (1968/1979) presents his suggestion only as a supposition that is open to revision if there is evidence for a different *Sūtrapīṭaka* among Mūlasarvāstivādins.<sup>19</sup> To such evidence I turn next.

### The Parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*

Based on a comparative study of the Chinese and Tibetan parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* (MN 44) and several other textual comparisons, Schmithausen (1987: 379) concludes that, contrary to the position taken by de Jong (1968/1979):

the Mūlasarvāstivādins not only had a Vinayapīṭaka but also a Sūtra- and a Kṣudrakapīṭaka peculiar to them and different not only from those of the Central Asian Sarvāstivādins but also from those of the Indian Vaibhāṣikas.

The existence of a distinctly Mūlasarvāstivāda *Āgama* transmission can be conveniently illustrated by placing side by side the two parallels to the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, found in the *Madhyama-āgama* (MĀ 210) and in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (Up 1005).<sup>[408]</sup> In the previous chapter I provided such detailed comparison, and the main points emerging

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<sup>18</sup> See also the discussion in Yao 2020: 460–463.

<sup>19</sup> de Jong 1968/1979: 231: “on peut supposer que les Mūlasarvāstivādin aient adopté le *Sūtrapīṭaka* des Sarvāstivādin tant que l’on ne dispose pas de témoignages qui démontrent l’existence d’un *Sūtrapīṭaka* différent chez les Mūlasarvāstivādin.”

from that study are that, from a structural viewpoint, the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse and the quotation in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* agree closely, whereas the *Cūḷavedalla-sutta* proceeds quite differently. This points to a close relationship between the former two.

Nevertheless, leaving aside a few cases of apparent textual displacement within the respective discourse, several substantial differences can also be identified between the *Madhyama-āgama* version and the discourse quotation in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*. Notably, [409] in a number of such cases the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* is closer to the Pāli version. The differences that emerge in this way corroborate the observation by Skilling (2002: 375) that

the Chinese *Madhyamāgama* and the *Madhyamāgama* cited by Śamathadeva in his *Upāyikā-ṭīkā* on the *Abhidharmakośa* are intimately related but differ, sometimes significantly, in order of texts, in contents, and titles.

### The *Madhyama-āgama* and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*

By way of complementing what emerges from a comparison between the *Madhyama-āgama* and discourse quotations in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, in what follows I briefly survey a few cases where relevant discourse quotations are instead found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. [410]

Differences between *Madhyama-āgama* discourses and their parallels in quotations in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* can take a variety of forms. One possibility manifests in a different title. The *Bhaiṣajyavastu* gives a reference to the *Velāṃa-sūtra* found in the *Brāhmaṇa-nipāta*.<sup>20</sup> The corresponding discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* extant in Chinese is indeed found in its section on Brahmins but has instead the title "Discourse to Sudatta".<sup>21</sup> Although the relevant Pāli parallel occurs rather among the Nines of the

<sup>20</sup> [21] Dutt 1984: 98,15: *velāmasūtre madhyamāgame brāhmaṇanipāte*.

<sup>21</sup> [22] MĀ 155 at T I 677a8: 梵志品須達多經 (the correspondence of this and the subsequently mentioned *Madhyama-āgama* discourse to references in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* has already been noted by Waldschmidt 1980a: 142).

*Āṅuttara-nikāya*, its title is *Velāma-sutta*,<sup>22</sup> corresponding to the title given in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*.

Another such reference in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* speaks of the *Māndhātṛ-sūtra* in the *Rājasamyuktaka-nipāta*.<sup>23</sup> The counterpart in the section of the *Madhyama-āgama* on kings has the title “Discourse on the Four Continents”.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the Pāli parallel occurs in the *Jātaka* collection and is entitled the *Mandhātu-jātaka*.<sup>25</sup>

Another type of difference concerns narrative details. According to the *Dhammacetiya-sutta* and its parallel in the *Kṣudraka-vastu*, on a certain occasion the two courtiers of King Pasenadi spent part of the night in discussion,<sup>26</sup> whereas according to the *Madhyama-āgama* [411] version they rather sat in silent meditation.<sup>27</sup> The same Pāli discourse and its *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* parallel report that on another occasion a disciple was coughing during a talk given by the Buddha,<sup>28</sup> whereas in the *Madhyama-āgama* version this disciple had rather fallen asleep and was snoring.<sup>29</sup>

More substantial differences emerge in the case of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, which in agreement with the *Saṅghabheda-vastu* reports the future Buddha setting out to emulate his two teachers and attain the immaterial spheres that formed the basis of their teaching. According to both versions, he felt confident in doing so since he had the same five spiritual faculties, *indriya*, that they also possessed.<sup>30</sup> The *Madhyama-āgama* version, however,

<sup>22</sup> [23] In the PTS edition, the title of the discourse AN 9.20 is reflected in the *uddāna* at AN IV 396,6; the Burmese and Ceylonese editions have the title as a header for the discourse.

<sup>23</sup> [24] Dutt 1984: 93,10: *māndhātṛsūtraṃ madhyamāgame rājasamyuktakanipāte*.

<sup>24</sup> [25] MĀ 60 at T I 494b9: 王相應品四洲經.

<sup>25</sup> [26] Jā 258 at Jā II 310,20.

<sup>26</sup> [27] MN 89 at MN II 124,5 and T 1451 at T XXIV 238b10, with the Tibetan counterpart in D 6 *tha* 85b6 or P 1035 *de* 82b2.

<sup>27</sup> [28] MĀ 213 at T I 797b5.

<sup>28</sup> [29] MN 89 at MN II 122,12 and T 1451 at T XXIV 238a26, with the Tibetan counterpart in D 6 *tha* 85a5 or P 1035 *de* 82a2 (according to which the disciple also sneezed).

<sup>29</sup> [30] MĀ 213 at T I 797a18.

<sup>30</sup> [31] MN 26 at MN I 164,16 and Gnoli 1977: 97,11.



speaks of only three spiritual faculties, omitting from the count the faculties of mindfulness and concentration.<sup>31</sup> Although one might be inclined to consider this a simple transmission or even translation error, since mindfulness and concentration are certainly required for achieving such lofty attainments, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* also mentions only these three spiritual faculties.<sup>32</sup> [412]

A still more substantial difference emerges in relation to the well-known intervention of Brahmā to convince the recently awakened Buddha to teach his discovery of the path to liberation to others. Reported in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and the corresponding section of the *Saṅghabheda-vastu*, the entire episode is absent from the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel.<sup>33</sup> In this case, too, the presentation in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse does not appear to be simply the result of a loss of text, as an individual translation parallel to the *Mahāvadāna-sutta*, which reports the same intervention in the case of a previous Buddha, also does not have the entire episode.<sup>34</sup>

The above cases are just a few examples selected somewhat at random, insufficient to draw definite conclusions. Moreover, when evaluating such differences, it needs to be kept in mind that at times the *Madhyama-āgama* also disagrees with the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*; in fact, even the *Majjhima-nikāya* can disagree with the Theravāda *Vinaya* (Anālayo 2017e). Some degree of variation is only natural in view of the oral nature of these texts.

Nevertheless, at some point the amount of variation reaches a critical mass. This does not yet seem to be the case for the *Madhyama-āgama* and the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (nor of course for the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the Theravāda *Vinaya*). But the divergences between the *Madhyama-āgama*

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<sup>31</sup> [32] MĀ 204 at T I 776b15; see also Bronkhorst 1993/2000: 75.

<sup>32</sup> [33] T 1428 at T XXII 780b11, a reference that involves a translation error, as here the future Buddha reflects that his teachers are *bereft* of the three spiritual faculties. Bareau 1963: 18 reasons that the translator probably misunderstood a reference to “not only” (*na kho*) the teacher having these qualities as implying that the teacher did not have them, 無有.

<sup>33</sup> [34] MN 26 at MN I 168,13 and Gnoli 1977: 128,30.

<sup>34</sup> [35] T 3 at T I 156c14, parallel to DN 14 at DN II 36,22. Notably, in this case the Sanskrit fragment parallel also has not preserved this episode, see Waldschmidt 1956: 148 note 2.

and the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts surveyed here do appear to reach such a critical mass, and it seems fair to conclude that their respective transmission lineages were distinct.

Proposing that there is therefore a heuristic value in making such a distinction is not meant to encourage artificial divisions between <sup>[413]</sup> entirely separate entities or to promote obsession with the identification of ‘school affiliations’. In other words, the desirability of avoiding the positing of ‘the Mūlasarvāstivāda school’ (let alone ‘sect’) in total contrast to ‘the Sarvāstivāda school’ need not prevent us from pragmatically distinguishing between ‘a’ Mūlasarvāstivāda lineage of oral transmission and ‘a’ Sarvāstivāda lineage of oral transmission.

### Theravāda *Nikāya* and Theravāda Oral Transmission

The lack of total correspondence between the *Majjhima-nikāya* and the Theravāda *Vinaya* leads me to a problem similar to some extent to the topic of ‘Mūlasarvāstivāda’ versus ‘Sarvāstivāda’, namely the academic problematization of the term Theravāda.<sup>35</sup> It seems to me that at times such problematization can involve the same conflation of a ‘sect’ as a political or ideological body with the existence of a monastic ordination lineage, *nikāya*, and its relation to an oral transmission lineage.

The discourse collections extant in Pāli have been transmitted by Theravāda reciters. Yet, they are not the product of the Theravāda ‘sect’, as there are number of differences, some quite substantial, between Theravāda doctrine and the position taken in the Pāli discourses. This does not mean that the term Theravāda can no longer be used to distinguish the discourses found in the *Dīgha-nikāya*, for example, from those found in the *Dīrgha-āgama* extant in Chinese translation (T 1). The former has been transmitted by monastic reciters who were ordained according to Theravāda law and the latter by monastic reciters who were ordained according to Dharmaguptaka law. Hence there is heuristic value in employing these two terms <sup>[414]</sup> to reflect the difference in the corresponding ordination lineages.

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<sup>35</sup> <sup>[36]</sup> On the problematization of the term ‘Theravāda’ see Anālayo 2013e and below p. 459ff.

In the case of the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Dīrgha-āgama*, the difference between the two collections extant now also involves languages. Yet, this is only an accidental result of the vagaries of transmission and less apt for drawing clear distinctions. It would hardly be helpful to identify a particular *Āgama* only by reference to the language in which it has been preserved.

The reciters of the *Dīrgha-āgama* extant in Chinese appear to belong to the same transmission lineage, broadly speaking, as the reciters of the *Vinaya* in Four Sections (T 1428) and some of the material extant in Gāndhārī fragments.<sup>36</sup> Here, again, speaking of the same transmission lineage does not imply complete correspondence, but only that, alongside minor differences that naturally occur even within a particular lineage of reciters (Anālayo 2017e: 58–63), there is in general a fair degree of correspondence.

Given that here we have different languages for what appear to be testimonies of basically the same transmission lineage, and that the Chinese language in which the *Dīrgha-āgama* is now extant is shared with other *Āgamas* which clearly stem from different transmission lineages, it becomes clear that the use of the name of a language does not furnish an appropriate means of identification. Nor would it be possible to refer to these texts always by way of the name of a particular location, something that is more feasible in the case of manuscripts whose provenance is known. For this reason, it seems to me meaningful to refer to the body of texts that comprises the *Dīrgha-āgama*, the *Vinaya* in Four Sections, and some Gāndhārī fragments as Dharma-guptaka, in the sense of an oral transmission lineage. [415]

### The *Samyukta-āgama* and Sri Lanka

What emerges on considering the Theravāda *Dīgha-nikāya* and the Dharma-guptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* can in turn be applied to the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Samyukta-āgama*. As shown by Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā (2020b), the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) corresponds closely to *sūtra* quotations in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* and in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. Hence it is indeed meaningful to refer to this *Samyukta-āgama* as representative

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<sup>36</sup> [37] See Salomon 1999: 166–178, Cox 2014: 36–39, and Salomon 2014: 13.

of a Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineage, in contrast to the *Madhyama-āgama* as representative of a Sarvāstivāda transmission lineage.<sup>37</sup> I contend that the usage of such terminology is justified by the circumstance that the respective monastic reciter lineages can be distinguished based on the *Vinaya* used for their ordination.

In the case of the *Samyukta-āgama*, the employment of the designation Mūlasarvāstivāda might appear questionable since the original used for translation into Chinese seems to have been acquired by Fāxiǎn in Sri Lanka.<sup>38</sup> Glass (2010) offers several significant arguments in favor of assuming that his manuscript was indeed the original used for the *Samyukta-āgama* translation now extant as Taishō no. 99. This translation involved Guṇabhadra

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<sup>37</sup> Bucknell 2022: 62 note 35 instead identifies the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) as belonging to a Sarvāstivāda line of transmission, based on the following argument: “Whether SA belongs to the Sarvāstivāda or the Mūla-Sarvāstivāda can be determined by comparing versions of the ‘*Dhamma*-wheel-turning Discourse’, specifically the section of it that deals with each of the four noble truths in three ways, making a total of twelve modes. In the SA version of this discourse the phrase ‘has been seen’ (or some slight variant thereof) is included in modes 5 to 12, though it properly belongs only to mode 9. The very same anomaly is found in the version preserved in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* but not in that of the Mūla-Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* or in any other version. This indicates that SA belongs to the Sarvāstivāda.” First of all, it is not reasonable to draw conclusions regarding school affiliation based on a single passage. Now, the relevant discourse SĀ 379 at T II 103c19 does indeed use 已知 for modes 5 to 12, which could be rendered as “has been known” or “has been understood”; in contrast, “has been seen” would more appropriately render 已見. Together with the fact that the whole argument is presented without a specific reference to the source texts, this gives me the impression that it may have been based on memory rather than on an actual consultation of the relevant texts. In fact, the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* differs from SĀ 379, as T 1435 at T XXIII 448c1 proceeds from using 知已 for mode 9 to using instead 斷已, 證已, and 修已 for modes 10 to 12 respectively, in keeping with the different tasks required by each truth; for a translation of both versions see Anālayo 2012b. The anyway in itself insufficient argument for identifying the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) as belonging to a Sarvāstivāda line of transmission is unconvincing.

<sup>38</sup> T 2034 at XLIX 91a24 reports that the *Samyukta-āgama* translated by Guṇabhadra and Bāoyún was the text that had been brought by Fāxiǎn. Although this catalogue is known for being in general rather unreliable, according to de Jong 1981: 108 “there is no valid reason to doubt the information” given in this work regarding the translation of T 99.

in the role of reading out the text and Bǎoyún (寶雲) as the translator. Glass points out that <sup>[416]</sup> Bǎoyún was a travel companion of Fǎxiǎn; the two had experienced much hardship together and became close friends. In fact, after Fǎxiǎn's return to China, the two lived together at the same temple. During this time, Bǎoyún would have had access to Fǎxiǎn's manuscripts. Moreover, there was a concerted effort to translate the manuscripts that Fǎxiǎn had brought back to China. By the time Guṇabhadra arrived in China, only three of these manuscripts had not yet been translated, one of them being the *Samyukta-āgama*. Glass (2010: 197) explains:

When Guṇabhadra arrived in Jiànkāng, the *Samyuktāgama* would have been the most important work in the collection of Fǎxiǎn's manuscripts that had not yet been translated. As shown above, Bǎoyún would have had access to this manuscript, and further, he may well have had an interest in seeing this manuscript translated out of a sense of loyalty to his former travelling companion and colleague. It is easy to imagine that Bǎoyún could have persuaded Guṇabhadra, a man eighteen years his junior, to recite the *Samyuktāgama* for him to translate when the latter had only just arrived from India.

In considering how a Mūlasarvāstivāda text could stem from Sri Lanka, it seems that the actual presence of Mūlasarvāstivāda monastics in Sri Lanka would not be an indispensable condition for the library of the Abhayagiri monastery to have manuscripts of Mūlasarvāstivāda *Āgamas* (or *Vinaya* for that matter). Due to the good contacts between the Abhayagiri monastery and India, such manuscripts could have been brought from India for the sake of study and consultation and then been kept in the monastic library.

Moreover, there is some evidence, although from later times, for the actual presence of Mūlasarvāstivāda monastics in Sri Lanka. <sup>[417]</sup> This is the Jetavanārāma inscription, which documents that monastics from four *Nikāyas* had taken up residence in Sri Lanka. According to Bechert (1998: 3),<sup>39</sup> it is likely that this inscription refers to

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<sup>39</sup> See also Gunawardana 1966 and 1979: 253, Hazra 1982/1981: 54, and Gethin 2012: 53f.

the very four *nikāyas* which prevailed in mainland India at that period, viz. the Mūlasarvāstivādins, the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Sammatīyas and the Sthaviras.

The Jetavanārāma inscription is dated on paleographic grounds to the ninth century (de Zilva Wickremasinghe 1904–1912: 1f), thus it is later than Fāxiǎn's time. Testifying to an earlier time, however, is an inscription from Bodhgayā, issued by the Sinhalese monk Mahānāman and dated to the second half of the sixth century. According to Tournier (2014: 24–26), this inscription points to a community of Sinhalese *Samyukta-āgama* transmitters in Bodhgayā who were in contact with Sarvāstivāda or Mūlasarvāstivāda communities in their homeland as well as in Magadha. The inscription suggests an active transmission of a Sarvāstivāda or Mūlasarvāstivāda *Samyukta-āgama* in Sri Lanka already in the sixth century. This would make it seem less improbable that Fāxiǎn could indeed have acquired a Mūlasarvāstivāda *Samyukta-āgama* in Sri Lanka.

## Conclusion

The expression “Mūlasarvāstivāda sect” is indeed problematic, but the problem appears to be not just the first, but more particularly the second of the two terms: the idea of a “sect”. Hence, a solution to the justified misgivings expressed by Hartmann (2020) and others is in my <sup>[418]</sup> view not achieved by employing expressions like “(Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda” (earlier used by myself as well) or by dropping the term completely and replacing it with “Sarvāstivāda”. The suggestion of such replacement risks becoming a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. As I hope to have shown in the foregoing, the term Mūlasarvāstivāda can serve a purpose as a designation for a specific, identifiable *Āgama* lineage of textual transmission.

I contend that the solution lies in simply clarifying in what sense the term is used, rather than discarding the term itself. From a doctrinal viewpoint, Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin are indeed closely similar. From a legal viewpoint, however, they differ in substantial ways, as they refer to distinct *Vinayas* and hence to different ordination lineages.

Due to the nature of oral tradition, different ordination lineages tend to encourage the formation of separate communities of reciters and thus distinct lineages of textual transmission (which at times might coincide with the regional use of certain conventions in diction and stock phrases). These lineages in turn also impact the transmission of *Āgama* texts. For this reason, it is meaningful to refer to *Āgama* texts by the name of the *nikāya* in which the respective reciters appear to have been ordained and within whose institutional container the recitation and transmission of the texts would have predominantly, though not exclusively, taken place.

## V

### The Dynamics of Abbreviation (1)

In this chapter I investigate the practice of textual contraction and expansion among the discourses found in the section on the aggregates, the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* extant in Chinese translation as entry no. 99 in the Taishō edition. I first survey the types of abbreviation found in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, then calculate the amount of text that is only represented by such abbreviations, and then relate my results to the topic of the early Buddhist oral tradition. In the next two chapters, I continue studying the topic of abbreviation but in relation to the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Ekottarika-āgama*, respectively.

The present research takes its inspiration from a remark made by Skilling (2013: 122 note 17), to the effect that:

The immense importance of the “*peyāla* principle”, which entails both contraction and expansion, for the understanding of Buddhist literature has unfortunately scarcely been recognized. We could learn a lot by analyzing the many uses of *peyāla* (Pali *peyyāla*).

This remark was followed a few years later by a survey of the topic “repetition and the *peyāla* principle”, which ends by noting that a paper studying this feature “is called for, but I leave that for someone else” (Skilling 2017: 292 note 52).

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In recognition of the pertinence of his remarks, it seemed fitting to me to follow up this suggestion and try to take at least a modest step in the direction of exploring the practice of textual abbreviation and expansion (*peyyāla/peyāla*) in the way this is evident in the *Samyukta-āgama* extant in Chinese translation.<sup>1</sup> Since a study of the whole *Samyukta-āgama* collection from this viewpoint would probably require a monograph, rather than being possible within the confines of the present chapter, the need arises to choose just one *saṃyukta*. Here the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, which collects teachings on the five aggregates, recommends itself as it is the only section of the *Samyukta-āgama* for which *uddānas* have been <sup>[57]</sup> preserved. For the present type of research, the information that can be gathered from such summary verses, listing the titles or contents of the discourses of a subsection of the collection, can be quite helpful.<sup>2</sup>

The same choice also appears apposite from a doctrinal perspective, in so far as, out of the different topics that serve as the scaffolding for the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Samyutta-nikāya* alike, the five aggregates illustrate an aspect of the topic at hand. This is because the implications of this scheme, in particular of the fourth aggregate, have undergone a process of expansion, which exemplifies features that also relate to the use of textual expansion.

In its usage in the early discourses, the analysis into five aggregates affected by clinging serves to highlight the main aspects of individual experience to which one is prone to cling. Regarding the fourth aggregate, *saṅkhāras/saṃskāras*, a discourse in the *Samyukta-āgama* and its parallel in the *Samyutta-nikāya* agree that this particular aggregate stands for “volition”, *cetanā*, in relation to any of the six sense-doors.<sup>3</sup> The employment of a different term, explaining *saṅkhāras/saṃskāras* with the help of the term *cetanā*, differs from the definition given for the other four aggregates, where each time the term used to refer to the aggregate recurs in the actual definition.

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<sup>1</sup> On the term *peyyāla/peyyāla* see Gethin 2007: 383f and on the same principle in Gāndhārī manuscripts see Lenz 2003: 85–91 and Salomon 2011: 182f.

<sup>2</sup> On *uddānas* see Allon and Silverlock 2017: 7–11. Regarding the distinction between such summary verses and colophons, von Hinüber 2017: 49 explains that *uddānas* “are relics of the oral text transmission, while true colophons belong to the written tradition.”

<sup>3</sup> SĀ 41 at T II 9c8 and SN 22.56 at SN III 60,25.

The term *cetanā* in turn can occur in the company of other near-synonyms. An example is a simile that serves to illustrate the nature of volition/intention as one of the four nutriments. The simile depicts how someone about to fall into, or even to be thrown into, a pit full of blazing coals would have the wish to get away.<sup>4</sup> The *Samyukta-āgama* [58] version of this simile employs the two terms “volition” (思) and “wish” or “aspiration” (願) to describe this person’s mental condition; the *Samyutta-nikāya* parallel achieves the same aim with the help of three terms, which in addition to “volition”, *cetanā*, are “wish”, *patthanā*, and “aspiration”, *paṇidhi*.

The same three recur together with *saṅkhāra* as a set of four terms with similar implications in a discourse in the *Ānguttara-nikāya* that describes the harmful results of wrong view. The repercussions of upholding wrong view are such that, whatever one’s “volition”, *cetanā*, “wish”, *patthanā*, “aspiration”, *paṇidhi*, and “mental formation”, *saṅkhāra*, it will only conduce to harm.<sup>5</sup> A Sanskrit fragment parallel mentions the same four terms in the same sequence.<sup>6</sup> Another occurrence of this statement with the same set of four expressions, found in a different section of the *Ānguttara-nikāya*, has a counterpart in the *Samyukta-āgama* in the four terms 思, 欲, 願, and 為, which seem to correspond well to the four Pāli terms.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of this brief excursion has been to show how *saṅkhāra* via *cetanā* to *patthanā* and *paṇidhi* can lead to an accumulation [59] of near-synonyms that serve to express similar nuances in the repetitive manner

<sup>4</sup> SĀ 373 at T II 102c18 and SN 12.63 at SN II 99,32.

<sup>5</sup> AN 1.7.9 at AN I 32,8.

<sup>6</sup> Tripāṭhi 1995: 156,7 (§ 17.51): *yā cetanā yā prārthanā yaḥ praṇidhir ye ca saṃskārās*. Another parallel, EĀ 17.5 at T II 583a27, reads: 意行, 所趣, 所念及諸惡行. I hesitate to draw conclusions based on this particular formulation, given the complexity of the translation of the *Ekottarika-āgama* and its general trend towards irregularity. This trend is evident in the present case in the fact that, what should be the same statement a few lines earlier at T II 583a20 only reads 所念, 所趣及餘諸行, a formulation also found in the next discourse, EĀ 17.6 at T II 583b4+10, for the corresponding case of right view. On irregularities in the translation terminology of the *Ekottarika-āgama* see also Radich 2017: 25f.

<sup>7</sup> AN 10.104 at AN V 212,26 and SĀ 787 at T II 204 a26.

that is so characteristic of early Buddhist discourse. As explained by Allon (1997: 191),

A common feature of the prose portions of Pāli canonical sutta texts is the proliferation of similar word elements and units of meaning to form sequences or ‘strings’. We frequently encounter sequences of two, three or more adjectives or adjectival units qualifying the same noun, a number of nouns all acting as the subject of the same sentence or as the object of the same verb. We encounter sequences of adverbs modifying the same verb, or a number of parallel verbs occurring together in the same sentence, and so on.

In the context of the fourth aggregate, the tendency to string together near-synonyms could have provided a starting point for a trend to include increasing numbers of other mental factors or qualities under the same header of *saṅkhāras/saṃskāras*. As a final result, the fourth aggregate became an umbrella category that comprises anything that is not explicitly covered by the other aggregates.<sup>8</sup> [60]

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<sup>8</sup> An example in case is Dhs 18,10, which concludes a long list of various factors that, from its viewpoint, pertain to the fourth aggregate by stating that, whatever other immaterial states there are, apart from the aggregates of feeling tone, perception, and consciousness, all these are to be included in the *saṅkhāra*-aggregate. Bodhi 2000: 45 comments that with “the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and the commentaries the *saṅkhārakkhandha* further serves as an umbrella category for classifying all mental concomitants of consciousness apart from feeling tone and perception. It thus comes to include all wholesome, unwholesome, and variable mental factors mentioned but not formally classified among the aggregates in the Sutta Piṭaka.” Karunaratne 1988: 118 reasons that, given that “orthodoxy prevented any addition to the number of *khandhas*”, the exegetical tradition “found an ingenious way to satisfy their own needs as well as the demands of orthodoxy. The restrictive conative signification of *saṅkhāra* was widened to include all mental factors and accordingly *saṅkhārakkhandha* was treated anew and transformed into the most spacious and accommodating category among the *khandhas*.” Rhys Davids 1936/1978: 324 speaks of the need “to find some pigeonhole wherein to store the increasing number of terms for mental life, taking shape with the growth of mental analysis”. McGovern 1872/1979: 87 notes that in this way a “most convenient dumping ground was found to be *saṃskāra*,

This in turn results to some degree in a shift of perspective for the entire scheme of five aggregates. What originally appears to have served as an analysis of how clinging to a sense of identity takes place, now becomes a map of what an individual is made up of.<sup>9</sup> From singling out chief aspects of the sense of identity, the scheme of five aggregates has evolved into a comprehensive survey that accommodates each and all type of mental factors and qualities. This reflects a drive towards comprehensive coverage that is characteristic of *Abhidharma* analysis and exegesis.<sup>10</sup> [61]

In this way, the fourth aggregate exemplifies a tendency to proliferation of synonyms as a feature of early Buddhist oral transmission and the results to which this can lead. Although the use and deployment of abbreviation is not confined to oral transmission, but similarly impacts manuscript culture and even modern-day printing, the need for its employment and its broad application is a direct effect of the repetitive nature of early Buddhist orality, a feature so evident in the use of strings of synonyms.

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which thus became a weird medley of otherwise unclassified mental factors.” Cox 1995: 68 notes that, since in the case of the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* the same tendency led to “the addition of the non-mental dissociated factors. The inclusion of these dissociated forces within the *saṃskāraskandha* contributed to a certain tension in the meaning of the term *saṃskāra*.” For Sanskrit fragments of the section on the *cittaviprayuktāḥ saṃskārāḥ* in the *Pañcavastuka* see Chung and Fukita 2017: 66–70.

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton 1996: xxiv and xxix concludes that, in its usage in the Pāli discourses, “the analysis of the human being into five *khandhas* is not an analysis of what the human being consists of”; instead, such analysis “is given not in terms of what he or she consists of but in terms of how he or she operates”.

<sup>10</sup> In his study of repetition in Buddhist Sanskrit texts, von Simson 1965: 41 (§ 11.1) considers comprehensive coverage (“Vollständigkeit”) and rhetorical efficacy (“rhetorische Wirksamkeit”) as central driving forces in the construction of series of terms with similar meanings. A shift in function of such formulas from the early discourses to exegetical literature has been identified by von Hinüber 1994b: 27, in that what earlier served to facilitate memory becomes building material for the construction of commentaries, “scheint es nicht mehr das Ziel der Verfasser zu sein, eine mündlich konzipierte Prose durch Formeln dem Gedächtnis leichter einprägsam zu gestalten. Die frühen Kommentare kehren das Prinzip um und nutzen die Reihung von semantisch verwandten Wörtern zur Kommentierung.” On the beginning stages of *Abhidharma* thought as evident in the early discourses see in more detail Anālayo 2014c.

## Types of Abbreviation Found in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*

In what follows I survey instances of the implementation of abbreviation in the way these manifest in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* of the *Saṃyukta-āgama*.<sup>11</sup> I begin, in the present section, by exploring the different types of abbreviation found. Then I attempt to [62] gauge the amount of text involved, and discuss implications of my findings for understanding and assessing the nature of early Buddhist oral transmission.

My survey of types of abbreviation follows the order in which the relevant discourses occur in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*. My presentation corresponds to the reconstructed order of the collection as shown in Table 1 (the numbering of discourses is according to the Taishō edition).

Table 1. Reconstructed Order of the *Skandha-saṃyukta*

Fascicle no.	<i>Skandha-saṃyukta</i> Discourses
Fascicle 1	SĀ 1 to SĀ 32
Fascicle 2	SĀ 256 to SĀ 272
Fascicle 3	SĀ 59 to SĀ 87
Fascicle 4	SĀ 33 to SĀ 58
Fascicle 5	SĀ 103 to SĀ 110

The first discourse in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, SĀ 1, recommends contemplation of impermanence as a way of implementing right insight, which will lead to disenchantment and liberation. The passage for the first aggregate reads as follows:<sup>12</sup>

You should contemplate bodily form as impermanent. One who contemplates like this achieves right insight. One who has right insight arouses disenchantment. One who has disenchantment erad-

<sup>11</sup> A study of abbreviation and expansion in SĀ 139 to SĀ 187, in comparison with their Pāli parallels, has already been undertaken by Paek 1997 (I am indebted to Oskar von Hinüber for drawing my attention to this research).

<sup>12</sup> SĀ 1 at T II 1a7: 當觀色無常。如是觀者，則為正觀；正觀者，則生厭離；厭離者，喜貪盡；喜貪盡者，說心解脫。

icates delight and lust. One who eradicates delight and lust, I say, liberates the mind. [63]

The application of this teaching to each of the five aggregates employs a frequently found type of abbreviation, where the text is only given in full for the first and the last item, whereas the middle items are presented in abbreviated manner. The discourse indicates the need for supplementation in this manner:<sup>13</sup> “In the same way contemplate feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness ... .” Here the expression “in the same way”, 如是, serves as a marker that an abbreviation has taken place. The discourse gives the full formula of the teaching again for consciousness.

SĀ 1 has two Pāli parallels in discourses 12 and 51 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*.<sup>14</sup> Discourse 12 differs in so far as it first qualifies each of the five aggregates as impermanent and only then turns to disenchantment, etc. Discourse 51, however, proceeds similar to SĀ 1 in so far as here the seeing of the bodily form aggregate as impermanent leads on to the description of right view and disenchantment, etc., before taking up the next aggregate.

In the exposition of the ensuing aggregates, the Burmese, PTS, and Siamese editions of discourse 51 abbreviate only the treatment of perception. Thus, in these three editions the text of the contemplation to be carried out is found in full for bodily form and feeling tone, as well as for formations and consciousness. This shows that the pattern mentioned above of giving in full only the first and last member of a list, although frequently found, is not the default approach for such cases. [64] The Ceylonese edition, however, follows the pattern also observed in SĀ 1 of abbreviating the exposition of the three middle aggregates and giving the full treatment only for the first and the last, the aggregates of bodily form and consciousness. Thus, this Pāli edition abbreviates in the same manner as the *Saṃyukta-āgama* discourse, in contrast to the pattern followed in the other Pāli editions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> SĀ 1 at T II 1a9: 如是觀受, 想, 行, 識 ...

<sup>14</sup> SN 22.12 at SN III 21,8 and SN 22.51 at SN III 51,13.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to variations in abbreviation practice between different editions of the

Variations between the Pāli editions can also be found in regard to the degree of abbreviation employed for the standard introduction to the discourse. Discourses in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* give the full formula, showing that, for whatever reason, no need was felt to abbreviate this description. The formula reads as follows:<sup>16</sup> “Thus have I heard.<sup>17</sup> At one time the Buddha was staying at Sāvattthī/Śrāvastī in Jeta’s Grove, the park of Anāthapiṇḍika/Anāthapiṇḍada.” A full version of the introductory formula is found in the first discourse of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, but other discourses in this collection employ abbreviation.<sup>18</sup>

The Pāli parallels to SĀ 1 abbreviate in different ways:

- *evaṃ me sutam, sāvattthiyam tatra kho ...* (B<sup>e</sup>, E<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup> of discourse 12) <sup>[65]</sup>
- *sāvattthi, tatra ’voca ...* (E<sup>e</sup> of discourse 51)
- *sāvattthinidānam ...* (B<sup>e</sup> of discourse 51)
- *sāvattthiyam ...* (C<sup>e</sup> of discourse 12, C<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup> of discourse 51)

The differences between the Pāli editions, together with the fact that the Chinese parallel gives the introduction in full, make it clear that even a bare reference to Sāvattthī is best reckoned as an abbreviation of the standard introductory formula. It is, in my view, out of the question to take such a reference to designate the place where the discourses were collected, as had been suggested by some scholars.<sup>19</sup>

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Pāli canon, the same can be observed when comparing *Samyukta-āgama* discourses transmitted by different groups of reciters within the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition; see Dhamma-dinnā 2020.

<sup>16</sup> SĀ 1 at T II 1a6: 如是我聞：一時佛住舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園。

<sup>17</sup> For a survey of scholarship on this introductory phrase and my reasons for taking the expression “at one time” to refer to the Buddha’s sojourn rather than to the hearing of the discourse see Anālayo 2014b and 2022d: 239 note 395.

<sup>18</sup> SN 1.1 at SN I 1,8: *evaṃ me sutam, ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā ...*

<sup>19</sup> Rhys Davids 1924: xif reasons that “it is possible that the Sāvattthī monastery or monasteries became, at least till the rise of the Asokan empire, the centre where the collecting of Suttas was carried on ... if they are just headed “Sāvattthī” or *Sāvattthī nidānam*, this may not mean that the Buddha’s sojourn at Sāvattthī is to be ‘taken as read’. It may only mean: ‘Sutta from the Sāvattthī collection’ ... when, centuries later, the Suttas, possibly for the

The instructions on the five aggregates in SĀ 1 being completed, the discourse proceeds with the following reference:<sup>20</sup> [66] “Just as with contemplating impermanence, in the same way also for *duḥkha*, emptiness, and not-self.” Here the need for supplementation takes the form “just as”, 如, and “in the same way also”, 亦復如是. The usage of these markers implies that another three distinct discourses should be recited; in fact, the edition by Master Yinshùn (1983: 3) counts each individually, as a result of which SĀ 2 in the Taishō edition becomes the fifth discourse in Yinshùn’s edition.

Two of these three additional discourses have a counterpart in the *Khandha-saṃyutta* in discourses 13 and 14, which take up the same basic type of contemplation found in discourse 12 for impermanence and apply this to *dukkha* and not-self.<sup>21</sup> This is precisely what results from executing the instructions in SĀ 1 for *duḥkha* and not-self.

The lack of a counterpart to the reference to “emptiness” reflects a recurrent pattern in the *Samyukta-āgama* and other texts of related reciter traditions (in the present case, a presentation corresponding to the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse can be found in an Uighur fragment).<sup>22</sup> The pattern is to mention emptiness explicitly, in addition to the three characteristics found regularly in Pāli discourses.<sup>23</sup> This in a way illustrates the principle mentioned

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first time anywhere, were fully written out in Ceylon, it was a natural thing to assume that ‘Sāvatthī’, with or without *nidānaṃ*, meant more than it originally meant.” Woodward 1930: xviif agrees, considering it likely that “the whole collection was stored and systematized in Sāvattihī. We should thus read *nidhāna* (store-house) for *nidāna* (context or connection), and picture to ourselves a sort of college or centre for receiving notes of discourses and fitting them into an arbitrary framework, which is about all we have left to-day ... I conclude that this particular Nikāya was made up at this centre; that some of the discourses happened there; that the words *nidāna* and *nidhāna* have been confused; that *nidāna* refers to the collection of source, and not to the locality, of events.”

<sup>20</sup> SĀ 1 at T II 1a14: 如觀無常, 苦, 空, 非我亦復如是; notably this is found before the standard conclusion reporting the delighted reaction of the listening monastics.

<sup>21</sup> SN 22.13 at SN III 21,19 and SN 22.14 at SN III 21,25.

<sup>22</sup> Fragment A18, Zhāng 1996: 350.

<sup>23</sup> According to de Jong 2000: 177, “a later development is a series of four items, void



earlier of the proliferation of near-synonyms that in the course of time can lead to a change of meaning. Whereas in their general usage in the early Buddhist discourses, emptiness and not-self are near-synonyms, once they occur <sup>[67]</sup> side by side they easily come to be interpreted as conveying different nuances. In the present case, then, with not-self already covered, “emptiness” can be taken to convey that there is also nothing that belongs to a self.<sup>24</sup>

Pāli discourses 13 and 14 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta* employ some degree of abbreviation. In the Ceylonese and PTS editions both discourses abbreviate the insight contemplation given in full for discourse 12 with the help of *pe* (the PTS edition explicitly marks the abbreviation with *pe* only for discourse 13). The Burmese and Siamese editions, however, only abbreviate in the case of discourse 13, but give the insight contemplation again in full for discourse 14.

The use of abbreviation is also attested in a Sanskrit fragment parallel to SĀ 1, which has preserved *vistarena yāv*. The same fragment has also preserved *saṃskārā vijñānam anātm*, which shows the application of the not-self characteristic to the five aggregates.<sup>25</sup>

The next discourse in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* follows the same basic pattern, in that SĀ 2 gives the introductory formula in full and abbreviates the middle three aggregates with the help of “in the same way”, 如是. The exposition completed, it applies the treatment given to impermanence also to *duḥkha*, emptiness, and not-self, this time marked with the help of the similar phrasing “in the same way ... also in the same way”, 如是 ... 亦復如是.<sup>26</sup>

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being added between suffering and not-self.” Baba 2004: 944 concludes that in general “the Northern Āgamas include expressions of emptiness that are more recent than those in the first four Pāli Nikāyas.”

<sup>24</sup> Yinshùn 1985/2017: 209 note 17 refers for this type of understanding to the \**Mahāvibhāṣā*, T 1545 at T XXVII 45b5: 非我行相對治我見, 空行相對治我所見. As pointed out by Yinshùn 1985/2017: 31 and 206, the addition of 空 in a way narrows down the meaning of the very term 空, inasmuch as, once “not-self” is already covered by 非我, the additional 空 only conveys the sense of “not pertaining to a self”, 非我所.

<sup>25</sup> Kha ii 9a2+4, de La Vallée Poussin 1913: 580.

<sup>26</sup> SĀ 2 at T II 1a25 where, similar to the case of SĀ 1, the instruction is found before the standard conclusion reporting the delighted reaction of the listening monastics.

In Yinshùn's edition, however, SĀ 2 corresponds just to a single discourse, based on his observation that the relevant *uddāna* refers <sup>[68]</sup> only to a single discourse.<sup>27</sup> This implies that the formula for expansion (by applying the treatment to *duḥkha*, emptiness, and not-self) must be of relatively late occurrence, as it appears to have come into being only after the *uddāna* had already reached its present form. In fact, the exposition on impermanence itself (SĀ 2) has a parallel in Pāli discourse 52 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*, but the other discourses that would result from implementing the abbreviation and applying the same treatment to the other characteristics have no parallel.

In other words, what could at first sight appear to be a substantial difference between the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Samyutta-nikāya*, resulting in the absence of a Pāli parallel for altogether three discourses extant in Chinese (albeit only in abbreviation), is probably just the result of a rather late addition of an abbreviation formula in the *Samyukta-āgama*. Perhaps a mistaken copying of the instructions found at the end of SĀ 1 has led to the present form of SĀ 2.

The pattern of abbreviating the middle three aggregates recurs in SĀ 3; in this case it also occurs in its Pāli parallel in the Ceylonese and PTS editions.<sup>28</sup> The Burmese and Siamese editions, however, again abbreviate only the case of the third aggregate of perception for the first part of the discourse; only in the second part of the discourse do these editions abbreviate all the middle three aggregates.

A few discourses later in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, an indication that the exposition on impermanence should similarly be applied to *duḥkha*, emptiness, and not-self can be found again, this time in relation to SĀ 8:<sup>29</sup> <sup>[69]</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Yinshùn 1983: 6 note 11. The *uddāna* is found at T II 1c20: 無常及苦, 空, 非我, 正思惟, 無知等四種, 及於色喜樂. This reflects altogether ten discourses, of which the first four (無常及苦, 空, 非我) correspond to SĀ 1, the fifth (正思惟) to SĀ 2, the next four (無知等四種) to SĀ 3 to SĀ 6, and the last (於色喜樂) to SĀ 7.

<sup>28</sup> SĀ 3 at T II 1b1 and SN 22.24 at SN III 27,3.

<sup>29</sup> SĀ 8 at T II 1c29: 如無常, 苦, 空, 非我亦復如是.

“Just as with impermanence, in the same way also for *duḥkha*, emptiness and not-self.” The same pattern is also found in a Sanskrit fragment parallel:<sup>30</sup> *(e)vaṃ duḥkhaṃ śūnyam anātmā*.

The resulting four discourses are recognized in the *uddāna*.<sup>31</sup> These have three parallels in discourses 9 to 11 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*, which cover impermanence, *dukkha*, and not-self.<sup>32</sup> The last is also taken up in a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, with a full version of the discourse extant in Tibetan in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*.<sup>33</sup>

A case of internal abbreviation can be seen in SĀ 15, where a monk approaches the Buddha with the request to be given a teaching for his intended withdrawal into solitude. His original request reads as follows:<sup>34</sup>

It would be well if the Blessed One would now teach me [70] the essentials of the Dharma in brief. On having heard the Dharma, I shall practice alone in a quiet place without negligence. Having practiced without negligence, I shall in turn reflect on that for whose sake a clansman’s son goes forth, shaves off beard and hair, and puts Dharma robes on the body, out of faith going forth from home to homelessness for the unsurpassed supreme holy life, to realize here and now that “birth for me has been eradicated, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, I know that for myself there will be no receiving of further existence.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> SHT IV 30a R7, Sander and Waldschmidt 1980: 78.

<sup>31</sup> T II 3a4: 過去四種說.

<sup>32</sup> SN 22.9 at SN III 19,16, SN 22.10 at SN III 19,35 and SN 22.11 at SN III 20,15.

<sup>33</sup> Pradhan 1967: 464,5 and Up 9001 at D 4094 *nyu* 77b4 or P 5595 *thu* 123a3, translated in Dhammadinnā 2012: 71f.

<sup>34</sup> SĀ 15 at T II 3a8: 善哉, 世尊, 今當為我略說法要。我聞法已, 當獨一靜處, 修不放逸。修不放逸已, 當復思惟, 所以善男子出家, 剃除鬚髮, 身著法服, 信家非家出家, 為究竟無上梵行, 現法作證: 我生已盡, 梵行已立, 所作已作, 自知不受後有。

<sup>35</sup> The Pāli counterpart, SN 22.36 at SN III 36,15, is considerable shorter, reading: “It would be well if the Blessed One would now teach me the Dharma in brief so that, on

Whereas in the Pāli version the Buddha delivers the requested teaching right away, in the *Samyukta-āgama* version he first repeats what the monk had said. As the statement is rather long, the repetition employs the abbreviation “up to”, 乃至, reading:<sup>36</sup>

[It would be well if the Blessed One] would [now] teach me the essentials of the Dharma in brief. On having heard the Dharma, I shall practice alone in a quiet place without negligence ... *up to* ... “knowing that for myself there will be no receiving of further existence.” [71]

The abbreviation itself is unproblematic, as the full passage is found just a few lines earlier. Nevertheless, the beginning part of the quote is shortened, wherefore in the passage above I have supplemented in square brackets the part needed for it to correspond to the original. This is a recurrent pattern in the *Samyukta-āgama*, in that abbreviated passages can come with some irregularities.<sup>37</sup>

The two parallels agree in employing abbreviation also in their respective concluding sections, which report that the monk indeed went into seclusion and eventually became an arahant.<sup>38</sup> Here the *Samyukta-āgama*

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having heard the Dharma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, secluded, diligent, energetic, and resolute.”

<sup>36</sup> SĀ 15 at T II 3a15: 當為我略說法要, 我聞法已, 獨一靜處, 修不放逸, 乃至自知不受後有。Regarding the often-used 乃至, Silk 2013/2014: 208 notes that “the modularity and formulaic structure of these texts was of course obvious to traditional scribes as well, and their frequent recourse to the use of abbreviations such as *peyālam* (or simply *pe*) or 乃至 *nāizhi* illustrate their conscious awareness of the phenomenon.”

<sup>37</sup> As noted by Jantrasrisalai, Lenz, Lin and Salomon 2016: 35f, “the application of abbreviation formulae in Buddhist manuscripts is typically somewhat casual and inconsistent.” This is in line with a general pattern where, in the words of Salomon 2011: 167f, “in practice one often finds a surprising degree of textual variation in the manuscript versions of canonical Buddhist texts. In short, in Buddhism there is an underlying sense, and sometimes even an explicit acknowledgement, that the spirit of the law outweighs its letter.”

<sup>38</sup> His secluded practice and eventual realization are also reported in a Sanskrit fragment parallel, Kha ii 10a, Chung 2008: 317,7: *ājñātavān sa bhi[k]ṣur arhan babh[ū]va*.

discourse again uses “up to”, 乃至, which has its counterpart in the *Samyutta-nikāya* parallel in *pe*.<sup>39</sup>

The next discourse in the *Samyukta-āgama*, SĀ 16, has the same introductory narration. Hence, after the phrase “At that time a certain monk approached the Buddha,” it employs the following expression:<sup>40</sup> “What he asked is as above, with the difference ... .” This makes it clear that the whole introductory narration needs to be supplemented from the preceding discourse, except for the stipulated [72] difference, which is then described right after the above formula. A Sanskrit fragment parallel to SĀ 16 gives the introductory narration in full.<sup>41</sup>

The Pāli parallel is discourse 35 in the *Khandha-samyutta*, which thus occurs before discourse 36 (the parallel to SĀ 15). In line with their respective positioning in the collection, discourse 35 gives the introductory narration and question in full and discourse 36 employs some degree of abbreviation, although only for the standard formulaic description of how the monk approached the Buddha, paid respect, and sat down.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the concluding section, in both collections the respectively second discourse has the concluding section with the monk’s secluded practice and attainment in a more abbreviated manner than the preceding discourse.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, reciters of both collections were expected to supplement in similar ways, an expectation that implies fixed collections in which the sequence of discourses remains stable.

The next three discourses in the *Skandha-samyukta* have the same plot of a monk asking for instructions for secluded practice and eventually be-

<sup>39</sup> SĀ 15 at T II 3b12 and SN 22.36 at SN III 37,23.

<sup>40</sup> SĀ 16 at T II 3b15: 所問如上, 差別者 ...

<sup>41</sup> Chung 2008: 318,3 (§ 2a to 3): *athānyataro bhikṣur yena bhagavāṃs tenopasaṃ(krānta upasaṃkramya bhagavataḥ pādau śirasā vanditvāikānte nyaṣīdat ekāntaṇiṣaṇ)[ṇ](a)ḥ sa bhikṣur bhaga[v](a)ṇ[t](a)m idam av[oca]t: sādhu me bhadaṃta bhagavan saṃkṣiptena dharman deśaya yad ahaṃ bhagavato dharmam [ś]ru[tv]ā eko vya[v](akṛ)sto ‘pramatta ātāpī pravivikto vihareyam).*

<sup>42</sup> SN 22.36 at SN III 36,13.

<sup>43</sup> SĀ 16 at T II 3b26 to 3b27 (compared to SĀ 15 at T II 3b9 to 3b13) and SN 22.36 at SN III 37,22 to 37,24 (compared to SN 22.35 at SN III 36,3 to 36,10).

coming an arahant, hence these discourses keep abbreviating both parts with “up to”, 乃至.<sup>44</sup> Discourse 20 then consists of <sup>[73]</sup> only a mention of the title, followed by:<sup>45</sup> “... should also be spoken like this”.<sup>46</sup> This seems to imply that exactly the same discourse as SĀ 19 should be recited again, only with a different title. Notably, this discourse is not taken into account in the *uddāna*.<sup>47</sup> This suggests that the apparent doubling of a discourse, due to being assigned two different titles, happened only after the *uddāna* had reached its present form. The arising of two different titles is of particular interest in so far as the discourses in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* generally come without titles (including SĀ 19), which can only be reconstructed from the *uddānas*. This in turn suggests that SĀ 20 came into being at a time after the closure of the *uddāna* but before the loss of explicit mention of discourse titles in this section of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* (which might in fact just be a decision taken by the translators into Chinese, although the *uddānas* were translated at least for the *Skandha-saṃyukta*).

The last discourse in the first chapter of the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, of which no Pāli parallel is known, employs internal abbreviation. <sup>[74]</sup> The exposition in SĀ 32 proceeds as follows:<sup>48</sup>

If recluses and brahmins do not know bodily form as it really is,  
do not know the arising of bodily form as it really is, do not know

<sup>44</sup> SĀ 17 at T II 3c9 and 3c25, SĀ 18 at T II 4a3 and 4a26, and SĀ 19 at T II 4b3 and 4b24 (the last two discourses also abbreviate the Buddha’s reply with the help of the same 乃至; see SĀ 18 at T II 4a6 and SĀ 19 at T II 4b7).

<sup>45</sup> SĀ 20 at T II 4b25: 亦如是說.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the title of SĀ 20, Yinshùn 1983: 30 note 2 suggests emending 深 to read 染, so so that the title becomes 染經.

<sup>47</sup> T II 5b26 lists 使 (= SĀ 15), 增諸數 (= SĀ 16), 非我 (= SĀ 17), 非彼 (= SĀ 18), 結繫 (= SĀ 19), 動搖 (= SĀ 21), 劫波所問 (= SĀ 22), 亦羅睺羅所問二經 (= SĀ 23 and SĀ 24). The Pāli parallel to both SĀ 19 and SĀ 20, SN 22.70 at SN III 79,7, has the title *rajanīya-saṇṭhita* in the Burmese and PTS editions and just *rajanīya* in the Ceylonese edition (S° does not give a title).

<sup>48</sup> SĀ 32 at T II 7a14: 若沙門婆羅門於色不如實知, 色集不如實知, 色滅不如實知, 色味不如實知, 色患不如實知, 色離不如實知故, 不堪能超越色.

the cessation of bodily form as it really is, do not know the gratification in bodily form as it really is, do not know the danger in bodily form as it really is, do not know the escape from bodily form as it really is, [then] for this reason they are not able to transcend bodily form.

When it comes to the corresponding case of those who do know, the text takes the following abbreviated form:<sup>49</sup>

If recluses and brahmins know bodily form ... the arising of bodily form ... the cessation of bodily form ... the gratification in bodily form ... the danger in bodily form ... the escape from bodily form as it really is, [then] these recluses and brahmins are able to transcend bodily form.

Here the abbreviation is obvious enough, hence no explicit markers are used in the Chinese text. Consultation of the full formula given earlier for the negative case of not knowing is required in order to recognize in what way the passage here has been abbreviated.

Continuing with examples from the second chapter of the reconstructed <sup>[75]</sup> *Skandha-saṃyukta*, a case that shows a feature not yet discussed is SĀ 259 together with its Pāli parallels. The discourse reports a discussion between Mahākottṭhita/Mahākauṣṭhila and Sāriputta/Śāriputra on what a monk, who has not yet attained ‘comprehension of the Dharma’, should give attention to.<sup>50</sup> The discourse has two Pāli parallels found consecutively as discourses 122 and 123 in the *Khandha-saṃyutta*, the only difference between them being that the discussion in discourse 122 starts off with a monk who is “virtuous”, *sīlavant*, whereas in discourse 123 the monk is instead qualified as “learned”, *sutavant* (neither of the two alternative terms in discourses 122 and 123 corresponds to the expression found in SĀ 259). Thus, the existence of two

<sup>49</sup> SĀ 32 at T II 7a20: 若沙門婆羅門於色, 色集, 色滅, 色味, 色患, 色離如實知, 此沙門婆羅門堪能超越色。

<sup>50</sup> SĀ 259 at T II 65b12: 比丘未得無間等法 (the expression 無間等 is a rendering of *abhisamaya* regularly employed in T 99), with a parallel in SHT IV 30e V4, Sander and Waldschmidt 1980: 85: *dharmena āyuṣmaṇ śāriputra bhikṣuṇā dharmān-abhi[sā](mayati)*.

separate discourses in this part of the *Khandha-saṃyutta* is only due to this difference, a difference that could easily have arisen due to an error during oral transmission.

The same holds for the case of SĀ 20, discussed above. In the present case the doubling of discourses due to a rather minor difference affects only a single term in one passage in the discourse and, in the case of SĀ 20, the issue at stake is just the title. Both cases are noteworthy inasmuch as they reflect a concern with precision, going so far as to result in the creation of an additional discourse just to accommodate a rather minor difference. The PTS edition in fact explains the difference between the two discourses 122 and 123 in a footnote and then just abbreviates the second discourse as:<sup>51</sup> *bārāṇasi-nidānaṃ*. [76]

The three Asian editions, however, still give the body of the discourse. The above drastic abbreviation would be an editorial decision taken by Feer when preparing this volume of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, originally published in 1890. Thus, in this case the introduction of a substantial abbreviation can be dated to the late nineteenth century.

My next example is discourse SĀ 262, which reports an instruction on the impermanent nature of the five aggregates. This instruction is given in abbreviation for the middle three aggregates and without the employment of any marker in the Chinese text:<sup>52</sup> “Bodily form is impermanent. Feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness is impermanent.” The Pāli parallel in discourse 90 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta* has the corresponding passage in full, reading:<sup>53</sup> *rūpaṃ kho, āvuso channa, aniccaṃ, vedanā aniccā, saññā aniccā, saṅkhārā aniccā, viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*.

Another abbreviation occurs in a later section of SĀ 262 in relation to the standard formulation of dependent arising, where only the first two and the last two links are given, such that the intervening part is abbreviated with the help of “up to”, 乃至:<sup>54</sup> “conditioned by ignorance are formations ...

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<sup>51</sup> SN 22.123 at SN III 169,5.

<sup>52</sup> SĀ 262 at T II 66b13: 色無常, 受, 想, 行, 識無常.

<sup>53</sup> SN 22.90 at SN III 132,23.

<sup>54</sup> SĀ 262 at T II 67a5: 緣無明有行, 乃至生, 老, 病, 死, 憂, 悲, 惱, 苦集.



up to ... birth, old age, disease, death, worry, sorrow, vexation, and pain arise.”<sup>[77]</sup> The use of this abbreviation presupposes that the reciters were sufficiently familiar with this key doctrine to be able to supplement the missing links, as the full formula had not yet been given in the other discourses in this chapter, or in the preceding first chapter of the *Samyukta-āgama*. In fact, the full formula does not occur anywhere in the remaining chapters of the *Skandha-samyukta*.

In line with the earlier mentioned case of SĀ 15, the abbreviated part of SĀ 262 shows some irregularity, since the correct statement at the end should be “conditioned by birth is old age.” In other words, the part that comes after the abbreviation 乃至 should have read 緣生有老, instead of just 生, 老, and this would more naturally have been followed directly by “death”, 死, rather than by “disease”, 病.

The situation for the parallel discourse 90 in the *Samyutta-nikāya* differs, as in the Pāli collection the *Khandha-samyutta* comes after the *Nidāna-samyutta*, which gives the full formula of dependent arising right away in its first discourse.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the Ceylonese edition of discourse 90 does not abbreviate and gives the whole formula for the twelve links in full; only the other three editions abbreviate after the first two links.

My next case is SĀ 271, which presents a teaching on the need to be free from lust for the five aggregates. After explaining the problem of lust in regard to the first aggregate of bodily form, the instructions take the following form:<sup>56</sup>

Not being separated from lust for feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness, not separated from desire for<sup>[78]</sup> it, not separated from craving for it, not separated from missing it, not separated from thirsting for it, if that consciousness changes, if it becomes otherwise, what do you think, will worry, sorrow, vexation, and pain arise?

<sup>55</sup> SN 12.1 at SN II 1,16.

<sup>56</sup> SĀ 271 at T II 71b7: 於受, 想, 行, 識不離貪, 不離欲, 不離愛, 不離念, 不離渴; 彼識若變, 若異, 於汝意云何, 當起憂, 悲, 惱, 苦為不耶?

Here the middle three aggregates are only mentioned once, without a marker of abbreviation, and then the remainder of the exposition only covers consciousness. The reply to this question then takes up only the case of consciousness, so that, strictly speaking, it only acknowledges explicitly the detrimental repercussions of lust for bodily form and consciousness (although the other three are of course implied).<sup>57</sup>

In most editions of the corresponding Pāli discourse the inquiry is given in full for the first and last aggregate, and for the fourth aggregate of volitional formations with only a minor abbreviation, so that only the cases of feeling tone and perception are completely abbreviated. In the Ceylonese edition, perception alone is completely abbreviated, reading *saññāya pe*.

The pattern of abbreviating the middle members of a list, evident in SĀ 271, can also manifest in relation to the six senses. This can be seen in SĀ 61 (found in the third chapter of the *Skandha-saṃyukta*), which offers definitions of each of the five aggregates. In the case of feeling tone, this definition proceeds as follows:<sup>58</sup>

Feeling tone arisen from eye-contact ... ear- ... nose- ... tongue- ...  
body- ... feeling tone arisen from mind-contact. This is called the  
feeling tone aggregate of clinging. [79]

Here the abbreviation goes so far as to dispense even with a reference to “contact” for the senses in the middle portion. The same pattern of abbreviation, without an explicit marker, occurs in a Tibetan parallel in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, to the extent that the above translation of the Chinese can equally serve as a rendering of the corresponding Tibetan passage.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In the parallel SN 22.84 at SN III 107,10+16+23 the replies just take the affirmative form *evaṃ bhante*, without going into further details.

<sup>58</sup> SĀ 61 at T II 15c23: 眼觸生受, 耳, 鼻, 舌, 身, 意觸生受; 是名受受陰; the discourse does not have a Pāli parallel.

<sup>59</sup> Up 1016 at D 4094 *ju* 18a6 or P 5595 *tu* 20a7: *mig gi ’dus te reg pa las skyes pa’i tshor ba’i dang, rna ba dang, sna dang, lce dang, lus dang, yid kyi ’dus te reg pa las skyes pa’i tshor ba ste. ’di ni tshor ba nye bar len pa’i phung po zhes bya’o*; translated in Dhammadinnā 2013: 126.

In the case of the next aggregate of perception, the Tibetan version maintains its earlier pattern, but the Chinese abbreviates further, this time employing the marker “up to”, 乃至 (as also done for the remaining aggregates):<sup>60</sup> “Perception arisen from eye-contact ... up to ... perception arisen from mind-contact. This is called the perception aggregate of clinging.”

My next example, SĀ 64, describes consciousness that is not established anywhere in the following manner:<sup>61</sup> [80] “Consciousness is not established in the eastern direction, the southern ... the western ... the northern direction.” In line with a standard pattern, the middle members of a list are given in an abbreviated form, without any need for an explicit marker.

The subsequent discourse in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, SĀ 65, continues after its formal conclusion with a list of other discourses that should similarly be recited. This reads as follows:<sup>62</sup>

As for “examining”, in the same way for “analyzing”, “analyzing in various ways”, “understanding”, “widely understanding”, “understanding in various ways”, “becoming familiar with”, “becoming familiar with by cultivating”, “practicing”, “engaging with”, “contacting”, and “realizing”, <twelve><sup>63</sup> discourses should also be recited fully in the same way.

SĀ 65 has a parallel in discourse 5 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*,<sup>64</sup> but the additional twelve discourses that would result from executing the above instruction are without a Pāli parallel. The next three discourses in the *Skandha-*

<sup>60</sup> SĀ 61 at T II 15c26: 眼觸生想, 乃至意觸生想; 是名想受陰.

<sup>61</sup> SĀ 64 at T II 17a17: 識不住東方, 南, 西, 北方; the parallel SN 22.55 at SN III 58,22 describes the unestablished condition of consciousness without any reference to the four directions.

<sup>62</sup> SĀ 65 at T II 17b14: 如觀察, 如是分別, 種種分別, 知, 廣知, 種種知, 親近, 親近修, 習, 入, 觸, 證, 二經亦如是廣說.

<sup>63</sup> The mention of “two”, 二, needs to be emended by adding 十, “ten”; see Yinshùn 1983: 111 note 3.

<sup>64</sup> SN 22.5 at SN III 13,29.

*saṃyukta* have a similar instruction at their end, which is in turn further abbreviated, as follows:<sup>65</sup> [81]

As for “examining”, in the same way ... *up to* ... “realizing”, twelve discourses should also be recited fully in the same way.

As for “examining” ... *up to* ... “realizing”, twelve discourses should also be recited fully in the same way.

Here the abbreviated reference to a set of discourses needs first to be expanded by recourse to the previous abbreviated reference to a set of discourses. Without access to SĀ 65, one would be at a loss to know what comes between “examining” and “realizing”, so as to result in altogether twelve activities that then can lead to the recitation of corresponding separate discourses.

SĀ 66 has a parallel in discourse 5 of the *Khanda-saṃyutta*, but the other two, SĀ 67 and SĀ 68, have no Pāli parallel. As a net result of this situation, none of the forty-eight discourses mentioned in these abbreviated recitation instructions has a Pāli counterpart.

Another abbreviation in SĀ 66 comes after a detailed instruction on how a lack of examining arising, gratification, danger, and escape leads to delighting, craving, and attachment. Having been expounded in relation to bodily form, the same is then applied to the other aggregates in the following manner:<sup>66</sup> “Feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness should also be recited fully in the same way.” Most editions of the Pāli version instead adopt the pattern of giving the exposition in full for the first and last aggregate and abbreviating [82] the three middle ones;<sup>67</sup> the Ceylonese edition, however, only abbreviates the case of perception.

A pattern similar in kind to the one mentioned above in relation to SĀ 262 occurs in SĀ 68, where the links of dependent arising from craving to *duḥkha*

<sup>65</sup> The first quote is taken from SĀ 66 at T II 17c9: 如觀察, 如是乃至作證十二經, 亦應廣說; the second corresponds to SĀ 67 at T II 18a5 and SĀ 68 at T II 18a23: 如觀察, 乃至作證十二經, 亦如是廣說.

<sup>66</sup> SĀ 66 at T II 17b24: 受, 想, 行, 識亦如是廣說.

<sup>67</sup> SN 22.5 at SN III 14,9; the exposition of consciousness is slightly abbreviated at its end.

are presented in this manner: “In dependence on feeling tone, craving arises ... *up to* ... this entire great mass of *duḥkha* arises.”<sup>68</sup> Clearly, someone not sufficiently familiar with the links of dependent arising would have stood little chance of performing a successful recitation of the *Skandha-saṃyukta*.

The next discourse, SĀ 69, has three instructions regarding how recitation should be carried out in full. According to the first two of these three, the treatment given to bodily form should be similarly executed for the other aggregates; the third makes it clear that three more discourses should be executed in the same manner. The instructions read as follows:<sup>69</sup>

In the same way feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness are to be recited in full.

As for bodily form, in the same way also for feeling tone ... perception ... formations ... consciousness. [83]

As for “I will teach”, [so with] “there is” and “you should understand”, [discourses] should also be recited in the same way.

Whereas SĀ 69 has a parallel in discourse 44 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*,<sup>70</sup> the additional discourses resulting from the above recitation instruction do not have a Pāli parallel. The same type of instruction to execute two further discourses occurs at the end of SĀ 70.<sup>71</sup> In this case, a Pāli parallel in discourse 103 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta* corresponds to the first alternative mentioned in the above recitation instruction, rather than to SĀ 70 itself.<sup>72</sup> The recitation instructions to expand SĀ 69 and SĀ 70 to become three discourses each are reflected in the relevant *uddāna*.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> SĀ 68 at T II 18a11: 緣受生愛, 乃至純大苦聚生; the passage has already been translated in Choong 2000: 45. SĀ 68 does not have a Pāli parallel.

<sup>69</sup> SĀ 69 at T II 18b4: 如是受, 想, 行, 識廣說; T II 18b11: 如色, 受, 想, 行, 識亦如是; and T II 18b15: 如當說, 有, 及當知, 亦如是說.

<sup>70</sup> SN 22.44 at SN III 44,1.

<sup>71</sup> SĀ 70 at T II 18b27.

<sup>72</sup> In SN 22.103 at SN III 158,1 the actual exposition sets in by just stating the matter at hand, which thus corresponds to the alternative “there is”, 有, in the recitation instructions in SĀ 70.

<sup>73</sup> T II 19a2: 其道有三種, 實覺亦三種.

The next discourse, SĀ 71, has a whole series of recitation instructions for further discourses. The original discourse begins with the Buddha stating, “I will now teach you.” The first injunction for reciting another discourse indicates the following:<sup>74</sup> “Another [discourse] is to be recited in the same way, with the difference: ‘you should understand ... .’”<sup>[84]</sup>

Then comes a paragraph with four phrases that should replace the original “I will now teach you,” followed by the standard conclusion to a discourse reporting the delighted reaction of the audience. Then comes the next instruction:<sup>75</sup> “As for ‘I will teach’, ‘there is’, and ‘you should understand’, [discourses] should also be recited in the same way; again with the difference ... .”

The first part refers back to SĀ 71, in that the introductory phrase “I will teach” should be replaced with the other two phrases. Then the same SĀ 71 should be recited with an additional description of a monastic who, by dint of successfully applying the teaching, becomes an arahant. This description occurs after the reference “again with the difference”.

Another five times instructions occur indicating variations to be applied to this description. Four of these express the same basic meaning of the monastic becoming an arahant in different terms, whereas the remaining one adds an explanatory gloss on some of the epithets used in the previously mentioned description of an arahant. The instruction itself reads each time:<sup>76</sup> “Again [it should be recited] with this difference ...”.

The *uddāna* clarifies that the final result should be four discourses on modes of teaching and six discourses related to the arahant.<sup>77</sup> The <sup>[85]</sup> series of discourses that results from executing these instructions has a single parallel in discourse 105 of the *Khandha-saṃyutta*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> SĀ 71 at T II 18c12: 餘如是說, 差別者: 當知 ... The discourse has a parallel in Śamathadeva’s *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, Up 5006 at D 4094 *ju* 268b1 or P 5595 *thu* 11b4, translated by Dhammaddinā 2013: 130f.

<sup>75</sup> SĀ 71 at T II 18c15: 如當說, 有, 及當知, 亦如是說, 又復差別者 ...

<sup>76</sup> SĀ 71 at T II 18c18, 18c20, 18c22, 18c23, and 18c27: 又復差別者 ... The instructions are cryptic, and I am indebted to the discussion in Sū 2009 for enabling me to make sense of them.

<sup>77</sup> T II 19a3: 有身四種說, 羅漢有六種.

<sup>78</sup> SN 22.105 at SN III 159,6.

An example for a truncated reference to the five aggregates can be seen in another discourse, SĀ 75, which takes the following form:<sup>79</sup> “There are five aggregates of clinging. What are the five? That is, they are the bodily form aggregate of clinging.” The discourse continues by examining the bodily form aggregate and thus fails to list the remaining four aggregates. Although the Pāli parallel does not have an introductory statement on the five aggregates,<sup>80</sup> a Sanskrit fragment parallel has preserved the following:<sup>81</sup> (*upā*)-*dānaskandhaḥ vedanā saṃjñā*. This makes it fairly probable that the passage quoted above from SĀ 75 is the result of textual loss, rather than being a radical form of abbreviation. The present case thereby serves to draw attention to the possibility of textual corruption. Due to the recurrent lack of use of a marker of abbreviation, such a case is less easily identified. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that what at times appears to be an abbreviation at first sight might on closer inspection turn out to be a loss of text.

The survey so far has already covered most of the type of abbreviations found in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, so that the material to be considered from the remaining two chapters is considerably less. A [86] case that shows how the same passage can be abbreviated in different ways is SĀ 38. The preceding discourse SĀ 37 and the Pāli parallel to both, discourse 94 in the *Khandha-saṃyutta*, do not abbreviate in a comparable manner. Here is the passage from SĀ 38, followed by two abbreviated repetitions:<sup>82</sup>

There is a [worldly] phenomenon in the world which I have myself understood and myself realized, and which I analyze, explain, and disclose to people, speaking with knowledge and vision. Those in the world who are blind and without vision do not understand and

<sup>79</sup> SĀ 75 at T II 19b22: 有五受陰。何等為五? 謂色受陰。

<sup>80</sup> SN 22.58 at SN III 65,22.

<sup>81</sup> SHT IV 30b R3, Sander and Waldschmidt 1980: 80.

<sup>82</sup> SĀ 38 at T II 8c16: 有世間法, 我自知自覺, 為人分別演說顯示, 知見而說。世間盲無目者不知不見。世間盲無目者不知不見, 我其如之何?; T II 8c19: 云何世間世間法, 我自知自覺, 乃至不知不見?; and T II 8c22: 是名世間世間法, 我自知自見, 乃至盲無目者不知不見, 其如之何?

do not see it. What can I do about those in the world who are blind and without vision, who do not understand and do not see it?

What is the worldly phenomenon in the world that I have myself understood, myself realized ... *up to* ... who do not understand and do not see it?

This is called the worldly phenomenon in the world that I have myself understood, myself realized ... *up to* ... what can I do about those who are blind and without vision, who do not understand and do not see it?

Here the second instance is more heavily abbreviated than the third. Now, once the reciter is expected to expand the first abbreviated passage [87] with the full formula, there would be no need to supply more material for the same purpose on a subsequent occasion. Thus, the fact that the last statement is less heavily abbreviated than the previous one would be due to the influence of a recurrent pattern, when abbreviating lists, to give not only the first member but also the last member in full, or at least in a more expanded form than the middle members.

An instance of abbreviation that requires recourse to the preceding discourses in the collection can be found in SĀ 40. The passage proceeds in this way:<sup>83</sup>

Engaging with bodily form, consciousness is established, engaging with feeling tone ... perception ... formations, consciousness is established ... *up to* ... because this is outside the sphere of experience.

The discourse itself provides no further clue as to what needs to be supplemented for the passage to link up with the idea of being outside the sphere of someone's experience. In order to locate the relevant material, recourse to the preceding discourse SĀ 39 is required, according to which the claim that consciousness could be established apart from the other four aggregates cannot be upheld, as that is outside of the claimant's sphere of

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<sup>83</sup> SĀ 40 at T II 9b1: 色封滯識住, 受, 想, 行封滯識住, 乃至非境界故。



experience.<sup>84</sup> The same indication occurs also in the Pāli parallel to SĀ 40 and probably in a Sanskrit fragment parallel, which has preserved parts of a corresponding passage.<sup>85</sup> [88]

An abbreviation of the noble eightfold path on its second and subsequent occurrences in a particular discourse can be seen in SĀ 42, where only the first occurrence lists all factors. The second instance reads:<sup>86</sup> “Right view ... *up to* ... right concentration.” The editions of the Pāli parallel abbreviate the noble eightfold path right away by mentioning only its first and last member.<sup>87</sup>

A cross reference to an *Ekottarika-āgama* collection can be found in SĀ 52; in fact, the discourse in question consists only of this reference. After giving the title of the discourse, this reference reads:<sup>88</sup> “It should be recited as in the Fours of the *Ekottarika-āgama*.” This would be a reference to a Mūlasarvāstivāda *Ekottarika-āgama* collection, from which the whole discourse should be supplemented. It is noteworthy that a discourse comes up for recitation that has already been included in another discourse collection. Perhaps even more remarkable is the fact that, as the very use of this abbreviation shows, reciters of the *Samyukta-āgama* were apparently expected to be able to supplement it easily, be this from memory or from access to a written copy of this collection. [89]

A cross-reference to another discourse can also be seen in SĀ 106 in the fifth chapter of the *Skandha-samyukta*, which takes the following form:<sup>89</sup> “As spoken fully in the ‘Discourse to Yamaka’, *up to* ... .” Fortunately, the “Discourse to Yamaka”, from which the required material is to be supplied,

<sup>84</sup> SĀ 39 at T II 9a11. The same need to refer to the preceding discourses arises again in SĀ 40 at T II 9b4: 乃至清淨真實, which requires being supplemented with material from SĀ 39.

<sup>85</sup> SN 22.53 at SN III 53,15 and fragment Kha ii 6b, de La Vallée Poussin 1913: 574.

<sup>86</sup> SĀ 42 at T II 10b11: 正見乃至正定.

<sup>87</sup> SN 22.57 at SN III 62,16.

<sup>88</sup> SĀ 52 at T II 12c3: 如增一阿含經四法中說; see also Yao 2020 on the related phenomenon of abbreviated references to discourses in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.

<sup>89</sup> SĀ 106 at T II 32c27: 如焰摩迦契經廣說, 乃至 ...

occurs just two discourses earlier in the same chapter of the *Skandha-saṃyukta* and thus is more easily accessed than the earlier reference to a discourse from the *Ekottarika-āgama*. In the *Khandha-saṃyutta*, the two corresponding Pāli discourses follow each other immediately and the instruction in the second discourse (no. 86) does not explicitly refer to the preceding discourse to Yamaka for any supplementation.<sup>90</sup>

### Quantifying Abbreviations in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*

The above survey shows different types of abbreviation in use in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, which could be distinguished into those that are either “marked” or else “unmarked”. Various markers can be used to indicate that an abbreviation has taken place or to give instructions regarding how a passage should be supplemented, such as “in the same way”, 如是, or “up to”, 乃至, etc. But at times abbreviations occur without any marker.

Another distinction could be made between “internal” and “external” abbreviations. At times the passage to be supplemented <sup>[90]</sup> is found internally, within the same discourse, but at other times it is placed externally, in the sense of being found in another discourse in the same collection (or on one occasion even in a different discourse collection).

The following four types of abbreviation result from the above proposed distinctions:

- marked and internal
- marked and external
- unmarked and internal
- unmarked and external

In addition to these four types of abbreviation, a fifth alternative to be kept in mind is the possibility that a passage could have suffered from textual loss and does not involve an intentional abbreviation.

In order to gain an impression of the degree to which text has been abbreviated, and of the frequency of each of these four types of abbrevia-

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<sup>90</sup> SN 22.86 at SN III 116,1.

tion, I have implemented all instructions for supplementation with the required material in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*.<sup>91</sup> For this purpose, I have mostly followed Yinshùn's understanding of the implications of a particular abbreviation, whenever this was unclear. An exception is SĀ 2, where I have adopted the instruction in the Taishō edition to supplement another three discourses, whereas Yinshùn has not followed this instruction because the resultant discourses are not mentioned in the respective *uddāna*. In other words, [91] I have simply taken the text in the Taishō edition as it is, rather than attempting to improve on it.<sup>92</sup>

A case where I have been unable to execute the instructions is SĀ 52, as this gives only the title and then enjoins to supplement the body of the discourse from the *Ekottarika-āgama*. Without access to this collection, nothing can be done in terms of supplementation. Hence, I leave SĀ 52 completely out of account.

Based on a character count of the bare text of the *Skandha-saṃyukta*, with all annotations, punctuation, etc., removed and with the required supplementations carried out, I arrive at about 31% original text (without its abbreviation markers) and about 69% supplementation. In other words, as illustrated in Figure 1, about two thirds of the full text of the *Skandha-saṃyukta* is present only by way of abbreviation.

The substantial role played by abbreviation can be further explored by examining how much of it corresponds to the four types proposed [92] above. Out of these four, the category of abbreviations that are not marked and are external, in the sense that they need to be supplemented from outside

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<sup>91</sup> I have taken out recitation instructions like 乃至, “up to”, so that these are not counted as either original text or as supplemented text. A few times the original had the first and last statement in full, but with slight differences in formulation. I have followed the formulation in the first statement for my supplementations and also adjusted the last statement accordingly (adjustments which hardly influence the word count of the material reckoned as original).

<sup>92</sup> I have also left out a correction given at T II 65c1 in the CBETA edition, on which my research is otherwise based. In the case of SĀ 65, I have followed the recitation instructions, which result in twelve discourses, and emended the reference “two” to “twelve”, as discussed above.

of a discourse, occurs very rarely. This case occurs so rarely that the character count does not even reach 1% of the total of abbreviations. Due to its lack of statistical significance, I leave this category out of the survey below in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Ratio between Original and Supplemented Text in the *Skandha-samyukta*

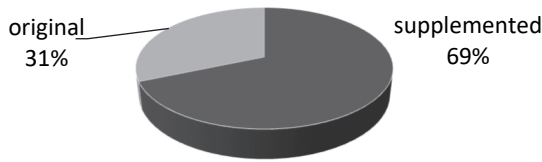
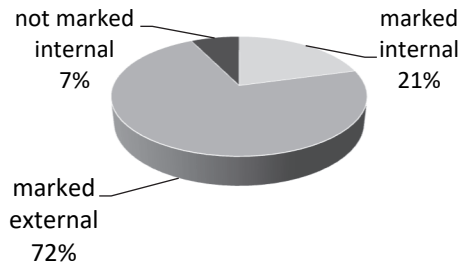


Figure 2. Ratio between Different Types of Supplemented Texts



Regarding the remaining three categories, particularly notable is that marked abbreviations are the clear majority, accounting for 93% of the material altogether. This does not reflect the frequency of occurrence of this type, as unmarked abbreviations occur fairly frequently. But these usually concern only a few terms that need to be added, hence the amount of material that results from this type of abbreviation is relatively small.

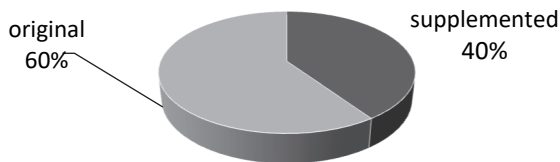
Out of the marked abbreviations, particularly prominent are those that are external, in the sense of needing to be supplemented from outside of the discourses in which they occur. These amount to about 72% of all abbreviated material. In contrast, abbreviations to be supplemented <sup>[93]</sup> from within the same discourse amount to only about 28%.

The category of abbreviations that are marked and external accommodates a single reference to another discourse by name and a few instances where similar material is found in the previous text. The bulk of the contribution made by this category, however, is due to the additional discourses that result from recitation instructions given to the effect that the text of a discourse should be repeated in full in the form of another discourse on its own, with a few specified changes. This “proliferation of discourses”, if it can be called such, appears to have substantially increased the percentage of material that in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* is present only in abbreviation.

Before exploring this further, I would like to note that the tendency to create a series of discourses based on at times rather minor textual variations is not confined to the reciters of the *Saṃyukta-āgama*. The same tendency is also plainly evident in the textual material analyzed by Gethin (2020a). Such instances in the Pāli collections seem to reflect a tendency to proliferation similar to what is evident in the *Skandha-saṃyukta*.

In order to explore the impact of such proliferation of discourses in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* further, I have removed all additional discourses that had come into being through following the recitation instructions. As a result, the ratio between original and supplemented text changes substantially, as illustrated in Figure 3. Now only about 40% is supplemented text and 60% original. In other words, when only abbreviations that concern the body of the same discourse are supplemented, the additional material is less than the amount of text that is already there.

Figure 3. Ratio between Original and Supplementation  
Disregarding Additional Discourses



Nevertheless, even leaving aside the extra discourses created by following the recitation instructions, the use of other forms of abbreviation still accounts for a substantial portion of text, about 40%. [94]

## Abbreviation and the Early Buddhist Oral Tradition

The quantitative analysis shows the degree to which abbreviation finds employment in the *Skandha-samyukta*. Needless to say, such abbreviation can only perform its function properly as long as the reciters know in what way the text is to be supplemented. At times this is evident enough, for instance when the middle members of a particular list are given in brief. Such cases do not even require an explicit marker. Markers are also unnecessary when standard formulas are shortened. Such shortening usually involves an abbreviation of something that can be supplemented from within the same discourse.

According to the quantitative analysis, abbreviations that are not marked and need to be supplemented from outside of a discourse occur so rarely that they are statistically insignificant. What falls into this category are standard lists of terms like the noble eightfold path or the series of dependent arising, which are so well known that they can be given in abbreviation even when no template for filling these out is found within the same discourse. This finding in turns makes <sup>[95]</sup> it in my view somewhat less probable that unmarked abbreviation can be taken as a ready explanation for substantially different passages in parallel versions of a discourse, involving, for example, the presence or the absence of a full account of the gradual path of training (see also below p. 144ff).

Now, the recurrent pattern of abbreviating the middle members of a particular list could well hark back to the period of oral transmission. The texts regularly exhibit a feature where a particular statement is followed by a detailed exposition that leads up to a repetition of the initial statement. This type of procedure is convenient in an oral setting, the speaker(s) in this way making sure that the audience keeps in mind the main topic. The abbreviation of middle members of a list appears to follow the same pattern, as once the full formula is given for the first member of the list, it would seem more natural to abbreviate the entire remainder of the list. That this is not done could well be due to some degree of abbreviation being already in use in the oral setting, being particularly handy as a time saving measure when having to recite a larger portion of text. In such a situation, it would

have been natural for such abbreviation to follow the model set by the texts themselves, namely, to repeat once more at the end what was stated at the outset.

The use of markers like “up to”, 乃至, or “in the same way”, 如是, come in handy for passages that are to be supplemented from a similar occurrence earlier in the same discourse. The need to make sure that the reciters know what to do would explain why marked abbreviations account for a high proportion of the supplemented material.

Decisions on when abbreviation is required differ. For example, the *Skandha-saṃyukta* in its present form does not abbreviate <sup>[96]</sup> the standard introductory formula to a discourse. In contrast, the information about the discourse being “thus heard” and the whereabouts of the Buddha are expressed with a variety of shortened phrases in the parallel Pāli discourses.

The proliferation of synonyms, evident in the case of the fourth aggregate, can also be seen in the tendency in the *Skandha-saṃyukta* to mention “emptiness” in addition to “not-self”, apparently considered sufficiently important to warrant the recitation of two separate discourses with otherwise equal content to express these two nuances.

The same concern to make sure that even a small nuance in difference is not lost expresses itself also in the instruction to recite the exact same discourse again, solely to do justice to an alternative title or an alternative term somewhere in the exposition. This phenomenon is so pervasive that it can safely be taken to express a basic concern of the transmitters and reciters of the early discourses. As pointed out by Allon (1997: 358), regarding the employment of repetition in Pāli discourses,

the scale on which this is pursued, that is the proportion of the text involved, [can hardly be seen] as anything other than proof, or at least as a very strong indication, that these texts were designed to be memorised and transmitted verbatim ... In contrast, material such as the contemporary Yugoslav epics ... which is composed ‘during the performance’, although exhibiting many forms of repetition, does not exhibit the form of gross repetition encountered in Pāli sutta texts.

In fact, an application of the research by Parry and Lord on Yugoslav epics to early Buddhist discourse literature is problematic in several <sup>[97]</sup> respects. From a methodological viewpoint, it involves a category mistake, inasmuch as conclusions drawn from epic material cannot be taken as a self-evident standard when evaluating material that is not epic and situated in a substantially different performance context.<sup>93</sup> As pointed out by Graham (1987: 138), the

oral use and even oral transmission of scripture should not be confused with folk oral tradition in which verbatim accuracy is not aspired to (i.e., in which ‘formulaic composition’ predominates: see, for example, Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* ...).

It is also problematic in so far as it can easily appear to stand in continuity with the colonial and post-colonial cultural arrogance of insisting on considering everything non-Western from the sole viewpoint of Western experiences and research. This makes it to my mind imperative to try to come to terms with the early Buddhist oral tradition on its own cultural terms and situated within its ancient Indian context, rather than opting for the facile alternative of resorting to Western models. In other words, rather than Yugoslavian epic, the oral transmission of Vedic texts should be the model against which early Buddhist oral transmission is evaluated.

One of the differences that emerge from such comparison is that the average early Buddhist reciter need not have gone through the rigorous memorization training that a Vedic reciter was expected to undergo from early youth onwards. This makes errors and variations only natural. Moreover, alongside the texts to be transmitted, a growing body of oral commentary emerged. Given that <sup>[98]</sup> one of the shortcomings of human memory is to conflate original information with individual inferences drawn, it is again only natural if new material of an original commentarial type should have made its way into the discourses. As I have shown elsewhere, there is sub-

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<sup>93</sup> I already presented this and several other related arguments in Anālayo 2014b, 2015b, and 2022d, building on research by von Hinüber 1989 and 1994b, Allon 1997, and Wynne 2004.



stantial evidence corroborating precisely the integration of commentarial material into the early discourses.<sup>94</sup> This would provide a model for appreciating an evident concern with precision, which is also apparent in the proliferation of different discourses just to accommodate a minor variation in title or a term, discussed above, with an equally evident integration of new material.

In an insightful study of abbreviation in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, Gethin (2007: 383 and note 25) concludes that:

although over time these repetition sections have become more or less fixed, they originally seem to have been composed in a manner that invites addition and expansion— within certain parameters ... I would wish to stand by the claim that there are good reasons for thinking of different recensions of Buddhist texts crystallizing after a period of somewhat freer composition and adaptation.<sup>95</sup>

As far as I can see, the proposal of an initial period of free improvisation has no firm grounding in the evidence at our disposal. This evidence rather shows that patterns of change were continuous and not something that happened only at an early stage.<sup>96</sup> The same is also evident from the survey in this chapter of the practice of abbreviation. Although some abbreviations may well hark back to very early times, [99] others are clearly late, as evidenced by consulting their parallels or the respective *uddānas*. In fact, substantial differences in this and other respects can occur even between parallel Pāli discourses, which could not be the product of an early period of improvisation only.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Anālayo 2010d.

<sup>95</sup> [94] McGovern 2016: 209 note 4 similarly states: “I believe that the evidence points strongly in favor of Cousins’ original intuition ... that there may have been an improvisational element involved comparable to the epic poetry studied by Parry and Lord.” For a critical reply to McGovern 2016 see also Anālayo 2020c: 2719–2723.

<sup>96</sup> See also Anālayo 2022d: 194.

<sup>97</sup> Anālayo 2014b: 52f.

Besides, the texts themselves reflect an ongoing concern with correct reproduction of the oral material to be transmitted. An illustrative example in case is the monastic code of rules, a text that clearly involves fixed wording, leaving no room for an improvisatory model. Still, a number of differences can be found between the codes of rules of different monastic traditions (see above p. 80ff), and these differences are of the same type as those found between parallel discourses.

At times it seems as if the attempt of the reciters to remember precisely has preserved formal aspects, even though the meaning has been lost, a pattern for which von Simson (1965: 137f) gives the following examples:

- *vivattacchaddo* – *vighuṣṭaśabdo*
- *brahmujjuggatto* – *br̥hadṛjugātro*
- *muducittaṃ* – *muditacittaṃ*
- *aññatāro* – *ājñātavān*
- *sammodi sammodanīyaṃ* – *sammukhaṃ sammodanīṃ*

Such errors are not the result of an early period of free improvisation, but rather must be due to failed attempts to preserve with precision. In sum, what research has brought to light so far concords with the emic perspective, in that the type of improvisation that is characteristic for a Yugoslavian bard is not relevant to a proper understanding of the early Buddhist oral tradition. I believe it is time to <sup>[100]</sup> set this model aside, so as to enable an appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the early Buddhist oral tradition on its own terms, culturally by situating it in its ancient Indian context and genre-wise by distinguishing it from epic material.

With such a proposal I in no way intend to encourage turning a blind eye to differences. In other publications I have relied precisely on at times substantial differences between parallel versions in order to discern, for instance, the beginnings of the *bodhisattva* ideal.<sup>98</sup> Many more examples could be mentioned, but suffice it to say that the differences that emerge from comparative studies are precisely what makes the early discourses such a fertile field for research and exploration.

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<sup>98</sup> See Anālayo 2010b and 2017a.

The assumption of an initial period of free improvisation would also not work for an extreme case of the use of abbreviation found in a discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*, without any known parallel.<sup>99</sup> This discourse could hardly have ever been recited in full, as on supplementing all the material that has been abbreviated, it would become more than twice as long as the entire *Madhyama-āgama* collection (which takes several days of recital).<sup>100</sup> In other words, the received discourse must have come into existence in abbreviated form, suggesting its comparative lateness. Nevertheless, content-wise the discourse stays well within the compass of early Buddhist thought. In other words, the building blocks for this discourse are simply taken from other discourses, an in itself natural tendency in oral transmission.<sup>101</sup> Thus even this case, where abbreviation has clearly run riot [101] and become an exercise in its own right rather than being an actual abbreviation of a text that existed in full, the material itself does not exhibit any innovation. This conforms with the other cases of abbreviation surveyed here and in Gethin (2020a), which similarly proliferate in various ways without resulting in substantial innovation.

## Conclusion

The principle of abbreviation has a pervasive influence on the text studied in this paper, the *Skandha-samyukta* of the *Samyukta-āgama* extant in Chinese translation, to the extent that nearly two thirds of the full text is now only represented in an abbreviated manner. At times, the need to supplement abbreviated material is explicitly marked as such, but at other times abbreviations take place without a marker. These cases need to be distinguished from the occurrence of accidental loss of text. The textual material to be employed for supplementation can be found either internally, in the

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<sup>99</sup> [95] MĀ 222 at T I 805c11 to 809a25.

<sup>100</sup> See Anālayo 2014c: 44–47.

<sup>101</sup> [96] As observed by Allon 1997: 367, “the insertion of another list of, say, ‘five good things’ in a text containing a parallel list of fives would not be a violation of *buddhavacana*, because the Buddha had in fact spoken of these ‘five good things’ on another occasion.”

same discourse, or else externally, in another discourse. In one instance the instructions even refer to a discourse from a no longer extant *Ekottarika-āgama* as the source for supplementation.

Decisions on when to use abbreviation were clearly not taken only at an early period, but rather reflect an ongoing process of negotiation. Just as it would have been convenient for individual rehearsal to abbreviate standard passages in order to be able to recite a collection of texts swiftly, similarly in a manuscript culture and even in modern day printing the same principle has retained its advantages. Its pervasive use in early Buddhist literature reflects the equally pervasive occurrence of repetition, a characteristic of an oral tradition that <sup>[102]</sup> needed to employ this and other means in an attempt at precise transmission. Precise transmission was sometimes hampered by the limitations of human memory and the ongoing influx of new ideas and understandings via the medium of commentary during oral performance.

Taken together, these various aspects point to the richness of the material at hand, a close study of which enables identifying the beginning stages of a range of developments that had a considerable impact on later Buddhist traditions.



