

Pali as an Artificial Language by
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PĀLI AS AN ARTIFICIAL LANGUAGE

In Geiger's grammar of Pāli we are taught that « The *v* is retained in gerunds like *mutvā* = *muktvā*, *patvā* = *āptvā* with *pra*, *vatvā* = *uktvā* » (§ 53.3). This sentence does not seem to have worried anybody as much as it should have done. For, how is it possible that a phonetic law well attested and firmly rooted in the whole area of Middle Indo-Aryan, namely the development of the consonant cluster *-tv-* into *-tt-*, as for instance in *satva*>*satta* or *catvārah*>*cattāro*, suddenly does not operate in one particular case that is, when the absolute is concerned. And it is especially bewildering that this cluster should survive at the end of a word in spite of the well known « phonetic weakness of terminational elements in Indo-aryan » as demonstrated by Sir Ralph Turner (JRAS, 1927, 227-239 = Collected Papers; London, 1975, 291-300). Still worse, the rule of retaining the Sanskritic form in *-tvā* in the absolute does not even apply universally within that very area, as absolutives such as Sanskrit *labdhvā* develop into *laddhā* (further examples: Saddanīti 482f.). This is indeed the expected development in Pāli, and it is attested, of course, in Prākrit (L. A. Schwarzschild: *Some forms of the absolute in Middle Indo-Aryan*, JAOS 76, 1956, 111-115). Here, first of all in Ardhamāgadhi the regular form of the absolute ending in *-ttā*: *pivittā* corresponds to Pāli *pivitvā*. Absolutives ending in *-ttā* were by no means alien to Buddhist Middle Indic as they are found in the so-called Patna Dharmapada (PDhp) now. This text represents a Sanskritisation unique in many respects, which shares some linguistic peculiarities with Pāli (G. Roth: *Particular features of the language of the Ārya-Mahāsāṅghika-Lokottaravādins*, in « Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung. Abh. der Akad. d. Wiss. in Göttingen. Phil-Hist. Klasse. Dritte Folge 117 », Göttingen, 1980, 78-135). In this version of the Dhammapada there are absolutives in *-ttā* such as *ñāttā*, PDhp 34 = *ñatvā*, Dhp 383. Taking into account this evidence from the PDhp and the general phonetic pattern of Middle Indo-Aryan, one should

expect absolutives in *-ttā* rather than in *-tvā* in Pāli, too. And they are attested indeed, but only occasionally as for instance *laddhā* from *labdhvā*. Therefore, it might seem necessary to postulate absolutives, ending in *-ttā* in Pāli in spite of the textual evidence.

This postulate seems to be a rather bold and extreme one at least at a first glance. Therefore, it may be useful to look for a different explanation trying to make the actual shape of the texts and the phonetic laws meet somehow or other.

First it may be argued that at the time when the language, we are used to call Pāli today (O. v. Hinüber: *Zur Geschichte des Sprachnamens Pāli*, in « Beiträge zur Indienforschung E. Waldschmidt zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet », Berlin, 1977, 237-246), was formed, the absolutives in *-tvā* were still surviving in Western India. Therefore, Eastern absolutives ending in *-tu* very rarely even met with in Pāli were recast into *-tvā*. These absolutives in *-tu* were not noticed by Geiger, but they are listed in the Saddanīti (Sadd 853.20-23 on Sn 424). The inscriptions of Aśoka show that they belong to the Eastern-language: Girnar ārabhiptā but Jaugada ālabhitu (1. Rock Edict, B). Forms such as ārabhiptā or captāro seem to give additional evidence for the linguistic reality (Sprachwirklichkeit) of the *tvā*-absolutives in Pāli. It is, however, open to conjecture what the orthography *-pt-* is meant to express phonetically. Although these words are transcribed generally as *catpāro* or *ārabhitpā* since the days of Hultsch's edition, this is a rather questionable supposition, as ligatures in Girnar mostly follow the common system applied when writing Brāhmī (*dbādasa, svāmika, prāṇa, sanyā, tamhi*). Probably *-pt-* is either meant as an orthographic expression of a labialized *-t-* at an intermediate state between *-tva-* and *-tta-* (similarly R.O. Franke, Kleine Schriften, 1978, 268 note), or, if taken as orthography for *-tp-*, it may reflect the first step of the development leading to *-pp-* (Skt. ātman-: Hindi āp). Either may be correct — at any rate Pāli has *satta* from *satva* and *cattāro* from *catvārah* side by with the absolute in *-tvā*, which, therefore, is anachronistic within the synchronic stage of the phonetic development. Thus no help in the attempt to justify the ending *-tvā* as genuine Western Middle Indic comes from the Aśokan inscriptions, and this way of bypassing the postulate of absolutives in *-ttā* for Pāli is obstructed.

