THE ORIGINS OF THE KHUDDAKA NIKĀYA AS THE FIFTH COLLECTION OF THE SUTTA PITAKA

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The Theravāda tradition explicitly states that the Sutta Pitaka, which consists of five Nikāyas was compiled at the First Council held at Rājagaha immediately after the passing away of the Buddha. Although all the sources of the First Council, not only Pali and Sanskrit but also Chinese and Tibetan, have been rather exhaustively examined by various scholars, the original accounts will be re-investigated here in relation to the Khuddaka Nikāya.

The eleventh chapter of the Cullavagga, which is the earliest account of the First Council and from which are derived the traditions preserved in the Commentaries and Sri Lankan Chronicles, says as to the proceedings of the “recital of the Dhamma”, thus: “The venerable Mahākassapa questioned the venerable Ānanda on the Dhamma, ‘Friend Ānanda, where was the Brahmajīla preached?’ ‘Sir, at the King’s park at Ambalaṭṭhikā, between Rājagaha and Nālandā’; “In connection with whom?” “Suppiya the wandering ascetic and the brahmin youth Brahmadatta”. And in such wise did the venerable Mahākassapa question the venerable Ānanda on the occasion and the person of the Brahmajīla. Again he asked, “Friend Ānanda, where was the Sāmaṇeraphala preached?” ‘Sir, at Jivaka’s Mango Grove at Rājagaha’. “With whom?” “With Ajātasattu, son of the Videhan princess’. Thereupon the venerable Mahākassapa questioned the venerable Ānanda on the occasion of the Sāmaṇeraphala, and the person. And in the self-same manner he questioned him on all five Nikāyas (etena upāyena pañcānikāyena pucchi)”.

The account given in the Samantapāsādikā, except for slight variations, agrees with that of the Cullavagga. Just after the statement that “in the self-same manner the venerable Mahākassapa questioned the venerable Ānanda on all five Nikāyas, the Samantapāsādikā has the following passage: “The five Nikāyas are, Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikāya, Saṃyutta Nikāya, Aṅguttara Nikāya and Khuddaka Nikāya. Here the Khuddaka Nikāya means the rest of the sayings of the Buddha excluding the four Nikāyas. The venerable Upāli explained the Vinaya therein and the venerable Ānanda the remaining