

6 *Manomayakāya*

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6.1 Introduction

The term *manomayakāya* can be translated as ‘mind-made body’, ‘body made of mind’, or ‘body consisting of mind’. This notion is quite problematic because it appears in a wide range of different contexts. I found only few works within academic literature which are truly and extensively focused on the concept of *manomayakāya*, or even more broadly on the term *manomaya*.¹ One of the first most compelling contributions on this topic is that of Sue Hamilton (1996, 138-68), who skilfully presents an overview of the relevant canonical Buddhist sources with a sharp comparison with the Vedic texts. What emerged from Hamilton’s study is that the concept of *manomaya* is rather enigmatic because it is a compound which could be interpreted in grammatically different ways and appears in different contexts.² A second important contribution is that of Michael David Radich (2007, 224-87), a brilliant study which, however, does not unfortunately consider Hamilton’s work among the secondary literature. Radich provides another set of contexts in his research on the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*). He states that there are nine different contexts which can be gathered in three macro-groups:

1 An old and short reference can be found in Eliade 1958, 165. Other brief and valuable references are in Swearer 1973, 447-9; Reynolds 1977, 378-9 (however, references are scattered throughout the paper); Johansson 1979, 34-9; Harvey 1993, 36; 1995, 91-2; Guang 2009; Agostini 2010; Radich 2010; Anālayo 2016; 2021a; 2021b; Shulman 2021.

2 Hamilton (1996, 139-40) discussed the term *manomaya* in four different contexts: (1) the context in which *manomaya* is used to indicate a particular ontology, such as in the first and second verse of the *Dhammapada* (in this regard, see Agostini 2010); (2) the context in which the term *manas* indicates the mental sense (*manodhātu*), the sixth sense; (3) the context in which *manomaya* is used as a metaphorical synonym for the cosmological level of the world of form (*rūpadhātu*); and (4) the context in which meditators create a body made of mind when they achieve a certain level of meditation.

(1) Buddhist practice and attainment; (2) cosmology; and (3) views of other schools (Radich 2007, 228).³ Later, there occurs a paper by Sumi Lee (2014), who begins her study by introducing the previous research on the concept of *manomaya* in Pāli sources; however, she focused her research primarily on the Mahāyāna texts, adding no further material for the study of Theravāda Buddhism. Since the 2018, I have published a series of studies that, directly or tangentially, concern the study of the *manomayakāya*.⁴ Additionally, a contemporary practice involving the development of the *manomayakāya* is described by Potprecha Cholvijarn (2023).

Within this present research, the main focus will be on the *manomayakāya* attained during the path of liberation in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D 2), although the other contexts in which *manomayakāya* or *manomaya* occur will also be considered whenever appropriate. Therefore, the canonical pericope of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* will be first analysed (§ 6.2), followed afterwards by a detailed analysis of the meaning of the compound ‘*manomaya*’ (§ 6.2.1) and some of the according similes will be provided (§ 6.2.2). This preliminary study of the canonical context will be completed and enriched with the evidence provided by the Vedic texts and the comparison between Buddhist and Upaniṣadic materials (§ 6.3). Thereafter, a thorough analysis, from the canon to the Pāli commentaries, will be undertaken (§ 6.4), mainly focusing on the interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa*.

6.2 Pericope (Basic Formula + Simile) and Analysis of Some Elements

The creation of a new mind-made body is not only the fourteenth element of the twenty elements of the path of liberation in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, but also appears within a sub-list of twelve attainments which are some fruits of the ascetic life. The elements of this latter sub-list are separated from each other with a phrase which indicates that the list is hierarchic, or in other words, the elements are listed from the lowest to the highest: “O great king, this also is a visible fruit of the homeless life which is more advanced and exalted than the previous one”.⁵ In the story, a monk, after having fulfilled the basic requirement of the morality, practised self-restraint in various

3 Within the nine contexts recovered by Radich (2007, 229), the *manomayakāya* occurs as: (1) the mental body which was developed at an advanced stage in the path of liberation; (2) the *post-mortem*’s destination for disciples who achieved a certain level of fulfilment; (3) the body through which the Buddha visits the Brahmā’s world; (4) the body used by the Buddha on one occasion to go to a disciple to teach him; (5) a rebirth that seems promised even to extremely generous lay people; (6) the form in which some deities are embodied in certain heavens; (7) the form in which some beings were embodied in the initial part of an aeon (Pāli: *kappa*; Sanskrit: *kalpa*); (8) an object among a group of objects of identification that can be mistakenly confused with the self (*attan*); and (9) one of the seven nihilistic views rejected by the Buddha in the *Brahmajālasutta*. It is worth noting that the *manomayakāya* takes on different connotations outside of the Pāli texts. For instance, it could be the medium through which the transmigration process operates, as can be seen from the Chinese *Samyuktāgama* (Lee 2014, 70).

4 De Notariis 2018; 2019a; 2019b; 2021; 2022b; 2025; forthcoming-b. Relevant parts from these works have been included in the present book.

5 *idam pi kho mahā-rāja sandiṭṭhikaṃ sāmāñña-phalaṃ purimehi sandiṭṭhikehi sāmāñña-phalehi abhikkantataraṇ ca pañitatarāṇ ca* (e.g. D 1 77).

ways and lived a mindful life,⁶ abandons the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇa*) and enters progressively within the meditative absorption states until the attainment of the fourth level of absorption (*catutthajjhāna*). Subsequently, the monk is able to know and see (*ñāṇa-dassana*) the difference between body (*kāya*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)⁷ and, after that, he is able to create a new mind-made body (*manomayakāya*). This creation is followed by three similes whose aim is to better illustrate the nature of this attainment. The episode is thus narrated:

Basic Formula

When the mind is concentrated in this way, purified, cleaned, unblemished, deprived of impurities, malleable, fit for work, steadfast, having attained impassibility, he directs and turns the mind (*citta*) in order to create a body made of mind (*manomaya*). He creates from this body another body which has a form, made of mind, with all limbs and [bodily] parts, without defect of any faculty.⁸

Simile

Just as, O great king, a man were to draw out from a reed a stalk. He might think: “This is the reed, this is the stalk; the reed is one thing, the stalk is another one, nevertheless from a reed a stalk was drawn out”. Just as, O great king, a man were to draw out a sword from a scabbard. He might think: “This is the sword, this is the scabbard; the sword is one thing, the scabbard another one, nevertheless from a scabbard a sword was drawn out”. Just as, O great king, a man were to pull out a snake from a basket (*karaṇḍa*).⁹ He might think: “This is the snake, this is the basket; the snake is one thing, the basket another one, nevertheless from a basket a snake was pulled out”.¹⁰

6 For a recent discussion concerning the role of morality and mindfulness in the Buddhist path, see Ben-David 2024.

7 “When the mind is concentrated in this way, purified, cleaned, unblemished, deprived of impurities, malleable, fit for work, steadfast, having attained impassibility, he directs and turns the mind for the sake of knowing and seeing (*ñāṇa-dassana*). He knows thus: ‘This is my body (*kāya*) which has a form, consists of the four great elements, born of mother and father, is maintained by rice and junket, has the inherent quality of impermanence, is subjected to erosion, abrasion, breaking, destruction, and this is my consciousness (*viññāṇa*) which is leaned on it, bounded to it’” (*so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte ñāṇa-dassanāya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so evaṃ pajānāti: ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpi cātum-mahā-bhūtiko mātā-ṭṭhika-sambhavo odana-kummāsupacayo anicc-ucchādāna-parimaddāna-bhedāna-viddhamsana-dhammo, idaṃ ca pana me viññāṇaṃ ettha sitaṃ ettha paṭibaddhaṃ ti*; D I 76). On the possible significance of this description of the physical body and how it relates with the body made of mind, see De Notariis 2025; forthcoming-b.

8 *so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudu-bhūte kammaniye ṭhite ānejjappatte mano-mayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti. so imamahā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṅga-paccāṅgiṃ ahīndriyaṃ* (D I 77).

9 Here, I translate *karaṇḍa* without following Buddhaghosa’s interpretation, who understands it as the snake’s slough (*karaṇḍā ti idam pi ahi-kañcukassa nāmaṃ*; Sv I 222). I will discuss my reasons below (§ 6.4).

10 *seyyathā pi mahā-rāja puriso muñjamhā isikaṃ pavāheyya. tassa evam assa: ayaṃ muñjo ayaṃ isikā, añño muñjo aññā isikā, muñjamhā tv eva isikā pavālhā ti. seyyathā pi pana mahā-rāja, puriso asi kosiyaṃ pavāheyya. tassa evam assa: ayaṃ asi ayaṃ kosi, añño asi añño kosi, kosiyaṃ tv eva asi pavāḷho ti. seyyathā pi pana mahā-rāja puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya. tassa evam assa: ayaṃ ahi ayaṃ karaṇḍo, añño ahi añño karaṇḍo, karaṇḍā tv eva ahi ubbhato ti* (D I 77).

Afterwards, the monk is able to perform many kinds of psychophysical power (*iddhividhā*), he develops the element of the divine ear (*dibbasotadhātu*), the knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others] (*cetopariyañāna*), the knowledge of recollection of former existences (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāna*), and the knowledge of the fall and rise of beings (*cutūpapātañāna*). Finally, he obtains the knowledge of extinction (*khayañāna*) of the influxes (*āsava*), attains insight into the four noble truths, and achieves liberation.

In this exposition concerning the creation of a mind-made body, it is not explained what its use and function is. Perhaps, since the concept pre-dates Buddhism, it was part of a common knowledge and so was taken for granted.¹¹ Moreover, some terms involved do not have a unique interpretation. Generally speaking, the action of translating is itself an interpretative act which is not without problem. Hence, it seems appropriate to better analyse the translation of some more ambiguous terms.

6.2.1 Interpretation of the Compound ‘*Manomaya*’

On the basis of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*’s passage, it is not clear whether *manomaya*¹² should be translated as ‘made of mind’, ‘made through the mind’, or ‘made in the mind’. Buddhaghosa comments upon the compound understanding the term *manas* according to the instrumental case.¹³ However, an interpretation according to the genitive case would be supported by a widespread use of the term ‘-*maya*’ at the end of compounds, with the meaning of ‘made of’, ‘consisting of’ (PED s.v. “*maya*”). Finally, given that within a compound the first term is never inflected, the locative case (‘made in the mind’) cannot be *a priori* ruled out. Among scholars, only Sue Hamilton discussed the grammatical interpretation of this compound. In this regard, Hamilton writes:

Maya can mean ‘consisting of’, ‘made’ or ‘originating’. So, if taken as a genitive *tappurisa*, the compound can mean ‘consisting of/made of the mind’; ‘originating in the mind’ if taken as a locative *tappurisa*; or

11 Radich (2007, 234-5) pointed out that the episode which portrays Udāyin, who contradicts Sāriputta since he believes that the gods who have a mind-made body are just those that are formless (*arūpin*) and made of perception (*saññāmaya*) (A III 192-4), would highlight that the doctrine of *manomayakāya* was part of a common knowledge. Udāyin’s point of view was wrong because the gods who are *manomaya* are not formless (*arūpin*): they have a form (*rūpin*) (e.g. *devā rūpino manomayā [...] devā arūpino saññāmayā*; M I 410, as also quoted by Hamilton 1996, 153). In another canonical passage, the doctrine of the creation of a mind-made body seems taken for granted. In the *Janavasabhasutta* (D 18), Janavasabha is glad that the number of gods is increasing (in comparison to the number of *asuras*) because there appeared in the Heaven gods who had lived the holy life under the Blessed one (*ye te bhante devā Bhagavati brahmacariyaṃ caritvā [...]*; D II 208). In this *sutta* there is no mention of the term *manomaya*, however, it is reported within the *Vinaya* that when Kakudha (the attendant of Moggallāna) died, he arose in a mind-made body (Vin II 185) and the mind-made body is the body of certain gods as it is stated, for instance, in the *Brahmajālasutta* (D I 17). Therefore, we stay with Radich (2007, 235) in claiming that it is possible to recover from the Pāli canonical texts an inner coherence which connects the reports of the term *manomaya* within different episodes.

12 This subsection is mostly based on De Notariis 2018, 182-8.

13 “*manomaya* means ‘created through the mind’” (*manomayan ti manena nibbattitaṃ*; Sv I 222). A similar explanation is also provided by Buddhaghosa when the term occurs within the *Brahmajālasutta* (D I 34). On this occasion, the commentator wrote: “*manomaya* means ‘created by the *jhāna*-mind’” (*manomayo ti jhānāmanena nibbatta*; Sv I 120).

‘made by the mind’ if taken as an instrumental. In effect the locative and instrumental have the same meaning: that the mind is the cause of something else coming to be. The genitive meaning, on the other hand, indicates that the stuff of something is the mind, and its concern with *what* something is means that it is an ontological interpretation of the compound. (Hamilton 1996, 138-9)

Apparently, Hamilton divides the possible interpretations in two groups: 1) the mind which is the cause of something, interpreting the term *manas* according to either the instrumental or locative case; 2) the mind which is the substance of something, interpreting the term *manas* in an ontological way according to the genitive case. This double subdivision has been pivotal within Hamilton’s study. In fact, from her work, a constant commitment emerges in demonstrating that, on the one hand, the mind is an agent and is the cause of something, and, on the other hand, an ontological discontinuity does not exist between different states or levels of existence. This way of proceeding led Hamilton to understand *manas* according to the instrumental case (the mind as an agent), to the detriment of the genitive case (the mind as an ontology).¹⁴ However, a stricter textual analysis may provide a different interpretation.

A first criticism to the instrumental interpretation of the compound concerns the fact that there would be no need to specify that the new body is created through the mind. At the beginning of the formulaic passage, indeed, it is stated that “he [the monk] directs and turns the mind (*citta*) in order to create a mind-made (*manomaya*) body”.¹⁵ Therefore, it would already be clear that the means through which this new body comes into existence is the mind (*citta*). Comparing this passage with the previous one in which the monk clearly knows the difference between his physical body (*kāya*) and the consciousness (*viññāṇa*), a certain analogy can be noted. Once the practitioner becomes aware of his body, he states: “This is my body (*kāya*) which has a form, consists of the four great elements, born of mother and father” (*ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūtiko mātā-*pettika*-sambhavo*; D I 76). Thereafter, when the monk creates a new mental body, it is reported that “he creates from this body another body which has a form, made of mind” (*aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ*; D I 77). In both passages, the bodies are initially described using the term *rūpin*, which means ‘endowed with a form’. The first passage goes on to state that the body ‘consists of the four great elements’ (*cātum-mahā-bhūtiko*) and that it is ‘born of mother and father’ (*mātā-*pettika*-sambhavo*), while in the second passage the body is *manomaya*. In another context, Buddhaghosa comments upon the compound ‘*cātum-mahā-bhūtiko*’ stating that *cātum-mahā-bhūtiko ti cātu-mahā-bhūta-mayo* (Sv I 120), using the term ‘-*maya*’ at the end of the compound to underline that it is ‘made of’. It may seem, *prima facie*, that in the first passage the body has a form and consists of the four great elements (*rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūtiko*, equivalent to *rūpī *cātum-mahā-bhūta-mayo*), while in the second passage the new body has a form and consists of mind (*rūpiṃ manomayaṃ*), understanding *manomaya* as ‘made of mind’. However,

14 Hamilton, commenting on the episode that concerns the creation of the *manomayakāya* in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, writes: “[i]ts existence, therefore, is not *in* the mind or *of* the mind, but it is a body created by the power of the mind” (1996, 157).

15 *manomayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināya cittaṃ abhinīharati abhininnāmeti* (D I 77).

this does not sufficiently clarify the situation since the term *manomaya* could also be compared with *mātā-ṭṭika-sambhavo* ‘born of mother and father’. Just as in the first passage the physical body originated from parents (*mātā-ṭṭika-sambhavo*), in the same way, in the second passage, the body has not ordinary origins, but it is self-produced thanks to the [own] mind (*manomaya*). It might be possible that the compound *manomaya* conveys both meanings simultaneously, and so this new body is made through the mind and consists of mind as well.

A glance into the Upaniṣads (a more careful analysis will be provided below in § 6.3) may sustain the hypothesis that would read *manas* inflected in the genitive case rather than the instrumental one. In fact, the term *manomaya* in the Upaniṣads should be understood ascribing the genitive case to the term *manas*. This interpretation is particularly clear, for instance, in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.4.5:

The self (*ātman*), indeed, is the *brahman*, it is made of consciousness, made of mind, made of vital breath, made of seeing, made of hearing, made of earth, made of water, made of wind, made of empty space, made of shininess and darkness, made of desire and absence of desire, made of anger and absence of anger, made of justness and injustice; it is made of everything. Precisely for this reason, it is said ‘made of this, made of that’.¹⁶

Additionally, the Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* seems to indicate this as the only way to read the compound.¹⁷ This passage would make absolutely no sense if it were translated by interpreting the first members of the various compounds formed with *-maya* to the second member according to the instrumental case. In this case, one should admit that the *ātman/brahman* is created by something, but this is conceptually unacceptable. Therefore, the genitive case should be preferred; *pāce* Hamilton who, commenting upon some passages, attempts to reject an interpretation according to the genitive case, stating that “it appears that there is no ontological discontinuity between levels of existence” (1996, 148).¹⁸ The lack of ontological discontinuity is compared to ice, water, and

¹⁶ *sa vā ayam ātmā brahma vijñānamayo manomayaḥ prāṇamayaś caḥsurmayaḥ śrotamayaḥ pṛthivīmaya āpomayo vāyumaya ākāśamayas tejomayo ‘tejomayaḥ kāmamayo ‘kāmamayaḥ krodhamayo ‘krodhamayo dharmamayo ‘dharmamayaḥ sarvamayaḥ | tad yad etad idaṃmayaḥ ‘domaya iti* (BU 4.4.5).

¹⁷ “[C]onsisting of spirit or mind, spiritual, mental” (SED s.v. “mano”), indicating the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and Upaniṣads as references.

¹⁸ Hamilton tries to neglect an ontological difference in order to reject an interpretation of the term *manas* according to the genitive case. Interestingly enough, Hamilton translated the Upaniṣadic compounds ending in *-maya* with calques that leave the interpretation undetermined. For instance, she translated BU 4.4.5 (translated above by me) in this way (e.g. consciousness-made, mind-made, breath-made, sight-made, hearing-made, etc.), although in the end she admits: “made of all” (Hamilton 1996, 145). This choice of translation is in agreement with the use of English speakers to translate *manomaya* as ‘mind-made’, an unexceptionable translation from the formal point of view since it is an almost perfect calque of the compound. Hamilton, regarding the Upaniṣadic passage, writes that “[t]his passage clearly indicates an absence of ontological discontinuity between the different things of (or by) which one is made and implies that in identifying with Brahman one identifies with everything” (1996, 145). Even assuming that there is not an ontological discontinuity, the instrumental interpretation is quite odd, and therefore Hamilton tries to suggest the interpretation according to the instrumental case in brackets with ‘or by’.

steam, which would be nothing but three different ways of existing, for the same element, within a density spectrum (see Hamilton 1996, 150). However, although there is ontological continuity between the various states of existence of the same element, I think it is undeniable that we can say, by convention, that one thing is ‘composed of water’ and another is ‘composed of ice’. It could be said that although ultimately there is no substantial difference, the apparent manifestation of these states of existence (ice, water, steam) presents them to the ordinary experience as different. Using philosophical categories which are typical of the Buddhist speculation, it can be said that there is no difference in an absolute sense (*paramattha*), but there is difference only in the relative plane (*vohāra*). Since language is a purely conventional tool for describing apparent reality, it goes without saying that a substantial non-discontinuity on the ontological level does not invalidate an interpretation according to the genitive case since, apparently, the substances in play would seem different.¹⁹

Now, after having exposed some evidence in favour of an interpretation according to the genitive case, it must be said that the fact that the compound is interpreted according to the instrumental case in the Pāli commentaries cannot be ignored.²⁰ In fact, as already mentioned above (§ 5.1), word elucidations were among the first ways of commenting, and it could be argued that the very action of commenting was indeed a need already present at the dawn of Buddhism. The *Pātimokkha*, for example, was included within the canon accompanied by an elucidation of the terms word by word (*padabhājanīya*). Another example of the importance of commentary in ancient Buddhism is the *Niddesa*, the commentary on two *vaggas* and a *sutta* of the *Suttanipāta*, which was included within the canon (Norman 1997, 149-50). Therefore, it cannot be excluded that the commentary interpretation of the compound is ancient, also in light of the fact that it is shared by several commentaries.²¹ Furthermore, the interpretation according to the instrumental case would seem to be also present in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu: “it is defined as ‘*manomaya*’ by the fact of being produced by the mind alone, due to the fact that it does not come into being through something external as, for example, the seed, the blood, etc.” (*sa eva manonirjātavāt manomaya uktaḥ | śukraśoṇitādikaṃ kiñcid bāhyam anupādāya bhāvāt*; *Abhidh-k-bh* 153).

This scenario reveals that within what is the most ancient context, that is the Upaniṣadic one, the interpretation that emerges is that *manas* is to be understood as inflected according to the genitive, while the interpretation

19 Even Harvey has argued for an ontological non-discontinuity between body and mind: “[w]hile *nāma* is centred on *citta* and *rūpa* is centred on the ‘four great elements’, there is no dualism of a mental ‘substance’ versus a physical ‘substance’: both *nāma* and *rūpa* each refer to clusters of changing, interacting process” (1993, 39). However, he also stated that “non-normal patterns of interaction between mind and body are found in the cases of development of the ‘mind-made’ body [...] these non-normal cases are dependent on the power of meditation to bring about transformations in the normal pattern of *nāma-rūpa* interaction” (1993, 40).

20 See, for instance, *jhānamattena* [Be *jhānāmanena*] *nibbattattā manomayā* (Sv I 110); *manomayo ti jhānāmanena nibbatto* (Sv I 120); *manomayan ti manena nibbattitaṃ* (Sv I 222); *manomayan ti manena nibbattitaṃ* (Ps III 263); *manomayan ti manena nibbattitaṃ* (Mp I 209); *jhānāmanena nibbattitakāyo tena manena katattā manomayakāyo nāma* (Paṭi-a II 666). Here, it is worth noting that by ‘mind’ the Pāli commentaries seem to specifically understand ‘*jhāna*’, as a sort of mind developed or born from meditation.

21 It is also emphasised by Norman (1989, 51) that some interpretations of the commentaries are as ancient as the canonical ones.

provided within the much later Buddhist commentarial literature is an interpretation according to the instrumental case. The truth is that from the canonical text, as it has been previously shown, it is possible to infer both inflections. The only element that would seem to tip the scales in favour of an interpretation according to the genitive case is the fact that the new mental body is created after raising awareness into the transience of the physical body. Therefore, it would seem to have been created in contrast to the latter. In this regard, the treatment of a body called '*manomaya*' within another supposedly ancient Buddhist collection of texts, namely the *Samyuttanikāya* (The Collection of Connected [Discourses]), is certainly noteworthy.

The passage at stake (i.e. S V 282-4) tells of an episode set in Sāvattihī that sees as protagonist the disciple Ānanda, who approaches the Buddha. As usual, he pays homage to him and sits on one side. Once he had sat down beside him, he asked him: "O Lord, does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā by the psychic power, with a body made of mind?" (*abhijānāti nu kho bhante Bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā*; S V 282). The Blessed one replies in the affirmative and therefore Ānanda pursues him with another question: "O Lord, but does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā with a body which consists of the four great elements (*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*), by the psychic power (*iddhiyā*)?" (*abhijānāti kho pana bhante Bhagavā iminā cātumahābhūtikena kāyena iddhiyā Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā*; S V 282). The Buddha replies affirmatively again, provoking a reaction of astonished surprise from Ānanda.²² The possibility of levitating up to the world of Brahmā is due to the unification of body and mind. It is stated that the Buddha "concentrates the body in the mind and the mind in the body",²³ thereafter he dwells in this state of unification which involves bodily perceptions of pleasure and lightness.²⁴ This practice makes the body lighter, more malleable, more workable, more luminescent, just like an iron ball heated for a whole day would become lighter, more malleable, more workable, more luminescent.²⁵ As a result "the body, without difficulty, ascends from the earth to heaven".²⁶ The contrast present in this passage concerns the materiality of the body, therefore, probably, the material of which it is formed. A mental body is opposed to the material body composed of the four great elements. The physical body, more solid and coarser, is lightened by the union with the mind which therefore appears to be endowed with a more subtle materiality, capable of 'diluting' the heaviness of physicality.²⁷ In

22 *tayidam bhante bhagavato acchariyaṃ ceva abbhutaṃ ca* (S V 283).

23 *kāyam pi citte samādahati cittaṃ pi ca kāye samādahati* (S V 283).

