

Sri Lanka International Journal of Buddhist Studies (SIJBS)
Volume V (2019), ISSN- 20128878

**A Brief Introduction to the Date and the Authorship
of the *Atthasālinī* (Part I)**

S. Vijitha Kumara

Chief Editor: Iromi Ariyaratne



Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy (SIBA)
Pallekele, Kundasale

A Brief Introduction to the Date and the Authorship of the *Atthasālinī* (Part I)

S. Vijitha Kumara

Proposition

“The foregoing notes may prove useful when the times are ready for a full inquiry into the history of the Buddhist Commentaries.”

- C. A. F. Rhys Davids, (Dhamma-Sangani – xxiv.)

[This article brings forward only a brief discussion on the date and authorship of the *Atthasālinī*. In fact, the research is still going on and all the findings in the part II are expected to be published. I intend to address by this short article, “what” and “when” only, not “why” and “how”]

Abstract

The historical records have entrusted the commentary of the *Dhammasaṅgānī* *Atthasālinī* (henceforth AS) to the commentator Buddhaghosa and it is believed that it was compiled in India. Particularly, the AS itself, the *Gandhavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* ensure that the author of the AS was Buddhaghosa. However, the inside facts of the text unanimously lead to the suspicion of the authorship and the place of its compilation. Particularly, the AS discloses only reference speaking of Ceylon. The above fact could lead to affirm the view that the AS was compiled in India. Similarly, the references to other commentaries in the AS conducive further to raise doubts on the date and the authorship of it. Especially, this paper aims to widely inquire the aspect of the historical records as well as varied views of the modern scholarship.

Keywords: Buddhaghosa, *Atthasālinī*, Authorship

Introduction

The AS,¹ the commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgānī*, is known as the initial compilation of Buddhaghosa. Particularly, the established view is that it was written by him before his arrival in Ceylon. In this regard, the historical records such as the *Mahāvaṃsa*,² the *Gandhavaṃsa*³ and the AS⁴ itself insist the Buddhaghosa’s authorship. However, the researchers are invariably suspicious of the date, place where the text was compiled and the authentic authorship of the AS. In this respect, the interior facts of the text also unanimously affirm that the incertitude of the authorship and the place of compiling the AS could be justifiable.

The only reference to Ceylon found in the AS itself, except the historical records, might perhaps be the reason to grip a view that it was compiled in India. Besides, the references to other commentaries that we come across in the AS also lead to uphold doubts on the date and the authorship of the text. Therefore, it would be more constructive to review the literature carefully.

Literature Review

After analyzing the historical records and the facts in the text itself, Prof. Norman notes “*The Mahāvamsa states that Buddhaghosa wrote the Atthasālinī in India, before going to Ceylon. If this was so, then he must have re-written it there, because he refers to commentarial material from the Mahāvihāra.*”⁵ Hinüber, in this same connection, suggests “*Because of the introductory verses it was difficult, however, to ascribe this text directly to him. Consequently he could have written only some sort of first edition and requested someone else to write an updated version.*”⁶ B. C. Law without hesitation admits that the AS was a work of Buddhaghosa.⁷ Though Law recognizes that the text contains references to the *Visuddhimagga* (vism), *Samantapāsādikā* (Sp) and *Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā* (Vib-a), he has not pursued analyzing the facts thoroughly.⁸ Editing the AS and publishing it as a Sinhalese script, Yagirala Paññānanda thera suggests that it was composed by Buddhaghosa.⁹ Nevertheless, after scrutinizing the references to the other commentaries encountered in the AS, Ven. Yagirala Paññānanda firmly says that it was compiled in Ceylon.¹⁰ Tin, who translated the AS to English does not try to offer in the least a viewpoint of his own but claims that he agrees with all the points Mrs Rhys Davids has discussed in her translation of the Dhammasaṅghani.¹¹ In fact, Mrs. Davids has widely studied the historical background of the AS and presented some important evidence primarily based on the internal facts which have no correspondence with historical records.¹² Apart from the above views, Prof. Endo pointing out the rejection of a teaching of Mahasivatthera, presents a different opinion that there was a Sinhalese AS.¹³

