Purifying the *Pātimokkha*: Pali Grammar and Buddhist Law in 17th-Century Haṃsāvatī

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**Abstract:** The present article examines a Pali legal text called the *Purification of the Pātimokkha (Pātimokkhavisodhana)*, an unedited 17th-century commentary on the Pali *Bhikkhu-Pātimokkha*, the code of rules of conduct for Buddhist monks. According to its author, this work was composed in Haṃsāvatī, present-day Bago in lower Myanmar. Following a careful survey of *Pātimokkha* manuscripts from different regions of the Southeast Asian peninsula, mainly Haripuñja (northern Thailand) and Rāmañña (the Mon country), and drawing from earlier *vinaya* commentaries and grammatical treatises, the *Purification* provides a series of original philological and text-critical arguments in order to purge discrepancies, errors and interpolations in the *Pātimokkha*. By resorting to elaborate grammatical reasonings, the author establishes a supposedly flawless text that is suitable for a legally valid recitation. The *Purification* can be perceived as a rarity, for it does not directly touch on legal matters, yet its position amidst other *vinaya* works seems undisputed. This article discusses the methodology of the *Pātimokkha visodhana* and problematizes the categorization of this treatise by considering both its grammatical and its historical background.

**Keywords:** *Pātimokkha, Pātimokkhavisodhana, Pali Grammar, Buddhist Law, Buddhist Philology, Haṃsāvatī, Myanmar.*
1. Introduction: The Overtones of Legalistic Pali

And if these two [senses] apprehended only what was close to them, then [the eye] should see the colour of the eye and the roots of the eyebrows, and determining the direction and the location of a sound would not be possible, and the archer would shoot the arrow at his own ear.

Vibhāvinī-ṭīkā¹

In Theravāda Buddhism, the legal validity of any ritual act involving speech—for instance, the ceremony of higher ordination (upasampadā) or the consecration of a monastic boundary (sīmā)—relies on the precise recitation (anussāvanā) of a Pali performative text.² If there is a mistake in the recitation, the act is not valid. That is why the monks officiating over an ordination, for example, have the text in front of them, even though they know it by heart. Such a stipulation is particularly challenging in countries that are not familiar with the Indic phonetic system.³ In Myan-

¹ Abhid-s-mṭ 157.32–35:
yadi c’etam dvayam attasamīpaṃ yeva ganhati,
akkhivaṃ paṃ tathā mālaṃ passeyya bhamukassa ca.
disādesavatthāṇaṃ saddassa na bhaveyya ca,
siyā ca saravedhissa sakaṇṇe sarapātanant ti.

These two verses are the conclusion of a longer versified passage that could well be Sumāṅgala’s own summary of the prose section that precedes it. For the translation I have slightly edited R. P. Wijeratne and R. Gethin, Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha) by Anuruddha. Exposition of the Topics of Abhidhamma (Abhidhammatthavibhāvin) by Sumāṅgala, being a commentary on Anuruddha’s Summary of the Topics of Abhidhamma (Lancaster: Pali Text Society, 2007), 235.

² Oskar von Hinüber, “Buddhist Law and the Phonetics of Pāli,” in Selected Papers on Pāli Studies (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994), 198ff. I use the term performative in the sense given by J. L. Austin, How to do things with words (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 12–13: “These have on the face of them the look—or at least the grammatical make-up—of ‘statements’; but nevertheless, they are seen, when more closely inspected, to be, quite plainly, not utterances which could be ‘true’ or ‘false’. Yet to be ‘true’ or ‘false’ is traditionally the characteristic mark of a statement. One of our examples was, for instance, the utterance ‘I do’ (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife), as uttered in the course of a marriage ceremony. Here we should say that in saying these words we are doing something—namely, marrying—, rather than reporting something—namely, that we are marrying.”

³ For a brief explanation regarding its influence in the phonetic fluctuation in Southeast Asian Pali manuscripts, see François Bizot and Oskar von Hinüber, La guirlande de Joyaux (Paris: École Française d’Étrême-Orient, 1997), 31. The title of a modern manual for
clarity and distinctness in ritual speech-sounds is so important that preliminary training in Pali pronunciation is required for novices before their first ordination.4

The oral performance of a Pali “formula for legal transactions”5 (kammavācā) and the written version that is preserved in manuscripts are mutually dependent. An example of this interdependence is found in the work that I am going to examine in this article, namely the Purification of the Pātimokkha (Pātimokkhavisodhana), written in early 17th century in Hanśavatī (Pegu/Bago), in Southern Myanmar. As the legal performative text is both an object of the ear and of the eye, its preservation depends on a reproduction system that involves the organs of sight and audition. These organs being fallible, errors of reproduction occur with certain regularity. To prevent and to restore such errors, Theravāda scholar-monks such as the author of the Purification have traditionally resorted to the discipline of Pali grammar.6 Indeed, grammar has been the concern of vinaya scholarship since Buddhaghosa’s times (ca. 5th century CE).7

pronunciation of vinaya texts in Thailand is found in Anatole-Roger Peltier, La littérature Tai Khoeun (Bangkok: Editions Duang Kamol, 1987), 40.

4 I would like to thank Venerable Nandobhāsa, an M.A. student at the Shan State Buddhist University, for informing me about these practices.


7 Von Hinüber, “Buddhist Law,” 219: “The legal consequences of mispronunciation are discussed in the short introduction, Sp 1399,14–17, and again following the section on phonetics, Sp 1400,1–36. Thus the teachings on phonetics have been linked with the commentary on Buddhist Law”; Kate Crosby, “The Origin of Pāli as a Language Name in Medieval Theravāda Literature,” Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka II (January 2004): 78: “By the time of the commentaries [i.e. ca. 5th C.E.], the attitude towards language held by preservers of the vinaya differed from the attitude held by the preschoolers of the Suttapiṭaka. The latter emphasized the preservation of meaning, aitha, while the former also emphasized the preservation of correct phonetics, vyājana/akkhara. This is because in vinaya correct pronunciation, wording and word order were regarded as essential for the correct performance of the liturgy required in legal procedures, kammavācā.” For the cardinal role of Pali grammar in 12th-century Sri Lankan monastic reformism see Gornall, “How many sounds.”
The *Purification* is of particular importance because of its focus on the written text and its philological discussions. By studying this text, we can also deepen our understanding of local manuscript practices in Myanmar. In so far as these practices may have influenced our reception of the Pali Tipiṭaka and its commentaries, they may be of special interest to those scholars who are interested in knowing how the oldest strata of the literature have been transmitted up to the present day.8

For scholars interested in Buddhist Law, this paper offers a clear example of the importance of the grammatical discourse in pre-modern Southeast Asian legal literature. The relationship between grammar and *vinaya* is particularly conspicuous in the Buddhist scholastic tradition of this region, where some authors analyze the grammatical *surface* of the text with such prolixity that they seem to have forgotten the *content*. Von Hinüber goes to the point of considering such commentaries a sort of denaturalization of the genre:

Ñañakitti explains the grammar of the Samantapāsādikā to such an extent that it is at times hard to see that he has before him a text on Buddhist law. The sophisticated legal discussions found in the works of his predecessors seem to be almost completely absent.9

Petra Kieffer-Pülz has also suggested that some *Pātimokkha* commentaries such as the *Purification* do not deal with “legal aspects.”10 There is definitely something to say about the exact genre to which these works belong. As von Hinüber himself has explained, the idea that some sort of magic, performative power is embedded in Dhamma speech-sounds is well documented in Theravāda literature.11 According to this idea, when the *akkhara*, the speech-sound, becomes the substance of the teachings of the Buddha, it is no longer conceived as a superficial or external element, but as a powerful, indestructible core that embodies the ultimate Truth.

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contained in the teachings. This is expressed in the stock definition of akkharā “speech-sound” in Vimalabuddhi’s Mukhamattadīpanī (or Nyāsa), which is one of the most influential grammatical texts in Southeast Asia and one of the sources of the Pātimokkhavisodhana:

They do not (na) wane (khīyanti), that is why they are called “speech-sounds” (akkharī). What this means is that, being forty-one in number, once they have fallen into the Tipiṭaka, they are not destroyed.12

The performative power of the oral speech-sound is extensive to the written texts of the Dhamma. In Lan Na and other regions of Southeast Asia some scripts are exclusively used for the Dhamma.13 In Myanmar, gilded kammatvācā manuscripts are still copied using the archaic tamarind-seed script, a practice that reflects the same belief in the immutability of...

