Building the Theravāda Commentaries

Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla as Authors, Compilers, Redactors, Editors and Critics

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The Theravāda tradition, or rather the tradition of one single Theravāda monastery, the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura, seems to be unique in many respects. Not only did the unbroken tradition of the Mahāvihāra preserve and spread the only complete Buddhist canon extant in the original Indian language. The Mahāvihāra also preserves the oldest history of Buddhism in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *Mahāvaṃsa* and in the historical introduction to the *Samantapāsādikā*, all based on the introduction to the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, which is consequently old enough to commemorate the writing down of the Tipiṭaka during the first century BC as an important historical event.[1]

While these features of the Theravāda tradition are widely known and commonplace knowledge to any Buddhologist, the commentarial tradition in this school, no less important, has not found much attention and is, it seems, in spite of some very valuable pioneering investigations, not as present in Buddhist studies as it might or should be.[2] Moreover, the program behind the project to create the commentaries on the Theravāda-Tipiṭaka has found little attention so far.

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[1]   It should be noted, however, that some of the Kharoṣṭhī fragments, which surfaced during the last two decades are in part even older than this date. Therefore, it seems that the Theravāda Tipiṭaka was not the first to be committed to writing, if the date given in Dīp and Mhv is taken at face value.

[2]   Besides the London thesis of 1945 prepared under the supervision of William Stede (1882–1852) by E. W. Adikaram ([1946] 1953) there are Mori 1989 (a bibliography of Mori's writing is found in: *Buddhist and Indian Studies in Honour of Professor Sodo Mori* 2002, pp. XV–XXII) and Endo 2008 as well as 2012 (with a pertinent bibliography of Endo).

It seems to be another perhaps unique feature of the Theravāda tradition that plenty of information on the creation of the commentaries is available, which is accessible either directly, or indirectly. Indirect evidence can be gathered from the commentaries, because the authors did not always work with the same care and concentration. Consequently, oversights and weakness in systematization help to trace the material they had at hand, and to detect their method of approach. An instructive example is provided by cross-references to no longer existing texts or chapters in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, which replaces the lost *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*.[3]

While this and similar indirect evidence is available very often in various texts, direct evidence on the composition provided by the authors themselves is astonishingly rich in the Theravāda commentaries. It is easily found in prominent places such as the introductory verses and again in the verses at the end, the *nigamana*s of the first four *nikāya*s of the *Suttapiṭaka*. Here, at the beginning of the text, the author of the commentaries addresses his reader directly telling him in very broad terms what he intends to do: "I am going to explain the meaning" (*atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi*, Sv 1,18*, verse 10) in his introduction comprising 16 *āryā*-verses. Who is "I"? This is neither said at the beginning nor at the end nor within the text of the commentaries. Only the identical colophons attached to all four *nikāya* commentaries name Buddhaghosa as their author, about whom very little is known.[4] However, his place of origin[5] is mentioned, if only in the colophon of the *Visuddhimagga*: …*Buddhaghoso ti garuhi gahitanāmadheyyena therena Moraṇḍaceṭakavattabbena kato* … This is translated, e.g., by Ñāṇamoli as "who should be called of Moraṇḍaceṭaka," which is a slightly surprising expression. Here, a widely spread and obviously old mistake[6] pervading

3   For details see v. Hinüber 1998: 51, § II.1.2.1.3.

4   The scanty and mostly fairly late material is collected in Finot 1921 and Buddhadatta 1944, besides the (unfortunately) better known Law [1923] 1946. The person of Buddhaghosa is discussed only in passing by Heim (2014).

5   The name of the place is spelled Moraṇḍakheṭaka in the Burmese and Moraṇḍaceṭaka in the Sinhalese tradition.

6   The 16th century manuscripts of the *Visuddhimagga* preserved at Vat Lai Hin both have °*vattabbena* (v. Hinüber 2013: nos. 131, 132). The discussion

almost all editions (PTS, Nᵉ, Bᵉ, Sᵉ, HOS) needs correction. The obvious emendation for °-*vattabbena* is °-*vatthabbena* corresponding to Sanskrit °-*vāstavyena*, a wording very familiar particularly from inscriptions. And indeed, the Simon Hewavitarne Bequest Series (SHB) edition of the *Visuddhimagga* does preserve (or restored) the correct reading: "a citizen of Moraṇḍaceṭa."

Although Buddhaghosa is almost completely silent on himself, he is not so, luckily, on his work. In the introductory verses to his commentaries he gives an outline of his plans to explain the true meaning of the Tipiṭaka.

The overall strategy is to create a systematic survey of the orthodox teachings not contradicting the interpretation of the learned monks of the Mahāvihāra:

> *samayaṃ avilomento therānaṃ theravaṃsadīpānaṃ*
> *Mahāvihārādhivāsīnaṃ*, Sv 1,21f.*, verse 9

> Not contradicting the understanding of the luminaries of the lineage of Elders, those residing in the Mahāvihāra.

How does Buddhaghosa want to achieve this? Two points are of importance. He does not, in his own understanding, act out of his own personal initiative. For, as he states in the *nigamana*s, he was urged by various monks to compose commentaries on the four *nikāya*s:

The Thera Dāṭhānāga of the Sumaṅgalapariveṇa asked Buddhaghosa to write the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* on the *Dīghanikāya*, and this explains the title of this commentary:

> *āyācito Sumaṅgalapariveṇavāsinā thiragūṇena*[7]
> *Dāṭhānāgena saṃghatherena theriyavaṃsena*[8]

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on Buddhaghosa's home town in the modern Nidāna to the *Visuddhimagga* found in the Dhammagiri edition (CD-ROM, 4.0) is based explicitly on the wrong reading, but clearly sees the problem of a compound ending in °-*vattabbena*, cf. appendix.

[7]   Read °-*gūṇena* m.c. (?), cf. *sūmatinā*, note 11 below; moreover, the meter of *pāda*s 5 and 6 is faulty.

[8]   The text is not printed in Eᵉ, vgl. v. Hinüber 1995. The text as printed there needs metrical corrections.

The commentary on the *Majjhimanikāya* on the other hand was composed at a request by Buddhamitta, those on the *Saṃyutta-* and *Aṅguttaranikāya* by Jotipāla, and the one on the *Aṅguttaranikāya* commentary in addition by a person named Jīvaka.

Who were these monks, and why did they ask? The monk of the highest rank is Dāṭhānāga who is a Saṃghathera, that is the seniormost of all monks within a certain area, perhaps in Ceylon or at least in Anurādhapura at the time. Although his monastery, the Sumaṅgalapariveṇa is mentioned, and although modern handbooks tend to assert that it was part of the Mahāvihāra, there is no evidence on its location whatsoever. Perhaps it is not by chance that a high ranking monk invited Buddhaghosa to take up his commentarial work on the very first *nikāya*, or *āgama* as Buddhaghosa prefers, and that it is emphasized only here that Dāṭhānāga as the first initiator is a member of the *theriyavaṃsa*.[9]

Others, who asked Buddhaghosa to comment on a certain text, were connected in some way or the other to South India.

Thus he met and lived with Buddhamitta, the initiator of the *Majjhimanikāya* commentary, in Mayūrarūpapaṭṭana of unknown location, but very likely in South India:

> *pubbe Mayūrarūpapa{ṭ}ṭanamhi saddhiṃ vasantena*, Ps V 109,9

That Jotipāla who was the initiator of the *Sāratthappakāsinī* on the *Saṃyuttanikāya* had South Indian roots is evident from the *nigamana* to the fourth *nikāya* commentary, the *Manorathapūraṇī*. For the first verse of the *nigamana* to the *Manorathapūraṇī* says:

> *āyācito sumatinā therena bhadanta Jotipālena*
> *Kāñcīpurādisu mayā pubbe saddhiṃ vasantena*, Mp V 98,2*

Invited by the benevolent Elder, the Venerable Jotipāla,

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9   Similar compounds occur very rarely in late Theravāda texts, e.g., *theriyavādānaṃ*, Mhv (*Cūḷavaṃsa*) XLVI. 8. The word *theriya* is, however, used in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscription at the time of Māḍhariputta Siri Puḷumāvi (ca. 225–240): *taṃbapaṃṇidīpapasādakānaṃ theriyānam* (Vogel 1929–1930 [1933]: 22), cf. also Gethin 2012: 1–63, particularly pp. 5 ff.. On South Indian connections of Theravāda cf. also Skilling 2009: 61-93, particularly pp. 70 ff.

when he *formerly* lived with me in Kāñcī and other places …[10]

Interestingly, a second person called Jīvaka is mentioned as an additional initiator of this commentary, who asked Buddhaghosa while he was already in Ceylon:

> *vara-Tambapaṇṇidīpe Mahāvihāramhi vasanakāle pi*
> *… saddhamme*
> *pāraṃ piṭakattayasāgarassa gantvā ṭhitena*[11] †*sūmatinā*†
> *parisuddhājīvenābhiyācito Jīvakenāpi*, Mp V 98,5*–8*

This Jīvaka could have been attached to the Mahāvihāra as a prominent layman and seems to have asked Buddhaghosa after the latter settled down in Ceylon. For, the choice of the wording *pubbe … vasantena* instead of, e.g., *vutthena* or for metrical reasons, *pavuṭṭhena*, seems to point to an event occurring already in South India. Therefore, a certain interval of time might have elapsed after the earlier request formulated by the monk Jotipāla, and this, at the same time, would hint at a longer or even long period of preparation and planning before Buddhaghosa sat down to work.

