ARTICLES

Scriptural Authenticity and the Śrāvaka Schools: An Essay towards an Indian Perspective

PETER SKILLING

> The statement that is meaningful
> Relevant to the practice of dharma
> That destroys the defilements of the three realms
> And that reveals the advantages of Peace (*nirvāṇa*):
> That is the Sage's statement.
> Anything else is not.
> Maitreya, *Ratnagotravibhāga*[1]

I. *Touchstones of Authenticity*

THE QUESTION of scriptural authenticity with regard to the Śrāvaka schools in India is very different from that beyond the subcontinent. In China and Tibet, the decisive determinant was whether or not a text had been translated from an Indian or Indic original (leaving aside here the possible definitions of India, Indian, or Indic, a Camelot which in the Chinese

[1] Ratnagotravibhāga, chap. 5, v. 18 (Prasad 1991, p. 185): *yad arthavad dharmapadopasaṃhitaṃ, tridhātusaṃkleśanibarhaṇaṃ vacaḥ, bhavec ca yac chānty anuśaṃsadarśakaṃ, tad uktam ārṣaṃ viparītam anyathā* (Vaṃsasthavila meter). Both *arthavat* and *dharmopasaṃhita* evoke an ancient pairing of *artha* and *dharma* in the *Āgama* traditions (for example, in connection with speech, at *Udānavarga*, chap. 24, vv. 1–2). The verse recapitulates a celebrated paragraph of the *Adhyāśayasaṃcodana*; Prajñākaramati cites the two together, first the *sūtra*, then the verse: Vaidya 1960b, p. 204.19.

and Tibetan *imaginaires* meant an ideal Madhyadeśa).[2] That is, authenticity depends upon source language and origins. Did a text have an Indian original? Was it transmitted from India to China or Tibet? Or was it an imposter, a native in Indian garb, a faux-immigrant? The question was one of ancestry, of genealogy, and not content or thought—although these certainly could and did enter into the debate.

What were the criteria of authenticity in India? In our investigation, we do not have much to go on. We have no ancient (or even mediæval) Indian *sūtra* catalogues, no correspondence or diaries, no specificities whatsoever which might expose the historical underpinnings of the ideology of authenticity—or rather ideologies, given the intricacy of the family tree(s) of Indian Buddhism. The question must be asked for each of the (conventionally counted) eighteen *nikāya*s, each of which transmitted its own scriptures.[3] What was authentic to one lineage might not have been so for another, a point cogently drawn by Vasubandhu in his *Vyākhyāyukti*.[4] This itself is significant: there can be no simple or single answer to our question.

The sources that we do have are scholastic, and decidedly partisan. Early witnesses to the philosophical ferment of the second and first centuries BCE are the Mahāvihārin *Kathāvatthu*, preserved in Pāli; the first two chapters of the Sarvāstivādin *Vijñānakāya*, preserved in Chinese translation (*Apidamo shishen zu lun* 阿毘達磨識身足論, T no. 1539);[5] and the "Pudgalavādin"

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[2] For the question of scriptural authenticity in China, see Kuo 2000 and the collection of essays in Buswell 1990. In Tibet, the question usually centers on the status of certain *tantra*s; it is embroiled in the rivalry of lineages and schools, and further complicated by the tradition of "treasure texts" (*gter ma*)—all far beyond the scope of this paper.

[3] A *nikāya* was primarily a *vinaya* or monastic ordination lineage, and hence is best rendered as "order." But the orders also transmitted ideas, tenets, and practices, and thus they were also "schools." They were not "sects" in the usual senses of the word in English, and it is important to remember that *nikāya*s were *monastic* lineages, rather than lay communities. The relations between the ancient *nikāya*s and their lay supporters, and to society in general, remain to be seriously investigated. In the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* (p. 3.13) the terms *nikāya*, *ācariyavāda*, and *ācariyakula* are treated as synonymous: *sabbe va aṭṭhārasa ācariyavādā dutiye vassasate uppannā. aṭṭhārasanikāyā ti pi aṭṭhārasācariyakulānī ti pi etesaṃ yeva nāmaṃ*. Cf. also *Aṭṭhasālinī*, p. 2.3, *nikāyantara*.

[4] See, for example, Lee 2001, pp. 227–29.

[5] Recently, the first known Sanskrit fragment of the *Vijñānakāya* has been identified: see Wille 2000, § 1869, p. 61. On the Chinese translation of the *Vijñānakāya*, see La Vallée Poussin 1925a, vol. 1, pp. 343–76; La Vallée Poussin 1971, pp. xxxiii–xxxvi; Willemen, Dessein and Cox 1998, pp. 197–205; Watanabe 1983, chap. 11; Potter et al. 1996, pp. 367–74 (on p. 367 there is a memorable misprint in the title of La Vallée Poussin's article [in addition to a forgettable one]).

*Saṃmitinikāya-śāstra (Sanmidibu lun 三弥底部論, T. no. 1649), also preserved in Chinese.[6] These are compendia of formal dialogic debates which record competing ideas and measure them against the words of the Buddha. The question is not the authenticity of buddhavacana—and hence the compendia already go beyond the range of the four mahāpadeśa (to be mentioned below)—but the appropriateness of ideas or views. Final authority lies in the word of the Buddha; a tenet is defeated if it contradicts the sūtra. From the time of the treatises on, the principle of "contradiction of sūtra" (sūtravirodha) is regularly invoked in debate.

The Kathāvatthu itself does not ascribe the theories that it raises to any school or individual—for that we must turn to the commentary, the Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā. Was this silence simply a matter of politesse? In much later periods, authors observed a kind of decorum through which opponents were not named, and alternate or opposing views were introduced anonymously with statements like "some assert" (keci vadanti) or "others would have it" (aññe icchanti). If the Kathāvatthu must be studied in tandem with its commentary, we must be careful to remember that the latter was written four or five centuries later in a quite different intellectual and geographical milieu.[7]

[6] See Thích Thiên Châu 1999, pp. 99–117. To these sources we may now add the "Spitzer manuscript" and Gāndhārī scroll BL 28 (Franco 2004 and Cox 2010). These and other emerging sources demand a complete reformulation of the study of the evolution and interaction of the early Buddhist schools.

[7] Caution is urged by Frauwallner (1995, pp. 86–87): "A close examination should be made of the attribution of the controversial doctrines to the various schools. The commentary in which it is contained dates from a late period. It is also hard to believe that the transmission regarding the original opponents of the polemic was preserved over the centuries out of antiquarian interest. It is perfectly conceivable, indeed perhaps even likely, that the individual polemics were later related to contemporary schools. This still needs to be clarified."

Caution is always appropriate when using commentaries, but perhaps Frauwallner exaggerates the problem. By the time the commentary was written, some of the schools may have been extinct, and their positions and tenets no longer living options. In the Sarvāstivādin śāstra literature, where the evolution of ideas is somewhat clearer due to the wealth of relatively dateable texts, we see that the same arguments are rehearsed for centuries. We might suspect that the debates became internalized, indeed ossified, within the school, and that the refutations were not for the benefit of the perpetually misguided opponents, but for the members of the school, to reassure themselves that their own positions were correct. But by "members," I refer only to those monastics who engaged in scholarly pursuits, and not to the general monastic membership. These were not dogmas to which the laity or even the monks and nuns were obliged to adhere, but rather the deliberations of influential scholastics. Some mediæval Indian debates are enacted to this day in the courtyards of Tibetan monasteries.

The accessible *Vibhāṣā* literature consists of three texts, or recensions, preserved only in Chinese (that is, no Sanskrit versions or Tibetan translations survive).[8] The *Vibhāṣā*s are treasuries of views, citations, and debates. Proponents and opponents are often identified, and the arguments can be quite elaborate. There are also doxographic compendia of tenets, preserved in Chinese and Tibetan, such as the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (Ch. *Yibu zonglun lun* 異部宗輪論, Tib. *Gźuṅ lugs kyi bye brag bkod pa'i 'khor lo*, P no. 5639) by Vasumitra (second century CE?), the oldest such work to survive.[9] Later examples are a section of the fourth chapter of Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvālā*, which circulated independently under the title *Nikāyabheda vibhaṅgavyākhyāna* (Tib. *Sde pa tha dad par byed pa daṅ rnam par bśad pa*, P no. 5640, sixth century?),[10] and the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra-nikāyabhedopadarśanasaṃgraha* (Tib. *Gźuṅ tha dad pa rim par klag pa'i 'khor lo las sde pa tha dad pa bstan pa bsdus pa źes bya ba*, P no. 5641) of Vinītadeva (eighth century). These compendia describe the evolution of the Buddhist schools and inventory their characteristic views; no attempt is made to refute or deny the views in question. I am not convinced that we understand the purpose of these texts. Were they reference works, simple doxographies? Were they crammers for monastic courses on comparative Buddhism? Or were they handbooks for training in debate?[11]

Several studies have examined the question of authenticity within Indian Buddhism on the normative level, using a set of criteria shared by the early Buddhist *saṃgha*s. These are the *mahāpadeśa* or "great authorities." These criteria glimpse back at the age of oral transmission and the formative period of the scriptural collections.[12] The relevance and meaning of the criteria would have changed after the compilation and writing down of the distinct scriptural collections of the different schools—that is, by the first century BCE to the first centuries CE. Nonetheless, the *mahāpadeśa* have continued to be applied in the scrutiny of ideas or texts in exegesis or debate, from the time of the *Nettipakaraṇa* (early centuries CE?) to that of

[8] For the *Vibhāṣā* literature, see Willemen, Dessein, and Cox 1998, pp. 229–39, and Potter 1996, pp. 511–68.

[9] See Lamotte 1958, pp. 301–2: the earliest of three Chinese translations dates to between 385 and 413.

[10] See now Eckel 2008, pp. 113–26 (translation), 309–19 (Tibetan text).

[11] A rich doxographic literature, based upon and elaborated from Indian exemplars, developed in Tibet. See, for example, Mimaki 1982 and Hopkins 1996.

[12] The classical study remains Lamotte 1947 (English translation by Boin-Webb [1983–84]). See also Lamotte 1949 (English translation by Boin-Webb [1985]). More recently, see Lopez 1988, pp. 1–10, and Davidson 1990. See also An 2002, pp. 55–66.

Vasubandhu and Buddhaghosa (fourth–fifth centuries?) to that of Haribhadra (ninth century) and Prajñākaramati (fl. second half of the tenth century), up to the present.[13]

Since the late nineteenth century, Western scholars have tended to use the Pāli scriptures as the touchstone of authenticity. This is problematic. The idea that Pāli texts are the oldest and most authentic is modern; it is a product of Western philological and text-comparative methodologies. The claims put forward by the Mahāvihāra in texts composed in Sri Lanka (the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Aṭṭhakathā*s) follow a different logic, which one might describe as genealogical: the Mahāvihāra is the original, unsullied *vinaya* lineage and as such it possesses, inherently and by right, the true texts.[14] The common contemporary designation of Theravāda as the oldest school, as the sole representative of "original," "primitive" or "early" Buddhism is not pertinent to the concept of authenticity from the viewpoint of the North Indian schools. The Mahāvihāra's claims do not directly impinge on the self-representation of the North Indian schools, for whom the Sthaviras, insofar as they were known at all, were only one of eighteen schools, and not, apparently, an especially prominent one.[15] But the claims, ideas, and evolution of the Mahāvihāra school are certainly relevant to the textual and intellectual history of Indian Buddhism, and this essay examines some

[13] Hardy 1961, pp. 21–22; *Vyākhyāyukti* (Lee 2001, p. 228); *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Wogihara 1973, p. 402.1); *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Vaidya 1960b, p. 205.2). For further references, see Lamotte 1958, pp. 180–81; Jaini 1977, pp. 22–28.

[14] I prefer the term "Mahāvihāra" to "Theravāda." In the vast oceans of Buddhist scriptures, including those composed in Pāli, and including chronicles and inscriptions, the term Theravāda is a rather rare fish. The school that we know today, which performs its rites and liturgies in a language which has come to be called Pāli, was codified primarily by Buddhaghosa in fifth-century Sri Lanka at the Mahāvihāra. The opening stanzas of the Pāli commentaries—the defining texts of the tradition—identify themselves as representing Mahāvihāra thought; Buddhaghosa states further that his selective translations and reworkings of the old Sinhala commentaries do not contradict the tenets of the Theras, and that they illuminate the lineage or heritage of the Theras (*samayaṃ avilomento therānaṃ theravaṃsappadīpānaṃ*: preamble to his commentaries on *Dīgha-*, *Majjhima-*, *Saṃyutta-*, and *Aṅguttara-nikāya*s). That is, "Theravāda" and "Mahāvihāra" are not coterminous. Neither term denotes a constant or monolithic tradition; see especially Endo 2003, Endo 2008, Endo 2009 for the intricacies of the Indian–Sīhala-Pāli conundrums.

Furthermore, we know very little about the traditions of the other branches of Sri Lankan Theravāda—the Abhayagiri and Jetavanīya schools—and the relations between the Sri Lankan Theravāda and the Vibhajyavāda of the mainland remain obscure. For the latter, see Cousins 2001. The Gāndhārī equivalent of Vibhajjavāda (Vivarjavada) occurs in the polemical manuscript BL 28: Cox 2010.

