The commentaries of the Pāli canon are a huge collection of materials providing useful information to scholars in various fields, including Buddhist studies, history, geography, culture, and languages in ancient India. These commentaries are especially significant when it comes to textual criticism of the Pāli canon. Focusing on the Dīghanikāya (DN) and its commentary Sumaṅgalavilāsinī (Sv), this paper will demonstrate the use of the commentaries in editorial work based on forty-five manuscripts from four traditions, Burmese (B), Sinhalese (C), Khom (K), and Tham (T).

1. Commentaries as a Reference Point

The aim of editing the Pāli canon is to restore the original text as accurately as possible. The problem is which version, or particularly which period, of the Pāli canon we should aim for. The Pāli canon has had additions throughout the course of its transmission since the first Buddhist council. As von Hinüber (2015: 378) has pointed out, some additions or interpolations in the Pali canon were already recognized by Buddhaghosa long ago. This is why there is currently no agreement among scholars as to when the Pali canon was formed into the complete set as we have now. Nevertheless, it is very likely that most scholars would agree that the extant Pāli canon came into existence no later than Buddhaghosa’s time. As a result, when editing the Pāli canon, the most practical aim is to look for the recension of the Mahāvihāra school used by Buddhaghosa when he composed the commentaries.

2. Lemma is What Buddhaghosa Saw

A lemma is one of the most helpful parts of the commentaries. In theory, it contains canonical readings that Buddhaghosa recorded from his manuscripts at the time. However, we
Examples and Issues of the Usage of the Commentaries

have several editions of the commentaries, B^e, C^e, E^e and S^e, in which inconsistencies can be found from time to time. The below examples show how a lemma is used.

**Example 1:** In the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* (DN 28), the Buddha responds to Sāriputta who has made a statement of high praise to him.

\[
\text{ulārā kho te ayaṃ Sāriputta āsabhī vācā bhāsitā} \ldots (\text{DN (E^e) III 99; (B^e) III 82, para. 142})
\]

Sāriputta, this is an excellent and dramatic statement spoken by you \ldots

- *ulārā* (B^{11,12,13,15} C^{1,4,5} T B^e C^e E^e); *ulārā* (C^2.3); *ulāro* (B^14)
- *olārā* (K^{1,2,3,14,15} S^e); *olāro* (K^16)

As suggested by CPD, *olāra* is used as a synonym for *ulāra* “large, excellent.” Among our manuscripts, only K manuscripts read *olāra*, where as all the rest of our manuscripts read *ulārā*. However only the latter reading is quoted as a lemma in the Sv of all printed editions including the S^e which belongs to Khom tradition: *ulārā ti setṭhā* (Sv (E^e) III 878; (B^e) III 62; (C^e) II 638; (S^e) III 101). Therefore, *ulāra* should be adopted here.

### 3. Useful Hints from Commentarial Explanation

**Example 2:** In the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* (DN 14), Khaṇḍa and Tissa are the first two people taught by the Vipassī Buddha. After receiving the teaching, they asked to go for refuge with the Buddha and Dhamma and became the first two monks. Later, a large crowd of 84,000 people came to listen to the teaching from the Vipassī Buddha. They also asked to go for refuge with the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha(?), and then received ordination.

\[
\text{Khaṇḍo ca Tisso ca etad avocuṃ: ete mayaṃ bhante Bhagavantam saraṇaṃ gacchāma, dhamaṇa ca, mahājanakāyo caturāsītipāṇasahassāni etad avocuṃ: ete mayaṃ bhante Bhagavantam saraṇaṃ gacchāma, dhamaṇa ca bhikkhusaṅghaṇa ca.} (\text{DN (E^e) II 42 ff.; (B^e) II 36 ff., para. 78 ff.)}
\]

- *bhikkhusaṅghaṇa ca* (B K); *bhikkhusaṅghaṇa ca* (B^e C^e S^e) • omit (C T E^e)

It is clear from the context that Khaṇḍa and Tissa asked to go for refuge to only the Buddha and Dhamma, excluding *bhikkhusaṅghaṇa*, because without existing monks there couldn’t have been a Saṅgha. However, after Khaṇḍa and Tissa had become monks, a group of 84,000 people came to ask to go for refuge. Here, should they include *bhikkhusaṅghaṇa* for their refuge or not? All of our witnesses, except C and T manuscripts
and the printed edition $E^e$, do include bhikkhusamghaṃ ca. Here the Sv comes to give us a helpful hint: Bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma dhammañ cā ti saṅghassa aparipuṇṇattā dvevācikam eva saraṇam agamaṃsu (Sv ($E^e$) II 474; ($B^e$) II 65). The lemma and its explanation indicates that bhikkhu-samghañ ca should be excluded against most of witnesses as the saṅgha had not been established yet.

