

In spite of the fact that the first Middle Indic traces thus emerge from the very oldest Indian literature extant that is from about 1000 B.C., well documented evidence is not found before Aśoka some seven hundred years later. Before that latter date the true position of Middle Indic buried under the cover of Vedic literature cannot be ascertained. However, from the simple fact that the precanonical language of Buddhism shows features of a development further advanced than the oldest Middle Indic inscriptions, two points may be argued: First, the normalization of the literary and administrative Middle Indic should have had some history even at the time of Aśoka, because it would have originated hardly at a time, when colloquial Middle Indic had superseded its more archaic predecessor. Secondly, as the recasting of the precanonical language into Buddhist Middle Indic shows, the gap between both could not have been too broad. Therefore nothing seems to call for any particularly long interval of time between Aśoka and the Buddha. However, given the next to complete lack of relevant material prior to the time of Aśoka, it seems to be impossible to go beyond this rather vague statement. As too many of the conditions lined out above as necessary for linguistic chronology are absent, the only argument contributed by linguistics to find the date of the Buddha does not prove to be very helpful.

Of course that date, if we had it, would be highly important for the early linguistic history of northern India. For it would allow to define much more clearly the beginning use of Middle Indic for religious purposes, what at the same time might be called the dawn of the Middle Indic period. However, given the uncertainty about the date of the Buddha, a precise chronological delimitation between the Old and Middle Indic periods does not seem to be possible at least at present, a delimitation, which is by no means easy to find even under more favourable circumstances. Thus the early developments in the Romania provide an excellent example for all those difficulties met with, when trying to define the transition from one language to another such as that from Latin to Italian, for which an enviably rich documentation is available, if compared to India.³⁸

Here, we are confronted with the result of a complicated linguistic process, the working of which cannot be observed directly. Starting from the normalized language of the Buddhist religious literature, we have to work our way back almost exclusively by help of the inner evidence deduced from the surviving texts to uncover the beginnings of this process during the lifetime of the Buddha. The duration of this gradual development, which at the same time is a function of space and time,³⁹ can hardly be estimated if only approximately. Therefore the inscriptions of Aśoka stand as the first datable testimony of Middle Indic as long as the date of the Buddha has yet to be found.

³⁸ M. Pfister, "Die Abgrenzung von Latein und Romanisch im Lessico Etimologico Italiano (LEI)," *Latein und Romanisch. Romanistisches Kolloquium I*, Tübingen, 1987, pp. 323–338. I am indebted to the author for drawing my attention to his article.

³⁹ Cf. *Mittelindisch* § 37 at the end.

EPIGRAPHICAL VARIETIES OF CONTINENTAL PĀLI FROM DEVNIMORI AND RATNAGIRI

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Compared to the rich manuscript tradition of insular Pāli as used by the Theravādins of the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura in Ceylon, there is extremely little evidence for inscriptional Pāli even from Ceylon, where hardly any epigraphical record in Pāli has been found.¹⁾ Nevertheless, those Pāli inscriptions, though rare and mostly very short, are highly important as the by far oldest surviving direct testimonies of Pāli, as some of them antedate the oldest known dated manuscript allegedly written in AD 1412 by centuries.²⁾

The oldest among the inscriptions found so far have been discovered in Southeast Asia. The first to be published was written on gold leaves unearthed at Maunggun,³⁾ if all texts not written on palm leaf may be considered as epigraphical here for sake of convenience. These plates contain the *ye dhammā* formula, an enumeration of things existing as four, five, etc. up to eighteen, and finally the *iti pi so* formula found in *Samyuttanikāya* (SN) I 219, 31 foll. In spite of the fact that the editor dated these plates back to the first(!) century AD, they could not have been engraved before the second half of the first millennium.

In Southeast Asia and in Ceylon gold was used as writing material for Buddhist scriptures now and again,⁴⁾ one of the most spectacular finds of this kind being a short book written on gold, the discovery of which has been announced by Ch. Duroiselle: *Excavations at Hmawza. Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for the year 1926/27*, p. 179 foll.⁵⁾ It has been dated back to the 5th century AD by U Lu Pe Win, though that may be somewhat early.

Further early evidence for inscriptional Pāli has been made known by L. Finot: *Le plus ancien témoignage sur l'existence du canon Pāli en*

Birmanie. JAS 1914. 193-195.

Epigraphical sources in the strict sense of the term from Burma date by centuries later than those mentioned so far. Among the oldest are the titles identifying the respective Jātaka scenes in the Petleik Pagoda near Pagan.⁶⁾

Further east in Thailand, the oldest Pāli inscription has been found at Nakorn Pathom engraved on a wheel of law (*dhammacakka*), which may be dated between the 6th and the 11th centuries AD.⁷⁾

It should be noticed that this inscription shows some peculiar features not found in standard Pāli, as the participium necessitatis such as *pahātavvaṃ*, *sacchikātavvaṃ*, *bhāvetavvaṃ* have been written with double -vv- instead of -bb-. The reading -vv- is beyond any doubt, and can be checked easily on the original now on display in the National Museum in Bangkok. However, it must be kept in mind that no word containing or written with *b* is found in this inscription. In spite of this reservation it does not seem to be altogether impossible that the Pāli of Dvāravatī differed in this respect at least from standard Ceylonese Pāli.⁸⁾ This becomes still more probable, if younger inscriptions dating from the 13th century and found at Lamphun in North Thailand are compared.⁹⁾ In the Vat Don inscription (BEFEO 25. 1925. 190) we find the words *savvāsiddhi* and *chavvīsa* side by side with *bahun*, which proves that *ba* and *va* have been distinguished in this script.

