

CHAPTER I

Schemes of the Buddhist Path in the Nikāyas and Āgamas*

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As is well documented in the modern scholarly literature, early Buddhist texts as represented by what survives of the four Nikāyas or Āgamas witness a considerable variety of schemes of the Buddhist path to final awakening.¹ How we are to assess and interpret this variety remains a matter of dispute. The tendency of modern scholars has been to see it as reflecting the disagreement and even confusion among the first generations of the Buddha's disciples as to the nature of the Buddhist path and its goal. This tendency has often been associated with attempts to stratify the Nikāya-Āgama literature chronologically so as to enable us to move closer to and even identify the original teachings of the Buddha himself.

In what follows I prefer to put such considerations aside and approach this literature from a different angle, having in mind not the question “what kind of path to awakening did the Buddha teach?” but rather the question “how did the authors of the Nikāya-Āgama literature wish to present the

* More than ten years ago when on research leave from Bristol University funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, I attempted to compile comprehensive lists of schemes of the Buddhist path, primarily with reference to the Pali Nikāyas. Some of those with whom I shared my work at the time made it clear that they thought without a more comprehensive attempt to take account of material from beyond the Theravāda tradition, the exercise was of limited interest. I tried to take heed of this, with the result the present article. More immediately I am grateful to Anālayo, Jin kyoung Choi, Vincent Eltschinger, Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Rita Langer, Bryan de Notariis, Cristina Pecchia, Lin Qian, Blair Silverlock and Daniel Stuart for their help, comments, criticisms and suggestions, as well as for drawing my attention to a number of errors; any that remain are my responsibility.

¹ See, for example, La Vallée Poussin 1937, Schmithausen 1981, Griffiths 1981, Cousins 1984, Vetter 1988, Bronkhorst 1993, Zafripulo 1993, Wynne 2007.

Buddha's path to awakening?" It seems to me that methodologically this is the more basic question, one that the eagerness to recover the "authentic" voice of the Buddha has prevented from being properly and fully addressed in the scholarly literature. Using this approach I wish to consider the form and extent of the different schemes of the path, and to suggest that the variety of schemes can be reduced to four principal schemes which the authors of the Nikāya-Āgama literature carefully and deliberately integrated with one another.

The principal sources I shall cite are: the four Nikāyas—Dīgha, Majjhima, Saṃyutta, Aṅguttara—of the Theravāda, or perhaps more properly Theriya, tradition surviving in Pali;² the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgama as witnessed by the single substantial surviving manuscript and the various fragments recovered from Central Asia; the Chinese translation of the Madhyamāgama (T 26), generally thought to belong to the Sarvāstivāda school; the longer Chinese translation of the Saṃyuktāgama (T 99) also thought to belong to the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda school; the Chinese translation of an Ekottarikāgama (T 125) whose affiliation is more problematic; the Chinese translation of a Dīrghāgama (T 1) which is generally thought to belong to the Dharmaguptaka school; and finally in one instance a Gāndhārī fragment from what seems likely to be a Dharmaguptaka Madhyamāgama.³ The precise school affiliation of the Sanskrit and Chinese Āgama translations can be questioned; nonetheless I shall refer to them as unproblematically belong-

² The modern scholarly use of the term *āgama* to refer to the non-Pali or non-Theravāda Buddhist collections of sūtras is a scholarly convention and I follow it here, but it should be noted that it does not strictly reflect ancient usage. While Pali sources in certain contexts prefer the term *nikāya* (e.g. in the account of the first Council at Vin II 287.27 and in listing the divisions of the canon at Sp I 16.5–7, 18.7–16; Sv I 14.28–15.13; As 25.1–26.4), the exegetical sources also routinely use *āgama* to refer to the four collections of sūtras (see, for example, the introductions and conclusions to the commentaries at Sv I 1.12, 2.6–10, (B^c 1957) III 250.5–10; Ps I 1.19, 2.10, IV 109.18; Spk I 1.14, 2.18–22, III 308.9; Mp I 1.16, 2.24, 3.4–9, V 98.14, 99.2; cf. As 2.5). Cf. Cousins 2013: 103 (who, on the grounds of the use of *nikāya* in Prakrit inscriptions, suggests that it is likely to represent the earlier Middle Indic and that the use of *āgama* is likely to reflect Sanskritization in the early centuries CE); Tournier 2014: 25 (who, without reference to Cousins, also believes that *āgama* may reflect Sanskritization); Anālayo 2015a: 12–16 (who suggests that *nikāya* replaced *āgama*).

³ Allon 2007: 5–6; Silverlock 2015: 34–42.

ing to the schools just indicated.⁴ This is in part a matter of convenience but also because it is not crucial to my purpose, which is to establish how the Buddhist path is presented in the surviving Nikāya-Āgama literature. Thus the specific school affiliation is less significant than that the material is representative of different redactions of the Nikāya-Āgama material. It is clear that we should view the four primary Nikāyas surviving in Pali as representing a single redaction of the early sūtra corpus. It also seems clear that the Chinese Dīrghāgama translation represents a redaction different from those of the Theravāda and the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda; whether or not it should be called Dharmaguptaka is not an issue in the present context. It also seems that the Sanskrit Dīrghāgama manuscript and the Chinese translations of the Madhyamāgama belong to closely related redactions (Mūlasarvāstivādin and Sarvāstivādin).⁵ Such a conclusion seems reasonable on the grounds that the Chinese Madhyamāgama (hereafter MĀ) and Sanskrit Dīrghāgama (hereafter DĀ) appear related in terms of contents (there is a symmetry whereby the sūtras of the Sanskrit DĀ are not found in the Chinese MĀ and vice versa) and phrasing (they share certain ways of expressing things, certain formulas, and certain numerical categories). But the issue is complicated by scholarly uncertainty about how to envisage the relationship between “Sarvāstivādin” and “Mūlasarvāstivādin”.⁶ However, given the lack of scholarly consensus on the issue, in what follows I am content to use “Sarvāstivāda” as a de-

⁴ On the school affiliation of the Chinese translations, see Waldschmidt, 1980: 136–74, and the literature cited by Anālayo 2014a: 46, n. 21; Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 7, n. 64, 8, n. 67, 9, n. 68.

⁵ Bucknell (2014: 59), following Hartmann, comments “whichever school the Chinese *Madhyama-āgama* belongs to, the Sanskrit *Dīrgha-āgama* belongs to the same school”.

⁶ On the problem of Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda, see especially Enomoto 2000, Skilling 2002: 374–76, Hartmann 2014 (n. 5). It seems likely that we are dealing here with the evolution of distinct but related Vinaya lineages; yet as Peter Skilling and Jens-Uwe Hartmann remind us, it is not at all clear that there is a straightforward one-to-one correspondence between Vinaya lineages and redactions of the Āgamas. Nonetheless, it is not certain that the Āgama material that comes down to us variously surmised to be or tagged by later Buddhist tradition as “Sarvāstivādin” or “Mūlasarvāstivādin” can be straightforwardly collapsed into a single unified redaction. Skilling (2002: 375) notes: “[T]he Chinese *Madhyamāgama* and the *Madhyamāgama* cited by Śamathadeva in his *Upāyikā-ṭīkā* on the *Abhidharmakośa* are intimately related but differ, sometimes significantly, in order of texts, in contents, and title.”

liberately vague and broad name to characterise what I assume to be an in some way related, although not unified, Sarvāstivāda-cum-Mūlasarvāstivāda Āgama tradition. In short, “Sarvāstivāda” is used here as a term of convenience meaning “maybe Sarvāstivāda, maybe Mūlasarvāstivāda, maybe both, but probably not neither”.

1. The significance of the *sīlakkhandhavagga* and parallels

The obvious place to begin an assessment of the Nikāya-Āgama schemes of the Buddhist path is with the presentation of the gradual scheme of the path found repeatedly in the three surviving versions of the Dīrghāgama. T. W. Rhys Davids was perhaps the first modern scholar to draw attention to the scheme of the Buddhist path found repeated in twelve of the thirteen *suttas* of the *sīlakkhandhavagga* of the Theravāda Dīghanikāya. Introducing his 1899 translation of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, where the scheme is first set out in the Theravāda canon, he comments how in drawing various elements together into one system, in treating them “as so many steps of a ladder whose chief value depends on the fact that it leads up to the culminating point of Nirvana in Arahatsip”, the scheme presents a distinctively Buddhist vision. He goes on to comment:

[T]he whole statement, the details of it, the order of it, must have soaked very thoroughly into the minds of the early Buddhists. For we find the whole, or nearly the whole, of it repeated (with direct reference by name to our Sutta as the oldest and most complete enumeration of it) not only in all the subsequent dialogues translated in this volume, but also in many others.⁷

Rhys Davids goes on to observe that the scheme is found in the eleven *suttas* that follow in the Dīghanikāya, and also briefly discusses its use in four *suttas* of the Majjhimanikāya.⁸ Since then a number of scholars have returned to the scheme, citing further examples and variations both in the Theravāda Nikāyas and the Āgamas of other schools, principally the Sarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka. In the first volume of his *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie* (1953) Erich Frauwallner used the scheme as the basis of his explanation

⁷ Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I: 59.

⁸ MN 27, 38, 39, 79.

of “the Buddhist way of deliverance” (“der buddhistische Erlösungsweg”).⁹ In an influential article published in 1981 Lambert Schmithausen referred to this scheme as “a stereotypical detailed description of the Path to Liberation” (p. 204) and in the course of his article commented on a number of variations on the scheme, citing a range of examples from both the Theravāda Nikāyas and the Sarvāstivāda Madhyamāgama in Chinese translation.¹⁰

In 1987 Konrad Meisig published a synoptic study of the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* laying out the Pali and Sanskrit texts of the versions from the Theravāda Dīghanikāya and Sarvāstivāda *Samghabhedavastu* alongside German translations of the three Chinese translations found in the Dazangjing.¹¹ His work includes a substantial comparison and discussion of four versions of the scheme of the path (pp. 53–80).¹²

In his 2004 Bristol doctoral dissertation, Kin Tung Yit outlined the wider occurrence of the scheme in especially the Theravāda Nikāyas and Chinese Āgamas (pp. 32–92), before undertaking a detailed comparative study of the first part of the scheme from the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world to the abandoning of the five hindrances.¹³

These seem to be the most significant studies for my concerns in the present article, though various other works touch on various aspects of this *sīlakkhandha-vagga* path scheme.¹⁴ While these studies have laid the groundwork, the full extent of the scheme, its variations and in particular their significance for our understanding of the Buddhist path as it is presented in

⁹ Frauwallner, *Geschichte* I: 160–82; he cites “Dīghanikāya 2, 3 usw.; Majjhimanikāya 27, 38 usw.” as sources.

¹⁰ Schmithausen 1981: 200, n. 15 (for references to Theravāda Nikāyas), 221, n. 75 (for references to the Sarvāstivāda Madhyamāgama).

¹¹ Meisig 1987; the three versions are (1) the Chinese translation (T 1, I.107a–109c) included in the Chinese translation of the complete Dharmaguptaka Dīrghāgama, (2) a freestanding Chinese translation (T 22, I.270c–276b), (3) a version included in the Chinese translation of the Ekottarāgama (T 125, II.762a7–764b12).

¹² The Ekottarāgama version of the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* omits the scheme of the path.

¹³ Yit 2004.

¹⁴ Eimer 1976: 26–34; Bucknell 1984 (who compares a number of versions of the gradual path found in Pali sources and argues that the scheme can be assimilated to the list of eight or ten constituents of the path); Manné 1995; Anālayo 2016 (who compares the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka accounts of items 4–12, as listed in Table 3 below).

the earliest Buddhist literature more generally remain unclear. The present article is an attempt to shed further light on this material. In the first place I aim to systematically collate and add to the passages already identified by especially Schmithausen and Yit in the available Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Dharmaguptaka sources in Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese translation, and present these in schematic form in a series of tables with the purpose of revealing the extent of particular schemes of the path and their variations. I should add that in this task I have also benefited particularly from Bhikkhu Anālayo's detailed *Comparative study of the Majjhima-nikāya* (2011) as well as his other studies of individual *suttas* and their parallels mentioned in the notes. I then wish to offer some observations on the picture of the Buddhist path that emerges in light of this comparison of sources representing three different Indian Buddhist schools.

With regard to the occurrence and place of the gradual scheme of the path specifically in the Dīrghanikāya/Dīrghāgama, the existing comparisons are made primarily with reference to the Theravāda sources in Pali and the Dharmaguptaka sources in Chinese translation. For evidence beyond these two schools, scholars have had to make do with the version of the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* that survives in Sanskrit in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya. But with the coming to light of substantial portions of what appears to have been a single complete Sanskrit manuscript of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgama in the early 2000s and the subsequent work of Jens-Uwe Hartmann and his students on this material, we now have a much clearer picture of the nature and shape of the Dīrghāgama collection of the Sarvāstivāda school.¹⁵ We are now able to compare the Dīrghāgama collections of three different Indian schools, two that flourished in the north of India and one that flourished in the south and in Laṅkā (**Table 1**). While the particular sūtras and number of sūtras included in each collection vary, there is considerable overlap and also a significant similarity in basic structure. All three collections suggest a primary threefold structure, with the fourth part of the Dharmaguptaka collection comprising just one sūtra having the appearance of a cosmological appendix.¹⁶ Regardless of whether this is so, what is more significant is that the Sarvāstivāda and Dharmaguptaka Dīrghāgama collections both have a section that is a counterpart to the Theravāda *śīlakkhandhavagga*, called the *śīlaskhandhanipāta* in the Sarvāstivāda and just numbered as the third sec-

¹⁵ Hartmann and Wille 2014.

¹⁶ Anālayo 2014b: 35–44.

Table 1. The Dīghanikāya/Dirghāgama

Theravāda Dīghanikāya (34)	Dharmaguptaka Dīrghāgama (30)	Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgama
Sīlakkhandha-vagga (13)	Section 1 (4)	Ṣaṭṣūtraka-nipāta (6)
1 Brahmajāla-sutta	1 大本經 = Mahāpadāna	1 Daśottara-sūtra
2 Sāmaññaphala-sutta	2 遊行經 = Mahāparinibbāna	2 Arhastavāra-sūtra
3 Ambaṭṭha-sutta	3 典尊經 = Mahāgovinda	3 Saṅgīti-sūtra
4 Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta	4 闍尼沙經 = Janavasabha	4 Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra
5 Kūṭadanta-sutta		5 Mahāvādāna-sūtra
6 Mahāli-sutta	Section 2 (15)	6 Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra
7 Jāliya-sutta	5 小緣經 = Aggañña	
8 Kassapaśihanāda-sutta	6 轉輪聖王修行經 = Cakkavatti	Yuga-nipāta (18)
9 Poṭṭhapāda-sutta	7 弊宿經 = Pāvāsi	7 Apannaka-sūtra
10 Subhā-sutta	8 散陀那經 = Udumbarikasihanāda	8 Sarveka-sūtra(?)
11 Kevaddha-sutta	9 眾集經 = Saṃgīti	9 Bhārgava-sūtra
12 Lohicca-sutta	10 十上經 = Dasuttara	10 Sālyā-sūtra
13 Tevijja-sutta	11 增一經 ‘Increasing by one’	11 Bhayabhairava-sūtra
	12 三聚經 ‘Threefold groups’	12 Romaharṣaṇa-sūtra
Mahāvagga (10)	13 大緣方便經 = Mahānidāna	13 Jinārṣabha-sūtra
14 Mahāpadāna-sutta	14 釋提桓因問經 = Sakkapañña	14 Govinda-sūtra
15 Mahānidāna-sutta	15 阿菟夷經 = Pātika	15 Prāsādika-sūtra
16 Mahāparinibbāna-sutta	16 善生經 = Sīgālovāda	16 Prasādaniya-sūtra
17 Mahāśudassana-sutta	17 清淨經 = Pāsādika	17 Pañcatraya-sūtra
18 Janavasabha-sutta	18 自歡喜經 = Sampasādaniya	18 Māyājāla-sūtra
19 Mahāgovinda-sutta	19 大會經 = Mahāsamaya	19 Kāmaṭhika-sūtra
20 Mahāsamaya-sutta		20 Kāyabhāvanā-sūtra
21 Sakkapañña-sutta	Section 3 (10)	21 Bodha-sūtra
22 Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta	20 阿摩晝經 = Ambaṭṭha	22 Saṃkaraka
23 Pāvāsi-sutta	21 梵動經 = Brahmajāla	23 Ātānāṭa-sūtra
	22 種德經 = Soṇadaṇḍa	24 Mahāsamāja-sūtra
Pātika-vagga (11)	23 究羅檀頭經 = Kūṭadanta	
24 Pātika-sutta	24 堅固經 = Kevaddha	Sīlaskandha-nipāta (23)
25 Udumbarikasihanāda-sutta	25 儼形梵志經 = Kassapaśihanāda	25 Tridaṇḍi-sūtra
26 Cakkavattisihanāda-sutta	26 三明經 = Tevijja	26 Piṅgalātreyā-sūtra
27 Aggañña-sutta	27 沙門果經 = Sāmaññaphala	27 Lohitya-sūtra I
28 Sampasādaniya-sutta	28 布吒婆樓經 = Poṭṭhapāda	28 Lohitya-sūtra II
29 Pāsādika-sutta	29 露遮經 = Lohicca	29 Kaivartī-sūtra
30 Lakkhana-sutta		30 Maṇḍīśa-sūtra I
31 Sīgālovāda-sutta	Section 4 (1)	31 Maṇḍīśa-sūtra II
32 Ātānāṭiya-sutta	30 世記經 ‘An account of the world’	32 Mahallin-sūtra
33 Saṃgīti-sutta		33 Śroṇatāṇḍya-sūtra
34 Dasuttara-sutta		34 Kūṭatāṇḍya-sūtra
		35 Ambāṣṭha-sūtra
		36 Prṣṭhapaḍā-sūtra
		37 Kāraṇavādi-sūtra
		38 Puḍgala-sūtra
		39 Śruta-sūtra
		40 Mahalla-sūtra
		41 Anyatama-sūtra
		42 Śuka-sūtra
		43 Jīvaka-sūtra
		44 Rāja-sūtra
		45 Vāsiṣṭha-sūtra
		46 Kāśyapa-sūtra
		47 Brahmajāla-sūtra

tion in the Dharmaguptaka Chinese translation.¹⁷ When we investigate the contents of this section in each collection we find essentially the same pattern. Central to the plan of the section in each case is what I shall style the Dīrghāgama gradual scheme of the path. And leaving aside for the moment a few minor variations, essentially the same gradual scheme of the path is common to all three versions of this section (**Table 2**). In each version the gradual scheme of the path is presented in full in the narrative frame of a particular sūtra and then presented again in abbreviated form in the series of sūtras that follow.

