

## **When the Little Buddhas are no more *Vinaya transformations in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC***

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### **Abstract**

The *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, which introduces the Pali Vinaya, is as unusual as it is important. It will be argued here that its peculiar narrative, set in the obscure North-West and focusing on the six Buddhas of the past, is a veiled reference to Buddhist debates of the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Part of a major restructuring of the Vinaya around the time of the Second Council, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* helped distinguish ‘Pātimokkha Buddhism’ from the looser, more ascetic movement of Gotama.

In the standard overviews of the Pali Vinaya, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* has generally been overlooked. Perhaps because of the text’s mythic content (the failures and successes of past Buddhas) and strange setting (the remote Brahminical town of Verañjā), it was completely ignored by K. R. Norman (1983). More attention was paid to it by von Hinüber, although even he could only hypothesise that it was composed ‘to build a general introduction to the Suttavibhaṅga, which runs parallel to the one of the Mahāvagga’ (1996: 15). While this is a reasonable guess, there are no compelling arguments for placing the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* after the *Mahā-vagga*, and some very good reasons for supposing it was composed beforehand, as part of the *Sutta-vibhaṅga*.

The text’s setting and mythic content mark the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* as an oddity in the Pali canon. But it is precisely its strangeness which merits a detailed study.

Unless they are obviously an attempt to construct a system mythic belief (as in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*), legendary texts most probably conceal an ulterior purpose. This seems to be the case with the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, which has nothing remarkable to say about past Buddhas, but instead refers to fairly technical textual and disciplinary matters. Its connection with the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* is just as important. If both texts were composed together, and if the mythic content is a commentary on an actual state of affairs, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* could turn out to be the most historically important text in the Pali Vinaya. For it would then explain the motivation for a major reformation of the Vinaya – the inclusion of the *Pātimokkha* within a biography of the Buddha – and also provide crucial evidence on the time and place of its production.

### An outline of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*

1. **Vin III.1-6 (Ee; Be para 1-15).** While residing in the town of Verañjā, the Buddha is visited by the Brahmin Verañja. The Buddha adeptly answers the hostile questions, Verañja takes refuge in the triple gem, and finally invites the Sangha to spend the rains in Verañjā. As von Hinüber (1996: 14) has pointed out, much of this exchange corresponds to a canonical Sutta (AN 8.11); the absence of this account in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya parallel suggests it was a later addition to the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*.<sup>1</sup>
2. **Ee III.6-7 (Be 16-17).** Facing a serious famine in Verañjā, the Sangha survives on ‘small portions of steamed grain’ (*pattha-pattha-mūlaka*).<sup>2</sup> Moggallāna offers to turn the world upside down, so that the *bhikkhus* can eat the ‘nutritive essence of the water plants’ (*pappaṭakojam*) on the earth’s lower surface. The Buddha rejects this idea, because people might become deranged, and also rejects Moggallāna’s idea of wandering off to Uttarakuru for alms.
3. **Ee III.7-9 (Be 18-20).** When Sāriputta wonders about the dispensations (*brahma-cariyas*) of previous Buddhas, the Buddha tells him that they did not last long for Vipassin, Sikhin and Vessabhū: while keen on teaching meditation, these ‘lazy’ (*kiḷāsuno*) Buddhas did not teach much Dhamma and did not establish monastic law (*sikkhāpada/pātimokkha*). However,

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<sup>1</sup> *Sifen lü* (四分律, Vinaya in four parts, translated by Zhu Fonian and Buddhayasas c. 410-412 C.E.

<sup>2</sup> See Horner (1949: 12) for a discussion.

the dispensations of Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa did endure, precisely because they taught a sufficient amount of Dhamma and established monastic law.

4. **Ee III.9-10 (Be 21).** Sāriputta requests that the Buddha lay down the monastic law, by reciting the Pātimokkha (*bhagavā sāvakānaṃ sikkhāpadaṃ paññāpeyya, uddiseyya pātimokkhaṃ*). The Buddha tells him to wait, as he will only establish rules when ‘corruption-inducing practices’ (*āsava-tṭhānīyā dhammā*) arise. The Buddha adds that at present the Sangha is pure, but corruption will arise when the Sangha has grown large (*vepulla-mahattaṃ patto*), achieved renown (*rattaññu-mahattaṃ patto*), is in receipt of excellent gifts (*lābhagga-mahattaṃ patto*) and highly learned (*bāhusacca-mahattaṃ patto*).
5. **Ee III.10-11(Be 22-23).** The Buddha sets off on tour (*janapada-cārikaṃ*), taking a route through Soreyya, Saṅkassa, Kaṇṇakujja, Payāga-tiṭṭha and Bārāṇasī before eventually arriving at the Kūṭāgāra-sālā of Vesālī, where the account ends. Thus the scene is set for the first *pārājika* offence: the recitational section on Sudinna (*Sudinna-bhāṇavāra*) narrates how this *bhikkhu* impregnated his former wife, causing the Buddha to lay down the first rule prohibiting sexual misconduct.

### **The composition of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa***

The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* introduces the *Sutta-vibhaṅga*, which in turn encloses the *Pātimokkha*: the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* explains the occasion on which the Buddha pronounced each Pātimokkha rule, and also includes a brief ‘word commentary’ (*pada-bhājanīya*) on each rule. This complex arrangement is generally considered a reworking of older material. According to Rhys Davids & Oldenberg (1899: xiv; Oldenberg 1997: xviff), the *Pātimokkha* pre-existed its current position within the *Sutta-Vibhaṅga*; von Hinüber (1996: 13) agrees that the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* narratives ‘are separated from the rules by a considerable period of time’.

Despite this no doubt complex textual history, there is no reason to doubt an intrinsic connection between the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* and the *Sutta-vibhaṅga*. A common authorship seems quite clear. In the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, the Buddha refuses to lay down the *Pātimokkha* until it is required, telling Sāriputta that the Sangha

is ‘devoid of tumours, dangers and stains, pure, established in the essence’.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the *Sudinna-bhāṇavāra* narrates how various classes of god lament the loss of purity occasioned by Sudinna’s entanglement with his former wife: ‘The community of mendicants was certainly devoid of tumours and danger, but Sudinna, a native of Kalandaka, has created a tumour and danger’.<sup>4</sup>

The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* and *Sudinna-bhāṇavāra* thus belong to a single narrative. But this is only to be expected. Once it was decided to enclose the *Pātimokkha* in a momentous Vinaya biography of the Buddha, an introduction is unlikely to have been an afterthought. For historical purposes this is fortuitous, since the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* includes important details on the time and place of its composition. The North-western town of Verañjā lies well beyond the Buddha’s sphere of activity, ‘from Śrāvastī, the capital of Kosala, in the north-west to Rājagṛha, the capital of Magadha, in the south-east’ (Bronkhorst 2007: 4). Indeed, canonical texts on Verañjā are marginal,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* (and *Sutta-vibhaṅga*) was composed some time after the Sangha had spread beyond its original home.

