

## Like the Rhinoceros, or Like Its Horn? The Problem of *Khaggavisāṇa* Revisited

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### ABSTRACT

The Pāli expression *khaggavisāṇakappo* may either mean ‘like the rhinoceros’ or ‘like the horn of the rhinoceros’. It occurs in the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* at the end of each stanza of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* and its parallels, and the refrain has been translated by some as ‘one should wander alone like the rhinoceros’ but by some, including K. R. Norman, as ‘one should wander alone like the horn of the rhinoceros’. K. R. Norman has however set out his reasons for regarding ‘like the rhinoceros horn’ as the correct translation, and ‘like the rhinoceros’ as wrong. The present article critically discusses Norman’s reasons, concluding that the expression *khaggavisāṇa* may be regarded as a deliberately ambiguous compound meaning both the rhinoceros and its horn, or perhaps as a single expression meaning ‘rhinoceros’. The zoological facts are considered, as well as the difficult etymology of *khaggavisāṇa*, its contextual meaning, its meaning in Jain parallels, and its discussion in Pāli commentaries. The article concludes that ‘like the rhinoceros’ is in fact a correct translation.

### Keywords

*khaggavisāṇa, khadgaviṣāṇa, khaggavisāṇakappo, Khaggavisāṇa-sutta, solitude*

The *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta* consists in 41 stanzas, each of which (except one) ends with the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo*.<sup>1</sup> These stanzas recommend a solitary, meditative, renunciate lifestyle, and employ a variety of nat-

1. Sn vv.35–75; also at Ap 8–13, where the stanzas are attributed to the *pacceka-buddhas*. The exceptional verse, Sn v.45, has the refrain, *careyya ten’attamano satīmā*, ‘one should wander with him mindful, satisfied’.

uralistic images and metaphors. They are commented upon in the *Cullaniddesa*, which also comments upon most of the stanzas in the *Parāyanavagga*. The *Niddesa* is itself included in the Pāli canon, which indicates that the stanzas of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* are some of the oldest examples of Buddhist literature (Jayawickrama 1977, 27; Norman 1983, 65; Norman 2001, 162). A smaller number of related or similar stanzas are preserved in Sanskrit in the *Mahāvastu*,<sup>2</sup> with the refrain, *eko care khadgaviṣāṇakalpo*. These Sanskrit stanzas in the *Mahāvastu* are called *khadgaviṣāṇagāthā*, which I propose to translate ‘rhinoceros stanzas’. Yet another version of the rhinoceros stanzas, in the Gāndhārī dialect of Middle-Indo-Aryan, has recently appeared, having been edited by Richard Salomon from birch-bark manuscripts written in the first century CE, and then buried, probably in Afghanistan. They are now conserved by the British Museum.<sup>3</sup> These 40 stanzas, which are similar to, but not identical with, the Pāli and Sanskrit versions, have the refrain *eko care khargaviṣāṇagapo*. The rhinoceros stanzas were therefore valued and preserved by several early Buddhist schools, and they belong to the earliest phase of Buddhist literature.

The question is, should the refrain, *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* in Pāli, or its equivalents in Sanskrit and Gāndhārī, be translated ‘one should wander alone like the rhinoceros’; or, ‘one should wander alone like the horn of the rhinoceros’? Does the compound *khaggavisāṇa* refer to the rhinoceros or to its horn?<sup>4</sup> The compound is ambiguous, and, as will be explained, may be understood either way. However, translators must make a choice, and most have preferred ‘like the rhinoceros’, probably partly because ‘one should wander alone like the rhinoceros’ sounds more natural in English.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, in one of the two English translations of the *Sutta-nipāta* now in print,<sup>6</sup> K.R. Norman has given the translation ‘one should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn’ (2001, 5ff), and in an important article he has presented arguments for the correctness of this translation.<sup>7</sup> In the present article I will raise some doubts in relation to Prof. Norman’s arguments, in order to conclude that the compound *khaggavisāṇa* remains ambiguous, and may therefore correctly be translated ‘rhinoceros’ as well as ‘horn of the rhinoceros’, and that therefore the translation ‘rhinoceros’ is justified. This conclusion will confirm what seems to have been the intuition of most translators and commentators of recent years, though not all.<sup>8</sup> Hence, this conclusion will have replaced

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2. Mvu I 357–9, where the stanzas are also attributed to the *pratyekabuddhas*.
3. Salomon 2000. The story of the birch-bark manuscripts is given in Salomon 1999.
4. The literature on translating *khaggavisāṇa* is discussed in Norman 1996. Salomon (2000, 10–14) reviews it all again, and, while concluding that *khaggavisāṇa* is best translated ‘rhinoceros’, has some misgivings about going against ‘the authoritative and emphatic opinion of K.R. Norman’ (p.13 n.11).
5. As Ven. Thanissaro puts it, ‘rhinoceros horns don’t wander’ (Access to Insight, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.03.than.html>, accessed 9 Oct 2014), and, as Stephanie Jamison puts it, the idea of a horn wandering alone ‘conjures up an unintentionally comic picture’ (Jamison 1998, 253 n.18).
6. Norman 2001 and Saddhatissa 1985. A translation by Thanissaro is available online (Access to Insight, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.03.than.html>, accessed 9 Oct 2014).
7. Norman 1996; more briefly in Norman 2001, 162–3.
8. As well as Norman, Steven Collins (1992, 273) in a highly critical review-article of Wiltshire

mere intuition or guesswork with just the kind of philological rigour that Prof. Norman himself has recommended in the study of Pāli texts (2006, 10–14).