Discussion

The significance of Norman’s view is that he critically takes into account the commentarial materials relating to the Mahāvihāra found in the AS. As I understand, the argument that he has presented does not fortify his conclusion inasmuch as it is disputable on the ground of the solid evidence to the effect that even southern Indians had the source materials that the Mahāvihārians had in Anuradhapura.¹⁴ Probably, Norman’s view that the AS was re-written by Buddhaghosa is acceptable though the basis he applied in his argument is disputable. My dissent against Prof. Hinüber is based on the suggestion he presented: “Consequently he could have written only some sort of first edition and requested someone else to write an updated version.” However, Law presents a few important points relating to the AS that may have a bearing on a rectification of views about the date and the authorship of the text. The earliest study on the authorship and the date of the AS was by Mrs. Davids and she disagreed to the existed historical records by bringing out 18 factors.¹⁵ The commentator of the AS used to refer to “*aṭṭhakathāyaṃ*” and “*aṭṭhakathā*” throughout the text and the scholars infer that by using “*aṭṭhakathāyaṃ*” he might have referred to the great commentary (*Mahāṭṭhakathā*).¹⁶ In addition to that, he from time to time has cited the varied interpretations of the other commentators (*aṭṭhakathācariyā*).¹⁷ These factors perhaps led to motivate Prof. Norman to present an argument that the commentator had followed the materials of the Mahāvihāra and consequently this

was re-written in Ceylon. In other words, he thinks that if Buddhaghosa wrote it while staying in India, it is impossible to refer to the source materials of Mahāvihāra. However, I do not agree that southern Indians did face any difficulty to use the commentarial materials of Mahāvihāra because there were three Sinhalese temples and Sinhalese monks who migrated from Ceylon to India and dwelt there with the source material brought by them, especially, in the time of King VattagāmiṇīAbhaya when a severe drought took place.¹⁸

Which commentaries have referred to the AS?

The other most interesting fact we found in the AS is the references to the Vism,¹⁹Sp²⁰ and Vib-a.²¹ If the Vism was written by Buddhaghosa after his arrival in Ceylon, how did he refer to the Vism in the AS, which was compiled in India? Hence, this time gap testifies that the AS was compiled in India and later on revised in Ceylon. The view of Yagiralapaññānandathera that the AS was completely written in Ceylon, takes less validity here, because Dhammapāla, who compiled early commentaries also has referred to the AS in his works. Similarly, Buddhadatta in his Bv-a also has referred to the AS. And the other most interesting thing is a reference to the AS found in the Sp, which was compiled by Buddhaghosa even after the Vism. It means that the AS was both an early and later work to Sp. Thus, it is obvious that complicated facts are there to be analyzed before coming to a conclusion. The references to the AS found in the Nett-a are also relevant to infer that the AS was written at a time later than that of the Nett-a.²² Moreover, a reference to the AS is found even in the Sn-a.²³ Besides, the commentary of the *Apadāna*²⁴ and the *Cariyāpiṭaka*²⁵ also referred to the AS and so that, they too would be earlier than the AS. Taking into account the facts alleged above, it is unjustifiable to conclude with certainty which commentaries were later or earlier to the AS because the serious issue here is that while the AS quotes the Sp, the Sp also quotes the AS. In that case, to adduce a clear cut suggestion, it is necessary to study the content, context and the purpose of citing while comparing the language style and contexts of different commentaries.

The monks' names found in the AS

Though the author has referred to Ceylon only once by name, analyzing the names of the monks that we come across in the AS, it is plausible to say that more than 80% of them may have been from Ceylon. Except Nāgasena and Assagutta almost all the other monks lived in Ceylon.

