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Conference

Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism

Guest editors
Cathy Cantwell, Jowita Kramer, Robert Mayer,
and Stefano Zacchetti

The Case of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*[1]

L. S. Cousins †

After presenting some background on the Pali commentarial literature and the School of Buddhaghosa, I turn to the Pali Aṭṭhakathā literature in a little more detail and then discuss the authorship of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*. The main part of this paper, however, is concerned with the first part of that commentary, the *Aṭṭhasālinī*. I examine this work from the point of view of its sources. It can be clearly shown that it is largely taken from the Abhidhamma section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*, mostly verbatim – a work dating probably from the late third century CE in the form utilized by our author/editor. That work itself, however, was largely a compilation and contains large sections that have been adopted *in toto* from one or more separate late second century sources as well as earlier commentarial matter from one or more commentaries on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*.

The Pali Commentarial Literature

Sinhalese traditions claim that the Pali Canon was brought to Ceylon in the third century BCE by Mahinda, a son or close kinsman of the Indian Emperor Asoka Moriya and others. It is likely that this does indeed represent the acceptance of Buddhist teachings by the court in Anurādhapura, even if some knowledge of Buddhism on the island is probably earlier than this. Although this might represent the time when an oral version of some of the older parts of the Canon was brought to the island, it is not likely that the later parts of the Canon are this old and they must have been brought at a later date from Buddhist centres south of the Vindhyā

[1] Thanks are due to the anonymous reviewer for some corrections and suggestions.

mountains. Oral versions of many Buddhist texts seem to have been put into writing by around the first century BCE. Either then or a little later some form of authoritative Canon was collected and organized. This eventually became a closed collection until recent times when, in Burma at least, three or four additional texts were added or associated.

Palm leaf manuscripts do not survive well in tropical climatic conditions; so only portions of just a very few Pali texts on other materials are as old as the first millennium CE and possibly none are earlier than the fifth century CE. That something like the Pali tradition existed before that is clear enough from the parallel versions belonging to other Buddhist schools that have been recovered in fragmentary forms from Central Asia and the neighbourhood of present-day Afghanistan. But for the actual dating of the Pali canonical literature in its present form we are dependent on the commentarial works.

For the bulk of the canonical works the tradition today attributes the current form of the extant commentaries to Buddhaghosa – a monk who came to the island from "Jambudīpa," supposedly from the neighbourhood of Bodhgayā in North India but more probably from either South India or South-East Asia. I shall refer to this body of literature as the work of the 'School of Buddhaghosa.' In actual fact it is unlikely that Buddhaghosa himself wrote all of these works. Some may have been written following the model he established, others by associates and others still under his supervision.

According to much later sources Buddhaghosa came to Ceylon in the reign of Mahānāma early in the fifth century CE, but there is no way of knowing whether such sources are reliable. We can however say that the major writings of the School of Buddhaghosa are posterior to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, a chronicle written after the reign of Mahāsena who died around 331 CE (± 30 years) and they are prior to the translation of a version of the *Vinaya Commentary* into Chinese in 489 CE. They show no sign of influence from the major North Indian writings associated with the names of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu; so perhaps a fourth century date is more prob-

able. I will discuss which of the main commentaries are the work of Buddhaghosa later on. However, it should be noted that only the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries actually cite the *Dīpavaṃsa*. So if they were later than the time of Buddhaghosa himself, the work of Buddhaghosa could perhaps have been contemporaneous with the *Dīpavaṃsa*. It is difficult, however, to imagine that the *Dīpavaṃsa* with its much inferior Pali could have been written after the availability of the *Visuddhimagga*.

Supposedly, however, Buddhaghosa was not the actual author of the commentaries attributed to him. Rather he translated from the Sinhaḷa language the commentaries that had been brought by Mahinda in the third century BCE and subsequently written down in the Sinhaḷa language. Indeed this tradition is already explicitly referred to in the introductions to the works of the School of Buddhaghosa. There are historical problems with this, but I will not address them in detail here. It is perhaps worth noting that there cannot have been a great deal of difference between spoken Sinhaḷa Prakrit in the third century BCE and the spoken dialect or dialects used for Buddhist texts at that time in North India – at the least they should have been mutually comprehensible. Two things are clear. Some of the canonical material probably always had an accompanying explanation and the extant commentaries contain stories and ideas attributed to Sinhalese authorities who lived within a century or two of the beginning of the Christian Era.

Still, however we may assess this historical tradition, it is clear that the commentaries of the School of Buddhaghosa were not written *de novo*. If one reads through the introductions to the commentaries of that School, they clearly refer to an earlier literature, some of it at least in Sinhaḷa Prakrit. The fact that they date their introduction to the island as early as the third century BCE makes it clear that in the fourth or fifth century CE they were believed to be very old. There is no indication that this was disputed. This must mean that they were, in their core at least, shared with the other two Buddhist schools on the island. With the solitary exception of a mention of a king Mahāsena in the *Vinaya Commentary*, no figure who can be dated later than the reign of Vasabha (d. 141 CE ± 30) seems to be mentioned in any of the commentaries of the School of

Buddhaghosa.[2] This suggests that the earlier commentaries largely took a form similar to that given in the extant later commentaries by the third century CE at the latest. That fits well with the fact that we know from the fragmentary manuscripts recovered in recent decades from the neighbourhood of Afghanistan that commentarial works were already being written in other Buddhist schools around the first century CE, if not earlier.

The School of Buddhaghosa

The earliest of the extant works of Buddhaghosa is almost certainly the *Visuddhimagga* – it is explicitly named as a kind of general commentary to the four *Āgama*s in the introductions to the commentaries to the four *Āgama*s (Sv I 2 etc.). Many of the introductions to other commentaries of the School of Buddhaghosa specifically mention it as an explanation of why they are omitting a detailed account of topics relating to the Buddhist meditative path. The *Visuddhimagga* in its conclusion states only that its exposition follows the method of the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathānaya*) to the five *Nikāya*s. An earlier work, preserved mainly in Chinese – the *Vimuttimagga* – has much in common with the *Visuddhimagga*. Although that work probably belonged to the Abhayagiri school Cousins 2012), it seems clear that both were drawing on a largely shared commentarial tradition.

We can then suppose that it was the writing of the *Visuddhimagga* that made possible the project to rewrite the existing commentarial works in a less repetitive form and one more suitable to international use. So the Sīhaḷa (Sinhaḷa) language was removed and replaced

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[2] It is not clear however that the mention of a king Mahāsena there (Sp III 519) does in fact refer to the historical Mahāsena mentioned above. The story is rather pejorative. So if it does refer to the historical Mahāsena, it could be a very late intrusion to denigrate the enemy of the Mahāvihāra. It is not found in the Chinese version. However, we should note that Sp specifically claims to have used a number of other sources apart from the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. Some of these could easily be later than the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* in date. This would also account for the reference in the same text (Sp II 297) to a type of coin known as a *rudradāmaka*, implying a late second century date at the earliest.

with a pleasing (*manorama*) language suitable for scripture i.e. the Pali language. In fact the extant commentaries do still contain quite a bit of repetitive matter, but the *Āgama* commentaries, at least, do not usually duplicate what is dealt with in detail in the *Visuddhimagga*. The project of rewriting the commentaries was a major undertaking and it seems likely that Buddhaghosa could only undertake it with a significant body of helpers and, as we shall see, under the sponsorship of senior elders. So it is probably best to view the four *Āgama* commentaries as works under Buddhaghosa's supervision. Stylistically, however, they do seem to reflect the clarity of the Pali language and syntax employed in the *Visuddhimagga*. The two later commentaries (i.e. Spk and Mp) also make some attempt to refer back to the first two and omit matters already covered there. The fact that the four describe the *Visuddhimagga* as a general commentary to the four *Āgama*s and not to the Canon as a whole may imply that at this stage there was no intention to write commentaries to the whole Canon.

