

The *muṇḍa*/*muṇḍaka* crux: What does the word mean?

Bryan Levman

Abstract:

*This article examines previous scholarship on the genealogy of *muṇḍa*/*muṇḍaka* and concludes that it is of non Indo-Aryan origin. The primary meaning of the word is usually taken to mean “bald,” but it also has many additional connotations which do not appear to be connected with this primary meaning. It also occurs as a proper name, the name of an ethnic or tribal group, in place names and in a technical vocabulary associated with agriculture, architecture, chariot and wagon construction, torture, etc. The word *muṇḍa* is cognate with the Puṇḍra tribe of pre-Buddhist India, and possibly with the Mallas, the sub-Himalayan tribe who hosted the Buddha’s funeral. If one takes *muṇḍa*/*muṇḍaka* as an ethnic or tribal cognomen, many of the heretofore-unexplained meanings of the word are explainable, although the precise meaning still eludes us.¹*

University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

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Introduction

The meaning of the word *muṇḍa* and its *-ka* suffixed form *muṇḍaka* is a well-known crux in linguistic and Pāli studies. In addition to its usual meaning of “bald” or “shaved” the word has many other additional denotations and connotations, including “empty,” “bare,” “unadorned,” “cropped,” “cut,” “lopped,” or “stripped,” “without horns,” “low,” or “mean,” “head,” “iron,” “blunt,” and others.²

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It is the name of an Indian king, one of the seven great Indian lakes, the name of a people, tribe or ethnic group, a type of house, a type of spoke in a chariot wheel and a type of window. It is also a kind of torture and is associated with wrestlers, porters, ascetics, prostitutes and others (these latter meanings to be discussed below). It is also (in English) the name of a language group, originally named by Max Müller in the nineteenth century, according to Sylvain Lévi.³ Indeed, the word's polyvalent meanings suggest a complex etymology and history, which so far has been impossible to unravel. This article will examine previous scholarship on *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* and re-examine its meaning in terms of actual use in the Pāli (P) and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) writings.

Earliest Appearance

The word is apparently not Vedic in origin, as its first appearance does not occur until the *Sāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka* (perhaps 5th century B.C.)⁴ where it seems to have the meaning “bald” (*pāṇḍuradarśanām kālīm strīm muktakeśām muṇḍām*, “a pale looking, dark, woman whose hair has been removed, bald,” in 11,4)⁵ and “head,”⁶ used in a pejorative context:

*ṛcām mūrdhānaṃ yajuśām uttamāṅgaṃ
sāmnām śiro 'tharvaṇām muṇḍamuṇḍam |
nādhīte 'dhīte vedam āhus tam ajñam
śiraś chittvā 'sau kurute kabandham || 1 ||*

“He who does not repeat the Veda constantly, - the head of the *ṛc* verses, the highest member of the *yajur* verses, the chief of the *sāman* verses, the principal head of the *atharva* verses – him they call ignorant; having cut off his head, he makes [himself] a headless body.” The word *muṇḍa* does not appear to mean “bald” here; it is being used more as a synecdoche for “head”, as is clear from the parallel structure of *mūrdhānaṃ* (head)...*uttamāṅgaṃ* (uppermost limb)...*śiro* (head) and *muṇḍamuṇḍam*. The repetition of the word appears to be an intensifying *āmreḍita*.⁷ In Pāṇini's *Aṣṭadhyāyī* (3.01.21) the word also occurs with the meaning “bald”.

Previous Academic Work

Oskar von Hinüber calls the word *muṇḍa* a *terminus technicus* (technical term) meaning “bald shaven”, that is evidence of an old, eastern, non-Indo

Germanic ascetic language, which has found its way into the Middle Indic texts.⁸

Most scholars have agreed with von Hinüber's conclusion that *muṇḍa* is non Indo-European (IE) in origin. Jean Przyluski derived it from the Santali word *muṇḍla* or *muṇḍra* (having the hair on the head shaved or closely cropped; to crop the hair, to shave the head); he notes how the first letter *m-* alternates with the labial *b-* in other Austro-Asiatic (AA) languages and the interchange of the vowels *-a-* and *-u-* in Malay (Malay *būtaḥ=bantun*, "shaved"), which also occurs in IA (Skt. *bhāṇḍilah*, "barber," P *bhandu* = P, Skt. *muṇḍa*, "bald, shaved").⁹ Thomas Burrow also derives *muṇḍa* from various Dravidian words and connects it with Skt. *baṇḍa*, (maimed, defective, crippled) since initial *m-* and *v-* are often interchangeable in Dravidian.¹⁰ The scholar who has probably done the most research on the word is Franciscus B. J. Kuiper who calls *muṇḍa* and related words, "the most difficult word group;"¹¹ he derives *muṇḍa* from the Proto-Munda language families, while acknowledging that a Dravidian origin is not disprovable. We shall return to Kuiper's work later in this article.

Several attempts have also been made to derive *muṇḍa* from within the IE tradition, but they are not convincing. Paul Thieme derives it from the hypothetical form **mr̥m̥ste* > **maṇḍe* (to scrub, clean) > *muṇḍa*;¹² Julius Pokorny from a hypothetical form **mel-d-* > Skt. *mardati*, *mṛdnāti* (to wipe, press, squeeze, crush);¹³ Paul Tedesco derives it from the Skt. word *vṛddha* (< *vardh*, "to cut");¹⁴ and Giotto Canevascini connects it with the Latin word *mundus*, (round ditch), with "spontaneous retroflexion" of *-nd-* > *-ṇḍ-*.¹⁵ But one of the great difficulties of an IE derivation is this very issue of retroflexion, which can not be so easily explained, i. e. spontaneous retroflexion – retroflexion in the absence of a phonetically conditioned environment – does not appear to be an IE phenomenon, but occurs as a result of borrowing. In the 1920's Alfred Woolner noted the existence of Vedic words with medial cerebrals (including *muṇḍa*) for which there was no Aryan derivation possible and suggests they may well be Austric in origin.¹⁶ Since then a lot of work has been done on retroflexion by Murray Emeneau, Franciscus Kuiper and Madhav Deshpande, who have all concluded that retroflexion is not an IE or IA phenomenon, but an import from Dravidian or Munda by areal diffusion.¹⁷ The word *muṇḍa* is Dravidian or Munda¹⁸ (AA) in origin.

A Note on *muṇḍa*/*muṇḍaka*

The word *muṇḍaka* is identical to the word *muṇḍa* with the addition of a *kṛt* –*ka* suffix which is usually used to denote an agent, i. e. a person who makes [another] *muṇḍa*, or a “barber.” However, *muṇḍaka* never means “barber” in Pāli, but simply “one who has been shaved,” either as a noun or an adjective – i. e. it is basically identical with the word *muṇḍa*. The –*ka* suffix can have a diminutive or pejorative connotation (and indeed this is sometimes the case), but not always so.¹⁹

Earliest Middle Indic Appearance

The earliest Middle Indic (MI) appearance of the word is in the *Sutta Nipāta* (*Sn*), a work generally considered to be amongst the oldest of Buddhist writings, so old that the commentary on it, the *Niddesa*, is also part of the canon; some of the *gāthās* may even go back to sayings of the Buddha himself.²⁰ The *Sn* reflects a very early time, before the *Saṅgha* had been established, when the Buddha is often portrayed as a peripatetic monk, wandering alone, without monks accompanying him, begging for alms. In the *Vasalasutta*, the Buddha enters Sāvattihī to beg one morning. There a brahman, Aggikabhāradvāja was performing a sacrifice when he saw the Buddha approaching from afar and said, *tatreva, muṇḍaka; tatreva, samaṇaka; tatreva, vasalaka, tiṭṭhāhi*, “Stop there, shaveling; stop there, wretched ascetic, stop there, outcaste.”²¹ Apparently the mere presence of a *muṇḍaka* – here translated as a “shaveling” – was enough to vitiate the power of a sacrifice. The Buddha then goes on to explain to Aggikabhāradvāja what a true outcaste is, concluding *na jaccā vasala hoti na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo* (“not by birth does one become an outcaste, not by birth does one become a brahman”),²² but by one’s actions. Aggikabhāradvāja is convinced and goes to the Buddha for refuge. In this sutta the *muṇḍaka* is clearly associated with the *samaṇaka*, an ascetic from an indigenous renunciant tradition different than and opposed to the *brāhmaṇas* who followed Vedic sacrificial rules.²³ The Pāli canon’s omnipresent compound *samaṇabrāhmaṇa* (“ascetic and brahman”) attests to the existence of these two religious and cultural traditions in ancient India whose “opposition was eternal” like that of the snake and the mongoose, as the grammarian Patañjali pointed out (commenting on Panīni).²⁴

