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# Buddhism among Tamils in Tamilakam and Īlam

Part 3  
Extension and Conclusions

**Editor-in Chief:**

Peter Schalk

**Co-Editors:**

Astrid van Nahl



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[www.uu.se](http://www.uu.se)

[acta@ub.uu.se](mailto:acta@ub.uu.se)

Cover:

The picture on the front cover shows the statue of the Vallipurambuddha which is now in Wat Benja, Bangkok.

## Abstract

Buddhism among Tamils in Tamilakam and Īlam. Part 3. Extension and Conclusions. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religio-num* 32. Editor-in-Chief: Peter Schalk. Co-editor: Astrid van Nahl. Uppsala: AUU, 2012.

This book is the result of a conference in Bangkok in January 2012 mainly financed by Vetenskapsrådet in Stockholm (426-2011-1299). In Bangkok, not only pre-colonial Buddhism among Tamils was discussed but also Buddhism during the colonial and post-colonial period, like the Buddhism of Pēriyar, of the Ambedkar movement in Yāḷppāṇam (Jaffna) in the 1950s, and the expansion of *siṃhala budu samayam* (Siṃhala Buddhism) into areas of Tamil speakers.

The field of Buddhist Studies—in Europe and the Americas—has largely ignored the traditions, activities, and cultural products of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in southern India, former pre-colonial Tamilakam, present Tamilnāṭu, and Īlam (Sri Laṅkā). This conference, building on previous work done by the applicant, sought to expand the range of conversation from South Indian and Īlam specialists to scholars of southern Asian “Buddhisms” in Southeast Asia. So much of Tamil-speaking religious and literary culture—whether in India or Īlam—is linked in as yet little understood ways to the various regions of Southeast Asia, including Thailand (the site of the conference). Based on prefigurations of Buddhism in Sanskrit and Pāli, representatives of Tamil culture, foremost of Tamil language and religion (Caivam), developed an indigenised form of Tamil Buddhism. In this volume it is called *tamilppauttam* (or Tamil Pauttam) in accordance with a tradition by scholars using Tamil. The concept of *tamilppauttam* is part of a rich indigenous Buddhist terminology that presents an emic aspect of Buddhism among Tamils and is therefore elaborately brought out in this volume.

In the history of the European study of South Asian Buddhism—stemming back to the mid-nineteenth century—the Tamil-speaking Buddhist communities of southern India and Īlam have been relatively under-studied, but provide an important link in dialogue and confrontation among the diverse Buddhist landscapes of greater India and the largely Theravāda communities of Īlam. In colonial and post-colonial times, Buddhism has been instrumentalised, as a liberating force from the caste system within the Tamil Dalit movement and also

as a creative force of a new Buddhist identity in Īlam as alternative to *Siṃhala Budu Samayam*. The problem for Buddhists among Tamils in Īlam today is that that their historical tradition is questioned by both Tamil Caivas(Shaivas) and Siṃhala Buddhists.

Each conference paper contributed to a clearer understanding of the role of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in textual, literary and political cultures, as emissaries of Buddhism among Tamils in past and present.

The goal of the conference was to foster critical inter-regional dialogue on topics concerning the transmission, cultures, and contacts among various forms of southern Asian “Buddhisms”.

Peter Schalk  
September 2012

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## Abbreviations

<b><i>BaT 1</i></b>	Buddhism among Tamils. Part 1
<b><i>BaT 2</i></b>	Buddhism among Tamils. Part 2
<b><i>BaT 3</i></b>	Buddhism among Tamils. Part 3
<b><i>BWPE</i></b>	A Buddhist Woman's Path to Enlightenment
<b><i>CFA</i></b>	Cease Fire Agreement
<b><i>CTI</i></b>	Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions
<b><i>GoSL</i></b>	Government of Sri Lanka
<b><i>JHU</i></b>	Jātika Heḷa Urumaya
<b><i>LTTE</i></b>	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
<b><i>SLFP</i></b>	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
<b><i>TNA</i></b>	Tamil National Alliance
<b><i>UNP</i></b>	United National Party



## Preface

*Anne Monius and Peter Schalk*

Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa, of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in Bangkok, Thailand, and Professor Peter Schalk of Uppsala University, Sweden, decided in 2011 to organise a conference in Bangkok on the theme, *Buddhism among Tamils*, on 8–13 January, 2012. It was sponsored by Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa personally, INEB, the Swedish Council of Science, and the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University.

Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa of Bangkok is an eminent international exponent of socially engaged Buddhism and arguably Thailand's most prominent social critic and activist. He has founded rural development projects, as well as many non-governmental organizations dedicated to exploring alternative models of sustainable, traditionally-rooted, and ethically and spiritually-based development. Dr. Sivarakasa is the founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Periodically, he has been persecuted for his social activism. In 1976, following a coup and the deaths of hundreds of students, he was forced to stay in exile for two years, during which time he was visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Cornell, and Toronto. In 1984, he was again forced to go into exile and was not exonerated until his successful trial in 1993. Dr. Sivarakasa was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in both 1993 and 1994. He received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, in 1995. He taught at Swarthmore College in autumn 2002 and Harvard University in spring of 2003. He has visited Professor Peter Schalk in Uppsala regularly over the years giving lectures. His webpage is [http://www.sulak-sivarakasa.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=67](http://www.sulak-sivarakasa.org/en/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=67).

Professor Anne Monius was helpful in formulating the leading ideas of the conference in Bangkok. Professor Anne Monius, Professor of South Asian Religions, belongs to the Harvard Divinity School. She is a historian of religion specializing in the religious traditions of India. Her research interests lie in examining the practices and products of literary culture to reconstruct the history of religions in South Asia. Her first book, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*, examines the two extant Buddhist texts composed in Tamil; her current re-

search project, “Singing the Lives of Siva’s Saints: History, Aesthetics, and Religious Identity in Tamil-Speaking South India”, considers the role of aesthetics and moral vision in the articulation of a distinctly Hindu religious identity in twelfth-century South India. Both works point to a larger research focus on the ways in which aesthetics and ethics define religious identity and community in South Asia, as well as to the creative and productive encounters among competing sectarian religious communities. Future research projects will explore the relationship of Hindu devotional and philosophical literature in Tamil to its Sanskritic forebears, as well as consider the transmission of South Indian strands of Buddhism and Hinduism to Southeast Asia.

Here follow some published works by Professor Anne Monius on Buddhism among Tamils.

Monius, Anne. Vijayalakcumi, Arankarācan. “Ētunikalcci in the *maṇimēkalai*. The Manifestation of the Beneficial Root ‘Causes’ and Renunciation”. In: *A Buddhist Womans Path to Enlightenment. Proceedings of a Workshop on the Tamil Narrative maṇimēkalai, Uppsala University, May 25–29, 1995* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 13) Uppsala: ACTA, 1997, pp. 261–277.

Monius, Anne. *Imagining a Place for Buddhism. Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Monius, Anne. “With No One to Bind Action and Agent: The Fate of Buddhists as Religious ‘Other’ in Tamil Saiva Literature”. In: *The Tamils: From the Past to the Present. Celebratory Volume in Honour of Professor Alvappillai Veluppillai at the Occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. Editor-in-Chief Peter Schalk. Colombo/Chennai: Kumaran Bookhouse, 2011.

Peter Schalk was appointed full professor for a chair in the History of Religions (in particular in Hinduism and Buddhism) in Uppsala University in the Faculty of Arts by the Government of Sweden in 1983. The chair was shifted to the Faculty of Theology in 1994. He retired from service on 1 January 2012.

His main areas of research in 2009–2012 are the religious expressions of socio-economic conflict in present-day South Asia, especially concepts of martyrdom in cross-cultural perspective and secular versions of martyrdom as promoted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE). Earlier he worked on Buddhist ritual in the Siṃhala-

Pali tradition, especially on *pirit* and *baṇa*, on Buddhism among speakers of Tamil in the pre-colonial period in Tamilakam and Īlam, on Caivam of Tamil speakers in the European exile, on the Vāddō (Vāddas) of Īlam, and on the semantic history of the Tamil toponym Īlam that refers to the whole island of Sri Lanka.

Here follow some works by Professor Peter Schalk on Buddhism among Tamils:

Schalk, Peter. “The Vallipuram Buddha Image ‘Rediscovered’”. In: *Dance, Music, Art, and Ritual*. Edited by Tor Ahlbäck (Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis XVI). Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1996, pp. 295–312.

Schalk, Peter, editor. *A Buddhist Woman’s Path to Enlightenment. Proceedings of a Workshop on the Tamil Narrative Manimekalai, Uppsala University, May 25-29, 1995*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1997.

Schalk, Peter / Velupillai, Alvappillai, et al. Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam, 2002. Part 1. Prologue. The Pre-Pallava and the Pallava period. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 19*. Uppsala, AUU, 2002.

Schalk, Peter / Velupillai, Alvappillai, et al. Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam, 2002. Part 2. The Period of the Imperial Cōlar. Tamilakam and Īlam. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 20*. Uppsala: AUU, 2002.

Schalk, Peter. “The Caiva Devaluation of Pautta and Caina Asceticism in Pre-colonial Tamilakam”. In: *Asceticism and its Critics. Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives*. Edited by Oliver Freiberger. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 117–130.

Schalk, Peter. “Canon Rejected: The Case of Pauttam among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam”. In: *Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte, 820. Band). Herausgegeben von Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, Christoph Kleine. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011, pp 233–258.

## The Content of the Conference

The content of the conference explored in distinct, concrete terms the literature, tracts, inscriptions, archaeological finds, architecture, sculpture and painting, and activities of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in southern South Asia from the pre-colonial period through the contemporary period in dialogue and conflict with Tamil Caivam (Saivism), Caiṇam (Jainism), Vaiṇavam (Vaishnavism) and worldly powers. These confrontations gave Buddhism among Tamils a special profile, but also marginalised the religion on the religious map of southern South Asia. Buddhaghosa's heirs failed in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century to make Pāli Buddhism acceptable in Tamiḷakam. Buddhism among Tamils never achieved the position, status and form of canonical Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese or Tibetan Buddhism. Among the Tamils we find several categories of Pauttam (Buddhism), including Caiva/Vaiṇava and Pautta (Buddhist) syncretism. Tamil refers not only to a language, but also to the religion known as Caivam and to a territory like Tamiḷakam. In Īlam, Buddhist traditions transmitted in Prākṛit, Tamil and Siṃhala existed both in harmony and conflict in Tamiḷ-speaking territory.

