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HISTORICAL IMAGINATION IN SRI LANKA FROM THE LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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ABBREVIATIONS

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
AY	*Alakeśvara Yuddhaya*
Cv	*Cūlavaṃsa*, edited and translated by Geiger
DA	*Daṁbadeṇi Asna*
Dhs	*Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, Pali Text Society
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*, Pali Text Society
DPPN	*Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* (Malalasekera)
Dpv	*Dīpavaṃsa*, edited and translated by Oldenberg
EZ	*Epigraphia Zeylanica*
GS	*Girā Sandeśaya* (Sinhala)
JAV	*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*, Pali Text Society
Jv	*Janavaṃśaya*
KK	*Kōṉēcar Kalveṭṭu*
KS	*Kōkila Sandeśaya* (Sinhala), edited and translated by Sumanasuriya
MKP	*Meraṭa Kaḍayim Pota*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*, Pali Text Society
Mhv	*Mahāvaṃsa*, edited and translated by Geiger
NS	*Nikāya Saṅgrahava* (=*Nikáya Saṅgrahawa*)
Pjv	*Pūjāvaliya*
PS	*Pärakumbā Sirita*
Rv	*Rājāvaliya*
RRv	*Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya*
SII	*South Indian Inscriptions* (ed. R.S.H. Krishna Sastri)
SN	*Saṃyutta Nikāya*, Pali Text Society
SLK	*Srī Lankādvīpayē Kaḍaim*, edited and translated by Abeyawardana
SS	*Säḷalihiṇi Sandeśaya*
TKP[a]	*Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam*, edited by Naṭarācā
TKP[b]	*Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam*, edited by Kārttikēyaiyar and Aiyar
VAP	*Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*
VP	*Vaiyā Pāṭal*
VRv	*Vanni Rājāvaliya*
YVM	*Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai*, edited by M. K. Capānātar

CHAPTER ONE: ECHOES OF THE PAST, PRESSURES OF THE PRESENT

§1.1 SRI LANKA'S PREMODERN RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

Three sites of religious significance stand out in the 17th century chronicles of Portuguese historians, reflecting on a century of domination in Sri Lanka: Adam's Peak (Śrī Pāda, a mountain in the central highlands celebrated as having been visited by the Buddha Gotama); the Konesvaram Śiva temple at Trincomalee (which Fernão de Queirós calls one of the most venerated temples in all of India, frequented by a concourse of visitors from throughout the region); and the Viṣṇu temple complex at Devinuvara on the south coast, which Diogo do Couto identifies as the greatest attraction for pilgrims on the island (after Adam's Peak)[1], and Queirós "the *pagoda* of greatest resort in Ceylon," next to that of Trincomalee.[2]

While for the Portuguese these sites merely represented shades on the spectrum of the odd religion of the *infidelos* of India, we can today identify each of the three locations as representing the island's most prominent religious traditions prior to the colonial period (Buddhism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism). Indeed all three sites are among the oldest continuous places of worship on the island, and their vibrancy at the time of the Portuguese arrival serves as a reminder of a rich history of religious diversity.

Indeed, the religiously and linguistically plural situation of Sri Lanka's southwest in the 14th-15th centuries is not a secret. Hindu temples at Kōṭṭe, praise of

[1] Couto, *History of Ceylon*, 373ff.

[2] From S.G. Perera's translation of Queirós' *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon,* I.35. For Queirós' remarks on Konesvaram, see I.66. The Portuguese referred to Hindu and Buddhist temples indiscriminately as *pagoda*-s.

Hindu deities in Sinhala *sandeśa* poems, and bilingualism in inscriptional discourse are amply documented and universally acknowledged by professional historians. However, a number of cumulative, intervening factors have also obscured the picture that we have inherited of the late medieval period (as well as the continued influence of this era on Sinhala Buddhist life (lay, monastic and royal) in the centuries after). The destruction of much of the island's coastal religious landscape at the hands of the Portuguese is one such factor.[3] The loss of temple libraries—both Hindu and Buddhist—is a related casualty of the 16th and 17th centuries. Other factors too, such as a more consolidated sense of "Sinhala" group identity in the face of colonial occupation and historical revisionism in the late Kandyan period[4] color our perception of lay and monastic Buddhist attitudes towards other religions throughout the preceding centuries.

Under the disadvantages of these distortions, two, essentially competing viewpoints are currently in play among historians and ethnographers of Sri Lanka regarding Sinhala Buddhist identity and self-perception from the late medieval period onwards: one emphasizing cultural, linguistic and religious integration and synthesis between Sinhala Buddhists and those of South Indian heritage co-

[3] While a number of the significant temples and monuments were later rebuilt, this did not occur uniformly (Konesvaram, the historically most renowned Śiva temple on the island, was not rebuilt until the 1950s), and did not necessarily restore all monuments to their pre-Portuguese status and cultural significance (the renovated shrine to Viṣṇu/Upulvan at Dondra, from the 13th century an active center of Hindu devotional activity (both Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva), now receives mostly Sinhala Buddhist visitors).

[4] See chapter 5.2.

inhabiting the island[5], and the other emphasizing Sinhala insularity and cultural continuity.[6] A particularly conservative view from among the latter camp is advanced by K.N.O. Dharmadasa, who sees "the vision of the Sinhala identity" embodied in the early Pali chronicles extended to the modern period in the form of a "continuous ideological tradition."[7]

It is true that from the mid-1st millennium in Sri Lanka, Pali literature furnished a normative vision of Buddhist kingship on the island, in which Sinhala (*sīhaḷa*) monarchs were obliged to defend the island and the Buddhist religion (*sāsana*) against foreign threats ("Damiḷa" usurpers). It is also true that this normative vision of political life was reproduced in later Sinhala vernacular literature, and that the semiology of "Sinhala" v. "Damiḷa" enshrined in the early Pali chronicles provided a ready-made template for expressions of religious, ethnic and national unity of the "Sinhala" people (certainly since the 16th century).

The several centuries prior to European colonial intervention on the island, however, were characterized by substantial transformations of Sri Lankan Buddhist architecture, literary aesthetics, popular devotional activities, and the Sinhala language itself. While the demographics of the island gave Sinhala Buddhism

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[5] Exemplary works representing this camp are Obeyesekere (1984), Gunawardana (1993), Holt (1991 and 2004), Meegama (2011) and Pathmanathan (2015a).

[6] Examples include Dharmadasa (1979 and 1989), Tambiah (1992) and Roberts (2004 and 2012).

[7] "People of the Lion," 35. Dharmadasa argues that a "deep-rooted ethnic animosity" on the part of Sinhala people towards non-Sinhalese underwrote resentment towards regents of South Indian heritage occupying the Kandyan throne during the twilight of Lankan royal sovereignty (*Idem.*, 19).

predominance over competing religious-linguistic matrices (e.g. Tamil Śaivism) in drawing exogenous cultural elements into its domain, it did not remain unaltered through the process of doing so. With respect to the suggestion that Sinhala Buddhists were deeply affected by a "continuous ideological tradition," historically possessing an acute sense of being distinguished as a group by way of language, religion and consanguinity (and also of being rightful custodians of the island's monarchy), we might with Alan Strathern ask the following question:

> Did the [Pali chronicle] ideology of virtuous Buddhist kingship survive into epochs for which our evidence-base somewhat shades away? If so, did it have a life in the consciousness of the wider population or was it reduced to a dead rhetorical gesture, a scholastic and monastic ideal? Were not other, more cosmopolitan discourses equally relevant?[8]

Through examining competing and coalescing narratives concerning the distant past in Sri Lankan Hindu and Buddhist literature from the 14th century, this dissertation makes an effort to answer this question. This dissertation works to show that the more capacious view of the island's early history that emerged during this period continues to be relevant to Sinhala Buddhists until the present day. I argue that while some of the transformations of the 14th-15th centuries did not survive much beyond the Portuguese period, others did, enacting a fundamental change in the way that Sinhala Buddhists perceived of the island's history, and of themselves.

§1.2 THE PALI CHRONICLE TRADITION AND MODALITIES OF HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Sri Lankan Buddhist historiography has generated a considerable volume of academic attention for now over a century, valued as a source for information on the

[8] *Kingship and Conversion*, 142.

history of not only Sri Lanka but broader Southern Asia as well. Central to the tradition are the *Dīpavaṃsa* (late 3rd or early 4th century CE) and the *Mahāvaṃsa* (c. 6th century CE), both written in loose Pali verse. The *Mahāvaṃsa* is the better known of the two owing to the fact that it has been updated six times since its first installment (last in 2010 under the Rajapaksha government).[9]

Sri Lanka's earliest history as narrated in the *Mahāvaṃsa* remains instrumental in contemporary Sinhala Buddhists' own understanding of their political and religious heritage. The chronicle begins with the three visits of the Buddha Gotama to the island, during each of which respectively he expelled resident demons (*yakkha*-s), preached to the Nāgas of Nāgadīpa, and meditated at the sites of future Buddhist devotional significance across the island. The death (*parinirvāṇa*) of the Buddha corresponds to the exact moment of the arrival of Prince Vijaya, exiled *enfant terrible* of Lāḷa[10], on Sri Lanka's shores. According to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Vijaya along with his band of seven hundred compatriots are the first human inhabitants of the island of Laṅkā, with Vijaya becoming the first in the "great

[9] Under Kings Parākramabāhu I (r. 1153–86), Parākramabāhu IV (r. 1302–26), and Kīrti Srī Rājasiṃha (r. 1751–82); in 1935 Yagirala Pannananda, a monk working alone, extended the chronicle from the fall of the Kandyan kingdom through the British colonial period; the chronicle was again updated in 1978 under President J.R. Jayewardene, and in 2011 under Mahinda Rajapaksha. An authoritative edition of the *Mahāvaṃsa* was produced by Wilhelm Geiger in two parts, the first under the title of *The Mahāvaṃsa*, comprising the first installments of the text dating to c. the 6th century, and the second entitled *The Cūlavaṃsa*, containing subsequent additions to the text up to the reign of Kirti Sri Rajasimha. This division in the chronicle Geiger derived from the 13th c. Sinhala *Pūjāvaliya,* which distinguishes the "great dynasty" (*mahāvaṃsa*) of Sri Lanka's kings from Vijaya to Mahāsena from the "lesser dynasty" (*cūlavaṃsa*) which followed them. I refer to the text as a whole as the *Mahāvaṃsa* to avoid confusion, and to reflect its unitary status in the original manuscript tradition.

[10] Lāṭa, a kingdom between Magadha and Vaṅga (i.e. between Bihar and Bengal) according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*.

lineage" (*mahā-vaṃsa*) of kings whose reigns serve as the subject of the chronicle. The work offers an account of the succession of kings of the island, with special attention given to military exploits, defense of the island and Buddhist religion from foreign incursions, and patronage of the Buddhist Sangha.

Perspectives on the text are varied: some have viewed it as a plodding, matter-of-fact chronological depiction of political events the chronicle can be viewed as a commentary on the tedious inevitability of political life. This, modern commentators have argued, is political history writing in the Buddhist mode, emphasizing the transience of kings and their worldly accomplishments.[11] With respect to its literary merit, Wilhelm Geiger calls the *Mahāvaṃsa* "a work of art, a *kāvya*, according to the standard of Indian poetry."[12]

Owing to their positivist criteria of historical verisimilitude, 19th century European evaluations of the "Great Chronicle" tended to be of one or the other extreme: there were on the one hand those who celebrated the *Mahāvaṃsa* as a skeleton key to the chronology of ancient South Asia (the dating of ancient monarchs and dynasties, Asoka not least among these) and, on the other hand, those who dismissed the work as little more than the fanciful ruminations of monastic

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[11] Phadnis, *Religion and Politics in Sri Lanka*, 24. Marguerite Robinson discerns in the Vijaya myth an "opposition between virtuous non-violence and sinful violence pervading the whole myth" (Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness in the Kandyan Period*, 156, citing Robinson (1968) "The house of the mighty hero" in E.R. Leach (ed.) *Dialectic in Practical Religion*: 122-52). Clifford (1978) points out the ambiguous portrayal of Duṭṭagāmaṇī's psychology and virtue of in the text.

[12] *The Dīpavaṃsa and Mahāvaṃsa*, 16. This is in contrast to its more clumsy predecessor, the *Dīpavaṃsa.* Geiger believes that the author of the *Mahāvaṃsa* made his literary intentions clear in declaring at the outset of the proem: "After worshipping the supreme Buddha, the altogether pure, sprung from an illustrious race, I write [the *Mahāvaṃsa*] in those places where pleasure and pain are spoken of."

scholiasts. The 20th century gave way to evaluations of the chronicle in terms of its political utility—historically in terms of its "legitimating" or "ideological" function, and in the modern context of the consolidation of Sinhala national identity post-independence. For Heinz Bechert (1978b) the most acute message of the *Mahāvaṃsa* is that of "the unity of nation and religion." Bechert argues that legitimation of state violence was itself the motivation for Pali history writing in Sri Lanka, and that this unique political application explains why similar historiographies never developed in India.[13]

Despite its complexities, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the *Mahāvaṃsa* is historiography in service of a specific vision of the island's political trajectory. The earliest events pertaining to Sri Lanka narrated in the *Mahāvaṃsa* are three visits of the Buddha Gotama, during each of which respectively he expelled resident demons (*yakkha*-s), preached to the Nāgas of Nāgadīpa, and meditated at the sites of future Buddhist devotional significance across the island. The death (*parinibbāna*) of the Buddha corresponds to the moment of the arrival of Prince Vijaya on Sri Lanka's shore (Vijaya being the first in the "chain" or "garland of kings"

[13] For Bechert, the *locus classicus* betraying the politically legitimating function of the *Mahāvaṃsa* is the account of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's (2nd c. BCE) military defeat of the occupying "Damiḷa-s," during which the he accrued very little karmic demerit (*Mhv* 25.109ff.). Bechert says that the incident "shows that even the basic principles of Buddhist religion were made subordinate to this leading notion" of the unity of nation and religion (by which he means that the basic Buddhist principle of non-violence is made subordinate to the notion that the island of Lanka must be ruled by a Sinhalese Buddhist monarch, even at the expense of wide-scale slaughter of foreigners) ("Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography," 7). For more perspectives on the political functions of the *Mhv* historically, see additional contributions to Smith (1978), esp. that of Clifford, Kemper (1991) and Walters (2000).

(*rāja-mālā*) which is the subject of narration of the chronicle).[14] The synchronism establishes a historical point of reference ineluctably connecting all future kings of the island with custodianship over the preservation of the Buddha's teaching and monastic institution (the *buddha sāsana*). Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's restoration of the island to Buddhist control (a subject which receive little mention in the *Dīpavaṃsa*) occupies nearly half of this portion of the chronicle.

Stepping away from the question of the political function of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, we might ask two elementary questions regarding the text from the standpoint of historical studies. First, what kind of history writing *is* the *Mahāvaṃsa*? Secondly, how representative was the *Mahāvaṃsa* of Sri Lankan's own understanding of the island's history in the premodern period?

The *Mahāvaṃsa*, often translated as "The Great Chronicle," relates the "lineage" or "succession" (*vaṃsa*) of the kings of Sri Lanka.[15] The text, it is true, conforms to the format of a "chronicle" insofar as it narrates in chronological sequence events of putative historical veracity, and insofar as it is a composite work, updated over the years at the hands of multiple redactors. Steven Collins notes that, by the criteria of Hayden White (1987), the *Mahāvaṃsa* excels classification as

[14] *In extremis*, realizing that Vijaya has reached the island's shore, the Buddha charges Sakka (Śakra) with the responsibility of ensuring the sustained existence of his *sāsana* in Sri Lanka: "In Laṅkā, O lord of gods, will my religion be established, therefore carefully protect him with his followers in Laṅkā" (*Mhv* 7.4, Geiger's translation).

[15] The *Dīpavaṃsa* states that its intention is to expound "the unequalled, most excellent succession" (*anūpamaṃ vaṃsavaragga*) of great rulers of the world, and that the ancient "lineage of kings" (*mahārāja vaṃsa*) which originated in India was continued in Sri Lanka (*Dpv* 1.4).

merely an *annal* or a *chronicle*, since it contains complete narrative segments (such as complete biographies of kings Devānaṃpiyatissa and Duṭṭhagāmiṇī).[16]

Collins notes furthermore that the *Mahāvaṃsa* presents not only a chronological accounting of the accomplishments of the Buddhist kings of Sri Lanka, but is also a "tale about time," "constructed and maintained by elaborate and constant references to precise dates and times after the Buddha's nirvana."[17] This is true with respect to events marked in "calendar time" from the year of the Buddha's death (his *parinirvāṇa*), but is also significant insofar as the *nirvāṇa* of a Buddha (of any Buddha, not just the Buddha Gotama) serves as a narrative fulcrum in conveying

[16] *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, 254-58, 268ff. White (1987) distinguishes three types of European history writing: the *annal*, the *chronicle* and the *history proper*. In the *annal*, historical events—the victory of a king in battle, a poor harvest season – are merely listed along with the year in which they took place. Other than chronological order, there is no narrative structure to the text—no explained relationship between events, no demarcated beginning middle and end, and no indication of by whom the events are recorded. The chronicle (White's example is the *History of France* by Reicherus of Rheims) represents an advance in terms narrative structure from the *annal*—chronicles include a "subject" in relation to all their various referents, like the life of an individual or city. (White draws from Hegel to argue that "social interest," or, in short an author's relationship to law or legitimating practices, is essential to history writing and to conceiving oneself as a historical subject.) Since chronicles describe some undertaking or institution as its central concern, they fulfill this criterion in a way that annals do not, or at least do not explicitly. "True histories" go beyond chronicles in ordering events in a merely chronological fashion, instead allowing for narrative interdiction (like the control of flow of events and possibility of simultaneity or temporal reversal), and a conclusion to the narrative (where winners win or moral tensions are resolved or everything which happened before is tied together). The chronicle, by contrast, simply stops at a certain point with no indication as to how things might continue in the future. The *Mhv* certainly contains greater narrative complexity than a mere *annal*, with its "principle subject" identifiable geographically as the island of Sri Lanka, and thematically either or both the genealogy of Buddhist kings of the island and the preservation of the Buddha *sāsana* there. Since the *Mhv* is an open-ended text, allowing for periodic updates, it does not have a definite point of temporal closure, as is required of a "history proper" for White.

[17] *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*, 268. Collins notes that: "The vaṃsa texts—every time they are recited and retold—recount a linear historical narrative; but in doing so they both express and embody the repetitive interweaving of timeless nirvanized Buddhahood with the texture of all time, past, present and future" (p.256).

"repetitive time." Collins identifies the *Buddhavaṃsa* (c. 2nd century BCE) as a Pali work exemplary in its incorporation of repetitive time: the text gives the biographies of twenty-four Buddhas prior to Gotama, dispersed throughout the previous five world ages (*kappa*-s). In doing so, the *Buddhavaṃsa* presents the loss and rediscovery of the Buddhist Dhamma as a cyclical affair, having transpired repeatedly throughout a past of incalculable duration.[18]

The *Mahāvaṃsa* sutures the repetitive time of the *Buddhavaṃsa* (it also includes a list of twenty-four Buddhas before Gotama) with linear, non-repetitive time, subordinating cyclical aspects of Buddhist cosmology to the calendrically grounded narrative of the civilizing presence of the Buddha, his *sāsana*, and its royal custodians in Sri Lanka. Thus, in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the correspondence of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and Vijaya's arrival on the shores of Laṅkā is more than a mere "synchronism," it is a *singularity*—the genesis of recorded time, human habitation, and religious life on the island.

Such a vision of the history of the island stands at one pole of a spectrum of what I refer to as *historical imagination* in Sri Lanka. This conservative Buddhist view of the island's past begins with the visitations of the Buddha and the arrival of Prince Vijaya, before which the island of Laṅkā was merely an abode of demons (Yakṣas, Rakṣasas and Bhūtas, according to the *Dīpavaṃsa*). As this dissertation aims to show, however, additional forms of historical imagination circulated

[18] Collins observes that: "The *Buddhavamsa* […] interweaves non-repetitive and repetitive time constantly, throughout the text. One of the most obvious events of non-repetitive time is the closure brought to each Buddha's story by his nirvanizing. Every chapter ends with this, often with the remark "Are not all conditioned things worthless?" (*nanu rittā sabba-saṅkhāra*), and with some kind of reflection on impermanence" (ibid, p.267).

alongside the conservative vision enshrined in the *Mahāvaṃsa.* Other accounts offer an expanded vision of Sri Lanka's long ago past, incorporating content of Hindu purāṇas as well as aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, equating Sri Lanka with Rāvaṇa's legendary fortress of "Laṅkāpura."

My usage of the phrase "historical imagination" is intended in a non-technical sense: I mean by it simply the way that Sri Lankans thought about or imagined the past.[19] By this I do not mean to imply that there was a static, perduring, or unitary form of imagining of the island's past on the part of all Sri Lankans. Indeed, one of the major aims of this dissertation is to highlight co-present (sometimes even *competing*) forms of historical imagination among different segments of premodern Sri Lankan society (Buddhist monks at various points of the orthodox-liberal spectrum, royals and elites, and the lay Sinhala speaking population at large). There is, however, a prima facie difficulty in employing "historical imagination" under such operative parameters: it assumes a certain degree of epistemic access to the contents of the minds of others. How can one claim access to "historical imagination" in the absence of any ethnographic data, much less access to the imaginations of Sri Lankans who lived more than five hundred years ago?

In support of my usage of this operational definition I appeal to two considerations, one based on source material, the other methodological. The conservative pole of Buddhist historical imagination in Sri Lanka, as we have

[19] I *do not* employ "historical imagination" in the specific sense of Hayden White (1973)—i.e. as a structuring principle of historical narration in the mode of a "master tropes" (of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony), depending on the emphasis given to various narrative elements.

inherited it in the textual archive, is anchored in early Pali chronicles composed at the Mahāvihāra ordination lineage, recopied and transmitted exclusively by Buddhist monks until the 19th century. Views contrary or supplemental to this pole are contained in other Sinhala texts—some also composed and preserved in monastic circles, and some composed and transmitted by lay people.[20] The bibliography employed within this dissertation in order to make this point is admittedly broad: it includes versions of the *Rājāvaliya* (a Sinhala chronicle of comparable authoritative status to the *Mahāvaṃsa*), poems written by both monks and educated lay people (principally Sinhala *sandeśa*-s), and miscellaneous prose works such as topographia (*kaḍayim pot*), local histories (*vitti pot*) and commentaries on caste. Popular stories concerning the island's history known to lay Buddhists are also preserved in poems, folklore, and in colonial period documents (such as those of Portuguese chroniclers).

My theoretical justification for employing "historical imagination" as an operative term follows an interpretive strategy established by Jacques Le Goff (1988) and Steven Collins (1998). In their reconstructions of the social dynamics of medieval Europe and premodern Buddhist polities in Southern Asia, respectively, Le Goff and Collins assume a degree of coherence to the worldviews depicted in premodern literary texts. The argument is that literary "imaginaires" can furnish a picture of the social lifeworld from which they come, since even fictional (i.e., "non-documentary") works must maintain some veridicality with actual circumstances of

[20] See Abeyawardana (1999), Godakumbura (1961), Obeyesekere, "Boundary Books," 21, and §§1.5 and 2.5, below.

reality in which they were produced (or else their audience would have no framework in which to understand them).[21] As the focus of the dissertation is on imagined representations of the distant past, I am less concerned with the descriptive utility belonging to my textual source material with respect to the empirical setting of late medieval Sri Lanka. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which Sinhala literature reflected changing demographic realities *through* the imagined past, in ways that drew from preexisting repertoires of images and narratives. Forging a new historical imaginaire involved the restructuring of previous visions of history in a coherent fashion—one that attends to chronological and narrative logic. For this reason, I speak of historical imagination in an agentive tone, emphasizing its capacity for synthesis and tendency towards producing visions of history that would have been intelligible from the point of view of audiences for which they were intended.

§1.3 SINHALA IDENTITY THROUGH TIME AND CHANGE

A considerable amount of scholarly attention has been focused on the role of the *Mahāvaṃsa* in premodern and modern political life, emphasizing the fact that the chronicle contains such an early articulation of an "ethno-religious" ideal (in which the Sinhala speaking residents of Sri Lanka, sharing a common ancestry, are

[21] See Le Goff's introduction to *The Medieval Imagination* and Collins' discussion in *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, 73-78.

situated as custodians of the Buddhist religion and as heirs to the island's political domain).[22]

Collating nearly two and a half millennia of epigraphic, textual and ethnographic data in order to pinpoint the moment of crystallization of "Sinhala consciousness" is an understandably complex and vexatious intellectual project. Despite a number of productive studies and conversations related to this topic, there remain three significant conceptual stumbling blocks that tend to compromise the clarity of the issue at hand. I will outline them below before treating each in succession and explaining their relevance to this dissertation:

> (1) Equivocation in operational definitions of the term "ethnic." In scholarly literature on Sri Lanka, loose usages of the term classify "a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background."[23] Such ascriptions are found alongside more specific applications of the term denoting "consanguineous descent" or "endogamous relations" among a group of people.
>
> (2) Extrapolation of attitudes appearing in literature authored by Buddhist monastics to the island's lay population at large.
>
> (3) A lack of clarity regarding the parameters of "Sinhala Buddhist" lay orthodoxy and orthopraxy (e.g. the extent to which those who may have identified as "Sinhala Buddhist" historically did so in a sense that connoted *exclusive* membership to the Buddhist religion).

To unpack *skandalon* (1): in Sri Lanka today, the idea that the Sinhala people are united through common "blood" finds widespread expression in popular culture

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[22] See Dharmadasa (1989, 1992), Kemper (1991), Tambiah (1986, 1992), Obeyesekere (1975, 2004), Roberts (2004, 2012), Strathern (2017) and contributions to Spencer (1990). Also apposite is Wentworth (2011), arguing that, by the second half of the first millennium CE, the word *tamiḻ* indexed a cultural character in addition to the Tamil language (first in such works as the *Cilappatikāram* and *Iṟaiyaṉār Akapporuḷ*).

[23] Obeysekere (1975: 238), quoting Barth, *Ethnic Groups*, p.13.

(as for instance in a popular bumper sticker boasting the portmanteau "*siṃhalē*," i.e. *siṃha lē*, "Lion's blood"[24]). Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people are commonly regarded as belonging to three distinct *jāti*-s, which in this context might be translated as "consanguineous" or "endogamous groups."[25] Although views such as these are now quite prevalent, the explicit notion that Sinhala speakers are united as a people through consanguineous descent seems not to have achieved widespread currency until the 20th century.[26]

There is, on the other hand, a longstanding association between the island of Sri Lanka, Sinhala speaking people and Buddhism—so much so that we cannot dismiss out of hand the probability that—in at least some spheres of Sinhala

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[24] On the recent "Sinha Le" political movement, see Walko, "Lion's Blood." On *sinhalē* as a name of the island of Sri Lanka historically, see Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 54ff.

[25] *Jāti* or *jātiya* can refer to race, ethnicity, or nationality (Krishantha Fedricks, personal communication, July 2017). On the 19th c. British division between the three main "ethnic groups" of Sinhala, Malabar (Tamil) and Moor, see Rogers, "Colonial Perceptions of Ethnicity and Culture," 104.

[26] This vocabulary reflects late 19th century developments in Sinhala self-perception influenced by European discourses of language and ethnicity, positing the Sinhala people as members of the Aryan (as opposed to Dravidian) race (See Kemper, *Presence of the Past*, 109ff., 200 and Rogers, "Historical images in the British period," 94f.). On James de Alwis' appropriation of 19th c. European intellectual trends regarding discreet "ethnic groups" in his translation of the *Sidat Saṅgarā* (1852), see Dharmadasa, "People of the Lion," 34-37. Traditionally among Sinhala landholding elites, the maintenance of "good blood" (*honda lē*, as opposed to *naraka lē*) in the family line was an essential factor in determining the pedigree and integrity of "endogamous bilateral kindreds" (*pavula*-s, "families") and "aristocratic patrilines" (*vaṃsa*-s), at least rhetorically (McGilvray, "Mukkuvar vannimai," 39). Michael Roberts notes (following Yalman (1967)) that in Sinhala society, "caste" (*jāti*, *vaṃsa*) is expressed through "the concepts of *pirisidu* (pure) and *hoṅda* (good) as opposed to *apirisidu* (impure) and *naraka* (bad). Those bearing the latter quality are, therefore, of low status—*hīna* or *pahat jāti*" (*Caste Conflict*, 35f.). Such a notion of consanguineous descent within families or castes is of course different from that of the collective genealogical heritage of the Sinhala people (or, more specifically, of Sinhala speakers). For a review of ethnographic literature on the significance of blood (amorphously conceived of as heritable, "bio-moral substance") in notions of caste purity in South Asia, see also McGilvray (1982).

speaking Buddhist society—ideas of political dominion, common language, shared religion (and perhaps shared hereditary descent) were co-located through the signifier "Sinhala." The precise antiquity and mode in which such a popular form of group identity manifested itself has been a topic of substantial scholarly conjecture. Michael Roberts (2004, 2012) argues that a ubiquitous form of Sinhala self-perception began to emerge in the 13th century. This "Sinhala consciousness" (Roberts also calls it a form of Sinhala "we-ness") was according to Roberts amplified from the 16th century onwards in the face of colonial occupation and the introduction of Catholic and Protestant Christianity as a source of religious competition.[27]

Others, such as Gananath Obeyesekere (1975) and K.N.O. Dharmadasa (1979, 1989, 1992), argue for an earlier date of a consolidated sense of religious and political group identity among Sinhala speakers, invoking the island's early Pali chronicles as evidence for a unitary and widespread form of Sinhala religious, political and linguistic self-perception from the 5th or 6th century.[28] Dharmadasa

[27] Roberts identifies five centrally constitutive elements of "Sinhala consciousness": (1) "the terms *sinhala* and *sīhala*, or the synonym *hela*, for the principal body of people and their language"; (2) the designation *Sīhaladvīpa* for Sri Lanka as a geographical and political body; (3) the idea that Sri Lankan was designated by the Buddha as a locus for the preservation of the Buddha *sāsana*; (4) the notion of a succession of Buddhist *cakravarti* kings ruling the island, descended from Vijaya; (5) "the episodic threats to this inheritance from Tamil invaders in the past" ("Sinhalaness and its Reproduction, 264f.). Berkwitz (2013) too traces a consolidated sense of Sinhala Buddhist identity from the 16th century in opposition to Portuguese Catholicism.

[28] Obeyesekere (1975) speculates that there was a strong notion of Sinhala ethno-religious identity from very early on in Sri Lanka (perhaps since its introduction to the island in the 3rd century BCE), which from the 16th century was diluted (by the fracturing of Sinhala identity into three subdivisions, "Sinhala Buddhist," "Sinhala Catholic," and "Sinhala Protestant"). A unitary form of Sinhala Buddhist identity was finally restored, Obeyesekere contends, in the 19th and centuries by a movement among Sinhala revivalist movement lead

concludes that "the vision of the Sinhala identity embodied in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and in the *Mahāvaṃsa*" has been reanimated, in different times and in different ways, resulting in "periodic expressions of a continuous ideological tradition."[29] We must note however that reconstructions of the religious sociology of Sri Lanka prior to the second millennium are necessarily limited due to a dearth of textual and epigraphic data available from that period, especially any pertaining to the island's lay population at large.

Within these scholarly discussions, conceptual slipperiness and equivocations in terminology have frustrated a thoroughly satisfactory resolution to the problem of the *fons et origo* of "Sinhala consciousness." Did, for instance, the recognition of "Sinhala" as a distinct language correlate with a recognition of its speakers as a people unique in other respects?[30] Or, given that one were to grant that "Sinhala" in the premodern context indexed "consanguineous" or "genealogical descent" from the first Indian settlers of Sri Lanka, several questions remain unanswered: How were latter groups of exogenous people arriving on the island integrated into Sinhala social life? Was there any sense that "Sinhala heredity" was diluted over

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by Anagarika Dharmapala, and by the reinstallment of Buddhism as a de facto (and, in 1972, de jure) national religion. Obeyesekere's views on the issue evolved in subsequent writing (compare (1975) with (2004) and (2017)).

[29] See Dharmadasa, (1989). For objections to Dharmadasa's treatment of the issue, see Gunawardana (1990) and (1993) and Roberts (2004).

[30] See Dharmadasa, "People of the Lion," 2-8. To take another example, while Roberts (2004, 2012) carefully avoids including (emically) assumed consanguinity within his five keys of "Sinhala consciousness," others take it as a given in their criterion of Sinhala "ethnic identity." See Rogers' discussion in "Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation Political Identities," esp. 16f.

time? Was "being Sinhala" a heritable, biological trait, or could non-Sri Lankans "become Sinhala" by some sort of process?

There is, undoubtedly, abundant evidence that self-awareness over Sinhala group identity was strong from the Portuguese period onwards, and that, certainly from the late 19th century, one component of Sinhala identity included the idea of consanguineous descent. There is at the same time a strong tradition in Sri Lanka's Pali and Sinhala Buddhist literature associating "Sinhala" regents (whatever this designation entailed) with custodianship over the island and the Buddha *sāsana*.[31] The trouble is what lies in the middle, both temporally and sociologically speaking, which leads us to *skandalon* (2) in the determining the origin and scope of Sinhala group identity. When and how was a designation that applied to the island's rulers in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* extended to the island's Buddhist or Sinhala speaking lay population at large? Furthermore, to what extent were the views of the monastic authors of the Pali chronicles who employed the "Sinhala" adjective to characterize the island's rulers representative of the views of the general population (including those of other monks, lay people, and political elites themselves)?

The *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* identify Prince Vijaya as a "Sīhaḷa" on the basis of his homeland of Siṃhapura, and the fact that his father was half man, half lion (*siṃha*). The Buddhist rulers of Sri Lanka are identified as "Sinhala" ("Sīhaḷa") as well, part of the "chain of kings" of whom Vijaya was the first link. Both the Pali

[31] The *locus classicus* is *Mhv* 7.1-4, wherein the Buddha enjoins the god Sakka (Śakra) to watch over Vijaya and his countrymen when they arrive in Laṅkā, the land in which the Buddha *sāsana* will be preserved. For textual examples of the amplification of this theme in later Sinhala literature, see §2.3.

and Sinhala chronicle tradition occasionally make explicit mention of the consanguineous descent of the rulers of the island from Vijaya and his nephew, Paṇḍuvāsudeva.[32] The *Dīpavaṃsa* and first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* do not supply a complete genealogy of the regents from Vijaya to Mahāsena (late 3rd-early 4th century CE), though they also do not mention any instance in which consanguineous descent was violated in the royal succession.[33]

Preoccupied as they are with the works of kings and events of monumental importance in the development of the Buddha *sāsana* in Sri Lanka, the early Pali chronicles do not extend the "Sinhala" designation to the island's Buddhist population at large.[34] From the 8th century, however, Pali and Sinhala commentarial works applied a definite ascription of "Sinhala" to the island's Buddhists, defined by genealogical descent from Prince Vijaya and use of the Sinhala language (*heḷa*, the language of Vijaya).[35] While this view represents a logical expansion of the

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[32] As at *Cv* 63.12-14 and *Rv*, 175, which speaks of "the royal seed (*raja-biju*) of Sri Lanka," see chapter 5.

[33] See Trautmann (1973), who observes that the redactors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* labored to present the Sīhaḷa royal dynasty of Sri Lanka as consanguineously descended (both patrilineally and matrilineally) through "cross-cousin" marriage (though when this was an impossibility parallel cousin marriage was substituted). Vijaya, together with his native *yakkha* wife Kuvaṇṇa, were the progenitors of the "Pulinda" clan (*gotta*, i.e. Skt. *gotra*), the descendants of whom would compete for the throne with other clans in Sri Lanka (concerning whose origins the *Mahāvaṃsa* does not give a full account). Based on the record of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, one possible disruption in consanguineous descent early on was in the conquest of the throne of Anuradhapura by Vasabha (1st c. CE), who belonging to the Lambakaṇṇa clan (*Mhv* 35.59-70).

[34] A later exception comes in the 18th century update to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which refers to Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha as the "believing ruler of the Sinhalas" (*sammādiṭṭhika sīhaḷādhipatino*) and "our Sinhala ruler" (*amhākaṃ sīhalindo*) (*Cv* 99.167, 100.167, 228; cf. 100.144).
[35] The texts identifying the "Sinhala" people as descendants of Vijaya and/or speakers of *heḷa* language are the 8th c. *Līnatthapakāsinī*, the 10th c. *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī* and the *Dhampiyā Aṭuvā Gäṭapadaya* (see chapter 5.2).

colonization narrative contained within the *Mahāvaṃsa*, we must note that other attitudes regarding the origins of the island's people also circulated among Sinhala speakers in the late medieval period. Chapter 5 of this dissertation examines for instance vernacular texts privileging *caste* (*jāti*, hereditary occupational group) over other descriptors of group belonging (with one prominent 15th century work on caste, the *Janavaṃśaya*, avoiding mention of the designation "Sinhala" altogether). Other texts acknowledge the many breaks in the "chain of kings" beginning with Vijaya, the dilution of Sri Lanka's royal bloodline, as well as the composite nature of Sinhala people themselves. Such attitudes serve as a reminder that the normative vision of Buddhist social life advanced by some monastic authors was not always uniformly received by the entirety of their audience.

In addition to language and common descent, *religion* stands as a third cornerstone of Sinhala identity in scholarly discussions on the topic. Defining the parameters of what it means, or has meant historically, to be "Sinhala Buddhist" represents *skandalon* (3) plaguing scholarly discussions of Sinhala identity. To begin, two considerations must be brought to the forefront. The first parallels an observation already made regarding attempts to pinpoint the genesis of Sinhala "ethnic consciousness"—just as difficulties arise in attempting to map modern vocabulary of "ethnicity" onto premodern conceptual apparatuses, modern assumptions about *religious* identity and belonging (e.g. concerning confessional exclusivity, standardized forms of orthopraxy, etc.) can forestall an investigation of premodern sociological realities.

Gananath Obeyesekere (1975) notes that, until the 16th century, there was no obvious means of referring to oneself as a lay Buddhist in Sinhala.[36] This was because, he conjectures, nearly if not all Sinhala speakers *were* Buddhists, meaning that merely belonging to a Sinhala speaking community would have implied that an individual was a Buddhist, with no further clarification necessary.[37] On its surface this inverted *argumentum ex silentio* bears a degree of plausibility. However, viewed differently, this linguistic lacuna may be taken to suggest a sociological milieu in which the confessional dimensions of religious belonging were differently conceived than they are for a present day interpreter. Indeed, it is difficult to find a natural translation for English "religion" in premodern Sinhala, i.e. a word or phrase with exclusivist connotations of "belonging to one religion or another" or "believing in one religion or another."

Sinhala words that are today translated as "religion" possess other shades of meaning not captured by the English equivalent. John Ross Carter notes that the term *āgama* was not used to denote "religion" in canonical, commentarial, medieval Pali texts or in classical Sinhala literature. He hypothesizes that this usage emerged in Sri Lanka in the late 18th or early 19th century, as a consequence of contact with

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[36] "*Mama buddhāgame*," "I belong to the Buddhist religion," and "*mama baudhayek*," "I am a Buddhist," are common locutions in modern Sinhala. Obeyesekere notes that the latter expression has a "neologistic" feel, with *baudhaya* possibly being a direct translation of English "Buddhist" ("Sinhala Buddhist Identity," 238).

[37] Obeyesekere's reasoning follows that of Senrat Paranavitana, who explains that, since Sri Lanka's Brāhmī inscriptions of the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE "are all in the Old Sinhalese language, the vast majority of the persons who had them indited must have been the community known as 'Siṁhala.' But this name does not occur at all in them, for the good reason that as almost every one in the land was Sinhalese it was not sufficiently distinctive to refer to a person by that designation" (*Inscriptions of Ceylon*, lxxxixx).

Protestant missionaries.[38] Śaiva priests and Sri Lankan Buddhist monks had an acute sense of the integrity of their respective traditions, as reflected in the term *samaya*, employed in Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala and Tamil to distinguish various philosophical-theological programs (e.g. in the sense of establishing the terms for a debate).[39] Given this historical usage, however, *samaya* carries with it pedantic connotations that do not neatly reflect a sense of lay religious community or "church."

Buddha-śāsanaya (Pali: *buddha-sāsana*) was elected for the Sinhala version of the 1978 Sri Lankan Constitution to translate English "Buddhism." Benjamin Schonthal notes that the phrase was chosen (in lieu of *buddha-āgama*) because it "implicated not only the Buddha's teachings but his entire legacy, which included properties, shrines, statues, temples and other material objects and geographical

[38] "A History of "Early Buddhism,"" 270. Kitsiri Malalgoda asserts that the term *āgama* was introduced by Christian missionaries in the 19th century and gradually adopted by Sinhala speakers as a means of referring to the "Buddhist religion" ("Sinhalese Buddhism," 164). Benjamin Clough, a Wesleyan missionary, recorded that the word *āgama* was used "universally" in colloquial Sinhala speech to denote religion in his *Sinhalese-English Dictionary*, first published in 1830.

[39] The 15th c. Sinhala *Girā Sandeśaya*, mentioning the study of the Vedas and Upaniṣads at Toṭagamuva Vihāra, goes on to valorize the head of the school as a masterful debater against the proponents of "other religions" (*ne samaya äduru*) (*GS*, v.238). On Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭi's early 16th century application of the term *samaya* to the conventions of the Buddhist religion ("the conventions of the King of Dharma" *dahaṁ raja samaya,* in contrast to "the divine religion/conventions of Jesus Christ," *jesus kristu dēvasamaya*), see Berkwitz, *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism*, 153ff. In Tamil religious literature, the term *camayam* designates sectarian divisions between schools of Hindu philosophy: Appar (7th c.) names six Samaya-s, namely Śaivam, Vaiṣṇavam, Śāktam, Kaumāram, Gāṇapatyam and Sauram (Sūriya) (Parmeshwaranand, *Encyclopaedia of Śaivism*, 78). There are also references to the "Buddha *camayam*" and the "*camayam* of the Therar (Buddhist monks)," as at *Tiruvācakam* 15.6: "Buddhists and others, those of various sects (*puttaṉ mutalāy* [...] *pal camayam*)" (Pope, *Tiruvāçagam*, 185).

spaces."[40] Although in modern legal usage has brought *buddha-śāsanaya* on parallel terms with English "religion," its broad semantic range ("suggesting not just religious doctrine, but institutions, persons, rituals, and property as well"[41]) makes it difficult to neatly translate the term as lay Buddhist "religion." In the Pali chronicles, for instance, the *buddha-sāsana* is "guarded" or "preserved" from the top down, i.e. by Buddhist monarchs, not something necessarily "constituted" by a lay community from the ground up.

Bringing to light these asymmetries in Sinhala Buddhist and Protestant Christian religious vocabulary is not to suggest that no strict notions of lay Buddhist orthodoxy and orthopraxy were present in premodern Sri Lanka. As demonstrated by Hallisey (1988), 12th-15th century Sinhala Buddhist prose works and poetry (some intended for broad lay audiences) advocate Buddhist forms of worship, affirm the efficacy of Buddhist apotropaic rituals, and occasionally deride Hindu theology and belief. This observation however leads to the second consideration which must be brought to the forefront in undertaking a discussion of Sinhala religious identity: the possibility of a disconnect between a *normative* or *prescriptive* ideal of Buddhist lay life advocated by certain monks, and the realities of lay Buddhist practice (reprising in another context *skandalon* (2), above). Granted that some monastics advocated a circumscribed form of lay Buddhist religious practice, the extent to which these admonitions were heeded by lay followers remains an open question. One of the objectives of this dissertation is to illuminate pluralist

[40] *Buddhism, Politics and the Limits of Law*, 172.

[41] *Idem*., 143.

forms of religious practice and literary expression that existed alongside more conservative expectations of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The objective in doing so is to reinforce to the reader that the adjectival ascription of "Sinhala Buddhist," where used, is meant a provisional sense, leaving room for flexibility with respect to the actual religious attitudes of the persons so described.

§1.4 CO-PRESENCE AND COMPETITION IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONs IN SRI LANKA

The co-presence of Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka is a well-documented historical phenomenon in Sri Lanka and remains a conspicuous part of religious imagination in the country today. Buddhist temple complexes almost always contain shrines to Hindu deities (*dēvālaya*-s). Sinhala Buddhists readily acknowledge their shared heritage with broader South Asia in the ancient disciplines of astrology, medicine, art and architecture.

The vocabulary through which this co-presence is articulated however remains a vexatious issue for scholars. Part of the problem stems from a necessity of mitigating between two extremes: (1) that of positing two isolated institutions of belief and practice which occasionally interact and exchange components, but with each retaining some sort of immutable, trans-historical core; and (2) that of abolishing or ignoring meaningful points of contrast constitutive of each religious groups' own self-understanding throughout time.

Richard Gombrich, viewing the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition as "surprisingly orthodox" prefers to characterize the tradition as "accretive," rejecting the term

"syncretistic."[42] Heinz Bechert by contrast, remarking upon the "strata of cults and myths of different origin" that have infiltrated Sri Lankan Buddhist literature, imagery and ritual practice over time, prefers to categorize the tradition as "synchretistic." Speaking of the annual procession displaying and celebrating the Buddha's Tooth Relic in Kandy (the Äsaḷa Perahära), a ceremony which conspicuously integrates the shrines of Hindu deities, Bechert remarks:

> It is difficult to avoid a description of this aspect of Sinhalese religion as "synchretistic", because it is evident that the […] division of the Buddhist sphere and the "mundane" cults of the gods had lost its validity in this context. Similar "synchretistic" tendencies can be observed in Kataragama and a few other places of pilgrimage.[43]

Sujatha Meegama (2011) exposes a tacit cultural essentialist position in art history commentary attributing apparently Hindu elements in Sinhala Buddhist architecture to "influence" (with the implication that an archetypal form of Sinhala architecture preceded later, modified versions). Charles Hallisey too admonishes that we must avoid searching "for particular parts of the medieval Buddhist tradition that "make sense" within a Hindu system, and then [feel] justified in attributing those elements to influence."[44] Hallisey's terminological concern differs from Meegama's however insofar as he worries that excessive fixation on the "influence" of a larger cultural formation (in this case, imperial Hindu South India) may obscure narratives of resistance, independence and antagonism on the part of the smaller (i.e. medieval Buddhist Sri Lanka). *Influence*, he argues, should not be

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[42] Gombrich, *Precept and Practice*, 54-48.

[43] Bechert, "Popular Religion of the Sinhalese," 223.

[44] Hallisey, "Devotion in Buddhist Literature," 179.

invoked at the expense of *competition* as an explanatory paradigm to account for similarities between contemporary sets of literary techniques, religious rhetoric or practice.

With sensitivity to both critiques, I agree that it is important to exercise caution in making ascriptions of provenance, and in making assumptions regarding the agency (or lack thereof) present in incorporating apparently exogenous themes and imagery from one religious tradition to another. For instance, although cosmogonic themes were excluded from Pali chronicles for a millennium, only to be reintroduced in Sinhala Buddhist historiography in the late medieval period, we must be reluctant to say that in every case that the imagery "came from" Sanskrit or Tamil Purāṇas. Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, widely circulated from the 5th century CE, collates material from Pali canonical and commentarial sources to furnish a uniquely Buddhist vision of the cyclical destruction of the world and genesis of human life (clearly an important source for later vernacular Sinhala cosmogony and cosmology). Hindu purāṇic motifs surfacing in late medieval Sinhala texts may have been derived from Pali works where they were preserved[45]—in such cases, the pertinent question to this dissertation is *why* it is that purāṇic imagery was revived in Buddhist historical imagination in the late medieval period.

However, since a major theme of this dissertation involves competing notions of Sinhala Buddhist identity, and since these competing notions depend on

[45] As indeed seems to have been the case for some versions of the *Rājāvaliya* (see chapter 2.4) and the *Janavaṃśaya* (see chapter 5.3), for instance.

greater and lesser degrees of religious and linguistic inclusiveness, questions over the origins and manner of incorporation of exogenous material into mainstream Sri Lankan Buddhist religious life must be addressed. To this end, it is worthwhile to highlight some significant instances of South Indian involvement in Lankan Buddhist life. Many important early Pali works were written by monks from modern day Tamil Nadu, among them Buddhadatta, famed 5th century translator of the Sinhala Buddhist canon, and his contemporary Buddhaghosa, a prolific commentator.[46] South Indian conscripts were hired by kings of Anuradhapura, some of whom lived on in permanent settlements. While the Cōḷa occupation of the 11th century was no doubt extractive in its original intent, agents of the south Indian empire developed a complex administrative apparatus throughout the northern portion of the island, providing financially for Buddhist vihāras in addition to Śaiva religious institutions. Sculpture and architecture reveal a fertile period of Pallava influence at Anuradhapura, the pre-second millennium seat of political and Buddhist monastic authority on the island, and post-Cōḷa Polonnaruva is awash with South Indian influence in its art and architecture.

While cultural interface—certainly at the elite level in terms of royal intermarriage, art and architecture, and monastic scholarship—did not ebb during this period, a countervailing movement also worked to reify orthodox Sri Lankan Buddhist doxa, praxis and history. Charles Hallisey (1988) argues that intensive efforts were underway—in South India from around 900 CE and in Sri Lanka from around 1000 CE—to persuade lay people to exclusively support either Śaivism or

[46] Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 264f.; Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, 91f.

Buddhism. In the Sri Lankan Buddhist case, this involved in part "ideological distance" from the Indic world, reinforced by Buddhist symbols (such as the Buddha's relics), Buddhist institutions, and ideals of Sinhala Buddhist monarchy exclusive to the island.[47] Amplifying the triumphalism of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, vernacular literature of the period cast Sinhala kings defenders against "Damiḷa" (i.e. *drāviḍa*)[48] adversaries who would threaten righteous governance and defile the Buddhist religion. The post-Cōḻa period also saw the production of vernacular literature intended for broad consumption, part of an effort at what Hallisey terms "vertical integration"—providing guidelines for religious behavior to disparate sections of lay society (from elites to peasants), establishing the Sangha as the arbiter of normative precepts for lay society at large, and establishing the Buddha as supreme over competing Hindu deities. Hallisey gestures to the mockery of Hindu

[47] According to Hallisey, after the 7th c. and the shift from Buddhist to Hindu imperial imagery and ritual in India, "Adherence to Buddhist values and patronage of Buddhist institutions created "distance" between Sri Lanka as a regional center and the expansive Hindu imperial formations, such as the Pallavas, Colas, and Pandyas, which were its neighbors. In this context, relations with more distant Buddhist Imperial centers in Eastern India were inevitably emphasized. The lack of continuity between the neighboring Hindu polities and Sri Lanka was further affirmed by the assumption that the island could only be ruled by a Buddhist, an assumption which was a product of this period" ("Devotion in Buddhist Literature," 175).

[48] The *Mahāvaṃsa* uses the term *damiḷa* to denote the Indian enemies of Sri Lankan Buddhist kings in general. The *damiḷa*-s "plundered the country like devils" during the reign of Sena V (972-82). Magha, the 13th century usurper identified as having come from Kaliṅga, is likened to Māra, the Buddha's tempter. The first occurrence of the term *damiḷa* in the *Mhv* is in reference to two brothers, Sena and Guttaka, who defeated one King Sūratissa and ruled the island shortly before the arrival of Eḷāra (*Mhv* 21.10). The description of the brothers as sons of a seafaring horse trader (*assanāvika*) make their origins more likely north Indian than south Indian, thus frustrating the assumption that *damiḷa* uniformly denotes "Dravidians" in the *Mhv.* The Portuguese were occasionally labeled "Tamils" in 16th and 17th c. Sinhala literature (Obeyesekere, *The Doomed King*, 30) *Demaḷa* in its modern Sinhala usage follows more closely English "Tamil."

practices and beliefs in Sinhala "preaching texts" (such as the c. 12th century *Amāvatura* and early 14th century *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*)[49], with Hindu deities in other contemporary Sinhala literature and visual imagery "organized in a pantheon, that is "vertically integrated" with the Buddha at its apex, and various gods arranged in a devolution of power."[50]

"Integration" dominated the Sinhala literary mood of the 12th to mid-14th centuries, and seems to have proceeded with some success. However, changing political and demographic currents disrupted the process, inclining courtly, monastic and lay attitudes towards aspects of Hindu religious life. The island experienced a sizable influx of South Indians of various walks of life when the Pāṇḍyan kingdom was overrun by the Muslim Khilji Dynasty in the first quarter of the 14th century. The resultant influence of Tamil and Malayalam language, religion, and political culture on the Sinhala kingdoms of southwestern Sri Lanka have been cataloged on a number of fronts.[51] Buddhist political life on the island was simultaneously affected by continental Indian influence, notably within the Gampola Kingdom (1341–1406) and the Kōṭṭe court of Parākramabāhu VI (r. c. 1410–1467). Gampola and the feudatories of the southwest and central highlands came to be

[49] "Devotion in Buddhist Literature," 182.

[50] "Devotion in Buddhist Literature," 180.

[51] See de Silva (1917), Dharmadasa (1995), Strathern (2007) and Meegama (2011). Obeyesekere (1984) traces the adaptation of elements from the *Cilappatikāram* into Sinhala village ritual literature and folklore, as part of the acculturation of the cult of the goddess Pattini (originally Kaṇṇaki). On the influence of Tamil on the Sinhala lexicon from the 14th c., see Dharmadasa (1995: 489). On the prevalence of Tamil terms in Sinhala boundary books, see Abeyawardana (1999: 66).

dominated by two families of South Indian extraction: the Alakēśvara-s and the Meheṇavara-s (or Mēṇavara-s). Both families, with their practice of matrilineal succession and stated connections to the city of Vañci, most likely emigrated from Kerala, perhaps some time in the 13th or early 14th century (see chapter 2.1). South Indian architectural tastes followed émigrés of this period[52], and bi-lingualism became a normal part of courtly life in the island's dominantly Buddhist southwest.[53]

Scholars have catalogued the influence of South Indian language, religion, and political culture on these Sinhala kingdoms of southwestern Sri Lanka on a number of fronts.[54] Sinhala literature from this period onwards showed pronounced lexical influence from Tamil and Malayalam.[55] Communities of South

[52] See Meegama (2011).

[53] On the bilingual (Sinhala and Tamil) Laṅkātilaka inscription of 1344, see Paranavitana (1960b). On evidence for a tradition of Tamil scribal officials at the courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, see Bell (1904 [1892]: 91-96) and Pieris (1912: 271ff.). The source materials of Portuguese chroniclers Fernão de Queirós, João de Barros and Diogo do Couto suggest some degree of bilingualism among Buddhists of the island's southwest, see for example Barros (1909: 30f.): "There is moreover current among the natives of the island a tradition that this name is not its proper one, but one given to it by chance; for its ancient name is Ilanáre [i.e. *īḻa-nāṭu*], or Tranate [i.e. *tiru-nāṭu*], as others say, and among the learned so it is called, although common usage and time have now taken so firm a hold, that it is generally called Ceilam."

[54] On South Indian (largely Keralan) migration to Sri Lanka and its impact on Sinhala village ritual from c. the 14th century, see Obeyesekere (1984); on the influence of Tamil in Sinhala poetry and music, see Dharmadasa (1995); on South Indian architectural influence in premodern Sri Lanka, see Meegama (2011); on Sri Lankan cosmopolitan interaction with the broader Indian Ocean world, see contributions to Strathern and Biedermann (2017).

[55] See Dharmadasa, "Literature in Sri Lanka," 489. This observation is corroborated by W.S. Karunatillake, who detects a pronounced influx of Tamil vocabulary from the 14th c. in such Sinhala works as the *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* (personal communication). For remarks on the influence of Tamil on Sinhala in general, see Karunatillake (2011) and Gair (1998). On the prevalence of Tamil terms in Sinhala boundary books, see Abeyawardana, *Boundary Divisions*, 66. The source materials of Portuguese chroniclers Fernão de Queirós, João de

Indian immigrants settling in the island's west coast and southwest were absorbed into the Sinhala Buddhist caste structure.[56] Sinhala *sandeśa* poems, discussed in chapter 6, give foremost testimony to the era's religious and cultural diversity. The messenger birds of these poems are instructed for example to worship at temples to the Śiva, Umā, Skanda, Ganeṣa, and Viṣṇu. By the early 16th century, Tamil was securely a component of the curriculum at Buddhist *piriveṇa-s*, monastic colleges catering both to Buddhist monks and lay people of the literate class.[57]

This dissertation considers closely the modes of transmission of Hindu religious imagery and Tamil literary formats in the Sri Lankan Buddhist southwest. It is important to note that Buddhist efforts at "integration" (including subordinating Hindu deities to the Buddha and Sangha in terms of venerability and apotropaic efficacy) did not cease in the mid-14th century. Some monastic factions resisted the pluralist *zeitgeist* of the late medieval period, including the usage of Tamil and the study of Hindu texts (the "eighteen Purāṇas" are singled out for scrutiny) at monastic colleges. Ultimately, some consequences of the religious liberality of the late medieval period would endure to the present (such as the standard inclusion of Hindu *dēvālaya*-s at Buddhist *vihāra*-s, and the prevalence of

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Barros and Diogo do Couto suggest some degree of bilingualism among Buddhists of the island's southwest, see for example Barros' remark: "There is moreover current among the natives of the island a tradition that this name is not its proper one, but one given to it by chance; for its ancient name is Ilanáre [i.e. *īḻa-nāṭu*], or Tranate [i.e. *tiru-nāṭu*], as others say, and among the learned so it is called, although common usage and time have now taken so firm a hold, that it is generally called Ceilam" (*History of Ceylon*, 30f.).

[56] Ryan (1953), Obeyesekere (2010).

[57] Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭi in his *Subhāṣitaya* defined illiterate people as those who did not understand Tamil, Sanskrit and Pali (see Berkwitz, *Buddhist Poetry*, 144).

aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in popular Sinhala understanding of the island's history), and some would be lost with time (such as the identification of Mahāsammata with Manu Vaivasvata, and the inclusion of both in declarations of Buddhist royal pedigree). This dissertation builds on previous studies in locating points of tension, permeability and reconciliation in Buddhist historical imagination at the eve of the colonial period.

§1.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The locus of "classical Sinhala Buddhist civilization" from the point of view of Sri Lankans today was the "royal country"[58] comprising most of the northern half of the island, with its capital at Anuradhapura, flourishing from the 3rd c. BCE to the late first millennium. The shift of the capital first to Polonnaruwa and then to Dambadeniya following the Cōḻa interregnum of the 11th century marked the beginning of a transition to the southwest by Buddhist rulers. The causes of this migration were partly commercial (opportunities for Arabo-Indic trade at the southern ports), partly military (the rise of the Kingdom of Jaffna), and partly yet to be fully understood. Under threat from the Tamil Ārya Cakravarti kings of northern Sri Lanka as well as from the Vijayanagara Empire, six different cities would serve as administrative seats for Lankan Buddhist monarchs between the years 1271 to 1394.[59]

[58] Sin. *raja-raṭa*, i.e. Skt. *rāja-rāṣṭra.*

[59] See Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change," 138.

This dissertation treats primarily of Sinhala and Tamil literature emerging in the 14th and 15th centuries—the "late medieval period," reckoned as the later half of the four centuries between the Cōḻa interregnum (and effective dissolution of kingdom of Anuradhapura) and the arrival of the Portuguese in 1506.

Chapter 2 explores the injection of Hindu purāṇic imagery into Sinhala literature and inscriptional discourse from the 14th century onwards, including the introduction of Manu as progenitor of the royal lineages to which rulers of the island's southwest were descended, an ancient flood which erased a massive portion of the island's geography, and elements of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (most interestingly the identification of Sri Lanka with Rāvaṇa's city fortress of "Laṅkāpura"). This chapter introduces vernacular Sinhala texts that serve as the basis for discussion throughout the remainder of the dissertation. While often these materials are difficult to date precisely, a concerted effort to establish their approximate chronology has been made throughout. The uncertainty of the point of origin of many middle period[60] Sinhala texts owes to the fact that they were distributed across the island, recopied and augmented many times. Shorter texts addressing the island's history include works on topography (*kaḍayim pot* or "boundary books"), historical relations of local significance (*vistaraya* or *vitti pot*), versions of the *Rājāvaliya*[61], and other

[60] This periodization follows Michael Roberts (2004), who designates the six centuries spanning the shift of the Sinhala capital from Polonnaruwa to Dambadeṇiya (early 13th c.) until the British annexation of Kandy (early 19th c.) as the "middle period" in Sri Lankan history.

[61] The "standard *Rājāvaliya,*" edited and translated by Suraweera in (1976 and 2000, respectively), is a critical edition of the most complete version of the text, dating to the late 17th c. The *Vanni Rājāvaliya* (ed. G. Obeyesekere and A. Tissa Kumara) is a variant recension. The *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya*, a chronicle of the kings of Kōṭṭe, is a foundational

miscellaneous texts and legal documents. These are works written in Sinhala prose by representatives of Buddhist courts and local seats of power, Buddhist monks, and sometimes by literate lay villagers.[62] The wide distribution and frequent colloquialisms of the texts indicates their importance as historical and topographic compendia in settings far removed from cosmopolitan centers. For this reason, miscellaneous Sinhala prose works possess a degree of ethnographic utility for the modern historian. Boundary books and *vitti pot*, while they are not eloquent, *haute culture* artifacts of lavish courts, offer an important glimpse into the popular historical imagination of the period.

Chapter 3 reviews two Tamil historical texts concerning the Konesvaram Temple of Trincomalee, the late 15th or early 16th century *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* and the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu*, written some time shortly after 1624 (though modified in circulation until the 19th century). In relating the history of royal patronage of

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document on which the *Rājāvaliya* expands. On the dates and significance of the *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya*, see Strathern (2006).