What does the word *muṇḍaka* mean here? Perhaps, “shaveling” as is usually translated, but as the text itself tells us, *muṇḍaka* is also a

samaṇaka, an “ascetic,” and a *vasalaka*, an “outcaste.” This might mean someone not part of the Vedic caste system (i. e. a “tribal”), but could also simply mean a low, mean, wicked or contemptible person. In the commentary, Buddhaghosa calls the *muṇḍaka kāḷakaṇṇī* (“black-eared”, perhaps a reference to the darkness of his skin), *asuddho* (“impure, because he does not honour the gods and brahmans”) and *ucchiṭṭha* (“vile, rejected, because as an ascetic, he is not worthy of coming to this place”).²⁵

A similar situation is related in the *Sundarikabhāradvājasutta*, also in the *Sn*. Here a brahman who has performed the *aggihutta* sacrifice looked around for someone to share the remains of the sacrifice. He saw the Buddha seated at the foot of a tree with his cloak over his head and he went up to him to offer him the food. The Buddha uncovered his head and the brahman, thinking *muṇḍo ayaṃ bhavaṃ, muṇḍako ayaṃ bhavan ti* (“The venerable one is shaven, the venerable one is a *muṇḍako*”)²⁶ wanted to turn back, but then the thought occurred to him that some brahmans are shaven as well (*muṇḍāpi hi idhekacce brāhmaṇā bhavanti*) so he approaches the Buddha and asks his descent, i. e. whether he is a *brāhmaṇa* or a *samaṇaka*. The Buddha then instructs Sundarikabhāradvāja that the sacrificial cake is merited by conduct, not by caste and therefore in a repeated refrain says *Tathāgato arahati pūraḷāsaṃ*, “A Tathāgata deserves the sacrificial cake.”²⁷

Again, it is not clear exactly what *muṇḍako* means, for the brahman, seems to be contrasting *muṇḍa* as “bald” with *muṇḍaka* which has more of a pejorative meaning. Some brahmans were completely bald too, yet they were apparently not *muṇḍakas*. – the former (brahmans) retained a small top-knot (*cūḍā* or *śikhā*) while the latter didn’t: However we know that for some *brāhmaṇas* who underwent tonsure, this was not always the case²⁸ and, as the commentator confirms this;²⁹ many brahmans were completely bald, with no top-knot; they were *muṇḍas*, but not *muṇḍakas*. The *muṇḍakas* were associated with the non-brahmanical, ascetic (*samaṇa*) tradition; they were outcastes (*vasalas*), apparently not part of the IA caste system.

Tribal Group?

There is one case in the Pāli canon where the word *muṇḍaka* clearly refers to an ethnic tribal group:

*Andhakā Muṇḍakā sabbe Kolakā sānuvindakā
ārā va Cīnaraṭṭhā ca āgacchanti mamaṃ gharajaṃ.*³⁰

One possible translation is, “The Andhakas, the Muṇḍakas [or the blind Muṇḍakas], the Kolakas and those who know them well, and those from afar, from the Kingdom of China come to my house.”³¹ The *Apadāna* is probably one of the latest books in the canon. Nor is the reading necessarily very reliable, considering all the variants: *Munakā* for *muṇḍakā*, several variants for *sānuvindakā* and several for *Cīnaraṭṭhā*. However, the gist of the verse is clear and *muṇḍaka*, at least in this instance refers to a tribal group. There are many other instances in the Pāli writings where *muṇḍaka* as “tribal,” or “outcaste” much better suits the context than *muṇḍaka* as “shaveling.” For example in the *Ambaṭṭhasutta* the brahman Pokkharasāti sends one of his students Ambaṭṭha to put the Buddha to the test. Ambaṭṭha deliberately insults the Buddha and his followers calling them *muṇḍakā samaṇakā ibbhā kaṇhā bandhupādāpaccā* “shaven little ascetics, menials, black scourgings from Brahmā’s foot.”³² The commentary makes the meaning of *muṇḍaka* clear: “the brahmans come from the head of Brahma, the warriors from his chest, the merchants from his navel, the servants from his knee and the ascetics from the back of his feet.”³³ The *muṇḍakā samaṇakās* are the lowest of the low, well below servants in the social order, i.e. on par with the mixed castes and untouchables. This position is also re-iterated in the *Aggaññasutta* from the *Dīgha Nikāya* where Vāsetṭha, questioned by the Buddha as to the brahman’s verbal abuse, repeats the criticisms levelled against the monks, the brahmans claiming that the monks have renounced the highest class and gone over to the inferior class, which are the *muṇḍakas* and *samaṇas*.³⁴

The hostility between the IA immigrants and the indigenous tribal groups is well known. Johannes Bronkhorst has written an impressive monograph on the hostility and differences between the two groups; he identifies *the samaṇas* with the indigenous peoples who lived in “Greater Magadha” (i. e. eastern north India) and practiced a religion and culture completely opposed to the Vedic belief system.³⁵ There is a large body of evidence in both the Vedic and Pāli writings to support this view. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* they are called “eastern demons” (*asurāḥ prācyāḥ*),³⁶ while the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* describes a mythical/historical conflict between the *kṣatriya* sage Viśvāmitra and his sons who are displaced by his decision to adopt the Vedic *ṛṣi* Śunaḥśepa as his first born; those of his sons who refuse to accept his decision, he curses

saying “Your progeny will receive these as their share: the Andhras, the Puṇḍras, the Śabarās, the Pulindas, the Mūtibas. Those living beyond the boundary are many; the descendants of Viśvāmītra are the most numerous of slaves.”³⁷ The Puṇḍras, Śabarās, Pūlindas and Mūtibas bear Munda names, according to Michael Witzel³⁸ and they inhabit the north-eastern, sub-Himalayan and Deccan areas which the IA immigrants are beginning to encroach on at the time of this text.³⁹ The Andhras were also a Deccan tribe, believed to be Dravidian speakers.⁴⁰ Both these texts (the *Śatapatha* and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*) are pre-Buddhist in time.

In the Pāli writings the conflict between the northwestern immigrants and eastern indigenous tribals is symbolized by the common *samaṇabrāhmaṇa* oppositional compound which represented the two opposing religious group of 4th-5th century northern India.⁴¹ A most telling example of this conflict occurs the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the story of the Buddha’s *parinibbāna*. The Buddha was himself from the Sakya tribe, yet for some reason he chooses to die in Kusinārā, which is capital of the Malla tribe. Like the Sakyas, the Mallas were one of the many sub-Himalayan indigenous tribes who were displaced by the Aryan in-migrations. The Mallas want to keep all the Buddha’s relics for themselves, and a war over the relics is only narrowly averted by the brahman Buddhist convert Doṇa. The relics are all divided up amongst seven tribes, with one portion being reserved for King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the only one of the IA *janapadas* (kingdoms) to receive a share; the rest go to the *gaṇa-saṅghas* (tribal “republics”), the type of indigenous polity into which the Buddha was born: the Licchavis of Vesālī; the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu; the Bulayas of Allakappa; the Koliyas of Rāmagāma; the Mallas of Pāva; the Mallas of Kusinārā.

Who are the Mallas who get not one, but two shares of the Buddha’s relics? They are a neighbouring tribe of the Sakyas whose name may well be cognate with the tribal name Muṇḍa. Alfred Woolner was the first to point out the derivation of *-lla-* from *-ṇḍa-*,⁴² which makes its first appearance in Vedic times (e. g. *gaṇḍa* = *galla*, cheek; *kṣudra* = *kulla*, little). The change from *-a-* > *-u-* before or after a labial is also very common.⁴³ Malla=Muṇḍa may explain another curious word in the Pāli *Vinaya*, *muṇḍavaṭṭi*, a term of insult directed against monks wearing a loin cloth.⁴⁴ Buddhaghosa explicates it in two ways: porters for the king and “a workman who is a wrestler (or member of the Malla clan) who, having bound on a loin cloth, wears it.”⁴⁵ In the corresponding Chinese versions of this story, they transliterate the name Malla as 末羅 Mò luó

(PB: mat-la),⁴⁶ or translate it as 力士 *Lìshì* (strong man), which suggests that the definition Malla=wrestler is simply a synecdoche of the eponym.⁴⁷ The first definite appearance of the Muṇḍas as a tribal group appears in the *Mahābhārata* where they are allies of the Kurus in the great war.⁴⁸ Here, in several variant readings, their name is also conflated with the Puṇḍras which points to the intriguing possibility that the early mention of the Puṇḍras in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* as a marginal, outcaste tribe was also referring to the Muṇḍas.⁴⁹ Phonologically the assimilation change from Skt. *-ṇḍra-* > Prakrit *-ṇḍa-* is quite common in MI (e. g. Skt. *paṇḍraka* > Pāli *paṇḍaka*, “eunuch”); dropping of an *-r-* after a *-d-* is attested at least from Aśokan times in the third century B.C. (e. g. *caṃda* < Skt. *candra* in Pillar Edict 7).⁵⁰ However, while the change of initial *p-* > *m-* does not make sense in terms of the IA phonetics, the change of initial onset *p->m-* is quite characteristic of the AA language structure.

