

Is Kacc 1: *attho akkharasaññāto a pubbavākya*?

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The Kaccāyana (=Kacc) grammar is the oldest extant Pāli grammar. This treatise is thought to have been composed in the 6th century; however, its authorship has also been attributed to Mahā Kaccāyana, one of the great disciples of the Buddha in the tradition of Theravāda.¹⁾ The influence of this text generated a great number of commentaries on the Kacc, the first of which, the Kaccāyana-vutti (= Kacc-v), was written in the 7th century and similarly attributed to Mahā Kaccāyana.²⁾ In considering the question of the Kacc's authorship, O. H. Pind pointed out that according to a description of the Kaccāyanasuttaniddesa (= Kacc-nidd), which was authored in the 15th century, the first *sutta* of the Kacc, namely Kacc 1: *attho akkharasaññāto*, "meaning is identified by syllables" was considered a representation of the Buddha's statement and served as a foreword (*pubbavākya*) to the text.³⁾ However, Pind focuses mainly on the Kacc-nidd, and other commentaries on the Kacc have remained to be studied. For this reason, I will compare some commentaries on the Kacc to examine the historical change of the scholars' positions on the authorship of Kacc 1 and the function of the opening *sutta* as a *pubbavākya*.

1. Mukhamattadīpanī Although there is no apparent mention of a *pubbavākya* in the Kacc-v 1, the possibility of a *pubbavākya* is introduced in the Mukhamattadīpanī (= Mmd), which was written by Vajirabuddhi (or Vimalabuddhi) in the 10th or 11th century in Burma. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first mention of a *pubbavākya* for the Kacc:

Others say that the person who composed the Kacc-v wrote the two introductory verses in the beginning of the Kacc-v and the person who composed *suttas* wrote the preface (*pubbavākya*): *attho akkharasaññāto* in the beginning of *suttas*.⁴⁾

Two significant points are garnered from this description: first, according to "others" (*apare*), the authors of the Kacc and Kacc-v might have been different individuals and second, Vajirabuddhi most probably did not support this position.

2. Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā Next, the Mukhamattadīpanī-porāṇaṭṭikā (= Mmd-

pt) alias Saṃ-pyan-ṭikā, which is thought to have been written in the 12th century in Burma, explained the passage quoted above in detail:

The word “others” refers to some teachers. They have the following process of understanding [about editorial process of the Kacc grammar]: A single elder (*thera*) wrote the treatise (= Kacc) twice. At first, [he wrote] only the *suttas* and the example sentences. At this time, he also spoke the [preface] sentence at the beginning of the *suttas*. Later, because of the difficulty in the instructions of the *suttas*, he wrote the [Kacc-]vutti. At this time, he wrote the two introductory verses. This process of understanding [about editorial process of the Kacc grammar] is not common to all [teachers]. If so, why is this [process] mentioned in the Nyāsa (= Mukhamattadīpanī)? [Answer:] By making clear understandings of [other] teachers at first, to inform about the teacher’s own [understanding].⁵⁾

According to the above description, those who accepted Kacc 1 as a *pubbavākya* apparently considered the author of the Kacc and Kacc-v to have been the same person and believed that Kacc 1 was written by an elder (*thera*)—most probably, Kaccāyana—as a preface to his exposition. However, as in the case of the Mmd, this view is not supported by the author.

3. Kaccāyanasuttaniddesa (Kacc-nidd) As O. H. Pind observed, claims regarding the Kacc 1 as a *pubbavākya* were accepted without reservation in the Kacc-nidd, which was written by Chapaṭa in the 15th century:

He (= Kaccāyana) says the sentence (vākya): “*attho akkharasaññāto*”. In this sentence, “*attho akkharasaññāto*” is the foreword which was spoken from the Bhagavat’s mouth. [In other words, “*attho akkharasaññāto*”] is not the sentence uttered by Kaccāyana. Because [the following background story on “*attho akkharasaññāto*” is transmitted]: After a veteran recluse received a subject for meditation from the Bhagavat, he sat under a Sāla tree near the Anotatta Lake. Then, he meditated on “origination and decay” (*udaya-bbaya*). [However,] he saw a heron (*baka*) wandering on water (*udaka*) and meditated, [incorrectly] chanting “heron on water” (*udaka-baka*). As the Bhagavat noticed the incorrectness and summoned the veteran recluse, he spoke the phrase: “*attho akkharasaññāto*”. As an elder Kaccāyana understood the Bhagavat’s intention, he placed the sentence “*attho akkharasaññāto*” at the beginning of his discourse (= Kacc). Thus, some also claim that [“*attho akkharasaññāto*”] is a *sutta* created by Kaccāyana.⁶⁾