Unfortunately all this early evidence for inscriptional Pāli from Southeast Asia remains very scanty, and later inscriptions are written either in local languages such as Thai or in Sanskrit, or the use of standard Pāli as imported from Ceylon and described by Aggavaṃsa in his *Saddaniti* written in AD 1154, which exercised a powerful influence, supersedes the older linguistic strata once for all.

From India herself only very few and moreover partly rather late Pāli inscriptions have been made known up to now.¹⁰⁾ Lately this material has been added to considerably by recent excavations in India, though the importance of these finds has not been recognized by the excavators themselves, who were not always sufficiently well versed in Middle Indic languages. Here, the excavations conducted at Devnimori near Shamalaji/Gujarat during the years

1960-1963 deserve to be mentioned first.¹¹⁾ In the inner chamber of the main stūpa (*mahāstūpa*) a relic casket was found, which bears two inscriptions, one in Sanskrit and a second one described as "Prakrit" and dismissed as "of purely religious interest" by the excavators (JOIB 12. 1962/63, p. 173).

The importance of the Sanskrit inscription, which is dated in the year 127 of the *kathika* kings (*kathikanṛpa*) and which has been written during the reign of *nṛpati śrī* Rudrasena, has been realized at once, and a whole series of articles discusses its various aspects.¹²⁾ In sharp contrast, no attention seems to have been paid to the "Prakrit" inscription to such an extent that no good or even complete photo has ever been published. Still worse, the reading given by Mehta-Chowdhary needs correction almost everywhere, as word divisions such as *de se samta sādhu* instead of *desesaṃ ta[m] sādhu* do not reveal any thorough understanding of either language or text.

On the whole there are nine lines of writing in "Prakrit", which is actually a variety of Pāli. Three of them are written on the top side of the lid, and only this part of the inscription is available completely on a not very clear, though still readable photo on plate XXXVI in Mehta-Chowdhary. Further there is one line of writing on each, the rim side, and on the rim under side, and finally four lines "inside the lid", which should be the bottom side. These lines, numbered as 4-9 by Mehta-Chowdhary, are available only as transcribed by them on p. 121 f. of their publication mentioned above with some small fragments of line 4 visible on figures 4-7 in JOIB 12. 1962/63.

Obvious mistakes such as *vināṇaṃ* for *viññānaṃ* render these lines nearly useless for any linguistic investigation before the reading has been checked against the original or a good photo. Therefore, mainly the lines 1-3 have been reedited and commented on here, as even this part of the text, roughly one third of the whole, is interesting and important enough to warrant a closer examination. Only some very few comments have been made on the latter half of the inscription, which, however, has been reprinted here from Mehta-Chowdhary with some corrections for sake of convenience.

The text is given here as read from the photo without discussing Mehta-Chowdhary's numerous mistakes in detail. Akṣaras not clearly visible have

been enclosed in parentheses, gaps filled are marked by brackets.

1. *evam me suta eka samaya (bhagavā) s(ā)vatthaya vi(ha)rati jatavane anādhapīṇḍika(ssa) ārā(me) ta(tra) hu bhaga(vā) bhikkhu āmantrettā bhikkhave ti bhante ti*
2. *te bhikkhū bhagavato pracca(samsū) bhagavā etad avoca // paḍicca-sa(mū)pāda vo bhikkhave desesaṃ ta sādhu susūnodha manāsikarodha bhāsissam (su)havvo eva bhante ti te bhikkhū bhagavato*
3. *praccasamsū bhagavā e[tad a](vo)ca kata[mo] ca bhikkhave paḍic-casamūpādo // avijjāpraccayā saṃkkhārā // saṃkkhārāpraccayaṃ viññānaṃ // viññānapraccayaṃ nāmarūpa // nāmarūpaṃpraccayā cchalāyatanam // cchalāyatanapraccayo phphasso*

The following details of this reading call for some explanations: In the first line no *anusvāra* is visible on the photo above *suta*, etc., which may be due to the fact that they have been written on the elevation of the inner rim of the lid. Consequently they may be invisible only on the photo. The same may apply for the *anusvāra* and the *i* lacking in the word *s(ā)vatthaya*, which stands for *sāvatthiyaṃ*. However, it should be kept in mind that the *i* in *bhikkhave ti*, etc. are clearly visible even in the same line. Therefore mistakes committed by the scribe cannot be ruled out altogether. For *pracca(samsū)* in line 2 a reading *praccasamsū* corresponding to *praccasamsū* in line 3 is possible as well. It is not clear whether or not a long *ī*, the only one in the Pāli inscription, was intended by the scribe in *paḍi*. The form of the short *i* is a complete circle above the respective akṣara, while the long *ī* is distinguished by a vertical stroke downwards from the centre of that circle, as can be deduced from the Sanskrit inscription, where it is very clear in *śarīra*. The *ī* in *paḍi* is written with some kind of flourish that may have no distinctive value.

