

Misan W. D. Kim

The Theravādin Doctrine of Momentariness

A Survey of its Origins and Development



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THERAVĀDIN DOCTRINE
OF
MOMENTARINESS
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The present work was originally submitted in substantially the present form as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford in 1999. In the course of preparing it for publication some twenty years later I have made some corrections and additions, especially to the bibliography.

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PART ONE

The Theravādin Doctrine of Momentariness A Survey of its Origins and Development

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PART TWO

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Foreword

Rupert Gethin

I first learnt of Venerable Misan Kim's doctoral research on the history and development of the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness in the late 1990s. Subsequently I met Venerable Misan on one or two occasions and we talked about his work, which by that time had been submitted for the degree of DPhil at the University of Oxford, and I asked about its publication. Venerable Misan hoped that would happen. Some twenty years later I found myself working on my own book on Abhidharma and puzzling over the account of episodes of consciousness in the chapter on the *khandhas* in the *Vibhaṅga* and *Yamaka* commentaries, where the ancient author suggests that the way of counting moments presented in the old *Sīhaḷa-aṭṭhakathā* contradicts a passage in the *Yamaka* (see below, pp. 123–124). I then recalled that Venerable Misan had told me that his research had included discussion of the passages relating to this issue, and so made the effort to contact him by email. He was kind enough to send me a PDF of his Oxford DPhil thesis, which I was able to read for the first time. What became apparent to me was that the Venerable Misan's dissertation was an important contribution to the study of the Theravādin Abhidhamma that deserved to be more widely available and known.

The Theravādin Doctrine of Momentariness is a study of the early history of the doctrine in the Theravādin Abhidhamma and its old, now lost, commentaries. Earlier scholars had speculated that the specifically Theravādin understanding of momentariness should be regarded as in principle borrowed from north Indian sources and then articulated by Buddhaghosa, the author of the *Visuddhimagga* and the commentaries to the four Nikāyas, who is often taken as the father of Theravādin orthodoxy. But what Venerable Misan shows, through a close reading of the relevant commentarial literature, is that the doctrine must have been already articulated in older sources, specifically the old Sinhala commentaries that are no longer extant but which were used by both Buddhaghosa and the author of the Abhidhamma commentary.

In the course of his study he also gives an account of the evolution of the distinctively Theravādin theory of the 'thought process' (*citta-vīthi*), showing how it is implicit in the works of the canonical Abhidhamma – in particular the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Vibhaṅga*, and *Paṭṭhāna* – and how the Theravādin understanding of momentariness

develops in this context. Moving to the Theravādin commentaries he explores how the development of the theory of three sub-moments (of origination, endurance, and dissolution) informs a debate, first in the *aṭṭhakathās* and then in the *ṭīkā*s, about whether a material dharma should be regarded as enduring for sixteen or seventeen thought-moments (*citta-kkhaṇa*). Venerable Misan's technical yet wonderfully lucid account shows precisely how the later 'textbook' opinion that material dharmas must endure for seventeen thought-moments emerges within the context of an ancient debate about the momentary arising of mind and body in the process of death and rebirth.

Venerable Misan's study is an important contribution to our understanding of the development of Buddhist thought generally and Theravāda Abhidhamma specifically. Based on a close reading of passages from the all too often neglected *aṭṭhakathā* and *ṭīkā* literature, it sheds significant light on the development of the Theravādin theories of momentariness and the process of perception. It is indeed a delight to finally witness its publication, more than twenty years since it was first written.

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Other teachers and colleagues have given generously of their time, and in particular I would like to thank Dr. Sanjukta Gupta Gombrich, Professor Alexis Sanderson, Dr. Jim Benson, Dr. Harunaga Isaacson, Dr. Sally Mellick Cutler and Dr. Andreas Pohlus for their encouragement and practical resourcefulness. I am enormously grateful to Dr. Elizabeth English and Mr. Paul Oldfield for performing the time-consuming task of proof-reading and polishing of my English.

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Misan W. D. Kim

Abbreviations and Bibliography

(according to the Roman alphabet)

Works reconstructed in Sanskrit from Chinese sources and fragments of Sanskrit texts are also included here. The Pāli texts, unless otherwise stated, refer to PTS editions. Non-Pāli sources are abbreviated in capitals. An asterisk before a title indicates a Sanskrit or Pāli title reconstructed from an ancient Chinese translation in cases where the original is lost. Common abbreviations listed in dictionaries (e.g. Oxford English Dictionary) are not listed here.

A: *Āṅguttara-nikāya*. Vols. I–V. Ed. R. E. HARDY. London 1885–1900.

A [B°]: *Āṅguttara-nikāya*. Burmese Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition. Rangoon 1965.

AAS-D: **Abhidharmāśṭaskandhaśāstra* (A-p 'i-t 'an pa chien-tu lun = **Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra*). T 26 (1543). Attrib. Kātyāyanīputra, transl. Dharmapriya, Saṅghadeva and Chu Fo-nien. Cf. [JP-H].

**Abhidharmahrdayaśāstra* (A-p 'i-t 'an Hsin Lun). T 28 (1550), Dharmasrī. Transl. Samghadeva and Hui-yüan.

Abhidh-av: *Abhidhammāvatāra*. Buddhadatta's Manuals 1. Ed. A. P. BUDDHADATTA. London 1915.

Abhidh-s: [*Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*] *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* and *Abhidhammavibhāvinī-Ṭīkā*. Ed. H. SADDHĀTISSA. Oxford 1989.

Abhidh-vb: *Abhidhammatthavibhāvinī-Ṭīkā* (*Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* commentary), see Abhidh-s.

Abhidh-vk: *Abhidhammatthavikāsinī* (= *Abhidhammāvatāra Abhinavaṭīkā*). Ed. A. P. BUDDHADATTA. Colombo 1961.

Abhidh-vk [B°]: *Abhidhammatthavikāsinī* (= *Abhidhammāvatāra Abhinavaṭīkā*). Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition. Rankun 1968.

ADIKARAM 1946: E. W. ADIKARAM, *The Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. Migoda 1946.

ADV: *Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣāprabhāvṛtti*. Ed. P. S. JAINI. [Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series. 4]. Patna 1959.

AKB: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Ed. P. PRADHAN. [Tibetan Sanskrit works series. 8]. Patna 1967.

AKB transl. see LA VALLÉE POUSSIN 1923–1931; PRUDEN 1988–1990.

AKB-H: **Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (A-p 'i-tamo chü-she lun). T 28 (1558), Vasubandhu. Transl. Hsüan-tsang.

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- As: *Atthasālinī* (*Dhammasaṅgaṇī* commentary). Ed. E. MÜLLER (1897), revised ed. London 1979.
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- B^e: Burmese edition. Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyana edition. Rangoon. [Mostly identical with the material on the CSCD].

