

Remarks on the *Visuddhimagga*, and on its treatment of the Memory of Former Dwelling(s) (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*)

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The *Visuddhimagga* as a whole

The first western edition of the *Visuddhimagga* (hereafter *Vism*) was published by the Pali Text Society (PTS) under the general editorship of C. A. F. Rhys Davids in 1920–1921. She described it as ‘a rough makeshift... put together by amateur hands so that we should no longer have to digest the contents through the unfamiliar medium of the scripts of further India’ (1975 [1921], p. 764). It was superseded by the Warren and Kosambi (1950) version (see below) but it remains useful and necessary, not only because many modern authors continue to cite the text using the PTS page numbers, but also because of its indices: while that of Names and Subjects has now been largely superseded by Ousaka and Yamazaki (2004, using the PTS page numbers), the Index of Quotations remains unique. Of the work of preparing the indices Rhys Davids wrote:

Of this extraordinary book we might say, within limits, what is said of the Divina Commedia and of the Shakespearean plays: in its pages may be found something on everything—i.e. in the earlier Buddhist literature... [T]he vocabulary of Buddhaghosa... is astonishingly rich as compared with the archaic simplicity of the bookless conditions under which the Piṭakas took birth... (1975, p. 763)

I translate *nivāsa* as ‘dwelling(s)’ to indicate that it refers both to individual lives in a rebirth sequence and to the general fact of dwelling (in *saṃsāra*). This article is conceived in part as a continuation of the kind of literary analysis I applied to the *Aggañña Sutta* (Collins 1993) and the *Cakkavatti-sihanāda Sutta* (Collins 1996), both in this journal. The point is not to oppose literary to conceptual analysis: the *Visuddhimagga* is by anyone’s criterion part of the history of Indian Philosophy. But any study of philosophy, of *ideas* in general, must pay attention to the specific textuality of what it studies.

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... the general work of quotation [from earlier Pali texts] is wonderfully accurate... [But] ‘What, anyway, was Buddhaghosa’s procedure when he quoted? Did he, save for some short, standard passages—*ye dhammā hetupphavā*, etc., and the like—take out from some metal coffer, white-ant proof, a palm-leaf MS. and copy a paragraph or a whole half-leaf? Or had he the wonderfully developed verbal memory of India? (1975, p. 766)

The PTS edition was not made directly from manuscripts, but from two Burmese and two Sinhala modern printed editions:

Thus the Pali Text Society’s edition has been the outcome of work done by other editors in palmleaf MSS. It seemed an unnecessary repetition of labour, and especially of eyesight service, to recommence meticulous discrimination in readings in a work of which the text itself had never suffered neglect in the land of its birth and of its early adoption (*ibid.*, p. vii).

Henry Clarke Warren started work on his edition of the text some time before 1892, when he made the first of a series of interim reports.¹ His early death in 1899 left the work unfinished, although a number of translations from Vism appeared in his widely-circulated and still very valuable *Buddhism in Translations*, published in 1894.² His Vism text remained unpublished until 1950 when it appeared in the Harvard Oriental Series, under the two names of Warren and Kosambi. It is not clear exactly what was Kosambi’s contribution to producing the HOS text we now work from; in his preface (dated 1927) he says (pp. vii–viii) first that he has ignored further work on other mss. by another scholar, since ‘the intention is to change Mr. Warren’s work as little as possible,³ but then that ‘Mr. Warren’s paragraphs I found either too large or too small. I have recast and numbered them to facilitate references and comparison with the translation’.⁴ Given that Ñāṇamoli’s magisterial translation (1999 [1956]) *The Path of Purification* follows the HOS paragraph divisions⁵ Kosambi’s decisions have had a great effect on how Vism is now read, both by specialists and, even more so, by non-specialists. Unlike Rhys Davids, Warren did work directly from manuscripts, two Burmese and two Sinhalese, but like her he noted the difficulties in doing so: ‘It seems almost impossible to

¹ Made to the International Congress of Orientalists in 1892, printed as Warren (1893a); cf. also (1893b). There had been an earlier *compte-rendu* by Carpenter (1890), based on two mss.

² Warren (1896); an index of the texts translated is given by Runkle (1903).

³ Moreover, ‘[i]n some places all of Mr. Warren’s authorities needed correction on the authority of the Tikā. With these exceptions Mr. Warren’s four manuscripts have been followed, but his original plan of printing B1 with all the variants has not been followed. For, in many places, even the B1 reading is faulty... Therefore the reading that makes the best sense, and only those variants that give possible meanings, have been retained.’

⁴ The reference to a translation here is presumably to one planned by himself but not completed. The paragraph divisions are not the same as those of the PTS edition; nor as those in the nāgarī script edition made by Rewatadhamma (1969–1972). In the Introduction (in Pali) Rewatadhamma states that his edition is based on the Burmese Chatṭhasaṅgāyana texts (see footnote 16), with some emendations and corrections (*visodhana-paṭisodhanakamma*).

⁵ As also does the French version by Maës (2002); but not the German of Nyanatiloka (1997 [1952]).

understand a Pāli work written on palm-leaves until it has first been transcribed. The natives do not divide the words, and they make use of almost no devices to help the eye, so that it becomes a question of spelling one's way along letter by letter, and it is hardly possible to read currently'.⁶

The later legends of Buddhaghosa's life and work very much see him as a product of and participant in a literate Buddhist world, albeit that he was also described as being gifted with prodigious powers of memory.⁷ There are numerous indications of this: an emblematic example is the story of how he wrote two versions of *Vism* (√*kr* and √*likh* are used,⁸) both of which books (*pothaka*) were hidden by the gods; then he produced a third, the gods restored the two versions they had stolen, and all three were found to be exactly identical in every single word.⁹ How are we, thinking historically rather than in legends, to imagine that Buddhaghosa wrote *Vism*, or how those who used it proceeded? By manuscripts or by memory? Or both? Historical and ethnographic research on mss. and their use is obviously necessary to begin to consider such a question.¹⁰ This article will not attempt any such thing. Rather it raises a preliminary issue: what kind of text is *Vism*? That is, not what genre is it, but what is the text actually like? What kinds of usage are suggested by the organization and contents of it? Although there are good general descriptions of *Vism* in the standard histories of Pali literature¹¹ I think that this issue has not received the attention it deserves. I will look at *Vism* in two ways: macroscopically at the principles of organization of the text as a whole, and microscopically at one section of it, the discussion of the Memory of Former Lives given in Chapter XIII 13ff. I hope that this analysis will increase perception and

⁶ Warren (1894, p. lxxv). The Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. *currently*, has: 'In the manner of a flowing stream; with easy rapid movement; smoothly, fluently, readily. Now *rare*.' Kosambi's preface to the HOS edition remarks (p. ix) on slight differences in the punctuation signs in the Burmese and Sinhalese mss. In 1921, Lanman, in a memorial to Warren published at the end of Burlingame (1969), wrote that 'Warren's catalogue (Warren 1885)... proves that he had already acquired the power of reading these palm-leaf books—no easy acquisition, when one considers the crabbed characters, the lack of contrast of color (black on brown, not black on white) and the maddening absence of adequate paragraphing and spacing and punctuation.'

⁷ See Finot (1921) and (1924), Law (1923); Ñāṇamoli (1999, pp. xxviii–xl). There are versions in the *Mahāvamsa* (= *Cūlavamsa*) XXXVII 215–246, translated in Geiger (1929, pp. 22–26), the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* (pp. 53–54), translated in Law (1941, pp. 76–77), and the *Buddhaghosuppatti* (also known as *-Nidāna*), text pp. 56–57, transl. pp. 24–26. On the latter see Gray (2001 [1892]) and Balbir (2001, 2007).

⁸ *Saddhamma*-s 53 has the verb √*drś*, to see (in the form *passitvā*) clearly indicating that it is the reading of mss. which is being envisaged.

⁹ Mv XXXVII 240–241: *ganthato athatho vā pi pubbāparavasena vā / theravādehi pālīhi padēhi vyañjanēhi ca / aññathattaṃ ahū n'eva pothakesu tīsu pi*; Bu-up 57, following one of Gray's (2001 [1892], p. 57) mss.: *tīsu yasmim padese ye nipātopasaggādayo saddhā therena likhitā tassa tasmim padese te samasamā a-vi-sadisā likhitā viya tiṭṭhanti*; *Saddh*-s 53–54: *ganthato vā akkharato vā padato vā vyañjanato vā athatho vā pubbāparavasena theravādīhi vā pālīhi vā tīsu pothakesu aññathattaṃ nāma nāhosi*.

¹⁰ On what they call 'Buddhist Manuscript Cultures' see Berkwitz et al. (2008); and for the kind of ethnography needed, McDaniel (2008).

¹¹ Most recently Norman (1983) and von Hinüber (1996).

admiration of how multiply sophisticated it is. Vism is standardly called a work of scholasticism, and the two meanings of that word given by the Oxford English Dictionary suggest the general range of things evoked by the term: [i] ‘The doctrines of the Schoolmen; the predominant theological and philosophical teaching of the period AD 1000–1500, based on the authority of the Christian Fathers and of Aristotle. [ii] Servile adherence to the methods and teaching of the schools; narrow or unenlightened insistence on traditional doctrines and forms of exposition.’ C.A.F. Rhys Davids, despite the admiration she expressed at the time of the publication of the text,¹² by the time of the completed PTS translation¹³ in 1931 was rather less enthusiastic:

Buddhaghosa is not always complicated and laboured in style; now and then he is not wordy and windy; sometimes within his limited horizons he is not aggravating... [D]ifficult as is at times his mental procedure, his writing is often crabbed and even obscure. There are passages in his last bunch of chapters which, in their elliptical diction, are tiresome to follow and to make intelligible. Whether this be entirely his fault and his misfortune, or it be in part due to faulty recensions... I am not sure.

Vism is ascribed to Buddhaghosa, as are a large number of commentarial works. It was no doubt in relation to the authorship of all these texts that Ñāṇamoli referred, in a private letter, to ‘the committee called Buddhaghosa.’¹⁴ In the terminology of Booth (1961), the implied author of Vism is a single person, who uses first-person singular and first-person plural pronouns and verbal forms. In the opening remarks the first person singular future tense of the verb *√bhās*, to speak, is used of the author’s (or any reciter’s?) intentions (*Visuddhimaggam bhāsissam*, I 4 = 2),¹⁵ while the concluding *nigamana* (pp. 612–613 in the HOS text, PTS p. 711) repeats the opening remarks and uses both the first person singular and the first person plural. At what seems to be the only place in the text where the author records a personal opinion the first person plural is used: *ayaṃ ettha amhākaṃ khanti*, ‘our preference here is this’.¹⁶ Sometimes the authorial voice states an intention: thus at III 16 it says that ‘we will later comment on...’

¹² She dedicated the book to her son—who was a pilot in the First World War and went missing, presumed dead, in 1917, and to ‘the work, past, present and future of Buddhaghosa,’ citing Bu-up 66 on the future of Buddhaghosa as the disciple of Metteyya foremost in learning: *Metteyyena Bhagavatā etad-agge thapito bhavissati: mama sāvakānaṃ dhammavinayadharānaṃ bahussutānaṃ nāṇagatīnaṃ nāṇadharānaṃ yadidaṃ Buddhaghoso ti*.

¹³ By Maung Tin (1975). Maung Tin’s version is very unreliable, as also is his translation of the *Atthasālinī* (1976 [1920–1921]). It is fortunate that we now have, for the latter, Nyānaponika (2005). Maung Tin was a Burmese Christian whose involvement in Pali studies was a matter of national pride and academic interest. Reading between the lines of Mrs. Rhys Davids’s Editorial Note to *The Expositor* and her Epilogue to *The Path of Purity* suggests that she was well aware of the deficiencies.

¹⁴ See Ñāṇamoli (1971, p. 235). This book was republished by the Buddhist Publication Society in 2008. It is available on-line at <http://wajj.com/oldbooks/thinkersnotebook.html>. Accessed 22 May 2009.

¹⁵ References to Vism are to the HOS chapter and paragraph division and then to the PTS page number.

¹⁶ XIII 123 = 434, translation by Ñāṇamoli.

