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Prefatory Remarks

In this article I treat a topic that I already dealt with in October 2021 in a conference at Louvre Lens, organised by the Department of Sinology, Université d'Artois. As introduction I gave stances on the issue of 'translatability vs untranslatability' pertaining to theistic thought and, subsequently, with earlier and later traditional Buddhist attitudes. Shedding some light on this problem in the context of occidental history of culture may be helpful to enhance an understanding of the present topic with reference to Buddhist literature in ancient Indian vernaculars and Sanskrit. It is surely not the case that only modern scholars have raised the said issue since already in the earliest accessible Buddhist sources, dating back to several centuries BCE, we can find passages that clearly imply the problem under discussion. In the following I first refer to the *locus classicus* in the Pāli canon and then to buddhologists commenting on the same. Furthermore, some thought is given to translating Buddhist texts both from traditional and buddhological viewpoints and, finally, translating Buddhist texts into modern Western languages has to be discussed by considering theoretical and practical aspects, possibilities as well as impossibilities. Vis-à-vis my Louvre Lens paper, in the present article many changes have been made with additional examples bearing on the subject.

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'Translatability vs Untranslatability' in Theistic Religions

The question whether sacred writings or canonical texts can be translated or not, has repeatedly been discussed amid considerable controversy in various areas of religious culture. An apposite example can be found in Islam: For Muslims it is a matter of fact that the Qur'an is definitely untranslatable. In modern times notwithstanding attempts have been made with the help of Qur'an translations to ensure a better understanding of the original with believers; a permit, however, to make such efforts, was revoked (Hans Küng *et al.* 1986: 15). Previously a similar attitude was taken to the Bible in Latin even though Latin is by no means the original language of the sacred writings of the Christians. In which high esteem Latin was held as the language of the Church and also as language of education in general until the Baroque era can be gleaned from the preface to a French translation of *De consolatione philosophiae* by Boethius. The anonymous translator - with his initials given as 'M.C.'- has serious qualms about the 'translatability/untranslatability' in respect of his Latin as well as Christian-inspired classic. In his preface he criticises in particular an earlier French translator of Boethius' work, underlining that someone thinking himself obliged to translate something is prone to be considered someone who 'decks himself with borrowed plumes'. On the other hand, according to 'M.C.', a translator of works by great minds runs the risk of travestying the original text due to his own incompetence through arbitrariness or inaccuracy on his part. 'M.C.' also admits that his own translation could never substitute for the 'grand' original; that he has just tried to translate conscientiously and that a motive for decking himself with borrowed plumes should be excluded because his 'author' is so famous that it would be absurd to take something away from his fame. It would, nevertheless, be his, the translator's, unquestionable merit to have made an excellent choice by opting for 'his' author.[1] At the very beginning of his preface 'M.C.' makes it plain why he, after all, has translated the 'grand' original in spite of all misgivings about translations: He dedicates his *opus «aux malheureux»*, to the unfortunates. Thus he affirms that translations

[1] 'M.C.' 1772: xlii.

none the less are justified, given that a translator is, for instance, altruistically or educationally motivated.

As is well-known, already before the Baroque era Christian missionary activities during the colonization of lands of foreign peoples were initiated. In recent years much criticism – often justifiably – has again and again been levelled for such activities. Something positive, all the same, should be acknowledged in this connection: In order to acclimatize, among the 'heathens' Latin liturgy, e.g., one had to make every effort to transmit as authentically as possible in the languages and dialects of non-European peoples the message of Christianity. It is an undeniable fact that Christian missionaries – apart from what they considered their actual mission – contributed considerably to steadily enhance our knowledge of foreign peoples and their cultures. Thus, for instance, Christian missionaries were among the first to have pioneered in the fields of indology, sinology, tibetology, etc.[2] Even nowadays we are still indebted to them for very useful tools for the translation of Buddhist texts.

The Historical Buddha and His Followers on Doctrinal Transmission and Relevant Comments by Modern Scholars

The passage in the Pāli canon relevant to the present discussion is the '*Sakanirutti-Anujānanā*' of the *Cullavagga* (*Vinaya*, vol. II).[3] According to the text two monks of Brahminic descent complain to the Buddha about members of the Order, hailing from a variety of social strata, about their 'disfiguring' of the Buddha's words by their 'own parlance' (*te sakāya niruttiyā buddhavacanaṃ dūsenti*). The two monks asked permission for editing/retranslating the Buddha's words, i.e. his discourses as handed down, *chandaso*. The Buddha refused to give his permission and gave, instead, his approval that one may study the discourses 'in one's own language/dialect' (*na bhikkhave*

[2] See e.g. a) C. Vogel's article in Eimer 1986: 131-146; b) Vogel in Grünendahl *et al.* 1993: 289-292; c) (*inter alia* on the beginnings of tibetology) de Jong 1987: 12-13; (also the further considerably enlarged ed. of the same work) de Jong 1997: 18-19.

