

Englische Zusammenfassung (abstract)

This book is a slightly modified version of my master's thesis submitted in October 2009 at the Department of Classical Indology, South Asia Institute, Ruprecht Karl University Heidelberg, written under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Axel Michaels and Dr. Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi.

Nāmarūpa (literally “name and form”) plays an important role in the Upaniṣads, where it refers to “individuality” on the one hand and “empirical reality”¹ on the other; the latter being characterized by individuality and diversity. In Buddhism, *nāmarūpa* is known as one link within the formula of origination in dependence (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and is commonly understood as an individual consisting of the five groups (*khandhas*). Whereas the various meanings of *rūpa* as “(visible) form” or “body” were preserved, *nāma*² was reinterpreted as “mind,” and thus equated with the non-material *khandhas* (*vedanā* “feeling,” *saññā* “ideation,” *saṅkhāras* “impulses,” and *viññāṇa* “perception”).³ Although some authors have attempted to clarify the connection between *nāmarūpa* in the Upaniṣads and the Pali Canon, they all reach very different conclusions. For instance, Wayman⁴ and Hamilton⁵ interpret the Buddhist *nāmarūpa* as a person, whilst Reat⁶ and Bucknell⁷ regard it as a designation of the entire (perceptible) world. This book explores the connection between the pre-Buddhist *nāmarūpa* and its Buddhist interpretation, and examines the plausibility of the explanations advanced by these authors.

The first part deals with the passages related to *nāmarūpa* in the

¹ Deussen 1963: 909.

² In this book, *nāma* refers to the term in Buddhist texts (both in Sanskrit and Pali).

³ The translation of the *khandhas*, with the exception of *viññāṇa*, follows Vetter 2000.

⁴ Wayman [1982] 1997.

⁵ Hamilton 1996 and 2000.

⁶ Reat 1987 and 1996.

⁷ Bucknell 1999.

Vedic texts⁸ and the Upaniṣads. Chapters 1.1 and 1.2 discuss the meaning of *nāman* and *rūpa* as independent terms in the Vedic texts. Chapter 1.3 offers an analysis of the text passages that can be regarded as predecessors of *nāmarūpa*, whereas chapters 1.4 and 1.5 analyse those where *nāmarūpa* actually occurs. Chapter 1.6 briefly presents significant issues raised in scholarship regarding the relationship between Buddhism and the Upaniṣads. The second part is concerned with *nāmarūpa* in the Pali Canon. It begins with a brief survey of the various scholarly approaches to the *paṭicca-samuppāda* and the attested variants of the formula in the Pali Canon (ch. 2.1). Chapters 2.2 to 2.5 provide a detailed analysis of the relevant passages in the Canon concerning *nāmarūpa*, focusing on those where *nāmarūpa* occurs in a context different from the *paṭticcasamuppāda*.

The first part of this book shows that in the Vedic texts *nāman* and *rūpa* are neither opposites nor counterparts and actually overlap. It is therefore inaccurate to assume that they are always to be understood in terms of *name* (*nāman*) and *named* (*rūpa*) or to treat *nāman* as a synonym of “language.” Moreover, a separate analysis of the usage of these words reveals that we are not dealing with homogeneous notions, since *nāman* and *rūpa* are highly polysemous. Accordingly, the meaning of *nāmarūpa* and its “predecessors” is far from being univocal. In the light of this ambiguity, I argue that speaking of an “Upaniṣadic” *nāmarūpa* is of little assistance when exploring how the meaning of the term has changed over time.

The aim of the second part is not to question the viability of interpreting *nāmarūpa* as the five or four (if *viññāṇa* is excluded) non-material *khandhas*, but to explore other possible interpretations that may antedate the systematization of the Abhidharma. In so doing, I follow Frauwallner,⁹ Schmithausen,¹⁰ Cox,¹¹ and Schul-

⁸ Faute de mieux, the term “Vedic texts” excludes here the Upaniṣads.

⁹ Frauwallner [1956] 1994.

¹⁰ Schmithausen 2000.