[15] For the problem of the presence and identity of the Indian Sthaviras, see Skilling 1993.

of these ideas in comparison with those of the great Northern school, the Sarvāstivāda.

Modern scholarship has also addressed the question of authenticity with regard to the Śrāvaka schools and the Mahāyāna, almost inevitably with the received idea that "Śrāvaka" (or "Hīnayāna") equals "Theravāda," and that the Pāli texts must necessarily be older and more complete. The situation was, however, much more complex. Neither Śrāvakayāna nor Mahāyāna was a monolith. The Mahāvihāra was only one agent among many, and most of the important Mahāyāna *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s predate the defining literature of the Mahāvihāra—the works of the prolific Buddhaghosa—by centuries. The Mahāyāna was a dynamic interplay of competing streams of thought: the history of Indian Buddhism was never a simple, two-way contest. Not only must we consider the relations between the various schools and the Mahāyāna on the level of ideas, we must remember that the monastics who practised Mahāyāna took Śrāvaka vows, and shared the same monasteries with their fellow ordinands. Above all, we should not forget that those who practised Mahāyāna accepted the Śrāvaka *Piṭaka*s. They followed one or the other *vinaya*, they studied and recited *sūtra*s, and they studied the *abhidharma*. They did not reject the Śrāvaka *Piṭaka*s: they were the word of the Buddha. The differences lay in questions of interpretation and emphasis, of ontology and epistemology—the subtleties of *neyārtha* and *nītārtha*, of *yathāruta*, *abhisaṃdhi* and *abhiprāya*, of *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha*.[16]

II. *Authority and Language*

I do not mean to imply that language has no bearing upon the problem of authenticity in India. To do so would be absurd—language and interpretations of language are, one might suggest, natural troublemakers. The point is that, in South Asia, language(s) played roles quite different from that which it (they) played in China or Tibet. Lamotte counts "the formation of Buddhist languages" as one of the two most remarkable accomplishments of Buddhist monastics during the three centuries leading up to the Christian Era (the second is "the progress in Abhidharma").[17] His evaluation seems all the more pertinent in the light of the new varieties of Buddhist Sanskrit evident in the manuscripts of the Schøyen Collection and the revelations of the riches of Buddhist Gāndhārī literature.[18]

[16] See Ruegg 1989.

[17] Lamotte 1958, pp. 606–7 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 548–49).

[18] For the continually expanding horizons of Gāndhārī literature, see Allon 2008, Salomon 2003, von Hinüber 2003, Salomon 2006, Strauch 2008.

In both textual transmission and ritual practice (performance of *karmavākya*), language mattered. The (probably) eighth-century North Indian scholar Śākyaprabha (representing a Sarvāstivādin tradition) and the later Tibetan polymaths Bu-ston (1290–1364) and Tāranātha (1575–1635) hold that the use of regional dialects affected the transmission of the *buddhavacana* from an early date, starting from the second century after the Parinirvāṇa, and that this led to the birth of the various schools.[19] According to the (probably) eighth-century *vinaya* specialist Vinītadeva, the eighteen orders arose from distinctions in region (*deśa*), interpretation (*artha*), and teachers (*ācārya*).[20] Does this mean that there were eighteen different languages? Given that most of the collections are lost, it is impossible to count the languages used. By the beginning of the Christian Era, the register of languages already went far beyond the four Indic languages of the North to be listed below. The Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya*s and the *Vibhāṣā*s relate how the Buddha explained the Four Truths of the Noble to each of the Four Great Kings in his own language, bringing each one to realize the state of stream-enterer.[21] Two of the languages were Āryan, and two non-Indo-European: a Dravidian language and Mleccha—the myth indicates the wide sweep of the North Indian Buddhist linguistic imagination. By the eleventh century, taking into account dialects, vernaculars, translations, and archaic and later forms of languages, the statement made in the *Vimalaprabhā Laghukālacakratantrarājā-ṭīkā* that "even 96 languages are said to be found in Buddhist texts" may not have been far off.[22] As Lamotte remarks, "Exaggerations and anachronisms apart, the *Vimalaprabhā* at least has the merit of drawing attention to the multiplicity of Buddhist languages, and this is confirmed by manuscripts found in Central Asia."[23]

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[19] For Śākyaprabha, see Obermiller 1931–32, part 2, p. 98; Vogel 1985, p. 106 (*skad tha dad kyis 'don pas*); for Bu-ston, see Obermiller 1931–32, part 2, p. 96; Vogel 1985, p. 105; Yuyama 1980, p. 177. For Tāranātha, see Schiefner 1868, p. 42.2; Schiefner 1869, p. 52; Chattopadhyaya 1980, p. 81.

[20] "*Samayabhedoparacanacakra-nikāyabhedopadarśanasaṃgraha*" (Gshung tha dad pa rim par klag pa'i 'khor lo las sde pa tha dad pa bstan pa bsdus pa), P vol. 127, no. 5641, folio 187b7: *yul don slob dpon bye brag gis, tha dad rnam pa bco brgyad gsuṅs*.

[21] See Lamotte 1958, pp. 608–9 and *Hôbôgirin*, s.v. "*butsugo*" (vol. 3, pp. 207–9). Also relevant to the Buddha's speech is *Hôbôgirin*, s.v. "*button*" (vol. 3, pp. 215–17).

[22] von Hinüber 1989, p. 361. The reference is to Shāstri 1917, p. 77.

[23] Lamotte 1958, p. 614 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 556). In the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, the early translator Dharmarakṣa is said to have studied and mastered thirty-six languages. This may be a figure of speech, a stock Chinese phrase, but it underlines the importance of linguistic skills (see Shih 1968, p. 34).

The language used by an order or school was a key component of the package that constituted its identity.[24] By the mediæval period, North Indian tradition described what we now might call "monastic Buddhism" in terms of "the four *nikāya*s," which subsumed the eighteen *bheda*s.[25] These were:[26]

> Sarvāstivāda, who used Sanskrit;
> Mahāsāṃghika, who used Prakrit;
> Sāṃmitīya, who used Apabhraṃśa;[27]
> Sthavira, who used Paiśācī.

In the latter part of the seventh century, Yijing 義浄 (635–713) reported that:

> As for the division into various Nikāyas (schools), according to the Western (Indian) tradition, there are only four great systems. With regard to their appearance and disappearance, and the diversity of their names, there is no agreement on such matters.[28] . . . Thus it is that in the five parts of India and in the islands in the South Seas, four Nikāyas are spoken of everywhere.[29]

Each of the four schools had its own collections of scriptures.[30] A stereotyped description listed some of their distinctive features in addition to language: caste, style of robe, etc. These are deemed to mark the identity of the four *nikāya*s, but there is no hard corroborative evidence for the latter features. The fourfold classification had circulated widely, largely in the North, by the second half of the first millennium, probably in Mūlasarvāstivādin circles; its origins need further research. The classification completely

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[24] For "the Buddhist languages" see Lamotte 1958, pp. 607–57 and von Hinüber 1989, passim.

[25] It seems that *nikāya* meant the mainstream school, *bheda* its divisions.

[26] All sources agree that the Sarvāstivāda, the school that concerns us here, employed Sanskrit. See Yuyama 1980, pp. 175–81; Vogel 1985; Ruegg 1985. For further details see Skilling forthcoming (b).

[27] For a note on the language of the Sāṃmitīyas, see Thích Thiên Châu 1999, pp. 31–32, and, more recently, Hanisch 2006. It is likely that, in these sources, Apabhraṃśa refers to an earlier Prakrit, an "imperfect" language (compared to the perfect language, Sanskrit) rather than the later Indian dialect.

[28] We might reflect on this when, one thousand three hundred years later, we set out in quest of absolute answers.

[29] Lamotte 1958, p. 601 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 544).

[30] See, e.g., Yijing's brief description of the scriptures of the four schools at Lamotte 1958, pp. 601–2 (translation, Lamotte 1988, pp. 544–45), and, for the schools in general, Lamotte 1958, p. 164ff. (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 150ff.) For the *Tripiṭaka* of the Sāṃmitīyas, see Thích Thiên Châu 1999, pp. 18–31.

ignores Gāndhārī as a *nikāya* language, along with the Dharmaguptakas or related schools of the Northwest, for which we have increasing early evidence in the form of inscriptions and, especially, Kharoṣṭhī birch-bark scrolls. Does this suggest that the Gāndhārī traditions had already waned, or that they had died out by the time the fourfold grouping was codified? Or is it simply a question of geographical prejudice—for the schools of Madhyadeśa—or of ignorance?

The texts available to us do not make any judgments regarding authenticity on the basis of language or any other factor. Can it be that, at that time, the schools had been assimilated by the Mūlasarvāstivāda? Was the interpretation of the term Mūlasarvāstivāda as "Sarvāstivāda, the root of all Buddhist schools" simply a strategy, a claim, with no historical reality?[31] Or was it—at least in the great Northern monasteries—a fact, accepted by the surviving schools? Did competition continue until the demise of monastic Buddhism, or was there accommodation and cooperation?

It is noteworthy that of the Indo-Nepalese manuscripts available today, only those of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins specify their school and language.[32] No other Indic Buddhist manuscript, whether *sūtra*, *vinaya*, or *abhidharma*, saw fit to supply this information (the same is true for the Pāli manuscripts of Sri Lanka and South-East Asia). When we describe the Sanskrit *vinaya* recovered from Gilgit as "the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya*," or the Turfan manuscripts as "Sarvāstivādin," we should remember that we are voicing hypotheses. The manuscripts do not identify themselves, and it might be safer to speak of manuscripts by their find-spots or present locations: as the "Gilgit *vinaya*," etc. Only certain translations into Tibetan or Chinese specify the school of the text. To what degree are modern conclusions regarding the school affiliation of texts based on secondary literary and epigraphical evidence? To what degree do they correspond to genuine textual identities?

There is no question that partisans of the Mahāyāna had a flexible attitude towards the use of language. For a bodhisattva, "skill in the analytical knowledge of languages" (*niruktipratisaṃvid*) is the ability to explain the Dharma in every conceivable language. The *Akṣayamatinirdeśa* explains:

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[31] I refer here to the conclusions of Enomoto Fumio (a theory first published in Japanese as Enomoto 1998): "the word 'Mūlasarvāstivādin' does not refer to a branch/offshoot of 'Sarvāstivādin' nor a sect independent from 'Sarvāstivādin'" (Enomoto 2000, p. 248). Rather, the name Mūlasarvāstivādin was used by Sarvāstivādins to claim (ahistorically) that they were the "root" of all other *nikāya*s; that is, it is a self-representation asserted at a certain point in the history of the school, and nothing else: see Enomoto 2000. For evaluations of Enomoto 2000, see Skilling 2002 and Wynne 2008.

[32] See Roth 1985 and de Jong 1985.

> Herein, what is *niruktipratisaṃvid*? It is understanding the lan-
> guage of all sentient beings, that is, understanding the language of
> gods, the language of *nāga*s, the language of *yakṣa*s, of *gandhar-
> va*s, *asura*s, *garuḍa*s, *kiṃnara*s, *mahoraga*s, humans, and non-
> humans. In sum, insofar as there is language, words, speech, ways
> of speech, expression, convention, linguistic practice of beings
> born in the five destinies, he understands them all. Understanding
> them, with these or those words, with these or those expressions,
> he teaches the Dharma to these or those beings in accordance
> with their speech. This is *niruktipratisaṃvid*.[33]

Mahāyāna *śāstrakāra*s—Candrakīrti and Śāntideva, for example—cite
texts in various forms of Buddhist Sanskrit. Śāntideva and the author of
the commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* cite brief excerpts in Pāli—or a
language very close to what we now call Pāli—from texts that are unknown
to the Mahāvihāra collections available today. Linguistic variety was an
accepted reality.

III. *Māgadhī: The Root-Language*

> Someone who is born in an uninhabited great wilderness, where no one speaks to him,
> will on his own naturally speak nothing but the language of Magadha. In hell, in the
> animal world, in the *peta* realm, in the world of men, in the world of gods, the language
> of Magadha is pre-eminent. . . . When the correctly and fully awakened Buddha deliv-
> ered the texts of the *buddhavacana* of the *Tipiṭaka*, he delivered them in the language
> of Magadha alone. Why? Because this made it easy to communicate the meaning.
>   Buddhaghosa, *Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā*[34]

Language looms large in Mahāvihāra definitions of canonicity, and a theory
promoted in the works of Buddhaghosa asserts not only that Pāli equals

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[33] *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* (Braarvig 1993, vol. 1, p. 112): *de la ṅes pa'i tshig so so yaṅ
dag par rig pa gaṅ źe na? gaṅ sems can thams cad kyi skad la 'jug pa śes pa ste: lha'i skad
daṅ, klu'i skad daṅ, gnod sbyin gyi skad daṅ, dri za daṅ, lha ma yin daṅ, nam mkha' ldiṅ
daṅ, mi' am ci daṅ, lto 'phye chen po daṅ, mi daṅ, mi ma yin pa'i skad la 'jug pa ste, mdor
na ji sñed du 'gro bar lṅar skyes pa'i sems can rnams kyi skad daṅ, sgra daṅ, dbyaṅs daṅ,
tshig gi lam daṅ, ṅes pa'i tshig daṅ, brda' daṅ, spyod pa 'ji sñed pa, de dag thams cad rab
tu śes te. śes nas kyaṅ sgra de daṅ de dag daṅ, ṅes pa'i tshig de daṅ de dag gis sems can de
daṅ de dag la sgra ji lta ba bźin du 'jug pas chos ston te. 'di ni ṅes pa'i tshig so so yaṅ dag
par rig pa źes bya'o*. For translation and commentary, see Braarvig 1993, vol. 2, pp. 431–32.
See also Pagel 1995, p. 363; *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* (Lévi 1907–11, vol. 1, chap. 18, v. 34,
p. 139.1: *tṛtīye vākye pratyekaṃ janapadeṣu yā bhāṣā*).