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12 Mmd 8,18–19: n’ akkharanī ti akkharā. pamāṇato ekacatālīsamattā pīṭakattayam pi patvā na khīyantī ti attho. See also Sadd 604,2ff. Sometimes akkharās are also conceived as “seeds” (bījas), e.g. in the Burmese Lokanīti (ca. 14th–15th centuries) we read:

One becomes a learned person
by treating the books
and other supports, as fields,
the stylus as a plough
and the letters as seeds.


poṭṭhakāṇī khettaṃ va, lekhāṇī yugamaṇgalam;
akkharāṇī bījaṃ katvā, caranto puṇḍito bhave.

Schnake’s French translation:

Après avoir fait des lettres les graines,
Les écritures le joug et la charrue,
Ainsi que des livres, etc., le champ,
On devient un sage.


One of the lost grammars quoted in Saddhammajotipāla’s Kaccāyanasuttaniḍḍesa seems to be named Bījākhya which could perhaps mean “Explanation of the Seed-Syllables” (Kacc-nidd 177,26).

the sounds and letters of the Dhamma.\(^\text{14}\) It is very likely that such ideas about the effectiveness and purity of speech-sounds influenced the composition of the *Purification of the Pātimokkha*, for it is only when the power of speech-sounds is taken into account that abstruse disputations regarding minute textual divergences become crucial in terms of the ritual effectiveness.

Of course, the *visodhana* as a traditional philological practice is not necessarily confined to aspects of legal validity (see section § 2.5). Any compilation of text-critical notes on a Pali work can be called a *visodhana* “purification” of that text. But it is also true that, in the specific case of the *Purification of the Pātimokkha*, the grammatical and philological discourses are subservient to the legal discourse. We shall keep in mind that the *Pātimokkha* is a text to be recited, to be performed orally. Grammar and philology provide certain analytical tools to ascertain the correct spelling of the *Pātimokkha* speech-sounds. The fact that some of the textual problems discussed in the *Purification* have nothing to do with meaning, but only with the shape of speech-sounds, suggests that the main concern of the author was not to clarify the meaning of the text, but to chisel its shape.\(^\text{15}\)

Since the Purification is a very little-known text, the primary goal of this article is to offer a general view at the contents and methods. At the present stage of our research, calibrating the historical influence of the *Purification* in the transmission of the *Pātimokkha* text is a difficult task. The distribution of manuscript copies of this text is not well known. Alexey Kirichenko informs me that he has found this text in several collections. I have located two Mss. in the University Central Libraries, Yangon; five in the Fragile Palm Leaves collection (FPL 2738; 5443;...


\(^{15}\) The metaphor of the shape (rūpa) of sound is very common in Pali grammar. Two similar sounds are described as sarūpa “having the same shape” (cf. Kacc 13). When a word is completely derived according to the rules of grammar, it attains its “complete shape” (rūpasiddhi) (Mmd, passim).
Purifying the Pātimokkha

2. The Purification of the Pātimokkha (Pātimokkha visodhana)

2.1. Subject matter

The Purification of the Pātimokkha (Pātimokkha visodhana) is a commentary on the Pali Bhikkhu-Pātimokkha. In the 19th-century Catalogue of U Yan, the Purification appears in the section of “Little Finger Manuals on the Vinaya” and it has retained this category in present-day manuscript catalogues. The word visodhana in the title indicates that the work consists of a philological purging, a sort of compilation of text-critical notes. The purification or edition of a Pali text is traditionally understood in Southeast Asia as part of the major reform called sāsanavisodhana “Purification of the Teaching” or “Purification of the Buddhist Religion.”

16 The present study is meant to be a first step towards the edition of the Pali text.
18 For the introductory stanzas and the colophon I have also consulted G and H (see References).
20 Another example is Ariyavamsa’s Jātakavisodhana (15th century), a brief compilation of philological notes on the ten major Jātakas. It combines Pali and Burmese in the commentary and is written in a highly grammaticalized style. At present, Ven. Kondaňñakitti, PhD candidate at the Shan State Buddhist University, is working on a critical edition and English translation of this text.
21 For the complex meaning of sāsana as “community, religion, teaching” see Alexey Kirichenko, “From Thathanadaw to Theravāda Buddhism: Constructions of Religion and Religious Identity in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Myanmar,” in Casting
As it has been shown by many scholars, the “sāsana reform” is not only a mechanism for the Sangha to purify itself from elements that are perceived as impure or heterodox, but it usually involves an attempt by the central political power to establish effective control over the concession of non-taxable monastic land and properties, and also to ensure ideological uniformity in the monastic ranks.22

2.2. An imperial Pātimokkha?

According to its Pali colophon, the Purification of the Pātimokkha dates to 1631/2 C.E.23 and was composed in the city of Haṃsāvatī, present-day Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia, ed. Thomas DuBois (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

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22 Michael Aung-Thwin, “The Role of Sasana Reform in Burmese History: Economic Dimensions of a Religious Purification,” Journal of Asian Studies 38, no. 4 (August, 1979); Patrick A. Pranke, “The ‘Treatise on the Lineage of Elders’ (Vāṃṣadasūpadī): Monastic Reform and the Writing of Buddhist History in Eighteenth-Century Burma,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2004), 17ff. In 15th-century Haṃsāvatī the term “purifier of the religion” (sāsanavisodhaka) is used as an epithet for the king and a treatise known as “Illustrator of the rules to purify the Religion” (Sāsanasodhanavidhidīpakaṃ) is brought to Rāmañña, cf. Jason Carbine, “How King Rāmatāñña Handled His Boundary Case: Sīmā, Sāsana, and Buddhist Law,” Buddhism Law and Society 1 (2015): 116. The concept has still been used in post-colonial times, see for instance Ledi Sayadaw, Thathanawithodani (Sāsanavisodhana), vol. 1 (Yangon: Hanthawaddi Press, 1954). The term sāsanavisodhaka was also a title given to the highest monk, since in the introduction to the Sīmāvīvadavinicchaya the author Neyadhamma states that at this time (i.e. 1858) he was sāsanasodhaka and saṅgharāja, cf. J. P. Minayeff, “Sīmā-vivāda-vinicchayā-kathā,” Journal of the Pali Text Society (1887): 18,30,31: tasmiṃ kāle ca aham sāsanasodhaka saṅgharāja ahosim. “Also at that time I was the Purifier of the Sāsana and the Patriarch (rājā) of the Community” (my translation). I thank Petra Kieffer-Pülz for this reference.

23 B gi-r–gu-v; F phī-v:

sambuddhāparinībhānā dvinnam dasa satānam ca
pañcasattati visādhisatassā pi ca mattake,
tenavatūdhike navasate tu sakkarañyako,
hamsāvatāvāhipāpirassā pāravetthussa uttare,
nātīdūre n’ accāsanne, janasankaravajjite,
ramme chāyodasampanne nānācetyābhinandite,
pariyattibhussuttherādhiyāsamyānate
āyatane gahaṭṭhaññam dānasillābhibhognanam
dhammasāvanāpano dhammasipārādhiyāsane.

“Two thousand one hundred ninety-five years after the parinibbhānā of the Perfectly Enlightened One—or, in Sakkarāja [calendar]: nine hundred and ninety-three [years]—, in the north of Haṃsāvatī, foremost among cities, not too far and not too near from the city,
Bago (Pegu) in southern Myanmar. The authorship of this treatise is uncertain. It has been falsely attributed to the Burmese scholar-monk Chapata Saddhammajotipāla, who lived in Sri Lanka and Pagan during the 15th century.\textsuperscript{24} Even though some sources affirm that the work is anonymous,\textsuperscript{25} the presence of the name “Ariyālānākāra” (“Ornament of the Noble Ones”) in the colophon presumably identifies the author of the Purification, who styles himself as a dweller (vasatā) of a monastery in the northern section of the city of Haṃsāvatī.\textsuperscript{26} The name “Ariyālānākāra” is quite common. It was also the honorary title of an accompanying monk, perhaps the teacher, of King Thalun,\textsuperscript{27} and a certain monk named Ariyālānākāra accompanied Tipitakālānākāra to Haṃsāvatī around 1608, during the rule of Thalun’s predecessor, King Anaukphetlun (r. 1605–28).\textsuperscript{28} Whether the identity of our author has anything to do with other roughly contemporary Ariyālānākāras is a matter for further investigation.

