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The Authorship of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* Commentaries: A Response to von Hinüber

Ven. Pandita (Burma)

University of Kelaniya

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The Authorship of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* Commentaries: A Response to von Hinüber

Ven. Pandita (Burma)¹

Abstract

Von Hinüber claims in his recent article, “Early Scripture Commentary,” which is included in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, that: (1) Buddhaghosa is the author of the commentaries on four *nikāyas*, but (2) not of other commentaries traditionally attributed to him. I agree with (1) but not with (2). On the contrary, I believe it is highly probable that the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries have come from Buddhaghosa. I will give in this paper the reasons for this belief.

¹ Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya. Email: ashinpan@gmail.com.

Introduction

The Theravādin tradition has attributed many commentaries (*aṭṭha-kathās*) to Buddhaghosa, who was, according to *Buddhaghosupatti* (*Bu-up*), an ancient Buddhist monk and author of *Visuddhimagga*, the manual of Theravādin Buddhism. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoḷi (xxix) has given the commentary titles traditionally attributed to him in a convenient tabular form, which is reproduced here as the table (1), to which I have added the fourth column, initiators.

Table 1: Works Traditionally Attributed to Buddhaghosa

Commentaries to the <i>Vinaya Piṭaka</i>			Initiator ²
<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>	Com. to	<i>Vinaya</i>	Buddhasirī Thera
<i>Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī</i>	„ „	<i>Pātimokkha</i>	Soṇa Thera
Commentaries to the <i>Sutta Piṭaka</i>			
<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsini</i>	„ „	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>	Dāṭhānāga Saṅghatthera
<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>	„ „	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>	Buddhamitta Thera
<i>Sāratthappakāsinī</i>	„ „	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>	Jotipāla Thera
<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>	„ „	<i>Āṅguttara Nikāya</i>	Jotipāla Thera
(The following works are part of the commentaries to <i>Khuddaka Nikāya</i>)			
<i>Dhammapad-</i>	„ „	<i>Dhammapada</i>	Kumārakassapa Thera

² An initiator is the one who has requested an author to write a particular book. Some commentaries, as seen above, do not name the respective initiators at all. The commentaries on *Dhammapada*, *Jātaka*, and *Dhammasaṅgani* name the respective initiators in their introductory verses, whereas all others do in their conclusions.

<i>aṭṭhakathā</i>			
<i>Jātakatṭhakathā</i>	„ „	<i>Jātaka</i>	Atthadassī <i>Thera</i> , Buddhāmitta <i>Thera</i> , Buddhadeva <i>Bhikkhu</i>
<i>Paramatthajotikā I</i>	„ „	<i>Khuddakapāṭha</i>	None
<i>Paramatthajotikā II</i> ³	„ „	<i>Suttanipāta</i>	None
<i>Visuddhajanavilāsini</i> ⁴	„ „	<i>Apadāna</i>	None
Commentaries to the <i>Abhidhamma Piṭaka</i>			
<i>Aṭṭhasālinī</i>	„ „	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>	Buddhaghosa <i>Bhikkhu</i>
<i>Sammohavinodanī</i>	„ „	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>	Buddhaghosa
<i>Pañcappakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā</i>	„ „	Remaining 5 books	None

But did Buddhaghosa really write all these works? The attempts to answer this question have taken up a large share of time and effort dedicated to commentarial studies, culminating in von Hinüber's admirable summary, *Early Scripture Commentary*, which is included as an article in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. The major claim he makes in the article is: (1) Buddhaghosa is the author of the commentaries on four *nikāyas*, but (2) not of other commentaries traditionally attributed to him.

³ *Gandhavaṃsa* ("Gv" 59) omits this.

⁴ *Gandhavaṃsa* (59) adds this.

I agree with (1) in his claim but not with (2). On the contrary, I believe it is highly probable that the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries have also come from Buddhaghosa. I will give the reasons for this belief in this article.

Preliminaries

I will base my argument mostly on the internal evidence, including the introductions, epilogues, and colophons found in what is supposedly Buddhaghosa's works. Even though those introductions, epilogues, and colophons have been hitherto the first go-to for the student of the commentarial literature, I believe they still have certain aspects not yet sufficiently examined, so I will examine them as a preliminary to my main argument.

The definition of Buddhaghosa's authorship

Von Hinüber argues that, in order to produce all those commentaries within a reasonable time frame, Buddhaghosa must have worked with a team of which he is probably the supervisor ("Building" 365-366). And I agree with him. If we are both correct, this inevitably raises the question: what do we mean when we talk about a particular work written, or not written, by Buddhaghosa?

This question is open to two alternative answers:

1. The actual authors in Buddhaghosa's group, including himself, took responsibility for the work(s) each wrote, even if Buddhaghosa was the overall supervisor. In this case, only the works he actually authored can be attributed to him.

2. Or, Buddhaghosa signed off and answered for all the works produced by the group he supervised. In this case, all those works can be attributed to him.

Von Hinüber seemingly favors the first version, for even though he denies Buddhaghosa's authorship for the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries, he suggests that Buddhaghosa may have "supervised the contemporary creation of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries" ("Early" 422).

However, I think the second version is much more plausible, for it is favored by the available internal evidence. How?

As Vaṇṇasirī has pointed out (125), Buddhaghosa tended to refer to himself using verbs of the first-person *plural* form in the text bodies of his works, but verbs and nouns of *singular* form in the introductions and epilogues.⁵ What follows will be a possible way to make sense of this:

⁵ The examples are taken from the four major *nikāya* commentaries which have undoubtedly come from Buddhaghosa.

First of all, the samples of the first person, plural references in the text body: "We will explain . . ." (*vaṇṇayissāma* Sv I 71, 215, II 885; Ps I 74, 215; Spk I 20), "We will do the exposition of new words" (*aṇṇapada* *vaṇṇanaṃ karissāma* Ps I 87), "From now on, we will do the exposition only of new and difficult words" (*aṇṇapada* *vaṇṇanā* *mattameva hi ito paraṃ karissāma* Ps I 198). [One seeming counter-evidence is *Ayaṃ pana me attano mati* (I 28 "This however is my own opinion."), but this cannot be conclusive, for, the CSCD edition is without *me* ("my")]

On the other hand, what follows is the self-references of singular form found in the introductions:

*iti me pasannamatino, ratanattayavandanāmayam puññaṃ. / yaṃ
suvihatantarāyo, hutvā tassānubhāvena / dīghassa . . . āgamavarassa / . . .
atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi. (Sv I 1)*

When I have my dangers abolished by the power of the merit that I have accomplished by paying homage to the Triple Gem with a clear mind, I will expound the meaning of the noble āgama named Dīgha.

... *majjhimāgamavarassa* ... *atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi* (Ps I 1)

... I will expound the meaning of the noble āgama named *Majjhima*.

... *saṃyuttāgamavarassa* ... *atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi* (Spk I 1)

... I will expound the meaning of the noble āgama named *Samyutta*.

... *aṅguttarāgamavarassa* ... *atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi* (Mp I 1)

... I will expound the meaning of the noble āgama named *Aṅguttara*.

The same is true in the epilogues:

āyācito sumaṅgala, pariveṇanivāsīnā thiraguṇena / ... yaṃ ārabhiṃ sumaṅgala, vilāsiniṃ nāma nāmena (Sv II 1064)

The work called *Sumaṅgalavilāsīnī* by virtue of (its) title, which I started as suggested by the (senior monk) who resides at Sumaṅgala monastery and who possesses the quality of steadfastness ...

Āyācito sumatinā therena bhadantabuddhamittena / ... yaṃ ahaṃ Papañcasūdanim Aṭṭhakathaṃ kātum āraddho (Ps V 109)

The commentary entitled *Papañcasūdanī*, which I started to create as suggested by Ven. Buddhamittena, the well-informed one ...

1. If an author used singular word forms for self-reference consistently throughout his work, he was probably a single author working alone;
2. If an author used plural forms for self-reference consistently, there were probably more than one author working as a team and taking joint responsibility for the works they produced;
3. But if the self-references took on plural form in the text bodies, but singular form in the introductions and epilogues, there were probably several authors working as a team but one of them, the team leader, signed off and answered for all the works produced by the team--in this instance, Buddhaghosa was the leader.

If this interpretation is correct, it would also explain why Buddhaghosa's colleagues have fallen into oblivion; posterity has seemingly remembered only the one who took responsibility.

*saddhammassa cira-tt̥hit' atthaṃ niṭṭhapentena yā mayā / Nipunā
Atṭhakathā āraddhā Sāratthapakāsinī nāma. (Spk III 308)*

The abstruse commentary entitled *Sāratthapakāsinī*, which has been started by me, desirous of the longevity of the Holy Dhamma.

*dhammakathāya nipuṇaparamanikāyassaṭṭhakathaṃ āraddho. /
yamahaṃ cirakālaṭṭhitimicchanto sāsanavarassa. (Mp V 98)*

The commentary of the *nikāya* extremely abstruse in the discourse of Dhamma, which I have started, being desirous of the long-standing endurance of the noble Teaching . . .

Note: the epilogue in Mp has radically different readings in different editions; I have used the CSCD version because it seemingly makes most sense.

In short, I argue that all the works that have come from Buddhaghosa's team can be termed "Buddhaghosa's works;" I will use the name "Buddhaghosa" in this paper to refer not only to him but also to his team as a whole.

The "Buddhaghosa Colophons"

The tradition has attributed the works listed in the table (1) to Buddhaghosa on account of what von Hinüber has called the "Buddhaghosa colophon" ("Early" 424) found at the end of each work. One typical colophon is as follows:

This *Path of Purification* was made by the elder who is adorned with supreme and pure faith, wisdom and energy, in whom are gathered a concourse of upright, gentle, etc., qualities due to the practice of virtue, who is capable of delving into and fathoming the views of his own and others' creeds, who is possessed of keenness of understanding, who is strong in unerring knowledge of the Master's Dispensation as divided into three Piṭakas with their commentaries, a great expounder, gifted with sweet and noble speech that springs from the ease born of perfection of the vocal instrument, a speaker of what is appropriately said, a superlative speaker, a great poet . . . who bears the name Buddhaghosa conferred by the venerable ones . . . (Vism 712; Ñāṇamoḷi 742)

(Other colophons are identical except the title of the particular text.)

Even traditional scholars have found it difficult to believe that Buddhaghosa has written those colophons. For instance, concerning the col-

ophon at the end of *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp VII 1416), a Burmese traditional scholar writes:

[This colophon] has been added later by a scholar or disciple who admires Buddhaghosa; this is why the latter's merits have been given elaborately. If this were written by (Buddhaghosa) himself, it would be improper to mention those magnificent qualities. Indeed, according to the text of *Alaṅkāra* (i.e., *Subodhālaṅkāra*), if one mentions one's own merits without a proper occasion, it is a defect of *ocit yahīna* type. (Trans. from *Janakābhivṃsa* 348)

We do not know who wrote those colophons or when, but we can at least be certain that all Buddhaghosa's works, even the *Visuddhimagga* (his *magnum opus*), were anonymous at the time they were completed, given that the introductory verses and the conclusion (*nigamana*) in each work, safely attributable to the author, do not mention his name at all; perhaps this is the reason why someone in posterity has chosen to create and add such colophons, so as to save the supposed author's name from oblivion.