Lastly, it is certainly not by chance that the first initiator is a high ranking monk and the last a most likely prominent layman. For, this would be a strong signal that the whole Buddhist community, monks and laymen alike, welcomed Buddhaghosa's work.

Summing up, it seems that Buddhaghosa was invited to the Mahāvihāra and that he came from South India, where there was a strong Theravāda tradition, as a kind of 'foreign expert,' or perhaps even as a leader of a group of experts, because it seems that some of

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[10]   A vague memory of these rather intensive connections of Buddhaghosa to South India seems to have been alive in Ceylon and might be mirrored in the Buddhaghosa chapter in Dhammakitti's extension of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Cūḷavaṃsa*) XXXVII 215–246 in the 12th century.

[11]   Sometimes *sumatinā* is changed to *subbatinā* (Cᵉ 1922; Cᵉ [SHB] *su*(*ma*)*tinā*) to save the metre; read *sūmatinā* rather (?), cf. °-*gūṇena* note 7. Reading *therena* instead of *ṭhitena* would make sense and would supply the missing short syllable, but would also violate the rhythm of the sixth *pāda*. – The modern Nidāna to the *Visuddhimagga* found in the Dhammagiri edition (CD-ROM 4.0) emphasizes explicitly that Jīvaka was an *upāsaka* (*jīvakenāpi upāsakena*, Vism p. 49).

his South Indian fellow monks joined him in Ceylon. Consequently, he must have been widely known for his learning, and he was active at a centre of Buddhist scholarship, which, at the time, was Kāñcī.[12]

Only the initiator of the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, and perhaps also of the whole project of the *nikāya* commentaries, the assumed Saṃgha-thera of Anurādhapura, Dāṭhānāga, was most likely a Sinhalese monk as Jīvaka might have been a Sinhalese layman. The others were acquainted with Buddhaghosa already in South India.

There are indications, that the first two and the last two of the four *nikāya* commentaries form a subunit.[13] If this assumption is correct, one monk from the Mahāvihāra and one from South India is mentioned in each subunit, which might be indicative of long term planning as well as emphasize that Buddhaghosa as an 'intruder' from the outside was welcome in the Mahāvihāra, being invited even by a Saṃghathera.

Thus, Buddhaghosa was asked to create the four commentaries by three monks and one layman, at least one person for each *nikāya*, and by yet another monk, *bhadanta* Saṃghapāla, to write the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *bhadanta-Saṃghapālassa sucisallekhavuttino*
> *vinayācārayuttassa …*
> *ajjhesanaṃ gahetvā va karontena imaṃ mayā*, Vism 711,25*–712,2*

It is remarkable, that the invitations came not just from group of senior monks to compose a set of commentaries, but from individuals asking to write individual texts. If a reason is sought for this procedure it could be the acceptance of the new commentary. Although this is nowhere stated, it is nevertheless likely that these monks might have been prominent representatives of the different *bhāṇaka* traditions for the individual *nikāya*s. These traditions are duly quoted and their opinions respected by Buddhaghosa. Still, they seem to have come to an end gradually once the new commentary existed, connected all *nikāya*s to the *Visuddhimagga* and thus superseded the old tradition.

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[12]   On Kāñcīpuram as a centre of Buddhist scholarship see Bhattacharya [1995] 2000.

[13]   Cf. HPL § 230, 227.

Thus Buddhaghosa's work, at the same time, created a new identity of the Mahāvihāra by uniting in the new local Mahāvihāra tradition the members of different branches of *bhāṇaka*s, who originally may have had stronger ties to an 'international' community as different *bhāṇaka*s are occasionally mentioned also in Indian inscriptions including South India.[14] This is an interesting contrast to the approach of the *Vinaya* commentary. For the *Samantapāsādikā* explicitly reaches out to the international community of *vinaya-dhara*s by changing the language of the text from the locally spoken idiom of Sīhaḷadīpa to international Pāli.[15] Moreover, the material used is not only drawn from the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, but also from South Indian texts such as the *Andhakaṭṭhakathā*.[16] The *Samantapāsādikā* thus connects the monks of the Mahāvihāra to South India.[17] For, the explicit purpose of using Pāli is to guarantee a much wider 'international' audience and to open access to the Mahāvihāra *Vinaya* commentary also to monks of "other islands" (*dīpantare bhikkhujanassa*, Sp 2,10*).

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[14] Tsukamoto 1996: II. Amar(āvatī) 69: *saṃyutakabhanakānaṃ*; on later *bhāṇaka*s cf. also v. Hinüber 2004: 135 ff. Moreover, the discussion of different divisions of the Tipiṭaka etc. mentioned below may point to a still living, perhaps fading *bhāṇaka* tradition at the time of Buddhaghosa.

[15] Language is a long standing issue with the Buddhists starting from the famous and much debated expression *sakāya niruttiyā buddhavacanaṃ pariyāpuṇitum*, Vin II 139,15 (summed up and continued by Ruegg 2000, cf. Schopen quoted below, surfacing again in the rules concerning a monk leaving the Saṃgha (an *ariya* not understanding a *milakkhuka* and vice versa, Vin III 27,35) or in the discussion of different *janapadaniruti*s "vernaculars" using different words for the same object (MN III 234,30–235,17) and still continuing in the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* as shown by Schopen 2009 [2013] (with some references to *sakāya niruttiyā* in note 19).

[16] Kieffer-Pülz 1993.

[17] Indeed, references to India, particularly to the south, are easily found in the *Samantapāsādikā* and the *nikāya* commentaries such as, e.g., the example referring to the Vindhya mountains: *agāmake araññe ti agāmakaṃ nāma araññaṃ Viñjhāṭavi-ādisu*; Sp 655,11 or *tatthāyam upamā*: *yathā hi desabhāsākusalo tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ atthasaṃvaṇṇanako ācariyo ye damiḷa-bhāsāya vutte atthaṃ jānanti, tesaṃ damiḷabhāsāya ācikkhati. ye andhaka-bhāsādīsu aññatarāya tesaṃ tāya bhāsāya*, Ps I 137,33–138,2 etc., which is an early reference to Telugu, cf. also v. Hinüber 1977.

A last point is interesting for Buddhaghosa's understanding of himself as an author. He does not act on his own, but at the request of others. This is certainly more than a mere τόπος of modesty. For already the Buddha had to be asked by the god Brahma to teach, and similar requests occur time and again in Buddhist scriptures.[18] Furthermore, Buddhaghosa thus might wish to recall that he acts in accordance with one of the principles applied when a *suttanta* was created during the first council, and, lastly, as mentioned earlier, he might have needed some credentials for the acceptance of his work.

In contrast, Dhammapāla, the second great commentator of the Mahāvihāra, second in time but not at all in quality, did not deem it necessary to act in the same way as his predecessors did, not only Buddhaghosa, but also the anonymous commentators of the *Dhammapada* and the *Jātaka*: The latter names the three monks as the initiators: the Elder Atthadassin, then Buddhamitta, who was, interestingly, not a Theravādin, but a Mahiṃsāsaka, and at last the monk Buddhadeva.[19]

Once Buddhaghosa was asked to work for the Mahāvihāra, the restructuring of the whole tradition could start. For, Buddhaghosa goes far beyond modernizing an old and creating a new commentary.

His first task was, as it is emphasized time and again, to translate the text of the basic commentary, the old *aṭṭhakathā* from Sinhala into Pāli.[20] According to the Theravāda tradition, Mahinda brought not only the Tipiṭaka to Ceylon, but also the commentary. For this immediate commentary to the Tipiṭaka the Theravādins use the name *aṭṭhakathā*, a term not shared by any other Buddhist

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[18]   Vin I 6,23; cf. CPD s.v. *ajjhesana*; BHSD s.v. *adhyeṣaṇa*. The word used by Buddhaghosa is *āyācita*.