Munda phonology

In 1923 Sylvain Lévi reported on this idiosyncrasy of the Munda language, whereby identical pairs and triplets were differentiated only by their first consonant which was extremely variable. He reports on ancient tribes that formed “twinned ethnics” (... *ethniques pour ainsi dire jumelés, parfois même trijumeaux*, “twinned ethnics so to speak, sometimes even triplets”)⁵¹, named Kosala/Tosala, Aṅga/Vaṅga, Kaliṅga/Triliṅga Utkala/Metkala, Pulinda/Kulinda, Uṇḍa/Puṇḍa/Muṇḍa. These tribes lived in the same areas and had the same name except for the change of the first consonant; he suggested that the names referred to the identical tribal group and the variation that occurred was due to the nature of the Munda language.⁵² Kuiper points out that Proto Munda made extensive use of varying initial onset gutturals, dentals and labials, making the words in effect synonyms.⁵³ In a 1948 article he gives extensive examples of word variation, mostly from Santali, a north Munda language group with a strong base in the north-eastern part of present day Jharkhand – just south of the state of Bihar where the Buddha lived and taught in the fifth century B.C.⁵⁴ Examples with a *p->m-* interchange at the beginning of the word include: *maçuk* “to eat up, manage” ~ *pacuk* “to eat up, finish, deceive”; *moṭa* “thick, fat, stout” ~ *poṭea*, *poṭma* “having a protuberant belly” ~ *puṭ puṭu* “swollen, prominent”; *maka moko* “well-developed, fat” *mikō*, *mōkō*, “chubby-cheeked” ~ *pikō pokō* “fat, chubby”; *makre* “wrong, perverse, awry” ~ *pākre* “one having a deformed leg”; *monde*, *mode* “musty, mouldy” ~ *boḍe* “muddy, dirty”, *ponda* “rotten”; etc.⁵⁵

While the interchange of *p* and *m* is not unheard of in IA languages (for example, the change from Skt. *ātma* > Prakrit *ātpa* in Aśoka's Rock Edict 12),⁵⁶ it almost never occurs in the *anlaut* (word-beginning) and is the result of diachronic development; as an Austro-Asiatic language groups trait, onset variation appears to be a synchronic, productive form of derivation. In his 1959 monograph, Pinnow provides a very useful introduction to word formation in these groups, a) through the use of prefixes, infixes and suffixes; b) through root-shortening (the so-called "*rapu'd*" words where for example, Mundari *rapu'd*, "to break" becomes *po:t* in Palauṅ, *pɹt* in Mon and *ra'b* in Kurku; c) through reduplication; and d) through inner transformation and variation with onomatopoeic words, rhyme words and articulatory phrases (*Lautbild*).⁵⁷ Although all the mechanisms which govern change are not clear, individual word variation is extensive: "The variation is contained within certain bounds that roughly speaking requires the preservation of the place of articulation - velar, retroflex/dental and labial. The palatal row can interchange with the velar and retroflex/dentals. Stops change easily to half-vowels (*b-w*), orals to nasals (*b-m*), unvoiced to voiced (*p-b*), unaspirated to aspirated (*p-ph*), stops to laterals or vibrants (*d-l-r*). Very often the change is from oral - nasal to nasal + oral, e. g. *b-m-mb*, the so-called nasalization and pre-nasalization, a phenomenon which is not seldom encountered in other languages, whereas the function of it is always different."⁵⁸ From the individual words secondary forms are created through "inner transformation" (*innere Umbildung*) resulting in dual forms which bring about a "nuancing of meaning" (*zwecks Bedeutungsnuancierung herbeizuführen*). Murray Emeneau called these formations "echo-words", a trait of the South India linguistic area which he believed was inherited from Dravidian or Munda speakers which had the meaning "and the like"; in Munda grammar books today, they are called "expressives".⁵⁹ Although *punḍ(r)a-muṇḍa* never occurs together as a dual form, their phonological relation, especially in terms of Munda phonology is very close. This initial labial consonant variation also manifests in Pāli (*muṇḍa* = *bhandu*, "shaven," page 46 above), probably as a borrowing from Munda, and in Dravidian, where the word occurs in Tamil as *moṭṭai*, "bald, head," as well as *pōṭu*, "baldness, shaven condition;" in Kannaḍa as *moṇḍa* "blunt, maimed, deficient" as well as *bōḷu*, "bald, the state of being shaved, a bare, leafless, treeless state;" and in Telugu as *moṇḍi*, "maimed, amputated, lopped, imperfect, blunt," as well as *bōḍa*, *bōḍi* "bald, bare, hornless, cropt, tuskless."⁶⁰

In trying to explicate the meaning of various Pāli usages of *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka*, we should keep in mind the possibility that the words may also refer to the tribal/clan group, with their (putative) baldness, like the Malla's legendary strength, being merely a synecdochical definition, i.e., the prominence of the part – i.e., baldness – standing for the whole – i.e., the tribe or clan – for such a long period of time that the true etymology of the term was forgotten. The use of the word *muṇḍa* as a toponym (Kaṇṇamuṇḍa, one of the seven great lakes in the Himalayas; Muṇḍa-*nigama*, a market town)⁶¹ and as a proper name (King Muṇḍa, grandson of Ajātasattu; Nagamuṇḍā, a slave woman, mother of Vāsabhakkhattiyā who married Pasenadi, King of Kosala; Mahāmuṇḍa, a Buddhist lay disciple)⁶² suggests a long – even primordial – connection with the geography, history and culture of ancient India. With this in mind, let us return to some other *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* problematica in the Pāli writings.

Pāli usages of *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka*

The words occur about 213 times in the Pāli canon and commentary (*aṭṭhakathā*). Although there are a few instances where the words simply mean “shaven” (as, for example in the *Dhammapada* v. 264, *na muṇḍakena samaṇo...* “Not by tonsure, [does one become] a mendicant”, or in the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* where monks and nuns describe themselves as “shaven”, *muṇḍa*),⁶³ most occurrences of *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* are pejorative. The Buddha, for example, never uses the word himself; in the instances where he does describe himself as “shaven” he uses the word *nivuttakeso* (“whose hair has been removed”)⁶⁴ or *kesamassuṃ ohāretvā* (“having shaved off hair and beard”).⁶⁵ There seems to be some attempt by the commentary to separate *muṇḍa* from *muṇḍaka* as in the example from the *Sundarikabhāradvājasutta* discussed above (page 49); another example of this distinction occurs in the *Ghaṭṭikārasutta* (MN 2 46), where the brahman student Jotipāl replies to Ghaṭṭikāra's suggestion of visiting the Buddha Kassapa with *kiṃ pana tena muṇḍakena samaṇakena diṭṭhenā'ti?* (“What is the use of seeing that bald-pated recluse?”) and the commentator notes that Jotipāl speaks thus because of his immature understanding – It is appropriate to call someone *muṇḍa*, but *muṇḍaka* is a term of abuse.⁶⁶ However there are lots of instances in the writings where *muṇḍa* is used negatively as well, as in the case of a criminal whose head is shaved before being executed;⁶⁷ or bald-headed nuns called prostitutes by a bhikkhu who inadvertently receives the contents of one nun's chamberpot on his head;⁶⁸ and as a descriptor for the dog of Hell whose

ears are sheared (*kaṇṇamuṇḍa*) and who lives by the eponymous lake, in the *Petavatthu* (2, 1218). There are also many cases where it is difficult to tell what the word means, as it seems to have a technical sense which does not relate very closely to the meaning “bald.”

***Muṇḍa* as an agricultural implement**

In the *Nandivīsāla Jātaka* 28, for example, we find the phrase *muṇḍa-rukkha-daṇḍaka* in the technical description of a brahmin harnessing his bull Nandivīsāla (the Buddha as a *bodhisatta* in another life) to one hundred carts:

yugaṃ dhure nicalaṃ bandhitvā ekāya koṭiyā nandivīsālaṃ yojetvā ekaṃ koṭiṃ dhurayottena paliveṭhetvā yugakoṭiṇca akkhapādaṇca nissāya muṇḍarukkhadāṇḍakaṃ datvā tena yottena nicalaṃ bandhitvā ṭhapesi. evaṇhi kate yugaṃ etto vā ito vā na gacchati.

Here translated as “...he fastened the cross-yoke on to the pole; then he put the bull in on one side and made the other fast by fastening a smooth piece of wood from the cross-yoke on to the axletree, so that the yoke was taut and could not skew round either way.”⁶⁹ The compound *muṇḍa-rukkha-daṇḍakaṃ*, “smooth piece of wood,” may also refer to a ploughing and/or transport implement used by the indigenous peoples (a special piece of wood as used by the Muṇḍas to fasten the cross-yoke to the axletree), whose meaning has been lost. Or it might refer to a kind of tree whose wood is being used for this purpose, either the Bengal madder or the East Indian Globe thistle (*Sphaerantus Hirtus*).⁷⁰ If the writer was looking for the concept “smooth” here, why not use one of the commoner Pāli terms (*gaḷita*, *likhita*, *sammaṭṭha*, *saṅha*, etc.) for this meaning?