Since I will structure this article around Prof. Norman's arguments, I will first quote his conclusion regarding the translation of *khaggavisāṇa* as 'horn of the rhinoceros':

When the Pāli can be so translated, when the earliest interpretations take it that way, when the Jain tradition supports it, and when the Indian rhinoceros is unique among animals in India in having only one horn, it seems certain to me that the reference is to the single horn ... (1996, 139)

This list conveniently provides four topics for my discussion (in re-arranged order) of how Prof. Norman's conclusion is much less certain than it appears: (i) the facts about rhinoceroses (ii) the Pāli of the *sutta* itself; (iii) evidence from the Jain tradition; and (iv) the earliest interpretations of the *sutta*, i.e. the *Cullaniddesa*, and also the later commentaries.

### The facts about rhinoceroses

In the other English translation of the *Sutta-nipāta* now in print, Ven. Saddhatissa renders the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* as 'Let one live alone like a unicorn's horn' (1985, 4ff.). Part of the reason for this translation is his mistaken idea that the rhinoceros is gregarious. In a note, Saddhatissa explains that 'in view of the gregarious nature of the Indian species, called *Rhinoceros unicornis*, I have chosen the latter term to emphasize solitariness symbolically' (1985, 8 n.1).<sup>9</sup> However, the fact is that the Indian rhinoceros is not gregarious; indeed, the very opposite is the case. Adult rhinoceroses usually roam and graze alone, though they occasionally form small groups to graze or wallow (Laurie *et al.* 1983, 4). The fact that the rhinoceros is a solitary wanderer is also something that Prof. Norman does not discuss, and of which he may possibly have been unaware.<sup>10</sup> The lifestyle of the rhinoceros in fact provides a very apt simile for the lifestyle of the sage depicted in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta*, who is enjoined to wander alone, except to enjoy the company of a wise companion.<sup>11</sup>

Another relevant fact about the Indian rhinoceros is that it has only one horn ('unicornis'),<sup>12</sup> and it is this fact that Prof. Norman finds more significant than

1990, states that *khaggavisāṇakappo* means 'like the (single) horn of the rhinoceros', against Wiltshire's 'like a rhinoceros'.

9. His mistake may relate, however, to Sinhalese tradition, since, according to Nyanaponika, in a note to his German translation of the *Sutta-nipāta*: 'In Ceylon there is a tradition that *khaggavisāṇa* does not refer to the rhinoceros, but instead to a horse-like animal with a horn on its forehead (see 'The Buddhist', Colombo, May 1943). The Sinhalese name for this is *kangavena* or *kagavena* (see Carter's Sinhalese-English dictionary). It would thus seem to be an animal related to the mythical unicorn. The legend of the unicorn for its part however might have arisen from the first garbled reports of the rhinoceros.' (Nyanaponika 1955, 243, my trans.). Allen also regards *khaggavisāṇa* as referring to the horn of the rhinoceros, because he erroneously believes that 'zoologists have never described this animal as being other than gregarious' (1959, 77).
10. The most he acknowledges is that 'it would appear that the Indian rhinoceros does not have a particularly gregarious nature' (Norman 1996, 136).
11. See e.g. Sn vv.45, 58.
12. Laurie *et al.* 1983, 1: horns of up to 572mm along the curve have been recorded.

the rhinoceros' solitary wandering. He understands *eko*, 'solitary', 'single', of the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* to refer to the *eko*, 'single', horn of the rhinoceros, and not to the *eko*, 'solitary', lifestyle of the beast, though he does so for philological reasons, which I will explain below. However, assuming that the early Buddhists composed the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* having observed the natural world around them, it is inconceivable that if they had noticed that the rhinoceros had only one horn that they should not also have observed its solitary habit of life. Moreover, the solitary wanderer of the rhinoceros stanzas is also compared to the solitary male elephant (Sn v.53, Dhp 329, discussed below), as well as to the lion (which is not in fact a solitary animal) (Sn vv.71–2, Ap 13, discussed below). These comparisons are thus with the habits of animals, rather than with parts of their anatomy, making it natural to suppose that *khaggavisāṇa* originally referred to the animal and not to its horn.<sup>13</sup>

The facts about rhinoceroses cannot, of course, by themselves determine the meaning of the expression *khaggavisāṇa*, which should be decided by philological and not zoological argument. However, should it be concluded that *khaggavisāṇa* really is ambiguous, and may just as well mean 'rhinoceros' as 'horn of the rhinoceros', then these facts about rhinoceroses will take on a new significance. They would imply that someone familiar with rhinoceroses who was to hear the refrain, *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo*, would naturally hear the comparison implied by the refrain as being between the Buddhist renunciate and the solitary beast, not only with its horn. With this in mind, I turn to the expression *khaggavisāṇa* itself.

