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ISSN 0265-2897

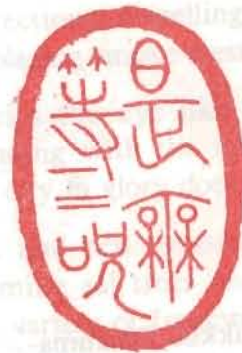
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*Buddhist Studies Review* is the bi-annual journal of the Institut de recherche bouddhique Linh-Sơn and the Pali Buddhist Union

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見無上  
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**SESAVATĪ'S MANSION**

Translated by John D. Ireland

(Vaṅgīsa:)

'I see this delightful and beautiful mansion, its surface of many a colour, ablaze with crystal and roofed with silver and gold. A well-proportioned palace, possessing gateways, and strewn with golden sand.

As the thousand-rayed sun in the autumn shines in the sky in the ten directions, dispelling the dark, so does your mansion glow, like a blazing smoke-crested fire in the darkness of night.


It dazzles the eye like lightning, beautiful, suspended in space. Resounding with the music of lute, drum and cymbals, it rivals Indra's city in glory does this mansion of yours.

White and red lotuses, jasmine and other flowers are there; blossoming sal trees and flowering asokas, and the air is filled with a variety of fragrances.

Sweet-scented trees, bread-fruits, laden branches interlaced, with palm-trees and hanging creepers in full bloom glorious like jewelled nets, and a delightful lotus pool exists for you.

Whatever flowering plants that grow in water and trees that are on land, those known in the human world and those non-human, heavenly, — all exist in your abode.


For what calming and self-restraint is the result? By the fruit of what deed have you arisen here? How did this mansion come to be possessed by you? Tell it in full, O lady with thick eyelashes.'



Frontispiece: the calligraphy in Sino-Vietnamese characters (Nôm) by Ven Thích Huyền-Vi reads:

*"[Therefore, know  
Transcendent Wisdom as]  
the Unsurpassed Mantra,  
the Incomparable Mantra,  
that cuts off all suffering."*

The seals, engraved by Ven. Bhikkhu Dhamma-vīro of Thailand, convey the same meaning as the calligraphy.



(Sesavatī)

'How it came to be possessed by me, this mansion with its flocks of herons, peacocks and partridges, and frequented by heavenly water-fowl and royal geese; resounding with the cries of birds, of ducks and koels<sup>1</sup>.

Containing divers varieties of creepers, flowers and trees; with trumpet-flower, rose-apple and asoka trees. Now how this mansion came to be possessed by me I will tell you. Listen, venerable sir.

In the eastern region of the excellent (country of) Magadha there is a village called Nālaka, venerable sir. There I was formerly a daughter-in-law and they knew me there as Sesavatī.

Scattering flower blossoms joyfully, I honoured him skilled in deeds and worshipped by gods and men, the great Upatissa<sup>2</sup> who has attained the immeasurable quenching<sup>3</sup>.

Having worshipped him who had gone to the ultimate bourn, the eminent seer bearing his last body, on leaving my human shape I went to (the heaven of) the thirty(-three) and here inhabit the place.'

(Vimānavatthu, vv.642-53)

1 The word *koel* is to be found in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th ed., as the name (derived from Hindi) for the Indian cuckoo; Skt and Pāli: *kokila*.

2 The personal name of Sāriputta who, according to tradition, came from the village of Nālaka.

3 *nibbuta*.

## DEBATES ON TIME IN THE KATHĀVATTHU

David Bastow

### I INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to give an account of the relations between the Kathāvatthu discussions of time and the theories and arguments of the Sarvāstivāda. On the basis of this account, I shall make some suggestions about the intellectual context in which the Kathāvatthu (abbrev. Kvu) was composed, and about its mode of operation within the context. As it is my opinion that the composers of Kvu<sup>1</sup> had a much better understanding of the early controversies about time than did the composers of the Kvu Commentary<sup>2</sup>, I shall attempt to examine Kvu in its own terms. My interpretation will therefore be very different from that of the PTS translators.

As Lance Cousins says<sup>3</sup> it seems that the early part of Kvu, composed around the time of Aśoka (third century BCE) describes a three-way debate. The protagonists can be given sectarian names, though it need not be assumed that the different positions belonged at that time to groups of Buddhists who had formally separated. The Sthaviras disagreed with the theories of the Pudgalavādins about the person, and with the theories about time of the Sarvāstivādins. The Sarvāstivādins seem to have

1 PTS 1979; *Points of Controversy*, tr. S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, PTS 1960.

2 Kathāvatthupakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā, PTS 1979; *The Debates Commentary*, tr. B.C. Law, PTS 1989.

3 L.S. Cousins, 'The «Five Points» and the origins of the Buddhist schools', in T. Skorupski ed., *The Buddhist Forum* II, SOAS, London 1991, p.35.

been with the Sthaviras in their opposition to Pudgalavāda. The place of Kvu in the debates about time can best be understood by comparing the Kvu with what is known about the Sarvāstivādin position from other sources.

Sarvāstivāda ideas about time developed gradually, over the many hundred years of the tradition's existence. Their characteristic belief, in fact the one that gave them their name, was that there is a sense in which past and future exist, are real. In relation to this belief, their thinking developed in two different ways. They gradually put together [A] a collection of philosophical arguments, which claimed in different ways to prove that past and future (or rather past and future objects, dharmas) must exist. They also constructed [B] an ontological theory — an extension to dharma-theory — to show in what way past and future exist. Our knowledge of their thinking about time comes from three different sources, three different periods in their history. One of their Abhidharma texts was the Vijñānakāya; this was composed in the third to second century BCE, so probably within a few decades of the early part of Kvu. It contains versions of three arguments [A]<sup>4</sup>, but no elaboration of the theory [B]. The Mahāvibhāṣā (first century CE) gives another argument, simple and profound<sup>5</sup>, and sets out a fairly complete account of theory [B]. In the fifth century CE Vasubandhu, in his Abhidharmakośa, described and attacked what he saw to be central points of the Sarvāstivāda position. In response to this, new versions of [A] and [B] were developed, in particular by Saṃghabhadra.

4 The first of these arguments is discussed in detail in my paper 'The first argument for Sarvāstivāda', *Asian Philosophy* 5, 2, 1995.

5 See my paper 'Mahāvibhāṣā arguments for Sarvāstivāda', *Philosophy East and West* 44, 3, 1994.

What is the relation of Kvu to all this?

The position I shall argue for is as follows:

1. In the first chapter (*vagga*) of Kvu, kathā I.6 is a set piece debate between Sthavira and Sarvāstivāda. It is concerned with an early version of the theory [B]. It does not mention the arguments put forward by the Vijñānakāya.
2. In the rest of Kvu there are several further kathās concerned with time; these are recognisably related to the arguments [A] of the Vijñānakāya<sup>6</sup>.

Before I look in detail at those parts of Kvu concerned with time, I wish to make some observations about the format of Kvu, as the understanding of this format is crucial to an understanding of the philosophical debates which take place within it.

(a) The identification of the protagonists in the debates. — Those who are familiar with the PTS translation should note that the text of Kvu nowhere identifies the protagonists in the debates it reports<sup>7</sup>. Not only does Kvu not identify the rival sects whose views are, according to the Commentary, being 'purged' but nowhere are we told for any particular question and answer who is the questioner and who is giving the replies. Everything has to be

6 In his introduction to his translation of the first two chapters of the Vijñānakāya ('La controverse du temps et du pudgala dans le Vijñānakāya', *Études Asiatiques*, Paris 1925, p.345; repr. in H.S. Prasad, *Essays on Time in Buddhism*, Delhi 1991, pp.79–112), Louis de La Vallée Poussin says 'Le Kathāvatthu et le Vijñānakāya représentent et font triompher deux doctrines contradictoires; ils ne se rencontrent pas'. I shall try to show that this is far too simple a view of the relation between the two texts.

7 Mrs Rhys Davids, in her 'Prefatory Notes' to *Points of Controversy*, p.xxxii, speaks with justifiable caution of the 'sects or groups . . . on whom the opinions debated about are fathered by the Commentary'.

gathered from the content. So the identification, in the translation, of the main protagonists in each section (*kathā*) is due to the Commentary; but often the latter does not analyse the discussion in detail, and the attribution of particular questions and answers to specific protagonists has been done by the translators — often, as Mrs Rhys Davids admits (p.lii), with considerable difficulty.

(b) The question of what is meant by a 'protagonist' in this context. — It should be noted that unlike the translation the text does not in its format indicate for each *kathā* a 'controverted point'. The format of the translation implies that for each *kathā* there is such a point, a question on which the participants take opposing sides, and which the ensuing discussion aims to resolve; but there is no such implication in the text. When we look at the content of the debates, we see that sometimes (notably in I.6) there are opposed positions; but sometimes the 'protagonists' are rather to be seen as participants contributing in their different ways to a discussion on a topic which is controversial or puzzling.

(c) The logic of the Kvu debates. — The impression given by the translation is that each subsection of each *kathā* is an argument in itself, in which the questioner, usually Sthavira, reveals or at least claims a self-contradiction within the views professed by the opponent. (To take a small example: the first sentence of the argument in I.6 is, according to the translation, '*Theravādin*. — You say that «all» exists. Hereby you are involved in these further admissions:- all exists everywhere . . .'. But the adversarial term 'admission' does not appear in the text. Rather, there is simply 'Does everything exist? Yes. Does everything exist everywhere? That should not be said'.) The translators would no doubt support their adversarial interpretation by pointing out that Kvu begins (in the *Puggala-kathā*) with an argument worked out according to an apparently elaborate logical

matrix<sup>8</sup>. The detailed matrix is fully articulated only in the first subsection of *kathā* I.1 ([1] - [10] in the translation). There it is meant to exhibit an alleged contradiction between 'the person (*puggala*) is known in the sense of a real and ultimate fact', and '*Puggalo* is not known in the same way (*tato*) as are [other] real and ultimate facts'. If this matrix were intended to govern the whole of Kvu, then in each pair of answers given by the opponent the second answer would be revealed as inconsistent with the first. In the rest of *kathā* I.1 the matrix is still in operation, in that in each subsection the (alleged) incoherence in the opponent's position is made explicit. (For example [138]: 'Acknowledge the refutation: if the former proposition is true, you should also, good sir, have admitted the latter . . .'.) But in the rest of Kvu the matrix survives, if it does, only in the use of '-pe-', as in [1] of *kathā* I.6, where the final pair of questions is 'Does everything exist. Yes. Does the view «that it is wrong to say that everything exists» itself exist? No -pe-'. Here '-pe-' presumably refers back to the matrix, and so means 'the answers you have given contain a contradiction'. But of course to say this is not to demonstrate that there is in fact a contradiction; so the use of -pe- is rather a feeble argumentative weapon.

My own view, as I shall argue, is that the Kvu passages concerned with time do contain philosophically powerful arguments; but their actual logical format is obscured rather than revealed by inserting at the end of every subsection 'the answers you have given contain a contradiction'. So I think that it was an error on

<sup>8</sup> This matrix has been analysed, or at least expressed in logical symbols, by F. Watanabe, *Philosophy and its Development in the Nikayas and Abhidhamma*, Delhi 1983, Ch.II. Watanabe follows a paper by A.K. Warder, in *Proceedings of the 25th International Congress of Orientalists* (1963), to which I have not had access.

the part of the PTS translators to use a consistently adversarial tone throughout the book.

Debates about time in Kvu are of two types. There is first the large-scale set-piece debate in I.6, in which the Sthaviravādin is attempting to demonstrate the incoherence of the Sarvāstivādin position. But secondly there are several shorter kathās throughout the rest of the book in which topics relevant to the understanding of time are debated. The Commentary does not connect these shorter debates to the Sarvāstivādins; nevertheless I shall try to show their relevance to the Sarvāstivādins' concerns.

## II THE DEBATE IN I.6

In this section I wish to show:

- i) that Kvu here demonstrates considerable knowledge and understanding of the Sarvāstivāda position at an early stage of its development.
- ii) that to understand the structure of the argument the kathā should be taken as a whole; it is a mistake to take each subsection as an independent argument against the Sarvāstivāda position. Some of the subsections are concerned rather with making clear what that position is.

Kvu I.6 begins thus:

[1] Does everything exist (*sabbam atthīti*)? Yes.

Does everything exist everywhere (*sabbathā*)? No (literally: that should not be said).

... always (*sabbadā*), by everything (*sabbena*), in everything (*sabbesu*), having become unbound (*ayogan ti katvā*)? No.

Does that which does not exist exist? No.

That everything exists is a bad view, (that everything exists is a good view) — does this view exist? No. (-pe-).

Here there are no arguments for or against the Sarvāsti position; rather the questioner is beginning by clearing away possible misapprehensions about what the position is. The 'sarvāsti' name is insufficiently specific; it needs to be made clear that the position does not involve the postulation of a universal undiscriminated reality, perhaps similar to the Upaniṣadic Brahman.

The questioner now focuses on the matter really at issue:

[2] Do past and future exist? Yes.

Surely the past is ceased (*niruddham*), gone away . . . ?

Surely the future is not yet arisen (*ajātam*) . . . ?

These are the obvious questions. How can you say that past and future exist, when the past is by definition what has ceased, the future is by definition what has not yet arisen? On the other hand, there is no problem in saying that the present exists; this has not ceased or gone away . . . , it has arisen, has come into being, is manifested. If the existence of the present is equivalent to its being not-ceased, arisen, manifested, how is it that this equivalence does not hold for the past and future?

Here again, one can hardly say that there is an argument against the Sarvāstivāda view. No-one who asserts the reality of past and future can be unaware of the meanings of 'past' and 'future'. Rather the questioner is opening up the discussion, expecting further elaboration of what is being claimed. There must be some theory lying behind the Sarvāstivāda assertion.

In [3] and [4], the same questions as in [2] are asked, the same answers given, with respect not to past and future *tout court*, but in reference to past and future *rūpa*, and the other *khandhas*. This adds nothing to the debate; though as we shall see the question of the relation between past, present and future on the one hand and the things which exist in the past, the present

and the future on the other, was a matter that had to be explicitly settled.

In [5] and [6] we and the questioner come to the beginnings of a theory:

Present, *rūpa*, *rūpa*, present, present *rūpa* — are these not-distinct, of the same meaning, the same, of the same content and origin? Yes.

When present *rūpa* ceases, does it give up its presentness (*paccuppanna-bhāvaṃ*)? Yes.

Does it give up its *rūpa*-ness. No.

The second and third questions seem designed to set out the core of the Sarvāstivāda theory: a *rūpa-dharma* can in a sense survive its ceasing to be present; it still remains identifiable as a *rūpa-dharma*. Its presentness is as it were a passing phase in its history. This is the theory to be explained in detail (several centuries later) in the Mahāvibhāṣā. There exist (now) not merely present dharmas, but past and future dharmas; existence or reality are to be distinguished from presentness. Or to put it another way, a dharma normally has a three phase history. First, it remains for an indefinite length of time in its future phase (*anāgata-bhāva*); then when the conditions are right it is momentarily manifest as present; then it 'ceases', is '*niruddham*', and enters into its existence as a past dharma.

In the next subsection [6] of Kvu, the Sarvāstivādin explains his core idea further by means of an analogy: a white cloth can give up its whiteness without ceasing to be a cloth. The analogy shows that just as it is a mistake to collapse together the meanings of the two terms in 'white cloth', to think of them as applying to exactly the same class of objects, and in fact essentially linked, so the initial answer in [5] above is mistaken in claiming that the two terms in 'present *rūpa*' are essentially

related, in that '*rūpa*' can be meaningfully applied only to some present reality. In general, reality and presentness are distinct.

In [7] and [8] we are for the first time given a telling argument against the Sarvāstivāda position. If, as just explained, *rūpa* does not give up its *rūpa*-ness when it ceases, becomes past, does this not amount to saying that *rūpa* is permanent (*nicca*), persistent, not subject to change? Of Nibbāna it can truly be said that it does not give up its Nibbāna-ness, and that it is permanent, persistent . . . (but surely the Sarvāstivādin cannot be intending to obliterate the distinction between conditioned and unconditioned dharmas!).

This objection was always a problem for the Sarvāstivāda<sup>9</sup>. Of course they did not see themselves as disagreeing with the Buddha's doctrine of the transience of all worldly things, nor indeed with its Abhidharmic version, the momentariness of all conditioned dharmas; for they interpreted this doctrine as referring to the momentariness of the 'present phase' in the dharma's history — the momentariness of its manifestation, of its participation in a stream of experience. But they never found, in answer to the charge of denying *aniccatā*, a simple way of explaining the difference between the indefinitely extended temporal history of dharmas, central to their theory, and the trans-temporal *niccatā* of Nibbāna.

The same theme is pursued in [9] - [20]. It is pointed out that the present (or rather present *rūpa* etc.) gives up its presentness; and the future (or rather future *rūpa* etc.) gives up its futureness;

9 See Vasubandhu's challenge, Abhidharmakośa V 27b (repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp.129-46), and Saṃghabhadra's reply, translated by L. de La Vallée Poussin in 'Documents d'Abhidharma: la controverse du temps', *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* V, 1936-7, pp.83-4 (repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp.147-298).

but the past (or rather past *rūpa* etc.) does not give up its pastness. How then can one say that past dharmas are impermanent, unlike Nibbāna?

[22] is again a matter of questions which reveal the Sarvāstivāda position, in fact a clarification of the theory hinted at earlier. It is an implication of this theory that the same thing (for example a *rūpa-dharma*) having been future becomes present, having been present becomes past.

Having been future, the present (or present thing) comes into being (*anāgatam hutvā, paccuppannam hotīti*)? Yes.

The very same thing is future and (then) present? No.

(But surely this involves a contradiction?) The very same thing is future and (then) present? Yes.

Having been, it becomes; having been it becomes? No? Yes.

Not having been, it does not become; not having been it does not become? No. . . .

Having been future, it (the same thing) becomes present; having been present, it (the same thing) becomes past? Yes.

Given an understanding of the Sarvāstivāda theory, this is reasonably straightforward. (The Commentary though struggles with it at some length.) This abstract expression of the theory is surely linked to the aphoristic expression of its contrary, quoted for example in the Abhidharmakośa V 27: 'not having existed, (the momentary dharma) comes into being; having been, it completely disappears (*abhūtvā bhāvaḥ, bhūtvā ca prativigacchati*)'. Vasubandhu says this comes from the Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra (from the Saṃyuktāgama); he himself uses an even simpler version: '*abhūtvā bhāvaḥ, bhūtvā abhāvaḥ*'.

The Sthavira does not in this subsection provide any counter-

arguments against this position<sup>10</sup>.

[23] to [49] do though put forward a further argument against the Sarvāsti position, with a massive accumulation of examples. The argument is a good one, and is one that the Sarvāstivādins had to meet. (It is brought up again by Vasubandhu, Abhidharmakośa V 27a.) It relies on the part of the theory of which we are already aware, that when a *rūpa-dharma* ceases to be present it still retains its *rūpa*-ness. The argument is that if past dharmas are real, and if they can be truly described as, for example, eye, or eye-consciousness, light, attention, . . . , then with all these existing together in the past surely all the conditions exist in the past for real seeing to occur; so it should be that 'there is seeing of past *rūpa* with the past eye'. That is, what could it mean to say that a *rūpa-dharma* is real if it in no way performs the functions of a *rūpa-dharma*? Surely, the Ābhidharmika might say, the very existence of conditioned dharmas is constituted by their conditionality, their function within the causal network represented by the fundamental doctrine of *paticcasamuppāda*. For them to exist is for them to be functional.

To take another challenging example:

Does the past desire (*rāgo*) exist? Yes.

Is the arahant then in a state of desire (*sarāgo*) by virtue of that desire?

In Kvu the Sarvāstivādin makes no reply to this weighty objection to his theory. For the theory to have any meaning at

10 Mrs Rhys Davids says (*Points of Controversy*, p.90, n.2) that 'the opponent invests time with objective reality', and so according to the translation the counter-argument is that the Sarvāstivāda position implies an absurdity; namely that the future is the same as the present which is the same as the past. But as we shall see the 'opponent' explicitly rejects this objectification.



all, for it to be at all plausible, there must be a way in which past and future dharmas are real without performing the functions they would perform if they were present, in their present phase. Can the Sarvāstivādin develop his theory to articulate, to make explicit, his view of how this is possible?

In fact in the theory as described in the Mahāvibhāṣā this question of the functional reality of past and future dharmas, far from being a problem for the theory, becomes the basis of the theory itself. That is, the distinction between present reality of a *rūpa-dharma* on the one hand, and its past and future reality on the other, is precisely the functional differences between the three time-phases (the theory speaks of these as the three *bhāvas* of the dharma). Presentness is just the functional capacity to play those causal roles in the world which the Kvu questioner is asking about. The present stage of a *rūpa-dharma's* existence is the stage at which it can be seen by a present eye, if light is present. In their past and future phases *rūpa-dharmas* do not have these functional capacities — but they do have others, for example the capacity to affect the mind in memory or pre-vision.

