

Aruna Gamage

Buddhaghosa, His Sources, and the Buddhist Others:

Authority and Heterodoxy in Early Mahāvihāra
Commentaries



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Authority and Heterodoxy in Early Mahāvihāra Commentaries

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gurudakkiṇā nāma antevāsikassa vibhavānurūpā.

The teacher's true reward is the
prosperity of the student

(Vv-a 229.25-26)

In Memory of
Oliver Abeynayake
(1941–2022)

Foreword

This book represents the major outcome of Aruna Gamage's many years of dedicated scrutiny of Pāli canonical and commentarial literature. Centred on the towering figure of Buddhaghosa – the South Indian monk turned key advocate of the Sri Lankan Mahāvihāra – Gamage's work critically contributes to the intellectual history of a most influential Buddhist lineage.

In particular, this book illuminates the emergence of the Mahāvihāra's self-proclaimed orthodoxy during the 4th and 5th centuries CE, which mark a pivotal moment in the consolidation of Buddhist schools' identities and doctrinal profiles. The Mahāvihāra identity discourse was shaped by a polemical engagement with Buddhist others, both within and outside of the Theriya fraternity. As previous scholarship has shown, this lineage asserted its authority by constructing historical narratives that positioned it as the sole legitimate heir to the Buddha's legacy. Less studied – though equally crucial and more difficult to grasp – is the Mahāvihāra's engagement with and critique of the scriptural transmissions and doctrinal orientations of other Buddhist milieux. In early commentaries and polemical tracts, the identity of these groups tends to be obscured by labels such as *keci* ("some") and *viṇḍavādīn* (a term frequently rendered as "sophist"). These labels typically occur in imaginary dialogues, where they serve as *faire-valoir* to the Mahāvihāra's perspective. It is this second dimension of the Mahāvihāra's self-assertion, which is backed by a highly articulate exegetical program, that this book seeks to illuminate.

In both its scope and depth, this stands out as an impressive work of erudition. Indeed, Aruna Gamage has mined an enormous and understudied body of literature to uncover the principles, exegetical strategies, and rhetorical devices through which the Mahāvihāra asserted its authority. The core sources considered in this study – the so-called 'Buddhaghosa Corpus', understood as the works authored by Buddhaghosa, his immediate predecessors and his disciples – are apprehended as part of a broader textual continuum. Gamage, who demonstrates his command of the wording, style, and doctrinal orientation of the canonical layer, also draws on earlier commentaries, preserved as fragments within the 'Buddhaghosa Corpus', while later sub-commentaries are consulted to provide guidance on understanding intricate passages, or to shed light on the reception

history of a given interpretation. With this rigorous exploration of altogether five textual layers, the core commentarial passages selected for study are always astutely analyzed and carefully contextualized, thereby improving upon earlier, more cursory interpretations.

By unpacking the interpretive principles and polemical devices deployed in the ‘Buddhaghosa Corpus’, this study shows in compelling detail how earlier scriptures were not only transmitted but framed and reshaped in the service of doctrinal consolidation. Far from being passive transmitters of a fixed canon, exegetes such as Buddhaghosa played an active role in defining its boundaries and scope. For instance, they undertook to explicitly reject scriptures which were being canonized by rival milieux, while recognizing the authenticity and authority of another group of discourses not included within the framework of the five Nikāyas. They further actively repurposed or reprocessed scriptural quotations to align them with the ‘perspective of the teachers’ (*ācariyavāda*), an expression employed to refer to the orthodox viewpoint of the Mahāvihāravāsins to be enforced in debate. This led even, in some instances, to slight alterations in canonical quotations, or even to creations of scriptural quotes when no canonical source was found to support the promoted viewpoint. Gamage sheds very interesting new light on this creative use of scriptures by Mahāvihāra commentators, who emerge as more innovative than they might appear at first sight.

Finally, this book takes a fresh look at the complex debates between the Mahāvihāravāsins and those labelled as Vitaṇḍavādins on issues fundamental to Buddhist soteriology, such as the definition of the supramundane path and the status of *nibbāna*. In seeking to shed light on the identity of the Vitaṇḍavādins – a label that does not consistently refer to a fixed and clearly identifiable Buddhist milieu – but also when gathering information about texts mentioned in the commentaries yet no longer extant in Pāli, Gamage has also made commendable efforts to engage with early Buddhist literature beyond the Pāli canon. These forays, which Gamage himself acknowledges would benefit from further development, contribute to decompartmentalizing the study of Pāli literature, which is still too often treated as a self-contained sphere within the broader Buddhist tradition. Given the wealth of the evidence, its complexity, and its multilingual nature, only sustained collaboration between scholars of the Pāli (or Theravāda) traditions and those working in other subfields of South Asian Buddhism will allow us to more comprehensively reconstruct the early Buddhist landscape.

In sum, this book – refined by the author since the completion of his dissertation, in 2019, thanks to the insightful and generous input from Rupert Gettin, Petra Kieffer-Pülz, and other esteemed scholars – offers a rare and penetrating exploration of the intellectual world, philological practices, and exegetical strate-

gies of Buddhaghosa and his circle. It also illuminates the dynamics behind the affirmation of the Mahāvihāra fraternity as a coherent and authoritative player in the Buddhist arena of the 4th and 5th centuries. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights into canon formation, the role of commentaries in stabilizing textual transmission, and the culture and techniques of debate in ancient South Asia. The results of Gamage's research – soon to be enriched by findings from new projects on which he has embarked – highlight the remarkable richness of Pāli commentarial literature and will hopefully inspire a new generation of scholars to follow in his footsteps.

Munich, May 2025

Vincent Tournier

Acknowledgements

This book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, *Buddhaghosa's Critique of Divergent Buddhist Views: A Doctrinal Study Mainly Based on Pāli Commentarial Exegesis*, which was submitted to the School of History, Religions and Philosophies, SOAS, University of London, in December 2019.

My dissertation was made possible by the outstanding guidance I received as a student at SOAS, for which I express my deepest gratitude here. Vincent Tournier, now Professor and Chair of Classical Indology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, served as an exemplary supervisor for my dissertation. Without his kind help, I would not have been able to embark on a PhD at SOAS in the first place. His guidance enabled me to approach both the canon and the commentaries from a more comprehensive perspective. He meticulously examined the dissertation and provided a series of thought-provoking comments and suggestions. I am also deeply grateful to him for dedicating an enlightening foreword to this work.

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General Introduction

1. Early Commentaries and the ‘Buddhaghosa Corpus’

The Mahāvihāra is the only surviving school of the Theriya branch (commonly called Theravāda) of Buddhism.¹ The canon of this school, the Tipiṭaka (‘Triple Basket’), consists of three sections – the Vinayaṭiṭaka or basket of monastic law, the Suttaṭiṭaka or basket of teachings and the Abhidhammaṭiṭaka or basket of higher teachings. The content of the Tipiṭaka was elaborated by the Mahāvihāra school through a series of exegetical works such as Aṭṭhakathās (‘commentaries’) and Ṭikās (‘sub-commentaries’).

Buddhaghosa, the famous author of many Aṭṭhakathās (‘commentaries’), has rightly been considered to mark a major turning point in the development of Mahāvihāra exegetical literature. Most of the exegetes who composed commentaries on the Pāli canon in South and Southeast Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand, clearly demonstrate the great influence that Buddhaghosa’s commentarial practice had on their works. However, before turning our attention to defining his corpus, it may be useful to recall the developments in commentarial literature that preceded him. I would suggest there are five ‘layers’ of commentarial tradition within early Pāli literature.

The first layer is traceable within the Tipiṭaka, which is the received Pāli canon. The Tipiṭaka *ipso facto* is furnished with substantial evidence of early commentaries. Such canonical commentaries explain some of the teachings in the

1 In line with traditional records like Dīpavaṃsa (ca. 3rd c. CE) and Mahāvaṃsa (5th c. CE), the Theravāda branch of Buddhism was likely first established in Sri Lanka around the 3rd century BCE (Dīp 8.1–13; Mhv 12.1–8). This branch was split into three schools during the first millennium as 1) Mahāvihāra, 2) Abhayagiri and 3) Jetavana. However, the Mahāvihāra is the only surviving school. This school transmitted all its texts in Pāli, a Middle Indian language. In contemporary parlance, we use ‘Theravāda Buddhism’ or ‘Theriya Buddhism’ to denote the teachings transmitted by the Mahāvihāra school (GAMAGE 2023: 118 n. 1). For the usages of Theriya, Theravāda, Theravaṃsa and Mahāvihāra, see BRETTFELD 2022: 15–42; ANĀLAYO 2023: 1–25.

canon, and one of those is included within the Vinayapiṭaka. The Suttavibhaṅga² contains, among others, sections called word-for-word explanations (*padabhājanīya*/*padabhājana*,³ lit. ‘analysis of terms’⁴) where the words of the Pātimokkha rules that form the core of the Suttavibhaṅga⁵ are explained.⁶ The other canonical commentary is the Niddesa, which is included in the Khuddakanikāya, the fifth Nikāya of the Suttapiṭaka. It consists of a commentary on the Khaggavisāṇasutta, the Aṭṭhakavagga and the Pārāyanavagga of the Suttanipāta.⁷ This text typically offers detailed descriptions as its glosses for which sometimes the discourses of the first four Nikāyas have been consulted as well. Occasionally, one is able to discern some intertextual resemblances between the Niddesa and the Padabhājanīya,⁸ while some of the synonyms found in the glosses of the Niddesa are not used elsewhere in the canon.⁹ Norman thinks that both the Padabhājanīya and the Niddesa ‘belong to the same period’.¹⁰ As Abeynayake (1984: 162–163) points out, some portions of the Paṭisambhidāmagga, an Abhidhamma text transmitted

2 For instance, Vin III 23.37–24.22. See also NORMAN 1983: 19; VON HINÜBER 1996: 13; 1995: 17; BRAHMĀLI & ANALAYO 2017: 226.

3 See Sp I 29.16.

4 See JAYAWICKRAMA 1962: 26.

5 For example, Vin III 28.8–10: *methunadhammo* (≠ Vin III 22.33) *nāma yo so asaddhammo gāmadhammo vasaladhammo duṭṭhullaṃ odakantikaṃ rahassaṃ dvayaṃdvayasamāpatti, eso methunadhammo nāma*. Tr. BD I 47: ‘**Sexual intercourse** means: What is not verily dhamma, village dhamma, low-caste dhamma, wickedness, the final ablution, secrecy, having obtained in couples, this is called *sexual intercourse*.’

6 Some glosses appearing in the Padabhājanīya section are reminiscent of specific scholastic (abhidhammic) explanations developed within the received Aṭṭhakathās belonging to the Mahāvihāra school. See Vin III 73.24–25: *jīvitā voropeyyā* (Vin III 73.10–11) *tī jīvitindriyaṃ upacchindati uparodheti, santatiṃ vikopeti*. Tr. BD I 126: ‘**Should deprive of life** means: He cuts off the faculty of life, destroys it, harms its duration.’ This gloss echoes the exegesis on *pāṇa* (‘living being’) of the Aṭṭhakathās (Sv I 69.21–24; Ps I 198.10–14; Spk II 144.19–22; As 97.14–18; Sp II 439.12–17). Presumably, here the Padabhājanīya influenced the Aṭṭhakathās. Norman (1983: 19) characterises the Padabhājanīya as an old commentary.

7 NORMAN 1983: 84. See also ABEYNAYAKE 1984: 157–158; VON HINÜBER 1996: 58–59.

8 The Niddesa shares the same gloss with the Padabhājanīya. For instance, the gloss on *methunadhammo* in Nidd I 139.6–8 (*methunadhammo nāma yo so asaddhammo gāmadhammo vasaladhammo duṭṭhullo odakantiko rahasso dvayaṃdvayasamāpatti*) is remarkably similar to that in Vin III 28.8–10 (see above, n. 5).

9 For instance, Nidd I 3.14–15: *macco* (Sn 151.2) *tī satto naro mānavaṃ poso puggalo jīvo jāgu jantu indagu manujo*. The terms *jāgu* and *indagu* do not occur elsewhere in the canon as synonyms for a living being.

10 NORMAN 1983: 19. Baums effectively explores the similarities and differences between the Niddesa and Gāndhārī commentaries (BAUMS 2009: 406–550).

in the Khuddakanikāya of the Suttapiṭaka, possess the characteristics of a commentary.¹¹ We see that both the Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Niddesa, gloss the term *āyasmā* in a strikingly similar manner.¹² This fact suggests that the author(s) of these two texts shared the same materials. The Aṭṭhakathās on these texts say that the Elder Sāriputta authored both the Paṭisambhidāmagga and the Mahā-Niddesa.¹³

Apparently, the early commentaries such as Mūlaṭṭhakathā (‘root commentaries’) and Sihaḷaṭṭhakathā (‘Sinhalese commentaries’) represent the second layer of commentarial works. Although these early commentaries of the second layer have fallen into complete oblivion,¹⁴ a number of quotations borrowed from them are traceable in Aṭṭhakathās that are handed down to us today. Thus, we have no

11 For instance, Paṭis II 19.8–21.16, 141.5–142.26.

12 Paṭis II 21.13–14: *āyasmā* (Paṭis II 19.6) *ti piyavacanāṃ etaṃ garuvacanāṃ etaṃ sagāravasa-ppattissādhivacanāṃ āyasmā* (Paṭis II 19.6) *ti*. ‘Venerable one: a term of cordial address; this is a term of respect; this is a respectful [and] deferential designation. [That is] **Venerable One**.’ Cf. Nidd I 140.1–3: *āyasmā* (Nidd I 139.25) *ti piyavacanāṃ garuvacanāṃ sagāravavacanāṃ sappattissavacanāṃ etaṃ āyasmā* (Nidd I 139.25) *ti*; II 445.14–16.

13 Paṭis-a I 8.21–9.9: *etaṃ Paṭisambhidāmaggaṃ appakaraṇaṃ [...] Sāriputtatherena bhāsitaṃ*. ‘This treatise [titled] the Paṭisambhidāmagga [...] was preached by the Elder Sāriputta’; Nidd-a I 9.9–25: *etaṃ Mahā-Niddesaṃ [...] Sāriputtatherena bhāsitaṃ*. ‘This Mahā-Niddesa [...] was preached by the Elder Sāriputta.’ Scholars consider the interpretations of four verses appearing in the three Bhaddekarattasuttas (M III 187.22–202.25) as ‘ältestes “Kommentarfragment”’ (VON HINÜBER 2007: 107) or ‘earliest commentaries’ (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2009: 150 n. 27).