[34] *Vibhaṅga-aṭṭhakathā*, pp. 387.33–388.8: *yo pi agāmake mahā-araññe nibbatto, yat-
tha añño kathento nāma natthi, so pi attano dhammatāya vacanaṃ samuṭṭhāpento*

Māgadhī, the language spoken by the Buddha, but that it is the root-language (*mūlabhāsā*)—the natural language, the root of all languages. Such a claim appears to be unique in Buddhist tradition to the Mahāvihāra, or more accurately to Buddhaghosa (and it certainly runs against the sentiment of the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa*). What inspired it? Does it seek to counter Brahmanical assertions about the status of Sanskrit,[35] or to counter Jaina theories about Ardhamāgadhī?[36] Or is it a dialogue with other Buddhist schools?[37] Buddhaghosa, who in the fifth century spearheaded the movement to privilege "Māgadhī" over all other languages, gives several reasons for translating (or rather rewriting) the commentaries into Māgadhī.

Before looking at Buddhaghosa's explanations, we should note another concept unique to the Mahāvihāra: that in addition to the *buddhavacana*, the commentaries were recited at the three Councils, and that these were brought to Lanka by the *arhat* Mahinda, the son of Aśoka. The idea that commentaries also deserve the seal of authenticity of the early councils has not been traced in any of the Indian schools, and even the term "*aṭṭhakathā*" (or its hypothetical Sanskrit equivalent, **arthakathā*) is so far unattested outside of the Mahāvihāra tradition. Sanskrit commentaries, described variously as *ṭīkā*, *vyākhyā*, *vyākhyāna*, *vivaraṇa*, etc., are ascribed to historical authors who lived after the death of the Tathāgata.

Buddhaghosa presents the conceptual lineage of the commentaries in the verse preambles to his great commentaries on the four main *sūtra* collections:

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māgadhabhāsam eva bhāsissati. niraye tiracchānayoniyaṃ pettivisaye manussaloke devaloke ti sabbattha māgadhabhāsā va ussannā . . . sammāsambuddho pi tepiṭakaṃ buddhavacanaṃ tantiṃ āropento māgadhabhāsāya eva āropesi. kasmā. evaṃ hi atthaṃ āharituṃ sukhaṃ hoti. Cf. also *Mohavicchedanī Abhidhammamātikā-aṭṭhavaṇṇanā*, p. 186.11: *sabhāvaniruttī ti ca māgadhikā bhāsā.*

[35] In the Spitzer manuscript, "the truthfulness of the Buddha's word" is questioned because of the fact that it is in Prakrit (*prākṛtatvād anṛtam buddhavacanam*). The text is fragmentary, but "the argument obviously presupposes that one can speak correctly and truthfully only in Sanskrit" (Franco 2004, p. 93). The context is not clear to me, but the opponent seems to be brahmanical rather than Buddhist.

[36] For a Śvetāmbara description of Mahāvīra's preaching, see Lalwani 1988, pp. 177–79. For aspects of Jaina attitudes to language, see Granoff 1991; Dundas 1992, pp. 60–61; and Dundas 1996. The Jaina theories, including the Digambara *divyadhvani* theory, do not provide direct parallels to the *mūlabhāsā* theory (see Dundas 1996, pp. 140–42).

[37] Surviving North Indian Buddhist literature does not seem to be aware of the *mūlabhāsā* theory.

> At [the] First [Council], the five hundred *arhat*s
> Recited the commentaries to illuminate the meaning.
> Later [at the Second and Third Councils], they were recited again.
> Brought to the Isle of the Sīhalas by the *arhat* Mahāmahinda
> They were translated into the Sīhala language for the benefit of
> the islanders.[38]

Thus the first stage was to make the commentaries—which had been imported from India and were recited in Māgadhī (remember that at this stage transmission was oral)—available to the inhabitants. The next stage, over five hundred years later, was to translate them back into Māgadhī from written sources. Why was this necessary?

Buddhaghosa's preamble continues:

> Then I, rendering them from Sinhala into the delightful language,
> Following the principles of the scriptures, without fault,
> Not contradicting the tenets of the Elders, illuminators of the
> Elders' lineage,
> Whose interpretations are meticulous, the residents of the Great
> Monastery,
> Eliminating repetitions, will illuminate the meaning
> For the satisfaction of good people and for the long life of the
> Dhamma.[39]

Here, the great scholar does not name the language into which he has rendered the commentaries, but he does give two reasons why he has done this: to please good people, and to preserve the teachings. Both of these are universal motivations for the production of Buddhist literature, anywhere and at any time, and hence they do not tell us much. In the verse preamble to his commentary on the *vinaya*, however, Buddhaghosa is more specific:

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[38] *Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 1, p. 1, vv. 6–7: *atthappakāsanatthaṃ aṭṭhakathā ādito vasisatehi, pañcahi yā saṃgītā anusaṃgītā ca pacchā pi. sīhaladīpaṃ pana ābhatātha vasinā mahāmahindena, ṭhapitā sīhalabhāsāya dīpavāsinaṃ atthāya*. The same verses are given at the beginning of the *Majjhima-*, *Saṃyutta-*, and *Aṅguttara-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*s. For a translation from the *Majjhimanikāya-aṭṭhakathā*, see Jayawickrama 2003, pp. 73–74. For the "introductory sections" in general, see Endo 2009.

[39] *Dīghanikāya-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 1, p. 1, vv. 8–10: *apanetvā tato'haṃ sīhalabhāsaṃ manoramaṃ bhāsaṃ, tantinayānucchavikaṃ āropento vigatadosaṃ. samayaṃ avilomento therānaṃ theravaṃsappadīpānaṃ, sunipuṇaviniccayānaṃ mahāvihārādhivāsinaṃ. hitvā punappunāgataṃ atthaṃ atthaṃ pakāsayissāmi, sujanassa ca tuṭṭhatthaṃ ciraṭṭhitatthañ ca dhammassa*. The same verses are given at the beginning of the *Majjhima-*, *Saṃyutta-*, and *Aṅguttara-nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*s.

> Owing to the fact that the hermeneutic tradition [of the Mahāvihāra]
> Has been composed in the language of the Isle of Sīhala
> The meaning is not accessible
> To communities of monks in other lands.
> Therefore, I now undertake this exegesis
> Which accords with the principles of the Canon.[40]

That is, the production of the Pāli commentaries, a massive project, was undertaken with a view to making the Mahāvihāra tradition available internationally, though what "communities of monks in other lands" Buddhaghosa had in mind remains unknown.[41] More work is needed to understand the social and historical factors that drove this ideological expansion. If Buddhaghosa came from India to Sri Lanka, as tradition has it, it was international to begin with, and if some commentaries were written by natives or residents of South India (Dhammapāla in Badaratittha, for example), the movement seems to represent a revival, a renaissance of the Mahāvihāra—but the degree to which it was an innovation in the name of a revered institution remains to be seriously investigated. In any case, the adherents of the Mahāvihāra certainly succeeded in realizing some of the goals stated by Buddhaghosa. Good people as well as scholars (the two terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive) enjoy the satisfaction of reading texts in Pāli, which have been well-preserved, and the Mahāvihāra tradition, long established in Sri Lanka and South-East Asia, is growing in Nepal and India, and it is evolving in the West, where "Theravāda Buddhism" competes with "Tibetan Buddhism," "Zen," and other Buddhisms in the global market of religions. Today, the Pāli language is studied academically beyond its traditional "homelands" of Sri Lanka and South-East Asia—in India, Nepal,

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[40] Jayawickrama 1962, p. 136, vv. 8–9: *saṃvaṇṇanā sīhaladīpakena, vākyena esā pana saṅkhaṭattā, na kiñci atthaṃ abhisambhuṇāti, dīpantare bhikkhujanassa yasmā, tasmā imaṃ pālinayānurūpaṃ, saṃvaṇṇanaṃ dāni samārabhissaṃ* (for Jayawickrama's translation, see Jayawickrama 1962, p. 2).

[41] It is appropriate to note here that in India and abroad numerous monasteries proudly bore the epithet "Mahāvihāra," as is known from epigraphy and historical records, and that such monasteries might belong to any school, or might be shared by several schools (as, for example, Nālandā Mahāvihāra). In Sri Lanka, the great Mahāvihāra of the early Anurādhapura period was the center of scholastic and educational traditions that spread beyond the island. In later periods, after the decline of Anurādhapura, several monasteries bore the name Mahāvihāra. The significance of this in relation to Mahāvihāra as an ideal lineage remains to be determined. For the idea of Mahāvihāra in China and Japan, see *Hôbôgirin*, s.v. "Daiji" 大寺 (vol. 6, pp. 679–711).

China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, often as part of an impetus towards "Early Buddhism." These accomplishments are remarkable, especially when we consider that the other seventeen schools eventually died out (with the exception of the Sarvāstivādin and Dharmaguptaka *vinaya* lineages, still active in Tibet and East Asia, respectively).

The concern to promote Pāli was largely, I believe, monastic: to firmly establish a coherent body of texts for the maintenance and expansion of the *vinaya* lineage. If it is true that "a later *Vinaya* regulation . . . specifies that legal transactions of the Order had to be performed in correctly pronounced Pāli to be valid,"[42] it is only natural, if not inevitable, that this should be the case for a single monastic lineage, in this case, that of the Mahāvihāra. Communal rites and recitations have to be performed in a single language. As in a formal meeting anywhere, members must agree on a common language, common rules, and common procedures. There is nothing mystical about this; it is a matter of survival.

But does this mean that Mahāvihārins rejected other *vinaya* traditions entirely? Or did they recognize the validity of other lineages who recited texts in other languages, and accept them as fellow, at times rival, organizations? Our understanding of *nikāya* to *nikāya* relations and exchanges in India is, to put it mildly, inadequate. We know that, at least at Nālandā, different *nikāya*s lived side by side, but questions remain: did the members of the different orders follow a common curriculum? Did they perform *saṃghakarma* together? But if so, how? Did each active *nikāya* have its own ritual space (*sīma*)? Was there tension and conflict, and if so, over what ideas or practices?[43]

In the verse preamble to the *Jātaka* commentary, the author (*the* or *a* Buddhaghosa according to later tradition) states that he was requested to compose the work by three monks: Atthadassī, Buddhamitta, and Buddhadeva. He describes Buddhamitta as "peaceful in mind, wise, belonging to the Mahiṃsāsaka-vaṃsa, and adept in principles of exegesis."[44] The author belongs to the Mahāvihāra, but describes Buddhamitta with respect. Can the author's use of the term *vaṃsa* for the Mahiṃsaka tradition have any significance? Can it imply acceptance of the order as a valid lineage going back to the Buddha?

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[42] Collins 1998, p. 48. For a succinct summary of Theravādin attitudes to language, see pp. 46–50.

[43] One relevant conflict is mentioned below, the problem of an ordained monastic paying homage to a lay bodhisattva.

[44] *Jātaka*, vol. 1, p. 1, vv. 8cd–9ab: *tath' eva buddhamittena santacittena viññunā, mahiṃsāsakavaṃsamhi sambhūtena nayaññunā*.

Whatever the case, for the Mahāvihāra, Pāli was the ultimate language. Buddhaghosa's "*mūlabhāsā* ideology" contrasts with the more natural attitude towards language presented in North Indian texts that are affiliated with Sarvāstivādin and Vaibhāṣika thought, which recognize the role of language in the evolution of Buddhist literature, and seem to regard it in a positive light.

IV. *Authority and Authorship*

The Great Śramaṇa Gautama, the Lion of the Śākyas, the Ten-Powered One, travelled and taught in the region of Magadha for forty-five years. His life was devoted to teaching, "for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans." This teaching was entirely oral, through discussion, debate, and sermon, and it spread by word of mouth for several centuries and over a vast area. The Sage of the Śākyas never took stylus, brush or pen in hand, but hundreds of thousands of pages have been written, calligraphed, and printed in his name.

How should we—limiting ourselves to the Śrāvaka texts—conceive the question of authorship? The *Tripiṭaka*s are the collective work of teams of editors or *saṅgītikāra*s (known in Pāli by the same name or as *dhammasaṃgāhaka*).[45] It was the *saṃgītikāra*s who supplied the setting and connecting narrative, and their contributions to the formation of the *Tipiṭaka*s are explicitly acknowledged by tradition, for example in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya* and in the Mahāvihāra commentaries. The stratigraphy of the editorial process can sometimes be distinguished, for example in the *Lalitavistara*, where there are abrupt changes of voice, or in the *Mahāvastu*, with its duplicated and interrupted texts. The *Tripiṭaka*s are certified as genuine *buddhavacana* because they have been passed down through a succession of communal recitations (*saṅgīti*s). The *saṃgīti* is the pedigree of the *Tripiṭaka*s.