24 *sukhasaññaṃ ca lahusaññaṃ ca kāye okkamitvā viharati* (S V 283).

25 *kāyo lahutaro ceva hoti mudutaro ca kammaniyyataro ca pabhassarataro ca. seyyathāpi Ānanda ayogaḷo divasaṃ santatto lahutaro ceva hoti mudutaro ca kammaniyyataro ca pabhassarataro ca* (S V 283). It is worth noting a parallel with the description of the mind of the practitioner who has overcome the fourth state of meditative absorption (*catutthajjhāna*) in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. In fact, in this text (D I 76), this mind is described using various terms including the state of malleability (*mudu-bhūta*) and the appropriateness to operate or work (*kammaniya*). The same terms also appear in the simile of the heated iron sphere, recalling to the mind the concept of 'ascetic ardour' (*tapas*). Just as the heat warms the metal sphere making it malleable, in the same way the ascetic ardour confers ductility to the mind.

26 *kāyo appakasireneva pathaviyā vehāsam abbhuggacchati* (S V 283).

27 This passage led Johansson to assert that "[t]he idea is probably that the mind (*citta*) is thin and light; by mixing it well with the body the combination will become less heavy" (1979, 38). On the concept of 'lightness', see De Notariis 2022b, 404-9.

this narrative, there is an opposition between different body densities. The commentary on this passage is taken from the *Sāratthappakāsinī*,²⁸ which glosses the sequence ‘*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*’ stating that the term *cātumahābhūtika* (composed of the four great elements) is to be understood as *cātumahābhūta-maya* using *-maya* at the end of the compound to indicate the composition of the matter of which the physical body is constituted. The comment carries on its elucidation emphasising that the characteristics of such a body are the heaviness (*bhārika*) and weight (*garuka*), thus highlighting the most peculiar characteristic of this body: the coarseness.²⁹ Moreover, the commentary avoids glossing the term ‘*manomaya*’, for which commentaries usually report the interpretation according to the instrumental case. I think this omission is not accidental because, as a rule, the commentary definition of *manomaya* is a dissolution of the compound that involves attribution to the first member (*mano/manas*) of the instrumental case. In fact, this interpretation would have been difficult to sustain in this context.

From the analysed elements, there would seem to emerge a certain difficulty to completely exclude the genitive from the interpretation of the compound *manomaya*, despite that the interpretation according to the instrumental case would seem to be the one that has been affirmed over time. The latter is well attested in the commentaries and could have its harbinger in a late canonical use of *-maya*, that is to say in the case of the wisdom (*paññā*) produced by reflection (*cintāmaya*), by hearing (*sutamaya*), and by development (*bhāvanāmaya*).³⁰ In conclusion, I am inclined to hypothesise a gradual transition in which the canonical texts still represent an intermediate step in this interpretative shift, as exemplified by Figure 6.1.

Genitive in the Upaniṣads	Buddhist canonical texts in Pāli	Instrumental in the Buddhist commentaries
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Figure 6.1 Diachronic representation of the grammatical interpretation of the term *manas* within the compound *manomaya*. English version of the picture reported in De Notariis 2018, 188

With a new insight concerning the meaning of the compound ‘*manomaya*’, we shall consider some interpretative problems involved in the translations and formulation of the canonical simile.

28 The passage at stake is Spk III 260-1.

29 The Pāli term which is usually translated as ‘gross’ is *oḷārika* (Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit: *audārika*, starting from the Sanskrit word *udāra*; BHSD s.v. “audārika”). Often in the texts, it occurs in connection with what is composed of the four great elements. For example, a gross self consisting of the four great elements is mentioned within the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*: *oḷārikam kho ahaṃ bhante attānaṃ paccemi rūpiṃ cātummahābhūtikaṃ kabaliṅkārahāra-bhakkhan ti* (D I 186). A physical body, composed of the four great elements, which is also coarse (*oḷārika*<*audārika*), occurs within the Sanskrit version of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (known as *Śrāmaṇyaphalasūtra*) that reached us within the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins: *ayaṃ mama kāyo rūpi* o>dārika<ś cātumahābhūtikaḥ* (SBhV II 245).

30 The oldest canonical occurrence is, most likely, in the quasi-Abhidhammic *sutta* called *Saṅgītisutta* (D III 219). A proper in-depth Abhidhammic treatment of the topic is provided in Vibh 324-5, which seems to be the base for further exegetical treatments, i.e. Sv III 1002 and Vism 439. Additionally, it is certainly interesting to consider Gethin’s discussion (2001, 222-3) of the occurrences in the *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettipakaraṇa*.

6.2.2 Notes on the Similes: Problematic Translations

Now, the translation of a couple of terms (*muñja* and *isīkā*) will be discussed, focusing on modern translations, the Buddhist world view, and the use of these terms within some Vedic texts.³¹

The terminology used in the presentation of the similes involves many difficulties. Here, I will deal with the first pair of elements, namely *muñja* and *isīkā*, whereas I will later discuss the problem concerning the translation of the term *karaṇḍa*, which is paired with the term *ahi*, since it requires a more detailed analysis (see below § 6.4).

My rendition of the pair of terms, *muñja* and *isīkā*, which I translate respectively as ‘reed’ and ‘stalk’, is not the only possible rendition. One of the first translation strategies adopted is to interpret the term *isīkā* as ‘reed’ and the term *muñja* as the sheath that covers it. This rendering was adopted, for instance, by Rhys Davids in his translation of the *Dīghanikāya* in 1899: “Just, O king, as if a man were to pull out a reed from its sheath” (1899, 88).³² A more recent interpretation is that of Rupert Gethin, who still interprets the term *isīkā* as ‘reed’, but translates the word *muñja* as ‘reed grass’: “It is as if, your majesty, a man were to draw out a reed from reed grass” (2008, 31).³³ These two translations might imply a slightly different interpretation of the extraction process. In fact, on the one hand we have a reed stripped of its sheath, while on the other hand we might understand that there is a single reed extracted from a multiplicity of reeds.³⁴ In the pursuit of trying to consider how the process of extracting the *manomayakāya* could be understood, it may be worth interpreting *muñja* as a ‘reed’ and *isīkā* as a ‘stalk’. In support of this hypothesis there is a definition found in the recent Pāli dictionary (*A Dictionary of Pāli*) written by Margaret Cone, who, among the various definitions, interprets the term *isīkā* as the inner part of the reed or stem which could be used to fabricate an arrow.³⁵ Such a use of the term is also reported within the *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch* for the Sanskrit equivalent *iṣīkā*.³⁶ Assuming that someone has to skin a reed or extract something from it, that something will probably have a function. In the following example of

31 This paragraph is based on De Notariis 2018, 188-94.

32 This reading derives from the interpretation of the same simile reported in *Satapathabrāhmaṇa* 4.3.3.16: *yatheṣīkā vimuñjā syād*. The passage clearly states that the reed (*iṣīkā*) is deprived of its sheath (*vimuñja*). This interpretation of the two terms was maintained in the subsequent translation made by Walshe (1995, 104).

33 Gethin’s translation seems very faithful to the interpretation of the PED (s.v. “muñja”), which sees precisely the term *muñja* as a type of grass, assuming that this term implies a collectivity (just as the term ‘grass’ in Italian [i.e. erba] implies a set of blades of grass). Therefore, the term *isīkā* would indicate the single element. This interpretation in connection with the simile is also reflected in a Pāli commentary, which glosses the word *muñja* in this way: *muñjamhā ‘ti muñjatiṇamhā* (Paṭi-s-a II 666), highlighting through the term ‘*ṭiṇa*’ that *muñja* is a type of grass.

34 I should specify that Rupert Gethin informed me that he does not understand the process of extraction differently from Rhys Davids and he meant, rather, that a single reed is extracted from a single blade of reed grass. Therefore, I want to inform the reader of Gethin’s real understanding, although I maintain his translation as an example of possible translation that can lead the reader to another understanding of the process of extraction. Also see my corrigenda (De Notariis 2021, 14).

35 “[T]he inner part of a reed or stalk (used as an arrow)” (DOP s.v. “isīkā”).

36 “Halme werden häufig besprochen und als Zaubermittel, namentlich als Pfeile” (SW s.v. “iṣīkā”). Even the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* mentions, with less references, this use of *iṣīkā* (SED s.v. “iṣīkā”).

the sword extracted from the sheath, it is obvious that between the sword and the sheath, only the first is usable. The sheath - as well as the basket (*karaṇḍa*) in the case of the snake (*ahi*) - serves only as a container, as a cover for what really counts. One could then wonder about the value of the snake in the case of the pair consisting of the snake (*ahi*) and basket (*karaṇḍa*). The snake in the basket could be, for example, the work tool of snake charmers. The aforementioned beggars used these trained ophidians in order to earn money. An account of this practice has come down to us in the *Samantapāsādikā*, the Pāli commentary on the *Vinaya*. In fact, this commentary, illustrating the meaning of the term *apada* (snake; lit. 'the one without feet'), states:

Among snakes (*apada*), that which is called *ahi* is a kept snake (*gahitasappa*) which belongs to somebody, such as snake charmers (*ahiguṇṭhika*), etc. When cause [such a snake] to play they earn half (*aḍḍha*) or a quarter (*pāda*) of a *kahāpaṇa*.³⁷

The extraction of the body made of mind also represents an extraction of something of value from its coarser container: the physical body.

The fact that things could have multiple levels of density or depth and that these levels in turn could have different uses or a different importance is attested in both Buddhism and the Upaniṣads. Hamilton, in her work, has drawn attention to how some things or elements may have three modes of existence. The scholar mentions *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 6.5.1-4, which identifies three modes of existence for food (*anna*), water (*āpas*) and fire (*tejas*): a coarse state (*sthaviṣṭa*), a middle state (*madhyama*) and a more subtle and refined state (*aṇiṣṭa*) (Hamilton 1996, 146). Similarly, it can be observed that this way of categorising the world was also known by Buddhism as, for example, the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* (The Discourse to Poṭṭhapāda; D 9) demonstrates. In this narrative, Poṭṭhapāda postulates (D I 185-6) the existence of three types of self (*attan*), which are gradually rejected dialectically by the Buddha: the gross self (*oḷārika*), the self made of mind (*manomaya*), and the formless self (*arūpin*). The very fact that things can have multiple levels or layers also implies that the various parts can have a certain value or a certain use, and one is not comparable to the other. A good example of this last statement is the simile of the heartwood that appears inside both the *Mahāsāropamasutta* (The Great Discourse of the Simile with the Heartwood; M 29) and the *Cūlasāropamasutta* (The Brief Discourse of the Simile with the Heartwood; M 30). In these two texts, it is explained how the various achievements should not be confused with the final goal, just as the heartwood of the tree should not be confused with other more external parts. In the *Cūlasāropamasutta*, the simile expressed reviews the various parts or layers of which a tree is made up of, highlighting how everything that is not heartwood is fundamentally not useful for achieving what one had set to make with the heartwood:

O brāhmaṇa, just like a man in need of heartwood, who looks for the heartwood, who wanders in search of the heartwood, after having passed

³⁷ *apadesu ahi nāma sassāmiko ahiguṇṭhikādīhi gahitasappo. yaṃ kilāpento aḍḍham pi pādam pi kahāpaṇam pi labhanti* (Sp II 362). The *kahāpaṇa* is a copper coin which has a square form (PED s.v. "kahāpaṇa").

just a large erect tree with heartwood, ignoring the heartwood, ignoring the sapwood, ignoring the inner bark, ignoring the outer bark, after having cut and picked up branches and foliage, went away thinking: “It is the heartwood!” Having seen him, a man with good sight would say precisely: “This good man certainly did not know the heartwood, he did not know the sapwood, he did not know the inner bark, he did not know the outer bark, he did not know branches and foliage so, indeed, this good man in need of heartwood, who looks for the heartwood, who wanders in search of the heartwood, after having passed just a large erect tree with heartwood, ignoring the heartwood, ignoring the sapwood, ignoring the inner bark, ignoring the outer bark, after cutting and taking branches and foliage, goes away thinking, ‘It is the heartwood!’ He will not achieve his purpose that required heartwood using his heartwood [in this case: branches and foliage]”.³⁸

From this simile, we can infer a division of the tree according to various levels. The most important part, the heartwood (*sāra*), is also the innermost part. Figure 6.2 shows the various layers that make up the tree as it was described within the simile.

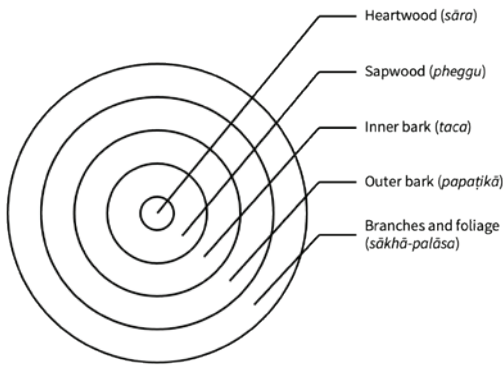


Figure 6.2 Tree layering described in the *Cūlasāropamasutta* (M 30). English version of the picture reported in De Notariis 2018, 193

This taxonomic subdivision of the tree shows a way of conceiving things that is analytical, which divides and discriminates between the parts involved because not all of them have the same value. Going deep to search for the true essence is a way of investigating the reality already present in the Upaniṣads, which testify to a search for the vital principle within natural phenomena and

38 *seyyathā pi brāhmaṇa puriso sāraththiko sārāgavesī sārāpariyesaṇaṃ caramāno mahato rukkhasa tiṭṭhato sāravato atikkamm’ eva sāraṃ atikkamma phegguṃ atikkamma tacaṃ atikkamma papaṭikaṃ, sākhāpalāsaṃ chetvā ādāya pakkameyya sāraṇ ti maññamāno; tanaṃ cakkhumā puriso disvā evaṃ vadeyya: na vatāyaṃ bhavaṃ puriso aññāsi sārāṃ na aññāsi phegguṃ na aññāsi tacaṃ na aññāsi papaṭikaṃ na aññāsi sākhāpalāsaṃ, tathā h’ ayaṃ bhavaṃ puriso sāraththiko sārāgavesī sārāpariyesaṇaṃ caramāno mahato rukkhasa tiṭṭhato sāravato atikkamm’ eva sāraṃ atikkamma phegguṃ atikkamma tacaṃ atikkamma papaṭikaṃ sākhāpalāsaṃ chetvā ādāya pakkanto sārāṇ ti maññamāno, yañ-c’ assa sārena sārakaraṇīyaṃ tañ-c’ assa atthaṃ nānubhaviṣṣati ti* (M I 198).

the nature of the individual (water, wind-breath, fire).³⁹ This *modus operandi* characterised by observation and hierarchical classification still persists in Buddhism, which maintains it in its vision of the world and cosmos.⁴⁰

Turning again to the problem of how translating the terms *muñja* and *iṣikā* – after having mentioned what could be the vision of the world that underlies this simile – the translation choices could be divided into two macro groups: 1) the extraction of a singularity (*iṣikā*) from a plurality (*muñja*); and 2) the extraction of a part (*iṣikā*) from a single whole (*muñja*). In the first case, *muñja* is a set of elements and *iṣikā* is a single element; in the second case, *muñja* is a single element and *iṣikā* is a part of it. A glance into the Vedic texts reveals that there is not a univocal interpretation. In *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 4.3.3.16 the *muñja* is described as something that can be taken from the *iṣikā/iṣikā: yatheṣikā vimuñjā syād*. In another passage, i.e. *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 6.3.1.26, the god Agni, moving away from the gods, enters a reed (*muñja*): *agnir devebhya udakrāmat sa muñjam prāviśat*, from the cavity (*susira*). Frequently, *muñja* would seem to be a term used as a singular noun, just as indicating a single stalk of *muñja*, and not as a plural one indicating *muñja* grass. In fact, in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 6.6.2.15, for example, when the ‘*muñja* grass’ is meant, the term *muñja* is inflected in the plural form: “this body, indeed, is precisely the cauldron of fire (*ukha*), the womb (*yonī*) is the grass (*muñjāḥ*)” (*tadvā ātmaivokhā | yonir muñjāḥ*). The term *iṣikā/iṣikā* also seems to have similar connotations. One can observe how *iṣikā*, within *Atharvaveda* 7.56.4, has the connotation of ‘single stalk’: “You [serpent] who here, sinuous, without joints, without limbs, make the faces twisted and deformed, may you, O Brahmanaspati, straight them out like a reed (*iṣikā*)” (*ayaṃ yo vakro viparur vyaṅgo mukhāni vakrā vrjinā kṛṇoṣi | tāni tvam brahmanas pate iṣikām iva saṃ namaḥ*).⁴¹ In fact, in *Chāndogyaopaniṣad* 5.24.3 the plural use of *iṣikā* is emphasised by the term ‘*tūla*’ (tuft) in the compound ‘*iṣikā-tūla*’ which, therefore, designates a ‘tuft of reeds’.

It would seem, therefore, that the interpretation that sees *muñja* as a single element and *iṣikā* as a part of it, probably the most important part, should be preferred. Another reason why the translation of *muñja* as a single reed should be preferred lies in the fact that in the remaining two similes from a single object (i.e. the sheath, and the basket) another single object is extracted (i.e. the sword, and the snake). Therefore, if one has to extract from the reed (*muñja*) its important and valuable part, this part could really be the ‘stalk’, which would then translate the term *iṣikā*. This translation could also conceptually include the interpretation that sees *iṣikā* as ‘reed’ and *muñja* as ‘sheath’. This is possible considering that the stalk is the

39 Frauwallner ([1953] 1973, 36-61) provides an exposition of how the vital principle is sought among these elements. Della Casa (1973, 35-6) highlights the different approaches of these first truth seekers: some of them were observers of natural phenomena; others focused on the nature of the individual; for others, there was a parallel progression of the observation of man and the cosmos; finally, there were those who attributed the qualities of knowledge and intelligence, proper to the individual principle, to the cosmic principle.

40 The subdivision of the Buddhist cosmos is based on three levels of progressive rarefaction: 1) the world of desire (*kāmadhātu*); 2) the world of form (*rūpadhātu*); and 3) the world of non-form (*arūpadhātu*), see Gombrich 1975, 133-4. For an overview of the Buddhist cosmos, see below Table 6.1 at § 6.3.1.3.

41 For the interpretation of *saṃ-√nam*, literally ‘to bend together’, with a meaning indicating ‘to straighten out’, see Whitney [1905] 1962, 426.

preponderant part of the reed and so extracting the stalk from the reed may represent the pruning of the stalk from the various offshoots or outgrowths of the plant.⁴²

6.2.3 Summary

So far, the interpretation of some terms has been highlighted, namely the compound *manomaya* and the pair of *muñja* and *isikā* occurring in the simile which illustrates the extraction of something from its container. Starting with the compound *manomaya*, we may note how both the exegetical Buddhist tradition and Sue Hamilton interpreted the first term (*manas*) of the compound *manomaya* as inflected into the instrumental case. However, it has been highlighted that there could be good reason to sustain a canonical reading of *manas* inflected into the genitive case. Furthermore, the gradual shifting over time of the grammatical interpretations of the compound *manomaya* would suggest that there may have also been a diachronic development for the interpretation of the body (*kāya*) that is *manomaya*, viz. the *manomayakāya*.

The terms *muñja* and *isikā* resulted to be difficult to interpret, as they often take on slightly different meanings depending on the context. The interpretative proposal that has been presented perceives *isikā* as the essential part of the reed that acts as a support, namely the stalk. This can also have its intrinsic usefulness as a main component for the creation of an arrow. Consequently, the *muñja* can be considered as the whole reed, namely the stalk with its offshoots (in a broad sense, it is also the sheath that covers the stalk). The extraction of the *isikā* from the *muñja*, together with the other similes, makes clear that what has value is to be found beyond the external rind. These similes would highlight how, beyond a grosser body (*kāya*), there is another body (the *manomayakāya*) more rarefied, but likewise real and, perhaps, even more valuable.

6.3 The Vedic Background with Particular Reference to the Upaniṣadic Context

The concept of *manomaya* appears within the Upaniṣads often in connection with the concept of *ātman*, the latter is frequently vaguely translated as ‘self’.⁴³ To be more specific, the notion of *manomaya* often appears listed as one of the constituent parts of the *ātman* in an intermediate position. Indeed, it is stated in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.5.3: “this is what this self is made of; it is made of speech, it is made of mind, it is made of breath”.⁴⁴ Moreover, the concept of *manomaya* appears in more sophisticated lists such as, for instance, in the already quoted *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.4.5:

The self (*ātman*), indeed, is the *brahman*, it is made of consciousness, made of mind, made of vital breath, made of seeing, made of hearing,

⁴² Further reflections on an odd wording of a passage in the simile are provided in Appendix 3.

⁴³ This section is mainly based on my previous work (De Notariis 2019b, 56-72).

⁴⁴ *etanmayo vā ayam ātmā | vānmayo manomayaḥ prāṇamayah* (BU 1.5.3).

made of earth, made of water, made of wind, made of empty space, made of shininess and darkness, made of desire and absence of desire, made of anger and absence of anger, made of justice and injustice; it is made of everything. Precisely for this reason, it is said 'made of this, made of that'.⁴⁵

However, this list should not be considered as a single list, but rather as a combination of lists, since the sequence of earth-water-wind-space could be considered a separate list. Indeed, in the Mādhyandina recension of the same passage, the list of elements composes of space, wind, fire, water and earth,⁴⁶ which is a widespread list of five elements. Furthermore, the sequence that includes the *ātman* made of consciousness (*viññānamaya*), made of mind (*manomaya*), and made of breath (*prāṇamaya*) can be likewise considered a separate list. This last list, which is composed of three elements, appears as the core of another list, which is composed of five elements within the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*.⁴⁷ This text exhibits five types of *ātman* which reside one inside the other like a Russian nesting doll and seem to come forth from the densest element to the subtlest. These five kinds of *ātman* are made (-*maya*) of different substances: food (*anna*), breath (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), consciousness (*viññāna*), and bliss (*ānanda*). The list is hierarchic: the most inferior type of *ātman* is listed first and is also the grossest element; the last element is the subtlest and best type of *ātman*. Any element is better than the previous one. For instance, in *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2.3.1, it may be observed that the *ātman* made of mind is preferred to the *ātman* made of breath:

Other than this very self made of breath (*prāṇamaya*), is the self made of mind (*manomaya*) which is inside it and permeates it. This very [self] has exactly the form of a man; its form of a man is the imitation of the form of a man [of the previous one and so on].⁴⁸

It is significant that this *ātman* has a manlike form, a fact which is echoed within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* when it is stated that the new mind-made body has all limbs and [bodily] parts (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgin*). It is worth noting that what Olivelle (and others) translates as 'self' seems to be an actual level of embodiment in this context. This list of five *ātman*s which could be reached progressively is summarised at the end of the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (3.10.4-5):

⁴⁵ *sa vā ayam ātmā brahma viññānamayo manomayaḥ prāṇamayaś caḥsurmayaḥ śrotamayaḥ pṛthivīmaya āpomayo vāyumaya ākāśamayas tejomayo 'tejomayaḥ kāmamayo 'kāmamayaḥ krodhamayo 'krodhamayo dharmamayo 'dharmamayaḥ sarvamayaḥ | tad yad etad idaṃmāyo 'domaya iti* (BU 4.4.5). Olivelle (1998, 121) has oddly reversed in his translation the term 'made of breath' with the term 'made of sight'. I translated the terms according to the Sanskrit text. See also above (§ 6.2.1).

⁴⁶ *ākāśamayo vāyumayas tejomaya āpomayaḥ pṛthivīmayaḥ*; end notes in Olivelle 1998, 519.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, TU 2.8.1 = TĀ 8.8.5; TU 3.10.5 = TĀ 9.10.5.

⁴⁸ *tasmād vā etasmāt prāṇamayāt | anyo 'ntara ātmā manomayaḥ | tenaiṣa pūrṇaḥ | sa vā eṣa puruṣavidha eva | tasya puruṣavidhatām anvayaṃ puruṣavidhaḥ* (TU 2.3.1). The self made of food (*annamaya*) is nothing but the human body (TU 2.1.1). The self made of breath (*prāṇamaya*) is inside the self made of food and so it has the same form, namely the human shape and this also applies to the following selves. It seems as if the physical body functions as a mould for the inner and subtler embodiments.

The one who is in this man and the one who is in that sun, both are one and the same. He who knows in this way, after having departed from this world, passes through the self (*ātman*) made of food (*annamaya*), then the self made of breath (*prāṇamaya*), then the self made of mind (*manomaya*), then the self made of consciousness (*vijñānamaya*), then the self made of bliss (*ānandamaya*); he has nutrition at will, has the form he desires, and traverses these worlds.⁴⁹

The concept of *manomaya*, within the Upaniṣadic passages mentioned so far, appears in connection with the concept of *ātman*, and as an element centrally located in some lists. In particular, within the five-element list in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, it is exactly in the centre of the list as an intermediate step between the grossest element (food) and the subtlest (bliss).