The Purification was written in rather turbulent times. Haṃsāvatī, formerly the capital city of an independent kingdom of Rāmañña, had become part of the Burmese Empire (or Toungoo Empire), which still had its official seat in Ava.\textsuperscript{29} The Burmese king Thalun (r. 1629–48) had settled in Haṃsāvatī in the aftermath of his victorious campaign to pacify...
the eastern and southern rebellions. He was crowned at that very city in 1633/34. Thus, despite its being composed in Haṃsāvatī, the extent to which the Purification may represent indigenous Mon Pali scholarship remains unclear.

The country of Lan Na in northern Thailand, which had been an important focus of Pali scholarship during the 14th to 16th centuries, was now under Thalun’s imperial administration as well. Veidlinger has suggested that the Burmese imperial power aimed at the replacement of local manuscript cultures, and if that is true, the Purification could constitute a witness of a centralized project of imposing textual uniformity. At present, however, we lack any evidence that supports any such claim for 17th-century Southern Burma. The type of characters in which the Purification was originally written is unknown, but its sources, as we will see, include Mon and Lan Na manuscripts. Given the proximity of the dates, the possibility that the compilation of the Purification was part of the ceremonial preparations for Thalun’s coronation should not be dismissed.

2.3. Comparing Pātimokkha Manuscripts

As is customary in Pali scholastic works, the main aim of the treatise is stated in the opening stanzas:

Having bowed down to the Foremost (pāmokkha) of all the world [i.e. the Buddha], I will purify the Pātimokkha taught by him, [making it] flawless both in words and speech-sounds. In some manuscripts, discrepancy (lit. multiplicity) of speech-sounds is found, and in some places there are extra words as well. I will

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30 Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles. Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 57: “The elaborate formal coronation that he [King Tha-lun] held at Pegu [= Haṃsāvatī] on the conclusion of his eastern expedition was designed to impress the Mon population with his claim to sovereignty over the south, lately the scene of an unusually bitter succession dispute. Tha-lun also spent the years 1633–34 strengthening military and administrative arrangements at Pegu and at Syriam.”

purify\textsuperscript{32} the text without missing any of these cases, carefully observing the words and letters used by the great masters of the past in purified manuscripts, and comparing both \{words and letters\} with the rules of practice and the word-for-word commentary that are handed down in the Vibhaṅga and \{also comparing them\} with the commentaries.\textsuperscript{33}

As this introduction points out, the confusion produced by the proliferation of variant readings and interpolations observed in manuscripts \{potthaka\} of the Pātimokkha is the main reason for composing this treatise. The term anākulaṃ, that we translate as “flawless,” literally means “not (an°) confused (ākula).” This word bears significant ritual connotations, for a ritual boundary (sīmā) that is ākula (“flawed” “confused”), for instance, is not fit for legal proceedings.\textsuperscript{34}

The colophon offers more details regarding the actual circumstances that led the author into this legal and philological enterprise:

A dweller of that excellent place, Ariyālāṅkāra\textsuperscript{35} by name, with the intention of having the Pātimokkha written onto a gilded manuscript, carefully examined numerous Pātimokkhas originating from different regions. In some of them he found a multiplicity in words and letters, or extra \{words and letters\}, and wrong spellings as well. As if carving monumental letters on a rock pillar, he has carried out the purification of the \{text\} so that it may last long. This treatise receives its descriptive name in accordance with the tetrad of grammarians. It is called Purification of the Pātimokkha because it purifies the Pātimokkha, or because by means of it \{the text\} is purified; and furthermore, because it contains the

\textsuperscript{32} Lit. “I will make the purification.” I read kāsam as 1st person singular = karissāmi, cf. Ja IV 287 kāsam ti kim karissāmi.

\textsuperscript{33} B kha-v; F pi-v:

\begin{verbatim}
pāmokkhasabhabolakassa vanditvā tena desitam
pātimokkham visodhesam padakkharan anākulaṃ.
kathaci potthake vannanānattam dissate, kvaci
atirekapadāṇi ca pi; tam sabbāṃ avirādhayaṃ
pubbācariyasīhehi yuttam sodhitapotthake,
padakkharan nisāmetvā vibhangeėgatehi ca
sikkhāpadehi tampadabhājaniyehi c’ uhhayaṃ
samsanditvā vaṃṇanāhi kāsam pāṭhavisoḍhanaṃ.
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{34} See, for example, Sv II 524,15–16: asukavihārasimā ākulā, uposathapavāraṇā pi ṭhitā “a certain monastery boundary (vihārasimā) is confused (ākulā), even the rituals of observance (uposatha) and invitation (pavāraṇā) have been stopped.”

\textsuperscript{35} Given that the text is in verse (gāthā), the word ariyālāṅkāranāmikā could, and perhaps should be an exceptional instr. sg. (?); cf. Thomas Oberlies, Pali Grammar. The Language of the canonical texts of Theravāda Buddhism. Part I: Phonology and Morphology (Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2019), §35.2: “It is only in pādā ‘with the foot’, which is formed in analogy with (petrified) padā, that the instr. sg. ends in “ā.”
purification of words and letters. By repeatedly pondering with care the letters of the words, the literal meaning and the implied meaning that are found in the *Vibhaṅga*, its Commentary (= *Samantapāsāḍikā*) and Sub-Commentaries (i.e. *Vajirabuddhiṭkā*, *Sāratthadīpani* and *Vimavinodaniṭkā*), in the Commentary on the *Mātikā*, [i.e. the *Kānkhiṭṭakarī*,] etc., and also in the *Vimaticchedanī (= *Vimativinodanī*) as well as in other scholastic treatises, may good people study this treatise that relies on previous masters.36

The author compares his work to the writing of a stone inscription, which symbolizes a perennial text, something supposedly indestructible, as the speech-sounds of the Tipiṭaka are believed to be. A fine example of legal treatise carved in stone is the 15th-century *Kālyāṇī Inscriptions* in Haṃsāvatī itself.37 The simile reminds of the legends about ancient sages who discovered the Law inscribed in the walls that encircle the Universe (*cakkavāla*). These legendary, semi-divine sages supposedly copied those laws in manuscripts and handed them down to humans.38 In the case of the Purification, however, what is meant to be durable is not the physical support (as palm-leaves are known to be perishable) but the quality of the

36 This is the continuation of the verses given in p. 7 n. 1. B gu-v; F phī-v:

   vasatā varatārāhanāmi, ariyālīlkārānāmi,
   sovanāpoththake pātimokkhalekhāpanāya ti
   pātimokkhesi anekesu nānādesappavattisu
   nānataṃ padavanānam adhikatti ca kartthaci
   viparitakkharā ca pi nisametvā visodhanan
   yam abhiṣankhatan tassa ciraṭhītī-y-idam katam,
   silāthambhamhi saṅgākkharalekhanakam viya,
   pātimokkham visodheti visodhiyyaty anena v
   padikkharassa v tathā visodhanan t’ idam tathā
   yam nertattacatukkena pātimokkvasodhanan
   laddhāhanvatthasamaṇhi tam [v.l. t] pubbācariyakassitaṃ
   vibhaṅga-āṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā mātikāṭṭhakathādīsa
   vimaticchedanīyaṃ ca tathā satthantaresu ca
   padikkharāṃ padatthān ca dhippāyaṃ ca punappunaṃ
   yoniso upadhāretvā samapekkhantu sajanā ti.


