Tracing the Threads of Time: A Critical Study of the Evolution of Pāli Language and Literature

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ABSTRACT

This research critically examines the evolution of the Pāli language and its literature, exploring historical contexts and scholarly interpretations that have shaped its development. Utilizing a qualitative library approach, data were collected from primary sources, including the Pāli Canon and its commentaries, as well as secondary sources such as research articles, journals, and scholarly books. The study reveals that Pāli, originally not designated as a language but as canonical texts, evolved over time to be recognized as the language of Theravāda Buddhist scriptures. The research highlights the significant role of Pāli literature, comprising the Canon (Tipiṭaka), commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā), sub-commentaries (Ṭīkā), and other literary works (Pāli Pakaraṇas), in preserving and disseminating Buddhist teachings. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the Pāli language's evolution and its literary corpus, offering valuable insights into the linguistic and cultural heritage of Theravāda Buddhism. The findings contribute to the academic understanding of Pāli's historical significance and its enduring impact on Buddhist scholarship and practice.

Introduction

Pāli is a language of the *Theravāda* Buddhist scripture and is believed to be spoken by the Buddha. It was the common language among the general population. The Buddha used this language when teaching. The Buddha also allowed his disciples to learn his teaching in *saka nirutti* (his dialect). Pāli is generally regarded as the dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan. It is also known as Māgadhi and referred to as the *mūlabhāsā*. Though modern scholars may present diverse opinions concerning the home of Pāli, *Theravāda* tradition upholds the belief that the Pāli was Māgadhi.

Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero approved that in his commentary. In the early period, the word Pāli was not designated as a language but referred to the canonical texts. With time, however, Pāli came to be regarded as the language, which is the language used to write canonical texts as well as other Pāli literature. The word Pāli acquired a broader meaning, encompassing not only the texts but also the language of the texts. In short, Pāli literature encompasses the Canon (*Pāli Tipiṭaka*), commentary (*Pāli Aṭṭhakathā*), sub-commentary (*Pāli Tīkā*), and other Pāli literary works (*Pāli Pakaraṇas*).

Research on the Pāli language and its literature has been written by several researchers before. The results of these studies show that this Pāli language has two streams. First, the school says this Pāli language comes from the oldest Burmese manuscript. Meanwhile, the second is the Pāli language circulating today in both books and manuscripts in Ceylon, which condemns everything contrary to English (Mason, 1872). Pāli itself is the oldest language in India. Therefore, Pāli is also referred to as the language of the ordinary people and was used by Buddha for his teachings (Patil, 2021). So, it can be said that Pāli has an essential role in Buddhist history, just like Sanskrit literature (Rao, 2022).

Furthermore, other researchers also say that Pāli was a local language used by people in the state of Maghdha to communicate, later referred to as Maghdabhasa. When the Buddha was enlightened, he used this Pāli language to spread his teachings (Satiman, Koomkrong, & Varindho, 2017). However, Pāli is not a language used today to communicate personal feelings. Therefore, Pāli has been recognized as a sophisticated, wise, and powerful medium for communicating the profound and subtle aspects of the Buddha's teachings (Perera, 2023).

From the description above, it can be said that many previous researchers have written research on the Pāli language and its literature. Therefore, this study aims to conduct further research on these existing studies to complete the scientific repertoire of the Pāli language and literature. This research focuses on the evolution of Pāli language and Pāli literature.

Method

The methodology employed in this research is qualitative research with a library approach. It is a series of activities that involve gathering literature data, reading, taking notes, and processing the research material (Zed, 2014). It involves acquiring information through resources offered by the library, including books, magazines, documents, and historical records, or conducting bibliographic research specifically relevant to the research topic (Mahmud, 2011). The data utilized in this research was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The Pāli Canon and its commentaries are considered primary sources. Research articles, journals, and scholarly books are considered secondary sources. With this library approach, information relevant to the topic was gathered, analyzed, and come with conclusion.

Findings

The Name of Pāli

In Canonical Texts and Pāli Commentaries, the term Pāli is not used to indicate a language. The original meaning of the term Pāli is a line, rowel, boundary, and limit. In its earliest usage, it was used to name a text. The Word Pāli always means the text, especially the texts of Buddhist scripture (Hazra, 2014). As found in the commentary and chronicles, *Pāli* has the meaning "canon." *Culavaṁsa* and *Mahāvaṁsa* reveal that the term Pāli is distinctly employed to refer to the original Buddhist text or Buddhist Canon, as opposed to explanatory commentary (*pāḷimattaṃ idhānītaṃ natthi atthakathā idaṃ*) (Mhv. 227). In the *Visuddhimagga* it is said "*Yasmā pana idaṃ cariyāvibhāvanavidhānaṃ sabbākārena neva pāḷiyaṃ na aṭṭhakathāyaṃ āgataṃ, kevalaṃ ācariyamatānusārena vuttaṃ, tasmā na sārato paccetabbaṃ,*" (Vsm. 107). In the *Visuddhimagga* too, it is stated "*Imāni tāva pāḷiyaṃ āgatarūpāneva. Aṭṭhakathāyaṃ pana balarūpaṃ sambhavarūpaṃ jātirūpaṃ rogarūpaṃ ekaccānaṃ matena middharūpanti evaṃ aññānipi rūpāni āharitvā.*" In addition, in the commentary of *Puggalapaññti*, Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thera gives a similar distinction between Pāli and *Aṭṭhakathā* and a distinction between *Aṭṭhakathā* and *Ācariyamata* (*Pañcapakaraṇa.* 173) (Buddhadatta, 2014).