The Theravāda *sīlakkhandha* section begins with the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, which turns out to be the only *sutta* in the collection not to incorporate the gradual scheme of the path into its narrative, though it does include one portion of it (the *śīlas*, no. 3 in Table 3 below). The scheme is presented in full within the narrative frame of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*, the second *sutta* of the section,¹⁸ the eleven *suttas* that follow the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* all abbreviate and adapt the scheme to the particular narrative frame in question.¹⁹

The third section of the Dharmaguptaka DĀ begins with the *Amozhou jing*, the equivalent of the Theravāda *Ambaṭṭha-sutta*, which is the third *sutta* of the Theravāda *sīlakkhandha-vagga*. The gradual scheme of the path is presented in full in the narrative frame of this sūtra.²⁰ The *Fan dong jing*, equivalent to the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, is the second sūtra. Like its Theravāda counterpart, it is not used to frame the gradual path,²¹ but the remaining eight sūtras that constitute this section again, as in the Theravāda *sīlakkhandha-vagga*, all abbreviate and adapt the scheme previously set out in full to the particular narrative frame in question.²²

¹⁷ T I.82a6: 第三分.

¹⁸ DN I 62.24–84.35. In the PTS edition of the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* the scheme is not presented in full, as we are referred back to the *Brahmajāla-sutta* for the *sīla* section. In S^e and B^e, for example, it is presented in full.

¹⁹ DN 3 (100.5–16), 4 (124.24–35), 5 (147.7–33), 6 (157.21–158.21), 7 (159.16–160.22), 8 (171.26–174/8), 9 (181.3–185.9) 10 (206.18–209.28), 11 (214.23–215.18), 12 (232.10–233.30), 13 (249.25–252.15).

²⁰ T I.83c3–86c16.

²¹ Yit 2004: 74 notes that an independent translation of the *Brahmajāla-sūtra* (T 21) does include rather more of the gradual scheme of the path, items 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 as set out in Table 3.

²² DĀ-D 22 (96b24–c10), 23 (100c21–23), 24 (102a11–19), 25 (103c20–104a8), 26

Table 2. DN and DĀ sīlakkhandhavagga / section 3 / sīlaskandhanipāta compared

THERAVĀDA		DHARMAGUPTAKA		SARVĀSTIVĀDA	
Sīlakkhandha-vagga (13)		Section 3 (10)		Sīlaskandha-nipāta (23)	
1 Brahmajāla-sutta	GP	21 梵動經	GP	47 Brahmajāla-sūtra	GP
2 Sāmaññaphala-sutta	GP	27 沙門果經	GP	44 Rāja-sūtra	GP
3 Ambaṭṭha-sutta	GP	20 阿摩晝經	GP	35 Ambāṣṭha-sūtra	GP
4 Soṇadaṇḍa-sutta	GP	22 種德經	GP	33 Śroṇatāṇḍya-sūtra	GP
5 Kuṭṭadanta-sutta	GP	23 究羅檀頭經	GP	34 Kūṭatāṇḍya-sūtra	GP
6 Mahāli-sutta	GP			32 Mahallī-sūtra	GP
7 Jāliya-sutta	GP			30 Maṇḍisa-sūtra I	GP
8 Kassapaśihanāda-sutta	GP	25 俱形梵志經	GP	46 Kāśyapa-sūtra	GP?
9 Poṭṭhapāda-sutta	GP-n	28 布吒婆樓經	GP-n	36 Pṛṣṭhapāla-sūtra	GP-n
10 Subha-sutta	GP			42 Śuka-sūtra	GP
11 Kevaddha-sutta	GP	24 堅固經	GP	29 Kaivartī-sūtra	GP
12 Lohicca-sutta	GP	29 露遮經	GP	28 Lohitya-sūtra II	GP
13 Tevijja-sutta	GP-a	26 三明經	GP-a	45 Vāśiṣṭha-sūtra	GP-a
[MN 51 Kandaraka-sutta]	GP			25 Tridaṇḍī-sūtra	GP
				26 Piṅgalātreyā-sūtra	GP
				27 Lohitya-sūtra I	GP
				31 Maṇḍisa-sūtra II	GP
				37 Kāraṇavādi-sūtra	GP
				38 Puḍgala-sūtra	GP
				39 Śruta-sūtra	GP
				40 Mahalla-sūtra	GP
				41 Anyatama-sūtra	GP
				43 Jīvaka-sūtra	GP-a
[MN 55 Jīvaka-sutta]					

KEY GP gradual path; -a with *apramāṇas*; -n with *nirodha*

The Sarvāstivāda *śīlaskandhanipāta* begins with the *Tridaṇḍi-sūtra*, a sūtra without an equivalent in the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka Dīrgha collections. In the only more or less complete manuscript of the Sarvāstivāda Dīrgha collection to survive, the scheme of the path is not set out quite in full in the first sūtra (*Tridaṇḍi-sūtra*), and the immediately following sūtra (*Piṅgalātreya-sūtra*) abbreviates the scheme with reference back to this.²³ The scheme of the path is given in its fullest form in the third sūtra of the collection, the *Lohitya-sūtra I*.²⁴ There then follow eighteen sūtras that once more all abbreviate and adapt this scheme to the particular narrative frame in question.²⁵ In the case of the final two sūtras of the *śīlaskandhanipāta*, the *Kāśyapa-sūtra* and *Brahmajāla-sūtra*, the situation is unclear as the text of these two sūtras is incomplete in the manuscript. Given that in both the Theravāda DN and the Dharmaguptaka DĀ the equivalents of the *Kāśyapa-sūtra*, the *Kassapasāhanāda-sutta* (DN 8) and the *Luoxing fanzhi jing* (DĀ-D 25), include the scheme of the path, we would expect the same to be the case in the Sarvāstivāda DĀ. Similarly, given that in the Theravāda DN and the Dharmaguptaka DĀ the *Brahmajāla-sutta* (DN 1) and the *Fan dong jing* (DĀ-D 21) omit the scheme of the path, we would expect this also to be the case with the Sarvāstivāda *Brahmajāla-sūtra*. This appears confirmed by two Tibetan translations of the *Brahmajāla-sūtra* (presumably of broadly Sarvāstivādin provenance).²⁶

(106c10–107a11), 27 (109b7–10), 28 (110a22–c4), 29 (113c17–19).

²³ With reference to the scheme as itemised in Table 3, the *Tridaṇḍi-sūtra* makes explicit items 1–9, 12, and 18–20; items 10–11 are clearly assumed but lost in abbreviation; items 13–17 appear to be omitted. See Choi 2015: 44–51.

²⁴ Melzer 2006: 20. The *Prṣṭhapāla-sūtra*, ten sūtras later, also refers back to the *Tridaṇḍi-sūtra* (Melzer 2006: 38), but it seems unlikely that we should read much significance into this, as the manuscript appears to be unsystematic regarding the sūtras it refers back to (cf. Melzer 2006: 7, n. 37), and moreover does not always name the sūtra it is referring to (cf. Melzer 2010: 20–21).

²⁵ See Melzer 2004: 15–22: DĀ-S 25 (360v8–366v8), 26 (369r3), 27 (370r8–382r2), 28 (385r4–5), 29 (387v5–6), 30 (390v4–391v1), 31 (391v7), 32 (395r1–v1), 33 (400v1–3), 34 (409r5–6), 35 (442v2–4), 36 (417r8–418r1), 37 (424v1), 38 (426r6–8), 39 (427v1–3), 40 (430r6), 41 (430r7), 42 (432r8–v3), 43 (434v4), 44 (446r6–v1), 45 (450r7–v6).

²⁶ One in the Sūtra collection (Derge-Tohoku no. 352) and another in Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (Derge-Tohoku 4049: *mngon pa, ju* 141b4–153b6); for a translation of the former, see Weller 1935; cf. Anālayo 2014a.

In sum, then, we can say that in the three versions of DN-DĀ that survive more or less in full, we find that one of the three principal sections comprises a series of sūtras that employ the same gradual scheme of the Buddhist path in a variety of narrative frames (and in nine cases in principle a parallel narrative frame is used in all three redactions). In the Theravāda DN we have a series of twelve *suttas*, in the Dharmaguptaka DĀ a series of nine sūtras, and in the Sarvāstivāda DĀ a series of twenty-one or twenty-two sūtras. In the case of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda collections, the name of the section derives from the fact that this scheme includes an extended account of the Buddhist monk's *śīla* as the initial stage of the path. As I noted earlier, when considering the Theravāda DN in isolation a century ago, T. W. Rhys Davids took the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* as the original narrative frame. In light of the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda versions it would seem better to consider the scheme of the path as having no "original" context, but rather as a freestanding scheme that was deliberately employed in a variety of different contexts for narrative effect.

2. The Dīghanikāya/Dīrghāgama gradual scheme of the path

In the Theravāda version the scheme can be set out in terms of a sequence of twenty stages or items.²⁷ The account begins with (1) the appearance of a Tathāgata in the world;²⁸ (2) a householder hears his teaching, gains faith, and gives up his household life to go forth into the life of a Buddhist monk; (3) he lives according to the moral restraint of the Buddhist monastic rule; (4) he lives guarding the senses and (5) being mindful and fully aware in all he does (eating, drinking, urinating, defecating, walking, standing, sitting, lying down, etc.); (6) he thus finds contentment in his life as a monk, and

²⁷ The division into twenty items is in part interpretative and is not found explicitly articulated in the text itself or in the exegetical tradition. As Manné (1995: 6–12) notes, different scholars have set out this scheme of the path in different ways; she cites Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I: 57–59, MacQueen 1988: 279–280, Meisig 1987: 39. Yit (2004: 16, n. 34) adds Griffiths 1983: 52–53. In dividing the scheme into twenty items I follow Yit, though in places use different terminology to characterise a stage; in practice this division more or less follows Manné's division, though she combines items (1) and (2) and splits item (20) into three parts.

²⁸ DN: *idha* [...] *tathāgato loke uppajjati*. DĀ-S: *iha* [...] *śāstā loka utpadyate tathāgato*. DĀ-D: 如來出現於世.

Table 3. The gradual scheme of the path: Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, English

1 tathāgato loka upajjati	śāstā loka utpadyate tathāgato	如來出現於世	the Tathāgata appears in the world
2 pabbajati	pravrajati	出家修道	he goes forth
3 pāṭimokkha-samvarasamvuta	prātimokṣasamvarasamvṛta	具諸戒行	moral restraint
4 indriyesu gutta-dvāro	indriyair guptadvārah	善護六根	guarding the senses
bhojane mattaññu	bhojane mātṛajñah	食知止足	knowing the right amount to eat
jāgarivam anuyutto	jāgarikānyukta	精進覺悟	keeping awake
satipatthāna	smṛtyupasthāna	念處	application of mindfulness
5 sati-sampajañña	smṛtisamprajanya	常念一心	mindfulness and awareness
6 santutṭha	santūṣṭa	趣足而已	content
7 vivittam senāsanam	prāntāni śayanāsanaṇi	樂在靜	secluded dwelling
8 pañca-nivaraṇa-pahāna	pañca-varaṇāni ... prahāya	滅五蓋	abandoning the 5 hindrances
9 pathama-jjhāna	prathama-dhyāna	初禪	1st absorption
10 dutiya-jjhāna	dvitīya-dhyāna	二禪	2nd absorption
11 tatiya-jjhāna	trītiya-dhyāna	三禪	3rd absorption
12 catuttha-jjhāna	catuṛtha-dhyāna	四禪	4th absorption
mettā	maitrī	慈	kindness
karuṇā	karuṇā	悲	compassion
muditā	muditā	喜	sympathetic joy
upekkhā	upekṣā	捨	equanimity
ākāśaññācāyatana	ākāśānantyāyatana	空處	infinite space
viññāṇañcāyatana	viññāṇānantyāyatana	識處	infinite consciousness
ākīrcaññāyatana	ākīrcañyāyatana	不用處	nothingness
nevasañnāsaññāyatana	naivasamjñāsaññāyatana	有想無思處	neither perception nor non-perception
saññāvedayitanirodha	saññāvedayitanirodha	想知滅定	cessation of perception and feeling
paññāya c' assa disvā	prajñāya cāya dṛṣtvā	意見 / 慧觀	and seeing by means of his wisdom
13 ñāna-dassana		心化作化身	knowing and seeing
14 mano-maya-kāya	mano-maya-kāya	神通智	mind-made body
15 iddhi-vidha	rddhiviśaya	天耳智	various powers of meditation
16 dibba-sota-dhātu	divyasrotrajñāna	他心智	the divine ear
17 ceto-pariya-ñāna	cetahpariyajñāna	宿命智	knowledge of others' mind
18 pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāna	pūrvanivāsānusmṛtijñāna	生死智	knowledge of past lives
19 satta-cūtupapāta-ñāna	cyutyupapāḍajñāna	無漏智	knowledge of beings' death and birth
20 āsava-kkhaya-ñāna	āśravakṣayaññāna		knowledge of the destruction of taints

This table includes additional items included in schemes discussed below

(7) retires to a secluded place to sit and practise meditation; (8) he abandons the five hindrances, and (9–12) he attains four successive “absorptions” (*dhyānas*). Using the unshakeable mental stability and purity established in the fourth *dhyāna* he applies and directs his mind towards further meditative accomplishments: (13) the understanding that his frail body made of the four primary elements is what his consciousness depends on, (14) the ability to produce a mind made body, (15) various powers (becoming many, disappearing, passing through walls, sinking into the earth, walking on water, flying through the air, touching the sun and moon, visiting the world of Brahmā), (16) the divine ear that hears sounds human and divine whether

far or near, (17) the knowledge of others' minds, (18) knowledge of his previous lives, (19) knowledge of the birth and death of beings in accordance with their actions, and finally (20) knowledge of the destruction of defilements (*āsrava*). This final knowledge is expressed in terms that reference the four truths: he knows the defilements, their arising, their ceasing and the way leading to their ceasing; knowing this he is freed from the round of rebirth. Elsewhere in the Nikāya-Āgama literature items 18–20 are referred to collectively as the three knowledges (*vidyā*), items 15–20 as the six higher knowledges (*abhijñā*).²⁹ For the sake of comparison with the other redactions of this material, these twenty items are set out in Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and English in **Table 3**, incorporating additional items that occur in some versions or in variations discussed below. In subsequent tables I shall use Sanskrit terminology as the default.

The Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgamas present this same scheme with only minor variations (**Table 4**).³⁰ The Dharmaguptaka version inserts two further items (knowing the right amount of food and being devoted to wakefulness) after no. 4 (guarding the senses), and begins the account of mindfulness in daily activities with the bare formula of the application of mindfulness.³¹ Neither the Dharmaguptaka nor Sarvāstivāda versions properly distinguish no. 13, presenting it in a shorter form as part of no. 14.³² And both the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda versions place no. 6 (contentment with the monk's life) after the initial account of the restraint of the monastic rule (no. 3), before its fuller elaboration. There are, of course, various differences and additions in wording and detail, but such differences have little bearing on the overall vision of the structure of the path.³³

²⁹ See, for example, DN III 275.25–28, 281.13–28; Stache-Rosen and Mittal, *Saṅgīti-sūtra*, I: 91–92, 170; T I.53b4–5, 54b9–11.

³⁰ For the text of the Dharmaguptaka version, see T I.83c3–86c16; this is partially translated (items 4–12) in Anālayo 2016: 5–11. For the text of the Sarvāstivāda version, see Choi 2015 and SBV II: 216.8–253.23 (the *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* found in the *Samghabhedavastu*).

³¹ T I.85a6–10; see Yit 2004: 209–210; Anālayo, *Comparative Study* II: 620, n. 173; Anālayo 2016: 5, 17.

³² SBV II 245.24–25; T I, 1.85c13–28. Cf. Meisig 1987: 328–35; Yit 2004: 332–33.

³³ These are discussed in some detail with reference to items 1–8 in Yit 2004, and with reference to items 4–12 in Anālayo 2016.

Table 4. The 'Tathāgata appears ...' gradual scheme in DN, DĀ-D, DĀ-S

	DN 2–8, 10–12	DĀ-D 20, 22–25, 27, 29	DĀ-S 25–26	DĀ-S 27–29, 32–35, 37–42, 44	DĀ-S 30–31 Maṇḍisa I–II (390v4–5, 391v7)	Śrāmaṇyaphala (SBV II 230–51)	DN 9 Poṭṭhapāda (DN 181.3–185.9)	DĀ-D 28 Buzhapolou (T I.110a21–c3)	DĀ-S 36 Prīṣṭhapāla (417r8–418r1)	DN 13 Tevijja (DN I 249.25–25i.15)	DĀ-D 26 Saṃmaṃsaṃ (T I.106c10–18)	DĀ-S 43 Jīvaka (434v)	DĀ-S 45 Vāsiṣṭha (450r–450v)
1 śāstā loka utpadyate tathāgato	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2 pravrajati	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
3 prātimokṣasaṃvarasamvṛta	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
(6) saṃtuṣṭa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4 indriyair guptadvāraḥ	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
bhojane mātṛajñāḥ	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
jāgarikānuyukta	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
smṛtyupasthāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5 smṛtisamprajanya	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
6 saṃtuṣṭa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7 prāntāni śayanāsanāni	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
8 paṃca-varaṇāni ... prahāya	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
9 prathama-dhyāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
10 dvitīya-dhyāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
11 tṛtīya-dhyāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
12 caturtha-dhyāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
maitrī	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
karuṇā	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
muditā	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
upekṣā	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ākāśānāntyaīyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
vijñānānāntyaīyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ākīñcanyāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
saṃjñāvedayitanirodha	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
13 ñāṇa-dassana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
14 mano-maya-kāya	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
15 rddhiviśaya	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
16 divyaśrotrajñāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
17 cetaḥparyāyajñāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
18 pūrvanivāsānusmṛtijñāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
19 cyutyupapādayajñāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
20 āsravakṣayajñāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

• item explicit

? item probably understood

◦ item understood in abbreviation

Turning to the application of the gradual scheme in twelve *suttas* in the Theravāda DN, we find the full path scheme (items 1–20) indicated in ten of these *suttas*. In two *suttas*, however, we find some divergence from the full scheme. In the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* (DN 9) the divergence occurs after the attainment of the fourth *dhyāna*: in place of items 13–20 we find an account of the attainment of the first three formless meditations (*ārūpya*) followed by “the progressive attainment of the final cessation of perception of one who is aware” (*anupubbābhisaññānirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti*).³⁴ It seems likely that this should be taken as indicating what is elsewhere in the Nikāyas called “the cessation of perception and feeling” (*saṃjñāvedayitanirodha*).³⁵ It is noteworthy that in the context of this discussion between the Buddha and the wanderer (*parivrājaka*) Poṭṭhapāda, the scheme stops short of knowledge of the destruction of the defilements: cessation of perception rather than final awakening marks the end of the scheme. In the *Tevijja-sutta* (DN 13) the divergence occurs after no. 8 (abandoning the five hindrances): in place of the *dhyānas* and various knowledges (items 9–20) we find the practice of the four immeasurable meditations (*apramāṇa*), namely kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*).³⁶ And here in the context of a discussion between the Buddha and brahmins the account of the path once more falls short of knowledge of the destruction of de-

³⁴ DN I 184.24–25.