But is this omission of the author(s)' name(s) incidental or deliberate? Given that, as seen in the table (1), the majority of authors have chosen to name the respective initiators of their works, we can say that the failure to name themselves was only *deliberate anonymity*. In other words, a commentator acted as a person who-must-not-be-named.

Again, why anonymous? To answer this question, we should consider the circumstances of writing and publishing a book in a manuscript tradition. In those times, an author would produce a single copy of his new work and wait for other people interested in his work to come and copy it manually, which is itself a non-trivial task. If no one else was interested enough to copy his work, it would remain "unpublished," and risk getting entirely lost if the author's own copy was destroyed.

Keeping that situation in mind, we should look at Buddhaghosa's circumstances. We have no reason to doubt that he was a foreign monk staying in Sri Lanka at the time. The story of him writing three copies of the *Visuddhimagga* within a single night to show his qualifications (*Bu-up* 6–7) may be exaggerated at best, but we can be fairly sure that he was at the time still a nameless scholar for the *Mahāvihāra* fraternity (Von Hinüber thinks otherwise; see footnote 11).

Then Buddhaghosa would have two choices:

1. He could act as a faithful presenter of the *Mahāvihāra* doctrine, transferring all the intellectual credit and responsibility to the fraternity. Then:

- He would lose much intellectual freedom.
- But his works would be endorsed by the *Mahāvihāra*, which would mean, because of the prestige and authority of the latter, many people would copy his works, leading to their longevity.

(Would this be an act of plagiarism? I answer that ancient people probably had a very different understanding of intellectual property [See Pandita 613–615]).

2. OR he could take proper credit for his work. Then:

- He could retain full intellectual freedom in his work.
- But his works would lose the *Mahāvihāra* endorsement, resulting in the uncertainty of their future survival.

It seems Buddhaghosa chose the first option. He claimed only to represent the *Mahāvihāra* tradition in his works (See Endo, “Method” 182–186). This means, I argue, those works belong not to what von Hinüber calls “Buddhaghosa’s project” (*Handbook* 426), but to a “grand

project” of *Mahāvihāra* itself, which would endorse them as officially representing the *Mahāvihāra* version of the Buddhist doctrine, and which would be responsible for merits and demerits in those works. In this way, Buddhaghosa successfully sold his works to both Ceylonese and international circles, during his time and later as well. (It means he had to give up much of his intellectual freedom; see pp. 293 ff. for details.)

If this is the case, I find it understandable that Buddhaghosa did not give his name in his works; his name would only put a shadow on the prestige and authority that the *Mahāvihāra* endorsement carried, similar to a presidential speech with credits explicitly given to the ghost writer! Indeed, besides the need for the support of the *Mahāvihāra* fraternity, there seems no other reason why Buddhaghosa, or any other commentator, should choose not to take the responsibility for their own works.

But I am not saying that Buddhaghosa worked alone in obscurity nor in secret. As mentioned at p. 27274, I agree with von Hinüber in his belief that Buddhaghosa must have worked with a team which he probably supervised. And his project must have drawn much public attention after he managed to get the support of *Mahāvihāra* authorities.

However, working in the public limelight does not necessarily mean he was *not* anonymous. In my opinion, Buddhaghosa’s circumstances can be compared to those of presidential speech-writers. Writing speeches for a president may be a legal and interesting job; which speech is written by whom may not be exactly a secret. Yet, no president would acknowledge his writer in the speech itself. In the same way, even if Buddhaghosa’s commentaries may have drawn public attention in those times, he still declined to name himself, nor his team, in his works—this is what I mean by his anonymity.

On the other hand, the mere anonymity of an author does not necessarily prove that it was Buddhaghosa, nor that his work belonged

to the Mahāvihāra project. This is why which works belong to the project, and which do not, becomes a worthwhile research question.

The question of which works a particular author like Buddhaghosa (and the team led by him) has actually written, which I attempt to answer in this paper, is in my opinion only part of the bigger question, which is more important for commentarial studies.

Furthermore, I should note, even though my explanation of Buddhaghosa's anonymity may be open to debate, there is still no reason to doubt that his works were originally anonymous.

The initiators

In the previous section, we have seen that commentators have remained anonymous, yet most often carefully recorded their initiators. Why? Moreover, some works show the respective initiators in their epilogues, whereas some name them in their introductions. What does this difference indicate?

We should remember, as noted previously, that a new book in the manuscript tradition would remain “unpublished” if no one bothered to copy it, and therefore risked getting entirely lost if the author's own copy was destroyed. In such circumstances, an initiator could probably play an important role to motivate a potential author. Even if no one else cared for the new work, the initiator at least would be expected to copy it. Otherwise why should he request for it at the beginning? Moreover, manually copying a book required much time and effort, so the initiator would have to make good use of his copy, for studying or for teaching—all this helping to widen the audience of the new work. In short, when an initiator requested a potential author to write a new book, the former

was essentially making a pledge to promote the forthcoming work when it is finished.⁶

Then, we can probably interpret an author's mention of the initiator's name in the new text, even though the former remains anonymous, as a subtle way to enforce the aforesaid pledge.

If so, I argue that where initiators are mentioned in the different texts probably indicates how the former came to interact with the development of those book projects:⁷

1. If an initiator is mentioned in the introduction, his request for the new work was probably received by the author before the lat-

⁶ Cf. von Hinüber's view of initiators's role: "If a reason is sought for this procedure it could be the acceptance of the new commentary. Although this is nowhere stated, it is nevertheless likely that these monks might have been prominent representatives of the different bhāṇaka traditions for the individual *nikāyas*" ("Building" 358). An interesting theory, but it cannot explain why the *Abhidhamma-bhāṇaka* tradition should have a junior monk like Buddhaghosa *bhikkhu*, the initiator of the *Abhidhamma* commentary, as its representative. (See p. 26)

⁷ Cousins has attempted to attribute such variations to authors adapting to different practices prevalent in different times (398). This is obviously why he has to coin the phrase "School of Buddhaghosa" for referring to "the body of literature" traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa, which he describes this way: "Some may have been written following the model he established, others by associates and others still under his supervision" (390).

However, a mere difference in such practices cannot conclusively prove that those works must be of different times, for, as shown above, there is another way to explain the aforesaid difference. Cousins's theory will remain mere food for thought until it is corroborated by further evidence showing that the works of different practices in showing their initiators actually belong to different periods.

ter began writing;⁸ the latter might also choose to mention the former in the epilogue as well.

2. If an initiator is mentioned only in the epilogue, his request probably came only after the author had already completed a substantial part of the book—possibly because it was only then that the former realized the potential value of the forthcoming work (In this case, the former encouraged the completion, not the initiation, of the new work, for the latter was already in the process of writing).
3. If no initiator is mentioned at all, the author was taking a risk to write a book that no one promised to “publish,” or he was famous and influential enough to feel confident that there would be people who would see great value in his work.

⁸ Is it not possible that, like researchers nowadays, the author writes the introduction at last, and thereby enables a late request to be incorporated in the introductory part? No, for such introductions are usually headed by a customary homage to the Triple Gem, which the author hopes would deter any obstacle hindering the completion of the new work. For instance:

iti me pasannamatino, ratanattayavandanāmayam puññaṃ.

yam suvihatarāyo, hutvā tassānubhāvena. (Sv I 1; Ps I 1; Spk I 1; Mp I 1)

Thus was established the homage to the Triple Gem by me, having a clear mind. After having destroyed (potential) obstacles by virtue of the power of that merit . . .

Such a purpose would be defeated if the introduction including such a homage were not written at the very beginning.

These are only general scenarios applicable to all authors in the manuscript tradition; I will use them as the basis to deal with Buddhaghosa's initiators.

First of all, the *Visuddhimagga* is, by definition, Buddhaghosa's work. The initiator is mentioned in the epilogue as follows:

Vibhajjavādi-seṭṭhānaṃ theriyānaṃ yasassinaṃ

Mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ vaṃsajassa vibhāvino.

Bhadantaṅghapālassa . . .

Ajjesanaṃ gahetvā (Vism 711)

After taking the suggestion of the wise Venerable Saṅghapāla, born into the lineage of the famous Elders who are the greatest of *vibhajjavādins* (i.e, those who hold the doctrine of analysis) and residents of the Great Monastery (Mahāvihāra) . . .⁹

⁹ Cf.:

[It was composed by me] according to

The wishes of Bhadanta Sanghapala,

That wise descendant of the famous elders,

Dwellers at the Great Minster, chief of those

Who held the doctrine of analysis . . . (Tin, *Purity* vol. 3, 877)

[In doing this], accepting the suggestion

Of the venerable Saṅghapāla,

From the mention of the initiator in the epilogue, should we understand that Buddhaghosa received this suggestion only after he had already started to write? No, in my opinion, probably following the model of its precedent (the *Vimuttimagga*), this work did not have a separate introduction, unlike Buddhaghosa's other works, and consequently, even if the suggestion was made before Buddhaghosa started to work, the epilogue would be the only proper place to mention the initiator.

Moreover, we should note that the term *vaṃsaja* ("born into the lineage [of Mahāvihāra resident Elders]") therein seemingly indicates that Ven. Saṅghapāla was ordained at the great temple, but probably no longer residing there at the time of Buddhaghosa's writing, for *Mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ* is only a qualifier of *theriyānaṃ* ("Elders"), not of *Saṅghapālassa*. Yet, Buddhaghosa still carefully highlighted the initiator's connection to Mahāvihāra.

The *Visuddhimagga* is Buddhaghosa's only work of which the initiator is explicitly shown as belonging to the Mahāvihāra lineage. It fol-

One born into the line of famous Elders,

Dwelling within the Great Monastery,

A true Vibhajjavādin, who is wise, . . . (Ñāṇamoḷi 836–837)

As seen above, two translators have understood this verse differently. However, if we check the original Pāli verse, we can see that the words *Vibhajjavādi-seṭṭhānaṃ*, *yasassinaṃ* and *Mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ* are the epithets of *theriyānaṃ*, given that all those are in genitive case, plural number, but that *vaṃsajassa* and *vibhāvino* are both epithets of Bhadantaṅghapālassa, given that all three of them are in genitive case, singular number.

Therefore, I observe that Ñāṇamoḷi has not noticed the significance of the numerical difference among those epithets, which has led to a confused translation, whereas Pe Maung Tin has seemingly got it right.

lows, therefore, that at least some, if not all, authorities of that great temple really wanted to have that text see the daylight. But why?