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- BS: *Buddhist Studies (Bukkyō kenkyū)*, Hamamatsu
- BSCD: *A Digital Edition of Buddhist Scriptures (Budsir IV on CD-ROM)*. Mahidol University Computing Center. Bangkok 1994.
- BSOAS: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London
- BSR: *Buddhist Studies Review*, London
- BU: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. In: *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, ed. PATRICK OLIVELLE. Oxford 1998.
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Sigla used in the edited sections (§§ 5.1.2, 5.3.3)

⊗ ... ⊗ ed. or ms. reads differently.

* ... * cited by other texts.

◆ ... ◆ cited by another text.

< > commentaries to an aforementioned passage

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[1] Introduction

At the core of Buddhist thought, as it came to be systematised, lies a vision of the world as a shifting and transitory array of phenomena. It lacks any underlying physical substrate to serve as a common thread holding the moments of phenomena together. The world and its perceiver are seen as an evanescent flux, where real existence is construed simply in terms of the capacity to bring about a subsequent effect. All conditioned material and mental phenomena thus pass out of existence as soon as they have come into existence. They are intrinsically momentary (*kṣaṇika*), and no permanent and unitary self is detected. There is only a relation of causal dependency which governs the transitions between the preceding and following moments, and this causal principle is responsible for the coherent patterns of material and mental phenomena. This seamless pattern is precisely what sustains the illusion of continuity (*santati*). The appearance of continuity between moments is therefore explained by the similarity between instantaneous collocations of phenomena. All conditioned phenomena are thus characterised by momentariness in the sense that they arise and perish in continual succession while presenting a picture of a seemingly static existence.¹

The doctrine of momentariness was initially a theory created by Buddhist scholastic tradition and eventually became an integral part of its doctrinal system.² This reflects a schematic and radical interpretation of the doctrine of impermanence and change. Most scholars agree that this radical doctrine cannot be traced back to early canonical sources (i.e. the Four Pāli *Nikāyas* and their equivalents in other traditions) and does not fit in with the empirically oriented teachings of early Buddhism.³ The commentary on the *Vibhaṅga* [2] clearly states that the notion of

- 1 This is a general outline of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness (SCHWEIZER 1994: 81–91), but it cannot cover the divergent views held by the Ābhidharmikas of the early schools, notably the Theravādin Ābhidhammikas.
- 2 By ‘the theory of momentariness’, I mean the developing doctrine in the Theravādin Abhidhamma texts, whereas by ‘the doctrine of momentariness’, I mean the developed stage at which the post-canonical tradition has already accepted the theory as an integral part of its doctrinal system.
- 3 Prof. Gombrich, in the Jordan Lectures for 1994, takes a fresh look at the earliest Buddhist texts and offers various suggestions as to how the teachings in them developed. For instance, he argues that we cannot understand the Buddha unless we understand that he was debating the existence of a soul; but what exactly was he denying? The other main theme he concerns himself with is ‘Metaphor, Allegory, Satire’. By taking

momentariness is confined to the Abhidhamma, and is not found in the *Suttas*.⁴ Nevertheless the doctrine of momentariness comes to be taken for granted as an integral part of the Buddhist doctrinal system. Systematic research on the doctrine of momentariness began in the 1930s with Stcherbatsky and Mookerjee,⁵ who were the first to deal extensively with this issue. Both scholars base their exposition on sources pertaining to the later period, in particular on the *Tattvasaṅgraha* (TS, chapter 8, *Sthirabhāva-parīkṣā*) by Śāntarakṣita and the commentary by Kamalaśīla, which are the indispensable textual sources for a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine. Their studies contributed much to making known the most salient features of this doctrine. But they only produce a picture of the final form which the doctrine of momentariness assumed in the Sautrāntika and Yogācāra schools and do not refer to the earlier phase of this doctrine. Alexander von Rospatt's study fills this gap with its full-scale investigation of the early history of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness.⁶ He discusses an impressive array of passages from early Buddhist literature in several languages – Sanskrit, Pāli, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese – covering most notably the *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas and early Yogācāra texts. However, considering his handling of extensive textual sources and the fact that research into this area still remains in its preliminary stages, it is quite natural that he could not provide a comprehensive study of the early formation of this doctrine, as it took place in the Theravāda commentarial texts. [3]

Among the early Buddhist schools who subscribed to the doctrine of momentariness, the Vātsīputrīya accepted only the momentariness of mental phenomena,⁷

the words of the texts literally – despite the Buddha's warning not to – successive generations of his disciples created distinctions and developed doctrines far beyond his original intention. He also shows how this led to a scholastic categorisation of meditation, and further argues that failure to understand a basic metaphor inevitably gave rise to the later argument between the Mahāyana and the older tradition. (These lectures have been published in GOMBRICH 1996).

4 Vibh-a 7; cf. As 420; Vism XIV § 187–190.

5 STCHERBATSKY 1930: 79–118 and MOOKERJEE 1935: particularly 1–86. See VON ROSPATT 1995: 3–7 for a bibliography of further research by modern scholars.

6 VON ROSPATT 1995. There are six reviews of von Rospatt's book: BRONKHORST 1995; VETTER 1997; PAGEL 1997; BUTZENBERGER 1997; GETHIN 1997a; POWERS 1998 <https://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2010/04/power981.pdf>.

7 The Vātsīputrīya (or jointly the Vātsīputrīya-Saṃmatīyas) took all mental phenomena to be momentary and all material phenomena, with the exception of flames and sound, to be non-momentary. The momentariness of flames and sound, which may have been regarded as a self-evident fact, is not specified in the works of Vasubandhu and Yaśomitra (AKB 79^{11–15}; SAKV 179^{10–15}), but reported by Kamalaśīla (TS 352 132^{6–8}) and P'u-kuang (*Chü-she Lun Chi*, T 41 201^{b22–24}). See VON ROSPATT 1995: 36–39 for full citations with translations.

whereas the Sarvāstivādins and several other schools, albeit in a different way, regarded all conditioned phenomena as momentary.⁸ In contrast to those schools, the Theravādins claim in the *Khaṇīkakkathā* of the *Kathāvatthu* that material things, namely the great earth, ocean, grass, trees and so on, last longer than a single instant of thought. The Theravādin commentarial tradition subsequently postulates its unique position that a moment of matter lasts as long as sixteen or seventeen thought moments.⁹ This computational modelling of the process in terms of the changing rate of material and mental phenomena distinguishes the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness from the rest of the doctrines developed in the Sarvāstivāda. Nevertheless, the Theravādins' interpretation, as it stands, was probably not known to the early Northern Ābhidharmikas because it is not found in the *vibhāṣā* texts (the 2nd century CE) extant in Chinese translations, though a similar view is attributed to anonymous *śramaṇas*.¹⁰ Moreover, in the doxographical sources, we do not find any direct accounts of the view that we currently have in the Theravādin commentaries.