³⁵ The precise meaning of *anupubbābhisaññānirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti* is unclear; my translation is influenced by the commentary (*sampajānantassa ante saññānirodhasamāpatti*), which explicitly identifies the attainment with *saññāvedayitanirodha* (Sv II 374).

³⁶ The abbreviated text perhaps leaves a question as to whether the four *dhyānas* (items 9–12) should also be included at DN I 249–51. B^c (1956) I 234.13–14 (and according to E^c, the only Burmese manuscript used) insert *mettā* immediately after *cittaṃ samādhīyati* in the place of the first *jhāna*: *tass’ ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato pāmujaṃ jāyati [...] sukhino cittaṃ samādhīyati. so mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati*. S^c (1894) I 313.4–5, C^c (1956) I 636.9–10, S^c (BUDSIR) = S^c (1922) I 310 all agree. E^c (1888) I 250.30–32, following the one Sinhala manuscript used, inserts *pe*, reading *cittaṃ samādhīyati—pe—so mettāsahagatena cetasā* and suggests (250, n. 5) that the manuscript must mean sections from the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* that include the four *jhānas*. Sv II 405 seems open (*tattha idha tathāgato ti ādi sāmaññaphale vitthāritam*) but might be read as implying everything; Sv-pt does not comment. The Dhammakāya Foundation “pilot version” (Pathum Thani: Dhammachai Institute, 2013) omits *pe* here without comment (241.2–3).

filements and concludes with union with Brahmā (*brahmuno saavyūpago, brahmasahavyatā*) after death.³⁷

If we now compare the Dharmaguptaka DĀ, we find a remarkably similar situation. Seven of the nine sūtras that incorporate the gradual scheme of the path set out the full scheme from the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world through to knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. And the equivalents of precisely those *suttas* where there is divergence in the Theravāda DN, the *Poṭṭhapāda* and the *Tevijja*, show a very similar divergence. Thus in the equivalent of the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta*, the *Buzhapolou jing* (DĀ-D 28), instead of items 13–20 we find all four (rather than just the first three) formless attainments and explicitly the cessation of perception and feeling.³⁸ Again there is no account of final awakening through knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. In the equivalent of the *Tevijja-sutta*, the *Sanming jing* (DĀ-D 26), the four immeasurable meditations are inserted following the four *dhyānas*, replacing in this case just items 13–20; the account ends with birth in the world of Brahmā rather than with knowledge of the destruction of the defilements.³⁹

Turning finally to the Sarvāstivāda DĀ, once again we find essentially the same pattern. Ignoring the *Kāśyapa-sūtra* for lack of evidence, we find that fourteen of twenty-one sūtras that present the gradual scheme of the path give the full scheme from the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world to knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. Two further sūtras all but give the full scheme, reducing the “six higher knowledges” (*abhijñā*), items 15–20, to the “three knowledges” (*vidyā*), items 18–20,⁴⁰ while two other sūtras omit the final knowledge.⁴¹ Once again we find that the parallel to the

³⁷ DN I 252: so [...] *bhikkhu kāyassa bheda parama maraṇa vasavattissa brahmuno saavyūpago bhavissati*.

³⁸ T I.110a22–c4; 1.110b15: 入想知滅定. See Stuart 2013: 56–65, 92–99.

³⁹ T I.106c10–107a11 (生梵天上). Cf. Anālayo 2015: 9–10.

⁴⁰ The *Tridaṇḍi-* and *Piṅgalatreya-sūtras*; see Choi 2015: 51. It is worth noting that the Sarvāstivāda account appears to consistently employ the term *abhijñā* for items 15–17 and *vidyā* for items 18–20; despite Gnoli’s presentation of the text, this applies to SBV’s *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra* as well; see Choi 2015: 26–27.

⁴¹ The two *Maṇḍisa-sūtras* (30, 31) include an abbreviated path scheme, but appear to end with knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings, omitting the final knowledge. Why this is so is not clear, but it is worth noting that the Theravāda *Udumbarikaśihanāda-sutta* (DN 25) likewise does this. In the latter case it is perhaps related to the narrative frame: the Buddha is addressing rowdy and sceptical

Poṭṭhapāda-sutta, the *Prṣṭhapāla-sūtra*, diverges, and in a similar—though not quite identical—way. The divergence again occurs following the fourth *dhyāna*, but in this case we move straight to the final attainment of cessation of perception and feeling (*abhisamjñāveditanirodha*) without mention of the intervening formless attainments.⁴² Again there is no account of final awakening through knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. The Sarvāstivāda parallel to the *Tevijja-sutta* and *Sanming jing* is the *Vāsiṣṭha-sūtra* (DĀ-S 45). In a similar manner the practice of the four immeasurable meditations is here put in place of the final stages of the path, though the abbreviations of the text make it unclear whether this is preceded by the four *dhyānas* or not.⁴³ Like its Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka parallels the *sūtra* makes no mention of knowledge of the destruction of the *āsravas*, but concludes with rebirth in the company of Brahmā.⁴⁴ The Sarvāstivāda DĀ includes a further *sūtra*, the *Jīvaka-sūtra* (DĀ-S 43), that places the practice of the first immeasurable meditation, *maitrī*, apparently after the initial items, again the abbreviations of the text making it unclear whether we should include the four *dhyānas* in the scheme or not. However, the wording *yāvac chīlaskamḍho* suggests that only the material up to and including moral restraint should be understood in this case.⁴⁵ The *Jīvaka-sūtra* has

wanderers; pointedly they are not persuaded to become followers and there is a narrative suspense in holding something back.

⁴² Melzer 2006: 38–39 (ms 417r8–418r1), 253–257. Cf. Stuart 2013: 56–65, 92–99. Stuart considers the possible significance of this difference at length. Nonetheless, that the general context is the progressive attenuation of *saṃjñā* is implied subsequently in the *sūtra* when the four *dhyānas* followed by the first three formless attainments (as in the Theravāda version) are presented as culminating in cessation. See Melzer 2006: 40, 262 (ms 418v5–8); Stuart 2013: 30–31, 74–75, 107. In considering such differences we must also acknowledge that we are relying on a single manuscript that contains, according to Hartmann (2014: 143), “countless mistakes, haplographies and dittographies, wrong *akṣaras* and mutilated words, omitted or wrongly added negations, and all this to a degree that often renders whole paragraphs incomprehensible”; noting that the manuscript contains no corrections, Hartmann concludes, “it appears that the manuscript was never read and it surely was not meant to serve as a study book for someone interested in the contents of the texts”, which is, of course, how I and others are attempting to use it.

⁴³ Melzer 2006: 22.

⁴⁴ DĀ-S ms 450v6: *vrahmakasabhāgatāyāṃ upapaddyate*.

⁴⁵ DĀ-S ms 434v4: *iha Jīvaka śāstā loka utpadyate pūrvavad yāvac chīlaskamḍho maitrīśahagatena cittaena ...*

a Theravāda parallel in the Majjhimanikāya (MN 55). While this includes an account of the first immeasurable meditation, it is not placed within the frame of the gradual scheme of the path that begins with the appearance of a Tathāgata in the world.⁴⁶ It is also worth noting that the *Kāraṇavādī-sūtra* (DĀ-S 13), too, has a parallel in the Theravāda Majjhimanikāya (MN 51, the *Kandaraka-sutta*); this parallel turns out to be one of ten Majjhimanikāya *suttas* that include a version of the gradual scheme of the path (see Table 5).⁴⁷

The presentation of the gradual scheme of the path beginning with the Tathāgata's appearance in the world in the three available versions of the *Dīrghāgama* is summarised in Table 4. We have then in all three versions of this *śīlaskandha* section a sequence of sūtras—ten in the Theravāda, seven in the Dharmaguptaka, and fourteen in the Sarvāstivāda (fifteen if we can count the *Kāśyapa-sūtra*)—that reproduce the same scheme of the path: a scheme that involves the practice the four *dhyānas* followed by a sequence of six knowledges culminating in the knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. Moreover, in all three versions there are in addition two sūtras—the same two—that diverge in essentially the same way: one replaces the knowledges that follow the practice of the *dhyānas* with the cessation of perception and feeling (preceded by the formless meditations in two versions); the other replaces those knowledges with the four immeasurable meditations leading to rebirth in the Brahma world. Neither of the divergent schemes ends in the destruction of the defilements and awakening. This is a remarkable congruence and deserves our attention.

With regard to the relationship between the three redactions, either we can regard one among them as the template from which the other two derive or, which seems better to me, we can view all three as deriving from some earlier redaction that no longer survives. But either way, it is clear that at a relatively early point in its development, the compilers of the *dīrgha* collection of sūtras deliberately chose to develop a substantial section that highlights one particular scheme of the path—that involving the practice of the four *dhyānas* and the sequence of six or three knowledges ending in

⁴⁶ MN I 370.

⁴⁷ Bucknell (2014: 93) suggests that strictly the *Kāraṇavādī-sūtra* has two parallels in the Theravāda redaction: MN 51, which includes the gradual path, and AN 4.198 (AN II 205–208), which does not. This seems to be an error, as the latter *does* include the gradual path; it is a parallel in that it incorporates much of the same material, but it lacks the frame which mentions the wanderer Kandaraka.

the knowledge of the destruction of the defilements—by presenting it in a sequence of sūtras that place it within a variety of narrative frames.⁴⁸ The emphasis on this scheme suggests that they regarded this way of presenting the Buddhist path as normative. At the same time it is clear that they wished to accommodate the practice of the formless meditations with cessation and also the immeasurable meditations, but in a way that seems to subordinate these to the former scheme: each occurs in just one sūtra (or two in the case of the *apramāṇa* scheme in DĀ-S), where they are placed in a specific narrative frame that does not explicitly end in awakening. The fact that the Sarvāstivāda redaction effectively reinforces this basic pattern (by adding to the number of sūtras that present the path by way of the four *dhyānas* and the sequence of six or three knowledges) suggests that the wish to present the Buddhist path in this way was not merely associated with the earliest phase of development, but something that persisted among the reciters of the *dirgha* collection.⁴⁹ And as we shall see this basic pattern is further reinforced by what we find elsewhere in the Nikāya-Āgama literature.

3. The “Tathāgata appears” scheme in the other Nikāyas and Āgamas

As Rhys Davids and others have noted, the *sīlakkhandha* gradual scheme of the path beginning with the appearance of the Tathāgata is also found in the Theravāda Majjhimanikāya. In fact there are exactly nine *suttas* that present a scheme of the path beginning in the same way as the DN version: “Here a Tathāgata appears in the world ...” (*idha tathāgato loke uppajjati*) (See **Table 5**). Seven of these give a straightforward version of the scheme ending in the knowledge of the destruction of defilements; as in the DN, the scheme is abbreviated in *suttas* placed later in the MN, but not always as radically as in the DN.⁵⁰ But the scheme clearly constitutes a distinct MN version: (1) the presentation is generally briefer (the similes for the *dhyānas* and knowledges

⁴⁸ In most, if not all, cases these narrative frames involve the presentation of the Buddhist path to those who are not followers of the Buddha, namely, wanderers of other schools, brahmins, etc.

⁴⁹ Cf. Bucknell 2014: 91–95.

⁵⁰ *Cūḷa-Hatthipadopama* (MN I 178–84), *Kandaraka* (MN I 344–48), *Apaṇṇaka* (MN I 412–13), *Sandaka* (MN I 521–22), *Cūḷa-Sakuludāyī* (MN II 38–39), *Ghoṭamukha* (MN II 162), *Devadaha* (MN II 226–67).

are omitted,⁵¹ the *śīla* section is much reduced); (2) there are several minor differences in wording (e.g. the introduction to the first *dhyāna* is different from that of the DN version and in fact corresponds more closely to that of the DĀ-D and DĀ-S versions); (3) like the DĀ-D and DĀ-S versions, it places the paragraph on contentment immediately after the account of *śīla*; (4) items 13–17 are missing so that the scheme progresses straight from the fourth *dhyāna* to the “three knowledges” (*vidyā*)—of previous lives, of the birth and death of beings in accordance with their actions, and of the destruction of defilements—and in this it is similar to the Sarvāstivāda DĀ presentation found in the *Tridaṇḍi-* and *Piṅgalatreya-sūtras* (DĀ-S 25–26). Of the two remaining MN *suttas*, the *Dantabhūmi-sutta* (MN 125) inserts additional items into the middle of the scheme, while the *Mahā-Taṇhāsamkhaya* (MN 38) replaces the items (13–20) that follow the *dhyānas* with a distinctive account of the final ceasing of unskillful states based on mindfulness of the body and the cessation of the links of dependent origination. I will return to the significance of this below. The items added in the *Dantabhūmi-sutta* are first the two items (knowing the right amount of food and being devoted to wakefulness) that are inserted after no. 4 (guarding the senses) in the Dharmaguptaka DĀ version of the scheme. It also inserts the formula of the four applications of mindfulness in place of the first *dhyāna* (item no. 9).

Elsewhere in the Theravāda Nikāyas we find two further occurrences of the gradual scheme of the path beginning with the appearance of the Tathāgata, both in the Aṅguttaranikāya. The first, although quite abbreviated, is a straightforward reproduction of the MN version of the scheme ending with the four *dhyānas* and the three knowledges; in fact it reproduces, without the introductory frame, the relevant portion of the *Kandaraka-sutta* (MN 51).⁵² The second inserts after the fourth *dhyāna*, replacing the three knowledges (items 18–20), the four formless attainments, and the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, and concludes with “having seen with his wisdom, the defilements are destroyed” (*paññāya cassa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*).⁵³ In this it resembles the DN/DĀ *Poṭṭhapāda/Prṣṭhapāla* scheme, although unlike the latter this AN scheme does explicitly conclude

⁵¹ The relevant similes are found elsewhere in MN when the *dhyānas* and knowledges are presented in other contexts. See MN I 276–280, MN II 15–21, MN III 92–94.

⁵² See AN II 208.11–211.22 for the gradual path; but MN I 342.23–349.3 = AN II 206.5–208.29.

⁵³ AN V 204.4–209.10.

with the destruction of the defilements and awakening. Finally we can note that a *Samyuttanikāya sutta* includes the statement of the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world and then progresses to the practice of the immeasurable meditations.⁵⁴

Turning now to the surviving Sarvāstivāda sources, mostly in Chinese translation, we find six sūtras in the *Madhyamāgama* (MĀ 104, 146, 198, 201, 204, 208) that present the gradual scheme of the path beginning with the phrase “the teacher, the Tathāgata, appears in the world”. Three of these (MĀ 104, 146, 204) give what might be regarded as the normal Sarvāstivādin *Madhyamāgama* version of the gradual scheme of the path; we can probably add MĀ 208 to this list.⁵⁵ Like the *Majjhima* version, it represents a reduced

⁵⁴ SN IV 320.10–322.26. This includes the statement attested in the *Tevijja-sutta* (DN I 251) that when these are developed the sphere of action with limits does not remain or persist (*yam pamāṇakatam kammaṃ na taṃ tatrāvasissati na taṃ tatrāvatipīṭhati*), illustrated with the simile of a strong conch blower easily signalling in all four directions.

⁵⁵ MĀ 208 straightforwardly introduces the gradual path but the account appears to stall at the fourth *dhyāna*; Anālayo speculates that text may have been lost (*Comparative Study* I: 436). The problem is how to understand the abbreviations in the Chinese translation of MĀ. Initially it is puzzling that the unabbreviated scheme of the path is given not in the earlier MĀ 104 (T I.595a7–12), but in MĀ 146 (T I.656c26–658a17). This, however, is explained by the fact that all but items 1 (the arising of the Tathāgata) and 9–11 (*dhyānas* 1–3) are already given in full in MĀ 80 (T I.552b13–553c18); the four *dhyānas* are given in full first in MĀ 2 (T I.422b11–22). With regard to MĀ 204, Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 186 suggests that the person who attains the *dhyānas* is the Buddha, rather than a monk in general (as in MN 26). It seems to me that Anālayo has misconstrued the straightforward insertion here of the abbreviated full scheme of the path, beginning with the arising of the Tathāgata in the world. The wording here is exactly as at T I.785c24–26 (MĀ 208), where Anālayo does not query the insertion of the gradual path scheme or suggest that it is the Buddha who attains the *dhyānas* (*Comparative Study* I: 436). The manner in which the translators of MĀ abbreviate repetitions is something that requires further examination by careful comparison of the translation with the original Indic wording, but it seems to me that alongside the use of such expressions as 乃至 (*yāvat*) we must assume silent abbreviation in places; cf. T I.595a8–10 (MĀ 104) where 乃至 is omitted but must be assumed. In sum, at T I.778b13 (MĀ 204) I think we need to understand some silent abbreviation and subsequently that the whole of T I.656c29–657c21 (from MĀ 146) is intended and so translate: “O five *bhikṣus*, when a Tathāgata arises in the world, free from attachment, a perfectly awakened one, perfect in knowledge and conduct, faring well, knower of the world, unsurpassed person, charioteer on the path of dharma, teacher of gods and men, a buddha, the

account when compared with the Dīrghāgama version. In fact the MĀ version is more reduced than the MN version. While the Theravāda Majjhima version omits items 13–17, the Sarvāstivāda Madhyama version appears to routinely omit items 13–19, and thus moves straight from the fourth *dhyāna* to knowledge of the destruction of the defilements.