In the history of the European study of South Asian Buddhism—stemming back to the mid-nineteenth century—the Tamiḷ-speaking Buddhist communities of southern India and Īlam have been relatively under-studied, but provide an important link in dialogue and confrontation among the diverse Buddhist landscapes of greater India and the largely Theravāda communities of Īlam. In colonial and post-colonial times, Buddhism has been instrumentalised, as a liberating force from the caste system within the Tamiḷ Dalit movement and also as a creative force of a new Buddhist identity in Īlam as alternative to *siṃhala budu samayam* (Siṃhala Buddhism). The problem for Buddhists among Tamils in Sri Lanka today is that their historical tradition is questioned by both Caivas and Siṃhala Buddhists. Each conference paper contributed to a clearer understanding of the role of Tamiḷ-speaking Buddhists in textual, literary and political cultures, as emissaries of Buddhism among Tamils in past and present.

In Bangkok not only pre-colonial Buddhism among Tamils was discussed but also Buddhism during the colonial and post-colonial period, like the Buddhism of Pēriyar, the Ambedkar movement in Yāḷppāṇam in the 1950s, and the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into areas of Tamiḷ speakers.

## Importance of the Conference for the Area of Research

As above, the field of Buddhist Studies—in Europe and the Americas—has largely ignored the traditions, activities, and cultural products of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in southern India and Īlam. This conference, building on previous work done by the applicant, sought to expand the range of conversation from South Indian and Īlam specialists to scholars of southern Asian “Buddhisms” in Southeast Asia. So much of Tamil-speaking religious and literary culture—whether in India or Īlam—is linked in as yet little understood ways to the various regions of Southeast Asia, including Thailand (the site of the conference). The goal of the conference was to foster critical inter-regional dialogue on topics concerning the transmission, cultures, and contacts among various forms of southern Asian “Buddhisms”.

## Venue in Bangkok

Why hold such a conference in Bangkok? There were three reasons.

1. Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa, living in Bangkok, has shown a deep interest for Buddhism among Tamils as part of his own concept of socially engaged Buddhism. He invited the research group of six scholars to stay in Bangkok and to finance local transport, board and lodging during the whole period and organise some of the excursions.
2. In Bangkok there is an important sculpture in Wat Benchamabopitr that once stood in Vallipuram in the district Yālpṇānam. It was gifted to the King of Thailand in 1906. The sculpture provides very important evidence of Buddhism among Tamils because it shows a connection to Amarāvati and not to Anurādhapura (See Buddhism among Tamils..., vol 1, pp. 211–224). A special examination of the statue was made under the guidance of Dr. Duraiswamy Dayalan (Turaicāmi Tayālan) from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). His contribution is included in the chapter “Buddhism among Tamils. An Introduction” by Peter Schalk.
3. The connection between Thailand and Sri Lanka has been very intensive in the past and the present, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when an extensive exchange took place between the two national Buddhist saṃghas.

## The Participants

There were six authors of papers, one who organised local transport, board, and lodging in Bangkok (Sivaraksa), and one who organised the travelling (Schalk) to and from Bangkok. They constituted an inner circle of seven persons. The outer circle consisted of intellectuals in Bangkok, Thais and non-Thais, who were invited to participate in the conference.

In January 2012, all six papers were discussed, interrupted only by an excursion to Wat Benchamabopitr. Each author was given 90 minutes for presentation and discussion of his paper.

1. Professor A. J. V. Chandrakanthan (E. Jē. Vi. Cantirakāntan) is Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, and a Catholic priest. Professor Chandrakanthan has held major academic appointments including, Head of the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilizations, University of Jaffna (1980–1986); Professor of Biblical Studies and Ethics, Concordia University (1996–1999). He has presented papers at a number of national and international conferences and published ten books and over 50 articles in issues related Christian Theology, Ethics, Human Rights and inter-religious spirituality. His paper in Bangkok had the title “Religious Conversion as a Form of Protest: Tamil Sub-nationalisms and the Ambedkar-Model. Buddhist Conversions in Post Colonial Jaffna”.

2. Dr. Duraiswamy Dayalan (Turaicāmi Tayālan) is Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India. He is the author of many outstanding works in archaeology, especially on temple architecture in South India. He contributed to the volume *Buddhism among Tamils...*, vol 2, pp. 559–568 with the paper “Recent Finds of Buddhist Artifacts and Architecture in Tamilakam”. His paper in Bangkok had the title “Excavations at Kanahanhalli: A Unique Buddhist Site in South India, but in the volume *Buddhism among Tamils...*, vol 3, only his examination of the Vallipuram Buddha statue in Bangkok is taken up.

3. Dr. Jude Lal Fernando (Jūd Lāl Pranāndu) is a post-doctoral research fellow and lecturer in Buddhist-Christian dialogue at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin. His dissertation was on *Dynamics of Essentialist Representations of Nationhood and the Politics of Interpretation: The Role of Religion in the making and Unmaking of the Sri Lankan Nation-State*. Dublin: Irish School of Ecumenics, 2008. His paper in Bangkok has the title “War by other



Means. Expansion of Sinhala Buddhism into the Tamil Region: Religio-Military Dimensions of Post-War Lanka”. Dr. Jude Lal Fernando had collected documentary pictures of the Sinhalisation of the Tamil area in Īlam’s North-East region after the defeat of the LTTE by Lankan military forces. They used Buddha-images that were planted triumphantly in Tamil areas of “re-conquest”.

4. For Professor Anne Monius, see above. Her paper in Bangkok had the title “Further Thoughts on the *Vīracōliyam* and Peruntēvaṇar’s Commentarial Project”.

5. Professor Peter Schalk’s article in Bangkok had the title “The Buddha Image among Īlam Tamils”. It focussed the Buddha image from Vallipuram in Sri Lanka, now at Wat Benchamabopitr (front cover, **fig. 51-53**), where the whole group of scholars made a detailed study of the Vallipuram Buddha statue, guided by Dr. Turaicāmi Tayāḷaṇ [Fig. 50, 54]. In the article “Buddhism among Tamils. An Introduction” in the present volume *Buddhism among Tamils ...*, Part 3, (*BaT* 3), Peter Schalk discusses the findings in Bangkok and presents the uses of the concept “Buddhism among Tamils” in scholarly and political documents. The present “re-conquest” described by Dr. Jude Lal Fernando retrieves a totalitarian ideology from the past. This is described by Peter Schalk in the article “Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmiṇī - Again”. This ideology also explains why *tamiḷppauttam* is controversial in Īlam.

6. Professor (em.) Alvapillai Veluppillai was a chair-holder of Tamil at the University of Yāḷppāṇam and came to Sweden in 1990 where he stayed till 2000. His fields are Tamil historical linguistics, history of Tamil literature and religions and analysis of Tamil inscriptions. He taught Tamil and History of religions at Uppsala University, Faculty of Theology, that honoured him by a PhD h.c. in 1995. He is a Swedish national. He contributed heavily to the volumes *Buddhism among Tamils... Part 1 and 2*, (*BaT* 1–2) and to the volume *A Buddhist Woman’s Path... (BWPE)*. His contribution in Bangkok was titled “History of Research of Buddhism among Tamils”.

For some of his works on Buddhism among Tamils see the list of his works in *The Tamils: From the Past to the Present. Celebratory Volume in Honour of Professor Alvappillai Veluppillai at the Occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. Editor-in-Chief Peter Schalk. Colombo/Chennai: Kumaran Bookhouse, 2011, pp. 16–31.

Dr. Sivaraksa functioned as chairman.

For the visiting participants in Bangkok see **Fig. 50** in this volume.

### Publication

The result of the conference in Bangkok with some modifications is now published in this volume, as *Buddhism among Tamils, Part 3, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 32, (BaT 3)*. It connects the present studies with earlier studies published by Uppsala University (*BaT 1–2, BWPE; Fig 60–62*).

September 2012

*Anne Monius*, Harvard University, USA  
*Peter Schalk*, Uppsala University, Sweden

# Buddhism among Tamils.

## An Introduction

Peter Schalk

### The Basis

The title of this book is *Buddhism among Tamils. Part 3. Extension and Conclusion* (=BaT 3). It precludes acquaintance with three other proceeding volumes, all published in the series *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum*.<sup>1</sup> They are abbreviated to BaT 1, BaT 2, and BWPE [Fig. 60–62].

The word “extension” in the present volume BaT 3 refers to the fact that new scholars participate in the Uppsala team [Fig. 50],<sup>2</sup> namely A. J. V. Chandrakanthan (E. Jē. Vi. Cantirakāntan) from To-

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<sup>1</sup> 1. A Buddhist Woman’s Path to Enlightenment. Proceedings of a Workshop on the Tamil Narrative *Maṇimēkalai*, Uppsala University, May 25–29, 1995 (=BWPE), published in 1997. The authors were Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātaṅ, Āḷvāppillai Vēluppiḷlai, Paula Richman, Pirēmā Nantakumār, D. Dennis Hudson, Peter Schalk, David Shulman, Anne Monius, Araṅkarācaṅ Vijayalaṭcumi, Irāccantiraṅ Nākacuvāmi. – 2. Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamiḷakam and Īlam. Part 1. Prologue. The Pre-Pallava and the Pallava Period (=BaT 1), published in 2002. The volume contains a map of Tamiḷakam and Īlam, BaT 1–3 which is copied in Fig. 58–59. Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamiḷakam and Īlam. Part 2. The period of the Imperial Cōlar. Tamiḷakam and Īlam (=BaT 2), published in 2002. – The authors in BaT 1–2 were Irāmaccantiraṅ Nākacāmi, Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātaṅ, Peter Schalk, Turaicāmi Tayāḷaṅ and Āḷvāppillai Vēluppiḷlai. – All three volumes cover the pre-colonial period only. BWPE is limited to Tamiḷakam with outlooks on Īlam. BaT 1–2 cover both Tamiḷakam and Īlam. – The frontiers of Tamiḷakam in the pre-colonial period are given in BaT 1 and Fig. 58–59. – The history of the toponym Īlam is described in BaT 1. In short, Īlam refers always to the island as a whole. Īlam is Lamkā that in Tamil is rendered as Ilaṅkai. Īlam should not be identified with Tamiḷīlam [Fig. 63]. A periodisation of Pauttam in Tamiḷakam is in BaT 1, 59–63. The naming of a period as “Caṅkam age” has been avoided. It does not refer historically to a period, but is an ideological periodisation from the 7th century, BaT 1, 64–65. Transliterations follow the *Tamil Lexicon* system. – A correction: In BaT 1, 493, note 653 and 654 refer not to Īlam as the text gives, but to Ilaṅkai.