## VI

### The Dynamics of Abbreviation (2)

In this chapter I continue examining the topic of abbreviation, in particular in relation to the first five fascicles of the *Madhyama-āgama* extant in Chinese translation (T 26) and the more specific case of abbreviations of expositions of the gradual path in the remainder of the same textual collection. This is meant to complement my study in the previous chapter of abbreviations in the first five fascicles of the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99).<sup>1</sup> Although being a relatively rarely studied phenomenon,<sup>2</sup> the employment of abbreviation is quite significant for deepening our understanding of the formation and transmission of Buddhist texts.

My first foray into the employment of abbreviation in the *Samyukta-āgama* was limited to the first five fascicles, which together make up the *Skandha-samyukta* of this collection. In order to cover a comparable portion of text in the *Madhyama-āgama*, in the first part of the present exploration I survey selected instances of abbreviation found in its first five fascicles. Needless to say, in both cases it would in principle have been preferable to survey the entire collection. Yet, such an undertaking is not really feasible within the confines of a single chapter. Due to the limited amount of material

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\* Originally published in 2021 under the title “Abbreviation in the *Madhyama-āgama*” in the *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*, 24: 23–38.

<sup>1</sup> See also Dhammadinnā 2020: 568–571.

<sup>2</sup> See, however, the stimulating studies of the closely related topic of repetition by Gethin 2007 and 2020a.

surveyed in this way, however, the conclusions drawn are necessarily of a similarly limited nature. By way of counterbalancing such limitations at least to some extent, in the second part of this chapter I turn to one specific case of abbreviation. This concerns a topic covered only in the remainder of the collection, namely the description of the gradual path of practice that ranges from the emergence of a Tathāgata as the teacher to a disciple's attainment of awakening.

### Lack of Abbreviation in the First Few Discourses

A somewhat unexpected feature of the first few discourses in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection is the absence of internal abbreviation (as mentioned in the previous chapter, an abbreviation can be reckoned internal if it relies on text found within the same discourse, such that, even if this discourse were to occur in isolation from the rest of <sup>[24]</sup> the collection, it would be clear in what way the abbreviated part is to be supplemented).

Although this is not surprising for external abbreviations, as standard doctrinal items that could be abbreviated in this way have so far not been introduced, the material in question leaves ample scope for internal abbreviation, in the sense that a passage given in full could easily have been abbreviated on subsequent occurrences in the same discourse.

This feature can be seen right away with the first discourse in the collection, which lists seven wholesome qualities. In the case of the first quality of knowing the teachings, for example, the significance of the teachings finds explanation in listing the twelve *āṅgas*.<sup>3</sup> This is followed by describing in the same words the case of one who does not know and the case of one who knows these *āṅgas*. All three of these similarly worded passages give the list of twelve *āṅgas* in full, rather than abbreviating it.<sup>4</sup> The same pattern of refraining from internal abbreviation continues throughout the exposition of other qualities in this *Madhyama-āgama* discourse.

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the significance of such listings of *āṅgas* see Anālayo 2016a and below p. 217ff.

<sup>4</sup> MĀ 1 at T I 421a18, 421a21, and 421a23.

The case of the first quality of knowing the teachings can be compared with the situation in the PTS edition of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* parallel,<sup>5</sup> which abbreviates the corresponding second and third reference to what in this version is the list of nine *aṅgas*.<sup>6</sup> The evident difference in abbreviation policy, if it can be called such, is not just a matter of Chinese translation as against Pāli text, as other parallels to the same *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, extant in Chinese translation, also abbreviate, after having listed the twelve *aṅgas* once.<sup>7</sup>

After the first fascicle of the *Madhyama-āgama* collection, however, this pattern gradually changes.<sup>8</sup> This can be seen in the ninth discourse, found in the second fascicle of the *Madhyama-āgama*, which begins with the Buddha asking a group of visitors if they knew a monastic endowed with a series of good qualities. The reply to that question repeats the whole long list of qualities, which is once again repeated as part of a reflection of someone who has just heard this reply.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this part is still dominated by an avoidance of abbreviating. In comparison, the PTS edition of the Pāli parallel gives the full list only once and abbreviates its recurrence.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of this *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, however, does employ [25] abbreviation, pointing to a change of attitude in this respect.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Whereas the B<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup> editions agree with the PTS edition in abbreviating the second and third occurrences, the C<sup>e</sup> edition only abbreviates the third.

<sup>6</sup> AN 7.64 at AN IV 113,13 (full), followed by AN IV 113,16 and 113,18 (abbreviated).

<sup>7</sup> T 27 at T I 810a11 first lists the twelve *aṅgas* and then at T I 810a15 refers to them summarily with the same expression used earlier to introduce their detailed listing: 十二部經. EĀ 39.1 at T II 728c3 lists the twelve *aṅgas* and then just refers to them summarily at T II 728c6, using the same expression 十二部經, also found in T 27, which in this case, however, has not been employed previously to introduce the detailed listing.

<sup>8</sup> See below notes 28 and 29 for abbreviations found already in MĀ 7.

<sup>9</sup> MĀ 9 at T I 430a10, 430a15, and 430a22.

<sup>10</sup> MN 24 at MN I 145,19 and 146,3; the reflection by the listener in MN 24 does not repeat the list of qualities. The B<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup> editions agree with the PTS edition in abbreviating the second occurrence (though in different ways); C<sup>e</sup> does not abbreviate it.

<sup>11</sup> See below notes 30 and 31.



The apparent reluctance to abbreviate, evident in the first few discourses of the collection, can be contrasted with its final discourse. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, this discourse exhibits a remarkable proliferation of abbreviations.<sup>12</sup> The discourse combines an abbreviated account of the gradual path (a topic to which I will return in the second part of this chapter) with a list of ten practices, which serve the purpose of overcoming ignorance. The list of ten practices is again combined with another list, which gives synonyms for the task of overcoming. Moreover, the mention of ignorance leads on to a listing of the ensuing links in the standard presentation of dependent arising as something to be overcome. On supplementing all the abbreviations, the discourse would become more than twice as long as the entire *Madhyama-āgama*.<sup>13</sup> This goes to show that the apparent reluctance in the first few discourses of the *Madhyama-āgama* to employ abbreviation is not a persistent trait of the remainder of the collection.

#### The Abbreviation Marker “In the Same Way” (如是)

One way of signalling abbreviation in the *Madhyama-āgama* takes the form of indicating “in the same way” (如是), or, more literally, “like this”. The phrase itself can find employment in a variety of ways in the discourses, which are not necessarily related to abbreviation. An instance where it does serve such a function occurs in an exposition of sense restraint, which explains the practice in full for the first sense organ of the eye and then abbreviates for the remaining sense organs:<sup>14</sup> “In the same way for the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... and the mind cognizing mental states.”

As will become clear with another example to be taken up later,<sup>15</sup> an abbreviated list of the six sense organs can also be given without a marker, as it is already fairly obvious that an abbreviation has occurred. In the present case of marked abbreviation, the text mentions just the ensuing physical

<sup>12</sup> MĀ 222 at T I 805c11 to 809a25.

<sup>13</sup> Anālayo 2014c: 44–47.

<sup>14</sup> MĀ 10 at T I 432b9: 如是耳, 鼻, 舌, 身, 意知法.

<sup>15</sup> See below note 35.

sense organs and in the case of the sixth and last sense organ also the corresponding object. The last then leads on to a repetition of the full exposition given earlier for the eye. This corresponds to a standard pattern of abbreviation, which is to give at least the first and last items in full and abbreviate those in between. This pattern reflects the oral medium, where the repetition of the full treatment in relation to the last item ensures that the main message is kept in mind. In the written medium, this last item could just as easily have been abbreviated as well.

A comparable usage can be found in relation to different doors of action. A detailed instruction regarding what should be done if an impure bodily action has been committed continues by indicating:<sup>16</sup> [26] “Verbal action is also in the same way,” The three doors of action are another topic that can alternatively be abbreviated without employing a marker.<sup>17</sup>

Marked abbreviation can also be employed for the four divine abodes or the five hindrances, where in each case the full exposition for the first member is followed by indicating that the same applies to the other members of this list:<sup>18</sup>

In the same way for compassion ... sympathetic joy ... and a mind endowed with equanimity.

In the same way for ill will ... sloth-and-torpor ... restlessness-and-worry ... and for abandoning doubt.

In such cases, the last member of the list will usually receive the same full treatment as given to its first member.

### The Abbreviation Marker “Up to” (至 and 乃至)

The employment of the alternative marker “up to” can serve to abbreviate the standard description of the attainment of the four absorptions, which

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<sup>16</sup> MĀ 14 at T I 437a5: 口業亦復如是.

<sup>17</sup> See below note 38.

<sup>18</sup> MĀ 15 at T I 438a24: 如是悲, 喜, 心與捨俱 and MĀ 19 at T I 444c3: 如是瞋恚, 睡眠, 掉悔, 斷疑.

begins by referring to seclusion from detrimental mental states and culminates in the attainment of the fourth absorption:<sup>19</sup> “Secluded from sensual desires, secluded from bad and unwholesome states ... *up to* ... one dwells attaining the accomplishment of the fourth absorption.” This abbreviation differs from those surveyed so far, as the full formula to be supplied does not occur in the same discourse. In terms of the taxonomy suggested in the previous chapter, it is thus an external abbreviation. For filling out the abbreviated parts, the full description given in another discourse found previously in the same collection needs to be consulted.<sup>20</sup>

A similar case involves a listing of the ten unwholesome courses of action, which mentions first the killing of living beings and then abbreviates the remainder of this list in the following manner:<sup>21</sup> “Taking what is not given ... sexual misconduct ... false speech ... *up to* ... wrong view”. Notably, in this case it is only a subsequent discourse in the same chapter that provides the textual material needed to flesh out this abbreviation, which requires supplementing the terms divisive speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech, covetousness, and ill will.<sup>22</sup> In itself, such [27] later occurrence is not necessarily problematic. As long as the full version is found somewhere in the same collection, the reciters who had memorized it would know how a particular abbreviated instance should be supplemented, if required. A later positioning of the full text is less cumbersome in the oral medium compared to a written version of the collection, in which case there is a greater need to locate the place where the template can be found, making it preferable to position the complete version first in order to be able to identify it more easily.

At the same time, however, even in oral recitation it would seem somewhat more natural to give the full version first and abbreviate subsequently. Perhaps departures from this pattern reflect a shifting around of discourses within the collection, which comparative study suggests to be a pervasive

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<sup>19</sup> MĀ 19 at T I 444c6: 離欲, 離惡不善之法, 至得第四禪成就遊。

<sup>20</sup> MĀ 2 at T I 422b11.

<sup>21</sup> MĀ 13 at T I 435b9: 不與取, 邪淫, 妄言, 乃至邪見。

<sup>22</sup> MĀ 15 at T I 437c14 lists the unwholesome ways of action that have been abbreviated in MĀ 13. It also provides a detailed explanation of each.

pattern of the different *Āgama* collections.<sup>23</sup> If these two considerations are combined, the proposed hypothesis would be as follows: A departure from the more natural pattern of having the full text first, due to a shifting around of discourses, was not perceived as sufficiently problematic to motivate those responsible for the transmission of the collection to adjust by giving the full account in what, by then, had become the first occurrence of the topic in question and abbreviating the discourse that previously had the full account.

Another case of abbreviation involves the members of the eightfold path, which are presented in this way:<sup>24</sup> “Right view ... *up to* ... right concentration”. In this case as well, a full listing of the eight path factors occurs only in a subsequent discourse, as part of an exposition of the fourth noble truth.<sup>25</sup> This shows that the above case of giving the full exposition at a later juncture is not unique in this respect.

The employment of marked abbreviation is not confined to doctrinal lists and can similarly be used for numerals. Here is an example:<sup>26</sup> “Either they eat one mouthful and are contented by one mouthful, or else two mouthfuls ... three ... four ... *up to* ... seven mouthfuls.” The same pattern of giving the numbers two, three, and four, but then not even mentioning the numbers five and six, before reaching the final number seven, occurs elsewhere in a description of a discussion that might range from one to seven days and nights.<sup>27</sup> [28]

## Lack of an Abbreviation Marker

*Madhyama-āgama* discourses often abbreviate without employing an explicit marker to signal what has taken place. One example is a listing of seven ways

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<sup>23</sup> See the survey of discourse parallels in Akanuma 1929/1990 and Bucknell 2014 and 2017 on the apparent shifting around of whole groups of discourses.

<sup>24</sup> MĀ 13 at T I 436a5: 正見乃至正定.

<sup>25</sup> MĀ 31 at T I 469a14. In the comparable case of an abbreviation of a standard doctrinal term, in this case the exposition of dependent arising (found in a discourse that falls outside of the scope of the present survey of the first five fascicles), MĀ 62 at T I 498b27, a complete coverage of the twelve links occurs previous to this abbreviation in MĀ 55 at T I 491a5.

<sup>26</sup> MĀ 18 at T I 441c24: 或噉一口, 以一口為足, 或二口, 三, 四, 乃至七口.

<sup>27</sup> MĀ 23 at T I 452a25.

to acquire worldly merits, which gives the first three cases in full, each time concluding with the statement that this is the first, second, and third of these seven worldly merits. The remaining four are presented together, followed by the statement that this is the seventh way to acquire worldly merits. This statement obviously intends only the last part of the preceding passage. As a result of adopting this mode of presentation, the exposition comes without any explicit reference to the fourth, fifth, and sixth worldly merits.<sup>28</sup>

The same discourse continues by expounding seven ways to acquire world-transcending merits. In this case, only the first two and the seventh are explicitly designated as such, so that this exposition lacks explicit references to the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth ways to acquire world-transcending merits.<sup>29</sup>

Another example concerns an inquiry into the purpose of living the life of a monastic under the guidance of the Buddha:<sup>30</sup>

“How is it, friend, are you cultivating the holy life under the recluse Gautama for the sake of purification of virtue?” He replied: “No.”

“Are you cultivating the holy life under the recluse Gautama for the sake of purification of the mind, for the sake of purification of view, for the sake of purification from the hindrance of doubt, for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path, for the sake of purification of knowledge and vision of the way, for the sake of purification of knowledge of the way of abandoning?” He replied: “No.”

The idea is evidently that each of these different purifications formed the topic of an individual question that met with a rejection. When asked to explain this matter further, the protagonist who had been rejecting the different proposals illustrates the situation with the example of a relay of seven

<sup>28</sup> MĀ 7 at T I 428a3: 是謂第一, T I 428a7: 是謂第二, T I 428a10: 是謂第三, and T I 428a16: 是謂第七.

<sup>29</sup> MĀ 7 at T I 428b1: 謂第一, T I 428b5: 是謂第二, and T I 428b10: 是謂第七.

<sup>30</sup> MĀ 9 at T I 430b27: 云何, 賢者, 以戒淨故從沙門瞿曇修梵行耶? 答曰: 不也. 以心淨故, 以見淨故, 以疑蓋淨故, 以道非道知見淨故, 以道跡知見淨故, 以道跡斷智淨故, 從沙門瞿曇修梵行耶? 答曰: 不也; on this list see also Anālayo 2005.

chariots used one after the other to reach a particular goal. The queries posed by the other person are similar to asking someone who used the whole relay of chariots if the journey had been accomplished by means of the first chariot, or rather by means of the second, or by means of the third, or else by means of the seventh. In this way, here again a series of numbers from one to seven are not given in full, as the fourth, fifth, and sixth chariots are not explicitly mentioned:<sup>31</sup> “Did you ride on the second chariot, did you ride on the third chariot ... *up to* ... the seventh chariot?” Even though the reference to the actual journey accomplished in this way has been abbreviated without being marked, the dropping of a reference to the fourth, fifth, and sixth chariots is signaled with the help of the abbreviation marker “*up to*”. [29]

A minor abbreviation occurs in the context of a description of insight into the four noble truths, which takes the following form:<sup>32</sup>

One understands *duḥkha* as it really is, understands the arising of *duḥkha*, understands the cessation of *duḥkha*, and understands the path to the cessation of *duḥkha* as it really is.

The presentation obviously does not intend to convey that the understanding of the second and third truths is not “as it really is” (如真). In other words, the phrase employed for the first and last items should be applied to those that come in between. A similar pattern occurs in the same discourse in relation to a long list of various things that one should better avoid, where the full formulation is only found for the first and last items, whereas the remainder takes the form of a list of such things without explicitly mentioning that these should be avoided, which is of course implied by the context.<sup>33</sup> The same discourse also applies the pattern of giving only the first and the last items in full to the three types of unwholesome thoughts and the seven awakening factors, where each time only the first and last are treated in full, and the others are given only in an abbreviated manner.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> MĀ 9 at T I 431a18: 乘第二車, 乘第三車, 至第七車?

<sup>32</sup> MĀ 10 at T I 432a29: 知苦如真, 知苦習, 知苦滅, 知苦滅道如真.

<sup>33</sup> MĀ 10 at T I 432b14.

<sup>34</sup> MĀ 10 at T I 432c13 and 432c17.

The pattern of giving the first and last item in full and then abbreviating those that come in between continues throughout the remainder of the section under study. An example concerns the six sense organs, which already came up above among abbreviations that do involve a marker. The present case shows that the same topic can also be covered without a marker:<sup>35</sup> “The sphere of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, the sphere of the mind”.

In the case taken up earlier,<sup>36</sup> it seems that perhaps a marker was used because the sense organ of the eye came with a detailed statement, which would have made it appear appropriate to introduce the other sense organs with the marker “in the same way”. In the present case, however, the six sense organs are part of a fairly short and straightforward list, presumably obviating the need to mark that an abbreviation has taken place.

A particularly frequent occurrence of abbreviation involves the doors of action. As also seen above, these can come with a marker.<sup>37</sup> Often, however, this is not the case and the reference to verbal actions is simply not given in full. Here is an example:<sup>38</sup> “Impure bodily actions, verbal, impure mental actions”. The discourse begins its examination with the case of someone who has impure bodily actions but pure verbal actions (身不淨行, 口淨行).<sup>[30]</sup> The formulation confirms what anyway could hardly be doubted, namely that verbal actions were considered an alternative in their own right. That is, the passage just quoted indeed involves an abbreviation.

These instances of abbreviation without a marker have in common that they are fairly unambiguous in nature and can be supplemented from the immediately preceding part of the same discourse. In terms of the taxonomy suggested in the previous chapter, these are all “internal” abbreviations.

## The Gradual Path

Another perspective on the practice of abbreviation in the *Madhyama-*

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<sup>35</sup> MĀ 13 at T I 435c19: 眼處, 耳, 鼻, 舌, 身, 意處.

<sup>36</sup> See above note 14.

<sup>37</sup> See above note 16.

<sup>38</sup> MĀ 25 at T I 454b26: 身不淨行, 口, 意不淨行.

*āgama* emerges with research by Gethin (2020b) of accounts of the gradual path of training, which lead via a range of practices from the emergence of a Tathāgata (= the Buddha) and a disciple going forth under him all the way up to the latter's attainment of full awakening.<sup>39</sup> Accounts of the gradual path have not come up in the survey above, as relevant instances occur only in *Madhyama-āgama* discourses found subsequent to the first five fascicles taken up for study here. As a way of counterbalancing possible shortcomings due to the restricted amount of text surveyed in the first part of this chapter, in this second part I follow the lead provided by Gethin (2020b) and examine relevant instances in detail.

Several descriptions of the gradual path in the *Madhyama-āgama* involve a somewhat abrupt shift from a reference to the arising of a Tathāgata, described with a standard set of epithets,<sup>40</sup> to the abandoning of the five hindrances as a precondition for the attainment of the four absorptions. Right after the last of the epithets used to describe the Tathāgata, the next sentence starts with “he” (彼), which can also convey the sense “that one”. Although it would be natural to take this Chinese character to refer back to the Tathāgata, the context makes it clear that the abandoning of the five hindrances is much rather done by a practitioner of the gradual path. Gethin (2020b) considers such instances to involve “silent abbreviation”, in the sense of an intentional abbreviation of the account of the gradual path between the last in the standard set of epithets that describe the Tathāgata and the disciple's overcoming of the hindrances.

Since such an abbreviation could only be supplemented by relying on another discourse, this would constitute an external abbreviation of a substantial portion of text without any marker. Such a procedure would amount to a significant departure from the pattern of employing abbreviation described above.

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<sup>39</sup> For studies of the gradual path account see, e.g., Franke 1917: 50–80, Eimer 1976: 26–34, Bucknell 1984, Meisig 1987: 35–80, Crangle 1994: 149–152, Manné 1995, Ramers 1996, Freiburger 2000: 71–86, Yit 2004, Melzer 2006: 12–24, Anālayo 2016f, and Gethin 2020b.

<sup>40</sup> For a study of these epithets in translations by Zhī Qiān see Nattier 2003b.



## Similar Passages

A first step in an attempt to understand such an unexpected finding would be to explore related usages in the remainder of the same collection, as a way of getting an impression of the type of usage typical of this particular textual tradition. In the present case, this could be done by surveying other passages in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection that also involve the same listing of epithets of the Tathāgata followed by a reference to “he” (彼). Several relevant instances begin with a reference just to the Tathāgata, without mentioning his <sup>[31]</sup> emergence in the world,<sup>41</sup> followed by listing the epithets and then describing his realization as follows:

He, in this world with its celestials, Māras, Brahmās, recluses, and brahmins, from humans to celestials, has understood himself, awakened himself, and dwells having himself accomplished realization.

In the context of this formulaic description of the Tathāgata’s realization, the employment of “he” (彼) clearly refers back to the Tathāgata. This passage is then followed by indicating that “he” (彼) teaches the Dharma, which again clearly intends the Tathāgata himself.

Several other instances that combine a reference to the Tathāgata with his emerging in the world are formulated in the first person singular. Thus, the Tathāgata, i.e. the Buddha, first states: “I have now emerged in the world, a Tathāgata” (我今出世, 如來), followed by giving the list of epithets and then stating: “I am now” (我今) benefitting myself and also benefitting others.<sup>42</sup> This confirms the pattern that the person mentioned right after the last epithet is the Tathāgata himself. The same holds for another relevant instance, which has a disciple as the speaker, in which case the phrase that follows the list of epithets is “he is my teacher” (彼是我師).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> MĀ 16 at T I 438b20, MĀ 20 at T I 445b3, MĀ 132 at T I 623a18, and MĀ 161 at T I 685a18: 彼於此世, 天及魔, 梵, 沙門, 梵志, 從人至天, 自知, 自覺, 自作證成就遊.

<sup>42</sup> Examples are MĀ 63 at T I 503a11, MĀ 67 at T 515a17, MĀ 68 at T I 518b14, MĀ 155 at T I 678a14, and MĀ 160 at T I 684b16.

<sup>43</sup> MĀ 162 at T I 690b15; this case does not explicitly mention the Tathāgata’s emergence

A description of the Tathāgata's realization in the third person singular, in the way given in the passage translated above, can also be preceded by an explicit reference to his emergence in the world (如來出世).<sup>44</sup> The same explicit reference in another passage follows the last epithet by indicating that "he stays in secluded places" (彼住無事處).<sup>45</sup> This instance still intends the Tathāgata's own practice, as evident from the ensuing question: "For what purpose does the Tathāgata stay in secluded places?" (如來以何義故, 住無事處).<sup>46</sup>

### Marked Abbreviations of the Gradual Path

With this fairly pervasive pattern of following the last epithet after a mention of the Tathāgata with a reference to the Tathāgata himself, the stage is set for examining accounts of the gradual path. The full version of such an account features as yet another instance where the emergence of the Tathāgata, followed by the list of epithets, leads over to a description of the Tathāgata's realization, beginning with "he has in this world" (彼於此世).<sup>47</sup> Next

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in the world.

<sup>44</sup> MĀ 198 at T I 758a18.

<sup>45</sup> MĀ 191 at T I 740a5.

<sup>46</sup> MĀ 191 at T I 740a7.

<sup>47</sup> MĀ 146 at T I 656c29. Considerable parts of this description occur also in MĀ 80 at T I 552b13, with the difference of lacking a reference to the emergence of the Tathāgata and of being worded in the first person singular, so that the reference to the five hindrances at T I 553b2 takes the form: 我已斷此五蓋. In particular the first of these differences makes it clear that MĀ 146 provides the template for abbreviated versions of the gradual path, in line with the standard pattern for abbreviations by way of first quoting part of the full exposition, in this case the Tathāgata's emergence in the world and his epithets, and only then abbreviating. Bucknell 2022: 109–111 proposes the influence of abbreviation, together with its subsequent loss, on a later part of MĀ 146 at T I 658a10, which proceeds directly from the attainment of the fourth absorption to the destruction of the influxes: 彼已得如是定心, 清淨無穢, 無煩柔軟, 善住得不動心, 趣向漏盡智通作證. This thereby proceeds without mentioning the other two higher knowledges found in the Pāli parallel, beginning in MN 27 at MN I 182,19 with *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyaḍāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye t̥hite āneñjappatte pubbe-*

comes a reference indicating that “he teaches the Dharma” (彼說法), which also clearly intends the Tathāgata. Later on, however, the same “he” (彼) will instead designate a disciple who is inspired by the Tathāgata’s teachings. “At a later time, he” (彼於後時) leaves behind the household life <sup>[32]</sup> and undertakes various practices until eventually “he abandons these five hindrances” (彼斷此五蓋).<sup>48</sup>

This full account provides the template for three abbreviated accounts of the gradual path, found in the final recitation section of the *Madhyama-āgama*, which continue, after the last epithet that concludes the description of the arising of the Tathāgata, with the following formulation:<sup>49</sup> “He abandons ... up to ... the five hindrances” (彼斷乃至五蓋).

This reference could at best only be taken to abbreviate the part of the gradual path that starts with the first instance of something being actually abandoned by the disciple, which in the full account is the abandoning of killing.<sup>50</sup> Such an abbreviation would omit the first part of the gradual path

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*nivāsānussatiñāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmeti*. The suggestion is that an abbreviation marker could have been placed after the reference to imperturbability, 不動心/*āneñjappatte*, and this would then subsequently have been lost. Yet, it would be more in keeping with the general use of abbreviation if a marker were to be placed in a way that makes it clear to subsequent generations of reciters what text should be recited. This is not clear with an abbreviation marker placed in the suggested manner. With the long string of previous terms supposedly not abbreviated, it would have been much more natural to place the marker even just a single term later, after what in MN 27 is the reference to *pubbeni-vāsānussatiñāṇāya*, or even better after *cittaṃ abhininnāmeti*. In this way, subsequent reciters would have known exactly what to supplement. Alternatively, had the set of three higher knowledges been considered a single block by the reciters, the marker would have been placed earlier, after *so evaṃ samāhite citte*/彼已得如是定心. In addition to requiring a rather improbable placing of the abbreviation marker, the same hypothesis should also explain the similar case of MĀ 182 at T I 725b25. This then requires two instances of the same (in itself already improbable) textual error occurring in two different discourses. In sum, the envisaged scenario does seem to be rather unlikely.

<sup>48</sup> MĀ 146 at T I 657a2, 657a9, and 657c21.

<sup>49</sup> MĀ 204 at T I 778b13, MĀ 208 at T I 785c26, and MĀ 222 at T I 805c17 (followed by numerous recurrences in the same discourse).

<sup>50</sup> MĀ 146 at T I 657a14.

account, which describes how someone hears the teachings, gains faith, aspires to go forth, and eventually does so.

Moreover, strictly speaking even this reference to killing does not seem to be the appropriate choice, as it reads “he abstains from killing and abandons killing” (彼離殺, 斷殺). If the abbreviation had intended this reference, it would have been more natural to phrase it as “he *abstains* ... up to” (彼離乃至), rather than “he *abandons* ... up to” (彼斷乃至).

On this reasoning, then, the first phrase to which the above abbreviation could indeed refer, in the sense of involving exactly the same expression “he abandons” (彼斷), is the reference to “he abandons these five hindrances” (彼斷此五蓋).<sup>51</sup> This reference, however, quite obviously could not be what the abbreviation “he abandons ... up to ... the five hindrances” (彼斷乃至五蓋) has in mind.

Clearly, the above reference is problematic. A possible explanation could be developed based on envisaging that this formulation may involve a minor error in the positioning of the abbreviation. Such a shift in position could easily have occurred, even just as a scribal error, in one of the three instances and then influenced the others. On this assumption, the formulation could be emended as follows: “He ... up to ... abandons the five hindrances” (彼乃至斷五蓋).

The proposed emendation only involves having the abbreviation “up to” (乃至) one character earlier. On the suggested emendation, the first reference to “he” (彼) would still intend the Tathāgata, in the sense of referring to the Tathāgata’s realization, beginning with “he has in this world” (彼於此世). This would be in line with the recurrent pattern in the passages surveyed above, where such a reference, found right after the list of epithets, indeed intends the Tathāgata. In view of this pattern, it would have been natural for the reciters to abbreviate at this point. [33]

The emended version thereby fulfils the purpose of the abbreviation required at this juncture, since it covers the whole description of the gradual path from the Tathāgata’s realization up to the disciple’s abandoning of the

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<sup>51</sup> MĀ 146 at T I 657c21.

five hindrances. Such abandoning would be what the later part of the above emendation refers to. In the full account, this reads “he abandons *these* five hindrances” (斷此五蓋). The employment of “these” (此) in the full account reflects the fact that the hindrances have just been individually listed, something that in the abbreviated version has naturally been dropped, resulting in a reference to just “the five hindrances” (五蓋).

Based on these considerations, it seems fair to conclude that the three accounts of the gradual path in question involve an abbreviation whose positioning appears to have suffered from an error, as a result of which the marker would have shifted place by one Chinese character. Whereas the formulation found in the original fails to fulfil its purpose properly, the whole problem can be solved with the proposed emendation.

The conclusion that these three accounts are not instances of major portions of text being abbreviated without an explicit marker would also be in line with findings from my research on abbreviations in the first five fascicles of the *Samyukta-āgama* collection, which showed that what may seem to be an abbreviation at first sight can turn out to be rather due to a loss of text (see above p. 120). The only difference is that the present instance is not even a loss of text, but instead an apparent shift of placement by one Chinese character.

### A Gradual Path Account without an Abbreviation Marker

The possibility of a loss of text is more relevant to another instance to be examined, which occurs in a discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection before its full account of the gradual path. After the last epithet, the formulation employed is as follows:<sup>52</sup> “[The Tathāgata] emerges in the world. He relinquishes the five hindrances” (出於世間. 彼捨五蓋).

This version differs from the standard formulation by having the reference to the Tathāgata “emerging in the world” only after the last epithet, rather than at the outset.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the use of the formulation 出於世間

<sup>52</sup> MĀ 104 at T 595a8.

<sup>53</sup> A to some extent comparable instance is MĀ 124 at T I 613b4, which follows the listing of epithets with the statement that he “has emerged in the world and teaches the Dhar-

to qualify the emergence of a Tathāgata seems to be unique to this discourse, being elsewhere in the collection rather used for mental qualities.<sup>54</sup> For designating the emergence of the Tathāgata in the world, *Madhyama-āgama* discourses generally, though not invariably, tend to use just the phrase 出世.

The above passage also employs the verb “relinquish” (捨), which differs from the standard verb “abandon” (斷) used elsewhere in *Madhyama-āgama* discourses in reference to “the five hindrances”. In relation to such variations, it needs to be kept in mind that the *Madhyama-āgama* differs from other Chinese *Āgamas* in having a comparably high consistency of terms and phrases, not following the general penchant of Chinese translators to introduce some variations for aesthetic reasons, as evident in other *Āgama* collections.<sup>55</sup> For <sup>[34]</sup> this reason, such irregularities do give the impression that some textual corruption could have occurred.

The verb “abandon” has been used in a closely similar context in the immediately preceding discourse. This is yet another instance referring to the Tathāgata’s emergence in the world. After the last epithet, this version proceeds by indicating that “he declares the abandoning of clinging.”<sup>56</sup> This refers to the Tathāgata teaching how to abandon all types of clinging. Perhaps the fact that here the use of “he” for the Tathāgata comes together with the verb “abandon” has in some way impacted the phrasing in the next discourse, although it remains unclear in exactly what way this could have happened. Whatever may be the final word on this somewhat obscure case, it seems obvious that the present passage does not conform to the general usage in the *Madhyama-āgama*. It follows that its formulation is not a reliable guide to identifying patterns of usages employed in the rest of the collection.

In sum, then, the idea that gradual path accounts show “silent abbreviation” to be a characteristic of *Madhyama-āgama* discourses is not corroborated by the instances surveyed above, with the possible exception of the last and rather uncertain instance. The absence of substantial evidence

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ma”, 出世說法. This phrasing thereby dispenses with a reference to “he” (彼).

<sup>54</sup> MĀ 7 at T I 428a27 and MĀ 58 at T I 493a17.

<sup>55</sup> See Radich and Anālayo 2017: 218.

<sup>56</sup> MĀ 103 at T I 591b8: 彼施設斷受.

for abbreviations that are not marked and need to be supplemented from outside the discourse in question is another finding in line with what emerges on surveying abbreviations in the *Samyukta-āgama*. Quantitative analysis shows such cases to be so rare in the first part of this collection as to be statistically insignificant (see above p. 124f). This makes it improbable for unmarked abbreviation to be responsible for a Chinese *Āgama* passage being substantially different from its parallel(s).

### The Need for Caution

In general terms, it would indeed seem preferable to be cautious before concluding too readily that unmarked or silent abbreviation of a substantial amount of text is characteristic of the *Madhyama-āgama* collection. The need for such caution can be illustrated with the example of a few *Madhyama-āgama* discourses which differ from their Pāli parallels in relation to the account of the gradual path of training.

One such *Madhyama-āgama* discourse proceeds only up to the fourth absorption, without mentioning the gaining of awakening.<sup>57</sup> In evaluating this situation, it needs to be kept in mind that the standard procedure for abbreviation within a discourse is to quote the beginning part in full and then do the same for the concluding part. As evident in the examples surveyed above, such abbreviation is usually not open-ended but instead tends to mention explicitly the first and last items in a particular list as the end-points within which abbreviation has occurred. In the present case, however, no final item can be identified. In other words, had an abbreviation occurred, the final words of the standard description of awakening would have been required. The absence of any such reference makes it rather improbable that this is a case of intentional abbreviation.

Moreover, in the corresponding Pāli version the abbreviated account of the gradual path occurs after a description of the fourth absorption has been presented as the realization of an entirely pleasant world. This results

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<sup>57</sup> MĀ 208 at T I 786b1, on which Gethin 2020b: 27 note 55 comments that “the omission of the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas* ... might be regarded as a silent abbreviation.”

in an incoherent presentation. The account of the gradual path <sup>[35]</sup> covers the four absorptions, each of which is in this particular context individually qualified as a state superior to the entirely pleasant world discussed earlier. In this way, the first absorption discussed in the gradual path ends up being presented as superior to the fourth absorption mentioned earlier.<sup>58</sup> This patently fails to make sense. The existence of such problems makes it advisable not to rely on the Pāli version for reconstructing the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel.

A similar case involves another *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, which also proceeds only up to the attainment of the fourth absorption.<sup>59</sup> In this case, again, the presentation in this discourse appears to provide a viable alternative to the full account of the gradual path given (in abbreviated form) in its Pāli parallel.<sup>60</sup>

The same holds for yet another *Madhyama-āgama* discourse, which proceeds from the arising of a Tathāgata to a description of freedom from likes and dislikes in relation to objects experienced through the sense organs.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> MN 79 at MN II 38,8; see also the discussion in Anālayo 2011c: 436.

<sup>59</sup> MĀ 198 at T I 758c4, in which case Gethin 2020b: 28 also considers the possibility of silent abbreviation.

<sup>60</sup> MN 125 at MN III 136,30. As I noted in Anālayo 2006b: 17, when “evaluating this particular difference, it needs to be born in mind that the topic of the two versions ... is how a disciple can, by dint of diligent practice, reach unification of the mind. From this perspective, an account of the disciple’s training until the attainment of the fourth *jhāna* would be sufficient, as with the fourth *jhāna* unification of the mind has indeed been accomplished.”

<sup>61</sup> MĀ 201 at T I 769c15. Gethin 2020b: 28 reasons that it “seems likely that there is silent abbreviation here and that the gradual path up to the attainment of the fourth *dhyaṇa* is intended ... otherwise we have an account of how someone who is already awakened (the perfectly awakened Tathāgata) practises to become awakened, which makes little sense.” The proposed reasoning would fit the case of MĀ 204 at T I 778b13, in relation to which Gethin 2020b: 26 note 55 rightly criticises me for having failed to realize that the mention of “he”, 彼, occurring right after the standard reference to the arising of the Tathāgata, should not be read as intending the Buddha (see Anālayo 2011c: 186, where I have been misled by my familiarity with the standard pattern elsewhere in the *Madhyama-*



To assume that the gradual path up to the attainment of the fourth absorption should be supplemented conflicts with the same principle already mentioned, in that an abbreviation should lead up to a phrase actually found in the full account. Yet, the description of freedom from likes and dislikes in the present case has no counterpart in the full account of the gradual path. The closest this full account comes to the present passage is its description of sense restraint. However, this occurs much earlier than the attainment of the four absorptions, so that an abbreviation leading up to this description would not cover absorption attainment. Moreover, the formulations regarding the sense organs in the two members of the same discourse collection are markedly different, making it highly improbable that they can be taken to refer to each other.<sup>62</sup> Apart from the description of sense restraint, however, the full version of the gradual path in the *Madhyama-āgama* does not take up the topic of the six sense organs. Besides, in the present case the providing of a full account of the gradual path in the Pāli version also results in a presentation that is not without problems.<sup>63</sup> Once again, the *Madhyama-āgama* version is best read in its own right.<sup>[36]</sup>

In sum, it seems preferable to be circumspect with the idea of unmarked or silent abbreviation of the external type, in order to avoid succumbing to a perhaps quite natural tendency to harmonize in line with the much better known Pāli parallels. Although the Pāli version of a particular text will always be an important reference point, it would be better not turn it into a tem-

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*āgama* to continue with a reference to the Buddha and by the fact that this particular occurrence is preceded by an account of other pre-awakening experiences of the Buddha). In the present case, however, the reference to “he” (彼) is more ambiguous, as the ensuing text could alternatively be read as a description of an awakened one’s freedom from reacting with likes and dislikes. It does not seem to be the case that a supplementation of the gradual path up to the fourth absorption is required for the passage to make sense. Besides, even attainment of the four absorptions does not necessarily imply that “he” will subsequently always be able to stay free from likes and dislikes toward experiences through the senses.

<sup>62</sup> MĀ 146 at T I 657c3: 若眼見色, 然不受相, 亦不味色, 謂忿靜故, 守護眼根 (adopting the variant 相 instead of 想), which differs from MĀ 201 at T I 769c14: 彼眼見色, 於好色而不樂著, 於惡色而不憎惡.

<sup>63</sup> See the discussion in Anālayo 2011c: 255f.

plate to which parallel versions have to be made to conform. This has for quite some time been recognized among those working with Sanskrit and Gāndhārī fragments, and the same applies similarly to working with the Chinese *Āgamas* and discourses extant in Tibetan. Throughout, respecting the idiosyncrasies of a particular textual tradition is the most promising avenue for furthering our understanding.

## Conclusion

Abbreviation in the first part of the *Madhyama-āgama* conforms to basic patterns also seen in the first part of the *Samyukta-āgama*. The two collections share a standard procedure of giving the first and last items in a list, abbreviating those in between. Such cases are often fairly self-evident, wherefore no marker is required. To signal abbreviation, the markers “in the same way” and “up to” can be relied on, which are particularly handy when the text to be supplemented is not found in the same discourse. This pattern appears to apply also to *Madhyama-āgama* accounts of the gradual path.

In the *Samyukta-āgama*, the first discourse immediately employs internal abbreviation by giving a full treatment only to the aggregates of form and consciousness, abbreviating the three aggregates that come between these two. The first few discourses in the *Madhyama-āgama* instead refrain from employing abbreviation.

Another and more substantial difference between the two collections is the absence in the *Madhyama-āgama* of repetition series, in the sense that a discourse is followed by an indication that the same exposition should be repeated several times, with some usually minor variation in terminology. Such a procedure could have been used, for example, for two consecutive *Madhyama-āgama* discourses that share a single Pāli parallel.<sup>64</sup> This has not been done and the two fairly similar discourses are both given in full.

The employment of repetition series appears to be more characteristic of collections of short discourses, be these assembled topic-wise according to the *saṃyukta/saṃyutta* principle or by way of ascending numbers accord-

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<sup>64</sup> MĀ 107 and MĀ 108 at T I 596c25 and 597c12, parallels to MN 17 at MN I 104,17.

ing to the *ekottarika/aṅguttara* principle. The basic feature of proliferating abbreviations that results from such repetition series is nevertheless also evident in the last discourse in the *Madhyama-āgama*. This shares with some of the repetition series found in collections of short discourses the feature of being mainly made up of abbreviations. In such cases, it often seems probable that the respective text(s) were never recited in full. This in turn points to an intriguing feature, in that a principle that would have come into existence to facilitate transmission, by way of abbreviating portions of text, in the course of time has acquired a considerably more creative role.

## VII

### The Dynamics of Abbreviation (3)

This chapter continues surveying the employment of textual abbreviation in the Chinese *Āgamas*, in the present case taking up the first six fascicles of the *Ekottarika-āgama* extant in Chinese translation (T 125).<sup>1</sup> In line with a suggestion made in the previous chapter, in what follows I again take up the need to avoid assuming too easily that an abbreviation without a marker has occurred.

The occurrence of abbreviation in the *Ekottarika-āgama* extant in Chinese can best be surveyed by noting cases where no abbreviation has occurred, where abbreviation has occurred and has been marked, and where abbreviation has been applied without an explicit marker.

#### Lack of Abbreviation

The first few discourses in the *Ekottarika-āgama* show a reluctance to use abbreviation similar to what is evident in the beginning parts of the *Madhyama-āgama* (see above p. 136f). This is particularly evident in the case of the first ten discourses (EĀ 2.1 to 2.10), which employ basically the same text

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<sup>1</sup> As the first fascicle has relatively little actual text, I have expanded the scope of my survey to the first six fascicles in order to cover roughly the same amount of material as taken up in my other two studies of the first five fascicles in the *Madhyama-āgama* and *Samyukta-āgama* collections. My survey therefore begins at T II 552c9 and goes up to T II 576a6.

to describe single things that should be cultivated, differing only insofar as the treatment is applied to different meditation practices.

The first such case concerns recollection of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup> The full text of this discourse recurs in exactly the same way another nine times without any abbreviation, the only difference being that the “Buddha” (佛) as the object of such mindfulness comes to be replaced by the Dharma (法), [62] the Community (眾), morality (戒), generosity (施), celestials (天), stilling (休息), breathing (安般), the impermanence of the body (身非常),<sup>3</sup> and death (死). This is remarkable, as the text could easily have been abbreviated.

The same pattern continues to some extent with the next set of ten discourses (EĀ 3.1 to 3.10), which expounds these ten recollections in more detail. Although the differences between these ten practices naturally result in differing descriptions, so that the variations are more substantial than in the previous set of ten, nevertheless these ten more detailed expositions share a considerable amount of textual material that could easily have been abbreviated.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, even parts relevant only to one topic that could have employed internal abbreviation are still given in full.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [3] EĀ 2.1 at T II 552c9.

<sup>3</sup> [4] The parallel listing of the ten recollections in the corresponding section on Ones in AN 1.20.93–102 at AN I 42,9 differs insofar as it just mentions mindfulness of the body, or more literally mindfulness gone to the body, *kāyagatāsati*, without bringing in the topic of impermanence. Note that the subsequent and more detailed exposition of these ten recollections in the *Ekottarika-āgama* speaks just of mindfulness of the body, EĀ 3.9 at T II 556b20: 念身, without a reference to 非常. Another and minor difference concerns the sequence of the last four recollections, which in the Pāli list are mindfulness of breathing (7<sup>th</sup>), of death (8<sup>th</sup>), of the body (9<sup>th</sup>), and of stilling (*upasama*; 10<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> [5] A comparable pattern can be discerned in the ninth chapter, where no abbreviation is used, even though discourses come in pairs that have considerable textual overlap: see EĀ 9.1 and EĀ 9.2, EĀ 9.3 and EĀ 9.4, EĀ 9.5 and EĀ 9.6, EĀ 9.7 and EĀ 9.8, and EĀ 9.9 and EĀ 9.10.

<sup>5</sup> [6] For example, EĀ 3.9 at T II 556c4 instructs contemplating the nature of the body, from the viewpoint of the four elements, in the following manner: 何者是身為? 地種是也? 水種是也? 火種是也? 風種是也? (for the fire element adopting the variant 也 instead of 耶). The individual questions repeated for each of the four elements could have been abbreviated; see also below note 14.

The case of the first ten discourses reflects a distinct feature of the *Ekottarika-āgama*, in the form it has been preserved in Chinese translation, which is the absence of repetition series of the type found in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* as well as in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and in its *Samyukta-āgama* counterpart (T 99). Such repetition series take the form of indicating that a particular discourse should be repeated with some specific changes to be applied, such as exchanging a particular term for another one, etc. In the case of the first ten discourses, for example, adopting this pattern would have enabled giving only the first discourse in full, followed by an indication that the same discourse should be repeated by replacing the reference to recollection of the Buddha with the other nine objects of recollection.

The absence of such repetition series in the entire collection need not necessarily imply a substantial difference in reciting practices among those responsible for handing down the Indic original, compared to other collections of short discourses arranged numerically or topic-wise. The translation of the *Ekottarika-āgama* was done based on an oral recitation of the Indic text, without access to a written copy; in fact, the preface to the translation reports the loss of some of the *uddānas*, mnemonic summaries that reflect the arrangement of texts through a listing of keywords.<sup>6</sup> This leaves open the possibility that the absence of repetition series could be the result of the circumstances of transmission and/or translation.

## Marked Abbreviation

The standard marker of abbreviation in the part of the *Ekottarika-āgama* under investigation is “up to”, 乃至, apparently preferred over the shorter form (至) and also over the alternative “in the same way”, 如是.<sup>7</sup> This differs from the abbreviations used in the first part of the [63] *Madhyama-āgama*, which regularly employs “in the same way”, 如是, and also alternates between the longer and shorter form of conveying “up to” (乃至 and 至). These dis-

<sup>6</sup> [7] T II 549a16: 下部十五卷失其錄偈也; for a detailed study of *uddānas* in T 125 see Sū 2013.

<sup>7</sup> [8] This observation refers only to the employment of 如是 as a marker of abbreviation; it does not cover other usages of the same phrase.

tinct modes of usage appear to offer yet another indication of different translation styles that distinguishes these two *Āgama* collections.<sup>8</sup>

An example for the employment of the abbreviation “up to” would be when a particular statement, be it a request or a confession, is made three times. After the full formulation of the first instance, the abbreviation 乃至再三 clarifies that this was repeated until reaching three instances altogether.<sup>9</sup> The usual pattern in the early discourses is for the person to whom such repetitions are addressed to agree or accept on the third instance. In the present case, however, the Buddha’s acceptance is followed by the indication that this was also expressed “up to three, four” times (乃至三四).<sup>10</sup> This must be a textual error, as a single acceptance would suffice and the addition of “four” after “three” fails to make sense.

### Unmarked Abbreviation

Alongside the recurrent use of “up to” (乃至), the *Ekottarika-āgama* also regularly employs unmarked abbreviation. An example in case is the listing of outstanding disciples, which presents these in groups of ten. The first eminent monk is introduced with the phrase “among my disciples, the foremost monk” (我聲聞中第一比丘), followed by mentioning the quality in which the monk was held to be outstanding and then giving his name.<sup>11</sup> For the next monk, the text abbreviates the above phrase and just states the quality and gives the name. The same procedure continues for the other eight members of this group. However, for starting the next group of ten monks, the above phrase is again given in full. The same pattern applies for the corresponding phrases introducing the listings of outstanding nuns (我聲聞中第一比丘尼), outstanding male lay disciples (我弟子中第一優婆塞), and outstanding female lay disciples (我弟子中第一優婆塞). The pattern of repeating the introductory phrase for every group of ten must be meant

<sup>8</sup> [9] See Hung and Anālayo 2017 and Radich and Anālayo 2017.

<sup>9</sup> [10] EĀ 11.10 at T II 567c20.

<sup>10</sup> [11] EĀ 11.10 at T II 567c22.

<sup>11</sup> [12] EĀ 4.1 at T II 557a18.

to ensure that there is no confusion about the fact that an abbreviation has occurred for the remainder of the group.<sup>12</sup>

Another case of unmarked abbreviation concerns the three doors of action, in the form of recommending “purity of conduct with the body, speech, and mind” (身, 口, 意清淨之行).<sup>13</sup> Since this phrase is very short, the abbreviation does not proceed according to the standard pattern of giving the full formula for the first and the last case but contents itself with giving it just once. The present case also shows that, even though the abbreviation is not marked, the [64] context makes it clear that an abbreviation has occurred, as the reference to the “body” and “speech” fail to make sense unless they are connected to the phrase that comes after the reference to the “mind”. In other words, this type of unmarked abbreviation in a way still signals the fact that an abbreviation has occurred, namely through the truncated state of parts of the relevant passage. This makes it clear to the reciters that an abbreviation has occurred.

Interestingly, the same discourse continues just a line of text below by relating the same three doors of action to loving kindness or benevolence in the following form: “cultivate *maitrī* with the body, cultivate *maitrī* with

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<sup>12</sup> [13] A departure from this pattern through a doubling of the phrase within a group occurs when EĀ 4.7 at T II 558a25 applies the phrase 我聲聞中第一比丘, already given for the first monk in this group, again to the case of the fifth monk. Although this could be just a textual error, it could alternatively reflect the circumstance that this monk is Ānanda, in the sense that the choice of a more explicit formulation may have served as a way of expressing respect (which would be in line with the relationship established in T II 550c29 between the transmission of the *Ekottarika-āgama* and Ānanda, reflecting the high regard in which he apparently was held by the reciters of this collection). A partial repetition occurs twice: EĀ 6.4 at T II 560a24 applies the first part of the phrase 我弟子中第一優婆塞, given for the first male lay disciple, to the case of the last male lay disciple in this group, in the form 我弟子中最後受證, and EĀ 7.3 at T II 560b29 similarly applies the first part of the phrase 我弟子中第一優婆斯 to the case of the last female lay disciple in this group, in the form 我聲聞中最後取證優婆斯者. These two cases are distinct from the remainder of the listings, as they describe qualities unique to the person named, making it natural for the matter to be formulated in more detail.

<sup>13</sup> [14] EĀ 10.3 at T II 564b2.



speech, and cultivate *maitrī* with the mind” (身行慈, 口行慈, 意行慈). Somewhat unexpectedly, no abbreviation is used.

Unmarked abbreviation also occurs regularly in the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.<sup>14</sup> The standard pattern of giving in full the first and last members of a particular treatment and then abbreviating those in between can also be seen, for example, in a coverage of different forms of conceiving of a self in relation to the five aggregates, where only the case of the first and the last aggregate are spelled out in full.<sup>15</sup> Another example is a description of insight into the four (noble) truths, which takes the following form:<sup>16</sup>

One contemplates this *dukkha/duḥkha*, knowing it as it really is; again, one contemplates the arising of *dukkha/duḥkha*; again, one contemplates the cessation of *dukkha/duḥkha*; again, one contemplates the way out of *dukkha/duḥkha*, knowing it as it really is.

In the passage quoted above, the phrase “knowing it as it really is” has been abbreviated for the second and third truth, being given in full only in the first and last instance. The discourse continues by relating this vision of the four truths to gaining liberation of the mind from defilements.

## The Significance of Unmarked Abbreviation

The topic of unmarked abbreviation calls for further examination, as the patterns evident so far suggest that this type of abbreviation is mainly applied to cases that are fairly self-evident. Moreover, in particular with longer passages, the standard procedure is to give the first and last item of a list in full, so that a clear template is in place for filling out the abbreviated part.

<sup>14</sup> [15] An example involving an inquiry similar to the one mentioned above in note 5 can be seen in EĀ 12.1 at T II 568a24: 還觀此身有地種耶? 水, 火, 風種耶?

<sup>15</sup> [16] EĀ 13.4 at T II 573b10; on the different versions of this discourse see Anālayo 2016i: 17–26.

<sup>16</sup> [17] EĀ 13.5 at T II 574b29: 彼觀此苦, 如實知之, 復觀苦習, 復觀苦盡, 復觀苦出要, 如實知之; for a comparative study of the parallel versions see Anālayo 2011c: 49–59.

Based on examining cases of the gradual path in the *Madhyama-āgama* in the previous chapter, I proposed the need for caution before too quickly interpreting a particular instance as reflecting unmarked abbreviation (see above p. 152ff). In order to explore how far the same applies to the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection, in what follows I take up three individual cases from this collection, examining these from the viewpoint of whether the phrasing in question could be an instance of unmarked abbreviation.

## The Gradual Path

My first example is the exposition of the gradual path in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* and its <sup>[65]</sup> parallels. MacQueen (1988: 179) reasons that, given that the gradual path account is provided in full only in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* and abbreviated in subsequent *Dīgha-nikāya* discourses, a “reader of the *Dīgha*, therefore, may get the impression that this document ‘belongs to’ the *Sāmaññaphala*, from which source the other sutras have merely borrowed it.” As he explains, however, in the case of the *Dīrgha-āgama* extant in Chinese, the full version of the gradual path account occurs in a different discourse and for this reason is abbreviated in the subsequently occurring counterpart to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. This goes to show that the gradual path account “has no unique relationship to the *Śrāmaṇyaphala Sūtra*” (MacQueen 1988: 180). As noted by Gethin (2020b: 15), in view of the indications to be gathered from the parallels, “it would seem better to consider the scheme of the [gradual] path as having no ‘original’ context, but rather as a freestanding scheme.”

Notably, the gradual path account is completely absent from the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*. In his groundbreaking study of parallel versions of this discourse, Bapat (1948: 110 and 113) seems to consider this absence to be a case of abbreviation. Yet, the relevant passage has no marker of abbreviation, making this a less probable explanation.

As one of several arguments in support of the hypothesis that the gradual path account could be a later addition in the other versions, Meisig (1987: 37) reasons that its inclusion undermines the point made in the previous

part of the discourse.<sup>17</sup> This previous part shows other teachers failing to give a concrete reply to the question by a visiting king about visible fruits of living the life of a recluse, instead of which they are shown to promote their own teachings. In contrast, the Buddha is on record for giving concrete replies to this question, which indeed satisfy the king. An example for such a concrete reply, found in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version and its parallels alike, takes the form of depicting someone in the service of the king who decides to go forth. The king acknowledges that in such a situation he would offer his support to the one gone forth.<sup>18</sup> After noting that this is another visible fruit of living the life of a recluse, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version continues as follows:<sup>19</sup>

Suppose again that person, who has become a recluse, eradicates the influx of becoming, accomplishing the influx-free liberation of the mind and liberation by wisdom, and personally abides in the direct realization of knowing as it really is that birth and death have been eradicated, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, and there will be no more experiencing of becoming. What would the king wish to do?

Besides not showing any sign of abbreviation, the above passage continues smoothly along the line of the previous discussion and provides to the king another visible fruit of living the life of a recluse. Although the conclusion drawn by Meisig (1987: 37) has been criticized by Freiburger (2000: 73f note 165), it seems to me that the *Ekottarika-āgama* presentation indeed stays well within the main thrust of the contrast made in all versions between the Buddha and the other teachers. During oral transmission, a reference to arrival at <sub>[66]</sub> the final goal, comparable to the one found in the passage

<sup>17</sup> [18] “Sie zerstört sogar die Pointe der Geschichte, denn der Buddha tut ja nun genau das, was der König vorher an den anderen Asketenführern bemängelt hatte.”

<sup>18</sup> [19] DN 2 at DN I 60,35, DĀ 27 at T I 109a24, T 22 at T I 272b24, EĀ 43.7 at T II 763c25, and the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1978: 228,32.

<sup>19</sup> [20] EĀ 43.7 at T II 764a2: 設復彼人已作沙門, 盡有漏, 成無漏心解脫, 智慧解脫, 己身作證而自遊化: 生死已盡, 梵行已立, 所作已辦, 更不復受有, 如實知之. 王欲何為?

translated above, could have triggered the integration of an account of the gradual path in the form in which this is now found in the other versions. By providing such a full account of the gradual path, however, the other versions end up presenting the Buddha as doing the same as the other teachers, namely promoting his own teachings. The polemic force of the contrast between the Buddha and the other teachers thereby loses a considerable part of its force.

Whatever may be the final word on this issue, it does seem to be the case that the absence of the gradual path account in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version does not involve an abbreviation.

### Similes in Conversion Formulas

The *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* reports that the Buddha's teaching led to the conversion of the king, who formally took refuge.<sup>20</sup> The Pāli version precedes his taking refuge with a series of similes illustrating the effect of the Buddha's teaching to have been similar to setting upright what had been overturned, to uncovering what was covered, to showing the path to one who is lost, and to bringing a lamp into darkness so that those with eyes can see forms.<sup>21</sup> Another two parallels extant in the *Dirgha-āgama* and in the form of an individual translation report the king's taking refuge without any simile.<sup>22</sup> None of the versions without similes gives the impression of involving abbreviation.

Elsewhere the *Ekottarika-āgama* does employ its versions of these similes when describing a conversion. With some minor variations typical for the diction in this collection, such descriptions tend to involve the images of showing a path, of the blind gaining vision, and of light in darkness.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [21] EĀ 43.7 at T II 764a15.

<sup>21</sup> [22] DN 2 at DN I 85,7.

<sup>22</sup> [23] DĀ 27 at T I 109b21 and T 22 at T I 276a3 (only the first object of refuge is mentioned explicitly).

<sup>23</sup> [24] EĀ 3.5 at T II 574c25, EĀ 17.8 at T II 585a12, EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c27, EĀ 34.10 at T II

However, at other times conversions are depicted without bringing in these similes (leaving aside reports of stream-entry, as these do not involve this particular set of similes).<sup>24</sup> Such briefer reports of conversion also do not give the impression of involving some form of abbreviation.

A comparable pattern can be seen in descriptions of conversion in the *Madhyama-āgama*. Particularly interesting are three discourses that occur in the same chapter of the collection (業相應品). Two discourses in this chapter, MĀ 12 and in MĀ 18, employ the illustrations of uncovering what was covered, showing a path to one who is lost, and bringing light into darkness so that those with eyes can see forms, but a discourse found between these two, MĀ 16, has only the bare formula without any simile.<sup>25</sup> The absence of similes in MĀ 16 can hardly be a matter of abbreviation, otherwise they should also have been abbreviated in MĀ 18. In fact, occurrences of the bare statement without any simile here and elsewhere in the *Madhyama-āgama* do not appear to be instances of abbreviation.

Conversion formulas in Indic language texts have recently been studied by Allon (2021: 97f), who notes that, whereas a Gāndhārī fragment from the British Library Kharoṣṭhī manuscript collection (BL 12 + 14.20–25) also has these similes, a perhaps a century later Gāndhārī fragment from the Robert Senior manuscript collection (RS 20.10–11) and a <sup>[67]</sup> Sanskrit version (as reflected in the *Catuspariṣat-sūtra*) do not have similes.<sup>26</sup> The resultant difference can best be illustrated by juxtaposing the two Gāndhārī fragment versions in the way given by Allon (2021: 97), together with his English translation:

*suyasavi bhu ghudama ñiujidu ukuje paḍichano a viv(are) muḍhasa  
va maghu praghāśe adhagharo aloka va <dharae> yavad eva cakṣuatu  
ruaṇa dhreḱṣatu, evam eva ṣamaṇeṇa ghodameṇa krirṇo śukro*

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698b7, EĀ 37.8 at T II 714c9 (not followed by taking refuge or requesting ordination), EĀ 37.9 at T II 715a23, EĀ 37.10 at T II 716c10, EĀ 49.4 at T II 797a27, and EĀ 49.6 at T II 799b7.

<sup>24</sup> <sup>[25]</sup> Examples are EĀ 32.7 at T II 680b14 and EĀ 50.10 at T II 813c21.

<sup>25</sup> <sup>[26]</sup> MĀ 12 at T I 435a5, MĀ 16 at T I 439c17, and MĀ 18 at T I 442b10.

<sup>26</sup> <sup>[27]</sup> On the dating of these Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts see the survey in Salomon 2014: 10.

*dharmu akhade vivaḍe s(a)praghaśide. (eṣaho) śamaṇo ghudamu śaraṇo ghachami dhama ca bhikhusagha ca u(asaghu) mi ś(a)ma(ṇe ghuda)m(e) dharedu ajavaghreṇa yavajivu praṇouviade śaraṇo <ghade> abhiprasaṇe.*

Just as, venerable Gotama, one would set upright what has been overturned or uncover what has been covered or show the path to one who is lost or bring light into the darkness, so that those with eyes might see forms, even so has the monk Gotama declared,<sup>27</sup> revealed, and proclaimed the Dharma, dark and bright. I go to the monk Gotama as a refuge and to the Dharma and to the community of monks. May the monk Gotama accept me as a layman, who with faith has gone [to him] as a refuge from today onward, for as long as there is life, until [my] last breath.

*eṣao bha geḍam(a) ś(a)r(a)ṇo gachami dhrarma ja bhikhuśaga ja uasao me bhi goḍama dharei ajavagreṇa yavajiva p(r)aṇueda śaraṇa gaḍe.*

I go to the venerable Gotama as a refuge and to the Dharma and to the community of monks. May the venerable Gotama accept me as a layman who has gone [to him] as a refuge from today onward, for as long as there is life, until [my] last breath.

Since the absence of the similes in the above Senior manuscript is in line with a general tendency in Senior manuscripts to abbreviate the formulaic introductory portion, Allon (2021: 99) reasons: “I suspect that the briefer form of the conversion formula found in the Senior manuscripts is similarly a manuscript abbreviation.”<sup>28</sup>

Given the dating of the two Gāndhārī manuscripts, proposing such a conclusion is certainly reasonable. However, since the passages taken up do not stem from the same text, the difference could in principle also be due

<sup>27</sup> [28] I would find it preferable to distinguish in the translation between *śamaṇa* and *bhikhu*, which could be done by rendering the former as “recluse” or “renunciant”, and using “monk” (or “monastic”) only for the latter.

<sup>28</sup> [29] On abbreviation in Gāndhārī manuscripts see also Allon 2001: 27–29.

to different contexts. Perhaps more importantly, there is no marking of the occurrence of abbreviation in the case of the second text.<sup>29</sup> The situation of the standard introduction to a discourse differs, as the reciters know of course what is required. Hence, even in Pāli discourses, the introduction can be abbreviated without a marker. But to do the same in the midst of a text without providing some form of indication that an abbreviation has taken place—at least leaving a somewhat truncated sentence or a phrase hanging in the air, thereby making it obvious that supplementation is called for even when an explicit abbreviation marker is missing—seems to me a less probable scenario.

This assessment can be corroborated further by turning to a conversion formula without similes in the *Bodha-sūtra* extant in Sanskrit fragments,<sup>30</sup> in which case the corresponding [68] Pāli discourse also does not have the similes.<sup>31</sup> This appears to be deliberate. Even though the reported conversion features as the first time that the prince, to whom the discourse is addressed, hears a teaching from the Buddha and thereon expresses his going for refuge, he reports that on two former occasions others had taken refuge on his behalf. Presumably because the reciters did not consider the present instance to be a fully-fledged conversion, the Pāli and Sanskrit versions agree in presenting it without any of the similes. This shows that even in Pāli discourses the employment of the similes is not invariably applied to all instances of reporting a conversion.

The same may hold for the Gāndhārī passages given above, in that the difference between them could be related to the circumstance that they stem from different texts. In the present case, the Pāli and Sanskrit versions in fact

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<sup>29</sup> [30] See Allon 2001: 205 for the immediately preceding part of the fragment from the Robert Senior manuscript collection (RS 20.9), which shows that the expression of conversion indeed sets in with *eṣao bha geḍam(a)*, unlike the Sanskrit fragment version; see below note 32.

<sup>30</sup> [31] Folio 344 of the Gilgit *Dirgha-āgama* manuscript, Silverlock 2009: 81f; British Library Sanskrit fragment Or.15009/106 verso in Kudo 2009: 173; and SHT IV 33.28R, SHT IV 165.24V, and SHT IV 180.1R, Sander and Waldschmidt 1980: 171, 197, and 213.

<sup>31</sup> [32] MN 85 at MN II 97,18.

do not have any marker of abbreviation. This differs from the procedure adopted elsewhere in conversion reports in Pāli discourses, where an abbreviation of the series of similes will be marked as such.<sup>32</sup> This makes it fair to conclude that the absence of similes in descriptions of conversions need not reflect intentional abbreviation.

## Descriptions of the Buddha's Awakening

The pattern that emerges in this way is also of relevance for evaluating the description of the Buddha's awakening in the *Ekottarika-āgama*. After covering the recollection of past lives and the divine eye, the relevant part of the discourse proceeds in this way:<sup>33</sup>

Again, relying on this concentrated mind, with its flawless purity and absence of fettering tendencies, a state of mind that has attained concentration and has attained fearlessness, I attained the eradication of the influxes in the mind. And I knew that 'this is *dukkha/duḥkha*' as it really is, not falsely. Then, at that time, when I had attained this mental condition, I attained liberation of the mind from the influx of sensuality, from the influx of becoming, and from the influx of ignorance. Having attained liberation, I in turn attained knowledge of liberation, knowing it as it really is that birth and death have been eradicated, the holy life has been estab-

<sup>32</sup> [33] See, for example, SN 7.2 at SN I 163,2, SN 12.17 at SN II 21,6, or AN 4.195 at AN II 199,28. The last adopts a pattern where, after the initial *abhikkantaṃ, bhante*, the fact of abbreviation is marked with *pe*, followed by *upāsakaṃ maṃ bhante bhagavā dhāretu*, etc. Perhaps a similar pattern applies to the Sanskrit fragment taken up by Allon 2021: 97: *abhikrānto 'haṃ bhadantābhikrāntaḥ. eṣo 'haṃ bhagavantaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchāmi*, etc., which could be a case where an abbreviation has taken place between *bhadantābhikrāntaḥ* and *eṣo*, with the marker having been lost or omitted by the scribe.

<sup>33</sup> [34] EĀ 31.1 at T II 666c14: 我復以三昧心，清淨無瑕穢，亦無結使，心意得定，得無所畏，得盡漏心，亦知此苦如實不虛。當我爾時得此心時，欲漏，有漏，無明漏心得解脫。已得解脫，便得解脫智：生死已盡，梵行已立，所作已辦，更不復受胎，如實知之 (adopting the variant 已 instead of 以); for a comparative study see Anālayo 2011e.



lished, what had to be done has been done, there will be no more descent into a womb.

A particularly noteworthy feature of this description is that it only refers to insight into *dukkha/duḥkha*, corresponding to the first of the four (noble) truths, rather than bringing in the whole scheme. This can be contrasted with the instance quoted earlier as an example for unmarked abbreviation, which explicitly mentions all four truths, only abbreviating the indication that insight into them involves “knowing it as it really is” for the second and third truths.

Due to lack of awareness of the way the early discourses employ abbreviation, in my comparative study of this discourse (Anālayo 2011e: 218 note 47) I unfortunately followed <sup>[69]</sup> the lead provided by Bareau (1963: 86) and took the presentation in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version to be an instance of abbreviation. Based on my present improved understanding of abbreviations, I consider my earlier position to be mistaken. It seems to me now improbable for this to be an instance of abbreviation, as this would have been marked in some way (unless one were to assume that a portion of text with such marking has been lost).

Avoiding the easy solution of attributing the idiosyncratic presentation in this *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse to abbreviation opens up the possibility to consider it instead as a testimony to a tendency toward drawing out explicitly the implications of the Buddha’s awakening. From this perspective, then, Nakamura (2000: 211) could be right in suggesting that the full set of the four noble truths in the Pāli parallel may reflect a later development compared to the *Ekottarika-āgama* version.

Needless to say, this is not to take the position that the teaching of the four truths is itself late. As already noted by Schmithausen (1981: 210): “it may seem doubtful whether ... the discovery of the four Noble Truths is a genuine reflection of what the Buddha’s Enlightenment, as an experience, actually was.” This does not imply, however, that the four noble truths are late in themselves, “for why shouldn’t the pattern of the four Noble Truths have already existed for some period before it came to be regarded as the content of Enlightenment?” (note 36). This reasonable suggestion would

find support in the description of liberating insight quoted earlier, which clearly reflects acquaintance with the four-truths scheme among the reciters of the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection.

What emerges from the above considerations, then, would be the suggestion that concrete descriptions of the actual content of the Buddha's awakening, rather than just a report of its effect in terms of eradicating the influxes and the ensuing knowledge that birth and death have been overcome, could be the result of a process of development (Anālayo 2021a). On this assumption, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version may be testifying to an interim stage in this respect that eventually led to the full formula of the four noble truths now found in its Pāli parallel.

Be that as it may, the present case is yet another instance where the assumption of unmarked abbreviation, in the absence of the provision of any indications for how the full text is to be expanded (unless this is already obvious from the context), does not seem to offer a convincing explanation.

## Conclusion

The employment of abbreviation in the *Ekottarika-āgama* follows basic patterns similar to such employment in the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Samyukta-āgama* collections, thereby testifying to similar processes at work across different traditions. Since the translation of the *Ekottarika-āgama* was based on an orally recited original, the present case testifies to the relevance of such patterns of abbreviation in the oral medium. Throughout, there appears to be an effort by the reciters to provide the information needed for subsequent expansion, unless this is self-evident. This makes it less promising an avenue for arriving at a better understanding of these texts to opt for explaining a difficult or unusual textual portion as simply being a case of unmarked abbreviation.



## VIII

### The Function of Silence in *Āgama* Literature

In what follows I study the function of silence in early Buddhist oral literature, based on selected passages from the textual corpus of the *Āgamas* (and Pāli *Nikāyas*).<sup>1</sup> The present exploration stands to some extent in continuity with my previous studies dedicated to the function of abbreviation, found in the three previous chapters, by way of providing an additional perspective on the overall theme of what the absence of explicit communication communicates; that is, what is being said when nothing is being said.

#### Communal Harmony

The early Buddhist attitude toward silence does not amount to a wholesale recommendation or rejection. In line with a general pattern of giving prominence to ethical repercussions of any intentionally undertaken activity, the question at stake is how far the observance of silence has beneficial outcomes. The distinction to be drawn in this way can be exemplified with two narratives describing monastics observing silence as a way of ensuring communal harmony. Here and below, my discussion of such episodes is only meant to draw out their narrative implications, without implying any historicist assumption.

One of these narratives occurs in the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* and the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, together with their parallels. According to the relevant passage, a group of three monastics were living together in silent harmony, punctuated by

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<sup>1</sup> On the role of silence in Christian monasticism and penitentiary see Brox 2019.

meetings every five days to discuss the Dharma.<sup>2</sup> This depiction is in line with an indication provided in another discourse, which [68] reports the Buddha instructing his disciples that, whenever they come together, they should either discuss the Dharma or else observe silence.<sup>3</sup>

The exemplary way of living together in communal harmony, described the *Cūlagosiṅga-sutta* and the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, can be contrasted with a narrative of another group of monastics who had reportedly vowed to maintain silence during the whole of the rainy season retreat. The different *Vinaya* versions of this narrative agree in recording the Buddha's strong censure of the adoption of such behavior.<sup>4</sup> The contrast that emerges in this way between these two narratives, which otherwise share several descriptive elements, conveys that resorting to silence should be done only when this is appropriate, rather than making a blanket rule of not speaking at all. In fact, the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel include the alternatives of remaining silent and speaking among occasions for the exer-

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<sup>2</sup> [3] MN 31 at MN I 207,24 and MN 128 at MN III 157,16, with parallels in MĀ 72 at T I 536b6 and MĀ 185 at T I 729c20, which envisage that on such occasions they might either discuss Dharma or observe silence together, and in EĀ 24.8 at T II 629a24, which only mentions their living together in silence, without a reference to regular meetings.

<sup>3</sup> [4] MN 26 at MN I 161,32 and MĀ 204 at T I 775c29. MN 26 stands alone in additionally qualifying such silence to be “noble”, *ariyo*. The idea of a noble type of silence as an alternative to discussion on Dharma recurs elsewhere in the early discourses; for instances in Pāli see AN 8.2 at AN IV 153,9, AN 9.4 at AN IV 359,19, Ud 2.2 at Ud 11,19, Ud 3.8 at Ud 31,16, Ud 3.9 at Ud 32,12, and for Chinese *Āgama* discourses see DĀ 10 at T I 54c28, DĀ 11 at T I 58b28, DĀ 30 at T I 114b20, MĀ 72 at T I 536b7, MĀ 185 at T I 729c21, and EĀ 40.1 at T II 735c4. Another employment of the notion of noble silence, already noted by Ruegg 1989: 210, is to designate the stillness of the mind to be gained by attaining the second absorption; see SN 21.1 at SN II 273,12 and SĀ 501 at T II 132a17. The commentary on SN 21.1, Spk II 233,11, clarifies that this passage should not be taken to convey that the type of noble silence that functions as an alternative to discussing the Dharma invariably involves the attainment of the second absorption (or higher ones).

<sup>4</sup> [5] Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 836a12, Mahāsaṅghika *Vinaya*, T 1425 at T XXII 451a24, Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 131a2, Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1446 at T XXIII 1044c29 and Chung 1998: 179,1, Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1435 at T XXIII 165b8, and Theravāda *Vinaya*, Vin I 159,10; see also Heirman 2009: 64–68.

cise of clear comprehension.<sup>5</sup> In other words, there is a need to know when silence is appropriate. According to a poem found in the *Dhammapada*, one does not become a sage just by observing silence.<sup>6</sup>

### Silent Agreement and Disagreement

The nature of silence as something to be evaluated from its context becomes also evident in its function to express either agreement or disagreement. A standard function of expressing agreement can be identified in those instances when silence functions as a reply to an invitation. The phrase used for such occasions expresses that the person “consented by remaining silent” (*adhivāsesi tuṇhībhāvena* / *adhivāsayati tūṣṇī(ṃ)bhāvena*).<sup>7</sup>

The nuance of agreement would perhaps also be relevant to a debate setting, where to remain silent implies that one has been forced to agree to the opponent’s position and hence has lost the debate.<sup>8</sup> An instance illustrating a misunderstanding, based on precisely this <sup>[69]</sup> pattern, involves the Buddha remaining silent when being abused by an angry brahmin, whereon the latter reportedly came to the mistaken conclusion that he had defeated the Buddha.<sup>9</sup> The need to reply in a debate can at times take a dramatic turn, when

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<sup>5</sup> [6] MN 10 at MN I 57,9 and MĀ 98 at T I 582b27. The whole exercise is absent from another parallel in EĀ 12.1; see also Anālayo 2013f: 51.

<sup>6</sup> [7] Dhṛp 268; Rau 1959: 172 notes that the relationship between silence and becoming a sage is also taken up in the *Mahābhārata* 5.43.35, Kumar De 1940: 208, which, however, takes the following form: *maunād dhi sa munir bhavati*.

<sup>7</sup> [8] For example, DN 16 at DN II 88,10 and Waldschmidt 1951: 150, who in note 4 points to other occurrences of the same pericope in the same discourse and other Sanskrit texts, such as the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 65,28, or the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavastu*, Dutt 1984: 225,12.

<sup>8</sup> [9] On debate in ancient India see, e.g., Solomon 1978: 833–875, Matilal 1987, and Bronkhorst 2007; on principles of debate in the Buddhist tradition Manné 1992, Todeschini 2011, Anālayo 2012d, 2013b, and below p. 446ff.

<sup>9</sup> [10] SN 7.3 at SN I 163,26, with a similar denouement of events being found in SĀ 1153 at T II 307b15 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 76 at T II 400c16. These three discourses are part of a series of reports of encounters between the Buddha and angry brahmins. The similarity in setting

an opponent will find Vajirapāṇi/Vajrapāṇi hovering in the air, ready to split the opponent's head into pieces with his thunderbolt unless a reply is given.<sup>10</sup>

The observation of silence can, however, also serve as an expression of disagreement. An example is the narrative of how Raṭṭhapāla/Rāṣṭrapāla forced his parents to allow him to go forth by lying down on the ground in silence, refusing to take food.<sup>11</sup> Another occurrence of silence as a marker of disagreement can be seen in the report that the Buddha, on being asked to step on a cloth, remained silent and thereby expressed his unwillingness to do so.<sup>12</sup> A related nuance emerges in another episode, according to which the Buddha remained silent instead of reciting the code of rules, since a member of the monastic community present on that occasion was not pure.<sup>13</sup>

This much does not yet exhaust the possible connotations of silence, since it can also serve to express embarrassment. This appears to be the sense relevant to a narrative according to which the Buddha had asked, in front of an assembly of monastics, if the recently ordained Anuruddha/Aniruddha and his friends were delighting in the monastic life. Presumably due to embarrassment, Anuruddha/Aniruddha and his friends reportedly remained silent even when this question was asked for a third time.<sup>14</sup> Only when subsequently the question was addressed to them directly was it possible to elicit a response. Whereas the case of Anuruddha/Aniruddha and his friends

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apparently led to some shifting around of textual material, as a result of which the episode under discussion is not found in what otherwise are considered to be parallel versions.

<sup>10</sup> [11] MN 35 at MN I 231,30, SĀ 110 at T II 36a15, and EĀ 37.10 at T II 716a7. Lamotte 1966: 115 and Flood 1989: 23 note that in such situations Vajirapāṇi/Vajrapāṇi will only be visible to the Buddha and his opponent. On the threat of splitting the opponent's head to pieces in ancient Indian literature see also de La Vallée Poussin 1932, Hopkins 1932: 316, Insler 1989/1990, and Witzel 1987.

<sup>11</sup> [12] MN 82 at MN II 58,11: *tunhī ahoṣi*, Waldschmidt 1980b: 366: *tūṣṇīm*, Speyer 1909/1970: 119,13: *tūṣṇīm*; a similar indication is also found in one of the parallels extant in Chinese, MĀ 132 at T I 623c17: 默然不答.

<sup>12</sup> [13] MN 85 at MN II 92,26 and Silverlock 2009: 76 (folio 341 verso5).

<sup>13</sup> [14] See the comparative study of this episode in Anālayo 2016g.

<sup>14</sup> [15] MN 68 at MN I 463,5 and MĀ 77 at T I 544b29.

is equivocal, silence definitely serves to express embarrassment in descriptions of a disciple being rebuked by the Buddha for obstinately holding on to a misunderstanding of the Dharma.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the above, silence can also express a realization of futility. An example appears to be an episode according to which Sāriputta/Śāriputra was contradicted three times in front of the Buddha, without anyone in the assembly expressing approval of his position. Since according to the conversational etiquette, reflected in the early discourses, stating something three times in a particular situation appears to be the limit to which one pursues a matter, the episode continues with Sāriputta/Śāriputra remaining silent,<sup>16</sup> even though the ensuing events show that his position was actually correct.

Given that silence can apparently express consent, disagreement, embarrassment, and a realization of futility, it seems fair to conclude that the message conveyed by a particular [70] instance of silence depends on the context. In other words, there is a need to evaluate each occurrence within its narrative setting and against the overall background of early Buddhist thought.

### The Case of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra

The above exploration provides a background for assessing what is perhaps the most famous instance of silence, reportedly observed by the Buddha on being asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra about the existence of a self. By way of introducing the setting of this instance of silence, here is a translation of a version of this episode extant in the *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99):<sup>17</sup>

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying at Rājagṛha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel's Feeding Place. Then the wanderer Vatsagotra approached the Buddha and, holding his hands

<sup>15</sup> [16] See, e.g., MN 22 at MN I 132,28 and its parallel MĀ 200 at T I 764a7.

<sup>16</sup> [17] AN 5.166 at AN III 194,15, MĀ 22 at T I 450a15, and Up 2038 at D 4094 *ju* 69b4 or P 5595 *tu* 78a2.

<sup>17</sup> [18] SĀ 961 at T II 245b9 to 245b25.



with palms together [in homage], exchanged friendly greetings. Having exchanged friendly greetings, he withdrew to sit to one side and said to the Buddha: “How is it, Gotama, is there a self?”

At that time the Blessed One was silent and indeed did not reply. In the same way [Vatsagotra asked] three times. At that time, the Blessed One also for three times did not reply. At that time the wanderer Vatsagotra thought: “I have already asked the recluse Gotama thrice and yet not seen him reply. I shall just leave.”

Then the venerable Ānanda was standing behind the Buddha and holding a fan to fan the Buddha. At that time, Ānanda said to the Buddha: “Blessed One, that wanderer Vatsagotra asked three times. For what reason has the Blessed One not replied? Will it not increase the bad and mistaken view of that wanderer Vatsagotra, [leading him] to say that the recluse [Gotama] is unable to reply on being asked?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “If I had replied saying that the self exists, that would have increased his former wrong view. If I had replied saying that there is no self, would this not have increasingly confused his former confusion, [leading him] to say that he formerly had a self that has from now on been annihilated? Given his former [belief] that the self exists, which then is the view of eternalism, this now being annihilated would then become the view of annihilationism.

The Tathāgata teaches the Dharma situated in the middle, apart from these two extremes, that is, because of the existence of this matter, that matter exists; because of the arising of this matter, that matter arises, that is, conditioned by ignorance are formations ... *up to* ... birth, old age, disease, death, worry, sorrow, vexation, and pain cease.”

When the Buddha had spoken this discourse, hearing what the Buddha had said the venerable Ānanda was delighted and received it respectfully.

Two parallels to the above discourse, found in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and in another *Samyukta-āgama* collection (T 100), report that the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra asked two questions, inquiring once if the self exists and then if the self does not exist.<sup>18</sup> According to another parallel extant in the form of a discourse quotation in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*, he asked three times the same question, although here the question is if the self does not <sub>[71]</sub> exist.<sup>19</sup>

The parallels agree that the Buddha remained silent and did not give any reply, which motivated the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra to leave. The *Samyutta-nikāya* version just reports that he left, without recording any reflection that motivated him to do so, whereas the other *Samyukta-āgama* discourse does report his realization that he had not received a reply, but without mentioning either his decision to leave or his actual departure. As a result, in this version it is not entirely clear if he should be visualized as still present during the ensuing exchange with Ānanda.

In the account given in the *Samyutta-nikāya*, Ānanda just inquires why the Buddha had not given a reply, without bringing up the possible impact of such silence on the wanderer Vacchagotta's wrong view. The Pāli version also stands alone in not bringing up the notion of a middle path between the two extremes of eternalism and annihilationism, exemplified by way of dependent arising. Nevertheless, the parallels agree on the Buddha explaining that, if he had taught the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra that there is no self, this would just have further confounded the latter.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, alongside several variations the parallels concur on two main points: When asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra about the existence (or absence) of a self, the Buddha remained silent. When later his attendant Ānanda requested an explanation of this silence, the Buddha pointed out that to declare the doctrine of not self to the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra would only have increased the latter's confusion.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> [19] SN 44.10 at SN IV 400,15 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 195 at T II 444c3.

<sup>19</sup> [20] Up 9031 at D 4094 *nyu* 88b6 or P 5595 *thu* 136a3.

<sup>20</sup> [21] SN 44.10 at SN IV 401,9, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 195 at T II 444c13, and Up 9031 at D 4094 *nyu* 89a4 or P 5595 *thu* 136b2.

<sup>21</sup> [22] This agreement among the parallels puts into perspective the following assessment

This suggests the function of silence in this instance to be to some extent similar to the case of Sāriputta/Śāriputra, mentioned above, who remained silent even though the position he had taken was correct. In both cases, the motivation for silence appears to be the realization that it is useless to affirm what the speaker knows to be true. In the case of Sāriputta/Śāriputra, the realization of uselessness reflects the preceding narrative of him being repeatedly contradicted. In the present case, the realization of uselessness would reflect the Buddha's assessment that to provide the correct answer was futile, as it would have worsened the confused state of mind of his visitor. [72]

### The Role of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra

The conclusion proposed above can be pursued further by reviewing the roles of the three protagonists involved in the episode. The point in what follows is not to pretend some form of certainty about what actually happened on the ground in ancient India, which in view of the limitations of

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of the Buddha's silence by Pérez-Remón 1980: 258: "If the teaching of the Buddha had as its central dogma the doctrine of absolute *anattā*, the only answer available to him would have been the negative one, *n'atth'attā* ... The very fact that the possibility of giving an affirmative answer, *atth'attā* is somehow contemplated belies the opinion that the Buddha's conviction and preaching was in favour of absolute *anattā*." Another relevant assessment is the proposal by Thānissaro 1999/2018: 60 that "to answer either yes, there is a self, or no, there isn't, would be to fall into extreme forms of wrong view that make the path of Buddhist practice impossible." The actual texts make it quite clear that the concern is about the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra getting confused and drawing a wrong conclusion by way of eternalism and annihilationism. The question at stake is not that the denial of a self as such is an extreme that stands in contrast to the Buddhist path of practice or that the possibility of an affirmative answer being envisaged by the non-Buddhist wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra conveys a position taken in Buddhist doctrine. As already noted by Rahula 1959/1974: 64, the Buddha "did not want to say 'there is no self, because that would unnecessarily, without any purpose, have confused and disturbed poor Vacchagotta ... He was not yet in a position to understand the idea of *Anatta*." Similarly, Harvey 1995: 38 reasons that "Vacchagotta would have been 'bewildered' at the denial of s/Self because, having formerly suspected that he had an eternal Self, he would feel that he had *lost* it if told that such a s/Self did not exist."

the textual sources is not possible.<sup>22</sup> Instead, the point is only to discern narrative patterns from the viewpoint of the background they provide—from the emic viewpoint of the reciters and their audiences—to the episode examined above.

*Āgama* literature regularly presents the Buddha as a highly skilled teacher, capable of assessing accurately the comprehension abilities of the members of his audience and thereby able to tailor his instruction accordingly. For him to choose silence in anticipation that a correct reply will create confusion in the listener is quite in keeping with this role.

Ānanda in turn features as the faithful and devoted attendant of the Buddha, having developed such intimacy with his teacher that, even though he has no telepathic powers, he often is shown to divine what the Buddha wishes to happen.<sup>23</sup> For him to be depicted as being surprised by the Buddha's silence and needing to query the latter about the reasons for his refusal to reply conveys that this episode should be reckoned as rather unusual.

The role of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra in *Āgama* literature is that of time and again exhibiting a keen interest in what appears to have been something of a standard questionnaire in the ancient Indian setting, employed to ascertain the position taken by another on the nature of the world, the soul, and the destiny of a fully realized one after death.<sup>24</sup> The latter takes the form of a tetralemma, envisaging that a Tathāgata exists after death, does not exist, both, or neither. Notably, the reports of the Buddha's standard reaction to being presented with these alternatives do not show him as adopting silence. In other words, such encounters are strictly speaking not instances of the Buddha's silence and for this reason have not been taken

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<sup>22</sup> [23] See in more detail Anālayo 2022d.

<sup>23</sup> [24] According to Malalasekera 1937/1995: 251, in his role as the Buddha's attendant Ānanda "was always at hand, forestalling the Master's slightest wish."

<sup>24</sup> [25] Malalasekera 1938/1998: 805 comments that "his discussions were chiefly concerned with such mythical questions as to whether the world is eternal ... the existence or otherwise of the Tathāgata after death, etc."

up in the survey provided above. In such cases, instead of remaining silent, the Buddha is on record for dismissing each alternative.<sup>25</sup> The reason for such dismissal appears to be the implicit premise underlying the tetralemma about the Tathāgata's postmortem condition, namely that the term was taken to refer to a self. Since from a Buddhist perspective no such self exists, it becomes impossible to take up any of the four alternative positions, as each case would implicitly affirm the mistaken premise.<sup>26</sup>

Although the different discourses that have the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra as their protagonist are not presented in some form of chronological order, the report in the *Mahāvaccagotta-sutta* and its Chinese parallels of his eventual conversion, going forth as a Buddhist monastic, and becoming an arahant, is clearly meant to provide a closure to these [73] episodes.<sup>27</sup>

Another relevant discourse is the *Aggivaccagotta-sutta*, which in agreement with its parallels reports an attempt by the Buddha to convey the impossibility of ascertaining the destiny of a Tathāgata after death with the example of an extinct fire, which cannot be said to have gone in one or the other direction.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> [26] For example, one of the discussions involving Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra, found in MN 72 at MN I 484,7, reports at first the Buddha indicating *na kho ahaṃ ... evaṃdiṭṭhi*, and when pressed on the same topic again at MN I 486,22 giving the clarification *na upeti*. The parallel SĀ 962 at T II 245c1+26 similarly proceeds from 我不作如是見, 如是說 to 不然. Another parallel has only a counterpart to the first of these two types of rejection, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 196 at T II 445a4: 我不作是見, 不作是說. The same holds for yet another parallel, Up 3057 at D 4094 *ju* 157a3 or P 5595 *tu* 181a7: 'di ltaṃ mi lta zhiṃ 'di skad du mi smra'o. Alongside such variations, the parallels clearly agree in presenting the Buddha as explicitly voicing his dismissal rather than just remaining silent.

<sup>26</sup> [27] See in more detail Anālayo 2018e: 37–44 and 2022a.

<sup>27</sup> [28] The report of his becoming an arahant/arhat can be found in MN 73 at MN I 496,31, SĀ 964 at T II 247b27, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 198 at T II 447a22, and T 1482 at T XXIV 964c26.

<sup>28</sup> [29] MN 72 at MN I 487,11, SĀ 962 at T II 245c28, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 196 at T II 445b17, Up 3057 at D 4094 *ju* 158a2 or P 5595 *tu* 182b2; on the fire simile employed here see also, e.g., Jayatilleke 1963/1980: 289–291, Siderits 1979: 496, Harvey 1990: 66f, Tilakaratne 1993: 78f, Ñāṇananda 2010, and Lin 2022: 155.

Besides conveying that the four alternatives of the tetralemma are not applicable, this type of explanation could indeed be imagined to cause the wanderer Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra to begin questioning the premise underlying his questionnaire. Against this background, in the episode translated above, which shows him questioning the paradigmatic assumption that there is a self, silence may indeed be viewed as offering the most appropriate response. It would have avoided increasing his delusion, even leading him to adopt the opposite wrong view of the one he already held. Instead, the Buddha's silence appears to have the role of stimulating him to remain in a state of inquiry about the matter, rather than giving him a ready-made answer that he would anyway have misunderstood. In spite of having arrived at questioning his premise of the self, the mental condition of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra should clearly be considered as not yet mature enough to let go of that premise. For this reason, any statement by the Buddha would have been interpreted from within the paradigm of his belief in a self, and hence a denial of the existence of a self would have been taken to imply the view of annihilationism.

Notably, the introductory narrations in the Chinese parallels to the *Mahāvaccagotta-sutta* report that on this occasion the Buddha also at first remained silent when Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra requested permission to ask a question. He reportedly only agreed to reply after announcing that he would only give a short answer.<sup>29</sup> All versions of the discourse continue with Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra gaining inspiration to go forth on hearing how many of the Buddha's disciples have realized various stages of progress to awakening.

The message conveyed by this narrative appears to be that the Buddha was in a way trying to wean Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra from expecting his uncertainty to be resolved through replies given by another and instead directed him to examine the matter himself. According to the *Mahāvaccagotta-sutta* and its parallels, this indeed happened, in that Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra joined the Buddhist order and eventually reached awakening himself, thereby coming

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<sup>29</sup> [30] SĀ 964 at T II 246b15, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 198 at T II 446a13, and T 1482 at T XXIV 963a18.

to have a firsthand experience of the absence of a self. This concords with the suggested appropriateness of not providing him with a clear reply in the episode translated above, which due to the inability of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra to step out of his paradigmatic assumption regarding a self would at that time only have led to a mental closing down rather than fostering the mental opening needed for letting go of this paradigmatic assumption.