Another characteristic of *manomaya*, which appears in the Upaniṣads, is the luminosity or brightness that is, indeed, connected with an *ātman* or a *puruṣa* made of mind. For instance, it is stated in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 5.6.1:

Made of mind (*manomaya*) is this person (*puruṣa*), he has the essence of the light (*bhāḥsatya*), he dwells within the heart, he is like either rice or barley. He is the lord of everything, the supreme ruler of everything, he rules over all, over everything.⁵⁰

In this passage, it is clear that this person (*puruṣa*) - which is, in this context, a synonym of *ātman*⁵¹ - made of mind and consisting of light (*bhāḥsatya*), attains mastery over the material world. In a similar way, it would seem that the monk in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, after he created a new mind-made body, is able to perform magical acts through the development of a variety of psychophysical power (*iddhividhā*), showing a mastery of the matter thanks to the control over the constituent elements. The monk, for example, “dives into the earth and emerges from it as if it were water”,⁵² proving that he is not subject to matter anymore, he is instead able to control it.

49 *sa yaścāyaṃ puruṣe | yaścāsāvāditye | sa ekaḥ || sa ya evaṃvit | asmāl lokāt pretya | etam annamayam ātmānam upasaṅkramya | etaṃ prāṇamayam ātmānam upasaṅkramya | etaṃ manomayam ātmānam upasaṅkramya | etaṃ vijñānamayam ātmānam upasaṅkramya | etam ānandamayam ātmānam upasaṅkramya | imāñ! lokān kāmānni kāmārūpy anusaṅcaran* (TU 3.10.4-5). The passage is the same in TU 2.8.1.

50 *manomayo 'yaṃ puruṣo bhāḥsatyas tasminn antar hṛdaye yathā vrīhir vā yavo vā | sa eṣa sarvasyeśānāḥ sarvasyādhipatiḥ sarvam idaṃ praśāsti yad idaṃ kiñca* (BU 5.6.1). It is also similar to this passage CU 3.14.2, in which the self made of mind is said to have an appearance which is luminous (*bhārūpa*).

51 In the Upaniṣads, it is possible to often find the term *puruṣa* used in place of *ātman*. An *ātman* that is a *puruṣa* occurs, for instance, in BU 1.4.1: *ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ*. A treatment concerning the relationship between the *ātman* and the male body (notably, the word *puruṣa* refers to the male of human species, and so it is also connected with the male body) is provided by Black (2007, 133-50).

52 *paṭhaviyā pi ummujja-nimmujjaṃ karoti seyyathā pi udake* (D I 78). This *iddhi* is analysed below at § 7.4.7.

6.3.1 Comparison between Buddhist and Upaniṣadic Contexts

The analysis of the Upaniṣadic references has revealed that the concept of *manomaya* appears – within the Upaniṣads – in conjunction with the concept of *ātman*. Moreover, it is often found in hierarchical lists as an element centrally located and, sometimes, it is characterised by brightness or luminosity. In what follows, some Buddhist *suttas* will be considered, in order to show how the pre-Buddhist characteristics of the Upaniṣadic *manomaya-ātman* survived in Buddhist texts. Particular reference will be paid to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D 2), *Poṭṭhapādasutta* (D 9) and *Brahmajālasutta* (D 1).

6.3.1.1 *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D 2), and the Centrality

The central position of the notion of *manomaya*, within the hierarchical list of *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, could be compared with the position of the same notion in a *Sāmaññaphalasutta* list. The mind-made body appears in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* when the monk, after having cultivated morality and achieved meditative absorptions, attains awareness about the impermanence of the physical body, and so he creates a new mind-made body. However, this mind-made body is not the ultimate goal and, therefore, the monk will attain liberation only after the destruction of all the noxious influxes. The different attainments listed in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* are hierarchical. The list is developed from the lowest attainment to the highest. This is demonstrated by the ending words which divide the attainments from each other: “O great king, this also is a visible fruit of the homeless life which is more advanced and exalted than the previous ones”.⁵³ This phrase marks the transition from one element to another within a list that consists of twelve attainments:

1. the attainment of the first level of absorption (*paṭhamajjhāna*);
2. the attainment of the second level of absorption (*dutiyajjhāna*);
3. the attainment of the third level of absorption (*tatijjhāna*);
4. the attainment of the fourth level of absorption (*catutthajjhāna*);
5. the monk knows and sees (*ñāṇa-dassana*) the difference between body (*kāya*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*);
6. the creation of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*);
7. the monk is able to perform the many kinds of psychophysical power (*iddhividhā*);
8. the development of the element of the divine ear (*dibbasotadhātu*);
9. the knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others] (*cetopariyaññāṇa*);
10. the knowledge of recollection of former existences (*pubbenivāsānussatiññāṇa*);
11. the knowledge of the fall and rise of beings (*cutūpapātāññāṇa*);
12. the knowledge of the extinction of the influxes (*āsavakkhayaññāṇa*).

In this hierarchical list, the creation of the mind-made body is in sixth position, which is a central position. It could not be exactly in the centre because twelve is an even number, but it could not be more central than this. As already noted above (§ 6.3), in the hierarchical list of the *ātman*s, within

⁵³ *idam pi kho mahā-rāja sandiṭṭhikaṃ sāmāñña-phalaṃ purimehi sandiṭṭhikehi sāmāñña-phalehi abhikkantataraṇa ca pañitaraṇa ca* (e.g. D I 77).

the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, which is composed of an odd number of elements, the notion of *manomaya* is exactly central:

Five kinds of ātman (<i>Taittirīyopaniṣad</i> 3.10.4-5)				
Made of food (<i>annamaya</i>)	Made of breath (<i>prāṇamaya</i>)	Made of mind (<i>manomaya</i>)	Made of consciousness (<i>vijñānamaya</i>)	Made of bliss (<i>ānandamaya</i>)

The three elements which are the core of this list also appear in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 4.4.5 and another list of three elements can also be found in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.5.3:

<i>Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad</i> 4.4.5		
Made of consciousness (<i>vijñānamaya</i>)	Made of mind (<i>manomaya</i>)	Made of breath (<i>prāṇamaya</i>)
<i>Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad</i> 1.5.3		
Made of speech (<i>vāṇmaya</i>)	Made of mind (<i>manomaya</i>)	Made of breath (<i>prāṇamaya</i>)

Seemingly, when the concept of *manomaya* is present within lists, it is located in the central position; it is higher than some elements of the list, but lower than others. Thus, it might so far seem, that the central position which characterises the notion of *manomaya* is shared by Buddhism and the Upaniṣads. This will become even more evident in the next analysis of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*.

6.3.1.2 *Poṭṭhapādasutta* (D 9), and the Connection with the Buddhist *Attan* (= Sanskrit: *Ātman*)

Another characteristic of the concept of *manomaya* noticed in the Upaniṣads was its connection with the concept of *ātman*. It is probably for this reason that in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* three kinds of *attan* (= Sanskrit: *ātman*) are proposed by Poṭṭhapāda which are refuted dialectically by the Buddha:

1. the gross (*oḷārika*) *attan*;
2. the mind-made (*manomaya*) *attan*;
3. the formless (*arūpin*) *attan*.

In this context, as well as in the Upaniṣads and *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the concept of *manomaya* appears located in a central position within a hierarchical list, which develops from the grossest element to the most rarefied. The gross *attan* is described through terms which are very close to the terms used to describe the physical body (*kāya*) within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. It was stated in this text by the meditator: “This is my body which has a form, consists of the four great elements, born of mother and father, is maintained by rice and junket”.⁵⁴ In the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*, it is stated by Poṭṭhapāda: “O Lord, I postulate a gross *attan* which has a form, consists of the four great

⁵⁴ *ayaṃ kho me kāyo rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūtiko mātā-ṭṭhika-sambhavo odana-kummāsupacayo* (D I 76).

elements, feeds on solid food”.⁵⁵ In both passages the subjects have a form (*rūpin*), consist of the four great elements (*cātummahābhūtika*), and feed on food (*odana-kummāsupacaya/kabaliṅkārāhāra-bhakkha*).⁵⁶ Subsequently, there appears something described as *manomaya*: in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* appears the mind-made body, whereas in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* appears the mind-made *attan*. In both texts, what is mind-made is described as having all limbs and [bodily] parts (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgin*) and without defect of any faculty (*ahīnindriya*).⁵⁷ The high degree of similarity concerning the *manomaya*’s phrasing in these two *suttas* is probably the reason that led some scholars to suppose that the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* may have borrowed the model of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.⁵⁸ However, a simpler explanation to justify the presence of the three kinds of *attan* and their refusal by the Buddha is that the text was created in a historical context in which different ideas about the composition of the *ātman/attan* were circulating.⁵⁹ Among various kinds of *ātman*, a mind-made *ātman* is indeed well attested in the Upaniṣads. The similarity between the terms used by both Buddhist texts may be due to the fact that the Buddhist canon is the result of an oral tradition, which tends towards simplification.⁶⁰ Another reason to justify the similarities may be that there is no substantial difference between the body (*kāya*) and the *attan*. What I would like to demonstrate now is that the Buddhist notion of the body connected to the concept of *manomaya* was influenced by a Vedic idea of *ātman*.

Although *ātman* often means ‘breath’ or ‘soul’,⁶¹ the meaning ‘body/trunk’ is attested early on in Vedic texts.⁶² In some passages, for instance, *ātman* seems to designate the vital body in opposition to the death body (*śarīra*), just as in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.2.6-7:

55 *oḷārikam kho ahaṃ bhante attānaṃ paccemi rūpiṃ cātummahābhūtikam kabaliṅkārāhāra-bhakkhan ti* (D I 186).

56 Here, it is worth remembering that the term *oḷārika* (gross) is not present within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* account, however, it appears in the description of the physical body within a Sanskrit version of this account extant in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin: <*ayaṃ mama kāyo rūpī* o>ḍārika<ś cātumahābhūtikah (SBhV II 245). See also above (§ 6.2.1).

57 D I 77 and D I 186.

58 Pande (1957, 89) supposed that a first stratum of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* contains references to *oḷārika* and *manomaya* only, and he claims that this opposition is present also in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. Radich (2007, 248) believes instead that these two *suttas* convey two different soteriological visions, but he states also: “[i]t is almost as if D[īgha]N[īkāya] 9 is deliberately attempting to hijack the model of D[īgha]N[īkāya] 2 and harness it to the polemical exposition of a new or alternative model” (Radich 2007, 244; square brackets mine).

59 In this regard, see Frauwallner [1953] 1973, 36-61, in which there is an exposition of the attempts to find the vital principle among natural phenomena and the individual nature.

60 To put it in other words, it is feasible that when texts are orally transmitted their memorisation is better facilitated if there is a high rate of passages with verbatim repetitions. Allon is right to say that “Verbatim Repetition obviously represents the greatest aid to memory. The greater the percentage of a text that is verbatim repetitive the easier it is to learn and remember” (Allon 1997b, 52).

61 See SED s.v. “ātman”, that would suggest some derivations variously connected with the act of breathing: *van-* ‘to breathe’, *vat-* ‘to move’, *√vā-* ‘to blow’. See also s.v. “tman” in SED: “vital breath”.

62 I am strongly indebted with Werner Knobl who was the first to draw my attention to this particular meaning for the term ‘ātman’. He was also so kind to send me some references from the Vedic texts.

So, when his vital breaths had departed, his corpse [śārīra] began to bloat. His mind, however, still remained within his corpse.

Then he had this desire: “I wish that this corpse of mine would become fit to be sacrificed so I could get myself a living body (*ātman*)!” (translation of Olivelle 1998: 39; square brackets mine).⁶³

This passage conveys an opposition between *ātman* and *śārīra*, which seemingly already occurs in some Brāhmaṇa texts, such as in *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa* 1.2:

This he places in his own body [*ātman*], in these immortal life-breaths. This being placed in his own body does not perish.

Now when the mind passes away, when the breath, sight, hearing, [speech], then it enters these fires. Thereupon they throw after (these life-breaths) also this body [*śārīra*, i.e. the corpse] of his in these fires. (translation of Bodewitz 1973, 20; square brackets mine)⁶⁴

However, the body as a whole is not the only physical interpretation of the concept of *ātman* since there are some passages in which *ātman* appears with the meaning of ‘trunk’ of the body, in contrast to the limbs (*aṅga*) as, for instance, in *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* 1.11.6: “the man belonging to Prajāpati is seventeenfold: the four limbs, the neck with head, the trunk (*ātman*), speech as seventh, the ten breaths” (*saptadaśaḥ puruṣaḥ prajāpatyaś | catvāry aṅgāni śirogrīvam ātmā vāk saptamī daśa prāṇā*); sometimes in a metaphorical way, just as in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 9.5.2.16: “the Sacrificer (*yajamāna*) is the trunk (*ātman*) of the sacrifice, the priests (*ṛtvij*) are its limbs” (*ātmā vai yajñasya yajamāno ṅgāny ṛtvijo*); and in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 12.2.3.6: “the Viśuvat is the trunk (*ātman*) of the year, the months are its limbs” (*ātmā vai saṃvatsarasya viśuvān aṅgāni māsāḥ [...]*). Other times, the trunk (*ātman*) is opposed to the wings (*pakṣa*) and tail (*puccha*), such as in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 7.2.2.8: “he only ploughs the trunk (*ātman*) [of the altar fire], not the wings and tail” (*sa vā ātmānam eva vikṣati | na pakṣapucchāny [...]*); and in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 7.3.1.44: “he puts it on the trunk (*ātman*) [of the altar], not on the wings and tail” (*tā ātmannevpadadhāti na pakṣapuccheṣu [...]*). It is possible that the composers of these Buddhist texts had in mind this idea of *ātman*. Therefore, in Buddhist texts when the body is *manomaya*, it is also with all limbs and [bodily] parts (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgin*), and what is *manomaya* within the Upaniṣadic texts, is the *ātman*. Moreover, the mind-made *attan* within the Buddhist texts is also described as endowed with all limbs and [bodily] parts (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgin*). The Buddhist tradition describes the mind-made *attan* in the same way as it describes the mind-made body (*kāya*). It is likely that this overlap of meaning

⁶³ *tat prāṇeṣūtkrānteṣu śārīraṃ śvayitum adhriyata | tasya śārīra eva mana āsīt || so 'kāmayata medhyaṃ ma idaṃ syād ātmanvy anena syām iti* (BU 1.2.6-7). On this passage, see De Notariis 2018, 178, n. 2.

⁶⁴ *tad ātman nidhatta eṣv amṛteṣu prāṇeṣu | tad asyātman nihtaṃ na pramiyate | tad yadā vai manaḥ utkrāmati yadā prāṇo yadā cakṣur yadā śrotraṃ yadā vāg etān evāgnīn abhigacchanti | athāsyaedaṃ śārīraṃ eṭeṣv evāgniṣv anupravidhyanti* (JB 1.2). Cf. Jurewicz 2019, 51-2, in which ‘*ātman*’ is translated as ‘himself’. I assume that the translations ‘in his own body’ and ‘in himself’ are almost equivalent in this context.

led the first composers of Buddhist texts to specify that the body is with all limbs, in order to avoid misunderstanding. In our idea of ‘body’, it is implied that a body has limbs, so when we use the word ‘body’, we have no need to specify that the body is with limbs. However, it seems that it was not the same for early Buddhist redactors.

6.3.1.3 *Brahmajālasutta* (D 1), a Hidden Centrality

A refusal of a mind-made *attan* also appears in the *Brahmajālasutta*, when the Buddha refutes seven kinds of nihilist doctrine. Even on this occasion, the notion of *manomaya* is preceded by grosser elements, and followed by subtler elements. The first nihilistic doctrine concerns an *attan* which has a form, consists of the four great elements, and is born of mother and father (*attā rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūṭiko mātā-ṭettika-sambhavo*; D I 34). The second nihilistic doctrine concerns an *attan* which is divine, has a form, belongs to the sense-sphere, and feeds on solid food (*attā dibbo rūpī kāmāvacaro kabaliṅkārāhāra-bhakkho*; D I 34). After that, there appears the third nihilistic doctrine which regards an *attan* which is divine, has a form, mind-made, with all limbs and [bodily] parts, and without defect of any faculty (*attā dibbo rūpī manomayo sabbaṅga-paccaṅgī ahīnindriyo*; D I 34). Subsequently, the last four nihilistic doctrines, which are forms of *attan* more rarefied, are displayed: the *attan* which has realised the sphere of infinite space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*); the *attan* which has realised the sphere of infinite consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*); the *attan* which has realised the sphere of nothingness (*akiñcaññāyatana*); and the *attan* which has realised the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*). The first kind of *attan* of this list of seven nihilistic doctrines is comparable to the physical body. Therefore, it is described identically to the physical body within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. This *attan* has a form, consists of the four great elements, and is born of mother and father: *rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūṭiko mātā-ṭettika-sambhavo* (D I 34 = D I 76). The second *attan* is divine, but it is still part of the sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*). This sphere of existence constitutes the first level of a hierarchy of consciousness and is followed by the form-sphere (*rūpāvacara*) and the formless-sphere (*arūpāvacara*). This system of a hierarchy of consciousness parallels the basic structure of the cosmos: the sense world (*kāmadhātu*); the form world (*rūpadhātu*); and the formless world (*arūpadhātu*).⁶⁵ The sense world is inhabited by human beings (*manussa*) – a fact that is described in the first nihilistic doctrine – and by some classes of gods:⁶⁶ Gods of the Four Great Kings (*cātummahārājika*), Thirty-Three Gods (*tāvatiṃsa*), Yama Gods (*yāma*), Contented Ones (*tusita*), Those who delight in creation (*nimmāṇa-ratin*), Those who have authority on others’ creation (*paranimmīta-vasavattin*), which are the subjects of the second nihilistic doctrine. Subsequently, there is the third *attan*, which is

⁶⁵ In this regard, see Gethin 1997, 192-3.

⁶⁶ In the *kāmadhātu* there are also categories of beings which are lower than the human being condition: Anti-Gods/Demons (*asura*), Departed Ones/Hungry Ghosts (*petti-visaya*), Animals (*tiracchānayoṇi*), Hellish Beings (*niraya*). However, it is clear that the list of the seven nihilistic doctrines starts from the grossest *attan* moving towards more rarefied *attans*, and this suggests that the term ‘divine’ (*dibba*) in the second nihilistic doctrine refers to beings which are higher than the human condition.

likewise divine, has a form and is also mind-made. This third *attan* is higher than the second *attan* which belongs to the sense-sphere (*kāmāvacara*) but is lower than the following four *attans* which reach the formless states, and so they belong to the formless-sphere (*arūpāvacara*). It seems safe to say that the third *attan* can be placed in the form-sphere (*rūpāvacara*), which is higher than the sense-sphere, and lower than the formless-sphere.⁶⁷ Therefore, as S. Hamilton (1996, 153-4) noted, the gods which have a form also have a mind-made body, whereas the gods who do not have a form are made of perception.⁶⁸ In Buddhaghosa's commentary it is also stated that *rūpa* and *arūpa devas* are generated by *rūpa* and *arūpa jhānas*.⁶⁹ Moreover, there is textual evidence which demonstrates that one who is reborn with a mind-made body has obtained a higher rebirth than the gods who feed on solid food.⁷⁰ These testimonies agree with the fact that the second and third nihilistic doctrine both concern a divine (*dibba*) *attan*, but the *attan* of the second nihilistic doctrine feeds on solid food, whereas the *attan* of the third doctrine is mind-made. It would seem that the list of seven nihilistic doctrines has a counterpart within both Buddhist cosmology and psychology. These correspondences are better shown in Table 6.1 which illustrates how the exposition of the seven nihilistic doctrines is actually influenced by the basic setting of the cosmos, and by the possible mental states of a person.

Table 6.1 Comparison of the *Brahmajālasutta*'s account with the Buddhist cosmology and psychology. The exposition of both the thirty-one realms of existence and the psychological states is borrowed from Gethin 1997, 195, excluding the elements which are not useful to the present discussion. Gethin schematised the thirty-one realms according to the following Pāli sources: Abhidh-s 22-4; Vibh 422-6; Vism 205-7, 236-44 (= Vism Ae 7.40-4, 8.29-65); Sv-pt I 217. A similar scheme also occurs in Gethin 1998, 117-18 with some minor variations that do not affect the present issue. See also Collins 1998, 298-9 and De Notariis 2024, 39

67 A mind-made *attan* is placed within the state of existence of the form (*rūpabhava*) – which is between the state of existence of sensual pleasure (*kāmabhava*) and the state of existence of formless (*arūpabhava*) – by the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* commenting on a *Poṭṭhapādasutta*'s passage: *manomaya-attabhāva-paṭilābhena paṭhama-jjhāna-bhūmito paṭṭhāya Akaniṭṭha-brahma-loka-pariyosānaṃ rūpa-bhavaṃ dassesi* (Sv II 380).

68 *devā rūpino manomayā [...] devā arūpino saññāmayā* (M I 410).

69 *manomayā ti jhānacittamayā. saññāmayā ti arūpajjhānasaññāya saññāmayā* (Ps III 122).

70 *atikkamm' eva kabalīṅkārāhārabhakkhānaṃ devānaṃ saḥavyataṃ aññataraṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ upaṇno* (A III 192). The food has a particular value in Indian asceticism: “[t]he food code of ascetics has both a cosmological and a soteriological dimension and meaning. The progression of the ascetic withdrawal from the food effort is a mirror image of the progression of cosmic evolution, an evolution produced by the human involvement in the food effort” (Olivelle 1995, 202). Further thoughts on the significance of food are expressed in De Notariis 2025; forthcoming-b.

Cosmology		Brahmajālasutta	Psychology	
WORLD (<i>dhātu</i>)	REALM (<i>bhūmi</i>)	THE ATTANS described in the seven nihilistic doctrines (D I 34-5)	MENTAL STATE	
Formless World (<i>arūpadhātu</i>)	<i>nevasaññānāsaññāyatana</i> (Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception)	7° nihilistic doctrine: the <i>attan</i> which has realised the Sphere of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception (<i>nevasaññānāsaññāyatana</i>)	Formless Attainments (<i>arūpa-samāpatti</i>)	Formless-Sphere Mind (<i>arūpāvacara</i>)
	<i>akiñcaññāyatana</i> (Sphere of Nothingness)	6° nihilistic doctrine: the <i>attan</i> which has realised the Sphere of Nothingness (<i>akiñcaññāyatana</i>)		
	<i>viññāṇaṅcāyatana</i> (Sphere of Infinite Consciousness)	5° nihilistic doctrine: the <i>attan</i> which has realised the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness (<i>viññāṇaṅcāyatana</i>)		
	<i>ākāsānañcāyatana</i> (Sphere of Infinite Space)	4° nihilistic doctrine: the <i>attan</i> which has realised the Sphere of Infinite Space (<i>ākāsānañcāyatana</i>)		
World of Pure Form (<i>rūpadhātu</i>)	<i>akanitṭha</i> (Highest Gods) <i>sudassin</i> (Beautiful Ones) <i>sudassa</i> (Good-Looking Ones) <i>atappa</i> (The Serene) <i>aviha</i> (The Durable) <i>asañña-satta</i> (Unconscious Beings) <i>vehapphala</i> (Great Fruit)	3° nihilistic doctrine: <i>attan</i> which is divine, has a form, mind-made, with all limbs and [bodily] parts, without defect of any faculty (<i>attā dibbo rūpī manomayo sabbaṅga-paccaṅgī ahinindriyo</i>)	4° <i>jhāna</i>	Form-Sphere Mind (<i>rūpāvacara</i>)
	<i>subha-kiṇha</i> (Full Splendour) <i>appamāṇa-subha</i> (Measureless Splendour) <i>paritta-subha</i> (Limited Splendour)		3° <i>jhāna</i>	
	<i>ābhassara</i> (Radiant Ones) <i>appamāṇābha</i> (Measureless Luminosity) <i>parittābha</i> (Limited Luminosity)		2° <i>jhāna</i>	
	<i>mahābrahmā</i> (The Great Brahmā) <i>brahma-purohita</i> (Brahmā's Ministers) <i>brahma-pārisajja</i> (Brahmā's Retinue)		1° <i>jhāna</i>	
World of the Five Senses (<i>kāmadhātu</i>)	<i>paranimmita-vasavattin</i> (Those who have authority on others' creation) <i>nimmāṇa-ratin</i> (Those who delight in creation) <i>tusita</i> (Contented Ones) <i>yāma</i> (Yama Gods) <i>tāvatiṃsa</i> (Thirty-Three Gods) <i>cātummahārājika</i> (Realm of the Four Great Kings)	2° nihilistic doctrine: <i>attan</i> which is divine, has a form, belongs to the sense-sphere, feeds on solid food (<i>attā dibbo rūpī kāmāvacaro kabaliṅkārahāra-bhakkho</i>)	8 skillful states of mind motivated by non-attachment, friendliness and wisdom (<i>kusala-citta</i>)	Sense-Sphere Mind (<i>kāmāvacara</i>)
	Human Being (<i>manussa</i>)	1° nihilistic doctrine: <i>attan</i> which has a form, consists of the four great elements, born of mother and father (<i>attā rūpī cātum-mahā-bhūṭiko mātā-pettika-sambhavo</i>)		
	<i>asura</i> (Anti-Gods/Demons) <i>petti-visaya</i> (Departed Ones/Hungry Ghosts) <i>tiracchānayani</i> (Animals) <i>niraya</i> (Hellish Beings)		12 unskillful states of mind motivated by attachment aversion and delusion (<i>akusala-citta</i>)	

Thus, it seems safe to state that in both *Poṭṭhapādasutta* and *Brahmajālasutta* there is a mind-made *attan* at an intermediate level which is refuted. In the case of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta*, the mind-made *attan* is placed between the gross (*oḷārika*) *attan* and the formless (*arūpin*) *attan*, whereas in the *Brahmajālasutta*, it appears as the third element within a list of seven nihilistic doctrines refuted by the Buddha. A more detailed analysis reveals that the list of seven nihilistic doctrines has parallels with the Buddhist cosmology and psychology, showing that the mind-made *attan* is always located in an intermediate state – the world of form (*rūpadhātu*) or the form-sphere (*rūpāvacara*) – placed between the sense world (*kāmadhātu*) or sense sphere (*kāmāvacara*), and the formless world (*arūpadhātu*) or formless-sphere (*arūpāvacara*). Therefore, it is possible to state so far that the concept of *manomaya* is an intermediate element within lists in both Buddhism and the Upaniṣads. In all Buddhist *suttas* analysed it appears in a middle position and is the same in all Upaniṣadic lists examined also. Another characteristic of *manomaya* that has been revealed is its connection with the concept of *ātman/attan*. In the Upaniṣads, sometimes the *ātman* (= *puruṣa*) is *manomaya* (e.g. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 5.6.1), other times, *manomaya* is used to describe one of the constituent parts of the *ātman* (e.g. *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.5.3), and sometimes, even, it is an intermediate density level in a list of layers to be crossed progressively (e.g. *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 3.10.4-5). On the other hand, Buddhism – which is famous for its denial of the existence of an *attan* (doctrine of *anattan*) – when it presents the notion of *manomaya* in connection with the word *attan*, treats it as something which should be rejected or surpassed. However, some characteristics of the Upaniṣadic *manomaya-ātman* survived in the Buddhist description of the mental body, the latter being described in terms that resemble the first. Thus, we shall consider some further similarities.

