

ART. XIV.—*On the Origin of the Buddhist Arthakathās.*

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About eighteen months ago I was engaged in preparing an edition of Brahmajāla Sutta, and of Buddhaghosa's commentary upon it which forms the first section of the Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī. Buddhaghosa's commentary upon Brahmajāla Sutta is one of the most important of his writings, since it contains a detailed account of the First General Council, held immediately after Buddha's death for the purpose of settling the text of the Buddhist Scriptures. Intending to publish this work in the same volume with the Brahmajāla which it comments upon, I began, and made considerable progress with, a translation of it. At the very outset I met with a difficulty, in the shape of an historical statement in Buddhaghosa's introductory verses which seemed in the highest degree improbable and untrustworthy. The first ten stanzas of the introduction run as follows:—

*Karuṇāsītalahadayam paññāpajjotavihatamohatamam
 Sanarāmaralokagarum vande sugatam gativimuttam.
 Buddho 'pi buddhabhāvam bhāvetvā c'eva sacchikatvā ca
 Yam upagato gatamalam vande tam anuttaram dhammam.
 Sugatassa orasānam puttānam mārasenamathanānam
 Atthannam pi samūham sirasā vande ariyasangham.
 Iti me pasannamatino ratanattayavandanāmayaṃ puññaṃ
 Yam suvihatanantarāyo hutvā tass' ānubhāvena,
 Dighassa dighasuttāṅkitassa nipunasso āgamavarassa
 Buddhānubuddhasaṃvaṇṇitassa saddhāvacahaguṇassa
 Atthappakāsanattham atthakathā ādito vasisatehi
 Pañcahi yā saṅgitā anusāṅgitā ca pacchā pi,
 Sihāladīpaṃ pana ābhatā 'tha vasinā mahāmahindena,
 Thapitā Sihalabhāsāya dīpavāsinam atthāya,*

*Apanetvā tato 'ham Sīhālabhāsāṃ manoramam bhāsam
 Tantinayānuechavikam āropento, vigatadosam
 Samayam avilomento therānam theravamsappadipānam
 Sunipunaviniṇchayānam mahāvihārādhivāsīnam,
 Hitvā punappunāgatam attham, attham pakāsayissāmi
 Sujānassa ca tuṭṭhattham ciraṭṭhitatthañ ca dhammassa.*

"I make obeisance to Him whose heart is tempered with mercy, in whom the darkness of error is dispelled by the lamp of wisdom, the teacher of the world with its men and angels, the welcome Being who is released from the bonds of existence.¹ I revere the spotless and perfect Truth, by contemplating which, beholding it face to face, the Enlightened attained to perfect knowledge. I bow my head before the holy Church, that congregation of eight orders of men, true sons of Buddha, who have trampled on the hosts of sin. While thus with a heart full of faith I render honour to the Three Jewels, if there be any merit in the deed, by the virtue thereof may all dangers be averted from my path. The commentary intended to explain the meaning of the noble Long Collection, that scripture distinguished for its long discourses, subtle of meaning, praised by Buddha and his apostles, possessed of the qualities that sustain faith,—the commentary, I say, upon this Scripture was at the first Council rehearsed by five hundred holy elders, and in later times rehearsed again and yet again.² And it was carried by the saintly Mahendra to the island of Ceylon, and for the sake of the dwellers in that isle translated by him into the Sinhalese language. And now rejecting the Sinhalese tongue, adopting the graceful language that accords so well with the order of Scripture, not contradicting the faultless conclusions of the elders of the priesthood who dwell at the Great Monastery,³ who are bright lights in the apostolic succession, men of skilful and subtle judgment,—for the edification of righteous men, and to the end that religion may

¹ Released from the five Gatis or states of existence, *i.e.*, existence as a deva, as a man, as a preta, as an animal, or as one suffering in hell.

² *Viz.*, at the 2nd and 3rd Councils.

³ In Ceylon.

long endure, I proceed to expound the meaning of my text, omitting all unnecessary repetitions."