The Sarvāstivāda MĀ 204 represents a parallel to the Theravāda *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* (MN 26). The Theravāda version also inserts an account of the stages of the path at this point in the Buddha's sermon to the five monks after his awakening, but its account starts with the four *dhyānas*, continues with the four formless attainments and ends with the cessation of perception and feeling and the destruction of the defilements. The Sarvāstivāda MĀ 104 is a parallel to the Theravāda *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* (DN 25) and the Dharmaguptaka *Santuona jing* (DĀ 8). Significantly both of these also contain the gradual scheme of the path at this point, but they do not begin with the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world. The Dharmaguptaka version begins with leaving home to enter the religious life; the Theravāda version assumes the state of one who has already entered the religious life. The Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda versions also differ by giving an account of the practice of the four *apramāṇas* instead of the four *dhyānas* and

blessed one. [*Silent abbreviation.*] He abandons—*up to*—the five hindrances that are defilements of mind and weaken wisdom; separate from desires, separate from bad unskillful *dharmas*—*to*—he attains and dwells in the fourth meditation.” (五比丘。若 時如來出興于世。無所著等正覺明行成爲善逝世間解無上士道法御天人師號佛衆祐。彼斷乃至五蓋心穢慧羸。離欲離惡不善之法。至得第四禪成就遊。) Here I take the initial “he abandons—*up to*—” as abbreviating the twenty-five repetitions of “abandons” (彼斷) at T I.657a15–c20. Significantly the abbreviations of modern editions also mislead modern scholars; with reference to MN II 226.6–13 (MN 101), Richard Gombrich makes precisely the same error when he comments (1994: 1087), “At this point there is an irrelevant insertion of a stock passage (pp. 226–7) about how a Buddha becomes Enlightened.” The radically abbreviated stock passage is the gradual scheme of the path and so not about how a buddha becomes enlightened, but how a buddha teaches *others* to become enlightened (and so incidentally perhaps not so irrelevant in a dialogue with a Jain ascetic). In light of all this, the omission of the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsravas* in MĀ 208 at T I.786b2 might be regarded as a silent abbreviation (cf. Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 436), although my survey provides various examples of accounts of the path stopping short of awakening.

stopping short of the destruction of the defilements, mentioning only the knowledges of past lives and of the death and rebirth of beings.⁵⁶

The two remaining MĀ sūtras (MĀ 198, 201) that contain an account of the gradual path beginning with the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world are parallels to the Theravāda *Dantabhūmi-sutta* (MN 125) and *Mahā-Taṇhāsaṃkhaya-sutta* (MN 38) respectively, and just like those two *suttas* they contain variations—essentially the same variations—on the scheme: like its Theravāda counterpart MĀ 198 inserts the practice of the four applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*) prior to the attainment of *dhyāna*, although these do not replace the first *dhyāna* as in MN 125; MĀ 198 in addition stops short of knowledge of the destruction of the defilements, talking just of the “imperturbability” associated with the attainment of the fourth *dhyāna*; this may be deliberate, but silent abbreviation in the Chinese translation is not impossible.⁵⁷ MĀ 201 appears to move straight from the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world and the listing of his qualities to the final formula involving a distinctive account of the final ceasing of unskilful states based on mindfulness of body and the cessation of the links of dependent origination, also found in its Theravāda parallel (MN 38). It seems likely that there is silent abbreviation here and that the gradual path up to the attainment of the fourth *dhyāna* is intended (as in MĀ 104, 204 and 208); otherwise we have an account of how someone who is already awakened (the perfectly awakened Tathāgata) practises to become awakened, which makes little sense.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ In fact MĀ 104 also mentions the four *apramāṇas* at T I.594b17–20, before the Tathāgata’s arising in the world, and so not as part of the gradual path scheme.

⁵⁷ Cf. comments above, n. 55. With regard to the absence of the three knowledges in the MĀ version, Anālayo (2006: 17–18) considers the loss of text a possibility, but then considers “both versions as viable presentations”. For a translation of MĀ 198 and a full discussion of the differences, see Anālayo 2006 and Anālayo, *Comparative Study II*: 717–22;

⁵⁸ MĀ 201 at T I.769c12–15 has the fixed statement of the Tathāgata’s appearance in the world and his qualities ending with “a buddha, the blessed one”; this is immediately followed by “he sees forms with his eye; with regard to a pleasant form he does not become attached” ([...] 佛衆祐。彼眼見色。於好色而不樂著。). In MN 38 the phrase about seeing forms but not being attached occurs after the statement of the gradual path as its conclusion; it seems likely that after 佛衆祐 we should understand a silent abbreviation (as in MĀ 204) and insert: “[...] He abandons—*up to*—the five hindrances that are defilements of mind and weaken wisdom; separate from desires, separate from bad unskilful *dharmas*—*to*—he attains and dwells in

Looking beyond the Madhyamāgama, in the Saṃyuktāgama a sūtra (SĀ 636), belonging to the *smṛtyupasthāna-saṃyukta*, inserts the *smṛtyupasthāna* formula in place of four *dhyānas* but lacks any additional explicit mention of the destruction of the defilements. In the context of Theravāda Nikāyas I noted above two Aṅguttara examples of the gradual scheme beginning with the arising of the Tathāgata in the world. These have no surviving parallels in the Chinese translation of the Ekottarikāgama, but the Aṅguttara *sutta* that presents the MN version of the Theravāda gradual path, proceeding from the four *dhyānas* to the three knowledges, has a parallel that survives embedded in the *Abhidharma Saṃgītiparyāya*;⁵⁹ this Sarvāstivāda version presents the MĀ Sarvāstivāda gradual path, proceeding from the four *dhyānas* straight to knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. It should also be noted that MĀ 19, which is parallel to the Theravāda *Devadaha-sutta* (MN 101), one of the seven Majjhimanikāya *suttas* that contain the gradual path, also contains the scheme of the gradual path, but one that starts with the abandoning of the five hindrances, omitting items 1–7. There are two *suttas* similar in form in the Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara-nikāyas which I have not included in Table 5, as the wording of the initial statement of the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world does not quite conform.⁶⁰ These state that the Tathāgata teaches in the former the aggregates and in the latter the person (*satkāya*), their arising, ceasing and the way leading to their ceasing: when the long lived gods hear this they are seized by a sense of urgency, realising that their existence, too, is limited.

To sum up, the Theravāda Nikāyas contain a total of twenty-four occurrences of this path scheme beginning with the phrase “the Tathāgata arises in the world”. Nineteen of these occurrences—ten in DN, eight in MN and one in AN—present the path with reference to the four *dhyānas* and three knowledges; one further occurrence (MN 38) is similar in principle, but describes awakening without reference to the three knowledges. Two occurrences—one in DN and one in AN—present the path with reference to the formless attainments and cessation, though only one of these explicitly concludes in awakening. Two versions, one in DN and one in SN, present the path with ref-

the fourth meditation.” See note 55.

⁵⁹ T (1536) XXVI.406c4–407b7; see Stache-Rosen and Mittal, *Saṃgītisūtra*, I: 124–25.

⁶⁰ SN III 85.13–19; AN II 33.16–31; they begin with a simile and then state *yadā tathāgato loke uppajjati* rather than *idha tathāgato loke uppajjati*.

erence to the immeasurable meditations; the former concludes with rebirth in the world of Brahmā, the latter is unspecific. In the Sarvāstivāda Āgamas as they survive a similar picture emerges. There are a total of twenty-nine explicit occurrences of the gradual path scheme beginning with the phrase “the Tathāgata arises in the world”. Twenty of these occurrences—sixteen in DĀ-S, three in MĀ, and one sūtra source quoted in the Abhidharma—present the path with reference to the four *dhyānas* ending in destruction of the defilements by way of the six, three or one knowledge(s) (*abhijñā/vidyā*). One similar occurrence (MĀ 201) describes awakening without reference to the three knowledges. Four similar occurrences (DĀ-S 30, 31 and MĀ 198, 208) stop short of awakening. One occurrence (DĀ-S 36) presents the path with reference to the attainment of cessation, though does not explicitly conclude in awakening. Two occurrences (DĀ-S 43, 44) present the path with reference to the immeasurable meditations, although only one of these (DĀ 44) shows their development in full and concludes with rebirth in the world of Brahmā. One occurrence (SĀ 636) replaces the *dhyānas* with the practice of the *smṛtyupasthānas* without specifying subsequent awakening.⁶¹

An initial assessment of the picture that emerges from a comparison focused on the Theravāda Majjhima and Sarvāstivāda Madhyamāgama suggests certain significant features. The first to note is the reduction of the scheme by leaving out certain items from the scheme’s beginning, middle or end. In certain cases this means that while parallel sūtras from different redactions contain the scheme of the gradual path, they do not in all cases begin with the phrase describing the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world (compare MĀ 19 with MN 101, DN 25 with MĀ 104, MN 26 with MĀ 204). This leads to other features: (1) the elaboration of the scheme by the addition of certain items (MN 125, MĀ 198); (2) the substitution of certain items with different items (MN 38, MĀ 201, MN 125, SĀ 636); (3) the substitution of one or other of the schemes already indicated in the DN-DĀ collections, namely either the formless attainments and cessation (MN 26, AN V 204–09) or the four *apramāṇas* (DN 25, DĀ-D 8).

Overall the presentation of the “Tathāgata appears” scheme of the path in the rest of the Nikāyas and Āgamas reiterates the consensus of the *śīlak-*

⁶¹ There is a further occurrence of the statement of the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world in the *Mahāsuññata-sutta* and its parallels, but it is not followed by an account of the gradual path. See MN III 116.22–25; T I.740a3–5; Skilling, *Mahāsūtras* I: 252.

khandha/sīlaskandha section of DN/DĀ. In effect the presentation sets up three schemes of the path. I shall call these:

- the four-*dhyāna* scheme
- the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme
- the *apramāṇa* scheme

Certainly the work of Rhys Davids, Schmithausen, Yit, and others has in part recognised the significance of such schemes of the path by noting their occurrence in the Nikāya-Āgama material more generally, yet the full extent to which precisely these three schemes are reproduced or adapted in the Nikāya-Āgama material remains only partially appreciated. In the rest of this article I will attempt to present as full a picture as I can based on the available sources.

That some presentations of the gradual path start at some point after the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world (item 1) means that the scope for comparing schemes of the path across the Nikāya-Āgama literature is broadened somewhat. Yet in the case of the account of the gradual path beginning with the phrase “Here ... a Tathāgata appears in the world ...”, we have a straightforward selection criterion, namely, all accounts of the path that begin with this formula. Identifying variations that do not begin with “the Tathāgata arises in the world” has proved less precise. There is a grey area where what precisely qualifies as a scheme of the path is not always clearly distinguishable from a simple listing of, say, the four *dhyānas*, or four immeasurables (*apramāṇa*).⁶² In what follows I believe I have identified all significant occurrences and that the material I present is overall representative, but I have not aimed at capturing every occurrence of the four *dhyānas*, four immeasurables, and formless attainments in the Nikāya-Āgama literature. Rather I have tried to identify those places where they occur as part of an account of the stages of the path. In places I have also included what I judge as equivalents for especially *śīla* (item 3) and destruction of the defilements (item 20).

⁶² For example, I have not included the *Mahāsakuludayi-sutta* (MN 77: III 9–22), which lists sets of items that the Buddha has explained the way to develop: *satipaṭṭhāna*, etc., eight *vimokkhas*, eight *abhibhāyatanas*, ten *kaṣiṇas*, four *jhānas*, six *abhiññās*; nor have I included the *Ākaṅkkheyya-sutta* (MN 6), which lists items that the *bhikkhu* might wish to develop, nor AN V 134–35 (parallel at MĀ 84), which lists the “thorns” that are obstacles to various attainments. On the other hand I have included the *Mahā-Assapura-sutta* (MN 39), which lists the qualities the *samaṇa* should develop.

4. The four-*dhyāna* scheme of the path

Table 6 sets out all the examples I have been able to identify of the presentation of the path centring on the four *dhyānas*, excluding those that describe the Buddha's awakening in the first person, which I deal with separately below. The table first details sūtras from MN and MĀ that are parallels, followed by sūtras from MĀ with no MN parallel but with a parallel elsewhere, then MN and MĀ sūtras with no parallels, and finally AN *suttas* with no parallel. Interestingly we find one instance where an MN *sutta* omits the *dhyānas*, but the MĀ has them, and one instance where an MN *sutta* has the *dhyānas*, but the MĀ omits them. But in both these instances the parallel that omits the *dhyānas* has some expression that is more or less equivalent to the *dhyānas*. Accordingly, following the discussion of overcoming the dangers of sense objects (*kāma*), the *Potaliya-sutta* (MN 54) talks of reaching “unified equanimity” (*upekkhā ekattā*) and “the purity of mindfulness achieved through equanimity” (*upekkhā-sati-pārisuddhi*), an expression that is routinely used as part of the standard description of the fourth *dhyāna*.⁶³ And MĀ 145 talks of a *bhikṣu* delighting in meditation.⁶⁴ The *Ganaka-Moggallāna-sutta* is distinctive in omitting the final knowledge of the destruction of defilements.

I noted above the absence of the knowledges of past lives and of the death and rebirth of beings in some Madhyamāgama versions of the gradual scheme of the path. As Schmithausen observes,⁶⁵ the version without these two knowledges is certainly the more common in the Madhyamāgama, but it is also found in Theravāda sources—in the Majjhimanikāya in the *Chabbisodhana-sutta* (MN 112) and three times in the Aṅguttara—while the version with three knowledges is also found in Madhyamāgama (MĀ 194). Yet

⁶³ MN I 367.6–10. Cf. DN I 75.28–31: *sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsati-pārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati*.

⁶⁴ T I.655a2: 比丘樂於燕坐. Anālayo, *Comparative Study* II: 627, n. 203, observes: “MĀ 145 at T I 655a3 describes how someone ‘internally properly practices tranquillity, is not separated from mental investigation and puts into operation insight, increasingly practising emptiness’ [...] expressions that bring to mind the injunction in MN 6 at MN I 33.10, ‘practising internal tranquillity of mind, not neglecting meditation (*jhāna*), being endowed with insight, and being a frequenter of empty places’, *ajjhataṃ cetosamathaṃ anuyutto anirākatajjhāno vipassanāya samannāgato brūhetā suññāgārānaṃ*.”

⁶⁵ Schmithausen 1981: 221–22, n. 75.

given the unclear manner in which MĀ sometimes abbreviates (see notes 55, 57, 58), there may be a question as to whether this is always a reduction or at least in some cases an abbreviation. However, the reduction in the case of the *Chabbisodhana-sutta* agrees with its MĀ parallel and in this case we know that it reflects the received text, as Buddhaghosa comments on it, explaining that in this *sutta* the monks are asking only about transcendent *dharma* (the context is the eradication of conceit which only comes with arhatship) and so this is a *sutta* with a single response (*ekavissajjitasutta*) and so the two ordinary knowledges are not included.⁶⁶

Schmithausen goes on to refer to André Bareau's arguments that the reduced version in fact represents the older version; I shall return to this issue below as it concerns accounts of the Buddha's awakening, where, *pace* Bareau, all three knowledges are found in Sarvāstivāda accounts of his awakening. It is worth noting that the fuller version with all six knowledges is also found occasionally in both Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda sources beyond DN and DĀ-S. The reduction of the six knowledges to three and the three knowledges to one after the four *dhyānas* needs also to be understood in the light of the reduction and expansion of items that precede the *dhyānas*. Thus a number of examples omit some or all of items 1–8. Conversely other examples substitute or add items. Again we find an instance in the Majjhimanikāya where knowing the right amount of food and being devoted to wakefulness are inserted after no. 4 (guarding the senses), though not in MĀ.⁶⁷ An EĀ parallel to MN 39, however, does include these two items, adding after them in place of the *dhyānas* the practice of the thirty-seven *dharma*s that contribute to awakening (*bodhipāṇṣika-dharma*).⁶⁸ While this is not paralleled in the Theravāda MN *suttas* that present the gradual scheme of the path, the sequence “guarding the sense doors, knowing the right amount of food, being engaged to wakefulness, being engaged in the development of the *dharma*s that contribute to awakening” is found in several places in the Theravāda canonical texts.⁶⁹ The *Sekha-sutta* (MN 53) adds instead, af-

⁶⁶ Ps IV 94–98.

⁶⁷ These two items are not unknown in MĀ: 食知止足 (T I.455b7) and 精進而不懈怠 (T I.455b14) appear to correspond to *bhojane mātrajñāḥ* and *jāgarikānuyukta* respectively.

⁶⁸ T II.802a16: 思惟三十七道之法.

⁶⁹ AN II 70–71, 300–301; Vibh 244. The significance of these is discussed in Gethin 2001: 289–93.

ter knowing the right amount of food and being devoted to wakefulness, a description of the monk as having seven good qualities (*saddhamma*): faith, self-respect, conscience, learning, energy, mindfulness, and wisdom (*saddha, hirimant, ottappin, bahussuta, āraddhaviriya, satimant, paññavant*). The same qualities are attributed to the monk before the practice of *dhyāna* in MĀ 3.⁷⁰ The Madhyamāgama parallel to MN 107 (MĀ 144) also elaborates on the practice of mindfulness in connection with guarding the sense doors.⁷¹

I have included in these four-*dhyāna* schemes of the path the account found in the *Mahāsuññatā-sutta* (MN 122). This is clearly a distinctive and somewhat unusual presentation of the path that departs from the usual gradual scheme of the path in a variety of ways by focusing on “emptiness” (*suññatā*). Nonetheless at the core of the Theravāda version is the abandoning of the conceit “I am” (*asmimāna*) on the basis of the contemplation of emptiness following the attainment of the four *dhyānas*. The Sarvāstivādin versions, in Tibetan translation as well as Chinese,⁷² imply only the first *dhyāna* as the basis for this.⁷³

Adding these treatments to the nineteen identified above, I count thirty-one (including MN 54) presentations of the path ending in knowledge of the destruction of the defilements by way of the four *dhyānas* in Theravāda Nikāya sources. Of these, twelve (ten in DN, one in MN, and one in AN) specify the six higher knowledges, fourteen just three knowledges, three only the final knowledge, while two give an equivalent to the final knowledge. To the twenty already identified in Sarvāstivāda sources we can add a further ten instances, giving a total of thirty which present the path with reference to the four *dhyānas* leading to the knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. Of these, sixteen (fourteen in DĀ-S and MĀ 80 and 218) specify six higher knowledges, three (DĀ-S 25, 26 and MĀ 194) just three knowledges, ten only the final, and one (MĀ 3) an equivalent to the final knowledge. Two further sūtras (MĀ 145, 191) describe the path ending in awakening with a reduced account of *dhyāna*.

⁷⁰ T I.423a14–b4: 信, 慚耻, 羞愧, 精進, 多聞, 正念, 智慧.

⁷¹ See Anālayo, *Comparative Study* II: 619–21.

⁷² For the Tibetan version, see Skilling, *Mahāsūtras* I: 188–263, II: 365–400.

⁷³ See Anālayo, *Comparative Study* II: 693.