6.3.1.4 Luminosity

Another characteristic worthy of analysis is the property of brightness or luminosity, which seems to belong to the notion of *manomaya*. In the Upaniṣadic context, luminosity may be a corollary of the fact that *manomaya* appears in connection with the concept of *ātman* (= *puruṣa*), which has brightness as its own characteristic. In *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 5.6.1, luminosity is indicated by the term ‘*bhās*’: *manomayo’ yaṃ puruṣaḥ bhāḥ* [...]; in a similar way, there is the term ‘*bhās*’ in *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 3.14.2, within the compound ‘*bhārūpa*’: *manomayaḥ prāṇasaṅgīro bhārūpaḥ* [...].

Interestingly, the characteristic of luminosity, in connection with the notion of *manomaya*, is also present in some Buddhist *suttas*, without implying any connection with the term *ātman/attan*, although a kind of embodiment is implied. Within the *Dīghanikāya* it is told in three *suttas* that at the beginning of an aeon (*kappa*) there were beings born in the Realm of Radiance that had a mind-made body and were self-luminous (*sayyam-pabha*). This episode appears within a pericope in three *Dīghanikāya*'s *suttas*: *Brahmajālasutta* (D 1), *Pāṭikasutta* (D 24), and *Aggaññasutta* (D 27). The pericope varies slightly in each text in order to fit the specific context.⁷¹ It is present, for instance, within the *Brahmajālasutta* in this form:

⁷¹ It is very typical of the pericopes to be adapted to the context with the most minimal changes, cf. Anālayo 2007, 8.

There is a time, o monks, when after a long lapse of time, at a certain point, this world contracts. When the world contracts beings are, as a rule, born in the Realm of Radiance. There, they are mind-made, feeding on joy, self-luminous, moving through the atmosphere, abiding splendidly, thus they remain for a long and lasting period of time.

There is a time, o monks, when after a long lapse of time, at a certain point, this world expands. When the world expands the empty palace of Brahmā appears. Then, a certain being, from exhaustion of the lifespan or from the exhaustion of merits, after falling from the division of the Radiant ones (*Ābhassara-kāya*), arises in the empty palace of Brahmā. There, he is mind-made, feeding on joy, self-luminous, moving through the atmosphere, abiding splendidly, thus he remains for a long and lasting period of time.⁷²

The characteristic of luminosity is conveyed by the compound ‘*sayyam-pabha*’ (self-luminous). In this compound, the Pāli term ‘*pabha*’ (adjectival form of *pabhā*, see PED s.vv. “pabha” and “pabhā”) has a parallel with the Sanskrit term ‘*pra-bhā*’ which, in the same way, has the meaning of ‘light’, ‘splendour’, and ‘radiance’ (SED s.v. “pra-√bhā”). Another term that is in connection with the brightness is ‘*subhatthāyīn*’ (abiding splendidly), which was translated into English by T.W. Rhys Davids as “continuing in glory” (1899, 30-1), by M. Walshe as “glorious” (1995, 75-6), and into Italian by F. Sferra as “dimoranti nella gloria [...] dimorante nella gloria” (2004, 288-9). The term ‘*subha*’ (Sanskrit: *śubha*), within the compound, is connected simultaneously with a range of meanings ranging from ‘shining’ and ‘bright’ to ‘beautiful’ and ‘welfare’ (PED s.v. “subha”). The translation ‘glory/glorious/gloria’ recalls in our culture – at least in my opinion – a Christian background, whereas the meaning of the compound seems to just describe a state of wellness, which is conveyed by the metaphor of light.⁷³

6.3.1.5 Atmosphere

Finally, there is a further characteristic relating to the body of beings inhabiting the Realm of Radiance whose translation made by scholars could hide an implicit reference to the Vedic worldview. The term in question is ‘*antalikkha-cara*’, which was translated by T.W. Rhys Davids as

72 *hoti kho so, bhikkhave, samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena ayaṃ loko saṃvaṭṭati. saṃvaṭṭamāne loka yebhuyyena sattā Ābhassara-saṃvaṭṭanikā honti. te tattha honti manomayaṃ pīti-bhakkhā sayamaṃ-pabhā antalikkha-caraṃ subhatthāyīno, ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhanti.*

hoti kho so, bhikkhave, samayo yaṃ kadāci karahaci dīghassa addhuno accayena ayaṃ loko vivaṭṭati. vivaṭṭamāne loka suññaṃ Brahma-vimānaṃ pātu-bhavati. ath’ aññataro satto āyukkhayā vā puñña-kkhayā vā Ābhassara-kāyā cavitvā suññaṃ Brahma-vimānaṃ upapajati. so tattha hoti manomayo pīti-bhakkho sayamaṃ-pabho antalikkha-caro subhatthāyī, ciraṃ dīghaṃ addhānaṃ tiṭṭhati (D I 17).

73 This paragraph might enlarge our comprehension concerning the “propensity among Theravāda and Dharmaguptaka reciters to improve on early discourse passages by introducing imagery related to fire and luminosity” (Anālayo 2017b, 11-12). Therefore, since the luminosity seems to be connected with the concept of *manomaya* in both Buddhist and Upaniṣadic texts, if it appears together with this concept, it should be considered an original feature of the text, and not a later addition.

“traversing the air” (1899, 30-1), by M. Walshe as “moving through the air” (1995, 75-6), and by F. Sferra as “eterovaghi [...] eterovago” (2004, 288-9). These translations follow the interpretation provided by the *Pali-English Dictionary* for the compound ‘*antalikkha-cara*’: “walking through the air” (PED s.v. “*antalikkha*”). However, the term ‘*antalikkha*’, has the corresponding Sanskrit term ‘*antarikṣa*’ which means ‘atmosphere’, that is the intermediate space between heaven and earth.

Atmosphere appears as a median element between heaven and earth in the tripartite subdivision of the cosmos. It is possible to recover from the *Rgveda* – our oldest Indian text record – two basic views about the composition of the cosmos: 1) a bipartite one, consisting of sky (*Dyaus*) and earth (*Prthivī*); and 2) a tripartite one, consisting of earth, atmosphere and sky. The tripartite division of the cosmos is mostly known to us through the *vyāhṛti*-formula, i.e. *bhūr, bhuvah, svar*, but in the *Rgveda*, a way to express it is through the image of the two world-halves (*rodasī*), with the atmosphere (*antarikṣa*) in the middle.⁷⁴ Terms used to designate the tripartition are various since the tripartite cosmos is found throughout the Vedic literature. Therefore, it is possible to also recover some kinds of tripartition of the cosmos within the Upaniṣads in which the atmosphere is a central element – between earth and sky – designated with the term ‘*antarikṣa*’. This tripartition appears, for instance, in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 3.1.10:

He conquers the earthly world (*prthivīloka*) through the invitational hymn (*puronuvākyā*), the intermediate world (*antarikṣaloka*) through the hymn of the sacrifice (*yājyā*), the heavenly world (*dyuloka*) through the hymn of glorification (*śasyā*).⁷⁵

Within this passage, the tripartite division of the cosmos consists of *prthivī* (earth), *antarikṣa* (atmosphere) and *dyu* (sky). Another example is *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 5.14.1:

There are eight syllables: *bhū-mi* (earth), *an-ta-ri-kṣa* (atmosphere), *dy-au* (sky). Eight syllables, indeed, are also one of the feet (*pada*) of *Gāyatrī* and, therefore, this is the same of that. The one who has the knowledge of this very foot/verse (*pada*) would conquer as far as these three worlds.⁷⁶

These few quoted examples demonstrate the persistence of a tripartite subdivision of the cosmos in the Vedic literature. This cosmological view conveys a meaningful term *antarikṣa* located in an intermediate position, where the atmosphere is an intermediate space between earth and sky.

⁷⁴ See, for instance, *rodasī antarikṣam* (RV 1.73.8; 5.85.3; 10.88.3; 10.139.2). Another way used to mention the tripartite division is, for example, *dyāvaprthivī antarikṣam* (RV 1.115.1; 4.14.2). It is interesting to remember that the bipartite division of the cosmos, as stated by Kirfel (1920, 3) and reconfirmed by Gombrich (1975, 112), seems to be older than the tripartite division. The complementary pair of sky and earth, *Dyāvaprthivī* (in the dual), is an Indo-European heritage which counterposes the Mother Earth (feminine) to the Father Heaven (masculine). The latter appears, indeed, at the vocative form of *Dyaus Pitar*, which corresponds with *Jupiter* in Latin and *Zeus Pater* in Greek (see Gombrich 1975, 112).

⁷⁵ *prthivīlokaṃ eva puronuvākyayā jayaty antarikṣalokaṃ yājyayā dyulokaṃ śasyayā* (BU 3.1.10).

⁷⁶ *bhūmir antarikṣam dyaur ity aṣṭāv akṣarāṇi | aṣṭākṣaram ha vā ekaṃ gāyatrīyai padam | etad u haivāsya etat | sa yāvad eṣu triṣu lokeṣu tāvad dha jayati yo 'syā etad evaṃ padam veda* (BU 5.14.1).

Thus, it remains to be seen to what extent it is possible to claim that there is a connection between the Upaniṣadic *antarikṣa* and the use of the corresponding term *antalikkha* within the Pāli texts. The concept of *manomaya*, found within the Buddhist texts, has been demonstrated to have some characteristics in common with the same concept which occurs in the Upaniṣads. Unfortunately, the Upaniṣadic term *antarikṣa* does not appear – as far as I know – to be closely related with the concept of *manomaya*. However, it is possible to assume that there exists, within the Upaniṣads, a connection between the atmosphere (*antarikṣa*) and the mind (*manas*), or, at least, that such a connection does not prove to be entirely unreasonable for the Upaniṣadic worldview. In this regard, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.5.4 stated that: “the three worlds are really these: this very world is the speech, the intermediate world (*antarikṣa*) is the mind (*manas*), the world up there is the breath”.⁷⁷ In this passage, a connection between *manas* and *antarikṣa* has been made explicit, allowing us to assume that the mind-made beings of the Pāli texts are described to move (*-cara*) in the *antalikkha* not by chance.

That is why the translation of the term *antalikkha* with ‘atmosphere’ would highlight that these mind-made beings are moving in an intermediate state between earth and sky, which is part of a common Indian background. Once again, it appears that the characteristic of centrality is connected with the concept of *manomaya*, but in this case it is a spatial type of centrality based on a cosmological model. This interpretation is consistent with the typical Buddhist cosmological interpretations formerly mentioned, which concern the tripartition of the cosmos in *kāmadhātu*, *rūpadhātu*, and *arūpadhātu* and position the notion of *manomaya* within the world of form (*rūpadhātu*), which is the intermediate state. Therefore, the connection between the concept of *manomaya* and the atmosphere (*antarikṣa/antalikkha*) could be interpreted as a residual influence caused by a previous cosmological view. This residual influence is due to the tendency of Indian cosmology to not abandon the old theories or ideas in favour of new ones, but rather to preserve the coexistence of the old and new ideas side by side.⁷⁸

6.3.2 Summary

The comparison between the Buddhist and Upaniṣadic texts has shown that the Buddhist concept of *manomaya* shares strong similarities with its Upaniṣadic equivalent. Many characteristics of *manomaya* seem to better fit the Upaniṣadic context than the Buddhist one, at least because some of them are apparent in the first and hidden, or at least less evident, in the latter. The Buddhist connection of *manomaya* with the *attan* in the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* is hardly explainable without considering the importance that speculations about the *ātman* held in the Upaniṣads as well as the wide semantic range of meanings of the Upaniṣadic *ātman*. In Buddhist texts, what is *manomaya* is usually a body (*kāya*), which is one of the meanings that *ātman* can have in Vedic texts, namely ‘body’ or ‘trunk of a body’. The characteristic of centrality, namely that *manomaya* is centrally located in some Upaniṣadic

⁷⁷ *trayo lokā eta eva | vāg evāyaṃ loko mano 'ntarikṣalokaḥ prāṇo 'sau lokaḥ* (BU 1.5.4).

⁷⁸ Gombrich (1975, 111) compares the complexity of the Indian cosmology with the Indian system of social organisation of the castes, which is likewise developed through a system of inclusion and aggregation of practices and customs in the course of time.

lists of elements, is, somehow, hidden in the *Brahmajālasutta* and survives in the connection of *manomaya* with the cosmological dimension of *rūpadhātu*, which is the intermediate world between the sense world (*kāmadhātu*) and the formless world (*arūpadhātu*). The intermediate world in the Vedic texts is often called *antarikṣa* ('atmosphere'; = Pāli: *antalikkha*) and, unsurprisingly, some *manomaya* beings are said to move in the atmosphere (*antalikkha-cara*). Luminosity is, in the Upaniṣads, an attribute of *ātman*, and *manomaya* beings in higher cosmological realms are likewise luminous.

Therefore, the Buddhist *manomaya* hardly emerges from out of the blue, but does resemble the earlier Upaniṣadic testimonies. Moreover, if we consider that the *manomayakāya* – as we will see in the next section – did not receive any treatment or elaboration from the first Abhidhammic exegesis, it would be safe to assume that it was an exogenous element, more in connection with the Vedic background, rather than the Buddhist scholasticism. Now, with a new insight concerning the ancient context of the *manomayakāya*, we shall see how it has developed over time.

6.4 From the Canon to the Commentaries

When we usually discuss Buddhism, we have to consider a complex system of beliefs which may have evolved throughout the centuries.⁷⁹ As Buddhists usually claim: “all compounded things are impermanent” (*sabbe saṃkhārā aniccā*; Dhṃ 277). From a certain point of view, it is possible to state that the *corpus* of Buddhist scriptures is also something that can be called ‘*saṃkhāra*’. As Richard Gombrich (2009, 139-41) pointed out, this word means both the process and the result of a process. The Buddhist literature was certainly the result of a process.⁸⁰ Its texts were composed and transmitted orally for several centuries, and during this process it may be possible that either some concepts were changed, whether deliberately or not, or if some material became fixed enough to not allow further modifications, some additions on that material in the form of a further exegesis occurred. The Buddhist literature available to us in this present day is the result of that process. The main aim of this section will be to trace the steps of development of a concept, that is to say, the *manomayakāya*, the body made of mind. These steps will display changes over time.

In order to recover the history of a particular concept we need to isolate it, tracing a line of development throughout the centuries. For the purpose of a diachronic study, it would be optimal to take a concept which is old enough to date back to early Buddhism and, at the same time, a concept which is not too scattered, in order to allow us to narrow its evolution. I mentioned the necessity of a concept dating back to early Buddhism because a study focused on the development of something needs to know the starting point of its own subject of study. An early Buddhist concept may have parallels

⁷⁹ With the word ‘complex’, I do not mean that all Buddhist concepts are hard to grasp, but I would like to point out that some concepts might be connected with others in ways that are not always clear or immediately obvious. Norman (1981), for instance, showed that the refutation of the doctrine expressed with the phrase *so loko so attā* should be understood as an Upaniṣadic reference. This could be an example of how some Buddhist concepts or doctrines could have been influenced by their source context.

⁸⁰ This development process has not always been linear, in this regard see De Notariis 2022a.

in texts contemporary to, or older than, the Buddhist texts and therefore may allow a more reliable reconstruction of how a concept was understood within the older stratum of the canon. Without an evident starting point, it is difficult to identify a development, as developments are not always linear. In the midst of developments, a later exposition could be closer to the original meaning of the concept than an older one, so strictly speaking it would be more like a restoration. Thus, a clear-cut starting point would be optimal.

In this regard, the concept of *manomayakāya* is a perfect subject of study. Based on the textual parallels with other Buddhist traditions which have survived in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan translations, we have no reason to believe that the *manomayakāya* was not an element present in early Buddhism.⁸¹ This could be valid even for the *iddhividhā* and the other *abhiññās*. In using the controversial label 'early Buddhism', we should take into account the warnings advanced by Peter Skilling (2022, 219-22), who highlighted, *inter alia*, "[t]he term *early Buddhism* is frequently invoked without any serious attempt to define it, and it is not entirely clear exactly what it is" (220). Thus, as the *manomayakāya*, *iddhividhā* and the other *abhiññās* occur not only in the Pāli Nikāyas but also in a similar fashion in the Āgamas, I will use the label 'early Buddhism' in the present book. Additionally, given that the canonical context is also analysed in light of the pre-Buddhist Upaniṣadic evidence, I see no reason not to regard the picture that emerges as among the earliest *recoverable* forms of Buddhism.

However, the results of the following analysis should be considered significant for the study of Theravāda Buddhism, although it cannot be ruled out that they may also be relevant to the study of early Buddhism. The starting point will be the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s exposition of the *manomayakāya*, which will be followed by other accounts in later texts which refer to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s exposition. The latter is considered here as the *locus classicus* for, at least, the Theravāda tradition.

6.4.1 The Relative Chronology of the Texts

As scholars of Buddhism know very well, there is a problem with the dating of texts in Buddhist studies. Often, both the absolute and the relative chronology remain doubtful. However, the peculiar narrowing of the research to the *manomayakāya* pericope allows a reliable identification of the relative chronology. In fact, this pericope is quite, but not extremely, widespread within the Pāli literature, thus enabling a more detailed analysis of the sources. Most of these sources will also be used in the study of the *iddhividhā* and *abhiññās* and, therefore, this discussion on chronology will underpin their analysis.

The starting point will be the already mentioned *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the best candidate to embody the *locus classicus* of this pericope. However, it is not the only text in which this pericope occurs. In fact, other *suttas* in the *Sīlakkhandhavagga* (from D 3 to D 12) include the pericope in their narration,

⁸¹ In this regard, see especially Gethin 2020; Anālayo 2021a.

but only in an abbreviated form.⁸² Another *sutta* which includes the pericope is the *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* (M 77). However, this *sutta* does not seem to be the actual place of origin of the pericope either. As a matter of fact, this *sutta* has a parallel with the Chinese version of the *Madhyamāgama*,⁸³ which does not report the detailed exposition of different kinds of aspects of the Buddhist path which contains the creation of a new body made of mind, along with three similes to better explain it. Moreover, as Bhikkhu Anālayo pointed out, the excessive length of the exposition within the *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* does not seem appropriate to a *Majjhimanikāya*'s text, but instead seems more likely to be a later interpolation. Therefore, Bhikkhu Anālayo wrote that:

Due to this detailed exposition, the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* has become a rather long discourse that would perhaps find a more fitting placement in the *Dīgha-nikāya*, instead of being included among discourses of “middle length”. In sum, this whole exposition in the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* gives the impression of being an expansion of what originally would have only been a reference to the destruction of the influxes or to the three higher knowledges. (Anālayo 2011, 424)

Therefore, we can maintain that the earliest context to embody this long version of the Buddhist path of liberation is the *Dīghanikāya* (and *Dirghāgama*, as the Chinese and Sanskrit texts would attest), and the evidence provided by *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* is better understood as a borrowing from that collection of texts.⁸⁴ With regard to the Theravāda tradition, the version of the path has come down to us in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.

Finally, there is another short reference to this pericope within the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (A I 24) which reports a brief allusion to the pericope claiming that Cullapanthaka (alternative reading of Cūḷapanthaka), among the disciples of the Buddha, is the preeminent one in the mind-made body creation (*etad aggam bhikkhave mama sāvakaṇaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ manomayaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimminantānaṃ*; A I 24). However, the allusion is very brief and presupposes a previous explanation of what a mind-made body is.

The references to the *manomayakāya* pericope discussed so far are from the first four Nikāyas: *Dīgha-*, *Majjhima-*, *Aṅguttara-*, *Samyutta-* (the latter makes no reference to the pericope, only to the body made of mind used to travel up to the *Brahmaloka*; see S V 282). The last Nikāya worthy of consideration is the *Khuddakanikāya*. I am discussing it separately from the other Nikāyas because the *Khuddakanikāya* is a very heterogeneous collection of texts which varies in relation to the content and composition

82 In this case, it could be difficult to discuss a *locus classicus* in the absolute sense. Therefore, as reported by MacQueen (1988, 179-80), within the Chinese version of the Dharmaguptaka *Dirghāgama*, this pericope is reported in full in the *Āmózhòu jīng* 阿摩書經 (= Pāli: *Ambaṭṭhasutta*, D 3) because it is the first *sutta* in the Chinese collection in which this pericope appears, whereas it is shortened in the other texts. Within the Mūlasarvāstivāda's canon, the pericope appears in the *Lohityasūtra* (Sanskrit; Pāli: *Lohiccasutta*, D 12) as pointed out by Melzer (2010, 20; and quoted also in Gethin 2020, 14, n. 24). However, it is possible to assume that the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* is the best candidate to embody the *locus classicus* of this pericope within the *Dīghanikāya* of the Theravādins, at least because it is reported in full in this discourse only.

83 In this regard, see Anālayo 2011, 423.

84 It was highlighted by Bucknell (2014) that there could have been a transference of discourses between *Dirgha-* and *Madhyama-āgama*, and *Dīgha-* and *Majjhima-nikāya*. This might indicate the existence of a certain fluidity between these two collections of texts.

period. Among these texts, the only text which includes the pericope in its entirety is the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, quoting it, in all likelihood, from the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. Another text which refers to a creation of a mind-made body is the *Niddesa* – in both the *Mahā-* and *Culla-niddesas* (Nidd I 340 and Nidd II 209) – which presents a very odd exposition of the *manomayakāya* which is not in line with any other (see Appendix 4). The dating of both texts is problematic, and it is not yet very clear. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is dated by Oskar von Hinüber to the II century AD,⁸⁵ and by Anthony Kennedy Warder from the 349 BC (Mahāsaṃghika Schism) to the II century BC (with few minor additions after this date),⁸⁶ while for the *Niddesa*, the situation is even worse. Therefore, Oskar von Hinüber (1996, 59) requested a re-examination of the *Niddesa* question. It is not yet clear if the *Niddesa* is earlier or later than the period of Aśoka, but it seems safe to assume that it cannot be later than the I century BC (date of the supposed writing down of the canon).⁸⁷ However, despite a lack of an absolute chronology, both texts quote directly and freely from the early strata of the canon (i.e. the first four Nikāyas).⁸⁸ Kenneth R. Norman (1997, 143) draws attention to the *Dīpavaṃsa* (Dīp 5.36), which states that the Mahāsaṃghika rejected the *Parivāra*, Abhidhamma, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, *Niddesa*, and parts of the *Jātaka*. He interprets the event assuming that these texts did not exist before the Schism, and therefore their composition should be dated later than the second *saṅgīti*.