The word *bhāsissam* ends in an akṣara, which resembles the numeral 8 without top and bottom: ४. It is certain that there is no *ti* after *bhāsissam*.

As there does not seem to be any difference between the akṣaras *a* and *su*, it is possible to read *(a)havvo* or alternatively *(su)havvo* of uncertain meaning. In line 3 *viññānaṃ* with a short *a* is very clear as is *saṃkkhāra* against *phphasso*.

There does not seem to be any retroflex *ṇ* in the inscription, unless every *n* is to interpreted as *ṇ* as both may look rather similar in this script. In the same way *ḍ* and *d* are not easily to be distinguished when characters are written in such a small size as in this inscription.

The following text is repeated from Mehta-Chowdhary with corrected word division. Those passages enclosed in pointed brackets are faintly, though clearly readable in R. N. Mehta, S. N. Chowdhary: Preliminary Report of the Excavations of the Devnīmori Stūpa 1962-1963. JOIB 12. 1962/63. 173-176, figures 6, 5, 7 (in this sequence):

4. "Rim Side (i.e. outer side of the lid)": *phphasso(!)praccayā vetāṇo // vetāṇo(!)praccayā tanhā(!) // tanhā(!)praccayā uvādāṇa // <uvādānapraccayo bhavo // bhavapraccayā jḡātī // jḡātī>praccayā jarāmarāṇa<sokapari-devadukkhadomanassaupā>yāsā saṃbhavanti em etissa <kevalassa dukkhakhaṃdhassa samudayo hoti //>*
5. "Rim Under Side": *ajjā(!)nirodhā sakkhāranirodho // sakkhāranirodhā viññānanirodho // viññānanirodhā nāmarupanirodho // nāmarupanirodhā ṣalāyatanānirodho // ṣalāyatananirodhā phphassanirodho // phphassanirodhā vedanānirodho //*
6. "Inside the Lid": *vedanānirodhā tanhā(!)nirodho // tanhā(!)nirodhā upādāṇa(!)nirodho // upādāṇa(!)nirodhā bhavanirodho // bhavanirodhā jātinirodho jātinirodhā*
7. *jjarāmarāṇasokapari-devadukkhadomanassaupāyāso nirudhyanti // eva-tassa kevalassa duḥkhakhaṃdassa nirodho hoti // atha duvvutī*
8. *bhikkhave paḍiccasamuppādo // itī dvo bhikkhave deta avoccamha / paḍiccasamuppāda vvo bhikkhave desesaṃ ta sādhu samsu-*
9. *nādhā maṇosi ro bhāsissām antu ham me ti ye ta avocamha iman ta paḍiccā avacamha //*

A few comments on the corrections against Mehta-Chowdhary may be useful, as they have been introduced in spite of the fact that this part of the inscription cannot be verified on a photo. Mehta-Chowdhary read *puccaya* instead of *praccayā* and *vināṇa* instead of *viññāna* throughout. The reading *uvādāna* against Pāli *upādāna*, cf. line 6 *upādāṇa (!)* read by Mehta-Chowdhary,

is certain and goes with *karodha* against Pāli *karotha* and *paḍi-* against *paṭi-*, although Mehta-Chowdhary always read it as *padi-* by mistake. The word *jjāti* seems to have been written with double *jj*, but Mehta-Chowdhary have *jāti*, line 6. Unfortunately it is impossible to verify the highly interesting *vetana* for Pāli *vedana*. In line 4 *em etissa*, if read correctly, is a mistake by the scribe for *evam* and perhaps *etassa*, cf. *evaitassa*, line 7 for *evam etassa*(?). Mehta-Chowdhary have misread *-domanassaupāyāsa-* as *-domanassarayāsa-* twice. Line 5 *ṣal-* as read by Mehta-Chowdhary may be correct if the Ratnagiri inscription discussed below is compared.

By the end of line 7 the text becomes more and more obscure, and consequently the following words cannot be explained without seeing the original: *duvvuti*, *dvo* "2" (?), *deta* and more or less the whole of line 9. Mehta-Chowdhary read *aṃsu nā dhamāṇo sirobhāsissāmantu*, which should be restored as above, for *aṃ* and *suṃ* are almost identical. Finally, *maṇosiro* may be a mistake of the scribe for *manasi karodha*. The rest of the text seems to be corrupt as it stands.

The text of this inscription corresponds to the first *sutta* of the Nidāna-saṃyutta, SN II 1, 7-2, 8. The wording of the inscription differs considerably from the SN, even if obvious mistakes such as *bhakkhu* or *savatthaya* for *bhikkhu* and *sāvatthiyam*, respectively, are not taken into account.