We do not know precisely when this functional interpretation of the three times, the theory of '*kāritra*', became explicit in the thinking of the Sarvāstivāda school. It is present in the Mahāvibhāṣā; it is not mentioned in the Vijñānakāya. It is significant that the *kāritra* theory appears to be unknown to the Kvu Commentary. In fact the latter adds very little on these passages, merely brief verbal expansions of selected portions of the text. For the most part it is content to say 'everything is to be understood in accordance with the text'<sup>11</sup>.

11 *The Debates Commentary*, p.50.

The Commentary's inability to provide the philosophical back-ground to the Kvu discussion is significant because in its introduction to its comments on Kvu I.6 (Commentary, p.44), it speaks of the '*sabbam atthi*' view as being 'held for instance at present by the Sabb'atthivādins' (*seyyathāpi etarahi Sabbatthivādānam*). As K.R. Norman says<sup>12</sup> it is not clear whether the '*etarahi*' refers to the time of the writing of the Pāli Commentary (fifth century CE), or to the time of the Sinhalese commentaries from which the Pāli was edited and translated. (These Sinhalese commentaries are usually given a date not later than the first century CE.) In any case there seems to be no evidence that the authors or editors of the Commentary have themselves any direct contact with the Sarvāstivādins of their time, or any direct appreciation of their thinking. This is in contrast to the composer or composers of Kvu, who do seem to have a good understanding of the Sarvāstivāda position at an early stage of its theoretical development.

To summarise my conclusions about the debate in kathā I.6: this kathā is designed as a whole to reveal the fundamental ideas of the Sarvāstivāda theory of time, and to put forward two powerful arguments against this theory.

The final section of Kvu I.6 consist of sutta quotations, without any comment or exegesis. Two sutta texts are cited as supporting the Sarvāstivāda position, three as against the position. Considering texts 1 to 4 below, a neutral observer may think it unlikely that the Buddha was meaning to take up a position one way or another on what later became the controversial point of '*sabbam atthi*'.

12 K.R. Norman, *Pāli Literature*, Wiesbaden 1983, p.123.

1. **FOR** the Sarvāstivāda position: the Buddha's definition of *khandha*, for example the *rūpa-khandha*, includes all *rūpa*, past, present and future, internal and external, far and near . . . (M II 16 f.).

2. **FOR:** in S II 101, speaking of the four *āhāras*, the foods of karmic dynamism, the Buddha says:

If there be desire (*rāgo*) . . . for these four, then consciousness is firmly placed, name-and-form descends, *saṃkhārā* (here meaning motivated actions?) grow.

When there is (*atthi*) growth of *saṃkhāra*, then in the future (*ayatim*) there is (*atthi*) renewed becoming and rebirth.

3. **AGAINST:**

There is no eye . . . mind by which one could recognise, make known, the Buddhas who are past, *parinibbute* . . . (S IV 52).

4. **AGAINST:** the sequel to 2 above:

If there be not *rāgo* for these four, . . . there is (*atthi*) in the future no renewed becoming (S II 102).

But Kvu also quotes a sutta passage, S III 71, which seems to address the matter more directly:

The three ways of speaking, of designation, of conceptualising, [which are] not mixed up, and [were] not mixed up in the past, [these] are not and will not be confused by blameless *sāmanas* and wise brahmins: that *rūpa* (etc.) which is past, ceased (*niruddha*) . . . it is said to be 'it has been (*ahosīti tassa saṅkhā*)'; it is not said to be 'it is (*atthi*)' nor 'it will be (*bhavissati*)'. (And equivalent distinguishing statements for future and present *rūpa*.)

The wording in the Sutta is not decisive; the Sarvāstivādin could certainly interpret it in a way compatible with his own position. But it is difficult to see why the Sutta was composed, if not to put forward an anti '*sabbam atthi*' position, as part of a

theoretical debate such as that in which Sthavira and Sarvāstivādin are engaged in Kvu. In this it is unlike texts 1 to 4, which do have a clear *raison d'être* quite apart from the Sarvāstivāda debate. One possibility is that it is a late sectarian addition to the Saṃyutta. C.S. Prasad notes<sup>13</sup> that its equivalent does **not** appear in the Saṃyuktāgama, which he says should be 'considered to be a work of the Sarvāstivāda tradition or of a school related to it'.

### III DEBATES ABOUT TIME IN THE REST OF THE KATHĀVATTHU

In this section I wish to show the following:

i) with respect to the **contents** of the remaining kathās which discuss time — although none of these kathās is linked by the Commentary to the Sarvāstivāda, nearly all are recognisably within the context of debate which produced the arguments for the real existence of past and future, in the Vijñānakāya. What I mean by this is not that they are directly addressed to the Sarvāstivāda position, but that they contain ideas, use arguments, which must have been current within the Buddhist philosophical community during the third century BCE; and which the Sarvāstivādins used for their own purposes. This debating community must have been, in spirit at least, non-sectarian or trans-sectarian.

ii) with respect to their **form** — they are best seen as the open-minded and collaborative consideration of a variety of arguments and points of view on puzzling or controversial issues. They do not read as if the Sthavira thinks of himself as taking on and defeating all comers on all issues. Very often the protagonist, identified by the Commentary (or at least by the translation) as

13 In 'The Chinese Āgamas vis-à-vis the Sarvāstivāda tradition', BSR 10, 1, p.51.

the opponent, is given the last word; this cannot merely be a matter of politeness between adversaries<sup>14</sup>.

In Kvu I.7 it seems that the Sarvāstivādin is the questioner. The point at issue is whether the past, present and future consist in the *khandhas* (*atītam khandhā ti?*), the *āyatanas*, the *dhātus*. The (presumably) Sthavira respondent agrees that this is the case (no doubt influenced by sutta quotation 1 above), but will not accept the inference that therefore past and future exist just as the present does. This agreement that the three times do not have independent existence, but consist merely of, are to be analysed into, past, present and future *khandhas*, is echoed in the opening section of the Mahāvibhāṣā discussion of time<sup>15</sup>. In fact there the contrary opinion is attributed to the Dārṣṭāntīkas and the Vibhajyavādins. This contrary opinion is that:

time by its nature is eternal (*nitya*); the *saṃskāras* are *anitya*. *Saṃskāras* go round in time, like fruits in baskets, going out of one basket and into another; or as men leave one house to go to another. In the same way *saṃskāras* from the future go into the present, from the present go into the past.

However, this primitive objectification of the three times as containers of conditioned dharmas is firmly rejected by the author of the Mahāvibhāṣā: 'time is the *saṃskāras*, the *saṃskāras*

14 I agree with Cousins, *op. cit.*, p.36: 'It is by no means clear that most of the views we are given [by the Commentary] as sectarian views were ever the positions of clearly defined schools. Many of them are surely constructed dilemmas, intended as debating points to sharpen understanding of issues. They could never have been the cause of serious sectarian division.'

15 Cf. 'Documents d'Abhidharma: la controverse du temps', *op. cit.*, pp.8-9; a translation by La Vallée Poussin of pp.393-6 of Mahāvibhāṣā 76.

are time'<sup>16</sup>.

(Kvu I.8 is about the theory of time, attributed by the Commentary to the Kassapikas, that only the part of the past exists which consists of dhammā with 'unripened fruit', karmic consequences which have not yet come to pass. Only that part of the future exists which consists of karmic fruitions which are 'bound to arise' but have not yet arisen. This is in itself a fascinating theory, a kind of compromise between the Sthavira and the Sarvāstivāda positions; but its full discussion would take too long to be possible in this paper.)

I shall now discuss a group of kathās which use ideas closely related to the main argument in the Vijñānakāya for the real existence of past and future.

Kvu V.8 is about knowledge or insight (*ñānam*) into the future. [1] and [2] discuss the means to this knowledge. It is denied that knowledge of the future comes through any kind of causal inference. This seems surprising; as Mrs Rhys Davids comments 'presumably the belief was in an intuitive vision, and not in a process of inference'<sup>17</sup>. Now such a belief played an important role in the argument which is given most space in the relevant passage of the Vijñānakāya<sup>18</sup>:

There are people who see [a] that desire, one of the three roots of suffering, is bad (*akuśala*); and [b] that it produces in the future a painful consequence. Should we say that what such a person sees is past, present or future? If

16 There is an interesting discussion of primitive theories of objectified time in S. Schayer, *Contributions to the problem of time in Indian philosophy*, Cracow 1938, repr. in Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp.307-82.

17 *Points of Controversy*, p.182, n.2.

18 See my paper on this argument, referred to in n.4.

it is past or future, then past or future exists.

Firstly [that is with respect to [a]], the seeing and the object of seeing cannot be simultaneous, for there cannot be in one *puḍgala* two simultaneous *cittas*, the *cittas* which are the object and subject of the seeing. [Hence the object of present seeing must be past, so the past exists.]

Secondly [that is with respect to [b]], what is seen cannot be present if the seeing is present, for the act and its karmic fruit cannot be simultaneous. [Hence the seen 'painful consequence' must be future, so the future exists.]<sup>19</sup>

The argument [a] will be relevant to our forthcoming discussion of Kvu V.9; but the point of [b] seems to be that there can be, for the wise, a 'seeing' of (not just an inference to) the future consequences of a present karmic action. The force of the argument for the reality of the future presumably stems from the claim that it can be 'seen' in some direct way. The Sarvāstivādins were very impressed by the traditional doctrine of the three-fold nature of perception; that for perception to occur, three things (types of dharma) have to come together: sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness. (Of course mind, *manas*, counts for these purposes as one of the six senses.) They argued that there is a kind of perception of past and future (here the sense organ is *manas*); so the objects of this perception must be real. Obviously, this argument is of no relevance if all knowledge of the future is by causal inference from what is perceived in the present, rather than by direct perception of the future.

In the remaining sections of Kvu V.8, it is denied that someone who is at a particular stage of the four Noble Paths has

19 L. de La Vallée Poussin, 'La controverse du temps et du puḍgala dans le Vijñānakāya', *Études Asiatiques*, Paris 1925, p.346.

knowledge of the succeeding stage, but then it is claimed that the Buddha did have an insight into the future, as when he forecast what the future had in store for Pāṭaliputra. The kathā as a whole certainly has no obvious conclusion; it seems rather to be a collection of ideas all related to knowledge of the future, but not closely related to each other. The Commentary offers no help of any substance.

Kvu V.9 [1] is even more obviously related to the arguments of the Vijñānakāya; in fact it is directly relevant to part [a] of the argument quoted earlier. The first question in this kathā is 'Is there knowledge of the present?'; but this is not really the point at issue. Of course the answer to this question is Yes; but the questioner goes on to ask 'Does one know that knowledge by the same knowledge?' This is a reference to introspective or self-conscious knowledge, not my seeing a tree but my knowing that I am seeing a tree; but more importantly, it refers to the knowledge and analysis of the processes of one's own mind, which are so important to the 'mindful' Buddhist. In all these complex thoughts, two distinct acts of knowledge are involved, one (as a later question suggests) the object (*ārammaṇam*) of the other. The point is stressed by analogies: Does one cut a sword with that (same) sword; does one touch a fingertip with that same fingertip? The logical format of this part of the kathā suggests that the questioner wishes to disprove the claim that there are two knowledges involved in self-conscious knowledge; but the text consists in fact of powerful arguments for the claim.

As has been said, this philosophically important Kvu argument about two knowledges is centrally relevant to part [a] of the first argument in the Vijñānakāya. There the two acts of consciousness are an act of desire, and the knowledge of and reflection on that desire. The Vijñānakāya draws the further consequence, that these two distinct acts of consciousness (in

mindfulness, or in any self-conscious mental activity) cannot be simultaneous. The principle that a stream of consciousness can contain only one act of consciousness (*viññāna* or *citta-dharma*) at a time was taken as axiomatic by the Ābhidharmikas, though I do not know that there is any direct justification for it in the suttas<sup>20</sup>. The Vijñānakāya concludes that when one knows one's own mental activity the consciousness which is the **object** of this knowledge must be in the past. [In fact there is here direct perception of the past; hence the past must be real.]

Kvu V.9 [2] argues that there must be knowledge of the present, because 'when every *saṃkhāra* is seen (*ditṭhe*) as *anicca*, is not that knowledge itself seen as impermanent?' This is not directly relevant to the Sarvāstivāda position, but is surely an ingenious argument: I take it to refer to the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the Three Marks of Existence, of which one is '*sabbe saṃkhārā aniccā*'. This is certainly a fact that can be known. But does not the scope of this doctrine include present *saṃkhārā*, including in fact the present act of knowledge by which one knows the doctrine? So there is knowledge of the present<sup>21</sup>.

There is an even more striking parallel between the arguments of Kvu XIX.1 and Vijñānakāya IV.9 (the final section of the chapter dealing with time). The latter puts the argument in its standard form:

One must abandon the *āśravas*. Are those *āśravas* which are to be abandoned past, future or present? They cannot

20 See Abhidharmakośa II 34d: the *cittas* and *cāittas* which have the same object are simultaneous, but 'at a given moment only one single *citta* can arise'.

21 This puzzling problem of the analysis of knowledge of 'all dharmas' is discussed at greater length in *kathā* XVI.4, where it is made clear that there are telling arguments in both directions.

be present, for then there would be in the same mind two modes or complexes of consciousness; that which is abandoned and that which does the abandoning. This is impossible. [Therefore the *āśrava* which is abandoned must be past, so the past must exist.]

Kvu XIX.1 is a clever collection of arguments leading to an obvious absurdity; an excellent example of what Lance Cousins calls 'constructed dilemmas'.

*Kilesas* are to be renounced.

[1] How can one renounce past *kilesas*? The past is already ceased.

[2] How can one renounce future *kilesas*? The future has not yet arisen.

[3] How can one renounce present *kilesas*?

Does one put away lust by means of lust?

Does there come to be a conjunction (*samodhāna*) of two *cittas*?

The *kilesa* is *akusala*; its abandoning is *kusala*. Surely *kusala* and *akusala* dhammas cannot 'come face to face' with each other?

[4] So there can be no abandoning of *kilesas*!

The parallelism between these two arguments, about on the one hand the abandonment of *āśravas*, and on the other the renouncing of *kilesas*, can hardly be a coincidence; they must at least stem from the same tradition of debate.

Kvu IX.6 and 7 are about the claim that consciousness which had a past or a future object (as in the cases of direct memory or pre-vision discussed in V.8 and V.9 above) has no object. This claim must have been a standard move at the time, though neither Kvu nor the Vijñānakāya gives any argument supporting it, apart from the dogmatic assertion that past and future objects

do not exist. Section IV of the *Vijñānakāya* (La Vallée Poussin's translation, p.352) begins:

The śramaṇa Maudgalyāyana says 'There is a thought whose object is non-existent (*asty abhāvālambanam cittaṃ*)'.

The Sarvāstivāda protagonist argues that it is part of the very nature of *viññāna* that it has an object; this is explicit in the Bhagavat's teaching about *viññāna*. (See my earlier reference to the threefold theory of perception.) Maudgalyāyana is reported as replying:

There is certainly a *citta* with non-existent object. What *citta*? That which bears on the past or the future.

He gives no supporting argument for his position. In Kvu IX.6 and 7, all the argument is against the 'no-object' claim.

When there is adverting, ideation, application . . . with a present object, then *cittaṃ* with a present object is with an object (*sārammaṇam*)? Yes.

Then surely when there is adverting . . . with a past or future object, then *cittaṃ* with past or future object is without an object?

The Commentary here puts the Sthavira in the role of arguing against the claim, that is arguing that consciousness with past or future object does have an object; a pro-Sarvāstī position.

A final connection between Kvu and *Vijñānakāya* may be made with respect to Kvu IX.12. Here the matter at issue is whether one can be possessed of, endowed with, the past or something past (*atītena samannāgato ti?*) or indeed with the future. The standard objections are made: that the past is ceased (*niruddham*), the future is not yet arisen (*ajātam*). But the final section argues that there is indeed possession of the past, for

surely there are those who meditate on the eight *vimokkhas*, acquire at will the four *jhānas*, acquire the four successive attainments.

The point seems to be that an attainment achieved in the past is still in some way present; in this way, perhaps, the past lives on. The topic is relevant to the analysis of a 'state of mind' at a particular time, which may be the present. How should account be taken of abilities which were acquired through past efforts, may not in fact be manifested or exercised at the present time, but have not been lost, and so surely in some sense still exist now? The Kvu passage raises the issue without proposing a solution.

In the *Vijñānakāya* this notion, that one can presently possess a non-manifested ability, is incorporated into an argument for the Sarvāstivāda position. The argument has several variants. One of them (*Vijñānakāya* IV.3) refers to the Buddha's distinction between ordinary people, *prthagjanas*, and more spiritually advanced people; the latter possess in some degree the five *indriyas* (faith, energy . . .). Suppose a person of some advancement (but not an arhat) has a tainted thought. The *indriyas* are still in some sense real in him — he does not because of this one unworthy thought become a *prthagjana*; but the *indriyas* are not simply manifest in his state of consciousness. The *Vijñānakāya* argument implies that the problem can be solved if we allow that the past is real.

To summarise this final part of my paper: the first chapter of the *Vijñānakāya* contains three arguments for Sarvāstivāda:

- (i) that in mindfulness one sees the past, and also its future consequences;
- (ii) the related but more abstract argument (developed at length in the much later debate between Vasubandhu and Saṃgha-

bhadra) that *viññāna* with past or future as its object must have a really existing object;

(iii) that a person's habits of mind, abilities, state of spiritual advancement, must in some sense be real even at times when they are not manifested in the persons' conscious mental complex.

To each of these arguments there are correspondances, more or less close, in Kvu. As I indicated earlier, the content and form of these debates in Kvu seem to show the existence in the third century BCE of an active and philosophically sophisticated community of debate, involving no doubt people of different doctrinal convictions, but also people willing to try out theories and arguments to see where they would lead.

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### ANNOUNCEMENT

The UK ASSOCIATION FOR BUDDHIST STUDIES was inaugurated at a well-attended meeting at SOAS on 8 July. 'The object of the Association shall be to promote the academic study of Buddhism through the national and international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject'. Open to academics, post-graduates and unaffiliated Buddhist scholars or interested Buddhist practitioners, for further details contact:

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### 'SOLITARY AS RHINOCEROS HORN'

K. R. Norman

The Khaggavisāṇasutta ('Rhinceros-horn sutta') occurs in Pāli at Sn<sup>2</sup> 35-75. It also occurs at Ap 2:9-49 (= pp. 8-13). A number of its verses recur in Sanskrit in Mvu I 357-59, where they are called *Khadgaviṣāṇagāthā* ('Rhinceros-horn verses'). The antiquity of the sutta is shown by the fact that some of its verses are common to both the Theravādin and the Mahāsāṅghika Lokotaravādin traditions, and also by the fact that it is commented upon in Nidd II which, although it is a commentarial text, is nevertheless sufficiently old to be included in the Theravādin canon. Each verse of the sutta, except 45<sup>3</sup>, has the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* in the fourth pāda. Although there is no indication in Sn, both the Mvu and the Pāli commentarial tradition state that these verses were uttered by Pratyekabuddhas,

1 An earlier form of this paper was submitted to the editor of a proposed felicitation volume in India, but to my knowledge has never been published.

2 Abbreviations of titles of texts: Ap = Apadāna; CP = Norman, 1990-96; D = Dīghanikāya; Dhp = Dhammapada; Divy = Divyāvādāna (Cowell and Neil, 1886); Ja = Jātaka; M = Majjhimanikāya; Mvu = Mahāvastu (= Senart, 1882); Mil = Milindapaṇḥa; Vism = Visuddhimagga; Nidd II = Cullaniddesa; Pj II = Paramatthajotikā II (= aṭṭhakathā on Sn); PTS = Pali Text Society; SBB = Sacred Books of the Buddhists; SBE = Sacred Books of the East; Sn = Suttanipāta; Sv = Sumaṅgalavilāsini (= aṭṭhakathā on D); Vin = Vinaya; -a = aṭṭhakathā; -pt = purāṇa-ṭikā. References to Pāli texts are to PTS editions, except where otherwise stated.

3 This seems to imply that verses 45 and 46 originally made a pair. The two verses occur together elsewhere in the Pāli Canon at Vin I 350,4\*-11\* = M. III 154,17\*-24\* = Dhp 328-29 = Ja III 488, 16\*-23\*, but with *eko care mātaṅg' araṇṇe va nāgo* ('one should wander alone like a mātaṅga elephant in the forest') as the refrain instead of *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo*.

and no doubt the idea expressed in the phrase *eko care* was thought to be appropriate for those who had been enlightened *pratyeka* ('individually'), although I have suggested elsewhere<sup>4</sup> that in the compound *pratyekabuddha* the word *pratyeka* is an incorrect back-formation from *pratyaya*.

There has been some doubt among translators about the way to translate this *pāda*, arising from the fact that the compound *khagga-visāṇa* is ambiguous in form and can be explained in two different ways. The Pāli word *khagga* (Sanskrit *khadga*) has two meanings: 'rhinoceros' and 'sword'. If *khagga* is taken in the meaning of 'rhinoceros', then the compound can be interpreted as a *taipuruṣa* (dependent) compound, meaning 'the horn of a rhinoceros'. If *khagga* is taken in the meaning of 'sword', then it can be taken as a *bahuvrīhi* (possessive) compound<sup>5</sup>, meaning 'having a sword as horn', i.e. 'a rhinoceros'. Consequently, from the form of the word we cannot be certain whether it is the rhinoceros or its horn which is single.