It is worth noting that the *manomayakāya* pericope has no place within the Theravāda Abhidhamma,⁸⁹ thus it seems to have escaped the new systematisation accomplished by the Abhidhammic texts. However, I should underline that the *Dīghabhāṇakas* ('the reciters of the *Dīgha[nikāya]*') ascribed the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* to the *Abhidhammapīṭaka*.⁹⁰

85 Oskar von Hinüber (1996, 60) follows Frauwallner's hypotheses concerning the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* presented in Frauwallner 1971, 106 = 1995, 42 and Frauwallner 1972, 124-7 = 1995, 87-9.

86 Warder 1982, XXXVIII-XXXIX. It is noteworthy that Cousins, in his review of von Hinüber (1996), seems to support Warder's hypothesis. He states that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* cannot be the last of Abhidhamma's works because it seems "unaware of the later development of the canonical Abhidhamma" (Cousins 1998, 155).

87 The tradition reports that the decision to write down the canon was taken after the discovery that there was only one monk alive who remembered the *Niddesa* (Sp III 695-6; this episode is quoted also in Norman 1983, 87 and von Hinüber 1996, 59). It cannot be excluded that in the future the date of the writing down of the canon traditionally accepted by scholars may be refuted or at least re-discussed. In this regard, see the attempt of Cousins (2013), recently taken up by Wynne (2018).

88 The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* seems, at the beginning, an expansion of the *Dasuttarasutta* (Warder 1982, XXXIII-XXXIV; see also Norman 1983, 87) and it presupposes a large part of Suttantas (Warder 1982, XXXIV-XXXV). Referring to the *Niddesa*, von Hinüber wrote that "Nidd[esa] occasionally quotes directly from the canon [...] it is, however, certain that Nidd[esa] does not belong to the old canonical texts and that also a date after Aśoka does not seem unlikely" (1996, 59; square brackets mine).

89 The only reference to the concept of '*manomaya*' is within the *Vibhaṅga*, in a passage which does not mention it directly (Vibh 384) but quotes D I 34 (which involves a mind-made self), replacing *dibbo rūpī manomayo* with *dibbo rūpimayo* (however, *dibbo rūpī manomayo* is actually the reading in Be, cf. De Notariis 2021, 12 n. 6).

90 This fact is attested in Sv I 15, quoted also by Adikaram (1946, 27) and Norman (1983, 9). Moreover, Warder referring to Upatissa's work, the **Vimuttimaggā*, wrote that: "[i]t is curious that four passages which appear to be direct quotations from the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* are referred to by Upatissa as 'in the *Abhidhamma*'" (1982, XL).

An early exegetical occurrence of *manomayakāya* is in the Chinese text entitled *Jiětuō dào lùn* 解脱道論 (T 1648), which is more commonly referred to as **Vimuttimaggā*.⁹¹ This text is believed to have been written by a monk called Upatissa (= Sanskrit: Upaṭiṣya) in either India or Sri Lanka, and there was a long debate among scholars concerning the geographical origin of the text and the original language in which it was written.⁹² It was initially thought to be an Abhayagiri text, however the school affiliation has been a point debated among scholars, although an origin within the Abhayagiri school seems to be the most likely so far.⁹³ The text is extant in its Chinese translation made in the sixth century AD, more precisely 515 AD,⁹⁴ during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502-587 AD) by a person known as *Sēng-qié-pó-luó* (僧伽婆羅),⁹⁵ and a part of it has been preserved in Tibetan.⁹⁶ In spite of its late translation, the text is reasonably older than the sixth century and, indeed, the Pāli *Visuddhimaggā* seems to be aware of it.⁹⁷ Regarding the Indian composition of the text, there is no exact information, but it should predate the *Visuddhimaggā*, and Bapat (1937, LV) even suggests to date the **Vimuttimaggā* around the I-II century AD on the basis of the comparison with the *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettipakaraṇa*. Kim (2018) suggests that the **Vimuttimaggā* was composed not later than 200 AD on the basis of the comparison with the occurrences of the term *'bhavaṅga'* within the *Milindapañha* (Kim 2018, 756) and *Paṭṭhāna* (Kim 2018, 757, 769).

91 Whereas the literal translation of the Chinese title would correspond in Sanskrit to *Vimuktimārga-śāstra* or *Vimuktimārga-nirdeśa*, see Anālayo 2009b, 2, n. 3 and Nyanatusita 2021, 5.

92 Hypotheses concerning the geographical origin of the **Vimuttimaggā* have fluctuated between various geographical areas: Sri Lanka or Cambodia (e.g. Nagai 1917-19, 70), India (e.g. Bapat 1937, LIV-LV), North India (e.g. Norman 1991, 48). Some scholars were interested to not rule out a Sri Lankan origin, criticising the Indian origin (e.g. Ehara et al. [1961] 1995, XXXVII-XLII), whereas Crosby (1999) criticised the methodology used to establish either an Indian or a Sri Lankan origin. Concerning this problem, Cousins wrote that “[w]e should however ignore suggestions that this [i.e. **Vimuttimaggā*] might be a work produced outside Ceylon, if this means in a tradition not derived from Ceylon. It is clearly in the Ceylon *abhidhamma* tradition and we have no evidence that such ideas were current in other schools” (2012, 87). Cousins is certainly right in pointing this out, and, indeed, his statement is corroborated by the recent observations of Kim, who wrote that the **Vimuttimaggā* “is the only text, except for Pāli texts, that discusses the cognitive process based on the concept of *bhavaṅga* which is known to be closely related to Sri Lankan Theravāda” (2016, 941). Moreover, as pointed out by Cousins (1981, 22), Schmithausen (1987, 7-8), Gethin (1994, 31) and more recently by Kim (2018, 754), Vasubandhu wrote within his **Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa* (*Dàshèng chéngyè lùn* 大乘成業論; T 1609) that *bhavaṅga* originated among the *Tāmraparṇīya(-nikāya)*, and “*Tāmraparṇīya* refers to, or is at least closely related to Sri Lankan Theravāda tradition” (Kim 2018, 754-5). According to Nyanatusita, the **Vimuttimaggā* could well have been composed in Sri Lanka (2021, 25) and its language may have been Pāli (2021, 20-4). A different position concerning the original language of the **Vimuttimaggā* is expressed by Willemen (2023).

93 The attribution of the **Vimuttimaggā* to the Abhayagiri sect was questioned by Norman (1991) and Crosby (1999). Recently, Cousins (2012) tried to re-establish this connection. On the school affiliation, see also Nyanatusita 2021, 16-20.

94 Following Skilling 1994, 173 and n. 1 and Nyanatusita 2021, 106.

95 There seems to be a bit of confusion concerning the original name of the Chinese translator, in this regard see Skilling 1994, 171-2 for the alternative options. Skilling seems to prefer ‘Saṃghabhara’ among all renditions, whereas Nyanatusita (2021, 103-4) prefers ‘Saṃghapāla’.

96 The Tibetan text entitled **Vimuktimārgadhutagaṇanirdeśa* was edited by Sasaki (1958) and Bapat (1964). This text corresponds to the third chapter of the **Vimuttimaggā* and a recent translation is provided by Nyanatusita (2021, 752-67). Moreover, extracts from the **Vimuttimaggā* were recovered by Skilling (1987, 7) within the **Samskr̥tāsamskr̥taviniścaya* (chapters 13-15) and a recent translation is provided by Nyanatusita (2021, 768-822). See also Skilling 1993, 135-41 and Anālayo 2009b, 2, n. 4.

97 As noted by Norman (1983, 120); von Hinüber (1996, 124); Anālayo (2009b); Nyanatusita (2021, 6-9).

Therefore, it would be safe to assume a wide span of time to date the text that could be from the I-II century AD to the IV-V century AD (period in which, presumably, Buddhaghosa, the author of *Visuddhimagga*, lived).⁹⁸ I would also suggest that this span of time could be slightly reduced assuming that the *Mahāvamsa* is right to report that Buddhaghosa came to Ceylon during the reign of King Mahānāma, which is dated, according to Kenneth R. Norman (1983, 130, n. 217), at the first half of the V century, perhaps 409-431 AD. Since the *Visuddhimagga* was the first work composed by Buddhaghosa,⁹⁹ it would make sense to believe not only that at the first half of the V century the **Vimuttimagma* already existed, but also that it had already become famous enough to serve as a model to the composition of the *Visuddhimagga*.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, assuming that at the beginning of the V century the **Vimuttimagma* was a well-established text within the Buddhist cultural *milieu*, it would make sense to suppose that it was already in existence within the IV century.¹⁰¹

Later texts which will also be taken into account are the *Visuddhimagga* and commentaries. The *Visuddhimagga* predates the actual Pāli commentaries. It is stated within the introduction of the commentaries of the first four Nikāyas that they will not deal again with the issues already explained within the *Visuddhimagga*.¹⁰² Moreover, it is not unusual to find within the commentaries the recommendation to check within the *Visuddhimagga* in order to obtain further information.¹⁰³ The author of the *Visuddhimagga* and of the commentaries of some principal works of the canon¹⁰⁴ is, presumably, Buddhaghosa, who could be roughly dated between the IV and V centuries.¹⁰⁵ The commentaries, which will be taken into account, will be the ones on the texts already mentioned. In this regard, there is an exegetical interpretation of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, within the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* (= *Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā*), in a section called *Sāmaññaphalasuttavaṇṇanā* (Comment on

98 It seems safe to assume that Buddhaghosa could not be later than 489 AD, a date in which a Chinese translation of the *Samantapāsādikā* was made (Norman 1983, 130; von Hinüber 1996, 103). Oskar von Hinüber (1996, 103) proposed a span of time for Buddhaghosa's dates of about 370 to 450 AD.

99 A conjectural hypothesis concerning the date of composition of the *Visuddhimagga* was formulated by Endo (2014, 106-9), who suggested as a possible date 428-429 AD.

100 Nagai suggested that “[t]he *Visuddhi-magga*, which hitherto has been considered to be entirely his [i.e. Buddhaghosa] own work, is in reality a revised version of Upatissa's *Vimutti-magga*” (1917-19, 80). The same idea is endorsed also by von Hinüber (1996, 124) and Anālayo (2009b, 3).

101 On the date of composition, see also Nyanatusita 2021, 44-9.

102 *iti pana sabbaṃ yasmā Visuddhimagge mayā suparisuddhaṃ vuttaṃ tasmā bhīyo na taṃ idha vicārayissāmi* (e.g. Sv I 2).

103 E.g.: *yam kiñci rūpan ti ādini Visuddhimagge Khandhaniddese vitthāritān' eva* (Ps II 114); so *Visuddhi-magge Buddhānussati-niddese vutto yeva* (Sv I 34).

104 The tradition ascribes the authorship of many commentaries to Buddhaghosa, whereas the modern scholarship is more sceptical concerning the authorship of some texts. Buddhaghosa's authorship of the commentary on the *Pātimokkha* and some *Kuddhakanikāya* commentaries (viz. Pj I, Dh-p-a, Pj II, [commentarial sections of the] Ja, Ap-a) is problematic and his authorship of the *Abhidhamma* commentaries and the commentary on the *Vinaya* is severely questioned. Therefore, the safest authorships ascribed by the tradition are one of the *Visuddhimagga* and ones of the four principal Nikāyas. In this regard, see Gethin 2012, 3, n. 5 and von Hinüber [2013/2014] 2015, 361-5.

105 A later chronicle, the *Mahāvamsa*, states that Buddhaghosa came to Ceylon during the reign of King Mahānāma (according to Norman 1983, 130, n. 217: first half of the V century perhaps 409-431 AD; according to von Hinüber 1996, 102: 409-431/349-371 AD; however, as pointed out by Cousins 1998, 156, von Hinüber also erroneously maintained a double chronology after the reign of Mahāsena, this means that only 409-431 AD is correct).

the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*). This comment, concerning the creation of the mind-made body, appears identical in Ps III 263. The passage within the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* will be compared with a parallel passage of the younger *Paramatthajotikā II* (= *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā*).¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the later commentary on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* named *Saddhammappakāsini* will be considered as well, analysing the comment on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s passage which reports the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s pericope. The *Saddhammappakāsini* is not Buddhaghosa's work, but was written by a monk named Mahānāma who finished it around the VI century.¹⁰⁷

The relative chronology of the texts which has just been presented could be summarised in Figure 6.3.

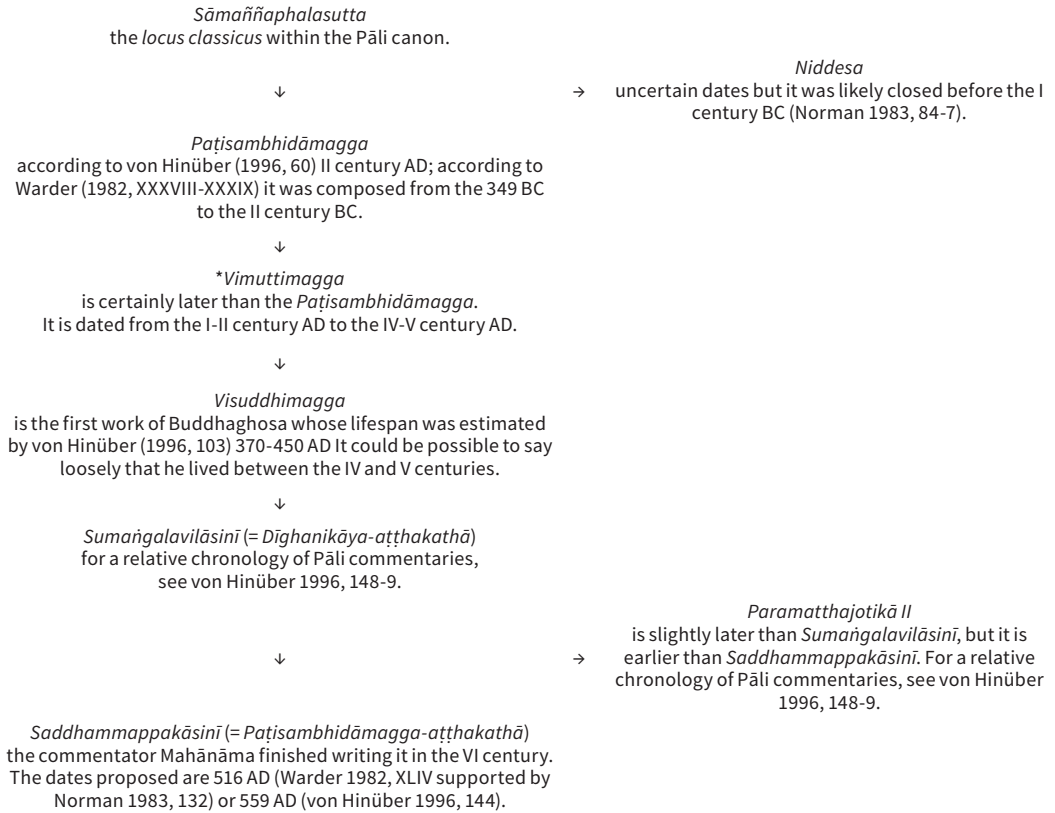


Figure 6.3 Chronology of the texts

106 For the position of the *Paramatthajotikā II* among the Pāli commentarial literature, see the relative chronology made by von Hinüber (1996, 148-9). Moreover, as further proof of its lateness, it is possible to state that the language of the *Paramatthajotikā II* shows characteristics common to the younger commentarial literature, such as the use of the quotative *āha* preceded by an active present participle, see Kieffer-Pülz 2014, 66.

107 The colophon of the *Saddhammappakāsini* states that the text was completed three years after the death of King Moggallāna. Based on that, Warder, attributes 496-513 AD as the date for Moggallāna I, and suggests 516 AD as the date of completion of the work (see Warder 1982, XLIV, also supported by Norman 1983, 132). Oskar von Hinüber (1996, 144) assuming Moggallāna as Moggallāna II (537-556/477-496), supposed as the date of conclusion of the work 559 or 499. However, a double chronology is wrongly assumed by von Hinüber, therefore, only 559 is right (see Cousins 1998, 156, quoted also by Kieffer-Pülz 2015b, 44, n. 43).

6.4.2 The Context of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (D 2): The *Locus Classicus*

The creation of a new mind-made body appears in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* within a list of twelve attainments which are some fruits of the ascetic life. In the story, a monk, after having fulfilled the basic requirement of the morality, enters progressively within the meditative absorption states until the attainment of the fourth level of absorption (*catutthajjhāna*). Subsequently, the monk is able to know and see (*ñāṇa-dassana*) the difference between body (*kāya*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and, after that, he is able to create a new mind-made body (*manomayakāya*). This creation is followed by three similes whose aim is to better illustrate the nature of this attainment. Afterwards, the monk is able to perform many kinds of psychophysical power (*iddhividhā*), he develops the element of the divine ear (*dibbasotadhātu*), the knowledge by comprehension of the minds [of others] (*cetopariyañāṇa*), the knowledge of recollection of former existences (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*), the knowledge of the fall and rise of beings (*cutūpapātāñāṇa*). Finally, he obtains the knowledge of extinction (*khayañāṇa*) of the influxes (*āsava*), attains insight into the four noble truths, and achieves liberation.

In this exposition concerning the creation of a mind-made body, it is not explained what its use and function is. Perhaps, since the concept pre-dates Buddhism, it was part of a common knowledge and so was taken for granted. Therefore, the compound ‘*manomaya*’ is also present within the Upaniṣadic texts and, as I have argued above (§ 6.3), the high number of common features shared by the concept of *manomaya* within the Buddhist texts (in particular within the *Sīlakkhandhavagga*) and its equivalent in the Upaniṣads allows us to hypothesise about common ancient contexts. In particular, there is one characteristic, shared by both Buddhist and Upaniṣadic texts, which is especially significant for the purposes of the present section. This characteristic is the centrality of the term *manomaya* within hierarchical lists. In the Upaniṣads, it appears central, for instance, within *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 1.5.3: “this self (*ātman*) is made of these [constituents]: it is made of speech, it is made of mind (*manomaya*), it is made of breath” (*etanmayo vā ayam ātmā | vānmayo manomayaḥ prāṇamayaḥ*). In *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 3.10.4-5 it appears in a list which develops from the grossest element to the most rarefied. The list exhibits five kinds of self and each of them is made (-*maya*) of a different substance: food (*anna*), breath (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), consciousness (*vijñāna*), and bliss (*ānanda*). In this list, the self made of mind appears exactly in the central position. The characteristic of centrality is also well attested within the *Sīlakkhandhavagga*’s discourses, and so within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as well. Therefore, the text lists twelve attainments and the creation of a body made of mind is reported as the sixth attainment. Since the list is composed of an even number of elements, the *manomaya* body could be no more central than this. The characteristic of centrality appears on other occasions within the *Sīlakkhandhavagga*’s

discourses.¹⁰⁸ With this in mind, it will be possible to observe how the creation of the body made of mind developed in the later Pāli Buddhist texts. Since there was not a very and proper new elaboration in the extant Abhidhamma literature, the first text that presents significant changes with regards to the mind made body is the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.¹⁰⁹

6.4.3 *Paṭisambhidāmagga*: The First Significant Developments

The mind-made body is treated chiefly within the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* in a chapter called ‘Treatise on Psychic Powers’ (*Iddhikathā*). The chapter is composed of a question-answer system and one of the first questions is about how many psychic powers there are (*kati iddhiyo?*). The answer is ‘ten’ (*dasa*) and, after a while, it is asked what they are (*katamā dasa iddhiyo?*). Thus, ten powers are listed in response:

1. psychic power of resolution (*adhiṭṭhānā iddhi*);
2. psychic power of transfiguration/transformation (*vikubbanā iddhi*);
3. psychic power of the mind-made [body] (*manomayā iddhi*);
4. psychic power of expansion of knowledge (*ñānavipphārā iddhi*);
5. psychic power of expansion of concentration (*samādhivipphārā iddhi*);
6. psychic power of the Nobles (*ariyā iddhi*);
7. psychic power that arises from Karmic results (*kammavipākajā iddhi*);
8. psychic power of the meritorious (*puññavato iddhi*);
9. psychic power made by sciences (*vijjāmayā iddhi*);
10. psychic power by succeeding by means of a right practice regarding various cases (*tattha tattha sammāpayogapaccayā ijjanaṭṭhena iddhi*).¹¹⁰

In this list, the concept of *manomaya* has lost the central position it had retained in lists within the early Buddhist canonical material and Upaniṣads. It was listed in hierarchical lists, but here it seems that there is no hierarchy at all among these *iddhis*. Therefore, the list appears as a re-elaborated exposition of the concept of ‘*iddhi*’ which includes old and new elements. The way in which the old element of the *manomaya* is listed shows that there is

108 It is evident, for instance, within the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* (D 9) in which three kinds of self appear: 1) the gross (*oḷārika*) self; 2) the mind-made (*manomaya*) self; 3) the formless (*arūpin*) self (D I 185-6). The centrality also occurs in a less evident context, such as in the *Brahmajālasutta* (D 1) in which there is a list of seven nihilistic doctrines (D I 34-5) that should be rejected. As I have already argued (§ 6.3.1.3), there is a connection between the seven nihilistic doctrines with the Buddhist cosmology, and what is *manomaya* within this account is connected with the world of the pure form (*rūpadhātu*), the intermediate level between the lower sense world (*kāmadhātu*) and the higher form-less world (*arūpadhātu*).

109 However, as previously stated, it might be possible that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* was considered an Abhidhamma text in the past. Moreover, it is a work which seems to include features of both canonical texts and Abhidhammic texts. Therefore, it is stated by Arnold C. Taylor that: “the traditional opening, *Evaṃ me sutam*, occurs, fairly frequently, and explains the formal inclusion of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* in the Sutta-piṭaka. I say ‘formal,’ because in essence the book is wholly Abhidhammic” (1907, IV). What seems certain regarding the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, using the words of C.A.F. Rhys Davids, – also in light of the present study – is that it is “of no small significance for interpreting the history of the Canon” (1908, 590).

110 *Paṭis* II 205. The same list also appears in a chapter called ‘Treatise on Powers’ (*Balakathā*) in *Paṭis* II 174.

a lack of the ancient original context in which it had the peculiar – but not always evident – characteristic of centrality, which is now definitively lost. The addition of new elements is also demonstrated, for instance, by the psychic power made by sciences (*vijjāmayā iddhi*). This power is in connection with the *vijjādhara*s (literally ‘[people] who know [magical] sciences’)¹¹¹ that, as written by A.K. Warder, are not so commonly in connection with *iddhis* in the other *Tipiṭaka* texts.¹¹² The *vijjādhara*s (Sanskrit: *vidyādharma*) became famous after being mentioned in Guṇāḍhya’s novel (*Bṛhatkathā*) for which Warder suggested as dating the II century BC.¹¹³ Then, it seems that this exposition of the ten *iddhis* is nothing more than a summary made by mixing old and new elements.

Later, the ten *iddhis* are explained in succession, one by one. At this point, it is clear that the reference text from which the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* draws the definition of *manomayā iddhi* was, probably, the pericope reported in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. Therefore, when it is asked, “What is the psychic power of the mind-made [body]?” (*katamā manomayā iddhi?*), the answer is a quotation of the pericope that occurs in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* (Paṭi II 210-11 = D I 77). However, the mind-made body appears in another previous occurrence, namely within the explanation of the first psychic power: the psychic power of resolution (*adhiṭṭhānā iddhi*). This *iddhi* is explained in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* quoting what the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* explains as the many kinds of psychophysical powers (*anekaviditaṃ iddhividhaṃ*; Paṭi II 207 = D I 78). In the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, these kinds of *iddhi* show that the meditator has attained mastery over matter and so he is no longer bound by the limitations of the physical world. He is able to multiply his physical form or return to a single unit, he can become invisible or visible, he can pass through physical obstacles, he can sink into the earth and walk on water, he can fly through the air, he can touch the moon and sun and, lastly, he can exercise bodily power as far as the Brahmā world. This last ability, namely the possibility to go as far as the Brahmā world, involves the creation of a mind-made body in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. It is narrated that “in front of Brahmā, he creates a material form (*rūpa*) which is mind-made, with all limbs and [bodily] parts, without defect of any faculty”.¹¹⁴ This particular use of the *manomayakāya* does not appear in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, nor does it appear in the entire *Dīghanikāya*. It seems borrowed from the *Samyuttanikāya*, from a chapter called ‘The Connected [Discourses] on the Bases of Psychic Powers’ (*Iddhipādasamyutta*). In this passage, it is recounted that Ānanda, after having approached the Buddha, asked: “O

111 This is evident from some passages such as “wizards, having whispered a spell, go to the sky” (*vijjādhara vijjaṃ pariṇipetvā vehāsaṃ gacchanti* [...]; Paṭi II 213).

