"DHAMMA'S TRANSMISSION AND THE PĀLI THERAVĀDA CANON"

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Abstract

This study presents a contrastive study of nasal sounds in Tamil and Sinhala languages on a structure framework. Tamil and Sinhala languages are the major languages in Sri Lanka. Both languages are the official languages in Sri Lanka. These two languages belong to different language families. Tamil belongs to the Dravidian language family, while Sinhala language family to the Indo-Aryan language family. This paper involves a contrastive and descriptive methodology. This research describes the place of articulation, manner of the articulation, distributions of sound and clusters of both languages. The main objective of this research paper is find out the similarities and dissimilarities and point out the specific features in both languages. Data was collected through self-observation and personal interviews. The important sources such as related books and article of the journals were used. This study will be helpful in second language teaching and learning and translation studies.

Keywords: Dravidian language, Indo-Aryan language, contrastive study, articulation, translation studies.

INTRODUCTION

A history is required of the creation and development of the Pāli Theravāda Canon created in India and Sri Lanka in the period roughly preceding the parinibbana up to the unification of the Saṅgha in Sri Lanka in 1164/5 A.D – covering approximately 1,655 years. In this period more than thirty major events or incidents occurred each of which contributed significantly to the creation of this particular Tipiṭaka. This history will seek to answer Hallisey's question "How did the teachings of the Buddha, given over a long period of time in many places, come to be collected into what eventually became the Pali canon?" (Hallisey. 1991) It will not be unhelpful here to remind ourselves that the Buddha had no 'librarian' and that he left his intellectual 'estate' – his Teachings which were comprised of the words in which he communicated His Doctrine – in an unrecorded and haphazard state with no documented canonical texts.

A history of this particular Tipiṭaka is important because this Canonical text is the only one now known to be in existence – relatively complete and intact - of all the Buddhist schools "The significance of the Theravāda canon for us today is that it is the only canon preserved as part of an unbroken tradition of practice, study and interpretation." (Tilakaratne. 2000). Concentration will be on the activities that led to its creation. These are unique in comparison with the scriptures of other Buddhist schools and with the canonical literatures of other religions - Judaism with its Torah, Talmud and Mishnah; Islam the Koran and its tafsirs and hadiths; Christianity with its Bible, gospels and countless commentaries. This Tipiṭaka has heretofore never possessed a comprehensive history [in English]. This Pāli Theravāda Tipiṭaka stands uniquely on its own.

Two sets of metaphors are employed to facilitate clarity. They require explanations. The entire set of the historical developmental processes that led to the creation of this Pāli Theravāda Tipiṭaka are envisaged as a 'chain of events' with each 'event' compared to a 'link' in a chain. Just as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link so, by applying criteria to each, can the strength of the chain in conveying the Buddha's teachings be reckoned. Each 'link' is adjudged therefore by a set of stated criteria to be a strong or weak contributor to the entire strength of the chain.

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This then provides a judgment to the authenticity of this Canon as the conveyor of the truths of the Buddha's Word or Words – Buddha-vacana.

The second metaphor has significance in relationship to the concept and also correctness of the meaning of Buddha-vacana. It associates the very words of the Buddha with 'coins' which, like all coinage, represent values [which ought to be incorruptible!] and when taken together form a currency here the 'currency' being that truth associated with the Truth of the Dhamma.

The time allocated in any Conference and the length of the historical period to be covered are obviously in conflict. Time constraints will require many of the details of the history of developments to be omitted and those being addressed being simplified to respond with answers to such questions as – 'what happened?', 'why?', 'what was the contribution?' and 'when? Thirty major 'events' or 'incidents' are identified that assisted with this Tipiṭaka's creation into the approximate form in which we possess it today - eighteen in India, before the Third Buddhist Council, and another thirteen similar events in Sri Lanka. Each is then assessed against criteria as a strong or weak 'link' contributing to this 'chain' of transmission enabling a judgment to be made of this Tipiṭaka's reliability as a vehicle to communicate the Truths of the Buddha's Dhamma.