### The Pāli term *khaggavisāṇa* and its context

The compound *khaggavisāṇa* (or *khadgavisāṇa* in Sanskrit, or *khargaviṣṇa* in the Gāndhārī Prakrit) is ambiguous and can be analysed in two different ways (See Margaret Cone, DOP I, 742). As Prof. Norman puts it:

The Pāli word *khagga* (Sanskrit *khaḍga*) has two meanings: 'rhinoceros' and 'sword'. If *khagga* is taken in the meaning 'rhinoceros', then the compound can be interpreted as a *atpuruṣa* (dependent) compound, meaning 'the horn of a rhinoceros'. If *khagga* is taken in the meaning 'sword', then it can be taken as a *bahuṛihi* (possessive) compound, meaning 'having a sword as a horn', i.e. 'a rhinoceros'. Consequently, from the form of the word we cannot be certain whether it is the rhinoceros or its horn which is single. (1996, 134)

Nevertheless, despite this uncertainty about the meaning of *khaggavisāṇa*, Prof. Norman, while acknowledging that the compound is in itself ambiguous, as we will see prefers to interpret it as a *atpuruṣa*, firstly, because the commentaries appear to take it as such, and, secondly, because a Jain parallel appears to take it that way too. By contrast, Edgerton had taken BHS *khaḍgaviṣṇa* to be a *bahuṛihi* meaning 'rhinoceros' rather than its horn.<sup>14</sup> By way of reply, Prof.

13. A point made by Jayawickrama 1977, 22–3.

14. BHSD pp.202–3: 'Since Skt. *khaḍga* and Pali *khagga* means *rhinoceros*, the Pali comm. on Sn paraphrases *kh<sup>o</sup>-visāṇa* by *rhinoceros-horn*. But actually the cpd. means *rhinoceros* = Skt. *khadgin*, originally *having a sword(-like) horn*. The comparison is to the animal, not to its horn.'

Norman has argued that the BHS tradition had forgotten the original meaning of the compound, that is, as a *attpurusa* (1996, 40).<sup>15</sup>

Given the ambiguity of the compound *khaggavisāna*, it seems reasonable to suppose that the composer(s) of the *Khaggavisāna-sutta* may have intended the compound to be understood in both senses simultaneously, both as a *attpurusa* meaning 'rhinoceros horn' and as a *bahuṛihi* meaning 'rhinoceros'. Ria Kloppenborg (1974, 59–60) has in fact proposed exactly such an interpretation, but Prof. Norman responded to this proposal with the criticism: 'I find this line of argument hard to follow, unless she means that *khaggavisāna* is to be taken in both ways simultaneously in a play upon words (*śleṣa*)' (1996, 135). As we will see below, Prof. Norman's criticism of Kloppenborg, and his rejection of the possibility of deliberate ambiguity, is based on his arguments, to be considered and to some extent rejected below, by which he decides that *khaggavisāna* should be originally considered a *attpurusa* and not a *bahuṛihi*. However, Richard Salomon is kinder to Kloppenborg, commenting:

While it is true that Kloppenborg's statement is not entirely clear, I think that it should still be taken seriously. It may not be question of *śleṣa* in the stricter technical sense of the terms in the expression *khaggavisāṇakappa*, but it is certainly reasonable to think that both interpretations – 'like the rhinoceros' and 'like the rhinoceros horn' – are in fact implied simultaneously. (2000, 13)<sup>16</sup>

With this encouragement in mind, let us explore further the vexed question of the etymology of *khaggavisāna*.

Heinrich Lüders maintained that *khagga* and *khadga* should be regarded as abbreviations of *khaggavisāna* and *khadgavisāna*, in the same way that Sanskrit *sūcīka*, 'stinging insect', can be regarded as an abbreviation of *sūcīmukha*, 'having a mouth like a needle', i.e. 'stinging insect' (1940, 429); and in the same way that Sanskrit *śiśuka-* (Pāli *susu* or *susuka*), 'dolphin', 'crocodile', can be regarded as abbreviations of *śiśumāra*, 'child-killer' (1942, 81). Prof. Norman has rejected this possibility, citing the works of Kuiper (1948, 137) and Mayrhofer (1956, 299), who show that *khadga* is a probably a Proto-Munda word that was borrowed into Sanskrit. Norman writes, 'The original meaning of *khadga* was "rhinoceros" when it was first borrowed into Indo-Aryan, and it is not an abbreviation for *khadgavisāna* as has been suggested [by Lüders]' (1996, 139–40 and 2001, 163).<sup>17</sup> However, more recent work by Mayrhofer (which Norman does not cite) does not support Norman's point of view. Mayrhofer concludes:

Because it can be assumed that both the Vedic *khadgá-* and also the *khadga*-'sword' of the younger language originate from a word borrowed from another language [Kulturwort], a connection between 'sword' and 'rhinoceros' in an undetermined original language cannot be ruled out; it is for now unprovable (1992, 444).<sup>18</sup>

15. cf. Mayrhofer (1992, 443–4), who also regards Edgerton's etymology as mistaken.

16. cf. Levman (2012), who shows that Pāli *pahitatta* is a deliberately ambiguous compound, meaning both 'of resolute will' and 'having abandoned self'.

17. Kuiper appears not to disagree with Norman's criticism of Lüders, commenting that 'any evidence of the supposed older form [of *khadgavisāna* in the meaning 'rhinoceros'] is wanting' (1948, 137).