[62] For an overview see Godakumbura (1961). On the preservation of folk accounts of the island's history in Sinhala *kaḍayim* and *vitti pot*, see Obeyesekere and Tissa Kumāra, *Vanni Upata*, 9. Such texts have been categorized in a variety of ways: by Obeyesekere (2004) as "intermediate" between Pali literature and Sinhala folk traditions; as the textual organ of the "Sinhala folk tradition" (de Silva 1996); and as part of the "Little Tradition" of Sinhala literature (Dharmadasa 1995). The traditional assessment is that Sinhala literature suffered a state of severe decline by the end of the 16th century (see Godakumbura (1955) and Berkwitz, *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism*, 35). A number of studies have been undertaken collating reoccurring themes from middle period Sinhala texts. H.A.P. Abeyawardana (1999) offers a comprehensive study of Sinhala boundary books, along with editions and translations of crucial texts. Michael Roberts (2004) invokes poetry and miscellaneous Sinhala texts to argue that, while the precise implication of the terms "Sinhala" and "Tamil" (*demaḷa*) changed between 12th and 18th centuries, they remained politically significant categories for the duration of the "middle period" (see n.62 above). D.G.B. de Silva (1996) investigates middle period Sinhala literature pertaining to the settling of the Vanni region—the so-called "buffer zone" made up of small feudatories separating Jaffna and the east from the kingdoms of the southwest.

Konesvaram, I argue, both the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* and *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* intersect with the "chain of kings" of the Pali and Sinhala chronicle tradition. Gajabāhu II (Parākramabāhu I's cousin who is both maligned and praised by the *Mahāvaṃsa*) features importantly as a "Buddhist convert" to Śaivism in the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam.* Prince Sapumal of Kōṭṭe (under his coronary name of Bhuvanekabāhu) was remembered fondly by later Tamil sources as a sponsor of Hindu institutions in the region, with the *Koṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* going so far as to include him within its own imagined millennia old "vaṃsa" of Tamil kings. This chapter confronts E. Valentine Daniel's dichotomization of Tamil Hindu "rhematic" and Sinhala Buddhist "dicemic" forms of historical imagination, arguing that Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s (histories of sacred places) and Pali-Sinhala chronicles overlap in form and content in some respects. I argue furthermore that the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* indicates that Tamil history writers were concerned in some cases to present their work as relying on documentary evidence.

Chapter 4 considers the exclusion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in relation to Sri Lanka's history in the early Pali chronicles, going on to explore the epic's introduction into Sinhala literary works of the late medieval period. I trace the initial identification of the island with Rāvaṇa's "Laṅkāpura" to Cōḻa period South India, arguing that the Sinhala Buddhist reception of the demon-king as a historical ruler of the island and a literary character was colored by his role in Tamil religious literature as a erudite *bhakta* of Śiva.

Chapter 5 investigates of the scope of the "Sinhala" designation in the early Pali chronicles and later commentary. I present instances of late medieval Sinhala

prose works acknowledging the composite nature of Sri Lankan heritage, as resulting from successive waves of immigration from the Indian continent. Building on this insight, I conclude with a critique of the theory that the *Mahāvaṃsa* was employed as an instrument of political ideology in the premodern context.

Chapter 6 begins with a case study of 15th century Sinhala "messenger poetry" (*sandeśa kāvya*), in which I trace continental sources of influence on the literary production of Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic centers of the period. I argue that Sinhala messenger poems reveal contested visions among Buddhist authors over the extent that Śaivite Hindu devotional attractions were to be celebrated, the role of Hindu literature in monastic curriculum, and the suitability of Tamil as a medium of composition. Ambivalences towards such issues reveal fault lines and the carryover of more conservative attitudes among Buddhist monastics during a time of increased South Indian influence on political and literary life in the island's southwest, though censorious remarks seem to have been directed towards fellow monks, rather than at lay patrons. Section 2 considers the perdurance of Rāvaṇa as an ancient king of Sri Lanka in Sinhala Buddhist historical imagination from the late medieval period to the present day. Rāvaṇa has undergone a transformation in the 21st century, now sometimes regarded as the "original" Sinhala king, learned *śāstrin*, ruler of a vast kingdom, and possessor of technological marvels far in excess of those of the present day.

The following chapters are heavily indebted to a number of antecedent historical, philological and ethnographic studies, to which I have extended due credit throughout. Special mention is owed to Gananath Obeyesekere's *Cult of the*

Goddess Pattini (1984) and John Holt's *The Buddhist Viṣṇu* (2004), on which §5.2 is heavily predicated. Jonathan Walter's "Buddhist History: The Sri Lankan Pāli *Vaṃsas* and Their Community" (2000) forms the basis for the discussion in §2.2.

CHAPTER TWO: COSMOLOGY AND KINGSHIP IN SRI LANKAN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

§2.1 POLITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The period spanning the Gampola Kingdom (1341–1406) and the Kōṭṭe court of Parākramabāhu VI (c. 1410–1467) was one of immense linguistic and cultural transformation in Sri Lanka. From the establishment of the capital at Gampola to the close of the 14th century, the politics of the southwest were in large part dominated by two merchant families of South Indian extraction: the Alakēśvara-s and the Meheṇavara-s (or Mēṇavara-s). The Meheṇavara-s first came to prominence under Senā Laṅkādhikāra, a minister in the service of the early kings of Gampola (c. 1341-1374). Marrying a daughter of Vijayabāhu V, some of the later kings of Gampola kept the Meheṇavara name by virtue of matrilineal succession.[1] Their rivals at courts of the central highlands were the Alakeśvara-s ("Alakeśvara" being the Sinhala rendering of Malayalam/Tamil "Aḷakakkōṉar," "the Lord of Alakā," an epithet of Kuvera). The name also appears in Sinhala prose works and inscriptions closer to its Dravidian form as "Alagakkōnāra" and "Aḷagakko."[2] The Alakeśvara-s also successfully served under and allied with the Sinhala kings of the region, and like Meheṇavara-s eventually married into the royal family descended from Vijayabāhu V (see Figure 1). Both families, with their practice of matrilineal

[1] Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence and Elite Change," 141, 148 and Paranavitana, "Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigama," 640.

[2] As in the *NS* (25, 28) and the *Kit-Siri-Mevan Vihāraya* inscription (Bell and Gunasekara, "Kęlaṇi Vihāra," 153), respectively.

succession and stated connections to the city of Vañci (Karuvūr), most likely emigrated from Kerala, perhaps some time in the 13th or early 14th century.[3]

While the southwest was nominally under the control of Gampola at the time, the Alakeśvaras ruled independently over a portion of the southwestern and Sabaragamuva regions in the mid-14th. century.[4] "Niśśaṅka Alakeśvara" ("Alakeśvara I") is the first to appear in Sri Lankan historical record. He began his career as an advisor to the Sinhala kings of Gampola in the mid-14th century, and

[3] Both the Meheṇavara-s and Alakeśvara-s belonged to the "merchant caste" (*velaṅda-kula*, *vaniġ-vaṃsa*) according to period documents (Karunatilaka, "Velanda-kula," 207; Alagakkōṇāra is for example called the "lord of Vañci, crest jewel of the merchant caste" (*vañci-parādhiśo vani-k-vaṃśa sikhā-maṇi*) in manuscript copies of the Niyaṁgampāya inscription of c. 1373 CE (Mudiyanse, *Gampola Period*, 175). As Somaratne notes, it is likely that the Alakeśvara-s originated as traders owing to their association with the city of Rayigama, near to the prosperous port of Beruvala (*Political History of Kotte*, 51). An inscription at the Kelaniya Rāja Mahāvihāra Temple recording the continued patronage of one of Alagakkonara's direct descendants in the royal service of Parākramabāhu VI (dating most likely to 1443-4) speaks of "patronage solicited and received from the noble wife of the minister Aḷagakko, tenth in the succession of the lineage of the great Nissaṅka Aḷagakko, descended from the distinguished Vañci lineage (*viśiṣṭa vañcīparapuren pämiṇi*)" (Bell and Gunasekara, "Keḷaṇi Vihára," 153f.)). D.B. Jayatilaka published the contents of a palm leaf document in the Hugh Nevill Collection purporting to be a copy of an inscription dated to 1373/4 concerning the founding of Jayavardhanapura by Alakeśvara, in which he is said to have belonged to the *vañci vaṃsa*, also called the *vaiśyavaṃsika* of *kērala desa* (*Sinhala Sāhitya Lipi*, 52-69; "*Britānya kautukāgārayen soyā gat sinhala lekhanayak*," *Svadeśa Mitrayā*, Sept. 7, 1935; cited in Suraweera, "D.B. Jayatilaka's Contribution to Sri Lanka Studies," 83). For a list of textual and epigraphic references indicating that the Alakeśvaras originated from Vañci, see Somaratne, *Political History of Kotte*, 50 and 280, n.67. Paranavitana calls attention to the matrilineal succession of the Alakeśvaras, "in keeping with [their] Malayāḷī extraction" ("Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigama," 640), as well as to the practice of fraternal polyandry in the Alakeśvara family (648f., 656). The *NS* records that Niśśaṅka Alagakkōnāra had a number of monastic colleges set up, given "the family names following from his own lineage (*vaṃsānugata gotravirudunāmayen*)." Three examples are given: "Girivaṃsaśekhara" and "Niśśaṅkha Alageśvara," with manuscripts varying on readings of the third, either "Kāñcipura-purandara" or "Vañcipura-purandara" (*NS*, p.27 with note).

[4] The *Rājavaliya* identifies three seats of power at this time: that of the Alakēśvaras at Rayigama, that of Vikramabāhu III at Gampola, and that of the Ārya Cakravarti king at Jaffna. The *Mayūra Sandeśaya* calls the three Alakeśvara brothers—Alagakkōnāra (Alakeśvara), Äpā, and Dēva Svāmi—the "three lords of Laṅkā" (*laka metun bā himin*, v.155).

operated autonomously from Bhuvanekabāhu IV of Gampola, or Parākramabāhu V of Dädigama (the two were brothers).[5] The second Alakeśvara of the historical record, who earned the rank of *prabhurāja*, and who married into the court of Gampola along with his two brothers (the three of nephews of Alakeśvara I (the son of his sister, Padmāvatī).[6] He is Alakeśvara who would construct Jayavardhanapura-Kōṭṭe ("the fort at Jayavardhana city"), expel the Ārya Cakravarti (some time between 1359 and 1369 CE) and act as effective sovereign of the southern, western and central portions of the island.[7]

The golden years of the Meheṇavaras and Alakeśvaras produced an observable shift in patterns of patronage at the royal court, and in the proximity and prominence of Hindu in relation to Buddhist imagery. The Laṅkātilaka and Gaḍalādeniya temples of Gampola contain prominent images of Hindu deities, including shrines to Śiva and Viṣṇu.[8] The Laṅkātilaka inscription, in which Senā Laṅkādhikāra's patronage is recorded, is inscribed on two stone slabs, one in

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[5] Ibn Batuta in his travel in 1344 names Alakeśvara ("Alkonar") as the sovereign of the southern portion of the island, and in possession of a white elephant (an emblem of royal power) (Lee, *The Travels of Ibn Batūta*, 186).

[6] This is Paranavitana's reconstruction ("Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigama," 644).

[7] The Alakeśvaras and Vikramabāhu III may have at first been allied with the Ārya Carkravarti (and willing to pay him tribute) in order to weaken the position of Parākramabāhu V. The kingdom of Jaffna seems to have invaded again in c. 1380-81, which explains the *Rājāvaliya's* reference to an invasion during the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu V (conflates his early eviction by Alakeśvara II with this later, abortive campaign).

[8] See Paranavitana (1934) and (1960c). The inscriptions date to c. 1344 CE, with the Laṅkātilaka inscription inscribed both in Sinhala and Tamil on two obverse stone slabs. By the 15th century, some *dēvālaya*-s were greater in size and received more lay traffic than the Buddhist vihāra-s with which they were adjoined (see Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 65 and Pathmanathan, "Guardian Deities of Lanka," 116).

Sinhala, one in Tamil. The minister's descendants would retain names and titles in Malayalam and Tamil.[9] The *Nikāya Saṅgrahāva* relates that at his newly constructed capital of Jayavardhanapura, Alakeśvara was "surrounded by his great Sinhala and Tamil armies, both possessed of the mightiness of lions."[10]

This chapter considers literary trends in Buddhist literature coincident with the ascendance of the religiously and linguistically diverse courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, examining the injection of Hindu purāṇic imagery and dynastic reckoning into Sinhala historical works from the 14th century. I begin by examining the presentation of the distant past in the early Pali chronicles, moving on to consider the convergence of visions of Buddhist history and Hindu purāṇic themes in later Sinhala literature. While primarily accounts of the succession of Lankan Buddhist kings, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* also put forth a history of Buddhism and of Buddhist monarchy on a cosmological scale, incorporating past Buddhas and incarnations of the Buddha Gotama into their renderings of the island's political history. I demonstrate that late medieval/early modern Sinhala poetry and historiography reflect a synthesis of Pali Buddhist narrative themes and imagery derived from Hindu Purāṇas such as cyclical time, the periodic destruction and reformation of the world, and the immensity of the universe. Buddhist regents in historiography, inscriptional discourse and poetry were from the 14th century represented through imagery drawn from the Hindu purāṇic tradition, including the genealogical ascription of descent from Manu Vaivasvata. In addition, this chapter

[9] Paranavitana, "Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigam," 640.

[10] *siṅhasamāna vikrama äti siṅhala demaḷa mahasenaga pirivara* (*NS*, 27).

introduces a topic that is developed throughout the rest of the dissertation: the appearance of narrative portions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sinhala accounts of the island's history. This phenomenon, I argue, resulted in a temporal decentering of the Buddha's life and the arrival of Vijaya as origin point of the island's recorded history in Sinhala Buddhist historical imagination.

§2.2 COSMOLOGY AND ROYAL GENEALOGY IN THE EARLY PALI CHRONICLES

Compendious Sanskrit works of foundational religious significance to Hindus today—including the *Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa*, and Purāṇas—relate the long-ago past on a grand scale, integrating cosmology, ancient drama of the gods, and human royal genealogies tracing to divine ancestry. Sanskrit Purāṇas, produced from the early first millennium CE until the early second, are exemplary in their synthesis of cosmic time and worldly dominion. By tradition eighteen "great" (*mahā*) Purāṇas are enumerated, though historically lists are discrepant as to which Purāṇas count as "great" and which as "lesser" (*upa*).[11] Though they often incorporate much more information, traditional literary expectations require that Purāṇas include five basic elements: (1) the "emission" or creation of the world at the beginning of the cycle of world ages (*mahākalpa*); (2) the generation of the cosmos at the beginning of this world age (*kalpa*); (3) the phylogenesis of living beings (*vaṃśa*); (4) accounts of the fourteen epochs of Manu, which together constitute one *kalpa*; and (5) the

[11] See Rocher, *The Purāṇas*, 30-34. Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s, an altogether different, vernacular genre, will be discussed in chapter 3.

succession of kings (*vaṃśanucarita*) of the Solar and Lunar dynasties from Manu during the present epoch (*manvatara*, consisting of a cycle of four *yugas*).[12]

The cosmogony of the Sanskrit Purāṇas revolves around divine agency—that of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Śiva, or some combination of the three (Śaiva oriented texts such as the *Śiva*, *Skanda* and *Liṅga Purāṇas* feature Viṣṇu prominently as an actor or agentive force between world ages). Disavowing a soteriology reliant upon any form of divine intervention, it is understandable that neither cosmogony nor cosmology receive a great deal of emphasis in early Pali Buddhism. In general, the Pāli Nikāyas treat the contemplation of cosmic time as soteriologically unproductive. The Brahmajāla Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* enumerates sixty-two distracting views concerning the contemplation of the past (*pubbanta-kappika*). These mostly involve speculation regarding the eternality and nature of the self, but also speculation regarding the cyclical contraction and expansion of the world and Brahmā's position in this process. Elsewhere in the Nikāyas, the Buddha lists ten questions on which he refuses to expound (the ten *avyākata*-s), the first four of which involve the eternality of the world.[13] The Buddha explains that he expresses no opinion on these questions, since such lines of inquiry are "not conducive to Dhamma, not the way to embark on the holy life, do not lead to disenchantment, nor

[12] Inden, "Imperial Purāṇas," 31f.

[13] "Is the world eternal? Is the world not eternal? Is the world finite? Is the world not finite?" (*sassato loko ti vā, asassato loko ti vā, antavā loko anantavā loko ti vā*). The list of the *avyākata*-s (sometimes also written *abyākata*) occurs at *Saṃyutta Nikāya* iv.392 and iii.258, *Majjhima Nikāya* i.426, *Dīgha Nikāya* i.187 and *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* 208, §1175. See Fuller, *The Notion of Diṭṭhi*, p.39 with n.139.

to dispassion, nor to cessation, nor to calm, nor to higher knowledge, nor to the enlightenment, nor to Nibbāna."[14]

The Nikāyas do occasionally offer a cataphatic perspective on cosmogony and cosmology, though in these instances it is almost always in connection with an affirmation of the impermanence of all things or the eternality of *saṃsāra*. The *Satta Suriya Sutta* describes the gradual evaporation of all water and the consequent death of all living things through the successive appearance of "seven suns," the volcanic eruption of Mt. Meru, and (finally) the total immolation of the world. The Buddha capitalizes on each stage in the process of the dissolution of the world to remind his audience:

> Thus, O Bhikkhus, all compounded things are impermanent, unstable, and give no comfort. Such as it is, O Bhikkhus, be dissatisfied with these things, to let go of them, to be free from them.[15]

The *Gaddula Sutta* admonishes that an end to rebirth is not effected even by the eventual dissolution of the world for those who do not seek liberation.[16] The

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[14] Adapted from Walshe's translation of *Dīgha Nikāya* i.188-9.

[15] *aniccā bhikkhave saṅkhārā adhuvā bhikkhave saṅkhārā anassāsikā bhikkhave saṅkhārā | yavan c'idaṃ bhikkhave alaṃ eva sabbasaṅkhāresu nibbindituṃ alaṃ virajjituṃ alaṃ vimuccituṃ* (*AN* iv, p.100 [LXII.2]). The Sutta goes on to tell of Sunetta, a religious teacher and "ford maker" of old, who although reborn as the god Brahmā and again seven times as Sakka, still failed to obtain liberation (since he did not comprehend the Four Noble Truths). The *Satta Suriya Sutta* is reproduced by Buddhaghosa at *Visuddhimagga* (13.32-41) where it is integrated into the *Aggañña Sutta.*

[16] "There comes a time when the great ocean evaporates, dries up, and does not exist. But for beings—as long as they are hindered by ignorance, fettered by craving, transmigrating and wandering on—I don't say that there is an end of suffering and stress. There comes a time when Sineru, king of mountains, is consumed with flame, is destroyed and does not exist. But for beings […] I don't say that there is an end of suffering and distress. There comes a time when the great earth is consumed with flame, is destroyed, and does not exist. But for beings […] I don't say that there is an end of suffering and distress" (Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation in *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, vol. 1, p.957; *SN* iii.149).

Saṅkhāra Upapatti Sutta[17] enumerates successively more vast heavenly world-systems (*loka dhātu*) existing above our own, in which those who cultivate foundational religious virtue (the five *ariya vaḍḍhi*-s) may be reborn. The text makes the point however that even the pinnacle of these (a world-system made of 100,000 subsidiary worlds) remains impermanent, and that its ruler (a "Brahmā of 100,000") is still subject to eventual rebirth. Nowhere in Pali literature is cosmic dissolution and reconstitution associated with the agency of a deity, nowhere is it associated with a soteriology[18], and nowhere is it associated with Viṣṇu's intervention on behalf of humankind.

Two canonical Pali texts in particular do however configure importantly in the later Buddhist cosmology of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. One is the *Buddhavaṃsa* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* (dating perhaps to the 2nd century BCE), which names the twenty-four Buddhas[19] prior to Gotama, dispersed throughout five *kappa*-s (*kalpa*-s) including our own. This succession of Buddhas (and incarnations of the Bodhisattva) served as the basis for Sri Lankan narration the distant past,

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[17] *MN* iii.101-2.

[18] Nowhere for example is cosmology in the Pali canon associated with the grace of Śiva with respect to bound souls, as in Śaiva Siddhanta. In the Pali Nikāyas, Viṣṇu (Veṇhu) appears as one among a number of Devas present to hear the preaching of the Mahāsamaya Sutta (DN 2.259), with Śiva (Īsāna) mentioned as a chief deva invoked by Brahmins and instrumental in the long ago battle of the Devas against the Asuras (see DPPN entry for 'Īsāna'). Neither is given a particularly privileged place in the pantheon of the canon and early commentaries (where Śakra (Sakka) is accorded the position of "lord of the gods"), and the cosmological activities with which they are associated in the Sanskrit Purāṇas are not mentioned.

[19] Brief biographies of the twenty-four Buddhas prior to Gotama are given, though three prior to the first among them (Dīpaṅkara) are also named: Taṇhaṅkara, Medhaṅkara and Saranaṅkara (belonging to the "Sāramaṇḍa kappa").

with the list serving as an introduction for Pali chronicles (including the *Mahāvaṃsa*) as well as later Sinhala preaching texts. The other is the *Aggañña Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the sole Pali canonical account of the origin of human life. This *sutta* also describes the appointment by the earth's early agrarian inhabitants of the world's first monarch, holding the title of *mahāsammata*.[20] The story explains the division of labor which took place during the incipient organization of human society as the origin of Hindu caste (for instance, because Mahāsammata exercised authority over cultivated lands (*khettāni*), he was designated a *khattiya* (*kṣatriyan*)).

The Buddhas named in the *Buddhavaṃsa*, along the succession of Indian monarchs beginning with Mahāsammata, constitute the lens for the narration of the distant past in the two earliest chronicles of Sri Lanka: the late 3rd or early 4th century *Dīpavaṃsa*, and the first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (c. 6th century). Here both lists are made to configure centrally in the origins of political life on the island, positioning, as Jonathan Walters discerns, "Sri Lankan kingship, monasticism, architecture, literature, geography, and economics explicitly as a continuation of the cosmic story that constituted earlier Buddhist empires in India."[21]

The *Dīpavaṃsa* asserts that three Buddhas before Gotama also visited Laṅkā. These were the previous Buddhas of our *kappa*—Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa—who visited Laṅkā when it was known respectively as Ojadīpa, Varadīpa

[20] Glossed by the text as *mahājanena sammato*, "appointed by the people" (Collins, "The Discourse on What is Primary," 345). The essential portions of the story are reproduced in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (13.44-54).

[21] "Buddhist History," 118.

and Maṇḍapadīpa.[22] Just as Gotama dispelled the Yakkhas, Rakkhas and Bhūtas, each of his three predecessors rescues the island from some calamity – fever, drought, and the ruinous contest of two competing kings.[23] Various homologies are made between the religious topography of Gotama's time and those of his forerunners,[24] with each Buddha imparting a relic[25] and each leaving a cutting from the tree under which he was enlightened.[26]

In addition to the Buddhas of the present *kappa*, the *Dīpavaṃsa* gives the complete genealogy of kings of the earth of this era, beginning with Mahāsammata. Mahāsammata is not simply here the first kṣatriyan (as he is in the *Aggañña Sutta*), but the first member of the Sākiya (Śākya) royal family, from which Gotama Buddha descended.[27]

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[22] *Dpv* 9.20, 15.35-64, 17.5-73. Though the chronology of the Buddhas mentioned in the *Dpv* is restricted to the present era, the reader is assured that "Laṅkā is a land inhabited by human beings since distant *kalpas*" (*laṅkātalaṃ mānusānaṃ porāṇakappaṭṭhitavutthavāsam*, 1.73).

[23] *Dpv* 17.8.

[24] *Dpv* 17.11-16.

[25] A cup, underwear, and a raincoat respectively by the three prior Buddhas (Gotama himself showed greater generosity, leaving "a *doṇa* of bodily remains (*dhātu sārīrikā*)").

[26] *Dpv* 17.9-10.

[27] The genealogy of the Sākiyas from Mahāsammata to Siddhattha is the subject of chapter three of the *Dpv.* The text broaches the subject of cosmological time, explaining that each of the first twenty-eight kings of the earth lived one *asaṅkheyya* of years (an *asaṅkheyya* being a unit of reckoning beyond 100 quintillion and therefore not calculable) (3.9-13). According to the commentary on the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, four *asaṅkheyya*-s are equal to one *mahākappa* (Horner, *Minor Anthologies III*, xxvi, n.1).

In keeping with its stated intention to expound "the unequalled, most excellent succession"[28] of great rulers of the world, the *Dīpavaṃsa* injects its ancient "lineage of kings" (*mahārāja vaṃsa*) into the succession of rulers of Laṅkā. We learn that Bhaddakaccānā, the daughter of a Sākiya prince named Paṇḍu, was brought from Jambudīpa and married to Vijaya's successor, Paṇḍuvāsudeva, "in order to preserve the family line."[29] The *Mahāvaṃsa* clarifies that Bhaddakaccānā's father was a king named Paṇḍu, himself the son of the Sākiya king Amitodana, brother to Suddhodana, Prince Siddhartha's father.[30] So it is that the Sākiya dynasty, which began with Mahāsammata, continued in Laṅkā through Bhaddakaccānā, who was the Buddha's first cousin, once removed.[31]

While neither deals with the topic of cosmogenesis or cosmic dissolution, both chronicles offer a template for subsequent perspectives among Sri Lankan Buddhists of the distant past on a "purāṇic" scale (the past through many *kalpa*-s/*kappa*-s). Jonathan Walters notes that, like Hindu Purāṇas, the *Dīpavaṃsa* labors to integrate events and processes of the distant past with the present, resurrecting "an earlier Buddhist claim to the command of time, subordinating human action (calculable time) to the endless reiteration of the Buddha's presence (incalculable

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[28] *anūpamaṃ vaṃsavaraggaṃ* (1.4).

[29] *kulavaṃsānurakkhanatthāya* (10.1).

[30] *Mhv* 8.18-28. The *Mahāvaṃsa* furthermore reveals that Paṇḍuvāsudeva is Vijaya's nephew, whom Vijaya summoned to take his place as sovereign of Laṅkā (*Mhv* 8.6-10). The section dealing with accession of Paṇḍuvāsudeva is disjointed and unclear in the *Dpv*, mentioning seven Sākiya (Śākyan) prince grand-children of Amitodana without including Paṇḍu on the list (10.6).

[31] Walters discusses this in "Buddhist History," 117-25.

time)."[32] However, while accounts of the the cyclical dissolution and reconstitution of the world, as well as of the physical lay-out and extent of the cosmos circulated among Pali Buddhists from the early first millennium[33], they were not an item of concern for the Pali chronicles. The geographical point of departure of both works is *Sri Lanka* (the *Mahāvaṃsa* begins with the Buddha's visit to the island before going on to tell the story of the development of Buddhism in India, the *Dīpavaṃsa* gives a very brief account of the Buddha's enlightenment and ministry before detailing his activities in Sri Lanka), with the *Indian continent* being a subject of marginal concern (and with cosmology receiving almost no attention whatsoever).

§2.3 SRI LANKA'S DISTANT PAST IN THE VERNACULAR

It is difficult to assess the extent of the readership of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*. Both are Pali texts, first written and maintained by the Mahāvihāra monastic fraternity, and so in isolation (i.e. without the mediation of a Sinhala commentary) would not have been accessible to a great many people (on the status of the circulation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* by the 19th century, see chapter 5). From the 12th century however, new vernacular forms of Buddhist literature were produced, some intended for broad lay audiences. Chronicles relating the transmission of the relics of the Buddha from India to Sri Lanka, such as the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsaya*,

[32] "Buddhist History," 118.

[33] In the form of the *sutta*-s mentioned above, and in Buddhaghosa's compendium of them in his *Visuddhimagga.*

Daḷadā Sirita, the *Elu Bodhivaṃsa*, emerged as popular Sinhala adaptations of Pali prose works.[34]

Short vernacular chronicles emerged within a movement that made written literary works available to the lay population at large—from noble men and women[35] to "unlearned but virtuous people,"[36] including "pious men and women in remote provinces."[37] Sinhala "preaching texts" (*baṇa pot*)—compendious prose works intended to be read aloud by a monk or educated layperson over the course of a night—were at the vanguard of this literary movement.

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[34] From early on, Buddhist history writing in Sri Lanka seems to have consisted in a complex and ongoing project of translation, elaboration and oral performance between Sinhala and Pali. This may have been the case from the inauguration of the Pali historiographic tradition in Sri Lanka. See Malalasekara's discussion of orality and the *Dīpavaṃsa* in *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, p.135. The *Mahāvaṃsa* claims to be a reworking of earlier Sinhala historiographical materials (its *ṭīka* lists a now lost *Sīhala Mahāvaṃsatthakathā* as one of these). The *Mahābodhivaṃsa* (10th c.), *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* (late 12th or early 13th c.), and *Thūpavaṃsa* (13th century) say the same thing with respect to themselves. While the Sinhala source materials for these Pali works are now lost, new versions of some were created in the 13th and first half of the 14th centuries (see Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 106-21). Prior to these adaptations are the *Dharmapradīpikāva*, a Sinhala commentary on portions of the *Bodhivaṃsa*, and the 12th c. *Bodhivaṃsa Gäṭa Padaya* (Liyanage, "Narrative Methods of Sinhala Prose," 23-27). These two works are commentarial in nature, not reworkings of their Pali source material in the manner of later Sinhala adaptations. The *Kesadhātuvaṃsa*, the chronicle of the Buddha's hair relic, which seems to have been an important compendium of Sinhala historical episodes supplementary to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, is now lost.

[35] In the case of the *Pūjāvaliya*, which also addresses itself to monks and provincials.

[36] *no viyat hudī jana*. The phrase occurs in the opening section of the *Amāvatura*.

[37] *pratyantavala…śraddhāvanta vū strī puruṣyan* (*Pjv*, 19). The *Pjv* explains that the pious men and women "living in remote parts of the country with no access to virtuous men (*satpuruṣya*) and with hardly any opportunity for listening to sermons that help the proper understanding of both worlds, will obtain books in which are written the many virtues of the Buddha and get them read by those who know to read" (Gunawardhana, v.1, p.28; *Pjv*, 19). Udaya Meddegama places the date of the presumed earliest Sinhala text for a general lay audience, the *Amāvatura*, between the reigns of Vijayabāhu I and Parākramabāhu I (1055-1186 CE) (*Amāvatura*, 4). Based on its similar format to *baṇa pot*, the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* may have been intended to have been read aloud to lay audiences as well.

The *suttas* of the Pali Nikāyas along with the *jātaka* collection furnished much of the source material for medieval Sinhala authors, and the bulk of these preaching texts consist in their retelling, elaboration and embellishment.[38] *Baṇa pot*, along with the short chronicles however also made island's history as related in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* available in written vernacular. The chronicles (the *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* being the most extensive among them) contain some information on the history of the island (King Asoka's mission, the reconquest of Duṭṭhagāmiṇī), but do not (like *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*) contain complete dynastic histories, nor accounts of the peopling on the island. In addition, two popular *baṇa pot* contain extensive historical sections: the *Pūjāvaliya*, written in 1266 by a monk, Mayūrapāda Buddhaputra, and the 14th century *Saddharmālaṅkāraya*, relating Buddhist historical episodes from India and Sri Lanka (based heavily on the Pali *Rasavāhinī*).

The *Pūjāvaliya* reprises the *Dīpavaṃsa's* vision of repetitive history, prefacing its account of the activities of Gotama Buddha in Sri Lanka with the feats of Buddhas of the distant past.[39] Each subsequent Buddha in turn rescues Lanka from a

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[38] Other Pali texts informing these works include the *Dhammapada*, its commentary, the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Visuddhimagga.* In addition to their importance as source materials for *baṇa pot*, the number of copies of these texts in the catalogues of manuscripts of the Colombo Museum and Peradeniya University libraries reflects their continued importance among Sri Lankan Buddhist authors.

[39] As in the *Dpv*, the inhabitants of Ōjadvīpa were at that time afflicted by a terrible fever, causing "untold misery and bringing death to all the inhabitants as happened at the great city of Visālā during the time of our Buddha." Kakusanda Buddha then arrives, prevents demons from entering the island to feast on the dead and dying, and restores everyone to good health. He then enjoins King Abhaya to plant a Bodhi tree in the place that is now Lōvāmahāpā (in Anurādhapura), thus adopting "a custom followed by the greatly-blessed kings of old who like you were chiefs over this island" (Gunawardhana, *Pūjāvaliya*, Part VI, 2ff.).

calamity (drought, internecine conflict) and establishes a Bodhi tree, ensuring each time that "all royalty born throughout that Buddha-era worshipped the Triple Gem and went to the city of *Nivan*."[40] The *Pūjāvaliya* goes on to demand fidelity towards the Buddha in a way unprecedented in earlier Pali works, baldly stating for instance that:

> the residence in this Island of Lanka of the followers of false creeds (*mithyādṛṣṭhi gatuvan*) does not become permanent just as in the past the residence of the demons (*yakṣayan*) did not get permanent. Even if a king adhering to a false creed did reign in Lanka at any time by force, the fact of his dynasty not establishing itself is a special aspect of the Buddha's superior powers. So, because this Lanka is amenable only to kings who have taken on a faith with a right view (*samyakdṛṣṭi gat rajun*), it is certain that their dynasties will survive. For these reasons, royal overlords of Lanka should be diligent in the establishment of the Dispensation (*śāsanapratiṣṭhāvehi apramāda*) out of genuine love and respect towards the Buddha (*budun kerehi svabhāva vū ādara bahumānayen*), protect the Wheel of Wisdom and the Wheel of Dharma, govern well and foster their dynasties.[41]

Historical works of this period (the 12th to mid-14th century) portray interlopers within Lankan Buddhist royal domain in a particularly harsh light. The *Mahāvaṃsa* acknowledges that Eḷāra, the 2nd century South Indian invader expelled by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, ruled the island righteously for forty-four years, "as one who is

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[40] Gunawardhana, *Pūjāvaliya* VI, 4.

[41] *Pūjāvaliya*, 746; adapted from Gunawardhana's translation, *Pūjāvaliya* VI, 1f. The idea that the history of Sri Lanka is repeated cyclically throughout world-ages is found again in the c. 14th century *Kurunāgala Vistarya*, wherein it is explained that Prince Vijaya granted the various districts of the Kurunegala region to his comrades and members of his court, and then that: "A king named Vijaya reigned in Hastipura during the time of Kakusanda Buddha, the said city lying at a distance of 400 *gaws* from Siṇhapura. During the time of Konāgama Buddha this city was also ruled by Vijaya. During the time of Kāsyapa Buddha also was this city ruled by a Vijaya, as well as in the time of Gotama Buddha. On account of this circumstance, Kurunāgala becomes, comparatively, the principle city in the thirty-five capitals in the Island of Laṅkā" (Modder, "Kurunegala Vistaraya," 44). "Siṇhapura" here refers to the continental homeland of Vijaya as described in the *Mhv* (i.e. Lāṭa).

equal [with respect to justice] towards both friend and foe."[42] By contrast, the *Pūjāvaliya* portrays Eḷāra's reign as extractive and disastrous, calling him a destroyer of the Buddhist religion.[43] This attitude may have been motivated in part by the siege of the island at the hands of foreign invaders following the illustrious reign of Parākramabāhu I.[44] The *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa* gives an epic rendering of the battle between Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Eḷāra, implicitly analogized with Parākramabāhu II's mid-13th century restoration of the island to Sinhalese rule. The work was probably written at Parākramabāhu's court when the exploitative reign of Māgha (a south Indian invader who held sway over the north for some four decades) belonged to living memory.[45]

In addition, Sinhala historical works from the 12th-13th centuries keep very closely to the history of the island and of the Indian subcontinent outlined in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*. The "incalculable past" is given regularity by the twenty-four births of the Bodhisattva during the lifetimes of the twenty-four Buddhas who preceded him. The history of the subcontinent is restricted to the life of the Buddha Gotama, the councils of elders who codified and transmitted his

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[42] *majjhatto mittasattusu* (*Mhv* 21.14).

[43] Gunawardhana, *Pūjāvaliya* VI, 37f. Collins notes with respect to the Pali literature of the period that, "We can trace […] a significant difference between Mahāvihārin texts written before Parakkamabahu's 'reform' and those written after: that is, in the direction of an increasingly triumphalist re-writing of earlier history" ("On the Very Idea of a Pali Canon," 96).

[44] For Walters' perspective on "the *Cūlavaṃsa* as a product of imperial defeat," see "Buddhist History," 145f.

[45] See Berwitz's remarks in his introduction to *History of the Buddha's Relic Shrine* and, on the dating of the Pali *Thūpavaṃsa*, Jayawickrama, *A Chronicle of the Thūpa*, xxiii.

teaching, and the life of Emperor Aśoka. The history of Sri Lanka again begins with the arrival of Vijaya, which coincides with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*.[46]

A more capacious view emerged in the mid-14th century in Sinhala prose works relating aspects of the history of Sri Lanka (*vitti*, *vistaraya* and *kaḍayim* books). Some parallels and some discrepancies may be noted between Sinhala prose works of this period and the Tamil and Telugu "*karaṇam*" texts explored by Narayana Rao, et al. (2001). As with South Indian *karaṇam* works, an authorial voice is rarely detectable in late medieval/early modern Sinhala historical works. Authority is however derived in a different, *sui generis* Sri Lankan Buddhist fashion, insofar as these texts sometimes signal their participation in the Pali-Sinhala *vaṃsa* genre, intimating themselves to be extensions of an earlier tradition.[47]

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[46] The 16th c. *Rājaratnākaraya* explains that there was no human habitation, and therefore could be no human history of the island until it is visited by a Buddha: "This island of Lanka was a dwelling place for men at the time when Buddhas lived, and a dwelling place for demons (*yakṣas*) when no Buddha lived" (Karunaratne, *Rājaratnākaraya*, 16).

[47] According to Narayana Rao, et al., *karaṇam*-s were scholar-bureaucrats at South Indian courts who, from approximately the 16th century, were in charge of accounts-keeping, documentary history writing, and to some extent policy-making as well (*Textures of Time*, 19ff.). Narayana Rao, et al. argue that *karaṇam*-s produced historical prose works in a novel mode, with a greater degree of self awareness than earlier Indian history writing, and endowed with "many subtle markers – syntactic, evidential, phono-aesthetic, silential, and so on" that signal to a native speaker precise valence with which the author is conveying a narrative (empirical/documentary, poetic, mythological/rhematic, etc.) (p.253). *Karaṇam* historiography did not depend on the statements concerning authority of transmission (a preoccupation of the Sanskrit Hindu epics), but rather invested authority to convey history accurately with the authors themselves, with the understanding that their social group was a reliable source of knowledge (p.95f.). *Karaṇam* works were characterized by fluid prose augmented with poetic embellishments. The most extensive examples provided by Narayana Rao, et al. are of works concerning South Indian military expeditions and courtly intrigue, including battles against and alliances with the forces of the French East India Company. Miscellaneous Sinhala prose works from the 14th century onwards share some of these features. The *Mātalē Kaḍaim* incorporates elements of Sri Lanka's long ago past in its narration of forces of Rājasiṃha II, allied with the Dutch, against the Portuguese fortification at Trincomalee. This text was written by a ranking official of Rājasiṃha's court, and valued in circulation not only as an authoritative documentary account, and also as a

Among the prolific archive of Sinhala texts of this period are "boundary books" (*kaḍayim pot*)—short prose works on the administrative divisions of the island, offering a detailed picture of portions of southwestern Sri Lanka.[48] Earlier Sinhala works such as the *Dambadeṇi Asna* and *Kurunāgala Vistaraya* prefigure the

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reference work delimiting the precise boundary of the Mātalē provincial district (the *mātalē disāva*). Other boundary books, *vitti pot*, and *Rājāvaliya*-s, like *karaṇam* works, do not reveal their sources, allowing their authority to rely on "collective understanding." Although some authors of these works were lay people (some court affiliated, some not), more often than not their exact provenance is unknown, making any attempt to analogize their production with the *karaṇam* milieu unwarranted. There are stylistic and thematic discrepancies as well: while *karaṇam* works employ smooth, syntactically complex prose with no breaks between sentences, later Sinhala prose works remained under the influence of Pali, with short abrupt sentences and few embellishments.

[48] Boundary books, like other contemporary Sinhala manuscripts, must be classified on the basis of their content rather than their titles. Local histories, boundary books, and documents with originally court sanctioned purposes circulated widely from the late medieval period, often under misleading names. The *Vanni Kaḍayim Pota* ("Book on the Boundaries of the Vanni Region," most likely a later Kandyan period document owing to the nature of its content and an apparent Christian allusion to "the Kingdom of Heaven" (*divya lōkayaṭa rājadhāni*, p.85)), for instance, gives a nod to the "boundary" genre with its introductory sentence, before going on to narrate key events in the history of island ending with an account of the settlement of the Vanni. It is better classified as a *vitti pota*. Indeed this text appears in other mss. recensions under other titles, none of which contain the word "*kaḍayim*" (see de Zilva Wickremasinghe, *Catalogue of Sinhalese Manuscripts*, 74-80). The re-titling of various documents as *kaḍayim pot* has led to some confusion with respect to their function, as in the case of Abeyawardana's (1999) assessment that boundary books bore legal authority in the late medieval and early modern periods. Following a discussion of the *Mātalē Kaḍaim*, Abeyawardana asserts: "*Kaḍaim* books were treated as state documents, and they were from early times in the custody and maintenance of *lēkam-gey-ättan* (Functionaries of the Secretariat). It further reveals that the *Lēkam-miṭiya*, a necessary adjunct to normal administration from the tenth century onwards, and the *kaḍaim* (boundary book) were both intrinsically related" (*Boundary Divisions*, 9; see also 16 and 48). While this may be true in the case of the *Mātalē Kaḍaim*, it is an overgeneralization of *kaḍayim* books in general. The standard *kaḍayim* exhibits little potential for practical application in administrative governance, often exhibiting minimal empirical precision in its geographical descriptions. The *Mātalē Kaḍaim* is restricted to a set of historical events taking place over a matter of a few years and to the boundaries of a single feudatory. Indeed some manuscripts refer to the work as a *lēkam-mitiya*, not a *kaḍayim* (*Boundary Divisions*, 24). The text itself makes reference to the *actual* legal document granting the Handagala Disāva (an administrative district south of Trincomalee) to the baron who breached the Portuguese fort. The *Mātalē Kaḍaim* states that the *sannas* (grant document, deed of title) was prepared by a notary (*sannas-rāla*) of the court of Rājasiṅha II and read aloud "at an assembly of chieftains gathered under the shade of the *bō* tree" (p.214).

style and content of the *kaḍayim* genre, featuring elaborate descriptions of the 13th-14th century capitals of the central dry zone. These works too involve detailed descriptions of physical landmarks and distances between them, along with tallies of buildings, groves, fields, temples and other landmarks. A precedent for the genre is also found in the first and second installments of the *Mahāvaṃsa,* with their extensive description of terrain of military significance (names of villages and their proximities, rivers and their fords) in connection with the military exploits of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi and Parākramabāhu I.[49]

The "standard *kaḍayim*" is my designation for the most widely known boundary book with the largest number of extant manuscripts. The text exists under various titles and with varying degrees of modification, though it is clear that these have proliferated from a single source. Print editions appear as the *Srī Laṃkādvīpayē Kaḍayim*[50], the *Meraṭa Kaḍayim Pota* and the *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya*[51] (the significance of the later title will be discussed in the following chapter). The bulk of the standard *kaḍayim* is devoted to a description of the twenty-eight districts

[49] Pali chronicles show some concern for specifically monastic cadastral issues as well, notably the boundary (*sīmā*) of the "primordial Mahāvihāra" drawn with a golden plough at Anurādhapura in the *Dpv*, in some recensions of the *Mhv*, and in the 10th century *Mahābodhivaṃsa* (see Walters, "Mahāsena and the Mahāvihāra," 334f.). Sinhala *sandeśa* poems of the 14th and 15th centuries are also intimately concerned with the geography of the island, naming cities, towns, rivers and geographically significant locations (man-made and natural).

[50] Edited and translated by H.A.P. Abeyawardana in his *Boundary Divisions of Medieval Sri Lanka*. He lists twelve manuscripts as sources. The *SLK* by popular tradition is attributed to one Giratalane Unnanse (Kulasuriya, "The Minor Chronicles," 23).

[51] Both edited by Gananath Obeyesekere and Ananda Tissa Kumara in *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya saha Upat Kathā.*

(*raṭa*-s[52]) of the Māyā Raṭa (central and southwestern Sri Lanka).[53] This text describes man-made boundary markers (*kaḍayim*) along with natural features and topography of the island. The physical descriptions of various towns and districts are supplemented with local lore and toponymic etymologies (*nirukti*-s[54]) explaining their histories, along with remarks on the dispositions of the inhabitants. Given its degree of specificity, the standard *kaḍayim*'s lists of villages, and the number of wells and paddy fields in each, may have been culled from legal documents—land-tenure roles or *lekam miṭi*.[55] It is unlikely that the standard *kaḍayim* itself was used directly for cadastral purposes, though its broad circulation in monastic collections suggests that it was viewed as a useful reference work for Sinhala Buddhists, something like a short encyclopedia on the island's geography and places of historical interest.

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[52] The term *raṭa* (Pali: *raṭṭha*, Skt: *rāṣṭra*) appears in several senses in the boundary books. Sri Lanka is divided into three *raṭa*-s, each of which are subdivided further. *Raṭa* also appears in the even more local sense of "village" (see *SLK*, 167 and 203). This telescoping polysemy parallels Tamil *ūr* and French *pays.*

[53] Forty-two (RRv, 48; MKP, 64) or forty-three (SLK, 202) additional divisions are listed for the northern and southern portions of the island (Pihiṭi and Ruhuṇu Raṭas). Māyā Raṭa makes up along with Pihiṭi and Ruhuṇu (Rohaṇa) Raṭa-s the traditional three-fold geographical division of Sri Lanka (together constituting the island as the *Tri Siṃhaḷa*). The term is first attested in an inscription of Niśśaṅka Malla (r. 1187-96) (de Zilva Wickremasinghe, "Galpota Slab-Inscription" [*EZ* II no.17], §B line 8). 'Tisīhala' first appears in the 14th century update of the *Mhv* (*Cv* 81.46), where also the terms 'Rājaraṭṭha,' 'Māyāraṭṭha' and 'Dakkhiṇadesa,' used to describe the two main political-geographical divisions of the island, are replaced by 'Māyāraṭṭha' and 'Patiṭṭharaṭṭha' (*Cv* 81.15, n.4). By the 15th century these divisions no longer corresponded to any actual domains of political control, adding to the evidence that the standard *kaḍayim* is concerned principally to tell a story of the island's imagined past than to document geographical realia.

[54] *Nirukti*-s, commonly glossed as "folk etymologies," explain the derivation of words (in the case of the *kaḍayim*, proper names) in creative ways, often on the basis of homophony. *Nirukti*-s tend to be unsubstantiated from the point of view of modern historical linguistics.

[55] Obeyesekere, "Boundary Books and Immigration Myths," 24.

The standard *kaḍayim* is Buddhist in orientation throughout—naming temples, Bodhi trees and other sites of devotional significance, and remarking on the degree of piety of the residences of various towns and districts. The fact that the text says a great deal about the coastal southwest (in addition to Kurunāgala and the central highlands), indicates that it was composed at some point after power had shifted from Gampola to this region. Considering the geographical distribution of the divisions outlined in the work (see Table 1), along with the nature of its content in comparison with other *kaḍayim* books[56], the standard *kaḍayim* seems to have developed out of the mid-14th century, *Kurunāgala Vistaraya*[57], taking its final form in the late 15th century (at Kōṭṭe) or early 16th century (at Kandy). Variations between recensions indicate that the text was recopied and modified locally over the course of the following several centuries.[58]

[56] In contrast to the standard *kaḍayim*, the 17th c. *Tri Siṃhalē Kaḍaim* lists the cities and *raṭa*-s of the Māyā Raṭa in a contemporary and politically relevant way (including the cities (*nuvara*) of Sītāvaka, Jayavardhana-Kōtte and the *raṭa*-s of the four, seven and nine Kōraḷē-s, and Sabaragamuva and Kalutoṭa Disāva. In additional contrast to the *Tri Siṃhalē Kaḍaim* which mentions Portuguese fortifications, the standard *kaḍayim* makes no reference to European presence on the island.

[57] The short prose work names the three *raṭa*-s which make up the "Tri Siṃhala" ("with Kurunāgala at the center of these divisions) along with a list of twenty-six cities and principalities of central and southwestern Sri Lanka, accompanied with explanations for the origins of their names (Modder, "Kurunegala Vistaraya," 48-51). With its elaborate description of Kurunāgala and reference to "Alakeśvara Mudiyānse," the *Kurunāgala Vistaraya* must have been written some time nearly before or after the seat of Sinhala political power shifted to Gampola in c. 1346.

[58] Obeyesekere (2004) speculates that the archeological and cartographic emphasis of the standard *kaḍayim* was inspired by the Portuguese. He has since revised his opinion, hypothesizing that *kaḍayim* works emerged from the prolific court of Parākramabāhu VI at Kōṭṭe (personal communication, November 14, 2014).

At least some redactors of the standard *kaḍayim* viewed the text as a useful historical reference. Two copyists indicate at the conclusion of their versions of the work that it contains "an approximation of what appears in the *maha-vaṅśaya* and the *suḷu-vaṅśaya.*"[59] This claim is significant in light of the text's picture of the earliest history of the island, which represents a significant break from Pali and Sinhala precedent. The standard *kaḍayim* begins with a short invocation to the Buddha, followed immediately by an account of the birth of Rāvaṇa: "The four *yuga*-s are those of Kretā, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. In this *yuga* which is one among those four, Pulāsti along with the Asura Kanya gave birth to the king named Rāvaṇa."[60] The text continues with an account of the rule of Rāvaṇa, during the course of which:

> he deviated from the law of kings (*rājadharma*)—without protecting the religious orders, without paying respects to gods, the Buddha, monks or Brahmins – he instead levied taxes on them, demanding something even from recluses and the Pacceka Buddhas (*pasē budun*) living at the top of Nandamūla Mountain. Thus he established one hundred kingdoms in Lanka, subordinated the Indian rulers, imprisoned the rulers of the *dēva*-world, *asura*-world, *garuḍa*-world, [and] *nāga*-world and levied tributes

[59] *mohu hamagē vena venama maha vaṅśayen saha suḷu vaṅśayen balā data yutu rāvaṇā rājāvaliya* (*RRv*, 48). The same claim is made in the final sentence of the *MKP* (p.64). Abeyawardana's edition of the *SLK* does not include such a statement, though it does refer readers to the "*mahāvaṃsa* and *cūlavaṃsa*" for details of the 164 kings of ancient times (p.202). The *Pūjāvaliya* classifies the kings of Laṅkā from Vijaya to Mahāsena (r. late 3rd – early 4th c.) as belonging to the "*mahāvaṃsa*," with all those who followed as belonging to the "*cūlavaṃsa*" (this was Geiger's justification for editing the later portion of the *Mahāvaṃsa* as the "*Cūlavaṃsa*"). Redactors of the standard *kaḍayim* may be invoking this taxonomy, or the "*maha-vaṅśaya*" and "*suḷu-vaṅśaya*" could simply indicate the "greater" and "lesser" records of the Pali chronicles and Sinhala historical sources, respectively. Modern Sri Lankan literary scholars categorize indigenous Buddhist works as either *mahā sāhitya* (notable literature) or *cūla sāhitya* (lesser literature) (Obeyesekere and Tissa Kumāra, *Vanni Upata*, 9).

[60] *SLK*, 155; *RRv*, 33; *MKP*, 49. All three texts agree in their phonetic rendering of "*rāvaṇā*," in keeping with a curious but widespread middle period Sinhala orthographic choice.

> from them. He captured the kingly planets of moon and sun and forced them to serve him by shedding their light over his city.[61]

A synopsis of the *Rāmāyaṇa* follows (Rāvaṇa abducts Sīta, that Prince Rāma retrieves her, and Rāvaṇa is slain), after which "half of the city and half of the kingdom was flooded out by the sea. What was left thereafter was given by Rāma to the custody of Vibhīṣaṇa."[62] The text displaces the *Rāmāyaṇa* into the distant past, before the time of first Buddha of this world-age (there have been four Buddhas in this *kalpa* so far, including Gotama, the most recent).[63]

The standard *kaḍayim* in this way breaches the historical singularity of the *Mahāvaṃsa*: the history of Sri Lanka does not begin with the visitation of the Buddha (not even with the visits of past Buddhas), nor does kingship begin with Vijaya. The standard *kaḍayim* is not alone among Sinhala historiographies in its extension of the island's history. The *Rājāvaliya* and related texts have it that Rāvaṇa reigned 1844 years before the time of the Buddha.[64]

The standard *kaḍayim* and *Rājāvaliya*-s also add a detail unknown elsewhere in the *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition. The standard *kaḍayim* explains that because of the demon king's wickedness, after his demise, a massive flood engulfed the island, reaching all the way to Badulla and Kandy. The *Rājāvaliya* tallies the extent of the

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[61] *SLK*, 191; *RRv*, 33.

[62] *SLK*, 191; *RRv*, 33.

[63] *SLK*, 191; *RRv*, 33. This dating is confirmed in the text's *nirukti* of "Dambadeṇi-raṭa," "so called because in a previous age it was bounded by a *damba* tree as in India, and during Rāvanā's time mango plants were established; the name remained unchanged during the ages of the Buddhas Kakusanda, Kōnāgama, Kāśyapa and Gautama" (*SLK*, 197; *RRv*, 42).

[64] The *Buddharājāvaliya* records that Vijaya arrived in Laṅkā 1844 years after the conclusion of Rāvaṇa's war (Kulasuriya, "The Minor Chronicles," 25).

destruction, noting that a major portion of the island was eroded when the flood receded, with "Rāvaṇa's fortress, twenty-five palaces, and 400,000 streets all overwhelmed by the sea."[65] We learn furthermore that Rāvaṇa's ancient capital in fact lay to the north of the present shores of the island, between Mannār (in northwestern Sri Lanka) and Tuttukuḍiya (on the southern tip of India).[66]

§2.4 TEMPORALITY AND PURĀṆIC IMAGERY IN LATER SINHALA HISTORIOGRAPHY

There are several avenues of interpretation open in considering this single aspect of the expanded scope of the island's ancient past in the standard *kaḍayim* and *Rājāvaliya*-s. Placing Rāvaṇa's capital city somewhere between Sri Lanka and the subcontinent may have been an attempt to hedge between the location of Rāvaṇa's "Laṅkā" as Sri Lanka itself, and the traditional, nondescript representation of "Laṅkāpura" (situated at the peak of Trikuṭa Mountain, somewhere in the southern sea) in Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* literature.[67] The incident of the flood washing away a large portion of ancient Laṅkā also allowed Sinhala writers to expand the ancient geography of the island beyond its current size.

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[65] Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 21. There is no reference to such an event in Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, though there is mention of a coming global flood, followed by the release of subterranean water at which time Rāma will dry up the waters of the ocean (Shastri, *The Ramayana, vol. III*, 51ff. [*Yuddha Kāṇḍa*, sarga 22]).

[66] Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 21, 25f.; *Vanni Rājāvaliya*, 37. The text also specifies that this occurred during Dvāpara Yuga, contradicting the assertion of the standard *kaḍayim* that Rāvaṇa lived during the present (Kali) Yuga.

[67] See chapter 3 for further information on the location of "Laṅkāpura" in the Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* tradition. The standard *kaḍayim* says that Ravana's Laṅkāpura was "enclosed in seven continents" or "seven iron gates" somewhere north of the island of Sri Lanka, where the ocean was drained for fifty-eight yojanas (290 miles) at the time "due to the power of the gods" (*SLK*, 156, 192; *RRv*, 34).

The first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* contains an account of a substantial flood that serves as the basis for later Sinhala commentary suturing Hindu epic and purāṇic elements into the island's history. The story concerns Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's callous grandfather, King Tissa of Kalyāṇī (Kelaniya), who cruelly put to death an agent of his younger brother (the former was disguised as a Bhikkhu in order to surreptitiously deliver a love letter to the queen). Enraged at the injustice of the execution, the sea-gods caused the ocean to overflow the land, prompting Tissa to dispatch his daughter, Dēvī, alone in a golden vessel into the sea, in order to propitiate them. (Dēvī subsequently comes ashore at Dondra in the southern kingdom of Rohaṇa, marries King Kākavaṇṇa, and begets Duṭṭhagāmaṇi).[68]

Later Sinhala accounts (from the 15th century onwards) add that the flood induced by Tissa's misdeed washed away a substantial portion of the island, reprising the retribution of the sea-gods following Rāvaṇa's demise. According to the *Vanni Rājāvaliya* (a modified version of the standard *Rājāvaliya*), even more of the eastern portion of the island was swept away when Araggat Deviyo (tutelary deity of the Kelaniya River) was enraged by the king's Bhikkhu-cide. As he sank down into the Kalakirī Sea:

> Because of the unrighteousness of King Kälaṇitissa, a lakh of villages at Kälaṇiya, nine hundred seaports, four hundred and seventy fishing towns, twelve pearl diving towns and sixteen other towns belonging to Laṅkā were swallowed by the sea. Of the harbors, only Mannāra and Kaḍupiṭi Mādampē remained.[69]

[68] *Mhv* 22.13-22.

[69] *VRv*, 37.

The text explains that Kelaniya was further inland from the sea at that time. Historical works of the period emphasize that the contours of the island were of an altogether different proportion before King Tissa's sin: the *Rājāvaliya* reveals that "eleven-twelfths of Sri Lanka were submerged by the sea."[70] The *Lakvidiya*, a short Kandyan period Sinhala work on the origins of occupational caste and the administrative divisions of the island, records more precise and even greater dimensions of loss:

> This Sri Lanka, first inhabited by *yakkha*-s and then by human beings during the time of the Buddha Gautama, was at that time seven hundred *yojana*-s in circumference. Then, during the days of Kälaṇitissa, because the king caused the death of an innocent Thēra by putting him in a cauldron of boiling oil, the grief stricken gods angrily submerged the king's territory with the waves of the ocean in order to destroy the world using their divine power. At that time, nine islands surrounding Laṅkā, twenty-nine districts, 35,504 villages together with great seaports, tanks, fields, gem mines, numerous living beings (legless, two-legged, four-legged, many-legged), structures such as *cētiya*-s, shrine rooms and monastic residences were all washed into the sea. Kälaṇiya, which was formerly seven hundred *gāvutas* away from the sea, now is at a distance of only one.[71]

The calculation runs that Sri Lanka extended 2100 miles further west into the ocean than it presently does.

The notion of an antediluvian Laṅkā much larger than its current size echoes a recurring theme in South Indian Tamil literature. Nakkīrar's commentary on the *Iṟaiyaṇār Akapporuḷ* contains the widely known account of the "three *caṅkam*-s" established by ancient Pāṇḍyan kings. The literary academies at Maturai, Kapāṭapuram and "Upper Maturai," stood for 4400, 3700 and 1850 years,

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[70] Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 26.

[71] Adapted from Abeyawardana's translation (*Boundary Divisions*, 172, 208).

respectively, between the intervals of which each was lost by flooding from the sea. Aṭiyārkkunallār in his commentary on the *Cilappatikāram*, elaborates, explaining that forty-nine districts (*nāṭu*-s) of the Pāṇḍyan country were swallowed up over the course of these events, from the Paṉṟuḷi River to the Kumari (meaning that the kingdom extended a great deal farther south into the ocean than its current limit at Cape Comorin). The *Maṇimēkalai* (c. 6th century) recalls the destruction of the port city of Pūkar by a massive deluge.[72] Nearly every Tamil *tala-purāṇam* records that the temple with which it is associated survived the most recent *pralaya* – the world-flood inaugurating each "age of Manu."[73]

By the early 20th century, the flood-myth also circulated in relation to Rāvaṇa, when some Indian Tamils identified the demon-king as having been a historical ruler of southern India. This narrative, clearly derived from the imagery of the lost "*caṅkam*-s of Maturai," placed Rāvaṇa's Laṅkāpura in Tamil Nadu, then the center of a much more expansive Indian subcontinent, extending far south, east and west into the Indian ocean.[74]

The inclusion of Rāvaṇa's reign as a part of Sri Lanka's past signals a significant change in attitude among later Sinhala Buddhists. The *terminus post quem* of the recorded history of the island was no longer the arrival of Vijaya and the

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[72] Though a village by that name still exists at the mouth of the Kaveri River.

[73] David Shulman argues that these recollections of a primordial deluge in South India issue possibly from a shared source, and participate in an archetypal theme of "renewed creation which follows upon the deluge" ("Tamil Flood-Myths," 10f.).

[74] See Purnalingam Pillai, *Ravana the Great*, p.2 and associated map; also Ramaswamy (2004).

death of the Buddha. Buddhist history was further decentered in later Sinhala historical works by the inclusion of Hindu purāṇic cosmology and temporality, presented either together with or at the expense of the "incalculable past" narrativized in terms of the twenty-three Buddhas preceding Gotama.

In addition to the historical decentering of Buddhism, a geographical decentering of Sri Lanka is observed in later Sinhala historical works as well.[75] The *Rājāvaliya* opens with a verbal map of the world, one among many such amid "the endless and boundless universe." From Mt. Meru the reader is taken across the various landmarks of Jambudvīpa, before being given a detailed description of the Bodhimaṇḍala, the vicinity in which the Buddha Gotama was enlightened in Mayadesa (the central part of the continent). This Meru-centric geography is not unique to the *Rājāvaliya* either, but became standard in historical works of the period.[76] Sri Lanka is decentered in the *Vanni Rājāvaliya's* historical prolegomena—world geography is framed at the outset with standard imagery from the Hindu

[75] "World systems" (*cakravāla*-s) are mentioned often in late medieval preaching texts, where they are employed to emphasize the immensity of the impact of Buddhas on beings throughout the universe. This application of cosmology follows that of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, where a description of the makeup of "one world-sphere" (*ekaṃ cakkavālaṃ*) along with the geography of Jambudvīpa is embedded in a discussion of the scope of the Buddha's omniscience (*Visuddhimagga*, 7.36-44; see additional references to "Sineru" in the index to Ñāṇamoli's translation). The 12th or 13th century *Daham Saraṇa* makes use of purāṇic characters (including Brahmas, the gods of the sun and moon, fish kings, and great Iśvaras) to reinforce the point that even immensly powerful beings remain mortal and subject to less fortuitous rebirth: "Once those great fish kings, who were like the great fish Ananda, played water games in the ocean 84,000 yojanas deep with a body 1,000 yojanas in size. Later they were reborn [as tiny water creatures], living only on account of some rain drops that had falled in a the puddle of a hoof print. Then they were included among those minute creatures who would die, dried up along with that water—thus [the former fish kings] became perceivers of great suffering" (*Daham Saraṇa*, 9).