We find here a distinct statement that a commentary on that portion of the Buddhist Canon which contains the Brahmajāla was rehearsed, and its text settled, at the First Council; so that, unless some explanation of the passage be found, we must suppose that Buddhaghosa, the Augustine of Buddhist divines, believed that a commentary on Buddha's sermons actually existed during Buddha's lifetime, and that its text was settled immediately after his death. After vainly endeavouring to solve the problem, I wrote to my friend Mr. J. F. Dickson, of the Ceylon Civil Service, and asked him whether he could obtain for me from any of his native friends a satisfactory, or at any rate a probable, explanation of the difficulty. After a long delay I received from Mr. Dickson, on the 15th of April, a paper on this subject by a Sinhalese native gentleman which seemed to me so able and scholar-like, that, although it was only intended for my perusal, I lost no time in obtaining permission to publish it in this Journal. A singular interest attaches to this essay from the circumstance that it is the work of a liberal Buddhist. I print it unaltered, only transliterating the Pāli citations.

R. C. CHILDERS.

On the Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī, and its allusions to an ancient Atthakathā.

It must be admitted that the point raised by Mr. Childers is one of grave importance as affecting the credibility of Buddhaghosa and the authenticity of all the commentaries on the Tipiṭaka. From a missionary point of view, the astounding statement that a commentary on Buddha's discourses existed during his lifetime, and was rehearsed along with those discourses at the First Great Council,¹ appears so improbable and unnatural as at once to justify one in discrediting the testimony; and I doubt not that missionary orientalists will hail the discovery as a valuable addition

¹ Immediately after Buddha's death.—R. C. C.

to their stock of arguments against the genuineness and authenticity of the Buddhist Scriptures. Indeed I found it difficult at first to obtain the opinions of some of my learned friends of the Buddhist priesthood on this point, as they seemed to regard it as another thunderbolt intended to be levelled against their religion by some enthusiastic missionary; and it was only after explaining to them the object of the inquiry, and the literary character of the gentleman who started the apparent difficulty, that I could induce them to look the question fairly in the face.

I am glad to say that most of my clerical Buddhist friends with whom I have consulted on this subject agree with me on the necessity of giving a wider and more extended signification than is generally allowed to the word *Atthakathá* as applied by Buddhaghosa in the passage cited.

The word, as is well known, is compounded of two terms, *attha*, "meaning," and *kathá*, "a statement, explanation, or narrative," the dental t being changed to the cerebral by a latitude in the rules of permutation.¹ The literal meaning of the compound term would thus amount to simply "an explanation of meaning." Taking this wider sense of the word as a basis for the solution of the problem, I think the statement of Buddhaghosa in his preface to the commentary on the *Dígha Nikáya* is not so hopelessly irreconcilable with probable and presumable facts as would at first sight appear. On a careful perusal of the two accounts given by Buddhaghosa of the proceedings of the three famous Councils in the *Sumaṅgala Vilásiní* and the *Samanta Pásádiká*, this view will, I think, be found to be very reasonable. It must be admitted that no actual commentary, in the sense that the westerners attach to that term, and like that which has been handed down to us by Buddhaghosa, existed either in the lifetime of Buddha or immediately after his death. The reasons adduced by Mr. Childers, apart from others that can easily be added, against such a supposition, are overwhelmingly convincing. But if we suppose that by the word

¹ *Attho kathiyati etáyáti atthakathá, thakdrassa thakáram katvá dukkhassa piṇanattño ti ááisu viya.*—*Tiká* of Samanta Pásádiká.

Aṭṭhakathá in his preface Buddhaghosa only meant to convey the idea that at the various Councils held for the purpose of collocating the discourses and sayings of Buddha, the meanings to be attached to different terms—chiefly those that appear to have been borrowed from the Hindu system of ascetic philosophy¹—were discussed and properly defined, then the difficulty of conceiving the contemporaneous existence of the commentaries and the Piṭakas would be entirely removed.

