A Small Problem of Tense and Person:
Dhammapada 306 and Its Parallels

Considerable attention has been given over the years to the verses of the Dhammapada corpus. Numerous small problems, however, continue to lurk here and there. Sometimes these problems are obvious, in that a verse as we have it seems to make little sense, while at other times the issues are more subtle. It is always helpful, if not essential, to compare parallel texts, first of all the Pāli Dhammapada, Gāndhārī (Khotan) and Prakrit (Patna) Dharmapadas, Sanskrit Udānavarga(s), and not rarely Chinese translations, quotations (keeping in mind that the relation between quoter and quoted is often unclear), other occurrences (including in non-Buddhist literature) and commentaries. Moreover, we should remain aware that evidence may also be found farther afield. Finally, while paying careful attention to the details of each verse, we must not in the process lose sight of our ultimate goal. Just what this goal may or should be is a question to which I will return at the close of these remarks.

The present contribution concerns a single foot of Dhammapada 306. In the edition of von Hinüber and Norman (1994) the Pāli verse is printed thus:

> *abhūtavādī nirayaṃ upeti yo vāpi[1] katvā na karomi cāha*
> *ubho pi te pecca samā bhavanti nihīnakammā manujā parattha*

While this may represent a more-or-less readable version of the verse as transmitted in the Pāli tradition(s), some difficulties persist. K.R. Norman's translation (1997) helps us understand this:

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[1] The editors chose this over the more logical, and in many scripts graphically virtually identical, *cāpi* without stating the reason for their preference. As Oskar von Hinüber tells me (email 7 March 2008), however, they followed the commentary which, with its *vā* with long vowel outside sandhi, clearly indicates this reading. In this regard, it is worth noting that the reasons for preferring any given reading are rarely made explicit by most editors of Buddhist texts.

> One who speaks of things that never were goes to hell; or the one who having done something says he did not do it [goes too]: both of these, when passed away, become the same — men with contemptible deeds in the next world.

The philological accuracy of Norman's translations is well known. Nevertheless, here he appears to render neither the tense nor person of the verb in the second pāda strictly. For the text does not have "says he did not do it", but rather something like "says I do not do [it]". Norman's change of first to third person may be attributed simply to the ease of expression in English, in that he wishes to avoid direct speech. The tense appears, at least at first glance, to be more of a problem. Carter and Palihawadana (1987: 332) in their strict literalness illustrate this, translating the second line: "And the one who having done says, 'I don't do this.'"[2] They go on to translate from the commentary (Dhp-a III 477,9-11), which does not help much, other than providing an explicit patient for the gerund along with a corresponding anaphoric pronominal patient for the quoted finite verb: *katvā ti yo vā pana pāpakammaṃ katvā nāhaṃ etaṃ karomī ti āha*, "Or one who, having done a wrong deed, says, 'I do not do this.'"

Von Hinüber and Norman print pāda b as *yo vāpi katvā na karomi cāha*. The editors cite a northern Thai manuscript (of 1786), the Sinhala script "Buddha Jayanti" edition, and the commentary as printed in H.C. Norman's 1912 edition as having the unmetrical (or at the very least, hypermetrical) cadence *karomī ti cāha*. No doubt a more expansive consideration of the (surely voluminous) manuscript evidence would reveal further variant readings, though whether these would be of much value is another question. The same reading, even if not in each case accepted into the main text by the respective editors, is reported for the same verse when it appears in the Itivuttaka, Udāna, Suttanipāta, and

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[2]They do not, however, quite translate the text they print, which has not the variant *cāpi* but rather *vāpi*. Moreover, their use of quotation marks is interpretive; as we will see, the absence of quotative (*i*)*ti* is a problem here.