<sup>2</sup> For the Uppsala team, see Peter Schalk, Academic Exchange between Yāḷppānam and Uppsala, 1988–1996, *Uppsala studies in the History of Religions 3* (1996) (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1996).

ronto and Jude Lal Fernando (Jūd Lāl Pranāndu) from Dublin. They bring an extended perspective to the concept of Buddhism among Tamils. Both write about the post-colonial period in Īlam (Laṃkā), the first about reformbuddhism or socially engaged Buddhism in the specific character of Ambedkarbuddhism during a short period in the 1960s in the North of Īlam; the second about contemporary political Siṃhala Buddhism (*siṃhala budu samayam*) imposed mainly in Caiva (Shaiva) areas in Īlam. “Extension” refers also to the article by Anne Monius who deepens her former analysis of the commentary of *Vīracōḷiyam*.<sup>3</sup> She highlights the connection between Tamil and Buddhism by demonstrating the *Vīracōḷiyam*’s and the Commentary’s close relation to the Buddhist literary world in Sanskrit. Their Tamil and Buddhism in a Cōḷa Court was situated in much broader currents of explicitly Buddhist discourses of grammar and poetics. To analyse Tamil through Sanskrit lenses gives these works a unique position.

The word “conclusions” in part *BaT* 3 refers to a summarising of some discussions which have taken place since the publication of the three volumes, during almost 20 years. Alvappillai Veluppillai has undertaken to do this extremely complicated work which is a summary not of Buddhism among Tamils, but of the history of academic study of Buddhism among Tamils. My “Introduction” takes up some conclusions, but refers mainly to different uses, academic and non/academic, of the concept “Buddhism among Tamils”.

After the publication of *BaT* 1–2 in 2002 a remarkable change has taken place. The study of Buddhism among Tamils before 2002 was mainly an occupation by professional historians and philologist. Today we can also see a strong interest from journalists and amateur historians for the history of Tamil Buddhism in Tamilakam and Īlam.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Monius, “The *Vīracōḷiyam*: Language, Literary Theory, and Religious Community”, Id. *Imagining a Place for Buddhism. Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 116–136.

<sup>4</sup> See for example J. L. Devananda, “Tamil Buddhism in Ancient South India and Sri Lanka”, <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2011/11/tamil-buddhism-in-ancient-south-india.html>, <http://transcurrents.com/news-views/archives/6419>; <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/3031>; <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2010/10/tamil-buddhists-of-past-and-future.html> – Anon., “Buddhism – A Tamils' Contribution”, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9WoNEd3ypI>. – Lakshman Jayawardana, “Ancient Buddhist links between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka”, <http://www.lakehouse.lk/mihintalava/gaya07.htm>. – Anon., “Tamil Buddhists (et al)”, <http://indica/2011/11/tamil-buddhists-et-al/> – Anon., “Special lecture on “Tamil Buddhist””, *The Daily Mirror*, 12 May 2010, <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=43,9158,0,0,1,0>. – Ameen Izzadeen, “Sinhala Ignorance of Tamil Buddhism in Sri

They produce popularised versions of historical research according to the principle “it is believed that...” without giving references. In Īlam this new interest has a special background. Even politicians engage in the study of Tamil Buddhism. They take positions for or against the statement that some historical Buddhist sites in the North and East of Īlam were managed by Tamil speakers.<sup>5</sup> Behind this discussion linger claims for territorial control by both Siṃhala and Tamil speakers which makes the issue a political one. It is possible today to start a heated debate on blogs and in other social media about this issue.<sup>6</sup>

## Buddhism among Tamils

What is Buddhism among Tamils? Some answer by using the expression Tamil Buddhism (*tamilppauttam*, Tamil Pauttam). These are, however, not equivalents in all usages. Buddhism among Tamils may be used as a blanket for several concepts, among them for Tamil Buddhism, but also for Prākṛit- and Pālibuddhism<sup>7</sup> and for Siṃhala Buddhism used by Siṃhala speakers expanding into the Tamil speaking areas in Īlam. Even Sanskrit Buddhism was known by Tamil speakers.<sup>8</sup>

Buddhism among Tamils is also a *territorial* concept; it includes all kinds of Buddhism in Tamil speaking areas in Tamilakam and Īlam.<sup>9</sup> Buddhism among Tamils is also a concept of time. In Tamilakam it covered a period of a millennium if we disconnect it from neobuddhism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Neobuddhism in Tamilakam was a new start which retrieved the past, but did not have an unbroken relation to the past. In Īlam the time perspective is longer; there were appearances and disappearances, ups and downs, up to the modern formations guided by contemporary local leaders like Vimalasāra Nāyaka Thera in Vavuniyā.<sup>10</sup>

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Lanka”, July 3, 2007, <http://federalidea.com/focus/archives/43> – Anon. Tamil Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Lankanewspapers.com, Saturday, 5 May 2012; [http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2012/5/76332\\_space.html](http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2012/5/76332_space.html).

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 42, 44, 55, 56, 133, 138, 139, 142 in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Devananda, “Tamil Buddhism in Ancient South India and Sri Lanka”...

<sup>7</sup> See *BaT* 1, 73–74.

<sup>8</sup> *BaT* 1, 52–53, 73–74.

<sup>9</sup> *BaT* 1, 53.

<sup>10</sup> *BaT*, 30–33.

Buddhism among Tamils in Tamilakam was heavily exposed to the polemic from the Caiva (Shaiva) and Vaiṇava (Vaishnava) side from the Pallava period onwards which resulted in a marginalised position in Tamilakam.<sup>11</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai has written on several anti-Buddhist spokesmen from the *patti* (*bhakti*)-movement like Campan-tar,<sup>12</sup> Appar,<sup>13</sup> and Māṇikkavācakar.<sup>14</sup> We often forget that some Buddhists participated in the controversy, for instance Cāttaṇār who evaluated non-Buddhist(Buddhist) religions low.<sup>15</sup>

We should be aware that Buddhism was heavily attacked by Caiṇam (Jainism) too.<sup>16</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai was able to document the presence of institutionalised Caiṇam already in the pre-Pallava period which is not possible to accomplish with institutionalised Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, we have to add that royal or state patronage of Buddhism in Tamilakam was exceptional and regionally limited.<sup>18</sup> One such exception is Nākapaṭṭiṇam (Nagapattinam) which was supported by three Cōla(Chola) Kings, not for religious, but for pragmatic-political reasons.<sup>19</sup> King Irājarāja (Rājarāja) who invaded Īlam consented to having a Mahāvihāra was named after him, the Irājarājaperumpalli at Periyakulam in the Tirukōṇamalai region.<sup>20</sup> It has been described by Alvappillai Veluppillai,<sup>21</sup> Sivasubramaniam Pathmanathan,<sup>22</sup> and myself.<sup>23</sup> Its religion is typical for what is called here Īlaccōlappattam ‘Buddhism of the Cōlas in Īlam’.

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<sup>11</sup> *BaT* 1, 19–21, 89.

<sup>12</sup> *BaT* 1, 153–155, 446–486, *BaT* 2, 664–666.

<sup>13</sup> *BaT* 1, 153–155.

<sup>14</sup> *BaT* 1, 155–156, 486–504.

<sup>15</sup> Ālvāpiḷḷai Vēluppillai, “A Negative Evaluation on Non-Buddhist religions in the *Maṇimēkalai*”, *BWPE*, 223–241.

<sup>16</sup> *BaT* 1, 21–22, 224–225.

<sup>17</sup> *BaT* 1, 22–23, 167–203.

<sup>18</sup> *BaT* 1, 21–22, 29, 62–63, 89–90. For royal patronage see R. Champakalakshmi, “Buddhism in Tamil Nadu”, *Buddhism in Tamil Nadu. Collected Papers* (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 69–96. Peter Schalk, “The Caiva Devaluation of Pautta and and Caiṇa Asceticism in Precolonial Tamilakam”, *Asceticism and its Critics. Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives*, Edited by Oliver Freiberger, *AAR Cultural Criticism Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 118–121.

<sup>19</sup> *BaT* 2, 514–518.

<sup>20</sup> *BaT* 1, 158.

<sup>21</sup> *BaT* 1, 159–162.

<sup>22</sup> *BaT* 2, 767–776.

<sup>23</sup> *BaT* 2, 776–783.

## Tamiḷ Buddhism

Let us now concentrate on one part of Buddhism among Tamils, on Tamiḷ Buddhism. What is that? Anne Monius writes that

in terms of ‘Tamil Buddhism’, my feeling is that there is no such coherence implied in the extant sources. I would more simply refer to ‘Buddhist thought and practices among native Tamil speakers’, leaving room to consider the work of, say, Buddhadatta and Dhammapāla alongside the Maṇimēkalai.<sup>24</sup>

This brings us again to Buddhism among Tamils as a blanket for Tamiḷ Buddhism and for Pālibuddhism in Tamiḷakam. Let us leave Pālibuddhism aside and concentrate on only Buddhism transmitted in Tamiḷ. What is thought and practised by Tamiḷ speakers as Tamiḷ Buddhism? Is there an *indigenised* set of ideas and practises which we can call Tamiḷ Buddhism or is Tamiḷ Buddhism an imitation of a known school’s teachings or of a blend of known schools’ teaching?<sup>25</sup> True, there seems to be no coherence if we keep track of the history of Tamiḷakam and Īlam. We have to introduce distinctions regarding persons, regions and periods and define each separately. We find Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, but there is still a debate about how to classify certain texts and text passages.<sup>26</sup> A number of scholarly views are presented.<sup>27</sup> Ramachandran Nagaswamy (Irāmaccantiraṅ Nācacāmi) has identified sectarian affiliations among Buddhist monks in Tamiḷakam.<sup>28</sup>

There is no unifying canon for Tamiḷ Buddhism as we know canons to exist in Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>29</sup> The written sources from Tamiḷakam are of different genres and can be and

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<sup>24</sup> Written communication on 15 July, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> For the concept indiginisation in this context see Peter Schalk, “Explorations of the Concept of Tamil Buddhism. A Preliminary View”, *Lanka. Studies in Lankan Culture*, 1992 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1992), 31–42, especially 32–33. See also Ālvāpṭillai Vēluppillai, “Historical Background of the Maṇimēkalai and Indiginization of Buddhism”, *BWPE*, 53–95.

<sup>26</sup> *BaT* 1, 84–89.

<sup>27</sup> *BaT* 1, 96–108.