[19]   The presence of a Mahīśāsaka monk in Ceylon at the time is not at all surprising: Faxian acquired a copy of the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* in 410/1 during his stay on the island (de Jong 1981).

[20]   Only very few traces of the original old *aṭṭhakathā* survive, which were discovered by H. Smith (1950: 177–223, particularly p. 184, § 5). Unnecessary doubts concerning the translation of the old *aṭṭhakathā* are raised by Pind (1992: 138).

school known today.[21] This Ur-*aṭṭhakathā* was, again following the Theravāda tradition, in Pāli, but was translated into Sinhala by Mahinda for the benefit of the Sinhalese Buddhists. Mahinda's language was outdated by the time of Buddhaghosa some seven hundred years later. Consequently, Buddhaghosa was also a translator besides being the author of the new *aṭṭhakathā*.

As an author, however, Buddhaghosa is much more visible in his *Visuddhimagga*, which is the fundament of Theravāda orthodoxy, and as such the centrepiece of the whole commentary:

majjhe hi Visuddhimagga esa catunnam pi āgamānaṃ hi, Sv 2,6*[22]

For the *Visuddhimagga* is in the middle of the four *āgama*s.

Consequently, it is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the teaching of the Buddha following the Mahāvihāra tradition, to know the *Visuddhimagga* together with the commentary on at least one *nikāya*. Again, this could be an echo of the slowly fading *bhāṇaka* tradition.[23]

Thus, Buddhaghosa is at the same time the author of the *Visuddhimagga*, the translator and compiler of the commentaries besides being most likely the organizer of the huge project to comment not only on the four *nikāya*s, but also upon all parts of the Tipiṭaka with the exception of the *Khuddakanikāya*. This raises the question of the limits of the project, which Buddhaghosa himself draws very clearly.

Obviously, the *Khuddakanikāya* was set aside and left without commentary in spite of the fact that the tradition credits Buddhaghosa also with composing both the *Paramatthajotikā*s on

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[21] On the terminology used to designate different forms of commentaries see v. Hinüber 2007.

[22] The Sanskrit Sandhi°-*magga esa*, m.c., is remarkable.

[23] The definition of a *bahussuta* at *Samantapāsādikā* 788,26–790,9 still shows clear traces of the *bhāṇaka* tradition, cf. v. Hinüber 1989; cf. also Spk III 38,30–39,2 or *samaṇā nāma ekanikāyādivasena bahussutā*, Mp III 25,12 and *dīghamajjhimapaṃcamātukadesakavācaka ... dīghamajjhimanikāyadhara*, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Tsukamoto 1996, II Nag 14,9 with 6,11 (= Vogel 1929–1930 [1933]: 19 ff. with p. 17).

the *Khuddakapāṭha* and the *Suttanipāta* respectively. These, however, are the work of two anonymous authors.[24]

Moreover, although Buddhaghosa is supposed to be the author also of the *Abhidhamma* commentary, this can be safely ruled out by many arguments put forward in the course of time.[25] Similarly to Buddhaghosa's *nikāya* commentaries, those on the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* are also conceived as a set, although of a different structure.

First, only the commentaries explaining the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and the *Vibhaṅga* have individual names, *Atthasālinī* and *Sammohavinodanī* respectively, while the rest is called summarily *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā* "Commentary on the five treatises." At the beginning of the *Atthasālinī* that is at the beginning of this set there are introductory verses similar in content to those in the *nikāya* commentaries. However, these verses are not in the elaborate *āryā* metre used by Buddhaghosa to introduce his *nikāya* commentaries, but in simple *śloka*s. At the end of the commentary on the *Paṭṭhāna*, the last *Abhidhamma* text, there is a general *nigamana* to all seven commentaries. The individual *Pañcappakaraṇa* commentaries are introduced by a few verses, which interconnect them such as "… having taught the *Puggalapaññatti*, the Buddha proceeded to the *Kathāvatthu* …" etc., and each part is provided with a very short *nigamana*.

Still, the *Abhidhamma* commentaries are connected to Buddhaghosa, as stated very clearly at the beginning of the *Atthasālinī* in a very long and convoluted sentence in the introductory verses:

> *bhikkhunā Buddhaghosena sakkaccaṃ abhiyācito*
> *… atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi*, As 1,18*–2,5* (verses 8–17)

"Being respectfully asked by the monk Buddhaghosa … I will explain the meaning" is a clear and straightforward statement: Buddhaghosa is the initiator, which rules out his being the author at the same time. However, the tradition weighs so heavily on both translators of the *Atthasālinī* that they are unable to grasp this

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[24] Cf. HPL § 255.

[25] Hayashi 1999.

very simple meaning. The first translator, Pe Maung Tin (1920) translates correctly "being besought by Buddhaghosa," but hastens to add a footnote "Not the Thera, author of this work," while Ñāṇaponika (1942/2005) refers *abhiyācito* to *dhammo*, which he supplies without saying so: "Ward nun vom Mönche Buddhaghosa … die Hohe Lehre demutsvoll erbeten."[26]

Moreover, the set is again indirectly connected to Buddhaghosa in the brief *nigamana* to the *Puggalapaññatti* commentary, which not only refers to the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, but also to the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *Visuddhimagge yaṃ vuttaṃ taṃ anādāya saṅkhātā*
> *… aṭṭhakathā ayaṃ*, Pp(-a) 254,11* ff.

> This commentary is composed without taking up, what is said in the *Visuddhimagga*.

This method is also applied in the *nikāya* commentaries, but the phrasing "what is said in" against the wording of the *nikāya* commentaries "what is said by me in the *Visuddhimagga*" amply suggests that Buddhaghosa is not the author. However, the *Abhidhamma* commentaries are connected by cross references to the *nikāya* commentaries, which seems to indicate that Buddhaghosa acted as the overall organizer.

Lastly, the commentary on the *Vinaya* is attributed to Buddhaghosa, which was composed at the initiative of the Elder Buddhasiri:

> *ajjhesanaṃ Buddhasirivhayassa therassa …*, Sp 2,13*

However, style and structure of the *Samantapāsādikā* are so different that it is hardly conceivable that the same author was at work here as in the *nikāya* commentaries, even if the topic, Buddhist law, *vinaya*, is taken into consideration, which is quite different from the Buddhist *dhamma* discussed in the *nikāya*s and in the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*.

As mentioned above, the introductory verses of the *Samantapāsādikā*, which are composed in the *indravajrā* (*triṣṭubh*) meter, reach out to an international public, while the other commentaries

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26 Tin 1920: 2 with note 5; Nyānaponika 2005: 4.

are explicitly prepared for the use of the adherents of Mahāvihāra orthodoxy. The *nigamana* to the *Samantapāsādikā* is totally different as well, mentioning even the King Sirinivāsa during the years 20 and 21 of whose reign the *Samantapāsādikā* was composed. If correct, this is an astonishing speedy process given the enormous complexity of the text.

Moreover, it is difficult to understand, if Buddhaghosa was the author of both, the *nikāya* commentaries and the *Samantapāsādikā*, why he should repeat pieces of an obviously old and outdated *Vinaya* commentary in his explanations of the *nikāya*s, while the same text is also found in the *Samantapāsādikā*, but in a modernized form.[27]

Still, the *Samantapāsādikā* makes ample use of the *Visuddhimagga*[28] in the same way as the *nikāya* commentaries do to provide the necessary basic information on the Dhamma to the *vinayadhara*s. Again, as in the case of the *Abhidhamma* commentaries, it seems that Buddhaghosa is visible here as the head of this huge project to comment on almost the whole Tipiṭaka.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence how this enormous project was executed, but a few general considerations may help to imagine how this huge task was mastered by Buddhaghosa as a kind of redactor-in-chief and as an author. Obviously, he did not work alone. The sheer volume of the commentaries forbids that, even if reduced to the four *nikāya*s. For, the length of the texts is very impressive: The *nikāya* commentaries together with the *Visuddhimagga* comprise today 7200 printed pages, the *Abhidhamma* commentaries another 1700 pages and finally the *Samantapāsādikā* has about 1400 printed pages, adding up to as many as about 10300 pages. To handle this mass within any rea-

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[27]   HPL § 241.