Jātaka commentary.[3] Fausbøll's 1855 *editio princeps*, in fact, printed pāda b in this hypermetrical form. In his second edition of 1900 (in which he professed to have corrected the meter), he printed instead *yo vāpi katvā na karomi-cāha* (without explaining the change from the first edition).[4] It is this second edition which forms the basis of the edition of von Hinüber and Norman, although whether their claim to have undone Fausbøll's metrical "corrections" is relevant in this verse I do not know.[5] Another Thai manuscript of the Dhammapada von Hinüber and Norman report as having *karomi ccāha*, a reading likewise found in other just-cited sources for the same verse. Regarding these configurations of pāda b, Fausbøll himself (1855: 394) hypothesized that "*ti* is a gloss, which the ignorance of the scribes introduced into the text; maybe first it had been written as *karomicāha*, either for *karomiccāha* or with pleonastic *ca* (*va*), or with *c* inserted for the sake of euphony."[6] This hypothesis has been noted, directly or indirectly, by subsequent scholars.[7] But what would have been the background behind such a reading?

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[3]It 42, verse in §48, Ud 45,10 (IV.8), Sn 127, §661, Ja II 416,31.

[4]I cannot resist quoting from a footnote to the Preface of the 1900 edition (p. ix), which is written in English, although the translation printed in the volume is, as it was in the first edition, in Latin. Having decried the printing of Pāli texts in Siamese script, and having stated that "There can be no doubt about the Roman (Latin) character triumphing at last over all others", Fausbøll wrote: "As certain as the Roman character will be universal, the English language will in time likewise be the universal language of the world, for it is a well known fact that in the beginning the Lord took all languages, boiled them in a pot, and forthwith extracted the English language as the essence of them all." It is a pity that scholars these days rarely dare to write like this.

[5]This rather appears to concern cases of *svarabhakti* vowels for the most part.

[6]ti glossa est, quae scribarum inscitia in textum irrepsit, fortasse principio scriptum erat karomicáha, sive pro karomiccáha, sive cum ca (va) pleonast., sive cum c euphoniae causa inserto. For the translation from the Latin I am indebted to Marieke Meelen.

[7]Brough 1962: 258: "Fausbøll suggested that *ti* was an interpolation, and that *c-* might be the remnant of an original (*i*)*ti*, so that the intended phrase might have been *na karomicchāha* (< *ty āha*).... Although this is unmetrical, it

Parallels in languages other than Pāli might not — at first glance — appear to help much, but in fact they preserve important clues.[8] The so-called Patna Dharmapada (Cone 1989) 114 reads:

> *abhūtavādī nirayaṃ upeti yo cāpi kattā na karomī ti āha |*
> *ubho pi te precca samā bhavanti nihīnakaṃmā manujā paratra ||*

This text here is rather close to the Pāli, and in the phrase of interest to us preserves the same tense and person. Moreover, as written pāda b has the same unmetrical (or hypermetrical) reading as do some Pāli sources. To make the pāda metrical, one must read **karomi āha*. Removal of the *c* of *cāha* would likewise seem to make the Pāli marginally more understandable, although it would not improve the meter and would introduce an anomalous hiatus. Moreover, a reading **karomi āha* is at best awkward in omitting any formal notice of direct speech. Evidently the scribe felt that the hypermeter was preferable to total omission of quotative *iti*. This is not the form found everywhere, however. A Gāndhārī equivalent to this verse (Brough 1962 §269) reads as follows:

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seems very probable that it should be re-established as the older Pali reading; for *na karomī ti cāha* is metrically even worse, and *na karomi cāha* is ungrammatical." Norman 1992 (in notes to Sn 661) and 1997 (in notes to Dhp 306), referring to Brough though not to Fausbøll, agrees in taking *karomi cāha* to be a sandhi from *karomi (i)ti āha* with shortening of the the third sylable m.c.: *karomi (i)ti āha > karomi ty āha > karomi cc āha > karomi c āha*; Masefield 1994: 85, n. 112, simply refers to Norman 1992.

