

The Chinese Parallels to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* (1)*

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In what follows I translate and study the Chinese canonical parallels to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, the discourse that according to tradition was given by the Buddha to his first five disciples soon after his awakening, with the result that one of them attained stream-entry, whereby the “wheel of Dharma” was set in motion.

Introduction

With the present paper I continue exploring the theme of the Buddha’s preaching activities, broached in the two previous issues of the present journal. While in the earlier papers I studied the motif of Brahmā inviting the Buddha to start teaching, and the Buddha’s sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three to teach his mother and the assembled *devas*,¹ in what follows I take up the discourse that tradition considers the starting point of the Buddha’s teaching career. In the Pāli tradition this discourse is known as the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, found in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and again in the Theravāda *Vinaya*.²

In addition to these two, a somewhat unexpected third Theravāda version exists in the form of a Tibetan translation undertaken in the early fourteenth century

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¹ Anālayo 2011a and 2012c.

² SN 56.11 at SN V 420,22 to 424,11, which in the E^c edition has the title *tathāgatena vuttaṃ* 1 (a title then used again for the next discourse, differentiated as 2), whereas B^c and C^c give the title as *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. SN 56.11 has been translated by Bodhi 2000: 1843–1847. The corresponding *Vinaya* section can be found in the *Mahāvagga*, Vin I 10,10 to 12,18, which has been translated by Horner 1951/1982: 15–18; cf. also Paṭiś II 147,1 to 149,37.

in collaboration with the Sri Lankan monk Ānandaśrī, based on what appears to have been a Pāli original that is no longer extant.³

The “Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma” has a broad range of parallel versions handed down in other Buddhist traditions and preserved in various languages either as discourses or in different *Vinayas*. In view of the importance of the first teaching delivered by the Buddha, a central purpose of my present paper is to present English translations of the canonical versions of this discourse preserved in Chinese, in order to make these more easily accessible to the general reader. I begin by briefly surveying the extant versions, grouped under headings that single out those Chinese versions that will be translated in the course of my study.⁴ The first four texts listed below, stemming from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* and *Sarvāstivāda* traditions, are translated in this paper; the remainder will be translated and studied in a subsequent paper.

1) *Samyukta-āgama* Discourse

A parallel to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* has been preserved in the Chinese translation of the *Samyukta-āgama* found in the Taishō edition as entry no.

³This is the *chos kyi 'khor lo rab tu bskor ba'i mdo*, D 31 ka 180b1 to 183a7 or Q 747 tsi 183b4 to 187a2, discussed in Skilling 1993: 103-106. A rendering of this discourse into Sanskrit can be found in Sastri 1938: 484-487, with comparative notes pp. 487-489; for a translation into French cf. Feer 1870: 363-380.

⁴I do not take into account the individual Chinese translation T 109, a discourse that begins by indicating that the Buddha was in the company of a thousand monks, T II 503b6, all of whom at the conclusion of the discourse become arahants, T II 503c14. Besides these indications that do not square well with the standard setting and conclusion of the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma, T 109 shows clear signs of lateness, as already pointed out by Dessein 2007: 20f. Thus the discourse begins by describing an actual wheel appearing spontaneously in the air in front of the Buddha, which he then orders to stop turning before he begins to deliver his talk, T II 503b7. Thus T 109 does not seem to belong to the canonical versions of the Buddha's first discourse to his five former companions, although it may well be based on elements from a version of this discourse. T 109 has been translated into English by Sastri 1938: 489-492. The motif of an actual wheel is also found in the *Lalitavistara*, Lefman 1902: 415,10, where this wheel appears when the Buddha is about to deliver his first discourse.

99.⁵ This *Samyukta-āgama* probably stems from a Mūlasarvāstivāda line of transmission.⁶

From the same Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, discourse versions are also extant as individual translations in Chinese and in Tibetan.⁷

Another discourse version is part of the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* preserved in Sanskrit fragments.⁸ The *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* relates the history of the coming into existence of the four assemblies of Buddhist disciples (monastic and lay, male and female).

Mūlasarvāstivāda versions of the Buddha's teaching to his first five disciples can also be found as discourse quotations in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, preserved in Sanskrit,⁹ and in Śamathadeva's compendium of discourse quotations from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, extant in Tibetan.¹⁰

2) Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*

The Buddha's first teaching is recorded in the *Sanḅhabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* as part of a biographical narration of events after the Buddha had attained awakening. The relevant section has been preserved in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan.¹¹ This is not the only version of the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of the Dharma in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, as two short versions are extant in

⁵SĀ 379 at T II 103c₁₃ to 104c₂₉. For a survey of Sanskrit fragment parallels to SĀ 379 cf. Chung 2008: 122f.

⁶On the school affiliation of the *Samyukta-āgama* cf., e.g., Lü 1963: 242, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Mayeda 1985: 99, Enomoto 1986: 23, Schmithausen 1987: 306, Choong 2000: 6 note 18, Hiraoka 2000, Harrison 2002: 1, Oberlies 2003: 64, Bucknell 2006: 685 and Glass 2010.

⁷T 110 at T II 504a₄ to 504b₂₁, which has been translated into English by Sastri 1938: 479f; and D 337 *sa* 275a₆ to 277a₄ or Q 1003 *shu* 283b₁ to 285a₇, entitled *chos kyi 'khor lo'i mdo*; for the text cf. Chung 2006: 86–99, who juxtaposes the Tibetan discourse with SĀ 379, relevant Sanskrit parallels and T 110. A rendering into Sanskrit of the Tibetan discourse can be found in Sastri 1938: 476–478; for a translation into French cf. Feer 1870: 363–380.

⁸The relevant Sanskrit fragments have been edited by Waldschmidt 1957: 140–162 (§§11.14 to 14.12); for a translation into English cf. Kloppenborg 1973: 23–29; cf. also the study by Waldschmidt 1951/1967: 177–180.

⁹Wogihara 1971: 579,19 to 580,22.

¹⁰D 4094 *nyu* 28a₇ to 29b₆ or Q 5595 *thu* 64a₈ to 66a₂.

¹¹Gnoli 1977: 135,1 to 137,17, the corresponding part of the Tibetan version is D 1 *nga* 42a₅ to 44b₆ or Q *ce* 39b₈ to 42a₇, edited by Waldschmidt 1957: 141–163, and the corresponding Chinese version is T 1450 at T XXIV 127b₂₄ to 128b₁₅, translated into German by Waldschmidt 1957: 141–163.

the *Kṣudrakavastu*,¹² the second of which occurs as part of the account of the first communal recitation or ‘council’ (*saṅgīti*) that according to tradition took place after the Buddha’s demise.¹³ Both of these two versions have been preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translation.

3) *Madhyama-āgama* Discourse

The *Madhyama-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation, generally considered to be a collection transmitted within the Sarvāstivāda tradition,¹⁴ has the beginning part of a version of the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma in its parallel to the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*.¹⁵

A quotation of the discourse with which the Buddha set in motion the wheel of Dharma is also extant in the *Dharmaskandha*, a canonical work of the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma*. The relevant section is preserved in Chinese translation.¹⁶

4) Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*

A version of the Buddha’s first discourse is also found in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*,¹⁷ extant in Chinese, where it occurs in the context of the account of the first communal recitation, *saṅgīti*.

5) *Ekottarika-āgama* Discourse

The *Ekottarika-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation has two versions of the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma. The first of these two versions occurs as a discourse on its own among the Twos of the *Ekottarika-āgama*.¹⁸ The second *Ekottarika-āgama* version is part of a longer discourse that reports the

¹²T 1451 at T XXIV 292a29 to 292c15, its Tibetan parallel being D 6 *tha* 247b3 to 249a2 or Q 1035 *de* 233b6 to 235b3.

¹³T 1451 at T XXIV 407a6 to 407a17, its Tibetan parallel being D 6 *da* 311a7 and 312a6 to b7 or Q 1035 *ne* 294b1 and 295a7 to b7.

¹⁴On the school affiliation of the *Madhyama-āgama* cf., e.g., Lü 1963: 242, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Enomoto 1984, Mayeda 1985: 98, Enomoto 1986: 21, Minh Chau 1964/1991: 27 and Oberlies 2003: 48, with a recent contribution in Chung 2011: 13–34 and a reply in Anālayo 2012b: 516–521.