(*parato... vaṇṇayissāma*), referring forward to sections of Chapter IV. The attribution to ‘Buddhaghosa’ is given in a separate prose epilogue, written in the third person (and so perhaps a later addition to the text of *Vism*). In verses found at the very end of the Ceylonese mss., the authorial voice hopes, in the first person singular, to be reborn in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven and then in his last life to meet Metteyya and attain nirvana. In what follows the name ‘Buddhaghosa’ and phrases such as ‘the author’ should be taken as referring to the implied single authorial voice of *Vism*.

What kind of text is *Vism*? At the end it is referred to as a *pakaraṇa*, a ‘treatise,’ though the commentary¹⁷ states that it is neither a commentary (*saṃvaṇṇanā*) like that on the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, nor a treatise (*pakaraṇa*) like the *Abhidhammāvatāra*. In the closing verses the word *pāli* is used twice of the text, which is unusual since that word at the time of *Vism*¹⁸ usually refers only to Canonical texts. Perhaps this is a hyperbole akin to the comparisons made, in the legends, between Buddhaghosa and both the Buddha and Metteyya. Ñāṇamoli referred to *Vism* as ‘a detailed manual for meditation masters, and as a work of reference’ (1999 [1956], p. xliii). As a modern book-phenomenon, especially with the apparatus Ñāṇamoli’s version provides—Pali-English Glossary, a comprehensive table of Contents and Index—it has become just that. I would imagine that almost all western scholars who work with *Vism*, at least in the English-speaking academy, start from his translation, using it indeed in the manner of a dictionary or encyclopedia: for example, looking up words in his Contents list or in the Glossary and Index to find specific passages (and then perhaps moving on to the Pali text, though I fear many stay with the English version), which are then read as ‘*Vism* on [subject X].’ This is a perfectly valid way to profit from Ñāṇamoli’s work. But how was *Vism* read, or used, without these aids? There are several ways in which the text is structured, only some of which are readily evident. In the epilogue it is said to have 58 recitation sections (*bhāṇavara-s*).¹⁹ It is not clear to me from any of the texts and translations what these sections might be. Very often sections of the text are concluded by a phrase using the word *niṭṭhita*, ‘completed’: thus at the end of the section which will be discussed here one reads *pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇakathā niṭṭhitā* (XIII 71 = 423); or simply the section-title is given at the end: thus at IX 76 = 314 there is *ayaṃ mettabhāvanāya vitthāra-kathā*, ‘this (was) the detailed explanation of the Meditation on Loving-Kindness’.²⁰

¹⁷ *Vism*-ṭ 2 = Be I 2. The commentary is cited from Rewatadhamma (1969–1972) and the Burmese edition as in the Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana CD (this latter is available through tipitaka.org and vridhamma.org).

¹⁸ On the word *pāli* and its history see Crosby (2004), with earlier works cited there.

¹⁹ The *nigamana* has: *Visuddhimaggo eso ca... niṭṭhito aṭṭhapaññāsa-bhāṇavārāya pāliya*, which Ñāṇamoli renders as ‘the *Path of Purification* with eight and fifty recitation sections in the text has herewith been completed’; the Burmese closing verse has: *iti... katā Visuddhimaggakathā pālīgaṇanāya pana sā aṭṭhapaññāsabhāṇavārā hoti*, for which he has: ‘The exposition of the *Path of Purification* has thus been made...; by reckoning the Pali text, [it] has eight and fifty recitation sections.’

²⁰ Sometimes the word *-mukhaṃ* is put ifc., as at VIII 41 = 239, *idaṃ maraṇasatiyaṃ vitthāra-kathāmukhaṃ*. Ifc. *-mukha* means ‘beginning with,’ or, like *-ādi*, can function as does our ‘etc.’

There are at least five overlapping kinds of architecture of the text as a whole:

- (i) the division into 23 chapters, each of which ends with a closing statement identifying the chapter and in many cases referring to the tripartite sub-division given here as (ii),²¹
- (ii) the familiar sequence *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, which Ñāṇamoli renders as Virtue, Concentration and Understanding, along with a single verse from the *Samyutta Nikāya* mentioning *sīla*, *citta* and *paññā*, which is repeated at times in the text and at the end;²²
- (iii) a list of seven forms of purification, *visuddhi*, found in canonical texts. This is what gives the text its name;
- (iv) a sequence of questions asked about each of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, which the text answers; sometimes the end of the answer comes at a very great distance from the initial asking of the question.

²¹ The PTS and HOS texts and translations have running headers which designate sub-sections of the chapters, which, if they are signaled as such in the text itself, are concluding phrases.

²² This may be the place for me to make some remarks about the hypothesis of Frauwallner, who thought that *Vism* was based on the *samādhi* section, with those on *sīla* and *paññā* added. Frauwallner's view occurs in a few pages which set *Vism* in a wider context of *Abhidharma/Abhidhamma* texts, published in English in 1995 as *Studies in Abhidharma Literature and the Origins of Buddhist Philosophical Systems*. Unfortunately, in my view, the main accomplishment of this work is to exemplify clearly an outmoded and discredited form of Orientalism (in the pejorative sense). The method is: Herr Professor sits at a desk in Vienna with various texts, in various editions, before him (note that tucked away in a footnote is the remark 'I have only had limited access to the Pāli literature' [1995, p. 215, n.7]). He then excogitates an historical progression from simple to more complex (to which the judgment 'degenerate' is frequently applied). Thus in speaking of 'The Earliest Abhidharma' he starts, not unreasonably, from the existence in many texts of lists of items (*mātrkā*, Pāli *māṭikā*, on which see Gethin [1992]), and then says that the development of later Abhidharma 'must have happened in more or less the following fashion,' going on to give an entirely hypothetical account, taken as fact in the rest of the work. The assumption that simple must precede complex has only to be articulated to be shown to be as absurd as it is common in previous generations of Indological scholarship. Do not people sometimes summarize and simplify in exegesis of earlier material? Evaluative dismissals ('superficial,' 'artificial,' 'tedious,' etc.) stand in for historical analysis. He treats the *Vimuttimaggā* (see text and n. 26 below) and *Visuddhimaggā* summarily on pp. 89–95. They, or rather 'the work represented' by them (that is, the work hypothesized by Frauwallner) 'essentially belongs to the tradition of the old Abhidharma... [but] the weaknesses of this work also become evident. There is no underlying structure, as one would expect with the formation of a system. The path of meditation forms the sole framework... [Compared to the *Abhidhamma* text *Dhammasaṅgāṇī*] the material has been merely collected and loosely strung together, which virtually amounts to a step backwards when compared to the latter work. This can hardly be described as a proper system as such. Only a few of the Buddhist schools created systems that were of equal rank to those of the philosophical schools. And the Pāli school was not among their number' (p. 94). The suggestion that the path of meditation is the central element of the text appears to arise solely from the fact that of the three sections, *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, that on *samādhi* is the longest: in the PTS pagination, *sīla* (Chapters I–II) occupies 83 pages, *samādhi* (Chapters III–XII) 352 and *paññā* (Chapters XIII–XXIII) 275. Frauwallner concludes: 'This path of meditation is here extended into a path of liberation. This has been achieved by premising a section representing the preparatory moral behavior and also adding a further section treating of the cognition attained through meditation' (p. 90). So the sections on Virtue and Understanding, more than half of the text, are reduced to being merely introductory and additional material, and the complex, overlapping structures used to organize the work as a whole are entirely ignored in favor of an hypothetical and evaluative developmental narrative.

Here are some further remarks on each of these forms of textual architecture:

- (i) The 23 chapters are of very significantly varying lengths: Chapter V, on the Remaining Kasiṇas (after Chapter IV of 41 pages on the Earth Kasiṇa) is just over 6 pages, whereas Chapter VIII on (Other) Recollections as Meditation Subjects (*anussatikammaṭṭhāna*), is 55 pages; Chapter XV, on the Bases (*āyatana*) and Elements (*dhātu*) takes up barely more than 8 pages, whereas Chapter XVII, translated by Ñāṇamoli as ‘The Soil of Understanding’ (*paññābhūmi*) is 62. It is not clear to me why the particular chapter divisions were chosen: some could easily have been sub-divided, others combined. Chapters XVII–XXII have clearly been ordered into separate chapters, *pariccheda*-s, in order to follow the list of 7 Purifications (see [iii] below). The number 23 would appear to have no significance. The chapter endings are as follows; that for Chapter I is given in full, the others abbreviated (translations by Ñāṇamoli):

Chapter I (44 pages) *iti sādhujanapāmojjatthāya kate visuddhimagge sīlaniddeso nāma paṭhamo paricchedo*. The first chapter called ‘The Description of Virtue’ in the Path of Purification composed for the purpose of gladdening good people.

Chapter II (19 pages) *dhutaṅganiddeso nāma dutiyo paricchedo*. The second chapter called ‘The Description of Ascetic Practices...’

The endings to Chapters III to X also contain the phrase *samādhībhāvanādhi-kāre*, translated by Ñāṇamoli as ‘in the Treatise on the Development of Concentration.’

Chapter III (27 pages) *kammaṭṭhānaggahaṇaniddeso nāma tatiyo paricchedo*. The third chapter called ‘The Description of Taking a Meditation Subject...’

Chapter IV (41 pages) *pathavīkasiṇaniddeso nāma catuttho paricchedo*. The fourth chapter called ‘The Description of the Earth Kasiṇa...’

Chapter V (7 pages) *sesakasiṇaniddeso nāma pañcama paricchedo*. The fifth chapter called ‘The Description of the Remaining Kasiṇas...’

Chapter VI (16 pages) *asubhakammaṭṭhānaniddeso nāma chaṭṭho paricchedo*. The sixth Chapter called ‘The Description of Foulness as a Meditation Subject...’

Chapter VII (26 pages) *chaanussatiniddeso nāma sattamo paricchedo*. The seventh Chapter called ‘The Description of Six Recollections...’

Chapter VIII (16 pages) *anussatikammaṭṭhānaniddeso nāma aṭṭhamo paricchedo*. The eighth Chapter called ‘The Description of (Other) Recollections as Meditation Subjects...’

Chapter IX (26 pages) *brahmavihāraniddeso nāma navamo paricchedo*. The ninth Chapter called ‘The Description of the Divine Abidings.’

Chapter X (13 pages) *āruppaniddeso nāma dasamo paricchedo*. The tenth Chapter called ‘The Description of the Immaterial States...’

Chapter XI (28 pages) *samādhiniddeso nāma ekādasamo paricchedo*. The eleventh Chapter called²³ ‘The Description of Concentration.’

Chapter XII (28 pages) *iddhividhaniddeso nāma dvādasamo paricchedo*. The twelfth Chapter called ‘The Description of the Supernormal Powers.’

Chapter XIII (25 pages) *abhiññāniddeso nāma terasamo paricchedo*. The thirteenth chapter called²⁴ ‘The Description of Direct Knowledge.’

The endings to Chapters XIV to XXIII all contain the phrase *paññābhāvanādhikāre*, translated by Nāṇamoli as ‘in the Treatise on the Development of Understanding.’

Chapter XIV (38 pages) *khandhaniddeso nāma cuddasamo paricchedo*. The fourteenth chapter called ‘The Description of the Aggregates...’

Chapter XV (8 pages) *āyatanadhātuniddeso nāma pannarasamo paricchedo*. The fifteenth chapter called ‘The Description of the Bases and Elements...’

Chapter XVI (22 pages) *indriyasaccaniddeso nāma solasamo paricchedo*. The sixteenth chapter called ‘The Description of the Faculties and Truths...’

Chapter XVII (62 pages) *paññābhūminiddeso nāma sattarasamo paricchedo*. The seventeenth chapter called²⁵ ‘The Description of the Soil in which Understanding Grows...’

Chapter XVIII (9 pages) *diṭṭhivisuddhiniddeso nāma aṭṭhārasamo paricchedo*. The eighteenth chapter called ‘The Description of Purification of View...’

Chapter XIX (6 pages) *kaṅkhāvitaraṇavisuddhiniddeso nāma ekūnavīsātimo paricchedo*. The nineteenth chapter called ‘The Description of Purification by Overcoming Doubt...’

Chapter XX (28 pages) *maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhiniddeso nāma vīsātimo paricchedo*. The twentieth chapter called ‘The Description of Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is the Path and What is Not the Path...’