[8] Less help is afforded by the Chinese translations: T. 210 (IV) 570a7-8 (*juan xia*) = T. 212 (IV) 663c29-664a1 (*juan 10*) = T. 213 (IV) 781b3-4 (*juan 1*) = T. 1464 (XXIV) 878c26-27 (*juan 7*): 妄語地獄近 作之言不作 二罪後俱受 是行自牽往. Here T. 213 has for pāda a 妄語入地獄, and T. 213 and 1464 read pāda d as 是行自牽去, both perhaps merely stylistic variants, while for T. 210 some editions have the reading 自作自牽去 for 是行自牽去. This I do not understand, in part because *xíng* 行 evidently translates *karma*. What *zì* 自 might represent I do not know and, likewise, the sense of *qiānwǎng* 牽往 / *qiānqù* 牽去 is not clear to me. One possibility is that the translators understood **nihita* for what Indic texts seem to have always as *nihīna*.

> *abhuda-vadi naraka uvedi yo yavi*[9] *kitva na karodi āha*
> *uvha'i ami preca sama bhavadi nihiṇa-kama maṇuya paratri*

Close to this is the reading in the old *Udānavarga*, preserved (except for a lacuna in pāda d) in the so-called Subaši manuscript, (Nakatani 1987) 8.1:

> *abhūtavādīr narakām upaiti yaś cāpi kṛtvā na karoti āha* ।[10]
> *ubhāv atau pretya samau bhavanti*[11] *nihīnakarmau* ... ॥

To this we may compare the Tibetan translation of the Udānavarga (Zongtse 1990):

> *gang dag gis byas bzhin ma byas zer ba dang* ॥
> *brdzun du smra ba* [v.l. *la*] *dmyal bar 'gro bar 'gyur* ॥
> *mi de gnyis ka 'dra ba pha rol tu* ॥
> *song nas dman pa'i chos dang ldan par 'gyur* ॥

In Tibetan, pādas a and b are inverted, the portion in question being rendered *gang dag gis byas bzhin ma byas zer ba*. Two things are peculiar. First, *gang dag* probably points to a plural. It might, however, indicate a dual, for which the corelative is *mi de gnyis ka* in pāda c. Neither formulation is supported in any Indic version. Second, *byas*

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[9]Regarding my writing *yavi* for Brough's *ya vi*, see below.

[10]The newer recension has for pāda b: *yaś cānyad apy ācaratīha karma.* I cannot account for this reading in relation to any other sources of the verse.

[11]Nakatani inexplicably prints *ubhā va tau*, which would seem to make of *ubhā* a form parallel to Pāli/Patna *ubho*, but then what of *va*? I think his division of the text unlikely. It does have the merit, however, of avoiding the odd form *atau*, which may, as Brough (1962: 258) thinks, be a miswriting for *etau* — or is it possible that there has been some confusion from *adas*? (To this correspond Gāndhārī *ami* [Sanskrit *amī*] and Pāli and Patna *te*.) The recensionally later Udānavarga text reads this pāda: *ubhau hi tau pretya samau niruktau.* This demonstrates the redactor's efforts to make the verse better Sanskrit. It was impossible for the Subaši redactor to retain Middle Indic *pi* as Sanskrit *api*, since this would have resulted in unmetrical **ubhāv api*, a problem the later redactor solves with *ubhau hi*. However, even though he is basically writing Sanskrit, the Subaši redactor seems to have been happy with *bhavanti* (also in the Middle Indic versions) with a dual subject, which the later Udānavarga redactor found unacceptable, replacing the finite verb with *niruktau*, as again Brough pointed out.

suggests a preterite. Note that the use of *bzhin* probably indicates a sense of duration, such that the two actions of doing (something) and saying ("I didn't do it") are simultaneous. We will return to this below. Let us see what we can make of the Gāndhārī and Sanskrit texts of pāda b.