¹⁵MĀ 204 at T I 777c26 to 778a2, translated by Bareau 1963: 173 and Minh Chau 1991: 159.

¹⁶T 1537 at T XXVI 479b25 to 480a15.

¹⁷T 1435 at T XXIII 448b13 to 449a7, translated by Anuruddha 2008: 47–49.

¹⁸EĀ 19.2 at T II 593b24 to 593c10.

events after the Buddha's awakening, found among the Threes of the same collection.¹⁹ While the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection is at present best reckoned as being of uncertain affiliation, an association with the Mahāsāṅghika tradition is the most often voiced hypothesis.²⁰

A version of the present discourse that can with certainty be attributed to this tradition, in particular to the Lokottaravāda-Mahāsāṅghika tradition, can be found in the *Mahāvastu* preserved in Sanskrit.²¹

6) Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*

The Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, preserved in Chinese translation, has its version of the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma as part of a biography of the Buddha.²²

7) Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*

Similar to the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* also has a version of the present discourse embedded in its biography of the Buddha, extant in Chinese.²³

In addition to the above listed canonical parallels, versions of what according to tradition was the Buddha's first discourse can also be found in the *Lalitavistara*,²⁴ the *Buddhacarita*,²⁵ the **Abhiniṣkramaṇa-sūtra*,²⁶ and in several biogra-

¹⁹EĀ 24.5 at T II 619a8 to 619b19; for a translation of the relevant section of EĀ 24.5 into French cf. Bureau 1988: 81f.

²⁰Cf. the survey of opinions on this topic held by Japanese scholars cf. Mayeda 1985: 102f and recent contributions by Pāsādika 2010 and Kuan 2012. My inclusion of the EĀ version at this juncture is simply a matter of convenience of presentation and does not imply any certainty about the school affiliation.

²¹Senart 1897: 330,17 to 335,9; translated in Jones 1956/1978: 322–328.

²²T 1421 at T XXII 104b23 to 105a2; translated into French by Bureau 1963: 174f.

²³T 1428 at T XXII 788a6 to 788c7; translated into French by Bureau 1963: 175–177.

²⁴Lefman 1902: 416,16 to 418,21, translated into French by Foucaux 1884: 346–348; cf. also T 187 at T III 607b15 to 607c26.

²⁵*Buddhacarita* 15.27–58, Johnston 1936/1995: 11–14.

²⁶T 190 at T III 811a14 to 812c4, translated into English by Beal 1875: 251–254; and D 301 *sa* 59b2 to 61b3 or Q 967 *shu* 60b4 to 62b8, part of which has been rendered into Sanskrit by Sastri 1938: 481–483 and translated into French by Feer 1870: 363–380.

phies extant in Chinese translation.²⁷ The school affiliation of these biographies is not always clear. For my present purpose the question of the school affiliation of these works is of less importance, since my emphasis is on the canonical discourse and *Vinaya* versions. Therefore I will only be able to consider the perspectives provided in these biographies as supplementary information, whenever this seems opportune.

As the above survey clearly shows, numerous parallels to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* are extant. In view of the amount of material to be covered, in the present paper I will focus on the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda versions of this discourse, leaving the other canonical version preserved in Chinese translation for a subsequent paper.

In what follows, I alternate the translations with brief studies, in the hope that the relative shortness of the translated extracts will be able to sustain the reader's interest in spite of the inevitable tediousness of reading texts that work again and again through the same topic.

1) Translation of the *Samyukta-āgama* Discourse²⁸

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying at Vārāṇasī in the Deer Park, the Dwelling-place of Seers.

Then the Blessed One addressed the five monks: “‘This is the noble truth of *duḥkha*,’ which is a teaching not heard before. When I gave proper attention to it, vision, knowledge, understanding and realization arose [in me].²⁹ ‘This is the arising of *duḥkha* ... this is the cessation of *duḥkha* ... this is the noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*,’ which is a teaching not heard before. When I gave proper attention to it, vision, knowledge, understanding and realization arose [in me].

Again, the noble truth of *duḥkha* should be further understood with knowledge, which is a teaching not heard before. When I gave proper attention to it,

²⁷The biographies preserved in Chinese are: 過去現在因果經, T 189 at T III 644b7 to 644c27; 眾許摩訶帝經, T 191 T III 954a2 to 954b3; and 中本起經, T 196 at T IV 148b1 to 148c16.

²⁸The translated discourse is SĀ 379 at T II 103c13 to 104a29. Here and elsewhere, due to the number of extant versions I am not able to undertake a thorough comparative study of each version and have to limit my footnotes to noting only a few points. A full examination of the various versions would require a whole monograph.

²⁹SĀ 379 does not explicitly indicate that the Buddha is the subject of this sentence. My insertion of “I” follows the individual Tibetan discourse edited in Chung 2006: 86, where *nga* introduces the reference to things not heard before.

vision, knowledge, understanding and realization arose [in me]. [Again], the noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, should be eradicated ...³⁰ Again, the cessation of the arisen *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha* should be realized ...³¹ Again, this noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, should be cultivated ...

“Again, monks, this noble truth of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, has to be understood completely ...³² Again, this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, has to be eradicated completely ... Again, the noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, has to be realized completely ... Again, the noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, [once] being understood, has to be cultivated completely [104a] ...

“Monks, [so long as] in regard to these four noble truths in three turnings and twelve modes I had not given rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and realization, I had not yet attained deliverance, release and liberation among the assemblies of those who listen to teachings:³³ *devas*, Māra, Brahmā, recluses and Brahmins; I had myself not realized the attainment of supreme and right awakening.

“[When] in regard to the four noble truths in three turnings and twelve modes I had given rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and realization, then I had thereby attained release and deliverance among the assemblies of those who listen to teachings: Māra, Brahmā, recluses and Brahmins; I had myself realized the attainment and accomplishment of supreme and right awakening.”

While the Blessed One was delivering this teaching, the venerable Kauṇḍinya and eighty thousand *devas* attained the pure eye of Dharma that is remote from stains and free from dust.

Then the Blessed One said to the venerable Kauṇḍinya: “Have you come to know the Dharma?”

Kauṇḍinya replied to the Buddha: “I have come to know it, Blessed One.”

Again he asked the venerable Kauṇḍinya: “Have you come to know the Dharma?”

³⁰ Abbreviations are my own.

³¹ Adopting a variant without 知, in line with the same formulation below for the completed realization of the cessation of *duḥkha*; a variant also followed by Yinshùn 1983: 107.

³² Following an emendation adopted by Yinshùn 1983: 107 and discussed by Chung 2006: 90 note 130.

³³ SĀ 379 T II 104a4: 闍法眾中, an expression that seems to be peculiar to this version.

Kauṇḍinya replied to the Buddha:³⁴ “I have come to know it, Well Gone One.”

Because the venerable Kauṇḍinya had come to know the Dharma, he was called Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya.

When the venerable Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya had come to know the Dharma, the spirits of the earth raised the proclamation: “Dear sirs, at Vārāṇasī, at the Dwelling of Seers, in the Deer Park, the Blessed One [has turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, which has never been turned by recluses, brahmins, devas, Māra or Brahmā, for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the sake of benefitting and profiting *devas* and men. The assembly of *devas* will increase, the assembly of *asuras* will decrease.”

When the spirits of the earth had proclaimed it, on hearing it the *devas* dwelling in the sky ... the *devas* of the Four Heavenly Kings ... the *devas* of the Thirty-three ... the Yāma *devas* ... the Tuṣita *devas* ... the Nirmāṇarati *devas* ... the Paranirmitavaśavartin *devas* in turn passed on the proclamation and within an instant it was heard up to the realm of the Brahmā *devas*.³⁵ The Brahmā *devas* raised the proclamation:

“Dear sirs, at Vārāṇasī, at the Dwelling of Seers, in the Deer Park, the Blessed One [has turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, which has never been turned by those who listen to teachings in the world: recluses, brahmins, *devas*, Māra or Brahmā, for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many, for the sake of benefitting and profiting *devas* and men. The assembly of *devas* will increase, the assembly of *asuras* will decrease.”