This has inclined some scholars to think that the Theravādins did not develop this particular theory in the early stage of their doctrinal history, and that it may have been interpolated into the Theravādin textual sources later. In fact, von Rospatt explicitly puts forward the hypothesis that the doctrine of momentariness in Theravāda Buddhism was adopted from another Buddhist school and that it may have been introduced by Buddhaghosa in the fifth century CE. He states that his hypothesis needs to be verified by a systematic examination of the early post-canonical sources. In particular, he has suggested a careful investigation to see whether pertinent material can be found in the commentaries attributed to Buddhaghosa, [4] and if so, whether this can be identified as the commentator's personal contribution or whether it may be traced back to the Sinhalese commentaries used by him. A similar view to that of von Rospatt, though he has not referred to it, was already to be found in D. J. Kalupahana's publications.¹¹ Contrary to this position, I propose the hypothesis that the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness was embedded in the Old Sinhalese commentaries. Before outlining the historical background of the Old Sinhalese and Pāli commentarial tradition to which I will

8 See VON ROSPATT 1995: 39.

9 See § 3.1.3 for a discussion of how the numbers differ in the commentarial texts.

10 See § 3.1.1.

11 The book *Causality: The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (KALUPAHANA 1975) is an outgrowth of his Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of London in 1966, and his subsequent publications are *Buddhist Philosophy: Historical Analysis* (KALUPAHANA 1976), *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (KALUPAHANA 1987) and *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (KALUPAHANA 1992).

refer frequently in the main discussion, let me first specify the aims, method and scope of this study.

(1) Aims, method and scope

At the outset, I should make it clear that the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness is best approached from a psychological rather than philosophical perspective. Investigation of the nature and content of the material reveals that, unlike the later Northern textual sources, the commentators deal with the subject within the domain of the sophisticated psychological system of the Theravādins. The basic premise of the Northern schools has been perpetuated, and later it is represented with a new type of method. That is to say, the developed doctrine of momentariness in Northern India is highly charged with epistemological implications in the philosophical works of notable Buddhist masters, namely, Dharmakīrti, Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Ratnakīrti and others, from the seventh to eleventh centuries CE. In contrast, the Theravādins' approach to the issue employs the computation of the relative duration of material and mental phenomena, and is largely concerned with the internal psychological processes that are involved in making sense of sense data. It is more analogous to a modern cognitive psychological approach¹² than to an epistemological one in philosophy. [5]

I have two objectives in this study: 1) to expound, to some extent, the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness itself, and 2) to make a comprehensive examination of its textual history. More emphasis is given to the textual history of the doctrine, leaving room for a further study on the implications of the doctrine itself in the sophisticated psychological system of the Theravāda. To present the internal evidence for its early textual history, I focus on how the theory gradually evolved in relation to other doctrines within the Theravādin doctrinal system. I further expand the scope of my inquiry to the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika's literary sources in order to have some external testimony to the formation of the Theravādin theory of momentariness. In particular, I draw some relevant material from the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, which records anonymous views and in some cases the position of the Vaibhājyavādins.¹³ I also use this parallel textual evidence in order to analyse the Theravādin account of the doctrine from a wider perspective. These parallel views will indirectly demonstrate

12 Cognitive psychologists suggest that the traces from one sensory event must endure in the brain for at least 500 milliseconds, if this event is to carry on to enter the full cognitive process, see AUSTIN 1998: 557. Cf. BROWN 1999: 261–277.

13 See Intro, p. 15, fn. 48.

the ongoing exegetical activity of the early Theravādin commentarial tradition; otherwise, we can only directly detect this activity through fragmentary evidence found in the Pāli commentaries which supersedes the original exegetical sources.

Von Rospatt has already covered the wide range of literary sources of the various early schools. My research will make use of this detailed investigation as an essential reference work, but my inquiry is sharply focused on the origins and gradual evolution of the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness, complementing von Rospatt's study, which examines, on a broader scale, the origins and early phase of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness. Although I have used the literary sources of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas, the main textual material that I propose to use consists of the early *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*, the Pāli Abhidhamma texts, their commentaries and sub-commentaries, and also Abhidhamma manuals dating from the fifth century CE to the twelfth century CE. In particular, I have made use of the pertinent material in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and *Vibhaṅga* commentaries, early Abhidhamma exegetical texts which are traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa. I am fully aware that this attribution is controversial among modern scholars, and for the sake of [6] argument I accept the opinion that they are probably the works of a close associate of Buddhaghosa rather than of Buddhaghosa himself. Accordingly, I consider that the pertinent material in the Abhidhamma commentaries predates the doctrinal expositions reproduced in Buddhaghosa's own treatise, the *Visuddhimagga*. This chronological preference will be justified when we discuss the probable date of the origins of the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness. Let us first outline the early history of the commentarial tradition of the Theravāda.

(2) The origins and evolution of the Theravādin exegetical texts

As my study concerns the doctrinal issues developed in the Theravādin exegetical texts, it will be useful to have beforehand an overall view of the early textual history of the Theravādin commentarial tradition. I shall consider with the utmost brevity only what is directly relevant to the present theme.

The Ceylonese tradition claims that the commentaries (*aṭṭhakathā*) were brought from India to Ceylon in the third century BCE. It is stated in the prologues to the Pāli commentaries that the *Aṭṭhakathās* were recited at the First Synod and subsequent Synods and later introduced to Ceylon by Mahinda and translated into Sinhalese.¹⁴ According to the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvāṃsa*, the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās*

14 Sv I 1; Ps I 1; Spk I 1; Mp I 1; As 1. This account recurs in the Mhv (xxxvii, vs 227–229) and the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* (JPTS 1890: 53).

were written down along with the Pāli canon at the Ālokavihāra Synod in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya in the first century BCE.¹⁵ However, the literal truth of the origins of the Theravādin exegetical texts has usually been accepted by scholars only with some reservations.¹⁶ It is unlikely that the original versions of the Pāli commentaries as we have them now were formed at the First Synod soon after the death of the Buddha; though it is conceivable that certain doctrinal points and ambiguous terms were discussed at that Synod. The interpretations agreed in the Synod would have formed the basis of the later exegetical tradition. With the development of heretical views and the growth of the schisms in the Saṅgha, at the Second and Third [7] Synods, the elders who assembled would have carried on this process of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. The commentaries that Mahinda was said to have introduced to Ceylon, along with the canon, probably consisted of the expositions as laid down at the Third Synod,¹⁷ which had just concluded. Very soon after Mahinda's arrival he translated them into Old Sinhalese and they continued to be studied and further elaborated by the elders of Ceylon, and were eventually committed to writing as stated above.¹⁸

When Buddhaghosa arrived in Ceylon in the fifth century CE, the commentaries handed down at various places were compiled into compendia and treatises. For instance, the *Mūla-/Mahā-Aṭṭhakathā*, or simply the *Aṭṭhakathā* of the dwellers of the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura, was a grand compendium of the orthodox interpretations. The *Andhaka-Aṭṭhakathā* was handed down at Kāñcīpura in South India; the *Kuruṇḍī-Aṭṭhakathā*, was so named because of its having been written at the Kuruṇḍavelu Vihāra in Ceylon.¹⁹ Buddhaghosa thus must have found a large mass of material at his disposal. These commentaries embraced various shades of opinion and were directed at the elucidation of the root (*mūla*) texts. Although the original sources that Buddhaghosa would have used are not extant, we are fortunate, for the verses and passages of the ancient teachers as well as the names of the exegetical works are preserved in the Pāli commentaries. They are truncated and admittedly fragmentary, but at least remain in recognisable and traceable form.