112 Warder wrote that he recovered a quotation from the *Jātaka* connected “with a ‘science’ giving invisibility” (1982, XXXVII). However, there are also some references in the *Apadāna* (e.g. Ap II 441: *vijjādhara tadā āsiṃ antalikkhacaro ahaṃ* [...] “then, I was a wizard, moving within the atmosphere...”), which would require a further analysis. The evidence provided in the *Apadāna* is quite close to the description of the wizards moving in the ether (*ākāsa*) and atmosphere (*antalikkha*) as provided in Paṭi II 213. Therefore, though the *Kevaddhasutta* (D I 213) provides evidence of a *vijjā* called Gandhāri, through which it is possible to perform the classical *iddhi*vidhā, the *vijjāmayā iddhi* seems to be more in connection with a late text, such as the *Apadāna*, than with *Kevaddhasutta*’s account.

113 Warder 1982, XXXVII; for more details concerning this dating see Warder 1974, 118-19.

114 *so tassa Brahmuno purato rūpaṃ abhinimmināti manomayaṃ sabbaṅgapaccanṅgaṃ ahinindriyaṃ* (Paṭi II 209).

Lord, does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā by the psychic power (*iddhiyā*), with a mind-made body (*manomayena kāyena*)?"¹¹⁵ The Buddha answered affirmatively. It is noteworthy that in this text, unlike the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, the word *iddhi* is connected with the concept of the mind-made body (*manomayakāya*). This connection is also implied in the fact that a mind-made body is mentioned in a chapter focused on *iddhis*: the *Iddhipādasamyutta*.

Another example concerning this connection can be found in the *Theragāthā*:

Having known my own intention,
the Master, who is unequalled in the world,
approached me by the power (*iddhiyā*),
with a body made of mind (*manomayena kāyena*).¹¹⁶

Taking into account these references (i.e. the *Samyuttanikāya* and *Theragāthā*), it might seem possible to assume that in an early stratum of Theravāda Buddhism, the *manomayakāya* was also considered an *iddhi* and this would legitimate the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s interpretation. However, I will now argue that the *Samyuttanikāya* and *Theragāthā* have only the proximity of the two terms in common with the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, because the use of them is certainly different.

In order to shed light on the issue, it is necessary to carefully analyse the context in which the two concepts (*iddhi* and *manomayakāya*) are related grammatically to each other in both texts. It is possible to note, *prima facie*, that the terms agree with each other differently. In the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* there is the form '*manomayā iddhi*' in which the term *manomaya* is used in an adjectival way, and therefore it agrees with the term *iddhi*, which is inflected in the nominative feminine case. In this context, the term *manomaya* is clearly an adjective of the term *iddhi*, the latter is used in a very technical way in this text. The situation is very different in the *Samyuttanikāya*. In this text, there is the following wording: *iddhiyā manomayena kāyena*. The word *manomaya*, in this case, agrees with the word *kāya* inflected in instrumental masculine whereas *iddhi* is an instrumental feminine. Since they are inflected in the same case (instrumental), '*iddhiyā*' and '*manomayena kāyena*' might be connected. Basically, there could be two possible translations for the passage *abhijānāti nu kho bhante Bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā* (S V 282):¹¹⁷

1. "O Lord, does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā by the psychic power (*iddhiyā*) which is the mind-made body (*manomayena kāyena*)?". This is a 'characterising interpretation', in which the mind-made body characterises the psychic power, in other words, the mind-made body is the specific psychic power used by the

115 *abhijānāti nu kho bhante Bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā* (S V 282).

116 *mama saṅkappam aññāya sathā loke anuttaro | manomayena kāyena iddhiyā upasaṅkami* || (Th 901). This passage is also quoted at A IV 235 and Ap I 235.

117 It may be worth noting that this is one of the few passages in the Pāli canon in which it is possible to recover an absolutive (or gerund) ending in *-itā* (or *-ittā* in the Sinhalese manuscripts), rather than the widespread form *-itvā*. In this regard, see von Hinüber 1992, 135-6.

Buddha. This means that, in this interpretation, the mind-made body is a kind of psychic power.

2. “O Lord, does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā by the psychic power (*iddhiyā*), with a mind-made body (*manomayena kāyena*)?”. This is a ‘non-characterising interpretation’, in which the mind-made body is not closely related to the psychic power.

The difference between the two translations lies in the interpretation of ‘*manomayena kāyena*’ as characterising ‘*iddhiyā*’, or as separated from it in the translation by a comma. This ambiguity is clarified by a parallel passage, within the *Samyuttanikāya*, which immediately follows the problematic passage.

Ānanda, after the first question concerning the visit to the Brahmā world with a mind-made body, asked another question, which is in Pāli: *abhijānāti kho pana bhante Bhagavā iminā cātumahābhūtikena kāyena iddhiyā Brahmālokam upasaṅkamitā* (S V 282). This question is essentially identical to the previous one, but in place of the mind-made body (*manomayena kāyena*) there is a body which consists of the four great elements (*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*). Theoretically, it might raise the same problem that was previously awakened about the translation of the first considered passage. It could happen because ‘*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*’ and ‘*iddhiyā*’ are inflected in the same grammatical form: instrumental. However, in this case, there are no doubts that the correct interpretation is what was defined above as a ‘non-characterising interpretation’. Therefore, it is not possible to assume that the body which consists of the four great elements is a type of psychic power, because it is just a way to describe the physical body.¹¹⁸ Since it is the natural body, it is in no way related with extraordinary or superhuman activity. Then, the passage should be translated: “O Lord, but does the Blessed one recall having approached the world of Brahmā with a body which consists of the four great elements (*cātumahābhūtikena kāyena*), by the psychic power (*iddhiyā*)?”, the answer given by the Buddha was affirmative. This second passage sheds light on the previous one because they are closely related to each other. Therefore, the passages illustrate that the Blessed one is able to go to the Brahmā world with both a mind-made and physical body. The parallelism between these two passages also indicates that the first passage should be translated following the ‘non-characterising interpretation’.¹¹⁹

It would seem that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* applied to the *Samyuttanikāya*’s text, which has been defined by Richard Gombrich as ‘scholastic literalism’.¹²⁰ Therefore, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* interprets the juxtaposition of the term

118 The physical body which consists of the four great elements appears, for instance, within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* as separate from the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) (D I 76).

119 Bhikkhu Bodhi, in his translation of the *Samyuttanikāya* (2000, 1741), translates the passage in the correct way.

120 “[U]nintentional literalism has been a major force for change in the early doctrinal history of Buddhism. Texts have been interpreted with too much attention to the precise words used and not enough to the speaker’s intention, the spirit of the text. In particular I see in some doctrinal developments what I call scholastic literalism, which is a tendency to take the words and phrases of earlier texts (maybe the Buddha’s own words) in such a way as to read in distinctions which it was never intended to make” (Gombrich [1996] 2006, 21-2).

iddhi with the mind-made body in a more relevant way than it really is, wrongly attributing a connection between them in that context.¹²¹ Moreover, it is also worth noting that the ability to fly could be an *iddhi*, but it is not necessarily connected with a mind-made body, such as in the *Dhammapada* (Dhp 175), in which the ability of geese to fly is also called *iddhi*.

But, could we really assume that the *Samyuttanikāya* inspired the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s reading? To corroborate this assumption, it is worth noting that the connection of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* with the *Samyuttanikāya*'s text is also supported by another passage which appears in both texts with some differences in the exposition. The passage concerns the unification of mind and body which as a result has perceptions of pleasure and lightness.

Table 6.2 The verb *samādahati* in the *Samyuttanikāya* means 'putting together', and the verbs *pariṇāmeti* and *adhiṭṭhāti* in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* mean, respectively, 'to make change into' and 'to fix into'. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s passage seems an expansion of *Samyuttanikāya*'s passage

<i>Samyuttanikāya</i> V 282	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> II 209
<p><i>Tathāgato (1) kāyam pi citta samādahati (2) cittaṃ pi ca kāye samādahati (3) sukhasaññaṃ ca lahusaññaṃ ca kāye okkamitvā viharati</i></p>	<p><i>sace so iddhiṃ cetovasippatto dissamānena kāyena Brahmaloḥaṃ gantukāmo hoti, (1) kāyavasena cittaṃ pariṇāmeti, kāyavasena cittaṃ adhiṭṭhāti; kāyavasena cittaṃ pariṇāmetvā kāyavasena cittaṃ adhiṭṭhahitvā (3) sukhasaññaṃ ca lahusaññaṃ ca okkamitvā dissamānena kāyena Brahmaloḥaṃ gacchati.</i></p> <p><i>sace so iddhiṃ cetovasippatto adissamānena kāyena Brahmaloḥaṃ gantukāmo hoti, (2) cittavasena kāyaṃ pariṇāmeti, cittavasena kāyaṃ adhiṭṭhāti; cittavasena kāyaṃ pariṇāmetvā cittavasena kāyaṃ adhiṭṭhahitvā (3) sukhasaññaṃ ca lahusaññaṃ ca okkamitvā adissamānena kāyena Brahmaloḥaṃ gacchati</i></p>

It would seem that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s textual passages that concern the concept of *manomayakāya* are a patchwork of other passages reassembled and reinterpreted. A similar case is that analysed by David V. Fiordalis (2008, 125-6), who highlights that the description of the behaviour of the mind-made body (which reproduces the actions of the creator, see Paṭis II 209-10) is also similar to the behaviour of the replica created by the Buddha in the account of the twin miracle (Paṭis I 125-6).¹²² This suggests that different accounts conflated and canonical materials were reused to create new and original expositions. However, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s use of the *manomayakāya* is not a blind reuse. This kind of reuse modifies the original characteristics of the *manomayakāya* which, on the one hand, loses

121 A more explicit connection can be found, however, in the history of Cūḷapanthaka (§ 7.4.4.2).

122 The twin miracle also appears, for instance, in Dhp-a III 213-14 (for a discussion regarding this account, also see Fiordalis 2008, 99), Sv I 57, and in the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins (SBhV I 156-7).

the characteristic of centrality and, on the other hand, is inserted within the list of *iddhis*.¹²³

6.4.4 **Vimuttimagga*: A First Method

The concept of *manomayakāya* in the **Vimuttimagga* inherits the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s innovations. Moreover, the **Vimuttimagga* further adds methodological instructions to create such a mental body. At first, the *manomayakāya* occurs in an exposition that resembles the canonical one:

What is the *iddhi* (變) produced by the mind (意所作; *manomaya*)? The meditator creates from this body another body, made by the mind (意所造; *manomaya*),¹²⁴ with all bodily parts (一切身分; *sabbaṅga*, cf. *sabbaṅgapaccaṅga*) and faculties (諸根; *indriya*, cf. *ahinindriya*).¹²⁵ This is called 'the *iddhi* produced by the mind' (意所作).¹²⁶

Later, the **Vimuttimagga* presents an account with a set of instructions to develop the power, also referring to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s indication to use this mental body to move up to the Brahmā world:

Then, the meditator who desires to develop the *iddhi* (變) of the *manomaya* (意所造), having mastered the mind in this way, cultivates the *iddhipādas*, enters the fourth *jhāna* and serenely emerges from it. He pays attention (作意 = *manasikaroti*) inwardly, inside the body: "[Let it be] like an empty pot". The meditator pays attention in this way: "Within my own empty body, [let there be] a creation (變化 = *nirmāṇa*)¹²⁷ conditioned according to the will". He adverts (轉 = *āvajjati*)¹²⁸ "Let me accomplish accordingly", having adverted he resolves (受持 = *adhīṭhāti*) with the knowledge "Let me accomplish accordingly". Having paid attention in this way, in a similar way (隨相似), by means of this suitable method (以此方便) he creates many creations (變化). Having created a creation,

¹²³ The concept of 'reuse' was recently studied with reference to Indian texts. See, for example, the introductory works of Freschi (2015), Freschi and Cantwell (2016), Freschi and Maas (2017).

¹²⁴ Notably, the **Vimuttimagga* seems to use two slightly different wording to translate *manomaya*: 意所作 and 意所造. Nyanatusita translates the locution 隨意所造 as "according to his wish" (2021, 514).

¹²⁵ Cf. *idha bhikkhu imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṅgapaccaṅgaṃ ahinindriyaṃ* (Paṭis II 211) and *so imamhā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayaṃ sabbaṅga-paccaṅgiṃ ahinindriyaṃ* (D I 76). Notably, in another passage the **Vimuttimagga* provides a translation of *sabbaṅgapaccaṅga* and *ahinindriya* closer to the canonical formulation: "with all limbs and bodily parts" (一切身分具足 = *sabbaṅgapaccaṅga*), "without defect of any faculties" (諸根不少 = *ahinindriya*), see T1648.32.0442c29.

¹²⁶ 云何意所作變? 彼坐禪人從此身化作餘身, 隨意所造, 一切身分, 諸根具足。此謂意所作變。(T1648.32.0441b06-08).

¹²⁷ Nyanatusita translates as "miraculous transformation" (2021, 527).

¹²⁸ Ehara et al.'s translation ([1961] 1995, 218) does not recognise that the Chinese character 轉 is the rendition of *āvajjati*. This way to understand the character 轉 will be apparent in the case of the **Vimuttimagga*'s accounts about the *iddhis* (see, for instance, § 7.4.6). Nyanatusita (2021, 527) rightly understands 轉 as a rendition for *āvajjati*.

he moves (行).¹²⁹ If the meditator with the created body desires to go to the Brahmā world, in front of the Brahmā world he creates his own body which is similar to the physical form of Brahmā.¹³⁰ [The form is] created by the mind (意所造 = *manomaya*),¹³¹ with all limbs and bodily parts (一切身分具足 = *sabbaṅgapaccaṅga*), without defect of any faculty (諸根不少 = *ahīndriya*).¹³² If the possessor of psychic power (神通人) walks back and forth there, then the created person (所化人) also walks back and forth,¹³³ if the possessor of psychic power sits, lies down there, emits smoke, flames, if he asks a question, if he answers, then the created person also sits, lies down, emits smoke, flames, asks a question, answers. This is the creation (變化 = *nirmāṇa*) made by the psychic power (神通所造 = **iddhimaya*); the created person is created accordingly.¹³⁴

In this passage, for the first time we find a practical method to create a mind-made body. The methodology to develop the *manomayakāya* involves the use of two key terms in their Chinese rendition: *āvajjati* (轉) and *adhiṭṭhāti* (受持). These are verbal forms, but they also exist as nouns (*āvajjana* and *adhiṭṭhāna*). In a preliminary and narrow definition, the first term, *āvajjati*, indicates the action of ‘adverting’ or ‘turning [the mind]’ towards something, just like one would ‘take aim’ before shooting, or warming up before a sprint.¹³⁵ The second term, *adhiṭṭhāti*, is a formal resolution through which an assertion becomes real.¹³⁶ This terminology will often occur later in

129 The phrasing 作變化已成行 (T1648.32.0442c27) is translated by Ehara et al. ([1961] 1995, 218) as: “[t]hereafter he engages himself in various activities”. This translation misses the connection of the logogram 行 with the three kinds of movement (三行) that will occur later in the text: 於是三行步行風行心行 (T1648.32.0442b20). In this regard, see below (§§ 7.4.9 and 7.4.11).

130 Slightly different from the Pāli *so tassa Brahmuno purato rūpaṃ abhinimmināti* (Paṭis II 209).

131 Nyanatusita translates the locution 隨意所造 as “created according to his wish” (2021, 527), but the passage is clearly paralleling the Pāli phrasing (see footnote below).

132 Cf. *manomayaṃ sabbaṅgapaccaṅgaṃ ahīndriyaṃ* (Paṭis II 209).

133 Cf. *sace so iddhimā caṅkamati, nimmito pi tattha caṅkamati* (Paṭis II 209).

134 爾時坐禪人欲起意所造變，如是心得自在，修如意足，入第四禪安詳出。於其身內作意，“猶如空瓶”。彼坐禪人如是作意：“於空自身內隨其所樂為變化”。“隨其當成”轉，已轉以智受持：“隨其當成”。如是作意，成隨相似，以此方便多作變化。作變化已成行。若坐禪人以所化身欲向梵世，於梵世前即化自身如梵形。隨意所造，一切身分具足，諸根不少。若神通人於此逍遙，彼所化人亦復逍遙。若神通人於此若坐臥，現出煙焰，若問若答，彼所化人亦坐，亦臥，亦出煙焰，亦問，亦答。是其神通所造變化；彼所化人亦以隨作如是等。(from T1648.32.0442c22 to T1648.32.0443a04). The final Chinese passage 是其神通所造變化；彼所化人亦以隨作如是等 (T1648.32.0443a03-04) is translated by Ehara et al. ([1961] 1995, 218) as “[b]ecause that made form springs from supernormal power, it does so”. Nyanatusita translates: “Whatever the one who possesses supernatural power and who has performed the miraculous transformation does, that created person also does” (2021, 528). I translated it as “this is the creation (變化 = *nirmāṇa*) made by the psychic power (神通所造 = **iddhimaya*); the created person is created accordingly”.

135 In Paṭis-a II 589 it seems to be almost a synonym of *manasi karoti* (to pay attention): *obhāso dhammo ‘ti obhāsaṃ āvajjati ‘ti ayaṃ obhāso maggadhammo phaladhammo ‘ti vā taṃ taṃ obhāsaṃ manasi karoti*.

136 Paṭis-a I 345, for instance, highlights that this action involves the determination that something is in a determined way: “let it be so” (*evaṃ hotu*): *adhiṭṭhāti ‘ti evaṃ hotu ti adhiṭṭhāti*. For a review of the definitions of *adhiṭṭhāna* and its Sanskrit and Tibetan cognate terms, see Eyre 2023, 9-20. A definition that fits well with many cases in the present book is the following: “*Adhiṭṭhāna* is then the ability to select a specific course of action and then follow through with its enactment” (Eyre 2023, 10). Some interesting observations on *adhiṭṭhāna* (Sanskrit) are provided by Tournier (2014), who also refers to some other academic studies (2014, 8 n. 22).

the analysis of the methodology to develop the *iddhividhā* and the other *abhiññās*. We will consider these terms in more detail as they may have some nuances and, furthermore, their use is not always consistent. Turning to the method to create the mental body, we may note that the physical body is first considered empty, and only then is it possible to fill the empty body with a creation. The text goes on to describe the use of the *manomayakāya* in the act of reaching the Brahmā world. The innovative set of instructions occurs also in the *Visuddhimagga*, which further enriches the exegesis.

6.4.5 *Visuddhimagga*: Further Developments

The concept of *manomayakāya* within the *Visuddhimagga* is strongly influenced by the modification introduced by the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and **Vimuttimagma*. Almost all references to the term *manomaya* within the *Visuddhimagga* were confined to Chapter XII, called *Iddhividhāniddeśa* (Explanation of the Variety of Psychophysical Power).¹³⁷ The list of the ten *iddhis* of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* also appears within this chapter (Vism 378) and, subsequently, the *manomayā iddhi* is briefly illustrated:

The power handed down in this way: “Now, the monk creates from this body another body which has a form, mind-made”, is called the psychic power of the mind-made [body] because it occurs through the completion of another mind-made body inside the body.¹³⁸

In this passage, it is specified that the new body is created inside the physical body. This detail – already present in the **Vimuttimagma* – will be fundamental in the following explanation which regards the method to create the mind-made body:

The one who desires to implement the mind-made [body] after having emerged from the meditative absorption which forms a basis, having adverted to the body in the way already explained, he resolves: “Let it be hollow!” and it becomes hollow. Then, having adverted to another body inside this [body], after the preparatory work, he resolves in the way already explained: “Let there be another body inside this [body]!” then he draws it out like a stalk from a reed, like a sword from a scabbard, like a snake from a basket/slough (*karaṇḍā*)¹³⁹ [...] and in this case, just as the stalk etc. are similar to the reed etc., in the same way the

137 Other short references to the concept of *manomaya* within the *Visuddhimagga* are in Vism 202, in which it is listed as one of the eight knowledges (*aṭṭha vijjā*), and in Vism 419, quoting D III 90.

138 *idha bhikkhu imamahā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti rūpiṃ manomayan ti iminā nayena āgatā iddhi sarīrabbhantare aññass’ eva manomayassa sarīrassa nipphattivasena pavattattā manomayā iddhi nāma* (Vism 379).

139 In this passage the term ‘*karaṇḍā*’ is oddly feminine because it is inflected in the ablative feminine (*karaṇḍāya*; it could also formally be a masculine dative, however, the passage requires an ablative), whereas in the same simile within the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, it is clearly masculine: *ayaṃ ahi ayaṃ karaṇḍo* (D I 77). Moreover, I reported a double translation for *karaṇḍā* because, on the one hand, I will argue that the original meaning is ‘basket’, but, on the other hand, Buddhaghosa clearly understands it as the ‘slough’ of the snake (see Sv I 222, translated below at § 6.4.6).

mind-made form is similar to the possessor of psychic power; the simile has been said in order to point out that. This is the psychic power of the mind-made [body].¹⁴⁰

It seems, from this passage, that the one who wants to create a mind-made body should first empty the physical body. The empty room is then filled with the new body which is mind-made. Subsequently, he pulls out the new body and this extraction is explained through three similes. The physical body is used as a matrix or a mould and therefore the new mind-made body – that is the creation – is essentially identical to the mould which created it. The method to create the mind-made body also influences its appearance. This passage shows the creation process and so emphasises the similarity, which will be the cause of further development.

6.4.6 *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*: A Stretched Interpretation

The *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, commenting on the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s passage which recounts the creation of the mind-made body, demonstrates serious consideration of the idea that similarity between the creation and the creator exists:

The created form is certainly similar to the possessor of psychic power in all these manners: if the possessor of psychic power is white, this [creation] too is white; if he has not perforated ears (*avidḍha-kaṇṇa*),¹⁴¹ this [creation] too has not perforated ears.¹⁴²

This idea of similarity has influenced the interpretation of the three similes. Just as the created form is similar to the creator, in the same way what is extracted should be identical to its receptacle. This similarity is explained briefly with reference to the first two similes: the extraction of the stalk from a reed and the sword from a scabbard. Whereas instead, the explanation of the last simile is certainly longer than the previous ones. The commentator is struggling to show the similarity for the third simile due to the term '*karaṇḍa*', which, evidently, does not fit very well with the principle of equality supported so far. Here, I have translated the passage to which I refer:

The passage that starts with '**[Just as, O great king, a man were to draw out] from a reed a stalk (*muñjamhā isikam*)**' is, overall, a triple simile which was indeed enunciated in order to show the condition of similarity. The stalk is, indeed, similar to the reed and is inside it; even

¹⁴⁰ *manomayaṃ kātukamo pana pādakajjhānato vuṭṭhāya, kāyaṃ tāva āvajjitvā vuttanayen' eva: susiro hotū ti adhiṭṭhāti, susiro hoti. ath' assa abbhantare aññaṃ kāyaṃ āvajjitvā parikkammaṃ katvā vuttanayen' eva, adhiṭṭhāti tassa abbhantare: añño kāyo hotū ti, so taṃ muñjamhā isikam viya kosiyaṃ asim viya, karaṇḍāya ahim viya ca abbāhati. [...] ettha ca yathā isikādayo muñjādīhi sadisā honti, evaṃ manomayarūpaṃ iddhimatā sadisam eva hotī ti dassanattamaṃ etā upamā vuttā ti. ayaṃ manomayā iddhi (Vism 406).*

¹⁴¹ Piercing the ears could be also a religious ceremony (SED s.v. "karṇa").

¹⁴² *iddhimatā nimitta-rūpaṃ hi sace iddhimā odāto tam pi odātaṃ, sace avidḍha-kaṇṇo tam pi avidḍha-kaṇṇan ti evaṃ sabbākārehi tena sadisam eva hotī (Sv I 222).*

the sword (*asi*) is similar to the scabbard (*kosī*). A curved sword is sheathed in a curved scabbard, the one extended in an extended one.