[76] On cosmology in the *Buddharājāvaliya*, see Kulasuriya, "The Minor Chronicles," 25.

Purāṇas: Mt. Meru and its peaks are to the north of the continent of Jambudvīpa, representing the center of the world on the classical Indian conception.

Cosmogony, a theme hitherto poorly represented in Pali and Sinhala Buddhist historical works, is the narrative point of departure for the *Vanni Rājāvaliya* and other works of the period. After opening with a promise to narrate the lineage of Buddhist kings beginning with Mahāsammata (whose holy splendor is likened to that of Mahā Brahmā), the *Vanni Rājāvaliya* describes the cataclysmic flood and conflagration (*mahāpralaya*) which inaugurates the present *kalpa*:

> When all at once the hundred lakhs of lakhs of world systems were first brought into being during this Mahābadra Kalpa, the highest portion of the sky having appeared, the great earth, Mt. Meru and the rest were on fire, emerging like a drum with no perforations—because of the great wealth of merit of all beings, the great cloud began to rain.[77]

The immensity of the ensuing flood is described, following the recession of which:

> The summit of the atmosphere was a height of 920,000 yojanas. From that summit, the water-earth stood at height of 480,000 yojanas. From there, the rock earth stood at a height of 120,000 yojanas. Below that, the infertile (*bol*) earth stood at a height of 240,000 yojanas. At that time, the ocean was deep. The three-peaked and seven-peaked Merus were located in their correct places, and the solid earth was established. Thus, Mt. Meru and the four great continents came into existence.[78]

The cosmic flood described is the *mahāpralaya* associated with the birth of a new *kalpa* in Hindu purānic cosmology. In keeping with Buddhist sensibilities, no theistic intervention is present during the renewal of the earth at the beginning of

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[77] *VRv*, 13.

[78] *VRv*, 13f.

the world age—it is merely the collective merit (*pin*, Skt: *pūṇya*) of all living beings which causes the deluge that extinguishes the world-destroying conflagration, allowing the earth to take form.

On the model of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*[79], the *Vanni Rājāvaliya* merges the purāṇic renewal of the world with the account of the origin of humankind given in the *Aggañña Sutta*:

> At that time the hundred lakhs of lakhs of world systems were one mass of darkness, like a great, dark hell. Then the Brahmas descended to the human world, making a single lamp from the light of their very own bodies, experiencing happiness and joy, walking on the sky. At that time, after the rain throughout the *keli* of lakhs of world systems, the earth became sweet to the taste. One of the Brahmins stirred the soil of the earth as if it were honey, put it to his mouth, and realized that it was very sweet. Happily he began to eat the soil, and after that the others started to taste it too. They remained exactly this way, eating the soil for 60,000 years.[80]

As in the original Pali version (the *Aggañña Sutta*), the once luminous, carefree and immortal beings become greedy for successively more difficult foods to obtain, leading to the need for labor, sexual differentiation, violence, and, ultimately, competent government to regulate the complexities of human affairs.

The *Vanni Rājāvaliya* and the standard *kaḍayim* (recall that the four standard Hindu *yuga*-s are invoked in the opening portion of this text in relation to Rāvaṇa's reign) are not unique among late medieval/early modern Sinhala works. Indeed,

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[79] The *Vanni Rājāvaliya's* description of the flood preceding the reconstitution of the world (p.13) follows closely (though not exactly) Buddhaghosa's description at *Visuddhimagga* 8.42.

[80] *VRv*, 14.

the synthesis of purāṇic and Pali Buddhist imagery became the status quo from this period onwards.[81]

Sinhala *sandeśa* poems associated with the court of Parākramabāhu VI (the *Haṃsa*, *Sälaḷihiṇi*, *Girā*, and *Kōkila Sandeśaya*-s) as well as the *Pärakumbā Sirita* ("The Acts of King Parākramabāhu") integrate purāṇic imagery on an unprecedented scale, invoking Mt. Meru, Mt. Kailāśa, Mt. Mandāra and the churning of the cosmic ocean, and the serpent Ananta Śeṣa to furnish similes regarding the majesty of Buddhist and Hindu temples, royal palaces and cities. The *Pärakumbā Sirita* makes frequent use of purāṇic imagery to eulogize Parākrambāhu VI, as in the following verse:

> It is said that in considering the loft fame of this king,
> the full moon is a vessel of milk,
> the milky ocean is a long palanquin,
> the Lord of Serpents (Ananta Śeṣa) is an anklet,
> the mountain of Īśvara is a stone toy,
> the divine elephant is a small vehicle,
> the sky river is a garland,
> and the cluster of stars is a pearl string.[82]

Of numerous such examples, one given the *Sälaḷihiṇi Sandeśa's* (c. 1450 CE) description of the image house at the Kelaniya Temple is particularly apposite, since it includes a reference to the need for protection of the island from a long-ago deluge:

> Worship the lotus-like holy feet of the Stone Statue
> Radiant in the color of the sea,

[81] See for instance R. Spence Hardy's mid-19th c. reconstruction of Sri Lankan Buddhist cosmology, drawn from a translation of the *Sūryōdgama-sūtra-sannē* (*Manual of Budhism* [sic], 1-19, 28-36).

[82] v. 63, adapted from Wickremesinghe's translation.

Which Lord Sakra created to protect the people
  When in the past the sea submerged the land[83]

Behold, if you can, O friend,
  The effulgent gems of the five storied mansion
From where Thera Maliyadeva preached
  And saved sixty *bhikkhus* from drowning
In the sea of *samsāra*[84]

In the Circular Relic-House, worship the stupa
  Which shines like the bubbles that rose
When Viṣṇu stirred up the sea with Mount Mandara,
  Spreading its brilliance
In all directions, like the moon.[85]

Here, in addition to the invocation of the purāṇic motif of the churning of the primordial ocean, Śakra takes on the role of a guardian figure during an ancient cataclysm, on analogy with Viṣṇu in his fish incarnation.[86] The connection is not an unnatural one, as Śakra is the patron deity of the island according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, entrusted with its welfare by the Buddha during his final visit there.

At a general level this phenomenon reveals a greater permissiveness with respect to the utilization of Hindu Sanskritic imagery than was previously exhibited by Sri Lankan Buddhist authors (a topic that receives fuller treatment in chapter 6.1). From the point of view of the present discussion, we must note that later Sinhala historiographies and poetry fashioned a bricolage of Buddhist and Hindu

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[83] *pera dala nidudiyakaṅda raṭabimi galata* (K.W. de A. Wijesinghe's edition).

[84] Buddhaghosa's *Papañca Sūdanī* (ii.1034f.) relates the episode of Maliyadeva preaching the *Cha Chakka Sutta* at Lohāpāsāda, causing sixty monks in attendance to attain enlightenment. This miraculous act of ministry he repeated at a number of other vihāra-s throughout the island.

[85] Adapted from Jayasuriya, *Säḷalihiṇi Sandeśa*, vv. 61-63.

[86] Or perhaps Śiva too in his role as a protector of humans and Devas. Obeyesekere remarks on the tendency for Śakra to absorb aspects of Śiva in Sinhala mythology (*Cult*, 100).

cosmogenic themes, topoi and deities, creating a vision of the island's past that was substantially expanded from that of the *Mahāvaṃsa.* The following section explores the fusion of Mahāsammata—a key dynastic figure in the Pali chronicle tradition—with Manu Vaivasvata—a key dynastic figure in the Hindu epics and Purāṇas.

§2.5 ENDURING AND CHANGING IDEALS OF BUDDHIST KINGSHIP

The *Rājāvaliya*-s adhere to the dynastic chronology of the early Pali chronicles in making Mahāsammata the first human king, in accordance with the *Aggañña Sutta*. The novelty of the *Rājāvaliya*-s comes in situating Mahāsammata's epoch in explicit relation to Hindu cosmology:

> From the birth of Brahma up to the *Antaḥ-kalpa* it was Mahāsammata who reigned in the world. The virtuous prince, born on the day that the sun appeared with intention of giving light to the world, to dispel darkness and illuminate the four continents, to enable the five Omniscient Ones (the five Buddhas of this *kalpa*) to attain Buddhahood and confer the bliss of Nirvāna to beings who undergo suffering in hell, that prince […] known as Mahāsammata, elected by consensus of the people, reigned in the world.[87]

In Sri Lanka, as with elsewhere in the Pali Buddhist world, Mahāsammata endures to the present as a cornerstone of historical imagination. As the *ur*-king of Pali and Sinhala historical writing, he would remain indispensible to claims of dynastic succession as well as politico-historical consciousness more broadly.

Jonathan Walters points out that the purāṇic implications of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* were amplified in a (most likely 9th century) commentary on the latter, the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* ("An illumination of the meaning of the Vaṃsa-text"). The text asserts, unprecedentedly, that several of the rulers following in Mahāsammata's

[87] Adapted from Suraweera's translation (*Rājāvaliya*, 4).

lineage (i.e. in the *mahārāja vaṃsa*) *were themselves* past incarnations of the Buddha Gotama.[88]

The *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* introduce another significant personage in the Hindu purāṇas – one who in subsequent chronicles and inscriptional discourse would become a central point of reference in the genealogy of real-life Lankan rulers. "Okkāka" (Skt: Ikṣvāku) appears on both the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa's* lists of the kings of this *kappa*, one among the ancient rulers of Bārāṇasī (eleven generations before the first of the 82,000 kings of Kapilavatthu).[89] While Okkāka/Ikṣvāku is simply one name on a list of many in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*, he is significant in the Hindu epic and purāṇic tradition as the immediate son of Manu. In addition to this distinction, Ikṣvāku in Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* is the founder of Daśaratha and Rāma's royal lineage.[90] According to

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[88] Walters, "Buddhist History," 130, citing *VAP* 1.120-24. This move brings the role of the Buddha closer to that of Viṣṇu as portrayed in Sanskrit purāṇas and epics, manifesting himself as an earthly king in order to intervene in an episode of divine or human discontent (on Manu as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, see Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 180). Lankan Buddhist rulers of the period took to heart the claim that they were themselves descended from the Śākyan clan and therefore (by the logic of the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*) possibly Bodhisattvas themselves. The attitude can be viewed on analogy with contemporary north Indian kings declaring themselves to be personal avatars of Viṣṇu (the so-called "Devarāja cult"). An inscription commissioned by King Mahinda IV (fl. 963/4-972) refers to the kings as "the pinnacle of the Śākya race," affirming furthermore that none but future Buddhas will become kings of prosperous Laṅkā (Walters, "Buddhist History," 140; *EZ* I no.9 and *EZ* II no.17). The Galpota slab inscription of Niśśaṅka Malla (r. 1187-96) declares: "Though kings appear in human form, they are human divinities (*nara-dēvatā*) and must, therefore, be worshipped as gods. The appearance of an impartial king should be welcomed as the appearance of a Buddha" (de Zilva Wickremasinghe, *EZ* II no.17, p.121). Another of his inscriptions likens him to "a Bodhisatta king" (de Zilva Wickremasinghe, "Prīti-Dānaka-Maṇḍapa Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* II no.29], 176).

[89] *Dpv* 3.41; *Mhv* 2.24.

[90] Goldman, *Rāmāyaṇa: Book One*, 225-27 [*Bāla Kāṇḍa* 46.10-19].

Sanskrit purāṇas and epics, Manu Vaivasvata is the arché-king of the present *manvantara* (the seventh of fourteen such epochs which together constitute the current *kalpa*). Like the six Manus before him, Manu Vaivasvata along with his consorts are the sole survivors of the cataclysmic flood (*pralaya*) bridging successive *manvantara*-s. Manu is thus not only the first king of this world epoch, but also the progenitor of humankind.[91]

Manu's name does not appear in the dynastic successions of either of the two Pali chronicles, with "Okkāka" appearing a number of generations onwards on the list of world rulers descended from Mahāsammata (perhaps, Jonathan Walters suggests, in an attempt to liken the late 3rd century Lankan dynasty genealogically to the contemporary rulers of Nāgārjunikoṇḍa).[92] Later on, beginning in the 9th century, Walters notes that the claim to have been "descended from Ikṣvāku" became an almost obligatory component of Sinhala royal inscriptional discourse (Ikṣvāku being the preferred Sinhala rendering of the name).[93] I would here like to supplement Walters' argument and carry it further forward in time, arguing that

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[91] No claim is made that Mahāsammata was the progenitor of humankind by the *Aggañña Sutta* or by the Pali chronicles.

[92] In addition to portraying the "chain of kings" of Sri Lanka as descendants of the Buddha's royal family (though not the Buddha himself), Walters explains that the *Dpv* aimed "to identify the lineage of the Sri Lankan kings *(rājavaṃsa)* as of Okkāka/Iksvaku descent. It represents Ikṣvāku, founder of that line, as the first king of the Sakya branch at Kapilavatthu of the Solar dynasty of Kosala (eastern Uttar Pradesh) at Ayodhyā, through Amitodana, younger brother of the Buddha's own father (*Dpv* 10.l-9.) The text thus portrayed the Sri Lankan kings as the true heirs to the Ikṣvāku legacy, a claim that the Ikṣvākus of Andhra had earlier staked out for their imperial kingdom in which, at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, Sri Lankan Buddhists had received their first recorded recognition" ("Buddhist History," 117f.).

[93] The *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* lowered standards with respect to claiming descent from the Śākyans as well, with the concession that royal lines other than those of first millennium Anuradhapura could too trace their heritage to Okkāka (Walters, "Buddhist History," 129).

dynastic associations with Ikṣvāku *and* Mahāsammata came to converge and take on new significance in order to imply (or, often also, claim explicitly) that Lankan Buddhist kings were also descended from Manu, the arché-king of the Hindu purāṇic and epic tradition. Indeed other early Pali sources assert that Mahāsammata is the name given in the sacred books for Manu[94], with subsequent Southeast Asian tradition making Mahāsammata the direct recipient of Manu's law codes.[95]

So far as I have discovered, the first explicit dynastic collocation of a Lankan regent with Manu appears in a copper-plate land grant (*sannas patra*) from the 26th year of the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu V (1386 CE). In accordance with what had been standard inscriptional discourse for several centuries by that point, the king is titled "the Wheel-Turner, Siri Saṅga Bō Śrī Bhuvaneka Bāhu, learned master of all literary arts, chief of the nine gems, Lord of the Tri Sinhala." The author of the document

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[94] In the commentary on the *Vimānavatthu*, Mahāsammata is identified as Manu, who "preceded all other men" and belonged to the first *kalpa* (*paṭhamakappiko*). He functioned as "a father to living beings" (*sattānam pituṭṭhāniyo*) (*Paramattha-dīpanī* IV, p.19; Manu "is known in the [Buddhist] tradition (*sāsane*) as "Mahāsammata"," the text clarifies).

[95] Pali and Burmese *dhammasattha* law books composed by Mon monks from the Pagan period onwards make Mahāsammata the recipient of the archetypal law book discovered by the Rishi Manu, who travelled to the walls of the universe in order to obtain it. The *dhammasatthas* are modeled on and in dialogue with the *Manu Smṛti* in a number of respects (Hooker, "Law Texts of Southeast Asia," 201-6; Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, 266-72). Stanley Tambiah offers this helpful clarification: "One critical illustration is provided by the Mon-Pagan and Thai legal codes, which, though calling themselves *dharmasastras (dhammasattham, thammasat),* actually attributed the establishment of their legal codes to the first king Mahasammata, under whose benevolent aegis a brahman called Manu delivers the substantive legal code. In this formulation we see that the personages opposed on the Indian stage – Manu (Brahmanical) and Mahasammata (Buddhist) – are here brought together, Manu being made an agent of the first Buddhist king. Incidentally, this also provides a precedent for Brahmans serving in Southeast Asian Buddhist courts as pundits, judges and interpreters of law" ("King Mahāsammata," 116).

(one "Sanhas Tiruvarahan Perumāḷ") expounds the epithet in a unique way, however, declaring that Bhuvanekabāhu was furthermore "descended from the pure race (*pavitra gōtra*) of Sumitra, born of the solar race that came from the age of Mahāsammata, himself know as the illustrious Vaivasvata Manu."[96] This locution – identifying Mahāsammata with Vaivasvata Manu and linking the donor king to his dynasty – appeared commonly on grant documents and inscriptions for kings of Gampola and Kōṭṭe following over the two centuries.[97]

An even more complete integration of Lankan Buddhist monarchy into the standard framework of Hindu Purāṇic dynastic succession appears in the literature associated with Parākramabāhu VI (r. c. 1410-67). The *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya*, a chronicle of the kings of Kōṭṭe kings from Alakeśvara III to c. 1557 (the reign of Rājasinha I), identifies Parākramabāhu VI as a literal descendent of Manu (in the manner of the earlier *praśasti*-s of Bhuvanekabāhu V and VI): a king "following in the lineage of Mahāsammata who is numbered [after] Śrī Vaivasvata Manu."[98] The *Sälalihini Sandeśaya* (c.1450), a poem written possibly by the king's son-in-law, Nallūrutanayā, eulogizes the king as follows:

> Seated in his lion-throne like Viṣṇu himself
> Adorned with the full sixty four ornaments, and the crown,

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[96] Bell, *Report on the Kęgalle District*, 93f. In addition to the association of Bhuvanekabāhu V with Manu, it is significant that Sumitra is not among the *mahārāja-vaṃsa*-s of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* (though he is known obscurely (as "Sumitta") in the Pali tradition through the Apadāna and the commentary on the Theragāthā as a king of one hundred and thirty *kalpa*-s ago) (Malalasekera, *DPPN*, 1248). Sumitra is listed in the *Śrīmad Bhagvatam* as the last descendent of Rāma in the present era (Kali Yūga).

[97] Bell, *Report on the Kęgalle District*, 94f., 96f.; Pieris, "Bhuwanéka Báhu VII," 272f. Bhuvanekabāhu VII (1521-51) himself concluded his correspondence letters to the Portuguese with a phrase in Tamil (Strathern, "Identity in the 'Sinhala Rebellion'," 25 n.16).

[98] *śrī vaivasvata manu saṅkhyāta paramparānuyāta* (*AY*, 21).

His Majesty hails from the unbroken lineage of Manu[99]
Worship his holy feet
And take your leave of him. [100]

The *Pärakumbā Sirita*, a eulogistic poem written for the king by one of Parākramabāhu's adopted sons, Śrī Rāhula, identifies King Aśoka as having descended from Manu as well:

> [King Dharmāsoka] followed in the royal lineage (*rajakulayen pata*) of Vaivasvata Manu, the progeny of Brahmā, and the first to be born in this vast world-age (*aturukapa = antaḥ kalpa*) – a lineage filled with famous universal monarchs such as Ikṣvāku, Pṛtu, Bhānu, Māndhātṛ, Prasēnajit, Sudarśana, Nahuṣa, Saṅkati, Raghu, Dilīpa, Triśaṅku, Naḷa, Nābhāga, Daśaratha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Kusa and Lava.[101]

King Parākramabāhu belongs to this lineage too, the poem tells us:

> Long live Parākramabāhu, born in the lineage (*kula bijāta*) of Daśaratha and Rāma,
> Fearless with his sword on the battlefield like Sahadeva,
> A snow shower to the fully blossomed lotus patch, namely, the queens of other kings;
> Like a wish-fulfilling tree in his distribution of gold, gems, pearls and silk![102]

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[99] *manu raja kulen pävatena piḷiveḷa nosiṅda* (K.A. de A. Wijesinghe's edition).

[100] Adapted from Jayasuriya's translation in his *Sälalihiṇi Sandeśa*, v.20. The contemporary *Haṃsa Sandēśa*, written by member of the Vīḍāgama Vihāra (see chapter 5), relates that King Parākramabāhu VI "instilled the manners of King Manu in the minds of the people" (v.32), though no mention of his actual heredity descent is given.

[101] *PS*, v.9. Proper names appear as they do in the text.

[102] v.78, adapted from Wickremesinghe's translation. Other references to the king resembling Rāma occur at vv.81, 82, 108, 117, 123 and 140. The poem also identifies the king as "descended from Bāhudeva who was victorious over the Asuras during the war between the gods" (v.80). A copper-plate granting a tract of land to two Brahmins of Oruvaḷa (a village in Aturugiri Kōralē) on behalf of Parākramabāhu VI also identifies the king as a descendent of "Mahā Sammata named Manu Vaivasvata" (Codrington, "The Oruvaḷa Sannasa" [*EZ* III.3], 67).

This list of kings is significant insofar as it replaces the royal succession of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* with the "Raghuvaṃśa"—royal succession beginning with Manu as narrated in Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the Mahābhārata, and Sanskrit Purāṇas.[103] In the *Pärakumbā Sirita*, the first king of the present world-age (though here defined as an *antaḥ kalpa*, as opposed to a *manvatāra*) is Manu (not Mahāsammata), and other kings who appear in random succession in the early Pali chronicles are clearly ordered according to the temporal narrative of the Sanskrit Hindu epics (e.g. Ikṣvāku, Daśaratha and Rāma).

Manu did not supplant Mahāsammata as the arché-king of Sinhala Buddhist historical imagination. By the early 16th century, Sinhala royal genealogical *bona fides* no longer made an equivalence between the two personages, and royal claims of descent from Manu were gradually phased out during the Portuguese period.[104]

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[103] The *PS* makes explicit note of this: Parākramabāhu "belongs to the dynasty of Raghu and Rāma (*raguram rajāṇeni*), with respect to his fame that resembles a sliver of moonlight" (v.81).

[104] As in a 1510 epigraph recording a land grant from Dharma Parākramabāhu to the Nagarisa Nīla (Viṣṇu) Temple at Dondra (Rhys Davids, "Dondra Inscription," 27). The reference to Parākramabāhu VI being descended from Manu in the *AY* is deleted in the later *Rājāvaliya*-s. Rājasiṃha I is called a "scion of the dynasty of Manu in an unbroken line" in the *Mukkara Haṭana*, a Sinhala text narrating events from the Kōṭṭe period into second half of the 17th c. (Raghavan, *The Karāva of Ceylon*, 16). As evidence of 16th-17th c. Sinhala views, Queirós' assemblage of the primordial history of the earth closely bundles the episodes Mahāsammata, the conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, and the arrival Prince Vijaya (revealing all three to have been episodes of foundational importance in the island's history in the eyes of his informants). Queirós' relation of the Mahasammata story is peculiar: the king is said to have first appeared when the world split open during a time of unrighteousness in India and Southeast Asia (*Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, I.7). The identification of Manu with Mahāsammata may have survived in some quarters of popular imagination (or may have been reinvented), as indicated in Alfred Roberts and A R. Ratnawira's pro-Navandanna caste tract, *Visvakarma and his Descendants* (1909). The authors identify Mahāsammata with Manu several times in the context of tracing to genealogy of the Navandanna to Visvakarma, Manu's father. A textual citation is given to a Sinhala work entitled *Rabel Warnanawa*, which tells of a Visvakarma caste (Navandanna)

The emphasis on purāṇic royal dynastic succession during the 14th-15th centuries did however muddy the water with respect to the narrative of the early Pali chronicles in popular Buddhist consciousness. Derived from his Sinhala informants at Goa, Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto gives the story of the primordial Buddhist king (we must infer Mahāsammata) with a Hindu purāṇic flavor: the king was "the son of the sun and the earth, and that God had sent him to those kingdoms to rule and govern them"[105] (Manu is the son of Brahmā from the Vedic tradition onward). From him come the people of the sun from whom Vijaya is descended. Couto's account fuses the descent of the solar dynasty in the Hindu purānic tradition with the characters of Mahāsammata and Vijaya.

§2.6 HISTORIOGRAPHY AS AN INDEX TO RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

How significant was the reorientation of royal genealogy towards descent from Manu? From the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* onward, royal pedigree was a fixation for Lankan Buddhist authors, albeit with shifting emphasis over time (e.g. on Mahāsammata, Suddhodana, Okkāka). Was the choice to insert Manu (however prominently) into the Sinhala *mahārāja-vaṃsa* merely an incidental choice, a poetic embellishment in keeping with the late medieval literary *zeitgeist*?

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soldier and Mahā Mudaliyar under the Dutch administration of Sri Lanka, Dona Antonio Rabel Wijendra Wijayasinha, whose origins are traced to "Manu, the King Mahasammata of a later date" (p.86). A work entitled the *Rabel Asna* matching Roberts and Ratnawira's description of the *Rabel Warnanava* is listed in D. M. De Zilva Wickremasinghe's *Catalogue of the Sinhalese Printed Books in the Library of the British Museum* (1901).

[105] Barros and Couto, *History of Ceylon*, 101.

Given the South Indian precedent for linking living Hindu kings to Manu, I would like to suggest that this is not the case, and that a deeper reworking of the Buddhist historical imagination was at play. Daud Ali detects a qualitative shift in the copper plate inscriptions of the Pallavas and Cōḻas in relation to the earlier Sanskrit *praśasti*-s of Gupta kings, with the former relating "not only the deeds of the king issuing it but those of his ancestors, as well." Ali observes that these works, composed in the voice of the king's royal poet,

> are very concerned with articulating a past […] the bards of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, Paramāras, Cālukyas, Cōḻas, and other post-Gupta dynasties, quite explicitly look back to the world histories of the Purāṇas to tell the genealogies of their kings. Each inscription becomes much more than an imperial voice proclaiming its own magnitude; it inscribes the submission of kings to a vision of history.[106]

In the Cōḻa case (Ali cites the early 11th century Tiruvālungāḍu plates of Rājendra), the aim was to position Tamil kings as descendants of Manu Vaivasvata.[107]

The claim of descent from Manu was but one aspect of the Cōḻa "purāṇicization" of royal genealogy: Rājarāja and his son Rājendra also claimed to be "infused with a portion of Viṣṇu."[108] Ali explains the political ramifications implicit in this genealogical claim:

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[106] "Royal Eulogy as World History," 170. Ali dates the fixation on purāṇic genealogy in Indian inscriptional discourse to the 8th c. (see p.183).

[107] Ali, "Royal Eulogy as World History," 193. The Tiruvālungāḍu plates declare that Sundaracōḻa, the grandfather of Rajendra, was regarded by his subjects as "Manu, arrived on earth once again to reestablish his law that had fallen away as a result of the power of the Age of Strife" (v.57, Ali's translation, *idem.*, 197).

[108] The Tiruvālungāḍu plates explain that Rājarāja, "was born a Murāri (Viṣṇu), with his hands bearing the auspicious marks of the conch (*śaṇkha*) and wheel (*cakra*), and his arms, long like the javelin (*prāsa*), holding the goddess Śrī, who embraced tightly his whole body" (v.61, Ali's translation, *idem.*, 204).

> In the succession of kings as told by the *Śivapurāṇa*, Viṣṇu is the main actor in history, incarnating himself in various kings to save the world. But Viṣṇu is also Śiva's chief devotee. If we look at the claims of Cōḻa kings in this light, we can see that they were by no means being inconsistent in their claims to be infused with a portion of Viṣṇu and yet to be ardent devotees of the great Parameśvara. This accommodation of Viṣṇu, of course, could allow Vaiṣṇavas to be positioned strategically within the polity as receiving great honor, but in the end being subordinated to the preeminent recipients of the king's generosity, the Śaivas.[109]

Sri Lankan Buddhist kings, even religiously liberal ones like Parākramabāhu VI, had no incentive to position themselves as subordinate to, or devotees of, Śiva. Late medieval Sri Lankan Buddhist literature listed major Hindu deities as part of the *deva sāsana*, "the order of the gods," which was subordinate to the "*buddha sāsana*" of which the Buddha himself was the head.[110] Hindu deities had apotropaic efficacy and could be solicited for boons, but were not intended to be loci of devotional attention (from the point of view of Buddhist monastic authors). Viṣṇu was portrayed a devotee of the Buddha, a *bodhisattva* himself, and a guardian deity of the island of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, clearly South Indian models of "purāṇicization" held some allure for the predominantly Buddhist courts of 14th-15th century Sri Lanka.

There is in the first place a straightforward question of transmission: where did epic and purānic imagery in Sinhala literature and inscriptional discourse of this period *come from*? I have gestured to the presence rulers of South Indian heritage at the courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, though this in itself does little to account for the

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[109] Ibid, 194f.

[110] Obeyesekere, *Cult*, 51-60.

introduction of new literary conventions, Hindu religious literature, poetic desiderata, etc. into the (largely monastic) world of Sinhala literary production at the time. Whereas often we must rely on inference to puzzle out the transmission of literary ideas across linguistic lines, occasionally the physical record provides a glimpse of the cross-fertilization process at work. Just such an example is provided by the copper-plate land grant mentioned above identifying Bhuvanekabāhu V as descended from Sumitra and Mahāsammata-cum-Vaivasvata Manu. H.C.P. Bell, who transcribed and translated the original document, noted that the record bears the unsteady penmanship of a Tamil official (one "Sanhas Tiruvarahan Perumāḷ"), perhaps newly arrived at Gampola judging by his freshman effort to master the rounded letters of the Sinhala script.[111] Bell makes the same observation with respect to the handwriting present on other Sinhala *sannas* documents issued by the Gampola and Kōṭṭe courts in the 14th and 15th centuries, where in some cases orthography consistent with a familiarity with Tamil is attested as well.[112]

Given the degree of religious liberality and bilingualism of the major players in the political arena at the time (the Meheṇavaras, Alakeśvaras, those associated with Parākramabāhu's court), the fact that Tamils were employed at lower

[111] Bell, *Report on the Kęgalle District*, 93f.

[112] On evidence for a tradition of Tamil scribal officials at the courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, based on names, handwriting (unfamiliarity with Sinhala script), and characteristic Tamil orthography in Sinhala documents, see Bell, *Report on the Kęgalle District*, 91-96 and Pieris, "Bhuwanéka Báhu VII," 271ff. "Perumāḷ" is a traditionally Vaisnava family name in South India, but in Sri Lanka it belongs to Śaivites as well. On the Perumāḷ epithet in relation to Murugan, see Pathmanathan, "The Guardian Deities of Lanka," 112f.

bureaucratic levels does not come as any great shock.[113] The presence of Tamil literary culture in Sinhala intellectual circles is attested in a number of instances, including the influence of the *Vīracōḻiyam* on the organization of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, a widely circulated 14th century Sinhala grammar (the only surviving work of its kind from the premodern period).[114] Dharmadasa (1995) compiles a number of forms of later Sinhala literature heavily influenced by Tamil models, including the war poem (*haṭan kavi*) and erotic poems (modeled respectively on Tamil *viruttam* and *paraṇi* verses). Obeyesekere (1984) traces the adaptation of elements from the *Cilappatikāram* into Sinhala village ritual literature and folklore, as part of the acculturation of the cult of the goddess Pattini (originally Kaṇṇaki). Short Sinhala poems based on the *Rāmāyana* and *Hariścandra* seem to have been derived from their Tamil rather than Sanskrit versions."[115] Śrī Rāhula's mention of a *Demaḷa Jātaka Gätapadaya* ("Tamil glossary on the Jātakas") in his mid-15th c. *Pañcikāpradīpaya*[116], along with additional references in Sinhala *sandeśa* poems to

[113] South Indian influence in scribal discourse of 15th c. Kōṭṭe was apparent in other subtle ways as well, such as in the stylization of the date ("in the year opposite the 20th") in the Jaffna Tamil inscription of Parākramabāhu VI, emulating the Pāṇḍyan method of recording regnal years (Pathmanathan, "Munnesvaram Tamil Inscription," 61).

[114] See Gair and Karunatillake's introduction to the *Sidat Saṅgarā* (2013). On a Kōṭṭe period colophon of a manuscript of the *Vaidyacitāmaṇi Bhaiṣadyasaṅgrahava*, "which existed earlier in the Tamil language," see Liyanaratne, "Indian Medicine in Sri Lanka," 204. The author of the 17th c. *Mahā Pataraṅga Jātaka Kāvyaya*, a Buddhist monk from Kobbākaḍuva, says explicitly that he drew his narrative from a Tamil version of the *Mahābhārata* (Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 178f.; Mudiyanse, "Buddhist Writings in Tamil," 20).

[115] W.A. de Silva, "Popular Poetry of the Sinhalese," 51.

[116] See Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 37.

Tamil spoken at Buddhist vihāras (see chapter 6.1) attests to some degree of bilingualism among Buddhist monastics of the day.[117]

Beyond the question of transmission is that of the ideological significance of an expanded view of the island's early history and royal genealogies among Sinhala authors. It is tempting to view the reorientation of Lankan claims of descent in inscriptional and poetic discourse of 14th-15th centuries as indicative of competition between two visions of royal genealogy in relation to the distant past: one Sinhala Buddhist (beginning the royal line begins with Mahāsammata and emphasizing the status of various Lankan regents as Bodhisattvas) and one Tamil Hindu. While some Buddhist monastics espoused reservations towards the study of Hindu Purāṇas, *kāvya* and drama[118], the integration Hindu and Buddhist dynasties can be seen as one aspect of the adaptation of continental literary trends that had been transpiring for several centuries in Sri Lanka at that point (though manifested in Sinhala literature in different ways, as in the influence of *bhakti* literature on Sinhala preaching texts of the 12th-13th centuries).

Viewed in this light, Hindu imagery in Buddhist historiography and poetry appears symbiotic rather than antagonistic. There is indeed no *logical* contradiction in claiming simultaneous descent from Manu and Mahāsammata from the point of

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[117] On the presence of Sanskrit among learned Sri Lanka lay and monastic literati, see Pannasara (1958); Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 148; and Godakumbura, who observes that the majority of astronomical and astrological works in Sinhalese are translations from Sanskrit (*Sinhalese Literature*, 339).

[118] The mid-15th century *Haṃsa Sandēśa* praises the head of the Padmāvati Parivena in Kāragala (one Vanaratana Thera) for "discarding the eighteen Purāṇas as faulty" after having studied the sixty-two heresies (v.195). See chapter 6.

view of the early Pali chronicles (indeed the two genealogies at times intersect, as with their emphasis on descent from Ikṣvāku/Okkāka).[119] The purāṇicization of royal genealogy in Sri Lanka thus stood as an effort to bring Sinhala poetic and inscriptional discourse into conformity with South Indian literary standards that had already been in place for several centuries, accelerated no doubt by the presence of rulers of South Indian heritage (and Tamil speaking employees) at the courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe. While the addition of purāṇic genealogy to the dynastic reckoning of the early Pali chronicles took place at the level of elite discourse (poetic encomia, inscriptions), the expanded vision of the early history of the island in Sinhala prose works suggests a shift in historical imagination at the popular level well, a topic which will receive more extensive treatment in chapters 4 and 5.

[119] Nor is there any contradiction in being a both a *bodhisattva* and an incarnation (partial or full) of Viṣṇu. All "guardians of the four warrants" (*satara varan deviyō*) in the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon are considered *bodhisattva*-s, Viṣṇu included.

CHAPTER THREE: TRANSECTING GEOGRAPHY AND INTERSECTING HISTORIES

§3.1 SRI LANKAN TAMIL LITERATURE AND "RHEMATIC" HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Although overshadowed by the Sinhala Buddhist corpus both in volume and scholarly attention, Sri Lankan Tamils produced a body of prose and verse works relating to the history of the island's northern kingdom and to some of its most revered Hindu temples. The kingdom of Jaffna arose amid contracting polities in both Sri Lanka and the southern subcontinent. The Cōḻa Empire came to an end in 1279, after which the last Pāṇḍyan ruler of Madurai was expelled in 1323 by the army of the Muslim Khilji kingdom. A Tamil dynasty whose members identified themselves as "Ārya Cakravartis"[1] maintained an autonomous existence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka from the late 13th century, becoming by the mid-14th century powerful enough to exact tribute from the Sinhala kingdom of Gampola.[2]

Jaffna came under the rule of Kōṭṭe in the mid-15th century during the reign of Parākramabāhu VI, and was ruled for seventeen years by the king's adopted son, Prince Sapumal (c. 1450-17). After the evicted king, Pararācacēkaraṉ, was able to resume his throne following Sapumal's departure, the Jaffna Kingdom saw several decades of prolific literary production, from which two works, the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* and the *Cekarācacēkaramālai*, still survive. From the early 1500s,

[1] The Ārya Cakravartis of Jaffna also identified themselves as *cētu kāvalaṉ*, guardians of the bridge," see chapter 4.3.

[2] This fact is acknowledged in the major Sinhala historical sources. Ibn Battuta, who visited Sri Lanka in 1344, identified the king of Jaffna ("Ayarī Shakartī, by name") as the "Sultan of Ceylon" (Lee, *The Travels of Ibn Batūta*, 184ff.).

however, the northern kingdom again found itself embroiled in contests for territory and sovereignty (with both colonial powers and the ascendant kingdom of Kandy), finally ceding sovereignty to the Portuguese in 1624.[3]

A handful of Sri Lankan Tamil texts survive from the period prior to the 18th century. Contradicting narratives, obvious anachronisms, and issues in establishing their precise chronology make these texts generally poor sources for reconstructing the dynastic history of the northern kingdom.[4] A considerable volume of literature present at the court and major temples of the north has been lost to historical circumstances. Much was buried in the Portuguese Conquista, with its campaign of destruction directed at religious property. Devastation was wrought again by the 1981 burning of the Jaffna Library, and many private manuscript collections in Jaffna were lost in the chaos of the ensuing civil war. Nonetheless there remain

[3] Even into the Portuguese period Kandy claimed suzerainty over Jaffna, as evidenced by Rājasiṃha II's moniker as "the King of Kandy and Jafnapatnam" (in addition to "the Earl of Trincomale and Batticaloa") in a 1636 letter to the Dutch Governor in Pulicat (Baldeus, *A Description of Ceylon*, 703).

[4] The order of the "twelve Ārya Cakravarti kings of Jaffna" derives from the *Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai*, written at the request of the Dutch governor of Jaffna in 1736 by one Mayilvākaṉa Pulavar, a "descendent of the hereditary bards of the kings of Jaffna." Mayilvākaṉa Pulavar based his composition on the *Kailāya Mālai*, the *Vaiyā Pāṭal*, and putatively several other texts which are now lost. The *YVM* is translated loosely by C. Brito as the *Yalpana-Vaipava-Malai* (1887). The *Kailāya Mālai* is a short prose tract on the origins of notable families of Jaffna and the establishment of the Nallūr Kantacāmi Temple. It cannot predate the 17th c. owing to its reference to the Setupatis of Ramnad. For a translation see Mootootamby Pillai (1906). The *Vaiyā Pāṭal* is a likely 16th c. verse composition on the mythical origins of the Jaffna Kingdom. For an overview of these three texts, see Hellmann-Rajanayagam (2014).

today a number of Sri Lankan Tamil literary works, most published as print editions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[5]

No Sri Lankan Tamil work (with the possible exception of the *Caracōtimālai*[6]) can be reliably dated earlier than the late 15th century, and the kingdom of Jaffna kept no continuous chronicle of its own. This discrepancy between the Buddhist and Tamil historiographical traditions prompts E. Valentine Daniel to remark that Sri Lankan Tamil awareness of their own political history remains "as dim as a candle before the sun."[7] Daniel goes so far as to lay out a broad-scale argument on the difference between Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil Hindu historical imagination. He suggests that the Pali and Sinhala chronicle tradition is the result of a mode of historical thinking rooted in chronological necessity, owing to the fact that the life of the Buddha is assigned an exact date by the tradition, from which all later history can be measured. This hypothesis reproduces the view that "historical religions" (such as Christianity and Islam) encourage the recording of significant events

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[5] For a summary of Lankan Tamil literature until the British period, see Kanapathipillai (1948) and Dharmadasa (1995). A number of eastern Sri Lankan religious poems probably date from the early Portuguese period: the *Katiraimalaip Paḷḷu* (=*Kathiraiyappar Paḷḷu*), *Paḷḷu Nāṭakam, Paralai Paḷḷu, Kanakarayan Paḷḷu*, and the Catholic *Jñāna Paḷḷu* (see V. Coomaraswamy's 1935 edition of the *Katiramallaip Paḷḷu*, p.301). For a survey of Sri Lankan Tamil temple literature, see Pathmanathan (2006). For Sri Lankan Tamil texts preserved in the Nevill Collection, see pp. 701-4 of vol. 6 of Somadasa's *Catalogue* (Or.6616(M)-Or.6616(S)).

[6] An astrological work composed at the court of Parākramabāhu III in c. 1310 CE, according to its colophon (see Pathmanathan, *Kingdom of Jaffna*, 229, n.28).

[7] *Charred Lullabies*, 27.

(religious, dynastic) with greater precision that other traditions by virtue of their dependence upon historical founder figures.[8]

Daniel invokes Charles Pierce's distinction between "dicent" and "rhematic signs" to explain the semiological apparatuses distinguishing two different modes of historical thinking:

> Dicisigns are signs whose effects are seen to have been actualized in some "here and now." Signs of the Sinhala past—the Buddha's visit to the island, for instance—are seen as actualized events, quite literally in his footprint on the mountain of Sri Pada. The reality of King Parākramabāhu the Great is found in his irrigation tanks. Heritage, by contrast, is a semeiosic rheme.[9]

In Buddhist historical imagination, according to Daniel, referents (events and objects, whether real or invented) anchor signs (written or aural statements) to "close the chain of signification," grounding historical narrative in a temporally ordered past. Historical statements are understood as referring to an ordered series of events, some of which left a demonstrable presence.

This Daniel contrasts this mode with historical narration relying on "rhematic signs," which combine to manufacture mythemes, non-localized with respect to time and space. While "dicisigns strive to particularize or concretize," "rhemes tend to synthesize and primordialize." Tamil "heritage," according to Daniel, is constructed from a repertoire of mythic narratives, any among which can be applied to a given location or historical personage(s), any number of times and in

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[8] C.H. Philips suggests that the 12th c. Kashmiri *Rājataraṅgiṇī* may have been inspired by Islamic historical writings (*Historians of India*, 5f.).

[9] *Charred Lullabies*, 27.

any number of places, with the assignation of an historical date or rigid chronology relative to events in question being purely optional. Daniel explains:

> As a semeiosic rheme, "heritage" is a sign of possibility that needs no actualization to make it real and that no number of actualizations can exhaust. With history as a dicisign, one begins with the idea that without a past to realize there would not be consciousness of a past; with heritage as a rheme, one begins with the idea that without a consciousness of the past there would not be a past to be conscious of. The former describes the Sinhala position toward the past, the latter, that of the Tamils.[10]

While he doesn't say so explicitly, Daniel is in large part characterizing Hindu historical narration as instantiated in Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s (historical accounts of sacred places) and the oral traditions influenced by these works. This chapter investigates Sri Lankan examples of the *tala-purāṇam* genre, namely, two Tamil historical works on the Konesvaram Śiva Temple at Trincomalee. The late 15th–early 16th century *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* (*TKP*) and early-mid 17th century *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* (*KK*) are significant insofar as they offer a Tamil Hindu vision of the earliest period of political and religious life on the island and its perceived endurance through time.

Daniel's taxonomy of Tamil "rhematic" and Buddhist "dicemic" historical imagination offers a point of departure in analyzing different general tendencies between Sinhala Buddhist and Tamil Hindu conceptualizations of history. While both the Sri Lankan Tamil and Sinhala "chain of kings" begin with a founder figure in the distant past (Kuḷakkōttaṉ and Vijaya, respectively), the Pali-Sinhala chronicle tradition marks the succession of kings fastidiously, dating their reigns from the all-

[10] *Idem.*, 28.

important synchronicity of Vijaya's arrival and the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa.* Representative of the *tala-purāṇam* genre, the Tamil historical works considered in this chapter treat their subject matter tropologically, such that the essential elements of narrative events and biographies with are reproduced in reference to other events and biographies in the same and other texts. The *tala-purāṇam* genre thus in effect collectively contains a stock of narremes, reordered, given different incidental details, and applied to specific localities and personages.[11]

Despite discrepancies in their attitudes to calendric dating, the Sri Lankan Buddhist and Tamil Hindu historiographical traditions overlap in some areas with respect to both form and content. Like the authors of Pali and Sinhala Buddhist historiographies, Tamil Hindus too exhibited a concern that the historical sponsors of Konesvaram belong to a single line of descent (that they belong to the same *kulam* or *marapu*). Though the historicity of the earliest kings of northern Lanka according to the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* and *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* cannot be substantiated, the inclusion of two later kings (Gajabāhu II and Bhuvanekabāhu VI) remembered as patrons of Buddhism in Pali and Sinhala historical works stands as a revealing intersection of two "chains of kings" generally thought to be isolated from one another. Furthermore, the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu's* claim to have incorporated documentary evidence in its account of the Konesvaram Temple (as the "Inscription of Konesvaram") indicates that Sri Lankan Tamils looked to material history with a

[11] For a structuralist perspective on the narrative tropes of the *tala-purāṇa* genre, see Shulman (1980).

"demonstrable presence" in recording and structuring their historical outlook (contrary to Daniel's characterization).

§3.2 THE *TAKṢIṆA KAILĀCA PURĀṆAM*

A. THE TEXT AND ITS BACKGROUND

Overlooking the bay of Trincomalee on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka, Tirukkōṇēśvaram Kōvil (or simply, "Konesvaram") is one of the oldest known places of Hindu worship in Sri Lanka. Tradition identifies Kōṇamalai, the cliff on which the temple sits, as the "third" or "southern" Mt. Kailāśa, homologized with Śiva's divine abode in the Himālayas. The 5th century *Vāyu Purāṇa* mentions a great shrine to Śiva named "Gokarṇa" on the eastern coast of "Malaya Dvīpa," its stylized description of Sri Lanka.[12] Campantar (7th century CE) devotes a hymn to Konesvaram (his only hymn to a Sri Lankan temple other than Tirukketīśvaram), describing Kōṇamalai of the coast as surrounded by elaborate gardens and tanks.[13]

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[12] Tagare, *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 48.20-30; see §4.3 below. The origin of the identification of Konesvaram with the name "Gokarṇa" is given in *TKP*: Rāvaṇa, on his way to deliver to his mother a *liṅgam* imparted to him by Śiva, is intercepted by Viṣṇu in the guise of a sage. Viṣṇu takes the *liṅgam* from him and installs it in the ground (accompanied by the curse that anyone who should move it will be poisoned in their sleep), following which "the gods worship it as "kōkarṉam" [sic]" (*Tarucaṉāmuttic carukkam*, v.108). On the positive identification of "Gokaṇṇa" with Trincomalee in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, see Geiger's note at *Cv* vol.1, p.59. The *Mahāvaṃsa* relates that King Mahāsena (r. c. 277-304) constructed a "Gokaṇṇa Vihāra" on the site of a Hindu temple at Gokaṇṇa. The king built this *vihāra* along with two others only after destroying a Hindu temple (*devālayam*) there (*Mhv* 37.40f.). Additional *Mahāvaṃsa* references to the location are discussed below in §3.6. Modern identifications of Konesvaram in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Sanskrit Purāṇas seem to be the result of confusion over the meaning and location of "Gokarṇa," of which there were more than one. The *Śiva Purāṇa* identifies Gokarṇa as situated "on the shore of the western ocean," most likely modern day Uttara Kannada, Karnataka (see Shastra, *Śiva-Purāṇa*, p.1285 + n.133).

[13] "Tirukōṇamalai" in *Tēvāram: Paṉṉiru Tirumuṟai*, 1063-65. Konesvaram does not appear in Appar's (7th c.) lists of significant Śiva temples (see the *Tiruvatikai viraṭṭāṉam* (no.7),

In his annals of Portuguese exploration and conquest of the island, Fernão de Queirós describes Trincomalee as the "Rome of the gentiles of the Orient." According to his account, Konesvaram received more pilgrims than Rāmesvaram and Kāñchipuram in south India, more than Jagannath in Orissa, and more than Vaijayanthi in Bengal.[14] While the original structure (known also as the "Temple of a Thousand Pillars") was destroyed by the Portuguese between 1623 and 1624, the promontory with its single remaining column remained a site of veneration until a new temple was constructed in 1953.[15]

The *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* is a compendious poetic work on the history of the Konesvaram Temple, the body of which consists of eight sections (including the *pāyiram*) containing a total of 632 quatrains of various meters.[16] Sequentially, the text describes the physical beauty of the island of Laṅkā (*ilaṅkai*), the glories of the temple of Konesvaram, Viṣṇu in his fish incarnation[17], cosmology, the marriage of

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Kṣetrakkovai (no.70) and *Aṭaivut tiruttāṇṭakam* (no.71) in Adi-p-Podi and Ramachandran, *Tirumurai the Sixth*).

[14] Queiróz, *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, II.236.

[15] For an account of the archaeological findings associated with the reconstruction of the temple, see Balendra (1953).

[16] Two editions of the *TKP* were compiled from original manuscripts, the first by Civacitampara Aiyar, son of Karttikeya Aiyar of Karainakar, published Madras in 1887 (TKP^b). Pu. Po. Vaittiyaliṅka Tēcikar's published the *Śrī Taksina Kailaca Puranam of Pirammaśrī Paṇṭitarācar* in Karaittivu, Batticaloa in 1916. Ka. Ce. Naṭarācā's 1995 annotated edition is based on these two. All citations refer to Naṭarācā's edition (TKP^a) unless otherwise indicated. On the different number of verses in the two editions of the *TKP*, see Pathmanathan's introduction, xxxvi.

[17] In this respect as in others, the TKP follows the conventions of continental *tala-purāṇa*-s, the text's own introduction (*pāyiram*) explaining that the Viṣṇu section is a translation of the *Maccē Purāṇam*, i.e. the Sanskrit *Matsya Purāṇa*. This is reiterated in the *Tirunakaraccarukkam,* v.21 and v.26.

Vicciravāku and Irāttirikari (Rāvaṇa's parents), concluding with an account of two putative historical patrons of Konesvaram, Kings Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ and Kayavāku. It is the earliest known Sri Lankan token of a Tamil literary genre which flourished in south India between the 16th and 18th centuries: the *tala-purāṇam* (Skt: *sthala-purāṇa*). These works describe the origins of Shaivite Hindu temples, drawing from the cosmogonic and cosmological narratives of Sanskrit purāṇas.[18]

The text is orientated towards Śaiva Siddhānta theology and includes several references to "Śiva Naṭarācaṉ" (Śiva as "Lord of the Dance").[19] That Viṣṇu features importantly in the *TKP* is not anomalous from the point of view of continental *tala-purāṇam*-s. In the Sanskrit *Śiva Purāṇa*, from which many *tala-purāṇam*-s draw heavily, Viṣṇu is incarnated as numerous kings of the ancient past, intervening to save the world from various calamities.[20]

For nearly a century scholars have followed Rasanayagam (1926) in attributing the TKP to the court of a putative early 14th century Jaffna ruler,

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[18] David Shulman surveys Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s from the 12th to 19th century in *Tamil Temple Myths* (1980). The genre is not without any precedent: physical descriptions of Śaiva temples and their environs are featured in hymns of the 7th c. Nāyaṉār poets, along with other works such as Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvāckam* and the late 8th or early 9th c. *Tiruvicaippā* (both texts using Citamparam to furnish a setting for their praise of Śiva).

[19] *Tirunakaraccarukam*, v.22 and v.103. The Naṭarāja image was historically very popular in Sri Lanka, with a number of bronzes having been unearthed at Polonnaruva (the seat of power on the island from the late 11th to 13th centuries). As in South India, Sri Lankan Śaiva temples still today have separate shrines for the icon (it is only a *mūla-sthāna* or centerpiece of worship at Citamparam, however).

[20] Daud Ali notes that there was no contradiction for Cōḻa kings to present themselves as "infused with a portion of Viṣṇu and yet […] ardent devotees of the great Parameśvara. This accommodation of Viṣṇu […] could allow Vaiṣṇavas to be positioned strategically within the polity as receiving great honor, but in the end being subordinated to the preeminent recipients of the king's generosity, the Śaivas" ("Royal Eulogy as World History, 194f.).

"Varōtaya Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ" or "Varōtaya Ciṅkai Āriyaṉ."[21] This hypothesis must be interrogated on a number of grounds. Verse 14 of the *TKP*'s *Pāyiram* (Introduction) refers to one "Cinkaiyantār Cekarāca Cēkarām Perumāṉ," while the *Ciṟappupāyiram*-s ("special introductions" containing colophonic information) of the available print editions yield confusing and contradictory attributions of authorship.[22] "Cekarāca cēkaraṉ" was a common coronary name of the kings of Jaffna, while "Ciṅkai Āriyaṉ" was a generic title appearing in most literary and inscriptional references to rulers of Sri Lanka's northern kingdom ("Ciṅkai" being an alternative name of the northern capital of Nallūr, and "Āriyaṉ" referring to membership in the Ārya Cakravarti dynasty). The identification of either name with "Varōtaya Ciṅkai Āriyaṉ," a king whose name appears once in the *Yāḻpaṇa Vaipava Mālai* (itself a dubious source for information on the history of the early Jaffna kingdom), is a tentative proposal.[23]

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[21] See *Ancient Jaffna*, 358.

[22] S. Pathmanathan connects the "Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ" of one *ciṟappupāyiram* and the *pāyiram* of the TKP to the king of the same name mentioned in the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* on the basis of similar epithets (TKP[a], xviii-xxiv). Again, the name "Varōtaya Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ" does not appear in either of the texts. The argument furthermore depends on a secure 14th century dating of the *Cekarācacēkaramālai*, which Rasanayagam provides by an alleged reference to the aid of a "Pandyan king" by the text's sponsor (mentioned in its *ciṟappupāyiram*, v.9). Referred to as a "kōmāṟaṉ" in this verse, it is not yet clear to me why this individual is interpreted to have been a Pandyan.

[23] A *ciṟappuppāyiram* of the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* is cited as the oldest documentation of the genealogy of the Ārya Cakravartis. Following Rasanayagam (1926: 355-58), modern scholars have associated this work (sponsored by one "Cekarācacēkaram" according to its *ciṟappuppāyiram* (v.11)) with "Varōtaya Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ," an early 14th century ruler of Jaffna according to the *YVM*. This is in spite of the fact that the *YVM* itself asserts that the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* was composed by the learned brother of Pararāca Cēkaraṉ (r. c. 1478-1518) (see Brito's translation, 26f.). Rasanayagam insists that Varōtaya must be the Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ of the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* on the basis of a reference to the sponsor's military assistance to a Pandyan king mentioned (v.9 of the *ciṟappuppāyiram*). Further

Another serious complication to the conventional dating of the *TKP* is the fact that Tamil purāṇas of the same format did not begin to appear in India on a wide scale until the start of the 16th century.[24] A clue to the date of *TKP* comes in its use of the epithet *ciṟī caṅka pōti* ("Śrī Saṅgha Bodhi")[25] in connection with a Buddhist ruler ("Kayavāku," i.e. Gajabāhu II) of Anuradhapura. "Śrī Saṅgha Bodhi," along with its Pali and Sinhala variations, was a frequently used royal title of Buddhist kings from the 8th century (alternating generationally with another title, "Śilameghavarṇa"). The epithet was known to northern Sri Lankans by reason of Parākrambāhu VI's conquest of Jaffna in c. 1450, where his inscriptional decrees bore the "Śrī Saṅgha Bodhi" moniker.[26]

Regarding a *terminus ante quem*, there are indications that the *TKP* was composed at some point before 1622-24, the years during which Konesvaram was razed by the Portuguese. There is no hint of this event in the text, nor of European colonial presence in any other capacity. This is in contrast other later Lankan Tamil

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complicating the dating and authenticity of the *ciṟappuppāyiram*-s of the text is the fact that multiple versions were in circulation by the time the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* was committed to print editions (compare Capāpati Aiyarāl's edition of the text with the *ciṟappuppāyiram* quoted by Natesan (1960) and Pathmanathan (*TKP*[a] and elsewhere)).

[24] A work called the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* on a Madurai shrine survives from the 12th century, and the *Koyil Purāṇa* is an early 14th century adaptation of the Sanskrit Cidambaramāhātmya. Beyond these however the first extant Tamil temple *purāṇas* is the *Citampara Purāṇam* of Purāṇa Tirmalainātaṉ, c. 1508 (Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, 32; see also Shulman's appendix on major works and their authors, p.353).

[25] *Tirunakaraccarukkam*, v.92.

[26] Pathmanathan, "The Munnesvaram Tamil Inscription," 68. The title is also retained in the living memory of Tamil Hindus in connection with a founder of the Nallūr Kantacāmi temple, "Śrī Saṅkha Bodhi Bhuvaneka Bāhu," almost certainly this Parākramabāhu's son (eventually coronated Bhuvanekabāhu VI), who ruled at Jaffna c. 1450-17 (discussed below in this chapter).

works which portend European activity on the island in the guise of prophecy. The TKP, unlike the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu*, gives every indication that it was composed at a time when Konesvaram was home to a flourishing religious community.[27]

Taking all this into account, it would appear that the *TKP* was composed some time after the occupation of the north by the kingdom of Kōttē, but before Jaffna had become heavily embroiled with the Portuguese. Three kings are known from this period: Kaṉakacūriyaṉ (who succeeded Prince Sapumal), his son Pararāca Cēkaraṉ, followed by his son, Caṅkili I. Strengthening this line of reasoning is the fact that Kaṉakacūriyaṉ and Caṅkili both bore the alias "Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ," as did the brother of Pararāca Cēkaraṉ. This prince Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ is remembered as an accomplished scholar who imported numerous Sanskrit and Tamil texts from India, establishing a learned academy at Jaffna.[28] The first half of the 16th century during this period of prolific literary activity (from which several other Lankan Tamil works survive as well) is the most likely date for the *TKP*.

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[27] In tracing possible sources of textual influence, it is noteworthy that the *TKP* makes several allusions to the South Indian temple of Citamparam and its associated literature, the earliest locus for the composition of Tamil temple histories in India. Citamparam has borne a special relationship to the Hindus of Jaffna and Trincomalee for several centuries, continuing to attract northern Sri Lankan visitors and donations to the present day. On the significance of Citamparam for modern Jaffna Tamils, see Navaratnam, *A Short History of Hinduism*, 18. Navaratnam speculates that this affinity dates all the way to the time of Māṇikkavācakar. Sri Lankan Hindu pilgrimage to Citamparam continues in the 21st century, where some permanent communities of Sri Lankan Tamils have been established. Bathing tanks such as the *Ñānapirakāca kulam* bear the names of Sri Lankan Tamil patrons. Personal names associated with Citamparam remain common in Jaffna: Tiricitamparam, Citamparam, Ambalavāṉar, and others (S. Suseendirarajah, personal communication). Tirupati in Andhra is the other most popular pilgrimage site for Sri Lankan Hindus (and even some Buddhists).

[28] Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 26f.

B. THE CONTENT OF THE *TAKṢINA KAILĀCA PURĀṆAM*

The poem proper begins with the "chapter on the land of Lanka" (*ilaṅkai maṇṭalac carukkam*), a eulogy of the physical beauty of the island and the good quality of its inhabitants. This section takes up a theme continued throughout the work: homology of the promontory of Tirukayilai with the Himalayan Mt. Kailāśa. The opening verse explains that "one shining peak atop Mt. Meru" was lifted up by the wind and transported to Sri Lanka.[29] The entire peak, the text explains, came to be the present country of Sri Lanka. On the basis of homophony with the verb *ilaṅku*, "to shine," Sri Lanka is appropriately called both *īḻam* and *ilaṅkai* because of the golden hue of this graft from Mt. Meru (and also because the island is littered with shining, precious gems[30]). A one-to-one identification between Mt. Meru and Sri Lanka is made: "everyone says that Meru and the southern Lanka are no different."[31]

The following chapter (the *Tirumalaic carukkam*) continues the description of the glories of Śiva's "southern abode" at Tirukayilai, followed by a chapter the creation of the earth and celestial bodies (the *puvanōṟpattic carukkam*). In line with Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy and continental Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s, this section

[29] *nimirntu eḻu mērumītil viḷaṅkiya ceṉṉi oṉṟu āra mārutam koṇṭiṅku amaintatē* (*Īḻamaṇṭalac carukkam*, v.1). The same is stated at v.8 of the *Katiraimalai Paḷḷu.* The 18th c. *Tirukōnāvala Purāṇam* adds that Vāyu, the wind-god, overpowered Ādiśeṣa in order to uproot Meru and transport the peak of the mountain to Sri Lanka.

[30] *māmaṇi eṅkum ilaṅkalāl* (*Īḻamaṇṭalac carukkam*, v.2).

[31] *mēruvum teṉilaṅkaiyum vēṟala eṉṟu ārum colvar* (*Īḻamaṇṭalac carukkam*, v.4). A homologue occurs later in the work when Ravāṇa transports Mt. Kailāśa to his mother (*Tarucanāmuttic carukkam*, v.119).

positions Śiva as "supreme god" (*parāparam*) and who sets in motion the matter which makes the entirety of the perceptible world[32] (displacing Brahman who holds this honor according to the standard Vedic-Upanishadic model, and at odds with the *Bhāgavata* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*-s, which identify Viṣṇu as "Parama Brahman").

The "translation" of the Sanskrit *Matsya Purāṇa* referred to repeatedly elsewhere throughout the text is the "chapter on the fish incarnation" (the *maccāvatarac carukkam*). This section recounts the torment of the Devas at the hands of the rakṣasa Iraṇiyaṉ (Hiraṇyakaśipu), who obtains a boon from Śiva making him invulnerable to any living being, weapon, or god. Beseeched for assistance, Viṣṇu (following the instructions of Śiva) transforms into a fish in order to retrieve a number of copper bracelets inscribed with a protective Vedic mantra from the bottom of the sea, allowing the Devas to successfully battle Iraṇiyaṉ and his Asura hordes.[33]

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[32] Śiva in his aspect as creator (*catāsivam*) is at the beginning of time a formless, motionless, omnipresent "great light," which animates the eight elementary particles of the universe (*nuṇ paramāṇuvil eṭṭu*) (*Puvanōṟpattic carukkam*, v.35-37).

[33] Rather than being a translation, this fish incarnation of Viṣṇu is curiously at odds with the one described in the *Matsya Purāṇa.* The Sanskrit text relates the story of Viṣṇu-as-fish rescuing Manu, first king of the world, along with other living beings during the global cataclysm (*mahāpralaya*) at the close of the previous *manvantara*. The *Matsya Purāṇa* also features the standard purāṇic story of Viṣṇu battling a nearly invincible Hiraṇyakaśipu in his incarnation as a lion (Narasiṃha) (as opposed to the battle with Iraṇiyaṉ in the *TKP* which is an altogether different story). While the initial temptation is to suppose that the *TKP* favors a cosmogony giving pride of place to Śiva rather than Viṣṇu, it must be noted that continental Tamil Śaivite *tala-purāṇam*-s not uncommonly feature the story of Manu's rescue by Viṣṇu-as-fish.