1. If we account for the fact that “*Vimuttimagga* . . . is . . . a ‘practice compendium’ or ‘path manual’ that in many aspects is similar to the *Visuddhimagga*” (Anālayo 622),
2. And if Bapat is right in arguing that “Buddhaghosa, while writing several paragraphs in his book, *Visuddhimagga*, has Abhayagirivādins and Upatissa’s *Vimuttimagga* in his mind” (XLIX),

Then it is possible that the request for the *Visuddhimagga* came from the Mahāvihāra circles because at the time, they wished for their own version of the *Vimuttimagga*, which probably was already possessed by the rival Abhayagirivāsin school when Buddhaghosa arrived in Ceylon.¹⁰

¹⁰ On Buddhaghosa’s part, he managed to make the *Visuddhimagga* not a mere manual for meditators but also the centerpiece of his *suttanta* commentaries: “The *Visuddhimagga* will stand in the midst of the four *āgamas* and illuminate whatever is mentioned in those (*āgamas*)” (Sv 1 2 *majjhe visuddhimaggo, esa catunnampi āgamānañhi / thatvā pakāsayissati, tattha yathā bhāsitaṃ atthaṃ*). This probably explains why its presentation style differs from the *Vimuttimagga*:

From an overall perspective, the *Vimuttimagga* appears somewhat more practical, whereas the *Visuddhimagga* has a tendency to be more scholarly. Often . . . its author [i.e., that of the *Vimuttimagga*] rests content with mentioning different opinions side by side, whereas Buddhaghosa has a more pronounced tendency towards refuting what in his view is not correct and establishing a single right opinion. (Anālayo 631)

As a meditation manual, the *Visuddhimagga* is undoubtedly an overkill, a fact which Buddhaghosa would probably be aware of, especially if he had the *Vimuttimagga* before him when he wrote the former. Then, why did he not make his work more concise, like the *Vimuttimagga*? Or, why did he not give up the pretense of writing a meditation manual and make instead a dedicated compendium, both in form and content, of the Mahāvihāra doctrine?

On the other hand, there are no explicitly shown Mahāvihāra connections with the initiators of the four major *nikāya* commentaries, which, we will see later, have surely come from Buddhaghosa:¹¹

1. Dāṭhānāga *saṃghatthera*, the first initiator of the *Dīgha-nikāya* commentary, was a resident of Sumaṅgala monastery (Sv II 1064 *Sumaṅgalapariveṇanivāsina*; Hinüber, “Building” 355). “Although his monastery, the Sumaṅgalapariveṇa, is men-

We can answer those questions if we accept the traditional statement claiming that the task of making the *Visuddhimagga* is supposed to be a test of Buddhaghosa’s qualifications (See *Ñāṇamoḷi* xxii). If he was in no position to reject the “suggestion” of a Mahāvihāra authority to write a meditation manual, it is understandable if he tried to save time and effort by letting the aforesaid manual also serve the role of the central part of his plan for the Pāli commentary project, hence the two-in-one nature of the *Visuddhimagga*.

On the other hand, Bhikkhu Analayo notes: “On the highly probable supposition that Buddhaghosa knew a version of the *Vimuttimagga*, a comparison of the two works time and again gives the impression as if he deliberately departed from the model set by his predecessor, even though on a number of occasions this involves him in having to depart from the canonical sources” (631). But he has failed to account for the fact that Buddhaghosa’s work had to serve also as the central pivot around which his *nikāya* commentaries were to revolve, whereas the *Vimuttimagga* is a mere meditation manual.

¹¹ This is why I do not agree with von Hinüber, who writes: “Summing up, it seems that Buddhaghosa was invited to the Mahāvihāra and that he came from South India, where there was a strong Theravāda tradition, as a kind of ‘foreign expert,’ or perhaps even as a leader of a group of experts, because it seems that some of his South Indian fellow monks joined him in Ceylon. Consequently, he must have been widely known for his learning, and he was active at a centre of Buddhist scholarship, which, at the time, was *Kāñcī*” (“Building” 357–358).

On the contrary, I argue that if Buddhaghosa were already famous enough to earn an invitation from Mahāvihāra to work on new Pāli commentaries, the initiators of his works should have been prominent resident monks of that temple. In reality, however, only the initiator of the *Visuddhimagga*, as I show in this paper, is explicitly shown as belonging to the Mahāvihāra lineage but not others.

tioned, and although modern handbooks tend to assert that it was part of the Mahāvihāra, there is no evidence on its location whatsoever” (“Building” 356).

If this monastery were part of Mahāvihāra, I argue, Buddhaghosa would have highlighted the fact, but he did not; so there seems no such a connection despite what the modern handbooks say. But it might still have been, at the time, a place famous enough to be recognized from its mere name without a mention of its location.

2. Buddhhamitta, the initiator of the *Majjhima-nikāya* commentary, is recorded (Ps V 109; Hinüber, “Building” 356) only as a monk who lived together with Buddhaghosa at Mayūrarūpa-paṭṭana, which von Hinüber describes as “of unknown location, but very likely in South India” (“Building” 356), and which Subrahmaniam and Nainar claim as identical with Mylapore, a very old part of modern Chennai in South India (281).
3. The initiators of the *Saṃyutta-* and *Aṅguttara-nikāya* commentaries are recorded under the same name Jotipāla (Spk III 308; Mp V 98).

Von Hinüber believes they were the same person (“Building” 356–357), but I think otherwise. Why? The initiator of Spk (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* commentary) was praised with several qualities¹² but no personal details of him were given, whereas the initiator of Mp (*Aṅguttara-nikāya* commentary)

¹² *sucisīlena subhāsītassa pakāsayantañāṇeṇa / sāsana vibhūtikāmeṇa . . . subhaguṇeṇa* (Spk III 308 “One who has good morality, wisdom that can illuminate the well-taught (Dhamma), a wish for the glory of the Teaching, and beautiful qualities”)

was described as formerly living together with the author in Kañcipūra, etc. This difference in treatment shows, I think, that the former Jotipāla was a famous personality at the time, recognizable from the name itself, whereas the latter was a nameless person and obliged to be introduced through his former connections with the author (Monks with identical Pāli names are a common phenomenon in the Order).

4. “Interestingly, a second person called Jīvaka is mentioned as an additional initiator of this commentary [i.e., Mp]” (Hinüber, “Building” 357; Mp V 98); Jīvaka made a request to Buddhaghosa when the latter was already living at Mahāvihāra.

“The modern Nidāna (sic.) to the *Visuddhimagga* . . . emphasizes explicitly that Jīvaka was an *upāsaka* (*jīvakenāpi upāskena*, Vism p. 49)” (“Building” 357), probably because he was mentioned without a monastic title like *bhikkhu* or *thera*. On the other hand, he was praised as “one having gone over to the other side of the ocean of three *piṭakas*” (Mp V 98 *pāraṃ piṭakattayasāgarassa gantvā*); it is doubtful whether a layman could spare time and effort to achieve such expertise in those times, and even if he did, whether Buddhaghosa would praise a lay person in such a manner.

Whether Jīvaka was a layman or a monk, he met Buddhaghosa while the latter was at Mahāvihāra; there is no evidence showing the degree of former’s influence in Mahāvihāra circles. Von Hinüber writes: “This Jīvaka could have been attached to the Mahāvihāra as a prominent layman . . .” (“Building” 357), but this sounds rather speculative.

All the initiators above of the major *nikāya* commentaries are shown in the respective epilogues, not in the separate introductions that, unlike the *Visuddhimagga*, those works possess. Yet, it is implausible that all the respective initiators approached Buddhaghosa only after the latter had begun the respective works.

There is another possible reason these initiators appear first in the epilogues. Immediately or some time after the completion of the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa began to write one of the *suttanta* commentaries without an initiator. When the initiator appeared only after a substantial part of the work had been completed, he had to be mentioned in the epilogue. Moreover, because Buddhaghosa intended to keep all introductions of *his* *suttanta* commentaries identical (see pp. 308 ff.), he had to mention the respective initiators of other *suttanta* expositions in their corresponding epilogues, regardless of whether they came to him before or after the start of the works that they requested respectively. This is probably why we have to see the initiators of Buddhaghosa's *suttanta* commentaries in their respective epilogues, not in the introductions.

Moreover, the initiators of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries, traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa, also have no obvious connections to Mahāvihāra:

5. The *Vinaya* commentary mentions, in the introduction, its initiator as Buddhasirī Thera (Sp I 2 *ajjhesanaṃ buddhasirivhayassa / therassa* “owing to the suggestion of Buddhasirī Thera”), who is also described in the epilogue as “possessing good morality and conduct” (VII 1415 *susīlasamācāraṃ*), but about whom nothing else is mentioned.
6. The *Abhidhamma* commentary mentions, in the introduction, its initiator as Bhikkhu Buddhaghosa, and also praises him therein as “possessing pure conduct and morality, endowed

with subtle and untainted insight” (As 1 *Visuddhācārasīlena nipuṇāmalabuddhinā*), but does not say anything else about him.

(In the case of those two works, I cannot see any reason why we should not infer that those two works were requested by the respective initiators even before Buddhaghosa started writing, from the fact that the former are shown in the respective introductions.)

In short, the Mahāvihāra authorities seemingly did not show the same enthusiasm for Buddhaghosa’s Pāli commentaries that they did for the *Visuddhimagga*. Why? Because they probably did not feel the same need for those works as they did for the *Visuddhimagga*. Given that the older commentaries in the native language had served the Mahāvihāra school so well for many years, those authorities might have hardly expected Buddhaghosa’s new works to supersede the old ones in Ceylon, even though they obviously agreed that the former are good enough for the international Buddhist community, and thereby worthy of the Mahāvihāra approval.

If this interpretation is correct, I argue, it is quite plausible that, as the tradition claims, Buddhaghosa was a foreign scholar coming to struggle in Ceylon for the sake of the international Buddhist community (See Ñāṇamoḷi xxi),¹³ which is also reinforced by the fact that some of his initiators undoubtedly had connections to South India.

¹³ If Buddhaghosa was a nameless scholar staying in a foreign land at the time, how did he manage to recruit a scholarly team to work for him? Probably by the courtesy of his initiators, I answer. Given that an initiator should probably have been, after the author himself, the person most willing to see the completion of a new book he requested, Buddhaghosa’s initiators, knowing the scope and depth of his project, must have given a lot of help to it, by participating themselves, or if they were famous and influential

Was Buddhaghosa a critical editor?

In the previous section, I have argued that Buddhaghosa lost much of his intellectual freedom given his status as a faithful presenter of the *Mahāvihāra* doctrine. This argument is open to debate, for there are scholars like Endo, who have argued that Buddhaghosa, contrary to his own claims, worked rather as a critical editor of the older *Sīhaḷa* sources:

With the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka . . . The compilation of old commentaries in the old language of *Sīhala*-s (Sinhalese) collectively known as the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*, began almost simultaneously. Their major portions were completed by about the beginning of the 2nd century A. C., corresponding to the reign of King Vasabha (A.C. 65–109). Minor additions were thereafter made till about the beginning of the 4th century, corresponding to a period soon after the reign of King Mahāsena (A.C. 276–303). (“Aṭṭhakathā” 17)

This dating range suggests that if references are made to those old *Sīhaḷa* sources in the Pāli commentaries, remarks contained in the present Pāli commentaries could be made only by someone who came after the *Sīhaḷa* commentaries are completed. Therefore such comments or remarks, if found in Buddhaghosa’s commentaries, are surely his own. (“Method” 188)

If Endo’s theory is correct, we must say Buddhaghosa enjoyed enough intellectual freedom to deal critically with the older sources preserved

persons, by recruiting their followers/friends to participate therein. This is probably how Buddhaghosa received a team of scholars and scribes.

by the *Mahāvihāra* tradition. Given that both theories of Endo and myself cannot be simultaneously correct, I will reassess his theory.