<sup>28</sup> *BaT* 1, 112–115.

<sup>29</sup> *BaT* 1, 54, 72. Peter Schalk, “Canon Rejected: The Case of Pauttam among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Ilam”, *Kanononisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte, 820. Band*, Herausgegeben von Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, Christoph Kleine (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011), 233–258.

are de facto collected in one volume called *peruntokai* ‘great collection’(see below).<sup>30</sup> Beyond this we also find Pāli and Sanskrit texts relating to Tamilakam.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, a number of texts in Sanskrit and Tamil which are highly critical of Buddhism confirm the existence of Buddhism in Tamilakam.<sup>32</sup> Buddhism can be studied through the eyes of the inimical beholder.

Inscriptions from Tamilakam and Īlam, they too “witness” about the presence of Buddhism.<sup>33</sup>

A special group of sources are artefacts from Tamilakam which can be dated and so can confirm that there is no Buddhist artefact older than the 4th century.<sup>34</sup> The influence of artefacts from Āntiram in the formative period of Buddhism in Tamilakam has been studied by Ramachandran Nagaswamy.<sup>35</sup> He has also studied coins and was not able to find any unambiguous trace of Buddhism in the pre-Pallava period.<sup>36</sup> I have checked all scholarly references to Buddhism in Tamilakam during the pre-Pallava period and found no convincing statement.<sup>37</sup> This does not exclude the existence of a non-institutional movement in Tamilakam by Buddhist merchants and pilgrims in the pre-Pallava period. They have, however, left no traces.

Īlam has produced an important literary source, a group of sources which is given the blanket name *vamsic* literature. It is an important source for the study of relations between Prākṛit-Siṃhala and Demaḷa (Tamil) speakers up to the arrival of the British.<sup>38</sup>

If we put all writings together which have been generated in Tamil by Tamil speakers during the pre-colonial period we get not more than one thick volume.<sup>39</sup> One scripture in this imagined book is

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<sup>30</sup> They are all listed in *BaT* 69–72.

<sup>31</sup> *BaT* 1, 73–74.

<sup>32</sup> *BaT* 1, 74–77, 89, *BaT* 2, 785–810.

<sup>33</sup> *BaT* 1, 77–79, 347–375.

<sup>34</sup> *BaT* 1, 78–79, 91–93. Peter Schalk, “The Oldest Buddhist Artefacts Discovered in Tamilakam”, ‘Being Religious and Living through the Eyes’. Studies in Religious Iconography and Iconology. A Celebratory Publication in Honour of Professor Jan Bergman, Edited by Peter Schalk and Michael Stausberg. Uppsala: AUU, 1998, 307–328.

<sup>35</sup> *BaT* 1, 111–112.

<sup>36</sup> *BaT* 1, 122–124.

<sup>37</sup> *BaT* 1, 238–347.

<sup>38</sup> *BaT* 1, 79–83.

<sup>39</sup> *BaT* 1, 72.



*Maṇimēkalai turavu* which has been elevated in the modern period as a typical representative of Tamil Buddhism.

In the 1930s, there was an attempt made to collect Buddhist fragments in one volume. It is called *peruntokai* [‘the great collection’]<sup>40</sup> but this cannot be identified as a canon, not even as an open one. Some of its parts have been translated in *BaT* 2.<sup>41</sup>

## Profiles of Tamil Buddhism

There is no such thing, it seems, as uniform Tamil Buddhism in Tamilakam and Īlam – except for on the score of langue. This lack of coherence and the plurality of contents and practises should, however, not prevent us from identifying shifting profiles of Tamil Buddhism during periods. Such profiles have dominant religious elements which constitute their profiles.

One such profile is Cōla Buddhism which dominated during the imperial Cōlas in Tamilakam and Īlam during parts of the pre-colonial period.<sup>42</sup> In Īlam we find Īlaccōla Buddhism. In addition we find socially engaged Buddhism of the Dalit Movement and of the anti-Brahmanical Dravidian Movement during the colonial and post-colonial period. It is possible to describe Tamil Buddhism as consisting of indigenised forms of Buddhism on the basis of its different regional and temporal profiles. In the case of Tamilakam there are at least three profiles emerging during the Pallava, imperial Cōla and colonial periods. For Īlam there are at least five profiles.

## Buddhist Profiles in Tamilakam

Let us look at Tamilakam first. We turn towards the Pallava period. Again, there is no *institutional* evidence for Buddhism in Tamilakam before the Pallavas.<sup>43</sup> This statement refers to the present state of all sources made available. Duraisamy Dayalan / Turaicāmi Tayālan has registered 80 sites of vestiges still unearthed in Tamilakam,<sup>44</sup> but he

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<sup>40</sup> *BaT* 1, 70.

<sup>41</sup> *BaT* 2, 811–827.

<sup>42</sup> *BaT* 2, 514–518.

<sup>43</sup> *BaT* 1, 83–84, 206, 238–347.

<sup>44</sup> *BaT* 2, 559–568.

also has come to the conclusion that based on our present sources Buddhism starts with the Pallavas.<sup>45</sup>

The Pallava period started ca 400 and ended in about 850. The rulers did not promote Buddhism<sup>46</sup> and the Buddhist institutions were in a state of decay caused by a massive attack by the *patti*-movement.<sup>47</sup> The Puttar (Buddha) was depicted as being bewildered.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese pilgrim Xuantsang's reports are unreliable when it comes to statistics but he establishes the fact of the existence of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna institutions in Tamiḷakam.<sup>49</sup> The Sanskrit ācariyas 'teachers' had their influence outside Tamiḷakam<sup>50</sup> and the Pāli ācariyas marginalised themselves as they insisted on refusing the use of Tamiḷ.<sup>51</sup> Kāñci was not a Buddhist site where Buddhism was centralised administratively during the Pallavas<sup>52</sup> and the *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai turavu* cannot be exploited for backing the statement that Buddhism flourished in Kāñci.<sup>53</sup> The rulers of the Pallava dynasty deselected Buddhism consciously<sup>54</sup> and the reason for this was not only religious, but also political.<sup>55</sup> Narasiṃhavarman II is allegedly an exception. He supposedly built a *vihāra* at Nākapattiṇam in the shift from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century. This cannot however be verified.<sup>56</sup> The influence of Buddhism in the modern period in Tamiḷakam on literature and social reform movements is insignificant, limited, arbitrary and personalised, in short contingent.<sup>57</sup> Possible reasons for the marginalisation and final extinction of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam are given, including intra- and interstate conflicts with Īlam.<sup>58</sup>

What then can we say positively about Buddhism in Tamiḷakam during the Pallavas? I refer to the establishment of the *Pautta vi-kāram* in Kāviriṇṇampattiṇam from the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>59</sup> Its original

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<sup>45</sup> *BaT* 2, 559.

<sup>46</sup> *BaT* 1, 66–67, 378.

<sup>47</sup> *BaT* 1, 379, 420–421, 446–486.

<sup>48</sup> *BaT* 1, 382.

<sup>49</sup> *BaT* 1, 285–290, 400–403.

<sup>50</sup> *BaT* 1, 383–387.

<sup>51</sup> *BaT* 1, 387–395.

<sup>52</sup> *BaT* 1, 381, 395–397.

<sup>53</sup> *BaT* 1, 397–400.

<sup>54</sup> *BaT* 1, 397–420.

<sup>55</sup> *BaT* 1, 408–413, 421–430, *BaT* 2, 835–842.

<sup>56</sup> *BaT* 1, 403–408.

<sup>57</sup> *BaT* 1, 28–29.

<sup>58</sup> *BaT* 1, 83–84, 408–430.

<sup>59</sup> *BaT* 1, 430–444.

name is unknown. This establishment is the oldest preserved Buddhist *institution* in Tamilakam.<sup>60</sup> The influence from Āntiram (Andhra) is visible in the artefacts<sup>61</sup> and the place was well-known in Īlam in the *Sīhalavatthupakaraṇa* as a passage for pilgrims to Northern India.<sup>62</sup>

Kāvrippūmpaṭṭiṇam was situated in the area of the ancient Cōlas which was conquered by the Pallavas. The Buddhist institution was founded before that conquest and has therefore nothing to do with the Pallava rulers. True, they tolerated its existence, but the general impression is that they exposed Buddhism to decay.<sup>63</sup> I have given a detailed description of this important place which can be called the cradle of Buddhism in Tamilakam.<sup>64</sup>

Ramachandran Nagaswamy has made a detailed study of the Buddhist images and sacred architecture in Kāvrippūmpaṭṭiṇam and other places.<sup>65</sup>

In this area of the old Cōlas, we also find a monk known as Coḷika Saṃghamitta in the reign of King Goṭhābaya (309–322 or 249–262).<sup>66</sup> The monks story is told in the *Mahāvamsa* 36: 110–113 and tells about his travelling between this area and the island.<sup>67</sup>

We conclude that Kāvrippūmpaṭṭiṇam was influenced by both Āntiram and Īlam and that the finds tell about Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna expressions which is in accordance with what Xuanzang had heard.<sup>68</sup>

From the time of Narasiṃhavarman's II rule is a record about a Buddhist monk, Vajrabodhi by name, who was skilled in tantric rituals, but this monk left the Pallava court for China and therefore no trace is visible in the form of successors in the Pallava area.<sup>69</sup> We can add Vajrayāna to the collection of Buddhist currents of ideas during the Pallavas.

The contemporary retrieval of Bodhidharma as a son of a Pallava King has no basis in Tamil sources; it depends on a special non-consensual reading of a Chinese source. The present inflating of wish-

<sup>60</sup> For the beginning of Buddhism in Tamilakam see *BaT* 1, 66–67.

<sup>61</sup> *BaT* 1, 436–438, 444.

<sup>62</sup> *BaT* 1, 431.

<sup>63</sup> *BaT* 1, 378–430.

<sup>64</sup> *BaT* 430–446.

<sup>65</sup> *BaT* 1, 127–129.

<sup>66</sup> The first date refers to Wilhelm Geiger's and the second date to the Pēradeṇiya school's chronology.

<sup>67</sup> *BaT* 1, 444–446.

<sup>68</sup> *BaT* 1 285–290.

<sup>69</sup> *BaT* 1, 405–406.

ful thinking in visual media about an invented personal history of Bodhidharma in Tamilnāṭu may help to create interest for Tamil Buddhism, but it is done in a way that may lead to a disappointment when facing the the void.

