

The *Vekhanassa-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* Parallel — A Case Study in the Transmission of the Pāli Discourses

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Abstract

The theme of the present article is the potential of employing the Chinese *Āgamas* in order to rectify transmission errors found in the Pāli *Nikāyas*, taking as an example the *Madhyama-āgama* counterpart to the *Vekhanassa-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. A translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse is followed by an examination of those of its parts that are of relevance for passages in the Pāli version that appear to have suffered from the vicissitudes of oral transmission.

Introduction

"Thus have I heard", *evaṃ me sutam*, is the standard opening of a Pāli discourse, an opening that quite explicitly draws attention to the oral nature of what follows. To fully appreciate the implications of this standard opening requires turning to parallel versions of a discourse that have been transmitted by a different reciter tradition. Though often agreeing in many respects, parallel versions also exhibit a considerable number of variations in minor matters and thus show the degree to which oral transmission can affect the canonical material that we now have at our disposal.

This oral transmission of the early discourses appears to have been under the influence of two determining factors. One of these two factors is the considerable emphasis placed on correct and accurate transmission of what was perceived to be the authentic word of the Buddha. In this respect the early Buddhist oral tradition differs decisively from the relatively free improvisation that characterizes oral tradition of a more narrative type.¹ The other determining factor is that those who were responsible for transmitting the textual legacy of early Buddhism had not necessarily undergone a training in memorizing skills from their

early youth onwards, as was the case for Vedic reciters, which makes it nearly unavoidable for errors in transmission to occur.

A case that well illustrates this is the *Vekhanassa-sutta*, the eightieth discourse in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. Though otherwise perhaps one of the less significant discourses in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, what makes the *Vekhanassa-sutta* worthy of study are the differences that can be found in its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel. This parallel is itself certainly not beyond errors, yet it does help to clarify some sections in the Pāli version.²

The *Madhyama-āgama* was translated by the Kashmiri Gautama Saṅghadeva during the period 397-398 AD, based on a written original that was read out to him by Saṅgharakṣa, another Kashmiri monk. The Chinese monk Dao-ci (道慈) acted as the scribe, assisted by Li-bao (李寶) and Kang-hua (康化).³ The original used for translation appears to have been in Prākṛit and with considerable probability stems from a Sarvāstivāda tradition.⁴

In addition to the *Madhyama-āgama* version, another Chinese translation has been preserved individually, in the sense of not being part of a translation of a discourse collection.⁵ According to the information given in the Taishō edition, this translation was undertaken by Guṇa-bhadra, a translator active during the fifth century.⁶

Translation

The Discourse to *Vekhanassa⁷

1. Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was living at Sāvattḥī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.
2. At that time the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa, while roaming around,⁸ came to where the Buddha was and, after exchanging greetings, he said in an inquiring manner: "Gotama, this is the supreme appearance, the supreme appearance, Gotama, this is the supreme appearance."⁹ The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what is this appearance?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, if [there is] an appearance where no other appearance is superior, more sublime, more excellent, Gotama, that appearance is the most excellent, that appearance is supreme!"

3. The Blessed One said: "Kaccāna, just as if someone were to say: 'That which is the most beautiful girl in the country, I want her!' Then another man would pose such a question: 'Friend, do you know of the most beautiful girl in the country: this is her family name, this is her given name, this is her birth? [Do you know] whether she is long or short, stout or slim; whether she is of light, or dark, or neither-light-nor-dark [skin colour]? [Do you know] whether she is a Warrior girl, or whether she is a Brahmin, a Merchant or a Worker class girl? [Do you know] whether she lives in the eastern, the southern, the western or the northern direction?' That man would answer: 'I do not know!'

Then the other man would ask again: 'Friend you do not know or see of the most beautiful girl in the country that this is her family name, this is her first name, this is her birth. [You do not know] if she is long or short, stout or slim; if she is of light or dark or neither-light-nor-dark [skin] colour. [You do not know] if she is a Warrior girl, if she is a Brahmin, a Merchant, or a Worker class girl. [You do not know] if she lives in the eastern, the southern, the western, or the northern direction. Yet you make this statement: 'I want that girl?'