The penultimate section[34] of the *TKP* relates in detail the story of the birth of Rāvaṇa, antagonist of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and demon king of Laṅkā. The author makes use of this chapter to showcase his poetic ability, with first third of its 195 verses dedicated to the marriage of Rāvaṇa's parents (the sage Vicciravāku[35] and Irāttirikari, daughter of the *rakṣasa* Irāttirikaraṉ) and Irāttirikari's lamentation subsequent to being abandoned by her ascetic husband.

The final "chapter on the holy city" (*tirunakarac carukkam*) is the most relevant to the present study, containing a wealth of information on the history of Sri Lanka from a Tamil Hindu perspective. The chapter continues from the previous, opening with a brief account of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the slaying of Rāvaṇa, and Rāma's bestowal of the kingdom of Laṅkā to Vibhīṣaṇa. Rāma and Vibhīṣaṇa build a Śiva temple at "the place of Gokarṇa," decorating it with paintings of various Devas, including Rāvaṇa prominently (see more detailed summary in chapter 3). A chronological break in the narrative occurs, recalling a time when Rāvaṇa sang sweet praise to Śiva on his vīṇā at Konesvaram (v.15). A Gandharvan named "Susaṅgīta" (*cucaṅkītaṉ*) plots to steal the instrument from Rāvaṇa, and upon doing so completes the temple construction (the text describes it as "renovation"):

> In accordance with Śiva's words, [Susaṅgīta] cut down the dense forest, making it a habitable place. He renovated the ruined temples, bringing entire family groups and settling them there. Worshipping Śiva, Nakulēcar, and obtaining his grace, he returned to dwell in his

[34] Inexplicably entitled the "chapter on the visible incarnation" (*tericaṉāmūrttic carukkam* (*TKP*[a], xxxvi), rendered *tarucaṉāmuttic carukkam* in the body of the text (*TKP*[a], v.2, p.1), and *taricaṉāmuttic carukkam* in Civacitampara Aiyar's edition (p.36)).

[35] Only son of Pulattiya (Pulastya), himself son of Brahmā, the Creator (*Tarucaṇāmuttic carukkam*, v.55; see also Naṭarācā's commentary on this verse).

> own realm, celebrated throughout the world [i.e. the Gandharva world] (v.18).[36]

The author interjects to say that he has until this point followed a Sanskrit *purāṇa* in narrating the story, which concludes extolling the physical beauty of Konesvaram on the first day of Dvāpara Yuga:

> On the first day of Dvāpara Yuga, when Treta Yuga had passed away, as if they were human beings, Devas came in order to worship and do penance at the golden, resplendent, lotus feet of the Lord of the Southern Mountain which is girt by the sea. Until this point, we have related everything following the Sanskrit *purāṇa* (v.21).

In an allusion to Viṣṇu and the churning of the cosmic ocean, the author concedes that the Śiva temple at Citamparam (in present day Tamil Nadu) is the most significant of all, being "the nectar among the temples that emerged from the sea."[37] It is disclosed that the *purāṇa* on which the *TKP* has hitherto been based is one concerning Viṣṇu-as-fish, with the author also recognizing his participation in the *tala-purāṇam* literary genre:

> Combining this ancient *purāṇa* composed by Mācūtamuṉi—which is one among the Matsyendra [Purāṇas found] on earth—along with many incidents which occurred after that time—recalling that true story and all of the great qualities of the Lord of the Southern Mountain, [I will narrate all of this] for the world to see according to the tradition

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[36] v.18. Dennis McGilvray notes that in Batticaloa, some "temples are seen as having been founded originally by epic figures such as Rāvaṇa, who, for all his faults, was a pillar of Saivism. Other temples are believed to have been built at the command of kings, who wished to insure the perpetual veneration of sacred icons (*lingams*, *vēl* weapons, *cilampu* anklets, etc.) either accidentally 'discovered' in the forest or brought to the region by wandering devotees. The warrior kings of the Vijayanagara period (14th-17th centuries A.D.) in South India have been noted for their consuming interest in temple construction and religious patronage which legitimated their systems of 'tributary overlordship', and the historical legends of Batticaloa seem to reflect much the same ideology" ("Mukkuvar vannimai," 72).

[37] *katamaruvum amutam* (v.22). This verse additionally advocates for the importance of the Śiva Natarāja ("dancing Śiva") image.

of connected verse of Tamil literary works *centamiḻ nūl toṭaimuṟaiyāl* (v.26).

The narration focuses at this point on a ruler of Kōṇāṭu and Maturai named Maṉu, alias Vararāmatēvaṉ, who hears of the greatness of the Southern Mount Kailāca by way of a Sanskrit text, the *Maccēntiya Purāṇam* (i.e. the *Matsya Purāṇa*). Maṉu travels to Sri Lanka to worship at Tirikōṇam, bringing with him from South India a number of images to install at Konesvaram, and conducting some renovations on the temple upon his arrival. Desirous that Konesvaram should prosper in the future, Maṉu has a considerable amount of gold buried in a well nearby, assigning a guarding spirit (a *pūtam*) to protect it until the appointed time. Returning to India, the king bestows the throne to his son, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, and dies at the close of Dvāpara Yūga.

Subsequently, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ is visited by a Brahmin who, while on pilgrimage in Sri Lanka, was instructed by the guardian demon to inform him of his father's buried treasure. Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ travels to Sri Lanka and locates in the well the copper plate with his father's royal insignia, and (so it seems) instructions on exactly where to excavate. Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ matches the sum left by his father from his own treasury, and embarks on a massive restoration of the site. He furthermore imports entire family groups from the Tamil country for various occupations associated with temple maintenance, constructs a small bathing place adjacent to Konesvaram (*pāpanāca* tank), builds a temple to Viṣṇu, and commissions a large reservoir to

support the region's agriculture. An inscription is erected to commemorate this last undertaking.[38]

The narrative at this point jumps to an "ignorant king" belonging to Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's ancestral lineage (*marapu*) named "Kayavāku" (Gajabāhu). Kayavāku is said to have abandoned Mt. Kayilai for Anuradhapura (the seat of political power on the island before the 10th century), "entering on the great falsehood known as the Buddhist Path"[39] while forgetting the Śaiva religion (*civacamayam*). This king is credited with spreading Buddhism throughout Laṅkā, and with assuming the title of "Śrī Saṅgha Bodhi."[40]

During his reign, a group of monks built a statue to the Buddha nearby to Konesvaram and took up residence there. One day, the text relates, these monks stole the requisites for Śiva *pūjā* from the Pācupatar priests and, in retaliation, were thrown into the sea to drown by the local Hindus. Angered by this news, Kayavāku made plans to build a Buddhist hermitage at Konesvaram to accommodate even more monks. Śiva however ordained it that the king should lose his sight, in order that he might come in the guise of a Brahmin in order to anoint Kayavāku with sacred ash and restore his sight in one eye (a feat which the Buddhist monks in attendance could not perform).

His faith in the Śaiva path restored, Kayavāku made his way to Kantalai, the tank constructed long ago by his ancestor, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ. Renaming the tank *kaṇ-*

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[38] *ceḻum tāraiyiṉ nīrkkuḷam kayilai civaṉārkkeṉak kal eḻuti vaittāṉ* (v.89).

[39] *puttamārkameṉum perumpāva vaḻiyiṟ pukkāṉ* (v.91).

[40] *ciṟīcaṅkapōti* (v.92).

talai, "the eye regained," Kayavāku pardoned the crimes of both the Buddhists and Śaivites at Konesvaram, vowing to dutifully follow "the singular path which is free of impurities" (v.97). The monks who had been thrown into the ocean were miraculously returned to shore by the waves. Learning of this, and worshipping Śiva with ecstatic emotion, Kayavāku regained sight in his other eye.

Living out his days devoted to Śaiva learning, Kayavāku grew concerned about the continuation of the religious activities at Konesvaram after his death. Two Brahmins conveniently arrive on the shore of Laṅkā, at which point the king pronounced that they were the awaited ones worthy to perform *pūja* to Śiva at Mt. Kailāca. The two Brahmins were in turn provided with all the needed requisites for their maintenance, including endowments of taxable pasture land. Kayavāku ensured that this gift would survive the ages, having the royal grant hewn in stone.[41] The details of the grant were also secured in a copper plate grant given to the Brahmins, stating that 8/10ths of the income of the sea, shore, lagoons and forest of the surrounding region belong to the Konesvaram temple, with the other 2/10ths to be shared by the two Brahmins.

The chapter goes on to affirm the identity of the celestial and Indian Ganges with the Mahāveli River, which flows from the central highlands into the Bay of Bengal via the bay of Trincomalee. Queried by Kayavāku, the Brahmin priests of Konesvaram explain to that the great noise heard one day suddenly is the Ganges, which Śiva made to flow beneath Mt. Kayilai in order to bathe himself, and at which the other deities and sages are now worshipping him (v.105). It is explained that

[41] *collum avaṉ kal eḻuti* (v.100).

the diverted Ganges mixed with the Mahāveli River, causing this waterway to distribute its pearls by way of the sea all the way to the Kāverī River[42], effectively forming a continuous aqueduct with South India (also, connecting the Ganges and abode of Śiva at Konesvaram with the Ganges and abode of Śiva similarly described in the *tala-purānam*-s of Citamparam).[43]

The narrative closes with the return of Kayavāku to Anuradhapura, where he lived out his days as a faithful devotee of Śiva, regularly sponsoring *pūjas* and festivals.

§3.3 PURĀṆIC KINGSHIP AND COLONIZATION MYTHS

Who were Kings Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ and Kayavāku? The identification of Kayavāku as the historical Gajabāhu II is discussed below in this chapter. As for an identification of King Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, a number of arguments have been put forward, including some based on tenuous documentary evidence.[44] From an inscription

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[42] *muttam eṟi kāviriyiṉ mukamumāy mutiyakaṭal* (v.106).

[43] The *Katiraimalai Paḷḷu*, a 16th century Sri Lankan Tamil poem, also emphasizes the identity of the Mavali River with the Indian Ganges ("the Ganges of Bhagīratha," *pakīrā kaṅkai*) (vv.6-22).

[44] The *YVM* has it that King Kuḷakkōṭṭan came to Trincomalee in Śaka year 358 (436 CE) on a tour of religious sites, stopping in the Trincomalee area to undertake restoration of Konesvaram and the nearby Śiva temple at Thambalagamam. On this version, Pāṇṭu, the ruler of Anuradhapura at the time, dispatched an army to investigate Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's activities. The army however returned being so impressed by Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ that the no further attempt was made to intervene on him. Rasanayagam identifies this Paṇṭu as a King Paṇḍu mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, who ruled from 434 to 439 CE (*Ancient Jaffna*, 229; The Damiḷa Paṇḍu's capture of northern country is recorded at *Cv* 38.11-34). On the basis of this chronology, Arumugam identifies Kuḷakkōṭṭan's father as the Cōḻa ruler Maṉu Nīti Kaṇṭa Cōḻaṉ, placing his arrival at 436 CE, and Kuḷakkōṭṭan himself as Cōḻa Kaṅkaṉ (*The Lord of Thiruketheeswaram*, 25). Additional oral accounts of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ persist in the Trincomalee region. Tennent in the mid-19th c. records the story that Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ was drawn to Konesvaram upon learning from the *purāṇa*-s that the promontory was a

describing Cōḷa infrastructural accomplishments found at Kantalai dating to 1033 or 1047, Irāmaccantiraṉ Nākacāmi and Peter Schalk identify Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ as one "Cōḷa Laṅkeśvara."[45] Pathmanathan (2006) makes this tentative identification as well.[46] One complication with such an ascription is that "Cōḷa Laṅkeśvara" seems to have been only a title for the governor of Lanka, on analogy with "Cōḷa Kerala" and " Cōḷa Pāṇḍya," rather than a proper name.[47]

Indrapala (1970) supposes that Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ was an accomplice of Māgha, the early 13th century invader from the Deccan. This is on the basis of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's alias "Cōḷakaṅkaṉ" in the *TKP*, which corresponds to the name "Coḍagaṅga" found in a Sanskrit inscription among the ruins of Konesvaram. The 13th century was a time of political reorganization in northeastern Sri Lanka, with the Vanni chieftaincies ascending to power as a result of the dislocation of Sinhala Buddhist influence to the

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fragment of Mt. Meru, whereupon he built a temple to Śiva. The princess of the region, having arrived as an infant on a sandalwood raft from the Deccan, "sent an army to expel him, but concluded the war by accepting him as her husband; and in order to endow the pagoda which he had built, she attached to it the vast rice-fields of [Thambalagamam], and formed the great tank of Kandelai, or Gan-talawa, for the purpose of irrigating the surrounding plain." Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ dies in the same fashion as in the *KK*, transformed *in extremis* into a golden lotus upon Śiva's altar at Konesvaram (*Ceylon*, vol. 2, 483f.).

[45] Nākacāmi, "Surveys on Buddhism and Jainism," 159, n.241, and Schalk, "Buddhism during the Pallava Period," 503. The Kantalai inscription is translated by K. Indrapala (1978). According to him, the inscription indicates "that there was no break-down of the irrigation system in the Kantalai area in the time of Cōḷa rule" (83).

[46] Pathmanathan acknowledges that the *KK* is probably a reflection of the 17th c. social milieu in which it was authored, presenting the chronology of events of the distant past in an imprecise way (*Hindu Temples*, 67-72).

[47] See A. Velupillai, *Epigraphical Evidences for Tamil Studies*, 66.

southwest.[48]

Thinking of the *TKP* as participating in the South Indian *tala-purāṇam* genre (with a rhematic outlook toward the past and toward "heritage") affords however a different, less positivistic interpretation of the historicity of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ. Indian Tamil temple histories insert royal genealogies belonging to the distant past along with the verifiable accounts of contemporary temple patrons. In this connection it is significant that the reigns of father and son in the *TKP* bridge two *yuga*-s, and that Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's father is named "Maṉu." Manu, as explained in chapter 2, is the name of the king who appears fourteen times within a given *kalpa* according to the Sanskrit Purāṇas and epics. Each Manu remains in the world for seventy-one *mahāyuga*-s (each consisting in four *yuga*-s of successively declining moral order). The Maṉu of the *TKP* is similarly a bridge figure between world ages: King Maṉu buries his gold at Konesvaram in anticipation of Kali Yuga, while the temple building project of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ is underway promptly as the era begins.[49]

The instability of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ as a fixed historical personage is apparent in the early 16th century *Vaiyā Pāṭal*, where the king's name is rendered "Kulakkētu." Kulakkētu is here a relative of Daśaratha at Ayodhya, invited by the Yāḻ player of Vibhīṣaṇa's court at Jaffna to relocate to Ilaṅkai in order that the governance and agricultural affairs of the island should be more efficiently conducted. Rather than making the trip himself, however, Kulakkētu dispatches his son, Ciṅkakētu, who is to

[48] Indrapala, "The Origin of the Tamil Vanni Chieftaincies," 127-40. According to this inscription the exact date of arrival of Coḍagaṅga was 1223 CE.

[49] *Tirunakarac carukkam*, v.55 and v.62.

be the first human ruler of the island of the post-*Rāmāyaṇa* period (the *Vaiyā Pāṭal* dates Ciṅkakētu's arrival to "year 3000 of the Kali *yuga*").[50]

In other Lankan Tamil texts, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's father is identified with another "King Maṉu" known from the continental Tamil purāṇic tradition: Maṉunīticōḷaṉ. In the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* he bears the epithet "the Cōḷa who followed the Laws of Manu" (*maṉu nīti kaṇṭa cōḷaṉ*, v.1), a title also attributed to him in two later texts, the *Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai* and *Tirukkōṇācala Vaipavam*.[51] This name can be traced to the *Periya Purāṇam*, a compilation of Śaiva hagiographies completed in the 12th century at Citamparam.[52] While there is no mention of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ in the *Periya Purāṇam* (nor in any other continental literary sources), Maṉunīticōḷaṉ adds another point of contact between the temple literature of Citamparam and Lankan Tamil presentations of their own history. The *Periya Purāṇam* relates the life story of one Maṉunīticōḷaṉ, ruler of Tiruvārūr in the Kāverī Delta, who had named himself after the true "Laws of Manu" owing to his own righteousness. His moral rectitude is illustrated by an episode involving the accidental death of a newborn calf, crushed by the wheels of the king's chariot. Maṉunīticōḷaṉ was so bereaved when

[50] *VP* vv.13-15. In addition to being a "relative of Tacarataṉ" (v.13), Kulakkētu is also called "the king of Ayōtti" (v.15).

[51] Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 4; Hellmann Rajanayagam, "Kulturelle Wahrnehmungen in der historischen Literatur der Jaffna-Tamilen," 475, n.15. Jack Eller identifies the *YVM*'s "Maṉu Nīti Cōḷaṉ" as a veiled reference to Eḷāra (*From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict*, 116).

[52] Kulōttuṅka II is credited with sponsoring the *Periya Purāṇam's* author, Cēkkiḻār, who auditioned the work at Citamparam's Thousand-Pillared Hall (Shulman, *The Hungry God*, 10).

confronted by the calf's mother that he promised to sacrifice his own son as compensation, crushing the prince under a chariot driven by his own hand.[53]

The same story occurs in the *Mahāvaṃsa* in connection with Eḷāra, Duṭṭhagāmiṇī's nemesis and usurper of the throne of Anuradhapura. In keeping with his disposition of being "equal towards friend and foe" (as the chronicle characterizes him), Eḷāra shares with Maṉunīticōḷaṉ a paramount concern for justice:

> At the head of his bed he had a bell hung up with a long rope so that those who desired judgment at law might ring it. The king had only one son and one daughter. When once the son of the ruler was going in a car to the Tissa-tank, he killed unintentionally a young calf lying on the road with the mother cow, by driving the wheel over its neck. The cow came and dragged at the bell in bitterness of heart; and the king caused his son's head to be severed (from his body) with the same wheel.[54]

It seems unlikely that the same (from a literary standpoint, somewhat obscure) episode would appear randomly in association with a seminal figure in the history of Konesvaram *and* the most famous Tamil ruler of Sri Lanka in the Pali-Sinhala chronicle tradition. Was then the specific identification of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's father with

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[53] Unable to bear the tragedy, Śiva reanimates the calf, the prince, and the king's minister (who had killed himself rather than carry out the order to execute the prince) (Shulman, *The Hungry God*, 10-13, his summary of *Periya Purāṇam* 1.3.13-50). The authors of two Tamil poems, the *Kaliṅkattupparaṇi* and *Vikkirama Śōḻaṉ Ulā*, identity the Maṉunīticōḷaṉ of Tiruvārūr as Manu Vaivasvata himself, son of the Sun and father of Ikṣvāku. An inscription dating to 1153 at present day Tiruvārūr in Tamil Nadu refers to the legend of the calf accidently run over by the son of King Manu-Cōḷaṉ (Hultzch, "Singhalese Chronology," 530).

[54] *Mhv* 21.15-18 (Geiger's translation). Eḷāra's moral outstandingness is incongruous with the infamy he would later acquire (in the *Pūjāvaliya*, *Rv*, etc.). Later Sinhala authors also overlooked Eḷāra's Buddhist piety exemplified in a related, subsequent episode in the *Mhv*: travelling on the road in Anuradhapura in order to extend an invitation to a group of *bhikkhus*, Eḷāra accidentally bumped a *stūpa* containing relics of the Buddha with the yoke of his chariot. Leaping to the grown, he insisting that his men sever his head with the wheel of the chariot as recompense. Eḷāra was convinced instead have the *thūpa* repaired, though his payment was inordinate in relation to the damage done (*Mhv* 21.21-26).

Maṉunīticōḻaṉ a crude attempt on the part of the authors of the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* and *Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai* to connect a figure from Tamil purāṇic history with the *Mahāvaṃsa*? Taken in isolation, this could appear to be the case. However, collating incidents from the biographies of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ and Kayavāku in the *TKP* in addition to *tala-purāṇam*-s of Muṉṉesvaram Temple (on the northwest coast of the island) reveals a more sustained approach to integrating the two historical traditions.

In later Tamil temple histories and orally circulated stories concerning the Muṉṉesvaram temple, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ again appears as a foundational figure (the account of his importation of the temple's supporting population follows closely that of the *KK*, see below). One additional story however appears in connection with Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ that is unique the mythology of Muṉṉesvaram: his name is invoked as one of a number of historical kings suffering from a debilitating skin condition, which only the goddess of the temple could remedy. The following is Rohan Bastin's summary of the story:

> The Diseased King myth recounts how the king, ruling from his capital, was suffering from a nagging skin disease which none of the court physicians could cure. The king learned of a powerful goddess temple at the far reaches of his kingdom. In desperation he decided to go there, and, one night, he secretly left the capital and travelled to Munnesvaram, or rather to the ruins of the temple there. He offered *puja* to the goddess in the ruins, and bathed in the tank next to the site. The skin disease cleared immediately and the king returned triumphantly to his capital, whereupon he ordered that a large bequest be made to Munnesvaram for temple repairs and reconstruction, as well as for the foundation and settlement of villages that would be clients of the temple. Thus the modern Munnesvaram came into existence.[55]

[55] *Domain of Constant Excess*, 48.

Bastin notes that this episode is a token of a common theme found in Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s, the "myth of the crippled king." David Shulman distills this theme—found in other vernacular South Indian literature, folklore, and late medieval *noṇṭināṭakam* ("cripple drama")—to an essence: it involves the conception of the king "as innately flawed, weighed down by an inescapable onus, and always in need of healing by some outside power such as a temple deity, Brahmin, or magician."[56] In relating the crippled king episode of Muṉṉesvaram, Bastin's informants sometimes substituted Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's name with others: Bhuvanekabāhu (it's unclear which one), Rājasiṃha II (r. 1635-87), and Kīrthi Srī Rājasiṃha (r. 1747-82), the latter two of whom are known to have financed renovations of the temple. Parākramabāhu VI made financial gifts to the temple as well, probably managed through his son, who would later in life acquire the regnal name of Bhuvanekabāhu VI (see below in this chapter). Kayavāku in the *TKP* participates in this motif as well (he is stricken with blindness and cured by Śiva in disguise). Kayavāku, as explained in greater detail below, corresponds to a 12th century ruler known to us through the *Mahāvaṃsa* and other sources (Gajabāhu II).

At the very least, the correspondence of the characters of Eḷāra in the *Mahavaṃsa* to King Manu of Tiruvārūr signals a shared participation in a set of

[56] *King and the Clown*, 92. Shulman elaborates on significance of the crippled king theme: "Like the image of *dharma* itself as an originally four-legged creature, that loses one of its legs each successive *yuga*, the dharmic ruler of the Kaliyuga, our present degenerate moment of time, is profoundly unbalanced, crippled, pathetically lacking the wholeness he is meant to symbolize." For *VP* and *YVM*'s account of the miraculous cure at Kirimalai of a Cōḻa princess suffering from an equine face and emaciated body, see *VP* v.15f., and Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 9f.

narratives between the early Pali chronicle tradition and medieval South India. I would argue that, in addition, the extension of the crippled king myth to *historical* kings of Sri Lanka, reveals an active effort on the part of Tamil authors to align the histories of Konesvaram and Muṉṉesvaram with documented dynastic chronology. Bastin's observation of equivocations in attribution of patronage from Bhuvanekabāhu, Rājasiṃha and Kīrthi Srī to "Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ" in the temple accounts of Muṉṉesvaram suggest however an easy slippage between the dicent (or documentary) mode associated with the Pali-Sinhala historiographical tradition, and the rhematic mode associated with Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s.

The story of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ also invites comparison with Sinhala "colonization myths," namely those of Prince Vijaya and Gajabāhu I (r. c. 171-93 CE). As discussed further in the following chapter, the *Mahāvaṃsa* records that, in addition to the brides for Vijaya and his party, the king of Madhurā supplied "craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds" for the fledgling colony in Laṅkā.[57] These immigrants (identified as "Pāṇḍyans") provided the stock for the future specialized laborers of the island, according to the text.

The other most famous account of the mass importation of people to Sri Lankan involves Gajabāhu I, a historical king of the 2nd century CE king who acquired legendary status as a national hero a millennium after his time. In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Gajabāhu is remembered simply as a loyal patron of the Buddhist religion and builder of temples and tanks. From the 13th century, however, his biography was enhanced in Sinhala literature and folklore. The *Pūjāvaliya* has

[57] *Mhv* 7.57.

Gajabāhu retrieving a group of Sinhala émigrés from Tamil South India who had initially made their way to the continent to do paid labor. By the 17th century *Rājāvaliya*, the story evolved into one of military conquest and retribution, in which Gajabāhu learned that 12,000 Sinhala people had been abducted by a Cola king during his father's reign. The king split the sea between Sri Lanka and India with an iron mace so that he and his army may pass, and demanded from the ruler of the Cōḻa country his own captive people in addition to 12,000 Tamils as recompense. The story is further supplemented with Gajabāhu's retrieval of the Buddha's begging bowl in addition to the anklet of Pattini (the Sri Lankan name of Kaṇṇaki, heroine of the *Cilappatikāram*, the Tamil epic).

Gananath Obeyesekere surmises that the specific number of 24,000 people returned from the Cōḻa country was invented to match the number of Keralan conscripts brought to Sri Lanka by Māgha during his destructive conquest in the early 13th century (given as 24,000 in the *Pūjāvaliya*).[58] No visit on the part of Gajabāhu to South India is mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, though a Sri Lankan king with his name (in its Tamil rendering as "Kayavāku") appears in a Tamil epic, the *Cilappatikāram*. This "synchronism," viewed in a positivist light, enticed some scholars to identify "Kayavāku" with the historical Gajabāhu. The later Sinhala tradition's assertion that Gajabāhu imported Pattini/Kaṇṇaki's anklet from Madurai led to the further speculation that the source of Sri Lankan Pattini worship (and its associated ritual corpus) lay with this king. Obeyesekere dismisses this possibility,

[58] See Obeyesekere, "Gajabāhu and the Gajabāhu Synchronism," as well as his remarks on the myth in *Cult of the Goddess Pattini.*

arguing that the entirety of the heroic biography of Gajabāhu was a later fabrication (as outlined above). The choice of Gajabāhu as a national hero of the distant past does indicate a knowledge of the *Cilappatikāram* (or at least indirectly the content thereof) among Sinhala Buddhists of the late medieval period however.

The rescue of these 12,000 Sri Lankans, along with the importation of 12,000 additional Tamil captives, Obeyesekere explains as a "colonization myth," providing a charter for the existence of South Indian peoples in Sri Lanka."[59] The *Rājāvaliya*, along with Sinhala *kaḍayim* and *vitti pot,* detail the specific cities and villages in which the imported people were settled by the king, along with the occupations at which they were employed. Such a myth is an etiological one, explaining the high concentration of non-Sinhala people in the island's west coast (as at Aluthgama and Chilaw). As Obeyesekere explains regarding these exogenous people,

> a charter had to be provided for explaining the obvious fact that they were alien, and yet, at the same time, show that they were *not* alien and really belonged to the country in which they were naturalized. This is a problem for any immigrant group in a larger society.[60]

The *TKP* account of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ does not function in precisely this way: although Trincomalee had a sizeable Buddhist population by the beginning of the 16th century, the region's Tamil population, the temple functionaries, and the members of the various Hindu castes responsible for the upkeep of Konesvaram were in no way "exogenous" or out of place in the linguistic and religious milieu of the island's north and east. Their presence did not need to be "accounted for" in the

[59] "Gajabāhu and the Gajabāhu Synchronism," 170.

[60] *Idem.*, 170.

manner of Tamil speaking communities in the island's predominantly Sinhala southwest. Rather, we can view Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's importation of the entire community of Konesvaram as a colonization myth *competing* with (or perhaps even *complimentary* to) those of Vijaya and Gajabāhu, though on a more local scale (i.e. limited to the Konesvaram Temple and the environs of Trincomalee).

In his examination of Sinhala accounts of South Indian settler communities in Sri Lanka (including those relating to Gajabāhu), Obeyesekere notes an expectation that newly arrived groups undertake service to a king (*rājakariya*) in order to establish their right to inhabit lands that fell under royal domain.[61] In this sense too the Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ colonization story parallels those of Vijaya and Gajabāhu—Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ "naturalizes" the newly arrived South Indians by conscripting them into royal service (the royal service of a Tamil, not Sinhala, king).

There is in addition a related set of Sinhala myths concerning "Karikāla," the legendary king of Kāñchipuram from whom Gajabāhu is supposed to have retrieved the 12,000 Sinhala captives. Karikāla was a well-known figure in both South India and Sri Lanka[62], and may have offered a template for Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ. From the 7th or 8th century, Karikāla was remembered in South India for his ability to control the flow of water in the Kāverī River, an accomplishment which, by the 14th century (in a Telugu rendering of a Kaṇṇada work, the *Navacōlacarita*), was accounted for not by the king's supernatural abilities but by his subjugation and enslavement of

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[61] *Buddhism, Nationhood and Cultural Identity*, 19f.

[62] Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas*, vol. 2, 31-36. On the integration of South Indian myths of King Karikāla into Sinhala folklore and literature, see Obeyesekere, "Gajabāhu and the Gajabāhu Synchronism," 171-74.

intransigent, neighboring kingdoms. In addition to building up the banks of the Kāverī, Karikāla's prisoners also constructed a tank somewhere in the region.[63]

Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ—like Karikāla a builder of bunds and tanks—renovates the temple at Mt. Kayilai which, according to the *TKP*, weds the waters of the Kāverī and Mahāveli, where the pearls of one flow into the other (and both of which represent the celestial Ganges flowing on earth). Indeed, "Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ" in Tamil means simply "builder of reservoirs." The depiction of Karikāla (or the King of Kāverī) in the *Pūjāvaliya* and *Rājāvaliya* is thoroughly negative, as he is an unprovoked invader of Sri Lanka and captor of a large number of innocent people. In other miscellaneous Sinhala literature Karikāla is sometimes presented in the same fashion as in the two historical works, and sometimes in a neutral light in association with other, unrelated mythological episodes. If the character of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ was indeed created as a response to Sinhala attitudes towards Karikāla, it is worth noting that he is portrayed as an entirely positive character in the *TKP*—a pious devotee and just king whose imported employees are not at all forced laborers. Adding credence to the hypothesis that the author of the *TKP* intended to associate Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ with Karikāla is the fact that Karikāla Cōḻa of Tanjore according to the *Bṛhadīśvaramahātmya* suffered from leprosy[64] (like Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, who is said to have been miraculously cured according to the temple literature of Muṉṉesvaram).

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[63] Though they do not mention Karikāla by name, Sinhala historical sources (the *Pūjāvaliya* and *Rājāvaliya*) made a connection with this this episode, claiming that in Gajabāhu's father's time, 12,000 Sinhala people were taken captive and put to work on the Kāverī (Obeyesekere, "Gajabāhu and the Gajabāhu Synchronism," 168-70).

[64] Shulman, *The King and the Clown*, 91.

Konesvaram in the *TKP* is a magnetic site of devotional attraction—forgotten and rediscovered cyclically. Once overgrown, Konesvaram must be again rendered habitable by an outside patron (from South India or, as the case may be, from the Gandharva realm). In this capacity Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ reprises the role of Vibhīṣaṇa, Susaṅgīta, and Maṉu, performing a renovation which occurs perhaps necessarily every *yuga* according to the *TKP*. Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's importation *en masse* of ritual and agricultural specialists from South India represents a "just so" story of the origin of Tamil Hindu religious community in Sri Lanka. Mention of the supremacy of Citamparam, the necessity of Pācupata priests at Konesvaram, and antecedent Sanskrit *purāṇa*-s in South India are all testament to the authors' cognizance of the temple's dependence on India historically, and of their participation in a literary-religious world beyond the shores of Sri Lanka.

§3.4 THE KŌṆĒCAR KALVEṬṬU

The *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu*, literally the "Inscription of Kōṇēcar [Temple]," is work in two parts attributed to one Kavirāca Varōtayaṉ. Fifty-three quatrain verses are followed by a prose section comprising thirty-four pages in the modern print edition.[65] Linguistic considerations and repeated mention of European colonial presence (including a "prophecy" concerning the destruction of Konesvaram) rule out an early date for the *KK*. The text's fixation on recovering lost treasure and documentation from the temple, in conjunction with its basic ordinances governing

[65] The *ciṟappuppāyiram* of the work itself states that the author composed the "*kalveṭṭu* verse half in story form" (*KK*, p.47). On the first print editions of the work, see Velupillai, "Historical Evaluation of Kōnēcar Kalveṭṭu," 95.

temple and social life make it most likely that the work was composed not long after the custodians of Konesvaram relocated to nearby Thambalagamam (around 1624).[66]

The *KK* is a *sui generis* work in terms of its style, organization and content. The verse format of the first portion of the text, outlining the temple's origins supplemented with an intervallic account of its sponsors, is a nod to the *tala-purāṇam* genre, and perhaps even to the *TKP* specifically. The late medieval/early modern period was a "golden age of caste histories," attested in South Indian works on the origins of hereditary occupational groups (and in the Sinhala context attested through works as the *Janavaṃśaya*, discussed in chapter 5.3 of this dissertation). As such, the *KK* may be viewed as participating in this genre, though its author is equally devoted to establishing the glory and antiquity of Konesvaram (in the wake of its destruction, presumably). The detailed verbal maps directing readers to several caches of subterranean riches at Konesvaram resemble Sinhala *nidhāna pot* or "treasure books," ola-leaf documents detailing the whereabouts of caches of wealth abandoned by ancient kings and other wealthy individuals.

The *KK* furthermore shares affinities with a unique South Indian Tamil text: the *Kōyil Oḻuku*, or the "Temple Record (or Register)" of the Ragnathaswamy Temple at Srīrangam. The *Kōyil Oḻuku* contains a chronicle of Ragnathaswamy Temple—from the founding Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas of the distant past, to the Khilji attack on

[66] The town of Thambalagamam lies twenty-three kilometers south of Konesvaram. Portuguese and Dutch accounts acknowledge the relocation of some of the devotional objects of Konesvaram to this location following its destruction. The Thambalagamam Śiva temple still holds an annual eighteen day festival in honor of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, involving a procession on foot from Thambalagama to Kantalai.

Srīrangam in the early 14th century, to subsequent restoration and royal patronage under the Vijayanagars, to an account of the arrival of John Wallace, a collector send by the British East India Company to oversee the Trichinopoly District (which took place in 1801). The chronicle is supplemented with descriptions of the procedures for temple rituals and honors, as well as a record of major donations to the temple. The *Kōyil Oḻuku* shows evidence of having been periodically updated by temple accountants, and draws from actual inscriptions on the walls and pillars of the temple to furnish its account of Ragnathaswamy's history (some of the inscriptions are quoted in the text).[67] By contrast, the *KK*—the "inscription of Konesvaram"—is not corroborated by Konesvaram's epigraphy (almost all of which was destroyed by the Portuguese). Clearly however its author (or authors) sought to project authority by purporting to include records of Konesvaram, perhaps in direct emulation of "Temple Record" of Ragnathaswamy.

Turning to an outline of the text itself: the prose section of the *KK* outlines the arrival of a king named Kayavāku, the Ārya Cakravarti dynasty, the settlement of families from South India (*cōḻa nāṭu*) in Sri Lanka, the establishment of the *vanni* chieftaincies around Trincomalee, and the history of Konesvaram including Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's activities there. The verse portion begins with a single verse account of "Varurāmatēvaṉ" ("the Cōḻa who followed the Laws of Manu"[68]) as in the TKP being drawn to Tirimalai (Konesvaram) having heard of its greatness. The work of

[67] Hari Rao, *Kōil Oḻugu*, viii-xi. A Tamil edition of the text edited by Śrī Kiruṣṇasvāmi Ayyaṅkār is published as *Kōyiloḻuku* (1976, printed in Tiruchirappalli).

[68] *maṉu nīti kaṇṭa cōḻaṉ.*

this king's son at Trincomalee constitutes the subject of the poem, with the author declaring:

> I shall sing (or compose) *as a single inscription* (*ōr kalveṭṭāy*) of the fragrant temple's mandapams, surrounded by jeweled walls, along with its temple towers; of the work of constructing tanks of plentiful water, and the work of constructing sacred rain-fed tanks (v.1).

The poem continues *in media res*, with Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ importing two *campa*-s of fine rice from the Cōḻa country to Konesvaram in order to conduct *pūja* to Śiva. Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ contemplates who will be able to fund the religious ceremonies of the temple in the future—the solution, of course, is that Konesvaram cannot depend on Indian imports, but must be made self-sufficient. Thus Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ departs for the Cōḻa country, bearing "all the tributes suitable for Cōḻa kings."[69] He recruits several clans (*kulam*-s) to carry out the various tasks required for temple operation: accountants, lamp-bearers, dancers (v.6), laborers (v.7), rice farmers (v.10), those in charge of oil production and storage (vv.15-18), as well as an executive overseer to run the city. Pācupata priests are brought from India in order to divine Siva's desires regarding further construction at the temple (vv.19-20).[70] For the sake of

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[69] The king departs "on the 15th day of the month of *paṅkuṉi*" (v.5).

[70] This episode also occurs in the TKP. The invitation to Jaffna of 512 Pācupatar is mentioned in the *ciṟappuppāyiram* of the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* (v.4). Velupillai suggests that the insistence in the tradition (i.e. in the *Cekarācacēkaramālai*, *TKP* and *KK*) that Pācupatar priests were officiates at Konesvaram probably reflects a historical reality: Pācupatar priests were prevalent in South India until the 12th c. when they were displaced by Śaiva Siddhanta Brahmin specialists in Tamil Nadu and (non-Brahmin) Vīra Śaivas in Karnataka. A similar shift may have taken place at Konesvaram (Velupillai, "Historical Evaluation of Kōnēcar Kalveṭṭu," 98). A verse from the *KK* states that the Pācupatar died when Kayavāku angrily came to the temple knowing that *pūja* was not being conducted properly. This has been interpreted to mean that the Pācupatar committed suicide in the face of the advancing Kayavāku (*KK*, p.86f.). In Nepal, the importation of Pācupata priests from south India to staff the Pashupatinath Temple of Kathmandu remains a longstanding tradition. According to Axel Michaels (2008), a Nepali document from 1734 requires that

regional agriculture, Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ builds a reservoir and fills it with water diverted from the Māvali River (v.23). He admonishes the temple staff on good conduct, emphasizing proper treatment of Brahmins, speaking of the negative consequences accruing from brahminicide and libel (v.12). Indolence with respect to temple duties and moral infractions are punishable by whipping (v.13). The king offers simple moral injunctions against adultery, lying and malice (v.14). Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's temple construction at Konesvaram is specified as having taken place 512 years after the start of Kali Yuga.[71]

The text includes a short interstitial section concerning an episode from the time of King Kayavāku. The section fills a narrative gap left by the TKP, explaining that Śiva *pūja* had ceased at Konesvaram because the resident Pācupata priests had died, and needed to be replaced by Vedic priests from India.[72] The prose portion proper of the *KK* begins with a list of six gems brought to Konesvaram by six kings, representatives of six different regions of south India. The recognizable names are Citamparam, Kāḷinga, and the Pāṇḍya country.[73] The text states that those who have accepted these gems are bound to do service to the temple, each according to their

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the priests of the Paśupatinātha Temple (called Paśupati-Bhaṭṭas) be Dravidian Teliṅgana (or Tailaṅgi) Brahmins belonging to the Smārta group, and that they come from south of the Vindhya Mountains. In 1984, four Bhaṭṭa Paśupatinātha priests came from Karnataka, including two from Gokarṇa. Thanks to Anne Mocko for alerting me to the Paśupati-Nepal connection.

[71] Specifically, on the 19th day of the month of Vaikāci, a full moon day (v.22).

[72] The section is simply entitled *Kayavāku rācaṉ*, pp. 99-101.

[73] The other three are Poṉṉavar (this could relate to *poṉṉi*, a common name of the Kāveri), Mahākompar, and Cempakar (p.102).

inherited occupation.[74] After a list of "five *paṇṭārattār*" (families designated as 'temple servants'[75]) come instructions for the correct administration of weddings and funerals[76], and an ordinance on the ritual hunting of wild pigs.[77]

Then follows an account of the accumulated wealth of the temple, beginning with the gifts of four kings: Kayavāku, Puvaṉēkakayavāku, and Pararācacēkaraṉ and Cekarācacēkaraṉ (whose donations are listed jointly).[78] From their order of appearance, these titles most likely correspond to Gajabāhu II, Bhuvanekabāhu VI (who reigned from Jaffna c. 1450-67), Ciṅkai Pararāca Cēkaraṉ (r. c. 1478–1519), and his son Caṅkili I (r. 1519–1561), known alternatively as Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ VII.

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[74] The gems are accepted by the Konesvaram superintendent (*tampirāṉ*), the king (*irācar*), the Vanniyar (*vaṉṉimai*), those of the agricultural caste (*kārāḷar*), the chiefs (*mīkāmar*), and those of the artisanal caste (*kammāḷar*).

[75] pp. 103-6. *Paṇṭārattār* is still today the name of a temple service caste in Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka (Velupillai, "Historical Evaluation of the Kōnēcar Kalveṭṭu," 98). "Baṇḍāra" as a Sinhala family name also appears in the literary record in the late medieval period, associated with landed families of central and southwestern Sri Lanka. Tambiah identifies this group as *pantarams* (non-Brahmin priests) of South India, who along with South Indian Brahmins emigrated and helped "to consolidate and differentiate the highest status of Sinhala *goyigama* of the *radala/mudaliyar* rank" (*Buddhism Betrayed?*, 153f.). As a title of a commander of armed forces, *baṇḍāra nāyakaya* appears on a list of other *nāyaka*-s in the early 14th c. *Daṁbadeṇi Asna* (*DA*, 5).

[76] *KK*, 106-8.

[77] *KK,* 108. The *KK's* short section on the pig hunt (the *tiruc cūkara vēṭṭai*) concerns the authorization of one "Tampirāṉ Māṇikkam" and his retinue to perform the ritual hunt, which includes the participation of two other local chiefs (a *vaṉṉipam* and Piḷḷaippaṇṭāram, apparently along with a number of bystanders). To the present day, an annual re-enactment of Śiva hunting a wild pig (the "sacred hunt," *tiruvēṭṭai*) is undertaken at the Kokkaddichcholai Śiva Temple south of Batticaloa (Dennis McGilvray, personal communication, 10-8-2015). The hunt is in connection with an episode in the *Mahābhārata*, in which Arjuna acquires the Pāśupatāstram from Śiva after the two of them jointly defeat the *rakṣasa* Muka, who has taken the form of a wild boar.

[78] The narrative is confused in this section, establishing Kayavāku Maharācan as the narrator before eventually conflating his voice with that of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ.

A short section on the "coming of the Āriya Cakkaravartti" records a prophecy of Kayavāku, foretelling of a future "disturbance of the Paraṅki" (*paṟaṅkik kalāpam*, referring to the Portuguese or to Europeans in general). Kayavāku recommends diligent worship of Śiva when this occurs, with the assurance that "two kings will descend in the Solar Lineage" in order to restore order on the island.[79]

The *KK* states that the exact amounts of land, gold, jewels, etc. donated by the kings are known thanks to the registry of the temple accountants (*karukala*-s), themselves having been appointed by Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ (v.6). Their cumulative record was preserved, we are told, thanks to an individual named Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ, who took the initiative to preserve the original registry and other temple documents. The *KK* relates the explanation of a temple accountant approached by an assembly of village headmen inquiring into the history of donations to Konesvaram:

> In the treasury of the ancient Kōṇaināyakar there is a great register (*periya caṇakka*), a manual of ritual rules (*vaḷamaippattati*), and ancient inscriptions (*ātiyāṉa kalveṭṭu*, perhaps in the sense of copper plates). In ancient times, King Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ kept a register—these are all with Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ of Tirunelvēli in the northern Cōḻa country.[80] In our hands are the income and expenditures which we review once a year, while the great register has come to Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ. These detailed accounts are with him.[81]

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[79] First Tirikayilaivaru Kaṉaka Kururāja Caiva Nāyaka, after him Virikiraṇattirikayilaivaru Kaṉakakururāja Vētanāyakam (p.111). Cf. the *YVM*, where it is predicted that after the French and Dutch unite to expel the British and confer rule of the island to a Sinhala king, two kings of the Ārya Cakravarti dynasty will rise up to rule over the fifty-seven countries, from Kanniya-kumara to the Himalayas (Brito, 27f.).

[80] The text later says that Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ resided in Nilāveli, a township in Trincomalee. Tirunelvēli may here refer to Kaṉakacuntara's ancestral homeland.

[81] *KK*, 113.

Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ is sought out by the headmen, who learn from him the specifics of what was given over to the temple by its patrons (689 *kaḷañcu*-s of gold, 634 *kaḷañcu*-s of jewelry given by Vararāmatevar, 8481 *kaḷañcu*-s of gold, 9512 *kaḷañcu*-s of jewelry given by Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, and so on). After Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ's litany of royal generosity, the *KK* explains that, in addition to the temple storeroom, the accumulated wealth of Konesvaram is buried in seven places around the temple tank. A detailed verbal map is given to the locations of two of the treasures: one buried in a cauldron beneath a hexagonal stone with an inscription in Dēvanāgari (the text does not specify what is inscribed) to the north of the tank on the temple premises; the other that of the main storehouse of the donations of the eight great royal patrons, accessible through a secret passageway beneath the temple steps, guarded by a five-headed cobra and a Vairava spirit.[82]

The *KK* gives the impression of having been written with preservationist intentions, relating a chain of custody of temple documents from Konesvaram's resident accountants to an interested public notary named Kaṉakacuntarap Perumāḷ to finally the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu*, the "inscription of Konesvaram," itself. Detailed descriptions of the realia of Konesvaram (sometimes hyperbolic, sometimes realistic) suggest that the author had firsthand knowledge of the temple premises, and was concerned to communicate them to posterity.

[82] *KK*, 115f.

§3.5 INTERSECTING HISTORIES

A. GAJABĀHU II

"Kayavāku" is a name of a legendary status in the historical works of Konesvaram: The *TKP* identifies him as belonging to the same ancestral line (*marapu*) as Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ; the *KK* makes him one of the seven or eight historical sponsors of the temple, with its prose section at times confusing his narration with that of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ; the *Tirikōṇācala Purāṇam*, a lengthy 18th century Tamil narrative poem, dedicates itself largely to Kayavāku's benefactions at Konesvaram.[83] Unlike Maṉu Nīti Cōḻaṉ and Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ (who most likely do not correspond to any actual historical figures) "Kayavāku" on a number of grounds may be identified as Gajabāhu II, cousin of Parākramabāhu I and king of Anuradhapura, c. 1131-1153.

Gajabāhu II is remembered with some ambiguity in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Parākrama is furious that Gajabāhu has "turned the Rājaraṭṭha into a briar patch of those with wicked [religious] views (*pāpadiṭṭhino*)," while elsewhere exuding lofty praise for his cousin, calling him a politic ruler who chose his officers well.[84] According to the text, Parākrama even rescues Gajabāhu from certain death at the hands of their bellicose mutual cousin, Mānābharaṇa.

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[83] On the *Tirikōṇācala Purāṇam*, see Pathmanathan, "Multiple Centres of Authority in Medieval Sri Lanka," 214.

[84] Parākrama declares that his cousin "belongs to the breed of great men" (*Cv* 70.277, see also 71.18).

The epigraphic record confirms Gajabāhu to have been religiously eclectic. Inscriptions record his support of Śaiva temples[85], images of Viṣṇu[86], and Buddhist vihāras alike. Though the *Mahāvaṃsa* has it that the Tooth and Bowl relics of the Buddha were removed from Polonnaruva to Rohaṇa due to the anti-Buddhist activities of Gajabāhu's father (Vikramabāhu)[87], this does not seem to have impaired his ability to function as a ruler, nor did it irreparably tarnished his relationship with the Sangha. Indeed it was the monks of the three fraternities in Polonnaruva who negotiated for his life during his final defeat by Parākrama.[88] Corroborating Gajabāhu's connection to Kantalai referenced in the *TKP* (where Kayavāku has his sight restored by Śiva), the *Mahāvaṃsa* concludes its account of Gajabāhu with his retirement to this location[89] (further confirmed by a Tamil inscription recording his gift to a Brahmin community there[90]).

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[85] Gajabāhu left a Tamil inscription at Śiva Dēvālē No.1 in Polunnaruva (Kularatna, "Tamil Place Names in Ceylon," 487). A Sinhala inscription from Mātalē records Gajabāhu's acknowledgment in the form of this and other inscriptional pillars for the monetary gifts of on Dā-perä-Raňgi-dāge Hinābi towards a festive offering to Skandha (Murugan) (Godakumbura, "Kapuruvaduoya Pillar-Inscription" [*EZ* V.38], 396).

[86] Codrington, "An Inscription of Gaja Bāhu II," 59.

[87] Specifically, the chronicle charges that Vikramabāhu gave villages entrusted for the maintenance of Buddhist institutions to members of his court, quartered foreign soldiers in Buddhist vihāras, and that he misappropriated from offerings intended for the Alms-bowl and Tooth relics of the Buddha (*Cv* 61.54-62).

[88] *Cv* 70.327-329.

[89] The place name is Gaṅgātaṭāka (*Cv* 71.1-5).

[90] This inscription gives Gahabābu's full title as *śrī (i)laṅkēśvaran gajabāhudēvar* (Swaminathan, "An Inscription of Gajabāhu II," 46), *ilaṅkēśvara* also being the title of the 11th c. Cōḻa regent who recorded his infrastructural expenditures in an inscription at Kantalai (Indrapala, "An Inscription from the 10th year of Cōḻa Laṅkeśvara Deva," 94).

The author's ambiguous treatment of Gajabāhu (as well as his depiction of the behavior of Parākrama) in the *Mahāvaṃsa* signals an aporia in the narrative logic of this portion of the chronicle: Lankan kings were faithful patrons of the Sangha, but also sometimes supported those of those of "wicked" or false religious views (*pāpadiṭṭhi*). While the *Mahāvaṃsa* allows this tension to sit, subsequent vernacular chroniclers were less comfortable with it. Gajabāhu is excised entirely from three of the most widely circulated Sinhala historical works: the *Pūjāvaliya* (13th c.), *Rājaratnākaraya* (16th c.), and *Rājāvaliya*, with royal succession passing directly from Vikramabāhu to Parākramabāhu.[91] Gajabāhu, the memory of whom is celebrated memory in the Tamil historiographic tradition, is intentionally forgotten in the Sinhala.

It is possible that this *damnatio memoriae* became standardized to make room for, and avoid confusion with, Gajabāhu I (separated by a millennium from Gajabāhu II, and bearing no relation to him, other than the shared regnal name). Kayavāku of the *TKP* and *KK* reflects a figure rooted in historical fact though molded by *tala-purāṇa* tropology (becoming another token of "the crippled king"). He is in this respect unique from Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, whose personage seems to have been invented for the purpose of matching or competing with seminal figures in the Sinhala Buddhist historical imaginaire (Vijaya, Gajabāhu I, Karikāla). Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's irrigation projects (described extensively in the *KK*) serve as an affirmation of Tamil

[91] Gajabāhu is listed among the monarchs of the 14th c. *Nikāyasaṅgrahava*, though no details of his reign are given (Fernando, *Nikāya Saṇgrahawa*, 20).

primacy in infrastructural accomplishments, so vastly important in the Pali and Sinhala historiographical tradition in connection with Buddhist regents.[92]

B. BHUVANEKABĀHU VI

While there is no indication that Gajabāhu II himself bore the epithet of "Śrī Sangha Bodhi" (as the *TKP* suggests[93]), the title did belong to two famed southern interlopers in the northern kingdom: King Parākramabahu VI (r. 1410-67) and his adopted son, Sapumal Kumāra. Parākramabāhu VI is unanimously remembered as great patron of Buddhism[94], and his efforts towards monastic reform clearly

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[92] Construction of tanks and canals is listed along with other architectural and patronage activities of rulers in the *Mhv*. Lists of Buddhist royal hydrological accomplishments are expanded in later Sinhala historiography, such as the final section of the 13th c. *Pūjāvaliya* and the 17th c. *Rājāvaliya*. Tamil historiographies attribute the 3,263 acre reservoir at Kantalai, one of the largest in Sri Lanka to Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ. Pali and Sinhala materials assign its original construction to Aggabodhi II (r.604-14 CE) who, according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, built tanks at Giritaṭāvapi and Gaṅgātaṭāvapi (*Cv* 42.67). Gaṅgātaṭāvapi is traditionally identified with Kantalai (Tennent, *Ceylon*, v.2, 484; Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, xliii; Goldschmidt, "Notes on Ancient Simhalese Inscriptions," 41). A Tamil inscription at Kantalai records the maintenance of the regional irrigation system by King Śri Caṅkavaṉmar *alias* Śri Cōḻa Ilaṅkeśvara Tēvar in his 10th regnal year. Astrological calculations date the inscription to either 1033 or 1047 CE. This individual was likely a brother of Rājendra I or a son of Rājādhirāja I, appointed by the latter during the 11th c. Tamil occupation of northern Sri Lanka (Indrapala, "An Inscription from the 10th year of Cōḻa Laṅkeśvara Deva," 82-85).

[93] Kiribamune, "Royal Consecration in Medieval Sri Lanka," 18; Paranavitana, "Two Tamil Pillar Inscriptions" [*E*Z 3 (no.33)], 311. Gajabāhu was due to inherit the title of Śrī Saṅgha Bodhi from his father, Vīrabāhu, though it does not appear in the textual, numismatic or epigraphic record associated with him. Kiribamune suggests that Gajabāhu never received official consecration as king owing to unwritten but "time-honoured strictures against non-Buddhists who attempted to gain the throne."

[94] Parakramabāhu's Buddhist patronage is recorded in nearly all the major historical works of the period. See *Cv* 91.15-36 and Karunaratne, *Rājaratnākaraya.* 68. In the *KS* he is referred to as "an aspirant to Buddha-hood, who fills his ear with the ambrosia of the Tripiṭaka preached by the Omniscient One" (v.142). The *Cv* does not mention any of the king's Hindu activities (in contrast with the *sandēśa* poems, which describe the Śiva temple at Kōṭṭē as rivaling the Temple of the Tooth in splendor). The *Kōkila Sandēśaya* calls the king "an aspirant to Buddha-hood," who "fills his ear with the ambrosia of the Tripitaka preached by the Omniscient One" (v.142). The *Girā Sandeśaya*, written some time shortly

indicate that he was invested in the moral stature and public perception of the Sangha.[95] The literary record also reflects however that his court at Kōttē was one of obvious religious inclusivism and linguistic diversity.[96]

Prince Äpāṇa, who would become Parākramabāhu VI, was born around the year 1395 to a son of Parākramabāhu V and a mother (Sunetradevī) said to be of Kāliṅgan descent.[97] Two nephews of Alakeśvara III (Vīra Alakeśvara and Vīrabāhu Ādipāda) controlled much of the southwest at that point, while the prince seems to have lived out his youth in obscurity (perhaps even in hiding) at Rayigama.[98] Vīra

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after 1450, praises Parākramabāhu VI for his Buddhist enthusiasm and for his defeat of the Āyracakravartis (Godakumura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 195f.).

[95] See Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 125-28.

[96] This subject is discussed in detail in chapter 5. The *sandēśa* poems composed during Parākramabāhu VI's reign, although all written by Buddhist monks, contain numerous references to temples and sites of veneration of Hindu deities (Viṣṇu, Skanda and Vibhīṣaṇa, prominently, and even Śiva occasionally).

[97] Geiger, *Cūlavaṃsa*, v.2, p.216, n.4. The *Mhv* and Sinhala chronicles such as the *Rājaratnākaraya* and *Rv* are unclear on the genealogy of Parākramabāhu VI. For a chart of Paranavitana's reconstruction of royal marriages of the period, see Figure 1. Parākramabāhu VI, like his grandfather and great-grandfather (Parākramabāhu V and Vijayabāhu V), is identified as a member of the "Savulu" family (Godakumbura, "Medawala Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* 5.1 no.47]). The *Rājaratnākara* explains that the family name in Sri Lanka traces to a princess, born of the egg of a peahen and given to a Mauryan prince in marriage, who accompanied the Bodhi Tree to the island along with Sangamitta in the 3rd c. BCE. The legend indicates that Vijayabāhu V "was an upstart, and was not related to the rulers who enjoyed the sovereignty of the Island before he rose into prominence" (Paranavitana, "Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigama," 637). The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* says that Parākramabāhu VI succeeded Parākramabāhu V (of Dädigama) of the Meheṇavara-vaṃsa (Fernando, *Nikāya Saṅgrahawa*, xviii).

[98] Though the text is confused on the matter, the *Rv* relates that when the prince Äpāṇa's father was kidnapped by an expeditionary force from China, his mother sought refuge at the Vīdāgama monastery in their native town of Rayigama. The *Rv* relates that the young heir grew up under the supervision of the temple prelate, who sheltered him from the agents of Alakēśvara in a nearby village (Rukule in the Four Kōraḷē-s). The *Rv* and other Sinhala sources maintain that it was at the instigation of the prelate of Vīdāgama that prince was installed on the throne at the age of sixteen (nothing is said of Chinese intervention).

Alakeśvara was taken prisoner by an expeditionary force led by Zheng He (Cheng Ho) in c. 1411, after which time the Chinese held a referendum among Vīra Alakeśvara's retinue which had been captured or voluntarily come along to Nanjing. Prince Äpāṇa, who had a legal title of descent, was elected to the throne (replacing Vīra Alakeśvara whom the Chinese identified as anathema to the Buddhist religion).[99] The prince, coronated Parākramabāhu VI, ruled from Kōṭṭe, where he had a daughter[100], adopted a pair of brothers (one of whom would succeed him as king[101]), and also adopted a third son who took vows at an early age and is known to us by his monastic name of Śrī Rāhula.[102] A prolific literary figure of the 15th

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Alakēśvara III at that time was put to death, some sources say by the hand of Parākramabāhu himself. Parakrama ruled three years from Rayigama before moving his court to Kōṭṭe.

[99] Paranavitana, "The Kōṭṭe Kingdom," 660-70.

[100] The princesses Lōkanāthā (once married known as Ulakuḍaya Dēvi).

[101] From whom Sapumal and Ambuḷugala were adopted is nowhere explicitly recorded. Ilangasinha (1992: 43) and Strathern (2007: 127), following Holt (1991:116)) speculate that Sapumal was a South Indian (perhaps a Malayāli) by birth on the basis of a reference in Couto's *History of Ceylon*: "In the time of [Parākramabāhu VI] there arrived at the city of Cota from the opposite coast a *panical* of the caste of those kings, a man of great activity and sagacity, whom the king welcomed, and married him to a woman of rank, by whom he had two sons and a daughter; these lads were brought up in companionship with the prince, with whom there was also a first cousin of these lads, the son of a sister of his mother's" (68f.). It is also possible that the two were the children of a provincial baron of the central highlands (Sumanasuriya makes such a speculation (*KS*, p.14)). Assuming that the prince whom Parākramabāhu VI appointed to take control of Ambuḷugala (northwest of Gampola in the Four Kōraḷē-s) was Sapumal's younger brother (called "Ambuḷugala," who held some position of authority there by the time Sapumal became king), then both brothers according to the *Rājāvaliya* are "descended from the Gampola royal dynasty which belonged to the solar race" (Suraweera (2000), 65). It is unclear though whether or not this appointment refers to Sapumal's sibling or to Parākramabāhu's *own* brother. On possible references to Sapumal in Sri Lankan Tamil literature, see §3.5.

[102] Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 88. Tradition identifies Śrī Rāhula as the son of a prince named Vikramabāhu and a noblewoman named Sīlavatī, though this information is not confirmed in contemporary documents.

century, Śrī Rāhula lived most of his life at the monastic college at Toṭagamuva, from which he headed the Gāmavāsi school.[103]

Prince Sapumal, one of three adopted children of the king, was brought up along with his younger brother, identified as Prince Ambulugala in the *Rājāvaliya*.[104] Demonstrating an aptitude for military leadership at a young age, Sapumal was given command of a substantial contingent of his father's army and dispatched to Jaffna.[105] After several campaigns, Sapumal prevailed against the northern kingdom,

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[103] See §6.1, below.

[104] Couto recounts that Sapumal was one of "two sons and a daughter" belonging to a *panical* "of the opposite coast" (i.e. South India) who had married a woman of rank at Kōṭṭe, having been authorized to do so by Parākramabāhu VI himself (*History of Ceylon*, 68f.). Obeysekere interprets *panical* as T. *paṇikkaṉ*, determining that Sapumal's "father was a gymnast (*panikka*) from Kerala and mother a Sinhala princess from the Four Korales" (*The Doomed King*, 245). The *Rv* is unclear on whose "younger brother" it was that ruled at Ambulugama. We can discern from context that this position was held first by the younger brother of Parākramabāhu VI, dispatched to the Four Koraḷes in order to bring it within the domain of the royal family. By the time Sapumal had seized the throne at Kōṭṭe (c. 1469) however, it was clearly *his* brother ("Prince Ambulugala") who was charged with the task of quieting a rebellion in the Pasyodun Kōralē (Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 65f.). That Sapumal's brother acceded to a position of authority in the Kōraḷē-s is confirmed by Couto (*History of Ceylon*, 69). Ambulugama went on to rule as *yuvaraja* in the Four Kōralēs when his brother acceded to the throne at Kōṭṭe, though his influence in the hill country was occluded by that of Senasammata Vikramabāhu who occupied the throne of Kandy from 1469 to 1511. Parākrama's biological daughter, Ulakuḍaya Dēvi, would marry a Tamil prince named Nallurutunayā. Spelling differences appear in the various Sinhala renderings of the prince's name, though all are obvious derivatives/corruptions from the Tamil original: *nallūr taṉayaṉ*, "son of Nallūr." See Couto, *History of Ceylon*, 68 + n.10, and also Dealtry, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhala Literary Works*, 213. "Lord of Nallūr" is an epithet of Skanda in Sri Lanka, and it is more likely that Nallurutanayā's name derives from this connection than from a geographical one (e.g. Nallūr at Jaffna or one of the several "Nallūr-s" of present day Tamil Nadu).

[105] Sapumal's title during this phase of his career is given as "Senānāyaka."

