

Studies in Pāli Commentarial Literature, Sources, Controversies and Insights. By Endo Toshiichi. HKU: CBS Publication Series. Hong Kong: Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, 2013, xiv + 270 pp. ISBN: 978-988-16843-2-5.

The present book is a collection of Endo's previously published articles with new additions that update his studies to reflect the latest research standards. As the title of his work aptly captures, he treats three main issues: the sources of the Pāli commentaries, some controversies and important insights into their chronology. Building upon Sodo Mori's monumental work "A Study of the Pāli Commentaries: Theravādic Aspects of the *Aṭṭhakathās*" (Tokyo: Sankibo, 1984), Endo discerns five important sources of the Pāli commentaries: the *aṭṭhakathā*, the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, views of different *bhāṇakā* (reciters), the views of *keci* (some) and *apare*, (others) and references to *pothaka* (book or manuscript). The author introduces two highly useful concepts in his work: the IOC and the SRIOC. The commentaries brought by Mahinda from India in the 3rd century B.C. are called the 'Indian Original Commentaries (IOC)'. Since they were subsequently translated and preserved in Sinhalese, these translations are called the 'Sinhala Rendition of the Indian Original Commentaries (SRIOC)', which Endo identifies with the *aṭṭhakathā* (singular number). The *aṭṭhakathā* (plural number) on the other hand, are complex in nature and cannot be used as effectively in evidence as its singular form.

Endo emphasizes that it is important to distinguish the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* and the *aṭṭhakathā* (sg.) as two separate sources of the present Pāli commentaries. The *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* are sometimes misunderstood as the Sihaḷa commentaries. This misunderstanding was already rectified to a great extent by E.W. Adikaram, the pioneer of the Pāli commentarial studies in Sri Lanka, whose research (Adikaram 1946, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*) opened a new horizon in the field of Pāli commentarial literature as independent source-material for the study of Theravāda Buddhism. Endo demonstrates how the time difference is the key to understanding how the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* were the commentaries to both the *Tipitaka* and the *aṭṭhakathā* (sg.) and as such played the role of giving additional information for exegetical purposes often interspersed with anecdotes. They were utilized for further elaboration and added information, which again implies that they were compiled at a later time than the *aṭṭhakathā* (sg.). Also, the fact that 'pāli' (sacred texts), *aṭṭhakathā* (sg.) and *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, in this order of im-

portance, are referred to as authorities in the Pāli commentaries, suggests that they were distinct sources.

The expansion of the SRIOC had been completed by the time of King Vaṭṭa-gāmaṇī-Abhaya of the 1st century B.C., when the Buddhist texts were committed to writing. During the reign of this king, a famine lasting twelve years struck Sri Lanka, a disaster resulting in turmoil within the country. This socio-political chaos was to change many aspects relating to the hitherto accepted Buddhist traditions in Sri Lanka. One of the changes the Saṅgha had to initiate was the method of transmission of the Buddhist texts from oral to written. Under these circumstances, that were unfavorable to the perpetuation of the Mahāvihāra tradition, the *bhikkhus* of the Mahāvihāra decided to homogenize the Buddhist texts and commit them to writing. The *Tipiṭaka*, together with its commentaries, were then in written form. Once the *aṭṭhakathā* (sg.) became written documents during that so-called Fourth Buddhist Council, a new class of Sinhalese commentaries became necessary, namely the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā* (and also some other commentaries like the *Mahāpaccarī-aṭṭhakathā*, *Kurundī-aṭṭhakathā* were compiled) to provide a forum for the Mahāvihāravāsins to add new exegeses and other anecdotes of later origins, necessary for the preservation of the Mahāvihāra identity against its rivals. This suggests a very important historical evolution of the Sinhalese commentaries. Endo's vision of the chronological sequence of events and the formation of the *Sihala-aṭṭhakathā*, is an important yardstick for the investigations that follow in his book.

It is further demonstrated how two sets of names play a decisive role in determining which source is referred to when quoted in the Pāli commentaries: if they are in what Endo calls "the first class of names" (*Dīgha-aṭṭhakathā*, *Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā*, etc.), it is rather difficult to determine whether a commentary referred to is an old commentary (*sihala-aṭṭhakathā*) or a Pāli one and therefore other circumstantial evidence has to be called in aid. But if "the second class of names" (*Sumaṅgalavilāsini*, *Papañcasūdanī*, etc.) is employed, the source referred to is undoubtedly a Pāli commentary. This determination of whether these sources were Sihala sources or Pāli ones is a key element in Endo's search to clarify the ambiguity of identification of the references in the Pāli commentaries.