14 In the concluding verses of his commentaries to the first four Nikāya commentaries, Buddhaghosa makes the following statement, Sv B^e III 250.14 (omitted in Sv E^e): *Mūlakatṭhakathāsāraṃ ādāya mayā imaṃ karontena*. ‘By me who composed this [Sumaṅgalavilāsinī] having extracted the essence of the root commentaries.’ Ps V 110.1, Spk III 308.14 and Mp V 99.7 read Mūlaṭṭhakathā in lieu of Mūlakatṭhakathā. Dhammapāla’s gloss on the term Mūlaṭṭhakathā runs as follows, Sv-pt III 372.14–17: *Mūlaṭṭhakathāsāraṃ* (Sv C^e II 780.14; B^e III 250.14) *ti pubbe vuttam eva Dīghanikāya-Mahā-aṭṭhakathāsāraṃ eva puna nigamanavasena vadati. atha vā Mūlaṭṭhakathāsāraṃ* (Sv C^e II 780.14; B^e III 250.14) *ti Porṇaṭṭhakathāsu atthasāraṃ*. ‘**The essence of the root commentaries**: [Buddhaghosa], in conclusion, again refers to the very same essence of the great commentary on the Dīghanikāya that he mentioned before. Alternatively, **the essence of the root commentaries**: the essence of the meaning [contained] in the old commentaries.’ The second interpretation that Dhammapāla introduces with the phrase *atha vā* however shows that the term under discussion points to the Ur-commentaries. Similarly, received Aṭṭhakathās present us with ample evidence for a number of early commentaries such as Sihaḷa-aṭṭhakathā (e.g., Sp VII 1415.2), Andhaka-aṭṭhakathā (e.g., Sp III 646.11.27; see also KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013b) and Saṅkhepaṭṭhakathā (e.g., Sp II 391.9, 477.22). In the Visuddhimagga, Buddhaghosa refers to the Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā (Vism 72.24, 184.30) Saṃyutta-aṭṭhakathā (Vism 387.8, 432.26) and Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā (Vism 315.24). These terms most probably point to lost early commentaries that Buddhaghosa

way of obtaining full access to their contents, but at least we can glimpse a few examples.¹⁵

The nature of the commentaries belonging to the second layer also must be inferred from the limited information contained in the received Pāli Aṭṭhakathās, which I count as the third layer of commentarial tradition. These Pāli Aṭṭhakathās¹⁶ contain a wealth of systematic exegetical techniques and a range of subtle scholastic expositions on the Tipiṭaka, which were developed over many centuries. Intertextuality is one of the predominant features of the works of this third layer.¹⁷ Moreover, the received Aṭṭhakathās ascribed to Buddhaghosa con-

relied mainly on in compilation of the Papañcasūdani, the Sāratthappakāsini and the Manorathapūraṇi respectively. See also BODHI 2017: 66.

- 15 ADIKARAM 1946 and LOTERMOSER 1982 studied the citations quoted from these early commentaries that I have taken as the second layer in this chapter. Kieffer-Pülz examined all the quotations found in the Andhaka-aṭṭhakathā (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 1993; 2010; forthcoming).
- 16 The first two texts of the Abhidhammapiṭaka, i.e., the Dhammasaṅgaṇi and the Vibhaṅga, themselves contain commentaries. Heim states that the term *aṭṭhakathā* occurs in the canon. Presumably, she tends to venture this opinion having seen both the Chatṭhasaṅgīti and Sinhalese Buddhajayanti editors giving the fourth chapter of the Dhammasaṅgaṇi the title ‘Aṭṭhakathākāṇḍa’ (Dhs B^e 266.1; C^e 500.1, 560.18). But the PTS edition (Dhs 234, 264) does not give this chapter the title ‘Aṭṭhakathākāṇḍa’. The titles of the canonical texts in editions are often introduced by the editors of the texts (NORMAN *et al.* 2018: xxxvii–xxxix). Heim says, ‘The term *aṭṭhakathā*, literally, “explanation of the meaning”, appears in the canon only in reference to material in the Abhidhamma (a chapter of the Dhammasaṅgaṇi), and thus enters the tradition only at this level of development; it is also a distinctively Pali genre’ (HEIM 2018: 65). Indeed, the term *aṭṭhakathā* does not appear in the canon. The passage to which Heim refers clearly represents a context in which the term has been introduced by the editors. The commentary on the Dhammasaṅgaṇi consistently refers to this particular chapter as ‘Aṭṭhakathākāṇḍa’ (As 6.38; 344.9). It is highly likely that this commentarial reference prompted a scribe or copyist to give the fourth chapter of the Dhammasaṅgaṇi the title ‘Aṭṭhakathākāṇḍa’ at a later stage.
- 17 We see the commentators sharing the same material in their works. For instance, the long exegesis, related to the semantic domain of the term *samaya*, with some variations, occurs in the commentaries ascribed to Buddhaghosa (Sv I 31.24–32.12), Dhammapāla (Ud-a 18.31–20.1), Buddhadatta (Bv-a 127.31–128.2) and Mahānāma (Paṭis-a I 331.28–332.2; III 530.29–33). See also HEIM 2018: 198. It would also be possible to surmise that Buddhaghosa initially borrowed these kinds of exegeses from the early commentaries and subsequently the other commentators such as Dhammapāla quoted them from Buddhaghosa’s works. Kieffer-Pülz, with many attestations, shows how the author of the Niddesa-aṭṭhakathā has apparently borrowed from the works of Buddhaghosa, Dhammapāla and Mahānāma (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2009: 164–165). A. P. Buddhadatta (Nidd-a I viii) and von Hinüber (1996: 142–143) also note other commentator’s influences on Upasena. These are good examples of the intertextuality of the

tain many views held by and expositions offered by anonymous teachers including Sri Lankan Elders.¹⁸ In his works, before citing those expositions or views, he typically announces that he is going to refer to this kind of external authority. Sometimes, however, he does not clearly indicate where his reference to a former teacher's opinion ends. As a result, the reader is often unable to distinguish between the exact divisions of these kinds of references and the commentator's writings.¹⁹

The Gaṇṭhipadas that evolved as a different type of exegetical work²⁰ from the 5th to 6th centuries²¹ onwards can be considered as the fourth layer. The term Gaṇṭhipada refers to the 'explanation of difficult words'.²² In her General Introduction to the Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathāṭikā, De Silva observes: 'It appears that the majority of gaṇṭhipadas [...] were compiled as glossaries to the Vinaya-piṭaka',²³ but they 'seem to have all perished leaving only traces of their existence in other literary works'.²⁴ Valuable information on the Gaṇṭhipadas known from manuscripts and quotations²⁵ can be found in the extensive study by Kieffer-Pülz, *Verlo-*

Aṭṭhakathās. For intertextuality, see KRISTEVA 1980: 36; ALLEN 2000: 35–36; GORMAN 2009: 119–121. Freschi, drawing on Steinkellner's observations, summarises various cases of textual reuse (FRESCHI 2014: 88–89). With reference to a number of classical Indian texts, she moreover discusses the diverse reasons for reusing a text (FRESCHI 2014: 101–102). Freschi and Maas illustrate how the earlier classical Indian works were adapted and reused in later texts (FRESCHI & MAAS 2017).

18 See Chapter One, 1.2 (below, p. 36).

19 For example, Buddhaghosa introduces a different opinion of an anonymous master using the phrase *thero panāha*. 'But the Elder said [thus]' (Vism 397.21–30 [?]; Ps I 197.29–198.8 [?]; II 9.13–10.5 [?]; IV 10.17–11.13 [?]). The beginning of this Elder's view is quite obvious, but the end is not easily discernible. See also KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 41–42.

20 The sub-commentaries on the Vinaya such as the Vajirabuddhiṭikā and the Sāratthadīpanīṭikā provide us with a mine of information on diverse Gaṇṭhipadas. For instance, for references to a Gaṇṭhipada, see Sp-ṭ B^e I 15.4; 16.7. Similarly, these sub-commentaries refer to Porāṇa-gaṇṭhipadas (Vjb 125.25; 245.18; Sp-ṭ B^e III 379.17), a Mahā-gaṇṭhipada (Sp-ṭ I 14.20; 20.21), Majjhima-gaṇṭhipada (Sp-ṭ I 14.21; 20.19), Cūla-gaṇṭhipada (Sp-ṭ I 14.21; 20.19), Anu-gaṇṭhipada (Vjb 58.20; 62.21), Sīhaḷa-gaṇṭhipada (Sp-ṭ I 16.7; 77.6–7) and so on.

21 See the KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2015b: 428. As the studies of Kieffer-Pülz show, Dhammasiri, the author of the Gaṇṭhipada, lived around the 5th/6th c. CE, and can be identified as a pupil of the author of the Samantapāsādikā (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 162, 168, 619–620).

22 See KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 14.

23 See Sv-pt I: xxxvii. Besides the Gaṇṭhipadas to the Vinaya, there are also fewer Gaṇṭhipadas on abhidhammic texts such as the Paṭisambhidāmagga-gaṇṭhipada (Sp-ṭ I 104.19). See also Paṭis-gp B^e, C^e, S^e.

24 See Sv-pt I: xxxvi.

25 See KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 19–21; 35–39.

*rene Gaṇṭhipadas zum buddhistischen Ordensrecht.*²⁶ Sinhalese Gāṭapadayas (lit. ‘explanation of knotty words’)²⁷ can also be classified within this category. However, there is no upper limit to the creation of Gāṭapadayas. As a result, while some Gāṭapadayas may be quite old, others may be relatively recent.

I would recognise sub-commentaries (*tīkā/vaṇṇanā*) as the fifth layer whose fundamental role is to explain the Aṭṭhakathās. Buddhaghosa’s commentaries obviously have had an enormous influence on the sub-commentators. Yet, we see the sub-commentators at times developing or reinterpreting the exegeses provided by the commentators.²⁸

There is no unanimity concerning which works are by Buddhaghosa. Later Pāli treatises, namely, the second part of the Mahāvamsa (12th c. CE),²⁹ the Sad-

26 See KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a.

27 As their explanations reveal, the authors of Sinhalese Gāṭapadayas have based these works on both canonical and commentarial sources. For example, the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya (10th c. CE) is a Sinhalese gloss on the Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā. Though this text gives high priority to glossing the Pāli terms of the commentary on the Dhammapada with Sinhala terms, at times it offers etymologies in Pāli as well. It is worth noting that some etymologies found in the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya are not found in either Aṭṭhakathās or Tīkāś or other exegetical works of the Mahāvihāra school. For instance, commenting on the phrase *dhajapatākam* (‘flag and banner’) in the Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā (Dhp-a I 3.13), the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya (Dhp-a-gp² 9.14–15) states: *dhajan* (≠ Dhp-a I 3.13) *ti mule bandhivā vissaṭṭhami. paṭākan* (≠ Dhp-a I 3.13) *ti tiriyaṃ yaṭṭhiyā appitaṃ. ‘Flag: What is released having tied [it] at the bottom. Banner: What is fixed onto a pole horizontally.’* As far as I can see, this etymology that distinguishes between a *dhaja* and a *paṭākā* is not traceable in Pāli exegetical works.

28 Dhammapāla glosses the canonical terms when the commentary has skipped them or when he apparently feels the commentator’s exegeses on such terms are not satisfactory. To give two simple examples: 1) On the phrase *dvaṅgulapaññāya* (S I 129.18) Buddhaghosa comments in the Spk I 189.23–190.1. Dhammapāla reinterprets the same phrase in the Spk-pt I 223.26–224.5. (2) Across his commentaries, Buddhaghosa takes the term *nepakka* to mean ‘wisdom’ (*paññā*; Sv III 703.13–14; Ps III 30.7–10; Spk I 50.6–10; II 60.11–12; III 234.2–7; Mp III 226.7–8; see also Vibh-a 311.34–312.5). Here I quote his definition in the Visuddhimagga, Vism 3.23–24: *nepakkaṃ vuccati paññā*. ‘It is wisdom that is called “sagacity”.’ See also ÑĀNAMOLI 1956: 7–8. Nevertheless, Dhammapāla affirms that this term refers to ‘mindfulness’ (*sati*) that is deep. See Vism-mhṭ I 15.23: *tikkhavisadabhāvappattā hi sati nepakkan* (Vism 3.23) *ti vuccati*. ‘For it is mindfulness that attains sharpness and purity that is called “sagacity”.’ Yet, in the commentary on the Itivuttaka, Dhammapāla follows Buddhaghosa’s interpretation. See It-a I 169.23: *nepakkaṃ vuccati paññā*. ‘It is wisdom that is called “sagacity”.’ New exegetical techniques and doctrinal orientations, which are identical to sub-commentaries remain to be systematically explored. I am not focusing on them in this book.

29 Mhv 37.225–244.

dhammasaṅgaha (14th c. CE),³⁰ Buddhaghosuppatti (14th c. CE?),³¹ Jinakālamāli (16th c. CE),³² Gandhavaṃsa (17th c. CE?)³³ and Sāsanavaṃsa (19th c. CE)³⁴ ascribe a range of commentaries to him. But many of those are certainly not the output of the great commentator. The narrative of Buddhaghosa appearing in the Mahāvaṃsa has obviously influenced these other five works. Failing to understand some statements of the Mahāvaṃsa record, the authors of these five works have produced a number of strange titles for the texts.³⁵ The epilogue of the Visuddhimagga (Vism 712.10–23) attributes the text's composition to Buddhaghosa. It takes the form of a highly ornate and long sentence, appearing as an eulogy in his praise. This sentence – including the variations that are produced by scribes or redactors – similarly appears in the epilogue of many Aṭṭhakathās, such as the Samantapāsādikā (Sp VII 1416.1–14), the Atthasālinī (As 430.9–21), the Sammohavinodanī (Vibh-a 523.23–524.8), the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas,³⁶ and the commentaries on the Khuddakapāṭha (Pj I 253.5–17), Dhammapada (Dhp-a IV 235.13–236.6), and Suttanipāta (Pj II, II 608.8–20).³⁷ If we take this stereotype epilogue at face value, Buddhaghosa would be the author of all these commentaries.³⁸

Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that this epilogue occurred in the original manuscripts of all these exegetical works, including the Visuddhimagga, but it rather sounds like a later interpolation. It is of particular interest to note here that Dhammapāla, who composed the commentary on the Visuddhimagga and the sub-commentaries to the Sutta Nikāya commentaries, does not comment on this sentence.³⁹ Furthermore, King Abhā Salamevan Kasub (Pāli: 'Abhaya Silāmegha-

30 Saddhamma-s 53–56.

31 Bu-up 56–60.

32 Jinak 71.

33 Gv 59.

34 Sās 30–31.

35 For instance, according to the Saddhammasaṅgaha (Saddhamma-s 53.3–4) Buddhaghosa began writing the Atthasālinī as a commentary on the book of protection (Paritta-aṭṭhakathā). The Gandhavaṃsa (Gv 59.25–26) says that he composed a commentary with the title Paramatthakathā on the entire Abhidhammapiṭaka.