As far as the grammatical features of the inscriptions are concerned, the phonetic development points to a language slightly younger than standard Pāli. For the *-th-* has developed into *-dh-*, which is typical for Śaurasenī rather (Grundlagen §187) than for Pāli: This occurs in *anādha-*, *sūsunodha*, *karodha*. Similarly *hu* for Pāli *kho* and *uvādāna* for Pāli *upādāna* show a development alien to Pāli but found in Prakrit as early as in the Jaina canon (Grundlagen §181, 277); *hu* appears later in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit occasionally.¹³⁾

The very clearly readable *bhikkhave* instead of *bhikkhavo*, SN II 1, 9, may simply reflect an older stage of the text tradition, and the Pāli form may be due to a fairly recent change in the text (cf. Grundlagen §296, 332).

Bhante contrasts with *bhadante*, *bhaddante*, SN II 1, 10, and may be a better reading, too, especially if *bhante*, SN II 1, 14, is compared. On the other

hand the scribe might have committed an omission here, as he perhaps did in *sādhū susūnodha*, line 2, which could be a mistake for *ta[m] sādhū su<ṭṭhu> sūnodha* against *taṃ suṇātha sādhuḥkaṃ manasi*, SN II 1, 12. If the restoration as *sādhū suṭṭhu* should be correct, this, too, would deviate from the Pāli wording, where *sādhū suṭṭhu* moreover does not seem to occur in canonical language at all. The Pāli English Dictionary by Rhys Davids and Stede does not give any reference to the Tipiṭaka s.v. *suṭṭhu*, and Aggavaṃsa quotes *sādhū suṭṭhu bhante saṃvarissāmi*, Sadd 899, 15 as an example, which could not be traced by the editor of the Saddanīti, Helmer Smith, which at the same time means that the Burmese exegetical tradition, on which H. Smith relies heavily (Sadd, Avant-Propos, p. VII foll.), probably holds no reference to it either. The wording, however, sounds like a quotation from a *kammavacanā*, proved by a Sanskrit parallel as well: *sādhū ca suṣṭu ca saṃvarisyāmi* (ZDMG 119. 1969, p. 115 at the end of the text). And indeed it occurs as *sādhū suṭṭhu saṃvarissāmi*, Sp 1063, 31 foll., cf. Vin I 126, 3.

Alternatively, it is possible to take the text as it stands when comparing *sumsuṇādha*, lines 8/9. The form *susūnodha* then might be an intensive **sumsūnoti* "hear well" built on the model of *caṃkamati: kamati*. It should be kept in mind, however, that otherwise no trace of any living intensive formation has been traced in Middle Indic so far (Grundlagen §417). On the other hand, a repetition of the same mistake in lines 8/9, that is, *su* for *suṣṭu*, does not seem very likely. In either case the wording of the inscription differs from both, the corresponding Pāli and from the Sanskrit version of this formula: *śṛṇuta sādhū ca suṣṭu ca manasi kuruta*.¹⁴⁾

Some further verb forms of this inscriptions pose problems as well. The first form following the easy and clear *viharati* is *āma[m] trettā* against Pāli *āmantesi*, which can be understood as an absolute only, cf. *pramajjittā*, Patna-Dharmapada 20: *paṃajjivā*, Dh 172, in spite of the syntactical difficulties involved in this interpretation: "having addressed"...he said (*ti*) (?). The use of an absolute in this formula stands isolated even if the corresponding Sanskrit is compared (v. Simson, §12. 3).

The next verb is *praccasumsū*, perhaps written *praccasamsū* in line 2, to

which Pāli *paccasosum*, Skt. *pratyāśrausuh* correspond. This preverb never occurs in the Sanskritised form *pra-* in Pāli, nevertheless *pracceti*, Patna-Dharmapada may be compared to *praccasumsū*, which is a formation similar to Pāli *agamimsu* : *agamisum*. In Pāli, however, no **assumsu* occurs side by side with *assosum*. In our inscription, *praccasamsū* may stand as a variant of *praccasumsū*, as does Pāli *ahamsu*, Dighanikāya II 254, 2 (without variant), SN I 26, 18 in the Sinhalese manuscripts against *ahesum* in those found in Southeast Asia, or Pāli *adhibhamsu*, SN IV 185, 31 quoted as *adhibhosum*, Sadd 29, 30 (cf. CPD s.s. *adhibhavati* and W. Geiger : Pāli. Literatur und Sprache. Strassburg 1916. §163. 3).

Further verb forms are *avoca* as in Pāli and *desesam*(!), *bhāsissam* against *desesāmi* and *bhāsissāmi*, SN II 1, 12. The form *av(v)ocamha*, *avacamha*, lines 8, 9 against Pāli *avacumha* stands outside any context in the inscription and needs checking against the original.

The form *paḍiccasamūpādo* does not occur in this slightly more recent Middle Indic form in Pāli, where *paṭi-* and *samupp-* prevail, cf. the reading of Mehta-Chowdhary in line 8 and the similar form at Ratnagiri discussed below.

The answer of the monks to the request of the Buddha in line 2 probably starts with the obscure *suhavvo* or *ahavvo*, which does not occur in Pāli nor in Sanskrit, as the whole sentence has been dropped in the Samyuktāgama. It cannot be ruled out altogether that *suhavvo/ahavvo* is to be construed with *bhāsissam* rather, as no *iti* marks the end of the Buddha's words.¹⁵⁾ If it is spoken by the monks, the meaning should be "very well indeed" (*eva* for Pāli *evam*?), which, however, remains a highly conjectural assumption.