The situation is less clear with the other commentaries traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa. The *Abhidhamma Commentary* I shall return to shortly, but the case of the *Vinaya Commentary* can be mentioned. A monk named Buddhasiri, who was a leading Vinaya authority, is named as having requested its composition in both its introduction and its conclusion. So it seems that it was not instigated by Buddhaghosa himself and could be a little later in date, but on one occasion it specifically mentions the first two commentaries on the *Āgama*s and on another the first volume of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*; so that would suggest a slightly later date than those.[3] However, the *Abhidhamma Commentary* also cites the *Vinaya Commentary* on one occasion[4] and the *Āgama* commentaries do so a number of times.[5] The latter also have a single reference to the second volume of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* (re-

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[3] Sp I 150; 172f.; V 1025.

[4] Dhs-a 97f. The references at Vibh-a 334 and 366 refer only to the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā* and are thus probably to an older *Vinaya* commentary.

[5] Sv I 70f.; 82; 84; 133; II 363; 530; 568; 592f.; III 981; Ps I 198; III 45; 106; IV 46; Spk II 37; 145f.; Mp III 334; IV 136f.

peated three times).[6] The *Visuddhimagga* also mentions the *Vinaya Commentary* (singular and plural) and the *Suttanta* commentaries (plural) but it does not give their Pali names and so is probably referring to the earlier commentaries in Sinhaḷa.[7] Unlike the *Āgama* commentaries of Buddhaghosa and the *Abhidhamma Commentary*, the *Vinaya Commentary* states that it is using a number of additional sources as well as the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. Since we do not know the date of these sources, it may well contain some material that is later than the time of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*.

The cross-references must reflect some kind of subsequent editing process, but it seems likely that scribes have in some cases glossed earlier references to the older commentaries with specific references to the extant Pali commentaries. Once the older commentaries were no longer available or in normal use this could happen rather easily, since it involves only the addition of the Pali name.

There are a number of other commentaries belonging to the School of Buddhaghosa – one to the *mātikā* to the *Vinaya* i.e. the *Pātimokkha* and four to various works belonging to the *Khuddakanikāya*. They may be slightly later and their relationship to earlier commentaries would need separate consideration; so I will not examine them here.

The Aṭṭhakathā Literature

The commentarial literature was first of all surveyed in a modern study by E. W. Adikaram in his doctoral thesis (1927?), later published as Adikaram 1953 [1946]. This initial examination was followed by further examination in a number of works on early Buddhist history and literature in Ceylon.[8] Of particular importance is the detailed analysis of verse citations in the commentaries of Buddhaghosa by Friedgard Lottermoser.[9] She analyses some

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6 Ps II 30; Spk II 45; Mp V 16.

7 Vism 72; 272.

8 Malalasekera 1928; Rahula 1966; Norman 1983; Hinüber 1996.

9 Lottermoser 1982. A parallel study was made in Japanese by Sodō Mori;

2,200 verse passages found in ten of the commentaries attributed to Buddhaghosa. This figure excludes the verses found in the prologues and conclusions of these works, but still includes much duplication. Most, but not all, of these passages are quoted from earlier sources – sometimes named, more often not.

Lottermoser's analysis provides a persuasive picture of the evolution of the pre-Buddhaghosa commentarial literature. It is clear that much of what we find in the works of the School of Buddhaghosa has been taken from an earlier work or works with little or nothing being added. It is also evident that this earlier work already contained material taken largely *verbatim* from still earlier works. Lottermoser in fact puts forward the following model:[10]

The Stage of Floating Traditions	possibly first century BCE
The Stage of Diversification	an earlier commentary on the Suttas
The Stage of Standardisation	shortly after 1st century CE
The Stage of Translation	activity of Buddhaghosa and others

While Lottermoser does put forward convincing evidence for some of this, parts of it remain no more than plausible. In particular, if one doesn't accept the late tradition that the texts were put into writing in Ceylon in the first century BCE, then there is nothing especially convincing about that date – it could be slightly earlier or rather later.

My own view is that it does seem highly probable that by the third century CE the Mahāvihāra had formed its own collection – the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* or *Great Commentary.* This included commentaries on the four main *Nikāya*s, the *Vinayapiṭaka* and the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* plus some at least of the *Khuddakanikāya*.

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much of this was subsequently made available in a revised form in English articles. They are collected in Mori 1989. See also: Kim 1999, Introduction. Along the same lines as Mori, the Japanese scholar Toshiichi Endo has also written a number of articles, material now collected in Endo 2013.

[10] Lottermoser 1982: 223–224.

I believe this would have been done by collecting and compiling earlier commentaries, themselves no doubt compilations of still earlier material. This would be closely analogous to the development of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* by compiling earlier smaller *vibhāṣā* (Cox 1995). Like the former the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* must have contained a certain amount of material giving the views of renowned elders on specific topics. It, however, must have been in Sinhalese Prakrit or some kind of mixture of Pali and Prakrit. Ole Pind (1992) has attempted to argue that it was written in Pali. This is not entirely impossible, but I do not find his arguments conclusive.[11] It is of course more than possible that it contained citations in Pali from canonical or other Pali works. In any case even if the process of conversion to Pali had already begun before his time, it is unlikely that it was anywhere near complete before the work of Buddhaghosa.

Lottermoser is probably right to suggest that an earlier stage consisted of separate commentaries on important *sutta*s. The pattern of citations which she indicates shows rather clearly that ma-

[11] At Vism 184 the reference to the *Majjhimaṭṭhakathā* strongly suggests that this section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* cited a sentence from AN III 68 in Pali. The quotation was probably embedded in the longer passage of the old *Majjhimaṭṭhakathā* that Buddhaghosa is citing. At Vism 72 cites a passage as *Vinayaṭṭhakathāsu vuttaṃ*. Pind interprets this a collective plural, but Buddhaghosa does not use this elsewhere and it seems more likely that he was referring to the various commentaries used as a source by Sp. One or more of these could have been written in Pali. Earlier on the same page of Vism 72, a view of the Vinayadharā is cited that is also given at Sp 299. Here the (later) author of Sp is following Vism but making a minor change either deliberately or inadvertently. The passage at Dhs-a 118 is probably rendering a passage in the Abhidhamma section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* which contains a quotation from the earliest part of Mil. This could have been cited in Pali already, Or, the author of Dhs-a was familiar with Mil. Further examples offered by Pind (Sv 105 & 182) seem to depend on rather speculative claims as to what could or could not be written in Prakrit – we know little about literary Sinhaḷa Prakrit in this period. He is also mistaken to suggest that the word *ditthigatika-* is rare in the older Pali commentaries. At Mp II 273 the citation from the *Aṭṭhakathā* contains nominatives in *-e*. This is of course normal in Sinhaḷa Prakrit. They have presumably been retained by Buddhaghosa because he regarded them as Pali forms (found in Kv). He in fact uses the same phrase to indicate identity in a number of other passages: Ps I 24; Spk II 254; Mp I 71; cf. Dhs-a 353; Paṭis-a II 449; Nidd-a III 80.

terial likely to have originally come from exegesis of a well-known discourse such as the *Satipaṭṭhānasutta* is dispersed across the extant commentaries. If all this material already had some authority at the time when it was collected into the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*, then it would not be very surprising if that has lead to a great deal of repetition. The need to remove some of this is clearly indicated in the introductions to the extant commentaries. The driving force behind this is most probably the challenges posed by the competition of the rising Abhayagiri school.