Still another possible explanation of *-tvā* could be visualized. There are of course the numeral *dve* « two » or the personal pronoun *tvam* « you » (nom.), where the cluster *tva* is preserved, too. But here orthography is deceptive. For, as metrical texts prove, these words are to be understood as *duve* and *tuvam* (A.K. Warder: *Pāli Metre*, London, 1967, 29 § 36 and Sadd, 288, 32 *tuvam*, 655.14-17 *duve*). In the light of this evidence it may be tempting to interpret *-tvā* in the same way as *-tuvā* referring to Śaurasenī and Māgadhi *gadua* and *kadua* from *gatvā* and *kṛtvā* (Pischel § 581), which are, however, the only examples of this kind of the absolute. Now, reading Pāli *katvā* as *katuvā* is inhibited

at once by metrics, for *-tvā* always makes position (K. R. Norman: *The Elders' Verses I*, London, 1969, LXII § 50b). Thus this attempt also ends in a deadlock soon.

So as we are still confronted with *-tvā*, where there should be *-ttā*, we must adopt the opposite course of argument. If we start from the hypothesis postulating *-ttā* as the only form in accordance with the phonetic pattern of Middle Indic, this means of course that the absolutives in *-tvā* have been introduced into the texts to replace the older *-ttā* for some reason at some time.

If so, one should expect to find some traces of *-ttā* surviving in the text tradition. On the other hand, had this replacement of *-ttā* by *-tvā* been introduced with the strictest consistency and without any error or mistake, the whole question might remain unsolved and, perhaps, unsolvable. There are, however, flaws and gaps such as *laddhā* referred to above. These traces of the historically correct absolute are surviving to a much larger extent than one might expect. Once this possibility is envisaged quite a few instances come to light.

To find references to those passages, showing traces of the historical forms of the absolute it is useful to check the entry *abhijānāti* of the Critical Pāli Dictionary, which gives the following five constructions of *abhijānāti*: 1. object in the accusative; 2. accusative of a past participle — both these constructions are also met with in Sanskrit; 3. with an absolute; 4. with the nominative of the agent noun; 5. with the aorist, if the medium in *-ttha* or *-ttha* is employed. Here we can leave aside the constructions known from Sanskrit, and concentrate on the last three: absolute, agent noun and aorist.

First of all the construction using an agent noun is strange and difficult to explain. Generally reference is made to Pāṇini 3.2.112 *abhijñāvacaṇe lṛ̥t* with the example: *abhijānāsi devadatta kaśmīreṣu vatsyāmah* (H. Hendriksen: *Syntax of the infinite verb-forms of Pāli*, Copenhagen, 1944, S. 84 note 2). But here Pāṇini teaches *lṛ̥t*, the first future, and not *luṭ* as found in Pāli. Therefore, in this particular case the parallel between Pāli and Pāṇini is not as precise as one might wish, what has always raised some suppressed suspicion as to the applicability of this rule. And this suspicion, once it is there, grows considerably by looking at the quite exceptionally large number of variants in the manuscripts for these agent nouns. A few examples should be sufficient to demonstrate this: *abhijānāti ... brahmaṇakam upasāṇikamittā*, S V 282, 17 « do you remember having gone to the *brahmaṇaka* ». All Singhalese manuscripts have *upasāṇikamittā* (there is no commentary on this passage), a variant which is as astonishing as it is inexplicable as long as an agent noun is expected in this context. Similarly: *nābhijānāmi ... gahaṇatāni manasā pi aticaritā*, A II 61, 26 « I do not remember having offended against my wife even in thought ». Here all Singhalese manuscripts have *aticaritvā* in the *mūla*-text, and *aticarittā* in an old Singhalese print of the commentary (Mp Ce 1929: *aticarittā ti atikka-*

mitā, Mp III 96, 3 Ee: *-itā... -itā*, Burmese variant *-itvā*). The third and last example demonstrates the fluctuation of the text tradition in parallel passages: *abhijānāmi khattiyaparisañ upasamkamitvā*, D II 109, 11 (Ce 1929 = 1954 = Ee with v.l. B *-itā*; Be *-itā*; K in Ee: *upasamkamitā ti pi pātho*; no commentary) « I remember having gone to the assembly of Kṣatriyas ». The parallel passage M I 72, 23 reads *upasamkamitā* with a Singhalese variant (ms. A of Trenckner) *upasamkamitvā*, and in a third parallel passage A IV 307, 14 the situation is the same again: *upasamkamitvā* in the Singhalese tradition followed here by Ee (= Ce 1915 s.v.l.) against *upasamkamitā* in Be (= Ph. of Ee).