Indian	Sri Lankan	Unclear
Assagutta ²⁶	Tipitakacūlanāga ²⁷	Dattābhaya ²⁸
Nāgasena ²⁹	Tipitakamahādhammarakkhita ³⁰	Mahāsaṅgharakkhitatthero ³¹
	Tissabhūti ³²	
	Mahāgatigamiyatissadattatthero ³³	
	Mahātissatthero ³⁴	
	Mahādattatthero ³⁵	
	Mahāsīvatthero ³⁶	
	Rakkhita ³⁷	
	Sumanadevatthero ³⁸	
	Mahānāgatthero ³⁹	

As the above facts reveal, the view that the AS lacks references to Ceylon is a fallacy. While a few doubts still remain, the only point that is conclusive is that the AS was a re-written commentary. Yet, the view that the author was the same Buddhaghosa or someone else (as Hinüber suggested) should be explicated by a deep analysis of the language and the content of the AS.

Possibility for a Sinhalese AS

The first scholar who presented this viewpoint was Prof. Endo in his *Studies on Pali Commentaries*.⁴⁰ He, referring to a note of a sub commentary (abhidhammatthavikāsinī), as the *tīkā* has rejected the view of the elder Mahāsīva, infers that there was a Sinhalese AS in Anuradhapura. Further, he suggests that the Sinhalese AS was developed with amendments up to 2 century AD.⁴¹ In this circumstance, yet a few questions are to be raised such as whether it was followed by Buddhaghosa earlier or later. Or, did he compile his first version without following the SAS? Then is it possible that he himself understood the deficiencies of explanations or disagreed with views in his early version and decided to revise? However, the elements that Prof. Endo has pointed out could be further expanded in order to come out with credible information as to why the AS was re-written.

Conclusion

Particularly, the Sp and AS referred to each other, while the Ap-a, Nett-a, Sn-a, Bv-a, and Nidd-a refer to the AS. Hence, it would be reasonable to concede that the AS was a re-written or revised commentary. Under such circumstances, it could be concluded that the current interpretations should further be revised in order to find

out a true date and authorship of the AS. The full research outcomes will answer to the aforementioned points comprehensively.

Acknowledgements

Hereby, I would like to thank Dr. Waruni Thennakoon and anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback on an early draft of this article.

Abbreviations

Ap-a	<i>Apadāna-aṭṭhakathā</i>
AS	<i>Atthasālinī</i>
Bv-a	<i>Buddhavaṃsa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Cp-a	<i>Cariyāpiṭaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
It-a	<i>Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā</i>
JPTS	Journal of Pali Text Society
Mhv	<i>Mahāvamsa</i>
My	Myanmar
Nett-a	<i>Nettipakaraṇa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Nidd-a	<i>Niddesa-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Sn-a	<i>Suttanipāta-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Spk	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>
Vib-a	<i>Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

References

- Adikaram, E. W. (1946) *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. Ceylon: Migoda.
- Apte, V.S. (1965) *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. Delhi.
- Barua, D. L. (1979) *Cariyapitaka-aṭṭhakathā*. ed. London: Pali Text Society.
- Bose, M. M. (1977) *Itivuttaka-aṭṭhakathā*. ed. vol.I and II. London: Pali Text Society,
- Buddhadatta, A. P. (1960) *PaliSahitya*. Vol.I and II. Ceylon,
- Cone, M. (2001) *Dictionary of Pāli*. vol I. Oxford.
- De Silva, L. (1970) *Dighanikaya-aṭṭhakathā-ṭīkā-Līnatthavaṇṇanā*.ed. III vols., London: Pali Text Society.
- Endo, T. (2013) *Studies in Pali Commentarial Literature*, Hong Kong:Centre for Buddhist Studies.