The fact that the narrative was produced by *saṃgītikāra*s did not diminish its authority. On the one hand, the narrative was the vessel for the precious *buddhavacana*; on the other, the *saṃgītikāra*s who participated in the earliest councils were believed to be all *arhat*s. That is, the product—the Buddha's words—was packaged by an elect elite (and further guaranteed by their *praṇidhijñāna*). What could be more authoritative? The whole text, the *buddhavacana* in its narrative setting, was imbued with power and came to be recited to bring blessings, prosperity, and protection.

[45] See Skilling 2009.

The *saṃgha*s were never regulated by a central authority, and as they spread throughout the subcontinent and beyond, new texts were produced and claims of scriptural authenticity multiplied. Questions of authority and authorship already surface in canonical collections, for example in the *Anāgatabhaya-sutra*. In the Pāli version, the Buddha warns of five "future perils, not yet arisen, which will come to be in the future."[46] The fourth peril concerns monks "who have not cultivated the body; who have not cultivated morality; who have not cultivated the mind; who have not cultivated wisdom" (*abhāvitakāyā abhāvitasīlā abhāvitacittā abhāvitapaññā*). "When *sutta*s expounded by the Tathāgata, profound and of deep significance, transcending the world, dealing with emptiness are recited, they will not want to listen; they will not lend an ear or take interest, and will not think to retain or fulfill such teachings" (*ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsitā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatāpaṭisaṃyuttā tesu bhaññamānesu na sussusissanti na sotaṃ odahissanti na aññācittaṃ upaṭṭhapessanti, na ca te dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti*). Instead, they will be interested in "*sutta*s composed by poets—verses intricately worded and elegantly phrased—that belong to outsiders, that are spoken by auditors" (*ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittakkharā cittavyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsitā*).[47]

In an early Mahāyāna *samādhi sūtra*, the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (hereafter *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sūtra*), the Buddha speaks about "beings who do not wish to hear this *samādhi*, and who will reject this *samādhi*" [6B].[48] He warns of future monks and bodhisattvas "who have not cultivated the body; who have not cultivated the mind; who have not cultivated morality; who have not cultivated wisdom" and who are, among other things, "frightened by the exposition of empti-

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[46] *Aṅguttaranikāya*, vol. 3, pp. 106–8.

[47] Parallel phrases occur at the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, vol. 1, pp. 72.26, 73.8, and the *Saṃyuttanikāya*, vol. 2, p. 267.6. A Sanskrit parallel from a list of sounds or topics to which a disciple of the Buddha abstains from listening in the Gilgit *vinaya* (Gnoli 1978, p. 235.18) is *kavatīkāveye citrākṣare citrapadavyañjane*. See also the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Dutt 1934, p. 158.4–5: *naitat tathāgatenārhatā samyaksambuddhena bhāṣitam iti kavikṛtāny etāni kāvyāni naitāni śrotavyāni*) and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya 1960a, p. 163.29–30: *yad etat tvayedānīṃ śrutam, naitad buddhavacanam. kavikṛtaṃ kāvyam etat. yat punar idam ahaṃ bhāṣe, etad buddhabhāṣitam, etad buddhavacanam iti*).

[48] Harrison 1978 and Harrison 1990. References in brackets are to the sections of Harrison's edition and translation. I describe the text as "early" because of the "early" Chinese translation by Lokakṣema, but the distinction is somewhat arbitrary. For "*samādhi sūtra*s," see Skilling 2010, especially pp. 216–17.

ness."[49] When the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sūtra* is being expounded, they "will not give ear to it or listen to it, will not have faith in it, nor accept, master, keep, or read it" [6D]. They will deride and denounce it, saying, "*sūtra*s like this are fabrications, they are poetic inventions; they were not spoken by the Buddha" [6E], or the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sūtra* is "something which was not spoken by the Buddha, which is a poetic invention of their own fabrication, a conglomeration of words and syllables[50] uttered merely in conversation"[6H].

If it is clear that the two texts draw upon a common phraseological source, it is equally evident that they apply the phraseology to their own ends. Buddhaghosa's interpretation, oddly enough, takes the passage to refer to texts that are not Buddhist at all: he interprets *bāhirakā* as "set up outside the *sāsana*" and *sāvakabhāsitā* as "spoken by disciples of outsiders."[51] I am not certain what he intends by this. The concepts of "outside" (*bahiddhā*) and "outsider" (*bāhiraka*)—rhetorical devices of exclusion, figures of alienation—in early Buddhist texts merit examination, but this lies beyond the agenda of this over-inflated article. Remembering that the pronouncement is a prediction, one might interpret "*sutta*s expounded by the Tathāgata" as the texts of one's own *Tripiṭaka*—for Buddhaghosa, the Mahāvihāra canon—and the "*sutta*s composed by poets" as the "fabrications" of other Śrāvaka schools and of the Mahāyāna. In the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sūtra*, it is a Mahāyāna tract—the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sūtra* itself —that is authentic, but its authenticity is challenged by ill-trained "monks and bodhisattvas."[52]

[49] The trope of the "fear of emptiness" has a long history, and its evolution merits scrutiny. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (chap. 9, v. 41), a rhetorical opponent of the Mahāyāna questions the usefulness of the teaching of emptiness: it is the realization of the Four Truths of the Noble that leads to liberation—what use is emptiness?

[50] *Tshig* and *yi ge sna tshogs pa*. Cf. the *citrākṣare citrapadavyañjane* of the Gilgit and the *cittakkharā cittavyañjanā* of the Pāli phraseology.

[51] *Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 3, p. 272.16–17: *bāhirakā ti sāsanato bahiddhā ṭhitā sāvakabhāsitā ti bāhirasāvakehi bhāsitā*. In the Mahāvihāra tradition, the trope of non-Buddhists, in this case the *titthiya* or *añña-titthiya*, is brought in to explain the state of the *saṃgha* that led to the convocation of the Third Council. This simply doesn't work, with the result that the account of the council is exceptionally weak. It is interesting that the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* exposes the fallacy of such a trope in its defense of the Mahāyāna: can this show an awareness, if not of the relevant Mahāvihāra texts (the *Mahāyāna-Sūtralaṃkāra* is, after all, older than the Pāli *Aṭṭhakathā*) but of the use of this argument by opponents of the Mahāyāna? For the argument, see Davidson 1990, p. 309.

[52] That the *sūtra* is questioned not only by monks in general but also by bodhisattvas is intriguing. It seems to lift the debate beyond a simple Śrāvakayāna/Bodhisattvayāna conflict.

The idea of future threats to the Śāsana was an enduring concern, mentioned as early as the Bairāṭ-Calcutta (or Bhābrā) inscription of Aśoka. The *Mahāyāna-sūtralaṃkāra* invokes the Buddha's predictions of future perils in its defence of the Mahāyāna: "If [the Mahāyāna] were to arise in the future as a threat to the Saddharma . . . why did the Blessed One not predict this from the start, as [he did for] the future perils?"[53] The argument rests on the idea that the Buddha would have foreseen and predicted the arising of *Mahāyāna*, had this been a real danger—therefore, since he did not, Mahāyāna thought and practice are not threats to the "established order" of Buddhism. What are we to make, then, of the Blessed One's prediction in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, that in future his profound *sūtra*s would be ignored in favor of later literary compositions? This is clearly an anticipation—we can interpret "predictions" as statements of contemporary concerns—of the problem posed by "non-authentic" texts, but, as we have seen, in the absence of any central authority, the trope could be, and was, exploited to differing ends. The *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* argument seems to explicitly ignore, or to deny, any identification of the future threats with the Mahāyāna.

V. *Vasubandhu and the Varieties of Textual Expression*

> The Eye of the World—the Teacher—has closed;
> Most of those who saw him with their own eyes have died.
> Sloppy thinkers, unscrupulous, who have not seen the truth
> Have left the *śāsana* in turmoil.
> Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośa*[54]

Modern scholarship has often assumed that the canonical *sūtra* literature of the various Śrāvaka schools should be broadly similar. Did not the influential schools—Sarvāstivāda, Theravāda, Mahāsāṃghika, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka—construct their collections according to similar principles? By length (*Dīrgha-*, *Madhyama-*), by subject or theme (*Saṃyukta-*), by numerical classification (*Ekottarika-*), and by genre (verse, *jātaka*, narrative)?[55] Do not the schools share many of the same *sūtra*s? The *Saṃgīti-*

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[53] *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (Lévi 1907–11, vol. 1, p. 3), chap. 1, v. 7: *ādāvavyākaraṇāt yady etat saddharmāntarāyi(!) paścāt kenāpyupāditaṃ, kasmād ādāu bhagavatā na vyākṛtam anāgatabhayavat.* See Davidson 1990, p. 309. The argument is repeated in the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*: see La Vallée Poussin 1928, pp. 176–77.

[54] Abhidharmakośa, chap. 8, v. 41: *nimīlite śāstari lokacakṣuṣi, kṣayaṃ gate sākṣijane ca bhūyasā. adṛṣṭatattvair niravagrahaiḥ kṛtaṃ, kutārkikaiḥ śāsanam etad ākulam* (Vaṃsasthavila meter).

[55] For details and further examples, see Lamotte 1958, p. 168ff.

and *Śrāmaṇyaphala-sūtra*s, for example, are known in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Gāndhārī versions, and in several Chinese translations. Many other *sūtra*s may be compared in any number of versions. Lamotte went so far as to aver that "it can be said that, on the whole, the various Buddhist schools used an identical Sūtrapiṭaka and several similar Vinayapiṭakas."[56] Before that, La Vallée Poussin had come to the conclusion that, "judging by the literature that has come down to us, or of which we have some indication, the numerous branches of the [monastic] community, distinguished by local legends, practices, dialect, and all sorts of priorities, did not, from a broad perspective, have more than a single canon," but he qualified this in a footnote that did justice to the intricacy of the question.[57]

I wonder whether the available materials are sufficient to make such claims. In the fourth century CE, Vasubandhu assessed the condition of the literature of the schools and found it problematic. The "original recitation" (*mūlasaṃgīti*) was no longer intact; different schools arranged their canons differently and included or excluded *sūtra*s differently.[58] In the *Vyākhyāyukti* and the *Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa*, Vasubandhu notes that at his time not all the *sūtra*s were preserved.[59] The implications of *mūlasaṃgītibhraṃśa* are fundamental to Vasubandhu's thought. He discusses the problem in detail in his *Vyākhyāyukti*—in his incisive critique of the very idea of a perfect *buddhavacana*—and in passing in his other works.[60]

By the second century CE, the *Vibhāṣā* had already reported that certain texts survived only in reduced form or were entirely lost, even if some of the claims sound exaggerated:

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[56] Lamotte 1958, p. 198 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 180).

[57] La Vallée Poussin 1925b, pp. 22–23 and n. 1, p. 23.

[58] The term *mūlasaṃgīti* seems rare. It is used in Pāli in the very interesting colophon of the *Nettipakaraṇa*: "At this point the *Netti*—which was spoken by the venerable Mahākaccāna, which was endorsed by the Blessed One, and which was recited at the original recitation—is completed" (p. 193.1–2: *ettavatā samattā netti yā āyasmatā mahākaccānena bhāsitā bhagavatā anumoditā mūlasaṃgītiyaṃ saṃgītā 'ti*). The colophon states explicitly that the Netti was spoken by Mahākaccāna during the lifetime of the Buddha, who "rejoiced in"— approved—it, and that it was recited at the First Council.

[59] Lamotte 1936, § 37b (p. 200): "The *Vyākhyāyukti* has demonstrated that 'Today, the complete [corpus of] *sūtra*s is no longer extant'", and therefore one cannot deny the store-consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*, by saying that it is not taught in the *sūtra*s (*rnam par bśad pa'i rigs pa las kyaṅ, deṅ saṅ mdo sde thams cad ni mi snaṅ źes bsgrubs te, de lta bas na mdo sde dag las lhaṅs por ma gsuṅs źes te, kun gźi rnam par śes pa 'dod par mi bya ba ni ma yin no*). For Lamotte's translation, see Lamotte 1936 p. 252.

[60] See Skilling 2000, p. 300.