Verañjā was also located close to Mathurā/Madhurā,<sup>6</sup> a town mentioned in only two Pali Suttas, both of which are placed after the Buddha’s death.<sup>7</sup> The composers of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa/Sutta-Vibhaṅga* thus belonged to the early missionary community of Verañjā/Mathurā, established by the time of the Second Council of Vesālī. In the Pali account of this Council (Vin II.294ff), venerable Sāṇavāsīn is said to reside at Mt. Ahogaṅga, known in later Sanskrit sources as Mt. Urumuṇḍā, the residence of Upagupta in the Aśokan era.<sup>8</sup> According to Frauwallner (1956: 27ff), Upagupta was the local saint of Mathurā, whose Vinaya

<sup>3</sup> Vin III.10: *nirabbudo hi sārīputta bhikkhusaṅgho nirādīnavo apagatakāḷako suddho sāre patiṭṭhito.*

<sup>4</sup> Vin III.18: *nirabbudo vata bho bhikkhu-saṅgho nirādīnavo, sudinnena kalandaka-puttena abbudaṃ uppāditaṃ ādīnavo uppādito ti.*

<sup>5</sup> Apart from the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* and its Sutta parallel (AN 4.53 = Vin III.1-6), Verañjā is only mentioned in three other canonical texts (MN 42, AN 8.11, AN 8.19). There is no evidence for the DPPN’s statement that ‘[t]here was evidently frequent intercourse between Sāvattī and Verañjā’.

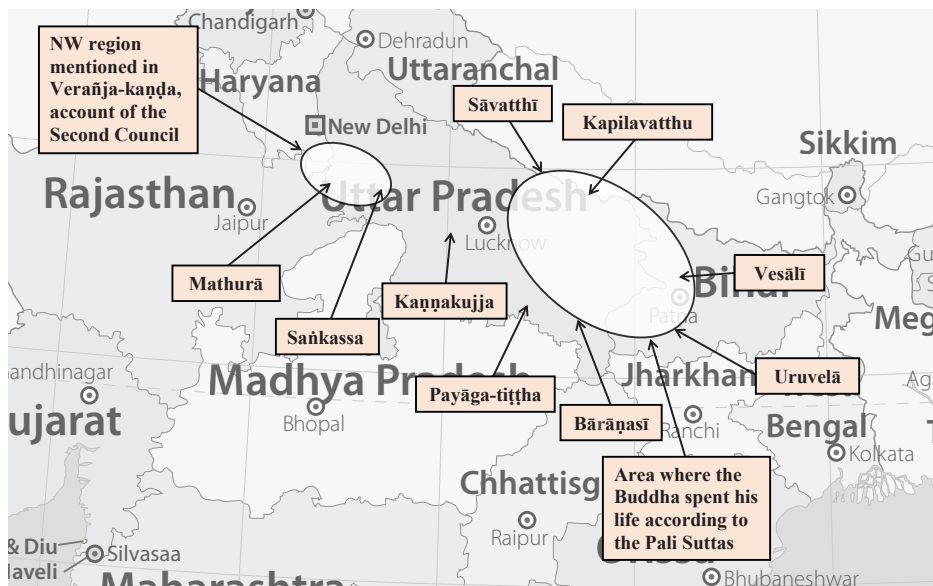
<sup>6</sup> AN 4.53 (Ee II.57): *ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā antarā ca madhuraṃ antarā ca verañjaṃ addhāna-magga-paṭipanno hoti.*

<sup>7</sup> MN 84, AN 2.39. Both involve Mahā-kaccāna, and both are set after the Buddha’s death as the introduction suggests (Ee MN II.83): *ekaṃ samayaṃ āyasmā mahā-kaccāno madhurāyaṃ viharati gundāvane.*

<sup>8</sup> Strong (1994: 147-48).

was preserved by the Mūlasarvāstivādins.<sup>9</sup> The Pali Vinaya must be related to a pre-sectarian phase of this tradition, as must the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (see n.1 above), which contains a close parallel to the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, including all the main elements: a famine in Verañjā, Moggallāna’s miraculous abilities, the account of former Buddhas’ dispensations, and the Buddha travelling to Vesālī to establish the *Pātimokkha*.

Frauwallner (1956: 37) has noted that a North-Western Buddhist network played ‘an important role already at the time of the council of Vaiśālī’. The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* is merely an earlier product of this network. But just how close in time to the Second Council is the text? Most probably, it was composed just after the council. At the end of the text, the Buddha travels to Vesālī via Soreyya, Saṅkassa, Kaṇṇakujja, Payāga-tiṭṭha and Bārāṇasī. Similarly, the Pali account of the Second Council narrates how Yasa, after enlisting Sāṅavāsīn’s support in Ahogaṅga, looked for Revata in Soreyya, Saṅkassa, Kaṇṇakujja, Udumbara, Aggaḷapura and Sahajāti.



*Map showing the major Buddhist sites of the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, including places mentioned in the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* and Pali account of the Second Council.*

<sup>9</sup> Frauwallner (1956: 24ff), Wynne (2008).

The DPPN (s.v.) notes that the route followed by the Buddha in the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* ‘may have been the very road followed by Revata when going from Sankassa to Sahajāti, this road passing through Kannakujja, Udumbara, and Aggalapura (Vin.ii.299).’ The parallel is indeed uncanny. In both accounts, a Western contingent travels East, from the region of Mathurā to Vesālī, in order to resolve disciplinary problems.

This can hardly be a coincidence. It suggests that just as an account of the Second Council closes the Pali Vinaya, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* opens the Vinaya with a veiled reference to it. An intriguing possibility is therefore raised. If the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* was composed at the time of the Second Council, was it a response to the problems caused by the Vajjiputtaka fraternity? Perhaps we can put the question like this. If the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* was composed after the *Pātimokkha*, to legitimise it as *buddha-vacana*, did this occur around the time of the Second Council, in response to the Vajjiputtakas adopting a less strict attitude towards it? Another correspondence suggests just this.

### Former Buddhas and ‘little Buddhas’

The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* section on former Buddhas who were too lazy (*kilāsu*) to teach the Dhamma in detail and establish the *Pātimokkha* reads as follows:

Sāriputta, the Blessed Vipassin, Sikhin and Vessabhū were lazy in teaching the Dhamma to their disciples in detail. Few were their Suttas, Geyyas, Veyyākaraṇas, Gāthās, Udānas, Itivuttakas, Jātakas, Abbhuta-dhammas and Vedallas. They did not lay down the rules of training for their disciples; they did not recite the *Pātimokkha*.<sup>10</sup>

So these lazy Buddhas left few Dhamma teachings, of the nine categories,<sup>11</sup> and did not lay down ‘rules of training’, that is to say, the recitational text of the *Pātimokkha*. This led to the break-up of their Sanghas:

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<sup>10</sup> Vin III.8: *bhagavā ca sāriputta vipassī bhagavā ca sikhī bhagavā ca vessabhū kilāsuno ahesuṃ sāvakānaṃ vitthārena dhammaṃ desetum. appakañ ca nesaṃ ahoṣi suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇaṃ gāthā udānaṃ itivuttakaṃ jātakaṃ abbhutadhammaṃ vedallaṃ. apaññattaṃ sāvakānaṃ sikkhāpadaṃ, anuddiṭṭhaṃ pātimokkhaṃ.*

<sup>11</sup> The Dharmaguptaka text refers to a twelvefold list; on the elaboration of such lists, see Cousins (2013: 105).