This view of the subject will appear still further borne out if we briefly glance over the history of the First Convocation, as narrated by Buddhaghosa himself. The first proposal to hold an assembly of priests for the purpose of collocating Buddha's discourses was made by Mahá Kassapa, the chief of the seven hundred thousand priests who assembled at Kusinára to celebrate the obsequies of the departed saint. Seven days had hardly elapsed after that mournful occurrence, when signs of discontent at monastic restraint manifested themselves, and a disaffected disciple of Buddha named Subhadda openly proclaimed that now their master was no more the ties of discipline should be relaxed, if not broken. The words of consolation offered by this old monk to his brethren in distress are certainly remarkable, as it would be difficult to say whether they betoken more the callousness of his feelings or the depravity of his heart: "Brethren, enough of this sorrow, weep not, lament not. We are well rid of that Arch-priest, having been in constant dread of his declarations, This befits you, this befits you not. Now, therefore, what we desire we shall do; what we do not desire that shall we not do."² To a sagacious mind like that of Mahá Kassapa it was not difficult to perceive what language like this foreshadowed, and he instantly formed the resolve to congregate the priesthood, and to collect and arrange the laws and doctrines proclaimed by his Master. Hardly two months had elapsed³ before this active mind brought about

¹ See note A.

² *Alam devuso mđ socittha mđ paridevitttha, upadduta ca homa "idaṃ vo kappati idaṃ vo na kappatitī," idāni pana mayam yaṃ icchissāma taṃ karissāma yaṃ na icchissāma taṃ na karissāma.*—Samanta Pāsādikā.

³ See note B.

what it had contemplated, and the result was the Council of the Five Hundred, convoked at Rájagaha, under the auspices of King Ajátasattu, for the purpose of collecting and arranging the doctrines and discourses of Buddha.

The proceedings of this Council appear to have been conducted in a very orderly and systematic manner, which is the more surprising when we consider that monastic autocracy was about to give place to a form of church government prescribed by the great Founder himself, but which was now to be established and tested for the first time. Mahá Kassapa, whom Buddha indirectly indicated as his equal in point of superhuman mental acquirements,¹ assumed the office of Moderator, and by the unanimous consent of the synod Upáli was elected as the best qualified of their order to repeat the Vinaya, and Ānanda the Dhamma; the Council having previously decided that the Vinaya was the most material for the permanence of Buddhism. Now it is important to observe that the catechetical form was used in the collocation of both the Laws and Doctrines. "Afterwards Mahá Kassapa, having seated himself in the presidential chair, questioned the venerable Upáli respecting the Vinaya in this wise. Brother Upáli, where was the first Párájika promulgated? My lord, at Vesáli. On whose account? On account of Sudinna, the son of Kalanda. With regard to what offence? To fornication. Then did the venerable Mahá Kassapa question the venerable Upáli on the offence, the cause, the offender, the primary law, the secondary law, the transgression and the non-transgression, relating to the first law enacted against mortal sin. And the venerable Upáli explained as he was questioned."² Such was also the method employed in the synod in the collocation of the Dhamma:—"Brother

¹ *Aham bhikkhave yávad eva akañkhami vivice 'eva kámehi-Pe-paṭhamam jhānam upasapajja vihardmi Kassapo pi bhikkhave yávad eva akañkhati-Pe-viharati.*—Samanta Pāsādikā.

² *Tato Mahákassapo thedsane nisiditv dyasmantam Upālim vinayam pucchi, paṭhamam dvuso Upāli párájikaṃ kattha paññattan ti, Vesāliyam bhante ti, kam drabbhāti Sudinnam Kalandaputtam drabbhāti, kasmim vatthusmin ti, methuna-dhamme ti. Atha kho dyasmā Mahákassapo dyasmantam Upālim paṭhamassa párájikkassa vatthum pi pucchi niddam pi pucchi puggalam pi pucchi paññattim pi pucchi anuppaññattim pi pucchi dpatim pi pucchi andpattim pi pucchi. Puṭṭho puṭṭho Upālitthero vissajesi.*