36 Sv B^e III 250.16–25; Ps IV 110.4–16; Spk III 308.20–309.3; Mp V 99.9–100.2.

37 For a translation of this epilogue, see BODHI 2017: 1330.

38 See HEIM 2014: 7–9. See also WINTERNITZ 1927: 190–191; LAW 1946: 79–91; ÑĀṆAMOLI 1956: xxxiii; GOONASEKERE 1967: 306–307; NORMAN 1983: 121.

39 For example, Vism-mhṭ II 534–535; Sv-pṭ III 372. But with respect to the Samantapāsādikā, this case appears to be different. One of the sub-commentaries on this text, the Vajirabuddhiṭkā, glosses the epilogue under discussion (Vjb 581.14–584.2). According to Kieffer-Pülz, the Vajirabuddhiṭkā was composed in the second half of the 10th century (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I vii, 162; 2019: 41–42; see also KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2009: 143; 2015c: 436; cf. VON HINÜBER 1996: 171).

vaṇṇa Kassapa’), the author of the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya (10th c. CE), does not provide a gloss on this epilogue either (Dhp-a-gp² 288). If Dhammapāla⁴⁰ and Kassapa considered this epilogue as having been written by the exact same author as the Aṭṭhakathās that they commented upon, there would be no reason for them to gloss it over. It suggests that these two exegetes regarded the epilogue in question as a later interpolation. Alternatively, this interpolation may not have existed at all when they examined those texts, including the Visuddhimagga. The Sinhalese extensive paraphrase (Mahāsannaya) to the Visuddhimagga by King Paṇḍita Parākramabāhu II (13th c. CE), produces compelling evidence in strengthening the view that Buddhaghosa did not compose this epilogue. According to this Mahāsannaya, a resident pupil (Sinhala: *atavāsi*, Pāli: *antevāsika*) of Buddhaghosa named Buddhamitra (Pāli: Buddhamitta) appended this epilogue to the Visuddhimagga. Since Buddhaghosa is considered to have lived in the 5th c. CE, it is probable that his pupil Buddhamitta lived in around the 5th–6th c. CE.⁴¹ On these grounds, I presume that the members of the Mahāvihāra school

40 The tradition ascribes a variety of exegetical works (i.e., Aṭṭhakathās, Ṭikās and Anuṭṭikās) to Dhammapāla. Scholarly research indicates the potential existence of multiple Dhammapālas associated with the Mahāvihāra school, and the precise dating of these figures remains a subject of debate. According to Cousins, the ‘earliest possible *floruit* of Dhammapāla is’ 6th c. CE (COUSINS 2011: 26), and eight commentaries, namely, Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā, Udāna-aṭṭhakathā, Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā, Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā, Cariyāpīṭaka-aṭṭhakathā, Nettippakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā, Vimānavatthu-aṭṭhakathā, Petavatthu-aṭṭhakathā were probably composed by Dhammapāla in the 7th c. CE. (COUSINS 1972: 163). Obviously, these Aṭṭhakathās are prior to the Dīgha-ṭikā (COUSINS 1972: 161). Both Cousins and Kieffer-Pülz are of the opinion that Dhammapāla who authored the Ṭikās to the Sutta Nikāyas and the Paramatthamañjūsā lived in the 10th c. CE (COUSINS 1972: 162; KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2014: 72 with n. 73; 2015a: 429 n. 4, 433 n. 21; 2015b: 84 n. 105). In addition to these commentaries, the tradition also ascribes the authorship of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī-anuṭṭikā, the Vibhaṅga-anuṭṭikā (COUSINS 2011: 23–24) and the Pañcappakaraṇa-anuṭṭikā (KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2014: 65 n. 26) to Ṭikā-Dhammapāla.

41 The Visuddhimārga Mahāsannaya reads thus, Vism-sn 1753.28–30: *dān buddhaghosa sthavirayange atavāsi vū buddhamitra terahu ‘paramavisuddhasaddhābuddhiviriyaapatimañḍitena’ yanādin sthavirayanaṇa guṇa kiyā viśuddhimaṅga terun visin kaḷa bava kīhu*. ‘The Elder Buddhamitta, who was the resident pupil of the Elder Buddhaghosa, after stating: “By [the Elder Buddhaghosa] who is endowed with utterly pure faith, wisdom and effort”, and so forth, in praise of the Elder [Buddhaghosa], now states that the Visuddhimagga was composed by the Elder [Buddhaghosa].’ Here, the term *atavāsi* (‘resident pupil’) alludes to the fact that Buddhamitta was a contemporary of Buddhaghosa. It moreover suggests that the sentence was added not much after the compilation of the Visuddhimagga. I am yet to figure out who this Buddhamitta might have been. We learn about a number of Buddhamittas from the Pāli commentarial literature. For instance, the author of the Samantapāsādikā (Sp VII 1415.3) studied Sinhalese

began to append the Elder Buddhāmitta's epilogue to many of the above mentioned commentaries from these two centuries onwards.⁴² It would also appear that the earliest reference to Buddhaghosa occurs in the epilogue appended by Buddhāmitta.

However, we should bear in mind the important time difference between the composition of the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Mahāsannaya* under discussion. Scholars have begun to question the credibility of the traditional acceptance of Buddhaghosa as the author of a massive number of commentaries. For example, leading academics of Theravāda Buddhist studies like von Hinüber⁴³ and Kieffer-Pülz⁴⁴ do not treat the *Khuddakapāṭha*- and the *Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* as the works of Buddhaghosa.⁴⁵ According to the latter scholar, these two works are

commentaries under Buddhāmitta (see also VON HINÜBER 1996: 103). Furthermore, the *Jātaka-aṭṭhakathā* was composed upon the request of several Elders, including Buddhāmitta (J I 1.16 [v. 8c]; see also VON HINÜBER 1996: 131). I am not certain whether these two commentaries point to the same figure. Interestingly, the author of the *Vajirabuddhiṭikā*, when referring to the authoritative masters of the Mahāvihāra school, mentions the name of the Elder Buddhāmitta thus, Vjb 147.9-10: *ācariyā nāma Buddhāmittatthera-Dhammasiritthera-Upatissattherādayo gaṇapāṃmokkhā, aṭṭhakathācariyassa ca santike sutapubbā*. 'Masters means: The Elder Buddhāmitta, the Elder Dhammasiri, the Elder Upatissa, and so forth, who [are] heads of groups, have studied in the presence of the commentator' (see also KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 619-620; VON HINÜBER 1996: 171). As this statement reveals, the Elder Buddhāmitta studied under the commentator. Using the phrase *Aṭṭhakathācariyas* as a generic term, the author of the *Vajirabuddhiṭikā* here apparently points to Buddhaghosa (so also KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a: I 71, 132, 159-160). This would appear to reinforce Parākramabāhu's statement. Mori examines the two phrases, *Aṭṭhakathācariyā* and *Aṭṭhakathikā*, which appear in Pāli commentaries, and argues that the former refers to the composers of old commentaries (MORI 1983: 981-983). He believes these two phrases are synonymous (MORI 1983: 979). This view of his is evidently unfounded. The term *Aṭṭhakathikā* is found exclusively in the exegesis of the *Maṅgalasutta* (Pj I 151.12; Pj II, B° I 33.1) within the entire *Aṭṭhakathā* literature. In this context, the phrase denotes specialists in the expositions of meaning, rather than the composers of the old commentaries.

42 A. P. Buddhādatta refuses the originality of the stereotypical sentence making the following statement: *Ē vākyaya kotānaka tibuṇat eya buddhaghosaścāryayan visin racita ekak nōva pasu kalaka etumāge potvaḷaṭa ek karana laddaki. kartṛnāmaya aprakaṭa vū hāma potakama aga ya yedīma pasuva siritak karagena tibē*. 'Although that sentence occurs everywhere, it is not written by master Buddhaghosa, but it was appended to that venerable one's works at a later period. Later on, it is customary to use that [sentence] at the end of every work of which the author's name is not clear' (BUDDHADATTA 1956-1957: 296). Nāṇamoli (1997: 295-296) who translated this sentence, gave it the title 'Postscript'.

43 See VON HINÜBER 1996: 128-130.

44 See KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2014: 64, 66; 2015: 20.

45 See also BODHI 2017: 16, 67.

‘even younger than Dhammapāla’s aṭṭhakathās’.⁴⁶ According to Pind,⁴⁷ Buddhaghosa is credited with composing the Samantapāsādikā. In contrast, von Hinüber underscores the compelling evidence suggesting that Buddhaghosa was likely not the author of the Samantapāsādikā, proposing instead that the text was the work of multiple authors.⁴⁸ The commentarial practice used in this work differs from that employed in the four Nikāya-commentaries.⁴⁹ Furthermore, although tradition assigns both the Samantapāsādikā and the Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī to Buddhaghosa, they evidently were not written by the same author,⁵⁰ and the latter commentary ‘represents a younger, more developed stage’.⁵¹ As is well known, tradition attributes the authorship of the three commentaries on the Abhidhammapiṭaka – the Atthasālinī, Sammohavinodanī, and Pañcappakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā – to Buddhaghosa. Norman agrees with this traditional attribution.⁵² In addition to the aforementioned sentence appearing in these commentaries, both the Atthasālinī and the Sammohavinodanī suggest that they were not composed by the great commentator himself, but rather by another author, possibly a pupil acting at his request.⁵³ As Jayawickrama says, the author of these commentaries was someone else, who wrote at Buddhaghosa’s invitation.⁵⁴ Bapat and Vadekar,⁵⁵ but also Cousins⁵⁶ compellingly argue that the Atthasālinī is not a work of the commentator under discussion. In the words of von Hinüber, ‘they are connected to Buddhaghosa’.⁵⁷ A. P. Buddhadatta also convincingly argues that Buddhaghosa should not be considered the author of the entire body of commentaries

46 KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2015: 20.

47 He concludes that Buddhaghosa is credited with composing the Visuddhimagga, the Samantapāsādikā, and the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas (PIND 1992: 138).

48 VON HINÜBER 1996: 104, 108–109; 2015: 364.

49 VON HINÜBER 1996: 120–121.

50 VON HINÜBER 1996: 110–111. See also NORMAN *et al.* 2018: xvii.

51 NORMAN *et al.* 2018: xxiii.

52 NORMAN 1983: 122–125.

53 In the prologue of the former commentary, the following statement can be found, As 1.17 (v. 8cd): *bhikkhunā Buddhaghosena sakkaccaṃ abhiyācīto*. ‘[I was] eagerly entreated by the monk Buddhaghosa.’ See also TIN 1920: I 2; NYĀNAPONIKA 2005: 4. The epilogue of the Sammohavinodanī reads, Vibh-a 523.9–10 (v. 3ab): *yācīto [...] yatinā [...] Buddhaghosena*. ‘[I was] requested by the ascetic Buddhaghosa.’ See also NĀNAMOLI 1996: II 297.

54 JAYAWICKRAMA Kv-a xiii.

55 BAPAT & VADEKAR 1942: xxxv–xl.

56 COUSINS 2015: 389–422.

57 VON HINÜBER 1996: 151.

on the Abhidhammapiṭaka, the Kaṅkhāvitarāṇī, the Khuddakapāṭha,⁵⁸ and the Dhammapada.⁵⁹ However, after analysing numerous examples, Hayashi highlights the absence of conclusive evidence to challenge the traditional view regarding the authorship of the Atthasālinī.⁶⁰ The attribution of authorship for a series of commentaries to Buddhaghosa can be explained by the fact that he was regarded as an overarching figure within the Mahāvihāra school.⁶¹

Whether or not Buddhaghosa was the sole author of all the above mentioned works, they can be considered to originate from a cohesive intellectual milieu of which he was the figurehead. Although the peritexts⁶² crediting Buddhaghosa

58 However, we should take into account here what occurs in the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya concerning Buddhaghosa's authorship of the Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā. At the very beginning of the Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gāṭapadaya, there is the following statement, Dhṛp-a-gp² 1.5-6: *dhammapada pāliyaṭa saṁvaranā kaṭāṭi budugos teraṇuvo*. 'The Elder Buddhaghosa who wishes to make an explanation of the scripture Dhammapada.' Although the term *kaṭāṭi* literally means 'he who wishes to make', it typically occurs in the senses of 'he who is going to make' within classical Sinhala literature. According to this statement, the author considers the Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā to be a work by Buddhaghosa.

59 See BUDDHADATTA 1956–1957: 183–196. Some academics were of the view that Buddhaghosa is a literary figure (for example, SMITH 1905: 185; WINTERNITZ 1927: 609). However, recent scholarship has not considered the latter view to be compelling.

60 See HAYASHI 1999: 31–71.

61 History reveals that this is a quite common tendency in South Asia as well as in Europe. For instance, not only the early authors such as Nāgārjuna (SEYFORTH RUEGG 1981a: 8; see also SERNESI 2013–2014: 491) and Kālidāsa (WINTERNITZ 1963: 48–49) but the poets who flourished in the more recent past such as Shakespeare (BROOKE 1908: ix–x, xliii) have also been considered umbrella figures. Therefore, the authorship of a number of works that they did not actually compose, has been ascribed to them. This feature is also common with respect to the composition of Tibetan canonical texts. Sernesi points out how the names of authors were attached to those works due to collective agency. As she says, the composition of those texts 'is a collaborative and derivative process' (SERNESI 2013–2014: 490). Therefore, 'many different individuals contribute to shaping the extant text as we have it and thus could be legitimately called its "author"' (SERNESI 2013–2014: 490). Krasser shows how various materials (students' notes, appendices, digressions) crept into a number of Sanskrit texts, namely, the Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti, Tarkajvālā, Prajñāpradīpa, Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti and the Hetubindu during their transmission (KRASSER 2014: 306–308: 310–311; see also HEIM 2014: 9–11).