The same basic attitude of discouraging intellectual proliferation and instead fostering a sense of inquiry appears to hold for the report of the Buddha's silence in all versions of the episode translated above. These clearly convey that silence had to be maintained because a straightforward reply would have caused Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra to conclude that he had lost the self he earlier believed to have had. In other words, the central issue at stake here would <sup>[74]</sup> be his sense of who he believed himself to be. In the end, this is indeed the underlying trajectory of a concern with the standard questionnaire on the destiny of a Tathāgata after death, namely to find out about the nature of a self in its relationship to liberation and thereby find out about one's own nature.

Now, this basic procedure of refusing to give a straightforward reply and instead, through remaining silent, forcing the other to turn the inquiry inward and stay with a sense of investigation and calling into question metaphysical assumptions could perhaps be seen as a distant precedent to the so-called koan meditation practice in Chan, Seon, Thin, and Zen Buddhism. One of the different forms such practice can take is precisely an inquiry into the sense of who one believes oneself to be.<sup>30</sup> This would align with the case of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra, in the sense that the Buddha's

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<sup>30</sup> <sup>[31]</sup> An example for this type of inquiry occurs right away in the first case in the *Blue Cliff Records*, T 2003 at T XLVIII 140a15: 是什麼人?, the same phrase being found repeatedly in other cases in this work (I am indebted to Guo Gu for drawing my attention to this pattern). Buswell 2018: 79 already noted a parallelism between such koan practice and the suggestion in the Pāli commentary Ps I 251,8 that the *satipaṭṭhāna* practice of mindful walking should be accompanied by querying "who goes?" and "whose is this going?"; see also Anālayo 2003: 139. Noting such parallelism is of course not in any way meant to deny the distinct Chinese roots of the type of practice under discussion, on which see, e.g., Foulk 2000.

silence would have encouraged him to continue to remain in a state of inquiry about his assumption of having a self and thereby about who he believed himself to be. Guo Gu (2016: 5f) explains about such forms of practice in Chan Buddhism that they

provide an impossibility, an impasse, so that you are left with a great sense of not knowing, impenetrability, and wonderment. They give you nothing to hang on to, so all words, concepts, and everything you have ever known about yourself, or this and that, falls away ... This experience of impenetrability, wonderment, and irresolvable impasse is ... the great questioning mind. This is the whole point of the gong'an method ... by using this method you can apprehend your original true nature, your intrinsic freedom.

Guo Gu (2016: 11) adds that “Chan teaches that the self or ‘I’ is just an illusion ... your true nonabiding nature *is* freedom, the freedom of no-self.” In the hope of not overstating my case, it does seem to me fair to propose that a sense of not knowing, of nothing to hang on to, of being immersed in inquiry, would quite probably be a fitting description of how the mental state of Vacchagotta/Vatsagotra should be imagined after the Buddha had reportedly reacted to his repeated questions by just remaining silent. Moreover, the eventual solution to this inquiry does take the form of an apprehension of his true nature—in the above-mentioned sense of “freedom of no-self”—as a result of having become an arahant/arhat. All this of course does not turn this episode into an actual instance of koan practice. Nevertheless, it does seem to me reasonable to propose that the function of the probably most famous instance of silence in *Āgama* literature to some degree foreshadows a form of practice that became prominent in East-Asian meditation traditions.





## IX

### Skill in Means

In the context of a survey of Mahāyāna ethics, Keown (1992/2001: 157) distinguishes between two kinds of skill in means. One of these is of general relevance to Buddhist practitioners and stays firmly grounded in the normative ethical framework of early Buddhism. The other, however, is relevant only to highly advanced bodhisattvas and Buddhas, who in this particular strand of Buddhist thought are considered to be capable of transgressing ethical precepts, as long as this happens out of a compassionate motivation.

As already noted by Tatz (1994/2001: 10), skill in means “is not a primary term of early Buddhism.” Although the idea of skill in means is indeed hardly mentioned in the early discourses, reflecting its comparatively late genesis and evolution, a closer study of the few relevant instances that can be identified can provide interesting perspectives. These instances can conveniently be grouped in accordance with the above distinction into two types, one relevant for practitioners in general and the other being more the reserve of the Buddha himself or of his highly advanced disciples.

#### The First Type of Skill in Means

“Skill in means” (*upāyakosalla*) features as part of a set of three skills mentioned in the *Saṅgīti-sutta*, with the other two being “skill in progression” (*āyakosalla*) and “skill in retrogression” (*apāyakosalla*).<sup>1</sup> The general func-

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tion of the *Saṅgīti-sutta* is to provide a map of various doctrinal terms. These are arranged according to the number they involve along a basic grid that proceeds from ones to tens. The present set occurs in the section of threes. The parallels to the *Saṅgīti-sutta* do not have this particular set of three skills, making the occurrence of skill in means in this context a presentation specific to the Pāli version of the *Saṅgīti-sutta* and thus probably later than the material this discourse has in common with its parallels.

A discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, of which no parallel is known, includes the same set of three among six qualities whose possession leads to the acquisition and strengthening of wholesome qualities. Conversely, their absence prevents such acquisition and strengthening. The relevant passage proceeds as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Here, monastics, a monastic is skilled in progression, is skilled in retrogression, is skilled in means, gives rise to desire for achieving wholesome states that have not been achieved, protects wholesome states that have been achieved, and accomplishes through perseverant undertaking. Monastics, endowed with these six qualities a monastic is able to achieve a wholesome state that has not been achieved and strengthen a wholesome state that has been achieved. [2324]

Apart from the three skills, to be explored below, the remainder of the passage could be summarized as indicating that, in order for wholesome states to arise and become strong, one needs to desire that they arise, protect them once they have arisen, and be perseverant in both respects. This thereby spells out a basic principle of mental culture.

The above listing of six states shows a peculiarity in the Pāli original, as only the first three are connected to each other with the conjunction

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<sup>1</sup> DN 33 at DN III 220,3.

<sup>2</sup> AN 6.79 at AN III 431,26: *idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu āyakusalo ca hoti, apāyakusalo ca hoti, upāyakusalo ca hoti, anadhigatānaṃ kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ adhigamāya chandaṃ janeti, adhigate kusale dhamme sārakkhati, sātaccakiriyāya sampādeti. imehi kho, bhikkhave, chahi dhammehi samannāgato bhikkhu bhabbo anadhigataṃ vā kusalaṃ dhammaṃ adhigantum, adhigataṃ vā kusalaṃ dhammaṃ phātikātun ti.*

“and” (*ca*), which for the sake of ease of reading I have not explicitly translated. From the viewpoint of Pāli grammar, it would be more natural if such a listing were to use this conjunction throughout or else dispense with it completely. The resultant irregularity, in the sense of combining two different styles of enumeration, gives the impression that the final presentation results from a combination of two originally separate lists.<sup>3</sup> When evaluated from the viewpoint of content, it would seem that the desire for wholesome states to arise, together with protecting them and persevering, fit the overall topic quite well and could even be considered sufficient for the goal of achieving and strengthening a wholesome state. On this reasoning, then, it would be possible that, during the process of oral transmission, the three skills were added to the above discourse. This would concord with the impression conveyed by the comparative perspective on the *Saṅgīti-sutta* that these three skills are not particularly early.

Be that as it may, further information on the three types of skill can be garnered from the *Vibhaṅga*, a work in the Theravāda Abhidharma collection. Although in general terms Abhidharma works are later than the early discourses, the case of the *Vibhaṅga* does not always fit this pattern. A particularly striking example emerges when consulting the coverage given to the four establishments of mindfulness in two Pāli discourses, the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*,<sup>4</sup> compared to which the treatment of the same topic in the *Vibhaṅga* appears to reflect an earlier stage in textual evolution.<sup>5</sup>

The exegesis of the three types of skill in the *Vibhaṅga* sees skill in progression as a form of wise understanding (*paññā pajānanā*, etc.) concerned with how paying attention in a particular way can lead to avoiding the arising of unwholesome states or to decreasing those already arisen, and can also lead to arousing and strengthening wholesome states.<sup>6</sup> Skill in retrogression then concerns the complementary case, namely wisely understanding

<sup>3</sup> See Anālayo 2014c: 101f and 2022c: 82f.

<sup>4</sup> MN 10 at MN I 55,27 and DN 22 at DN II 290,1.

<sup>5</sup> This has already been pointed out by Bronkhorst 1985.

<sup>6</sup> Vibh 325,31.

which forms of attention have the opposite effect as those described above, thereby leading to retrogression rather than progression. Regarding skill in means, the *Vibhaṅga* then offers the following succinct explanation:<sup>7</sup> “And therein all wisdom of means is skill in means.”

In this way, skill in means here operates in the background of the other two skills, in the sense that it refers to knowing how to direct attention and how not to direct attention. For this rather fundamental task in mental culture, the cultivation of mindfulness would be a key requirement. The same cultivation of mindfulness would also provide a meaningful perspective on skill in means in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* passage translated above. In other words, perseverance in aspiring for wholesome states and protecting them requires that one knows how to do that, particularly through directing attention accordingly. Here, mindful supervision can provide the required feedback. On noting that wholesome states increase by attending in a particular way, such a form of attending should be encouraged. However, if another form of paying attention results in triggering unwholesome reactions, mindful recognition of this pattern can provide the indispensable feedback for being able to deploy attention differently.

From this viewpoint, then, the type of skill in means described in the above passages stands in a close relationship to right effort and right mindfulness as key elements in Buddhist mental culture. Such a type of skill in means would indeed be relevant to practitioners in general. Grounded in a clear distinction between what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, it could take the form of monitoring with mindfulness to discern those conditions, in oneself and in others, that foster what is wholesome and counter what is unwholesome, followed by making an effort in support of an overall increase in wholesome states. Such skill in means would be a very practical and meaningful way of expressing compassion, in the understanding that unwholesome states cause harm for oneself and others, hence their diminishing in turn diminishes harm. This is precisely what compassion in early Buddhist soteriology is about: countering harm.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Vibh 326,10: *sabbā pi tatr’ upāyā paññā upāyakosallaṃ*.

<sup>8</sup> See Anālayo 2015f: 7f.

In this way, it seems that the early Buddhist type of skill in means that is of general relevance to any practitioner would call for a firm grounding in mindfulness and a clear orientation toward fostering what is wholesome and overcoming what is unwholesome. In a way, the ethical skill, if it can be called such, that is enshrined by the nuance of being “wholesome”, is arguably a skill of primary importance in early Buddhist soteriology. As noted by Hick (1991: 143), “the idea of means implies the idea of an end.” The end of such skillful means would indeed be to foster what is wholesome and to counter what is unwholesome, thereby decreasing harm to others and oneself. Such an end would be a natural and obvious expression of being firmly rooted in compassion.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the actual meditative cultivation of compassion, as described in early Buddhist texts, relies on mindfulness, as is also the case for the other three immeasurable or boundless states.<sup>10</sup> Understood in this way, such skill in means would reflect a basic and ancient connection that harks back to early stages in the development of Buddhist thought and practice.

## The Second Type of Skill in Means

Whereas the passages surveyed above, taken from the *Saṅgīti-sutta* and a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, present a form of skill in means that would be of universal applicability to any practitioner of mindfulness meditation, another two passages reflect more specific concerns. The first of these [2325] is a verse which, strictly speaking, does not involve an occurrence of the full term “skill in means”, although Bhikkhu Pāsādika (2008: 439) considers this verse to be already “distinctly reminiscent of the Mahā-

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<sup>9</sup> Of relevance here is also the position taken by Kabat-Zinn 2011: 281 that “mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) was developed as one of a possibly infinite number of skillful means for bringing the dharma into mainstream settings.” Maex 2011: 167 reasons: “What Jon Kabat-Zinn did, is in line with a long-standing Buddhist approach called *upāya*, usually translated as ‘skillful means’ ... Jon Kabat-Zinn has done nothing else but continue that tradition and restate the teaching in a way that makes it acceptable to the medical and the scientific world.”

<sup>10</sup> See Anālayo 2019b.

yāna usage of *upāyakaūsalya*.” The verse employs the similar term “knowing the means” (*upāyaññū*) and then continues by mentioning the quality of being “skilled” (*kusala*) on its own. The two terms occur consecutively in a poem whose main topic is the respect owed to a teacher of Dharma. The verse under discussion then illustrates the nature of such a teacher with the example of a sturdy boat, equipped with oar and rudder, which someone “knowing the means” and being “skilled” can employ to bring others across.<sup>11</sup>

According to the commentarial explanation, the verses were spoken by the Buddha in reference to his chief disciple Sāriputta.<sup>12</sup> This identification is intriguing. Whereas in the early discourses Sāriputta functions as an outstanding teacher, second only to the Buddha himself, later Mahāyāna texts portray him in a considerably more negative light.<sup>13</sup> From the viewpoint of such texts, to find Sāriputta/Śāriputra associated with knowledge of the means to ferry others across would certainly be highly unexpected, if not surprising. Yet, this is indeed the role accorded to him in the early discourses. Whatever way his role is conceived, however, the present verse is not of general applicability and much rather concerns the more specific case of a highly accomplished teacher.

The same holds for the other relevant occurrence, which is also in verse and in this case refers to the Buddha himself. The relevant verse occurs in the *Theragāthā*, which contains earlier and later material.<sup>14</sup> The stanza translated below was reportedly spoken by the Buddha’s half-brother Nanda:<sup>15</sup>

Due to superficial attention, I was devoted to adornment,  
And I was restless and vain, afflicted by sensual lust.  
Through the being skilled in means of the Buddha, the kinsman  
of the sun,

<sup>11</sup> Sn 321: *so tāraye tattha bahū pi aññe, tatrūpayaññū kusalo mutimā*.

<sup>12</sup> Pj II 325,24.

<sup>13</sup> See Migot 1954.

<sup>14</sup> Norman 1969: xxix envisages a period of formation “of almost 300 years”.

<sup>15</sup> Th 157: *ayoniso manasikārā, maṇḍanaṃ anuyuñjisaṃ, uddhato capalo cāsiṃ, kāma-rāgena aṭṭito*. Th 158: *upāyakusalenāhaṃ, buddhenādiccabandhunā, yoniso paṭipajjitvā, bhava cittaṃ udabbahin ti*.

Having practiced penetratively, I removed my mind from becoming.

The first verse highlights Nanda's condition of being under the influence of sensual lust. Besides creating agitation in the mind, this made him keen on adornment. The reference to superficial or unwise (*ayoniso*) attention relates to the passages surveyed above, according to which paying attention in a certain way, unwholesome states will arise and increase. This appears to have been Nanda's predicament. A contrast to such misdirected attention then takes the form of practice undertaken in a way that is wise or, more literally, penetrative (*yoniso*). As the passage taken up above from the *Vibhaṅga* clarifies, the shift from unwise to wise attention involves skill in means, an element that in the present case appears to have been introduced by the Buddha, presumably in the form of some instruction to Nanda. Relying on such skill in means, Nanda became an arahant, whereby he removed his mind from future becoming in the cycle of birth and death, *saṃsāra*. In this way, although the contrast provided by the two verses resonates closely with the first type of skill in means, explored above, the role of the Buddha in the present context is in line with the previous instance concerning Sāriputta, in the sense that these verses concern the skill in means of a highly accomplished teacher.

### Nanda's Practice to Overcome Sensual Lust

The skill in means relevant to the case of Nanda can best be explored by surveying other discourses depicting his struggle with sensual lust. A discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reports that on one occasion Nanda approached the Buddha carrying a shiny bowl, dressed up in ironed robes, and with his eyes painted.<sup>16</sup> This description seems to relate to the reference in the first of his two verses to being "devoted to adornment." Such misguided devotion then led to a stern rebuke by the Buddha, who reportedly commended that Nanda undertake three types of more ascetically inclined practices, presumable to wean him from his sensual inclinations and infat-

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<sup>16</sup> SN 21.8 at SN II 281,2.



uations with his own beauty. These three practices are living in the seclusion of a forest; subsisting on begging for food rather than accepting invitations to meals, which will usually be more delicious than what one receives through begging on the roads; and wearing robes made of rags instead of accepting gifts of ready-made robes, which will usually be of much higher quality.

This Pāli discourse has three parallels extant in Chinese, whose introductory narration differs in so far as here Nanda had been seen all dressed up by other monks, who reported this to the Buddha. Hearing their report, the Buddha called Nanda to his presence and rebuked him. Two versions found in two different *Samyukta-āgama* collections report the recommendation that Nanda should become a forest dweller, subsist on begging food, and wear rag robes.<sup>17</sup> In a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama*, the rebuke points out that his behavior is not different from that of lay people.<sup>18</sup> In this way, alongside exhibiting some variations, the parallels agree that Nanda behaved in ways unsuitable for one who has gone forth by indulging in adornment, and that the Buddha reacted to this by pointing out the type of [2326] behavior he should rather adopt. The instruction exemplifies the approach to sensuality typical for early Buddhist soteriology, namely the exercise of restraint and the employment of countermeasures.

The same holds for a discourse in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*, which provides a detailed survey of four mindfulness-related practices whose undertaking enabled Nanda to live the celibate life of a monk in spite of his lustful disposition.<sup>19</sup> One of these practices takes the form of guarding the sense doors in such a way that no unwholesome states arise. This relates well to the exposition given in the *Vibhaṅga* of skill in means, mentioned above. A chief tool for such practice is mindfulness.<sup>20</sup> Another practice is moderation in eating, which also has a direct relationship to mindfulness.<sup>21</sup> In addition,

<sup>17</sup> SĀ 1067 at T II 277a25 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 5 at T II 375a12.

<sup>18</sup> EĀ 18.6 at T II 591a27.

<sup>19</sup> AN 8.9 at AN IV 166,19.

<sup>20</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2020b.

<sup>21</sup> See also Anālayo 2018d.

the cultivation of wakefulness is mentioned, which requires purifying the mind from unwholesome states while sitting or walking in meditation during the day and the first and last part of the night, to be combined with going to sleep mindfully in the middle of the night. This is obviously also a mindfulness-related practice. The same holds for the fourth, which takes the form of mindful contemplation of the impermanent nature of feeling tones (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), and thoughts (*vitakka*).

The detailed survey offered in this way stands out among Pāli discourses for its comprehensive presentation of early Buddhist methods for countering sensual desire. Mindfully guarding the sense doors serves to counter the ingrained tendency of the mind to pursue what stimulates lust; moderation with eating supports the same, as food can easily become another occasion for living out sensual tendencies. These combine with readiness to counter unwholesome states at any time and the cultivation of insight into impermanence, which naturally leads to dispassion and thereby undermines sensual passion.

Similar to the *Samyutta-nikāya* passage on Nanda dressing up, the present Pāli discourse also has parallels in two *Samyukta-āgama* collections extant in Chinese.<sup>22</sup> With some minor differences in presentation, these also present the four mindfulness-related practices surveyed above, adding an injunction to the monks in the audience that they should undertake the same types of training. Clearly, Nanda was not the only one in the early Buddhist monastic community struggling with sensual desire. Sanskrit fragments have preserved parts of a version of this instruction, in addition to which another parallel offering such instructions is extant in Tibetan translation.<sup>23</sup>

Out of the above four practices, guarding the sense doors was reportedly taken up particularly well by Nanda, as the listing of outstanding disciples in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* reckons him foremost in this respect.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> SĀ 275 at T II 73a26 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 6 at T II 375a24.

<sup>23</sup> SHT VI 1226.3R–5V, Bechert and Wille 1989: 20–22, and Up 2065 at D 4094 *ju* 90a2 or P 5595 *tu* 102b1.

<sup>24</sup> AN 1.14.4 at AN I 25,11: *etad aggamaṃ ... indriyesu guttadvārānaṃ*.

The counterpart in the *Ekottarika-āgama* could be read to imply a similar type of accomplishment, as it reckons him foremost in calmness of all faculties and an immovable mind.<sup>25</sup>

The advice that emerges from the passages surveyed above would indeed provide a range of skillful means to wean the mind from sensual lust. Hence, from this perspective, the reference in Nanda's verse to skill in means could easily be interpreted as intending the above type of instructions, even though these do not explicitly mention this particular term. In fact, as pointed out by Gombrich (1996: 17), the "Buddha's 'skill in means' tends to be thought of as a feature of the Mahāyāna ... but the exercise of skill to which it refers, the ability to adapt one's message to the audience, is of enormous importance in the Pali Canon."

In the same vein, Jayatilleke (1963/1980: 406) reasons that it is the ability of "the Buddha in adjusting his sermons to suit the predilections and temperament of his listeners that comes to be known as the *upāya-kauśalya* or 'the skill in (devising) means (to convert people)'." That is, even when the term is not explicitly used, the basic idea of being skilled in teaching others the means for cultivating what is wholesome and avoiding what is unwholesome can be seen to underlie a range of instructions reportedly given by the Buddha.

## Nanda and Heavenly Nymphs

Another perspective on Nanda's struggle with lust emerges in a discourse extant in the *Udāna*.<sup>26</sup> In general, prose narration in this collection tends to be later than the bulk of material found in the four main Pāli discourse collections, making it reasonable to place the present instance at a later time in the development of Buddhist texts than the Pāli discourses related to Nanda surveyed above. The relevant story begins with Nanda telling other monks that he wants to disrobe. On being informed of this, the Bud-

<sup>25</sup> EĀ 4.5 at T II 557c22: 諸根寂靜, 心不變易; here this describes one of two eminencies of Nanda.

<sup>26</sup> Ud 3.2 at Ud 21,15.

dha summons Nanda to his presence. Nanda reports that he keeps thinking of a beautiful fiancée from his lay life. The Buddha then takes Nanda by the arm and levitates together with him to the Heaven of the Thirty-three to show him heavenly nymphs attending on Sakka, the ruler in this heaven. Nanda admits that these heavenly nymphs are far more attractive than his former fiancée. The Buddha then promises that Nanda will gain such heavenly nymphs. On hearing this promise, Nanda is ready to continue living in robes. Later, being spurred by criticism raised by other monks of his mean motivation, Nanda makes an effort and becomes an arahant. He informs the Buddha that there is no longer any need to keep the former promise that Nanda will gain heavenly nymphs.<sup>27</sup> [2327]

The *Udāna* discourse summarized above has a parallel in an *Udāna* collection extant in Chinese as well as in an *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse.<sup>28</sup> These report that, during the visit to heaven, Nanda found out that a host of beautiful nymphs, who were without any male partner, were waiting for him to be reborn in heaven in order to be able attend on him. This thereby makes explicit something that is also implicit in the Pāli version, in that the winning of heavenly nymphs concerns Nanda's next birth. Both of the Chinese versions continue with the Buddha taking Nanda also to a visit to hell, revealing to him where he is destined to be reborn after having amused himself with the heavenly nymphs. This has the same sobering effect that in the Pāli account results from the criticism by other monks. The *Ekottarika-āgama* version agrees with the Pāli account that, once he had become an arahant, Nanda told the Buddha that the former promise of heavenly nymphs was no longer binding.

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<sup>27</sup> Shulman 2019a: 242 apparently misunderstands this turn of events to imply that the Buddha being released from his commitment serves to express “that only awakening can be the true freedom from commitment.” Instead, the point appears to be simply that, once Nanda has become an arahant and gone beyond the prospect of future rebirth, any pledge as to what form his next rebirth will take has become irrelevant. The ruse to keep him in celibacy has worked, as by becoming an arahant he has become unable to engage in sexual intercourse: see, e.g., DN 29 at DN III 133,16, Sanskrit fragment 285v6, DiSimone 2016: 93, and DĀ 17 at T I 75b17.

<sup>28</sup> T 212 at T IV 739c1 and EĀ 18.7 at T II 591b5.

The description of the Buddha taking Nanda by the arm up to heaven appears to reflect a developed notion of physical levitation from what, at an early stage, seem to have been envisaged as acts performed with the mental body.<sup>29</sup> In other words, although the idea that the Buddha and accomplished meditators could levitate to visit various heavens is early, for them to be able to carry someone else along reflects a more evolved conception of levitation done with the physical body rather than with the mental one.

A problematic idea in the above episode is the Buddha's promise that, by staying in robes, Nanda can be certain that in his next rebirth he will gain the company of heavenly nymphs.<sup>30</sup> The idea of such a promise, regarding the definite conditions of Nanda's next rebirth, does not sit too well with the early Buddhist theory of karma and its fruit, as expounded in the *Mahākammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallel.<sup>31</sup> The parallel versions of this discourse indicate that the circumstances of one's next rebirth do not depend only on the ethical quality of one's most recent conduct, as at times a karma from a distant past may come to fruition instead. As a result, it is in principle possible that someone observing wholesome conduct still is reborn in hell, just as someone immoral can still be reborn in heaven. In both cases, the wholesome or unwholesome conduct will have its result, but this will ripen at a later time. The quality of the present rebirth has been caused by something else, done much earlier. Thus, although appropriate conduct in combination with a strong aspiration will make it quite likely that one will be reborn in a particular heavenly realm,<sup>32</sup> this is not completely certain. The only escape from such uncertainty, envisaged in early

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<sup>29</sup> See Anālayo 2016h, 2021b and 2022d: 237 note 376.

<sup>30</sup> The concern here is clearly with keeping Nanda in robes, *pace* Shulman 2019a: 247, who mistakes the story to mean that "Nanda will attain union with the *apsaras* [heavenly nymphs] if he practices good meditation." No reference to meditation, good or otherwise, is found; the central idea is rather that Nanda should practice celibacy now so as to be able in his next life to indulge in sensuality in a way much superior to what would be available to him now if he were to disrobe.

<sup>31</sup> MN 136 at MN III 209,30 and MĀ 171 at T I 707a26; see also Anālayo 2011c: 778–780.

<sup>32</sup> MN 120 at MN III 99,14.

Buddhist thought, is by way of attaining stream-entry, as this will ensure that no rebirth takes place in hell and other lower realms.

From the viewpoint of the complexity of karma and its fruition, it could not really be predicted with absolute certainty that Nanda's staying in robes will result in his next rebirth taking place in the Heaven of the Thirty-three in the company of heavenly nymphs. That is, even without the censure by others or the additional tour to hell, which in the parallel versions serve to direct him instead to the path toward transcending all types of birth, if Nanda had stayed in robe just aspiring to be united in his next life with the heavenly nymphs, it could not have been predicted with certainty that this will indeed happen.

Another and rather significant departure from early Buddhist thought emerges on contrasting the underlying approach to Nanda's lustful tendencies with the description of how to deal with sensual desire in the passages surveyed earlier. These present countermeasures of various types, through ascetic forms of conduct and mental practices that prevent the arising of lust. The present episode, however, depicts the adoption of a substantially different approach. This can best be summarized with a quote from the *Ekottarika-āgama* version, which in this discourse occurs after the Buddha has taken Nanda to heaven and before he takes him to hell: "Now I shall extinguish Nanda's fire through fire."<sup>33</sup> In its current placing, the sense appears to be that the Buddha intends to extinguish the sensual fire in Nanda's mind through a vision of the fires of hell. However, this description would equally fit the rationale of the heavenly tour, whose purpose is to extinguish Nanda's burning lust for his fiancée, due to which he wants to disrobe, through setting him on fire with sensual longing for heavenly nymphs (which he can only gain if he continues to live in robes).

In all versions of this episode, taking Nanda to heaven and showing him the heavenly nymphs is intentionally employed to stimulate his sensual desire even more, rather than curb it. <sup>[2328]</sup> He is being weaned from lusting for his former fiancée not through insight into the predicament of sensuality, through realizing the limitations of physical beauty, or through

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<sup>33</sup> EĀ 18.7 at T II 592a19: 我今當以火滅難陀火。

arousing dispassion for what is impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory. Instead, the tool is the stimulation of sensual passion for something even more sensually attractive than what has, up to now, been the object of his lusting. Such a procedure would be in line with the position taken, for example, in the *Hevajra Tantra*, a work appearing around 900 CE,<sup>34</sup> that lust itself can provide a release from the bondage of lust: “Through lust the world is bound, through lust it is freed indeed.”<sup>35</sup>

This statement is preceded by a reference to a homeopathic treatment as an illustration of how a particular problem can in this way be countered. The above indication then continues with a dismissive reference to those Buddhists who are not aware of this form of practice. Such lack of awareness would certainly hold for the remainder of early Buddhist texts, where the Nanda episode appears to be unique in reflecting this type of approach. There is, of course, the tantalizing instruction: “in dependence on craving, craving should be abandoned.”<sup>36</sup> However, this does not involve a recommendation to stimulate sensual craving. Instead, it commends “craving” (if it can even be called such) for liberation in order to overcome sensual types of craving. In spite of some superficial similarity to the quote from the *Hevajra Tantra*, the implication of this passage is substantially different. In other words, the Nanda episode in the *Udāna* could indeed be the earliest attested instance in Buddhist texts where sensual lust is being intentionally stimulated as a means for going beyond sensuality. From this viewpoint, then, this episode, found after all in a Pāli discourse, could even be considered an instance of proto-tantra.

The remarkable nature of this approach has not been lost on the commentary on the *Udāna* discourse,<sup>37</sup> which devotes some effort to explaining why the Buddha made Nanda, who already had a lustful mind, look at heav-

<sup>34</sup> See Szántó 2015.

<sup>35</sup> *Hevajra Tantra* II.ii.50, Snellgrove 1959: 50: *rāgena badhyate loko rāgenaiva vimucyate*.

<sup>36</sup> AN 4.159 at AN II 145,35: *taṇhaṃ nissāya taṇhā pahātabbā ti*; with a parallel in SĀ 564 at T II 148a26: 依於愛者，當斷愛欲。

<sup>37</sup> Ud-a 172,14: *kasmā pana bhagavā avassutacittaṃ āyasantaṃ nandaṃ accharāyo olokāpesi?*

only nymphs. The attempt at explaining this unusual procedure employs the illustration of a skilled (*kusala*) physician who treats a person with excessive bodily humors by first exacerbating the condition in order to then be able to remove it. This illustration is similar to the one employed in the *Hevajra Tantra*. The Pāli commentary argues that, in a comparable way, the Buddha, as one who is skilled (*kusala*) in taming persons to be guided, intentionally exacerbated Nanda's condition. Another commentary then identifies this procedure as an instance of the Buddha's skill in means.<sup>38</sup> The same identification recurs in the introductory narration to one of the *Jātaka* tales, which in general reflect a late level of textual development comparable to the just-mentioned commentary (and thus later than the *Udāna* tale). The narration in question mentions several instances of the Buddha's skill in means.<sup>39</sup> Notably, the tale of Nanda is the only such instance found among the discourses, as the other examples are known only from commentarial texts.

Although Federman (2009: 126) has a point in warning against reading too easily the Mahāyāna concept of skill in means into early Buddhist texts, in this particular case it seems indeed that, as noted by Pye (1978/2003: 134), “the story of Nanda ... probably comes nearest to the Mahayana sense of skilful means” among this type of Pāli sources. The somewhat unique approach to dealing with defilements that emerges in this way may well be a central factor in turning the narrative of Nanda's dedication to the monastic life in order to win heavenly nymphs into a lasting inspiration in Buddhist narrative traditions as well as in Buddhist art.<sup>40</sup> The former finds reflection in a range of different versions of this tale,<sup>41</sup> even to the extent of motivating the celebrated Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa (active around the second century CE) to compose a whole work on Nanda, the *Saundarananda*.<sup>42</sup> Notably, the *Saundarananda* also contains a version of the simile

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<sup>38</sup> Pj II 274,20: *upāyakusalatāya*.

<sup>39</sup> Jā 478 at Jā IV 224,9.

<sup>40</sup> Zin 2006: 167–190.

<sup>41</sup> See Lamotte 1944/1981: 118 and Yamasaki 2009.

<sup>42</sup> See Salomon 2015.



of the physician to illustrate the Buddha's approach,<sup>43</sup> showcasing the continuity of the felt need to explain this type of method.

Further developments along the lines of the already remarkable nature of the Nanda episode can be seen even in the Pāli tradition. The commentary on the *Dhammapada* provides an extended version of the *Udāna* tale, adding that the Buddha had tricked Nanda into going forth.<sup>44</sup> The story goes that the Buddha handed his bowl to Nanda at the end of a meal and did not take it back, thereby forcing Nanda to follow him up to the monastery. Once they had arrived at the monastery, the Buddha told him to ordain, which out of respect Nanda was unable to refuse. A similar tale can be found in the version of the Nanda tale reported in the Chinese *Udāna* collection.<sup>45</sup>

This Pāli commentarial tale stands in some degree of contrast with a detail in the *Samyutta-nikāya* report of the Buddha's rebuke of Nanda's dressing up, discussed above. This rebuke explicitly notes that Nanda went forth out of confidence or faith.<sup>46</sup> At the time of this discourse, Nanda was evidently still seen as having decided to become a monk by his own inspiration, rather than being deceived into going forth by the Buddha. The same indication can be found in the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to this discourse as well as in the parallel in the same collection to [2329] the *Udāna* tale of Nanda being promised heavenly nymphs.<sup>47</sup>

As pointed out by Kalupahana (1992/1994: 117) in the context of a discussion of skill in means, "deception in any form, whether intended to achieve good or bad ends, is not condoned in [early] Buddhism." The above tale does not fit particularly well with such an attitude. Schroeder (2004: 15) reasons that stories of this type, which abound in later texts, "not only go against orthodox Buddhist doctrine—they seem philosophically inconsistent. That the Buddha can ... cheat to help others attain liberation ... seems like sophistry."

<sup>43</sup> *Saundarananda* X.43, Johnston 1928: 71.

<sup>44</sup> DhP-a I 115,1.

<sup>45</sup> T 212 at T IV 739b6.

<sup>46</sup> SN 21.8 at SN II 281,9: *saddhā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajitassa*.

<sup>47</sup> EĀ 18.6 at T II 591a24 and EĀ 18.7 at T II 591b20: 以信.

Although the idea of Nanda being cajoled into going forth further enhances the remarkable transformation of a person completely in the grip of sensual lust into an arahant, the net result is that the Buddha appears in a substantially different light from the way his personality and moral integrity emerge in other early discourses. As noted by McClintock (2011: 103), the Nanda tale is one of several later narratives in which the Buddha features as a “compassionate trickster”. In this way, a proto-tantric approach can be identified already among the Pāli discourses, which a Pāli commentarial tale then combines with an employment of skill in means (explicitly recognized as such by the Pāli commentarial tradition) that no longer fits comfortably into the ethical framework that is otherwise so pervasive in early Buddhist thought.

The tale of Nanda thereby showcases the beginning stages of a problem that becomes considerably more pronounced in later tradition, regarding the scope of “means”. As pointed out by Jackson (2004: 872), this tendency “defines virtue in terms of motive rather than conduct”. Such a shift in perspective is not without its challenges. In the words of McGarrity (2009: 202): “*Upāya* is a deliberately malleable and stretchable term ... The issue is just how far it can stretch and yet still continue to mean anything.” This is indeed the question: At what point has the scope of “means” been stretched to such an extent that it no longer concords with the alternative, and in the early texts more prominent, sense of the term translated as “skill”, *kusala*/*kuśala*, namely as a referent for what is ethically “wholesome”? Whatever the reply may be, the above exploration shows the basic problem that emerges in this way to be a pan-Buddhist one, rather than being confined to the Mahāyāna traditions.



## X

### A Discourse Without Parallels

In the present chapter I study and translate a discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama* preserved in Chinese of which no parallel in other discourse collections is known. This situation relates to the wider issue of what significance to accord to the absence of parallels from the viewpoint of the early Buddhist oral transmission. The main topic of the discourse itself is perception of impermanence, which is of central importance in the early Buddhist scheme of the path for cultivating liberating insight. A description of the results of such practice in this *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse has a somewhat ambivalent formulation that suggests a possible relation to the notion of rebirth in the Pure Abodes, *suddhāvāsa/śuddhāvāsa*. This notion, attested in a Pāli discourse, in turn might have provided a precedent for the aspiration, prominent in later Buddhist traditions, to be reborn in the Pure Land.

#### Oral Transmission

The discourses found in the four Pāli *Nikāyas* and their counterparts in the Chinese *Āgamas* and at times in Gāndhārī and Sanskrit fragments or Tibetan translation, and on rare occasions even in Uighur, are the final product of centuries of oral transmission. According to the traditional account, these discourse collections hearken back to the first *saṅgīti* or “communal recitation”, to follow the terminology employed by Cousins (1991: 27), the scholar in whose honor the present study has been written.<sup>1</sup> Accounts of

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\* Originally published in 2018 under the title “An *Ekottarika-āgama* Discourse Without

this *saṅgīti* in the Dharmaguptaka, Haimavata (?), Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, and Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayas* agree that at that time the corpus of orally transmitted discourses was divided into four main groups.<sup>2</sup> These allocate together long discourses, medium-length discourses, shorter discourses assembled by topic, and shorter discourses that involve some numerically arranged item between one and ten or eleven. The Theravāda *Vinaya* speaks of five such groups, [126] adding a miscellaneous section now known as the *Khuddaka-nikāya*.<sup>3</sup>

It seems indeed plausible that at an early stage in the Buddhist oral tradition some such grouping would have come into being in order to facilitate a division of labor among reciters, not all of whom would have been able to memorize the entire corpus of texts in circulation at that time. In contrast, the *aṅgas* mentioned in several early discourses are probably best understood as referring to textual genres, rather than being a division of texts into groups.<sup>4</sup>

Whereas a basic division into groups, referred to as *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas*, appears to be a common starting point, the allocation of discourses to one of these groups seems to have been rather school-specific. In view of the ongoing demand to maintain the oral tradition, it is perhaps not surprising if different lineages of reciters took varying decisions in this respect, reflecting the need to ensure that each collection attracts sufficient prospective reciters willing to learn its contents and thereby ensure its transmission to future generations.

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Parallels: From Perception of Impermanence to the Pure Land” in *Buddhist Studies Review*, 35.1/2: 125–134. © Equinox Publishing.

<sup>1</sup> See also Gombrich 1988/1990: 25 and the discussion in Tilakaratne 2000 and Skilling 2009a: 55–60.

<sup>2</sup> T 1428 at T XXII 968b19, T 1463 at T XXIV 820a23, T 1425 at T XXII 491c16, T 1421 at T XXII 191a24, T 1451 at T XXIV 407b27, and D 6 *da* 314a7 or P 1035 *ne* 297a5; see also Anālayo 2015i and 2022d: 20f and 37–39.

<sup>3</sup> Vin II 287,27. On the *Khuddaka-nikāya* see, e.g., Abeynayake 1984: 33–46, Collins 1990: 108 note 11, von Hinüber 1996/1997: 42f, and Freiburger 2011: 218.

<sup>4</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2016a and below p. 217ff.

At present only one complete set of these four groups of discourses is extant, namely the Theravāda collection of the Pāli *Nikāyas*. Although it can safely be assumed that the reciter lineages of other Buddhist schools would have maintained comparable groupings of discourses, at present we only have access to parts of such collections, as the four main Chinese *Āgamas* do not belong to the same school. Besides resulting in some degree of overlap, in that a single Pāli discourse can have more than one parallel, found in different *Āgamas*, this situation also results in the existence of discourses without parallels, in the sense that a discourse is extant only in one of the reciter traditions to which we still have access.

The implications of a discourse having no known parallels are not necessarily straightforward. Although at first sight one might be tempted to conclude that this must reflect the comparatively late date of the coming into existence of this discourse, in actual fact the situation is more complex, as such absence can also be just the result of differing allocations of a particular discourse in various transmission lineages.

An example in case would be the *Jīvaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, which is without a parallel in the Chinese *Āgamas*.<sup>5</sup> Yet, this does not imply that the Pāli discourse is late itself, or else that the reciters of the *Madhyama-āgama*, a collection probably transmitted within a Sarvāstivāda milieu,<sup>6</sup> dropped such a discourse from their collection of medium-length discourses.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the reason is simply that the Sarvāstivāda reciters had [127] allocated this text to their collection of long discourses, as the recently discovered Sanskrit fragment *Dirgha-āgama* does indeed have a version of this discourse.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> MN 55 at MN I 368,17 to MN I 371,22.

<sup>6</sup> The general consensus among scholars on the school affiliation of the *Madhyama-āgama* has been called into question by Chung and Fukita 2011: 13–34, as well as Chung 2014 and 2017; for critical replies see Anālayo 2012g: 516–521 and 2017e. On the appropriateness of distinguishing between Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda *Āgama* transmission lineages in general see also above p. 73ff.

<sup>7</sup> This has been assumed by Minh Chau 1964/1991: 31f.

<sup>8</sup> See the survey in Hartmann and Wille 2014: 141.

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned first-sight impression for ascribing the absence of a parallel to lateness still carries considerable probability. In the case of the *Dirgha-āgama* preserved in Chinese, for example, it seems that the three discourses in this collection that do not have a parallel are indeed of somewhat later origin.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the example of the *Jīvaka-sutta* is not meant to dismiss the possibility of lateness in toto but only to warn against the simplistic equation of absence of parallels with lateness. Instead, absence of parallels is just one out of a range of possible indicators that needs to be taken into consideration in order to determine relative lateness of a particular discourse. In what follows I examine how far an assumption of lateness holds for an *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse without parallels, which to the best of my knowledge has so far not been translated or studied, at least in a Western-language publication.

A case study of a discourse without parallels from this collection is of particular interest, because the *Ekottarika-āgama* at times contains rather evolved manifestations of Mahāyāna thought.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the *Ekottarika-āgama* even shows clear signs of a substantial reworking of the collection in China, resulting in the merging together of discourses that must have originally been distinct texts.<sup>11</sup> Another remarkable feature is the apparent wholesale

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<sup>9</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2014L.

<sup>10</sup> Anālayo 2013d. This to some extent relates to the challenging question of the school affiliation of this collection. Several scholars have argued for a Mahāsāṅghika affiliation of the *Ekottarika-āgama*; see Mayeda 1985: 102f (offering a survey of opinions in this respect by Japanese scholars), Pāsādika 2010, Kuan 2012, 2013a, 2013b, and 2013c; on the suggestion by Bareau 1955: 57 that the introduction to the collection points to such an affiliation see Anālayo 2013g: 15–19. Hiraoka 2013, however, points out narrative affinities between texts found in the *Ekottarika-āgama* and in the Sarvāstivāda tradition(s); see also the points raised in Palumbo 2013: 297ff. Yet, as far as I can see Harrison 2002: 19 is quite right when he states that the *Ekottarika-āgama* “can hardly be Sarvāstivādin” (pace Palumbo 2013: 102 note 8); in fact, in view of the compositional history of the collection and the clear evidence for substantial Chinese influence on its final state, it seems to me that the school affiliation of this collection, at least in its present state, can no longer be definitely determined; see Anālayo 2016c: 211–214.

<sup>11</sup> Anālayo 2014/2015 and 2015h.

addition of a discourse, an addendum evident from the distinctly different Chinese translation terminology, which makes it safe to conclude that this discourse would have been added in its Chinese form to the *Ekottarika-āgama*.<sup>12</sup> This distinctive character of the *Ekottarika-āgama* sets it apart from the other Chinese *Āgamas*, which show no signs of having gone through a comparable development in China. In view of this, one may easily suspect a discourse without parallel in this collection to be indeed distinctly late. Yet, as I hope to show in the remainder of the present chapter, this is not necessarily the case. In what follows, I first translate the discourse in question.<sup>13</sup>

### Translation of EĀ 38.2

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was at Sāvattihī/Śrāvastī in Jeta's Grove, the Park of Anāthapiṇḍika/Anāthapiṇḍada. At that time the Blessed One said to the monastics:<sup>14</sup> [128]

“You should give attention to the perception of impermanence, widely [cultivate] the perception of impermanence. Having given attention to and widely [cultivated] the perception of impermanence, you will completely eradicate craving for the sensual sphere, and craving for the material sphere and the immaterial sphere, and you will also eradicate ignorance and conceit.

“It is like a fire used to burn grass and sticks, which exhausts them forever and without a remainder, just without traces left behind. It is just like this when, on cultivating the perception of impermanence, one completely eradicates craving for the sensual [sphere] and craving for the material [sphere] and the immaterial [sphere], and ignorance and conceit, [eradicating them] forever and without a remainder.

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<sup>12</sup> Anālayo 2013g.

<sup>13</sup> [11] The translated discourse is EĀ 38.2 at T II 717b28 to 717c17.

<sup>14</sup> [12] Here and elsewhere, I translate counterparts to the Pāli *bhikkhu* or Sanskrit *bhikṣu* with the gender-neutral “monastic”, in order to reflect the fact that in its general usage in the early discourses *bhikkhu* or *bhikṣu* can include female monastics; see in more detail Collett and Anālayo 2014.



“The reason is, monastics, that at the time you cultivate the perception of impermanence your mind becomes dispassionate. By having a dispassionate mind, one in turn is capable of analyzing the Dharma and giving attention to its meaning, without there being worry, sadness, pain, and vexation. By having given attention to the meaning of the Dharma, one is not deluded or mistaken in one’s practice. If one sees that there is a quarrel, one in turn has this thought:

“Those venerable ones do not cultivate the perception of impermanence, do not widely [cultivate] the perception of impermanence; for this reason they devote themselves to this quarrel. By quarrelling, they do not contemplate the meaning [of the Dharma]. By not contemplating its meaning, their minds are consequently confused. By persisting in this delusion, with the ending of life they will enter the three evil destinies: that of hungry ghosts, of animals, [or] of being in hell.’

“Therefore, monastics, you should cultivate the perception of impermanence, widely [cultivate] the perception of impermanence, and in turn become free from perceptions of ill will or delusion, becoming capable of contemplating the Dharma and contemplating its meaning. After the end of life, three good conditions will arise: being reborn in heaven or among humans, or the path to Nirvāṇa. Monastics, it is in this way that you should train.”

At that time the monastics, hearing what the Buddha had said, were delighted and received it respectfully.

## Study

The gist of the above discourse is well in line with the importance given to contemplation of impermanence elsewhere in the early discourses. For example, according to a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and a parallel in the partially preserved *Samyukta-āgama*, insight into impermanence applied to the five aggregates of clinging is a way of cultivating insight that will bring lust or craving to an end and lead to liberation.<sup>15</sup> This accords well

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<sup>15</sup> [13] SN 22.51 at SN III 51,15 speaks of the destruction of lust (*rāga*) and delight (*nandi*) and its parallel SĀ<sup>3</sup> 12 at T II 496b27 of the destruction of craving (愛) and lust (貪).

with the indication made in the passage translated above that the perception of impermanence will eradicate the three types of craving, namely those related to the sense-sphere, the material sphere, and the immaterial sphere. In this way, as far as the importance given to impermanence is concerned, the above translated text is well within the ambit of thought generally reflected in the early discourses.

An interesting contribution it makes is to relate the perception of impermanence to the arising of quarrels. The point appears to be that those who get heated up in <sup>[129]</sup> attack and counterattack in a debate or litigation have lost the overall picture of reality as a changing process, which due to lacking permanence inevitably lacks the potential to provide true satisfaction or to be in some way or another something one can truly grasp and appropriate as one's own. In other words, what is impermanent consequently must be *dukkha/duḥkha*, and what is *dukkha/duḥkha* is certainly empty, a view of things that indeed would leave little room for the type of self-righteous attitude that fuels quarrels and litigations.<sup>16</sup>

Another dimension of the discourse above that requires further comment is the passage that I have translated as “three good conditions will arise: being reborn in heaven or among humans, or the path to Nirvāṇa”. The term I have rendered as “to arise” is 生, which could equally well be translated as “birth”. In fact, to some extent such a translation would fit the context better, since the preceding passage speaks of entering the three evil destinies and thus is clearly concerned with forms of rebirth. Given that the present passage also has three different options, it would be natural to assume that it intends to present a contrast to what has been said earlier. The only problem with such an understanding, which has motivated me, after some hesitation, to opt for the translation “arise”, is that the third of these three options speaks of the “path to Nirvāṇa”.

However, the idea to be born on the path to Nirvāṇa could be made sense of as referring to birth in a Pure Abode. These are heavens in Bud-

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<sup>16</sup> [14] As Deshung Rinpoche 1995: 162 explains, “someone who recollects the teachings on impermanence can very quickly decide what is worthwhile and what is not, and will soon become discriminating about his actions.”

dhist cosmology where only non-returners dwell and thus indeed a realm of rebirth that one could consider to be a “path to Nirvāṇa”, since all of its inhabitants are invariably destined to reach the final goal in these realms. Moreover, given that all those dwelling in a Pure Abode are by definition free from desire and aversion, it would be a place that offers ideal conditions for further progress to the final goal. Thus, being reborn in a Pure Abode could indeed be suitably reckoned a form of rebirth “on the path to Nirvāṇa”, by dint of the ideal conditions for progress along the path to the final goal combined with the certainty of reaching the goal soon.

If the present passage should indeed be intending rebirth in a Pure Abode, the question arises if such a reference would mark the discourse in question as late, in line with my overall topic of evaluating how far the absence of parallels points to lateness. This question can be explored by turning to a few selected Pāli discourses that point to related ideas.

The idea of an actual aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Abodes can be found in the *Saṅkhārupapatti-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. This discourse describes a monastic who is in possession of the five qualities of faith, virtue, learning, renunciation, and wisdom. Endowed with these five qualities, the monastic will be able to achieve various rebirths aspired to, ranging from the human realm to various heavens, including the Pure Abodes. The relevant passage proceeds as follows:<sup>17</sup>

A monastic who possesses faith, possesses virtue, possesses learning, possesses renunciation, and possesses wisdom hears that the *devas* of radiance (*vehapphalā*) are long-lived and beautiful, with abundant happiness. [The monastic] thinks: ‘Oh, that on the breaking up of the body after death I might reappear in the company of <sup>[130]</sup> the *devas* of radiance!’ [The monastic] fixes the mind on it, resolves the mind on it, and develops the mind for it. These aspirations and this abiding, developed and cultivated in this way, lead to [the monastic’s] reappearance there.

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<sup>17</sup> <sup>[15]</sup> MN 120 at MN III 103,1 (the abbreviated parts are supplemented from a previous section of the discourse); for a comparative study see Anālayo 2011c: 679–681.

After having taken up the *vehapphalā devas*, the *Saṅkhārupapatti-sutta* continues by making similar stipulations for rebirth among the *avihā*, *atappā*, *sudassī*, and *akanitṭhā devas*, thereby covering the different realms of the Pure Abodes recognized in early Buddhist cosmology. Each time, the attraction of the long life, beauty, and happiness of these celestial beings leads the monastic to aspire for rebirth in the respective realm, and due to having such aspiration as well as due to the five qualities mentioned at the outset, such rebirth will indeed be accomplished.

Another Pāli discourse of relevance to the present question is the *Alagaddūpama-sutta*, also found in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. After listing several levels of awakening attained by disciples of the Buddha in descending order, the discourse closes with the asseveration that all those who have sufficient faith and love (*pema*) for the Buddha are bound for heaven:<sup>18</sup>

In the Dharma thus well-proclaimed by me, being manifest, open, evident, and free of patchwork, those who have sufficient faith and sufficient love for me are all bound for heaven.

The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Alagaddūpama-sutta* has a similar statement:<sup>19</sup>

My Dharma being in this way well proclaimed, revealed, and disseminated without deficiency, transmitted and propagated to *devas* and human beings, those who have faith and who delight in me will, on passing away, all be reborn in a good realm.

Combining this indication with the *Saṅkhārupapatti-sutta* shows that already among the early discourses ideas can be found that may have served as a precedent for the notion in later traditions of aspiring to rebirth in the Pure Land.<sup>20</sup> I would contend that the similarities between the Pure

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<sup>18</sup> [16] MN 22 at MN I 142,5; for comments on or reference to this passage see, e.g., de La Vallée Poussin 1927/2001: 233, Ludowyk-Gyomroi 1947: 32, Upadhyaya 1980: 352, Cruise 1983: 159, and Norman 1991/1993: 184.

<sup>19</sup> [17] MĀ 200 at T I 766b23; for a comparative study see Anālayo 2011c: 158.

<sup>20</sup> [18] On Indian antecedents for Pure Land Buddhism see, e.g., Rowell 1934, 1935 and

Abodes and the Pure Land as celestial realms that afford ideal practice conditions, as well as the importance of an aspiration for such rebirth (notably by monastics) in the *Saṅkhārupapatti-sutta*, and the reference to faith and love for the Buddha in the *Alagaddūpama-sutta* and its parallel are striking enough to allow for such a suggestion.

Moreover, from the viewpoint of my main topic the passages just mentioned are better candidates for such a hypothesis than the discourse from the *Ekottarika-āgama* translated earlier. Besides the ambiguity of the passage in question, which allows for different translations, it does not bring in the motif of an aspiration for rebirth in a particular realm nor does it take up the topic of faith and love for the Buddha as something that leads to a heavenly rebirth. <sup>[131]</sup> In other words, the above-translated *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse seems to be well in line with the type of thought reflected in other early discourses, and in the case of one possible reading of a somewhat ambivalent passage, two Pāli discourses take a more pronounced stance in this respect. In sum, the *Ekottarika-āgama* passage in question need not be reflecting developments substantially later than those evident in the four Pāli *Nikāyas* in general.

This in turn gives the impression that the circumstance that the discourse translated above does not have a parallel need not imply that it must be late. Instead, it may well be a case comparable to that of the *Jīvaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, mentioned above, although with the difference that in this case no Pāli parallel is known from a complete set of the four collections of discourses. Yet, although complete from the viewpoint of the Theravāda reciter tradition, it clearly need not be seen as a complete reflection of early Buddhist discourse material.

The *Ekottarika-āgama* has in fact at times preserved early material. One example is a textual reference to an actual footprint of the Buddha found in several early discourses. Here the *Ekottarika-āgama* description has preserved a version of this footprint that is not yet adorned by a wheel-mark and thus is quite probably earlier than its parallels, including a discourse

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1937, Eckel 2003, Nattier 2003a, Strauch 2010, and Szuksztul 2015.

in the *Anguttara-nikāya* and a version extant in Gāndhārī belonging to the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments. All of these parallels describe the footprint being adorned with a wheel-mark, which they depict with varying detail.<sup>21</sup>

In sum, the various aspects emerging from the above considerations, taken together, serve to show the complexity of the processes of oral transmission and textual formation responsible for what we now can access in the form of the *Āgamas* and their Pāli *Nikāya* parallels.

## Conclusion

A discourse without parallels in the *Ekottarika-āgama* turns out to display no definite signs of lateness on closer inspection. At the same time, however, the discourse has an intriguing passage which, on adopting one of its possible interpretations, would point to the idea of a particular form of practice leading to rebirth in the Pure Abodes. The idea of aspiring to such rebirth is found in a more explicit form in an otherwise unrelated Pāli discourse. Together with the indication in another Pāli discourse that faith and love for the Buddha lead to heaven, such ideas may have set a precedent for the aspiration found in later Buddhist traditions to be reborn in the Pure Land. In contrast, the *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse under discussion does not provide comparable precedents for such an aspiration, and its message appears to be well in keeping with early Buddhist thought in general. The present case study thereby illustrates the complexity of the transmission of the early discourses, which does not allow simply equating lack of parallels with lateness.

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<sup>21</sup> [19] EĀ 38.3 at T II 717c21 and its parallels AN 4.36 at AN II 37,26, British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 line 4f, Allon 2001: 120, SĀ 101 at T II 28a23, and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 267 at T II 467a29; see in more detail the discussion in Anālayo 2017a: 23–26.



## XI

### The First Three *Aṅgas* and Early Buddhist Texts

The present chapter critically examines the idea that the first three out of the standard listing of textual *aṅgas* served as an early ordering principle of the Buddhist scriptures. The proposed interpretation of these three *aṅgas* is explored from the viewpoint of current academic knowledge and relevant textual comparison. This will hopefully serve as a reply to the concerns voiced by Choong (2020: 903) that Master Yinshùn's (印順) proposal made to this effect “has attracted so little attention among Western researchers into early Buddhism”. Contrary to the impression articulated by Choong (2020: 911), this is not so much a case of “a widespread failure, among Western scholars of early Buddhism, to take due account of the very substantial research findings of Master Yinshun.” Instead, it is rather because for several reasons this particular proposal is text-historically unconvincing.

The hypothesis that at an early stage in the transmission of the early Buddhist discourses the three *aṅgas* of *sutta/sūtra*, *geyya/geya*, and *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa* fulfilled a role of textual collections, similar to that of the *Āgamas* and *Nikāyas*, rests on these five premises:

- ◇ The assumption that the *aṅgas*, usually known in listings of nine or twelve, functioned as textual collections. (1)

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- ◇ The proposition that *sutta/sūtra* stands for simple prose expositions of doctrinal topics (such as on the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, conditionality, and the path), *geyya/geya* for verse mixed with prose, and *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa* for expositions (of the type found in the sections with discourses spoken by disciples and by the Tathāgata, the 弟子所說誦 and 如來所說誦 of the *Samyukta-āgama*). (2)
  - ◇ The hypothesis that the structures of the *Samyukta-āgama* and <sup>[985]</sup> the *Samyutta-nikāya* in particular reflect the employment of these three *aṅgas* as a basic ordering principle. (3)
  - ◇ The notion that at an earlier stage only three *aṅgas* were in use, which formed a precedent to the listings of nine or twelve. (4)
  - ◇ The identification of the three *aṅgas* with a tripartite analysis of the *Samyukta-āgama* in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* of the *Yogācārabhūmi*. (5)
- In what follows, I will examine each of these five points in turn.

### The Function of the *Aṅgas*

The actual function of the *aṅgas* is up to now not well understood, in spite of considerable scholarship on this topic both in the East and in the West. A detailed survey of references to listings of nine or twelve *aṅgas* in the early discourses makes it appear rather improbable that the *aṅgas* ever functioned as an organizational principle for allocating discourses into textual collections.<sup>1</sup>

In reply to a proposal by von Hinüber (1994a) that a shorter listing of four *aṅgas* reflects an early attempt at organizing the texts, Klaus (2010: 518) points out that such hypotheses are not supported by the discourses, which do not present the *aṅgas* as an attempt at ordering the texts. Cousins (2013: 105f) comments that

short versions are sometimes interpreted as earlier lists of ‘*Aṅgas*’, but that seems quite anachronistic to me ... there is no indication anywhere that any of this has anything to do with an arrangement of the canonical literature in some kind of earlier recension.

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<sup>1</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2016a and 2022d: 50–54.

Skilling (2017: 293 note 55) concludes that “the *Āṅgas* are not actual collections of texts.”<sup>[986]</sup> It is thus not possible to take for granted that the *āṅgas*, be it the full set or a shortened listing, ever served as textual collections. Instead, it needs to be acknowledged that, at the present state of academic knowledge, this is a debated issue.

## The Significance of the First Three *Āṅgas*

An understanding of the significance of the three *āṅgas*, found at the outset of the standard listings of nine or twelve, can be approached by examining occurrences of the respective terms found in the early discourses in addition to occurrence in such bare listings. This enables ascertaining the type of meaning the relevant term would have carried at an early stage, before any possible change in meaning during the period of its employment as an *āṅga*.

In the case of the first of the three *āṅgas*, the term *sūtra/sutta* (leaving aside *suttanta*), is of course regularly found in the titles of discourses. The main occurrence of relevance apart from discourse titles can be found in the context of the four great standards (*mahāpadesa/mahāpradeśa*). These describe procedures for verification to determine if certain teachings should be accepted as reliable testimonies of what the Buddha had taught. For this purpose, the particular teaching under scrutiny should be examined to see if it fits among the *sūtras/suttas* and is in line with the *Vinaya*.<sup>2</sup> The Pāli commentaries on the respective passage offer several interpretations of these two referents. The most straightforward interpretation understands<sup>[987]</sup> *sutta* here to stand for the whole collection of discourses.<sup>3</sup> This would be in line

<sup>2</sup> <sup>[56]</sup> DN 16 at DN II 124,15 and AN 4.180 at AN II 168,21: *sutte c’ eva otaranti vinaye ca sandissanti*; with parallels in Sanskrit fragments, Waldschmidt 1951: 246,7: *sūtre ’vataranti vinaye saṃdṛśyante*, in DĀ 2 at T I 17c10: 其所言依經, 依律, 依法者, T 6 at T I 183a1: 入經承律, T 7 at T I 195c9: 若修多羅及以毘尼法相之中有此法者, and EĀ 28.5 at T II 652b24: 彼布現, 所謂與契經相應, 律, 法相應者.

<sup>3</sup> <sup>[57]</sup> Sv I 565,37 or Mp III 159,3: *sutta(ṇṭa)-piṭakaṃ suttaṃ, vinaya-piṭakaṃ vinayo ti*. Bodhi 2012: 1712 note 893 comments that “this instruction presupposes that there already existed a body of discourses and a systematic Vinaya that could be used to evaluate other texts proposed for inclusion as authentic utterances of the Buddha.”

with the use of the term in discourse titles. As a result, however, all discourses, without exception, would fall under this *aṅga*.

The term *geya/geyya* appears to occur in the early discourses principally in listings of the *aṅgas*, leaving little to be said about its import.

The term *vyākaraṇa/veyyākaraṇa* occurs quite often in the early discourses and can carry a range of meanings.<sup>4</sup> Of particular interest are several Pāli discourses that identify themselves (or at least the main ‘explanation’ given in the body of the discourse) as a *veyyākaraṇa*:

- the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (DN 1)<sup>5</sup>
- the *Sakkapañha-sutta* (DN 21)<sup>6</sup>
- the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* (DN 28)<sup>7</sup>
- the *Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta* (MN 49)<sup>8</sup>
- the *Mahāpuṇṇama-sutta* (MN 109)<sup>9</sup> [988]
- the *Cūḷārāhulovāda-sutta* (MN 147 = SN 35.121)<sup>10</sup>
- the *Chachakka-sutta* (MN 148)<sup>11</sup>
- the *Tiṃsamattā-sutta* (SN 15.13)<sup>12</sup>
- the *Anattalakkhaṇa-sutta* (SN 22.59)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [58] For a survey of *veyyākaraṇa* in Pāli discourses see Anālayo 2009g.

<sup>5</sup> [59] DN I 46,28; parallel to 說此法時 in DĀ 21 at T I 94a9, 說是經時 in T 21 at T I 270c14, and *chos kyi rnam grangs 'di bshad pa na* in a Tibetan parallel, Weller 1934: 64,23.

<sup>6</sup> [60] DN II 288,20 and 289,3; parallel to *(a)smiṃ khalu dharmapary(ā)ye bhāṣyamāṇe* in a Sanskrit fragment parallel, Waldschmidt 1932: 111,6, to 說此法時 in DĀ 14 at T I 66a1 and MĀ 134 at T I 638a26, and to 說正法時 in T 15 at T I 250b20.

<sup>7</sup> [61] DN III 116,9; parallel to *asmiṃ khalu dharmaparyāye bhāṣyamāṇe* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Āgama* Sanskrit manuscript, 299r8, DiSimone 2016: 121 and 389.

<sup>8</sup> [62] MN I 331,32; parallel to 此經 in MĀ 78 at T I 549a29.

<sup>9</sup> [63] MN III 20,22; parallel to 說此經時 in SĀ 58 at T II 15a28 and to *chos kyi rnam grangs 'di bshad pa na* in Up 7006 at D 4094 *nyu* 57a2 or P 5595 *thu* 98b8.

<sup>10</sup> [64] MN III 280,7 and SN IV 107,28; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 200 at T II 51c10.

<sup>11</sup> [65] MN III 287,5; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 304 at T II 87a25.

<sup>12</sup> [66] SN II 189,1; parallel to 說是法時 in SĀ 937 at T II 240c22, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 330 at T II 486a16, and EĀ 51.2 at T II 814b19.

<sup>13</sup> [67] SN III 68,28; parallel to *imaspi ca va araṇo bhaṣiamaṇ(\*o)* in the Gāndhārī fragment

- the *Khemaka-sutta* (SN 22.89)<sup>14</sup>
- the *Āditta-sutta* (SN 35.28)<sup>15</sup>
- the *Gilāna-suttas* (SN 35.74 and SN 35.75)<sup>16</sup>
- the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta* (SN 56.11)<sup>17</sup>
- the *Gotamakacetiya-sutta* (AN 3.123)<sup>18</sup>
- the *Aggikkhandhopama-sutta* (AN 7.68)<sup>19</sup>
- the *Dvayatānupassanā-sutta* (Sn 765)<sup>20</sup> [989]

The parallels to these Pāli discourses differ, however, often speaking instead of a *dharmaparyāya* or a *sūtra*.<sup>21</sup> It seems as if these three terms served to convey similar meanings. Such usage does not give the impression that from an early stage the terms *vyākaraṇa* and *sūtra* carried sufficiently different meanings for the reciters such that they could have been employed as headers to create different collections of the orally transmitted texts.

Regarding the possible implications of *geya/geyya*, it is noteworthy that the *Brahmanimantaṇika-sutta* combines prose with verse, even though the Pāli version refers to it as a *veyyākaraṇa* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel as a *sūtra* (經). This usage would conflict with the assumption that all texts with verse were assigned to the category of *geya/geyya*.

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parallel in Allon 2020: 223, *asmin khalu dharmaparyāye bhāṣyamāṇe* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Gnoli 1977: I 139,14, 說此經已 in SĀ 34 at T II 8a2, and 說此法時 in T 102 at T II 499c26.

<sup>14</sup> [68] SN III 132,10; parallel to 說此法時 in SĀ 103 at T II 30c4.

<sup>15</sup> [69] SN IV 20,26; parallel to 說此經已 in SĀ 197 at T II 50c5.

<sup>16</sup> [70] SN IV 47,27 and SN IV 48,12; parallel to 授第一記 (adopting a variant reading) followed by the standard 說此經已 in SĀ 1025 at T II 268a18.

<sup>17</sup> [71] SN V 423,14; parallel to 說是法時 in SĀ 379 at T II 104a8, T 110 at T II 504b7, and EĀ 24.5 at T II 619b6 (for a survey of parallels found apart from *Āgama* texts see Anālayo 2015l: 348–350).

<sup>18</sup> [72] AN I 276,24; no parallel appears to be known to this discourse.

<sup>19</sup> [73] AN IV 135,4; parallel to 說此法時 in MĀ 5 at T I 427a3 and EĀ 33.10 at T II 689c1.

<sup>20</sup> [74] Sn 149,16; no parallel to this discourse appears to be known.

<sup>21</sup> [75] See above notes, and on the significance of *dharmaparyāya* the entry in Edgerton 1953: 279f, s.v., and Skilling 2021: 37f.

## The First Part of the *Samyukta-āgama* and its Pāli Parallel

A similar impression emerges when consulting the first part of the *Samyukta-āgama*, which begins with the *Skandha-samyukta*, in comparison with its Pāli counterpart. Two discourses found in both the *Skandha-samyukta* (with their parallels in the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā*) and the Pāli *Khandha-samyutta* have verses;<sup>22</sup> another discourse shared by the two collections has an inspired utterance (*udāna*).<sup>23</sup> [990]

One of the discourses with verse is the famous “Discourse on the Burden” (*Bhāra-sutta*). The other has the perhaps even more famous set of similes that compare the body to a lump of foam, feeling tone to bubbles, perception to a mirage, formations to a plantain tree, and consciousness to a magical illusion. This can safely be regarded as one of the most important teachings on the five aggregates. It is hard to imagine that the reciters would have collected texts on the topic of the five aggregates without including these two discourses from the outset, even though they have verses.

Following the *Khandha-samyutta* and the *Skandha-samyukta* are the collected sayings spoken to Rādha.<sup>24</sup> Similar to the preceding discourses in the *Khandha-samyutta* and the *Skandha-samyukta*, the discourses in this collection also cover the topic of the aggregates. According to Choong (2000: 243 and 249), the discourses found in the *Khandha-samyutta/Skandha-samyukta* should be considered as *sutta/sūtra*, but those found in the *Rādha-samyutta/Rādha-samyukta* should instead be regarded as *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa*. Yet, the only real difference between them is that in the latter case the recipient of the teachings is explicitly named as Rādha. It is not easy to understand how this could change the nature of the respective discourse from a *sutta/sūtra* to a *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa*.

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<sup>22</sup> [76] SĀ 73 at T II 19a26, Up 9023 at D 4094 *nyu* 86a3 and P 5595 *thu* 132b6, and SN 22.22 at SN III 26,10; SĀ 265 at T II 69a18, Up 4084 at D 4094 *ju* 240b2 and P 5595 *tu* 274b6, and SN 22.95 at SN III 142,29.

<sup>23</sup> [77] SĀ 64 at T II 16c8 and its parallel SN 22.55 at SN III 55,29.

<sup>24</sup> [78] SĀ 111 to SĀ 129 at T II 37c6–41b6 and SN 23.1 to SN 23.71 at SN III 188–201.

Perhaps the *Rādha-saṃyutta*/*Rādha-saṃyukta* originated from what initially was merely a sub-chapter within the *Khandha-saṃyutta*/*Skandha-saṃyukta*. Alternatively, it is equally possible that several discourses addressed to Rādha were collected under his name from the outset. In fact, the list of foremost disciples in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* includes Rādha among outstanding male monastics.<sup>25</sup> Once he is already [991] known in the discourses themselves as an exceptional disciple, sufficient to find a place in this listing, it would not be surprising if the reciters should have chosen his name as a reference point for collecting discourses, similar to *saṃyuttas*/*saṃyuktas* collected under the name of other eminent disciples. Due to the fact that the discourses addressed to him happened to be on the topic of the five aggregates, it would then have been natural to place this collection on Rādha close to the collection on the aggregates, as the similarity in content facilitates ease of memorisation and hence their oral transmission. Although this is of course just a hypothesis, it is in principle just as possible as the assumption that the collection on Rādha originated from a sub-section within the collection on the aggregates.

The *Rādha-saṃyutta* and the *Rādha-saṃyukta* share a pattern of beginning with several discourses, found similarly in both versions, that have quite unique and individual presentations. These are then followed by a proliferation of discourses that appear to have been generated somewhat automatically by way of repetition, similar to what has been described by Gethin (2020a) for another part of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. These proliferations or discourse permutations differ between the *Rādha-saṃyutta* and the *Rādha-saṃyukta*. Such differences imply that the grouping of discourses around the name Rādha must have been in existence early enough to allow for the arising of different additional discourse permutations in the two reciter traditions.

Of further interest regarding the distinction applied by Choong, which he applies not only to the *Saṃyukta-āgama* but also to the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, is that the *Khandha-saṃyutta* actually contains a discourse on the five aggregates that is explicitly addressed to Rādha.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the reciters of

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<sup>25</sup> [79] AN 1.4.4 at AN I 25,15.

<sup>26</sup> [80] SN 22.71 at SN III 79,33; no parallel to this discourse appears to be known.

the *Samyutta-nikāya* evidently did not <sup>[992]</sup> consider it an issue of major importance whether a teaching on the aggregates addressed to Rādha is placed in the *Khandha-samyutta* or in the *Rādha-samyutta*. As a result, one such discourse is now found in the *Khandha-samyutta* and a number of others in the *Rādha-samyutta*. The discourse on the aggregates addressed to Rādha and found in the *Khandha-samyutta* leaves no room at all for considering other discourses on the aggregates addressed to Rādha, now found in the *Rādha-samyutta*, as representing a substantially different type of exposition, *veyyākaraṇa* as opposed to *sutta*.

This case exemplifies a problem that also holds for the *Samyukta-āgama*, in that it is difficult to discern what would make the discourses in the *Skandha-samyukta* sufficiently different from those in the *Rādha-samyukta* to be reckoned as pertaining to the category of *sūtra* instead of *vyākaraṇa*.

The situation that emerges in this way concords with the overall impression conveyed by references to the three *aṅgas* in early Buddhist discourse literature, in that it is doubtful that they served as an ordering principle for creating discourse collections. This is as doubtful as the assumption that the *aṅgas* in general ever had such a role.

At the same time, it needs to be admitted that the three points surveyed so far are not yet decisive. It is still possible to assume that the *aṅgas* did have such a role originally, that the uncertainty in defining the three *aṅgas*, as currently reflected in early discourse literature, is due to a loss of understanding of their earlier function, and that the present distribution of discourses in the first part of the *Samyukta-āgama* and its counterpart in the *Samyutta-nikāya* is similarly due to a loss of understanding of their original structure, which has been obscured by later developments. Although the points mentioned so far make the three-*aṅga* theory doubtful, they do not suffice to disprove it. <sup>[993]</sup>

### The Count of Three *Aṅgas*

The next premise to be examined is the assumption that at an early stage in the development of Buddhist textual collections, only three *aṅgas* were in existence. The count of three *aṅgas* derives from a passage in the *Mahā-*

*suññata-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel;<sup>27</sup> a Tibetan parallel has instead the full set of twelve *āṅgas*.<sup>28</sup> The context of this reference in all three versions is an admonition addressed by the Buddha to his attendant Ānanda. According to this admonition, a disciple should not follow the teacher (the Buddha) for the sake of these *āṅgas*. Instead, a disciple should follow him for the sake of teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation.<sup>29</sup>

If the reference to three *āṅgas* (or twelve *āṅgas* in the Tibetan version) is taken to indicate some system of textual division that collects the different discourses spoken by the Buddha and his disciples, [994] there would be no place left for the teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation, for whose sake a disciple should follow the Buddha. The context makes it clear that something more specific than the whole corpus of early Buddhist canonical texts must have been intended, independent of whether this corpus be presented as three-fold, nine-fold, or twelve-fold. Judging from the context, the passage under examination may originally have been an injunction not to follow the teacher for the sake of getting ever more ‘explanations’ (*veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa*), in contrast to following him for the type of teachings that are directly related to the practice and the goal. Such an admonition would suit the case of Ānanda quite well, who features in the discourses as foremost

<sup>27</sup> [81] MN 122 at MN III 115,18: *suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇassa hetu* (B<sup>e</sup> and C<sup>e</sup>: *sutta-geyya-veyyākaraṇaṃ tassa hetu*, S<sup>e</sup>: *sutta-geyya-veyyākaraṇassa sotuṃ*) and MĀ 191 at T I 739c4: 正經, 歌詠, 記說.

<sup>28</sup> [82] Skilling 1994: 242,13: *mdo'i sde dang, dbyangs kyis bsnyad pa'i sde dang, lung bstan pa'i sde dang, tshigs su bcad pa'i sde dang, ched du brjod pa'i sde dang, gleng gzhi'i sde dang, rtogs pa brjod pa'i sde dang, de lta bu byung ba'i sde dang, skyes pa rabs kyi sde dang, shin tu rgyas pa'i sde dang, rmad du byung ba'i chos kyi sde dang, gtan la bab par bstan pa'i sde'i chos de dag dang.*

<sup>29</sup> [83] MN 122 at MN III 115,25: *śīlakathā, samādhikathā, paññākathā, vimuttikathā, vimutti-ñānadassanakathā*, MĀ 191 at T I 739c8: 戒論, 定論, 慧論, 解脫論, 解脫知見論, and the Tibetan version in Skilling 1994: 244,13: *tshul khrims kyi gtam dang, ting nge 'dzin gyi gtam dang, shes rab kyi gtam dang, rnam par grol ba'i gtam dang, rnam par grol ba'i ye shes mthong ba'i gtam dang.*



among monastic disciples in being learned but at the same time as one who did not reach full awakening during the Buddha's lifetime. In fact, the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* and its parallels begin with the Buddha admonishing Ānanda and a group of monastics by contrasting excessive socializing with the secluded lifestyle necessary to gain both temporary and final liberation of the mind.

In this way, the context makes it quite possible that the reference to three (or twelve) *aṅgas* results from an expansion of what originally could have been just a reference to explanations. During oral transmission the occurrence of *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa* could have prompted the addition of *sutta/sūtra* and *geyya/geya*. In line with the same tendency, subsequently the other terms mentioned in the standard list of the *aṅgas* were added, as now seen in the Tibetan version.

Be that as it may, however, the context makes it certain that the textual passage employed to establish the notion of three *aṅgas* as an early stage in the evolution of textual division is unable to fulfil that purpose. The problem is simply that on such a reading the relevant discourse passage [995] no longer makes sense, as it posits a contrast between the whole of the teachings (in terms of three *aṅgas*) and what indeed is about the whole of the teachings, namely teachings on morality, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge-and-vision-of-liberation. Whereas the previous three points are only doubtful, the present one is decisive. It definitely undermines the three-*aṅga* theory, leaving it bereft of any grounds for the assumption that at some early stage in the history of Buddhism only three *aṅgas* were known.

### The *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī*

In a discussion of the divisions of the *Samyukta-āgama*, the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* division of the *Yogācārabhūmi* offers a three-fold typology as a principle underlying all of them:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> [84] T 1579 at T XXX 772c17: 一是能說, 二是所說, 三是所為說 and D 4039 zi 128a1 or P 5540 'i 143b6: *su ston pa dang, ci ston pa dang, gang la ston pa dang*. On the content of the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* supplying a 'mātrkā' to the *Samyukta-āgama* see Huimin 2020.

- speaker
- topic
- audience

In other words, the *saṃyuktas* of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* are based on one of these three perspectives, in that they concern either the one who spoke a particular discourse, the topic taken up in it, or those to whom the teaching was given. This presentation has no explicit reference whatsoever to the three *āṅgas*.

Each of these three labels can be applied to any discourse, since they invariably involve a speaker, are on some topic, and the very fact that they have been transmitted shows that they had an audience. In other words, these three categories are not mutually exclusive. [996] They are complementary perspectives that can be applied to each and every discourse.

Whereas any single discourse can fit each of the three categories mentioned in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī*, for the three *āṅgas* to have functioned as textual divisions, they need to be at least somewhat exclusive to each other. If each and every discourse could at the same time be a *sutta/sūtra*, a *geyya/geya*, and a *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa*, these three terms would no longer be able to function as ordering principles for textual allocation, since they would not yield any concrete evaluative principle to determine to which of these three a particular discourse should be assigned.

Such evaluative principles can be seen to underlie the division into *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas*, which is based on distinguishing between long, medium-length, and short discourses, and the last are then further distinguished into those collected by topic and those collected numerically. These distinctions are of course not absolutely water-tight compartments. The length of a discourse is open to some degree of subjectivity. At the same time, it is clearly not the case that each and every text can at the same time be considered long and medium-length and short.

Material common to the collections of long discourses consists indeed of long discourses; a particularly short discourse in the *Āṅgama* can be identified as the result of a later development that occurred within the already-formed collection.<sup>31</sup> A comparable case is an extremely long discourse

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<sup>31</sup> See Anālayo 2014l: 32–35.

(if its abbreviated parts were to be filled out) now found in the *Madhyama-āgama* collection.<sup>32</sup> Again, an unusually long discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya* can be shown to have grown in size from what originally would have been just a medium-length discourse.<sup>33</sup> [997]

In sum, the basic distinction of discourses into long, medium-length, and short, despite some overlap and fuzziness of boundaries, does yield categories that enable allocating discourses differently. The same does not hold for the distinction into speaker, topic, and audience. Take the example of the earlier mentioned discourses spoken by the Buddha to Rādhā on the topic of the five aggregates. Such discourses could be fitted under each of these three categories. They could in principle be allocated to a collection of texts “spoken by the Buddha” (which exists in the reconstructed *Samyukta-āgama*), a collection of texts “on the five aggregates”, and a collection of texts “spoken to Rādhā”. In contrast, they could not equally well be allocated to a collection of texts that are “long”, that are of “medium-length”, and that are “short”, as they fit only the last of these three categories.

From this it follows that the tripartite analysis in the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* cannot be equated with the three *āṅgas*, as this results in equating a listing of three complementary categories with a listing of three categories that, in spite of occasional overlap, need to be exclusive of each other. Already the previous point, regarding the count of three *āṅgas*, deprives the three-*āṅga* theory of an indispensable premise. The present point has the same effect by showing that the presentation in the *Vastusamgrahaṇī* could not have intended the positing of the three *āṅgas* as the basic formative principle behind the order of discourses in the *Samyukta-āgama*.

## Conclusion

The five premises for positing the three *āṅgas* as an early ordering principle of the Buddhist scriptures fail to offer support for this hypothesis and at times even openly contradict it. The assumption that the *āṅgas* functioned

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<sup>32</sup> See Anālayo 2014c: 44–47; already discussed above p. 132 and 138.

<sup>33</sup> See Anālayo 2009d.

as textual collections is highly improbable. The use of the three terms *sutta/sūtra*, *geyya/geya*, and *veyyākaraṇa/vyākaraṇa* in the early discourses does not support the assumption that these represent prose expositions of doctrinal topics, verse mixed with prose, and expositions, respectively. The structure of the *Samyutta-nikāya* and the *Samyukta-āgama* does not seem to follow the proposed three-fold division, as evident from the basically same type of discourses occurring in the *Skandha-samyukta*, supposedly corresponding to the first *āṅga*, and the *Rādha-samyukta*, which instead should be corresponding to the third *āṅga*.

It is impossible for the reference to three *āṅgas* in the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to have been intended to represent a tripartite division of the oral teachings, as such an assumption would render meaningless the remainder of the passage within which this reference occurs. It also not feasible for the tripartite division into speaker, topic, and audience in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* to have been meant to serve as a grid for textual division and allocation, as all three are similarly relevant to any discourse.

In sum, that the in itself intriguing proposal of such a function for the three *āṅgas* has not received much attention in Western scholarship is not due to a failure of the latter to take into account Asian scholarship but simply reflects its unconvincing nature.

## Postscript

In a more recent publication, Choong (2021: 12 note 5) refers to his discussion in Choong (2020: 903–911, especially note 24), as if this had provided adequate responses to the various problems identified in my writings regarding the three-*aṅga* theory. This does not appear to be the case. Choong (2020: 903f note 24), in reference to Anālayo (2016a: 23 note 50), argues that this “obviously ignores the relevant findings of Master Yinshun and the Ceylonese/Burmese versions reading” of MN 122. Yet, in the same context of discussing MN 122 in reply to another proponent of the three-*aṅga* theory, in Anālayo (2016a: 22 note 47) I refer the reader to my discussion in Anālayo (2011c: 698 note 69), which as Choong (2020: 904) himself recognizes refers to Master Yinshùn’s three-*aṅga* theory, and the previous note 67 on the same page provides the variant readings (to the best of my knowledge the first instance to do so for this particular passage, hence being the very opposite of ‘ignoring’ these). It is normal procedure in scholarly writings to refer to previous discussions in order not to burden the reader with all of the details again and again.

Another point is that Choong (2020: 904) expresses difficulties to understand why in that note I propose that, once the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* is used to reconstruct the *Samyukta-āgama*, “it would not be possible to use the reconstructed *Samyukta-āgama* in turn to prove that the indications in the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* are correct, since this would become a circular argument.” He then goes into a detailed discussion of the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* in order to conclude, Choong (2020: 907), that this work does indeed throw light on the structure of the *Samyukta-āgama*.

I agree, but the point I was making is a different one. Just to be clear: a circular argument, or circular reasoning, is a logical fallacy when someone uses the conclusion as evidence to show that the reasons for the very conclusion are true, that is, when someone makes an argument in which both the premises and the conclusion have to rely on the truthfulness of the other. In the present case, using text A to reconstruct text B is perfectly fine. But then relying on the reconstructed text B to assess text A would be falling prey to this type of logical fallacy.

This to some extent also relates to the next point in Choong (2020: 907), namely that the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* does not mention the three *āṅgas* and instead lists speaker, topic, and audience. Since the three-partite division into speaker, topic, and audience concerns categories that are not mutually exclusive, it does not fit the three *āṅgas* in their supposed role of textual divisions. In other words, the correspondence of this three-partite division to the three *āṅgas* needs to be established, rather than tacitly assumed.

This is not just a matter of explaining the mismatch in sequence of the two sets of three, as it rather concerns the more fundamental requirement of providing a compelling reason for why the three *āṅgas* are at all brought in here. In sum, the discussion in Choong (2020: 903–911)—the last part of which partially grants points I made and therefore has not been taken up again here—has not been successful in establishing the three-*āṅga* theory, which would require providing convincing solutions for all of the various problems surveyed in this chapter and summarized in its conclusion.

An additional problem, not discussed here but already mentioned in Anālayo (2011c: 697f note 69), is that it would also be good to establish conclusively that the *Samyukta/Samyutta* collections had indeed a primary role for assembling texts at an early stage of early Buddhist orality, the other *Āgamas/Nikāyas* being only secondary to that.



## XII

### The Role of Pericopes and Formulas (1)

In the present chapter I survey aspects of the dynamics and functions of Buddhist oral narrative in *Vinaya* and discourse literature, based on critically examining relevant suggestions by Ven. Paṇḍita and Eviatar Shulman. The proposed conclusion is that a proper understanding of these texts requires keeping in mind their function in the context of oral tradition, based on adopting a historical perspective for interpretation and conducting a comparative study of all available versions.

#### The Group of Six in *Vinaya* Narrative

An example for appreciating the dynamics and functions of oral narrative in a *Vinaya* setting is a recurrent reference to a group of six monks or nuns. Scholars studying such references for the most part tend to agree that such narratives are best not considered as historical accounts.<sup>1</sup> However, a read-

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant publications are surveyed in Liu 2013, to which the following could be added: Bhagvat 1939: 47, Barua 1968: 49, Gräfe 1974: x, and perhaps Anālayo 2012a: 417.



ing of references to the group of six as reflecting historical facts has been proposed by Paṇḍita (2017).

Since it appears improbable that a group of monks with just six members could indeed have perpetrated the considerable number of offences attributed to them in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, Paṇḍita (2017: 106) argues for taking the phrase *chabbaggiya* to refer not just to a group of six but much rather to the “followers of the group of six”. On this interpretation, the number of possible wrongdoers can be increased without limit, and the perceived conflict with the idea that such narratives reflect actual events in ancient India can be resolved.

In support of the suggestion that the phrase *chabbaggiya* refers to “followers of the group of six”, Paṇḍita (2017: 106f) refers to the expression *sakyaputtiya*, which regularly occurs in postposition to *samaṇa* to designate that someone is “a recluse of the son of the Sakyan”, i.e., of the Buddha.<sup>2</sup> Yet, for a proper appreciation of the phrase *chabbaggiya*, it would probably be more pertinent to take up terms that also combine a numeral with a reference to a “group”, rather than involving a proper name combined with a reference to a “son”, as is the case with *sakyaputtiya*. Paṇḍita (2017: 106) notes one such case, which is the expression *pañcavaggiya*. This indubitably refers to a “group of five”, evident in its use to designate the first five disciples of the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

The remainder of the discussion shows that Paṇḍita (2017: 109) is also aware of another relevant term: the *sattarasavaggiya*, the “group of seventeen”.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the numeral again refers to the count of members of the group, who had gone forth together as young boys;<sup>5</sup> the expression is not

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<sup>2</sup> On this expression see in more detail Freiburger 2000: 221–225.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., MV 1.6 at Vin I 8,2 (= MN 26 at MN I 170,23) which reports the recently awakened Buddha’s reflection that the group of five had been of much help to him during his ascetic practices.

<sup>4</sup> Sarkar 1981: 108 has already noted the terminological similarity between *chabbaggiya* and references to the *pañcavaggiya* and *sattarasavaggiya*.

<sup>5</sup> MV 1.49 at Vin I 77,10 introduces them as seventeen boys who had Upāli as their single leader.

about a group of seventeen leaders with their followers. Moreover, <sup>[2]</sup> *pañcavaggiya*, *chabbaggiya*, and *sattarasavaggiya* usually occur before the term they qualify, not in postposition as is the case for *sakyaputtiya*. That is, the common usage is *pañcavaggiyā bhikkhū*, *chabbaggiyā bhikkhū*, and *sattarasavaggiyā bhikkhū* but *samaṇā sakyaputtiyā*. These considerations make it fair to conclude that the phrase *chabbaggiya* is more appropriately understood to intend a group with six members.

Such a conclusion can be further supported by taking up a related phrasing employed in a listing of different types of monastic *saṅghas*, which can comprise four, five, ten, twenty, or more members. These are designated with the terms *catuvagga*, *pañcavagga*, *dasavagga*, *visativagga*, and *atirekavisativagga*.<sup>6</sup> Here, again, the numerals that form a compound with the term for “group” occur before the term *bhikkhusaṅgha* and serve to specify the actual count of members of the respective *saṅgha*.

These considerations do not imply that the group of six may not have had followers. But when the Pāli *Vinaya* employs the phrase *chabbaggiya*, it seems reasonable to assume that this indeed means a group with six members, in line with other terms employed in the same text that combine a numeral with the term “group”, the resultant compound preceding the term to be qualified.

## The Narrative Trope of the Group of Six

In order to counter the impression that the group of six functions as something of a trope in descriptions of mischief in Pāli *Vinaya* narrative, Paṇḍita (2017: 109) argues that they can at times play a positive role. One of two instances he cites in support of this suggestion reports the group of six granting dependence to monastics who lack shame.<sup>7</sup> Since this leads to the Buddha promulgating a ruling against such behaviour, it can hardly serve as an example for the group of six being shown in a positive role.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> MV 9.4 at Vin I 319,24.

<sup>7</sup> MV 1.72 at Vin I 91,24.

<sup>8</sup> Paṇḍita 2017: 109 reasons that “this story seemingly indicates that the former [i.e. the *chabbaggiyas*], at least the ones in this story, were good conscientious monks.” There

The other instance cited by Paṇḍita (2017: 109) involves an interaction between the group of six and the group of seventeen. The group of six finds out that the group of seventeen partakes of food at the wrong time. Upon learning of this finding, the Buddha promulgates a rule against such behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

Consultation of the narrative that introduces the corresponding rule in other *Vinayas* helps to place this episode into comparative perspective. None of the narratives explaining the promulgation of this rule in the other *Vinayas* refers either to the group of six or to one of those monks that according to the Theravāda tradition was a member of the group.<sup>10</sup> Notably, the [3] Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda *Vinayas* do report misbehaviour by the group of seventeen in regard to food and thus have a narration that in this respect parallels the Theravāda *Vinaya*.

It seems that the Pāli *Vinaya* account is probably best considered in the context of several interactions between these two groups, described in

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seems to be no indication in the narrative that those who give dependence to candidates lacking shame (or being unconscientious) should be considered to have shame (or be conscientious) themselves. In fact, in line with the indication that those of a similar character tend to congregate (SN 14.15 at SN II 155,10 and its parallels SĀ 447 at T II 115a25 and EĀ 49.3 at T II 795b22), one might even argue that the *chabbaggiyas* were shown to grant dependence to those who were similar to themselves in lacking shame (or in being unconscientious).

<sup>9</sup> Pāc 37 at Vin IV 85,21.