Some translators have taken one meaning, and some the other. In my note on Sn 35-75 in *The Group of Discourses II*<sup>6</sup> I discussed this matter and gave my reasons for translating in the way I did. Since, however, many people will have read my translation either in the 1984 version or in the paperback (1985) version, both of which lack notes, it is probably worth setting out those reasons again, in slightly greater detail and incorporating a few extra comments.

Fausbøll translates the *pāda* 'Let one wander alone like<sup>7</sup> a

4 Norman, 1983A, p.96.

5 See Jones, 1949, p.250, n.1.

6 Norman, 1992, pp.145-46.

7 Pj II 65, 15 explains that *kappa* = *sadisa* 'like, resembling'.

rhinoceros<sup>8</sup>, and does not mention the possibility of an alternative translation. Hare translates 'rhinoceros' but adds in a note<sup>9</sup>: '*khaggavisāṇa*, here rendered "rhinoceros", is perhaps more properly "horn of rhinoceros", its singleness (*eko*) being contrasted no doubt with the two horns of other animals'. Jones translates *khadgaviṣāṇakalpa* 'like a rhinoceros', although he notes<sup>10</sup> that literally it means 'like the horn of the Indian rhinoceros'. It is not clear why these two translators reject the translation which they assert is more proper or literal. In his examination of this sutta<sup>11</sup> Jayawickrama quotes the explanations given in both Nidd II and Pj II (see below), but although he comments upon the difference between the Indian rhinoceros and other species, he nevertheless insists that the comparison is not with the horn but with the animal. Edgerton makes the same point, and maintains that the explanation in Pj II is incorrect<sup>12</sup>.

Kloppenborg deals with the matter at length<sup>13</sup> and translates 'like the horn of a rhinoceros'. She adds, however, 'Although all commentaries take this comparison with reference to the horn of a rhinoceros, they combine this with the paccekabuddha's way of life. In view of the fact that the rhino's way of life can equally be called solitary, it seems that in the comparison both aspects are emphasised, the one horn as well as the solitary life'. I find this argument hard to follow, unless she means that *khaggavisāṇa* is taken in both ways simultaneously in a play upon words (*śleṣa*).

8 Fausbøll, 1881, pp.6 foll.

9 Hare, 1945, p.11, n.2.

10 Jones, 1949, p.250, n.1.

11 Jayawickrama, 1949, p.120.

12 Edgerton, 1951, s.v. *khadga-visāṇa*.

13 Kloppenborg, 1974, pp.59-60.



Saddhatissa entitles the sutta 'The Unicorn's Horn'. He notes<sup>14</sup> that some scholars have translated *khaggavisāṇakappa* as 'like the rhinoceros', but he quotes the commentary and translates the compound accordingly. He states, 'Moreover, in view of the gregarious nature of the Indian species, called *Rhinoceros unicornis*, I have chosen the latter term to emphasise solitariness symbolically. Each stanza, except 11 [= Sn 45], ends with the refrain: "Let one live alone like a unicorn's horn". From information made available to me by Russell Webb<sup>15</sup> it would appear that the Indian rhinoceros does not have a particularly gregarious nature, but it is not possible to know whether Saddhatissa would have translated in a different, unsymbolic, way had he known that he was wrong in his view. His decision to identify *khagga* with the mythical creature 'unicorn' is, however, rather unsatisfactory since it obscures the fact that the simile is based upon a general natural phenomenon.

A phrase similar to that in the Sn also occurs at Mil 105,3 (*ekacarino khaggavisāṇakappā*), where Rhys Davids<sup>16</sup> translates 'dwellers alone like the solitary horn of the rhinoceros', and Miss Horner<sup>17</sup> translates 'faring along like the horn of a rhinoceros', and at Vism 234,8 (*khaggavisāṇakappā*), where Pe Maung Tin<sup>18</sup> translates 'like the horn of a rhinoceros' and Nāṇamoli<sup>19</sup> gives the same translation. They give comparable translations ('like the horn of a rhinoceros' and 'like the rhinoceros's horn', respectively) for *khaggasiṅgasamūpamā* at Vism 234,12\*. At Mvu 301,4 occurs

- 14 Saddhatissa, 1985, p.8, n.1.  
 15 In a letter dated 2/3/96.  
 16 Rhys Davids, 1890, p.158.  
 17 Horner, 1963, p.147.  
 18 Pe Maung Tin, 1975, p.269.  
 19 Nāṇamoli, 1956, p.252.

*khadgaviṣāṇakalpā*, which Jones translates as 'live in loneliness like a rhinoceros'<sup>20</sup>. The simile is also found in Divy: *ekas caret khadgaviṣāṇakalpaḥ* (294,15\*) and *khadgaviṣāṇakalpā* (582,8).

In my translation of the Suttanipāta I translated the refrain as: 'One should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn'<sup>21</sup>, relying especially upon the commentaries, which explain it as referring to the horn. Nidd II<sup>22</sup>: *yathā khaggassa nāma visāṇam ekam hoti adutiyaṃ, evam eva so paccekabuddho takkappo tassadiso tappatibhāgo* 'As the horn of the rhinoceros is single, solitary, so the *pratyekabuddha* is like that, resembling that, similar to that'. Pj II, written some 600 years later, gives a similar explanation<sup>23</sup>: *khaggavisāṇakappo ti, ettha khaggavisāṇam nāma khaggamigasiṅgam* 'Here the horn of the rhinoceros means the horn of the animal (called) rhinoceros'. So does the commentary on Ap and the *ṭikā* on Sv. Ap-a gives the same explanation as Pj II<sup>24</sup>: *khaggavisāṇakappo ti, ettha khaggavisāṇam nāma khaggamigasiṅgam*. The *pāda* is quoted at Sv 207,29. The *ṭikā* on this states<sup>25</sup>: *khaggavisāṇakappo ti tāya eva ekavihāritāya khaggamiga-siṅga-samo* "Like the horn of the rhinoceros" means resembling the horn of the animal (called) rhinoceros by reason of its solitariness'.

In view of these commentarial explanations, it is strange that some translators have been so reluctant to accept the translation 'solitary as a rhinoceros-horn'. It is possible that those who reject

- 20 Jones, 1949, p.250.  
 21 Norman, 1984, pp.7-10.  
 22 Nidd II 129, 13-15. The same explanation is repeated at Ap-a 133, 32-34.  
 23 Pj II 65, 10-11.  
 24 Ap-a 153, 4-5.  
 25 Sv-pt I 331, 28.

it have the African and other two-horned rhinoceroses in mind, and are unaware of the fact that, unlike them, the Indian rhinoceros has only one horn as its zoological name *Rhinoceros unicornis* confirms. Jayawickrama bases his argument against adopting this translation partly on the fact that it is dependent on the interpretation of the word *khagga* as 'rhinoceros', since he maintains that *khagga* by itself in the sense of 'rhinoceros' is found in only a few comparatively late passages in Pāli<sup>26</sup>, although three of the references he gives are in fact to canonical texts, and other canonical references can be given<sup>27</sup>. Sanskrit *khadga* is attested with this meaning from the time of the Maitrāyaṇī-Saṃhitā and the Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā (see Monier-Williams, s.v.).

Jayawickrama also objects<sup>28</sup> to a comparison with a part of an animal, stating that the idea of wandering alone is usually compared with the movement of animals rather than with a part of their anatomy. He also points out that other references to solitude in Pāli usually include animals, not inanimate things, e.g. *gajam iva ekacārinam* ('wandering alone like an elephant'), Ja II 220,13\*; *nāgo va yūthāni vivajjayitvā* ('like an elephant leaving the herds'), Sn 53; *eko care mātaṅg' araṇṇe va nāgo* ('one should wander alone like a *mātaṅga* elephant'), Vin I 350,10\* = M III 154,23\* = Dh 329 = Ja III 488,23\*; *nāgo va ekako carati* ('he wanders alone like an elephant'), Ja V 190,22\*. Although this is clearly true, I do not see that this necessarily precludes a comparison with an inanimate object, especially if we regard the point of the comparison as being not the activity of wandering

26 He quotes Nidd II 129,13; Pj II 65,10; Ja V 406,30; 416,20\*\*, VI 277,27; 538,2\*.

27 Ja VI 497,12\*, 578,24\*.

28 Jayawickrama, 1949, pp.119 foll.

but the solitariness.

It has often been noted that there is much parallelism in early Jain and Buddhist literature<sup>29</sup>, and in this particular case there is a comparable reference to a Jain text, which helps to shed light on this problem. We find in the Jain Kalpa-sūtra the phrase *khaggivisaṇam va ega-jāe*<sup>30</sup> used as an epithet of Mahāvīra. Jacobi translates 'single and alone like the horn of a rhinoceros'<sup>31</sup>. The grammatical structure of this phrase does not permit of any reference to the animal, since the neuter form *-visaṇam* makes it clear that it is the horn which is solitary. This effectively proves the point.

When the Pāli can be so translated, when the earliest interpretations take it that way, when the Jain tradition supports it, and when the Indian rhinoceros is unique among animals in India in having only one horn, it seems certain to me that the reference is to the single horn, and I think that there is no problem with the phrase if we translate: 'Let him wander all by himself (*eko adutiyo*) having a resemblance to the rhinoceros horn, which is also *eko adutiyo*'.

It is possible that some translators have rejected this view because they have not fully understood the meaning of the words used here. The Sanskrit word *khadga* 'rhinoceros' is a non-Aryan word, as Kuiper<sup>32</sup> and Mayrhofer<sup>33</sup> have explained, and it is to be separated from the Sanskrit word *khadga* 'sword'. The original meaning of *khadga* was therefore 'rhinoceros' when it was first

29 For examples, see Nakamura, 1983.

30 Jacobi, 1879, p.62 (Jinacaritra § 118).

31 Jacobi, 1884, p.261.

32 Kuiper, 1948, pp.136 foll.

33 Mayrhofer, 1956, p.299.

borrowed into Indo-Aryan, and it is not an abbreviation for *khadga-viṣāṇa* as has been suggested<sup>34</sup>. It follows then that the meaning of the compound *khadgaviṣāṇa* is 'horn of a rhinoceros'. It was later mistakenly taken as meaning 'having a sword as horn', when confusion arose with the word *khadga* 'sword'.

So, in addition to the explanation quoted above, the Ap-a — probably the last of the commentaries on Pāli canonical texts to be written<sup>35</sup> — gives an alternative explanation: *khaggam viṣāṇam yassa migassa so 'yam migo khaggavisāṇo*, Ap-a 203,6-7, 'The animal whose horn is a sword is the "sword as horn", i.e. rhinoceros. Nevertheless, Ap-a still maintains that the reference is to the animal's horn: *khaggavisāṇakappā khaggavisāṇamigasiṅgasadisā gaṇasaṅganikābhāvenā to attho*, Ap-a 204,2-3, 'Like the *khaggavisāṇa* means the horn of the animal (called) *khaggavisāṇa*, because of the absence of communication with a group'.

It seems clear that in some parts of the Buddhist Sanskrit tradition also the true meaning of the compound was forgotten, which led to the belief that the reference was to the rhinoceros, and not to its solitary horn. We consequently find in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit texts such compounds as *khadga-sama* ('equal to a rhinoceros') and *khadga-sadrśa* ('like a rhinoceros'), and the phrase *eka viharati yathaiva khadgo* ('he lives alone like a rhinoceros')<sup>36</sup>.

Whichever way the simile is to be taken, it could only have been formulated by someone who knew about the singleness of the rhinoceros's horn or the animal's preference for a solitary life. It seems likely that such knowledge could only have come from

34 Lüders, 1940, p.429.

35 See Norman, 1983B, pp.146-47.

36 See Edgerton, 1951, s.v. *khadga-viṣāṇa*.

North India, since in India the rhinoceros is now restricted to the northern region adjoining the Nepalese Terai and even in ancient times was probably unknown in southern India. It is not unreasonable to suppose that early Buddhists in Magadha, and Jains in the same region, had first-hand knowledge of the animal. It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that the early Pāli commentators had probably never seen the Indian rhinoceros, they nevertheless knew that it had only one horn and were able to explain the simile in the way they did. It seems clear that, like other information found in the Mahāvihāra commentarial tradition, this knowledge was originally brought from North India.

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## WHAT LANGUAGE DID THE BUDDHA SPEAK?<sup>1</sup>

Ven. Piyasīlo

Despite the enormous amount of Buddhist texts and extent of research work done on the Buddha and his teachings, no scholar has been able to pinpoint the language or dialect which the Buddha used to preach.<sup>2</sup>

The word 'Pāli' is found only in the Commentaries, not in the Tipiṭaka (PED, s.v. Pali). The Commentaries (e.g. DhA 4, 93, DhA 157) frequently use the word 'Pāli' in the sense of 'canonical text' in contrast to the Aṭṭhakathā (Commentary), and sometimes also in the sense of 'language of the canonical texts'. In the Jātaka Commentary, 'Pāli' often means the Jātaka verses. Winternitz (1972: 603) remarks that curiously the term 'Pāli' is often used at the present day by the country people of Eastern Bengal to denote the verse portions of their prose narratives (Rūpa-Kathā and Gīta-Kathā).

We do not have any definite information as to what language the Buddha himself spoke. Winternitz (1972: 12) says that the Buddha spoke the dialect of his native province Kosala (modern Oudh), and that it was most likely in this same dialect that he first began to proclaim his doctrine. This view is quite tenable because in the sixth century BCE, the Sākya territory of

1 Reprinted from *Unisains Buddhist '79* (Penang) with the kind permission of the Editorial Board.

2 Ed. Attention should be drawn to the seminal contributions to *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung. The Language of the Earliest Buddhist Tradition*, ed. Heinz Bechert, Göttingen 1980, his own subsequent paper, 'Methodological Considerations Concerning the Language of the Earliest Buddhist Tradition', *BSR* 8 (1991), pp.3-19, and Mettananda Bhikkhu, 'What Language Did the Buddha Speak?', 2 parts, *WFB Review XXVII*, 1-2, Bangkok 1990.

Kapilavatthu was subject to Kosala. The Sutta Nipāta (v.405) speaks of the Buddha's birthplace as belonging to the Kosalans, and the Aṅguttara Nikāya (A I 276) mentions Kapilavatthu as being in Kosala. Elsewhere Pasenadi is reported as saying, 'The Blessed One is a Kosalan; I, too, am a Kosalan' (M II 124).

Warder remarks (1970: 206) that we cannot speak of any 'original' language of the Buddhist Canon, nor have any definite information as to what language the Buddha himself spoke. At the most, we can say that the recension (of the Canon) in the language of Magadha might have enjoyed some pre-eminence for the first centuries.

As a literary language Pāli, like all literary languages, developed more or less out of a mixture of dialects. Such a literary language, even if it is a mixture of two different dialects, could only have proceeded out of one certain dialect. This was very likely old Magadhī, so that the tradition which makes Pāli and Magadhī the same, though it is not to be taken literally, has some historical background (Winternitz, 1972: 13).

One should, however, be aware of the fact that during the Buddha's lifetime, Magadha was merely one of numerous rival states. The Buddha taught in it and met its two successive kings (Bimbisāra and Ajātasattu). However, he spent relatively little time in Magadha, teaching in at least half a dozen other states. Buddhism thus spread at first for the most part outside the frontiers of Magadha. It reached the majority of the countries of India before the Magadhan supremacy, and it did so as a strictly non-political and non-worldly organisation. However, in a century and a half the spread of Buddhism was overtaken by the expansion of Magadha (under Asoka), so that for a time hardly a single community of monks could be found outside the frontiers of the empire (Warder, 1970: 207).

There is related in the Vinaya (Vin II 139) an interesting episode about two monks who complained to the Buddha that monks of different origins and status, using their own dialects, were corrupting the word of the Buddha. The two monks, who were brahmins, then requested that the Buddha-word be given in metrical form like the Vedas (that is, in Sanskrit). The Buddha sternly rejected the suggestion, saying that such an innovation would not be conducive towards the conversion of the unconverted nor enhance the faith of the converted. He then gave the classic declaration: 'I allow you, monks, to learn the word of the Buddha each in his own dialect' (*anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya niruttīyā buddhavacanam pariyaṇitum*. — *ibid.*).

In his Commentary on the Vinaya, however, Buddhaghosa explains the phrase *sakāya niruttīyā* as 'the speech of the Magadhans as spoken by the Buddha' (VinA 1214). This has led a few Western scholars like Geiger (1968: 6f) and Horner (BD V, 194) to translate the same passage to the contrary effect of 'I allow you, monks, to learn the word of the Buddha according to his own dialect (that is, Magadhī, the language used by the Buddha himself)'. If this were the case, argues Winternitz (1972: 602), then we should also expect that not only the translation into Sanskrit, but also the learning of the word of the Buddha in the dialects of the monks of the various districts, would have been forbidden. This, however, cannot be so as the Buddha expressly forbade his teachings to be given in the vedic form declaring it as an act of wrong-doing (*na, bhikkhave, buddhavacanam chandaso āropetabbam; yo āropeyya āpatti dukkatassa*. — Vin II 139).

E.J. Thomas (1949: 253f) explains the above passages differently. He translates *nirutti* as 'grammar' and *chandaso* as 'metre', and makes the Buddha say: 'I order you, monks, to master the word of Buddha (*buddhavacanam*) in its own grammar'. He does not think it possible that *sakāya niruttīyā* can mean 'each in

his own dialect', and believes that the passage in question only contains a prohibition to versify the Canon. Even if this explanation were accepted, argues Winternitz (1972: 603), it is difficult to see why a versification of the word of the Buddha should be detrimental to the propagation of the Doctrine. Moreover, *nirutti* does not mean 'grammar', but 'linguistic expression'; *chandaso* may mean 'metre', just as well as 'Veda'.

That the Buddha permitted the use of one's own dialect in the study of his teaching also accords well with the Arana-vibhaṅga Sutta (M III 234f, 237), where it is said that the 'middle way' is for one not to insist unduly on his own provincial dialect (*janapada-nirutti*) and at the same time not to diverge from general or recognised language (*janapadaniruttiṃ nābhivaseseyya, samaññāṃ nātidhāveyya*). It is said here that, for instance, a different word is used for 'bowl': *pāti, patta, vittha, sarāva, dhāropa, poṇa, pisila*, and that each one considers his word is the only correct one, but that in the interest of peace, it is best for each one to use the word which is currently at hand.

Even during his lifetime, the Buddha had disciples coming from many different countries and who spoke, if not completely different languages, at least different dialects. It has been shown by scholars like Lin Li-kouang (1949: 216ff) that the early Buddhists generally adopted the local languages wherever they taught. Their success in spreading the Doctrine and establishing it in many countries of India therefore, says Warder (1970: 206), differed in dialect or language from the earliest times, and we cannot speak of any 'original' language of the Buddhist Canon.

The policy of using local dialects in spreading the Buddha's teaching was followed by Asoka in his famous inscriptions which are found all over India. The Asokan inscriptions were written in two major scripts known as Kharoṣṭhī and Brahmī (and allegedly, Aramaic), using two major dialects, generally called the Eastern

(the standard and official language of Asoka's court) and the Western, both of which allowed local variations (Mookerji, 1962: 246f). Besides, we also have the Prakrit Dhammapada found in Central Asia (Pande, 1974: II, n.50).

While it is true that, on a general level, the local dialect should be used in the propagation and establishment of the Buddha's teaching, it is vital, on the higher level, that the Pāli texts themselves are the only reliable authority as to their meaning (Warder, 1963: xi). The importance of Pāli is accentuated by the fact that of the recensions of the Canons of the earliest Buddhist schools (of which there were supposed to have been eight by about the first century BCE), we now possess only one complete and intact Canon — the Pāli Canon of the Sthavira-vāda school (Warder, 1970: 6, 14). This Canon is now preserved in Sinhalese, Burmese, Khom, Thai, Japanese, Latin and Devanāgarī alphabets.

The extant Pāli Canon has an extensive exegesis by the Buddhist schools including those written by Buddhist scholars from the South-East Asian countries. These form the basis for the understanding of meaning. We can check their interpretations by seeing whether the schools and individual scholars agree among themselves, and then go back to the Tipiṭaka contexts and see how they work out in the system of what is believed to be the Buddha's language when taken by itself. After all, remarks Warder (1967: 69), in the hope of further reducing the area of uncertainty in the interpretation of the texts, we should continue the great Pāli grammarian Aggavaṃsa's own excellent research into Pāli usage, *nīti sāsanassopakārāya yathābalaṃ amhehi thapitā* (Sd 640): 'rules established by us, according to our ability, for benefit of the teaching'.