> Originally the *Ekottarāgama* enumerated dharmas from 1 to 100;
> today it stops at 10, and between 1 and 10 many are lost . . . At
> the Nirvāṇa of Śāṇavāsa, disciple of Ānanda, 77,000 *Avadāna*
> and *Sūtra*, and 10,000 *Abhidharmaśāstra* were lost.[61]

In certain instances, this rhetoric of loss was a device to justify doctrines
not found in the extant canon (such as the six causes, *hetu*)—*aṃtarhitaṃ
tat sūtraṃ*, "that *sūtra* is lost"—but it is evident that texts *had* been lost (the
"new" Gāndhārī texts amply confirm this), and that this fact was part of the
received picture of the *buddhavacana*. At a later date, it was also believed
that many chapters or sections of Mahāyāna *sūtra*s and *tantra*s were no
longer extant.[62] The *Vibhāṣā* noted further that false texts had been inserted
into the *sūtra*, *vinaya*, and *abhidharma*.[63] At one point, Vasubandhu
laments, "What can we do now? The Teacher has passed away: leaderless,
the religion is divided into many factions, and today they do whatever they
like with texts and ideas."[64]

   Nonetheless, Vasubandhu did have access to a wide range of sources
belonging to a wide range of schools—far more than we have access to
today. In his *Abhidharmakośa*, he makes reference to the textual traditions
of schools other than the Sarvāstivāda, either by name or as the reading
(*pāṭha*) of "another school (or other schools)": *nikāya-antara*, *nikāya-
antarika* or *nikāya-antarīya*.[65] In at least one case, he refers to a reading
common to all schools, *sarvanikāyāntareṣu . . . pāṭhād*.[66] That is, he makes

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[61] Lamotte 1958, p. 179 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 163); La Vallée Poussin 1971,
p. 245, n. 2. The Sanskrit is given in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* as a statement of
the Vaibhāṣikas (Wogihara 1932–36, p. 188.24–25: *tathā hi ekottarikāgama ā śatād
dharmanirdeśa āsīt. idānīṃ tv ā daśakād dṛśyaṃta iti*).

[62] Bu-ston in Obermiller 1931–32, part 2, pp. 169–70.

[63] Lamotte 1958, p. 180 (translation, p. 164).

[64] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975, pp. 122.24–123.2): *kim idānīṃ kurmo yac
chāstā parinirvṛtaḥ śāsanaṃ cedam anāyakaṃ bahudhā bhinnaṃ bhidhyate cādyāpi
yathecchaṃ granthataś cārthataś ca*.

[65] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975, p. 114.1): *nikāya-antara-pāṭhād*; ibid. (Pradhan
1975, pp. 55.8, 72.7): *nikāyāntarīyāḥ* [I correct from -*tāḥ*] *sūtre paṭhanti*. In other cases,
Vasubandhu uses the term *nikāyāntara* for the interpretations or opinions of other schools
rather than for citations; this also demonstrates that he had access to sources that presented
their tenets. In some cases, Vasubandhu may be citing a citation rather than the original text
(a custom that becomes more and more evident in later texts), but I do not doubt that he had
an enviable library at his disposal.

[66] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975, p. 439.5). Cf. Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā*, in
La Vallée Poussin 1903–13, p. 269.11, *idaṃ ca sūtraṃ sarvanikāyeṣu paṭhyate, tad asmād
āgamād yathopavarṇitāyāś copapatter nārhati* ("This *sūtra* is read in all schools."); p. 549.8,

use of his encyclopædic knowledge of the texts, and invokes the principle of *sūtravirodha* to invalidate an opponent's argument.

Reasonings similar to those of Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti* are often presented in idealized debates in favor of the authenticity of the Mahāyāna, for example in the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra* and the *Tarkajvālā*.[67] In the commentary to chapter 9 of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the Śrāvaka announces that his own tradition is uncontested because of its status as *buddhavacana* (*madāgame buddhavacanatve 'vivādaḥ*), while the Mahāyāna is contested (*savivādaṃ savipratipattikaṃ mahāyānaṃ*). Prajñākaramati turns the tables to show that the Śrāvaka doctrine is also contested. Firstly, the four *nikāya*s with eighteen divisions do not agree with one another, and secondly, even within the same *nikāya*, specialists in *sūtra*, *abhidharma*, and *vinaya* do not agree with one another.[68] The same point was made earlier by Haribhadra in his *Ālokā* on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, where he notes the discrepancies among the *Tripiṭaka*s of the eighteen *nikāya*s.[69]

In one extraordinary case in the *Tarkajvālā*, Bhāviveka quotes extracts from the scriptures of all eighteen schools in order to demonstrate that, from the point of view of scripture (*āgama*), it is allowable for an ordained monastic, a *bhikṣu*, to offer homage to a lay bodhisattva.[70] The question was not merely theoretical—it impinged directly on the quotidian worship of bodhisattva images by ordained monastics, which seems, at a certain point, or at certain points, to have stirred up the dust of debate in the corridors of the monasteries. The question was sufficiently important to galvanize Bhāviveka to cite by title one text of each of the eighteen schools in support of the concept—something that neither he nor anyone else does anywhere

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etāś ca gāthāḥ sarvanikāyaśāstrasūtreṣu paṭhyante ("These verses are found in the treatises and *sūtra*s of all schools"). The Tibetan equivalent, *sde pa thams cad*, occurs, for example, in the *Madhyamakāvatāra* (La Vallée Poussin 1907–12, p. 250.19, *sde pa thams cad kyis 'don pa yin te*) and elsewhere. See also La Vallée Poussin 1925b, p. 23 n. 1.

[67] For another debate on this subject, see *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi* (La Vallée Poussin 1928, pp. 175–78). A comparative study of these passages may unravel the intertextual tangles. For now I assume that Vasubandhu was one of the initiators: this might well prove to be wrong if earlier or shared sources can be traced.

[68] *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Vaidya 1960b, p. 206).

[69] *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* (Wogihara 1973, p. 402.10–15): *tathaikaikasmin sūtrānta-piṭake 'nyāni sūtrānta-piṭakāni na sarva-prakāram avataranti, tathaikaikasmin vinaye 'nye vinayā na sarva-prakāram saṃdṛśyante, tathaikaikasmin nikāye yā dharmatā vyavasthāpitā na sā 'nyeṣu nikāyeṣu dharmatāṃ sarva-prakāram anulomayatīty evam aṣṭādaśa-bheda-bhinnāni sūtra-vinayābhidharma-piṭakāni parasparaṃ granthārtha-vyatibhinnāni.* For an English translation, see Sparham 2006, pp. 279–80.

[70] See Skilling 1997a; Eckel 2008, pp. 166–73 (translation), pp. 348–54 (Tibetan text).

else. That is, this is the only place that I know of where samples of texts of the eighteen schools are cited side by side. It is regrettable that the passage survives only in Tibetan translation, since the citations may well have been in several different Buddhist languages.

Bhāviveka's excerpts are tantalizingly brief, but one thing is certain: most of the texts, titles, and even genres are unknown to us today. His brief citations of lost texts offer a glimpse of another side of the iceberg: they are not mere variant versions of known texts, but are texts about which we know absolutely nothing. This fact, combined with the recent revelations arising from the study of the Gāndhārī manuscripts, the Schøyen manuscripts, and new manuscript finds from Xinjiang and Tibet, leads us to the conclusion that there is much we do not know about the Buddhist literatures of the early period.

VI. *Inclusion and Exclusion: The Mahāvihāra Canon*

The Mahāvihāravāsins of Sri Lanka were aware that other schools transmitted *sūtra*s that they themselves did not, and that other schools arranged their *sūtra* and *vinaya* collections differently. An early report of this is made in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, which describes how the "schismatics," that is, the "eighteen schools," "broke up the original redaction (*mūlasaṃgaha*) and made another redaction," and how they "rejected parts of the profound *Sutta* and *Vinaya* and made a different, counterfeit (*paṭirūpa*) *Suttavinaya*."[71] The passage also refers to differences of exegesis and of grammar and orthography—that is, of language.

The *mūlasaṃgaha* of the *Dīpavaṃsa* is a semantic counterpart of Vasubandhu's *mūlasaṃgīti*, but the terms are put to opposite uses. For Vasubandhu, the *mūlasaṃgīti* is lost, and we can access the *buddhavacana* only through an imperfect textual pluralism. For the *Dīpavaṃsa*—and for the Mahāvihāra tradition up to the present—the *mūlasaṃgaha* survives, despite the depredations of other schools: it is the Pāli canon.

At an early date, the *Suttavibhaṅga* of the Pāli *vinaya* defines "Dhamma" as spoken by Buddhas, spoken by auditors, spoken by sages, and spoken

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[71] *Dīpavaṃsa*, chap. 5, vv. 32–38. The passage is cited at the beginning of the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*, pp. 3–5. Is *paṭirūpa* an innocent term, or does it evoke the *saddharma-patirūpaka* of the decline of the True Dharma (for which see n. 78 below and Lamotte 1958, pp. 210–22)? The date of the *Dīpavaṃsa* is not known; a third–fourth century date is often proposed. The ideas of counterfeit dharma and the decline of the True Dharma were well-established by that time, but remained a concern for the Buddhist communities.

by deities, pertaining to welfare, pertaining to practice.[72] Is this an oblique recognition that the Dhamma, the texts, are products of multiple or collective authorship? Not according to the commentary, the *Samantapāsādikā*, which restricts its examples of the four categories to known Pāli texts in which the sages and deities play subordinate roles as interlocutors. It interprets *attha-upasañhito* as *aṭṭhakathā-nissito*, "grounded on the commentaries," and *dhamma-upasañhito* as *pāḷi-nissito*, "grounded on the Pāḷi," i.e., the *Tipiṭaka*.[73] This considerably narrows the scope of what might seem to be a very generous and open definition of Dhamma—here it is recast in exclusively Mahāvihārin categories.[74]

The Pāli *Sārasaṅgaha*, composed by Siddhattha at Polonnaruva in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, follows the *Samantapāsādikā* definition, describing the "Dhamma" as the "Pariyatti-dhamma"—textual Dhamma, transmitted by the *saṃgha* through the recitation councils, and acquired through memorization and study. The two texts list titles that "were not recited at the three Councils," as follows:[75]

> *Kulumba-suttaṃ*
> *Rājovāda-suttaṃ*
> *Tikkhindriyaṃ*
> *Catuparivaṭṭaṃ*
> *Nandopananda-damanaṃ*
> *Apalāla-damanaṃ*.

[72] *Vinaya*, vol. 4, p. 15.9–10: *dhammo nāma buddhabhāsito sāvakabhāsito isibhāsito devatābhāsito atthupasañhito dhammupasañhito*. The *Shanjianlu piposha* 善見律毘婆沙 (T no. 1462) is rather different, but not without interest: Bapat and Hirakawa 1970, pp. 446–47 (for the problem of identifying this text with the *Samantapāsādikā*, see Pinte 2010. For a different, earlier opinion, see Endo 2006, which is a response to Guruge 2005.) For examples of texts spoken by auditors, see Lamotte 1947, p. 215 (translation, Boin-Webb 1983–84, p. 6); for sages and gods, Lamotte 1947, pp. 215–16 (translation, Boin-Webb 1983–84, pp. 6–7). The Dharmaguptakas also give the same fourfold definition (loc. cit.). For a fivefold classification, see below.

[73] *Samantapāsādikā*, vol. 4, p. 742.9.

[74] One example of Dhamma transmitted by a deity that the commentary does not mention (though it does finish with an *ādi* ["etc."]) is the *Āṭānāṭiya-sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, one of the most important long *sūtra*s of early Buddhism in the sense that we have evidence of its use as a ritual and textual source across "Buddhist Asia" from an early period to the present. The text—which I cannot help but see as dramatic or operatic—is framed in two movements, the first spoken by Vaiśravaṇa to the Buddha, the second spoken by the Buddha, who upon the morrow transmits Vaiśravaṇa's text to the monks.

[75] *Samantapāsādikā*, vol. 4, pp. 742.24; 743.6; *Sārasaṅgaha*, p. 45.24: *idaṃ saṅgītittayaṃ anārūḷhaṃ* (I follow the spelling of the *Sārasaṅgaha*).

Although they were not recited at the councils, they do not seem to be explicitly accepted or rejected, and their status is not clear to me. One title, *Nandopananda-damana*—the subduing of the dragon-king Nanandopanda—may be identified with a text cited by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga*. Buddhaghosa quotes it by the title *Nandopanandadamana*, and does not describe it as a *sūtra*—but this is done in a thirteenth-century Tibetan translation and in Thai tradition.[76] The story itself is integrated into the "eight victories" of the Buddha in the *Bāhūṃ* or [*Aṭṭha*] *Jayamaṅgala* verses (Verses on the Blessings [brought by the] Eight Victories [of the Buddha]), in Thailand today one of the most common chants for blessing and success. The *Apaḷāladamana* must have been a similar narrative on the Buddha's conversion of the *nāga* king Apaḷāla, a well-known but extra-canonical story, frequent in Gandhāran narrative art.[77] The other titles have not been identified.

Our two sources then list titles of texts which are "not the word of the Buddha" (*abuddhavacana*). More or less the same list is given in the commentary on the *Saṃyuttanikāya*, where the titles are given as examples of the counterfeit Dharma.[78] The late fourteenth-century Sinhalese-language *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya*—composed by Saṃgharāja Dharmakīrti, "the greatest scholar of his day in Ceylon, and . . . one of those rare men of learning and genius whose greatness is for all time and all climes"[79]—attributes some of the titles to different schools, as follows:[80]

Samantapāsādikā, Sārasaṅgaha	School according to *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*
Vaṇṇa-piṭaka	Hemavata
Aṅgulimāla-piṭaka	Rājagiri
Raṭṭhapāla-gajjita	Pūrvaśailī
Āḷavaka-gajjita	Aparaśailī
Guḷha-ummagga	———
Guḷha-vessantara	Siddhārthaka

[76] See Skilling 1992, pp. 124–26 (q.v. for a pre-Buddhaghosa Chinese translation of a related narrative that awaits study).

[77] See *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, s.v. "Apaḷāla."

[78] *Saddhammapaṭirūpaka*, *Sāratthappakāsinī* vol. 2, p. 201, penult.