The word *Pāli* sometimes alternates with *tanti*. In the commentaries, the term *Pāli* came to be regarded as a synonym for *Buddhavacana*, *Tipiṭaka*, *tanti*, and *pariyatti* (Law, 2007). The term *Pāli* has been used for Canonical Texts, such as *Parajika Pāli, Pacittiya Pāli, Mahavagga Pāli, Culavagga Pāli*, and *Parivara Pāli*. However, by that time, the term *Pāli* has been regarded as a language of *Pāḷibhāsā.* The expression *Pāḷibhāsā*, meaning 'language of the texts,' was early taken to be the name of the language itself. In the seventeenth Century, the term *Pāli* was already being used as the language of Theravadin texts. In addition, in the *Sāsanavaṁsa*, written in Burma in 1861, the name *Pāli* is seen as a language (Norman, 1983). It is believed that *Pāli* arose from a spoken dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan, spoken in Magadha country and known as *Magadhi*. It is characterized as *māgadhinirutti* or *māgadhi* idiom was *mūlabhāṣā*.

The Origin and Evolution of the Pāli Language

The Buddha was living around Magadha. Therefore, He used the language of Magadha, which is called *Magadhi*. Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero says that the language spoken by Buddha was *Magadhi* (*Sammāsambuddhopi tepiṭakaṃ Buddhavacanaṃ tantiṃ āropento māgadhabhāsāya eva āropesi*) *(Samohavinodanī.* 388). This is referred to as the *mūlabhāsā* or the root of all the language (*Sabbesaṃ mūlabhāsāya māgadhāya niruttiyā*) (Mhv. 244). Pāli is sometimes called *Suddha-Magadhi* to distinguish it from *Ardha-Magadhi*, which the Jaina canon uses.

After his enlightenment, the Buddha preached his discovery of *Dhamma* to all people. The forty-five years of his life were spent preaching *Dhamma* to all of India. He preached to all beings regardless of caste or social status. He preached the truth to all beings to liberate them from the cycle of birth and death.

In India, there was a strata social system at that time. In addition, the usage of their language is different too. The low-caste people used *Prākrit* languages, while the high-caste people used Sanskrit in their communication. The people of high caste

considered Sanskrit to be a sacred language. Therefore, they did not allow the low-caste people to speak Sanskrit. Only the Brahmins and the male community of royal families were allowed to communicate in Sanskrit. *Pāli*, a language belonging to Prakrit, is the language of ordinary people.

There were four periods of development in India's languages: Proto-Indo-Aryan, Old Indo-Aryan, Middle Indo-Aryan, and Modern Indo-Aryan. In the time of Old Indo-Aryan, languages were divided into two periods: Vedic Sanskrit and Classical Sanskrit. Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas, which originated from the earliest religious texts in India. This language was used by Vedic people or Brahmin, which was considered sacred and a language of high-class people. Classical Sanskrit was later developed. It is also known as Epic Sanskrit. However, Sanskrit is the language of high-class people. Therefore, the low-class people did not understand and could not study it.

In the period of Middle Indo-Aryan, the *Pāli* language has been developed. This language is called vernacular or can be used by everyone. Generally, people knew and understood this language. According to the orthodox theory, *Pāli* is *Māgadhī*, *Māgadhanirutti*, *Māgadhikabhāṣā*. Most of Buddha's time was spent in the Magadha, and Buddhism was developed there. Therefore, the Buddha used this language in his sermon to introduce Buddhism.

Many scholars believe that Buddha used the *Magadhi* language, although *Magadhi* changed over time. These changes resulted in a division into three forms, namely *Māgadhī* (the language of the court and cultured people), *Addhamāgadhī* (the language of the merchants and ordinary people), *Suddha-Māgadhī* (the pure *Māgadhī*, which came to be called *Pāli*, which was, as stated above the language in which the Buddha preached His doctrine, and in which the Buddhist Scriptures have been preserved).

Theravāda tradition holds Magadhi as the language of the Buddha. George Grierson, Windisch, and Winternitz support this view (Law, 2007). Different scholars have put forward their views regarding the origin and home of this language. T.W. Rhys David has said that *Pāli* was a literary dialect based on the spoken language of Kosala (David & Stede, 2011). He said a standard Kosalan speech existed in the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. The speech of the Buddha and the *Pāli* scriptures were composed within a century after the Buddha died in this Kosalan country (Law, 2007).

B.C.M Walleser said that Pāli was the language of Pāṭaliputta - the capital city of Magadha country. According to him, *Pāli* is contracted from Pāṭali or Pāḍali. W. Geiger regards Pāli as a keine based on Ārdhamāgadhī (Geiger, 2014). However, P. V. Bapat has shown in his research that it is not safe to prove that (Law, 2007).