***Muṇḍa* as a form of torture**

In the *Mahādukkhakkhandhasutta* (MN 13), there is a reference to a special form of torture called a *saṅkhamuṇḍika*, translated as the “polished-shell shave,”⁷¹ which the commentary explicates as follows:

*saṅkhamuṇḍikanti saṅkhamuṇḍakammakāraṇaṃ, taṃ karontā uttaroṭṭhaubhatokaṇṇacūlikagaḷavāṭaparicchedena cammaṃ chinditvā sabbakese ekato gaṇṭhiṃ katvā daṇḍakena vallitvā uppāṭenti, saha kesehi cammaṃ uṭṭhahati. tato sīsakaṭāhaṃ thūlasakkharāhi ghaṃsitvā dhovantā saṅkhavaṇṇaṃ karonti.*⁷²

“*Saṅkhamuṇḍika* is the bodily punishment of the *saṅkha* (shell) *muṇḍa* (“smooth,” “shaved,” or “practiced by the Muṇḍa people”?), those who do this, having cut the skin by clipping round the area from the neck to the top-knot, both ears and the upper lip, tying all the hair together on one side, they twist it around and root it out. With the hair, the skin comes out. Then, having rubbed the skull with gravel and fat, washing it, they give it the appearance of a conch shell.” The word *muṇḍa* could mean “bald” or “shaved” in this context; but it might equally refer to an ancient form of torture practiced by one of the indigenous peoples (or both meanings might be applicable).

***Muṇḍa* as a type of seat**

There is also such a thing as a *muṇḍapīṭha*, a “*muṇḍa*-seat.” What is this? In the *Sekkhassutta* (MN 53), the Sakyans are preparing a new assembly hall for its inauguration by the Buddha. They “prepared seats” (*āsanāni paññāpetvā*) which the commentary explicates as follows:

*pacchimabhittiṃ nissāya bhikkhusaṅghassa pallaṅkapīṭha-
apassayapīṭha-muṇḍapīṭhāni paññāpetvā upari
setapaccattharaṇehi paccattharāpetvā pācīnabhittiṃ nissāya attano
attano mahāpiṭṭhikakojavake paññāpetvā haṃsalomādipūritāni
upadhānāni thapāpesuṃ...*⁷³

“...near the western wall he prepared a cross-legged seat, a bolster seat and a *muṇḍa* seat for the bhikkhu *Saṅgha*, above which he spread out a white canopy; near the eastern wall for each of them they prepared a high-backed *kojavaka* seat and they caused pillows filled with swan’s down to be placed (on them)...” What is a *muṇḍa* seat? It could mean “bare,” or “unadorned,” but not if the swan’s down pillows are placed on them (and it is not clear exactly where these are placed, whether just on the Sakyans’ seats or on the monks’ seats as well). The compound *kojavaka* (lit: “armour-wolf”) is apparently a technical term for the seat on an elephant’s back;⁷⁴ perhaps *muṇḍapīṭha* refers to a type of seat used/manufactured by one of the tribal/ethnic groups?

***Muṇḍa* as an architectural term, circumvallation**

In the *Ambalaṭṭhikārāhulovādasutta* (MN 61) the Buddha describes the behaviour of a royal elephant who “does his work” (*kammaṃ karoti*); this phrase is further explained in the commentary:

*kammaṃ karotīti āgatāgate pavaṭṭento ghāteṭi. puratthimakāyādīsu pana puratthimakāyena tāva paṭisenāya phalakakoṭṭhakamuṇḍapākārādayo pāteṭi, tathā pacchimakāyena, sīsena...*⁷⁵

“He does his work’ means, that sallying forth, he destroys all comers. At the vanguard [of the army], etc. with the vanguard, he destroys the *muṇḍa* rampart of the wooden gateway stronghold, which [has been built] for the purpose of defence.”⁷⁶

What is a *muṇḍa* rampart? The *ṭīkā* suggests that it is both a wooden (*phalaka*, made of wooden planks, a shield) storeroom/stronghold above the gate (*koṭṭhaka*) and the upper covering (*uddhacchada*) of the rampart (*pākāra*), used for a lookout and defence.⁷⁷ We can learn more about it from a parallel term *muṇḍaharmmiya*.

***Muṇḍa* as a type of house**

This compound is found in the *Abhisamācārikā-Dharma-Vinaya* of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin school, in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.⁷⁸ Here the Buddha addresses the monks, telling them to find shelter during the rains and lists various forms of accommodation which are suitable and repairs that have to be made to make them habitable. The Buddha says *muṇḍaharmmiyā pratisaṃskartavyā*: “*muṇḍaharmmiyas* are to be restored.” What kind of building is this? Buddhaghosa defines a *hammiya* as a *muṇḍacchadanapāsādo*,⁷⁹ which may mean a “building with a *muṇḍa* (flat?) roof.” Horner translates as a house with a “sun-roof”, i.e., all the rooms have ceilings so that they are covered in; but over the whole or part of the uppermost rooms, although there are ceilings, there is no further outside roofing. This means that one can walk on the *upper* side of the ceiling with no roof over one.”⁸⁰ This would appear to be a flat, rather than a domed roof.⁸¹ In another part of his commentary Buddhaghosa’s defines a *hammiya* as *upariākāsatale patiṭṭhitakūṭāgāro pāsādo*.⁸² “On top of a flat roof, a building with an upper storey is placed – a palace,” which seems to be consistent with his definition of a *hammiyagabbho*, as an upper storey (monk’s) chamber on a flat roof or a chamber on a *muṇḍa* roof.⁸³ The word seems to have the meaning of “flat,” but since a *muṇḍaharmmiya* seems to be an additional storey on top of an already flat

roof, - which itself has a terrace above it – it may be closer to the meaning “head,” (as in “head of a building”) that we have seen is one of the possible meanings of the word. Or it might refer to a form of architectural design and construction which originated with the Muṇḍa peoples. See also the commentary on Apadāna v. 536 where the phrase *satipaṭṭhānamaṭṭālam* (“mindfulness is your watchtower”) is explained by *te tuyhaṃ catusatipaṭṭhānāṭṭālamuṇḍacchadanam* (the muṇḍa roof of your four mindfulnesses). Here *muṇḍacchadana* is equated with a watchtower type structure.⁸⁴

Muṇḍa as fenestration

Also in the *Abhisamācārikā-Dharma-Vinaya*, the word *muṇḍa* refers to a kind of fenestration or window:

... *bhikṣuṇā muṇḍe vātapāṇe pātraṃ sthaviṭaṃ tan dāni vātamaṇḍalikāye āgacchiyānaṃ bhūmīyaṃ pātito bhinno kapālānāṃ rāsiṃ kṛtvā yavāgūye gaṇḍī ākoṭitā so dāni hastāṃ nirmmādiya vihāraṃ praviṣṭo paśyati*.⁸⁵

“A *bhikkhunī* placed a bowl in/on a *muṇḍa* window and that bowl fell to the ground and broke when a whirlwind arose. It made a mess of pieces and when the gong was sounded for the rice gruel, he [i. e. the Buddha] washed his hands and entered the *vihāra*, and saw it.” von Hinüber tentatively translates this as “the alms bowl was placed in a not closable window; when a whirlwind arose, it fell to the ground and broke.”⁸⁶ What kind of window is a *muṇḍa* window? Perhaps an “open” window with no shutters to close in a windstorm (as von Hinüber has suggested, in the sense of “bare” or “unadorned”)? or a type of design which is favoured by one of the indigenous tribes? Or both?

Muṇḍa as a chariot wheel-spoke

In the commentary to the *Khuddakapāṭha*'s *Ratanasutta* Buddhaghosa describes the wheel of a *cakkavatta*, a wheel-turning monarch:

*indanīlamaṇimayanābhi sattaratanamayasaḥassāraṃ
pavālamayanemi, rattasuvaṇṇamayasaṇḍhi, yassa dasannaṃ
dasannaṃ arānaṃ upari ekaṃ muṇḍāraṃ hoti vātaṃ gahetvā
saddakaraṇatthaṃ, yena kato saddo
sukusalappatāḷitapañcaṅgikatūriyasaddo viya hoti*.⁸⁷

“The navel is made of sapphires, a thousand spokes are made of the seven jewels, the rim of the wheel is made of coral, the link [axle?] is made of burnished gold, and after every ten spokes is one *muṇḍa* spoke, whose purpose is to make a sound by catching the wind, a sound which is like the sound of the five kinds of musical instruments, well and skilfully played.”⁸⁸ The word *muṇḍa* here could mean “head,” in the sense of “principal” and it could also mean “bare” or “unadorned,” in contrast to the other jewelled spokes; or it could mean something completely different, perhaps horizontal blade-like “spokes,” at ninety degrees from the others, with holes in them that “caught the wind” as the wheels revolved and sounded as described. We don’t know; however *muṇḍa* meaning “bald” or “unadorned” or “head” simply does not fit well in this context.