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## EKOTTARĀGAMA (XXI)

Translated from the Chinese Version by  
Thích Huyền-Vi and Bhikkhu Pāsādika  
in collaboration with Sara Boin-Webb

Ninth Fascicle

Part 18

(Shame and Remorse)

8. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying, together with a large [number of] bhikkhus, viz. five hundred persons altogether, among the Śākyaans at Kapilavastu, in the Nyagrodha Park. Then Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī went to the Exalted One. She bowed down her head at his feet and said to him: [I] hope for a long time the Exalted One will bring the ignorant and deluded to their senses, and may [his] life never be endangered! — Gautamī, responded the Exalted One, such words in regard to the Tathāgata are not appropriate. The Tathāgata [can] prolong his life-span which will not be short, and his life will never be [really] in danger<sup>1</sup>. — Now Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī improvised the following verses:

How [can one] revere him who is foremost, who is unparalleled

In the world? [He] is capable of removing all doubts; that is why

These words [of veneration] are uttered. —

1 Cf. BSR 12, 2 (1995), p.163 f.: 'Since the Tathāgata's body is not reckoned an ordinary body, it is not subject to other people's violence . . .'. As for the Tathāgata's power to prolong his life-span, see D II, 103 f.; E. Waldschmidt (ed.), *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra II* (Berlin 1951), 15.10, 15.13 (pp.204, 206): *ākāṅkṣamāṇas tathāgataḥ kalpaṃ vā tiṣṭhet kalpavaśeṣaṃ vā*.

The Exalted One in turn responded to Gautamī with these verses:

Reverence for the Tathāgata implies this: effort and steadfastness,

A mind that is ever more courageous and which looks upon Disciples as equals (*tulya*). —

In reply to the Exalted One Mahāprajāpatī declared: Henceforth the Exalted One should be revered [for his,] the Tathāgata's, insisting on regarding<sup>2</sup> all living beings with a mind free from [the discriminatory concepts of] upper and lower (*adhika-nyūna*) [classes]. Among the heavenly beings, men . . . and Asuras, the Tathāgata is supreme. — The Exalted One acknowledged what Mahāprajāpatī had said, and [she] rose from her seat, bowed down . . . and left. The Exalted One said to the bhikṣus: Among my disciples it is Mahāprajāpatī who is foremost<sup>3</sup> in respect of broad-mindedness and extensive awareness. — Having heard the Buddha's words, the bhikṣus were pleased and respectfully applied themselves to practice<sup>4</sup>.

9. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī, at the Jeta Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍada's (T2, 593a) Park. Then the Exalted One said to the bhikṣus: There are these two persons who indulge in slandering the Tathāgata. Which two? He who claims as [the Tathāgata's] teaching what is not [his] teaching, and he who claims as un[authentic] teaching what is [authentic] teaching. Furthermore, there are [these] two persons who do not slander the Tathāgata. Which are the two? He who declares un[authentic] teaching as un[authentic] teaching, and he who

2 For 禮 (592c23) read 視 (after 592c, n.29 and Hayashi, p.159).

3 Cf BSR 4, 1 (1987), pp.47, 57 (n.l).

declares authentic teaching as authentic teaching. Therefore, bhikṣus, what is un[authentic] teaching has to be declared as such, and what is authentic teaching [also] has to be declared as such. Thus bhikṣus, you should train. — Having heard the Buddha's words, the bhikṣus were pleased . . .<sup>4</sup>.

10. 'Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī. . . Then the Exalted One said to the bhikṣus: There are these two persons who acquire inestimable merit. Which two? He who admires and praises what is praiseworthy, and he who by no means admires what does not deserve [praise]. Furthermore, there are [these] two persons who acquire inestimable demerit. Which are the two? He who strongly opposes and denigrates what admittedly deserves admiration, and he who enthusiastically admires what is by no means admirable. O bhikṣus, do not imitate such behaviour. — Having heard the Buddha's words, the bhikṣus were pleased and respectfully applied themselves to practice<sup>5</sup>.

4 Cf. Ōkubo, *op. cit.*, p.104: *adharmmaṃ dharmmato dīpayati dharmmaṃ cādharmmataḥ. . . (abhāṣitāṃ bhāṣitāṃ bhāṣitāṃ abhāṣi) tataḥ. . . ( . . . adharmma)m adharmmato dīpayati dharmmaṃ ca dharmmataḥ. . . abhāṣitāṃ abhāṣitāḥ bhāṣitāṃ ca bhāṣitāḥ*. As Pāli parallel Hayashi (p.160) and Lancaster (p.222) refer to A II, 3, 5, & 6 (p.60); the parallel actually is at A II, 3, 3 & 4 (*abhāṣitāṃ . . . bhāṣitāṃ. . .*). Cf. F.L. Woodward, *The Book of the Gradual Sayings I* (PTS, London 1932), p.54.

5 Cf. Ōkubo, *ibid.*: *gurvviṃ laghutāḥ [dīpayati] laghvīṃ gurutaḥ. . . gurvviṃ gurutaḥ (laghvīṃ laghutāḥ. . .)*; A II, 12, 6 (p.89 f.) (*appasādanīye thāne pasādāṃ. . .*). Cf. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p.80 (§6).



## THE INTERNATIONAL DUNHUANG PROJECT

### UNDERSTANDING BUDDHISM AND DAILY LIFE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Susan Whitfield

On the 30th day of the 9th month of the *jiayu* year, Zhang Xuanyi, a man of the people belonging to a tribe of nomads in Shazhou (Dunhuang), reverently had a copy made of the Weimojing (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra<sup>1</sup>) in small characters on behalf of his parents in the past, his deceased ancestors of seven previous incarnations, and also his present family, including husband and wife, sons and daughters and other relatives, as well as all the living beings of the universe, praying that they may all pass onto the Pure Land of the West and in course of time attain Buddhahood<sup>2</sup>.

This colophon to a manuscript from Dunhuang<sup>3</sup>, probably written on 22 October 914, encapsulates many of the characteristics of Chinese and Central Asian Buddhism. It also reflects a picture of daily life which is not always apparent from a reading of the traditional Chinese historical sources. Study of the manuscripts found at Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites has greatly increased our knowledge of these two areas. But a large part of the manuscripts has yet to be researched and it is expected that there is far more to be learned.

1 Taishō 474.

2 Translation from L. Giles, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Manuscripts from Tunhuang in the British Museum*, London 1957, G.3281, p.89.

3 In the British Library, Or.8210/S.1864.

Chinese and Central Asian Buddhism

The Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra became enormously popular in China, not least because the eponymous protagonist is a layman. Even the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is not able to match his powers of argument, although Vimalakīrti's final rhetorical victory is gained by his silence — the ultimate explanation of the doctrine of non-duality (*advaya*). The text itself was first translated into Chinese by Zhi Qian at the beginning of the third century<sup>4</sup>. Later in the same century Dharmarakṣa made both a complete version and a summary. Another five translations had appeared by the middle of the seventh century along with at least nine commentaries. Seng Zhao, a fourth-century commentator, attributed his own conversion to Buddhism to a reading of the sūtra. Two of the most famous translators in China, Seng Zhao's master, the Kuchean monk Kumārajīva, and the Chinese monk-traveller Xuanzang were among its translators<sup>5</sup>. The popularity of the text is echoed in contemporary iconography: Vimalakīrti is a frequently-occurring motif in Buddhist cave temples such as those at Dunhuang in Central Asia and the Yungang Caves near Longmen in Central China<sup>6</sup>.

The popularity of this sūtra reflects the direction of Buddhism in Central Asia and China, where Mahāyāna teachings became dominant and those practices and schools which did not involve becoming a monk or adopting a rigorous lifestyle in

4 Taishō 474.

5 Taishō 475 and 476 respectively.

6 For the continuing popularity of Vimalakīrti see the several examples and discussion in M. Weidner (ed.), *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850-1850*, Lawrence and Honolulu 1994, pp.11-13, cat.35 & 43.

order for the adherent to gain merit flourished<sup>7</sup>. This is seen clearly in the idea of the Pure Land — Sukhāvati — also mentioned in this colophon, where lay followers would be reborn if they called on Amitābha Buddha<sup>8</sup>. Vimalakīrti, who 'lived in comfort though a disciplined follower of the Buddha'<sup>9</sup>, managed to get the best of both worlds<sup>10</sup>. And this is part of the process which resulted in the teachings which were to dominate Chinese Buddhism. Among these were the Madhyamaka, whose founder Nāgārjuna asserted that there is nothing to differentiate Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, and the Chan (Zen) conclusion that the Pure Land is

7 For a fuller discussion of its popularity see E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (2 vols), Leiden 1959, vol.1, pp.131-2. Translations from the Chinese include É. Lamotte, *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, translated from French by Sara Boin, London 1976, repr. Oxford 1994.

8 The earliest datable reference to the Pure Land of Amitāyus (Amitābha) is in the Pratyutpanna Sūtra translated by Lokakṣema in ca. 179. The Pure Land cult took hold in China from the early fifth century.

9 F. Wood, caption to catalogue No.75, 'Collected commentaries on the Sūtra of Vimalakīrti's Teaching' (Or.8210/S.1412) in W. Zwalf (ed.), *Buddhism: Art and Faith*, London 1985, p.65.

10 Not that Chinese Buddhists all avoided suffering as the oft-quoted criticism of Buddhism by the ninth-century literatus Han Yü shows. In his memorial to the emperor, which is concerned to prevent the procession of the reliquary containing the Buddha's finger bone from Famen Temple to the capital, he describes the excesses which, he argues, usually accompany this type of event. These include self-mutilation: 'then there would ensue a scorching of heads and burning of fingers; crowds would collect together, and tearing off their clothes and scattering their money, would spend their time from morn to eve in imitation of Your Majesty's example. The result would be that by and by young and old, seized with the same enthusiasm, would totally neglect the business of their lives; and should Your Majesty not prohibit it, they would be found flocking to the temples, ready to cut off an arm or slice their bodies as an offering to the Buddha'. However, the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra appealed especially to the wealthier merchants and gentry among the Chinese as Zürcher, *op. cit.*, makes clear (I, p.50).

the pure mind, not a separate 'heavenly abode' but enlightenment itself<sup>11</sup>.

The other notable point about the colophon is that it is dedicated by a non-Chinese. The region of Dunhuang, which was under Chinese control for some but certainly not all of the first millennium, is at the confluence of the Taklamakan and Gobi Deserts. Westward, the Silk Road split to skirt the Tarim Basin, and eastward routes went directly to the Chinese capital, Chang'an, but also north-east into the land of the Mongols and other nomadic tribes. Many different peoples would have lived in or passed through Dunhuang: officials and soldiers from China, Sogdian merchants, pilgrims from India and nomadic traders. The ethnic diversity of the area is again reflected in the Dunhuang manuscripts which are written in over fifteen different languages and scripts including north Indian, Turkic, Tibetan, Tangut and Chinese. The Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra appears in several languages including Sogdian and Tibetan<sup>12</sup>. This diversity extended into the Chinese capital — where there were communities of Persians, Uighurs and others — and into the Chinese imperial line. The Tang dynasty (618-907) emperors almost certainly had Xianbi ancestry<sup>13</sup>. The translators of the sūtra included Indo-Scythians, a sinicised Indian and a relative of the Kuchean ruling house<sup>14</sup>.

11 See P. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London 1993, for a clear exposition of the development of these schools.

12 Or.8212/159 (Ch.00352) (Sogdian); Or.8210/Ch.73.xv.10; Ch.9i.10; Ch.51i.36; Ch.9i. frag. 59b (Tibetan).

13 See H.J. Wechsler's chapter in D. Twitchet and J.K. Fairbanks (eds), *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol.3, *Sui and T'ang China, 589-906*, Part 1, Cambridge 1979, p.151, for a discussion of the evidence for this and further references. The Xianbi were a nomadic people who lived in Mongolia.

14 Zhi Qian's grandfather was Indo-Scythian, as was Dharmarakṣa. Zhu Shulan was born in Luoyang of an Indian family and Kumārajīva was born in Kucha

Although over 80% of the materials found are canonical Buddhist texts the remaining documents also teach us about the extent and influence of this religion in Chinese Central Asia. More often than not they contain some reference to Buddhism. The signatories or witnesses of a contract may be monks<sup>15</sup>; there are many manuscripts listing the accounts of local monasteries<sup>16</sup>; records of semi-religious clubs survive<sup>17</sup>; and the many model letters frequently have a monk as the sender or recipient<sup>18</sup>. In other words, Buddhism clearly penetrated most aspects of life at this time and the Dunhuang manuscripts, studied in conjunction with other extant artefacts, are an invaluable source for understanding daily life in Chinese Central Asia in the first millennium of our era<sup>19</sup>.

### The History of the Dunhuang Manuscripts

When in 1900 the Daoist monk Wang Yuanlu unblocked the entrance leading to a previously unknown cave he was presented with the sight of over 40,000 manuscript scrolls, documents and paintings almost completely filling the small space. Cave 17 was only one of several hundred caves forming a Buddhist temple

and related to the ruling family on his mother's side.

15 For example, Or.8210/S.5867, S.1350 (contracts between monks), S.4445, S.5811, S.5956, S.5806 (between monasteries and laymen), S.5820, S.5826, S.5871 (between monks or nuns and laymen), S.1946, S.5816, S.7547 (with monks as witnesses).

16 For example, Or.8210/S.1291, S.5873 (loans made by monasteries), S.1366, S.1625, S.4899 (account notes of goods consumed in monasteries).

17 For example, Or.8210/S.345, S.5631, S.5788 (meeting at gate of a monastery), S.3156, S.4660, S.7573 (monks as members).

18 For example, Or.8210/S.2200 (letters for laymen to write to monks and replies), S.5575 (model letters for monks).

19 For a fuller discussion of this topic see forthcoming (1997) article by the author in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology*.

complex carved out of the friable cliff face 25 km south-east of the town of Dunhuang in Gansu Province. The other caves contain glorious murals dating from the fourth century. These had captured Wang Yuanlu's imagination when he had arrived at the site as an itinerant monk, and he determined to restore and repaint them. Therefore when Aurel Stein arrived at Dunhuang in 1907 on his second Central Asia Expedition having heard of the manuscript find, Wang Yuanlu was willing to exchange several thousand manuscript scrolls for money which he could use to continue his restoration programme. He parted with more the following year to Paul Pelliot, an eminent French sinologist. Later, the Chinese government sent an order for the remainder to be removed to Beijing, but some found their way into private hands, and later Russian and Japanese expeditions also managed to acquire substantial numbers. The cave collection is therefore now divided, primarily between the national libraries in Beijing, London and Paris, and the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg, but with smaller collections in Japan and at other institutions throughout Asia, Europe and North America<sup>20</sup>.

Conservation and cataloguing of the manuscripts and documents in all the major collections remain unfinished. There has been microfilming but this is also incomplete and of very variable quality, and it is only recently that high quality facsimiles of a large number of the manuscripts have become available<sup>21</sup>. But this sort of production is not practical for the large

20 A preliminary list of sites will be given in future issues of *IDP News* available from the author.

21 Microfilms of large parts of the London, Paris and St. Petersburg collections were reproduced in Taiwan under the title *Dunhuang baozang* (140 vols, ed. by Huang Yongwu, Taipei n.d.). More recently, the British Library entered into an agreement with Sichuan People's Publishing House to produce high qual-

number of Buddhist manuscripts, some of which comprise scrolls up to 700 feet long, nor are they readily affordable at all. The majority of the manuscripts therefore remain unseen and unstudied. The International Dunhuang Project was established to change this situation and to make the manuscripts the centre of a new era of research into Chinese and Central Asian Buddhism and history.

### The International Dunhuang Project (IDP)

In October 1993 the British Library organised a conference which, for the first time, brought together conservators and curators from all the major collections of Dunhuang manuscripts<sup>22</sup>. It was decided to exploit the enthusiasm for co-operation and collaboration and suggestions generated by the conference by establishing the International Dunhuang Project. The aims of the IDP are as follows:

- \* To establish the full extent of the documentary legacy from Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites and to share that information through the development of an international database.
- \* to develop new techniques for the preservation of the original documents through close collaboration with research chemists and paper technologists.

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ity facsimile editions of the non-Buddhist manuscripts under the editorship of the Institute of History and others. Vols 1-8 (out of 14) have appeared to date (*Yingzang Dunhuang wenxian*, 1990-). Following this example, similar editions are being produced by Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House for the collections in Paris, St. Petersburg, Shanghai and Beijing.

22 The conference proceedings are now available: S. Whitfield and F. Wood (eds), *Dunhuang and Turfan* (British Library Studies in Conservation Science: 1), The British Library, London 1996.

- \* to promote common standards of preservation methods and documentation.
- \* to catalogue the material according to common or compatible standards.
- \* to store the documents in the best possible environment and reduce handling to a minimum.
- \* to stimulate research on the material and increase access through the production of surrogate forms, facsimile publication, microfilm, and computer-stored images.

Since this date, a regular newsletter has been produced and a second conference held (Paris 1996, details in *IDP News* 5). The Project secured three years' initial funding from the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange to start work on a database of the British Library Stein collection of Chinese manuscripts. Information on manuscripts in other languages has also been added and the database will be available in the British Library Oriental Reading Room from next year (1997). This will continue to be supplemented and it is hoped that material from the other major collections will be added to the database over the next few years and that some of the material will be made available online.

The database is designed to be much more than a computerised catalogue. It will be a wide-ranging research tool and, apart from the catalogue information on the manuscripts, already contains indexes, a bibliography with abstracts, details of sites, information on the people, places, monasteries and other works mentioned in the manuscripts, and connections to other relevant information<sup>23</sup>. Most importantly, however, it includes high-quality

23 Such as the various full text databases of the Buddhist Canon in different

digitised images of all the manuscripts. The user will be able to scroll through whole manuscripts, view small areas, or manipulate several fragments from different collections on screen. For the first time since their discovery, all the documents will be available for research and it will be possible to study the cave library as a whole.

Further details of the Project are available from: Dr Susan Whitfield, IDP, The British Library, OIOC, 197 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 8NG, UK; tel: +44 171-4127647; Fax: +44 171-4127641; e-mail: susan.whitfield@bl.uk.

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languages. For details of these projects see the report by the author of the 1997 Meeting of The Electronic Buddhist Text Initiative in *IDP News* 5 (Summer 1996).

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Complementing the IDP, the **CIRCLE OF INNER ASIAN ART** was formed at the School of African and Oriental Studies last year. Under the presidency of Prof. Roderick Whitfield, the Circle's main object is 'to increase the existing body of knowledge and research relating to the art and archaeology of Inner Asia, and to circulate relevant information by means of the occasional Newsletter. Emphasis will be given to art historical and archaeological material of the pre-Islamic period, supported by relevant contributions from the fields of history, literature, religion, philology and anthropology'. Further details from: CIAA Department of Art and Archaeology, SOAS (University of London), Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG, UK; e-mail: russellsmith@cix.compulink.co.uk; Fax: +44 171-4363844 (please state CIAA).

# Buddhist Library Project

Jamyang Meditation Centre in London is launching a vast Buddhist library project.

Although the number of English translations of Buddhist texts and books on Dharma written for Westerners is increasing rapidly, at almost the same rate important works are quickly going out of print or becoming hard to find. Therefore a large Buddhist library is of great importance for Dharma students and scholars, as well as for preserving these works for the future.

The library will cover all traditions from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana to Pure Land, and Zen, and will include all four Tibetan schools - Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelugpa, plus Bon. Books on Tibetan culture and Buddhist-related subjects such as Buddhist art, architecture, medicine, etc., will also be considered.

Those wishing to help may do so in the following ways:

- ◆ Donate Dharma books to the library.
- ◆ Donate non-Dharma books to the library. (We will resell them to raise money for the purchase of Buddhist books.)
- ◆ Donate money to enable the library to purchase books.
- ◆ Donate shelving or other items which could be used in the library.
- ◆ Donate your time to help transcribe taped material.
- ◆ Swap your Dharma books for our duplicate copies of books. (We hope to have a list available shortly.)

If you are starting your own Buddhist library or already have one, please contact us so that we can share our information and contacts.

Magazines, articles, audio tapes, videos, etc. will also be welcome.

Please send your donations to:

## Jamyang Meditation Centre

'The Old Courthouse',

43 Renfrew Road,

Kennington, London SE11 4NB

Tel: (44) (0)171 820 8787; Fax: (44) (0)171 820 8605

Email: [jamyang@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:jamyang@cix.compulink.co.uk)

For more information please contact Mike Gilmore or Richard Pope c/o Jamyang.

## NIBBĀNA, TRANSCENDENCE AND LANGUAGE

A Review Article by

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi

The task of explaining the nature of Nibbāna, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, has taxed the minds of thinkers and scholars from the earliest phase of Buddhist history. Even within the Pāli tradition alone interpretations of Nibbāna are bewildering in their diversity, ranging from postulations of a metaphysical absolute to a conviction of personal annihilation. Despite vast differences, however, most expositors of Buddhist thought would probably concur on two propositions concerning the final Buddhist goal: (i) Nibbāna is transcendental, a reality in some way beyond the phenomenal world; and (ii) this reality is ineffable, inexpressible in words.