62 1) ALLEN 2000: 103: '[A] peritext, consisting of elements such as titles, chapter titles, prefaces and notes.' 2) GENETTE 1997: 1: 'Paratexts are those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader: titles, forewords, epigraphs, and publishers' jacket copy are part of a book's private and public history.' 3) ALLEN 2000: 103: 'The paratext is the sum of the peritext and the epitext.'

with these Aṭṭhakathās may be considered as interpolations, there still appears to be a coherent style, voice, and hermeneutic approach in five works, namely, the Visuddhimagga and the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas that are less problematically attributed to the commentator under discussion.⁶³

However, Buddhaghosa's connection with these commentaries deserves to be further explored through a systematic survey. Of particular interest in this regard are the circulation of textual modules, diverse reading practices, and writing styles attested in the commentaries ascribed to him. Although such an investigation would doubtless be an immensely fruitful contribution to the field of Theravāda Buddhist studies, it is beyond the scope of this study.

In this monograph, I prefer to use the term Theriya instead of the name Theravāda,⁶⁴ to refer to three distinct Buddhist schools: 1) Mahāvihāravāsin, 2) Abhayagirivāsin and 3) Jetavanīya, established at Anurādhapura, Laṅkā.⁶⁵ According to recent research, the term Mahāvihāra was used to designate monasteries belonging to the Theriya lineage located in South India as well.⁶⁶ Yet here, I use the term Mahāvihāra only to denote the thus-called Buddhist school in Laṅkā.⁶⁷

63 We have already seen that the tradition ascribes a range of commentaries to Buddhaghosa. Yet it is rather difficult to find clear-cut evidence within those commentaries to support this traditional ascription. If we put to one side the epilogue (see also NORMAN *et al.* 2018: xvi–xvii), which is clearly a later interpolation, even the main text of the Visuddhimagga itself is not helpful when it comes to identifying it as a work by Buddhaghosa. The prologue of the Sutta Nikāya commentaries (Sv I 2.3–5; Ps I 2.7–9; Spk I 2.15–17; Mp I 2.21–23) read: *yasmā Visuddhimagge mayā suparisuddhaṃ vuttaṃ*. ‘For [the expositions of moral precepts, and so forth,] are very lucidly stated by me in the Visuddhimagga’ (see also JAYAWICKRAMA 2003: 74). Strictly speaking, this statement helps us only in concluding that the Visuddhimagga and the four Sutta Nikāya commentaries were composed by the very same author.

64 Tournier says, ‘Quant à la branche de ce groupe implantée à Laṅkā, nous évitons ici le nom quelque peu éculé de Theravādin, lui préférant Theriya’ (TOURNIER 2017: 17 n. 66; see also SKILLING 2009: 67). Anālayo says, ‘it seems to me there may not be a really pressing text-historical or religio-historical need to find a substitute for the name Theravāda as a way of designating the Buddhist traditions of South and Southeast Asia’ (ANĀLAYO 2023: 22).

65 See COUSINS 2001: 144; 2012: 67–69; GETHIN 2012: 50–52. See also BAREAU 2013: 16–17, 22–23; WYNNE 2018b: 249, 250, 254.

66 COUSINS 2001: 141, 144–145; TOURNIER 2018: 52; WYNNE 2018b: 256. Although numerous Mahāvihāras existed in South India, only a limited number were associated with the Mahāvihāra school in Sri Lanka (see KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2025 [forthcoming]).

67 See COUSINS 2001: 142; TOURNIER 2017: 17 n. 66. Some scholars refer to the Mahāvihāra school as Mahāvihāra Nikāya, see GUNAWARDANA 1979: 55; BRETFELD 2022: 16.

Buddhaghosa adheres to specific doctrinal principles⁶⁸ when refuting the views of opponents whom he designates as *vitaṇḍavādins*, *keci*, *apare*, and so on.⁶⁹ Notably, many of these tenets emerge through the systematic development of the teachings in the Pāli canon. The creativity of Mahāvihāra exegetes, such as Buddhaghosa, thus warrants further examination, as the prevailing perception among many Buddhist practitioners, particularly in Sri Lanka, is that they represent a conservative adherence to early doctrine. At the same time, the identity, doctrinal orientation, and scriptural transmissions of Buddhaghosa's opponents remain to be systematically examined. A number of well-researched scholarly works have investigated various aspects of Pāli exegetical literature. Among them, some have focused on the use of sources by the commentators including Buddhaghosa⁷⁰ and some illustrate the utility of the commentaries as source-

68 As we shall see in the following chapters, these tenets appear to be the doctrinal principles introduced by the Mahāvihāra school. Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla affirm that they do not contradict the principles (*samaya*) of the Mahāvihāravāsins. For instance, Sv I 1.20–21; Ps I 1.22–23: *samayaṃ avilomento [...] mahāvihāravāsinaṃ*; Ud-a 2.6: *mahāvihāravāsinaṃ samayaṃ avilomayaṃ*. 'Without contravening the principles of the residents of the Great Monastery' (see also MASEFIELD 1994: I 2; JAYAWICKRAMA 2003: 74; SKILLING 2010: 12). As the commentators point out, the term *samaya* has at least nine meanings, and *ditṭhi*, which means 'view' or 'debating opinion' is one of those (see HORNER 1978: 183; NĀṆAMOLI 1997: 112–113; MASEFIELD 1994: I 36–37). Buddhaghosa apparently uses the term *sakasamaya* in the Visuddhimagga to refer to the Mahāvihāra standpoint (Vism 522.21–22; Vibh-a 130.5; see also TOURNIER 2018: 59 and n. 107). In their commentaries, both Upasena and Mahānāma claim that they do not deviate from the Mahāvihāra standpoint when interpreting the Niddesa and the Paṭisambhidāmagga respectively (Nidd-a I 2.3; Paṭis-a I 2.13). Considering these attestations, I am inclined to assume that the terms *samaya* and *sakasamaya* often occur in Pāli commentaries to mean Mahāvihāra standpoints relating to earlier views expressed in the Tipiṭaka as well as new doctrinal orientations developed within the Mahāvihāra school. When commenting on the colophon of the Samantapāsādikā, the author of the Vajirabuddhiṭikā offers two interpretations of the term *sakasamaya*. The second of those states that the term refers to the Tipiṭaka (Vjb 582.18: *sakasamayo* (≠ Vism 712.11) *ti sogataṃ piṭakattayaṃ*. 'One's own standpoint: the three baskets [of Scripture] pertaining to the Well-farer.')

69 One of the most difficult parts of this study is to recognise whom Buddhaghosa refers to by these anonymous epithets. Although the sub-commentaries gloss these epithets with the name of non-Mahāvihāra schools in some contexts, those identifications are debatable. I have myself identified some doctrinal similarities of *vitaṇḍavāda* views with that of the Sautrāntikas, as expressed in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya. But, in some cases, the term *Vitaṇḍavādi* appears to stand for the members of the Mahāvihāra school as well.

70 LAW 1923, 1933, 1946; ADIKARAM 1946; GOONASEKERE 1967; LOTTERMOSER 1982; ENDO 2013; KIEFFER-PÜLZ 1993, 2013.

material for unravelling unknown facets of Sri Lankan history;⁷¹ more recently, other works have revealed the great potential of the commentaries for studying Buddhism in general and Sri Lankan Theriya Buddhism in particular.⁷² Some researchers have paid attention to dubious semantic explanations of commentarial interpretations.⁷³ Other studies have examined Buddhaghosa's relationship with the Mahāvihāra school.⁷⁴ Similarly, there have been studies critically reviewing doctrines upheld by various Buddhist sects in the Aṭṭhakathās.⁷⁵

Hayashi has focused on the apocryphal texts preserved especially in the commentaries ascribed to Buddhaghosa.⁷⁶ Buddhaghosa's commentaries contain echoes of texts that are untraceable within the corpus of the received Tipiṭaka. I have noted several quotations of and allusions to such texts in his commentaries on the first four Nikāyas. Those excerpts are highly likely to be the echoes of lost canonical texts. Perhaps some of those excerpts have been preserved in the lost early commentaries consulted by Buddhaghosa. Those citations are useful in determining the nature of the early layers of the Pāli canon/canons, and deeply significant for discovering divergent doctrines that are not attested in the received Tipiṭaka.

Heim seemingly regards all the Aṭṭhakathās attributed to Buddhaghosa by tradition as the works of Buddhaghosa himself.⁷⁷ Her latest research highlights how Mahāvihāra exegetes, such as Buddhaghosa, employ a range of exegetical techniques in their commentaries on the Tipiṭaka. This work will be especially valuable for those studying the exegetical strategies evident in the Mahāvihāra Aṭṭhakathās.⁷⁸ Yet the commentarial techniques and broader hermeneutic strategies employed by Buddhaghosa, particularly in relation to the doctrinal principles of the Mahāvihāra school, remain insufficiently explored. Thus, through a detailed analysis of commentaries attributed to Buddhaghosa, the present study examines the role of non-Mahāvihāravāsin views in the articulation of Mahāvihāra tenets. Equally, this study explores creative hermeneutic strategies that shed intriguing light on the relationship between the Mahāvihāra and other Buddhist schools.

71 ADIKARAM 1946; RAHULA 1956.

72 BABA 2008; ENDO 2013; KIEFFER-PÜLZ 2013a; CROSBY 2014; HEIM 2014; VON HINÜBER 2015.

73 ADIKARAM 1946; NORMAN 1997.

74 GETHIN 2012: 1–63.

75 MORI 1982; SILK 2002; COUSINS 2009, 2012.

76 HAYASHI 2013: 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d.

77 For instance, she regards commentaries such as the Atthasālinī and the Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā as having been authored by Buddhaghosa (HEIM 2014; 2018).

78 HEIM 2018.

2. Buddhaghosa's Commentarial Practice

Ostensibly, the Pāli commentaries set out merely to clarify ambiguities in the Pāli canon. Buddhaghosa's statement appearing in the first four Nikāya commentaries further clarifies this notion.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, at the same time, the commentaries establish Mahāvihāra tenets related to the Tipiṭaka. This serves the dual purpose of defining the Mahāvihāra school as distinct from other Buddhist schools and providing homiletic guidelines for Mahāvihāra students. Scholarly attention has already been paid to the special features of the exegetical techniques in the Pāli commentaries.⁸⁰ From his exegeses, it is clear that Buddhaghosa is a well-versed scholar of the Pāli canon as well as a diligent philologist.⁸¹ For example,

79 Cf. Sv I 1.14: *atthappakāsanatthaṃ aṭṭhakathā*. 'The aṭṭhakathās for the purpose of illustrating the meaning' (see also Ps I 1.16; Spk I 1.13; Mp I 1.14). Dhammapāla explains the term *aṭṭhakathā* as follows, Sv-pt I 19.22-24: *attho kathiyati etāyā ti atthakathā* (Sv I 1.14), *sā eva aṭṭhakathā tthakārassa tthakāraṃ katvā, yathā 'dukkhassa pīlanatṭha'* (Paṭi I 19.31) ti. 'By means of this [*atthakathā*] the meaning is expressed, thus [it is called] *atthakathā*. That very *atthakathā* [is referred to as *aṭṭhakathā*] making [a substitution] *tṭha* for *ttha*, just like [the phrase] *dukkhassa pīlanatṭha* ("oppression as meaning of suffering").' See also ÑĀNAMOLI 1982: 21. Spk-pt I 119.27-28: *aṭṭhakathāṃ katheti* (Spk I 84.5) *ti avivaṭṭapāṭhassa pāliyā atthasaṃvaṇṇanaṃ karoti ti attho*. '[One] explains the explanation of the meaning: [one] compiles an exposition of meaning of an unfamiliar reading in a [canonical] text (*pāliyā*).'

80 De Silva studied several exegetical techniques such as religious etymologies, distinctive hermeneutic methods of each basket of the canon, similes, and so forth, appearing in the Pāli commentaries (DE SILVA 1988: 91–108). She also discusses a number of exegetical techniques in her General Introduction to the Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathāṭikā (Sv-pt I: lxvi–lxxx). Von Hinüber takes into consideration two exegetical methods employed by Buddhaghosa, namely, (1) *apubbapadavaṇṇanā* ('explanation of the terms, which were not commented on before'), (2) *anuttānapadavaṇṇanā* ('explanation of unclear words') (VON HINÜBER 1996: 106, 114, 116, 130, 144; see also VON HINÜBER 2007: 108). Ñānamoli (1997: vi–viii) and Bodhi (2017: 67–72) in their translations of the Khuddakapāṭha-aṭṭhakathā and the Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā respectively, show a series of exegetical techniques. In her work, Heim discusses a range of exegetical methods of Buddhaghosa in detail (HEIM 2018: 61–72). For canonical synecdochic expressions noted by the commentators, see GAMAGE 2020: 259–282; 2023: 118–147.

81 POLLOCK 2009: 934 states: '[P]hilology is, or should be, the discipline of making sense of texts' (see also POLLOCK 2015: 114). In line with this broad definition, our commentator is clearly a fervent philologist. Heim writes, 'We can see Buddhaghosa practicing a philology that advanced a theory of scripture and the interpretive project' (HEIM 2018: 3). As Saussure's description also indicates, the role of the philologist, in a way, is similar to that of the commentator. See SAUSSURE 1966: 1: 'The early philologists sought especially to correct, interpret and comment upon written texts.' See also ZIOLKOWSKI 1990: 6. The philologist scrupulously examines the language of the text that he reads. He considers words as the indices to genuine historical knowledge (see ZETZEL 2015: 48; see also CHANG 2015: 317). The definition of philology – 'the art of slow reading' –

in the Sāratthappakāsinī, he identifies a number of words that occur only once within the entire Tipiṭaka. This practice of the commentator is akin to the concept of *hapax legomenon* employed by scholars, particularly philologists studying the Bible and Greek and Latin texts.⁸² In the Sāratthappakāsinī, Buddhaghosa identifies four instances (namely, two phrases and two terms) from the Saṃyuttanikāya that appear only once within the canon, and categorises them as *asambhinnapada* or *abhinnakapada* (lit. ‘unbroken phrase’).⁸³ The leading exegete’s identification of such *hapax legomena* within the canon serves as a testimony to his profound mastery of the latter source. The two phrases deal with the Buddha’s activities.

(1.) In the Sammasanasutta, addressing the Elder Ānanda, the Buddha says: *tena h’ Ānanda suṇātha* (S II 107.14). ‘Then listen, o Ānanda.’ Buddhaghosa’s gloss on this phrase is as follows:

tena hi Ānanda suṇāthā (S II 107.14) *ti idaṃ Tepiṭake Buddhavacane abhinnakaṃ padaṃ. aññattha hi evaṃ vuttaṃ nāma natthi* (Spk II 119.22–24).⁸⁴

This (i.e., the following): **Then listen, o Ānanda**, is a unique phrase in the word of the Buddha [handed down] in the three baskets. For there is no [identical] statement made in this manner elsewhere [in the Tipiṭaka].

