Moggaliputtatissa Encyclopedia Article

Moggaliputtatissa

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Moggaliputtatissa

MOGGALIPUTTATISSA, Buddhist elder and *arahant* leader of the monastic order (*saṃgha*) in India during the reign of Aśoka (274–232 BCE). According to the chronicles of the Theravāda tradition (*Mahāvaṃsa* and *Dīpavaṃsa*), he was the chief Buddhist adviser to Aśoka. After Aśoka became a generous supporter of Buddhism, he asked Moggaliputtatissa whether anyone had ever been a greater kinsman of the Buddha's religion. Moggaliputtatissa responded that a true kinsman of the Buddha must let his son or daughter enter the *saṃgha*. As a result, Aśoka encouraged one of his sons, Mahinda, to become a monk and one of his daughters, Saṃghamitta, to become a nun. Moggaliputtatissa subsequently became Mahinda's teacher in the *saṃgha*.

The primary work of Moggaliputtatissa is reported to have been the purification of the *saṃgha* and the organization of the Third Buddhist Council. Because Aśoka supported the *saṃgha* with lavish patronage, the *saṃgha* became corrupt and filled with undisciplined monks. When Aśoka's ministers, sent to ascertain what was wrong within the *saṃgha*, rashly executed some of the monks, Aśoka feared that the blame for the sin would accrue to him. Moggaliputtatissa, however, reassured Aśoka that he was not to blame for the act. Then, seated beside Aśoka, Moggaliputtatissa questioned all the monks and purged the *saṃgha* of those who did not subscribe to the Vibbhajjavāda interpretation of the teachings. The chronicles relate that he then chose a thousand *arahant*s and held the Third Council, at which the Tipiṭaka was recited and committed to memory in its complete and final form. Moggaliputtatissa himself recited the *Kathāvatthuppakaraṇa* at this council.

Moggaliputtatissa also arranged for Buddhist monks to be sent as missionaries to other countries. The most notable of these missionaries was Mahinda, who is credited with the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

See Also

Aśoka.

Bibliography

The primary source for Moggaliputtatissa is *The Mahāvaṃsa, or, The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, translated and edited by Wilhelm Geiger (1912; reprint, Colombo, 1950). An important secondary source is Walpola Rahula's *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Anuradhapura Period* (Colombo, 1956).

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