

The Sword and the Sheath

Three Notes on Kaccāyana 1: Attho Akkharasaññāto

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Introduction

THE *Kaccāyanabyākaraṇa* has been used over the centuries as a beginner's manual for the study of the Pāli Buddhist literature. It opens with a fascinating and mysterious aphorism: *attho akkharasaññāto* (meaning is understood by means of speech-sounds). Although there seems to be no doubt in modern editions that *Kaccāyana* 1 is the first rule of the grammar, its status as a *sutta* (grammatical rule) has been debated among traditional scholars. The different views of the ancient commentaries and the possible motivation behind them will be discussed in Sect. 1 of the present paper. Sect. 2 focuses on the formulation of the *sutta*. It hypothesizes that it could have been adapted from a Sanskrit *sūtra* that originally had a different meaning. In Sect.3 I will discuss the convention of the divine revelation of speech-sounds in the Sanskrit grammatical tradition and I will draw parallels with *Kaccāyana* 1. One theme runs through these three notes is the rarity of *Kaccāyana* 1 as an opening statement

that emphasizes meaning (*attha*), unlike the first rules of most grammars that open with a statement about speech-sounds (*akkhara*). My point of departure in this article is the work of other scholars in the field, notably Subhūti (cf. Gornall and Gunasena (2018), Pind (1996, 2012), Gornall (2014) and more recently Watanabe (2019)).

§1. The Status of Kaccāyana 1 in the Pāli Tradition

1.1 The first problem that we encounter with *Kacc* 1 has to do with its role. Some interpreters believe that it is a *pubbavākya*, a sort of introductory remark, not a *sutta* (grammatical rule). Others are of the opinion that it is a *sutta* and it should be read as a part of the *sutta-pāṭha*, that is to say the sequence of rules that constitute the grammatical system. According to the *Mukhamattadīpanī* (*Mmd*), the oldest extant commentary on *Kacc* / *Kacc-v*, *Kacc* 1 is defined as a *sutta*, but an alternative opinion is also reported:¹

vuttirīṃ kubbatā vuttādo gāthādvayaṃ vuttam | *sutte kubbatā*
suttass ’ādo pubbavākyaṃ āradham attho akkharasaññāto ty
apare | – *Mmd* 7.15-19

The author of the *vutti* composed the two stanzas at the beginning of the *vutti* and the author of the *suttas* started at the beginning of the [first] *sutta* with the preliminary statement, namely, “meaning is conveyed by means of speech-sounds” (*attho akkharasaññāto*). This is what others maintain.

According to Watanabe (2019: 49) we can draw two conclusions from the quoted passage:

1. The authors of the *Kacc* and *Kacc-v* might have been different individuals, and
2. Vimalabuddhi (or Vajirabuddhi), author of the *Mukhamattadīpanī*, most probably did not support this position.

¹ This passage is discussed in Watanabe 2019: 49, see also Mason 1868: 3 and Malai 1997: 92.

Watanabe's hypothesis is plausible given the fact that Vimalabuddhi uses the term *suttakāra/-ka* only twice in the entire commentary,² and he never uses the term *vuttikāra*. It seems, however, that the main point of controversy is whether the *Kacc 1* is a *sutta* or a *pubbavākya*. Vimalabuddhi makes clear that, for all purposes, *Kacc 1* will be treated as a *sutta*. But he complicates this matter by first denying its status as *saññāsutta* (definition rule),³ and then later on treating it as a *saññāsutta*.⁴ Indeed, he seems to understand *Kacc 1* as a *paribhāsā* (meta-rule), but that is never explicitly stated.

1.2 The anonymous *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā* (*Mmd-pṭ*), the oldest commentary upon the *Mukhamattadīpanī*, explains *apare* (others) as those who believe that the same *thera*, presumably Mahā Kaccāyana, wrote the treatise "twice" (*dikkhattum*): he first wrote the *sutta* with the examples, opening it with a preliminary statement and afterwards he wrote the *vutti* in order to elucidate the cryptic text of the *sutta*. According to Watanabe (2019: 10-92), the view of the "others" is rejected by the *Mukhamattadīpanī* and *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā*. But here, again, the nature of the disagreement is not clear. What the *Mukhamattadīpanī* and *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā* seem to be defending, in my opinion, is that *Kacc 1* is a *sutta*, i.e. it is part of the *sutta-pāṭha* and not an independent statement. It is interesting to note, in this respect, that Vimalabuddhi only begins his full-fledged commentary in *Kacc 2*, for he treats *Kacc*

² The term *suttakāra* appears in *Mmd* 12.26; *suttakāraka*, with the same meaning, appears in *Mmd* 448.29.

³ *Mmd* 8.12-17: *keci pana attho akkharasaññāto ti iminā va saññā vihītā idam [i.e. Kacc 2] pana tabbivaraṇam iti vadanti tarāṇaṃ na gahetabbaṃ | evañ hi sati attho akkharasaññāto ti suttavuttiyaṃ yeva akkhara icc anena kv attho | akkharāpādayo ekacattālīsaṇaṃ ti vattabbaṃ bhavēyya | idha ca na vattabbaṃ | akkhara icc anena kv attho | attho akkharasaññāto ti na vuttañ ca tattha, vuttañ c 'eha |*

⁴ *Mmd* 14.26: *tesu pan' idam saññāsuttan ti parihāro.*

1 as a general principle of word comprehension that applies from the *Kacc* 2 onwards.⁵

1.3 More importantly, according to the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā*, the function of *Kacc* 1 is to represent the Buddha's principle that meaning (*attha*) is paramount and linguistic sound (*sadda*, *akkhara*) is subordinate to meaning. It does so by quoting some verses of unknown origin:

[One could object:] "But is it not true that speech-sounds are primary because it is when there are speech-sounds that meaning is produced?" That is not so. Only meaning is primary because, if there is nothing to be named, the applying (*nyāsa*) of speech-sounds does not occur. And furthermore, it has been stated:

When the meaning is not known, that [speech-sound] cannot be established, but when there is a meaning, it is possible to establish the speech-sound.