18. Many thanks to Bryan Levman and Robert Clark for help with the translation.

Given this uncertainty over the original meaning of *khadga*, Lüders' proposal, despite the lack of corroborative evidence for it in the Indic languages, may not necessarily be incorrect. Indeed, Lüders' proposal that *khaggavisāṇa* was not in fact a compound but a single expression denoting 'rhinoceros' has received more recent support from Prof. J.C. Wright, who has observed that the evidence presented by Mayrhofer and Kuiper suggests that there was a pre-Aryan word for 'rhinoceros', of which both *khadga* and *khadgavisāṇa* are adaptations, comparable to New Persian *karg*, *kargadan*, and Greek καρύγχωνος. He compares *khadgavisāṇa* with *mrganābhi*, 'deer's navel', which in Sanskrit denotes both musk and the musk-deer (Wright 2001, 5; MW p.828).

While the etymology of *khaggavisāṇa* remains uncertain, it seems clear that Prof. Norman has not sufficiently considered the possibility that the compound was originally intended to be deliberately ambiguous, and the further possibility that the expression *khaggavisāṇa* was originally understood as a single expression meaning 'rhinoceros'. In regard to the latter possibility, Prof. Norman has also not considered the (admittedly late) evidence of the *Abhidhānappadipīka* (a Burmese lexicon of Pāli by Moggallāna): *khaggakhaggavisāṇā tu palāsādo ca gandako*, meaning, 'khagga and indeed *khaggavisāṇa* mean rhinoceros'.<sup>19</sup> This too suggests the possibility that *khaggavisāṇa* was understood as a single expression meaning 'rhinoceros'.<sup>20</sup>

Given these several ways to understand *khaggavisāṇa* — as a *tatpuruṣa* ('horn of a rhinoceros'), as a *baḥuvrīhi* ('having a horn which is a sword', that is, 'rhinoceros'), as deliberately ambiguous (both 'rhinoceros' and 'horn of a rhinoceros'), or as a single expression meaning 'rhinoceros' — the question is, which is the correct way to understand *khaggavisāṇa* in the refrain of the rhinoceros stanzas? Unfortunately, as Prof. Norman has observed, there are no clues about how to interpret the expression from the refrain itself. And the recently edited Gāndhārī version of the rhinoceros stanzas has shed no new light at all on this matter (Salomon 2000, 13). Norman looks to a Jain parallel and to the earliest commentary to decide. But before we look at these, let us consider the Buddhist and poetic context for the refrain. Firstly, there are a pair of verses in the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* (Sn 45–6) which are also found in the *Dhammapada* (328–29) and elsewhere, except for a different final line:<sup>21</sup>

sace labhetha nipakaṇ sahāyām  
saddhiṇ caram sādhuvihāri dhīrām  
abhibhuyya sabbāni parissayāni  
careyya ten'attamano satima-

no ce labhetha nipakaṇ sahāyām  
saddhiṇ caram sādhuvihāri dhīrām  
rājā va rāṭhām vijitam pahāyā  
eko care khaggavisāṇakappo

If one should find a wise companion  
good to live and wander with, resolute,  
overcoming every danger,  
one should wander with them, mindful, satisfied.

If one cannot find a wise companion  
good to live and wander with, resolute,  
like a king leaving a conquered kingdom,  
one should wander alone like the *khaggavisāṇa*.

19. Abh p.613, cited in DOP I p.742; *gandako* and *palāsādo* are words for rhinoceros; *gandako* is the same in Skt., usually taken to mean 'possessing swellings' in reference to the knobbly hide, though Kuiper (1948, 137) suggests an Austro-Asiatic origin; *palāsādo* is given in PED under *palāsata* and may be equivalent to Vedic *parasvat*.
20. The English word 'rhinoceros' presents perhaps a comparable case. The word comes from the Greek πίνο- (*rhino-*), meaning 'nose', and κέρας (*keras*), 'horn'. An English-speaking person may say 'rhinoceros' ('nose-horn', cf. German 'Nashorn'), or use the shortened form 'rhino', but the words equally refer to the same animal.
21. Ap 9, M III 154, Vin I 350, Ja III 488.

The last line in the *Dhammapada* version, however, reads: *eko care mātaṅg’araññe va nāgo*, ‘one should wander alone like an elephant in the elephant-forest’; *khaggavisāṇa* is thus equivalent to the elephant. As Jayawickrama has argued, the comparison in the whole refrain is thus between the solitary wandering of the renunciate and that of an animal (a rhinoceros or elephant), not an object (a horn) (1977, 22–3). Another piece of evidence not so far produced that points in the same direction is found in the *Apadāna* (13 – v.52), in a stanza that follows the rhinoceros stanzas, and describes the *pacceka-buddhas*:

<i>mahantadhammā bahudhammakaṇyā</i>	They are great, with large Dharma-bodies,
<i>cittissarā sabbadukkhoghatiṇṇā</i>	lords of mind, who have crossed the flood of all pain,
<i>udaggacittā paramatthadassī</i>	minds exalted, seeing the ultimate,
<i>sīhopamā khaggavisāṇakappā</i>	they are like lions, they are like <i>khaggavisāṇas</i> .

