Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Reading the Buddha's Discourses in Pāli.*
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This nicely produced volume "is *not* intended to be … a Pāli primer" (p. viii), but is comparable to Scharf's (2003) edition of the *Rāmopākhyāna* and similar works, where the, in this latter case, Sanskrit text is printed with a full glossary below each verse and a literal translation, in order to help students to acquire reading proficiency in the language. In the same vein, Bhikkhu Bodhi, who has devoted a considerable part of his life to the translation of Pāli suttas, has done us a great service in preparing the book under review.

After a comparatively brief, but informative introduction on Pāli (pp. 1–10), the author gives a concise overview of Pāli grammar (pp. 11–48),[1] and a separate chapter on "common sentence patterns" (pp. 49–79), where he sketches some syntactic peculiarities of the language which most modern readers will not be that familiar with. The core of the book (pp. 81–501) consists of his selection of (fragments of) Pāli suttas, all of which are chosen from the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. First, the original text is printed, based on the electronic version of the Burmese edition, although occasionally readings from other editions, such as that of the *Pāli Text Society*, are preferred (cf. p. x). Below the Pāli, a word-for-word glossing is given, followed by a translation into more idiomatic English, but not as idiomatic as the published translations of the author (cf. p. 8).[2] Each

[1] No overview of paradigms is offered here, as Bhikkhu Bodhi's focus is rather on the main trends of Pāli grammar than on the details.

[2] The *Saṃyutta Nikāya* is translated in its entirety in Bodhi (2000).

section is concluded with selected grammatical explanations and at the end of the book (pp. 503–528), a Pāli-English glossary is added as well.[3] Instead of presenting his selection of suttas in the order of their appearance in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the author has made the laudable decision to group passages that treat the same basic principle of (Theravāda) Buddhism together, dividing them into six chapters, of which the last is a very short one, with such topics as "The Four Noble Truths" (chapter 1) or "Dependent Origination" (chapter 4).

As a consequence, the book may even be suitable for readers who have no interest in Pāli as a language, but want to form an idea of the main tenets of Early Buddhism from the original texts themselves rather than from an introductory book on Buddhism, where the presentation will necessarily depend to some extent on the personal interpretations of the author. Nevertheless, in this review, we will rather evaluate to what extent the book fulfils its duties in helping students to acquire the skills necessary to read Pāli texts with confidence. To meet this aim, the author of a book such as the one under review should 1) possess a profound familiarity with the language, i.e. the explanations given should be correct and 2) he should be able to transmit this knowledge in such a way that as varied a readership as possible can profit the most from engaging with the book. In other words, the level should be high, but at the same time, understandable to what one may want to call "interested laypeople". It should be kept in mind that a basic knowledge of Pāli grammar is presupposed for those readers that really want to delve into the texts (cf. p. viii).

To come straight to the point, the author succeeds well in the aims he has set himself. Obviously, there are always points where one may want to disagree and I will list some of those below, but on the whole, the author should be warmly congratulated on the work he has done. To illustrate Bhikkhu Bodhi's way of presenting the texts, I cite a randomly chosen example, from the *Siṃsapāvanasutta* (SN 56:31; p. 112 in the book).

First, the actual Pāli text is given in a different font from the translation; the literal translation is also printed differently from the idiomatic one.

> *appamattakāni, bhante, bhagavatā parittāni siṃsapāpaṇṇāni pāṇinā gahitāni; atha kho etān' eva bahutarāni yadidaṃ upari siṃsapāvane ti.*

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[3] A brief bibliography, which is unfortunately limited to Anglo-Saxon literature, can be found on pp. 529f.

Glossing:

> "Trifling, Bhante, by the Blessed One few *siṃsapā*-leaves with hand taken; but these indeed more, that is, above in the *siṃsapā*-grove."

Idiomatic translation:

> "Bhante, the *siṃsapā* leaves that the Blessed One has taken in his hand are few, but those above in the *siṃsapā* grove are indeed more numerous."

If I may make one comment on an otherwise sound translation, and one that is fully in line with the others in the book, I would not have left Bhante untranslated, as is done throughout the book. Why not simply "Sir" or something similar instead of replicating a Pāli honorific that will be puzzling to some readers? More generally, the necessity of glossing as well as translating each example may be questioned, as this procedure takes a lot of space. At the beginning of the book, I can see the usefulness of this. But once the reader has gone through a certain amount of examples and, let us be honest, the Pāli canon has a certain predilection for repetitions, would a translation with notes on vocabulary and grammar not be sufficient? Even in those cases that the same sentence is repeated just below in the text with the change of only one word (e.g. *viññāṇaṃ* 'consciousness' instead of *rūpā* 'forms'), full glossing is given on both occasions.

What about the grammatical explanations? The author, it should be stressed, is intimately familiar with the Pāli texts and he has done an excellent job here as well. The comments are generally reliable and easy to follow. Two general points should be made, however, before I list a couple of small points where I disagree with Bhikkhu Bodhi's explanations.