[3] J. Kashyap 1956: 228-229.

buddhavacanaṃ chandaso āropetabbaṃ ...anujānāmi bhikkhave sakāya niruttiyā buddhavacanaṃ pariyāpuṇituṃ). The expressions *chandaso* and *sakāya niruttiyā* have occasioned much discussion which gave them considerable prominence. In 1976 the Department of Indology and Buddhist Studies, Göttingen University, had organized a symposium on 'The Language of the Earliest Buddhist Tradition', and the contributions to the symposium were published by Bechert under the title *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung*.[4] In his paper presented on that occasion, entitled 'The dialects in which the Buddha preached,' K.R. Norman (1980: 61) enumerates the various ways how to interpret *chandaso*, viz. as 'Vedic', 'Sanskrit', 'metrical' and 'according to one's wish'. Since editing/retranslating *chandaso* was not approved by the Buddha, says Norman, discussing the meaning of *chandaso* would be just a matter of academic concern. So it would be more important in this context to concentrate on the exact meaning of *sakāya niruttiyā,* literally translated by most of the experts as 'in one's own dialect/language'.

The interpretation of *sakāya*, in particular, occasioned a dispute between Weller and Geiger.[5] The latter takes his stand on Buddhaghosa's commentary re. the passage under discussion (*VinA* 1214), composed some 900 years after the Buddha: *sakāya niruttiyā ti, ettha sakā nirutti nāma sammāsaṃbuddhena vuttappakāro māgadhiko vohāro.* Geiger's translation runs: 'Here «own language» is the parlance used by the Buddha, the Māgadha language.'[6] According to Buddhaghosa and the Theravāda tradition represented by him, the Buddha's approval ought to be understood to the effect that one should study the discourses in '[his] own language', i.e. in Māgadhī, in the language spoken by the Buddha. Geiger grounds his interpretation on the fact that the tradition followed by the famous commentator is so old that 'after all, one will have to admit that its representatives could still have had a real

[4] Bechert 1980. This theme is also thoroughly examined by Ji Xianlin; see his paper in Ji Xianlin 1982: 402-411.

[5] See Rau 1987: 236-243 on Friedrich Weller, 'Cullavagga V, 33, 1', Wilhelm Geiger, 'Erwiderung', and F. Weller 'Zu Buddhaghosas Erklärung von Cullavagga V, 33, 1'.

[6] *Ibid.*: 239: 'Hier ist «die eigene Sprache» die vom Buddha gebrauchte Redeweise, die Māgadhasprache.'

idea about the matter in hand.'[7] John Brough who favours an interpretation as defended by Weller, refers in his article 'Sakāya Niruttiyā: Cauld kale het' to 'Buddhaghosa's late Theravāda prejudice', and goes on saying in the same place:

> Perhaps it would be too speculative to imagine that Buddhaghosa's interpretation of this passage has been a major factor in the continuing study of Pali to the present day in all the Theravāda countries, where Pali is used without question to be the language of the Buddha. In notable contrast, the Tibetans and Chinese, once they had translations made into their own languages, paid no further attention to the Indian originals of their texts. (Bechert 1980: 36).

One might indeed have the impression that the Theravādins' idea of the language of the Buddha could be reminiscent of the Muslims' dogma-like concept of their sacred language and of the Qur'an's untranslatability. It is ascertainable none the less that in respect of their Pāli tradition the Theravādins have never taken, to be sure, a rigid standpoint. Such is attested to by traditional accounts of the existence of ancient Sinhalese translations of numerous commentaries on canonical texts on the basis of which Buddhaghosa, as tradition has it, retranslated commentaries into Pāli (Goonasekere 1967: 335-352). On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence for the existence of bilingual ritual texts – e.g. in Pāli and Thai[8] - and also for translations of Pāli canonical texts published in countries of Theravāda Buddhism. In the above-mentioned book, in his reaction to Geiger's 'reply' (Rau 1987: 240-243) to my mind Weller argues convincingly that, apart from Buddhaghosa's 'southern' interpretation of *sakāya niruttiyā*[9] there has also been a 'northern' tradition. Weller quotes first from the

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[7] *Ibid.*: 238: '… dass man immerhin wird zugeben müssen, dass ihre Träger noch eine wirkliche Vorstellung von der Sache haben konnten.'

[8] See e.g. Buddhadāsa 1954.