<sup>10</sup> T 1428 at T XXII 662b8, T 1421 at T XXII 54a7, T 1425 at T XXII 359b21, T 1442 at T XXIII 824b7, and T 1435 at T XXIII 95a22; see also Anālayo 2011c: 362–364. The list of members of the group of six in the Pāli commentary, Ps III 186,21, has only two individuals in common with such a listing in the Sarvāstivāda \**Vinayavibhāṣā*, T 1440 at T XXIII 525c29 (on which see Funayama 2006: 44–46) making it uncertain if a reference to a named monk found in some of the other *Vinayas* should be understood to intend one of the members of the group of six from the perspective of that particular textual tradition. For the present purpose, however, it suffices to know that none of these *Vinayas* mentions either the “group of six” (六群比丘/六眾苾芻) as a whole or one of the monks included in this group according to the Theravāda tradition. This implies that all these *Vinayas* do not agree with the Theravāda *Vinaya* on the identity of the protagonist(s) of the narrative in question.

the same *Vinaya*, which show a recurrent pattern of the group of six bullying members of the group of seventeen. Instances reported in the Pāli *Vinaya* involve, for example, the group of six tickling a member of the group of seventeen so much that the latter dies.<sup>11</sup> In other episodes, the group of six forcefully evict the group of seventeen from a building they had just prepared, frighten them, hide their bowls and robes, hit them, threaten them, or intentionally worry them.<sup>12</sup> When read in line with these other events, perhaps the tendency for the group of six to be shown time and again as making trouble for the group of seventeen led to their mention on this particular occasion in the Pāli *Vinaya*.<sup>13</sup>

The narrative function of referencing the group of six can at times take a humorous turn. Schopen (2004: 178) reports that in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* the group of six insist on a strict but impractical adherence to a particular rule, thereby necessitating the Buddha's intervention to regulate against such an interpretation. Although strictly speaking their role here is on the side of adherence to the rules, the actual import of such depiction is in line with their function as perpetrators of various types of mischief that require the enactment of additional regulations.<sup>14</sup>

## The Historicity of the Group of Six

Another argument proposed by Paṇḍita (2017: 115) is that treating the group of six “as historical figures ... can explain why they are found across *Vinaya* traditions”. Yet, as the above case regarding the rule against eating at the wrong time already shows, the *Vinayas* do not necessarily agree on

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<sup>11</sup> Pār 3 at Vin III 84,20. This is followed by another episode at Vin III 84,24, according to which the *sattarasavaggiyas* walk on a member of the *chabbaggiyas*, as a result of which this one also dies. On a literal reading of these episodes, it would follow that from this time onward the *chabbaggiyas* and the *sattarasavaggiyas* had each lost one of their members.

<sup>12</sup> Pāc 17 at Vin IV 44,9; Pāc 55 at Vin IV 114,9; Pāc 60 at Vin IV 122,33; Pāc 74 at Vin IV 146,1; Pāc 75 at Vin IV 146,33; and Pāc 77 at Vin IV 148,26.

<sup>13</sup> On their role as rebellious monks see also Dhirasekera 1970: 81.

<sup>14</sup> On positive evaluations of the group of six in later texts see Liu 2013 and on humour in *Vinaya* literature Schopen 2007 and Clarke 2009a.

which episodes involve the group of six. Besides, the fact that something is mentioned in different *Vinaya* traditions only attests to the comparative earliness of the story; it does not follow that the contents of such a shared story must invariably be an accurate reflection of what actually happened on the ground in ancient India.

An example in case is a report in the different extant *Vinayas* that a particular monk had the supernormal ability of producing a flame from his finger(s) in order to illuminate the walking paths for other monastics who had arrived at the monastery late at night.<sup>15</sup> The description is not just about some inner meditative experience of luminosity, but much rather conveys the sense that his finger(s) served the function of an actual torch that enabled others to see in the dark. The agreement between the *Vinayas* of the Dharmaguptaka, [4] Mahāsāṅghika, Mahīśāsaka, Mūlasarvāstivāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Theravāda traditions in reporting such a supernormal ability does not suffice to turn this feat into a historical fact.

In favour of considering the group of six to be actual historical persons, Pandita (2017: 111f) reasons that, if they “were only fictitious characters, they must have been invented at a very early stage, possibly even before the sectarian split of different schools in the Order. Yet, I cannot see any valid need for such a fabrication.” The proposed reasoning does not seem to give sufficient recognition to the narrative purpose of a trope in the context of *Vinaya* story-telling. A proper consideration of this type of literature makes it appear rather improbable that episodes involving the group of six invariably refer to actual historical persons who did what the respective narrative reports.

Taking this position does not imply that all occurrences of the group of six must for this reason invariably be considered fabrications. The narrative function of the trope of the group of six in the course of the evolution of *Vinaya* literature does not make it impossible that in ancient India there was indeed a group of six monastics that behaved in ways that provoked the promulgation of some rules. If they ever existed, which at present can

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<sup>15</sup> See Anālayo 2012c: 156.

no longer be ascertained, then the success of their appearance in some story or other, and the impact this had on the monastic audience, could easily have fuelled a multiplication of references to them. Such a gradual growth of references to the group of six would explain the difference noted above, in that the extant *Vinayas* do not necessarily agree with which particular regulation the group of six should be associated. It would also explain why the same trope does not feature invariably in all instances where rules are occasioned by monastics whose names were no longer remembered.

Paṇḍita (2017: 109) notes that narratives introducing new rules or their emendations in the *Vinaya* will already cause the audience to expect to hear about some improper conduct or event, hence there would be no need for any additional narrative trope. This underestimates the function of such a narrative trope in an oral setting, which is not confined to merely signalling that something improper is about to be reported. The key question is one of presenting a compelling and attractive story. The importance of such concerns become plainly evident through a comparative study of the stories depicting the laying down of the first and third *pārājika* rules.<sup>16</sup> These show at times substantial variations which seem to be motivated by the wish to make the narrative more compelling and attractive. Such evidence, gained through comparative study, provides an appropriate basis for assessing the nature of *Vinaya* narrative. From that perspective, as I pointed out in Anālayo (2012a: 417f):

When considered from the perspective of the function of *Vinaya* narrative as an integral part of the education and training of monastics, the question of historical accuracy becomes in fact somewhat irrelevant ... in the actual teaching situation, then, the mere mention of the notorious six creates an anticipation of yet another caricature of monastic behaviour to be avoided, which helps keeping the details of the respective rule better in mind.

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<sup>16</sup> See Anālayo 2012a and 2014h.

In short, it seems more fruitful and does better justice to this genre of literature to approach the trope of the group of six and *Vinaya* stories in general from the viewpoint of their narrative function, based on a comparative study of the different extant versions, in order to be able to evaluate the development of a particular role or tale from a text-historical perspective. [5]

### Pāli Discourse Narratives

The same needs apply in turn to the study of the discourses. Compared to the case of *Vinaya* literature, here narrative material tends to be less prominent, in particular in the case of short doctrinal discourses found in the *Samyutta-nikāya*/*Samyukta-āgama* and the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*/*Ekottarika-āgama*. Nevertheless, the literary qualities and functions of the narrative portions in the early discourses remain an important aspect, which is best explored with the help of a comparative study of the relevant parallels transmitted by different oral tradition lineages. This need has been put into question by Shulman (2019b: 96 note 3), however, who argues in favour of focussing only on the Pāli texts because

all texts are *versions* of each other, with no core original behind them, so that texts do not necessarily compare. For this reason, I submit that it is important to analyze each tradition in its own right in order to understand its idiosyncratic emphases, before we make an effort at comparison.

Comparative study of the parallels preserved by other reciter traditions is not about positing a core original but about adopting a historical perspective on textual transmission. In fact, as the remainder of this chapter will show, such comparative study can offer important contributions to an understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the Pāli discourses.

Shulman (2019b), however, prefers an approach that rather identifies different Pāli discourses as parallels, as long as they share some formulaic descriptions. As a case study exemplifying this approach, he takes up the formulaic narrative of the Buddha's progress to awakening, found in several

discourses in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, beginning with the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*. Shulman (2019b: 100) explains: “I take the *Bhayabherava* and the *Dvedhāvitakka* as versions of each other, and attribute primacy to the *Bhayabherava* since it provides the literary model of these two discourses in a more crystalized way.”

Considering these two discourses as versions of each other relies on their sharing a formulaic description of the Buddha’s awakening. Moreover, “there are unique emphases to the *Dvedhāvitakka*, such as its uses of similes. The structure of the text, however, is remarkably similar to the *Bhayabherava*, in a way that makes them *versions of each other*. This is, in many respects, the same text” (p. 107). The suggestion that these two discourses are versions of the same text can best be evaluated based on a brief survey of each, in light of the extant parallels from other transmission lineages.

The *Bhayabherava-sutta* (MN 4) and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel (EĀ 31.1) set off with the brahmin Jāṇussoṇī paying a visit to the Buddha,<sup>17</sup> broaching the topics of the difficulties of living in seclusion and of the role of the Buddha as a guide and inspiration for his disciples. This motivates the Buddha to deliver a detailed exposition of the challenges of seclusion he faced during his pre-awakening practice. The exposition surveys the type of qualities needed to avoid fear arising when in seclusion and contrasts those who lack such qualities with the Buddha-to-be during his quest for awakening, who was endowed with each of the qualities mentioned.

Next the Buddha relates how he confronted fear due to unexpected noise (such as the breaking of a branch or the passing by of an animal) by remaining in the same bodily posture until the fear subsided.<sup>18</sup> At this juncture the narrative formula under discussion occurs, describing the Buddha’s pre-awakening attainment of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges. The discourse draws to a close with the Buddha clarifying that his frequent [6] resorting to seclusion should not be misconceived as imply-

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<sup>17</sup> MN 4 at MN I 16,14 and EĀ 31.1 at T II 665b17; for relevant Sanskrit fragments see Anālayo 2011c: 37 note 64. EĀ 31.1 has been translated in Anālayo 2011e.

<sup>18</sup> On this mode of facing fear see also Anālayo 2020d.



ing that he still needed to eradicate defilements in his mind. Instead, it should be understood as being motivated by two reasons, one of which appears to be his compassionate intention to set an example for others. The two discourses end with the brahmin taking refuge.

The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* (MN 19) and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel (MĀ 102) report a talk addressed by the Buddha to his monastic disciples, in which he describes his pre-awakening practice of dividing his thoughts into wholesome and unwholesome types.<sup>19</sup> The discourse continues by reporting his overcoming of unwholesome thoughts. Another topic is the formation of unwholesome mental habits as the result of frequently thinking in unwholesome ways. Both discourses present a simile of a cowherd to illustrate the teaching on unwholesome thoughts.<sup>20</sup>

The same expositions are in turn applied to the topic of wholesome thoughts which, although not having detrimental consequences, still have the disadvantage of preventing the mind from entering deep concentration. In the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*, this leads over to the formulaic description under discussion, which covers the Buddha's pre-awakening attainment of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges. Notably, the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel has only the second to fourth absorptions and the third higher knowledge.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, here the one who attains these is an unspecified monastic rather than the Buddha himself.<sup>22</sup> This amounts to a significant difference to be taken into account when evaluating the formula under discussion.

The two discourses continue with the simile of a person trying to lure

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<sup>19</sup> MN 19 at MN I 114,20 and MĀ 102 at T I 589a12; the latter has been translated in Anālayo and Bucknell 2020: 259–264.

<sup>20</sup> Both versions speak of a “cowherd”, *gopālaka*/牧牛, *pace* the reference in Shulman 2019b: 107 to “a shepherd.”

<sup>21</sup> The lack of a reference to the first absorption appears to be a textual error; see Anālayo 2011c: 140 note 200. The same does not necessarily hold for the other divergences from MN 19.

<sup>22</sup> This difference has already been noted by Schmithausen 1981: 221 note 75; a publication included in the list of references in Shulman 2019b: 140.

a herd of deer into a trap, but another person prevents this ruse from being successful. The Buddha then explains the significance of this simile. The two discourses end with the Buddha's injunction to his audience that they should make an effort to meditate in secluded places.

In spite of a shared concern with contrasting what is unwholesome to what is wholesome and highlighting the need to cultivate the latter for the mind to become concentrated, topics taken up in one way or another in a broad range of early discourses, the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* are clearly not versions of each other, in the sense of being "in many respects, the same text". The thematic similarity and the sharing of a formulaic description, such as, in the present case, the attainment of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges, are embedded in different presentations reflecting distinct doctrinal and literary concerns.<sup>23</sup> They present two different basic teachings, the one on fear and seclusion, given to a brahmin, and the other on distinguishing what is wholesome from what is unwholesome, given to monastic disciples. [7]

## The Significance of Formulas

The idea of considering otherwise different Pāli discourses as versions of the same texts relies on a particular interpretation of the significance of formulas, such as the formulaic description of the attainment of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges in the present case. Shulman (2017b: 368) argues that

it is important to realize that formulas are not only a mnemonic,

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<sup>23</sup> Shulman 2019b: 107 points to another similarity in the occurrence of fear in both versions before the descriptions of absorption attainment. However, these occurrences are about different types of fear. In MN 4 at MN I 21,2 (and in its parallel EĀ 31.1. at T II 666a29) the fear arises due to hearing unexpected sounds while living in seclusion. In MN 19 at MN I 116,8, however, the future Buddha reflects that he does not see anything to fear in wholesome thoughts (the corresponding reflection in MĀ 102 at T I 589b21 does not refer to fear). Although both Pāli discourses use the term *bhaya*, its significance differs substantially; on different types of fear see also Karunaratne 1991, Weerasinghe 1997, Brekke 1999, and Giustarini 2012.

technological device but have literary features and serve poetic functions; they are like images in an image bank that can be applied and reapplied in designated contexts in order to reference certain ideas, emotions, and perceptions.

This seems to be fairly uncontroversial. The general tendency in current scholarship to highlight the mnemonic function of such formulas is surely not meant to imply that these do not also have literary and poetic functions. The suggestion is only that, during the prolonged period of oral transmission, passages and descriptions tended to become increasingly stereotyped and formalized as aids in memorization and rehearsal. The resultant formulas obviously still have content, which can convey a range of meanings and serve literary and poetic functions. However, in an article published a year later, Shulman (2018: 16) goes a step further:

‘Discourses’ are like meditations, in which one may take traditional materials—oral formulas—and combine them in new ways, at times adapting and expanding them, in order to create a new Buddhist story that is at the same time traditional and innovative. Oral formulas are thus not only the best available technology for the preservation of the Buddha’s words in a pre-literary setting, but are a creative element with a forward-moving vector.

The above passage implicitly argues for an improvisatory model for understanding the formation of the early discourses. This becomes more evident in the publication already quoted, published another year later, in which Shulman (2019b: 136) proposes

a dynamic of textual composition described here as “the play of formulas”, and which suggests that the texts are far removed from attempts to preserve historical information, including an attempt to preserve teachings. Instead, they are creative works within an authorized literary and philosophical ambience. Formulas connect to each other and continue to branch off within and between texts.

First of all, there is a need to distinguish between the idea that early Bud-

dhist oral narrative presents accurate historical information and the suggestion that a central concern of such texts was the preservation of teachings. Taking a position in support of the mnemonic function of formulas, as part of an overall attempt to preserve the teachings in an oral setting, does not imply that the content of such formulas must be an accurate reflection of what actually happened.

This can be illustrated with the example of the trope of the group of six, discussed above. The suggestion that this phrase has become a standardized oral referent to a group with six members (rather than six leaders with a large following) does not imply an affirmation of the historical accuracy of a narrative in which it is employed. Similarly, the suggestion that certain descriptions have become standardized oral formula (to facilitate memorization) does not imply <sup>[8]</sup> an affirmation of the historical accuracy of a narrative for which they are employed.

As regards the idea of a “play of formulas”, it is indeed the case that formulaic descriptions, once they have come into existence, can have a life of their own.<sup>24</sup> However, the proposal here appears to posit formulaic descriptions as the primary material out of which discourses were intentionally fashioned in creative ways. This seems to be implicit in the description by Shulman (2019b: 97) that the early Buddhist “texts re-work traditional materials—oral formulas—in creative ways,” that is, the “texts re-work authoritative formulas in a way that reflects ... vibrant processes of textual composition.” From this viewpoint, a particular discourse can be seen to reflect the use of “authorized, available formulas to tell new stories” (p. 127). In relation to the formulaic description under discussion, “in the ‘play of formulas’ each narration of enlightenment or of a section of the path to enlightenment can be lifted from its original setting and placed in a new context” (p. 133).

The reference to an “original setting” is of interest in relation to the assessment, in the same article by Shulman (2019b: 96 note 3), that the early discourses have “no core original behind them”. It is not immediately clear how these two assessments should be reconciled with each other.

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<sup>24</sup> See also Anālayo 2022d: 121–125.

Regarding the idea of a “play of formulas”, the occurrence of the same formulas in different contexts is usually taken to corroborate that they served purposes of memorization. Such occurrences do not in themselves prove the alternative hypothesis proposed by the author. The distinctive element of the proposal under discussion appears to be that it considers certain Pāli discourses as versions of the same texts, once they share the same formula(s). This seems to be based on assuming that such sharing of formulaic descriptions is a primary element from the viewpoint of the composition of the respective discourses, compared to which the remainder of textual material in these discourses would then have a more supplementary role. Hence, differences in the remainder of the two discourses can be set aside, as these can still be considered to stem from a single version as long as a basically similar narrative sequence can be identified, as well as the shared use of formula(s).

The idea behind this presentation appears to be that once a particular formula has come into existence, it becomes a ready-made building block for the construction of a discourse, in the sense that it can be “lifted from its original setting and placed in a new context”. This does not seem to grant sufficient room to the inherently fluid nature of oral transmission, where formulas evolve alongside and in interaction with the remainder of the text, with neither of the two necessarily having a primary function as the key element in textual composition.

For exploring this further, comparative study of the actual textual evidence can offer helpful indications. The hypothesis that the recurrence of formulas shows the respective discourses to be versions of a single text would require establishing that the formulaic passages under discussion are indeed of primary importance in the relevant discourses, with the remainder of the text being supplementary to that primary purpose. The hypothesis could be refuted if it can be shown that the formulaic passage under discussion is not primary, with the remainder of the discourse standing well on its own without it. [9]

## The Progress to Awakening Narrative

Turning to the actual evidence for formulaic descriptions of the Buddha’s progress to awakening in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, another relevant discourse,

in addition to the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*, is the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*. In agreement with a *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* reports the going forth of the Buddha-to-be and his apprenticeship under Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. The two discourses do not describe the actual event of awakening and only refer to it in passing.<sup>25</sup> They thus do not employ the formula found in the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*, depicting the future Buddha's attainment of the four absorptions and three higher knowledges.

Another *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse of relevance to the present exploration is the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, which in agreement with a Sanskrit parallel employs the formulaic narrative of the future Buddha's going forth and apprenticeship (as found in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*) and the formula describing his attainment of the four absorptions and three higher knowledges (as found in the *Bhayabherava-sutta*).<sup>26</sup> These are combined with a narrative reporting the ascetic practices of the Buddha-to-be, a combination which then recurs in the *Bodhirājakumāra-sutta* and the *Saṅgārava-sutta*.<sup>27</sup> Shulman (2019b: 122) considers the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* to be the "first example of 'the play of formulas' in the MN [*Majjhima-nikāya*]". This statement appears to intend the combining of formulas found in the preceding discourses in the collection (the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*).

Closer inspection of the narrative setting and doctrinal import of the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* shows that the discourse does not require the two formulas in question. The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* would deliver its main message just as well if it were to cover only the ascetic practices of the Buddha-to-be, which is indeed its main topic. In other words, this discourse does not provide actual evidence for a primary role of the two formulas already found in previous *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses.

The same holds for the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* themselves, which would deliver their basic message just as well if they

<sup>25</sup> MN 26 at MN I 167,9 and MĀ 204 at T I 777a13.

<sup>26</sup> MN 36 at MN I 240,25 and 247,18 and Liu 2010: 105 (331r6) and 117 (337r2).

<sup>27</sup> MN 85 at MN II 93,19 and MN 100 at MN II 212,1; see also Anālayo 2011c: 481 and 581.

only had a brief reference to the Buddha's awakening, such as now found in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel.

Even the sharing by the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* of the formula narrating the Buddha's pre-awakening attainment of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges does not prove anything more than that at some point during the centuries of oral transmission these formulaic descriptions came into existence. Quite possibly some degree of formalization could have been employed at a very early stage. But it is equally possible that texts already existing for some time became subsequently more formalized, to facilitate their memorization.

In the case of the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, Shulman (2019b: 104) himself comments that "the connection between the description of awakening and the first part of the text about overcoming fear remains somewhat superficial. Whether this suggests a re-working of the text or not is not crucial at the moment."<sup>[10]</sup> Yet, the mere possibility of a re-working would be crucial, since it implies that the discourse chosen to illustrate the hypothesis does not provide sound evidence for this idea. According to the proposed hypothesis, the formulaic narrative of the Buddha's pre-awakening cultivation of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges should be the key element of this discourse. If the connection of the formula to the rest of the text is superficial and could be the result of a later reworking, it would no longer be possible to consider the *Bhayabherava-sutta* as providing clear evidence for the primacy of the creative employment of a formula for the composition of the discourse.

In fact, the main topics of the difficulty of living in seclusion and the Buddha's role as an inspiration for his disciples are well covered by the remainder of the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and do not depend on the description of the Buddha's pre-awakening cultivation of the four absorptions and the three higher knowledges to deliver their central message. In other words, as far as the available evidence allows a judgment, the formula under discussion is not the key element of the discourse.

In the case of the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*, as already mentioned above, the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel does not have the full narrative description of the Buddha's pre-awakening cultivation of the four absorptions and the

three higher knowledges. Nevertheless, it still presents a coherent and meaningful exposition of the main topic.

Perhaps the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel lost text and the narrative of the Buddha's pre-awakening practices turned into the description of an unnamed monastic who attains only the third of the three higher knowledges. At the same time, it is also possible that the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel could have preserved an earlier stage in textual transmission, in which case the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* would testify to an application of the formulaic description at a later point. In any case, however, the *Madhyama-āgama* version shows that the remainder of the discourse can function as a text on its own without including the formula describing the Buddha's pre-awakening practices, demonstrating that this formula could hardly be considered the primary element of the discourse.

The basic problem with the suggested theory of a play of formulas is that it does not suffice to point to the mere existence of formulas in order to prove that these result from the envisaged play at work. One might just as well point to punctuation on a printed page and argue for a play of punctuation, proposing that the author at first designed the placing of commas, periods, etc., and afterwards filled up the gaps between these with text. Just as the mere existence of punctuation does not prove that such punctuation was a primary element in written textual composition, in the same way the mere existence of formulas does not prove that such formulas were a primary element in oral textual composition.

Nor would it make sense to determine parallelism based on similarities in punctuation between certain texts. In fact, in the present case the absence of the formula under discussion does not make the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse so substantially different from the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* that they could no longer be considered parallels. It follows that sharing the formula under discussion does not suffice for considering discourses as parallels. In this way, the case studies adopted by Shulman (2019b) actually showcase the importance of comparative study, as a consultation of the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* helps to clarify the situation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The relevant information is readily available in Anālayo 2011c: 139f, included in the



## Errors of Transmission

The idea that formulas were the key elements for creative textual composition rather than reflecting the demands of memorization can be explored further with two of the discourses already examined. Of particular relevance here are pointers to memory errors that can be identified through comparative study.

The *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* takes up the dispelling of unwholesome thoughts, then describes how <sup>[11]</sup> the mind follows the course set by whatever one frequently thinks about, and after that has the simile of the cowherd.<sup>29</sup> Its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, however, positions the simile of the cowherd immediately after describing the need to dispel unwholesome thoughts and before taking up the effect of frequent thinking on the mind.<sup>30</sup> This is clearly the more meaningful placing, as the simile depicts the cowherd's need to stop the cows from straying into the ripe crop and eating it, which will get him into trouble with the owners of the crop.

Reading the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* on its own, the purpose of the simile of the cowherd is not fully apparent. On consulting the *Madhyama-āgama* version, however, it becomes plainly evident that the purpose of the cowherd simile is to illustrate the need to take firm action and to be apprehensive of unwanted consequences. The pattern of frequent thoughts leading to a corresponding mental inclination is a subsequent topic, no longer directly related to the cowherd simile. The apparent shift of position of the simile in the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* could hardly be considered an instance of intentional creativity. Instead, it is more meaningfully understood as the result of a frequent error in memorization, where textual pieces are remembered well, but their sequence has become jumbled.

The *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* also testifies to this pattern. After the formulaic narrative of the Buddha's going forth and apprenticeships, the discourse continues with three similes that illustrate the need to be bodily and mentally

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list of references in Shulman 2019b: 138.

<sup>29</sup> MN 19 at MN I 115,29.

<sup>30</sup> MĀ 102 at T I 589a27.

withdrawn from sensuality in order to reach awakening, a need that is independent of whether one practices asceticism or not.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in the Pāli version these similes precede the account of the future Buddha's ascetic practices. In the Sanskrit fragment parallel, however, the corresponding similes rather occur after the description of his asceticism.<sup>32</sup> From the viewpoint of the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, this would indeed be a better placing, as the understanding illustrated by these similes could only have arisen once the Buddha-to-be had already undertaken asceticism and realized its futility. However, Shulman (2019b: 125 note 67) argues:

A careful reading of these similes that is sensitive to the literary development of the *Sutta* demonstrates that they are very much in place, and indeed that they are a key element in the discourse. When we understand that the focal point of the *Sutta* is the polemic on asceticism, they prove to frame its statement. Only when the core of the text is thought to be the Buddha's biography does this element seem[sic] out of place.

The discourse indeed involves a polemic on asceticism, but that does not explain the inconsistency of the placing of the similes. In fact, the polemic relies on an autobiographical account of the Buddha's own ascetic practices, hence these two are complementary aspects of the same presentation. The three similes in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* concern the inability or ability to reach awakening, each of which states that such inability or ability holds independent of whether one practices asceticism. What really matters is that one emerges from sensuality. The polemic force of the insight that ascetic practices are not needed for awakening requires the Buddha's realization of the futility of asceticism *after* having tried them out himself.<sup>33</sup> [12]

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<sup>31</sup> MN 36 at MN I 240,29; for a survey of occurrences of these similes in other texts see Anālayo 2011c: 235–237 and Liu 2019: 86f.

<sup>32</sup> Liu 2010: 115 (335v7).

<sup>33</sup> The conceiving of these three similes is described with an aorist form, MN 36 at MN I 240,29: *tisso upamā paṭibhaṃsu*, which shows that they should not be understood to have occurred to the Buddha at the time of the discussion with Saccaka but much rather

In terms of the story of the future Buddha's struggle to reach awakening, it makes little sense for his realization of the dispensability of asceticism to be placed before his actual undertaking of ascetic practices. From the viewpoint of the polemic intent of the discourse, this placing makes the argument lose much of its force. Both concerns could be addressed in a much better way if the similes in the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* were to be shifted to occur after the description of the future Buddha's asceticism.

More and stronger examples of the apparent influence of memory errors can be found with the help of comparative study.<sup>34</sup> The choice of the above discourses is simply determined by the fact that they supposedly illustrate the hypothesis under discussion. Even what can be garnered from these instances alone should already suffice to exemplify the type of evidence that becomes available through comparative study. Why would anyone deliberately make a change of sequence in such a way that the resultant description no longer makes as much sense? Especially in a polemic setting, why weaken the presentation of one's argument intentionally?

In contrast, when all one has to rely on for establishing the proper sequence is memory, a jumbling of sequence can easily occur. If during recitation the mind is focused on formal aspects of the text, to ensure accuracy, it would not be surprising if a loss of meaning due to a jumbling of sequence escaped notice, precisely because attention is on formal aspects rather than on meaning.

In sum, the textual evidence chosen to illustrate the hypothesis that the recurrence of formulas shows the respective discourses to be versions of a single text instead points to the secondary role of the formulas discussed. The same evidence also suggests errors that probably occurred during memorization. This makes it fairly probable that formulas, rather than being employed as the basic building blocks for composing a discourse, do indeed reflect the concerns of memorization.

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during the period before his awakening.

<sup>34</sup> A range of examples of this type can be found in Anālayo 2011c (together with those just mentioned).

## Narrative and Doctrinal Dimensions of the Discourses

Another problem with the proposed hypothesis appears to be an accord-ance of undue importance to the formulaic narrative portions of the re-spective discourses, neglecting to take fully into account their doctrinal as-pects. The same problem can be illustrated with the help of a study by Shul-man (2017b) of the literary qualities and functions of narrative portions of the discourses in the first recitation section of the *Dīgha-nikāya*. Shulman (2017b: 369) characterizes the first discourse in this section, the *Brahma-jāla-sutta*, as being “most famous for its outline of sixty-two mistaken phil-osophical views, which the Buddha refutes.” Closer consultation of the actual text shows that the *Brahmajāla-sutta* neither presents a count of “sixty-two” mistaken views nor does it report an actual “refutation” of these views by the Buddha. The number sixty-two in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* refers to “grounds” (*vatthu*) for the arising of views, with the actual number of views being far fewer. A concern with the grounds for the arising of views relates to the Buddha’s role of exposing the conditioned arising of views, presenting a psychological analysis of the genesis of views as it were, rather than refuting their content.<sup>35</sup>

The situation can conveniently be illustrated with the first four grounds for views taken up in <sup>[13]</sup> the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, all of which concern the single view of eternalism.<sup>36</sup> No argument is offered to refute eternalism as such. Three of these four grounds differ from each other only in respect to how far into the past the recollection of past lives has been developed, and the fourth ground bases the same view of eternalism on theoretical reason-ing.<sup>37</sup> Thus, these four grounds lead in different ways to a single view. Hence, these four count as a single view, showing that the *Brahmajāla-sutta*’s expo-sition consequently does not cover “sixty-two mistaken philosophical views”.

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<sup>35</sup> Notably, in another publication Shulman 2017c: 870 translates the passage in DN 1 that describes the Buddha’s insight rather than presenting a refutation of the respective view. Yet, the implications of this passage appear to have been overlooked.

<sup>36</sup> DN 1 at DN I 13,6.

<sup>37</sup> See the discussion in Anālayo 2009h: 190f.

In relation to the same discourse, Shulman (2017b: 369) also suggests that

it may not raise much controversy to say that the sixty-two views ultimately reduce to the two fundamental ‘extreme’ philosophical mistakes that the Buddha often warns against, those of *sassata* (eternalism, or essential identity that exists over time) and *uccheda* (annihilationism, or disjunction between successive elements).

Closer inspection of the actual exposition in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* and its parallels reveals that these cover four grounds for making evasive statements, none of which has any evident relationship to eternalism or annihilationism.<sup>38</sup>

Lack of appreciation of doctrinal aspects of the *Brahmajāla-sutta* could be the by-product of an excessive emphasis on its relatively short introductory narration.<sup>39</sup> This introductory narration provides a significant frame for

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<sup>38</sup> DN 1 at DN I 24,26; for the parallels see Anālayo 2009h: 199–203. In support of his assessment, Shulman 2017b: 369 note 35 reasons: “The classification made by the discourse itself is into views that rely on an early or a later limit (*pubbanta*, *aparanta*). This relates to the idea of an essential identity that exists over time (eternalism) and to the position that such an identity may have an end (annihilationism).” The reasoning is not clear, as eternalist views occur under both headings, *pubbanta* and *aparanta*: DN 1 at DN I 13,6 and DN I 31,1. The classification is not so much about the content of any view but rather about whether the grounds (*vatthu*) for any of the views relate to past or future times. A reduction to eternalism and nihilism is only found in the commentary, Sv I 122,10: *satt’ eva ucchedadiṭṭhiyo, sesā sassatadiṭṭhiyo*, a gloss that fails to do justice to the discourse itself, as evidenced by its coverage of the four types of equivocation.

<sup>39</sup> Shulman 2017b: 372 refers to “two recent articles published by Bhikkhu Anālayo” on the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, where “Anālayo discusses the BJS [*Brahmajāla-sutta*] as an example of early Buddhist oral tradition but does not relate in any way to the creative storytelling in the text, even though he focuses on ‘the opening narration of the Brahmajāla’.” Although this is in itself a minor issue, it might still be worthwhile to clarify the situation. The purpose of the two articles, Anālayo 2014b and 2015b, is a comparative study, of which only a small part concerns the introductory narration, simply because these are fairly similar in the parallel versions. Shulman 2017b: 368 note 33 in fact relies on the main finding of the comparison of the introductory narrations, where the parallel DĀ 21 at

the remainder of the discourse. However, the function of the introductory narration, comprising two out of forty-six pages in the PTS edition of the discourse, should not receive so much attention that the significance of the doctrinal aspects of the discourse is lost from sight.<sup>40</sup> [14]

The same also holds for the previously discussed hypothesis, according to which discourses should be considered versions of a single text if they share formulaic narrative material. This similarly overlooks the importance of the doctrinal aspects of the respective discourses, which shows them to be too different to be considered versions of a single text.

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T I 88b29 explicitly indicates that the Buddha, when asking the monastics what had happened, already knew about it. Elsewhere in the same article, Shulman 2017b: 370 note 39 comments on “the exposition of morality” in DN 1 that it “evolves into a long list of practices that the Buddha avoids, which is difficult to take fully seriously.” A detailed discussion of the exposition on morality can be found in Anālayo 2014b, which shows that this part of the Pāli discourse is with high probability a later expansion. It is not clear why this perspective has been ignored when discussing the perceived difficulties with the long list of practices. The same type of problem recurs in a reflection in Shulman 2017b: 367 note 28 on “the grouping and ordering of the texts within each of the three divisions”, concluding that “ideas of this sort are rarely discussed.” Yet, precisely this topic is discussed in quite some detail in Anālayo 2015b. It is not easy to avoid the impression that he has not fully read the two articles he criticizes.

<sup>40</sup> The need to base assessments of the import of a particular discourse on a close reading of the original can also be illustrated with a statement by Shulman 2017b: 382 in relation to DN 12, according to which the discourse involves “a monk who had an insight regarding the place in which the four material elements ‘cease’. He moves through the powers of his *samādhi* between different godly realms, rising higher and higher in divine hierarchy, but no gods can explain his vision.” (Shulman 2017a: 191 again speaks of this monk searching “for an explanation of a certain insight he had”). The relevant passage in DN 12 at DN I 215,22 only reports that a certain monk had a reflection in his mind (*aññatarassa bhikkhuno evaṃ cetaso parivitakko udapādi*), inquiring where the four elements cease. This is just a question and not some form of insight or vision. In fact, the ensuing narrative shows that the monk’s tour of celestial realms to receive an answer to his query was misguided and thus lacked insight or vision, as he should have approached the Buddha to receive clarifications (which even required reformulating the question, showing that even the inquiry itself was not an insightful one). On the narrative function of this episode see also Anālayo 2011a: 14f.

## Conclusion

Much of the above exploration points to the importance, if not indispensability, of comparative study in order to assess early Buddhist narrative texts, whose functions and purposes are probably best appreciated by neither viewing them as primarily concerned with conveying accurate historical information nor considering discourses as parallels merely because they share narrative formula(s).

Needless to say, there is of course ample scope for studying a single tradition in its own right, but any conclusions drawn in this way are necessarily limited to that tradition. Employing only Pāli discourses is quite definitely not sufficient for drawing conclusions about the nature of early Buddhist discourses in general. According to a basic principle of scientific research, the first step is to collect *all* relevant data, only after which has the time come for interpretation. The idea that working with Pāli texts alone suffices to understand early Buddhism should by now be obsolete. As pointed out by Salomon (2018: 56):

early scholars of Buddhism in the West, especially in the English-speaking world, had assumed that the Pali canon represented *the* true original scriptures of Buddhism while other manifestations of Buddhism and versions of Buddhist texts were secondary derivations, elaborations, or corruptions. This view prevailed mainly because the Pali canon of the Theravāda tradition of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia happened to be the only one that survived complete and intact in an Indian language, and because it came to the attention of Anglophone scholars at a relatively early date as a result of the colonization of Sri Lanka by England. This led to the illusion that the Pali canon was the only true Buddhist canon, and the misconception was reinforced by the self-presentation of the bearers of that tradition, who were the early European scholars' main points of contact with the Buddhist world. But it is now clear that the seeming primacy and authority of the Pali Tipiṭaka is only an accident of history.

In sum, the information that can be gathered by consulting the parallels extant in the Chinese *Āgamas* (and at times also in Sanskrit and Gāndhārī as well as material extant in Tibetan translation) is of crucial importance for a proper understanding of early Buddhist narrative as the final product of a prolonged period of oral transmission which has inevitably had an impact on its final shape.





## XIII

### The Role of Pericopes and Formulas (2)

This chapter presents a critical evaluation of the approach to early Buddhist oral tradition proposed by Shulman in *Visions of the Buddha: Creative Dimensions of Early Buddhist Scripture* (2021), extracts of which appeared soon afterwards in an article titled “The Play of Formulas in the Early Buddhist Discourses” (2021/2022).

#### The Play of Formulas

The oral nature of the early discourses is a topic that requires more attention than it has received so far. For this reason, it is highly appreciated that recent monograph publications, like Levman (2020), Allon (2021), Shaw (2021), and Shulman (2021), are dedicated to exploring various dimensions of this topic. Of these four, the last presents an approach to understanding the basic dynamics of early Buddhist orality that substantially departs from scholarly consensus thus far and therefore calls for a detailed evaluation.<sup>1</sup>

The central theory proposed by Shulman (2021: 227), referred to with the phrase “play of formulas”, involves the following proposition:

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\* Originally published in 2021 under the title “‘Visions of the Buddha’: A Critical Reply” in the *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 18: 1–36.

<sup>1</sup> The present survey does not provide a comprehensive survey of all of the positions taken in Shulman 2021 that call for a critical reply, some of which have been taken up in Anālayo 2022d.

The point here is that the formula, rather than the full discourse, is the main level of textual utterance ... this theory suggests that the main texts of early Buddhism were the formulaic encapsulations of both narrative and doctrinal materials, and that full suttas are primarily legitimate combinations of such formulas. This notion allows us to understand how discourses were created from formulas bottom-up.

The term formula here refers to “fixed textual elements that are reproduced mainly across texts, often across many texts” (p. 171). “The shortest formulas are strings of words, a sentence or part of a sentence, that are repeated in the exact same order in more than one text, and often within a single text as well.” An example for such a short formula is the standard opening of a discourse with the statement “thus have I heard.” Other formulas can be longer, an example being the exposition of the gradual path in the collection of long discourses. In sum: “Formulas are <sup>[2]</sup> the units of textual articulation that repeat across texts, and that strictly maintain their form. Scholars often use terms such as *stock phrase*, *pericope*, or *cliché* to describe them” (p. 171).

In support of the proposed model of a play of formulas, Shulman (2021: 155) adduces a supposed precedent in early European scholarship of Pāli texts. In the course of providing a chronological survey of the development of Buddhist literature, Rhys Davids (1903/1997: 188) considers “simple statements of Buddhist doctrine now found, in identical words, in paragraphs or verses recurring in all books”, as the earliest such level. As already pointed out by Allon (2021: 116), however, “Rhys Davids was referring to formulas concerning doctrine, not formulas in general.” In fact, the theory of a play of formulas differs substantially from the early stage in textual development envisaged by Rhys Davids.

The idea that formulas served as the primary building blocks for the creation of discourses does not seem to be supported by the actual evidence. This becomes already evident on closer scrutiny of the attempt by Shulman (2019b) to relate the play of formulas to *Majjhima-nikāya* discourses that report aspects of the Buddha’s progress to awakening. As shown in detail in the previous chapter, the very first examples chosen by Shulman (2019b),

presented again in Shulman (2021: 200) under the heading of offering a “cogent example of the play of formulas”, indicate that the relevant formulas are secondary. It follows that these formulas did not serve as the primary building blocks out of which a discourse was created bottom-up.

Without repeating the detailed discussion already offered in the previous chapter, a brief look at another example, introduced by Shulman (2021: 180) as the “most robust example of the play of formulas”, supports the same point. The discourse in question is the *Brahmāyu-sutta* (MN 91), the perhaps most central part of which takes the form of a detailed examination of the Buddha’s conduct, carried out by a brahmin student. This substantial textual portion is unique to this particular discourse and for this reason could not be considered a formula, the defining characteristic of which is repeated usage. Shulman (2021: 188) in fact acknowledges that “[t]his material is an original contribution of the *Brahmāyu*, which was not taken from any other text.” Similarly, regarding another central element of the discourse in the form of a versified exchange between the Buddha and Brahmāyu, the teacher of this brahmin student, Shulman (2021: 189 note 104) comments that “[t]hese verses are not found in any other source and could, perhaps, be a more archaic element.” In contrast, <sup>[3]</sup> the formulas employed in the remainder of the discourse appear to have a secondary role. Yet, to establish the *Brahmāyu-sutta* as a robust case in support of the proposed theory, the formulas employed in it would need to be shown as constituting the primary elements of textual composition.

Even though Shulman (2021: 191) asserts that “the *Brahmāyu* achieves its goal through specific techniques of composition, which rely on formulas and their combination,” the actual evidence he himself acknowledges shows the formulas and their combination to be secondary to the discourse, whose main message much rather finds expression in textual material that does not conform to the definition of formulas given by Shulman (2021: 171). In this way, the case chosen as the supposedly “most robust example of the play of formulas” turns out to provide evidence contrary to the proposed theory.

An illustrative example of the basic problem would be the standard introduction to a discourse or else the standard concluding formula reporting the rejoicing of the listeners. It hardly makes sense to consider such formulas to

be “the main level of textual utterance”. This is not to deny the importance of formulas in early Buddhist orality or the fact that at times, alongside their mnemonic function, such formulas can take on a life of their own. But the introduction and concluding formulas could hardly have served as the primary elements out of which a discourse like the *Brahmāyu-sutta* was created bottom-up.

Confirmation of this assessment can be found in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, whose formulaic conclusion includes the brahmin Brahmāyu among those who rejoiced.<sup>2</sup> Yet, before coming to this standard conclusion, all versions report Brahmāyu’s passing away.<sup>3</sup> The resultant discrepancy has already been noted by Minh Chau (1964/1991: 207), who points out that the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse reports the brahmin “rejoicing over the Buddha’s speech, when he was reported dead already in the preceding paragraph.” This incoherence points to an application of the formulaic description at the end of the discourse without it being properly adjusted to its context. Such a misapplication does not fit the idea that the concluding formula served as a principal block in constructing a discourse. During such an act of creation, attention will be on the meaning of what is being said or recited. The present error, however, must result from a lack of attention paid to meaning, as can indeed happen when somewhat automatically applying a formulaic ending to an already existing text. [4]

Evidence supporting the secondary nature of such formulas is not confined to Chinese Āgama material and can also be identified among Pāli discourses. A case in point are two otherwise identical discourses addressed to a brahmin and found in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and the *Sutta-nipāta* respectively, which differ in their concluding sections. In the *Samyutta-nikāya* version, the brahmin takes refuge as a lay follower; in the *Sutta-nipāta* version he requests ordination and becomes an arahant.<sup>4</sup> The two alternative outcomes are articulated with the standard Pāli formulas employed for such descriptions. This is not the outcome of two different formulas serving as building

<sup>2</sup> MĀ 161 at T I 690a4: 梵志梵摩及諸比丘, 聞佛所說, 歡喜奉行.

<sup>3</sup> MN 91 at MN II 146,8, MĀ 161 at T I 689c23, and T 76 at T I 886a16.

<sup>4</sup> SN 7.11 at SN I 173,22 and Sn 1.4 at Sn 16,3 (the last reference is to the page, as the formula under discussion occurs in a prose portion of the discourse).

blocks for creating the exact same discourse bottom-up. Instead, the most meaningful and parsimonious explanation is that an already existing discourse was combined with different concluding formulas.<sup>5</sup>

In the remainder of his study, Shulman frequently points to the mere presence of formulas in various discourses as if their existence were in itself proof of his theory. This is not the case. In order to support the proposed theory, the formulas would have to be shown to have functioned as the primary elements out of which the discourse was constructed “bottom-up”.

The impression that emerges in this way concords with criticism already raised by Allon (2021: 116) of the play of formulas in the following way:

Most formulas do not have much appeal except in the context in which they are found. One cannot imagine members of the early community ... formulating and memorizing such context-bound formulas ... It was the plot and the overarching purpose of the story that generated the production of the bulk of formula.

Another pertinent point made by Allon (2021: 112) is that “[i]t is hard to imagine that the focus was on learning a body of formulas and narrative frames, not actual sutras. To understand how formulas work and are used, one would have to learn them in their context.” The already-mentioned formulaic introduction and conclusion to a discourse provide a good example, as the idea that these came into being and were then learnt on their own, without any relationship to an actual teaching introduced and concluded in this way, is rather implausible. Another problem, already mentioned in the previous chapter (see above p. 246), is that the proposed theory does not take into account the fluid nature of oral transmission, where neither formulas nor the remainder of the text necessarily have a primary function as the key element in textual composition. <sup>[5]</sup>

In other words, the play of formulas is too flat to account for early Buddhist orality, as it does not take into consideration continuous change and

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<sup>5</sup> *Pace* the assertion by Shulman 2021/2022: 558 that “formulas, and not full-discourses, are the true texts of early (or earlier) Buddhism.”

complex interactions among textual elements taking place during centuries of oral transmission. In fact, the proposed model appears to involve the implicit assumption that a onetime creative act of composition, based on pre-existing formulas, can sufficiently explain the situation.

A telling example is the proposal by Shulman (2021: 215) that the composition of the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* (MN 36) is “a synthesis of the two narrations of enlightenment” found in previous discourses in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, in particular being “a product of the narrative sequence of the *Bhaya-bherava* model” (MN 4), with the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* then “reworking” ideas found in the *Bhaya-bherava-sutta* (p. 217). The underlying assumption is that the *Bhaya-bherava-sutta* came into existence before the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*, otherwise the composition of the latter could not be envisaged as being based on the former. Since the actual discourses do not provide any indication regarding the respective primacy of their composition (or content), the proposed scenario must be based on their sequential placing in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. In other words, the reasoning appears to take for granted that the collection in its present order came into existence at the same time when the individual discourses were created.<sup>6</sup> This ignores the complexity of early Buddhist orality and the continuous impact of change during oral transmission. As a result, the play of formulas collapses centuries of oral transmission, with all their complex dynamics, into a single act of textual creation.

## Formulas as Independent Textual Elements

Shulman (2021: 165) reasons that, “to appreciate the play of formulas, we must gain confidence that tradition saw formulas as ‘the text’.” An argument presented by him in support of gaining such confidence concerns two cases

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<sup>6</sup> The impact of this type of reasoning can also be seen in the suggestion by Shulman 2021/2022: 559 that the texts to which we have access nowadays “are not ‘collections’ in a simple and straightforward manner, as if editors neatly placed ready-made texts in the right category—‘Long’, ‘Middle-length’, ‘Connected’, or ‘Numerical’. Rather, they—the ‘editors’, which were themselves in important senses ‘authors’ and ‘reciters’ (*bhāṇaka*) responsible from [sic] ‘transmission’—were creating texts as they went along to fit their visions of the collections” (emphasis added).

in the *Majjhima-nikāya* where discourses are distinguished into a *mahā-* and a *cūḷa-* version. In the first such case, which concerns the *Mahāsāropama-sutta* (MN 29) and the *Cūḷasāropama-sutta* (MN 30), Shulman (2021: 168) reasons that, given that these two are of similar length and have similar presentations, “the difference cannot be that of length” and also “not be one of importance”. Hence, the proposal is that the reason for qualifying the former as *mahā-* is that it “offers the clearer, more confident and straightforward, application of the formula”. In other words, from the viewpoint of the formula, “the discourse that gives it a better expression is deemed the primary one.”<sup>[6]</sup>

Yet, a substantial textual portion of the *Cūḷasāropama-sutta*, covering the four *jhānas* and the four immaterial attainments, lacks coherence in its present placing and therefore is probably a later addition.<sup>7</sup> The strangeness of the resultant presentation has in fact been recognized by Shulman (2021: 167 note 44). Since the current length of the *Cūḷasāropama-sutta* is probably the result of textual expansion, the most parsimonious explanation would simply be that this must have happened after the qualification *cūḷa-* had already been applied to it. Before that apparent expansion, the *Cūḷasāropama-sutta* would have been the shorter of the two discourses. Adopting such a straightforward explanation would be in line with a general pattern of such distinctions to reflect length or importance of a discourse, as already noted by Horner (1953/1980: 194).

The second example mentioned by Shulman (2021: 168) concerns the *Mahādukkhakkhandha-sutta* (MN 13) and the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta* (MN 14). In this case, the *mahā-* version is indeed the longer one, obviating any need to bring in the idea of a supposed hierarchy of importance given to formulas in order to explain the distinction drawn by the reciters between these two discourses.

Another type of evidence, provided in support of the idea that formulas existed as independent textual elements, involves the term *dharmapariyāya*. In reply to my referencing an instance of the Buddha reciting a discourse by himself, Shulman (2021: 192) argues that

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<sup>7</sup> See Pande 1957: 122f and Anālayo 2011c: 201f.



the Buddha is said to recite a text—here deliberately termed “discourse” by Anālayo. Yet the text says that the Buddha was reciting a *dharmapariyāya*, a “formulation of *dharmā*”, which can also relate to a full text, but is more often better interpreted as relating to a formula.

The relevant text reports the Buddha reciting a *dharmapariyāya* on the topic of dependent arising, followed by encouraging a monk who happened to overhear the recitation that he should commit it to memory. The application of the term “discourse” to this instance in Anālayo (2011c: 857) is justified by the circumstance that the exact same *dharmapariyāya* recurs earlier in the collection as a *sutta* in its own right.<sup>8</sup> The same holds for another reference to a *dharmapariyāya*, found in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*. The actual text also recurs elsewhere, together with the relevant introductory narration, in the form of two individual discourses.<sup>9</sup> [7]

Another text qualified as *dharmapariyāya* is the *Madhupīṇḍika-sutta*, in relation to which Shulman (2021: 193 note 119) reasons that here “it is clear that this formulation of doctrine refers to one part of the text, and specifically to the teaching given by both Mahākaccāna and the Buddha.” Now, the term *dharmapariyāya* occurs at the end of the discourse when the Buddha reportedly names it *madhupīṇḍika*.<sup>10</sup> The reciter tradition evidently considered the name given to this *dharmapariyāya* to intend the whole discourse, and not just to one part of the text, as the reciters adopted it for the discourse’s title. The same holds for several other instances when Pāli discourses report the Buddha giving one or several alternative names to a *dharmapariyāya*, one of which then becomes the title of the whole discourse.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> SN 12.45 at SN II 74,15 reports the Buddha’s recitation of the *dharmapariyāya*, which occurs earlier in the collection as a discourse in its own right in the form of SN 12.43 at SN II 72,4, with the only difference being that it is framed by a statement on the arising and cessation of *dukkha*; the same holds for a recurrence of SN 12.45 in the form of SN 35.113 at SN IV 90,13, in which case the actual discourse is the preceding SN 35.106 at SN IV 86,18.

<sup>9</sup> DN 16 at DN I 93,14, repeated in SN 55.8 to 55.10 at SN V 357 to 360.

<sup>10</sup> MN 18 at MN I 114,15, preceded by two references by Ānanda to the same term at MN I 114,12+14.

<sup>11</sup> Examples are DN 1 at DN I 46,22, DN 29 at DN III 141,22, and MN 115 at MN 67,28;

But even apart from the position taken by tradition on the significance of the term *dharmapariyāya* in the *Madhupiṇḍika-sutta*, “the teaching given by both Mahākaccāna and the Buddha” is unique to this discourse. Neither recurs elsewhere in exactly this form. It follows that these teachings are not fit for being considered examples of formulas. The same problem recurs with other examples given by Shulman (2021: 193 note 121) in support of his theory. These cover cases when the term *dharmapariyāya* refers to a teaching, a simile, and a phrase, each of which does not occur elsewhere in this exact form.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, these examples do not fit the definition of formulas given by Shulman (2021: 171) as “units of textual articulation that repeat across texts, and that strictly maintain their form.”

Shulman (2021: 165) also argues that the *Vinaya* ruling against teaching those who are not fully ordained word by word intends formulas.<sup>13</sup> Although the Pāli version of this rule does not spell out what types of text are meant, several parallels do provide such information. According to the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, the rule intends to prevent lay people reciting the Buddha’s discourses in this way.<sup>14</sup> The Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* relates the promulgation of this rule to lay disciples wanting to learn the recitation of discourses and

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see also MN 12 at MN I 83,24, where the title mentioned in the Pāli discourse serves for naming the Chinese and Sanskrit fragment parallels and the discourse in some Pāli editions (see Anālayo 2011c: 106), and MN 117 at MN III 77,25, which reports the Buddha qualifying the *dharmapariyāya* just given with the title that is then employed by the reciters for the whole discourse.

<sup>12</sup> In MN 5 at MN I 32,24 the *dharmapariyāya* is a teaching given by Sāriputta, which in this form does not recur elsewhere. In MN 65 at MN I 445,27 the *dharmapariyāya* is a simile, only the beginning part of which recurs in MN 107 at MN III 2,3. In MN 114 at MN III 45,13 the *dharmapariyāya* is qualified to be on the topic of *sevitabbāsevitabbaṃ*, which in this exact form appears to be specific to the present instance (parts of the actual exposition recur in AN 9.6 at AN IV 365,24 and AN 10.54 at AN V 100,10). Moreover, in the case of MN 114 the reciters take the phrase *sevitabbāsevitabbaṃ dharmapariyāyaṃ* to refer to the whole discourse, evident in their choice of the discourse’s title. This is thus contrary to the suggestion by Shulman 2021: 193 note 121 that here “the *dharmapariyāya* clearly relates to the short formulaic utterance that the Buddha provides early in the discourse.”

<sup>13</sup> The ruling is found in Vin IV 14,30.

<sup>14</sup> T 1428 at T XXII 638c21: 與諸長者共在講堂誦佛經語。

verses,<sup>15</sup> and the Mahāsāṅghika *Vinaya* reports that the rule was occasioned by teaching the *Pārāyanavagga*.<sup>16</sup> None of these stipulations concerns formulas, making it highly improbable that such a sense is appropriate for their Theravāda counterpart, an impression confirmed by the commentarial understanding of the import of this rule.<sup>17</sup>

In relation to another instance of private recitation, in this case involving Anuruddha, Shulman (2021: 192) admits that this reference concerns “probably verses”.<sup>18</sup> Since verses can be unique, however, they do not [8] straightforwardly fall under the proposed definition of formulas. This brings to light another problem of the proposed theory, as the play of formulas automatically relegates textual units that are not repetitive to a secondary level of textual formation. Yet, there is no reason why the fact of being repeated should make the textual element that is repeated more primary than textual elements that are not repeated. Primacy in matters of textual composition does not depend on whether the results of such composition are later repeated.

Some of the early Buddhist verses are indubitably early and for this reason need to be taken into account in any attempt at explaining the dynamics of the early Buddhist oral tradition. A case study of the *Udāna* collection, for example, shows that some verses appear to have been transmitted for quite some time on their own, the relevant prose narrations being only added later.<sup>19</sup> Such a scenario does not fit the play of formulas. Another misfit is the monastic code of rules, perhaps the most frequently memorized item in early Buddhist orality, which the play of formulas is unable to explain adequately. Besides, formulas are not even mentioned in the traditional listing of *aṅgas*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> T 1421 at T XXII 39c11: 學誦經偈.

<sup>16</sup> T 1425 at T XXII 336c5: 教眾多童子句句說波羅耶那; see also Lévi 1915: 422.

<sup>17</sup> See Norman, Kieffer-Pülz, and Pruitt 2018: 285.

<sup>18</sup> The parallels give a long list of the texts he was believed to have recited, which clearly are not just formulas; see SĀ 1321 at T II 362c10: 誦憂陀那, 波羅延那, 見真諦, 諸上座所說偈, 比丘尼所說偈, 尸路偈, 義品, 牟尼偈, 修多羅, 悉皆廣誦 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 320 at T II 480c22: 誦法句偈, 及波羅延大德之偈, 又復高聲誦習其義, 及修多羅等.

<sup>19</sup> See Anālayo 2009e.

<sup>20</sup> On the *aṅgas* as probably textual types see Anālayo 2016a, 2022d: 50–54 and above p. 217.

Had formulas been the primary building blocks of the early text, one could reasonably expect this to be reflected in contexts which refer to the *aṅgas*.

In sum, the textual evidence surveyed above does not provide the support needed to “gain confidence that tradition saw formulas as ‘the text’,” to use the wording by Shulman (2021: 165).

### The Four *Mahāpadesas*

The four *mahāpadesas* present potential sources from whom one may have heard a text and then explain how in each such case the text should be examined in order to decide if it is to be accepted. Shulman (2021: 199) considers these four *mahāpadesas* to support the idea that the play of formulas was central for the formation of early Buddhist oral texts:

The notion of comparison to accepted materials, which is the key of the *mahāpadesa* doctrine, suggests that tradition knew how to make room for variation within accepted boundaries, allowing new composition according to accepted lines; this is what the play of formulas suggests.

In support of this conclusion, Shulman (2021: 197) presents a translation of one of these four *mahāpadesas*. Closer inspection shows that he only translates the second part of the relevant text. In the case of the first *mahāpadesa*, the missing part proceeds as follows:<sup>21</sup> [9]

Here, monastics, a monastic might say: “I heard this in the presence of the Blessed One, I learned this in his presence: this is the Dharma, this is the discipline, this is the teacher’s teaching.”

The other three *mahāpadesas* make similar statements in relation to other authoritative sources of teachings believed to stem from the Buddha, which could be a community of monastics, a group of learned monastics, or just

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<sup>21</sup> DN 16 at DN II 124,2: *idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ vadeyya: sammukhā me taṃ, āvuso, bhagavato sutaṃ sammukhā paṭiggahitaṃ, ayaṃ dhammo ayaṃ vinayo idaṃ satthu-sāsanā ti*; see also AN 4.180 at AN II 168,5.

a single learned monastic. This type of formulation makes it clear that the intention is not to allow new composition or personal creativity and experimentation. Instead, the main purpose of the *mahāpadesas* is the evaluation of the authenticity of reports about what the Buddha himself was believed to have taught.

Turning to evaluations provided by other scholars, von Hinüber (1996/1997: 6) introduces the *mahāpadesas* as follows: “To guard the texts against alterations, Buddhists developed at a very early date some means to check their authenticity.” Ray (1985: 158) concludes his survey of relevant sources by stating: “On the one hand, the text must be proposed from reliable external authority; on the other, such authority must be further and finally tested against the canons of Buddhist doctrine, not as literal words and phrases, but as living understanding.” In what is the classic study of the topic, Lamotte (1947) explains that the *mahāpadesas* would reflect an already established practice of referring to the source from which a particular teaching was obtained,<sup>22</sup> to which the added criterion for authenticity is that the text needs to be in accord with the spirit of the discourses, the *Vinaya*, and the general doctrine.<sup>23</sup> It must be based on taking into consideration the full text, rather than only its later part, that these scholars do not envisage the *mahāpadesas* as sanctioning new composition.

The prevalent assessment in Buddhist scholarship of the significance of the *mahāpadesas* thus appears to be quite different from the position taken by Shulman (2021: 198),<sup>24</sup> apparently due to taking into account only part of the relevant text, that “the doctrine of the *mahāpadesas* suggests that

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<sup>22</sup> Lamotte 1947: 220: “Le Buddha constate d’abord un usage établi chez les religieux: lorsqu’un bhikṣu voulait faire admettre un texte quelconque par la communauté des moines, il se réclamait d’une des quatre ‘Grandes autorités.’”

<sup>23</sup> Lamotte 1947: 222: “Ainsi donc, pour que le texte proposé sur l’une des quatre Grandes autorités soit garanti, il n’est pas nécessaire que la lettre en soit reproduite dans les Écritures, il suffit que sa teneur générale soit en harmonie avec l’esprit des Sūtra, du Vinaya et de la doctrine bouddhique en général.”

<sup>24</sup> An exception appears to be Cousins 1983: 2f; for a refutation of which see Wynne 2004: 99–104.

there was a degree of creativity and personal experimentation alive and accepted within the textual tradition.”<sup>25</sup>

In line with the astute observation by Lamotte (1947), the function of the *mahāpadesas* can best be appreciated by keeping in mind the oral situation. As pointed out by Davidson (1990/1992: 293) in a context not related to the *mahāpadesas*: <sup>[10]</sup>

during the more than forty years of the Buddha’s teaching career, there were many monks acting as authoritative teachers of the doctrine throughout the kingdom of Magadha and its border areas. They would cross paths with the master from time to time and receive new information as his doctrine and teaching style developed. They would also receive new information from one another during the fortnightly congregations, the summer rains retreats, and whenever they met as their mendicant paths crossed.

Visualizing the situation in this way, there must have been a continuous need for updating the body of texts a particular reciter had memorized. In the resultant fluctuating situation of early Buddhist orality, where any new teaching given by the Buddha or one of his authoritative disciples would only gradually percolate among different monastic reciter communities, the procedure of the *mahāpadesas* is a natural one. As long as the Buddha was alive, he could have been consulted directly to settle any uncertainty, in line with a recurrent pattern in the early discourses of someone approaching him to find out if a certain rumor was correct. With the Buddha’s passing away such a stable reference point to assess the authenticity of a particular teaching would be lost. As noted by An (2002: 61) in an article dedicated to exploring the *mahāpadesas*, “after the Buddha’s death the settled texts assumed the Buddha’s authority.”

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<sup>25</sup> Shulman 2021: 198 note 135 adds “see also Shaw (2015: 433–437)”. The referenced article does not even mention the *mahāpadesas*, so that it would at most only support the idea of creativity in general.

## Comparative Study and Historicism

In support of the model of the play of formulas as a preferable alternative to the established procedures in Buddhist scholarship, Shulman attributes a historicist agenda to comparative studies of early Buddhist texts. Under the header of “The Perils of Historicism in Buddhist Studies” (2021: 150), he considers such perils to be evident in the following reference made in Anālayo (2011c: 855): “According to the different *Vinayas*, soon after his awakening the Buddha sent his first monk disciples out to teach others.” Now, a proper evaluation of this statement would need to take into account the explanation given in the introductory parts of that work (2011c: xxv):

My research ... presents a comparative study of the legacy of discourse material preserved by the reciters, the *bhāṇakas*. It is their presentation of the teachings that I am investigating, based on considering their legacy as source material for early Buddhist thought that deserves to be taken seriously.

A footnote (13) appended to the first of these two statements adds the following clarification: <sup>[11]</sup>

Thus when using expressions such as, for example, “the Buddha said to Brahmā”, I certainly do not intend to convey that the historical Buddha certainly said so, nor do I postulate the existence of Brahmā. Instead, I only intend to indicate that the reciters of the discourses report the Buddha to have spoken in a certain way to Brahmā. It would become cumbersome reading if in every such instance I were to mention explicitly that *I only represent the point of view of the discourses*. (emphasis added)

At an early stage in the compilation of my comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, I tried to formulate my summaries of the presentation of the reciters in such a way as to make it clear on every single instance that I was not presenting these as historical facts. However, it soon became evident that such a procedure results in convoluted phrasing and makes for difficult reading. For this reason, I decided to abandon it and simply clarify the situ-

ation at the outset of my study. Thus, when I say “according to the different *Vinayas*” such and such a thing happened (e.g., the Buddha sending out his first disciples to teach), I mean precisely what this phrase implies: I report what the texts convey. Based on that, I then draw out the implications of the position taken by the reciters. It must be due to not having read the explicit indication at the outset of my comparative study that Shulman (2021: 152) comments that “[t]aking these Vinaya accounts as plain history is questionable to begin with,”<sup>26</sup> followed by adding in a footnote (5):

This first group of students relates to “Yasa and his friends” ... It should be noted that the Yasa episode in the *Mahāvagga* is filled with supernatural elements. The attempt to treat such a text as providing a reliable historical core, which only later was embellished with narrative elements, is suspect.

Shulman (2021: 235) includes in his bibliography my detailed study of the *Vinaya* narrative related to the first *pārājika* against sexual intercourse, in the course of which I repeatedly draw attention to the need to read the texts as reflecting the concerns of the reciters rather than as historical records. This has led me to the following conclusion in Anālayo (2012a: 425):

In order to be able to appreciate the impact of the imagination of the monks responsible for the transmission of the *Vinaya*, then, a comparative study of *all* extant accounts is an indispensable necessity. As the Sudinna case shows, it is through a comparative study of all extant versions that those parts of the tale can be identified

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<sup>26</sup> Even though Shulman 2021: 153 is clearly aware that my research in Anālayo 2011c is about the changing nature of the texts and how to explain this, he nevertheless characterizes my approach to imply that the first disciples “carried with them ... texts that basically correspond to the discourses we find today” and that for me “the texts prove to be, at their heart, original instructions of the Buddha” (p. 152). My position is rather that the texts we presently have access to cannot take us back to whatever teachings the first disciples may have known or transmitted and that it is impossible to gain access to the original instructions of the Buddha.



that with high probability reflect how the functioning of this tale in a *Vinaya* teaching setting would have influenced the shape this tale eventually acquired. <sup>[12]</sup>

In a monograph study of another *Vinaya* narrative, I clarify my position in the following way (Anālayo 2016d: 13):

Throughout this study, my intention is not to reconstruct what actually happened on the ground in ancient India, which in view of the limitations of the source material at our disposal would anyway be a questionable undertaking. Instead, my intention is to reconstruct what happened during the transmission of the texts that report this event. In short, I am not trying to construct a history, I am trying to study the construction of a story.

In the introduction to my comparative study of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, I also discuss the role of the principle of coherence in early Buddhist thought (Anālayo 2011c: xxvi). I argue that the recognition of coherence as a criterion of truth, reflected in the early texts, makes it reasonable to employ the same principle when evaluating a particular textual passage. Such reliance on the principle of coherence does not imply asserting that something actually happened in ancient India. Even a fairy tale, to have its effect, needs to be convincing and hence, from the viewpoint of tradition, be coherent.

An example in case is an incoherence identified by Alsdorf (1957: 36–38) in the *Vessantara-jātaka*, where in the course of a journey the prince first gives away the horses drawing his chariot to begging brahmins and subsequently only the chariot itself. The resultant incoherence of a journey taken in a chariot that has no horses appears to have led to the addition of a prose narration that introduces celestials taking the form of draft animals. Identifying such incoherence and probable textual development does not require a positivistic reading; there is no need to assume that Vessantara actually existed in order to investigate the apparent genesis of the idea of celestials acting as draft animals. The point is simply that for the story to perform its literary function, it needs to be experienced by the audience as coherent. In other words, the justified interest in literary dimensions should

not lead to overlooking the literary requirement of narrative coherence.<sup>27</sup>

The misunderstanding of my comparative studies as involving an attempt to establish what truly happened occurs repeatedly in Shulman (2021), such as when commenting: “Recent, highly optimistic, views of the texts as revealing the events and teaching episodes behind the Buddha’s career are misguided” (p. 226). In support of attributing this assessment to my work, Shulman refers back to a previous footnote of his own (p. 4 note 4) that mentions “Anālayo (2017[b]), who argues for the historicity of <sup>[13]</sup> the early discourses.” The publication referenced is a monograph with collected articles that has over 600 pages. Given the absence of a page reference, it seems that the basic approach adopted for comparative study is mistaken to imply the taking of definite position on the historicity of the contents of what the early discourses report. This is of course not the case. A related instance of criticism by Shulman (2021: 13), which offers further clarifications regarding the problem he sees in such comparative studies, takes the following form:

Anālayo (2017[b]: 501) reads Chinese versions in order “to document the contribution Chinese *Āgama* passages can offer for an alternative understanding, or even for a correction, of their Pāli counterparts.” The price Buddhist studies has been paying for following this approach is an implicit acceptance of the traditional idealization of Buddhist scriptures as the true word of the Buddha, with no ability to acknowledge the deep creativity at work within the Buddhist textual project and with fewer resources to understand the mean-

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<sup>27</sup> Shulman 2021: 140 note 62 argues that “one of the marks of an oral tradition of storytelling is that it tends to defy coherence, working in divergent vectors of interpretation; see Valk (2017).” The reference is to a study of myths told by different brahmins regarding a goddess to which a temple established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century is dedicated. Note that even though the different versions of this myth show considerable divergence, the individual versions are not internally incoherent. That is, this case does not imply that coherence (in the way this operates in this particular religious setting) is not a requirement for narratives to function. In fact, Shulman 2021: 167 note 44 adopts my reasoning in Anālayo 2011c: 201 (without acknowledgement) regarding the strangeness of the presentation in MN 30, showing that he also relies on coherence as a criterion of evaluation.

ing of the texts for the people who used them. That is, scholars try to fix the word of the Buddha in a much stronger way than tradition ever did.

Comparative study is the very opposite of “the traditional idealization of Buddhist scriptures as the true word of the Buddha”, as it precisely shows that the true word of the Buddha cannot be reconstructed. By surveying parallel texts, it provides many more “resources to understand the meaning of the texts for the people who used them” than an approach that relies only on the Pāli tradition. The suggestion that “scholars try to fix the word of the Buddha in a much stronger way than tradition ever did” is absurd. Comparative study runs contrary to the central belief of traditional Theravāda Buddhists that the Pāli canon represents the word of the Buddha. It is precisely the potential of showing that the Pāli version at times calls for correction that undermines traditional beliefs. The promotion of consulting only the Pāli version, a position taken by Shulman, concords with the predilections of traditionalists much better than comparative studies does.

### A Proper Appreciation of Comparative Studies

Based on the assumption that comparative studies involve the “historicist fallacy”, Shulman (2021: 155) takes up my comparative study of the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* as a “demonstration of the dead-end to which historicist approaches tend to lead us.” In that study, I noted the similarity between the introductory narrations found in the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* (MN 31) and in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* (MN 128), as well as in a <sup>[14]</sup> parallel account in the *Mahāvagga* of the *Vinaya*, related to a quarrel that had reportedly broken out among the monks of Kosambī. Even though the two discourses are associated with different locations, they report the same episode of the Buddha being stopped by the park keeper of a grove in which three monks were living together.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In my comparative study (Anālayo 2011c: 203f) I just note: “Although one may well imagine that the park keeper did not recognize the Buddha on meeting him for the first time, it seems more difficult to imagine the same happening again.” This is simply an

Another difference is that “in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* the three monks have not yet reached the goal, while in the *Cūlagosiṅga-sutta* they are already accomplished arahants” (Anālayo 2011c: 203). Shulman (2021: 158) takes these assessments to be a “good example of the damage that an overly historicist interpretation can produce.” His argument then takes the following form (p. 159):

The problem comes when Anālayo tries to push back the events in the *Upakkilesa* earlier in time, to a moment *before* the events at Kosambī ... Anālayo is trying to force the texts to relate a reasonable historical narrative. Naturally, the interpretation hinges on an error in transmission, the theoretical backdrop for any puzzling element, since there are no other conceptual moves available when the literary dimensions of the texts are sidelined. Yet here, the error is attributed mainly to the authors/reciters/redactors of the *Upakkilesa*, the discourse that explicitly places its narration of the encounter with the park-keeper and the three monks after the events at Kosambī. In fact, it is clear that the *Upakkilesa* narrative and the *Mahāvagga* narrative are essentially the same, the one offering a more elaborate telling of the other, so that taking the *Upakkilesa*

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observation regarding narrative coherence and does not carry the exaggerated implications that Shulman 2021/2022: 573 reads into it: “Anālayo ... becomes troubled and wonders how it could be that the park-keeper failed to recognize the Buddha on their second meeting. For Anālayo, this is troubling since the harmony-formula is not a literary device used to frame good stories about monks and meditation, but a mnemonic method employed to preserve history. For the philology most commonly practiced in Buddhist studies, formulas are only a technology used to preserve the teachings in an age before writing; according to this approach, there is no need to pay attention to aesthetics or to issues of the heart, which for some reason are thought to remain outside the scope of what moved authors and audiences.” There is no being troubled on my side by this narrative repetition, nor an intention to present the episode as historical, nor a disregarding of aesthetic aspects of the texts and their impact on the audience, which I have studied in several of my publications. Most importantly, the functions of the texts have never been reduced to only a mnemonic purpose except by Eviatar Shulman as part of his agenda to promote his theory of the play of formulas.

as an account that precedes the Kosambī conflict completely obliterates the logic of this text. The *Upakkilesa* cannot be placed before the events at Kosambī, unless we ignore large parts of the narrative.

This argument involves a misunderstanding of my study, in which I did not take the position that the *Upakkilesa-sutta* should be placed before the events at Kosambī.<sup>29</sup> Instead, my position is that, “according to the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, the meeting between the Buddha and the three monks took place *right after* the Buddha had left the quarrelling monks of Kosambī” (Anālayo 2011c: 204; emphasis added).

I then note that the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* also places the events in this discourse right after the Kosambī event, a positioning that resonates with some implicit indications in the Pāli version of the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta*. Yet, from the viewpoint of the content of these two Pāli discourses, the *Upakkilesa-sutta* should precede the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta*, as in the former the three monks struggle to maintain their concentration, whereas in the latter they feature as highly accomplished meditative adepts. [15]

My overview of the indications given by the different versions becomes problematic only when one tries to force it into a historicist reading. But to do so is beside the point. A comparative study of oral texts transmitted for centuries cannot yield definite historical facts. What it can yield is a better understanding of the texts and their transmission. In fact, the conclusion I propose is not about what actually happened on the ground but about what appears to have happened during the transmission of these texts. From that viewpoint, it is of considerable interest that two discourses in the same *Majjhima-nikāya* collection, the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* and the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, present accounts that conflict with each other.

Shulman (2021: 160) also criticizes another aspect of the same comparative study as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> A repetition of the same misunderstanding can be found in Shulman 2021/2022: 574: “Anālayo tries to force the text to express events that happened *before* the conflict at Kosambī, thereby completely obliterating the logic of this discourse.”

Anālayo is driven to place the *Upakkilesa* earlier since he sees the *Cūḷagosiṅga* as reporting a stage in which the three monks were more advanced in their meditative attainment. In fact, he sees the text as describing them as arahants, in a way that finds little support in the discourse. This is probably the only reason to think that the *Upakkilesa* is earlier.

In support of his assessment that the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* does not present the three monks as arahants, he refers to the statement in the discourse “that they have reached the state of cessation (*saññāvedayitanirodha*), for which the MN uses a formula that speaks of inflows (*āsava*) being destroyed, even though this does not necessarily correspond to complete liberation” (2021: 160 note 24). Yet, this does appear to be the implication of the reference to the *āsavas* being destroyed,<sup>30</sup> as for indicating that only some of these are destroyed, corresponding to a level or realization falling short of becoming an arahant, the discourses tend to add the qualification “some” (*ekacca*) before the reference to the *āsavas*.<sup>31</sup>

Shulman (2021: 160 note 24) also argues, regarding a *yakkha* that appears at the end of the discourse, that “although the Yakkha refers to the Buddha as an arahant, he does not do so in relation to the three monks.” Closer inspection of the relevant passage shows that the reference employs the standard qualification of the Buddha as *arahaṃ sammāsambuddho*.<sup>32</sup> The early discourses use this specifically for the Buddha and not for his disciples, making it unsurprising that the present passage conforms to this pattern. Such usage does not entail that the three monks were not considered to be arahants.<sup>[16]</sup>

Moreover, the assessment of the relationship between the two discourses is not based just on their attainment of arahant-ship. The *Upakkilesa-sutta* describes the three monks as encountering problems similar to the Buddha’s own pre-awakening experience of a series of obstacles to concentration. In contrast, in the *Cūḷagosiṅga-sutta* and its parallels the three monks have

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<sup>30</sup> MN 31 at MN I 209,23: *paññāya ca no disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*.

<sup>31</sup> An example is MN 70 at MN I 478,6: *paññāya c’assa disvā ekacce āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*.

<sup>32</sup> MN 31 at MN I 210,17.

mastery of the absorptions and immaterial spheres. There can be no doubt that the two discourses present these three monks at different moments in their meditative development. In fact, Shulman (2021: 160 note 24) admits that “[i]t is true, however, that the monks’ practice can be considered more advanced in the *Cūḷagosinga* than in the *Upakkilesa*.” Yet, according to his assessment there is “no need to see one text as relating earlier events than the other, since both are actually placing a different set of meditative attainments within the same literary design” (2021: 160). This assessment does not seem to work so well, as it is only in one discourse that they are shown to have “a set of meditative attainments”. In the other discourse, they are reportedly unable to stabilize their concentration and precisely for this reason have not yet reached meditative attainments.

Elsewhere in his study Shulman (2021: 222 note 59) in fact reports that in the *Upakkilesa-sutta* “the monks relate their irregular *samādhi* experience ... which they admit they have trouble maintaining.” Given his own assessment, it follows that the two discourses do indeed report encounters with the Buddha that, from the viewpoint of the reciters, are to be allocated to an earlier and a later occasion.

Another criticism by Shulman (2021: 153 note 8) proceeds as follows:

Regarding the *Aggivacchagotta-sutta* (2011[c]: 883), Anālayo misunderstands the context of the teaching given in this discourse, so that the ideas introduced by the Chinese text do not result from “commentary”, but are part of the philosophy taught in the discourse ... the “unanswered questions” relate to selflessness to begin with ... For this reason, the reference in the parallel version from the *Samyukta Āgama*, which refers to the destiny of the self of beings, and which Anālayo sees as resulting from the commentary, fits the context perfectly.

The relevant part of the *Aggivacchagotta-sutta* concerns the tetralemma on the destiny of the Tathāgata after death. In this context, the term Tathāgata does not refer to the self in general but more specifically to a fully awakened one. Instead of employing the standard Chinese translation for the

term Tathāgata as 如來, found elsewhere in the same *Samyukta-āgama* collection, the usage of 眾生神我 is indeed <sup>[17]</sup> perplexing.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, in Anālayo (2011c: 883f) I suggested that “the puzzling reference in the Chinese version could be due to the influence of an ancient Indian commentarial explanation similar to what is now preserved in the Pāli commentaries”, which gloss such references to the Tathāgata as implying a “living being”, similar to the reference to a “living being”, 眾生, in the Chinese phrase under discussion. Since the whole phrase 眾生神我 involves a substantial departure from the translation terminology employed in the same collection elsewhere, it is rather doubtful that Chinese readers would have understood it to reflect the term Tathāgata.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, it certainly does not fit the context, let alone fitting it “perfectly”.

Another criticism concerns my comparative study of the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, in the course of which I quote other scholars who pointed out problems with its description of the Buddha’s pre-awakening practices (Anālayo 2011c: 116 note 89):

Dutoit (1905: 50) notes that the description of the bodhisattva’s solitary dwelling in a forest given in MN 12 at MN I 79,1, according to which he would hide as soon as he saw a cowherd or shepherd from afar, stands in contrast to the traditional account according to which the bodhisattva was in the company of the five monks during his ascetic practices. Dutoit also points out an inner contradiction, where MN 12 at MN I 78,19 describes the bodhisattva undertaking the practice of bathing in water three times a day, but then at MN I 78,23 depicts how dust and dirt had accumulated on his body over the years to the extent that it was falling off in pieces. Freiburger (2006: 238) notes another contradiction between the reference to nakedness at MN I 77,28 and the wearing of different types of ascetic garment described at MN I 78,10.

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<sup>33</sup> SĀ<sup>2</sup> 196 at T II 445a18.

<sup>34</sup> See Anālayo 2017f: 13.



I then refer to Hecker (1972: 54), who had proposed a solution to this incoherent presentation by relating it to the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka*, which “indicates that the *bodhisattva* undertook these ascetic practices in a former life.”<sup>35</sup>

Shulman (2021: 140 note 61) objects that my presentation is “misleading”, as my treatment of the description of ascetic practices supposedly “tries to explain them away as the product of [a] confusion with the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka*” (2021: 140). Moreover, according to his assessment my “explanation ignores the fact that the *Mahāsīhanāda* describes these practices far more elaborately than does the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka*.” In addition, “[t]here is also no mention of previous lives in this discourse,” that is, in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*.<sup>[18]</sup>

First of all, there is no attempt to explain the ascetic practices away. My point is much rather to try to understand the presentation in the discourse, in line with the principle of coherence already mentioned. In Anālayo (2011c: 116 note 88) I point out: “This *Jātaka* tale begins by referring to Sunakkhatta’s disparagement of the Buddha, so that there can be no doubt that it refers to the same occasion as MN 12.” In fact, the main elements of the introductory narration in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* (MN 12) recur as the introductory narration of the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka* (Jā 94).<sup>36</sup> The ensuing part of the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka* then summarizes the main ascetic practices of the *bodhisattva* being naked and covered with dust, living in such seclusion as to flee from the sight of humans, eating cow dung, and subjecting himself deliberately to extremes of cold and hot weather. These correspond to the practices described in more detail in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*.

The *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka* then presents a poem on the *bodhisattva*’s asceticism that is also found at this juncture in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*.<sup>37</sup> This verse, which in fact constitutes the *jātaka* proper, appears to be specific to these two texts. There can hardly be any doubt that the two texts intend the same ascetic practices believed to have been cultivated by the Buddha before his awakening, and it is difficult to understand how such a sugges-

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<sup>35</sup> Hecker 1972: 54 states: “hier beginnt, wie aus J[ā] 94 hervorgeht, ein Bericht aus einem früheren Leben des Buddha, und zwar im 91. Äon.”

<sup>36</sup> Compare the text beginning at MN I 68,8 with its counterpart at Jā I 389,20.

<sup>37</sup> MN 12 at MN I 79,29 and Jā 94 at Jā I 390,31.

tion could be classified as “misleading”. In fact, Shulman (2021: 141) has to admit that “perhaps the reference to a missing Jātaka, as suggested by An-ālayo, still makes sense” (although my suggestion is not really about a “missing” *jātaka*), followed by presenting the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka* as an example for instances where “Jātakas synthesize suttas” (note 68). If that is the case, then what is the basis for dismissing the observation of such a relationship between these two texts as “misleading”?

Moreover, the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* at a later point does refer to previous lives,<sup>38</sup> contrary to the statement by Shulman (2021: 140) that “[t]here is also no mention of previous lives in this discourse.” In a criticism of those who believe that purification comes about through the cycle of rebirth, the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* reports the Buddha pointing out that he had already experienced all kinds of rebirth (except for the Pure Abodes), thereby proving to himself that the undergoing of rebirths is not in itself purificatory. The same type of argument would make good sense for the description of asceticism, in the sense that with his own experiences of these ascetic practices he had similarly proven to himself that such practices are not in themselves purificatory. At any rate, the suggestion here is in fact not that a “confusion” has happened. Instead, the point is only that the idea of a past life, although not articulated explicitly, may well stand in the background of the presentation of asceticism in the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*, given that another <sup>[19]</sup> and later text, the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka*, explicitly relates these practices to a former life of the Buddha many aeons ago. Taking into account the perspective afforded by the *Lomahaṃsa-jātaka* in this way enables a coherent reading of the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta*’s presentation and offers a solution to the problems correctly identified by previous scholarship.

The principle of coherence also stands in the background of my comparative study of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*. In relation to the episode of the Buddha’s encounter with Upaka, who could have become his first convert, Shulman (2021: 212 note 39) argues that my “discussion of the different versions of the Upaka episode exemplifies some of the problems that inhere

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<sup>38</sup> MN 12 at MN I 81,36.

in the attempt to identify a ‘correct’ version of the text.” He adds that “it is hopeless to try to see what the ‘true’ version was.” Yet, the terms “correct” or “true” do not occur in my discussion of this episode, nor do I express value judgements that reflect such ideas. I simply survey the parallels from the viewpoint of their inner coherence and as instances testifying to the dynamics of oral transmission.

In relation to my comparative study of the final part of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, Shulman (2021: 213) repeats his view of my work as involving a search “for the ‘correct version’”, arguing that:

The attempt to change the sequence of the text is frustrating, ever again assuming that there is a mistake in “transmission”, as if there necessarily was a clear text to be transmitted. Rather than succumbing to such temptations to explain the problem away and to make the discourse ostensibly more coherent, we can again see how the literary approach takes us further.

The supposedly preferable literary approach then takes the form of proposing that the allocation to the chapter on similes is responsible for the incoherent presentation (2021: 214): “To be included in this collection, a text must give prominence to a simile, which the editors of the *Ariyapariyesanā* achieved” with the help of the part that does not fit its context particularly well.<sup>39</sup> Now, had the allocation to the chapter on similes indeed been responsible for this part of the discourse, the question remains why it was placed at a juncture of the text where it does not fit. In fact, Shulman (2021: 213) acknowledges this misfit: “The last section of the text does not fit very well with what came before.” The proposed solution does not solve this problem. The purpose of finding inclusion in the chapter on similes could have been achieved by placing the simile earlier, where it fits better. This goes to show that the proposed “literary approach” does not really take us further. [20]

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<sup>39</sup> A repetition of the same assessment in Shulman 2021/2022: 577 takes the following form: “I suggest that the simile was added to the narrative for the quite prosaic purpose of making it fit the ‘chapter on similes’.”

It is also not clear why the suggestion of an error in sequence is “frustrating”, given that there is ample evidence for precisely such errors to occur during oral transmission.<sup>40</sup> Note that I present this just as a possible explanation, speaking of “the assumption that the sequence of the narration might have suffered from a misplacing of this passage during the process of transmission of the discourse” (Anālayo 2011c: 187). Based on evidence that a particular error tends to occur in oral transmission, I offer the suggestion that this may apply to the present case, without taking the position that this must have been the case and thus without actually attempting “to change the sequence of the text”. Here and elsewhere, there is a tendency for criticism raised by Shulman to be the result of careless reading.

Another point made in the above criticism takes the form of problematizing that “there necessarily was a clear text to be transmitted.” What else but a text (as long as we use that term to include what is not written) could have been transmitted during the centuries of oral tradition? At some point some form of an oral teaching must have come into existence whose transmission over centuries led to what we can now access in the form of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its parallel extant in Chinese.

### Comparative Studies and Literary Dimensions of the Texts

An argument employed repeatedly by Shulman in support of his play of formulas is to present his approach as finally doing justice to the literary dimensions of the texts:<sup>41</sup> “Without acknowledging the literary dimensions of the texts, any historical analysis is plainly fantastic; the understanding of the historical must follow upon the appreciation of the literary” (2021: 226). Yet, “scholars insist that the main driving impulse of early Buddhist scripture is to preserve the teacher’s words” (p. 25). Such criticism also targets my work, evident in the reference to “Anālayo’s strong emphasis on verbatim repetition as the sole performative practice of the texts” (p. 154). Yet, as the previous part of the present chapter would have shown, I offered a series

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<sup>40</sup> See in particular the survey in Anālayo 2011c: 873–876.

<sup>41</sup> See also below note 42.

of suggestions about material of a commentarial type becoming part of the discourse itself, something that implies a performative setting that is not restricted to verbatim repetition. In fact, in Anālayo (2011c: 859) I made a point of noting that “oral transmission was perceived not only as a means of preserving texts.”<sup>[21]</sup>

The performative dimension of the early discourses and their literary dimension have for quite some time been recognized and studied, including by myself.<sup>42</sup> In relation to the specific case of formulas, as noted in the previous chapter (see above p. 244), highlighting their mnemonic function does not of course imply that such formulas do not have literary and poetic functions. Formulas obviously still have content, which can serve various literary and poetic functions.

Comparative study offers a particularly powerful tool for advancing our understanding of precisely the literary dimensions of the early discourses. This holds, for example, for appreciating the literary roles of the celestials Brahmā, Sakka, and Māra in early Buddhist narrative (studied in Anālayo 2011a, 2011f, and 2014d; summarized in Anālayo 2018c). It is precisely the consultation of parallel versions that helps to bring out more clearly the rich literary dimensions of the portraits of each of these celestial denizens of early Buddhist texts. Of particular interest is also the role of such celestials in a narrative that serves as an authentication strategy for attributing the delivery of Abhidharma teachings to the Buddha himself (studied in Anālayo 2012i).

Another fascinating literary dimension evident in some early discourses is debate (studied in Anālayo 2010f), appreciation of which requires a proper understanding of debating strategies precisely in order to avoid literalist and historicist interpretations (see Anālayo 2012d and 2013b). An intriguing narrative motif is also the Paccekabuddha/Pratyekabuddha (examined in Anālayo 2010e and 2015k), where a comparative study and exploration of relevant material in the Chinese *Āgamas* helps to develop a perspective on

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<sup>42</sup> The selected works acknowledged in Shulman 2021: 42 note 7 do not include any of my publications relevant to literary dimensions of the early discourses, even though his bibliography shows awareness of at least one relevant article, Anālayo 2012a.

the apparent attraction of this notion in the early period after the Buddha's demise. Yet another narrative motif of similar interest is the wheel-turning king, in which case once again comparative study shows its literary dimensions and in what ways this motif was deployed (explored in Anālayo 2011g and 2012h). Conversion is another motif that easily shows the impact of narrative agendas, in particular when it comes to the conversion of a brahmin (see Anālayo 2011d). A particularly fascinating narrative of this type involves the transformation of the <sup>[22]</sup> killer Aṅgulimāla into a saint, where comparative study showcases the different literary trajectories that have impacted reports of this episode (studied in Anālayo 2008a).

Another and perhaps even more remarkable narrative appears to reveal the probable genesis of the motif of spontaneous auto-combustion (examined in Anālayo 2012c). Although clearly arising from literary concerns, in the course of Buddhist history this particular motif has inspired actual instances of setting parts or the whole of one's body on fire. This is not the only narrative trope related to fire imagery (on which see Anālayo 2015d), which stands in relation to the literary function of depictions of miracles (see Anālayo 2015j and 2016h). Each of these literary topics can greatly benefit from comparative studies.

Needless to say, a study of literary aspects can hardly overlook the *jātakas*, whose development from folk tales to becoming stories of the Buddha's past lives is particularly intriguing (studied in Anālayo 2009c and 2010b: 55–71). Even in relation to what is perhaps the most famous *jātaka* in the Theravāda tradition, the *Vessantara-jātaka*, comparative study can provide important indications regarding its apparent literary function (see Anālayo 2016k). In view of the androcentric tendencies in much of early Buddhist literature, a comparative study of a narrative involving a past life of the Buddha as a female is of considerable interest (see Anālayo 2015e). Of similar benefit are comparative studies of other narratives concerning female rebirth (see Anālayo 2014f), attitudes toward nuns (see Anālayo 2010a), and of course the narrative of the founding of the order of nuns (see Anālayo 2016d).

Comparative study of *Vinaya* narratives can draw on quite a variety of parallel versions, which help to clarify the literary purposes of the stories

purporting to report the convocation of the first communal recitation, *saṅgīti* (surveyed in Anālayo 2015i), and the circumstances of the promulgation of the rules against sexual intercourse and homicide (see Anālayo 2012a and 2014h).

In view of the above range of publications related in one way or another to literary dimensions of the texts, it is rather astonishing that Shulman (2021: 59) singles me out as “a salient example” for modern scholarship that ignores the narrative and literary dimensions of the early discourses.<sup>43</sup> Here as well as elsewhere, his assessments tend to reflect a failure to ascertain the situation *before* voicing an evaluation. <sup>[23]</sup>

## The Notion of Parallelism

According to Shulman (2021: 29), in my comparative studies I tend “to speak of ‘parallels’ of texts, rather than of versions, suggesting that a text is a clearly defined entity that underwent changes.” Actually, I use “version” quite often and interchangeably with “parallel”. However, Shulman (2021: 7) intends the term “version” in a special way:<sup>44</sup>

The idea of texts as versions combats the common philological approach that assumes that “parallel” texts, i.e., different versions of a text preserved in distinct canons and languages, can be compared to each other in order to identify more reliable, authentic, or “earlier” versions, and then to mark processes of change and development.

An example for what this implies is his suggestion that the *Bhayabherava-sutta* (MN 4) and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta* (MN 19) “are versions of each other” (2021: 206). In the previous chapter I already examined this proposal in detail, showing that these two discourses are substantially different and

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<sup>43</sup> See also above p. 254 note 39.

<sup>44</sup> A similar formulation occurs in Shulman 2021/2022: 557, according to which the proposed model of the play of formulas “combats the commonly accepted views that texts are mainly an attempt to record and preserve the Buddha’s teachings and life events, and that the best way to understand their history is to compare parallel versions of them.”

thus are not versions of each other. The attempt to combat the common philological approach appears to rest on a failure to appreciate the notion of discourse parallelism. This notion rests on the impression that the texts identified as parallel versions report the same instance of a teaching being given. This is not the case for the *Bhayabherava-sutta* and the *Dvedhāvitakka-sutta*.