"flooding the streets of Yāpāpaṭuna with enemy blood," forcing the Ārya Cakravarti king into exile.[106]

The balance of the evidence suggests however that, despite his violent arrival, Sapumal lived comfortably at Jaffna, with little friction from the northerners whose land he occupied.[107] It is imperative to recognize first of all that the prince's invasion of Jaffna was not one of "Sinhala" conquering "Tamil," as Sapumal himself grew up in an intensely bilingual environment, and (with the authorization of his father) governed in a manner respectful to both Buddhist and Hindu institutions. The *Kōkila Sandeśaya*, a Sinhala messenger poem written in commemoration of the prince's victory in the north, records that his victorious army was made up of "Demiḷa" (Tamil) troops, along with Sinhaḷas, Maḷalas and Doḷuvaras.[108] Indeed

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[106] *KS*, v.269. Other Sinhala sources say that the Ārya Cakravarti was killed and his family transported as captives to Kōṭṭe.

[107] The *KS* describes Sapumal as residing at Jaffna "seated on the lion-throne, duly protecting the *sāsana* of the Silent Sage (the Buddha), perpetually resembling the moon in the sky of this glorious Laṅkā" (v.272).

[108] v.257. The practice of employing South Indian conscripts was not unusual at this time: The *Mukkara Haṭana* records that Parākramabāhu VI summoned professional soldiers from Kāñcīpura, Kāvēripaṭṭanam and Kīlakkarai in order to expel the Mukkura forces encamped at Puttalam (Raghavan, *The Karāva of Ceylon*, 16; see also Roberts (1982: 25) who locates a similar account in the *Irugal Bandaravalīya*). The *KS* offers the curious detail that Sapumal "smashed the Kannada forces" (*kannaḍi sen biṅdi*) at Jāvaka-Koṭṭaya (Chavakachcheri, on the Jaffna peninsula) in the course of his northern campaign (v.242). If Sapumal and his father employed mercenaries of various South Indian provenance, the Āryacakravarti of Jaffna may have done the same. For evidence of large-scale movement of mercenaries to the island in the mid-15th c., see Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, p.11. Two references to Parākramabāhu VI's military involvement with Kannada people appear in the *PS*. The first may be in reference to the success at Jāvaka-Koṭṭaya related in the *KS*, the second is unclear. Parākramabāhu is said to have "crushed the pride of the Kannaḍi-s" (*PS*, v.51), with the following two verses celebrate the defeat of the "royal clan of the Ārya Cakravartis" (*sakviti rajakula*) and that of one Kūruḍayan Mālavarāraya, the latter taking place "in the city of the Cōḷas" (*soḷiyā pura*)). The poem also boasts that the king "destroyed the gate of Kannaḍipura, employing great, dark elephants" (v.79). A (no doubt hyperbolic) list of Indian languages in which the king receives praise appears at v.86, casting doubt on the

Sapumal possessed a conspicuously Tamil Hindu moniker in the memories of the informants of Portuguese chroniclers: Campaka Perumāḷ.[109]

Sapumal remained at Jaffna for seventeen years, the last two of which he seems to have spent planning a return to Kōṭṭe in order to take the kingdom from Parākramabāhu's grandson, Jayabāhu, who acceded to the throne in 1467.[110] Sapumal took for himself the coronary name of Bhuvanekabāhu (VI), and it is likely that he operated under this title during his final years in the northern kingdom. A forested tract of land in the regions bears the name "Puvaṉiṅka Vaṭṭai," alongside other locations with names resembling those of south Indian generals employed by the kingdom of Kōṭṭe.[111] The name "Bhuvanekabāhu" appears in connection with Nallūr Kantacāmi temple to Murugan at Jaffna in several records, indicating that the

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factuality of putative continental military exploits described elsewhere in the poem. The status quo ethnic valence of the (implicitly "Sinhala") kingdom of Kōṭṭe at war with the "Demalas" to the north appears in the roughly contemporary *Girā Sandēśaya*. Here Parākramabāhu VI is said to have defeated an army at Rāmāpatuna (Rāmeśvaram), "crushing the pride of the mighty Tamil forces (*demala baḷasen man mäṅḍa*), who perpetually thirst for battle" (v.150). The *PS* also calls the king "a crown worn on the heads of the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya dynasties" (v.56, cf. v.130).

[109] Queirós renders this ""Chambā-pera-Mali" (*The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, I.48). Couto refers to the prince as "Quebá Permal, king of Jafanapataõ" (*History of Ceylon*, 69). "Sapu" is the Sinhala rendering of *campaka* (*sapu-mal* meaning simply "Campaka flower"). P.E. Pieris cites a Sinhala mss. (a version of the *Rājāvaliya*?) giving an account of Sapumal's heroics in the Jaffna campaign wherein he receives the epithet "Āriya Väddaiyārum Perumāḷ" ("Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna," 15).

[110] Both the *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Rājaratnakaraya* call Parākramabāhu VI's grandson "Jayabāhu" (*Cv* 92.1-2; Karunaratne, *Rājaratnākaraya*, 69), while he is elsewhere referred to as "Vīraparākramabāhu." On the likelihood that Sapumal left in place a retainer named "Vijayabāhu" at Jaffna (subsequently killed by Pararāca Cēkaraṉ, son of Kaṉakacūriya Ciṅkai Āriyaṉ, during the reconquest of the city), see Somaratne, *Political History of Kotte*, 152.

[111] Pieris, "Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna," 17.

shrine was an object of Sapumal's patronage.[112] This is not at all implausible given that Sapumal and his father supported Hindu institutions in addition to the Buddhist Sangha, including some in the north. An inscription at Muṉṉēśvaram dating to the 38th year of Parākramabahu VI's reign (c. 1450, the year of Sapumal's conquest of Jaffna) records the donation of proceeds from nearby land to the priests of the Śiva temple there (though the record still affirms that Parākrama "adores the lotus-like feet of the Buddha").[113] Contemporary Sinhala literature reveals that Parākramabāhu VI supported one temple to Śiva and one to Skanda at his capital of Kōṭṭe[114], meaning that Sapumal's patronage of Kantacāmi would have been far from scandalous (and indeed, to the contrary, most likely expected).

Accepting that Sapumal was remembered in the Tamil north by his coronary name of "Bhuvanekabāhu," we may more easily account for the *KK*'s reference to "Puvaṉēka-kayavāhu's" activity at "Muṉīccaram Pati" (on the basis of Parākramabāhu's contributions to Muṉṉesvaram, executed when Sapumal was in control of the region). The *KK* also numbers "Puvaṉēka-kayavāhu" among the seven

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[112] Until the 20th century, the daily praise verse (*kaṭṭiyam*) recited at the Nallūr Kantacāmi shrine named "Bhuvanekabāhu" as a founder (or re-founder) of the temple. The *kaṭṭiyam* gives his full title in royal style in Sanskrit: *sūryya-kula vaṁśotbhava śrī saṁkhabodhi bhuvaneka bāhu* (Codrington, "The Problem of the Kotagama Inscription," 220; see also Rasanayagam, *Ancient Jaffna*, 332). "Buvanēkā Vāku" is mentioned in the *Kailāya Mālai* as "a learned Brahmin of Madura and of a high family," appointed by King Siṅkai Ariyaṉ as Prime Minister of the kingdom, stationing him at Nallūr (Mootootambi Pillai, *Kailaya Malai*, 281). The colophon record that it was Buvanēkā Vāku who "built the town of Jaffna and a temple for Skanda at Nallūr." On possible variant manuscript readings of relevant sections of the *Kailaya Mālai*, see Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples*, 371, n.31. Pathmanathan accepts the identity of this "Buvanēkā Vāku" with Prince Sapumal (2006: 352ff.; 2015a: 380-83).

[113] Pathmanathan, "The Munnesvaram Tamil Inscription," 68.

[114] See chapter 6.

or eight historical patrons of Konesvaram, designates him "a member of our clan" (*eṅkaḷ kulattu*), suggesting that he belongs to the same lineage as Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ and Kayavāku.[115] The hypothesis that Sapumal operated with all the necessary accouterments of a king of the island is buttressed by a surprising discovery by the Portuguese a century later: a tooth relic of the Buddha at Jaffna. Couto records that the relic was brought from the "principle *pagoda*" of Jaffna (presumably Nallūr Kantacāmi Temple) and given to the Portuguese viceroy overseeing operations there.[116] There is no record of any Cōḻa or Ārya Cakravarti king possessing a tooth relic, an unsurprising fact given that these rulers had nothing invested in the royal symbolism so important to their Sinhala neighbors.

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[115] The full description of "Puvaṉēkakayavāku" in the prose portion of the *KK* reads as follows: "The king called "Puvaṉēkakayavāku Maharāca" – who belongs to our clan, who planned a temple at Muṉīccaram Pati and restored the Tirukkōṇēcar Siva Temple – performed *pūja* with regularity. Hearing of the excellence of the Lord of Tirikayilai [sic], he bathed in Pavanācam tank, circumambulating and worshipping the feet of Kōṇanāyakar. Giving wealth equaling the amount of his body weight (*taṅkakkaṭṭiyāṟṟulāvāmum ēṟṟi*), giving 1090 golden, gem-studded ornaments to the deity, performing consecration, giving treasure to be placed in the store room, he gave jewelry to all those doing service to the temple, entering it into the account of the Karukulas (see v.6). Planting thousands of coconut, mango, mahua and mango trees, he created a great number of flower gardens and returned to his city (i.e. Kōttē?). During the days for which he ruled the country for a long time, by the grace of Siva he was blessed with a son named Maṉuṉēkakayavāku. When his son prospered, Buvanekakayavaku attained the feet of Siva" (p.110). Written one hundred years later, the *YVM* presents Sapumal as an unwanted intruder, who "tyrannized over the Tamils, compelling them to adopt the Sinhala dress, manners and habits, and severely punished them if they followed their own ancient practices." The *YVM* refers to the usurper confusingly as "Vijayavāku," though this figure must be identified as Sapumal on the basis of chronology as well as the fact that he is said to have reigned seventeen years at Jaffna (Brito, 24f.).

[116] Couto, *History of Ceylon*, 191. In around the year 1560, Dom Constantino brought the tooth from Jaffna to Colombo with the intention of selling it to the King of Pegu. Objecting to the notion of profiting from such an idol of heathendom, the Archbishop of Goa ordered the tooth publically ground up in a mortar instead (211-14).

The most probable scenario is that Sapumal, in crowning himself successor to Parākramabāhu preemptive to his return to Kōṭṭe, spared no expense in outfitting himself with all the trappings of Buddhist kingship (it was no issue to leave the tooth relic in Jaffna knowing that he could always return if repulsed in the south, and also that another relic (that of his father, inherited by Jayabāhu) awaited him at Kōṭṭe). That Sapumal was regarded as the rightful successor to his father by at least some, and that he operated under the title "Bhuvanekabāhu" during his final years at Kōṭṭe is suggested in a land grant of the Aramkälē Vihāra, which records that Vīḍāgama Maitreya, head of the Vanavāsi ordination lineage, made a special visit to preach the Dhamma to him at Yāpā-paṭuna.[117] One version of the *Rājāvaliya* records that his father's prime minister, one Ekanāyaka Mudaliya, sent Sapumal a written message informing him of his nephew's accession to the vacant throne.[118] Diogo do Couto, based on the records available to him, also narrates that Sapumal was invited to take the throne at Kōṭṭe for himself by a relative (Jayabāhu having proven himself a hopeless incompetent).[119] Indeed at the council convened upon Parākramabāhu's death to elect his successor, a contingent of Buddhist Theras appeared to favor Sapumal over Jayabāhu.[120] In addition to the support of Viḍāgama Maitreya,

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[117] The record is the *Aramkälē Sannasa* (Jayatilaka, *Siṃhala Sāhitya Lipi*, 138 + n.147f.).

[118] Somaratna, *The Kingdom of Kotte*, 139: the version of the *Rv* is a mss. entitled *Yavarājasiṅha-valiya* (Or. 6606-88, fol. 2).

[119] Couto records a more complicated picture of succession following Parākramabāhu's death, in which Sapumal was invited from Jaffna by a female relative (possibly the aunt of Jayabāhu) who was *de facto* ruling Kōṭṭe at the time (*History of Ceylon*, 69f.).

[120] Somaratna, *The Kingdom of Kotte*, 139, citing K.D.P. Wickramasinhe, *Kōṭṭe Yugaye Siṃhala Sāhityaya*, 66-70; *Säḷalihiṇi Sandeśaya*, vv. 98-108; and *AY*, 24.

Gāmavāsi monks were willing to chant *pirit* for Sapumal once he had been installed at Kōṭṭe.[121]

The returner-king's role in the religious and political affairs of the southwest remained complex, as were the attitudes of others towards him. Once officially king, Bhuvanekabāhu VI was, like his adoptive father, a recognized patron of the Buddhist Sangha, famously receiving a monastic envoy from Burma[122], and appointing Vīḍāgama Maitreya to the station of *rāja-guru* (Buddhist religious advisor to the king). As discussed further in chapter 6, Vīḍāgama Maitreya represented a more conservative (approaching anti-Hindu) Buddhist voice than his predecessor in office (Sapumal's adoptive brother, Śrī Rāhula, himself head of the Gāmavāsi fraternity).

On the surface, there is nothing to suggest that Bhuvanekabāhu VI ran his kingdom in any way radically different from his father. It is a historical curiosity, then, that an uprising against him, spawned by a feudal lord of the Pasyodun Kōraḷē (one Srī Vardhana), should have been branded the *siṃhala peraḷi*, or "insurrection of the Sinhalas."[123] The *siṃhala peraḷi* was not successful (it was put down with the help of those loyal to the king in the Seven Kōraḷē-s and with that of his biological brother, ruling at Ambulugama), and Bhuvanekabāhu would go on to reign until his death. Nonetheless, the *siṃhala peraḷi* configures in the evidence of modern historians positing a recognizable and continuous form of Sinhala self-perception

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[121] Somaratna, *The Kingdom of Kotte*, 139.

[122] Recorded in the Kelaniya inscriptions of Dharmaceti (Sein Ko "The Kalyani Inscriptions of Dharmaceti" 42ff.). For other donative records, see Rhys Davids (1870-71).

[123] *Rv*, 219; in other sources also referred to as the "*siṃhala samage.*"

("ethnic consciousness"—religious, linguistic, and consanguineous) among Sri Lankan Buddhists in the premodern period. There is a temptation to view the "insurrection of the Sinhalas" as evidence that some believed Bhuvanekabāhu VI to have been a *non-Sinhala*, and that a more rightful heir to the throne ought to take his place (Sapumal's adopted status and possible South Indian heritage could have stirred resentment of some Buddhists who sought to have him deposed). It is indeed hard to ignore the stark branding of the insurrection as one of "Sinhala" v. foreign usurper—a call-to-arms resonant with the battles of the greatest national heroes (Duṭṭhagāmiṇī, Parākramabāhu I). As Alan Strathern observes, such a rhetorical strategy

> resounded strongly enough with a wider audience for it to have lent an enduring name to the conflicts in the 'Sinhala insurrection.' Indeed, the name itself is the main reason why one would entertain the possibility of an ethnic element to these events in the first place because the alternative explanation of it remains puzzling. It is difficult to think of another example from comparative history where the name of an ethnic or linguistic group has been invoked simply to reflect the widespread extent of a revolt—that is to say, without the central authority being distinguishable on ethnic or linguistic grounds.[124]

On the other hand, it is unclear what line Sapumal-Bhuvanekabāhu crossed in order to inspire such enmity. The immediate assumption among historians of more ethnic essentialist persuasion is that he violated the sensibilities of the Buddhist populace by being "too Hindu," "too Tamil," or by having the wrong pedigree. But a more simple explanation may be in order: it is possible that the king disrupted the previous status quo of feudal tenure in the Pasyodun Kōraḷē and other provinces, promising an inordinate number of land grants to the military commanders and

[124] "Identity in the 'Sinhala Rebellion,'" 19.

court officials he brought with him from Jaffna to Kōṭṭe.[125] The *siṃhala peraḷi* may more easily have been the expression of the collective angst of a handful of disenfranchised noblemen, rather than the popular outpouring of a "deep-rooted ethnic animosity" (to use K.N.O. Dharmadasa's phrase). Indeed, rather than presenting him as an interloper, Sapumal-Bhuvanekabāhu receives general approval in the Sinhala chronicles. The *Rājāvaliya* mentions the *siṃhala peraḷi* in the course of one sentence with dispassionate matter-of-factness. The *Rājaratnākaraya* says nothing of Sapumal's intrigues at Jaffna nor his subsequent regicide. It records simply that after Jayabāhu passed away Bhuvanekabāhu reigned for fifteen years, that he had a valuable casket fashioned for the Tooth Relic, and gave generously to the Sangha.[126]

§3.6 THE "CHAIN OF KINGS" FROM KUḶAKŌṬṬAṆ TO BHUVANEKABĀHU

Written in the early 18th century during the period of Dutch dominion in Sri Lanka, the *Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai*, a Tamil prose history of Jaffna kingdom, adopts an explicitly contrarian and antagonistic stance towards the *Mahāvaṃsa*. The text begins as does the Pali-Sinhala narrative, with Vijaya arriving with his retinue as the first settlers in the north of Sri Lanka. The text goes on however to revise the Pali-Sinhala account, crediting Vijaya with introducing Śaivism to the island, having

[125] The *Rv* (p.220) records that Sapumal, once king, summoned the military commanders of the Seven Kōraḷē-s called *paḍattalavaru* (i.e. Tamil/Malayalam sing. *paṭattalavaṉ*, equivalent in meaning to *senāpati*) in order to quell an insurrection against him (the *paḍattalavaru* may have been commanders whom Sapumal brought with him from Jaffna to Kōṭṭe, subsequently awarded titles as provincial barons).

[126] Karunaratne, *Rājaratnākaraya*, 69.

brought a Brahmin priest with him from Kashi.[127] Vijaya dedicates his capital of Katirai-mālai to Lord Śiva, erecting Hindu temples in cities in each of the cardinal directions "as a protection for the four quarters of his infant kingdom."[128]

The *YVM* explicitly co-opts and "Tamilizes" the Vijaya colonization narrative, making Śaivism the initial and dominant religion of the island, and eliding any mention of the Buddha's imprimatur over the future legacy of Sinhala Buddhist kingship. Some competition with Pali-Sinhala historical accounts is detectable in the *tala-purāṇam*-s of Konesvaram as well, such as in Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's irrigation projects (which by the *TKP* and *KK's* chronologies long predate those of Buddhist Anuradhapura), Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ's importation of craft specialists to Konesvaram (vis-à-vis the Sinhala Gajābahu colonization myth), and in the positive rendering of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ in contrast to the *Pūjāvaliya's* negative portrayal of his narrative homologue, Karikāla. Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ in the *TKP* and *KK* possesses a similar narrative function as Vijaya in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. Arriving from abroad, he is the first member of the Lankan Tamil political dynasty, furnishing the original endowment for the continuance of the most significant site of Śaiva religious activity on the island. Like

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[127] Confusingly and anachronistically, the *YVM* also has it that Vijaya imported the island's Buddhist population from Siam, where some Buddhists were residing on account of being embattled in Magadha because of their religious persuasion. This was necessary due to the fact that the island was bereft of inhabitants, containing only *vetar* (Sinhala: *vädda*, indigenous hunter-gatherers) and wild animals. After bringing the Buddhists, Vijaya "settled them in the various quarters of Lanka before establishing his own capital and commencing his reign" (*ilaṅkaiyiṉetticaiyiluṅ kuṭiyēṟṟi, nakarap piratiṣṭai ceytu, aracāṭciyai ārampittāṉ* (*YVM*, 5)).

[128] See Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 1-4. The temples are Kōṇēcar Koyil in the east (at Trincomalee), Tirukētīccuraṉ Koyil in the west (rebuilt from ruins), Santirasēkaran Koyil in the south, and Tiruttambalēsuraṉ and Tiruttambalesuvari Koyil-s in the north (at the foot of Kiri-mālai).

Vijaya, he is the first link on a chain of kings enduring from the beginning of this *yuga* until the kingdom of Jaffna. Reflecting this fact, Kayavāku offers this eulogy in the *KK*:

> King Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ, king among kings, undertook many Śiva temples for the Lord of Tirikōṇācalam, donating great tanks from which water flows daily, rice fields, and much treasure. Those following in his royal lineage, each in their respective time, have undertaken temple repairs, tanks, agricultural allotment, orchards and arboretums, maṇḍapas, endowments, and treasuries—maintaining them such that they would not fall into disrepair—doing *pūja* to village deities, and decorating the Śiva temples - following the regulations which are to be followed at all times.[129]

Nonetheless, unlike in the later *YVM*, religious antagonism does not manifest itself as a dominant theme within the *TKP* or *KK*. Indeed, in place of competition, there appears to have been a self-conscious attempt to connect the mythology and historical patronage of Konesvaram to the Pali-Sinhala chronicles, suggesting an overall benign attitude on the part of Tamil authors towards Buddhist history. While the foundational figures of Konesvaram (and other Lankan Hindu temples as well) in the Tamil *tala-purāṇam*-s are drawn from continental Indian literature, later kings (in the "*vaṃsa*" or "*marapu*" of Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ) mentioned in these documents reflect actual historical personages (Gajabāhu II and Sapumal-Bhuvanekabāhu), albeit sometimes colored by the purāṇic imagination (as in the case of Gajabāhu's miraculous healing at Kantalai).

The temple histories of Konesvaram in addition serve to supplement our understanding of the premodern religious landscape of Sri Lanka. Konesvaram—the island's most renowned Śiva temple—lies at the very periphery of the religious

[129] *KK*, 110.

world depicted in the Pali and Sinhala chronicles. Konesvaram's allure does not escape mention in the *Mahāvaṃsa* altogether however, and historical records reveal however that the temple was significant to Sri Lankan Buddhist kings. While no dynasty of a (South Indian) Maṉu or Kuḷakkōṭṭaṉ is recorded in Pali and Sinhala sources, Konesvaram did possess a certain mystique for the authors of the *Mahāvaṃsa*. The chronicle relates the curious mid-6th century episode of Mahānāga, a young brigand who is conveyed to Gokaṇṇa (Trincomalee) by a man of magical arts in return for assisting him in obtaining alms food. The magician summons an oracular Nāga king who informs Mahānāga that he will make war with three kings, slaying a fourth, and be king for the final three years of his life. This all comes to pass when Mahānāga finds employment at the court of King Silākāla, where he is promoted until he is able to enact a coup and seize the kingdom for himself.[130] The association of Gokaṇṇa with Śaiva imagery is confirmed in the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s account of Mānavamma, heir to the throne of Kassapa (11th century). Mānavamma, reciting mantras with a pearl rosary at a riverbank in the vicinity of Gokaṇṇa, offered his own eye to the peacock of Kumāra (Murugan, son of Śiva), the peacock having been frustrated that no drink was served along with the customary offering of food.[131]

Records also show support for Konesvaram and its religious community from Lankan kings also remembered as great patrons of Buddhism in the Pali-

[130] *Cv* 41.69-92. The details of the story in combination with the fact that Mahānāga was raised by an uncle named Bhayasīva (also called Sīva) suggest a Śaiva connection (though the chronicle emphasizes that Mahānāga was a great patron of the Sangha during his brief reign as king).

[131] *Cv* 57.5-10.

Sinhala tradition. During their 11th century occupation, the Cōḻas were involved in maintaining the irrigation system at Kantalai[132] (nearby to Trincomalee and also referred to as the "Southern Kailāśa"), establishing a Brahmadeyam there as well. Following the eviction of the Cōḻas, Vijayabāhu I and Kitti Niśśaṅka-Malla continued to support the Brahmin community there.[133]

Although Sinhala sources are silent regarding Konesvaram, the temple remained an important religious destination for the Buddhist rulers of the southwest in the 15th and 16th centuries. As demonstrated above, Sapumal was remembered as an important figure there in the *KK*. Queirós mentions a pilgrimage of Bhuvanekabāhu VII (r. 1521-51) to Śiva's abode at Konesvaram, where the king again retreated at the end of his life, ensuring that his "mortal remains were interred in Trincomalee where the sepulchres of ancient kings of the island were."[134] The significance of the temple to the kings of the southwest is again confirmed by Queirós when he describes the construction of a fort over its premises in 1622-24, whereby the Conquistadors "turned [the place] into [a] defense of

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[132] Indrapala, "An Inscription of Cōḻa Laṅkeśvara Deva."

[133] On Brahmins at Kantalai living under the protection of Vijabāhu I (r. 1058-1114), see Paranavitana, "A Tamil Slab-Inscription from Pālamōṭṭai," [*EZ* IV.4 no.24], 193. Kitti Niśśaṅka-Malla's (r. 1187-96) gift of alms in the Pārvatī hall in the town of Caturveda-Brahmaputra is recorded in a Sinhala inscription at Kantalai. The epigraph also mentions that he had a temple (*dēvālaya*) named Niśśaṅkēśvara built in the Pāṇḍya country while his army occupied it for three months (de Zilva Wickremasinghe, "Kantaläi Gal-Āsana Inscription" [*EZ* II.42], 288-90).

[134] *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, II, pp. 271 and 296: "From Calane he was taken to Côta, and thence to Triquillmale, where he had prepared his resting place, all making reverence to him in their fashion, for they say he died a great pagan." For this portion of his chronicle, Queirós draws from the records of Captain Antonio Monis Baretto, dispatched to Colombo by Francis Xavier to continue working to convert Bhuvanekabāhu VII to Roman Catholicism.

Christians that which was previously the abominable abode of his Idols and the honoured sepulchre of the Kings of Côta (Kōṭṭe) and of the others of Ceylon, or the urn of their ashes."[135]

§3.7 QUERYING "RHEMATIC" AND "DICEMIC" HISTORY

As the findings of the previous chapter of this dissertation suggest, the distinction between Tamil "rhematic" and Buddhist "dicemic" historical imagination is in fact more porous than it appears in Daniel's characterization. Drawing from canonical Pali materials, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* countenance an "incalculable past" (inhabited by twenty-eight Buddhas before Gotama and, logically, an infinite number before them). The *Dīpavaṃsa* and later Sinhala historical works depict the seminal events of the establishment of the Buddha *sāsana* in Sri Lanka as having occured repeatedly in the ages prior to Gotama, with the essential details remaining the same, with only the island and its rulers possessing different names. From the 14th century Sinhala historical imagination was further supplemented with elements drawn from Hindu purāṇic cosmology.

Daniel's assertion that the Buddhist narrative of the history of Sri Lanka is stably rooted in recently recorded history is also subject to critique. Although the *Mahāvaṃsa* says nothing of the history of Sri Lanka before the three visits of the Buddha Gotama, other Pali and Sinhala chronicles (such as the 3rd-4th century *Dīpavaṃsa* and 13th century *Pūjāvaliya*) relate that the events of foundational religious and political significance that took place on the island during the present

[135] *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, IV.734-737.

era (the era of "our Buddha") had taken place in precisely the same manner three times already within the present *kalpa* (the rescue of the island from a calamity by a Buddha, the establishment of a Bodhi tree, the arrival of a royal dynasty loyal to the Buddha *sāsana*). In the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Pūjāvaliya*, the cyclical establishment and dissolution of Buddhist religion in Sri Lanka mirrors the foundational premise of the *tala-purāṇam* tradition in the form of the cyclical loss and rediscovery/ reconstruction of sacred Hindu places.

Sri Lankan Buddhist historiography is not free from tropological treatment of its subject matter either. Some of the same narremes found in Tamil historical works appear in Pali and Sinhala chronicles, such as the episode in which Eḷāra puts his own son to death in retribution for his careless killing of a cow (found in reference to Maṉunīticōḻaṉ in the *Periya Purāṇam*). The *Rājāvaliya* and other later Sinhala texts make Vijaya's cousin, Paṇḍuvāsudeva, out to be a "crippled king": beset with terrible skin ailment (*divi dos*) owing to a curse placed upon him by Kuvaṇṇā for his uncle's sin of having abandoned her, Paṇḍuvāsudeva could be cured only by the medical acumen of a Keralan prince, enticed to Sri Lanka by the legerdemain of Rāhu.[136]

Despite these overlaps, Daniel is correct in his discernment of a different attitude and aesthetic among Tamil historical relations in comparison to the Pali-Sinhala tradition. The *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* and *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* are not concerned to give a complete genealogy of the Tamil kings of Sri Lanka, naming them only intervolically (not consecutively) and often providing little frame of

[136] *Rv*, 171f.

reference for the passage of time between each (the *KK* only lists eight great royal patrons of Konesvaram by name). Calendrical history, scrupulously noted in the Pali-Sinhala tradition, is elided at the expense of conformity to certain narrative expectations (repeated narremes, etc.) in Tamil. Sri Lankan Tamil approaches to history writing were not completely bound by genre conventions or by the "rhematic" mode of historical imagination outlined by Daniel, however. While the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* follows closely the structure of other continental *tala-purāṇam*-s, the *Kōṇēcar Kalveṭṭu* is an example of Tamil historical writing concerned with documentary history, albeit in the absence of a preceise calendrical or chronoligical framework.

The foundational roles of Rāma and Rāvaṇa in the temple histories of northern and eastern Sri Lanka, a subject briefly treated in this chapter, receives fuller treatment in the following. There I explore the incorporation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative into Sinhala Buddhist historiography in greater detail, giving special attention to the eventual geographical equivalence between the "Laṅkāpura" of the Hindu epic with the "Laṅkādvīpa" by which Sri Lanka was independently known in first millennium Sanskrit texts and in the early Pali chronicles. While I do not identify the *tala-purāṇa*-s outlined in this chapter as direct sources of influence on Sinhala literature and folklore, I do argue that South Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil attitudes likely influenced the incorporation of elements of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Buddhist historical imagination of the period.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MANY *RĀMĀYAṆAS* OF LAṄKĀ

§4.1 THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF THE *RĀMĀYAṆA*

Famous throughout the region as an epic narrative and authoritative encyclopedia of ancient lore, the *Rāmāyaṇa* serves as a basic idiom through which South and Southeast Asians understand and express their past. Jains, Sikhs, Thai Buddhists, and various tribal groups all have their own versions of the story, often with significant deviations from the "standard" (Vālmīki's) iteration, and often reflecting their own ideals of justice, heroism, and religious community.

A number of paradoxes inhabit our reception of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative (or "the story of "Rāma-Sītā" as it is locally known) in Sri Lanka. On the one hand, the more you look, the more you see it everywhere. Miscellaneous references to the Hindu epic appear with startling frequency in Sinhala folklore, poetry and middle period historical works. Various landmarks, villages and sites of interest throughout the island are associated with Rāvaṇa's kingdom, Sītā's captivity, and the battle between Rāma and the *rakṣasa* hosts.[1] Sinhala Buddhists today sometimes refer to the period before the arrival of the Buddha Gotama and Prince Vijaya in Sri Lanka as the "Rāvaṇa *yuga.*"[2]

On the other hand, as Heinz Bechert has noted, not a single manuscript of any complete version of the epic in any language has survived in Sri Lanka to the modern period. There is no "Sinhala *Rāmāyaṇa*," and while Kampaṉ's Tamil version

[1] Famously for instance in the kingdom of "Sītāvaka" (a feudatory of inland southwestern Sri Lanka in the 15th and early 16th centuries, see chapter 6.2.

[2] Obeyesekere and Tissa Kumara, Introduction to the *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya*, 9.

is known and celebrated among the island's Tamils today, though we know little to nothing about its initial textual transmission. The early Pali chronicles (the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*) say nothing of the historicity of the epic, and nothing about it in relation to Sri Lanka. This is despite the fact that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was known from early on in Sri Lanka, and its presence in scholastic circles is attested with Kumāradāsa's 6th century Sanskrit version, the *Janakīharaṇa.*[3] Echoes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are also found from the Anuradhapura period onwards: when Prince Vijaya reaches the island's shores in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, "Laṅkāpura" (either a city located somewhere within Laṅkā itself or an independent location, the text is unclear) is inhabited by the "chief of Yakkhas."[4]

Beyond those who cite the occasional tendency of Lankan monastic authors to inveigh against literature with non-Buddhist content, a number of arguments have been put forward to account for the exclusion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* from Pali historiography.[5] Heinz Bechert (1978) argues that the Mahāvihāra writers of early Pali chronicles consciously excluded any narrative from the *Rāmāyaṇa* in order to preserve the primacy of Sinhala Buddhist political and religious life on the island.

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[3] Kumāradāsa and his *Jānakīharaṇa* are mentioned at v.23 of the *Pärakumbā Sirita*, where the poet is identified as a king of Sri Lanka and a friend the poet Kālidāsa (on the legend of the relationship between the two, found in the *Sidat Saṅgarāva* and Knighton's *History of Ceylon*, see Rhys Davids, "Kālidāsa in Ceylon"). While no mss. of the work survived in Sri Lanka, a number of those found in India appear to have been re-translations into Sanskrit from a Sinhala commentary (*sannē*) on the work (Swaminathan, *Jānakīharaṇa*, 4f.).

[4] *Mv* 7.33, 7.62. It is to Laṅkāpura that the Yakkhinī Kuvaṇṇā flees when sent away for good by Vijaya, along with their two children.

[5] The *Mahāvaṃsa* draws from the *Rāmāyaṇa* to furnish similes and allusions though does not incorporate the narrative as historical fact. The 12th century extension of the chronicle acknowledges that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābharata* were known, but not accorded the status of "*itihāsa*" (*Cv* 64:42-44).

Richard Gombrich (1985) suggests that the absence of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Pali historiography reflects Theravāda Buddhist hostility towards its Brahmanical Hindu values.[6] Steven Collins (2003) argues that the Pali *Vessantara Jātaka* was able to serve as a substitute for the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sri Lanka because it is made up of the same basic story-matrix.

Bechert, Gombrich and Collins for the most part restrict their discussions to Pali literature of the first millennium, though some of their conclusions are extrapolated to later periods. Yet to be considered is the explosion of new forms of vernacular literary expression which took place from the mid-14th century, and which had a lasting effect on the place of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the Sri Lankan Buddhist historical imagination. Then, in the late medieval period, the reigns of Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa take on formative significance, and a history of Lankan kingship is extended to a date far earlier than the time of the Buddha Gotama.

Almost certainly the *Rāmāyaṇa* made its way into Sri Lanka's Buddhist southwest by way of a number of avenues, scholarly opinions on which are discussed below. This chapter is devoted to exploring a possible *northern* avenue of transmissions of the epic into late medieval and early modern Lankan religious imagination, through the Kingdom of Jaffna and Tamil South India. Cōḷas of the 10th century were the first to identify Sri Lanka as the "Laṅkā" of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a geographical equivalence maintained by Ārya Cakravarti rulers who dubbed themselves "guardians of Rāma's bridge" (*cētu kāvalaṉ*). Rāvaṇa is frequently

[6] Gombrich compares Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* with the Pali *Dasaratha* and *Vessantara Jātakas* (dating the Pali Jātaka prose (the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*) to the early first millennium, "perhaps as late as the 5th century") ("The Vessantara Jātaka," 434).

portrayed as a *bhakta* of Śiva in first millennium South Indian temple literature and iconography. This theme is continued in the temple literature of Konesvaram and other northern and eastern Sri Lankan locations, with an emphasis on Rāvaṇa's piety, along with the fact that he was a once-just ruler, learned academician, and skilled musician. I argue that Sri Lankan Tamils have treated Rāvaṇa in a uniquely sympathetic fashion, envisioning him as the first king of the island and an instrumental figure in the foundations of Hindu religious life. The acceptance of Rāvaṇa as a historical ruler of Sri Lanka in Sinhala literature from the 14th century onwards signaled a change in mood from that of the first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which seems to have intentionally excluded the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a component of the island's history. Like Sri Lankan Tamil ones, Sinhala literary depictions of Rāvaṇa are positively colored, though understandably deficient in references to Śaiva religious institutions and practice.

§4.2 THE *RĀMĀYAṆA* IN PALI AND SINHALA HISTORIOGRAPHY

A possible explanation for the absence of any mention of the historicity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the early Pali chronicles is found among Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic authors themselves. Famed 5th century commentator Buddhaghosa twice refers to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as "pointless talk" (*niratthakatha*).[7] This appraisal is carried over in the c. 12th century Sinhala *Amāvatura* and 14th century *Saddharmaratnāvaliya*, the

[7] *bhāratayuddha-sītāharaṇādi niratthākathā purekkhāratā tathārūpikathakathanama ca* (*Papañcasūdani*, Pt.1, p.201, cited in Seneviratne, "Rāma and Rāvaṇa," 229).

later of which "refers to stories such as Rāma-Sītā as hindrances to the final realization and attainment of Nirvāna."[8]

Sri Lanka Pali chronicles draw from the *Rāmāyaṇa* to furnish similes and allusions[9] though do not incorporate the narrative as historical fact.[10] The 12th century extension of the *Mahāvaṃsa* acknowledges that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābharata* were known, but not accorded the status of "*itihāsa*":

> (I hear) in tales as in the *Ummagga Jātaka* and others, of deeds done by the Bodhisatta in the different stages of his development, the outcome of his heroic nature and of other qualities. (I hear) in worldly stories (*lokiyā kathā*) – in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhārata* and the like – of the courage of Rāma who slew Rāvaṇa, and of the extraordinary deeds of heroism performed in battle by the five sons of Paṇḍu – how they slew Duyyodhana and the other kings. (I hear) in the Itihāsa tales of the wonders worked by princes of old like Dussanta and others in combat with gods and demons.[11]

Thirteenth century Sinhala works containing information on the history of the island (such as the *Pūjāvaliya*, *Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, and adaptations of other short Pali *vaṃsa*-s), are silent on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Works of the period take time only to disparage the epic as a source of religious information, as in Guruḷugōmī's

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[8] Seneviratna, "Rāma and Rāvaṇa," 229. The *Saddharmaratnāvaliya* takes this statement from Buddhaghosa directly.

[9] The *Cūlavaṃsa* likens one of Parākramabāhu's queens to Sītā in beauty, and Parākramabāhu II is said to resemble Rāma in battle (Godakumbura 2003: 101f.).

[10] At least not as a component of the Sri Lanka's history. Two passages in the *Mahāvaṃsa* do however lend a hue of historicity to the epic. To his ministers who balk at the prospect of constructing a bridge over the Dāduru River, King Parākramabāhu I declares: "The whole world still knows how King Rāma once built a causeway across the ocean, employing only monkeys" (*Cv* 68.19-20). The forces of the king subsequently battle those of Mānābharaṇa "like the monkeys who lept over the ocean in the combat between Rāma and Rāvaṇa" (75.59).

[11] *Cv* 64:42-44 (Geiger's translation).

Amāvatura: here, the merchant Upāli, having been persuaded of the truth of the Buddha's doctrine, likens the vacuous nature of Jain teaching to the Hindu epics:

> When wise men examine the teaching of lowly Nigaṇṭhas and books such as the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*, they will not find any substance in them, just as one may not find a grain of rice in a heap of bran or any hard wood inside a banana trunk; hence they are neither practical nor re-examinable.[12]

A change occurred however from the mid-14th century, when Sinhala historical works, topographia and poetry began to assign the reigns of Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa formative significance, extending history of Lankan kingship is extended to a date far earlier than the time of the Buddha Gotama and Prince Vijaya.

Allusions to the *Rāmāyaṇa* are found in *sandeśa* literature, though there is no extended narration of the epic. Comments on the popularity of stories relating to the *Rāmāyaṇa* among the Buddhist population at large are found amid the genre, as in the *Mayūra Sandésaya* (composed some time between 1360 and 1391), where, travelling south from Jayavaḍḍanapura, the messenger bird is instructed:

> (Peacock!) Travel across the rice fields of Salpiṭi [Kōralē]
> at Saṅgārāma.
> There, it is not fitting that you should not hear of the glory and
> pleasant qualities of she whose body is a golden creeper –
> Sītā, who lived along with dear Rāma.[13]

The *Girā Sandeśaya* (c. 1450-60) gives a scene of travellers at a rest house in the coastal town of Välitoṭa (modern Balapiṭiya) relating stories of Rāma and Sīta:[14]

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[12] Meddegama, *Amāvatura*, 98.

[13] *Mayūra Sandēśaya*, v.50.

[14] Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 197f. Other mentions of the epic in the *sandeśa* literature: Some examples: the *Kōkila Sandeśa* (c.1450) describes the queen of Parākramabāhu as "like the Princess, the daughter of King Kosala, the mother of Rāma"

There were stories of Rāma and Sītā
– tales of long, long ago –
the essence of which is given in various poems and dramas,
and which are old, frivolous (*misadiṭu* = *mithyādṛṣṭi*) stories.[15]

Beyond references to the circulation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (or its story elements), characters from the epic appear for the first time as protective deities at the island's Buddhist courts from the same period. Vibhīṣaṇa is first mentioned as one of the four "god kings" (*devirajjuruvan*) of the island, alongside Saman (Sumana), Ganesha (Gaṇapati), and Skanda in an 1344 inscription at the Laṅkātilaka Vihāra at Gampola.[16] Vibhīṣaṇa (or Bibhīṣaṇa) is of course the brother of the Rāvaṇa who, realizing the error of Rāvaṇa's ways, assists Rāma in his victory, and is consequently bestowed sovereignty of Lanka at the conclusion of the war.[17] The inscription records that the portion of the temple complex containing the shrines to these guardian deities was sponsored by Sēnālaṅkādhikāra, minister to King

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(v.112). The *Sälalihini Sandeśaya* contains a reference to Rāvaṇa, who "brought the three worlds under his sway."

[15] *GS*, v.114. Other conversation at the rest house included discussion of the Buddha's virtues, making tales of Rāma and Sītā frivolous by comparison. In Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (1.31), the cloud messenger is directed to the city of Avanti, which is "peopled by village elders versed in the legends of Udayana" (*udayanakathākovidān*) (Bhattacharya, p.125).

[16] Gunasekara, "Three Sinhalese Inscriptions," 83.

[17] Regarding the apotheosis of Vibhīṣaṇa, Obeyesekere notes that "clearly was a demon at one time, being the brother of Ravana, the demon king of the *Ramayana*. The same probably is true of the god Saman, who, according to Paranavitana (1958), was originally Yama, the god of the underworld; Yama, in popular conception, is a demonic king" (*Cult*, 67).

Bhuvanekabāhu IV and who, as scion of the "Meheṇavara vaṃsa" and like the Alakeśvaras, seems to have had a family connection to Kañcipuram.[18]

Vibhīṣaṇa retained his significance as the century wore on—the *Nikāya Saṅgrahāva* records that he (this time along with Saman, Skanda and Upulvan) was one of the four guardian deities of Alakeśvara III's newly built city of Jayawardhanapura.[19] At this time, Vibhīṣaṇa's shrine at the Rāja Mahāvihāra at Kelaniya (six miles north of Jayawardhanapura) became a mainstay on the travel circuit of Sinhala "messenger birds."[20] Vibhīṣaṇa's *devālaya* features prominently in one of the few Pali *sandeśa* poems, the Vuttamālā Sandesa Satakaṃ, most likely composed at the court of Parākramabāhu V at Dädigama. The roughly

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[18] The *Nikāya Saṅgrahāva* applauds Sēnālaṅkādhikāra for his sponsorship of a costly, three storied image-house (presumably to the Buddha) at Kañcipuram, along with a great Buddha statue at Devinuvara and an image house at the Akbō Vihāra (in addition to Laṅkātilaka, which is likened to Mt. Kailasa in its beauty) (*NS*, 25).

[19] Temples were built in each of the four cardinal directions of the city in order to house these "four lords possessing warrants" (*satara varam maharajun*) (*NS*, 26). Vibhīṣaṇa is listed as a *devirajjuruvan* alongside Saman (Sumana), Ganesha (Gaṇapati), and Skanda in a 1344 inscription at the Laṅkātilaka Vihāra at Gampola (Gunasekara, "Three Sinhalese Inscriptions," 83). Śakra was the first to be endowed with *varam* (tutelary stewardship, sanctioned authority) over Laṅkā by the Buddha himself, with Śakra in turn designating the responsibility to Upulvan (as at *Mhv* 7.5f.). A lineup of four gods appear in later inscriptional discourse and literature as the inheritors of a portion of the "warrant," standardly including some permutation of Nātha, Viṣṇu, Skanda, Saman, Pattini, and Vibhiṣaṇa. These "four gods possessing warrants" also consign guardianship over their respective domains to lesser, local gods and goddesses. Regarding the apotheosis of Vibhīṣaṇa, Obeyesekere notes that "clearly was a demon at one time, being the brother of Ravana, the demon king of the *Ramayana*. The same probably is true of the god Saman, who, according to [Senerath Paranavitana], was originally Yama, the god of the underworld; Yama, in popular conception, is a demonic king" (*Cult*, 67).

[20] Attested in three messenger poems composed during the reign of Parākramabāhu VI: vv.77-96 of the *Sälaḷihiṇi Sandēśa* (where Vibhīṣaṇa is called "a refuge to the whole world"), v.168 of the *Kōkila Sandēśa*, and vv.114-116, v.202 of the *Haṃsa Sandēśa*. Vibhīṣaṇa's *devālaya* was destroyed by the Portuguese but rebuilt along with the rest of the temple in the 19th century.

contemporary Sinhala *Mayūra Sandeśaya* remembers Vibhīṣaṇa's mandate to protect the island, instructing the peacock courier to stop at Kelaniya (Kalyānapura) (making his way from Gampola to Jayavardhanapura) and proclaim in supplication:

> I have come to worship at your splendorous feet, O Lord Vibhīṣaṇa!
> May you, for the duration of this *kalpa*, watch over and ensure
> tranquility for the king [Bhuvanekabāhu V] who is the pinnacle of all
> auspiciousness, his Queen, the three brothers[21] who show such might
> and resolve, and the many officers and ministers of all of them!
> Give them victory as was given to Rāma, son of Daśaratha, and his army,
> such that he could extend his dominion in all ten directions![22]
> Grant them greater prosperity than is known even to Śakra, Viṣṇu,
> and to all the other gods whose dominion reaches in all the ten directions![23]

While Vibhīsaṇa's presence as a guardian deity has been sustained until the present day at Kelaniya, Rāma and Lakṣman seem to have been occasionally introduced as guardian deities of the late medieval-early modern period as well. A record of an inscription at the Sabaragamu Saman Dēvāle dating to c. 1449 identifies Saman as Lakṣmaṇa (Paranavitana argues that this identification was made on the basis of homophony between "Lakṣman" and "Las-Saman," a possible Sinhala epithet of Saman as "god of the (the Buddha's foot-) print").[24] The *Jinakālamālinī*, a

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[21] The Alakeśvara brothers of Rayigama: Alagakkōnāra (Alakeśvara), Äpā (Vīrabāhu), and Dēva Swāmi (see vv.66-71, 155).

[22] These lines are missing in Liyana Āracci's edition, but clearly this is a printer's mistake as he glosses it in his commentary. The missing lines read: *dasa rata rāma niriṅduṭa jaya dun lesin* | *dasa ata taram väḍi aṇasaka salasamin* (K. Jayatilaka, *Mayūra Sandēśaya* (1990)).

[23] *Mayura Sandeśa*, v.38. The poem was probably written by a Buddhist monk of Dharmakīrti's school at Gaḍalādeniya.

[24] Paranavitana, "God of Adam's Peak," 27f. Paranavitana points out that there are no other known identifications of Saman with Lakṣmaṇa, and that the Sabaragamu Saman Dēvāle inscription most like reflects a "desire of the priests of the fifteenth century to refer to the deity by a name in sonorous Sanskrit, in place of one smacking of the vulgar speech which

Pali work written in Chiang Mai in 1516, remarks that the island of Laṅkā was protected by four powerful divinities: Sumanadevarāja, Rāma, Lakkhaṇa, and Khattagāma (i.e. Kataragama, Skanda).[25]

Sinhala historical works of the late medieval and early modern periods contain scattered remarks on Rāma and Rāvaṇa. The *Rājāvaliya* states that Rāvaṇa reigned 1844 years before the time of the Buddha[26], that his capital city was located between northern Sri Lanka and the southern tip of India, and that a large portion of Sri Lanka was lost to flooding which occurred at the end of the demon king's war with Rāma. The geography of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is further articulated in the standard *kaḍayim* (one manuscript of the text even bears the title *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya*).[27] As noted in chapter two, the standard *kaḍayim* begins its history of Sri Lanka with the reign of Rāvaṇa and a condensed account of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The text in addition associates a number of central southwest locations with the activities of Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa when they were rulers of the island (listed and mapped in Figure 2).[28]

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then, as now, would have been considered not quite appropriate to a powerful divinity, in an impressive official document" (p.28).

[25] Paranavitana, "Religious Intercourse between Siam and Ceylon," 192f.

[26] Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 15f.

[27] See Obeyesekere's and Tissa Kumāra's introduction in their edition of the *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya*, p.9.

[28] Rāvaṇa's kingdom in the standard *kaḍayim* is imagined to encompass Sri Lanka and the Indian continent. The text gestures at the location of Rāvaṇa's capital of Laṅkāpura as having been somewhere between Nāgadīpa (a small island at the extreme north of Sri Lanka) and the Kāvēri port in southeast India, where it was "enclosed in seven continents and a dyke four *gav*-s broad, which drained the salty water of the sea" (*SLK*, 192; *RRv*, 34). "At the time when the ocean swallowed up King Rāvaṇa, this island of Śrī Laṅkā was 1,280 *gavvus*. Because it was an area on the earth where the Buddha had performed his miracle (*siddhasthāna*), the place of the experience of the divine Nāga king Mahōdara was not

While the *Mahāvaṃsa* depicts the Buddha assigning the responsibility of watching over Lankan monarchy to Śakra (who in turn entrusts it to Upulvan), later Sinhala *sandésa* poetry and historiographies highlight Rāma's gift of the Lankan throne to Vibhīṣaṇa. The vernacular textual tradition presents Vibhīṣaṇa, the *rakṣasa*-cum-deity, as tutelary of the island and its royalty—from the distant era of Rāvaṇa to the present day.

§4.3 THE GEOPOLITICS OF "LAṄKĀPURA" IN MEDIEVAL SOUTH INDIA

Why, after centuries of exclusion, does the *Rāmāyaṇa* appear so suddenly and prolifically in Gampola-Kōttē period Buddhist literature? Several scholarly attempts to answer this question have been made, some straightforward and some oblique. Anuradha Seneviratne (1984) supposes that an oral version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* circulated among Sinhala people from the time of their immigration from India. Jonathan Walters (1991/92) argues that the appearance of Vibhīṣaṇa at 14th century Gampola represented the symbolic subjugation of southwestern Lankan regents to the Vijayanagar Empire (the kings of which presented themselves as embodiments of Rāma, to whom Vibhīṣaṇa of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was vassal).[29] John

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swallowed up, with 58 *yojanas* remaining." The passage is confusing because an episode concerning the Buddha (presumably Gotama) is sandwiched between two short accounts of the reign of Rāvaṇa. Perhaps the notion is that Nāgadīpa was preemptively preserved from destruction earlier in the *kalpa*, with the anticipation that the Buddha would in the future preach to the Nāgas there. The *Rājāvaliya* confirms the location of Laṅkāpura as lying between Tūṭṭukudi (in Tamil Nadu) and the Sri Lankan port of Urātoṭa (Suraweera (2000), *Rājāvaliya*, 21).

[29] While novel, there is a chronological difficulty with this argument. Although the Vijayanagar Empire (founded in 1336) was clearly on the political horizon in the early 14th century, why would Lankan regents have acquiesced to symbolic subjugation if they were not paying taxes to Vijayanagar until 1378, nor facing Vijayanagar military incursion until c.

Holt explains *Rāmāyaṇa* motifs in middle period Sinhala literature as an attempt to "cut Viṣṇu down to size," rendering him less of a transcendental deity in order that he may be absorbed within the Sri Lankan Buddhist deistic pantheon.[30]

Almost certainly the *Rāmāyaṇa* made its way into Sri Lanka's Buddhist southwest by way of a number of avenues, and Holt's argument for a southern route of diffusion by way of Devundara is supplemented with more than ample evidence.

1385? (See Nilakanta Sastri, "Inroads by Pāṇḍya and Vijayanagara Empires," 686f.) Walters' explanation is that Vijayanagar had to first make *dialectical* inroads with Lankan royalty before they could make any claims of suzerainty—they had to first make "Sri Lanka want to be part of the Indian empire" (p.137). He does not however furnish any evidence of Vijayanagar sponsorship at Gaḍalādeṇiya, gesturing only to the apparent presence of Vijayanagar architectural influence at the site, and to the fact that Dhammakītti (a monk, not a ruler) solicited the empire's permission for a continental temple construction project. Furthermore, the identification of Vijayanagar rulers with Rāma did not occur until the construction of the Rāmacandra temple at the heart of the capital city during the reign of Devarāya I (1406-22). The state ensign remained a local form of Śiva (Virūpākṣa) until it was changed to Veṅkaṭeśvara (Viṣṇu) by Veṅkaṭa II (1586-1614) (Rao, *Re-figuring the Rāmāyaṇa*, 99). Meegama (2011) has further dismantled this argument, advancing her own hypothesis on the rise in popularity of guardian deities associated with late medieval southwestern Sri Lankan courts, including Vibhīṣaṇa. Ajay Rao argues that Vibhīṣaṇa's submission to Rāma became an important theme as an allegorical expression of the submission of the devotee's soul to Viṣṇu among late medieval South Indian Śrī Vaiṣṇava authors (as for instance in Govindarāja's commentary on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, see *Re-figuring the Rāmāyaṇa*, 56-64 and 113-15).

[30] *The Buddhist Viṣṇu*, 141. Holt traces the evolution of Viṣṇu to the position he attained in the Kandyan period as a central figure within the Sri Lankan Buddhist pantheon, and as one of the four *lokapāla*-s (guardian deities) of Sri Lanka. Holt argues that between the 14th and 15th centuries, Viṣṇu became conflated with the indigenous deity Upulvan (Pali: Uppalavaṇṇa). By the 18th century, Viṣṇu was established as one of the four guardian deities of Sri Lanka, alongside Natha, Pattini and Kataragama. Rāma came to be associated with Viṣṇu cum Upulvan by the 16th century[30], and Sinhala poetry concerning elements of the *Rāmanaya* invoking Viṣṇu explicitly was involved in the domestication of Viṣṇu as a god in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon, subordinate to the Buddha. Holt's argument is entirely plausible, and is congruent with the process of absorption of foreign deities into the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon well documented by Obeyesekere (1984). My argument in this chapter should be seen as complimentary, arguing for a northern origin to *Rāmāyaṇa* characters and imagery in Sinhala literature, while keeping open the possibility of simultaneous Vaishnavite influence as well (by way of Devinuvara on the southern coast, the point of origin of Sri Lankan Viṣṇu cult according to Holt).

It is furthermore clear that the "Sri Lankan *Rāmāyaṇa*" – Kumāradāsa's c. 6th century Sanskrit poetic version of the epic – was circulating in the 15th century.[31] The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the *northern* avenue of diffusion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into late medieval and early modern Lankan religious imagination. The geographical identification Sri Lanka as the "Laṅkā" of the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems to have been a late first millennium south Indian innovation, sustained by the Ārya Cakravarti kings of Jaffna. Rāma and Rāvaṇa are featured as foundational figures in the Tamil temple myths of south India, reproduced in the *tala-purāṇam*-s and folklore of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. However, as I argue, Lankan Tamils also innovate on the south Indian perception of Rāvaṇa, rendering him a positive figure in the island's religious history—a fastidious devotee of Śiva, and the original king of Laṅkā, long before the arrival of Vijaya.

A. LAṄKĀ AND *ILAṄKAI*

There is no indication that the "Laṅkā" of Vālmīki's epic was intended to correspond with the island of Sri Lanka. "Laṅkāpura" (or "Laṅkāpuri") is depicted as a city at the top of Trikūṭa Mountain—it is described as a fortress with impenetrable ramparts and moats.[32] Trikūṭa itself is described as "an inaccessible

[31] Kumāradāsa and his *Jānakīharaṇa* are mentioned at v.23 of the *Pärakumbā Sirita*, where the poet is identified as a king of Sri Lanka and a friend the poet Kālidāsa (on the legend of the relationship between the two, found in the *Sidat Saṅgarāva* and Knighton's *History of Ceylon*, see Rhys Davids, "Kālidāsa in Ceylon"). While no mss. of the work survived in Sri Lanka, a number of those found in India appear to have been re-translations into Sanskrit from a Sinhala commentary (*sannē*) on the work (Swaminathan, *Jānakīharaṇa*, 4f.).

[32] "With its splendid white mansions, Lanka, set high on the mountain peak, looked […] like a city in the sky. Hānuman gazed upon that city (*purīm*), built by Vishva-karman and

rock" in the ocean[33], its peak resembling that of Mount Kailāśa.[34] Later first millennium Sanskrit renderings of the epic give no indication of a correspondence between Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā and Sri Lanka, with some versions even making an explicit geographical distinction between the two islands.[35] "Laṅkā" and "Siṃhala" are listed as separate domains of the "southern division" according to Sanskrit topographical reckoning, including that of the *Mahābhārata* and Varāhamihira's *Bṛhat-Saṃhitā*.[36]

South Indian religious literature too conforms to Vālmīki's geographically vague and fanciful depiction of Laṅkāpura. In the 7th century hymns of Cuntarar, Rāvaṇa's "southern Lanka" is located somewhere "in the southern seas full of waves" (*tiraiyiñār kāṭal cūḻnta teṉṉilaṅkai*), and is "full of broad roads made for

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protected by the lord of the *rākshasas*, as if upon a city floating in the sky" (Goldman and Goldman, *Rāmāyaṇa Book Five,* 73 [*Sundara Kāṇḍa* 5.2.15-20]).

[33] Shastri, *The Rāmāyaṇa*, vol.3, 4ff.

[34] Shastri, *The Rāmāyaṇa,* vol. 3, 350 [*Yuddha Kāṇḍa*, sarga 125].

[35] Sri Lanka, "the territory of the Siṃhalas" is identified as a separate location from Rāvaṇa's Laṅkāpura in Rājaśekhara's 9th or 10th c. *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (Paranavitana, "The God of Adam's Peak," 18). The distinction between Siṃhala-dvīpa and Trikūṭa Mountain is preserved in Bhoja's (fl.1025) *Champu Rāmāyaṇa*. However, in the Yuddha Kāṇḍa appended later to the work by Lakṣmaṇasūri, Trikūṭa is referred to as "the torus of the lotus flower that is the island of Sinhala" (*siṃhala-dvīpa-kamala-karṇikām*, in the *gadya* portion between verses 32 and 33; see Paramasiva Iyer, *Rāmāyaṇa and Lanka*, xi and xv). "Laṅkā" in Kumāradāsa's c. 6th century *Jānakīharaṇa* too is identified as the location of Mt. Trikūṭa (canto 18, v.61), though the island is at one point referred to as "the gem repository of the ocean" (*payodhiratnālayam*), which Swaminathan speculates could be a reference to Sri Lanka under its occasional epithet of "Ratnadvīpa" (canto 20, v.61 + n.1).

[36] *Bṛhat-Saṃhitā*, 14.11-16. On the geography of "Siṃhala Dvīpa" and "Laṅkā" in the *Mahābhārata*, *Mārkandya Purāṇa*, the early 11th c. *Tarikh al-Hind* of Al-Biruni, the *Golādhyāya Bhuvanakoṣa* of Bhāskarācārya and the *Skanda Purāṇa*, see Paul, "Pre-Vijayan Legends," 268-70.

strong chariots."[37] The Laṅkāpura of Kampaṉ's famed 12th century version of the epic is again a fortified city jutting out of the ocean, "with the wide sea as its moat."[38] The *Kantapurāṇam* (the Tamil version of the *Skanda Purāṇa*) depicts "Ilaṅkaipuram" as a city somewhere far out amid the ocean, which sank during a fierce battle between Skanda and Vīravāku, resurfacing from the water some time afterwards.[39] Subsequent South Indian poetry tended to be similarly equivocal on the whereabouts of Rāvaṇa's ancient domain.[40]

As Sri Lanka was known as "Laṅkā" from very early on (at least from the time of the *Dīpavaṃsa*), it would be surprising were there no conflation at all between the island and the "Laṅkāpura" of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Indeed we find precisely this in

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[37] Rangaswamy, *Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram*, 299.

[38] See *Āraṇya Kāṇḍam*, v.3066f. of Sundaram's translation. Extensive description of Laṅkāpura's geography is given in the *Sundara Kāṇḍam* as well.

[39] Dessigane and Pattabiramin, *La légende de Skanda*, 101ff. Section II.15 recounts the construction of Ilaṅkaipuram along with seven other cities around Vīramakēntiram by the divine architect Kaṭavuḷtaccaṉ at the behest of Cūrapanmaṉ (65f.).

[40] In Veṅkaṭeśa's 14th c. Sanskrit *Haṃsasandeśa*, Rāma instructs his messenger bird to depart India "for the royal seat of the demon king Rāvaṇa on Trikūṭa Hill in Laṅkā, the island country that appears and vanishes with the rising and falling ocean tides" (Hopkins, *The Flight of Love*, 56). Additional description of the island and city appears at vv.1.54-2.6 (the city of Laṅkā "stands on the sheer peaks of Suvela" (2.3)). On the basis of this imagery, Bronner and Shulman submit that Veṅkaṭeśa's Laṅkā was constructed "in exact parallel to Kālidāsa's Himalayan Alakā," with "elements of that divine city, such as the Mandāra trees or the gods wives and courtesans" having been "physically transplanted to Laṅkā by Rāvaṇa, the half-brother of Kubera, who rules the sister-city of Alakā" ("A Cloud Turned Goose, 22f.). Ajay Rao (2015) however identifies the Laṅkā of Veṅkaṭeśa's *Haṃsasandeśa* as Sri Lanka. The early 14th c. Keralan *Śukasandeśa* references Rāma's *setu* in the vicinity of Rāmeśvaram (Sri Lanka is not explicitly mentioned) (Unni, *Śukasandeśa*, 35, 45).

the *Vāyu Purāṇa*'s[41] world geography, where "Malaya Dvīpa," "the island of Malaya," is said to be:

> a source of gems, jewels and gold. It is very prosperous. It is the place of origin of sandalwood and is surrounded by gulfs (lit. "seas").[42] Many kinds of Mleccha tribes live there. There are many rivers and mountains.
>
> The glorious mountain Malaya is the source of origin of silver. This excellent mountain is famous as Mahāmalaya.
>
> It is known as the second Mandara mountain. The abode of Agastya, bowed to by Devas and Asuras, is also there.
>
> There is another mountain Kañcanapāda which is a second Malaya. There are many hermitages there, resorted to by pious persons and full of hedges of grass and Soma plants. It abounds in flowers and fruits of all kinds. It excels even the heaven. On festive occasions, on all Parvan days, heaven descends to that place.
>
> There is a great city Laṅkā on the beautiful ridge and peak of the mountain Trikūṭa decorated with different minerals. The mountain is many Yojanas in height. Its variegated precipices and caves resemble houses. The city has gold ramparts and archways. There are many mansions and palaces with turrets and gables of variegated colour. It is a hundred Yojanas long and thirty Yojanas broad. It is flourishing and the people there are happy and gay.
>
> It is the abode of noble Rākṣasas who can assume various forms as they please. Know that to be the habitation of the enemies of Devas, proud of their strength. Free from all harassments, the city is inaccessible to human beings.
>
> In that island, on the eastern shore of the sea there is Gokarṇa, the great shrine of Śaṅkara (Śiva).[43]

Since this description lies within the section of the text entitled the "description of Jambudvīpa's lands and islands, etc.,"[44] commentators have treated the location of "Malaya Dvīpa" ambiguously, with identifying it with the southernmost tip of

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[41] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* was composed during the Gupta period.

