

**An Old Colophon Preserved:  
The Tipiṭaka of Nāṇavaṃsa and Sobhaggasiri**

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In the year Cūlasakkarāja 906 (called *kāp sī* as a cyclical year and corresponding to A.D. 1544) Lady Keev “Juwel”, the wife of Lām Ceḍ, donated the text of the Itivuttaka together with its commentary, the Paramatthadīpanī II, to the “Great Monastery” (Vat Hlvañ) in the vanished Northern Thai town Dā Soy.<sup>1</sup> This is the oldest known manuscript of these texts, which, however, is not complete. Moreover it is heavily damaged by mice or rats. Still, folios containing colophons to individual fascicles (Thai: *phūk*) are preserved and show that the two manuscripts form a set.

While the end of the commentary is missing that of the Itivuttaka survives: ... *lokena terasā ti. itivuttake dvādasādhikasatasuttaṃ itivuttakaṃ niṭṭhitam*. The very last folio at the end following this *explicit* contains a long colophon in Pāli, which is quite unusual in the collection preserved at Vat Lai Hin near Lampang in Northern Thailand. The bad state of preservation of this colophon ending in *itivuttakappakaraṇam niṭṭhitam* prevented a complete and correct interpretation and allowed only for a preliminary translation, when the catalogue of the Lai Hin manuscripts was prepared.

Therefore it came as a most pleasant surprise when on 11 July 2015 during discussions of the new critical edition of the Tipiṭaka (Dhammakaya-Tipiṭaka) at Vat Phra Dhammakāya at Pathumthani (Padumadhānī) north of

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is described as nos. 70 and 71 in O. v. Hinüber, *Die Pali-Handschriften des Klosters Lai Hin bei Lampang in Nord-Thailand*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Veröffentlichungen der Indologischen Kommission, Band 2. Wiesbaden 2013.

Bangkok, a second version of the same colophon was brought to my notice by Dr Alexander Wynne. This colophon belongs to a copy of the Dīgha-nikāya. It is appended to the end of a Pāṭikavagga manuscript, which was copied at the initiative of Gru Pā Kañcana, a well-known monk, who built up an extremely valuable and still extant collection of Pāli texts at Vat Sūn Men in Phrae in North Thailand, as the colophon confirms:<sup>2</sup>

*bra mahāthera cau tan jū kañcana araṇṇāvāsī meṭṭhā bree pen  
glau lee. sissa cau daṇ mvar saddhā bāy ṇok mī rājjavaṇ meṭṭhā  
hlvaṇ brapāṇ brōm kan sān lee*

The venerable Mahāthera named Kañcana, the forest dweller at Phrae, was the leading [monastic] supporter. All his venerable followers, who were royal lay supporters in Luang Prabang, joined together had [the manuscript] produced.

Although the manuscript is not dated it must have been copied as almost all the manuscripts sponsored in one way or the other by Gru Pā Kañcana during the thirties of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the two manuscripts with the same Pāli colophon are separated by almost exactly three hundred years.

Besides being fragmentary, the Itivuttaka colophon also contains some obvious copying mistakes as already noted in the catalogue of the Lai Hin manuscripts. Likewise, the Dīgha-nikāya colophon is corrupt in rather many places. Still, comparing the two colophons, it is possible to reconstruct the original text nearly completely. In doing so, it is extremely helpful that the wording of the colophon points to a metrical text, and, now that there are

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<sup>2</sup> On Gru Pā Kañcana see *Pali-Handschriften*, as previous note, p. xlv. The translation of the colophon follows: Harald Hundius, “The Colophons of Thirty Pāli Manuscripts from Northern Thailand”, *JPTS* 14. (1990), pp. 1–173, particularly p. 129.

two manuscripts, it is not too difficult to see that two Vasantatilaka stanzas (---|---|---|---|---[*ta-bha-ja-ja-ga-ga*]) are followed by a Mālinī verse (---|---|---|---|---[*na-na-ma-ya-ya*]).

In the following presentation of the colophon, the reconstructed version of the verses is given in the first line in bold-faced type followed by the versions found in the Itivuttaka and Pāṭikavagga colophons respectively in their corrupt and fragmentary forms.