The state of Sanskritisation in *praccaya*, Pāli *paccaya* corresponds exactly to *praccasumsū*.

The syntax of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* does not follow the pattern of Pāli, where the indeclinable *-paccayā* is used instead of a *bahuvrīhi* compound ending in *-praccaya*, common in Sanskrit,¹⁶⁾ too.

The word *viññāna* is written with a short *a* beyond doubt twice, for which no obvious explanation suggests itself. The double *phph* in *phphassa* is noteworthy. And finally *cchalāyatana* is not recorded in canonical Pāli, where

salāyatana is used exclusively. Later, in line 6, Mehta-Chowdhary read *ṣal-*, which would be nearer to canonical Pāli. If read correctly, it would suggest that in the language of this inscription both forms stand side by side, a situation corresponding to that of post-canonical Pāli.¹⁷⁾ The latter form concurs with the inscription found at Ratnagiri near Bhuvaneshvar during the excavations conducted in 1958-1961 under the supervision of Debala Mitra, who also carefully published the results.¹⁸⁾

In Ratnagiri altogether five inscriptions of canonical Buddhist texts have been found. Two of the four Sanskrit inscriptions are too badly damaged to be read (Mitra, p. 413, note 5). Those two, which have been transcribed by D. Mitra are without any immediate parallel in either Pāli or in the extant parts of the Samyuktāgama or in any other text recovered from Turfan.

The text of the fifth inscription, classified as "Prakrit" by D. Mitra and carefully edited by her, has been reread here from the accompanying plate and improved upon in a few passages :

1. [e]vaṃ me su[tam ekam samayaṃ bhagavā sāvatthiyaṃ] (17)¹⁹⁾
2. viharati ja(!) [tavane ānāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme] (18)
3. tatra ko(!) bha(ga) [vā bhikkhū āmantesi bhikkhavo ti bhante ti] (19)
4. te bhikkhū bha(ga) [vato paccassosum bhagavā etad avo] (18)
5. ca paḍi(h) casa(mū) [ppādam vo bhikkhave desisā-] (15)
6. mi tam s[u] (n) [ātha sādhuḥkaṃ manasi] (k) [a] (r) [otha bhāsissā-] (m) [it] y[e ?] (19)
7. (sādhu) bhadante ti [te] (bhi)khū bhagavato paḥcasosi(m) bhagavā (20)
8. (etaṃ) voca aviṇā(!) paccay(ā) saṃkhār(ā) sakhārāpa(h) caya vi- (20)
9. [ñā]naṃ viñ(ā)ṇapa(cca)yaṃ nāmarūpaṃ nāmarū(pacca(!)) [ya ṣa-] (19)
10. [dāyatanapaccayo phasso phassapaccayā] vedanā (v) [e-] (19)
11. [danāpaccayā taṇhā taṇhāpaccayaṃ u] pādāna[m u] pād(ā)- (19)
12. [napaccayo bhavo bhavapaccayā jāti] (jā)tipa(hca) ya[m] (18)
13. [jarāmarāṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhad] (omana(h) s(ā)- (17)
14. [pāyāsā sambhavanti. evaṃ etassa kevalassa] ++ du(hkha)kha- (17)
15. [ndhassa samudayo hoti. avijjāniro] dhā saṃkhā- (16)
16. [ranirodho. saṃkhāranirodhā viññāna] nirodho vi- (17)

17. + + + + + *nirodh[o] nāmarūpa[ni]rodho nāmarūpani-* (20)
 18. *rodhā śadāyatananirodho (śaḍā) yatana[ni]rodhā phar[sani]rodho* (23).
 19. *pha(r)sa[ni]rodhā vedanānirodho vedanāni[ro]dhā taṇhāniro[dho]* (22)
 20. *taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho upādānanirodhā bhavaniro<dho>* (23)

The rather difficult reading of this heavily damaged inscription calls for some comments. First, the length of the lines seems to vary considerably. As the extremes, 15 and 23 akṣaras, respectively, occur in lines containing a fairly certain text (lines 5 and 18), there is not much room left for doubt about this irregularity. Consequently the restoration of the text as given here remains very much conjectural. However, it seemed convenient to provide the fragments with some context.

Strangely enough, neither at Ratnagiri nor at Devnimori is any trace of an *e* in *jeta*- visible. However, the inscriptions are not very clear in both instances.

Instead of *kho*, SN II 1, 9 and *hu* at Devnimori, *ko* is written beyond doubt at Ratnagiri, which may be a mistake hard to explain.

In line 5 both readings, *paḍiḥcasamū* [or *paḍiḥcasamu*] are possible, as the stone breaks away in the middle of what might be an *u* or *ū*.

The *-ḍ-* in the prefix *paḍi-*, read *paṭi-* erroneously by D. Mitra, concurs with the Devnimori inscription against the Pāli. A peculiarity of Ratnagiri is the strange use of the *visarga*. Here in *paḍiḥca-*, line 5, *paḥcasosi*, line 7, *domana(h)s(ū)*, line 13, *du(h)kha*, line 14, the dots of the *visarga* are used to mark a double consonant. They are clearly readable in *paḥcasosi*, and the variants *paccaya*, line 8, besides *paḥcaya* hardly leaves any room for a different explanation. So far this use of the *visarga* does not seem to be recorded elsewhere.²⁰⁾

D. Mitra's reading of the beginning of line 6 needs some correction. As no trace of an *-ā* can be seen above the *sa*, and as the traces of the following akṣara rather point to *na*, the text may follow the Pāli closely here, and *suṇātha* should be restored instead of Mitra's *sādhukam*. This fits quite well, when counting the akṣaras up to the lower parts of the akṣaras *ka* and *ro*, which are still visible.

