

The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* and *Abhidharma*

Tse-fu Kuan (Yuan Ze University, Taiwan)

Abstract

While preserving the earliest teachings of Buddhism, the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* in the Pali Canon is also closely related to the *Abhidharma*, supposedly later canonical literature. The *Āṅguttara Nikāya* is a collection of *suttas* (Skt. *sūtra*) that are organized by numbers mentioned in the *suttas*. Its framework is based on a numerical scheme according to which each successive chapter deals with sets of terms one number more than those dealt with in the preceding chapter. This method of arrangement is similar to that used in constructing the *māṭrkās* (Pali *mātikā*), or comprehensive lists of the fundamental doctrinal items, such as those found in the *Vibhaṅga*, a Theravāda *Abhidhamma* text, and the *Dharmaskandha*, a Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* work. Peter Skilling and Collett Cox suggest that some *suttas* in the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* contain material that can be identified as belonging to a later stratum, and were composed under the influence of *Abhidharma*. By contrast, Junjirō Takakusu *et al.* hold that the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* can be seen as the source of *Abhidharma*. This research is an attempt to explore the issues concerning the relationship between the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* and *Abhidharma* in terms of history, genre and content.