## VASANTATILAKA

**1. SOBHAGGASĪRipavarāya vayādipañca-**

**It:** sobhaggasiripavarāya vayādipañca-

**D:** sobhaggasiripavarāya dipañca-

**2. kalyāṇiyāya sa{ṃ}vute ti supākatāya**

**It:** kalyāṇiyāya saṃvute ti pākatāya

**D:** kalyāṇiya savate ti supākate

**3. khattiyāniyā pati pu{ñ}ñābhirato sukhaṭṭho**

**It:** khattiyāniyā pati puññābhirato sukhaṭṭho

**D:** khattiyāniyā pati puññābhirito sukhaṭṭho

**4. yo NĀNAVAMSApavaro mahupāsako †si†**

**It:** yo nānavamsapavaro mahupāsako si

**D:** yo nānavānsapavaro mahusako

**5. tenājji(t)ṭho †siri†dharo varaBUDDHAVAMSO**

**It:** tenājjiṭṭho silapañño varabu[ddhavamso]

**D:** tenādhiṭṭho siladharo re buddhavamso

**6. thero ayam tikūṭahemavihāravāsī**

**It:** thero ayam tikūṭahemavihāravā[sī]

**D:** thero ayam tikūṭahemavihāravāsī

**7. lekhāpīte kavijane sukha saṃvidhāya****It:** lekh]i(ttha)ke kavijane sukhasaṃvidhāya**D:** lekhiṇe kavijanena sutthu saṃvidhāya**8. lekhāpayī tīpītakam saha-m-atthaṭīkam****It:** [+ + + + ]pītakam saha-m-atthaṭīkā |**D:** likkhāpi tepītakam saha-p-atthaṭīkam

MĀLINĪ

**9. tividhapītakam etaṃ vepula[m] sīsa(ṭ)ṭhena****It:** tividhapīta[kam .]d. vepulāsaṭṭhena**D:** tividhapīmedaṃ vepulasisaṭṭhena**10. sakalamahitale cīraṭṭhiti (s)sāsanassa****It:** sakalamahītale cīraṭṭhiti sāsanassa**D:** sakalamahitale cīraṭṭhissatanassa**11. varabhūripatilābhā NĀṆAVAMSAvhayena****It:** varabhūripatilābhā nāṇavaṃsayhena**D:** varabhūrimatilābhā nāṇavaṃsahiyena**12. kusalam-a-gahituṃ lekhāpītipāsakena****It:** kusama-gahitu lekhāpītipāsakena

itivuttakappakaraṇaṃ niṭṭhitaṃ

**D:** kusalam-a-gahituṃ lekhāpītipāpakena | |

pāṭiyavaggadīghanikāya ||| ha ||

## COMMENTARY

## (Reconstruction and metre)

1. The *akṣaras vayā* are dropped in D. — Occasionally, as in *sīri*, metrical lengthening of vowels is required in these verses, cf. *EV I*, 2nd ed., pp. lxijf. §48,<sup>3</sup> very occasionally *sīri* is even written in the manuscript tradition.

In D (*dīpañcakalyāṇīya savate ti supākate*) is repeated after *ñāṇavaṅso pavaro* in verse 4. The dittography was noticed by the scribe and cancelled by using parentheses as indicated.

2. Although D is very faulty, it preserves the metrically correct *su-*<sup>o</sup>. The equally metrically correct *sa-* in the otherwise faulty *sava~~v~~ateti* with the second *-va-* being crossed out by the scribe may be ultimately accidental. It is, however, repeated as *savateti* in the dittography, which almost guarantees that the scribe found this wording in the manuscript he copied; on the occasional shortening of a nasalized vowel m. c. cf. *EV I*, p. lix §45.

3. In *pu{ñ}ñābhirato* only *-ñ-* is to be read m. c. instead of *-ññ-*, cf. *EV I*, p. lviii §42 and p. lix §45. In D <sup>o</sup>*-abhirato* is an obvious scribal error.

4. In D *mahusako* is a mistake, and the last syllable *si*, which is required by the metre, is missing. It is tempting to interpret *si* as *āsi* “was”. However, only *asi* is abbreviated in this way. Perhaps correction into *pi* or *hi* is necessary, although neither makes sense, unless this is to be taken as a meaningless *pādapūraṇa*.