[28]   Although P. V. Bapat and A. Hirakawa translate (1970: 106 with note 81 corresponding to Pāli *Visuddhimagge vuttanayen'eva*, Sp 147,9) "I have explained … in the Path of Purity", there is no Chinese character for "I." Consequently this is a very misleading interpretation by the translators instead of the correct "as it is said …;" HPL, p. 104, note 377 must be corrected accordingly.

sonable period of time, numerous staff sharing the workload is necessary. Although it is impossible to know how many monks might have worked together under the supervision of Buddhaghosa, it is, however, obvious that they worked very carefully and successfully. For, their activities can be traced by occasional remarks on the change in structure when the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* was remade into the modern Pāli one, and, first of all, when comparing parallel passages.[29]

Another glimpse at Buddhaghosa's work as redactor is provided by the very many cross references,[30] which indeed show that the *Visuddhimagga* was the centre of the project and consequently perhaps really composed first as the late tradition of the Cūlavaṃsa vaguely, but perhaps correctly remembers. It is conceivable that in order to connect the *Visuddhimagga* to the individual commentaries Buddhaghosa and his staff wrote an enormous amount of palm leaf slips with excerpts from the *Visuddhimagga*, to be inserted at the appropriate places in the various commentaries. Although this would be the obvious procedure, it is hard to find corresponding evidence in ancient India.[31]

While it is impossible to really see Buddhaghosa at work as redactor and compiler within this large scale Mahāvihāra project, his activities as author that is as commentator and as such also as a critic of the text are traced easily.

The first step for Buddhaghosa was to establish the text of the *suttanta*s, which he was going to explain. How exactly this was

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[29] The method by which this comparison could be worked out is outlined in HPL § 239–243.

[30] The cross references do not give any clue to the chronology of the composition of the commentaries (Adikaram [1946] 1953: 4).

[31] The only reference to the use of slips, which are called *pattrikā* in Sanskrit, traced so far is Jayaratha's (13th century) commentary on Ruyyaka's *Alaṃkārasarvasva* (Dvivedī 1939: 86, 137). Jayaratha surmises that readers confused slips with texts excerpted from Ruyyaka's work, which resulted in a faulty text (Jacobi [1908] 1969: 165). A second reference to the use of slips is perhaps found in the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya* (Schopen [1997] 2004: 402).

done, remains to a large extent uncertain. However, variants are giv-
en, rarely with their source,[32] which is usually the (old) *aṭṭhakathā*:

pāḷiyaṃ pana mahabbalā ti likhanti. aṭṭhakathāyaṃ sabbavāresu mahābalā ti pāṭho, Sv 686,32–34

They write however *mahabbalā* in the canonical text, in the *aṭṭhakathā* in all instances the reading is *mahābalā*.

This obviously is a trifle variant, irrelevant for the interpretation of the text, as most of them actually are. Still, Buddhaghosa meticu-
lously lists them. Two conclusions can be drawn from this obser-
vation: Buddhaghosa had before him a very stable and robust text tradition with relatively few variants, and he was very careful in preserving also very minor variations in the wording.[33]

Occasionally, Buddhaghosa notes the often blurred distinction between *-tt-* and *-nt-*, a problem well known to any reader of Indian manuscripts or inscriptions:

mattaṃ mattan ti pamāṇayuttaṃ pamāṇayuttaṃ. mantā mantā[34] ti pi pāṭho paññāya upaparikkhitvā upaparikkhitvā ti attho, Sv 821,1

Measure by measure means: by the appropriate measure. There is also the reading: having deliberated again and again, meaning having examined again and again in one's mind.

The wording "there is also the reading" indicates Buddhaghosa's preference for the reading given in the *pratīka*.

Variations between single letters only are not rare, but conse-
quences for the meaning of a word or even the wording of a para-
graph are seldom as considerable as in the following example:

sa bhūtapacaniṃ pacī ti … pajanin ti pi pāṭho, Ps I 58,24–26

This well-known hesitation of the Mahāvihāra tradition between voiced and voiceless consonants,[35] in this particular case *-j-* and *-c-*,

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[32]   Unfortunately, it is not possible to draw much benefit from Endo 2002.

[33]   There are, e.g., only 46 *pāṭha*s noted for the *Dīghanikāya* in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*.

[34]   Eᵉ *mantvā*! At the same time this is one of the frequent variations *-ā* : *-aṃ*.

[35]   This hesitation is also found in South Indian Buddhist Prakrit, cf.

changes the meaning radically. The reading °-*pacaniṃ* is explained by *paci*, *dayhi*, but °-*pajaniṃ* by *janikaṃ nibbattikaṃ*, exactly the opposite "destroying" versus "producing."

The following variant should also be seen in this light:

kiṃ je Ambapālī ti je ti ālapanavacanaṃ. bhoti Ambapāli. kiṃkāraṇā ti vuttaṃ hoti. kiñ ce ti pi pāṭho ayam ev'ettha attho, Sv 545,18–20

"Why, my dear Ambapālī?" My dear is an address. "Hey Ambapālī, why (*kiṃkāraṇā*)?" This is said. There is also the variant *kiñ ce* with exactly the same meaning.[36]

Moreover, the variation between a voiced and unvoiced consonant seems to be at the root of the following corrupted wording:

gāmapaddhanan (Bᵉ *gāmapaṭṭan*; Cᵉ [SHB] *gāmapaṭṭanan*) *ti vuṭṭhita-gāmapadeso vuccati. gāmapadan ti pi pāṭho ayam ev'attho*, Sv 812,27

… The place, from which a group/village has risen/moved. There is also the variant "trace of a group/village" with exactly the same meaning.

It is clear also from the context in the *Dīghanikāya*[37] that a deserted village is meant, where two friends try to trace valuables (*dhanaṃ*, DN II 349,28), which might have been left behind. While the variant preserved by Buddhaghosa, *gāmapada* "the trace of a village," does not pose any difficulty, *gāmapaddhana* and variants are obscure, although the meaning "deserted village" is beyond doubt from the context and from the commentary.

The subcommentary explains:

Nakanishi & v. Hinüber 2014: 14 f.

[36] Eᵉ and Cᵉ (SHB) both read *kiñce*; Bᵉ has *kiñcāti*, which does not make sense. The remarks by An (2003: 69 f.) are slightly beside the point: "Madam (*bhoti*) Ambapālī" is inconsistent with p. 69, note 6, because *je* is an address of inferiors and *kiñ ce* "what if" does not fit the context of the *suttanta*. On the use of *je* as an address see v. Hinüber 1994: 8 f.

[37] The text of the *Pāyāsisuttanta* has *gāmapaddhanaṃ* with the variants in manuscripts *gāma-*: Sᵈ °-*paṇḍanaṃ*, Sᵗ °-*paccanaṃ*, Bᵐ °-*paṭṭaṃ*, K °-*pajjaṃ*; Bᵉ reads *gāmapaṭṭaṃ* (with the variants *gāmapattaṃ*, Cᵉ; *gāmapajjaṃ*, Sᵉ). There are other corruptions in the parallel passages in this *suttanta*.

gāmapattan (v. l. *gāmavajjan* [thus most mss.]; B[e] *gāmapattan* [!])
ti gāmo eva hutvā āpajjitabbaṃ suññabhāvena anāvasitabbaṃ.[38]
*ten'āha vuṭṭhitagāmappadeso ti. gāmapadan ti yathā purisassa pāda-
nikkhittaṭṭhānaṃ adhigataparicchedaṃ padan ti vuccati,* Sv-pṭ II
449,20–24

… Having been a village, it (°-*pattaṃ*) can be approached (*āpajji-
tabbaṃ*), (but) it cannot be inhabited, because it is deserted (empty).
Therefore it is said "a place from where a group/village has risen/
moved." "Trace of a village" is explained as a trace with clear con-
tours just as the place, where a man had put down his foot.

In the first part of the explanation *patta* seems to be understood
as "place" (based on a reading *paṭṭana*?). From this a *gāma* "has
risen" according to Buddhaghosa's commentary, that is it moved.
Therefore, this is another trace of the Vedic meaning of *grā́ma* "a
(migrating) group of people."[39]

At the same time, the original reading can be guessed now.
None of the variants *gāma-paddhana*, °-*paṭṭana*, °-*paccana* etc.
makes sense. All begin with *pa-*° and end in °-*ana*. The liga-
tures in the middle *ddha/ṭṭa/cca* seem to mirror something which
was not any longer understood. As rightly pointed out in Sv-pṭ
II 449 note 125, in Sinhala script *ddha* and *ṭṭa* are very simi-
lar. Consequently, the reading may have been *paṭṭana* rather, al-
though a *gāmapaṭṭana* "village-city" is not very likely and does
not fit Buddhaghosa's explanation. Therefore, it seems that an
original **gāmapatana* was no longer understood and consciously
'emended' to *gāmapaṭṭana*. The reason is easy to see. For, at the

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[38] So correctly B[e]; E[e] w.r. (misprint?) *anāmasitabbaṃ*.