Similarly, Kaccāna, you make this statement: 'that sublime appearance is the most sublime appearance, that is the most excellent appearance, that is the supreme appearance'. But when I ask you about that appearance, you don't know it."

4. The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa said: "Gotama, just like superbly refined utmost excellent gold, polished and treated so as to be pure by a goldsmith who is skilled in refining, placed on a white cotton mat under the sunshine, whose most sublime appearance were glowing and shining with clear light, so too, Gotama, I say that sublime appearance is the most sublime appearance, that is the most excellent appearance, that is the supreme appearance."

5. The Blessed One said: "Kaccāna, I will now ask you, you may answer in accordance with your understanding. Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose the superbly refined utmost excellent gold, polished and treated so as to be pure by a goldsmith skilled in refining, placed on a white

cotton mat under the sunshine, whose most sublime appearance were glowing and shining with clear light; compared with a glow-worm that were glowing and shining with clear light in a dark night, of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?" The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the glow-worm is supreme and more excellent than the clear light of the superbly refined and select gold."

6. The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose a glow-worm were glowing and shining with clear light in the middle of a dark night; compared with a burning oil lamp that were glowing and shining with clear light in a dark night, of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the burning oil lamp is supreme and more excellent than the clear light of the glow-worm."

7. The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose a burning oil lamp were glowing and shining with clear light in a dark night; compared with a great burning wood fire glowing and shining with clear light in a dark night, of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the great burning wood fire is supreme and more excellent than the clear light of the burning oil lamp."

8. The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose a great burning wood fire were glowing and shining with clear light in the middle of a dark night; compared with the morning star glowing and shining with clear light towards dawn in a cloudless [sky], of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the morning star is supreme and more excellent than the light of the great burning wood fire."

9. The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose the morning star that were glowing and shining with clear light towards dawn in a cloudless [sky]; compared with the light of the resplendent moon,¹⁰ which in a cloudless [sky] at midnight were glowing and shin-

ing with clear light, of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the resplendent moon is supreme and more excellent than the light of the morning star."

10. The Blessed One asked: "Kaccāna, what do you think, suppose the light of the resplendent moon in a cloudless [sky] at midnight were glowing and shining with clear light; compared with the light of the resplendent sun that during the time close to mid-autumn were glowing and shining with clear light in a pure sky free from clouds, of these [two] clear lights, which is the supreme one, which is the most excellent?"

The heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa replied: "Gotama, the clear light of the resplendent sun is supreme and more excellent than the light of the resplendent moon."

11. The Blessed One said: "Kaccāna, [beyond this] there are many gods. Now even though this sun and moon are of such great power, such great might, such great merit, such great majesty, yet their clear light does not compare to the clear light of these gods. In former times I met and conversed with such gods. What I declare is in keeping with the minds of those gods, yet I do not make such a statement as: 'that sublime appearance is the most sublime appearance, that is the most excellent appearance, that is the supreme appearance!'"

But you, Kaccāna, in regard to what is [even] inferior and worse than the light of a glow-worm, you say: 'that sublime appearance is the most sublime appearance, that is the most excellent appearance, that is the supreme appearance!', and when asked about it you do not [even] know it!"

Then the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa, after being directly criticized by the Blessed One, was upset and worried inside, with head lowered he kept silent, at a loss for an argument and without words, as if he were searching for something.

12. Then, having criticized [him] the Blessed One, in order to cheer him up, said: "Kaccāna, there are five strands of sensual pleasures that are gratifying and wished for, that lead to joy [of the type] that is related to sensuality, [namely] forms known by the eye, sounds known by the ear,

smells known by the nose, flavours known by the tongue, touches known by the body.