Further explanations are necessary. An 'event' is considered to be a closed 'one-off' activity usually dateable to within a specific time-frame with a relatively clear beginning and an end. In comparison 'incidents' are considered to be less precise and may be either pervasive and / or recurring and / or developing through many events and time scales which, in most cases, have no clearly dateable commencements and finishes. This means that not all the 'links' in the 'chain' are single, closed one-off events: nevertheless they may be recognised as 'links' by the descriptions / criteria just expounded.

There are six such 'incidents'.

'Languages' *[1]* There are three issues related to 'languages' to be addressed: the first - in what language did the Buddha communicate His teachings? In what languages were the earliest texts assembled and compiled by the Indian bhāṇakas prior to their being accepted as Canon? Which of the Prakrits could be classified as dialects and which languages? Scholars differ greatly about the language used by the Buddha. It is commonly believed that he employed the Kośalan-Māgadhi idiom. This makes sense because it would have been the language used when he was Prince Siddhartha at Court. Other scholars believe that it could have been Saurasenī but it had developed far to the west [in today's Rajasathan]. At the time of the Buddha Pāli apparently was in early development not as a popular language but a 'construct' [Gombrich prefers to use 'codification' (1996)] employed by the educated and the 'literati' – one can presume Court and monks and priests. Pischel (1900) argued that there were at least twenty-two Prakrits in use in northern India then. Some were major language groups like Saurasenī and others small as with Kośalan and Māgadhi which would have been little more than dialects. The significance between them is that a dialect would have been restricted to a locality in which local people would have had some measure of understanding of each other, whilst 'language' seems to denote geographical distance consequently with some measure of incomprehensibility between them. Whichever – dialect or language – these put into perspective the amazingly difficult tasks facing the Indian bhāṇakas monks when trying to assemble spoken and heard texts into the suttas and nikayās which were to form the Canon.

'Intrusion of 'vaitulya' beliefs' *[2]* These incidents occurred in Sri Lanka where these intrusions were considered to pose potential dangers to what was believed to be the integrity of the Pāli Theravāda texts protected by the monks of the Mahāvihāra. They averred that they contained concepts considered heretical and imported from the Mahāyāna schools of northern India. They seem to have begun to appear early in the take-up of Buddhism in Sri Lanka reaching one of their apogees around the time of the establishment of the Abhayagiri vihāra which Geiger dates [with unusual precision] to the end of March in 28 B.C. (Geiger. 1912. xxxv) Their continuing existence is evidenced by the definite references in the vaṃsas to the destruction of texts containing these vaitulya beliefs.

'Śṛṭi restrictions'. Although writing was already practiced in earlier civilizations, Harrapa and Mahenjo-Daro [2,600 to 1,900 B.C.] Sumeria, Assyria [circa 6ᵗʰ century B.C.] and the Persian Achaemenid Empire [stretching into India to the Indus River] Vedic practices prohibited it for religious texts which were intended to be spoken and heard only. [One cannot help but comment - thus ensuring power and influence to those monks who possessed the texts in their memories over those who did not!!] Writing, as today an obvious means of communicating the canon across generational boundaries was prohibited as being *śṛṭi* [*nisedheti*]. The Buddha adopted similar practices. Consequences were to make even more difficult the works of the Indian bhāṇakas tasked by the First Buddhist Council with the collection and protection of the teachings of the Buddha when they remained extant only as words in the memories of the monks who had heard him preach throughout his forty years as Teacher. These people would have had to have been discovered by the bhāṇakas before they could themselves learn the words and then, through remarkable feats of the mind, assemble them into verses [gāthās], then the suttas and finally the nikayās. These were amazing intellectual and scholarly exercises that have unjustly gone almost unnoticed and unrecognised in the world today.

'Education for monks'. *[4]* With no written texts from which to learn the Buddha's inherited Doctrine for about 165 years after the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka with Arahant Mahinda *paramaparā* practices, adherence to the Mahāpadesas and education were the only ways of reliably continuing it. Large monasteries' ruins such as the Western and Eastern in Anuradhapura still bear witness today to this fact. Practices were thought to centre on cohorts of students visiting the *kuti* of a senior monk expert in a particular aspect of the canon and then moving on to a similar experience with another teacher. Although canonical texts remained prohibited it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that 'professor monks' kept notes as sorts of 'crib sheets' or 'working tools'. After the safe preservation of the canonical texts into writing [circa 83 – 77 B.C.] more texts would have been generated for the safer protection of the Doctrine.