My concern here, however, is specifically with the *Abhidhamma Commentary*.

The *Abhidhamma Commentary*

It has long been noted that the author of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* cannot be Buddhaghosa, as tradition would have it. That is for the simple reason that the author states in the introduction that he has been requested to write it by the *bhikkhu* Buddhaghosa. Although later tradition has attempted to introduce a lesser Buddhaghosa at this point, that too is implausible. Had the author been the famous Buddhaghosa, he would hardly have referred to a junior contemporary of the same name without explanation.

Caroline Rhys Davids suggested that the author might have been a pupil of Buddhaghosa.[12] That has been followed by some, but the suggestion that he was a junior contemporary of Buddhaghosa seems rather unlikely. In fact, we can note that a consistent pattern is found in the *Visuddhimagga* and the four *Āgama* commentaries of Buddhaghosa. The preface does not mention the name of anyone as having invited the author to write the work. This is found only in the concluding verses (*nigamana*). The monk who is named is generally given some *pāda*s of praise. The intention is clearly to give some authority to the work. This is particularly obvious with the first of the *Āgama* commentaries on the *Dīghāgama* where the request is attributed to Dāṭhanāga, described as *saṅghathera*. This presum-

[12] Rhys Davids 1932: 30; see the discussion in Bapat and Vadekar 1942: Introduction.

ably means he was the most senior monk in the Mahāvihāra; so his *imprimatur* was doubtless important for the success of the project.

This procedure of mentioning the inviting monk only in the concluding verses is not generally followed in the other commentaries of the School of Buddhaghosa. The two *Vinaya* commentaries mention him both in the preface and in the concluding verses, the *Jātaka* and *Dhammapada* commentaries only in the preface, while the *Khuddakapāṭha* and *Suttanipāta* commentaries do not mention anyone at all. Most later commentaries either do not mention anyone or mention someone in the preface. The situation of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* is then interesting. It is divided into three named parts. The first part has the invitation at the beginning, the second has the same invitation in the concluding verses, while the third part on the last five *Abhidhamma* books has no invitation at all.

In effect then the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries (including Kkh) lie in between the earlier practice of Buddhaghosa and the later practice of mentioning the inviting monk at the beginning. Returning now to the specific mention of Buddhaghosa *bhikkhu* as inviting the composition of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*, it is unusual to mention a simple *bhikkhu*. Most such mentions refer both to *bhadanta* and *thera*. In fact the only other non-*thera*s mentioned occur at the end of Mp and Ja, but both of these are in cases of more than one inviter when *thera* has already been mentioned. The only reasonable explanation of this is that a relatively junior Buddhaghosa is requesting a senior monk to compose the *Abhidhamma Commentary*. Presumably it is less than ten years since his *upasampadā*, although he could easily have been a novice for ten years before that. Very probably he has already gained some reputation as author of the *Visuddhimagga* and is just starting on the project of the *Āgama* commentaries. As leader of that project he is asking a senior monk who is a reputed *abhidhamma* master to undertake the parallel composition of an *Abhidhamma Commentary* in Pali.

Such a *scenario* helps to explain some features of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*. Although the author is clearly sympathetic

to Buddhaghosa's project, he is perhaps a little more conservative and adheres more closely to the Sinhaḷa *Abhidhamma Commentary* which he is translating or standardising into Pali. This perhaps gives a clearer picture of his sources than the better-written work of Buddhaghosa. Lottermoser comments: "The most noteworthy feature of [the *Aṭṭhasālinī*] is its 'patched appearance'."[13] This is clearly correct and reminds a little of the *Dīpavaṃsa* – perhaps the oldest post-canonical work written in Ceylon.[14]

The *Abhidhamma Commentary* is written in three named sections, but is clearly conceived as a single work with references both to what is to be treated in later volumes and backwards to what has been treated previously. As with the *Āgama* commentaries, the names must be introduced to distinguish the new Pali commentary from the existing Sinhaḷa one. Only later in the subcommentaries do we find *Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā* used to refer to the three Pali sections as a single work. That usage is adopted here for convenience.

Here I shall focus in particular on the first section of the *Abhidhammaṭṭhakathā*, the *Aṭṭhasālinī Dhammasaṅgahaṭṭhakathā* (Hayashi 1999).

The *Aṭṭhasālinī*

The name is mostly given in full in earlier citations, but from the *ṭīkā* period on it is usually shortened to just *Aṭṭhasālinī*. The full meaning must be intended to convey something like: "the commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaha* which is amply provided with meaningful explanations" (< *artha* + *śālin*).[15] The preface specif-

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[13] Lottermoser 1982: 58.

[14] Peṭ and Nett seem to come from one or more different traditions; so one or both may have been written in South India. The core of Mil must be of North Indian origin, but in the form we have it, it seems to have been expanded substantially in a Theravādin context. The Pali utilized in these three works differs slightly from the form standard after Buddhaghosa. We do not know if that is due to a different geographical origin or to an earlier pre-Buddhaghosa form of Pali in Ceylon. Little is known for certain about the earlier development of Pali on the island.

[15] The English translation renders this as "The Expositor" (Tin 1920). The

ically states that the author is removing the language of the dwellers in Taprobane and introducing the blemish-free language that accords with scripture i.e. Pali. He is expounding the complete established opinion of the *Mahāvihāravāsin*s, unmixed with the views of other fraternities (*nikāya*). He then declares that he will expound the meaning, adopting what should be adopted in the *Āgama* commentaries, delighting those with discernment. By this he clearly means the commentaries of Buddhaghosa because he goes on to list some topics given in the *Visuddhimagga* which he will omit. He concludes by urging his 'hearers' to stay focussed because such discourse on *Abhidhamma* is hard to obtain. This whole declaration indicates clearly he is both including material which would not have been found in the Abhidhamma section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* and omitting material relating to the general topic of what we would call 'meditation.'

The actual commentary starts with a statement of what is meant by *Abhidhamma*, discussing the meaning of the prefix *abhi-* and contrasting *Abhidhamma* and *Suttanta* teaching. It then lists the seven books of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, giving as authority the consensus (*samānakathā*) of the teachers. There then follows a brief debate on the inclusion of the fifth book, the *Kathāvatthu* (Dhs-a 2ff.). I will not give the details but what is significant is that the opposing speaker is referred to as the *Vitaṇḍavādin* ("a quibbler"). This may be intended generically but I suspect that a specific individual is meant. Some twelve or thirteen of his views are contested in various commentaries and it seems clear that passages had been incorporated already in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* from a work in debate form, criticizing his views.

Two of these views have been identified as those of the Mahiṃsāsaka school.[16] Others fit more into the loose category of *Darṣṭāntika* with some perhaps indicating Mahāyānist leanings. I would like to suggest, however, that the view ascribed to the *Vitaṇḍavādin* here at this point in the *Abhidhamma Commentary*

German has: "Darlegung der Bedeutung" (Nyanaponika, Bretfeld, and Knopf 2005). I take *śālin* in the sense of "amply provided or furnished with" (MW).