Coming back to the assumed absolutive ending in *-ttā*, the reason for this fluctuating manuscript tradition becomes obvious at once. Starting from a sentence such as *abhijānāti ... upasamkamitā*, that is *abhijānāti* combined with the absolutive, the process of Pālisation went into different directions. In most instances this absolutive was changed correctly into *-tvā*, sometimes it was misunderstood as an agent noun, or, even more astonishing it was not touched at all.

The evidence for an interchange between agent noun and absolutive is by no means limited to these *abhijānāti*-sentences. Thus we have for instance *chettā*, Sn 343 against *chetvā* of the Burmese tradition; or: *abhisameccā ti abhisamāgantā*, Pj I 236, 13 is found in a comparatively old Singhalese manuscript written AD 1821, against *"gantvā* again in the Burmese tradition.

Looking at this evidence, which shows the very often quite bold handling of the Pāli tradition by the Burmese, one might be inclined to conclude that the transformation of the absolutives is as recent as the 19th century. But of course absolutives in *-ttā* did not survive in general that long. They are found only, where there is some doubt about the correct grammatical analysis.

Fortunately, there is evidence to show that these doubts are fairly old, dating back probably beyond the *atthakathā*. In the sentence *sarasi tvāñ Dabba evarūpani kattā*, Vin III 162, 29 « do you remember, Dabba, having done this » the commentary finds it rather difficult to account for *kattā*, and states *ye pana katvā ti paṭhanti tesam ujukam eva*, Sp 581, 7 « those who read *katvā* get a smooth construction » (cf. Vmv Be, 1960, I 281, 14-18). This does not only prove early doubts about the correct text, namely *kattā* or *katvā*. At the same time the commentary shows that the agent noun was felt to be the more difficult construction in contrast to the easy absolutive, and rightly so. For in such cases as this one the form *kattā* taken as an agent noun is of course an old and genuine absolutive left unchanged.

Before concluding this discussion of the absolutive combined with *abhijānāti* or *sarati*, those instances have to be considered, where there is an aorist used. These aorists, too, developed from absolutives ending in *-ttā*. As mentioned earlier, only aorist forms ending in *-ittha* or *-itho* occur. Checking the variants as for instance *bhāsitā*, *abhāsittā* and *abhā-*

sittā, M I 256, 6 further evidence for an original text having *bhasittā* emerges. Incidentally there are changes into the opposite direction, too, when the aorist *ajjhappattā* is transformed into a past participle *ajjhappatto* (O. v. Hinüber: *Reste des reduplizierten Aorists im Pāli*, MSS 32, 1974, 65-72). This also shows, how forms no longer understood could change their grammatical category.

This examination of the text tradition may be summed up as follows: The construction of *abhijānāti* with an agent noun or an aorist developed only at a time, when Pāli had become an artificial language that is a language similar to that of the Homeric epics, which, though it had manifold connections to many dialects, was not identical with either of them. As far as the living Western or Eastern Middle Indian dialects are concerned this artificial construction may be called a «ghost construction». Therefore, the rule given by Pāṇini for the construction of *abhijñāvacana* does not have the slightest bearing on Pāli.

At the same time the absolute in *-tvā* emerges as a purely artificial form, and thus there is no violation of the phonetic laws on the development of *-tva-*. Forms such as *katvā* no longer conflict with *laddhā* or *dīṭhā/datthā* the rare absolute corresponding to *dṛṣtvā* and explained correctly as *dīṭhā ti disvā*, Mp III 39, 16. It had been noticed by V. Trenckner already, but it somehow did not find its way into Geiger's grammar. Of course Geiger lists the common absolute *disvā*, which he derives from *dṛṣtvā* and which Pischel (§ 334) even takes as the basis of *Ardhamāgadhi dissā, dissam, dissā*. Now it is plainly impossible to find any way that leads from *dṛṣtvā* to *disvā*, what is a common place statement today. But this deprives us of any possible explanation of *disvā* in accordance with Middle Indic phonetics. Once, however, the absolute in *-tvā* has been recognized as an artificial form, a new and easy way opens. The Prākrit absolutes *dissā* etc. are to be derived from **dṛśya*, as absolutes in *-ya* directly attached to the root are common, though not frequent in Middle Indic (cf. Sadd s.v. ²*phusita* and K. R. Norman: *Some absolute forms in Ardha-Māgadhi*, IIJ 2, 1958, 311-315). In Pāli, however, this absolute *dissā* was treated in the same way as those ending in *-ttā* were: *disvā* is as much an artificial form as *katvā* is. And exactly this is the reason why it is impossible to find any explanation of *disvā* within the given frame of Middle Indic phonetic laws.