Chapter XXI (27 pages) *paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhiniddeso nāma ekavīsātimo paricchedo*. The twenty-first chapter called ‘The Description of Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way...’

²³ Nāṇamoli has ‘concluding’ rather than ‘called,’ which is an editorial insertion. The first volume of at least one of the Burmese texts has a list of chapter titles for Chapters I–XI here, which contain some minor variations from those given in the text.

²⁴ Again Nāṇamoli has ‘concluding’ rather than ‘called,’ presumably taking Chapters III to XIII as a whole, although the phrase *samādhībhāvanādhikāre*, ‘in the Treatise on the Development of Concentration,’ does not occur in the endings to Chapters XII and XIII.

²⁵ Again Nāṇamoli has ‘concluding’ rather than ‘called,’ taking Chapters XIV–XVII as a whole, as is explicitly stated in his Contents list. Chapter XIV 32 asks *kathaṃ bhāvetabbā ti*, ‘How is it (*paññā*) developed?’ and states in reply *ettha pana... imāya paññāya khandhāyatanadhātuindriyasaccapaṭiccasamuppādādibhedā dhammā bhūmi*, ‘Now the things classed as aggregates, bases, elements, faculties, truths, dependent origination, etc. are the *soil* of this understanding’ (emphasis in Nāṇamoli [1999, p. 442]). These are indeed the subjects of Chapters XIV 33 to the end of Chapter XVII.

Chapter XXII (23 pages) *ñāṇadassanavisuddhiniddeso nāma bāvīsatiṃ paricchedo*. The twenty-second chapter called ‘The Description of Purification by Knowledge and Vision...’

Chapter XXIII (13 pages) *paññābhāvanānisamsaniddeso nāma tevīsatiṃ paricchedo*. The twenty-third chapter called ‘The Description of the Benefits of Understanding...’

- (ii) The text begins with a single verse from the *Samyutta Nikāya*, to which in a formal sense the entire *Vism* is commentary. The verse, with Ñāṇamoli’s translation, is:

*sīle paṭiṭṭhāya naro sapañño, cittaṃ paññañ ca bhāvayaṃ
ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, so imaṃ vijāṭaye jaṭan ti (S I 13).*

When a wise man, established well in virtue, Develops consciousness and understanding, Then as a bhikkhu ardent and sagacious He succeeds in disentangling this tangle.

The verse, or parts of it, are returned to throughout the text: for example it is referred to at the end of Chapters I, II, XI, XXII and XXIII, immediately preceding the chapter-title. Chapters II, XIII and XXIII are the end of the discussion of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, respectively.

The three-fold division by sections on Virtue, Concentration and Understanding (*sīla-samādhi-paññā-mukhena*) is mentioned at *Vism* I 8 = 4 and repeatedly throughout the text. In this *Vism* seems to have followed an earlier text, on which more research is necessary, the *Vimuttimagga* ascribed to Upatissa.²⁶ (That text has 12 chapters.) All modern editions and translations follow this model in their descriptions and lay-out of *Vism*. As the previous elaboration of chapter-titles shows, Chapter I is entitled *sīla*; Chapter II is on The Ascetic Practices (*dhutaṅga-s*). Chapters III to X have in their endings the phrase *samādhi-bhāvanādhikāre*, the Section on the Development of Concentration; Chapter XI is called the chapter on *samādhi*: it deals with the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment (*āhāre paṭikūlasaññā*), with the defining of the four physical elements, earth, water, fire and air, (*catudhātuvavatthāna*) (both introduced in III 105), and concludes with the beginning of the answer to the question ‘What are the benefits of Concentration?’ (asked at III 1), an answer continued in Chapters XII and XIII. Chapters XIV to XXII deal with Understanding; and XXIII answers the question ‘What are the Benefits of Understanding?’ (asked at XIV 1). So there is a roughly analogous two-fold division within the headings Virtue, Concentration and Understanding:

²⁶ What is known of this text and its author is summarized in Norman (1983, pp. 113–114, 120) and von Hinüber (1996, pp. 124–126, #245–250). See also Ñāṇamoli (1999, pp. xl–xli), Bapat (1937), Skilling (1994) and Crosby (1999).

- 1A. Chapter I deals with Virtue.
 - 1B. Chapter II discusses a special list of practices which are said to develop characteristics such as fewness of wishes, contentment and effacement,²⁷ mentioned at I 116 and 151, and II 1.
 - 2A. Chapters III–XI 119 deal with Concentration.
 - 2B. Chapters X 120–XIII deal with the advantages of developing Concentration.
 - 3A. Chapters XIV–XXII deal with Understanding.
 - 3B. Chapter XXIII deals with the advantages of developing Understanding.
- (iii) In the canonical *Discourse on the Relays of Chariots (Rathavinīta Sutta)* there is a list of 7 forms of Purification (*visuddhi*), which are like a sequence of chariots someone might use to travel from one city to another (clearly in the background is the trope of the city of nirvana).²⁸ It is the imposition of this 7-fold sequence on the tripartite *sīla-samādhi-paññā* sequence which marks the main organizational difference of Vism from *Vimuttimaggā*, and which gives Vism its name. Numbers 3–7 are used as Chapter titles for Vism XVIII–XXII:
1. *sīla-visuddhi* (Chapters I and II)
 2. *citta* (Chapters III–XIII)
 3. *diṭṭhi* (Chapter XVIII)
 4. *kaṅkhāvitaraṇa* (Chapter XIX)
 5. *maggāmaggañānadassana* (Chapter XX)
 6. *paṭipadāñānadassana* (Chapter XXI)
 7. *ñānadassana* (Chapter XXII)

Chapter XIV 32 refers to the subjects of Chapters XIV 33ff. through Chapter XVII—the Aggregates, Bases, Elements, Faculties, Truths, and Dependent Origination—as the soil (*bhūmi*) of Understanding, to *sīla-visuddhi* and *citta-visuddhi* as its roots (*mūla*), and to the 5 *visuddhi*-s, the titles for Chapters XVIII–XXII, as its trunk. Thus the 23 chapters, the tripartite *sīla-samādhi-paññā* sequence, and the 7 forms of Purification are intertwined. It is worth remarking that the sequence of *visuddhi*-s does not play any great role, other than for providing chapter-divisions and chapter-titles for XVIII–XXII, in the course of the work itself.

- (iv) in addition to the forms of textual organization discussed so far, which for the most part are consonant with the division into chapters, there is a series of questions asked about each of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, which are answered in later parts of various chapters. A typical benefit of using Ñāṇamoli's translation is that he signals where the answers are given, saving one an immense amount of trouble in seeking them out. Even so, in reading through hundreds of pages of very heterogeneous material this form of architecture is easily lost, given that the answers are so very variable in length. The following table sets out the questions (with Ñāṇamoli's translations) and the places in the text where they are answered:

²⁷ These are Ñāṇamoli's renderings of *appicchata*, *santuṭṭhita* and *sallekhatā*.

²⁸ *Majjhima Sutta* 24, M I 145–151. At D III 288 the 7 *visuddhi*-s are incorporated into a list of 9, with the addition of *paññā-visuddhi* and *vimutti-visuddhi*, Purification of Understanding and of Release.

1.	<i>Sīla</i> ; questions asked I 16 <i>kiṃ sīlaṃ</i> , What is Virtue? <i>ken' atthēna sīlaṃ</i> , In what sense is it Virtue? <i>kān' assa lakkaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhānāni</i> , What are its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause? <i>kimānisaṃsaṃ sīlaṃ</i> , What are the benefits of Virtue? <i>katividhaṃ c' etaṃ sīlaṃ</i> , How many kinds of Virtue are there? <i>ko c' assa saṃkilesa</i> , What is the defiling of it? <i>kiṃ vodānaṃ</i> , What is the cleansing of it?	Questions answered I 17–18 I 19 I 20–22 I 23–24 I 25–142 answered together in I 143–160
2.	<i>Samādhi</i> ; questions asked III 1 <i>ko samādhi</i> , What is Concentration? <i>ken' atthēna samādhi</i> , In what sense is it Concentration? <i>kān' assa lakkaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhānāni</i> , What are its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause? <i>katividho samādhi</i> , How many kinds of Concentration are there? <i>ko c' assa saṃkilesa</i> , What is its defilement? <i>kiṃ vodānaṃ</i> , What is its cleansing? <i>kathaṃ bhāvetabbo</i> , How should it be developed? <i>samādhībhāvanāya ko ānisaṃso</i> , What are the benefits of the development of Concentration?	Questions answered III 2 III 3 III 4 III 5–25 answered together in III 26 III 27–XI 119 XI 120–XIII 128
3.	<i>Paññā</i> ; questions asked XIV 1 <i>kā paññā</i> , What is Understanding? <i>ken' atthēna paññā</i> , In what sense is it Understanding? <i>kān' assa lakkaṇa-rasa-paccupaṭṭhāna-padaṭṭhānāni</i> , What are its characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause? <i>katividhā paññā</i> , How many kinds of Understanding are there? <i>kathaṃ bhāvetabbā</i> , How is it developed? <i>paññābhāvanāya ko ānisaṃso</i> , What are the benefits of the development of Understanding?	Questions answered XIV 2 XIV 3–6 XIV 7 XIV 8–31 XIV 32–XXII 128 XXIII 1–59

There are also other ways in which a phrase might be introduced and then taken up later.²⁹ Thus the *Vism* is structured in an overlapping and heterogeneous number of ways, of which only the Chapter-endings are marked numerically. The implied author clearly has a very definite system of structuration in mind; but equally clearly

²⁹ Thus the phrase '40 Meditation subjects' is mentioned at III 28 = 89, and then referred to again (with *ti vuttaṃ*) when they are enumerated at III 105 = 110.

it would seem that any user of the text would have had to master it in its totality, with the various organizational modes by which it is constituted, even in order to find specific passages.

Vism has been shown to follow three kinds of earlier text: the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* for the chapters on Concentration; the *Paṭisambhidā-magga* for that on Wisdom; and the *Vimuttimaggā* in the way these sections are made to follow a section on Virtue. One significant difference between Vism and all the earlier texts, however, is the inclusion of many stories, along with elaborate similes and metaphors, and other kinds of literary device. In turning now to a microscopic analysis of one section of the text, the Memory of Former Dwelling(s) in Chapter XIII, I wish to emphasize and highlight the issues of textual dynamics and literary quality. I do not wish to claim the status of great art for the text: it is, indeed, a work of scholasticism, not seriously comparable with Dante or Shakespeare. But I think that we do not appreciate Vism properly if we do not clearly recognize that such elements are there. The implied author was clearly intent on producing a particular kind of text, demanding specific interpretative skills from its users. Other Pali texts, such as the canonical *Vinaya* and all the commentaries, include narratives along with their exegetical materials. These kinds of text, however, are structured merely as commentarial elaborations of pre-given textual forms: the *Pātimokkha* rules for the *Vinaya* and the relevant canonical texts for the commentaries. Vism weaves both its narratives and its exegeses into a whole which is quite unique in Pali. Both its exegetical scholasticism and its textual-literary qualities make significant demands on the expertise of its users.

On the Memory of Former Dwelling(s)

A translation of the relevant sections of Vism (XIII 13–71, 410–423) is given in an Appendix. This differs from Ñāṇamoli's only in a few minor details; it is added here simply in order to facilitate the reading of this article in JIPh. I don't regard it, apart from some minor details, as an improvement on his rendering. The passage occurs in the last chapter of the *samādhi* section (thus 2B in the terms of [ii] above), as part of the answer to the question 'What are the benefits of Understanding?' asked at XI 123 = 371. Memory of Former Dwelling(s) is one of five kinds of 'Mundane Direct-Knowledge' (*lokikābhiññā*). Two things strike one immediately about the general structure of the passage: first, it begins as ostensibly a word-commentary on the standard canonical description of this Knowledge, although the text of Vism nowhere contains this description as a whole. Ñāṇamoli's translation somewhat obscures this fact, since he adds, helpfully, the whole *Sutta* passage, but because of a typographical mistake in punctuation it is unclear what is added in the translation and what is the text of Vism.³⁰ A user of Vism in ms. would have to have the *sutta* text available—whether through memory or in written form—separately from Vism as redacted. Second, this word-commentary actually occurs only in a very small part of the section considered as a whole: it is given in

³⁰ He opens a square bracket (p. 406 line 19) before 'the text is as follows,' but seems not to close it. In fact it should be closed after the word 'herein' on line 33, and the square bracket before this word should be omitted].