[39] This meaning is not recognized in either the PED or the NPED, but
cf. Rhys Davids & Oldenberg 1882: 1 note 1 "parish, not village;" for the
Vedic evidence see Rau 1957: 51, § 36; for Pāli, e.g., *gāmo corehi vuṭṭhāsi
… gāmo dvedhā bhijjittha … yena bahutarā tena gantuṃ*, Vin I 149,18–22
"Because of robbers the group moved … the group split into two … to go,
where the majority is;" or *yo pi sattho atirekacatumāsanivittho so pi gāmo*
"a caravan that has settled down for more than four months is also called a
village." Both instances show that the Vedic meaning and the knowledge of
a moving *gāma* just persisted in some old wordings found in the Theravāda
canon.

time of Buddhaghosa, if not much earlier, *gāmapatana* could be only understood as a meaningless "falling of a village," when the Vedic meaning of both words, *gāma* and *patana*, was forgotten. If, on the other hand, the Vedic meanings for both members of the compound are applied, *gāmapatana* as "a group (of people) rushing on" perfectly fits the context and the explanation of the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*. Moreover, this is again one of those explanations preserved in the new *aṭṭhakathā* which seem to be fairly old: The Vedic meaning of the root √*pat* can hardly have been known at the time of Buddhaghosa.[40]

A similar change in meaning, also involving the word *gāma*, is preserved in the interpretation of *senānigamo*:

> *senānigamo ti senāya nigamo paṭhamakappikānaṃ kira tasmiṃ ṭhāne senānivāso ahosi. tasmā so padeso senānigamo vuccati. senānigāmo ti pi pāṭho. Senāni nāma Sujātāya pitā tassa gāmo ti attho*, Ps II 173,24

> Senānigama means the settling down of an army. For in a former age there was a resting place of an army at this location. Therefore this place is called Senā-nigama. There is also the reading Senāni-gāma. Senāni is [the name of] the father of Sujātā, whose village this is. That is the meaning.

While Buddhaghosa again preserves an old and correct interpretation of *nigama* as "settling down," the variant *senāni-gāma* is based on the interpretation prevalent in the Buddhist Sanskrit tradition, where *Mahāvastu* or *Lalitavistara* both have Senāpatigrāma[41] with the original meaning of *nigama* "settling down" most likely being forgotten. This meaning, however, seems to be still present in Pāli *gāmanigama* meaning "settling down of a group (of people)" as in *Vebhaḷiṅgaṃ nāma gāmanigamo*, MN II 45,13 "the settlement (of a group) called Vebhaḷiṅga" or in *gāmanigamaṃ … duvidhena vadāmi*, AN V 101,20 "A settlement can be of two sorts, as I say." However, already in canonical language the compound was re-interpreted as "village and small town" as in *gāmanigamarājadhāniyo gāmā pi … nigamā pi … nagarā pi*, AN I 159, 31–160,1.

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[40] A similar case is the explanation *giñjaka*, see below, and v. Hinüber 2015.

[41] Cf. BHSD s.v.

In spite of being mostly rather conservative as in *anaṇo ti …
aniṇo ti pi pāṭho*, Ps III 343,14[42], Buddhaghosa sometimes accepts
modernisations such as:

> *vaṅkagasto va ambujo ti baḷisaṃ gilitvā ṭhitamaccho viya. ghaso ti pi
> pāṭho ayam ev'attho*, Sv 702,23

> Like a fish which has eaten a hook means: like a fish in the state of
> having swallowed a hook. There is also the variant "eating" with ex-
> actly the same meaning.

Here, *ghasto* is not genuine Middle Indic, but one of the many arti-
ficial forms in Pāli.[43]

An interesting modernisation, which Buddhaghosa did not rec-
ognize as such perhaps, is the variant: *āyāmā ti ehi yāma ayāmā
ti pi pāṭho gacchāmā ti attho*, Sv 537,36 explaining *āyām' Ānanda
yena Ambalaṭṭhikā*, DN II 81,14 in the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*.
Here, Buddhaghosa piously preserves the old form *ayāma*, be-
cause as a good Sanskritist, he was certainly aware that this is the
form of the imperative 1st person pl. in Sanskrit. The explanation
of the subcommentary, on the other hand, shows that this know-
ledge was finally lost: *ayāmā ti pana pāṭhe akāro nipātamattaṃ*,
Sv-pṭ II 175,28 "in the variant *ayāma*, however, the letter *a* is a
particle."

In some instances, the variant and Buddhaghosa's explanation
coincide: *tumhe khvettha bhaṇe ti tumhe kho ettha bhaṇe. ayam eva
vā pāṭho*, Sv 812,18, where only the Sandhi *khv-ettha* is explained.

The same coincidence can be observed in the following explan-
ation, where various editions established slightly different word-
ings: *seyyathā pi … kuṭṭarājāno* (mss. S[1–3] *kujja-°*; B[e] *kuṭṭa-°* with
v.l. C[e] *kuḍḍa-°*) … *cakkavattissa anuyantā*, SN V 44,13 is explained
as *kuḍḍarājāno* (B[e] *kuṭṭa-°*; C[e] [SHB] *kuḍḍa-°*) *ti khuddakarājāno*
(C[e] [SHB] *kūṭa-°*), *khuddakarājāno ti pi pāṭho*, Spk III 134,16.[44]

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[42]   v. Hinüber 2001: § 122.

[43]   While *vaṅkaghasta* prevails, there is only *kālaghasa*.

[44]   = *kuḍḍarājāno* (B[e] *khudda-°*; C[e] [SHB] = E[e] with v.l. *khudda-°*), Mp III
385,5 ad *khuddarājāno* (v.l. *khuddaka-°*; *khuḍḍa-°*; B[e] *khudda-°*), AN III 365,7
= *kuḍḍarājāno ti khuddakarājāno, khuddakarājāno* (v.l. *kūṭa-°* = B[e]) *ti pi pāṭho*,

Reading and explanation obviously influenced each other. The context shows that *kuḍḍarāja*s are subordinate to a *cakkavatti*, which lead to the explanation *khuddaka-°* that intruded into the text and replaced the incomprehensible *kuṭṭa-°*.[45]

Buddhaghosa's explanation shows that the principle of the *lectio difficilior* was silently respected. This is even formulated in a way in the *Samantapāsādikā*, when the construction of the phrase *sarasi tvaṃ Dabba evaṃrūpaṃ kattā*, Vin III 162,29 is discussed. A problem arises here, because the absolutive *kattā* under the disguise of a *nomen agentis* was not recognized. The discussion of this word ends by:

> *ye pana katvā ti paṭhanti tesaṃ ujukam eva*, Sp 581,8, cf. 592,15

Those who read *katvā* get a straightforward construction.

Although these variants preserved in Buddhaghosa's and other commentaries, would provide a basis for a much more comprehensive study, it is sufficient here to remember that Buddhaghosa as a commentator also acted as a text critic, when he carefully checked the wording of the texts, which he and his team were handling. In acting this way, he seems to follow the practice of the old *aṭṭhakathā*, because some few variants are attributed already to that text.

Although Buddhaghosa nowhere explains the principles of his textual criticism, he does so once it comes to literary criticism.

At the very beginning of the four *nikāya* commentaries, the introduction *evaṃ me sutaṃ* etc., which is called *nidāna*, Sv 50,18, needs a lengthy explanation (Sv 26,1–50,19; Ps I 3,1–15,19; Spk I 4,1–13,27; Mp I 4,1–19,5). First, a distinction is made very briefly between grammatical analysis (*padavibhāga*), and the explanation of the meaning (*attha*):[46]

> *ettha evan ti nipātapadaṃ. me ti ādīni nāmapadāni. paṭipanno hotīti ettha paṭīti upasaggapadaṃ, hotīti ākhyātapadan ti iminā tāva nayena*

Mp V,14 (Eᵉ = Ce 1926) ad *kuḍḍa-°* (v.l. B *kuṭa-°*; Bᵉ *khudda-°*), AN V 22,8.

[45] CDIAL 3238 **kuṭṭa-³* "defective" is not helpful.

[46] The terminology is explained by Smith (1949: 1105–1148).

padavibhāgo veditabbo. atthato pana evaṃsaddo … anekatthabhedo
…, Sv 26,13–18

Here *evaṃ* is a particle, *me* etc. are pronouns, *paṭipanno hoti*: here
paṭi is a preverb, *hoti* is a verb. This method should be recognized as
grammatical analysis. Regarding, however, the meaning … the word
evaṃ has various meanings.

When commenting on the *nidāna* the following points are discussed:
kāla-desa-desaka-parisā-apadesa(*-paṭimaṇḍitaṃ nidānaṃ*), Sv
50,18 = Ps I 15,18 = Spk II 3,13 = Mp I 19,4 "time, region, in-
structor, audience, reason."