The word *akkharāṇi* here means *akkharāṇi* (speech-sound). And, furthermore, it has been stated:

"Only the sword cuts the creeper, not the sheath;
 Only water removes thirst, not the jugs;
 Only the lion kills the enemy, not the cave" – thus thinking,
 the Thera [Kaccāyana] mentions "meaning" in the first rule of his grammar (*nirutti*),
 "Only the wish-fulfilling jewel (*cintāmaṇi*) is charming, not the thread;
 only clothes beautify people, not the baskets;
 only food removes hunger, not the plate" – thus thinking,
 the Thera [Kaccāyana] mentions "meaning" in the first rule of his grammar (*nirutti*),

⁵ *Mmd* 14.27ff.

and having first attained these four types of discrimination, following what was stated by the Conqueror, he refers to “meaning” (*attho*).⁶

According to these stanzas, probably quoted from a lost commentary on *Kacc*, Kaccāyana Thera composed the first rule “following what had been stated by the Conqueror” (*jinavuttānusarinā*). This expression could be interpreted in two ways:

- (1) Following a similar statement made by the Buddha on this topic; and
- (2) following the principles of the *dhamma* explained by the Buddha.

Option (1) fits well into the context, for, as Pind has pointed out, *Kacc* 1 could be based on a canonical passage that highlights the importance of phonetics as a requisite for the correct inference of meaning (see §2.1). The passage from (*Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭīkā*) could perhaps be read as a veiled critique of Buddhappiya’s *Rūpasiddhi* and other grammarians who favoured phonetics over meaning (cf. Pind 1996: 69).

⁶ *Mmd-pṭ* 46.1-16: *nanv akkharaṃ padhānaṃ akkhare saty atthādhigamassa sambhavato ti\ n ’evaṃ\ att ho va padhāno\ asaty ābhidheyye akkharanyāsāsambhavato\ vuttañ ca: avijjamānake atthe na taṃ sakkā thapetave\ vijjamāne pan’ atthamhi sakkā akkharāṃ thapetave ti\ akkhan ti akkharāṃ\ aparam pi vuttam: khaggo va chindati lataṃ na ca kosako ti\ āpo va kaḍḍhati tasaṃ na ca bhājanāni\ sīho va jayyati ripuṃ na guhā ti mantā\ thero niruttivoidhim ādi avoca attham\ cintāmaṇī manaharo na pilotikāni\ vattham vibhūṣati naraṃ na ca peṭakāni\ annam jighacchavinodam na ca ukkhalī ti\ thero niruttivoidhim ādi avoca attham\ paṭisambhidānam etāsam catunnañ cādisambhavā\ attho so gahito tena jinavuttānusarinā ti ca*

1.4 The debate on the status of *Kacc* 1 is carried over in the *Mukhamattadīpanīsāra* (*Mmd-sāra*) of Guṇasāgara (thirteenth-fourteenth century CE, Pagan, Myanmar).⁷ Guṇasāgara repeats the aforementioned sword and sheath simile from the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭīkā* and adds a verse that is later on quoted in the *Kaccāyana-vañṇanā* (see §1.7):

[14.] Other teachers call this *sutta* a *pubbavākyā*, but due to its similarity to *suttas*, we think that it is a meta-rule (*paribhāsā*).

[15.] “And because it is stated first, it is said to be a preliminary meta-rule, therefore, this *sutta* is a *paribhāsā*”, thus is it stated in the *Sandhivinicchaya*.⁸

By using the pronoun “we”, Guṇasāgara is probably trying to establish the standard interpretation of his school: *Kacc* 1 is a *sutta*; and among the different types of *suttas*, it is a *paribhāsā*, not a *saññā*. Furthermore, the name *pubbavākyā* is compatible with being a *paribhāsāsutta*. Stanza 15 seems to name a text called the *Sandhivinicchaya* (Elucidation on the Sandhi [Book of Kaccāyana]?). To the best of my knowledge, this work has not survived. It is possible that the verses quoted by the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭīkā* and repeated in the *Mukhamattadīpanī-sāra* 11ff. are from the *Sandhivinicchaya* itself. From this reference and the previous one in the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭīkā* we may surmise that the status of *Kacc* 1 was a subject of discussion even in other grammars that are now lost.

1.5 The implicit background of this controversy is probably the old debate concerning the relationship between sound

⁷ I am currently editing this text. So far it has only been found in palm-leaf manuscripts, cf. Ruiz-Falqués 2014.

⁸ *Mmd-sāra* §§14–15:
pubbavākyan t ’idam suttam vadant ’ācariyā pare |
suttānam ānurūpena paribhāsā ti no matī ||
pubbattā pubbavākyañ ca paribhāsāya bhāsato |
paribhāsā ti suttan taṃ vuttam sandhivinicchaye ||

(*sadda*, Skt: *śabda*) and meaning (*attha*, Skt: *artha*). If *Kacc 1* is read as a *saññāsutta*, that is to say as a *sutta* giving the definition of the term *akkhara* (speech-sound), the sense of the rule is “*akkharas* are those things that convey meaning”. The focus would be on speech-sounds, as if they were the agents in the process of communication – here *akkharehi* (cf. *Kacc-v 1.11*) would be analysed as *kattusādhana* (a means to express the agent). Conversely, if *Kacc 1* is read as a *paribhāsā*, the rule states that meaning is accessed through *akkharas* and meaning is the primary element – here *akkharehi* would be analysed as *karaṇasādhana* (a means to express the instrument). It is a matter of detail, but the detail matters because it reflects two opposite views on language: one sees sound and meaning as forming an inseparable, eternal unit and the other sees sound, or words, as mere conventions that make communication possible. In the Pāli tradition, Vinaya scholarship has tended to adopt the first position and Sutta scholarship the second.⁹ The idea that one should take meaning only as a “teacher” and not the letters or speech-sounds and that one “should not take delight in speech-sounds” is echoed in the first pages of Sri Rahula’s *Padasādhanaṭīkā* (*Pds-ṭ*), which includes a statement attributed to the Buddha: “Take refuge in the meaning; bhikkhus, do not take refuge in the letter.”¹⁰

⁹ Cf. von Hinüber 1994; Crosby 2004: 78: “By the time of the commentaries [i.e. c.fifth century CE], the attitude towards language held by preservers of the Vinaya differed from the attitude held by the preservers of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. The latter emphasized the preservation of meaning, *attha*, while the former also emphasized the preservation of correct phonetics, *vyāñjana* / *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 pronunciation and Pāli grammar specifically, see Gornall 2014. For an example of the Vinaya approach to speech-sounds, see Ruiz-Falqués 2019.