- Geiger, W. (1921) *Culavaṃsa*. ed. II vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- (1930) *Culavaṃsa*. trans. London: Pali Text Society.
- (1908) *Mahavaṃsa*. ed. London: Pali Text Society.
- (1934) *Mahavaṃsa*. trans. London: Pali Text Society.
- Hazra, K. L. (1994) *Pali Literature and Language*. vol.I and II. Delhi.
- (1991) *Studies on the Pali Commentaries*. Delhi.
- Horner, I. B. (1946) *Buddhavaṃsaatṭhakathā (Maduratthavilāsini)*. ed. London: Pali Text Society.
- Law, B. C. (1933) *History of Pali literature*. vols. II. London.
- Malalasekera, G. P. (1983) *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*. vol. I-II. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Minayeff, I. P. (1886) *Gandhavaṃsa* . ed. Journal of the Pali Text Society. London: Pali Text Society, 54-81
- Monier Williams, M. (2005) *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. 4thed. New Delhi: Motilal Banarshidass Publishers.
- Mullar, E. (1979) *Atthasālinī*. ed. London: Pali Text Society.
- Norman, K. R. (1983) *Pali Literature*. Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz.
- Pannakitti, H. (2003) *Palisahityaye Itihasaya*. trans. Colombo: S. Godage.
- Rhys Davids, C. A. F. (1975) *Visuddhimagga*. ed. London: Pali Text Society.
- Rhys Davids, T. W. and Stede, W. (1993) *Pali-English Dictionary*. eds. London: Pali Text Society.
- Rhys Davids, T. W., and Carpenter, J. E. (1968) *Dīghanikāyaatṭhakathā (Sumaṅgalavilāsini)*. ed. vols. I-III. London: Pali Text Society.
- Sree Padma A. W. B. (2008) *Buddhism in the Krishna River Valley of Andhra*. New York: State University.
- Vipassana Research Institute. *Uttaravinicchaya*. CSCD.
- Von Hinuber, O. (1996) *A Hand Book of Pali Literature*. New York: Walter Gruyter.
- Walleser, M. and Kopp, H. (1967) *Aṅguttaranikāyaatṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇī)*. eds. vols. I. London: Pali Text Society.
- Woods, J. H., Kosambi, D. and Horner, I. B. (1976-1979) *Majjhimanikāyaatṭhakathā (Papañcasūdanī)*. eds. vols. I-III. London: Pali Text Society.
- Woodward, F. L. (1977) *Samyuttanikāyaatṭhakathā (Sāratthapakāsini)*. ed. vols. I-III. London: Pali Text Society.

--- (1977) *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*.ed. London: Pali Text Society