Both the Gāndhārī and the Sanskrit agree in having, like the Pāli, a present tense finite verb. But whereas the Pāli and Patna Dharmapada have a first person form, *karomi*, Gāndhārī and Sanskrit present the third person *karoti*. This is hard to understand; who is the agent of *karoti*, if not the speaker of *āha*? But if so, the form should be *karomi*. However, it may be that these questions of tense and person are connected. Concerning this problem, Brough (1962: 258) wrote as follows:

> Although the precise form can only be guessed, there need be no doubt that the verse started its career with a verb in a past tense. There is thus no occasion to consider *karomi* here as a "timeless" present — and still less justification to render it as an English present; for why should a man go to hell for telling the truth?[12] Most probable would be an aorist, *na karaṃ ti āha*; or perhaps we should spell it *n'akaraṃ*, since this aorist normally preserves its augment. After the aorist has come to be felt archaic, *karomi*, first as an explanation, and then as a replacement, leads directly to the Pali readings. In the Prakrit, the same original would be expected to appear as *n=akaru* (or *n=akaro) di āha*, inevitably to be misunderstood as in the U[dānavarga], *na karoti*. For the Prakrit, an imperfect **akaroṃ < akaravaṃ* would have given the same result. There is of course no means of deciding, in the absence of other examples, whether the Prakrit was still correctly understood when our manuscript was written, and it is possible that the transcription here should be *karo di*.

Brough appears to suggest that pāda b as initially composed had as its finite verb an aorist: *akaraṃ*. This was then negated: *na + akaraṃ*, whence *nākaraṃ* before (*i*)*ti āha*. Written in or transmitted through a script such as Kharoṣṭhī in which vowel length is generally not

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[12]I confess that Brough's point here is obscure to me.

marked,[13] this would produce *nakaraṃ ti āha*, then understood as *na karaṃ ti āha*. With final °*aṃ* expressed as °*o* (through °*u*),[14] and voicing of intervocalic -*t*-, this would lead to *na karo di āha > na karodi āha = na karoti āha*, when *karo* was no longer understood as preserving a first person aorist. As an alternative hypothesis, Brough suggests the imperfect *akaravaṃ*, which written with Middle Indic -*o*- for -*ava*- would appear as *akaroṃ*.

Carter and Palihawadana (1987: 491) express their unhappiness with Brough's approach in the following terms:

> [T]he ancientness of the present tense form is proved by [the Patna *Dharmapada*] 114, which too has *na karomīti āha*, and the old MSS of [Udānavarga] (viii, I), which have *na karomīti prāha*[15] and *na karoti āha* (see Bernhard [1965] p. 161). Obviously, what prompts [Brough] to suspect the reading and suggest complex alternatives to it is the idea that the present tense does not make good sense here. This is an assumption that can be questioned. Perhaps the composer of the verse had in mind the offender who defensively says that he "does not do" (present tense) that kind of thing?

Why might Brough have felt the need of a preterite finite verb, and is such a sense justified? Carter and Palihawadana's suggestion that "the composer of the verse had in mind the offender who defensively says that he 'does not do' (present tense) that kind of thing" is hardly convincing. There are, however, grammatical grounds for doubting the need for a past tense verb form.

In the expression *yo cāpi katvā na karomi cāha,* the action of saying (*āha*) "*na karomi*" seems to follow the action indicated by the gerund *katvā*. According to Speyer (1886 §380), "in its most common employment the gerund may be said to do duty as a past participle of the active…. As a rule, it denotes the prior of two actions, performed by

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[13]It seems that the long *ā* in this verse is the only instance in the Gāndhārī (Khotan) Dharmapada. See Glass 2000 §1.1.1.

[14]See Brough 1962 §§21, 75.

[15]In fact all that the ms in question LB279 preserves is ///[*rom*]*īti prāha*; see Bernhard 1965.

the same subject." The same is true in Middle Indic; as Hendriksen (1944: 112-16, §41) has detailed, the Pāli gerund may indicate "that the action expressed by the gerund in time precedes that of the principal verb", this being its ordinary usage. However, this is not always and necessarily the case. Hendriksen goes on to explain that "[s]ometimes the gerund indicates what is simultaneous with the principal verb", and indeed the same holds true of Sanskrit (Speyer 1886 § 381). If we understand the relation of gerund and finite verb *āha* to be one of simultaneity, it would be possible to understand the present tense of the quoted "*na karomi*", and to translate the phrase "while doing something, one says/claims, [']I am not doing [it.']" With this extremely awkward bracketing of the quotation marks I seek to emphasize that the text as we have it here has, in fact, no formal indication of quotation, that being one of its difficult points. Regarding the other feature of this translation, we recall here that the simultaneity of the verbs appears also to have been intended by the Tibetan translation quoted above by its use of *bzhin*. Despite this possibility, however, such gymnastics may not be necessary.