[9] A staunch supporter of the 'southern' tradition also is, for instance, Coḷiya Kassapa (ca. 12th century CE). See his Vinaya subcommentary in Tongsawet 1980: 191: *sakavādi suttaṃ gahetvā … yathābhūtam atthaṃ gahetvā… so sakavādi* ['speaking (the Buddha's) own'…] *suttan ti saṅgītittayāruḷhaṃ Pāḷivacanaṃ. Paravādī ti Mahāvihāravāsī vā hotu aññanikāyavāsī vā, yo viparītato atthaṃ gahetvā* ['having failed to grasp the meaning'] … *so va idha paravādī ti vutto* [is called 'opponent'] (transcription in roman type and textual additions are the present writer's).

Tibetan version of the *Ārya-Mahāparinirvāṇa-nāma-Mahāyānasūtra*. The key words of the quotation are *sems can thams cad kyi raṅ gi yul gyi skad du,* 'in each of all sentient beings' own vernacular.' In reply to the objection that this quotation belonging to the 'northern tradition', according to Weller corresponding to *sakāya niruttiyā,* must be later than Buddhaghosa's interpretation, Weller, after giving the relevant place and citation, points out the following: A literal equivalent to the above Tibetan version is to be found in Dharmarakṣa's Chinese translation of the same discourse which he already translated in 423 CE, i.e. before Buddhaghosa's coming to Sri Lanka. By means of one more quotation Weller can even show that the 'northern tradition', so-called – too is attested by a passage in the commentary on the *Dīghanikāya*, viz. in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*: *sabbasattānaṃ sakasakabhāsānurūpato,* 'in accordance with each of all sentient beings' own language' (Tiwary 1974: 36). Winding up his argumentation, Weller concludes his own estimation by stating that the Buddha had to refuse the two monks of Brahminic descent their proposal; since he had opened doors for everybody to realize ultimate liberation, it was a matter of the utmost importance to him that with absolute comprehensibility his teachings were made accessible to everybody ready to be 'all ears'; 'the form of the vessel', a trope for language, was not important to him – a picture in miniature how far this man was well in advance of his time with its pedantry.'[10]

In the above-mentioned article discussing *Cullavagga* (*Vinaya* II) § 16, Brough also consults the Chinese translations of the corresponding *Vinaya* passages pertaining to other schools. Likewise Lamotte examines and translates all relevant Chinese Vinaya passages and draws the following conclusion:

> Tout bien pesé, il semble que le Buddha interdit de psalmodier les textes bouddhiques avec les intonations en usage dans la récitation des Veda, mais ordonne que chaque disciple enseigne la parole du Buddha dans son dialecte propre (Lamotte 1976: 611).

[10] Rau 1987: 237: 'Von der Form des Gefässes – denn etwas anderes ist die Sprache nicht – darf er absehen – ein Bild im Kleinen, wie viel dieser Mensch der Pedanterie seiner Zeit voraus war.' Quite in the sense of Weller's understanding of *sakāya niruttiyā* – see Walpola Rahula in Dhammapala *et al.*1984: 211-218.

Translating Buddhist Texts both from Canonical and Buddhological Viewpoints

Since according to Buddhist understanding basically it is acceptable to translate canonical – i.e. for Buddhists sacred – texts, now the question arises as to how translations should be done. In this context a *locus classicus* can also be pointed to in the *Araṇavibhaṅgasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya,*11 even though the place in question does not specifically refer to translating but, in general, to the way how to communicate by language. Here verbal communication, nevertheless, precisely in the sense of the Buddha's'Middle Way', also applies to translating. The translation of the passage in 'The Exposition of Non-Conflict' runs:

> One should not insist on local language, and one shouldnot override normal usage… and insisting «Only this is correct; anything else is wrong ». This is how there comes to be insistence on local language and overriding normal usage (Ñāṇamoli, Bodhi 1995 (2001): 1084).

So, as can be gathered from this passage, what matters in verbal communication and translating is one's avoiding (*anabhiniveso*) all sorts of dogmatism, obstinacy, artificiality and exaggeration. In the same discourse even examples of 'local language' are given, being reminiscent of vogue-words or jargon. The text might also be taken as implying that one should not willfully override norms of language (*samaññāya ca anatisāro*) for the sake of ostentatious display or claptrap at the cost of clarity of expression and comprehensibility.