Sāriputta, it's just like various flowers laid out on a board: if they are not securely tied together with string (*suttana*), the wind will scatter, disperse and destroy them. Why is that? It's just how it is because of not being securely tied together by string. In the same way, Sāriputta, with the disappearance of those Blessed Buddhas, and with the disappearance of their 'little Buddha' disciples, the disciples who came later – of various names, lineages and classes, gone forth from various families – brought about the disappearance of the holy life very quickly.<sup>12</sup>

The term *anubuddha*, here translated as 'little Buddha', requires some explanation. According to Cone's *A Dictionary of Pāli (anubujjhati s.v.)*, the primary meaning of *anubuddha* is 'realised, understood', but as a masculine noun the term can also refer to 'one who has understood in succession; a disciple or successor of the Buddha'. This is how the term is used in a few places where it refers to *Koṇḍañña*,<sup>13</sup> one of the first five disciples, and reputed to be the first person who understood the Buddha. Just as the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* refers to 'disciples awakened in succession from the Buddha (*buddhānubuddhānaṃ sāvakānaṃ*), so too is *Koṇḍañña* referred to as 'an elder awakened in succession from the Buddha' (*buddhānubuddho ... thero*). Theragāthā 1248 also refers to *Koṇḍañña* as an 'heir of the Buddha' (*buddha-dāyādo*). The term in the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* must in general refer to prominent disciples of past Buddhas, those close enough to the past Buddhas to be regarded as their Dharma heirs. Such disciples could loosely be called 'little Buddhas'.

It is in the generation after the 'little Buddhas' that things went wrong for some past Buddhas. But if the term 'little Buddha' (*anubuddha*) refers to a Buddha's prominent disciples, this story resembles the account of the Second Council very closely. The most important figure at this council was Sabbakāmin, a companion of Ānanda (Vin II.303: *āyasmato ānandassa saddhi-vihāriko*). Sabbakāmin thus represents precisely the next generation

<sup>12</sup> Vin III.8: *seyyathāpi sāriputta nānā-pupphāni phalake nikkhittāni suttana asaṅghitāni, tāni vāto vikirati vidhamati viddhamseti. taṃ kissa hetu? yathā taṃ suttana asaṅghitattā. evaṃ eva kho Sāriputta, tesam buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ antaradhānena buddhānubuddhānaṃ sāvakānaṃ antaradhānena ye te pacchimā sāvakā nānā-nāmā nānā-gottā nānā-jaccā nānā-kulā pabbajitā, te taṃ brahmacariyaṃ khippaññi eva antaradhāpesuṃ.*

<sup>13</sup> SN I.194 (= Thag 1246), Thag 679.



after Ānanda.<sup>14</sup> The description of diverse Sanghas of the past Buddhas, after their little Buddhas had passed away, also sounds suspiciously like how Gotama's Sangha would have been at the time of the Second Council: widely spread, and no doubt with disciples 'of various names, lineages and classes, gone forth from various families'.

Contrary to the activity of lazy Buddhas and the demise of their dispensations, Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa left numerous Dhamma teachings, and established the *Pātimokkha*. Their Sanghas were 'well tied together' (*susaṅgahita*) by the *Pātimokkha* 'thread' (*sutta*), so that the holy life endured long (Vin III.9: *te taṃ brahmacariyaṃ ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ ṭhapesuṃ*). The image of a network of flowers well tied together symbolises the aim of the authors of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*: a diffuse but unitary Sangha bound by a common disciplinary commitment to the *Pātimokkha*.

The message would seem to be quite clear. When the principle disciples of the Buddha have passed away, it is not just the *Pātimokkha* which guarantees concord, but a *Pātimokkha* laid down by a Buddha. As a set of *Pātimokkha* rules codified by the Buddha, the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* achieves exactly this. And surely this was its sole purpose. As a stand-alone recitational text, the *Pātimokkha* does not look anything like a teaching of the Buddha. As such, its observance might not have been deemed obligatory. This was the problem faced by the conveners of the Second Council; the creation of the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* makes sense as a response to it.

### The *Pātimokkha* in the Suttas

For this thesis to be plausible, there must be good reasons to suppose that the *Pātimokkha* post-dates the Buddha. This is not the traditional understanding, of course. According to the *Uposatha-kkhandā* of the Pali Vinaya, the Buddha decided to convert 'points of training' (*sikkhā-pada*) into the recitational text of the *Pātimokkha*:

Why don't I allow those points of training, declared by me to the *bhikkhus*, to be their *Pātimokkha* recitation? That can be their Uposatha ritual.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> It is unlikely that at the Second Council, Sabbakāmin was 120 years old since his ordination, as claimed in the Vinaya (Vin II.203: *vīsa-vassa-satiko upasampadāya*).

<sup>15</sup> Vin I.102: *yaṃ nūnāhaṃ yāni mayā bhikkhūnaṃ paññattāni sikkhā-padāni, tāni nesam*



There can be little doubt that something like this happened at some point: *sikkhā-padas*, found throughout the Sutta-piṭaka (most notably in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, DN I.63ff), were arranged into the recitational text of the *Pātimokkha*. But did this occur during the Buddha's life, or even in the early phase(s) of Sutta composition? This obviously depends on how the Sutta evidence is understood. Perhaps the most important text is the 'Pātimokkha pericope':

The mendicant becomes virtuous, abiding restrained by the *pātimokkha* restraint, pasturing in good conduct, seeing danger in even a minute transgression, training in conformity with the points of training.<sup>16</sup>

Variants on this pericope occur throughout the Suttas. From this it might be concluded that the Pātimokkha belongs to a very early period of Sutta composition. But this is not the case. The 'Pātimokkha pericope' can only be regarded as a dubious part of the earliest Buddhist tradition: brief and formulaic, it could have been added to any text mentioning moral virtue (*sīla*). A number of parallels to the Majjhima Nikāya prove just this: although found in MĀ 145, the Chinese Āgama parallel to MN 108 (Anālayo 2011: 626), the pericope is not found in the Chinese parallels to MN 6, 107 and 125.<sup>17</sup> According to Anālayo (Anālayo 2011: 618, 718), the parallels to MN 107 and 125 focus on cultivating purity of body, speech and mind, rather than observing the *Pātimokkha*. But he underestimates the importance of this (Anālayo 2011: 718):

This in itself relatively minor difference is part of a recurring pattern, where the Pali discourses appear to have a predilection for the injunction to scrupulously observe the rules, while their Madhyama-āgama counterparts place more emphasis on the purpose of observing the rules in terms of the need to develop bodily, verbal, and mental purity.

This difference between the Chinese and Pali Buddhist canons is not 'relatively minor'. The MĀ parallels suggest that 'Pātimokkha pericope' does

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*pātimokkhuddesaṃ anujāneyyaṃ? so nesam bhavissati uposatha-kamman ti.*

<sup>16</sup> M III.11: *bhikkhu sīlavā hoti, pātimokkha-saṃvara-saṃvuto viharati, ācāra-gocara-sampanno, aṇumattesu vajjesu bhaya-dassāvī, samādāya sikkhati sikkhā-padesu.*

<sup>17</sup> MN 6 = MĀ 105, EĀ 37.5; MN 107 = MĀ 144, T 70; MN 125 = MĀ 198; see Anālayo (2011: 46-47, 618, 718).

not belong to the earliest phase(s) of MN Sutta composition. An early form of the pericope, which does not mention the *Pātimokkha*, can even be seen in the Chinese parallel to MN 6: EĀ 37.5 refers to ‘being afraid of a small transgression, what to say of a major one’ (Anālayo 2011: 47 n.104), apparently a parallel to a small section of the *pātimokkha*-pericope (*anumattesu vajjesu bhaya-dassāvī*).