15 Dīp xx, 20–21; Mhv xxxiii, 100–101.

16 ADIKARAM 1946: 33ff; LOTTERMOSER 1982: 221; NORMAN 1983: 119.

17 The Northern tradition only mentions the first two of these communal recitations, see Willemen in WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 55–59.

18 See MALALASEKERA [1928] 1994: 90ff.

19 Twenty-eight major sources of the Pāli commentaries are listed by ADIKARAM 1946: 10; Mori identifies forty sources (MORI 1984: 144–146; 1989a: 193–206; 1989b: 685–696).

Systematic and comprehensive research on the Pāli commentarial literature is yet to be done, but preliminary studies have been carried out by scholars.²⁰ E. W. Adikaram (1946) studied the origins of the Theravādin commentaries in his pioneering work, *The Early History of Buddhism*. Making extensive use of Adikaram's work, F. Lottermoser (1982) and Sodo [8] Mori (1984) independently undertook larger-scale studies of the Pāli *Aṭṭhakathā* literature.²¹ Their research has uncovered the nature of the early exegetical tradition and Buddhaghosa's own contribution to the Pāli commentaries; although they have used different methods, there are some common findings and observations.²² I have selected Lottermoser's work for a summary of the early history of the commentarial literature,²³ which is pertinent to our discussion of the date of the Theravādin exegetical texts.

Lottermoser examines approximately 2600 verse passages²⁴ from the nine selected Pāli commentaries²⁵ which are traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa and from his main work, the *Visuddhimagga*. As her central theme is the source material for the *Aṭṭhakathā*, she accordingly investigates all the verse passages in the texts as an effective clue to the source material that must have been current in the early stages of the formation of the Theravādin commentaries. All the verse passages collected from those ten texts are examined from four different standpoints: 1) the length of

- 20 Dīp (Oldenberg 1879), Intro: 4; GEIGER 1916: 25; FRANKE 1907: 203ff; MALALASEKERA [1928] 1994: 79ff; SMITH 1929, CPD (Andersen & Smith 1929), s.v. *aṭṭhakathā*; WINTERNITZ 1927–1933 (III): 184; FRAUWALLNER 1956: 186; BECHERT 1957: 329ff; ADIKARAM 1946; WARDER [1970] 1980: 321–323; LOTTERMOSER 1982: 631ff; NORMAN 1983: 118ff, 1997a: 149–166; MORI 1984: 718ff in Japanese; 1989a: 314ff.
- 21 Lottermoser's work was submitted as a Ph.D. thesis to the University of Göttingen, Germany, in 1979 and printed privately in 1982 from typescript for distribution to the libraries of universities and scholars (LOTTERMOSER 1982). Sodo Mori's work, however, was submitted as a D.Litt. thesis to the University of Tokyo, Japan, in 1980 and published in Japanese (MORI 1984); parts of this book were translated into English and published (MORI 1989a). The *Andhakattṭhakathā* has been examined by KIEFFER-PÜLZ 1993, 2010 and forthcoming; the quotations from Kurundī and Mahāpaccarī are at present investigated by Aruna Kīrti Goigoda Gamage.
- 22 Lottermoser mainly focuses upon an examination of all the verse-passages of the selected commentaries; whereas Sodō Mori is chiefly concerned with the proper names, geographical references, the views presented anonymously, and so on. He reviewed Lottermoser's book and compared it with his own work, see MORI 1989a: 159–177.
- 23 LOTTERMOSER 1982: 221–229. See also a useful Table (XXXI) which conveniently summarises the growth of the *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā* in four stages of floating traditions, diversification, standardisation, and translation.
- 24 The length of the verse passages is classified thus: single verses embedded in prose (71.9 %), long verse passages (23.7 %), and verse fragments (4.4 %).
- 25 The first four *Nikāyas* (Sv, Ps, Spk, Mp) and the three Abhidhamma commentaries (As, Vibh-a, Ppk-a), the *Vinaya* commentaries (Sp) and the *Pātimokkha* commentary (Kkh).

the individual verse passage, 2) duplication (i.e. repeated occurrence) within the ten texts, 3) source references obtained, and 4) parallels traced in the commentaries of the *Khuuddaka-nikāya*.²⁶ Detailed investigation with this unique method reveals that the lost source material, which is collectively called *Sihalaṭṭhakathā*, had gradually grown up in four stages, namely, the stages of floating traditions, diversification, standardisation, and translation. [9]

In the earliest phase there was no commentary in a written form, but exegetical teaching traditions in an oral form must have been introduced from India, to which Sinhalese conventions were gradually added. Lottermoser refers to this earliest stage of evolution as ‘Porāṇa I’ (the ancient teachers). The basic *Sutta* commentary was presumably written down as early as the first century BCE, and this marks the final stage of the floating traditions (the 3rd to the 1st century BCE) of Indian as well as Sinhalese origins, which is referred to as ‘Porāṇa II’. During this period, stories connected with Ceylon probably also appeared. This early commentary may have served as the common source not only for the compilation of the Sinhalese version of the four *Nikāya* commentaries, but also to some extent for that of the commentaries on the *Vinaya*- and *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*.²⁷

The second stage (the 1st century BCE) is characterised by the development of divergent teaching traditions connected with specific canonical texts, which were already organised into the first four *Nikāyas* (*Dīgha*, *Majjhima*, *Saṃyutta*, and *Aṅguttara* – this distribution was probably the beginning of the *bhāṇaka* system). The *bhāṇaka* tradition may have been the underlying cause of this diversity, in which a common basis of exegetical material was formed. This seems to lead to the growth of different commentaries, which eventually gives rise to a substantial part of the four *Nikāya* commentaries of the Sinhalese *Ṭṭhakathā* literature.

The third stage (the 1st century CE) is the standardisation of the divergent exegetical material. In this period the major growth of the *Sihalaṭṭhakathā* of the *Tripiṭaka* was completed, and subsequent additions were probably of a minor nature.²⁸ Lottermoser has traced a set of lost source works of the *Sihalaṭṭhakathā*

26 By “parallel” she means verses occurring in the texts attributed to Buddhaghosa which are also found in the *Khuuddakaṭṭhakathā*, i.e. the commentaries which are not attributed to Buddhaghosa. See LOTTERMOSER 1982: 89ff.