Conclusion

These are most of the usages of *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* in the Pāli and BHS writings. As we have seen, in many cases the word means “bald,” or “shaved,” and meanings of secondary derivation – “plain,” “unadorned,” etc.- are associated with the primary meaning. In many cases, but not all, the word carries an additional pejorative overtone. But there are yet several other contexts where none of these meanings are appropriate. The use of the word in proper names and places suggests an ancient connection with the geography and culture of north-eastern India, dating back to the indigenous peoples and their language, which pre-dates the Aryan immigrations of the late second and early first millenniums B.C. Because of its retroflex structure, we can be fairly certain that the word is non-Aryan and derives from either the Munda or Dravidian language groups. Phonologically, the former group is an especially compelling source, because of its propensity to interchange initial consonants at the place of articulation (*m*- >< *p*- >< *b*-). We find several examples of this (*muṇḍa* = *puṇḍ(r)a*) in the *Mahābhārata* from the later part of the first millennium B.C. and even within the Pāli writings, which are much earlier. Here *muṇḍa* in the BHS version of the *Mahāvadanāsūtra*, appears as *bhaṇḍu* in the Pāli version.⁸⁹ The word also appears in several other contexts, in the *Vinaya* story of the bald headed blacksmith (*kammārabhaṇḍu*) who joins the *Saṅgha* against his parents’ wishes; in the *Jātakas*, and many times in the commentaries.⁹⁰ One may assume that, because of identity of meaning, the words *muṇḍa* and *bhaṇḍu* are cognate, and we have demonstrated above that *muṇḍa* and *puṇḍ(r)a* are also related, as are

probably *muṇḍa* and *malla*. The variations in these words are all functions of AA internal phonological rules.

The word *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* is associated with baldness, but also has the additional meaning of “low,” “mean,” “outcaste,” “low class,” etc.,. This meaning appears to stem from the word’s association with one of the eastern tribal groups that opposed and were displaced by the incoming Indo-Aryans. So, when the Buddha and his followers were being insulted as *muṇḍakas*, they were not only being called “bald mendicants,” but also outcastes with non-Aryan tribal affiliations, in the same way that the word *Malla* referred, not only to a wrestler, but probably also to a member of the *Malla* clan (see page 51-2). This helps to explain the polysemousness of the word *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka* and especially some of the arcane terms used in agricultural, architectural, technical, etc., descriptions; the meaning “bald” or one of its secondary connotations, does not easily fit these contexts; the meaning “as used/built/produced by the *Muṇḍa* clan or tribe” is often more appropriate.

In cultural history, the use of an ethnic name as a racial attribute, where the name comes to signify one of the putative (often negative) characteristics of the group (i. e. a synecdoche), is quite common. Often the origin of the term is forgotten. How many people know, for example, that the word “gyp,” meaning “to cheat or swindle” comes from the name for the Romani people (the Gypsies); or that the verb “to jew down” meaning “to beat down in price” comes from the name for the Jewish ethnic group; or that the pejorative word “jock,” (“one characterized by excessive concern for machismo”)⁹¹ originally referred to the Scottish peoples? The evolution of meaning in language is a multifaceted phenomenon where social, political, historical and cultural strata interpenetrate and overlay each other in a complex tapestry; although we may not be able to unweave *muṇḍa/muṇḍaka*’s actual history of semantic development, we can understand – by carefully studying the context of its use -- the various strata of meaning in the word and uncover the richness of its genealogy.

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² See Otto Böhtlingk and Rudolph Roth, *Sanskrit Wörterbuch* (New Delhi: Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990; first published 1855-75), vol. 5, page 822-23.

³ Sylvain Lévi, "Pré-Aryen et Pré-Dravidien Dans L'Inde", *Journal Asiatique*, 103 (1923), 22. "On sait que le nom des Muṇḍa a été choisi par Max Müller pour désigner une famille de langues qui ont été fortement influencées par le dravidien, mais qui en sont originellement indépendantes, et qui sont apparentées à la famille mōn-khmer et aux parlers des tribus sauvages de la presqu'île malaise." "One knows that the name of Muṇḍa was chosen by Max Müller to designate a family of languages which were strongly influenced by Dravidian, but which were originally independent and related to the Mōn-Khmer family and to speakers of the wild tribes of the Malaysian peninsula." Quoting M. Risley, Lévi says the word *muṇḍa* "signifie un chef de village." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word Munda was first used in 1805, apparently to signify an ethnic group; it is both an ethnic group and a language family.

⁴ Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Aitereya Āraṇyaka, edited from the manuscripts in the India office and the Library of the Royal Asiatic society with introduction, translation, notes, indexes and an appendix containing the portion hitherto unpublished of the Sāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 17f and 31f.

⁵ Sanskrit available in Bhim Dev, *Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyakam* (Hoshiarpur: Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, 1980), 66. Second quote on page 81.

⁶ This is the meaning of the word in Santali ("head end"), one of the Munda languages. See Paul Olaf Bodding, *A Santal Dictionary* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos J. Dybwad 1929-36), 341-42. Available online: <http://www.aa.tufts.ac.jp/~mmine/india/Bodding2k/dic-srch.cgi> (accessed Dec. 2011). According to Hoffman, the first European scholar on Mundari, *muṇḍa* means a landed proprietor, rich man or village chief. See Rev. John

Baptist Hoffmann, *Mundari Grammar and Exercises* (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2010; originally published in 1905-1909), 7. The *Mundas* usu. call themselves *Hōko* or *Hoꝛoko*; when they do use the word *Munda* for self-designation, it is always the second member of a compound (as in *Kumpaṭmunḍa*); see Hoffmann, *Encyclopaedia Mundarica* (Patna: Patna Superintendent, Government Printing 1930-1950), 2881. In Sinhalese (the indigenous language of Sri Lanka where the Buddhist canon was first written down in the first century B.C.), there is a cognate word (*muṅḍu*) which means “bare, uncultivated” (in relation to land) and a further word *muṅḍuma* with a derogatory sense, meaning “good-for-nothing,” or “wretched” (My thanks to Dr. Mahinda Paliawadana for the first reference and to Prof. Suwanda Sugunasiri for the second).

⁷ Arthur Berriedale Keith, *The Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka with an Appendix on the Mahāvraṭa* (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1908), 71, translates *muṅḍamuṅḍa* as “supreme tonsure.”

An *āmreḍita* is a reduplication, usu. for emphasis.

⁸ Oskar von Hinüber, *Das Ältere Mittellindisch im Überblick*. (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), §72. Als *terminus technicus* gehört das deśī-Wort *Munda* “kahl geschoren” nach Ausweis der Belege einer alten östlichen, nicht-indogermanischen Asketensprache an. I thank Dr. von Hinüber for providing me with his (unpublished) “Notes on *muṅḍa*,” which expand on this conclusion.

⁹ Jean Przyluski, “Emprunts Anaryens en Indo-Aryen”, *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris*, 30 (1929-30), 199-200.

¹⁰ T. Burrow, “Dravidian Studies 7”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 12 (1947-48), 391. For example, he cites Kannaḍa, *moṅḍu*, “maimed, blunt”; Telegu, *moṅḍi*, “maimed, amputated, blunt,” Tulu, *moṅḍu*, “blunt.” For all equivalences see T. and Burrow and M. B. Emeneau, “A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary”, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 4199 and 4200, p. 349.

¹¹ F. B. J. Kuiper, *Proto-Munda Words in Sanskrit* (Amsterdam: N.V. Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1948), 102-107.

¹² Paul Thieme, “Indische Wörter und Sitten”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 93 (1939), 135.

¹³ Julius Pokorny, *Alois Walde Vergleichendes Woerterbuch der Indogermanischen Sprachen* (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1927), 288.

¹⁴ Paul Tedesco, "Sanskrit *muṇḍa*- 'SHAVEN'", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 65 (1945), 82-98.

¹⁵ Giotto Canevascini, "On Latin *Mundus* and Sanskrit *Muṇḍa*", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies University of London*, 58 (1995), 340-5. Retroflexion, p. 343.

¹⁶ Alfred C. Woolner, "Prakritic and non-Aryan Strata in the Vocabulary of Sanskrit", *Sir Asutosh Memorial Volume* (Patna, 1926-1928), 65-71.