As Speyer (1886: 244, §325) points out with reference to Pāṇini 3.2.120, 121, a present tense may indicate a "near past". He refers to the example cited in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* as follows:[16] "If one asks 'have you made the mat?', the answer may be, when using *na*, *na karomi* or *nākārṣam* 'no, I have not', or if an interrogation, 'have I not?'" This suggests that there can be no formal grammatical objection against the use of the present *karomi*, understood as conveying a recently completed action; it would make good sense in our sentence, and be acceptable even by the norms of Pāṇinian Sanskrit.[17] This could explain either why the sentence could have been composed using a present finite verb in the first place, or why once the verb was rewritten in a present finite

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[16]*naśabde nuśabde copapade pṛṣṭaprativacane vibhāṣā laṭpratyayo bhavati bhūte | akārṣīḥś kaṭaṃ devadatta | na karomi bhoḥ | nākārṣam | ahaṃ nu karomi | ahaṃ nu akārṣam ||*

[17]See also Bechert 1958.

form it was not judged objectionable. In spite of the seeming elegance of this proposed solution, it is merely partial. The third person *karoti* in the Gāndhārī and Sanskrit versions remains unexplained, as does the employment of *na karomi āha* without any quotative *iti*. Brough's hypothesis hints at a relation between these two problems.

In looking for an original first person past verb form, Brough postulated an original first person aorist *akaram*, from which he judged *akaro* to be a phonetic development. While this is not entirely impossible, such an aorist in Gāndhārī would probably have developed into **akare*.[18] More problematic, however, is his suggestion that *akaro* represents the imperfect *akaravaṃ > *akaroṃ > *akaro*. In the first place, as discussed by Oskar von Hinüber (2001 : §479), the imperfect is almost totally vanished from Middle Indic. Secondly, *-ava-* is not known to become *-o-* before *-ṃ* in either Old or Middle Indic (email from Oskar von Hinüber 7 March 2008). This suggests that the former possibility of an aorist is considerably more likely than the latter explanation, although neither is supported by strong evidence.

However we might account for the form of the verb, much can be explained by postulating a form *(a)karo(ṃ)*, which would have been followed by an *iti*, written *ti* as is normal in Middle Indic. When this *ti* was attached to the preceding *(a)karo*, it was not recognized as an independent phonological unit. Hence the *-t-* which came after a now lost word boundary was voiced, yielding *(a)karodi*. Since the tendency to voice intervocalic stops is responsible for the development *-t- > -d-*, we would ordinarily expect that *aka-* would have become *aga-*. It seems that **agaroṃ* would also have been possible, but at least with *-k-* this voicing does not always take place.[19]

What of the augment prefixed to the hypothesized *akaraṃ > akaro*? The resulting sequence **nāka-* in the pāda *yo yavi kitva nakarodi āha* creates an unusual scansion. The pāda would most

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[18]According to a personal communication from Stefan Baums, aorists in Gāndhārī mostly develop *-aṃ > e*, although *-aṃ > o* cannot be ruled out.

[19]See Brough 1962, §38.

normally scan $- - \smile - - \smile \smile - \smile - \times$ as a standard triṣṭubh. Recalling that Gāndhārī written in Kharoṣṭhī script normally does not indicate vowel length, we must keep in mind that what is written *a* may contextually be understood as *ă* or *ā*. The meter is then, first of all, evidence that we should write *yavi* rather than Brough's *ya vi*, as noted above, since normal scansion would yield an equivalent to *cāpi*, giving the first sequence $- - \smile$. The next sequence *kitva* scans $- -$, providing the caesura here after the fifth syllable. Subsequently we would normally expect $\smile \smile - \smile$. Were the text to read **nākaro di* (even if actually written *nakaro di*), we would have instead $- \smile - \smile$. That is, the break would be $- - \smile$ rather than the expected $- \smile \smile$. It is true that two (actually one, since the pādas are identical) examples of this scansion do appear in the Gāndhārī (Khotan) Dharmapada (190d = 191d), but it is unlikely that this is a metrical possibility here.[20]