13. Kaccāna, forms could be desirable or else they could be undesirable. There may be a person [for whom] those forms that are agreeable to the mind, commendable to the mind, [productive of] joy in the mind, fulfilling to the mind, satisfying to the mind's aspirations, are supreme and more excellent than other types of forms that are not desired, not wanted, not aspired to, not searched for. These are [then] the most excellent and supreme types of form [for that person]. Kaccāna, in the same way for sounds, smells, flavours and tangibles. Kaccāna, tangibles could be desirable or else they could be undesirable. There may be a person [for whom] those tangibles that are agreeable to the mind, commendable to the mind, [productive of] joy in the mind, fulfilling to the mind, satisfying to the mind's aspirations, are supreme and more excellent than other types of tangibles that are not desired, not wanted, not aspired to, not searched for. These are [then] the most excellent and supreme types of tangibles [for that person].

14. Then, the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa held out his folded hands in respect towards the Buddha and said: "Gotama, it is very profound and very unique, how the recluse Gotama has explained to me in various ways sensual pleasures and the foremost sensual pleasure. Gotama, just as if with a grass fire one were to ignite a wood fire, or with a wood fire one were to ignite a grass fire, so too the recluse Gotama has explained to me in various ways sensual pleasures and the foremost sensual pleasure."¹¹

The Blessed One said: "Stop, stop, Kaccāna, because for a long time you have been of a different view, of a different belief, [affirming] a different type of joy, a different type of pleasure, a different type of thinking, you do not fully understand the meaning of what I say. Kaccāna, suppose a disciple of mine during the first and last watches of the night does not lie down to sleep, but with proper concentration and intention develops the requisites of the path, coming to know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more becoming hereafter', such a one would fully understand what I say."

15. Then the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa got angry towards the Buddha, dislike arose [in him] and disapproval, and with a wish to

slander the Blessed One, with a wish to slight the Blessed One, in order to slander the Blessed One, in order to slight the Blessed One, he said:

"Gotama, there are recluses or Brahmins who do not [even] know the past world, who do not [even] know the future world, who do not [even] know countless births and deaths, yet they claim to have reached final knowledge, [assuming that they] know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more becoming hereafter'.

Gotama, I think like this: 'How come these recluses and Brahmins who do not [even] know the past world, who do not [even] know the future world, who do not [even] know countless births and deaths, claim to have reached final knowledge, [assuming that they] know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more becoming hereafter'?"

16. Then the Blessed One promptly reflected: "This heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa got angry towards me, dislike arose [in him] and disapproval, and with a wish to slander me, with a wish to slight me, in order to slander me, in order to slight me, he said:

'Gotama, there are recluses or Brahmins who do not [even] know the past world, who do not [even] know the future world, who do not [even] know countless births and deaths, yet they claim to have reached final knowledge, [assuming that they] know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more becoming hereafter'.

Gotama, I think like this: 'Why is it that these recluses and Brahmins who do not [even] know the past world, who do not [even] know the future world, who do not [even] know countless births and deaths, claim to have reached final knowledge, [assuming that they] know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more becoming hereafter'?"

Knowing this the Blessed One spoke: "Kaccāna, if there are recluses or Brahmins who do not [even] know the past world, who do not [even] know the future world, who do not [even] know countless births and deaths, yet they claim to have reached final knowledge, [assuming that they] know as it really is that 'birth is extinct, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there is no more

becoming hereafter', for them it would be fitting to make [instead] this statement: 'Let be the past world, let be the future world!'¹²

Kaccāna, I [too] make such a statement: 'Let be the past world, let be the future world!' Even without recalling a single [past] life, if a disciple of mine comes who is not fraudulent and not deceitful, with a straight character, I will teach him. If he practices like that, in accordance with what I taught him, he will certainly come to know the proper *Dhamma*.

Kaccāna, just like an infant boy, young and tender, lying on his back, whose father and mother have bound his hands and feet.¹³ But when later on he has grown up and all his faculties have matured, the father and mother free his hands and feet. He might only recall the time of being liberated,¹⁴ but does not recall the time of being in bondage.

Just so, Kaccāna, I make such a statement: 'Let be the past world, let be the future world!' Even without recalling a single [past] life, if a disciple of mine comes who is not fraudulent and not deceitful, with a straight character, I will teach him. If he practices like that, in accordance with what I taught him, he will certainly come to know the proper *Dhamma*.