E. Windisch and W. Geiger explain Magadhi as a language that was talked by the people in the region of the Middle Ganges (Geiger, 2014). H. Luder said that the language of the present *Pāli* Canonical Text is not the original form of that language. According to him, the original language in the 6th Century B.C. was Ardha-Magadhi, which was the language of Jain Mahaweera. Due to the migration of Buddhist monks from Magadha to Western India, the teaching of the Buddha's language was also subjected to change. F. Edgerton, who composed the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit dictionary, expressed another view regarding the matter as he pointed out that neither the Buddha's home (Kapilavatthu) not his favorite place (Savatthi) not the

place of his first sermon (Banarasi) not the place of his death (Kusinara), belong to the Magadha country. Therefore, the Buddha is not likely to have spoken the Magadhi language in any of these places. Nevertheless, in this case, K.R Norman, a well-known Pāli scholar, suggests that it is more likely that the Buddha moderated his audience. Though the above scholars stated their views, it is difficult to investigate the actual linguistic situation in Magadha, India, during the 5th and 6th Century B.C. because the available records were written after at least a few centuries.

Pāli Literature

Pāli Literature is the whole treatise on Buddhism written in Pāli, including the primary and secondary sources of early and later texts. The Pāli Literature consists of four main divisions: Canon (*Tipiṭaka*), commentaries (*Aṭṭhakathā*), Sub-Commentaries (*Tīkā*), and other Pāli literary works (*Pāli Pakaraṇas*). Out of those four divisions, the original Buddha's words are grouped in the Pāli canon. At the same time, the other divisions contain more details to explain the Buddha's words. Those are composed of elderly monks from different periods.

Pāli Tipiṭaka

Tipiṭaka is generally known as the Canonical Buddhist Scripture. The term 'tipiṭaka' has already been translated into various languages of various countries where Buddhism exists. Tipiṭaka is derived from two Pāli words: 'Ti' means 'Three' and 'Piṭaka' means 'Basket.' Therefore, in English, it is known as Three Baskets. Various languages are given as *Tripiṭaka* (Sanskrit), *Piṭakaya* (Sinhala), *Pinyin* (Chinese), *Samjang* (Korean), *Tam tang* (Vietnamese), *Tiga Keranjang* (Indonesian), etc.

Tipiṭaka consists of *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Piṭaka* and *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero tells us how tradition recognized the distinctive character of each *piṭaka*. It is said that the *Vinaya* is the discourse on injunctions (*āṇā-desanā*); the *Sutta* is the popular discourse (*vohāra-desanā*), while the *Abhidhamma* is the discourse on ultimate truths (*paramattha-desanā*) (DhsA. 21). In the *Atthasālini,* he tries to distinguish between *Dhamma* and *Abhidhamma*. *Dhamma* or *sutta* is a discursive "*sappariyāya desanā*" style that uses similes, metaphors, and anecdotes. In contrast, *Abhidhamma* is a non-discursive style, "*nippariyāya desanā,*" which uses impersonal terminology, meaning, and functions (DhsA. 153) (Tin, 2016).

Tipiṭaka consists of *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Piṭaka* and *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. According to the *Theravāda* tradition, *Tipiṭaka Pāli* is the primary source, and others are later compositions. The collection of Vinaya rules was grouped in the Vinaya Piṭaka. The collection of discourses was named Sutta Piṭaka. The collection of Higher Doctrines is named *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. According to the commentator, 84.000 Dhammakhandhas (units) are in *Tipiṭaka*. 82.000 units belong to the doctrines of the Buddha, and 2.000 units belong to the doctrines of *Sāvaka Saṅgha* and Councilors. It is classified further than 21.000 units belong to *Vinaya Piṭaka*, 21.000 units belong to *Sutta Piṭaka*, and 42.000 units belong to *Abhidhamma Piṭaka.* The difference among them is that *vinaya* is the discourse on injunctions (*āṇā-desanā*);

the *sutta* is the popular discourse (*vohāra-desanā*), while the *Abhidhamma* is the discourse on ultimate truths (*paramattha-desanā*) (DhsA. 21).

Vinaya Piṭaka

Vinaya Piṭaka is the first division of *Tipiṭaka*. It contains the monastic rules for monks and nuns. In addition, several discussions are regarded as the essential facts of Buddhism. It also records the situation of the Order after the death of the Master, including the story of the first and second Buddhist councils. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Aṭṭhakathā* or *Atthasālinī* gives an account of the characteristics of Vinaya Piṭaka. It says that because it shows precepts and principles and governs both the body and the tongue, men call this Scripture of *Vinaya*. For so is vinaya is interpreted (*vividhavisesanayattā, vinayanato ceva kāyavācānaṃ; Vinayatthavidūhi ayaṃ, vinayo vinayoti akkhāto*) (DhsA. 19).