38 This passage from the *Dhammapaṇḍita Dhammasat* has been studied and translated in Lammerts, *Buddhist Law in Burma*, 63–64: “Manu travelled by means of his superpowers to the boundary wall of the universe (*cakravāla*) There he transcribed the letters (*akkharā*) of the *dhammasat* treatise, each as big as a cow, which had been written [on the wall] since the beginning of the world. He gave the treatise to Mahāsammata.” Some sources date the compilation of the *Dhammapaṇḍita* to the early 17th century, cf. Lammerts, *Buddhist Law in Burma*, 54–55.
edition. What is compared to the durability of the stone is the authenticity of the text.

2.4. The three meanings of the title

As for the brief explanation of title in the colophon, it follows three “means of accomplishing an action” (sādhana) that are known to the Pali grammarians. We may paraphrase it as follows: (1) the book is called Pātimokkha-visodhana (Pāt-vis) because it is a purifier of the Pātimokkha, it is an agent (kattusādhana), that is to say, the Pāt-vis itself purifies the Pāt; (2) it is called Pāt-vis because, by means of it, the Pāt is purified; in this case the title expresses an instrument or means (karaṇasādhana)—some agent purifies the Pāt by means of the reasonings of the Purification; (3) the third explanation highlights the bare action of purifying (bhāvasādhana “complete verbal activity”40) that is the content of the Purification.

I provisionally translate neruttacatukka as “tetrad of grammarians.”41 To judge from the context, this concept seems to refer to four grammarians: Kaccāyana (ca. 6th century, India), author of an eponymous grammar; Aggavamśa (ca. 12th century, Myanmar), author of the Saddanīti; Moggallāna (12th century, Sri Lanka), author of an eponymous grammar; and Vimalabuddhi (10th century, India/Sri Lanka), author of the Mukhamattadīpanī.42 These four authorities are consulted in the elucidation of the textual problems of the Pātimokkha (see below). The Abhidhānappadīpikā, which is also quoted in the Purification, is probably not counted as a separate grammar because it was traditionally, but wrongly, ascribed to Moggallāna.43

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39 DSG s.v. sādhana. See also Mahesh A. Deokar, Technical Terms and Technique of the Pali and the Sanskrit Grammars (Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2008), 310ff.
40 DSG s.v. bhāvasādhana.
41 Kār-t ad Kār 81: nerutikā ti niruttijanantā ācariyā “The neruttikas are the masters who know nirutti.”
Another possibility is to understand the term \textit{nerutta} as “method of interpretation.”\textsuperscript{44} The problem with this rendering is that the conventional number or \textit{nirutti}s (not \textit{nerutta}s) is not four, but five: insertion of a sound (\textit{vaṇṇāgamo}), metathesis of sounds (\textit{vaṇṇavipariyāyō}), modification of a sound (\textit{vaṇṇavikāra}), deletion of a sound (\textit{vaṇṇanāsa}), extension of the meaning of a verbal root (\textit{dhātussa atthātisayena yogo}).\textsuperscript{45} It could well be, however, that our author refers to a different list of only four \textit{nerutta}s (= \textit{nirutti}s).

2.5. \textit{The Purification and the gaṇṭhipada literature}

In the Pali literature, the so-called \textit{ganṭhipadas} or “books of difficult words” have been used as philological companions to preserve and understand the authentic readings of the Pali legal texts.\textsuperscript{46} Although the \textit{Purification} is not classified as a \textit{ganṭhipada} in any catalogue that we know, there are little things that differentiate this treatise from a \textit{ganṭhipada} treatise. \textit{Ganṭhipadas} approach the difficult words in a straightforward manner, clarifying the meaning of difficult words and passages, elaborating etymologies, giving grammatical analysis, and variant readings, as well as background stories and so on.\textsuperscript{47} That the \textit{visodhana} genre is a sub-genre of the \textit{gaṇṭhi} can be corroborated by the fact that Ariyavamsa’s \textit{Purification of the Jātaka} (\textit{Jātakavisodhana}) is known in some catalogues as \textit{Jāt[aka]ganṭhi}.\textsuperscript{48} If we compare \textit{Naṇakitti}’s \textit{[Pātimokka]ganṭhidipanī} with the \textit{Purification}, however, we observe that \textit{Naṇakitti}’s work is not so much focused on the actual readings of the manuscripts, but on gramma-

\textsuperscript{44} Sadd 878, 37. I would like to thank Alastair Gornall for pointing this out to me.

\textsuperscript{45} Mmd 396, 4–6:
\begin{quote}
\textit{vaṇṇāgamo vaṇṇavipariyāyō, dve cāpāre vaṇṇavikārānāsā, dhātussa atthātisayena yogo, tad uccate pañcavidham nirutti ti.}
\end{quote}

See also Sadd § 1343.


\textsuperscript{47} Kieffer-Pülz, \textit{Verlorene Gaṇṭhipadas}, 8.

\textsuperscript{48} For instance, Ms. UCL 9795 has the title \textit{Jāt-ganṭhi} and contains the \textit{Jātakavisodhana}. It is also called “\textit{ganṭhi treatise}” in the \textit{Sāsanālāṭkāra}, a 19th-century Burmese monastic chronicle (see the \textit{Nidāna} of the printed edition of \textit{Jātakavisodhana}).
tical derivations. The same applies to the Pātimokkhaṭṭhānuṭṭhāna, written in the 18th century by the Burmese monk Vicittālāṅkāra. ⁴⁹

A work that is much closer to the Purification is the Method to Write the Pātimokkha (Pātimokkhalekhananaya), attributed to Nāṇavāra (1705–1753). ⁵⁰ This work refers to the Purification for further explanations and also disagrees with it at times. ⁵¹ Another interesting feature of the Method is that it refers quite often to the Vinayaṭṭhāṅkāra, a late commentary composed in the middle of the 17th century. ⁵² Both the Purification and the Method are manuals whose primary aim is to offer proper readings for the written text of the Pātimokkha.

As it has been stated in the introduction, the concern with the shape of the letters and sounds of the Pātimokkha text probably derives from the fact that it is a performative text to be recited, and the validity of this legal recitation does not depend on the understanding of the reciter, but on the proper execution of the sounds.

3. Method and style of the Purification

3.1. Manuscript sources

From the introduction and the colophon of the Purification we understand that the author had the intention to produce a gilded manuscript of the Pāt. With this project in mind, he decided to compare different manuscripts of this text from different regions, perhaps being aware of discrepancies in the (oral?) transmission of the text. These regions are Rāmañña, that is to say the Mon country corresponding to southern Myanmar, and Haripuṇja, which corresponds to the city of Lamphun in Lan Na, today in Northern Thailand, but in the 17th century could simply refer to territories east of

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⁵¹ Pātimokkhalekhanaya FPL 8204 phe-v l.9: viṭṭhāratthikehi pātimokkhavisodhanato gahetabbaṃ “those who need a more detailed explanation should obtain it from the Purification of the Pātimokkha”; phe-v l.10: tividham uccāraṇam api yuttaṃ. kasmā? imassa kriyāvīsesanatthā tassā ca maduṃ pacatī sammā būjhatī sukhaṃ sayati ty ādinā diṭṭhātā. pātimokkhavisodhane pana… “All three expressions [āvi, āvī and āvin] are correct. Why? Because it [the word āvin] can function as a qualifier of the verb (i.e. adverb, kiriyāvīsesa), as it is seen in examples such as ‘he cooks softly’ ‘she awakens completely’ ‘he sleeps well’, etc. In the Purification of the Pātimokkha, however… .”
Rāmañña. The *Purification* provides an internal nomenclature or system of abbreviations in order to distinguish different textual families of the *Pātimokkha*, much in the same way that a modern critical edition may refer to different recensions:

Now here [i.e. in this treatise], when it is stated “in some places” (*katthaci*), it has to be understood that it refers to the manuscript that has been purified by Dhammadhaja Thera, a resident of Rāmañña; when we say “somewhere” (*kvaci*) it means: in the manuscript(s) of the *Pātimokkha* produced in Haripuñja; furthermore, when we say “in some [manuscripts]” (*kesuci*) it means: in *Pātimokkha* manuscripts of undetermined origin; and when we say “everywhere” (*sabbattha*) it means: in all of the previous three.53

The mention of a former editor of the *Pātimokkha*, Dhammadhaja Thera, is certainly intriguing. We lack more detailed information about this Mon scholar-monk whose textual authoritativeness suggests that he could have been an important figure of the Buddhist Sangha in Rāmañña during the 16th or 17th century. The short philological prelude on the manuscript sources sets the *Purification* project in a cosmopolitan scenario.