When defining formulas, Shulman (2021: 171) notes that some of these can be quite short, commenting: “A simple example of this type of formula is the opening phrase of all discourses in the MN and DN—*evaṃ me sutaṃ*, “Thus have I heard.” Taking this type of formula as an example, are all discourses in these two collections versions of each other, just because they share this formula? Clearly, the idea of shared formulas is insufficient in itself for determining parallelism. More is required, and this is precisely what the common philological approach has been relying on for over a century of Buddhist scholarship, since the (for the English-speaking world) groundbreaking publications by Anesaki (1908) and Akanuma (1929/1990). The notion of discourse parallelism has shown its worth and forms the basis not only for comparative studies of the Chinese *Āgamas* but also for research on Sanskrit and Gāndhārī fragments (or discourse material extant in other languages). The play of formulas is not a convincing alternative to this approach.

The unconvincing nature of the proposed revision of the notion of parallelism can perhaps best be illustrated with an example. Suppose police investigating a particular crime compare different eyewitness <sup>[24]</sup> accounts. Given the limitations of human memory, these can at times be quite different from each other, even though the individual witnesses may sincerely believe they are reporting what they actually saw. Despite such differences, the investigating police officers will only be concerned with eyewitnesses of this particular crime. It would make no sense for them to consult eyewitness reports of another crime that took place at a different time and in a different place, however much these other reports may have some superficial similarity to those that concern the crime under investigation.

The same principle holds for comparative study. In order to improve our understanding of a particular discourse, in the way it has been transmitted, parallels ostensibly reporting the same teaching are of direct rele-



vance. The qualification “ostensibly” here is meant to note a difference compared to the crime investigation example, insofar as comparative study does not require affirming that the teaching was indeed given by the speaker(s) at the reported location. It only requires ascertaining that, from the viewpoint of the reciters, the relevant texts appear to have been seen as reporting the same episode. Other discourses that ostensibly report some different episode, even if they share some superficial similarity due to the employment of particular formulas, are not of comparable relevance.

Shulman (2021: 14) proposes that, “[b]efore scholarship continues to compare texts, it should ask where comparison is meant to lead us and acknowledge the creative vectors that were active within the tradition, rather than seeing them as mistakes or corruptions.” The introduction of value judgements, evident here, recurs also when Shulman (2021: 144) portrays the approach he wishes to dismiss as involving attributing a particular textual development to “the hand of cunning redactors who altered some sort of original, pristine text.” Another example is the reference to “remaining suspicious of innovation as a corruption of a core text” (2021: 36). The same recurs in a criticism directly aimed at my work: “Anālayo’s views ... are based on similar assumptions regarding an original ‘text’ that underwent lamentable changes during transmission” (2021: 30).

The attempt to dismiss comparative study by associating it with value-laden terminology seems to reflect Shulman’s own ways of thinking. Shulman (2021: 42) in fact uses the term “lamentably” to qualify the supposed absence of interest in literary dimensions among <sup>[25]</sup> other scholars. In contrast, a digital search of the PDF versions of my over 400 publications has not led me to a single occurrence of an instance of change being qualified as “lamentable”. There is in fact nothing at all to be lamented, as instances of change are much rather highly interesting. My most significant discoveries through comparative study are precisely based on acknowledging “the creative vectors that were active within the tradition,” whereby instances of “innovation” become particularly revealing.

Moreover, the appeal in the quote given above that comparative study should be preceded by reflection on its functions and goals ignores that such reflections have already been made and published. As has become ev-

ident above in relation to the unfounded accusation of historicism, the repeated criticism of various aspects of my *Comparative Study of the Majjhima-nikāya* has evidently not been based on reading the first part of the work, in which I clarify, as the title of the relevant section indicates, the “research scope and purpose” of my study. In an article published previously (Anālayo 2008b), which is freely available on the internet, I already took up the following points, as summarized in the abstract:

The present paper offers a few methodological reflections on comparative studies between the discourses found in the Chinese *Āgamas* and their parallels in Pāli, Sanskrit and Tibetan. The issues taken up are: the impact of oral transmission on this material; the notion of a parallel and difficulties in applying this notion; the advantage of approaching the category of a parallel with the help of the Buddhist four-fold logic; and the potential of comparative studies.

Although neither of these two presentations was meant to be the final word on the issue, and the continuity of research will offer new perspectives that help to improve these presentations, there is no basis for Shulman (2021: 144) to call for a halt to comparative studies and request reflection on what it entails and intends to achieve. In line with the instances already surveyed above, Shulman tends to problematize issues due to a lack of paying attention to, or a careless reading of, the relevant sources.

A dismissal of the potential of comparative studies to understand the evolution of Buddhist thought also becomes evident when Shulman (2021: 14 note 26) argues that “judgments on early and late are ultimately speculative.” Notably, this evaluation is meant to apply to comparative studies in particular, as he reserves for himself the right to make such <sup>[26]</sup> distinctions when studying Pāli texts in isolation. An example is when Shulman (2021: 229 note 3) identifies Pāli discourses as pertaining to what “is probably not one of the earliest textual strata in the Nikāyas”, where “some of these categories are younger than others,” which “suggests that these concepts are a late addition.” In the case of a study based on consulting parallels extant in Chinese, however, Shulman (2021: 35) argues that “in a comparative analysis,

it is dangerous to imagine earlier versions that were ostensibly behind the ones we read today.”

A comparable tactic can be seen when Shulman (2021: 66) finds a particular formula “does not really connect with the logic of the text”. Even though elsewhere he argues against parallelism, when it comes to defending the play of formulas, he seems to have no qualms about quoting the parallel versions extant in Sanskrit and Chinese in support of his position, arguing that these parallels show that “all versions of the text include the formula” (66 note 86).

### Study Confined to Pāli Texts

Shulman (2021: 9f) justifies his approach of consulting only Pāli material by reasoning that, “when each text is a viable version, the voice of each tradition can and should be analyzed on its own.” In this way, “we come to realize that there is much room for analyzing each tradition—in the present study, the Pāli one—on its own, in order to achieve a richer understanding of its idiosyncratic perspective and compositional practices” (2021: 14).<sup>45</sup> He further dismisses the potential of comparative study with the assessment that parallels extant in different languages from distinct reciter transmissions should be seen “as versions of a similar story—as different ‘tellings’—rather than as culminations of different lines of transmission that ultimately refer back to one original text” (2021: 121). This assessment is based on a brief foray into comparative study in reliance on an assistant who read the Chinese text on his behalf (2021: 30 note 73).

It is difficult to avoid the impression that a central agenda in the promotion of the play of formulas—and the polemics concerning the supposed historicist fallacy and the alleged lack of attention to literary dimensions in comparative studies—would be an attempt to authenticate re-

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<sup>45</sup> An additional argument presented in Shulman 2021/2022: 561 is that “there is also reason to assume that Pāli versions tend to be (but need not necessarily be) earlier.” I already presented a substantial body of evidence in Anālayo 2016j to show that Pāli discourses were as much affected by later change as the discourses of other reciter traditions. There is simply no sound reason for taking Pāli versions to be earlier, as they result from the same complex processes of oral transmission as their parallels.

search that only relies on Pāli texts. Debunking comparative study in these various ways can then serve as a convenient excuse for not consulting Chinese *Āgama* or Tibetan parallels. In fact, Shulman (2021: 150) explicitly distances himself from current scholarship in Buddhist studies<sup>[27]</sup> that operates under “too strict a philological paradigm. Most salient among these voices today is Venerable Anālayo.” Yet, the in itself understandable frustration of being unable to consult the primary sources directly is not sufficient ground for dismissing summarily what is beyond one’s personal reach.

Aside from the fact that the idiosyncrasies of a Pāli discourse can only be appreciated fully based on a consultation of the parallels, even just studying Pāli texts on their own requires some philological expertise. It is not clear if this requirement is being met, as the presentation in Shulman (2021) involves errors that one would not expect to occur when the Pāli language has been properly learned. An example is the proposal that Sunakkhatta must have been a novice monk, as he is referred to as a *samaṇa* (p. 126 note 23). This proposal is unexpected because Shulman (2021: 16 note 33, 21 note 48, 135 note 48, 138 note 56, 181 note 77) elsewhere repeatedly quotes Pāli passages that refer to the Buddha with the phrase *samaṇa Gotama*, which obviously does not imply that the Buddha was a novice.<sup>46</sup> He even states explicitly: “I translate *samaṇa* (Skt *śramaṇa*) as ‘renunciate’” (2021: 15 note 29), showing awareness of the fact that *samaṇa* does not mean “novice” but much rather “renunciate” or “recluse”. In spite of this, Shulman (2021: 126 note 23) still reasons:

Sunakkhatta is referred to twice as a novice monk (*samaṇa*), once by the narrator of the first episode with the naked ascetic (see later discussion), where he is said to be the attendant who follows the Buddha on his alms-round (*pacchā-samaṇa*), and a second time by the Buddha in the second episode in which the Buddha calls him a “Sakyan novice” (*samaṇo sakyaputtiyo*). Rhys Davids (1899: 199) supports this view but does not offer a detailed account.

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<sup>46</sup> See also the comment in Shulman 2021: 188 note 101 that “Uttara calls the Buddha ‘recluse’ (*samaṇo*).”

In line with the procedure adopted to authenticate the play of formulas, in the present context again a reference to T. W. Rhys Davids serves to support the supposed finding. Following up this reference brings to light that Rhys Davids (1899: 199) does not in any way support the view that Sunakkhatta was a novice.<sup>47</sup>

A lack of familiarity with basic Pāli terms appears to be also evident when Shulman (2021: 145) refers to the final part of the *Pāṭika-sutta* as taking up the “joyful deliverance (*subhaṃ vimokkhaṃ* [sic])”. This appears to conflate *subha*, “beautiful”, with *sukha*, “happy” (or “joyful”). In addition, this reference also involves a misspelling of Pāli terminology, here in the form of a doubling of the *m* whereby the term *vimokha/vimokkha* becomes *vimmokha*.<sup>48</sup> [28]

Shulman (2021: 15 note 30) explains his general procedure as follows: “Pāli quotes are taken from the VRI (Vipassanā Research Institute) edition, compared and adapted according to the PTS (Pali Text Society), and slightly edited.” Yet, incorrect word separations found in the digital VRI edition have repeatedly been kept without being corrected during the process of comparison, adaption, and slight edition: *paññāpetu’nti* (2021: 62 note 72), *bhū-*

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<sup>47</sup> The reference to “Rhys Davids (1899: 199)” leads to a page of the latter’s translation of DN 6. Since Shulman 2021 elsewhere refers to discourse content by way of the Pāli title and not by way of any English translation, the reference given by him here must be intending an annotation to the translation. In fact, in this part of DN 6 Sunakkhatta is just referred to by name for the first time, without any qualification of his monastic status. In a footnote appended to this reference, Rhys Davids 1899: 199 note 1 provides the following information, as a way of introducing him: “This young man became the Buddha’s personal attendant; but afterwards, when the Buddha was in extreme old age (M. [MN] I, 82), he went over to the creed of Kora the Kshatriya, and left the Buddhist Order. Kora’s doctrine was the efficacy of asceticism, of rigid self-mortification. And it was to show how wrong this doctrine, as put forth by Sunakkhatta, was, that the Buddha told the story (Gāt. [Jā] I, 398) of the uselessness of the efforts he himself had made when: ‘Now scorched, now frozen, lone in fearsome woods, Naked, without a fire, afire within, He, as a hermit, sought the crown of faith.’ But we do not hear that Sunakkhatta ever came back to the fold.” Nothing in this note (or on this page) “supports” the view that Sunakkhatta was a novice.

<sup>48</sup> The PTS edition of DN 24 at DN III 35,2 speaks of *subhaṃ vimokkhaṃ*; the VRI edition has *subhaṃ vimokkhaṃ*.

*tabhabyāna'nti* (2021: 70 note 93), *sayamṭaṭibhāna'nti* (2021: 138 note 56) twice *sāra'nti* (2021: 167 note 43), *pariyosāna'nti* (2021: 168 note 46), *nissaraṇa'nti* (2021: 169 note 49), *pasanna'nti* (2021: 189 note 107), and *duggahita'nti* (2021: 198 note 131).

Whereas these errors are just brought over when copying text from the digital VRI edition without rectification, other instances involve errors that are not found in either the VRI or PTS editions. One example takes the form of a meaningless duplication of the sentence *sabbaṃ dhammaṃ abhijānāti; sabbaṃ dhammaṃ abhiññāya sabbaṃ dhammaṃ pari jānāti* (2021: 50 note 34), apparently the result of a copy-and-paste error. At times the grammatical form is incorrect, such as when the inquiry *kacci pana vo* requires *vihara-thā ti* but the form given is *viharantīti* (2021: 156 note 14). Or else, the two members of a compound are given in the opposite order, such as when the term *āgatāgamā* is changed to *āgamāgatā* (2021: 197 note 129). In addition, a number of spelling errors occur, which are not found in the two editions consulted and thus presumably are the result of the process of comparison, adaption, and slight edition (the following list leaves out errors involving just a lack of diacritical marks).<sup>49</sup> The editorial process, if it can be called such, has resulted in the following:

- *diṭṭhiyā* has become *diṭṭhoyā* (2021: 8 note 14)
- *accantaniṭṭho* has become *accantniṭṭho* (2021: 50 note 34)
- *seyyathīdaṃ/seyyathidaṃ* has become *seyatthīdaṃ* (2021: 94 note 36)
- *ti* has become *to* (2021: 95 note 38)
- *Ambalaṭṭhikā* has become *Ambaliṭṭhikā* (2021: 95 note 38)
- *pacchābhattaṃ* has become *pacchābattaṃ* (2021: 101 note 55)
- *devamanussānan* has become *devamanassānam* (2021: 102 note 58) or *devamanussāyan* (2021: 204 note 15)
- *ito tiṇṇaṃ* has become *itiṇṇaṃ* (2021: 102 note 61)
- *viharissāma* has become *viharissām* (2021: 110 note 88)
- *sakkato* has become *sakkto* (2021: 110 note 88)
- *imasmiṃ* has become *iamsmiṃ* (2021: 117 note 101)

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<sup>49</sup> Examples would be *abhijanāmi* (p. 139 note 60) or *pajanāmi* (p. 144 note 77).

- *bhikkhu* has become *bhukku* (2021: 117 note 101)
- *Cūḷamalunkyaṇṇaputta-* has become *Cūḷamalunkhyaputta-* (2021: 127 note 26 and 174 note 61)
- *tividhā* has become *tividhā* (2021: 161 note 27)
- *aññāṇa* has become *anaññā* (2021: 179)
- *sammāsambuddhassa* has become *samāsambudhassa* (2021: 188) [29]
- *aparissuddhakāyakammantā* has become *aparissuddhakānyakammantā* (2021: 202 note 10)
- *sukhāya* has become *sukhyāya* (2021: 204 note 15)
- *vivekaṇṇam* has become *vivekaṇṇam* (2021: 217 note 51)
- *sukham* has become *saukham* (2021: 217 note 52)
- *iddhipādam* has become *iddipādam* (2021: 229 note 4)
- *sammāpaddhāna* has become *sammāpaddhāna* (2021: 232)

Needless to say, we all make errors. But the frequency of at times gross mistakes in the ‘editing’ of what is after all a limited amount of Pāli text given mostly in annotations and copied from a digital edition conveys an impression of a degree of carelessness and lack of philological rigor that is unexpected for a scholarly publication.

## Conclusion

Based on the above exploration, it seems fair to conclude that the play of formulas does not offer a reliable approach for a better understanding of the early Buddhist texts. Whatever *prima facie* appeal it may have had, on closer inspection the proposed model turns out to be based on a careless reading of the primary sources and relevant scholarship, being to all appearances driven by the agenda of wanting to bypass the philological training needed to do research on early Buddhism.

At least as far as early Buddhist thought is concerned, it is decidedly not the case, as assumed by Shulman (2021: ix), that “[i]f we are to understand religious scripture, we must shake away the remnants of an intellectual heritage that distinguishes ... between true and false.” Although such phrasing may resonate with postmodern sensitivities, it misses the mark when it comes to scholarly research of early (and later) Buddhism.

Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that Shulman is correct in emphasizing the importance of the literary dimensions of the texts. However, this should not lead to ignoring other dimensions and, more importantly, the most promising tool for studying such literary dimensions is a comparative study of parallels extant from different transmission lineages.





## XIV

### The Role of Memorization

Several of the limitations in research procedure that have become evident in the previous two chapters also manifest in another study by Shulman (2023) of the *Sagātha-vagga* of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, with a particular emphasis on the prose sections of this collection, considered by him to reflect free storytelling rather than memorization of texts.

My examination of this proposal in the present chapter covers four main themes, the first three of which concern problems in his study that are related to primary sources, to secondary sources, and to a proper understanding of early Buddhist orality. The fourth and final topic is textual evidence supportive of the impression that both prose and verses in the *Sagātha-vagga* were meant to be memorized.

#### Primary Sources

Shulman (2023) presents an assessment of the *Sagātha-vagga*—mainly the *Kosala-samyutta* and the *Vaṅgīsa-samyutta*, and to a lesser extent also the otherwise unrelated *Udāna*—from the viewpoint of literary dimensions of their prose sections. The first of three aims explicitly mentioned in the abstract in Shulman (2023: 1) is to show that the prose of the *Kosala-samyutta* represents “a form of wisdom literature, with protagonist King Pasenadi of Kosala being comparable to wisdom-kings like King Solomon or Alexander the Great”.

An episode that does present King Pasenadi as shrewd reports him acclaiming in front of the Buddha that a group of ascetics whom he had just

worshipped must be arahants or on the path to becoming arahants. This appears to be a ruse to try to draw the Buddha out, as the king later admits that these men were his spies disguised as ascetics.<sup>1</sup> Shulman (2023: 5) unfortunately misses the point of the story when he refers to “the King worshipping a series of ascetics he encounters, mistakenly assuming that they are liberated arahants.” Since in the narrative setting Pasenadi knows that they are his own spies in disguise, to refer to “his belief that these are arahants” (p. 5) fails to do justice to that setting. At any rate, the present episode would not provide an example of wisdom in its early Buddhist sense, given that the attempt to set the Buddha up involves intentional deception by making a statement that the speaker knows to be false. Here and elsewhere, evaluating what early Buddhist texts portray as an instance of wisdom of course needs to rely on the conception of ethically-informed wisdom reflected in these same texts.

The above misunderstanding is not the only one of this kind. Another instance occurs in relation to the Buddha’s claim, reported in another discourse in the same *Kosala-samyutta*, to have reached full awakening, set in contrast to other well-known teachers of that time. Shulman (2023: 4) reasons that “here, the point is that while the Buddha can claim that he has attained full enlightenment, the others cannot. The King wonders whether this is because the Buddha is young (*dahara*).” The point is actually the opposite, as the king doubts the Buddha’s claim because he is still young.<sup>2</sup> The underlying disbelief in a claim to awakening just because the claimant is comparatively young also does not seem to reflect the king’s wisdom, as he needs the Buddha to clarify the situation.

A supposed role as a wisdom-king is also not evident in a report of Pasenadi conducting a great sacrifice, which from an early Buddhist perspec-

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<sup>1</sup> SN 3.11 at SN I 79,8 (= Ud 6.2 at Ud 66,5); see also SĀ<sup>2</sup> 71 at T II 399b11. Another parallel, SĀ 1148 at T II 306a9, proceeds differently.

<sup>2</sup> SN 3.1 at SN I 68,17; see also SĀ 1226 at T II 334c26, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 53 at T II 391c12, T 212 at T IV 680b6, D 296 *sha* 296a2 or P 962 *lu* 324b2, Gnoli 1977: 182,7, and the discussion in Choong 2006: 33.

tive would be the opposite of wisdom.<sup>3</sup> The same holds for two reports of the king engaging in battle,<sup>4</sup> or the way Pasenadi struggles with the passing away of his grandmother at a highly advanced age, needing the Buddha to remind him of the obvious fact that all sentient beings are bound to die.<sup>5</sup> Yet, Shulman (2023: 4) sees “King Pasenadi acting as a model Buddhist wisdom-king” in the *Kosala-samyutta*, whereby this collection supposedly achieves this “King’s framing as a royal paragon of Buddhist insight”.<sup>6</sup> The above examples suffice to show that such a framing is not a persistent concern behind the stories collected in the *Kosala-samyutta*; in fact, the one regularly associated with wisdom in these stories is the Buddha rather than Pasenadi.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> SN 3.9 at SN I 75,31; see also SĀ 1234 at T II 338a23, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 61 at T II 394c27, and the discussion in Dhammadinnā 2023: 80. Shulman 2023: 8f comments on SN 3.9 (and SN 3.10) that “we find the Buddha again instructing the King directly” and the teachings given are “a Buddhist wisdom-scripture that discusses advice to the king.” Yet, there is no report of the Buddha addressing the king at all, as he rather gives teachings to monastics.

<sup>4</sup> SN 3.14 at SN I 83,1 and SN 3.15 at SN I 84,9; see also SĀ 1236 at T II 338c4, SĀ 1237 at T II 338c24, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 63 at T II 395c8, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 64 at T II 395c21, T 212 at T IV 716a3, Speyer 1906/1970: 54,10 and 56,6, and the discussion in Choong 2006: 25ff. On the early Buddhist attitude toward fighting in a battle see Anālayo 2009i.

<sup>5</sup> SN 3.22 at SN I 97,16; see also Hartmann 2017: 91, SĀ 1227 at T II 335b20 (with Enomoto 1994: 48), SĀ<sup>2</sup> 54 at T II 392b8, T 122 at T II 545b25, and EĀ 26.7 at T II 638c3.

<sup>6</sup> Shulman 2023: 6 sees SN 3.4 (and 3.5) as showing that “the figure of Pasenadi as a wisdom-king emerges more strongly,” yet the main point reportedly made by the king here is the relatively simple distinction between wholesome and unwholesome deeds. The same holds for the observation in SN 3.6 (and 3.7) that the wealthy tend to become negligent and act wrongly for the sake of sensual gratification, which hardly deserves being reckoned an instance of “the wisdom-king maturing in his voice and understanding” (p. 7). Together with SN 3.25, these instances do not seem to be strong examples for the Buddhist conception of wisdom, as they rather appear to reflect notions held in common in the ancient Indian setting. Moreover, these instances need to be considered alongside other discourses in the same *samyutta*, which hardly evince a sustained effort to place a spotlight on Pasenadi’s wisdom.

<sup>7</sup> Shulman 2023: 5 in fact implicitly acknowledges this when identifying a “general trend in the collection, in which the wisdom that the Buddha articulates, and which the King

In the context of discussing the *Vaṅgīsa-saṃyutta*, Shulman (2023: 15) comments on verses spoken by Vaṅgīsa that are related to his succumbing to sensual lust on seeing beautiful women: “Transforming his passionate mind to an enlightened one, the poet echoes a favorite theme that the enlightened mind cannot be tracked, as in *Dhammapada* 179.” The reference to a transformation to an enlightened mind is unexpected, as neither the prose nor the verses imply any attainment by Vaṅgīsa.<sup>8</sup> This also affects the *Dhammapada* verse, which not only differs in wording but also in context, as it concerns the Buddha as a fully awakened one, wherefore it employs the imagery of being beyond tracking.<sup>9</sup>

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accepts and at times expresses himself, has real practical value,” though it is not clear how this assessment should be reconciled with the idea that Pasenadi features as a wisdom-king.

<sup>8</sup> In SN 8.1 at SN I 186,1–2 Vaṅgīsa reports having heard from the Buddha about the path leading to Nirvana, rather than reporting that he had realized Nirvana himself; see also Spk I 269,13, according to which the reference to the path to Nirvana intends his still tender cultivation of insight. The parallels SĀ 1215 at T II 331b23 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 250 at T II 462a6 also indicate that he had merely “heard”, 聞, about the path to Nirvana. Shulman 2023: 15f is aware of the fact that Vaṅgīsa’s recent attainment of arahant-ship comes up only in the last discourse in this *saṃyutta*, SN 8.12 at SN I 196,8, which must be located at a later moment in narrative time; once having become an arahant, he would no longer be subject to sensual lust. Another point worth noting in regard to his verses in SN 8.12 is the observation by Anesaki 1905: 28 that between the ending of his verse at SN I 196,17 (... *niyāmagat’ addasā*) and the beginning of his next verse in SN I 196,18 (*svāgataṃ* ...), two additional verses occur in Th 1258 and 1259, which take up the four noble truths, a topic also covered in his verses in the parallels to SN 8.12, SĀ 1217 at T II 332a4–5 (with Enomoto 1994: 45) and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 252 at T II 462b14–15; see also Choong 2007: 43f. This suggests the possibility that these verses may have been lost at some point during the transmission of SN 8.12.

<sup>9</sup> The challenge to Māra in the final part of the poem in SN 8.1 at SN I 186,4: *na me maggam pi dakkhasi ti* differs from the phrasing in Dhp 179: *apadaṃ kena padena nessatha*, which is moreover not addressed to Māra. In the two parallels, SĀ 1215 at T II 331b29 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 250 at T II 462a11, this final line comes even without a reference to *marga*, instead mentioning Māra’s inability to see the speaker himself. In early Buddhist thought, going temporarily beyond Māra’s vision can already be achieved with the attainment of just the first absorption; see, e.g., MN 25 at MN I 159,11 and its parallel

Another episode reports Vaṅḡsa composing verses on the spot, whereupon the Buddha first ascertains that these had been composed spontaneously and then invites Vaṅḡsa to continue in the same vein. Shulman (2023: 16), however, takes the relevant passage to convey that “the Buddha asks for more verses that were composed before.”<sup>10</sup> This then leads to the evaluation that the subsequently spoken verses “do not convey the same sharpness that the fresh, inspired verses do”. Yet, the discourse is throughout concerned with verses composed on the spot, rather than verses composed earlier.

Shulman (2023: 23f) references the translations by Rhys Davids (1917) and Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000), whose consultation could have rectified the selected errors mentioned above.<sup>11</sup> This would have been particularly use-

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MĀ 178 at T I 720a9. This differs from the condition of a mind that by dint of having eradicated all defilements through realizing full awakening has gone permanently beyond being tracked in any way.

<sup>10</sup> SN 8.8 at SN I 193,7 quite clearly reports the Buddha encouraging him to continue with verses *not* thought out previously: *tena hi taṃ, vaṅḡsa, bhiyyosomattāya pubbe aparivitakkitā gāthāyo paṭibhantū ti* (correcting the loss of the retroflex *ṭ* in the last term in Feer’s 1884 edition, in keeping with Somaratne’s 1998 edition). The corresponding part in the parallel SĀ 1219 at T II 332b21 reports the Buddha encouraging him to continue with his verses in the following way: 隨汝所說, 莫先思惟, the second part of which appears to convey a sense similar to *pubbe aparivitakkitā*. Spk I 278,30 explains that other monks had been under the mistaken impression that Vaṅḡsa was spending his time composing poetry in advance, hence the Buddha invited him on the present occasion to demonstrate his skill in impromptu composition in front of his monastic companions as a way of exonerating him from such suspicions.

<sup>11</sup> The above survey is not meant to be comprehensive. Providing just one more example to confirm that the failure to do justice to the texts is a recurrent problem, Shulman 2023: 15 comments that the “powerful moment of the first arahant falling at the Buddha’s feet greatly inspires Vaṅḡsa,” adding that “Vaṅḡsa would not have witnessed the event but only heard of it.” The narrative progression in SN 8.9 provides no basis for assuming that Vaṅḡsa would only have heard of Kondaṇṇa’s worship. In fact, Rhys Davids 1917: 246 abbreviates the relevant part as follows: “Then the venerable Vaṅḡsa ... (*beholding this, obtained leave and*) ... extolled Añṇāsi-Kondaṇṇa.” The commentary, Spk I 282,33, reports that Koṇḍañña was still present when the verses came to their conclusion. According to the parallel SĀ<sup>2</sup> 225 at T II 456c13, Koṇḍañña sat down after his act of worship, which implies he was still there when the verses were spoken, and

ful given his apparent difficulties with Pāli originals. Leaving aside loss or mistaken placing of diacritics, in Shulman (2023: 15) the terms *paṭibhāti* and *paṭibhātu* have become *patiphāti* and *batibhātu*.<sup>12</sup> The proper name Sañjaya has become Sañcaya (note 24), the term *pāto* has been changed to *pāti* (note 51),<sup>13</sup> *paṇḍito* has become *paṇḍtio* (note 63), and *tevijjo* has become *tejijjo* (note 77). A reference to *loke* has turned into *like*, *kāmaratiyo* has been changed to *kāmarattoyo* (both note 83), and *sattisūlūpamā* has incurred an exchange of *t* for *i*, resulting in a doubling of the latter in the form of *satiisūlūpamā* (note 85).

An unexpected change is the deletion of the quotative, such as when *rakkhito ti pavuccatī ti* becomes just *rakkhito pavuccatī'ti* (note 41) and *paṇḍito ti pavuccatī ti* just *paṇḍito pavuccatī'ti* (note 55).<sup>14</sup> Note 42 reports that the PTS edition reads *majjante* instead of *majjanti*; this is incorrect, as both PTS editions also read *majjanti*.<sup>15</sup> A quote given in note 42 ends with *vippaṭipajjanti*,<sup>16</sup> which has been changed to *vippaṭipajjan'ti*; the subject *sattā* requires the third person plural *vippaṭipajjanti* (adding a quotative would take the form of *vippaṭipajjantī ti*).<sup>17</sup> In note 51 *ivantalikkhe* has been wrongly divided as *iva'ntalikkhe*. Another case of wrong division occurs in note 53 in the form of *pāṇina'nti*.<sup>18</sup>

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the parallel SĀ 1209 at T II 329b12 reports Vaṅgīsa reflecting that he wishes to express his praise in front of Koṇḍañña, 面前.

<sup>12</sup> See SN 8.5 at SN I 189,13+15 or SN 8.6 at SN I 190,9+11.

<sup>13</sup> SN I 81,14 agrees with the Asian editions B<sup>c</sup>, C<sup>c</sup>, and S<sup>c</sup> on reading *pāto*, “in the morning.”

<sup>14</sup> See SN I 73,24 and SN I 87,8. Another deletion in Shulman 2023: 22 note 72 occurs in relation to the statement in MN 9 at MN I 46,25: *sādhū vat' āyasmantaṃ yeva sārīputtaṃ paṭibhātu etassa bhāsitassa attho*, where in his quote the verb *paṭibhātu* is lost (its presence is indirectly reflected in the inadequate translation as “would enlighten”), so that the resultant Pāli quote lacks a verb and no longer makes sense.

<sup>15</sup> See SN I 73,31 for Feer's 1884 edition, which corresponds to p. 169,1 in Somaratne's 1998 edition; the context requires a verb in the third person plural.

<sup>16</sup> See SN I 73,32.

<sup>17</sup> See SN I 74,1.

<sup>18</sup> A perhaps related problem involves *antakā ti* becoming *antakan'ti* (note 82). SN I 104,15 and the three Asian editions B<sup>c</sup>, C<sup>c</sup>, and S<sup>c</sup> agree on reading *antakā ti*; the context

Note 59 then presents a striking instance of reasoning in relation to compound formation, reporting that a phrase in a particular passage, instead of having “a space between *tamo* and *tamaparāyaṇo*, becomes *tamo-tamaparāyaṇo* in one compound. This changes the meaning of *tamo* from a nominative to an ablative sense.” The first term in Pāli compound formation usually involves the stem form (as in *tamaparāyaṇo*), only rarely the declined form, which of course retains its case. It is not really possible, however, for the nominative *tamo* to acquire an ablative sense on merely being joined in its present, declined form to the ensuing compound.

For Shulman (2023: 22 note 59) to present this supposed shift from nominative to ablative without a change of the case ending as if it were a self-evident fact reveals a significant lack of knowledge of Pāli grammar, which in turn implies that the errors listed above are not merely accidents but rather reflect the same basic issue of lack of acquaintance with the Pāli language. It seems unnecessary to pursue this further, and I refrain from commenting on various unconvincing translations.<sup>19</sup>

## Secondary Sources

The third of the three aims mentioned in the abstract in Shulman (2023: 1) is to demonstrate “the organic connection between the first book and

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requires a vocative of *antaka* as an appellation of Māra.

<sup>19</sup> A single example may suffice to show that there is indeed room for questioning the proposed translations. The reference in SN 5.1 at SN I 128,24 to *atthi nissaraṇaṃ loke, paññāya me suphussitaṃ* (the lack of a *niggahīta* in *nissaraṇaṃ* in Feer’s 1884 edition has been corrected in keeping with Somaratne’s 1998 edition) has been rendered by Shulman 2023: 18 as “[t]here is indeed a refuge in this world, flowering for me through wisdom.” Yet, *nissaraṇa* means “escape”; the idea that this refers to a “refuge” appears to be due to a confusion with *saraṇa*. Moreover, *phussita* here is the past participle of *phusati*, “to touch, to experience”; the reference to “flowering” could perhaps be the result of a confusion with *pupphita* or *phullita*. The translation by Rhys Davids 1917: 161 gives this verse as follows: “[t]here is an escape while in the world, and well [b]y insight have I found and made it mine.” Bodhi 2000: 221 renders the same in this way: “[t]here is an escape in the world, [w]hich I have closely touched with wisdom.”



the other books of the *Samyutta*”, thereby countering the appearance of the *Sagāthavagga*

as an anomaly—the other four books contain some of the denser articulations of early Buddhist philosophy in the canon. Thus, scholars question whether the first book, which normally introduces verses with stories, is a real part of the collection. Scholars are also inclined to assume that the verses are the heart of the text.

Shulman (2023: 19 note 3) then refers to “Bodhi (2000, pp. 22–28) for a position that takes the SGV [= *Sagātha-vagga*] to have a very different character from the other books of the *Samyutta*.” Yet, Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000: 26) merely explains that the *Sagātha-vagga* “is unique in being compiled on the basis of literary genre”, which is indeed correct, followed by immediately clarifying that verses also occur in other volumes of the *Samyutta-nikāya*.<sup>20</sup> He also points out that minor *saṃyuttas* in other parts of the collection are not necessarily doctrinal and can span “a wide diversity of topics”. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000: 27) moreover explains that an application of the *saṃyutta* principle can be based on topics or in various ways be related to persons.

The information provided in this way suffices to clarify the situation, dispensing with any need for Shulman (2023: 1) to problematize that “[i]t seems odd to find a book of poetry at the opening of such a predominantly philosophical collection.” Simply put, the basic principle of collecting dis-

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<sup>20</sup> The referenced range of pages covers the whole discussion of the groundplan of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, of which the most directly relevant part to the present topic appears to be Bodhi 2000: 26: “The first book, the *Sagāthāvagga*, is unique in being compiled on the basis of literary genre. As the name of the *Vagga* indicates, the suttas in this collection all contain *gāthās* or verses, though it is not the case (as Feer had assumed at an early point) that all suttas in SN [= *Samyutta-nikāya*] containing verses are included in this *Vagga*. In many suttas of Part I, the prose setting is reduced to a mere framework for the verses, and in the first *saṃyutta* even this disappears so that the sutta becomes simply an exchange of verses, presumably between the Buddha and his interlocutor. The other four *Vaggas* contain major *saṃyuttas* concerned with the main doctrinal themes of early Buddhism, accompanied by minor *saṃyuttas* spanning a wide diversity of topics.”

courses in reliance on persons rather than on topics predominates in the first volume of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, whose discourse members also contain verses, wherefore it has been given the appellation “*Sagātha-vagga*”. Neither of these two features is unique to the *Sagātha-vagga*, however, as *saṃyuttas* related to a particular person as well as prose combined with verses recur in other volumes of the *Samyutta-nikāya*.

In a detailed study of the evolution of the *Sagātha-vagga*, von Hinüber (2020: 8) argues that its distinct nature is also reflected in the commentary on the *Samyutta-nikāya*.<sup>21</sup> In reference to this discussion, Shulman (2023: 2)

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<sup>21</sup> The relevant observation by von Hinüber 2020: 8 concerns the placing of “the four *suttanikkhepas*, the ‘four reasons for laying down a *suttanta*’, as a system for their classification. While this remark is systematically positioned immediately after the discussion of *evaṃ me sutaṃ* in the commentaries on the *Dīgha*-, *Majjhima*-, and *Aṅguttara-nikāyas*, it is inserted in the *Samyutta-nikāya* commentary only at the beginning of the *Nidāna-vagga*.” Shulman 2023: 19 note 4 argues that “von Hinüber reads far too much into what is actually a rather minor and technical distinction ... In the first book, the *Book with Verses*, the verse [sic] do not constitute [sic] regular teachings [sic] events so the section on the motivation for teachings [sic] the discourse are [sic] saved for later.” Already the first discourse in the *Sagātha-vagga*, SN 1.1 at SN I 1,14–20, provides a brief but profound prose exchange before presenting its verse, which seems to constitute a regular teaching event (on the verse see also Choong 2011: 68f). In fact, the four commentaries Sv I 51,14, Ps I 16,14, Spk II 4,14, and Mp I 19,23 explicitly include the *Devata-saṃyutta* among examples for the third *suttanikkhepa*, being occasioned by a question, *pucchāvasika*; the brief teaching in SN 1.1, the first discourse in the *Devata-saṃyutta*, is indeed motivated by a question. This also undermines the assessment by von Hinüber 2020: 8 that “the first *suttantas* in the *Sagātha-vagga* ... frequently start without any hint at an event that induced the Buddha to deliver a discourse and the decisive sentence *tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi*, etc., found at the very beginning of the *Nidāna-vagga* (SN II 1,9), is missing. Therefore, no *suttanikkhepa* can be determined for most *suttantas* of the *Sagātha-vagga*.” Besides conflicting with the above indication in the commentaries, the supposedly “decisive sentence” *tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi* is already found in the same *Devata-saṃyutta*, in SN 1.11 at SN I 5,19, and in several other discourses in the *Sagātha-vagga*. It is also not clear why this sentence should be decisive, since it would not be necessary for a teaching given in response to a question or even relevant for any type of teaching addressed to an individual or a non-monastic audience. In sum, in contrast to the positions taken by Shulman 2023: 19 note 4 and von

states that the latter “defined books two to five as ‘the “real” or “true” *Samyutta-nikāya*’ (p. 8)”. The use of the term “defined” is perhaps not the best choice here, as the relevant statement is meant to exemplify the attitude taken by the commentary.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, von Hinüber (2020: 6 note 3) also points out that “[t]here is a second *Sagātha-vagga* in the *Samyutta-nikāya*,” which comprises the first ten discourses in the *Vedanā-samyutta*.<sup>23</sup> It follows that, when

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Hinüber 2020: 8, I see no reason why SN 1.1 could not have been identified in the commentary as an instance of the third *suttanikkhepa* and then served as an occasion for expounding the whole set of four. At the same time, however, this confirms the importance of the observation by von Hinüber 2020: 8 (= 1996/1997: 115) that such an exposition occurs only in the commentary on SN 12.1, the first discourse in the *Nidāna-vagga*. Instead of considering this placing to express a value judgment regarding what constitutes the true nature of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, I am inclined to follow the suggestion by Bucknell 2007: 17 that it may reflect an earlier stage in the development of this collection when the *Sagātha-vagga* was not yet placed at its outset. SN 12.1 as the first discourse in that hypothetical earlier stage falls according to Spk II 4,25 into the category of the second of the four *suttanikkhepas*, being *parajjhāsaya* or taught at the wish of another, rather than being *pucchāvasika*. Perhaps, by the time the *Sagātha-vagga* received its current placing, the exposition of the four *suttanikkhepas* in Spk may have already been perceived as too closely connected to the articulation of this identification of SN 12.1 to allow for it to be easily transferable to SN 1.1, unlike the exposition of the standard opening *evaṃ me suttaṃ*. This would explain why only the latter made it into the commentary on the beginning portion of the *Sagātha-vagga*. Be that as it may, Shulman 2023: 19 note 4 also argues that “[w]hile the distinction between the *Samyutta*-commentary and its sister ones is of interest, it in no way suggests that the SGV [= *Sagātha-vagga*] is any less original, or early.” Note that von Hinüber 2020: 12 refers to the *Sagātha-vagga* as one of two textual collections “most likely dating back to the early period of orality in our text tradition. If the chequered material preserved in the *Sagātha-vagga* was collected that early, it is perhaps an initial attempt to secure the many floating oral texts” (Shulman 2023: 3 is aware of this quote). This clarifies that the position taken by von Hinüber 2020 is not to qualify the *Sagātha-vagga* as unoriginal or late.

<sup>22</sup> Shulman 2023: 2 is aware of the fact that “[v]on Hinüber’s perception of the text also relies on his understanding of the different organization of the opening of the commentary.”

<sup>23</sup> SN 36.1 to 36.10 at SN IV 204,10 to 216,1; von Hinüber 2020: 6 note 3 notes that “[t]here is no *vagga-uddāna* (SN IV 238), but the title of the *vagga* is guaranteed by *vedanā-samyutte sagāthavaggassa pathame*, Spk III 74,4.”

viewed from a formal perspective, there is no rigid separation between the *Sagātha-vagga* and the remainder of the *Samyutta-nikāya*.<sup>24</sup>

Shulman (2023: 2), however, sees the discussion by von Hinüber (2020) as an example of a tendency where, “[f]or some, the connection between practical wisdom that is relevant to the householder and the advanced meditations and insights cultivated by professional, celibate practitioners raises questions.” The idea of practical wisdom relevant to the householder is not taken up by von Hinüber (2020) at all, nor does he provide any contrast to meditations and insights cultivated by professional, celibate practitioners.<sup>25</sup>

Shulman (2023: 3) states that “[s]cholars often like to see verses as early,” followed by providing references in support of this assessment in his note 15, to which I return below.<sup>26</sup> This assessment seems to serve as a cen-

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<sup>24</sup> The same also holds from the viewpoint of content. Dhammadinnā 2020a: 3 note 4 already clarified in a comment on a discourse in the *Bhikkhunī-samyutta*: “as the doctrinal content of this and other discourses collected in the *Sagātha-vagga* illustrate[s], the appraisal by von Hinüber 2020: 7 that ‘the first of the five *vaggas* [of the *Samyutta-nikāya* = the *Sagātha-vagga*] does not contain much material really relevant to Buddhist teachings’ is unjustified.” This seems quite to the point and perhaps even sufficient, obviating a lengthy discussion of the same issue.

<sup>25</sup> Shulman 2023: 3 also quotes a statement in relation to the *Sagātha-vagga* by von Hinüber 1996/1997: 38 that “the most important part of this text are the verses.” Without thereby intending to endorse this formulation, it could nevertheless be noted that von Hinüber 1996/1997: 38 indicates on the same page that “[p]arts of the *Sagāthavagga* seem to be very old, actually very near to Vedic texts,” followed by a footnote reference to SN I 51,2–23, which comprises the relevant prose. Next, he notes that “[t]he most prominent part of the *Sagāthavagga* is the *Dhajaggasutta*, which contains the *iti pi so*-formula.” This formula occurs in a prose part of the respective discourse; see SN 11.3 at SN I 219,31. Still on the same page, he observes that “the *Vaṅḡsasamyutta*, SN I 190,21–191,24, contains an archaic text on the *pavāraṇā*.” In this case the reference is also to the prose, as the verses begin at SN I 191,32 (see also below note 59). These references to prose or prose with verse as being “very old”, “the most prominent part” of the collection, or else “an archaic text”, help to contextualize the quote on the verses being the most important part of the *Sagātha-vagga*.

<sup>26</sup> The quote occurs between two statements made on the *Sagātha-vagga* and thus can easily give the impression that it may intend the verses found in that collection.

tral reference point for considerable parts of his discussion, evident when Shulman (2023: 3) continues right away to propose, in relation to the *Sagāthavagga*, that “we can leave behind the idea that the collection’s main end is to preserve the verses, or to think of the latter as in any way primary to the former,” that is, to prose.

In the course of studying individual discourses, Shulman (2023: 7) then concludes that the relevant verse “cannot be given any primacy over the prose”. Another instance shows, according to him, that “it would be difficult to uphold a reading that prioritizes the verses over the story” (p. 8). In relation to yet another discourse, Shulman (2023: 9) argues for a “creative process of composition of this text, rather than verses being earlier, more authoritative and cherished textual elements that dominate the stories, as if the collection was only meant to preserve them,” and still another instance leads him to conclude that “there seems little reason to assume that the verses are older than the story” (p. 10).

These references lead up to a position taken by Shulman (2023: 12) regarding what he considers “[p]erhaps the most evident example of a verse that was composed to suit the story”—and therefore of course being later than the prose—in the following form (italics as in the original): “If we had any doubts that *this poem was composed for this specific collection*, notice the vocative *raja* [sic] used as a meter-filler, in which the Buddha speaks directly to the King,” that is, to Pasenadi.<sup>27</sup>

The argument as such is not compelling, given that a poem in the *Apadāna* repeatedly uses the vocative *mahārāja*, yet without having any prose narrative. With the verses alone, however, it remains unclear who is being addressed in this way.<sup>28</sup> This shows that such an address need not result from verse composition based on already existing prose. Moreover, the idea that the verse “was composed for this specific collection” appears to take for

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<sup>27</sup> The reference is to SN 3.21 at SN I 96,3 (being the first instance of a repeated use of the vocative *rāja* in the verses).

<sup>28</sup> The first such instance occurs in Ap 28.65 at Ap 589,15 (not in B<sup>c</sup>); Walters 2014: 187 in fact wonders if the reference is “to the Buddha? the Buddha’s father? someone in the text’s audience?”

granted that discourses were composed at the same time as the entire discourse collection. This would hardly be a probable scenario, as it seems more straightforward to assume that the collection was formed based on already circulating individual discourses.

Apart from these minor points, however, a perhaps more significant issue would be the perceived need to assert that verses in the *Sagātha-vagga* are not necessarily earlier than the prose. As mentioned above, Shulman (2023: 20) refers in his note 15 to other scholars presumably taking the position he intends to counter; the note takes the following form: “For example, Norman (1997, p. xix), Oberlies (2019, p. 8), Warder (1967, p. 226). These ideas seem to go back to Geiger ([1916] 2000, p. 1).”

The reference to Norman (1997: xix) leads to the bibliography, and the publications mentioned on that page do not seem to be relevant to the topic at hand.<sup>29</sup> In the introduction to his Pāli grammar, Oberlies (2019: 8) discusses the chronological stratification of the Pāli canon, which he considers to be “largely in the dark”. He refers briefly to the *Sagātha-vagga* as likely belonging to the same oldest strata as other verse collections, including the *Jātaka* verses and the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, the referencing of which shows that his stratification proceeds in a rather broad manner. Moreover, he includes prose formulas in the same stage,<sup>30</sup> which thus does not imply a consideration of verses as in principle earlier than prose.

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<sup>29</sup> The same holds for Norman 1997: 19, which has a discussion related to Pāli dictionaries. Shulman 2023: 24 also includes Norman 1983 in his list of references, yet this could not be the intended publication, as the respective introduction goes only up to page x. Moreover, given that Shulman 2023: 19f notes 1, 14, and 26 refers thrice to different aspects discussed on the same page by Norman 1983: 51, he must have been aware of the comment on this very page that “[i]t is debatable whether the prose of the introductions to the verses in the *Sagāthavagga* is as old as the verses themselves.” This does not amount to asserting that verses in this collection are in principle earlier.

<sup>30</sup> Oberlies 2019: 8: “As for the chronological stratification of the canonical texts, there we are still largely in the dark. The (non-)usage of certain forms and syntagmas clearly shows, on linguistic grounds, that the *Gāthās* of the *Jātakas*, together with parts of the *Suttanipāṭa*, the *Dhammapāṭa* as well as the *Thera-* and *Therīgāthās*, all belong to the oldest stratum. This is likely to hold also for the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Samyuttanikāya*,

In the course of an in-depth study of Pāli meter, Warder (1967: 226) reasons that the Pāli canon would have grown “from a collection of simple, direct poems (and no doubt also prose narratives of the *Brāhmaṇa* type, which perhaps preponderated).”<sup>31</sup> Since the envisaged earliest stage of growth includes prose alongside verse, it also does not propose that verses are in principle earlier. Supposedly the one on whom the ideas of the others rely is Geiger (2000: 1), a Pāli grammar based on a study originally published in German in 1916. The relevant page distinguishes four stages of the Pāli language, the first and the last of which concern verses, and even in relation to the first stage there is a clear recognition of a mixture of archaic and new forms.<sup>32</sup>

None of these scholars actually takes the position that the verses in the *Sagātha-vagga* are in principle earlier than its prose parts. In fact, the three publications where the reference by Shulman (2023: 20 note 15) leads to

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as well as for many of the metrical passages inserted into the prose texts and for the formulas too, all of which have certainly preserved—in part—some very old language. It is also fairly certain that the Suttapiṭaka is of earlier date than the Vinayapiṭaka. Linguistic criteria likewise show that the Apadāna, Cariyāpiṭaka, Buddhavaṃsa and Mahā- and Cūlaniddesa ... are to be ranked among the most recent texts of the canon. As for where the other texts are to be ordered timewise, this will only yield, if at all, to exacting study.”

<sup>31</sup> Warder 1967: 226: “The Pali Canon grew from a collection of simple, direct poems (and no doubt also prose narratives of the *Brāhmaṇa* type, which perhaps preponderated), characterized by a forceful, rather abrupt diction, to a greatly enlarged chrestomathy of literary compositions of all types ... the best aspects of which were not so much the content of the literature as the beauties of its presentation: highly developed metrics and poetics.”

<sup>32</sup> Geiger 2000: 1: “Four stages of the Pāli language can be distinguished: 1. The language of the Gāthās, i.e. the metrical pieces. It is very heterogeneous in character. On the one hand it contains many archaic speech-forms ... on the other hand, it also contains large numbers of new formations wholly characteristic of Pāli, and they are often mixed with archaic forms which may occur side by side with them, sometimes in one and the same verse ... 2. The language of the canonical prose. It is more homogeneous and uniform than the language of the Gāthās. The archaic forms become less numerous and, in part, disappear altogether ... 3. The later prose of the post-canonical literature ... 4. The language of later artificial poetry, which no longer possesses a homogeneous character.”

something relevant to the topic are all about Pāli language. From the viewpoint of Pāli language, the main point would simply be that archaic forms tend to be more easily preserved in verse than in prose. But more archaic verse and less archaic prose could still have come into existence at about the same time, with the prose undergoing more changes in the course of oral transmission. Anyhow, none of the above justifies a prolonged discussion to try to establish that verses in the *Sagātha-vagga* need not be invariably earlier than their accompanying prose.

Shulman (2023: 3) continues to pursue the same topic in relation to the *Udāna*, where my study of the collection supposedly “prioritizes the verses over the stories, suggesting that the connection between stories and verses ‘may not be original’, with the inspired utterances—the *udānas*, i.e., the verses—reflecting ‘an earlier textual layer’.” Contextualization helps to clarify the situation. The reference to “an earlier textual layer, to which in the majority of cases prose narrations appear to have been added only at a later stage” in Anālayo (2009e: 46) is explicitly introduced as a “position taken by other scholars”. In this way, in a case where there are indeed several scholars taking the position that the verses tend to be earlier than the prose,<sup>33</sup> Shulman (2023: 3) does not mention any of these, does not even acknowledge that my statement represents the opinions of others, and instead singles me out for supposedly prioritizing the verses over the stories. This is unexpected because a chief purpose of my study was precisely to show that the situation is more complex than the idea of an already existing verse collection to which later prose has been added.

In the discussion leading up to the reference to other scholars, I pointed out that parallels to the *Udāna* consist for the most part of just verses, and the only parallel that combines verses with prose, the 出曜經 (T 212), often presents comments on specific words, rather than stories. This shows that the form of presentation adopted in the Pāli *Udāna* of embedding each of its verses in a prose narration is not shared by parallel versions, which

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<sup>33</sup> Most directly relevant here are Winternitz 1920/1968: 66f, Pande 1957: 71f, Lamotte 1968: 465, Nakamura 1980/1999: 43, and Abeynayake 1984: 66.



in turn concords with the assessment by other scholars that the verses would reflect an overall earlier textual layer. In my research, I then documented a tendency for Pāli verses in the first chapters to be connected to each other thematically and by concatenation, which substantially diminishes with subsequent chapters. Such thematic connection, and even more so concatenation, works well for a collection made up of just verses, but no longer has the same effect once prose narrations occur between the verses.

Conversely, prose narrations related to each other tend to occur in close vicinity mainly in the chapters of the second part of the Pāli *Udāna* collection. This then led me to the conclusion in Anālayo (2009e: 56) that prose narrations already accompanied the verses in the formation of the chapters of the final part of the *Udāna*, taking care to clarify that my study is not meant to imply that the verses in the first chapters are earlier than those in subsequent chapters.<sup>34</sup> This is hardly a case of prioritizing the verses over the stories.

Shulman (2023: 20 note 30) notes that in my study I showed that only “in the first four *vaggas*, there is a shared term in the verses,” but takes this to imply that my study sees “the verses being original and the stories later additions” in general, leading him to the conclusion: “He believes that the texts were arranged according to the verses, with the stories being secondary.” This assessment seems to be in line with a general tendency to fall short of accurately presenting the publications of other scholars.<sup>35</sup>

Another criticism by Shulman (2023: 21 note 30) is that “Anālayo is not sensitive enough to the high literary qualities of some of the stories, and

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<sup>34</sup> Anālayo 2009e: 56: “whereas the first half of the collection would have come together in its present order when the inspired utterances in question still stood on their own, in the case of the second half of the collection it seems that the prose narrations were already part of the material that was arranged into chapters. Needless to say, such gradual development does not imply that the inspired utterances in the first four chapters are early and those in the other four chapters are late. The formation of the *Udāna* collection may at a relatively late stage still have incorporated early material that up to that point had not found its final allocation.”

<sup>35</sup> The survey given above is not comprehensive, as within the confines of the present chapter it is not possible to report and clarify all relevant instances of not doing justice to the research of others, even just those related to my own publications.

highlights technical issues instead of aesthetic concerns.” The title of my article announces the topic to be “the development of the Pāli *Udāna* collection”, and the abstract begins with the statement that “[t]he aim of the present paper is to show that the Pāli *Udāna* collection is the product of a gradual development.” This makes it hardly surprising if the article then “highlights technical issues”, and it is unreasonable to expect a discussion of literary qualities and aesthetic concerns.

At the same time, I do discuss several of the narratives, in the course of which I mention that “[t]he story of how king Pasenadi asks the Buddha’s opinion about some fake ascetics also occurs in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya*” (Anālayo 2009e: 44). Reading this part could have prevented the misunderstanding by Shulman (2023: 5), mentioned above, where he believes the story to imply that the king believed these fake ascetics to be arahants. But even quite apart from this misunderstanding, an assessment of literary and aesthetic dimensions needs to be based on a proper understanding of the formation of the text or collection under discussion. This is precisely where a study of technical issues has its place, as I will document in the final part of this chapter. Trying to sidestep or dismiss such studies of more formal aspects for the sake of promoting an appreciation of literary and aesthetic qualities is comparable to building a house without a foundation. Although at first sight it may appear stable, on closer inspection it quickly falls apart.

## Understanding Early Buddhist Orality

Shulman (2023: 21 note 30) reasons that “many of the stories in the *Udāna* were obviously told in public events and shared beyond the memorization and recitation of texts, if a text like the *Udāna* was ever recited communally at all.” It is not clear how the *Udāna* could have reached us without going through a process of memorization and communal recitation. The same problem recurs in a criticism of the statement by von Hinüber (2020: 12) that the *Sagātha-vagga* and the *Dhammapada* “share the common feature that they preserve verses from the collective memory of monks”. Shulman (2023: 3) takes this statement as evidence for “the reigning scholarly paradigm which sees textual collections mainly as efforts of preservation of valued

materials.” It is difficult to imagine how these two Pāli collections could have been written down in Sri Lanka without prior oral transmission over centuries, relying precisely on “the collective memory” of the monastic reciters. Continuous improvisation until that time does not provide a compelling scenario, since it would be difficult to understand why the Sri Lankan improvisers did not introduce some local features to accommodate to their audiences during about two centuries of creative oral performances in Sri Lanka before the event of writing down the discourses.<sup>36</sup>

The problem that emerges in this way relates to the second of the three aims mentioned in the abstract by Shulman (2023: 1), which is to show that the *Sagātha-vagga* “was designed for a performance by storytellers or preachers”. In his conclusions, Shulman (2023: 18) comes back to the same point, in that in contrast “to the idea that texts are meant to preserve, and specifically in this case to preserve verses, the SGV [= *Sagātha-vagga*] shows that here there is an important role of religious texts in the telling of stories in order to facilitate society’s internalization of the Buddhist views on life.” The contrast made in this way is puzzling. It seems not to take into account that, precisely in order to be available for preaching purposes, the texts need to be preserved in a historical setting that as yet did not use writing to transmit religious teachings. The undeniable fact that creativity and aesthetic impression are relevant factors does not change the need to keep the texts in memory.<sup>37</sup> If the *bhāṇakas* had not been committed to reproducing texts through memorization for generation after generation, this whole body of oral literature would long have been lost.

Elsewhere Shulman (2023: 5) does envisage that at least the verses were memorized and then employed in combination with storytelling for preaching purposes.<sup>38</sup> Such a scenario may be applicable to the *Dhammapada*, but

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<sup>36</sup> Bechert 1992: 52 reasons: “Reconsidering the question on the basis of the available evidence, we may consider the writing down of the scriptures during the reign of Vaṭṭa-gāmaṇi Abhaya as a historical fact.”

<sup>37</sup> See also above p. 244.

<sup>38</sup> Shulman 2023: 5: “The interpretation I am offering here for the genre of prose introductions to verses is that a performer could retain the verses in his or her memory, and

that would imply that the verses are earlier than the prose, which is contrary to his repeated arguments against the idea that the verses may be earlier than the prose.<sup>39</sup> Quite apart from such apparent incoherence, the basic problem is that scenarios of this type need to be grounded in textual evidence.

Looking at the situation from the viewpoint of the Pāli sources, there is a difference between the prose narrations in the *Sagātha-vagga*, which often recur in the parallels, prose narrations in the *Udāna*, which for the most part are not supported by parallels, and prose narrations related to the *Dhammapada*, which are only found in the commentary.

Instead of giving priority to textual evidence, however, the main principle underlying his study appears to be the following assertion by Shulman (2023: 3): “here, aesthetic impact and emotivity are key to penetrating the *history* of the texts” (emphasis in the original). In this way, subjective appraisal in terms of aesthetic and emotional appeal becomes the chief criterion for studying the discourses of the *Sagātha-vagga*.

A methodological problem here is the type of standards used in order to evaluate such aesthetic and emotional appeal. For example, Shulman (2023: 5) sees the Buddha pronouncing “a verse with sexist undertones”.<sup>40</sup> Yet, is

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then recite them to end their act of storytelling or preaching.” Such improvisatory storytelling is not easily reconciled with a case of repetition of the nearly identical prose narration in SN 3.2 at SN I 70,15 and SN 3.23 at SN I 98,2, combined with the same verse. Shulman 2023: 6 considers this case to be “a simple example that recommends that the preservation of verses is not the main goal of the text,” and that “the placement of the verses in this way shows that there are concerns beyond keeping the verses and their preservation that were active in shaping the collection.” Yet, a straightforward explanation for such duplication would be to assume that minor variations during textual transmission led to two versions, which precisely due to the concern for preservation were both kept in the collection; in fact, Shulman 2023: 6 acknowledges that “potentially these could have been two very similar versions of a text that were kept.”

<sup>39</sup> Shulman 2023: 5 reasons that “[t]he memorization of the verse does not, however, make the story secondary.” This is debatable, but at any rate the envisaged scenario makes the verses earlier.

<sup>40</sup> SN 3.16 at SN I 86,13. An evaluation of this verse that is more sensitive to the ancient Indian setting has been proposed by Choong 2006: 33: “the Buddha intended to com-

there a concept in ancient Indian thought that corresponds to the idea of sexism? If not, is it entirely straightforward to rely on this or other aspects of contemporary ways of thinking to evaluate a different culture situated well over two millennia in the past? Is aesthetic appeal, for example, some sort of absolute entity quite independent of cultural and historical conditions, such that we can be sure that what we nowadays perceive as aesthetically appealing must have had the same effect in any other human society at whatever time in the past? This methodological problem is particularly acute when subjective impressions become the chief criterion for evaluating the history and function of ancient Indian texts.

In relation to a particular discourse in the *Sagātha-vagga*, Shulman (2023: 10) comments that “when we can see from the nature of the stories that they [are] related to performative events,” then “we should consider the possibility that some of the verses also resulted from such performative moments.” In a more general statement, Shulman (2023: 2f) then remarks on prose material in the *Sagātha-vagga* that “the richness of the stories ... makes clear that these stories were meant to be told in public settings, in which the audience was not composed only of monks and with the performance going beyond fixed recitation of the texts in Pāli.”

Besides the unexpected reference to recitation in Pāli, to which I return below, the problem with reliance on literary qualities as the main determinant for functional usage can be exemplified with the case of *Vinaya* literature, which contains some rich literary compositions. Yet, narratives that portray monastic misconduct would hardly have been “meant to be told in public settings, in which the audience was not composed only of monks” or nuns. It follows that the richness of a narrative is not sufficient grounds for determining its function.

In the conclusion of his article, Shulman (2023: 18) offers the following assessment as the outcome of his study: “The *Sagāthāvagga* calls us to open our eyes to the practices of storytelling that were behind the shaping

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fort the king, and was aware of the customary view that being a good woman includes being a devoted wife, revering her mother-in-law, and giving birth to a son.”

of important parts of the early Buddhist discourses.” The formulation shows that he sees such storytelling as central for the formation of at least the prose sections of the *Sagātha-vagga*. As mentioned above, for him this stands in contrast to memorization of these prose section. This contrast can be explored further based on the above reference to recitation in Pāli, which recurs in the following comment by Shulman (2023: 6): “In the case of the SGV [= *Sagātha-vagga*], such prose was surely not recited to lay audiences in Pāli, a language they did not understand, but retold in live contexts in ways that were meaningful and communicative.” In relation to stories found in the *Kosala-saṃyutta*, Shulman (2023: 10) then comments that “these are not texts only shaped for recitation by monks in a language that people do not understand,” followed by referring again to “the practice of storytelling that is behind the collection” (p. 11).

The idea of Pāli (or Pāḷi) as a language that people do not understand is relevant to Theravāda societies in Southeast Asia. In such a setting, recitation of Pāli discourses from the *Sagātha-vagga* would indeed involve a language that many members of the audience do not comprehend. But this does not hold for the ancient Indian setting within which the *Sagātha-vagga* emerged and evolved; it has no bearing on the formation of this collection. Whatever Prākṛit(s) were used for the composition and early transmission of the discourses collected in the *Sagātha-vagga*, we can be sure that ancient Indian (and ancient Sri Lankan) audiences were not facing the type of language barriers encountered in later times by Southeast Asians on hearing a recitation of Pāli texts. In this way, the wrong paradigm seems to have been adopted for evaluating early Buddhist oral literature, and this in turn would be the reason behind the repeated rejection of the relevance of memorization for assessing the formation and transmission of the early discourses, be it their prose narratives or their employment of formulaic phrasing.

The apparent conflation that emerges in this way would explain the contrast drawn by Shulman (2023) in the present study and in his other publications on early Buddhist orality between either memorization or else creativity, such as storytelling. If memorization is assumed to involve a language that most people do not comprehend, then memorized texts in their

received form will indeed be less relevant for general preaching, which would instead require giving sermons in a language generally understood. It also explains his rejection of the “reigning scholarly paradigm” regarding the importance of memorization, articulated also in his writings on the play of formulas.<sup>41</sup> Once memorization is perceived as unrelated to preaching and storytelling, then the rich literary qualities of the discourses can indeed seem to stand in contrast to this paradigm.

All of this apparently results from a conflation of historically and culturally quite distinct settings, thereby revealing the degree to which his discussion of early Buddhist orality is out of touch with the reality of its ancient Indian setting.

### Evidence for Memorization

To round off the above critical examination, in what follows I turn to textual evidence in the *Sagātha-vagga* that is relevant to memorization. One such instance occurs in a discourse reporting a teaching in verse given by the Buddha to help Pasenadi reduce his excessive food intake. As Shulman (2023: 5) correctly notes, although apparently without realizing the implication of this episode, “[t]he King then asks the young Brahmin who accompanies him to memorize the verse and recite it at each of his meals.” In this way, the discourse itself commends *memorization* of the verse.<sup>42</sup>

It could be significant that the person to undertake such memorization is a young brahmin, given the historical precedent set by memorization of the Vedic scriptures for Buddhist orality. It may be that the young brahmin should be envisaged as having received some training in memorization. This would explain why Pasenadi prefers to rely on his help, as in this way a precise repetition of the verse could be ensured, combined with the ad-

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<sup>41</sup> Shulman 2021b: 191f refers to scholars who “deny that texts were composed in performance through creative improvisation and insist that they were memorized verbatim and recited communally”, adding that this “is founded on a conservative bias that takes discourses to be mere attempts to preserve the Buddha’s teachings.”

<sup>42</sup> SN 3.13 at SN I 82,4; see also SĀ 1150 at T II 306c11 (with Enomoto 1994: 34) and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 73 at T II 400a9.

vantage of having someone else regularly remind the king of the Buddha's teaching. The discourse reports that the young brahmin indeed recited the verse exactly as the Buddha had spoken it,<sup>43</sup> rather than improvising on the theme of knowing one's measure with food.

This instance is not the only one of this type in the *Sagātha-vagga*. Another such episode also involves a brahmin who according to the relevant narrative has been neglected by his sons. The Buddha teaches him a set of verses, asking him to memorize these.<sup>44</sup> The purpose of such memorization is to enable the brahmin to recite these verses in a public gathering in which his sons are present. The brahmin does as told and his sons indeed change their attitude. The presentation in the discourse leaves no doubt that his recitation should be seen as an exact repetition of the verses taught to him by the Buddha.

These two instances involving brahmins committing verses to memory can perhaps be taken to exemplify the continuity of Vedic memorization practices among followers of the teachings of the Buddha, albeit without a comparable degree of precision, given that many reciters would not have gone through training in memory skills.<sup>45</sup> This basic situation is a significant factor in appreciating the dynamics of early Buddhist orality, where an apparent attempt to memorize with precision combines with the natural creativity of untrained memory.

Whereas the two cases of recitation of verses mentioned above involve lay protagonists, an injunction given to monastics comes up in another Pāli discourse in the *Sagātha-vagga*, which reports the Buddha encouraging his monastic disciples to memorize and keep in mind a particular set of verses

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<sup>43</sup> Besides testifying to the importance granted to verbatim memorization of versified teachings, the discourse in question also does not concord with the supposed role of Pasa-nadi as a wisdom-king, given that he features here as someone unable to know his measure with food and needing the Buddha's advice, and the help of the young brahmin to be reminded of that, in order to overcome his gluttony. This could hardly be reckoned an example of wisdom, at least from an early Buddhist perspective.

<sup>44</sup> SN 7.14 at SN I 176,9; see also SĀ 96 at T II 26b25 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 262 at T II 466a9.

<sup>45</sup> For a juxtaposition of these two Indian oral traditions see von Hinüber 1989: 67f and for a more detailed discussion Anālayo 2022d.



spoken by a celestial.<sup>46</sup> This is thus the third instance of an actual injunction to memorize that is explicitly reported in the *Sagātha-vagga*.

Looking at these three injunctions just from within the perspective of this collection, a small detail may be worthy of note, namely that in the present case the injunction to memorize comes with an emphasis, in the form of being repeated by using two different verbs to express the basic sense of committing to memory (*uggaṇhāti* and *pariyāpuṇāti*), whereas the other two instances involving brahmins use just a single injunction with a single verb (*pariyāpuṇāti*). Could this perhaps be taken to exemplify that in the case of monastic disciples—who were not necessarily brahmins with previous training in memorization—there was a need for such additional emphasis to ensure that these verses were indeed kept well in mind?

Whatever may be the implication of this minor detail, a basic requirement for keeping texts in mind is their regular rehearsal. The undertaking of such rehearsal features in a narrative in the *Sagātha-vagga*, which reports that a monastic was engaging in regular rehearsal (*sajjhāya*).<sup>47</sup> This monastic was apparently rehearsing in a somewhat excessive manner and at a later time stopped completely. A celestial observer, rather than expressing puzzlement at such regular rehearsal in private—which in a setting of improvisatory performance could easily provoke such a reaction—instead is on record for being surprised that the rehearsal has been stopped. The way this narrative proceeds fits an emic expectation that texts are to be memorized better than a setting where improvisation is the norm.

The same holds for another report in the *Sagātha-vagga* of a monastic reciting in private, which in this case involves Anuruddha. The parallel versions agree in conveying the impression that the recitation involved one or several known verse collections, so that this would also be a repetition of received texts rather than a creative act of composition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> SN 2.8 at SN I 50,12.

<sup>47</sup> SN 9.10 at SN I 202,21; see also SĀ 1337 at T II 368c25 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 357 at T II 490b27.

<sup>48</sup> SN 10.6 at SN I 209,19 (according to Spk I 308,28, the phrase *dharmmapadāni* used in SN 10.6 refers to the whole *Dhammapada*); see also SĀ 1321 at T II 362c10 and SĀ<sup>2</sup> 320

According to the discourse already mentioned above, in which the Buddha told his monastic disciples to memorize a set of verses spoken by a celestial, this celestial had visited the Buddha at night to speak the verses. When the night was over, the Buddha repeated them to the monastics. The discourse presents this as an exact repetition of the verses spoken by the celestial. Once even the Buddha is shown to forgo the opportunity to improve in some way on verses that he has heard but rather passes them on in their received form, it can safely be assumed that the emic expectation would have been that the monastics listening to him will do the same.

Another relevant feature of the same encounter is that the Buddha is not only on record for repeating the verses, but also for relating again the whole prose narration that had been given earlier (by the reciters) in order to introduce the episode in question. In this way, the Buddha repeats all the details of this report to his monastic disciples (except, of course, for adjusting from third to first person singular, that is, instead of reporting that the celestial approached “the Blessed One”, for example, the Buddha reports that the celestial approached “me”). Although the explicit instruction to the assembled monastics only concerns the verses, it seems as if the prose framing should be considered as included in their memorization, given the example set by the Buddha himself.

According to the introductory narration of another discourse in the *Sagātha-vagga*, a young monk had been bathing and was approached by a celestial, leading on to an exchange in verse between the two. The monk then approaches the Buddha and repeats not only the versified exchange but also its prose narration, including the information that he had just been bathing and was drying his limbs when the celestial approached him.<sup>49</sup>

In order for the Buddha to comment on the verse exchange, this detailed report could perhaps have been shortened. The full report is even less required with later oral performance of this discourse, since all details have already

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at T II 480c21 (translated by Bingenheimer 2020: 785), which list more than one such verse collections (see above p. 268 note 18).

<sup>49</sup> SN 1.20 at SN I 10,3.

been given in the first instance. Why repeat circumstantial information that has just been recited? The reason may be that, from the viewpoint of the reciters, the prose and the verses belong together and were both to be memorized in conjunction, rather than only the verses being committed to memory and the prose left open to individual adjustment and improvisation.

This apparent insistence on prose details can be compared to the minimal information needed for improvisation, evident in Gāndhārī manuscripts of *Avadānas* studied by Lenz (2010). Just a few keywords and phrases seem to have been considered enough to provide the information needed for someone to tell the story in an impromptu manner, rather than providing the full text, let alone going so far as to repeat in all its details a narrative that has just been given.

The pattern of reciting a previously given prose narration with all its various details, instead of just summarizing, recurs in several other discourses in the *Sagātha-vagga*,<sup>50</sup> showing that the above instances are not isolated cases. This procedure can be compared to a set of four related discourses in the same collection, the first of which reports the Buddha successfully converting a particular brahmin who decides to go forth as a Buddhist monastic. The other three discourses each begin with another brahmin hearing about this conversion and then going to confront the Buddha. These three cases do not repeat the narrative given in the first discourse, instead of which each instance has just a short remark that the brahmin in question had heard about the conversion.<sup>51</sup> This shows that in some contexts the procedure of just summing up was indeed used, which makes it reasonable to assume that a full repetition of a prose narration that has just been given may be reflecting the emic perception of such passages as calling for memorization.

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<sup>50</sup> SN 2.20 at SN I 55,25, SN 3.12 at SN I 80,13, SN 3.14 at SN I 83,13, SN 3.15 at SN I 85,1, SN 4.21 at SN I 118,8, SN 4.22 at SN I 119,22, SN 6.10 at SN I 151,17, and SN 11.24 at SN I 239,22. In the narrative setting such repetition need not be redundant, as it may serve to inform the addressee of what happened. On subsequent oral performance, however, particularly of an improvisatory type, the second part could conveniently be summarized in some form, rather than being repeated with all its details.

<sup>51</sup> SN 7.2 at SN I 161,31, SN 7.3 at SN I 163,19, and SN 7.4 at SN I 164,8.

A particularly interesting instance of the repetition of prose occurs in the *Kosala-saṃyutta*, where the Buddha first replies to a statement by Pa-senadi and then reports an exchange that he had on a former occasion with his attendant Ānanda. The Buddha's report begins in the traditional way with "at one time", followed by indicating the location where he was dwelling.<sup>52</sup> This conveys the impression that prose material, including the standard introduction to a discourse, was perceived by the reciters as an integral part of the text to be memorized to such an extent that the Buddha himself is shown to adopt the same format.

Besides these instances found within individual discourses, showing that the emic expectation was precise repetition of both verse and prose, rather than free improvisation, another type of textual evidence relates to the situation once a *saṃyutta* made up of several such individual texts has come into existence. The relevant evidence takes the form of mnemonic summary verses, *uddānas*, found at the end of individual chapters in the *Sagātha-vagga*. Such an *uddāna* lists keyword(s) for each discourse, thereby ensuring the maintenance of their established order for memorization and recitation. Often the keyword also serves as the title to the discourse,<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> SN 3.18 at SN I 87,22 (Shulman 2023: 11 is aware of this episode); see Anālayo 2022c: 239 note 395 for several such instances and the respective parallel versions.

<sup>53</sup> For title variations among Pāli discourses, in particular in relation to the *Majjhima-nikāya*, see Anālayo 2011c: 106 notes 41+42. The overall impression that emerges in this way is that some of these were only adopted at a relatively late stage. Although many *uddānas* seem to be comparatively early, the suggestion by Bucknell 2007: 29 that in the case of the *Sagātha-vagga* the very sequence of its *saṃyuttas* would have been determined by a previously composed *uddāna* seems to go too far. Be that as it may, within the context of the present chapter a full survey of title variations in the *Sagātha-vagga*, in comparison with its summary verses, is not possible. Nevertheless, a single example could be noted in relation to SN 3.3, where the Burmese edition has the title *Jarāmarāṇa-sutta* (adopted by Somaratne 1998, being indeed the more compelling alternative), whereas the Ceylonese, Feer's 1884, and the Siamese editions have the title *Rāja-sutta* or just *Rājā*. This reflects a difference in their respective *uddāna*, as the Burmese edition lists *jarā* instead of the reference to *rājā* found in the other editions. The difference in title in turn finds reflection in the two main English translations, as Rhys Davids 1917: 96 gives the title as "The King", whereas Bodhi 2000: 167 has "Aging and Death".

thereby further underlining the degree to which the chosen term was seen as central to the discourse as a whole. The employment of such mnemonic summary verses is particularly relevant to communal recitation, where maintenance of the agreed order is indispensable,<sup>54</sup> whereas the same would be considerably less imperative for personal recitation or individual oral performance.

In the context of the present chapter, I am not able to dedicate the time and space that these mnemonic summary verses deserve. In what follows, I only take up selected examples from *uddānas* that are related to discourses in the two *Samyuttas* of the *Sagātha-vagga* that have been studied in detail by Shulman (2023)—the *Kosala-samyutta* and the *Vaṅgīsa-samyutta*—although he does not seem to have taken into consideration this aspect of the collections in his attempt to assess the oral function of their discourses.<sup>55</sup> My examination of such selected examples concerns in particular the question of whether memorization among later generations of reciters was perceived as comprising not only verses but prose as well.

One relevant example occurs in relation to the discourse already taken up above on Pasenadi's tendency to overeat, which is found in the second chapter of the *Kosala-samyutta*. The *uddāna* refers to the discourse by the term that indicates the quantity of food earlier eaten by the king.<sup>56</sup> This term occurs only in the prose narration; it does not feature in the verses. This gives the impression that the prose was considered an integral part of the material to be memorized. Had the prose been open to free improvisation, it would not have made much sense to earmark the discourse based on a minor detail of its narration that during creative

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<sup>54</sup> See Allon 2018: 234, quoted above p. 79 note 8.

<sup>55</sup> Note that Shulman 2023: 17, 19 note 8, and 20 note 11 refers to Bucknell 2007, whose article (p. 27ff) offers a detailed discussion of *uddānas* and their significance, in particular in relation to the *uddāna* connected to the content of the whole *Sagātha-vagga*. Reading this part of his article could safely be expected to arouse awareness of the significance of *uddānas* in general for appreciating oral dynamics at work in the collection.

<sup>56</sup> The keyword at SN I 93,15 is *doṇapākakurena*; *doṇapāka* is the term used in the prose in SN 3.13 at SN I 81,23 to specify the amount of food eaten by Pasenadi.

retellings could easily have been lost or else undergone change. The latter could take the form of increasing the quantity of food, for example, in order to enhance the contrast between the king's earlier behavior and his later conduct, after he had received a teaching in verse from the Buddha.

The majority of references to other discourses in the same mnemonic summary verse also require the prose text in order to work.<sup>57</sup> Whereas this does not hold for the preceding first chapter of the *Kosala-saṃyutta*, in the third and last chapter—which comprises only five discourses instead of the usual count of ten—references to prose again outnumber those to verse, even if only by a small margin.<sup>58</sup>

In the case of the *Vaṅḡsa-saṃyutta*, it is perhaps unsurprising to find a fair number of terms taken from the verses, given that Vaṅḡsa features as an outstanding poet. Nevertheless, some references in the respective mnemonic summary verse are still to the prose and would not be intelligible without access to it.<sup>59</sup> A particularly significant case is the mention of the

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<sup>57</sup> The *uddāna* at SN I 93,15 refers to *jāṭilā* and *pañcarājāno*, which occur in the prose of SN 3.11 and 3.12 but not in the respective verses. SN I 93,16: *saṅgāmena dve vuttāni* refers to SN 3.14 and 3.15; the term *saṅgāma* occurs only in the respective prose. The ensuing *dhītarā* in SN I 93,16 relates to the prose of SN 3.16; the term does not feature in the verse portion. SN I 93,17: *aputtakena dve vuttā* again reflects the prose narrations of the discourses SN 3.19 and 3.20; it would not be intelligible on consulting only the verses. This leaves only the reference in SN I 93,16 to two discourses involving the term *appamāda*, which occurs both in the prose and in the verses of SN 3.17 and SN 3.18.

<sup>58</sup> The *uddāna* at SN I 102,32 lists *puggalo ayyakā loko, issattaṃ pabbatūpamā*; the first three terms occur only in the prose section of the respective discourses SN 3.21, 3.22, and 3.23. The remaining two, however, would perform their function even with access just to the verse portions of SN 3.24 and 3.25.

<sup>59</sup> The reference in the *uddāna* at SN I 196,24 to *pesalā atimaññanā* requires consulting the prose of SN 8.3, which at SN I 187,14 reports that this was precisely what Vaṅḡsa had been doing in relation to other monks. The ensuing reference in the *uddāna* is to Ānanda, whose name features only in the prose of SN 8.4. Although the first verse reports Vaṅḡsa addressing Ānanda, SN I 188,16, he does that by the latter's clan name of Gotama, a term he reportedly uses in the verse of the preceding discourse to address himself instead; see SN 8.3 at SN I 187,21. The *uddāna* at SN I 196,25 refers to *pavāraṇā*, which occurs in the prose of SN 8.7 (on which see also Choong 2007: 38ff and Kuan

proper name Gaggārā in the *uddāna*, a lotus pond whose bank provides the location for the discourse.<sup>60</sup> Here, too, it would be impossible for the *uddāna* to perform its function if only the verse were to be memorized, which does not mention this location. Moreover, this lotus pond has no bearing on either prose or verse. These could just as well be associated with Jeta's Grove, for example, rather than with a relatively little-known location occurring only rarely elsewhere in Pāli discourses.

Whatever motivated the reciters to choose the name of this lotus pond to earmark the discourse, from the viewpoint of the present study this choice is significant. Given that in general the location of a discourse was apparently considered of little importance,<sup>61</sup> a reference to the Gaggārā lotus pond would hardly have stood much of a chance to be preserved over a series of improvisatory performances, even less of a chance than the specification of the amount of food taken by Pasenadi. The term Gaggārā would also not have given an improviser any clue as to what the theme of an impromptu performance should be, precisely because the term has no relation to the content of the discourse. It could safely be expected that sooner or later, during a series of improvisatory oral performances, it would have been supplanted by the standard reference to Jeta's Grove.

A Pāli commentary mentions the lotus pond in Jeta's Grove and the Gaggārā lotus pond as exemplifying beautiful ponds of this type.<sup>62</sup> Such an association between these two locations would have further facilitated a shift to the much better-known location of Jeta's Grove. That this has not

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2013c, with a critical reply to aspects of the latter in Anālayo 2022e: 30f notes 52 and 57). Although the verses begin with a reference to the fifteenth day, SN I 191,32, they do not mention the annual observance of the *pavāraṇā*. Hence, in this case, too, the term mentioned in the *uddāna* requires consulting the prose narration.

<sup>60</sup> The *uddāna* at SN I 196,27 refers to *gaggārā*. The corresponding discourse SN 8.11 at SN I 195,15 opens with the indication that the Blessed One was dwelling on the bank of the Gaggārā lotus pond; the verse in SN 8.11 at SN I 196,1 eulogizes the Buddha and does not mention the location at all.

<sup>61</sup> See Schopen 1997 and for a contextualization of his findings also Anālayo 2011c: 887 note 138.

<sup>62</sup> Mp II 35,15.

happened may well be because the mnemonic summary verse references a prose narration to be repeated with precision rather than freely retold on the occasion of oral performance.

The above examples give the impression that the reciters considered the prose to be just as relevant as the verses to establishing the order of discourses in the *Kosala-saṃyutta* and the *Vaṅḡsa-saṃyutta*, which in turn only makes sense if they saw the prose as relatively fixed rather than as open to individual creativity.

Overall, there is thus quite a body of textual evidence in the *Sagātha-vagga* relevant to appreciating its oral function, none of which appears to have been taken into serious consideration by Shulman (2023). Of course, I readily concede that studying mnemonic summary verses is not necessarily aesthetically pleasing or emotionally inspiring. But it lays the foundation required for being able to appreciate literary dimensions of the discourses collected in the *Sagātha-vagga*.

Giving priority instead to such literary dimensions at the expense of first developing a clear understanding of the formation and function of the collection puts the cart before the horse.

## Conclusion

A close examination of the assessment of the *Sagātha-vagga* by Shulman (2023) concords with findings in the previous chapters of the unreliable nature of the research underpinning his proposal that the composition of early Buddhist oral literature results from a play of formulas. Contrary to his suggestions in the present case, textual evidence shows that prose and verse portions of the *Sagātha-vagga* were meant to be memorized.

A proper assessment of the processes of composition and transmission of the early Buddhist texts requires a careful study of the extant originals—ideally in their different languages or at the very least by closely reading available translations—adequately reflecting the results of already published research, and taking into account the ancient Indian setting. It is only when these requirements are in place that theories about the nature of early Buddhist textual practices deserve to be taken seriously.





## XV

### Text-Critical Study of *Āgama* Literature (1)

In this chapter I reply to criticism raised by Wynne (2018b) of my examination of the two-paths theory, according to which the early discourses reflect two conflicting approaches to liberation, one of which is based on intellectual reflection, the other on absorption. The criticism and my reply are predominantly concerned with principles of text-critical study.

#### The Two-Paths Theory

The two-paths theory (or “two-path thesis”, TPT) holds that the early Buddhist texts reflect a tension between two contrasting accounts of progress to liberating insight, one of which just requires an intellectual understanding of the four noble truths whereas the other envisions absorption attainment on its own as productive of such insight. I critically examined the main arguments advanced in support of this theory as part of a comparative study of the *Tevijja-sutta* in Anālayo (2015c), to which I added further observations in Anālayo (2016b), written in reply to the assumption evident in Polak (2016) that the two-paths theory represents scholarly consensus. The material from both articles then became part of a monograph on early Buddhist meditation, Anālayo (2017c).

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\* Originally published in 2018 under the title “On the Two Paths Theory: Replies to Criticism” in the *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 15: 1–22. The postscript at the end of the present chapter appeared in 2019 as the last part of an article titled “On the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*” in the *Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 20: 143–157.

In an article entitled “Text-critical History is not Exegesis, a Response to Anālayo”, Wynne (2018b) raises a series of critiques of my assessment of the two-paths theory. The title of his article succinctly conveys what appears to be the central thrust of his presentation: his belief that I engage in Buddhist scriptural exegesis instead of text-critical academic research.

### Foreclosing Further Discussion

Wynne (2018b: 102) is under the impression that I attempt to foreclose further discussion. As in this context he summarized the main criticism he makes in his paper, this part of his argument can conveniently be used as a starting point:

Anālayo’s case against the TPT, followed by his judgement that the debate is settled, go against the grain of normal academic procedure. Why is this? The problem perhaps is possibly due to <sup>[2]</sup> the distinction between exegesis and history being unwittingly blurred. Whereas exegetes naturally prefer tradition to remain unchallenged, historians deal in arguments and uncertainty. Indeed, historical doubt inevitably invites an [sic] strong exegetical response, and this might explain Anālayo’s response to the TPT: casting aspersions on the intellectual proclivities of others; reading one’s own conclusions into texts which lack them; ignoring other perspectives which challenge one’s own ideas; failing to take one’s sources seriously, at their own word; and, most seriously of all, relying on commentarial and scholastic perspectives: all of this signals an approach which is more exegetical than philological. The overall effect is to seal off what tradition regards as sacred—the homogeneity of the canonical discourses on the Buddhist path—while at the same time attempting to shut down debate.

The above assessment is not correct. In what follows, I will take up one by one the allegations raised to show that they are unfounded. The first of these allegations relates to the comment in Wynne (2018b: 101) that:

rather strangely, however, Anālayo believes his own arguments are an unqualified success: ‘As far as I can see, the two paths theory has by now been successfully refuted and might best be set aside as an erroneous projection of the Western contrast between the thinker and the mystic onto material that does not warrant such an interpretation.’ (2016[b]: 41)

Before the passage just quoted by him, in my article I survey the criticism or reservations other scholars have voiced regarding the two-paths theory, in particular of Eliade (1958), Swearer (1972), Cox (1992/1994), Keown (1992/2001), Gethin (1992/2001), Gómez (1999), Bodhi (2003), Cousins (2009), and Stuart (2013). My impression that the two-paths theory has been successfully refuted is not an assertion of the success of my own arguments. Instead, I consider the arguments by other scholars to have successfully refuted the main planks of the two-paths theory.

Here it also needs to be kept in mind that I am replying to the underlying assumption in Polak (2016) that the two-paths theory represents scholarly consensus, ignoring the criticism that has been leveled at this theory to date. Thus, I am not attempting to close the debate, but only pointing out the need of taking into account criticism that has been raised in previous scholarship. Consultation of the full passage in my article confirms that I am not presuming the debate to be closed (Anālayo 2016b: 41):

As far as I can see, the two paths theory has by now been successfully refuted and might best be set aside as an erroneous <sup>[3]</sup> projection of the Western contrast between the thinker and the mystic onto material that does not warrant such an interpretation. Of course, others will not necessarily agree with my assessment. Yet, those who wish to uphold this theory or one of its two main assumptions need to engage seriously with the criticism that has been voiced, rather than ignoring it. At the very least, the notion of two conflicting paths can no longer be taken as representing scholarly consensus, but needs first to be argued by addressing in detail the different objections that have been raised.

This is fully in line with academic procedure. The accusation that in my works I attempt to seal off what tradition regards as sacred is not justified.

### Reliance on Later Exegesis

Another of the criticisms voiced by Wynne (2018b: 101) is the impression that I rely uncritically on later Buddhist exegesis:

Anālayo assumes that the meditators of AN 6.46 are at least stream-enterers, but this idea is based on a later Buddhist notion of stream-entry, one unknown to the canonical discourses. Similarly, his assertion that Nārada (in SN 12.70 [sic]) is a ‘non-returner’ (*anāgāmin*) is based on the Pāli commentary; the idea of experiencing but not fully realising Nirvana also belongs to later exegesis. Rather than studying the many internal parallels which actually help clarify what these texts mean, Anālayo prefers to read relatively late schemes, anachronistically, into them.

Beginning with the second of the two issues mentioned above, the relevant part of my discussion in Anālayo (2017c: 95) proceeds as follows:

In all versions the monk Nārada employs the simile of seeing water that one is unable to reach physically to illustrate that, even though one has already seen the goal, one therefore need not have fully reached it. In other words, the simile conveys that he has reached a stage of awakening that falls short of being arahantship. This conclusion finds confirmation in the commentary, which reports that Nārada was a non-returner.

The first sentence in the passage quoted above is based on a comparative study of the simile found in the parallel versions, references to which I provide in the footnote at the end of that sentence. In the discourse, the simile serves to illustrate an explicit statement made in the Pāli and Chinese version by Nārada, namely that he is not an arahant.<sup>1</sup> This is [4] not an

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<sup>1</sup> SN 12.68 at SN II 118,10, and SĀ 351 at T II 99a1. The Sanskrit fragment parallel, SHT

anachronistic reading of later schemes into the texts, but rather a conclusion drawn based on a comparative study of the discourses. The reference to the Pāli commentary is only in support of the conclusion reached by studying the main texts. This single instance of consulting the commentarial tradition as a secondary source is hardly sufficient grounds for the allegation that exegesis is being “smuggled into Buddhist studies” (Wynne 2018b: 104).

In general terms, it seems to me that conscientious research requires consulting the commentarial tradition. The commentators are considerably closer in time and culture to the early Buddhist period than we are and therefore should not be dismissed out of hand. This also means that the burden of proof, in my view, is with those who wish to propose ideas that are in complete contrast to the exegetical tradition. This holds for the other criticism in the passage quoted above, regarding the implications of stream-entry. To maintain the position that the commentarial traditions of Indian Buddhism entirely misunderstood the nature of stream-entry would require a study of its own and should not be based on a summary dismissal. It would require surveying stream-entry descriptions in the early discourses, extant in various transmission lineages, and conclusively proving that they are incompatible with what the commentarial traditions assume.

Besides, in a critical study of the two-paths theory, Bhikkhu Bodhi (2003) provides support for such an understanding of the implications of stream-entry from the discourses themselves. Even though this paper is explicitly mentioned in both of my publications that Alexander Wynne criticizes, Anālayo (2016b) and (2017c), he appears not to have consulted it. This paper, and other publications that discuss the nature of the lower levels of awakening, would also need to be refuted conclusively rather than being ignored.