If an early stage of Sutta composition did not know the *Pātimokkha*, the general lack of Sutta evidence for the *Pātimokkha* ceremony should come as no surprise. Most of the Suttas which mention Uposatha days refer to the lay activities of Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.<sup>18</sup> A few Suttas also describe Uposatha gatherings of the Buddha and his followers, but make no mention of the *Pātimokkha*.<sup>19</sup> This leaves only three Suttas which actually refer to the *Pātimokkha* recitation on the Uposatha day. One of these is set after the Buddha’s death (MN 108), the narrative in another is completely fictitious (Ud 45), and the other (Ud 48) concerns the schismatic machinations of Devadatta, probably not a part of the earliest Buddhist tradition.

*Udāna* 48 is a straightforward ‘Devadatta text’: when Devadatta declares that he will hold the Uposatha and Sangha acts separately, Ānanda informs the Buddha that Devadatta will split the Sangha. The Buddha then utters an inspired utterance: ‘It is easy for the good to do good, but difficult for the bad to do it. It is easy for the bad to do bad, but difficult for the noble to do it.’<sup>20</sup> This story must belong to the same period as similar stories about Devadatta in the Vinaya Khandhaka.<sup>21</sup> But according to Ray’s summary of the evidence, the account of Devadatta as a schismatic does not appear in the ‘earliest core of the Skandhaka discussion of *saṃghabheda*, as reflected in the Mahāsāṃghika version’ (Ray 1994: 172). If Devadatta’s schism ‘arose not only after the death of the Buddha but also after the split between Mahāsāṃghikas and Sthaviras’ (Ray 1994: 172), *Udāna* 48 must be a relatively late text.

The *Gopaka-Mogallāna Sutta* (MN 108) comments on an early form of the Uposatha ceremony, when the *Pātimokkha* was considered a means of maintaining Sangha unity (*sāmaggiya*):

<sup>18</sup> DN 17, DN 18, DN 19, DN 26, MN 83, AN 3.71, AN 7.53, AN 10.46, AN 10.119, AN 10.167. See Rhys Davids & Oldenberg (1899: x) on the Vedic background to the ceremony.

<sup>19</sup> MN 109, MN 110 (= SN 22.82), MN 118, SN 8.7, AN 4.190, AN 10.67, SN 3.12.

<sup>20</sup> Ud p.61: *sukaraṃ sādhuṇā sādhu, sādhu pāpena dukkaraṃ, pāpaṃ pāpena sukaraṃ, pāpaṃ ariyehi dukkaran ti.*

<sup>21</sup> Vin II.185ff.

There is, Brahmin, a rule of training which has been declared to the mendicants, a *Pātimokkha* which has been recited by the completely awakened Blessed One, an Arahant who knows and sees. On an Uposatha day, as many of us who live near to a village field gather together, and then request someone who knows it. When it is being recited, if there is an offence, a transgression, for a mendicant, we regulate him according to the law, according to the instruction. The honourable sirs do not regulate us – the Dhamma regulates us.<sup>22</sup>

From this we learn of an apparently simply *Pātimokkha* ceremony, after the Buddha, with Buddhist mendicants in a general area – no monastic boundary (*sīmā*) is mentioned – gathering for the Uposatha ceremony. The ceremony and rules are considered Dhamma, not Vinaya: ‘the Dhamma regulates us’. Could this mean that when MN 108 was composed, the *Pātimokkha* had not yet been assigned to a separate class of ‘Vinaya’ tradition? It was possibly the case that the *Pātimokkha* was still considered part of the oral tradition of Suttanta/Dhamma, just as early lists of ‘points of training’ (*sikkhā-pada*) are found in such texts as the *Sāmañña-phala Sutta*.

The text is certainly late, however. Focusing on the activities of Ānanda after the Buddha’s death,<sup>23</sup> it is similar to the *Kosambi Sutta* (SN 12.68), also set after the Buddha’s death, and involving Musīla, Savitṭha, Nārada and Ānanda. Another Sutta involving Nārada (AN 5.50) is set in Pāṭaliputta under the reign of King Muṇḍa, apparently the great-grandson of Ajātasattu (DPPN s.v.; Wynne 2019: 153). SN 12.68 and MN 108 probably belongs to the same period as Nārada, i.e. 30-50 BE.

The only other Sutta which mentions the *Pātimokkha* is *Udāna* 45. It describes how Ānanda, at a Sangha gathering on an Uposatha night, requests the Buddha to recite the *Pātimokkha* on three occasions (the first, middle and last

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22 MN III.10: *atthi kho brāhmaṇa tena bhagavatā jānatā passatā arahatā sammāsambuddhena bhikkhūnaṃ sikkhāpadaṃ paññattaṃ, pātimokkhaṃ uddiṭṭhaṃ. te mayaṃ tad-ahuposathe yāvaticā ekaṃ gāma-khettaṃ upanissāya viharāma, te sabbe ekajjhaṃ sannipatāma, sannipatitvā yassa taṃ vattati taṃ ajjhesāma. tasmim ce bhaññamāne hoti bhikkhussa āpatti hoti vītikkamo, taṃ mayaṃ yathā-dhammaṃ yathānusiṭṭhaṃ kāremā ti. na kira bhavanto kārenti, dhammo no kāretī ti.*

23 MN III.7: *ekaṃ samayaṃ ānando rājagahe viharati veḷu-vane kalandaka-nivāpe acira-parinibbute bhagavati.* ‘On one occasion, Ānanda was staying in Rājagaha, in the Bamboo grove, in the squirrels’ feeding ground, not long after the Buddha had attained Parinirvana.’

watches of the night). The Buddha finally states that ‘the assembly is impure, Ānanda’ (Ud p.52: *aparissuddhā ānanda parisā*), at which point Moggallāna surveys the minds of the *bhikkhus* and locates the offender: ‘a person of poor virtue, wicked, his conduct impure and dubious, concealing his deeds, not an ascetic but claiming to be, not following the holy life but claiming to, rotten within, drenched (with lust), full of rubbish’.<sup>24</sup>

What happens next is bizarre. After identifying the offender using his supernatural powers, Moggallāna plays the role of a nightclub bouncer, grabbing the errant *bhikkhu* by the arm and throwing him out of the portcullis.<sup>25</sup> Moggallāna then requests that the Buddha recite the *Pātimokkha*, but the Buddha first praises Moggallāna: ‘It is marvellous and extraordinary, Moggallāna, how that stupid man waited until you grabbed him by the arm!’<sup>26</sup> The Buddha then tells the assembly that from now on the *Pātimokkha* is their concern:

Mendicants, I will no longer perform the Uposatha ritual, or recite the *Pātimokkha*. Henceforth, mendicants, only you can perform the Uposatha ritual, and recite the *Pātimokkha*. It’s not possible, there’s no chance, that the Tathāgata will perform the Uposatha ritual, and recite the *Pātimokkha* in an impure assembly.<sup>27</sup>

This story is also found at the conclusion to the Vinaya rules dealing with the *bhikkhu-saṅgha* (Vin II.236-37).<sup>28</sup> It is indeed a suitable fiction with which to end the Vinaya. Its function is quite explicit: the text both authenticates the Uposatha ritual as part of the Buddha’s teaching career, and yet distances him from it, so that it becomes a concern of the Saṅgha beyond the Buddha.