The above canonical text on verbal communication tallies with a characterization of the Buddha's teaching as found in many places of the canonical scriptures: There his teaching is defined as *ehipassika*, literally '[about which one can say:] come and see', as being communicable, generally accessible and open to examination. What is communicable can of course also be considered translatable in spite of many difficulties with the transfer of religio-cultural contents from a particular place of

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[11] Chalmers 1899 (1977): 234-235: *Janapadaniruttiṃ nābhiniveseyya, samaññaṃ nātidhāveyyāti … Idam eva saccaṃ mogham aññan ti. Evaṃ kho … janapadaniruttiyā ca abhiniveso hoti samaññāya ca atisāro.* Cf. also Pāsādika 1989: 27 – quotation No. 39 (*Madhyamāgama*).

origin of a specific religious culture to quite different cultural regions. This state of affairs is corroborated, for example, by the course of Buddhist or Christian missionary history.

In seeming contradiction to what has just been stated there are also canonical passages on incommunicability and ergo untranslatability. Thus, for instance, the following words of the Buddha have been handed down in the *Mahāvagga*[12] :

> This *dhamma*, won by me, is deep, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, excellent, beyond dialectic, subtle, intelligible to the learned… And so if I were to teach *dhamma* and others were not to understand me, this would be a weariness to me, this would be a vexation to me (Horner 1951 (1982): 6-7).

Thereupon it says in the *Mahāvagga* that Brahmā Sahampati earnestly requests the Buddha to set forth his teaching out of compassion for all suffering sentient beings; some of them would surely be able to understand his message. Then he Buddha answers:

> Open for those who hear are the doors of deathlessness; let them [have] faith. Thinking of useless fatigue, I have [as yet] not preached, Brahmā, the sublime and excellent *dhamma* to men.[13]

Despite all reservations the Buddha decides to set forth his teaching out of altruistic motivation. Let us remember what the aforementioned anonymous French translator of Boetius' work has written about his altruistic and educational motivations. In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha says that absolute truth as realized by him is 'difficult to grasp, difficult to understand and not accessible by thought alone'. Such utterances should, however, by no means be misunderstood as being anti-rational and entirely contradictory to the above-cited canonical statement highlighting rationality and

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[12] J. Kashyap 1956:7: *adhigato kho myāyaṃ dhammo gambhīro duddaso duranubodho santo paṇīto atakkāvacaro nipuṇo paṇḍitavedanīyo… ahaṃ ceva kho pana dhammaṃ deseyyaṃ, pare ca me na ājāneyyuṃ; so mam assa kilamatho vihesā ti.*

[13] J. Kashyap 1956: 10: *apārutā tesaṃ amatassa dvārā, ye sotavantu pamuñcantu saddhaṃ / vihiṃsasaññī paguṇaṃ na bhāsiṃ dhammaṃ paṇītaṃ manujesu brahme ti //* See Horner 1952 (1982): 9. Brackets are the present writer's – in accordance with Oldenberg's transl. – cf. Bechert 1992: 91. Horner translates: 'renounce their faith.'

clarity of thinking and language. When with the realization of ultimate release through insight-knowledge (*vimuttiñāṇadassana*) one's realizing the Unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) is meant, it is that which later on is referred to as *anabhilāpya*, as incommunicable. When in Buddhist texts incommunicability is pointed out, quite often marked by prefixes having a negative or privative sense, as in the *Mahāvagga* for example, the realm of absolute truth is referred to. Crucially, this realm and that of communicability involving the realm of conventional truth are not, according to Buddhist understanding, mutually exclusive. This is stressed in an oft-cited stanza of *Nāgārjuna's Middle Way*[14] :

> Without relying on everyday common practices (i.e. relative truths), the absolute truth cannot be expressed. Without approaching the absolute truth, *nirvāṇa* cannot be attained (Inada 1970: 146).

The Tibetan scholars who, in close collaboration with Indian paṇḍitas, translated Buddhist texts into the language of the Land of Snows were called 'lotsawas' (*lo tsā ba*), according to popular etymology supposedly tallying with Sanskrit *lokacakṣus,* 'eyes of/for the world'. This expression gives us an idea of the status that was accorded to the 'lotsawas' and their works in Central Asia and is still accorded to them by Tibetans and all followers of Tibetan Buddhism. There is no denying the fact that the Indo-Tibetan translator-reviser teams have done us a great service by having provided a meticulous rendering of so many ancient Indian original texts, quite a few among them lost in their original versions, but luckily accessible in their Tibetan 'equivalents' in various xylograph editions; in a number of cases even thanks to the readings of such xylograph editions readily available for research, mistaken readings in modern editions of Sanskrit texts can be detected and corrected. In view of the large amount of canonical corpora, understandably, occasional vagaries or lapses in translations and editions have always been in want of textual criticism to which, fortunately, also modern researchers have been contributing a lot.