¹⁰ *Pds-ṭ* 8.16-23: *atthappadhānaṃ hi buddhavacanaṃ na vyāñjanappa*

1.6 In later commentaries the focus of the discussion about *Kacc* 1 shifts to authorship. The question, here, is whether the rule comes from the Buddha or from the grammarian Kaccāyana. This controversy inspired a story narrated in Chapaṭa Saddhammajotipāla's *Kaccāyanasuttaniddesa* (*Kacc-nidd*), written around 1446 CE in Pagan, Myanmar. The story can be summarized as follows: In seeing an old monk near the lake Anotatta, wrongly reciting the *mantra* *udaya-(b)baya* (arising-passing away) as *udaka-baka* (water heron), the Buddha admonished him that he should pronounce words correctly because “meaning is conveyed by speech-sounds” (*attho akkharasaññāto*).¹¹ As Pind

dhānaṃ; ten' āhu ācariyā:

attham hi nātho saraṇaṃ avoca na byañjanaṃ lokahito mahesī
tasmā akatvā ratim akkharesu atthe niveseyya matim mutimā ti||

aññatthā pi vuttaṃ:

atthānurakkhaṇatthāya vuttaṃ sabbam idam ato |
attham eva guruṃ katvā gaṇhe na vyañjanaṃ vidū ti ||

bhagavatā pi vuttaṃ: atthapaṭisaraṇā bhikkhave bhavatha mā
byañjanapaṭisaraṇā ti |

“For the words of the Buddha have the meaning (*attha*), not the expression (*vyañjana*) as its primary (*padhāna*) [element]. That is why the masters stated:

“The Lord, the great seer who benefits the world, declared meaning to be the refuge, therefore the intelligent person should cause his mind to dwell on meaning, not taking pleasure in speech-sounds.”

And elsewhere it has also been stated:

“All this has been stated for the sake of protecting the meaning, therefore wise ones should take the meaning only as a teacher, not the expression.”

And even the Blessed one has stated: “Take refuge in the meaning, *bhikkhus*, do not take refuge in the expression” [cf. *Sn-a* E° II.398.7-8].

¹¹ *Kacc-nidd* 3.23-32; cf. D’Alwis 1863: xxi; Pind 1996: 68.

has pointed out, this story is reminiscent of a passage in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya, which is also found in other texts of Southeast Asia, such as the *Saddavimāla* (Pind 1996: 70). It is noteworthy that the original context of *attho akkharasaññāto* is not a normal communication process, in which there is a sender and a receiver but a monk's recitation of a *mantra*, by and for himself. What the Buddha seems to emphasize is not only that correct pronunciation is necessary in order to convey the right meaning to others but also to convey the right meaning to oneself. The passage seems to suggest that the efficacy of certain texts is dependent on correct recitation, a notion that is not foreign to Pāli grammarians (Ruiz-Falqués 2017: 75). After telling this story, Chapaṭa adds:

Furthermore, the Thera Kaccāyana, having known the intention of the Blessed One, placed this statement (*vākyam*) *attho akkharasaññāto* at the beginning, and then he produced this treatise [on grammar]. They also say that this *sutta* was composed by Kaccāyana.¹²

1.7 A similar version of the story is found in Mahā Vijitāvī's sixteenth-century commentary called the *Kaccāyana-vañṇanā* (*Kacc-vañṇ*). It is difficult to know if this version is a formerly existing story or created by Mahā Vijitāvī. Two elements reveal some level of corruption. First of all, as Pind has observed, the original *mantra* for "meditation exercises" (*kammaṭṭhāna*) is not *udayabbaya*, but *khayavaya*, and yet the mispronounced *mantra* after seeing the heron in the water is still *udakabaka*; second, after mispronouncing the *mantra*: *khayavaya* as *udakabaka*, one of those brāhmaṇas produces an even stranger variation: "after seeing a cloth (*paṭa*) in a pot (*ghaṭa*), he distorted [the *mantra* again] as *ghaṭapaṭa* (pot-cloth)" (*eko ghaṭe paṭam disvā ghaṭapaṭo ti virajjhati*).¹³

¹² *Kacc-nidd* 3.31-33: *kaccāyanattherena pi bhagavato adhippāyam jānitvā attho akkharasaññāto ti vākyam pubbe ṭhapetvā idam pakaraṇam katan ti kaccāyanena katasuttan ti pi vadanti*

¹³ *Kacc-vañṇ* 7.28: *eko ghaṭe paṭam disvā ghaṭapaṭo ti virajjhati*

This second pseudo-*mantra* could have been introduced on the basis of the following passage of *Mukhamattadīpanī* upon *Kacc 1*:

This is the meaning herein: whatever meaning/object of a word, such as pot (*ghaṭa*), cloth (*paṭa*), and so on, is to be expressed, it can only be conveyed by means of speech-sounds.¹⁴

After telling the story of the two brāhmaṇas, Vijitāvī gives a second interpretation:

It is also stated that, because [this statement/this rule] was established by the Thera, it is said to be a *paribhāsā* (meta-rule).¹⁵

He substantiates this claim by quoting the *Mukhamattadīpanī-sāra* verse 14 (§1.4), which Watanabe has interpreted as the final opinion of the *Kaccāyana-vaṇṇanā* (Watanabe 2019: 1093). Finally, the story of the old recluse at the bank of the Anotatta lake is cited, in a clear reference to the preface of *Kaccāyanasutta-niddosa*.