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<sup>24</sup> Ud p.52: *taṃ puggalaṃ dussīlaṃ pāpa-dhammaṃ asuci-saṅkassara-samācāraṃ paṭicchanna-kammantaṃ asamaṇaṃ samaṇa-paṭiññaṃ abrahmacāriṃ brahmacāri-paṭiññaṃ anto-pūtiṃ avassutaṃ kasambu-jātaṃ.*

<sup>25</sup> Ud p.52: *taṃ puggalaṃ bāhāyaṃ gahetvā bahi-dvāra-koṭṭhakā nikkhāmetvā sūci-ghaṭikaṃ datvā...*

<sup>26</sup> Ud p.53: *acchariyaṃ moggallāna abbhutaṃ moggallāna, yāva bāhā-gahaṇā pi nāma so mogha-puriso āgamessatī ti.*

<sup>27</sup> Ud p.53: *na dānāhaṃ bhikkhave ito paraṃ uposathaṃ karissāmi, pātimokkhaṃ uddisissāmi. tumh’eva dāni ito paraṃ uposathaṃ kareyyātha, pātimokkhaṃ uddiseyyātha. aṭṭhānam etaṃ bhikkhave anavakāso, yaṃ tathāgato aparissuddhāya parisāya uposathaṃ kareyya, pātimokkhaṃ uddiseyya.*

<sup>28</sup> The text is also found at AN 8.20.

## The Pātimokkha as a ritual recitation

Within the sprawling mass of Suttanta traditions, the material on the Uposatha/*Pātimokkha* forms a marginal and undoubtedly late part of it. A study of some of the formal aspects of the Pātimokkha supports the idea that it post-dates the Buddha. According to Dutt, the *Pātimokkha* ‘originally consisted in periodical meetings for the purpose of confirming the unity of the Buddha’s monk-followers by holding a communal confession of faith in a sort of hymn-singing.’<sup>29</sup> A similar point was made earlier by Rhys Davids and Oldenberg (1899: xxvii-xxviii), albeit with greater insight into the term *pātimokkha*:

Prati-muc (ātmanep.) means ‘to free oneself, to get rid of;’ and it is precisely through the recitation of this formular, and the answering of questions contained in it, that the conscience of the member of the Brotherhood was set free from the sense of the offence he had incurred. Pātimokkha or Prātimoksha means therefore ‘Disburdening, Getting free.’

Noting that the term *patimokkha* occurs in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* with the meaning ‘a sort of remedy, purgative’, Gombrich comments as follows (1991: 35):

The original *pātimokkha*, the Pali-English Dictionary tells us, is ‘a name given to a collection of various precepts contained in the Vinaya... as they were recited on Uposatha days for the purpose of confession.’ In other words, it denotes not just a set of rules, a text, but also the ceremony of reciting those rules after confessing any transgression against them.

When the term *pātimokkha* occurs in the Suttas and Vinaya, it is almost always something to be ‘recited’ (*uddisati*). The ritual aspect of the *Pātimokkha* is even written into the formulation of its rules. As von Hinüber has noted (1998: 262), most rules include the adversative particle ‘but’ (*pana*) for no apparent reason, for example the 11<sup>th</sup> rule ‘involving forfeiture’ (*nissaggiya-pācittiyā*):

*yo pana bhikkhu kosiya-missakaṃ santhatam kārāpeyya,  
nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ.*

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<sup>29</sup> Dutt (1960: 71), as quoted by Gombrich (1991: 31-32).

‘If any bhikkhu should have a rug made mixed with silk, there is an offence entailing expiation with forfeiture’ (Pruitt & Norman, 2001: 36-37).

This translation overlooks the adversative meaning of *pana*; a more accurate translation would begin ‘But the *bhikkhu* who ...’. Von Hinüber (1998: 262) comments as follows:

Now it is by no means immediately obvious, what is meant by “but (*pana*) a monk who...”, as long as these rules are considered individually. If, on the other hand, the Pātimokkhasutta as whole is taken into consideration, the use of the adversative particle *pana* not only makes sense, but is required by context.

The context to which von Hinüber refers is what he calls ‘the Pātimokkhanidāna’, an introductory passage now found in the *Uposatha-kkhandhaka* (Vin I.103). This introduction, to be recited by a senior *bhikkhu* in an Uposatha gathering, begins by asking if any of the congregation has committed an offence:

May the community hear me, venerable sir. Today is the fifteenth, the Uposatha. If it is suitable to the community, the community should perform the Uposatha, it should recite the *Pātimokkha* ... For whom there may be a transgression, he should reveal it. There being no transgression, let silence prevail; through silence, I will know that the venerable sirs are pure. As, however, for each individual questioned there is (to be) an explanation, just so (must it) be announced up to the third time in such an assembly.<sup>30</sup>

The speaker of this ritual introduction is obviously not the Buddha. The text continues as follows:

‘**But** the *bhikkhu* who does not reveal an existing offence, for him there is intentional false speech ...’

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<sup>30</sup> Vin I.102-03: *suñātu me bhante saṃgho, ajj’ uposatho pannarasa. yadi saṃghassa pattakallaṃ saṃgho uposathaṃ kareyya pātimokkhaṃ uddiseyya ... yassa siyā āpatti so āvikareyya. asantiyā āpattiyā tuñhī bhavitabbaṃ. tuñhībhāvena kho pan’ āyasmante parisuddhā ti vedissāmi. yathā kho pana paccekapuñṭhassa veyyākaraṇaṃ hoti, evam eva eva-rūpāya parisāya yāvatiyaṃ anussāvitaṃ hoti.*

Vin I.103: *yo pana bhikkhu ... santiṃ āpattiṃ nāvikareyya, sampajāna-musāvād’assa hoti.*

According to von Hinüber (1998: 262), the term *pana* ‘clearly contrasts this monk and his behaviour to those being pure, and this entails the use of *pana* here and in all subsequent rules’. The *Pātimokkha* rules thus continue the introductory formula; neither was uttered by the Buddha. The *Sutta-vibhaṅga*, introduced by the *Verāṅja-kaṇḍa*, creates an entirely different presentation: not of a text composed for ritual recitation, but of individual rules pronounced by the Buddha when circumstances demanded them.

### The evolution of the Pātimokkha

So far we have seen that the *Pātimokkha* was a ritual formula of the early Buddhist era, and not initially regarded as taught by the Buddha. It also seems, moreover, that the *Pātimokkha* rules were periodically revised, as part of an ongoing creation of tradition. Von Hinüber has noted that one Sutta (AN 3.83) refers to ‘just over 150 points of training’ (*sādhikam ... diyaḍḍha-sikkhā-padasatam*), a figure that can be reached ...

... by subtracting the 75 Sekhiyas, which have been created on the basis of the Vattakkhandhaka, the eighth chapter of the Cullavagga. Furthermore, it seems that there might have been only 90 instead of 92 Suddhika-Pācittiyas originally, if rules such as Pācittiya XXII and XXIII were split up at a later date. If correct, this assumption would lead to a set of exactly 150 rules at a very early period.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from an expansion of an early set of around 150 rules, many of the rules were also elaborated from a simpler formulation. This can be seen in the citation of certain rules in the account of the Second Council (von Hinüber 1998: 260). The first point of contention is whether it is suitable to store salt in an animal’s horn (Vin II.306: *kappati bhante siṅgi-loṇa-kappo ti*). In rejecting this practice, Sabbakāmin cites a Pācittiya rule: ‘In eating from a store, there is expiation’ (Vin II.306: *sannidhi-kāraka-bhojane pācittiyan ti*). However, in the extant *Pātimokkha* (*Suddha-pācittiya* 38) this rule reads as follows:

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<sup>31</sup> von Hinüber (1998: 258).