Because at Vārāṇasī, at the Dwelling of Seers, in the Deer Park, the Blessed One turned the wheel of Dharma, this discourse is called the Discourse on Turning the Wheel of Dharma.

When the Buddha had spoken this discourse, the monks, who had heard what the Buddha had said, were delighted and received it respectfully.

³⁴Besides minor variations in formulating similar passages, a noteworthy change occurs at the present juncture in SĀ 379 at T II 104a12, which shifts from the earlier transcription of his name as 憍陳如 to the alternative 拘隣. The transcription 拘隣 is also employed in EĀ 24.5 at T II 619b6, whereas the transcription 憍陳如 is used in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 788b24, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 104c18, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1450 at T XXIV 128a9 and T 1451 at T XXIV 292b29 (= T 110 at T II 504b7) or T XXIV 406c5, and the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1435 at T XXIII 448c14.

³⁵Chung 2006: 97 note 181 points out that an emendation of the present passage suggested by Yinshùn (印順) 1983: 109 note 7 is not supported by the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.

Study

On comparing the discourse translated above with its Pāli counterpart, a striking difference is the absence of any mention in the *Samyukta-āgama* version of the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification that should be avoided. Another and perhaps no less striking difference is the lack of any explanation regarding the nature of the four noble truths in the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse, which instead directly proceeds to the different aspects of how the Buddha realized these four noble truths, the “three turnings” that are to be applied to each truth.

The Buddha’s teaching of the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification is recorded elsewhere in the *Samyukta-āgama*,³⁶ which also has expositions of the nature of the four noble truths similar to the explanations that appear in the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*.³⁷ Thus the reciters of the *Samyukta-āgama* were evidently aware of these two aspects, even though they do not feature in their account of the first teaching given by the Buddha.

The *Samyukta-āgama* discourse does not stand alone in this respect, as similar presentations can be found in the discourses individually translated into Chinese and Tibetan,³⁸ as well as in the discourse quotations in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* and in Śamathadeva’s compendium of discourse quotations from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.³⁹

Turning to the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, however, a different picture emerges: here we do find the two extremes as well as an explanation of the nature of the four noble truths.

³⁶ Cf., e.g., SĀ 912 at T II 228c18, which is a parallel to SN 42.12 at SN IV 330,26.

³⁷ Cf., e.g., SĀ 344 at T II 95a1, which is a parallel to MN 9 at MN I 48,29; for a translation of SĀ 344 cf. Anālayo 2011c. Unlike SĀ 912, which has the Buddha as its speaker, SĀ 344 is an exposition by Śāriputra.

³⁸ Chung 2006: 86–99 and T 110 at T II 504a4 to 504b21.

³⁹ Wogihara 1971: 579,19 to 580,22 and D 4094 *nyu* 28a7 to 29b6 or Q 5595 *thu* 64a8 to 66a2.

2) Translation from the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*⁴⁰

At that time the Blessed One said to the five men: “Men who have gone forth should not be involved with two types of wrong teachings.⁴¹ What are the two? The first is delighting in attachment, a custom of the worldling that is low, inferior and vulgar, going [so far as] to indulge with delight in licentious sensual pleasures. The second is tormenting oneself, which is mistaken and is not a custom practised by noble ones. One who has gone forth should keep away from these two wrong teachings. Those who always practise the teaching by the middle, which I have established, will attain purification of vision and great wisdom, accomplishing right awakening and the tranquillity of Nirvāṇa. [127c]

“What is that teaching by the middle?⁴² It is the noble eight[fold] path. What are its eight [parts]? They are right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.”

At that time the Blessed One gave teachings like this with a determined mind to the five men. Then two of the five learned the Dharma from the Buddha while three went in the morning to beg alms, returning with enough for the six to eat. In the afternoon, three learned the Dharma from the Buddha and two went into the village to beg alms, returning with sufficient for the five to eat together. Only the Buddha, the Blessed One, did not take food at the wrong time.

Then the Blessed One told the five: “Because of giving reasoned attention with the power of effort to this noble truth of *duḥkha* ... to this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha* ... to this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha* ... to this noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, which I had not heard before, I attained the arising of pure wisdom, vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.”

Again he told the five men: “Because of giving reasoned attention with the power of effort to this noble truth of *duḥkha*, which I had not understood before and which now was to be understood ... to this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, which I had not eradicated before and which now was to be eradicated ...

⁴⁰The translated section is found in T 1450 at T XXIV 127b24 to 128b15.

⁴¹I have emended the present reference in T 1450 at T XXIV 127b25, which at this point actually speaks of “wrong teachers”, 邪師, but three lines below, as pointed out by Waldschmidt 1957: 141 note 12, T 1450 switches to the more appropriate “wrong teachings”, 邪法. The Sanskrit and Tibetan versions instead speak of the two extremes, cf. Gnoli 1977: 134,10 and Waldschmidt 1957: 141,8 (§14)

⁴²Adopting a variant without 處.

to this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, which I had not realized before and which now was to be realized ... to this noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, which I had not cultivated before and which now was to be cultivated, I attained the arising of pure wisdom, vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.”

“Because of giving reasoned attention with the power of effort to this noble truth of *duḥkha*, which I had not heard before, which being already fully understood need not be understood again ... to this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, which I had not heard before, which having already forever eradicated I need not eradicate again... to this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, which I had not realized before,⁴³ which having already realized I need not realize again ... to this noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, which I had not cultivated before, which having already cultivated I need not cultivate again, I attained the arising of pure wisdom, vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.

“You five should know that at first, [128a] when I had not yet attained these four truths with three turnings and twelve types, had not aroused pure vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening, I had been unable to go beyond the realm of men and *devas*, up to Brahmā, and the whole world with its recluses and Brahmins, *devas*, men and *asuras*, I had not realized liberation and release, had not become free from distortions, I had not realized the supreme right knowledge.

“You should know that, since I cultivated these four truths with three turnings and twelve types, I realized the arising of pure vision, knowledge, understanding, I awakened to right awakening. Then I went beyond the realm of men and *devas*, Māra and Brahmā, and the world with its recluses and Brahmins, *devas*, men and *asuras*. I was liberated and released, free from distortions. I realized right knowledge and supreme right awakening.”

When the Blessed One delivered this teaching, the venerable Kauṇḍinya realized in the teachings the attainment of the pure eye of the Dharma that is free from dust and free from stains, and a company of eighty thousand *devas* also realized in the teachings the eye of the Dharma.

⁴³ As already noted by Waldschmidt 1957: 149 note 13, T 1450 at T XXIV 127c26 here changes from the earlier reference to what had not been heard before, 先未曾聞, to a formulation more closely adjusted to the context, in the present case 先未所證. The exposition of the completed realization of the cessation of *duḥkha* and the completed development of the path in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions still has *pūrvam ananuśruteṣu dharmeṣu* and the equivalent *sngon ma thos pa'i chos rnam*, cf. Gnoli 1977: 135,25+28 (where the first instance is without *dharmeṣu*, an error in the edition corrected in Chung 2006: 81,16) and Waldschmidt 1957: 149,13+19.

Then the Blessed One asked Kauṇḍinya: “Have you realized the Dharma?” He replied: “Blessed One, I have realized it”. The Buddha asked again: “Kauṇḍinya, have you realized the Dharma?” He replied: “Well Gone One, I have realized it”. The Buddha said: “Venerable Kauṇḍinya has fully realized the Dharma, for this reason his name shall be Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya.”

Then the community of *yakṣas* that dwell on the earth heard what the Buddha had said and together they made this proclamation: “Dear sirs, you should know that at the town of Vārāṇasī, at the Place where Seers Descend,⁴⁴ in the Deer Park, the Buddha, the Blessed One, has [turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, which recluses, brahmins, men, *devas*, Māra and Brahmā are not able to turn, for the welfare of many people, for the benefit of many people, out of feelings of compassion. For this reason, the community of *devas* will increase and the *asuras* will decrease.”