The end of this line and the beginning of line 7 are difficult: [*bhāssisā*] (*m*) [*it*] *y*. is certain. The vowel following *ity* should be *e* according to the Pāli text: *bhāssissāmiti. evaṃ bhante ti kho te bhikkhave*, SN II 1, 14. The next line of the inscription, however, seems to begin with *s(ā)dhu bhadante ti*, as read by D. Mitra. In the Devnimori inscription the enigmatical (*su*) *havvo* is found in this passage.

For *paḥcasosiṃ* the reading *paḥcasoṃsi* seems to be possible with a difficult ending, as a third person plural of the aorist ending in *-si* stands isolated. On the other hand it is hard to believe that the mark above the *sa*, read as *-i*, is an accidental damage to the stone, while at the same time the subscript *-u* has been destroyed without any trace.

In line 8 *avijā* is written with only a single *-j-*, and *e(taṃ) voca* may be a mistake of the scribe for *etad avoca* as D. Mitra assumes probably correctly. The *anusvāra* dot read here is doubtful and may be due to damage to the stone.

The whole sentence *katamo ca bhikkhave paṭiccasamuppādo*, SN II 1, 15 found at Devnimori was well, is missing here at Ratnagiri. The syntax of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, on the other hand, follows the Devnimori pattern and differs from the Pāli.

The word *viñāṇa*, clearly readable in line 9, is written with a single *ñ*. The long *-ā*, however, missing at Devnimori, seems to be beyond doubt at Ratnagiri: *ñā* against *ñā*. At Ratnagiri *na* is written here and later in *taṇhā*, too. At the end of line 9 *nāmarū<pa>paccaya* is a mistake committed by the scribe, who has omitted some text here, too.

Again, in *domana(h)sū-* and in *du(h)kha* the *visarga* marks a double consonant. This makes the latter word look like Sanskrit. Therefore, by this purely graphical rule, non-genuine Sanskritisms could intrude into Middle Indic and help to pave the way for a more far reaching Sanskritisation.

The Ratnagiri inscription does not share with Devnimori the Sanskritic form *pra-* in *paccaya*: *praccaya* and *paccasoṃsi*: *praccasoṃsū*.

In line 14 *kevalassa* has been left out by the scribe and has been added later on the "thickness-side" (D. Mitra, p. 422, note 1). Consequently it is not on the photo, which shows only the front side of the stone. There are two

blurred akṣaras before *dukkha*.

In the following gap of line 15 the text deviates from the Pāli, as *ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave samupphādo. avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā saṃkhāranirodho*, SN II 1, 23–25 is too long to fit into the space available. Similarly, the text at Devnimori seems to be ...*samudayo hoti. avijjānirōdhā*... in a passage not on the photo.

In spite of D. Mitra's *ñāṇanirōdhā nāma-* at the beginning of line 17, there are five blurred akṣaras before *-nirōdh[o] nāma-*, not to be read *nirōdhā*, as the left side of the *dha* is undamaged and certainly no *-ā* has been written. Therefore there must be some mistake committed by the scribe, which, however, cannot be reconstructed from the scanty remains of what he wrote originally.

One of the more remarkable features of this inscription is *ṣadāyatana*. The first akṣara is clearly a *ṣa*: 𑀲 and not *ccha*, as read hesitatingly by D. Mitra. This would concur with Devnimori, line 5, if the reading of Mehta-Chowdhary can be trusted.

In line 19 the reading *pharsa* is highly doubtful though by no means impossible. Therefore D. Mitra's reading, which introduces a further Sanskritism into this inscription, has been kept here, though with some reservations.

The last akṣara *dho* in line is again not visible on the photo. According to D. Mitra it has been written on the "thickness-side" (p. 422, note 4).

When trying to evaluate the evidence as a whole, first a however tentative chronology of the inscriptions should be established. Unfortunately all five slabs and fragments from Ratnagiri have been found out of archaeological context (D. Mitra, p. 411). Thus the only clue to their date is the palaeography, which seems to point to the later 6th century as far as the Sanskrit inscriptions are concerned, and to the 5th century for the Middle Indic inscriptions (D. Mitra, pp. 413, 421).

In spite of the fact that the Devnimori casket has been found *in situ* on top of some coins dating from the beginning of the 4th century (Mehta-Chowdhary, p. 28), and that the Sanskrit inscription on the same casket is dated in the year 127 of the *kathika* kings, an unfortunately otherwise

unknown era, no definite date could be established so far. Nevertheless a certain consensus has been reached in the discussion of the chronology in the relevant articles mentioned above in footnote 12, that the casket should date from the late 4th or early 5th century. If this chronology is not altogether wrong, the Devnimori casket may be older than the Ratnagiri slab by a little less than a century.