*Nirvana and Ineffability* by Asanga Tilakaratne is a tightly argued philosophical study that aims at disposing of both these closely interwoven points of consensus<sup>1</sup>. The author, who holds a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Hawaii, is presently Head of the Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies affiliated with the University of Kelaniya. His book, which reveals a wide familiarity with both Buddhist studies and recent scholarship in the philosophy of religion, extends into a new area of enquiry the tradition of Sri Lankan Buddhist philosophical analysis that sprang up from contact with the empiricist and

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<sup>1</sup> *Nirvana and Ineffability: A Study of the Buddhist Theory of Reality and Language*. Asanga Tilakaratne. Kelaniya: Postgraduate Institute of Pāli and Buddhist Studies, 1993, 182 pp. In this article I have used the word 'nirvana' when quoting Tilakaratne, but the Pāli Nibbāna in my own exposition.

humanistic streams of modern Anglo-American philosophy.

The book unfolds in eleven chapters, with the heart of the author's argument laid out in its middle three chapters. These deal respectively with 'The Nature of Nirvana' (Ch.VI), 'The Non-transcendental Philosophy of Language in Early Buddhism' (Ch.VII), and 'The "Silence" of the Buddha and Ineffability' (Ch.VIII). It is upon these chapters, and the Conclusion, that I will focus this article.

The author sets the stage for his analysis in the Introduction by defining the form of spirituality from which he intends to dissociate early Buddhism as 'the transcendent interpretation of religion'. This conception of religion rests on two premises: (i) that all higher religions recognize as their ultimate concern 'a reality which transcends human cognition or which occupies a wholly different realm of existence', and (ii) 'that such a reality is ineffable or cannot be described by language' (p.3). Tilakaratne contends that neither of these characterizations pertain to the Buddhism of the Pāli Canon. On the one hand, he says, the anti-substantialist, empirical stance of the original teaching precludes the recognition of Nibbāna as a transcendent reality; on the other, the Buddha's pragmatic, affirmative attitude towards language precludes the idea that Nibbāna might be ineffable.

In both respects, Tilakaratne holds, Buddhism contrasts sharply with two other major forms of spirituality: monism, as represented by Advaita Vedānta, and theism, as represented by Christianity and Bhāgavata Hinduism. Both these religious forms, in different ways, are necessarily committed to the twin tenets of the transcendent interpretation. Advaita is bound to them because it posits a metaphysical absolute beyond the duality of subject and object, the prerequisite for meaningful discourse; theism, because it rests on faith in a supreme God whose essence can never be adequately comprehended by the finite human intellect.

Tilakaratne recognizes that Nibbāna can be correctly interpreted only if it is viewed from within the broader philosophical framework of early Buddhist thought, and thus in Chs III-IV he sketches the basic principles of this framework. He holds that the entire concern of early Buddhism is with empirical, conditioned reality — with reality as known through perception (both sensory and extra-sensory) — which is 'the only reality that is available to us'. This reality, he asserts, comprizes everything, both Samsāra and Nibbāna, and thus Buddhism locates its solution to the predicament of human suffering squarely within the domain of conditioned, temporal reality (pp.50-1).

Such ideas may appear to clash with the prevalent understanding of Nibbāna as a state utterly beyond the conditioned world, and thus in Ch.VI Tilakaratne sets out to substantiate his purely 'immanent' perspective on Nibbāna with the aid of the Pāli Nikāyas. He first takes up for examination the Buddha's formula of the 'gradual training' as described in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta. By analysis of this formula he contends that the entire path is a personal discipline of moral and mental purification that does not require reference to any reality beyond the empirical order. This description of the path, he claims, shows us that 'nirvana is not a separate and distinct object' of knowledge, but a mode of knowing and experiencing, 'the quality of life led by the emancipated person' (p.69).

Textual studies are necessarily selective, but in this case it is the acutely narrow selection on the basis of which Tilakaratne attempts to validate his position that this reviewer finds problematic. If other texts had been examined we would have gained access to alternative exposures of the same process of emancipation, and several of these would be difficult to accommodate comfortably within a purely naturalistic interpretation of Nibbāna. I have in mind particularly the account of the 'destruction of the

taints' described at M I, 435-7 (and elsewhere) as well as a handful of suttas on the unique meditative experience of the arahant (see A V, 7-10). These suttas suggest that Nibbāna is indeed a distinct object of knowledge on the basis of which the defilements are destroyed and to which the arahant has special access in an extraordinary sphere of contemplation that the unenlightened person can hardly think of without bafflement.

Another reservation — and it is a serious one — concerns Tilakaratne's methodology. Not only does he narrowly limit his base of canonical texts, but he makes no references at all to the Pāli commentaries. The commentaries, however, offer us a more detailed, microscopic picture of what actually takes place on the occasion of enlightenment, showing that the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths described so concisely in the Sāmañña-phala Sutta comes about when the truth of cessation (= Nibbāna) is penetrated as an object of the path consciousness. From the standpoint of the Pāli commentaries, Nibbāna is neither the simple act of destroying the defilements nor the purified condition of mind that results from their destruction, but the undefiled reality, the deathless element (*amatadhātu*), in dependence on which the destruction of defilements comes about (see for example Vism 508). Granted that the commentaries represent a later, more systematized phase of Buddhist thought, their analysis of sutta material still certainly merits consideration in a philosophical study of early Buddhism.

In the next part of this chapter Tilakaratne proposes to take a fresh look at the texts most often cited in support of the transcendental interpretation, the famous Nibbāna Suttas of the Udāna (VIII, 1-4). He admits that these suttas could be used to support the view of Nibbāna he is opposing, but he concludes that to be understood correctly they must be interpreted in a manner consistent with the naturalistic picture of Nibbāna, 'the broader

picture well supported by the texts' (p.76). It is, however, just the nature of the 'broader picture' that is in question here, and it seems that to square the above suttas with a naturalistic view of Nibbāna requires considerable bending and stretching of their manifest meaning. Tilakaratne tries to settle the issue with citations from Kalupahana and Johansson, critics of the transcendental interpretation, but he seems unaware that Ācariyas Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla have both appealed to these same Udāna suttas to bolster their argument for a transcendental understanding of Nibbāna against the views of a rival sect (perhaps the Sautrāntikas) which held Nibbāna to be the mere cessation of defilements and aggregates.

Tilakaratne next examines the attempt to justify a transcendent interpretation of Nibbāna by appeal to the Buddha's rejection of the four assertions regarding the post-mortem status of the arahant (as at M I, 486-8). He specifically targets for criticism K.N. Jayatilleke, who attributed the Buddha's rejection to the impossibility of describing trans-empirical reality. Tilakaratne refutes this approach, an implicit endorsement of the ineffability thesis, as an inconsistent departure from the principle of strict empiricism which he takes to be the methodological imperative of early Buddhism. To resolve the issue he marshals several other suttas which show that all four poles of the famous 'tetralamma' tacitly presuppose that the arahant exists as a self, a self which must either survive in eternity or undergo annihilation. When the assumption of self is repudiated, all the alternatives that stem from it must likewise be cast away. In this section Tilakaratne is on firmer ground, but while he rightly shows up the flaws in Jayatilleke's approach I would question his conclusion that the Buddha's rejection of the four alternatives established that 'non-transcendence is a central characteristic of nirvana' (p.81). At M I, 488, the simile of the extinguished flame is counterbalanced by



the simile of the great ocean, 'unfathomable and immeasurable', and a proper understanding of the arahant's post-mortem condition must give equal weight to the implications of both similes.

In the next chapter (VII) the author explores what he calls 'the non-transcendent philosophy of language in early Buddhism'. He stresses that Buddhism steered a middle way between two extreme attitudes towards language, the absolutist attitude represented by Brahmanism, which insisted that language is divinely ordained and hence an infallible index to reality, and the nominalist attitude, which easily slides into mysticism or scepticism. Instead, the Buddha treated language as a conventional medium of communication valid in its own right and affective enough both to express truth and to guide others in its realization. The linguistic problems in religious discourse do not arise from any inadequacy inherent in language but from our psychological tendency to grasp upon conceptual formulations as absolute rather than to treat them as pragmatic tools for communication and understanding.

Ch.VIII expands upon the theme of the 'undeclared points' already introduced in Ch.VI. Tilakaratne here argues down the hypothesis that the Buddha's refusal to answer the ten undeclared points was rooted in the recognition of an ineffable transcendental reality. He rightly points out, *contra* Murti and Panikkar, that the Buddha did not respond to these questions with a mystical silence; rather he expressly refused to answer them, and did so for reasons he made perfectly explicit. On some occasions (as to Mālunkyaputta) he refused because the questions were irrelevant to the practical task of treading the path to emancipation. On other occasions (as to Vacchagotta) he explained that the very form in which the questions were posed already presupposed speculative views symptomatic of ignorance and craving. Although I disagree with Tilakaratne's denial of a trans-

dent reality, I find he argues a cogent case against the move to turn the undeclared points into an entranceway to the transcendent.

Next come two short chapters: Ch.IX, which examines the use of the tetralemma in the thought of Nāgārjuna, founder of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhist philosophy; and Ch.X, which discusses the direct and indirect styles of discourse employed by the Buddha. Finally, in the Conclusion (Ch.XI), Tilakaratne draws out the implications of his study for our understanding of the place of Buddhism within the spectrum of human spirituality. He first seeks to determine the precise relationship between the two notions of transcendence and ineffability. His handling of this issue strikes me as one of the more puzzling features of the book, for he defines both notions in such austere terms that it is doubtful whether any religionist could subscribe to them. He defines transcendence as 'referring to a phenomenon which is beyond human perception and cognition . . . something that is unknown and unknowable' (p.141), and ineffability as 'unsayability in an extreme sense, viz., a phenomenon which is completely beyond linguistic expression' (p.143). From these definitions it follows that transcendence and ineffability are closely interlinked, indeed mutually entailing, since if a phenomenon is wholly unknown and unknowable that phenomenon has to be completely inexpressible and vice versa.

Now it seems to this reviewer that no religionist would declare the supreme object of his faith to be transcendental in the sense that it is absolutely and utterly beyond the scope of human knowledge in its entirety; for in such a case one could not even know that it is worth making the spiritual bedrock of one's life. Nor would such a religionist, even in the apophatic mystical tradition, regard the ultimate as literally being completely inexpressible, the evidence to the contrary being the vast deluge of

literature that has poured forth from this tradition on the nature of the unspeakable Godhead. What most mystical writers claim, as the basis for their thesis of ineffability, is that the transcendent is unknowable in terms of the ordinary processes of human cognition. To be known at all the transcendent must be apprehended by a special act of intuitive knowledge, which is either conferred by grace or won by contemplative effort, and as thus apprehended it is indescribable by way of familiar terms and concepts. This thesis of ineffability amounts to the assertion that language is inadequate as a medium for conveying the divine nature, either because the divine defies logical categories (as in the monistic tradition) or because it embodies qualities too sublime to express in speech (as in the theistic tradition). In contrast, the notions of transcendence and ineffability that Tilakaratne targets in his critique of transcendent religion appear visible only as the terminal points of abstract philosophical inquiry, as in the case of the Kantian noumena; they hardly seem to be the notions intended in religious discourse.

It is nonetheless significant that in early Buddhism we do not find any laments over the shortcomings of language or an insistence on the utter ineffability of the ultimate good, as we do in the writings of the mystics. The Pāli Nikāyas in particular appear to treat language as a perfectly viable instrument for communicating the truths enshrined at the heart of the Dhamma. But from this it would be premature to conclude, as Tilakaratne does, that Nibbāna is not a transcendental reality but a quality of life that can be adequately understood simply as the end point of the process of mental purification effected by the path. Though texts dealing with the 'metaphysical' aspects of Nibbāna are certainly few in number, in the opinion of this reviewer such texts are straightforward enough to leave little doubt that Nibbāna is a transcendent reality which serves as a distinct object of medi-

tative knowledge.

We might propose that the Buddha did not dwell on the shortcomings of language because he recognized that language was generally an efficient enough tool for the fulfilment of his mission, namely, to guide others to liberation. He was able to adapt language to this end by describing Nibbāna in ways that intersect with the crucial existential concerns of human life. Such descriptions fit into either of two distinct moulds. One stresses Nibbāna as the most desirable goal of all: blissful, peaceful, sublime, liberative, secure, the cessation of all suffering. The other highlights the practical inner work that must be undertaken to attain release from suffering; Nibbāna then becomes the destruction of craving, the eradication of defilements, the relinquishment of all attachment. Because these linguistic formulations of the goal served to inspire in others a desire to attain it, and could guide them into the practice conducive to such attainment, it would have been self-defeating, even confusing to others, for the Buddha to have endorsed a thesis of ineffability. Certainly, insofar as the nature of Nibbāna could be conveyed effectively in words, it is not ineffable.

From the use of such pragmatically motivated epithets, however, it would be a mistake to reduce Nibbāna to the experiential aspects of its attainment. Hence to caution against such an error, the Buddha highlights the transcendent aspect of Nibbāna, showing Nibbāna as the 'wholly other' beyond all mundane existence: the not-born, the not-made, the not-become, the unconditioned, etc. He does not elaborate on such statements, no doubt to avoid giving food to our hunger for metaphysical speculation. What he expects of his disciples is an experiential transcendence to be embodied through practice and realization, not a theoretical transcendence to be caught in concepts. But such statements affirming a transcendent reality, 'the unconditioned

element' (*asāṅkhatā dhātu*) are there in the texts, and it seems that it is only by a wilful denial of their explicit content that one can get them to say something other than they appear to be saying.

The Buddhism of the Pāli Canon adopts a decidedly non-mystical stance, and in this respect contrasts significantly both with non-dualistic Vedānta and with theism, as Tilakaratne rightly and repeatedly points out. On careful examination, however, one finds in the sutta literature two parallel notions which serve to define the boundary line beyond which our ordinary modes of cognition cannot reach and which thus point to a sphere that cannot be fully gauged and grasped by the concepts derived from such modes of cognition. Between them these two notions play a similar role to the idea of ineffability in other religious traditions. Though they are not formally recognized as such in the texts, we might call them *inscrutability* and *immeasurability*.

The idea of inscrutability applies to the arahant while he is alive, particularly when he has entered the special state of *samādhi* to which he has unique access through the destruction of all ignorance and defilements (A V, 7-8, 318-26). In this *samādhi* the arahant's mind attends to none of the ordinary bases of meditation but to Nibbāna itself, and even the gods, unable to comprehend the dwelling point of his mind, can only stand and worship him from afar (see A V, 325). The notion of immeasurability applies to the arahant after his Parinibbāna; it seems to be used as a way to characterize — by negation of the extinguished personality of the arahant — the *anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*, the element of Nibbāna without residue, which he has attained with his physical demise. We see this aspect of immeasurability in the simile of the great ocean at M I, 488, and even more strikingly in the way this simile is elaborated by the therī Khemā at S I, 376-7. While the Buddhist texts generally do

not fault language itself, with these twin notions of inscrutability and immeasurability they affirm a dimension of reality which stands far beyond the conditioned phenomena of the world, inaccessible to the net of concepts and words fashioned from our experience of phenomenal reality. Indeed, in at least one well-known passage the Buddha virtually confirms that the immeasurability of the enlightened person after his demise implies that his condition is ineffable. This is his reply to Upasīva's question about the post-mortem state of the arahant (Sn 1076):

There is no measuring of the one who has passed away;  
There is nothing by which one might speak of him.  
When all phenomena have been uprooted,  
Uprooted are all the pathways of speech.

In the very last section of his book Tilakaratne examines the notion of transcendence that he takes to be valid within Buddhism. He maintains that in contrast to both monism and theism, which locate the solution to the problem of worldly suffering in a reality beyond the empirical order, Buddhism offers as a solution 'nirvana, which is neither a disappearance of the distinction between subject and object nor a "physical" transcendence of the world' (p.149). According to the author, the transcendence relevant to the Buddhist concept of Nibbāna is a moral one, 'the moral quality of the state of mind that realizes nirvana'. This transcendence means the purification of the mind of its depravities, which allows the individual to dwell in the midst of the world untainted by the mire of phenomenal existence.

Now while it can hardly be denied that the attainment of Nibbāna requires moral purification — indeed, a complete purification of mind and understanding in all respects — it would be an oversimplification to identify this purification with Nibbāna itself. The famous 'stagecoach simile' (M I, 148-50) makes it clear that all

seven stages of purification still remain on this side of conditioned existence, while Nibbāna alone stands on the far side. In its own nature Nibbāna is *bhavanirodha*, the cessation of becoming, and its full realization brings the entire process of becoming to an end, inclusive of the subject-object relationship and the very presence of a world. Even though Nibbāna may be experienced by those who have reached the last phase of sarn-sāric existence, the texts leave little doubt that complete deliverance, for early Buddhism, is consummated only with the attainment of the Nibbāna element without residue (*anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*), when the five aggregates that constitute experience themselves cease with no more renewal. It is true, as Tilakaratne states, that the arahant is 'living in the world (while) transcending it simultaneously', but what makes him an arahant is the fact that he has put an end to rebirth and ensured that he will return no more to re-becoming (*khīṇajāti . . . nāparam itthattāya*).

Tilakaratne seeks to validate his interpretation by examining the use of the term *lokuttara*, 'transcendental', in the Paṭisambhidāmagga (Ps), which he says is the first canonical text to use this word (inaccurately, as the word is used already in a technical sense at M III, 72-5, and more loosely perhaps at M II, 181 and III, 115; it is also a major structural concept in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, which possibly precedes Ps), which turn out to be the familiar thirty-seven constituents of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyā dhammā*) supplemented by the four paths, their fruits, and Nibbāna. He then concludes: 'The very content of the list clearly shows that what is meant by "transcendental" is not something that transcends human experience or knowledge, but moral virtues which constitute the substance of the Buddhist soteriology meant to make an end of human suffering' (p.150).

Ps is an extremely terse text, resting on an implicit but precisely delineated system which is the standard against which

interpretations must be made. If we look at the list in the light of this system, we would see that what makes all the other factors in the list *lokuttara* is their orientation towards Nibbāna, and Nibbāna confers a *lokuttara* quality on them precisely because it is transcendent to the conditioned empirical world. The Ps Commentary explains that the thirty-seven constituents of enlightenment are *lokuttara* only when they occur in the four paths and fruits, which take Nibbāna as their object; when they occur in the preparatory stage of the practice, even though they are wholesome qualities tending to deliverance, they are still *lokiya*, mundane. The paths are *lokuttara* because they lead to the overcoming of the world by eliminating the defilements, the fruits because they are the way stations towards the transcending of the world, and 'Nibbāna is *lokuttara* because it always stands beyond the entire world' (*sadā nibbānam sabbalokam atikkamitvā t̥hitam*, PsA 448, SHB Sinhala-script ed.).

The guiding purpose behind *Nirvana and Ineffability* emerges on the very last page. It is the wish to dispel what the author calls 'the myth of the universal identity of religion' (p.150). This contention must be taken seriously, for along with the points of convergence between the great religious traditions there are also important differences which resist facile attempts at harmonization. However, it is questionable that the distinctiveness of Buddhism can be successfully preserved by arguing against a transcendental dimension at its core and seeking to assimilate its teachings to Anglo-American empiricism and positivism. While such a rationalized version of the Dhamma may seem impressive within the scientific, sceptical climate of our age, in the end it may leave us with something that amounts to little more than a system of ethical culture and mental training based on an especially insightful psychology.

Throughout the book, at repeated intervals, Tilakaratne

constructs his argument in accordance with the following logic: Transcendent models of religion must be either monistic or theistic; Buddhism is neither monistic nor theistic; therefore Buddhism is not a religion of transcendence. The logic here is clearly unsatisfactory, for its premises exclude *a priori* the possibility that there could be a version of religious transcendence which is neither monistic nor theistic. In this reviewer's opinion it is precisely there that we should assign early Buddhism. The teaching of the Pāli Canon does not, like monism, transform the world into a mere appearance or manifestation of a metaphysical absolute, nor like theism does it recognize a divine creator. Yet within the framework of a non-substantialist philosophical vision it encompasses a transcendent reality which is at once the pre-condition for deliverance and the final term of the liberative process. This reality is Nibbāna, transcendent and immeasurable, yet available to us through the Noble Eightfold Path and realizable here and now as the extinction of suffering.

*Bhikkhu Bodhi*

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Nāgārjuna in China*. A Translation of the Middle Treatise. Brian Bocking. The Edwin Mellor Press, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter 1994. iv, 499 pp. £59.95, US\$119.95.

The publication of this volume gives me a particular pleasure, the pleasure of knowing that the Avon valley meadows I used to wander as a boy now shelter not only the same old dairy farms but also an expert in Buddhist philosophy in China nearly sixteen hundred years ago. Now that Bath College of Higher Education is making its mark in research terms, surely it is time to find a more elegant name — I would favour, were it not for its unsuitability for a Buddhist Studies centre, St. Loe College, after the nearby village. Be that as it may, Brian Bocking's translation of the *Chung-lun* is everything one might ask of a rendering of a Chinese Buddhist text, the product of not only many years of individual effort but also of consultation with yet more senior scholars, such as Saigusa Mitsuyoshi. Though Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā* are hardly unknown to Western Buddhist studies, the form in which they reached China (with untold consequences for Chinese thought) is, despite the pioneering work of Richard Robinson, much less appreciated. For though the redoubtable Kumārajīva had in fact translated many of these verses as quoted in other materials before turning to the text studied by Bocking, this version embeds the verses in a work of commentary by an author about whom practically nothing is known — and, given that Chi-tsang, the great Chinese expert on this text, who possessed a vast wealth of now lost commentary going back to the time of its translation, seems to have been in the dark on the matter, maybe the question of the author's identity will never be cleared up.