¹⁷ Murray B. Emeneau, *Language and Linguistic Area* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), 198; This article, "The Indian Linguistic Area Revisited" was originally written in 1974: "...Sanskrit was handed down at some early period by a majority of speakers who learned it as a second language, their first language being Dravidian. In their first language there were contrasting dentals and retroflexes; in Sanskrit, or we had better say pre-Indo-Aryan, there were only dentals and some allophones of dentals "backed" toward the Dravidian retroflex position. Assignment of these backed allophones to their own Dravidian retroflexes was easy for native Dravidian speakers..."; F. B. J. Kuiper, "The Genesis of a Linguistic Area", *Indo-Iranian Journal* 10, (1967), 89-90: "...in pre-historic Indo-Aryan, bilingual speakers who recognized a phonemic contrast between dentals and retroflexes in the foreign language, came to interpret the allophones of proto-Indo-Aryan in terms of the foreign phonetic system. The loan-words with retroflexes which – at least in my interpretation of the Rigvedic evidence – they must have introduced into Indo-Aryan may have contributed considerably to the spread of this novel phonemic distinction among the speakers of early Indo-Aryan; Madhav M. Deshpande, "Genesis of Rgvedic Retroflexion: A Historical and Sociolinguistic Investigation", in Madhav M. Deshpande and Peter Edwin Hook, eds., *Aryan and non-Aryan in India* (Ann Arbor, 1979), 297: "...the origin of retroflexion lies not so much in the Aryans' borrowing this trait from Dravidians in early times as in Dravidians' adapting Aryan speech to their native phonology."

¹⁸ Munda is the name of an Austro-Asiatic language group which is still spoken today in the Chota Nagpur plateau of north-eastern India, state of Jarkhand. To avoid confusion, the capitalized word "Munda" without italics and without diacritics is used to refer to the language group. The word *Muṇḍa* with diacritics and no italics refers to the tribal/ethnic group (see below), attested from at least the time of the *Mahābhārata*. The word *muṇḍa(ka)*, with diacritics and in italics refers to the word as actually used

in the Old Indic and Middle Indic texts or as quoted in the academic literature.

¹⁹ William Dwight Whitney, *Sanskrit Grammar* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1924; originally published 1879), §1222d.

²⁰ K. R. Norman, *Pāli Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 59, 63; K. R. Norman, "Four Etymologies from the Sabhiya-sutta", in Somaratna Balasooriya (et al.), ed., *Buddhist Studies in honour of Walpola Raula* (London, 1980), 179 (1980); also published in *Collected Papers 2* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1991), 156.

²¹ K. R. Norman, *The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipāta)* (Lancaster: The Pali Text Society, 2006), 14. Another occurrence of a similar curse occurs in the commentary to Jātaka 490, *Pañcuposathajātaka*, in V. Fausboll, *The Jātaka together with its commentary* (London: Published for the Pali Text Society by Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1963), vol. 4, 328: where an ascetic curses a *paccekabuddha* who has usurped his seat with the words, *vasala, kāḷakaṇṇi, muṇḍaka, samaṇaka*, "Outcaste, black-eared, shaveling, ascetic."

²² *ibid*, page 17.

²³ That there was a "religion of Greater Magadha" different than and opposed to Vedism is the central thesis of Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha, Studies in the Culture of Early India* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007). For a discussion of the *samaṇa* tradition see pages 79f; see also Govind Chandra Pande, *Studies in the Origin of Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), 261. For more examples of the association of *muṇḍakas* with *samaṇas*, see below.

²⁴ *yeṣāṃ ca virodhaḥ śāsvatikaḥ*. Srīśa Chandra Vasu, *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, vol 1*. (Poona: Published by R.N. Dandekar at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962), 311; F. Kielhorn, *The Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali* (Poona: Published by R.N. Dandekar at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962), 476.

²⁵ Helmer Smith, *Sutta-Nipāta Commentary 2 being Paramatthajotikā 2, Volumes 1, 2*. (London: Luzac & Company for the Pali Text Society, 1966) vol 1, 175: *kāḷakaṇṇi muṇḍakasamaṇako ... "muṇḍo asuddho hoti" ti brāhmaṇānaṃ diṭṭhi, tasmā "ayaṃ asuddho, tena devabrāhmaṇapūjako na hoti" ti jigucchanto "muṇḍakā" ti āha. muṇḍakattā vā ucchiṭṭho esa, na imaṃ padesaṃ arahati āgacchitunti samaṇo hutvāpi...*

²⁶ Norman, *Group of Discourses*, page 53. Sn PTS, 80.

²⁷ *ibid*, page 54-5.

²⁸ See for example, the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, in Patrick Olivelle, *The Dharmasūtras* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 210.

²⁹ Helmer Smith, *Paramatthajotikā* 2, vol. 2, 402: *muṇḍo ayaṃ bhavaṃ, muṇḍako ayaṃ bhava nti sīse vivaritamatteva kesantaṃ disvā* [*see note below] "*muṇḍo*" *ti āha. tato suṭṭhutaṃ olovento parittampi sikhaṃ adisvā hīlento "muṇḍako" ti āha. evarūpā hi nesaṃ brāhmaṇānaṃ diṭṭhi. tato vā ti yattha ṭhito addasa, tamhā padesā muṇḍāpi hīti kenaci kāraṇena muṇḍitasīsāpi honti. muṇḍo ayaṃ bhavaṃ, muṇḍako ayaṃ bhava nti.* "By this the text signifies that when he (the brahman) didn't see any hair as soon as his head (the Buddha's) was uncovered, said, 'A shaven (person)'. Then looking at him more closely, he did not see even a small top-knot, he expressed contempt for him and he said, "He is a *muṇḍako*" for such is the belief of these brahmans. *tato vā ti* This signifies that the brahman (wished to go away from that place), where standing, he saw (the Buddha). *muṇḍāpi* This means for some reason (some brahmans) are also shaven-headed." I am indebted Dr. Mahinda Palihawadana for help in translating this passage. The phrase *kesantaṃ disvā* I am reading as *kesaṃ na disvā*, at his suggestion.

³⁰ Mary E. Lilley, *The Apadāna of the Khuddaka Nikāya, Part 2* (London: Pali Text Society, 1927), page 359, *gāthā* 14. The editor capitalizes *Andhakā*, suggesting that she is interpreting it as a tribal group; however it is also an adjective meaning "blind."

³¹ The words *sānuvindaka* is translated as "together with those who know them," taking the word as derived from *sa-anu-vid* and modifying *Kolakā*. However there are several variants for this part of the text (*koṭṭhakāsānuvindakā; ...hānuvindikā, Kuṭṭhaganuviṭṭhakā*), suggesting that the transmission is garbled.

³² *muṇḍakā samaṇakā ibbhā kaṇhā bandhupādāpaccā* DN 1 90. Trans. by Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: a translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 113. In the Tibetan Vinaya (http://www.asianclassics.org/release6/flat/KD0001M2_T.TXT) this is also preserved, where the word *muṇḍaka* is translated as *mgo reg* ("shaved head"). The Chinese translate the same passage as 毀形 (*huǐxíng*) which means "deformity" and may indicate that they had a different word than *muṇḍaka* in their source document as *huǐxíng* usu. translates Skt. *vairūpya* (T01n0001_p0082b24).

³³ T. W. Rhys-Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya*. (London: Pali Text Society, 1886-1932), vol. 1, 254: *brāhmaṇā brahmuno mukhato*

nikkhantā, khattiyā urato, vessā nābhito, suddā jāṇuto, samaṇā piṭṭhipādatoti. Note the contrast with *Rg Veda* ix, 20, 12 where the *sūdra* is said to have been born from the feet of *Puruṣa*. In the Indian caste system, the only groups lower than the *Śūdras* were the mixed castes and those who did menial work which rendered them “untouchable.”

³⁴ DN 3, 79. *Te tumhe seṭṭhaṃ vaṇṇaṃ hitvā hīnamattha vaṇṇaṃ ajjhupagatā, yadidaṃ muṇḍake samaṇake ibbhe kaṇhe bandhupādāpacce. Tayidaṃ na sādhu, tayidaṃ nappatirūpaṃ, yaṃ tumhe seṭṭhaṃ vaṇṇaṃ hitvā hīnamattha vaṇṇaṃ ajjhupagatā yadidaṃ muṇḍake samaṇake ibbhe kaṇhe bandhupādāpacce'ti.* “And you, you have deserted the highest class and gone over to the base class of shaveling petty ascetics, servants, dark fellows born of Brahma's foot! It's not right, it's not proper for you to mix with such people!” Trans. by Walshe, *Long Discourses*, 407.

³⁵ Bronkhorst, Greater Magadha. See footnote 23.

³⁶ *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 13, 8.1.5. For discussion see Munishwar Jha, *Māgadhi and its Formation* (Caclutta: S. N. Guha Ray at Sree Saraswaty Press Limited, 1967), 12.

³⁷ 33.6: *tān anuvyājahārāntān vaḥ prajā bhakṣiṣṭeti | ta ete 'ndhrāḥ puṇḍrāḥ śabarāḥ pulindā mūtibā ity udantyā bahavo bhavanti vaiśvāmītrā dasyūnāṃ bhūyiṣṭhāḥ.* The word *bhakṣiṣṭa* is a precative 3rd sing. form. See Whitney §895. For alternate English translation see Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇas of the Rigveda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971; originally published 1920), 307.