Then the *yakṣas* dwelling in the sky, having heard the proclamation made by those who dwell on the earth, together made this proclamation ... up to ... the *devas* of the Four Heavenly Kings ... the *devas* of the Thirty-three ... the *Yāma devas* ... the *Tuṣita devas* ... the *Nirmāṇarata devas* ... the *Paranirmitavaśavartin devas* ... reaching the *Brahmā devas*, all at the same time in the same instant at the same moment made this proclamation. When the *Akaniṣṭha devas* heard this proclamation,⁴⁵ they also proclaimed:

“Dear sirs, you should know that at the town of Vārāṇasī, at the Place where Seers Descend, in the Deer Park, the Buddha, the Blessed One has [turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, which recluses, brahmins, men, *devas*, Māra and Brahmā are not able to turn, for the welfare of many people, for the benefit of many people, out of feelings of compassion. The community of *devas* will increase and the *asuras* will decrease.”

Because at the town of Vārāṇasī, at the Place where Seers Descend, in the Deer Park, the Blessed One [turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, therefore this discourse and this place have received the name Place or Discourse Where the Wheel of the Dharma was Turned. [128b]

⁴⁴T 1450 at T XXIV 128a16: 仙人墮處, which would reflect an original *ṛṣipātana*; cf. also Chung 2006: 86 note 85 and the discussion in Caillat 1968 and Norman 1989: 375. The corresponding part in Gnoli 1977: 136,23 refers to the *ṛṣivadana*, with its corresponding counterpart in *dran srong smra ba* in Waldschmidt 1957: 155,11.

⁴⁵T 1450 at T XXIV 128a23: 阿迦尼吒天; the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions do not bring in the *devas* of the *Akaniṣṭha* realm, but speak just of the *Brahmā devas*; cf. Gnoli 1977: 137,7 and Waldschmidt 1957: 157,11.

Then the Blessed One said to the [other] four: “There are four noble truths. What are the four? They are the noble truth of *duḥkha*, the noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, the noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, the noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*.

“What is the noble truth of *duḥkha*? It is this: birth is *duḥkha*, old age is *duḥkha*, disease is *duḥkha*, death is *duḥkha*, separation from what is loved is *duḥkha*, association with what is disliked is *duḥkha*, not getting what one wishes is *duḥkha* ... up to ... the five aggregates of clinging are *duḥkha*. It should be understood like this, [for which] the eight[fold] path should be cultivated, that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

“What is called the noble truth of the arising [of *duḥkha*]? It is craving and desire that lead to experiencing further becoming, craving conjoined with lust and delight, craving that delights and rejoices in this and that, the stain of craving. In order to give it up and be free from it, the eight[fold] right path should be cultivated.

“What is the noble truth of the cessation [of *duḥkha*]? It is the cessation, the destruction, the appeasement, the disappearance and permanent fading away of the craving and desire that lead to experiencing further becoming, the craving and delight that are the cause of being defiled by attachment. To realize this the eight[fold] right path should be cultivated.

“What is the noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*? It is the noble eight[fold] path, which should be cultivated.”

When the Blessed One had spoken this teaching on the four truths, Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya realized the liberation of the mind [through] the eradication of all influxes and the [other] four realized in these teachings the pure eye [of the Dharma] that is free from any stain or dust. At that time in the world there were two arhats, one being the Blessed One and the second being Kauṇḍinya.

Study

There are several interesting features in the above version of the Buddha’s first teaching to his five disciples, such as the suggestion that a time interval occurred between the delivery of the teaching on the two extremes and the disclosure of the four noble truths. A discussion of these will have to wait, however, until I have also surveyed the Sarvāstivāda versions.

The above *Saṅghabhedavastu* version shows that both the rejection of the two extremes and an exposition of the nature of the four noble truths were known in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition as part of the teaching given by the Buddha to his first five disciples. In line with the above *Samyukta-āgama* version, however, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* gives central emphasis to the “three turnings” applied to each truth as that part of the teaching which triggered the stream-entry of Kauṇḍinya. Thus the explanation of the four noble truths occurs only subsequent to this event and the acclamation by the *devas*.

Comparing the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* version, the chief difference in coverage between them could in principle be explained in two ways: Either the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse is an earlier version of the Buddha’s first discourse, which was later amplified in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, or the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse is an extract from a longer version of the first discourse, such as the one found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*.

Regarding the first of these two alternatives, given that the *Samyukta-āgama* version refers to the Deer Park and reports the Buddha as addressing the five monks, the way the discourse has been preserved gives no indication that the setting of the discourse should be considered different from what other versions report in more detail, namely that the Buddha gave this instruction at the Deer Park to his five former companions who had been with him when he practised asceticism. According to the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, when the recently awakened Buddha approached his former companions at the Deer Park, they decided not to show him any respect, as they thought that he had given up his striving for liberation.⁴⁶ A similar description precedes the extract from the *Saṅghabhedavastu* translated above.⁴⁷

In such a setting a teaching that explains to the five why the Buddha had given up ascetic practices and what alternative route to liberation he had discovered would fit the context well. Some such explanation would seem to be required in order to overcome the diffidence of the five and enable them to become receptive to the disclosure of the four noble truths.

In other words, since the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse does not show any sign of having a different setting from the *Saṅghabhedavastu* other than that it begins at a later juncture of events, an instruction on the two extremes to be avoided would

⁴⁶MN 26 at MN I 171,22 and MĀ 204 at T I I 777c2.

⁴⁷Gnoli 1977: 133,5, T 1450 at T XXIV 127a28 and the Tibetan version in Waldschmidt 1957: 135.

fit the context well and does not give the impression of being a later addition. This makes the second of the two above-mentioned alternatives somewhat more probable, in that the *Samyukta-āgama* could just be an extract from a full account similar to that now found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*.⁴⁸

The impression that the *Samyukta-āgama* could just be an extract finds further support when examining the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, which has two versions of the present discourse. In order to avoid tiring the reader with excessive repetition, I have consigned my translation of these two versions to an appendix to this paper.

The first of these two versions in the *Kṣudrakavastu* has the same coverage as the above *Samyukta-āgama* discourse, that is, the first *Kṣudrakavastu* version has just the exposition of the three turnings to be applied to each of the four noble truths. The second *Kṣudrakavastu* version begins with a brief reference to this teaching on the three turnings, with an explicit indication that this should be given in full as in the discourse on the three turnings, and then continues with Ānanda reporting how the Buddha taught the five monks the nature of the four noble truths, as a result of which Kauṇḍinya became an arahant. There cannot be any doubt that these two *Kṣudrakavastu* versions are two separate extracts from a full version that had both the three turnings and the exposition of the nature of the four noble truths.⁴⁹

Notably, the first *Kṣudrakavastu* version is word for word identical with the individual discourse, which is said to be translated by Yijing (義淨).⁵⁰ Since Yijing is also the translator of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, there can be little doubt that this discourse was simply taken from the *Vinaya*. This extract from the *Kṣudrakavastu* has become a discourse on its own, now found among individu-

⁴⁸ A somewhat comparable case is the Tibetan translation of the **Abhiṅkramaṇa-sūtra*. The Chinese translation, T 190 at T III 811a14, reports the teaching on the two extremes, T III 811b5 explains the nature of the four noble truths and at T III 811b20 describes the Buddha's realization of the four noble truths. The Tibetan translation, D 301 sa 59b2 or Q 967 shu 60b4, also begins with the teaching on the two extremes, but then directly follows this at D 301 sa 60a2 or Q 967 shu 61a4 by describing how the Buddha realized the four noble truths and thus does not explain the nature of the four noble truths.

⁴⁹ That the two *Kṣudrakavastu* versions belong to what would have been a continuous account of the teachings delivered by the Buddha to his first five disciples can also be seen from a mistake shared by both, where the reference to the Buddha's realization of what was *not* heard before has lost the negation, cf. T 1451 at T XXIV 292b2: 於所聞法 and T 1451 at T XXIV 406c4: 於所聞法.

⁵⁰ T 1451 at T XXIV 292a29 to 292c15 = T 110 at T II 504a7 to 504b21, a correspondence already noted by Chung 2006: 78.

ally translated *Samyukta-āgama* discourses in the Taishō edition. Only through a comparison with the first *Kṣudrakavastu* version does it become clear that this individual *Samyukta-āgama* discourse has simply been copied from the *Vinaya*. This makes it fairly probable that the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse is similarly an extract from a full version of the first discourse, similar to what is now found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*.