1.8 After this short survey, the interpretation of the *Mukhamattadīpanī* seems to be that *Kacc 1* is not a *pubbavākya*, but a *sutta* by Kaccāyana; the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā* and *Mukhamattadīpanī-sāra* clarify that it is a *paribhāsāsutta* by Kaccāyana; the *Kaccāyanasutta-niddosa* is of the opinion that it is a *pubbavākya* by the Buddha originally addressed to an old monk who mispronounced a *mantra*, and that it was later on adopted by Kaccāyana the grammarian; the *Kaccāyana-vaṇṇanā*, too, maintains that *Kacc 1* is a *pubbavākya* by the Buddha but that it was originally addressed to two brahmaṇas who mispronounced a *mantra*. Whether authors believe that *Kacc 1* was uttered by the Buddha himself or not, they all seem to acknowledge the fact that this rule expresses an idea that had been taught by the

¹⁴ *Mmd* 7.10-12: *ayaṅ h' etth' attho | yo koci ghaṭapaṭādivacanaṭṭho so sabbo akkhareh' eva saññāto |*

¹⁵ *Kacc-vaṇṇ* 8.3-4: *therena thapitattā paribhāsā ti pi vuttam |*

Buddha.¹⁶ Furthermore, it is possible to identify two different interpretations of *Kacc* 1, which are not necessarily incompatible: (1) *Kacc* 1 is about the importance of mastering speech-sounds (*akkharas*), that is to say, phonetics and grammar, and (2) *Kacc* 1 is about the primacy of meaning (*attha*) over speech-sounds (*akkharas*): “Take refuge in the meaning, *bhikkhus*, do not take refuge in the expression” [*Sn-a* E° II 398.7-8].

§2. The Formulation of *Kaccāyana* 1 and Its Parallels

2.1 *Kacc* 1 is a unique *sutta* in the history of Pāli grammar. Neither Aggavaṃsa’s *Saddanāṭi*, nor Moggallāna’s grammar,¹⁷ nor derivatives such as the *Payogasiddhi* and *Padasādhana*, have a similar *pubbavākya*. Even the *Bālāvatāra*, a work of the *Kaccāyana* school, excludes *Kacc* 1. The rule has no parallel in Pāṇini either. In his *A Comparative and Critical Study of Kātantra and Kaccāyana Grammars*, Dwivedi and Kumar does not give any Sanskrit parallel for *Kacc* 1. Instead, he establishes the correspondence

¹⁶ Cf. §2.1. See also *Psđ-ṭ* 12.31-36: *vuttam hi bhagavatā: dve me bhikkhave dhammā saddhammassa ṭhitiyā asamosāya anantaradhānāya saṃvattanti, katame dve? sunikkhittam ca padabyañjanam attho ca sunikkhitto, sunikkhittassa bhikkhave padabyañjanassa attho pi sunayo hoti. ime kho bhikkhave dve dhammā saddhammassa ṭhitiyā asamosāya anantaradhanāya saṃvattanti ti* “And it has been stated by the Blessed One: «These two *dhammas*, *bhikkhus*, result in the preservation of the True Dhamma, in its not falling into oblivion, in its non-disappearance. Which two? An expression (*padabyañjana*) that has been correctly laid down and a meaning (*attha*) that has been correctly laid down. When the expression is correctly laid down, *bhikkhus*, the meaning, too, becomes easy to infer. These are the two *dhammas*, *bhikkhus*, that result in the preservation of the True Dhamma, in its not failing into oblivion, in its non-disappearance»,” see Gornall 2014: 513-14.

¹⁷ In the case of Moggallāna, it is understandable, because no such a rule appears in the *Cāndravyākaraṇa*.

between the first rule of the *Kātantra* (*Kā* 1.1.1) and *Kacc* 2 (2004: 16). Pind points to a Pāli canonical passage that reassembles *Kacc-v* upon *Kacc* 1 as a possible source for the formulation of *Kacc* 1,¹⁸ and he seems to dismiss the possibility that it is based on an older grammatical rule.

2.2 One may observe, however, that *Kacc* 1 bears a certain resemblance to the initial *sūtras* of works belonging to the so-called “Aindra School”,¹⁹ such as *Kātantra* 1.1.1: *siddho varṇasamāmnāyaḥ* (the list of sounds has been established [by tradition]); Yāska’s *Nirukta* (*Nir*) I.1: *samāmnāyaḥ samāmnāta* (a traditional list [of words] has been handed down)²⁰; the *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* (*TPr*) I.1: *atha varṇasamāmnāyaḥ* (now the list of sounds) (Whitney 1868).

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>TPr</i> I.1	<i>atha</i>	<i>varṇa-</i>	<i>samāmnāyaḥ</i>
<i>Nir</i> I.1	<i>samāmnātaḥ</i>	[<i>pada-</i>]	<i>samāmnāyaḥ</i>
<i>Kā</i> 1.1.1	<i>siddho</i>	<i>varṇa-</i>	<i>samāmnāyaḥ</i>
<i>Kacc</i> 1	<i>attho</i>	<i>akkhara-</i> <i>saññāto</i>	

The possibility that *Kacc* was using as one of its models some grammar similar to the *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* should not be dismissed.²¹ If we compare these two grammars we see that *atha/*

¹⁸ A II.147.20: *dunnikkhittassa ... padabyañjanassa attho pi dunnayo hoti* (if the expression of a word has been incorrectly laid down, its meaning, too, is difficult to infer); cf. Pind 1996: 69; 2013: 1 n. 1; Gornall 2014: 513.

¹⁹ I follow the denomination of Burnell (1875: 1-37), which is still useful in order to understand the “philogenetic” relationship between *Kacc* and other grammatical treatises.

²⁰ The technical terminology of Yāska’s *Nirukta* has to be considered as belonging to the Aindra system.