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* is considered crucial for the life of *sāsana*. It said that as long as the respect for law and Order is maintained so long shall the word of the Buddha prevail (*vinayo nāma Buddhasāsanassa āyu vinaye ṭhite sāsanam ṭhitaṃ hoti*) (VinA. I. 13). According to *Theravāda* tradition, *Vinaya Piṭaka* is made up of five books, namely: *Pārājikapāli, Pācittiyapāli, Mahāvaggapāli, Cullavāggapāli, Parivārapāli. Pārājikapāli* contains the basic rules for *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, explained in the story. It deals with 4 *Parajika*, 13 *Saṅghadisesa*, 2 *Aniyata* and 30 *Nissaggiya Pacittiya. Pācittiyapāli* contains the rules such as 92 *Pacittiya*, 4 *Patidesaniya*, 75 *Sekhiya*, 7 *Adhikaranasamatha. Mahāvaggapāli* reports several significant events, such as the Buddha's enlightenment and the *Saṅgha's* establishment. *Cullavāggapāli* elaborates on the *bhikkhus'* etiquette and duties, as well as the rules and procedures for addressing offenses that may be committed within the *Saṅgha. Parivārapāli* contains a recapitulation of the previous sections, with summaries of the rules classified and re-classified in various ways for instructional purposes. It is the last book of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and is a manual. It is compiled as a catechism, enabling the reader to analyze the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Sutta Piṭaka

Etymologically, *Sutta Piṭaka* is derived from two words: *Sutta + Piṭaka. Sutta* means discourse, and *Piṭaka* means a basket. Therefore, *Sutta Piṭaka* is the basket of discourses. It contains many discourses which are subdivided into five *Nikāyas*, namely *Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya,* and *Khuddaka Nikāya.*

Dīgha Nikāya is the first division of *Sutta Piṭaka*. It is a collection of long discourses. It consists of 34 long discourses *(catuttiṃseva suttantā, tivaggo yassa saṅgaho; Esa dīghanikāyoti, paṭhamo anulomiko). Dīgha Nikāya* is divided into three divisions, namely the division of morality (*sīlakkhanda Vagga*), the large division (*mahā Vagga*), and the division beginning with the discourse on Pāthika (*pāthika Vagga*). *Sīlakkhanda Vagga* contains thirteen discourses, *Mahā Vagga* contains ten discourses, and *Pāṭika Vagga* contains eleven discourses.

Majjhima Nikāya is the second division of *Sutta Piṭaka*. It is known as the Middle Length Discourses. According to the commentator, the name of *Majjhima Nikāya* because it contains middle-length discourses dealing with 152 Suttas. It is divided into three parts, namely *Mūla Paṇṇāsaka*, containing 50 Suttas; *Majjhima*

Paṇṇāsaka, containing 50 Suttas; and *Upari Paṇṇāsaka*, containing 52 Suttas (*diyaḍḍhasataṃ suttantā, dve ca suttāni yattha so; Nikāyo majjhimo pañca-dasavaggapariggaho*)*.*

Saṃyutta Nikāya is a "grouped" or "connected" series of *suttas* in the *Sutta Piṭaka*. It is the third division of *Sutta Piṭaka*. In the European edition, the *Nikāya* contains 2889 suttas in all. However, according to the commentator Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero, there are 7762 suttas of varied length (*satta suttasahassāni, satta suttasatāni ca; dvāsaṭṭhi ceva suttantā, eso saṃyuttasaṅgaho*). *Saṃyutta Nikāya* is divided into five *vaggas*. A collection of *vagga* can be mentioned as one *Saṃyutta*. Those five *vaggas* are *Sagātha Vagga, Nidāna Vagga, Khandha Vagga, Saḷāyatana Vagga,* and *Mahā Vagga.*

Aṅguttara Nikāya is the fourth division of *Sutta Piṭaka*. It contains nine thousand fifty-seven *Suttas* and is divided into eleven parts (*Nipāta*) according to number of items of *Dhamma* covered in each *sutta* (*nava suttasahassāni, pañca suttasatāni ca; Sattapaññāsa suttāni, saṅkhyā aṅguttare ayaṃ*). Those eleven parts (*Nipāta*) are *Ekaka Nipāta, Duka Nipāta, Tika Nipāta, Catukka Nipāta, Pañcaka Nipāta, Chakka Nipāta, Sattaka Nipāta, Aṭṭhaka Nipāta, Navaka Nipāta*, *Dasaka Nipāta* and *Ekadasaka Nipāta* (Warder, 1961)*.*

Khuddaka Nikāya is the last division of *Sutta Piṭaka*. *Khudda* means smaller or lesser. Therefore, *Khuddaka Nikāya* is a division of short books. It contains fifteen discourses according to Sri Lankan tradition, such as *Khuddakapāṭha* (the short passages), *Dhammapada* (the path of the *Dhamma*), *Udāna* (exclamation), *Itivuttaka* (the truth-said), *Suttanipāta* (the sutta collection), *Vimānavatthu* (stories of celestial mansions), *Petavatthu* (stories of hungry ghosts), *Theragātha* (verses of elderly monks), *Therīgātha* (verses of elderly nuns), *Jātaka* (birth stories), *Niddesa* (exposition), *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (path of discrimination), *Apadāna* (stories), *Buddhavaṃsa* (history of the Buddha) dan *Cariyāpiṭaka* (basket of conduct). While according to Burmese traditions, there are 18 books with three additions, namely *Nettipakarana* (the guide to study *Tipiṭaka*), *Miḷinda-pañha* (Milinda questions), *Peṭakopadesa* (the instruction to study canonical) and *Suttasangaha* (compendium of discourses).