In addition to the types of *bhāṇakas* already examined by Adikaram and Mori in the works cited above, the book under review also treats *akkhara bhāṇakā*, reciters or specialists in 'phonetics'; *vyañjanabhāṇakā*, specialists in the letters or sound of words; *vaṇṇabhāṇaka*, probably specialists in praising; (all three related

to different branches of the science of writing including phonetics); *padabhāṇaka*, specialists in syllables or sentences. The author's investigation of the views attributed to different *bhāṇakas* in the Pāli commentaries indicates that the source material, specifically the *Mahā-atthakathā*, utilized by the commentators for the writing of the Pāli commentaries contained more information than was actually translated. This inference becomes more realistic as many views ascribed to different *bhāṇakas* cannot be verified or corroborated in the existing Pāli canon or commentaries.

Next, the author presents an important and in-depth study of the views of 'some' or 'others' found in the commentator Dhammapāla's *Paramatthadīpanī*. In addition to the sources that represent the Mahāvihāra orthodoxy, the Pāli commentaries often refer to different views of people or groups of individuals. The content of the views of 'some' or 'others' ranges from simple grammatical discrepancies in cases, different readings of the canonical passages, historical facts, and disciplinary rules, to very intricate doctrinal matters. Their views, sometimes rejected, at other times supplementing and used to strengthen the Mahāvihāra stance, can be roughly classified into 2 basic categories: individuals or groups of individuals within the Mahāvihāra fraternity and those of the non-Mahāvihāra fraternity. They are quoted in the forms of views or opinions of 'some', or 'others' (*keci*, *apare*, *eke*, *aññe*, *ye...te*, *ekacce*, *itare*, etc.) However, the different use of terms does not in any way indicate that the commentators had specific individuals or traditions in mind when referring to the views of others. On the contrary, these terms are in many cases interchangeable. On the other hand, when some teachers of the Mahāvihāra fraternity are specifically referred to by the commentators, the term 'ācariyā' (teachers) preceded by *eke*, *ekacce*, *aññe*, and *keci* is invariably used. Identification in these instances is thus less problematic than independently used anonymous words like *keci*, *apare*, and so on. Yet another method adopted by the commentators when referring to 'some' or 'others' is that they employ the additional word 'elders' (*therā*): *eke therā*, *ekacce therā*, *keci therā*, *ye therā*, *apare therā* and *itare therā*. Endo demonstrates how these 'elders' (*therā*) refer only to the Mahāvihāravāsins and the non-Mahāvihāravāsins, but not to the Abhayagirivāsins and its allies.

Very valuable for future research is the author's specification of expressions of disagreement as found in Dhammapāla's *Paramatthadīpanī*: 'taṃ atthakathāsu paṭikkhitam' (that is rejected in the commentaries), 'taṃ akāraṇam' (that is unreasonable), 'taṃ na sundaram' (that is not good or proper), 'taṃ na gahetabham'

(that should not be taken or adopted), ‘*taṃ ... matimattaṃ*’ (that is mere speculation), ‘*taṃ asiddham*’ (that is not complete). These phrases will certainly help future scholars to reach further results for the other commentaries.

The chapter on the use of ‘*potthaka*’ (book or manuscript) in the Pāli commentaries seeks to investigate the very complex nature of this source. The term *potthaka* denotes any kind of written book or manuscript, and in a much broader sense any book or manuscript of any period, whereas the *aṭṭhakathā* refer to a specific genre of literature. This difference is an important distinction between these two terms. *Aṭṭhakathā* is the name given to a specific source while *potthaka* can be one or more written manuscripts of that *aṭṭhakathā*, either in Sīhala or Pāli. Still, their identification remains difficult, since one single text may have had plural manuscripts and written books or manuscripts may have been preserved at different monasteries.