Kaccāna, take for example an oil lamp that burns in dependence on oil and wick, if nobody supplies oil and the wick is not adjusted, when the former oil is already extinguished and there is no further supply, having no more fuel it will come quickly to cessation.¹⁵

Just so, Kaccāna, I make such a statement: 'Let be the past world, let be the future world!' Even without recalling a single [past] life, if a disciple of mine comes who is not fraudulent and not deceitful, with a straight character, I will teach him. If he practices like that, in accordance with what I taught him, he will certainly come to know the proper *Dhamma*.

Kaccāna, just as if one were to use ten or twenty or thirty or forty or fifty or sixty bundles of wood to make a fire that is bright and fully ablaze,¹⁶ [so that] then [one can] see the fire blazing. If afterwards nobody supplies more grass, wood, chaff, or dung, when the former firewood is already extinguished and there is no further supply, having no more fuel it will come quickly to cessation.¹⁷

Just so, Kaccāna, I make such a statement: 'Let be the past world, let be the future world!' Even without recalling a single [past] life, if a disciple of mine comes who is not fraudulent and not deceitful, with a straight

character, I will teach him. If he practices like that, in accordance with what I taught him, he will certainly come to know the proper *Dhamma*."

17. While this teaching was being given, the stainless and dustless eye of the *Dhamma* in regard to all phenomena arose in the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa.¹⁸ Then the heterodox wanderer Vekhanassa saw the *Dhamma* and attained the *Dhamma*, realized the totally pure *Dhamma*, [having] no more any [need] of other teachers, no longer relying on others, eradicating doubt and crossing over confusion, free from any hesitation, already established in the realization of the fruit, he attained intrepidity in the teaching of the Blessed One.

Bowing down at the Buddha's feet he said: "Blessed One, I wish to obtain the going forth from the Buddha to practice the path, [may I receive] the full ordination and become a monk to practice the holy life." The Blessed One said: "Well come,¹⁹ monk, practice the holy life!"

The heterodox wanderer obtained the going forth from the Buddha to practice the path, he forthwith received the full ordination and became a monk to practice the holy life. When the venerable Vekhanassa had gone forth to practice the path and had received the full ordination he, knowing the *Dhamma* and seeing the *Dhamma* (etc.), [eventually] attained full liberation.

The Buddha spoke like this. The venerable Vekhanassa and the other monks heard what the Buddha said, were delighted and put it into practice.

Comparison

In what follows, only those differences that help to clarify an aspect of the Pāli discourse will be discussed, which is the case in relation to the treatment given to the theme of sensual pleasures in the later part of both versions.

According to the Pāli version, the Buddha spoke in this context of a highest sensual happiness that is supreme among sensual types of happiness, *kāmasukhā kāmaggasukhaṃ tattha aggaṃ akkhāyati*.²⁰ In the Pāli discourse this proclamation is somewhat cryptic, coming as it does at the end of a discussion of the five strands of sensual pleasure, and its implications are open to conjecture. The Pāli commentary then explains that *kāmaggasukha* refers to *Nibbāna*,²¹ to which the sub-commentary adds that, since all phenomena of the three realms can be

considered as a form of sensual pleasure (*kāma*), thus of all such types of happiness *Nibbāna* is the highest.²²

This commentarial explanation is rather problematic. A first problem is that *kāma* in its early Buddhist usage stands for only one of the three realms, not for all three. Rebirth in the other two realms, or even just experiences that correspond to them, such as the *jhānas* or the immaterial attainments, are totally beyond *kāma*. This much can be seen from the standard introduction to the attainment of the first *jhāna* in the Pāli *Nikāyas* and the Chinese *Āgamas*, which quite explicitly indicates the condition for its attainment to be seclusion from *kāma*, *vivicc'eva kāmehi* / 離欲.²³ In fact, elsewhere the expression *kāmagga* refers to the highest realm within the sensual sphere, inhabited by the gods that delight in the creation of others,²⁴ clearly inferior to the types of experiences of the other two realms.