The allegation that I merely adopt the position of later exegesis needs to be considered in the light of my other publications, which have repeatedly subjected to text-historical scrutiny notions and beliefs central to the Theravāda exegetical tradition. For example, I have argued that the tradi-

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II 680a 95, Waldschmidt, Clawiter, and Sander-Holzmann 1968: 39, has unfortunately not preserved the relevant part.

tional Theravāda belief in the Buddha's omniscience, just as the Theravāda doctrinal denial of an intermediate existence, conflict with the position taken on these issues in the early discourses.<sup>2</sup> Through comparative study I have provided evidence supporting the conclusion that the prediction of the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya, a central element in the religious world of Theravādins, is a late element that [5] conflicts with the early Buddhist conception of conditionality.<sup>3</sup> Other publications of mine have critically examined the Theravāda attempt to authenticate their Abhidhamma by claiming that it was taught by the Buddha during a sojourn in heaven,<sup>4</sup> and tried to show that the tale of Vessantara, the most well-known and beloved past-life story of the Buddha in Theravāda circles, has its origin in a Brahmanical plot that is at odds with Buddhist values.<sup>5</sup> Yet other publications by me contend that the scheme of seven purifications that serves as the scaffolding for the *Visuddhimagga*, the most important meditation manual in the Theravāda tradition, appears to involve a misunderstanding by Buddhaghosa of the seventh stage of purification, as presented in the relevant discourses.<sup>6</sup> More examples could be given, but the above should already suffice to show that, although I am a Theravāda *bhikkhu*, I do not uncritically adhere to Theravāda beliefs and doctrine.

As can be seen in each of the above cases, my position was based on providing evidence that runs counter to the respective commentarial notion or Theravāda belief. This is clearly the appropriate procedure for advancing our knowledge, namely a text-historically informed approach to evaluate the commentaries. In fact, just rejecting the commentarial exegesis is as much a form of ignorance as just adhering to it. For this reason, I deem it important that later exegesis, such as the *Visuddhimagga* or comparable works of other traditions (like the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for example)

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<sup>2</sup> Anālayo 2006a and 2018e: 20–22.

<sup>3</sup> Anālayo 2010b: 107–113; see also Anālayo 2014g.

<sup>4</sup> Anālayo 2012i.

<sup>5</sup> Anālayo 2016k.

<sup>6</sup> Anālayo 2005 and 2009f; for a reply to criticism see Anālayo 2017b: 507 note 14.

are taken seriously on their own terms for the information that they can potentially offer. They should only be set aside if there is sound evidence to the contrary. This does not mean that later schemes are read anachronistically into the early texts. My work reflects the distinction between exegesis and history.

### Taking the Texts Seriously

After examining three discourses he considers most relevant to the two-paths theory (SN 12.68, SN 12.70, and AN 6.46), Wynne (2018b: 87) states that “since our three texts apparently provide strong support for the TPT, it is somewhat strange that Anālayo (2016[b]) does not mention them.”

This is not the case. AN 6.46 is mentioned in the main text of Anālayo (2016b: 39) and in a footnote in Anālayo (2016b: 41 note 8) I refer the reader to another publication of mine in the following way:

in Anālayo 2015[c]: 12–15, I surveyed the main passages quoted in support of the two paths theory, arguing that none of these war-rants such a reading. <sup>[6]</sup>

That other paper surveys the three discourses mentioned by Alexander Wynne (SN 12.68, SN 12.70, and AN 6.46,) and offers arguments to counter interpreting them as supportive of the two-paths theory. Based on referring to my earlier detailed study, published in 2015, in Anālayo (2016b: 41) I then explain, in the main text of that article, that I will proceed “without rehearsing most of what has already been said.” This is a clear statement. It leaves no basis for puzzlement that I do not mention these passages and then argue, as Wynne (2018b: 92) does, that earlier “he has not analyzed the most important texts, an omission which he corrects, however, in his *Early Buddhist Meditation Studies* (2017[c]).” It is by ignoring the explicit reference to my previous discussion in Anālayo (2015c) that Alexander Wynne arrives at the mistaken impression that I had to correct an earlier omission.

Another criticism, also related to the topic of not taking the texts seriously, takes the following form in Wynne (2018b: 101):



Anālayo claims that the standard account of insight into the Four Noble Truths is a motif for the meditative realisation of Nirvana. In other words, the texts are not to be taken seriously at their word: although the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* talks of ‘turning the mind towards knowledge’, and the *Kāya-gatā-sati Sutta* explains this idea with quite precise similes, Anālayo believes that his own interpretation of the *Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta* is to be preferred instead. Dissenting voices are again overlooked.

The contrast seen between my position and the terminology in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* and the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* appears to be based on a misunderstanding. In his earlier discussion, Wynne (2018b: 89f) quotes two passages from Anālayo (2016b: 44 and 45), without the part that comes between them, and then states “Anālayo concludes that the path does not culminate in the Four Truths,” adding that, in this way, “Anālayo’s hermeneutic allows the explicit testimony of the texts to be explained away.” In the part in Anālayo (2016b: 45) not quoted by Alexander Wynne, I propose the following:

what the entire set of the four noble truths points to is a realization experience, which is described by analogy with a medical scheme of diagnosis.

At an earlier point, I also speak of “the level of insight into the four noble truths gained with awakening” (Anālayo 2016b: 42).<sup>7</sup> Consultation of the rest of my discussion shows that my intention was not to deny the relevance of the four noble truths in any way, but only to explain that the culmination point of the path is not just a matter of intellectual reflection. [7] This is hardly a case of explaining away the explicit testimony of the texts.

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<sup>7</sup> Admittedly my statement, regarding the four truths, that “they are not the goal itself, just as the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself” could be read to carry such implications. But this can only happen if one disregards the remainder of my discussion. In the revised version of my discussion, published in Anālayo 2017c (to which Wynne 2018b refers in his discussion), this statement is in fact no longer found, precisely because I realized that it could be misunderstood.

In fact, my explanation relies on indications made explicitly in the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and its parallels.

The other criticism mentioned in the above passage, according to which I supposedly overlook dissenting voices, comes with a footnote reference to a comment by Schmithausen (1981: 203) on the probable late nature of the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*.<sup>8</sup> In two detailed comparative studies, published in the same journal that Alexander Wynne has recently joined as an editor and which he now employs as a venue for his criticism, I examined in detail the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* in the light of its parallels (Anālayo 2012b and 2013a). In both publications, I refer to Schmithausen (1981).

In addition to providing a comparative study with translations of the Chinese Āgama and Vinaya parallels, I also examine arguments proposed by other scholars supporting the alleged lateness of what tradition considers to have been the first teaching given by the Buddha, finding these arguments to be in need of revision. In sum, instead of me overlooking dissenting voices, it seems rather that my dissenting voice is being overlooked here.

## Circularity

Another criticism by Wynne (2018b: 100) is that my presentation involves circularity:

To prove the ubiquity of the calm-insight paradigm in early Buddhist discourses, Anālayo refers to two texts (AN 6.60 and the *Brahmajāla Sutta*). But both texts lack calm-insight schemes. Anālayo's argument seems to be that calm-insight is universally applicable not because of what the texts say, but simply because calm-insight must be universally applicable.

Anālayo similarly claims that distinguishing between calm and insight ignores the subtle 'interrelation between tranquillity and insight' that the Buddhist path implies. Once again, the argument

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<sup>8</sup> Wynne 2018b: 101 note 32 refers the reader to his own note 19; the reference is actually found in his note 24.

seems to be that calm-insight is universally applicable because calm-insight is universally applicable; what the texts actually say is ignored.

My discussion of AN 6.60 and the *Brahmajāla-sutta* is not about the ubiquity of the calm-insight paradigm, but much rather about “discourses that highlight the potential drawbacks of absorption attainment” (Anālayo 2017c: 112). As I mention in the very next sentence, my point is that <sup>[8]</sup> “such discourses imply that the early Buddhist texts did not consider absorption attainment to be in itself productive of liberating insight.” Alexander Wynne’s criticism is based on a misunderstanding.

Regarding the interrelation between tranquility and insight, in Anālayo (2017c: 173f) I summarize my previous work on this topic in the following manner:

Tranquillity and insight are closely interrelated in the early discourses, and it is only in later tradition that these came to be seen as two distinct paths of meditative practice. An illustrative example is when the *Āneñjasappāya-sutta* and its parallels showcase the contribution the cultivation of insight can make for the development of tranquillity. An example for the contribution of tranquillity to insight can be seen in the *Cūḷasuññata-sutta* and its parallels, which employ the perceptions of the immaterial attainments for the sake of a gradual deepening of insight into emptiness. The possibility of such cross-fertilization between tranquillity and insight shows that in the early discourses these two do not function as separate paths, but rather constitute complementary dimensions of the path.

Instead of being a case of circularity, my position is based on detailed comparative studies of relevant early discourses.<sup>9</sup>

Wynne (2018b: 88) identifies another instance of supposed circularity as follows:

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<sup>9</sup> The relevant studies are Anālayo 2009a and 2012e.

Invoking the notion of ‘cumulative and interrelated aspects of the path’ as the key to understanding the Buddhist path merely begs the question: is a ‘cumulative and interrelated’ model assumed in the key texts? In other words, there appears to be a serious circularity in Anālayo’s thinking. To the question, ‘is there a distinction between calm and insight in some early texts?’, Anālayo’s answer is ‘There is no distinction, because there is no distinction between calm and insight in early Buddhist path schemes.’

The notion targeted in this criticism occurs in a passage concerning attempts to standardize accounts of the gradual path (Anālayo 2016b: 40):

Although such standardization yields neat theoretical presentations, a problem inevitably results from the fact that theoretical accounts can only describe one item at a time. There is therefore an inherent danger that cumulative and interrelated aspects of the path recede to the background, whereas its <sup>[9]</sup> sequential aspects are foregrounded. This might explain the variations found in path accounts in the early discourses.

The expression “cumulative and interrelated aspects”, the notion under criticism, comes with a footnote reference to a more detailed comparative study of accounts of the gradual path in the discourses in Anālayo (2016f). In that study, I adopted a distinction, proposed originally by Bucknell (1984), between “sequential” and “cumulative” activities described in accounts of the gradual path. Consultation of my article would have quickly clarified that this is not about a distinction between calm and insight, but merely about the problem of how to understand variations in parallel accounts of the gradual path. In line with previously-examined instances of criticism, Alexander Wynne continues to ignore explicit references in my work that could have clarified the situation for him. The allegation of circularity proves to be without a foundation.

### *Criticism ad Hominem*

Another criticism by Wynne (2018b: 100) proceeds as follows:

Playing the man, not the ball. This sporting metaphor refers to the use of psychological tactics to undermine one's opponent ('gamesmanship'), rather than concentrating purely on the game at hand. It is an apt description of Anālayo's *ad hominem* attacks on Louis de la Vallée Poussin. Rather than deal with the academic problem identified by de La Vallée Poussin (the 'ball'), Anālayo prefers to 'play the man', by suggesting that de La Vallée Poussin was influenced by Vasubandhu, or is guilty of Orientalism. Personal criticism de-means academic endeavour. One might as well say that Western converts to Buddhism are not sufficiently objective to study Buddhism academically. Of course, such a point would be absurd.

This assessment is based on an identification by Wynne (2018b: 93) in my work of an "*ad hominem* critique of Louis de La Vallée Poussin. He does this by claiming that de La Vallée Poussin was influenced by Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*." Actually, the suggestion of such influence was just an attempt to understand what might have inspired de La Vallée Poussin. This was not meant to convey anything negative. In fact, I see nothing inherently wrong in taking up what the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* seems to suggest and trying to see whether this fits with the discourses. This is all the more understandable given the early stage in the history of Buddhist studies at which de La Vallée Poussin produced what I refer to as "his remarkable annotated translation of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*" (Anālayo 2017c: 91).<sup>[10]</sup>

My discussion here was never meant to be a critique, *ad hominem* or otherwise. If this much can already be considered criticism *ad hominem* by "casting aspersion on the intellectual proclivities of others" and playing the man instead of the ball, then how should Alexander Wynne's style of criticism of me in his article be regarded?

### Ignoring Dissenting Scholarship

In the last of the criticisms to be examined here, Wynne (2018b: 100) contends that I ignore modern scholarship that disagrees with my own ideas:

Anālayo (2016[b]: 41) makes the reasonable point that those ‘who wish to uphold this theory or one of its two main assumptions need to engage seriously with the criticism that has been voiced, rather than ignoring it.’ This is sensible and commendable, but Anālayo unfortunately fails to follow his own advice. The arguments made here have already been made, albeit more briefly, in Wynne (2007: 102-04). Other important works are bypassed: Gombrich (1996) is not taken seriously, and Schmithausen’s study (1981) of early path schemes is more or less ignored, as is Bhikkhu Bodhi’s tentative support for the TPT (2007). By ignoring alternative points of view, Anālayo makes a one-dimensional case that ultimately harms his own analysis.

In the course of my discussions in Anālayo (2017c), I refer to Schmithausen (1981), Gombrich (1996), Bodhi (2007),<sup>10</sup> and Wynne (2007).<sup>11</sup> Without more specific indications as to what precisely should have been mentioned and taken more seriously, it is not clear to me in what way I warrant being accused of ignoring conflicting scholarship.

The lack of clarity in this respect can perhaps best be illustrated by following up the reference Alexander Wynne gives to his own work: Wynne (2007: 102–104). Following up this page reference leads me to the later part of a discussion of the *Udayamāṇavapucchā* and the beginning of a discussion of the *Posalamāṇavapucchā*. Although the discussion starts off with the topic of *jhāna*, the remainder is concerned with various other terms used in the relevant verses. I fail to see any specific arguments in support of the two-paths theory that I could have taken into account.

On the assumption that he might have given a wrong cross-reference to his own work, I checked the index in his book, which has led me to Wynne

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<sup>10</sup> The assumption that Bodhi 2007 is in “tentative support” of the two-paths theory is another case of misunderstanding. The point he is concerned with in this article is to what degree absorption attainment is required for reaching the final goal; he does not envisage reaching the final goal by mere intellectual reflection.

<sup>11</sup> Anālayo 2017c: 77 note 30, 94 note 61, 94 note 62, 118 note 19, 159 note 106, 160 note 108, 166 note 123.

(2007: 117–120) as what he would have had in mind.<sup>12</sup> Yet, this is just a summary of already well-known arguments for the two-paths <sub>[11]</sub> theory. It does not seem to me to be worth being taken up explicitly, as it does not add significantly new arguments to the discussion.

Although I would not consider it worth explicit reference in the context of a survey of main arguments proposed in support of the two-paths theory, which after all only needs to acknowledge who made certain points first and not who just repeated them, it definitely deserves being considered in the present context. Reading Alexander Wynne’s entire coverage of the two-paths theory, it becomes clear that it lacks even a single reference to scholarship that dissents from it. This is indeed a case of “ignoring alternative points of view” and thereby making “a one-dimensional case that ultimately harms his own analysis.”

This stands in contrast to my own work where, in addition to the scholars already mentioned above (as being referenced in Anālayo 2017c), in the course of my discussion of the two-paths theory I also refer to several other scholars who endorse that theory and thereby dissent with my position, including de La Vallée Poussin (1929) and (1936/1937), Pande (1957), Griffiths (1981), Sferra (2011), Clough (2012), and Polak (2016). To the best of my abilities, I have tried to include relevant scholarship, covering material published in English, French, and Italian, and to address the main arguments that emerge from their publications.

In general, I think it is fair to state that detailed annotations and extensive bibliographies are characteristic of my writings. My examination of the two-paths theory is no exception to this. The complaint that I ignore dissenting scholarship to make a one-dimensional case is contrary to the evidence. In turn, it is fair to ask if this is instead applicable to Alexander Wynne’s work.

## Arguing the Two-Paths Theory

In the first part of his article, Wynne (2018b: 81–87) discusses three passages he considers to be “key texts” in support of the two-paths theory: SN 12.68,

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<sup>12</sup> For another instance of wrong cross-referencing to his own work see above note 8.

SN 12.70, and AN 6.46. Given his frequent emphasis on the importance of taking into account dissenting scholarship, as well as the need to do justice to the explicit testimony of the texts and avoid any circularity, it seems fair to employ these same principles to evaluate his own academic work. In fact, towards the end of his article, Wynne (2018b: 101) offers general reflections on proper academic research, as follows:

Perhaps academic progress can be made even when the objectivity of its practitioners is undermined or when <sup>[12]</sup> contemporary scholarship is ignored, or even when circular argumentation is deployed. But progress is surely impossible when the explicit statements of the texts are bypassed in favour of one's own preferred ideas.

I wholeheartedly agree on the need to beware of reading our own ideas into the texts, to avoid circularity, and to make sure that all relevant academic publications are taken into account rather than ignored. The preceding pages will have shown that Alexander Wynne's assessment of my work as failing to be up to these standards is contradicted by the evidence.

Turning to the three key passages in question, since Alexander Wynne has already provided details of each episode, suffice it for the present context to consider an aspect of their presentation, namely the level of awakening attained, if at all, by chief protagonists in each discourse. These are Nārada in SN 12.68, Susīma in SN 12.70, and a group of scholar monks in AN 6.46.

### *Nārada in SN 12.68*

In the case of Nārada in SN 12.68, Wynne (2018b: 85) holds that the phrase "having touched with the body", *kāyena phusitvā*, in SN 12.68 refers to the attainment of the formless states and their goal, cessation. Alexander Wynne does not refer to the detailed discussion of this discourse by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2003), a study critical of the two-paths theory, which marshals relevant evidence from other discourses that Alexander Wynne has not taken into account: a reference to *asekhas* as having touched with the body the consummation of the five spiritual faculties,<sup>13</sup> and another discourse that defines the consummation

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<sup>13</sup> SN 48.53 at SN V 230,17.



of these five spiritual faculties to be the deathless.<sup>14</sup> This in turn leads Bodhi (2003: 63) to the conclusion that “both the *sekha* and the *arahant* ‘see’ *nibbāna* with wisdom, but the *arahant* alone can ‘dwell contacting it with the body’.”

In another study critical of the two-paths theory, which also takes into account parallels to SN 12.68 preserved in Chinese, Gómez (1999: 703) concludes that, contrary to the assessment by de La Vallée Poussin, “the contrast is not between the intellectual apprehension and the intuitive apprehension, but between all mental apprehensions and an experience in the body or the whole person: in short, a realization.”

Another expression of criticism of an interpretation of SN 12.68 as supportive of the two-paths theory can be found in Swearer (1972: 369), who argues that the interpretation proposed by de La Vallée Poussin “is [13] severely challenged by an analysis of *viññāṇa* and *paññā*”, presented by him. Wynne (2018b) does not even mention Swearer (1972), Gómez (1999), or Bodhi (2003), let alone engage seriously with the points raised by them.

### *Susīma in SN 12.70*

In the case of *Susīma* in the second of the three passages to be taken up, SN 12.70, Wynne (2018b: 86) has similarly failed to take into account the discussion by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2009). This has brought to light that two Chinese parallels to SN 12.70, found in the *Samyukta-āgama* and the Mahā-sāṅghika *Vinaya*, explicitly report *Susīma*’s stream-entry.<sup>15</sup> While acknowledging that the textual evidence on this point is ambiguous, Bhikkhu Bodhi (2009: 65) rightly points out that such an attainment would fit the context of SN 12.70.

### *Scholar Monks in AN 6.46*

The third passage, AN 6.46, involves a contrast between meditator monks

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<sup>14</sup> SN 48.57 at SN V 232,17.

<sup>15</sup> SĀ 347 at T II 97c5: 爾時須深見法得法, 覺法度疑, 不由他信, 不由他度, 於正法中心得無畏 (later on this version also records his eventual realization of the final goal, an attainment also reported in the Pāli commentary, Spk II 127,20) and T 1425 at T XXII 363b11: 滅惡邪見, 得法眼淨.

and scholar monks. Wynne (2018b: 81–84) has studied this in detail, dedicating more space to AN 6.46 in his article than to the other two passages together. Thus, his study of AN 6.46 affords a convenient occasion for taking a closer look at his methodology. The issue at stake is whether the scholar monks, described in this passage, can be considered arahants, this being the original take on the discourse by de La Vallée Poussin (1929). Evaluating this attribution requires an examination of the qualification of these scholar monks as *gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ paññāya ativijja passanti*, translated by Wynne (2018b: 81) as “they see, having penetrated the profound words of the doctrine with insight.”

In his discussion of other occurrences of the compound *atthapadaṃ*, Wynne (2018b) does not mention that such occurrences have already been surveyed by Cousins (2009: 37–39), yet another study that voices disagreement with the two-paths theory. Cousins’ survey covers three discourses in the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* and three consecutive verses in the *Dhammapada*: in addition to AN 6.46 itself, these parallel occurrences are AN 4.192 and AN 9.4, as well as Dhṛp 100 to 102.

The ensuing discussion in Wynne (2018b) shows that he finds AN 4.192 particularly relevant for his argument. His procedure for giving priority to this particular occurrence is as follows: after mentioning the *Dhammapada* verses, Wynne (2018b: 83) states that, “apart from this, the term only occurs in the definition of the Dhamma devotees at AN 6.46, <sup>[14]</sup> and in one other Sutta, AN 4.192.” In other words, the verse occurrences are set aside, as if only prose occurrences are relevant to ascertaining the meaning of the compound. Moreover, the second prose parallel (AN 9.4) is completely ignored.

Only two paragraphs later on the same page, in the context of a discussion of the phrase “penetrating with insight”, Wynne (2018b: 83) states: “AN 9.4 refers to the mendicant who preaches the Dhamma, and then ‘penetrates and sees the profound meaning (*gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ*) with insight, just as he illumines it.”

This contradicts his earlier statement that there is only one other prose occurrence paralleling AN 6.46, namely AN 4.192. The statement just quoted shows that this earlier statement was made in full awareness of the second prose parallel in AN 9.4. In other words, he is clearly aware of *atthapadaṃ*

being found in AN 9.4, but he fails to take it into account when discussing occurrences of *atthapadaṃ*. This illustrates a tendency to not represent the relevant information fully and accurately, be it intentional or out of negligence, evident in his various criticism of my work surveyed above.

The reference to AN 9.4 in the context of his discussion of the phrase “penetrating with insight” also clarifies why it had to be ignored earlier. AN 9.4 not only shares the term *atthapadaṃ* with the description of the scholar monks in AN 6.46 but also the reference to “penetrating with insight”. A listing of the three occurrences in the *Āṅuttara-nikāya* side by side illustrates the situation as follows:

AN 4.192: *gambhīraṃ c’ eva atthapadaṃ udāharati*<sup>16</sup>

AN 6.46: *gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ paññāya ativijjha passanti*<sup>17</sup>

AN 9.4: *gambhīraṃ atthapadaṃ paññāya ativijjha passati*<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, AN 9.4 employs the same phrasing as the passage under question, AN 6.46, in its description of the scholar monks. In contrast, the phrasing in AN 4.192, although it involves *atthapadaṃ*, employs a different verb. In an earlier part of his discussion, Wynne (2018b: 91) states that

the philological or text-critical method should rather draw out the meaning of difficult passages by using closely related textual parallels ... every effort must be made to keep the discussion firmly rooted in what the texts actually say, rather than edge towards what one would like them to say. [15]

On following this approach, AN 9.4 would clearly have been the right candidate for drawing out the meaning of the description of the scholar monks in AN 6.46, instead of AN 4.192. The problem with applying his own proposal here, however, is that the reference to *atthapadaṃ* in AN 9.4 appears in the context of an ascending list of five benefits of listening to the teachings, where it is part of the description of the third benefit. The fifth

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<sup>16</sup> AN II 190,7.

<sup>17</sup> AN III 356,20.

<sup>18</sup> AN IV 362,2.

benefit is that those in training who hear such teachings will be inspired to make an effort to progress toward awakening; for arahants, hearing such teachings will serve as a pleasant abiding in the here and now. The context does not give the impression that the reference to *atthapadam* in the third benefit involves arrival at the final goal.

This would explain the omission of AN 9.4 in the earlier discussion. Taking into account AN 9.4 in this context would have inevitably led to a conclusion that does not accord with the two-paths theory. It would have undermined the required basis for considering the scholar monks to be arahants.

By proceeding in this way, Wynne (2018b: 83) is then able to conclude, in reference to AN 4.192, that “as the only other prose occurrence of *atthapadam* is found in AN 6.46, it is likely that it too uses the term as a designation of Nirvana.” Based on this type of analysis of the term *atthapadam*, the needed basis has been established to vindicate the assessment originally made by de La Vallée Poussin in what is the first and foundational publication advocating the two-paths theory in the history of Buddhist studies: the scholar monks described in AN 6.46 are indeed “not merely doctrinal experts, but rather liberated Arahants”, Wynne (2018b: 83).

From the viewpoint of the need to take the sources seriously and at their own word, this procedure is rather disconcerting. Far stronger words could in fact be used here to qualify Alexander Wynne’s methodology. Anyway, the facts speak for themselves.

The procedure adopted in this way also appears to involve some degree of circularity: the need to consider the scholar monks as arahants motivates the selection of AN 4.192 as the only prose parallel occurrence of *atthapadam* to be taken into account. Based on this selection, the conclusion can then be drawn that the scholar monks are indeed arahants. <sup>[16]</sup>

## Overall Assessment

The study by Alexander Wynne of three key passages relevant to the two-paths theory shows signs of ignoring dissenting scholarship, not doing justice to the explicit testimony of the texts, and some degree of circularity.

The omissions or errors made in the course of studying these three passages make it unmistakably clear that Alexander Wynne has not even read the contributions made by scholars whose conclusions are critical of the two-paths theory, in particular Swearer (1972), Gómez (1999), Bodhi (2003 and 2009), and Cousins (2009).<sup>19</sup> I referred to each of these papers in Anālayo (2016b) and (2017c), my two publications taken up by Alexander Wynne for criticism, and these references are found not only in footnotes, but in the case of Anālayo (2016b: 41) even in the main text, where I speak of “papers with criticism of the assumptions underlying the two-paths theory and/or with clarifications regarding the discourses quoted in its support”. This makes it impossible for Alexander Wynne to be unaware of these publications and their potential significance for his attempt to defend the two-paths theory.

This is indubitably an example of “ignoring modern scholarship in disagreement with his own ideas”, in stark contrast to his own assessment in Wynne (2018b: 100) that it is “sensible and commendable” to engage seriously with the criticism that has been voiced, rather than ignoring it. With all due respect to a fellow academic and former pupil of Richard Gombrich, when other critical scholarship is not even consulted and instead strongly worded attacks are launched to discredit and thereby silence a dissenting voice, then this leaves me with the impression that the two-paths theory (as an icon of the belief in the incongruity of the texts) is being turned into an unquestionable truth, instead of remaining an academic hypothesis that is open to being disproved.

From the viewpoint of the audience of his article, since Alexander Wynne never refers to any of the studies by scholars critical of the two-paths theory, a reader unacquainted with relevant publications could easily get the impression that no other scholar has ever disagreed with the interpretation that these three passages support the two-paths theory. The only recent exception would then appear to be Anālayo (2017c), taken up swiftly for

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<sup>19</sup> Relevant publications that have appeared in the meantime include Bronkhorst 2019, who takes the step to revise his earlier support of the two-paths theory (p. 2), and Fiordalis 2019, who surveys narratives that do not concord with the basic dichotomy underlying the two-paths theory.

criticism in Wynne (2018b) by declaring this to be merely an attempt “to seal off what tradition regards as sacred—the homogeneity of the canonical discourses on the Buddhist path—while at the same time attempting to shut down debate.” In doing so, Wynne (2018b: 104) presents himself <sup>[17]</sup> to his reader as a custodian of proper academic procedure who, wisely foreseeing future decline, has intervened in a timely manner, realizing the danger if in this way

exegetical thinking is unwittingly smuggled into Buddhist studies, and if modern studies are cherry-picked towards a desired end, little progress will be made in understanding intellectual history ... It might also be a trend which will further develop in the future, as the academic study of Buddhism grows at Theravāda monastic universities, and as more ‘Western’ monastics turn their attention to academic studies. At this point in time, then, it is crucial that a firm effort is made to distinguish text-critical history from exegesis.

The way Alexander Wynne visualizes his own role reveals his agenda, also evident in the style of his unfounded criticism of my work. Such an agenda invariably impairs his ability to live up to his own rhetoric, evident in his examination of relevant canonical passages. In fact, it prevents him from even reading dissenting scholarship. Pertinent to understanding the dynamics behind the agenda of scholars posing as custodians of proper scholarship are observations made by Gómez (1995: 211f), regarding

the scholar who understands his or her role as the custodian of a cultural object, or an idea, perhaps a “truth” ... This role of course overlaps with that of the “cleric”, the custodian of standards, values, truths. The cleric is no longer charged with the cure of souls but serves as a true “clerk”, the custodian of grammar and the proper genres of scholarship. Perhaps, if this clerk is up to date, he or she will also be the custodian of “method” ... [c]ommon among contemporary scholars is the role of the anti-priest: the guardian of “secular authority”. I do not refer here to the common iconoclasm directed at the consecrated work of other scholars, rather, I refer to

the scholar's interest in undermining the authority of the tradition he or she studies. Seldom is this role part of the scholar's public role.

This also ties in with observations I made above, in that being a monastic does not imply that one must automatically be a blind adherent to religious beliefs. Similarly, not being a monastic does not mean that one is automatically free from bias. In fact, the "anti-priest", to borrow the term used by Gómez, can be just as biased, in particular in favor of dismantling the authority and homogeneity of the tradition studied. [18]

In the end, the problem of confirmation bias is universal to human beings, simply because beliefs that can impact objectivity can be secular just as much as religious. The forces of cognitive dissonance affect us all. We all face the challenge of having to avoid bending evidence in our favor and ignoring research dissenting with our own predilections.

## Conclusion

The series of allegations by Alexander Wynne (2018b), regarding my examination of the two-paths theory, are unfounded. His various accusations are based on a misreading of my research and a failure to consult footnotes and references given, with the result that his contentions of improper scholarship appear to characterize his own approach better than my work. This is particularly evident in his discussion of three discourses relevant to the topic of the two-paths theory, which show consistent disregard of dissenting scholarship combined with incorrect representation of the textual evidence to yield confirmation for his belief in the two-paths theory. In sum, a closer examination of Alexander Wynne's discussion shows that much of what he accuses me of in his article is actually what he engages in himself.<sup>20</sup>

*How come you see the speck in your brother's eye  
and do not see the plank in your own eye?*

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<sup>20</sup> [19] Matthew 7.3: *Quid autem vides festucam in oculo fratris tui, et trabem in oculo tuo non vides?*

## Postscript

This postscript continues the discussion reported in the present chapter, in response to a rejoinder by Wynne (2019) to my reply, found in the previous part of this chapter, to his criticism in Wynne (2018b).

To begin with, I would like to express my appreciation of the fact that, in his latest reply, Wynne (2019: 149) begins on a more conciliatory note that sets quite a different tone compared to Wynne (2018b). Nevertheless, the remainder of his article still contains allegations that force me to reply, which I hope to present in a spirit of non-contentiousness and solely for the sake of clarification.

It seems to me that Alexander Wynne may not have fully appreciated the purpose behind my listing of the dissenting scholarship that he has not taken into account. My main concern was to defend myself against his earlier criticism. The particular point I made is that both of his studies of the two-paths theory, Wynne (2007: 117–120) and (2018b), do not mention dissenting scholarship. I felt obligated to draw attention to this because disregard of dissenting scholarship was one of the criticisms he had raised against me, although my writings on this topic had actually covered a range of publications voicing opinions contrary to my own.

The issue here is not the degree to which he now finds pertinent the arguments made by scholars critical of the two path theory (evaluations that might have found a better placing in his <sup>[154]</sup> earlier publications). It is therefore not the case, as assumed by Wynne (2019: 160), that my argument is rendered redundant by my “failure to cite any telling critique from them”. The point under discussion is a failure to mention dissenting scholarship in the first place, thereby risking that a reader of his contributions comes away with the impression that, previous to my own writings, there has not been a single scholar expressing disagreement with the two-paths theory.

Although Wynne (2019: 149) explains that he was unaware of some of the dissenting works mentioned by me, I had actually given reference to these works not only in footnotes, but also in the main text of my earlier discussion (Anālayo 2016b: 40f). It is difficult to see how he could not have



been aware of these publications if he had carefully read the article that formed the target of his criticism.<sup>21</sup>

In reply to another of his allegations, according to which I did not take the texts seriously, I had shown that this appears to apply rather to his own treatment of the phrase *atthapadam* in AN 6.46. Based on omitting an occurrence of the term in AN 9.4, Wynne (2018b: 83) concluded that, as far as occurrences of *atthapadam* in Pāli discourses are concerned, “the term only occurs in the definition of the Dhamma devotees at AN 6.46, and in one other Sutta, AN 4.192.” Based on this assessment, he was then able to consider these Dhamma devotees to have been “liberated Arahants”, a consideration crucial for his overall argument.

The way he arrived at this conclusion is faulty. On the very same page of his discussion, he refers to AN 9.4 as an instance where the term in question occurs. My pointing out that this occurrence should have been taken into account, when drawing his earlier conclusion, is not a case of “misrepresenting” his analysis of AN 6.46, *pace* Wynne (2019: 159). The case is quite unequivocal: A conclusion has been drawn based on not taking into account a relevant passage that was clearly known. [155]

In his present reply, Wynne (2019: 158–160) tries to remedy the earlier omission by arguing that AN 9.4 actually fits his interpretation that the Dhamma devotees in AN 6.46 are liberated arahants. The point at stake is whether the occurrence of *atthapadam* as the third in a list of five ascending benefits, described in AN 9.4, should be understood to imply full awakening. As the fifth benefit explicitly mentions full awakening, I had argued that this prevents considering the third benefit to refer to the same. In reply, Wynne (2019: 158) correctly points out that this fifth benefit differs from the preceding three, as it concerns the audience and not the speaker.

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<sup>21</sup> [13] The assumption of a less than careful reading might also explain why, even though in the article republished in the previous chapter I made it clear that my first contribution to the topic is Anālayo 2015c (contrary to Alexander Wynne’s assumption that I had provided proper arguments only in 2017), in his introductory survey Wynne 2019: 149 does not mention this publication and only refers to Anālayo 2016b (misspelled as 2106) and 2017c as my previous writings on the issue.

Yet, the fourth benefit comes with a reference to the speaker being either on the path to attainment or else having reached it, whereas the second benefit is about the speaker gaining inspiration. Given the ascending nature of the list, it follows that the third benefit must refer to the speaker gaining a benefit somewhere in between inspiration and being on the path to attainment or else having reached it; it does not work to take it as a referent to the highest attainment of full awakening. Nevertheless, Wynne (2019: 160) concludes that

although Anālayo has attacked my supposedly ‘disconcerting’ treatment of AN 9.4, his critique is undermined by his misreading of this text. To adapt a phrase from Richard Gombrich, a mountain has been made out of a non-existent molehill.

His interpretation of AN 9.4 can hardly be considered so self-evident that “there is no other possible reading” of this passage, as assumed now by Wynne (2019: 159). Anyway, the omission of AN 9.4 when drawing conclusions regarding occurrences of *atthapadam* in Pāli discourses stands.

This is not really a case of a non-existent molehill that has been turned into a mountain. This metaphor had its proper place in a critique voiced by Gombrich (1990) of untenable conclusions drawn by Schopen (1989), based on the absence of monastic regulations concerning the cult of *stūpas* in the Pāli *Vinaya*. Whereas such conclusions based on an absence of references can indeed be illustrated with the example of non-existent molehills, Alexander Wynne’s criticism falls into a different category. It seems to me to be rather a case of throwing stones when living in a glass house. <sup>[156]</sup>



## XVI

### Text-Critical Study of *Āgama* Literature (2)

In this chapter I examine the narrative structure of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*, arguing that the discourse can be read as a coherent presentation. I take the occasion to reply to criticism raised by Wynne (2018a) of my comparative study of this discourse.

#### The Main Structure of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*

The main narrative structure found in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and its parallel in the *Madhyama-āgama* proceeds as follows:

- ◇ The monk Sāti upholds the view that the same consciousness transmigrates through the round of rebirths, in spite of being censured for this claim by other monks. Called to the Buddha's presence, he has to face a firm rebuke for his mistaken idea. (1)
- ◇ The Buddha explains that consciousness is dependently arisen, comparable to fire that depends on fuel. (2)
- ◇ The Buddha engages the monks in a catechism on the dependent nature of what 'has come to be'. (3)
- ◇ The Buddha expounds the four nutriments, tracing their conditioned arising from craving back to ignorance; <sup>[144]</sup> next he outlines dependent

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arising via the standard twelve links from ignorance to old age and death and back again to ignorance; and then he covers the cessation mode of dependent arising in forward and reverse order. (4)

- ◇ In response to questioning by the Buddha, the monks in attendance affirm their disinterest in speculations about the self. (5)
- ◇ The Buddha examines the conditions for the formation of a foetus and then depicts how, once grown up, the person delights in feeling tone, which then gives rise to the ensuing links of dependent arising. (6)
- ◇ A reference to the arising of a Tathāgata serves in the Pāli version as an occasion for a full account of the gradual path of training up to the fourth absorption, following which the Buddha describes mental balance towards anything experienced at a sense-door. (7)

## The Topic of the Discourse

The *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta* ends with the Buddha telling the monks that they should keep this discourse in mind as an instruction on the topic of “liberation by the destruction of craving”, qualifying the teaching given as being “concise” or “succinct”, *saṅkhitta*.<sup>1</sup> The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel also concludes by indicating that this discourse is about “liberation by the destruction of craving”, but without qualifying the instruction as succinct.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the two versions agree on the main theme of the instruction but differ as to whether this particular teaching given by the Buddha should be considered as succinct. This difference would imply that either a reference to the conciseness of the discourse has been lost in the *Madhyama-āgama* version or else it has been added to the *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse.

When exploring these alternatives, the preceding discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, the *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*, can be <sup>[145]</sup> consulted. The *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta* reports an instruction on liberation by the destruction of

<sup>1</sup> MN 38 at MN I 270,37: *saṅkhittena taṇhāsaṅkhayavimuttiṃ dhāretha*.

<sup>2</sup> MĀ 201 at T I 769c29: 此經稱愛盡解脫; the actual title of the discourse differs, however, see Anālayo 2011c: 251 note 227.

craving, *taṇhāsaṅkhayavimutti*, given by the Buddha to Sakka. According to the narrative setting, Sakka had explicitly asked for an instruction that is “succinct”, *saṅkhitta*.<sup>3</sup> The teaching given by the Buddha in reply to this request is indeed concise, unlike his much longer teaching reported in the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*. In the *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*, this brief teaching then leads on to a prolonged encounter between Sakka and Mahāmoggallāna, as a result of which the discourse becomes long enough to find a place among the collection of middle-length discourses. Had the discourse been solely about the succinct instruction itself, it could have been more conveniently placed in a collection of shorter discourses.

During its report of the encounter between Sakka and Mahāmoggallāna, the *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta* refers back to the Buddha’s “succinct” instruction on “liberation by the destruction of craving” as many as ten times.<sup>4</sup> The recurrent qualification of the “liberation by the destruction of craving” as “succinct” in the *Cūḷataṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta* could easily have misled the reciters of the *Majjhima-nikāya* to apply this qualification to the otherwise same expression “liberation by the destruction of craving” when reciting the next discourse, the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*, even though in this case such a qualification does not fit the context. This makes it fair to assume that the second of the two alternative options envisaged above could fit the case, namely that the expression “succinct” was added to the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*. This could have occurred as the result of a simple error during oral transmission.

Wynne (2018a: 110), however, takes the reference to a concise exposition at the end of the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta* to imply that the discourse has been expanded, reasoning that, if it

ever was a ‘concise’ discourse it must have been expanded in the course of its transmission. We will keep this in mind as we analyze the different portions of the text, for a redaction of a concise dis-

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<sup>3</sup> MN 37 at MN I 251,17: *kittāvataṁ nu kho, bhante, bhikkhu saṅkhittena taṇhāsaṅkhaya-vimutto hoti?*

<sup>4</sup> MN 37 at MN I 252,3, 252,32, 254,9, 254,15, 254,33, 254,36, 255,17, 255,22, 256,2, and 256,6.

course into a very complex one is <sup>[146]</sup> unlikely to have been carried out seamlessly. Redactors leave ‘fingerprints’: if the text was expanded, a close analysis might reveal thematic and terminological discontinuities.

## The Nutriments and Dependent Arising

In search of such fingerprints in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*, Wynne (2018a: 119) comes to the conclusion that its “section 4 is an interpolation.” Chief arguments in support of this conclusion, as far as I am able to tell, would be the following:

The four nutriments of section 4 are material food (subtle or gross), contact, mental intention (*manosañcetanā*) and ‘sentience’ (*viññāṇa*). This disagrees with section 3, which talks about *viññāṇa* not as a nutriment, but as a result of nutriment ...

The four nutriments are said to depend on a causal sequence which *includes* some of the four nutriments: *viññāṇa* and ‘contact’ are ‘nutriments’, but they are apparently caused by themselves. In other words, they are both cause and effect, and the same is probably true of the third nutriment—‘mental intention’—if this is equivalent to mental constructions/volitions (*saṅkhārā*), the second link in the chain of dependent origination.

Wynne (2018a: 119f) concludes that

the addition of a twelvefold version of dependent origination creates incoherence, and directs attention away from the meaning of the Buddha’s encounter with Sāti. Hence section 4 is out of step with the teaching to the teaching [sic] on personal identity which surrounds it ... section 4 thus obscures the meaning of a very important aspect of early Buddhist thought: the Buddha’s encounter with Upaniṣadic essentialism.

The presumed incoherence involves the speculations about the self, taken up in section 5 of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*. According to the

assessment by Wynne (2018a: 120), section 5 should not be preceded by an exposition of the twelve links of dependent arising (as found in section 4), as in this way the monks' indifference to such speculations <sup>[147]</sup>

is not because the *bhikkhus* understand that such questions are inappropriate, but rather because *the correct answer has already been given*. In short, to the question 'did we exist in the past ... what were we in the past?', dependent origination in its twelvefold form provides an answer along the lines 'yes, we did exist in the past, in the form of a specific sequence of individual continuity.'

Regarding the first argument about a disagreement between sections 3 and 4, it needs to be noted that section 3 does not explicitly refer to consciousness, *viññāṇa*. In other words, this argument is based on the assumption that the reference to what has come to be, *bhūtaṃ*, must refer to *viññāṇa* (Wynne 2018a: 114). Although this is of course possible, as Wynne (2018a: 113) notes himself, the commentary rather takes the phrase *bhūtaṃ idaṃ* to refer to all five aggregates.<sup>5</sup>

The same expression occurs in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* as part of an exegesis of a verse from the *Pārāyana-vagga*.<sup>6</sup> Both the *Samyutta-nikāya* discourse and the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* continue with a reference to the origination of what has come to be due to nutriment, *tadāhāra-sambhavaṃ*. Nevertheless, no reference to consciousness, *viññāṇa*, can be found in either the relevant part of this *Samyutta-nikāya* discourse or in the *Pārāyana-vagga* verse. The commentary on the *Samyutta-nikāya* also understands the phrase *bhūtaṃ idaṃ* to intend all five aggregates.<sup>7</sup>

Turning to the situation in the Chinese Āgama parallels, the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse has as its counterpart to the reference to *bhūtaṃ idaṃ* (in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*) the phrase "truly said", 真說,<sup>8</sup> apparently

<sup>5</sup> Ps II 307,12.

<sup>6</sup> SN 12.31 at SN II 48,4; commenting on Sn 1038. The assessment of this text by Wynne 2018a: 125 as "relatively late", without any consultation of parallel versions, is unconvincing.

<sup>7</sup> Spk II 61,3.

<sup>8</sup> MĀ 201 at T I 767b12.



taking whatever equivalent to Pāli *bhūtaṃ* was found in its Indic original in the sense of *bhūta* as “truth”. This is not an isolated understanding by Gautama Saṅghadeva, the translator of the *Madhyama-āgama*, as the other occurrence of the expression *bhūtaṃ idaṃ* in the *Samyutta-nikāya* discourse commenting on the verse from the *Pārāyana-vagga* has <sup>[148]</sup> its counterpart in “truth”, 真實, in a *Samyukta-āgama* parallel translated by Bǎoyún (寶雲).<sup>9</sup>

Whatever value one may be willing to accord to the two commentarial explanations and to the understandings of the Chinese translators of the *Madhyama-āgama* and the *Samyukta-āgama* respectively, there is clearly room for different understandings of the cryptic phrase *bhūtaṃ idaṃ*.

Given that the relevant section in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* does not mention *viññāṇa* explicitly, it is not really possible to construe an incoherence on the mere assumption that this section must be a reference to consciousness. After all, it is only because of this particular interpretation that the assumed incoherence has materialized. This would perhaps more naturally call into question the interpretation rather than the coherence of the discourse itself.

Regarding the second argument concerning a mention of both cause and effect, it needs to be kept in mind that even the standard formulation of dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*) by way of twelve links shows a similar feature. Name in the fourth link of name-and-form is elsewhere explained as corresponding to feeling tone, perception, intention, contact, and attention.<sup>10</sup> Yet, contact is also the sixth link and feeling tone the seventh link in the standard formulation of dependent arising. When such a recurrence is already found in the standard set of twelve links, it can hardly be employed as an argument for a supposed incoherence of section 4 in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*.

As for the third argument about the incoherent placement of the exposition of dependent arising before the monks affirm their disinterest in speculations about the self, a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* that takes up

<sup>9</sup> SĀ 345 at T II 95b17.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., SN 12.2 at SN II 3,34 and its parallel EĀ 49.5 at T II 797b28.

the same series of speculations can be considered in the light of its parallels preserved in Chinese translation and Sanskrit fragments.<sup>11</sup> The parallel versions agree [149] in clarifying that a noble disciple is beyond such speculations due to insight into dependent arising. This shows that it is indeed meaningful for the *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya-sutta* to proceed from a depiction of dependent arising in section 4 to the absence of speculations about the self in section 5. Thus, the suggestion that section 4 must be a later interpolation remains unconvincing.

In sum, none of the arguments discussed above suffices to establish section 4 as an obvious interpolation. Yet, according to Wynne (2018a: 118), with section 4

the Buddha has apparently gone off on a tangent. What had been a discussion of Sāti's error, the dependent nature of *viññāṇa* and its 'nutriment' or generation, is now an analysis of individual continuity over time (and lifetimes).

Rather than reflecting a tangent, section 4 could instead be seen as targeting precisely the problem of Sāti's error, which was about continuity during the round of rebirths. From this viewpoint, section 4 can be considered an appropriate response to Sāti's view that the same consciousness transmigrates.

In fact, the exact opposite of Wynne's hypothesis could also be proposed, namely that section 4 is original and what precedes and follows it is a later addition. I now present such an alternative case, in order to document that subjective impressions of coherence can differ and are for this reason not sufficient in themselves to determine the lateness of a particular passage. This is not a reflection of my own opinion on the narrative coher-

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<sup>11</sup> SĀ 296 at T II 84b27 and S 474 folio 11 V7–10, Tripāṭhī 1962: 40, parallels to SN 12.20 at SN II 26,27. Wynne 2018a: 125 comments that SN 12.20 "looks like a fairly late composition" due to the occurrence of some rare terminology. Yet, frequency of occurrence does not equal earliness. Some very rare terms can be quite ancient. Besides, the parallels to SN 12.20 have a similar presentation. Here as well as elsewhere, it is important that assessments of lateness are considered in the light of the evidence that can be garnered from a comparative study of parallels.

ence of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta*, but instead merely an attempt to show that alternative perspectives are possible.

In order to argue for such an alternative position, it could be contended that it is unexpected for the Buddha to involve the other monks in a question-and-answer catechism. It is certainly meaningful for him to give a teaching to the entire monastic congregation present on that occasion, but for him to question the other monks closely would make better sense if they had somehow shown signs of having misunderstood his teachings. Yet, the one who misunderstood what the Buddha had taught was Sāti, whereas the other monks had been trying their best to convince him of his [150] mistake. There seems therefore little reason for the Buddha to question the monks as to whether they had doubts about what ‘has come to be’, as he does in section 3, since their earlier behaviour had already shown them to be beyond such doubts. Nor does it seem particularly clear why he should ask the monks if they entertain meaningless speculations about the self in relation to past, future, and present, as he does in section 5. One might suspect such speculations to have been entertained by Sāti, but not by those who tried to convince him of his wrong view.

Instead of querying the monks, as he does in sections 3 and 5, the Buddha should have directly targeted Sāti’s misunderstanding of the nature of consciousness by expounding dependent arising, as he does in section 4.

In sum, based on the reasoning just delineated, one might propose that sections 3 and 5 are the later interpolations. Removing these, the hypothetical original discourse would then be as follows (leaving aside sections 6 and 7 for the time being):

- ◇ The monk Sāti upholds the view that the same consciousness transmigrates through the round of rebirths, in spite of being censured for this claim by other monks. Called to the Buddha’s presence, he has to face a firm rebuke for his mistaken idea. (1)
- ◇ The Buddha explains that consciousness is dependently arisen, comparable to fire that depends on fuel. (2)
- ◇ The Buddha expounds the four nutriment, tracing their conditioned arising from craving back to ignorance; next outlines dependent arising

ing via the standard twelve links from ignorance to old age and death and back again to ignorance; and then covers the cessation mode of dependent arising in forward and reverse order. (4)

This alternative hypothesis results in a sequence as meaningful as the one proposed by Alexander Wynne. On this alternative hypothesis, the Buddha continues directly from expounding the conditionality of consciousness in relation to the six senses to its role as one of the four nutriments, which serve as a maintenance for living beings that have come to be and that are about to come to be.<sup>12</sup> This directly addresses Sāti's misunderstanding<sup>[151]</sup> about transmigration without any need to engage the other monks in a catechism on the dependent nature of what 'has come to be' or to verify their disinterest in speculations about the self.

In order to prevent potential misunderstandings, I would like to repeat that the above alternative hypothesis does not reflect my own view of the narrative coherence of the discourse. Instead, it is only meant to show that subjective assumptions about coherence of ideas can differ. For this reason, they do not suffice on their own to distinguish between earlier and later layers of a discourse and, in my view, should not be made the sole basis for taking a definite stance on which parts of a text are later additions. Instead of relying on perceived thematic and terminological discontinuities, assessments of earlier and later strata are preferably made based on solid evidence, such as the absence of the passage in question from a parallel version. A case in point would be the qualification "concise" or "succinct", *saṅkhitta*, discussed earlier. Here we do have a clear-cut difference between the parallel versions, albeit a minor one. Hence, there is indeed room for constructing hypotheses regarding which of the two discourses has preserved the earlier version of this part of the text.

## Comparative Study of the *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya-sutta*

Wynne (2018a: 123f) quotes from my comparative study of the *Mahātaṇhā-*

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<sup>12</sup> MN 38 at MN I 261,5: *bhūtānaṃ vā sattānaṃ t̥hitiyā, sambhavesīnaṃ vā anuggahāya*; Wynne 2018a: 119 considers this to be an addition to the discourse.

*saṅkhaya-sutta* and then adds his criticism of the same as follows: “the present discourse’s main concern ... is dependent arising’ (Anālayo 2011c: 256). This judgement overlooks significant differences within the text, and papers over the cracks that run through the early Buddhist tradition.”

The context of my statement is an evaluation of the appropriateness of the gradual path account in the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* in the light of the apparent absence of such an account in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel. The passage in question reads in full:

The present discourse’s main concern, however, is dependent arising, which would not require a full account of the gradual path of training. The audience of the Buddha <sup>[152]</sup> in this particular instance are monks who are already disciples in higher training. Thus the members of his audience would have been well acquainted with the gradual path of training from their own experience and would therefore not need to be given a detailed account of it. These points would support the presentation in the *Madhyama-āgama* version, which does not have a full account of the gradual path.

Rather than overlooking significant differences, my concern is precisely to study them. The accusation that this statement “papers over the cracks that run through the early Buddhist tradition” seems groundless, as the very purpose of the discussion in this passage is to show that the Pāli version could be the result of an expansion of the text.

Wynne (2018a: 124) continues his criticism as follows: “The same tendency to homogenize can be seen in Anālayo’s description of the account of personal maturation and habituation to pleasure.” The passage that supposedly reflects a tendency to homogenize proceeds as follows (Anālayo 2011c: 255):

The *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel report how, after successful conception, following the period of the mother’s pregnancy a child is born, grows up, and develops a liking for pleasant experiences and a dislike for unpleasant ones. The grown-up thereby delights in feeling tone, which in turn leads

to the remaining links of dependent arising. In both versions, the present passage thus forms a practical application of the previous treatment of dependent arising by way of its twelve links in forward and backward order, illustrating how delight in feeling tone leads to clinging and therewith to the conditioned arising of *dukkha*.

Wynne (2018a: 124) objects:

There is nothing ‘practical’ about the idea of a *gandhabba* descending into the mother’s womb, and in no way is the statement that the young boy starts to play games an *application*, of any sort, of the twelfold chain of Dependent Origination.

The objection seems to be based on a misunderstanding. As the full quote above shows, my concern is not the *gandhabba*’s <sup>[153]</sup> descent into the mother’s womb but what happens afterwards, when the person in question has grown up and delights in sensual pleasures. My comment is about a passage that comes later and which takes up the remaining links of dependent arising, where delight in feeling tone at the six sense doors leads to clinging, becoming, and birth, etc. This passage involves an application of the principle of dependent arising to what I would consider a “practical” illustrative situation (compared to just a bare listing of the links of dependent arising as such), namely the enjoyment of sense objects that are related to sensual desire.

## Conclusion

The qualification of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* as offering a “succinct” instruction on liberation by the destruction of craving could be the result of an error during oral transmission, caused by a recurrent use of the same qualification in the preceding discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. The complex narrative structure of the *Mahātaṇhāsāṅkhaya-sutta* could be reduced in various ways, yet such a procedure does not necessarily lead to a convincing reconstruction of its original form. Evaluations of parts of the text as being earlier or later would be considerably more convincing if based on actual differences discernible by a comparative study of parallel versions extant in different transmission lineages.



## XVII

### The Beginnings of Abhidharma

In this chapter I intend to clarify aspects of my research on the emergence of Abhidharma thought, in reply to comments voiced by von Hinüber (2019a) and Johnson (2019).<sup>1</sup> The aspects taken up are the significance of the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* in relation to the attribution of omniscience to the Buddha and the comparative lateness of the *Anupada-sutta* as a testimony to a tendency for analyses of the mind to become increasingly concerned with providing a comprehensive coverage.

#### The Buddha's Omniscience

Later Buddhist traditions are in general agreement that the Buddha should be reckoned to have been omniscient. This idea may well have played a key role in the development of Abhidharma thought, in the sense that such type of thought would have emerged from an attempt to provide a coverage as comprehensive as possible, mirroring the omniscient knowledge that had come to be attributed to the Buddha.

The position that the Buddha was omniscient is not easily reconciled with the way the early discourses present him. A sufficiently strong argument in this respect was made by Gombrich (2007: 206f) as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> The latter more specifically criticizes Sujato and Brahmali 2014.



the idea that the Buddha was omniscient is strikingly at odds with the picture of him presented in every *Vinaya* tradition ... [which] show that the Buddha ... occasionally made a false start and found it necessary to reverse a decision. Since omniscience includes knowledge of the future, this is not omniscience.

Several early discourses of different transmission lineages support the impression that, during early stages in the development of Buddhist thought, the founder of the tradition was not yet seen as omniscient.<sup>2</sup> In addition, a Pāli discourse (of which no parallel is known) explicitly reports the Buddha stating that he did not claim to be omniscient. The relevant passage in the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* proceeds as follows:<sup>3</sup> [22]

Vaccha, those who speak like this: “The recluse Gotama is omniscient and all-seeing; he claims to have complete knowledge and vision thus: ‘When walking, standing, awake, and asleep, knowledge and vision are established in me continuously and uninterruptedly,’ they are not speaking what has been said by me, but they are misrepresenting me with what is untrue and false.

The Pāli commentary struggles with this statement and reasons that it should not be read as a total rejection.<sup>4</sup>

“He is omniscient and all-seeing; he claims to have complete knowledge and vision,” this would indeed have to be granted. But “When walking ... etc. ... are established,” this should not be granted.

<sup>2</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2014c: 117–125.

<sup>3</sup> [2] MN 71 at MN I 482,14: *ye te, vaccha, evamāhaṃsu: samaṇo gotamo sabbaññū sabba-dassāvī, aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti: carato ca me tiṭṭhato ca suttassa ca jāgarassa ca satataṃ samitaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paccupaṭṭhitan ti, na me te vuttavādino, abbhācikkhanti ca pana man te asatā abhūtenā ti.*

<sup>4</sup> [3] Ps III 195,19: *sabbaññū sabbadassāvī aparisesaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ paṭijānāti ti hi idaṃ anujānitabbaṃ siyā, carato ca me ... pe ... paccupaṭṭhitan ti idaṃ pana nānujānitabbaṃ. sabbaññūtaññāṇena hi āvajjitvā va jānāti. tasmā ananuññāya tthatvā anuññam pi paṭikkhipanto evam āha.*

He indeed knows with omniscient knowledge when adverting to it. For this reason, keeping with what is not permissible and disregarding what is permissible, he speaks like this.

The explanation is rather strained. The Buddha has explicitly been asked by Vacchagotta to clarify if the attribution of such a claim to himself was correct or rather a misrepresentation. Such a request is quite natural in the oral setting of ancient India, where being face to face with someone offers a convenient opportunity to clarify if certain rumours are correct. Given the setting, it would be out of keeping with the way the Buddha is portrayed elsewhere if he had given a reply that is only partially true. Had the intention been to reject merely the notion of continuous presence of omniscience, it would have been more straightforward for him to be shown to say so directly.

In fact, the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* continues with Vacchagotta inquiring further. Given that he has now found out what type of claim should not be attributed to the Buddha, as that would be a misrepresentation, he wants to know in what way one can avoid any misrepresentation, that is, what did the Buddha claim to have reached? Had the situation been as imagined in the commentary, at this point the Buddha should have clarified the type of omniscience he indeed claimed to have. Instead of doing that, however, according to the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* the Buddha only claimed to have reached the three higher knowledges. These are recollection of his own past lives, the divine eye, and the destruction of the influxes, which are the three knowledges generally associated with the night of his awakening.<sup>5</sup> The continuity of the discussion in the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* thereby makes it unmistakably clear that the commentary does not accurately explain the discourse. [23]

The commentarial gloss may have been inspired by the fact that the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta* attributes a claim of being endowed with the continuous presence of omniscience to the Jain leader Mahāvīra (referred to by his clan's name as Nāthaputta or Nātaputta):<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Anālayo 2017d: 96–124.

<sup>6</sup> [4] MN 14 at MN I 92,35.

Friend, the Nigaṇṭha Nāthaputta is omniscient and all-seeing; he claims to have complete knowledge and vision thus: “When walking, standing, awake, and asleep, knowledge and vision are established in me continuously and uninterruptedly.”

This part of the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta* is not supported by its three Chinese parallels, which do not take up Mahāvīra’s claim to omniscience.<sup>7</sup>

An occasion where the Buddha could have been shown to refute the type of claim attributed to Mahāvīra occurs in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*, which reports the Buddha being asked if he had in principle rejected the possibility of omniscience. The Buddha clarifies that this was yet another misrepresentation, as he had only rejected the possibility of knowing everything simultaneously:<sup>8</sup>

Great King, I acknowledge having made a statement in this way:  
“There is no recluse or brahmin who knows everything and sees everything simultaneously; this is an impossibility.”

A similar statement occurs in parallels in the *Madhyama-āgama* and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.<sup>9</sup> The Pāli commentary explains that the key expression *sakideva* here refers to knowing all with a single adverting through a single state of mind, *ekacittena*.<sup>10</sup>

The point of the type of statement reported in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta* and its parallels is thus only to clarify that it is not possible for a single act of knowing to comprise everything knowable. This does not reject the claim made by Mahāvīra as something that is in principle impossible. Perhaps this lack of explicit rejection motivated the position taken in the commentarial gloss on the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*, in an attempt to establish the Buddha’s omniscience and at the same time reject the omniscience claimed by Mahāvīra.

<sup>7</sup> [5] MĀ 100 at T I 587b18, T 54 at T I 849a17, and T 55 at T I 850c6.

<sup>8</sup> [6] MN 90 at MN II 127,28.

<sup>9</sup> [7] MĀ 212 at T I 793c6 and D 1, *kha* 88b1 or P 1030 *ge* 81b6; see Anālayo 2014c: 120.

<sup>10</sup> [8] Ps III 357,2.

In a discussion of the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*, von Hinüber (2019a: 255) follows the commentarial gloss in stating that “the Buddha rejected the Jain view (as he does more often in the *Tipiṭaka*), but not his own omniscience”, in other words

the Buddha does not reject his being omniscient, but being omniscient in a particular way. For the Buddha explicitly rejects <sup>[24]</sup> the claim that he possesses omniscience (like Mahāvīra claims) of all and everything in one moment (2019a: 254).

This statement conflates the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* formulation with the one found in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*. The *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*, just as the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha-sutta*, is not about knowing all “in one moment”. The expression “in one moment” or “simultaneously” (*sakideva*) only occurs in the *Kaṇṇakatthala-sutta*.

In other words, there appear to be two types of omniscience under discussion in these discourses. One of these two positions is a claim attributed to Mahāvīra and mistakenly also attributed to the Buddha, which he rejects. This is the claim to continuous omniscience. The claim implies that at any time, whatever one’s posture, be it awake or asleep, one is able to access complete knowledge and vision. The other position, not attributed to either of the two and rejected by the Buddha as something in principle impossible, is the idea that everything can be known in one moment or simultaneously.

The difference between the two positions could be illustrated with the example of Wikipedia. The first position would amount to claiming that one has continuous internet access to whatever information can be found in Wikipedia; the second one would be the claim that one is able to access all information found in Wikipedia simultaneously. The latter is impossible; even with the best imaginable internet connection, one can only open one page at a time.

In addition to being based on a conflation of these two types of omniscience, the discussion in von Hinüber (2019a: 254) also expresses criticism of my study of the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* in Anālayo (2014c), as

the important middle part of the quotation is left out, which says:

“whether I am walking or standing or sleeping or awake knowledge and vision are continuously and uninterruptedly present to me” (Bhikkhu Bodhi). If this sentence is taken into account the interpretation changes considerably.

Firstly, the assumption that this part changes the interpretation is based on following the commentarial gloss combined with the conflation mentioned above. Secondly, the implicit criticism that I left out parts of the original that were not congenial to my interpretation is unfounded. In fact, I had introduced the relevant discussion in Anālayo (2014c: 117 note 61) by stating that “my discussion of omniscience is based on revised excerpts” from an article of mine published on this topic previously. In that earlier article, I had already examined the commentarial explanation (Anālayo 2006a: 6): [25]

The Pāli commentary tries to reconcile this statement with the view that the Buddha was omniscient by explaining that the Buddha’s refusal referred only to the later part of this proclamation, to being endowed with omniscience “continuously”. Yet, in that case one would expect the Buddha to refute only that part of the statement and explain the type of omniscience with which he was endowed, instead of reckoning the attribution of a claim to omniscience to him as misrepresentation, untrue, and contrary to the fact.

Following up the reference given by me to this article, which is freely available on the internet for download, could have clarified that there is no need for me to suppress part of the original in order to support my interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [9] A not entirely adequate treatment of my work is also evident in the remark by von Hinüber 2019a: 247 note 40 that “Bhikkhu Anālayo seems to hide the embarrassing wording of Upaka’s answer in a footnote,” made with reference to Anālayo 2011c: 184 note 214. This forms part of a discussion by von Hinüber 2019a: 247 of the report of the first encounter the recently awakened Buddha had with someone else, where “Upaka remains sceptical, which was hard to digest for later Buddhists.” Now, the point of my footnote 214 is actually to present evidence for a suggested overall pattern of the verse exchange between the Buddha and Upaka, as the parallel versions differ in regard to

## Sāriputta's Analysis of Absorption

The other topic to be covered in this chapter is the *Anupada-sutta*'s description of Sāriputta's analysis of absorption. Several features of the discourse point to its comparative lateness, which makes it an important testimony to the evolution of Abhidharma thought.

In an introduction to her translation of the *Dhammasaṅgani*, C. A. F. Rhys Davids (1900/1922: viii) notes the occurrence of terminology in the *Anupada-sutta* that is distinctly late:

The intrusion of two words—of *anupada*, and of *vavatthita*, 'determined'—which are not the old idiom, suggest a later editing and show us that when this editing took place, the period of the compiling of the naïf crude analyses of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka was either at hand, or not far removed in time.

Bhikkhu Nyanaponika (1949/1985: 54f) comments that

Though *anupada* does not occur frequently in the Piṭakas, it is also not at all an expression characteristic of any later period of Pāli literature; so we cannot draw any conclusions from the mere fact of rare occurrence. With regard to the other word, it is true that derivatives of the verb *vattheti*, *vavatthita* and particularly *vavatthāna*, are found very frequently in later canonical books as the *Paṭisambhidā-Magga* and the *Vibhaṅga*, and especially in the commentaries and the *Visuddhimagga*. But *vavatthita*, 'determined' or 'established', is likewise not such a highly technical term that the dating of a text could be based on that evidence alone.

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the sequence and at times also content of these verses. His final reaction at the conclusion of this exchange comes up earlier in my comparative study, discussed in the main text rather than in a footnote; Anālayo 2011c: 183: "during this meeting, the Buddha proclaimed that he had reached full awakening. This proclamation apparently did not convince Upaka, since all versions report that he left the Buddha and took a different road." This is far from an attempt to hide the fact that the Buddha's first encounter after his awakening did not result in a successful conversion.

Another argument has recently been made by Johnson (2019: 107), referring to the occurrence of the term *anupubbābhisaññānirodhasampajāna-samāpatti* in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*.<sup>12</sup> He notes that “it would be difficult to find this particular compound word outside of this one *sutta*,<sup>[26]</sup> yet this *sutta*, the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*, seems an authentic teaching of the Buddha.” He then reasons, in relation to the *Anupada-sutta*, that this discourse “contains enough unique elements to warrant some creative use of vocabulary and compound words befitting the particular emphasis of the teaching” (2019: 108).

However, the compound in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* combines terminology found regularly elsewhere: *anupubba*, “gradual”, *nirodha*, “cessation”, *sampajāna*, “clear knowing”, and *samāpatti*, “attainment”. The only real innovation is the addition of the prefix *abhi-* to the otherwise very common term *saññā*, “perception”. In contrast, terms like *anupada* and *vavatthita* are indeed foreign to the language of the Pāli discourses.

Moreover, the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* has parallels in Sanskrit and Chinese which, although not using exactly the same term, testify to a similar idea. The Sanskrit fragment parallel speaks of the “cessation of higher perception and feeling”, *abhisamjñāveditanirodha*.<sup>13</sup> The occurrence of *abhisamjñā* at the outset of this compound testifies to the existence in another reciter tradition of the only term in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*’s compound that indeed seems to be unique to its exposition, *abhisaññā*. The *Dirgha-āgama* parallel speaks of the “gradual attainment of the concentration on the cessation of perception and knowing”, 次第得想知滅定.<sup>14</sup> If this were to be translated into Pāli, it could become something quite closely corresponding to the phrase found in the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*.

Comparable support for the terminology in the *Anupada-sutta* is not available, as no parallel to this discourse is known. This is not to take the position that absence of a parallel automatically implies lateness. As rightly pointed out by Skilling (2020), to question the authenticity of a discourse

<sup>12</sup> [10] DN 9 at DN I 184,26.

<sup>13</sup> [11] *Dirgha-āgama* fragment 418r1, Melzer 2006: 256; see also the reconstruction of Or.15009/625 verso 6 in Kudo and Shono 2015: 433.

<sup>14</sup> [12] DĀ 28 at T I 110c8.

simply because it has no parallels is unconvincing, as it may have had counterparts in any of the canons that do not survive (see also above p. 206ff). In the present case, the *Anupada-sutta* in fact shares the status of lacking parallels with the *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta*, discussed above. It seems best to avoid drawing far-reaching conclusions based on such lack of parallels. What definitely results from such a situation is just that the evidence for reconstructing early Buddhist thought provided by such a discourse is comparatively weak and would be stronger if it had parallels that have a similar presentation.

Returning to the suggestion of the comparative lateness of the *Anupada-sutta*, another relevant observation, also made already by C. A. F. Rhys Davids (1900/1922: ix), is the inconsistent nature of the listing of mental <sup>[27]</sup> factors in descriptions of the absorptions in this discourse, where “two quite distinct lists are lumped together.” In the case of the first absorption, for example, the mental factors mentioned in the standard description found elsewhere in the discourses come with the conjunction *ca*. This conjunction is missing in the remainder of the list.<sup>15</sup> The difference can best be evidenced by providing a literal translation:

application and sustaining and joy and happiness and mental unification and contact, feeling, perception, volition, mind, desire, determination, energy, mindfulness, equipoise, attention.

Such inconsistency is a fairly strong sign of a combination of two originally different listings. Johnson (2019: 110), however, objects to such a conclusion:

I think there is a very obvious reason for using “*ca*” in the list of *jhāna* factors in [the] *Anupada-sutta*, and dropping it in the second list in the same passage ... the word “*ca*” can denote things that are linked together in time and space. It is a good word to indicate factors that arise simultaneously. The latter list has a different purpose. It is designated to indicate sequence, not simulta-

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<sup>15</sup> <sup>[13]</sup> MN 111 at MN III 25,15: *vitakko ca vicāro ca pīti ca sukhañ ca cittekaggatā ca phasso vedanā saññā cetanā cittaṃ chando adhimokkha viriyaṃ sati upekkhā manasikāro.*



neity. By listing factors without “*ca*” the effect of communicating a sequence (rather than simultaneity) is enhanced. Hence the title of the *Anupada-sutta*, with the idea of [a] sequence of mental states being one of the main points being taught. They occurred one by one, not at the same time.

For absorption to take place, the simultaneous existence of the factors in the second part of the list is also required. Being in the first absorption does not only necessitate application, sustaining, joy, happiness, and mental unification. If mindfulness and attention were to be missing, for example, the attainment of absorption could not happen.

Moreover, the phrase *anupada*, “step by step”, applies to all members of the above list. It is not relevant only to its second part. Thus, the attempt to account for the irregular use of the conjunction *ca* in the above listing as intentional is not convincing. A more reasonable explanation is indeed that we have here a combination of what originally were two different lists.

The impression of a combination of originally different textual pieces finds further support in the circumstance, already noted by Schmithausen (1981: 231 note 116), that at times the resulting description of an absorption results in duplications: [28]

The lists of the mental factors present in the various stages are clearly heterogeneous, each consisting of two different sets, the first of which comprises the specific factors of the respective stage, whereas the second list contains factors equally present in all stages (viz. *phasso*, *vedanā* etc.). In some instances, the mechanical combination of these two sets has led to repetition: *sati* occurs twice in the case of the Third *Dhyāna*, *upekkhā* in the case of the Third and Fourth *Dhyāna*.

However, Johnson (2019: 105) asserts that “the Buddha’s teaching as given in the *suttas*, often used duplication and redundancy.” It would perhaps be more correct to say that “repetition” is a recurrent feature of the early discourses. In contrast, the kind of doubling of terms found in the *Anupada-sutta* is indeed unusual. Although on its own indeed not decisive,

it does support the impression that the discourse combines two originally different listings. The first part corresponds to the usual description of absorption attainment in the discourses, whose concerns are to facilitate absorption attainment by way of highlighting the most significant aspects of each level of such attainment. The second part, however, includes mental factors present in any state of mind. Its concerns are thus different from those of the first part. Among Pāli discourses, an explicit listing of the presence of mental factors in an absorption that are found in every state of mind (such as contact, feeling, perception, and volition) is unique to the *Anupada-sutta* and has parallels only in Abhidharma texts.

Together with the other points surveyed above, it seems fair to conclude that arguments proposed by various scholars in support of the relative lateness of the *Anupada-sutta* present a convincing assessment of the discourse. At the same time, however, the very fact of being included in the *Majjhima-nikāya* collection shows that the *Anupada-sutta* is not that late. In other words, such assessment need not result in a wholesale rejection of the discourse. Instead, it can be considered to provide a fascinating window on early trends in the development of Abhidharma thought.

Yet, according to Johnson (2019: 93) “the *Anupada-sutta* is often ignored by meditation teachers or considered to be inauthentic by scholars who propound the *Visuddhimagga*.” This seems curious, since the *Visuddhimagga* is clearly later than the *Anupada-sutta*. The problem here appears to be rather the possibility of relying on the *Anupada-sutta* to authenticate the idea of insight absorption, *vipassanā-jhāna*, as something already found in the early discourses. [29]

However, the origin of the notion of *vipassanā-jhānas* appears to be quite recent, emerging as a strategic move adopted by Mahāsi Sayādaw in order to defend his approach to insight meditation against the objection that it bypasses the cultivation of absorption.<sup>16</sup> From having been employed as a strategy in a debate, the idea has quickly gained appeal among Buddhist modernists, presumably because it enables authenticating even shallow

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<sup>16</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2020a.

states of concentration with the prestigious label of being a “*jhāna*”.<sup>17</sup> Attempts to argue that such states correspond to the description of absorption found in the discourses often rely on the *Anupada-sutta*, in the belief that it shows Sāriputta contemplating the arising and disappearing of mental factors while immersed in an absorption.

The type of reasoning involved can be exemplified with the statement by Gethin (2020b: 40) that the description of Sāriputta’s contemplation implies that his “knowledge occurs within each attainment.” In line with the resultant perspective, Gethin (2020a: 127 and 129f) then argues that the *Jhāna-saṃyutta* (SN 53) shows that practices listed earlier in the *Mahā-vagga* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* are typically developed while the practitioner is in absorption attainment. Yet, the *Jhāna-saṃyutta*, for which no parallel is known, appears to be simply the outcome of the proliferation of repetitions in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, by way of combining the standard description of the four absorptions with repetition series found at the end of previous *saṃyuttas* in the *Mahā-vagga*.<sup>18</sup> This does not imply that the practices described in these previous *saṃyuttas* require absorption. Take the first of these *saṃyuttas* on the noble eightfold path (SN 45). It could hardly be maintained that cultivation of path factors like right action or right livelihood, for example, involve absorption attainment. Such unconvincing conclusions can be drawn from the idea that insight takes place during absorption, as supposedly testified by the *Anupada-sutta*.

This is indeed the position defended by Johnson (2019: 95) when he states that “in each of the *jhānas*, Ven. Sāriputta is aware and open to the arising of phenomena ... Ven. Sāriputta is having insight while in *jhāna*.” It follows that “in the *Anupada-sutta*, the *samādhi* practiced by Ven. Sāriputta is not a state of intense concentration to the exclusion of various phenomena, but rather open, aware, and relaxed, allowing phenomena to arise.” This assessment is best evaluated in the light of the actual description in the *Anupada-sutta*, where the relevant part proceeds as follows:<sup>19</sup> [30]

<sup>17</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2022c: 184–197.

<sup>18</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2022c: 153–155.

<sup>19</sup> [14] MN 111 at MN III 25,18.

Known to him these states arose, known they remained, known they disappeared. He understood thus: “Indeed, in this way these states, which have not been for me, come into being; having been, they disappear.”

As already clarified quite some time ago by Vetter (1988: 69), “it is certainly not possible to observe, as is stated in the text, the disappearance of these qualities in any of these states [i.e., the absorptions], because they are constituted by these qualities.” In other words, the arising and disappearance of the mental factors of an absorption can only be observed either before entry into absorption or else after emerging from it. If these factors were to disappear, the absorption attainment would concomitantly be lost. The same holds for their arising, which implies that up to that point they had not been present. Without their presence, the absorption cannot come into being.

The situation could perhaps be illustrated with the example of someone using warm water mixed with medicinal herbs to bathe a wounded hand. The patient might immerse the hand into the water that “having been boiled, cools down”, and once it has become too cold, starts heating it again, as a result of which his hand is in water that “not being warm, comes to be warmed.” The popular interpretation of the *Anupada-sutta* is somewhat as if, on hearing this description, someone concludes that the hand was kept immersed even when the water was actually boiling. That is not possible, since immersion in boiling water would damage the hand. Similarly, cultivating insight into impermanence while being in an absorption is not possible, since attending to variety and change would damage the mental unification and stillness of an absorption.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, the perceived need to defend the authenticity of the *Anupada-sutta* relates to a misreading of its actual content. Whether early or late, the discourse simply does not provide support for the idea that contemplation of impermanence can take place while being immersed in one of the four absorptions.

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<sup>20</sup> [15] For a more detailed discussion see Anālayo 2017c: 110–150 and 2019a.

## Conclusion

The *Tevijjavacchagotta-sutta* does indeed testify to the lateness of the attribution of omniscience to the Buddha and the *Anupada-sutta* to the lateness of the tendency for analysis of the mind to attempt a comprehensive coverage. As of now, I see no reason to revise any aspect of my reconstruction of the beginnings of Abhidharma (Anālayo 2014c) as being an attempt to achieve a comprehensive coverage that mirrors the notion of omniscience which by that time had come to be attributed to the Buddha.

## XVIII

### The Notion of Monastic Communion

In this chapter, I argue that a breach of a *pārājika* rule does not necessarily result in an act of expulsion, contrary to a recurrent assertion made in *Vinaya* scholarship. For example, in an entry on “Vinaya” in the *Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*, Prebish (2018: 98) asserts: “Violation of any one of the *pārājika-dharmas* results in permanent expulsion from the *saṃgha*.” This exhibits a standard position taken in current scholarship on the repercussions a fully-ordained monastic incurs by violating one of the *pārājika* rules. However, in an article originally published in 2016 and republished in a monograph with collected papers on *Vinaya* in 2017, I argued that such a simple equation is not tenable.<sup>1</sup> Given the time it takes for a contribution to a handbook to be published, it can safely be assumed that, at the time of writing, Charles Prebish would simply not have been aware of my discussion.

A position similar to that of Prebish is taken by Heirman (2016/2017: 160), who states:

The so-called *pārājika* rules comprise the first category of regulations in the *prātimokṣa*—a list of rules for monks (*bhikṣu*) and nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*). Offending against any of these rules results in permanent expulsion from full monastic status.

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\* Originally published in 2019 under the title “*Pārājika* Does not Necessarily Entail Expulsion” in the *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism at Soka University*, 22: 3–8.

<sup>1</sup> See Anālayo 2017i: 7–33.

In a footnote appended to this affirmation, Heirman (2016/2017: 160 note 1) refers to publications on the *śikṣādattaka* observance by Clarke (2000 and 2009b) as well as by Greene (2017), and to my own contribution as “a recent critical reply to Shayne Clarke’s hypothesis”. Although she thus must have been aware of my argument, perhaps her reference to my paper was a last-minute addition to a completed article and thus did not result in either a reformulation of the statement quoted above or a reply to my position. <sup>[4]</sup>

Another case is the following assertion by Kieffer-Pülz (2018: 41): “In the Theravāda tradition, breaking of the *Pārājika* rules leads to irreversible exclusion from the Buddhist community.” Here, too, the statement is accompanied by a footnote referencing my study and in this case with a criticism of my position. I will return to this criticism below.

The above-quoted recently published statements by three *Vinaya* scholars have left me with the impression that it would perhaps be useful if I summarize my position here in order to clarify why, as far as I can see, an equation of *pārājika* with expulsion or exclusion (be it for *Vinaya* traditions in general or for the Theravāda tradition in particular) is not tenable, at least as long as such expulsion or exclusion is understood to refer to some action undertaken by others.<sup>2</sup>

### Breach of Celibacy by a *Bhikṣu*

In what follows I take, by way of example, the case of a fully ordained male monastic, a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu*, who intentionally engages in sexual intercourse without having previously renounced his monastic status. As a result, at the very moment of penetration he becomes one who is “not in communion”, *asaṃvāsa*. This is the terminology used in the formulation of the relevant *pārājika* rule itself.<sup>3</sup> Here the term *saṃvāsa* refers to “communion” in a legal

<sup>2</sup> <sup>[1]</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971: 383 and 450) gives for “exclusion” the sense of “shutting from a place, a society, etc., debarring from privilege” and for “expulsion” the sense of “the action of expelling, or driving out by force (a person or thing); the turning out (of a person) from an office, a society, etc.”.

<sup>3</sup> <sup>[2]</sup> Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1429 at T XXII 1015c7: 不共住, Kāśyapīya *Vinaya*, T 1460

sense;<sup>4</sup> it does not concern residential rights in a particular monastery. As a technical term in *Vinaya* usage, *saṃvāsa* reflects the need for fully-ordained monastics to be in communion with each other, so as to be able to form the quorum required for the performance of valid legal acts.

If a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* intentionally engages in sexual intercourse, this does not require others to take any action to expel or exclude him from communion. Loss of communion has been incurred simply by the fact of the violation itself. From that very moment onwards, he is no longer a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* and has lost the rights that come with that status. This much has in fact already been pointed out by Hüsken (1997: 93), who notes that “if an offender is aware of his *pārājika* offence and leaves the order on his own initiative, the *Vinaya* describes no concrete act of expulsion.”

The impression that some action needs to be taken to expel or somehow ensure the exclusion of a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* who has broken a *pārājika* rule might in part result from a well-known [5] story that reports such an action taken by Mahāmoggallāna/Mahāmaudgalyāyana. The basic story line that emerges, based on a comparative study of a range of versions of this event, is as follows:<sup>5</sup> In spite of repeated requests, the Buddha does not recite the *pātimokkha/prātimokṣa*, because an immoral person is present in the *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* community. Mahāmoggallāna/Mahāmaudgalyāyana spots the culprit and escorts him outside of the building in which the *uposatha* ceremony was to be held.

Closer examination of this narrative makes it clear that the act of expulsion was warranted because the person was still pretending to be a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu*. He had come to the *uposatha* ceremony and seated himself among

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at T XXIV 659c26: 不應共住, Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravāda *Vinaya*, Tatia 1975: 6,21: *na labhate bhikṣuḥi sārddha saṃvāsaṃ*, Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1422 at T XXII 195a10: 不共住 (see also T 1422b at T XXII 200c22: 不應共事, and on this differing code of rule the remarks in Clarke 2015: 70), Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, Banerjee 1977: 14,6: *asaṃvāsyah*, Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, von Simson 2000: 163,7: *asaṃvāsyah*, and Theravāda *Vinaya*, Pruitt and Norman 2001: 8,7: *asaṃvāso*.

<sup>4</sup> [3] See also the Pāli commentary, Sp I 260,10.

<sup>5</sup> See Anālayo 2017i: 8–14.



the *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* community, pretending to be one of them. In fact, he tried to keep up this pretense throughout the whole night, even though the Buddha's refusal to recite the *pātimokkha/prātimokṣa* made it clear that something was wrong. Thus, the intervention by Mahāmoggallāna/Mahāmaudgalyāyana was required to remove a sham monk from the *uposatha* hall. It was this act of hypocrisy that led to his expulsion from the hall, in addition to whatever breach of a *pārājika* the culprit had committed earlier.

Another point to be kept in mind is that this particular act of expulsion or exclusion concerned the building in which the *uposatha* ceremony was held. The sham monk had no right to join the *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* community for this legal act because he had lost his privilege to participate in the *uposatha* ceremony. This differs from residential rights in a monastery. One who has broken a *pārājika* rule could in principle still continue to live at the same monastery where he previously dwelt. If a former *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* honestly acknowledges his breach of a *pārājika*, there would be no reason for him to be expelled or excluded from the monastery where he had been living as a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* (or from any other monastery). He could continue to dwell there as a layman or else by becoming a novice.

In sum, instead of employing terms like “exclusion” or “expulsion” that give the impression of an action taken by others, a preferable way of describing the situation would be to rely on the terminology employed in the very formulation of the *pārājika* rules themselves. This could be achieved with a formulation like this: Violation of a *pārājika* rule results in a permanent loss of communion (*saṃvāsa*) with the community of fully-ordained monastics.

### Novicehood and *Śikṣādattaka*

Quoting from my study, Kieffer-Pülz (2018: 41 note 58) expresses her criticism in the following way:

“The institution of the *śikṣādattaka* is in this respect comparable to the option of becoming a novice, mentioned in the Pāli commentary, by confessing that one has lost one's status as a fully ordained monk” (Anālayo 2017[i]: 29). In the Theravāda tradition,

a monk who commits a *Pārājika* offence is automatically excluded from the order. The question is whether he is only excluded from the status of a monk, or also from the status of a novice. In the earlier case his years as a novice would still count. [6]

Relating my proposition to the idea that one who has incurred a *pārājika* could still be a novice seems to be based on a misunderstanding. In my presentation I did not suggest that committing a *pārājika* offence would in itself result only in a downgrade from *bhikkhu/bhikṣu* to novice. The point of my discussion is about the possibility of continuing to stay at the same monastery by taking novice ordination, after having confessed a *pārājika*. Thus, my suggestion is only that one who has broken a *pārājika* and honestly acknowledges his breach may be allowed to live in robes at the same monastery after “having *become* a novice” (Anālayo 2017i: 26, italics added). This of course requires first taking novice ordination.

The part of my study that immediately precedes the sentence quoted by Kieffer-Pülz proceeds as follows:

The *śikṣādattaka* observance, in the way summarized by Clarke based on what is common among the different *Vinayas* that recognize this procedure, only institutionalizes the way in which a monk, who has offended against a *pārājika* rule, can continue to live in robes at a monastery in a position situated between novices and fully ordained monks. It does not change the nature of the *pārājika* offence itself. One who has actually committed a *pārājika* offence is still no longer considered a fully ordained monk according to these *Vinayas*. In fact, if these *Vinayas* did not recognize that having sex, etc., entails a breach of the *pārājika* rule, there would hardly have been any need for them to get into devising the *śikṣādattaka* option in the first place.

Kieffer-Pülz (2018: 41 note 58) objects that:

the *śikṣādattaka*-stage, therefore, definitely is more than “a more institutionalized version of the basic option of remaining in robes at a level below that of a fully ordained monk” (Anālayo 2017[i]: 30).

It rather reminds one of a Theravāda *bhikkhu* who has to live under probation (*parivāsa*) because he has concealed a *saṅghādisesa* offence.

This formulation risks obfuscating the difference between the irreversible and permanent loss of status incurred by one who has violated a *pārājika* and the temporary loss of such status that results from a *saṅghādisesa* offence. With or without the option of undertaking the *śikṣādattaka* observance, violation of a *pārājika* has definite and lasting consequences that go beyond temporary suspension.

Another criticism raised by Kieffer-Pülz (2018: 41 note 58) is as follows:

Anālayo's (2017[i]: 29) reference to the possibility of withdrawing from the monk's status by wishing to become a novice (i.e. deliberate downgrading from monk to novice)—which is completely independent of the *Pārājika* offences—does not fit in here ... in the Theravāda tradition the *Pārājiko* would be newly initiated as a novice and—unlike a *śikṣādattaka* who is hierarchically placed between monks and novices (Clarke 2000: 163)—would be at the lowest end of the hierarchy of the novices. Thus he cannot be equated with the *śikṣādattaka* from this point of view.

In my presentation I did not propose a simple equation of *śikṣādattaka* and novice. This much could be gathered from the following part (Anālayo 2017i: 30):

What happened with the *śikṣādattaka* observance appears to be that some *Vinayas* carved out a more institutionalized version of the basic option of remaining in robes at a level below that of a [7] fully ordained monk. This might have occurred in response to an increase in the number of such cases, leading to a felt need for more explicit legislation that also ensures that one who is willing to confess and thereby incur the resultant loss of status as a fully ordained monk can ensure that, following his demotion in status, at least he will be placed within the monastic hierarchy above the level of a

novice. In several *Vinayas* the attractiveness of admitting a breach of a *pārājika* seems in fact to have been increased by offering a few additional privileges, while at the same time keeping the *śikṣādattaka* observance still clearly distinct from the condition of being fully in communion.

The above should suffice to show that I did not just equate the *śikṣādattaka* observance with novice-hood and that I also duly recognized that one who undergoes this observance has more privileges than a novice. At the same time, however, these still fall short of the full set of privileges that come with full ordination as a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu*.

In sum, my main point is that the *śikṣādattaka* option does not change the nature of a *pārājika* offence. Instead, it seems to be a further development of a possibility recognized in all *Vinayas*, namely that someone who has violated a *pārājika* rule can in principle still live in robes at the same monastery, if he takes novice ordination. My intention is certainly not to equate the *śikṣādattaka* with becoming a novice, but much rather to clarify that becoming a novice can be seen as a precedent to what in some *Vinaya* traditions eventually became the *śikṣādattaka* observance.

This in turn makes it clear that this observance is considerably less dramatic a development than has sometimes been assumed. It certainly does not involve a substantially different understanding of the nature of a *pārājika* offence. In other words, there is no need to set apart the Theravāda tradition as differing substantially from other monastic traditions on the implications of a *pārājika*. Even in those *Vinayas* that recognize the *śikṣādattaka* option, breach of a *pārājika* rule still has its consequences. Although not invariably requiring an act of expulsion or exclusion by others, the breach does definitely entail a loss of the complete set of privileges that had earlier been acquired when taking full ordination as a *bhikkhu/bhikṣu*.

## Conclusion

Violation of a *pārājika* offence has definite consequences in the different *Vinaya* traditions, in that the one who intentionally incurs such an offence

has thereby lost “communion”, in the sense of being able to function as a fully-fledged member of the monastic community in legal matters. Such loss of communion does not necessarily require an act of expulsion or exclusion, which is only needed when someone who has lost communion pretends otherwise.

## XIX

### The Founding of the Nuns' Order

My comparative study of the textual depictions of how the order of nuns came into existence (Anālayo 2016d) has been criticized by von Hinüber (2019b) and Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018). In this chapter, I reply to selected points raised by them.

#### No Buddhist Nuns at the Time of the Buddha?

The criticism by von Hinüber (2019b) needs to be understood against the backdrop of an ongoing debate between us regarding his hypothesis that no order of nuns had come into existence while the Buddha was still alive (von Hinüber 2008), to which I responded with a detailed rebuttal (Anālayo 2008c). In a reassertion of his position, von Hinüber (2015) took up my contention that a reconstruction of early Buddhist thought (let alone what supposedly happened on the ground in ancient India) requires a comparative study of parallel versions of the early discourses. In his reply, von Hinüber (2015: 198) took the position that

concentration on the Theravāda tradition is neither a “methodological problem” ([Anālayo 2008c] p. 114) nor a “methodological shortcoming” ([Anālayo 2008c] p. 122), but a methodological necessity. Only the oldest levels of the Buddhist tradition we can reach might occasionally tell something about the very early history of Buddhism.

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\* Originally published in 2019 as an appendix to an article under the title “Women in Early Buddhism” in the *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 16: 51–76 (see above p. 13ff).

Such a position does not reflect the general consensus among scholars in Buddhist studies. For example, according to Salomon (2018: 56f),

early scholars of Buddhism in the West, especially in the English-speaking world, had assumed that the Pali canon represented *the* true original scriptures of Buddhism while other manifestations of Buddhism and versions of Buddhist texts were secondary derivations, elaborations, or corruptions ... This led to the illusion that the Pali canon was the only true Buddhist canon ... most if not all Buddhist textual scholars nowadays consider each version of a given text, and by extension each body of Buddhist literature, to have *a priori* an equal claim to accuracy and originality.

In line with this position, in Anālayo (2016j) I offered a survey of differences between the discourses in one particular Chinese Āgama collection and their Pāli parallels. Several of these indubitably show that the Pāli version is not invariably representative of “the oldest <sup>[52]</sup> levels of the Buddhist tradition”. An example relevant to the discussion in the main part of the present chapter concerns the *Nandakovāda-sutta*,<sup>1</sup> where

comparative study shows that the more negative presentation of the nuns in the Pāli discourse is with high probability the result of later change. Thus when von Hinüber (2008: 24) notes that in this Pāli discourse the Buddha “does not even talk to her ... as if Mahā-pajāpatī Gotamī would not exist”, then I contend that this should be treated as historical information about the attitude of the reciters of the Pāli discourse, rather than as a source of historical information about the actual situation on the ground at the time of the Buddha. In sum, in my view it is indeed a “methodological problem” and a “methodological shortcoming” when one relies on the four Pāli *Nikāyas* on their own for purposes of historical reconstruction of what happened on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>[72]</sup> Anālayo 2016j: 52 note 157.