The Pāli *Tipiṭaka* contains references to the possible disappearance of the True *Dhamma* (*saddhamma-antaradhāna*), which cannot be adequately understood and appreciated without comprehension of the socio-political and religious changes surrounding the famous famine during the time of King Vaṭṭagāminī-Abhaya (103-102, 89-77 B.C.), already referred to above. This turmoil had far-reaching effects and exercised a considerable impact upon the concept of the True *Dhamma* coming to an end and safeguarding it with particular emphasis on ‘*pariyatti*’. This move towards preservation was probably also due to a sense of rivalry the Mahāvihāravāsins seemingly had towards the Abhayagiri fraternity after its establishment in the 1st century B.C.

In his chapter on the ‘*Shan-chien-lü-p’i-pò-sha*’, attempts are made to critically examine Guruge’s arguments (Ananda Guruge 2005, “*Shan-jian-lu-piposha* as an Authentic Source on the Early History of Buddhism and Asoka”, in *Dhamma-Vinaya: Essays in Honour of Bhikkhu Dhammavihari*, edited by Asanga Tilakaratne, et al. Mahāragama: Sri Lanka Association of Buddhist Studies, pp. 95-96) that the ‘*Shan-chien-lü-p’i-pò-sha*’ is not a direct translation of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*. According to Endo, Guruge’s hypothesis ignores the chronological sequence of events and formation of the *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā* in general. The latter has not paid adequate attention to the circumstances under which the present Pāli commentaries were translated and edited from the *Sīhala-aṭṭhakathā*. Guruge’s arguments are by no means convincing enough to reverse the opinion that has been hitherto held by many scholars. For similarities between the two, which fact Guruge has not referred to adequately, are evidently far greater than what he claims are

differences, and even most of those differences can be explained logically and reasonably to support the thesis that the ‘*Shan-chien-lü-p’i-p’ò-sha*’ is an abridged translation of the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*. Endo then turns to the evidence that the translation was done from Pāli and that the translator knew Pāli sources. I can supplement his argument with a recent article of mine that shows the same results, based on a study of the entries from T24n1462 in the *Fanfanyu* (T54n2130), Baochang’s Sanskrit-Chinese lexicon that was compiled as early as A.D. 517 (G. Pinte 2012, “False Friends in the *Fanfanyü* “ in *Acta Orientalia*, 65 (1), pp. 97-104).

The final chapters in Endo’s book focus on the editorial methods of Buddhaghosa and the other commentators. There is ample reason to believe that the commentators edited and rearranged the content of the *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* to a great extent while translating them into Pāli. The author concludes that Buddhaghosa was free to use his discretion whenever need arose even against the views of the Mahāvihāra tradition. The Theravāda tradition, as found in the Pāli commentaries, is not always coherent and intelligible. Among the commentaries, incongruent exegeses are seen, suggesting that the tradition was a mixture of diverse views expressed and upheld by individual members of the Mahāvihāra fraternity. Further, many references to views of other schools are made in the Pāli commentaries. Undoubtedly there must have been diverse circumstances that compelled or created a necessity for the commentators to add their own comments in order to render the contextual meanings more intelligible: when differences or discrepancies can be discerned between the sacred texts (*pāḷi*) and the old commentaries (*Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā*) or between the old commentaries themselves; when and if the views of elders (*ācariyas*) of the Mahāvihāra fraternity were different from those according to the sacred texts or the old commentaries or when criticizing the views of other schools. Endo shows how Buddhaghosa was giving his own comments even by subjecting the *Mahā-aṭṭhakathā*, one of the most important and authoritative old commentaries within the Mahāvihāra tradition, to a critical perusal. This testifies that Buddhaghosa was not just blindly editing and translating the old commentaries into Pāli. This line of research is extended to the question as to whether the introductions and epilogues are actually translations of the old sources or new additions made by the commentators themselves.

The author concludes his comprehensive study with indications that some Buddhist texts favoured a particular textual tradition. He shows, more specifically, that the textual tradition of the *Vinaya-aṭṭhakathā* often followed that of

the *Majjhima-aṭṭhakathā*, but the opposite direction of indebtedness was not the case.

Although some aspects of the Pāli commentaries treated in this book have been known for a while now, the added value of the book under revision lies in bringing together all relevant material, including the important results reached by Japanese scholars, which is otherwise not easily accessible for those who can't read Japanese. Continuing the monumental work of Sodo Mori, the author has reached valuable new results, especially on the chronological sequence of events and the formation of the *Sihala-aṭṭhakathā*. Toshiichi Endo has hereby succeeded in creating a basic work of reference, worthy to be read by everyone working on Pāli commentarial literature.

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