At the end of the commentary on the *nidāna* and before
Buddhaghosa begins to explain the *suttanta* proper, he returns to
theory.

Two basic principles of interpretations are outlined. The first
point to be investigated systematically, are the different reasons,
why the Buddha delivered a certain discourse (*suttanta*) the next is
the overall structure within the individual discourses.

The first question asked by Buddhaghosa is: What induced the
Buddha to deliver a discourse? The answer is given in the four
*suttanikkhepa*s "the reasons for laying down a *suttanta*." The first
is the Buddha's own intention or disposition (*attajjhāsaya*), which
induces him to act without being asked to do so. Buddhaghosa lists
some examples among them the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasuttanta* or the
Ariyavaṃsasuttanta.

The second reason is the disposition of another person (*para-
jjhāsaya*). This applies, if the Buddha recognizes in somebody
the readiness to make spiritual progress. In this category the
Rāhulovādasuttanta is mentioned.

The third reason for the Buddha to speak is a question (*pucchāvasi-
ka*) as it is the case at the beginning of the *Sāmaññaphalasuttanta*
or in various parts of the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya*.

The fourth and last reason simply is an occasion presenting it-
self (*aṭṭhuppattika*) as in the case of the *Dārukkhandhūpama* in the
Saḷāyatanavagga of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* or the *Aggikkhandhūpama*
in the *Sattakanipāta* of the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, where the Buddha

sees a huge heap of wood or a big fire and takes this at the starting point of a discourse (SN IV 179,5–181,23; AN IV 127).

The division of a *suttanta* into paragraphs as it were, is achieved by recurring to the four *anusandhi*s. These are explained in two commentaries, in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* and in the *Papañcasūdanī* on the *Dīgha-* and *Majjhimanikāya* respectively (Sv 122,21–123,22 ≠ Ps I 175,25–176, 8) by adducing different examples in both commentaries.

There are three types of *anusandhi*s "connections" or "developments," which run parallel to the *suttanikkhepa*s, but mark a turning point or some progress in a discourse.

This may be achieved by a question, and, consequently, there is a *pucchānusandhi*. The only example for this *anusandhi* is again taken from the *Dārukkhandhūpama* in the *Saṃyuttanikāya* (SN IV 179,5 ff.), where the Buddha talks about *orima tīra*, *pārima tīra* etc. and a monk asks: What does this mean *orima tīra* etc.?[47] Interestingly, in his very long commentary on the *Dārukkhandhūpama* itself, Buddhaghosa does not come back to the *pucchānusandhi*, but explains that the Buddha knew from the very beginning that there was somebody who was *anusandhikusala* "well-versed in *anusandhi*s," and, would, therefore put a question at the right point (Spk III 40,23).

If there is the second *anusandhi*, the *ajjhāsaya-anusandhi*, the discourse develops, because the Buddha notices the right disposition of a monk as in the corresponding *suttanikkhepa* and asks "what do you think monks … ?" thus developing his talk. This *anusandhi* is demonstrated by an inexact quotation from *Mahāpuṇṇamasuttanta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* (MN III 19,15 ff.), and again there is no reference to an *anusandhi* in the corresponding commentary (Ps IV 79).

The third and last *anusandhi* concerns the natural development from one topic to the next and is called *yathānusandhi*.

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[47]   In the commentary Nanda the cow-herd (*gopālaka*, Sv 122,24) asks the Buddha, which does not concur with *aññataro bhikkhu*, SN IV 180,4 which is, as the content of the *suttanta* shows, correct, cf. SN IV 181,5.

These tools as described here by Buddhaghosa are not an invention of the Theravādins or Buddhaghosa himself. For, the term *anusandhi* as such does occur elsewhere in Buddhist literature, e.g., in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, and *anusandhi*s are discussed by Vasubandhu in the *Vyākhyāyukti*. These, however, are quite different from those defined by Buddhaghosa.[48]

The tools of interpretation described here are not used systematically in Buddhaghosa's commentaries in such a way that *sutta-nikkhepa*s are given regularly in the explanation of every individual *suttanta* as done later by Dhammapāla.

However, Buddhaghosa refers to the three *anusandhi*s occasionally, which he uses as a device of interpretation, e.g., in explaining the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* (SN I 23): A monk, who is well versed in the *anusandhi*s (*anusandhikusala*) thinks: "The meaning (*attha*) of this verse (spoken by the Buddha) did not develop naturally (*yathānusandhi*)." Therefore he himself utters a verse in the intention "to connect (the meaning) in a natural way" (*yathānusandhiṃ ghaṭento evam āha*, Spk I 64,1–3). Thus, in a way, he even seems to correct the speech of the Buddha. Of course he does not, because it is said occasionally that the Buddha knowing the *anusandhikusalatā* present in his audience plans his discourse in such a way as to provoke a reaction from a monk knowledgeable in *anusandhi*. This is stated clearly in the commentary on the *Aṅguttaranikāya*:

> *satthā desanaṃ paṭṭhapetvā yathānusandhiṃ apāpetvā tuṇhī ahosi. kasmā? anusandhikusalā anusandhiṃ uṭṭhahitvā pucchissanti. bahū hi imasmiṃ ṭhāne tathārūpā bhikkhū athāhaṃ tehi puṭṭho desanaṃ vaḍḍhissāmīti. ath'eko anusandhikusalo bhikkhu bhagavantaṃ pucchanto …,* Mp II 178,9–13

> The teacher delivered a discourse and fell silent without having brought it to an end in a naturally coherent way. Why? "Those knowledgeable in *anusandhi*s will create an *anusandhi* by asking. For, in this audience there are many monks of that quality. Once I am asked, I will expand my discourse." Then, one monk knowledgeable in *anusandhi*s asking the Buddha …

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[48] Following Nance (2012: 117 f.), cf. Smith 1949: § 5.3.2.1.

Although the three specific *anusandhi*s are not referred to systematically, the question about *anusandhi* arises time and again. In many different ways monks at the time of the Buddha, who are well versed in *anusandhi*s, are supposed to have influenced the course of a conversation between the Buddha, who himself of course possesses *anusandhikusalatā*, Ps V 18,7, and his audience, when these monks helped to establish the coherence of a discourse.

Therefore reflecting on *anusandhi*s or the correct or clear development of a discourse seems to have been more or less a commonplace procedure, because the discourses of the Buddha are characterized as: *na hi buddhānam ananusandhikakathā nāma atthi*, Spk I 249,10 "For there is no discourse of the Buddha without coherence (*anusandhi*)." This sentence introduces the explanation of how two parts of the respective discourse in the *Sagāthavagga* of the *Saṃyuttanikāya* are connected.

The *anusandhi*s, which are found in a text, are consequently a device used by Buddhaghosa to control coherence and quality of the Buddha's discourses. As good texts they develop from one *anusandhi* to the next. The Buddha of course was aware of the perfect structure of a discourse, and so were many of his monks in the traditional understanding.

It is likely that the use of *anusandhi*s in text interpretation had already fairly long tradition during Buddhaghosa's time as one paragraph at the beginning of the *Papañcasūdanī* also seems to indicate.

For, while the length of the respective basic text is indicated in the introductions to all four commentaries by giving the number of *suttanta*s etc., it is only in the introduction to the *Papañcasūdanī*, that the overall number of *anusandhi*s is noted as well, because it might have been of particular importance only for the Majjhimabhāṇakas.[49]

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[49]   Their number is given as 3900 (Ps I 2,27) for the 153 (E^e 152 [!], Ps I 2,17) *suttanta*s of the *Majjhimanikāya* or no less than an average of 25.49 (25.65) *anusandhi*s in each individual *suttanta*. However, not too much confidence should be put into this figure, because the length of the text of the

Therefore, it is impossible to determine Buddhaghosa's share as an author and theoretician in the discussion on *anusandhi*s. For, he might have taken over a considerable amount of material from the old *aṭṭhakathā* thus acting as a redactor and compiler rather, who follows the tradition.

In some cases it is almost certain that Buddhaghosa adapted older material. When commenting on the building in Nādikā called *giñjakāvasatha* he correctly explains the rare word *giñjaka* in his gloss *iṭṭhakāmaye āvasathe*, Sv 543,11 = Ps II 235,6 = Spk III 281,8 = Mp III 351,23 ≠ Spk II 75,3 "in a house made of bricks."[50] This is clearly north Indian knowledge introduced to Ceylon together with the canonical text, and it is perhaps not by chance that this old explanation is found in the commentary on the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*.