Although both inscriptions show some affinity to each other and to the respective Pāli text, at the same time these three versions of the same sūtra differ linguistically and in their wording. The most characteristic features of the language are clearly Middle Indic and nearer to Pāli, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and especially to the language of the Patna-Dharmapada without fully agreeing with either of them. Some of the main differences between both, the Devnimori and the Ratnagiri inscriptions, may be recalled: *praccasumṣū* : *paccasomṣi*; *desesaṃ* : *dessisāmi*; *praccaya* : *paccaya*; *chaḍ-* : *ṣaḍ-*, in contrast to Pāli *paccassosum*, *dessisāmi*, *paccaya*, *saḍ-*, and Pāli *paṭi-* against *p(r)aḍi-* of the inscriptions. This shows that the language, although nearer to Pāli than to any other surviving Middle Indic, is by no means identical with it. Thus the inscriptions should be classified linguistically as two new varieties of continental Pāli or Buddhist Middle Indic (Grundlagen §40, 43), one eastern and one western, as the distribution of *chaḍ-* and *ṣaḍ-* underlines (Grundlagen §399). It should be kept in mind, however, that both are more remote from Pāli than South Indian continental Pāli (Notes, as footnote 2 above, p. 15 foll.).

And not only the language, but the syntax of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* and the wording of the text are at variance as well in these three examples. This, again might mean that the inscriptions do not necessarily belong to the Theravāda school of Buddhism, and even if they should, they can hardly be attributed to the Ceylonese Mahāvihāra tradition most obviously.

Given the extremely scanty knowledge available on the geographic distribution of Buddhist schools,²¹⁾ it would be unwise to attribute these little texts to any of them with confidence. However, it should be stressed that they add considerably to the very rare evidence for Buddhist canonical scriptures written in a Middle Indic language other than Pāli.²²⁾ Therefore a full study of

the Devnimori casket from a better photo, or better still, from the original deserves high priority.

Lastly attention may be drawn to the fact that both texts have been found together with Sanskrit inscriptions. At Devnimori both languages are closely linked, as they are found side by side on the same vessel. Evidently Sanskrit was used for administrative or worldly matters, while the language of religion still was Middle Indic, a situation not altogether alien to other regions of the Buddhist world such as Ceylon or Southeast Asia. And long ago St. Konow has drawn the attention to a similar combination of Sanskrit and Pāli in Burma, where moulds with a Sanskrit legend have been imported from India to be later inscribed in Pāli on the spot.²³⁾ Perhaps this coalescence of both these languages accounts for the somewhat more progressed Sanskritisation of the language of the Devnimori casket.

In Ratnagiri, on the other hand, the Middle Indic text of the Buddhist sūtra clearly precedes the four slabs bearing the Sanskrit versions. This may be interpreted either as two schools of Buddhism using different languages for their respective scriptures living side by side in the same monastery, which is well possible, or, rather, that those monks staying at Ratnagiri changed the language of their scriptures by 500 AD. There is evidence for such a change of language elsewhere within one school of Buddhism, and it does not seem to be mere coincidence that far away in Central Asia Sanskrit Middle Indic has been exchanged for Sanskrit at about the same time.²⁴⁾ What immediate connection, if any, there may be, is difficult to ascertain at present. At any rate the inscriptions from Devnimori and from Ratnagiri provide new and important material for the study of both the linguistic and the textual history of Buddhism in areas from which nothing comparable to these inscriptions had been known previously.

NOTES

- 1) M. Dias: Sanskrit and Pāli Inscriptions of Ceylon. *Ancient Ceylon. Journal of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*. 1. 1971. 105-109.