### 3.2. Method of analysis

The methodology of the purification serves three main purposes: (1) to decide the right reading when there is a discrepancy, (2) to remove extra words and (3) to correct misspellings. The default attitude of the scholiast is to treat every variant as grammatically viable, but to select only one as correct. The form in which the *Purification* reviews the opinions of authorities, including grammatical works such as the *Kaccāyana* and the Saddanīti, often reaches the status of a proper scholastic debate. The virtual opponent may retort: “But does not the *Kaccāyana* [grammar] say that…”54, giving an occasion for the teacher to clarify the matter: “Yes, but…”55. This is the style of most medieval Pali commentaries. In general, however, the *Purification* tends to sequences of contrasted arguments without developing a full debate with turns of speech.

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54 B khā-r; F pī-v: *nanu kaccāyane*.

55 B khā-r; F pī-v: *saccam, taṃ pana*. 
At the very beginning of the treatise we find a long discussion of the word *uddisseyya* “would proclaim” (Pāt 4,10).56 The contentious point here is that some manuscripts read *uddisseyya* “would be proclaimed.” The commentator does not dismiss this reading directly. Rather, he explores ways in which it could make sense given the specific context. He puts forward the working hypothesis that the extra *s* corresponds to the affix *y* to express passive, thus reading *uddisseyya* as “would be proclaimed.” Soon the discussion on *uddisseyya/uddisseyya* moves to semantics. The author observes that verbal roots can take more than one meaning, but the *Kaccāyana* only teaches the form, not the possible meanings (“In the *Kaccāyana* grammar a division of the meanings of the verbal roots is not made”).57 This poses a problem in the commentator’s attempt to clarify the sense of the verbal root, in this case *disa* preceded by the preverb *ud*. The debate is extended and the author resorts to inference in order to prove that *uddisseyya* must be active and the root *disa* must be understood in the sense “to show” (*pekkhana*)58 and not “to be perceived” (*paññāyana*), which would be the passive of “to show.”

At this point we seem to have reached a conclusion: “Therefore,” states the commentator “the word ‘he should proclaim’ (*uddisseyya*) must be in the sense of ‘he should show’ (*pakāseyya*). And this is stated according to the reasoning (*naya*) of the *Saddanītī*.”59 When the problem seems to be solved, the commentator decides to approach it from a different angle (*atha vā… “alternatively…”*) and he explores the possibility of the root *disa* meaning “*atisajjana* in the sense of making known, giving instruction or explaining.”60 Two Abhidhamma sources, namely Buddhaghosa’s61 *Āṭṭhasāliṇī* and Ānanda’s *Mūlaṅkā*, are scrutinized.

56 For a discussion on the specific meaning of the verb *uddis*, see Kate Crosby, “*Uddis* and Ācikkh: Buddhaghosa on the inclusion of the sikkhāpada in the pabbajjā ceremony,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000).

57 B khi-v; F pī-v: *kaccāyane pana dhāvatvatthavībhāgam akatvā*. The meanings of the verbs in the *Kaccāyana* are traditionally learnt in the *Dhātupātha*, the *Dhātumāṇḍūra* or similar works (Andersen and Smith 1921).

58 Sadd 444,5: *B khi-r; F pu-r: tasmā uddisseyyā ti ettha pakāseyyā ti aththa bhavitabbaṁ ayaṁ ca yathā saddanītīto nayaṁ gahetvā vutto.*

59 Sadd 444,5: *B khi-r; F pu-r: tasmā uddisseyyā ti ettha pakāseyyā ti aththa bhavitabbaṁ ayaṁ ca yathā saddanītīto nayaṁ gahetvā vutto.*

60 Sadd 453,5: *Dhātupātha § 303, § 493; Dhātum § 475, § 572. This is a Class VI verb (divādīgana). B khi-r; F pu-r: *atissajjanaṁ ca nāma pabodhanāṁ devamanāṁ kathanāṁ vā.*

61 Buddhaghosa is traditionally considered the name of the author of this text, but the ascription is problematic, cf. Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*. Indian Philology and South Asian Studies, vol. 2. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 151.
These sources are then compared to the *Kaňkhāvitarāṇī*. At the end of this long and circuitous discussion, the author reaches the following conclusion:

The meaning “showing” and similar meanings in great measure fit and agree with the root [disa] in the sense of giving instruction (atisajjana) which is inferred from within the word uddiseyya. Therefore this meaning should be stated as essential.\(^62\)

But even this conclusion is not completely satisfactory and the author brings up the opinion of some ancient masters (porāṇācariya) who defend a different analysis on the basis of the suitability of sound (saddayutta) and the suitability of meaning (athhayutta), and also because of not contradicting what has been stated in the textual tradition (āgama): they read the verbal root as disī in the sense of “to utter” (disī uccārane)\(^63\) instead of the root disa in the sense of “to show” (pekkhane). This alternative interpretation leads exactly to the previous corollary; “Therefore, the word uddiseyya derived from the root disī should be considered [as authentic].”\(^64\) The absolute final conclusion seems to be based on the statements of the grammarians, who are called here “ancient masters.” The main purpose of this grammatical discussion is simply to establish that the word uddiseyya should be written with one s, not with two. It is about spelling, not about meaning.

### 3.3. Scriptural matters

An interesting excursus involving script is found in the commentary on the variant *anigataratanake/aniggahitaratanake/anibhataratanake* (Pāṭ 78,8; aniggataratanake) “treasure that has not been withdrawn.” In this case the commentator observes that bha could be a misreading of ga “in a manuscript written in the māṃsi [script]” (mamsilekhāpotthake).\(^65\) The meaning

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\(^62\) B khī-ṛ; F pu-v: *ayaḥ ca ācikkhanādi-ataṭho uddiseyya ti ettha antonitena* [read ṣītena?] *atisajajanasankhātena dhātvathena ativiya saṃsandati sameti. tasmā ayam attho sārato vaccaṭtabbo.*

\(^63\) The *Pāṭimokkhavisodhana* reads with Sadd 568,13; Dhātup § 627 and Dhātum § 869 read *disa uccārane*; but Mnd B\(^3\) *disī* throughout: 66,27; 403,23; 426,7.

\(^64\) B khī-ṛ; F pu-v: *tasmā uddiseyya ti imassa disiddhānampphannabhāvo vicāretabbo.*

\(^65\) There are occasional variants to this word in the four manuscripts that I have consulted, for instance *dhamsi*, *dhamsa*, *mamsa*. But in most cases all Mss. read *māṃsi/-ṛ.*
of the word *mamsi* is obscure. It does not seem to be a Pali word66 and we may speculate that it could be a Mon/Khmer loanword. It also sounds very similar to the Burmese word for “tamarind-seed”: *man kyaññ* ṭ (pronounced today *ma jī*):67

In the manuscript written in *mamsi* script there is doubt regarding the readings *ga* and *bha*, for *ga* looks like *bha*, and in the same way, *ca* looks like *va*, and *da* looks like *ra*.68

Indeed, these features remind us of the Old Burmese script known as “tamarind-seed script,”69 which is found still today in gilded *Kammavācā* bundles (see §1). In the *Purification*, regular incised palm-leaf manuscripts are simply called lekhanalekhā *potthaka* “inscribed manuscripts.”70

In a subsequent passage the author reports that *mamsi* manuscripts are not available in Haripuñja and that may have influenced their transmission of the *Pātimokkha* text:

In some places, in inscribed manuscripts, the letter *s* is observed [instead of *g*], but in all the manuscripts of the monks of Haripuñja only *bh* is observed. As there are no *mamsi* manuscripts in that country, the people who live there have to rely on inscribed manuscripts, and they would have considered as authentic the form that they observe in them.71

When confronting the variant *ga/bha* the commentator resorts to semantics and infers the correct reading by matching the meaning with the gloss given in the commentary.72 In this case we can see how the shape of

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66 Unless it means the plant *mamsī* PED s.v. *mamsi*: “(f.) [cp. Sk. māṃsi] a certain plant *Nardostychus jatamansi*, J vi.535.” To the best of my knowledge, no paper or ink are produced from this plant.