¹¹ Cox 1993.

man,¹² who suggest that the interpretation of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* as referring to the world is a later development, and argue that *nāmarūpa*, as a link of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, initially referred to a person but still did not stand for the *khandhas*. Indeed, the fact that *nāmarūpa* occurs in the oldest parts of the Pali Canon – e.g. in the *Pārāyana* and the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*, and in the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Samyuttanikāya* – while the five *khandhas* are rarely mentioned in the *Nikāyas* suggests that *nāmarūpa* was incorporated into the Canon before the *khandha*-theory and the twelve-membered *paṭiccasamuppāda* achieved their final form. Chapter 2.2 therefore deals with *nāmarūpa* and the *khandhas*, relating them to another understanding of the human being as consisting of *viññāṇa* and *kāya*, which is also found in the Canon and had been already pointed out by C.A.F. Rhys Davids,¹³ Falk,¹⁴ and Harvey.¹⁵ The variants of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* relevant to *nāmarūpa* – such as the ten- and the nine-membered formulas – are analysed in chapters 2.3 and 2.4, with particular emphasis on the various explanations of the relationship between *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa*. Lastly, chapter 2.5 focuses on the occurrences of *nāmarūpa* where no mention to the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is made. Since, in its most general sense, *nāmarūpa* stands for all things having name and form, it is possible to interpret it simultaneously as designating both the world and the sub-category “person” without creating contradictions. For this reason, I preferred to leave the question of whether *nāmarūpa* initially referred to the world or to an individual aside, and focused instead on a more relevant, though generally neglected, distinction, namely between what I called a *subjective* and an *objective nāmarūpa*; in other words, between one’s own *nāmarūpa*, “my name and my appearance/body,” and the *nāmarūpa* “outside” (*bahiddhā*), i.e. the object(s) of perception. The objective *nāmarūpa* implies reading *nāma* as “designation,” while in the subjective one *nāma* is primarily, though not exclu-

¹² Schulman 2008.

¹³ Rhys Davids 1937.

¹⁴ Falk 1943.

¹⁵ Harvey 1981.

sively, a “proper name.” A subjective *nāmarūpa* can thus also be interpreted as identity (and not “mere” individuality) – we consider not only our bodies but also our names an essential part of us and actually identify with them. Yet, unlike Hamilton¹⁶ I understand “name” as a proper name and not as an abstract identity based on concepts.

The book concludes that assuming the presence of a “pre-Buddhist” *nāmarūpa* in the earliest portions of the Pali Canon does not require that *nāma* be interpreted as an abstract concept. In Vedic texts, *nāman* is far from being a conventional sign; on the contrary *name* and *named* are quite often considered identical. In addition to this conception, in Vedic texts and Upaniṣads names appear as a subtle substance, as an essential constituent of a person. I therefore see no reason to dismiss these notions of *nāman*. Indeed, the fact that *nāma* could have been easily identified with the core of a person or with a component subsisting after death may explain why its reinterpretation became necessary. For this reason, I consider it more plausible to interpret *nāma* as proper name in the passages where *nāmarūpa* means nothing more than a “living body” – such as those addressed by Schmithausen¹⁷ and Langer,¹⁸ in which the conception and development of the embryo in the womb are described. *Nāmarūpa* may therefore have been used to refer to a body that has a proper name, i.e. a person. Since the narrow meaning of *nāma* still allowed its identification with the core or the essence of a person, it was finally reinterpreted and split into different constituents, first into *vedanā*, *saññā*, *cetanā* “volition,” *phassa* and *manasikāra* “attention,” and subsequently into the five *khandhas*: *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāras* and *viññāṇa*. Thus, this reinterpretation of *nāma* mirrors that of *viññāṇa*, in which the older notion of *viññāṇa* as a transmigrating entity¹⁹ was eventually replaced by the sixfold perception.

¹⁶ Hamilton 1996 and 2000.

¹⁷ Schmithausen 2000.

¹⁸ Langer 2000.

¹⁹ See above pp. 73f.