- 2) O. v. Hinüber: Notes on the Pāli Tradition in Burma. *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Jahrgang 1983. Nr. 1. p. 5 note 3.*
- 3) Maung Tun Nyein: Maunggun Gold Plates. *Epigraphia Indica* 5. 1898/9. 101 foll.
- 4) O. v. Hinüber: Sieben Goldblätter einer Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā aus Anurādhapura. *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. I. Philologisch-Historische Klasse. Jahrgang 1983. Nr. 7. p. [4] = 190*; cf. D. B. Diskalkar: *Materials Used for Indian Epigraphical Records*, Bhandarkar Oriental Series, No. 13. Poona 1979. p. 30 foll.; a new Kharoṣṭhī inscription written on a gold leaf has been published by H. W. Bailey: *A Kharoṣṭhī Inscription of Senavarma, King of Oḍi*. *JRAS* 1980. 21-29, cf. G. Fussman, *BEFEO* 71. 1982. 1-46.
- 5) A transcript has been prepared by U Lu Pe Win: *The Gold-leaf Pāli Manuscript of Old Prome*, Report of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of Burma, for the Year 1938-39. Rangoon 1940. 12-22, by Niharranjan Ray: *An Introduction to the Study of Theravāda Buddhism in Burma*. Calcutta 1946. p. 37 foll., and again by U Tha Myat: *Pyu Reader*. Rangoon 1963. 25-33.
- 6) Taw Sein Ko: The Plaques Found at the Petleik Pagoda, Pagan. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for the Year 1906/07*. 127-136, Plates XLI-L; G. H. Luce: *The 550 Jātakas in Old Burma*. *Artibus Asiae* 19. 1966. 291-307 and the same again in: *Old Burma-Early Pagan*. New York 1969. p. 44.
- 7) G. Coëdès: Une Roue de la Loi avec Inscription en Pāli Provenant du Site de P'ra Pathom. *Artibus Asiae* 19. 1966. 221-226. A fragment of a second inscribed *dharmacakka*, which may be still older, has been described by J. Boisselier: *Un Fragment de Roue de la Loi de Lopburi*. *Artibus Asiae* 19. 1966. 225-231; this fragment and further short Pāli inscriptions from the Lopburi area have been edited in *Cārūk porāṇ run' rāk bap dī' labpuri lā klai' getyaṇ* (Early Inscriptions from Lopburi and Surroundings). Bangkok 2524=1981.
- 8) O. v. Hinüber: Die Grundlagen des älteren Mittelindisch (forthcoming) §41, 255. This book is henceforth quoted as 'Grundlagen'.
- 9) G. Coëdès: Documents sur l'Histoire Politique et Religieuse du Laos Occidental. *BEFEO* 25. 1925. 189-192 and R. Halliday-O. Blagden: *Les Inscriptions Mōn du Siam*. *BEFEO* 30. 1930. 81-105.
- 10) C. Bendall: On Pāli Inscriptions from Magadha (Behar). *Actes du X^{ème} Congrès International des Orientalistes*. Genf 1894. Leiden 1897. 153-156; cf. also *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 2. 1976. p. 39 note 28.
- 11) R. N. Mehta, S. N. Chowdhary: *Excavations at Devnimori*. Baroda 1966 (henceforth: Mehta-Chowdhary).
- 12) P. R. Srinivasan: Devni-Mori Relic Casket Inscription of Rudrasena, Kathika Year 127. *EI* 37. 1967/68. 67-69, where earlier articles are mentioned: V. V. Mirashi, *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* 3. 1965. 1 01-104; S. Sankaranarayanan, *JOIB* 15. 1965/66. 66-73; D. C. Sircar, *JOIB* 14. 1964/65. 339-339; R. N. Mehta and S. N. Chowdhary, *JOIB* 12. 1962/63. 173-176 with plates.
- 13) F. Edgerton: *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*. New Haven 1953 s.v. *hu*.
- 14) G. v. Simson: *Zur Diktion einiger Lehrtexte des buddhistischen Sanskritkanons*. *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft. Beiheft H. München* 1965. §2, 10.

- 15) Ch. Tripāṭhi: Fünfundzwanzig Sūtras des Nidānaṣaṃyukta. Sanskrittexte aus den Turfan-funden VIII. Berlin 1962. p. 147, note 4.
- 16) For references see BHSD (as note 13 above) s.v. *prattiyasamutpāda* and *pratyaya*.
- 17) Critical Pāli Dictionary II s.v. *āyatana*, ifc., p. 130a.
- 18) Debala Mitra: Ratnagiri (1958-1961). Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 80. Delhi 1983, Vol. II pp. 420-422, plate CCCXX, who gives a short survey on Buddhist texts found in inscriptions in India on p. 412 foll.
- 19) These figures given parentheses are the estimated number of akṣaras in the respective lines.
- 20) In light of this evidence, the variation between *naissargika* and *naihsargika* in the same manuscript of a Prātimokṣasūtra found at Gilgit may be a matter of orthography.
- 21) E. Lamotte: Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien. Louvain 1958. pp. 581-584.
- 22) For reference see: R. Salomon, G. Schopen: The Indravarman (Avaca) Casket Inscription Reconsidered: Further Evidence for Canonical Passages in Buddhist Inscriptions. Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 7. 1. 1984 pp. 107-123; IJ 28. 1985 p. 50.
- 23) Archaeological Survey of India. Annual Report for the Year 1905/06. p. 170, cf. also: G. Luce, as above note 6, p. 96.
- 24) O. v. Hinüber: Sanskrit und Gāndhārī in Zentralasien. In: Sprachen des Buddhismus in Zentralasien. Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica 16. Wiesbaden 1983. 27-34, esp. p. 34.

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Pāli and Pāṣācī as Variants of Buddhist Middle Indic.*

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The first scholar, who tried to trace back the linguistic history of Buddhism beyond Pāli and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit was Sylvain Lévi. In his famous article "Observations sur une Langue Précanonique du Bouddhisme" published in the Journal Asiatique 1912, 495-514, he was able to demonstrate that some words found in Buddhist texts preserved in Indian languages defy any linguistic explanation by applying the phonetic laws operating in Pāli or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit respectively. Thus Lévi came to the conclusion that those words are relics of an earlier linguistic layer superseded by both these languages. These remnants have been collected and interpreted systematically by Heinrich Lüders in his observations on the language of the original Buddhist canon ¹⁾. The well known and widely, if not universally accepted results of Lévi's and Lüders's researches may be summarized as follows: Buddhist texts have been conceived originally in an eastern language obviously, as the Buddha was living and teaching in the eastern part of northern India. When Buddhism began spreading westwards, these eastern texts were recast in a western mould,