27 LOTTERMOSER 1982: 223.

28 ADIKARAM 1946: 87 stated that no material was added to the Sinhalese commentaries after the first century CE, but Sodo Mori’s study (MORI 1989a: 81) of the individuals mentioned in the commentaries has shown that King Mahāsena is mentioned by name in the *Samantapāsādikā* (III 519²⁶). Since this king is datable to 276–303 CE, this shows that additions to the *Sihalaṭṭhakathā* continued to be made until the very end of the third century or the beginning of the fourth CE (see NORMAN 1997a: 155–156).

through a close examination of the duplicate patterns for the verse passages in the present Pāli commentaries. She has shown [10] that the ten texts examined in her study are recastings in Pāli language of such lost Sinhalese source works.

The stage of translation (the 5th century CE) is marked by the literary activity of Buddhaghosa. Although Pāli commentaries attributed to Buddhaghosa drew their material from the Sinhala and Dravidian commentaries they were not verbatim translations of them. This is quite evident from such expressions as “*Mahāṭṭhakathāyaṃ sāraṃ ādāya ...*” (“having taken the essence of”),²⁹ to show how the Pāli commentaries have been compiled. Buddhaghosa was also making use of other available material, such as the canon and various traditions and opinions of teachers. Nevertheless, he does not appear to have had a free hand to stamp his own original thought on his works, because he had to confine the scope of his exegesis to the Mahāvihāra orthodox tradition. Under these circumstances, Buddhaghosa cannot be expected to show much originality in the Pāli commentaries.³⁰

(3) The early Abhidhamma exegetical texts and their authorship

When the authorship of the Pāli commentaries is ascribed to Buddhaghosa, as mentioned above, it should not be supposed that they are in any way original compositions, or even innovative attempts to interpret traditional material. Most scholars assume that, except for the Abhidhamma commentaries, they are carefully edited and translated versions of a vast body of accumulated exegetical material that Buddhaghosa found at the Mahāvihāra.³¹ Pind (1992) suggests that the commentaries on the *Vinaya* and the four *Nikāyas* can undoubtedly be ascribed to Buddhaghosa, but that the commentaries on the Abhidhamma canonical texts and others cannot be his.³² It should also be remarked in this connection that Buddhaghosa stipulates in the prologues and epilogues of the four *Nikāyas* that his work, *Visuddhimagga*, is integral to each of his commentaries. This means that he had already [11] written his work before translating the Sinhalese commentaries. In the prologue of the *Samantapāsādikā*, however, Buddhaghosa does not mention the *Visuddhimagga*, though he refers to it in the main text a few times. The same

29 This phrase occurs in the epilogues of the four *Nikāyas* – Sv (P^e does not include the epilogue, but B^e does, see Sv [B^e] III 249); Ps V 109; Spk III 308; Mp V 98; but the phrase *Porāṇaṭṭhakathānanaṃ sāraṃ ādāya...* occurs in the epilogue of Vibh-a 523.

30 See the conclusion, pp. 227–229.

31 See ADIKARAM 1946: 10–17; NORMAN 1983: 119–120; Bhikkhu BODHI 1993: 13–15; VON HINÜBER 1996: 101, § 206.

32 PIND 1992: 136–137.

applies to the Abhidhamma commentaries.³³ Previous writers such as Bapat and Vadekar (1942) and Jayawickrama (1979) suggested that the Abhidhamma commentaries, including the *Atthasālinī*, are probably the work of a close associate of Buddhaghosa rather than of Buddhaghosa himself.³⁴ Although I have not entirely dismissed the traditional view that it was Buddhaghosa himself who edited and translated the Old Sihala *Aṭṭhakathās* on all the Abhidhamma canonical texts into Pāli, when I deal with a cross reference between the commentaries on the *Vibhaṅga* and *Yamaka*, I have given priority to the view of the scholars mentioned above. This is because my investigation of the issue of momentariness reveals that the *Visuddhimagga*'s stance differs from the position postulated by the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, *Vibhaṅga* and *Yamaka* commentaries, which indicates their different authorship.³⁵

The problem of their authorship does not directly affect my hypothesis that the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness must have appeared in the Old Sihala *Aṭṭhakathās* and that it was [12] already accepted among scholastic Theravādin monks. Whoever the author(s) of the Abhidhamma commentaries may have been,

- 33 BSCD shows that in the Pāli commentaries there are many cross-references to the *Visuddhimagga* in the 4 *Nikāya* commentaries, but far fewer in the *Samanapāsādikā* and the Abhidhamma commentaries. In the case of the *Samantapāsādikā*, this is understandable because the *Visuddhimagga* deals with the subject of *vinaya* only in the *Sīlaniddesa* (the first two chapters). Given the fact that the *Visuddhimagga* is a comprehensive treatise on Abhidhammic issues, we would expect it to be more closely linked to the Abhidhamma commentaries than to other commentaries.

Table Intro-1: Cross-references to the *Visuddhimagga* in the Pāli commentaries

| <i>Tipiṭaka</i> Commentaries | 4 <i>Nikāyas</i> commen- taries | <i>Khuddakanikāya</i> commentary | Abhidhamma commen- taries | <i>Samantapāsādikā</i> |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Nos of cross-refer- ences to the <i>Visud- dhimagga</i> | 248 | 41 | 25 | 11 |

Three keywords are used for retrieving the data: *Visuddhimagge* (313), *Visuddhimaggato* (11), and *Visuddhimaggaṃ* (1). The data mostly occur in the locative singular, *Visuddhimagge*.

- 34 Pind thinks that the term *āgamaṭṭhakathā* in the introduction to the *Atthasālinī* refers collectively to Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the *Nikāyas*, but not to the older sources (i.e. the *Mahāṭṭhakathā*, the *Sīhalaṭṭhakathā*) used by Buddhaghosa in the Pāli commentaries (PIND 1992: 137). Compare this with Norman's remark (NORMAN 1983: 124, fn. 154). Norman supports the traditional view of Buddhaghosa as the author, whereas Bapat and Vadekar (As [N^e], pp. XXXIII–XXXIX), Jayawickrama (Kv-a, pp. IX–XIII) and Pind (1992: 136–137) insist on someone else's authorship. Cf. Cousins in 1987 (Vibha-a transl., p. IX) and VON HINÜBER 1996: 151. See also COUSINS 1981: 22–46.

- 35 See § 3.1.3.

they must have used the old Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās*.³⁶ In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the existence of the early exegetical texts in the regional languages (i.e. Sīhala, Gāndhārī, etc.) is confirmed by the recent discovery of the Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts which are the earliest surviving specimens of an ancient tradition of vernacular commentaries.

(4) The Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathā* compendia as a counterpart to the Gandhārī commentaries

The British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments from Gandhāra are believed to be the oldest surviving Buddhist manuscripts ever discovered.³⁷ The references in the manuscripts to historical figures (i.e. Jihonika and Aśpavarman) as well as the paleographic and linguistic features are broadly attributable to a period ranging from about the early first century CE to the middle of the second century CE.³⁸ In terms of historical enquiry into early exegetical tradition, these oldest dated manuscripts have wider implications for our understanding of the early commentarial literature in general. One major class of texts which is very prominently represented among the British Library fragments is that of commentaries on sets of verses, which are characterised by exegetical structures and genres.³⁹ In this regard, Richard Salomon makes an intriguing remark:⁴⁰

36 L. S. Cousins (1992: 55–56) remarks that “the precise authorship of the *Atthasālinī* is debated, but it is clear that, whether it was an early work of Buddhaghosa himself or the work of an associate, it is less carefully edited than most of the other commentaries and sometimes preserves earlier traditions which have been normalized elsewhere.” For his similar remark on the commentaries on the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* in general, see COUSINS 1987: x.