(2.) In the Candūpamasutta we read: *atha kho Bhagavā ākāse pāṇiṃ cālesi* (S II 198.17). ‘Then, the Blessed One waved [his] hand in the air.’ On this phrase, Buddhaghosa states as follows:

ākāse pāṇiṃ cālesi (S II 198.17) *ti [...] idaṃ ca pana Tepiṭake Buddhavacane asambhinnapadaṃ nāma* (Spk II 169.19–20).⁸⁵

This, [the Blessed One], **waved [his] hand in the air**, is also indeed a unique phrase in the word of the Buddha [handed down] in the three baskets.

also makes an allusion to the meticulousness that should essentially be maintained in the discipline (see ZIOLKOWSKI 1990: 6; POLLOCK 2009: 933).

82 I am grateful to Andreas Pohlus for correcting this statement regarding *hapax legomenon*. For *hapax legomenon*/*hapax legomena* see CASANOWICZ 1904: 226; GREENSPAHN 2016: 17.

83 I follow BODHI 2000: 799 n. 273; 1441 n. 294 and 1947 n. 276, who renders the term as ‘unique phrase’. Woodward translates it as ‘the ungarbled’ word and ‘the pure text’ (WOODWARD 1927: IV 197 n. 2; 1930: V 252 n. 3).

84 Dhammapāla explains the phrase as follows, Spk-pt II 120.4–5: *abhinnakaṃ padan* (Spk II 119.23) *ti avomissakapadaṃ, aññattha evaṃ anāgataṃ vākyan ti attho*. ‘**The unique phrase**: The phrase that is unmixed. [This] means an utterance that is not handed down in this manner elsewhere [in the Tipiṭaka].’

85 See also Dhammapāla’s gloss in the Spk-pt II 159.5.

The other two *hapax legomena* are (3.) *kuṭṭhitam* and (4.) *opapāti*. Concerning *kuṭṭhitam* it is understood as 'swelteringly hot' by Woodward and Bodhi.⁸⁶ Buddhaghosa in his *Sāratthappakāsinī* glosses the term *kuṭṭhitam* with *kuthitam*.⁸⁷ In the Burmese *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* (S B^e II 480) and the Sinhalese edition (S C^e IV 532.¹⁹) *kuthitam* occurs as the lemma. The inconsistency of the lemma in these three editions leads us to assume that the original reading has been contaminated at the hands of copyists/scribes. Therefore, the exact *asambhinnapada* can hardly be determined. As far as I can ascertain, *kuthita* and *kuṭṭhita* appear more than once in the canon, suggesting that they are not *hapax legomena*.⁸⁸ In all these occurrences, the term under discussion appears in the sense of 'sweltering'. In addition to this meaning, the term evolved to be used in the sense of 'rotten' in the exegetical literature.⁸⁹ Presumably, *kuṭṭhitam* is the *asambhinnapada*.

Concerning *opapāti* there is not only a mismatch between the canonical and the commentarial readings,⁹⁰ but there are also variants in the various editions. The *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* edition reads here *omāti* (S B^e V 247.³⁻⁴) while the Sinhalese edition records it as *opātiha* (S C^e V 2, 46.³⁵). None of the editions of the *Sāratthappakāsinī* that I consulted⁹¹ are satisfactory. But all of them contain the following sentence in this context:

idaṃ tepītake Buddhavacane asambhinnapadaṃ.

This is a unique term in the word of the Buddha [appearing] in the Three-baskets.

86 See S IV 289.²¹: *tena kho pana samayena uṇhaṃ hoti kuṭṭhitam*. 'On that occasion, [that area] became swelteringly hot' (see also WOODWARD 1927: IV 197; BODHI 2000: 1319). Both, Woodward and Bodhi, take the term *uṇhaṃ* as a noun and *kuṭṭhitam* as its qualification. Thus, they translate the latter term as 'sweltering'.

87 Spk III 92.¹⁷⁻¹⁹: *kuṭṭhitam* (S IV 289.²¹) *ti kuthitam*. *heṭṭhā santatta-vālikāya upari ātapena ca atitikhīnaṃ ti attho*. *idaṃ pana tepītake Buddhavacane asambhinnam padaṃ*. '**kuṭṭhitam**: hot. [It] means [the area] was extremely sharp (i.e., "piercingly hot") owing to well-heated sand under foot and the sunshine above. This is indeed a unique term in the word of the Buddha [appearing] in the Three-baskets' (see also BODHI 2000: 1441 n. 294).

88 For *kuthita*, see Vin III 108.¹⁷ (B^e 149.9; C^e I 252.¹⁹). For *kuthitā*, see Thi 172.¹⁷ (B^e 433.16; C^e 106.12).

89 See also DOP, s.v. *kuthita*: 'stinking; putrid; rotten'; DOP, s.v. *kaṭṭhita*, *kuthita*: 'hot, boiling, seething'.

90 S V 282.²⁶⁻²⁷: *yañ ca kho opapāti ha bhante Bhagavā iddhiyā manomayena kāyena brahmalo-kam upasaṅkमितuṃ*. Tr. BODHI 2000: 1741: 'That the Blessed One is able to go to the brahmā world by spiritual power with a mind-made body.' Both Woodward (1930: 252 n. 3) and Bodhi (2000: 1947: n. 276) experienced difficulty in translating this *asambhinnapada* because it is notoriously corrupted and there is a remarkable mismatch between the canonical reading and the commentarial lemmas.

91 The PTS (Spk III 260.³³⁻³⁴), Sinhalese (Spk C^e III 204.²⁴⁻²⁵), *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* (Spk B^e III 291.²³⁻²⁴) and Siamese (Spk S^e III 339.⁷⁻⁸) editions.

Furthermore, the same commentary has the term *asaṃkiṇṇā* (lit. ‘unmixed’) in the sense of *asambhinnapada*. In the Saṃyuttanikāya there is the following statement:

natthi kiccaṃ brāhmaṇassa (S I 47.32 [v. 4a]).

For the brahmin there is no task to be done (BODHI 2000: 141).

The stanza that includes this line, as Buddhaghosa states, is ‘unmixed’ in the whole canon.

tīsu kira piṭakesu ayaṃ gāthā asaṃkiṇṇā. Bhagavatā hi aññattha viriyassa doso nāma dassito natthi (Spk I 105.12–14).

As is well known, this stanza is unmixed in the three baskets. For the defect of the effort has not been pointed out anywhere else by the Blessed One.⁹²

Likewise, throughout his commentaries, Buddhaghosa makes diverse categorical statements concerning the structure of the suttas and the content of the Tipiṭaka, at times offering bold assertions concerning specific discourses and statements within the canon. It will suffice to mention two instances here.

1.) The Mahāpadānasutta of the Dīghanikāya (D II 1.1–54.7), according to Buddhaghosa is the longest discourse in the whole canon. Its content has been abbreviated by the redactors through the application of the *peyyāla* method (‘abridgement’). Thus, it appears that when these abbreviations are fully expanded, this discourse would stand as the longest in the received canon.

Tepiṭake Buddhavacane aññaṃ suttaṃ chabbīsati bhāṇavārasataparimāṇaṃ nāma natthi. ‘suttantarājā’ nāma ayaṃ suttanto vedītabbo (Sv II 480.14–16).

Indeed, there is no other discourse in the word of the Buddha [handed down] in the three baskets that has the measure of 126 *bhāṇavāras* or recitals. This *suttanta* should be known as ‘the King of Discourses’.

Dhammapāla defines a *bhāṇavāra* as follows,

bhāṇavāro ti ca dvattiṃsakkharānaṃ gāthānaṃ vasena aḍḍhateyyagāthāsataṃ (Ps-pt I 20.20–21).

And a recital: two-hundred and fifty stanzas by virtue of [the measurement of] the thirty-two-syllable stanzas.⁹³

92 Dhammapāla’s gloss implies that he also has understood *asaṃkiṇṇa* as synonymous with *asambhinna*. See Spk-pt I 144.17: *asaṃkiṇṇā* (Spk I 105.13) *ti avomissā evaṃ aññattha anāgatattā. ‘asaṃkiṇṇā: Unmixed because [it has] not been handed down elsewhere [in the canon] in this manner.’* Buddhaghosa’s reference to *asambhinnapada* can only be found in the Sāratthappakāsinī.

93 In the Saddanīti, Aggavaṃsa further elucidates *bhāṇavāra*, Sadd I 357.28–358.2:

*aṭṭh’ akkharā ekapadaṃ ekā gāthā catuppadaṃ |
gāthā c’ ekā mato gantho gantho bāttiṃsatakkharo ||*

2.) Buddhaghosa flatly rejects the existence of a sutta in the entire Pāli canon that states that the Buddhas appear in other universes. To the best of my knowledge, this assertion by the great Mahāvihāra exegete holds true.

imā tisso saṅgītiyo āruḷhe Tepītake Buddhavacane 'imaṃ cakkavāḷaṃ muñcivā aññatra Buddhā uppajjantī' ti suttaṃ natthi, 'na uppajjantī' ti pana atthi (Sv III 898.3-5).

In the three baskets, the word of the Buddha, which was handed down by the three communal recitations, there is not a [single] discourse, [which states] thus: 'Beyond this external ring of [mountains], the Buddhas emerge elsewhere'; whereas there are [discourses, which state]: '[The Buddhas] do not emerge [in other universes]'.⁹⁴

This feature is also an unimpeachable testament to his impressive knowledge of the Pāli canon.

One of the most striking defining features of Buddhaghosa's commentarial method is his steadfast commitment to elucidating the contextual meaning of canonical utterances. Grammatical analyses are comparatively rare in his works; instead, he appears to have placed supreme emphasis on unveiling their significance within the precise settings in which they arise.⁹⁵ Careful analysis of the

*bāttimsakkharaganthānaṃ paññāsaṃ dvīsataṃ pana |
bhāṇavāro mato eko: sv aṭṭhakkharasahassako ||*

'One quarter (*pada*) has eight syllables and one stanza has four quarters.

One stanza is known as a *gantha* that has thirty-two syllables.

Two hundred and fifty of the thirty-two-syllable *ganthas* are considered one *bhāṇavāra* that has eight thousand syllables.'

Since these explanations show that a *bhāṇavāra* comprises 8,000 syllables (i.e., $8 \times 4 = 32$, $32 \times 250 = 8,000$), there are 1,008,000 ($8,000 \times 126$) syllables in the Mahāpadānasutta. See also VON HINÜBER 1995a: 131; DIMITROV 2016: 231 fn. 65; 249.

94 The same assertion can be found in Ps IV 114.13-15; Mp II 10.6-9; Vibh-a 431.6-8.

95 For example, it is of interest to pay attention to how he deals with the canonical phrase *yatra hi nāma* throughout his four Sutta Nikāya commentaries. The following sentence occurs in the Mahāpadānasutta of the Dīghanikāya, D II 8.4-7: *yatra hi nāma Tathāgato atīte Buddhhe [...] anussarissati*. As I have observed in a number of canonical attestations, the final verb of a sentence beginning with *yatra hi nāma* is consistently given in the future tense (for a detailed study, see FAHS 1969: §§ 723, 725, and 754). Thus, in this example as well, the final verb is in the future tense – *anussarissati* (lit. '[he] will recollect'). What follows is Buddhaghosa's gloss in the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī, Sv B^e II 18.25-19.3: *yatra hi nāmā* (D II 8.4) *ti acchariyatthe nipāto, yo nāma Tathāgato ti attho. [...] anussarissatī* (D II 8.6-7) *ti idaṃ yatrā ti nipātavasena anāgatavacanaṃ. attho pan' ettha atītavasena veditabbo. Bhagavā hi te Buddhhe anussari, na dāni anussarissati. 'Yatra hi nāma* is a phrase [occurring] in the sense of surprise. Verily the Tathāgata who [possesses such marvellous qualities], is the meaning.' ... This (i.e., the following) [verb]: [He] **will recollect** is a term [that denotes] the future tense owing to [the occurrence of] the particle *yatra*. But the meaning [of the verb] should in this context be understood by virtue of the past tense. For, the Blessed One recollected those Buddhas of the past,

semantic range of specific canonical terms vividly depicts Buddhaghosa's consideration of pragmatics. This analysis enables the audience to choose the most appropriate meaning of such terms within the particular context in the canon.⁹⁶

[but he] is not going to recollect [them] now' (see also Ps IV 167.4-5; Spk I 209.4-5). In this gloss, after identifying the grammatical feature of *yatra hi nāma*, Buddhaghosa goes on to explain its contextual meaning. We should note here that *yatra*, as incorporated in the lemma, conveys a 'locative' meaning, whereas *yo*, as appearing in the gloss, denotes a 'nominative' sense. The term *yatra*, as Buddhaghosa points out, must be understood in the sense of *yo*. That is, in this context, *yatra* semantically resembles *yo* and refers to the Buddha. Furthermore, *anussarissati* (lit. '[he] will recollect') should be understood as *anussari* (lit. '[he] recollected'). In light of this exegesis, I shall render the above mentioned sentence of the Mahāpadānasutta thus: 'For the Tathāgata recollected the Buddhas of the past.' Besides the above mentioned example, many of the exegeses of *yatra hi nāma* found in the four commentaries do not address grammatical features. Instead, they are solely concerned with discerning the contextual meaning of the phrase (Sv II 569.15-16, III 836.3, 870.2, 903.32, Ps II 405.16, Spk II 383.4 III 289.4, Mp III 167.11, 386.11). As Buddhaghosa insists in these attestations, *yatra* occurs in the sense of the nominative singular (i.e., 'yo') as a referent to the person mentioned in the canon: 1.) Ālāra Kālāma (D II 130.11), 2.) The Buddha Gotama (D III 30.27), 3.) A certain human being – *aññataro satto* (D III 92.5), 4.) The Buddha (D III 115.2), 5.) Baka, the brahma (M I 326.8), 6.) The Elder Mālukyaputta (S IV 72.2), 7.) The Elder Sāriputta (S V 385.7), 8.) Upaka Maṇḍikāputta, the ascetic (A II 181.30), 9.) A sinful person – *pāpo manusso* (A III 369.22). In the Spk B° III 332.18-19 and Mp III 244.17, his glosses run thus respectively: *yatra hi nāmā* (S V 453.14-15) *ti ye nāma*, *yatra hi nāmā* (A III 34.9-10) *ti yāni nāma*. In these two contexts, *yatra* stands for the nominative plural, and they refer respectively to the 'Licchavi princes' – *Licchavikumārakā* (S V 453.9-10) and 'meritorious deeds' – *puññāni* (A III 34.10). However, in some accounts it also appears in the sense of other nominal cases. For example, in Mp III 216.10: *yatra hi nāmā* (A III 241.12-13) *ti yaṃ nāma*, *yatra* is semantically similar to *yaṃ*, the accusative singular, and it is a referent to 'an offence' (A III 241.11-12). Moreover, in Sv III 843.36: *yatra hi nāmā* (D III 57.16) *ti yesaṃ nāma*, this phrase represents the sense of genitive plural, and it refers to foolish people's intentions – *moghapurisā* (D III 57.16).