If von Hinüber is right in maintaining that “the brackets for Buddhaghosa’s dates are about AD 370 to 450” (*Handbook* 103), we can say Buddhaghosa must have started his work at least two hundred years after the major part of the older *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathās* was finalized (as Endo maintains) around A.C. 109. Certain issues in the older commentaries, if there were, must have become publicly known earlier than the finalization of the latter, so we can say that many generations of the *Mahāvihāra* fraternity had already lived with those issues for more than two hundred years when Buddhaghosa comes onto the scene. The inevitable question then is: had those monks been just parroting the contents in the old *Sīhala aṭṭhakathās* without any spirit of critical thinking or without any intellectual will to solve the issues therein?

The answer is probably in negative. There are several instances where the individual experts cited by Buddhaghosa held different opinions on certain issues (Endo, “Method” 191–193); this shows that the critical spirit in the *Theravādin* school had been alive, well, and kicking prior to Buddhaghosa. Then it follows that individual scholarly monks who prospered prior to Buddhaghosa must have seen, pondered, and tried to deal with the issues, problems, and contradictions extant in the old commentaries they used.

Subsequently, when certain ideas and solutions forwarded by individuals came to be accepted by general consensus in the *Mahāvihāra* fraternity even before Buddhaghosa appeared, they would become part of the *Mahāvihāra* orthodoxy, and would consequently be incorporated into Buddhaghosa’s works. What Endo (“Method”) has found in Buddhaghosa’s commentaries, namely several ideas given without any sources cited, nor explicitly claimed as “his own” (*amhākaṃ khanti* or *atano mati*), probably belong to the category of such ideas. For instance:

1. The *Visuddhimagga* (Vism 107; Ñāṇamoḷi 109) rejects the “opinion of teachers” regarding the directions for recognizing the temperaments because these are found neither in the canon nor the commentary. According to Endo (“Method” 190), this is a case of Buddhaghosa rejecting the opinion of Mahāvihāra teachers, but according to my theory, it is a case of Mahāvihāra authorities rejecting the opinion of certain ancient masters.
2. In the *nikāya* commentaries (Sv II 543; Spk III 281), “the view of Dīgha-Bhāṇaka-Tiṭṭhaka-Mahāsīvaththera, the elder who was active during the time of King Vasabha (65–109 A. C.), is rejected. The authority for this rejection appears to have been the “‘aṭṭhakathā’ . . .” (Endo, “Method” 191–192). But who decided to side with the *aṭṭhakathā*? According to Endo, it was Buddhaghosa, but according to my theory, the general consensus of the Mahāvihāra fraternity.
3. The *Visuddhimagga* (Vism 518–519; Ñāṇamoḷi 594–595) rejects “the view of ‘some’ on the term ‘paṭiccasamuppāda’ in a way not found anywhere else in the Pāli commentaries”; so, “this rejection could be Buddhaghosa’s own arrangement” (Endo, “Method” 195). However, Buddhaghosa himself mentioned in all introductions of the major *nikāya* commentaries that *paccayākāraḍesaṇā* (“the discourse of the modes of causation”, i.e., *paṭiccasamuppāda*) is one of the topics he expounded clearly in the *Visuddhimagga* so that he did not have to do so again in the commentaries.¹⁴ Therefore, the absence of this topic in the Pāli commentaries is not a

¹⁴ *sīlakathā . . . paccayākāraḍesaṇā . . . vipassanā bhāvanā ceva. / iti pana sabbaṃ yasmā, visuddhimagge mayā suparisuddhaṃ. / vuttaṃ tasmā bhiyyo, na taṃ idha vicārayissāmi.* (Sv I 1–2; Ps I 1–2; Spk I 2; Mp I 2 “The discourse of morality . . . the discourse on the modes of causation . . . the Insight meditation—all this has been mentioned by me very clearly in the *Visuddhimagga*; I will not consider it again here”)

strong enough premise to justify such a conclusion. Besides, we can say as well that this arrangement was from the Mahāvihāra authorities themselves.

In fact, it is possible to interpret all instances that Endo has provided as the judgments of the contemporary Mahāvihāra circles as a whole rather than as Buddhaghosa's critical editing.

But, if those were not Buddhaghosa's own ideas, why did he not cite them properly, as he did with the older commentaries? I answer thus. If such ideas were not part of any written work, yet if they were well established as part of the *Mahāvihāra* orthodoxy, it would not be necessary to cite the origins of those ideas; this would be dictated by the same principle that made Buddhaghosa himself stay anonymous, viz., the need to transfer the intellectual responsibility to the Mahāvihāra fraternity.

If such ideas were established as part of the *Mahāvihāra* orthodoxy, why were they not in written form? Because writing a research paper on a particular topic is only a modern phenomenon, whereas only book-level texts were the norm in the history of ancient Pāli literature. Consequently, any ancient scholar discovering a solution to a particular problem and yet not willing to write a whole book would only tend to offer his solution in his oral lectures. Such solutions, spread through word-of-mouth, could become part of the orthodoxy if they were accepted by the general consensus in the fraternity. In fact, the need to access such orally transmitted solutions was probably the reason why Buddhaghosa chose to come to Ceylon, rather than to attempt writing new commentaries at home drawing from the imported copies of the older commentaries.

The reasoning above is supported by the following piece of evidence:

Samayaṃ avilomento, therānaṃ theravaṃsappadīpānaṃ.

Sunipunaṇavinicchayānaṃ, Mahāvihārādhivāsīnaṃ. (Sv I 1; Ps I 1; Spk I 1; Mp I 2)

Not contradicting the opinion of the senior monks, who are like the torches illuminating the lineage of (ancient) senior monks, who can sway very subtle judgments, and who are resident authorities at Mahāvihāra.

This text is from the introductory verses common to all major *nikāya* commentaries, which have undoubtedly come from Buddhaghosa. Therein, he promised not to contradict the opinion of the Mahāvihāra authorities, but he did not make such a pledge to the older sources. This implies that he would side with the Mahāvihāra authorities whenever the latter differ from the older commentaries, and also that he was obliged to be consistent with the general consensus of the Mahāvihāra fraternity in whatever he said.

Therefore, it follows that in all the instances where Buddhaghosa appeared to speak on his own, like those given by Endo to support his theory, he was probably only voicing the general consensus of Mahāvihāra community in his times. On the contrary, to claim that Buddhaghosa was a critical editor, one would need to bring some evidence in which Buddhaghosa appears to have been speaking on his own, and also which was not the opinion of contemporary Mahāvihāra authorities. Until such evidence comes to light, we do not need to question Buddhaghosa's own repeated declarations that he was only a translator and compiler of the older sources.

Von Hinüber's Theory: Evidence and Counter-evidence

As mentioned in the introduction, von Hinüber has argued that Buddhaghosa is the author (1) of the commentaries on four *nikāyas*, but (2) not of other commentaries traditionally attributed to him.

Out of the several pieces of evidence he gives to support (1), the most convincing one in my opinion is his statement: “Buddhaghosa refers to the *Visuddhimagga* as composed “by me” in the introductory verses to all [four] *nikāya* commentaries” (“Early” 424), obviously referring to the following lines:

*iti pana sabbam yasmā, visuddhimagge mayā suparisuddham.
vuttam tasmā bhiyyo, na tam idha vicārayissāmi. (Sv I 2; Ps I 2;
Spk I 2; Mp I 2)*

But all this (discussion of morality, etc.) has been stated by me very succinctly in the *Visuddhimagga*.

Therefore I will not consider it here.

This is indisputable evidence that Buddhaghosa has written, at least, the commentaries to four *nikāyas*. But can this mere fact also prove (2), that he is NOT the author of any other commentary?

I do not think so. Why? Because, in those four *nikāya* commentaries, he never mentioned “stated by me” when he actually cited the *Visuddhimagga* in various places. The mention of his authorship of that text, it appears, was only an incident limited to those lines in the identical introductory verses; as I mentioned earlier, Buddhaghosa could not be anxious to show off his identity. On the other hand, if he did write other commentaries with different introductions, that clue would disappear in that work. Therefore, we cannot conclusively claim that a particular commentary has not come from Buddhaghosa just because that work is without this clue.

There is evidence contradicting the part (2) of von Hinüber's theory. What follows is part of the conclusion to *Manorathapūraṇī*, the commentary to the *Aṅguttara nikāya*:

Sabbāgamasamvaṇṇana-manoratho pūrito ca me yasmā,

etāya Manorathapūraṇī ti nāmaṃ tato assā. (Mp V 98)

My wish to expound all *āgamas* has been fulfilled by this commentary,

Therefore, its title (comes to be) *Manorathapūraṇī*.

From the text cited above, it is fairly safe, in my opinion, to conclude that this is probably the last commentary Buddhaghosa wrote, but von Hinüber has derived an altogether different conclusion:

As the last commentary to be completed in this grand project it owes its name to the fact that it is the “(commentary that) fulfilled my [i.e. Buddhaghosa's] wish to comment on all *āgamas* (Nigamana, v. 6). / This important remark at the end of the *Manorathapūraṇī* [i.e., the commentary on the *Aṅguttaranikāya*] shows, together with the introductions, that Buddhaghosa composed only these four *aṭṭhakathās* . . . (Hinüber, “Early” 423)

If Buddhaghosa referred to only those four *nikāyas* by the term *sabbāgama* . . . (“all *āgamas*”), von Hinüber's theory can be correct. However, Buddhaghosa himself was found to say otherwise in the same work: *eko nikāyo eko āgamo nāma, dve nikāyā dve āgamā nāma, pañca nikāyā pañca āgamā nāma* (Mp II 189 “One *nikāya* is termed one *āgama*; two *nikāyas* are termed two *āgamas*; five *nikāyas* are termed five *āgamas*.”). Unless one could prove that Buddhaghosa was contradicting himself here, his usage of the term *sabbāgama* can lead us only to the conclusion that he had written the commentaries to five *nikāyas*, that is, not only to the four

nikāyas as von Hinüber claims but also to at least part of the remaining *Khuddakanikāya*.

Again, we should not forget that Buddhaghosa himself gave two different definitions of the *Khuddakanikāya*:

*Brahmajālādicatuttiṃsa-suttanta-saṅgaho Dīgha-nikāyo . . .
Majjhima-nikāyo . . . Saṃyutta-nikāyo . . . Aṅguttara-nikāyo,
Khuddakapāṭha-Dhammapada-Udāna-Itivuttaka-Suttanipāta-
Vimānavatthu-Petavatthu-Theragāthā-Therīgāthā-Jātaka-
Niddesa-Paṭisambhidāmagga-Apadāna-Buddhavaṃsa-Cariyā-
piṭakavasena pannarasabhedo Khuddakanikāyo ti idaṃ Suttan-
ta-piṭakaṃ nāma. (Sv I 17)*

The *Dīghanikāya*, which is the collection of thirty-four *suttas* beginning with the *Brahmajāla* (*sutta*), the *Majjhimanikāya* . . . the *Saṃyuttanikāya* . . . the *Aṅguttaranikāya*

. . . the *Khuddakanikāya*, which is fifteen-fold by virtue of *Khuddakapāṭha*, *Dhammapada*, *Udāna*, *Itivuttaka*, *Suttanipāta*, *Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu*, *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Jātaka*, *Niddesa*, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, *Apadāna*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Cariyāpiṭaka* (texts)—(all) this is termed *Suttanta Piṭaka*.