End Notes

- ¹ “attha” means “meaning” (artha>attha). Nevertheless, According to some of commentaries, “attha” means “the commentaries” and Dhamma means “the Buddhavacana” (*Atthañcadhammañcapaṭibāhantītisuggahitasuttantānaṃatthañcapāḷiñcapaṭibāhanti*, M. Walleser, & H. Kopp, (1967) *Āṅuttaranikāyaatṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇī)*. eds. vols. II. (London: Pali Text Society, 1967) 143. Did Buddhaghosa strive to elaborate or make shine the commentaries (attha)? Or did he comment on the Buddhavacana? This point should be studied with the support of semantic of ‘sālinī’. Sālinī in Sanskrit means “shining”, (Endowed with, Possessed of, possessing, shining or resplendent with- Practical Dictionary – 915p). So, “attha” here, might give the meaning of “the Dhamma” [Atthasālinī itself defines “*Dhammotitanti. Atthotitassāyevattho*” E. Mullar, *Atthasālinī*. ed. (London: Pali Text Society, 1979) 22] Thus, it cannot be taken in that the “attha” implies merely “meaning”. It is the meaning of the Dhamma or Buddhavacana. Therefore, this could be translated as “Master of the Buddhavacana.” Also, the Atthasālinī, Paṭisambhidā commentary and Sammohavinodanī define the “attha” to be “causality-hetuphala[*Tatthaatthotisañkhepatohetuphalaṃ*.-Vibh-a]. In this manner, the translation would be “the master of the causality”. Moreover, other commentaries give other varied definition on the “attha”. As they have defined, “attha” means that which possessed of five facts: paccayasamuppannaṃ, nibbānaṃ, bhāsitattho, vipāko, kiriyā [*Pabhedatopanayaṃkiñcipaccayasamuppannaṃ, nibbānaṃ, bhāsitattho, vipāko, kiriyātiimepañcadhammāatthotiveditabbā*, A. P. Buddhadatta, *Vibhaṅgaatṭhakathā*, ed. (London: Pali Text Society, 1980) 386] is the attha. The text Atthasālinī also contain all above five facts in the structure. As the commentaries have explained, these five are the detailed facts of the causality. In this sense, I suggest that “the master of the causality” would be the most appropriate translation of the Atthasālinī.
- ² *Tatthaññodayaṃnāma - katvāpakaraṇaṃtadā*
Dhammasaṅgaṇīyā ’kāsi - kacchaṃ so aṭṭhasāliniṃ.Mhv 37:225
- ³ I. P. Minayeff, (1886) *Gandhavaṃsa*. ed. JPTS. (London: Pali Text Society, 1886) P. 59
- ⁴ *mahāvihāravasīnaṃ vaṃsālañkārabhūtenavipulavisuddhabuddhinā buddhaghosotigarūhigahitanāmadheyenatherenakatāyayaṃ aṭṭhasālinīnāmadhammasaṅgahaṭṭhakathā*. E. Mullar, (1979) 430
- ⁵ K. R. Norman, *Pali Literature*. (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz, 1983) 120
- ⁶ O. von Hinuber, *A Hand Book of Pali Literature*. (New York: Walter Gruyter, 1996) 151
- ⁷ Buddhaghosa wrote a commentary on the Dhammasangani known as the Atthasālinī, B. C. Law, *History of Pali literature*. vols. II. (London, 1933) 468
- ⁸ An examination of the Atthasālinī shows that it was composed after the Samantapasadika to which it refers in pages 97 and 98 of the P.T.S. edition., *ibid*, 471
- ⁹ *Aññāsambahūnanaṃatṭhakathānivaimissāatthasālinīyā pi kattāsabbatthavissutayasoghosaōcariyobuddhaghosovahoti*. Y. Paññānandathera, *Dhammasaṅgaṇippakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*. ed. (Colombo: Hewawitarana Publishers, 1940) iii
- ¹⁰ *Tattoniṭṭhātragantabbātenācariyenanijaraṭṭhevasatāatthasālinīnakatāticalaṅkāḍipamāgammavisuddhimaggacānātoparamevakatātivāti*. *Ibid*. v
- ¹¹ Maun Tin, *The Expositor*, Trans. (London: Pali Text Society 1920) xiv
- ¹² C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *A Manual of Buddhist Ethics (Dhammasaṅgani)*. Trans. (London: Royal Asiatic Society 1900) xx-xxvi
- ¹³ T. Endo, (2013) *Studies in Pali Commentarial Literature*, (Hong Kong: Centre for Buddhist Studies 2013) 27
- ¹⁴ As the historical texts recorded, at the time of a severe drought that took place in the 1st century AD in Ceylon, some group of monks have brought the porāṇaṭṭhakathā to India. The inscription found at Sri Parvata in Andhra also confirms that there were three Sinhalese monasteries in Andhra after Amaravati period. S. Vijitha Kumara, *A Chronological Approach to the Pali Commentaries*, SIJBS, (Kandy: SIBA 2015) 47
- ¹⁵ C. A. F. Rhys Davids, (1900) xxiii-xxiv

