Norihisa Baba

1. Introduction

Although there is no controversy among scholars in the assumption that the first four Nikāyas are prior in the order of compilation to both the Abhidhammapiṭaka (AP) and the Khuddakanikāya (KN), it still remains unclear with regard to the order of the compilation of the AP and the KN. This paper, on the basis of the analysis of relevant accounts found in the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas (CFFN: Sumaṅgalavilāsini, Pavaṇcasūdanī, Sāratthappakāsini, Manorathapūrani), aims to elucidate the order of these two corpuses of texts. While these four commentaries, as such, were compiled in the fifth century CE, as they are regarded as having originated in earlier sources, called Sihalaṭṭhakathā, they, in fact, contain references to the different recensions of the AP and KN, apparently earlier than the date.

2. The Structure of the Abhidhammapiṭaka and the Khuddakanikāya

The Pali canon, in the present form, comprises both the Abhidhammapiṭaka, consisting of seven kinds of texts (Dhammasaṅgaṇī, Vibhaṅga, Dhātukathā, Puggalapaññatī, Kathāvatthu, Yamaka, Paṭṭhāna) and the Khuddakanikāya, of fifteen (Khuddakapāṭha, Dhammapāda, Udāna, Itivuttaka, Suttanīṭṭhāna, Vīmāṇavatthu, Petavatthu, Theragāthā, Therigāthā, Jātaka, Niddesa, Paṭisambhidāmagga, Apadāna, Buddhavaṃsa, Cariyāpiṭaka). This structure of the AP and the KN, however, does not correspond to that shown in the descriptions of them in the Commentaries, which difference alludes to the change of the ideas of the AP and the KN in the course of the history of text’s transmission. Each commentary on the first four Nikāyas explains these two texts as follows:

A. The Sumaṅgalavilāsini (115.14-29) identifies the seven texts of the AP and the
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thirteen of KN, exactly in the same way as shown above, but it categorizes the thirteen books in the name of “Khuddaka-gantha”, not of “Kuddhakanikāya”. Note-worthy at this point is the difference found between the reciters of the Dīghani-kāya (Dīghabhāṇakā) and those of the Majjhimanikāya (Majjhimabhāṇakā); the former claims that the “Khuddaka-gantha” should be included in the AP, while the latter asserts that it should be included in the Suttapiṭaka, together with the Cariyāpiṭaka, Apadāna, and Buddhavaṃsa.

B. The Sumaṅgalavilāsini (117.10-16) regards the same seven texts as belonging to the AP, and the same fifteen books as being categorized into the KN. This is the only example that shows the exact correspondence to the present construction of the KN in the CFFN. However, as É. Lamotte3) has pertinently proved, in the parallel passage in the Chinese translation of the commentary on the Vinaya, “Shàn jiān lǜ pí pó shā (善見律毘婆沙)”, only fourteen books are shown as belonging to the KN (T 24.676a7-13). This description of The Sumaṅgalavilāsini can be regarded as having been redacted in comparatively later time.

C. The Papañcasūdanī (184.21-29) explains that the Buddha himself considered the seven texts as being categorized in the AP, while The Sumaṅgalavilāsini (1565.37-566.6) enumerates only twelve books, and that not as the KN but as “the word of Buddha that is not to be called Sutta”.

D. The Manorathapūrani (188.11-20), while showing the seven texts as belonging to the AP, mentions the Jāraka not as the KN but as the text that belongs neither to the Suttapiṭaka nor the AP.

The examination in the above can be shown in the Diagram 1 and 2 as below.

【Diagram 1】Structure of the AP in the CFFN

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<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vibhaṅga</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dhātukathā</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Puggalapaññatti</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kathāvatthu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Yamaka</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6 (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Paṭṭhāna</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7 (5)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Conclusion

In the CFFN, while the seven texts of the AP were consistently fixed, the number and the name of the texts belonging to KN, fifteen in the present form, was not at all firmly established at that time, and, among other things, they were not even called “KN”. This clearly shows that the emergence of the idea of the KN as containing the fifteen texts postdates that of the establishment of understanding of the AP as having the seven texts. Given that the AP was composed later than the first four Nikāyas, the order of composition of the Pāli canon is logically as follows: The
First Four Nikāyas ⇒ Abhidhammapiṭaka (7 texts) ⇒ Khuddakanikāya (15 texts)

〈References and Abbreviations〉 References to Pāli texts are to the Pāli Text Society editions. AP: Abhidhammapiṭaka. KN: Khuddakanikāya. CFFN: The Commentaries on the First Four Nikāyas.

〈Notes〉 1) While both the first four Nikāyas (Āgamas) and the Vinaya were transmitted not only in the southern tradition but also in the northern tradition, such as the Sarvāstivādins, the AP is extant uniquely in the Theravādins. In addition, given that the AP is not mentioned in the description of the first council (saṅgīti), the AP was presumably compiled after the first four Nikāyas and Vinaya had been composed. With regard to the process how the AP developed from the sūtras of the first four Nikāyas, see K. Mizuno, Pāli Ronsho Kenkyū (Studies on the Pāli Doctrinal Literature), Tokyo, 1997, pp.174-177.


3) É. Lamotte, do., p.253

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〈Key Words〉 Abhidhammapiṭaka, Khuddakanikāya, the commentaries on the first four Nikāyas, the order of composition

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