Moreover, simple explanations of commonplace words such as *aṇuṃ thūlan* (DN I 223,8*) *ti khuddakaṃ mahantaṃ* or *uppannaṃ hotīti* (DN II 223,10) *jātaṃ hoti*, Sv 395,9[51] make sense only in a Sinhala commentary explaining Pāli words in Sinhala Prākrit, glosses which the compiler Buddhaghosa piously incorporated into his modernized commentary.

Buddhaghosa's activities as a redactor can be seen best by comparing parallel passages in different commentaries such as the explanation of the ten *sikkhāpada*s found in all four *nikāya* commentaries and furthermore in the *Atthasālinī* as an *Abhidhamma* commentary. Even a preliminary investigation into these parallels

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Majjhimanikāya as calculated in *akkhara*s and *bhāṇavāra*s (= 8000 *akṣara*s, cf. Smith 1949 § 5.3.3.1) contains obvious mistakes. It is calculated as 740053 *akṣara*s corresponding to 80 and half a *bhāṇavāra*s plus 23 *akkhara*s, which does not tally: 80.5 *bhāṇavāra*s plus 23 syllables equal only 644023 syllables, and, on the other hand, 740053 *akkhara*s are 92.5 *bhāṇavāra*s plus 53 *akkhara*s.

[50]   On *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*: *tatra sudaṃ bhagavā Nādike viharati giñjakāvasathe*, DN II 91,21 = II 94,15; cf. Bloch 1951. Grierson 1926 § 1263 *pangiñjā*. The word *giñjaka* is now also attested in epigraphy (v. Hinüber & Skilling 2013: 22). Cf. *gāma* and *nigama* discussed above.

[51]   HPL § 231.

shows that Buddhaghosa marvellously held the huge mass of text together by numerous cross references and very carefully checked parallel passages.[52]

Finally, as a literary critic Buddhaghosa is keen to examine the history of the texts he is commenting on far beyond textual criticism. Again, he provides the theoretical frame work for evaluating the tradition at the beginning of the first commentary, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, where he inserts an interesting paragraph into the historical introduction, when the first council is described.

After Buddhaghosa quotes the questions answered by Upāli as described in the *Vinaya*, he continues:

> … *puṭṭho puṭṭho āyasmā Upāli vissajjesi* (Vin II 287,9). – *Kim pan' ettha paṭhamapārājike kiñci apanetabbaṃ vā pakkhipitabbaṃ vā āsi nāsī ti? Buddhassa bhagavato bhāsite apanetabbaṃ nāma natthi. na hi tathāgatā ekavyañjanam pi niratthakaṃ vadanti. sāvakānaṃ pana devatānaṃ vā bhāsite apanetabbaṃ pi hoti. taṃ dhammasaṅgāhakā therā apanayiṃsu. pakkhipitabbaṃ pana sabbatthāpi atthi, tasmā yaṃ yattha pakkhipituṃ yuttaṃ tam pi pakkhipiṃsu yeva. kiṃ pana tan ti?* "*tena samayenā*" *ti vā* "*tena kho pana samayenā*" *ti vā* "*atha kho ti*" *vā* "*evaṃ vutte*" *ti vā* "*etad avocā*" *ti vā evamādikaṃ sambandhavacanamattaṃ evaṃ pakkhipitabbayuttaṃ pakkhipitvā pana* "*idaṃ paṭhamaṃ pārājikan*" *ti ṭhapesuṃ,* Sv 12,13–25

Asked time and again Upāli answered. – However, was there anything that should be removed or added? There is nothing in the word of a Buddha, which should be removed, because the *tathāgata*s do not utter a single sound without meaning. In the utterances of the pupils or the gods there are (parts) that should be removed, and the members of the council did remove that. But everywhere something can be added. Therefore they added exactly that which was appropriate at a certain place. However, what is that? After connecting words such as "at that time," or "now at that time," or "then," or "having said so," or "said that," etc. apt to be added, were added they established "This is the first Pārājika."

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[52] HPL § 239. This topic involving an investigation into the structure of the old and new *aṭṭhakathā*s cannot be discussed in detail here, cf., however, HPL § 243.

Although there are some obvious additions to the canonical collections made at a later date, if *suttanta*-texts are said not to have been spoken by the Buddha such as the *Gopakamoggallānasutta*, MN III 7–15,[53] which begins: *Ānando Rājagahe viharati … acira-parinibbute bhagavati*, MN III 7,13 ff., Buddhaghosa is silent here in his commentary, but at another instance, at the end of the *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta*, he, as a literary critic, in two steps classifies some paragraphs as later, even much later additions.

First, the unusual, but certainly old concluding sentence *evam etaṃ bhūtapubbaṃ*, DN II 167,21 is considered as being added only during the third council,[54] and the following seven verses (DN II 167,22–168,4) are thought to be composed still later in Ceylon.[55]

Moreover, Buddhaghosa attributed verses spoken during the Buddha's last meal to the redactors of the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*.[56] These verses are missing in the parallel Sanskrit version. Therefore it is not impossible that Buddhaghosa was influenced here again by the Sanskrit tradition[57] and that he wanted to get rid of the verses in order to 'modernize' a text without changing it, which, of course, could not be changed.

Problems of this kind were much more pressing for the second great commentator Dhammapāla, who probably wrote even more commentaries than Buddhaghosa did. For, besides his *Paramattha-dīpanī* on five texts of the *Khuddakanikāya*, he is credited with a set of subcommentaries to Buddhaghosa's work, the four *nikāya*

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[53]   MN no. 108 *Gopakamoggallāna*-s, cf. *suttanta*s MN nos. 84 *Madhura*-s, 94 *Ghoṭamukha*-s, 124 *Bakkula*-s.

[54]   *tatiyasaṅgītikārā pi imaṃ padaṃ ṭhapayiṃsu*, Sv 615,13 "this sentence was inserted by the members of the third council."

[55]   *gāthāyo pana Tambapaṇṇittherehi vuttā*, Sv 615,17 "The verses, however, were spoken by Elders in Ceylon."

[56]   *Cundassa bhattaṃ …*, DN II 128,6*–12* : *imā pana dhammasaṅgāha-katherehi ṭhapitā gāthā ti veditabbā*, Sv 568,30 f. and: *gantvāna buddho …*, DN II 135,3*–16* : *imā pi gāthā saṅgītikāle yeva ṭhapitā*, Sv 571,17.

[57]   Cf. the explanation of Senānigama quoted above.

commentaries[58] including a commentary (the *Paramatthamañjūsā*) on the *Visuddhimagga*, the *Līnatthavaṇṇanā*, a sub-subcommentary to the *Abhidhamma* commentaries, and a subcommentary to the *Netti-aṭṭhakathā*.

Even less is known about Dhammapāla than about Buddhaghosa. Dhammapāla and his work are not mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Cūḷavaṃsa*). His monastery of unknown location is named in a very brief colophon as Badaratitthavihāra. It is not unlikely that he was a South Indian. This may be the reason for the sequence of *Khuddakanikāya* texts in Dhammapāla's *Paramatthadīpanī* I–VII, which markedly differs from that in the Mahāvihāra-Tipiṭaka, but concurs with the tradition of the Dīghabhāṇakas and particularly with that of the Majjhimabhāṇakas (Sv 15,22 ff.), who, like Dhammapāla, included also the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, which was not in the *Khuddakagantha* of the Dīghabhāṇakas.[59]

Dhammapāla certainly is younger than Buddhaghosa. For, it is evident at once from the introduction to his set of commentaries at the beginning of *Paramatthadīpanī* I on the *Udāna* that Buddhaghosa's project was the model for Dhammapāla, which he probably even tried to surpass by being more detailed and systematic. A significant progress in the technique of composing commentaries between Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla is easily recognized.

Following Buddhaghosa's model, Dhammapāla describes the texts to be commented on, and calculates their length.[60] Further, in contrast to Buddhaghosa, the *anusandhi*s are systematically described: There are altogether 81 *anusandhi*s in the *Udāna*, two texts have *pucchānusandhi*s and the rest develops *yathānusandhi*. There is no *ajjhāsayanusandhi* (Ud-a 4,27–31, cf. It-a I 37,10–12).

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[58] The *Līnatthappakāsinī* includes also the commentary on the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*.

[59] HPL § 85.

[60] E.g., the length of the *Udāna* as 8,5 *bhāṇavāra*s (*aḍḍhanavamattā*, Ud-a 4,28; E^e w.r. *addhunā*[!]*navamattā*) or 67.382 *akkhara*s (68.000) or 2100 *śloka*s (recte 2125), which is approximately correct.