Once the artificial character of the absolutes in *-tvā* has been understood, many a problem can be solved concerning those difficult forms in Pāli, all of which have one thing in common: They do not conform to the phonetic pattern of Middle Indo-Aryan.

One group of those forms is provided by those strange *saṃdhis* such as *pātvākāsi*, M II 45, 4 and Vin III 105, 13, the aorist of *pātu karoti*. The long vowel before a consonant cluster, which itself should not occur in Pāli — both are contrary to the phonetic structure of Middle Indic. As *paccāmitta: pratyamitra* (cf. CPD s.v. *accāhita*) or *paccūsa:*

pratyūṣa (with Middle Indic *sam̄dhi*): * *pratyuṣas* show, this *sam̄dhi* should have produced **pattākāsi*, which, however, was restored on the model of Sanskrit. The same holds good probably for *sam̄dhis* such as *khvāham*, S I 12, 17 instead of **khāham*, if *ko nu kh'ettha upāyāso*, Ja IV 469, 21* is compared (manuscript B^s *khvettha*; differently H. Smith at H. Bechert: *Grammatisches aus dem Apadāna-Buch*, ZDMG 108, 1958, 309). This can be gathered from an example in the Jātaka: *dassāham parapessiyā ahum*, Ja III 413, 20* « I was a slave-girl receiving orders from others ». Here *dassāham* or *dāsāham* quoted by the commentary as a variant, are firmly rooted in the manuscript tradition. Now it is most revealing to read the same verse as quoted by the Saddanīti as *dāsyāham*, Sadd 618, 2. This very clearly points to the introduction of a Sanskrit *sam̄dhi* by Pāli grammarians.

These few examples may be sufficient here to show the highly artificial character of a part of the Pāli *sam̄dhi*, which exists side by side with many rather archaic *sam̄dhi*-combinations (cf. H. Bechert: *Vokalkürzung vor Sandhikonsonant*, MSS 6, 1955, 7-26). Of course the *sam̄dhi* in Pāli as a whole rather urgently deserves a comprehensive study.

The last example *dāsyāham* for *dassāham* brings us to consonant clusters in which the second consonant is -ya-, and where the phonetic laws of Middle Indic are violated again. Already more than one hundred years ago V. Trenckner drew the attention to such clusters (Pāli Miscellany 56 n. 4 = JPTS, 1908, 105 n. 4) to prove a development -tr->-ty>-cc-. In exemplifying his — as we know today — wrong idea, Trenckner quotes: *anuññāto aham matyā samcatto pitarā aham*, Ja VI 16, 6* « I am allowed by my mother and expelled by my father », where the commentary explains *matyā* as *mātarā*. But as there is no direct way from *mātarā* to *matyā* instead of **mattā*. Here, *matyā* (Sadd 140, 9 foll.) was integrated artificially into the feminine declension on the line of *Bārā-nassam* ... *nivāsiko*, Ja II 435, 14* changed to *Bārānasyam*, Sadd 202, 17 or *nabbho*, Vv 745 (= Ee [2] 1012), which is written thus in Singhalese manuscripts, changed into *nabhyo*, Sadd 201, 3 and further Sanskritised in Ee (2) as *nābhyo* (!). Similarly, *khatya*, *ratyā* or *tithyā* (Sn 891) are artificial backformations starting from *khatta*, *rattā* or *tittā*. This material collected more or less at random could be enlarged easily. But it is sufficient here to reach at the following conclusions.

At an early stage during the formation of Pāli, genuine Middle Indic forms began to be converted into artificial words under the growing influence of Sanskrit on Buddhist Middle Indic. Thus hybrid forms such as *katvā* or truly artificial forms such as *disvā* originated. On the other hand we may deduct from this insight into the working of the orthographic diaskeuasis the following principle: Whenever we come across forms not in accordance with the phonetic pattern of Middle Indic, these Pāli words belong to the category of artificial formations.