The comparison of *pacceka-buddhas* with lions and with *khaggavisāṇas* again implies that the latter are animals and not things. These points do not of course prove that *khaggavisāṇa* does not mean ‘horn of the rhinoceros’, but only that, given this usage, we would certainly need some strong evidence to suppose that *khaggavisāṇa* does not mean ‘rhinoceros’.

Secondly, we should note that Prof. Norman’s interpretation of *khaggavisāṇa* as ‘horn of the rhinoceros’ implies that we must interpret *khaggavisāṇakappo* in the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* as qualifying only the word *eko*, alone, and not the verb *care*, since the horn may be *eko*, but it cannot wander. Norman concludes, ‘I think there is no problem if we translate: “Let him wander all by himself (*eko adutyo*) having a resemblance to the rhinoceros horn, which is also *eko adutyo*”’ (1996, 139). That is to say, that Norman’s interpretation requires us to think of the grammar of the refrain as:

One should wander alone, as the horn of the rhinoceros is alone.

Rather than as:

One should wander alone, as the rhinoceros wanders alone.

While Norman’s interpretation is perfectly intelligible and grammatically possible, it implies that the concept of being solitary in the phrase *eko care* could be separated from the concept of wandering. This implication, however, is hard to reconcile with the way ‘solitary wandering’, *ekacariyā*, appears as a unitary concept in Buddhist poetry. For instance, in the *Sutta-nipāta* we read of *sīhaṇ v’ekacaram nāgam*, ‘the nāga [Buddha] who wanders alone like a lion’ (166), and *ekam carantam muniṁ*, ‘the muni [Buddha] who wanders alone’ (213).<sup>22</sup> Whether the adjective (*eko*) and the verbal construction (*cariyā*) are compounded or not,

22. See also e.g. Sn 821 *muni ... idha ekacariyam dalhaṇ kaiyirā*, ‘a muni should make his solitary wandering firm’, Dhp 37 *ekacaram*, ‘wandering alone’ (of the mind), Dhp 61 *ekacariyā*, ‘solitary wandering’, Dhp 305 *ekāsanam ekaseyyam* | *eko caram atandito | eko damayam attānam vanante ramito siyā*, ‘one who sits alone, sleeps alone, wanders alone, strenuous, who subdues himself alone, might delight in the forest’, Dhp 329 *eko care mātaṅgaraññe va nāgo*, ‘one should wander alone like an elephant in the mātaṅga forest’, Dhp 330 *eko care na ca pāpāni kaiyirā*, *apposukko mātaṅgarañña va nāgo*, ‘one should wander alone, one should not do evil, as unconcerned as an elephant in the mātaṅga forest’, Ud 3.9 *ekacaro sa bhikkhu*, ‘he is a bhikkhu, who wanders

the concept denoted is the same. A nice example is from the *Mahāvastu*: a seer called Kāśyapa had a child, and he, ‘Remembering the saying, “the one-horned beast wanders all alone”, the seer gave the child the name Ekaśrṅga’ (*ekacaram śrṅgakam jātanti tena ṛṣṇā ekaśrṅgo ti nāmaṇ kṛtam* III 144).<sup>23</sup> Given these examples of the unitary concept of solitary-wandering in Buddhist poetry, it seems most likely that a reader of the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* would understand it to mean ‘one should wander alone, as the *khaggavisāṇa* wanders alone’. In which case, *khaggavisāṇa* must mean rhinoceros. The fact that rhinoceroses do indeed wander alone makes this reading rather difficult to resist, unless there is some compelling evidence that it must have been understood differently.<sup>24</sup>

### Evidence from the Jain tradition

Let us now examine the reasons Prof. Norman believes *khaggavisāṇa* is a *tatpuruṣa* meaning ‘horn of the rhinoceros’, and not a *bahuṛihi* meaning ‘rhinoceros’. Firstly, he cites a Jain parallel to the *khaggavisāṇa* refrain. Among a list of praiseworthy qualities of the Jain founder, Mahāvira, found in the *Jinacaritra* is (in Prakrit) *khaggi-visāṇam* *va ega-jāe*, translated by Jacobi, ‘he was single and alone like the horn of a rhinoceros’.<sup>25</sup> As Norman says, the grammatical form of *khaggi-visāṇam* is neuter singular, and therefore does not allow the compound to be analysed as a *bahuṛihi*, which would agree with the masculine subject of the sentence, indicated by *jāe*. As Prof. Norman writes, ‘this effectively proves the point’ – that *khaggavisāṇa* is a *tatpuruṣa* meaning ‘horn of the rhinoceros’ (1996, 139).