5. In spite of the loss of *vara*, of which only *re* is extant, D contains the clue to a possible reconstruction. In It *sīlapañño* does not scan, nor does D *sīladharo*, which, however, could be read as a metrically correct *siladharo* or as *siridharo*. A confusion of *ra* and *la* is not unlikely before a Thai linguistic background: *siridharo* > *silidharo* with a “correction” into *sīladharo*, which

<sup>3</sup> *The Elders' Verses*, Vol. I: Theragāthā, 2nd ed. Translated with an introduction and notes by K.R. Norman. Lancaster 2007.

does not otherwise seem to occur in Pāli. In It this could have provoked a further “correction” to *sīlapañño*, which is well attested in Northern Thailand at the time. An alternative, therefore, could be *sīlapa{ñ}ño*, cf. *pu{ñ}ñā-bhirato* in verse 3 (?). Consequently, the reconstruction remains doubtful. Luckily, the name *Buddhavaṃsa* lost in It is preserved in D.

In *tenājji{t}tho* the cluster *tt̥ho* does not make position; for similar though not identical examples cf. *EV I<sup>2</sup> p. LVIII §43: °-{}t̥thāniyo*. D *°-adhi{t}tho* is a mistake.

6. The metrically correct *°-kuṭa-°* for *°-kūṭa-°* is preserved in both manuscripts.

7. The reconstruction *lekhāpīte* seems to be fairly certain. The word *sutthu* for *sutt̥hu* in D does not scan, unless read as *su{t}thu*.

8. The common South-East Asian form *tepiṭaka* must be replaced by *tipiṭaka*. In D *likkhāpi* is grammatically wrong and does not scan, nor would *lekhāpesi*. The use of the sandhi consonant *-m-* is remarkable.

9. Here, again, only D gives a clue how to reconstruct the verse: *tividhapīṭamedam > tividhapīṭakam etam*. The long *-ā-* in *vepulā* preserved in It though metrically correct is hardly justified grammatically, perhaps *vepulam* or *vīpulam* (?). The important syllable *si* is missing in It; read *sīsa-{}thēna*, cf. *EV I<sup>2</sup> p. LVIII §43: °-{}t̥thāniyo*.

10. Although D is partly corrupt, *ciraṭṭhissatasānassa* seems to allow a metrical reconstruction *cīraṭṭhīti (s)sāsanassa*. The form *ciraṭṭhīti* without ending instead of the expected *ciraṭṭhītiyā*, which would scan, is problematic, because it would, at the same time, create a redundant syllable and *sāsanassa* would no longer scan. Perhaps the compound *ciraṭṭhīti-(s)sāsanassa* is a South-East Asian formation following the rules operating in Thai compounds; on the doubling of the initial *s-* in *(s)sāsanā* cf. cf. *EV I, p. lvijf. §42*.

11. Although both It °-y $\bar{h}$ ena and D °-hiyena are wrong, this is easily mended to °-v $\bar{h}$ ayena.

12. D *kusalamagahitum* now partly solves the puzzle of *kusamagahitu* in It. However, the astonishing “sandhi -a-”, which seems to be unique, together with the unusual, perhaps likewise unique combination of *kusalam gaṇhāti* points to a possible problem in the reconstruction, although the meaning is obvious.

The metrical licence applied by the author of these verses obviously continues the usage found in the verses of the Tipiṭaka.

After this reconstruction the text can be understood and translated following the Pāli as closely as possible in the following way:

The husband of the best Kṣatriyāṇī Sobhaggasiri, who is well-known as being blessed with the five perfections such as youth etc., found his pleasure in merit making and was abiding in bliss; he (the husband) who was (?) a great Upāsaka, the best Nāṇavaṃsa, by him was approached the glorious venerable Buddhavaṃsa. This Thera, who lived in the Tikūṭahema Monastery, had the Tipiṭaka with commentaries and sub-commentaries copied after having wise (or: competent) men, who were ordered to copy, appointed in a happy way.

This threefold vast (? *vepula/vīpula* ?) Piṭaka was ordered to be copied by the Upāsaka called Nāṇavaṃsa, who stood at the top and who wished to accumulate meritorious acts by his excellent vast acquisitions, to ensure the long duration of the teaching (of the Buddha) on the whole earth.