We do not find an indigenous form of Tamil Buddhism related to the Pallava Court, but we find a document written in Sanskrit at the Court by Mahendra Vikrama Pallava in about 600. It is called *Mattavilāsa prahasana* and describes Buddhism as a religion in decay.<sup>70</sup> It shows that the Court acted not out of pure xenophobia against Buddhism. It tried to argue with many examples that Buddhism was allegedly unworthy to exist within Pallava culture.

We have to turn to the civil society outside the Court to find pro-Buddhist literary creations, to the *Cilappatikāram* which has references to Buddhist institutions, and to the *Maṇimēkalai turavu* which is a missiological Buddhist work.

In *BWPE* is an introduction which summarises the research on *Maṇimēkalai turavu* in relation to the *Cilappatikāram* with regard to earlier research, authorship, genre, dating, sectarian affiliation, historical setting, interpretative themes like causation, Gods and the Buddha, the soul, the *amuta curapi*, “reformed Buddhism”, rituals, and gender.<sup>71</sup> These two literary creations do not represent specified schools/sects, but especially *Maṇimēkalai turavu* has much information about Buddhist schools in relation to non-Buddhist schools. This information has been worked upon by the author Cāttaṇār into a personalised version of Tamil Buddhism. The date of this work has reasonably been decided by Alvappillai Veluppillai till about 550.<sup>72</sup> This dating is accepted by me till other new facts appear.

Alvappillai Veluppillai also emphasises the way Cāttaṇār has indigenised Buddhism into Tamil Buddhism by communicating a large set of Buddhist terms in Tamil as translations from Sanskrit and Pāli.<sup>73</sup> This is a significant part of the profile of Buddhism during the Pallava period alongside with the pluralism of traditional Buddhist ideas. Let me give two examples of the former: Anne Monius and Araṅkarācaṅ Vijayalaṭcumi have focussed in a study how Cāttaṇār has used the concept of *karman* in his Tamil translation *viṇai* in a similar but not identical way as was done by the Sarvāstivādins in the

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<sup>70</sup> *BaT* 1, 116–118.

<sup>71</sup> *BWPE*, 9–34.

<sup>72</sup> *BWPE*, 16–21, 54–57.

<sup>73</sup> *BWPE*, 75–80, 90–91, 94.

*Abhidharmakośabhāṣayam*.<sup>74</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai has made a deep study of the concept of *marupirappu* ‘rebirth’ in *Maṇimēkalai turavu* and noted an abundance of stories about rebirth which contrasts strongly with the scarcity of such stories in other Tamil narrative poems.<sup>75</sup>

A continuous debate is going on today between scholars as to whether *Maṇimēkalai turavu* should be read as a source for historical facts as does Alvappillai Veluppillai or as a dream book as does David Shulman.<sup>76</sup>

It can be added that from the time of Cāttaṇār Buddhism is classified not just a contingent expression of religiosity, but as a *camayam* ‘religion’, as an autonomous institution, alongside with other religions, but as the ultimate one, in Cāttaṇār’s evaluation. *Maṇimēkalai turavu* would have been a good start for the formation of an institutionalised Tamil Buddhism<sup>77</sup> were it not for the fact, shown by Alvappillai Veluppillai, that this work was forgotten; it had no continuous reception. Only in the 1890’s with Caminātaiyar’s edition was this work retrieved from oblivion.<sup>78</sup>

To conclude, if *Maṇimēkalai turavu* is today taken as profile of Buddhism for the Pallava period, then, if we follow the intentions by the author Cāttaṇār, we face a non-sectarian version of Buddhism which, however, is compatible with late Hīnayāna traditions. These have much in common with early Mahāyāna doctrines. This version of Buddhism is indigenised not only through language but also by a key concept of Tamil culture which is *karpu* ‘chastity’.<sup>79</sup> The girl Maṇimēkalai is an exemplary case of *karpu*. The modern selection of *Maṇimēkalai turavu* as representative for the Pallava period and for Tamil Buddhism through the ages is symptomatic of a lack of sources. This selection approaches a manipulated historical writing that suspends the pluralism of Buddhist ideas during the Pallava period and following periods.

<sup>74</sup> Anne Monius, Araṅkarācaṇ Vijayalaṭemi, “Ētunikaḷcci in the *Maṇimēkalai*: the Manifestation of Beneficial Root: ‘Causes’ and Renunciation”, *BWPE*, 261–275.

<sup>75</sup> Āḷvāppillai Vēluppillai, “The Role of Rebirth in the Lives of Maṇimēkalai”, *BWPE*, 277–295.

<sup>76</sup> David Shulman, “Cāttaṇār’s Dreambook”, *BWPE*, 241–260.

<sup>77</sup> Peter Schalk, “Tamilische Begriffe für Religion”, *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum* 33 (Uppsala: AUU, 2012), 80–124.

<sup>78</sup> *BaT* 2, 523.

<sup>79</sup> See *BaT* 1, 55.

We come now to the imperial Cōḷa period (ca. 850 to ca. 1300). The Cōḷa rulers did not allow any visible influence of Buddhism at their Courts. In that way they followed the Pallavas, but like the Pallavas the Cōḷas were pragmatics and allowed the establishment of a huge Buddhist institution at Nākaṭṭiṇam in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century as Buddhist centre specialised on trade with Southeast Asia.<sup>80</sup> It replaced Kāviriṭṭiṇam in the South away from the political and cultural centres of the Cōḷas who were dedicated Caivas and who actively promoted Caivam by royal protection.

Ramachandran Nagaswamy has studied the bronzes and votive *stūpas* from Nākaṭṭiṇam.<sup>81</sup> This study which is fundamental for the study of Cōḷa Buddhist buddhology, was extended by Sivasubramaniyam Pathmanathan<sup>82</sup> who also made a deep study of the historical setting of that place.<sup>83</sup>

Caiva polemic against Buddhism continued from the Caiva side intensively in works like the *Tirukkalamṭakam*,<sup>84</sup> *Civañāṇacittiyār*,<sup>85</sup> *Periyapurāṇam*.<sup>86</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai has shown that in a work like *Nīlakēci* and in other works the Caivas too kept up the same polemic.<sup>87</sup> A Tamil Buddhist work, *Kuṇṭalākēci*, survived these attacks only in fragments.<sup>88</sup>

The Pāli ācariyas continued to cultivate their relations to Īlam, but made no progress in Tamilakam after Buddhaghosa's legacy to spread Buddhism in Pāli only.<sup>89</sup> The Vaiṇavas also joined in the attack against Buddhist institutions.<sup>90</sup> Buddhism was indeed harassed during its whole history in Tamilakam in the pre-colonial period.

First Alvappillai Veluppillai,<sup>91</sup> then Anne Monius<sup>92</sup> got the impression that Buddhists were treated better than Caivas. I have doubts.

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<sup>80</sup> *BaT* 2, 534–553.

<sup>81</sup> *BaT* 1, 129–145.

<sup>82</sup> *BaT* 2, 584–609.

<sup>83</sup> *BaT* 2, 569–584.

<sup>84</sup> *BaT* 2, 519, 632–644.

<sup>85</sup> *BaT* 2, 519–521, *BaT* 2 785–810 (= Tamil text, transliteration and translation by Ālvāpīllai Vēluppīllai).

<sup>86</sup> *BaT* 2, 521–522.

<sup>87</sup> *BaT* 1, 167–203, *BaT* 2, 609–631.

<sup>88</sup> *BaT* 2, 518, 611–614.

<sup>89</sup> *BaT* 2, 517, 523–534.

<sup>90</sup> *BaT* 2, 523–534,

<sup>91</sup> *BaT* 1, 467–476.

We all agree that we cannot use the story, wrongly ascribed to Campantar, about the impalement of 8000 Caiṇas,<sup>93</sup> as an argument. The story was probably a fiction, let go to be used for mentally terrorising the Caiṇas. The argument for the alleged better treatment of Buddhists is quantitative, the Buddhists are scolded fewer times than the Caiṇas, and qualitative, the Caiṇas are scolded harsher than the Buddhists. This is not immediately convincing. “More often” and “harsher” may be misleading. We have to evaluate the fact that the Caiṇas have survived throughout the centuries, that they have a continuous tradition of more than 2000 years in Tamiḷakam, that they have been able to preserve a large treasure of Tamiḷ-Caiṇa literature, that the Cōḷa royal Court integrated them to the chagrin of Caiva critics, and that the Caiṇas even today are statistically identifiable in Tamiḷnāṭu. We can say nothing like that about the Buddhists. One reason for the survival of the Caiṇas is the ability to adopt themselves to Tamiḷ culture by using Tamiḷ from their first appearance in Tamiḷakam in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD., and their willingness to take over Caiva forms of worship. In cases where the Buddhists acted like the Caiṇas they could suspend for some time their complete marginalisation, but could not prevent it to happen from about the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD. and onwards. To give one illustrative example: The complete marginalisation of the Pāli *ācariyas* is due to their unwillingness to use Tamiḷ in their *dhammadūta* work.<sup>94</sup> Another reason was that Caiṇas were not regarded as a threat like the Buddhists in a protracted inter-state conflict with Īḷam.<sup>95</sup>

The dominance of Caivam was unquestionable and it greatly influenced also the profile of the surviving Buddhism. We call it Cōḷa Buddhism. There were two kinds of it. First, we have as source the inscriptions of the bronze pedals in Nākaṭṭiṇam. The buddhology in them is so close to Caiva theology that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the one from the other.<sup>96</sup> The reader gets the impression that Cōḷa Buddhism is on its way to be assimilated into Caivam. Today this

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<sup>92</sup> Anne Monius, “With No One to Bind Action and Agent: The Fate of Buddhists as Religious ‘Other’ in Tamil Caiva Literature”, *The Tamils: From the Past to the Present. Celebratory Volume in Honour of Professor Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai at the Occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. Edited by Peter Schalk. Colombo/Chennai: Kumaran Bookhouse, 2011, 153–177.

<sup>93</sup> *BaT* 1, 451. Schalk, *The Caiva Devaluation...*, 127–128.

<sup>94</sup> *BaT* 1, 387–395. *BaT* 2, 523–534.

<sup>95</sup> *BaT* 1, 409–430.