Chapaṭa’s description is unique in that he concurred with the idea of a *pubbavākya*, which is not admitted in older commentaries, although he also briefly mentioned the non-*pubbavākya* position, which was considered orthodox in the Mmd and Mmd-pt. Another notable difference is that whereas as described in the Mmd and Mmd-pt, supporters of the

pubbavākya position never considered Kacc 1 as a representation of the Buddha's own words, but rather merely a preface created by an elder, conversely, Chapaṭa declared the Kacc 1 to have been a statement uttered by the Buddha himself. Further, he connected Kacc 1 to an apocryphal tale. Although this narrative does not exist in the *tipiṭaka* or its commentaries of Theravāda, it indicates a similarity to some canonical discourses transmitted in the Sarvāstivāda tradition, as highlighted by O. H. Pind.⁷⁾ In addition, what is particularly notable here is that when Chapaṭa refers to other *suttas*, he consistently prefaces such remarks with “*iti suttam āha*”. Hence, it should be grasped that the words *vākya* “sentence” (observed in the underlined part) and *sutta* are clearly distinct in the Kacc-nidd. In other words, Chapaṭa regarded Kacc 1 as separate from the *sutta*-group.⁸⁾

4. Kaccāyanasuttavaṇṇanā Finally, I will examine the Kaccāyanasuttavaṇṇanā (= Kacc-vaṇṇ), which was authored in Burma by Vijitāvī in the 16th century. Vijitāvī appears to have quoted another narrative not described in the Kacc-nidd to illustrate that the Kacc 1 denoted the Buddha's own words. However, he did not concur with the position that the statement constituted a *pubbavākya* because in his view, *attho akkharasaññāto* also functioned as a meta-rule (*paribhāsā*), one of the categories of *suttas*. As a consequence, Vijitāvī regarded *attho akkharasaññāto* as a *sutta* and not as a *vākya*:

Who stated this *sutta*? [A:] the Bhagavat did. When was [this *sutta*] stated? [A:] Two *brāhmanas* named Yama and Uppala seized the subject of the meditation of “origination and decay” and went forth. When they two meditated pronouncing “*khayavaya, khayavaya*” (origination and decay), one *brāhmana*, after seeing a heron wandering to catch fish on water [and then pronouncing] ‘*udaya-baka*,’ failed in [his meditation] and the other *brāhmana*, after seeing a cloth (*paṭa*) on a pot (*ghaṭa*) [and then pronouncing] “*ghaṭa-paṭa*” (pot and cloth), also failed in [his meditation]. At this time, the Bhagavat, after emitting light (*obhāsam muñcivā*), set the sentence *attho akkharasaññāto*. Then the subject of their meditation was fixed. For this reason, it is said that [Kacc 1] is spoken by the Bhagavat. After Mahā Kaccāyana came to know this, he asked permission from the Bhagavat and went to the Himālaya, where he turned his head towards the south in Manosilātala, and then facing [the west, north] and east [in order],⁹⁾ composed the treaties named Kaccāyana, which begins with *attho akkharasaññāto*. [Objection]: Thus, this is said to be a preface (*pubbavākya*). Furthermore it is said: Meta-rule *sutta* (*paribhāsā-sutta*) is to be a meta-rule (*paribhāsā*) on the reason that it is set by the elder (*thera*) [However, since Kacc 1 is not written by Kaccāyana *thera* on the reason above, Kacc 1 should not be regarded as a *paribhāsā-sutta*, but a *pubbavākya*]. [Reply]: It is said: “Other teachers say that this *sutta* is a preface (*pubbavākya*) [, so Kacc 1 should not be regarded as a *sutta*]. [However,] this is our idea: Because [Kacc 1] conforms to *suttas*, [Kacc 1] is a meta-rule.” And

also, some scholars say that [Kacc 1] was uttered [by the Bhagavat], intended for a veteran recluse who sat under a Sāla tree on the bank of the Anotatta Lake. This (= Anotatta version described in the Kacc-nidd) is the other half of the origin (*aḍḍhuppatti*) of this (= Kacc 1).¹⁰⁾

Thus, according to Vjijitāvī, it was not contradictory for a sentence uttered by the Buddha to simultaneously serve as a *sutta*,¹¹⁾ and he appears to have attempted to again position Kacc 1 as a member of the *sutta*-group.