[14] de la Vallée Poussin 1903-1913: 494: *vyavahāram anāśritya paramārtho na deśyate / paramārtham anāgamya nirvāṇaṃ nādhigamyate //* (XXIV, 10).

Concerning problems and perspectives of translating Buddhist texts into Western languages, we are indebted to Ruegg for his outstanding contributions to the by now extensive literature on 'translating as an art and science' in general and, in particular, on 'problems, theory and practice of translating in indological and buddhological perspectives'. One of Ruegg's contributions to a Festschrift is of particular interest in the present context (Ruegg 1992: 367-391). He discusses problems which also the anonymous translator of Boethius' opus adumbrates in his preface: *traduttore traditore,* 'translators are traitors', or *les belles infidèles,* the 'unfaithful beauties, so-called', meaning neologisms doing more or less violence to the original on which they are based. According to Ruegg an 'ideal translation' should read as if it were an original text and not at all a translation. He brings into question how a translator could be able to convey to his readers or listeners the full meaning of an original text. A translator should not only possess all linguistic and technical equipment and the best possible acquaintance with both the original and target language, but he should also be able to cope with textually exegetical traditions and intercultural hermeneutics. Ruegg's article of 1992 is, *inter alia,* very valuable because of his numerous references and bibliographical informations on 'translational science' pertaining to various disciplines and also on 'translational philosophy'.

Chinese translations of Buddhist texts were already made centuries before Indo-Tibetan translation teams started on their work. Much has been written on and still is given full attention by Eastern and Western scholars to Chinese translations of ancient Indian texts in Sanskrit and closely related dialects. In a recent interesting contribution by Dessin (2020: 3-24) first the West vis-à-vis 'the Chinese conceptual world' is dealt with and the translational activities chiefly on the part of Christian missionaries. Then Dessin observes that 'Buddhological research was built on the fundament of Christian theology', employing 'the same method of historical criticism which was developed by New Testament scholars…' (Dessin 2020: 18). Since he also mentions de Jong, it should not be forgotten that it was the latter who insisted on a 'reorientation', stressing that a buddhologist should try his best to understand Buddhist mentalities and to have contact with practising Buddhists instead of simply relying on 'sacred texts' as philological material (de Jong 1979: 28). Such a 'reorientation' still is

in need of a corrective in Buddhist studies as well as in other disciplines, viz. diachronic approaches necessitating supplementary synchronic investigation (Pāsādika 2021: 253), and, naturally, a 'reorientation' of this kind should also apply to modern translations.

Referring to early (2nd–3rd Century CE) translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese Dessin notes that they either had the choice of transliterating Indic proper names and technical terms or of finding Chinese equivalents. Opting for different approaches, on the one hand they tried to avoid inaccurate renderings of Buddhist terms by means of transliterations, and on the other they struggled to find the most adequate expression of terms and subject-matter that might come home to the Chinese. In his conclusion Dessin aptly says that through translations meant to come home to the Chinese, the original meaning of subject-matter might to some extent be distorted 'from a purely philosophical and historical point of view… regrettable or even academically unforgivable'. But he also emphasizes that translations 'are the result of a genuine attempt at mutual understanding' (Dessin 2020 : 22).

On Translating Indian Buddhist Texts into Modern Western Languages

Inquiries into the problems or religio-cultural transfer from the cultures of certain countries to those of others are surely meaningful and justifiable. In this thematic context it is advisable to revert briefly to what has been adumbrated before, viz. 'reorientation' in Buddhist studies. In addition to the aforesaid characterization of Buddhist teaching as being *ehipassika,* 'accessible to everybody', another canonical epithet of *dhamma* is *akālika*, 'immediate' or 'independent of the course of time'. It is definitely the task of buddhologists *inter alia* to explore pre-Buddhist 'thought-historical' preconditions for Buddhist teaching or its later developments resulting in past and even present new forms of Buddhism. It should, all the same, also be part and parcel of buddhological research to learn to understand Buddhism in its self-assertion and self-consistency. This should include taking into account traditional standpoints, viz. that quintessential teachings, 'dating back to the historical Buddha himself' and accepted by all

Buddhist schools, are *ehipassika* and *akālika,* i.e. universal and valid at all times. Accordingly translating Buddhist texts into modern Western languages should not be a daunting or even unacceptable venture in spite of the 'exoticism' of Buddhist thought as it is occasionally taken. Let us remind ourselves of the edifices of Western philosophers. Albeit in general we do not have to face any language barriers, it is more often than not difficult to understand correctly what great thinkers have said.