[16] Mori 1989 [1975]; Silk 2002.

must also be that of a *Mahiṃsāsaka*. It clearly presupposes the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* in seven books as we know it from Pali sources. The debate is mainly about what should count as the fifth book. Here we can note that when the *Dīpavaṃsa* (Dīp V 37–43) lists the parts of the canon rejected by the *Mahāsaṅghika*s it mentions the *Abhidhammapakaraṇa* specifically. It does not do so in the case of the fraternities in the Theravāda division. This may mean that the author of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, or more probably his source, thought that the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* was common to these fraternities. He was certainly mistaken as regards the schools of Greater Gandhāra, such as the *Sarvāstivāda*, but the mistake would be understandable if the *Mahiṃsāsaka*s in the south did indeed possess a version of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. This would be particularly likely if, as many scholars believe, the Tambapaṇṇiya school of Ceylon originally separated from the *Mahiṃsāsaka*s.

Troubles with a 'wicked *bhikkhu*' expounding Vitaṇḍavāda teachings are mentioned for the reign of Vohārikatissa (acc. 239 ±30 CE). The account in the *Dīpavaṃsa* (Dīp XXII 43–45) is quite brief and tells us mainly that much which is unfitting (*akappiya*) was expounded in the realm of that king. A wicked monk harmed the Buddha's teaching by expounding vitaṇḍa teachings. The king took his minister and crushed the Vitaṇḍavāda.[17] The account in the later *Mahāvaṃsa* (Mhv XXXVI 41) is a contraction of the three stanzas of the *Dīpavaṃsa* version into a single stanza. Quite plainly Mahānāma's only source for this event is the *Dīpavaṃsa*. Since the *ṭīkā* adds nothing, we can be sure that nothing more was known.

This may represent the point at which the Tambapaṇṇiya school formally separated from the *Mahiṃsāsaka*s i.e. in the first half of the third century CE. No doubt they would have been growing apart long before this. This would account for the absence of any mention

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[17] Dīp XXII 43f.:

41 *Tassa rañño tu vijite dīpenti akappiyaṃ bahuṃ.*
Vitaṇḍavāde dīpetvā dūsesuṃ jinasāsanaṃ
Kapilāmaccam ādāya akāsi pāpaniggahaṃ.

42 *Disvāna rājā pāpabhikkhu<ṃ> dūsentaṃ jinasāsanaṃ*
Kapilāmaccam ādāya ākāsi pāpaniggahaṃ
Vitaṇḍavādaṃ madditvā jotayitvāna sāsanaṃ.

of the Ceylon school in Vasumitra's treatise on the schools. At the time when it or its source was written, the separation had not yet occurred. For present purposes, however, what is important is that the references to Vitaṇḍavādin views must have been incorporated in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* soon after this i.e. in the third century CE.

After that the text gives an outline of the structure of each of the seven books of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. In part this must have been extracted from the account of the Canon given later (discussed below).

Motivating the reader

The next section (Dhs-a 10–23) is explicitly stated to be for the purpose of showing the profundity of *abhidhamma*. It is introduced with the conjunction *idāni* "now." Such expressions occur frequently. They indicate something like a fixed teaching procedure with specific topics to be taught at each point. The immediate source of these must be the Sinhalese *Abhidhamma Commentary*, although it seems likely that it goes back to some older commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*. As we shall see, this kind of procedure seems to have been embedded in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. In this case, as in others, it is doubtful whether earlier Sinhaḷa commentaries from the first century CE remained available. It seems more probable that after the compilation of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* they soon disappeared or had only limited availability. It is also unclear how far Sinhaḷa Prakrit of the first century CE or earlier could still be easily read in the fourth century CE.

The section begins with the list of the four kinds of ocean. The ocean of *saṃsāra* and the ocean of water are explained, but the real point is the two last: the ocean of methods (*naya*) and the ocean of knowledge. The reason for emphasizing the profundity of *abhidhamma* at this point now becomes clear. It is explained that endless joy and good feeling arises for family members (*kula-putta*) with strong faith and with knowledge to the fore who recollect two scriptures: *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*. For *Abhidhamma* the point is driven home by telling the story of the Elder Tissadatta of Mahāgatimbaya (vll.).

This Elder embarked on an ocean voyage as part of a pilgrimage to pay homage to the Mahābodhi tree in India. Out of sight of land he observed the magnificence of the ocean and reflected as to which was mightier the movement of the waves or the introduction to the method (*nayamukha*) in the twentyfourfold *samantapaṭṭhāna*. He concluded that the latter was greater because unlike the ocean it has no limits. Strong joy arose as he was recollecting such a subtle and exquisite (*saṇha*) teaching. He stilled the joy and developed insight. As he was sitting, he dispelled all mental disturbances (*kilesa*) and established in arahatship, he uttered an inspired verse (*udāna*).

This story illustrates the ocean of methods. What we should note here is the strong relationship between study of *abhidhamma* and Buddhist practice. Expressing it differently, we might say that arousing awe plays an important role – one that we see more widely in Buddhism too. It is for example an important aspect of many of the Mahāyāna scriptures.

The last of the four oceans is the ocean of knowledge that is to say the omniscience of the Buddha by which the four oceans are discerned and the ocean of methods comprehended. This provides a lead into an account of the first four weeks, following the Buddha's awakening. In other words part of what we might call the *Abhidhamma Legend* is being introduced because in the fourth week after various miraculous events the Buddha sits in a jewelled chamber, contemplating (*sammasanto*) the seven books of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*. Only the last gives full scope to his omniscient knowledge.

The text then moves on to the later part of the *Abhidhamma Legend* where subsequently what had been realized in the jewelled chamber was given form in three months of continuous teaching to his mother and to the deities of ten thousand world systems in the heaven of the Thirty Three. It was taught more or less simultaneously to Sāriputta in the forest near Sāvatthi and Sāriputta taught it to his 500 disciples. In fact, some part in the method of reciting *Abhidhamma* and the enumerations of the *Paṭṭhāna* is understood as the work of Sāriputta, aiming to facilitate the learning and study of *Abhidhamma*.

Description of the Canon

With a somewhat tenuous connection, but still technically part of the section showing the profundity of *abhidhamma* there then comes a detailed description of the contents of the Canon and the different ways of organizing those contents. This has close parallels in the introductions to the Pali commentaries to the *Vinayapiṭaka* and *Suttapiṭaka*. It seems clear that it has been assembled in the commentary to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* by adding material collected from elsewhere.[18] Obviously it has intentionally omitted a detailed account of the First Council because in contrast to the *Suttapiṭaka* taught by Ānanda at that time the origin of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* is traced to Sāriputta at an earlier period.

In the section on the three *piṭaka*s (Dhs-a 23–31) we find introduced a discussion of the three kinds of learning (*pariyatti*). The phrase used is: *Ettha pana … daṭṭhabbo* "Now at this point … should be seen." This kind of phrasing, which frequently recurs, indicates a strong sense that particular topics should be taught at particular points. The distinction is between study which is like grasping a <poisonous> serpent, study whose goal is the exit from *saṃsāra* and study which is like the <work of> a treasurer. The first of these is derived from the *Alagaddūpamasutta* and warns that study of the *dhamma* in order to score points or gain competitive advantage will lead to bad results. The third is the study of an *arahat* whose aim is to preserve the lineage.