XIII 13–14 = 410–411, XIII 28 = 414 and XIII 66–71 = 422–423. These word-commentaries amount to only slightly more than one page in both HOS and PTS editions, out of a total of some ten and a half pages, so they are about 10% of the whole. What fills the rest of the space is (i) some remarks in XIII 15–27 = 411–414 on different people who have such memory and on the preliminary manner in which a person should try to achieve it, and then—the largest portion of the whole section—paragraphs XIII 29–65 = 414–422, which describe different ways in which an eon can come to an end, and then how it evolves again, in words which are explicitly said to be in part taken from the canonical *Sattasuriya* (A IV 100–106) and *Aggañña Sutta*-s (D III 80–98): i.e. 60% of the whole. This is certainly unexpected (the commentaries to the *sutta* texts do not do this), and needs to be interpreted: unless one takes the Orientalist position that texts such as *Vism* were put together haphazardly and ad hoc, so that no principles of composition and organization need to be searched for, one needs to ask ‘what did the implied author of *Vism* want this passage to achieve?’ I will sketch some beginnings of an answer below, but my main point is to ask the question.

First I will look at the remarks in *Vism* and its commentary on the temporal direction which the rememberer is said to follow: that is, whether and how the mind of the rememberer moves backwards in time from the present to the past (I shall call this *paṭiloma* order—a word used in XII 22 and 23 = 412) or from the past to the present, in once-upon-a-time biographical-narrative order (*anuloma*). It is clear that once a rememberer has arrived at the life from which memory is to start, the memory must be in *anuloma* order: indeed XIII 28 = 414 states that a life, in the phrase ‘(he remembers) one life’ is *paṭisandhimūlaṃ cutipariyosānaṃ ekabhava-pariyāpannaṃ khandhasantānaṃ*, ‘(this means) a continuity of Aggregates included in one existence starting from rebirth-linking and ending in death.’ This analysis occurs in the sections XIII 15–27 = 411–414 and XIII 67–71 = 422–423. As just stated, the *Sutta* passage is not given in the text of *Vism*. I will start with it, as found in, for example, the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (D I 81-2, PTS paragraphs #93–94). An expandable sequence of three lives is mentioned: I have placed this sequence of lives on separate lines and given them numbers for clearer understanding (these will be returned to later in the *Vism* exegesis):

#93. *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpa-kkilese mudubhūte kammaniye tṭhite āneñjappatte pubbenivāsānussat-iñāṇāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so anekavihitam pubbenivāsam anussarati, seyyathidaṃ ekam pi jātiṃ dve pi jātiyo tisso pi jātiyo catasso pi jātiyo pañca pi jātiyo dasa pi jātiyo viṣam pi jātiyo timsam pi jātiyo cattālīsam pi jātiyo paññāsam pi jātiyo jātisatam pi jātisahassam pi jātisatasahassam pi aneke pi saṃvaṭṭakappe aneke pi vivaṭṭakappe aneke pi saṃvaṭṭavivaṭṭakappe:*

[1] *amutrāsiṃ evaṃnāmo evaṃgotto evaṃvaṇṇo evamāhāro evaṃsukhaduk-kha-ppaṭisaṃvedī evamāyupariyanto,*

so [1] tato cuto

[2] *amutra udapādiṃ; [2] tatrāpāsiṃ evaṃnāmo evaṃgotto evaṃvaṇṇo evamāhāro evaṃsukhadukkhappaṭisaṃvedī evamāyupariyanto, so [2] tato cuto*

[3] *idhūpapanno ti iti sākāraṃ sauddesaṃ anekavihiṭaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussarati.*

With a mind in this way concentrated, purified, cleansed, spotless, without Defilements, soft, workable, unmoving, imperturbable, he turns and bends his thought towards the Knowledge of the Recollection of Former Dwelling(s). He remembers his various former dwelling(s): that is, one life, two lives, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, one thousand, one hundred thousand, several eons of devolution, several eons of evolution, several eons of devolution and evolution (together):

[1] There I had such-and-such a personal name, such a clan-name, such an appearance, such food, such was my experience of pleasure and pain, and such was the length of my life.

Dying³¹ from [1] that place

I was reborn [2] there (i.e. somewhere else); there [2] I had such-and-such a personal name, such a clan-name, such an appearance, such food, such was my experience of pleasure and pain, and such was the length of my life.

Dying from [2] that place

I was reborn [3] here (i.e. in the present life). He remembers his various former dwelling(s) with characteristics and with specific details

The content of the memory is here given as three lives, the present and two previous, but it seems obvious that although numbers 2 and 3 must refer to [2] the life immediately preceding the present life and [3] the present life, the sequence from 1 to 2 can be taken to be expandable, to three, four, five, etc., up to the eons of devolution and evolution together mentioned in the previous sentence.

The next section of the text, paragraph #94, gives a simile (the numbers refer, again, to the sequence of three lives):

seyyathāpi... puriso sakamhā gāmā aññaṃ [1] gāmaṃ gaccheyya, tamhā pi [1] gāmā aññaṃ [2] gāmaṃ gaccheyya. so tamhā [2] gāmā sakamyeva [3] gāmaṃ paccāgaccheyya. tassa evaṃ assa: ahaṃ kho sakamhā gāmā amuṃ gāmaṃ agacchiṃ tatrāpi evaṃ atthāsīṃ, evaṃ nisīdiṃ, evaṃ abhāsīṃ, evaṃ tuṇhī ahoṣiṃ, tamhā pi gāmā amuṃ gāmaṃ agacchiṃ, tatrāpi evaṃ atthāsīṃ, evaṃ nisīdiṃ, evaṃ abhāsīṃ, evaṃ tuṇhī ahoṣiṃ, so' mhi tamhā gāmā sakamyeva gāmaṃ paccāgato ti. Evaṃ eva kho, mahārāja, bhikkhu evaṃ samāhite citte...

³¹ The text here, as is common in Sanskrit and Pali, and as again later, combines the third-person *personal pronoun so* with first-person verbal forms: one might render this as 'this (same) I,' or 'this (very) I.'

It is as if a person might go from his own village to [1] another village, and from that [1] village to another [2] village, (and then) from that [2] village he might go back to his own [3] village. He would think (to himself) ‘I went from my own village to that (other) [1] village: there I stood, sat down, spoke and was silent. Then from that [1] village I went to that [2] one; there I stood, sat down, spoke and was silent. Then from that [2] village I went back to my own [3] village.’ In this way, great king, the monk, with concentrated mind...

The temporal direction here is this: from the present moment the rememberer goes—here, apparently, directly but see below on what the *Vism* says on this issue—first to a life located somewhere in the past; then he returns in biographical-narrative sequence (once-upon-a-time, *anuloma*) to the present, via one or more intermediate lives. As suggested above, the number of intermediate lives (i.e. the sequence 1 → 2) must be thought of as expandable to much larger numbers. The commentarial exegesis of the *Sāmaññaphala* here (Sv 223) refers only to the simile, and states that the three villages/lives referred to are to be understood as being visited on the same day. In relation to this it is worth noting that the verbs used of what is remembered are in what is called in western grammars the aorist, but in Pali *ajjatanī* (Skt *adyatanī*) literally ‘(what happened earlier) today.’ In a more precise sense, the tense refers to actions in the past whose process and effects are still present.³² In this context, this means simply that whatever is present to memory is *ajjatanī*, still present as experience and as effect of (past) action. The commentarial exegesis ends with *tassa purisassa tīsu gāmesu taṃ divasaṃ katakiriyāya āvibhāvo viya pubbenivāsāya cittaṃ abhinīharitvā nisinnassa bhikkhuno tīsu bhavesu katakiriyāya pākāṭabhāvo daṭṭhabbo*, ‘Just as the deeds the man has done in the three villages that day are clear to him, so one should see clarity as to what was done in the three lives on the part of the monk who is sitting down and who has turned his thought towards previous dwelling(s).’ The simple word *nisinnassa*, ‘sitting down,’ will be seen to be of some importance in interpreting the *Vism* elaboration of this passage.

In *Vism* XIII 13 = 410 ‘former dwelling(s)’ is glossed:

pubbenivāso ti pubbe atītajātīsu nivutthakkhandhā. nivutthā ti ajjhāvutthā anubhūtā attano santāne uppajjitvā niruddhā. nivutthadhammā vā: nivutthā ti gocaranivāsena nivutthā attano viññāṇena viññātā paricchinā
former dwelling(s) (means) the Aggregates lived before, in past lives. ‘Lived’ (means) lived internally, experienced, arising and ceasing in one’s own continuity. Or else (it means) mental objects lived (through); ‘lived’ (here means) lived in the dwelling(-place) of one’s sensory field, demarcated as that of which one has been conscious in one’s own consciousness.³³

In XIII 14 = 411, ‘former dwelling(s)’ (*pubbenivāsaṃ*) is glossed as *samanantarātītaṃ bhavaṃ ādiṃ katvā tattha tattha nivutthasantānaṃ*, ‘Former dwelling(s)’ (means) the continuity lived here and there, making one’s immediately past

³² I am grateful to Gary Tubb for this precision, as also for other Sanskrit (and other) suggestions.

³³ Buddhas, it adds, have access to other people’s experience.

life the beginning'; the verb *anussarati*, he remembers, is glossed *khandha-paṭipāṭivasena cuti-paṭisandhivasena vā anugantvā anugantvā sarati*, '(means) he recalls, moving gradually by means of the succession of Aggregates or by Death-and-Rebirth (moments).' The commentary (Vism-a 862 = Be II 45) glosses *khandha-paṭipāṭivasena* as *khandhānaṃ anukkamo. sā ca kho cutito paṭṭhāya uppaṭipāṭivasena*, "'by a sequence of Aggregates'" (means) as a succession of Aggregates: this starts from the death-moment and goes out of order.' That is to say, the process of memory here first goes backwards (*paṭiloma*) in a sequence of Aggregates or from death to birth, before, as will be seen, finding a starting-point and then returning to the present in biographical/narrative order (*anuloma*). The word *pāṭipāṭi* means '(regular) order, succession'; *paṭipāṭiyā* means 'successively, in succession, in order'; *anupaṭipāṭi(yā)* are much the same; *uppaṭipāṭi(yā)*, as in the Vism commentary here, means primarily 'in irregular order, out of order,' (in the sense, for example, of missing things out in a list, 1-3-5 instead of 1-2-3-4-5), and can include, as here, reverse order as a kind of non-normal order. Most of the discussion of the memory of past lives is concerned, as XIII 21 = 412 says, with ordinary Disciples who proceed *khandha-paṭipāṭivasena vā cutipāṭisandhivasena vā*. That *khandha-paṭipāṭi* means in gradual, reverse order must here be inferred; but the fact that in proceeding directly from death-moment to rebirth-moment the rememberer proceeds initially in reverse order is not only stated in the commentary to XIII 14 = 411, but is also said explicitly in the text in XIII 17 = 411. The text states that the two Main Disciples (Sāriputta and Moggallāna) and Pacceka-buddhas do not need to proceed *khandha-paṭipāṭi* but *ekassa attabhāvassa cutiṃ disvā paṭisandhiṃ passanti, puna aparassa cutiṃ disvā paṭisandhiṃ ti... saṃkamantā gacchati*, 'they proceed along having seen the death-moment in one lifetime and (then) seeing the rebirth-moment (in that lifetime), and again seeing the death-moment in another (lifetime) they see the rebirth-moment (there). The commentary says: *tasmīṃ tasmīṃ attabhāve cutiṃ disvā antarā kiñci anāmasitvā paṭisandhiyā eva gahaṇavasena*, '(one proceeds) in one lifetime or another seeing the death moment and (then) grasping immediately (*eva*) by means of the rebirth-moment, not touching on anything in between' (Vism-a 893–894 = Be II 46).