67 မန်ကျည်း

68 B ga-r; F pha-r–pha-v: *mamsilekhpotthake ca gakārabhakāresu sansay* uppatti sambhavati. gakāro hi bhakāro viya khāyat, bhakāro ca gakāro viya. tathā cakāravakāradakārarakādayo ca.

69 See Lammerts, “Notes,” 235.

70 I translate *lekhanalekha* and *lekhanalikhita* as “inscribed” vis à vis the inked *mamsi* or “tamarind-seed” manuscripts. The term *lekhanalikhita* refers to regular carved, inscribed palm-leaf manuscripts. In tamarind-seed manuscripts ink is used.

71 B ga-v–gā-r; F pha-r: *katthaci lekhanalikhitapottake pi sakāro diṭṭho yeva. haripuñjarajātthavāsīnāṃ pana bhikkhūnaṃ sabbapothakesu bhakāro yeva diṭṭho. tasmiṃ rājhe mamsilekhpotthakassa abhāvato tannīvāsīnaṃ ca lekhanalikhitapothake yeva kataparicayattā tathā diṭṭhākāro yeva sacco siyā.

72 B ga-v; F pha-r: *tasmā nikkhantaṃ ti atthavānnon upanidhāya nigatasaddan’ eva bhavitabban ti kappetvā nigatan ti likhitam siyā* “Therefore, based on the gloss nikkhantaṃ
the letters is also dependent on the semantic value that is given in the commentarial literature. But, again, the discussion here is about the correct reading of the text, not about the meaning of a reading that has already been established.

3.4. Reconstruction of scribal errors

The reconstruction of some mistakes and interpolations is another salient feature of the Purification. In one passage the author informs us that, in mamsi manuscripts, the only reading that he finds is nibbhatam,73 “with consonantal cluster” (sasaññoga), that is to say with the consonant cluster °bbh°, which he considers a wrong spelling—one should write it with bh only: nibhatam. To justify his view, he recreates the mental process that caused the misspelling:

The person who was writing (lekhakena) or the reciter [of the text] (bhanantena) did not see any contingency (pasaṅga) when he would observe the word nibbhatam, with consonant cluster, in a mamsi manuscript, for he would not imagine that [the conjunct bbh] could [actually] derive from [a single] g. But only when the word nibbhatam, without consonant cluster (nissaññoga), was observed, there one would imagine, following the method that we have explained, that it could actually be g, [the reading bh being] caused by the contingency of the similarity between bha and ga. That is why everywhere in the old manuscript only the word nibhatam, without consonant cluster, is there. This is how [this matter] is understood.74

The spelling with double consonant in the mamsi manuscript seems to serve the purpose of reducing the risk of confusion for the reader/reciter.

When dealing with interpolation, the author imagines possible ways in which vinaya passages could have contaminated the Pātimokkha text. On one occasion, for instance, he speculates that the scribe, having seen the

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73 This is part of a long discussion on the compound aniggataratanake (Pāṭ 78,8), where variants of “nigata” are analyzed.

74 B gā-r-gā-v; F phā-r. mamsilekḥapoṭthake pana sabbattha nibhhatam ti sasaññogapade yeva diṭṭhe sati lekhakena vā bhanantena vā tasmiṃ gakārasaṅhinā na bhuvaṭṭhaṃ tappasaṅgabhavato. nibhataṃ ti nissaññogapadassā diṭṭhātā yeva pana te tasmiṃ gakārasaṅhinino sthān vutthanayena bhakāraṇgaṇāṇaṃ sadyaśabhavapassangasambhavato. tasmiṇa porāṇapothake sabbattha nibhathāṃ ti nissaññogapadassā eva atthi ti viṅhāyati.
word *iti* in the chapter of the *uposatha*, must have thought that it applies in another passage too, and he would have written it down again.\(^75\)

A similar case is related to an interpolated passage at the end of the *pārājika* section of the *Pātimokkha*:

But now [this expression, i.e. the one mentioned before, namely *tattha sabbeh’ eva samaggehi sammodamānehi avivādāmānehi sikkhitabban* “There, it (= the Pāt) is to be studied by all, being united, in agreement, not disputing”] is written, by virtue of habit, for the sake of easy grasping at the moment of recitation, because after two recitations have been performed, the rest is mostly treated as if heard (*savabhāvassa iva*) by the word(s)/sentence(s) [actually] heard. In a very well purified old manuscript such a reading is not found. Therefore, this [extra passage] is not an old reading.\(^76\)

Sometimes a mistake is explained as the result of the “carelessness” (*pamāda*) of the scribe. Another similar expression is “lacking of attention” (*satisammutṭha*). These two terms are the opposite of *apamāda* and *sati*, two doctrinally charged concepts that cannot but resonate in the mind of any Theravādin: the last words of the Buddha were *appamādena sampādetha* “work diligently.”\(^77\) As is well known, *sati* means, apart from “mindfulness,” “memory,” a word that in oral or residually oral cultures is a synonym of “knowledge.”\(^78\)

Scribal errors such as the ones that we have mentioned are considered a sort of impurity that needs to be removed. Anything that has been added to the original old text is an impurity that may ultimately compromise the validity of the recitation. The commentator is forced to provide convincing arguments before he expunges an error from the textus receptus. Some-

\(^75\) B khu-r; F pū-r: *so pana uposathakkhandhake amujānāmi bhikkhave pātimokkham uddisitatum eva ca pana bhikkhave uddisitabban ti vavā suṇātu me bhante sangho || pa || āvākatā hi ’ssa phāsū hoī ti ettha vuttaṃ iti-saddam disvā idhā pi so adhippeto ti kappetvā likhito siyā. For the full Pali text and English translation see Appendix 2.

\(^76\) B khu-r; F pū-v: *so pana idāni uddesadvayam eva uddisivā avasesassa sutapadena sāvitabhāvass’ eva yebhuyena katattā, idāni ācittanāvaseṇa uddesakāle sukkhagahanattham likhito. suparisuddhe porānapoṭṭhake idiso pātho n’ atthi. tasām n’ eso porānapātho. I would like to thank Petra Kieffer-Pülz for her decisive assistance in understanding this passage.

\(^77\) D II 120,14.

\(^78\) Cf. Patrick McCormick, “Writing a Singular Past: Mon History and ‘Modern’ Historiography in Burma,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 29, no. 2 (July 2014): 313: “Members of residually oral societies see knowledge as something finite that an individual either grasps completely or not; memorization is the same as mastery of a subject.”
times the arguments come from his own reasoning. At other times, however, it is necessary to invoke certain authorities.