Table 8. The *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme: from AN navaka-nipāta

	AN IV 410	AN IV 411–14	AN IV 414–18	AN IV 418–22	AN IV 422–26	AN IV 430–32	AN IV 433–34	AN IV 436–38	AN IV 438–48	AN IV 449–50 (×10)	AN IV 450–56 (×10)
1 tathāgato loka uppajjati											
2 pabbajati											
3 sīla											
6 santutṭhi											
4 indriya-saṃvara											
5 sati-sampajañña											
7 vivittaṃ senāsanaṃ								•			
8 pañca-nīvaraṇa-pahāna								•			
9 paṭhama-jjhāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
10 dutiya-jjhāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
11 tatiya-jjhāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
12 catuttha-jjhāna	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ākāsānañcāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
viññāṇañcāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ākīñcaññāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
nevasaññānāsaññāyatana	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
saññāvedayitanirodha	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
paññāya c' assa disvā			•			•	•	•	•	•	•
14 mano-maya-kāya											
15 iddhi-vidha				•							
16 dibba-sota-dhātu				•							
17 ceto-pariya-ñāṇa				•							
18 pubbe-nivāsānussati-ñāṇa				•							
19 satta-cutūpapāta-ñāṇa				•							
20 āsava-kkhaya-ñāṇa			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

5. The *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme

Table 7 summarises all instances I have been able to find of the presentation of the path by way of the formless meditations, apart from the primary example of the *Poṭṭhapāda-sutta* / *Prṣṭhapāla-sūtra* found in the *sīlakkhandhavagga* and *śīlaskandha-nipāta* of DN and DĀ-S, respectively, and the sequence of occurrences found in the Book of Nines in the *Anguttaranikāya* (see **Table 8**). Where there are parallels I include these whether or not they also present the path by way of the formless attainments. In fact, in all but one case (MN

26) the parallel also includes some mention of the formless attainments. Apart from this case the parallels generally correspond.

The most common account of the path leading to the destruction of the defilements via the formless attainments culminates in the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling immediately after the attainment of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, followed by the statement that “and having seen by means of his understanding, the defilements are destroyed” (*paññāya cassa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*).⁷⁴ This occurs seven times in the Theravāda DN and MN, and a further twenty-five times in a sequence of *suttas* in the Book of Nines in the Aṅguttaranikāya.⁷⁵ It occurs five times in the Chinese translation of the Sarvāstivāda MĀ and is likely paralleled in the Gāndhārī *Goṣiga-sutra*, which is likely to be from a Dharmaguptaka Madhyamāgama.⁷⁶ Alongside this there are also instances of the destruction of the defilements being indicated directly following the attainment of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (three clear examples in Theravāda sources, two in Sarvāstivāda sources). These examples are not consistently reflected in the parallels.

Examples where the fourth formless attainment is omitted before the destruction of the defilements (MN 52, MN 64 = MĀ 205, AN IV 422–26) are of some interest. The *Aṭṭhakanaḡara-sutta* (repeated in full at AN V 342–47) is explicit in presenting the four *dhyānas*, the four immeasurable attainments not as progressive steps towards the destruction of the defilements but as alternative foundations for their destruction, leading to either arhatship or at least non-return by way of insight into their conditioned and impermanent nature. The omission of the fourth formless attainment here is reflected in the instructions for development of insight in the late Theravāda exegetical tradition. Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* comments that one

⁷⁴ Cf. T I.720a23: 慧見諸漏盡斷知.

⁷⁵ This sudden proliferation of *suttas* in the Book of Nines of AN is clearly related to the reference to the four *jhānas*, four formless attainments, and attainment of cessation as “nine progressive attainments” (*nava anupubbavihārasamāpattiyo*), e.g. AN IV 410.27, though not all of the following *suttas* include all nine attainments.

⁷⁶ Silverlock 2015: 526–531, 545–549. The relevant portion of the manuscript is damaged; on the basis of a calculation of the number of missing *akṣaras*, Silverlock reconstructs the missing text as including the phrase *prāṇae drispa aravae parakṣiṇa*, but comments that it is impossible to know if it occurred in the gap or was the subject of an abbreviation. He notes, however, that later in the manuscript this exact wording is used four times.

who wishes to accomplish insight “should emerge from any one of the form sphere or formless sphere *dhyānas* apart from the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, and discern the characteristic, function, and so on of the associated *dharmas*”.⁷⁷ Dhammapāla adds in his commentary that this is said because the *dharmas* associated with the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception are difficult for the beginner to discern.⁷⁸

As Anālayo notes, the Sarvāstivāda parallel (MĀ 217) similarly presents each attainment as a basis for insight leading to either non-return or arhatship through “watching *dharmas* as *dharmas*”.⁷⁹ The Sarvāstivāda parallel includes the fourth formless attainment. While this may, as Maithrimurthi has suggested, be a mistake in the transmission of the sūtra, as he himself acknowledges, the “mistake” is witnessed in a separate additional translation (T 92).⁸⁰ In fact, from the perspective of the later tradition, there would seem to be nothing absolutely wrong with including the fourth attainment: using it as a basis for insight is not impossible, just difficult for the beginner. Nonetheless, as again Anālayo notes,⁸¹ in the case of the *Mahā-Māluṅkyaputtasutta* and its parallel (MĀ 205), which like *Aṭṭhakanagara-sutta* present the four *dhyānas* and first three formless attainments as the basis for insight leading to nirvana or non-return, there is agreement on omitting the fourth formless attainment. A further presentation of the *dhyānas* and first three formless attainments forming the basis for insight once a meditator has emerged is found in the Theravāda *Ānguttaranikāya*.⁸²

The *Cūḷa-suññatā-sutta* (MN 121) and its Sarvāstivādin parallels in the form of Chinese (MĀ 190) and Tibetan translations of Madhyamāgama can also be considered in this context. In all surviving versions this sūtra clearly represents a distinctive presentation of the path, focusing on the formless

⁷⁷ Vism 587 (18.3): *taṃ sampādetukāmena samathayānikena tāva ṭhapetvā nevasaññānāsaññāyatanam, avasesarūpā rūpāvacarajjhānānam aññatarato vuṭṭhāya vitakkādīni jhānangāni taṃ-sampayuttā ca dhammā lakkhaṇarasādivasena pariggahetabbā.*

⁷⁸ Vism-mhṭ (B^e) II 350: *idaṃ bhavaggadhammānam ādikammikassa duppariggahatāya vuttaṃ.* Cf. Ps-ṭ (B^e) II 9 as cited by Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 310, n. 6. Cf. also Stuart 2013: 41 (citing Sv II 372).

⁷⁹ Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 310–11.

⁸⁰ Maithrimurthi 1999: 97, n. 136.

⁸¹ Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 310, n. 6, and 355–58.

⁸² AN IV 422–26.

meditations and a “signless concentration” developed on their basis which leads to destruction of defilements. In the Sarvāstivāda versions, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception is omitted.⁸³

These treatments, taken alongside those ending with the cessation of perception and feeling followed by seeing with understanding, suggest a number of questions about how these attainments are understood to function as a vehicle for insight: is insight possible while in the attainments or are the attainments merely the objects of insight, or a preparation for insight? These are complex and wide ranging questions and I will only comment on them briefly here. The *Anupada-sutta*, a Theravāda text which has no parallel, has been called late and linked to the emergence of the Abhidharma.⁸⁴ Whether or not this is the case, it addresses in part some of these questions.

The *sutta* presents the Buddha’s account of how Śāriputra achieved awakening in the space of a fortnight.⁸⁵ He did so by attaining all nine attainments—the four *dhyānas*, the four formless attainments, and cessation. With regard to each of the first seven, Śāriputra is described as defining the particular *dhammas* that constitute the attainment: known to him the *dhammas* arise, known to him they are present, known to him they disappear. The implication is that this knowledge occurs within each attainment.⁸⁶ In the case of the last two attainments—the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception and the cessation of perception and feeling—the wording is different: Śāriputra is said to have first emerged from these attainments and subsequently contemplated the *dhammas* that were past, that had ceased and changed.⁸⁷ Nonetheless, with regard to the last attainment the phrase “and having seen by means of his understanding, the defilements were destroyed” (*paññāya c’ assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*) occurs immediately follow-

⁸³ Skilling, *Mahāsūtras* I: 146–86 (174–75); II: 345–59 (355–56).

⁸⁴ Perhaps the first to do so was C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *JRAS* 34 (1902), 477, 481, followed by Deleau 2006: 516 and Anālayo 2014: 100–110.

⁸⁵ Śāriputra’s awakening while standing fanning the Buddha is also referred to in brief in the *Dīghanakha-sutta* (M I 501.1–2); Migot 1954: 452–455 discusses various redactions of the *Dīghanakha-sutta*, but says nothing about the *Anupada-sutta*. Śāriputra’s practice of the nine attainments is also referred to at SN III 235–38.

⁸⁶ MN III 25–28 passim: *tyāssa dhammā anupadavavatthitā honti. tyāssa dhammā viditā uppajjanti, viditā upaṭṭhahanti, viditā abbattham gacchanti.*

⁸⁷ MN III 28.16–17, 28.27–29: *so tāya samāpattiya sato vuṭṭhahitvā ye dhammā atītā niruddhā vipariṇatā te dhamme samanupassati.*

ing the attainment of cessation, and so before the statement that makes his emergence from the attainment explicit. But seeing with wisdom while in the attainment is counterintuitive.

The commentary is clear that we should understand that this refers to Śāriputra's combining calm and insight in two distinct meditation attainments: the fruit of arhatship and cessation.⁸⁸ Taking it as given that *nirodhasamāpatti* is only achieved after non-return or arhatship, the commentary first suggests that we have here to do with Śāriputra's ability either to obtain the fruit of arhatship or to attain cessation; but it then records an alternative understanding of the passage (attributed to "the elders of India"): that Śāriputra accomplished *nirodhasamāpatti* after he had achieved non-return and then subsequently gained arhatship.⁸⁹ Either way the commentary associates "having seen by means of his understanding, the defilements were destroyed" with something distinct from the attainment of cessation and, mindful of the fact that contemplating the immaterial *dhammas* of an attainment in which the functioning of *citta* has been temporarily suspended is problematic even after emerging from it, goes on to suggest that in this case the *dhammas* he watches are either the three kinds of material *dharma* (produced by *kamma*, food and season) that persist within the body of the meditator even during the attainment of cessation, or the *dhammas* that occurred in the earlier attainment of the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.⁹⁰

Whether or not these specific commentarial explanations are regarded as contrived, they clearly address somewhat obvious questions arising from the presentation of the material in the sūtras which are difficult to ignore. I will return to them in the context of accounts of the Buddha's awakening, but in this context it is worth noting also the Aṅguttaranikāya treatment, which presents each of the nine attainments as preparing the mind for achieving any of the various higher knowledges culminating in knowledge of the destruction of the *āsravas*: attaining and emerging from these attainments, a

⁸⁸ Ps IV 90.24–91.2: *sāriputtattherassa samathavipassanaṃ yuganaddhaṃ āharitvā arahattaṃ pattavāro pi atthi, nirodhasamāpatti samāpannavāro pi.*

⁸⁹ Ps IV 91.7–10: *jambudīpavāsino therā pana vadanti sāriputtatthero samatha-vipassanaṃ yuganaddhaṃ āharitvā anāgāmiphalaṃ sacchikatvā nirodhaṃ samāpajji, nirodhā vuṭṭhāya arahattaṃ patto ti.*

⁹⁰ Ps IV 91.11–13: *te dhamme ti anto samāpattiyaṃ pavatte tesamuṭṭhānikarūpadhamme heṭṭhā nevasaññānāsaññāyatanasamāpattiyaṃ pavattadhamme vā te.*

monk's mind becomes soft and workable, his concentration becomes immeasurable and well developed; he is able to apply his mind to the realization of any of the higher knowledges.⁹¹

Nearly all examples present the formless attainments as preceded by the four *dhyānas*, either immediately or with intervening attainments (the four *apramāṇas*). Four of the exceptions present the formless attainments in the context of the eight liberations (DN 15, MĀ 97, MN 137, MĀ 163), which in effect assumes the *dhyānas*.⁹² The *Cūḷa-suññatā-sutta* probably should be read as assuming the attainment of *dhyāna* on the basis of the earth *kasiṇa*.⁹³ In one case in the Madhyamāgama (MĀ 219) we find the four formless attainments preceded by the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* and the four *apramāṇas* without the prior attainment of the *dhyānas*. The presentation of the formless attainments in a sequence following the immeasurable meditations is characteristic of the Madhyamāgama: it occurs five times (MĀ 178, 185, 217, 192, 219) as opposed to just once in the Majjhimanikāya (MN 52, but repeated in AN). The sequence of the four *dhyānas* and the formless attainments without the immeasurable meditations occurs four times in the Madhyamāgama (MĀ 91, 205, 85, 168) and nine times in the Majjhimanikāya (MN 8, 25, 26, 30, 31, 64, 66, 111, 113). Thus in sum the four-*dhyāna* sequence followed by

⁹¹ AN IV 421.7–13: *yato kho bhikkhave, bhikkhu taṃ tad eva samāpattiṃ samāpajjati pi vuṭṭhāti pi, tassa mudu cittaṃ hoti kammaññaṃ. mudunā kammaññena cittena appamāṇo samādhi hoti subhāvito. so appamāṇena samādhinā subhāvitena yassa yassa abhiññā sacchikaraṇīyassa dhammassa cittaṃ abhininnāmeti abhiññā sacchikiriyyāya tatra tatr' eva sakkhibhabbatam pāpuṇāti sati sati āyatane.*

⁹² DN 15 (D II 68–71) appends lists of the seven *vijñānasthitis*, two *āyatanas* and eight *vimokṣas*; MĀ 97 likewise (T I.581b13–c2), but here the eight *vimokṣas* occur as eight progressive stages culminating in the attainment of cessation, seeing by wisdom and the destruction of the *āsravas*. DĀ 13 (T I.62a25–b25), T 14 (T I.246a5–22) and T 52 (T I.846a14–b24) also list seven *vijñānasthitis*, two *āyatanas* and eight *vimokṣas*, but in a manner closer to DN 15, without including the destruction of the *āsravas* with the last.

⁹³ All versions speak of the unified perception of earth; the language of MN III 105.12 is most explicit in its reference to meditation: “he directs his attention to the oneness that is dependent on the perception of earth; his mind is disposed towards, settles, rests, and becomes focused on the perception of earth” (*paṭhavisaññaṃ paṭicca manasikaroti ekattaṃ. tassa paṭhavisaññāya cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati adhimuccati*); the commentary plausibly takes this as referring to the attainment of *dhyāna* on the basis of the earth *kasiṇa* (Ps IV 152.20–53.6). Cf. Skill-ing, *Mahāsūtras* I: 156–59; II: 355.

the formless attainments (with or without the immeasurable meditations) occurs eight times in the Madhyamāgama and ten in the Majjhimanikāya. As for the sequence of four formless attainments followed by cessation, seeing by wisdom, and the destruction of defilements, this is found six times in the Majjhimanikāya (MN 25, 26, 30, 31, 111, 113) and proliferates in the Book of Nines in the Aṅguttaranikāya with twenty-five occurrences.⁹⁴ In the Madhyamāgama it occurs five times (MĀ 97, 178, 168, 163, 219).

6. The *apramāṇa* scheme

Table 9 summarises all occurrences of schemes of the path incorporating the four *apramāṇas* in the four Theravāda Nikāyas, DĀ-S, DĀ-D, and the Chinese translations of MĀ, SĀ and EĀ, excluding those associated with the formless attainments included in Table 7.

In nearly all cases the parallels agree on two points: the inclusion of the immeasurable meditations and the final outcome. There are two exceptions with regard to each of these points. The Theravāda *Mahāgovinda-sutta* (DN 19) explains that Govinda practises the four immeasurables, but the Dharmaguptaka version (DĀ-D 13) does not; both versions agree nonetheless that Govinda was reborn in the Brahmaloḥita. I have not had access to the Sarvāstivāda version (DĀ-S 14). As I noted above, the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka versions of the *Udumbarikasīhanāda-sutta* agree on presenting a version of the gradual path with the four *apramāṇas*; the Sarvāstivāda (MĀ 104) parallel has instead the four *dhyānas*. In this case the difference in path scheme coincides with a difference in the final goal: the Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka versions present the path only as far as the knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings, stopping short of knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. The Theravāda *Vatthūpama-sutta* (MN 7), however, does include knowledge of the destruction of the defilements after the four

⁹⁴ In Gethin 2001: 163, n. 88, I suggested that in calculating the number of times a particular formula occurs in the Nikāya-Āgama literature, it is sometimes useful to make a distinction between the number of “occasions” on which a given list is itemised and the number of “times”; “occasions” takes no account of the repeated itemizing of a list within an extended *Samyutta* or *Aṅguttara* treatment; “times” takes into account all repetitions, even when lost in the abbreviations. Thus the sequence of formless attainments, cessation, seeing by wisdom, destruction of defilements occurs on twelve “occasions” in the Theravāda Nikāyas, but thirty-one “times”.

Table 9. The *apramāṇa* scheme[illegible]

- item explicit
 - item understood in abbreviation
- ? uncertain
⊙ close equivalent

apramāṇas, but only after the monk is described as knowing “there is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, there is the escape beyond what is connected with this perception” (so *atthi idaṃ, atthi hīnaṃ, atthi paṇītaṃ, atthi imassa saññāgatassa uttarīṃ nissaraṇaṃ ti pajānāti*). The Sarvāstivāda parallel (MĀ 93) lacks both these elements. An Ekottarikāgama parallel has

instead the three knowledges, of past lives, of the death and rebirth of beings, and of the destruction of the defilements.⁹⁵

The *Cūḷa-Assapura-sutta* (MN 40) presents the development of the four *apramāṇas* by someone following the way of practice taught by the Buddha as the way of gaining inner peace (*ajjhataṃ vūpasamo*), as a result of which he or she may be said to have set out on the path proper to the ascetic (*ajjhataṃ vūpasamā samaṇasāmīcippaṭipadaṃ paṭipanno ti vadāmi*), while someone who has realised the freedom of the mind and understanding that is without *āsravas* can be said to be the true ascetic (*āsavānaṃ khayā samaṇo hoti*). This suggests that the practice of the four *apramāṇas* is a way of approaching the final destruction of the defilements. As Anālayo has noted, however, the Sarvāstivāda (MĀ 183) parallel inserts instead, following the four *apramāṇas*, the same formula of insight leading to the destruction of the defilements (“there is this ...”) that is used in the Theravāda *Vatthūpama-sutta*.⁹⁶ The formula is also found following the immeasurable meditations in the Aṅguttaranikāya. Thus while there are clear examples of the scheme of the path based on the immeasurable meditations leading to the final goal, it is clear that these are associated with some additional practice of insight, and that the default outcome for the bare practice of the immeasurable meditations is rebirth in the Brahmaloḥa.

The close association of the four immeasurable meditations and the formless meditations, apparent in especially the Sarvāstivāda Madhyamāgama, seems likely to be related to a sūtra paralleled in the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda *bojjhaṅga-saṃyutta*/*bodhyaṅga-saṃyukta*. This is one of a number of sūtras which begin with wanderers of other schools (*anyatīrthika-parivrājaka*) claiming that they teach the same thing as the Buddha and demanding that his monks explain the difference.⁹⁷ In this sūtra the wanderers claim to a group of monks that, like the Buddha, they too teach the abandoning of the five hindrances and the practice of the four *apramāṇas*. The monks take the matter to the Buddha, who suggests that if asked how kind-

⁹⁵ Two further parallels are found in the Chinese Tripiṭaka as freestanding texts: T 51, T 582; the former coincides with MĀ 93, the latter does not mention the immeasurable meditations. See Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 53–55.