'Manuscript 'working collections' metamorphosing into libraries' *[5]* These individual collections of what today librarians and academics refer to as 'working collections' would have been collected in greater numbers. But Vinaya rules make no mention of any authority for monks to keep texts to themselves (Panabokke. 1993) so there is the likelihood that at some stage these could have metamorphosed into collections within the temples that would have resembled libraries. However no proof exists even though during the centuries the possibilities kept recurring. It is not until 420 / 430 A.D. with Buddhaghosa's reference to working in the '*ganthā pārivena*' of the Mahāvihāra that one can begin to date when Lankan libraries might have come into being. (Ňāṇamoli. 1956) Libraries having significance because one of their functions is the protection of texts, ideas etc. "The 'root' concept of 'library' is deeply embedded in our ways of thinking about the world and coping with its problems." (McGarry. 1997)

'Liberalisation of meanings of words' *[6]* Words are like coins in a currency: to alter their meanings is to devalue them and that in turn debases the currency. When the currency represents the Truth of the Buddha's words, as in his Dhamma, that currency should never be so debased. Yet that happened, for example in the Vinaya [see Petra Keiffer-Pulz (2007)], and with the sense of *Buddha-vacana*.

This ends considerations of the 'incidents' interfused with other activities.

Pre-First Buddhist Council texts. *[7]* A controversial subject even without subscribing to the notion that many questions concerning the management of the Council by Mahākassapa remain unanswered. Only the existence of what Levy and Lamotte have referred to as '*Ur-Kanon*' or '*textes pre-canoniques*' provide some answers as does the Cullavagga. Both also assist in answering Hallisey's "how did the teachings of the Buddha given over a long period of time, in many places, come to be collected in what eventually became the Pali canon?" (Hallisey. 1991) To this he correctly responds "something like the first saṅgāyana must have taken place, otherwise there would be no corpus of scriptures". This provides a convincing answer to scholars like Oldenberg [1863-1934] and Frauwallner [1898-1974] who doubted its

very existence. Criticisms firmly put to rest by - "there is a substantial core of evidence for the historicity of the First and Second Buddhist Convocations." (Karunadasa. 1999)

Bhāṇakas *[8]* – whose function, ordered by that First Council, was "two-fold 1) To decide what, out of the vast store of material at hand, should be given the protection of formal organization: and 2) To set up a mechanism to preserve this material." (Bodhesako. 1984) As a consequence the tasks of these earliest Indian monks were unbelievably enormous. With the Buddha having left with nothing written down their only sources, from which to collect His Teachings, were through the mouths of the monks who had retained in their minds the Teachings that they had heard [some decades earlier] and who after the Council would have scattered to their *sīmās* and *vihārās* throughout the length and breadth of the Gangetic and Yamuna plains. Thereafter, still without writing, the bhāṅakas would have had to have retained passages in memory and from these classify them by subject bringing together like with like to create gāthās, collect these in turn to form suttas and thereafter gather them into the four nikāyas. Their magnificent works, without which the Tipiṭaka in its current form would not have existed today, has gone almost unnoticed. Yet for 236 years – about eight generations of monks - must have so laboured. In world literature there can have been no similar task so successfully achieved as was theirs yet it has gone un-sung and un-appreciated.

Protection of the Words *[9]* As noted above this was an objective successfully achieved by the Indian bhāṇakas then transferred and continued at first in Sri Lanka especially before the decision to commit to writing the canonical texts and the translation of certain suttas but thereafter however less so. "It appears that the number of the bhāṇakas at the time in question [circa 430 A.D.] was comparatively small, so limited in number that it was possible to reach them all". (Samantapāsādikā II. 339 cited by Adikaram. 1946)

Preservation *[10]* of the Buddha's Words [expounding His Doctrine] was a priority from Parinibbana through the First Council's deliberations and [as we have noted] so superbly achieved by the Indian bhāṇakas. But with the prohibitions imposed on the adoption of writing by *śṛṭi* restrictions on the Canon's contents how were they to be passed on from one generation to another? Answer - by word of mouth to the ears of listeners and across generation gaps employing the practice of *śisyā paramparā* which had been devised and apparently worked successfully for generations associated also with the application of the Buddha's own advice contained in the four great 'indicators' – the Four *Mahāpadesas*.