<sup>96</sup> *BaT* 2, 828–834 (Tamiḷ text, transliteration and translation by Civacuppiramaniyam Patmanāṭan).

assimilation is completed as we can see today in Tamilnāṭu from the ritual treatment of surviving statues of the Puttar from the Cōḷa period.<sup>97</sup>

Cōḷa Buddhism became Tamil Buddhism also in Īlam during the Cōḷa period. Today we find artefacts like statues of the Puttar, once belonging to an institution of Tamil Buddhism, completely integrated and assimilated in Caiva kōvils.<sup>98</sup>

Ramachandran Nagaswamy has reproduced a Caiva ideology of assimilation of other religions.<sup>99</sup>

Second, we find in the *Vīracōḷiyam* and in its commentary an emotional and devotional form of Mahāyāna which also comes close to Caiva *patti*, and it appealed to Tamil sentiments: The relation between Avalōkitaṅ (Avalokiteśvara) and Civaṅ was mediated through the personality of Akattiyār (Agastya). Caiva *patti* is pointed out as source of influence on the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary, but a part of the concretisations given for this influence can as well be traced to a Buddhist tradition that may have influenced Caiva *patti*.<sup>100</sup>

This kind of emotional and devotional Buddhism was also closely connected with intensive Sanskrit studies which gives it a unique profile. Anne Monius writes:

The formation of Tamil words in accordance with Sanskrit principles, and the composition of Tamil poetry in accordance with Sanskrit theories of alaṃkāra or ornamentation—all framed with the authoritative Tolkāppiyam rubric of treating grammar and poetics as a single topic—constitute the heart of the Vīracōḷiyam's Project.<sup>101</sup>

Anne Monius emphasises not only the devotional aspect of this kind of Buddhism,<sup>102</sup> but also the motive of the heroic self-sacrifice of the Puttar in contrasting comparison with the concept of heroism in the

<sup>97</sup> A. Srivathsan, "Buddhism in Tamil Nadu: The 'Buddha Samy' of Thiyaganur", [www.thehindu.com/arts/magazine/article3500352.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/arts/magazine/article3500352.ece). The article is also published in <http://dbesjeyraj.com/dbsj/archives/6972>.

<sup>98</sup> *BaT* 1, 91–93.

<sup>99</sup> *BaT* 1, 115–116, *BaT* 2, 644–662.

<sup>100</sup> G. Vijayavenugopal, "Some Buddhist Poems in Tamil", *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (Vol 2, 1979 Number 2), 93–95, [http://www.search-results.com/web?q=Tamil+Buddhism&qsrc=121&o=10000048&l=dis&atb=sysid%3D406%3Auid%3D4dd2e7b6b6038dab%3Auc%3D1346568735%3Ab%3DSearchnu%3Asrc%3Dhmp%3Ao%3D10000048%3Aq%3DTamil%2520Buddhism&locale=en\\_US&qid=456C5E1CFC898F2B5A12928E67106C9B&page=10](http://www.search-results.com/web?q=Tamil+Buddhism&qsrc=121&o=10000048&l=dis&atb=sysid%3D406%3Auid%3D4dd2e7b6b6038dab%3Auc%3D1346568735%3Ab%3DSearchnu%3Asrc%3Dhmp%3Ao%3D10000048%3Aq%3DTamil%2520Buddhism&locale=en_US&qid=456C5E1CFC898F2B5A12928E67106C9B&page=10).

<sup>101</sup> See p. 113 in this volume.

<sup>102</sup> Anne Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 142–148.



*Tolkāppiyam*.<sup>103</sup> This is a highly interesting example of indigenisation which of course has many other faces also, not least in versions of the soteriology and ontology of Buddhism and its social appearance of renunciation.

The project's relation to persons and not to Buddhist institutions prevented a continuous transmission over time through these institutions. The *Vīracōḷiyam* project as described above is mainly a linguistic project to study Tamil through Sanskrit, not a religious one. It had a patron in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century known as *Vīracōḷaṅ*, but there is no indication that he patronised Buddhism.

Ramachandran Nagaswamy has translated and commented upon passages from the *Vīracōḷiyam*.<sup>104</sup> *BaT* 2 contains an analysis, Tamil texts in transliteration and translations from this Buddhist devotional tradition, presented by Alvappillai Veluppillai.<sup>105</sup> I give here an example, *Vīracōḷiyam*, yāppuppataḷam, 11, *urai*, that illustrates the view that even the highest god of *smārta* Hinduism, Brahmā, worships the Buddha.

When celestial beings from all eight directions, led by Brahmā came and worshipped (Your) feet-flower with clean flowers, entreated an enquired, You preached kindly for the benefit of our scared people, to whose evil bond, lust, wild rage and difficult to remove delusion were serving as strong instruments; You also told them mercifully to proceed on the path of virtue, leading to happiness.<sup>106</sup>

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the lamp of Buddhism in Tamilakam was extinguished.<sup>107</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai has found an inscription from 1580 in Kumbakōṇam of a Caiva kōyil which remembers the existence of a former Buddhist *vikāram*. Buddhism had become a mere memory in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was Tamil Buddhism retrieved by Cāminātaiyar from the past. His legacy was a text edition and a creation of a Tamil Buddhist terminology to be used in philological work.<sup>108</sup> This was the beginning of studies about Buddhism among Tamils. The historical-philological method was and is dominant also in the work of the Uppsala team.

We come now to the third profile. Buddhist activists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century used this legacy from Cāminātaiyar for their purpose. Ayōtti-

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 148–155.

<sup>104</sup> *BaT* 1, 118–122.

<sup>105</sup> *BaT* 2, 522, 644–662.

<sup>106</sup> *BaT* 2, 816.

<sup>107</sup> *BaT* 1, 29.

<sup>108</sup> *BaT* 1, 96–98.

tācar was one of them. He founded the *Dravida Buddha Sangham* in 1898 at Irāyapeṭṭai,<sup>109</sup> later called South India *Sakya Buddha Association*. In 1911 Ayōttitācar succeeded in convincing the British administration that Buddhism should be classified as being separate from Caivam and Vaiṇavam.<sup>110</sup> Through Professor Narasu,<sup>111</sup> there is a link from Ayōttitācar to the rationalists within the Dravidian movement from the 1930s onwards,<sup>112</sup> and to the Ambedkar movement.<sup>113</sup> An anti-brahmanical polemic and an empathy for the downtrodden, especially the Dalits, connect them. What today internationally is called “socially engaged Buddhism” has roots in these movements.

It should be mentioned here that the *South India Sakya Buddha Association* in Ceṇṇai was not united with the *Mahabodhi Society* which had been founded 1892 in Ceṇṇai under the influence of the Anagārika Dharmapāla. Ayōttitācar had good contacts with anti-colonial monks in Īlam, but not with anti-Tamiḷ zealots. Ayōttitācar thought that the downtrodden under his protection were derived from the Śākyas and that his form of Buddhism preserved the pure teaching of the Puttar.<sup>114</sup> Ayōttitācar’s focus was social, not ethnic.

The *Mahabodhi Society* in Ceṇṇai has since its foundation in 1892 had a missiological approach, but in the racist spirit of the Anagārika Dharmapāla. Its focus too was ethnic. In the 1980s and the 1990s the monks and the Society as such were regularly in confrontation with solidarity groups of Tamiḷ speakers, sympathisers of the Tamiḷ resistance movement, who suspected the monks to be agents for the political and military interests of the insular Government.<sup>115</sup>

Today, Buddhists cannot be given more than a dash in the contemporary census of Tamiḷnāṭu(Tamilnadu) and Kēraḷam(Kerala), former central areas of Tamiḷakam. The Caiṇas fare better: 0.0.1 % of the population. It is of interest to explain why Caiṇam has been

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<sup>109</sup> *Ayōttitācar cintanaikaḷ (camayam, ilakkiyam)* II (New Delhi: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1999), 10. For a solid work on Ayōttitācar and his movement’s history see G. Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity. A Buddhist Movement among Tamils under Colonialism* (New Delhi: New Age International, 1998).

<sup>110</sup> S. Perumal, “Revival of Tamil Buddhism: A Historical Survey”, *Buddhism in Tamilnadu, Collected Papers*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998, 529–542, 530–531.

<sup>111</sup> Perumal, *Revival of Tamil Buddhism...*, 530–531.

<sup>112</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>113</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>114</sup> Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity...*, 56.

<sup>115</sup> *BaT* 1, 24.

somewhat better off than Buddhism. This has been the case along in the past. Royal patronage was not refused to them as strictly as to the Buddhists.<sup>116</sup> The Caiṅas adopted the language Tamil soon after their arrival in Tamilakam in the pre-Pallava period and they adopted local customs without letting themselves to be assimilated.<sup>117</sup> Caiva and Vaiṅava xenophobia also hit them hard, but they survived.<sup>118</sup>

## Profiles of Tamil Buddhism in Īlam

We now turn to Īlam with its five profiles of Tamil Buddhism.

1. There is a source consisting of inscriptions in Prākṛit which were written in Pirāmi (Brāhmī) by Tamil speakers. They date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.<sup>119</sup> The period is called “early Anurātapuram period” by historians. These Tamil speakers were Buddhists whose Buddhism cannot be distinguished in content from the Buddhism of contemporary inscriptions by Prākṛit speakers. There is a visible Tamil substratum. They are all about donations to a *vikāram* (*vihāra*). This kind of Buddhism may be called merit-Buddhism because donations accrue merit which is useful to profit from in a coming existence. Merit-Buddhism is visible in all currents of Buddhism, but in the special source, here inscriptions, merit-earning is focussed and emphasised.

These merit-earning Buddhists were active in the political, administrative, and religious centre, Anurātapuram, but there are also inscriptions from Periya-Puḷiyāṅkuḷam<sup>120</sup> and Ampārai.<sup>121</sup> All these inscriptions show the existence of early settlements by Tamil speakers confirming the record of the *Mahāvamsa*. Moreover, these inscriptions confirm that some of these Tamil speakers were Buddhists. The conclusion formulated in 2002 remains: Some Tamil speakers from the earliest historical period were Buddhists. They promoted Buddhism and contributed to the building and maintenance of the classical showpieces of monumental architecture, like for example the buildings in the vicinity of the Abhayagiri vihāra in Anurātapuram. The Buddhists were organisationally and linguistically integrated

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<sup>116</sup> For this, see *BaT* 1, 25.

<sup>117</sup> *BaT* 1, 25.

<sup>118</sup> *BaT* 1, 25–28.

<sup>119</sup> *BaT* 1, 94,348–375.

<sup>120</sup> *BaT* 1, 373–374.