My assessment of the *Nandakovāda-sutta* receives considerable coverage in the most recent contribution by von Hinüber (2019b). Before turning to that topic, however, in order to complete the picture, I first need to reply to three additional points raised by von Hinüber (2015) in defense of his hypothesis.

One of these is the statement by von Hinüber (2015: 196) that the Buddha “never ordained any nun himself but left that to the monks from the very beginning”, which appears to be intended to support the assumption that the order of nuns did not come into existence while the Buddha was alive. This statement is not quite correct, as the promulgation of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* was, according to the different *Vinayas*, precisely to grant ordination to Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī. Although her acceptance of these took place in the presence of Ānanda, who served as a messenger, the ordination itself was clearly granted by the Buddha himself. The central elements of this episode, reported in the different *Vinayas*, are not compatible with the idea that the first Buddhist nuns were ordained only after the Buddha had already passed away.

The second point to be examined is an assertion by von Hinüber (2015: 196) that

no nuns are present at the Nirvāṇa, no *bhikkhunīsaṃgha* is mentioned, when the originally three assemblies were formed after the ordination of Yasa, although this would have been an occasion to also introduce a *bhikkhunīsaṃgha*. [53]

The absence of a mention of the order of nuns in the Pāli *Vinaya*, the only text referenced here, seems to be interpreted as a corroboration of the hypothesis that this order only came into existence after the Buddha had passed away. Yet, even a consultation of only the relevant passage from the Pāli *Vinaya*, reporting the ordination of Yasa, suffices to clarify the situation. Such consultation makes it clear that, from the viewpoint of the *Vinaya* narrative, this ordination took place at a very early time in the history of Buddhist monasticism, soon after the Buddha's awakening.<sup>2</sup> The same Pāli *Vinaya*

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<sup>2</sup> [73] Vin I 15,1.



implicitly presents the founding of the order of nuns as something that took place at a later time. For this reason, it is entirely natural that they are not mentioned in the Pāli *Vinaya*'s report of the ordination of Yasa. In other words, there is no reason to expect that the ordination of the male Yasa should have led to the founding of an order of nuns.

A related topic is the assumption that the nuns should have been present when the Buddha passed away while on one of his walking tours. As already noted in Anālayo (2008c: 116), since for nuns it was improper to join such tours with monks, it is only natural that there is no reference to them being present on such an occasion. When von Hinüber (2015: 199) queries "but why should the Buddha shun his own nuns (if he had had any), but frequent the company of lay-women," then this conflates joint travel in the company of females with the acceptance of meals offered by female donors and conversations with them. These are different issues. To the best of my knowledge, the early discourses do not report the Buddha travelling in the company of either nuns or lay women. The lack of such references has no bearing on the existence of nuns or lay women but is simply due to modes of conduct considered appropriate in the ancient Indian setting, where such joint travel was considered inappropriate for mendicant monastics living a celibate life.

The third point concerns a summary assessment in Anālayo (2008c: 124) of the various assumptions, be these explicit or implicit, that would be required in support of the hypothesis that no nuns existed at the Buddha's time. By way of example, according to the first two of these assumptions, the Buddha remained firm in refusing to found an order of nuns and, consequently, Buddhist women (including the stream-enterer Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī) decided to go forth under a non-Buddhist teacher. However, von Hinüber (2015: 199) replies to both points that in his original paper these were "neither discussed nor used as an argument". Yet, without these two assumptions the hypothesis can no longer be upheld. <sup>[54]</sup> The reference by von Hinüber (2008: 21) to the "group of female ascetics joining Buddhism" and his assertion that "the *saṃgha* of nuns is created by accepting the whole group of ascetics accompanying Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī" requires that she

and her followers had indeed gone forth outside of the Buddhist tradition, which then supposedly explains the “surprisingly clear signals that the vocabulary of the ordination of nuns must have come from outside Buddhism” (p. 19), that is, from those non-Buddhists who had granted them ordination. For Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers to do so and then become part of the Buddhist order only after the Buddha’s death also requires the assumption that during his entire life the Buddha refused to allow the existence of Buddhist nuns.

The conjecture of such a persistent refusal by the Buddha is indispensable for Oskar von Hinüber’s hypothesis, which is based on the supposition that a negative attitude towards women changed in subsequent times and became more accommodating. As I already pointed out in Anālayo (2008c: 123), the evidence we have suggests that the attitude towards women in ancient India rather tended to change for the worse. This holds for the Buddhist traditions more specifically, where an increase in negative attitudes and even misogyny makes itself felt in commentarial and exegetical literature. Some examples have already been surveyed in the first chapter (see above p. 31ff). One case is the contrast between the early Buddhist position that women are as capable as men to become awakened and the position taken in later Buddhist tradition that the acquisition of a male body is required for becoming an advanced bodhisattva. Another example is the evaluation of female birth as a reflection of bad karma. Widely attested in later Buddhist text, this notion is without explicit support in the early discourses. The same difference holds for menstruation, which in later times comes to be seen in an increasingly negative light. More examples could be given, but this much already suffices to show that the evidence we have points to a deterioration of the position of women from early to later Buddhist texts, rather than the opposite.

### The *Nandakovāda-sutta*

Turning now to the *Nandakovāda-sutta*, one of the differences between the Pāli version and its parallels is an evaluation implicit in their respective depictions of the Buddha’s reaction when informed that Nandaka had failed

to take his turn to exhort the nuns. In relation to this aspect of my comparative study, von Hinüber (2019b: 90) comments that “the author sees a *dukkata* offence here, and this is not without consequences for the subsequent interpretation.” The impression that I consider Nandaka’s reluctance to involve a *dukkata* offence is incorrect. Instead, I consider it impossible to take a definite position that Nandaka incurred such an offence because the regulation that reckons this behavior to be a *dukkata* <sup>[55]</sup> offence could have been promulgated much later. For this reason, in Anālayo (2016d: 23f) I expressed myself in the following way:

independent of whatever temporal relation obtains between the promulgation of this regulation and the events recorded in the *Nandakovāda-sutta*, the fact that this eventually became an offence makes it clear that Nandaka’s behaviour was far from ideal.

Yet, von Hinüber (2019b: 90) asserts that

the text does not say that Nandaka actually failed to instruct the nuns; on the contrary, as soon as the Buddha reminds him of his duty, he immediately complies. Therefore, as he has not committed any offence, his positive answer to the Buddha instead of an embarrassed silence of an offender is quite natural. The offence taken by the author to this behavior seems to be misplaced.

Here is the relevant part of the *Nandakovāda-sutta*, given in the translation by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995/2005: 1120) so as not to prejudice the discussion by providing my own rendering:

Now on that occasion the elder bhikkhus were taking turns in advising the bhikkhunīs, but the venerable Nandaka did not want to advise them when his turn came. Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, whose turn is it today to advise the bhikkhunīs?” “Venerable sir, it is the venerable Nandaka’s turn to advise the bhikkhunīs, but he *does not want to advise them even though it is his turn*” (italics added).

The passage does convey that “Nandaka actually failed to instruct the nuns,” contrary to the assertion by Oskar von Hinüber. Although the temporal relationship between the events reported in the *Nandakovāda-sutta* and the promulgation of the *dukkāṭa* regulation remains unsure, the text shows him at first unwilling to take his turn and only complying after being told to do so by the Buddha himself.

The question of the temporal relationship between the promulgation of *Vinaya* rules and episodes reported in the *Nandakovāda-sutta* also applies to the description, given in all versions, that Nandaka approached the nuns at the Rājakārāma. According to von Hinüber (2019b: 91 note 3), “if the Rājakārāma was a monastery for nuns, Nandaka would have committed a *pācittiya* offence had he gone there, unless there were nuns that were ill.” This assumes that the corresponding *pācittiya* regulation had already been promulgated by the time of the events depicted in the *Nandakovāda-sutta*. Such an assumption is unwarranted. In fact, in Anālayo (2016d: 34) <sup>[56]</sup> I noted that “the background narrative to the promulgation of this rule reports that formerly it had been the custom for exhorting monk(s) to approach the nuns’ quarters.” The *Vinaya* narrative clearly recognizes that for some time such action was customary rather than an offence, and I am not aware of any clear-cut indication showing that the events depicted in the *Nandakovāda-sutta* could not be allocated to this period.

The parallel versions agree that Nandaka taught the nuns on two consecutive occasions and that the Buddha illustrated the outcome of the first teaching with the example of the moon being nearly full on the fourteenth day, and the outcome of the second teaching with the example of the full moon on the fifteenth day. A significant difference is that in the Pāli version the image of the full moon illustrates only that the nuns have reached at least stream-entry, but in the parallels the same image shows that they have all become fully awakened. In Anālayo (2016d: 32f), I commented that

in its gloss on the attainments of the nuns, the *Majjhima-nikāya* commentary explains that some of them had from the outset only aspired to lower stages of awakening ... this explanation seems somewhat forced, because one would be at a loss to understand why some

nuns should only aspire to lower levels of awakening. I am not aware of a precedent for this idea elsewhere in the discourses, in the sense that a monastic who sincerely aspires for liberation (instead of going forth for any other motive) has nevertheless from the outset the wish to attain only a lower stage and will be fully satisfied with that.

In reply, von Hinüber (2019b: 91) comments:

[a]fter declaring the very sensible explanation of *paripuṇṇasamkappa* in the commentary (Ps V 97, see below) as “somewhat forced”, the author prefers to interpret this clear and simple simile comparing the waxing moon to the increasing success as “to illustrate the attainment of full awakening by the nuns” (p. 33), which according to the author, was the result of Nandaka’s effort in the original text.

The point at stake is not the waxing moon and its relationship to increasing success but rather the full moon as reflecting the final attainments of the nuns. Nandaka’s effort is not something imputed by me, as in all versions the attainments of the nuns, both earlier and later, occur as a result of his teaching. Finally, the evaluation of the commentarial gloss as “very sensible” would need to be supported in some way and should take into account the reasoning I proposed for considering it as somewhat forced. <sup>[57]</sup>

In Anālayo (2016d: 31f) I noted that the unfavorable presentation of the aspirations and eventual attainments of the nuns in the *Nandakovādasutta* stands not only in contrast to the Chinese version, as

the presentation in the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse and in the Mūla-sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* receives an unexpected confirmation from the Pāli commentary on the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, according to which with Nandaka’s second instruction the nuns had indeed all become arhats. The same is also reported in the commentaries on the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* ... the difference regarding the level of attainment of the nuns is not a question of merely commentary against discourse, because according to the commentary on the *Majjhima-nikāya* the nuns did not all reach full awakening ...

The hypothesis that the nuns were only at a later time held to have all reached full awakening would require that either the Theravāda commentarial tradition influenced the Mūlasarvāstivāda reciter tradition, as evident in the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (and the Sanskrit fragment version), or else this influenced the commentarial tradition preserved in Pāli, because it seems less probable that the same idea arose independently in these textual traditions. Although such cross-tradition influence is certainly possible, it is easier to imagine that the *Nandakovāda-sutta* underwent a later change in this respect, which then also influenced the commentary on the *Nandakovāda-sutta*. Given that those who recite the discourse would also be those who transmit the respective commentary, such a change would involve the same reciters, without requiring influence from outside groups. In line with the law of parsimony, this simpler explanation seems preferable over the assumption that an idea arose in one tradition, be this the Theravāda or the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, and was then taken over in the other.

According to von Hinüber (2019b: 92), however, “obviously, this Saṃyuktāgama / Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya tradition intruded into Theravāda from the outside and was incorporated only in the (Aṅguttara-) commentary,” (a proposal that fails to mention the relevant commentaries on the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā*). In support of this supposedly “very likely, almost self-evident interpretation”, von Hinüber (2019b: 92–93) argues that my suggestion of “a change of a suttanta and subsequently also of the commentary for which there does not seem to be the slightest evidence otherwise, is difficult to accept.” [58]

The suggestion that there is not the slightest evidence for an alteration of a discourse that subsequently also affects the corresponding commentary is baffling, because evidence abounds for precisely this pattern. Time and again passages in Pāli discourses that clearly result from later changes are taken up for exegesis in the commentary. An example is the detailed exposition of the former deeds held responsible for the Buddha's auspicious

bodily marks, provided in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*. This part of the Pāli discourse is without doubt a later addition, and the commentary elaborates on precisely this later addition in much detail.<sup>3</sup> Again, the advent of Maitreya in the *Cakkavatti-sutta* is a late element that has of course influenced the respective commentary.<sup>4</sup> Another example is the *Mahācattārīsaka-sutta*'s presentation of supramundane path factors, another obviously late part that reflects a mature stage of Abhidharma thought; the commentary expounds this late addition in detail.<sup>5</sup> The same holds for the exposition of the four noble truths given in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, another obvious late addition, which has inspired the commentary to provide additional explanations.<sup>6</sup> More examples could be given, but these few instances already suffice to show that the assertion by Oskar von Hinüber is in complete contrast to the textual evidence.<sup>7</sup>

### Similes Illustrating the Founding of an Order of Nuns

Another criticism by von Hinüber (2019b: 94) takes the following form:

[t]he author suggests a radical different interpretation of the well-known similes until now understood as illustrating the disastrous effects of admitting women to the Saṃgha. In a surprising turn he rejects this common understanding and tries to see the similes as means and ways to demonstrate the integration and protection of the nuns.

After discussing the simile of the dyke in detail, von Hinüber (2019b: 95) concludes that “this and all other similes were meant (and so far gen-

<sup>3</sup> [74] DN 30 at DN III 145,23 and Sv III 919,7; see the discussion in Anālayo 2017a: 103–122.

<sup>4</sup> [75] DN 26 at DN III 76,1 and Sv III 855,34; see the discussion in Anālayo 2017b: 379–391.

<sup>5</sup> [76] MN 117 at MN III 72,4 and Ps IV 130,20; see the discussion in Anālayo 2014c: 129–142.

<sup>6</sup> [77] DN 22 at DN II 305,1 and Sv III 797,24; see the discussion in Anālayo 2014c: 91–100.

<sup>7</sup> [78] Needless to say, the comment by von Hinüber 2019b: 92 note 6 that in the Theravāda manuscript tradition “text and commentary were transmitted always in separate manuscript” does not imply that these were unrelated in oral transmission. As I argued in Anālayo 2010d: 13–16, such an assumption patently fails to make sense.

erally understood, see p. 93 note 9) as exemplifying a danger to be warded off.”<sup>8</sup> In Anālayo (2016d: 93 note 9) I had surveyed the opinions voiced by feminist scholars on the implications of the simile of the dyke. Their assessments of its negative connotations are made without providing any canonical backing or support and for this reason appear to be simply a reflection of the subjective impression these ancient Indian images can evoke in a modern academic reader.

In contrast, the alternative interpretation I had proposed in Anālayo (2016d: 92f) is based on other occurrences of the same imagery in different contexts in the early discourses. However, von Hinüber (2019b: 96 note 15) <sup>[59]</sup> dismisses such evidence, arguing that “the interpretation of a simile depends largely on the context. A mechanical transfer from one context to another might lead the interpretation astray.”

Although context of course needs to be taken into account, this should not go to the extreme of preferring subjective impressions over canonical evidence. In fact, in addition to the same imagery occurring elsewhere among Pāli discourses, the commentaries on its occurrence in the Pāli canonical accounts of the founding of the nuns' order can be consulted. These do not present the simile of the dyke as “exemplifying a danger to be warded off”. Instead, they understand the dyke to have a conservation purpose; it serves to ensure that enough water remains in a great lake.<sup>9</sup> This is precisely the function of the simile of the dyke in the other canonical occurrence I had mentioned, which conveys that “the function of the dyke is to ensure that a pond becomes full to the brim” (Anālayo 2016d: 93). In this way, the commentarial explanation supports that the simile of the dyke in the context of the narrative about the founding of the nuns' order has indeed the same basic import as it has in the other canonical occurrence. It follows that the relevant canonical and commentarial textual sources do not support the interpretation that modern scholars like to read into the simile of the dyke.

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<sup>8</sup> For a reply to criticism by von Hinüber 2019b: 94 regarding the similes in T 1428 and T 1463 see Anālayo 2022b: 230 note 23.

<sup>9</sup> <sup>[79]</sup> Mp IV 136,20 and Sp VI 1291,8.



After noting that some accounts of the founding of the nuns' order report the Buddha permitting Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers to shave off their hair and don robes, in Anālayo (2016d: 54) I surveyed other versions which, although they “do not mention such a suggestion by the Buddha, nevertheless report that she and her group did precisely that.” Examples are the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda and Theravāda versions. However, von Hinüber (2019b: 97) objects: “Although these versions do not say so, the interpretation following the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda and Theravāda versions begins ‘having received a permission by the Buddha to shave off their hair’.”

I made it actually quite clear that these versions do not mention a suggestion by the Buddha. Moreover, the full sentence in Anālayo (2016d: 55) reads: “Having received a permission by the Buddha to shave off their hair and don robes, for Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her group to do so would be a natural course of action to take.” Thus, contrary to the impression created by the incomplete quotation provided by Oskar von Hinüber, nowhere in the discussion in Anālayo (2016d) is there any suggestion that the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda and Theravāda version <sup>[60]</sup> have such a permission. The point here is rather that the behavior they depict would be natural if such a permission had been given.

In his final assessment, von Hinüber (2019b: 97) states that

[t]his new interpretation of the similes and many, if not all, other interpretations create the (perhaps wrong) impression that most of the arguing is based on the silent assumption that there was originally some sort of pool in which all elements of the foundation story were assembled. This allowed the ancient Buddhist authors of the different versions to select whatever they found suitable and necessary for their story, depending to [sic] their respective intention, which the author ingeniously tries to uncover. Because of this assumption, all texts appear to be static, as it were, without allowing any ramifications or developments in the course of time, other than the various features of the “original story” being extracted unchanged from the original version or being “distorted”.

The idea that I assume “some sort of pool in which all elements of the foundation story were assembled” is so out of keeping with my study that I wonder if this remark was added by someone else who had not read my book. Even the case of the *Nandakovāda-sutta*, surveyed above and forming the first chapter of my study, would suffice to show this. In the last sentence that concludes that chapter (Anālayo 2016d: 38), I speak of “later developments, evident in the narrative strategies of distancing the nuns and minimizing their abilities”. The very idea of “later developments” is incompatible with the notion of some sort of original pool that had already assembled the different elements of the story. Much of what I describe concerns a gradual evolution of the texts due to various social, religious, and historical conditions, which of course allows for “developments in the course of time” and is incompatible with the assumption that “all texts appear to be static.” I am at a loss to understand this assessment of my work.

The same holds for the assertion by von Hinüber (2019b: 98) that “this way of arguing does not leave much if any room for tracing the development of different, at times even controversial and conflicting, views within the Buddhist community in various countries over the centuries,” further considered to reflect “a tendency to harmonize all versions”. The whole point of my study of the foundation account is precisely the tracing of textual developments involving different and at times conflicting views, the very opposite of harmonizing all versions. <sup>[61]</sup>

In sum, the criticism raised in von Hinüber (2019b) appears to be influenced by the need to assert his position in our ongoing debate regarding whether the foundation of an order of nuns happened while the Buddha was still alive. Some of his arguments seems to be based on a less than careful reading of my presentation, as a result of which he then misunderstands my discussion, and at other times he affirms positions that do not do justice to the textual evidence we have.

### The *Nandakovāda-sutta* Again

An ongoing debate also stands in the background of criticism raised by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro of my study of the foundation of the nuns' order and of

the first *saṅgīti*. In this case, the issue at stake is the legality of reviving an order of nuns. In what follows I take up selected instances of such criticism, without intending to cover each and every instance.<sup>10</sup> One instance of such criticism also concerns the *Nandakovāda-sutta*. In my discussion in Anālayo (2016d: 19), I had noted a tendency to distance nuns, evident in the fact that the Pāli discourse differs from its parallels in depicting Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī in the standing posture rather than sitting. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 46) argues:

Anālayo here neglects to mention two points that should be obvious to anyone familiar with the suttas. One is that in all the nikāyas, the standing posture is also adopted by devas coming to see the Buddha, as a sign of extreme respect ... The other point is that throughout the Pāli Canon, Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī is always depicted as standing when addressing the Buddha.

Both criticisms appear to be based on a less than careful reading of my discussion. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro apparently overlooked that in the introduction to the discussion on that same page I clearly indicate that what follows is based on “contextualizing the present instance within the *Majjhima-nikāya* collection”. In order to cover the other occurrences when Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī remains standing, a survey of all other references to postures adopted by visitors in the respective textual collections would have been required. This would have been a rather time-consuming task, hence the explicit indication that the survey has been intentionally restricted to the very collection in which the discourse in question occurs. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro also seems to have missed footnote 14, found on that same page in Anālayo (2016d: 19), which states that “the adoption of postures differs for *devas*, who are generally depicted as remaining standing when conversing with humans.”

In relation to the same Pāli discourse’s depiction of the Buddha not even replying to a request by Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers for a [62] teaching (whereas in the parallel versions the Buddha gives a teaching even without being requested), Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 46f) reasons that

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<sup>10</sup> [80] For a rejoinder to legal arguments advanced in Ṭhānissaro 2018 see below p. 413ff.

the third *garudhamma* stipulates that the *bhikkhunīs* should expect a formal exhortation from the *bhikkhus* every two weeks. This means that, in making her request that the Buddha perform this exhortation instead, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is asking the Buddha to override the third *garudhamma* that she promised to respect. And the fact that 500 *bhikkhunīs* accompany her in this request is a defiant act: She's trying to use the force of numbers to influence him. So, Yes [sic], something wrong is going on.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 47) then asserts that when in the Pāli version the Buddha instead turns to Nandaka and asks him to give an exhortation to the nuns, “this incident establishes the precedent that the *bhikkhus* are qualified to teach the *bhikkhunīs*.” If the giving of an exhortation by monks had already been regulated in the third *garudhamma*, this of course implies that the Buddha considered them to be capable of doing so. Hence, it is not clear why there would have been any further need to establish, by way of precedent, their qualification to teach nuns. Besides, the number five hundred is simply a standard pericope in the early texts;<sup>11</sup> it carries no necessary implication of defiance or an attempt to use the force of numbers. Given that Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī and her followers hope to receive a teaching from the Buddha, in the narrative setting it is entirely natural that they all approach him together.

### The First *Saṅgīti*

In relation to the suggested impact of the account of the first *saṅgīti* on attitudes towards nuns, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 37) understands my proposal to be that “the First Council, in shaping the Canon as we now have it, deformed the Buddha's original intent.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, the discussion throughout is

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<sup>11</sup> [81] Anālayo 2011c: 417f.

<sup>12</sup> [82] See also Ṭhānissaro 2018: 3: “In an attempt to question the validity of some of the *garudhammas*, he asserts in FHNO and *Saṅgīti* [= Anālayo 2016d and 2017i] that the monks at this council, as led by Ven. Mahā Kassapa, represented a faction of the *Saṅgha* whose views and practices were at odds with the Buddha's.”

not about what happened on the ground in ancient India soon after the Buddha's demise. The point at stake is the *story* of the first *saṅgīti* in the way it gradually came into existence during its oral transmission. As I stated quite explicitly in the introduction (Anālayo 2016d: 13): "I am not trying to construct a history, I am trying to study the construction of a story."

The different accounts of the first *saṅgīti* report various accusations levelled at Ānanda. In Anālayo (2016d: 161f) I argued that a concern with purity is particularly prominent in one of these accusations, according to which "Ānanda allowed or did not prevent women from worshipping the recently deceased Buddha, as a result of which their tears defiled the Buddha's body." This led me to assess the various accusations levelled as <sup>[63]</sup> being "not based on breaches of *Vinaya* rules, but rather on brahminical notions of purity and propriety, as well as expressing distinct negative attitudes towards women". Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 33) argues that "the brahmanical attitude toward corpses is not that mourners might defile them; it's that a corpse might defile the mourners. So the accusation that tears soiled the Buddha's body is actually antibrahmanical, in that it reverses the role of 'defiling' and 'defiled'." Yet, the point at issue here is rather the accusation that Ānanda in the first place "allowed or did not prevent women from worshipping the recently deceased Buddha", as according to brahminical customs only men should be allowed to perform funeral rites. Bhikkhunī Dhammānandā (2016a: 43) explains that "in Indian funerals only close male relatives are supposed to do the cremation. Women are expected to stay at home (except for the widow) while men carry out the cremation rituals at the cremation ground."

Another misunderstanding occurs in relation to my discussion of "mistaking the means of moral conduct for the goal" in Anālayo (2017i: 213), which Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 35) understands to mean that "strict adherence to the rules is not necessary for reaching the higher attainments." This is a different topic. That it is not my intention to dismiss the importance of ethical conduct for progress on the path can be seen by consulting the immediately preceding part in Anālayo (2017i: 212):

[t]he importance of virtue, *sīla*, has its proper place as the first of the three trainings, building a foundation for the higher mind and

higher wisdom. Nevertheless, observance of the rules is clearly seen as subordinate to the overarching aim of cultivating the higher mind and higher wisdom, that is, tranquillity and insight.

### The Acceptance of the *Gurudharmas*

Another criticism concerns my comparative study of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*. Two *Vinaya* versions do not accompany each of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* with a statement that the respective principle to be respected should be upheld for the whole of one's life. In (Anālayo 2016d: 112) I argued that this variation suggests that “perhaps at an earlier time these stipulations were not accompanied by an indication that they are to be respected for the whole of one's life.”

Out of these two *Vinaya* versions, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 40) takes up just the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, based on the full translation of the relevant text provided in Anālayo (2016d: 202–207), and then argues that in this version a counterpart to the statement on lifelong validity can be found: <sup>[64]</sup> “the *garudhammas* as a set are followed by this injunction: ‘They should act according to what I have laid down, which cannot be reversed.’”

Consultation of the translation, however, brings to light that the promulgation of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas* occurs much earlier (Anālayo 2016d: 204). After listing the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* continues with Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī's/Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī's acceptance of these eight principles to be respected and then reports her subsequent request that nuns be accorded respect according to seniority. This is followed by the Buddha's proclamation of the five impossibilities for women, after which he gives the prediction of decline and then describes the dire repercussions that founding an order of nuns will have for the respect and support offered by the laity. Had this not happened, lay people would have freely provided the four requisites, invited the monks into their houses, and even loosened their hair to wipe the feet of monks and invite them to step on it. Hearing this, Ānanda is in tears. The Buddha consoles him, explaining that Māra had obscured Ānanda's mind.

It is only after all these events that the statement occurs that “they should

act according to what I have laid down, which cannot be reversed” (Anālayo 2016d: 207). This is obviously not a counterpart to the assertion of lifelong validity that in the other *Vinayas* is repeated right after each single *garudhamma/gurudharma*. Hence, when Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 40) notes that “Anālayo omits this fact in his discussion,” then such omission is indeed warranted, because the statement in question is not part of the promulgation of the *garudhammas/gurudharmas*. It belongs to a narrative enlargement of the episode in question.

Regarding the contrast created by discourse passages that involve a positive evaluation of the existence of nuns with the prediction that the creation of an order of nuns spells decline for the whole tradition, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2015: 17) argues that to take that contrast as reflecting the late nature of the prediction

is tantamount to saying that, because the Buddha obviously wanted to start a Bhikkhu Saṅgha, any negative remarks about bhikkhus attributed to him anywhere in the Canon have to be regarded as bogus. Or that because the Buddha saw that professional soldiers would go to hell if killed when trying to kill others in battle (SN 42:3), any positive reference to soldiers in battle as models of behavior for the monks—as in AN 5:75–76—have to be regarded as later interpolations. There is nothing inconsistent in seeing the Buddha as a realist rather than an ideologue. [65]

The comparison is unconvincing. There is of course no real conflict between a positive attitude toward the existence of an order of monastics (be these male or female) and negative remarks about some individual monastics. Similarly, an assessment of the karmic consequence of actual killing is a different topic compared to using a simile that involves a soldier.

The contrast in the case of the prediction of decline, however, concerns the same topic: Several Pāli discourses report that the Buddha had decided not to pass away until he had competent disciples from all four assemblies, one of which is the order of nuns.<sup>13</sup> According to another two Pāli discourses,

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<sup>13</sup> [83] DN 16 at DN II 105,8, SN 51.10 at SN V 261,18, AN 8.70 at AN IV 310,32, and Ud 6.1 at Ud 63,32.

the completeness of his teaching requires that members of each of the four assemblies become accomplished disciples.<sup>14</sup> The wheel-marks on his feet served as a portent of the Buddha being surrounded by many disciples, including nuns.<sup>15</sup> All of these Pāli discourses stand in direct contrast to the prediction of decline; they concern precisely the same topic: the existence of an order of nuns. In fact, in several Pāli passages the nuns are counted among disciples who through proper conduct can prevent the decline of the teachings.<sup>16</sup> All of these passages make it indeed highly probable that the prediction of decline is a later addition that came into being at some time during the oral transmission of the texts.<sup>17</sup>

### The Role of Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa

The account of the first *saṅgīti* has Mahākāśyapa as its central figure. In relation to his depiction in the discourses in general, in Anālayo (2016d: 173) I noted that,

according to the *Mahāsakuludāyī-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel the Buddha made a point of presenting himself as consid-

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<sup>14</sup> [84] DN 29 at DN III 125,24 and MN 73 at MN I 490,21.

<sup>15</sup> [85] DN 30 at DN III 148,18.

<sup>16</sup> [86] SN 16.13 at SN II 225,8, AN 5.201 at AN III 247,20, AN 6.40 at AN III 340,13, and AN 7.56 at AN IV 84,22.

<sup>17</sup> [87] Gombrich 2017: 69f comments on my study of the prediction of decline: “I find it implausible that what Mahā Kassapa said on that occasion [i.e. the first *saṅgīti*] could have been represented as something the Buddha said many years earlier.” My point, however, is not that this prediction was actually said by Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa. Much rather, my suggestion is that during the transmission of the *Vinaya* texts, apprehensions by male monastics among the reciters would have been the source of this prediction. Such apprehensions might at first have taken the form of a commentary given during oral transmission alongside the recitation of the actual text. In the course of time, due to a recurrent pattern of conflating source text and commentary (Anālayo 2010d), such assessments would have been integrated into the actual text. As noted in Anālayo 2016d: 160, the Theravāda *Vinaya* attributes the various criticisms of Ānanda to unnamed monks, probably reflecting an earlier stage, before these ended up being attributed to Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa.



erably less ascetic in his conduct than some of his disciples. The contrast between the Buddha and Mahākāśyapa in this respect comes to the fore in another passage where, on being invited by the Buddha to adopt a less demanding conduct in view of his advanced age, Mahākāśyapa refuses to give up his ascetic practices.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 31) argues: “Anālayo here is conflating Ven. Mahā Kassapa’s dhutaṅga practices—living in the wilderness, going for alms, wearing robes made of cast-off cloth (SN 16:5)—with the self-torture that the Buddha engaged in on the way to his awakening.”

Now, the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* and its parallel do not even mention the Buddha’s pre-awakening self-tortures. Instead, they show him, after having awakened, being considerably less ascetic than some of his <sup>[66]</sup> monastic disciples: at times he dwelled surrounded by many people rather than living a solitary life in the wilderness, he accepted invitations to sumptuous meals instead of going for alms, and he wore good quality robes rather than those made of rags. The contrast here is indeed between ascetic practices adopted by Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa and the same practices not being adopted by the Buddha.

Another criticism by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 32), also related to Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa, takes the following form:

as for Ven. Mahā Kassapa’s refusal to give up his practices: Anālayo is here clearly quoting out of context, and it’s hard to believe that he’s not doing it intentionally. The full discourse shows that the Buddha, in making his offer to Ven. Mahā Kassapa, is providing the latter with the opportunity to explain why he sticks with his dhutaṅga practices even though he no longer needs to.

The assessment by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro of the “full discourse” relies on the Pāli version only. This overlooks the fact that in the footnote to the statement “Mahākāśyapa refuses to give up his ascetic practices” I refer to the different versions of this discourse (Anālayo 2016d: 173 note 78), including a reference to a translation of the Chinese parallel EĀ 12.6, provided in An-

ālayo (2015k). In other words, the quoted statement is made from a comparative perspective; it is obviously not a reflection of the Pāli version only.

The parallel EĀ 12.6 in fact proceeds quite differently, as can be seen in the translation in Anālayo (2015k: 13). Here Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa explains his refusal to give up his ascetic practices by stating that he would have become a Paccekabuddha/Pratyekabuddha in case the Buddha had not accomplished full awakening. After this statement, he notes that all Paccekabuddhas/Pratyekabuddhas adopt ascetic practices. The point appears to be that the undertaking of ascetic practices is so natural to him (evident from the fact that he could have become a Paccekabuddha/Pratyekabuddha) that he will not give them up.

From a comparative perspective, the element common to the parallel versions is the refusal by Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa, but the reasons given for this refusal differ in these texts. Consulting the footnote could have prevented Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 33) from drawing the conclusion that my statement involves “a gross misrepresentation of the texts, quoting them out of context so that they yield a meaning opposite to the meaning they would <sup>[67]</sup> have conveyed when quoted in full.” In his final assessment, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 50) comes back to the same point, expressing his impression that I have

quoted the texts out of context. The most serious instance of this—and one that is hard to accept as unintentional—is his quotation from SN 16:5, where he gives the impression that the Buddha, instead of praising Ven. Mahā Kassapa for his adherence to ascetic practices, was criticizing him for them. This instance of taking a text out of context is extremely serious because it is part of Anālayo's sustained accusation that Mahā Kassapa, and by extension, the First Council, represented an understanding of the Dhamma and Vinaya at odds with the Buddha's intentions. This argument calls the entire Dhamma and Vinaya as we have it into question.

The assessment expressed here is based on misunderstandings. My discussion is not about historical persons but about textual accounts. Moreo-

ver, my presentation of Mahākassapa/Mahākāśyapa is not just a reflection of the Pāli discourse but a summary based on a comparison of parallel versions.

This is not the first time that Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro accuses me of quoting out of context, based on misunderstanding my position.<sup>18</sup> His accusation actually takes out of context what I said, by isolating my statement from the footnote appended to it, found right below on the same page, and from the overall context of the book in which it occurs, which is a comparative study of parallel versions rather than just of Pāli texts. Here and elsewhere, it would have been preferable if Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro could have read my presentation more carefully, which could have prevented him from formulating unfounded accusations.

## Conclusion

The criticisms raised by Oskar von Hinüber and Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro, surveyed above, prove to be unfounded. I stand by the conclusions reached in *The Foundation History of the Nuns' Order*.

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<sup>18</sup> [88] Another instance occurs in relation to my discussion of SN 16.13 in Anālayo 2014i, mistaken in Ṭhānissaro 2018: 44 to be that “the lack of any one of the assemblies would bring about the disappearance of the True Dhamma—the conclusion that Anālayo wants to draw from this sutta.”

## The Legality of *Bhikkhunī* Ordination

In this chapter I examine the legal validity of reviving the Theravāda order of *bhikkhunīs* by an act of single ordination, granted by *bhikkhus* on their own. My presentation responds to criticism voiced by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro of this possibility of restoring the missing one out of the four assemblies in the Theravāda tradition.

My case for considering the revival of the formerly extinct order of *bhikkhunīs* in the Theravāda tradition as legal is based on an authorization given, according to the *Cullavagga*, by the Buddha for *bhikkhus*, on their own, to ordain female candidates. I refer to this as “single ordination”, distinct from “dual ordination”, which requires the collaboration of both orders.

In a monograph published recently, I examined this topic in detail (Anālayo 2018a). Soon after its publication, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro published a criticism of the single ordination option on his website (2018).<sup>[932]</sup> In the context of the present chapter, I am not able to do full justice to the detailed discussion by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro. Nor am I able to reflect fully my own detailed presentation. Since both publications are available online, the interested reader could consult these in order to arrive at a more complete picture. The main instances of criticism that I address here, however, should suffice to show that the position taken by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro is not convincing.

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\* Originally published in 2018 under the title “The Case for Reviving the *Bhikkhunī* Order by Single Ordination” in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 25: 931–962.

For ease of reference during the ensuing discussion, I first summarize the main promulgations made, according to the *Cullavagga*, by the Buddha.

The permission for *bhikkhus* to ordain female candidates on their own (“single ordination”) is preceded by the promulgation of a *garudhamma*, a “weighty principle”. This sixth of altogether eight *garudhammas* sanctions “dual ordination”.

The rule on single ordination is followed by two more rules. One of these authorizes dual ordination in “two stages”. The first stage involves the order of *bhikkhunīs*, the second the order of *bhikkhus*. This ruling is meant to avoid embarrassment of female candidates when asked, in front of the *bhikkhus*, intimate questions that are part of the ordination procedure.

If a candidate has gone through the first stage but, due to some danger, is unable to approach the order of *bhikkhus* for the second stage, another rule permits this second part to be performed “by a messenger”. The altogether four relevant promulgations, listed in their chronological order, are thus:

- dual ordination (*garudhamma* 6)
- single ordination
- dual ordination in two stages
- dual ordination with the second stage by a messenger [933]

## The Authorization for Single Ordination

The case for a revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination that I present here relates to the second of these promulgations. This is an authorization which, according to *Cullavagga* X.2, was given by the Buddha as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*Bhikkhus*, I authorize the giving of the higher ordination of *bhikkhunīs* by *bhikkhus*.

The key question is whether this authorization for single ordination is still valid or else has been implicitly rescinded by the subsequent rule on *bhik-*

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<sup>1</sup> Vin II 257,7: *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhuniyo upasampādetun ti.*

*khunī* ordination in two stages. The latter is the position taken by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2015: 12), arguing that there is

a principle the Buddha consistently followed in amending rules. In every other case where he amended an already existing rule but wanted to keep both the pre-existing version and the amended version in force, he was careful to delineate the conditions to which the amended version applied, so that the pre-existing version would still be in force in all other situations.

The principle he describes here is based on his own conclusions and not on something explicitly stated in the *Vinaya*. He supports his position with two examples. The second of these is particularly pertinent, since it concerns ordination. It corresponds to the fourth promulgation mentioned in my survey above, when approaching the *bhikkhu* order puts the female candidate in danger. According to *Cullavagga* X.22, the Buddha authorized that this second part of the ordination can be completed with the help of a messenger:<sup>2</sup> [934]

*Bhikkhus*, I also authorize the giving of the higher ordination by messenger.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2015: 13) notes that the addition of the word “also” (*pi*) shows that the ruling is not meant to rescind the earlier rule on two stages. In the course of his argument, he considers the above formulation with the word “also” to be the final version of the rule.<sup>3</sup> This is not correct. The above ruling is part of a narrative which continues by reporting the employment of unsuitable messengers. In response to this, the Buddha is on record for formulating the final version of the rule as follows:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Vin II 277,11: *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, dūtena pi upasampādetun ti*.

<sup>3</sup> [2] This is evident in the statement he makes after translating the above rule. Both together proceed as follows: “I allow, bhikkhus, for Acceptance to be given also [*api*] through a messenger.’ — Cv.X.22.1. This statement of the rule is followed by the transaction statement to be used in this situation.” Yet, the transaction statement only comes after the rule has been reformulated in order to exclude unsuitable messengers.

<sup>4</sup> Vin II 277,18: *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, vyattāya bhikkhuniyā paṭibālāya dūtena upasam-*

*Bhikkhus*, I authorize the giving of the higher ordination through an experienced and competent *bhikkhuni* as messenger.

It is after this final formulation of the rule that the transaction statement to be used in such a situation is found. Thus, strictly speaking, the final authorization comes without the term “also”. The fact that this rule is not meant to replace the earlier rule on dual ordination in two stages only becomes clear on consulting the earlier formulation, which is embedded in the narrative leading up to the final formulation, and the subsequent transaction statement. If the final formulation were to be extracted from its context and considered just on its own, its legal relevance would remain unclear. [935]

In this way, the case chosen by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro to determine the criteria for whether a rule is rescinded or not points to the importance of considering the legal implications of a rule in light of the accompanying narrative.

In evaluating the above rules, it is instructive to examine the evolution of *bhikkhu* ordination reported in the *Mahāvagga* (I.28), given that it concerns the same matter of ordination, only differing in that it involves male candidates. The evolution of ordination of male candidates shifts from ordination by going for refuge to a formal transaction with one motion and three proclamations. The *Mahāvagga* reports an explicit indication by the Buddha that the former method is no longer valid:<sup>5</sup>

*Bhikkhus*, from this day on I abolish the higher ordination by way of taking the three refuges that I had authorized.

This is followed by the authorization of the new procedure. Now this long formulation would have been entirely superfluous if it had been clear from the outset that the promulgation of the new procedure automatically rescinded the previous one. Instead, only the authorization of the new procedure would have been required:<sup>6</sup>

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*pādetun ti.*

<sup>5</sup> Vin I 56,6: *yā sā, bhikkhave, mayā tīhi saraṇagamanehi upasampadā anuññātā, taṃ ajjatagge paṭikkhipāmi.*

<sup>6</sup> Vin I 56,7: *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, ñatticatutthena kammēna upasampādetun ti.*

*Bhikkhus*, I authorize the giving of the higher ordination by a formal transaction with one motion and three proclamations.

The absence of any mention of “also” in this formulation was clearly not considered sufficient to establish that the rule on the three refuges was <sup>[936]</sup>abolished. Instead, an explicit statement was felt to be required to ensure that the fact of abolishment was unmistakably expressed.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 12) notes this explicit statement as exemplifying a pattern that “when the Buddha totally rescinded a rule, *he would say so explicitly*” (italics in the original). Now the present case is simply a shift in ordination procedure, as is the case with the rules on *bhikkhunī* ordination under discussion. If automatic rescinding should be considered the invariable pattern for such rules, the explicit rescinding in the present case would have been redundant.

Applying what emerges in this way to the situation of *bhikkhunī* ordination, it becomes clear that, even though there is no explicit marker that the rule on single ordination is still in force, there is also no clear indication that it has been abolished. It is for this reason that in Anālayo (2015g: 417 note 17) I commented

Ṭhānissaro [2015: 12] argues that “to assert that the Buddha did not want Cv.X.17.2 (the rule for double ordination) to rescind Cv.X.2.1 (the rule for unilateral ordination), but forgot to limit the conditions under which Cv.X.17.2 would apply, is to assert that he was thoughtless and careless.” One could similarly argue that for the Buddha not to make more explicit his presumed wish that the rule on single ordination be rescinded is thoughtless.

In sum, as there is neither an explicit abolishment of single ordination nor a marker of its continued validity, further examination is required. Such examination naturally proceeds to the narrative context. Before turning to that, however, I want to clarify two methodological issues raised by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro, concerning historical-critical as against legal readings and the value of *Vinaya* narrative for interpreting a rule. <sup>[937]</sup>



## Historical-Critical and Legal Readings

In my writings on *Vinaya*, I distinguish between two type of readings. One of these is “historical-critical”, which employs comparative study of parallel versions in order to understand the evolution of a text, often used to distinguish earlier and later layers. The other is “legal”, which relies on the text of a single *Vinaya* in order to discern its legal implications for those who have been ordained based on this *Vinaya*.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 38) presents his discussion of these two readings under the premise: “Does Anālayo actually observe, as he claims, a strict separation between the two modes of scholarship?” The premise he formulates does not reflect my position. The distinction between these two modes of reading does not mean that there must be a strict separation and they cannot inform each other. It only means that a historical-critical reading cannot determine questions of legal validity. But it obviously can provide additional information, which is precisely why I employ it in a subsidiary role when discussing legal matters. This can conveniently be seen in my recently published study (2018a), whose overall concern is a legal reading. Yet, when relevant, I refer to my comparative studies. But each time I clearly point out that I am shifting gears, so to say, and that what I present now is the comparative perspective. An example in case is my discussion of the prediction of decline, according to which the Buddha supposedly held the founding of an order of *bhikkhunīs* responsible for a halving of the lifespan of his dispensation (a topic to which I return below). The relevant part in Anālayo (2018a: 110) points out that comparative study of this prediction makes it highly probable that the prediction of decline reflects apprehensions among later generations of monks, but then nevertheless continues by stating: <sup>[938]</sup>

However, in what follows I will be taking the account in the *Cullavagga* at its face value, since my task is to arrive at a coherent reading of the Pāli canonical text as it has come down.

This example suffices to show that I clearly acknowledge that, regardless of the results of my comparative studies, a legal reading of the Pāli *Vinaya*, in the form it has come down, is alone binding.

## The Relevance of the Narrative Context

Another methodological clarification concerns what value the narrative context has for understanding a rule. In reply to several cases cited by Bhikkhus Brahmāli and Anālayo (2017: 235–244) in support of the significance of the narrative for understanding a rule, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 8–10) points out a number of examples where the narrative does not fulfil this role, such as when a narrative has no real connection to the rule.

The narrative related to the rule on single ordination, however, fits none of the counterexamples quoted by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro. For this reason, I leave it up to Bhikkhu Brahmāli to respond, if he wishes, to Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro on the question of the general applicability of narratives for interpreting rules in the *Khandhaka*. As far as the present case is concerned, I consider it reasonable to follow the argument in Bhikkhus Brahmāli and Anālayo (2017: 244) that

the narratives and the rules in the *Khandhakas* need to be read as an integrated whole ... the *Khandhaka* narrative within which the rules on *bhikkhunī* ordination are embedded needs to be considered to gain a proper perspective on the legal significance of these rules. [939]

## The Narrative

The actual narrative could be summarized as follows: In reply to a request by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha granted her ordination on the condition that she accept the undertaking of eight *garudhammas*. The sixth of these is that female candidates, who have undertaken the probationary training, should be ordained by both the order of *bhikkhus* and the order of *bhikkhunīs*. In terms of the four regulations surveyed at the outset of the present chapter, *garudhamma* 6 sanctions “dual ordination”.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī accepted but was unable to act in accordance with *garudhamma* 6. She was the only *bhikkhunī* in existence at that time. There were no other *bhikkhunīs* who could join her to form an order of *bhikkhunīs*, required to collaborate with the order of *bhikkhus* to grant dual ordin-

ation to her five hundred followers. Predictably, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī had to approach the Buddha and request guidance. In reply, the Buddha promulgated the authorization on single ordination, according to which *bhikkhus* should give ordination to the female candidates on their own.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 16) holds that this authorization “was implemented as a temporary, stopgap measure.” In previous publications I argued that such a conclusion is problematic, because it paints the Buddha as a bad legislator. The problem is that he had explicitly made the acceptance of these eight *garudhammas* the condition for Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to be ordained. If the rule on single ordination was just a “temporary, stopgap measure”, it follows that the Buddha had made a major blunder. He completely overlooked the fact that he was asking Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to accept as “a principle to be revered, respected, honored, venerated, and not to be transgressed” (as per the pericope attached to the formulation of the *garudhammas*) something that was flatly impossible for her in <sup>[940]</sup> that situation. On realizing his own oversight, the Buddha was then supposedly forced to devise a “temporary, stopgap measure”.

According to Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 21), we should consider the “temporary alternative that he chose as more in line with his intentions for the training of the bhikkhunīs.” This is hardly convincing and does not solve the problem. On this reasoning, the Buddha’s supposed intentions for training the *bhikkhunīs* forced him to resort to this “temporary, stopgap measure”, even though he could have avoided the problem by formulating the *garudhamma* differently. An alternative would have been for the Buddha himself to grant ordination to the followers of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. That would have dispensed with any need to give a special authorization to the *bhikkhus*. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 21) objects:

If the Buddha had ordained the bhikkhunīs himself, their training would have been his direct responsibility. Given their numbers, this would have been an overwhelming task. At the same time, by formulating a rule for unilateral ordination, the Buddha was implementing one half of Garudhamma 6, getting the bhikkhus accustomed to the role they would play in overseeing the bhikkhunīs in

the future. None of this would have been the case had he chosen either of Anālayo's alternatives.

There seems to be no reason why the Buddha could not have ordained the five hundred followers of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and then delegated their training. As to the idea of getting the *bhikkhus* accustomed to their future role, this would be covered in one of my alternatives (Anālayo 2017i: 263; see also 2015g: 413 and 2018a: 126):

A simple alternative would have been for the Buddha to formulate *garudhamma* 6 in a different way. He could have simply stipulated the need for female candidates to receive <sup>[94]</sup> ordination from *bhikkhus*, without mentioning any cooperation by *bhikkhunīs*.

This is in fact the formulation found in some other *Vinayas* (Anālayo 2016d: 96f). That would have provided the opportunity for the *bhikkhus* to become “accustomed to the role they would play in overseeing the *bhikkhunīs* in the future”, which Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro considers to be required. It would also have made the situation clear for Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, without any need for her to return to the Buddha for further clarification on how to proceed with her five hundred followers.

In sum, the problem of interpreting the narrative in such a way that the Buddha is not portrayed as a thoughtless legislator remains a challenge that the arguments by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro have not been able to resolve. The pattern of first asking Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to accept *garudhamma* 6 and then issuing an authorization for *bhikkhus* on their own to ordain female candidates makes better sense if this authorization is meant to be relevant in future times as well, when the basic procedure of dual ordination cannot be followed. Unlike this authorization, the alternatives of simply ordaining the five hundred followers of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī himself or else allowing them to become ordained by accepting the *garudhammas* would indeed have resulted in “temporary alternatives” only, not in something invested with continued validity for later times. Moreover, the proposed interpretation does not turn the Buddha into a thoughtless legislator. Instead, he has intentionally created a situation for further regulation that

clarifies how to act when the basic procedure of dual ordination cannot be implemented.

This reading has already been proposed by the venerable U Nārada Mahāthera, also known as the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw, in a commentary on the *Milindapañha* written in Pāli and originally published in 1949. According to U Nārada Mahāthera, the purpose of the rule on single ordination was precisely to ensure that a *bhikkhunī* order could be revived at a later time (Anālayo 2018a: 198). Further evaluation of his suggestion requires a closer look at the nature of the *garudhammas*. [942]

### The Nature of the *Garudhammas*

The *garudhammas* are of a somewhat special character and are not “rules” in themselves. They were formulated in relation to someone who at the time of their promulgation was still a lay person, namely Mahāpajāpati Gotamī. As I pointed out in Anālayo (2016d: 114 note 73), the Pāli commentary “notes that the *garudhammas* are the only pre-emptive type of regulation found in the Theravāda *Vinaya*”.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 8) seems to have misunderstood this, as he argues that I am mistaken because the *Vinaya* contains rules not promulgated in response to a misdeed. Yet, my point here is not just the idea of a rule being promulgated in response to some misdeed but also the fact that the *garudhammas* are formulated for someone who is not yet a monastic. It is in this sense that the promulgation of the *garudhammas* “differs from the standard procedure of laying down rules recorded elsewhere in the *Vinaya*”.

In addition to this difference, although several *garudhammas* have counterparts among the *pācittiyas*, the *garudhammas* themselves are not found in the code of rules, and their transgression does not result in the need for a formal act of disclosure or in some form of invalidation of a legal act. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 15) reasons that

Garudhamma 6 is a *garudhamma*, which means that it is not a rule. Instead, it is a principle that the Buddha formulated as part of his ultimate vision for how the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* should be governed.

This means further that the remaining rules *do not rescind or modify this garudhamma*. They are simply ways of embodying it in legal form as explicit allowances.

Although the *garudhammas* are indeed somewhat unique and do not fit the pattern of other rules, and they are indeed formulated as part of the Buddha's vision of what was to come, it does not follow that they could <sup>[943]</sup> not in principle be rescinded or modified by the Buddha. Moreover, even though the *garudhammas* are not "rules", they are nevertheless legally binding. This distinction needs to be clearly kept in mind.

The question of abolishing or rescinding a *garudhamma* in fact comes up right away in the next section of the *Cullavagga*. It reports that Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī asked Ānanda to request the Buddha to abolish *garudhamma* 1 concerning the paying of respect between *bhikkhunīs* and *bhikkhus*. The Buddha refused, thereby making it clear that *garudhamma* 1 has to be followed.

Now Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī would hardly have made her request if she had been aware that the *garudhammas* cannot be abolished. Nor would she have made the request if it had been clear to her that the *garudhammas* need not be followed. Moreover, the Buddha is on record for explaining why he chose not to abolish it, rather than declaring that in principle a *garudhamma* can never be abolished. In sum, the episode gives the impression that, in principle, a *garudhamma* could have been abolished by the Buddha.

If a *garudhamma* can be abolished, it would follow that it should also be open to modification. Here the counterparts found for some *garudhammas* among the *pācittiyas* can be consulted. The promulgation of a corresponding *pācittiya* rule is to some extent a modification, since it implies that, from now on, failure to perform the prescribed action requires a formal act of disclosure in front of a fellow *bhikkhunī*. This was not the case before the promulgation of the *pācittiya*, when the same behavior was only a failure to implement the corresponding *garudhamma* but carried no consequences.

Yet, according to Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 21), "the *garudhammas* all provide the opportunity to provide additional legislation alongside them." In other words, according to his assessment a *garudhamma* has no legal repercussions on its own. For it to be legally binding, additional <sup>[944]</sup> legis-

lation is needed. In the case of *garudhamma* 6, according to Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 26),

Even though the *garudhamma* mentioned that bhikkhus would play a role in the Acceptance of bhikkhunīs, they had no authority to play any role until the Buddha had specifically set down a rule allowing them to.

This suggestion can be examined by consulting the narratives related to several *pācittiya* rules that correspond to *garudhammas*, in order to ascertain whether the *garudhammas* were already legally binding on their own or else required additional legislation in order to become operative.

According to *garudhamma* 3, the *bhikkhunīs* should inquire from the *bhikkhus* about the date of the observance day and come for exhortation. The *Vinaya* reports that, when some *bhikkhunīs* failed to do so, the *bhikkhus* complained about it (which then motivated the Buddha to promulgate *pācittiya* rule 59 for *bhikkhunīs*):<sup>7</sup> “How can these *bhikkhunīs* not enquire about [the date of] the observance day and not request exhortation?” To the best of my knowledge, the enquiry about the date of the observance day only comes up in this rule. Judging from the introductory narration and the complaint of the *bhikkhus*, this enquiry was already being undertaken prior to the promulgation of this rule. Such previous practice must have been based on *garudhamma* 3.

In the case of exhortation, other relevant regulations are found in *pācittiyas* 21 and 22 for *bhikkhus*. The narrative introducing the first of these two (which is clearly the earlier one) reports that elder *bhikkhus* were exhorting the *bhikkhunīs*. This in turn conveys the impression that [945] exhortation was already in practice. Independent of whether we consider the episode leading to *pācittiya* rule 21 for *bhikkhus* to be earlier or later than the episode leading to *pācittiya* rule 59 for *bhikkhunīs*, the exhortation appears to have been undertaken based on *garudhamma* 3. It did not require additional legislation.

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<sup>7</sup> Vin IV 315,18: *kathaṃ hi nāma bhikkhuniyo uposatham pi na pucchissanti ovādam pi na yācissanti ti.*

In fact, the episode of the promulgation of the *garudhammas* as principles to be accepted by Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī in order to become a *bhikkhunī* could hardly be about principles that had no applicability unless further legislation occurred. Having become a *bhikkhunī*, she would already have had to follow whatever rules the Buddha promulgated. Therefore, the request for her to accept the *garudhammas* makes sense if they had some consequences on their own, as guidelines to be observed from that moment onwards. These considerations in turn make it safe to conclude that the promulgation of *garudhamma* 6 was sufficient ground for dual ordination to take place. It did not require additional legislation.<sup>8</sup> In other words, stating that a *garudhamma* is not a “rule” does not imply that it has no legal significance. There is therefore no reason to assume that it could not be modified. It follows that Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 19) is not correct in arguing that “none of the rules about Acceptance amended or replaced the *garudhamma*.”<sup>9</sup> [946]

Based on the clarification that a *garudhamma* can be modified by the Buddha, just as any rule, the situation that emerges from the narrative points to a foundational regulation enshrined in *garudhamma* 6 that is followed by a specific modification authorizing *bhikkhus* on their own to ordain female candidates. This is the position taken by U Nārada Mahāthera: *garudhamma* 6 is the *mūlapaññatti*, the “fundamental prescription”, and the subsequent rules on *bhikkhunī* ordination are supplementary prescriptions, *anupaññatti* (Anālayo 2018a: 186).

Notably, the same position has been taken more recently by the State Saṅgha Mahānāyaka Committee in a document on the topic of *bhikkhunī*

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<sup>8</sup> [3] It is also incorrect for Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro 2018: 19 to argue that my position implies that the rule on single ordination “effectively, is not a rule only for unilateral ordination but also for dual ordination”. The same misunderstanding of my position is repeated in Ṭhānissaro 2018: 23. That is not the case. The principle of dual ordination has been sanctioned with *garudhamma* 6 already. The rule on single ordination authorized single ordination. It did not authorize dual ordination.

<sup>9</sup> [4] This also shows that an objection by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro 2018: 20 to the problem of depicting the Buddha as a bad legislator does not work, as it is also based on his misunderstanding of the nature of *garudhamma* 6.



ordination, published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Government of Myanmar. Although their general conclusions do not agree with those of U Nārada Mahātera, they concord with him that the rule on single ordination is a supplementary prescription, based on *garudhamma* 6 (State Saṅgha Mahānāyaka Committee 2006: 14).

## The Implementation of Dual Ordination

Now the rule on single ordination authorized the *bhikkhus* to give ordination on their own. However, once an order of *bhikkhunīs* had come into existence through the assistance of the *bhikkhus*, the new *bhikkhunīs* would have been under obligation to follow *garudhamma* 6. This means that they had to ensure that a female candidate, who had undertaken the probationary training, received ordination from both orders.<sup>10</sup> [947] The same need is in fact a continuous element, even after further rulings on conducting dual ordination in two stages. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 19) rightly points to

the origin story to Pācittiya 21, which stipulates that the bhikkhu instructing the bhikkhunīs must ask them if the eight garudhammas were still being kept up. This clearly implies that the garudhammas are still in force. The rules that implement a garudhamma do not rescind it.

In this way, the *bhikkhunīs* continue to be under the obligation to ensure that both orders are involved in the ordination. They are not free to grant ordination by themselves, nor can they leave the matter entirely in the hands of the *bhikkhus*. But the form of dual ordination to be followed has in the meantime been modified. Such modification does not stand in contradic-

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<sup>10</sup> [5] This is implied by the formulation of *garudhamma* 6: *dve vassāni chasu dhammesu sikkhitasikkhāya sikkhamānāya ubhatosaṅghe upasampadā pariyesitabbā*, “a probationer who has trained for two years in six principles should seek higher ordination from both orders.” The translation in Ṭhānissaro 2018: 14 is not entirely accurate: “Only after a female trainee has trained in the six precepts for two years can she request Acceptance [full ordination] from both Saṅghas,” as the original has no explicit reference to “only” and the formulation “can she request” does not fully convey the sense of *pariyesitabbā*.

tion to the origin story to *pācittiya* 21, mentioned by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro. The basic principle enshrined in *garudhamma* 6 remains the same: dual ordination (plus the probationary training).

It would have been contrary to *garudhamma* 6 if the *bhikkhunīs* had continued to send female candidates to the *bhikkhus* for single ordination. The *bhikkhus* on their side could safely be expected to have wanted to support the *bhikkhunīs* in adhering to the *garudhammas*. This would have made it preferable, from the perspective of both orders, to shift to dual ordination as soon as this was possible. In other words, following the narrative in the *Cullavagga* in the way it has evolved up to the present juncture, it could be expected that, from the time the followers of Mahāpajāpati Gotamī had received ordination onwards, dual ordinations were held. [948]

There are in fact indications that support this impression, found in relation to the inquiry about stumbling blocks. Such inquiry is meant to prevent ordination being granted to candidates with diseases or other defects. *Cullavagga* X.17 reports the Buddha authorizing the form in which such an inquiry should be presented to female candidates. The inquiry involves a series of questions, the last of which is:<sup>11</sup> “What is the name of your preceptress?”

This implies that, at a time when only *garudhamma* 6 and the authorization for *bhikkhus* to give ordination on their own had been promulgated, there was already a female preceptor (*pavattinī*) involved in the ordination of female candidates. Nevertheless, this does not in itself entail an active participation of the order of *bhikkhunīs* in the ordination.

The same does, however, appear to be implied by the formulation of the authorization itself, as this employs the phrase *upasampādentiyā*.<sup>12</sup> This is the feminine form of the present participle of *upasampādeti*. Judging from its masculine counterpart *upasampādentena* in the corresponding inquiry in *Mahāvagga* I.76,<sup>13</sup> the case is instrumental. Although Horner (1952/1975: 375) takes *upasampādentiyā* to refer to the female candidate to be or-

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<sup>11</sup> Vin II 271,30: *kā nāmā te pavattinī ti?*

<sup>12</sup> Vin II 271,21: *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, upasampādentiyā catuvisatiṃ antarāyike dhamme pucchitum*. I am indebted to Bhikkhu Brahmāli for drawing my attention to this passage.

<sup>13</sup> Vin I 93,26.

dained, Cone (2001: 476) more correctly lists the present passage among instances of ordaining and receiving into the *Saṅgha*. On this reading, the phrase *upasampādentiyā* would testify to a female granting ordination, which must of course have been a *bhikkhunī*, namely the preceptress (*pavattinī*). This in turn implies participation of a member of the order of *bhikkhunīs* in the granting of ordination already at this stage in the evolution of ordination of female candidates reported in the *Vinaya*.

Another indication occurs when the female candidates are embarrassed on being asked about the stumbling blocks, some of which are on matters of an intimate nature. The *Cullavagga* introduces this episode with the following phrasing:<sup>14</sup>

At that time the *bhikkhus* asked among the *bhikkhunīs* about the stumbling blocks.

The term *bhikkhunīnaṃ* is curious, since these are stumbling blocks for candidates, not for *bhikkhunīs* themselves. Moreover, the stumbling blocks have just been listed, leaving no need for them to be qualified further to ensure clarity regarding to whom they apply. This gives the impression that the *bhikkhus* did not ask the candidate directly, but instead asked the *bhikkhunīs* who had brought the candidates for ordination. The *bhikkhunīs* would then in turn have inquired <sup>[949]</sup> of the candidates, in line with the implication of the phrase *upasampādentiyā*, discussed above. In the ancient Indian setting this would have been a perfectly normal procedure.

Bhikkhu Tṭhānissaro (2018: 26) considers it “more natural that the candidates would be unable to answer when asked the embarrassing questions by the *bhikkhus*, and not when *bhikkhunīs* were answering for them.” This does not appreciate that, in order for the *bhikkhunīs* to answer on behalf of the candidates, they would of course have to question them directly. The ensuing narrative in fact shows that when candidates were interrogated by *bhikkhunīs*, even without any *bhikkhus* present, they were still embarrassed.

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<sup>14</sup> Vin II 271,30: *tena kho pana samayena bhikkhū bhikkhunīnaṃ antarāyike dhamme pucchanti.*

Another objection by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 25) takes the following form:

‘Bhikkhunīs’ stumbling blocks’ doesn’t necessarily have to mean stumbling blocks for bhikkhunīs. The genitive in Pāli can also mean, “pertaining to”, “belonging to”, or “related to”. In Pāli syntax it would be perfectly acceptable to refer to “bhikkhunīs’ stumbling blocks” as a quick, short-hand way of referring to the questions specifically for bhikkhuni ordination ... [Moreover] the listing of stumbling blocks given in the narrative contains two types of questions: those specifically for female candidates, and those that the female candidates have in common with male ones. So it is not superfluous to mention which questions were the ones that caused embarrassment. They were the sexually explicit ones.

Even with the alternative meaning of the genitive, the phrase does not really work so well, because, after all, the stumbling blocks pertain to, belong to, or are related to female candidates for ordination and not to *bhikkhunīs*. Taking the case of one of the diseases that are stumbling <sup>[950]</sup> blocks, if it should turn out that an already-ordained *bhikkhunī* has such a disease, no consequence would result from that. This is because these do not cause a *bhikkhuni* to stumble, so to say. They only make a candidate for ordination stumble.

Throughout the remainder of this section of the *Cullavagga*, the candidates are consistently referred to as *upasampadāpekkhā*, “those who want to be higher ordained.” They are not referred to as *bhikkhunīs*, and quite correctly so. On taking the *Vinaya* text literally as it is, this prevents considering the reference to *bhikkhunīs* just prior to the mention of the stumbling blocks as referring to the candidates.

The second argument by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro does not work so well, because it would imply that the *bhikkhus* asked the candidates only about those stumbling blocks that are specific to female candidates and not those in common with male candidates. This would have been an improper procedure. It would also not work to assume that the phrase in question is meant to convey that, even though all stumbling blocks were stated, the embarrassment occurred right at the time when those specific to female candidates were

spoken. To convey that sense, the Pāli phrase would have to involve a *yasmiṃ samaye* construction instead of beginning with *tena kho pana samayena*.

Given that the two objections do not really hold, it seems indeed that the *bhikkhunīs* were already involved to some extent in the actual granting of ordination. This would then have continued until the need for further legislation arose due to the introduction of the questions regarding stumbling blocks. The resultant legislation is indeed not just about dual ordination, but about two stages in such dual ordination that aim to avoid the potential embarrassment of female candidates. [951]

In sum, if there are no *bhikkhunīs*, there is nobody who has the obligation to “revere, respect, honor, venerate, and not transgress” the *garudhammas*. In that situation, there are only *bhikkhus* who have the right to ordain on their own, based on the authorization given by the Buddha on single ordination. Once such ordaining has brought into being an order of *bhikkhunīs*, however, these need to “revere, respect, honor, venerate, and not transgress” *garudhamma* 6. This is legally binding on them, even though, as mentioned above, there is no explicitly mentioned consequence for a case of transgression. Still, it is clear that *bhikkhunīs* should not just ordain a female candidate on their own, and they should also not just send such a candidate to the *bhikkhus* for single ordination.

### Lack of Specifications about the Ordination Procedure

The assumption that dual ordination was already in practice before the promulgation of the rule on ordination in two stages would imply that *garudhamma* 6 was the only directive employed for such purposes. Here, it needs to be kept in mind that, at this early stage in the evolution of the Buddhist monastic community, regulations were not necessarily as clearly defined and detailed as they became in later times.

The rule on ordination in two stages takes its occasion from the entry of undesirable members into the order of *bhikkhunīs*. For this to have happened, it can safely be assumed that quite some time had elapsed since the founding of the order. Another indication in this respect is an episode in *Cullavagga* X.8, concerning a pupil of Uppalavaṇṇā who for seven years

had been unable to memorize the *Vinaya*. Although the sequence of episodes reported in the *Cullavagga* is probably not meant to follow a strict chronology, there is an overall tendency to proceed from earlier to later events. This makes it probable, although not certain, that the episode involving this pupil took place before the promulgation of ordination in two stages. [953] In sum, it seems fair to assume that quite some time passed between the rule on single ordination and the rule on two stages in dual ordination.

As noted by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 15), the formulation of the rule on single ordination just refers to “*bhikkhus*”, whereas the next rule on ordination in two stages speaks of the “order of *bhikkhus*”. Such an increasing degree of formalization and precision is in line with a general tendency for matters during an early period of the monastic orders to be less precise and detailed.<sup>15</sup> For instance, in the case of the boundary (*sīmā*) [952] to be established for holding ordinations, Chung and Kieffer-Pülz (1997: 14) explain that:

Originally, “the residence” (*āvāsa*) in which Buddhist monks had their dwelling-places delimited the space within which the monks had to assemble as a “complete community” (skt. *samagra saṃgha*, pā. *samagga saṃgha*) for “ecclesiastical acts” (skt. *karma*, pā. *kamma*), as for example the “ordination ceremony” (*upasaṃpadā*), the “observance day” (skt. *poṣatha*, pā. *uposatha*) etc. This area was later defined more precisely by determining a “boundary” (*sīmā*) with “marks” (*nimitta*) which indicated the border of the *āvāsa*. Still later, the *sīmā* gained a life of its own and was determined irrespective of the extension of the residence.

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<sup>15</sup> [6] It does not imply, *pace* Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro 2018: 22, that the rule on single ordination is a make-shift solution. Although in *Cullavagga* X similar formulations are used for temporary regulations, *Cullavagga* X.6 (below cases 1 to 3) and X.8 (case 4) employs this type of formulation involving *bhikkhus* for legislating what appear to be permanent authorizations: 1) *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīnaṃ ācikkhituṃ: evaṃ pāti-mokkhaṃ uddiseyyāthā ti*; 2) *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīnaṃ ācikkhituṃ: evaṃ āpattiṃ paṭikareyyāthā ti*; 3) *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīnaṃ ācikkhituṃ: evaṃ kammaṃ kareyyāthā ti*; and 4) *anujānāmi, bhikkhave, bhikkhūhi bhikkhunīnaṃ vinayaṃ vācetuṃ ti*.

In view of this, it is less surprising that we find no detailed explanation for how dual ordination, sanctioned by *garudhamma* 6, should be implemented once an order of *bhikkhunīs* had come into existence. In other words, it is not necessary to expect, as Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 26) does, that “there would have had to have been rulings on what role they were to play: Were they allowed to voice objections and bring the procedure to a halt? How were the *bhikkhunī* intermediaries chosen? And so forth.”

Comparable to the gradual evolution of legislation concerning the delimiting of the space for ordination, mentioned above, protocols employed in later times need not have been in use already at such early stages. A simple application of the procedure already in use for ordaining male candidates could have been employed for dual ordination, without a need for extensive additional legislation.

### Modifying *Garudhamma* 6

The survey so far supports the reasoning by U Nārada Mahāthera that *garudhamma* 6 served as the foundational promulgation that was then modified by subsequent rules on single *bhikkhunī* ordination, dual ordination in two stages, and ordination through a messenger.

Now, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 12–15) formulates what he considers to be several “patterns of legislative procedure” regarding how rules are rescinded or modified. Since he has made it clear that the *garudhammas* are not rules, it seems safe to assume that his arguments are not meant to apply to them. In fact, as discussed above, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro holds that *garudhammas* can in principle not be rescinded or modified. <sup>[954]</sup> However, in the case of *garudhamma* 6 he provides an additional argument. According to Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 24), the subsequent rule on ordination in two stages,

on formal terms, cannot be viewed as a modification of *Garudhamma* 6, both for the reason that it is a rule whereas the *garudhamma* is not, and for the reason that, if it were a modification of the *garudhamma*, it would have been a full restatement, with modifications, of the *garudhamma*.

He does not give further details regarding how *garudhamma* 6 should have been restated if a modification took place. The rule on two stages reaffirms the basic principle of dual ordination, so in that respect it does restate it. What it fails to mention is the probationary period. As I mentioned in Anālayo (2018a: 98–100), it is in fact not entirely certain that the probationary training was indeed part of the formulation of *garudhamma* 6 from the outset. Perhaps then the above assessment by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro could be taken as being in line with the impression that the reference to the probationary training is a later addition to *garudhamma* 6. Although there are other reasons why I consider this a probable scenario, it is difficult to draw a definite conclusion here.

In fact, the idea of a full restatement, supposedly a required element for considering the rule on two stages to be a modification of *garudhamma* 6, is not found in the modification of that rule by introducing the alternative of employing a messenger. At the outset of this chapter, I translated both the earlier and the final versions of this rule. Neither amounts to a full restatement of the rule on two stages in dual ordination, as they do not mention that the candidate needs to be higher ordained on one side and cleared in the *bhikkhunī* order (*ekato-upasampannāya bhikkhunīsāṅghe visuddhāya*). Clearly, the two formulations of the rule <sup>[95]</sup> on employing a messenger do not involve a full restatement of the rule on ordination in two stages.

In sum, here and elsewhere, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro's perception of invariable patterns that, according to his view, are inherent in *Vinaya* law, are not necessarily the final word on the matter. On closer inspection, they might turn out to be far less self-evident than he seems to think. The rule on ordination in two stages is indeed a modification of *garudhamma* 6, as it introduces the two-stage procedure to the already sanctioned dual ordination. This is unfortunately lost from sight if one fails to recognize that the *garudhammas*, despite not being rules, do have legal relevance.

## The Intention Behind the Rules on *Bhikkhunī* Ordination

By way of presenting a background for evaluating the significance of the altogether four promulgations on *bhikkhunī* ordination, in Anālayo (2017h: 21)



I suggest that

all of these four regulations have as their purpose the facilitation of ordination of *bhikkhunīs*, not its prevention. This makes it to my mind rather doubtful that an interpretation of any of these rules as completely and definitely preventing any ordination of *bhikkhunīs* does full justice to them.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 18) replies that this

ignores the specific rules placing restrictions on *bhikkhunī* ordination, such as those regarding the need for a qualified sponsor ... It ignores one of the basic principles underlying the rules surrounding all Community transactions: They exist not only to facilitate the procedure in question, but <sup>[956]</sup> also—by establishing the basic requirements for a valid transaction—to mark it as invalid when those requirements are not met.

This reply concerns a different issue. The suggestion that the four regulations on *bhikkhunī* ordination are throughout concerned with facilitating such ordination does not stand in opposition to other rules that stipulate some restrictions. These restrictions are meant to facilitate the proper performance of ordinations, rather than preventing them wholesale.

The situation could be compared to the difference between a speed limit and a driving ban. The problem is not limits of some type, but the assumption that a particular rule makes it totally impossible to grant ordination at all. This is an interpretation that runs counter to the overall intention of all of the main promulgations that, according to the *Cullavagga*, the Buddha made on the topic of *bhikkhunī* ordination.

### Training of *Bhikkhunīs*

Another objection by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 27) concerns the need to ensure that the members of a revived order of *bhikkhunīs* receive proper training. In reply to an earlier response by me to this type of objection, he states that:

Anālayo's response shows a total lack of appreciation for what training entails. Nowhere does the Vinaya state that eight- or ten-precept nuns are qualified to train *bhikkhunīs* ... there is no precedent in the Canon on which to base the argument that eight- or ten-precept nuns could act as qualified teachers for *bhikkhunīs*. [957]

This objection is based on a misunderstanding. I did not propose that eight- or ten-precept nuns train *bhikkhunīs*. My suggestion was rather that the first generation of *bhikkhunīs* resulting from the recent revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination had previously been senior eight- or ten-precept nuns and thus brought with them many years of monastic experience. In addition, they received training from compassionate *bhikkhus* who were willing to help them gain expertise in those aspects of monastic conduct with which they were not yet familiar from their experience of being eight- or ten-precept nuns. By now, these *bhikkhunīs* have twenty years of seniority and are well able to train others. In both Sri Lanka and Thailand, *bhikkhunīs* have meanwhile gained a reputation for their good conduct. To the best of my knowledge, so far no scandal has emerged among *bhikkhunīs* of the type that regularly manifests due to irresponsible members of the order of *bhikkhus*. Thus, the whole discussion about the need to ensure proper training is not fully in keeping with the current reality.

The revival of the *bhikkhunī* tradition could be considered in the light of the revival of strict discipline in the forest traditions of Sri Lanka and Thailand. The first generation of these forest *bhikkhus* were not able to avail themselves of proper training from *bhikkhu* teachers genuinely qualified in the maintenance of strict discipline and thus did not have the benefit of living in dependence (*nissaya*) on an exemplary teacher whose conduct they could emulate. According to Carrithers (1983: 139), lacking exemplary teachers, the first forest monks of Sri Lanka “took their inspiration from the Jātakas perhaps, but their organization from the Vinaya and their practice from the Visuddhimagga”. Regarding the forest tradition of Thailand, Taylor (1993: 303) reports that [958]

forest monks of both *nikaai* in the lineage of Ajaan Man refer to the pristine *winai* and so-called *dhutanga* as their charter, the ‘forest

discipline'. These are the particular rules and regulations which Man re-enacted from his, and Ajaan Sao's, own understanding of the *vinaya* texts available to them at the time.

This puts into perspective the position taken by Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 27) that the training available through the personal relationship between student and teacher “cannot be gained through books or Dhamma talks”. In spite of having started out without personal training and basing themselves on books instead, the forest tradition has developed successfully. By now its members have acquired sufficient seniority to be able to provide proper training for disciples who live in dependence on them. At least to some extent, this provides a precedent for the first generation of *bhikkhunīs*.

Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 2) also notes that “the Buddha made no provision for reviving the Bhikkhu Saṅgha in case it died out after he died.” That is only to be expected, given that the order of *bhikkhus* came into existence first and is hierarchically in a higher position. For this reason, they can revive an extinct *bhikkhunī* order, but the reverse is not possible.

## The Disappearance of the True Dharma

Another aspect in evaluating the revival of the *bhikkhunī* order is the prediction of the disappearance of the true Dharma, already mentioned briefly above. According to the *Cullavagga*, the Buddha predicted that this would occur after 500 years, due to the founding of an order of *bhikkhunīs*. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 28) reasons: <sup>[959]</sup>

as SN 16:13 shows, the “disappearance of the True Dhamma” does not mean that no traces of True Dhamma remain. Instead, it means that counterfeit Dhamma has arisen ... the Buddha's prediction in Cv X.1.6—that the founding of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha would cause the True Dhamma to disappear in 500 years—was actually quite prescient, in that it was approximately 500 years after his death that the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras first appeared.

Since he already made this suggestion in an earlier web post, Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 29) then comments, in regard to Anālayo (2016d), that

in that publication

he doesn't even acknowledge the existence of the criticism I made. To simply ignore a reasonable criticism of his "historical-critical" argument in this way is bad enough. It shows that he is not really serious about pursuing a historical-critical approach to the texts. However, to ignore two reminders about the Canon's meaning for the phrase, "disappearance of the True Dhamma", and to continue using a false meaning of the phrase to discredit the Canon, is something much worse. It moves beyond mere negligence to a lack of honesty.

The above is one in a number of instances of personal accusations in Ṭhānissaro (2018). I have decided not to respond to such criticism *ad hominem* in an attempt to bring an element of de-escalation to the already emotionally charged topic of the legality of *bhikkhunī* ordination. Regarding the argument itself, I admit I had so far not considered the idea of putting all of the blame on *Prajñāpāramitā* texts as an instance of "reasonable criticism", as it had appeared to me to be just an instance of polemics. Be it reasonable or not, closer inspection shows that <sup>[960]</sup> the Pāli discourse quoted does not support Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro's argument. The relevant passage in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reads:<sup>16</sup> "Kassapa, the true Dharma does not disappear so long as a counterfeit of the true Dharma has not arisen in the world." The prediction of decline in *Cullavagga* X.1 reads:<sup>17</sup> "Ānanda, the celibate life will not be of long duration; Ānanda, the true Dharma will last only five hundred years."

The terminology employed is different. The *Cullavagga* is concerned with the *brahmacariya*, the "celibate life" or "holy life," as a foundation of the true Dharma that is in danger, and not with any counterfeit Dharma, be it *Prajñāpāramitā* or any other text.

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<sup>16</sup> SN 16.13 at SN II 224,10: *na tāva, kassapa, saddhammassa antaradhānaṃ hoti yāva na saddhammapaṭirūpakaṃ loke uppajjati.*

<sup>17</sup> Vin II 356,14: *na dāni, ānanda, brahmacariyaṃ ciraṭṭhitikaṃ bhavissati, pañc'eva dāni, ānanda, vassasatāni saddhammo ṭhassati.*

## Conclusion

After all this arguing back and forth, it is a relief to conclude on a note of concord. Bhikkhu Ṭhānissaro (2018: 4) affirms that “the prospect of being able to provide full ordination for women is an attractive one.” This affirmation is in line with a position I regularly encountered among *bhikkhus* opposed to the revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination, who do consider it as something in principle positive, were it not for what they perceive as a legal impossibility. Hopefully, the foregoing would have shown that such apprehensions regarding the legality of the restoration of the missing one out of the four assemblies are understandable but, fortunately, unfounded.

## Postscript

The position taken by U Nārada Mahāthera, or the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw, on the legality of reviving the *bhikkhunī* order through ordination given by *bhikkhus*, which the above study has confirmed as an accurate reflection of the relevant indications found in the Pāli *Vinaya*, has recently been examined by Scott (2023) from the perspective of its historical setting. Alongside offering a range of interesting observations, some parts of this study are unfortunately problematic, wherefore in the present postscript I will take up a few selected statements that seem most directly relevant to the topic of the present chapter.

One of the points to be explored concerns an assessment of the contested legal problems by Scott (2023: 10), as according to him “[t]he inability to meet these two criteria, that of being admitted as probationers by the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha* and then receiving a two-sided ordination from both monks and nuns, is considered by conservative legalists as the major barrier to ordaining women as *bhikkhunīs* in the present age.”

The first of these two criteria has been discussed in detail by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2010: 126–131), showing conclusively that this is not a barrier. Scott (2022: 18) quotes from the relevant discussion but presents it as providing additional evidence in support of a “figurative reading of the *garudhammas* as helpful but not compulsory instructions”. However, the crucial point, as the remainder of the sentence quoted only partially by Scott (2022: 18) shows, is rather that “women who received full ordination without having undergone the *sikkhamānā* training were still regarded as validly ordained *bhikkhunīs* as long as their ordination conformed to the other decisive criteria” (Bodhi 2010: 128). It would have been preferable if this part could have been quoted fully, and ideally while discussing the two criteria that in the past have been considered to be major barriers to granting *bhikkhunī* ordination, as one of these barriers has been conclusively removed.

Another, comparable instance concerns the suggestion that according to some contemporary scholars the *garudhammas* “are later interpolations to the *Vinaya*piṭaka”, an assessment Scott (2023: 32 note 60) backs up by quoting extracts from Hüsken (2000). In a different context, Scott (2023: 31 note 26) refers to my discussion of the *garudhammas*, referencing my

report in Anālayo (2017h: 12) that comparative study of the *garudhamma* relevant for ordination shows some variations among the different *Vinayas*.

The sentence preceding this reference, found on the very same page of my study, presents my conclusion that “there is no definite reason to reject the whole set of *garudhammas* as a later interpolation,” and on the preceding page I explicitly refer to the claim “that this set of *garudhammas* (Pāli) or *gurudharmas* (Sanskrit) must be a later interpolation”, explaining that my research has shown that “this position is not correct” (Anālayo 2017h: 11). Here, too, it would have been preferable if this part of the discussion had been quoted, or at least summarized, in order to clarify that a wholesale rejection of the *garudhammas* as interpolations would require arguing the case again, in dialogue with my objections to this proposal.

Another topic is the discussion in Scott (2023: 3) of “the Mingun Jetavana’s distinction between two types of regulation laid down by the Buddha, root regulations (P. *mūla-paññattīs*) and supplementary regulations (P. *anupaññattīs*)”, which leads to his query: “Yet, what right does the Mingun Jetavana claim to discern the nature and function of this supplementary regulation?” He concludes that “the Mingun Jetavana invokes the supreme commentarial conceit, understanding the Buddha as addressing him directly through the *Milindapañha* and outside millennia of accrued local tradition.”

The distinction between root regulations and supplementary regulations is already found in the canonical *Cullavagga* and the *Parivāra*, which use the terms *paññatti* and *anupaññatti*.<sup>18</sup> The *Vinaya* commentary *Samantapāsādikā* then employs the term *mūlapaññatti* for the former.<sup>19</sup> The distinction as such is a basic parameter of Theravāda legal thought, without any need to bring in the *Milindapañha*, leaving hardly a basis for questioning the Min-

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<sup>18</sup> Vin II 286,28 (in the account of the recitation of the *Vinaya* at the first *saṅgīti*) and Vin V 1,6; see also von Hinüber 1996/1997: 13 on these two in relation to the structure of the *Suttavibhaṅga*.

<sup>19</sup> Sp I 258,19 concludes its comment on the first *pārājika* in the form it was reportedly promulgated in response to the Sudinna incident by stating *mūlapaññattam nitthitam*, followed by using the term *anup(p)aññattivāre* to introduce its next comment on the additional stipulation that this rule also applies to sexual intercourse with an animal.

gun Jetavan Sayādaw's right to rely on this distinction and draw out the implications that result from it. In fact, to do so could be considered an expression of "millennia of accrued local tradition" of Theravāda monastics discussing legal implications of the *Vinaya*, rather than being outside of these.<sup>20</sup>

The need to appreciate key elements of Theravāda monastic law comes up again when Scott (2023: 2) speaks of the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw "deploying a reverse prolepsis where the Buddha has purposefully embedded future flexibility in the *Vinayapiṭaka*," "a flexibility into which the Mingun Jetavana claims special access. In short, the Mingun Jetavana is arguing for a new model of *sāsana* history." Another relevant reference in Scott (2023: 14f) takes off from a characterization by Bhikkhu Bodhi of the position against granting *bhikkhunī* ordination: "'to attempt to reconstitute a broken bhikkhunī saṅgha, it is said, is to claim a privilege unique to a perfectly enlightened Buddha, and no one but the next Buddha can claim that' (Bodhi 2010, pp. 104–5). Yet, such a claim is exactly what is being made by the Mingun Jetavana ... ."

The traditional conception of the *Vinayapiṭaka* sees it as providing regulations applicable continuously since their promulgation, up to today. Relying on this conception for applying monastic rules to the present does

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<sup>20</sup> A failure to appreciate fully the notion of *mūlapaññatti* can also be seen from the contrast Scott 2023: 19 apparently believes to obtain between the position taken by the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw, who "understands the *garudhammas* as root regulations that can be modified or amended in conjunction with supplementary regulations", and the reference he quotes from Kawanami 2007: 235 to the effect that the "Burmese *Saṅgha* holds that th[e sixth *garudhamma*] is a major ruling." The terms "root regulation" and "major ruling" refer to the same concept of *mūlapaññatti*. For the second case, Kawanami 2007: 234 in fact clearly indicates that the relevant discussion "focuses on the nature of the *garudhamma* rules and examines whether these are *mūla-paññatti* (a major rule, weighty regulation) or only *anu-paññatti* (a minor rule, supplementary regulation)". Notably, in line with a pattern evident in relation to referencing Bodhi 2010 and Anālayo 2017h, another statement from the very same page from Kawanami 2007 is quoted in Scott 2023: 18. A more adequate presentation could have been achieved by explaining that the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw and the State Saṅgha Mahānāyaka Committee are in agreement on the status of the sixth *garudhamma* as a *mūlapaññatti*, which in principle can be modified or amended by supplementary regulations if, and only if, the Buddha himself is the one who, according to the *Vinaya* report, promulgated such *anupaññatti*(s).



not reflect a “new model of *sāsana* history”. Attempts at interpreting the rules in relation to any present issue is entirely natural within a Theravāda monastic setting, rather than involving anything peculiar to the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw in the form of some supposed claim to “special access”. It is also quite definitely not an instance of arrogating to himself the privilege of a Buddha, which concerns lawmaking. In contrast, the position taken by the Sayādaw stays within the confines of interpreting the laws promulgated by the Buddha according to the report given in the *Vinaya*. Alongside highlighting some of the more specific modes of presentation adopted by the Sayādaw, which at least in part would reflect the circumstance that he presents his reasoning in the context of commenting on the *Milindapañha*, it would have been preferable if these other aspects of the Theravāda legal context had been more clearly acknowledged in order to provide a balanced picture of the situation as a whole.

More points could be taken up, but perhaps the above extracts already suffice to show that the discussion does not convey the impression of building on a proper appreciation of Theravāda monastic law and procedures. Particularly noteworthy is that several passages express a negative evaluation of the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw, made in clear awareness that tradition reckons him to have been an arahant.<sup>21</sup> Thus he is accused of “ensconcing himself securely within ‘the sphere of authority of the Buddha’s wisdom of omniscience’” and of relying on attributing to the *Milindapañha* “quasi-esoteric lessons or hitherto-hidden methods”, being one who presents an “admittedly idiosyncratic interpretation” and who at times is just “deliberately simplistic and diametrical” (Scott 2023: 14, 9, 13, and 11). The proposed analysis of the historical background could have been carried out without peppering it with such dismissive phrasing.

Notably, Scott (2023: 2) introduces his study by announcing that “[t]he point of this paper is not to evaluate the merits of the different arguments for or against re-establishing the *bhikkhunī-saṅgha*.”<sup>22</sup> Somewhat contrary

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<sup>21</sup> Scott 2023: 7: “Widely considered an *arahant* ... the Mingun Jetavana is an enigmatic figure in the history of twentieth-century Burmese Buddhism.”

<sup>22</sup> Toward the end of his study, Scott 2023: 25 repeats that “it was not my intention to

to the aims expressed by this initial announcement, an implicit evaluation of the merits of the arguments in support of re-establishing the order of *bhikkhunīs* appears to have become an undercurrent of his study. In terms of the selected points surveyed above, the article fails to clarify that one of the two barriers to *bhikkhunī* ordination has already been removed; it puts into question the nature of the *garudhammas* (one of which is crucial for the case in favor of revival) without reporting scholarly dissent; it questions the right to distinguish between root and supplementary regulations and interpret their respective significance; it activates the pervasive fear among traditionalists that the future of the *sāsana* is at stake and that the lawgiving privilege unique to the Buddha is being infringed; and it repeatedly uses dismissive expressions to characterize positions taken by the Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw. Taken together, this unfortunately amounts to an undermining of the Sayādaw's position in favor of a revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination, and that by sidestepping a proper appraisal of what is actually of legal relevance.

Scott (2023: 25) is clearly aware of what is at stake from an emic perspective, evident when he notes the perception common among Burmese Buddhists that, “because a woman cannot enter into the *sāsana* as a monastic and become a worthy field of merit, upon reaching the highest stage of the Theravāda path through *vipassanā* meditation, she must surely perish within seven days.” On the same page he reports that he was told personally that “the primary reason he [the Sayādaw] pushed for the ordination of women was because of the Mingun Jetavana's compassion for his *thilashin* and lay women disciples, facing the prospect of perishing if they were to become *arahants* through *vipassanā* practice under his watch.”

Drawing attention to this aspect of the situation is not in any way meant to suggest that awareness of such a background should determine, or impose limitations on, the outcomes of scholarly research. But it would furnish an additional reason to strive for presenting a fair and balanced appraisal of what is in principle a very interesting topic, namely the historical background to the debate on *bhikkhunī* ordination in Burma.

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adjudicate between these different views,” followed on the same page, just a few lines later, by referring to “the special and provocative conceit of the Mingun Jetavana”.



## XXI

### Appendix I: Debate in the *Milindapañha*

The present appendix proceeds beyond *Āgama* and *Vinaya* literature to a later text, the *Milindapañha* extant in Chinese and Pāli, applying the same basic procedure of comparative study employed in previous chapters to the opening debate between the Bactrian King Milinda and the Buddhist monk Nāgasena.<sup>1</sup> In addition to a full account of their encounter extant in Pāli, in the form of the *Milindapañha*, the same debate is also reported in two Chinese translations, which appear to stem from a single original rendition.<sup>2</sup> Extracts from this debate are also found in an *Avadāna* collection extant in Chinese and in a discourse quotation given in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of consulting the Chinese parallel to the *Milindapañha* has already been noted by von Hinüber (1996/1997: 83), who points out that the “development of [the] Mil[indapañha] can be traced with the help of the ... Chinese translation.” This assessment finds confirmation in the comparative study below. By way of preparation for that, however, a brief look at principles of Indian debate is required.

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\* Originally published in 2021 under the title “The Opening Debate in the *Milindapañha*” in the *Sri Lanka International Journal of Buddhist Studies*, 7.2: 15–27.

<sup>1</sup> This part of the debate has already been taken up for a comparative study by Minh Chau 1964: 47–49 and recently by Levman 2021: 114–116.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed study can be found in Demiéville 1924; see also Takakusu 1896, and Guang Xing 2009. For interesting suggestions regarding the possible choice of certain Chinese renderings in order to convey meaning to the Chinese audience see de Notariis 2022.