The '*karaṇḍa*', this as well is the name for the covering of the snake (*ahi-kañcuka*), it is not the name for a bamboo basket (*vilīva-karaṇḍaka*) because the covering of the snake is certainly similar to the snake. In this regard, although the passage '[just as] a man were to pull out a snake from a *karaṇḍa* (*puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya*)' is shown as the fulfilment of a removal by means of a hand, however the removal of this should be interpreted as made through the mind. He loathed his old skin, just like this snake who was established in its particular state of birth, leaning inside a branch or inside a tree, its physical body is destroyed through a vigour called 'the practise of ejection of the body from the skin'. In the same way, he gives up the casing (*kañcuka*) spontaneously (*sayaṃ*) through four actions; It is not possible to extract something else from it. Therefore, this has been said in connection with the mental extraction, it should be understood in this way. Then, the body of the monk is similar to the reed etc., the created form (*nimitta-rūpa*) is similar to the stalk etc., this is the application of the simile.¹⁴³

In this passage, the commentator expresses awareness that the term '*karaṇḍa*' could be interpreted as a bamboo or reed basket. So, he specifies that it is not a basket made of bamboo or reed (*vilīva-karaṇḍaka*). But, what does the term '*karaṇḍa*' really mean? At first sight, the *Pali-English Dictionary* gives, as a translation for this term, two options: (1) a basket, (2) the slough of a snake.¹⁴⁴ To justify the interpretation of this term as 'the snake's slough', the dictionary quotes the commentarial passage translated above (Sv I 222). Also, the more recent dictionary, *A Dictionary of Pāli*, edited by Margaret Cone, reports these two translations.¹⁴⁵ However, checking within the Monier-William's *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, it results that there are no references for the interpretation of '*karaṇḍa*' as 'snake's slough', since only the definition of 'basket' is attested.¹⁴⁶ Finally, it is possible to observe that it is reported in *A Critical Pāli Dictionary* that the meaning 'slough' is wrongly assumed by the commentary.¹⁴⁷ In fact, within the *Tipiṭaka*, the term '*karaṇḍa*' seems to only have the meaning of 'basket'. I recovered the

143 *muñjamhā isīkan ti ādi upamā-ttayaṃ pi hi sadisa-bhāva-dassanatham eva vuttam. muñja-sadisā eva hi tassa anto isikā hoti, kosiya-sadisō yeva asi. vaṭṭāya kosiya vaṭṭam asim eva pakkhipanti, patthaṭṭāya patthaṭṭam.*

karaṇḍā ti idam pi ahi-kañcukassa nāmaṃ na vilīva-karaṇḍakassa nāmaṃ ahi-kañcuko hi ahinā sadiso va hoti. tatha kiñcāpi *puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyyā* ti hatthena uddharamāno viya dassito, atha kho citten' ev' assa uddharaṇaṃ veditabbam. ayaṃ hi ahi nāma sañjātiyaṃ ṭhito kaṭṭh-antaraṃ vā rukkh-antaraṃ vā nissāya tacato sarīraṃ nikkadḍhana-payoga-samkhātena thāmena sarīraṃ khādamānaṃ viya purāṇa-tacaṃ jigucchanto ti imehi catūhi kāraṇehi sayam eva kañcukaṃ jahati, na sakkā tato aññena uddharituṃ. tasmā cittena uddharaṇaṃ sandhāya idam vuttan ti veditabbam. iti muñjādi-sadisam hi imassa bhikkhuno sarīraṃ, isikādi-sadisam nimitta-rūpan ti idam ettha opamma-saṃsandanaṃ (Sv I 222).

144 PED s.v. "karaṇḍa".

145 DOP s.v. "karaṇḍa". This dictionary as well quotes Sv I 222.

146 SED s.v. "karaṇḍa".

147 CPD s.v. "karaṇḍa".

references excluding those for the equivalent term *'karaṇḍaka'* for which the translation as 'slough' has never been attested by the dictionaries.¹⁴⁸

Table 6.3 *'Karaṇḍa'* in the *Tipiṭaka*

'Karaṇḍa' in the Tipiṭaka	
Texts	References
<i>Vinaya</i>	---
<i>Dīghanikāya</i>	<i>seyyathā pi pana mahā-rāja puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya</i> [...] (D I 77, and the other <i>Dīghanikāya</i> 's suttas in which the pericope is repeated verbatim)
<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>	<i>seyyathāpi pan', Udāyi, puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya</i> [...] (M II 18)
<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>	---
<i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>	---
<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>	<i>seyyathāpi vā pana puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya</i> [...] (Paṭis II 211); <i>tumbake ca karaṇḍe ca kārayiṇṇaṃ tadanucchave</i> (Ap I 303); <i>tumbake ca karaṇḍe ca datvā buddhe gaṇuttame</i> (Ap I 313)
<i>Abhidhamma</i>	<i>karaṇḍāya nikkhipenti</i> (Kv II 563)

The term *'karaṇḍa'* is used mainly within the pericope which explains the creation of a mind-made body. There are no reasons to assume the meaning 'slough', except for the commentarial explanation. It is evident within the *Apadāna* that the terms *'karaṇḍa'* and *'karaṇḍaka'* are used as synonyms: *tumbake ca karaṇḍe ca* (Ap I 303), *tumbake ca karaṇḍake ca* (Ap I 313). Moreover, there is a simile, within the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which is modelled on the base of the simile of extraction within the *Dīghanikāya*:

Table 6.4 A comparison between the similes of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and *Dīghanikāya*

Paṭisambhidāmagga I 145	Dīghanikāya I 77
Just as there would be a jewel (<i>maṇi</i>) put in a box (<i>karaṇḍaka</i>), a man would say: "This is the jewel, this is the box; the jewel is one thing, the box another one, but this very jewel is in this box".	Just as, O great king, a man were to pull out a snake (<i>ahi</i>) from a basket (<i>karaṇḍa</i>). He might think: "This is the snake, this is the basket; the snake is one thing, the basket another one, nevertheless from a basket a snake was pulled out".
<i>seyyathāpi maṇi karaṇḍake pakkhitto assa, tamenam puriso evam vadeyya ayam maṇi ayam karaṇḍako, añño maṇi añño karaṇḍako, so kho panāyam maṇi imasmim karaṇḍake ti</i>	<i>seyyathā pi pana mahā-rāja puriso ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya. tassa evam assa: ayam ahi ayam karaṇḍo, añño ahi añño karaṇḍo, karaṇḍā tv eva ahi ubbhato ti</i>

148 In this regard, see the s.v. "karaṇḍaka" in PED; DOP; and CPD.

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s simile concerns a jewel (*maṇi*) within a box (*karaṇḍaka*). It is worth noting that although this simile resembles, in its grammatical construction, the *Dīghanikāya*'s pericope regarding a snake pulled from a *karaṇḍa*, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* did not hesitate to use roughly the same word in an identical metaphorical framework to specifically designate a box. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that the interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa* as the skin of the snake had not yet been developed at the time of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.

Finally, we must take into accounts these two pieces of evidence: 1) the use of the term '*karaṇḍa*' in connection with the meaning 'slough' has not been found, except for the commentarial interpretation; 2) by contrast, there is indeed use of the term '*karaṇḍa*' with the meaning of 'basket' in connection with a snake. The latter reference is from the *Vinaya*'s commentary, the *Samantapāsādikā*:

Among snakes (*apada*), that which is called *ahi* is a kept snake (*gahitasappa*) which belongs to somebody, such as snake charmers (*ahiguṇṭhika*), etc. When cause [such a snakes] to play they earn half (*aḍḍha*) or a quarter (*pāda*) of a *kahāpaṇa*, they also give them up, but only having gained gold and money do they give them up. They, after having gone to the seating space of some monks, after putting down the basket of snakes (*sappa-karaṇḍa*), fall asleep or go somewhere. Then, if a monk, with the intention of stealing, touches the basket (*karaṇḍa*), this is a misdemeanour (*dukkata*); if he moves it, this is a grave offence (*thullaccaya*); if he takes it away from its place, it is an offence worthy of expulsion (*pārājika*). And, if he, after having opened the basket (*karaṇḍaka*), grasps the snake to the neck, this is a misdemeanour (*dukkata*); if he pulls it out (*uddharati*), this is a grave offence (*thullaccaya*); and if he, having straightened the snake, pulling it out from the flat surface of the basket, sets it free even for a mere tip of a hair, this is an offence worthy of expulsion (*pārājika*).¹⁴⁹

It is worth noting that the verb used by the commentary to state that the snake is pulled out from the basket is '*uddharati*'; the same verb is used in the optative form within the *Dīghanikāya*'s pericope (*ahiṃ karaṇḍā uddhareyya*; D I 77).

Then, there are not many reasons to assume that the word '*karaṇḍa*' means 'slough'. However, there is still another question that should be clarified. Was the commentarial explanation of the pericope invented by the commentator, or might that have been borrowed from another source? In this regard, I found a commentarial explanation which, commenting on a different situation, uses a simile concerning a snake which abandons its old skin. The text is the late commentary on the *Suttanipāta*, the *Paramatthajotikā II*. Here, I provide the translation of the passage which comments on the *Uragasutta*:

149 *apadesu ahi nāma sassāmiko ahiguṇṭhikādīhi gahitasappo. yaṃ kīlāpento aḍḍham pi pādam pi kahāpaṇam pi labhanti. muñcantāpi hiraññaṃ vā suvaṇṇaṃ vā gahetvā 'va muñcanti. te kassaci bhikkhuno nisinnokāsaṃ gantvā sappakaraṇḍaṃ tṭhapetvā niddāyanti vā katthaci vā gacchanti. tatra ce so bhikkhu theyyaccittena taṃ karaṇḍaṃ āmasati dukkaṭaṃ, phandāpeti thullaccayaṃ, tḥānā cāveti pārājikaṃ. sace pana karaṇḍakaṃ ugghāṭetvā sappam gīvāya gaṇhati dukkaṭaṃ, uddharati thullaccayaṃ, ujukaṃ katvā uddharantassa karaṇḍatalato sappassa naṅguṭṭhe kesaggamatte mutte pārājikaṃ* (Sp II 362). A piece of this passage was quoted above in § 6.2.2.

Abandoning the **skin (taca)** which is called **old (purāṇa)** because it belongs to an old time, [and it is called] **deteriorated (jiṇṇa)** because of its withering state, [the snake] gives it up in four ways: (1) remaining in its own kind (*sajātiyaṃ ṭhito*), (2) while loathing (*jigucchanto*), (3) in reliance (*nissāya*), (4) through vigour (*thāmena*). Its own kind (*sajāti*) is the name for the kind of a snake, whose nature is to be long, for snakes do not pass beyond their kind in five behaviours: (1) rebirth, (2) passing away, (3) going into hibernation, (4) mating with their own species, and (5) removing the deteriorated skin. Hence, when it gives up the skin, it then gives up, only remaining in its own kind, and while it remains in its own kind, it gives it up while loathing. ‘While loathing’ means when it is half freed, half unfreed it hangs on, then while feeling tormented it gives it up. And while loathing in this way, in reliance on the gap between sticks, roots, or rocks it gives it up. And while giving it up relying [on this gap], it gives up the skin having generated endeavour, made an effort, vigorously bending its tail and spreading its hood while exhaling. Having done it, the snake can go wherever it wants. In just the same way a monk, desiring to abandon this and the other shore, gives them up in four ways: (1) remaining in his own kind (*sajātiyaṃ ṭhito*), (2) while loathing (*jigucchanto*), (3) in reliance (*nissāya*), (4) through vigour (*thāmena*). His own kind (*sajāti*) means the morality (*sīla*) of the monk, because of the statement ‘born in a noble lineage’, and for this reason it says: “a man, established in morality, is wise [...]” (S I 13). Then, remaining in his own kind in this way, the monk, by seeing danger everywhere, loathes (*jigucchanto*) this and the far shore in the form of his own and other existences, which produce suffering like an old worn out skin; he relies on (*nissāya*) the good friend; he produces extraordinary vigour (*thāma*) in the form of right effort (*sammāvāyāma*); dividing the day and night into six parts he strives and struggles in the way stated as “walking and sitting during the day he purifies the mind of obstructive thoughts (*āvaraṇīyehi dhammehi*)” (A I 114); like the snake bending its tail, he folds his legs; like the snake exhaling, he too strives with unyielding effort; like the snake spreading its hood, he produces an expansion of his knowledge; finally like the snake its skin, he gives up this and the far shore. And once he has given them up, like a snake that has given up its skin, he too as one who has laid down his burden goes where he wants, to the element of

Nibbāna which is without residue of fuel.¹⁵⁰

The similarity between *Paramatthajotikā II* and *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* poses some theoretical problems. If, on the one hand, the commentary on the *Suttanipāta*, the *Paramatthajotikā II*, seems later than the commentary on the *Dīghanikāya*, namely the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, on the other hand, the commentarial explanation made by the *Paramatthajotikā II* is much clearer and more appropriate to the context than *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*'s explanation. Therefore, the passage in *Paramatthajotikā II* comments on the first verse of the *Suttanipāta* which actually concerns a simile of a snake who abandons its old slough (*urago jīṇṇam iva tacam purāṇam*; Sn 1), whereas the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* comments upon a passage which concerns an extraction of a snake from a *karaṇḍa* which is realistically – as has been previously demonstrated – a basket (*ahim karaṇḍā uddhareyya*; D I 77). Both texts describe how the snake gives up its skin and they state, with different words, that it gives up the skin through four actions (*imehi catūhi kāraṇehi*; Sv I 222), or in fourfold ways (*catubbidhena*; Pj II 13). The *Paramatthajotikā II*, unlike *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, states clearly what the fourfold ways are: *catubbidhena jahāti*: (1) *sajātiyaṃ ṭhito* (2) *jigucchanto* (3) *nissāya* (4) *thāmenā ti* (Pj II 13). Successively, the *Paramatthajotikā II* explains each point in detail, whereas the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* does not. The different way of exposition is also reflected by the lexicon. Therefore, both texts recount that the snake, in order to give up its skin, leans on something. The *Sumaṅgalavilāsini* reports that the snake leans inside a branch or inside a tree (*kaṭṭh-antaram vā rukkh-antaram vā nissāya*; Sv I 222), whereas the *Paramatthajotikā II* states that the snake leans inside a branch or among roots or among rocks (*daṇḍantaram vā mūlantaram vā pāsānantaram vā nissāya*; Pj II 14). Then, it can be questioned how the similarity and differences between these texts can be interpreted. The answer lies in the method used to compose the Pāli commentaries which have come to us. The commentaries are the result of

150 so jajjarabhāvena *jīṇṇam* cirakālatāya *purāṇaṅ* cā ti saṃkhaṃ gataṃ *tacam* jahanto *catubbidhena jahāti*: *sajātiyaṃ ṭhito jigucchanto nissāya thāmenā ti. sa jāti nāma sappajāti dīghattabhāvo, uragā hi pañcasu ṭhānesu sa jātin nātivattanti: up(a)pattiyaṃ cutiyaṃ vissatthaniddokkamaṇe sa jātiyā methunapatisevane jīṇṇatācāpanayane cā ti, - yato, yadā tacam jahāti, tadā sa jātiyaṃ yeva ṭhatvā jahāti, sa jātiyaṃ ṭhito pi ca jigucchanto jahāti. jigucchanto nāma, yadā upaḍḍhatthāne mutto hoti upaḍḍhatthāne amutto olambati, tadā naṃ aṭṭiyaṃto jahāti, evaṃ jigucchanto pi ca daṇḍantaram vā mūlantaram vā pāsānantaram vā nissāya jahāti. nissāya jahanto pi ca thāmaṃ janetvā ussāhaṃ karitvā viriyena vaṃkaṃ naṅguṭṭhaṃ katvā passasanto ca phaṇaṃ katvā jahāti, evaṃ jahitvā yena-kāmaṃ pakkamati. evaṃ evaṃ ayam pi bhikkhu orapāraṃ jahitukāmo catubbidhena jahāti: sa jātiyaṃ ṭhito jigucchanto nissāya thāmenā ti. sa jāti nāma bhikkhuno ariyāya jātiyā jāto ti vacanato silaṃ, ten' eva cāha sile patitṭhāya naro sapaṇṇo ti, evaṃ etissaṃ sa jātiyaṃ ṭhito bhikkhu taṃ sakattabhāvādibhedam orapāraṃ jīṇṇam purāṇatācam iva dukkhaṃ janentaṃ tattha tattha ādinavadassanena jigucchanto kālyānamitte nissāya adhimattaṃ sammāvāyāmasaṃkhātāṃ thāmaṃ janetvā divasaṃ caṃkamaṇa nisajjāya āvaraṇīyehi dhammehi cittaṃ parisodhetī ti vuttanayena rattindivaṃ chadhā vibhajitvā ghaṭento vāyamanto urago viya vaṃkaṃ naṅguṭṭhaṃ pallaṃkaṃ ābhujitvā urago viya passasanto ayam pi asithilaparakkamatāya vāyamanto urago va phaṇaṃ karitvā ayam pi nānavipphāraṇaṃ janetvā urago va tacam orapāraṃ jahāti, jahitvā ca urago viya jahitāto yena-kāmaṃ ayam pi ohitabhāro anupādīsesanibbānadhātudisaṃ pakkamati (Pj II 13-14). I owe to Rupert Gethin so many corrections on this passage that I feel the merits for this translation are entirely his, while the remaining errors are mine.*

a work of compilation and editing from older sources.¹⁵¹ For instance, E.W. Adikaram, in his pioneering work, listed twenty-eight ancient sources to which commentators often refer to as authorities (1946, 10). Another list of between thirty-five and forty sources is provided by S. Mori.¹⁵² A reasonable way to interpret the connection between the two explanations is that they come from a common source. Perhaps the original source was really a comment on the first verse of the *Suttanipāta*¹⁵³ – which actually concerns a snake who abandons its skin – that was borrowed by the commentator of the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* in order to write the interpretation of the term ‘*karaṇḍa*’ as a term to designate the snake’s slough. The commentator summarised the passage because it was not its original context, so he borrowed only the necessary. This hypothesis would also explain the reason why some identical concepts are expressed using different words. The tradition claims that when the commentaries arrived in Sri Lanka they were translated into the language of the inhabitant of the island.¹⁵⁴ Successively, Buddhaghosa translated the commentaries from the *Sīhaḷa* language into a more suitable language: the Pāli language.¹⁵⁵ If the original source was in a language other than Pāli, this would justify the different translations.¹⁵⁶ The two commentaries were, indeed, written on two different occasions.

Therefore, we can say so far that *karaṇḍa* straightforwardly means ‘basket’, and that *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*’s suggestion that it means ‘slough’ is artificial. Clearly, *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* knows that *karaṇḍa* generally means basket (it says so). So, the question is: why the suggestion that it means ‘slough’? There are two possibilities: (1) there is an old and lost usage of *karaṇḍa* in the sense of slough; or, (2) the commentator has another motive. Concerning the first case, no use of *karaṇḍa* in the sense of slough has been recovered, whereas in the latter case the obvious reason is that he wants to bring out how the form of the *manomayakāya* matches the form of that from which it is drawn. The commentator then adapts an existing commentarial account of a snake sloughing of its skin unconnected with

151 However, it would be overly simplistic to consider the commentators as mere inert redactors. Recent studies have highlighted the commentators’ own contribution in writing commentaries. Endo, for instance, regarding the commentator Buddhaghosa, writes that: “Buddhaghosa fulfilled the role of a commentator not by simply discarding unnecessary repetitions and writing mistakes in the old commentaries, but by using his knowledge of Buddhism as the standard tool to critically edit them” (2013, 208). A similar statement was written by von Hinüber: “Buddhaghosa as a commentator also acted as a text critic, when he carefully checked the wording of the texts” ([2013/2014] 2015, 371).

152 Mori 1984: 145-6, quoted by Endo (2013, 20, n. 16), who claims he detected thirty-five sources. However, according to Kim 1999, 7, n. 19 (= 2023, 6, n. 19), the sources detected by Mori are as many as forty.

153 The connection of the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* with the *Suttanipāta* is revealed by the commentarial use of the wording ‘*purāṇa-tacaṃ*’ which is equivalent to the ‘*tacaṃ purāṇaṃ*’ of the *Suttanipāta*, a wording form which seems to be confined only to this text.

154 *aṭṭhakathā ādito vasisatehi pañcāhi yā saṅgītā anusaṅgītā ca pacchā pi Sīhaḷadīpaṃ paṇa ābhatā ’tha vasinā Mahā-Mahindena ṭhapitā Sīhaḷabhāsāya dīpavāsinaṃ atthāya* (Sv I 1).

155 *apanetvāna tato ’haṃ Sīhaḷabhāsaṃ manoramaṃ bhāsaṃ | tantinayānucchavikaṃ āropento vīgatasam* (Sv I 1).

156 In addition to the fourfold procedure to give up the old skin, which is conveyed differently by the two commentaries (Sv I 222: *imehi catūhi kāraṇehi*; Pj II 13: *catubbidhena*), I would like to draw attention to the action of ‘leaning on’. The first object on which the snake leans is roughly the same: *kaṭṭh-antaram* (Sv I 222), *daṇḍantaram* (Pj II 14). Both terms are connected with the wood and refer to the limbs of the tree.

manomayakāya. He found such an exegetic account in the old commentary on the *Suttanipāta*, which comments on a snake who abandons its old slough (*urago jīṇṇam iva tacam purāṇam*; Sn 1) and which survives in the actual form of the *Paramatthajotikā II* (i.e. Pj II 13-14). It is worth noting that Buddhaghosa's emphasis on the *manomayakāya* having the same form as the body from which it is drawn fits well with the old Upaniṣadic *manomaya-ātman* (e.g. TU 2.3.1). However, this fact (i.e. the similarity) is echoed in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* most likely when it is stated that the new body made of mind has all limbs and [bodily] parts (*sabbaṅga-paccaṅgin*). Moreover, I argued in § 6.2.2 that the similes aim to highlight the extraction of something of value from its container and, therefore, there would be no need to believe the Buddhaghosa's forced interpretation. Now, I would like to discuss the only record I have found that might seem to contradict my theory concerning the interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa*.

6.4.6.1 Snakes Freed from the Old Skin in Brāhmaṇa Literature

As previously stated, within the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka*, the term *karaṇḍa* is only used to designate a basket, and the interpretation as the slough of the snake is only found within the commentary (Sv I 222). However, it should be pointed out that there is an example within the Brāhmaṇa literature concerning a simile of a snake which is freed from its skin just as a stalk (*iṣīkā*) is freed from its reed (*muñja*). This simile appears in almost the same form within the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa*, *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa*, and *Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa*. Let me take as an example the formulation that occurred in the *Gopathabrāhmaṇa* (2.4.6):

Just as a snake is freed from its old skin, or a stalk from its reed, so in the same way they get rid of all evil.¹⁵⁷

Since in the Brāhmaṇa texts the simile of the snake (*ahi*) freed from its skin (*tvac*) is in conjunction with the simile of the stalk (*iṣīkā*) freed from the reed (*muñja*), it might be argued that there is a connection with the Buddhist texts. The Buddhist account presents the simile of a stalk (*iṣīkā*) drawn out from a reed (*muñja*) followed by the similes of a sword (*asi*) drawn out from a scabbard (*kosi*) and a snake (*ahi*) pulled out from a *karaṇḍa*. Keeping in mind the Brāhmaṇa's passage, it could at first be tempting to suppose that the term *karaṇḍa* means 'slough'. However, a more careful analysis reveals that this interpretation is not well supported. Indeed, it is possible to note that in the Sanskrit text the word used to denote the 'slough' is *tvac*, whereas in the Buddhist text the word *karaṇḍa* would have been used. Nevertheless, in Pāli there is the word *taca*, etymologically equivalent to the Sanskrit *tvac*, which was indeed used to denote the slough of the snake within the Pāli canon.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, the two similes imply two different actions. In the

¹⁵⁷ *tad yathāhir jīrṇāyās tvaco nirmucyeteṣīkā vā muñjād evaṃ haivaite sarvasmāt pāpmanāḥ saṃpramucyante*. Cf. *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa* 2.134 and *Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa* 18.5.19-21. A simile concerning the rooting up of a stalk from the reed in order to explain the liberation from evil can be also found in *Satapathabrāhmaṇa* 4.3.3.16. Similar passages are also discussed by Killingley (2018, 64).

¹⁵⁸ E.g. *urago jīṇṇam iva tacam purāṇam* (Sn 1).