This section concludes by affirming the position of the *abhidhamma* in the various classifications of the scriptures: the third basket (*piṭaka*), the fifth *nikāya* and so on. It then addresses the arguments of a monk who claimed that the *abhidhamma* was not the word of the Buddha. The response is largely by affirmation with quite strong language – concluding that the monk who rejects the *abhidhamma* should be dismissed (*uyyojetabbo*). However, it then addresses the argument that the *abhidhamma* cannot be the word of the Buddha because it does not have an introduction (*nidāna*) such as *ekaṃ samayaṃ Bhagavā …* as do many thousands of *sutta*s. The ob-

[18] Lottermoser 1982: 263ff.

vious objection that such a *nidāna* is not found in the case of various other texts is made. It then goes on to claim that *abhidhamma* is the special province of the Buddhas comparable to royal property i.e. it needs no identification. In this context it refers to the *Abhidhamma Legend*. This will lead into the life story of the Buddha.

First, however, we have answers offered by two authorities: the Elder Tissabhūti of the Maṇḍala monastery and the Elder Sumanadeva the town dweller. The former lived in the first century BCE, while the latter is undated but must belong to a similar period.[19] The latter responded to the objection by offering a *nidāna* for the *abhidhamma*:

> *ekaṃ samayaṃ Bhagavā devesu viharati Tāvatiṃsesu Pāricchattakamūle Paṇḍukambalasilāyaṃ. tatra kho Bhagavā devānaṃ Tāvatiṃsānaṃ abhidhammakathaṃ kathesi kusalā dhammā, akusalā dhammā, abyākatā dhammā ti.*

This makes quite a nice *nidāna* for the *abhidhamma* texts; so it is a testimony to the conservatism of the Theravāda tradition that it has never been incorporated into the canonical works, although I believe it is sometimes chanted in a liturgical context. This discussion on the authority of *abhidhamma* is plainly derived from the Sinhaḷa *Abhidhamma Commentary* i.e. the relevant section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*, but is no doubt older than that.

The *Nidānakathā*

The final resolution of the issue then follows with the claim that the *Abhidhamma* has not one but two *nidāna*s (Dhs-a 31):

The Two *Nidāna*s of Dhs-a	
Adhigamanidāna "History of the Attainment"	from Dīpaṅkara to sitting under the Mahābodhi
Desanānidāna "History of the Teaching"	until the First Sermon

[19] Mori 1988: 129.

By *nidāna* here is meant an account of what precedes – so what led up to the Buddha's Awakening and what led up to his First Sermon. Before detailing these a short questionnaire is given and answered, concluding with the lineage of fifteen teachers in India, followed by Mahinda and his companions.

At this point the PTS edition and translation are rather confusing. They omit what they call the "Dūrenidāna Chapter" and refer to 45 pages of Fausböll's *Jātaka* edition. In fact, the *Jātaka* and some later commentaries use a threefold division. The German translation gives this in full, but unfortunately the editor has added a note that perpetuates the error. Rather, Dhs-a is giving its own *Adhigamanidāna* which happens to largely, but not completely, coincide in content with Ja.

The Three Nidānas of Ja	
Dūrenidāna "History of the Far Past"	from Dīpaṅkara to rebirth in Tusita
Avidūrenidāna "History of the Not-so-distant Past"	from the passing away from the Tusita realm until the attainment of omniscience
Santikenidāna "History of the Present"	the particular dwelling place of the Buddha when a given text is promulgated

Although much of the content of the two is the same it is clear from the editions of Dhs-a in Asian script which usually give this in full that there are discrepancies with the version in Ja.

The *Aṭṭhasālinī* does go on to mention the threefold division as an alternative. The "History of the Present" it explains by citing the *nidāna* given above in Pali. So it does seem that the author of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* was familiar with the threefold list, but von Hinüber is probably right to see the twofold version as older.[20] Its immediate source must be the same Sinhalese *Abhidhamma Commentary*. As for the threefold version it is probably a mistake to see this as originally especially associated with the *Jātaka*

[20] Hinüber 1996: § 316; see also Gaffney 1996; Appleton 2010: 62.

Commentary. Two other later commentaries mention it and then refer to the *Jātaka Commentary* for details: Pj II 2 and Cp-a 3; Bv-a 3f. gives the list of three and Ap-a 2–99 gives a full version. The *Vinaya Commentary* gives only an account of the three Communal Recitations under the heading of the *bāhiranidāna*. Most probably a number of the earlier Sinhalese commentaries had versions of the threefold *nidānakathā* as part of their introductions. These have been compiled into a single version either in the Pali *Jātaka Commentary* or in its Sinhaḷa predecessor.

Word Commentary on the *Mātikā*

Before the *Aṭṭhasālinī* turns to the word commentary on the *mātikā* a stanza is repeated which was previously given at the end of the verses of the preface (Dhs-a 2 and 36):

> As I utter this *abhidhamma* discourse in this way listen carefully without distraction; for this discourse is hard to get.

No doubt this is a way of indicating that the author is coming to the meat of the matter. At all events after indicating that the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* is the first of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma*, the place of the first term of the *mātikā* in the overall structure of Dhs is outlined. Another similar stanza follows, again seeking to motivate the hearers:

> Henceforth listen carefully and well to this profound *abhidhamma* discourse as it is uttered, good people, with one-pointed <minds>.

Then follows a short section outlining the arrangement in sections of the *mātikā* and indicating whether particular triplets and couplets apply comprehensively to all *dhamma*s or only to a smaller specific set of *dhamma*s. Now comes a word for word commentary on the *mātikā* (Dhs-a 38–54). As we shall see, most, if not all, of this must be taken more or less verbatim from the Sinhaḷa *Abhidhamma Commentary*.

Commentary on the *Padabhājanīya*

The same must be true of a large part of what follows. In effect after the *mātikā* the remainder of the *Dhammasaṅgaha* consists of

a *padabhājanīya* or "analysis of items." That is divided into four sections (*kaṇḍa*). The first of these, the section on arisings with *citta* and the second, the section on materiality (*rūpa*) are a commentary on the first triplet of the *mātikā*. The third section, the *nikkhepakaṇḍa* is a much briefer commentary on the triplet *mātikā* (including the first triplet) and the initial 100 couplets of the couplet *mātikā*. The final section, the *atthuddhāra* or *aṭṭhakathākaṇḍa* "commentarial section" is a new commentary on the 22 triplets and the initial 100 couplets of the couplet *mātikā*. It employs the kind of terminology that we find in the *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna* and must therefore be a somewhat later addition.

We see here the rather typical Indic development of commentary followed by commentary. So from this point of view the *Aṭṭhasālinī* is a commentary on a commentary and is itself succeeded by subsequent subcommentaries down to recent times. Equally typical is the manner in which the three parts of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* begin by addressing matters in enormous detail and gradually become sketchier and sketchier as they continue.

The greater part of what is found in the commentary on the *padabhājanīya* is relatively straightforward commentary on Dhs. It doubtless comes almost verbatim from the earlier Sinhalese commentary. This becomes clear because there are occasional statements that something is not treated in the *aṭṭhakathā* i.e. in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*.[21] Moreover, it seems probable that the author or editor of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* always indicates when he adds significant material not in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. I shall not examine the bulk of the commentary on the *padabhājanīya* here. I do not think that would tell us much. What I do want to do is to examine two large insertions: the *dvārakathā* "discourse on doors" and the *vipākuddhārakathā* "discourse on the selection of resultants." These seem to give us rather more information on the contents of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*.