*yo pana bhikkhu sannidhi-kāraṇaṃ khādanīyaṃ vā bhojanīyaṃ vā khādeyya vā bhuñjeyya vā, pācittiyaṃ.*

‘But should a *bhikkhu* chew or eat solid food or soft food which comes from a store, there is expiation.’<sup>32</sup>

All five of the *Pātimokkha* rules cited in the account of the Second Council have this truncated form, with an offence in the locative followed by the term ‘expiation’ (*pācittiya*). For example, on the final point of whether it is suitable to accept gold or silver (Vin II.307: *kappati bhante jātārūpa-rajatan ti*), Sabbakāmin cites a *Pācittiya* rule: ‘in accepting gold or silver, there is expiation’ (*jātārūparajata-paṭiggahaṇe pācittiyān ti*). But the actual rule in the *Pātimokkha* (*Nissaggiya-pācittiya* 18) is more complex:

*yo pana bhikkhu jātārūpa-rajataṃ uggaṇheyya vā uggaṇhāpeyya vā upanikkhitaṃ vā sādīyeyya, nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ.*

‘But should a mendicant receive or have received gold or silver, or accept a deposit, there is expiation entailing forfeiture.’<sup>33</sup>

Although the *Pātimokkha* was also revised to ensure greater legal exactitude, some of the extant *Pācittiya* rules have retained their older formulation, with a prohibited item in the locative case followed by the word ‘expiation’. We can consider the eighth point of the Second Council: whether ‘it is suitable to drink *jaḷogī*’ (Vin II.307: *kappati bhante jaḷogim pātun ti*). Sabbakāmin’s reply, ‘In drinking liquor and spirits, there is expiation’ (*surā-meraya-pāne pācittiyān ti*) is identical to *Suddha-pācittiya* 51 (Vin IV.110). Strangely, however, in this case the ‘word commentary’ (*pada-bhājanīya*) section of the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* cites the term ‘should drink’ (Vin IV.110: *piveyyā ti*), indicating that while the word commentary knew an updated version of the rule (to something like *yo pana bhikkhu surā-merayaṃ piveyya, pācittiyān ti*), by oversight the updated version was omitted and the original rule retained.

<sup>32</sup> Vin IV.87; Pruitt & Norman (2001: 58-59).

<sup>33</sup> Vin III.237; Pruitt & Norman (2001: 38-39).

### **Move to the monastery, or stay in the forest?**

We have seen that the *Pātimokkha* was devised as a means of affirming Sangha unity, through asserting moral purity. At some point in the early Buddhist era, prior to the Second Council of Vesālī, ‘points of training’ were transformed into a recitational text performed on Uposatha days. This happened after the Buddha’s death: the Sutta evidence for the *Pātimokkha* is marginal, fictitious and in some cases demonstrably a later addition. Once the ceremony was established, the content of the *Pātimokkha* was periodically expanded and its legalistic formulations refined.

The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* should be understood against this background of *Pātimokkha* development. Its rules were a script for a senior *bhikkhu* to recite at the Uposatha ritual. But the *Sutta-vibhaṅga*, introduced by the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, presented the rules afresh within a legendary biography of the Buddha. As von Hinüber has noted (1995: 7), the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* underlines the important point that

the rules of conduct must be promulgated by the Buddha himself. He is the only law giver, and thus all rules, to which every single monk has to obey, are thought to go back to the Buddha.

This repackaging of the *Pātimokkha* was a suitable response to those fraternities which did not take it very seriously. Indeed, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* contains enough clues for the real circumstances of its composition to be decoded. The Buddha’s journey East to Vesālī, the idea of corruption arising when ‘little Buddhas’ are no more, and indiscipline among the Vajjiputtakas: all this is the events of the Second Council reimagined as a mythic fantasy. But the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* was probably not aimed at the Vajjiputtakas alone. The story of venerable Mahā-kappina, who decides not to attend the Uposatha ritual, illustrates other forms of opposition to the new institution:

Whether I go to the Uposatha or not, whether I go the Sangha’s ritual act or not, I have been purified by the highest purification.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Vin I.105: *gaccheyyaṃ vāhaṃ uposathaṃ na vā gaccheyyaṃ, gaccheyyaṃ vā saṃgha-kammaṃ na vā gaccheyyaṃ, atha khvāhaṃ visuddho paramāya visuddhiyā ti.*

In response to this individualism, Mahā-kappina is implored to respect the Uposatha ritual, because if Brahmins do not respect it, who else will?<sup>35</sup> Like the Vinaya in general, this is not a story of what happened in the lifetime of the Buddha, but of resolving Sangha tensions in the early Buddhist era. Mahā-kappina symbolises the forest ideal, of meditators bent on solitary spiritual perfection, but now in conflict with the new ‘Pātimokkha Buddhism’. Awareness of this difference is also coded into the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*. Its account of the meditative teaching of ‘lazy’ Buddhas can be read as praise for, but ultimately a critique of, the forest vocation:

But those Blessed Ones, encompassing mind with mind, were not lazy in exhorting their disciples. One time, Sāriputta, the Blessed Vessabhū, a fully awakened Arahant, was in a certain scary forest thicket. Encompassing mind with mind, he exhorted and instructed a community of a thousand mendicants:

*Think like this, do not think like that! Pay attention like this, do not pay attention like that! Abandon that, abide having attained this!*

And then, Sāriputta, being exhorted and instructed thus by Vessabhū, the minds of that thousandfold community of mendicants were released from the corruptions without grasping.<sup>36</sup>

This is no more than a mythic exaggeration of Gotama’s own teaching. It reflects the fact that the Buddha was an austere sage, rather than a legal scholar who established a monastic order; a meditation master, rather than a disciplinarian who devised the *Pātimokkha* rules. The message of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* is clear enough. Just as Vessabhū’s dispensation failed because there was no *Pātimokkha*, so too will Gotama’s unless things change. And so while partially recognising the importance of the forest vocation, the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* subsumes it within a call for textualism and *Pātimokkha* Buddhism.

<sup>35</sup> Vin I.105: *tumhe ce brāhmaṇā uposathaṃ na sakkariṣṣatha na garu-kariṣṣatha na mānessatha na pūjessatha, atha ko carahi uposathaṃ sakkariṣṣati garu-kariṣṣati mānessati pūjessati?*

<sup>36</sup> Vin III.8: *akilāsuno ca te bhagavanto ahesuṃ sāvake cetasā ceto paricca ovaḍiṭṭuṃ. bhūtapubbaṃ Sāriputta vessabhū bhagavā arahaṃ sammā-sambuddho aññatarasmim̐ bhimsanake vana-saṇḍe, sahasaṃ bhikkhu-saṃghaṃ cetasā ceto paricca ovaḍati anusāsati: evaṃ vitakketha mā evaṃ vitakkayittha, evaṃ manasi-karotha mā evaṃ manasā-kattha, idaṃ pajahatha idaṃ upasampajja viharathā ti. atha kho sāriputta tassa bhikkhu-sahasassa vessabhunā bhagavatā arahatā sammā-sambuddhena evaṃ ovadiyamānānaṃ evaṃ anusāsiyamānānaṃ anupādāya āsavehi cittāni vimuccim̐su.*

Further evidence for a change from the more ascetic tradition of Gotama is contained in SN 16.5. In the bamboo grove of Rājagaha, the Buddha observes that since Mahā-Kassapa is old, his hempen rag-robles must be a burden, and so why not accept the robes of a householder, and invitations to eat? Why not also live close to the Buddha? In response Kassapa outlines what he has long practised and advocated: dwelling in the forest, eating almsfood, wearing rag-robles, wearing the triple-robe, having few wishes and abiding content, secluded, aloof and resolute.