Abhidhamma Piṭaka

The word *Abhidhamma* is composed of two words: *Abhi + Dhamma*. Here, *Abhi* means higher, unique, further, etc. *Dhamma* means doctrine and philosophy. Therefore, *Abhidhamma* means the higher doctrine, particular doctrine, or the further analysis of Buddha's teachings. Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thera, the great Theravādin commentator, characterized *Abhidhamma* in the *Atthasālini* as the teaching that surpasses and distinguishes itself from the *Dhamma* (DhsA. 2). Additionally, it is explained that *Abhidhamma* is named because this teaching reveals things that undergo growth, possess proper attributes, well-differentiated and surpassing value (DhsA. 19) (Tin, 2016).

According to *Theravāda* tradition, canonical Abhidhamma is represented by seven books such as *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (the Classification of *Dhamma*), *Vibhaṅga* (the Analysis), *Dhatukathā* (the Discourses on Elements), *Puggalapaññatti* (the Designation of Individual), *Kathāvatthu* (the Book of Debate), *Yamaka* (the Book of Pairs) and *Paṭṭhāna* (the Book of Conditional Relation).

Although those *Abhidhamma* texts are traditionally accepted to be the Buddha's own words, the historical authenticity of *Abhidhamma* as the words of the Buddha has been challenged by modern scholars. Historically, it is identified that the monk who compiled the *Kathāvatthu* was Mogaliputtatissa Thera at the end of the third Buddhist council, long after the parinibbāna of the Buddha (Medhācitto, 2023). The Thero argued in the *Atthasālinī,* saying that Ven. Mogaliputtatissa Thera expounded *Kathāvatthuppakarana* not by his knowledge but according to the table of contents laid down, as well as by the method given by the Buddha (*Moggaliputtatissattheropi idaṃ pakaraṇaṃ desento na attano ñāṇena desesi, satthārā pana dinnanayena ṭhapitamātikāya desesi*). Therefore, according to tradition, all the books of *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* should be acknowledged as the word of the Buddha (DhsA. 6).

Aṭṭhakathā (Commentary)

The term '*Aṭṭhakathā*' is composed of the combination of '*aṭṭha*' and '*kathā*'. '*Aṭṭha*' means 'meaning' or 'sense', and '*kathā*' means 'talk,' 'discussion' or 'exposition.' *Dīghaṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā* gives following observation '*attho kathīyati etāyāti atthakathā, sā eva aṭṭhakathā, ttha-kārassa ṭṭha-kāraṃ katvā … (DAṬ. I. 19)*' Toshiichi Endo suggests this translation 'The meaning is spoken by [means of] that is '*aṭṭhakathā*; '*atthakathā*' is also [spelt] '*aṭṭhakathā*' when '*ttha-*' is made into '*ṭṭha*' (Endo, 2013). Therefore, the whole term of *Aṭṭhakathā* means exposition of meanings. Generally, '*Aṭṭhakathā*' is understood as the commentary of canonical sources (Tipiṭaka). However, Toshiichi Endo suggests that the *Aṭṭhakathā* includes not only the commentaries to the *Tipiṭaka* but also other works of diverse nature (Endo, 2013). Sodo Mori classifies *Aṭṭhakathā* into four categories:

a) Direct commentaries on the *Tipiṭaka* and the *Visuddhimagga*.
b) Primary commentaries such as the *Nettippakaraṇaṭṭhakathā, Catubhāṇavāraṭṭhakathā,* and *Vinayasaṅgahaṭṭhakathā*.
c) Chronicles and native works such as the *Dīpavaṃsa, Mahāvaṃsa, Sīhaḷavatthuppakaraṇa,* and *Sahassavatthuppakaraṇa* (Oldernberg, 1979). Some of these are occasionally named "-*aṭṭhakathā*," which indicates a text of the rank of *aṭṭhakathā*.
d) Specific works with no title of "-*aṭṭhakathā*" but with their commentaries labeled as "-*ṭīkā*." They include, for example, some Abhidhammic summary works (e.g., *Abhidhammāvatāra, Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*), some grammatical works (e.g., *Abhidhānappadīpikā, Kaccāyanasāra*), some poetical works or essay or poetry (e.g., *Jinālaṅkāra, Vuttodaya*). (Mori, 1984).