The tendency for *Vinaya* extracts to become discourses on their own does not appear to be restricted to the short versions of the Buddha's teaching to his five disciples. The *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*'s description of the coming into existence of the four assemblies of Buddhist disciples (monastic and lay, male and female) has its counterparts in other Buddhist schools in their respective *Vinayas*, making it quite probable that the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* had its origin in a *Vinaya* environment.⁵¹ Since the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* has the teaching on the two extremes, the three turnings and the exposition of the nature of the four noble truths,⁵² in this case what appears to be another *Vinaya* extract is not confined to the short version found in the individual discourse copied from the *Kṣudrakavastu*.

In sum, the short versions that only describe how the Buddha realized the four noble truths in three turnings, but do not expound the nature of the four noble truths and do not introduce these with a rejection of the two extremes, are probably intentional extracts from a longer account. Apparently the Mūlasarvāstivāda reciters considered this extract to be the most significant part, the part that should be considered to have set in motion the wheel of Dharma, namely the Buddha's indication how each of the four noble truths needs to be put into practice in three turnings.

A somewhat similar perspective comes to light when one examines the canonical versions of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, found in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.

3) Translation of the *Madhyama-āgama* Discourse⁵³

At that time I told them: “Five monks, you should know that there are two extreme undertakings that those who are on the path should not practise: the first is attachment to sensual pleasures which is a lowly act, undertaken by the com-

⁵¹ Cf. Hartmann 1994: 333f and on the general pattern of biographies emerging from a *Vinaya* environment cf., e.g., Frauwallner 1956: 46 and Hirakawa 1993/1998: 264.

⁵² Waldschmidt 1957: 140–162 (§§11.14 to 14.12)

⁵³ The translated section is found in MĀ 204 at T I 777c25 to 778a2.

moner; the second is to torture oneself and cause suffering to oneself, which is an ignoble thing and which is not connected to what is beneficial.⁵⁴

“Five monks, abandon these two extremes and take up the middle path that accomplishes understanding and wisdom, [778a] that brings about certainty and the attainment of mastery and that leads to wisdom, leads to awakening and leads to Nirvāṇa, namely the eight[fold] right path, from right view to right concentration. These are its eight [parts].”

Study

The above short passage shows that the Sarvāstivāda tradition considered the rejection of the two extremes to have been delivered by the Buddha to his first five disciples. Now the above brief reference in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse and the absence of any extract from the first discourse in its *Majjhima-nikāya* parallel, the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, has been considered by some scholars as evidence that the four noble truths are only a later addition to the Buddha’s first discourse and consequently are merely a later element in early Buddhist thought.

In order to examine the suggestions made in this respect, I need to depart briefly from my main subject – the Chinese parallels to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* – and discuss a suggestion made relatively early in the history of Buddhist scholarship regarding the late nature of the four noble truths. This suggestion comes as one of several “curious omissions in Pali canonical texts”, noted by C.A.F. Rhys Davids in 1935, where she points out that the four noble truths are absent from the Fours of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*. Regarding this absence, Rhys Davids (1935: 723) comments that the four noble truths, being “of the first importance, their occurrence where they should one and all have come, aye, and been given first rank, is ... the reverse of what we ... find”. While looking for the four noble truths among the Fours of the *Āṅguttara-nikāya* may at first sight appear quite straightforward, closer inspection suggests otherwise.

In the way the orally transmitted discourses are now found in the four main *Nikāyas* of the Pāli canon, the material has been divided into predominantly long discourses, allocated to the *Dīgha-nikāya*, mainly medium long discourses, allocated to the *Majjhima-nikāya*, and what for the most part are short discourses, allocated to the *Samyutta-nikāya* and the *Āṅguttara-nikāya*. The *Samyutta-nikāya* then assembles short discourses according to topic, resulting in different

⁵⁴ Adopting a variant without 求.

saṃyuttas, whereas the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* assembles short discourses according to a numerical principle, where the existence of a particular number between one and eleven in some part of a discourse provides the rationale for inclusion in the respective section of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*.

Teachings on the four noble truths not only involve the number four, but at the same time also address a topic that tradition considers a key doctrine of early Buddhism. Thus the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* has a whole *saṃyutta* dedicated to this theme. This is the *Sacca-saṃyutta*, which collects over one hundred thirty discourses on the four noble truths.⁵⁵ Since these are collected in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, it is not surprising to find that such discourses are not collected among the Fours of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*.⁵⁶

In other words, the expectation to find discourses on the four noble truths among the Fours of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* appears to be a case of looking in the wrong place. Such an expectation fails to appreciate that, in spite of occasional overlapping, the nature of the four *Nikāyas* is to complement one another. The four *Nikāyas* are not four independent records of what tradition believed to be the Buddha's teaching, each of which has to be in itself complete.

The suggestion by Rhys Davids in turn appears to have inspired Anderson to find further support for the lateness of the four noble truths.⁵⁷ Since the *Ariya-pariyesanā-sutta* does not record the contents of the Buddha's first teaching at all, Anderson (1999/2001: 63) concludes that "the *Ariyapariyesana-sutta* shows that certain redactors of the canon conceived of the Buddha's act of teaching without the four noble truths". Anderson (1999/2001: 55f) holds that probably "the four noble truths emerged into the canonical tradition at a particular point and slowly became recognized as the first teaching of the Buddha ... [being] a doctrine that came to be identified as the central teaching of the Buddha by the time of the commentaries".

It seems to me that this is another case of looking in the wrong place, a failure to appreciate that, just like the four *Nikāyas*, the early discourses complement

⁵⁵SN 56.1–131 at SN V 414–477; according to the survey in Gethin 2007: 386, the count of discourses in the different editions of the *Sacca-saṃyutta* varies between 131 and 135.

⁵⁶Zafropulo 1993: 112f notes that reference to the four noble truths occurs also in verse, such as Dh 190f and its parallels or Th 1258f; he concludes that "le témoignage de ces Gāthās nous semble suffisant pour attester l'ancienneté de la notion d'une quaternité d'Āryasatyāni".

⁵⁷Anderson 1999/2001: ix starts her preface by quoting Rhys Davids 1935 (under her maiden name) and then in the beginning part of the actual study (p. 3f) gives a full quote of the relevant part from Rhys Davids 1935.

one another and are not independent records of what tradition believed to be the Buddha's teaching, each of which has to be complete in itself.

The purpose of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* is to depict in autobiographical fashion the Buddha's noble quest for awakening. There is no reason for this discourse to give a full account of the first teaching delivered by the Buddha, which is rather the purpose of the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. The expectation that the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* should give a complete account of everything that is in some way related to the Buddha's awakening mistakes a discourse with autobiographical features for a full-fledged autobiography. Such a full-fledged autobiography, however, cannot be found in any discourse in the four Pāli *Nikāyas*.

Staying within the scope of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, a more detailed account of meditative aspects of the Buddha's approach to awakening can be found in the *Bhayabherava-sutta*, which reports how, based on his attainment of the four absorptions, he was able to realize the three higher knowledges (the last of which is formulated in terms of the four noble truths).⁵⁸ The *Bhayabherava-sutta* begins with the difficulties of living in seclusion, followed by the Buddha indicating how he dealt with fear when living alone in the wilds. The context thus makes it natural for the discourse to focus on the meditative development that led to the Buddha's awakening and thereby going forever beyond fear.

Another *Majjhima-nikāya* discourse with autobiographical features is the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta*. The setting of the discourse is a challenge by the non-Buddhist debater Saccaka, a proponent of asceticism, in reply to which the Buddha is on record as describing his own practice of austerities. Here the context naturally leads to a different perspective on the Buddha's progress to awakening, namely on his attempts to reach liberation through breath control and fasting. The fact that such ascetic practices are not mentioned in the *Bhayabherava-sutta* does not mean that these are conflicting accounts of what preceded the Buddha's breakthrough to full awakening, but is simply a result of the setting of each discourse. Nor does the circumstance that neither the *Bhayabherava-sutta* nor the *Mahāsaccaka-sutta* mentions what the Buddha taught his first disciples mean that this teaching was unknown to the reciters of the *Majjhima-nikāya*. It is only natural that, given the purpose of these two discourses, the topic of the Buddha's first discourse does not come within their purview.