²¹ Some rules in *Kacc* are closer to the *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* than they are to Pāṇini or the *Kātantra*, e.g. *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* I.6:

atho > *attho* is not problematic from the phonetic point of view (cf. *CPD* s.v. *atho*). The beginning of a *śāstra* with the “auspicious” (*maṅgala*) word *atha* is a well-established convention (cf. *MW* s.v. *atha*). As to the words *vaṅṅa/varṅa* and *akkhara/akṣara*, they are synonyms (cf. Deokar 2008: 78) and they occupy the same position in the *sūtra*. Finally, *samāmnāyaḥ* and *saññāta* also present some superficial similarities in terms of sound, perhaps *saññāta* < *samaññāta*/-*ya* (?). Senart (1871: 11) pointed out a similar confusion between *saññā*/*samaññā* with regard to *Kacc* 9 *parasamaññā payoge*. Commentaries such as *Kacc-v*, the *Mukhamattadīpanī* and *Rūpasiddhi* seem to understand the word *samaññā* in *Kacc* 9 as equivalent to *saññā* (technical term),²² thus interpreting the rule as “the technical terms (*sa[ma]ññās*) of others [may be used] when applicable (*payoge*)”. As Senart (1871: 11) has observed, one would rather expect a derivation based on Skt: *sāmānya* (common), i.e. “those [technical terms] which are in common [i.e. shared] with others [i.e. with Sanskrit grammars, may be used] when applicable”.

2.3 What could be the reason for the author of *Kacc* to modify the formulation of the rule? If we assume that the model of *Kacc* 1 was a treatise similar to the *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya*, the

śeṣo vyañjanāni and *Kacc* 6: *sesā byañjanā*. For an example of a Buddhist Sanskrit grammar based on, or following the same model as, the *Kātantra*, see Lüders 1930.

²² The words *samaññā* and *saññā* are clearly synonyms in *Mukhamattadīpanī* 19.23-26: *attano samaññāni vatvā parasamaññāya pacchā vattabbato ih' edarū vuttarū. tividhā hi saññā anvatthasaññā sakasaññā parasaññā ti\ tā pana akkharavaggaghosasaññādivasena dīpetabbā* (This is stated because, after stating one's (his?) own *samaññā*, the *samaññā* of others should be stated next (*pacchā*). Indeed, *saññā* (!) is of three types: expressing its meaning, one's own *saññā* and a *saññā* of others. As to these (*tā pana*) [*saññās* of others,] they are to be illustrated by means of terms such as *akkhara* (speech-sound), *vagga* (consonantal group), *ghosa* (aspirate) and so on.)

original model could be represented in Pāli as follows: **atho akkharasamannāyo* (now, the list of speech-sounds). Indeed, the list of sounds is given in *Kacc 2 akkharā p' ādayo ekacattālīsaiṃ* (and letters, starting with *a*, are forty-one). The purpose of *Kacc 2* is not only to establish the number of speech-sounds in Pāli, but also to make clear that they are different from the Sanskrit sounds:

Or rather there is an objection (*codanā*) that, since there is mention of [the sounds] *a*, etc. in the expression “the sounds beginning with «a»”, why is “forty-one” mentioned? Here, the answer (*parihāra*) is that [the enumeration of sounds] indicates that the forty-one [sounds] are a help [in understanding] the *suttantas*, even though there are also other sounds existing outside [of the *suttantas*].²³

It is possible, therefore, that a rule such as **atho akkharasamannāyo* was considered redundant and the author of *Kacc* decided to replace it with a general statement about the purpose (*payojana*) of grammar, especially if that was meant to be an opening statement not only for the section on phonetics (*sandhi*), but for the entire compilation of the four major books of *Kacc*.²⁴ The meaning of the new formulation, *attho akkharasaññāto*, is glossed in *Kacc-v* as expressing the purpose of grammar:

The meaning of any verbal expression is conveyed only by means of speech-sounds. For, if there is any failure in [pronouncing/writing] the speech-sounds, the meaning is difficult to understand. Therefore, skilfulness in speech-sounds is of great help in [properly reciting, or properly understanding] the *suttantas*.²⁵

²³ *Mmd 10.2-5: atha vā akkharāpādayo ti vutte yeva akārādīnam gahaṇe sati pi ekacattālīsaiṃ ti kasmā vuttan ti codanā. idha suttantopākārā ekacattālīsaiṃ | bahiddhā pana aññe pi akkharā santi ti ñāpanatthan ti parihāro |* – tr. Alastair Gornall (2014: 528)

²⁴ On the original structure of *Kacc* in four books, see Pind 1996: 71.

²⁵ *Kacc-v ad Kacc 1: sabbavacanānam attho akkhareh' eva saññāyate |*

2.4 In addition to possible Sanskrit parallels to *Kacc* 1, we have testimonies of what could be the opening *suttas* of two lost Pāli grammars,²⁶ one by Bodhisatta Mahāthera and the other by Sabbaguṇākara Mahāthera.²⁷ The former is mentioned in the following passage of the *Padasādhanaṭṭikā*:

The Venerable Mahāthera Bodhisatta says “the forty-one speech-sounds are helpful in [understanding] the speech of the best among men [i.e. the Buddha]”.²⁸

The grammar of Sabbaguṇākara is quoted also in the *Padasādhanaṭṭikā* in a passage that is illuminating in several ways. Sri Rahula (fifteenth century CE) refers to the work when commenting upon the word *sutta* in another stanza that he cites:²⁹

Furthermore, Master Sabbaguṇākara, in [his work] *Māgadhikasaddakalikā* (Flower Bud (?) of Magadhan Words) has stated: “The *sutta* [is] *vyākaraṇa* (grammar).³⁰ only the

akkharavipattiyam hi atthassa dunnayatā hoti, tasmā akkharakosallam bahūpakāraṃ suttantesu | Note that the *vutti* only mentions the *suttantas*, i.e. the *Sutta Piṭaka*. It does not mention the Vinaya, nor the *Abhidhamma*. See also *Mmd* 6.15ff. The *Rūpasiddhi* states that the first aphorism is in order to state the “purpose” (*payojana*) and the “subject” (*abhidheyya*) of grammar: *tattha jinasāsanādhigamassa akkharakosallamūlakattā tam sampādetabban ti dasseturim abhidheyypayojanavākyam idam uccate*.

²⁶ Both are probably later than *Kacc*, cf. Pind 2012: 71 n. 76.

²⁷ Franke 1902: 2; Pind 2012: 71.