The *Sāratthadīpanī-ṭīkā*, sub-commentary to the *Vinaya*, gives different definitions of '*Aṭṭhakathā*' in different way, such as 'the authority of the former teacher, which definition is seen everywhere in the *Gaṇṭipada-s*' (*pubbācariyānubhāvo aṭṭhakathā ti sabbattha gaṇṭipadesu vuttaṃ*) (Be. I. 17). *Vimativinodanī-ṭīkā* defines *aṭṭhakathā* as an exegesis free form the *Tipiṭaka* (*aṭṭhakathā ti pāḷimuttakavinicchayo*) (Be. I. 124). *Vinayālaṅkāra-ṭīkā* suggests different definitions as any miscellaneous discourses preached or established by the Exalted One on different occasions (*tattha tattha hi bhagavatā pavattitā pakiṇṇakadesanā yeva aṭṭhakathā ti*) (Be. I. 12). Toshiichi Endo opines that these definitions may indicate that later Buddhists attempted to have even the

commentarial works authenticated as the word of the Buddha (*Buddhavacana*) (Endo, 2013).

Exegesis aims to elucidate the words and phrases that are difficult to understand. It is proved by its prologue with the phrase '*atthapakāsanaṭṭhaṃ'* (for the elucidation of the meaning) (DA. I. 1). The *Brahmajālasuttavaṇṇanā* shows six methods of exegetical methods. It states thus:

"*Atha vā chahi ākārehi saṃvaṇṇanā kātabbā sambandhato padato padavibhāgato padatthato anuyogato parihārato cāti.*" (DAṬ. I. 43).

'*Sambandhato'* means '*nidāna'*; '*padato'* means 'word-to-word explanation of extracts taken from the text'; '*padavibhāgato'* means 'grammatical, philological and syntactical evaluation of words'; '*atthato'* is 'correct interpretation of words and ideas'; '*anuyugato'* means 'the method of raising questions or critically examining the validity of issues'; and '*parihārato'* is 'the method of answering such questions or meeting the criticism with substantial counter-arguments' (De Silva, 1970).

According to Sri Lankan tradition, the *Aṭṭhakathā* were presumed to be composed at the First Buddhist Council and rehearsed at the following councils. It is reported that *Aṭṭhakathā* was introduced into Sri Lanka by Ven. Mahinda and also were translated into Sinhala by him. Though those translations are not available now, the names are mentioned in the Pāli commentaries and later works such as in the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī, Saddhammasaṅgaha,* and the *ṭīkā*. The Sinhala *Aṭṭhakathā* are such as *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā, Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā, Mahāpaccariya-aṭṭhakathā, Kurundī-aṭṭhakathā, etc.*

However, this paper will deal with *Aṭṭhakathā* in the sense of the exegetical works or the commentary on *Tipiṭaka. Pāli Aṭṭhakathā* is to be dated from the first half of the fifth Century A.C. It is reported that Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero came to Sri Lanka during King Mahānāma's time (406-28 A.C.). Many *Aṭṭhakathā* were composed by him. Ven. Buddhadatta was another commentator and an elder contemporary of Thero. The most essential commentator after Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero was Ven. Dhammapāla. Furthermore, the commentaries were continued by other commentators, such as Ven. Upasena, Ven, Mahānāma.

The list of *Pāli Aṭṭhakathā* with their authors is given table 1 (Malalasekera, 1998).

Table 1. Pāli Aṭṭhakathā list

Number	Canonical Text	Commentary	Author
	The whole Tipiṭaka	Visuddhimagga	Ven. Buddhaghosa
Vinaya Piṭaka			
1	Vinaya Piṭaka	Samantapāsādikā	Ven. Buddhaghosa
2	Pātimokkha	Kaṅkhavitaraṇī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
Sutta Piṭaka			
1	Digha Nikāya	Sumaṅgalavilāsinī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
2	Majjhima Nikāya	Papañcasūdanī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
3	Saṃyutta Nikāya	Sāratthapakāsinī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
4	Aṅguttara Nikāya	Manorathapūraṇī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
	Khuddaka Nikāya		
1	Khuddakapāṭhapāli	Paramatthajotikā	Attributed to Ven. Buddhaghosa

2	Dhammapāda	Dhammapādātthakathā	Attributed to Ven. Buddhaghosa
3	Udānapāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
4	Ittivuttakapāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
5	Suttanipātapāḷi	Paramatthajotikā	Attributed to Ven. Buddhaghosa
6	Vimānavatthapāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
7	Petavatthupāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
8	Theragāthāpāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
9	Therigāthāpāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
10	Jātakapāḷi	Jātakātthakathā	Attributed to Ven. Buddhaghosa
11	Niddesapāḷi	Saddhammapajotikā	Ven. Upasena
12	Patisambhidāmaggapāḷi	Saddhammapakāsinī	Ven. Mahānāma
13	Apadānapāḷi	Visuddhajanavilāsinī	Not known
14	Buddhavaṃsapāḷi	Madhuratthavilāsinī	Ven. Buddhadatta
15	CariyaPiṭakapāḷi	Paramatthadīpanī	Ven. Dhammapāla
Abhidhamma Piṭaka			
1	Dhammasaṅganī-pakaraṇa	Atthasālinī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
2	Vibhaṅga-pakaraṇa	Sammohavinodanī	Ven. Buddhaghosa
3	Dhātukathā-pakaraṇa	Pañcappakaranattha kathā	Ven. Buddhaghosa
4	Puggalapaññatti-pakaraṇa	Pañcappakaranattha kathā	Ven. Buddhaghosa
5	Kathavatthu-pakaraṇa	Pañcappakaranattha kathā	Ven. Buddhaghosa
6	Yamaka-pakaraṇa	Pañcappakaranattha kathā	Ven. Buddhaghosa
7	Paṭṭhāna-pakaraṇa	Pañcappakaranattha kathā	Ven. Buddhaghosa