Ānanda, where was the Brahmajāla delivered? My lord, between Rājagaha and Nālanda," and so on. Though it is subsequently added that "at the conclusion of the questions and answers the five hundred Arhats repeated the texts together in the order in which they had been collocated,"¹ it is difficult to believe that all the five hundred rehearsed the long narratives prefixed to some of Buddha's discourses in the same words and style that they are now clothed in. Buddhaghosa's account of the synod is gathered from tradition, which was very probably embodied in the Sinhalese aṭṭhakathās, and there can be little doubt that the main facts are correct; but that he drew largely from tradition, written and oral, and possibly in some instances from imagination, will I think appear clear to any careful reader of the commentaries. Witness for instance his relation of Ānanda's mysterious entrance into the assembly: *paṭhaviyaṃ nimujjītvā attano āsane yeva attānaṃ dassesi, ākāseṇa gantvā nisīdīti pi eke*, "He plunged into the earth and showed himself in his seat, and also *some say* he went through the air and sat down." He does not say which version is correct, but is quite satisfied with both accounts, and is evidently quite willing to let his readers choose whichever they like. Buddhaghosa throughout all his writings appears to have set one great object prominently in view, namely to inspire reverence for what he considered as supreme authority. When he came to Ceylon for the purpose of translating the Sinhalese commentaries, he found a great many extant at that time,² and out of these commentaries, embracing no doubt various shades of opinion, and representing different schools of thought, he had to expunge, abridge, enlarge, and make a new commentary.³ Now how could he do all this, and at the same time preserve undiminished among future generations the same reverence and authority in which the older commentaries were held

¹ *Pucchavissajjanapariyosdne pañca arahantasatthi saṅgaham dropitanāyena eva gaṇasajjhāyam akāmsu.*

² These are distinctly enumerated by him—

Mahā-aṭṭhakathā c'eva Mahāpaccarim eva ca

Kurundi cāti tisso pi Sihaṭṭhakathā imā.—Samanta Pāsādikā.

³ See note C.

by the Buddhists of that age? The thought struck him, as no doubt it would strike any careful reader of the Buddhist Scriptures, that a large portion of the writings contained in that canon appear to be explanations and definitions of terms used by Buddha, and also that a great many discourses said to have been delivered by Buddha to certain individuals have not been recorded.¹ Now what more easy to conceive, or what more probable, than that they formed the nucleus of matter for the formation of a commentary, and that at the First General Council, which lasted seven months, the elders, who had all seen and heard Buddha, should have discussed them, and decided on the method of interpreting and teaching the more recondite portions of Buddhist philosophy? and what therefore if he should say in somewhat exaggerated language, "the commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya was at the beginning discussed (or composed, or merged into the body of the Scriptures) by five hundred holy elders"?—for the original words may admit of such a construction.² Nor will this opinion appear merely hypothetical if we carefully peruse the account given by Buddhaghosa of the commentaries in his Samanta Pāsādikā. In his metrical introduction to that work, after the usual doxology, he explains the necessity of having a proper Pāli Commentary on the Vinaya, and then proceeds to set forth what he is about to do :—

*Samvaṇṇanam tañ ca samārabhanto tassā mahā-aṭṭhakatham
sarīraṃ*

*Katvā, mahāpaccariyaṃ tath' eva kurundināmādisu vissutāsu
Vinicchayo aṭṭhakathāsu vutto yo yuttam attham apariccajanto,
Tato pi antogadhatheravādam, samvaṇṇanam sammā samā-
rabhissam ;*

*Tam me nisāmentu pasannacittā therā ca bhikkhū navamajjhimā ca
Dhammappadīpassa tathāgatassa sakkacca dhammam patimāna-
yantā.*

*Buddhena dhammo vinayo ca vutto, yo tassa puttehi tath' eva ñāto,
Yo yehi tesam matim accajantā yasmā pure aṭṭhakathā akāṃsu*

¹ See note D.

² *Aṭṭhakathā ādito vasisatehi pañcahi saṅgītā.*

*Tasmā hi yaṃ atthakathāsu vuttaṃ taṃ, vajjayitvāna pamā-
dalekhaṃ,
Sabbam pi sikkhāsu sagāravānaṃ yasmā pamāṇaṃ idha paṇḍita-
naṃ.*

*Tato ca bhāsantaram eva hitvā, vitthāramaggañ ca samāsavitvā,
Vinicchayaṃ sabbam asesavitvā, tantikkamaṃ kañci avokkamitvā,
Suttantikānaṃ vacanānaṃ atthaṃ suttānurūpaṃ paridīpayanti
Yasmā ayaṃ hessati vaṇṇanā pi sakkacca tasmā anusikkhitabbā.*