Another problem is that *Nibbāna* is beyond the three realms, so that it would not be appropriate to treat the happiness of *Nibbāna* as supreme among the types of happiness of the three realms. As a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* clarifies, the happiness of *Nibbāna* is the very cessation of any feeling.²⁵ This makes it clear that the happiness of *Nibbāna* is of quite a different type compared to the forms of happiness that can be felt within the three realms.

The solution to the admittedly cryptic passage in the *Vekhanassa-sutta* can be found in the *Madhyama-āgama* version. In agreement with the other Chinese translation undertaken by Guṇabhadra, the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse indicates that the point made by the Buddha was that desirable sense-objects appear to provide the supreme form of happiness, when they are contrasted to undesirable sense-objects.²⁶ Thus instead of referring to *Nibbāna*, the passage appears to be just an acknowledgement of the gratification that can be obtained through desirable sense-objects. This would then have been the first step in an examination of sensual pleasures from the perspective of their gratification (*assāda*), their disadvantage (*ādīnava*) and the release from them (*nissaraṇa*), an examination that was not concluded owing to Vekhanassa's intervention.

Another clarifying perspective can be gained from the Chinese parallels in regard to Vekhanassa's reaction on being told that he had misunderstood the Buddha's exposition. The Pāli and Chinese versions agree that

Vekhanassa reacted by criticizing those who claim to have reached final liberation without knowing past and future.²⁷ The two Chinese versions speak in the same context also of knowing "infinite births", which makes it clear that the reference to knowing the past refers to recollection of past lives. The same understanding is also reflected in the Pāli commentary.²⁸

According to the Pāli version, the Buddha acknowledged Vekhanassa's criticism as being in accordance with what is proper.²⁹ This is rather surprising, since recollection of past lives is not an indispensable requirement for reaching full liberation. Of the three higher knowledges, the decisive one, from a Buddhist perspective, is the destruction of the influxes. Such destruction can be accomplished even without having developed the other two higher knowledges, and thus without knowledge of the past.

Those who attain the final goal without developing the first two higher knowledges would be the *paññāvimutta arahants*, those who are freed by wisdom only. A listing of different types of *arahants* in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* indicates that, out of a congregation of five-hundred *arahants*, sixty had reached the three higher knowledges, another sixty had the six knowledges (*abhiññā*), another sixty were freed both ways (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*), but the remaining three-hundred-and-twenty were released by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*).³⁰ The numbers given in the Chinese parallels differ, but they also clearly indicate that the majority of *arahants* were those released by wisdom.³¹ Thus on reading the Pāli version of the *Vekhanassa-sutta* one would be at a loss to understand why the Buddha should agree with Vekhanassa's criticism.

In the Chinese versions, in fact, the Buddha does not agree to this criticism. According to them, the Buddha rather indicated that those who voice such criticism should be told to let be past and future.³² The two Chinese versions continue with the Buddha turning to Vekhanassa and telling him as well to let be past and future. This injunction is also found in the Pāli version, where, however, its implications are less evident, as it follows after the acknowledgement of the appropriateness of Vekhanassa's criticism.³³

The Pāli version then continues with a reference to the Buddha's ability to guide a sincere disciple to realization. The same is also found in the Chinese versions, which, however, also make the point that such a

disciple could be led to realization even if he or she should be unable to remember a single birth. Thus what in the Pāli version appears somewhat unrelated to what goes on before, in the Chinese versions reinforces the point made earlier, namely that Vekhanassa's criticism was not justified, as it is possible to reach liberation even without knowing the past.

By way of illustration of the Buddha's ability in leading a disciple to realization, the Pāli version comes out with a simile that describes an infant bound with a five-fold bond who, after growing up, will be released from its bondage and know he is free from them. The full import of this simile becomes clear in the Chinese versions, which highlight that the grown-up child's knowledge of being freed is independent of his or her ability to recall the earlier bondage. That is, the point made with this simile is that to know one's former bondage during previous existences is not required in order to reach liberation in the present.