Two factors, however, cast doubt on this point. First, if the Pāli expression *khaggavisāṇa* can be considered a non-compounded expression denoting ‘rhinoceros’, having a neuter gender, then the Prakrit *khaggi-visāṇam* might similarly be considered a neuter expression meaning ‘rhinoceros’. Second, the context of the epithet *khaggi-visāṇam* is a series of comparisons with animals: in Jacobi’s translation, ‘his senses were well protected like those of a tortoise; he was single and alone like the [khaggi-visāṇam]; he was free like a bird; he was always waking like the fabulous bird Bhārunda, valorous like an elephant, strong like a bull, difficult to attack like a lion’ (1879, 62). This rather suggests that *khaggi-visāṇam* refers to the animal rather than to its horn. Collette Caillat makes the further point that the prose passage in the *Jinacaritra* is followed by a verse summary which states, *vihage khagge ya bhārūṇde* (‘a bird, a rhinoceros, and Bhārūṇda’, in Jacobi’s translation), which again suggests that the comparison is with the animal (2003, 38 n.580).<sup>26</sup> The matter is of course far from certain, but the points made by Caillat do raise doubts about the degree to which the Jain parallel to the Pāli refrain *eko*

alone’, Mil 105 *paccekabuddhā ... ekacarino khaggavisāṇakappā*, ‘solitary buddhas who wander alone like the *khaggavisāṇa*’.

23. Trans. Jones (1956, 140). Jones remarks (n.3) ‘the horned beast is here taken to denote the Indian one-horned rhinoceros’. I owe this reference to Wiltshire 1990, p.50 n.26.
24. We should note also that, according to MW, p.227, *ekacara* can mean ‘rhinoceros’.
25. Norman (1996, 139) citing Jacobi (1879, 62), *Jinacarita* §118. The phrase is also found in the *Aupapātikasūtra*, Leumann (1883, §27), cited in Bautze, (1985, 414, n.21).
26. See also p.46, n.90. Caillat also argues that Pāli *kappa* in *khaggavisāṇakappo* might be taken to retain a more substantive sense, following Jain testimony concerning ascetics who follow the ‘rule’ (*kalpa*) of Mahāvira which includes solitary wandering. Hence we might translate ‘following the habits of the rhinoceros’ (p.38).

care khaggavisāṇakappo allow us to conclude that *khaggavisāṇa* must originally have meant ‘horn of the rhinoceros’ rather than ‘rhinoceros’.

### Interpretations in the *Niddesa* and commentaries

Secondly, Prof. Norman’s translation of *khaggavisāṇa* as ‘horn of the rhinoceros’ relies especially, as he tells us, upon the *Cullaniddesa* and the later commentaries, since these works unambiguously explain the compound as a *tatpuruṣa* (1996, 137). The *Niddesa* comments on *khaggavisāṇakappo* like this:

yathā khaggassa nāma visāṇam ekam hoti adutiyam, evam eva paccekasambuddho tak-  
kappo tasadiso tappaṭibhāgo. (Nidd. II 129)

Which Prof. Norman translates as follows:

As the horn of the rhinoceros is single, solitary, so the *pratyekabuddha* is like that, resembling that, similar to that. (1996, 137)

The *Paramatthajotikā*, the later commentary on the *Sutta-nipāta*, explains *khaggavisāṇakappo* in a different way to the *Niddesa*. It says: *ettha khaggavisāṇam nāma khaggamigasingam* (Pj II 65), which Norman translates: ‘Here the horn of the rhinoceros means the horn of the animal [called] rhinoceros’ (1996, 137). This is of course clear evidence that the later commentators also understood the word *khaggavisāṇa* as a *tatpuruṣa*. The *Paramatthajotikā* clearly does not analyse *khaggavisāṇa* as a *bahuṛīhi*, since *khagga* in *khaggamigasinga* cannot be taken to mean ‘sword’.

There is one exception to this commentarial line of interpretation. The commentary on the *Apadāna* uniquely explains *khaggavisāṇakappo* as a *bahuṛīhi* (Ap-a 203): *khaggam visāṇam yassa migassa so'yan migo khaggavisāṇo*, ‘the animal whose horn is a sword is the “sword as horn”, that is, the rhinoceros’ (tr. Norman 1996, 139). This however is less of an exception than it first looks, since the *Apadāna* commentary also reproduces the analyses of *khaggavisāṇa* as a *tatpuruṣa* given in the *Niddesa* and the *Paramatthajotikā*.<sup>27</sup> Its explanation of *khaggavisāṇa* as a *bahuṛīhi*, taken in conjunction with its reproductions of the explanation of the compound as a *tatpuruṣa*, may be an attempt to explain how this word *khagga*, which means ‘sword’, can also mean ‘rhinoceros’,<sup>28</sup> for it goes on to say: *khaggavisāṇakappā khaggavisāṇamigasingasadisā gaṇasāṅgaṇikābhāvenā ti attho* (Ap-a 204). Prof. Norman translates: ‘Like the *khaggavisāṇa* means like the horn of the animal [called] *khaggavisāṇa*, because of the absence of communication with a group’ (1996, 140). The idea of the ‘horn of the animal [called] *khaggavisāṇa*’ is, however, very strange.

There is therefore no doubt that the *Niddesa*, the earliest commentary on the rhinoceros stanzas, as well as later commentaries, analyses *khaggavisāṇa* as a *tatpuruṣa*. There is nevertheless room for some doubt about what exactly the *Niddesa* intends with its analysis of *khaggavisāṇa*. Such doubt has been raised by Prof. J.C. Wright. He notes that the *Niddesa* continues its comments on the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* by explaining the meaning of *-kappa*, and then con-

27. Ap-a p.133 reproduces the commentary on *khaggavisāṇakappo* from the *Niddesa*, and Ap-a p.153 reproduces that at Pj II p.65.