²⁸ *Psd*-ṭ 12.9-10: *badhantabodhisattamahāthero naravaravacanopakārāni cattālīs’ akkharānī ti āha* |

²⁹ *Psd*-ṭ 6.21-23: *vuttam hi*:

suttessv eva hi tam sabbam yam vuttam [read v.l. vuttam] pañcīkāya yam

suttam uppatti atthānam sabbam sutte patitṭhitan ti

³⁰ Cf. *MBh* I.11.15: *atha vyākaraṇam iti asya śabdasya kaḥ padārthaḥ? sūtram* |

sutta is the embodiment (*sarīra*) of *vyākaraṇa* because it [i.e. grammar] cannot be grasped by words that go beyond the *sutta* (*ussutta*, Skt: *utsūtra*³¹). When an explanation (*anvākyāna*) is being made with regard to an error (*vippaṭṭipatti*) occurring in language (*sadda*), the statement (*vacana*) will not be grasped as long as the *sutta* [i.e. grammatical treatise] is not taught (*dassita*) – in the same way that a loose bundle of flowers remains impossible to grasp without a string (*sutta*) [to bind it].³² For that reason [the *sutta* is *vyākaraṇa*]. This is the meaning. Another [meaning is] that *lakkhiya* (that which is characterized) [i.e. language/words] and *lakkhaṇa* (that which characterizes) [i.e. the grammatical rules] are grammar.³³ Kātyāyana thinks that grammar is both [of these] together.”³⁴

³¹ Cf. Joshi and Roodbergen 1986: 184 n. 768: “*Utsūtram*. The compound is formed in the sense of *sūtrād udgatam* (what has gone beyond the rules) by *Saunāgavārttika* 9 on P. 2.2.18.”

³² There is a “pun” (*silesa*) here with the word *sutta* “thread/treatise” and the verb *ādiyati* “to seize, to grasp” (cf. *DOP* s.v. *ādiyati*), literally, like grasping a flower, or figuratively, like grasping the meaning of a word.

³³ Cf. *MBh* I.12.15: [*Vārttika* §14] *lakṣyalakṣaṇe vyākaraṇam* |

³⁴ *Pds-ṭ* 6.24-30 [see also Pind 2012: 71 n. 76]: *vuttañ c’ ācariyasabbaguṇākarena māgadhikasaddakalikāyaṃ suttam vyākaraṇam. ussuttābhidhānen’ ādeyattā suttam eva vyākaraṇasarīraṃ | saddavippaṭṭipattiyāṃ pavattā yaṃ [read pavattāyaṃ] suttam vinā agathitapuppharāsīmhi viya anvākyāne [Pind atthākyāne] karīyamāne yāva suttam na dassitam, tāvad anuppādeyaṃ vacanaṃ bhavati | tasmā kāraṇā ti attho | lakkhiyalakkhaṇāni vyākaraṇam añño [em. ti añño] | ubhayāni samuditāni vyākaraṇam nāma ti kāccāyano maññate iti* | Cf. *MBh* I.11.15-12.27. The problem discussed in the *Mahābhāṣya* is whether *vyākaraṇa* is *śabda*, i.e. language, or *sūtra*, the grammatical rule. Patañjali is of the opinion that *vyākaraṇa* is the *sūtra* only. Kātyāyana, however, postulates that *vyākaraṇa* is the sum of both words and grammatical rules; cf. Scharfe 1977: 83; Joshi and Roodbergen 1986: 158ff. I thank Alastair Gornall and Petra Kieffer-Pülz for their crucial assistance in clarifying this passage.

Sabbaguṇākara seems to adhere to Patañjali's view, which somehow excludes language from the definition of the term *vyākaraṇa*. From this passage we also understand that Sabbaguṇākara's grammatical framework is based on the *pāṇinīya* tradition.

2.5 In another passage of the *Padasādhanatīkā* we find a second quotation from the same work. This one bears a striking similarity to *Kātantra* 1.1.1 and presents the list of speech-sounds as something already established, much in the same way as Sanskrit grammarians do:

Mahāthera Sabbaguṇākara has said: *siddhakkamādādayo vaṇṇākkharā titālisā*, "There are forty-three sounds established (*siddha*) in an order (*kama*) that begins with *a*."³⁵

This could be the opening *sutta* of Sabbaguṇākara's grammar or a *sutta* at the very beginning of the treatise. It appears as a combination of *Kacc* 1 and 2:

Kaccāyana	(1) <i>attho akkharasaññāto</i>	(2) <i>akkharā p' ādayo ekacattālisāṃ</i>
Sabbaguṇākara	<i>siddhakkama-vaṇṇa-</i>	<i>a-d-ādayo akkharā titālisā</i>

The opening *suttas* of Bodhisatta and Sabbaguṇākara resemble what the reading of *Kacc* 1 might have been if a model such as *Taittirīya Prātiśākhya* I.1 had been faithfully adapted:

Actual	(1) <i>attho akkharasaññāto</i> (Meaning is understood by means of speech-sounds)	(2) <i>akkharā p' ādayo ekacattālisāṃ</i> (and speech-sounds are forty-one, beginning with <i>a</i>)
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³⁵ *Psd-ṭ* 12.11-12: *sabbaguṇākaramahāthero siddhakkamādādayo vaṇṇākkharā titālisā ti āha*. I follow Gornall 2014: 532-33; see also Pind 2012: 71 n. 76.

Reconstructed model	(1) <i>atho akkharasamannāyo</i> (Now the list of speech- sounds:)	(2) <i>akkharā ādayo</i> (speech-sounds, beginning with <i>a</i> , are forty-one)
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This is not meant to reconstruct a supposedly lost proto-*Kacc*, but rather to show what the model on which *Kacc* was based probably looked like and how the author of *Kacc* decided to adapt it to serve new purposes. If this hypothesis is true, it could help to explain why some commentators fail to recognize *attho akkharasaññāto* as a grammatical rule.