Katamo Khuddakanikāyo? Sakalaṃ Vinayapiṭakaṃ, Abhidhammapiṭakaṃ, Khuddakapāṭhādayo ca pubbe-nidassita-pañcadasa-bhedā, ṭhapetvā cattāro nikāye avasesaṃ buddhava-canaṃ. (I 23)

What is *Khuddakanikāya*? The Buddha's discourses except the four *nikāyas*, (i.e.,) the whole *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, and the aforesaid fifteen-fold *Khuddakapāṭha*, etc., (are the *Khuddakanikāya*).

In the first definition, the *Khuddakanikāya* is a subdivision of the *Suttanta Piṭaka* whereas in the second, a division of the whole Buddhist canon. But we do not yet know, at this stage, which one Buddhaghosa had in mind when he said “all āgamas” (*sabbāgama . . .*). Therefore:

1. If he meant the first definition, the commentaries to the *Khuddakanikāya* texts of *Dhammapada*, *Jātaka*, *Khuddakapāṭha*, and *Suttanipāta* and/or *Apadāna* are the candidates to his authorship;
2. But if he meant the second, the commentaries to the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma Piṭakas* can also be added to the list above of the candidates to his authorship.

This finding is important enough, in my opinion, to justify a reevaluation of the other pieces of evidence von Hinüber has put forward, and I do that in the following sections. In the meantime, I will attempt to narrow down the aforesaid list of candidates, using additional evidence.

First of all, if we account for two different definitions of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* as well as the fact that all other *nikāyas* except it belong to the *Suttanta-piṭaka*, we can see the composition of the canon as perceived by Buddhaghosa and clarified by the following table:

Table 2: Composition of the Canon as Perceived by Buddhaghosa

piṭaka	<i>Suttanta</i>					<i>Vinaya</i>	<i>Abhidhamma</i>
nikāya	DN	MN	SN	AN	K ₁	K ₂	

In the table above, K₁ is the *Khuddaka-nikāya* as a division of the *Suttanta-piṭaka*, per Buddhaghosa’s first definition, and (K₁ + K₂) is the *Khuddaka-nikāya* as a division of the whole canon, per the second. Other *nikāyas*, on the other hand, are each not only divisions of the *Suttanta-piṭaka*, being members of the list [DN, MN . . . K₁], but also divisions of the whole can-

on, being members of the list [DN, MN . . . ($K_1 + K_2$)]. Then, it follows that the term *nikāya/āgama*, being common to all those *nikāya* titles, can be interpreted, depending on the context, as a division either of the *Suttanta-piṭaka* or of the whole canon.

Next, we should take a look again at the identical statement common to the introductions of the four *nikāya* commentaries: “The *Visuddhimagga* will stand in the midst of the four *āgamas* and illuminate whatever is mentioned in those (*āgamas*)” (Sv I 2; Ps I 2; Spk I 2; Mp I 2 *majjhe visuddhimaggo, esa catunnampi āgamānañhi / thatvā pakāsayissati, tattha yathā bhāsitaṃ atthaṃ*).

In which sense did Buddhaghosa use the term *āgama* in the cited statement above? Cousins seems to think this is a division of the whole canon, for he notes:

The fact that the four describe the *Visuddhimagga* as a general commentary to the four *Āgamas* and not to the Canon as a whole may imply that at this stage there was no intention to write commentaries to the whole Canon.
(393)

But his interpretation is untenable. Why? If the term *āgama* in the afore-said statement means a division of the whole canon, the mention of only four *āgamas* will rule out the whole *Khuddaka-nikāya* ($K_1 + K_2$), contradicting Buddhaghosa’s own claim in the conclusion of the same work that he has expounded all *āgamas*.

Therefore, the only feasible option is to interpret the term *āgama* in this context as a division of the *Suttanta-piṭaka*. Accordingly, we can infer, when Buddhaghosa wrote commentaries on those four major *nikāyas*, he had no intention to expound K_1 (i.e., the *suttanta* texts belonging to the *Khuddaka-nikāya*), hence his statement of the four *āgamas*, i.e., the four *Suttanta-piṭaka* divisions, having the *Visuddhimagga* as their cen-

ter. If we also consider the fact that Mp, one of the commentaries that does include this statement, was probably his last commentarial work (as shown on p. 299), we can say that he never changed his mind in this regard, so we can safely rule out his authorship of the four *Khuddaka-nikāya* commentaries traditionally attributed to him.

Then, how should we interpret the term *āgama* in *sabbāgama* mentioned in the epilogue of Mp (See p. [299])? If we take this to mean a division of the *Suttanta-piṭaka*, *sabbāgama* (“all *āgamas*”) will also cover K_1 (i.e., the *suttanta* texts in the *Khuddaka-nikāya*), which contradicts what he said in the introduction. Therefore, we should interpret the term *āgama* here as meaning a division of the whole canon. Consequently, *sabbāgama* should refer to the four major *nikāyas* (*āgamas*) plus K_2 (i.e., the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*). Given that K_2 is part of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, the last division of the whole canon, Buddhaghosa is justified when he claimed that he has expounded all *āgamas*.

This argument is further corroborated by the cross-references found between the four *nikāya* commentaries (surely written by Buddhaghosa) on one hand, and those to the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* on the other. As seen in the table (3), the *Vinaya* commentary is cited by all four *nikāya* commentaries whereas the former cites the commentaries to the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima nikāyas*, out of the four. On the other hand, the former and *Aṭṭhasālinī* (the commentary to *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the first book of *Abhidhamma*) cites each other. Such mutual references can occur only out of a carefully laid out plan dictating which topic goes where and gets cited where.¹⁵

¹⁵ On the contrary, Cousins notes: “The cross-references must reflect some kind of subsequent editing process, but it seems likely that scribes have in some cases glossed earlier references to the older commentaries with specific references to the extant Pali commentaries. Once the older commentaries were no longer available or in normal use

Table 3: The Cross-references between the *Nikāya* and the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* Commentaries

The Cited Works	The Citing Works
<i>Samantapāsādikā</i> (the com. to the <i>Vinaya</i>)	The com. to <i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i> (the first book of the <i>Abhidhamma</i>), ¹⁶ and those to the <i>Dīgha</i> -, ¹⁷ <i>Majjhima</i> -, ¹⁸ <i>Samyutta</i> -, ¹⁹ <i>Aṅguttara</i> ²⁰ <i>nikāyas</i>
<i>Aṭṭhasālinī</i> (the com. to <i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i> , the first book of <i>Abhidhamma</i>)	The com. to the <i>Vinaya</i> ²¹
<i>Sammohavinodanī</i> (the com. to <i>Vibhaṅga</i> , the second book of <i>Abhidhamma</i>)	The comm. to <i>Dīgha</i> -, ²² <i>Majjhima</i> -, ²³ <i>Samyutta</i> -, ²⁴ <i>Aṅguttara</i> ²⁵ <i>nikāyas</i>

this could happen rather easily, since it involves only the addition of the Pali name” (394).

For Cousins, this is the only possible interpretation, for, (1) he maintains that the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries are later than Buddhaghosa’s works (i.e., according to von Hinüber and Cousins himself, the *Visuddhimagga* and the *nikāya* commentaries) but earlier than other works traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa (i.e., the *Jātaka*, *Dhammapada*, *Suttanipāta* and *Khuddakapāṭha* commentaries) (397–398), and (2) any cross-references among works of different periods can happen only by editorial work taking place subsequent to those periods.

However, I argue, if Cousins is to be right, we should have seen substantially different versions of Buddhaghosa’s works, those touched by the subsequent editorial work of cutting, copying, and pasting, and those escaping it, but we have not. Furthermore, I have already shown above on pp. 299–300 that I do not agree with Cousins’s premise (1) above. In my opinion, those cross-references themselves can be viewed as counter-evidence to his theory.

¹⁶ (As 97, 98)

¹⁷ (Sv I 70, 71, 82, 84, 133; II 363, 530, 567, 592, 593; III 981, 1000, 1043)

¹⁸ (Ps I 198, 199; III 45, 106; IV 46)

¹⁹ (Spk II 37, 145)

²⁰ (Mp III 334; IV 136, 137)

²¹ (Sp I 150; V 1025)

²² (Sv II 642)

The Cited Works	The Citing Works
<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i> (the com. to the <i>Dīgha nikāya</i>)	The comm. to the <i>Vinayapiṭaka</i> ²⁶ and to those of the <i>Majjhima</i> -, ²⁷ <i>Samyutta</i> -, ²⁸ <i>Aṅguttara</i> ²⁹ <i>nikāyas</i>
<i>Papañcasūdānī</i> (the com. to the <i>Majjhima nikāya</i>)	The comm. to the <i>Vinayapiṭaka</i> , ³⁰ to the <i>Samyutta</i> -, ³¹ and <i>Aṅguttara</i> ³² <i>nikāyas</i>

Furthermore, we should also consider the fact that the Mahāvihāra orthodoxy during his times had invested the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma piṭakas* with extraordinary significance. The *Dīgha-nikāya* commentary had the following spoken by the participants in the First Council:

*vinayo nāma Buddhassa sānassa āyu, vinaye ṭhite sāsanaṃ
ṭhitaṃ hoti . . . (Sv I 11)*³³

The *Vinaya* is the life of the Buddha's Teaching; if the *Vinaya* survives, the Teaching survives.

And the *Majjhima-nikāya* commentary praises the *Abhidhamma* obviously at the expense of the *suttas*:

²³ (Ps II 30)

²⁴ (Spk II 45)

²⁵ (Mp V 16)

²⁶ (Sp I 172)

²⁷ (Ps I 2; III 386; V 24)

²⁸ (Spk I 3, 136, 348)

²⁹ (Mp I 3; II 285)

³⁰ (Sp I 172, 173; IV 870; V 965)

³¹ (Spk I 13; II 45)

³² (Mp I 15)

³³ The same is mentioned in the *Vinaya* commentary (Sp I 13).

Anābhidhammiko hi dhammaṃ kathento, ayaṃ sakavādo ayaṃ paravādo ti na jānāti; sakavādaṃ dīpessāmī ti paravādaṃ dīpeti; paravādaṃ dīpessāmī ti sakavādaṃ dīpeti; dhammantaraṃ visaṃvādeti. Ābhidhammiko sakavādaṃ sakavādaniyāmen' eva, paravādaṃ paravādaniyāmen' eva dīpeti; dhammantaraṃ na visaṃvādeti. (Ps II 256)

When one not versed in the *Abhidhamma* talks on *Dhamma*, he does not know “This is our own doctrine, and this is others’ doctrine.” Thinking “I will show our own doctrine,” he shows others’ doctrine. Thinking “I will show others’ doctrine,” he shows our own doctrine. He lets the difference of dhammas be misunderstood. (But) the one versed in *Abhidhamma* illuminates our own doctrine (only using) the methodology of our own doctrine, and illuminates others’ doctrine (only using) the methodology of others’ doctrine. He does not let the difference of dhammas be misunderstood.