28. I owe this observation to Margaret Cone.

cluding: *eko adutiyo muttabandhano sammā loke carati*, 'single, solitary, he wanders properly in the world, freed from ties'. With this in mind, Wright comments on the grammar of the *Niddesa* passage as follows:

It is an interesting attestation of the correlation of *tat-* in the posterior clause [i.e. in *takkappo*] with the genitive *khaggassa* as the logical subject of the prior clause, for it is not obvious how the horn could share with the individual ... the quality of lack of encumbrance [i.e. *muttabandhano*] ... The *Niddesa* can be attempting to combine the text's rational meaning with its explanation of the word *khaggavisāna* 'rhinoceros' as 'one-horned *khagga*', hence 'he should be minimally encumbered like the one-horned rhinoceros' (2001, 4).

If Wright is correct, we should translate the *Niddesa* passage as:

As the horn of the rhinoceros is single, solitary, so the *pratyekabuddha* is like that [one-horned rhinoceros], resembling it, similar to it.

However, it is possible to object that Prof. Wright is reading too much into the *Niddesa* here, and *muttabandhano* in the extract above refers only to the *paccekabuddha*.

Nevertheless, the *Niddesa* does continue to use *khaggavisāna* in such a way that it is natural to suppose it refers to the animal and not just to its horn. An example is its exegesis of the word *nāga* in Sn 53. The original stanza runs:

<i>nāgo va yūthāni vivajjayitva</i>	Like an elephant, forsaking the herds,
<i>sañjātakhandho padumī uṭāro</i>	massively built, spotted, huge,
<i>yathābhīrantam vihare arāññe</i>	might live as it wishes in the forest,
<i>eko care khaggavisānakappo</i>	one should wander alone like the <i>khaggavisāna</i> .

The *Niddesa* (II 64) comments:

*yathā so hatthināgo yūthāni vivajjetvā ... eko va arāñña-vana-majhe ajjhogāhetvā carati*  
*... paccekasambuddho pi gaṇam vajjetvā ... eko care khagga-visāna-kappo arāñña-vana-*  
*patthāni*

Like that elephant forsaking the herds ... like one who wanders alone having plunged into the middle of the forest ... the *pratyekabuddha* also, abandoning the group ... should wander the forest wildernesses alone like the *khaggavisāna*.

It would seem natural to suppose that the *Niddesa* is here comparing the *khaggavisāna* with the *nāga*, and that it takes the concept of *ekacariyā* to have a unitary sense. I would therefore suggest that Prof. Wright's comment on the meaning of the *Niddesa* exegesis of *khaggavisānakappo* is not without some contextual support, and that it is possible that the *Niddesa* compares the *paccekabuddha* not to the horn of the rhinoceros, but to the solitary-wandering animal.

Likewise, there is indirect evidence that, in its commentary on Sn 53, the *Paramatthajotikā* also seems to understand *khaggavisāna* to mean 'rhinoceros' and not its horn. Commenting on the stanza concerning the elephant forsaking the herds, quoted above, it says: *yathā c'esa yūthāni vivajjetvā ekacariyasukhena yathābhīrantam viharam arāññe eko care khaggavisānakappo* (Pj II 103): 'and like that [elephant], forsaking the herd because of the bliss of solitary-wandering, lives as it wishes in the forest, one should wander alone like the *khaggavisāna*'. It is clear

that the commentary understands *ekacariyā* to be a unitary concept, which would seem to imply that it understands *khaggavisāṇa* to mean the solitary-wandering horned rhinoceros and not just its single horn, since the horn can be single but cannot wander, as Prof. Norman himself acknowledges.

Therefore, while the *Niddesa* and the *Paramatthajotikā* certainly take *khaggavisāṇa* as a *tatpuruṣa*, it would appear that the analysis is at odds with the comparison that they suppose the expression *khaggavisāṇakappo* implies. Even the *Apadāna* commentary's discussion of *khaggavisāṇa*, discussed above, admits of this same ambiguity. When we read (in Norman's translation), 'Like the *khaggavisāṇa* means like the horn of the animal [called] *khaggavisāṇa*, because of the absence of communication with a group', it must be said that horns do not communicate with groups, and the absence of such activity would again suggest that *khaggavisāṇa* refers to the uncommunicative animal and not merely to its horn.<sup>29</sup>

To conclude this complex discussion of the commentarial analysis of *khaggavisāṇa*: while there is no doubt that the commentaries treat the compound as a *tatpuruṣa* meaning 'horn of the rhinoceros', they also seem to treat the expression as if it refers to the animal and not merely its horn. While the opinion of the *Niddesa* certainly gives us the earliest analysis of *khaggavisāṇa*, it does not seem to me entirely certain that even the *Niddesa* supposes that the expression refers to the horn of the rhinoceros and not to the animal itself.