⁹⁶ See Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 55 (n. 46), 261 (n. 282); at T I.726b27–28 he suggests reading with the variant: 有有, 有羸, 有妙, 有想來上出要.

⁹⁷ MN I 84, SN V 108–11, 112–15, 115–21, AN V 48; cf. MĀ 30, SĀ 713, 714, 743, EĀ 46.8.

ness, compassion, joy and equanimity are developed, where they lead, and what their perfection, fruit, and goal are, the wanderers of other schools would be unable to respond. The Buddha then explains that the perfection of *maitrī* is the liberation that is the “beautiful” (*śubha*), the perfection of compassion the liberation that is the sphere of infinite space, the perfection of joy the liberation that is infinite consciousness, and the perfection of equanimity the liberation that is the sphere of nothingness. In the Theravāda version the Buddha also talks in this context of developing each of the immeasurable meditations accompanied by the constituents of awakening; in the Saṃyuktāgama this detail is given in a separate immediately following sūtra.⁹⁸

I noted with reference to their presentation in the *sīlakkhandha-vagga/sīlaskandha-nipāta* that there is some ambiguity about whether the immeasurable meditations are preceded by the four *dhyānas* or inserted in their place. In the case just mentioned, in both the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda versions the immeasurable meditations apparently follow immediately on the abandoning of the hindrances. In two Majjhimanikāya *suttas* (MN 7 and 40), but not their Madhyamāgama parallels, they are preceded by a formula associated in the Dīghanikāya gradual path scheme with the abandoning of the hindrances immediately prior to the attainment of the first *dhyāna*:

He gains [...] gladness. When one is glad, joy arises. The body of one whose mind is joyful becomes tranquil. One whose body is tranquil experiences happiness. The mind of one who is happy becomes concentrated.⁹⁹

This suggests the immeasurable meditations in place of the *dhyānas*. Overall, it is apparent that there are examples from Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and Dharmaguptaka sources of both patterns. I will return to this in my concluding remarks.

⁹⁸ SĀ 744 at T II.197c15–22, translated and usefully discussed in Martini 2011: 150–51.

⁹⁹ MN I 37.31–33: *labhati [...] pāmojjaṃ. pamuditassa pīti jāyati. pīṭimanassa kāyo passambhati. passaddhakāyo sukhaṃ vedeti. sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati*. Cf. MN I 283.21–25; DN I 73.20–23). On this standard description of the process of becoming concentrated in meditation and its occurrence in the Nikāya-Āgamas and other sources, see Gethin 2017: 225–24.

Table 10. The Buddha's awakening

	MIN 4 Bhayabherava (MN I 21.20–23.28) EĀ 31.1 (T I.666b10–c20)	MN 19 Dvedhāvitakka (MN I 117.4–22) MĀ 102 (T I.589c5–23)	• MN 26 Ariyapariyesanā (MN I 163.9–167.29) • MĀ 204 (T I.776b4–777a18)	• MN 36 Mahāsaccaka (MN I 240.17–249.21) • DĀ-S 20 Kāyabhāvaṇa-sūtra (331r6–338v4) • MN 85 Bodhirājajakumāra (MN II 93.15–24) • DĀ-S 21 Bodha-sūtra (342r4–7)	• MN 100 Saṅgārava (MN II 21.271–212.19) • DĀ-S 22 Śaṅkaraka (B48 r4–5)	MN 128 Upakkilesa-sutta (MN III 157.29–162.25) MĀ 72 (T I.536c19–539b8)	AN IV 302.9–305.5	MĀ 73 (T I.539b21–540c16)	AN IV 176.16–179.13 = Vin III 3.37–6.2 MĀ 157 (T I.679c10–680b5)	AN IV 439.20–448.20	Samghabhedavastu I 97–119
2 prāvṛjya											
Āraḍa: ākimcanyāyatana			• • •	• • •	• • •	• • •					•
Udraka: naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana			• • •	• • •	• • •	• • •					•
Uruvilvā			• • •	• • •	• • •	• • •					•
(3 similes)				•	•	•					
austerities				•	•	•					•
(3 similes)				•	•	•					•
recollection of 1st dhyāna				•	•	•					•
9 prathama-dhyāna	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	
10 dvitīya-dhyāna	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	
11 tṛtīya-dhyāna	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	
12 caturtha-dhyāna	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	
ākāsānantyāyatana											•
vijñānānantyāyatana											•
ākīñcanyāyatana											•
naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana											•
samjñānāvedayitanirodha											•
prajñāya cāśya dṛṣṭvā											•
15 rddhiviṣaya											•
16 divyaśrotarjñāna											•
17 cetahparyāyajñāna											•
18 pūrvanivāsānusrmṛtijñāna	• •	•	•	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	•
19 cyutyupapāḍajñāna	• •	•	•	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	•
20 āsṛavakṣayajñāna	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	• •	•

• item explicit

◦ item understood in abbreviation

◎ close equivalent

7. The Buddha's awakening

Table 10 presents all complete accounts of the Buddha's awakening known to me in the extant Nikāya-Āgama sūtra literature; I append one Vinaya account from the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya.¹⁰⁰ As with other schemes, there is

¹⁰⁰ The account of the Buddha's awakening in MN 85 and 100 is radically abbreviated in the PTS edition, but repeated in full in Asian editions: MN (S^o) II, 443–61, 669–88; (B^o) II 279–91, 425–38. In the Sarvāstivāda parallels, it is given in full only in DĀ-S 20; DĀ-S 21 and 22 abbreviate with reference back to this sūtra; see Liu

a grey area where it is not quite clear whether to include any reference to the bodhisattva's practice before his awakening. I will discuss this briefly at the end of this section.

It seems likely that the scheme of the Buddha's awakening functions as paradigmatic for the path to awakening in general. Associating a scheme with the Buddha's awakening is also no doubt intended in part to give it legitimacy. With this in mind, it is remarkable that five of the eight sūtras in both surviving versions give the same account of the Buddha's awakening by way of the four *dhyānas* and three knowledges. The departure from this scheme in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* (MN 26) and its parallel (MĀ 204) represents not so much an account of the Buddha's awakening according to an alternative scheme, as simply the omission of the details of any scheme. The *Dvedhavitakka-sutta* (MN 19) and its Sarvāstivāda parallel (MĀ 102) is the only example where two parallel discourses appear to disagree on their account of the Buddha's awakening: MĀ 102 omits the first two knowledges (of past lives and the death and rebirth of beings), and so conforms to the default MĀ four-*dhyāna* path scheme. On the basis of this omission, Bareau has argued that the Sarvāstivādin sources preserve an older account of the Buddha's awakening.¹⁰¹ As Schmithausen and Anālayo have noted, the text of this account is anomalous in other minor ways: it appears to change from the first to the third person, and the first *dhyāna* seems to be missing.¹⁰² But Bareau's argument is anyway somewhat undermined by the fact that MĀ 157 (which he overlooked) includes all three knowledges, as does DĀ-S 20 (which he did not have access to). In light of this and in the context of the overall pattern of the scheme of the four *dhyānas* and *abhiññās* in the Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgama and Madhyamāgama, MĀ 102's omission of the two knowledges begins to look more like a simple reduction of the fuller scheme than the preservation of a more primitive version.¹⁰³

2008: 55–66; Hartmann 2004:129; Zhang 2004: 13.

¹⁰¹ Bareau, *Recherches* I: 81–83, 88–89.

¹⁰² On the change of person, see Schmithausen 1981: 221, n. 75. On the missing first *dhyāna* Anālayo, *Comparative Study* I: 140, nn. 200, 201, speculates that text has been lost.

¹⁰³ Schmithausen 1981: 221–22, n. 75, takes up the argument that a version with only the last knowledge might be earlier, commenting on the change of tense in the Pali version: aorist in the final knowledge, but present in the first two. Such a change of tense is not witnessed in the subsequently discovered Sarvāstivāda *Kāyabhāvanā*-

The *Samghabhedavastu* account is an interesting counterpoint to the Sarvāstivāda sūtra accounts in that it substitutes the battle with Māra and his armies for the *dhyānas* and includes all six higher knowledges. The elaboration of the battle with Māra is, of course, a feature of all developed narratives of the Buddha's awakening, sometimes mentioning the four *dhyānas*, sometimes not.¹⁰⁴

The most distinctive of the Nikāya-Āgama accounts of the Buddha's awakening is one found in the Aṅguttaranikāya: it departs from the scheme of the four *dhyānas* and three knowledges and uses instead the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme. This account occurs in the *navaka-nipāta* in a *sutta* which is one of a sequence of twenty-eight; each presents the nine attainments, beginning with the four *dhyānas* and ending in the cessation of perception and feeling.¹⁰⁵ It appears to be without any parallel. How we understand the significance of this account of the Buddha's awakening is obviously related to how we understand the significance of the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme more generally, a topic I intend to address in a separate paper.

While the association of the scheme with the awakening of the Buddha has no known parallel in what survives in the Sarvāstivāda Āgamas, it does seem to have been known to the Sarvāstivāda tradition. Before the publication of the Sanskrit manuscript, Louis de La Vallée Poussin drew attention to a comment in the *Abhidharmakośa* that seems to allude to something like

sūtra, where the present is used throughout; see Liu 2008: 129–32. This, of course, does not necessarily mean the change in the Theravāda version is without significance.

¹⁰⁴ For example, the *Mahāvastu* gives accounts of Dīpaṃkara's and Gautama's awakening in terms of the four *dhyānas* and three knowledges (Mvu I 227–29, II 283–85), but then an account of Gautama's awakening in terms of the defeat of Māra without reference to the *dhyānas* (Mvu II 399–416); the *Lalitavistara* places the *dhyānas* and three knowledges after the defeat of Māra (Lal 299–350); the *Jātaka* commentary describes the defeat of Māra and awakening without reference to the *dhyānas* and knowledges (Ja 71–75).

¹⁰⁵ As Anālayo (2014c: 27) notes, in this *sutta* each attainment is introduced by the phrase “at another time” (*aparena samayena*). This raises the interesting question of whether the accounts of the Buddha's awakening (and of gradual path generally) are intended as descriptions of the progress of meditation over an extended or shorter time period.

this account.¹⁰⁶ In discussing how and when the Buddha achieves success in the attainment of cessation, Vasubandhu explains:

The lord buddhas gain this [attainment of cessation] at the same time as knowledge of the destruction [of defilements]; they do not require any preparation. For in their case actualizing the accomplishment of all qualities is associated with the mere wish [to do so]. They therefore have gained complete dispassion. But how, when the attainment of cessation has not yet been produced, does the Buddha achieve the success of one who is liberated both ways? He achieves that success as if it had been produced because of his mastery. But the westerners say that the bodhisattva produces the attainment earlier, when still in the state of one in training. And why not go along with this? To do so means accepting the authority of precisely the Elder Upagupta's *Netrīpada*, where it is stated that when someone produces the knowledge of destruction having produced the attainment of cessation, he is to be declared the Tathāgata.¹⁰⁷

This passage addresses an obvious question for the tradition. A buddha must be accomplished in all meditative attainments, including cessation, but since cessation is regarded as accessible only by non-returners and arhats, at what point does a buddha acquire this accomplishment? Vasubandhu's suggestion appears to be that he achieves this accomplishment not by actually attaining cessation, but simply by becoming a buddha: at the moment he becomes a buddha he has the ability to enter into any attainment he wishes. The alternative view that Vasubandhu rejects suggests that the bodhisattva achieved cessation before reaching buddhahood when he was a non-returner.

It is possible to read the Aṅguttara account of the Buddha's awakening with reference to the formless attainments and cessation as addressing the

¹⁰⁶ La Vallée Poussin 1937: 221.

¹⁰⁷ Abhidh-k-bh 70.22–71.3 (*bhāṣya* to Abhidh-k II 44a): *kṣayajñānasamānam kalam buddhā bhagavanta enām labhante nāsti kiñcid buddhānām prāyogikam nāma | icchāmātrapratibaddho hi teṣām sarvaguṇasampatsaṃmukhībhāvaḥ | tasmād eṣām sarvavairāgyalābhikam | katham khalv idānīm anutpāditāyām nirodhasamāpattau kṣayajñānakāle bhagavān ubhayatobhāgavimuktaḥ sidhyati | sidhyaty utpāditāyām iva tasyām vaśitvāt | prāg eva tām bodhisattvaḥ śaikṣyāvasthāyām utpādayatīti pāścātyāḥ | atha kasmād evaṃ neṣyate | evaṃ ca sthaviropaguptasyāpīdam netrīpadam prāmāṇikam bhaviṣyati | nirodhasamāpattim utpādya kṣayajñānam utpādayatīti vaktavyam tathāgata iti |*

same general issue Vasubandhu raises: a buddha must be accomplished in all attainments, and the suggestion here appears to be that the Buddha accomplished cessation in some way at the same time as gaining awakening.¹⁰⁸ Yet this account seems to be in tension with the accounts of the Buddha's awakening by way of the fourth *dhyāna* and three knowledges that are, as we have seen, routinely found in the Majjhimanikāya; but neither the Theravāda commentary nor the subcommentary offers any comment.¹⁰⁹ The issues here are, of course, related to those raised by the account of Śāriputra's awakening discussed above.

Two further accounts, both paralleled in the Nikāyas and Āgamas (MN 128 with MĀ 72 and AN IV 302.9–305.5 with MĀ 73), also depart from the common description, but these I think are to be understood with reference to it. The first describes the Bodhisattva's difficulties in developing *samādhi* when he can no longer perceive light (*obhāsa*) or see forms (*rūpa*). By overcoming various mental defilements (*citta-upakkilesa*) he is able to develop various kinds of *samādhi*. Reference to *samādhi* with and without “thinking” (*vitarka*) and “examining” (*vicāra*) in both versions clearly indicates the *dhyānas*, possibly all four.¹¹⁰ The sūtra concludes with a statement of the

¹⁰⁸ Cf. S II 210–17, where two *suttas* present the Buddha as attaining the nine attainments and five *abhiññās* at will. The parallels at T II.302a2–b2 (SĀ 1142) and T II.416c8–417a23 (SĀ-2 117), however, have the four *dhyānas*, four *apramāṇas*, four formless attainments and six *abhiññās*, omitting cessation.

¹⁰⁹ With regard to the latter accounts, Buddhaghosa is explicit that, taking the fourth *dhyāna* as the basis of insight, the bodhisattva applied his mind in order to achieve knowledge of the destruction of the *āsravas*, that is, the path of arhatship; this is called “destruction of the *āsravas*” because it puts an end to them, and this knowledge is there because it belongs to that destruction. Ps I 126.34–127.3: *so evaṃ samāhite citte ti vipassanāpāḍakam catutthajjhānacittam veditabbam. āsavānaṃ khayañāṇāyā ti arahattamaggañāṇatthāya. arahattamaggo hi āsavavināsanato āsavānaṃ khayō ti vuccati tatra c' etaṃ ñāṇaṃ tappariyāpannattā ti.*

¹¹⁰ The talk of limited (*paritta*) and immeasurable (*appamāṇa*) forms and concentration recalls the language of the eight “spheres of mastery” (*abhibhāyatana*), which in turn seem related to the eight “liberations” (*vimokkha*) and formless attainments (e.g. DN II 110.5–112.20). The two versions both conclude by listing seven *samādhis* (MN III 162.14–19; T I.539b2–5), agreeing on the first three (with *vitarka* and *vicāra*, without *vitarka* but with *vicāra*, without *vitarka* and *vicāra*), but then diverging; MN 128 then has with joy (*pīti*), without joy, with pleasure (*sāta*), with equanimity (*upekkhā*); MĀ 72 has “exclusive *samādhi*” (一向定 = **ekānta-samādhi*), “mixed *samādhi*” (雜定 = **mīśra-samādhi*), “limited *samādhi*” (少定 = *paritta-*

Buddha's awakening. In Table 10, I have entered this account as an equivalent to the four-*dhyāna* scheme.

The second account begins similarly with reference to the Bodhisattva's perceiving light and seeing forms in meditation, but then progresses differently, setting out in all eight successive stages prior to awakening: (1) perceiving light, (2) seeing forms, (3) associating with the gods, (4) knowing the class of gods, (5) knowing the actions that brought about their rebirth, (6) knowing their food, and experience, (7) knowing their lifespan, (8) knowing if he had previously dwelt among those gods. The account concludes by stating that when the Bodhisattva's knowledge and vision of the gods had been thoroughly purified in these eight rounds, he had achieved awakening. These eight rounds of purification seem to reference the *dhyānas* and particularly the first two of the three knowledges (of former lives, and of the death and rebirth of beings). In Table 10, I have entered this account as an equivalent to the four-*dhyāna* scheme with three knowledges.

I should note also that SN and AN contain a number of *suttas* which describe the Bodhisattva's practice in various ways. Rather than setting out competing views of how the Buddha achieved awakening, they seem intended to be inclusive and complementary: contemplation of dependent origination, the enjoyment, danger, and letting go of things indicating approaches to insight; the *iddhipādas* and mindfulness of breathing approaches to *samādhi*.¹¹¹

samādhi), immeasurable *samādhi* (廣無量 = *aparīṭṭa-/apramāṇa-samādhi*); however, MN also talks of limited and unlimited *samādhi* earlier (III 161.29–33), while “mixed *samādhi*” perhaps references the earlier talk (MN III 160.13–14; T I.538b5) of “perception of diversity” (*nānatta-saññā*). Both concluding lists clearly attempt to summarise the process of refining the *samādhi* described. On refining *samādhi* cf. also AN I 257–58 (= SĀ 1247).

¹¹¹ Contemplation of the links of dependent origination (SN II 10, 104; SĀ 285, 287); contemplation of enjoyment, danger, and letting go with reference to the four elements (SN II 170), the aggregates (SN III 27), the six senses (SN IV 7–9; SĀ 243), past, future, and present sense objects (SN IV 97; SĀ 211), feelings (SN IV 233), the world (AN I 258–59); practice of the *iddhipādas* (SN V 263, 281, AN III 82–83), and of the sixteen stages of *ānāpānasati* (SN V 317.1–11; SĀ 814 T II.209a23).