In the *Abhidhamma* commentary itself, the status of the *Abhidhamma* is elevated even higher:

Ābhidhammikabhikkhūyeva kira dhammakathikā nāma, avasesā dhammakathaṃ kathentāpi na dhammakathikā. Kasmā? Te hi dhammakathaṃ kathentā kammantaraṃ vipākantaraṃ rūpārūpaparicchedaṃ dhammantaraṃ āloḍetvā kathenti. Ābhidhammikā pana dhammantaraṃ na āloḍenti. Tasmā ābhidhammiko bhikkhu dhammaṃ kathetu vā mā vā, pucchitakāle pana pañhaṃ kathessatīti. Ayameva ekantadhammakathiko nāma hoti. (As 29)

It is said that only monks versed in the *Abhidhamma* are called preachers of *Dhamma*; others are not, even though

the latter actually deliver Dhamma discourses. Why? When those (i.e., with no expertise in *Abhidhamma*) preach the Dhamma, they do so mixing up the difference of karma, the difference of resultants, the difference of materiality and non-materiality (i.e., mentality), the difference of dhammas. On the contrary, *Abhidhamma* experts do not mix up the difference of dhammas. Therefore, a monk with expertise in *Abhidhamma* would answer a question when he is asked, whether he delivers Dhamma talks or not. Only such (an *Abhidhamma* expert) is a true preacher of Dhamma.

The texts cited above reveal the exalted status given by the Mahāvihāra school to the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* piṭakas in contrast to the *Suttanta piṭaka* during Buddhaghosa's times. Accordingly, I find it understandable that Buddhaghosa, who had come to Mahāvihāra because he believed that its doctrine represented the authentic Buddhism, chose those two piṭakas over certain *sutta* texts. But we would still need further research to understand why he chose the four major *nikāyas* over the *Khuddaka-nikāya* *sutta* texts.

Besides, we should remember that both the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries show their respective initiators in their introductions, which according to my theory indicates that the author received the requests of the initiators before any writing process began. And “before writing” can mean, if the author happened to be Buddhaghosa, either before his coming to Ceylon or after his arrival there. If he did receive those requests before coming to Ceylon, we can say that the international Theravādin Buddhist community at the time was also in need of the Mahāvihāra versions of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* expositions.

All the reasoning above, combined with Buddhaghosa's seeming statement of Mp being his last work, indicates the possibility that he

came to work on the *suttanta* commentaries only after writing on the other two *piṭakas*.

On the other hand, I do not claim that he is the actual author of all the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries traditionally attributed to him, and later I will give my opinion in this regard. In the meantime, I intend to reevaluate the various pieces of evidence von Hinüber has given against Buddhaghosa's authorship of those works.

The identical introductory verses in the nikāya commentaries

“The introductory verses to all four *nikāya* commentaries [i.e., *Dīgha-*, *Majjhima-*, *Samyutta-*, and *Aṅguttara nikāyas*] are identical except for the fifth verse, which briefly characterizes the specific *nikāya*” (Hinüber, “Early” 423) whereas “The form and content of the introductory verses [of *Samantapāsādikā*, the *Vinaya* commentary] are quite different from the beginning of both the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* [the *Dīgha nikāya* commentary] and the *Atthasālinī* [the first book of *Abhidhamma* commentary]” (425); this shows, according to von Hinüber, that the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries should have authors other than Buddhaghosa, the author of the *nikāya* commentaries.

In my opinion, we should firstly think why Buddhaghosa has made identical introductory verses for the four *nikāya* commentaries. Given that different commentaries to different *nikāyas* are *different works*, no one could blame him if he wrote a different introduction for each work. Then, why has he not made those introductions different?

The first possible answer would be that he intended to make those introductions a seal, a trademark of his authorship, effectively ruling out the other commentaries with different introductions (This is seemingly how von Hinüber thinks). However, if Buddhaghosa were so

anxious to get credit for his works (which seems improbable for an author bent on being deliberately anonymous, as I have shown at p. 281), he could have easily mentioned his name in the introductions or conclusions of his works, rather than go to the extent of writing identical introductions.

On the contrary, a more plausible answer would be: he has made the introductions to his *sutta* commentaries identical so as to put them in contrast with the commentaries to the *Vinaya* and to the *Abhidhamma Piṭakas*, which he had already written, or planned to write. If this answer is correct, *the four Khuddakanikāya commentaries traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa can be ruled out from his authorship*, given that, despite belonging to the same *Suttanta Piṭaka*, those texts have introductions different from those of other *nikāya* commentaries. (This is the same conclusion that I have already reached through other means on pp. 301-303.)

But what is the evidence for this answer?

kasmā pan' ettha yathā abhidhamme 'yasmim̐ samaye kāmāvacaran ti' ca, ito aññesuca Sutta-padesu 'Yasmim̐ samaye bhikkhave bhikkhu vivicc' eva kāmehīti' ca bhumma-vacanena niddeso kato, Vinaye ca 'Tena samayena Buddho Bhagavā' ti karaṇa-vacanena, tathā akatvā 'ekaṃ samayan' ti upayogavacanena niddeso kato ti? (Sv I 33)

Just as it is indicated by locative case in the *Abhidhamma* as “*yasmim̐ samaye kāmāvacaram̐*,” etc., and in other speeches of *sutta* as “*yasmim̐ samaye bhikkhave bhikkhuvivicc' eva kāmehi*” etc., and just as it is indicated by instrumental case in the *Vinaya* as “*tena samayena Buddho Bhagavā*,” etc., why is it not done (i.e., indicated) in those ways

here (i.e., at the beginning of *Brahmajālasutta*) but indicated by accusative case as “*ekaṃ samayaṃ*”?

In the text cited above, we can see Buddhaghosa raising the question why accusative forms are used to indicate time in very common phrases like *ekaṃ samayaṃ* in *suttas*.

For this question, there is an answer available for him from ancient masters (*porāṇā*), and he himself cited that as follows:

Porāṇā pana vaṇṇayanti ‘tasmiṃ samaye’ ti vā, ‘tena samayenā’ ti vā, ‘ekaṃ samayan’ ti vā, abhilāpamattabhedo esa, sabbattha bhummam eva attho ti. tasmā ekaṃ samayan ti vutte pi ekasmiṃ samaye ti attho veditabbo. (I 33)

The ancient masters explain, “Whether it is *tasmiṃ samaye* or *tena samayena*, or *ekaṃ samayaṃ*, it is just a difference in expression; only the locative sense is there in every instance. Therefore, even though it is said *ekaṃ samayaṃ*, the meaning of “at a time” (*ekasmiṃ samaye*) should be understood.”

But Buddhaghosa (i.e., the *Theravādin* orthodoxy during his times) had his own idea, and *before* giving the ancient answer cited above, gave his own answer:

Tattha tathā idha ca aññathā attha-sambhavato . . . (I 33)

Because in those texts of *Abhidhamma*, etc., the (proper) sense arises in those ways (i.e., through the locative or instrumental cases), but here (i.e., in the *Brahmajālasutta*), (it) arises in the other way (i.e., through the accusative case) . . .

Then he continued to elaborate how different forms are used to indicate time in different *piṭakas*, but what is relevant here is: Buddhaghosa believed that the *Vinaya*, *Abhidhamma* and *Suttanta piṭakas* are subjects mutually different enough to justify different expressions for essentially the same sense. If so, I argue, it is natural for him to make identical introductions to his *sutta* commentaries so as to put them in contrast with the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries, which he had already written, or planned to write.

The differences in presentation and content

Von Hinüber and other scholars have noticed the differences in presentation and content between the *nikāya* commentaries on one hand, and the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries on the other.

. . . so [i.e., different] is the method followed in this commentary [i.e., the *Vinaya* commentary]; differing views—also from non-*Mahāvihāra* and South Indian commentaries, which are partly mentioned in the introductory verses—are discussed, and controversies on the legal interpretation are presented (von Hinüber, 1996, § 210, § 320), whereas the *nikāya* and *Abhidhammapiṭaka* commentaries usually offer only orthodox explanations. (Hinüber, “Early” 425)

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

form. (“Building” 364; *Handbook*) (Hinuber 364 See also HPL 241)

Moreover, as convincingly argued by Bapat and Vadekar, the structure of the *Abhidhamma* commentary points to an author different from Buddhaghosa. (*Handbook* 151)

Though there have been numerous places where the *Aṭṭhasālinī* shows agreement with the *Visuddhimagga*—such places have been indicated in foot-notes—there are not a few places where the interpretation in our text differs from that in the *Visuddhimagga*. And this difference is not restricted to mere interpretations but also noted in philosophical views or technicalities of Buddhist philosophy. (Bapat and Vadekar xxxv)

The scholars cited above share the assumption that if Buddhaghosa also wrote the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries, he would have made the content and form of those works consistent with the works that we know for sure have come from him. But there is evidence against such an assumption—how Buddhaghosa dealt with the topic of the longevity of the Buddha’s Teaching.

First of all, consider the Pāli canon in this context. It shows the Buddha apparently stating that the Teaching could potentially survive for one thousand years but, thanks to the establishment of the nuns’s Order, the former will survive only for five hundred years (*Vin* II 256; Horner vol. 5, 355–356; *AN* IV 278–279; Bodhi 1191–1192). This statement seemed to be literally understood and believed during the earliest times, for the account of the First Buddhist Council show Venerable Ānanda getting blamed for having lobbied to have the nuns’s Order established (*Vin* II 289; Horner vol. 5, 401).

Later, the same statement got newly interpreted as seen below, apparently when the Teaching was approaching the five-hundred-year limit, and still showed no signs of going away:

evameva ye ime anuppanne vatthusmiṃ paṭikacceva avītikamanatthāya garudhammā paññattā. Tesu apaññattesupi mātugāmassa pabbajitattā pañceva vassasatāni saddhammo tiṭṭheyya. Paṭikacceva paññattattā pana aparānīpi pañcavassasatāni ṭhassatīti evaṃ paṭhamaṃ vuttaṃ vassasahasameva ṭhassatīti. (Sp VI 1291)

So also these Revered Conditions (*garudhamma*) were prescribed in very advance so as not to be transgressed, before relevant circumstances arose. Even if those Revered Conditions had not been prescribed, the Holy *Dhamma* may survive precisely for five hundred years thanks to woman's ordination. But because those Conditions were prescribed in advance, it would survive another five hundred years. Therefore it would survive for (altogether) one thousand years, as was firstly stated.

According to this new interpretation, the Buddha's prescription of the Revered Conditions (*garudhamma*) was the antidote to the destructive effects of the nuns's Order, rendering the life-span of his Teaching back to its full potential, i.e., one thousand years. I call this a *new interpretation* because, if this were how this statement was originally understood, the participants in the First Buddhist Council would not have been shown as blaming Venerable Ānanda for his help in the founding of the nuns's Order (*Vin* II 289; Horner vol. 5, 401).

Later again, seemingly when the Teaching approached the one thousand-year limit and was still going strong, other theories arose to explain the term "one thousand years" and make it match with the

ground reality. It was at this stage that irreconcilable differences appeared.