<sup>3</sup> T 203 at T IV 492c23; on T 203 see Willemen 1992 and 1994. For the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* quotation see the detailed study by Skilling 1998.

## Principles of Debate

The basic principles of debate can be appreciated with the help of a description of its contemporary practice in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Dreyfus (2003: 258) reports from his own training in debating that, when one is in an actual debate situation,

it is crucial to remain calm and good-humored, while keeping an eye out for sharp rejoinders that can turn the presence of a large crowd to one's advantage. I remember an incident that took place while I was answering [challenges in a debate session] in Se-ra Jay. The abbot, Geshe Lob-zang Thub-ten, who was my teacher, made a joke at my expense, implying that my answers were weak. The whole assembly burst into laughter. I was not fazed and without blinking I replied, "Some may laugh, but I challenge them to back up their laughter!" The audience exploded. I had won the exchange. <sup>[16]</sup>

The actual argument has of course no logical weight; it does not prove anything. But the quick and astute way he replied won him the approval of the audience and thereby the upper hand in the debate situation.

The same basic pattern is already evident in the period of early Buddhism, as can be seen in the case of a debate recorded in the *Pāyāsi-sutta*.<sup>4</sup> The Pāli version of this discourse has several parallels extant in Chinese, in addition to which a version of this debate is also extant from the Jain tradition.<sup>5</sup> Needless to say, in the latter case the debate involves a Jain monk. The *Pāyāsi-sutta* and its Chinese parallels depict a Buddhist monk debating a local king, a basic setting that bears considerable similarity to the *Milindapañha*. The topic at stake is the question of rebirth, which the materialist king denies. The actual debate begins with the king voicing his disbelief in rebirth with the phrase "there is no other world."<sup>6</sup> This is the standard phrasing apparently employed

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<sup>4</sup> [6] For a more detailed comparative study see Anālaya 2012d and 2013b.

<sup>5</sup> [7] See Bollée 2002. A comparison of the Buddhist and Jain versions can be found in Leumann 1885: 470–539 and Ruben 1935: 143–151.

<sup>6</sup> [8] DN 23 at DN II 319,12: *n' atthi paraloko*; with its parallels in DĀ 7 at T I 43a1: 無有他

in the ancient setting to convey this particular ideological position. The Buddhist monk reacts to this statement by querying whether the sun and the moon belong to this world or to the other world. The king has to admit that they belong to the other world. This is of course no argument for rebirth. But it is a valid reply in the context of a debate. The point at stake is not so much to provide a logical proof. The existence of the sun and the moon have little to do with rebirth and certainly do not prove it. Yet, the monk's reply is successful, since he has exhibited his rhetorical skill by using a good argument that forces his opponent to retreat or even remain silent. This is what counts in a debate setting.<sup>7</sup> It would be a misunderstanding to interpret this argument from a logical perspective.<sup>8</sup> What counts is quickly giving a sharp reply.

Keeping in mind the nature and basic principles of debate helps to appreciate the encounter King Milinda apparently had with another Buddhist monk, before his meeting with Nāgasena. The story reports the king approaching the monk and asking two seemingly innocent questions. These were why the monk had gone forth and whether the purpose of his going forth could also be achieved by a lay person. When the monk affirmed the latter, the king drew the conclusion that it is useless to go forth as a monk, as one can reach the same purpose by remaining a householder. The monk remained silent, thereby admitting his defeat.<sup>9</sup>

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世, MĀ 71 at T I 525c4: 無有後世, and T 45 at T I 831b24: 無有來世. The last two deny more precisely a future world. It seems safe to assume that these two translations may also go back to an Indic original worded similarly to the phrase found in DN 23, with the translators perhaps adding 後/來 to express the underlying meaning. For a detailed study of the denial of another world as part of the standard formulation of wrong view see Dhammadinnā 2023.

<sup>7</sup> [9] On debate in ancient India see, e.g., Solomon 1978: 833–875, Matilal 1987, and Bronkhorst 2007; on principles of debate in the Buddhist tradition Todeschini 2011 and on debate in the *Dīgha-nikāya* Manné 1992.

<sup>8</sup> [10] An example would be Evans 2008: 61, who reasons that the “opening argument is to ask whether the sun and the moon are of this world or another ... [which involves] right away the use of false dilemma ... and consequent equivocation of the ‘other world’ of the sun and the moon and the ‘other worlds’ of rebirth.” Such reasoning reflects lack of awareness of the rules of debate; see in more detail Anālayo 2013b: 17f.

<sup>9</sup> [11] Mil 20,28 and T 1670B at T XXXII 705c5.

This episode shows Milinda's debating strategies, presumably based on having developed familiarity with Indian debating practice. The first question regarding why the monk went forth can just appear like a polite inquiry in order to find out about the philosophy and conception of the final goal of the other's doctrine or even just to make a personal contact. The follow-up question of whether the same can be attained by a lay person is a natural one to pose by someone who is not a monk himself. Perhaps in order to assure the king that the Buddha's teaching is also relevant to householders, the monk gives an answer that, in the debate setting, leads to his defeat. <sup>[17]</sup>

Now, the conclusion drawn by the king is not actually compelling. Even though lay practitioners may in principle reach the final goal, the same is more easily achieved if one decides to go forth. The monastic life, at least in its ideal form, is meant to afford the best possible conditions for progress on the path. A verse in the *Suttanipāta* compares the lay life to a peacock, whereas the path of a monastic compares to a goose, whose speed of flight the peacock can never match.<sup>10</sup> However, to explain the situation appropriately, the monk would have to retract his earlier position of unqualified assertion. In order to avoid being bested, he should not just have flatly stated that lay disciples can reach the final goal but should have added a qualifier of some sort. Doing that would have forestalled the conclusion Milinda was ready to draw.

With a basic appreciation of rules of debate in general and of Milinda's characteristic approach in particular in place, it is now time to turn to the first exchange between the king and Nāgasena, based on the Chinese version.<sup>11</sup>

### Translation (Part 1)

The king asked Nāgasena in turn: "Dear, what is your name?"

Nāgasena said: "My parents gave me the name Nāgasena and in turn called me Nāgasena. At times my parents called me Wéixiān (維先), at times my parents called me Shǒuluóxiān (首羅先), and at times my parents called me Wéijiāxiān (維迦先). By reason of such usages, all people recognize me.

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<sup>10</sup> <sup>[12]</sup> Sn 221.

<sup>11</sup> <sup>[13]</sup> T 1670B at T XXXII 706a9.

All people in the world just have such names.”

The king asked Nāgasena: “Who is Nāgasena?” The king asked again: “Is the head Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “The head is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Are the eyes, ears, nose, or mouth Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “The eyes, ears, nose, or mouth are not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Are the neck, shoulders, arms, feet, or hands Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “They are not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Are the thighs or lower legs Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “They are not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Is the countenance Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Is [the experience of] pain and pleasure Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Is [the doing of what is] wholesome and evil Nāgasena?” <sup>[18]</sup>

Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Is the body Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Are the liver, lungs, heart, spleen, veins, intestines, or stomach Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “They are not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “The countenance, [the experience of] pain and pleasure, [the doing of what is] wholesome and evil, the body, and the mind—are these five things in combination rather Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “They are not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “In the case that there is no countenance, [experience of] pain and pleasure, [doing of what is] wholesome and evil, body, and mind—is the absence of these five things rather Nāgasena?”

Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “Is the sound of the respiration Nāgasena?”



Nāgasena said: “It is not Nāgasena.”

The king asked again: “What is Nāgasena?”

### Study (Part 1)

The above exchange shows Milinda employing the same basic approach of beginning by asking an innocent question: What is your name? Nāgasena deals with this better than the other monk, as he forestalls the drawing of unwarranted conclusions by immediately clarifying that there are alternative names and that any of these is simply a matter of designation. Although the texts do not explicitly indicate this, it seems fair to assume that, given Milinda’s earlier success with the other Buddhist monk, Nāgasena is here shown to be careful with apparently innocent questions, by qualifying immediately what he had said.

Milinda was reportedly acquainted with the different philosophical tenets in the ancient Indian setting, so that it seems reasonable to assume he may have had at least a superficial acquaintance with basic Buddhist ideas. In the ancient setting, a Buddhist teaching that would naturally have received much attention by others and for this reason would have been popularly known (though not necessarily understood properly) is the doctrine of not self. This often takes the form of a deconstruction, such as by analyzing the individual into five aggregates and then showing that each of these fails to meet the requirements that would justify it being considered a permanent and autonomous self.<sup>12</sup>

Such deconstruction of the self as a cardinal Buddhist tenet was and still is puzzling to those who are not well versed in Buddhist doctrine.<sup>13</sup> To

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<sup>12</sup> [14] This basic pattern can already be seen in what tradition considers to have been the second sermon given by the Buddha; see Allon 2020 for a survey of the parallel versions and a study of a Gāndhārī fragmentary version.

<sup>13</sup> [15] An example would be the reasoning by Batchelor 1997: 36: “A central Buddhist idea, however, is that no such intrinsic self can be found through analysis or realized in meditation. Such a deep-seated sense of personal identity is a fiction, a tragic habit that lies at the root of craving and anguish. How do we square this with rebirth, which neces-

someone accustomed to thinking in terms of a self, its denial in Buddhist <sup>[19]</sup> thought can easily seem misconceived and incoherent. Perhaps the present passage can be taken to imply that the king is portrayed as trying to explore this presumed weakness of Buddhist philosophy by using the basic procedure of deconstruction to lead to the absurd, and thereby self-contradictory, conclusion that Nāgasena does not exist.

Said simply, the argument would be that, given that Nāgasena has communicated his name, what exactly has he been talking about? On adopting the Buddhist deconstruction of a self, nothing can supposedly be found to which the name really refers. The expectation would then be that, faced with this dilemma, Nāgasena either has to confess that his previous statement, in which he announced his name, is not really correct or else implicitly admit that the Buddhist deconstruction of a self is not a coherent way of arguing. On this interpretation, it could be assumed that Milinda would have been ready to use any affirmation that Nāgasena indeed exists, despite the king's inability to find him, to conclude that, on the same reasoning, the self exists, despite any inability to find it among the aggregates.

In the Pāli version, the king presses his point more strongly by accusing Nāgasena of falsehood, inasmuch as there is no Nāgasena to be found.<sup>14</sup> Yet, Nāgasena is not short of a reply, which takes the following form in the Chinese version.<sup>15</sup>

## Translation (Part 2)

Nāgasena asked the king: “[You came in] what is called ‘a chariot’.<sup>16</sup> What is a chariot? Is the axle the chariot?”

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sarily entails the existence of something that not only survives the death of the body and brain but somehow traverses the space between a corpse and a fertilized ovum?” For a critical reply see Anālayo 2021d: 123–126.

<sup>14</sup> [16] Mil 26,23.

<sup>15</sup> [17] T 1670B at T XXXII 706a28.

<sup>16</sup> [18] The supplementation “you came in” takes its inspiration from Mil 26,32, where the king states, in reply to an inquiry by Nāgasena, that he has come in a chariot.

The king said: "The axle is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the rim the chariot?"

The king said: "The rim is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Are the spokes the chariot?"

The king said: "The spokes are not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the hub the chariot?"

The king said: "The hub is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the drawbar the chariot?"

The king said: "The drawbar is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the yoke the chariot?"

The king said: "The yoke is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the carriage's framework the chariot?"

The king said: "The carriage's framework is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the pole [of the canopy] the chariot?" <sup>[20]</sup>

The king said: "The pole [of the canopy] is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the canopy the chariot?"

The king said: "The canopy is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the combined assembly of all these wooden parts, placed to one side, rather the chariot?"

The king said: "The combined assembly of all these wooden parts, placed to one side, is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "In the case that there is no combined assembly of all these wooden parts, is that rather the chariot?"

The king said: "The absence of the combined assembly of all these wooden parts is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "Is the sound [of driving] the chariot?"

The king said: "The sound is not the chariot."

Nāgasena said: "What is the chariot?"

The king was silent in turn and had nothing to say.

Nāgasena said: "It is taught in a Buddhist discourse: 'Just as by means of the combined assembly of all these wooden parts one constructs a chariot and thereby gets a chariot, similarly it is for a person.'"

## Study (Part 2)

Nāgasena's reply employs the same deconstruction strategy but now applied to a lifeless object. As he explicitly indicates at the end of his argument, his presentation is inspired by a canonical precedent. This precedent involves a nun facing a challenge by Māra. In reply to a reference to a "sentient being" in Māra's challenge, the nun clarifies that this term stands for something composite and not a substantial and unchanging entity. In order to convey this point, she employs the simile of a chariot, which is similarly composite, as it is made up of various parts.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [19] SN 5.10 at SN I 135,20, SĀ 1202 at T II 327b9, SĀ<sup>2</sup> 218 at T II 454c29, and Up 9014 at D 4094 *nyu* 82a7 or P 5595 *thu* 128b2; see also Bingenheimer 2011: 171, Anālayo 2014d: 126, and Dhammadinnā 2020a: 9. In contrast to the assessment in Dhammadinnā 2020a: 14 that Māra "impersonates antagonistic challenges to the Buddha's teachings", in the present instance by giving "voice to a view opposite to the Buddhist worldview, in this case a key presupposition held in the early Indian philosophical landscape", Jones 2023: 5 asserts that the reply to Māra "is not an argument aimed at non-Buddhist conceptions of the self. The non-Buddhist who believed that there was a soul or essence of the person separate from the constituents would be unlikely to accept the conclusion of the argument." The proposed reasoning does not seem to take fully into account the narrative setting, according to which Māra had come to disturb and unsettle the nun in question. To rebuff him, it is enough if she dismisses his notion on Buddhist doctrinal grounds; it is not necessary for her to devise arguments that convince him. The overall study provided in the same article is based on the proposition by Jones 2023: 3 "that Candrakīrti's ironic praise that an argument was 'very brilliantly said' (*ucyate ati iva citram*) is an echo of King Milinda's use of the word *aticitra* ('brilliant') to describe Nāgasena's words," wherefore the former should be understood as an implicit reference to the chariot simile, even though the relevant part does not mention a chariot or its parts. The passage in the Pāli version, Mil 28,10+11+25: *aticitrāni pañhapapaṭibhānāni visajjitāni*, is in fact not ironical, and the Chinese parallel just reports the king expressing approval, T XXXII 706b15: 王言: 善哉, 善哉 (English translation available in Anālayo 2021c: 129). This leaves hardly any basis for the suggested correlation, based on which Jones 2023: 10 and 14 then identifies a substantial difference between Abhidharma thought and Candrakīrti regarding the implications of the chariot simile, in that according to the former a chariot/being "*does not ultimately exist*", whereas according to the latter a chariot/being "*exists conventionally*". If a chariot/being does not exist ultimately, this of course implies that it can only exist conventionally. In other words, it is not clear what difference these two formulations are

In a detailed study of this episode, Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā (2020a: 13) explains that the nun’s “illustration is not a denial of the conditioned existence of a chariot or a self, but a calling into question [of] the shift from concept to ontology evident in Māra’s pressing her on the characteristics of a ‘being.’” Importantly, in this canonical precedent, “the notions or terms ‘chariot’ and ‘being’ are not problematized as such.” Instead, the point is simply to clarify the nature of what these terms should be taken to imply.

The reply by Nāgasena silences the king. In the narrative setting, he could hardly have been aware of the canonical precedent set by the chariot simile, which Nāgasena adjusts to the present context by employing the same deconstruction strategy used earlier by the king. This move must have been unexpected to the <sup>[21]</sup> king, since one does not normally relate the deconstruction of the self to something inanimate.

According to the Pāli version, which presents the same basic deconstruction of the notion of a chariot, Nāgasena started his reply by asking if the king had come in a chariot, which the king affirms. The same could be implicit in the Chinese version, for which reason it has been supplemented in the translation above. Such an inquiry would then employ the very same strategy of posing an innocent question that leads up to a rebuttal, in the same way the king had employed earlier. In the Pāli version this takes the form of pointing out that, since the king is unable to establish the existence of a chariot, his earlier affirmation of having travelled in one appears to be a falsehood.<sup>18</sup>

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intended to express. Within the limitations of a footnote, it is not possible to do full justice to a whole article, or even just to raise all the points that seem to call for further discussion. Perhaps the above nevertheless suffices to provide a backdrop to the unconvincing assessment of the doctrinal thrust of the chariot simile in the reply to Māra, in comparison to which the interpretation offered by Dhammadinnā 2020a is clearly the preferable one.

<sup>18</sup> <sup>[21]</sup> Mil 27,15. It is also worthy of note that in both versions the king departs on horse, rather than by using his chariot. Vasil’kov 1993: 68–69 comments on this contrast in the case of the *Milindapañha* that in this way the king “first visits Nāgasena in a chariot; but after the [first] discussion, in which he is defeated, he returns home on horseback ... One might suggest ... that the king abandons his chariot out of vexation, since it was precisely the celebrated ‘example of the chariot’ which the monk had just used to prove to him that he was wrong.” However, in that case, one would expect some more

The exploration of the debate dynamics thus far has been based on the Chinese version. A substantial difference occurs at the outset of the relevant portion in the Pāli version (corresponding to Part 1 of the translation of the Chinese version given above), which proceeds as follows:<sup>19</sup>

### Translation (Part 3)

Then King Milinda said this to the venerable Nāgasena: “Venerable sir, how are you known? Venerable sir, what is your name?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “Great King, I am known as Nāgasena and, Great King, my companions in the holy life address me as Nāgasena. Yet, though my parents gave me a name like ‘Nāgasena’, or ‘Sūrasena’, or ‘Vīrasena’, or ‘Sīhasena’, this is but a designation, Great King, a convention, a concept, a verbal expression; ‘Nāgasena’ is just a name, as there is no person to be found here.”

Then King Milinda said this: “Good sirs, let the five hundred Bactrian Greeks and the eighty thousand monks listen to me. This Nāgasena speaks thus: ‘There is no person to be found here.’ Is it appropriate to approve of this?”

Then King Milinda said this to the venerable Nāgasena: “Venerable Nāgasena, if no person is to be found, then who offers you robes, alms food, dwellings, and medicinal requisites for the sick and who partakes of them? Who guards moral conduct? Who engages in [mental] cultivation? Who realizes path and fruit, Nirvana? Who kills a sentient being? Who takes what is not given? Who engages in sexual misconduct? Who speaks falsehood? Who drinks alcohol? Who performs the five deeds of immediate [retribution]?”

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explicit allusion to this contrast. Hence, a more plausible explanation would be that “Milinda’s leaving behind the chariot after the [first] dispute with Nāgasena is a direct result of the king’s defeat in the debate. A traditional coupling of two motifs, defeat in a contest, verbal or otherwise, and the surrender of the chariot to the victor, would seem to explain the strange incident of Milinda’s departure on horseback.”

<sup>19</sup> [22] Mil 25,5.

“There is therefore nothing wholesome, nothing unwholesome, there is no doing or causing to do of wholesome and unwholesome deeds, there is no fruition or ripening of good and bad deeds.

“Venerable Nāgasena, if someone kills you, there would be no killing of a sentient being for that one. Venerable Nāgasena, you also have no teacher, no preceptor, and no ordination. [22]

“You say this: ‘Great King, my companions in the holy life address me as Nāgasena.’ What here is Nāgasena? How is it, venerable sir, is the head hair Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Is the body hair Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Are the nails ... the teeth ... the skin ... the flesh ... the tendons ... the bones... the bone marrow ... the kidneys ... the heart ... the liver ... the diaphragm ... the spleen ... the lungs ... the bowels ... the mesentery ... the contents of the stomach ... the feces ... the bile ... the phlegm ... the pus ... the blood ... the sweat ... the fat ... the tears ... the grease ... the spittle ... the snot ... the oil of the joints ... the urine ... the brain in the head Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “How is it, venerable sir, is bodily form Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Is feeling tone Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Is perception Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Are volitional formations Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “Is consciousness Nāgasena?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “How is it, venerable sir, is Nāgasena bodily form, feeling tone, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda asked:] “How is it, venerable sir, is Nāgasena apart from bodily form, feeling tone, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness?”

[Nāgasena replied:] “No, Great King.”

[Milinda said:] “Venerable sir, although I have been asking and asking, I do not see that Nāgasena. Venerable sir, Nāgasena is just a sound. How could there be a Nāgasena? Venerable sir, you are speaking a falsehood, an untruth; there is no Nāgasena!”<sup>[23]</sup>

### Study (Part 3)

A crucial difference, compared to the ostensibly earlier Chinese version, is the addition of the phrase “there is no person to be found here” in Nāgasena’s first statement to the king. This changes his stance, compared to the Chinese version, as he now takes the position of denying that there is a person at all. This appears to reflect the theory of two truths, according to which, from the viewpoint of ultimate truth, a person does not exist at all.<sup>20</sup>

Such denial appears to have motivated an extension of Milinda’s reply in the Pāli version, by way of querying who receives offerings and undertakes moral conduct, etc. It is only after this additional line of argument that the deconstruction of the name Nāgasena falls into place, similar in kind to what is found in the Chinese version, with some differences in details.

That the present difference is indeed a case of later expansion can be seen from its lack of inner coherence. At first, Milinda argues that a denial of the person makes no sense, since it results in the inability to provide a coherent account of subjective experience and the need for moral restraint, etc. Yet, in the ensuing part Milinda deconstructs Nāgasena and arrives at the conclusion that no Nāgasena can be found, thereby contradicting the point he has just made. In order to reply to Milinda’s argument, in the way it is now found in the Pāli version, there would have been no need for Nāgasena to bring in the chariot simile. Instead, he could have just called

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<sup>20</sup> <sup>[23]</sup> A more detailed exploration of this doctrinal shift, in relation to the chariot simile, is at present under preparation by Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā, wherefore I do not follow this up further in the present context.



the king out for making an incoherent argument, pointing out that what Milinda had said earlier does not match what he said subsequently.<sup>21</sup>

The addition of the argument that there is no person, and its corresponding reply that there is no chariot, seems to obfuscate the point made by Nāgasena, as well as by the nun to whom the simile is attributed. As pointed out by Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā (2020a: 13), the nun's reference to a sentient being and a chariot certainly does not propose "a metaphysical affirmation of their conventional existence but ultimate or absolute non-existence". Yet, this is what the opening debate between Milinda and Nāgasena in the Pāli version of the *Milindapañha* has come to convey, thereby inaugurating a shift in perspective on the significance of the chariot simile as an illustration of the doctrine of not self that appears to have had a lasting influence in later Buddhist traditions.

## Conclusion

A comparison of the opening debate in the Chinese and Pāli versions of the *Milindapañha* shows a process of expansion in the latter, apparently influenced by a radicalized notion of the doctrine of not self (combined with the theory of two truths) as implying that a person does not exist at all. As a result of this process of expansion, the dynamic underlying the debate has to some extent become obfuscated.

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<sup>21</sup> [24] An example for pointing out an incoherent presentation, in this way by noting that what has been said earlier does not match what has been said subsequently, can be found in MN 56 at MN I 376,30: *na kho te sandhīyati purimena vā pacchimaṃ, pacchimena vā purimaṃ*, with a parallel in MĀ 133 at T I 629b29: 汝之所說, 前與後違, 後與前違, 則不相應.

## XXII

### Appendix II: The Name Theravāda

*I do not propose that we abandon  
the use of the term Theravāda  
—that would be absurd ...  
(Skilling 2009b: 80)*

In the first part of this appendix, I take up an eighteenth-century inscription related to a Burmese mural depiction of a tale relating a past life of the Buddha, qualified to be a ‘Theravāda’ *Jātaka*. Then in the next part I turn to research by Gethin (2012) regarding occurrences of the Pāli terms *theravāda*, *theriya*, and *theravaṃsa* in pre-twentieth century Pāli texts. This then leads me in the final part of my exploration to a critical evaluation of the position taken by Perreira (2012) that a reference to the Theravāda school in Western writings in 1907 constitutes the point of origin of the contemporary usage of the term.

#### The Inscriptional Evidence

In the course of a survey of *jātaka* depictions in Burmese art, mainly related to the tale of *Vessantara*, Handlin (2016: 180) drew attention to the inscription under discussion as

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\* Originally published in 2023 under the title “The Name Theravāda in an Eighteenth-Century Inscription: Reconsidering the Problematicization of the Term”, in *Śāntamatiḥ, Manuscripts for Life: Essays in Memory of Seishi Karashima*, N. Kudo (ed.), 1–25, Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University.

the first time the term *Theravāda* appears in the public domain. The donor of a 1761 endowment whose Vessantara narrative features a labyrinthine Wingaba Hill inscribed another image with the hitherto not encountered title *Theravāda Zaq (Jātaka)*, the image relating a previous Buddha life, of unknown origin. [2]

In what follows, I first explore the image depicting the *jātaka* in question and then turn to the corresponding inscription. In the final section of the present part, I contrast the resulting evidence to a tendency to problematize the name *Theravāda* in some scholarly writings.

#### *A 'Theravāda' Jātaka*

The inscription in question accompanies a mural in a shrine of the Shwemutaw compound, located in upper Myanmar. In a detailed study of such Burmese Buddhist wall paintings during the period from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, Green (2018: 11, 24, 17, and 169) explains:

By presenting Buddhist biography, the murals bridged the gap between the Buddha's presence and absence ... To enter temples of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries was to enter a cohesively articulated and represented Burmese Buddhist world to which the devotee belonged by performing ritual activities within it. The iconographic program and disposition of the imagery together produced a space that was religiously and socially effective ... The majority of the wall painting's subject matter would probably have been accessible to Burmese society due to literary developments, particularly the public narration of religious stories ... [and] the push towards translating religious texts into the vernacular that strengthened in the seventeenth century ... The popularity of translating Pali texts into Burmese during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the importance of religious material, particularly stories of the Buddha and his previous lives, as well as the focused subject matter of the contemporaneous wall paintings, were related phenomena.

Regarding the target audience of these murals, Green (2018: 16) notes:

“Viewers would have included the local community, both lay and religious, although the extent of visitation is unknown.” In terms of the history of Burmese art, the image under discussion shows several of the features identified by Green (2018: 46f) as characteristic of a style of wall painting employed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, distinct from styles of painting that came into use in the course of the eighteenth century and persisted into the nineteenth century. The relevant part of her description of this style provides the following indications, which can be read in comparison with the actual image found below on p. 462:

Proportions are not realistic, with people and animals disproportionately large compared to the landscape and buildings ... people are mostly illustrated in three-quarter profile with broad faces, large eyes, wide noses, thick lips, large ears with plug earrings, and three lines on their necks. They are clothed in textiles elegantly decorated with geometric patterns that can be seen on Indian trade textiles in South-east Asia. Men are portrayed with a large lump in their cheeks, possibly representing a betel quid, and the women have their hair pulled up and bound by a ring on top of their heads. Colors are bright. There is usually a red background.<sup>1</sup>

Several features found in the mural under discussion disappear from use during the second half of the eighteenth century, which shows a tendency to shift from frontal view to bird’s-eye view and to employ multiple perspectives, allowing the viewer to see different areas in a compound simultaneously. Pictures overall appear more realistic, and figures are more to scale with the environment. People are depicted with oval faces, the lumps in the cheeks of men have disappeared, and women wear their hair tied up in buns or semi-elaborate <sup>[3]</sup> coifs (Green 2018: 49f). In sum, the painting style used for the image under discussion concords with the dating of 1761 mentioned by Handlin (2016: 180), derived from two donative inscriptions featured on the door jambs of the shrine.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the significance of the red background see also Green 2018: 156 and 159.

<sup>2</sup> Lilian Handlin, personal communication, 2022.



A Theravāda *jātaka*, Shwemutaw, Upper Myanmar

Turning to the actual narrative presented in the mural, the left part of the painting features a male reclining on his side on a low platform and with his head and one shoulder supported by two pillows. He wears a long white shirt marked with black arrow-type symbols and underneath a pair of trousers marked with thick red circles. His eyes are closed, and his hands are placed on his stomach. The image suggests that he is taking a rest, perhaps after partaking of a heavy meal.

To his right, the next narrative segment shows a young woman seated on the ground with her back turned towards him. Her dress is made of the same white cloth marked with arrow-type symbols, with the trousers worn below marked with red circles. The visual similarity between her clothes and those of the reclining male could be meant to convey the impression that the two are related to each other. She is gesticulating, with her left arm raised, in the course of a conversation with a young male seated next to her. He is bare-chested and wears a green sarong. With his right arm raised, presumably to make a point, he is gazing at her.

Further to the right two similarly bare-chested males wearing sarongs can be seen walking away. Each of these two males carries a pole on the left shoulder, with a basket on each end. Comparable to the case of the visual similarity between the reclining male and the woman in matters of dress, the similarity resulting from these two and the seated male being bare-chested and wearing just sarongs could be intended to communicate that these three in some way belong together.

### *The Inscriptional Reference to Theravāda*

The inscription below the image provides the following information:<sup>3</sup>

When the future Buddha was a thief, the wife of a rich man felt attachment to him and wanted him to engage in wrong behavior. He did not do it and had her keep the precepts. He was given some of

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<sup>3</sup> I am deeply indebted to Lilian Handlin for providing a photograph and translation of the inscription, as well as other information. Without her kind and generous help, the first part of the present study could not have reached its present form.

the rich man's wealth and released. A Theravada *jātaka*.<sup>4</sup>

Based on the summary of the tale provided in this way, it seems fair to propose that the image is meant to show the rich man reclining while his wife is in conversation with the thief. The two carriers do not correspond to anything mentioned in the inscription, leaving their role uncertain. Nevertheless, it would seem possible that these two are collaborators of the thief with the task of carrying away whatever he was planning to steal. Presumably on realizing that he has been discovered, they would have decided to leave. [4]

Whatever the role of these two may have been, the explicit indications that the inscription does provide can be appreciated in the light of the explanation by Green (2018: 167) that “the writing derived from the paintings and was ... a device to enhance the reception of the visual narratives.” The story line provided in the inscription indeed brings to life the depiction in the mural and thereby substantially enhances its reception. The function of the final remark that this is “a Theravada *jātaka*” in enhancing the reception of the visual narrative is not as self-evident, requiring further exploration.

Now, the tale as such, in the way it emerges from the inscription, appears to serve as an illustration of the importance of keeping the third precept. This would presumably have been of particular appeal to the donors, whose status as lay disciples is evident from statements that record the reasons for two generations to part with some of their wealth in order to perform the meritorious deed of constructing the shrine and meticulously decorating its interior.<sup>5</sup> The circumstance that in this tale the one who shows such high regard for refraining from sexual misconduct is a thief enhances the main message. In this way, someone adopting wrong livelihood that involves in-

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<sup>4</sup> The actual spelling used in the inscription is *theravāta*. The use of *t* instead of *d* appears to reflect a not uncommon type of spelling mistake, recognized on p. 2 of Vol. 1 of the *Concise Myanmar Dictionary*, first published 1992 by The Myanmar Literary and Translation Commission, Ministry of Education (I am indebted to Bhikkhu Aggacitta for this reference). An example of the same type of error appears to occur in another eighteenth-century inscription, figure 4.7 in Green 2018: 182, which refers to the Buddha's pre-awakening teacher Rāmaputta as “Uttaka” instead of Uddaka.

<sup>5</sup> Lilian Handlin, personal communication, 2022.

tentionally breaking the second precept against taking what is not given still has such high regard for the third precept that he refrains from the opportunity to engage in sex with the wife of the rich man.

Since from an emic perspective *jātakas* serve to illustrate the perfections acquired by the future Buddha during his various previous lives, the present tale would have functioned as an exemplification of the second in the standard listing of perfections: morality (*sīla*). Above the present image, the same wall shows scenes from the past life of the Buddha as Vessantara,<sup>6</sup> illustrating the first perfection of generosity (*dāna*). This other *jātaka* illustration provides an important visual reference point for the story under discussion. Green (2018: 111 and 66f) explains:

The organization of the wall paintings, vertically, horizontally, and from periphery to center provides strong evidence that the imagery was conceived of as a cohesive entity with a systematic meta-narrative ... the murals formed a programmatic whole where each of the sections was not only cohesive within itself, but also related to the other groups of images ... The *jātakas* perform as a group in the murals.

The tale of Vessantara is the last member of the *Mahānipāta*, the final ten stories in the classical *Jātaka* collection, which have been of particular appeal in the South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions. Regarding Burmese murals of the period in question, according to Green (2018: 66) “the *Mahānipāta* was the dominant group of the *jātaka* narratives in most of the temples.” From the perspective of *jātaka* tales performing together, combined with the central role of the *Mahānipāta* in such wall paintings in general, an obvious choice for illustrating the perfection of morality would have been the narrative of the *nāga* Bhūridatta from the *Mahānipāta*.<sup>7</sup> Yet,

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<sup>6</sup> Jā 547; For a comparative study of this tale see Anālayo 2016k.

<sup>7</sup> Jā 543, which in its conclusion at Jā VI 219,23 places a particular highlight on keeping the *uposatha* (a closely similar main plot in Jā 506 ends with the same highlight at Jā IV 468,20); see also the correlation of the *Mahānipāta* tales with the perfections in Appleton 2010: 75. In relation to another past life of the Buddha as a robber, Jā 279 at Jā II 389,5 explains that even *bodhisattas*, although they are such great beings, neverthe-



this choice was not adopted and instead the mural shows a tale <sup>[5]</sup> that is not even part of the classical *Jātaka* collection. Regarding such non-classical *jātaka* tales in general, Jaini (1990/2001: 391) reasons:

It is true that these tales could not be traced to the canonical *Jātaka* book itself... Notwithstanding the diverse sources from which these tales drew, because the spirit of their teachings remained distinctly Buddhist, they were acceptable as complements to the canonical *Jātakas* ... as long as the hero of the tales remained the Bodhisatta, and as long as nothing blatantly contrary to the Buddha's teachings was allowed to corrupt the message, their value in the edification of devout laypeople remained unchanged.

At the same time, however, alongside such reasoning there is also room for the existence of awareness among Buddhists of the fact that certain texts could not have been part of what according to tradition was recited soon after the Buddha's final Nirvana at the first "communal recitation" (*saṅgīti*).<sup>8</sup> In the case of a well-known assembly of non-classical *jātakas*, the *Paññāsa-jātaka*, according to an unverified tale a Burmese king considered these tales to be apocryphal and ordered the collection to be burnt.<sup>9</sup> Whether this ever happened or not, the circulation of such a story reflects the possibility of misgivings regarding such *jātaka* tales. This could also have been relevant to the past life of the Buddha as a thief who keeps the third precept, as this

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less at times take what belongs to others, quoting a statement that attributes this to a fault in their horoscope, *nakkhattadosenā ti*. The interjection of this strained explanation into the midst of the narrative reflects awareness within the tradition of the difficulties involved in the *bodhisatta* adopting such a type of wrong livelihood. From this perspective, a *jātaka* in which the future Buddha is a thief or robber would share with the tale of *Vessantara* an ethically complex presentation, differing in this respect from the fairly straightforward conduct of the *nāga* Bhūridatta.

<sup>8</sup> Skilling 2006: 167 reports that "the *Piṭakamālā* described the *Paññāsa-jātaka* as 'outside the *saṅgāyana*,' but late Theravādin works accept certain works, such as the *Nandopananda-sutta*, as 'Buddha-word,' even though they were not included in the council (*saṅgītiṃ anāropita*). That is, 'Buddhavacana' and 'Tipiṭaka' are not necessarily coterminous."

<sup>9</sup> Prince Damrong, quoted in Skilling 2006: 159; see also Jaini 1981: vf and 1990/2001: 376.

is not even one of the *Paññāsa-jātakas* in the Burmese collection of these tales.<sup>10</sup>

In general, the construction of such shrines during the period in question appears to have been fairly regularized. Green (2018: 94) reports, regarding the superstructure of receding and concentric roofs:

Sumptuary regulations controlled the use of such structures, and the number of layers permitted to each person accorded with his or her rank ... The incorrect use of ... architectural features, and other adornments could bring heavy punishment to offenders.

Regarding the effect of a tendency toward standardization on murals of the period under discussion, according to Green (2018: 36 and 59)

artists and donors drew upon a stock body of material for representation, depicted in formulaic manners ... The stability of the subject and organizational structure in turn enabled the interpolation of variations precisely because it was possible to insert them without disturbing the foundations.

In such a setting, a need to validate the “interpolation”, if it can be called such at all, of a past life of the Buddha that is not part of the classical *Jātaka* collection could have led to an explicit assertion that this does not result in “disturbing the foundations”.<sup>[6]</sup>

Alternatively, perhaps the qualification as a Theravāda *jātaka* simply served to name an anonymous narrative. Since a *jātaka* is obviously Buddhist,<sup>11</sup> the specification Theravāda may have been meant to convey that this tale belongs to the same tradition as the Pāli version of the Vessantara *jātaka*. Given that the Vessantara narrative can be considered to be “*the* Theravāda *Jātaka*”, in view of its immense popularity and appeal among the Buddhist populations of South and Southeast Asia,<sup>12</sup> it does not seem too far-fetched to introduce its companion on the same wall as “a Theravāda *jātaka*.”

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<sup>10</sup> The text has been edited by Jaini 1981 and 1983.

<sup>11</sup> Skilling 2006: 113 explains about *jātaka* that “[a]s a genre it is unique to Buddhism.”

<sup>12</sup> Collins 2016: vii even speaks of it as “indeed *the* central text in the Theravāda Buddhism of South and Southeast Asia.”

Whichever of these interpretations may appear preferable, the designation applied in this way as such does seem to reflect a self-understanding or sense of identity shared by those involved in one way or another in the production of the mural as well as those expected to view this inscription, expressed through the name Theravāda. It would follow that already in the mid-eighteenth century the use of the name Theravāda to convey a specific Buddhist identity was sufficiently well known to be employed in this way in an inscription. As far as I can see, this employment would be in line with the way the term is used nowadays. When introducing the tale of the thief who kept the third precept to an audience in the twenty-first century, it would be quite natural to refer to this tale as “a Theravāda *jātaka*.”

*Problematizing the Name Theravāda*

The apparent use of the name Theravāda to convey a specific Buddhist identity already in the eighteenth century invites a reconsideration of a tendency to problematize the usage of this term. In some recent scholarly publications, this tendency finds expression in replacing the more commonly used Theravāda with the names Theriya and/or Theravaṃsa, apparently based on the perception that the usage of the name Theravāda to refer to South and Southeast Asian Buddhism(s) is an innovation stemming from the early twentieth century. At times such replacements are simply adopted without further discussion. Fortunately, however, in the introduction to a posthumously published monograph that employs the alternative name Theriya, Cousins (2022: 1) provides information that helps appreciate this type of choice:

Southern Buddhism is often referred to as Theravāda Buddhism, although the ancient term ‘Theravāda’ has only relatively recently been adopted as a collective name for this tradition. The first person to utilize the term appears to have been the British monk Ānanda Metteyya (Alan Bennett, 1872–1923), the first Western-born monk to visit Europe. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that it was already in use in Burma and adopted by him from his sources there. In any case, it is now widely used to refer to that form of Bud-

dhism whose monastic order derives from the lineage of the ancient Theriyas in Ceylon and elsewhere and whose texts have been preserved by that lineage in the Pali language.

The reference to Ānanda Metteyya comes with an endnote in support, which mentions: “Perreira 2012. See also Gethin 2012.” By way of exploring this reference, in what follows I take up the contributions by these two authors in turn, beginning with the latter.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Theravāda and Related Terms in Pāli Texts

The second of the above two references is to an article with the tantalizing main title “Was Buddhaghosa a Theravādin?”, offering an informative survey of occurrences of the relevant terms in Pāli texts. In full acknowledgment of my indebtedness to this detailed research, on the results of which I simply rely for my present exploration, there are a few issues of interpretation regarding these results where I venture to see things in a different way. In what follows, I begin by exploring the Pāli term *theravāda*, then compare its usage to that of the alternative Pāli terms *theriya* and *theravaṃsa*, and finally turn to the contemporary usage of the name Theravāda.

### *The Term Theravāda in Pāli Texts*

Based on identifying two main meanings of the term *theravāda* in Pāli commentaries and chronicles, Gethin (2012: 14) explains that, unlike the term’s usage in the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* (and in Sri Lankan chronicles):

As for the Pali *aṭṭhakathās*, the term *theravāda* is not used to refer to a school or Vinaya ordination lineage at all;<sup>13</sup> it is used to refer to

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<sup>13</sup> The formulation adopted here summarizes the preceding assessment in Gethin 2012: 10 that “outside the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* there is little evidence for the use of the expression *theravāda* in the *aṭṭhakathās* as the name of a particular school or lineage of Buddhism contrasted with other schools or lineages of Buddhism.” My introductory phrasing is meant to bridge these two formulations, as occurrences in the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* would pertain to “the Pāli *aṭṭhakathās*”, so that, strictly speaking, at least in

a general body of received interpretation of the canonical texts, which is distinguished from the earlier traditions of interpretation thought of as deriving from the 500 arahats present at the first council.

This finding raises the following question for me: Could there be some relationship between the two senses of the term *theravāda* attested in Pāli texts, that is, between the textual body of commentaries and the ordination lineage? For the purpose of exploring this possibility, in what follows I briefly present ideas that I have elsewhere discussed in more detail.<sup>14</sup>

Considering the issue of distinct monastic lineages (conventionally counted as eighteen *nikāyas*)<sup>15</sup> from the viewpoint of how this would have impacted the actual lived experience of Indian monastics, a key element must have been the fortnightly recitation of the code of rules (*pātimokkha/prātimokṣa*) by those who have received full ordination. Participation in this observance serves as an expression of communal harmony and commitment to following a [8] specific set of rules. The same principle stands in the background of

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this instance of a Pāli *aṭṭhakathā* the term *theravāda* is used to refer to a school or *Vinaya* ordination lineage.

<sup>14</sup> Anālayo 2022d; see also above p. 73ff for similar points in relation to Mūlasarvāstivāda Āgama and *Vinaya* transmission, as part of a critical assessment of a problematization of the name of this monastic lineage, which has found expression in the usage of the term “(Mūla)-sarvāstivāda”. I also hope that my present discussion will be able to put into perspective some of the concerns voiced by Bretfeld 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Bechert 1993: 12 explains: “A *nikāya* has nothing in common with a ‘sect’ in the accepted understanding of this word, if used in the context of the history of Christianity. A *nikāya* is a group of monks [and nuns] who mutually acknowledge the validity of their *upasampadā*, and consequently, if staying within the same *śīmā*, can commonly perform *vinayakarmas*.” In full appreciation of his clarification of the significance of the term *nikāya* in general, it does not seem to me that the remainder of his discussion has successfully settled the problem emerging from the research by Gunawardana 1979 regarding how to relate the prominence in the actual constitution of the *Saṅgha* in mediaeval Sri Lanka of eight *mūlas*, apparently none of which can be definitely traced to the Mahāvihāra, to the common notion of the absolute centrality of the Mahāvihāra for Theravāda monasticism subsequent to the unification of the three Sri Lankan (sub-) *nikāyas* during the reign of Parākramabāhu I; see also Skilling 2009b: 71.

the first *saṅgīti*. Rather than adopting the common but problematic rendering as a “first council”, following clarifications offered by Tilakaratne (2000) this event can preferably be understood to represent a “communal recitation”. In other words, just as the narrative of the first *saṅgīti* serves to communicate agreement on the teachings believed to have been given by the recently deceased Buddha, expressed through the undertaking of a group recitation, so the fortnightly recital of the code of rules serves as an expression of harmony in matters of conduct among the participating monastics.

For that to work, however, the participating monastics need to rely on the same code of rules. Although minor variations may go unnoticed, substantial differences in the formulation and import of rules no longer provide the needed foundation for group recitation. This appears to be a key element in the background of the emergence and consolidation of distinct monastic lineages.

The recitation of the code of rules does not stand in a vacuum, of course, but is part of larger patterns of oral recitation and transmission at work during this period. Those who memorize and recite together the same code of rules will tend to do so also for other texts. Although this need not result in an absolute watertight separation, the general situation must have been for monastic ordination lineages to converge with oral transmission lineages.

Returning from this brief excursion into early Buddhist orality to the question of the two meanings of the Pāli term *theravāda*, it seems to me that it is indeed reasonable to envision a relationship between the monastic lineage responsible for textual transmission and the transmitted texts, namely the texts believed to have been recited at the first *saṅgīti* together with a body of commentaries on these. In fact, neither the monastic lineage nor these commentaries can come into being or continue existing on their own, as both depend on the actual existence of the same monastics. The very monastics belonging to the ordination lineage in question have either expressed their opinions in the form of the commentaries under discussion, or they play an active part in the transmission of these commentaries, or else they consider these opinions, voiced by their more knowledgeable companions, as an important reference point for understanding the teachings.

In sum, the monastic lineage can be viewed as the container for the textual transmission and the textual body of commentaries as pertaining to the content of the same transmission. In this way, the two meanings of the Pāli term *theravāda* can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. If this much is granted, it becomes possible to perceive a continuity between the textual body of commentaries and the monastic lineage as the two senses of the Pāli term *theravāda* attested in what Gethin (2012: 7 note 13) counts as 229 occurrences of the term in 37 pre-twentieth-century Pāli texts.

### *The Terms Theriya and Theravaṃsa in Pāli Texts*

Gethin (2012: 12) notes that “the Pali *theriya*, corresponding to the Sanskrit *sthāvirīya*, is itself extremely rare” in Pāli texts. Regarding its import, Gethin (2012: 14) further explains that “the name of the school contrasted with the Mahāsaṅghikas is variously given in the early Pali sources as simply Thera or Theriya.” In addition, a second type of usage appears to be identifiable in a reference in a sub-commentary that probably intends the distinction [9] between the four *mahānikāyas* recognized in texts from the Indian mainland,<sup>16</sup> which comprise the Sarvāstivāda and the Sāṃmitīya in addition to the two already mentioned.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, both usages appear to my mind to be problematic as a substitute for Theravāda. This can be illustrated with a study by of the first *pārājika* of the “Therīya Vinaya” (Dhammawasa 2021).<sup>18</sup> The topic is clearly the *Vinaya* extant in Pāli, as the article has repeated citations of Pāli phrases from this work and its commentary. However, the term “Therīya” could equally well apply to the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, for example. The Dharmagup-

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<sup>16</sup> Gethin 2012: 53. The reference in Gethin 2012: 4 to “the specifically Mahāvihāra claim to be the only true Therīyas in Laṅkā” and the similar header in Gethin 2012: 47, announcing the topic to be “The *Mahāvaṃsa*: ‘The Mahāvihāravāsins are the only true Therīyas in Laṅkā,’” do not reflect a third type of occurrence, as the actual term in the relevant *Mahāvaṃsa* passage is not *theriya* but *theravāda*.

<sup>17</sup> For the spelling of the latter, I follow Skilling 2016: 46 note 1.

<sup>18</sup> This case is interesting, as it shows that by now the new usage has begun to spread to Sri Lanka.

taka tradition belongs to the Theriya tradition as distinct from just the Mahā-sāṅghika tradition and also as distinct from the other three *nikāyas* recognized in the listing of four *mahānikāyas*. In other words, neither the first nor the second of the above-mentioned usages of the Pāli term *theriya* are sufficiently specific to fulfil the function of clearly designating which *Vinaya* is intended.

The usage of Theriya *Vinaya* would become particularly problematic if, instead of studying the first *pārājika* just based on Pāli texts, one were to undertake a comparative study of this rule.<sup>19</sup> To avoid confusion, this would require some clarification to the effect that, even though one has decided to use the name Theriya, the reader should keep in mind that this does not mean the Theriya traditions as per the use of the term in Pāli texts, as it instead should be understood to convey the more restricted sense of the Theravāda monastic lineage. Such complications are better avoided by using both terms in accordance with their respective meanings attested in Pāli texts, that is, by using Theriya when the intended meaning is in line with the above two usages and instead adopting the common usage of referring to the Theravāda tradition when doing a comparative study of the different extant *Vinaya* traditions, and by extension also when just studying a Pāli text like the Theravāda *Vinaya* on its own.

Following the already established usage in this way would be in line with the sense conveyed by the term *theravāda* in Pāli texts. As a textual body of commentary that is seen as distinct from the texts believed to have been recited at the first *saṅgīti*, the term does function as a specific designation of the Pāli Buddhist traditions that evolved in South and Southeast Asia. It can be understood to combine the container provided by the monastic reciters responsible for the formation and transmission of this specific textual body of commentaries as well as its content. This content comprises opinions voiced by these monastic reciters, documented in this specific body of commentaries, which in combination result in particular doc-

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<sup>19</sup> For a comparative study of the narrations purporting to explain the circumstances of the promulgation of the first *pārājika* see Anālayo 2012a.



trinal positions and understandings of the texts (including those on monastic discipline) believed to stem from the first *saṅgīti*. This is precisely what enables distinguishing Theravāda from, say, Dharmaguptaka or any other *nikāya*. When viewed from this perspective, the name Theravāda emerges as a choice preferable to Theriya. In sum, I have difficulties to see the advantage of using a term of rare occurrence whose employment in the Pāli texts does not match the required meaning particularly well.<sup>[10]</sup>

Turning to the alternative Pāli term *theravaṃsa*, according to Gethin (2012: 19 note 43) “[t]he term *vaṃsa*, however, is not used as an equivalent to *vāda* or *nikāya* in the discussions of schools in the Dīp, Kv-a and Mhv,”<sup>20</sup> that is, in those Pāli texts that reflect a concern with the topic of *nikāya* affiliation. This would put the choice of *theravaṃsa* at a disadvantage compared to *theravāda*, which does occur as the name of a *nikāya* in these Pāli texts.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the general trend among scholars who wish to avoid the usage of the name Theravāda appears to be to opt for the alternative Theriya, rather than Theravaṃsa.<sup>22</sup>

Now, the broad understanding of the Pāli term *theravāda* proposed above still has the monastic lineage as its core element, additionally including the texts originating from and transmitted by its members in the scope of meaning of the term. Given the centrality of the monastic lineage, it is still striking that this sense is not more prominent in *aṭṭhakathā* literature. This can be explored further in relation to the history of the monastic tradition to which we nowadays refer to as Theravāda given in the first part of the *Vinaya* commentary, the *Samantapāsādikā*, which shows little interest in *nikāya* affiliation. Gethin (2012: 30) points out: “If we only read the *Sa-*

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<sup>20</sup> On occurrences in other Pāli commentaries see Gethin 2012: 16.

<sup>21</sup> Gethin 2012: 11 note 22 explains that “the terms *vāda* (‘exposition’ or ‘doctrine’), *kula* (‘community’), as well as *ācariyavāda* (‘teachers’ [tradition of] exposition’) and *ācariya-kula* (‘community of teachers’) all seem to be used in the introduction to Kv-a as equivalents of *nikāya* (‘group’).”

<sup>22</sup> Gethin 2012: 2 note 4 offers a suggestion along such lines in relation to *theriya* and not for *theravaṃsa*, reasoning that, as far as the monastic ordination lineage is concerned, “it might be better to use ‘Theriya’ than ‘Theravāda’ in this context.”

*mantapāsādikā* account we would learn nothing about the split between the Theriyas and Mahāsaṅghikas, nor of any other splits in the ordination lineage of the Saṅgha.” As rightly noted by Gethin (2012: 32): “The concern was simply to demonstrate that what was introduced to Laṅkā was in itself authentic and significant.”

This could indeed be the key function of this narrative, which is perhaps best understood against the background of a pervasive concern of any *nikāya* to be heir to an unbroken lineage of correctly carried out ordinations. Kieffer-Pülz (2010: 219) explains that an ordination’s “legitimacy depends on an uninterrupted ordination lineage going back to the time of the Buddha.” However, as noted by Hartmann (2010: 26), an obvious problem is that such unbroken continuity “cannot be reliably and convincingly established over a long period of time. This holds true for any given lineage,” even though, of course, “each of them takes the integrity of its own lineage for granted.” This basic pattern of a felt need to view one’s own *Vinaya* lineage as the authentic one can safely be assumed to have been common among different *nikāyas*.<sup>23</sup> Yet, precisely because it is challenging to establish an uninterrupted lineage, successfully promoting one’s own *nikāya* and its ordinations requires providing as much information as possible to make the claim of an uninterrupted lineage appear convincing. In such a context, references to splits in the monastic community are not of comparable relevance. In the words of a comment by Gethin (2012: 10 note 19) on a commentarial reference related to the succession of *Vinaya* teachers starting from the Buddha, “what [11] seems to be the focus here is being able to legitimize one’s ordination by being able to point to a specific lineage, rather than contesting the legitimacy of rival lineages.”

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<sup>23</sup> The basic attitude can be exemplified with Dīp 5.51, Oldenberg 1879: 37,26: *sattarasa bhinnavādā eko vādo abhinnako*. From the emic viewpoint, it must have been the others who broke off to form distinct monastic lineages, and who also made changes to the texts; see Dīp 5.43+49, Oldenberg 1879: 37,10+25: *aññaṃ akaṃsu*. It seems probable that similar ideas were held by other *nikāyas*, even though perhaps not always voiced as openly as here, as a basic part of their belief in the authenticity of their own monastic lineage. Once the validity of ordination is held to require, among others, reliance on the ‘correct’ text, it follows that variant versions of this text have to be viewed as inauthentic.

Once a central aim is to make one's own lineage appear as authentic as possible, it would suffice to provide a spotlight on the key monk responsible for its transmission from India to Sri Lanka, Mahinda, for having learned the whole of the *theravāda*, presumably in the sense of the relevant textual body.<sup>24</sup> In other words, when viewed from the perspective of what the *Samantapāsādikā* must be trying to achieve, it seems quite understandable if during the oral period of its formation the main purpose was perceived by the reciters to be the establishing of the authenticity of the *Vinaya* lineage to which this commentary belongs.<sup>25</sup> Relating Mahinda to *theravāda* suffices in this context as a marker of a sense of identity.

The same *Samantapāsādikā* reflects awareness of a version of the *Dīpa-vaṃsa* and thus quite probably of the *nikāya*-related information found in this text.<sup>26</sup> In fact, as duly noted by Gethin (2012: 42), “Buddhaghosa and his fellow monks on Lankā in the fifth century CE certainly knew of the split between the tradition of the Theras and the Mahāsāṅghikas, and also of subsequent splits.” This makes it perhaps understandable why such matters are taken up in detail only in the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu* and in the chronicles, whose orientation naturally calls for such information. Moreover, Tilakaratne (2021: 443) reasons:

why the tradition was not called by a specific name has something to do with the location of Sri Lanka as an island without rival ... Buddhist schools. There was not any particular need for the Sri Lanka Theravādins ... to assert themselves as Theravādins ...

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<sup>24</sup> Sp I 52,7: *sabbattheravādaṃ tiṇṇaṃ vassānaṃ abbhantare uggahetvā*.

<sup>25</sup> On the sources of the introductory narration in the *Samantapāsādikā* see Frauwallner 1994: 10–15.

<sup>26</sup> Sp I 74,18 and 75,14, noted by Gethin 2012: 43 note 87, who also points out that the sub-commentary supplements the narrative given in the *Samantapāsādikā* with *nikāya*-related information taken from the commentary on the *Kathāvatthu*. This probably reflects the circumstance that, by the time of its composition, there was less a need to affirm the authenticity of the by then well-established monastic lineage, leading to a broadening of the scope of the narrative.

Confirmation for this assessment can be found in the introduction to the *Jātaka* collection, which employs the term *vaṃsa* to designate *nikāya*-affiliation, although here used for a monastic ordination lineage distinct from the Theravāda. According to the relevant part, the compilation of the *Jātaka* collection was undertaken in response to an invitation by the Thera Atthadassin, Buddhamitta, and Bhikkhu Buddhadeva, who is qualified as a member of the Mahiṃsāsaka lineage.<sup>27</sup> Gethin (2012: 18) comments that “in designating Buddhadeva a Mahiṃsāsaka it is implied that his school is different from Atthadassin and Buddhamitta’s. Yet the author does not reveal what name he would use to designate this school.”

It seems fair to propose that there may not have been a felt need to designate the school of Atthadassin and Buddhamitta, as that much would have been obvious. In the narrative setting, they will naturally be assumed to be members of the tradition to which we nowadays refer to as Theravāda, wherefore only the differing *nikāya* affiliation of Buddhadeva merits explicit designation. The case of Atthadassin and Buddhamitta conveys the impression that the absence of an explicit *marker* of *nikāya*-identity does not imply the absence of a *sense* of *nikāya*-identity. In line with the well-known saying, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.<sup>28</sup> [12]

In sum, based on the above survey it seems to me that the name Theravāda, understood as representative of a textual body of commentaries *and* the monastic lineage responsible for the formation and transmission of this textual body, emerges as a preferable choice over the alternatives Theriya and Theravaṃsa for usage in scholarly writing such as, for example, when needing to refer to the *Vinaya* extant in Pāli.

### *Usage of the Name Theravāda*

The broad conception of Theravāda suggested above, comprising both of the main meanings that have been identified in Pāli texts, helps to contextualize an occasional polemic usage of the term, resulting in claims that are

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<sup>27</sup> Jā I 1,17: *mahiṃsāsakavaṃsamhi ... buddhadevena*.

<sup>28</sup> For what appears to be a similar case, also concerning conclusions drawn based on the absence of explicit references to the Theravāda, see Abeysekera 2018: 350f.

not compatible with historical facts. Such usage is certainly problematic, but fortunately it occurs only rarely compared to the vast majority of usages of the term in pre-twentieth century Pāli texts. It follows that an employment of the name Theravāda in scholarly writing does not amount to an endorsement of such polemics, simply because the most frequent usage of the term is not polemic. In this respect the name Theravāda differs from its predecessor in scholarly writing in Hinayāna, which is a derogatory term too deeply entangled in polemics to allow for a value-free usage to categorize the Buddhist traditions of South and Southeast Asia.<sup>29</sup>

Besides, a mere change of terminology by replacing the name Theravāda with another one would not offer an effective way of responding to the problem of the superiority conceit underlying such polemics. In case this change is carried out successfully, the same superiority conceit could simply transfer to the new term. In other words, a mere change of terminology will quite probably not suffice to address this type of problem. In case there should be a wish to address it, instead of resorting to mere cosmetic measures this could take the form of exposing shortcomings of the premises on which the underlying attitude relies.<sup>30</sup>

An occasional polemic usage is not the only type of problem related to the notion of Theravāda. Another problem identified by Gethin (2012: 2) is the following:

we tend to retreat to the certainties of such categories as ‘Theravāda’ and ‘Mahāyāna.’ Yet as soon as we do so we create of Theravāda a constant and enduring tradition to which Buddhists, both lay and monastics, in different times and places have belonged and continue to belong; a tradition that is moreover rather more than a simple ordination lineage.

The delusive certainty potentially resulting from such generalizing categories is indeed problematic. However, such repercussions are not just a problem for the name Theravāda, as any general category, be it Mahāyāna

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<sup>29</sup> See in more detail Anālayo 2014e.

<sup>30</sup> See Anālayo 2021d: 73–104.

or Buddhism or what not, can have such a deluding effect on those who are not sufficiently aware of the limitations of language. Once again, the cure for this problem is not a change of terminology, because the same type of misunderstanding can recur with a different term. For this reason, this type of problem much rather calls for inculcating awareness of the limitations of concepts.

As regards the more specific case of Theravāda, the usage of the term in Pāli texts does point to “more than a simple ordination lineage”. This in turn helps to settle another problem identified by Gethin (2012: 14) in regard to the second part of the Pāli term, as “*vāda* here <sup>[13]</sup> seems to be an alternative to *nikāya*, and to talk of the ‘Theravāda school’ is like saying the ‘Thera school school.’” A solution here would be to understand *vāda* in a broader sense as a “doctrine”, as suggested by its most frequent usage in Pāli texts, rather than relying on the restricted sense the term carries in the introduction to the commentary on the *Kathāvattu*.<sup>31</sup> This would also offer an appropriate solution for the designation of the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda *nikāyas*, as here, too, equating *vāda* with *nikāya* would result in the same type of problem.

Yet another problem identified by Gethin (2012: 2) is a simplistic contrast sometimes made between Theravāda and Mahāyāna as the two main divisions of Buddhism, the problem being that “there is an imbalance of terminology: the term *theravāda* should strictly refer to one of several ancient monastic ordination lineages, whereas the term *mahāyāna* refers to a particular orientation in Buddhist practice.”<sup>32</sup> Once again, given that the at-

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<sup>31</sup> See above note 21.

<sup>32</sup> Gethin 2012: 2 continues: “Ordination lineages pertain to the specific tradition of the monastic rule (*vinaya*) that an individual monk follows; they do not pertain to whether his goal is to become an arhat or to become a Buddha.” It could be added that the situation here is somewhat complex, as in the Chinese Dharmaguptaka traditions, for example, the taking of the bodhisat(t)va vow has become part of the ordination procedure. Bianchi 2019: 153 explains that in this type of procedure “a monk or nun must participate in three different ordination ceremonies (novice, complete, and bodhisattva), which are held together in one place and within a specific period of time.” According to the detailed study of the actual ordination procedure by Orsborn 2021, not only the last, but all three of these ordinations are pervaded by a distinct Mahāyāna spirit, so

tested usage of the term in Pāli texts is not confined to a monastic ordination lineage, there is no need to limit its current usage to that meaning. Without in any way intending to promote the adoption of the simplistic Theravāda–Mahāyāna contrast, it also needs to be kept in mind that, from a historical perspective, this contrast derives from the earlier Hīnayāna–Mahāyāna contrast, a topic to which I turn in the next part of my exploration. Before doing that, however, I need to conclude my exploration of the Pāli term *theravāda*.

Closer inspection suggests the possibility of viewing the Pāli term *theravāda* as undergoing an organic process of evolution in meaning. This has a starting point in an occurrence in Pāli discourses describing the Buddha's pre-awakening apprenticeship with two teachers,<sup>33</sup> where the term might stand for a textual body of oral teachings and comments related to the meditative attainments taught by Ālāra Kālāma/Ārāḍa Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta/Udraka Rāmaputra respectively. The sense of a textual body of oral comments continues prominently in Pāli commentarial literature, with the obvious difference of having as its reference point instead the teachings held to have been given by the Buddha and his disciples, in the way these were believed to have been recited and commented on at the first *saṅgīti*.

During the oral period, the transmission of this textual body of oral commentaries must have been intimately related to those responsible for its transmission, namely the monastic lineage of reciters. Of these two sides of what appears to be basically the same coin, the content of this transmission naturally features prominently in Pāli commentarial literature, probably reflecting the circumstance that the absence of competition with other *nikāyas* would have encouraged such emphasis. In turn, the container for this transmission, the monastic lineage, naturally comes more to the forefront in the Pāli chronicles and in the commentary to the <sup>[14]</sup> *Kathāvatthu*. In this way, although certainly never representing a monolithic entity that

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that employing the appellation “Mahāyāna ordination” would actually be adequate. On the relationship between the bodhisat(t)va vow and monastic ordination in the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda traditions see Sobisch 2002.

<sup>33</sup> MN 26 at MN I 164,5 and MN I 165,25 (the whole narrative recurs in MN 36, MN 85, and MN 100); see also Anālayo 2013e: 215–217.

has remained unchanging throughout time, the Pāli term *theravāda* can be seen to follow a meaningful trajectory of evolution in meaning.

With due recognition granted to the inevitable limitations that go with any attempt at definition, usage of the term in scholarly writing could be grounded in the notion of a tradition of religious practices, rituals, and thought that has and still is dynamically evolving, due to continually responding to whatever the perceived needs of the historical moment and location may be (and precisely for this reason not being a monolithic entity). This tradition, or better these traditions, have as their core points of reference the Pāli texts (together with relevant vernacular texts) and the corresponding monastic lineage (together with its lay followers). Such a working definition would hopefully be sufficiently specific to avoid confusion with Buddhist traditions based on other monastic lineages and at the same time be sufficiently broad to include the lay and monastic domains together with their corresponding texts and beliefs.

Although it is impossible to isolate a particular moment of time as *the* ‘point of origin,’ for conventional purposes the arrival of Bhikkhu Mahinda and his sister Bhikkhunī Saṅghamittā in Sri Lanka can be taken as a reference point. Their arrival stands representative for the transmission of the texts, the ordination lineages of the two orders (*bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*), and ritual practices reflected in the arrival of relics and the planting of a seedling of the *bodhi* tree that had reportedly been brought by Bhikkhunī Saṅghamittā. Indian antecedents to this transmission would then still fall within the scope of the preceding period of early Buddhism,<sup>34</sup> representative of the shared heritage of all Buddhist traditions.

Now, even with the testimony provided by the eighteenth century inscription, the name Theravāda in the proposed sense is not necessarily as early as the phenomena it describes. Once this is clearly acknowledged, how-

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<sup>34</sup> Regarding the usage of this term, Griffiths 1983: 56 explains: “By ‘early Buddhism’ we mean, broadly speaking, pre-Aśokan Indian Buddhism,” mainly accessed through textual “material largely shaped within the first two centuries of Buddhist history.” On the historical value of the relevant textual material see Anālayo 2012f, on the processes responsible for its shaping Anālayo 2022d, and on the term itself above p. 1ff.



ever, it need not be considered an obstacle to actual usage. As explained by Collins (2017: 17f), regarding such usage:

It is necessarily retrospective, a term of art in modern historiography. When we use the term of any premodern time and place what we mean is something, or some things, which can be seen, or argued, to be genealogically related to what we now call ‘Theravāda.’

### The Myth of Western Origins

In addition to examining historical antecedents in Pāli literature, an evaluation of what led to the popularity of the term Theravāda also needs to take into account its role in replacing the earlier usage of the derogatory term Hīnayāna to designate the Buddhist populations of South and Southeast Asia. This leads me to the other of the two references mentioned above p. 469, namely the study by Perreira (2012) of the coming into vogue of the usage of Hīnayāna in public and scholarly discourse after the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, lasting until its eventual replacement by the term Theravāda around 1950. In the present case, I am once again indebted to the wealth of detail provided in his contribution. At the same time, however, as already expressed in a criticism of his research in Anālayo (2013e),<sup>35</sup> I find [15] his conclusion regarding the ‘origin’ of the contemporary use of the name Theravāda unreliable. My exploration begins by critically examining the main proposal by Perreira (2012), followed by turning to a comparable argument made in relation to the term ‘Buddhism’. Then I take up the promotion of the name Theravāda that started in 1950 with the founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists.

#### *The Name Theravāda in the West*

Perreira (2012: 549f) reports that the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1907 in preparation for a visit by the British monk Ānanda Metteyya, who in 1902 had taken higher ordination in a Burmese

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<sup>35</sup> A republication of the same in Anālayo 2016c: 509 also takes into account the reference to inscriptional evidence that in the meantime had appeared in Handlin 2016: 180.

Theravāda tradition and was now about to visit his home country to teach Buddhism. An announcement of the formation of this society appeared in the same year of 1907 in the *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, featuring a reference by Ānanda Metteyya to the “Bouddhisme de l'école Theravada”. Based on identifying this reference as the first occurrence of the name Theravāda to designate the Buddhism of South and Southeast Asia, Perreira (2012: 554) then suggests that Ānanda Metteyya “was himself the source of our modern use of ‘Theravāda’ — and not a Burmese text or Burmese informant”.

The central role attributed in this way to Ānanda Metteyya rests on two planks, each of which is indispensable for upholding it. One of the two planks is that the 1907 announcement marks the first appearance in Western writing of the name Theravāda as a referent to the Buddhist ‘school’ found in South and Southeast Asia; the second plank is the attribution of this usage to an innovation by Ānanda Metteyya himself, rather than reflecting an already existent notion that was merely adopted by him.

Regarding the first of these two planks, as already noted by Bretfeld (2012: 290), “the word Theravāda in the sense of a parental branch of monastic lineages was already known since 1837, when George Turner [sic] published his translation of the ‘Great Chronicle’,” that is, of the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>36</sup> Awareness of the name Theravāda in this work can be seen reflected in the Pāli dictionary by Childers (1875/1993: 545), who discussed it under his entry on “*vādo*”, taking care to alert his readers to misunderstandings of the term he identified in Turnour’s translation of the *Mahāvamsa*. In a discussion of the “Sinhalese church” a few years later, Oldenberg (1879/1997: xli) mentioned “the name Theravādî ... which the followers of this school applied to themselves.”<sup>37</sup>

According to Perreira (2012: 466), in such references, published before 1907, the term is just “used as a technical term signifying the teachings and precepts propounded by the Buddha and subsequently gathered, transmitted, and recited by its original depositories, the Theras”. This is not quite

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<sup>36</sup> The publication is actually dated to 1836 and gives the name of the author as George Turnour.

<sup>37</sup> An edition and translation of the *Dīpavamsa* was published in the same year by Oldenberg 1879.

correct, as the sense of a Buddhist tradition or school is already evident. It follows that these publications prevent considering the 1907 reference by Ānanda Metteyya to the Theravāda ‘school’ as having broken entirely new ground in the West.

Regarding the attribution of the usage of the name Theravāda to an innovation by Ānanda Metteyya himself, Perreira (2012: 553) duly notes that the term occurs frequently in the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, an eighteenth-century work providing a history of the tradition from the time of the Buddha to Burmese Buddhism at the time of its compilation. In terms of genre, the <sup>[16]</sup> *Vaṃsadīpanī* stands in a continuity of monastic law books with historical introductions produced since the twelfth-century in Sri Lanka. A few selected occurrences of the term in this work can help to ascertain its usage:

In relation to the first *saṅgīti*, the *Vaṃsadīpanī* explains that the “doctrine of the teachers who held this recitation of the Dhamma and Vinaya is called Theravāda,” followed by depicting the arising of different *nikāyas* in terms of other schools that “separated from the Theravāda”.<sup>38</sup> In accordance with its Pāli precedents, the *Vaṃsadīpanī* thereby combines the two main meanings of the term (discussed above p. 470ff). Such combining continues in later parts of the same work. The sense of a textual body underlies a reference to a senior monk who “taught disciple-monks the Piṭakas of the Blessed One, along with their commentaries, so that [these monks] would become [true] Theravādins”.<sup>39</sup> The sense of a monastic lineage becomes apparent in the indication that “to practice as true disciples in the Theravāda lineage of the ancient masters” is to act “in accordance with the rules of training and the duties [enumerated in the] Khandhaka” of the Pāli *Vinaya*.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the disciple-monks who learn the Piṭakas, including the *Vinaya*, will for that very reason be well equipped to follow the rules of training and the

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<sup>38</sup> Vṃs I.11 and I.15 (pp. 13 and 19), after the translation given in Pranke 2004: 50 and 57, which is based on the 1967 edition published by the Hanthawaddi Press, Rangoon. My ignorance of Burmese prevents me from trying to consult the original.

<sup>39</sup> Vṃs III.83 (p. 98), Pranke 2004: 164. Here and below, supplementations in square brackets are found in this way in Pranke 2004.

<sup>40</sup> Vṃs IV.110 (p. 140), Pranke 2004: 236.

monastic duties. The interrelationship that emerges in this way confirms the impression that it probably does better justice to the actual usage of the term *theravāda* in Pāli sources if these two meanings are considered as inter-related, that is, as two sides of the same coin.

Regarding Soṇa and Uttara, believed to have brought Buddhism to the region, from “those noble lords, the Elders Soṇa and Uttara, there descended a unified lineage of Vinaya masters and teachers of Scripture who never broke with the Theravāda.”<sup>41</sup> This is thus a counterpart to the report of the transmission of ‘Theravāda’ to Sri Lanka by Bhikkhu Mahinda. A close relationship between the resultant traditions emerges in the report of a visit paid by monks from the region to Sri Lanka, resulting in the members of the two monastic lineages deciding to give ordination together. The *Vaṃsadīpanī* reports the following reasoning expressed by the Sri Lankans:<sup>42</sup>

We are the spiritual successors of the Elder Mahāmahinda who established the Sāsana on Sīhaḷa Island. You, sirs, are the spiritual successors of the great Elders Soṇa and Uttara who founded the Sāsana in Suvāṇṇabhūmi. We therefore are not different. Let us then conduct ecclesiastical ceremonies as one.

Independent of whatever historical value one may be willing to accord to the reported episode,<sup>43</sup> the description does reflect an emic perception of a shared sense of *nikāya*-identity, common to the relevant populations in South and Southeast Asia and distinct from the other ‘seventeen’ *nikāyas*. It is precisely this sense of *nikāya*-identity that the *Vaṃsadīpanī* evokes <sup>[17]</sup> in support of the particular monastic observance it wants to promote, namely the proper way for novices to wear their robes when being outside of the monastery and thus in front of laity. The issue appears to be not just the need to follow the example of fully ordained monks and cover both

<sup>41</sup> Vṃs III.63 (p. 70), Pranke 2004: 133.

<sup>42</sup> Vṃs III.73 (p. 84f), Pranke 2004: 149.

<sup>43</sup> At least the basic attitude communicated by this episode would be in line with instances of exportation and importation of ordination lineages between Sri Lanka and Myanmar or Thailand; see Panabokke 1993.

shoulders with the outer robe, but the need to manifest in public that the two dimensions of Theravāda—the monastic community and the body of teaching—are in alignment with each other.

The gravity of the issue, from an emic perspective, is that those who do not follow the proper monastic protocol have thereby departed from the whole ancient tradition of Theravāda, seen as stretching all the way back in time to the first *saṅgīti* and established in different parts of South and Southeast Asia. The reason is that, from the viewpoint of the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, covering both shoulders is in accord with the pertinent indications in the textual body of Theravāda, as evident in particular in the relevant regulations in the *Vinaya* and its commentaries. Hence, even though it is deemed possible to conduct ordination together with Sri Lankans, the same is no longer considered viable with those from one's own country if these have adopted a form of behavior that is seen as not being in accordance with the Theravāda.

The sense of identity that emerges in this way should, according to the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, not be seen as relevant only to a monastic dispute. Instead, it features as a matter of general concern, with the king taking a personal interest in the contested mode of conduct and reportedly also the laity in general. The last finds explicit expression in the report in the *Vaṃsadīpanī* that a congregation of male and female lay disciples submitted a petition requesting that the disaccord regarding this monastic observance be resolved and the division between the different monastic factions be overcome. According to the report of their concern, in the present situation, “even while we are duty bound to give donation, our property and goods will be expended without [spiritual] benefit [accruing to us].”<sup>44</sup> Being unable to discern which of the contending factions acts in accordance with the rules of discipline, the lay disciples are worried about a loss of merit accrued through gifts made to unworthy recipients.

Needless to say, in a traditional setting the offering of *dāna* is central to lay practice, leading naturally to an interest regarding the worthiness of

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<sup>44</sup> Vms IV.123 (p. 171), Pranke 2004: 272.

those who receive one's offerings. An important dimension in this traditional practice is the role of the monastic recipients in inspiring through their appearance and conduct.<sup>45</sup> From this perspective, the monastic observance under discussion, regarding the 'proper' way of wearing robes when being visible to laity, can indeed become a matter of public concern. In fact, in the course of her study of Burmese wall paintings Green (2018: 35) reports:

Another facet of the murals is the fact that they were produced during the 'robe-wrapping' dispute that divided the Sangha from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century ... The flurry of temple construction and embellishment during the late seventeenth to early nineteenth century ... suggests an anxiety regarding the continuation of the *sāsana* in the face of religious schism and dynastic change. [18]

In sum, the *Vaṃsadīpanī* does appear to testify to a usage of the name Theravāda that could indeed have provided a fitting precedent for Ānanda Metteyya's employment of the term. However, Perreira (2012: 554) considers it unlikely that Ānanda Metteyya could have been acquainted with a manuscript of the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, an edition of which was only published in 1916. Yet, the question is not so much whether Ānanda Metteyya had personal access to a manuscript of this work, which in the absence of any reference by him to the *Vaṃsadīpanī* can at present no longer be verified. The point is rather that the *Vaṃsadīpanī* testifies to awareness among the Burmese of the name Theravāda as a Buddhist school. This thereby concords with the indications to be gathered from the inscription discussed in the first part of this article, testifying to a usage of the name Theravāda to designate a sense of Buddhist identity that is not confined to the local tradition(s) and thus relevant for both South and Southeast Asia.

Besides textual and the earlier discussed inscriptional usage reflecting the currency of the notion among Burmese Buddhists in the eighteenth-century, Ānanda Metteyya could also have come to know of the name Theravāda dur-

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<sup>45</sup> On the importance of inspirational aesthetics in Theravāda monastic culture (studied in relation to Sri Lanka) see Samuels 2010.

ing his previous stay in Sri Lanka, where he apparently had learned Pāli.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Perreira (2012: 551) quotes the following statement published by Ānanda Metteyya in 1908:

The word Theravāda really means “The Tradition of the Elders”, and it is very clear from the way in which this word is employed in ancient Commentaries and in the Sinhalese Chronicles that it was used by the early writers to mean the School ...<sup>47</sup>

The relevance of the Sri Lankan chronicles for the notion of Theravāda employed by Ānanda Metteyya can also be seen reflected in the colophon to the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, which explicitly refers to the *Mahāvāṃsa* as a source of authority—in fact, this is the only source text mentioned here by name—employed for the purpose of recounting “the lineage of Theravāda luminaries who propagated the noble Sāsana.”<sup>48</sup>

Once Ānanda Metteyya in the above quote explicitly indicates the sources for his usage and correctly sees the function of the name Theravāda to designate a school already evident in the Sri Lankan chronicles, a function similarly evident in the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, which reflects notions that must have been in circulation at the time of Ānanda Metteyya’s stay, there seems to be hardly any room left to consider his 1907 reference to the Theravāda ‘school’ as an innovation.

In this way, each of the two planks needed for conferring a central role on Ānanda Metteyya in the genesis of the notion of a Theravāda ‘school’ do not stand scrutiny. Instead, his role in this respect seems to have been considerably less dramatic, and the way he has been presented seems to owe more to the influence of what I would refer to as the ‘myth of Western origins’ than to the actual evidence.

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<sup>46</sup> See Harris 1998.

<sup>47</sup> The quote continues with the untenable claim that this school has remained “faithful to the *ipsissima verba* of the Buddha, as handed down from teacher to pupil in direct succession.” The very nature of the early Buddhist oral transmission definitely undermines such beliefs; see Anālayo 2022d.

<sup>48</sup> *Vṃs* (p. 177), Pranke 2004: 279.

In an introduction to a symposium on Theravāda studies, Kaloyanides and Walker (2021: 196) report that recent years have seen “a greater sensitivity to the history of the term ‘Theravada’ itself”, in fact, “the field underwent a critical realignment centered on this dominant term.” Such greater sensitivity is an important improvement. At the same time, however, the assumption that the research by Perreira (2012) “makes plain that the widespread <sup>[19]</sup> use of the term ‘Theravada Buddhism’ is a specific twentieth-century development heralded by the writing of the English monk Ananda Metteyya” is problematic, as his research is unreliable in this respect. Besides exaggerating the importance of Ānanda Metteyya and not giving adequate room to conflicting evidence, an additional problem is that the role of Asians in this twentieth-century development has not received the recognition that I believe it deserves. Before turning to that role, however, in what follows I first provide another example of the ‘myth of Western origins’, so as to clarify what I mean with this phrase.

### *The Term Buddhism*

The basic pattern underlying the attribution of a central role to Ānanda Metteyya in the contemporary usage of the name Theravāda has a precedent in another instance following a similar pattern. This is the claim that the very notion of ‘Buddhism’ is a recent construction, dating from the start of the nineteenth century when the eminent French scholar Eugène Burnouf (1801-1852) gave coherence to the bits and pieces of knowledge of the tradition that by then had reached the West.<sup>49</sup> The assumption that this marks the construction of the notion of Buddhism itself has already been critiqued by von Hinüber (2002: 267), who pointed out that this “does not do justice to Indian literature, where ‘Buddhism’ as a concept was always

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<sup>49</sup> Batchelor 1994: 227–249; see also the way Almond 1988: 12 presents the results of his research on the reception of Buddhism in the West (especially in Britain): “I have tried carefully to avoid giving the impression that Buddhism existed prior to the end of the eighteenth century: that it was waiting in the wings, so to say, to be discovered; that it was floating in some aethereal Oriental limbo expecting its objective embodiment. On the contrary, what we are witnessing in the period from the later part of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the Victorian period in the latter half of the 1830s is the *creation* of Buddhism.”



present,” citing as an example a drama from the eleventh century. Elsewhere I have presented additional arguments,<sup>50</sup> allowing me to be fairly brief in the present context.

The notion of Buddhism has a precedent in the Pāli term *sāsana*, more specifically the *sāsana* of the Buddha, his “teaching” or “dispensation”. In a way comparable to the Pāli term *theravāda*, the term *sāsana* can be seen to evolve in meaning from representing Buddhism just in the sense of a body of teachings during an earlier period of its usage to eventually coming to represent the container for the transmission of these teachings: Buddhism as an institutional entity. The latter sense can already be identified in a verse in the *Theragāthā*, where the speaker refers to his going forth in the Buddha’s *sāsana*.<sup>51</sup> Since one cannot go forth or ordain in a teaching but only in some form of religious institution, here the Buddha’s *sāsana* conveys the nuance of an institution. This sense becomes more pronounced in later texts, such as when a verse in the *Mahāvamsa* considers the expulsion of an invading Tamil army from Sri Lanka to be an act that will bring glory to the *sāsana*.<sup>52</sup>

The apparently first reference to Buddhism in Western writing occurs in the second century, in the form of a report by the Christian Church Father Clement of Alexandria that some Indians follow the precepts of the Buddha.<sup>53</sup> In addition to monastic ordination, this reference could also comprise the taking of precepts by lay followers. In any case, it does reflect the existence of a Buddhist religious institution, membership in which involves adopting a set of precepts. [20]

Gunawardana (2005: 56f) marshals inscriptional and other evidence testifying to what in contemporary parlance could be called a “World of Theravāda Buddhism” already in existence since the fifth century, being part of a global Buddhist identity “kept alive throughout history by movements of religious, texts, relics and images from one centre to another”. Such a sense of shared in-

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<sup>50</sup> Anālayo 2021d: 108–113.

<sup>51</sup> Th 181: *yato ahaṃ pabbajito sammāsambuddhasāsane*.

<sup>52</sup> Mhv XXV 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Stromata* I.15.

stitutional identity that goes beyond the confines of a particular country or local culture appears to be also evident in the *Vaṃsadīpanī*, discussed above.

An example illustrating that such a sense of common religious identity—whatever conceptual label may have been used for it—was not confined to Theravāda countries or even to shared *nikāya* affiliation would be the case of the Chinese pilgrim Fǎxiǎn (法顯). At the end of the fourth century, he set out to India and eventually even went to Sri Lanka in search of *Vinaya* texts to be brought back to this home country for translation.<sup>54</sup> His very undertaking must have been based on a sense of collective Buddhist identity, in this case between Chinese Buddhist monastics and their Indian and Sri Lankan brethren. This has a complement in the early fifth century travel of Sri Lankan nuns to China in order to enable Chinese women, who up to that point had been ordained by monks only, to receive ordination (and quite probably also personal training and advice on monastic conduct) directly from other nuns.<sup>55</sup> Two nuns died on the way and an additional group of nuns had to come from Sri Lanka to fulfill the quorum needed for granting ordination. The motivation of these two groups of nuns to undertake such a challenging journey must have been grounded in a sense of Buddhist fellowship, based on a perception of ‘Buddhism’ that goes beyond the confines of any particular local tradition.

Given that there is an ancient Indian precedent for the term Buddhism, and that the sense of a religious institution beyond the confines of a particular locality is also evident long before the nineteenth century, the claim that the construction of Buddhism took place in the nineteenth century in the West is a myth. The basic recipe in this instance of the myth of Western origins appears to be the same as for the name Theravāda: Overlooking Asian antecedents, an appearance of the respective term in a Western publication—in both cases by coincidence in French—is viewed as heralding the birth of the relevant construct in its contemporary use.<sup>56</sup> Asian Buddhists

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<sup>54</sup> T 2085; on Fǎxiǎn’s quest see also Anālayo 2010c.

<sup>55</sup> T 2063 at T L 939c12; on this remarkable undertaking see Guang Xing 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Judging from the discussion in Crosby 2004, another comparable case could be the usage

are relegated to the role of passive recipients of the ready-made constructs originating in Western publications. In this way, ‘Theravāda’ and ‘Buddhism’ as notions central to contemporary Asian religious identity are effectively trademarked as ‘made in the West’.

The basic attitude underlying the construction of such instances of the myth of Western origins can also be seen at play in contemporary US-American Buddhism, whenever <sup>[21]</sup> publications tend to celebrate the contributions made by Americans of European descent but ignore the contributions made by Asian-Americans, whose forms of practice are at times dismissed as outdated or somehow irrelevant.<sup>57</sup> Throughout, there seems to be too little room left for acknowledging Asian agency.

### *From Hīnayāna to Theravāda*

The question of Asian agency is directly relevant to the shift from Hīnayāna to Theravāda. This shift seems to be indeed the key element, rather than any particular moment in the evolving trajectory of meaning of the Pāli term *theravāda*, such as an appearance in Western writing in 1907, as constituting the ever so elusive ‘point of origin’. Instead of trying to pinpoint an exact moment of time for that, perhaps a better question to be pursued would be if anything can be identified that had a decisive influence on the current popu-

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of *pāli* as a language name rather than just conveying the meaning of a “text”, although here suggestions of a possible European influence on such usage in Asia are worded considerably more cautiously (note that, here, too, the first occurrences in Western writing are in French; see the detailed survey in Pruitt 1987). In fact, the identification of the other two cases as instances of the ‘myth of Western origins’ is not just about envisaging that the West may influence the East, which of course has happened and still happens (see above note 18 for an example). Instead, the point is to highlight when obsession with origins results in claims apparently held with such inner conviction that conflicting evidence is ignored or dismissed—in short, when confirmation bias overrules scholarly sobriety.

<sup>57</sup> This type of attitude tends to rely on what Hickey 2010: 10 refers to as “the assumption that ‘white Buddhism’ is authentic American Buddhism, and that ‘Asian Buddhism’ is an essentially foreign thing that happens to reside on American soil.” See also Han 2021 for a collection of Asian-American perspectives on this issue.

larity of the term, comparable to the effect of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 on the popularity of Hīnayāna to refer to the South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions. On pursuing this question, the pivotal event leading to the widespread adoption of the name Theravāda appears to be the founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in 1950, an event located in Asia and expressing Asian agency.

In this way, the spotlight could shift from the British monk Ānanda Metteyya to the eminent Sri Lankan scholar and diplomat Gunapala Piya-sena Malalasekera (1899–1973). Central here is his role in conceiving of the idea of an international meeting of Buddhists from all over the world and then successfully convening such a meeting in 1950 in Colombo, apparently attended by 129 Buddhist delegates from 27 nations, leading to the founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, of which he became the first president. One of the resolutions formulated in 1950 by this newly founded organization was precisely the decision to abandon the derogatory term Hīnayāna as a referent to the Buddhist populations of South and Southeast Asia and to adopt instead the name Theravāda. For the trajectory of the name Theravāda, this is a considerably more significant episode than the appearance in French of an announcement by a British monk that a Buddhist society has been founded in the West.

Regarding the shift from Hīnayāna to Theravāda, according to Guruge (2012: 175f) “it took quite some time before the Buddhists of South and Southeast Asia reacted to the intrinsic disparagement with which their form of Buddhism was designated.” But once “more and more nationals of the region had access to the writings of Western scholars, the term ‘Hīnayāna’ was found unacceptable as a designation for the form of Buddhism they practiced.” Guruge (2012: 177) further explains the reasoning for the shift in terminology by way of abandoning the use of Hīnayāna: “It is not only disliked but also incorrect to use it today to refer to the school of Buddhism obtaining in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, etc.” These traditions “also include a Bodhisattva Path; so it is incorrect to see them as purely Śrāvakayāna in nature.”<sup>58</sup> He concludes

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<sup>58</sup> For a survey of relevant publications, including inscriptional evidence, concerning the

his survey of the relevant reasoning by noting: “This is how the current use of the term Theravāda has come into existence.” [22]

In other words, from this perspective the adoption of the name Theravāda features as a reflection of an increasing awareness of the discriminatory and misleading nature of the appellation Hīnayāna, previously imposed on the tradition. In my own field experience in Sri Lanka, I encountered the same perspective; more than once I witnessed expressions of resentment at having been labelled Hīnayāna, combined with taking pride in having successfully resisted such discriminatory usage through affirming a ‘Theravāda’ identity. Regarding such adoption of the name Theravāda, Perreira (2012: 561) reports:

the dismantling of the British Empire ... meant that former colonies could now articulate a new path toward independence and self-determination ... Among Buddhist nations, the newly independent Sri Lanka led the way when its leaders decided that the first major international event it would host as an independent country would be a World Fellowship of Buddhists ... [and] ‘Theravāda Buddhism’ ... would, in 1950, become the official designation for the Buddhists of South and Southeast Asia.

In other words, emergence from colonial oppression and related attempts to undermine Buddhist practices and beliefs finds expression in an affirmation of a global sense of Buddhist identity, as part of the formation of modern nation-state and transnational identities. A central element in this affirmation is the rejection of the derogatory name Hīnayāna that has been imposed on South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions during the colonial period. The gaining of freedom from colonial rule leads to the decision that the name Theravāda should be used from now on for referring to these Buddhist traditions.

In view of this historical background, there is unfortunately a risk that attempts to replace the name Theravāda may be experienced by some mem-

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bodhisat(t)va ideal as an integral part of Theravāda doctrine, followed by some of its members up to the present day, see Anālayo 2014e: 22 note 51.

bers of the population affected by this alteration of their self-chosen appellation as standing in continuity with past instances of disrespect and discrimination toward their religious tradition(s)—in short, as a form of neo-colonialism. In view of this risk, I believe we need to combine our post-modern predilection for terminological problematization with an awareness of the potential harm that replacement attempts might unintentionally cause, due to the history of power relationships that stands in the background of the contested usage.

## Conclusion

As exemplified by the eighteenth-century Burmese inscription, it seems to me there may not be a really pressing text-historical or religio-historical need to find a substitute for the name Theravāda as a way of designating the Buddhist traditions of South and Southeast Asia. Moreover, it would be preferable if the rights of the Asian Buddhists in question to self-determine their name could be respected. I would follow from the above that continuing to use Theriya and/or Theravaṃsa to replace Theravāda may require arguing the case afresh, in dialogue with the problems identified here and in Anālayo (2013e).



## Abbreviations

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
Ap	<i>Apadāna</i>
B <sup>e</sup>	Burmese edition
C <sup>e</sup>	Ceylonese edition
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
Cv	<i>Cullavagga</i>
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>
Dīp	<i>Dīpavaṃsa</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
E <sup>e</sup>	European edition (= PTS)
Jā	<i>Jātaka</i>
Kv-a	<i>Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 126)
Mhv	<i>Mahāvaṃsa</i>
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>
MV	<i>Mahāvagga</i>
P	Peking edition



Pāc	<i>Pācittiya</i>
Pār	<i>Pārājika</i>
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
PTS	Pali Text Society edition
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ <sup>2</sup>	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
SĀ <sup>3</sup>	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 101)
S <sup>e</sup>	Siamese edition
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i>
Sp	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i>
T	Taishō edition (CBETA)
Th	<i>Theragāthā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Ud-a	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>
Up	<i>Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā</i>
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vms	<i>Vaṃsadīpanī</i>
VRI	Vipassanā Research Institute

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This volume, introduced by an essay on early Buddhism as a text-historical periodization, collects revised versions of articles related to *Āgama* and *Vinaya* literature as well as a new study on the role of memorization. It thereby complements previously published volumes of collected papers by the same author (*Madhyama-āgama Studies*, 2012; *Samyukta-āgama Studies*, 2015; *Ekottarika-āgama Studies*, 2016; *Dīrgha-āgama Studies*, 2017; *Vinaya Studies*, 2017).