The translation is rather difficult, owing to the complexity and conciseness of the construction, but it may be rendered thus :—"In commencing this commentary, I shall, having embodied therein the Mahā Atthakathā, without excluding any proper meaning from the decisions contained in the Mahā Paccarī, as also in the famous Kurundi and other commentaries, and including the opinions of the Elders,—perform my task well. Let the young, the middle-aged, and the elderly priests, who entertain a proper regard for the doctrines of the Tathāgata, the luminary of truth, listen to my words with pleasure. The Dhamma, as well as the Vinaya, was declared by Buddha, his (sacerdotal) sons understood it in the same sense as it was delivered; and inasmuch as in former times they (the Sinhalese commentators) composed the commentaries without disregarding their (the sacerdotal sons') opinions, therefore, barring any error of transcription, everything contained therein is an authority to the learned in this priesthood who respect ecclesiastical discipline. From these (Sinhalese) commentaries, after casting off the language, condensing detailed accounts, including authoritative decisions, and without overstepping any Pāli idiom (I shall proceed to compose). And as this commentary will moreover be explanatory of the meaning of words belonging to the Suttas in conformity with the sense attached to them therein, therefore ought it the more diligently to be studied."

Now, in this important passage, Buddhaghosa make mention of three distinct commentaries, and refers to others then in existence, besides naming another authority called *Thera Vāda* (the opinions of the Elders). The three commentaries enumerated are—1, *Mahā Atthakathā*; 2, *Mahā Paccarī*;

3, *Kurundi*. Were these three commentaries separate works on the Vinaya, the Sutta, and the Abhidhamma respectively, or did they each embrace the whole of the Tipiṭaka? It is difficult to answer this question with positive certainty, but there are good reasons to incline to the latter opinion. The glossarists (authors of the *Ṭīkās*) give but a very imperfect account of these works. However, it will be well to hear what they say of them:—*Mahā atṭhakathā nāma paṭhamamahāsāṅgīti-ārūḥā mahākassapapamukhehi therehi katā mahāmahindena ānetvā Sihalabhāsāya katā mahā-atṭhakathā nāma jātā*, “Mahā Atṭhakathā is evidently what was gathered in the first great Council. It was made by the elders, with Kassapa as their chief. Having been brought by Mahā Mahinda, and converted into the Sinhalese language, it was called Mahā Atṭhakathā.” It is clear, therefore, that this is the same commentary (*atṭhakathā*) referred to by Buddhaghosa in his *Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī*. *Mahāpaccarī nāma Sihalabhāsāya ulumpam kira atthi tasmim nisiditvā katattā mahāpaccarī nāma jātā*, “It is said that there was a raft called in the Sinhalese language Mahā Paccarī; as this work was composed on that raft, it was called Mahā Paccarī.” *Kurundattakathā nāma Kurundaveḷuvihāro nāma atthi tasmim nisiditvā katattā kurundi nāma jātā*, “There is a vihāra called Kurundaveḷu; as the work was composed there, it was called Kurundi.” In their remarks on the word *ādi* in this verse, the authors of the *Sārattha Dīpanī* and the *Vimati Vinodanī Ṭīkās* enumerate two works called *Andhakatṭhakathā* and *Sanṅkhepatṭhakathā*, but the *Vajira Buddhi Ṭīkā* gives *Cullapaccarī* and *Andhakatṭhakathā*.¹

Thus it will be seen that the information furnished to us by the glossarists respecting these lost works is very meagre, and leads one to suspect that at their time almost all traces of them had disappeared, although in the *Pāli Muttaka* (a work written by one of these glossarists) reference is made to all the three commentaries. Mention is also made of the Mahā Atṭhakathā and another commentary called *Mūlatṭhakathā* at the end of the *Dīgha* and *Majjhima*

¹ See Preface to Minayeff's *Pātimokkha*, pages vii and viii, notes 9, 10, 11, 12.—R.C.C.

Nikāyas.¹ In the Sammoha Vinodanī (commentary on the Vibhaṅga), Buddhaghosa states that he composed that work "by taking the substance of the old commentaries."² It appears pretty clear therefore that all the Siṃhalese commentaries enumerated by Buddhaghosa were each separate works on the entire body of the Tipiṭaka. Those comments were probably more or less directed to the elucidation of one or more of the Piṭakas, but that each of them purported to be a separate and independent commentary on the entire Tipiṭaka I think there can be little room to doubt.