Certainly the hypotheses advanced by the translator seem eminently reasonable, and I would tend to agree with them. It is unfortunate that in one of the very few textual cruces in the entire work (and in fact in the preface, rather than the translation from Sanskrit, at that) the canonical tradition of Chinese Buddhism appears to have left it unclear as to whether the characters

representing the name of the author should be read as transcriptions of the names Piṅgala or Vimālakṣa. In fact volume 25 of the new *Chung-hua ta-tsang-ching* published in Peking in 1987, provides textual variants unknown to the editors of the Taishō Canon in general use, including some from early and significant woodblock editions, and from pp.835c and 845b of this convenient but as yet under-utilised work of reference it is possible to see that, though the reading indicating Piṅgala is older than the Korean Canon (whence the current text of the Taishō), since it occurs in the version of the Khitan Liao Canon engraved on stone, both the northern transmission, in the form of the Jurchen Chin Canon used as the basis of the *Chung-hua ta-tsang-ching* text, and all southern editions favour Vimālakṣa. Since the latter reading is also attested by every edition of the preface as separately transmitted in the Buddhist bibliography *Ch'u san-tsang-chi chi*, it would seem that the time has now come to lay Piṅgala to rest as a mere textual corruption. As I have explained in *Taoist Resources* 5.2 (1994), p.74 at n.6, such a mistake in the view of one expert could have entered the Korean Canon because of the undue reliance of some northern versions of the Canon on the first, inadequately corrected printings of the *editio princeps*.

Other textual problems, though perhaps worthy of re-examination in the light of the 1987 variorum edition, are hardly likely to affect the text itself, which is in linguistic terms fairly straightforward, whatever the problems of construing the philosophy it contains. I found one passage where the translation looked at first sight a little unexpected, but this turned out to be due not to the translator but to my own presumptions concerning Chinese technology. It may come as a surprise to some former country boys to find a reaper (or perhaps a mower) cutting grass with a sickle (p.381), when there was from well before the time of the translation of the *Chung-lun* a Chinese equivalent to the scythe. But the text does use the term for sickle, not scythe, and according to Frances Bray in *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge 1984), p.338, use of the scythe remained geographically extremely limited, so Chinese in the northwest where the translation was done really did cut grass with a sickle — whatever Indian practice was.

For the value of this volume is, to repeat, its presentation of Nāgārjuna in his Chinese incarnation. One cannot of course deny the requirement for students of Buddhist philosophy to try and get as close to the words of the philosopher as first recorded in his own language, but to understand the impact of those words far beyond the land of his birth the type of translation given here is surely a very necessary undertaking as well. I do hope that the translator, for all the diffidence he expresses over the length of time his work has taken, feels encouraged to transmit a knowledge of yet further East Asian Buddhist works to England's green and pleasant land.

T.H. Barrett

The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's *Mo-ho Chih-kuan*. Neal Donner and Daniel B. Stevenson. The University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1993. xx, 385 pp. US\$45.

This volume, from the 'Classics in East Asian Buddhism' series of the Kuroda Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Human Values, not only renders into English the important opening part of one of the most highly regarded products of Chinese Buddhist thought, but does so with a wealth of annotation and introductory material sufficient not only to explain but also to contextualise within the Chinese Buddhist tradition the extremely dense prose of the original work. Though the volume springs ultimately from the doctoral studies of the first-named translator, there is no sense here of the reconditioning of earlier work, doubtless because the second translator has managed not simply to assist his predecessor in improving the presentation of the text but also to demonstrate how this famous treatise played its part in the unfolding of one of the great traditions of Buddhist scholarship, that of the T'ien-t'ai (Japanese, Tendai) school. Unlike Zen, this scholarly tradition cannot be easily reduced to the anecdotal, and so has not so far caught the attention of the restless Western mind. But like Zen, as Stevenson shows in the second and third chapters in particular, it has produced an imaginative history of itself that

can only be reread by those with a good sensitivity to the rhetoric of tradition.

There is, of course, much in the text itself that might call for comment, particularly in the light of its extended description of religious practices, since it is now possible to consider the Buddhist religious practice of the time of its author, Chih-i (538-97), against a fuller knowledge of the total spectrum of religious practice in mediaeval China, and indeed Kobayashi Masayoshi has produced in Japanese some interesting remarks on the links between some forms of religious practice sponsored by Chih-i and those of the Taoist religion, in the final chapter of his *Rikuchō Bukkyō shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo 1993). But Stevenson's exposition of the evolution of T'ien-t'ai highlights above all the highly problematic progress of the *Mo-ho chih-kuan* which is revealed once one ceases to be intimidated by its colossal reputation as the chief pillar of T'ien-t'ai thought. It is not merely that he and Donner draw on the Japanese scholarship of Satō Tatsuei to recount the successive revisions by Chih-i's chief disciple which ultimately produced the text as we know it; his account of later T'ien-t'ai demonstrates clearly that the selection of certain texts as pillars of T'ien-t'ai thought was far from determined at the outset, and that rather the T'ien-t'ai tradition continued to be moulded and shaped by the preoccupations of later interpreters in ways which testify to the continued dynamism of the school rather than to its blind adherence to a canon established by the great Chih-i alone.

In this connection one can see that practical considerations have perhaps acted to constrain too radical a reconsideration of the text itself, in that having to point out that the commentary of Chan-jan (711-82) on this treatise now in Taishō Canon 46, No.1912, marked a stage in the establishment of its reputation, the translators are under a certain obligation to provide in their annotation some account of how Chan-jan read the text, since his interpretations were to become standard. Yet once one steps outside the viewpoint of the tradition itself, surely reliance on one commentary by Chan-jan alone looks somewhat arbitrary. For later in his life (as noted on p.44, n.27) he compiled a condensed form of this most famous commentary which, ac-

ording to Hibi Nobumasa, *Tōdai Tendaigaku kenkyū josetsu* (Tokyo 1966), p.264, shows considerable shifts of emphasis when compared to his earlier work. One further notes that the layman Liang Su (753-93), who was a disciple of Chan-jan at an even earlier stage in his career, produced a summary of Chih-i's text (touched on but not explored here, p.45, n.34, and p.50, n.45) which again demonstrates yet another understanding of its structure, which (we may suspect) equally derived from Chan-jan, at was perhaps a yet more mature stage of his thinking.

So then, once we see the T'ien-t'ai tradition not as something cast in stone but as a far more dynamic, ever-changing attempt at grappling with a synthesis which even in Chih-i's mind probably never achieved the level of a final statement, there is a great deal of work to be done. Donner and Stevenson show that it takes a considerable erudition in East Asian sources even to attempt such work. But they also show that the rewards are commensurately great, and the further possibilities even more exciting.

T.H. Barrett

A Survey of Vinaya Literature. Charles S. Prebish. The Dharma Lamp Series 1, Jin Luen Publishing House, Taipei 1994. 157 pp. No price given.

This is a timely and valuable contribution to Vinaya Studies. It reflects the author's long and intimate association with the Vinaya tradition over many years, in the course of which he has become established as one of the foremost Vinaya scholars in the modern world. The book was completed during Prof. Prebish's tenure of the Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary in 1993, and is published as the first volume of a new series from a new publishing company in Taiwan that plans to market a series of high quality scholarly books in Buddhist studies. It could not have chosen a better volume with which to start.

Regarding the aim of the volume the author writes: 'It is my intention in the following pages to present a bibliographic survey

of Vinaya literature, covering both primary and secondary sources, that has appeared in print since 1800'. However, the reader will quickly realise that this book provides much more than just a survey, and the bibliographic material is preceded by a carefully written 41-page Introduction that explains how the Vinaya Piṭaka is organised as well as how it functions in monastic life. The survey proper begins in chapter two and cites the 'paracanonical', canonical and non-canonical texts of each of the major Nikāyas in the early Indian Buddhist tradition. Within the organisational framework utilised, Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Japanese texts are referenced and divided into separate categories of 'texts' and 'translations'.

Collecting the material for the survey must have been an enormous labour, since there are few other sources which offer systematic reviews of Vinaya literature. The only three works to attempt this are Lamotte's *Histoire*, Akira Hirakawa's *Ritsuzō no Kenkyū* (A Study of the Vinaya Piṭaka) and Akira Yuyama's *Systematische Übersicht über die buddhistische Sanskrit-Literatur (Erster Teil: Vinaya-texte)*. Mitsuo Sato's *Genshi Bukkyō Kyōdan no Kenkyū* (A Study of the Early Buddhist Order in the Vinaya Piṭaka) is also an important source, but the present work advances on all these in its comprehensiveness and improved arrangement of the material. It goes far beyond Yuyama's volume in both scope and date and there is simply nothing else like it available in English at the present time, nor is there likely to be for many years to come.

The research itself is scrupulously careful and exact, and one can have no doubt about the author's statement in the Preface that it 'encompasses many years of scouring the various Buddhist libraries available to me' (p.ix). As pointed out in the Introduction, however, the aim of the survey was not to be exhaustive:

'This survey is not intended to be encyclopedic in any sense of that word. Instead, it is true to its title. With regard to the texts and translations, it is quite thorough, but not exhaustive. With regard to the secondary literature, it is somewhat selective, but attempts not to omit any major studies. Although I have largely limited myself to language materials

available in English, French, German, Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese and Tibetan, I have also acknowledged the important, recent contributions of Japanese scholars in this area' (p.ix).

Despite this, mention is made of many sources the existence of which few would otherwise be aware. I can think of only two items which might be added, although these were perhaps omitted deliberately on the basis of the above criteria. These are *Sakaino Kōyō Kairitsu kenkyū* (Investigations in Precepts and Vinaya), 2 vols., published in 1928 as a supplement to the *Kokuyaku daizōkyō* (Japanese Translation of Essential Buddhist Canon); and J. Duncan M. Derret, *A Textbook for Novices, Jayaraksita's Perspicuous Commentary on the Compendium of Conduct by Śrīghana* (Turin 1983). Sanghasena's edition of the Sanskrit text of the latter in the Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series (Vol.XI) is mentioned on p.60.

The two main requirements for a survey of this kind are that the contents should be comprehensive and accurate and that the reader should be able to retrieve the information easily. In this case the second requirement is fulfilled no less admirably than the first. The volume is delightfully user-friendly and has a very helpful series of Indices covering (a) Authors, Compilers, Editors, and Translators, (b) Article Titles, (c) Book Titles, (d) Text Titles in Pāli and Sanskrit, in Chinese, and in Tibetan. An added bonus is that numerous charts are included for cross-referencing between various canonical languages. As if all this were not enough there is a separate chapter on 'secondary Vinaya literature' that examines this material decade by decade from the 1930s and before, back to the publication in 1836 by Alexander Csoma de Kőrös of 'Analysis of the Dulva (Vinaya)' in *Asiatic Researches*. There is even a reference to what must be the first book ever published on Vinaya in Paris in 1691. Such a careful and comprehensive arrangement of indices will save anyone countless hours of searching for little known but critical and important sources.

There is no doubt that this volume is a landmark in Vinaya studies and a requisite tool for anyone doing research on Vinaya. It is also indispensable for anyone with a Buddhist Studies library in view of the unsurpassed introduction to the Vinaya contained in chapter one and the many fascinating snippets of information



provided throughout, such as the listing of the seven Pāli Tipiṭaka collections in print on p.116. Whatever field of Buddhism one studies, and in whatever languages, there is something here of interest. As far as Vinaya itself is concerned it sets a standard from which all further research must proceed.

Damien Keown

The Origin and Development of Early Indian Contemplative Practices. Edward Fitzpatrick Crangle. (Studies in Oriental Religions 29) Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 1994. xiii, 314 pp. DM 148.

This is a typical work based on a doctoral dissertation, but one which has been found worthy of publication in a prestigious series of a highly reputable house. It sets out to decide the question whether the methods of spiritual disciplines, for which the author has chosen the expression 'contemplative practices', applied for the sake of mental development and of final liberation or salvation, originally developed from within the Vedic-Brāhmanic, and therefore Aryan, tradition or whether an indigenous, i.e. non-Aryan, contribution resulted in a certain synthesis.

To resolve the question the author limits his research to three main bodies of sources, namely the early Vedic scriptures up to the Aranyakas, the Upaniṣads and the Pāli Sutta Piṭaka. He discusses the early Vedic contemplatives identified by the terms *rṣi* (seer), *muni* (ecstatic), *yati* (an obscure type of ascetic) and *brahmacārin* (the Vedic student and also a specific type of renunciate associated with the cult of Rudra/Śiva), gives some attention to the early occurrence of the terms *brahman*, *dhī*, *tapas* and *yoga* and points out the term *upāsanā* widely used in the Aranyakas and implying the internalisation of previously external sacrificial proceedings.

The use of the terms *upāsanā* and *yoga* is further explored in the Upaniṣads, and the emerging yogic disciplines, which largely anticipated Patañjali and partly also the Buddhist path, is seen as a synthesis of two different techniques these terms origi-

nally represented. This discipline contains further terms: *dhyāna* ('profound meditation'), *samādhi* (absorption), *dhāraṇā* (concentration), and *ekagrata* (onepointedness). The author considers the expression *dhāraṇā* to be, in some Upaniṣadic contexts, similar to Buddhist mindfulness, i.e. *satī*, a meaning which does not appear to be implied in Patañjali's usage of the term — this point would merit closer scrutiny. The final shape of the discipline as the 'sixfold yoga' in the comparatively late Maitrī Upaniṣad, though pre-Patañjali, is clearly influenced by Buddhist ideas and practices.

The Buddha, having structured the practice into his eightfold path, extended the meditative procedure for the learner (*sekha*, epitomised by *dhyāna/jhāna*) by developing *vipassanā* (insight). This is generally equated with *paññā* (wisdom), thereby linking yogic practices firmly to the need of acquiring (final) knowledge (*ñāna*), the condition of liberation (*vimutti*), i.e. of reaching the goal of *nibbāna*. This represents the course of the perfected one (*arahat*) which then comprises ten stages.

This interpretation of the Buddhist path to liberation, in which the author follows the works of Rod S. Bucknell and Helmut Eimer, regards the first two factors of the eightfold path (*sammā ditṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa*) as preliminary steps to be followed by earnest practice of the three factors of morality and three further ones of meditation. This contradicts the widely used Dhammadinnā's placing of the first two factors within the category of *paññā* which, however, is properly represented here only by the ninth factor, *samma ñāna*, the result of *vipassanā* practice, which is then followed by the tenth factor, *sammā vimutti*.

The author then goes on to discuss further phenomena connected with the Buddhist path, such as the five powers (*bala*) and the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), and the details of the Buddhist practices which are associated with the individual factors of the tenfold path. He touches also on the problem of the division of the Buddhist contemplative practice into two distinct methods of the full development of calm (*samatha*) through *jhānas* and the method of perfecting insight (*vipassanā*). This method is largely though not entirely endorsed by the modern Theravāda school of Buddhism and accepted by some scholars, but the author finds that it is not explicit in the Pāli *suttas*.

Rather, 'the earliest and most authoritative of Buddhist canonical sources . . . indicate a single method wherein two interdependent and interactive aspects mature to a flawless soteriological harmony'. While jhānic and other contemplative techniques employed in Buddhism are adapted from pre-Buddhist Vedic-Brāhmanic trends, the *vipasannā* technique appears to the author to be a specifically Buddhist practice.

The author's conclusion is that 'the early Indian contemplative practices developed neither in a simple linear fashion nor as a result of a single synthesis', but rather as a 'zigzag progression wherein Āryan/Brāhmanical contemplative practices both influenced, and were influenced by, indigenous yogic disciplines'. With this one can agree provided that the term 'indigenous' is not understood as synonymous with the expression 'non-Āryan'.

This whole question is much more complicated. While the Vedic/Brāhmanical tradition was undoubtedly basically Āryan, penetration of some non-Āryan elements even into the body of the Vedic Saṃhitās has already been recognised. On the other hand, non-Vedic movements of contemplatives (*jhāyins*, such as those mentioned as the Buddha's two teachers prior to his enlightenment) and ascetics (*śramaṇas/samaṇas* — curiously enough, this term has not been analysed by the author) cannot be summarily regarded as non-Āryan. One Āryan but non-Vedic phenomenon, that of Vrātyas, represents another omission from the author's analyses. However, within the boundaries which the author has set himself for his thesis, he has delivered a detailed examination of primary sources and secondary literature which is immaculately annotated and therefore very useful for reference purposes as well as for future researchers. Perhaps understandably as a thesis, the author is very cautious when confronting various views of other authors and sometimes shows perhaps too much hesitation in drawing some definite conclusions. His final one can these days be regarded as more or less current so that the merit of the work lies chiefly in making the sources for it so clearly accessible.

Karel Werner

Jinakālamālī Index: an annotated index to the Thailand part of Ratanapañña's chronicle Jinakālamālī. Hans Penth. Pali Text Society, Oxford, and Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai 1994. xx, 358 pp. £13.00.

The Jinakālamālī (= JKM) was written in Pāli by Ratanapañña Thera of Thailand in the sixteenth century. It is a study of the epochs of Buddhism, as it originated in India, spread to Ceylon and thence to South East Asia. The work falls into six parts: up to the time of the Buddha; the three councils; the history of Buddhism in Ceylon; the history of Lampon until 1292; an account of the Lanna kingdom and the introduction of the Sinhalese form of Buddhism into Thailand; the spread and influence of this, an account of recent events known to the author; and a eulogy of King Tilok and his great-grandson. The last three parts of the work are of great interest to Thai historians and those studying the relationship between Ceylon and South East Asia.

In 1956 the PTS published an edition of JKM by A.P. Buddhadatta, which was based on his earlier Sinhalese edition. N.A. Jayawickrama compiled the index to the PTS edition, and in 1968 translated JKM into English under the title *The Sheaf of Garlands of the Epochs of the Conqueror* (PTS). Jayawickrama's identifications of places and persons named in the Thai portion of the text were based mainly upon the work of Georges Coëdès, who had published an edition and French translation of the second half of JKM in 1925 (*BEFEO XXV*, pp.36-140), and of Dhanit Yupho, the Director-General of the Fine Arts Department, Bangkok, at that time. Prof. Jayawickrama did not claim to have solved all the problems it contains, but his translation has undoubtedly served to make JKM better known.

Dr Hans Penth, who is well acquainted with Thailand and the Thai language, has now produced an annotated index to the part of JKM which is concerned with Thailand, to correct and supplement the work of earlier scholars.

His primary index (pp.1-270) includes the names of settlements, monasteries and related or general objects. General items, e.g. abodes, architectural types, measures, etc., are referred to in

Appendixes. Each item has references to page numbers in the French, English and Thai translations of Coëdès, Jayawickrama and Sāng Monwithun respectively. Since some entries extend over several pages, running headings would have helped readers to find their way around more easily. The very nature of the index favours the use of a telegraphese type of English, which sometimes reads oddly, but non-English constructions are rare, e.g. 'to avoid that . . . trees . . . reached into the . . . area' (p.173 and 'I ignore how much it was practised' (p.127).

There is a Secondary Index (pp.271-304) of (1) Persons, (2) Mountains, (3) Rivers and lakes, (4) Plants and trees, (5) Animals, (6) Books and Writings, and five appendices (pp.305-26): (1) a list of Mon and Thai kings according to JKM from Nāng Jām Thewī to Phayā Ket; (2) an explanation of the names of the months and years; (3) a list of weights and measures; (4) information about manuscripts, text editions and translations of JKM; (5) an abstract of the chronicle of the Sāvattī sandalwood Buddha image. The book concludes with a Bibliography (pp.327-58) in which, as the author states, many of the works it contains are described in some detail because of their relevance for JKM or because such details may not be generally known.

The whole volume contains many words and names in Thai characters and it was the difficulty of printing these in England that led to the decision to make this a joint publication with a Thai publisher, a decision which also reflects the fact that interest in this Index is likely to be greater in Thailand.

The volume includes two maps, one of Thailand and adjacent regions, and the other a sketch map of Chiang Mai showing the monasteries mentioned in JKM. By an interesting extension of the use of the word 'monastery' this map also shows the railway station, the airport and the premises of the Thai publishers.

*K.R. Norman*

King Aśoka and Buddhism. Historical and Literary Studies. Edited by Anuradha Seneviratna. Buddhist Publication Society,

Kandy 1994. xi, 161 pp., with two maps. SL Rs 300, US\$12.00.

Assessments of important figures in history have to be made on the basis of records: their autobiographies, others' biographies about them and such monuments as survive and which may record information. Autobiographies are a fairly modern 'Western' class of literature, while biographies in the present sense of the word are only found over a somewhat longer stretch of time. Before that they blend into what we would call mythical accounts and contain events which are generally regarded these days as fantastic. This is specially true of accounts of great teachers' lives in which it is often impossible to disentangle the 'real' events of the past from the embroidery of hagiographers.