[21] E.g. Dhs-a 74 lines 1–33.

Discourse on Doors

The *dvārakathā* (Dhs-a 82–106) is introduced in the treatment of the first arising with *citta*. Earlier we learn that this type of skilful (*kusala*) consciousness has one of six kinds of objective support (*ārammaṇa*) i.e. it can have any of the five kinds of sensory object or a non-sensory object. It has pleasant feeling, is closely linked to knowledge and is understood to be spontaneous (*asaṅkhārena*). We should note that the last two categories seem to be largely particular to the *abhidha*(*r*)*mma* tradition we know from Pali sources. So, for example, for the Sarvāstivādins, knowledge accompanies all skilful *citta*.

This initial classification of consciousness into the eight skilful arisings is very much concerned with *kamma*. So the *Aṭṭhasālinī* explains it in terms of the three bases of undertaking fortunate action (*puññakiriyavatthu*). These are multiplied by means of body, speech and mind into the nine doors of *kamma*. Equally they are linked to the six kinds of objective support.

Having outlined these we have a specific statement: "… at this point the *dvārakathā* was given in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*" (… *imasmiṃ ṭhāne Mahaṭṭhakathāyaṃ dvārakathā kathitā ti*) (Dhs-a 82). The English translation omits the phrase *imasmiṃ ṭhāne*, but it is certainly very significant. The author of the *Aṭṭhasālinī* is closely following a method and order of teaching as given in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*.

We are then told that in this there are:

three	*kamma*	doors of *kamma*
five	*viññāṇa*	doors of *viññāṇā*
six	contact	doors of contact
eight	*asaṃvara*	doors of *asaṃvara*[22]
ten	unskilful *kammapatha*	skilful *kammapatha*

[22] So PTS edition; most other editions add eight *saṃvara* and eight doors of *saṃvara*. This is probably correct, since they are commented on later.

We learn that "This is known as the establishing of the *mātikā* of the *dvārakathā* up to this point." It would be difficult to believe that a text with a separate *mātikā* of this kind was not a separate work at some point. The treatment in fact begins with the second item. The English translation again renders very misleadingly with "we may leave these until later," when the text's use of the past tense clearly indicates that this was done in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* itself.[23]

The topic with which it begins is then the doors of *kamma* i.e. first of all bodily action. This is understood as *viññatti* (Sanskrit *vijñapti*). That is to say, bodily communication – concerning the manner in which we communicate by body language. That is understood as a particular modification (*ākāravikāra*) of mind-originated physical phenomena, one that can only be comprehended by the mind. The volition which generates that particular form of bodily action is bodily *kamma*.

At this point the commentary indicates that when there is a follower of another (Buddhist) teaching (*paravādin*) <present>, it should be explained as skilful or unskilful. If not, it should follow the triplet and include the third item: "undeclared." This must refer to the *kiriya citta* of an *arahat*, a notion probably peculiar to the Pali *abhidhamma* tradition and in any case not found in the Sarvāstivādin system known to us. Such a comment must go back to an earlier period of greater interaction between the schools. Further on we have a stanza attributed to the Porāṇas[24] and a little later verses attributed to the Teachers of the *Aṭṭhakathā*. Most probably these were both cited in this way in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* itself.

In the following treatment of the door of verbal action we meet a rare case in which the view of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* is given but then rejected on the authority of the *Paṭṭhāna*, referring to the *Āgama* commentaries i.e. those of Buddhaghosa.[25] So here the author of

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[23] *Tattha kiñcāpi tīṇi kammāni paṭhamaṃ vuttāni tāni pana ṭhapetvā ādito tāva tīṇi kammadvārāni bhājetvā dassitāni.*

[24] Dhs-a 84; cf. Sv-pṭ III 239.

[25] Sv III 887; Mp II 269. But according to the *Mūlaṭīkā* the *Paṭṭhāna* is referring to gross sound, while the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* refers to subtle sound.

the *Abhidhamma Commentary* has added a paragraph critiquing the view of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. Similarly to the case of bodily action, the door of verbal action is verbal communication. Verbal action itself is the volition involved in skilful or unskilful speech.

When we come to the door of mental action, a disputed issue given in the source appears to have been contracted and we are simply given the agreed view (*sanniṭṭhāna*) that the door of mental action is the 29 kinds of skilful and unskilful mentality. Mental action is the associated volition. So here the author appears to have edited his source a little.

The commentary now returns to a detailed treatment of the first item in this *mātikā* – the three kinds of *kamma*. Again the English translation is very misleading: "We now … shall give a detailed account of the table of contents…" What the text actually says is: "Now comes the detailed discussion of the remaining setting out of the *mātikā* of the *dvārakathā*."[26] The author, or rather editor, is following his source very closely. The treatment of the three kinds of *kamma* is quite elaborate and I will not go into here. One or two points are, however, especially relevant.

So we find another reference to the sequence of teaching: "In this place came the linking to the doors."[27] Essentially this concerns the way in which, for example, preparing for hunting is an act at the body door. That is bad behaviour of the body but it doesn't constitute a *kammapatha* if the hunting is completely unsuccessful and so is not an unskilful bodily *kamma*. If one announces one's intention to go hunting, that is an act at the speech door, but the same rule applies. If the intention to kill arises, that is an act at the mind door. It is the *kammapatha* of illwill, but does not constitute the act of taking life. So unskilful bodily action and verbal action arise each in two doors. Mental bodily action arises in all three doors. This is the agreed position i.e. in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*.

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[26] *Idāni yāni tīṇi kammāni ṭhapetvā imāni kammadvārāni dassitāni tāni ādiṃ katvā avasesassa dvārakathāya mātikāya ṭhapanassa vitthārakathā hoti*.

[27] Dhs-a 89: *Imasmiṃ ṭhāne dvārasaṃsandanaṃ nāma hoti*. I take *hoti* as a historic present.

At this point comes another of the recorded debates with a *Vitaṇḍavādin* – that on unskilful *kamma* at the mind door. This again suggests a date soon after the reign of Vohārikatissa. However, we should of course remember here that the *Dīpavaṃsa* only tells us that such views were suppressed in the third century CE. It says nothing about how long they had been around; so they could well have arrived in Ceylon by the second century CE. We can also gather something from the actual debate. In both cases the *Vitaṇḍavādin* is asked to cite a *sutta* recited at the three Councils. In the first case he cites the *Kulumbasutta* which is not found in the Pali Canon. This would rule out the Abhayagirikas, as there is no reason to suppose that they had a significantly different recension of the *Suttapiṭaka* to the Mahāvihāra. Since the *Kulumbasutta* (vll. *Kuṭumba-* or *Kulumpa-*) is mentioned in the *Vinaya Commentary*, we know also that it was not a Mahāyānist work. In fact the tone of the discussion there makes it clear that the *Kulumbasutta* was acceptable as *Buddhavacana* in a way that a Mahāyānist work would not have been.[28] The other citation is taken from the *Mahāvagga* (Vin I 103) but I do not know if it is present in the other recensions of this text extant in Chinese translation.