There is a hierarchy of abilities, both in how far into the past different classes of people can remember, and in their manner of doing so: other ascetics (*titthiyā*) must proceed *khandha-paṭipāṭiyā*, and cannot proceed death-moment-to-rebirth moment without the need for going through a (reversed) sequence of Aggregates (*paṭipāṭiṃ muñcivā*); ordinary Disciples and the Eighty Great Disciples can do both; the Two Chief Disciples and Pacceka-buddhas, as already mentioned, do not need to proceed *khandha-paṭipāṭi* but can go straight from death-moment to rebirth moment to previous death-moment, and so on. Buddhas, however, can go anywhere and in any direction and do not proceed gradually. The text here (XIII 18 = 411) uses a striking textual metaphor:

tesaṃ hi anekāsu kappakoṭṭisu heṭṭhā vā upari vā yaṃ yaṃ ṭhānaṃ icchanti, taṃ taṃ pākaṭaṃ eva hoti. tasmā anekā pi kappakoṭṭiya peyyālapāliṃ viya saṃkhipitvā yaṃ yaṃ icchanti, tatra tatr' eva okkamantā sīhokkantavasena gacchanti

‘For them, in multiple eons, in any direction³⁴ whatever place they want is apparent to them; therefore wherever they want, like jumping over an elision in a text, there they alight, abbreviating millions of eons and proceeding like a lion descending.’

In reading a text passing over elisions, like reading the text itself, must be in *anuloma* order; but the sense of the general statement here is that Buddhas go to wherever they like, in whatever direction they want, and start remembering there.

In sections XIII 22 = 412 and following, *Vism* returns from the heights of speculation about Buddhas’ memories to the simple, practical steps which a monk who wants to achieve this memory must take, specifying that the process goes in reverse-narrative, *paṭiloma* order:

#22 *tasmā evaṃ anussaritukāmena ādikammikena bhikkhunā pacchābhataṃ piṇḍapāṭapaṭikkantena rahogatena paṭisallinena paṭipāṭiyā cattāri jhānāni samāpajjitvā abhiññāpādaka-catutthajjhānato vuṭṭhāya sabbapacchimā nisajjā āvajjitabbā. tato āsanapaññāpanaṃ, senāsanapavesanaṃ, pattacīvarapaṭisāmanaṃ, bhojanakālo, gāmato āgamanakālo, gāme piṇḍāya caritakālo, gāmaṃ piṇḍāya pavuṭṭhakālo, vihārato nikkhamanakālo, cetiyaṅgaṇabodhiyaṅgaṇavandanakālo, pattadhovanakālo, pattapaṭiggahaṇakālo, pattapaṭiggahaṇato yāva mukhadhovanā katakiccaṃ, paccūsakāle katakiccaṃ, majjhimayāme katakiccaṃ, paṭhamayāme katakiccaṃ ti evaṃ paṭiloma-kkamaṇa sakalaṃ rattindivaṃ katakiccaṃ āvajjitabbam.*

#23 *ettakaṃ pana pakaticittassa pi pākataṃ hoti. parikammasamādhicittassa pana atipākataṃ eva. sace paṇ’ ettha kiñci na pākataṃ hoti, puna pādakajjhānaṃ samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhāya āvajjitabbam. ettakena dīpe jalite viya pākataṃ hoti. evaṃ paṭilomakkameneva dutiyādivase pi tatiyācatutthapañcamādivase pi dasāhe pi aḍḍhamāse pi māse pi yāva saṃvaccharā pi katakiccaṃ āvajjitabbam.*

#24 *eten’ eva upāyena dasavassāni vīsativassānī ti yāva imasmim bhava attano paṭisandhi, tāva āvajjantena purimabhava cutikkhaṇe pavattitanāmarūpaṃ āvajjitabbam. pahoti hi paṇḍito bhikkhu paṭhamavāreneva paṭisandhiṃ ugghāṭetvā cutikkhaṇe nāmarūpamārammaṇaṃ kātuṃ.*

#25 *yasmā pana purimabhava nāmarūpaṃ asesam niruddham aññaṃ uppannam, tasmā taṃ thānaṃ āhunarikaṃ andhatamam iva hoti duddasaṃ duppaññaṇa. tenāpi na sakkom’ aham paṭisandhiṃ ugghāṭetvā cutikkhaṇe pavattita-nāmarūpamārammaṇaṃ kātuṃ ti dhuranikkhepo na kātabbo. tadeva pana pādakajjhānaṃ punappunaṃ samāpajjitabbam. tato ca vuṭṭhāya vuṭṭhāya taṃ thānaṃ āvajjitabbam.*

³⁴ Literally downwards or upwards, *hetṭhā vā upari vā*. In texts (cf. the simile about to be mentioned) *hetṭhā* means earlier in the text, *upari* afterwards.

#22 Therefore a beginning monk who wants to remember in this way should, after his meal on his return from the begging round, go to a quiet, secluded place and attain in sequence the four Meditation Levels; emerging from the fourth Level, which is the basis for the Direct Knowledges, he should pay attention to his most recent (act of) sitting down; from there to the designation of a seat (for him), then entering his dwelling-place, putting away his bowl and robe, the time when he ate, the time when he returned from the village, the time of entering the village for alms, the time when he left the monastery, the time when he paid his respects in the areas around the Stūpa and the Bodhi-tree, the time when he washed his bowl, the time he took hold of his bowl, and the (various) duties from that time as far as the time of washing his face, the duties in the morning, those in the middle watch (of the night) and in the first watch. In this way, in reverse order, he should pay attention to all his duties day and night.

#23 This much is clear to his ordinary mind; it is especially clear to a mind at the preliminary work stage of concentration. If anything is not clear he should again attain the base Meditation Level [= the 4th] the emerge from it and pay attention. By such (an effort) it becomes clear as if a lamp had been lit. Thus (likewise) in reverse order he should pay attention to the duties on the second day (back), (then) on the third, fourth, fifth, tenth day, a fortnight, a month, and up till a year (ago).

#24 By this same means he should pay attention to the mind-and-body occurring in this lifetime for ten years, twenty years, as far (back) as his own rebirth-moment, and then at the death-moment in the previous life. A skilled monk can unlock (the door of) rebirth-linking at the first attempt and make the mind-and-body at the (previous) death-moment his object.

#25 But since the mind-and-body in the previous life is completely destroyed and another has arisen, that place (i.e. the previous life) is obscure like a mass of darkness, and is difficult to see for one of little wisdom. However, the burden is not to be laid down (by a monk) thinking ‘I cannot unlock (the door of) rebirth-linking and make the mind-and-body at the (previous) death-moment my object.’ He should attain that same base Meditation Level again and again, and each time he emerges from it pay attention to that place again and again.

At the end of the section, when the author returns to word-commentary on the *sutta*, this directionality is repeated. (In giving the text of XIII 70 = 422–423 both the PTS and HOS editions italicize some words from the *sutta*, but they do not do so accurately. Ñāṇamoli’s translation does so correctly.) In what follows the phrases in the *sutta* being commented on are underlined in the text and italicized in the translation:

Sutta: [1] amutrāsīm *evaṃnāmo evaṃgotto evaṃvaṇṇo evamāhāro evaṃsukhadukkha-ppaṭisaṃvedī evamāyupariyanto,*

so [1] tato cuto

[2] amutra udapādiṃ; [2] tatrāpāsiṃ *evaṃnāmo evaṃgotto evaṃvaṇṇo evamāhāro evaṃsukhadukkhappaṭisaṃvedī evamāyupariyanto*,

so [2] tato cuto

[3] idhūpapanno *ti*.

[1] *There I had* such-and-such a personal name, such a clan-name, such an appearance, such food, such was my experience of pleasure and pain, and such was the length of my life.

Dying from [1] *that place*

I was reborn [2] *there* (i.e. somewhere else); *there* [2] *I had* such-and-such a personal name, such a clan-name, such an appearance, such food, such was my experience of pleasure and pain, and such was the length of my life.

Dying from [2] *that place*

I was reborn [3] *here* (i.e. in the present life).

Vism: *api ca yasmā* [1] amutrāsiṃ *ti idaṃ anupubbena ārohanatassa yāvadacchakaṃ anussaraṇaṃ, so* [1] tato cuto *ti paṭinivattantassa pac-cavekkhaṇaṃ, tasmā* [3] idhūpapanno *ti imissā idhūpapattiyaṃ anantaram ev' assa upapattiṭṭhānaṃ sandhāya* [2] amutra udapādiṃ *ti idaṃ vuttaṃ ti veditabbaṃ. [2] tatrāpāsiṃ* *ti evaṃ ādi paṇ' assa tatra imissā upapattiyaṃ anantare upapattiṭṭhāne nāmagottādīnaṃ anussaraṇa-dassanatthaṃ vuttaṃ. [3] so tato cuto idhūpapanno *ti svāhaṃ tato anantarūpapattiṭṭhānato cuto idha amukasmīṃ nāma khattiyakule vā brāhmaṇakule vā nibbatto ti.**

Moreover, because (the phrase) [1] *there I (had...)* (refers to) (an act of) remembering on the part of one who ascends [i.e. moves backwards in time, *paṭiloma*] as (far as) he wishes, (and the phrase) *dying from* [1] *that place* (refers to) his paying attention once having turned back [i.e. again in biographical-narrative *anuloma* order], therefore (when the phrase) *I was reborn* [2] *there* is said it is to be understood as referring to his place of rebirth immediately next to [= preceding] this [present] rebirth (which is referred to in the phrase) *I was reborn* [3] *here*. (The phrase) beginning *there* [2] *I (had...)* is said in order to show the remembering of personal name, clan name, etc., in the place of rebirth immediately next to [= preceding] this [present] rebirth. (The phrases) *Dying from* [2] *that place* *I was reborn* [3] *here* (mean) 'I, dying from that immediately adjacent [=preceding] place of rebirth I was reborn here in such-and-such a Kṣatriya family or Brahmin family.'

From an external academic perspective, this whole account of the memory of former lives cannot be a phenomenological description of Buddhaghosa's or anyone else's experience of memory: it is rather an imaginative projection. In making such a leap of imagination, Vism seems clearly to want to highlight the issue of the direction of remembering, as an integral part of its textual-imaginative dynamics. The direction of memory is interwoven with changes in perspective on the attainment as a whole. After the two paragraphs giving word-commentary on the *Sutta* text, the next 6 paragraphs (XIII 15–20 = 411–412) take a large-scale perspective on types of advanced practitioners and the eons they remember. Then in XIII 22 = 412 the perspective changes suddenly to an individual monk, sitting down after lunch and trying to attain memory of past lives. He may be young: the phrase in XIII 24 = 412 'occurring in this lifetime for ten years, twenty years, as far (back) as his own rebirth-moment,' may have this import. He is to remember the very small-scale details of that day's life, then of more and more days (presumably each much the same, at least since his ordination in the monastic order)—a moment of domestic comedy in Vism coming after the macro-chronology of Buddhas and eons, and coming before the epic-scale cosmological perspective of XIII 29ff. = 414ff. The simile of the tree-cutting 'strong man' in XIII 26 = 413 also provides a dynamic contrast to the immobile monk, sitting down to his task. (Recall that the commentarial exegesis of the *Sāmaññaphala* [Sv 223] chooses to specify that the monk is 'sitting down.'). Paragraph XIII 27 = 413–414 combines a focus on the sub-liminally short moments of consciousness posited by *Abhidhamma* analysis, while also making reference to the cosmological division between the Sphere of Desire and the Sphere of (refined) Form.