- ¹⁶ “*Vuttañhetamaṭṭhakathāyaṃ*” Muller (1979) 108/ “*Avicāritametamaṭṭhakathāyaṃ*.” Ibid. 113/“*Aṭṭhakathāyaṃpana - ākāsegacchatomahāsakuṇassaubhoḥi*...ibid. 115”
- ¹⁷ “*Aṭṭhakathācariyāpanāhu – nāḷiyāminamānoviya*” ibid. 123 See the same statement of the Patisambhida “*nāḷiyāminamānoviya.Pati-a*, 85
- ¹⁸ See the foot note 14
- ¹⁹ *Visuddhimaggepanidaṃ, yasmāsabbaṃpakāsitaṃ. E. Muller (1979) 2/ Ayametthasaṅkhepo. Viṭṭhāropana visuddhimaggevuṭṭana yenevaveditaṃbo* ibid. 168.
/bhāvanāvidhānaṃsabbamaṭṭhakathānāyenaḡahetvāvisuddhimaggeviṭṭhāritaṃ ibid.
/Tesaṃviṭṭhārakathāvisuddhimaggevuṭṭāyeva ibid 186.
- ²⁰ *Viṭṭhāropanasamantapāsādikāyaṃ* ibid. 98
- ²¹ *Sabbākāreṇaṃpanesavibhaṅgaṭṭhakathāyaṃāvibhaviṣṣati* ibid 368
- ²² *Idaṃanuppādeñāntiīdhāpīpūbbevuttanāyenevaarahattaphalañāṇavasenaatthoyjetabbo. Aṭṭhasāliniyaṃpana ‘khayeñāṇamkilesakkhayakareariyamaggeñāntivuttam. Vipassana Research Institute.CSCD.Netti-a My 69/ Hadayaṃāhaccatiṭṭhantīticittassaabbhantarasaṅkhātamaḡhadayaṃāhantvātiṭṭhanti. Tathā hi vuttamaṭṭhasāliniyaṃ ‘abbhantaraṭṭthenahadaya’nti. 201 Yathāvuṭṭāsupanadāvisupaṭipadāsuoyāyākāyacinīyāti, ayaṃvipaṇcitanāṇṇītiayametthaadhippāyo. Yasmāpanaṃaṭṭhasāliniyaṃ) paṭipadācalatīnīvicāraṇāyaṃ ‘calatī’tivuttam, tasmāekassapipuggalassajhānantaramaggaṇaresupaṭipadābhedoicchitovāti. Ibid. 206*
- ²³ *Yathāha – ‘paṭhamajjhānaṃupasampajjaviharatiṭṭhuppannaṃdukkhindriyaṃaparisesaṃnirujjhatī’tiādi. Taṃsabbamaṭṭhasāliniyādhamaṃsaṅgahaṭṭhakathāyaṃvuttam. H. Smith, (1966). Sutta-nipata-atthakatha. ed. Vol. I (London:Pali Text Society 1966)120/ Tenavuttam – ‘sabbenalokenaavirujjhamāno’ti. Ayametthasaṅkhepo, viṭṭhāreṇapanametṭādikathāaṭṭhasāliniyādhamaṃsaṅgahaṭṭhakathāyaṃvuttā. Ibid, 128*
- ²⁴ *Yathāha – ‘paṭhamajjhānaṃupasampajjaviharatiṭṭhuppannaṃdukkhindriyaṃaparisesaṃnirujjhatī’tiādika ṃsabbamaṭṭhasāliniyādhamaṃsaṅgahaṭṭhakathāyaṃvuttam. C. E. Godakumbura, (1988), Apadānaaṭṭhakathā, ed. (London: Pali Text Society, 1988) 194/ Tenavuttam – ‘sabbenalokenaavirujjhamāno’ti. Ayametthasaṅkhepo, viṭṭhāropanametṭādikathāaṭṭhasāliniyādhamaṃsaṅgahaṭṭhakathāyaṃvuttā. Sesaṃvuttasadisamevāti. Ibid. 200*
- ²⁵ *Atthikehibuddhavaṃsatogahetabbo. Yopicethavattabokathāmaggo, sopiṭṭhasāliniyādhamaṃsaṅgahaṇṇanāyajāṭṭhakaṭṭhakathāyacavuttanāyenevaveditaṃbo. D. L. Barua,Cariyapitakaṭṭhakathā. ed. (London: Pali Text Society, 1979)15*
- ²⁶ E. Mullar, (1979) 419
- ²⁷ Ibid 229, 284, 230, 267
- ²⁸ Ibid 268
- ²⁹ Ibid 114, 119, 120,127, 142,
- ³⁰ Ibid 267
- ³¹ Ibid 268
- ³² Ibid 30
- ³³ Ibid 12
- ³⁴ Ibid 116,200,
- ³⁵ Ibid 267
- ³⁶ Ibid 221,266,405
- ³⁷ Ibid 187
- ³⁸ Ibid 31
- ³⁹ Ibid 399
- ⁴⁰ T. Endo, (2013) 27-28
- ⁴¹ Ibid 28