The *Vinaya* and *Dīgha nikāya* commentaries introduced the theory of five-thousand-year life span of the Teaching, but the two commentaries differ from each other concerning the characteristics of one-thousand-year components of the whole life-span (See the appendix 1). On the other hand, the *Aṅguttara* and *Samyutta nikāya* commentaries define seven stages of the decline of the Teaching; of them, the first stage lasts one thousand years according to Mp and twenty years according to Spk, but the extents of the later stages are not specified by either commentary (See the appendix 2).

All of those four commentaries are traditionally believed to have been written by Buddhaghosa, and three of them except the one on the *Vinaya* are, as previously seen, undoubtedly from his hands. What is surprising here is that not only did Buddhaghosa not attempt to solve those apparent contradictions among the commentaries, but also had he failed even to remark on the issue.

Then, has a piece of his writing gotten lost in its transmission from generation to generation up to our times? This is unlikely, for we have the following remark from the *Vinaya* sub-commentator showing that the issue is probably there from the very beginning:

Yasmā cetaṃ sabbaṃ aññamaññaṇapaṭiviruddhaṃ, tasmā tesaṃ tesaṃ bhāṇakānaṃ matameva ācariyena tattha tattha dassitanti gahetabbaṃ. Aññathā hi ācariyasseva pubbāparavirodhappasaṅgo siyāti. (“Sp-ṭ” III 439)

Because all these (commentarial expositions) contradict one another, it should be understood that the corresponding knowledge of each *bhāṇaka* tradition has been shown in each (commentary) by the master (i.e., Buddhaghosa).

Otherwise, it would have been the master's own fault of inconsistency.

Then, is it an oversight on Buddhaghosa's part? This is also unlikely, for as a very systematic and thorough author, he cannot have written on the same topic three times without noticing that he had contradicted himself.

So, there is only one explanation available to us—Buddhaghosa deliberately ignored the issue. But why? Probably because this is an issue that the Mahāvihāra tradition had not been able to solve. What has happened here appears to be this: a canonical statement supposedly coming from the Buddha himself mismatched the ground reality in later times. To validate this statement and thereby defend the Buddha, several theories without a canonical basis have appeared. When those competing theories contradict one another, it is not possible to infer any judgment from the canon. Given that all those theories involve spiritual achievements, it is not possible either to find a solution from concrete nature. Therefore, the Mahāvihāra tradition seemingly decided just to preserve the available theories and to let the unfolding history make the final judgment.

What is especially relevant and interesting here is that Buddhaghosa chose to inherit all those contradictions in his works without making so much as a remark. This shows that he had to inherit the whole Mahāvihāra doctrine, good or bad, consistent or inconsistent, in his works. If such contradictions can exist even among the *nikāya* commentaries, it must have been out of the question, in contrast, for the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries, which must deal with different subject-matters.

Therefore, the difference of presentation and content in the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries is not convincing proof that those works have not come from Buddhaghosa.

Buddhaghosa the initiator

In the table (1), the initiator of two *Abhidhamma* commentaries is named Buddhaghosa. Von Hinüber believes that this Buddhaghosa is identical with the author of *Visuddhimagga* and of the four *nikāya* commentaries; this is why he writes: “Thus, the introductory verses to the *Atthasālinī*, the first of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* commentaries . . . name Buddhaghosa as the person at whose initiative this text was composed thereby excluding his authorship” (“Early” 424).

On the other hand, the tradition maintains that the initiator of the *Aṭṭhasālinī* is another monk with an identical name, and refers to him as Culla-buddhaghosa (“Junior Buddhaghosa”) to differentiate from the famous commentator:

Called Culla-Buddhaghosa to distinguish him from the greater. He was a native of Ceylon, and two works are ascribed to him—the *Jātattagīnidāna* and the *So-tattagīnidāna*. The former probably refers to the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*. It was at his request that **Buddhaghosa** (1) wrote his Commentaries to the *Abhidhamma*. (“2. Buddhaghosa”)

So, who is right? Cousins finds the tradition implausible because “Had the author been the famous Buddhaghosa, he would hardly have referred to a junior contemporary of the same name without explanation” (397). But I do not think his view is tenable; for an author being deliber-

ately anonymous like Buddhaghosa, as I have argued above, he would have little reason to take up such identity issues.

On the contrary, I argue, the clue for answering this question can be found in the titles attached to respective initiators, shown in the table (1). Nine of them were *theras*, which means, according to the *Vinaya*, that they had been “ordained for 10 years or more” (“thera”). And one of those *theras* was called *saṅghatthera* (“the senior(most) in the *Saṅgha*”), meaning that he was the most senior monk in the temple where he lived, or the chapter which he belonged to. On the other hand, there were only two initiators entitled *bhikkhu* (“monk”), probably meaning that they were junior monks ordained for less than ten years, and Buddhaghosa the initiator is one of them.

Now let us consider the case of Buddhaghosa the commentator. He was most probably a foreign monk (Hinüber, *Handbook* 102), who came to Ceylon to study the Sinhala commentaries, and afterwards lead the grand project of Mahāvihāra by writing the *Visuddhimagga*, the handbook of Theravādin Buddhism, to accompany the *nikāya* commentaries he also wrote. It is hard to believe that such a person happened to be a junior monk ordained for less than ten years.

Therefore, the traditional belief is more plausible in that Buddhaghosa the initiator is a person different from Buddhaghosa the commentator. It means we cannot rule out the authorship of Buddhaghosa the senior for the *Abhidhamma* commentaries.

The parallel evidence of the Chinese Samantapāsādikā

Von Hinüber has rejected Buddhaghosa’s authorship of *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp) partly because of Finot’s following argument:

There exists a Chinese translation of the *Samantapāsādikā* under the title of *Chan-kien-pi-pro-cha-lu* (sid.) by Saṅghabhadra, a *Śramaṇa* of the western region: it is exactly dated 489 A. D., and therefore posterior to the utmost by 50 years to the presumed date of Buddhaghosa. It is not possible that in such a short lapse of time the name of the author had fallen into oblivion: now, the translator does not mention it in any way. Therefore, in the time of the Chinese translation, the *Samantapāsādikā* was an anonymous work. (Finot)

I am not convinced by Finot. Even if he is correct in assuming that Saṅghabhadra's work is a translation of *Sp*,³⁴ the very short time interval of not more than fifty years between Buddhaghosa and the Chinese translation of *Sp* means that the "Buddhaghosa colophons" were probably not yet present when Saṅghabhadra undertook to translate *Sp* into Chinese. Without those colophons, all Buddhaghosa's works, even the *Vissuddhimagga*, would be anonymous, so this anonymity is not evidence convincing enough to deny Buddhaghosa's authorship of *Sp*.

Furthermore, even if Saṅghabhadra happened to know Buddhaghosa's identity, there are valid motives why the former would not mention the latter's name in the former's work such as:

³⁴ Guruge has recently raised doubts whether the aforesaid Chinese work is really a translation of *Sp* ("Shan-jian-lu-piposa"), whereas Endo has responded by arguing that the former actually is an abridged translation of the latter ("Shan-chien").

Endo's argument is thorough with one exception. He has not answered why Saṅghabhadra has chosen to make an "abridged," not complete, translation, and thereby to run the risk of distorting the content of *Sp*. This is why I still have my doubts.

1. Even when a translator knew the original author's identity, the former was not obliged to name the latter explicitly when the latter is being deliberately anonymous;
2. Given that Buddhaghosa could not become famous yet in that short lapse of time, whatever prestige and authority which his works possessed, and which the translator was trying to inherit, must be based upon the endorsement of the Mahāvihāra. In such a case, mentioning the original author's name would only hinder, not help, the translator trying to get Chinese readers to accept his translation as an authority on the Mahāvihāra monasticism.

Therefore, I argue, the absence of Buddhaghosa's name in the Chinese translation is not convincing enough evidence to let us assume *Sp* is not one of Buddhaghosa's works.

The Case of the *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī*

I have shown above that the evidence von Hinüber has offered to refute Buddhaghosa's authorship of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries is not convincing enough. On the other hand, I do not claim that all the commentaries on the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*, traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa, are in fact from his team. In what follows, I will show my own judgment in this regard.

Even though the respective introductory verses of the four *nikāya* commentaries on one hand and those of the *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* commentaries on the other are widely different, there is a subtle connection between the respective manners of describing the Buddha therein. As seen in the table (2), out of the innumerable ways to praise the Buddha, only two qualities of his, wisdom and compassion, are found to be adopted. In the *Suttanta* commentaries, those qualities are expressed in a

balanced manner, but the *Vinaya* commentary highlights the compassion at the expense of omitting the wisdom entirely; the *Abhidhamma* commentary, on the other hand, highlights the wisdom with the compassion being only a standard of comparison to illustrate the former.

Table 4: Different Descriptions of the Buddha in the Introductory Verses of the Commentaries to Three *Piṭakas*

<i>Suttanta</i>	<i>karuṇāsītalahadayaṃ paññāpajjotavihatamohatamaṃ . . . vande sugataṃ</i> (Sv I 1; Ps I 1; Spk I 1; Mp I 1)	“I pay homage to (the One) whose heart is cooled by compassion, and whose darkness of ignorance has been destroyed by the light of wisdom . . .”
<i>Vinaya</i>	<i>Yo kappakoṭihipi appameyyaṃ / kālaṃ karonto atidukkarāni. / khedaṃ gato lokahitāya nātho, / namo mahākaruṇikassa tassa. (Sp I 1)</i>	“Let (my) homage be to the great-compassioned Patron, who got exhausted doing extremely difficult things for the well-being of the world, throughout (a period) immeasurable even by tens of millions of eons.”
<i>Abhidhamma</i>	<i>Karuṇā viya sattesu, paññā yassa mahesino / Ñeyyadhammesu sabbesu, pavattittha yathāruci. (As 1)</i>	“As on all beings his pity, rolled at will / The Sage’s insight through all knowable things.” (Tin 1)

The sub-commentator on the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* has noticed this phenomenon, and notes as follows:

*Bhagavato ca desanā vinayapiṭake karuṇāppadhānā, suttan-
tapīṭake paññākaruṇāppadhānā. Teneva ca kāraṇena vinaya-
piṭakassa saṃvaṇṇanaṃ karontena karuṇāppadhānā bhaga-
vato thomanā katā, āgamasamvaṇṇanañca karontena ubha-
yappadhānā, abhidhammadesanā pana paññāppadhānāti katvā
paññāppadhānameva thomanāṃ karonto “karuṇā viya sattesū”
ti karuṇaṃ upamābhāvena gahetvā paññāya thometi. (“Dhs-
mṭ” 2)*

The Buddha’s discourses are dominated by compassion in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, and by wisdom and compassion in the

Suttanta Piṭaka. For this reason, the Buddha's praise dominated by compassion is made by (the master) when (he) creates the commentary of *Vinaya Piṭaka*, and that dominated by both (compassion and wisdom) when (he) creates the commentary of *āgamas*. But the discourse of *Abhidhamma* is dominated by wisdom; accordingly, wishing to create a praise only dominated by wisdom, he takes the compassion as the standard of comparison as "like compassion on beings," and praises (the Buddha) with (the latter's) wisdom.