- 96 Buddhaghosa identifies a spectrum of potential meanings and subtle nuances for a number of words occurring in the canon. In such cases, he cites apt examples, which illustrate how each word expresses divergent meanings when it occurs within various contexts in the canon. For instance, when commenting on the phrase *Brahmadattena māṇavena* ('with the youth Brahmadaṭṭa') in the Brahmajālasutta of the Dīghanikāya (D I 1.7-8), Buddhaghosa explains three possible meanings of the term *māṇava* as follows, Sv I 36.5-12: **Brahmadatto** (D I 1.11) *ti tassa nāmaṃ*. **māṇavo** (D I 1.11) *ti satto pi coro pi taruṇo pi vuccati*.

'coditā devadūtehi ye pamajjanti māṇavā |

te dīgharattaṃ socanti hīnakāyūpagā narā' || (M III 187.3-4 (v. 1); A I 142.14-15)

ti ādisu hi satto māṇavo ti vutto. 'māṇavehi samāgacchanti katakammehi pi akatakammehi pi' (M I 448.30-31) *ti ādisu coro*, 'Ambaṭṭho māṇavo' (D I 89.11), 'Aṅgako māṇavo' (≠ D I 123.4) *ti ādisu taruṇo māṇavo ti vutto*. *idhāpi ayam eva attho*. 'Brahmadatta is his name. Māṇava

Presumably, by employing this exegetical practice in his works, the commentator softly warns Mahāvihāra students of the Pāli canon not to carelessly attribute all the meanings of a word to its diverse occurrences without considering their context. Such an attribution, as biblical scholars point out, is an error called 'illegitimate totality transfer'.⁹⁷ Although he refers to phonetic principles in relation to the accurate articulation of canonical statements,⁹⁸ his exegesis in the *Papañcasūdanī* leaves us with the impression that one is capable of attaining spiritual attainments, including *nibbāna*, regardless of whether one articulates the letters correctly or not.⁹⁹ In the same commentary, he draws on an example to support this opinion, which appears to be representative of the Mahāvihāra school more broadly.

is said to be either “a human being” or “a thief” or “a youth”. For, “a human being” is expressed as *māṇava* in [the statements] such as: [1] “[If] the *māṇavas* who remain heedless though urged by the divine messengers, those people who approached the inferior realm, regret for a long time”; [and] “a thief” [is expressed as *māṇava*] in [the statements] such as: [2] “[The monks] have met with the *māṇavas* [both] those who had committed an act [that is a crime] and those who had not”; [but] “a youth” is expressed as *māṇava* in [the statements] such as: [3.1] “Ambaṭṭha, the *māṇava*” [, and] [3.2] “Aṅgaka, the *māṇava*”. In this context too, indeed this [i.e., “the latter sense”] is the meaning.’ The particular contexts of the canonical attestations cited by him, strongly suggest that Buddhaghosa has chosen appropriate examples in illustrating these three meanings of the term *māṇava*. It should be taken into account here that the *Soṇadaṇḍasutta* reads *Aṅgako nāma māṇavako* (D I 123.4). Apparently, Buddhaghosa slightly changed this attestation for the sake of brevity in the context under discussion. I will discuss this practice of the commentator in more detail in the third chapter (below, pp. 177–228).

- 97 Barr, a British biblical scholar coined this expression (BARR 1961: 218). Adams writes, ‘In the cases of “illegitimate totality transfer” the lexicographer rightfully identifies a number of potential meanings for a word; however, he or she wrongly attributes the entire set of meanings to each occurrence of the word’ (ADAMS 2016: 325; see also GORMAN 2010: 108).
- 98 Buddhaghosa speaks of tenfold letters (*dasavidhaṃ vyañjanaṃ*) related to phonetics (Sv I 176.28–177.6; Ps II 203.18–25; Mp II 289.15–22). The *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp VII 1399.7–1401.3) insists on the accuracy of pronunciation of the formula spoken (*kammaṇvācā*) at legal procedures, as a crucial factor (see also VON HINÜBER 1994: 198–208; GORNALL 2014: 511–550; HEIM 2018: 77).
- 99 The *Kintisutta* gives us the impression that the meaning is more significant than the phrasing. This discourse employs a method to follow when there arises a disagreement between two monks about the meaning (*attha*) and phrasing (*vyañjana*) in relation to the Teaching (*abhidhamme*). See M II 239.4–5: *siyaṃsu dve bhikkhū abhidhamme nānāvādā*. Tr. NĀNAMOLI & BODHI 1995: 848: ‘[T]wo bhikkhus might make different assertions about the higher Dhamma.’ As this discourse indicates, one should neglect the dissimilarities of the phrasing of such Teaching if they are similar in meaning. See M II 240.9–11: *atthato hi kho sameti byañjanato nānaṃ. appamattakaṃ kho paṇ’ etaṃ yad idaṃ byañjanaṃ. mā āyasmanto appamattakehi vivādaṃ āpajjitthā ti*. ‘For [the phrasing of these two groups of venerable ones] are consistent in meaning [but] dif-

The Papan̄casūdanī records an interesting incident at a monastery called Vijayārāma:

Vijayārāma vihāravāsī kir’ eko khīṇāsavathero dvinnāṃ bhikkhūnaṃ suttaṃ āharitvā kammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento “samuddho samuddho” ti bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano bhāsati’ ti dhaniṭaṃ katvā āha. eko bhikkhu “samuddo” nāma bhante’ ti āha. ‘āvuso “samuddho” ti vutte pi “samuddo” ti vutte pi mayaṃ loṇasāgaram eva jānāma. tumhe pana no atthagavesakā, vyañjana-gavesakā. gacchatha Mahāvihāre paṇḍavayañjanānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ santike vyañjanaṃ so-dhāpethā’ ti kammaṭṭhānaṃ akathetvā uṭṭhāpesi (Ps IV 29.23–30.5).

An Elder who had destroyed the taints who dwelled at the Vijayārāma monastery, when explaining a topic for meditation to two monks, having brought forward a discourse, said with aspiration: ‘The uninstructed ordinary man, o monks, says “*samuddha* [and] *samuddha*”.’ One monk said, ‘It is, o venerable sir, indeed “*samudda*”.’ [The Elder answering said,] ‘O friend, we recognise the very same ocean with salt[ed water] whether it is referred to as “*samuddha*” or “*samudda*”. [People like] you are not the seekers of the meaning but the seekers of letters.’ [The Elder], without explaining the topic for meditation, caused [that monk] to get up saying thus, ‘Go and refine [your knowledge of] the letters with the monks who are well-acquainted with the letters at the Mahāvihāra’.¹⁰⁰

In this passage, the Elder, who sought to correct the pronunciation of the Elder who was an *arahant*, has apparently referred to one of the two discourses appearing in the Saṃyuttanikāya, which begin with the following statement of the Buddha,

*‘samuddo samuddo’ ti bhikkhave assutavā puthujjano bhāsati.*¹⁰¹

In this account, Vijayārāma apparently refers to a monastery belonging to the Mahāvihāra school. As this passage shows, *arahants* are not necessarily the obedient followers of the letter but instead give priority to the meaning. One’s proper

ferent in phrasing. Nevertheless, this phrasing is a mere trivial [matter]. “Do not, venerable ones, enter into a dispute over trivial [matters].” Buddhaghosa glosses *appamattakaṃ kho* as follows, Ps IV 29.20–22 (B^e IV 19.8–10; C^e IV 20.17–20; S^e IV 19.11–12): *appamattakaṃ kho* (M II 240.10) *ti suttantaṃ patvā vyañjanaṃ appamattakaṃ nāma hoti. parittamattakaṃ* (B^e °mattaṃ) *dhaniṭaṃ katvā ropite pi* (S^e omits *ro*°) *āropite pi* (B^e omits *āro*°; B^e S^e add *hi*) *nibbutiṃ pattuṃ sakkā hoti.* ‘Indeed, a trivial [matter]: The phrasing indeed becomes trivial when it comes to the discourse. [One] can attain extinction whether or not one slightly performs the aspiration of the aspirate [letters], which is a trifling matter.’ Dhammapāla expresses this opinion rather boldly as follows, Ps-pt II 239.13: *byañjanassa micchāropanaṃ na visesantarāyakaraṃ hoti ti.* ‘Erroneous performance of a letter does not cause obstacles for one’s [stage of] distinction.’ The term *visesa* refers to spiritual attainments such as the stream-entry, and so forth (M II 96.19–20; Ud 61.23–24). Dhammapāla equates *visesa* with arahantship (Ud-a 321.23).

100 See also RAHULA 1956: 224.

101 S IV 157.3–4; V 157.27–158.1.

articulation of the letter in the topic of meditation is not really a crucial requirement for his spiritual attainment such as arahantship. Although this passage deals only with the aspirate/non-aspirate distinction, and it does not tell us the nature of the letter-related principles developed in the Mahāvihāra school, its context in the Papanāsudānī invites us to assume that the Mahāvihāra principles of letters have laid a heavy emphasis on considering the pragmatic interpretations of canonical utterances rather than their literal meaning, especially when interpreting doctrinal points in the discourses. These Mahāvihāra perspectives have apparently shaped Buddhaghosa's approach.

When glossing specific terms, he usually warns the audience against following their literal meaning. For instance, the Rathavinītasutta qualifies the Elder Puṇṇa the son of Mantānī, with the term *appiccho* (*appa* + *iccho*) (M I 146.4). Since the Elder is an *arahant*,¹⁰² Buddhaghosa finds the literal meaning of this term, i.e., 'he who has little desire', rather odd. Thus, he glosses *apiccho* as follows:

appiccho (M I 146.4) *ti icchāvīrahito, n' iccho* (B^e S^e ni i^o), *nittaṇho. ettha hi byañjanaṇṇ sāvasesaṇṇ viya, attho pana niravaseso. na hi tassa anto aṇumattā pi appikā* (B^e S^e *pāpikā*) *icchā nāma atthi. khīṇāsavo h' esa sabbaso pahīnataṇho* (Ps II 138.31–35 [= B^e II 44.24–27; C^e 114.32–35; S^e II 45.22–46.1]).

He who has little desire: One who does not have desire, one who does not have wishes, one who does not have craving. For in this case, the phrasing [appears] to be incomplete, but the meaning is complete. For there is not even a measure of an atom of a little desire in him. For this [Elder] is one whose influxes have perished, whose cravings have been abandoned altogether.¹⁰³

With this explanation, Buddhaghosa instructs his audience not to adhere strictly to the literal meaning of terms like *appiccha*. While one may, at first glance, notice a striking mismatch between some of Buddhaghosa's glosses and their canonical

102 The statements used in this discourse to qualify the Elder Puṇṇa show that he is an *arahant* (M I 145.29–32).

103 In the same commentary, Buddhaghosa again glosses the term more concisely as follows, Ps III 438.14: *appicchan* (M B^e II 410.19) *ti anicchamaṇṇ*. 'One who has little desire: One who does not have desire' (see also Mp I 75.2). For the same kind of gloss on the phrase *na te honti mahapphalā*. Tr. Бодхи 2012: 430: 'they do not bring great fruit', appearing in the Aṅguttaranikāya (A II 42.1 [v. 1b]), see Mp III 83.7–12. Perhaps, because Mahāvihāra scholasticism insists that *paññā* ('wisdom') is one of the wholesome concomitants, the commentator does not want his audience to understand the term *duppañña* by following its literal meaning 'bad wisdom'. As such, he glosses the term (Ps II 334.16–17), thus: *duppañño duppañño* (M I 292.9) *ti ettha paññāya 'dun' nāma natthi, 'appañño nippañño' ti attho. 'duppañño duppañño: here indeed there is no description as "bad" (du^o) of [the term] wisdom. [It] means, "one who has no wisdom" and "one who is devoid of wisdom".' See also his glosses on *duppaññā* in Ps I 118.6–7, Mp II 37.27.*

lemmas, as a rule, these glosses align well with the contexts.¹⁰⁴ He sometimes employs some strategies in order to harmonise the teachings of the Tipiṭaka with Mahāvihāra scholastic tenets. That is, he typically interprets the canon in accordance with the *abhidhammic* principles of the Mahāvihāra school. Let me briefly cite an example here. According to the Anaṅgaṇasutta, the person of inferior conduct may pass away while his mind is tarnished.

so [...] *saṅkiliṭṭhacitto kālaṃ karissati* (M I 25.18–19).

One will pass away with consciousness defiled.

The Mahāvihāra school, by contrast, maintains that all the living creatures pass away with *bhavaṅgacitta* ('the consciousness of link of existence'). Therefore, it is impossible for anybody to die with a defiled consciousness.¹⁰⁵ In order to

104 For some examples, see 1.) Sv I 288.6; Ps III 423.18: *pariyāpuṇāmi* (D I 117.13; M II 168.4–5) *ti jānāmi*. 'I recite: I know', 2.) Spk I 114.25: *kocī* (S I 59.18) *ti katthaci*. 'Whosoever: wherever', 3.) Ps III 148.13; Sp I 211.10: *na ussahāmi* (M I 437.26–27; Vin III 17.1) *ti na sakkomi*. 'I do not endeavour: I cannot', 4.) Ps III 237.22: *pīleyyā* (M II 5.8) *ti dadeyya*. '[One] would press out: [One] would give', 5.) Spk I 291.26: *ko 'me* (S I 199.17) *ti kahaṃ ime*. 'Who these [disciples are]: Where these [disciples are]', 6.) Ps V 100.13: *na uppajjati* (M III 282.14) *ti na yujjati*. 'Does not arise: Does not suit', 7.) Sp B^e III 76.23: *hiyyo* (E^e *bhīyyo*) *pī* (Vin IV 69.33) *ti suve pi*. 'Yesterday as well: tomorrow as well.' This practice is clearly evident when Buddhaghosa addresses certain variant readings of the Nikāyas. He typically records variant reading(s) other than the canonical lemmas. The literal meaning of some of these variant readings differs significantly from the lemmas. Yet, he asserts that such lemmas and the variant readings are similar in meaning within the specific context. Let us examine the following two instances: 1.) Sv III 846.23–24: *caratan* (D III 58.20) *ti carantānaṃ*. *carantan ti pi pāṭho*, *ayam evattho*. '*caratan*: Of those who behave. There is also the reading *carantaṃ*, which indeed has the [exact same] meaning.' Buddhaghosa here states that both *carataṃ* and *carantaṃ* have the same meaning. But it is obvious that they differ in meaning because the former is the genitive plural while the latter is the accusative singular of *carant*^o. 2.) Sv III 870.31: *acchantī* (D B^e III 78.14, but D III 94.22 *acchenti*) *ti vasanti*, *acchenti ti pi pāṭho*. *es' evattho*. '*acchanti*: [They] dwell. There is also the reading *acchenti*. Indeed, [it has] the [exact same] meaning.' Here also, the former term is the non-causative, whereas the latter is the causative. These interpretations suggest that, at least during the time of the commentators, causative forms were frequently employed in a non-causative sense. For some contextual interpretations of Buddhaghosa, see also HEIM 2018: 97–101.