Why does Kassapa live like this and praise this lifestyle, asks the Buddha? Kassapa says it is for his own blissful abiding in the present and out of compassion for the later generation (SN II.203: *attano diṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihāraṃ sampassamāno, pacchimañ ca janataṃ anukampamāno*), thinking ‘perhaps the later generation will come to follow my view’ (SN II.203: *app eva nāma pacchimā janatā diṭṭhānugatiṃ āpajjeyyūṃ*). Kassapa then makes a revealing comment about this ‘later generation’:

(When the later generation hears) ‘Those who were apparently a Buddha’s disciples, his ‘little Buddhas’, were long-term forest dwellers, and spoke in praise of forest dwelling ... were resolute and spoke in praise of being resolute’, the (later generation) will strive for just that (lifestyle, *tathattāya*), which will be for their wellbeing and happiness in the long-term.<sup>37</sup>

The Sutta ends with the Buddha praising Kassapa and telling him to carry on with his asceticism: ‘Wear hempen rag-robles, Kassapa, wander for alms, and live in the forest!’<sup>38</sup> SN 16.5 thus resists the move to the monastery – living near to the Buddha – and sticks to the ascetic ways of the forest. It is also the only canonical text apart from the *Verañja-kaṇḍa* which refers to ‘little Buddhas’. If it belongs to the same era as the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*, after the Buddha’s principle disciples had passed away, it clarifies that a major concern of the age was to

<sup>37</sup> SN II.203: *ye kira te ahesuṃ buddhānubuddha-sāvaka te dīgharattaṃ āraññakā c’eva ahesuṃ āraññakattassa ca vaṇṇa-vādino ... pe ... piṇḍa-pātikā c’eva ... pe ... paṃsukūlikā c’eva ahesuṃ ... tecīvarikā c’eva ahesuṃ ... appicchā c’eva ahesuṃ ... santuṭṭhā c’eva ahesuṃ ... pavivittā c’eva ahesuṃ ... asaṃsaṭṭhā c’eva ahesuṃ ... āradha-vīriyā c’eva ahesuṃ vīriyārambhassa ca vaṇṇa-vādino ti. te tathattāya paṭipajjissanti, tesam taṃ bhavissati dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya.*

<sup>38</sup> SN II.203: *tasmā-t-īha tvam kassapa sāñāni c’eva paṃsukūlāni dhārehi nibbasanāni, piṇḍapātāya ca carāhi araññe ca viharāhī ti.*

avoid slipping away from the austere ways of old. Although the *Pātimokkha* was an attempt to codify this austerity within a developing monasticism, not everyone agreed with this solution.

### **The Vajjiputtaka problem reconsidered**

The texts on Mahā-kappina's disdain for the Uposatha, and Mahā-kassapa's forest asceticism, show that within the Sangha of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, some resisted the rules of the developing monasticism. The Vajjiputtakas also resisted the *Pātimokkha*, albeit for different reasons: they wished not to return to the forest, but to follow a more relaxed sort of monasticism. This can be seen in AN 3.83, a Vajjiputtaka document which sets out an opposition between essential spiritual ideals and the *Pātimokkha*:

At one time, the Blessed One was residing in Vesālī, in the Great Wood, in the hall with a peaked roof. And then a certain Vajjiputtaka *bhikkhu* approached the Blessed One, saluted him and sat to one side. Seated to one side, he said to this to the Blessed One.

‘Respected sir, this recitation of more than 150 points of training is recited every half-month. I am unable, sir, to train in them.’

‘Are you able, *bhikkhu*, to train in the triple training of higher virtue, higher mind and higher insight?’

‘I am able, sir, to train in the triple training of higher virtue, higher mind and higher insight.’

‘Therefore, *bhikkhu*, you may train in the triple training of higher virtue, higher mind and higher insight. When you train in this triple training, your passion, hatred and delusion will be abandoned as you train in it. And with the abandoning of passion, hatred and delusion, you will not do anything unskilful, you will not resort to any evil.’

On another occasion, that *bhikkhu* trained in the triple training of higher virtue, higher mind and higher insight. As he trained in it, his passion, hatred and delusion were abandoned. And with the abandoning of passion, hatred and delusion, he did not do anything unskilful, and did not resort to any evil.

Perhaps the Vajjiputtakas can now be viewed in a different light, not simply as breakers of the Buddha's monastic code, but rather as adopting a more flexible approach to an early Buddhist innovation: 'Pātimokkha Buddhism'. When the older way of the *bhikkhu* was giving way to settled monasticism, *Pātimokkha* Buddhism was a rule-heavy attempt to assimilate the austere forest ideal into the new monasteries. The Vajjiputtaka response to this was effectively a warning against the danger of missing the wood (the 'triple training' of virtue, meditation and wisdom) for the trees (a copious rule-book).<sup>39</sup> And yet we can also easily understand the perspective of the *Verañja-kaṇḍa*: 'without *vinaya* there is no order (*samgha*), and without the community of monks there is no Buddhism' (von Hinüber, 1995: 7).

The situation around the time of the Second Council was no doubt complicated. There were tensions not only between Vesālī and the North-West network around Verañjā, but probably also within different lineages. So while the Verañjā-kaṇḍa says that the period of corruption occurs when the Sangha has 'attained the eminence of great learning' (Vin III.10: *bāhusacca-mahattaṃ patto*), it also laments the lack of Dhamma teachings (in nine categories) given by the lazy Buddhas of the past. In other words, a critique of scholasticism is somehow bound up in the call for increasing textualism.

Other tensions in the proto-Theravādin tradition can be made out. The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* and the account of the Second Council have a clear ascetic tendency: from the Buddha praising the diet of streamed grain in the famine of Verañjā (Vin III.6-7), to the description of the meditative teaching of Vessabhū, and also the account of the Pāveyyaka *bhikkhus* residing at Ahogaṅga, 'all forest dwellers, all alms-rounders, all rag-robbers, all three-robbers, all arahants' (Vin II.299: *sabbe ārañṇikā, sabbe piṇḍapātikā, sabbe paṃsukūlikā, sabbe tecīvarikā, sabbeva arahanto*). The proto-Theravādins were ascetically inclined, and yet strongly in favour of a code for settled monasticism (the *Pātimokkha*).

Stronger support for the ascetic vocation found expression in the lineage of Devadatta, whose attempted reform was merely a more adamant voice from the forest, one more clearly opposed to the compromises of the *Pātimokkha*. Yet another response was the more relaxed monasticism of the Vajjiputtakas:

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<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the Vajjiputtakas would have agreed with Oldenberg's estimation (1997: xxiii) of the Second Council: 'We thus perceive that the grand intellectual movement which we call Buddhism had even at that time lost the spirit of freedom upon which it was founded, and that it had degenerated into monkish ceremoniousness'.

whereas Devadatta's tradition rejected *Pātimokkha* Buddhism, the Vajjiputtakas preferred a relaxed version of it, arguing for a greater focus on the spirit rather than the rules.