³⁸ See Michael Witzel, “Substrate Languages in Old Indo-Aryan (R̥gvedic, Middle and Late Vedic)”, *Electronic Journal for Vedic Studies*, 5 (1999), 39. The Puṇḍras “is the name of a people regarded as outcasts in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. Their name occurs in the Sūtras also. In the Epic their country corresponds with Bengal and Bihar,” per Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Vedic index of names and subjects* (London: Murray, 1912), 536.

³⁹ See Bimala Churn Law, *Tribes in Ancient India* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Series No. 4, 1943). The ancient Puṇḍras are an eastern tribe in the sub-Himalayan foothills, who lived just south-east of Bihar (where the Buddha lived and taught) and east of Jarkhand, where present day Muṇḍas live, (278). The Śabarās, Andhras and Pulindas lived in the Deccan (172). The Mūtibas may also have been a southern tribe (173-5).

⁴⁰ Law, *Tribes*, 164.

⁴¹ See footnote 24.

⁴² Woolner, “Prakritic and non-Aryan Strata,” 67.

⁴³ R. Pischel, *Comparative Grammar of the Prākṛit Languages*, translated from the German by Subhadra Jhā (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981; first published 1900), §104. e.g. Skt. *prathama* > Pkt. *puḍhuma*. See also *Jātaka* 41, where *pādam-olamba* (having caught hold of) is in the Burmese, but *pādam-olumba* is in the Sinhalese, Thai and PTS version.

⁴⁴ *Vin* 2, 137; *Cullavāga* V, 29.

⁴⁵ J. Takakusu and Makoto Nagai, *Samantapāsādikā Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Vinaya Pitaka* (London: The Pali Text Society, 1924-1947), vol. 6, 1212. *saṃvelliyaṃ nivāsentī ti mallakammakārādayo viya kacchaṃ bandhitvā nivāsentī*. “They wear loin cloths” means, like wrestlers, labourers etc. (or of the Malla clan), etc they bind on a loin cloth and wear it.” As porters: *muṇḍavattī ti yathā rañño kuhiñci gacchato parikkhārabhaṇḍavanamanussāti adhippāyo*. *muṇḍavattī* means “Like persons who carry requisite goods of a king who travels somewhere,” that is the meaning.

⁴⁶ 遊行經T01n0001_p0029b03. PB represents the phonetic reconstruction of the sounds in Early Middle Chinese by Edwin G. Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese, and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991).

⁴⁷ 大般涅槃經T01n0007_p0207b07. In fact, Law, *Tribes*, 259 suggests that “it is probable that the word ‘Malla’ denoting a professional wrestler was derived from the tribal name of this people.”

⁴⁸ For example: In Vishnu S. Sukthankar, *The Āraṇyakaparvan, Being the Third Book of the Mahābhārata The Great Epic of India* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1942), Book 3, Chapter 48, p. 159, the Muṇḍas are one of many tribes attending a sacrifice, where they are listed along with several others:

*hārahūnāṃś ca cīnāṃś ca tukhārān saindhavāṃś tathā
jāguḍān ramaṭhān muṇḍān strīrājyān atha taṅgaṇān* (verse 21)

“[I saw] the Hārahūṇas, the Cīnas [Chinese], the Tukhāras, the Saindhāvas as well, the Jāguḍas the Ramaṭhas, the Muṇḍas, the Strīrājyas [Amazonian women] and then the Taṅgaṇas [coming to the sacrifice]”.

⁴⁹ There is of course a distance of several centuries separating the time of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* from that of the *Mahābhārata*. In the latter epic, there are at least two instances where the Puṇḍra tribes are mentioned, with the Muṇḍas as a variant reading. In Shripad Krishna Belvalkar, *The Bhīṣmaparvan, being the sixth book of the Mahābhārata the great epic of India* (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, 1947), Book 6 Chapter 52

verse 8-9, page 277-78, where the Puṇḍras/Muṇḍas form the left flank of the Kuru army; the Magadhas *inter alia*, form the right flank: *māgadhās ca kalingās ca dāśeraka gaṇaiḥ saha dakṣiṇam pakṣam āsādyā sthitā vyūhasya damśitāḥ kānanās ca vikuñjās ca muktāḥ puṇḍrāviṣas tathā brhadbalena sahitā vāmaṃ pakṣam upāśritāḥ* “The Māgadhas and the Kalingas and the Dāśerakas together with their troops, formed the right flank, stood firm, armed in military array. The Kānanas and the Vikuñjas and the Puṇḍras [var. Muṇḍa] tribes [stood] in like manner, and possessed of great strength they occupied the left flank.” The critical edition lists four witnesses where *puṇḍra* has the *muṇḍa* variant reading.

There is also another mention of the Puṇḍra tribe in Book 6, Chapter 46, verse 49, with a single variant reading of *muṇḍāḥ* for *puṇḍrāḥ* in the following text: *piśācā daradās caiva puṇḍrāḥ kuṇḍīviṣaiḥ saha maḍakā laḍakās caiva taṅgaṇāḥ parataṅgaṇāḥ*; “... [The] Piśācas and the Daradas, the Puṇḍras [var. Muṇḍa] together with the Kuṇḍīviṣas, the Maḍakas and the Laḍakas, the Taṅgaṇas, the Parataṅgaṇas...”

⁵⁰ See Jules Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Asoka* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1950), 172, line 10. Another interesting point is that the word for “a person having his hair cropped or shaved” is *muṇḍra* in Santali, with the added *-r-*. See Bodding, *A Santal Dictionary*, 342.

⁵¹ Lévi, S. 1923. "Pré-Aryen", 56.

⁵² Mayrhofer defines *Puṇḍrāḥ* as “Name eines Volkes...vielleicht als ein austroasiatischer Name sowohl mit *Oḍrāḥ* (*Uḍra-*, *Uṇḍā-* usw.) wie andererseits mit dem Namen der *Muṇḍāḥ* zusammengehörig. See Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen, A Concise Etymological Sanskrit Dictionary* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter - Universitätsverlag., 1963), vol. 2, 302.

⁵³ F. B. J. Kuiper, *Proto-Munda Words*, 3-5.

⁵⁴ The Munda language group is divided into North Munda and South Munda. Most Munda speakers live in the Chota Nagpur plateau of north-eastern India, in the state of Jharkhand. For an introduction to the Munda language family and distribution maps, see Gregory D. S. Anderson, "Introduction to the Munda Languages", in Gregory D. S. Anderson, ed., *The Munda Languages* (London and New York, 2008): 1-10.

⁵⁵ F. B. J. Kuiper, "Munda and Indonesia", *Orientalia Neerlandica, A Volume of Oriental Studies* (Leiden, 1948), 386-87. Other *m-* > < *p-* alterations at the beginning of a word are shown in Heinz-Jürgen Pinnow,

Versuch einer Historischen Lautlehre der Kharia-Sprache (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1959), 370-71.

⁵⁶ See Jules Bloch, *Inscriptions d'Aśoka*, 124, line 29.

⁵⁷ Heinz-Jürgen Pinnow, *Versuch einer Historischen Lautlehre*, 10-22. Palaung and Mon belong to the Mon-Khmer (or eastern) branch of Austro-Asiatic and are thus only distantly related to Munda.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 20; translated by the author. Kuiper also mentions pre-nasalization as a mechanism of word variation in his “Munda and Indonesian” article, page 381. If he is right then the pre-nasalization of *puṇḍra* by the addition of a nasal before *p* (*n+p*) would result in *m*: *n+p* > **np* > **mp* > *m* (the homorganic nasal). *n+ puṇḍ(r)a* > *muṇḍa*

⁵⁹ See Gregory D. S. Anderson, *The Munda Languages*, where they are called expressives in the following language groups: Gorum (413), Gta? (741-743), Gutob (665), Ho (227), Juang (537), Kera? Mundari (184), Kharia (482-483), Kherwarian (230-231), Korku (288), Mundari (139-45), Remo (607-08), Santali (73-74) and Sora (360-62).

⁶⁰ The *m*- words and definitions may be found in Burrow & Emeneau, *Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*, 349; the *p*- and *b*- words and definitions in Kuiper, *Proto-Munda*, 104. Kuiper believes that the Dravidian words are borrowings from Munda.

⁶¹ *kaṇṇamuṇḍa* as the name of a Himalayan great lake occurs throughout the commentary, for example, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, 1, 164: *kaṇṇamuṇḍa-rathakāra-anotatta-sīhappapāta-chaddanta-mandākinī-kuṇāla-dahe*; it is also the subject of *Kaṇṇamuṇḍapetavatthu* (p. 41f). *Muṇḍa-nigama* (market town) is a place mentioned in the commentary to *Dhammapada* 382. H. C. Norman, *The commentary on the Dhammapada, volumes 1-5* (London: Pali Text Society, 1970), *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, 4, 128, where Mahāmuṇḍa lived.