The *Vitaṇḍavādin* argues that when someone is killed by means of psychic power (*iddhi*), that is an example of unskilful bodily *kamma* at the mind door. (The precise example given in the *Kulumbasutta* is of an abortion adduced by *iddhi*.) The orthodox position is that the action in this case is performed by the *iddhi* of the *Atharvaveda*, involving the practice of *tapas* for seven days and then standing up, turning a rosary[29] and repetitively reciting a spell (*vijjā*). So it is not at the mind door. The *Vitaṇḍavādin* also argues that the case where a monk fails to confess a fault even when asked three times is an example of unskilful verbal *kamma* at the mind door, since the Buddha in the *Mahāvagga* defines it as "fully conscious lying." But this is rejected on the grounds that all *āpatti* operate at the doors of body or speech – no *āpatti* at the mind door have been laid down. Rather in this case the offence is due to inactivity at the speech door.

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[28] Sp IV 742. Hinüber 1996: 201f. is misleading.

[29] ?, cf. Nidd-a II 413: *vaṭṭetvā vaṭṭetvā*.

Dhammapāla in the *Cariyāpiṭaka Commentary* gives a shortened version of the first part of this, but with some additional material. The discussion relates to the story of Mātaṅga.

It is not quite so clear that this is a Mahiṃsāsaka position. *Bhāviveka/Bhavya cites the following as a position of the *Mahiṃsāsaka*s: "L'acte (*karman*) est conforme à la pensée (*yathācitta*). Il n'y a pas d'acte corporel (*kāyakarman*) ni d'acte vocal (*vacīkarman*)."[30] This could perhaps be connected. More clearly related is a section in Harivarman's *śāstra* which mentions several of the matters at issue.[31] Harivarman takes the position that mental action is more important and rejects the suggestion that no mental *āpatti* is found in Vinaya.

After the treatment of *kamma*, the text continues with a brief account of the five kinds of sensory discrimination (*viññāṇa*) and the five doors of the sense consciousnesses i.e. the eye, etc. Following that is a similarly brief treatment of the six kinds of contact (*phassa*) and their doors. This seems to be a way of adding mind door process to the sense door process referred to in the case of the five kinds of sensory discrimination. Then the eight kinds of *asaṃvara* and the corresponding set of doors are introduced. That distinguishes two kinds of activity in relation to the body – one where there is simply sensory awareness of touch as opposed to the "moving body" (*copanakāya*) where bodily communication is generated. The discussion in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* adds eight kinds of *saṃvara* and eight doors of *saṃvara* that were not given in this *mātikā*.

The final pair in the *mātikā* is skilful and unskilful course of *kamma* (*kammapatha*). It is noteworthy that it is here that we have the only references in the *Abhidhamma Commentary* to the *Vinaya Commentary* – that is to say, precisely in a context where our author indicates he is abbreviating his source. Most probably a reference to the *Vinaya Commentary* in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* has been supplemented with the word *Samantapāsādikā*. The treatment of

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[30] Bareau 1956: 181.

[31] Sastri 1975–1978: 256ff.; cf. p. 216.

the *kammapatha* is quite long and it suffices to say that this is essentially concerned with *kamma* that is potentially strong enough to generate a corresponding rebirth.

The *dvārakathā* concludes with a section that attempts to tie together the various parts of this *mātikā*. It is introduced "Now in this place the setting out of the *kammapatha* should be understood."[32] Overall, we should note that the less usual subject matter addressed here concerns two areas: bodily and verbal communication matter (*viññatti*) and what we might call observance and rejection of moral discipline (*saṃvara/asaṃvara*). Forms of *viññatti* and *viññatta-* are earlier found only in the *Vinayapiṭaka*. They are not found in the *Suttapiṭaka* apart from one occurrence in the *Apadāna*, clearly derived from *Vinaya* (Ap I 273). *Saṃvara*, of course, is not at all unusual in earlier sources, but with the rise of *abhidhamma* the question of how exactly to define it arose.

One direction, taken especially by the Sarvāstivādins, was to define a special kind of materiality which they called *avijñapti* to act as the material counterpart. Almost all Buddhist traditions, I suppose, consider that the act of undertaking precepts and maintaining them effects a real change in the individual that perpetuates itself as long as they are not broken. The Vaibhāṣikas formalize this with the concept of a kind of *rūpa* called *avijñapti*; other schools saw this as a mental phenomenon or as some kind of aggregation of *dhamma*s or classified it as *cittavippayutta*. The issue is discussed briefly in the *Kathāvatthu*.[33]

It is easy then to see the *Dvārakathā* as defining the position of the Theriya school or perhaps rather of the ancestor of a group of schools, one of whom would be the Theriya school. So it would be a carefully preserved authoritative source, included in the commentarial tradition.

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[32] Dhs-a 104: *Idāni imasmiṃ ṭhāne kammapathasaṃsandanaṃ nāma veditabbaṃ*.

[33] For Vaibhāṣika views on *kāyavijñapti*, see Shi 2009.

After the *Dvārakathā*

There are scattered citations in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* referring to "in the *Aṭṭhakathā*." I take this to be shorthand for the *Abhidhamma* section of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*, not a reference to a different commentary. However, it is impossible to rule out the alternative possibility that such references were already contained in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* and referred to an older commentary from an earlier period.

The *Aṭṭhasālinī* now returns to comment on the body of Dhs (after the *mātikā*). As has been mentioned, the Dhs itself (i.e. Dhs 9–87) continues here with a commentary on the first two items of the first triplet i.e. skilful and unskilful. Dhs-a is commenting on that until page 261. Since the *dvārakathā* is basically concerned with *kamma*, it applies in principle throughout that. This portion of the text will be passed over here. I shall continue to the treatment of material that is classified under the heading of the undeclared (*abyākata*) – the final item in the first triplet.

After brief comments on the different kinds of skilful resultant consciousness, there comes a reference to the view of the Elder Mahāsīva who rejected the view that omniscient *bodhisatta*s always take rebirth with the first of the *mahāvipāka*s which has pleasant feeling and in their case is the result of the prior practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*). He argued that *citta* with neutral feeling is more powerful and enables them not to be disturbed by divine objects. But we are told that this view was rejected in the *Aṭṭhakathā* with the words: "This is just the Elder's wish. It is not so."

It seems likely that the whole of this passage (Dhs-a 266f.) is taken verbatim from the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*; so the passage will be from an earlier *Abhidhamma Commentary* that has been collected into the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. The Elder Mahāsīva has been discussed in detail by Sodō Mori and seems to clearly be associated with the reign of Vasabha (d. 141 CE ± 30).[34] So we should probably think of a late second century date for this source. It seems clear that this is taken from an earlier *Abhidhamma Commentary* dating from this period.

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[34] Mori 1987 = Mori 1989.

Immediately after this passage we have a second large insertion: the *vipākuddhārakathā* (Dhs-a 267–288).

Discourse setting out resultants

The *mātikā* given here takes the very unusual form of presenting the views of three well-known Elders. They are all associated with the period of the reigns of Vaṭṭagāmanī and his successor Kūṭakaṇṇatissa (d. 11 CE ± 30).

	resultant *citta*s	path	causeless
Cūlanāga	16	12	8
Mahādatta	12	10	8
Mahādhammarakkhita	10		8

A sequence of topics is then given which are applied in order to each of the three views in turn.[35]

ussadakittana	account of predominances
hetukittana	account of causes
ambopama	mango simile
five *niyāma*	five kinds of law
pañcanāḷiyantopama	simile of the five cane presses

At the end of the treatment of the view of the first Elder we are told: "Now a miscellaneous method was given in order to make clear all these *citta*s" and a summary verse is cited, followed by a detailed commentary (Dhs-a 279–284). Such *pakiṇṇaka* occur a number of times in the *Aṭṭhasālinī* – five times in verse form and four in prose.[36] Several of the verse ones are found also in the

[35] In fact it is slightly more complicated than this, since the last three are also applied in turn to the three alternatives given in the *hetukittana* in the case of the first Elder's view.