37 A set of twenty-nine scrolls recently acquired by the British Library promises to provide a window into a crucial phase of the history of Buddhism in India. The fragmentary birch bark scrolls, which were found inside one of a set of inscribed clay pots, are written in the Gandhārī Prakrit language and Kharoṣṭhī script. Dating from around the beginning of the Christian era, the scrolls are probably the oldest Buddhist manuscripts. R. Salomon and others provide in SALOMON, ALLCHIN & BARNARD 1999 a detailed description of the manuscripts and a survey of their contents, along with a preliminary evaluation of their significance. Also included are representative samples of texts and translations.

38 Salomon in SALOMON, ALLCHIN & BARNARD 1999: 141ff.

39 ID.: 26–29; 171–172.

40 ID.: 11–12.

Although the individual verses explicated in these commentaries are for most part Gandhārī translations of material well known in other traditions, the nature, organizational principles, and function of the texts as a whole remain largely obscure. Presumably, they represent local modes of instruction and preaching in fundamentals of Buddhist teachings, which should provide an interesting counterpart to the well-known Pāli [13] commentaries, whose arche-types, now lost, were said to have been composed in the local Sinhalese vernacular language. We may therefore have in these new fragments the earliest surviving original specimens of the ancient tradition of vernacular commentaries.

This indicates that the date of the formation of the Gandhārī commentaries partly accords with the period, as outlined above, of the development of the divergent exegetical material (the 1st century BCE) and the standardisation of the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* (the 1st century CE).

Another interesting scholastic document, as Salomon reports, is apparently an Abhidharma treatise or commentary discussing topics such as the nature of existence in the three time periods, the Sarvāstivādins' well-known eponymous doctrine.⁴¹ Salomon further remarks that there are other substantial remains of scholastic texts, but the contents of these fragments have not yet been closely examined. We may expect to identify the relevant topics, namely, the four characteristics of conditioned factors (*saṃskṛtalakṣaṇa*), the doctrine of momentariness, and so on, as research progresses in the foreseeable future. At this stage, however, it is premature to use this fragmentary material directly, except for its general implications for the early chronology of the exegetical tradition. A useful textual source of approximately the same date as the Gandhārī commentaries mentioned above are the three *vibhāṣā* compendia, extant in Chinese translation, which preserve the opinions of many of the early Buddhist schools, the recognised masters as well as anonymous teachers, on various doctrinal questions.

(5) The Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* versus the *vibhāṣā* compendia?

A comparison between the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* and the *vibhāṣā* compendia should immediately be justified by appropriate qualifications. They were probably composed

41 A representative passage reads: *sarvaka[l]o sarvaṃ asti sarvatra sarvaṃ asti sarvagarena sarvaṃ asti sarvakara[ne]na (sarvaṃ asti*) sarvabhavaḥ sarvaṃ asti sarvahuḍha sarvaṃ asti sarvapacageha sarvaṃ asti*. (Fragment 28, part 2, r, lines 21–22) “Everything exists at all

[14] around the same period (the 1st century BCE – the 2nd Century CE),⁴² but as far as the region of their origin and availability as well as their contents and styles are concerned, they differ considerably. The existence of the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* of the Theravādins in Ceylon can be inferred from the fragmentary references in the Pāli commentaries, while the three extant *vibhāṣā* compendia in Chinese translation represent a much larger group of lost *vibhāṣā* texts of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas in Kāśmīra.⁴³ As for content, the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* include the exegetical works of the *Tripiṭaka* as a whole, but the extant *vibhāṣā* compendia are commentaries on the **Jñānaprasthāna* / **Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra*.⁴⁴ Both the Sīhala *Aṭṭhakathās* and the extant

times. Everything exists everywhere. Everything exists with the aspect of everything. Everything exists as the reason for everything. Everything exists as all phenomena. Everything exists as all causes. Everything exists as all conditions.” Translation by Salomon in SALOMON, ALLCHIN & BARNARD 1999: 30 with the assistance of Collett Cox; the symbol (*) refers to a lost or completely illegible syllable that has been conjecturally restored on the basis of the context.

- 42 Despite the scholarly discussion that has been devoted to the problem of the date of Kaniṣka and to the issue whether or not Kaniṣka can be reliably associated with either the revision of the canon or the *Vibhāṣā* compendia, a satisfactory answer has yet to be worked out. See chapter 2, p. 99, fn. 268, for a detailed note. See now FALK 2013.
- 43 COX (WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 229–239) remarks that the *Vibhāṣā* compendia were compiled in a period of sectarian self-consciousness and intense inter-sectarian debate, as well as tremendous growth in both doctrinal interpretation and techniques of argument. The three extant *Vibhāṣā* compendia (the **Vibhāṣāśāstra* [T 1547], **Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra* [T 1546] and **Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* [T 1545]) represent a much larger group of *Vibhāṣā* texts that are no longer extant and whose contents, therefore, are virtually unknown. Sanskrit fragments of a *Vibhāṣā* compendium have been identified within the Pelliot collection. The fragments, consisting of four pieces of a single leaf, were probably discovered in the region of Kucā. The Sanskrit corresponds closely to the translations of the **Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* and **Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra*, but with some revealing differences (see ENOMOTO 1996: 135–143).
- 44 The *Jñānaprasthāna*, compiled in approximately the first century BCE, is the last of the seven Abhidharma texts of the Sarvāstivāda. The text secures a prominent place among those seven texts, because it serves as the root-text for the definitive achievement in Sarvāstivāda scholasticism, the *Vibhāṣā* compendia. It is traditionally attributed to Kātyāyanīputra; according to Paramārtha, he compiled the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma text in the region of *chī-pin*, or the Northwest, and structured it in eight chapters (*skandha*), undoubtedly a reference to the *Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra*. However, the **Mahāvibhāṣā* states that its root-text, the *Jñānaprasthāna*, was composed when Kātyāyanīputra was in an eastern region, and Hsüan-tsang states that it was composed in Cīnabhukti. The text is cited in traditional sources by two names: the **Jñānaprasthāna*, the title used for Hsüan-tsang’s translation (T 1544), and the **Aṣṭaskandhaśāstra* (T 1543), which is the title used for the earlier translation. The latter is sometimes rendered as the *Aṣṭagranthaśāstra* (see Cox in WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 222, fn. 247, for philological differences of

vibhāṣā compendia contain not only detailed exegesis of the root-texts but also entirely new doctrinal categories and interpretative positions. But their styles are distinctive; the former are characterised by rich illustrations (stories) and similes with which the root-texts are expounded, and employ polemic and reasoned [15] argument less rigorously⁴⁵ than the latter, which adopt a complex polemical style using specific techniques of criticism and proof.⁴⁶