The Pāli *Vekhanassa-sutta* concludes with Vekhanassa taking refuge and asking to be accepted as a lay disciple.³⁴ This is also to some extent puzzling, since Vekhanassa was a wanderer, so that one would expect him to rather request ordination instead of becoming a lay disciple.³⁵ According to the Chinese versions, Vekhanassa indeed requested the going forth, in fact he attained stream-entry during the discourse and, after going forth, in due time became an *arahant*.³⁶

In this way, the Chinese counterparts to the *Vekhanassa-sutta* help to clarify some points in the Pāli version that may have suffered from the vicissitudes of oral transmission. They reveal that the reference to the highest sensual pleasure need not have *Nibbāna* in mind, and that the criticism of claims to awakening without knowing the past can be dismissed as inappropriate, since even without recollecting a single past life final liberation can be attained.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i>
B ^e	Burmese edition
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
Ps-pt	<i>Papañcasūdanī-purāṇaṭīkā</i>
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ ²	'other' <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
T	Taishō
Vv	<i>Vimānavatthu</i>
Vv-a	<i>Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā</i>

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Notes

- ¹ A detailed examination of the oral characteristics of the Pāli discourse has been undertaken by Allon 1997, and a study of the same phenomena in Buddhist Sanskrit texts by von Simson 1965; see also von Hinüber 1994.
- ² MN 80 at MN II 40-44 and MĀ 209 at T I 786b-788a. In order to facilitate comparison between the two versions, in my translation of MĀ 209 I adopt the paragraph numbering used in Nāṇamoli 2005: 663-665. For the same reason, I employ Pāli terminology throughout, without thereby intending to take a position on the original language of the *Madhyama-āgama*.
- ³ T I 809b26: 請罽賓沙門僧伽羅叉令誦胡本, 請僧伽提和轉胡爲晉, 豫州沙門道慈筆受, 吳國李寶, 康化共書 (a 聖 variant reading gives the name of the last as 唐化)
- ⁴ On the original language of the *Madhyama-āgama* see Bapat 1969: 5; Enomoto 1986: 20 and von Hinüber 1982: 250. On its school affiliation see Enomoto 1984; Lü 1963: 242; Mayeda 1985: 98; Minh Chau 1991: 27; Waldschmidt 1980: 136 and Yin-shun 1983: 703.
- ⁵ T 90 at T I 913c-914c.
- ⁶ T I 913c6: 宋天竺三藏求那跋陀羅譯. On Guṇabhadra see also T 2059 at T L 344a5-345a13, translated in Shi 1968: 148-155; and Bagchi 1927: 378-388.
- ⁷ MĀ 209 gives the name of this wanderer as 韓摩那修, which according to Pulleyblank 1991: 39, 217, 221, 346 would correspond to *pejṇ' ma na' suw*, hence the original term must have been different from its Pāli counterpart *Vekhanassa*.
- ⁸ Adopting the 宋, 元, 明 and 聖 variant 彷彿 instead of 仿佯.
- ⁹ According to Hirakawa 1997: 1005, 色 also renders *varṇa*, so that the sense here seems to be the same as in the corresponding passage in MN 80 at MN II 40,7: *ayaṃ paramo varṇo*. The Pāli commentary on the same proposal made by Sakuludāyī in MN 79 at MN II 32,27 explains that the proclamation of a "supreme appearance" intends the condition to be attained on rebirth in the *Subhakiṇhadevaloka*, the heavenly realm that corresponds to the attainment of the third *jhāna*, cf. Ps III 273.
- ¹⁰ MĀ 209 at T I 786c27: 月殿, literally "moon palace", an expression that in the next exchange is also used for the sun, 日殿. The expression 月殿 recurs in MĀ 141 at T I 647c22, where it is the counterpart to *candimāpabhā* in SN 45:146 at SN V 44,18. My rendering as "resplendent" is based on the assumption that in the present context 殿 may also stand for *pabhā*, being perhaps misread as *sabhā*, which according to Hirakawa 1997: 694 is one of the terms rendered by 殿.
- ¹¹ The simile used here by Vekhanassa is not found in MN 80.
- ¹² In MN 80, the Buddha instead agrees to Vekhanassa's criticism, see the discussion below.
- ¹³ The point of binding the child like this would be to keep it from doing mischief when the parents are busy and unable to keep it under surveillance.
- ¹⁴ Adopting the 宋, 元 and 明 variant that only reads 解, without 縛.
- ¹⁵ MĀ 209 at T 787c11: 無所受已, where 受 renders **upādāna*, which in the present context would have the sense of "fuel". Though this simile is not found in MN 80, a version of this imagery occurs in SN 12:53 at SN II 86,22.
- ¹⁶ Adopting the 宋, 元 and 明 variant 炯 instead of 洞.
- ¹⁷ Though this simile is not found in MN 80, a Pāli version of this imagery occurs in SN 12:52 at SN II 85,17.
- ¹⁸ MN 80 does not report his stream-entry or his going forth.
- ¹⁹ Adopting the 宋, 元, 明, and 聖 variant 來 instead of 哉.