**Example 3:** In the Lohicca-sutta (DN 12), two different names are given to a barber by manuscript traditions.

‘evem bhante’ ti kho Bhesiko nahāpito Lohiccassa bhāhmaṇassa paṭissutvā yena Bhagavā ten’ upasamkami. (DN ($E^e$) I 225; ($B^e$) I 215, para. 505)

- Bhesiko ($C^e$)
- Bhesikā ($C^e$)
- Rosikā ($B^{2,3,4} K^{1,2,3,4} B^e$); Rosika ($B^1 T$); Rosiko ($B^3 S^e$); Rositā ($K^5$)

In general, all $C$ manuscripts read Bhesiko whereas SEA manuscripts read Rosikā. There are two problems here, at the beginning and the end of the barber’s name. The first problem at the beginning of the name, Bhe-/Ro-, is rather straightforward. It is likely to have been caused by confusion over the letter Ro- in Mon, Burmese, and Khom scripts for the letter Bhe- in Sinhalese script. In addition, based on the equipvalent name Bheṣaji(n) found in the Sanskrit fragment (SHT X 3830), it is reasonable to conclude that the name should begin with Bhe-. For the second problem at the end of the name, should the gender of his name be masculine or feminine? The Sv comes to our aid here: Bhesikāṃ nahāpitan āmantesī ti Bhesikā ti evam itthilingavasena laddhanāmaṃ nahāpitaṃ āmantesi. (Sv ($E^e$) II 395; ($B^e$) II 327). “Bhesikāṃ nahāpitan āmantesi: he addressed a barber who had obtained the name ‘Bhesikā’ in the feminine gender.” As a result, even though only the printed edition $C^e$ has it, Bhesikā is correct and should be adopted here.

**4. Old Variants at Buddhaghosa’s time**

It has been known among scholars that variant readings in the Pāli canon have been found even at Buddhaghosa’s time. In the Sv, a variant reading is given in forty-nine different places which are indicated by a phase ‘... ti (pi)vā pātho’ or ‘(keci) ... ti (pi) pāṭhanti’ (Horner 1979; von Hinüber 2015: 366–371). One of them is shown in the next example.

**Example 4:** In the Sāmaññaphala-sutta (DN 2), there is a simile of the divine eye as follows:
Examples and Issues of the Usage of the Commentaries (Chaowarithreonglith)

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seyyathā pi mahārāja majjhe sīṅghātaka pāsādo, tattha cakkhumā puriso thito passeyya manusse gehāṃ pavisante pi nikkhamante pi rathiyā vīthiṃ sañcarante pi majjhe pi sīṅghātaka nisinne. (DN (E) I 83; (B) I 78, para. 247)

Great king, just as there was a mansion at the central square. A man with good eyesight standing there might see humans entering and leaving a house, travelling along a road and street, and sitting at the central square.

- vīthiṃ sañcarante (B²)
- vithim sañcarante (S⁶)
- vithiyaṃ sañcarante (B¹)
- vithi sañcarante (C²,⁵ E⁶)
- vithi sañcarante (C¹)
- vithi sañcarante (B⁵ K³,⁴,⁵ T)
- rathi sañcarante (B²)
- rathim sañcarante (B⁴)
- rathiya sañcarante (K¹)
- vithisañcarante (C²)
- omit (K²)

We have a wide range of variants here. Two printed edition, B⁶ and S⁶, read v(ī|i)thiṃ sañ-carante by having vīthiṃ in the accusative case, but no manuscript supports this reading. Most manuscripts, C, T, B⁵ and K³,⁴,⁵, read v(ī|i)thi sañcarante, which presents difficulties in grammatical explanation. The oldest Burmese manuscript, B1, reads vithiyaṃ sañcarante whereas the rest of manuscripts, B²,⁴ K¹, read rathi(ṃ) sañcarante, but there is no support from the commentaries. However, a unique reading vītisañcarante is given in our last witness, the printed edition C⁶. Here, the lemma in the Sv shows that the word is problematic and its variants already existed even in Buddhaghosa’s time.