§3. Kaccāyana 1 and Legends of Grammatical Revelation

3.1 The story about the Buddha inspiring *Kacc* 1 represents an archetypal tale about the divine revelation of grammatical knowledge. It has abundant parallels in the Sanskrit tradition. According to a well-known legend in Somadeva's *Ocean of Rivers of Stories* (*Kathāsaritsāgara* 1.7.1-13), the *Kātantra* grammar was originally inspired by the war god Kumāra Kārttikeya, who conferred its first *sūtra* of *Kātantra* to the grammarian Śarvavarman. According to this legend, Śarvavarman was on a mission to compose the shortest grammar of Sanskrit. For this purpose, he retreated to the forest and undertook great austerities, "a vow of fast and silence".³⁶ Eventually he fell to the ground unconscious. Śarvavarman himself recounts the rest of the story to the king who is the main recipient of his new grammatical method:

After that I remember a man with a spear in his hand arriving and saying to me in a clear voice: "Get up, my son, everything will turn out well for you." Then, as if I had been showered by a downpour of the nectar of immortality, I awoke feeling well, free from hunger and thirst. Next I arrived in the vicinity of the lord, overcome by the burden of my devotion. After

³⁶ Mallinson's translation, cf. *Kathāsaritsāgara* 1.7.4: *ito rājan nirāhāro maunastho 'ham tadā gataḥ!*

bathing, I excitedly entered his inner sanctum. Inside Lord Kārttikeya granted me his darshan and then Sarasvatī took bodily form and entered my mouth. Immediately afterwards the blessed lord recited with his six lotus-mouths a *sūtra* that was a perfected form of the alphabet. As soon as I heard it, with the impertinence that, alas, comes so easily to mankind, I guessed the next *sūtra* and said it myself. The lord then said to me, "If you had not spoken it yourself, this treatise would have wiped out that of Pāṇini. Because it is now so concise, it shall be called the *Ka Tantra* and also the *Kalāpaka*, after the name of my vehicle." On saying this, he revealed that new concise grammar. ...³⁷

Variations of this legend occur, but what is important here is that the revelation does not go beyond the first aphorism: *siddho varṇasamāmnāyaḥ* (the collection (*samāmnāya*) of speech-

³⁷ *Kathāsaritsāgara* 1.7.6-14, tr. by Mallinson (2007: 163-65). The vehicle of Kumāra is the *kalāpin* (peacock). The following is the Sanskrit text followed by Mallinson:

*uttiṣṭha putra sarvaṃ te samṗatsyata iti sphuṭam
śaktihastaḥ pumān etya jāne mām abravīt tadā |
tenāham amṛtāsārasaṃsikta iva tatḥṣanam
prabuddhaḥ kṣutpīpāsādihīnaḥ svastha ivābhavam |
atha devasya nikaṭam prāpya bhaktibharākulaḥ
snātva garbhagrhaṃ tasya praviṣṭo 'bhūvam unmanāḥ |
tato 'ntaḥ prabhunā tena skandena mama darśanam
dattam tataḥ praviṣṭā me mukhe mūrtā sarasvatī |
athāsau bhagavān sākṣāt ṣaḍbhir ānanaṣaṅkajaiḥ
siddho varṇasamāmnāya iti sūtram udairayat |
tac chrutvāiva manuṣyatvasulabhāc cāpalād bata
uttaram sūtram abhūhya svayam eva mayoditam |
athābravīt sa devo mām nāvadiṣyaḥ svayam yadi
abhaviṣyad idam śāstraṃ pāṇinīyopamardakam |
adhunā svalpatantratvāt katantrākhyam bhaviṣyati
madvāhanakalāpasya nāmnā kalāpakam tathā |
ity uktvā śabdaśāstraṃ tat prakāśyābhinavaṃ laghu |*

sounds (*varṇa*) has been established (*siddhaḥ*) [by tradition] (*Kā* I.1.1).³⁸ This narrative seems to imply that the gift of the god is the complete list of sounds or “letters” (*akṣarasamāmnāyaḥ*), and not the grammatical rules, which are described as a by-product, or rather as a consequence, of the discovery of the *akṣarasamāmnāya*. The legend reflects a pattern that appears in other grammatical traditions as well. As Saini (1987: viii) has pointed out:

It is difficult to say whether the origin of the *Kātantra-vyākaraṇa*, as given in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, is correct or not, because most of the post-Pāṇinian systems claim their origin from some god.

The reports and stories attached to *Kacc* 1 follow the same convention of tracing the origin of the treatise to a divine or great being.

3.2 The same idea applies to Pāṇini’s *pratyāhāra sūtras*, traditionally known as *Śiva-sūtras*, that is to say, the *sūtras* given or revealed by Lord Śiva. This tradition is relatively late, and there are reasons to believe that the *pratyāhāra sūtras* were actually authored by Pāṇini or someone belonging to the same grammatical school.³⁹ But conventions are strong and they adapt well across religious affiliations. In Sanskrit Buddhist traditions, for instance, the Hindu god Śiva is replaced by the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. According to the Tibetan chronicler Tāranātha, the *bodhisattva* is none other than Pāṇini and his initiation to grammar consists in receiving the revelation of the list of speech-sounds from a deity:

The brāhmaṇa Pāṇini was a friend of King Nanda. He was born

³⁸ Saini 1987: viii: “When Kārttikeya uttered the first *sūtra*: *siddho varṇasamāmnāyaḥ* of the proposed system and was about to utter the second *sūtra*: Śarvavarman himself spoke the *sūtra tatra caturdaśau svarāḥ*.”

³⁹ Cf. Deshpande 1998; Cardona 1969.

in the Bhirukavana, in the west. He asked the palmist whether he was going to be an expert in grammar. The prediction was in the negative. With a sharp knife, he changed the lines of his own palm, studied grammar under all the grammarians of the world, worked hard and acquired great proficiency. Yet he remained dissatisfied. By intense propitiation, he received the vision of the tutelary deity. The deity appeared before him and uttered *a, i, u*, and he acquired knowledge of all the words in the three worlds.

The “outsiders” [*bāhyas* or *tīrthikas*] consider him as the *Īśvara* [= Śiva (?)]. But the “outsiders” have no basis for this. The “insiders” [= Buddhists] consider him as Avalokiteśvara. This is based on the prophecy of the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*: “Pāṇini, the son of a brāhmaṇa, will certainly attain the *śrāvakabodhi*. I have predicted that he would be the great *lokeśvara* [= Avalokiteśvara] by his own words.”