### Conclusion

I have presented evidence to cast doubt on Prof. Norman's certainty that the ambiguous compound *khaggavisāṇa* is a *tatpuruṣa* meaning 'horn of the rhinoceros'. The facts about rhinoceroses would suggest the very opposite; evidence from the Jain tradition is not compelling; and the evidence of the earliest commentary is not altogether convincing. The compound *khaggavisāṇa* therefore remains ambiguous. Richard Salomon, discussing this ambiguity, concludes positively:

the ambiguity [of *khaggavisāṇa*] may not be the result of a philological problem; rather, the expression can be seen as a doubly meaningful simile. Perhaps it was so intended by its original composer, who, if this is correct, cleverly took advantage of the natural fact that the Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) is 'alone' (*eko*) in two respects as a solitary beast ... and as having an unusual single horn. (2000, 13)

Salomon, however, did not consider the possibility that *khaggavisāṇa* is a single expression meaning 'rhinoceros', as suggested by Lüders and Wright, based on the work of Kuiper and Mayrhofer. While this possibility remains a matter of speculation, if it were actually the case, it would strengthen Salomon's positive conclusion, since it need not be supposed that the original composer relied on a śleṣa or pun, which might well have been obscure to the original audience. If *khaggavisāṇa* is a single expression meaning 'rhinoceros' as well as a compound meaning 'horn of the rhinoceros', the creative ambiguity of the expression would work without recourse to the sophistication of punning. To return finally to the question of translation, if the expression *khaggavisāṇa* is ambiguous, and was intended perhaps deliberately to be so, it is therefore most elegant, as well as

29. Indeed, taking *khaggavisāṇa* to mean the animal, we might prefer to translate *ganasaṅganikābhāvenā* not as 'because of the absence of communication with a group' (Norman), but as 'because of not being in contact with the crowd'.

not incorrect, to translate it as 'rhinoceros'. A footnote indicating the ambiguity of the expression, and the consequent possibility of translating it 'horn of the rhinoceros', would complete the task of translation, to the satisfaction of both philologists and poets.

I will conclude with a tentative suggestion concerning the wider implications of understanding *khaggavisāṇa* to mean 'rhinoceros' as well as 'horn of the rhinoceros'. If we were to suppose that *khaggavisāṇa* meant only 'horn of the rhinoceros', then the rhinoceros stanzas as a whole would appear to recommend a form of solitude comparable to the solitary state of the rhinoceros' horn, that is, an absolute form of solitude. If, however, we suppose that *khaggavisāṇa* means 'rhinoceros' (as well as 'horn of the rhinoceros'), then the stanzas recommend a form of solitude comparable to the solitary lifestyle of the animal. This form of solitude is not absolute, but relative, since rhinoceroses do in fact congregate occasionally to wallow and graze. If we were to understand the refrain *eko care khaggavisāṇakappo* to mean 'one should wander solitary as a rhinoceros horn', and therefore the stanzas to be recommending absolute solitude, then it would be difficult to reconcile such a recommendation with the teaching of the Buddha in the *Nikāyas*, which recommends a monastic lifestyle involving participation in community life and spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa mittatā*). However, if we understand the refrain to mean 'one should wander solitary as a rhinoceros', and the stanzas to be recommending a relative solitude, punctuated by meaningful interactions with fellow renunciates, then the discourse no longer appears to recommend a lifestyle at odds with that which was taught by the Buddha. After all, considering that we have versions of the *Khaggavisāṇa-sutta* in Pāli, Sanskrit and Gāndhārī languages, it was evidently popular among monastic reciters, who did not of course live in solitude. This popularity is best explained by supposing that those reciters understood the discourse to be recommending a form of solitude which they themselves could practise, at least occasionally on retreat. Nevertheless, it must be said that the attribution from early times of the rhinoceros stanzas to the *paccekabuddhas*, evident in the *Mahāvastu* as well as in the *Apadāna* and *Cūlaniddesa*, suggests that the solitary lifestyle recommended by the stanzas seemed to the early Buddhists not to be an ideal to which they could practically aspire. However, the topic of the reception of the rhinoceros stanzas in early Buddhism deserves a fuller account than is possible here.

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### Abbreviations

Abh	<i>Abhidhānappadīpika</i> (Subhūti, 1900)
Ap	<i>Apadāna</i> (Lilley, 1925–27)

Ap-a	<i>Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā</i> ( <i>Apadāna</i> commentary) (Godakumbura, 1954)
BHSD	<i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary</i> (Edgerton, 1953)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i> (von Hinüber and Norman, 1994)
DOP I	<i>Dictionary of Pāli</i> , vol.1 (Cone, 2001)
Ja	<i>Jātaka</i> with its commentary (Fausbøll, 1877-96)
M	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i> (Trenckner & Chalmers, 1887-1902)
Mil	<i>Milindapañho</i> (Trenckner, 1880)
Mvu	<i>Mahāvastu</i> (Senart, 1897).
MW	<i>A Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i> (Monier-Williams, 1899).
Nidd II	<i>Cullaniddesa</i> (commentary on <i>Pārāyanavagga</i> and <i>Khaggavisāṇa-sutta</i> ) (Stede, 1916)
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i> ( <i>Sutta-nipāta</i> commentary) (Smith, 1916-18)
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i> (Andersen & Smith, 1913)
Sv	<i>Sumārgalavilāsinī</i> ( <i>Dīgha-nikāya</i> commentary) (Rhys Davids & Carpenter, 1886-1932)
Ud	<i>Udāna</i> (Steinthal, 1885)
Vin	<i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i> (Oldenberg, 1879-83)

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