Three persons are named: Lady Sobhaggasiri of *kṣatriya* origin, which means of royal blood, or at least of nobility, her husband the great *upāsaka* Nāṇavaṃsa, and the Thera Buddhavaṃsa. Names ending in °-vaṃsa are common in Lān<sup>2</sup> Nā at this period, as is *nāṇa*-° as the first member of a

name.<sup>4</sup> However, persons bearing names of this type are usually monks and not laymen as Ñāṇavaṃsa certainly is.

The word °-*pravara* “best, venerable” following the names of the lay supporters of the donation may correspond to Thai *cau*<sup>2</sup> (เจ้า), which is used following the names of monks or other high ranking persons. In addition to the *kṣatriya* origin of his wife the description of the great *upāsaka* Ñāṇavaṃsa as *sīsattḥa*, which might translate Thai *ayū*<sup>1</sup> *háva* (อายุ ฟ้า) in line 9 seems to point to a person of some status; perhaps he was even a local ruler or married into a family of higher status. For, it is remarkable that his wife is mentioned first and described in some detail as being well known for possessing a particularly charming appearance<sup>5</sup> already indicated by her name Sobhaggasiri. All this is said in the first Vasantatilaka verse.

Next, as mentioned in the second Vasantatilaka, Ñāṇavaṃsa sought the support of a senior monk for the execution of his project in the same way as did the followers of Gru Pā Kañcana many centuries later, when they donated the manuscript of the Pāṭikavagga of the Dīgha-nikāya. The technical term for asking a monk to act as an *upatthambhaka* “patron” or “religious advisor” is *ajjhesati* / *ajjhiṭṭha*.<sup>6</sup>

As the patron of the donation by Ñāṇavaṃsa the Thera Buddhavaṃsa organized the copying by selecting the scribes called here poetically *lekhāpīte kavijane* “wise (or: competent) men, who were ordered to write.”

<sup>4</sup> Hans Pentz, *Jinakālamālī Index. An Annotated Index to the Thailand Part of Ratanapañña's Chronicle Jinakālamālī* (Oxford and Chiang Mai, 1994), p. 280 (*kula-vaṃsa*), p. 283 and p. 292 (*sīla-vaṃsa*), p. 287 (*ñāṇa-*°), cf. further the names listed p. 219 and *Pali-Handschriften*, as note 1 above, no. 7 (*ādiccavaṃsa*), p. 230 (index s.v. *ñāṇa-*°).

<sup>5</sup> The five *kalyāṇis* are enumerated, e.g., at Spk III, 277, 18-12 as: *chavi-*°, *maṃsa-*°, *nahāru-*°, *aṭṭhi-*°, *vaya-kalyāṇaṃ*.

<sup>6</sup> This was common practice and is well documented in various colophons, cf. *Pali-Handschriften*, as note 1 above, p. xlviff.



This meaning of *kavi*, rare in Pāli, occurs again in the verses added at the end of the Jātaka in Sinhalese manuscripts used in V. Fausbøll's edition<sup>7</sup> where almost endless wishes are expressed, which the scribes hope will be fulfilled by the merit accumulated by copying the Jātaka:

... *piṭakesu vedesu ca nekavyākaraṇesu ca*  
*takkādisu pan' aññesu satthesu ca visārado*  
*kavi c' āgamakovido*<sup>8</sup> *paravādappamaddano* ...

Ja VI 594.30\*-33\*

... an expert (*kovido*) in the Piṭakas and the Vedas (!) as well as in various systems of grammar, in logic also and in other *śāstras*, a wise man (*kavi*), knowing the tradition, suppressing wrong views ...

The Thera Buddhavaṃsa resided in a monastery called *tikūṭahemavihāra* "Golden monastery with three peaks" or perhaps "Monastery with three golden peaks" following the sequence of a Thai compound. This could be a translation of *sām yod gāṃ* (or: *doṇ*) (สาม ยอด กำ [ทอง]).<sup>9</sup> So far, this

<sup>7</sup> Ja VI 594, note \*. They are not found in manuscript B<sup>d</sup> as erroneously stated in the CPD, see next note.

<sup>8</sup> This sequence of *akṣaras* occurring in verses found only in E<sup>c</sup> is printed as *kavicāgamakovādo* and misunderstood in the CPD s.v. The correction is obvious now, once the second reference to *kavi* in a similar context in Nāṇavaṃsa's colophon can be compared. The mistake °-*kovādo* for °-*kovido* found in both Sinhalese manuscripts points to the fact that these verses were copied from an earlier manuscript or composed by the scribe of the older Sinhalese manuscript C<sup>k</sup>. The Abhidhānappadīpikā, which always was a book of reference when learning Pāli, explains *budho vidvā ... sudhī kavi vyatto ...* (Abh 228), echoing the series of synonyms in Amarakośa 2. 7. 5 *budhaḥ / dhīro ... prajñah ... kavīḥ*.