Now which is one of the decisive preconditions for approaching the wisdom of Eastern as well as Western philosophy? The answer may sound banal but relevant to writing and translating: lucidity of expression and style. One should bring this to mind again and again in the times of increasing linguistic degeneration. It has of course to be taken for granted that not every competent expert in foreign/Oriental languages will be able to do refined translations with crystal clear formulations. The artistic style of an author cannot be learnt, but it should be possible to acquire the ability to write or translate a text with precision, appositely and descriptively. There does not seem to be a dearth of publications in Western – let alone Eastern – languages of manuals on the art of style, on 'usage and abusage', etc. The German stylist Reiners concludes in his book with a passage entitled 'Can Good Style be Learnt?' as follows: 'Whoever tackles expression trains at once mind and character' (Reiners 1980: 61).

A fine translation of Buddhist texts into a Western language should have two solid foundations: a) lucidity of expression and style as said, and b) as stressed by Ruegg, a translator's coping with textually relevant exegetical tradition. On account of the great antiquity of Buddhism and its special form of transmission, i.e. oral transmission for centuries, and also due to the exceptionally liberal and pluralistic stand of its founder, because of such transmission exegetical problems arise to no small extent. So whoever wishes to translate Buddhist texts should become – as thoroughly as possible – familiar both with textual criticism and exegesis of Buddhist tradition and of modern buddhology. A small specimen has been given in connection with the above-mentioned *loci classici* from the Pāli canon. Regarding modern textual criticism and exegesis if possible, some familiarity with the 'four classical languages of buddhology' – Pāli, Sanskrit, classical

Tibetan and Buddhist Chinese – would be desirable. As a model of buddhological competence should be mentioned Étienne Lamotte, whose opus represents the achievements of outstanding experts from the East and West. Thanks to his and his colleagues' creativity considerable progress has been made in Buddhist studies even though a tremendous lot will still have to be done. It goes without saying the Lamotte's *œuvre* includes numerous translations of Buddhist texts through which he has succeeded in making accessible Buddhist thought in an entirely different sphere of culture.

With reference to the observations by Dessin quoted above it should be mentioned that a number of Buddhist terms handed down in 'classical Chinese', e.g. *xì lùn* 戏論 for *prapañca* ('mental proliferation') or *niàn chǔ* 念處 for *satipaṭṭhāna* ('application of mindfulness'),[15] are liable to being misunderstood in common parlance of modern Chinese. In the following – and necessarily in brief – a modest attempt be made at illustrating as to how to cope with the translation of just two Buddhist key terms by means of textual analysis and linguistic comparison. The above-named terms *papañca/prapañca* and *satipaṭṭhāna/smṛtyupasthāna* may suffice to probe into the nuances of their meanings.

Hindi translations of Buddhist texts are in general quite close to the originals, and also the 'key term' *prapañca*, with a host of meanings according to the context in which it occurs, is usually conveniently given in Hindi, too, as *prapaṃca.* But when consulting Hindi-English dictionaries one immediately realizes what a serious challenge is to be faced: *prapaṃca,* i.e. 'the world, illusory creation, manifestation, delusion, extent, copiousness, worldly affairs, artifice, manipulation, quarrel, opposition, error, fraud…' With which context does a particular rendering of *prapañca* fit in? The whole gamut of meanings of this word as conveyed by it in Hindi is certainly inspired by its occurrence in non-Buddhist literature which, as is conclusively shown by L.M. Joshi (1967: 444-446), is not of any pre-Buddhist origin. Joshi inter

[15] Cf. *xì lùn* in colloquial modern Chinese: 'speaking about theatrical plays…' and *niàn chǔ* : 'to decide not to forget, to remember, to think, to read…'; *prapañca* also means 'ludicrous dialogue', but not in Buddhist contexts. Cf., however, Soothill/Hodous 1937: 458b: *prapañca*: 'sophistry, meaningless argument, frivolous or unreal discourse'.

alia cites S.N. Dasgupta, affirming that the Buddhists were the first to use the words *prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam* (Joshi 1967: 445).[16] These words are also used in the *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad*, v. 7. According to Röer this text is one of the latest among the Upaniṣads with an introduction of ''technical terms of the Vedānta'' from various sources. Röer translates these words as ''(in whom) all the spheres have ceased, [who is…] blissful.''[17] These words in *op.cit.*, v. 7, have most probably been adopted from Nāgārjuna's dedicatory verses at the beginning of his *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*s.