<sup>121</sup> *BaT* 1, 374.

through Prākṛit with the insular Mahāsaṃgha. There was concord and co-operation between Tamiḷ speakers and non-Tamiḷ speakers with the common aim to establish monumental Buddhism on the island.<sup>122</sup>

This does not contradict the first part of the *Mahāvamsa* which is wrongly said to have closed the door for Tamiḷ speakers to become Buddhists.<sup>123</sup> The point of the Duṭṭhagāmiṇī story is that Tamiḷ speakers may become human through Buddhism; without Buddhism they are beasts.<sup>124</sup> The *Mahāvamsa*'s first part reveals a literally narrow-minded, but classical Indian conceptualisation of humanity based on religion only, here on Buddhism only. The author of the early part of the *Mahāvamsa* was in no way unique by making religion the distinct characteristic of humanity, but by making one specific religion that characteristic, Buddhism became exclusive and excluding. The idea of a universal humanity was still rare and where it appeared it was a universalised concept based on a parochial experience of man about man.

There is one historical person, albeit covered with legends. He represents the type of Tamiḷ who remained faithful to his non-Buddhist, probably post-Vedic tradition from South-India. His name is Eḷāra, Tamiḷ Ellālan. He was King of the island before King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī (101–77, 161–137) who killed Eḷāra, because he was not a Buddhist, according to the early part of the *Mahāvamsa*. Duṭṭhagāmiṇī allegedly established a Buddhist state on the island, a state under “one umbrella”. This incident has been retrieved during the present conflict many times. Eḷāra is identified with the leader of the Tamiḷ resistance movement, Veluppillai Prabhakaran (Vēluppillai Pirapākaran), and Duṭṭhagāmiṇī is identified with the head of state, now President Mahinda Rājapakṣa. A homology is created which overrides a cleft of 2000 years.<sup>125</sup> This is an example of instrumentalisation by retrieval of an ancient formation of Buddhism as a totalitarian state ideology. It aims at marginalising non-Buddhists today and eliminating contingencies about the promoting of a constitutional unitary state. This is constitutionally in force since 1972. Especially the Tamiḷ Resistance Movement is identified as an anti-Buddhist force repeating allegedly the past of pre-colonial invasions. It is said to be supported by Catholics and by many million Tamiḷ speakers in Tamiḷnāṭu. The Eḷāra-

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<sup>122</sup> *BaT* 1, 375.

<sup>123</sup> *BaT* 1, 35–39.

<sup>124</sup> *Loc.cit.* See pp. 38, 130, 132, 156–157 in this volume.

<sup>125</sup> See pp. 38, 130, 132, 156–157 in this volume.

Duṭṭhagāmiṇī story is very complex, indeed, which is made visible in my paper in this volume called “Eḷāra – again”.<sup>126</sup> In the modern version of this story, backed by parts of the Mahāsaṃgha, there is room only for *siṃhala budu samayam* in the *urumaya* ‘heritage’.

2. Having left the stage of Prakrit-Tamil merit-Buddhism, we now come to Īlaccōḷappauttam as a second profile.<sup>127</sup> In the Cōḷa empire’s official writings the name *īlam* for the whole island was regularly used. It is documented in the island earlier than *laṃkā*. *Īlam* alternated with *ciṅkalam*.<sup>128</sup>

Prākṛit Buddhism which for ritual and teaching purposes was based on the Pāli canon and on its Pāli commentaries was discontinued among Tamil speakers. The religious language within Buddhism shifted to Tamil in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>129</sup> The oldest Tamil *Buddhist* inscription is dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century and is from the Apaikiri site in Anurātapuram.<sup>130</sup>

The Cōḷa connection to Īlam was evident in many invasions from but also to the Cōḷa empire from Īlam. These invasions from Tamilakam to Īlam gave Tamil speakers a devastating image in Īlam. They started from the beginning of the historical period. Eḷāra was such an early spill-over from Tamilakam. During the Cōḷa imperial period the door to Buddhism was closed in some sources; then Tamil speakers were classified as beasts in some of these sources, generally all Tamil speakers.<sup>131</sup> There were, however, other sources which kept a door open for Tamil converts to Buddhism; Buddhist rulers demonstrated pragmatism and endurance with these Tamil speakers, but their endurance was questioned by their obligate and inherited xenophobia.<sup>132</sup>

There was a *dāmiḷa bhikkhu saṃgha* which received the Jayasena-pabbata vihāra from the hands of the *mahesi* of King Udaya I (792–

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<sup>126</sup> See p. 129 in this volume.

<sup>127</sup> *BaT* 2, 47–48.

<sup>128</sup> *BaT* 2, 672–675. For the history of the toponym Īlam see Peter Schalk, *īlam<siḥala: An Assessment of an Argument. Acta Universitatis Uppsaliensis, Historia Religionum 25*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2004.

<sup>129</sup> *BaT* 2, 683.

<sup>130</sup> *BaT* 2, 682–690.

<sup>131</sup> *BaT* 1, 39–47.

<sup>132</sup> *BaT* 1, 48–52.

797, 797–801), according to *Mahāvamsa* 49:24<sup>133</sup> Tamil mercenaries, merchants and settlers became Buddhists and were accepted in the military and civil administration (see below).

Those Tamil speakers who were dedicated to Īlaccōlappattam can be classified in three different categories. Some continued to be loyal to the political centre in Anurātapuram. They were mercenaries in the service of the King and could only survive by keeping to the oath of allegiance to the King of the Siṃhala speakers. To them was entrusted the guard of the most holy relic, the tooth of the Puttar. These mercenaries' Īlaccōlappattam can be studied in inscriptions from Mayilaṅkuḷam,<sup>134</sup> Morakakavelai,<sup>135</sup> Vijayarājapuram and Polonaruṅvā.<sup>136</sup>

Others were merchants organised in guilds with strong connections to Tamilakam. They too have left traces about their religion.<sup>137</sup> Mercenaries and merchants could live in the same city as Siṃhala speakers, albeit in different parts.

S. Patmanathan (Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātan) has analysed a number of Tamil inscriptions left by merchants and mercenaries reflecting their engagement in Buddhism as Īlaccōla Buddhism.<sup>138</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai extended this important documentation about the interaction of Tamil Buddhism and the state.<sup>139</sup>

Tamil speakers were also settlers in settlements, some of them in the periphery of power. They were remnants from Tamilakam in the East of the Cōla invasions. Their religion can be studied in the inscriptions from the Velkam vēram in Eastern Īlam<sup>140</sup> and several other inscriptions from Polonaruṅvā,<sup>141</sup> Hiṅgurakagoḍa,<sup>142</sup> Paṅḍuvasnuvara,<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> This is the reading by Wilhelm Geiger. In his translation of the *Cūlavamsa*, Part 1, 1953, p. 129, he says that all MSS are corrupt. "If my restoration is correct---it would mean that also Damiḷas in Ceylon were Buddhists, but that the bhikkhus of this nationality formed a special group". Geiger's amendment is discussed with acceptance in R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough. Monasticism in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1979, 47.

<sup>134</sup> *BaT* 2, 699–703.

<sup>135</sup> *BaT* 2, 722–737.

<sup>136</sup> *BaT* 2, 737–767.

<sup>137</sup> *BaT* 2, 675–681, 690–694, 694–698, 703–706, 713–722.

<sup>138</sup> *BaT* 2, 682–689, 694–776.

<sup>139</sup> *BaT* 2, 690–694.

<sup>140</sup> *BaT* 2, 776–783.

<sup>141</sup> *BaT* 2, 706–709.

<sup>142</sup> *BaT* 2, 709–712.

<sup>143</sup> *BaT* 2, 726–737.

Puḷiyāṅkuḷam and Māṅkaṅāy.<sup>144</sup>

The religion of the mercenaries, urbanised merchants and rural settlers appeared as active, reflected and constructed syncretism of Buddhism and Caivam.<sup>145</sup> This syncretism is now called Īlaccōḷappattam. It was an interpretation of buddhology in Caiva terms – sometimes in Vaiṇava terms – which made the Puttar an *iṣṭadevatā* ‘chosen godhead’. This process was non-exclusive in doctrine, but selective in ritual. It was a form of authorised henotheism which we first could study already in the inscriptions from Nākaṭṭiṇam,<sup>146</sup> but somewhat later also in Īlam.<sup>147</sup> Evidently, this kind of Buddhism qualified the mercenaries, traders and settlers among Tamil speakers to be accepted as humans, if not by conviction of the Mahāsaṅgha, then by the pragmatism of the rulers.

3. We now come to the third profile of Tamil Buddhism. It has disappeared like Prākṛit Buddhism and Īlaccōḷappattam. It is related to Mahāyāna which has a long history in Īlam,<sup>148</sup> albeit it has always been marginalised in Īlam by one of the 17 Hīnayāna schools known as Theravāda in the tradition of the Mahāvihāra in Anurātapuram. Still in the 1990s a monk’s conversion from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna was stigmatised by the Mahāsaṅgha.<sup>149</sup>

There is one bilingual inscription from the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Siṃhala and Tamil from the Laṃkātilaka vihāra.<sup>150</sup> In this inscription we find a syncretistic buddhology, dominantly Mahāyāna, but encountering Caivam, Vaiṇavam and Smārta references, formed by ideologues or

<sup>144</sup> BaT 2, 754–767.

<sup>145</sup> BaT 2, 678–681.

<sup>146</sup> BaT 2, 569–609.

<sup>147</sup> See also BaT 2, 47.

<sup>148</sup> W. S. Karunatilaka, “Mahayanism in Ceylon during the Anuradhapura Period: Epigraphical Evidence”. *University Buddhist Annual* 9 (1958–1959): 17–20. N. Mudiyanse, *Mahāyāna Monuments in Ceylon* (Colombo: M D Gunasena, 1967). Id. “Three Unpublished Mahayana Bronzes from Ceylon in the British Museum”, *Journal of The Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)*, NS, 14 (1970): 46. Id., “Nagarjuna and Sukhavati Lokeshvara”, *Spolia Zeylanica* 32 (1972): 61–64. Id., *The Art and Architecture of the Gampola Period*. Colombo: M D Gunasena, 1963. Senerat Paranavitana, “Mahāyāna in Ceylon”, *Ceylon Journal of Science*, Section G, 2 (1928–1933): 37–71. Id., “Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in Ceylon”. *B C Law Volume*, Part 2. Poona: 1946, 15–18. Richard Gombrich, *Precept and Practice. Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 221–223.

<sup>149</sup> Peter Schalk, “Articles 9 and 18 of the Constitution of Lanka as Obstacles to Peace”, *Lanka* 5 (1990): 279–292.