Four mahāpadesas *[11]* – found in the Mahāparinibbānasutta (D.N. II 124-126) they were intended by the Buddha as the criteria to ensure that the Buddha's Words were not changed, reduced or added to and they clarified ''the procedures that should be followed in determining whether or not a particular statement belongs to the word of the Master" (Tilakaratne. n.d.). Their intention was to protect the authenticity of His Teachings although in later centuries their purposes were not entirely conformed with when some of the strictures were ceded to the Nettippakaraṇa but "the Sinhalese tradition does not include this in the Tipiṭaka. In Burma it is considered a text of the Khuddakanikāya." (Jayawardhana.1994)

Canon's authenticity *[12]* The excellence of the works of the Indian bhāṇakas over the two hundred and thirty-six years between the First and Third Councils [in 247 B.C.] when [virtually – with the exception of Moggaliputta Tissa's *Kathāvatthu*] the Pāli Theravāda Canon had been completed in accordance with śisyā paramparā practices and adherence to the instructions in the mahāpadesas. Both these ensured that the Canon that Arahant Mahinda brought to Sri Lanka, six months after the conclusion of the Third Council, was as authentic as it had been possible to get it in preserving the authenticity of the words used by the Buddha in his Teachings and in producing his Dhamma.

The Canon from India to Sri Lanka *[13]* On first acquaintance this, understandably, could be assumed to have represented a weak link in this chain of transmission in that the entire, almost completed, Canon had moved from the memories of hundreds of bhāṇakas and monks into those of only five people. But the vaṃsas indicate that the enthusiasms of king Tissa and the likelihood that the basic tenets of the Teachings had already in some form and to some

degree preceded Mahinda's arrival, prove this not to have been so. Venerable Ariṭṭha's ordination must have gone some way to supporting Mahinda's earlier answer "Great king, the sāsana is established but it has not taken root". With this event one can argue that the transfer had been successfully completed.

***Lankan Saṅgha and new bhāṇakas* [14]** One significance of Ariṭṭha's Ordination was that an order of monks could now be selected, educated and trained to create a new Lankan Saṅgha. That, in turn, allowed the re-establishment in Sri Lanka of the bhāṇakas' practices. However, because the collected canonical texts had grown too large to be held with ease in the memories of ordinary monks, they were divided up for safe-keeping by individual groups. Unfortunately this led to arguments and disputations so that by the 5ᵗʰ century the Lankan bhāṇakas had virtually disappeared. (Adikaram. 1946)

***Aṭṭhakathās* [15]** Although not part of the Canon the aṭṭhakathās ['aṭṭha'= 'reach, attain, to proceed' – 'kathā' = 'talk, conversation' hence 'exposition of meaning'] these 'Commentaries' provide large amounts of valuable historical information and therefore cannot be ignored. They contributed strong 'links' to the 'chain' particularly because some had had their genesis earlier in India whilst others were significantly Lankan in origin.

***'Open' and 'closed' texts* [16]** Today scholars [like Norman, von Hinuber and Abeynayake] refer to the 'stratification' of texts [based on phonetics, language, grammatical and other differences] in efforts to discover dates for their inclusion into the Canon. Important though these are more significant is it to be able to date when the Canon was finally closed [thus ensuring authenticity of contents and accord with definitions of 'canon'], what were its last admitted contents, why were other texts refused admission and, most importantly, who took these decisions and founded on what criteria?

***Writing down of the Canonical texts* [17]** This was by far one of the most important events to occur in the development of this Tipiṭaka. Consideration became necessary after Tissa, a Brahmin, had tried to seize king Vaṭṭagāmini's throne resulting in his fleeing leaving the country instead to be ruled for thirteen years by seven Indian *damilas* who fought

against and killed each other. Simultaneously a disastrous famine occured that caused monks to empty their monasteries and flee south to Ruhana or into India. With the return of king Vaṭṭagāmini [89 B.C.] the monks returned. However with them the realization had dawned that had any monks died then portions of the Dhamma held in their memories would also have been lost: hence the radical decision to overturn *śrṭi* strictures. It took place between 83 and 77 B.C. at the Āloka Vihāra outside Mathale under supervision not of the Mahāvihāra monks but those from the newly-established Abhayagiri monastery who were more liberal. Thus "Manuscripts of the Alu-vihāra edition were soon made and were deposited in the Mahāvihāra and other principle temples of the island." (Malalasekera. 1994)