A welcome survey of the occurence of *papañca* in Pāli texts is offered by Premasiri (2004: 299-302). The term is used in many places of the *Sutta-Piṭaka* as a noun, as a verb, a verbal derivative and as a compound, whereas it is nowhere employed in the Abhidhamma collections.[18] Premasiri appositely remarks that *papañca* ''has profound psychological import'' and that correctly understanding its meaning ''and eliminating it is a necessary requirement for the attainment of the final goal of liberation in Buddhism'' (Premasiri 2004: 299). A canonical Pāli commentary and Buddhaghosa mention various effects of *papañca*, viz. craving, conceit, dogmatic views…, resulting in disputes, quarrels, slander, deceit, hostility… These various instances should perhaps not be interpreted as being different types of *papañca*, but as being its

[16] Cf. also Dasgupta 1975: 425.

[17] Röer 1979: 172, 177. Röer's estimation re. the origins of this text is confirmed by other scholars; see e.g. Bhattacharya 1943 (1989): 43, or Sturm 1996: 168.

[18] Although not mentioning the term *prapañca*, Vasubandhu clearly refers to a Sanskrit version of *Majjhimanikāya* I, pp. 111-113, referred to in the following. See Pradhan 1967 (1975): 5: *ta evādhvā kathāvastu saniḥsārāḥ savastukāḥ* //7// *ta eva saṃskṛtā gata-gacchad-gamiṣyad-bhāvād adhvānaḥ adyante'nityatayeti vā* / *kathā vākyam tasyā vastu nāma* / ... *''kathāvastūny'aṣṭādaśabhir dhātubhiḥ saṃgṛhītāni''* / Pruden 1988: 61-62: ''7c-d. Conditioned things are the paths; they are the foundations of discourse; they are 'possessed of leaving;' they are 'possessed of causes.' 1. Conditioned things are the paths – that is to say, the three periods, the past, present and future – because they have for their nature having gone, of going, of shall be going… Or rather conditioned things are called paths (*adhvan*) because they are devoured (*adyante*) by impermanence. 2. Discourse (*kathā*), means words, or speech (*vākya*); discourse has names or words (*nāman*) for its foundation… 'The *kathāvastu*s, the foundations of discourse, are embraced within the eighteen *dhātu*s.'

results.[19] The *locus classicus* where the psychological significance of the term *papañca* can be ascertained is at *Majjhimanikāya* I, 111-113.[20] The discourse gives a detailed account of the psycho-physical processes of perception including the interaction of the mind as the sixth sense-organ, mind-objects and mind-consciousness, giving rise to contact, feeling, perceiving, thinking and mental proliferation (*papañca*). On account of the latter one is assailed with perceptions and concepts with regard to past, future and present mind-objects cognizable through the mind. The assertion of this discourse is that with the final overcoming of mental proliferation with its effects all evil and ill are overcome once and for all.

A perfect match of this *locus classicus* are the aforementioned dedicatory verses in Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*s which Inada translates as follows:

> I pay homage to the Fully Awakened One, the supreme teacher who has taught the doctrine or relational origination, the blissful cessation of all phenomenal thought constructions. (Therein, every event is 'marked' by): non-origination, non-extinction, non-destruction, non-permanence, non-identity, non-differentiation, non-coming (into being), non-going (out of being).[21]

Interestingly, Bugault in his French translation of the dedicatory verses renders *prapañca* as ''words and things'',[22] and also as

[19] E.g. *diṭṭhipapañca* can be translated as '*papañca* of dogmatic views' or as '*papañca* conducive to dogmatic views'.

[20] Trenckner 1888 (1979): *Cakkhuñ-… manañ- c'āvuso paṭicca dhamme ca uppajjati manoviññāṇaṃ. tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā…, yaṃ papañceti tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccupannesu manoviññeyyesu dhammesu…*As for *Āgama* parallels, see Anālayo 2011: 134-138. Cf. also Pāsādika 1989: 60: quote No. 200 from the *Madhyamāgama*: *cakṣuḥ pratītya rūpāṇi cotpadyate cakṣurvijñānam iti* /

[21] Inada 1970: 39. See de la Vallée Poussin 1903-1913: 11: *anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvatam /anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam //yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śivam /deśayām āsa saṃbuddhas taṃ vande vadatāṃ varam* // See also Ruegg 2002: 79-79 on the seeming paradoxicality of the dedicatory verses.

[22] As for an apt definition of thing, cf. Hayward, Sparkes 1982: 1170: ''thing- … whatever exists or is conceived to exist as a separate entity…''; Bugault 2002: 35 ('des mots et des choses'), 323.