This is as typical for Dhammapāla's more sophisticated and more systematic approach, as is the long and complicated discussion on *evaṃ me sutaṃ* (Ud-a 6,1–25,13) or his careful and much more comprehensive definition of the four *suttanikkhepa*s (Ud-a 29,26–31,15), which ends in the *suttanikkhepa*s being again systematically presented for every individual text of the *Udāna* (Ud-a 31,1–15).

The texts, which Dhammapāla comments upon, are much more diverse than those collected in the four great *nikāya*s. Some, such as *Thera-* and *Therīgāthā* are not *buddhavacana*. Therefore, Dhammapāla confronts the role of the members of the different councils much more often and that frequently in greater detail. This starts at the beginning of the *Udāna* commentary, when Dhammapāla emphasizes that the *Udāna* was shaped by the members of the first council (*dhammasaṅgāhaka*), who did not collect all *udāna*s in the *Udāna*, but transferred some to the *Dhammapada*.[61]

The unusual introduction to the texts of the Itivuttaka, which begin, as it is well-known, not by *evaṃ me sutaṃ*, but by *vuttaṃ hetaṃ*, is a welcome opportunity for Dhammapāla to discuss and describe the work of the redactors participating in the first council in greater detail:

> *api ca nānānayehi saṅgītikārā dhammavinaye saṃgāyiṃsu. anubuddhā hi dhammasaṅgāhakamahātherā. te sammadeva dhammavinayassa saṅgāyanākāraṃ jānantā katthaci "evaṃ me sutan" ti-ādinā, katthaci "tena samayenā" ti-ādinā, katthaci gāthābandhavasena nidānaṃ ṭhapentā, katthaci sabbena sabbaṃ nidānaṃ aṭhapentā vagga-saṅgahādivasena dhammavinayaṃ saṅgāyiṃsu. tattha idha "vuttañ hetan" ti-ādinā nidānaṃ ṭhapetvā saṅgāyiṃsu,* It-a I 32,25–32

Moreover, the redactors collected the teachings and discipline according to various principles. For the great Elders were the immediate successors to the Buddha as redactors. Because they knew the correct shape of the recitation of *dhamma* and *vinaya*, they inserted

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[61] *dhammasaṅgāhakehi Udānapāḷiyaṃ saṅgahaṃ anāropetvā Dhamma-pade saṅgītā*, Ud-a 3,27 f. As Bernhard (1968: 881) has demonstrated (without, however, referring to Dhammapāla's much earlier observation) the *Udānavarga* originally was a close parallel to the Pāli *Udāna* and developed only gradually into a *Dhammapada* text.

sometimes "thus have I heard" and so on, sometimes "at that time" and so on, sometimes they used verses as an introduction, sometimes they abstained altogether from inserting an introduction, and divided *dhamma* and *vinaya* by means of paragraphs and so on. In this way they recited this collection (*iha*, i.e. the *Itivuttaka*) by establishing "this was said" as the introduction.

The reason given by Dhammapāla, why the redactors active during the first council were able and permitted to shape the text was their unusual status of *anubuddha*s, as learned monks still very near to the Buddha himself. This authority could never be reached again by any later monk.

Even these few observations demonstrate that both commentators reflected on their work and on the texts they were dealing with in many, often almost modern ways, and that they did have a critical approach to the texts they were explaining in an encyclopaedic manner including grammar and lexicon as well as dogmatic matters and even ecclesiastic law, at times embracing history and stories as well. It will be possible only after a detailed study of the manifold aspects of Buddhaghosa's and Dhammapāla's work to investigate how all this interrelates to the commentaries of other Buddhist schools.

Appendix

Visuddhimagganidānakathā, Dhammagiri CD-ROM/Chattha Sangayana Tipitaka 4,0 (p. 33):

Tathā imassa pi visuddhimaggassa nigamane – "moraṇḍakheṭaka-vattabbenā" ti vuttaṃ. Ettha ca kheṭo ti padassa gāmo ti vā, jāna-padānaṃ kassakānaṃ nivāso ti vā, khuddakanagaran ti vā tayo atthā sakkatābhidhāne pakāsitā, dakkhiṇa-indiyaraṭṭhesu ca yāv'ajjata-nâpi gāmo kheḍā ti voharīyati. Tasmā moraṇḍavhaye kheṭe jāto moraṇḍakheṭako, moraṇḍakheṭako iti vattabbo moraṇḍakheṭaka-vattabbo, tena moraṇḍakheṭakavattabbenāti vacanatthaṃ katvā "moraṇḍagāme jāto ti vattabbena therenā" ti attho gahetabbo. Idāni pana dakkhiṇa-indiyaraṭṭhe guntājanapade nāgārajunakoṇḍato eka-paṇṇāsamilamatte amaravatito ca aṭṭhapaṇṇāsamilamatte padese kotanemalipurī ti ca gundalapallī ti ca voharitaṃ ṭhānadvayam atthi,

tattha ca bahūni buddhasāsanikaporāṇasantakāni diṭṭhāni, nemalīti telaguvohāro ca morassa, gundalu iti ca aṇḍassa, tasmā taṃ ṭhāna- dvayam eva pubbe moraṇḍakheṭo ti voharito ācariyabuddhaghosassa jātigāmo bhaveyyā ti porāṇaṭṭhānagavesīhi gahito. Yasmā panetaṃ "moraṇḍakheṭakavattabbenā" ti padaṃ "moraṇḍagāmajātenā" ti padaṃ viya pālinayānucchavikaṃ na hoti, aññehi ca bahūhi vise- sanapadehi ekato aṭṭhatvā visesyapadassa pacchato visuṃ ṭhitaṃ, āgamaṭṭhakathādīsu ca na dissati, tasmā etaṃ kenaci taṃkālikena ācariyassa jātiṭṭhānaṃ sañjānantena pakkhittaṃ viya dissatī ti.

So it is said in the *nigamana* to the *Visuddhimagga*: "*moraṇḍakheṭaka- vattabbena*." Here, there are three meanings of the word *kheṭa* evident from Sanskrit vocabulary: either "village" or "the dwelling place of the local farmers" or "a small town," and in South India, to this very day, *kheḍa* is used for "village." Therefore *moraṇḍakheṭako* means "born in the village called Moraṇḍa." He must be called Moraṇḍakheṭaka, i.e. *moraṇḍakheṭakavattabba*. After having established the literal meaning of the word *moraṇḍakheṭakavattabena*, the meaning can be understood as "the Elder, who must be called someone born in the vil- lage Moraṇḍa." Now, in South India in the district Guntā (i.e. Guntur, Andhrapradesh) at a distance of 51 miles from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and 58 miles from Amarāvatī there are two places called Kotanemalipurī and Gundalapallī, and there many Buddhist antiquities are found. *Nemali* means "peacock" in Telugu, and *gundalu* means "egg." Therefore it is understood by those studying ancient geography that these two places were formerly called Moraṇḍakheṭa and might have been the village, where Ācariya Buddhaghosa was born. However, because the word *moraṇḍakheṭakavattabbena* like a word (such as) *moraṇḍakheṭagāmajātena* does not fit the rules of Pāli, and because it (*moraṇḍakheṭakavattabbena*) stands separately behind the qualified noun (i.e. Buddhaghosa) and not united with the many other adjectives (which qualify Buddhaghosa in the *nigamana*) and because this (the word) is not found in the *āgama*s and the commentaries, it seems that it was inserted by somebody of that period (i.e. of Buddhaghosa), who knew the birth place of the Ācariya (Buddhaghosa).

The argument is that *moraṇḍakheṭakavattabbena* is: a) a wrong compound which does not conform with the rules of Pāli grammar as *moraṇḍa- kheṭakajātena* would, b) the word follows the name Buddhaghosa in con- trast to all his other qualifications, which precede his name, and thus is separated from the word it qualifies, c) this word is not attested in either canonical or commentarial language. According to Pāli usage found in

the modern *Visuddhimagganidānakathā taṃkālika* must refer to the time of Buddhaghosa. Once the correct reading °-*vatthabbena* "citizen of …" is inserted, all difficulties disappear, cf. note 6 above.

General Abbreviations

The system of abbreviations is based on Smith 1948, supplemented by the Consolidated List of Abbreviations in CPD III: XV–XXVIII, and v. Hinüber 1996: 250–257.

BHSD   *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*. See Edgerton 1970.

CDIAL   *Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan Languages*.
          See Turner 1966.

CPD   *Critical Pāli Dictionary*. See Trenckner et al. 1924–2011.

HPL   *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*. See von Hinüber 1996.

NPED   *New Pāli-English Dictionary*. See Cone 2010.

PED   *Pali-English Dictionary*. See Rhys Davids & Stede 1959.

SHB   Simon Hewavitarne Bequest Series

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