Even though the *Abhidhamma* sub-commentator may be right regarding his claim about the Buddha's different qualities getting manifest in different *piṭakas*, it does not necessarily mean that the difference in *piṭaka* domains must dictate how the Buddha is praised at the beginning of their respective commentaries. In fact, there are many commentaries in the *Khuddakanikāya* that do not follow this norm. However, this relationship among the respective praises of the Buddha in the introductory verses of the *nikāya*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidhamma* commentaries can be explained, if we maintain that they came from the same hands, i.e., from the same team in the same "grand project" of Mahāvihāra.

If my interpretation is correct, we can safely rule out the *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī*, the commentary on *Pātimokkha*, from Buddhaghosa's authorship, for even though this is a *Vinaya* commentary, the praise of the Buddha in its introductory verses, unlike in *Samantapāsādikā*, gives no emphasis to his compassion:

Buddhaṃ dhammañca saṅghaṇca vipasannena cetasā

Vanditvā vandanāmānapūjāsakkārahājanam (Kkh 1)

Having paid homage, with a clear mind, to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Order, which are the receptacle of homage, respect, devotion, and hospitality . . .

(Von Hinüber is also of the same opinion albeit based on different grounds [“Early” 426].)

Then, we can sum up Buddhaghosa’s works as the revised list shown in the table (5).

Table 5: The Revised List of Buddhaghosa’s Works

Commentaries to the <i>Vinaya Piṭaka</i>			Initiator
<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>	Com. to	<i>Vinaya</i>	Buddhasirī <i>Thera</i>
Commentaries to the <i>Sutta Piṭaka</i>			
<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsini</i>	„ „	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>	Dāṭhānāga <i>Saṅghatthera</i>
<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>	„ „	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>	Buddhamitta <i>Thera</i>
<i>Sāratthappakāsini</i>	„ „	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>	Jotipāla <i>Thera</i>
<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>	„ „	<i>Ānguttara Nikāya</i>	Jotipāla <i>Thera</i>
Commentaries to the <i>Abhidhamma Piṭaka</i>			
<i>Aṭṭhasālinī</i>	„ „	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>	Buddhaghosa <i>Bhikkhu</i>
<i>Sammohavinodanī</i>	„ „	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>	Buddhaghosa
<i>Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā</i>	„ „	Remaining 5 books	None

Conclusion

I have reassessed in this paper von Hinüber's theory on Buddhaghosa's authorship, and the evidence he has offered in support thereof. My approach is based upon three hypotheses:

1. That the so-called "Buddhaghosa colophons" have not come from Buddhaghosa's hands. Modern scholars hitherto have not been able to accept the mere presence of such a colophon in a given text as evidence of Buddhaghosa's authorship, hence all the research, including mine, on the question of which texts he has actually written. On the other hand, they have not gone to the length of claiming that all those colophons are later interpolations; I am the first researcher to make such a claim.
2. Without those colophons, all Buddhaghosa's works come to be anonymous. Why? Another hypothetical answer: it is probably because he wished to have all the intellectual credit and responsibility transferred to the contemporary Mahāvihāra community.
3. If Buddhaghosa chose to be anonymous, why has he carefully recorded his initiators's names? One more hypothetical answer: to seek their help in promoting his works.

Those hypotheses have little value in themselves; rather, their value lies in whether they can be used to explain the available historical data consistently and plausibly. It is up to other scholars to judge whether I have succeeded in my attempt to give such explanations.

As a result of this approach, I have arrived at a revised list of Buddhaghosa's works as given in the table (5), in which both the *Vinaya* commentary (Sp) and the *Abhidhamma* commentaries are confirmed as having come from Buddhaghosa's hands, whereas the *Kaṅkhāvitaraṇī* and some *Khuddaka-nikāya* commentaries have been ruled out.

Now readers may ask: what is so important about the question of Buddhaghosa's authorship? The identification of his works is important for the direction of further research in commentarial studies. For, we all know that Buddhaghosa chose certain texts over others to expound. His choices tell us his priorities, which can provide important insights into the Buddhist atmosphere of his times.

Take the *Dhammapada*, for instance. Nowadays, this is "one of the most popular texts of the THERAVĀDA canon" (Hinüber, "Dhammapada" 216). And it might have been as popular and important during Buddhaghosa's times, if the tradition is correct in asserting that the *Dhammapada* commentary has come from Buddhaghosa himself.

Both von Hinüber and myself have argued that Buddhaghosa is not the author of the *Dhammapada* commentary. If we are right, this leads to interesting research questions. Why did he pass over the *Dhammapada*? Because the text was not so important in his times? Or because it was viewed by his contemporary Buddhist world as too simple to warrant a serious Pāli commentary of its own? Such questions make sense only when the *Dhammapada* commentary has not come from Buddhaghosa.

The situation above is applicable to every commentary that Buddhaghosa chose not to write. A plausible identification of Buddhaghosa's actual works can really help if we wish to understand the Buddhist atmosphere of his times.

Appendices

1. Five Thousand Years of Buddhism

The relevant texts from Sp and Sv, and their translations are as follows.

Vassasahassanti cetam paṭisambhidāpabhedappattakhīṇāsava-vaseneva vuttaṃ. Tato pana uttarimpi sukkhavi-passakakhīṇāsavavasena vassasahassaṃ, anāgāmivasena vassasahassaṃ, sakadāgāmivasena vassasahassaṃ, sotāpannavasena vassasahassanti evaṃ pañcavassasahassāni paṭivedhasaddhammo ṭhassati. Pariyattidhammopi tāniyeva. Na hi pariyattiyā asati paṭivedho atthi, nāpi pariyattiyā sati paṭivedho na hoti; liṅgaṃ pana pariyattiyā antarahitāyapi ciraṃ pavattissatī. (Sp VI 1291)

This term *vassasahassaṃ* (“one thousand years”) is stated by virtue of *arahats* who have achieved various Analytical Insights (*paṭisambhidā*). In fact, the Holy Dhamma of Realization (*paṭivedhasaddhamma*) will remain one thousand years more by virtue of *arahats* having Dry Insight, one thousand year more by virtue of non-returners, one thousand years more by virtue of once-returners, and one thousand years more by virtue of stream-enterers. Thus the Holy Dhamma of Realization will survive for five thousand years altogether. The Holy Dhamma of Learning would also survive for those five thousand years, for there can be no realization if there is no learning. On the other hand, the (monastic) appearance would survive long after the learning has disappeared.

Setavattha-samaṇaka-vaṃso pana Kassapa-Buddha-kālato paṭṭhāya sāsanaṃ dhāretuṃ nāsakkhi. Paṭisambhidāppattehi vassa-sahassaṃ atṭhāsī, chaḷ-abhiññehi vassa-sahassaṃ, tevijjehi vassa-sahassaṃ, sukkha-vipassakehi vassa-sahassaṃ, pātimokkhena vassasahassaṃ atṭhāsī. (Sv III 899)

On the other hand, the lineage of semi-ascetics in white robes was not able to preserve the Teaching from the time

of Kassapa Buddha. (The Teaching) survived for one thousand years with those who have achieved Analytical Insights, one thousand years (more) with those who have six Supernormal Powers, one thousand years (more) with those who have Three Wisdoms, one thousand years (more) with those who have Dry Insight, and one thousand years (more) with the *Pātimokkha*.

Note: The very mention of Kassapa Buddha, and the usage of a past tense verb (*aṭṭhāsi*) seemingly show that the Sv exposition is about the teaching of Kassapa Buddha, not of our own. But the Sp-ṭ author, probably thinking that this classification of periods is applicable to our Buddha's Teaching too, has quoted this text together with other sources from *Suttanta* commentaries, so I have included it as well for the sake of completeness.

2. Seven Stages of the Decline of Buddhism

The relevant texts from Mp and Spk, and their translations are as follows.

Buddhānaṃ hi parinibbānato vassasahassam eva paṭisambhidā nibbattetuṃ sakkonti. Tato param cha abhiññā, tato tā pi asakkontā tisso vijjā nibbattenti. Gacchante gacchante kāle tā pi nibbattetuṃ asakkontā sukkhavipassakā honti. Eten' eva upāyena anāgāmino sakadāgāmino sotapannā ti. (Mp I 87)

Indeed, after the *parinibbāna* of Buddhas, (people) can achieve Analytical Insights only for one thousand years. After that, only Six Supernormal Powers. After that, not being able even to achieve those, (they) achieve Three Wisdoms. As the time goes on, not being able even to

achieve those, (they) become (*arahats*) having Dry Insight. In the same manner, (they become) non-returners, once-returners, and stream-enterers.

Paṭhamabodhiyaṃ hi bhikkhū paṭisambhidā-ppattā ahesuṃ. Atha kāle gacchante paṭisambhidā pāpuṇituṃ na sakkhiṃsu. Chaḷabhiññā ahesuṃ: tato cha abhiññā pattuṃ asakkontā tisso vijjā pāpuṇiṃsu. Idāni kāle gacchante tisso vijjā pāpuṇituṃ asakkontā āsava-kkhaya-mattaṃ pāpuṇissanti. Tam pi asakkontā anāgāmi-phalaṃ: tam pi asakkontā sakadāgāmi-phalaṃ: tam pi asakkontā sotāpatti-phalaṃ: gacchante kāle sotāpatti-phalaṃ pi pattuṃ na sakkhissanti. (Spk II 202)

Indeed, during the *paṭhamabodhi* (“first *bodhi*”) period, monks achieved Analytical Insights. Afterward, as the time went on (they) were not able to achieve Analytical Insights. (They) came to have six Supernormal Powers. Afterward, not being able to achieve six Supernormal Powers, they achieved Three Wisdoms. Now, as the times goes on, not being able to achieve Three Wisdoms, (they) will achieve mere exhaustion of taints. Not being able (to achieve) even that, (they will achieve) Non-Returner Fruition; not being able (to achieve) even that, (they will achieve) Once-Returner Fruition; not being able (to achieve) even that, (they will achieve) Stream-Entry Fruition. As the time goes on, (they) will not be able to achieve even Stream-Entry Fruition.

The “first *bodhi* period” herein can be interpreted as the period of twenty years after the Buddha’s enlightenment if we draw from the following commentarial statements:

*bhagavato hi paṭhamabodhiyaṃ vīsativassantare nibaddhupaṭ-
ṭhāko nāma natthi* (Sp I 178 “There is no permanent at-
tendant during the First *Bodhi* of the Buddha, i.e., during
twenty years.”)

*tasmā amhākampi bhagavā paṭhamabodhiyaṃ vīsativassa-
mattameva idaṃ ovādapātimokkhaṃ uddisi.* (I 187 “Therefore
our own Buddha also recited the *Pātimokkha* of Instruction
during the First *Bodhi*, i.e., only for twenty years.”)

*bhagavato kira paṭhamabodhiyaṃ vīsati vassāni bhikkhū cit-
taṃ ārādhayiṃsu.* (I 213 “It is said that monks pleased the
Buddha’s mind during the First *Bodhi*, i.e., for twenty
years.”)

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