If so far we have a *piece de théâtre* playing in the mind of the after-lunch meditating monk, from XIII 29 to 65 = 414–422 the mood changes to the epic-cosmic, with some mighty and fearsome scenes worthy of a Cecil B. DeMille movie, also with some moments of comedy. The main part of this section of the text presents not a mental-phenomenological account of remembering, though this does play some role, but a visual-cinematic *spectacle*. XIII 32 = 414–415 offers an apocalypse not without its lighter moments: when the world is destroyed by fire, first of all a great cloud called 'the cloud destroying the eon' arises and rains everywhere. People, all unknowing, delightedly bring out their seeds and plant them. But when the plants have grown just high enough for an ox to graze on them, it rains no more. Then the text says *gadraharaṃ ravanto ekabindum pi na vassati* (which Ñāṇamoli mis-translates). This must mean '(even though the sky is) roaring (like) the braying of a donkey, it does not rain even a single drop.' That is, even though there is thunder there is no rain. The choice of comparison here, as with the delusion of the delighted farmers, seems grimly humorous. Collins (1993), following Wendy Doniger and Richard Gombrich, argued that there is extensive and specifically satirical comedy in the *Aggañña Sutta*, which Vism is going on to cite; although this account of the memory of former lives is certainly not, *en gros*, intended as satire, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that the imagination constructing these monumental scenes might not also have its humorous aspects. Some details in the next few scenes can certainly be read that way. In XIII 33 = 415 the waters gradually recede, and as they do so fish and turtles die and are reborn in

the Brahma-world, as are other beings. In XIII 34 = 415 gods of the Sense-sphere called “Lokabyūhas” (military gods?), their top-knots removed and with hair unkempt, with weeping faces, and wiping their tears with their hands, dressed in extremely ugly red clothes, wander the paths of mankind and announce ‘Good people, good people, after the passing of a hundred thousand years from now there will be the arising of an eon [this can be read as ironic, since the point is that such arising must be preceded by the destruction which is in fact the gods’ concern]: this world will be destroyed, the great oceans will dry up, this great earth and Meru king of mountains will be burned up and destroyed. There will be destruction up to the Brahma-world.’ They hiss out their doom-laden predictions in words full of sibilants and spirants: *mārisā, mārisā ito vassasatasahassassa accayena kappavutthānaṃ bhavissati, ayaṃ loko vinassissati, mahāsamuddo pi ussussissati, ayaṃ ca mahāpathavī sineru ca pabbatarājā udḍayhissanti vinassissanti. yāva brahmalokā lokavināso bhavissati*. But their advice is gentle: practice Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity, serve your mothers and fathers, honor the elders of your family. In XIII 35 = 15–16 people (but only mostly, *yebhuyyena*) follow their advice and are, eventually, reborn in the Brahma-world. XIII 36–55 = 416–455 continue with the destruction of an eon by fire, citing both the *Sattasuriya* and *Aggañña Sutta*-s: once again, these would have had to be present to the user of Vism, either in ms. or in memorized form. It is noteworthy that the *Aggañña Sutta* uses aorist and historic-present verbal forms, as is appropriate to a historical narrative: Vism uses only the present tense, its account being *what always happens*, not what happened once, at the beginning of our eon. The perspective is cosmological, but the text offers occasional telling small-scale details. In XIII 39 = 416, for example, after the fifth sun appears there is only enough water in the great ocean to wet the joint of one’s finger; when the sun burns through to the Tāvātimsa heaven it destroys all the glorious chariot-palaces (*vimāna*-s) of gold, jewels and gems; when all Conditioned Existents are destroyed as far as the Brahma-world the fire goes out leaving no ash, like the flames of ghee- or oil-lamps. ‘The upper space and the lower space is one great darkness.’

XIII 42–43 = 417 signal the fact that re-evolution is next, albeit in an initially sinister manner: a great cloud arises, at first raining only fine rain, but then gradually the rain becomes heavier, like the stalks of the water-lily, sticks, pestles and finally palm-tree trunks. This rain fills the burnt worlds and the wind compacts the water to re-create the earth. Then the world starts to evolve as in the *Aggañña Sutta*, to which reference is made in XIII 44 = 417. XIII 44–54 = 417–419 re-tell the *Aggañña* story, with elisions and additions: for example, playful *nirukti* etymologies for the words ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ are given which are not in the *Aggañña*, and there is a somber addition to the emergence of gender and sexuality, in which it is the eating of grosser kinds of food which creates urine and feces within people’s bodies, which then require openings to be let out, which are called, as elsewhere, ‘wound-openings’ (*vana-mukha*)—existentially a striking idea, that to be embodied as a human is to be wounded. By XIII 54 = 419 the evolution of human society has reached the stage of the Great Appointee (*mahāsammata*), the first king. But Vism adds the remark that it was the future Buddha : ‘whenever there is an occasion for (anything) wonderful in the world, a future Buddha is the first person there (to do

it)' (*yaṃ hi loke acchariyatthānaṃ bodhisatto va tattha ādipuriso ti*).³⁵ XIII 55–65 return to details of physical cosmogony, giving the length of periods of devolution and evolution, and the periods of stasis following them. The specific differences when the world is destroyed by water and wind are given, with more numerical attention to the lengths of eons, giving a total of sixty-four eons in the past to be remembered. XIII 61 = 412 has a striking example of the violence of the account: the wind raises the mountains at the perimeter of the world (*cakkavāla-pabbata*) and the central Mt. Meru in the air, and hurls them into space; they crash together and are reduced to crumbling dust.

If one were to think of this part of the text as a whole in terms of the Indian aesthetic of *rasa*-theory, what *rasa*-s would one perceive there? Certainly on the surface level of the events portrayed *bhayānaka*, fear, and *adbhūta*, wonder, and occasionally *hāsyā*, humor; reflectively also, surely, *bībhatsa*, distaste, and *karuṇā*, compassion; and perhaps overall, as is perhaps the case with *rasa*-theory in general, one should agree that behind all represented emotions—just because, in part, they are represented and not directly lived—*śānta*, the sense of peace which sets the spectacle of all the turmoil and trouble of the conditioned world, with its violent eon-endings and gradual beginnings (themselves characterized by moral decline from immaterial to material, from individual joy to social compromise), against the timeless peace of nirvana, evoked here, as so often, by contrast with its opposite.

Conclusion

It is in one obvious sense absurdly anachronistic to suggest that the major part of Vism's discussion of the Memory of Former Dwelling(s) is like a Cecil B. DeMille 'epic,' and that its dramatic and often violent images are cinematic in effect. But this language is intended to raise the important issue of the relationship between reading/listening to a text and practice(s) of visualization. This issue has been raised recently in two thought-provoking articles, Harrison (2003) on Sanskrit and Chinese texts, and Gethin (2006) on the Pali *Mahāsudassana Sutta*. Harrison, for example, describes how the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra* gives at one point (as at many others with similar descriptions) what may seem a mind-numbingly repetitive list of jewel-trees, with different colors for different parts; but moving through these descriptions and visualizing them, he suggests, has an effect which is 'brilliant and kaleidoscopic.' He continues:

Seen in this way, the passage passes from being static to kinetic, since now we are ourselves creating and manipulating the images, setting them in motion. This gives us a new way of reading the text, as a template for visualisation, the sheer detail of which now begins to make sense. What we are left with on the

³⁵ This does not necessarily mean the person who was to become our Buddha, Gotama: three other Buddhas preceded him in the present eon, so logically this could be any of those three. However, XIII 54 = 419 states that in this case this was *ayam eva Bhagavā bodhisattabhūto*, 'this very Blessed One, as a future Buddha, which I translate as 'our Blessed one, a future Buddha.'

printed page resembles the wiring diagram for a television set, of interest only to electricians, baffling and tediously complex to anyone else. But when we ‘do’ the text rather than read it, when we perform its operations ourselves, it suddenly becomes a little more interesting.³⁶

The issue of repetition does come up in relation to Vism, though not to any significant degree in the passage now under discussion. But the idea of a reader/listener ‘doing’ the text rather than simply ‘reading’ it or listening to it suggests that the choice of visual images which the text conjures up, as well as the changes in dynamic from cosmology to individual meditative experience, are intended to make the text, in more than one sense, *dramatic*.

Vism is then, both carefully and variously organized as a whole; in addition to this macroscopic organizational sophistication the discussion of the Memory of Former Dwelling(s) given above is meant to suggest that, microscopically, the text is also capable of great sophistication, including such as may be called of a literary-dramatic kind. In the contemporary academy, at least in the west, it seems sadly unlikely that anyone will have the time or resources to be able to do the kind of textual-historical and ethnographic study necessary to ask how Vism was/is used by its readers/audience who did/do not read it in modern book form, whether from printing presses in Asia or from the western editions and translations. But I have tried to show here that what such a study would be looking for would be something more detailed and multi-valent than the simple perception of Vism as ‘scholasticism’ might suggest.

Appendix: translation of Vism XIII 13–71 = 410–423

#13. In the description of the knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s)³⁷ the words *to the knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s)*³⁸ (means) for the purpose of that knowledge which is the memory of former dwelling(s); *former dwelling(s)* (means) the Aggregates lived before, in past lives. ‘Lived’ (means) lived internally, experienced, arising and ceasing in one’s own continuity. Or else (it means) mental objects lived (through); ‘lived’ (means) lived in the dwelling(-place) of one’s sensory field, demarcated as that of which one has been conscious in one’s own consciousness. Or else (it can mean) that of which others’ consciousness has been conscious, in the case of remembering

³⁶ See Harrison (2003, p. 122). Elaine Scarry (2001) has provided a very helpful series of reflections on the relationship between ‘reading’ modern novels and the process(es) of visualization they provoke and/or require.

³⁷ *anussati*, from √*smṛ*; there is a constant ambiguity in derivatives of √*smṛ* between memory of the past and mindfulness in the present. But note that the first entry for ‘mind’ in OED is ‘the faculty of memory.’ The rather clumsy ‘Dwelling(s)’ is meant to suggest that *nivāsa* can mean one (act or place of) dwelling, in the sense of one life, but also the act of dwelling itself, as a practice.

³⁸ Words italicized are those in the sutta passage being commented on.

(the lives of) those who have attained nirvana³⁹; these (latter) are found only in Buddhas. (The words) *memory of former dwelling(s)* (mean) the memory by which one remembers former dwelling(s); *knowledge* (means) the knowledge associated with that memory. Thus *to the knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s)* (means) for the purpose of this knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s); for the arriving at this knowledge, for the attaining of it, is what is said.

#14. *Various* (means) of many kinds, occurring in many forms; ‘depicted broadly’ is the sense. *Former dwelling(s)* (means) the continuity lived here and there, making one’s immediately past life the beginning. *He remembers* (means) he recalls, moving gradually by means of the succession of Aggregates or by Death-and-Rebirth (moments).

#15. Six (kinds of) people have this memory: Members of Sects, ordinary Disciples, Great Disciples, Chief Disciples, Paccekabuddhas and Buddhas.

#16. In this regard Members of Sects remember only forty eons, but no further. Why? Because of the weakness of their understanding. Their understanding is weak because they do not demarcate Name and Form. Ordinary Disciples remember a hundred or a thousand eons, because their understanding is strong; the Eighty Great Disciples remember a hundred thousand eons; the two Chief Disciples remember one incalculable eon and one hundred thousand eons; Paccekabuddhas remember two incalculable eons and one hundred thousand eons. Such is the extent of their (capacity). But there is no limitation in the case of Buddhas.

#17. Members of Sects remember by the sequence of Aggregates, and they cannot remember by death(-moment) and re-linking(-moment) apart from the sequence (of Aggregates); for them, as for the blind, there is no alighting at whatever place they want: as the blind go along not letting go of their stick, so they remember without letting go of the sequence of Aggregates. Ordinary Disciples proceed by the sequence of Aggregates or by death(-moment) and re-linking(-moment); thus also the Eighty Great Disciples. The two Chief Disciples have no need of the sequence of Aggregates: they proceed along having seen the death-moment in one lifetime and (then) seeing the rebirth-moment (in that same lifetime), and again seeing the death-moment in another (lifetime) they see the rebirth-moment (there also); thus also Paccekabuddhas.

#18. Buddhas have no need of the sequence of Aggregates nor of proceeding by death(-moment) and re-linking(-moment): For them, in many millions of eons, whatever place they want, in any direction,⁴⁰ is apparent to them; therefore wherever they want, like jumping over an elision in a text, there they alight, proceeding like the descent of a lion. The knowledge they have proceeding in this manner, like an arrow shot by a (master) archer such as Sarabhaṅga who is able to pierce a hair, which is not impeded by trees, creepers and the like but hits right on the target,

³⁹ The Pali here is *chinnavaṭṭamakānussaraṇādisu*, on which see Ñāṇamoli ad loc.; the commentary (Vism-a 861 = Be II 44–45) states that this term refers to Buddhas, and also to Paccekabuddhas and Sāvakas (i.e. Arhats). It offers no explanation of what might be meant by one person remembering, from the inside, the experience of others.

⁴⁰ Literally downwards or upwards. In texts (cf. the simile about to be mentioned) *heṭṭhā* means earlier in the text, *upari* afterwards.

being neither impeded nor getting stuck: just so (the knowledge of Buddhas) is neither impeded nor gets stuck in the intervening lives but unimpeded and unstuck takes hold of whatever place it wishes.