3.5. Authorities

The idea that some sources are more authoritative than others is reflected in the term “measure” or “yardstick” (pamāṇa)79 applied to some books. The term pamāṇa is often used in other legal commentaries, and it generally refers to specific passages, not to entire books.80 Given the grammatical and scholastic background of our author, the term pamāṇa has important connotations on account of its philosophical charge. In Indian Philosophy, the Sanskrit word pramāṇa (“means of correct knowledge”) is in the centre of any epistemological debate.81 As we have seen in the colophon, the author of the Purification distinguishes four main sources of authority: (1) the Vibhaṅga of the Vinaya, together with its commentary (the Samantapāsādikā) and its sub-commentaries; (2) the Mātipāṭṭhakathā, that is to say, the Kaṅkhāvitaranī; (3) the Vimaticchedanī, which seems to refer to the Vimativinodanī; and (4) “other disciplines” (satthantaresu). By other disciplines the author most probably means grammatical texts. The following is a provisional list of titles explicitly named in the Purification (excluding Introduction and Colophon):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>TIMES QUOTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Vinaya]</td>
<td>4082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibhaṅga</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṅkhāvitaranī</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaṅkhāvitaranī-ṭīkā</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vimativinodanī</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

79 B khau-v; F pam-r: etakam eva pamāṇabhūtesu potthakesu vibhaṅge ca sandissati “so much is observed in authoritative manuscripts and in the Vibhaṅga.”
80 I thank Petra Kieffer-Pülz for this information.
82 There are twenty allusions to āṭṭhakathās and four to ṭīkās, they all seem to correspond to vinaya texts of some sort. Sometimes the expression collectively refers to a set of commentaries, but at other times they refer specifically to passages of Samantapāsādikā, Sāratthadīpanī, etc. I do not have a complete record of the references at this moment.
Another important authority, mentioned but once, is the Kammavācā, whose exact content is difficult to ascertain:

With regard to the word bhikkhusaṅgho (Pāt 2, ff.), many manuscripts read it with the class consonant ṅ [i.e. they read bhikkhusaṅgho]. In the Kammavācā [corpus], however, it is seen with ṁ. This reading only should be accepted, because [the Kammavācā] has been completely purified by those who have extinguished their cankers, those whose insight (paṭisambhidā) [into the Dhamma] has blossomed and have obtained the fruits of linguistic knowledge (niruttī).84

The words saṅgha or saṁgha are semantically equivalent, and even phonologically there is not much that can distinguish them. It is to be noted that in Burmese pronunciation this distinction bears important implications on the oral performance of the text, as saṅgha is pronounced “thing-ha” whereas saṁgha is pronounced “than-ga.”85 The standard treatise on Pali grammar for Burmese monastics, however, makes clear that saṅgha and saṁgha are virtually identical, the only difference being in the quality of the final nasalization.86 Yet the author of the Pātimokkhavisodhana feels the need to justify the right sound on the basis of the spiritual attainments of ancient reciters (redactors?), whose identity remains unclear.

83 One of these references is only to Vimalabuddhi, author of Mmd.
84 B kī-; F pe-v: bhikkhusaṅgho ti vaggantasahitapadāṁ balūsu pothakesu dissati. kammavācāyam pana saṅggaḥiṣampadām eva diṣṭhātā tam eva gahetabbaṁ niruttīto phalapatēte pabhinnapāṭisambhīdehi khaṇāsavēhi suvisodhitattā. tato va saṁghaṁ.do sas vībhavati.
85 I thank Christian Lammerts for pointing this out to me.
Occasionally, words are accepted on the grounds of meaning and not only because of the form. And in a few cases the author of the Purification may accept two possibilities as equally valid if they are properly defensible in grammatical terms. This is an interesting point given the fact that Pali grammarians may accept more than one form as equally valid, which seems to mean that they must be equally effective in ritual settings. Recitave perfection, therefore, does not necessarily imply uniformity.

In one case the author of the Purification resorts to the principle of the majority reading: “Now, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty whether this [word] ends in short or long vowel, but the ending in short vowel is observed in many manuscripts.”

3.6. Dealing with discrepancy

In the Purification, grammarians do not always project their authority as a collective. As is well known, grammarians may disagree or approach textual problems in different manners. The term that the Purification uses for such types of discrepancies is “variety of theories of the masters” (ācariyānaṃ nāṇāvādo). “Variety of theories” (nāṇāvāda) is a strong word that is found in canonical vinaya literature as a synonym of “quarrel.”

This term is used once in the Purification, regarding what appears to be an insignificant point in the commentary of the nava paṭhamāpattikā (“nine offences at once”). Some ācariyas such as Vimalabuddhi read it as a
dental $\text{pathamā}$, with dental aspirate $\text{th}$, while others, like Aggavānsa, read $\text{pathamā}$, with retroflex aspirate ($\text{ṭh}$). Although the meaning of the word does not suffer the slightest change, the disagreement regarding its sound is still considered $\text{nānāvāda}$.\textsuperscript{93} The commentator examines both options and concludes that Vimalabuddhi’s view is not sufficiently restrictive and therefore cannot solve the dilemma: “In the $\text{Mukhamattadīpanī}$, however, the derivation of the form is explained as we have just shown. The [way of deciding the right] speech-sound ($\text{akkhara}$) seems indeed confused ($\text{ākula}$\textsuperscript{94}) and perplexing.”\textsuperscript{95} The author of the $\text{Purification}$ chooses the retroflex reading of the $\text{Saddanīti}$ because the spelling $\text{pathamā}$ is consistently observed in this work, both in the rules as well as in the examples from the literature: “Therefore,” concludes the $\text{Purification}$, “the theory of the teachers who expect retroflex $\text{ṭha}$ seems to be correct. It has to be accepted after careful examination ($\text{vimamsitvā}$).”\textsuperscript{96}

4. Conclusion

After this short survey of the $\text{Purification of the Pātimokkha}$, one wonders whether the view of $\text{vinaya}$ specialists such as von Hinüber or Kieffer-Pülz, namely, that a work like this one is not related to legal matters in a strong sense of the term, might not be incorrect after all. For there is virtually no line written in the $\text{Purification}$ that addresses questions of monastic law in a straightforward manner. This short commentary mainly

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\textsuperscript{93} B khū-r; F pe-r: vītha pathhamasadda dantajathakāro vādhippeto ti ca muddhajathakāro vādhippeto ti ca ācāryānām nānāvādo hoti.

\textsuperscript{94} See § 2.3.

\textsuperscript{95} B khū-v; F pe-v: mukhamattadīpanīyaṃ pana yathāvuttam akkharasampatti nidiṭṭhā [v.l. na diṭṭhā], ākulaśākulaśakkharam eva dissati.

\textsuperscript{96} B khū-v; F pe-v: tasmā muddhajathakāraṃ icchantānaṃ ācāryānaṃ vādo yutto viya dissati. vimamsitvā gahetabbo.
focuses textual problems. Indeed, it provides correct readings for the Pātimokkha text, which is to be recited in the fortnightly ritual of the uposatha. As it deals with a legal text, it makes sense to categorize it as a Vinaya manual (§ 2.3.). But it is not at all clear whether the grammatical method of the Purification is intrinsically part of the legal discourse, because similar grammatical reasonings are found in scholastic works outside the Vinaya discipline.

Unlike the commentaries of Nāṇakitti on vinaya texts, the Purification is not concerned with the meaning of the words. Meaning is only taken into consideration before the final text is established, not afterwards (as customary in commentarial literature). The stress on right spellings is a distinctive mark of Ariyālaṅkāra’s project to establish a flawless (anākula), pure (visodhita) and perpetual (ciraṭṭhitika) Pātimokkha. The purity of the text is also achieved by removing elements that are considered alien to the original redaction. It is not clear to what degree the importance of correct recitation in legal texts such as the Kammavācā has influenced the composition of the Purification. One is tempted to think that the Theravāda grammatical doctrine on the power of speech-sounds that conform with the words of the Buddha is immanent throughout the entire commentary.

In any case, the Purification constitutes a very fine example of pre-colonial textual criticism applied to manuscripts of legal relevance. It is a well-planned purging of the textus receptus. It examines different scripts, and manuscripts from different origins, systematically labelling them in different ways. Ariyālaṅkāra’s outstanding display of grammatical skills attests to the importance of this hermeneutic discipline in late Pali scholastic literature of all sorts. An expert in Buddhist Law was expected to understand such treatises as the Purification.

As stated in the Introduction, the historical relevance of this treatise is difficult to measure. If we look back to the time when the Purification was written—a tumultuous and dangerous period from what we know—ceremonies and rituals occupied a central role in the preservation of the declining and fragile buddhasāsana. Kirichenko has highlighted the fundamental role of action, rather than belief, in pre-colonial Myanmar:

A comparison of any contemporary work meant to serve as an introduction to Buddhism for beginners with texts used for such introduction historically would reveal that difference. While the former mainly discuss Buddhism as a set of
propositions about reality, the latter present precepts, observances and passages for recital.97

The Purification is a project to restore one of these passages for recital. It was composed a year or two before the coronation of King Thalun and was meant to be copied onto a golden manuscript, which means that it was probably sponsored by the king himself, or some member of the royal family. In such circumstances, purifying the Pātimokkha on the basis of manuscripts from different provinces of the empire may have been an attempt to produce a cosmopolitan text that would, literally and symbolically, transcend localisms. It is almost as if the levelling of the textual discrepancies was a metaphor for the ongoing administrative unification. But more research on the Pali Burmese legal literature of the period will be needed if we aim at a clear comprehension of the social role of legal-philological treatises such as Aryālankāra’s Purification of the Pātimokkha.