Despite these obvious differences and limitations on any comparison, some relevant material can be drawn from the three extant *vibhāṣā* compendia. In particular, the **Mahāvibhāṣā*, being the repository of virtually every conceivable doctrinal position postulated by the early schools or masters, provides us with invaluable records in which similar ideas to the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness are found. For instance, the three moments theory attributed to *śramaṇas* seems to share the same framework as the sixteen or seventeen moments theory. The views of the Vibhajyavādin (Pāli Vibhajjavādin) are frequently cited along with the Dārṣṭāntika.⁴⁷ The debate between the Vibhajyavādin (an analyst) and the Yuktivādin (one who follows the reasoned argument) also occurs in the *vibhāṣā* compendia, but it is not entirely clear whether the Vibhajyavādin here refers to advocates of a historical sect or merely to a generic term for their methodology, which is contrasted with the Yuktivādin; the Yuktivādin's position is mostly accepted by the Sarvāstivāda-Vai-

opinion as to whether the Sanskrit equivalent of the name for a section of the text is *skandha* or *grantha*).

- 45 The Pāli commentaries usually employ unsophisticated polemics, and the counter-arguments are often attributed to the Vitaṇḍavādins (sophists). BSCD retrieves 27 occurrences – *vitaṇḍavādi* (22), *vitaṇḍavādasatthe* (1), *vitaṇḍavādasattham* (4). See MORI 1989a: 209–226 and COUSINS 1998, for a classification of the views.
- 46 Apart from the traditional catechetical method and the familiar techniques of elaboration through the juxtaposition of matrices, the *vibhāṣā* compendia, taking a comment in the root-text as a starting point, present sustained arguments about specific doctrines. Each section of commentary on a specific passage from the root-text begins with a formulaic statement, declaring the purpose of the text to be that of refuting false views and establishing correct principles. The *vibhāṣā* compendia then list the faulty theories of other schools or masters, often explicitly identified, to be countered by the statements. The text will accordingly proceed with its extended discussion, including passages from the Sūtra cited as scriptural authority as well as reasoned arguments. See BUSWELL 1997c: 561–565 and Cox in WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 237–239 for further remarks on the complex polemical style and the method of compilation of the *vibhāṣā* compendia.
- 47 The *vibhāṣā* compendia cite not only other Sarvāstivāda lineages such as the Westerners, the Outsiders, and so on, but also other schools, namely, the Vātsīputrīyas, Mahāsāṅghikas, Dharmaguptakas, Mahīśāsakas, and Kāśyapīyas. They also cite the view of non-Buddhists such as the Sāṃkhyas, Vaiśeṣikas, Lokāyatas, and Śābdavādins. See WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 239.

bhāṣika. André Bareau shows that the doctrinal positions of the Vibhajyavādin as presented in the *vibhāṣā* compendia more commonly agree with the views of other early Buddhist schools (e.g. the Mahāsāṅghika and Mahīśāsaka) than with those of the Theravādin. Apart from this conflicting evidence in the *vibhāṣā* compendia, scholars do not rule out the possibility that the Ceylonese Theravāda traces its lineage through the [16] Vibhajyavādins.⁴⁸ However, when I deal with the issue of the denial of *antarābhava* and its theoretical connection with the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness, without assuming its sectarian connection, I simply contrast the Vibhajyavādins' stance in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* with the view of the Theravādins in order to show the formation of this doctrine in the early exegetical texts.

Another useful source in the **Mahāvibhāṣā* for tracing the early doctrinal history is the variety of anonymous views recorded at the beginning of the treatment of each topic.⁴⁹ After a series of anonymous opinions, the definitive view of the Vaibhāṣikas usually appears, with the stock phrase 'the critique says' (*p'ing-yüeh*), in response to the topic under discussion. The rest of the views are rejected or marginalised, but they can be used to show the existence of controversies on certain doctrinal points. For example, I compare the divergent views of the *cetah-paryāyajñāna* (insight into the minds of others), which are anonymously attributed to masters, with the opinions of anonymous teachers (*keci*) and *bhāṇakas* in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* commentary. This comparative approach is also applied when I examine the *Khaṇikakathā* (one of the last chapters of the *Kathāvatthu*) which is the oldest evidence of the theory of momentariness, without neglecting the pertinent reference from the textual sources of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika. Thus, in our attempt to contrast some related textual sources of the Northern and Southern traditions, we do not unwittingly neglect or isolate the mention of views, seemingly insignificant or unrelated at first, which might upon further investigation prove to be of considerable importance. Provided we are aware of the limitation of this

48 BAREAU 1955: 167–180 (the table on pp. 205–240); Bareau studies the doctrinal positions of early Buddhist schools, largely depending upon the *vibhāṣā* compendia. He shows that the doctrinal positions of the Theravādins disagree 15 times with those of the Vibhajyavādins, but agree only 5 times. In contrast, the Mahāsāṅghika and Mahīśāsaka agree with the Vibhajyavādins 16 and 10 times respectively, but no disagreements are found (see the table on p. 177 for detail). For the possible relationships between the Vibhajyavādins and the Theravādins, see JAYATILLEKE 1963: 278–280; PRASAD 1972: 101–113; PREBISH 1974: 239–254; PREBISH & NATTIER 1977: 237–254; KARUNADASA 1983: 1–27; COUSINS 1991: 27–60; 1994: 15–32; NORMAN 1992: 191–218; GETHIN 1998: 53. See also BUSWELL 1997: 1256–1258 for the view of the Vibhajyavādins/Kāśyapīyas.

49 They are usually introduced with little more than the laconic 'moreover' (*fu-ts'ê*) or 'there is this explanation' (*yu-shuo*). This in turn indicates considerable doctrinal diversity and the active intellectual milieu in which the *vibhāṣā* compendia were formed.

approach and do not overestimate the data, it will allow us to identify the origins and development of certain doctrines within an early [17] exegetical tradition or across several such traditions. This perhaps reveals a picture of an early stage in which those doctrines were developing in the parallel textual sources of the Southern and Northern traditions before they were formalised in the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* respectively in the fifth century CE. I think this type of comparative study has not really been attempted so far in Buddhist scholarship. This comparative approach needs not necessarily be confined to the interpretation of ancient texts. Sūtrantic interpretations by modern scholars may have an affinity with the views attributed to anonymous masters or to the Dārṣāntika (the Sautrāntikas) in the **Mahāvibhāṣā*. For instance, Sue Hamilton and Joong-Pyo Lee do not support the common understanding of the term *āyatana* as the sense organs and their objects, and argue, based on an analysis of the canonical texts, that they are potentialities which determine the nature of each of the types of an individual's psychological process.⁵⁰ A similar line of thought, attributed to anonymous masters, is recorded in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*.⁵¹