First, some infelicitous statements are made on the relationship between Pāli and Vedic and Classical Sanskrit. The author could have chosen to present Pāli as a language on its own, without referring to Sanskrit at all, and that would have been completely fine. However, he occasionally does refer to Sanskrit, but not all of his comments are fully correct and some may obscure rather than clarify things. In the introduction (p. 1), Pāli is said "to descend" from Vedic Sanskrit, which is not accurate because Pāli preserves linguistic archaisms (e.g. *idha* 'here') where the Vedic Sanskrit of our texts has the later form (e.g. *iha* 'here').

Most readers will not be bothered by such details, but occasionally the clarity of Bhikkhu Bodhi's grammatical explanations is affected as well. For instance, on p. 109, it is commented that in the compound *sassamaṇa-brāhmaṇiyā* 'with wandering ascetics and Brahmins' the double -*ss*- "occurs through the influence of the -*śr*- cluster in Skt *śramaṇa*". Obviously, Sanskrit is not influencing Pāli on this point: an older -*śr*- simply becomes -*ss*- by sound law and, when this does not result in an over-heavy syllable this geminate is preserved and otherwise simplified to a single consonant.

Second, Bhikkhu Bodhi makes the case system of Pāli more complicated than it actually is, by promoting the dative to a position it no longer has in Middle Indo-Aryan languages, where, the dative, apart from relic forms (on which, for Pāli, see e.g. Oberlies 2019 I: 207; Spencer 2020: 121f.), merges with the genitive. As a consequence, I would not call a form like *tassa* < Skt *tasya* a dative, as Bhikkhu Bodhi does on several occasions (e.g. p. 18; 63; 107; 153 etc.). This is simply a genitive used as an indirect object, as is possible in Sanskrit as well and it is not clear to me why the author, who otherwise follows the standard grammars quite faithfully, has opted for this idiosyncratic deviation from them. More such examples can be found in the book: on p. 166, e.g., *bhagavato* is said to be "a genitive with the function of an ablative", but genitive and ablative simply have the same form in the *vant*-declension, so that one should call such a form an "ablative".

A few minor comments, including mere typo's, are listed below:[4]

- p. xiii: Rhy > Rhys

- p. 91: *tasmāt* is not only Vedic Sanskrit and the "probably" may be deleted.

- p. 91 l. 4 of the Pāli text: *abhisambhujjhissati > abhisambhujjhissanti*

- p. 94; 109; 110: the two options for the translation of *ariyasacca* are discussed: "Noble Truth" or "Truth of the Noble One". The author simply notes that some passages support interpretation one and others interpretation two. See on this also Norman (1990 = 1993: 171–174), who argues that both meanings are intended at the same time. On p. 251, SN 35: 228 [187] is cited, where one

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[4] I will not list here all those cases where I disagree with the use of the term "dative" or with the way Sanskrit etymologies are presented.

reads *ariyassa vinaye* 'in the discipline of the Noble One'. This could also be cited as additional support for a translation "Truth of the Noble One".

- p. 95 fn. 73: *Māgadhi > Māgadhī*

- p. 105: *pativijjhati > paṭivijjhati*

- p. 115: Even though *paññāya* is correctly translated, it is explained wrongly as an absolutive, whereas it is here a dat.f.sg. of the noun *paññā-* 'understanding'.

- p. 158: Because, as is accurately discussed on p. 160, *sadevakā … sadevamanussāya* are ablatives, they should not be translated as if they are locatives. The punctuation of the Pāli could also be improved here.

- p. 180 (*et passim*): Tradition is followed and *diṭṭhe'va dhamme* is translated as "in this present life", but Gombrich' (2006²: 116 fn. 14) "when he has seen the truth" seems more likely to me.

- p. 192: The English word "monk" has intruded in the Pāli text instead of *bhikkhu*.

- p. 213: *yoniso* 'thoroughly' is confusingly called an "ablative", but *-so* is an adverbial suffix < Skt *-śaḥ* (On p. 302, the correct identification of *yoniso* as an adverb is given and on p. 342, *sabbaso* 'entirely' is rightly explained as well).

- p. 373 with fn. 186: For the occasional use of nominative phrases to introduce places in Pāli, cf. von Hinüber (2006: 198–200 with further ref.). The explanation cited from the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* seems rather far-fetched.

- p. 398ff: 'to enter the rains' is too literal a translation for *vassaṃ gacchati*. For readers who do not know the expression, the meaning only becomes clear at p. 405, where it is explained that this idiom refers to the three-month retreat of monks during the rainy season.

- p. 405: *upagacchāmi* is of course first person and not third person singular.

- p. 444: Sākata > Sāketa

One final point. Even though the author justifies his choice (p. 5; 8), it is still a pity that only passages from the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* are included in the book. At least parts of some other *Nikāya*s could have been incorporated to present the student with a more representative sample of Pāli literature. In fact, I think I would not be alone in welcoming a second volume that would not only include samples from the other *Nikāya*s, but also from the *Vinaya*, the *Abhidhamma* and other Pāli texts, such as the *Jātaka*s, the *Dhammapada*, etc. Such a book would be another significant tool for more advanced students of Pāli.

Saṃkhittena, an occasional point of criticism aside, there should be no doubt that this book will form a major help for the happy few who want to read the Buddha's teachings in Pāli.

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