<sup>9</sup> Names of this type are not rare, cf. *vaḍ cēd yod* "\**sattakūṭavihāra*" in Chiang Mai: O. v. Hinüber, "The Pāli Manuscripts Kept at the Siam Society, Bangkok. A Short Catalogue", JSS 75 (1987), pp. 9–74, nos. 38 and 63.

monastery has defied identification. For metrical reasons *vara-*<sup>o</sup> corresponding to *cau*<sup>2</sup> (𑀇𑀓𑀢), cf. *pavara-*<sup>o</sup> as discussed above, is put in front of the name of the Thera Buddhavaṃsa.

After this preparatory work Ñāṇavaṃsa could execute his plan. This change of topic is mirrored in the change of metre from the Vasantatilaka to the Mālinī. It is emphasized by *vara-bhūri-ṣaṭilābha* “excellent vast acquisitions”, that is riches, if understood correctly, that he could do so as a wealthy man equipped with the substantial financial means needed to finance a copy of Tipiṭaka together with Aṭṭhakathās and Ṭikās. His aim was to ensure the continuity of the Buddha’s teaching and to make merit.

After recovering two identical colophons referring to Ñāṇavaṃsa’s plan in manuscripts of two texts from different parts of the Tipiṭaka, one accompanied by the Aṭṭhakathā,<sup>10</sup> it is not impossible that a substantial part of the plan was actually realized, although no Ṭikā has been found as yet. However, as only a fraction of the colophons extant in manuscripts in Lān<sup>2</sup> Nā have been studied so far, other parts of this donation might surface in course of time.

Neither place nor date of Ñāṇavaṃsa’s donation can be determined. The only hint at the place, where Ñāṇavaṃsa and his wife Sobhaggasiri lived, is the monastery of unknown location. From Dā Sṣy, where It was copied, no monastery called Tikūṭahemavihāra is known.<sup>11</sup>

Ñāṇavaṃsa’s copy of the Itivuttaka or a copy of that copy was available in Dā Sṣy in 1546 and a much later copy derived from his Dīgha-nikāya existed still at the time of Gru Pā Kañcana. The text of the colophon of the Itivuttaka, already faulty in a few places, continued to deteriorate during the

<sup>10</sup> Although the end of It-a is not extant, it seems safe to assume that this manuscript was also copied from one found in Ñāṇavaṃsa’s donation.

<sup>11</sup> The surviving names of monasteries in Dā Sṣy are listed in *Pali-Handschriften*, as note I above, p. xxxviii ff.

following centuries. Therefore, although an immediate copy from Nāṇavaṃsa's original is perhaps unlikely, the extant Itivuttaka and its commentary might not be too far away in time from an original perhaps created between about 1470, when the manuscript tradition in Northern Thailand begins, and around 1500.

If this time frame is approximately correct, this is the second set of a complete Tipiṭaka prepared in Lān<sup>2</sup> Nā during this period. For in 1477 King Tiloka convened a council of one hundred monks, the eighth in Thai reckoning, at Vat Jet Yot (วัดเจ็ด ยอด) in Chiang Mai in order to purify the Tipiṭaka. Afterwards, he had this copy housed in a building erected specifically for this purpose in that monastery.<sup>12</sup> However, in contrast to Nāṇavaṃsa's donation, no tangible trace in the form of a manuscript derived from King Tiloka's Tipiṭaka is known to survive, although it is not unlikely that some of the Pāli manuscripts copied, e.g., in Dā Sōy during the early sixteenth century could be based on this edition. On the other hand, after the discovery of the copies of the Itivuttaka and the Pāṭikavagga of the Dīghanikāya donated by Lady Keev and by the followers of Gru Pā Kañcana respectively, it is possible for the first time now to trace a manuscript tradition over a couple of centuries due to Nāṇavaṃsa's and Sobhaggasiri's enduring *puṇya*.

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<sup>12</sup> Penth, *Jinakālamāli Index*, as note 4 above, p. 218.