8. The *smṛtyupasthāna* scheme

I have noted that in a number of places the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* is brought into the gradual schemes of the path. In the Dharmaguptaka DĀ gradual path, the bare *smṛtyupasthāna* formula of contemplating body as body, feelings as feelings, mind as mind, and *dharma*s as *dharma*s is inserted as an introduction to mindfulness and awareness (see Table 4); in MĀ 107 it is associated with guarding the senses (see Table 6). More interesting are examples where *smṛtyupasthāna* appears to be directly associated with the practice of concentration and the *dhyāna*s. This is possibly the case in MĀ 219 (see Table 7), but becomes explicit in SĀ 636, where the *smṛtyupasthāna* formula is placed immediately following the abandoning of the five hindrances in the position of the *dhyāna*s, and in the *Dantabhūmi-sutta* and its MĀ parallel, where the *smṛtyupasthāna* formula is placed again immediately following the abandoning of the five hindrances and followed by the attainment of the *dhyāna*s—all four in MĀ, the second to fourth in MN (see Table 5). The *Mahā-Taṇhāsaṃkhaya* (MN 38) and its parallel (MĀ 201) also conclude with a distinctive account of the final ceasing of unskilful states based on mindfulness of body.

This is striking given the tendency of some modern scholarship to treat the gradual scheme of the path involving the four *dhyāna*s as radically different from and even in contradiction to the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* as paradigmatically presented in the (*Mahā*-)*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallels. In a 1981 article, Paul Griffiths, for example, suggests that *smṛtyupasthāna* “may be taken as a paradigm example of how insight meditation operates” and that in the (*Mahā*-)*Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* “we find the clear implication that *nibbāna* can be attained by the practice of mindfulness alone without the concentration games involved in *samādhi-bhāvanā*”; he goes on to comment of concentration (i.e. *dhyāna* practice) and insight that “[t]he methods and aims of each kind of practice—both equally prominent in the texts—are radically at odds, and it is difficult to see how they can be reconciled”.¹¹² Subsequent studies, however, such as my own *Buddhist Path to Awakening* (1992), Anālayo’s *Satipaṭṭhāna* (2003) and Kuan’s *Mindfulness in Early Buddhism* (2008) have sought to explore the relationship between *smṛtyupasthāna* and concentration practice in the Nikāya-Āgama literature.¹¹³ I think we can

¹¹² Griffiths 1981: 614–15.

¹¹³ See Gethin 2001[1992]: 44–59; Anālayo 2003: 61–91; Kuan 2008: 59–80.

Table 11. The *smṛtyupasthāna* scheme

	• MN 10: Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta MN I 55–63		• MN 119: Kāyagatāsati-sutta MN III 89–99		• MN 118: Ānāpānasati-sutta MN III 78–88		• SĀ 803 (T II.206a14–b14), 815 (T II.209b15–210a5)
4 smṛtyupasthāna	•		•		•		•
contemplation of body	•		•		•		•
7 secluded dwelling	•1	•5	•1	•5	•		•
breathing in and out							
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
5 posture	•2	•1	•2	•1			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
5 activities	•3	•2	•3	•2			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
abandoning unskillful thoughts	•3			•3			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate				•			
restraint of the mind	•4			•4			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate				•			
9 vivekaja-prītisukha: 1st dhyāna	•6		•15	•6			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
10 samādhija-prītisukha: 2nd dhyāna	•7		•16	•7			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
11 niṣprītika-sukha: 3rd dhyāna	•8		•17	•8			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•				
12 pariśuddha-citta: 4th dhyāna	•9		•18	•9			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate				•			
conception of light	•10			•10			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate				•			
reviewing the sign of contemplation	•11			•11			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate				•			
parts of the body	•4	•12	•4	•12			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•	•			
attention to elements	•5	•13	•5	•13			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•	•			
dead bodies	•6–14	•14–18	•6–14	•14–18			
cittaṃ ... samādhīyate			•	•			
contemplation of feeling	•15	•15			•		•
contemplation of mind	•16	•16			•		•
contemplation of dharmas	•	•			•		•
5 varāṇa	•17	•17					
5 skandha	•18						
6 āyatana	•19	•18					
7 bodhyaṅga	•20	•19			•		•
4 satya	•21						
benefits					•		•
9–12 4 dhyānas			•	•			
15 rddhiviṣaya			•	•			
16 divyaśrotrañāna			•	•			
17 cetahparyāyāñāna			•	•			
18 pūrvanivāsānasmṛtijñāna			•	•			
19 cyutyupapādajñāna			•	•			
anāgāmitva	•			•			
20 ājña / āsravakṣayañāna	•		•	•	•		•

take this further and demonstrate how the *smṛtyupasthāna* scheme is related rather more explicitly to the gradual path scheme in the Nikāya-Āgama literature.

Certainly the examples just cited seem to bear witness to a clear desire in Nikāya-Āgama literature to bring the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* into the schemes of the gradual path. Moreover there is also clear evidence in this literature of a desire to bring elements of the gradual path schemes into the accounts of the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna*. That this evidence has sometimes been overlooked is perhaps connected with a failure to read such *suttas* as the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* and *Ānāpānasati-sutta* as deliberate elaborations of the general *smṛtyupasthāna* framework set out in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*. **Table 11** presents these *suttas* and their parallels in MĀ and SĀ with reference to elements of the gradual scheme of the path.

Schematically the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and its parallel might be read as similar to *suttas* such as the *Aṭṭhakanagara* and *Mahā-Mālunkya-putta* (Table 7). These *suttas* employ the elements of the gradual scheme not so much as successive steps ending in awakening as a number of alternative routes to awakening: eleven in the *Aṭṭhakanagara* (but twelve in MĀ 217), and seven in the *Mahā-Mālunkya-putta* and also MĀ 205. Similarly the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* sets out a series of different ways of applying mindfulness: fourteen with reference to the body, one with reference to feelings, one with reference to mind, and five with reference to *dharmas*, making a total of twenty-one. Each of these ways of practising mindfulness concludes by stating “he dwells independent; he does not grasp anything in the world” (*anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*). The commentary takes this phrase as equivalent to the arhatship and thus characterises the *sutta* as “a teaching that is taught culminating in arhatship in twenty-one places” (*ekavīsatiyā pi ṭhānesu arahattanikūṭena desitaṃ desanaṃ*).¹¹⁴ The *sutta* as a whole concludes with a statement that anyone who practises the four applications of mindfulness for anything from seven years down to just seven days can expect one of two outcomes: arhatship or non-return. The Sarvāstivāda parallel (MĀ 98) has essentially the same elements, although the objects of mindfulness and number of ways of practising mindfulness differ: eighteen with reference to the body, one with reference to feelings, one with reference to mind, and three with reference to *dharmas*, making a total of twenty-three. The wording of

¹¹⁴ Sv III 806; Ps I 302. Cf. Gethin 2001[1992]: 45–46, 55.

the repeated formula also differs, though is similar in intent, concluding with “he acquires knowledge, vision and understanding”.¹¹⁵

The manner in which the Theravāda version of the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* should relate to the gradual scheme of the path and the *dhyānas* is not immediately obvious, but that the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* is assumed to be related to the abandoning of the hindrances and the practice of *dhyāna* is perhaps suggested by a formula repeated in a number of places in the Theravāda Nikāyas that sums up the Buddhist path as involving “abandoning the five hindrances, defilements of the mind that weaken wisdom, and, with a mind well established in the four applications of mindfulness, truly developing the seven constituents of awakening”.¹¹⁶ Significantly this formula is used to introduce the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* in the Sarvāstivāda version of the sūtra.¹¹⁷

The relationship of the practice of *smṛtyupasthāna* to *dhyāna* begins to become more apparent when the *sutta* is read alongside the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* (MN 119), which surely is intended. The *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* is essentially a more detailed treatment of precisely the same fourteen practices of mindfulness of body set out under watching body as body in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, but significantly adds the four *dhyānas* to make a total of eighteen. In addition in this *sutta*, after the account of each of these eighteen practices, the following is inserted:

When one dwells like this, attentive, ardent, determined, the memories and thoughts connected with the household life are abandoned, and with their abandoning the mind becomes stilled within, composed, unified and concentrated.¹¹⁸

This suggests that each exercise is orientated towards the development of concentration and *dhyāna*. A similar phrase is inserted after each way of

¹¹⁵ T I.582b23: 有知有見有明有達。On the translation of this, see Kuan 2008: 208–209, n. 13, where he argues that although fourfold, this reflects equivalents of *jñāna*, *darśana*, and *vidyā* in the Indic original.

¹¹⁶ DN II 83 = III 101 = SN V 160–61 = AN III 387 = AN V 195: *pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbalīkaṇe catūsu satipaṭṭhānesu supatīṭṭhitacittā sattabojjhaṅge yathābhūtaṃ bhāvetvā*. Cf. Gethin 2001[1992]: 58–59, 169, 172, 258.

¹¹⁷ T I.582b12–13: 悉斷五蓋心穢慧羸。立心正住於四念處。修七覺支。

¹¹⁸ *tassa evaṃ appamattassa ātāpīno pahitattassa viharato ye gehasitā sarasaṅkappā te pahīyanti. tesam pahānā ajjhataṃ eva cittaṃ santiṭṭhati sannisīdati ekodī hoti samādhiyati*

practising mindfulness of body in the Sarvāstivādin parallel (MĀ 81),¹¹⁹ while the four *dhyānas* are also included as objects of mindfulness of body by way of the feelings that suffuse the body in each *dhyāna*. In fact these are also included under the first application of mindfulness in the Sarvāstivāda *Smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra* (MĀ 98) itself. Moreover, the sequence of items presented by way of mindfulness of body in both sūtras (MĀ 81 and 98) suggests a meditative progression related to the sequence of items 5, and 9–12 of the gradual path. The practice of mindfulness of body begins with mindfulness of the postures and activities, described using essentially the same formulas used for item 5 in the gradual path scheme. Next come the controlling and restraining of unskilful thoughts, described using formulas that are found in the context of the Theravāda *Vitakkasaṇḥhāna-sutta* (MN 20) and the Sarvāstivāda parallel “The discourse on higher consciousness” (MĀ 101), a discourse that sets out various techniques for dealing with unwanted unskilful thoughts in meditation practice. This is followed by mindfulness of breathing in and out, described using the first four of a scheme of sixteen stages set out elsewhere in both traditions. This in turn is followed by mindfulness of the successive feelings that suffuse the body in the *dhyānas*: respectively, the joy and happiness born of seclusion in the first, the joy and happiness born of concentration in the second, the happiness that is distinct from joy in the third, and finally the purity of mind in the fourth.¹²⁰

Both the *Kāyagatāsati-sutta* and its Sarvāstivāda parallel conclude with a list of the benefits of practising mindfulness of body. These include attaining the four *dhyānas* and all six higher knowledges culminating in knowledge of the destruction of the *āsravas*, relating the *smṛtyupasthāna* scheme once more to the gradual scheme of the path.

Finally the Theravāda *Ānāpānasati-sutta* and Sarvāstivāda parallels such as SĀ 803 and 815 present *smṛtyupasthāna* by way of a scheme of sixteen ways of contemplating the breath divided into four groups of four, each as-

¹¹⁹ T I.555a21–24: 彼若如是在遠離獨住。心無放逸修行精勤。斷心諸患而得定心。得定心已則知上如真是謂比丘修習念身。Kuan (2008: 156–57) translates: “Thus however his body behaves, a monk knows the supreme as it really is. He thus lives alone in solitude, with a vigilant mind, practices diligently, abandons defilements in the mind, and obtains a concentrated mind. Having obtained a concentrated mind, he knows the supreme as it really is.” See also Kuan’s discussion, 2008: 86–90.

¹²⁰ 離生喜樂 (T I.582c20) = *vivekaja-prītisukha*; 定生喜樂 (582c28) = *samādhija-prītisukha*; 無喜生樂 (583a7) = *niṣprītika-sukha*; 清淨心 (583a16–17) = *pariśuddha-citta*.

sociated with mindfulness of body, feelings, mind and *dhammas* respectively. Thus the first group of four is presented under the category of mindfulness of body in both the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and *Kāyagatā-sutta* and their MĀ parallels. The Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda accounts of these sixteen stages essentially agree, although there are some minor differences in wording.¹²¹ The sixteen stages in the Theravāda version are in summary:

He breathes in and out with a long breath;
 he breathes in and out with a short breath;
 he breathes in and out experiencing the whole body (*sabbakāyapaṭi-*
saṃvedī);
 he breathes in and out calming the activity of the body (*passambhayaṃ*
kāyasamkhāraṃ).
 He breathes in and out experiencing joy (*pītipaṭisaṃvedī*);
 he breathes in and out experiencing happiness (*sukhapaṭisaṃvedī*);
 he breathes in and out experiencing the activity of the mind (*citta-*
saṃkhārapaṭisaṃvedī);
 he breathes in and out calming the activity of the mind (*passambhayaṃ*
cittasamkhāraṃ).
 He breathes in and out experiencing the mind (*cittapaṭisaṃvedī*);
 he breathes in and out fully gladdening the mind (*abhippamodayaṃ*
cittaṃ);
 he breathes in and out concentrating the mind (*samādahaṃ cittaṃ*);
 he breathes in and out freeing the mind (*vimocayaṃ cittaṃ*).
 He breathes in and out watching impermanence (*aniccānupassī*);
 he breathes in and out watching dispassion (*virāgānupassī*);
 he breathes in and out watching cessation (*nirodhānupassī*);
 he breathes in and out watching letting go (*paṭinissaggānupassī*).

As Kuan has indicated, the terminology of a number of these stages is suggestive of stilling the mind in *dhyāna*.¹²² The language of calming the body

¹²¹ The one substantive difference is in the fourth tetrad: Sarvāstivāda versions insert “watching abandoning” (*prahāṇānudarśin*) after no. 13 and then omit no. 16. See Anālayo 2007: 137–150, Dhammajoti 2008: 251–288, Anālayo, *Comparative Study* II: 664–73, Anālayo 2013: 227–33, Cousins 2015: 1–24, Anālayo 2016a: 242–49.

¹²² Kuan 2008: 70–8.

and of then experiencing joy and happiness references the recurring Nikāya-Āgama description of this process already noted.¹²³

Again as Kuan and more recently Cousins have argued,¹²⁴ the sequence from experiencing joy (no. 5), through experiencing and calming the activity of the mind (7–8), to concentrating and freeing the mind (12) seems to assume the refining of feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saṃjñā*)—what the Nikāya-Āgama texts mean by “activity of the mind”—that comes with the attainment of the higher *dhyānas* and formless attainments. In doing so they in part agree with interpretations found in later Buddhist tradition; Cousins cites the exegetical sources of various Buddhists schools which read the sixteen stages with reference to the practice of the *dhyānas*. But it seems that there is no consensus in the later tradition about how precisely to do this. For Buddhaghosa the first group of four refers to the practice of the beginner, while the other three groups refer to the practice of someone who contemplates feelings, mind and *dhammas* having first achieved *dhyāna*.¹²⁵ Cousins suggests that taking the sixteen exercises in mindfulness of breathing in this way is to see them as “modes” of practice rather than stages, and that this is characteristic of a later, Abhidharma approach. He argues that in the original *sutta* context the sixteen exercises must certainly have been regarded as stages: the first group of four describes the initial stages, the second group progresses through the four “form” (*rūpa*) *dhyānas*, the third group progresses through the formless attainments, while the fourth turns to insight.

While tying the second and third groups respectively to the *dhyānas* and formless attainments is not without its attractions, it also seems possible that the terminology of the sixteen stages was always intended to be open ended, and that this is precisely why specific *dhyānas* are not mentioned. In this case it is in line with presentations of the path as found in the *Aṭṭha-kanagāra-sutta* and other places (MN 52, 64; MĀ 205, 217, see Table 7): successive attainment of all four *dhyānas* and formless attainments is not assumed; rather one of these attainments is required as a basis for reaching the knowledge of the destruction of the defilements. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that presenting the path in this way, namely, by way of a scheme of

¹²³ On this formula, see note 99 above.

¹²⁴ Kuan 2008: 70–80; Cousins 2015.

¹²⁵ Vism 277 (8.186): *idam eva catukkaṃ ādikammikassa kammaṭṭhānavasena vuttaṃ. itarāni pana tīni catukkāni ettha pattajjhānassa vedanācittadhammānupassanāvasena vuttāni.*

progressive stages in which each stage can itself be understood as somehow subsuming the whole path is in fact a significant feature of the presentation of the Buddhist path in the Nikāya-Āgama literature, perhaps especially in the context of *smṛtyupasthāna*. Thus from the perspective of the *Kāyagatāsatisutta* (and its parallel), the whole of the Buddhist path is presented in terms of mindfulness of body, without explicit reference to mindfulness of feelings, mind or *dhammas*. On the other hand, from the perspective of the sixteen stages of mindfulness of breathing it is rather that when mindfulness of body is fully developed in the form of mindfulness of breathing, it must also include mindfulness of feelings, mind and *dhammas*.¹²⁶ This variety in presentation is thus a device that guards against too rigid a conception of the stages of the gradual path.

As a final point in this context, it is worth noting how the *Saddharma-smṛtyupasthāna-sūtra* (probably a second or third century CE text) seems in effect to present the fourth application of mindfulness (watching *dhammas*) as a series of ten progressive stages (*bhūmi*), of which each involves the meditator (*yogācāra*) in observing *dhammas* internally (*yogācāra adhyātmike dharma dharmānupaśyī viharati*). The successive stages involve observing various aspects of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), the sense spheres (*āyatana*), etc., in a manner that focuses on the complexity of their conditioning. Yet the culmination of this practice is the attainment of the four *dhyānas* and the understanding of the rise and fall of *dhammas* generally.¹²⁷ Thus once again we have a relatively ancient text which bears witness to the manner in which the path was understood by bringing different schemes of the path together rather than abstracting them.

9. Conclusions

In a recent review of scholarship concerned with early Buddhist meditation, Daniel Stuart notes that the conceptions offered in a number of scholars' work he cites are "basically imagined reconstructions of a putative earliest (set of) practice(s)". Characterising Lance Cousins' and my own contribution as by way of contrast "more faithful to an actual lived tradition of meditative practice", he nonetheless complains that within our work

¹²⁶ Cf. Gethin 2001[1992]: 56–58.

¹²⁷ Stuart, *Less Traveled Path* I: 55–106, 536–37.

the homogenizing force of the Theravāda commentarial project tends to drown out the voices of the individual meditative traditions that most likely made up a very colorful fabric of religious practice during the first half of the first millennium in India, Sri Lanka and elsewhere.¹²⁸

The extent to which the Theravāda commentarial project should be characterised as a “homogenizing force” might be debated.¹²⁹ However, in the present article, rather than approach the Nikāya-Āgama literature with an ear attuned to the Theravāda commentaries, I have tried to listen to the voices of the composers and compilers—the *bhāṇakas*—of the Nikāya-Āgama literature drawn from (at least) three different redactions (Theravāda, Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivāda), and in doing so I have tried to attune myself to what they might have wanted to say about the Buddhist path. Certainly those voices bear witness to a variety of schemes of the Buddhist path in the early literature, but there is also a certain harmony in those voices that bears witness to a certain consensus, in the first place about the specific different schemes presented, in the second place about the interchangeability of certain elements within these schemes, in the third place about the permutations and patterns of variation, and finally about how those different schemes should be related to each other. Thus the composers of the Nikāyas combine the same set(s) of items in similar ways to produce similar patterns of variation that, far from being random, are informed by an understanding of certain principles that determines which elements are appropriate for a given context.¹³⁰

To elaborate, the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and (although the evidence is more limited) the Dharmaguptaka reciters of the Āgamas appear to be of one voice on the following points:

¹²⁸ Stuart, *Less Traveled Path* I: 14.