[79] Fernando 1908, p. v.

[80] The left-hand column gives the titles from *Samantapāsādikā* vol. 4, p. 742.29 and *Sārasaṅgaha*, pp. 45–46. The right-hand column gives the school attributions of *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya* (Fernando 1908, p. 9). I have attempted to regularize the names of the schools, but have had no opportunity to consult the original Sinhalese.

Guḷha-vinaya   Vajraparvata
Vetulla-piṭaka[81]
etc.

The texts cannot be precisely identified. Two seem to be related to well-known *jātaka*s, the *Mahā-Ummagga* or *Mahosadha* (*Jātaka* no. 546) and the *Vessantara* (*Jātaka* no. 547), but the significance of *guḷha*, "secret," is anybody's guess, as in the case of the *Guḷha-vinaya*.[82] Do some titles refer to known Mahāyāna *sūtra*s like the *Aṅgulimāla-sūtra* and the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*? Are any of them *tantra*s? Whatever the case, none of them merits *buddhavacana* status. The *Sārasaṅgaha* explains that they were composed by "non-Buddhists in *bhikkhu*'s robes," and gives a condensed version of the classical account of the Third Council.[83]

The old *Aṭṭhakathā* list ends with "*Vetulla-piṭaka*, etc." (*ādi*). The *Sārasaṅgaha* expands the list, and the *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya* expands it further. In these lists we find some familiar titles:

Sārasaṅgaha	*Nikāyasaṅgrahaya*
1. *Ratanakūṭaṃ*	———
2. *Māyājālatanta*	1. *Māyājāla-tantra*
———	2. *Samāja-tantra*
3. *Mahāsamayatatvaṃ*	3. *Mahāsamayatattva*
4. *Tatvasaṃgahaṃ*	4. *Tattvasaṅgraha*
5. *Bhūtacāmaraṃ*	5. *Bhūtacāmara*
6. *Vajjāmataṃ*	6. *Vajrāmṛta*
7. *Cakkasaṃvaraṃ*	7. *Cakrasaṃvara*
	8. *Dvādaśacakra*
	9. *Bherukādbuda*
8. *Mahāsamayaṃ*	10. *Mahāsamaya*
9. *Padanikkhepaṃ*	11. *Pādaniḥkṣepa*
10. *Sabbabuddhaṃ*	12. *Catuṣpiṣṭha*

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[81] Variant spellings in the *Samantapāsādikā* include *Vedaḷha* and *Vedalla*. *Vaidalya*, *Vaitulya*, and *Vaipulya* are epithets of what later became the "Mahāyāna." See also the list at the *Saṃyutta-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 2, p. 201.

[82] *Guḷhavessantara-guḷhaummagga-guḷhavinaya-vedallapiṭaka* are mentioned by Buddhaghosa at the *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā* (vol. 2, p. 566) and *Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā* (vol. 3, p. 160.6), in the context of the *mahāpadesa*, apparently in the words of Sudinna Thera, as texts which are not found in the *Tripiṭaka* and do not lead to the subduing of desire.

[83] *etāni vaṇṇapiṭakādīni abuddhavacanehi kehi kataṃ ti. bhikkhuvesadharehi titthiyehi kataṃ* (p. 45.31).

13. *Parāmarda*
14. *Maricudbhava*
15. *Sarvabuddha*
11. *Sabbabhuyaṃ*   16. *Sarvaguhya*
12. *Samuccayaṃ.*   17. *Samuccaya*
and the *Kalpaśāstra*s:
18. *Māyāmarīci-kalpa*
19. *Heramba-kalpa*
20. *Trisamaya-kalpa*
21. *Rāja-kalpa*
22. *Vajragandhāra-kalpa*
23. *Marīciguhya-kalpa*
24. *Suddhasamuccaya-kalpa*

Here, some of the titles can be provisionally identified. *Ratanakūṭa* may be the *Ratnakūṭa-sūtra*, also known as the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. The others are *tantra*s, among which the *Māyājāla*, *Tattvasaṃgraha*, and *Cakrasaṃvara* are well known, and others evoke familiar titles or cycles.

What can we learn from these fragmentary reports of texts known to the learned scholars of Sri Lanka? The titles in the earliest list cannot be identified, with the exception of *Vetulla-* (*Vedaḷha-*, *Vedalla-*) *piṭaka*, which seems to have been an early term for a collection of proto-Mahāyāna or pre-Mahāyāna texts—that is, Mahāyāna *avant la lettre*, before a cohesive Mahāyāna identity was consciously forged.[84] Even the style of some of the titles is unusual: I do not believe that there are other instances of titles ending in *-garjita*, for example.[85] If we accept the attributions of the *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya*, we might conclude that most of the texts were transmitted by South Indian schools. And this might give us pause: few if any texts of the Southern schools survive, especially from the early period when Buddhism flourished at sites like Amarāvatī, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, and Phanigiri in Andhra Pradesh, or Kanaganahalli in Karnataka. We might conclude from the titles listed in the *Samantapāsādikā* and *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya*, from the excerpts from the canons of the Southern schools cited by Bhāviveka, and from the few citations in other texts, that Southern literature had a distinct character, quite different from the literature that survives in Indian

[84] The terms *Vedalla*, etc., are used by Asaṅga and others as synonyms of Mahāyāna, and one of the forms, *Vaipulya*, persists in the literature. But whether a collection called *Vetulla-piṭaka* ever actually existed, whether orally or in manuscript, is an unknowable.

[85] The term is used elsewhere in Pāli commentaries, however, for example, in the *Doṇagajjita*. See An 2003, p. 213 and n. 3 with reference to the *Manorathapūraṇī*, vol. 3, p. 77.

languages or in translation, which, with the exception of the Pāli texts, is distinctly North Indian, whether Sarvāstivādin, Lokottaravādin, or Dharmaguptaka. We might conclude that there is an enormous blank spot on our literary map of the subcontinent: the South.[86]

These passages show that the Mahāvihāra excluded texts from its *Tripiṭaka*, and categorically classed certain texts of other schools as *abuddhavacana*. It is evident that the school was aware of textual innovations and intellectual developments on the mainland—not only in the South, with which monastic relations are explicitly mentioned, but also in North India. The *Ṭīkā*s, for example give close paraphrases in Pāli of passages from the scholastic literature of the Vaibhāṣikas.[87]

There remains the puzzle of the untraced citations in the *Milindapañha*, *Nettipakaraṇa*, and *Peṭakopadesa*. These works cite passages from *sūtra*s that are not found in, or differ from, the Mahāvihāra *Tripiṭaka* that we know today.[88] A further discrepancy that haunts these works is that, for example, on occasion the Pāli commentaries cite the *Peṭaka*, but the cited passages cannot be found in the extant *Peṭakopadesa*.[89] What does all this signify? I find it hard to believe that the texts were excluded or removed individually from the Mahāvihāra *Tripiṭaka* by a series of considered and collective editorial decisions over the centuries. Firstly, they are cited in the works in question for their very authority as *buddhavacana*. To reject them would be to render invalid the arguments that they are enlisted to support. Secondly, they do not introduce any radically new ideas or turns of language.

What other possibilities are there? The three texts are not Mahāvihāra works as such; they were originally produced in India using a different *Tripiṭaka* or *Tripiṭaka*s. The citations, and other indicators, show that the three works were not collated and edited to agree with the Mahāvihāra *Tripiṭaka*. It is also possible that at one point the Mahāvihāra, or its predecessors, had to choose among variant recensions, and chose a recension or recensions that differed from those cited in the texts in question. That is, it was not a question of deliberate rejection, but of selection, of choice of

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[86] For something of what we do know, see Monius 2001.

[87] For examples, see Skilling, forthcoming (a).

[88] For the *Milindapañha*, see Horner 1964, pp. ix–xviii (and in general, see Skilling 1998, pp. 81–101). For the *Nettipakaraṇa*, see Ñāṇamoli 1962 (translator's introduction, pp. lv–lvi and a list of quotations, pp. 283–87); for the *Peṭakopadesa*, see Ñāṇamoli 1964 (translator's introduction, pp. xxiv–xxv and a list of quotations, pp. 381–85). For early Chinese references to and translations from a text or texts parallel to the *Peṭakopadesa*, see Zacchetti 2002a; Zacchetti 2002b.

[89] Ñāṇamoli 1964, pp. xxix–xxxii.

another version. In any event, the citations reveal that the textual tradition of the Mahāvihāra is not as uniform as has been claimed.

VII. *Texts Unique to the Mahāvihāra*

We have seen that the Mahāvihāra was aware that other schools arranged their *Tripiṭaka*s differently and that they transmitted texts which the Mahāvihāra did not accept as *buddhavacana*. To turn the tables, we will now examine texts transmitted by the Mahāvihāra that are, as far as we know, unique to that school. We have no explicit evidence that other schools actively rejected these texts, but we at least know that they were not part of their textual transmissions.

These texts belong to several genres and to all three *Piṭaka*s. The *Khuddaka-nikāya* of the Mahāvihāra *Sūtra-piṭaka* preserves commentaries and treatises, in the form of *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, as well as a handbook, the *Khuddakapāṭha* (for which see further below). None of these texts are known outside the Pāli versions. The *Khuddaka-nikāya* includes the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpiṭaka*, texts whose authenticity has been questioned (and usually rejected) by modern scholarship from the early years of Buddhist studies. Although both belong to genres developed by other schools as well, the two Pāli texts are thoroughly unique and independent. The succession of past Buddhas presented in the *Buddhavaṃsa* is not known to any other school (apart, of course, for the shared seven Buddhas leading up to Śākyamuni). The configuration of *jātaka*s in relation to perfections in the *Cariyāpiṭaka* is specific to that text. The numerically arranged verses of the canonical *Jātaka* are also unique as a collection, although some of the verses have counterparts in the literature of other schools (and in Indian literature in general).[90]

Included in the *Vinaya-piṭaka* is the *Parivāra*, a digest or handbook compiled in Sri Lanka by the learned monk "named Dīpa" and completed by the first century CE.[91] The integration of this text into the *vinaya*—at the end, as the last book—shows that the Mahāvihāra *Tripiṭaka* was not closed until the first century CE at the earliest. The *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* preserves a post-Aśokan treatise, the *Kathāvatthu*.

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[90] For the texts of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, see von Hinüber 1996, §§ 84–128.

[91] *Vinaya*, vol. 5, p. 226.4–7: *pubbācariyamaggañ ca pucchitvā 'va tahiṃ tahiṃ, dīpanāmo mahāpañño sutadharo vicakkhaṇo, imaṃ vitthārasaṃkhepaṃ sajjhāmaggena majjhime, cintayitvā likhāpesi sissakānaṃ sukhāvahaṃ*. See further von Hinüber 1996, §§ 41–42.

Can it be mere chance that the *Dīpavaṃsa* alleges that the "Mahāsaṅgītikas" rejected just these texts (along with a few others)? It states that they rejected the *Parivāra*, *Atthuddhāra*,[92] *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, *Niddesa*, and part of the *Jātaka*, along with the six (!) books of the *Abhidhamma*, and made up their own versions.[93] Buddhaghosa introduces an otherwise unidentified Sudinna Thera who seems to reject all works that are not called *sutta*.[94] Might this not reflect uncertainty about the status of these works within the Theravādin, or at least the Mahāvihāra, fold itself? It is natural that other schools would not accept the Mahāvihāra *Abhidharma*, since they had their own *abhidharma*s, which in some cases may have developed earlier, and in any case would have reached their final form independently.[95] The early *abhidharma* literature that survives today—of any school, in any language, including the seven books of the Mahāvihāra *Abhidharma*—is the end-product of several centuries of intellectual endeavor that began with early pedagogical and exegetical practices and was formalized with the formation of the *Piṭaka*s, as seen in the *Vibhaṅga*s of the *vinaya*s and in certain *sūtra*s or *nikāya*s, especially the *Aṅguttara*.[96] The *Abhidharma* is not only

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[92] *Atthuddhāra* presumably refers to the *Atthuddhāra-kaṇḍa* of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*: see von Hinüber 1996, § 134.

[93] *Dīpavaṃsa*, cited at the *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā*, p. 4.9–11: *parivāraṃ atthuddhāraṃ abhidhammaṃ chappakaraṇaṃ, paṭisambhidañ ca niddesaṃ ekādesañ ca jātakaṃ, ettakaṃ vissajjetvāna tañ ca aññaṃ akaṃsu te*. For *chappakaraṇaṃ*, see Lamotte 1958, p. 200. One might ask whether the missing seventh work is not the *Dhātukathā*, as Lamotte suggests, but rather the *Kathāvatthu*. The status of the *Kathāvatthu* was contested even within the school itself, and it is logical that it would be the last book to enter the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. It is also a cumulative text, that, according to Lamotte, may not have achieved its final form until the second half of the third century CE (see Lamotte 1958, p. 202). I am not convinced, however, that we need to wait so late for Vetullavāda doctrines to have been introduced to either the *Kathāvatthu* or to have reached the Isle of Tabropane.

[94] *Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 2, p. 566.7–8; *Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 3, p. 159.11–12: *sudinnatthero pana asutta-nāmakaṃ buddhavacanaṃ nāma natthī ti taṃ sabbaṃ paṭikkhipitvā*.