That the reciters of the *Majjhima-nikāya* were aware of the four noble truths as the theme of the Buddha's first teaching at Benares is in fact explicitly recorded in

⁵⁸MN 4 at MN I 23,14; cf. Anālayo 2011b: 218 note 47.

the *Saccavibhaṅga-sutta* of the same *Majjhima-nikāya*. The topic of this discourse is an analysis of the four noble truths; thus in this context it is natural to find an indication that in the Deer Park of Benares the Buddha set in motion the wheel of Dharma by teaching the four noble truths.⁵⁹

A reference to this event can also be found in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, which reports the recently awakened Buddha proclaiming that he is about to go to Benares to set in motion the wheel of Dharma.⁶⁰ The fact that neither his actual realization of the four noble truths nor his teaching of these to his first disciples is recorded in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* is just because the main point of this discourse is to contrast the ignoble quest of the average worldling to the noble quest for awakening. Viewed in this perspective, the only part of the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* that the reciters could perhaps have included is the section on the two extremes, as one of these two extremes corresponds to the ignoble quest. The section on the two extremes is precisely what we find in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel.

The fact that the above translated *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* has only this much of the first discourse, however, has been taken by Bareau as a sign that some reciters were not aware of the four noble truths as the theme of the Buddha's first discourse or else refused to consider it as such.⁶¹ He then concludes that the doctrine of the four noble truths is only a later development in Buddhist thought.⁶²

As already pointed out by Schmithausen (1981: 210 note 36), Bareau's reasoning is not convincing. Even if the four noble truths were not part of the first sermon, this does not necessarily entail that the doctrine as such is late, as it may well have existed elsewhere in the canon.

Moreover, Bareau's conclusion that the four noble truths were not part of the first sermon is flawed by a methodological problem, as the comparative study on which he bases this conclusion does not take into account important parallels.

⁵⁹MN 141 at MN III 248,5.

⁶⁰MN 26 at MN I 171,11.

⁶¹Bareau 1963: 181 comments that MĀ 204 (as well as EĀ 19.2, which I will be discussing in my second paper) "nous montrer qu'à une lointaine époque, une partie au moins de docteurs du Bouddhisme ignoraient quel avait été le thème du premier sermon ou refusaient de considérer comme tel les quatre saintes Vérités."

⁶²Bareau 1963: 180: "s'il en est bien ainsi, il s'ensuit des conséquences importantes pour l'histoire de la doctrine bouddhique. En effet, la thèse des quatre saintes Vérités se serait développée assez tard et elle ne serait pas, comme on le croit généralement, la base même de la pensée bouddhique."

Bareau considers the above translated *Madhyama-āgama* discourse as representative of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which he compares with the Dharmaguptaka, Mahīśāsaka and Theravāda *Vinaya* versions. He evidently was not aware of the fact that the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* has a version of the Buddha's first discourse that does mention the four noble truths (translated below); and he also left out of account the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*.⁶³ Another version not consulted is the second of the two *Ekottarika-āgama* discourse parallels, of which Bareau takes into account only the first one in support of his conclusions. Thus Bareau's conclusions, which have in turn influenced other scholars,⁶⁴ need to be revised based on a more comprehensive examination of the extant versions.

As becomes clear from the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* translated below, alongside the passage on the two extremes in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse we have a canonical Sarvāstivāda version that has an exposition of the four noble truths from the viewpoint of the three turnings. In addition, a discourse quotation in the *Dharmaskandha* has a corresponding version of the first discourse.⁶⁵

Thus even if one were to adopt the position that each of these versions is an independent witness that was meant to give a complete account of the Buddha's first teaching, within the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions the teaching of the four noble truths in three turnings constitutes the Buddha's first discourse in a *Samyukta-āgama* discourse, in an individual Chinese translation equalling the *Kṣudrakavastu* version, in an individual Tibetan translation, in several instances in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, as well as in discourse quotations in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, in Śamathadeva's com-

⁶³In his survey of the sources utilized for his research, Bareau 1963: 9 indicates that it was his conscious decision to leave aside the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* and the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*, whereas his comment that the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* “ne contient de récit parallèle à ceux que nous étudierons” indicates that he was not aware of the relevant passage in T 1435. While overlooking the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* parallel can easily happen, it seems to me that the conscious decision to leave aside the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* and the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* is a methodological weakness that undermines his study and conclusions. A proper assessment of the traditions on the life of the Buddha has to be based on a comparative study of *all* extant canonical versions at our disposal, as is the case for an assessment of any *Vinaya* narrative; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2012a.

⁶⁴Bronkhorst 1993/2000: 107 quotes Bareau 1963 and then concludes that “initially those Four Noble Truths were not part of the sermon in Benares, and consequently probably not as central to Buddhism as they came to be”. Dessein 2007: 22 also follows Bareau in stating that MĀ 204 and EĀ 19.2 “see the first ministry of the Buddha as only consisting of the middle mode of progress”.

⁶⁵T 1537 at T XXVI 479b25 to 480a15.

pendium of discourse quotations from the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and in the *Dharmaskandha*.

In other words, in view of the situation in the parallel versions transmitted within the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions, a more likely conclusion would be that the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions considered the four noble truths in three turnings, rather than the exposition of the two extremes, to constitute the first teaching.

However, as mentioned above, it seems to me considerably more natural to see the shorter versions as intentional extracts rather than as competing versions of the Buddha's setting in motion of the wheel of Dharma. In fact it is hard to imagine that such glaring contradictions on what tradition regarded as the first discourse of the Buddha would have been transmitted within texts of the same reciter traditions of the Mūlasarvāstivāda as well as the Sarvāstivāda without being made to harmonize with each other during the long period of transmission.

4) Translation from the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*⁶⁶

At one time the Buddha was staying at Vārāṇasī in the Dwelling Place of Seers, the Deer Park ... At that time the Buddha said to the five monks:

“This is the noble truth of *duḥkha* ... This is the noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha* ... this is the noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha* ... this is the noble truth of the path, which is a teaching I earlier had not heard from others. When among teachings I gave right attention, vision arose, knowledge arose, understanding arose and awakening arose.

“Monks, this noble truth of *duḥkha* should therefore be understood with knowledge ... Having understood this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, it should be eradicated ... Having understood this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, it should be realized ... Having understood this noble truth of the path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, it should be cultivated, which is a teaching I earlier had not heard from others. When among teachings I gave right attention, vision arose, knowledge arose, understanding arose and awakening arose.

“Monks, this noble truth of *duḥkha* has therefore been understood with knowledge ... [448c] Understanding this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*, it has therefore been eradicated ... Understanding this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*, it has therefore been realized ... Understanding this noble truth of the

⁶⁶The translated section is found in T 1435 at T XXIII 448b₁₃ to 449a₇.

path to the cessation of *duḥkha*, it has therefore been cultivated, which is a teaching I earlier had not heard from others. When among teachings I gave right attention, vision arose, knowledge arose, understanding arose and awakening arose.

“Monks, during the very time that I had not given rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening with regard to the four noble truths in three turnings and twelve parts, turning the wheel of Dharma, in this world with its Māra, Brahmā, recluses, Brahmins and among the assemblies of *devas* and men I had not attained deliverance, not attained liberation, not attained release and not attained an undistorted condition of the mind. At that time I did not have the thought that I had attained supreme and perfect awakening.

“At the very time when I had given rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening with regard to the four noble truths in three turnings and twelve parts, turning the wheel of Dharma, in this world with its Māra, Brahmā, recluses, Brahmins and among the assemblies of *devas* and men I had attained deliverance, had attained liberation, had attained release and had attained an undistorted condition of the mind. At that time I had the thought that I had attained supreme and perfect awakening.”

When this teaching was spoken, the elder Kauṇḍinya and eighty thousand *devas* among all teachings gave rise to the eye of Dharma that is remote from stains and free from dust.

At that time the Buddha said to Kauṇḍinya: “Have you attained the Dharma?” Kauṇḍinya replied: “I have attained it.” The Blessed One similarly [asked] Kauṇḍinya: “Have you attained the Dharma?” Kauṇḍinya similarly replied: “I have attained it.” The Blessed One similarly [asked] Kauṇḍinya: “Have you attained the Dharma?” Kauṇḍinya similarly replied: “I have attained it.” Since Kauṇḍinya was the first to attain it, the Blessed One called him Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya.

As Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya had attained the Dharma, at that time the spirits of the earth made a loud proclamation: “Living beings, at Vārāṇasī, at the Dwelling Place of Seers, in the Deer Park, the Buddha [has turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve parts that other recluses and Brahmins, *devas*, Māra, Brahmā and similar [beings] like this in the whole world are unable to turn in accordance with the Dharma, for the benefit of beings, for the welfare of beings, out of compassion for the world, for the profit and welfare of *devas* and men. The lineage of *devas* will increase, the assembly of *asuras* will decrease.”

The spirits dwelling in the sky, having heard the proclamation by the spirits of the earth, also made a loud proclamation that the Buddha had turned the wheel

of the Dharma. The Four Heavenly Kings heard the proclamation made by the spirits dwelling in the sky and also made a loud proclamation ... the *devas* of the Thirty-three ... the *Yāma devas* ... the *Tuṣita devas* ... the *Nirmāṇarati devas* ... the *Paranirmitavaśavartin devas* at that time made the proclamation ... up to the realm of *Brahmā devas*, all made this loud proclamation:

“Living beings, at *Vārāṇasī*, at the Dwelling Place of Seers, [449a] in the Deer Park, the Buddha [has turned] the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve parts that other recluses and Brahmins, *devas*, *Māra*, *Brahmā* and similar [beings] like this in the whole world are unable to turn in accordance with the Dharma, for the benefit of beings, for the welfare of beings, out of compassion for the world, for the profit and welfare of *devas* and men. The species of *devas* will increase, the assembly of *asuras* will decrease.”

Since at *Vārāṇasī*, at the Dwelling Place of Seers, in the Deer Park, the Buddha had turned the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve parts, therefore this discourse was called the Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

Study

Similar to the *Samyukta-āgama* discourse translated at the beginning of this paper, the above version of the Buddha’s first discourse in the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* focuses on the “three turnings” that need to be applied to each truth. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda* and *Sarvāstivāda* versions surveyed thus far indicate that, as already pointed out by Schmithausen (1981: 202), the first teaching by the Buddha consists “of at least three independent portions which are in fact presented as three different discourses in the version of at least one school”.

When evaluated from the perspective of narrative logic, the suggestion that the Buddha’s initial proposal of a middle path that leaves behind the two extremes was not immediately followed by his delivery of the four noble truths appears quite meaningful. It would fit the narrative denouement if, after the Buddha had introduced the eightfold path as an alternative to the dichotomy between sensuality and asceticism, his five former companions were given a little time to digest this new perspective. Since according to the description that precedes the above discourse they were at first unwilling even to listen to the Buddha at all, as they thought that his giving up asceticism had disabled him from reaching awakening,

it would be natural for them to need a little pondering and reflection in order to be able to accept the new perspective which the Buddha proposed.⁶⁷

This suggestion finds support in some of the biographies preserved in Chinese, which explicitly indicate that the Buddha continued his teaching once he realized that the five had accepted the idea of a middle path.⁶⁸ The same seems implicit in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse translated above, which right after the exposition of the two extremes continues with the Buddha indicating: “I wished to continue instructing the five monks.”⁶⁹

Once the five monks had accepted the idea of a middle path, this would then naturally lead on to an exposition of what early Buddhist thought reckons as what immediately precedes a practical implementation of the eightfold path,⁷⁰ namely right view in terms of an appreciation of the four noble truths.

Such a suggestion need not be seen as standing in contrast to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and those of its parallels that continue from the teaching of the two extremes directly to the four noble truths. These versions may simply have assembled the different spoken parts together, without marking where a longer pause had occurred.

What appears to be less convincing in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* account, however, is the suggestion that between the delivery of the teaching on the two extremes and the discourse on the four noble truths so much time intervened that

⁶⁷Based on his study and translation of the Tibetan parallels, Feer 1870: 403 comments that “pour faire entrer cette incomparable théorie dans l’esprit des cinq disciples, habitués à voir dans l’exténuation volontaire d’eux-mêmes l’exercice de la plus haute moralité ... l’enseignement dut donc se prolonger.”

⁶⁸T 189 at T III 644b15 continues after the Buddha’s exposition of the two extremes to be avoided and the eightfold noble path to be cultivated by indicating that at that time the five were very pleased on hearing what the Buddha had said, 時彼五人, 既聞如來如此之言, 心大歡喜. T 189 at T III 644b18 then reports that at that time the Blessed One examined whether the faculties of the five men were capable of attaining awakening, whereupon he addressed them again, 爾時世尊觀五人根, 堪任受道, 而語之言, which is followed by his teaching of the four noble truths. T 191 at T III 954a10 provides a similar transition after the teaching on the two extremes, indicating that at that time, after the Blessed One had spoken like this, he examined whether the five men were able to receive the Dharma, after which he continued to speak, 爾時世尊如是說已, 又復觀知五人, 堪能受法, 即復告曰.

⁶⁹MĀ 204 at T I 778a3.

⁷⁰That right view immediately precedes the noble eightfold path is stated in MN 117 at MN III 72,29 and its parallels MĀ 189 at T I 735c13 and D 4094 *nyu* 44b6 or Q 5595 *thu* 84a8.

some monks repeatedly took turns at going begging for alms, a presentation also found in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse.⁷¹

A similar description occurs in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, where it comes after the complete delivery of the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*, as well as in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, where it is preceded by the indication that the Buddha had been able to convince the five.⁷² The Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* reports with additional detail how some out of the five went begging after the delivery of the Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel had been completed.⁷³

Now it certainly seems conceivable that the Buddha arrived at the Deer Park at such a time of the day that, after his initial instruction on the two extremes to be avoided had been completed, the time had come for begging food, and he delivered his discourse on the four noble truths after the meal. But it seems less plausible that his first five disciples needed days to digest the new message.

Notably, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* reports that, after the delivery of the discourse on the three turnings had led to Kauṇḍinya's stream-entry, an explanation of the nature of the four noble truths then resulted in Kauṇḍinya becoming an arhat. This would mean that while his attainment of stream-entry needed a longer interval, his progress to full awakening happened right after his stream-entry.

Vetter (1985: 74) notes that in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* “the Buddha is so busy instructing the five ascetics that he no longer goes out begging himself but in turn two or three of the five ascetics must bring back food for the others ... this account only becomes meaningful to me if I assume that he was initiating these ascetics in the stages of *dhyāna*-meditation and was guiding them in a very practical way”.

Following Vetter's suggestion, the interlude during which some monks went to beg would fit a progression from stream-entry to arhatship, which appears to require the development of absorption.⁷⁴ This would be in line with the sequence of events in the Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda *Vinaya*.

⁷¹ After the teaching on the two extremes, MĀ 204 at T I 788a3 continues by reporting that two or three of the five went begging alternately.

⁷² Vin I 13,3; cf. also MN 26 at MN I 173,2.

⁷³ T 1428 at T XXII 788c24.

⁷⁴ In Anālayo 2003: 79-85 I have argued that, as far as the early discourses allow us to judge, it seems that the attainment of stream-entry does not require the previous development of absorption attainment, which appears to be necessary, however, for progress to the two higher levels of awakening, non-return and arhatship. Given that Kauṇḍinya and his companions are introduced as upholders of asceticism, it seems fairly probable that they should be seen as needing some time to train in concentration, which would fit best after stream-entry, but before full awakening.

Perhaps the presentation in the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions is the result of shifting the begging from after the delivery of the first discourse to a point before the disclosure of the four noble truths.⁷⁵ That some shifting of textual passages took place in the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts can be seen from the circumstance that the *Kṣudrakavastu* reports that after the delivery of the first discourse and Kauṇḍinya's stream-entry, when the five had gone forth, the Buddha had to tell them that they should no longer address him by his personal name.⁷⁶ In other canonical versions,⁷⁷ including the *Saṅghabhedavastu*,⁷⁸ this episode comes before the delivery of the first discourse, which appears a more natural placing as at that time they had not yet been convinced of his claim to be awakened.