[42] *ākaraṃ candanānāṃ ca samudrānāṃ tathā' 'karam.*

[43] Tagare, *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 48.20-30; Sanskrit text from *Vāyu Purāṇam*, p.137f.

[44] *jambudvīpāntargatāṅgadvīpādīnāṃ katham* (*Vāyu Purāṇam*, p.196).

continental India.[45] Indeed aspects of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*'s description appear less-than-empirical in nature (the total lack of any mention of Buddhism is also a curious omission, if we are to take "Malaya Dvīpa" as identical with Sri Lanka). Some points of contact with the topography of Sri Lanka are apparent, however: the temple to Śiva at "Gokarṇa" corresponds to the Konesvaram temple at Trincomalee (see below in this chapter), with the name "Malaya" referring to the central administrative portion of Sri Lanka, historically.[46]

More unambiguous identification of Sri Lanka with the abode of Rāvaṇa appears from the 8th century in South Indian inscriptional discourse recording territorial conquests over the island. The first known example is contained in the Kasakudi plates of Nandivarman. The *praśasti* boasts that the king's ancestor, Narasiṃhavarman I, was a "victorious hero, who surpassed the glory of the valour of Rama by (*his*) conquest of Laṅkā."[47]

By the 9th century, the *Rāmāyaṇa* began to take on substantial political and religious significance in South India, among both Shaivites and Vaishnavites.[48]

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[45] See Tagare, *Vāyu Purāṇa*, p.312, n.3, and Pathmanathan, "The Rāmāyaṇa," 550ff.

[46] See *Cv* 70.1-29 with notes in Geiger's translation.

[47] *SII*, vol. 2 (348. 22). Chapter 47 of the *Cv* confirms that a Lankan aspirant to the throne, Manavamma, was funded in his invasion of the island by one king Narasiṃha. Manavamma's second invasion was successful, and the chronicle dates his reign from 691 to 726 CE. Pallava inscriptions corroborate the war between Narasiṃhavarman I and Vallabha, the occupant of the Lankan throne deposed by Manavamma according to the *Cv.*

[48] On the significance of the *Rāmāyaṇa* for 14th century South Indian Vaishnava theology, see Rao (2015).

Rāma emerged as an ideal king[49] and a frequent standard of comparison in the literature celebrating real-life military and political adventurers. In connection with this development, the Cōḻas standardized the equivalence between "Laṅkā" and "Laṅkāpura" as they began making military headway onto the island in the 10th century. A hymn celebrating the Citamparam Śiva temple complex attributed to a Cōḻa prince named Kaṇṭarātitya (written during or some time before the year 907) eulogizes a recent victor, stating that, just as Śiva subdued Rāvaṇa, "the king of Lanka" (*ilaṅkaivēntaṉ*), "Cempiyaṉ, the just Cōḻa king of Uṟaiyūr, conquered both the hot-tempered tyrant of the [Pāṇḍyan] South and the king of Sri Lanka (*īḻam*)."[50]

Adversary Sinhala kings and their armies were likened to Rāvaṇa and his *rākṣasa* hosts. The Udayendram plates of Pṛthvīpati II (c. 919 CE) boast that when this king's ally, Parāntaka, "defeated the Pāṇḍya (king) Rājasiṃha, two persons experienced fear at the same time: the Lord of Wealth (Kubera) on account of the death of his own friend, and Vibhīśaṇa [sic] on account of the proximity (of the Cōḻa dominion to Sri Lanka)."[51] The Tiruvālaṅgāḍu plates of Rājendra (c. 1017 CE) relate that his campaign in Sri Lanka was conducted even more efficiently than Rāma's:

> Constructing a bridge across the water of the ocean with the
> assistance of able monkeys, the Lord of the Rāghavas (i.e. Rāma)
> killed with great difficulty the king of Laṅkā (i.e. Rāvaṇa)
> with sharp-edged arrows --
> (but) this terrible general of his (of King Rājarāja, Rājendra's father)

[49] Paula Richman notes that, "In Tamilnadu, the Thanjavur area has been closely associated with veneration of Rama as perfect king, especially during the Chola dynasty's imperial expansion" (*Ramayana Stories*, 16).

[50] Younger, *Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, 216. Original text: *Tiruvicaippā*, §5, v.7-8 (p.224-6).

[51] Wijetunga, *Sri Lanka and the Choḷas*, 51f.

> crossed the ocean with ships and burnt the Lord of Laṅkā.
> Hence Rāma is surpassed by him (i.e. by Rājendra).[52]

The above Sanskrit portion of the plate is succinct in its comparison, though the Tamil eulogy contained within the same text elaborates on the significance of this victory. Daud Ali observes that the Tamil portion of the text compares

> Rājarāja's victory over Sri Lanka to the conquest of the island by a more famous king in his own Ikṣvāku lineage, Rāma Daśarathi (v.80). Rājendra's defeat of the Okkāka king, Mahinda V (982-1029), proved that the Cōḻa and not the Sinhala king was the true descendant of Ikṣvāku, and enabled the Cōḻa to name that ancestor in his orders. Rājendra's primary purpose in his campaign to the island that his father had for the most part conquered was to obtain the regalia of not only the Sri Lankan king but of the Pāṇḍya, who had earlier deposited it there for safekeeping:
>
> "He took, with his great fierce army the crown of the war-like king of Īḻām [Sri Lanka] on the sea, the exceedingly beautiful crown of the queen of that king, the beautiful crown and the pearl necklace of Indra which the Pāṇḍyan had previously deposited with that king, and the entirety of Īḻa-maṇḍalam on the heaving sea."[53]

The depiction of Cōḻā enemies as "rākṣasas" persisted until the twilight of the empire, and was used in reference to Sri Lankans as well as continental adversaries.[54]

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[52] *baddhvā [s]etuñjalanidhijale rāghavendraḥ kapīndraiḥ laṅkānāthaṃ katham api śaraiḥ tīkṣṇaśṛṅgairjjaghāna | naubhistīrtvājalanidhimasau yasya daṇḍaḥ pracaṇḍo laṅkānātham niradaha[da]tastena rāmobhibhūtaḥ* (R.S.H. Krishna Sastri, *SII*, v.3, pt.3, p.398 (text) and p.421 (trans.), v.80). This inscription was written shortly after Rājendra's annexation of the island.

[53] "Royal History as World Eulogy," 199, translating from Krishna Sastri's edition of the Tiruvālungādu plates in *SII*, vol. 3 (II.135-39, 141).

[54] Rājēndra Cōḻa III (r. 1246-79) is remembered as "a very Rāma of northern Laṅkā, renowned as the abode of the Vīrarakṣasas." K.A. Nilakantha Sastri comments: "This is clearly a reference to a campaign against the Śāmbuvarāyas, some of whom called themselves Vīra-rākṣasa and who held sway in the region of North Arcot" (*The Cholas*, v.2, pt.1, p.202). Krishnaswami Aiyangar concurs with this interpretation (*South India and her Muhammadan Invaders*, 37).

B. THE ĀRYA CAKRAVARTIS AND THE "GUARDIANS OF RĀMA'S BRIDGE"

Sri Lankan Tamils seem to have openly accepted the identification of the island with the Laṅkā of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, reversing however the negative and demonic connotations of their Cōḻa predecessors. On analogy with Rāma and Vibhīṣaṇa, the Ārya Cakravartis became themselves "guardians of the bridge," that is, protectors over the narrow, submerged isthmus connecting Ramesvaram on the Indian continent with the island of Mannar.[55] In addition, the island ceased to be an "abode of rakṣasas" in Lankan Tamil literature. Instead, drawing from the Tamil purāṇic traditions of South Indian temples such as Citamparam and Ramesvaram, Rāvaṇa was portrayed in a favorable light in northern Sri Lanka, remembered for his piety and foundational role at places of Śaiva worship across the island.

The 17th century Setupati rulers of Ramnad and Sivaganga are the best known "protectors of the bridge," as their headquarters at Ramesvaram and family name (*cētu pati*) suggest.[56] Lankan sources reveal that the title was in operation three centuries earlier on the opposite side of the "bridge," among rulers of the northern kingdom of Jaffna (who also traced their origin to Ramesvaram in south

[55] The episode in Valmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (along with the Sanskrit term *setu*) is given at Shastri, *The Rāmāyaṇa, vol. III*, 51-55 [*Yuddha Kāṇḍa*, sarga 22].

[56] The earliest reference to any Setupati ruler in South India is from 1604 CE. While no direct connection to the Kingdom of Jaffna has been suggested, a late 18th or early 19th Telugu manuscript recording the descent of the Setupatis states that the dynasty began with seven persons from the Ramnad peninsular coast being appointed as its guardians, "in early times when the Chakravartis flourished" (Taylor, "A Chronicle of the Acts of the *Sethupathis*," 49). On the absence of the Setupatis in the literary record before the 17th c., see Thiruvenkatachari, *The Setupatis of Ramnad*, 125-28.

India).[57] Early copper coins of the Ārya Cakravartis, while borrowing their design from the mints of Polonnaruwa and Dambadeṇiya, were imprinted with the word *cētu*, "bridge," in Tamil lettering.[58] This, it would appear, is an abbreviated form of the title *cētu kāvalaṉ*, "protector of the bridge" (the same meaning as *cētu pati*). The *cētu* moniker also appears in a Tamil inscription commemorating an Ārya Cakravarti military victory at Koṭagama (only thirteen miles north-east of Dädigama, where Parākramabāhu's capital lay at the time), most likely dating to the mid-late 14th century when Jaffna exercised tax authority over the ports of the south.[59] The epithet appears later in connection with one "Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ" (most

[57] A *ciṟappuppāyiram* of the *Cekarācacēkaramālai* states that the Ārya Cakravartis originated from Ramēśvaram, identifying them as belonging to the "Ganga" (*kaṅkai*) dynasty (Natesan, "The Northern Kingdom," 691). The Portuguese historian de Queyroz, writing in the mid-17th c., records that an "Arus" (Ārya) family hailed originally from Gujarat, having at some point built the Ramēśvaram temple with the sanction of the Nāyaka of Madurai. This family intermarried with the rulers of northern Sri Lanka, the first of their descendants no longer subject to a client relationship with southern Sri Lanka being the first of the "Ārya Cakravartis" (*The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, I.48f.).

[58] Medis, "An Overview of Sri Lanka's Medieval Coinage," 63f., 67f. Medis speculates that the Tamil design (but not the *sētu* epigraph) was first copied from the "lion coins" of Parākramabāhu I.

[59] Veluppillai, *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, *Part II*, 91-94; Codrington, "The Problem of the Kotagama Inscription"; Pathmanathan, *Ilaṅkait tamiḻc cācaṉaṅkaḷ II*, 211-22. Codrington postulates a roughly mid-15th century date for the inscription on the basis of the analysis of an epigraphic specialist in Madras, though this conclusion is doubtful. There is no record of any Tamil incursion during the mid-15th century (the period during which the entire island was securely under the dominion of Parākramabāhu VI). Paranavitana discloses that the forms of the letters of the Koṭagama inscription do not differ greatly from those of the Laṅkātilaka Tamil inscription of 1344 ("Gaṁpaḷa and Rayigama," 642, n.29). The domination of the northern kingdom from the mid to late 14th c. is related in the *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya* and *Rājāvaliya*, where it is asserted that the Ārya Cakravarti collected taxes from the nine ports of Sri Lanka (*laṅkāvē nava toṭamuṇayen*) until his forces were expelled by Alakeśvara III (*AY*, 19; *Rv*, 207). An inscription dating to 1360/61 at Medawala records an agreement between Vikramabāhu III of Gampola and the Āyra Cakravarti of Yāpāpatuṇa concerning the rights of the latter to collect taxes at several locations in the present day Kandy District (Godakumbura, "Medawala Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* 5.1 no.47]).

likely Pararāca Cēkaraṉ VI (r. c. 1478-1519) or his son, Caṅkili I) in a colophon of the *Cekarācacēkara-mālai*, an astrological work composed under his sponsorship:

> Uniting the domains of southern Lanka[60],
> Uprooting [the his opponents] as onlookers say, "O his glittering spear!" […]
> Ciṅkai Ariyaṉ, protector of the bridge (*cētu kāvalaṉ*),
> Lord of the Ganges[61], Tilaka among the learned,
> Teacher of many across the broad ocean,
> Having no equal with respect to mastery of the triple Tamil[62],
> Cepparum Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ.[63]

A similar title appears in a colophon of the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam*:

> Bearing guardianship over the shore with its expansive bridge
> (*cētuvuyar karaik kāval pūṇṭvaṉ*),
> The one with his dark spear raised,
> Commander Ciṅkai Āriyaṉ,
> Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ who is ornamented with fame.[64]

The association of the northern kingdom with the bridge-building episode of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was not restricted to Tamils alone, either. The *Kōkila Sandēśaya*, a Sinhala messenger poem composed c. 1450 in the wake of the conquest of Jaffna by Prince Sapumal, describes the capital city as one in which:

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[60] *teṉilaṅkaipuri ticaitoṟu maruvum.* The use of *teṉ ilaṅkāpuri* to refer to "southern Lanka" exhibits continuity with the Cōḻa designation of the island (Valmīki also speaks of Rāvaṇa's kingdom as the "southern Laṅkā").

[61] *kaṅkai nāṭaṉ*, a possible allusion to similar titles held by Cōḻa rulers.

[62] *muttamiḻ*, the three domains of Tamil composition according to the classical scheme: *iyal* (poetry), *icai* (song), and *nāṭakam* (drama). See Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*, 140-43.

[63] Pathmanathan, Introduction to TKP[a], xxi, citing a *Ciṟappuppāyiram* of the *Cekarācacēkara-mālai*. Again the king is referred to later on in the body of the text as "Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ, utmost in learning, protector of the bridge (*cētu kāvalaṉ*)" (Pathmanathan, Introduction to TKP[a], xxii, citing the *Cekarācacēkara-mālai* quoted in *Iḻattut tamiḻ kavitai vaḷarcci*, 24-26. Pathmanathan gives a more complete citation in *Ilaṅkait tamiḻc cācaṉaṅkaḷ II*, 214 and 220: *Cekaracacekaramalai*, Ed. I. C. Irakunātaiyar).

[64] TKP[b], *Ciṟappuppāyiram*, v.9 (reproduced in TKP[a], *Ciṟappuppāyiram*, i).

> Lord Rāma, King of the Gods, flourishes. In his body he shines with the color of the ocean as if it has struck thereon when the great bridge (*mahat sētuva*) was constructed with great effort to convey the vast armies for battle against the Ten-necked One (Rāvaṇa).[65]

As for the possible origin and significance of the *cētu pati* title, it is noteworthy that the submerged isthmus joining India and Sri Lanka makes the Palk Straight navigable at only two points: one near Ramesvaram (this passage being only twelve feet at its deepest), and another off the coast of Mannar. For this reason, Mannar was a strategic asset with respect to the control of shipping in the region, one which fell within the territory of the northern kingdom.[66]

§4.4 RĀVAṆA AND RĀMA IN THE TAMIL TEMPLE LITERATURE OF SOUTH INDIA AND SRI LANKA

While the Ārya Cakravartis identified themselves as "guardians of the bridge," Rāvaṇa and Rāma appear ubiquitously as foundational figures in the Tamil temple myths and historiography of Sri Lanka's north and east. The characterization of Rāvaṇa as a *bhakta* of Śiva has deep roots in Indian literature. In Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the demon king reports to his brother Vibhīṣaṇa that he has travelled to the Himalayas in order to undergo penance and win the friendship of Śiva.[67] A seminal theme of later South Indian temple imagery and Śaiva poetry, known as the

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[65] v.258, adapted from Sumanagala's translation. Rasanayagam identifies this temple as having been at Vallipuram (*Ancient Jaffna*, 373).

[66] See de Silva and Pathmanathan, "The Kingdom of Jaffna up to 1620," 105f.

[67] No boons are acquired from Śiva in the course of this episode, only the mocking epithet of "Ekakṣipipiṅgali," "Yellow-eyed One," since one of Rāvaṇa's eyes became jaundiced as the result of a curse from Umā (acquired during a lapse in his austerities) (Shastri, *The Rāmāyaṇa, vol. III*, 410-12).

rāvaṇa anugraha mūrti in the Sanskrit *āgamas*, tells the story of Rāvaṇa's harassment of Śiva and subsequent subordination. It is as follows:

> Rāvaṇa was flying through the air on his chariot when his route was blocked by Mt. Kailasa. Arrogantly, he uprooted the mountain and began to toss it aside. Śiva interrupted Rāvaṇa, pinning him beneath the mountain. Singing hymns of Śiva's majesty in apology, Śiva released him, blessing him with long life and a mighty sword.

An early reference to the story appears in the *Kalittokai* of the Caṅkam corpus[68], and afterwards as a frequent literary motif in South Indian Sanskrit and Tamil works, often with various permutations.[69] In the *Śiva Purāṇa*, Rāvaṇa cuts off nine of his ten heads as an act of penance, impressing Śiva sufficiently enough to win the boon of his own Śiva-*liṅgam* to worship.[70] The *rāvaṇa anugraha mūrti* is a steady motif of the 7th-8th century Tamil Nāyaṉār poets. Rāvaṇa is mentioned in each of Appar's *patikam*-s[71], and Campantar references the story in the 8th verse of nearly every one

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[68] In *Kuṟiñci* section of the *Kalittokai*, a rutting elephant is likened to "the ten-headed lord of demons, who put his broad bracelet-adorned hands into the roots of the Kayilai hill – that of the Lord of the moistened locks, who bent the Himalayas as bamboo for his bow, united to Umai as He is" (adapted from V. Murugan's translation in *Kalittokai in English* (no .37, p.135)).

[69] On 8th century Pallava reliefs of Rāvaṇa lifting Mt. Kailasa at Kailāsanātha (Kañcipuram) the Vaikuṇṭaperumāḷ Viṣṇu temple, and on the origin of the imagery at Mathurā in the 5th century, see Gillet, "Entre démon et dévot." The 8th century saw temples visually featuring characters of the *Ramayana* for the first time in the Pallava and Pāṇḍya territories. The Kailāsanātha Temple of Kāñchī features "a representation of Vāli worshipping a Liṅga and Rāvaṇa trying to disturb him. In the Ōlakkeṇṇeśvara temple on the top of the hill at Māmallapuram the northern niche of the Garbhagṛha carries the sculpture of Rāvaṇanugrahamūrti. An inscription at Māmallapuram also of the same period refers to Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa […] Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa is repeated in a number of Pallava temples at Kāñchi assignable to the 8th c." (Nagaswamy, "Śrī Rāmāyaṇa in Tamilnādu, 413).

[70] Shastra, *Śiva-Purāṇa*, 1366-68.

[71] See Adi-p-Podi and Rāmachandran*, Tirumurai the Sixth*. South Indian tradition explains this fact on the basis of Appar's insistence in a previous life that Rāvaṇa sing praises to Śiva

of his hymns.[72] Cuntarar describes Rāvaṇa as a mighty *rakṣasa* (*val arakkaṉ*), who regrettably misdirects all of his aptitude towards wicked ends. When finally penitent however, pinned beneath Mt. Kailasa, Rāvaṇa applies himself duly, making a *vīṇa* using his severed arms as strings and severed head as a sound box.

South Indian Śaiva temple literature draws from the *rāvaṇa anugraha mūrti* and related stories in the *Śiva Purāṇa* to render Rāvaṇa an instrumental figure in the establishment of a number of locations of devotional significance. The temple literature of Varañci (in Tamil Nadu) and Mahābaleśvar (in Karnataka) invoke the story of Rāvaṇa's failed attempt to transport a Śiva *liṅgam* to Laṅkā, which first appears in the *Śiva Purāṇa.* In each case, Rāvaṇa accidentally lays down the *liṅgam* he has been given as a reward for his penance on route from the Himayalas to Laṅkā. When he attempts to pick it up again, he bends the *liṅgam* out of shape, causing it to appear like a cow's ear (a *gokarṇa*).[73] In addition to being a name of the forest in which Śiva practiced his penance according to the Sanskrit *purāṇas*, "Gokarṇa" (Tamil: *kōkaṇṇam*), is a place name associated historically with at least

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(Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, 322; Rangaswamy, *Religion and Philosophy and Tēvāram*, 296).

[72] Rangaswamy, *Religion and Philsoophy of Tēvāram*, 296.

[73] In the *Śiva Purāṇa*, Rāvaṇa stops to urinate, entrusting the *liṅgam* to a cowherd who is unable to hold it for the duration (Shastra, *Śiva-Purāṇa*, 1366-68). The *Tiruvarañcaram*, a Tamil *tala-purāṇa* of Varañci, relates that Vināyaka was dispatched by the Devas to prevent Rāvaṇa from removing the Śiva *liṅgam* to Laṅkā, and thus increasing the power of his kingdom (Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, 323).

three Indian temples (Mahābaleśvar, Kēdaram in Bengal, and the Gokarṇa Temple of Mahendra Mountain in Kalinga).[74]

Significantly, "Gokarṇa" is also an early designation for the Konesvaram Temple of Trincomalee in Sri Lanka[75], where Rāvaṇa is regarded as an instrumental founding figure. The *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam* gives a brief account of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the slaying of Rāvaṇa, and Rāma's bestowal of the kingdom of Laṅkā to Vibhīṣaṇa. Rāma then prays to Śiva and attains a rarified mental state as a result of *darśana*.[76] Following his example, Vibhīṣaṇa too worships at "the place of Gokarṇa," imploring Rāma that they build a temple to Śiva at that spot.[77] Rāma assents and construction begins. The temple is decorated with paintings of various Devas, including Rāvaṇa prominently (Vibhīṣaṇa's devotion at the sight of the artwork is remarked upon, so the inclusion of Rāvaṇa seems to be out of respect for his fallen brother) (v.12). Deities, including Indra and Viṣṇu, come to worship at the temple, and do so until Rāma grants permission for them to return to their abodes. The text

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[74] Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples*, 57f. Gokarṇa is also mentioned as the name of a mountain of uncertain location in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Goldman and Goldman, *Rāmāyaṇa: Book Five*, 206 [*Sundara Kāṇḍa*, 5.34.73]). Remembering Śiva's activity at Citamparam (Tillai), Appar invokes Rāvaṇa's embarrassment at the hand of the more powerful deity: "With the ten-jeweled crown on his head, the giant Rāvaṇa with great pride used the overwhelming strength of his shoulders and lifted the lofty mountain onto his mountain-like shoulders. He then made a great noise and laughed at the Daughter of the Mountains and the Lord. The Lord of the beautiful Tillai Hall pressed down with his toe and trampled him. With the eye that saw that toe, what else could be seen?" (Younger's translation of v.10 of the *Tirunāvukkarsu Suvāmikaḷ Tēvāram* (*Home of Dancing Śivaṉ*, 205)).

[75] See n.12 in §3.2, above.

[76] *TKP*, *Tirunakarac carukkam*, vv.1-8.

[77] Vibhīṣaṇa: "I worship the double *kōkaṉakam*, which blossoms into one mountain" (*kuṉṟu oṉṟu malarnta irukōkaṉakam pōṟṟi* (referring to the peaks of the Bay of Trincomalee?), TKP, *Tirunakarac carukkam*, v.10).

recalls a time when Rāvaṇa too sang sweet praise to Śiva on his vīṇā at Konesvaram (v.15).

Similar stories appear in the later *tala-purāṇam*-s and oral traditions of other Śiva temples in northern and eastern Sri Lanka as well. The temple literature of Tirukētīśvaram in Mannar has it that Mayan, father-in-law of Rāvaṇa, had a temple built there in order to install a Śiva *liṅgam*. Rāma is said to have later worshipped there on his return to India from Laṅkā.[78] The *tala-purāṇam*-s of Muṉṉēśvaram (located on Sri Lanka's northwest coast) declare that the site gained prominence when Rāma, returning to Ayodhya on his flying Garuda after having defeated Rāvaṇa, stopped to rest at an uninhabited spot. Determining that this would be a good place to worship Śiva, Rāma dispatched Hanuman to India in order to retrieve a *liṅgam* for this purpose. When Hanuman tarried too long, Rāma built his own *liṅgam* out of sand. Hanuman eventually returned with the *liṅgam*, only to have Rāma hurl it away towards India in annoyance. Rāma's sand *liṅgam* remained after the two of them returned to the continent, established as the first lingam to be worshipped at Muṉṉēśvaram.[79]

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[78] Arumugam, *Ancient Hindu Temples*, 36; Vaithianathan, "Thiruketheeswaram Temple and the Port of Mantota," 19f. Vaithianathan adds that according to local tradition, "Arjuna, the hero of Mahabharatha and the kinsman and disciple of Lord Krishna, also visited Thiruketheeswaram in the course of his pilgrimage to the South."

[79] The story is found in the *Srī Muṉṉēśvara Māṉmiyam* (18th or 19th c.), as well as in the *Dakṣiṇa Kailāsa Mahātmyam*, a (most likely modern) Sanskrit work glorifying the Hindu temples of the island (Pathmanathan, *Hindu Temples*, 243f.; Bastin, *Domain of Constant Excess*, 45). Many Śaivite temples on Sri Lanka's east coast also claim to be locations at which Rāma stopped to perform religious rites in memory of the departed on his return to Ayodhya (Arumugam, *Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*, 20, 75). Some Hindu temples of the Batticaloa region also identify Rāvaṇa as their founder (McGilvray, "Mukkuvar vannimai," 72).

The temple's origin story is in fact a very close facsimile of that of the Ramesvaram Śiva temple, across the "bridge" of the Palk Straight in southern Tamil Nadu. The only discrepancy between the stories is that it was Sītā, not Rāma, who constructed the initial sand *liṅgam* of Ramesvaram.[80] Ramesvaram's reputation as a place of devotional significance for Rāma is present as early on as the *Śiva Purāṇa*, wherein Rāma complains that Śiva's gift of invincibility to Rāvaṇa was inordinate, asking that he too be made invincible in battle against the demon king. Śiva grants this request, transforming himself into "the *liṅgam* named Rāmeśvara."[81]

While still acknowledged as the antagonist of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sri Lankan Tamils remember Rāvaṇa sympathetically as an ardent devotee of Śiva. In the temple literature of Konesvaram, the sentiment of *rāvaṇa anugraha mūrti* is inverted, making Rāvaṇa's feat of lifting Mt. Kailasa an act of extreme heroism and piety (rather than antagonism of Śiva and Umā). The 18th century *Tirukōṇācala Purāṇam* gives the (still popular) story of Rāvaṇa's resolution to bring Konesvaram

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[80] Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths*, 50f., and Sethuraman, *The Śaiva Temple of India*, 25. Another minor discrepancy is that, rather than flinging away Hanuman's imported *liṅgam*, Rāma plants his alongside the sand *liṅgam.* The *Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa* also identifies the *Kōṭi-tīrtha* at Ramesvaram as the place where Rāma bathed upon his return from Laṅkā in order to purify himself from the sin of his killing Rāvaṇa.

[81] Shastra, *Śiva-Purāṇa*, 1381-84. Rāmanāthasvāmi at Rāmēśvaram is one of twelve *jyotiliṅgam* temples throughout India, where Śiva is worshipped as a physically manifest beam of light, represented by ancient *liṅgams*. The Sanskrit *Liṅgam Purāṇa* also prefigures later Tamil temple literature, saying that Rāma established a *liṅgam* at the seashore at Rāmēśvaram after killing Rāvaṇa. The motif of Rāma expiating the sin of killing Rāvaṇa at Ramesvaram was known and clearly significant in Jaffna by Queirós' time (*Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, I.58). On Indian literature referencing pilgrimage to "Rāma's bridge," see Granoff 1998. The story of the bridge's construction is the subject of Pravarasena's 7th c. *Setubandha,* and Śaṅkara's disciple Padmapāda visits the bridge (at Rāmesvaram, after visiting Chitambaram) in the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya.* Other accounts of pilgrimages to the *tīrtha* of Rāma's *setu* are later, from the 16th c. onwards.

to his aged mother, Kaṉṉiyā, who was nearby but too ill to make the journey to the top of the hill in order to worship. In the act of cutting away a portion of the hill however, his sword broke and Rāvaṇa was drug into the sea (a vaulting cleft in the rock face at the temple premises is now called "Rāvaṇa's cut" (*irāvaṇaṉ veṭṭu*) in reference to this incident). Realizing that his strength was inadequate for the task, Rāvaṇa turned instead to penance, pulling out his eyes and offering them as flowers to Śiva, pulling out the tendons of his arm to fashion Yāḻ on which he sang songs of devotion. Satisfied, Śiva restored Rāvaṇa's body, allowing himself to be transported along with his temple at Konesvaram to Kaṉṉiyā. The Devas, worried that their regular worship at Tirumayilai would be interrupted, send Viṣṇu to falsely inform Rāvaṇa of the death of his mother. Believing him, Rāvaṇa performed her funerary rites at the nearby hot springs at which she was residing, immediately after which Kaṉṉiyā actually died.[82]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* configures foundationally in Sri Lankan Tamil historiographical material as well. The *Vaiyā Pāṭal*, a 16th century chronicle of the Jaffna Kingdom, as well as the 18th century *Yāḻppāṇa Vaipava Mālai*, begin their narration of the island's history with Vibhīṣaṇa's receipt of Lankan kingship from Rāma, who "continued to reign up to and during the early part of the present *yuga*."

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[82] Sivaratnam, *Outline of Cultural History*, 255f. An allusion to this episode occurs at v.124 of the *Katiraimālai Paḷḷu* (mid-16th c.). Until recent times, Rāvaṇa's mother was herself worshipped at the hot springs which bear her name several kilometers from Konesvaram (for a 19th c. account of the practice, see Tennent, *Ceylon*, vol. 2, 496f.). Rāvaṇa's pietistic self-mutilation is a multi-form of the story of Tiṇṇaṉ/Kaṇṇappar, which appears in Cēkkiḻār's famed 12th c. *Periyapurāṇam.* Tiṇṇaṉ, a hunter who leaves slain animals as offerings to Śiva, proves his selfless devotion by offering his own eye to the god (see Cox, "The Transfiguration of Tiṇṇaṉ," 227-30).

The resident *rakṣasas* departed the island upon Vibhīṣaṇa's death, "from fear of foreign subjugation."[83] The 18th century *Maṭṭakkaḷappu Pūrva Carittiram*, a Tamil history of Batticaloa, similarly traces Lankan monarchy from Rāvaṇa's reign to the arrival of Prince Vijaya, saying (uniquely) that Rāma remained to rule Lanka instead of returning to Ayodhya after the battle.[84]

South Indian *tala-purāṇam*-s are clearly a formidable source of the popularity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Lankan Hindu temple histories. The temple literature of Citamparam (in Tamil Nadu) in particular seems to have influenced the purāṇas of Konesvaram, as discussed in the previous chapter. While our knowledge of the mechanics of textual exchange between the Indian continent and northern Sri Lanka prior to the late 15th century are hazy (as are nearly all details concerning the Kingdom of Jaffna), only a modicum of imagination is required to speculate as to how it might have taken place. The *Yāḻpaṉa Vaipava Mālai* even relates an account of direct importation of Sanskrit and Tamil literature from Ramesvaram to Jaffna. Cekarāca Cēkaraṉ, the scholar brother of Pararāca Cēkaraṉ VI (r. c. 1478-1519), is said to have made a book-buying trip to Cētukkarai in order to stock the library at his Jaffna academy.[85]

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[83] Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 1; cf. *VP*, vv. 12-13. V.D. Hellmann-Rajanayagam gives a comparative study of the two texts in his "*Kulturelle Wahrnehmungen in der historischen Literatur der Jaffna-Tamilen*" (on this portion of the *VP* and *YVM*, see p.473).

[84] *Maṭṭakkaḷappu Pūrva Carittiram*, pp. 1-4. This text is also known as the *Maṭṭakkaḷappu Māṉmiyam.* It says furthermore that the island's Śaiva religion dates from the time of Rāvaṇa, preserved until that of Vijaya.

[85] Brito, *Yalpana-vaipava-malai*, 27.

§4.5 ECHOES OF THE *RĀMĀYAṆA*

While the archive for this dissertation derives principally from the 14th century and later, a deeper history of cultural-literary synthesis with respect to the historicity of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is also traceable. Echoes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* attest to its presence among Lankan Buddhist authors from an early period.[86] While it is hard to dispute Heinz Bechert's observation that early Pali chroniclers gave priority to Buddhist temporal indices (at the expense of Hindu ones), a careful reading of the first installment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* reveals a recognition of the essential *Rāmāyaṇa* notion of an "abode of *rakṣasa*-s" within or nearby to the island of Laṅkā. A number of intersecting story matrices are in play between the Indian and Sri Lankan literary traditions which, when examined together, illuminate more thoroughly how it is that Rāvaṇa (as "lord of Laṅkāpura") was a candidate for eventual assimilation into Sinhala Buddhist historical imagination (and also possibly why it is that he was at first excluded).

To begin, it is important to note that both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the Pali Buddhist chronicles portray their respective "Laṅkā-s" as, at first, devoid of human habitation. Vālmīki's Laṅkāpura is the abode of *rākṣasa*-s, who, while not inherently uncivilized or disorderly, require intervention from Rāma, who restores

[86] An inscription dating to the first year of the reign of Sena II (c. 846 CE) mentions two officers of the king named Kaṇṇā (Kṛṣṇa) and Rāvaṇā (Paranavitana, "Viyaulpata Pillar-Inscription" [*EZ* IV.4 no.21], 176-80). "Polonnaruva," the central seat of power from the late 11th to 13th centuries, derives from "Pulastya Nagara" (Pali: Pulatthinagara)—Pulastya being the grandfather of Rāvaṇa and, according to the *Mahābhārata* and Sanskrit puranas, the progenitor of all *rakṣasas*. Polonnaruwa is called "the Kāliṅga city of Pulastipura" in the inscriptions of Niśśaṅka Malla (r. 1187-96) (de Zilva Wickremasinghe, "Prīti-Dānaka-Maṇḍapa Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* II no.29], lines 8 and 36 and "Galpota Slab-Inscription" [*EZ* II no.17], part B, line 7).

overlordship to the dependable Vibhīṣaṇa (ousting Rāvaṇa). The Pali chronicles are slightly inconsistent on the question of the primordial inhabitants of the island: in the *Dīpavaṃsa* the island is home to Yakkhas (*yakṣa*-s), Bhūtas and Rakkhasas (*rākṣasa*-s), while the *Mahāvaṃsa* mentions only Yakkhas (phantasmagoric, ghoulish homovores). In both cases, however, the resident non-humans are evicted by the Buddha during his first visit to the island (the Yakkhas, who seem to have made their way back, are again eliminated by Vijaya upon his arrival according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*). Thus the seeds are sown in the early Pali tradition for the possible accommodation of "Ravana's Laṅkāpura" at some point in the distant past, especially if one accepts the *Dīpavaṃsa* account of an ancient race of *rākṣasa*-s dwelling on the island.

The early Pali tradition intimates though that the proper abode of Rakkhas and Yakkhas lies elsewhere, somewhere beyond Sri Lanka's shores. In the *Dīpavaṃsa*, "Laṅkādīpa" is the island of Lanka, which the Buddha ordains as suitable for exclusive habitation by humans. To this end, he deports the Yakkhas, Bhūtas and Rakkhasas inhabiting Laṅkādīpa to nearby "Giridīpa," thus "interchanging the two islands for the (two kinds of beings), man and Rakkhasas."[87] The quarantine location's name, "Giridīpa" or "mountain island," has semantic resonances with the "inaccessible rock," the "triple peak" of Trikūṭa Mountain on which Rāvaṇa's fortress of Laṅkāpuri is situated in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa.*[88]

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[87] *Dpv* 1.75.

[88] Though in other respects it is said to resemble Laṅkādīpa, the text remarks that Giridīpa is situated "in the great sea, in the midst of the ocean and of the deep waters, where the waves incessantly break; around it there was a chain of mountains, tower, difficult to pass;

The *Mahāvaṃsa* gives the names of two Yakkha cities: Sirīsavatthu and Laṅkāpura. "Laṅkāpura" is inhabited by the "chief of Yakkhas," and it is here that Kuvaṇṇā flees when sent away for good by Vijaya, along with their two children.[89] Sirīsavatthu is identified as the city of Yakkhas in the Pali Valāhassa Jātaka (where a group of five hundred sailors are shipwrecked on the island of Tambapaṇṇni (i.e. Sri Lanka)), in what seems to be a cognate story with the landing of Vijaya.[90] The exact location of "Laṅkāpura" in the *Mahāvaṃsa* is uncertain (even whether or not it is within the island of Laṅkā): it may be that the geography of the Valāhassa Jātaka is here conflated with that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with *two* demon cities instead of one.[91]

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to enter it against the wish (of the inhabitants) was difficult" (*Dpv* 1.70), suggesting a fortress-like quality to the island.

[89] *Mhv* 7.33, 7.62.

[90] Vijaya's arrival at Laṅkā presents itself as one token of the pan Indo-Arabo-European "tale of the shipwrecked sailor." It appears with various permutations in Homer's *Odyssey*, *Sinbad the Sailor*, the Pali Valāhassa Jātaka, the Sanskrit Buddhist *Avadāna* collection, and elsewhere. The core narrative consists of a captain and his crew lured to or shipwrecked on a remote island, the seduction and immobilization of the crew at the hands of indigenous enchantresses, and the rescue of the crew by the captain/hero. In the *Mhv*, Laṅkā is inhabited only by Yakkhas at the time of Vijaya's arrival. The Yakkhiṇī Kuvaṇṇā lures all seven hundred of Vijaya's party inland and throws them, paralyzed and bound, into a chasm (intending to devour them but unable to owing to a protect thread issued by Sakka). Vijaya subdues Kuvaṇṇā, forces her to return his men, and with her help slays the remaining Yakkhas of the island. The episode as related in the *Mhv* resembles closely that of the Valāhassa Jātaka. Here the Buddha tells of the Island of Tambapaṇṇni, where the city of Sirīsavatthu (also the name of a city of the Yakkhas according to the *Mhv*) was an abode of Yakkhiṇī-s. The Yakkhiṇī-s scour the coast in search of shipwrecked sailors, enticing them into their city by means of illusions and magical wiles, in order to torture and eat them. In a former life, the Buddha relates, he rescued five hundred sailors from the clutches of the Yakkhiṇī-s when he was incarnated as a flying horse (*JAV* II.127-30 (no.196)).

[91] The proximity of the Vijaya colonization story to the *Rāmāyaṇa* depiction of Laṅkāpura in the imagination of the region is revealed in a version of the peopling of Sri Lanka collected by Hsuan Tsang during his 7th century South Indian sojourn. In this account, five hundred demonesses of Laṅkā living within an iron city seduce five hundred sailors accompanying the merchant prince Siṃhala. Siṃhala subsequently drives the demonesses into the sea, destroys their iron city, and rules Laṅkā as king. For discussion, see Gunawardana (1990:

In an effort to create a historical singularity that marked the genesis of recorded time in Sri Lanka as the arrival of Vijaya and the *parinirvana* of the Buddha, the author or authors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* omitted the narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though not without leaving traces. When Sinhala Buddhist historical impressions began to take on an independent character from the 14th century onwards, suturing the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the early Pali chronicle narrative did not violate the logic or timeline of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, since the island prior to Vijaya's arrival was an abode of demons (including Rakṣasas specifically according to the *Dīpavaṃsa*). Indeed, Rāvaṇa's legendary kingdom of Laṅkāpura offered a lens through which to imagine an ancient Sri Lanka geographically more vast and materially more prosperous than the present. It was, of course, an ancient *Hindu* past, displacing the chronological supremacy of the Buddha enshrined in the early Pali chronicles.

While Sinhala literature sometimes portrays Rāvaṇa's reign as ultimately disastrous, Lankan Buddhist attitudes towards the demon king were not wholly inimical. Although half of the island was washed away by the sea because of his unrighteousness, the standard *kaḍayim* and *Rājāvaliya* concede that Rāvaṇa's reign

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49ff.), Kemper (1991: 56ff.), and (contra Guanwardana) Dharmadasa (1989: 9). It is interesting to note that initial Cōḻa identification of "Ilaṅkaipura" with Sri Lanka did not fix that geography in the Tamil literary imagination (as attested in the 12th century *Kampa Rāmāyaṇam* and later *Kantapurāṇam*). Later Tamil literature insists that there were *two* island domains of the *rakṣasa*-s—"Ilaṅkāpuri" belonging to Rāvaṇa, and "Pātāḷa Laṅkā," belonging to the demon king's brother *Mayil Irāvaṇaṉ* ("Peacock Rāvaṇa"). The *Mayilirāvaṇaṉ Katai* probably does not predate the 18th c., though its story matrix seems to have circulated orally among Tamils for centuries prior according to Zvelebil (*Two Tamil Folktales,* xxxvii, xlv). Later Tamil tradition, then, still follows the early Pali tradition in positing two islands: "Laṅkā" in addition to another, even more remote one.

was one of immense prosperity.[92] Like Tamil devotional literature and *tala-purāṇam*-s, Sinhala oral tradition remembers Rāvaṇa as valorous and learned (as represented by his ten heads), an expert in medicine and an author of several Sanskrit works on the subject, and as a masterful vīṇā player.[93] As John Holt (2004) stresses, late medieval Sinhala poems downplay the godliness of Viṣṇu while emphasizing the fairness of Rāvaṇa. Sinhala poetry presents Rāma as the aggressor in the conflict with Rāvaṇa—cutting off Surpanakha's nose upon her advances, with Rāvaṇa abducting Sītā out of revenge for this action, not because of his own insatiable lust.[94]

It is also noteworthy that many short Sinhala poems narrating aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (mainly the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa's forces) are titled after Rāvaṇa (e.g. *Rāvaṇa Puvata*, *Rāvaṇa Haṭana*, *Rāvaṇa Kathāva*), rather than after Rāma.[95] The *Rāvanā Kathāva Kavi*, recounting the abduction of Sitā, her discovery by Hanuman, and the war with Rāvaṇa, doesn't even mention Rāma by name (*viṣṇu*,

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[92] Rāvaṇa's capital was bedecked with fantastic palaces and four lakhs of sprawling streets. The standard *kaḍayim* gives the location of treasure collected during his reign under a certain rock at Pandāväva (see Figure 2).

[93] Seneviratne, "Rāma and Rāvaṇa," 235. Rāvaṇa as master of śāstric learning persists in modern day Sri Lankan mythology, as evidenced by the paintings of scientific books authored by the ancient demon-king at the Rāvaṇa Devalaya of Devram Viharaya, Pannapitiya (built in 1999).

[94] See *The Buddhist Viṣṇu*, 138ff. Holt's explanation for the elevation of Rāvaṇa vis-à-vis Rāma is an effort on the part of Sinhala Buddhist authors to "cut Viṣṇu down to size," downplaying Rāma's moral perfection and thus *a fortiori* his divinity.

[95] Manuscripts bearing these titles are summarized in Hugh Nevill's *Sinhala Verse*: no. 177, 689 and 690. More of the same and similar names are listed in W.A. de Silva's *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts in the Colombo Museum*, vol. 1 (1938).

dasa avatāra, and *avatāra* are the appelations used instead).[96] Rāvaṇa is even presented as a positive romantic interest in the *Kohoṁbā Yakkama*, a Sinhala text containing the narrative of a ceremonial performance dance of the same name.[97]

The incorporation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Sinhala Buddhist historical writing did not occur without any vexation. Rāvaṇa himself was not exalted *tout court* by Sinhala Buddhist authors: although his reign was remembered as one of immense prosperity, the standard *kaḍayim* also emphasizes the demon-king's tyranny, and the disaster it wrought upon the island. *Rāmāyaṇa* personages were incorporated into Sinhala Buddhist religious life each on their own terms: Vibhīṣaṇa was elevated to the status of a Buddhist guardian deity, while Rāvaṇa was not. Aside from Rāvaṇa's *a-dharmic* tendencies, he possesses another, more specifically South Indian characteristic that would have been a source of apprehension among Sinhala Buddhists: as is made known in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and emphasized in Tamil religious literature, Rāvaṇa was an ardent *bhakta* of Śiva. In the semiology of

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[96] The mss. are described by W.A. de Silva in his *Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts in the Colombo Museum*, vol. 1 (no. 1966). The *Rāvanā Kathāva Kavi* appears to be essentially the same as the *Rāwanā haṭana* described by Hugh Nevill in *Sinhala Verse* (no. 689), the text of which he estimated to belong to the late 16th c.

[97] The poem offers a version of epic in which Sītā allowed herself to be seduced by Rāvaṇa after three months in captivity. When Vālin (rather than Hanuman) is dispatched by Rāma to discover her, Sītā, by this time enjoying herself in Rāvaṇa's pleasure grove, commands the *rakṣasa* forces to seize the monkey, bind his tail with cloth, and set it alight. Finally retrieved by Vālin and again in the company of Rāma, Sītā is caught with a sketch of Rāvaṇa, her former lover, which she had drawn at the behest of Umā. Enraged, Rāma orders his brother Saman to take Sītā to the Himālayas and to kill her there—Saman disobeyed, and Sītā found herself in the custody of the sage Vālamiga (Vālmīki), with whom she raised a family (see Godakumbura (1946a), (1946b) and (1993)). On the identification of Lakṣman with Saman (Sumana), see Paranavitana, "The God of Adam's Peak," 27f. Godakumbura explains that the story of the Kohoṁbā Yakkama "is not widespread, and that it is even now known only to traditional performers of the occult rite or folk ceremony practiced only in a few villages in the central districts of the island" ("Rāmāyaṇa in Śrī Laṅkā," xcv).

devotion of premodern Sri Lanka, Śiva represented the absolute religious other, and was never made a guardian deity of the courts of the island's southwest (as even Viṣṇu was).[98]

As with Manu in the case of integrating South Indian dynastic genealogy into the royal encomia of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, however, Rāvaṇa served as a kind of intermediary between two different historical imaginaires, one Tamil Hindu and one Pali Buddhist. Laxity in late medieval Sinhala historiography with regard to the Vijaya singularity (that forms an edifice for the reckoning of calendric time in the *Mahāvaṃsa*) is again symptomatic of broadening vision of the history of the island among Sinhala Buddhists of the time. As I argue further in chapter 6.2, Rāvaṇa lives on in Sinhala historical imagination to the present day, where his glorious kingdom of Laṅkāpura has become a serious rival narrative in depicting the origins of the national past.

[98] The other consideration is that Rāvaṇa was possibly ineligible for guardian deity status since he was slain by Rāma, whereas Vibhīṣaṇa lived on to rule over the island (though the Sinhala folk tradition, attested by Queirós and continuing to this day, stating that Rāvaṇa lies a state of suspended animation, waiting to one day return to his kingdom, doesn't make his elevation to the status of a *varan deviyo* altogether impossible, see chapter 6.2).

CHAPTER FIVE: COMPETING VISIONS OF THE NATIONAL PAST

§5.1 INTRODUCTION: THE PEOPLE OF THE LION

Since Sri Lanka's independence from Britain in 1948, the imagery, rites and vocabulary of Buddhist monarchy have played a formative role in the island's political discourse. Early nationalist polemics argued that a modern democratic government is obligated to fulfill the traditional duties of Buddhist kings: upholding the Buddhist religion (*buddha sāsana*), preserving the institutions of Buddhist monks (the Sangha), and safeguarding the collective interests of the island's Sinhala Buddhist majority.[1] Among Sri Lankan Buddhists today, Prince Vijaya is regarded not only as the first link in the island's illustrious "chain of kings," but also as the progenitor of the Sinhala speaking people, who trace their ancestry to him and his fellow émigrés from north India. "Sinhala" is today a multivalent designation, signifying the island's traditional Buddhist culture, the Sinhala language, and Sinhala ethnicity (distinct from Sri Lanka's other two major *jāti*-s, "hereditary groups," i.e. Tamils and Muslims).

The aim of the present chapter is not to rehearse an argument regarding the precise temporal origin of Sinhala "ethnic consciousness" or its modern development, concerning which a number of helpful studies have already been undertaken.[2] Instead, I consider the semantic range of the term "Sinhala" as applied in the *Mahāvaṃsa* and its commentarial tradition, making light of the strategies

[1] See Schonthal (2016).

[2] See chapter 1.3 of this dissertation and Obeyesekere (1975, 2004), Tambiah (1986, 1992), Dharmadasa (1989, 1992), Gunawardana (1990, 1995), Kemper (1991), Roberts (2004, 2012), Strathern (2017), and contributions to Spencer (1990).

through which later redactors of the chronicle accommodated the infusion of foreign monarchs into the "chain of kings" ostensibly descended from Prince Vijaya. I go on to examine perspectives contained in Sinhala prose works on the peopling of Sri Lanka, caste, and the heredity of the island's kings and rulers. Far from affirming the consanguineous heritage of Sinhala speaking people, such perspectives emphasize the composite nature of the Buddhist people of the island, as well as discontinuities in royal dynastic succession.

Finally, I consider asymmetries between present day political applications of the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the text's premodern legacy. Scholarly commentary on the chronicle has emphasized its "politically legitimating" function—its role in engineering public opinion in favor of the ruling status quo, reinforcing a mono-genetic, mono-lingual, and mono-religious form of Sinhala identity. I argue that the political instrumentality of the text has likely been overstated, at least insofar as it applied to the island's Buddhist population at large. Indeed, rather than adopting (or promulgating as normative) an exclusive form of religious identity, it was incumbent upon premodern Lankan monarchs ruling over diverse populations to patronize the institutions of both Hindus and Buddhists.

§5.2 "SINHALA-NESS" IN AND THROUGH HISTORY

Although its declared intention is to narrate the history of the great "sīhaḷa" kings of Sri Lanka, at no point does the *Mahāvaṃsa* explicitly define the scope of the term "Sinhala." The chronicle refers to the island as "sīhaḷa-dīpa" ("the island of the Sinhalas") following the late 3rd or early 4th century *Dīpavaṃsa*, where first recorded usage of the term *sīhaḷa* occurs in Pali. The *Mahāvaṃsa* explains that, on account of

their association with Sīhabāhu (Vijaya's father), Vijaya and his band of seven hundred exiles "were also called Sīhaḷa."[3] "Sīhaḷa" is applied adjectivally to kings identified in the chronicle as defenders of the Buddhist religion against "Damiḷa"[4] adversaries. Nowhere however is the term explicitly extended to the island's population at large.

Indeed, the *Mahāvaṃsa* has little to say about Sri Lankan religious life beyond the royal court and major figures within Buddhist Sangha. The "great lineage" (*mahā-vaṃsa*) from which the text derives its title refers to the succession of Sri Lankan Buddhist rulers, who trace their ancestry to Vijaya.[5] Vijaya is, the chronicle implies, the first link in the Sinhala "garland of kings" (*rāja-mālā*) extending all the way to the last independent ruler of Sri Lanka (Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha, r. 1798-1815). The Lankan Buddhist "royal lineage" in the Pali chronicles is presented as consanguineous succession (rather than strictly legal succession, or succession by appointment), with royal *bona fides* derived from either patrilineal or matrilineal ancestry.[6]

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[3] *Mhv* 7.42.

[4] Skt. *drāviḍ*a, i.e. "Dravidian" or "Tamil." The *Mahāvaṃsa* uses the term *damiḷa* to denote the enemies of Buddhist kings in general. The *damiḷa*-s "plundered the country like devils" during the reign of Sena V (972-82). The army of Māgha invading in the 13th c. is likened to the hosts of Māra, the Buddha's tempter (*Cv* 54.66 and 80.70).

[5] See notes 31-33 in §2.2, above.

[6] See Trautmann (1973). Some rules of royal succession are given in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, and while the necessity of consanguineous succession is never explicitly stated, it is also never explicitly violated. The later vernacular chronicle tradition is more direct in affirming the genealogical nature of the Lankan Buddhist "chain of kings," as in the *Rājāvaliya*'s proclamation that, despite the conquest of the north of the island by Eḷāra in the 2nd century BCE, "the royal seed (*rajabiju*) of Sri Lanka was not lost amid the succession of kings (*rajavaliya*) [extending to those rulers of] Rūṇamāgama and Kälaṇiya" (*Rv*, 175).

The *Mahāvaṃsa* however also suggests a paradox inherent in such a genealogical definition of "Sinhala" royal descent—the text acknowledges from its outset the contingency of Sri Lankan Buddhist polity and its reliance on matrimonial alliances with foreign powers. The depiction of the marriage of Vijaya with Kuvaṇṇā (native *yakkha* princess of the island), along with the marriage of Vijaya's accomplices to Pāṇḍyan (South Indian) princesses, constitutes an allegory concerning the digestion of foreign people into Sinhala political life. It also reflects the empirical reality of alliances between Sri Lankan and continental rulers regularly cemented through intermarriage.

The paradox of the genealogical conception of "Sinhala" (as a matter of royal descent) deepens as one considers the complication that, over time, the royal bloodline grew so diluted that some claimants to the throne may have borne no identifiable ancestry to Vijaya whatsoever. The infusion of foreigners into the Lankan succession of kings became especially pronounced during and after the Cōḻa occupation of most of northern Sri Lanka during the 11th century, when Buddhist dominion was reduced to the southernmost quadrant of the island (the "kingdom of "Rohaṇa"). In addition to the genealogical problem, 12th century redactors of the *Mahāvaṃsa* also had to accommodate the historical fact of patronage of Hindu institutions by "Sinhala Buddhist" rulers, as well as their retention of Hindu caste identity.

Nowhere are these issues more salient that in the *Mahāvaṃsa*'*s* description of Parākramabāhu I (r. 1153-86), one of the most celebrated kings in Sri Lankan

history and the predominant subject of the first update to the chronicle (most likely written under his sponsorship, attributed to a Mahāvihāran monk by the name of Dhammakitti[7]). Here Parākrama is presented as a Buddhist king par excellence—unifier of the Sangha under the Mahāvihāra fraternity, generous patron, and indefatigable restorer of the monuments and reliquaries of Anuradhapura. He is moreover a *Sinhala* king: upon learning of the birth of his nephew, Vikramabāhu remarks that Parākrama "gleams like a jewel that is the center stone in the chain of kings (*rājamālā*) beginning with King Vijaya."[8] As a young man, Prince Parākrama bristles upon learning that his cousin of Shaivite inclination (Gajabāhu II, see chapter 3) has "fetched nobles of wicked views (*pāpadiṭṭhino*) from abroad and so made the Rājaraṭṭha a briar patch."[9]

In the final battle for the Rājaraṭṭha, Parākrama is brought an Indian sword (*jambudīpa pāṭava*) by mistake. The king excoriates his squire: "That is not the Sīhaḷa blade! Leave this (sword) that could put an end to all the lines of hostile kings in Jambudīpa and bring me quickly the Sīhaḷa blade!"[10] Parākrama's eventual campaign in South India, prompted by a plea for help from the besieged Pāṇḍya king of Madhurā (Madurai), is presented as one of Sīhaḷa v. Damiḷa. His adversary,

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[7] Since this portion of the chronicle may well have been the work of more than one author, we might more accurately refer to its authorship as "the committee known as Dhammakitti." The update spans chapters 37 to 79 of the *Mhv*, with chapters 37 to 72 bearing unique features (see Kulasuriya, "The Minor Chronicles," 3).

[8] *Cv* 62.56.

[9] *Cv* 70.53f. (my translation).

[10] *Cv* 72.104.

Kulasekhara (Kulōttuṅka III, before he acceded to the Cōḻa throne), declares his heretical intentions before attacking the Lankan army: "Only when I shall have cut off the heads of the Sīhaḷas shall my sacrifice to the gods in holy Rāmissara (the Śiva temple at Rāmesvaram) take place!"[11] Upon their defeat, the captured Damiḷas are transported to Lanka and set to work rebuilding the Buddhist stūpas "which they had destroyed."[12]

The *Mahāvaṃsa* however mentions several facts complicating the assertion that Parākrama was a "Sīhaḷa," descended from "the chain of kings beginning with Vijaya." In the first instance, Parākrama was two generations removed from the South Indian Pāṇḍyan dynasty patrilineally[13] (a reminder of why he may have been so eager to lend assistance to the king of Madurai[14]), his father having been in all probability a strong supporter of Hinduism (and possibly even married to a Cōḻa

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[11] *Cv* 76.148.

[12] The Ratanavāluka-cetiya is specifically mentioned here (*Cv* 76.102-4), as is the Mahāthūpa, following the restoration of which Parākramabāhu sponsors a massive commemorative festival (76.105-20).

[13] Parākrama's father was Mānābharaṇa, son of the king of Paṇḍu (*Cv* 59.40-42). Parākrama's mother was Ratanāvalī, daughter of Vijayabāhu I (assumed on the basis of the identification of the "chief queen" (*mahesī*) mentioned at 62.18-26 with Ratanāvalī, bequeathed to Mānābharaṇa by Vijayabāhu (59.42-44)). Though remembered favorably in the chronicle, Vijayabāhu's Hindu sympathies are also recorded. During his reign, "Hindu temples were maintained as in the days of the Coḷas" (60.78), with no state taxes levied upon them. A lengthy Tamil inscription at the Daḷadā Maḷuva at Polonnaruva famously records Vijayabāhu entrusting the security of the Buddha's Tooth Relic to the Veḷaikkāras, resident mercenary soldiers of south Indian extraction. Vijayabāhu's patronage to the Brahmin community at the "Southern Kailāsa" Śiva temple at Kantalai is recorded in a Tamil inscription there (Paranavitana, "A Tamil Slab-Inscription from Pālamōṭṭai" [*EZ* IV.4 no.24], 192-4). Further discussion previously in chapter 3.3.

[14] This "Paṇḍu king" is also named Parākrama (Parakkama), though this seems to be only a coincidence (*Cv* 76.76).

princess).[15] Parākrama's birth is prophesied to his father, Mānābharaṇa, by the god Śakra[16], following which birth rites (*jātakamma*, Skt. *jātakarman*) are performed for the infant prince, "according to the rules laid down in the Veda."[17] As a young man Parākrama receives the *upanayana* thread investiture at the insistence of his uncle (Kitti Siri Megha), supervised by "Brahmans versed in the ritual of the Veda." The ritual, if conventionally interpreted, signifies Parākrama's formal initiation into the *kṣatriya varṇa* (as John Holt says, "in a manner that would be clearly understood by Hindu observers").[18] Following Parākrama's coronation and unification of the island under one crown, the chronicle details the king's support of Hindu institutions (alongside Buddhist ones). Parākrama builds thirteen shrines to Hindu gods (*devālaya*-s) in the northern kingdom, repairing some seventy-nine more. An additional twenty-four temples to various deities are built in the southern kingdom

[15] A Tamil inscription at Budumuttāva appears to refer to Mānābharaṇa under the alias "Vīrapperumāḷ." This ruler is here called Pāṇḍya (congruent with the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s identification of Mānābharaṇa), adding that he had a bride named Cundamalliyāḷvār, daughter of "the Coḷa king Kulottuṅka." This detail is not mentioned in the *Mahāvaṃsa* nor elsewhere. The date of the inscription (the 8th year of the reign of Jayabāhu) would make this Cōḷa king Kulōttuṅka I (Paranavitana, "Two Tamil Pillar Inscriptions" [*EZ* III.33], 308f.).

[16] *Cv* 62.11-17.

[17] *Cv* 62.45.

[18] *Cv* 64.12-17. Holt discusses the episode in *The Buddhist Viṣṇu*, 37. Parākrama explicitly self identifies as a *kṣatriyan* in a land-grant inscription to one of his generals: "His Majesty Parākramabāhu who is descended from the royal line of the Okkāka dynasty which, abounding in an assemblage of illustrious, boundless and transcendental virtues, has made other *kṣatriya* dynasties of Jambudvīpa its vassals; who is by right of descent the lord of the maiden, the land of Laṅkādivīpa, the chief queen of the *kṣatriya* nobles" (Paranavitana, "Devanagala Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* III.34], 323). A nearly identical eulogy appears in an inscription of Parākrama's grandfather, Vijayabāhu (Wickremasinghe, "Aṁbagamuva Rock-Inscription" [*EZ* II.35], 215).

of Rohaṇa.[19] Furthermore, in the end Parākrama showed little concern that his kingdom pass to a "Sīhaḷa" or even a Sri Lankan, nominating a prince of Kāliṅga (Odisha, India) to serve as his successor.[20]

Dhammakitti's portrayal of Parākrama reveals major contours in the spectrum of monastic attitudes towards acceptable forms of religiosity of the rulers of Sri Lanka. The chronicler finds no inherent contradiction in Parākrama's simultaneous support for Buddhist and Hindu institutions. The king was a great supporter of the Sangha (particularly the Mahāvihāra fraternity) but was also a great unifier: as a king ruling over a religiously diverse population, it was a matter of duty that he should patronize both Hindu and Buddhist temples. Dhammakitti is in this respect a theological liberal, though he draws the line at mentioning any support for temples to Śiva, specifically (unsurprising given that, of any form of Hindu practice, Śiva worship drew the strongest opprobrium from Buddhist religieux).