Brāhmaṇa's passage, the snake (*ahi*) is freed (*nirmucyeta*; middle optative form) from the slough (*tvac*), whereas in the Buddhist passage, the snake (*ahi*) would be pulled out (*uddhareyya*; optative form) from the *karaṇḍa*. In the Vedic simile, the snake sheds its skin by itself; whereas, if we take Buddhaghosa interpretation seriously, someone literally skins the snake, which is actually quite an unrealistic reading. In another commentary, as I have already pointed out, (Sp II 362) a snake (*sappa*) is pulled out (*uddharati*) from a basket (*karaṇḍa*). It seems that these similes were part of a common *milieu*, and their nature was very ductile since they could be used to illustrate different meanings and could be mixed together in different combinations.¹⁵⁹ Last but not least, it is worthy to note that the interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa* as the slough of the snake is almost a *hapax*, since it only appears in a commentarial passage reported in Sv I 222 (= Ps III 263). Hence, on the basis of these observations, it seems that the best interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa* when occurring in the Pāli canon is, indeed, 'basket'.¹⁶⁰

6.4.7 *Saddhammappakāsinī*: A Melting Pot of Ideas

The last reference which should be analysed is the commentarial explanation concerning the pericope of the creation of a mind-made body in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. In this passage (Paṭis-a II 666), there are further small innovations mixed with interpretations taken from the texts previously analysed. In Table 6.5, I divide and translate the passage in order to highlight the new and old ideas used for the composition of the commentarial explanation.

159 The use of the same similes for different purposes was pointed out by Norman ([1976] 1991, 101-2) who, however, interprets the *Dīghanikāya*'s passage (D I 77) following Rhys Davids' interpretation (1899, 87-8), which is based on the commentarial explanation. The fact that the similes could be mixed together in a different combination is demonstrated, for instance, by *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 4.3.3.16, which only presents the rooting up of a stalk from the reed; or, it is also evident from a passage in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* (see *Suttāgame* I 137). The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* is a Jaina text in which there is a simile concerning a sword drawn from a scabbard combined with the simile of the stalk drawn from reed in order to illustrate the same concept; see also the translation made by Jacobi ([1895] 1964, 340).

160 For this reason, it would be better to change the nickname "'snake slough' pericope" given by Radich (2007, 233) to the passage that presents the creation of the body made of mind.

Table 6.5 Saddhammappakāsinī II 666

Saddhammappakāsinī II 666	Critical notes and references
<p>In reference to the interpretation of the knowledge concerning the psychic power of the mind-made [body]: with reference to the passage that begins with: “He creates from this body another body”, a monk possessing psychic power desires to perform the psychic power of the mind-made [body] after having emerged from the meditative absorption which forms the base, whose object is the space <i>kaṣiṇa</i>,¹ and having adverted to his own material body in the way already explained, he resolves, “Let it be hollow”, and it becomes hollow. Then, having adverted to another body inside this [body] by means of the earth <i>kaṣiṇa</i>, after the preparatory work, he resolves in the way already explained, and another body exists inside him. He, pulling it out from the mouth, places it outside [his body].</p> <p><i>manomayiddhiññāniddese: imamahā kāyā aññaṃ kāyaṃ abhinimmināti</i> ti ādisu iddhiṃ bhikkhu manomayiddhiṃ kātukāmo ākāsakaṣiṇārammaṇa-pādakajjhānato vuttḥāya attano rūpakāyaṃ tāva āvajjitvā vuttanāyena’ eva susiro hotū ti adhiṭṭhāti. susiro hoti. atha tassa abbhantare paṭhavikaṣiṇavasena aññaṃ kāyaṃ āvajjitvā parikkamaṃ katvā vuttanāyena’ eva adhiṭṭhāti. tassa abbhantare añña kāyo hoti. so taṃ mukhato abbhivā² bhi tḥapeti.</p>	<p>This passage is based on Vism 406 with some additions. The passage, within the <i>Visuddhimagga</i>, in which it is recounted how to create a mind-made body, is increased through the addition of the <i>kaṣiṇas</i>. It is also highlighted that this mind-made body is pulled out from the mouth. Even this latter detail is an addition.</p>
<p>Now, this [text], making known the meaning through similes, started to say ‘just as [...]’. In this connection, ‘from a reed (muñjamhā)’ means from a reed grass (<i>muñjatiṇamhā</i>). ‘One who were to draw out a stalk (īsikaṃ pavāheyya)’ means ‘one who were to pull out a top sprout (<i>kaḷīraṃ luñceyya</i>)’. ‘From a scabbard (kosiyā)’ means ‘out of a scabbard (<i>kosakato</i>)’. ‘Karaṇḍā’ (ablative masculine)’ it means ‘<i>karaṇḍāya</i>’ (ablative feminine), the meaning is: ‘from the covering which is the old skin (<i>purāṇatacakañcukato</i>)’. And in this occurrence, ‘he would pull out (uddhareyya)’ should be understood as its removal by the mind. Indeed a snake (aḥi), established in its own kind, relying on the gap between sticks or trees, with vigour – referring to the effort of drawing out its body from the skin – and while loathing its old skin as something devouring its body, in these four ways gives up its slough by itself.</p> <p><i>idāni tam atthaṃ upamāhi pakāsento seyyatthā ‘pī’ ti ādim āha. tattha: muñjamhā</i> ti muñjatiṇamhā. <i>īsikaṃ pavāheyyā</i> ti kaḷīraṃ luñceyya. <i>kosiyā</i> ti kosakato. <i>karaṇḍā</i> ti karaṇḍāya, purāṇatacakañcukato ti attho. tattha ca: <i>uddhareyyā</i> ti citten’ ev’ assa uddharaṇaṃ vedītabbaṃ. <i>aḥi</i> nāma saḷāyāyaṃ ṭhito kaṭṭhantaram vā, rukkhantaram vā nissāya tacato sarīranikkadḍhanapayoga-saṅkhātena thāmena sarīraṃ saṅkhādamānaṃ viya purāṇaṃ tacamaṃ jigucchanto, imehi catūhi karaṇehi sayam eva kañcukamaṃ jahāti.</p>	<p>The explanation of the similes is borrowed from Sv I 222. Nevertheless, there are some additions. The commentary specifies that the <i>muñja</i> is a sort of grass (<i>tiṇa</i>). It also states that the <i>īsikā</i> is the top sprout (<i>kaḷīra</i>) of the reed grass, <i>kosī</i> ‘scabbard’ is <i>kosaka</i> ‘scabbard’, and that the term <i>karaṇḍā</i> (ablative masculine) is a synonym of <i>karaṇḍāya</i> (ablative feminine).</p>
<p>In this case, just as the stalk etc. are similar to the reed etc., in the same way the mind-made form is similar in all qualities to the possessor of psychic power, the simile has been purposefully used to highlight this.</p> <p><i>ettha ca yathā isikādayo muñjādīhi sadisā honti, evam idaṃ manomayaṃ rūpaṃ iddhimato sabbākārehi sadisam eva hotī ti dassanattamaṃ imā upamā vuttā ti.</i></p>	<p>This passage too is based on Vism 406, with the addition of ‘<i>sabbākārehi</i>’ and the substitution of the pronoun ‘<i>imā</i>’ in place of ‘<i>etā</i>’.</p>

Saddhammappakāsinī II 666	Critical notes and references
<p>“The possessor of psychic power approached with a mind-made body” (Th 901, with ‘iddhimā’ in place of ‘iddhiyā’), in this passage the body created by a mind which performs supernatural knowledges is called a mind-made body. “He is reborn in a certain mind-made body” (A III 50), in this passage the body is produced by a mind which performs meditative absorption states; because it was created by this mind it is called a mind-made body. But in the present passage the body is produced by a mind which performs supernatural knowledges; because it was created by this mind it is called mind-made body. If someone asks, “This being so, [even] when [a body is] made by the power of resolution and the power of transformation is it called a mind-made body?” Certainly, it is, but in the present context, having defined those [two powers] separately according to the differences between them and because they are designated as ‘the power of resolution and the power of transformation’, it is only the creation that comes from within that is called a mind-made power.</p> <p><i>manomayena kāyena iddhimā upasaṅkamī ti ettha abhiññāmanena katakāyo manomayakāyo nāma. aññataramaṇ manomayaṇ kāyaṇ upapajjī ti ettha jhānāmanena nibbattitakāyo tena manena katattā manomayakāyo nāma. idha pana abhiññāmanena uppāditakāyo tena manena katattā manomayakāyo nāma. evaṇ sati adhiṭṭhānidhiyā, vikubbaniddhiyā ca, kato manomayakāyo nāma hotī? ti ce: hoti yeva. idha pana tāsamaṇ visumaṇ visumaṇ visesena visesetvā adhiṭṭhānidhi, vikubbaniddhī ti ca vuttattā abbhantarato nimmānam eva manomayiddhi nāma.</i></p>	<p>The same quotations are also included within the <i>Manorathapūranī</i> (Mp I 209). The <i>Saddhammappakāsinī</i>’s author borrowed some canonical passages in order to state that there are some different kinds of mind-made body. Successively, the commentator seems also to assert that the psychic power of the mind-made body is involved when the psychic power of resolution and the psychic power of transformation are performed. This idea, which concerns a sort of synergy among powers, is not entirely new. Indeed, a passage in the <i>Visuddhimagga</i> seems to suggest a similar kind of interconnection: “Among these ten psychic powers, the word ‘many kinds of psychic powers’ is only conveyed by the psychic power of resolution. However, both psychic powers of transformation and of mind-made body should be expected according to this meaning” (<i>iti imāsu dasasu iddhīsu iddhividhāyā ti imasmimṇ pade adhiṭṭhānā iddhi yeva āgatā. imasmimṇ pan’ atthe vikubbanā manomayā iddhiyo pi icchitabbā eva; Vism 384</i>).</p>
<p>1 Among the meditation objects there are the so called <i>kaṣiṇas</i> (= Sanskrit: <i>krtsna</i>; literally ‘totality/entire’), usually ten in number. They consist of four elements, four colours, space, and consciousness. The last two items are replaced in some texts by light and limited space.</p>	
<p>2 In the translation, I amended ‘<i>abbhitvā</i>’ with ‘<i>abbūhitvā</i>’.</p>	

It is worth noting that this exegesis is the result of former innovations which have been attested in other and older texts. This commentarial explanation claims to interpret a *Paṭisambhidāmagga* passage (Paṭis II 210-11), but includes later developments and changes concerning the pericope of the creation of a mind-made body. These developments occur only in texts such as the *Visuddhimagga* and *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. This fact naturally leads us to wonder to what extent a later interpretation is suitable and useful in order to recover the exact meaning of the root text. It appears that there is not a direct link which connects the root text to the commentary. Therefore, the commentary on the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* appears as the result of a process in which the developments are accumulated, reshaped, and presented again in a new form.

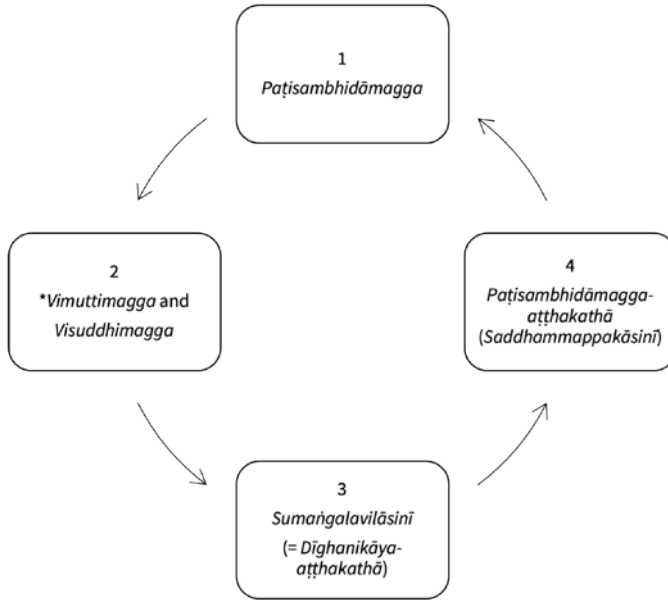


Figure 6.4 Representation of the circle of influences. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* influenced the **Vimuttimaggā*, *Visuddhimaggā* and *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī*, which influenced the composition of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s commentary, which could influence our understanding of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*

Figure 6.4 highlights that the first text influences the following texts but, at the end, the interpretation of the root text is influenced by the result of the influences which itself has produced. This process makes the task to recover the original meaning of a concept a very hard and dynamic task, and shows the need for a diachronic approach to Buddhist studies.

6.4.8 Conclusion of the Diachronic Study

The present chapter has tried to recover the development of the interpretation concerning the creation of the body made of mind (*manomayakāya*) within Pāli Buddhist literature. The analysis started from the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s exposition and continued with the expositions found in later texts. The first and most influential developments were found in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. This text shows that the concept of *manomaya* has lost the central position it had within lists in the early canonical materials and in the Upaniṣads. Moreover, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* interprets the *manomayakāya* as a sort of psychic power (*iddhi*). This interpretation was probably due to an over scholastic and literalistic understanding of a *Samyuttanikāya* passage (S V 282), in which the term *manomaya* is close to the term *iddhi*. The innovations found in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* were inherited by the **Vimuttimaggā* and *Visuddhimaggā*, which in turn add new material. The latter illustrates the process through which the body made of mind is created, and it emphasises the similarity between the creator and the new creation. This similarity influenced the exegesis made by the *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī* since it affected

the interpretation of the three similes. In this text, for the first time, it is stated that the term '*karaṇḍa*' is the slough of the snake, in spite of its common meaning of 'basket'. However, this translation is not supported by the early canonical texts, and it seems that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* was also unaware of this interpretation. Therefore, it reports a simile (Paṭis I 145) concerning a jewel (*maṇi*) inside a box (*karaṇḍaka*), which resembles, in the grammatical construction, the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*'s simile (D I 77) concerning a snake (*ahi*) pulled out from a basket (*karaṇḍa*). It was also noted that the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*'s passage, through which the term *karaṇḍa* was interpreted as the slough of the snake, resembles a passage in the *Paramatthajotikā II*, a late commentary on the *Suttanipāta*. An explanation that could justify the presence of both similarities and differences between the two commentarial passages is that both passages are derived from a common source. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the actual Pāli commentaries were written on the base of common sources. Finally, the *Saddhammappakāsini*'s account has been analysed and resulted to be composed, for the major part, by former innovations with some minor additions. This led to the problem concerning the reliability of the commentarial literature. Therefore, to what extent it is possible to trust a comment on a text if this comment is made up by passages of texts later than the commented text? This question is problematic since the process through which the commentaries were written and the ways in which they used to comment are still far from clear. However, in the case concerning the creation of the body made of mind (*manomayakāya*) it is possible to infer a certain *modus operandi*, exemplified by the following scheme:

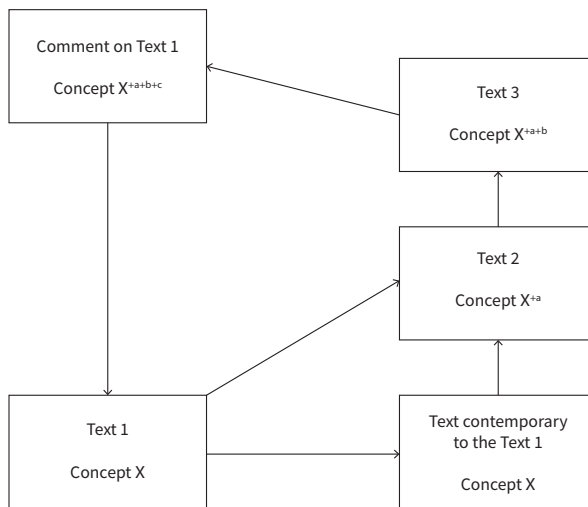


Figure 6.5 This scheme shows how Concept X becomes more complex and detailed over time. This pattern of development could be applied to the relationship between the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* and *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, and between *Paṭisambhidāmagga*'s account and its commentarial explanation in the *Saddhammappakāsini*

This scheme exemplifies that the commentarial explanation was built up by small innovations accumulated over time, and finally a Concept X in a Text 1 became the Concept X^{+a+b+c}. However, the additions ‘a’, ‘b’, and ‘c’ are recorded only in texts later than Text 1. Although these small innovations could seem trivial and also coherent with the original concept, the interpretation of the term *karaṇḍa* as the slough of a snake seems to depend on these former innovations, nonetheless. Since in texts later than the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* the similarity between the creation (the body made of mind) and the creator was emphasised, the author of the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* stated that the three similes were enunciated in order to show the condition of similarity (*upamāttayam pi hi sadisa-bhāva-dassanattam eva vuttam*; Sv I 222). It goes without saying that the common meaning ‘basket’ for the Pāli word *karaṇḍa* did not fit very well with the assumption that similes should illustrate the similarity. Therefore, the commentator provides a long exposition to argue that the term *karaṇḍa* means ‘slough’, whereas, with regard to the other two similes, the commentator limits himself by just mentioning that what is drawn out is identical to its receptacle (*muñja-sadisā eva hi tassa anto isikā hoti, kosiya-sadiso yeva asi*; Sv I 222).

In conclusion, without denying the great importance that the commentarial literature has had and still has for our understanding of Buddhism, I think that we still lack a full comprehension of what the commentarial literature really is. When we consider the relationship between the canon and the comment, the most immediate picture that we conceive is the use of the comment to understand the canon. What I have shown in this study is that it is possible to overturn the prevailing paradigm and, therefore, the use of the canon to understand the commentarial literature is a similarly valuable approach.

6.5 General Conclusions

This chapter highlights that it is not always possible to uncritically accept the commentarial exegesis concerning a concept with ancient roots such as the *manomayakāya*. The process of knowing and understanding should take into account different angles of interpretations. In this case, the evidence provided by the Vedic background, which was a more ancient and probably original context of some kinds of mental embodiment, was of paramount importance. The very term ‘*manomaya*’ has not a plain interpretation, and despite that the exegesis is unanimous in translating it as ‘made through the mind’ or ‘made by the mind’ (considering the first term of the compound, i.e. *manas*, inflected in the instrumental case), there is evidence both from the Buddhist canon and Vedic texts that a translation like ‘made of mind’ (*manas* inflected in the genitive case) cannot be completely disregarded. In some cases (e.g. S V 282), namely when the mental body occurs in contraposition to the gross and heavy physical body made of the four great elements (*cātumahābhūtika*), the *manomayakāya* really seems to represent a body that, since it is made of mind, is lighter, thinner and overall better than the coarse body. Indeed, if the interpretation of the similes formulated in the present study is correct, the similes aim to further highlight that the new mental body is the inner valuable part which can be extracted from the physical body. This interpretation of the similes is, in some ways, in opposition to the commentarial interpretation provided by Buddhaghosa, who assumes

that the similes aim to highlight the similarity between the original physical body and the mental body. This assumption led Buddhaghosa to understand *karaṇḍa* as the ‘slough’ of the snake (*ahi*), deliberately overlooking the ordinary and always accepted meaning of ‘basket’. Buddhaghosa’s interpretation that sees the similes highlighting the similarity between the physical and mental bodies may seem, *prima facie*, derived from the Upaniṣadic understanding of many levels of embodiment, such as in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*, in which increasingly subtler inner selves (*ātman*) have the human form because the previous one had it, and so on (until reaching the physical body, the external stratum).¹⁶¹ It might be so, but nonetheless, *karaṇḍa* as the ‘slough’ of the snake is an *hapax* in Buddhist literature and is not attested in Sanskrit (as far as I know) with such a meaning. Moreover, we are not really acquainted with Buddhaghosa’s, and broadly speaking early commentators’, knowledge of Upaniṣadic doctrines and their propensity to refer to them, either tacitly or openly. We can only but note that the later sub-commentarial literature ostensibly makes reference to the Upaniṣads. An example is the *Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā*, which refers to the reciters of the Vedas (*vedavādīn*) who preach the doctrine of the five selves (*attan*). This is nothing more than the *Taittirīyopaniṣad*’s doctrine of the five selves (*ātman*).¹⁶² Turning to the interpretation of *karaṇḍa*, we may note that even if Buddhaghosa’s interpretation might seem to be derived from Upaniṣadic doctrines, and the concept of *manomaya* in the canon resulted to be very close to the Upaniṣadic one, this does not mean that we should blindly accept every interpretation coherent with the Vedic *milieu*. To better explain: interpretation should be conceived as the result of a synergetic work of many sources, and the work of hermeneut is to establish the best interpretation based on the evidence gathered. In the case of *karaṇḍa*, the interpretation of the canonical similes and the philological analysis of the exegetical sources point out that Buddhaghosa’s reading of *karaṇḍa* as the ‘slough’ of the snake is forced and linguistically unjustified. Furthermore, even the Chinese translation of this simile in the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrghāgama* would not support Buddhaghosa’s understanding: “It is like someone taking a snake out of a basket (篋)”.¹⁶³ Indeed, the word *qiè* 篋 clearly indicates something along a ‘basket’ (cf. s.v. “篋” in DDB). Whether Buddhaghosa invented the ‘snake’s slough’ interpretation or inherited it from older sources is a matter probably unsolvable. What seems likely is that the textual passage he used to justify his reading had its original exegetical context in the commentary on the *Suttanipāta* (Pj II 13-14). Therefore, the study of the *manomayakāya* highlights how it would be essential to promote a ‘philology of ideas’ in the field of Buddhist studies. Only when cross-referencing the sources can we have a clearer picture of a concept like the body made of mind whose meaning and significance have never been made explicit in the texts. This can only be done by balancing the data, namely improving our knowledge of the canonical context through the evidence provided by both its past (e.g. Vedic background) and its future developments (exegesis).

161 *sa vā eṣa puruṣavidha eva | tasya puruṣavidhatām anvayaṃ puruṣavidhaḥ* (TU 2.3.1).

162 *annamayo pāṇamayo manomaya ānandamayo viññāṇamayo ti pañcadhā attānaṃ vedavādīno vadanti* (Sv-pt I 202). Notably, this passage occurs in the *ṭīkā* when it comments on the *aṭṭhakathā*’s exegesis on a *Brahmajālasutta*’s passage involving the *manomayakāya*.

163 又如有人篋中出蛇 (T0001.01.0085c20-21).

Concerning the Pāli commentarial literature and broadly speaking the exegesis, we can begin noting that the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* departs from the older canonical account of the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*. Indeed, not only has the concept of *manomaya* lost the central position it held in lists within early Buddhist canonical materials and the Upaniṣads, but the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* introduces many innovations. The text reworks the canonical material (esp. from the *Dīghanikāya* and *Samyuttanikāya*) and in doing so alters the understanding a reader could draw by only considering the earlier canonical material. The other exegetical works considered in the chronological order gradually add further material, without rejecting the previous exegetical accounts, but integrating them with new information. This pattern is certainly interesting and, as we will see further in the book, is not a one-off case. The very fact that exegetical works provide new information over time should make us aware that the interpretation of a given concept might have changed over time as well. However, since the Pāli commentaries were based on older sources that have not reached us, there could be reasonable doubt that new information came from these older sources as well. That is to say, in the case of two texts, one younger and one older, if the younger text provides an exegetical account on a given concept similar to the older text, but it further adds new information, we cannot rule out *a priori* that it did not make use of the same old sources. Therefore, since generally speaking, we do not have an *a priori* rule to apply in the evaluation of the commentarial philological contribution to the interpretation of early texts, we should evaluate any piece of exegesis on a case-by-case basis. This could be undertaken by questioning the exegetical texts, namely putting the right questions to the commentaries in the process of analysis. The questions to which I am referring are as such: is the exegesis at stake from old sources? Was the exegesis at stake originally elaborated for the passage to which it is referring to, or was it borrowed from elsewhere? Is this interpretation introducing innovations? Therefore, the use of the commentaries can be valuable in the study of early Buddhism as long as we are able to pose the right questions to the exegeses and to analyse them until we are able to answer to these questions, or at least to admit that we are not in fact able to fully answer. A similar reasoning, of course, can be applied in the use of the Vedic sources for the study of Buddhism, and this is the reason why I regard the process of interpretation as dynamic; a scholar should always move forward from one source to another and back again, over and over again, until the perfect balance among the sources and the interpretations is found.

Finally, summarising some conclusions from this chapter, we can state that the Buddhist *manomayakāya* is an ancient and exogenous concept, not exclusively Buddhist but part of the Indian *milieu*. It escaped the first and early process of systematisation and, therefore, the first exegesis it received (viz. from the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*) already shows a high degree of innovation. The later exegeses (commentaries) further add details and explanation. There occurs the description of the method to perform a creation of a mental body. This set of instructions is a kind of exegesis that will also occur for the other extraordinary capacities (as we will see in the next chapters). More relevant from a philological point of view is the interpretation of the similes, in particular the extraction of a snake from a basket. This gave us the opportunity to reflect on the reliability of the commentarial exegesis. If the pattern of accumulation of details over time would be confirmed, could we really trust an interpretation that clearly introduces innovations?

For instance, can we understand a concept X like X^{a+b+c} , where 'a', 'b' and 'c' are new information gradually introduced by the exegetical literature? In some cases, to believe or not to believe the exegesis would be based on the propensity of the reader to trust this literature. However, in other cases - such as the interpretation of *karaṇḍa* - this chapter has shown that is possible to conduct a thorough analysis on some issues, and so a reliable evaluation of some exegetical accounts is possible, it simply depends on how much effort one wishes to invest.