105 Below are relevant explanations of *bhavaṅgacitta*: (1.) Vism 460.12–13: *ekasmiṃ hi bhavayam sabbapacchimaṃ bhavaṅgacittaṃ, taṃ tato cavanattā cutī ti vuccati*. 'For, the "consciousness of link of existence" is the last of all in one existence, it is called "falling" because of falling from that [becoming].' See also ÑĀNAMOLI 1956: 466. (2.) Sv-pt II 240.1: *bhavaṅgacittaṃ sabbapacchimaṃ*. 'The "consciousness of link of existence" is the last of all.' Cf. Spk-pt I 252.28. See also COLLINS 1982: 239, 244–246; GETHIN 2005: 165–167; LANGER 2007: 55. (3.) Spk I 224.16–19: *ye hi keci Buddhā vā Paccekabuddhā vā*

be consonant with this Mahāvihāra tenet, in his Papañcasūdanī, Buddhaghosa glosses the above mentioned statement of the Anaṅgaṇasutta thus:

saṃkiliṭṭhacitto kālaṃ karissatī (M I 25.19) *ti ettha ca akusalacittena kālaṃ karissatī ti na evam attho daṭṭhabbo. sabbasattā hi pakaticittena bhavaṅgacitten' eva kālaṃ karonti. ayaṃ pana avisodhetvā cittasantānaṃ kālaṃ karissatī ti etam atthaṃ sandhāya evaṃ vutto ti veditabbo* (Ps I 141.34–142.2).

One will pass away with consciousness defiled: In this context, however, the meaning should not be understood thus: 'One will pass away with an unwholesome consciousness.' For all living beings pass away with the stream of consciousness, which is the natural consciousness. 'But this [meaning] should be known as having been stated thus with reference to the [following] meaning: "One will pass away without purifying the stream of consciousness".'

The Mahādhammasamādānasutta¹⁰⁶ teaches the negative consequences of committing ten unwholesome (*akusala*) deeds.¹⁰⁷ As this discourse says, one can commit all these unwholesome deeds in pleasure (*sukha*) and joy (*somanassa*).¹⁰⁸ Let us

ariyasāvokā vā antamaso kunthakipillakaṃ upādāya sabbe pi bhavaṅgacitten' eva abyākatena dukkhasaccena kālaṃ karonti. 'Whosoever [living beings such as] the Enlightened Ones, Independently Enlightened Ones or noble disciples, even [tiny living creatures] including various kinds of ants, all of them indeed pass away with the "consciousness of link of existence", which is the indeterminate truth of suffering.' See also Sv II 595.1–3. (4.) Sv-pt II 240.3–4; Spk-pt I 253,2: *sabbe pi sattā bhavaṅgacitten' eva cavanti.* 'All the living beings pass away only with the "consciousness of link of existence".' Although there are rare mentions of the term *bhavaṅga* in the Paṭṭhāna (COLLINS 1982: 238) and the Milindapañha (i.e., Mil 299.10–301.7), *bhavaṅgacitta* apparently began to occur as a technical term only within the developed Abhidhamma system in the Mahāvihāra exegetical literature (GETHIN 2005: 159–181). For detailed references to studies on *bhavaṅga*, see GETHIN 2005: 176 n. 1.

106 M I 309.22–317.19.

107 The ten unwholesome deeds are also referred to in the canon as *dasa akusalakammamathā* ('ten courses of unwholesome deeds') (D III 269.1–4; Vibh 391.24–28).

108 M I 313.28–314.14: *katamaṃ ca bhikkhave dhammasamādānaṃ paccuppannasukhaṃ āyatinaṃ dukkharopākaṃ? idha bhikkhave ekacco sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena pāṇātipātī hoti, pāṇātipātapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena adinnādāyī hoti, adinnādānapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena kāmesu micchācārī hoti, kāmesu micchācārapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena musāvādī hoti, musāvādapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena pisuṇāvāco hoti, pisuṇāvācāpaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena pharusāvāco hoti, pharusāvācāpaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena samphappalāpī hoti, samphappalāpapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena abhijjhālu hoti, abhijjhāpaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena byāpannacitto hoti, byāpādapaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti; sahāpi sukkena sahāpi somanassena micchādīṭṭhi hoti, micchādīṭṭhipaccayā ca sukhaṃ somanassaṃ paṭisaṇvedeti. so kāyassa bhe-*

take the example of killing a living being (*pāṇātipāta*), the first of the ten unwholesome deeds. Since *somanassa* is a wholesome (*kusala*) mental concomitant, this discourse might convey the impression that one harbouring a wholesome motive is capable of killing a living being. According to the Mahāvihāra scholastic tradition, one who has a wholesome motive cannot kill any living being, but one can commit such an act only if one has an unwholesome motive, which is called *dosa* ('hatred').¹⁰⁹ In the *Papañcasūdanī*, Buddhaghosa offers a creative interpretation to avoid this apparent contradiction.

sahāpi sukhenā (M I 313.29-30) *ti ettha pāṇātipāto pharusavacā byāpādo ti ime tāva tayo pubba-cetanāya ca aparacetanāya cā ti dvinnamaṃ cetanānaṃ vasena sukhaveḍanā honti. sannitthāpakacetanā pana dukkhasampayuttā va hoti. sesā satta tissannaṃ pi cetanānaṃ vasena sukhaveḍanā honti yeva. sahāpi somanassenā* (M I 313.30) *ti somanassa eva c' ettha sukhan ti vedittabbaṃ. itthaphoṭṭhabbasamaṅgino vā pubbhāgaparabhāgesu kāyikasukham pi vaṭṭati yeva* (Ps II 376.1-8).

And in pleasure: In this context, first these (i.e., the following) three [deeds]: 1.) killing a living being, 2.) harsh speaking [and] 3.) ill will, become the feelings of pleasure by virtue of the two volitions: 1.) prior volition and 2.) subsequent volition. But the volition of completion is associated only with displeasure. The remaining seven [deeds] become feelings of pleasure, by virtue of all three volitions, indeed. **And in joy:** And in this context, the joy alone should be known as pleasure. Or, even the bodily pleasure in

dā param maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati. idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave dhammasamādānaṃ paccuppannasukhaṃ āyatiṃ dukkhavipākaṃ. 'What, bhikkhus, is the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain? [1] Here, bhikkhus, someone in pleasure and joy kills living beings, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have killing of living beings as condition; [2] in pleasure and joy, he takes what is not given, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have taking of what is not given as condition; [3] in pleasure and joy, he engages in sexual misconduct, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have engaging in sexual misconduct as condition; [4] in pleasure and joy, he speaks falsehood, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have speaking of falsehood as condition; [5] in pleasure and joy, he speaks divisively, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have divisive speaking as condition; [6] in pleasure and joy, he speaks harshly, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have harsh speaking as condition; [7] in pleasure and joy, he indulges in idle chatter, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have indulging in idle chatter as condition; [8] in pleasure and joy, he is full of longing, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have longing as condition; [9] in pleasure and joy, he has a mind of ill will, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have ill will as condition; [10] in pleasure and joy, he holds wrong view, and he experiences pleasure and joy which have wrong view as condition. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. This is called the way of undertaking things that is pleasant now and ripens in the future as pain' (based on ÑĀṆAMOLI & BODHI 1995: 411-412, and BODHI 2012: 1519-1520).

109 See *Vism* 454.23-26; *Abhidh-av* 6.35-38. For more information on *dosa*, see GETHIN 2004a: 180; KARUNADASA 2010: 88-89. See also GETHIN 2004a: 175, 182-183, 188, 190.

the prior stage [and] the later stage of [one] who is endowed with the desired tangible object, is suitable, indeed.

Although one's thought at the exact moment of killing a living being is definitively associated with *dukkha*, the preceding and following thoughts related to this activity can be associated with *sukha* ('pleasure'). As Buddhaghosa suggests, the discourse asserts that one can kill a living being with *sukha* and *somanassa* ('joy') by attributing the preceding and subsequent thoughts to the current thought accompanying the act. He further clarifies that in this context, *sukha* and *somanassa* are synonymous. Therefore, *somanassa* does not refer to the particular wholesome mental concomitant in this discourse; rather, being synonymous with *sukha*, it denotes bodily pleasure (*kāyikasukha*). As this exegesis makes clear, at the moment when a living being is killed, one cannot under any circumstances be accompanied by the wholesome motive of *somanassa*, but instead must be associated with displeasure (*dukkha*), based on an unwholesome motive. In this way, this exegesis teaches the audience how to read the Mahādhammasamādānasutta accurately.

In addition to *sammāsati* ('right mindfulness'), the canon speaks of *micchāsati* ('wrong mindfulness').¹¹⁰ In line with Mahāvihāra scholastic works, *sati* ('mindfulness') is synonymous with *sammāsati*, which is a wholesome mental concomitant.¹¹¹ The Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha includes mindfulness under the heading of 'universal beautiful factors' (*sobhanasādhāraṇā*).¹¹² In these works, there is no reference to *micchāsati* under the category of unwholesome concomitants. We see Buddhaghosa rejecting the existence of a particular phenomenon called *micchāsati* in the Papañcasūdanī (Ps I 188.22-31). The Atthasālinī (As 250.4-8) stresses that although there is a reference to *micchāsati* in the discourses (*suttante*) it is not existent in the absolute sense.

nippariyāyena pan' esā natthi (As 250.8).

Im absoluten Sinne (*nippariyāyena*) aber gibt es keine (NYĀNAFONIKA 2005: 384).

Buddhaghosa often adopts systematic hermeneutic strategies in reviewing the views of non-Mahāvihāra Buddhist opponents. When refuting an opponent's position, he takes a few factors into consideration. Among them, the key is his analysis of how the opponent's position contradicts the canon. In the Visuddhimagga, for instance, applying four criteria, he rejects a non-Mahāvihāra opponent's view:

keci pana [...] 'uppādamattaṃ paṭiccasamuppādo' ti vadanti. taṃ na yujjati. kasmā? suttābhāvato, suttavirodhato, gambhīranayāsambhavato, saddabhedato ca (Vism 518.34-519.2).

But, some [masters] state that 'dependent origination is mere arising'. That is untenable. On what basis? Because of (1) the absence of [canonical] discourses, (2) contradiction to

110 D III 254.26; M III 77.8; S V 1.19-20; A II 221.10-11; Vibh 373.24; Kv 38.18.

111 Vism 462.32; Abhidh-av 16.13, 29.7; Moh 8.26.

112 BODHI 1993: 85.

[canonical] discourses, (3) non-existence of profound methods, (4) and deviation from grammar (see also NĀNAMOLI 1956: 535).¹¹³

Within his glosses that can be attested in the first four Nikāya-aṭṭhakathās, the commentator, in establishing the Mahāvihāra perspective while refuting non-Mahāvihāra views, typically follows several steps, such as (1) stating the Mahāvihāra perspective, (2) introducing and refuting the opponent's view, (3) explaining how the opponent's view contradicts the canon, (4) and, lastly, restating again the Mahāvihāra perspective. For the sake of understanding these steps, let me quote a brief passage from the Sāratthappakāsinī in which Buddhaghosa refutes the existence of *antarābhava* ('in-between existence'), which was maintained inter alia by the Sarvāstivādins and the Sautrāntikas. The following comment occurs as the gloss¹¹⁴ on the phrase *n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayam antarena* ('indeed neither here nor beyond nor in between the two'):

113 In the Paramatthamañjūsā, Dhammapāla explains *saddabhedato* as follows, Vism-mhṭ II 230.20–21: *saddabhedato* (Vism 519.2) *ti saddavināsato saddāyogato*. 'Because of deviation from grammar means: because of the loss of grammar and because of not being connected to grammar.' In his lengthy critique in question (Vism 519.5–520.23), Buddhaghosa points out the futility of the opponent's position referring to a series of discourses (see Ud 1.8–10 ≠ Vin I 1, 8–10; S V 12.17–19.20–21; II 17.10–11; D II 55.13–14 = S II 92.12–13; 72.5–6–73.1.11–24; D II 57.16–17). This exegesis implies that Buddhaghosa typically sought to refute the opponent's position that (1) does not have a canonical support, (2) contradicts the canon, (3) does not have a doctrinal significance, (4) and is incompatible with grammar.