All these records, when we are dealing with events of the distant past, are subject to inexorable forces of impermanence. Memories even of famous people quickly fade or are distorted and afterwards, as legends passed down through generations, change their emphasis and content. Even if memories are written down soon after events happened it is by no means sure how long that record can survive. Decay, wars, neglect, termites. . . the dangers to ancient books are many. And of course those that do survive the centuries may contain only partial or distorted truths. Records upon stone may fare better but most of them decay slowly with the weather, if they do not come to a quicker end through human hands.

Generally, the greater the span of time between these famous persons of the past and the present, the less we know about them. Here we are concerned with King Aśoka, a man who lived so long ago and in such different conditions from our own that it is no wonder we have the greatest difficulty in discerning him and his motives among all the conflicting records. Those we have of him and his times are really very sparse — we have no idea of what a day at his court was like or precisely how he conducted his government. We know nothing of his private life, though there are several legends from Buddhist sources. How well can we know a man whose ministers and whose wives are unknown to us? What were their characters and in what sort of politics did they engage? All this is so unsure and Buddhist records — the

Sarvāstivādin Avadānas and Theravādin Mahāvamsa — are frequently in conflict, so the best source of information about him must necessarily be the lithic inscriptions he caused to be made. Yet there is no doubt Aśoka was a successful ruler of the Mauryan empire and, as such, may have used some of these inscriptions for propaganda purposes. We are unlikely ever to know how much the reality of living in the Mauryan empire differed from the picture he gives us in his inscriptions.

On the other hand, if Buddhist records are not treated critically, then one has lost sight of the main reason for their existence: they were never intended to be objective history (if such a thing is possible) but exist to portray Aśoka as an upholder of Buddhist Dharma, as a committed layman supporting the monastic Sangha and as an example of the ideal Buddhist ruler: the Wheel-Turning Emperor who conquers by Dharma. The Mahāvamsa account of Aśoka has a very definite message: the emperor empowers Tissa to rule in Sri Lanka and then sends his son and daughter, both ordained, to propagate the Dharma there. The story was written by a monk from Sri Lanka who wrote so that his readers would be imbued with the sense of a continuity of royal power from Aśoka to Tissa and to succeeding kings, but also with the establishment through Aśoka's son and daughter of the Bhikkhu- and Bhikkhunī Sanghas in Sri Lanka. The Mahāvamsa's account should be viewed in this light.

The present book assembles the views of six scholars, of whom three are from Sri Lanka while the others are American, British and Indian. Brief remarks on these essays will highlight a few of the more striking conclusions.

Richard Gombrich gives an overview of Aśoka's inscriptions and emphasises how they reflect Buddhist teachings. He is very aware of the conflict between the inscriptions and the Buddhist account in the Mahāvamsa but does not take much notice of the northern Buddhist stories of Aśoka. The Third Council's account in the Mahāvamsa is treated admirably: 'Certainly, it confuses the fortunes of one sect, or perhaps even just one monastery, with those of Buddhism throughout India: it is impossible to believe that no Uposatha ceremony was held in all India for seven years and in any case Aśoka's expulsion of pseudo-monks from one

monastery would only have rectified matters in that particular *sangha*, not in the Sangha as a whole'. The third section of his paper is concerned with Aśokan missions sent as far as Egypt and the Middle East which not so surprisingly in the Mahāvamsa, a monastically written story, are attributed to the Theravādin thera Tissa Moggaliputta. These, however, were said to go only to border areas of the Mauryan empire.

Romila Thapar gives a detailed and interesting account of Aśoka's inscriptions, including those which were translated into Aramaic and Greek. She argues persuasively that 'dhamma' in the inscriptions addressed to the people and to his officials is the kind of virtue that followers of many teachers would recognise. Such 'dhamma' can still be taught in India, as indeed I have done. When I taught a brahmin, generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*śīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*) with an emphasis on calm rather than insight, plus a description of loving-kindness practice and a mention of impermanence, it was acclaimed as real Dharma — but I never mentioned Buddhism. Her paper warrants several readings to become familiar with the full range of content of Aśoka's inscriptions.

With 'The Emperor Aśoka and Buddhism: Unresolved Discrepancies between Buddhist Tradition and the Aśokan Inscriptions', we come to the first of Ananda Guruge's two articles and enter a different atmosphere. The first two scholars have preserved an element of detachment in their examination of Aśoka but here we find ardent admiration for him, particularly as he is depicted in the Mahāvamsa. This is unfortunate though the article otherwise contains some good quotations from the inscriptions and stimulating reflections. The vexed issue of Aśoka's mission to the West is raised and compared with Tissa Moggaliputta's Dhamma-missions to the border areas. The author asserts that both took place probably as separate endeavours. The theory, however, takes no note of Gombrich's idea on p. 8 of his contribution: 'Aśoka's ambassadors of righteousness would certainly not have been men travelling alone. Such a mission could well have included monks, perhaps even representatives of more than one religion. . . The monks who composed the chronicles would not have been pleased to record that Buddhism

travelled as a sideshow. . .? But this solution seems by far the most likely. When our author writes: 'Aśoka did play a major role in the propagation of Buddhism. . .' he is anxious to identify the general Dharma of the inscriptions with specifically Buddhist teachings. It seems to me that a great feature of Aśoka is precisely that while he tried to increase practice of general Dharma he did not try to propagate Buddhism, even though it was his personal religion. At this point it would be good to note Rock Edict XII on how one should be restrained in speech regarding others' sectarian views while actually praising the practice of other sects — itself a practice which will lead to the growth of one's own religious tradition.

In 'Aśoka's Edicts and the Third Buddhist Council', N.A. Jayawickrama denies that the Third Council was a 'party-meeting' though the evidence is very much against him. Gombrich's words quoted above are much more persuasive. Jayawickrama persists in regarding the sangha which was purified as the Sangha — the only one that counted apparently being Theravāda. Though he mentions the split in the Sangha after the Second Council, Theravāda is regarded as the parent of the others. This is as sectarian a bias as the Mahāsāṅghika's probable view of themselves being the 'original' body. Perhaps indeed they had greater cause for it as they appear to have been the majority party.

While the author of the following paper, Anuradha Seneviratna, also subscribes to the Theravāda view of the Third Council and its work, his main focus is upon the continuation of Aśoka's influence in Sri Lanka. His sources are drawn only from the various Pāli commentaries and chronicles and, while his account is interesting from the traditional point of view, it lacks the liveliness of other papers whose authors have had to weigh and balance conflicting materials.

John S. Strong writes upon 'Images of Aśoka: Some Indian and Sri Lankan Legends and their Development'. In this paper he concentrates upon legends derived from two sources: Sri Lankan Pāli chronicles and North Indian Sanskrit stories now preserved in Chinese. The differences between these two accounts are contrasted and compared, in particular in four episodes of the Aśokan legend: The Gift of Honey and the Gift of Dirt; The Fate of the

Bodhi Tree; The Gathering of the Relics; and the 84,000 Stūpas or Vihāras. This discussion of the early traditions is followed by a section on Later Developments under which we find examined: the Gift of Dirt Reconsidered; the Legends of the Queens; the Collection of the Relics — a New Story; and the 84,000 Stūpas Once More. It is notable that these later developments in legend include Theravādin sources — from the Trai Bhūmi Kathā, the Dasavatthupparāṇa, and the Lokapaññatti, for instance. The author has clearly pointed out that Buddhist monks have not tried to preserve the true history of what happened to Aśoka but rather used him as an ideal to illustrate Dharma.

Ananda Guruge contributes the final paper in which he reviews prevalent opinions on Aśoka, with a glance at the ways he has been portrayed in the literature of the past. For instance, brahminical sources have largely ignored him or have only the most confused memories of him while the Jains barely mention him. This is not surprising in view of the fact that Indian historical records — as far as they exist — were written and preserved by those to whom Buddhism was inimical. Next the northern Buddhist sources are examined in the light of their historical value and found severely wanting. A final section looks at the oft-repeated charge that Aśoka was responsible for — and hence Buddhism can be charged with — the collapse of the Mauryan empire soon after his death. It has been said by a number of Indian scholars, no doubt with some Hindu prejudice, that Aśoka's 'pacifism' brought about this decline. However, to label Aśoka a pacifist is obviously wrong. Just because he renounced war after the conquest of Kalinga does not mean he disbanded his army or was no longer able to maintain civil law and order. He himself states in Rock Edict XIII: 'And the forest-folk who live in the dominions of the Beloved of the Gods, even them he entreats and exhorts in regard to their duty. It is hereby explained to them that, in spite of his repentance (for having caused slaughter in the Kalingan war), the Beloved of the Gods possesses power enough to punish them for their crimes, so that they should turn away from evil ways and would not be killed for their crimes'. Truly the iron fist in the velvet glove!

This well-produced book contains plenty of material for re-

lection by politicians the world over. Perhaps the Buddhist Publication Society would render a signal service to the cause of peace if they sent out parcels of this work to all the world's governments — certainly this would be true could one be sure that all those people in power would actually read it. Even if this cannot be expected and such a programme will therefore not be practical, still here we have some reflections upon one of those very rare Buddhists who have tried to translate their Dhamma into political and social action. Aśoka's attempts to do this inspired me when I first heard about them as a schoolboy in the middle of World War II. May his words and example continue to inspire many more in future.

Laurence C.R. Mills

Buddhist and Vedic Studies. A Miscellany. O.H. De A. Wijesekera. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1994. xv, 361 pp. Rs 275.

The author of this collection of papers was one of the most distinguished Indologists produced by Sri Lanka. Having graduated in Indo-Aryan studies at University College, Colombo (affiliated to the University of London), he obtained a government scholarship to SOAS in London where he read Sanskrit, specialising in Vedic studies, and Comparative Philology, resulting in an M.A., and the Upaniṣads with Betty Heimann which earned him a diploma in Indian Philosophy. Having secured his Ph.D in Pāli studies under Dr W. Stede, he joined the staff of his College in Colombo in 1936 and was appointed to the Chair of Sanskrit at the University of Ceylon in 1948.

The papers included were mostly published in various journals and magazines, and some of them were delivered at international conferences between the years 1941 and 1970; they are arranged in two parts, under the headings of 'Buddhism' and 'Vedism'. The Buddhist ones deal with some of the most important problems of the early Buddhist tradition and each of them shows the author's thorough knowledge of the Pāli sources and his independence of judgement. Thus, when explaining, in 'The Buddha and Metaphysics' (1941) the Buddha's 'noble silence' on

certain metaphysical questions, he points out that the Buddha nevertheless did define the Absolute (as the 'unborn', in Udāna VIII, 3.10) and even applied to it the word *brahman* when he called himself *brahmabhūta* (Suttanipāta 561), never, of course, allowing it to be viewed in the Upaniṣadic manner as the 'source' of Saṃsāra. In 'Buddhism and the Moral Problem' (1945) the author firmly dispenses with determinism and stresses the role of will (*chanda*) in overcoming conditionality. The absence of a permanent core to human personality is dealt with in 'The Three Signata' (1960) and 'The Buddhist Concept of Mind' (1961), both written for the BPS in Kandy; they do not hold surprises, but 'The Concept of Viññāṇa in Theravāda Buddhism' (for JAOS 84, part 3, 1964) argues that, besides other meanings, *viññāṇa* 'also means the surviving factor in the individual' in the rebirth process, re-entering womb after womb, and sometimes referred to as *gandhabba*. Other papers, of a more general nature, deal with Buddhism and its contribution to Indian life and culture, its social aspects and attitude to peace, and the problems of Theravāda 'under modern cultures'. One interesting paper assembles Buddhist evidence for the early existence of drama in India.

The author's twin specialisation in Vedic and Buddhist studies produced some interesting comparative papers included in the second part. 'The Philosophical Import of Vedic Yakṣa and Pali Yakkha' (1943) traces the background for the expression *yakṣa* used in the Kena Upaniṣad for *brahman* and the Buddhist usage of the equivalent in Pāli, *yakkha* (besides the mythological meaning), as 'wonderful being' or even 'holy person' (used also as an epithet of the Buddha, M I 386) or in the context of the state of purification of a being (*yakkhassa suddhi*) on the threshold of Nibbāna. 'Vedic Gandharva and Pali Gandhabba' (1945) establishes the pre-Buddhist as well as Buddhist application of the term *gandharva* for 'discarnate spirit' by thoroughly scanning the texts from the Ṛg Veda to the Pāli Suttas and anticipates to some extent the article of *viññāṇa* in Part One. 'An Aspect of Upaniṣadic Ātman and Buddhist "Anatta"' (1950) discusses the 'macrocosmic' connotation of the term *ātman* in the Upaniṣads and the Buddhist rejection of it in the sense of a theistically or pantheistically conceived Creator or Immanent Soul, leaving aside the

individual, 'microcosmic', aspects of the problem. Of further interest to Buddhist readers are 'Vitalism and Becoming: A Comparative Study' (1943), drawing among other sources on Bergson's philosophy, and 'The Symbolism of the Wheel in Cakravartin Concept' (1957), while some of the remaining articles are of high interest to Indologists.

On the whole, the book is a useful undertaking. It could be of great help especially to students and younger scholars who may find in it hints for their own research. It is also a fitting tribute to a scholar whose work deserves to be more widely known.

Karel Werner

Master Yunmen: From the Record of the Chan Teacher 'Gate of the Clouds'. Translated, edited and introduced by Urs App. Kodansha International, New York, Tokyo, London 1994. xix, 252 pp. \$13.00, £10.99.

Zen practitioners in the West are fortunate in that many new and valuable translations of the recorded sayings of ancient Chinese Ch'an masters have recently become available. No longer are we dependent on the secondary interpretations of Christmas Humphreys or Alan Watts nor upon Daisetz Suzuki's particular bent. These recent translations are based on years of outstanding scholarship in ancient languages and the way in which these translations share with us the difficulties of interpretation allows us faith in their endeavours. The choice of words and phrases to represent ancient Chinese characters in modern English (or indeed other European languages) is fraught with problems and it is a fascinating exercise to compare translations of the same text by different scholars. The subtle overlap in meanings often helps to reveal the depth of the original thought.

Master Yunmen was born in 864 CE near Shanghai during a time of political upheaval in China. We know most about him from an inscription in stone outside the monastery in the Yunmen mountains of South China where he lived for the last twenty years of his life and where most of his quoted sayings were pronounced. His teaching was given during the early devel-

lopment of the historical tendency to quote the sayings of earlier masters as sources for meditative reflection. He was therefore one of the earliest masters to employ *kōans* in an attempt to get his monks to perceive their own essential nature.

App's outstanding account of this master provides us not only with numerous translations of his quoted sayings but also an account of his life, the history of Zen, an especially valuable introduction to Yunmen's teaching and an account of the sources from which App compiled this text. Indeed, without the interpretive section many readers would be foxed and stuck in reading without access to their deep implications what might appear to be a set of merely clever old Zen witticisms. Many of the quotes are exceedingly short:

*Someone asked, "What is being silent while speaking?"*

*The Master said, "A clear opportunity just slipped through your fingers!"* (p.95)

And that is at least comprehensible. There is less clarity when one reads that the 'steam of rice gruel' is the 'eye of the genuine teaching'. Some decoding is essential for a modern reader — even one moderately knowledgeable about Zen.

App goes straight to the essential point. The human mind, unlike that of animals is ex-centric. That is to say it is both itself and has knowledge of itself as an object. It cannot know itself as a subject within the terms of an objective experience — yet intuitively it is precisely this that is sought. Likewise things are experienced as objects through the senses yet the source of that apprehension is forever invisible. The tension between these polarities of human existence is the field of work in Zen.

The inability to grasp the self as subject is the root of existential anxiety. *'Because of that clinging to self and its objects and the simultaneous deep separation both from itself, all others and other things, the human being is profoundly unfree and dissatisfied'* (p.43). There is a need for 'limitless emptying' into a freedom from all attachments, including attachment to the Dharma. This can only be reached by an unrestricted focus on the very source of experience itself. Neither philosophy nor psychologising will help and Master Yunmen is relentless in rejecting all such windbags. The only valid approach is the direct

pursuit of the question "What is wrong?" until the realisation that nothing is wrong emerges spontaneously. Although Master Yunmen occasionally gives a short teaching, for the most part he simply throws a questioner's puzzlement back to himself trying to get the monk or the official visitor to turn the light back onto his own experiential origination. This technique became a major methodological form in the subsequent presentations of Zen to students.

Often, when a monk was dumbfounded, the master gave an answer to a question he had just set. These muttered asides are especially revealing. Once Master Yunmen entered the Dharma Hall and when the assembly had gathered and settled down he said "There is a big mistake — check it out most thoroughly". When no one said anything he added "To do this there is no need for someone else" and presumably left (p.199).

App's introduction gives the modern reader a certain grasp of what is going on. Indeed these ancient interactions state the very problems we face in relation to the same issues today. While reading is not the same things as being in the presence of a master as potent as Yunmen, nevertheless there is here a possibility that the reader may himself be jerked into some fresh awareness. I guess this is the essential point of all these translations. But beware:

*Once Master Yunmen said, "What is accomplished when one has mentioned the two words 'Buddha' and 'Dharma'?" In place of the audience he answered, "Dead frogs" (p.198).*

*John Crook*

Alms and Vagabonds: Buddhist Temples and Popular Patronage in Medieval Japan. Janet R. Goodwin. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1994. vii, 181 pp. US\$27.

Economics, politics and doctrine influence the way religious institutions interact with the populace. This point, although obvious and important, has largely been ignored by historians of Japanese Buddhism. This book is one of the few studies of medieval Japanese Buddhism that shows how these factors had a

decisive influence on the temples' relationship with the laity and is the first extensive study in English on the so-called *kanjin* campaigns in which Japanese Buddhist temples solicited funds from the laity.

By examining the interaction between the temples and the laity as it occurred in these campaigns, the author tries to illustrate 'ways in which *kanjin* campaigns contribute to the formation of collectivities in society as a whole, bringing models of community to secular life' (p.5).

Goodwin's clear and concise examination provides: an overview of *kanjin* campaigns up to the Kamakura period (1185-1333) showing how they were initiated and regularised; two in-depth case studies of *kanjin* campaigns; an analysis of the way they were used to establish ties with the local magnates and communities; and a summary in which she perceptively points out how the physical framework (i.e. temples, pagodas, images) of Japanese Buddhism is no less important than doctrine.

Chapters Two and Four are particularly insightful as they show how the emperors Shomu and Go-Shirakawa, by initiating *kanjin* campaigns, were legitimising their political power. Both commenced such campaigns for the construction of the Daibutsu or great statue of Roshana [Vairocana] at Todaiji — Shomu in the eighth century, and Go-Shirakawa in the twelfth century after the original Daibutsu was destroyed by fire. By taking a central role in the *kanjin* campaigns for its construction, the emperors were also building a larger power base for themselves through the mobilisation of people and resources from all over the country. Furthermore, by drawing parallels between himself and Roshana, Shomu attempted to sanctify his power through the religious symbol he built.

The analysis in Chapter Three of a particular *kanjin* campaign led by a Nara monk is also of special interest because it shows how doctrine and a changing economy influenced the way temples interacted with the populace. In the twelfth century there was a shifting of power and wealth away from the capital into provincial hands. This shift in the economic and social structure of the country encouraged temples to look for new supporters and ways to exploit new wealth. However, it coincided with a



time of revival in begging amongst Nara temples, and a growing belief that the world had entered the 'latter days of the dharma' (*mappo*) — a time when salvation by one's own efforts without the grace of a Buddha becomes almost impossible. The combination of change in the social structure and in religious ideas led temples to evangelise more in the provinces using simplified Buddhist teachings which would attract donors. In the case of the Kasagi temple the alms-seeking mendicants or *hijiri* did this — as it was commonly done — by telling of miraculous events that occurred at the temple, and the rewards for those who supported the temple.

As an account of *kanjin* campaigns, and how they influenced the interaction between temples and the populace, the book is excellent. There is, however, a problem with the representation of the *hijiri* who did the leg work for the campaigns. The author uses tale (*setsuwa*) collections as sources to describe the *hijiri*. Goodwin recognises these tales as fictitious but paraphrases Barbara Ruch to claim that they 'are hardly more suspect than "factual" evidence which can be altered or forged' (p.3). I agree that *setsuwa* can be used as historical sources but only insofar as they can tell us about certain ideals, not about actual people. These texts cannot be used for historical evidence without examining the motivations for why they were compiled. In Chapter Two the author uses *ojoden*, a genre of hagiographic tales of individuals who attained rebirth in the Pure Land, to characterise the *hijiri*. To use an *ojoden*, or any other hagiographic type of text, as if it were secular biography fails to recognise the intention of the author which is to demonstrate that his or her subject is a holy individual. Such an approach misleads the reader by leaving the impression that the ideal portrait of the *hijiri* in the text is a representative one.

This criticism is not meant to undermine the value of this commendable work. This important book is a contribution to everyone interested in Japanese religion and should be required reading for anyone who thinks Buddhism has little to do with economics and politics.

Clark Chilson

*The World in the Buddhist Sense*. Nina van Gorkom. Triple Gem Press, London 1993. 121 pp. £7.95.

This volume consists of nine letters written by Mrs van Gorkom in response to enquiries from a correspondent identified as 'Mr. G.' regarding points of Buddhist teaching and practice, where 'Buddhist' is firmly coterminous with 'Theravādin'. Van Gorkom explains the origins of the work in her Preface:

'How to develop understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* naturally, while we are. . . doing our daily tasks. . .? this was the topic of letters I wrote while living in Tokyo to someone who was wondering how to develop right understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* in daily life' (pp.7-8).