¹²⁹ I would argue that the account of meditation practice found, for example, in Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* remains broadly accommodating of a significant variety of approaches and practices.

¹³⁰ Cf. Gethin 1992: 155–56, where I argue that early Buddhist literature is characterised by a set of interconnected lists that govern the structure and pattern of the presentation of the Buddha’s teaching, facilitating various options (expositions that are full and exhaustive, bare and concise, or focused on a particular aspect) provided one is familiar with and sensitive to the underlying principles that inform the way different lists relate to each other.

- The presentation of the gradual path by way of three principal variations: (1) the four-*dhyāna* scheme, (2) the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme and (3) the *apramāṇa* scheme.
- The presentation of an additional scheme by way of the applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*).
- The presentation of the four-*dhyāna* scheme as the normative gradual path; this scheme assumes commitment to *śīla* and such general practices as guarding of the sense doors and mindfulness of activities as a basis for the attainment of the four *dhyānas*, leading on to knowledge of the destruction of the defilements, typically by way of knowledge of past lives, and the death and rebirth of beings.
- The association of the four-*dhyāna* scheme followed by the three knowledges with the awakening of the Buddha.
- The elaboration of the two further schemes of the gradual path—the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme and the *apramāṇa* scheme—as complementary to the first scheme; the former by way of attainments additional to the four *dhyānas* (namely, the four formless spheres and sometimes also cessation); the other by way of the practice of the four *apramāṇas* (which are presented sometimes as attainments additional to the four *dhyānas*, sometimes as the initial stages of the practice of the formless meditations, and sometimes in place of the *dhyānas*).¹³¹
- The inclusion in all three principal variations of the gradual path—whether involving the *dhyānas*, formless attainments, cessation, or immeasurable meditations—of some account of the gaining of knowledge in addition to the attainments themselves. The attainment of the four *dhyānas*, the immeasurable meditations, the formless meditations, or cessation does not of itself entail awakening; awakening is consistently distinguished from

¹³¹ It is worth noting in this context that for the later Theravāda tradition, the formless attainments are characterised as the fourth *dhyāna* “accompanied by perception of infinite space”, etc. (*ākāsānañcāyatanasaññāsahagataṃ* [...] *catutthajjhānaṃ*); see Dhs 55–56 (§§ 265–68), and cf. Abhidh-s-mhṭ 78.28–79.13; and the *dhyānas* are generic practices to be attained using various alternative subjects of meditation, including kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity; see Vism 111 (3.106–107), and Vim 63–64 (T 1648: 32.411a19–b4).

these attainments and requires some form of additional knowledge, usually expressed in terms that reference the four truths, or understanding the impermanence, etc., of things.

- The presentation of schemes that take the form of a step by step gradual path, apparently assuming the successive attainment of all items mentioned (whether the *dhyānas*, immeasurable meditations, or formless attainments), alongside presentations that regard just one of the items mentioned as a sufficient basis for destruction of the defilements.
- Presentations that integrate the three principal schemes of the gradual path with the *smṛtyupasthāna* scheme, and vice versa.
- Instances of *all* schemes stopping short of final awakening; in most cases it seems possible to identify an internal narrative logic to this omission.

What is revealed by the pattern of different schemes of the path, it seems to me, is not a record of the Nikāya-Āgama authors' disputes and confusion about the nature of the Buddhist path and its goal, but rather an early attempt to produce a coherent and unified vision of the Buddhist path: to borrow Stuart's metaphor, the threads of the different schemes are skilfully and creatively woven together to produce a single yet variegated and colourfully patterned fabric.

Of course, the survey undertaken in the present article does not address in full all the questions concerning different schemes of the path raised in the existing scholarly literature. I shall briefly comment on three questions. The first two are similar in form. What is the precise relationship of the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme to the normative four-*dhyāna* scheme? Similarly, what is the relationship of the four-*apramāṇa* scheme to the normative four-*dhyāna* scheme?

In part the same answer can be given in response to both questions, and in fact I have given it already: there is a clear consensus that neither cessation nor the immeasurable meditations are sufficient in themselves to bring about the final destruction of the defilements; an additional knowledge is required, although this knowledge is not always stated in the same way. Nonetheless the practice of the formless attainments or of the immeasurable meditations is straightforwardly and unproblematically presented as a basis for acquiring that knowledge. Thus the kind of argument elaborated by Richard Gombrich about the place of kindness and compassion in early

Buddhist presentations of the path seems to me something of an unnecessary complication.¹³² I hope to elaborate on the matter of the cessation of perception and feeling in a forthcoming article, but in brief, I would suggest that the inclusion of cessation in the scheme of the path is best understood as part of an inclusivist strategy whereby meditation attainments regarded by non-Buddhist wanderers as the goal of the religious life are accommodated within an overall Buddhist scheme of the path. This reflects the attempt of

¹³² Gombrich set out his argument again in *What the Buddha Thought* (2009: 78–85). He argues that in the *Tevijja-sutta* “companionship with Brahmā” (*brahma-sahavyatā*) after death is understood by the Buddha and his brahman interlocutors to refer to their highest religious goal; thus when the Buddha redefines “companionship with Brahmā” as a meditative state that involves pervading the six directions with a mind that is full of kindness, he must intend to substitute his own highest religious goal, namely awakening. According to Gombrich, the Buddha’s followers misunderstood what the Buddha was up to and so arrived at the “dogma that someone who practised the *brahma-vihāras* was reborn in the Brahma world but no higher” (p. 88). If, as Gombrich claims, the teaching that “love and compassion can be salvific for the person who cultivates those feelings to the highest pitch” was such a crucial part of what the Buddha taught (p. 195), it seems somewhat implausible that he should have chosen to teach this principally to brahman outsiders and in terms that were obscure to his own followers. Gombrich refers also to the *Metta-sutta* (pp. 86–7). Yet this short poem talks not simply of pervading the world with thoughts of love, but also of “not embracing opinion” (*ditṭhiñ ca anupagamma*) and “having achieved insight” (*dassanena sampanno*). This sounds closer to “seeing things as they are” (*yathā-bhūta-dassana*), which is, Gombrich acknowledges, the way “enlightenment is commonly referred to by the Buddha” (p. 159). While it seems possible to understand pervading the six directions with a mind full of love as a significant step on the way to seeing things as they are, it is not obvious why it should of itself simply be regarded as one and the same thing. Part of the problem is what it means in this context to speak of something as “salvific”. If the constituents of awakening can be developed in association with the immeasurable meditations (SN V 119.3–121.5; T II.197c15–22); and if, as the Theravāda commentaries put it (Ps I 85 = Spk III 139 = Mp II 98–9 = Vibh-a 316.), the constituents of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*) are present in *jhāna* achieved through the practice of kindness and compassion (as through the practice of mindfulness of breathing and so on), does this not in fact suggest that later Theravāda thought presents kindness and compassion as no less “salvific” than other meditation practices? And is it not just as plausible to read the *Tevijja-sutta* as reinterpreting “companionship with Brahmā” as the achievement of immeasurable kindness and compassion but then, rather than presenting this as a simple equivalent to awakening, placing it within an overall scheme of the path where awakening is conceived as seeing things as they are? For a helpful and critical discussion of the role of the *apramāṇas* in early Buddhist meditation, see Martini 2011.

the Nikāya-Āgama authors to position the Buddhist way as a distinctive approach to the quest for liberation in the religious world of eastern India in the fourth to third centuries BCE.

The third question concerns the place of schemes of the path that may *not* involve the *dhyānas*, the immeasurable meditations, or formless meditations. That such an understanding of the Buddhist path is evidenced in the Nikāya-Āgama literature was perhaps first articulated by La Vallée Poussin in his 1937 article “Musīla et Nārada”, where he cited a number of *suttas* in support of such a view. La Vallée Poussin’s article has prompted a variety of responses over the years and once more, there is not the space to consider the issues here.¹³³ It might be suggested that the approach adopted here—taking as a starting point the gradual scheme of the path presented in the *śīlakkhandhavagga/śīlaskandhanipāta*—will inevitably fail to capture the material in the Sūtra literature that sets out a path without reference to the *dhyānas*, etc. Perhaps what is required is a survey and assessment of contexts in the Nikāya-Āgama literature where accounts and formulas of awakening occur without explicit and immediate reference to the *dhyānas*.¹³⁴ Nonetheless it should be clear from the present survey that taking the *smṛtyupasthānas* as a paradigmatic Nikāya-Āgama presentation of the path without reference to *dhyāna* fails to take into account the considerable amount of material in that same literature that explicitly combines elements of *smṛtyupasthāna* and *dhyāna* practice.

The final point I would like to make is a more general one about the nature of Nikāya-Āgama literature and the search for the earlier and more “archaic” form of a sūtra (often with the implication that this is in some sense more “authentic”). Often the approach has been to take a single sūtra text and to consider its parallel redactions and then to make some judgement about a more archaic version. The present survey of schemes of the path as presented in a range of sūtras and their parallels reveals a pattern of insertion and omission of various “formulas”, “stock passages” or “pericopes” across the different redactions. It seems to me that such a pattern of insertion and

¹³³ See for example Gómez 1999, Bodhi 2003, 2007, and 2009, and Cousins 1984 and 2009.

¹³⁴ For example, the account of the past Buddha Vipassin’s awakening at DN II 34–35 and parallels (e.g. T I.7c); here the bodhisattva contemplates the links of dependent origination and then separately (*aparena samayena*) the rise and fall of the aggregates (though the latter is not found at T I.7c).

omission raises problems for the chronological stratification of early Buddhist literature that are not always sufficiently recognised.

Let us compare, for example, the scheme of the path as presented first in the *Devadaha-sutta* (MN 101) and its parallel MĀ 19, and then in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* (MN 26) and its parallel MA 204. The Theravāda tradition transmits the *Devadaha-sutta* inserting the full Majjhimanikāya gradual scheme of the path, beginning with the formula of the arising of the Tathāgata in the world (items 1–12, 18–20). The Sarvāstivāda tradition transmits the sūtra inserting at the same narrative point its version of the Madhyamāgama gradual scheme of the path but omitting the initial stages and so begins with retiring to a secluded dwelling (items 7–12, 20). In the case of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its parallel we find the inverse of this situation with an added difference. The Sarvāstivāda tradition transmits the sūtra inserting its full version of the Madhyamāgama gradual scheme of the path beginning with the formula of the arising of the Tathāgata in the world (items 1–12, 20). The Theravāda version inserts at the same narrative point the *ārūpya-nirodha* scheme of the path without reference to the appearance of the Tathāgata in the world.

In the case of both texts, the *Devadaha-sutta* and *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*, we might approach such differences with the assumption that one or the other version results from either a deliberate change or an accidental error in the transmission of the sūtra, and thus seek to recover the more archaic, “more authentic” or even “the original” version. But the strictly scholarly grounds for deciding which scheme of the gradual path is the one that “truly” belongs here seem to be very shaky. Alternatively, we might conclude that at least these portions of these two sūtras were at the time of their composition and during their early transmission not regarded as fixed, and that the notion of a single authentic version is misconceived and inappropriate. It seems to me that the latter conclusion better fits the patterns of insertion, addition and omission that we find in the material surveyed in this article. This is not to suggest, however, that the insertion, addition or omission of a particular formula at a particular point is not of interest or of significance. There may be a variety of considerations influencing the use or omission of a particular formula in a particular context: a wish to extend or shorten a text, literary and aesthetic sensibilities, didactic and doctrinal concerns, to name a few. Yet how such considerations relate to matters of relative chronology is not straightforward: the literary and aesthetic do not necessarily coincide with the didactic and doctrinal, and either might override the other. Moreover,

the current survey of schemes of the path reveals patterns of expansion and reduction that seem to me to indicate that a shorter exposition might just as easily be considered a later summary as an earlier core. The danger in such contexts is that scholarly judgements about what is earlier and later amount to little more than intuitions or preferences. This is, of course, not to deny that it is impossible to make any scholarly judgements about relative chronology, only that we need to be aware of the limitations imposed by the nature of the particular sources we are using.¹³⁵

Above all, the present survey of schemes of the path in the Nikāya-Āgama literature seems to confirm Étienne Lamotte's general judgement, made sixty years ago. What a comparison of the Pali Nikāyas and Āgamas shows is that certainly "the number of pericopes is not the same: some are added, others omitted, and yet others relocated".

However, [...] the variations in question affect hardly anything save the method of expression or the arrangement of the subjects. The doctrinal basis common to the āgamas and nikāyas is remarkably uniform. Preserved and transmitted by the schools, the sūtras do not however constitute scholastic documents, but are the common heritage of all the sects. [...] Any attempt to reconstruct a "pre-canonical" Buddhism deviating from the consensus between the āgamas and nikāyas can only end in subjective hypotheses.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ It is surely possible in some instances to trace the development in the use of certain technical and doctrinal terms. Thus, for example, on the basis of an examination of the use of *cetiya* and *thūpa* in Pali texts, Cousins 2018 seems to me to adduce reasonable grounds for concluding, contra Schopen, that the Theravāda redaction of the Vinaya is indeed earlier than the Mūlasarvāstivādin (while not denying that this contains equally ancient material), and that parts of the Vinaya (the *Suttavibhaṅga*) along with the four primary Nikāyas are demonstrably generally earlier than other canonical texts (the *Parivāra*, *Jātaka*, *Petavatthu* and *Vimānavatthu*, and *Apadāna*).

¹³⁶ Lamotte 1988: 156; for the original French, see Lamotte 1958: 171: "Le nombre de péripécopes n'est pas le même: certaines sont ajoutées, d'autres supprimées, d'autres d'enfin déplacées. [...] Cependant, [...] les variations en question n'affectent guère que le mode d'expression ou la disposition des matières. Le fonds doctrinal commun aux āgama et aux nikāya est remarquablement uniforme. Conservés et transmis par les écoles, les sūtra ne constituent pas autant des documents d'école, mais l'héritage commun à toutes les sectes. [...] Tout essai de reconstruction d'un bouddhisme « précanonique » s'écartant du consensus entre āgama et nikāya ne peut aboutir qu'à des hypothèses subjectives."

Lest I be misunderstood, in appealing to Lamotte here, I am not suggesting (just as Lamotte was not suggesting) that the comparison of the Nikāyas and Āgamas is somehow a futile exercise. Whether or not our scholarly quest is “pre-canonical” Buddhism, clearly, as Lamotte’s own scholarship perfectly exemplifies, the scholarly study of ancient Buddhism should draw on as broad a range of sources as possible. Besides, we also need to test Lamotte’s general judgement with specific focused studies. And the more we study the pattern of addition, omission and relocation of “pericopes”, the better our understanding of the nature of the consensus between the Āgamas and Nikāyas. Indeed, I would hope that the present study precisely illustrates this.

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Abhidh-s-mhṭ	<i>Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-ṭīkā</i> , ed. Hammalawa Saddhatissa. Oxford: 1989.
As	<i>Atthasālinī</i> , ed. Edward Müller, London: PTS, 1897.
AN	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i> , ed. R. Morris, E. Hardy, 5 vols. London: PTS, 1885–1900.
B ^e	Burmese edition in Burmese script
C ^e	Ceylonese edition in Sinhala script
DĀ	Dīrghāgama
DĀ-D	Dharmaguptaka Dīrghāgama (= T 1)
DĀ-S	Sarvāstivāda Dīrghāgama
DN	<i>Dīghanikāya</i> , ed. T.W. Rhys Davids, J. E. Carpenter, 3 vols. London: PTS, 1890–1911.
Dhs	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇi</i> , ed. Edward Müller. London: PTS, 1890.
EĀ	Ekottarikāgama (= T 125)
E ^e	European edition in Roman script
Ja	<i>Jātaka</i> , together with its commentary, ed. V. Fausbøll, 6 vols. London: PTS, 1877–1896.
Lal	<i>Lalitavistara</i> , ed. S. Lefmann, 2 vols. Halle: Verlag d. Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1902–1903.

MĀ	Madhyamāgama (= T 26)
MĀ-S	Sarvāstivāda Madhyamāgama
MN	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i> , ed. V. Trenckner, R. Chalmers, 3 vols. London: PTS, 1887–1902.
Mp	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i> , ed. M. Walleser, H. Kopp. London: PTS and Luzac, 1936–1957.
MSu	The <i>Mahāsudarśanāvadana</i> and the <i>Mahāsudarśanasūtra</i> , ed. Hisashi Matsumura. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publ., 1988.
Mvu	<i>Mahāvastu-avadāna</i> , ed. É. Senart, 3 vols. Paris: L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1882–1897.
Nett	<i>Nettipakarāṇa</i> , ed. E. Hardy. London: PTS, 1902.
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i> , ed. J. H. Woods, D. Kosambi, I.B. Horner, 4 vols. London: PTS, 1933–1938.
Ps-ṭ	<i>Papañcasūdanī-ṭīkā</i> , B ^e , 3 vols. Rangoon: Buddhasāsana-samiti, 1961.
PTS	Pali Text Society
SĀ	Samyuktāgama (= T 99)
SBV	<i>The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu</i> , ed. R. Gnoli, T. Venkatacharya, 2 vols. Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977–1978.
S ^e	Siamese edition in Thai script
SN	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i> , ed. L. Feer, 5 vols. London: PTS, 1884–1898.
Spk	<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i> , ed. F.L. Woodward, 3 vols. London: PTS, 1929–37.
Śrāv-bh	<i>Śrāvabhūmi</i> , ed. K. Shukla. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973.
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i> , ed. T. W. Rhys Davids, J. E. Carpenter, W. Stede, 3 vols. London: PTS, 1886–1932.
Sv-pt	<i>Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā</i> , ed. L. de Silva, 3 vols. London: PTS, 1970.
T	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> , ed. Junjirō Takakusu, Kaigyoku Watanabe. Tokyo: Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.
Vibh	<i>Vibhaṅga</i> , ed. C. A. F. Rhys Davids. London: PTS, 1904.
Vibh-a	<i>Sammohavinodanī</i> (Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā), ed. A. P. Buddhadatta. London: PTS, 1923.
Vim	Vimuttimagga (= T 1648) <i>The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga)</i> of Arahant Upatis-

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