114 There is no clear-cut reference to *antarābhava* in the received Pāli canon. But it contains several important indications of this concept. Of these, the phrase *ubhayam antarena* appearing in *n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayam antarena* ('indeed neither here nor beyond nor in between the two') occurring in a couple of discourses is very remarkable (for instance, M III 266.9; S IV 59.14; 73.15; Ud 8.11). Ud 81.9 reads the phrase as *ubhayam antare* (see also HORNER 1959: III 318; NĀNAMOLI & BODHI 1995: 1116; BODHI 2000: 1166). This expression refers to how one extinguishes all sorts of rebirths, after the destruction of defilements, such as clinging and wavering. We know that the Kathāvatthu rejects the existence of *antarābhava* (Kv 361.7–366.25). See also LIN 2012: 151. According to the commentary on the Kathāvatthu, the Pubbaseliyas and the Saṃmitīyas maintained the notion of *antarābhava* (Kv-a 105.7–8). However, this concept was apparently upheld by the Vaibhāṣika school. In the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya, we see how Vasubandhu insists on the existence of the *antarābhava*. For instance, Abhidh-k-bh 121.18: *asty evāntarābhavaḥ*. 'There is indeed the intermediate existence' (see also PRUDEN 1988–1990: II 385). Furthermore, to strengthen his perspective, he quotes a canonical attestation that speaks of seven kinds of existences in which *antarābhava* occurs as its seventh (Abhidh-k-bh 121.20–21: *sūtra uktaṃ: 'sapta bhavāḥ. narakabhavaḥ tiryagbhavaḥ pretabhavo devabhavo manuṣyabhavaḥ karmabhavo 'ntarābhava' iti*; see also PRUDEN 1988–1990: II 386). According to the latter this canonical discourse is discussed in the Vibhāṣā (PRUDEN 1988–1990: II 500 n. 29). Scholarly research on the theme further attests this fact (see KRITZER 1997: 12; 1998: 31–32; CUEVAS 2003: 41). Analysing a simile appearing in the

n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayam antarenā (S IV 59.13–14) *ti na idhaloke na paraloke na ubhayattha hoti. es'ev'anto dukkhassā* (S IV 59.14) *ti vaṭṭadukkhā-kilesadukkhassa ayam eva anto, ayaṃ paricchedavaṇumabhāvo hoti. ayam eva hi ettha attho. ye pana ubhayam antarenā* (S IV 59.14) *ti vacanaṃ gahetvā antarābhavaṃ icchanti, tesam vacanaṃ niratthakaṃ. antarābhavassa hi bhāvo Abhidhamme paṭikkhitto yeva. antarenā* (S IV 59.14) *ti vacanaṃ pana vika-ppantaradīpanaṃ. tasmā ayam ettha attho: n' eva idha na huraṃ* (S IV 59.13). *aparo vikappo: 'na ubhayam'* (S IV 59.14) *ti* (Spk II 372.27–373.8).

Indeed, neither here nor beyond nor ubhayam antarena: [One is reborn] neither in this world, nor in another [world], nor in both. **Just this is the end of suffering:** Just this is the end of suffering of the circle [of becoming] and the defilements; this is the nature of separation of path. For this is the meaning in this context. But the statement of those who, fixing on *ubhayam antarena*, argue for the existence of the in-between existence has no substance, for the in-between existence¹¹⁵ is clearly rejected in the Abhidhamma. But the statement *antarena* indicates another alternative: Therefore, in this context, this is the meaning: **nor in this world, nor in another**, [and,] another alternative,¹¹⁶ **'not in both'**.

1	2	3	4
Indeed, neither here nor beyond nor ubhayam antarena: [one gets rebirth] not in this world, not in another [world], not in both. Just this is the end of suffering: just this is the end of suffering of the circle [of becoming] and the defilements; this is the nature of separation of path. <u>For, this is the meaning in this context.</u>	But the statement of those who, fixing on ' <i>ubhayam antarena</i> ', argue for the existence of the in-between existence has no substance,	for the in-between existence is clearly rejected in the <i>Abhidhamma</i> .	But ' <i>antarena</i> ' indicates another alternative: <u>therefore, in this context, this is the meaning:</u> 'not in this world, not in another', [and,] another alternative, 'not in both' .

Āṅguttaranikāya and the Madhyama-āgama, Anālayo shows the traceability of the motif 'intermediate existence' in early Buddhism (ANALAYO 2018a: 20–22; 2018b: 4; LIN 2012: 149–186).

115 In this context, I follow Dhammapāla who understands the term *bhāvo* in the sense of 'existence' (Spk-pṭ II 296.25: *bhāvo* (Spk II 373.5) *ti atthitā*).

116 Masfield (1994: I 137) and Bodhi (2000: 1406 n. 53) render *aparo vikappo* as 'a further alternative' and 'the other alternative' respectively.

This table sets out Buddhaghosa's four steps appearing in the above mentioned gloss. The first column shows the Mahāvihāra interpretation of the statement *n' ev' idha na huraṃ na ubhayam antarena*, which seems to be the identical with that of Buddhaghosa. In line with this interpretation, *idha* ('here') and *huraṃ* ('beyond') denote *idhaloke* ('in this world') and *paraloke* ('in another world') respectively. The most significant part of this exegesis is the gloss on *ubhayam antarena* ('in between the two'). We see this gloss equating *ubhayam antarena* with *ubhayattha* ('in both [worlds]').¹¹⁷ The purpose of this equation is to narrow the meaning of the term *antarena* to 'in', excluding the sense of 'in between'. Accordingly, this exegesis leaves us with the following understanding: 'The phrase *ubhayam antarena* occurs in the canon as an alternative expression or *exergasia* to restate what is already expressed in the preceding two terms: *n' ev' idha na huraṃ* ('indeed neither here nor beyond'), thus *ubhayam antarena* means 'nor in both worlds'.¹¹⁸ After offering this interpretation, Buddhaghosa emphasises that it is the only meaning that suits here, thus: *ayam eva hi ettha attho* ('for only this is the meaning in this context'). We shall see later in greater detail how the commentator uses the term *attha* ('the meaning') to point to Mahāvihāra tenets when reviewing these kinds of non-Mahāvihāra views.¹¹⁹ In the second column we read, he introduces and rejects the view of those who maintain the notion of an intermediate existence.¹²⁰ The third column contains his statement, which expresses that the notion of the intermediate existence was rejected in the Abhidhamma. Here, he most probably has in mind the particular section with the title *Antarābhavakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu*.¹²¹ The fourth column shows how he further strengthens the view that he presented in the first column. Here he reads 'a new meaning' into¹²² the

117 See DOP, s.v. *ubhayattha*: 'in both places; in both respects'.

118 In the canon, the term *ubhayattha* obviously appears as an *exergasia*. For instance, the term occurs in the Dhammapada to further stress *idha* ('here') and *pecca* ('hereafter'). See Dhṃ 18ab: *idha nandati pecca nandati katapuñño ubhayattha nandati*. '[He] delights here, [he] delights hereafter. The one who has done merit delights in both places' (see also NORMAN 2000: 2). But I am not sure there is any attestation to *antarena* in this sense in the canon.

119 See 1.6 (below, p. 73).

120 With the exception of the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*, all the other commentaries often refer to the upholders of dissenting views with anonymous epithets. See 1.7 (below, p. 79).

121 Kv 361.7–366.25. See also Spk-pṭ II 296.25: *Abhidhamme* (Spk II 373.5) *Kathāvatthu-ppakaraṇe*. 'In the *Abhidhamma* = in the *Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa*.' As Bareau (2013: 220–227) shows, besides the Mahāvihāravāsins, other Vibhāyavāda schools such as Mahīśāsakas and Kāśyapīyas also rejected *antarābhava*.

122 As the biblical scholars point out the practice of 'reading into the Scripture is called eisegesis'. See WILLIAMS 1973: 218: 'Exegesis is legitimate interpretation, which "reads

term *antarena*. That is, in this context, the term *antarena* does not occur in the sense of ‘in between’. Rather, it functions as an illustrator of ‘another alternative’.¹²³ Before summarising the Mahāvihāra perspective on the phrase *ubhayam antarena*, Buddhaghosa again reminds his audience: *ayam ettha attho* (‘this is the meaning in this [context]’).¹²⁴ In the following chapters, we shall see in much more detail how he employs diverse creative hermeneutic techniques when commenting on non-Mahāvihāra views.

3. Scope and Method

Due to the extensiveness of the sources, in this study, I pay special attention to the Pali Text Society’s editions of the Visuddhimagga and the Aṭṭhakathās to the four main Nikāyas. I also consult Sinhalese (Simon Hewavitarne Bequest), Burmese (Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti) and Siamese (BudSir) editions where appropriate. As far as I can discern, scholars are nearly unanimous in attributing the authorship of these five texts to Buddhaghosa. In addition, I have incorporated the Samantapāsādikā, which is traditionally ascribed to Buddhaghosa, into this study. Buddhaghosa has apparently consulted this commentary in the compilation of other main commentaries such as the Sumaṅgalavilāsinī.¹²⁵ The Samantapāsādikā is moreover of vital importance when understanding the Mahāvihāra perspective of peripheral and

out of” the text what the original author or authors meant to convey. Eisegesis, on the other hand, reads into the text what the interpreter wishes to find or thinks he finds there. It expresses the reader’s own subjective ideas, not the meaning which is in the text.’ See also PEPINSKY 2015: 83.

123 In the Ṭikā, Dhammapāla also emphasises that the term *antarena* does not convey the meaning: ‘intermediateness’ in this context. See Spk-pt II 296.27–28: *vikappato aññāṃ vikappantaraṃ, tassa dīpanaṃ antarenā* (S IV 59.14) *ti vacanaṃ, na antarābhavadīpanaṃ, tādisassa anupalabbhanato payojanābhāvato ca*. ‘Another of the alternative[s] = another alternative; to explain this *antarena* [is used], not to explain the intermediate state; because such a one (*tādisassa*) (i.e., *antarābhava*) is not obtained and because of the absence of a motive [for it].’

124 For more comments on *antarābhava*, see also Ps V 83.11–18; Kv-a 105.2–106.19. Dhammapāla develops Buddhaghosa’s arguments, particularly in Ud-a 92.20–94.9; Ppk-mṭ 59.7–13; Ppk-nṭ 120.16–124.7.

The Kathāvatthu (Kv 596.14–598.22) denies the non-Mahāvihāra view: ‘There are no guardians in the Niraya-hell.’ In his works, Buddhaghosa, following the aforementioned four steps, further develops the perspective of the Kathāvatthu (Sv III 809.26–30; Ps IV 231.5–10; Mp II 227.24–29. See also Kv-a 187.1–20). Mori, consulting a range of primary sources, tends to presume that this view was held by Southern Mahāsāṅghikas (MORI 1997: 460).

125 See 1.2 (below, p. 36, n. 2).

apocryphal texts, and new orientations that developed within the school relating to disciplinary rules.

I also examine the *Atthasālinī* and the *Sammohavinodanī* that ‘are connected to Buddhaghosa’,¹²⁶ along with their sub-commentaries, since this study pays particular attention to the doctrinal controversies held between the Mahāvihāravāsins and their adversaries. These two commentaries are instrumental in exploring a number of abhidhammic tenets introduced by the school. In addition, I examine a few of the other treatises such as the *Abhidhammāvātāra* and the *Mohavicchedanī* (13th c. CE). For they offer highly sophisticated theoretical treatments in articulating the Mahāvihāra standpoints of some soteriological concepts such as the supramundane path, *nibbāna*, and so forth.

Since this is inductive research, I give priority to a study of the data, resorting primarily to the research methods of philology and doctrinal history. I thus use the tools of textual analysis such as textual criticism and redaction criticism. In studying Mahāvihāra exegesis, and in particular Buddhaghosa’s praxis as a commentator, I am also inspired by comparative hermeneutics, and especially by the methods of biblical exegesis. All the data gathered are systematically studied interpreting the doctrinal debates in their broader context. Accordingly, I examine the details that relate to the doctrinal arguments of Buddhaghosa with non-Mahāvihāravāsins in the commentaries enumerated above in order to shed light on their Buddhist lineages. However, this study is not restricted to the details of the doctrinal controversies attested in the Pāli exegetical works. Relevant Pāli canonical attestations are necessarily taken into consideration. In addition, some corresponding Sanskrit and Tibetan canonical works are also studied in order to understand the nature of the non-Therīya perspectives on particular doctrinal views.

4. Overview of Chapters’ Contents

Chapter one of this monograph reveals specific strategies formulated by Buddhaghosa when dealing with non-Mahāvihāra opponents, especially those he labels *Vitaṇḍavādins*. In this chapter, I briefly touch upon some exegetical methods employed by him in order to harmonise the doctrines of the Pāli canon with later Mahāvihāra views. Furthermore, I explore how the commentator analyses the four sources of authority in terms of a hierarchy that begins with *sutta* and subsequently gives priority to the Mahāvihāra tenets designated as *ācariyavādas*. I will also explain what the Mahāvihāra school considered to be the intended

126 See VON HINÜBER 1996: 151.

'meaning' (*attha*) of the canon. In addition, I briefly discuss some logical fallacies seen in Buddhaghosa's exegeses.

Chapter two shows how the Mahāvihāra exegetes sought to grant canonical status to some texts that circulated outside the Pāli canon while at the same time attempting to denounce some of the scriptures such as Mahāyānasūtras, which have been recognised as canonical by other Buddhist schools. This chapter also assesses the style and doctrinal features of some of these texts comparing them with their canonical and commentarial parallels. It is thus a contribution to a better understanding of Buddhaghosa's attitude towards the 'margins' of the Pāli canon.

Chapter three scrutinises canonical quotations used by Buddhaghosa, paying particular attention to the amendments, paraphrases and *ad hoc* creations that he uses to support his arguments, especially when he lacks canonical evidence to support some Mahāvihāra tenets such as *ekāyanamagga* ('the direct path').

Chapter four is dedicated to the study of three controversies that arose between the Mahāvihāra proponent and non-Mahāvihāra opponents about soteriological aspects related to Buddhist scholasticism, such as *nibbāna* and the supra-mundane path. Concurrently, the logical basis of the arguments is also examined, drawing attention to relevant examples in the Pāli canon. In addition, this chapter aims at tracing the teachings ascribed to the Vitaṇḍavādins with those of the scriptures of the other Buddhist schools.

Through the lens of Pāli commentarial literature, this book illustrates how Mahāvihāra exegetes shaped their tradition's doctrinal identity. At the heart of this tradition stands Buddhaghosa, whose commentaries remain central to understanding the intellectual practices of this sole survivor among the ancient Sri Lankan Theriya schools.

No mere compiler, Buddhaghosa emerges in this study as a discerning and methodical interpreter, working with multiple recensions of the Buddhist canon and drawing upon early commentaries now lost to time. His exegetical strategies are subtle yet systematic, often imperceptibly reshaping inherited

material to affirm the Mahāvihāra perspective as authoritative. Though he rarely voices personal opinions, he guides his readers into a refined, and at times previously unattested, doctrinal vision. The book also sheds new light on key controversies between Mahāvihāra exegetes and their critics—frequently derided as sophists (*Vitaṇḍavādins*)—particularly with regard to the ontological status of *nibbāna*. It reveals the literary finesse and hermeneutical creativity with which Buddhaghosa and other major exegetes (including Dhammapāla and Buddhaddatta) defended their positions, providing a compelling, original take on early Mahāvihāra textual and doctrinal interpretation.



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