Ṭīkā (Sub-commentary)

The word "*ṭīkā*" is derived from the root √ṭīk, which means to explain or to make clear (Jayawardhana, 1994). Ṭīkā is another kind of Pāli literature that is written to provide further elucidations or detailed information to the commentaries (Malalasekera, 2003). After commentaries were written, certain difficult words were not expressed clearly. Therefore, to elucidate further some problematic words found in the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*), the sub-commentaries (*ṭīkā*) were written. Pāli Ṭīkā is identified with the term "*Atthavaṇṇanā*" (exposition of meaning). It is proved that on many occasions, instead of using the term *Ṭīkā*, the author of the text used the term *Atthavaṇṇanā* (D.Ṭ. I. 525)*.* Prof. N. A. Jayawickrama points out that *ṭīkā* are the dove-tailed into the commentarial period and flourished in the Polonnaruwa period and continued almost to the last Century (19th Century). They served as supplementary works to Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero's commentaries (Malalasekera, 2011).

The etymology of the word *ṭīkā* cannot be traced in Pāli. A definition is given in the Sanskrit book called "*Sabdastomamahandhiya*." The term *ṭīkā* is a feminine noun with the suffix "Ka." According to the *Encyclopedia of Religion,* the term *ṭīkā* is explained as that which explains the problematic word in the commentary. Taking everything into account, we can conclude that the term *ṭīkā* means to give interpretation to different words.

The Ṭīkā texts are divided into four categories. They are as follows:
a) Interpretation of difficult section in commentary (*Linatthapakasini*)
b) Interpretation of difficult section Pakaraṇa (*Vinaya vinicchaya ṭīkā*)
c) Interpretation of difficult sections in grammatical texts (*Kaccayana vannana ṭīkā*)
d) Interpretation of difficult sections in poetry with *Alaṅkara* and meters (*Vuttodaya ṭīkā* and *subodhalamkara ṭīkā*)

Malalasekera stated that, unlike the commentaries, Ṭīkās were purely of Sri Lankan origin, compiled and written by Sri Lankan scholars (Malalasekera, 1958). They first started to compile in Sri Lanka and flourished during the Polonnaruwa period (12th or 13th centuries). There is not enough evidence to prove that Pāli Ṭīkās had been started to compose in India. However, exegetical works known as Ṭīkās are found in Indian literature. Ṭīkās are comparatively later compositions for beginners composed for any literature.

There are large numbers of Ṭīkā found in Buddhist literature. The exegetical works on the treatises such as *Visuddhimagga* and *Abhidhammattasaṅgaha*, etc., are also called Ṭīkā as evident from the names *Visuddhimagga-Ṭīkā*, *Abhidhammattasaṅgaha*, *Vibhāvinī- Ṭīkā*, etc. Further exegesis works like *Mahāvaṃsa* grammatical works like *Bālāvatāra* are also categorized as *Ṭīkā*.

Somapala Jayawardhana states eleven *Ṭīkās,* including one on the *Visuddhimagga* (Jayawardhana, 1994). The following table gives the names of *Ṭīkās* on the canonical texts, the names of canonical commentaries, and the author of *Ṭīkās.*

Table 2. Names of Ṭīkās in canonical texts, names of canonical commentaries, and authors of Ṭīkās

Name of Ṭīkā	Canonical Commentary	Author
Vajirabuddhiṭīkā	*Samantapāsādikā*	Ven. Vajirabuddhi
Sāratthadīpanī	*Samantapāsādikā*	Ven. Sāriputta
Vimativodanī	*Samantapāsādikā*	Ven. Mahākassapa of Cola
Vinayatthamañjusā	*Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī*	Ven. Buddhanāga
Dīghanikāyaṭīkā	*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*	Ven. Dhammapāla
Majjhimanikāyaṭīkā	*Papañcasudanī*	Ven. Dhammapāla
Saṃyuttanikāyaṭīkā	*Sāratthappakāsiṇī*	Ven. Dhammapāla
Sāratthamañjūsā	*Manorathapūraṇī*	Ven. Sāriputta
Līnatthapadavaṇṇanā	*Atthasālinī*	Ven. Ānanda Vanaratanatissa
Līnatthavaṇṇanā	*Līnatthapadavaṇṇanā*	Ven. Culla Dhammapāla
Paramatthamañjūsā	*Visuddhimagga*	Ven. Dhammapāla

Pakaraṇa (other Pāli literary works)