The process of transformation was or is a very long one finding its provisional end in the *Chatṭhasaṅgāyana* edition of 1956. But when and why did it begin?

Those who started this process clearly had in mind an approximation of their holy language to Sanskrit. Thus the idea obviously is the same one that leads to the formation of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS). But it was not only the idea, even the rules how to Sanskritize were the same for both Pāli and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

As to the survival of absolutives in *-ttā* there is faint evidence only in BHS, and F. Edgerton (BHSG, § 35.52 foll.) is extremely cautious in forming an opinion about them. But as his statement « no *ttā* is recorded in Pāli » is no longer valid, more confidence may be set in the traces of absolutives ending *-ttā* in BHS (*labdhā* for *labdhvā*, SP IV 35 = ed. Kern 115, = ed. Watanabe 51.20 from a Gilgit manuscript may be added to BHSG, § 35.52).

A revealing mistake in the Mahāvastu proves that those forming BHS out of Buddhist Middle Indic were well aware of absolutives in *-ttā*. This becomes evident from a comparison between a Pāli and a corresponding BHS sentence. *aññatare pi kho... sattā tassa sattassa diṭṭhā-nugatiṁ āpajjamānā*, D III 85, 21 foll. « other beings also follow the fancy of this being » is found as *anye pi satvā tasya satvasya drṣtvā-nukṛtim āpadyante*, Mvu I 339, 11 « other beings having seen (that) imitate this being ». As the redactor of the Mahāvastu misunderstood his Middle Indic text he reveals his awareness of absolutives in *-ttā*, which should be changed into *-tvā*.

A whole set of rules has been applied in Sanskritizing the following verse in SP, where the Gilgit version is given in the first and the Kashgar version in the second line:

*diṣṭyāsi kṣemena ca svastinā ca aviheṭhitah prāpt’imāṇi agrabodhim
drṣṭo’si kṣemena ca svastinā ca avisthitah prāpta imāgrabodhim
asmāku vrddhī iyam evarūpā diṣṭyā ca vardhāma narindrasimha
asmāka vrddho-m-iyam evarūpā drṣtvā ca vandāma narendrasimha,*
SP VII 11

Without discussing details we can concentrate on *drṣtvā*, *drṣṭo* as found in the Kashgar version, and *diṣṭyā* and *drṣṭyā* in the Gilgit-Nepalese tradition. These different attempts to Sanskritize Buddhist Middle Indic show that there was a choice among *drṣtyā*, *drṣtvā* or *drṣṭā* for converting *diṭṭhā*, exactly the same choice one finds in Pāli. At the same time the different Sanskritisations in one and the same passage — and not only here — of SP show that the recensions of SP go back to different transformations of an original text in Buddhist Middle Indic. But this problem, of course, needs further investigation as does the whole process of the formation of BHS, which has been treated recently by Th. Damsteegt: *Epigraphical Hybrid Sanskrit*, Leiden, 1978, 238 foll.

To sum up: As the rules applied in transforming Buddhist Middle Indic towards Sanskrit are the same for both Pāli and BHS, it does not seem to be impossible that Pāli participated in the very first and earliest steps towards Sanskrit. But then, still at an early date of this development Pāli broke away from this trend keeping its own pattern of Middle Indic, while in the north Sanskrit was the ultimate result.

Thus in the development of Pāli a new phase or a new element emerges. The recasting of the Eastern Middle Indic in the mould of a Western language leading to Buddhist Middle Indic resulted in an artificial language as can be seen for instance from the double paradigm of the optative of *atthi* « to be », where Eastern *sīyā* stands fully developed side by side with an equally complete paradigm of Western *assa* (cf. CPD s.v. *atthi*).

The next phase of development, as described here, was characterised by the growing pressure of Sanskrit, which inaugurated the origin of a new set of artificial forms such as *disvā*, and which paved the way for later Pāli grammarians to develop these artificial formations still further.

Now during a third phase no longer any language really existent served as a model. Artificial forms such as *ratyā* or *matyā* came into being by means of purely theoretical thinking. Most important for the intrusion of these forms into our Pāli tradition is the Saddaniti of Aggavamsa, so much so that Helmer Smith said in the introduction to his edition of this text « notre pali est une fonction de celui du 12^eme siècle ». How these rather bold constructions were formed first of all within the Burmese Pāli tradition, that I hope to demonstrate elsewhere soon.

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Note: The system of abbreviation follows the one laid down in the *Epilogomena* to: V. Trenckner: *A Critical Pāli Dictionary*, vol. I, Copenhagen, 1924-48.