[95] For a survey of the *abhidharma* literature, see Lamotte 1958, pp. 197–210 and the introduction to Cox 1995, also Cox 1992.

[96] Perhaps not even a finished product: see Lamotte's cogent remark that "the Abhidhamma abounds in repetitions, rectifications, reclassifications and explanations which give it the character of an unfinished work still in the process of elaboration" (Lamotte 1988, p. 184. Original French [Lamotte 1958, p. 202]: "l'Abhidhamma abonde en reprises, en rectifications, en reclassements et en explications qui lui donnent le caractère d'une œuvre inachevé, encore en pleine élaboration"). I suggest below that the *Abhidhamma* (along with, for example, the *Prajñāpāramitā*), is an ideal text: with its multiple layers of abbreviation and cross-reference, it cannot be finished or be fully written down. What we have are sample recordings, working texts.

"the Doctrine pure and simple, without the intervention of literary develop-ments or the presentation of individuals,"[97] but an intellectual movement of definition, classification, and synthesis—the Ābhidharmikas are precisely described as "categorizors" (*lākṣaṇika*).

The Mahāvihāra seems to be alone in its *literal* ascription of the seven books of its *Abhidharma* to the Buddha himself (literal with the excep-tion of the *Kathāvatthu*). The school holds that the Tathāgata first realized and reviewed the contents of the seven books in the fourth week after his awakening, in a Jewelled Residence constructed for him by the gods to the north-east of the Bodhi-tree.[98] Later he delivered six books, *in toto* as books, in the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven,[99] and laid down the outline of the seventh, the *Kathāvatthu*, to be completed several centuries later by Moggallīputta Thera. Such radical claims are not made by other schools for their *abhidharma*s. The Vaibhāṣikas of Kashmir do maintain that the *Abhidharma* was spoken by the Buddha, but they explain that it was spoken here and there, and then later collected by his auditors[100]—a position which in some cases is not far from the truth, in the sense that the basic works of the Sarvāstivādin *Abhi-dharma* hinge on and revolve around extensive citations of *sūtra*s. Other schools at best claim multiple authorship, by the Buddha's close auditors, notably Śāriputra, or by later historical (but obscure to us today) figures.[101]

In the case of the *abhidharma*, as in the case of *sūtra*, *vinaya*, and *śāstra*, more texts have been lost than have been preserved. Among the manuscripts carried back to China by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), in addition to *sūtra*s, *vinaya*s, relics, and Buddha images, were *śāstra*s belonging to the Sthavira, Mahāsāṃghika, Sāṃmitīya, Kāśyapīya, Dharmaguptaka, and Sarvāstivāda schools,[102] most of which were never translated into Chinese and are

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[97] Lamotte 1958, p. 197 (translation, Lamotte 1988, p. 180).

[98] Fausbøll 1962, p. 78.2–5: *catutthe pana sattāhe bodhito pacchimuttaradisābhāge devatā ratanagaharaṃ māpayiṃsu. tattha pallaṃkena nisīditvā abhidhammapiṭakaṃ visesato c'ettha anantanayaṃ samantapaṭṭhānaṃ vicinato sattāhaṃ vītināmesi.*

[99] See Skilling 2008.

[100] See Lamotte 1958, pp. 200–201 and 203, with reference to Bu-ston (Obermiller 1931–32, part 1, pp. 49–50) who is paraphrasing the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (*Kośa* 1:3). The *Vibhāṣā* cited by Lamotte (1958, p. 205, transla-tion, Lamotte 1988, p. 187) would have it both ways: "The Abhidharma was originally the word of the Buddha, but it is also a compilation by the Ārya Kātyāyanīputra." On the intrica-cies of the claims, see Cox 1992, pp. 160–61.

[101] See Lamotte 1958, pp. 202–10 for the several traditions, which often bear traces of memory of historical post-*nirvāṇa* authorship, obscured by a growing trend to move them back to the auditors and time of the Blessed One.

[102] Lamotte 1958, p. 199, referring to Watters 1904–5, vol. 1, p. 21.

assumed to be lost. A remarkable feature of the Gāndhāran commentarial or *śāstra* literature that is currently being studied by Cox and others is that none of the texts has any parallels in extant *śāstra* literature, whether preserved in Indic languages or in translation. Of the vast and magnificent library of Buddhist literature, the contents of only a few rooms remain.

The conclusions of the great Belgian savant Lamotte still merit citation:

> Despite their supposed canonicity, the Abhidharmas are the works of schools and it is only through contrivance that they are connected with the Buddha and disciples contemporary with him. . . . However, whoever the authors of the Abhidharma may have been, they reveal themselves as strictly faithful interpreters of the "Meaning of the Sūtras": at the most they limited themselves to compromising the doctrinal integrity of Śākyamuni's message. They therefore have every right to present their Abhidharma as the Word of the Buddha.[103]

Mahāvihāra texts are rich in narrative. Commentaries on "canonical" texts, such as that on the *Dhammapada* (*Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*) relate stories and events unknown to other schools, or relate shared stories in versions substantially different from those of other schools. Translated from Sinhala to Pāli on the Isle of Sri Lanka seven or eight hundred years after the passing of the master, the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* is an unlikely candidate for authority by modern standards. But through its association with the canonical *Dhammapada*, through its purported authorship by Buddhaghosa, and through language—the very fact that it is in Pāli—its stories have achieved the status of history or biography, and for many Theravādins the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* is as authoritative as any *sūtra*, and certainly more familiar.

As a general principle, we might say that texts achieve authority through use. The *Buddhavaṃsa* and other texts of the *Khuddaka-nikāya* considered "later" by modern scholarship—*Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu*, *Jātaka*, *Apadāna*—are precisely the texts that were deemed important and became familiar—not, perhaps, as texts, but through their narratives, mediated through the sermon. They were resource collections—the stuff from which sermons are fashioned.[104] They were also recited in rituals and illustrated on the walls of temples and in cloth paintings and other media.

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[103] Lamotte 1958, pp. 209–10 (Lamotte 1988, p. 191).
[104] The *Suttasaṃgaha* (Chaudhuri and Guha 1957; Norman 1983, pp. 172–73; von Hinüber 1996, § 157) is a good example of a source book for sermons—the selection of texts is very

VIII. Sūtra*s Unique to the Sarvāstivāda*[105]

The Sarvāstivāda produced an immense literature which has come down to us only in part. Like the Pāli *vinaya*, the Sarvāstivādin *vinaya* allowed several sources of the Dharma, as reported in the *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論:

> The Buddha said this in the *Vinaya*: What is the Dharma of the Buddha? The Dharma of the Buddha is that which has been uttered by five types of person:
>
> 1. That which was uttered by the Buddha.
> 2. That which was uttered by the Buddha's auditors.
> 3. That which was uttered by the sages.
> 4. That which was uttered by the deities.
> 5. That which was uttered by magically conjured humans/persons.[106]

When we compare the available texts of the Sarvāstivādins with those of the Mahāvihāravāsins, an interesting picture emerges. Both schools divide their *sūtra* collections into four primary (the *Āgama*s or *Nikāya*s) and one

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different from those "canonized" by modernity, and the collection has elicited little interest from contemporary scholarship.

[105] Here, I use "Sarvāstivāda" for all inflections of the school: the so-called Mūlasarvāstivāda, the Central Asian Sarvāstivādins, and the Sarvāstivādas of the Chinese *Madhyamāgama* and *Saṃyuktāgama*s, including the philosophical movements within these lineages, the Vaibhāṣikas, Sautrāntikas, and so on.

[106] *Dazhidu lun*, T 25, no. 1509: 66b4–6. See Lamotte 1944, pp. 81–82:

> Ainsi le Buddha a dit dans le *Vinaya*: Qu'est-ce que la loi bouddhique (*buddhadharma*)? La loi bouddhique, c'est ce qui est énoncé par cinq sortes de personnes: 1. Ce que le Buddha a énoncé (*buddhabhāṣita*); 2. Ce que les disciples du Buddha ont énoncé (*śrāvakabhāṣita*); 3. Ce que les sages ont énoncé *(ṛṣibhāṣita)*; 4. Ce que les dieux ont énoncé (*devabhāṣita*); 5. Ce que les êtres apparitionels ont énoncé (*upapādukabhāṣita*).

The translation of number (5) differs from Lamotte's. His interpretation of *hua ren* 化人 as *upapāduka* does not seem justified. In Kumārajīva's translation of the "Lotus Sūtra," *hua ren* corresponds to *nirmita* (Kern and Nanjio 1908–12, p. 235.1. See Karashima 2001, p. 120). Further, *upapāduka* or *aupapāduka* is one of the four types of birth, referring to "apparitional beings." They are not known to teach the Dharma. On the contrary, in Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, the Dharma is often taught by humans conjured up by Buddhas or bodhisattvas. Only the *Dazhidu lun* passage includes the fifth category. See Lamotte 1944 [p. 82, n. 1] for some of the parallels in *vinaya*s and other sources.

miscellaneous (*Kṣudraka*, *Khuddaka*) collection, and their *Piṭaka*s share many *sūtra*s. But the Sarvāstivāda transmitted *sūtra*s that were not known to the Mahāvihāra. These *sūtra*s, some of them very long, were full members of the *Sūtra-piṭaka*, and were invoked as fully authoritative in the exemplified debates reported in Sarvāstivāda or Vaibhāṣika scholastic literature. That is, texts unknown to the Mahāvihāra were not only canonical *buddhavacana* for the Sarvāstivāda, but they enjoyed prominence and full authority.

Because no complete *Tripiṭaka*s or even registers of any of the Sarvāstivādin *Tripiṭaka*s exist, we cannot draw up a complete list of the *sūtra*s of the Sarvāstivādins, and because the same is true for the other schools such as the Mahāsāṃghikas, with the exception of the Mahāvihāra, we cannot with any security know whether a text was *only* transmitted by the Sarvāstivāda. But it is possible to list a number of texts which are certainly not found in Pāli, which were certainly authoritative for the Sarvāstivāda (and for the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas), which in their extant recensions are certainly Sarvāstivādin, which are not found or referred to in the literature of other schools, and therefore were almost certainly unique to the Sarvāstivādins. The list includes both long and short texts. In some cases, we know to which *Āgama* a text belonged, in others we do not—and some may have been transmitted outside of the *Āgama*s —extra-*Āgama* or extra-*Tripiṭaka*, for which the term may have been *muktaka-sūtra*, although this is not certain.

Long *sūtra*s unique to the Sarvāstivāda:

Arthavistara-sūtra (Dīrghāgama)
Māyājāla-sūtra (Dīrghāgama)
Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra (Ṣaṭsūtrakanipāta of the Dīrghāgama)
Tridaṇḍi-sūtra (*Śīlaskandhikā* of the *Dīrghāgama*)
Bimbisārapratyudgamana-sūtra (Madhyamāgama)
Nyagrodha-sūtra
Arthaviniścaya-sūtra
Āyuḥparyanta-sūtra
Garbhāvakrānti-sūtra

Some of the texts are quite distinctive. Others—like the *Bimbisārapratyudgamana* and the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*—are composite reorganizations of elements found in the collections (mainly the *vinaya*s)

of most other schools. Once again, it is the editorial voices—those of the *saṃgītikāra*s—that make the difference. The whole of the *Bimbisārapraty-udgamana* makes up one section of the *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra*.[107] The *Āyuḥparyanta-sūtra*[108] and the *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*,[109] both available in Sanskrit (the first from Gilgit, the second from Nepal) and Tibetan, are encyclopædic compilations, the first of cosmological material and verses gathered in part from various shorter *sūtra*s, the second of lists and categories. The *Garbhāvakrānti*, available in two Tibetan versions, is also composite; not only is it a *sūtra*, but it is incorporated into the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya* and the Tibetan *Ratnakūṭa*, which is otherwise a collection of Mahāyāna texts.[110] It is not clear whether the *Āyuḥparyanta*, *Arthaviniścaya*, and *Garbhāvakrānti* were included in one or the other *Āgama*, or whether they were transmitted extra-*Āgama*.[111]

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[107] Waldschmidt 1952–62. The title carries a conundrum: the *sūtra* does not deal with the "four assemblies" but only three. The *bhikṣuṇī* assembly was not yet founded during the period covered by the *sūtra*. The *Catuṣpariṣat-sūtra* is found in the *Saṃghabhedavastu* of the *vinaya*. This is an example of one type of intertextuality in the Śrāvaka collections.

[108] Sanskrit and Tibetan edited by Matsumura Hisashi (1989).

[109] Samtani 1971 (Sanskrit text) and Samtani 2002 (English translation).

[110] *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* (*'Dul ba phran tshegs kyi gźi*), P vol. 44, no. 1035, folios 119b8–145b7; *Ratnakūṭa*, "Āyuṣmannandagarbhāvakrāntinirdeśa" (Tshe daṅ ldan pa dga' bo mṅal du 'jug pa bstan pa), P vol. 23, no. 760, part 13 (as far as I know this is the sole Śrāvaka *sūtra* in the *Ratnakūṭa* collection); cited at *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, chap. 1, v. 35ab (Śāstri 1970–73, part 1, p. 93.10), as well as in the **Sārasamuccaya* (Chos mṅon pa la 'jug pa rgya cher 'grel pa snyiṅ po kun las btus pa), P vol. 119, no. 5598, folios 320a8, 320b2, the *Pañcavastukavibhāṣā* (Sastri, n.d., p. 22.10), the *Yogācārabhūmi* (Bhattacharya 1957, p. 27.6), and (several times) in the *Bhāvanākramasūtrasamuccaya* (P vol. 102, no. 5329). For some of the complications in the transmission of the *Garbhāvakrānti*, see de Jong 1977, pp. 29–31. We await Robert Kritzer's study, edition, and translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya version.