In his introduction to the Samanta Pāsādikā, Buddhaghosa uses the following words: "The Dhamma as well as the Vinaya was declared by Buddha, his sacerdotal sons understood it in the same sense as it was delivered; and, inasmuch as in former times they (*i.e.* the Siṃhalese commentators) made the commentaries without rejecting their (*i.e.* Buddha's immediate disciples') opinions, therefore, etc." This passage will, I think, explain the sense in which he uses the word *Atthakathā* in his preface to the Sumaṅgala Vilāsinī. For two things are clearly deducible from the passage, viz., that when Buddhaghosa speaks of the *Atthakathā* that existed in the earliest days of Buddhism, and almost contemporaneously with Buddha, he only refers to the method of explaining and interpreting the Buddhist Scriptures adopted by Buddha's immediate disciples, and also that Mahinda was not the sole composer of the commentaries, but that there were others who, either jointly with Mahinda or separately, composed comments on the Sacred Canon.³ One of the glossarists in expounding this passage takes a very sensible view of the matter. His words are:—*Buddhena dhammo vinayo ca vutto ti pālito ca atthato ca buddhena bhagavatā vutto, na hi bhagavatā aeyākatam tantipadam atthi, sabbesam yeva attho kathito, tasmā sammāsambuddhen' eva tiṇṇam piṭakānam atthavaṇṇanāk-kamo pi bhāsito ti daṭṭhabbam, tattha tattha bhagavatā pavattitā pakiṇṇakadesanā yeva hi atthakathā*, "The Dhamma as well as the Vinaya was declared by Buddha; that is, it was declared

¹ *Mūlatthakathāsāram dāya*, etc.

² *Pordatthakathānam sāram dāya*.

³ See note E.

by the blessed Buddha in words as in sense, for there is not one scriptural term which has not been defined by the Blessed One: the sense of all words has been truly expounded. Therefore it should be borne in mind that it is by the all-perfect Buddha himself that even the method of interpreting the three Pīṭakas has been propounded. In fact, the desultory discourses made by the Blessed One here and there, are what is meant by the word *Atthakathā*." My view of this subject therefore receives additional weight from the exposition given of Buddhaghosa's meaning by his glossarist.

Nor will this view receive less support from collateral facts connected with the life and ministry of the "Great Sage," who gave to the world a creed that has stood the test of time and the progress of the human intellect during upwards of twenty-four centuries. He renounced the world and all its pleasures in the vigour of life, being then in his twenty-ninth year, passed his days for six long years in a wilderness, subjecting his delicate frame to a severe course of mortification and penance, and at length, receiving the light of that philosophy by which he thought himself capable of explaining all the mysteries of nature, he entered upon a career of religious reformation which lasted for forty-five years. During this long period of uninterrupted labour, he not only preached and argued and conversed and travelled, but also legislated, and gave to his disciples a code of monastic discipline surpassed by no other system of monachism either in the East or West. Can it be imagined then that the *Tipiṭaka* contains *all* the words of Buddha? Undoubtedly not. To the followers of that faith it may contain "all that is necessary to salvation," but it assuredly does not record all and everything done and spoken by this almost superhuman intellect. If John could say of the pious Nazarene of Judæa that if all the things he had done should be written every one, the world itself could not contain the books, what length of hyperbole must be used in reference to the doings and sayings of the great philosopher and teacher of India, whose term of unremitted labour so greatly exceeded that of Jesus of Nazareth?

It is a hopeless task, as Mr. Childers says, to inquire into what has become of the old Sinhalese commentaries. No trace of them now exists. The early diffusion of the Páli language among the priesthood and learned laity, and the subsequent introduction of Sanskrit literature and Sanskrit verbiage into the once pure Elu,¹ must have so choked that language that it died out early, and its memory was cherished only by the lovers of Parnassus. For all philosophic and religious purposes the Páli and the Sanskritized Sinhalese began to be used from a very early period, and continue to be used to the present day.