A secondary issue is how the form would be written, and whether we should expect hiatus. We do see it elsewhere in the same Gāndhārī (Khotan) Dharmapada manuscript in verse 19c *na adi'adi* = *nādiyati*, 209a/210a *na apu mañe'a* = *māppamaññetha*, 235a *na abhaṣamaṇa* = *nābhāsamānaṃ*, and so on. At the same time, it is absent in 62b *nadi-mañadi* = *nātimaññati*, 197c *naṇubhavadi* = *nānubhavanti*, 274d *naṇu-vadadi* = *nānupatanti*, 337d *naṇutpadi* for *nānutappati*, and so on. Therefore, the way of writing cannot be relevant to this problem. Whether we understand *n'aka°* or *na ka°*, if we see a sandhi of *na + aka°* here, the result is metrically faulty. This metrical difficulty, then, seems to argue against the one-time existence of an aorist with augment.

It is, however, possible that an unaugmented form was used. Although the augment is obligatory in chaste classical Sanskrit, unaugmented forms are found in Epic Sanskrit and under some conditions in Pāli.[21] I do not think the situation in Gāndhārī has yet been clarified. In

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[20]For a detailed discussion of the meter of this text, see Glass 2001. I am grateful to the author for sharing it with me, and for his advice in this regard.

[21]von Hinüber 2001: §485; Renou 1975: 403 (§283); Geiger 1994: 153 (§158). Unaugmented imperfects are much more common than aorists.

light of these usages, it would be possible to imagine a situation in which the metrical fault caused by the long *ā* of *nāka°* could have been avoided through the use of an original augmentless aorist, *karoṃ*. Either because of accidental omission of the anusvāra, or because it was felt to be erroneous when *ti* (for *iti*) was understood to be *-ti* as the third person singular ending of *karoti*, the text came to be transmitted in the form *na karoti*. Subsequently, the third person form was felt anomalous, because of its position as quoted speech, and replaced easily by the metrically equivalent first person *karomi*. Moreover, the juxtaposition of two finite verbs, the quoted *karomi* and the following *āha* was also felt irregular, and 'corrected' by insertion of (according to this scenario, secondary) *iti*. Through normal phonological development this came to be reduced as follows: *iti* > *ti* > *ty* (preceding *āha*) > *cc* > *c*, various stages of this process being evidenced in different versions of pāda b, or in different readings within the Pāli tradition itself.

There is currently no direct evidence that would positively confirm the postulation of an original preterite in the phrase in question. But I believe that such a hypothesis best accounts for the variously attested forms of the pāda.

A passage in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya may shed further light on the problem. It is important to notice that the context of the expression to be quoted below is precisely the same as that in the Dhammapada, namely in forming part of a discussion of the problem of lies. We find the following stated in regard to the issue of stipulations regarding acceptable speech (Pradhan 1975: 218.9–14):

> *atha kasmāt mṛṣāvādād viratir evopāsakasaṃvaraśikṣāpadaṃ na paiśunyādiviratiḥ | …*
>   *mṛṣāvādaprasaṅgāc ca sarvaśikṣāvyatikrame | (34ab)*
> *sarvatra hi śikṣātikrame samanuyujyamānasyopasthitam idaṃ bhavati nāham evam akārṣam[22] iti mṛṣāvādasya prasaṅgo bhavati |*

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[22]Pradhan prints *ahārṣam*, which is corrected here with Funahashi 1987: 192, n. 1, who refers to Tib. *ma byas so* and Chinese 不作. Without access to the manuscript, I do not know whether *ahārṣam* is a genuine reading or a misprint

> Why is only the abstention from lying speech [listed as] a rule of behavior of the layman's vows, not the abstention from slander and the rest? …
>
>> And because if he violated all [the other] rules of behavior, he would necessarily lie about it. [34ab]
>
> For whenever he has violated a rule of behavior, it would occur that, being questioned about it, [he would respond]: "I didn't act like that!" inevitably resulting in lying speech.