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[19] *Cv* 79.19, 79.22, and 79.81. Parākrama is not exceptional in this respect: from Vijayabahu I onwards the *Mahāvaṃsa* enumerates the sponsorship of Hindu activities by other Lankan kings as well. Meegama (2011) argues that the *devālaya*-s of Polonnaruva represented a central facet of a new ideal of Lankan kingship, in which Buddhist rulers actively modeled themselves after the Cōḻas. Some details are missing too. Kulasekhara's intention to sacrifice to the gods at Rāmesvaram (the closest geographical point between the Indian continent and Sri Lanka) exemplifies Śaiva heresy and Cōḻa contempt for the Sinhalas. It would therefore have involved a great amount of cognitive dissonance had the updater of the chronicle acknowledged that Parākrama himself was a donor at Rāmesvaram, paying for the construction of the sanctum of the Rāmanāthasvāmi shrine in 1173 (Thiruvenkatachari, *Setupatis of Ramnad*, 9-14, 136 n.16; Sethuraman, *The Śaiva Temple of India*, 34). Although ejected from the Pāṇḍya and Cōḻa territories to the north, Lankan forces held the area around Rāmesvaram for some time after 1181, into the reign of Niśśaṅka Malla (1187-96).

[20] Vijayabāhu II (*Cv* 80.1 with Geiger's note).

Symptomatically, Parākrama is still presented as a *Buddhist* and a *Sinhala* king above all else. While Dhammakitti is keenly aware of the infusion of foreign blood that had taken place over the course of the riotous two centuries preceding Parākrama's accession, he remains intent to salvage some sense of continuity in the Sinhala "chain of kings." In an effort to do so, he attributes these words to Queen Mittā (Parākrama's grandmother):

> After Prince Vijaya had slain all the yakkhas and made this island of Laṅkā habitable for men, since then one has allied the family of Vijaya with ours [i.e. the royal dynasty to which Parākrama and his grandmother belonged] by unions above all with scions of the Kāliṅga line.[21]

Dhammakitti, the chronicler, is hedging here: on the one hand, he does not give up entirely on the hereditary definition of "Sinhala" as royal descendent from Vijaya; on the other hand, he acknowledges that foreign alliances have introduced exogenous elements into the Sinhala royal dynasty. He seems to be arguing that because the source of foreign matrimonial alliance has been consistent over time, there is some greater assurance of continuity in the bloodline of the royal family which began with Vijaya.

While Parākramabāhu lived some eight centuries ago, the last kings of Kandy provide a case nearer to the present, and with a great deal more data

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[21] *Cv* 63.12-14. The issue at stake is the wish of Mittā's son (Sirivallabha) to marry his son (Mānābharana) to a south Indian princess, in which case Mānābharana's father-in-law would then be a Pāṇḍyan "sprung from the Ariya dynasty." It is true that by the 12th c., Lankan political intercourse and intermarriage with the Pāṇḍyas and Kaliṅgas was an empirical reality, born out of necessity as an alliance against the Cōḻas. However, Mittā's assertion is anachronistic from the point of view of the chronicle itself: Vijaya of Mahānāma's *Mahāvaṃsa* solicits a princess bride from the *Pāṇḍyan* king of Madurai (along with other Pāṇḍyan ladies of noble station for his retinue) (*Mhv* 7.46-73).

at hand, of foreign rulers being "made Sinhala." The final four rulers to occupy a sovereign throne in Sri Lanka—Śrī Vijaya Rājasiṃha (1739-47), Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha (1747-80), Rājādhi Rājasiṃha (1780-98) and Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha (1798-1815)—were descended from the Nāyakkars of Madurai, the first three of them born in India. The Nāyakkars, originally Telugu speakers from Andhra Pradesh, settled in Madurai where they served to administer under the Vijayanagaras, and began to intermarry with the kings of Kandy in the early 18th century. Śrī Vijaya, Kīrti Śrī, and Rājādhi were brought by their family to Sri Lanka at a young age and groomed for their inheritances, which included an education under the foremost Buddhist prelates of the time. For this reason, the Nāyakkar kings were not thoroughgoing cultural outsiders, in spite of the fact that they were not natives of Sri Lanka. They spoke Sinhala, were well versed in Buddhist religion and, once king, were ardent sponsors of Temple of the Tooth.

Although the Nāyakkars remained generous supporters of Buddhist institutions, the fact that the last independent kingdom on the island spent its twilight under the aegis of Tamil speakers of South Indian heritage was felt as an affront to some Sinhala religious leaders and authors. A handful of monastic authors castigated the Nāyakkars as "plunders" and "heretical Tamils."[22] Majority opinion however was welcoming to these four kings, viewing them as defenders of the Sinhala people against the encroaching Dutch and British. In the 18th century extension of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Kīrti Śrī

[22] K.N.O. Dharmadasa catalogues the relevant literature in "People of the Lion," 16-30.

is called the "believing ruler of the Sinhalas" (*sammādiṭṭhikasīhaḷādhipatino*) and "our Sinhala ruler" (*amhākaṃ sīhalindo*).[23] After successfully defending Kandy against a British invasion in 1803, Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha was likened to none other than Duṭṭhagāmiṇī in Väligala Mudali's *Iṅgrīsi Haṭana* ("War with the English").[24] Robert Percival, a British official present for the transition of the Kandyan monarchy to colonial administration, identified Śrī Vikrama as having been elected to the throne in the possession of "the authority of their native princes." Although he knew of the South Indian heritage of the Nāyakkars, Percival did not categorize them as he did the Tamils of northern Sri Lanka (whom he identified as "several tribes" of "Moorish extraction," and who were often identified as "Malabars"), writing instead that the Kandyan people were "proud of being free from foreign yoke, and slaves only to *masters of their own race.*"[25] In keeping with majority sentiment among Kandyan people at the time, the British perceived the Nāyakkars as legitimate successors to the Lankan monarchy, and of "native" (i.e. Sinhala) extraction.[26]

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[23] *Cv* 99.167, 100.167, 228. He is also called the "Sīhala ruler" (*sīhalādhipo*) at *Cv* 100.144.

[24] Gunawardana, "Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past," 65.

[25] *Idem.*, 67f., citing Percival, *An Account of the Island of Ceylon*, 249f. (emphasis mine).

[26] On efforts to slander Śrī Vikrama after the British acquisition of the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815, see Obeyesekere (2017). Much of the defamatory rhetoric directed towards the king was generated by associates of Ähälēpola, the king's chief lieutenant (*yuva-raja*), who conspired with the British to overthrow him. Textually this animosity took the form of two poems composed in c. 1815, the *Ähälēpola Varnanāva* and the *Kirala Sandēśaya*, and later works of the Maritime Provinces glorifying *Ähälēpola* at the expense of Śrī Vikrama such as the *Ähälēpola haṭanē* and *Perali haṭanē.* The *Sulu-Rājāvaliya*, a Sinhala chronicle modeled on the *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Rājāvaliya* completed in 1820 or 1821 castes Śrī Vikrama as an

It seems, at this point in the imagination of Buddhist monastic history writers at least, that (in the words of Steven Kemper) the idea of being "Sinhala" involved a political category rather than a genealogical one.[27] The examples of Parākramabāhu I, Sapumal-Bhuvanekabāhu VI (discussed in the previous chapter), and the Nāyakkars of Kandy betray a weak operative usage of the term "Sinhala," wherein it was reduced almost to the point of an empty signifier. The descriptor seems to have be applied or revoked by contemporaries on the basis of whether or not the ruler in question deserved (or, put bluntly, was well liked enough) to occupy the throne. Alan Strathern, remarking on the foreign heritage of many of Sri Lanka's regents, usefully terms the "Sinhala" moniker a form of "symbolic indigenisation," i.e. "a signal that while the king may be set apart from his people he also acts for them and in their name."[28]

"inverted Asoka," at first a generous and benevolent monarch before transforming into a despot (Obeyesekere, *The Doomed King*, 271ff.). These works, written by sympathizers with the British Crown, in addition to tarnishing the memory of Śrī Vikrama in popular imagination, have also been cited as evidence for prevailing anti-Tamil sentiments among Sinhalese in the Kandyan Kingdom (by for example Dharmadasa (1979 and 1989) and Roberts (2004 and 2012)).

[27] Kemper, *Presence of the Past*, 97. Even so, attempts to render Kīrthi Srī consanguineous with the traditional Sinhala "chain of kings" were sometimes made. The *Mātale Kaḍayim Pota* (the second *Mātale Kaḍayim*, the one composed during Kīrthi Srī's reign) makes the ruler out to be a relative of one Lankan Parākramabāhu (seemingly Parākramabāhu VI) (1415-1467) by way of an ancient South Indian marital connection. While not impossible nor even implausible, no evidence for such a connection exists elsewhere (Obeyesekere, *Buddhism, Nationhood and Cultural Identity*, 50). The *Välaviṭa Sannasa* places Kīrti Śrī within the lineage of Lankan kings descended from Vijaya (Gunawardana, "Colonialism, Ethnicity and the Construction of the Past," 64).

[28] "Identity in the 'Sinhala Rebellion,'" 17.

§5.3 ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNTS OF THE PEOPLING OF SRI LANKA

Though its major episodes were well known in vernacular literature and in the Sinhala folk tradition, the *Mahāvaṃsa* itself is written in Pali. The chronicle is an elite document: the financiers of its updates were Buddhist kings, its circulation was restricted to monastic libraries, and its readership was limited to Buddhist monks (along with a handful of educated lay people). What then was the understanding of "Sinhala identity" among Sri Lanka's Buddhist population at large?

The Pali commentarial tradition over time extended the term "Sinhala" to include *all* descendants of Vijaya and his party, that is, to include all Sinhala-speaking Buddhists of the island. The *Mahāvaṃsa* records that, in addition to the brides for Vijaya and his party, the king of Madhurā supplied "craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds" for the fledgling colony in Laṅkā.[29] The 10th century commentary on the chronicle, the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, makes a distinction between the hereditary descendants of these immigrants and those Vijaya's seven hundred male accomplices from Lāṭa: all the descendants of Vijaya's retinue "up to the present day are called "Sīhaḷa-s" because of their association with the prince called "Sīhaḷa" (Vijaya)."[30] Such an operational definition of "Sīhaḷa" was in use since at least two centuries prior, as revealed in Dhammapala's *Līnatthapakāsinī*.[31] The text glosses Buddhaghosa's account of the translation of the

[29] *Mhv* 7.57.

[30] Gunawardana, "People of the Lion," 6, citing *VAP*, vol. I, p.261.

[31] The 8th c. work is a *ṭīka* on Buddhaghosa's *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (Buddhaghosa's own commentary on the *Dīgha Nikāya*).

original commentaries from Pali to Sinhala, explaining the etymology and historical sense of term "sīhaḷa":

> From [the addition of the suffix -*la*] in the sense of the taking or the catching of a lion, sīha, Sīhaḷa means the lion prince. The status of being Sīhaḷa is to be recognized of both the *kṣatriyas* on the island of Tambapaṇṇi (Sri Lanka), because they are born in his lineage, and of the island because those (descendants) live there.[32]

Beyond the Pali commentarial tradition, works written in Sinhala intended for broad, lay Buddhist audiences also tended to circumscribe exogenous (foreign, non-Buddhist) peoples in contradistinction to the "Sinhala" people. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's victory over the Tamils is a popular motif in Sinhala poetry, boundary books, chronicles, and other short, historically themed miscellaneous texts. In connection with this episode (along with others describing historical assaults on the island's Buddhist religion) the phrase "fierce Tamils" (*sädi demaḷu*) often appears as a stock designation in these works.[33]

Precisely the degree to which such literary tropes corresponded to popular attitudes is a matter of question. At least some percentage of such xenophobic remarks could be attributed to a residual vocabulary inherited from the Pali chronicles, without any conscious intention on the part of the authors to "consolidate" Sinhala identity or to alienate or antagonize Sri Lankans of South Indian heritage.[34] Some have in addition observed that the theme of "Sinhala v.

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[32] Kate Crosby's translation in "Pali as a Language Name," 75.

[33] The *Mahāvaṃsa*'s analogization of the 13th century invader Māgha to Māra and his hosts is reproduced in literature of the period (Roberts, *Sinhala Consciousness*, 50).

[34] Tambiah remarks on the Lankan Buddhist scribal tradition of recopying stock themes and phrases from text to text (*Buddhism Betrayed?*, 142). Roberts observes that vernacular

Demaḷa (Tamil)" occurred with even greater frequency in Buddhist literature when southwestern Sri Lanka was embattled not by northern Hindu aggressors but by European colonial powers.[35]

Despite these considerations, the trend among scholars has been to emphasize Sinhala insularity and cultural continuity from the late medieval period onwards.[36] There remains however a parallel story to be told, as I have argued in the preceding chapters and continue to argue here. While Sinhala speakers outnumbered Tamil speakers on the Sri Lanka by the time of the arrival of the Portuguese[37], with new arrivals to the island from South India often integrating themselves into Sinhala society[38], Sinhala language, society, and lay Buddhist life did not remain unaltered as this occurred. Buddhist chauvinism is often matched in middle period literature with a sense that the island was religiously and linguistically shared space, as well as with an acknowledgement of the composite

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Buddhist story telling and history writing from the 13th c. "encouraged the reproduction of history in the oversimplified oppositions inscribed within the original *Mahāvamsa*" (*Sinhala Consciousness*, 9).

[35] Roberts points out that although the kingdom of Jaffna ceased to exist in 1619, the trope of the "fierce Tamil" continued popularly throughout the Kandyan period (analogized with the disruptive presence of the Portuguese (*paraṅgi*), Dutch (*landēsi*), and British (*iṅgrīsi*)) (134-36). Berkwitz (2013) argues that an unprecedented form of self-conscious Buddhist religiosity emerged in the 16th c., in response to embattlement in the face of Portuguese Catholic proselytizing. In the same vein, Obeyesekere (2004) argues that from the time of Portuguese incursion, Sinhala Buddhist authors cast Europeans as the usurping "Other" and as oppressors of the *sāsana.*

[36] For influential views to this effect, see Tambiah (1992) and Roberts (2004 and 2012).

[37] An estimated 75% of the island's population was Sinhala Buddhist at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in 1506.

[38] See Roberts (1982 and 2012) and Obeyesekere (1984).

nature of Sinhala people themselves. Vernacular and extra-monastic versions of the island's history existed alongside the *Mahāvaṃsa*, giving versions of events that were sometimes supplementary, sometimes contradictory to the Pali chronicles.

Vernacular tradition—written and oral—offers various permutations of the Vijaya colonization myth. The informants of the Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto provided a version of the story very close to that of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, but appended a note on the prolific exchange of goods and persons which took place between South India and Sri Lanka in the aftermath of marriage between the men of Vijaya's party and many noblewomen of the Indian continent:

> [T]he nuptials being celebrated between them all with great solemnities; thenceforward they frequently went to and fro and interchanged communications, many persons crossing over to live in [Sri Lanka], principally workmen of every craft, and agriculturalists with their plows, seed, cattle, and everything else necessary for human life. With this that island began to increase, and the interior became populated in such a manner that great and beautiful cities and towns were built.[39]

This account comes from Sinhala Buddhists, originally of Sri Lanka's southwestern coastal region, who converted to Christianity and immigrated to Goa in the 1540s and 1550s. It reflects the *Mahāvaṃsa's* claim that Sri Lanka was originally peopled by a large number of South Indians in addition to Vijaya and his party. However, the oral tradition, unlike the Pali commentary in the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, says nothing about a hereditary distinction between Vijaya's "Sinhala" descendants and those of later Indian immigrants. Indeed, the folk tradition implies that it was the

[39] Couto, *History of Ceylon*, 65.

immigrants who ensured that the "island began to increase," both in population and in prosperity.

Narratives acknowledging the composite nature of the inhabitants of the islands are found elsewhere as well, such as in the *Kulavistaraya*, a short Kandyan period Sinhala work on the origins of occupational family names in Sri Lanka. The text argues that the Sinhala people should not be regarded as having caste membership, owing to the fact that a great variety of people migrated to Sri Lanka from the time of Vijaya onwards. In making the point, the author of the work speaks in a candid (and in fact historically accurate) manner of the "mixed descent" of the island's Buddhist rulers from time immemorial:

> The invasions of this land were numerous. Sri Lanka (*siṃhalē*) has a line of kings—but it was not there at the beginning. The reasons are thus: when the lowly birds who eat the fruits of *nuga, äsatu* and *bō* trees expel the seeds with their excrement, from this springs the *nuga, äsatu* and *bō* trees, and under their shade [which is common to all] live persons of the four auspicious castes (*vaṃsa*-s). Therefore, if a person belonged to the royal family (*rājāvaliya*), irrespective of his descent on the paternal side, he is admitted to the royal dynasty. If on the paternal side he belonged to the royal family, irrespective of maternal origin he is qualified to become king. If both paternal and maternal parents belonged to the royal family, he is eligible to become king. If the royalty is [mixed] like that, then do not inquire about the castes of the rest of the people. Contrary to this, it is on the strength of merit-demerit, bravery, victory and support of the people that kingship is founded.[40]

By means of a rather oblique scatological metaphor, the author makes the point that Buddhist monarchy in Sri Lanka has a complex legacy, at times magnificent and at times inglorious. Claims to the throne required either matrilineal or patrilineal pedigree but, the passage recognizes, without any assurance that over time there

[40] Adapted from Abeyawardana, *Boundary Divisions*, 17 (cf. 135ff.).

should be any direct relationship to the first king (or kings) of the island. Instead of fixating on royal genealogy, it is better to evaluate kings on a meritocratic basis. If there is no perduring "line of kings" in Sri Lankan history (wherein the strictest genealogical criterion apply), then how, the *Kulavistaraya* forces us to inquire, can one make the case that there are "pure" castes? (Or, a fortiori, how can one make the case that there is a "pure" Sinhala hereditary identity?)

The *Kulavistaraya* presents a realistic and candid appraisal of the genealogy of island's ruling class, one which, significantly, exhibits no preoccupation with descent from Prince Vijaya and his band (a theme so central to the *Mahāvaṃsa* narrative). What of the self-perception of other segments of premodern, Sinhala-speaking Sri Lankan society with respect to their own origins? One set of resources through which this question may be approached are Sinhala works on caste history, which give various accounts of the origins of the island's hereditary occupational groups. The purpose of such works is to explain the origins (in India) of a diverse array of social enclaves, their customary relationships to one another, and to give an account of their arrival on the island.

Most prominent among such texts is the *Janavaṃśaya*, a Sinhala prose work dating perhaps originally to the 15th century, amended in circulation at the hands of various copyists to emphasize the high status of different caste groups.[41] The

[41] See Nevill's introduction to his partial translation of the text and Roberts (1982). A number of mss. are catalogued at the Colombo National Museum and in the Nevill Collection (see Somadasa, *Catalogue of the Hugh Nevill Collection*, vol. 7, p.18). I rely on Vijayasiri's 1957 edition for what follows, which differs in several respects from the mss. available to Nevill for his translation (as for example in regards to Nevill's confusing explication of the "origin of caste" (see "The Janawamsa," p.76)).

Janavaṃśaya can be read in large part as an etiological myth, explaining the presence of culturally exogenous communities in the island's southwest as have immigrated *en mass* during several key occasions in Sri Lanka's history. Michael Roberts notes that detailed accounts of hereditary occupational groups and their relationships to one another in the *Janavaṃśaya* indicates a successful integration of South Indian immigrant communities into Sinhala Buddhist society at the time the text was composed, suggesting that "Karāva, Salāgama and Durāva [fisherman, cinnamon peeler and toddy tapping caste] immigrants had either resided in the island for some time, or performed a significant social role."[42]

There are a number of interesting features of the text relevant to the present discussion: the first is the synthesis of the *Aggañña Sutta* with the Vedic account of the origin of castes (as in the "Sacrifice of Prajāpati"); the second is the fact that, while Prince Vijaya is shown to be instrumental in introducing various castes groups to Sri Lanka from India, he is not presented as a biological progenitor of the Sinhala people.

The *Janavaṃśaya* begins with a synopsis in Sinhala of the Pāli *Satta Suriya* and *Aggañña Sutta*-s (see chapter 2.2): the Buddha, dwelling outside of Sāvatthi, is approached by a young aspirant for ordination, Bhāradvāja, and asked about the origins of the Caṇḍāla (Untouchable) caste.[43] The Buddha undertakes his

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[42] Roberts, *Caste Conflict*, 20.

[43] The *Janavaṃśaya* most often uses the term *kula* to refer to hereditary occupational groups, but freely substitutes the terms *vaṃśa* and *varṇa* as well. Michael Roberts notes that in Sinhala society, in addition to *jāti*, "Terms such as *gedara, vāsagama* and *vamsa* are also employed to identify families and to distinguish status gradations between families within a caste" (*Caste Formation*, 46).

explanation, beginning from the world cleansing wind, rain and fire that bridged the previous *kalpa* to our own. Passing from the cosmogony of the *Satta Suriya Sutta* to the anthropogenic account of the *Aggañña Sutta*, the Buddha then explains that the first beings of our present world-era were luminous-bodied (*śarīra ālōkayen*) denizens of the ethereal Brahma world (*bambalova*), content to sustain themselves on the rarified food (*prīti āhāra*) plentifully available there. This situation endured until the beings of Brahma world learned of the sweet taste of the five flavors of the earthly world (*poḷova*), and descended to partake of them.[44]

At this time there was only one category of people, Brahmins, who collected a form of self-producing rice (*sayaṃjāta häl*), requiring no effort in its cultivation. As some among them grew greedy for a greater share, however, the self-producing rice disappeared, thus originating the need for manual cultivation. As the Brahmins continued to dwell on the earth for several tens of thousands of years, growing increasingly covetous, their bodies lost their luminescence and acquired a corporeal form, becoming sexually differentiated to acquire the characteristics defining men and women.[45]

Following an account of the origin of the sun and moon, other celestial bodies and days of the week, the narrative of the *Aggañña Sutta* is again continued, with the Brahmin inhabitants of the earth having descended into civil strife, feuding, stealing from one another, and arguing. To restore the social order, a scion of the lineage of the son was elected king of all people: Mahāsammata, "appointed" (*sammata*) by the

[44] *Jv*, 5-8.

[45] *Idem.*, 8f.

people (*mahājanayā*).[46] It was from the time of this great king that cultivation of various crops proceeded in an orderly way, with specialists designated for various forms of it.

After the various creatures of the animal realms had then elected their own kings on the same model, and five generations of male descendants of Mahāsammata had reigned of the human inhabitants of the earth, there had evolved only three major occupational groups (*mahāsāra kulaya*): rulers (the *raja* or *kṣatriya kula*); Brahmins (*brāhmaṇayō*), who served as personal priests (*purōhitava*) to the kings and were learned in the *sāstras*, ritual (*yāga sōma bali bili*) and medicine; and finally householders (*gṛhapati*[47]*)*, who performed agricultural work and kept up other essential commercial activity (*vyavahāra*). Some time later a fourth occupational group (*kula*) emerged in the form of merchants (*veḷendō* or *vāṇijja*), when one Brahmin medicinal specialist focused himself on this expertise, passing the trade on to his children. As commerce increased and some among these four castes became rich and some poor, the poorer were hired to do the agricultural work and manual tasks that the rulers, Brahmins, householders and merchants no

[46] *Idem.*, 11f. The text declares that the lineage of great kings of the earth issued from Mahāsammata (*maha sammata raju paṭan rājavaṃśaya*).

[47] The text itself equivocates on the precise import of this term. Gṛhapati-s are presented at first as house-holding Brahmins or a property owning caste of proximate status. Elsewhere the *Janavaṃśaya* identifies *gṛhapati*-s with the *vaiśya* caste (*gṛhapati vaiśyayō madhyama vaṅsa ättō yi*, p.54).

longer cared to—these people (originally the friends and relatives of the higher *kula*-s) became known as the *kṣudraya* (i.e. Śudras).[48]

The *Janavaṃśaya* then interrupts the temporal flow of the narrative to explain a familiar designation in the Sinhala caste system, unaccounted for in the Vedic, *catur-varṇa* schema.[49] This is the distinction between "Govi-s" (literally, "cultivators") and other manual and menial occupational groups. The text explains that early on, before specialized agricultural *kula*-s had appeared, landless Brāhmaṇas, Gṛhapatis and Rajas (Kṣatriyas) all themselves toiled in the cultivation of rice (permitted to do so in the manner of sharecropping by a small number of Gṛhapatis who owned the land). Thus it is, the text explains, that even conventionally high caste individuals came to be referred to as "Govikam Karannō," or "cultivators."

At the beginning of this *kalpa*, when rice ceased to be self-producing, a Brāhmaṇa named Kāsyapa developed the method of tilling, planting and reaping that we are now familiar with. Living in Jambudvīpa, his descendants came to be

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[48] *Jv*, 15-17. The text at first presents at first an amicable picture of the relationship between castes, though later explains the origin of distrust and enmity between them: "There were the various division on the basis of labor: *raja, bamuṇa, gṛhapati, vaiśya* and *śudra.* What is the reason for this? When the greed and craving of living beings had grown for some time, and human beings had given birth to anger and hatred, some people who were hostile to one another considered: "These people are hostile towards our caste. Therefore do not visit their homes, do not do honor to them, do not eat, drink or live together with them." And so, in time, without their sons and grandsons knowing of this hostility…would say "do not go there, do not eat there – they are lowly (*nīcayōya*), impetuous and vile (*caṇḍahīna vairaya*)," and in such a way trained their own sons and grandsons" (p.56).

[49] While there are scattered literary references to the operation of the "four *varṇa*-s" in premodern Sri Lankan Buddhist society (as at *Cv* 80.54-70), there is no evidence that such a rigid caste scheme had any greater purchase there than it did elsewhere in South India.

known as "Govi Bamuṇō" ("cultivator Brahmins"), and eventually simply "cultivators" (*govikam karana aya*) or those of the "cultivator caste" (*govi kula*).[50] Prince Vijaya, upon reaching the Sri Lanka's shores, appointed the most clever and skillful among his retinue to be cultivators, thus seeding the island with the "Govi" caste. Although throughout the intervening generations the illustriousness of this caste designation faded, the original status of the cultivators should not be forgotten, the *Janavaṃśaya* admonishes:

> Although like other groups they are identified on the basis of their occupation, the Cultivators—themselves considered Śudras—in fact belong to the great and productive family line (*kulavaṃśa*) of householders, born of the Brahmin lineage (*brāhmaṇa vaṃśaya*)."[51]

Non-Govi-s—other occupational groups such as weavers (*salāgama*), goldsmiths (*karmakāra*), blacksmiths (*vaḍuva*) and tailors—are similarly classified as Śudras.[52]

Although it supplies an account of the origin of caste *in illo tempore*, the *Janavaṃśaya* suggests that there is little *intrinsic* difference between occupational groups, stating that "a name [i.e. a caste designation] comes into usage from an employment," reinforcing the point that even "those who do the work of Śudras" should be regarded as descended from the "Brahmin lineage."[53] This is because, as

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[50] *Jv*, 17-19.

[51] *Idem.*, 19.

[52] The specialties of these groups are similarly explained to have been designated at the beginning of this *kalpa*, when individuals originally of the Gṛhapati, Brahmin and Raja (Kṣatriyan) *kula*-s departed to train in other crafts necessary for the society emerging at the time. Cloth weavers, for instance, became an independent *kula* when divine clothes disappeared owing to the covetous and avarice of the people, and manually produced garments were required to cover the shameful portions of people's bodies.

[53] *Jv*, 23.

with Cultivators (Govi), tradespeople of Śudra designation were also originally members of the higher tier of the *catur-varṇa* scheme.

This message is reinforced in the text's discussion of the Vaḍukam (carpenter) caste, members of whom were first brought to the island by Prince Vijaya and again later dispatched by King Asoka. Despite the fact that this initial stock of carpenters had apprenticed in the trade from their fathers, as had been done down through the generations, the *Janavaṃśaya* explains that the craft may be performed by anyone who learns it[54]: this is how one earns the designation "Vaḍuva." Likewise,

> Each caste is named according to the respective trade its members have learned. Because people of the entire human race (*siyalu manuṣya jāti*) are known according to their various livelihoods in the same manner as are the Vaḍu, and because no caste is regarded as lowly (*nindā piṇisa jātiyak niyama koṭa näti*), each works in support of the other. It is impossible to regard this matter otherwise. And so, without designating those who do carpentry work alone as the "Vaḍu" caste (*mē vaḍu jātiya*) [on a hereditary basis], nor others on the basis of their own [hereditary] occupation, [one should know that] all are Brahmins […] Some people in the world nevertheless declare, "We are superior! We are superior!", citing the fact that they belong to the king's court or that they are mighty in wealth, virtue and wisdom. Yet, as among those who know carpentry [and others], there is no difference in caste (*jātiyak venama näta*) between them.[55]

Although the *Janavaṃśaya* has very definite notions of the *origins* of occupational castes, it acknowledges that castes have not been preserved strictly through heredity. The text takes Vijaya's arrival and the mission of King Asoka as two

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[54] The example of Blacksmiths who sometimes indeed do the work of carpenters.

[55] *Jv*, 27. The Carpenter caste (*vaḍuva*), the text later explains, are one of five servant groups, reviled by some as *caṇḍāla*-s. The Vaḍuvō along with the Sannāli (tailors), Radava, Panikki (barbers), and Hommāra.

paradigmatic instances of the injection of occupational specialists into Sri Lanka, explaining subsequent growth in their ranks as a consequence of other islanders (the text does not specify whom) taking up their respective occupation and caste names themselves.

In addition to downplaying the significance of heredity in caste designation, the *Janavaṃśaya* draws from canonical Pali literature to question the value of Vedic castes in the first place. The text concludes by presenting all twenty-seven of verses of the *Vasala Sutta*, given in Pali and also glossed in Sinhala. The verses contain the Buddha's explanation of how it is that one comes to be designated a low-caste person (*vasala*[56])—not by birth, but through action: by harboring hatred, killing living beings, stealing, adultery, slander, etc. Conversely, it is not through birth that one comes to be designated a Brahmin, but through meritorious action.[57]

Although the *Janavaṃśaya* affirms that generationally maintained specialized occupational groups are a reasonable way of organizing civil society, it does so while recapitulating a classical Buddhist notion of meritocracy and egalitarianism. People of *all castes*, the text declares, are descended originally from Brahmins and Kṣatriyas (as opposed to having been created out of the various limbs of Prajāpati as in the Vedic account). What's more, belonging to one or another occupational group (*jāti/vaṃśa/varṇa*, the *Janavaṃśaya* uses all three terms) is a matter of the trade

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[56] The *Jv* equates *vasala* status as that of a Caṇḍāla (p.53f.).

[57] *Jv*, 71-75, corresponding to *Sutta-Nipāta*, 116-42 (pp. 21-25). All those who abstain from the ten kinds of sin, follow the ten kinds of virtuous (*kusala*) behavior, and act compassionately for the good of the world are considered sons of good families (*kula putrayan*, i.e. high caste) in this world and the next (sinners are born as women and *napuṃsakas*) (*Jv*, 53f.).

one practices and the lifestyle one chooses to live, not a social status fixed indelibly from birth. This principle of *samanātmata*, as it is called in in modern Sinhala, is reinforced elsewhere in the text, as for instance in the assertion that:

> There is no difference other than that original distinction between farmers and merchants. These people were the sons and grandsons of Brahmā who was born in the first *kalpa.* Indeed all are one in this way (*siyallōma ekak ma vannōya*). Thus one should perceive no division in the origin of each and every [person/caste].[58]

Regarding historical perceptions of the origin of the people of Sri Lanka, the *Janavaṃśaya* is significant insofar as it establishes an origin for all the people of the island on the Indian subcontinent (*daṁbadiva*, Jambudvīpa) *in illo tempore.* Some occupational groups came originally to Sri Lanka during Vijaya's reign (imported by him from the "Pāṇḍi Raṭa"), and others dispatched by King Asoka to accompany the sapling of the Bodhi tree (according to tradition brought to the island by the king's daughter, Sanghamitta). All the people of Sri Lanka—rulers and peasants, Sinhala speakers and others—are transplants from India, and no reference is made to the either "Sinhala" or "Tamil" speakers as a hereditary designation. Indeed the very term "Sinhala" is nowhere used in the *Janavaṃśaya*, either as a designation for a people or a language. Glossing the etymologies for various occupational groups, the text explains how they came to be what they are now "in the Lankan language" (*laṃkā bhāṣāven*).[59]

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[58] *Idem.*, 57.

[59] See Ryan (1953) and Pfaffenberger (1982). As Ryan notes, however, "These structural similarities or, more accurately, borrowings and transplantations from South India, are not reflected in a comparable rigidity in caste strictures and [taboos]" (*Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 17). Parenthetically, it is worthwhile to note that the *Janavaṃśaya's* curious insistence that people of all occupational groups are Śudras (though they were "originally Brahmins") is

Other Sinhala texts too complicate the *Mahāvaṃsa* narrative of Vijaya and his retinue as progenitors of the Sinhala people. The *Nīti Nighaṇḍuva*, a Kandyan period Sinhala work on civil and criminal law, speaks of the intermingling of Vijaya-era continental transplants to the island with later immigrants in a manner similar to the *Kulavistaraya*. The text explains that, at about the time of Vijaya's thirty-eight year reign, the four great castes of the Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Govi-vaṃśa migrated to the island. Subsequently,

> After the reign of many kings, Gajabahu ascended the throne, marched to the Chola country and returned with 24,000 maidens in lieu of 12,000 that had formerly been carried there from Lanka. Among the 24,000, people of different castes were brought to the Island. Representatives of the Raja (Kṣatriya), Brahmin and Merchant castes had from time to time come over to live here. They did not however preserve their castes in tact, but intermarried with the Govi caste, and it

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itself derived from South Indian caste ideology. In contrast to northern India where the Vedic *catur-varṇa* scheme was more neatly preserved, Tamil South India developed a unique form of the caste system with three main components: (1) Brahmins, in charge of temple and ritual affairs, (2) Veḷḷāḷar ("cultivators"), considered Śudras, and (3) "exterior castes" or Untouchables. Although low in rank on the basis of *catur-varṇa* orthodoxy, the Veḷḷāḷar are proud of their status, account for a very high percentage of temple patronage, and remain ritually clean in contrast to Untouchables. The same outlook, reproduced among Tamil Hindus in northern Sri Lanka, can be seen reflected in the *Janavaṃśaya's* taxonomy of "Sinhala caste." The "Govi-vaṃsa" or "cultivator caste"—the caste to which approximately half of all Sinhala Buddhists claim membership today (though this percentage seems to have grown prodigiously over the past century)—parallels the Veḷḷāḷar. Govi-s (also known as Goyigama) are even in some records referred to as 'Vellāḷar,' as in the *Reports on Castes and Services* of 1818 on file with the British Colonial Office of Ceylon (Roberts, *Caste Conflict*, 70-72; Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon*, 71, 74). Govi subcastes show evidence of Tamil derivation as well, as for example with the "Paṭṭi," "cowherds of the king," almost certainly derived from T. *paṭṭikkāran*, a village servant (for a list of Govi subcastes see Ryan, 93, 135-7). On parallels with Sinhala "Kavikāra" temple "poets" and dancers and in the *devālaya*-s of Sabaragamuva Province and South Indian *dēvadāsi*-s, see Ryan, 135. The designation of *all castes* as "Śudra" (excepting Brahmins, who do did not figure importantly in the late medieval Sinhala social landscape that the *Janavaṃśaya* describes) parallels the destigmatization and social elevation that this caste experienced in South India, allowing "Śudras" to stand at or near the top of the social hierarchy (Govi-s and others in the Sinhala Buddhist case, Veḷḷāḷar in the Tamil case).

> is for this reason that the Govi is considered the chief caste in this kingdom, though now it has many divisions.[60]

The *Kulavistaraya*, *Janavaṃśaya* and *Nīti-Nighaṇḍuva* all decenter the Vijaya colonization narrative in their accounts of the peopling of Sri Lanka, acknowledging (albeit in mythologized fashion) several instances in which large numbers of people from the Indian continent had been transported to the island and integrated into Sinhala society.[61] It is noteworthy that the *Mahāvaṃsa* itself depicts the immediate intermarriage of Vijaya and his party with indigenous and continental Indian peoples, an anecdote that did go unnoticed by medieval Sinhala writers giving their own accounts of the origins of Sinhala social life and polity. Indeed, the episodes concerning Vijaya's union with the Yakkhiṇī Kuvaṇṇā, and his party's subsequent quest for brides from South India, can be read as a parable concerning the necessity of the digestion of the foreign into Sinhala political life from its very inception.[62]

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[60] Adapted from LeMesurier and Pa'nabokke, *Nīti-Nighaṇḍuva*, 5f. The text continues: "The descendants of a king by a wife of the Govi caste are called Bandara Waliya, and with those of pure Govi caste are comprehended in the term Radalakampéruwa or Mudalipéuwa. The holders of subordinate offices are called Paiṇda Péruwa or Raṭé Ḗttó; while descendants of kings or prime ministers who betake themselves to the forests for fear of their enemies, are called Wḛdiwanse (the Veddah caste)."

[61] For evidence that skepticism regarding a consanguineous "Sinhala people" and an unbroken "chain of kings" remained alive among some Sri Lankans into the British period, see p.12f. of Roberts and Ratnawira's *Visvakarma and his Descendants* (1909). From the point of view of the "Visvakarmas" (i.e. the Navadanna caste) the royal lineage of Manu, which had continued in Sri Lanka through Vijaya, came to an end following the reign of Mahāsena in the 3rd c. CE.

[62] See Strathern (2017). Vijaya's successor, Paṇḍuvāsudeva, was his nephew through his brother, Sumitta, and a queen who hailed from "Madda" (*Mhv* 7.6-10). B.C. Law identifies "Sāgala," the capital of "Madda" as Sailkot in modern Punjab (*Geography of Early Buddhism*, 53).

As a coda to this discussion I turn to a recent observation of Gananath Obeyesereke's concerning the fact that "while the mythic origins of the Sinhalas are clear, there is no single recorded example of *Sinhala kings* claiming descent from the lion, in commemoration of the prototypical hero, Sinhabahu."[63] According to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, Prince Vijaya was the son of twin siblings, Sīhabāhu (Sinhabāhu) and Sīhasīvalī, who were themselves the offspring of a lion father and a human mother (Sinhabāhu possessed hands and feet resembling a lion's paws).[64] This, later tradition (such as the *Līnatthapakāsinī*) asserts, is the basis of the "Sinhala" moniker as a designation for all Sinhala speakers, themselves distant descendants of Sinhabāhu, "the lion king." Obeyesekere notes however a reluctance historically on the part of Buddhist rulers to mark themselves as descendants of this king, who, according to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, killed his lion father in exchange for his kingdom, and who married his biological sister:

> The myth of Sinhabahu is rooted in patricide and brother-sister incest, the form a *ānantarika kamma*, one of five heinous sins for which one can spend a near eternity in hell, the closest that Buddhists came to the notion of eternal damnation. No Sinhala king would wish to be associated with it for fear of *vas*, "poisonous effects" (or terrifying consequences). Instead Sinhala kings right down to Sri Vikrama claimed descent from the Sun, (*suriya*), which is the *vaṃsa* of Mahasammata of the dynasty of the Buddha and also that of Manu, the Hindu law-giver. Some also claimed descent from the moon, as for example when Lilavat (Līlāvati), the chief queen of Parakramabahu I the third possessor of that name, claimed descent from both the Sun and the Moon. Hence also the significance of Kotte kings who not only claimed descent from the Sun but also employed the sun and moon flag as theirs.[65]

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[63] *The Doomed King*, 242.

[64] *Mhv* 6.1-38.

[65] *The Doomed King*, 242f.

Attempts to bypass Vijaya and his father in claiming descent from Mahāsammata (or Manu) reveals a degree of ambivalence on the part of Sri Lankan monarchs towards Sinhala ethnic pedigree.

§5.4 THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMATION IN SRI LANKAN HISTORY WRITING

Since Sri Lankan independence, the *Mahāvaṃsa* has been upheld as an authoritative source of information on the history of the island, invoked as a mandate for Sinhala Buddhist political supremacy, and as evidence for a two and half millennia precedent of the same. The chronicle has become an edifice of modern political life, and its role in the "legitimation" and "ideology" of Sinhala nationalist discourse has been exhaustively discussed by historians and anthropologists.[66]

What, however, was the function of the *Mahāvaṃsa* before the modern democratic state? It is impossible to ignore the fact that the *Mahāvaṃsa* is historiography in service of a specific vision of the island's political trajectory (a vision greatly amplified in comparison with its prototype, the late 3rd or early 4th century *Dīpavaṃsa*). In Mahānāma's first installment, the Buddha is the initial civilizing force of the island, expelling the native Yakkhas not with compassion (as in the *Dīpavaṃsa*) but with force. The coincidence of Vijaya's arrival with the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha establishes a historical point of reference ineluctably connecting all future kings of the island with the fate of the Buddhist religion

[66] Kapferer (1988), Seneviratne (1991), Kemper (1991), Tambiah (1992), Gunawardana, (1995), Wickramasinghe (2006).

(*buddha sāsana*). Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's restoration of the island to Buddhist control in the 2nd century BCE (a subject which receives limited treatment in the *Dīpavaṃsa*) occupies nearly half of this portion of the chronicle.

Influentially, Heinz Bechert (1978a) has argued that legitimation of state violence was itself the motivation for Pali history writing in Sri Lanka, and that this unique political application explains why similar historiographies never developed in India.[67] Drawing heavily from Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*, Bardwell Smith (1978b) identifies the *Mahāvaṃsa* as one of a number of "legitimating mythologies underwriting political authority" in premodern South Asia.[68] The strongest version of the "legitimation" thesis posits that premodern Sri Lankan rulers made use of the Pali chronicles (or at the very least, the ideology contained within them) to mobilize mass segments of the Sinhala Buddhist population militarily on their behalf. This is perhaps indeed something of a status quo notion among Sri Lankans themselves (if we are to take the 2015 film *Maharaja Gämuṇu* as any indication), and one occasionally voiced by historians. K.N.O. Dharmadasa advances such a view, writing:

> [Myths] can have tremendous potency. Thus, as far as the Sinhalese are concerned, their historical role was as defenders of the Sasana

[67] Bechert perceives the fundamental message of the *Mahāvaṃsa* as "the unity of nation and religion," the *locus classicus* of which is the account of King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's military defeat of the occupying Tamils, during which the he accrued very little karmic demerit. According to Bechert, this instance "shows that even the basic principles of Buddhist religion were made subordinate to this leading notion" (by which he means that the basic Buddhist principle of non-violence is made subordinate to the notion that the island of Lanka must be ruled by a Sinhalese Buddhist monarch, even at the expense of wide-scale slaughter of foreigners) ("Beginnings of Buddhist Historiography," 7). See also other contributions to Smith (1978a).

[68] "Kingship, the Sangha, and the Process of Legitimation," 109.

> [Buddhist religion], and, as pointed out by Obeyesekere [1975: 235] they could be mobilized by their rulers to fight the foreign invaders by appealing to the identity of interests between ethnicity and religion.[69]

Granting that the *Mahāvaṃsa* is a politically charged document, and that its central theme is "the unity of nation and religion," quite a number of steps remain before we can accept that the text somehow served to convince the Buddhist population of the island of the legitimacy of a given king, or of engendering some form of "national consciousness." In the first place, why assume that there was any necessity for "political legitimation" or "legitimation of state violence" in premodern polity at all? In what sense does a king or ruler need to be "legitimated" in a society where the only conceivable mode of social organization is hierarchical and monarchical?[70]

Backing off from the stronger sense of "legitimation" as a dynamic between ruler and subject (*vertical* legitimation), there is a weaker sense (one which Bardwell Smith also employs) of *horizontal* legitimation—legitimation before one's social peers and other contestants to the throne. In this sense, whoever had the money and influence to sponsor a work of literary significance could potentially elevate themselves socially in the eyes of their competitors (Sheldon Pollock identifies this kind of horizontal legitimation—"aesthetic power"—as the reason for the proliferation of Sanskrit literary culture in first millennium India). Sponsoring a

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[69] "People of the Lion," 16.

[70] See Skilling, "King, Sangha and Brahmans," 202, and Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 522f. James Scott makes this comment a propos pre-modern political self-determination: "It is one thing to claim that *this* king is not as beneficent as his predecessors, another to claim that kings in general don't live up to the beneficence they promise, and still another to repudiate all forms of kingship as inadmissible" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 92).

work of such significance as the *Mahāvaṃsa* (or the chronicle of any other monastic lineage[71]) would have been an exemplary display of this kind of literary capital.[72]

Horizontal legitimation of this kind is however a far cry from the ability to engender ethno-religious consciousness in the Sinhala Buddhist population at large that has been attributed to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, and for which purpose (with arguable success) it has been employed since Sri Lanka's independence. Furthermore, a distinction has to be made between the supposition (i.e. of Bechert and Smith) that the *Mahāvaṃsa itself* was a vehicle of Sinhala ideology to the island's Buddhist population at large, and the supposition that the basic ideology of Sinhala kingship (as protectors of the Buddha *sāsana*) *contained within the Mahāvaṃsa* found its way by other (vernacular) means into popular consciousness. The former—the hypothesis that the *Mahāvaṃsa* was a direct vehicle of Sinhala ideology—faces from the outset two substantial obstacles: (1) the fact that we have a very poor picture of the scope of the transmission of manuscripts of the chronicle, both over time and geographically, and (2) the fact that, since the *Mahāvaṃsa* was composed in Pali, it was not linguistically accessible to most Sri Lankans.

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[71] The competing Jetavana and Abhayagiri Vihāra-s maintained their own chronicles, most likely until their dissolution in the 12th c. On lost historical works mentioned in the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, see Malalasekera, *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, lvi-lxxii.

[72] The Mahāvihara most likely held some authority in terms of authorizing royal coronations as well. Kiribamune (1976) argues that there was an unspoken rule requiring that a regent be a Buddhist in order to receive royal consecration in medieval Sri Lanka. The single description of the ritual known from the Buddhist literature of Sri Lanka is contained in the *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī*, which requires that the clay used to fashion the coronation vessel come from seven specific sites within the Mahāvihāra monastic complex at Anuradhapura (Walters, "Buddhist History," 130). If this stipulation corresponded to actual coronary protocal of the time, it obviously invested Mahāvihārin monks with veto power over any hopeful to the throne.

We should not however for this reason overlook the *Mahāvaṃsa* altogether as an important instrument for transmitting a consistent historical vision of the island's past to the Sri Lankan Buddhist population at large. An examination of the available evidence compiled during the early 19th century, when the Pali chronicles first became a subject of interest for the British, reveals that in practice, the Pali document of the *Mahāvaṃsa* and vernacular commentary were employed hand-in-hand by Buddhist monks.

Sir Alexander Johnson, in collecting the manuscripts on which the first English translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (compiled by Edward Upham) was based, allowed his informants to gather supplementary information from Sinhala texts such as the *Rājāvaliya* and *Rājaratnākaraya*, as well as from other manuscripts and oral accounts. George Turnour, who produced the second English translation of the *Mahāvaṃsa*, disparaged interpolations in Upham's version as "mutilated abridgements" and "amplifications" on the grounds that they deviated from the core Pali text.[73] However, Walters and Colley observe that:

> The learned monks who collected manuscripts for Johnston (and presumably had them copied, and served on or sent underlings to serve on the team/s that initially translated the Pali into Sinhala) certainly could have presented Johnston with a literal rendering of only the *Mahavamsa*, had they so chosen (or had that been what Johnston requested of them). But they provided instead a vernacular gloss that "translated" according to different standards and practices than those of emergent European Orientalism.[74]

They add:

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[73] Walters and Colley, "Making History," 151.

[74] "Making History," 151.

> This Sinhala gloss on *Mahavamsa* which became the basis of Upham's "translation" reflected indigenous reading practices that kept "the text" more open than Turnour would have countenanced. Like a commentary, this Sinhala gloss (as far as we can know it from the much-edited English form in which it survives) apparently "read" the Pali *Mahavamsa* according to the monks' own then-present purposes and predilections, summarizing or omitting some details and expanding others, rather than making any pretense of being a literal re-rendering of the ancient text. This is, indeed, precisely the correct method for reading *Mahavamsa* according to *Vamsatthappakasini,* the *Mahavamsa* commentary upon which Turnour and later writers claimed his authority.[75]

On its own, as an isolated physical document, the Pali text of the *Mahāvaṃsa* by itself was relegated to an object of veneration in Buddhist monasteries of the early 19th century (often kept on display in the main shrine).[76] "Reading" the *Mahāvaṃsa*, that is, making use of the text in order to learn about, teach about, or write new histories of the island, involved simultaneous readings from a commentary (*ṭīka*)[77] on the text, as well as appeals to Sinhala vernacular sources (principally versions of the *Rājāvaliya*, *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* and *Rājaratnākaraya* and *Pūjāvaliya*[78]). "Reading history" as an intertextual practice was in fact necessary, owing to the

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[75] "Making History," 151f.

[76] This according to the Rev. Mr. Fox, who assisted Edward Upham with his translation (Walters and Colley, "Making History," 159, citing Upham's *The Mahavansi*, vol. 1, xii). George Turnour's assessment of the atrophied state of Pali learning in Sri Lanka by the early 19th c. has been taken at face value by many modern historians, though the actually situation appears to have been more complicated. Blackburn (2001) documents the advanced Sanskrit and Pali curriculum of the Siyam Nikāya in the mid-late 18th c. It is possible however that the vibrant state of Pali learning taking place at Kandy was not matched in more provincial environments (see also Gooneratne, *Vimāna-vatthu*, xiv).

[77] See Malalasekera, *Pali Literature of Ceylon*, 132ff. and Tennent, *Ceylon*, vol. 1, 314.

[78] The *Pūjāvaliya*, first composed in 1266, was itself brought up to date to the 18th century (its appendix is known as the *Suḷu-pūjāvaliya*). The *Rājāvaliya* was also open to revision (and known under various names) until the late 17th c.

incomplete (and even sometimes contradictory) nature of the Pali *ur*-document of the *Mahāvaṃsa.* As Pradeep Jeganathan notes, "Multiple, indigenous conceptions of the past clearly existed at the time and while some conceptions overlap with the textual material, others do not."[79]

The implication is that, until it first appeared in print form and translation under the British, the *Mahāvaṃsa* itself was not conceived of as the singular, canonical source of the island's history. Vernacular historiography served as a necessary supplement. Regrettably, since the earliest European manuscript hunters were fixated on discovering the single most ancient (and therefore from their positivistic point of view, most authoritative) textual account of the island's past (and also of Buddhism in India), they were uninterested in sociology of *Mahāvaṃsa*-reading in Buddhist *vihāra*-s, even as they observed it firsthand. Nonetheless, a recognition that the *Mahāvaṃsa* was not a monological or purely authoritative source of historical knowledge in premodern Sri Lanka frees up a number of interpretive possibilities. In the first place, it restores the agency to curate and

[79] "Authorizing History," 112. On information found in Sinhala chronicles and folklore supplementing the *Mahāvaṃsa*, without which the logic of the chronicle is sometimes unapparent, see Obeyesekere (1989). Walters and Colley remark: "There, "the book called *Mahavamsa"* is to be "listened to" in the original 5th century verse and simultaneously contemplated at length (or passed over without mention): "heard" in the sense of "understood" (or what we would call "interpreted" and "effected"), in that instance via 10th century scholarly prose which interpolates later or separate material that is not technically "in" the *Mahavamsa* text, engages rival historians and makes judgments about the comparative trustworthiness of contradictory reports, declares in its silence that large chunks are not worth discussing further, glosses curious language or grammatical constructions or archaic names, and so forth. In actual practice, of course, this is precisely what any historian does with her or his sources: summarize, choose particular points upon which to focus new interpretations that draw on outside materials, quote or paraphrase those points as proves appropriate, pass over huge swathes without mention, or substitute then-contemporary language and names" ("Making History," 151f.).

interpret history to Buddhist monks themselves. This eliminates the temptation to follow Smith and Bechert in assigning to the *Mahāvaṃsa* the (almost demiurgic) function of engendering a form of Buddhist royalist or ethno-nationalist consciousness among Sinhala peoples (i.e. it forces us to consider the complex mediation that the text underwent at the hands of its monastic interpreters).

Furthermore, while there are few grounds on which to believe that readings of the *Mahāvaṃsa* were particularly liberal during the late Kandyan/early British period, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that they may have been so at earlier times. While the supplementary Sinhala texts identified by Upham and Turnour share a fairly orthodox perspective, other Sinhala materials circulating in monastic libraries (such as those mentioned above in this chapter) advance a more religiously and linguistically inclusive vision of the early history of the island.

§5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has worked to reveal alternative discourses circulating among Sinhala speakers regarding the *Mahāvaṃsa* narrative of the peopling of the island, developed by later monastic commentators to include a definition of the Sinhala people as having descended from Vijaya. Works such as the *Kulavistaraya*, *Janavaṃśaya*, and *Nīti-Nighaṇḍuva* reinforce an understanding of the island's Sinhala speaking people as being composed of successive waves of immigration from the Indian continent, not merely the scions of Vijaya and his compatriots. In addition, the *Janavaṃśaya* portrays *caste* as the dominant modality of group self-identification in the late medieval period, with no substantive mention of the ethnic

formulations (Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim) that have come to dominate discourses of belonging in Sri Lanka today.

Though in the present day the *Mahāvaṃsa* has become central in nationalistic expressions of unitary dimensions of Sri Lanka's Buddhist past, the text itself reveals a more complicated picture of the realities of premodern governance. Intermarriage with Indian royal families as a matter of diplomacy and alliance was not uncommon, as even the episode of the importation of "Pāṇḍyan" brides in the *Mahāvaṃsa's* Vijaya episode alludes to. While there were some hostile voices towards the Nāyakkars with no identifiable Sri Lankan ancestry who acceded to throne of Kandy in the mid-1700s, the *Mahāvaṃsa* continued to eulogize these kings as it had other kings of obvious mixed (Lankan/continental) descent in the past, going so far as to call Kīrti Śrī Rājasiṃha a "believing ruler of the Sinhalas."

Sri Lankan kings ruling over religiously diverse populations, having come from religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds themselves, had little incentive to antagonize their subjects by extending patronage to some religious institutions at the expense of others. This is a fact implicitly acknowledged by the *Mahāvaṃsa*, which depicts royal sponsorship of Hindu *devālaya*-s as generous acts in fulfillment of the expectations incumbent upon a Sri Lankan sovereign.

CHAPTER 6: HISTORY BELOW THE SURFACE AND AGAINST THE GRAIN

§6.1 POLARITIES OF SINHALA BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE: A CASE STUDY IN SINHALA *SANDEŚA* POEMS

The preceding chapters have worked to expose different ways that premodern Sri Lankans imagined the distant past: cosmogenesis and the passage of time on a cosmological scale, the genealogies of the island's great Buddhist kings, the habitation of Sri Lanka prior to the arrival of Prince Vijaya, and the origins of Sinhala speaking people. I have argued that some monastics advanced a conservative vision of the island's past (associated with a more restrictive view of lay Buddhist orthopraxy), which contrasted with more pluralist visions of the same. As further evidence for this hypothesis, and in an effort to investigate this pluralist/exclusivist dynamic as it was instantiated in the literary works of two competing monastic ordination lineages of the Kōṭṭe period, the following section undertakes a case study of Sinhala "messenger poems" composed during the reign of Parākramabāhu VI. Messenger poems are also valuable to this study insofar as they help us to trace one avenue of transmission of literary culture from South Indian to Sri Lanka during the late medieval period.

"Messenger poetry"—*dūta kāvya* or *sandeśa kāvya* as the genre is known in Sanskrit—appeared in Pali and Sinhala in Sri Lanka contemporary with a revival of the genre elsewhere in India. The works—ordinarily composed of quatrain verses—are modeled after Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, and involve a conceit in which the poet conveys a message by way of an avian carrier to person or deity, usually describing in detail the route that the messenger should take *en route*. From the early 14th century, the *sandeśa* genre was adapted in the service of regional literary

tastes and devotional contexts in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere. *Sandeśa* poems received occasional vernacular treatment—as in the Malayalam *Uṇṇunīli Sandeśa* and Umāpati Civācārya's Tamil *Neñcu Viṭu Tūtu*—though the majority of South Indian messenger poems from the 14th-18th centuries are in Sanskrit.[1]

While a few among these were celebrated for their literary merit and theological significance (such as Veṅkaṭanātha's *Haṃsa Sandeśa*[2]), the messenger genre remained only one amid a variety of other poetic formats available for South Indian authors to chose from.[3] By contrast, the Sinhala *sandeśa* poems of Sri Lanka are considered exemplary classical works of the late medieval period, valued both for their literary quality and as a source of information on the religious and cultural landscape of the island at that time.

The first Sri Lankan experimentation with the messenger genre was by way of a short 13th century Pali work, the *Mahānāgakula Sandesa*. The poem takes the form of a correspondence letter from a prelate of a vihāra at Mahānāgakula (Mānāvulu, in the central highlands) to one Mahāthera Kassapa Saṅgharakkhita of the city of Arimaddanapura (of Pagan, modern Burma).[4] A resident of the Gātara

[1] The 18th century saw a revival of vernacular *sandeśa* composition in the region. For the Tamil case, see Dubyanskiy (2008: 47-50). On modern Sanskrit and Malayalam *sandeśa*-s in Kerala, see Unni's introduction to the *Śukasandeśa.*

[2] See Rao (2015) and Hopkins (2016).

[3] Modern commentators have accused the authors of Keralan Sanskrit *sandeśa*-s of "slavishly following" Kālidāsa's template (Rajendran (2007)), with later, vernacular *sandeśa*-s often regarded as poetically unexceptional (Dubyanskiy (2008)).

[4] See Barnett (1905).

pariveṇa of in the central highlands composed a second Pali *sandeśa*—the *Vuttamālā Sandesa Sataka*—some time around the 1340s. The work, consisting of 102 stanzas, dispatches a bird from the regional capital of Dädigama with a message of supplication to Vibhīṣaṇa at his temple at Kelaniya (near modern Colombo). The poem is principally devoted to a description of the grandeur of Dädigama, and requests of Vibhīṣaṇa to guard over King Parākramabāhu V.[5]

The roughly contemporary *Tisara Sandeśa*—the first Sinhala messenger poem to have come down to us—directs a swan to Dädigama from Viṣṇu's shrine at Devinuvara on the extreme southern coast of the island. Vibhīṣaṇa's *devālaya* at Kelaniya and Viṣṇu's at Devinuvara (where he is locally known as Upulvan) would continue to feature as the point of departure and/or destination of later Sinhala messenger poems (with one or both appearing prominently in nearly all of them until the 18th century). Sri Lankan *sandeśa*-s thus distinguish themselves from continental ones in their thematic content—in almost every Sinhala example the "message" to be delivered consists of a request to a Hindu deity to produce some benefit to a king or member of the royal family. By contrast, following Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, the messenger poems of Kerala and Tamil Nadu employ *vipralamba* (or *viyoga*) *śṛṅgāra*—love experienced amid the separation of lovers—as their

[5] Godakumbura, "Dedigama," 116-18. Several print editions of this text are available, including one by Hariścandra Abayaratna (Godage International Publishers, 2003), a Devanagari edition by Ramanakshatra Prasada (Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 2006), and an incomplete edition by Aruna K. Gamage (Godage International Publishers, 2012). A third Sri Lankan Pali messenger poem—the *Rāma Sandesa*—was written by one Kunkunāvē Sumangala sometime between 1798 and 1815 (ed. by Väliviṭa Dhammāloka as the *Siri Rāma Sandesaya* and published in 1950, reprinted by Godage International Publishers in 2009). The poem solicits Viṣṇu at his shrine at Haňguranketa to bestow blessings upon King Śrī Vikrama Rājasiṃha.

governing poetic sentiment. Birds are instructed to carry a messenger from a male lover (the narrator) to his female beloved, living some distance away.[6]

Continental and Lankan Buddhist *sandeśa*-s do however share other stylistic elements, including detailed topographies contained within the flight routes assigned to their avian envoys—valuable resources for reconstructing the urban and devotional landscapes of late medieval South India and Sri Lanka. The genre was perhaps especially alluring owing to its suitability for rendering physical descriptions of the island's topography, a preoccupation of monastic authors from early on in Sri Lanka.[7] Keralan Sanskrit messenger poems are a likely avenue of influence given the popularity of the genre there from the same period, the shared titles of a number of popular Keralan and Sinhala *sandeśa*-s (e.g. *Haṃsa*, *Mayūra* and *Kokila*), and the similar cadastral, local specificity of works from both regions.[8] N.P. Unni notes that, taken in conjunction with one another, the *Śukasandeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa and *Kokila Sandeśa* of Uddaṇḍa offer "a complete geographical and

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[6] The *Haṃsa Sandeśa* of Pūrṇasarasvati (perhaps 14th c.) inverts the standard gender polarity of the genre, dispatching a messenger bird from a female *bhakta* of Kṛṣṇa at Kāñcipuram to the god's residence at Vṛndāvana (see Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī's introduction to the *Haṃsa Sandeśa*). An exception to the "love message" theme is found in Umāpati Civācārya's 14th century *Neñcu Viṭu Tūtu*, in which the narrator delivers a message to Śiva by way of his own heart. This poem—the first recorded example of a messenger poem in Tamil—repurposes the genre in the service of philosophical and sectarian ends (see Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷaiyavarkaḷ's 1925 edition and Irāmanāta Piḷḷai's commentary (1968)).

[7] See chapter 2.3.

[8] On the importance of Kerala as a locus of Sanskrit literary production and preservation from the 7th c., see Kunjunni Raja (1980 [1958]). On the impact on Sinhala village ritual life from Keralan (and Tamil) immigrants, see Obeyesekere (1987 [1984]). Keralans and Sri Lankans share an idiosyncratic pronunciation of the Sanskrit *visarga* as an aspirated vowel (rather than an echo vowel as elsewhere in India), suggesting a continued tradition of intellectual exchange between the two regions.

cultural account of Kerala," with each outlining a separate route from India's southwestern seaboard to Toṇḍamaṇḍalam.[9]

Sinhala messenger poems offer detailed descriptions of the physical and devotional landscape of southwestern Sri Lanka of the 14th and 15th centuries, directing their couriers to visit Hindu (as well as Buddhist) temples in addition to those of Vibhīṣaṇa and Viṣṇu. Early South Indian *sandeśa*-s do the same, instructing messenger birds to visit numerous temples to Śiva, Pārvati, Viṣṇu, Kāli and other Hindu deities *en route* (including ones at Trivandrum, Calicut, Śrīrāngam, and Kāñcipuram).[10] Late medieval Sinhala *sandeśa*-s share other features with their South Indian counterparts by way of the poetic standards of comparison employed to exalt various regents, cities, landscapes, and religious monuments (boilerplate *upamāna*-s of Indian *kāvya*, such as the heavenly Kalpavṛkṣa, the Serpent Śeṣa, Mt. Kailāsa; dramatis personae such as Rāma and Sītā, etc.).