⁶² The story of King Muṇḍa is told in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 3, 57f. The story of Nagāmuṇḍā is told in *Jātaka* 7 (1, 133) and *Jātaka* 465 (4, 145). For Mahāmuṇḍa see previous footnote.

⁶³ *Theraḡāthā* v. 153, 414, 944, 998, 1118. *Therīḡāthā* 32, 75, 183, 348

⁶⁴ *Sn*, verse 456 *Sundarikabhāradvājasutta*. The compound *nivuttakeso* is a *bahuvrīhi* (descriptive compound). The word *nivutta* comes from the Vedic root *vap*, (“to shear”, “to shave”, past participle of *ni+ vap* = **nyupta* > *nivutta*, which root occurs in the *Rig Veda* (e.g. 10.142 where we find *vapta* and *vapasī*); the word *muṇḍa* does not occur in the *Rig Veda*. This (*vap*) is also the word used in the *Gr̥hya* (“household”) *sūtras*

for tonsure of the brahman child, e. g. *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya sūtra*, 1.17.10, *āvapat*.

⁶⁵ MN 1, 163, *Ariyapariyesanāsutta*. The verb-form *ohāretvā* is a gerund.

⁶⁶ *muṇḍakena samaṇakenā ti muṇḍaṃ muṇḍoti, samaṇaṃ vā samaṇoti vattuṃ vaṭṭati, ayaṃ pana aparipakkaññattā brāhmaṇakule uggahitavohāravaseneva hīlento evamāha. Majjhimaṇṇāsa-aṭṭhakathā*, commentary in J. H. Woods and D. Kosambi, *Papañcasūdanī Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā of Buddhaghosācariya, Part 2, Suttas 11-50* (Warwick Square, E.C.: Oxford University Press for the Pali Text Society, 1928), 3.280: “It is fitting to call a bald person ‘*muṇḍa*’ or an ascetic ‘*samaṇa*’ but he [Jotipāl], because of his immature understanding, speaks this way, looking down [on him] because of terms/designations learned in a Brahman family.”

⁶⁷ The phrase *khuramuṇḍa karitvā* occurs in 11 instances, meaning “having caused his [the criminal’s] head to be shaved with a razor” prior to execution. (e. g. *Susimasutta*, SN 2, 128)

⁶⁸ Vin 4, 224: *assamaṇiyo imā muṇḍā bandhakiniyo*. “These bald (nuns) are not ascetics; they are prostitutes.”

⁶⁹ E. B. Cowell, *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (London: Luzac & Company, 1957), vol 1, 72.

⁷⁰ Per Monier Williams, S. M. 1899. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Reprint 2002, s.v. *muṇḍa*.

⁷¹ Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, a Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston Wisdom Publications, 1995), 182.

⁷² J. H. Woods and D. Kosambi, *Papañcasūdanī*, vol 2, 58. Trans. by author.

⁷³ *Ibid*, vol 3, 19. Trans. by author.

⁷⁴ Per the *ṭīkā* (sub-commentary). It is interesting that the *ṭīkā* defines the *muṇḍapīṭhaṃ* as *yojanāvaṭṭeti yojanaparikkhepe* which seems to be saying that a *muṇḍa* seat has the circumference of a yoke. See discussion above on *muṇḍa-rukkha-daṇḍa* (Page 55). Although the author did not have access to the original, the *ṭīkā* is available in Dhammapāla, *Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā* (Rangoon: Buddhasāsana Samiti, 1961). Quotes from the *ṭīkā* are from the Digital Pāli Reader, <chrome://digitalpalireader/content/index.xul?loc=m.1.0.0.2.0.0.t&analysis=mahaapi.t.thikakojavake>

⁷⁵ J. H. Woods and D. Kosambi, *Papañcasūdanī*, vol 3, 127. Trans. by author.

⁷⁶ I take *puratthima*, to mean “forefront” (see F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998; originally published 1953), vol 2, s.v.*purastima*, p. 347), or vanguard.

⁷⁷ *Paṭisenāya phalakoṭṭhakamuṇḍapākārādayoti paṭisenāya attano ārakkhatthāya ṭhapite phalakoṭṭhake ceva uddhacchadapākārādike ca*. Digital copy available at:

chrome://digitalpalireader/content/index.xul?loc=m.1.1.0.0.0.0.t&query=p
halakako.t.thakamu.n.da¶=7&analysis=appa.nihitato&frombox=0

⁷⁸ 54, 7. Digital copy available at:

http://fiindolo.sub.uni-

goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/4_rellit/buddh/abhisdhu.htm. The hard copy was not available to me: Taishō Daigaku, *Daishubu setsu shusseburitsu Biku igihō* “Bonbun shahon einban tebiki” (Tokyo: Taishō Daigaku Sōgo Bukkyō Kenkyūjo Biku Igihō Kenkyūkai, 1998).

⁷⁹ Commentary to *Vinaya* 3, 200; *Samantapāsādikā* 3, 654.

⁸⁰ I. B. Horner, *Book of the Discipline* (London: Pali Text Society, 2001-2007; first published 1949-1966), vol. 2, 16, footnote 6. Italics in original.

⁸¹ See C. S. Upasak, *Dictionary of Early Buddhist Monastic Terms* (Varanasi: Bharati Prakashan, 1975), s.v. *hammiya*, 245, who defines it as “A large multi-storeyed mansion with an upper chamber at the top, but without a dome.”

⁸² J. Takakusu and Makoto Nagai, *Samantapāsādikā* 6, 1215.

⁸³ Ibid 6, 1219. *hammiyagabbhoti ākāsatale kūṭāgāragabbho vā muṇḍacchadanagabbho vā*.

⁸⁴ *Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā*, 286. The PTS edition was not available to me. It can be found in the Burmese edition, Vipassana Research Institute, *Apadāna-Aṭṭhakathā, Paṭhamo Bhāgo* (Dhammagiri: Vipassana Research Institute, 1998), 295.

⁸⁵ *Abhisamācārikā-Dharma*, 101, 2f.

⁸⁶ Oscar von Hinüber, “Sprachentwicklung und Kulturgeschichte, Ein Beitrag zur materiellen Kultur des buddhistischen Klosterlebens”, *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhandlungen der Geistes und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse Jahrgang 1992, Nr. 6*, (1992), 45: “die Almosenschale wurde in ein nicht verschliessbares (?*muṇḍa*) Fenster gestellt. Da erhob sich ein Wirbelwind, sie fiel zu Boden und zerbrach.” Brackets and question mark in original.

⁸⁷ The version quoted is from the Burmese edition used in the Digital Pali Reader at:

chrome://digitalpalireader/content/index.xul?loc=k.0.0.0.6.5.0.a&analysis=pavaa.lamayanemi&frombox=0. I was unable to access a hard copy of the Burmese *Tipiṭaka* to check the Digital Pali Reader edition; however the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* CD (available at <http://www.tipitaka.org/>) was checked. The PTS version is slightly different and for *muṇḍāraṃ* has *muddhāraṃ* (*muddha* + *araṃ*); Mayrhofer, *Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 652, suggests that the classical form of *muṇḍa*, meaning “head,” may in fact be a Middle Indic form of Skt. *mūrdhan*, “head”. See Helmer Smith, *The Khuddaka-paṭha, together with its commentary, Paramatthajotikā 1 [by Buddhaghosa]* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1959), 172.

⁸⁸ This is translated by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli, *The Minor Readings (Khuddakapāṭha) The First Book of the Minor Collection (Khuddakanikāya)* (London: Luzac & Company Ltd., 1960), 186 where *muṇḍāraṃ* is rendered as “head-spoke.”

⁸⁹ Ernst Waldschmidt, “Das Mahāvādānasūtra: Ein kanonischer Text über die sieben letzten Buddhas. Sanskrit, verglichen mit dem Pāli nebst einer Analyse der in chinesischer Übersetzung überlieferten Parallelversionen. Auf Grund von Turfan-Handschriften herausgegeben. Teil 1-2. ”, *Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst*, (1953), p.128; also in Takamichi Fukita, *The Mahāvādānasūtra, A New Edition Based on Manuscripts Discovered in Northern Turkestan* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), p. 114, 116. The Pāli version occurs at DN 2, 28. Buddhaghosa equates *bhaṇḍu* with *muṇḍa*. The sporadic appearance and disappearance of aspiration in the Prakrits is quite common; see Geiger, *Grammar*, §40.

⁹⁰ *Vinaya*, 1, 76. *Jātaka* 3, 22 (#306) 6, 538 (#547). There are approx. 35 occurrences of the word in the commentaries. The PED suggests the word *bhaṇḍu* might be related to *paṇḍu* (= *paṇḍa*, “eunuch,” “impotent”), which Jacob Wackernagel, *Altindische Grammatik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1896), 116, 184 also connects with *baṇḍa* (“maimed,” “defective”), a word he claims is of foreign origin. See footnote 10.

⁹¹ American Heritage Dictionary, s.v. jock².