APPENDIX 1

The Grammatical Style of the Purification

The following extract is given in Pali and English as an illustration of the grammatical reasoning in the Purification98. Note that the meaning of the word remains exactly the same:

\[\text{pannaraso}^{99} \text{ ti ettha dantajanakāro yeva gahetabbo || katthaci pana pātimokkhopothake paṇjaraso ti muddhajanaṇakāro likhito || so nādhippeto || bahūsu hi pātimokkhopothakesu tadaṅñesu ca āṅhesu dantajanakāro yeva diṭṭho || saddanitiyaṇ ca pañcato dasassa dassa ro ramhi paṇcassa panno niccaṃ\}^{100} [ti] \text{ iminā suttena paṇcasaddassā paṇṇādesakaraṇamuhi dantajanakāro yeva diṭṭho || paṇṇavāṣati paṇṇāsan ti ettha pana muddhajanaṇakāro adhippeto || ten’ eva saddanitiyaṃ paṇṇattīpaṇṇāsāṇāṃ nāsāṃ nāsāṃ paṇṇattī paṇṇattī vā paṇṇāsāṃ paṇṇāsāṃ vā paṇṇattī paṇṇattī vā paṇṇāsāṃ paṇṇāsāṃ vā}^{102} \text{ ti vuttaṃ || tathā}^{102} \]

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97 Kirichenko, “From Thathanadaw to Theravāda,” 29.
98 B khā-r, F pi-v.
99 Pāt 4,8; n.4: Ñā, Se: -ṇṇ- (throughout).
101 Sadd § 89.
102 Sadd § 89.
With regard to the word pannaraso “fifteenth,” only a dental $n$ should be apprehended. In some places in the Pātimokkha manuscript, however, it is written pannaraso, with retroflex $n$. This is not intended, for in many Pātimokkha manuscripts, and in places other than these, only the dental $n$ is observed. Furthermore, in the Saddanīti, it is stated: “always after the word pañca (‘five’), the syllable $da$ of dasa (‘ten’) becomes ra, and before ra, pañca becomes panna,” and according to this rule, in the replacement of pañca that is panna, only the dental $n$ is observed. In examples such as pañnavīsati (“twenty-five”) or paññaṃsa (“fifty”), however, the retroflex $n$ is intended. For the same reason, in the Saddanīti, after establishing the rule “of the words paññatti (‘concept’) and paññaṃsa (‘fifty’), $nīna$ is replaced by $ño,” it is stated: “paññatti or paññaṃsa [both are valid]; paññaṃsa or paññaṃsa [both are valid].” Similarly, after establishing the rule: “in the word pañcavīsati (‘twenty-five’), pañño replaces pañca” it is stated: “pañnavīsati or pañcavīsati, or [even] pañcisati [are all valid].” In the Moggalāna [grammar], too, after establishing the rule: “before the words visati (‘twenty’) and dasa (‘ten’), pañca is replaced by pañña and panna,” it is stated: “pañnavīsati or pañcavīsati, or pañcadasa (‘fifteen’).” That is why only the dental $n$ [in pannaraso] should be approved.

APPENDIX 2
A Case of Contamination
(Pātimokkhavisodhana B khu-r; F pū-r)

This discussion refers to the Introduction (nidāna) of the Pātimokkha (Pāt 6.2), where a passage from the Vinaya (Vin I 102.33–103.11) is quoted. This passage ends with the sentence āvikatā hi ’ssa phāsu hoti, that

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103 Sadd § 90.
104 Sadd § 90.
105 Mogg III 99.
106 Mogg-v III 99.
Norman translates: “when revealed, it is good for him.”¹⁰⁷ The Purification tells us that some Mss. read \( \text{p\grave{a}s\text{u} hoti} \).

“\( \text{p\grave{a}s\text{u} hoti} \)” ti ettha iti-saddo kesuci potthakesu likhito. so pana aposathakkhandhake “anuj Śānāmi bhikkhave pātimokkhaṃ uddisitaṃ. evaṃ ca pana bhikkhave uddisitaṃ: vyattena bhikkhunā paṭibalena saṃgho ŋāpetabbo: sunātu me bhante saṃgho. [...] yo pana bhikkhu yāvatatiyam anussāviyāmade saramāno santim āpattiṃ n’ āvikāreyya, sampāṭānamusāvādo assa hoti. sampāṭānamusāvādo kho pan’ āyasamanto antarāyiko dhammo vutto bhagavatā. tasmā saramānena bhikkhunā āpannena visuddhāpekkhena sanī āpatti āvikātābā.] āvikātā hi ‘ssa pāṣu hoti” ti ettha vuttaṃ iti-saddaṃ disvā idhā pi so adhippeto ti kappetvā likhito siyā.

Concerning “\( \text{pāsu hoti} \)” the word iti is written (i.e. added?) in some books. This [iti], however, may have (siyā) been written after assuming that it is intended here too, having previously observed the word iti in a passage [of the Vinaya] where it is said: “I order, monks, to recite the Pātimokkha. And thus, monks, should it be recited”, [that is in the passage]: «Venerables, let the Community listen to me. [...] Whatever monk remembering while it is being proclaimed up to the third time that there is an existing offence should not reveal it, there comes to be conscious lying for him. Now, conscious lying, venerable ones, is a thing called a stumbling-block by the Blessed One. Therefore, the existing offence should be revealed by a monk who remembers that he has fallen [into an offence] and who desires purity; for when it is revealed there comes to be comfort for him (\( \text{pāsu hoti} \ti)\).”

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Abbreviations

Abhidh-s-mhṭ = Abhidhammathasaṅgaha-vibhāvinī-ṭīkā
ARIRIAB = Annual Report of the International Research Institute for
          Advanced Buddhology at Soka University
Be = Burmese edition
Ce = Sri Lankan (Ceylonese) edition
CPD = Critical Pali Dictionary
D = Dīgha Nikāya
DSG = Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar (Abhyankar 1961)
Ec = European Edition
FPL = Fragile Palm Leaves Foundation (http://fpl.tusita.org/)
Gv = Gandhavaṃsa
Ja = Jātaka
Kacc = Kaccāyana
Ln = Lokanāti
Mmd = Mukhamattadīpanī
Mogg = Moggallāna
Mogg-v = Moggallāna-vutti
Ms. = Manuscript
Mss. = Manuscripts
MW = Monier Williams (online version: https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-
       koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2014/web/webtc2/index.php)
Pāt = Pātimokkha
Pāt-vis = Pātimokkhavisodhana
PED = Pāli-English Dictionary
Piṭ-sm = Piṭakat-tō-samuiñ (Nyunt 2012)
Sadd = Saddanīti
Sn = Suttanipāta
Sp = Samantapāśādikā
Sv = Sumanāgalavilāsinī
UPT = U Pho Thi Collection
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H = FPL 2738 foll. ka–khō. Category: Other (!). Pāli language; Burmese script. Scribe and Place of Origin: unknown. Date: 1767. Note in the catalogue: “this text is unknown to other catalogues at the time of this cataloguing.”

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Editions

For the detailed bibliographical references not given here, see below “Secondary Sources.”

Dhātumañjasā = Andersen and Smith 1921.
Dhātupāṭha = Andersen and Smith 1921.
Gandhavaṃsa = Minayeff 1886.
Kaccāyana = Pind 2013.
Lokānīti = Kumar 2015.
Moggaḷāna(-vuttī) = Moggaḷāna-vyākarana CSCI Tipiṭaka (Roman).
Mukhamattādīpanī C = The Mukhamattādīpani with the Kaccāyana Vutti, Revised and Edited by Welivitiye Dhammaratana Terunnanse, Colombo: H. C. Cottle, 1898.

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