– Quoted in Deshpande 1998: 453-54

Note that the *sūtra* “*a i u*” is most probably a reference to *aiuN*, the first *śivasūtra*, where *N* is simply a “metalinguistic marker” (*anubandha*). Tāranātha relates a similar story about Candragomin, the fifth-century Buddhist Sanskrit grammarian of Nālandā. According to this narrative, Candragomin was secretly instructed by a statue of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, known in a previous life as Pāṇini:

From the outside door, he overheard the stone image of Ārya Avalokiteśvara teaching the Doctrine to Candragomin, much in the manner in which an Ācārya teaches his disciples. ...

– Ibid.: 457

These few examples suffice to show that the stories behind *Kacc* 1 should not be taken in isolation. Reports that *Kacc* 1 was not the work of Kaccāyana, but a “revelation” from the Buddha, need to be understood in the context of this same convention.

§4. Concluding Remarks

4.1 In this paper I have tried to expand the analysis of *Kacc 1 attho akkharasaññāto* in three notes that examine different aspects of its exceptional character. We have seen how *Kacc 1* is not exactly a grammatical rule, but rather a philosophical statement. Some scholars trace it back to the Buddha, whose grammatical insight, a manifestation of his *paṭisambhidā* (analytic skill), is thought to permeate the entire treatise of Kaccāyana (see §1.3). The first part of this paper shows that the controversy about the status of *Kacc 1* involves a plurality of opinions, some of which partly intersect. By surveying the main commentaries on the Kaccāyana one may observe how the underlying problem of this controversy is whether *Kacc 1* should be integrated in the sequence of *suttas* or not.

4.2 The discussion on the authorship of *Kacc 1* is rooted in the same problem. Those who proposed the Buddha as the original author of *Kacc 1* ultimately tried to substantiate the idea that this rule is not part of the *sutta-pāṭha*, but a theoretical principle that surrounds it. The general opinion of the Kaccāyana commentators seems to be that *Kacc 1* is a *paribhāsā-sutta* and it was written by the grammarian Kaccāyana. Some of them, moreover, accept the possibility that *Kacc 1* could have been originally uttered by the Buddha or that *Kacc 1* represents an idea that had already been taught by the Buddha. Beneath the technical discussion, however, we found a more philosophical debate about the conception of language, grammar and Buddhist literature. The tradition is ambivalent with regard to the actual purport of *Kacc 1*: to some, it emphasizes correct pronunciation, to others it emphasizes the importance of meaning over expression.

4.3 This leads us to the second part of the paper, in which we have seen how the formulation of the rule *attho akkharasaññāto* reveals an original model that would follow the expected convention, viz. **atho akkharasamannāyo*. The reason why the author of *Kacc*,

or perhaps a compiler of *Kacc* and *Kacc-v*, may have adapted the rule, is that it was seen as redundant. Moreover, by changing its formulation, the idea that meaning is more important than expression was introduced as a programmatic statement. It also became a sort of justification for studying a worldly science such as grammar. This point ties in with the third and final note, where legends around *Kacc* 1 are re-assessed in the context of an ancient Indian tradition that presents grammatical knowledge as a revelation. *Kacc* 1 is presented as a revelation from a great being (the Buddha), in the same way that the first rule of the *Kātantra* was given by Lord Kumāra, or that the *pratyāhāra sūtras* of Pāṇini are known as a revelation from Lord Śiva. Such narratives dramatize the idea that grammatical knowledge, being a human creation, is only possible when something that is not created by humans, the alphabet, is acquired. In the case of *Kacc* 1, the revelation aspect is maintained, but we find an important variation. Here, meaning is more important than the sounds or letters that convey it. It is not the alphabet that comes from a superior being, but some “meaning”. Sounds or letters are only useful insofar as they convey something that is useful or true. That is why the author of the *Mukhamattadīpanī-porūṇaṭīkā* quotes the simile of the sword and the sheath. The usefulness of grammar is not denied, but what really “cuts the creeper” is the meaning of the Tipiṭaka, which shall be kept safe in the “sheath” of grammar. It is a minor variation, but it nevertheless explains why the author of *Kaccāyana* decided not to begin with a *sutta* that would be too similar to Sanskrit models. Those models assume that the alphabet is revealed independently from any meaning and that language itself (i.e. Sanskrit) is sacred. In the Sanskrit tradition, speech is divine. In the *Kaccāyana* tradition, conversely, the Tipiṭaka is the only interesting repository of speech-sounds, and these sounds (or written letters) are important as long as they convey the Buddha’s teaching, which is what ultimately needs to be studied.

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Abbreviations

If not stated otherwise, abbreviations follow the Bibliography of the *Critical Pali Dictionary* (<https://cpd.uni-koeln.de>):

CPD	= <i>Critical Pali Dictionary</i> (https://cpd.uni-koeln.de)
DOP	= <i>A Dictionary of Pali</i> , see Cone 2001–2020.
E ^e	= European edition
<i>Kacc</i>	= <i>Kaccāyanabyākaraṇa</i>
<i>Kacc-nidd</i>	= <i>Kaccāyanasuttaniddesa</i>
<i>Kacc-v</i>	= <i>Kaccāyanavutti</i>
<i>Kacc-vaṇṇ</i>	= <i>Kaccāyanavaṇṇanā</i>
<i>Kā</i>	= <i>Kātantra</i>
<i>MBh</i>	= <i>Mahābhāṣya</i>
<i>Mmd</i>	= <i>Mukhamattadīpanī</i>
<i>Mmd-pṭ</i>	= <i>Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭīkā</i>
<i>Mmd-sāra</i>	= <i>Mukhamattasāra</i>
MW	= Monier-Williams (https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2014/web/webtc2/index.php)
<i>Nir</i>	= <i>Nirukta</i>
<i>Psd-ṭ</i>	= <i>Padasādhana-ṭīkā</i>
<i>Rūp</i>	= <i>Rūpasiddhi</i>
<i>Sk</i>	= <i>Sanskrit</i>
<i>Sn-a</i>	= <i>Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā</i>
<i>TPr</i>	= <i>Taittirīya Prātiśākhya</i>

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