#19. Among the beings who remember their former dwelling(s) the vision of former dwelling(s) had by Members of Sects occurs with a brightness like that of a fire-fly; that of ordinary Disciples resembles a lamp; that of Great Disciples that of a fire-brand; that of the Chief Disciples that of the Morning Star; that of Paccekabuddhas like the moon; that of Buddhas like the disk of the Autumn sun with its thousand rays.

#20. The remembering of former dwelling(s) of Members of Sects is like going along by (tapping) the end of a stick; that of ordinary Disciples like going across a bridge made of a tree-trunk; that of Great Disciples like going across a foot-bridge; that of the Chief Disciples like going across a bridge (wide enough) for a cart; that of Paccekabuddhas like going along a (wider) footpath; that of Buddhas like going along a main road for carts.

#21. In this section [of Vism] it is the remembering of former dwelling(s) of Disciples that is referred to. So it was said [in #14]: *He remembers* (means) he recalls, moving gradually by means of the succession of Aggregates or by Death-and-Rebirth (moments).

#22 Therefore a beginning monk who wants to remember in this way should, after his meal on his return from the begging round, go to a quiet, secluded place and attain in sequence the four Meditation Levels; emerging from the fourth Level, which is the basis for Special Knowledge, he should pay attention to his most recent (act of) sitting down; from there to the designation of a seat (for him), then entering his dwelling-place, putting away his bowl and robe, the time when he ate, the time when he returned from the village, the time of entering the village for alms, the time when he left the monastery, the time when he paid his respects in the areas around the Stūpa and the Bodhi-tree, the time when he washed his bowl, the time he took hold of his bowl, and the (various) duties from that time as far as the time of washing his face, the duties in the morning, those in the middle watch (of the night) and in the first watch. In this way, in reverse order, he should pay attention to all his duties day and night.

#23. This much is clear to his ordinary mind; it is especially clear to a mind at the preliminary work stage of concentration. If anything is not clear he should again attain the base Meditation Level [= the 4th] the emerge from it and pay attention. By such (an effort) it becomes clear as if a lamp had been lit. Thus (likewise) in reverse order he should pay attention to the duties on the second day (back), (then) on the third, fourth, fifth, tenth day, a fortnight, a month, and up till a year (ago).

#24 By this same means he should pay attention to the mind-and-body occurring in this lifetime for ten years, twenty years, as far (back) as his own rebirth-moment, and then at the death-moment in the previous life. A skilled monk can unlock (the door of) rebirth-linking at the first attempt and make the mind-and-body at the (previous) death-moment his object.

#25 But since the mind-and-body in the previous life is completely destroyed and another has arisen, that place (i.e. the previous life) is obscure like a mass of darkness, and is difficult to see for one of little wisdom. However, the burden is not

to be laid down (by a monk) thinking ‘I cannot unlock (the door of) rebirth-linking and make the mind-and-body at the (previous) death-moment my object.’ He should attain that same base Meditation Level again and again, and each time he emerges from it pay attention to that place again and again.

#26. In acting thus, it is just as if a strong man were cutting a tree to make a roof-plate for the peak of a roof, but after cutting only the branches and foliage he was unable to cut the main part of the tree because the edge of his axe was blunted; not laying down the burden (of his task) he would go to a smith and have the axe sharpened and then return to cutting again; and then when the edge was blunted (again) do as he did before and (return to) cutting, and so cutting in this way—by cutting what was uncut at each place he cut before, because there is no need to cut again what had been cut—he might soon cause the great tree to fall. So too (the rememberer) emerging from the base Meditation Level does not pay attention to what he had attended to before but pays attention directly to the rebirth-moment and soon unlocks (the door of) rebirth-linking and makes the mind-and-body occurring at the (previous) death-moment his object. This sense can also be explained by means of (the similes) of the wood-cutter and barber.

#27. The knowledge which occurs taking its object from the most recent sitting-down to the rebirth-moment is not what is called the knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s). That is called the preliminary work of concentration knowledge; some say that it is knowledge of the past, but that is inappropriate with reference to the Sphere of (Refined) Form. But when in a monk who has gone beyond rebirth-linking Mind-Door Attention occurs taking as its object the mind-and-body which occurred at the death-moment, and when that ceases four or five (mental) Impulsions occur taking that same thing as their object, of which the first (three or four)⁴¹ occur in the Sphere of Desire and are called preliminary work, etc., and the last occurs in the Sphere of (refined) Form as Absorption Consciousness belonging to the Fourth Meditation Level, so there is knowledge which arises along with that (Absorption) Consciousness, this is called knowledge consisting in the memory of former dwelling(s). (It is) by means of the Memory associated with that knowledge that *he remembers his various former dwelling(s): that is, one life, two lives,... he remembers his various former dwelling(s) with details and characteristics.*

#28. Here *one birth* (means) a continuity of Aggregates included in one existence starting from rebirth-linking and ending in death. And in the same way two births, etc. *Several eons of devolution* etc. (means) a decaying eon of devolution (or) an increasing eon of evolution.

#29. In this regard a period of stasis is understood along with a period of devolution, because it is rooted in it; (likewise) a period of stasis along with a period of evolution. This being the case what is said (in the words) ‘There are, monks, four incalculables in an eon. What are they? Devolution, stasis (after) devolution, evolution and stasis (after) evolution’ is included here.

#30. In this regard there are three devolutions: devolution by water, devolution by fire, and devolution by wind. There are three limits to devolution: The Ābhassara

⁴¹ Picking up what was said in XIII 5 about the Divine Ear.

World, the Subhakiṇḥa World and the Vehapphala World.⁴² When an eon devolves through fire, it is burnt by flames below [i.e. up to] the Ābhassara World; when an eon devolves through water it perishes below the Subhakiṇḥa World; when an eon devolves through wind it is destroyed below the Vehapphala World.

#31. There are three Buddha-fields: the field of Birth, the field of Command and the field of Range. In this regard the Field of Birth has as its limit the ten thousand-fold world-system which quakes on the occasions of a Tathāgata's birth, etc.; the Field of Command has as its limit the thousand-billion-fold⁴³ world system where the power of these Protection-texts is efficacious: the Ratanasutta, Khandhaparittam, Dhajaggaparitta, Ātānāṭiyaparitta, Moraparitta; the Field of Range is unending and immeasurable, in relation to which it is said 'as far as he might wish'—here whatever a Tathāgata wishes, he knows. So among these three Buddha-fields one Field of Command is destroyed: and as this is destroyed so too is the Field of Birth destroyed. The destruction occurs simultaneously; and also the (re-) establishing (of the two) happens simultaneously.

#32. The destruction and (re-) establishment is to be understood thus: at a time when the eon is destroyed by fire, at first a great cloud destroying the eon arises and rains a great rain on the thousand billion-fold world system. People are happy and pleased and bring out all kinds of seeds and sow them; but when the crops have grown so that a cow can graze on them (the sky) roars like a donkey braying but does not rain a single drop. The rain is completely cut off. It was in relation to this that the Blessed One said 'There is a time, monks, when for many years, for many hundreds of years, for many thousands of years, for many hundreds of thousand of years it does not rain.' Beings that live by rain die and are reborn in the Brahma world, as also are deities who live on flowers and fruits.

#33. Thus when a long time has passed water gradually disappears. Then gradually fish and turtles die and are reborn in the Brahma world, as do beings in hell. Some say that in this regard beings in hell are destroyed by the appearance of the seventh sun. But there is no being reborn in the Brahma world without (attaining) a Meditation Level: among these (hell-beings) some are oppressed by hunger, some are incapable of attaining a Meditation Level: how could they be reborn there? By means of a Meditation Level attained in a Deva world.

#34. Then after the passing of a hundred thousand years there is the arising of an eon [i.e. signalled by the end of the previous one]. Deities of the Sphere of Desire called Military gods, their heads bare and their hair dishevelled, with faces weeping and wiping their tears with their hands, wearing red clothes which are extremely ugly wander in the paths of human beings and announce: 'Sirs, sirs, after the passing of a hundred thousand years from now there will be the arising of an eon: this world will be destroyed, the great ocean will dry up; this great earth and Mt. Meru will burn up and be destroyed; the destruction of the world will reach as far as the Brahma world. Cultivate loving-kindness, sirs, cultivate compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, attend to your mothers, attend to your fathers, show respect for the elders in your family.'

⁴² These are three of the Brahma-worlds.

⁴³ *koṭṭisatasahassa*, literally ten thousand times ten million.

#35. When they hear what (the gods) say, for the most part humans and the deities who live on earth feel agitation, and with mutual soft-heartedness do good deeds such as (cultivating) loving-kindness and are reborn in the Deva world. There they enjoy divine food and drink, perform the preliminary work on the air kasiṇa and attain a Meditation Level. Others, through the karma which is to be experienced over a series of lives, are reborn in the Deva world. For there is no being, wandering in the realm of rebirth, who is without the karma which is to be experienced over a series of lives. They attain a Meditation Level there in the same way. And so by means of a Meditation Level attained in the Deva world all of them are reborn in the Brahma world.

#36. But after the rain has stopped, and after the passing of a long time, a second sun appears. The Blessed One said: ‘there is a time, bhikkhus...’ as is elaborated in the *Sattasuriya Sutta*. When this appears there is no distinction between day and night: one sun arises as the other sets, and the world is scorched with continuous sunlight. Whereas in the ordinary sun there is a Junior god (called) the Sun, there is not in the sun which destroys an eon. When the ordinary sun exists, dark clouds with columns of smoke move in the sky; when the sun which destroys an eon exists the sky is spotless like the disc of a mirror, with smoke and clouds gone. Apart from the five great rivers all the water in little streams, etc., dries up.

#37. Then after the passing of a long time a third sun appears, because of whose appearance even the great rivers dry up.

#38. Then after the passing of a long time a fourth sun appears, because of whose appearance the seven great lakes, the sources of the great rivers, dry up; that is, the Sihapapātana, Haṃsapātana, Kaṇṇamuṇḍaka, and the Rathakāra, Anotatta, Chadanta and Kuṇāla lakes.

#39. Then after the passing of a long time a fifth sun appears, because of whose appearance there is not even enough water remaining in the great ocean to wet the joint of a finger.

#40. Then after the passing of a long time a sixth sun appears, because of whose appearance the entire world-sphere is one (mass of) smoke, which exhausts all moisture. The thousand billion world-spheres are likewise.

#41. Then after the passing of a long time a seventh sun appears, because of whose appearance the entire world-sphere is one (mass of) flame, along with the thousand billion world-spheres. Even the peaks of Mt. Meru, those of one hundred leagues (high) and others, crumble and disappear into space. This flame of fire rises up and reaches the Cātumahārājika (heaven). There it burns up heavenly palaces made of gold, of jewels, of gems, and reaches the Tāvātimsa heaven. By this same means it reaches the level of the First Meditation Level [i.e. Sphere of (Refined) Form]; there it burns three worlds and strikes against the (top of the) Ābhassara world and stops. While there is any conditioned thing even as small as an atom it does not go out. But when all conditioned things have expired it goes out leaving no ash, just like a flame burning with ghee or oil. The upper sky along with the lower sky is one mass of darkness.

#42. Then after the passing of a long time a great cloud arises and at first rains gently; gradually raining showers like white lily stalks, sticks, pestles and palm-trunks it fills every place that was burnt in the thousand billion world-spheres and

disappears. Then above and around the water a wind arises and makes (it) a solid (thing), like a round drop of water on a lotus leaf. But if (someone were to ask) how it makes a great solid (mass of) water, (the answer is) by making spaces (in it). For it makes spaces here and there.

#43. This (mass of water) being pressed together, made into a mass and decreasing gradually descends lower. As it descends (a new) Brahma-world appears in the place for the Brahma-world, and Divine worlds appear in the place for the upper four Sphere of Desire worlds. But when it has descended to the place of the former earth strong winds arise. These obstruct it, hemming it in like water in a water-pot when the outlet is blocked. As the sweet water disappears it causes an earth-essence to appear on its surface.⁴⁴ This has color, smell and flavor (resembling) the skin on dried-up milk-rice.