The remainder of the Preface is devoted largely to an exposition of *anattā-vāda*, which, indeed, runs as a *leitmotif* through the whole work. Towards its close, we are told that 'The Scriptures as they have come to us date from the Buddha's time, the sixth century BC. . .' (p.12), the most charitable interpretation of which assertion is that it represents an extreme simplification, as well as indicating a rather tenuous grasp of Buddhist history. However, the two-page glossary, which supplies definitions of Pāli terms used in the text, suggests that the charitable interpretation is not warranted, for 'Pāli' is defined *tout court* as 'the language of the Buddhist teachings', whereas it would be more accurate (not to mention more diplomatic) to refer to it as 'one of the literary languages of Buddhism'. The fundamentalism implicit here is a disservice to the Dharma, which does not favour either misinformation or myopia.

Two letters will serve to illustrate the tenor of the work.

Letter 2 is a reply to the question, 'I wish you could tell me more about personality belief, *sakkāya diṭṭhi*. Is *sakkāya diṭṭhi* wrong view? But if I have such a wrong view, is it only a kind of *nāma* to be recognised as such' (p.25 — sic: no question mark or italicisation). The answer is given in strictly orthodox terms: the five *khandhas* are enumerated and defined, and various scriptural and commentarial references to *anattā-vāda* are cited (here and throughout, van Gorkom quotes extensively from both the Tipiṭaka, using the PTS English translations, and from the

Visuddhimagga in Nānamoli's translation). She resists a judgement as to whether there is wrong view in this case: 'It is not easy to know when there is clinging with wrong view and when without wrong view. Only when paññā is keener can it know the different characteristics of reality more clearly' (p.27). However, she insists that 'There is **no person** who has painful feelings, there is a nāma which feels' (p.35, author's emphasis), a point made repeatedly throughout the work.

Thoroughly orthodox though it is, this neglects to take account of the implications of passages such as the incident where Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether there is or is not a self, but receives no answer to either question (S IV 398-400). The Buddha then explains to Ānanda that if he had said there is a self, he would have been espousing eternalism, while saying the contrary would amount to nihilism. One way or another, he would have 'caused more bewilderment for the bewildered Vacchagotta. For he would have said, "Formerly, I had a self but now I do not have one any more"'. In other words, the teaching of *anattā* is not a dogma but a tool, like all Buddhist teachings; and it is the task of the teacher to select the appropriate tool for given circumstances. Thus Steven Collins remarks:

'Views of self. . . are not merely castigated [in Buddhism] because they rest on supposedly untenable intellectual foundations; rather they are conceptual manifestations of desire and attachment, and as such need not so much philosophical refutation as a change in character in those who hold them' (*Selfless Persons*, Cambridge 1982, p.119).

In terms of orthodox Theravāda doctrine, then, the answer is irreproachable, but things are not so cut-and-dried as that, as the Buddha himself recognised. If Mr G. is in the same position as Vacchagotta, then he should receive an answer along similar lines rather than a presentation of standard doctrine, with which the excerpts quoted from his letters suggest he is already familiar. This, of course, hinges on how well the author knows Mr G., which we are not in a position to judge.

In common with all the letters, this one concludes with the salutation 'with mettā', which I have always felt, for no reason I can justify, to be a rather affected usage.

Letter 8 deals with the problem of being 'aware while doing difficult things'. Mr G. refers in particular to learning a foreign language and remembering the combination of a safe, actions which he reports require such effort of mind that there is no energy left for awareness, as opposed to 'automatic' actions such as eating and shaving, in which he seemingly has no difficulty. Once more, the author's response is entirely orthodox. She quotes at length from the Dīgha Nikāya, the Papañcasūdanī, the Majjhima Nikāya and the Saṃyutta Nikāya, and makes wide use of technical terminology (*virīya*, *kusalakusala*, *nāma*, *rūpa*, and so on), displaying substantial familiarity with doctrinal categories and the texts wherein they are enunciated.

At no point, however, in either this or any of the other letters, do her answers become personal in the sense of appearing to draw from her own experience. It may be that this is deliberate — as I have remarked, *anattā-vāda* is stressed throughout the text, and perhaps the author has tailored her prose style to reflect it: passive verbs and other impersonal constructions abound. Similarly, Mr G. never seems to be addressed as a human individual — he is little more than a literary device, a cue for the rehearsal of doctrine. It is this impersonality which makes the text dry, flat and uninspiring, despite its impeccable doctrinal credentials and the undoubted value of the teachings which it represents.

I would suggest that one of the hall-marks of great teachers is their ability to let their personality suffuse their teachings, to stamp them somehow with their own mark — since they are living the teachings and are steeped in the personal experience of *anattā-vāda*, they can afford to do so without risk either to themselves or to their students. Such teachers can wander off into anecdotal tangents, they can tell a joke or administer a rebuke at the appropriate moment, but they remain firmly in control of themselves, the situation and the subject matter; and nothing is superfluous. They give their teachings to flesh-and-blood people, and are responsive to those people's needs, as the Buddha was in the case of Vacchagotta. Mrs van Gorkom may possess this quality *viva voce*, but her writing in this instance consists entirely of text-based exposition of standard Theravāda doctrinal cat-

egories. Some teachers could make these come to life but, regrettably, the present author does not.

Hamish Gregor

*Zen in America*. Helen Tworikov. Kodansha America Inc., New York 1994. 271 pp. £13.99.

The story of the coming of the Dharma to the West holds for me a special fascination, whence I was pleased to receive this addition to the slowly growing literature on that subject, an account of American Zen whose author, Helen Tworikov, will be familiar to readers as the founder and editor-in-chief of the Buddhist review *Tricycle*.

'American Zen', however, is not a category whose validity Tworikov is prepared to accept: 'And while [the teaching styles of American Zen teachers] are distinct voices engaged in a common search, at this time there is nothing that can properly be called "American Zen"' (p.20). What exactly could 'properly be called an "American Zen"' is not analysed. The traditional definition of the establishment of the Dharma speaks of a native monk of native parents studying the Vinaya in his own language which, it could be argued, effectively amounts to the establishment of a native lineage of teachers. One might have expected some reference to this tradition and discussion of the matter in these terms, particularly in view of the fact that most of the teachers discussed have recognised an American Dharma heir.

The rejection of the concept of an 'American Zen' is reflected also in the book's subtitle, *Five Teachers and the Search for an American Buddhism*. The teachers in question are Robert Aitken, Jakusho Kwong, Bernard Glassman, Maurine Stuart and Richard Baker; and the authors' intention is to present an account of each of these teacher's experience and understanding of Zen. As originally conceived, the book was to deal with seven American teachers whose 'qualifications for transmitting Zen had been acknowledged by their Japanese masters' (p.19), but the other two, Philip Kapleau and Walter Norwick, declined to be interviewed for the book.

Disposing firstly of its shortcomings, *Zen in America* cites no sources for its many quotations, with the exception of a footnoted acknowledgment on p. 183 of a passage from Heinrich Dumoulin's *A History of Zen Buddhism*<sup>1</sup>. Some if not most of the statements made by the book's subjects are presumably drawn from interviews with the author, but quotations are not confined to these; and even if they were, the omission would remain serious. There is no bibliography, and the index amounts only to a short list of personal names occurring in the text. In her very abbreviated history of Zen, the author rather hesitantly indicates (p.17) that there may be some element of invention in the traditional lists of Zen patriarchs, whereas few scholars are in any doubt that the retrospective co-option of prestigious masters played a substantial part in the compilation of the Zen lineages<sup>2</sup>.

Tworikov seems to be unsure of her readership: some sections of the Introduction suggest that she is writing for those unfamiliar with Buddhism (she gives definitions of *Buddha* (p.15) and *zazen* (p.6), for example), but elsewhere she appears to assume some knowledge: she gives no definition of *kōan*, and disposes of *sūnyatā* in a single brief and slightly allusive paragraph (p.7). There is no mention of the Dharma's Indian origins and only the very sketchiest outline of Zen history (in which Mahākāśyapa makes a brief appearance in the less familiar guise of 'Maka-shapa'), which omissions perhaps foster the impressions that Zen is coextensive with the Dharma itself and that nothing of material significance happened in Buddhist history between the *parinirvāṇa* and Bodhidharma's arrival in China. This latter im-

1 H. Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism*, tr. P. Beachey (Boston 1969). This is the precursor of Fr. Dumoulin's *tour de force*, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, 2 vols, English ed. tr. J.W. Heisig and P. Knitter (New York and London 1988, 1990).

2 See, e.g. Philip Yampolsky (tr.), *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York 1967), pp.4 ff; H. Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History* I, Ch. 5 and 6. (Accident was at play also, as in the case of Śubhamitra, variously listed as the 24th, 28th or 34th patriarch, who, rather like Lieutenant Kijé, came into being as a result of scribal error, namely the transposition of the first two syllables of the name of Vasumitra.)

pression, indeed, is reinforced by the Lineage Chart (p.253), in which the first name is 'Siddhartha Gautama Shakyamuni' and the second is Bodhidharma.

However, despite these defects, I found this a highly absorbing book whose author has researched her subject matter carefully and writes with enthusiasm and insight.

The Introduction gives a short account of the arrival of Zen in America in terms of the activities of Nyogen Senzaki, Harada Rōshi and Yasutani Rōshi (which is also recounted in evocative detail in Rick Fields' *How the Swans Came to the Lake*<sup>3</sup>). Reference is also made to the pioneering work of D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts, and the 'Beat Zen' of Kerouac et al. receives passing notice.

The subject of the first chapter is Robert Aitken, 'Zen master, scholar, author and radical pacifist . . . the unofficial American dean of Zen' (p.25). After narrating the salient features of his early life, significant among which were the years he spent as a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, in the course of which he met and studied with R.H. Blyth, Tworikov goes on to describe Aitken's experiences with Zen, firstly in Los Angeles with Nyogen Senzaki, and latterly in the course of seven months in Japan in 1950, where he sat his first *sesshin*. Aitken travelled to Japan a number of times over the following years, receiving teachings from various masters, including Soen Rōshi and Yasutani Rōshi. In 1959, he and his second wife founded the *Diamond Sangha* in Honolulu. After moves to various parts of Hawaii, the Aitkens eventually settled in their present location, Koko An Zendo, located in the hills above Honolulu.

Tworikov's account is liberally sprinkled with quotations illustrative of Aitken's attitude to pacifism, leadership, zazen practice, ethics and so on. One of these may be cited as representative of Aitken's down-to-earth and immediate style:

Recently in Los Angeles this fellow from Vietnam asked me,

3 Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake*, 3rd ed. (Boston and London 1992), pp.195 ff.

'Is warfare real?' 'You bet your life it's real, if anything is real, warfare is real.' That's what I told him. We can't duck around such issues. Emptiness is form. (p.54)

Like many American Buddhist communities, Aitken's has experienced difficulty in establishing appropriate decision-making mechanisms, stemming from the problem of distinguishing spiritual from temporal authority. Aitken himself is reluctant to accept the guru role and, according to Tworikov, his students have sometimes 'received crossed signals which, as they see it, [reflect] Aitken's confusion as to where to draw the line between the teacher's authority and the student's autonomy' (p.57). This confusion, Tworikov continues, is not a teaching device, for Aitken is critical of what he calls the 'Gurdjieff syndrome', the concept that 'If I disrupt the student's life it's always for his own good' (*ibid.*). He continues:

Gurdjieff was an extreme violator of this sort of thing [*sic*], sending a woman back from the Crimea through the battle lines between Reds and Whites, back to Moscow to pick up a rug that he left there in his apartment. It was an incredibly dangerous trip and she writes about it as if it were her practice! . . . I want there to be some substance in what I tell people to do, and if they ask me why I want to be able to meet their challenge. (*ibid.*)

The Chinese-American Sōtō teacher Jakusho Kwong and his followers carry on the Zen work tradition in the cultivation of a vineyard, whose crop is sold to a local winery for the production of what Tworikov, presumably on experiential grounds, describes as 'mediocre sherry' (p.68). Unlike Aitken, Kwong received his Zen training entirely in the United States, largely in San Francisco, where he lived through the hippie period, during which he met his teacher, Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi. Kwong maintains that only now is the Dharma beginning to reach the United States, having initially been confused with Japanese culture:

The first two decades of Zen in America were about the meeting of Japanese and American cultures. Because we were so new to the form, we leaned on our teachers, projected everything onto them, and in some ways lost our center point. This is the beginning of a digestion period. (p.67)

Kwong's center is Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, near Santa Rosa in California's wine-growing area. Although work plays an important part in the programme at Sonoma Mountain, Kwong's Sōtō background is reflected in the central importance given to zazen, and in particular to group practice:

There are people who practice at home, and they practice sincerely, but if they don't practice with a group of people their edges stay too rough. There are people who like the dharma, but they don't like the Buddha or the sangha. . . Compassion cannot be realized without practicing with others. (p.75)

Bernard Glassman, Dharma heir of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, also represents the Sōtō tradition, but his approach to the meeting of work and practice is in vivid contrast to Kwong's. The heart of Glassman's operation is a high-tech bakery in the centre of New York, which supplies a wide range of products to retailers and restaurants throughout the city, and which Glassman sees as his 'laboratory':

Sitting together is definitely the most intimate way of being together. . . But work-practice affords me more possibilities of working individually with students. . . If people come and sit zazen and get up and leave — there is no way to work with them. . . As a teacher, zazen doesn't give me enough interaction. Work-practice is not necessarily the best way, but the way I'm going to do it. (pp.117- 18)

A further reason for Glassman's emphasis on work and business is his perception of the backgrounds against which they operate: 'When Zen was introduced to Japan. . . its inherent cultural content was art — aesthetics. In our culture it seems correct to me that business is the world we most associate with' (p.121). Zazen, however, remains as central to Glassman's approach as it does to Kwong's: 'You cannot have Zen training without zazen. If we didn't have work-practice, we could still be a Zen community. If we didn't have zazen, we could not' (p.116).

Glassman himself is very finely drawn, perhaps in part because he is Tworkov's own teacher. He emerges from Tworkov's account as a fiercely single-minded and energetic individual: another of his students remarks, ' . . . he runs a community like a

juggernaut. The biggest problem around him is always going to be burnout. Nobody can keep up with him' (p.114).

The late Maurine Stuart, Dharma heir of the Rinzai master Soen Rōshi, differs from the other teachers described in her attitude to residential courses. Her view is worth quoting *in extenso*:

In Japan. . . the monastery was another aspect of a community-oriented social system, and one didn't join up in order to fulfil a need to belong or to identify with a group. There is nothing wrong with those feelings or with those needs, but I question the use of a Zen center as a place to work them out. My experience with residential centers in the United States is that they attract very immature people. They have been set up along the lines of Japanese male hierarchies, and the Americans who have a need to be in the protective shadow of these systems are not very mature. . . American Zen students are a little confused about the ego. They think they're supposed to check it at the door like a hat. Of course you have your ego, otherwise you wouldn't be here. You have to have your ego in order to want to clarify your life and understand it. But from what I've seen of the residential centers, this confusion has served to maintain an unhealthy dependency on the teacher. (p.165)

She was critical also of the 'professional Buddhism' of residential centres:

The residential communities that I know. . . have bred a kind of solipsism with regard to Buddhism. The vast scope becomes narrowed down to a very narrow perception of things. . . [which] becomes the whole scope for the residents. This does not encourage the open-hearted way of Buddhism as I understand it.

Stuart preferred instead to teach at *sesshins* and in informal meetings with her students, often at their homes — one of her students, to whom she gave cooking lessons, remarks: 'I learned more from her over a pot of soup than I did in the zendo' (p.163).

Before coming to Zen, Stuart had a career as a concert pianist, and brought much from that experience to her teaching:

There's not much difference between teaching Zen and teaching the piano. . . It's a question of being with each person, of

helping them find the way themselves, of helping them to become their own teachers. . . I can't *give* anything to anybody. Teaching is about being present. Just being there. (p.164)

The sexual misbehaviour of teachers has troubled a number of American spiritual communities, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. This topic is raised in *Zen in America* within the context of the self-confessed misconduct of Eido Rōshi, another disciple of Stuart's master, Soen Rōshi. Stuart's view was that the issue was not sex as such, but exploitation: 'I wasn't judgemental about. . . a teacher having sex with a student, but in this situation it was an unloving act' (p.192). This topic leads Tworkov again to the matters of leadership and authority. Stuart says: 'Our American democratic traditions will have a very important effect on the role of the teacher. . . One of the most important changes that will come out of our American heritage is that students will stand up to their teachers and say no' (p.193). Here and elsewhere, Tworkov also brings out Stuart's rejection of stereotyped feminist reactions to perceived male chauvinism.

Richard Baker, the final subject of *Zen in America*, is another of Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi's Dharma heirs. As abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, Baker presided over a prosperous business organisation which subsidised Buddhist scholars and maintained connections with powerful figures in the business and political spheres. In Tworkov's somewhat ambiguous words, Zen Center '... appeased cynics of Zen and New Age communities as well as Judeo-Christian skepticism toward the Oriental influence' (p.203).

Baker's incumbency was cut short by sexual scandal and questions of financial mismanagement. This led to his being forced by student opinion to resign, as well as his being ostracised by many American Buddhist communities. Tworkov concludes: '... for the first time, the collective judgements of a student body took precedence over the authority of a teacher' (*ibid.*). While these events were undoubtedly of major importance in a number of respects for the American Buddhist Community, one feels that Tworkov to some extent sacrifices her central theme to their detailed rehearsal. She deals with the topic sensitively and does not seek to apportion blame, but the space she devotes to it leaves her less scope than in her other chapters for dealing with

Baker's teaching style; and one is left with the undoubtedly erroneous impression that Baker was the Ringo Starr of the Dharma circuit: 'A former student once said that I have more robes than a rock stars has shirts' (p.205).

*Zen in America* closes with a brief Afterword which contributes little to the body of the text, and which makes the very dubious and, I would suggest, transparently partisan assertion that 'The Zen system of dharma transmission remains unique' (p.258). In expansion of this claim and with perhaps a nuance of belittlement, Tworkov refers to Buddhist 'sects; in which 'priests, meditation instructors and lineage holders' (*ibid.*) attain prominence through study, through kin lineage and through the Tibetan *sprul sku* system, and concludes: 'In the Zen ideal, "transmission" does not refer to something given and received, but to the recognition of one enlightened mind by another' (*ibid.*). This recognition, it would seem to me, is common to — indeed, is the essence of — all traditions of authentic Dharma transmissions.

Nevertheless, despite this and other shortcomings mentioned earlier, *Zen in America* remains an insightful and valuable record of contemporary Buddhism in America.

Hamish Gregor

Bioethics and Buddhism. Damien Keown. Macmillan Press, London 1995, and St. Martin's Press, New York 1995. xvi, 208 pp. £40.

The title of this book leaves no doubt as to its contents, but the 187 pages belie the number of issues that Damien Keown has managed to address within its confines. This is the first work to examine contemporary issues in medical ethics from the standpoint of Buddhism and, as Keown acknowledges, it is but the tip of a very large iceberg. It is written for a wide general audience with or without a knowledge of Buddhism or medical ethics, so care has been taken to lay the groundwork, explaining Buddhism and the links between Buddhism and medicine. Surprisingly (and this is my only criticism), Keown does not provide a conclusion so one is left feeling somewhat abandoned on p.187.

While acknowledging the difficulties inherent in defining the 'Buddhist' view, Keown maintains that on the whole there is much consistency among the major schools in the field of ethics, and chooses to ground his argument in the texts and commentarial literature of the Theravāda Canon, with particular reference to the Five Precepts and Buddhaghosa. He also draws on much contemporary opinion. From this touchstone Keown seeks to apply Buddhist principles to many of the major problems in contemporary medical ethics. The format is clear and is set out in three parts with numerous headings, useful for future reference. The issues considered are concerned with problems pertinent to the beginning and the end of life and Keown deals with each issue in detail, drawing frequently on texts and commentaries for endorsement. It seems that defining the moment when an ontological individual can be said to exist and when its life actually ends is as difficult within Buddhism as it is for other religions. Keown considers the issues of conception and death, abortion and euthanasia, as would be expected but also less obvious topics. A particularly interesting debate he raises is that of *monozygotic* twinning, which challenges the belief that life begins at fertilisation because of the question (or problem) of shared karmic identity. His examination is stimulating, and he suggests in conclusion that Buddhists may well understand individual life as being generated in many ways, although he himself does not subscribe to the possibility of identical twins sharing the one karmic identity. He also examines the issue of PVS, the Persistent Vegetative State, and looks at this in the light of recent cases which have received much media attention, finding no evidence from the Buddhist perspective to believe that life must continue regardless.

This is a welcome beginning to what the author describes as 'one of the greatest challenges facing Buddhism today', that of discovering and developing a perspective on issues concerned with medical ethics in the contemporary situation. He promises that this book is but a prologue of what is to come, something that will be welcomed by the growing number of Buddhists in the West today and many others.

Wendy A. Jermyn

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