Finally, a general remark on relative chronology has to be made to justify my use of Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika textual sources. Due to the lack of direct textual documentation and adequate contextual information,⁵² the precise dating of individual texts is impossible. We must therefore be satisfied with a relative textual chronology, whether of individual texts within a tradition or across several traditions. One seemingly reliable method for establishing a relative chronology would be to collect textual cross-references; these could then be used to construct a ladder of textual dependence.⁵³ But here also the possibility of textual interpolation, as C. Cox has rightly pointed out, either in the process of composition or translation, cannot be excluded. Inevitably, then, relative chronologies ultimately depend upon internal textual criteria: namely, characteristics of either format or content. Regardless of which criterion is chosen, the chronology proceeds from certain assumptions concerning the development of these characteristics, and when these assumptions are disputed, the chronologies that they support are quickly undermined. In spite of these potential [18] difficulties, a relative chronology or periodization has often been used by scholars for early texts.⁵⁴ Keeping the methodological limitations and difficulties noted by C. Cox in mind, I examine the historical development of

50 LEE 1988: 137–158; HAMILTON 1996: 1–41.

51 T 27 381a²⁴–382^{b6}. See § 1.1.3-(2).

52 E.g. colophons and chronicles.

53 WILLEMEN, DESSEIN & COX 1998: 166–167.

54 ID.: 167–168.

the doctrine of momentariness in the broad context of the textual tradition of the Theravāda and Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika.

(6) An outline of the chapters

The present study consists of two parts. In the first, I deal with the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness, in particular its origins in the *Nikāyas* and the Abhidhamma canon, and its subsequent development and application in the commentarial texts. In the second part, I present relevant textual material drawn from various post-canonical Pāli texts, including some edited sections, translations and annotations.

The first chapter of Part One commences with an overview of the *dharma* theory and a brief survey of the earliest texts, in which the theory of momentariness is likely to have been formed. I have retrieved (from the canonical texts on CD-ROM) the representative passages concerning the doctrine of impermanence and the *ti-saṅkhata-lakkhaṇa*. After tracing the origin of the *ti-saṅkhata-lakkhaṇa* formula in the canon, I examine the concept of moment (*khaṇa*) and its interpretations in post-canonical texts in the light of the relevant Abhidhamma texts of the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣikas.

In the second chapter, as its title ‘The Developing Theory of Momentariness’ indicates, I focus on how the theory of momentariness emerges from the intellectual milieu of the Buddhist scholastic tradition in India. I examine in detail the *Khaṇikakathā* of the *Kathāvatthu*, which provides the oldest evidence of the theory of momentariness. I analyse the controversy on this issue presented in the *Kathāvatthu* in the light of the Theravāda *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* and the Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika’s canonical and exegetical works. I also try to determine when and how the theory of the thought process (*citta-vīthi*) took shape in the Abhidhamma canon, in order to examine how the doctrine of momentariness [19] developed into the unique doctrine which calculated the exact relative duration of mental and material phenomena.

The third chapter concerns the developed form of the doctrine of momentariness. I study the *Pakiṇṇakakathā* in the *Vibhaṅga* commentary, which seems to be the *locus classicus* for the theory, in the light of comparisons with the three moments theory in the **Mahavibhāṣā*. I ask why the number sixteen or seventeen was adopted and why the commentaries vary as to the number of thought moments (16 or 17). I present possible solutions drawn from the *Mūlaṭīkā* and *Anuṭīkā* of the *Vibhaṅga* commentary. Moreover, I analyse the relevant chapters (*Vīthi-pariccheda*) of the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* and its commentaries to examine how the notion of *khaṇa* (moment) is explicitly applied to the seventeen stages of the sense-door process. I also address the issue of the nature of materiality in relation to the theory of

rūpa-kalāpa (the smallest material unit), the Theravāda counterpart of the atomic theory postulated in the Northern traditions of Buddhism. In this connection, I show that the **Vimuttimaggā* (VIM) does not mention the duration of materiality in terms of sixteen or seventeen thought moments; instead, it explains a single moment (*eka-kkhaṇa*) of materiality in conjunction with the changing phase of the three units of the material groups (*kalāpa*).

The doctrine of momentariness does not seem to appear as a topic in its own right before its fully-fledged treatment in the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, but is nevertheless presupposed and applied in the doctrinal tenets of Theravāda Buddhism. As examples of such treatment in the commentarial texts, I present the issue of the denial of *antarābhava* and its theoretical connection with the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness, and the momentary present (*khaṇa-paccuppanna*) and its selective application to the theory of insight into the minds of others (*cetopariyaññā*). The fourth chapter thus shows the internal evidence that the doctrine of momentariness evolved gradually, along with other doctrines, within the doctrinal system developed in the commentarial tradition of the Theravāda. [20]

The first part of my study will conclude by reviewing the chronology proposed by von Rospatt and D. J. Kalupahana. I attempt to present substantial evidence that the Theravādin doctrine of momentariness developed in the *Vibhaṅgappakaraṇa Sīhaḷaṭṭhakathā* before Buddhaghosa arrived in Ceylon to translate the old Sīhala commentaries into Pāli.

Part Two, the last chapter of the thesis, provides annotated translations of relevant material with the edited sections of text from the Pāli commentarial corpus (previously untranslated, with the exception of the *Vibhaṅga* commentary). In presenting the draft translation of the *Vibhaṅga* commentary by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (and others), I have made changes and added comprehensive annotation. [21]

The idea of the impermanence and transience of life is fundamental to Buddhist teachings. The first of the 'three characteristics' (*tilakkhana*), i.e. 'impermanence' (*aniccatā*), is a doctrine constantly and emphatically insisted upon in the canonical texts. The radical and extended interpretation of this doctrine gave rise to the idea that the world is not made of enduring substances with changing qualities. Rather, reality is made only of events that flash into and out of existence, not only through the causal power of their chief cause but also through the influence of an entire causal complex. This is referred to as *kṣaṇikavāda*, 'the doctrine of momentariness'. There is disagreement among Buddhist thinkers about the exact meaning of the doctrine of momentariness. Some hold that no conditioned phenomenon can endure for more than a single moment, after which it stops existing. Others, though, argue that momentariness is not incompatible with duration; things are produced, endure and disappear. In particular, the

Theravādins attempt to model the thought process in terms of the relative duration of material and mental phenomena. Theravādin exegetes hold that a moment of matter lasts for as long as sixteen or seventeen thought moments.

The central part of the present book examines the origin and development of the Theravāda version of the doctrine of momentariness. Unlike other scholars who consider this doctrine an interpolation into Theravāda textual sources, possibly by Buddhaghosa (5th c. CE), the present study hypothesizes and verifies on the basis of textual evidence that the Theravāda doctrine of momentariness was most probably already present in the early Sinhalese commentaries. In attempting to trace the textual history of this doctrine, the parallel textual sources of the early Southern and Northern traditions (1st c. BCE–2nd c. CE) are examined, before their formalisation in the 5th c. CE.