***Reliability of manuscripts* [18]** The exact processes by which words kept in memories were transferred to written documents are not today known although it is assumed that the monks employed scribes to write. Comprehension of Pāli by the Lankan monks was weakening so errors there may have been. However few scholars have ventured to challenge the reliability of the texts and, indeed, given the monks continuing responsibilities to protect the authentic of the Buddha's Works, one can remain reliably assured that these processes in no way undermined the integrity of the new texts.

***Arahats* [19]** Some sources have alluded to the protection that arahants provided for these processes. These need to be viewed with skepticism. No one has had the distinction of knowing an arahant and therefore of their powers. Malalasekera suggests the last to be recognized was Ven. Malaya-Mahādeva circa 161-137 B.C. (Malalasekera. 1983)

***'Learning' versus 'Practice'* [20]** This controversy centred around a debate in Vaṭṭagāmani's reign [89-77 B.C.] between monks who held to the opinion that 'learning' ['pariyatti'] was of greater importance than 'living the life' ['patipatti'] i.e. catering to the people's needs. "After arguments had been adduced on both sides the 'dhammakathīkas' gained victory over the 'paṃsukōlikas': practice was relegated to the background and preaching gained supremacy. The Sutta defeated the Vinaya." (Manorathapūraṇī. I. 92, 93. [Buddhaghosa - 428-440 A.D.] - Adikaram. 1946) The significance of this decision is two-fold: it

completely changed the priorities and practices of Theravāda Buddhism and, importantly from our perspective, this without a single word of the texts of the Canon being changed.

Translations from Pāli into Sinhala [21] The second most important event in these transmission processes was the translation of certain suttas, 450 years later, out of the Pāli that was increasingly difficult for the new Lankan Saṅgha members to understand and use, by Mahādhammakathī between 340 and 368 A.D. The entire canon was not translated only certain selected suttas [never identified nor the authority for such actions known] into Sinhala. It made available the Buddha's words to any who wished to avail themselves and in so doing represented a further reduction of the authority of the monks as well as removing another obstacle to the free-flow of the Dhamma.

Heresies and 'vaitulya' texts [22] Heretical ideas, and later texts primarily from the northern Mahāyāna schools, had always been relatively readily accessible given their proximity. The Mahā-vihāra had always seen itself as the 'protector' of the 'purity' of the Theravāda doctrine hence its antagonism towards what it regarded as heretical ideas and texts. But with the establishment of the monasteries of Abhayagiri and later the Jetavana [in the grounds of the Mahā-vihāra] - both with far more liberal policies towards new ideas than the conservative Mahāviharā monks - the disputes increased in number even though few of them, if any, were concerned with doctrinal matters but more with relatively small differences in interpretations of practices or discipline. These three nikayās gave rise over centuries to eight āyatanas – "The significance of this institution was reflected in the role it played in the religious as well as in the political affairs of the time and the deference and respect accorded to it by the rulers and dignitaries of the land." (Gunawardana. 1979) It was these and their nikayās' feudings that eventually persuaded king Parakrāma Bāhu I to 'unite' the Lankan Saṅgha in 1164/5 A.D.

Book burnings [23] Such strong antagonisms towards heretical ideas and vaitulya texts that entered the Island are alleged to have resulted in their physical destruction by fire. On close examination however pictures are not clear. Definite mentions of the 'burning of books' is hard to come by. Geiger [in his 1912 translation of the Mahā-vaṃsa] translates simply - 'suppressing the Vetulya doctrine' (M-v XXXVI 40) or '*katvana niggahaj tesaj*' literally 'putting down' without explanations. Later Pāli however is specific using the gerund '*vaitulya rada genra dava*' (Nikayā-saṃgrahaya but in 1330 A.D) so in what manner they were 'put down' is not clear. Similarly the number of times these events occurred is confused. The first [possibly] was by king Kuṅcanāga [193/4 A.D.]; the second [indisputably] by king Vohārikatissa [214-236] "Suppressing the Vetulya-doctrine and keeping heretics in check by his minister Kapila he made the true doctrine to shine forth" (M-v. xxxvi 41) Adikaram continues "The king, thereupon, caused the Vaitulya books to be burnt" quoting the same authority for this statement [but as it was written 1,094 years after the event it cannot but be suspect]; followed by king Goṭhābaya [254-267] who excommunicated and banished the monks in the Abhayagiri (M-v. xxvi 111-2); finally by the maverick king Mahāsena [276-303 A.D.] Ironically such destructive actions do serve to suggest that collections of documents had become, if not commonplace by the 3rd century A.D., at least common enough to have been able to collect vaitulya texts together for destruction with some facility.