Pakaraṇas is the last stage of Pāli literatures. It is also sometimes known as Compendium (Saṅgaha). This classification is viewed from one perspective because various scholars do more classifications to explain the content of Pāli Literature. Based on Sri Lankan tradition, some scholars add Post Canonical and Pre-commentarial Literature as the second stage. All literature or books were composed after the third Buddhist council (3rd Century BC) until the Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa Thero wrote the commentary. He (5th century A.D.) was called Post Canonical and Pre-commentarial Literature. Nettippakarana, Petakopadesa, and Milindapañha, which, according to Burmese tradition, belong to Khuddaka Nikāya, Sutta Piṭaka, are included in Post Canonical and Pre-commentarial Literature according to Sri Lankan tradition. Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka broadly classified the Pāli Literature into four classifications: (1) Mūla: Pāli Canon, (2) Aṭṭhakathā: commentary, (3) Ṭīkā: sub-commentary and (4) Añña: all remaining Pāli treatises. Therefore, all Pāli treatises not categorized as Canon, Commentaries, and Sub-commentaries are considered Pakaraṇa.

Discussion

The research critically examines the evolution of the Pāli language and its literature, revealing that the term "Pāli" originally referred to canonical texts rather than a language. Over time, it became recognized as the language of Theravāda Buddhist scriptures. The study also categorizes Pāli literature into four main divisions: the Canon (Tipiṭaka), commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā), sub-commentaries (Ṭīkā), and other literary works (Pāli Pakaraṇas). This comprehensive categorization underscores the significance of Pāli in preserving the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples.

Comparing the findings with previous research highlights both similarities and differences. While scholars like George Grierson and K.R. Norman have discussed the origins and significance of Pāli, this study provides a more integrated understanding by combining historical, linguistic, and literary perspectives. Previous studies have debated the exact origin and classification of Pāli, often focusing on its linguistic aspects. This research, however, extends beyond linguistic analysis to include the broader cultural and religious context, emphasizing the role of Pāli literature in the preservation and dissemination of Buddhist teachings.

The findings of this research are indicative of the profound impact that language evolution has on cultural and religious preservation. The transition of Pāli from a mere designation of texts to a recognized language illustrates how linguistic developments can influence religious practices and cultural heritage. This evolution is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of religious traditions in maintaining their core teachings through changing times and contexts. The study of Pāli, therefore, reflects a larger phenomenon of how languages evolve and adapt to serve the needs of religious and cultural preservation.

The implications of these findings are significant for both linguistic and religious studies. For linguists, the study provides a comprehensive view of how a language can evolve from being a dialect to becoming a cornerstone of religious literature. For scholars of religion, the research highlights the importance of

language in preserving religious teachings and traditions. The categorization of Pāli literature into Canon, commentaries, sub-commentaries, and other literary works provides a structured framework for further research and understanding of Buddhist texts.

The research findings can be attributed to the extensive use of primary and secondary sources, providing a holistic view of the evolution of Pāli. The historical context, combined with linguistic and literary analysis, offers a deeper understanding of the development of Pāli. The consistency of Pāli's use in Theravāda traditions and its adaptation over time reflects the intentional efforts of Buddhist scholars and monks to preserve the teachings of the Buddha accurately.

Based on these findings, several actions are recommended. First, further research should be conducted to explore the phonological and syntactic changes in Pāli over time. Second, a comparative study of Pāli with other Prākrit languages could provide additional insights into its evolution. Third, incorporating modern linguistic techniques and technologies could enhance the understanding and preservation of Pāli texts. Finally, promoting the study of Pāli in academic and religious institutions can ensure that this critical aspect of Buddhist heritage continues to be preserved and understood by future generations.

Conclusion

This research has critically examined the evolution of the Pāli language and its literature, uncovering significant insights into its development. One of the key findings is that the term "Pāli" was initially used to denote the canonical texts rather than the language itself. Over time, however, Pāli came to be recognized as the language of the Theravāda Buddhist scriptures. The study also revealed that the Pāli literature is categorized into four main divisions: the Canon (Tipiṭaka), commentaries (Aṭṭhakathā), sub-commentaries (Ṭīkā), and other literary works (Pāli Pakaraṇas). These texts collectively preserve and elucidate the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its comprehensive analysis of the historical and linguistic evolution of the Pāli language and its literature. By examining both primary and secondary sources, this study has provided a detailed understanding of how Pāli developed from a dialect of Middle Indo-Aryan into the established language of Theravāda Buddhist texts. This research enriches the academic discourse on Pāli by highlighting its role in the dissemination of Buddhist teachings and its significance in preserving the cultural heritage of Buddhism. The findings underscore the importance of Pāli as a scholarly and religious language, contributing to a deeper appreciation of its historical and cultural context.

Despite its comprehensive approach, this research has certain limitations. The study primarily relies on existing literature and historical texts, which may contain inherent biases and gaps. Additionally, the focus was predominantly on the textual evolution of Pāli, with less emphasis on its phonological and syntactic changes over time. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating linguistic analysis of Pāli's phonetic and syntactic developments. Further studies could also explore the influence of Pāli on contemporary Buddhist practices and its role in modern Theravāda communities. Expanding the geographical scope of the

research to include regions outside of South Asia where Pāli has had an impact could provide a more holistic understanding of its evolution and significance.

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