²⁰ MN 80 at MN II 43,4. Occurrences such as *bhavagga* in SN 22:76 at SN III 83,14 or *silagga* etc. in AN 4:75 at AN II 79,2 indicate that a *tappurisa* compound with *-agga* as its second member stands for what is the "topmost" or the "highest" among what is referred to by the first member of the compound.

²¹ Ps III 277: *'kāmaggasukan'ti nibbānaṃ adhippetam.*

²² B^c-Ps-pt II 133: *sabbe hi tebhūmakadhammā kāmaṇīyaṭṭhena kāmā, te paṭicca uppaj-janasukhato nibbānasukham eva aggabhūtam sukham.*

²³ The aloofness from *kāma* is especially highlighted in AN 9:33 at AN IV 411,5: *vivicc' eva kāmehi ... paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati, ettha kāmā nirujjhanti, te ca kāme nirodhetvā nirodhetvā viharanti.*

²⁴ Vv 17 and Vv-a 80.

²⁵ AN 9:34 at AN IV 415,3: *etad eva khv' ettha sukham, yad' ettha n' atthi vedayitam.*

²⁶ MĀ 209 at T I 787a21 and T 90 at T I 914a29.

²⁷ MN 80 at MN II 43,22: *ajānantā pubbantam apassantā aparantaṃ*; MĀ 209 at T I 787b9: 不知世前際, 不知世後際, 不知無窮生死; T 90 at T I 914b17: 不知過去世, 不知當來世, 無量生世間.

²⁸ Ps III 278.

²⁹ MN 80 at MN II 44,3: *tesaṃ so yeva sahadhammiko niggaḥo hoti.*

³⁰ SN 8:7 at SN I 191,22.

³¹ MĀ 121 at T I 610b25, T 63 at T I 862a4 and SĀ 1212 at T II 330b24 count ninety *arahants* endowed with the three higher knowledges, ninety *arahants* freed both ways, while the remaining three-hundred-twenty are freed by wisdom. SĀ² 228 at T II 457c11 counts ninety *arahants* with the three higher knowledges and one-hundred-eighty *arahants* freed both ways, the remainder being freed by wisdom.

³² MĀ 209 at T I 787b28: 置世前際, 置世後際, and T 90 at T I 914b28: 置過去世, 置當來世.

³³ MN 80 at MN II 44,3: *api ca, Kaccāna, tiṭṭhatu pubbanto tiṭṭhatu aparanto.*

³⁴ MN 80 at MN II 44,20: *upasakaṃ maṃ bhavaṃ Gotamo dhāretu ajjatagge paṇupetaṃ saraṇaṃ gataṃ.*

³⁵ Freiburger 1997: 128, in a survey of the usage of the term *paribbājaka* in the Pāli discourses, comes to the conclusion that there is no evidence for the existence of any Buddhist *paribbājakas*; cf. also Karunaratne 2004: 318. Thus for someone who has already gone forth as a wanderer and who becomes a Buddhist, the most natural thing to do would be to ordain as a member of the Buddhist monastic order.

³⁶ MĀ 209 at T I 787c24 and T 90 at T I 914c15.