From the time of Buddhaghosa, there had always existed some (at least rhetorical) reservations among Lankan Buddhist monastics over the suitability of Sanskrit Hindu literature—Hindu *kāvya* in particular—as a subject of study and template for Buddhist writers.[11] Throughout the remainder of this section I attempt to trace the vestiges and revised opinions over these attitudes within the two principal competing monastic groups of the island's late medieval southwest, with

[9] Unni's introduction to the *Śukasandeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa, 10.

[10] As in the *Śukasandeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa, *Mayūra Sandeśa* of Udaya, and *Kokila Sandeśa* of Uddaṇḍa.

[11] See chapter 3, notes 5 and 6.

representatives of each having authored the most prominent Sinhala messenger poems of the 15th century. The contending factions were two major ordination lineages: the Vanavāsi ("forest dweller") and Gāmavāsi ("village or city dweller") lineages (*paramparāva*-s).[12] It is important to note that the designations of "forest dweller" v. "city dweller" by this point were little more than rhetorical distinctions, and were in no way descriptive of the actual living circumstances of monks of the two fraternities.

Vanavāsi strongholds included the monastic college (*parivena*) at Vīḍāgama in the central highlands and the Kāragala Vihāra[13], the fraternity's monastic seat in the central dry zone. Gāmavāsi monasteries rose to prominence on the southwest coast coincident with the relocation of the main seat of Buddhist power from the central highlands to Kōṭṭe (near modern Colombo) at the turn of the 15th century. The most prolific literary representatives of the two schools were two individuals very close to King Parākramabāhu VI (r. 1410-67) himself: on the Vanavāsi side, there was Vīḍāgama Maitreya, successor to the prelate at Vīḍāgama who raised the king to the throne as a teenager—and on the Gāmavāsi side there was the king's adopted son,

[12] The term *vanavāsi-paramparāva* occurs at *NS*, 28. The Gāmavāsi and Vanavāsi factions were instrumental in re-organizing the Sangha after its unification under Parākramabāhu I, but disappeared from the scene at the end of the 15th century (no mention is found of them after the reign of Vikramabāhu III) (Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 124)). "Vanavāsi" and "Gāmavāsi" were the two major lineages by which Buddhist monastics identified following the reorganization of the Sangha under Parākramabāhu I (r. 1153-1186).

[13] Founded by Arthanāyaka Daḷasengama Miganturu, grandson of Nāgasena Mahāthera of the Vanavāsa-vihāra at Vattala and husband of the sister of Alakeśvara I, Padmavatī.

known to us by his monastic name of Śrī Rāhula, head of the monastic college at Toṭagamuva (near modern Hikkaduwa).[14]

Vīḍāgama Maitreya's *Buduguṇālaṅkāraya* ("Ornament of the Virtues of the Buddha"), written between 1456 and 1460, establishes the conservative tone of the Vanavāsi school. It is a Sinhala poem concerning the Buddha's visit to Visālā, the city of Licchavis, which was at the time afflicted by a confluence of maladies (famine, disease and evil spirits).[15] The poem uses the occasion to mock Śiva and his votaries, and to question the efficacy of Vedic sacrifice. The Vedas are derided as "worldly texts." Śiva's appearance is dreadful, and his ox is "decrepit"—he and his followers are considered shameless in their appearance. The reader is invited to ask of what use there is in making offerings to one who is still bound with defilements (*kleśa*-s). Non-Buddhist teachers are panned unilaterally: "If any good could come out of these worthless naked ascetics, then one could obtain coolness from fire, or oil from sand!"[16] Nor is Viṣṇu sparred in the dialogue: one of the Licchavis asks how it could be that, if this god is so majestic, he was deprived of Sītā when incarnated as

[14] In his *Kāvyaśekhara*, Śrī Rāhula says that he was the grandson (*nattā*) of the chief incumbent of Uturumula. It is not clear whether the term is meant in the literal sense or that of monastic succession (Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 71, 80). It is noteworthy however that the *Cv* (57.6ff.) describes the Thera Uturmula as a devotee of Skanda, while Śrī Rāhula in his *Parevi Sandēśaya* records that he obtained a boon from Skanda. In both his *Kāvyaśekhara* and *Parevi Sandēśaya* Śrī Rāhula identifies himself as having descended from the *Kañdavuru-kula* (i.e. Skandavara-kula) of Demaṭānagama (Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka*, 87). The *KS* likewise identifies him as belonging to the *Kañdavuru-kula*, calling him "the very appearance of Skanda manifest on earth" (v.84).

[15] The story reprises one found in early Pali commentarial literature.

[16] Weerasinghe, *Budugunalankaraya*, v.133.

Rāma?[17] Having conferred among themselves and determined the inadequacy of a Hindu solution to their plight, the Licchavis invite the Buddha, who rids the city of its pestilences by chanting the Ratana Sutta (seventeen Pali verses representing a condensed catechism of Theravāda Buddhist orthodoxy, enumerating the three jewels of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, the Four Noble Truths, and upholding the goal of Nirvana).[18]

The *Haṃsa Sandeśaya*, a Sinhala messenger poem also traditionally attributed to Vīḍāgama Maitreya (though, given the balance of the evidence, more likely written by a pupil or colleague of his) gives further insight into the normative Vanavāsi vision of the island's Buddhist landscape. The *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* follows the path of a goose (a *haṃsa*), dispatched from Vīḍāgama to the Padmāvati *pariveṇa* at Kāragala, seat of the Vanavāsi fraternity. The bird is on orders to instruct the Elder Vanaratana (head of the college at Padmāvati) to make use of the Ratana Sutta to bring the gods under his control, entreating them to serve and protect King Parākramabāhu.

This *sandeśa* is unique among Sinhala messenger poems insofar as the bird's point of departure and destination are Buddhist monasteries (as opposed to either the shrine of Viṣṇu at Devinuvara or of Vibhīṣaṇa at Kelaniya). Hindu imagery is not

[17] v.179. Rāma, as an incarnation of Viṣṇu ("Uvindu" or "Upendra") is furthermore derided as impotent insofar as he was unable to ford the sea to Laṅkā by his own power, requiring the assistance of his monkey accomplices (v.180). Vīḍāgama Maitreya affirms the absolute supremacy of Buddhism over Hindu theism in another work (his collection of moral aphorisms for lay people, the *Lōväḍa Saṅgarāva*), wherein he declares that the Buddhist Sangha "wipes their feet on the head of prosperous Brahmā" (v.3).

[18] The Ratana Sutta appears twice in the Pali canon, in the *Sutta Nipata* and *Khuddakapatha.*

absent from the poem, however, as it furnishes standards of comparison (*upamāna*-s) to glorify native persons and places of Sri Lanka (Jayawardhanapura "surpasses the city of Alakā" (v.12), and is matched in splendor only by Mt. Meru (v.13); King Parākrama is equal in valor to Rāma (v.38), etc.).

The temple of Vibhīṣaṇa at Kelaniya makes a significance appearance in the *Haṃsa Sandeśaya*, but beyond that the poem is dedicated principally to describing in the physical splendor of the Buddha, the chanting of *paritta* (apotropaic Pali verses), and Buddhist monastic learning. As in the *Buduguṇālaṅkāraya*, the Ratana Sutta is advanced as the most efficacious instrument of royal protection. Tamil language is nowhere mentioned in the poem—neither in the curriculum of the Padmāvati Parivena[19], nor on the curriculum vitae of Vīḍāgama Maitreya given at the conclusion of poem (which records that he is "well-versed in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit"). Vanaratana Thera is declared to have "discarded eighteen Purāṇas as faulty" after having studied all the sixty-two heresies[20], and also to have discarded the study of poetry and drama, recognizing them as pointless subjects of study.

Turning to the *sandeśa* poems of Śrī Rāhula and his Gāmavāsi associates of the southwest coast we find however a quite different attitude towards Hindu religion and literature.

The *Sälaḷihiṇi Sandeśaya* (c. 1450), one of two Sinhala messenger poems traditionally attributed to Srī Rāhula, projects the six-mile flight of a starling from

[19] Which includes the Pali Tipitaka, (Pali) grammar, logic, prosody, poetry and drama (but not Tamil).

[20] v.195 in Jayasuriya's translation. The sixty-two heresies refer to the *dvāsaṭṭhi* enumerated in the canonical Brahmajāla Sutta and in the *Milindapañha*.

Kōṭṭe to the *devālaya* of Vibhīṣaṇa at Kelaniya. The bird carries the request of the king's son-in-law and minister (Nallūrutunayā), asking for a son to be born to Princess Ulakuḍaya Devi. The poem's description of Kōṭṭe gives us some additional information not present in the Vanavāsi *Haṃsa Sandeśaya.* In addition to the Temple of the Tooth, the *sälaḷihiṇi* bird is told of a great temple to Śiva in the royal capital:

> Rest a while in the charming temple of Īśvara [Śiva] (*mankal isuru kōvilä*)
> Where rows of flags flutter
> Amidst the rising fumes of aloe and camphor,
> Where Tamil songs of praise (*tiyu gī demaḷa*)
> are sung by the devotees,
> The drum beats, the blowing of conch shells,
> And the tinkling of bells intermingle.[21]

The poem is replete with Hindu imagery (the churning of the cosmic ocean, Mt. Meru, etc.), and King Parākramabāhu is said to be seated in his throne "like Viṣṇu manifest" (v.20). The starling messenger is told to report to Vibhīṣaṇa upon arrival that the king's son-in-law "faithfully keeps him in mind by offering oblations" (v.96).

The bilingual dimension of monastic life among the Gāmavāsi monastic colleges is revealed in two other contemporary messenger poems. The first is the *Girā Sandeśaya*, composed anonymously at some point between 1450 and 1460, of which Srī Rāhula is not the author but the recipient of the avian telegram. Śrī Rāhula in his monastic residence at Toṭagamuwa receives a message from Kōṭṭe enjoining him to pray to Nātha (Avalokiteśvara) for the well being of King Parākramabāhu, to protect the island from sickness, fear and false beliefs, and for the safety of the Buddhist religion. Most significant is the account of the curriculum

[21] *SS*, v.22 (adapted from Jayasuriya's translation).

of the monastic college at Toṭagamuva over which Srī Rāhula presided (the "Vijayabāhu Piriveṇa"). Not only are the Tipiṭaka and Pali commentaries on the syllabus, but so are metrics, grammar and Sanskrit poetics (*alaṃkāra-śāstra*), as well as Tamil poetry and drama.[22] Admission to the *pariveṇa* was not restricted to Buddhist monks, apparently, since the *Girā Sandeśaya* records that Brahmin youths (perhaps from India) studied the Vedas there as well:

> A cohort of Brahmins train there—seated throughout the monastery they dispel intellectual uncertainty with their discriminating acumen, memorizing the meaning of the Vedas while ordering them as is fitting.[23]

The poem records that the elders of the monastery vigorously discuss the Eighteen Purāṇas (v.241).

Finally, the *Kōkila Sandeśaya*, written by a southern Gāmavāsi poet[24] in commemoration of Śrī Rāhula's adoptive brother's (Prince Sapumal's) victory over

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[22] Subjects of instruction include "Sanskrit, Pali, Eḷu and Tamil poetry and drama" (*saku magada eḷu demaḷa kav naḷu*) (*GS*, v.227). *Eḷu* may refer here to either poetic Sinhala (i.e. *heḷa*) or to Prakrit. Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭi in his 16th c. *Subhāṣitaya* refers to "ignorant people" who do not know Tamil, Sanskrit or Magada (*demaḷa saku magada no hasaḷa*) (Bechert, *Eine regionale hochsprachliche Tradition*, 11)).

[23] *tiyuṇu näṇin keremin säka nivāraṇa | pamuṇu vamin ekineka samaya kāraṇa | dämuṇu sitin iṅda kara vehera pūraṇa | bamuṇu räsek veda'rut karati dāraṇa* (v.223). Śrī Rāhula's own *Pärakumbā Sirita* celebrates Parākramabāhu VI as "ornamented with the neck of justice and the wings of Vedic knowledge (*vē piyapatarin*)" (v.64), "like [the Ṛṣi] Nārāyaṇa with respect to his subtle knowledge of the various *śāstras* and the four Vedas" (v.70), and "a lordly Guru, victorious in disputation owing to his Vedic knowledge" (v.85). The poem does say repeatedly that the king was versed in the Buddhist Tipiṭaka as well.

[24] A resident of the Tilaka Piriveṇa at Devinuvara. On the Gāmavāsi affiliation of this institution, see Ilangasinha (1992: 64) and Sumanasuriya (1958: 58ff.). Commentarial literature identifies the author of the *KS* as descended from the Irugal royal family, (members of the court at Daṃbadeṇiya are the earliest attested to bear this name). On *mūla*-s as monastic lineages, see Ilangasinha (1992: 64, 67ff.) and Gunawardana (1979: 282ff.).

the Jaffna kingdom in 1450, extensively integrates Tamil language and locations of Shaivite Hindu worship into its description circuit of the island. Containing the longest flight path of any Sri Lankan messenger bird, in order, from south to north, the cuckoo is instructed to visit: (1) Devinuvara, with its temple to Viṣṇu-Upulvan; (2) a Nāga Kovil in the vicinity of Vällēmaḍama (v.45); (3) Weligama, where "Tamil songs are recited" (v.57); (4) Toṭagamuva, where Srī Rāhula ("the Elder Vijayabāhu") is "the very manifestation of Skanda upon the earth," and composes poems in the six languages[25]; (5) Paiyāgala Vihāra, where there are Tamil poets and grammarians of different schools (v.97); (6) the Ganeśa Kovil near Potupiṭiya (v.103); (7) the Pattini Dēvālaya near Kōṭṭe which Gajabāhu had once erected in her honor (vv.115-120); (8) Koṭṭē, where poets proficient in Sinhala, Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit compose poems in honor of Parākramabāhu; (9) Munneśvaram, where Śiva, "the Moon-turbaned One," resides (v.188); (10) the temple of Ayyanār ("Ariyan Kovila") at Māvatu-paṭuna (Mantai) (v.208). The author of the *Kōkila Sandeśaya*, while leaving himself anonymous, states that he lives at Devinuvara and is "deeply learned in the Sinhala and Tamil languages."[26]

Juxtaposition of the *Buduguṇālaṅkāraya* and *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* with the messenger poems of the Gāmavāsi school reveals divergent attitudes towards the celebration of Hindu devotionalism. The *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* does, it is true, dispatch

[25] Cf. *GS*, v.245. Traditionally the "six languages" that the title of *saḍbhāṣā-parameśvara* ("master of six languages") referenced were Sanskrit, Prakrit, Magadhi, Saurasenī, Apabhraṃsa and Paiśācī. The *KS* does not tell us which "six" are meant.

[26] *dasana matin däna heḷu demaḷa baṇa tatu* (v.290). Text and translations in Sumanasuriya (1958).

its messenger bird to the shrine of Vibhīṣaṇa at Kelaniya, speaking reverentially of the deified *rākṣasa*.[27] It is important to note however that Vibhīṣaṇa, with his *devālaya* located within a large Buddhist temple complex (the Rājamahā Vihāraya), was established a century before as one of the four "guardian deities" of the island.[28] As one of the "god kings" (*devirajjuruvan*) or "four lords possessing warrants" (*satara varam maharajun*), Vibhīṣaṇa was (and remains) an integrated figure in Sinhala Buddhist religious imagination, with the 5th or 6th century *Mahāvaṃsa* explaining that the Buddha first invested Śakra with a "warrant"[29] over Laṅkā (Śakra in turn could designate guardian authority to subordinate gods, such as Vibhīṣaṇa and Upulvan).[30]

The profligate mention of other Hindu deities—Śiva in particular—in the Gāmavāsi *sandeśa*-s signals heterodoxy of different scale, however.[31] While other Hindu deities remained candidates for assimilation within the Sinhala Buddhist "pantheon," Śiva remained a signifying "other," never celebrated in Sri Lankan Buddhist literature and never granted status as a "guardian deity." Gāmavāsi openness about Tamil been known and spoken by Buddhist monks also stands out

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[27] Vibhīṣaṇa (or Bibhīṣaṇa) is of course the brother of the Rāvaṇa who, realizing the error of Rāvaṇa's ways, assists Rāma in his victory, and is consequently bestowed sovereignty of Lanka at the conclusion of the war.

[28] See chapter 3, n.17.

[29] A *varam*—"tutelary stewardship," "sanctioned authority."

[30] See *Mhv* 7.5f.

[31] The rivalry between the Buddha and Śiva runs deep in Sri Lanka, with the Buddha seated upon Mt. Meru at the image houses of Anuradhapura elevating him to the stature of Lord of the World and cosmos, in a symbolic effort to dethrone Śiva.

as unique. In addition to the references mentioned above, Srī Rāhula in his *Pañcikāpradīpaya* mentions and quotes (in Sinhala) from a work entitled the *Demala Jātaka Gätapada*, apparently a Tamil gloss on the "birth stories" of the Buddha.[32]

Gāmavāsi authors were not thoroughly consistent however in their views on Hindu literature. While the *Girā Sandeśaya* speaks of the study of the Vedas, Upaniṣads, *kāvya* and *nāṭya* at Toṭagamuva, it also valorizes Śrī Rāhula as masterful debater against the proponents of "other religions":

> The palm of the Sage Agastya on the ocean of religious literature and *śāstra*,
> Who at all times is replete with virtues, both exceptional and pure—
> That Venerable One, whose words are now well known throughout the world,
> Who is the harsh wind that uproots the trees which are the teachers of other religions (*ne samaya äduru*) (v.238).

Śrī Rāhula himself treats the Hindu epics with apprehension in his *Kāvyaśekara Mahākāvyaya*, where he proclaims (echoing Buddhaghosa) that, "one should know that both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are pointless stories."[33] The *Girā Sandeśaya* gives a scene of travellers at a rest house in the coastal town of Välitoṭa (modern Balapiṭiya) relating stories of Rāma and Sīta:

> There were stories of Rāma and Sītā
> – tales of long, long ago –
> the essence of which is given in various poems and dramas,
> and which are old, frivolous (*misadiṭu* = *mithyādṛṣṭi*) stories (v.114).

[32] Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, 37.
[33] *rāmāyaṇa barata* | *ätuḷu deḍum mulyuta* | *kīmut bas nirata* | *yutu va de aṅgin danuva niyavata* (§9, v.35 (p.126)).

The author of the poem goes on to imply that the stories of the Buddha are a preferable subject of casual conversation. Elsewhere however Gāmavāsi-s speak reverentially of *Rāmāyaṇa* dramatis personae. The *Kōkila Sandeśaya* describes the northern capital at Jaffna as a city in which:

> Lord Rāma, King of the Gods, flourishes. In his body he shines with the color of the ocean, as if it had stuck thereon when the great bridge (*mahat sētuva*) was constructed with great effort to convey the vast armies for battle against the Ten-necked One (Rāvaṇa).[34]

Vanavāsi attitudes in this respect were similarly equivocal: while Vīḍāgama Maitreya in his *Buduguṇālaṅkāraya* was eager to disparage Rāma, the author of the *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* by contrast speaks reverentially of him in the context of his betrothal of the throne to Vibhīṣaṇa:

> [O Goose!] Worship the lotus-like feet of Vibhīṣaṇa
> Who was made lord of Lanka
> And consecrated in the assembly of gods
> By Rāma, in human form, of world renowned fame
> Who like a majestic, peerless lion
> Frightened with one word and vanquished the demons
> On many occasions.[35]

Conflicting attitudes towards Rāma and the *Rāmāyaṇa* were representative of perhaps a number of ambivalences inhabiting the religious and cultural outlook of Vanavāsi-s at the time: the *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* describes the dances of beautiful women at Kalyāṇi Vihāra to the tune of music played as prescribed in the

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[34] v.258, adapted from Sumanagala's translation. Additional scattered references to the epic and its characters appear throughout Gāmavāsi *sandeśa*-s: the *KS* also describes the queen of Parākramabāhu as "like the Princess, the daughter of King Kosala, the mother of Rāma" (v.112). The *SS* contains a reference to Rāvaṇa, who "brought the three worlds under his sway."

[35] v.114, adapted from Jayasuriya's translation.

Bharataśāstra[36] (v.111), as well as the recitation of "perfect poetry and drama" by monks at the Padmāvati Pariveṇa (v.182)—this despite the fact that Vanaratana, preceptor of the *pariveṇa* and head of the Vanavāsi school, discarded "poetry and drama as of no use" (v.194).

What does one make of this panoply of attitudes towards Hindu religious life and literature? A safe assessment considers Sinhala Buddhist monastic perspectices on the basis of a scale with two poles: one highly orthodox, resistant to Hindu devotional practice (particularly of the Śaivite variety), Hindu religious literature, and to Tamil as a medium of instruction and composition; the other maximally heterodox. While negotiating the religiously and linguistically plural situation of the Buddhist southwest of the late medieval period necessitated in practice moving toward the heterodox pole of this spectrum, conservative rhetoric still surfaced, even when belied by the more inclusivist tenor of the works such as the *Kōkila* and *Girā Sandeśaya*-s.

Gāmavāsi attitudes were more consonant with the linguistically plural and religiously liberal atmosphere of Parākramabāhu VI's court and family life. Despite his liberal religious persuations, the conspicuously Tamil-Hindu names of some of his adoptive children and sons-in-law (Nallūrutanayaṉ), and his support for a Śiva temple in his own capital city, Parākramabāhu VI is unanimously remembered as a great patron of the Sangha, praised by both the Vanavāsi and Gāmavāsi factions.[37]

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[36] Possibly the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, or possibly another instructional text on musical performance such as the *Bharatārnavāḍi Bharata Śāstra Saṅgraha.*

[37] Parakramabāhu's Buddhist patronage is recorded in nearly all the major historical works of the period. See *Cv* (91.15-36) and Karunaratne (2009: 68). In the *KS* he is referred to as

The king seems to have shown no preferential treatment for one group over the other. The coveted post of *saṅgha-rāja* (religious advisor to the king) was awarded in alternating succession between Vanavāsi and Gāmavāsi throughout his reign (Vanaratana was succeeded by Srī Rāhula, who was himself succeeded by the Vīḍāgama Maitreya).

This suggests that conservative scorn may have been directed *inward*, toward monks viewed as overly enthusiastic about Hindu literature, *kāvya*, and non-Buddhist devotional attractions. Indeed, although a religious conservative in his writings, Vīḍāgama Maitreya apparently courted the patronage of Parākramabāhu VI's adopted son Sapumal, a supporter of Śaivite institutions.[38]

For both the Vanavāsi-s and the Gāmavāsi-s, a good *sandeśa* poem would have been a source of pride—competent literary production of this kind was proof that monastic scholars were in touch with cosmopolitan trends beyond the island's shores, and that their colleges were equipped with the best faculty resources. Messenger poems were also a means of eulogizing royal persons and families, and so of affirming networks of patronage as well. Clearly there were some misgivings at the highest ranks of the Vanavāsi-s concerning the appropriateness of overindulgence in Hindu literature (as well as poetry and drama in general), but the

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"an aspirant to Buddha-hood, who fills his ear with the ambrosia of the Tripiṭaka preached by the Omniscient One" (v.142). The *Cūlavaṃsa* does not mention any of the king's Hindu activities (in contrast with the *sandēśa* poems, which describe the Śiva temple at Kōṭṭe as rivaling the Temple of the Tooth in splendor). The *KS* calls the king "an aspirant to Buddha-hood," who "fills his ear with the ambrosia of the Tripitaka preached by the Omniscient One" (v.142). The *GS* praises Parākramabāhu VI for his Buddhist enthusiasm and for his defeat of the Āryacakravartis.

[38] See chapter 5.5.

fact that a monk of this faction chose to write the *Haṃsa Sandeśaya* (and that subsequent generations chose to preserve it) suggests that the impulse to elevate the literary status of the school ultimately overrode its more conservative reservations.

§6.2 PERDURING HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

A serious potential objection looms over the efforts of the preceding chapters: to what extent can one be sure that the Hindu historical notions incorporated in Buddhist literature in the late medieval/early modern period were in fact meaningful to Sri Lankan Buddhists? Does purāṇic imagery in Sinhala *sandeśa*-s, the appearance of the dynasty of Manu in inscriptional discourse, and elements of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sinhala historiography truly signal a rupture in the way that Sinhala Buddhists thought about history? Could these developments merely represent literary conventions, adopted incidentally along with other Sanskritic (Hindu or Hindu seeming) tropes? Are the insights of this dissertation rightly confined to the realm of literary aesthetics?

On the one hand, the literary dimension of the sources under consideration in this study cannot be overlooked. The 14th and 15th centuries continued a process of aligning Sinhala (and Pali too) with cosmopolitan South Asian literary standards which had been underway for at least two centuries prior. Sinhala preaching texts (*baṇa pot*) from the 12th century onward employed heavily Sanskritic language and literary conventions (i.e. *alaṃkāra*-s). The choice of the *sandeśa* genre as a medium of poetic expression itself attests to the influence of regional literary fashions on late medieval Sri Lanka (*sandeśa-kāvya* appeared in Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and

Tamil from the same period[39]). Sri Lankan monastic authors also worked to elevate Pali to the status of a "cosmopolitan vernacular" (to use Sheldon Pollock's locution), compiling Pali lexicons, grammatical treatises, and one loose adaptation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyadarśa* (the *Subodhalaṃkāra*).[40] So essential as they are to Sanskrit and Sanskritized vernacular *haute culture* literature, it was a natural matter of course that Hindu cosmological imagery and elements of Hindu epics should find their way into Sinhala literature of the period.[41]

On the other hand, the mid-14th century marked a qualitative change in the frequency of the appearance of Hindu themes in Sinhala *kāvya*, inscriptional discourse and prose works. Sinhala and Pali literary production from the close of the Cōḻa interregnum until the rise of the Gampola kingdom was characterized by an often almost obsessively Buddhist orientation. For this reason, one cannot attribute the prolific appearance of Hindu imagery in Sinhala works from the mid-14th century onwards entirely to the adaptation of continental, Sanskritic literary style.[42] There is furthermore the matter of intention and tone in employing purāṇic tropes: it is one thing to proclaim as a Buddhist monastic author that a given ruler "instills

[39] See introduction to Hopkins (2016) and Bronner and Shulman (2006).

[40] See Gornall (2012) and Gornall and Henry (2017).

[41] Prime examples are found in the seminal 14th century *Sidat Saṅgarā*, which illustrates grammatical points with Sinhala verses on the splendor of Mt. Kailāśa and the erudition of Rāvana.

[42] A telling comparison is between the 13th c. Pali *Mahānāgakula Sandesa* and later Sinhala ones, the *Mahānāgakula Sandesa* exhibiting a relative dearth of Hindu imagery.

virtue in the people *like* Manu," and another thing to say as a matter of genealogical record that a ruler *is himself a direct descendent* of Manu.

Furthermore, and in more direct support for the argument at stake in this dissertation, there is a wealth of evidence for the popularity of Hindu historical notions among beyond highly literate circles, among the island's Sinhala Buddhist population at large (as in Sinhala folklore and miscellaneous middle period documents). By the 16th century, the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems have become indelibly a part of Sinhala Buddhist historical self-understanding in the island's southwest. Crucial testimony comes in the *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* of Ferñao de Queirós, a Portuguese Jesuit. Queirós (who never himself visited Sri Lanka) wrote from Goa in the 1680s, basing his work on firsthand accounts and correspondence of Portuguese agents (collected since their arrival in Sri Lanka in 1506). The Sinhala Buddhist informants of the Portuguese clearly perceived the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a seminal event of the island's past. The popular Sinhala version of the story intersects with the Tamil *tala-purāṇam* tradition at points as well. For instance, returning to Sri Lanka with Sītā in tow, Rāvaṇa first "took to the port of Triquilimalê [Trincomalee]; and inhabiting and cultivating the land, they gave it the name 'Lancave' which means distant and delightful land."[43] The incident gives an indication that Sinhala Buddhists were aware of Rāvaṇa's importance as a historical figure at Konesvaram/ Trincomalee (as related in the *Takṣiṇa Kailāca Purāṇam*). Rāma's bridge too is a factual episode for the Sinhalese: Rāma sought Rāvaṇa "with a powerful army, and

[43] *Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, I.8.

making a bridge for his passage across the shoals of Chilaõ and the Island of Manār, had marched as far as Palachêna, near the port of Negombo."[44]

Following the defeat of the Rākṣasas, the retrieval of Sītā, and the immolation of Rāvaṇa's headquarters at Seytavâca (Sītāvaka), Rama returned north to his own lands. In commemoration, "heathendom built the pagode of Raman-coir (Rāmesvaram) on a small island, which is the beginning of those shoals, and is separated by the channel Vtiar [sic]."[45] And so, it would appear, the renown of Rāmesvaram was not limited to the northern kingdom. The version of events related to Queirós has an odd alternative ending, though one which is noteworthy owning to the fact that it still circulates among Sri Lanka Buddhists today:

> [Rāvaṇa], seeing himself defeated and dishonored, carried away by his feelings, hid himself in the lands of Mayogâma in the borders of Sofragaõ and bewitched the gold and silver from the mountains, that they might never more be seen or found. […] In one of these mountains, they say, he fall asleep, and is still sleeping, believing that he who offers a sacrifice of the husk of a *nêle mari* (*nêle* is rice in the husk) and of the oil of the coco, will wake him and heal him of the wounds which so many centuries ago he received in battle. [46]

The remaining Magi (*rakṣasas*) went on to live another 372 years on the island until, apparently, they were expelled by Prince Vijaya and his party. During this time they built "sumptuous edifices, of which no memorial is found except for a labyrinth in the country of Biligal-Corla in the village of Columbua, which means the abode or dwelling-place of nymphs."

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[44] *Idem.*

[45] *Idem.*

[46] *Idem.*, I.9.

Evidence that Rāvaṇa mythology circulated in the central highlands from the 15th century comes in the standard *kaḍayim*'s reference to "Rāvaṇa's Park" being inundated by the sea, in a flood which reached all the way to Mahānuvara (Kandy), Badulla and Alutnuvara.[47] A number of place names—modern and premodern—derive from characters and episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Most famous among these was explains the Kingdom of Sītāvaka[48], which according to the *Sītāvaka Haṭana* earned its name in association with the story of Sītā's birth: she is discovered by a farmer plowing a field his field in a pot which had earlier been filled with Rāvaṇa's blood and planted there by his agents.[49] "Sītā Eliya" (where there is now a Hindu temple to Sītā) in the mountainous Nuwara Eliya District has for centuries been identified as the place where Sītā was held captive by Rāvaṇa (in a garden surrounded by Aśoka trees).[50] Locals identify the Divurumpola Vihāra at Welimada

[47] *SLK*, 203.

[48] The kingdom flourished from 1530-92 CE, encompassing the majority of the island's northwest and southwest (modern North Western, Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces), eventually absorbing the Kingdom of Kōṭṭe.

[49] Strathern, *Kingship and Conversion*, 179. The *Sītāvaka Haṭana* was composed c. 1585. The poem's account of Sītā's birth is a variation on Valmīki's, wherein the princess is found in a ploughed furrow by her father, Jānaka (Rāvaṇa does not configure in the episode). Rāvaṇa is identified as Sītā's father in similar, *ex utero* versions of her gestation and birth in Indian folk traditions (see Borde, "Did the Subaltern Speak?", 278, and contributions to Singh and Datta (1993)). The Kingdom of Sītāvaka relating to Sītā in popular etymology among Sinhala Buddhists at the time is confirmed by Queirós, whose informants explained that the "City of Sintavâca" was built by Rāvaṇa and his Rākṣasa host in honor of Sītā (*Temporal and Spiritual Conquest*, I.8).

[50] References to "Sītā's mountain" (*sītā kaṅdu*) and "Rāvaṇa's rock" (*rāvanā gala*) appear in one short collection of *kaḍayim* verses concerning the vicinity of Adam's Peak (*Uḍahēvāhäte kaḍaim kavi*, in Abeyawardana, *Boundary Divisions*, 188). This is evidence that the geography of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was present in the central highlands before the arrival of Tamil plantation laborers in the 19th century, and a counter-case to Godakumbura's suggestion

(Badulla District) as the site where Sītā underwent the *agni* test to prove her chastity before Rama.[51] Sinhalas and Tamils alike say that Rhumassala Kanda in Galle is a portion of the mountain transported to the island by Hanuman, containing the medicinal herb needed to cure a wound sustained by Lakṣmaṇa in battle.[52]

The notion that Rāvaṇa was an ancient ruler of Sri Lanka was not extinguished over the intervening centuries, either. In his 1852 introduction to his translation of the *Sidat Saṅgarā*, James de Alwis argues that Sinhala was the indigenous language of Sri Lanka (and that Vijaya and his band of castaways spoke either Pali or Sanskrit instead).[53] From the early 1880s, Buddhist publications floated the notion that Rāvaṇa, demon king of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, was in fact an early Sinhala (*heḷa*) monarch, long before the time of the Buddha.[54] Early 20th century Sinhala revivalists went so far as to elevate Rāvaṇa above Vijaya in his status as a national hero. Munidasa Cumaratunga (1887-1944) celebrated Rāvaṇa for his

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that place names such as "Sītā Ālla" are relatively recent derivations from earlier names containing the Sinhala word *sītala*, "cold" (for which see "The Sinhalese Rāmāyana." 114).

[51] Divurumpola is etymologized as "the place of oath." The temple and its Bodhi tree (said to mark the spot where Sītā immolated herself) became a flashpoint of controversy in 2013 when it was revealed that the Indian government intended to sponsor the construction of a temple to Sītā nearby (with some Sinhala Buddhists claiming, on what grounds it is unknown, that the real intention was to build a temple to *Hanuman*) (Fedricks, "The Revival of Ravana," 12).

[52] Pathmanathan, "The Rāmāyaṇa," 554. Pathmanathan gives several other examples of locations associated with the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the vicinity of Jaffna: "Tiruvaḍinilai," identified in connection with Rāma's footprint (*vaḍi*) visible there, and "Villūṇḍi," where Rāma stopped once with his bow (*vil*).

[53] de Alwis, *Sidath Sangarawa*, xilivf. De Alwis was influenced by European racialist scholarship of the mid-19th century, which argued for the possibility of discerning discrete, unadulterated world cultures through philological means.

[54] Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age*, 90f.

sovereignty from India—from his point of view, Vibhīṣaṇa was a traitor for acquiescing to vassalage under Rāma, and Vijaya little more than a foreign invader:

> It is a slur on the Sinhalese nation to say that the arch robber Vijaya and his fiendish followers were its progenitors. Many thousands of years before their arrival we had empires greater and mightier than any other nation could claim to have had.[55]

The original Sinhala people (the original speakers of *heḷa*) were Rāvaṇa and the inhabitants of the island during his reign, according to Cumaratunga (the question as to whether these original inhabitants were Rākṣasas or humans is conveniently overlooked).

While such attitudes found little public expression other than in the indigenist polemics of Cumaratunga and a few others through the close of the 20th century[56], the decade has seen an explosion of interest in Rāvaṇa has exploded among Sinhala Buddhists, with newspapers, popular books and television programming. These media proclaim that the demon-king was a speaker of *heḷa* (the original, non-Sanskrit Sinhala language), in possession of technological innovations far outstripping our own (e.g. interplanetary vehicular travel), and ruler of a vast "Laṅkā," many times the extent of the island's current size. In early 2007 the Sri Lankan Tourist Development Board inaugurated the "Rāmāyaṇa Trail," a circuit of locations throughout the island each with some putative connection to the

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[55] Cited in Dharmadasa, *Language, Religion and Ethnic Assertiveness*, 262.

[56] Arisen Ahubudu produced *Sakviti Rāvaṇa* ("Rāvaṇa the Wheel-turning King"), a Sinhala drama in the form of a reworking of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the 1980s in which Rāvaṇa was the protagonist. As an advisor to the Premadasa administration, Ahubudu successfully lobbied for the erection of a massive statue of Rāvaṇa at the rear entrance to the Kataragama temple complex (K.N.O. Dharmadasa, personal communication July 22, 2016).

"historical *Rāmāyaṇa*."[57] Members of the Rāvaṇa Balaya, an ultra-nationalist Buddhist monastic youth movement, have ironically adopted the image of the demon-king on their rallying flag. The "Rāvaṇa Kathāva" is a text known to every Colombo trishaw driver, owing to the monthly newspaper columns of the self-styled "Ācarya" Mirando Obeyesekere.[58]

Some *Rāmāyaṇa* imagery, once thought to be moribund, has been reanimated amid the flood of interest in Rāvaṇa among Sinhala Buddhists in post-war Sri Lanka. Bolthumbe Vihāra (near Balangoda in Ratnapura district), famous as the seat of the Buddhist deity Saman, is also believed by locals to be the place where Rāvaṇa's body fell after he was decapitated by Rāma's arrow. Attendants of the Bolthumbe Vihāra today say that the temple contains Rāvaṇa's flying mechanical vehicle (*dandu-monara*) (flying machine) as well as his flag (neither are shown to outsiders, though the flag is carried within a box at the head of the procession during the temple's

[57] Indian Hindus are the anticipated market, and for several hundred dollars one can undertake a one-week all-inclusive *pradakṣiṇa* of these sites. The Sri Lankan government boasts of "more than 50 *Rāmāyaṇa* sites from the place of Seetha Devi's captivity to the battlefields of war where Lord Rama slew Ravana, the ten-headed demon-king" ("Ramayana Trail on fire").

[58] This Mr. Obeyesekere (known until the 1990s as A.H. Mirando, an independent scholar of Sinhala literature) has been enthusiastically received by the Sri Lankan Tourist Board, which has aided the distribution of his publications. He claims that palm-leaf documents in his possession (including the "Rāvaṇa Kathāva") along with some innovative re-readings of Sinhala epigraphy prove that Rāvaṇa was an ancient king of the island, who ruled long before the arrival of Prince Vijaya. Rāvaṇa was, according to Obeyesekere, a Sinhala speaker ("pure Sinhala" (*heḷu bāsāva*) being the first world language), a Buddhist (converted by "some Mahāyāna Buddha"), in possession of powered flight in the form of his "puṣpika vimāna" (the palace complex at Sīgiriya, as well as the ancient cities of the Mayas and Incas served as his "airports"), the discoverer of electricity, nuclear power and a host of other modern technologies.

annual *perahera*).[59] The interest in Rāvaṇa at Bolthumbe is new (a *dēvālaya* to the demon-king was constructed on the temple premises in 2011, next to that of Saman), though literary mentions of his paraphernalia date back to at least the 17th century (most likely earlier).[60]

The perdurance of Rāvaṇa as an ancient king of Sri Lanka in popular consciousness testifies to the significance of the shift in historical imagination that occurred in the late medieval period. New ways of imagining the past opened up the possibility of new ways of imagining the collective identity of the Sinhala people. There remain the difficult issues of identifying the original Sinhala (or *heḷa*) people with Rākṣasas (Rāvaṇa is still graphically depicted in the traditional manner of Rākṣasas and Yakṣas, with two protruding fangs), and reconciling Rāvaṇa's provenance as a Hindu literary character with the impulse to portray him as a Buddhist (Mirando Obeyesekere and others maintain that he was converted by "some Mahāyāna Buddha"). Nonetheless, such considerations have been outweighed by the allure of extending the national past further into history,

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[59] Fedricks, "The Revival of Ravana," 6.

[60] The *Rājāvaliya* mentions a "peacock vehicle" (*moṇara yaturu*) in connection with the mother of a South Indian prince (Malaraja) summoned to Sri Lanka to cure the *divi dos* ("leopard curse") of Paṇḍuvāsudeva (*Rv*, 172). Rāvaṇa does not configure directly in the story, though the text mentions that the swath of sea over which Malaraja crossed to reach Sri Lanka from Tūttukuḍi was once the location of the demon-king's capital city, now submerged. Though we have no record of what it looked like, nor any knowledge that it was ever actually employed, the "flag of Rāvana" is mentioned in the *Mukkara Haṭana*, in connection with several items awarded to the South Indian conscripts who defeated the Mukkara forces encamped at Puttalam by Parākramabāhu VI (Raghavan, *The Karāva of Ceylon*, 19). According to the text, the *rāvaṇa koḍiya* was given along with the Irahaṅda and Makara flags. Raghavan notes however that "no specimen of the Rāvana Koḍiya is known to be in existence, but the Irahaṅda Koḍiya and the Makara Koḍiya are amongst the royal insignia of the Karāva people which are still in use on ceremonial occasions" (p.26).

glamorizing ancient Sri Lanka as Rāvaṇa's "Laṅkāpura" in a way that the Vijaya narrative of the early Pali chronicles does not accomplish.

§6.3 COMPOSITE PEOPLE, COMPOSITE PAST

The preceding chapters have worked to show expanded forms of historical imagination in Sinhala literature from the 14th century, manifest in the integration of Hindu purāṇic cosmology into Sinhala historical works, the adaptation of South Indian conventions in representing the royal genealogies of the rulers of Sri Lanka's southwest, and the acceptance of elements of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a part of the island's distant past. This expanded historical imagination was coincident with the ascendance of rulers of South Indian heritage at courts of Gampola and Kōṭṭe, increasingly cosmopolitan forms literary production at Buddhist monasteries, and increased immigration from Kerala and Tamil Nadu to Sri Lanka.

Previous studies have charted the effects of the influx of South Indians on Sri Lankan religious and social life from this period. Gananath Obeyesekere (1984) has painstakingly documented the incorporation of Tamil and Keralan religious literature (the *Cilappatikāram*, famously), imagery and practices into Sinhala Buddhist village ritual life. M.D. Raghavan (1961) and Michael Roberts (1982) trace the integration of Karāva (fisherman), Salāgama (cinnamon peeler) and Durāva (toddy tapper) communities, originally from South India, into Sinhala Buddhist society from this period. The accelerated influence of Tamil on colloquial Sinhala lexicon (kinship terms, commonly used verbs) has been acknowledged by these and scholars, though further study at the hands of qualified linguists remains a desideratum.

Sinhala works on caste history, as well as "colonization myths" relating the mass importation of people from South India to Sri Lanka (such as those concerning King Asoka and Gajabāhu I), have been read as an index to the prevalence of exogenous people throughout the predominantly Buddhist portions of the island's southwest during the late medieval period. Such texts are, I would contend, themselves products of an active "historical imagination," working to reconcile new demographic realities with the Pali-Sinhala chronicle tradition and other components of the Sri Lankan Buddhist literary repertoire. My own attempted contribution in this dissertation has been to show the workings of this same historical imagination in a more indirect way—likewise motivated by demographic transition but, rather than attempting to account straightforwardly for the presence of peoples of South Indian heritage in Sinhala social life, working to accommodate different visions of the distant past (one viewed through the lens of Hindu Purāṇas and epics, the other through that of the Pali chronicles).

The survey of primary sources in this dissertation has been intentionally broad, with the aim of reinforcing the point that the interface of Buddhist and Hindu literary and historical imagination took place in different ways, at various levels of society. The decision to include Vibhīṣaṇa, Skanda, and Viṣṇu/Rāma as guardian deities of Sri Lanka, for instance, was made at an elite level (though no doubt influenced by the ascendant popularity of these figures among the population at large). The incorporation of *topoi* derived from the *Rāmāyaṇa* into local geography and lore, as attested in Sinhala *kaḍayim*, *vitti pot* and popular stories and verses,

came about much more haphazardly, as a result of the gradual incorporation of Hindu mythology into Buddhist village life.

On the Indian subcontinent, the *Rāmāyaṇa* existed in numerous literary forms, with various theological interpretations and political-discursive applications by the early second millennium. In his study on the role of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Indian political life from the 11th–14th centuries, Sheldon Pollock emphasizes the usage of the text to cast adversaries as "rākṣasas," while Hindu kings likened themselves to Rāma (sometimes concretizing the identification by claiming themselves to be avatars of Viṣṇu).[61] Kampaṉ's 12th century *Irāmāvatāram* endures as a classic in Tamil literature, a paradigmatic expression of the late medieval South Indian *bhakti* movement (in which Rāma is fully identified as the supreme God Viṣṇu). Ajay Rao (2015) has demonstrated the importance of the epic in 14th-16th century South Indian Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, as exemplified in Veṅkaṭeśa's 14th century *Haṃsa Sandeśa* and Govindarāja's commentary on the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.*[62]

Sri Lankan Buddhists had a different relationship to the epic. Although rulers were occasionally likened to Rāma (by way of strength, valor, etc.) in the context of Sinhala poetic encomia, the template of the Buddhist "wheel-turning king" (*cakravartin*) remained the dominant image through which political ambitions were discursively articulated. Viṣṇu, although incorporated as one of the four "guardian

[61] In light of its later political applications, Pollock goes so far as to declare that, "The *Rāmāyaṇa* is profoundly and fundamentally a text of "othering"" ("Rāmāyaṇa and Political Imagination in India," 282). For Ajay Rao's critique of Pollock's argument, see *Re-figuring the Rāmāyaṇa as Theology*, 96-114.

[62] See also Hopkins (2016).

deities" of the kingdoms of the majority Buddhist courts of Kōṭṭe and Kandy, remained subordinate to the Buddha in the Sinhala devotional pantheon (i.e. as a member of the *deva-sāsana* which was itself subordinate to the *buddha-sāsana*). Rāma, as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, was often presented antagonistically in Sinhala folklore and popular poetry, rather than as a valorous king and warrior.[63]

While Buddhist theological outlooks on the epic were necessarily different from Hindu ones, the *Rāmāyaṇa* still found an important place amid the reconfigured historical imagination of Sri Lanka's late medieval period. Rāvaṇa, like Manu Vaivasvata with respect to the marriage of purāṇic and Pali Buddhist dynastic lineages, was an important hinge facilitating the interface of two visions of Sri Lanka's distant past. While the authors of the early Pali chronicles (perhaps intentionally) did not incorporate the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a component of the island's past, their rendering of prehistoric Laṅkā as an "abode of demons" allowed for an easy suturing of Pali chronology to the Hindu epic.

Reluctance to include aspects of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Mahāvaṃsa* is an early and exemplary instance of what I have identified as a conservative form of Buddhist monastic historical imagination, correlated with more strict expectations with respect to lay Buddhist orthopraxy and orthodoxy. Prescriptions regarding normative expectations of religious practice cannot of course be taken as evidence that they were fully heeded. As I have endeavored to show, versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* along with other Hindu tales circulated freely among Sinhala Buddhist laity (despite being castigated as "frivolous," "worthless," or "meaningless" by some

[63] See Holt (2004) and chapter 4.5 above.

monks). Shrines to Hindu deities—both those located on the premises of Buddhist *vihāras* as well as independent *devālaya*-s and *kōvil*-s—were frequented by Sinhala speakers in the late medieval period as they continue to be today.

There is a certain irony, I submit, in the possibility that the Pali chronicle tradition's mono-lingual, mono-genetic and mono-religious outlook found more relevant political application in the 20th and 21st centuries than it did in the millennium and half prior. The *Mahāvaṃsa*, with its categorization of "Sinhala" v. "Damiḷa," is ready-made for enacting semiologies of national belonging and unity as opposed to "others" (i.e. "Sinhala" v. "Tamil"), for which purpose it has been sadly exploited in modern democratic Sri Lanka. By contrast, premodern Sri Lankan monarchs were concerned to maintain their image as generous patrons of religious institutions of all kinds. Cultivating such an image tended to involve *plural* rather than *exclusive* religious patronage, in which there was little incentive to seek the mass approval of one segment of the population at the expense of another (one might also alienate one's own family members in doing so). So it is that Parākramabāhu VI (one among many Sri Lankan monarchs who ruled over a linguistically and religiously diverse population) saw no contradiction in supporting the Vanavāsi and Gāmavāsi Buddhists, along with the Śiva temple in his capital, the nearby shrine to Vibhīsaṇa, and the Viṣṇu temple complex at Devinuvara.

APPENDIX

Table 1: *raṭa*-s of the standard *kaḍayim*

1. Sinduruvāna (circumference of 24 *gav*-s, present day Udunuvara and Yatinuwara)
2. Balaviṭa-raṭa[1]
3a. Mātalē (10,000 villages forming the *raṭa* (*SLK*))
3b. Mahagalraṭa (*RRv*)
4. Bōgamvara[2] (Now the name of the lake and prison in Kandy)
5. Dumbara-pansiya-pattu
6. Māyādunna-raṭa
7. Kindigoḍa
8. Pālamgomu[3]-rājjya ("Large enough to be considered a kingdom.")
9. Kumburugomu-raṭa
10. Aṭakalanda-raṭa ("Sufficient for eight kings to rule over.")
11. Māniyangomu[4]-raṭa
12. Denavaka
13. Kaḷugalbaḍa[5]-raṭa
14. Navayotna[6]-raṭa
15. Pasyotna[7]-raṭa
16. Pānabunna[8]-raṭa ("The city of the first king?"[9])
17. Kälaṇi-degambaḍa-raṭa (Kelaniya)
18. Attanagalu-raṭa (There are now two Attanagalu-s, one in Gampaha and one in Kandy)
19. Kuru-raṭa (Alut-Kuru-raṭa, the Negombo-Chilaw region)
20. Piṭigal-raṭa[10]
21. Dambadeṇi-raṭa
22. Beligal-rājjya (Beligal is also the name of a *kōralē* near Kegalle.)
23. Mädavelāna-rājjya, or, Delana-mädavelāna

(con't)

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[1] Bälaviṭiya (*RRv*)
[2] Bōganvara (*RRv*)
[3] Pālāgomu (*RRv*)
[4] Māniyangamu (*RRv*)
[5] Kaḷugal (*RRv*)
[6] Nava-yodun (*RRv*)
[7] Pas-yodun and Pas-yonna (*RRv*)
[8] Pāṇabunnā (*RRv*)
[9] *paḷamu raja nuvarak ättēya* (*RRv,* 39)
[10] Likely in the Negombo-Chilaw region owing to the reference to this country containing "Mahadampe" (=Madampe?) and "Kaḍupiṭi-oya" (in modern Puruduwella). There is a town named Pitigala in the SW inland from Ambalangoda, though the geographical references do not correspond to what is mentioned in the *kadayim* books.

Table 1 (con't): *raṭa*-s of the standard *kaḍayim*

24. Kurunā̆gala ("Sufficient for the army of one king.")
25. Villidegalbaḍa (incorporated within the description of Kurunā̆gala)
26. Minisara-raṭa (incorporated within the description of Kurunā̆gala)
27. Nāranvinna-raṭa ("Given by King Gajabāhu to fifty-three chiefs (*mudali*)."
28. Mādura

Figure 1: Genealogy of the rulers of Gampola, Dädigama and Kōṭṭe

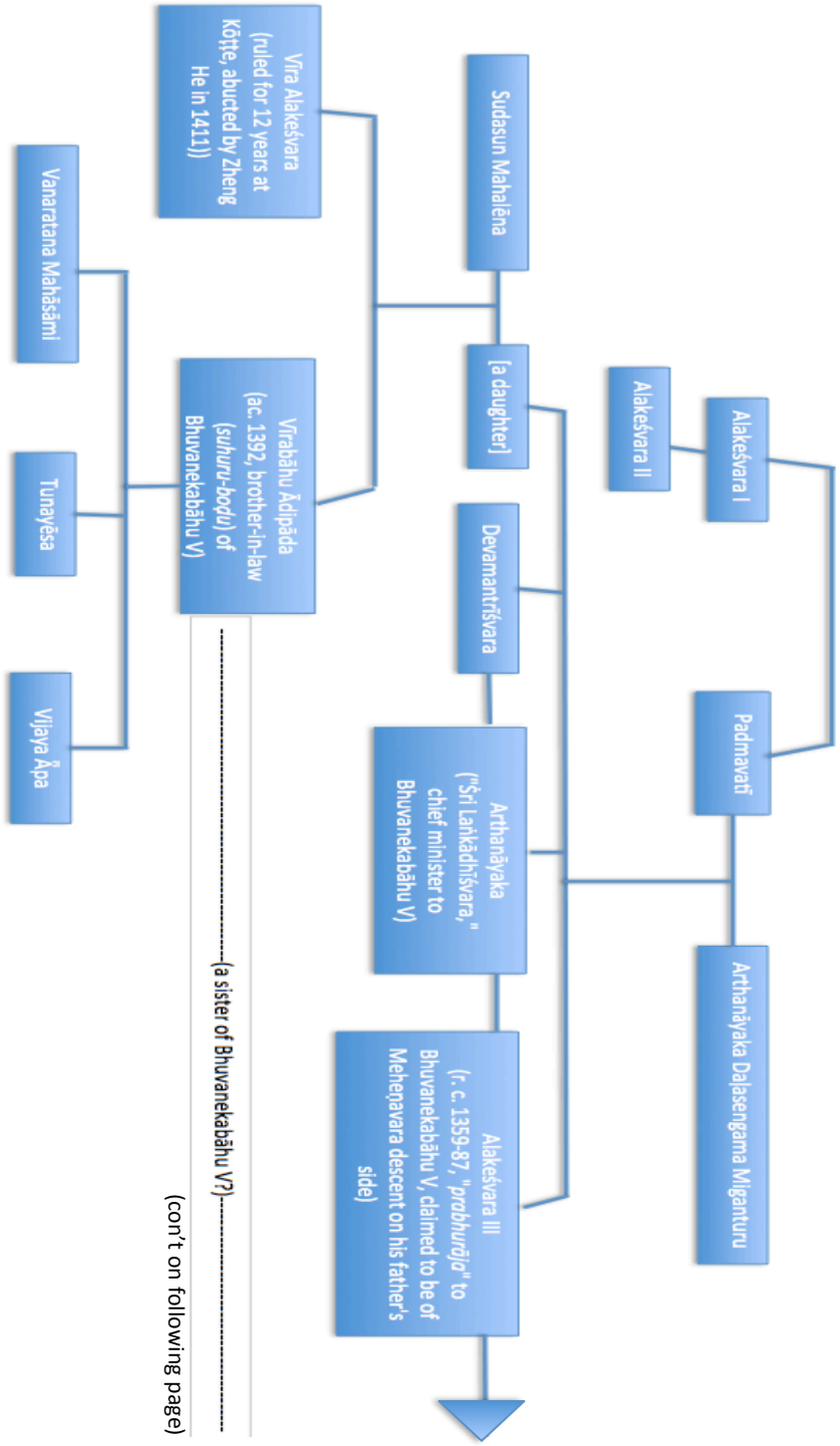


Figure 1 (con't): Genealogy of the rulers of Gampola, Dädigama and Kōṭṭe

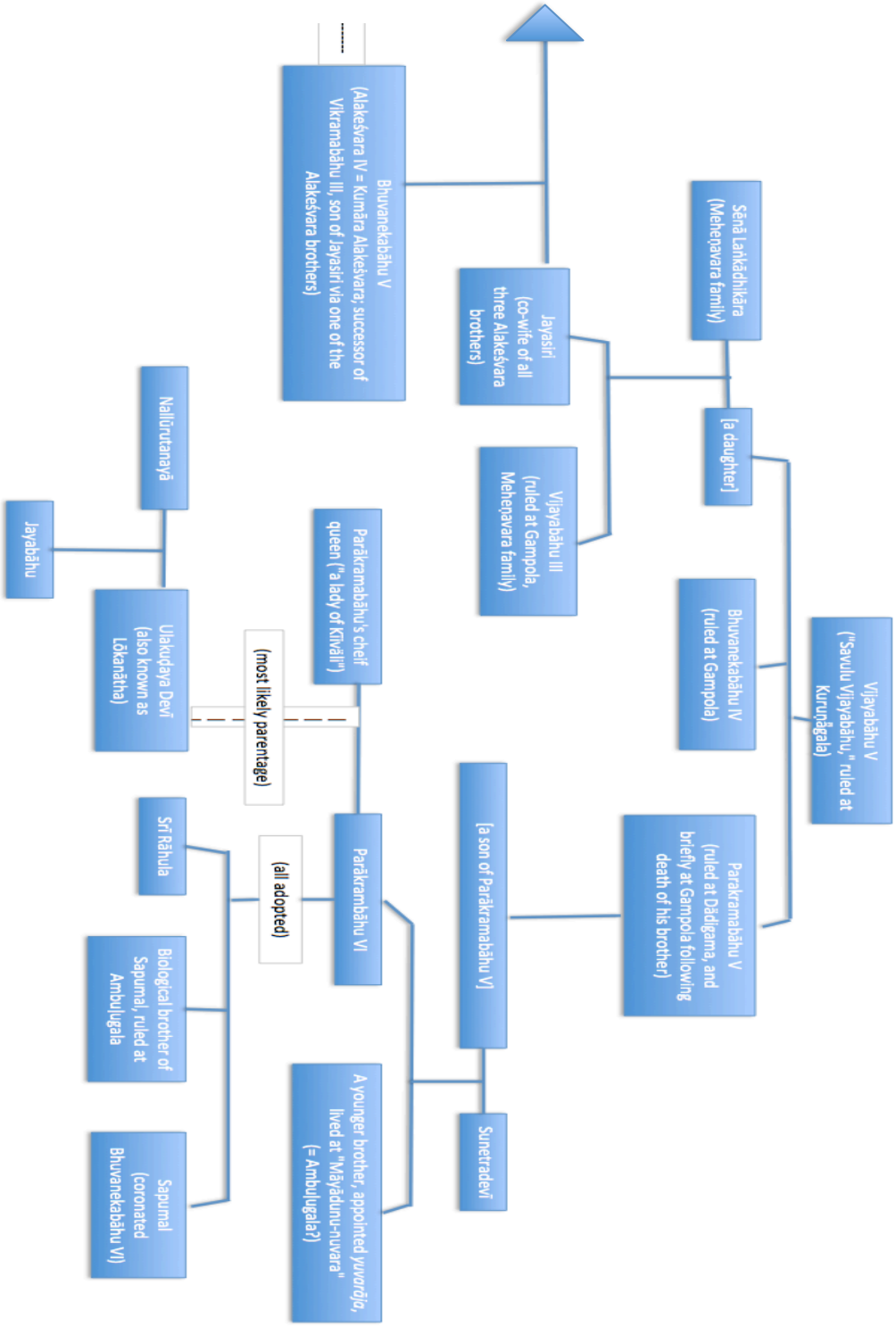


Figure 2: Geography of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the standard *kaḍayim*

1. Kumburugomu Raṭa, said to have been "a royal city in the age of Rāvaṇa."[11]

2. Kalyānapura (Kelaniya), identified as the residence of Vibhīṣaṇa.[12]

3. Attanagalu, where Rāma handed sovereignty of Lanka over to Vibhīṣaṇa; where a queen, prince, merchant and royal tutor were allowed to settle with their entourage by Rāma at the conclusion of the war; near to Rā-gama, so named because infants drank toddy (*rā*) during the time of *Rā*vaṇa.[13]

4. Mädavelāna-rājjya, west of Dambadeni, where "breadfruit chips were made for King Rāvaṇa."[14]

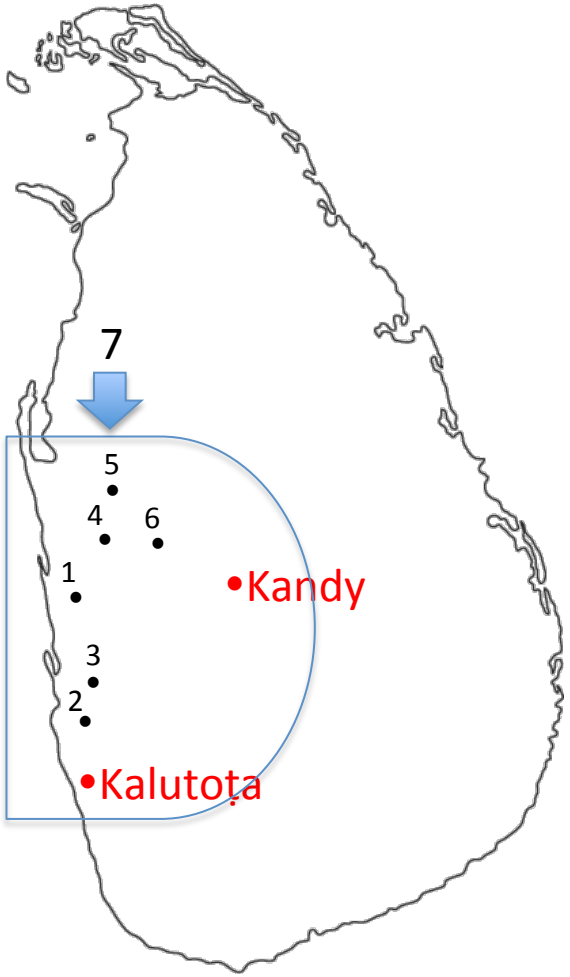
5. Pandāväva, where treasure collected during Rāvaṇa's time is buried under a rock containing the engraving of hoof prints.[15]

6. Kurunāgala, over which a certain king ruled during Rāvaṇa's time.[16]

7. Flooding of southwestern Sri Lanka during Rāvaṇa's period. "Rāvaṇa's Park" is mentioned in connection with other upcountry locations (Mahānuvara (Kandy), Badulla and Alutnuvara).[17]

[11] *SLK*, 194; *RRv*, 37
[12] *SLK*, 195; *RRv*, 39
[13] *SLK*, 196; *RRv*, 40. The same information is repeated in the *Hatana Kōralē Vittiya* (Abeyawardana, *Boundary Divisions*, 31). For references to Rakṣasas as drunkards in the *Kampa Rāmāyaṇam*, see Sundaram, *Sundara Kandam*, p.29, v.30f.
[14] *SLK*, 199; *RRv*, 44
[15] *SLK*, 200; *RRv*, 45
[16] *SLK*, 200; *RRv*, 46. The *RRv* gives the added detail that this was ""the place where a certain king ate a bit of food (*kāva*) at the time of Rāvaṇa."
[17] *SLK*, 203. The *Rāvaṇa Rājāvaliya* (as well as unfortunately the manuscript transliterated by Abeyawardana along with his English translation of the SLK) does not include this information. Present day oral tradition places "Rāvaṇa's Park" (*rāvaṇa älla*) at Ella, fifteen kilometers from Badulla.

Figure 2 (con't): Geography of the Rāmāyaṇa in the standard kaḍayim



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