dibbacakkhūpamāyaṃ vithim sañcarante ti aparāparam sañcarante. vithim carante ti pi pātho.
(Sv (Be) I 220; (Se) I 330)

dibba-cakkhu-upamāyaṃ vītisañcarante ²) ti aparāparam carante. ³) vidisañcarante ti pi pātho.
(Sv (Ee) I 224)

The Sv gives us even more variants — vithim sañcarante, vithim carante, vītisañcarante, and vīdisañcarante. At this point, vītisañcarante ‘moving past each other’ seems to be a good reading. Because the problem could be solved if we see vīti- as a verbal prefix and read it as a single verb, vītiañcarante. In addition, when focusing on the commentarial explanation ‘aparāparaṃ (sañ)carante,’ two more cases of the same explanation have been found, and they apply a lemma of one single verb as follows: saṃsaranṭi ti aparāparam sañ-caranti. (Sv (E) I 105); anucañkamante ti aparāparam caṅkamante/sañcarante. (Ps (E) II 323).
5. Conclusion

As shown in the above examples, the commentaries are a practical and useful tool for those who are editing the Pāli canon. However, they are sometimes not very helpful when a lemma becomes inconsistent across different printed editions, e.g. muddhābhisitto/muddhāvasitto in the Cakkavatti-sutta (DN 26). Furthermore, we also need to use the commentaries with caution, taking into account other aspects such as context, manuscript reading, parallels, philological points, and so forth. All in all, using commentaries in editing the Pāli canon is a way to approach, appreciate, and re-examine the commentaries with new eyes.

Notes
1) Burmese manuscripts for DN I — B¹ (1679), B² (1768), B³ (1774), B⁴ (1792), B⁵ (1806); for DN II — B⁶ (1773), B⁷ (1832), B⁸ (1836), B⁹ (1839), B¹⁰ (1882); for DN III — B¹¹ (1784), B¹² (1795), B¹³ (1832), B¹⁴ (1842), B¹⁵ (1883). Sinhalese manuscripts for DN I-III — C¹ (1744), C² (1783), C³ (1832), C⁴ (1855), C⁵ (unknown). Khom manuscripts for DN I — K¹ (1777), K² (1783–1809), K³ (1824–1851), K⁴ (1851–1868), K⁵ (unknown), K⁶ (removed); for DN II — K⁷ (before 1767), K⁸ (1781), K⁹ and K¹⁰ (1824–1851), K¹¹ (unknown); for DN III — K¹² (1807), K¹³ (1824–1851), K¹⁴ (1851–1868), K¹⁴ and K¹⁵ (unknown). Tham manuscripts for DN I — T¹ (1598), T² (1822), T¹ and T² (1836), T³ (unknown); for DN II — T⁴ (1836); for DN III — T⁵ (1820), T⁶ (1825), T⁷ and T⁸ (1836).
2) E⁸ gives more variants in the critical apparatus as follows: S⁷ vī-śaṃcaranto; S⁸ vītisāṃcarante; S⁹ vīthi-saṃcarante, and so. S⁴ corrected from vītisam°; B⁹ rathim sañcarente.
3) E⁸ gives more variants in the critical apparatus: S⁵ omits; S⁶ vīthi-saṃcarante; B⁹ vithi sañce°.

Abbreviations

| B  | Burmese script manuscript              |
|----|----------------------------------------|
| Bᵉ | Burmese edition – Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti        |
| C  | Sinhalese script manuscript            |
| Cᵉ | Sinhalese edition – Buddhajanti editon or Simon Hewavitarne Beduest edition |
| CPD | Critical Pāli Dictionary               |
| Eᵉ | Europian edition – PTS                 |
| K  | Khom script manuscript                 |
| Kᵉ | Khom edition – Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti          |
| Pᵉ | Papañcasūdanī                         |
| P⁹ | (Commentary on Majjhimanikāya)         |
| T  | Tham script manuscript                 |
| Sᵉ | Thai edition – Śyāmaratṭha edition     |
| SEA | Southeast Asia                         |
| SH/T | Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden |

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