Conclusion It appears that the view of Kacc 1 as the Buddha's utterance ultimately acquired the status of the orthodox, although whether it should be a *sutta* continued to be a subject of debate. In closure, I would like to suggest an effect of the process in which this attribution came to be so firmly established. It seems clear that Kacc 1 functioned to provide a frame-story for readers, such that learners might feel that they were engaging with some form of "sacred text" in which the Buddha's own words are explained in detail by his revered disciple Kaccāyana rather than merely studying a dull grammatical text. Thus, I propose that the above-illustrated evolution of attributions for Kacc 1 among commenters might be regarded not only as a history of the authorisation of the Kacc grammar, but also a history of the development of a literary device that was inserted into the Kacc by scholars of this treatise.

1) See Pind [2012: 71]. 2) On the chronology of the Kacc and Kacc-v, see Pind [2012: 73, 90].
 3) See Pind [1995: 284–285], [1996]. 4) Mmd 8.17–20: *vuttiṃ kubbatā vuttādo gāthādvayaṃ vuttaṃ / sutte kubbatā suttādo pubbavākyaṃ āradham attho akkharasaññāto ty apare*. 5) Mmd-pt 47.23–29: *apare ti ekacce ācariyā // tesam ayaṃ uggahaṇamaggo / therena paṇ' idaṃ pakaraṇaṃ dvikkhattuṃ kataṃ // paṭhamaṃ suddhāharaṇamattam eva // tadā suttādo vākyaṃ āha // pacchā atigūḥhatāya suttapadesassa vuttiṃ akāsi // tadā tassādo gāthādvayaṃ āhā ti // nāyaṃ sabbasādhāraṇuggahaṇamaggo // yady evaṃ, kasmā Nyāse idaṃ vuttan ti // ācariyuggahaṇavibhāvana-mukhena attano ācariyamatikattuvinnāpanatthaṃ //* 6) Kacc-nidd 3.22–32: *attho akkharasaññāto iti vākyaṃ āha. tattha "attho akkharasaññāto" ti idaṃ bhagavato mukhapāṭhabhūtaṃ pubbavākyaṃ, na Kaccāyanaena vuttavākyaṃ. tathā hi eko buḍḍhapabbajito bhikkhu bhagavato santike kammaṭṭhānaṃ gahetvā Anotattatīre sālarukkhamaṇe nisinno udayabbayakammaṭṭhānaṃ karoti. so udake carantaṃ bakaṃ disvā "udakabakan" ti kammaṭṭhānaṃ karoti. bhagavā taṃ vitathabhāvaṃ disvā buḍḍhapabbajitaṃ pakkosāpetvā "attho akkharasaññāto" ti vākyaṃ āha. Kaccāyanatherena pi bhagavato adhippāyaṃ jānitvā "attho akkharasaññāto" ti vākyaṃ pubbe thapetvā idaṃ pakaraṇaṃ katan ti, Kaccāyanaena katasuttaṃ ti pi vadanti.* 7) For instance, see 根本説一切有部毘奈耶雜事 T 24.1451.409c–410a (≡阿育王伝 T 50.2042.115b19–25). Pind speculated that the diffusion of the Sarvāstivāda in Burma was caused by the transmigration of the Sarvāstivāda from North-western India as pressed by Muslims in the 11th century (See Pind [1996: 70, fn. 6]). However, as reported by 義淨 (*Yi Jing*), the Sarvāstivāda was probably already present in Burma by that time. See 南海寄歸內法伝 T 54.205.b7–8: 東裔諸國雜行四部 "In East-

ern India, four *nikāyas* are learned together.”