[36] Verse: Dhs-a 192; 198; 210; 226; 279; prose: 213; 292; 325; 339.

Visuddhimagga.[37] This makes it clear that the immediate source is the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. That is also evident from a citation of the *ussadakittana* in Vism.[38] Whether this *pakiṇṇaka* was originally part of the *Vipākuddhārakathā* is unclear. It gives a further nine similes and explanations. All of this amounts to a very detailed account of what later texts call the consciousness process (*cittavīthi*). At the end the less usual step is taken of reconciling the views of the three rather than adopting one of them.

Dvārakathā and *Vipākuddhārakathā*

It is clear that the *Aṭṭhasālinī* contains two large insertions which were already present in the *Mahaṭṭhakathā*. Since the *Dvārakathā* is concerned with *kamma* while the *Vipākuddhārakathā* outlines the results of *kamma*, it is tempting to see them as at some stage part of the same work. The former, in particular, is reminiscent in style of earlier *abhidhamma* literature with its *mātikā* of numbered lists in ascending order. This shows every sign of belonging to a period when traditions of oral literature were more dominant. It may be assumed that the reference to Vitaṇḍavādin views has been incorporated at the time of the compilation of the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* from a relatively recent polemical work. The *Vipākuddhārakathā*, on the other hand, presents the views of Elders who lived around the beginning of the Christian Era. This appropriately represents a time when *abhidhamma* ideas associated with the *Paṭṭhāna*, the last work of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, were being formulated in debate in Ceylon.

Citing the commentaries

The usage that I have referred to, that is to say the use of *ṭhāne* "at this point" followed by a past participle such as *gahitaṃ* or a verb in the past tense is actually rather rare in Pali commentaries out-

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[37] Vism 317; 193; 338.

[38] Vism 103: *Ayaṃ pan'ettha aṭṭhakathācariyānaṃ matânusārena vinicchayo*; *vuttañ h'etaṃ ussadakittane*: *ime sattā pubbahetuniyāmena lobhussadā dosussadā mohussadā alobhussadā adosussadā amohussadā ca honti*.

side the *Abhidhamma Commentary*. In Sanskrit, however, *gṛhīta* is found as "mentioned or referred to in the *mūla*."[39] Even the usage with a future passive participle is fairly uncommon in other commentaries and almost entirely restricted to cross-references to the *Visuddhimagga*.

One example that shows very clearly that it should be interpreted in the way I have taken it is found in the *Vinaya Commentary*.[40] Here the author comments that the *Aṭṭhakathā* i.e. the *Mahaṭṭhakathā* stops at this point and adducing numerous *sutta*s addresses various *Vinaya* subjects in detail. The author of the *Vinaya Commentary*, however, explains that he will address these matters as they arise.

The later parts of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*

The kind of established sequence of teaching that has been pointed out here is less frequent in the later parts of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*. This must originally have been because the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* was initially memorized as the basis for *abhidhamma* study and then explained systematically in order. Such an explanation must have been provided from the beginning and will underlay all subsequent commentaries.

In the second part of the *Abhidhamma Commentary*, the *Sammohavinodanī* (Vibh-a) we do not find much similar material. This cannot be addressed in detail here, but we can note one striking example that is similar. This is the reference to the "taking by the hand question."[41] Here what is involved is an interchange between two named figures: Mahādhammarakkhita and Dīghabhāṇakābhaya. We have met the former above. As previously indicated, he is asso-

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[39] Tubb and Boose 2007: 225.

[40] Sp III 589: *Imasmiṃ pana ṭhāne ṭhatvā Aṭṭhakathāya* "*attādānaṃ ādātukāmena Upāli-bhikkhunā pañcaṅgasamannāgataṃ attādānaṃ ādātabban*" *ti ca* "*codakena Upāli-bhikkhunā paraṃ codetukāmena pañcadhamme ajjhattaṃ paccavekkhitvā paro codetabbo*" *ti ca evaṃ Upālipañcakâdīsu vuttāni bahūni suttāni āharitvā attādānalakkhaṇañ ca codakavattañ ca cuditakavattañ ca saṅghena kātabbakiccañ ca anuvijjakavattañ ca sabbaṃ vitthārena kathitaṃ, taṃ mayaṃ yathā āgataṭṭhāne yeva vaṇṇayissāma …*

[41] Vibh-a 81f.: *imasmiṃ pana ṭhāne hatthe gahitapañhaṃ nāma gaṇhiṃsu*.

ciated with the period of the reigns of Vaṭṭagāmanī and his successor Kūṭakaṇṇatissa (d. 11 CE ± 30). Dīghabhāṇakābhaya is associated with the reign of Vaṭṭagāmanī. So we are again in the period of the debates concerning the *cittavīthi*.

It is likely that the remaining *abhidhamma* works were part of more advanced studies and so perhaps had a less structured method of teaching. It is also possible that the second part of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* was partly the work of the pupils of the author of the first part. That seems even more likely to be the case with the final part – the *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā* "the commentary on the five [remaining] works."

Conclusions

For me the kind of process which underlies the formation of the *Abhidhamma Commentary* is perhaps more about transmission than intertextuality as such. In the earliest period of Buddhist literature I believe a more fluid use of oral texts, of a kind that we find in some but not all kinds of traditional literature, was generally current. This allowed the slotting in and out of standard formulæ and the like. Later a more fixed type of memorization seems to have become normal. As the Buddhist Saṅgha grew, one would expect both regional and sectarian traditions to develop, but we do not know at what point or points the shift (probably never complete) from learning at the feet of the most famous teachers available to learning from those of one's own fraternity occurred. We also do not know when some of the literature was put to writing, although radiocarbon dating of some of the Gāndhārī material hints at a rather earlier date than has been supposed by many. Most probably oral transmission of the first four *Nikāya*s continued long after Buddhists had taken to the use of written texts for various purposes.

This is a highly conservative tradition and remained so outside of the creative Mahāyāna-orientated circles which developed the Mahāyāna *sūtra* traditions. We should not underestimate the degree to which it like other Indian traditions could sometimes preserve oral material accurately over very long periods. Their concern was

not so much to author new works as to transmit and present effectively a teaching. Before printing there is no possibility of the mixed blessing of copyright. Before writing the concern had to be putting the material to be transmitted into a form or context in which people would want to memorize it. The more other people could be persuaded to plagiarize it the better. After the growth in the use of writing I suspect that practices varied greatly in different times and places, depending on the local sophistication of scribal copying practices and individuals.

So I suppose that they were transmitters not authors, transmitters not editors.

Primary Sources and Abbreviations

Abbreviations of texts used in this paper are generally those of the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*: http://pali.hum.ku.dk/cpd/intro/vol1_epileg_abbrev_texts.html.

Citations are to the page numbers of the editions published by the Pali Text Society. Unless otherwise indicated, page numbers for other texts are as given for the Burmese edition on the Dhammagiri CD (version three) issued by the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI).

MW Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary.*

PTS *Pali-English Dictionary.* See Rhys Davids & Stede 1921–1925.

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