#44. Then the beings who are first of all reborn in the Ābhassara world fall from there because of the wasting away of their life and merit, and arise here. They provide their own light and move about in the air. In the manner stated in the *Aggañña Sutta* they taste that earth-essence, and overcome by craving start to eat in handfuls. Then their self-luminousness disappears, and there is darkness. They see the darkness and are afraid.

#45. Then to destroy their fear and to give rise to courage the disc of the sun appears, fully fifty leagues (in diameter). They see this and are pleased and happy (at the thought) ‘we have obtained light!’; and they give it the name ‘sun’ thinking ‘it arose destroying our fear and giving rise to courage (*sūra-bhāva*), therefore it is “the sun” (*suriya*).’ Then when the sun which has made light during the day goes down, they are again afraid thinking ‘the light we obtained has been destroyed.’ And they think ‘it would be good if we could get some other light.’

#46. As if it knew their thought, the disc of the moon appears, fully forty-nine leagues (in diameter). At the sight they are even more pleased and happy, and give it the name ‘moon,’ thinking ‘it arose as if knowing our wish (*chanda*), therefore it is “the moon” (*canda*).’

#47. When the sun and moon have appeared thus, the constellations and planets appear. From that time on night and day are known; gradually (also) half-months, months, seasons and years.

#48. On the same day when the sun and moon appear, the mountains of Mt. Meru, the World-Sphere and the Himalayas appear; they appear on exactly the Full-Moon day of Phagguna, not before and not after. How? Just as when a meal of panic-seed is being cooked and at one and the same moment bubbles appear, and some places are swellings, some hollows and some places are flat, likewise in places which are (like) swellings there are mountains, in places where there are hollows there are oceans, and in places which are flat there are (the four) islands.

#49. Among those beings who taste the earth-essence gradually some come to have (good) complexions, others bad; and those with (good) complexions despise those who have bad (complexions). Because of their despite the earth-essence disappears, and a fragrant earth appears. Then in the very same manner this

⁴⁴ For the translation of *rasa-pathavī* as ‘earth-essence,’ and for other terms taken from the *Aggañña Sutta*’s account of the evolution of goodstuffs, etc., see the notes ad loc. in Collins (1993).

disappears and a (kind of) creeper appears; then in the very same manner this disappears and rice, growing without cultivation,⁴⁵ appears: without powder, (already) husked), pure, sweet-smelling and ready to eat.

#50. Then (cooking-) vessels appear for them. They put the rice in the vessels and place them on top of stones; by itself a flame appears and cooks it. This cooked rice is like jasmine flowers: it has no need of any sauce or curry—it has whatever flavor they want to eat.

#51. From the time they (start to) eat this gross food urine and excrement appear, and in order that the (urine and excrement) may come out orifices break open in them, and the conditions of being male and female appear. Woman looks at man, and man looks at woman, with intense, excessive longing. Because of this intense, excessive longing the burning of desire arises in them; and they (start to) have intercourse.

#52. They are criticized and harassed by wise people because they practice what is not Right (*asaddhamma*), and they build houses to conceal their impropriety. Living in houses they gradually follow the example of one lazy being and (start to) make a store. From this time on powder and husk cover the grain, and in places where (the rice) has been cut it does not grow again. They come together and lament ‘Bad things have appeared for us beings: we who were formerly made of mind...(etc.); (this) is to be elaborated in the manner described in the *Aggañña Sutta*.

#53. They set up boundary-lines. Then a certain being takes a share from another which is not given. They censure him twice, and on the third occasion beat him with their hands, clods of earth and sticks. When taking what is not given, accusation, lying and punishment have thus appeared they gather together and reflect: ‘what if we were to appoint one being, who on our behalf might criticize whomever is rightly to be criticized, accuse whomever should be accused, banish whomever should be banished; and we will give him a portion of rice (in return) for that.’

#54. When in this very eon beings had come to this conclusion, our Blessed One, as a future Buddha, was at that time the most handsome, the most-good-looking and with the greatest authority among those beings, and he was able to restrain and encourage them. They approached him, asked him (if he would do it) and appointed him. He was known by three names: as he was appointed by the people (*mahājanena saomatt*) he was called ‘Mahāsammata’⁴⁶; as he was ‘Lord of the Fields’ (*khetānaṃ adhipati*) he was a Kṣatriya; because ‘he brings joy to others (*paesaṃ rañjati*) according to what is right and proper he is King (*rājā*). Whenever there is anything wonderful in the world, a future Buddha is (always) the first person (involved) in it. Thus starting from the future Buddha when the circle of the Kṣatriyas had been instituted, gradually the Brahmin and other estates were instituted.

#55. In this regard, from the (arising of) the great cloud destroying the eon until the ceasing of the flames is one incalculable and is called ‘devolution.’ From the ceasing of the flames which destroy the eon until the completion of the great

⁴⁵ *akattḥapāko*: this might also mean ‘which cooks without (a) wood(-fire).’

⁴⁶ On the term see Collins (1993) and on the name Collins and Huxley (1996).

rain-cloud which fills the thousand billion-fold world system is a second incalculable and is called 'stasis (after) devolution.' From the completion of the great rain-cloud until the arising of sun and moon is a third incalculable and is called 'evolution,' From the appearance of sun and moon until the (arising of another) great cloud destroying the eon is a fourth incalculable and is called 'stasis (after) evolution.' These four incalculables are one great eon. This is how destruction by fire and the (re-)establishment (of the universe) is to be understood.

#56. At a time when the eon is destroyed by water, (the account) is to be elaborated in the manner already stated, beginning (with the words) 'a great cloud destroying the eon arises.'

#57. But there is this specification. Instead of a second sun (appearing) here a great cloud of caustic water arises to destroy the eon; at the beginning this rain is very gentle, but gradually it rains with great floods, filling the thousand billion-fold world system. As they are hit by the caustic water, the earth, mountains, etc. are dissolved and the water is everywhere supported by winds. Water takes hold of (everything) from the earth to the level of the Second Meditation Level; then it causes three Brahma-worlds to dissolve then hits the Subhakiṇḥa (Brahma-world) and stops. Then while there is any conditioned thing even as small as an atom it does not abate. But when the water has affected and defeated every conditioned thing it suddenly abates and disappears. The upper sky along with the lower sky is one mass of darkness, everything in the manner said earlier. But here the world (re-)appears beginning from the Ābhassara world; beings die from the Subhakiṇḥa world and are reborn in the place of the Ābhassara, etc.

#58. In this regard from the (arising of) the great cloud destroying the eon until the ceasing of the water is one incalculable. From the ceasing of the water which destroys the eon until the completion of the great rain-cloud is a second incalculable. From the completion of the great rain-cloud... [as in #55]. These four incalculables are one great eon. This is how destruction by water and the (re-)establishment (of the universe) is to be understood.

#59. At a time when the eon is destroyed by wind, (the account) is to be elaborated in the manner already stated, beginning (with the words) 'a great cloud destroying the eon arises.'

#60. But there is this specification. Instead of a second sun (appearing) here a wind arises in order to destroy the eon. First it makes coarse dust rise up, then fine dust, then fine sand, then coarse sand, then gravel and stones until it makes rise up rocks the size of movable pavilions and great trees standing on uneven ground. These rise from the earth up to the sky but do not fall down again, but right there become crushed to pieces and disappear.

#61. Then in due course a wind arises below the great earth, turns the earth around and hurls it with its roots upwards into the sky. Parts of the earth a hundred leagues wide, then parts measuring two, three, four or five hundred leagues break off as they are thrown by the force of the wind, and right there in the sky become crushed to pieces and disappear. The wind throws up the World-sphere mountain and Mt. Meru and hurls them into the sky. They knock against each other and become crushed to pieces and disappear. In the same way destroying palaces built on the earth and palaces in the sky it destroys the six worlds of the Sphere of Desire

and destroys the thousand billion world-spheres. World-sphere comes up against (other) World-Spheres, Himālaya against (other) Himālayas and Mt. Meru with (other) Mt. Merus: they become crushed to pieces and are destroyed.

#62. The wind takes hold of (everything) from the earth to the level of the Third Meditation Level; then it causes three Brahma-worlds to dissolve then hits the Vehapphala (Brahma-world) and stops. Then destroying every conditioned thing it is itself destroyed. The upper sky along with the lower sky is one mass of darkness, everything in the manner said earlier. But here the world (re-)appears beginning from the Subhakiṇṇa world; beings die from the Vehapphala world and are reborn in the place of the Subhakiṇṇa, etc.

#63. In this regard from the (arising of) the great cloud destroying the eon until the ceasing of the wind is one incalculable. From the ceasing of the wind until the completion of the great rain-cloud is a second incalculable... [as in #55]. These four incalculables are one great eon. This is how destruction by wind and the (re-) establishment (of the universe) is to be understood.

#64. For what reason is the world destroyed in these ways? Because of Unwholesome Roots (*akusalamūla*). This world is destroyed when the Unwholesome Roots are prominent: When Desire is more prominent it is destroyed by fire; when Hatred is more prominent it is destroyed by water—some say that it is the reverse—and when Delusion is more prominent it is destroyed by wind.

#65. Being destroyed in this way it is destroyed uninterruptedly seven times by fire, then on the eighth occasion by water, then again seven times by fire, then on the eighth occasion by water: being destroyed by water on the eighth occasion seven times, then again being destroyed seven times by fire, thus sixty-three eons are passed. But on the next occasion, the wind, excluding the completion of destruction by water, takes the opportunity to destroy the world, obliterating (as far as) the Subhakiṇṇa world where the full life-span is sixty-four eons.

#66. The monk who is remembering former dwelling(s) and recalling eons, remembers from these eons several eons of devolution, several eons of evolution and eons of devolution and evolution. How? In the manner beginning *there I was*. In this regard the words *there I was* (mean) I existed in [for example] that eon of devolution, that existence, that womb, that destiny, that station of consciousness, that abode of beings, that class of beings.

#67. *I had such and such a name*: Tissa or Phussa. *Such and such a family*: Kaccāna or Kassapa. This is said with reference to his remembering of his name and family in that past existence. But if he wants to remember his appearance at that time, or whether his life then was rough or refined, or how much pleasure and pain he had, or whether he was long-lived or short-lived, he remembers that also. Therefore it is said: (*I had*) *such an appearance*, ... *and such was the length of my life*.

#68. *Such an appearance*; pale or dark(-skinned); *such food*: with rice and meat as food or with windfall fruits as sustenance; *such was my experience of pleasure and pain*: I experienced in various ways mental and bodily pleasure and pain in the categories of material and psychological;⁴⁷ *such was the length of my life*: with a length of life measured at 100 years, or 84,000 eons.

⁴⁷ *sāmisānirāmisappabheda*: *āmisa* is literally 'flesh.'

#69. *Dying from that place I was reborn there*: dying from that existence, that womb, that destiny, that station of consciousness, that abode of beings, that class of beings I arose in (another) existence, womb, destiny, station of consciousness, abode of beings, class of beings; there I (had)... then I existed again in that existence, womb, destiny, station of consciousness, abode of beings, class of beings.

#70. Moreover, (the phrase) ‘there I (was...)’ (refers to) (an act of) remembering on the part of one who ascends as (far as) he wishes, (and the phrase) ‘dying from that place’ (refers to) his paying attention once having turned back, (when the phrase) ‘I was reborn there’ is said it is to be understood as referring to his place of rebirth immediately next to [= preceding] this [present] rebirth (which is referred to in the phrase) ‘I was reborn here.’ (The phrase) beginning ‘there I (had...)’ is said in order to show the remembering of personal name, clan name, etc., in the place of rebirth immediately next to [=preceding] this [present] rebirth. (The phrases) ‘Dying from that place I was reborn here (means) ‘I, dying from that immediately adjacent [=preceding] place of rebirth I was reborn here in such-and-such a Kṣatriya family or Brahmin family.’

#71. *Thus*: in such a way; *with characteristics and with specific details*: *specific details* is in terms of name and family, *with characteristics* is in terms of appearance, etc. A being is designated Tissa Kassapa through his name and family; by means of his appearance etc. he is known in terms of differences such as pale or dark. Therefore the specific detail is name and family, the characteristics are the other things. The meaning of *He remembers his various former dwelling(s)* is clear.

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