Besides, what appears less straightforward in the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda versions is that the Buddha expounds the significance of the four noble truths only after Kauṇḍinya has reached stream-entry,⁷⁹ a presentation not found in other parallels. In fact, without some indication of what the four noble truths are about, it is hard to imagine how Kauṇḍinya could have understood what the Buddha was speaking about and to what the three turnings needed to be applied. In this respect the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta* and those of its parallels found outside of the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda traditions have a more convincing presentation, in that after the five monks had accepted the notion of a middle path as an alternative to asceticism, they then received a teaching on the nature of the four noble truths. This then could have been followed by an explanation of the “three turnings”, according to which each of the four noble truths needs not only to be understood, but also needs to be put into practice, a practice that needs to be brought to its successful conclusion in order to issue in full awakening.

⁷⁵In the biography T 191 at T III 953c28, the episode of the alternate going to beg alms comes even before the instruction on the two extremes.

⁷⁶T 1451 at T XXIV 292c18 and D 6 *tha* 249a3 or Q 1035 *de* 235b4.

⁷⁷MĀ 204 at T I 777c12, EĀ 24.5 at T II 618c29, the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 787c23, the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya*, T 1421 at T XXII 104b15, and the Theravāda *Vinaya*, Vin I 9,12 (cf. also MN 26 at MN I 171,33).

⁷⁸Gnoli 1977: 133,22, the Tibetan version in Waldschmidt 1957: 137,12, and the Chinese version T 1450 at T XXIV 127b12.

⁷⁹The account of the first *saṅgīti* in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* reckons the teaching of the four noble truths, expounded in detail in the discourse on the three turnings of the Dharma wheel, as the first discourse spoken by the Buddha, while the explanation of what these four noble truths are about is reckoned his second discourse, T 1451 at T XXIV 407a3 and D 6 *da* 312a5 or Q 1035 *ne* 295a6. I am indebted to Rod Bucknell (email 28-4-2012) for having drawn my attention to this pattern.

This completes my survey of the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Sarvāstivāda parallels to the *Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta*. In a subsequent paper I will turn to the other canonical parallels preserved in Chinese translation, based on translating the two *Ekottarika-āgama* discourses and the versions from the Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka *Vinayas*.

Appendix

Translation of the first version from the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (= individual translation)⁸⁰

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was staying at Vārāṇasī, at the Place where Seers Descend, [292b] in the Deer Park.

At that time the Blessed One said to the five monks: “Monks, giving reasoned attention to this noble truth of *duḥkha*, which I had [not] heard before ... giving reasoned attention to the teaching of this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha* ... of the cessation of *duḥkha* ... of the path leading to the cessation of *duḥkha*, I was able to give rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.

“Monks, giving reasoned attention to this noble truth of *duḥkha* that should be understood like this ... to this noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha* that should be eradicated like this ... to this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha* that should be realized like this ... to this noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *duḥkha* that should be cultivated like this – a teaching to be understood, which I had [not] heard before – I was able to give rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.

“Monks, giving reasoned attention to this noble truth of *duḥkha* that has been understood like this ... to this noble truth of the arising *duḥkha* that has been eradicated like this ... to this noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha* that has been realized like this ... to this noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *duḥkha* that has been cultivated like this – a teaching to be understood, which I had [not] heard before – I was able to give rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening.

“Monks, if I had not understood these four noble truths in three turnings and twelve aspects, then vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening could

⁸⁰The translated section is found in T 1451 at T XXIV 292a29 to 292c15, which corresponds word for word to T 110 at T II 504a4 to 504b21.

not have arisen. In the whole world, with its *devas*, Māra, Brahmā, recluses and brahmins, I would therefore not have become free from worry and defilements and attained liberation of the mind, I could not have realized and attained the supreme awakening.

“Monks, because I realized and understood these four noble truths in three turnings and twelve aspects, vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening were able to arise. In the whole world, with its Māra, Brahmā, recluses and brahmins, I became free from mental worry and defilements and attained liberation of the mind, I was able to realize and attain the supreme awakening.”

At the time when the Blessed One was delivering this teaching, the venerable Kauṇḍinya and eighty thousand *devas* attained the pure eye of Dharma that is remote from stains and free from dust. [292c]

The Buddha said to Kauṇḍinya: “Have you understood this Dharma?”

He replied: “I have understood, Blessed One.”

[The Buddha said again to Kauṇḍinya]: “Have you understood this Dharma?”

He replied: “I have understood, Well Gone One.”

Because of this he was called Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya (*Ājñāta means: having understood the meaning*).⁸¹

Then the earth-dwelling *yakṣas*, having heard what the Buddha had said, gave out a loud shout, telling men and *devas*: “Dear sirs, you should know that at Vārāṇasī, at the Place where Seers Descend, in the Deer Park, the Buddha has fully proclaimed the wheel of Dharma in three turnings and twelve modes, therefore being able to provide great benefit to *devas*, men, Māra, Brahmā, recluses, brahmins and the whole world, so that fellow practitioners of the holy life will quickly attain the peace of Nirvāṇa. Men and *devas* will increase, the *asuras* will decrease.”

Because the *yakṣas* had made this proclamation, the *devas* in the sky and the assembly of the Four Great Kings all heard it and came to know it. Like this in turn, in an instant, in a moment, the six [classes of] *devas* of the sensual realm up to the Brahmā *devas* all heard that shout. Having heard it, all in the assembly of Brahmās also proclaimed it (*to be spoken in full as earlier*). Because of this, the discourse was called the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma.

At that time the five monks and men and *devas* together, having heard what the Buddha had said, were delighted and received it respectfully.

⁸¹ Here and elsewhere, parts in italics are translations from the original Chinese.

Translation of the second version from the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the Mūla-sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (account of the first *saṅgīti*)⁸²

[Part 1]

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was staying at Vārāṇāsī, at the Place where Seers Descend, in the Deer Park. At that time the Blessed One said to the five monks: “Giving reasoned attention to this noble truth of *duḥkha*, which I had [not] heard before, I was able to give rise to vision, knowledge, understanding and awakening. *Herein to be spoken in full as above in the Discourse on the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma.*⁸³

[Part 2]

“Monks, you should know that there are four noble truths. What are the four? They are the noble truth of *duḥkha* ... of its arising ... of its cessation ... and of the path.

“What is the noble truth of *duḥkha*? It is this: birth is *duḥkha*, disease is *duḥkha*, old age is *duḥkha*, death is *duḥkha*, separation from what is loved is *duḥkha*, association with what is disliked is *duḥkha*, not getting what one wishes is *duḥkha*, said in short, the five aggregates of clinging are *duḥkha*. This is called the noble truth of *duḥkha*.

“What is the noble truth of the arising of *duḥkha*? It is craving conjoined with delight and acting accordingly, which is an occasion for the arising of defilements.

“What is the noble truth of the cessation of *duḥkha*? It is the complete and entire removal, cessation, discarding, giving up, transformation and elimination of this craving conjoined with delight and acting accordingly, which is an occasion for the arising of defilements and for experiencing further existence, the cessation of defilements conjoined with craving through realizing the sublime Nirvāṇa. This is called the cessation of *duḥkha*.

“What is the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *duḥkha*? It is the eightfold right path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right

⁸²T 1451 at T XXIV 406c1-5 and 407a6 to 407a17.

⁸³After this indication that the full discourse should be supplemented, the *Kṣudrakavastu* continues by reporting the proceedings of the first communal recitation or council. Then Ānanda is asked where and to whom the Buddha spoke the second discourse, to which Ānanda replies that it was spoken to the five monks at Vārāṇāsī, followed by reciting what I have translated as part 2.

livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This is called the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of *duḥkha*.”

When this teaching was spoken, Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya realized the liberation of the mind from all defilements and the other four monks attained the pure eye of the Dharma that is free from stains and dust.

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Ap | <i>Apadāna</i> |
| AN | <i>Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> |
| As | <i>Atthasālinī</i> |
| B ^e | Burmese edition |
| C ^e | Ceylonese edition |
| D | Derge edition |
| Dhp | <i>Dhammapada</i> |
| E ^e | PTS edition |
| EĀ | <i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125) |
| MĀ | <i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26) |
| MN | <i>Majjhima-nikāya</i> |
| Paṭis | <i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> |
| Q | Peking edition |
| S ^e | Siamese edition |
| SĀ | <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99) |
| SN | <i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> |
| T | Taishō edition (CBETA) |
| Th | <i>Theragāthā</i> |
| Vin | <i>Vīnayaṭṭaka</i> |

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