Five 'Great Commentators' [24] Three of the five 'Great Commentators' arrived on the island to assist eventually with the re-establishment back in India of the commentaries to the Theravāda canonical texts which had still continued to exist in Pāli although the commentaries to them had been lost. The motives for their works in Sri Lanka could in no way originally have had as its objective any pursuance of the continuation of the transmission of the Pāli Theravāda Canon on the island which, by this time, some half a century after Mahādhammakathī's translations of selected texts out of Pāli, had, to a great extent, fallen into dis-use. Nevertheless this, unwittingly, they accomplished through their completion of twenty-four commentaries on twenty-eight canonical texts. Their works have never been considered to be canonical but, as justification for the activities of these monks' and the works completed by all of them, being considered here is because of the light that the results of their scholarships throw on the transmission processes. Their primary concerns

were never solely with developments of the canonical texts [even though they made, incidentally, such contributions] but, as in Buddhaghosa's case at least, it was simply to adhere to Revatā's instructions to do no more than translate and bring back to India the *aṭṭhakathās* in Pāli.

Libraries developing transmission responsibilities *[25]* The significance of libraries as transmission agents is often overlooked. They are often commonly referred to as 'store-houses of knowledge' and as such they serve for the protection for records and documents. So in Buddhism, where the earliest documents containing canonical texts were created in 83 / 77 B.C. to be distributed around the island's monasteries, one could reasonably have expected this to have resulted in the creation of libraries specially [as already noted] 'professor monks' were likely to have stored in their kutis 'working tools' for teaching to which canonical texts in writing could have been added. None were established. There are no references to them in the Canon, in the vaṃsas or the aṭṭhakathās until Buddhagosa's reference in his Visuddhimagga to the '*ganthā pārivara*'. Presumption suggests, therefore, that they metamorphosed from 'working collection' and / or came into existence at some time in the fifty-nine to eighty-seven years between the translation of some suttas, circa 340-368 A.D., and Buddhaghosa's reference circa 427 A.D.

Libraries – storage of the Words and roles in transmission *[26]* Once collections in libraries had come into existence they could be organized thus facilitating access to the Buddha's Words. In this manner the truths of the Dhamma could have been even more securely protected as well as transmitted with greater facility.

Transfer of manuscripts – Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa *[27]* Between about 1055 and 1130 A.D. the court and the king moved frequently between the capital and the fortified city of Polonnaruwa as attacks from southern India became more frequent until Anuradhapura had to be abandoned almost entirely as the seat of the king. What happened to manuscripts and their collection is, unfortunately, nowhere recorded. This represents a gap that might possibly be filled by a missing link.

Jetavanarama of Polonnaruwa *[28]* This 'missing link' could be the first clear and indisputable reference to Libraries - *"thirty-four gate towers and two houses for books"* (Cula-v. II. 78. 38). This vaṃsa report records Parakrāma Bāhu's magnificent Jetavana Monastery - "Thus there were in Jetavana in all five hundred and twenty buildings" (78. 47) "Creating out of bricks and stucco an elixir for the eyes [he built] the Tivaṅka house for the Tivaṅka image." (78. 39). Today, unexcavated, this monastery lies disguised and buried by jungle even outside the boundary fence of Unesco's Cultural Triangle site opposite the Tivaṅka statue. By this period – mid 1160's - Godakumbura (1955) and others have made clear Sinhala literature, much of it Buddhist and based on the contents of the Canon and the aṭṭhakathās, had increased in quantity and had become rich in quality. The Paṃsūkulikā monks too from Dimbulāgala, who had played such a significant role in the king's Saṅgh 're-unification', were known to be prolific authors of texts so there is much that might have been stored in these 'two houses for books'.