The Pali Vinaya thus suggests a multitude of orientations within the Sangha of the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC: the forest ideal (*Verañja*, Mahā-kappina), strict asceticism (Mahā-kassapa, Devadatta) strict monasticism (*Verañja*, *Pātimokkha*), relaxed monasticism (Vajjiputtakas), the new vocation of scholasticism (*Verañja-kaṇḍa*) and so on. At a key moment, an attempt was made to resolve some of the tensions by establishing Pātimokkha Buddhism as *buddha-vacana*. The *Verañja-kaṇḍa* introduction to the *Sutta-vibhaṅga* suggests that this occurred at the time of the Second Council, when the 'little Buddhas' had passed away.

### Appendix 1: Dating the Second Council

Rhys Davids & Oldenberg (1899, xxiii) dated the Second Council to the mid 4th century BC, within 'thirty years of 350 B.C.', but this assumes that the Buddha died in 'the period 420-400 B.C.' Dating the Buddha's death to c. 400 BC would push the Second Council to around 340 BC. Cousins (2005: 54-55) has dated it even later, c.70-80 BE, i.e. 330-320 BC, but this is probably too late. While it is reasonable for Cousins to assume (2005: 54) that Ānanda 'might have lived until around 20 BE', he also assigns the latest date possible for Sabbakāmin, 'the presiding monk (very probably the oldest living monk)' at the Second Council, who he views as 'a pupil of Ānanda' (2005: 54). This allows Cousins to suppose that if Sabbakāmin was a young ordinand at the end of Ānanda's life, he could have lived for another 50-60 years, placing the Second Council around 70-80 BE.

It is not clear why Cousins insists on the longest possible period between the death of Ānanda and Sabbakāmin's age at the Second Council. For the Pali account of the Second Council does not refer to Sabbakāmin as Ānanda's pupil, but calls him his 'religious companion' (Vin II.304: *saddhi-vihārika*). It follows that a gap of fifty years or more between Sabbakāmin and Ānanda is an exaggeration. Placing Sabbakāmin within a generation or two of Ānanda suggests that he lived for another 20-40 years after him. This would put the Second Council within the period 40 – 60 BE (360-340 BC), which would correspond to the rough date of MN 108 proposed above (c. 30 – 50 BE). Further support for the mid 4th century BC is suggested by the *Pātimokkha* rules on wealth and money (*Nissaggiya-pācittiya* 18-19):



18. *yo pana bhikkhu jātarūpa-rajataṃ ugganheyya vā ugganhāpeyya vā upanikkhattaṃ vā sādiyeyya, nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ.*

‘But should a mendicant receive or have received gold or silver, or accept a deposit, there is expiation entailing forfeiture.’

19. *yo pana bhikkhu nāna-ppakāraṃ rūpiya-saṃvohāraṃ samāpajjeyya, nissaggiyaṃ pācittiyaṃ.*

‘But should a mendicant engage in various types of *rūpiya*-transaction, there is expiation entailing forfeiture.’<sup>40</sup>

Rule 18 refers to ‘gold and silver’ rather than money, and so is substantially the same as one of the Suttanta ‘points of training’ (e.g. DN I.64: *jātarūpa-rajata-paṭiggahaṇā paṭivirato hoti*). Rhys Davids (1877: 7) doubted whether the term *rūpiya*, in rule 19, refers to money, preferring instead to understand the notion of ‘transactions in silver’ (*rūpiya-saṃvohāra*) as a reference to ‘silver as a medium of exchange’, rather than actual money. If so, the rule could be seen as a complement to rule 18, adding that besides accepting gold and silver, it is an additional offence to undertake a transaction with it. On the other hand, rule 19 could be an attempt to update the older rule on gold and silver to more recent economic conditions; Pruitt and Norman (2001: 39) have translated *rūpiya-saṃvohāra* as ‘monetary transaction’.

Whatever the meaning of *rūpiya*, one of the practices of the Vajjiputtakas was requesting money: ‘Give, sirs, a *kahāpaṇa* to the community, or a half or a quarter or a Māsaka coin.’<sup>41</sup> Even Rhys Davids (1877: 3) admits that a *kahāpaṇa* was a type of coin, and if so the Second Council can be understood, at least in part, as a response to changes in Buddhist behaviour brought about by the innovation of money. The Second Council must therefore belong to a period in which money was circulating in northern India.

According to Cribb (1985: 550), Indian coinage was derived from the ‘Graeco-Iranian world’, the first examples being Gandharan Punch Marked Coins, which ‘were in circulation at a date in the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BC’. If these coins can probably be dated to ‘the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC’, and allowing some time for the new technology to catch on, coinage must have become normal

<sup>40</sup> Vin III.237ff; Pruitt & Norman (2001: 38-39).

<sup>41</sup> Vin II.294: *deth’ āvuso saṅghassa kahāpaṇam pi aḍḍham pi pādam pi māsakarūpam pi.*

in the period after Ānanda's death (c.380 BC), and quite possibly before it. Although this does not provide definite dates for the Second Council, it suggests that a date towards the mid 4th century BC is more likely than a date towards its end. This roughly agrees with Gombrich's (1992) dating of the Second Council around 345 BC. But assuming the circulation of coins prior to 350 BC, and given the period after c. 380 BC as the time when the little Buddhas were no more, a date closer to 360/350 BC is perhaps more likely.

## Appendix 2: AN 3.83 (Ee I.230-31)

*evaṃ me sutam. ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā vesāliyaṃ viharati mahāvane kūṭāgāra-sālāyaṃ. atha kho aññataro vajjiputtako bhikkhu yena bhagavā ten' upasaṅkami ... pe ... ekam antaṃ nisinno kho so vajjiputtako bhikkhu bhagavantam etad avoca:*

*sādhikam idaṃ bhante diyaḍḍha-sikkhāpada-sataṃ anvaddhamāsaṃ uddesaṃ āgacchati. nāhaṃ bhante ettha sakkomi sikkhituṃ ti. sakkhasi pana tvaṃ bhikkhu tīsu sikkhāsu sikkhituṃ, adhisīla-sikkhāya adhicitta-sikkhāya adhipaññā-sikkhāyā ti? sakkom' ahaṃ bhante tīsu sikkhāsu sikkhituṃ — adhisīla-sikkhāya adhicitta-sikkhāya adhipaññā-sikkhāyā ti. tasmā-t-ihā tvaṃ bhikkhu tīsu sikkhāsu sikkhassu, adhisīla-sikkhāya adhicitta-sikkhāya adhipaññā-sikkhāyā.*

*yato kho tvaṃ bhikkhu adhisīlam pi sikkhissasi, adhicittam pi sikkhissasi, adhipaññam pi sikkhissasi, tasmā tuyhaṃ bhikkhu adhisīlam pi sikkhato adhicittam pi sikkhato adhipaññam pi sikkhato, rāgo pahīyissati doso pahīyissati moho pahīyissati. so tvaṃ rāgassa pahānā dosassa pahānā mohassa pahānā, yaṃ akusalam taṃ na karissasi yaṃ pāpaṃ tvaṃ sevissasī ti.*

*atha kho so bhikkhu aparena samayena adhisīlam pi sikkhi adhicittam pi sikkhi adhipaññam pi sikkhi. tassa adhisīlam pi sikkhato adhicittam pi sikkhato adhipaññam pi sikkhato, rāgo pahīyī doso pahīyī moho pahīyī. so rāgassa pahānā dosassa pahānā mohassa pahānā, yaṃ akusalam taṃ na kāsi yaṃ pāpaṃ taṃ na sevī ti.*

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