‘‘vains bavardages’’ (‘vain gossiping’). Here one is immediately reminded of Premasiri’s discussing *papañca* in Pāli texts ‘‘as a psychological term that signifies the internal sub-vocal chatter that goes on in the mind using the prolific conceptual constructions based on sense-perception’’ (Premasiri 2004: 302). As for the Tibetan translation of *prapañca*, viz. *spros pa,* in ordinary language meaning ‘what is delighted in, employment, activity…,’ a misunderstanding of the technical term can be avoided thanks to abundant publications of commentaries and dictionaries. An extremely valuable study tool is, for instance, the ‘‘Tibetan-Chinese Encyclopaedia’’ in three vols. (Zhāng Yí Sūn 1985: 1693), providing, inter alia, the following important informations: The Chinese rendering of *spros pa*, i.e. *xì lùn* (cf. n. 15 above) can be understood in the sense of Bugault’s ’’vains bavardages’’ or ‘‘des mots et des choses’’, fitting in with the given context. One of the encyclopaedia’s entries is *spros pa’i bag chags*, *vāsanā*, ‘tendencies, habit-energy (of the past) (Schmithausen 2007: 72, 157, 198), ‘firing’ *prapañca*, and another is *spros pa’i mtha’ brgyad*, i.e. ‘‘the eight extreme views’’ referred to in Nāgārjuna’s dedicatory verses mentioned above: 1) production, 2) cessation, 3) eternalism, 4) nihilism, 5) going, 6) coming, 7) oneness, 8) multiplicity. These extreme views can conclusively be associated with the ‘past, future and present mind-objects cognizable through the mind’ mentioned above in the Pāli *locus classicus*. One more entry of the encyclopaedia is *spros bral brgyad*, ‘‘one’s being separated/free from the ‘eight extreme views’.’’ Now how can this freedom be realized?

The overcoming of *prapañca* can be achieved by means of *satipaṭṭhāna/ smṛtyupasthāna*, already referred to above. This term is generally translated as ‘application of mindfulness’ or ‘(the) foundation(s) of mindfulness’, the latter being based on the Pāli commentaries and Buddhaghosa. The Tibetan translation of *smṛtyupasthāna, ñe bar bźag pa*, allows of both interpretations, viz. ‘application’ and ‘foundation’. When drawing on the available information in dictionaries, one may perhaps opt for the more dynamic ‘application/cultivation of/developing mindfulness’ instead of the seemingly static ‘foundation’ of it.

In respect of translating *smṛtyupasthāna* it may also be helpful to refer to Hui Neng’s *Tánjīng*/Platform Sūtra. Although in

this text the term *niàn chŭ/smṛtyupasthāna* nowhere occurs, the cultivation of mindfulness *per se* is the core message of it. Just a few quotations from the *Tánjīng* may be given to substantiate this remark. In section 17 of the *Tánjīng*,[23] for example, it says:

> This tradition of the Dharma – from the very beginning –, including both [traditions of] subitism and gradualism, is based on non-thought (no process of thinking) as its method/system/main doctrine.[24]

At first glance with casual reading, this statement seems to be at odds with common sense. In the above quotation *niàn* does not mean *sati*/*smṛti,* mindfulness, but 'thinking/discursive thought', and non-thought stands for in the Buddhist sense meditatively applied mindfulness. Thus the *Platform Sūtra* runs:

> As for non-thought no thinking is [meant] as regards [wandering] thoughts… [However,] thoughts arise non-stop: thoughts related to the past, present and future mix up uninterruptedly… But when[ever] in the flow of thoughts there is no taking one's stand [on any-'thing'], then there is no attachment. So it is non-attachment which is the basis [of this tradition of the Dharma]… .[25]

As for 'thoughts related to the past…', it is perhaps not inapt to point out a certain resemblance to the above-cited *locus classicus* in the *Majjhimanikāya*. The term that can be equated with 'mindfulness' in the *Platform Sūtra* is *zhēn xīn* (眞心) 'the straight/straightforward/upright/true/pure mind' (Morel 2001: 50).

Conclusion

Finally, J.W. de Jong may be referred to again who – along with helpful advice – laconically gives a résumé of the problems dealt with above. According to him in translations into Western languages occidental notions can never be entirely avoided. It is to be hoped that a special tradition will slowly establish itself, helping

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[23] Morel 2001: 375: 惠能，壇經：. . . 此法門從上已來頓漸皆立無念為宗.

[24] This and the following quote are the present writer's transl. based on Morel *loc. cit.* , i.e. on the Chinese text in the appendix.

[25] Morel *loc. cit.*: …無念者於念而不念. . . 念念不住前念今念後念 念念相續. . . 於一切上念念不住卽無縛也此是以無住為本. As for the translation 'in the flow of thoughts', lit.: 'on top of thoughts'.

to achieve more or less satisfactory translations. In the meantime, every translator has to take risks involving the possibility of failure or danger. Adding glossaries of technical terms would enhance the usefulness of translations and contribute to creating adequate terms in Western languages (Hahn *et al.* 1994: 86).

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