Here the phrase *nāham evam akārṣam iti* parallels precisely the expression of interest to us. The verb here is a first person aorist. This cannot prove the speculation that the original form of the Dharmapada verse contained a preterite, much less an aorist. It does, however, illustrate that at least the author of the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya felt that an appropriate expression of precisely this sentiment in precisely this context would be expressed in the aorist. Almost needless to say, the denial of responsibility for the action, this denial constituting the lie in question, must have been expressed in the first person as direct speech. It is correspondingly likely that Brough's explanation for the development of the present forms, in both persons, is correct. Originally in first person, they came to be (mis)understood as in third person, then reconfigured to first person to account for the circumstance that they are quoted in direct speech. The employment of the first person present form is thus tertiary. The verse as originally conceived is likely to have had a first person unaugmented aorist, recast through error as a third person present. The Gāndhārī (Khotan) Dharmapada and the Subaši Udānavarga preserve, in different forms or phases, this secondary stage. This uncomfortable reading was ultimately reformulated, this time through conscious and intentional revision, into the first person present found in the Pāli Dhammapada and Patna Dharmapada.

What can we learn from all of this? Or put another way, what might be the goal to which I referred at the beginning of this essay?

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in Pradhan's edition. However, in some North Indian scripts *k* and *h* can be confused. I am grateful to Harunaga Isaacson for discussion on this point.

There is no doubt that the task the modern editors of the Gāndhārī, Patna and Subaši texts set for themselves was, quite appropriately, merely the establishment of the most reliable diplomatic edition of the single available manuscript of their respective texts. Any remarks about the history of the text or suggested better readings were to be relegated to notes. In an ideal world, the task of editors of "the" Pāli Dhammapada is — or should be — different. In this case, assuming that such an editor believes in the unity of the text, a first task is to determine what sort of edition is to be produced. Since there is no one traditional and "canonical" version of the text, but rather manuscript evidence containing, *inter alia*, variant readings, the first task of an editor is to decide what he or she wishes the edition to (re)present. As far as I know, few editors of Indian Buddhist texts so far have explicitly discussed this question in a scientific manner. As far as the Dhammapada is concerned, however, we are in a somewhat better situation than usual. In the notes to his translation, which in some sense can be seen as also constituting his notes to the edition he published together with von Hinüber, Norman has given extensive discussions of text critical problems. However, while he renounced any idea of recreating, reconstructing or discovering an Ur-Dhammapada, he did not correspondingly explicitly address the question of what sort of edition of the Dhammapada he did aim for. And this may be because this is a question very difficult to answer. If what one seeks is not some proto-text, what criteria guide the choice of one reading over another? If, as in the case of the verse under discussion here, it can well be argued that the metrically correct (or more common, or less idiosyncratic) reading chosen by the editors reflects (nothing more than?) a late attempt to salvage something from an even worse situation, should the editors merely go ahead and print this attested but otherwise problematic reading? Or should the editors attempt to restore a historically more justified text, even if they know that they cannot reach far enough back to create something "original"? If they conclude that competing but equally faulty "traditional" readings are found in their sources, how are

they to choose what to print? In fact, editors may well conclude, as I would suggest is in fact the case in our verse, that the early and meaningful shape of the verse was lost already by the time the text was (re)cast in Pāli. In such a case, is an editor justified in printing any reading at all? Or should the conclusion rather be that the best that can be achieved is the compilation of a set of materials, with explanatory annotation, pointing to the solution or possible solutions of a crux which the materials at hand do not permit one to resolve? Would this not better be seen as renunciation of the task of editor than as demonstrating scientific restraint? These questions and more cannot be avoided by a serious student of this literature. Seen in this light, the long history of attention to the Dharmapada literature should surely not be understood as signaling that all fundamental questions, much less small difficulties, have been addressed. Rather, I suspect that the more we dig, the more we will find quite the opposite to be true.

<div style="text-align: right">Jonathan A. Silk</div>

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