8) The Rūpasiddhi (= Rūp) of Buddhapiya also regarded Kacc 1 as a *vākya*. See Rūp 1.13–14: *abhidheyya-ppayojanaṃ vākyam idam uccate*. “The following sentence (= Kacc 1) which expresses the utility of the grammatical text is uttered.” Here I follow the interpretation of Rūp-ṭ 5.19–22: *abhidheyyassa ... byākaraṇasatthassa yaṃ payojanaṃ ... tassa paridīpakaṃ vākyam*.

9) This sentence most probably intended to provide a folk etymology for the prefix *pari-* (around) of the word *pari-bhāsā*.

10) Kacc-vaṇṇ 10.26–11.13: “*attho akkharasaññāto*” *ti ādim āha / idaṃ suttaṃ kena vuttaṃ? bhagavatā vuttaṃ / kadā vuccan ti? Yama-Uppalanāmakaṃ dve brāhmaṇā khayavayakammaṭṭhānaṃ gahetvā gacchantā nadiṭṭe “khayavayaṃ khayavāyan” ti kammaṭṭhāne kayiramāne, eko udake macchaṃ gaṇhiṇuṃ carantaṃ bakaṃ disvā “udakabako” ti virajjhati, eko ghaṭe paṭaṃ disvā “ghaṭapaṭo” ti virajjhati. tadā bhagavā obhāsaṃ mūncivā “attho akkharasaññāto” ti vākyam ṭhpeti. tesaṃ ca kammaṭṭhānaṃ paṭiṭṭhati. tasmā bhagavatā vuttaṃ ti vuccati. taṃ ṇatvā Mahākaccāyano bhagavantaṃ yācivā Himavantaṃ gatvā Manosilātale dakkhiṇadisābhāgaṃ sīsaṃ katvā puratthimadisābhimukho hutvā “attho akkharasaññāto” ty ādikaṃ Kaccāyanapākaraṇaṃ viraci. tasmā pubbavākyaṃ ti vuttaṃ. paribhāsāsuttaṃ therena ṭhapitattā paribhāsā ti pi vuttaṃ / vuttaṃ ca “pubbavākyaṃ i’ idaṃ suttaṃ vadant’ ācariyāpare / suttānāṃ anurūpena paribhāsā ti no matī” [verse] ti. Anotattāre sālrukhamūle nisinnaṃ ekaṃ buddhapabbajitaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ ti pi vadanti. ayaṃ imassa aḍḍhupatti.*

11) This concept might derive from the Kārikā of Dhammasenāpati, who described the word *sutta* as follows: “Synonyms of *sutta* are *ārambha*, *vacana*, *patti*, *lakkhaṇa*, *yoga*, *vākya*, *suttayātana*, and so forth” (Kārikā 55: *ārambho vacanaṃ pattilakkhaṇaṃ yogam eva ca / vākyam suttayātanaṃ suttānaṃ abhidhānaṃ //*). According to the Kārikā-ṭikā glosses, *ārambha* means “preface” or “foreword” (Kārikā-ṭikā 344.28–345.2: *ārambho ti vuttapayogasiddhiyā suttopadesassa ādibhāvato ārambhaṇaṃ ādikaraṇaṃ //*).

Abbreviations

Kacc: *Kaccāyana and Kaccāyanavutti*. Ed. Ole Holten Pind. Bristol: Pali Text Society, 2013.
Kacc-v: See Kacc. **Kacc-nidd:** *The Kaccāyanasuttaniddesa*. Ed. M. Medhankara. Colombo 1915.
Kacc-vaṇṇ: *Kaccāyanavyākaraṇaṃ of Kaccāyana Mahāthera with the Commentary Kaccāyanasuttavaṇṇanā* by Mahāvijitāvi Thera. Vol. 1. Ed. L. N. Tiwari. Varanasi 1992. **Kārikā:** *Saddā-ñay 15 coṇ pāṭh*. Rangoon 1964. **Kārikā-ṭikā:** *Saddā ñay ṭikā pāṭh*. Vol. 3. Rangoon 1929.
Mmd: *Nyāsa-pāṭh (Mukhamattadīpanī)*. Rangoon 1933. **Mmd-pt:** *Mukhamattadīpanī-ṭikā (Saṃpyan-ṭikā)*. Rangoon 1917. **Rūp:** *Padarūpasiddhi*. Rangoon 1963. **Rūp-ṭ:** *Padarūpasiddhiṭikā*. Rangoon 1965.

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