L. COMRILLA VIJASINHA.

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NOTES.

(BY THE AUTHOR.)

Note A.—It is my opinion, although contrary to that of orthodox Buddhists, that the Buddhistic philosophy, in so far as regards its asceticism and self-purification, is derived from the Hindu system of Patanjali. I think a perusal of the Patanjali Yoga and its Commentary by Bhoja Rája will instinctively lead one to this conclusion, taking for granted, as it undoubtedly appears, that the Patanjali Yoga Sûtra was anterior to the Buddhistic era. It is quite clear that Buddha's first ascetic teachers, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddakārāma Putta, were followers of this system.

Note B.—It is evident from Buddhaghosa's narrative of the convocations that the Council of the Five Hundred (*pañcasatikasaṅgīti*) assembled within two months from the date of Buddha's death. The proposal by Mahā Kassapa to his brethren to go to Rājagaha for the purpose was made fourteen days after Buddha's death:—*Attha tathāgathassa parinibbānato sattasu sādhuḥkīlanadivasesu sattasu dhātupūjādivasesu vitivattesu addhamāso atikkanto*. After coming to Rājagaha the Theras were occupied during the first month in causing repairs to be made to the monasteries already abandoned by the priests, and afterwards informed the king Ajātasattu that their work was over, and requested him to furnish a hall of assembly (*sannisajjaṭṭhānaṃ*):—*Therā paṭhamamāsaṃ sabbavihāra-paṭisaṅkharānaṃ kārāpetvā rañño drocesuṃ*. The king accordingly

¹ The old Sinhalese Prākṛit, still used in writing poetry. The Sinhalese now spoken in Ceylon contains a vast admixture of words borrowed from Sanskrit.
—R.C.C.

caused an ornamental hall to be built "at the mouth of the cavern Sattapanni, on the slope of the mountain Vebhára." Making an allowance of a fortnight for the preparation of this hall, the First Buddhist Synod may be said to have assembled two months after the death of Buddha.

Note C.—It is evident that Buddhaghosa's task was not a simple translation of the Sinhalese commentaries into the Páli language. No great ability was required for this purpose, much less extraordinary talents. In his introduction to the Vinaya Aṭṭhakathá, he tells us briefly what he undertook to perform, "to translate, abridge, collate, systematize, etc.," in fact, to make a Páli variorum edition of the Sinhalese commentaries. No wonder that the learned Sinhalese priests of that period thought it prudent to test beforehand his latent talents by giving him a text from the sacred canon as a subject for a thesis. The result of this test was, as we know, the Visuddhi Magga, embodying the entire system of Buddhism.

Note D.—*Ekamantam nisinnassa kho Yasassa kulaputtassa Bhagavá anupubbikatham kathesi, seyyathidam dánakatham silakatham sagga-katham, kámanam ádinavam okáram saṅkilesam nekkhamme ánisamsam pakásesi : yadá Bhagavá aññási Yasam kulaputtam kallacittam muducittam vinivarana-cittam udaggacittam pasannacittam atha yá buddhanam sámukkamsiká dhammadesaná tam pakásesi, dukkham samudayam nirodham maggam*, "Then the Blessed One related to the genteel Yasa, who sat by his side, an orderly series of narratives, viz.: regarding charity, restraint, and heavenly pleasures; he discoursed on the evil, the vanity, the pollution of sensual pleasures, and the blessing of self-abnegation. Then when the Blessed One saw the genteel Yasa with a mind pliant, tender, unbiassed, jubilant, and complacent, he proclaimed that doctrinal truth originally discovered by Buddhas alone, viz., sorrow, its source, its destruction, its method of destruction."

Note E.—Mahinda came to Ceylon about 236 Anno Buddhæ, and Buddhaghosa about 956 A.B., so that a period of 720 years elapsed between the advent of the former to Ceylon, and that of the latter. During this long interval a goodly number of works on the tenets of Buddhism must have been composed. Perhaps the frequent allusions to the Mahá Aṭṭhakathá and Múlaṭṭhakathá, the "great commentary" and the "original commentary," refer to Mahinda's original work, and the Paccarí, Kurundi, etc., refer to subsequent compilations.