[111] The Sanskrit *Āyuḥparyanta-sūtra* is from the Gilgit finds, which suggests by associa-tion (with the famous *vinaya* and sundry Śrāvaka texts) a Mūlasarvāstivādin affiliation; it is cited in full by Śamathadeva in his **Abhidharmakoṣaṭīkopāyikā* (*Chos mṅon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel bśad ñe bar mkho ba*, P vol. 118, no. 5595, hereafter **Upāyikā-ṭīkā*), a collection of Mūlasarvāstivādin sources. Yaśomitra (*Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*, chap 1, v. 3 [Śāstri 1970–73, part 1, p. 15.18]) states that the Sautrāntikas classify the *Arthaviniścaya* under *Abhi-dharma*. The Sautrāntikas make this statement in a debate with the Vaibhāṣikas about the status of the *Abhidharma* and the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*; for the assertion to be meaningful, the *sūtra* must have been accepted by the Vaibhāṣikas. (See Samtani 1971, pp. 28–30, on the importance of the *Arthaviniścaya*.) Since both the Sautrāntikas and the Vaibhāṣikas belonged to the (Mūla)Sarvāstivādin fold, the *sūtra* must have been transmitted in that school.

Short *sūtra*s unique to the Sarvāstivāda:[112]

Paramārthaśūnyatā-sūtra[113]
Mahāśūnyatā-sūtra[114]
Mānuṣyaka-sūtra[115]
Vidyāsthānopama-sūtra[116]
Sahetusapratyayasanidāna-sūtra[117]
Hastatāḍopama-sūtra[118]
Sūtra comparing the Buddha to a physician[119]

At least some of these short *sūtra*s belonged to the *Saṃyuktāgama*. All but the *Vidyāsthānopama* are cited as authoritative in the *Abhidharmakośa* in the course of "debates" within the Vaibhāṣika tradition.

Should one propose that these texts were lost in Pāli, or that they did not enter into the final Mahāvihāra transmission? Or are they examples of the bold and innovative literature of the Sarvāstivādins? Clearly, for that tradition these texts had canonical authority, since they are cited or referred to in the *Vibhāṣā* compendia, the *Abhidharmadīpa*, the *Abhidharmakośa*, and other manuals and *śāstra*s, as well as by others such as Asaṅga and Harivarman. The "traditional" comparative model, in which the presence or absence of a Pāli version has an absolute chronological value, even in regions where the Pāli texts were not transmitted, has had its day. It is time to experiment with new models which take into account the geography and the linguistic realities of South Asia.

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[112] For translations of short *sūtra*s from the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama*, many of which have no precise parallel in Pāli, see Choong Mun-keat, 2004.

[113] Lamotte 1976, pp. 2135–37; cited in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and **Upāyikā-ṭīkā*.

[114] This *Mahāśūnyatā-sūtra* deals with *pratītyasamutpāda*, and is not to be confused with the *Mahāśūnyatā-mahāsūtra* or the Pāli *Mahāsuññata-sutta*: see Skilling 1997b, references in part 2, introduction to *Mahāsūtra* 4, section 4.

[115] **Upāyikā-ṭīkā*, P vol. 118, no. 5595, folio 112a4; cited in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and *Abhidharmāvatāra*.

[116] Edited from Central Asian manuscripts in Waldschmidt 1959; translated in Skilling 1979 (pp. 64–67).

[117] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* chap. 6, v. 3 (Śāstri 1970–73, part 3, p. 888.1); cited in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* and **Upāyikā-ṭīkā*.

[118] *Abhidharmadīpa* (Jaini 1977, p. 271.18); cited in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, *Vyākhyāyukti*, and **Upāyikā-ṭīkā*.

[119] I do not know the title of this *sūtra*, which is cited in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* and *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā*.

IX. *Anthology and Authority*

*Tripiṭaka*s are ideal collections: as books they are sets of resource materials, deemed by their editors to be comprehensive and complete, rather like encyclopædias. Only a scholarly elite had the need, ability and leisure to consult or to master them. Otherwise, selected texts were anthologized for practical use: for curricula, for sermons, for ritual (including ritual copying for merit-making), and for handbooks (*muṭṭhipotthaka*) to be carried about in a monk's bag.[120] (In fact we know next to nothing about the production, storage, circulation and use of manuscripts during the period, or about monastic libraries, apart from stray references in inscriptions.)

One of the earliest anthologies in Pāli is the *Khuddakapāṭha* of the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, "a collection of nine short pieces gleaned from the canon and put together most probably for practical purposes as a kind of handbook."[121] A later example, compiled in Sri Lanka at an uncertain date, is the *Catubhāṇavāra*, a collection which serves both curricular and ritual purposes. The *Suttasaṃgaha* presents itself as a source book for sermons (*deśanā*). Several *paritta* or *rakṣā* collections, compiled at different places and different times, are used in the Mahāvihāra lineages. These include the above-mentioned *Catubhāṇavāra*, the *Paritta* and *Mahāparitta*, and the *Cūlarājaparitra* (*Sattaparitta*) and *Mahārājaparitra* (*Dvādasaparitta*).[122]

Another genre is condensation, which summarizes narratives or doctrines in a few stanzas, and is recited both as a *rakṣā* and as homage (*vandanā*). Examples in Pāli include the *Jayamaṅgalagāthā* (invoking the power of the eight victories of the Jina), the *Sattamahāṭṭhānagāthā* (homage to seven sites in the vicinity of the Bodhi-tree at Vajrāsana) and the *Aṭṭhamahāṭṭhānagāthā* (homage to the eight great sites of Śākyamuni's life and career).[123] The *Bojjhaṅgaparitta* is a verse summary of three *sutta*s from the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, whose power lies in an invocation of truth (*etena saccavajjena sotthi te hotu sabbadā*). The *Āṭānāṭiyaparitta* is only an excerpt of the opening verses of the long *sūtra* of the same name, and many other *paritta* are similarly only extracts. Condensations of the seven books of the *Abhidhamma*, the *Sattapakaraṇa-abhidhamma*, are among the most common manuscripts found in Thai and Khmer collections.

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[120] *Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā*, vol. 2, p. 91.6. I owe the reference to von Hinüber.

[121] See von Hinüber 1996, pp. 43–44. In fact, one text is not found in the Pāli *Tripiṭaka*, as the author himself notes.

[122] For these, see Skilling 1992.

[123] For the last two, see Skilling and Pakdeekham 2010.

The examples that I have given are all in Pāli. We know much less about collections used in other traditions, although it is likely that many of the fragmentary manuscripts of Central Asia belonged to liturgical or apotropaic collections. The Sarvāstivādins had collections of the *Mahāsūtra*s; the lists of titles and the *Mahāsūtra*s preserved in Tibetan show the diverse type of texts which could be used as *rakṣā*.[124] In Nepal, there is the famous *Pañcarakṣā*, and in Nepal and Tibet there are numerous collections of *dhāraṇī*s (*dhāraṇīsaṃgraha*, *gzuṅs 'dus*), which include texts parallel to the Pāli *Paritta* and to the *hṛdaya*s of the great Mahāyāna *sūtra*s.

The collections were (and are) transmitted in independent manuscripts or books, "outside the formal canon"; they were (and are) committed to memory. They usually mix canonical and non-canonical material, but the distinction between the two is not meaningful to the users. Whatever modern scholarship may say about their authenticity, for tradition their authority is unimpeachable, and many indeed invoke the power of truth (*sacca-adhiṭṭhāna*, *satya-adhiṣṭhāna*). Their very efficacy lies in their truth, in the fact that they are the word of the Buddha. Even those that are abstracts or condensations of narratives or of *sūtra*s transmit the power of the word, deeds, or truths of the Buddha and other realized beings. Perhaps the condensed version is even more powerful, as in the "essence formulas" (*hṛdaya*) that concentrate entire collections or texts into a few syllables. Their recitation invokes the presence of the Buddha, which dispels dangers and bestows felicities.

X. *Questions without Conclusion*

What was the situation on the ground at the time of Vasubandhu and Buddhaghosa? It is likely that they both saw a Buddhism with multiple recensions of *Tripiṭaka*s, with different *nikāya*s making competing claims to possess the authentic word. Buddhism had undergone disruption in some parts of India, and the golden age, if there ever was one, had passed. Certainly the great age of composition and compilation had passed, issuing in a period of consolidation, condensation, and attempts at reconciliation of different views.

I have shown, I hope, that the individual *Sūtra-piṭaka*s of different schools, the Mahāvihāra and Sarvāstivāda, each contained texts that the other did not possess, and that these texts were fully authoritative to the

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[124] See Skilling 1997b, vol. 2, parts 1 and 2, tables 1–3.

school in question. Each school accuses the other schools of adding books to the canon, and each, in its own way, is right. The *Piṭaka*s of different schools are products of different contexts, different imperatives, and different principles of redaction.

To what needs did these "new texts" respond? To what degree were the needs doctrinal, to what degree were they social? To what degree were they generated by historical change, by geographies, by localisations, dislocations, disruptions? Texts were designed, selected, or promoted to fulfill specific and socially significant functions: protection against calamity (*rakṣā*), promotion of welfare (*svastigāthā*, *svastyayanagāthā*), rejoicing in merit (*anumodanā*), mobilization of funds and works through promise of blessings (*ānisaṃsā*), source books for sermons (*deśanā*).[125] Texts were canonized by function, and I wonder whether they were ever meant to be absolute statements of the *buddhavacana* in the abstract.

The primary evolution is one of ideas, not one of texts. Texts are bounded; ideas are not. Modern scholarship has set up chronological hierarchies of authenticity: from canonical to paracanonical, to postcanonical, to noncanonical, to apocryphal. This hierarchy coincides to some degree with traditional models. For example, the Mahavihāra tradition has *Pāli*, *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, *Mūlaṭīkā*, *Anuṭīkā*, *Pakaraṇavisesa*, etc. We have no evidence for such a tiered system of commentary in North India, where the main contrast is between *buddhavacana* and *śāstra*.

When we take the role of the *saṃgītikāraka*s into account, it is obvious that every word of a *sūtra* or of a *Tripiṭaka* cannot be *buddhavacana*. This fact, recognized by Buddhist tradition, is sometimes ignored in modern scholarship.

> All of these canonical collections reflect what the schools concerned (Theravāda, Mahāsāṃghika, Sarvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, etc.) eventually considered to be *the* [author's emphasis] Canon [author's capitalization], the authentic statement of the teaching of the Buddha as remembered, transmitted, and eventually written down. Each school claimed to represent unadulterated the original Buddhism of the Buddha. . . . In the Theravāda tradition, all the contents of the *Tipiṭaka* are held to stem from the Buddha himself either directly or through his active approval of the teaching of other enlightened monks.[126]

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[125] Without question many or most texts were (and are) multi-purpose.
[126] Williams 2000, p. 31.

I find a number of problems in this statement. First, all canons contain a great deal of narrative material, which tradition attributes, not unreasonably, to the editors, the *saṃgītikāraka*s (although we may reasonably ask, "which *saṃgītikāraka*s?"). This is explicit in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya* and in the Pāli commentaries. Canons are the work of *saṃgītikāra*s, of successions of editorial committees; they contain the statements of the Buddha, within narrative settings, and the statements of others—as the *vinaya* remarks, of auditors, sages, and deities. They contain statements of Māra (*mārabhāṣita*) and of opponents of the Buddha like Devadatta. Narrative truth is efficacious in its own right; it edifies, inspires, and entertains. But it is not, and does not pretend to be, the *word* of the Buddha. Thus the canons are not—and cannot be—coterminous with *buddhavacana*, the "speech of the Buddha." Secondly, we do not have evidence that "each school claimed to represent unadulterated the original Buddhism of the Buddha." Williams may be projecting a selective Theravādin perspective onto the other schools. For some of the schools, we have no evidence whatsoever that they made such a claim, while for others the evidence suggests that they did not make such a claim at all.

The question of authenticity is not simple. It is not a binary question, as it is often presented: it is not a question of Theravāda versus the other *nikāya*s, or Theravāda versus Mahāyāna, or Mahāyāna versus Theravāda. The positions of different schools and texts agree on many points, while even within a single school there is disagreement about what texts were *buddhavacana*, what texts not, what texts were *nītārtha*, which *neyārtha*, and so on. Texts were continually measured against the sayings of the Buddha, and all schools sought to avoid *sūtravirodha*. But given that textual plurality was the rule, and that, as diverse strategies of exegesis developed, a single text or statement could yield multiple meanings, decisions of authority were never final.

ABBREVIATIONS

P   *Eiin Pekin ban saizō daizōkyō* 影印北京版西蔵大蔵経 (The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition), 168 vols., ed. Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 . Tokyo; Kyoto: Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1955–61.

T   *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵經 . 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭 . Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–34.

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