Unification of Lanka Saṅgha *[29]* This unification of the three originally Anuradhapura-based monasteries and their later developed eight āyatanas, that had feuded together for more than one thousand years, that Parākrama Bāhu in 1164/5 A.D. brought together, is only of significance for us in the context of the transmission processes of the Canon and that only in a minor way because from the doctrinal perspective, it is believed that neither the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagiri nor the Jetavana possessed canons that differed from one to the other in any major way. The differences concerned relatively minor issues of discipline and practice. For us, therefore, the importance of this 'unification' was the raising of the question - what happened to the manuscripts that the eleven institutions are likely to have possessed before the 'unification' and after it was completed?

Loss of Libraries and their Records *[30]* After Mahākāśapa's and Sāriputta's guidance of the Saṅgha and the unification of these eleven institutions what happened to their collections of manuscripts? The answer is not known but there are two pointers. The first – one can guess at with reasonable accuracy – that because the Mahāvihāra remained intact after the

unification so would its collection of manuscripts. But what would have happened to the other collections that the Mahāvihāra monks had always claimed included vaituya texts? One can reliably guess that they would have been un-welcome in that monastery's library collection. One fact is known. Parākrama Bāhu did not descend to book burning. Given his construction in the Jetavanarama of 'two houses for books' it is possible that they were donated there. However, alas, proof there is not.

In conclusion to this section it must be recalled that the purposes of libraries throughout their long histories, of nearly eight thousand years, were [and today still remain] "the guardian of the social memory [because] there are many parallels with the ways in which the human memory stores and retrieves information necessary for survival". (McGarry. 1997) This serves to reinforce the close relationships between bhāṇaka monks and their prodigious works and the libraries that eventually followed them. Despite such purposes libraries appear to have scarcely manifested themselves in Sri Lanka. This in spite of the existence to the north in India of the famous libraries of Nālandā, Vikramasilā and Takkasilā [the first university's library dating back to the first century B.C. (Dutt. 1956) and the second university pre-dating the Buddha] as well as knowledge that must have travelled along the Silk Road and its off-shoots (Whitfield & Sims-Williams. 2004) not only about the library of the Lyceum circa 335 B.C. in Athens and of Alexander the Great's [circa 367 B.C.] and, even earlier, the two libraries of kings Sennacheri [706 – 681 B.C and Ashurbannipal [668-627 B.C.] in Assyria as well as that of Persepolis in the Aechaemenid Empire of Persia [550-330 B.C.]. [It represents a strange lacuna that requires further investigation.]

This completes a brief review of the 'incidents' and events' except that each was evaluated to assess its strength or weakness as a 'link' in this one thousand six hundred years 'chain' of transmission that represents the communication of the Buddha's spoken Words employed to convey His Teachings to form the Dhamma and the creation of this Pāli Theravāda Tipiṭaka.

It would have been far too shallow and lacking in credibility to simply have awarded numbers from a

total of ten or an 'A+' or a 'B-'. Using the Canon's own stated criteria ie the Four Mahāpadesas, the credibility and reliability of monks in their collection, preservation and ordering of words etc. from these a total of twelve criteria was evolved. Briefly listed these were – Authenticity; Plausibility; Authority and Reliability of Sources – scholars and authors; Scholars' Opinion; Motives of Authors; Accuracy – descriptions and dates; Sources and Timescales between Events; Placements of Texts; Eligibility as Canon; Integrity of Words – 'meanings of meanings'.

Detailed examinations of each of these thirty links against these twelve criteria - recalling that the strength of a chain is always reliant on its weakest link – indicated that six were not strong; three were indeterminate and twenty-one were assessed as strong. The entire chain of transmission of the Buddha's doctrine was strong.

In conclusion - at the end of this exercise what have we learned? I suggest that it is that through all these centuries of wars, famines, corruptions, fratricides, monks' and scholars' concerns for the 'true' texts of the Pāli Theravāda Canon and the Words in it - this unique Tipiṭaka - have been conveyed with far more reliability, integrity and authenticity, over one thousand and six hundred years, than we had any right to expect: the Words and the Teachings of the Buddha are, in this Canon, the Words and the Teachings of the Buddha!

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