<sup>150</sup> BaT 2, 779–780. Paranavitana, “Lankatilaka Inscriptions”, *University of Ceylon Review* 18 (1960): 1–18.

theologians. The text refers to a hierarchic pantheon of divine beings, at the top of which a Puttar is seated on a diamond throne and the other divine beings are regarded as aspects of him. The inscription makes no ritual distinction between the Puttar and the gods because it says that the lamps are offered to both.<sup>151</sup> We face Mahāyāna inclusive thinking of the devotional kind which was practised also by Tamil speakers. There is a link to the *Viracōliyam* and a link to Tamil *patti* from a phenomenological, not from a historical, point of view.

4. We now come to the fourth profile. We move to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There has been in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century in Īlam an intensive learning of Tamil by Buddhist monks being native Siṃhala speakers, but this learning disappeared. There was a *dhammadūta* tradition for monks to go to Tamil speaking areas, not to convert Caivas, but to cultivate and maintain Buddhism among Siṃhala speaking settlers. There were always Tamil speakers in Īlam who valued the Puttar highly, but to convert to Buddhism and to abandon Caivam was a big step. It happened, however. Even a local community could go together and convert to Buddhism. The influence from Ambedkar and his followers in Tamilakam was felt intensively in the 1950s and 1960s in Yālppāṇam. In the present volume (*BaT* 3) A. J. V. Chandrakantan describes the process of conversion from and reversion to Caivam among Ambedkar's followers in Yālppāṇam. The question about conversion from Caivam to Buddhism or even to Islam is still unexplored for the case of Īlam.

Even beyond social motives there is a Buddhist community of converted Caivas in Vavuṇiyā.<sup>152</sup> True, the number of all converted seems to be very small, much smaller than the number for converted Caivas to Christianity. What is the reason for this? This question brings us to the fifth profile.

5. We now come to political Buddhism in the footsteps of the Anaḡārika being enforced as alien element on Tamil speaking areas by Siṃhala speakers. They are part of the state administration including the armed forces. We have to distinguish between Buddhist politics of the idealised Aśokan type and political Buddhism.<sup>153</sup> Both are going back to the pre-Christian era in Īlam. Political Buddhism instrumen-

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<sup>151</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>152</sup> *BaT* 1, 30–33.

<sup>153</sup> For this distinction see Peter Schalk, "Political Buddhism among Lankans in the Context of Martial Conflict", *Religion, Staat, Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift Für Glaubensformen und Weltanschauungen* 2.2 (2002): 223–242.



talises Buddhism for political aims. In Īlam, this aim was and is to unify the island under one umbrella, in modern terms to create and preserve a unitary state whose ideology is majoritarianism.

Today again, we see in Īlam an intensive learning of Tamil by Buddhist monks who are native speakers of Siṃhala. Today, they bring with them pamphlets translated from Pāli, Siṃhala and English into Tamil. Their task is to spread knowledge about Siṃhala Buddhism to Tamil speakers and of course also to care for the traditional religious edification and political motivation to old and new Siṃhala speaking settlers in the “reconquered” areas. Information is spread by these *dhammadūta*-monks: Buddhist sites in Tamil areas are in reality Siṃhala Buddhist sites. I learned from a young Buddhist monk in 2004 that Kantarōtai, where he was stationed as guide, was also a place visited by the Buddha.

The political aspect of Siṃhala Buddhism alienates Tamil speakers who see in it a danger for the preservation of their culture and above all for their possession of territory. Tamil speaking intellectuals who have made a distinction between the teaching of the Puttar and that of the political monks have felt attracted by the former and alienated by the latter. It would be wrong to ascribe to the Tamil resistance movement the view that Buddhism in general is political and anti-Tamil. The standard image of the Puttar among Tamils, retrieved on every July 25, the day of the biggest anti-Tamil pogrom, is that of a weeping Puttar. He weeps tears of blood looking at his followers who kill Tamil speakers [Fig. 64]. He has compassion which his present followers allegedly have not.

The contemporary teaching by monks and politicians is in its content determined by a special political situation and characterised as “re-conquest” in the article by Jude Lal Fernando in this volume (*BaT* 3). The ultimate aim is to re-establish Siṃhala Buddhism in the whole island as allegedly foreseen in the *Mahāvamsa*. Siṃhala Buddhism is the ideological essence which creates cultural homogeneity in a unitary state. Siṃhala Buddhism is in this situation not just Buddhism transmitted in Siṃhala alongside with Pāli, but also a contemporary political category embossed in 1902 by the Anagārika Dharmapāla (†1933) in his journal *Siṃhala Baudhhiyā* [“The Siṃhala Buddhist”]. He was inspired by the modern nation state that was introduced by colonialism. He changed the character of Buddhism as a universal religion into an ethnocentric and nationalistic one. Buddhism has become Siṃhala Buddhism. His interperation of *dhammadīpa* was ‘island [=Laṃkā] of the *dhamma*’ which he projected into the Pāli canon. Moreover, he equated *dhammadīpa* with *sīhaḷadīpa* ‘the is-

land of the Siṃhalas”. Siṃhalaness, today rendered as *Siṃhalatva*, became an authentic expression of the *dhamma*. True, the canon had the concept of *dhammadīpa* but meaning ‘having *dhamma* as lamp’. Whoever, wherever, whenever should have the *dhamma* as a lamp.

In the *Mahāvamsa* this universal concept was parochialised. *Dhammadīpa* became to mean ‘[the island] having the *dhamma* as [guiding] lamp’. Inspired by this the Anagārika constructed his ‘island of the *dhamma*’ which eliminated the canonical meaning of *dīpa* as lamp.<sup>154</sup> The connection between the *dhamma* and a specific territory is here evident. Political Siṃhala-Buddhism is based on this connection which transforms universal Buddhism into a religious parochialism. Another import point in this connection is that the Anagārika Dharmapāla sees no change between the canonical and his formulation. He makes himself contemporary with what he believes to be the genuine spirit of the Buddha.

We have to carry with us two uses of Siṃhala Buddhism, one historical and descriptive which refers to the way how Pāli Buddhism is transmitted by the help of the language Prākṛit developing into Siṃhala in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and one which refers to political Buddhism that has “re-conquest” in mind. Some Buddhist zealots like the Anagārika even use English to promote what they call Siṃhala Buddhism. One important point in their message is that historical sites in Tamil speaking areas are survivals of Siṃhala Buddhism. These sites legitimise the re-conquest. This point includes a denial of the possibility that these sites were once constructed by Tamil speakers or by them together with Prākṛit speaking settlers. The denial denies the whole concept of Tamil Buddhism for the case of Īlam; Tamil Buddhism questions the legitimacy of the re-conquest. This brings us to the point of the controversy between the representatives of Siṃhala Buddhism and Tamil Buddhism; it is not about doctrinal or ritual matters, but about possession of land. In this situation, the concept of Tamil Buddhism encountering political Siṃhala Buddhism transforms also from a religious into a political-religious category; it also claims the right of possession and control over territory. Political Tamil Buddhism is a result of encountering political Siṃhala Buddhism and of reacting against it. I refer to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) politician M. A. Sumanthiran (Cumanthiraṇ) who in an important report has highlighted his concerns about the militarisation of

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<sup>154</sup> See Peter Schalk, “Semantic Transformations of *dhammadīpa*”. *Buddhism, Conflict, Violence and in Modern Sri Lanka*. Edited by Mahinda Deegalle (London/ New York: Routledge, 2006, 86–92.

the North and East.<sup>155</sup> In the section called “Creation of Sinhala Settlements” he also mentions “Places of worship” He points out that the rapidly changing demography of the North of Sri Lanka is escalating. The number of Buddhist statues, *vihāras* and *stūpas* on the A9 highway has increased rapidly. A *vihāra* named Mahātota Rāja Mahā Vi-hāra has come up within 50 meters of the famous Tirukkētīsvaram temple in Mannār district. Also the armed forces are preventing people from rebuilding original Christian and Hindu places of worship that have been damaged or destroyed, M. A. Sumanthiran mentions in his report. A *vihāra* is being erected on the site of the Arasadi Piḷḷaiyār Kōvil. In Kokkiḷāy district, Mullaittīvu, a Caiva Kōvil which was damaged during the war is being demolished and a *vihāra* is being erected in that place. Part of the land of the Hospital in Kokkiḷāy and part of the land of a post office are being used to construct this *vihāra*. Earlier, it was the Piḷḷaiyār Kōvil that was there in that place. There are plans to install a statue of the Lord Buddha in Kiṇṇiyā at a place where seven hot wells and a Piḷḷaiyār temple is situated, where, for centuries, Caivas have performed certain religious ceremonies. The Caiva kōvil is now destroyed, and a Buddhist statute has been erected in the vicinity on the other side of the hot wells.<sup>156</sup> In an interview he points out that Buddhist statues have come up in areas where we don’t even have a single Buddhist civilian living.<sup>157</sup>

The TNA MP S. Sritharan (Es. Ciṛitaran) is reported to have said that some elements try to prove that some Buddhist archaeological sites were the settlements of Siṃhala Buddhists in history. “Actually, they were the settlements of Tamil Buddhists”.<sup>158</sup> Jude Lal Fernando will take up this development along A 9 highway in his article.

There is a group of intellectuals who see in the concept of Tamil Buddhism an expression of Tamil chauvinism and in political Siṃhala Buddhism an expression of Siṃhala chauvinism. They think that the defenders of Tamil Buddhism are fighting Siṃhala chauvinism with Tamil chauvinism.<sup>159</sup> For them both sides are tarred with the same brush. This is not a fair analysis. The academic historical-philological

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<sup>155</sup> M. A. Sumanthiran, “Situation in North-Eastern Sri Lanka: A Series of Serious Concerns”, Tabled in Parliament on 21 October, 2011, Section, 7.3. Published in a revised version in <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/2759>.

<sup>156</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>157</sup> Tamil Canadian, “Speech by TNA’s MA Sumanthiran”, October 30, 2011, [http://www.sangam.org/2011/11/Sumanthiran\\_Interview.php?uid=4520.-](http://www.sangam.org/2011/11/Sumanthiran_Interview.php?uid=4520.-)

<sup>158</sup> Anon., “Tamil Buddhists”, LankaNewspapers.com, 12 December 2011, [http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/12/73160\\_space.html](http://www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/12/73160_space.html).

<sup>159</sup> De Silva, “Vallipuram Buddha Image – Again”, 84.

dimension of the study of Tamil Buddhism is not seen by these intellectuals and the relation between cause (political Siṃhala Buddhism) and effect (political Tamil Buddhism) is covered by the ascription that both parties are tarred with the same brush. The academic discussion about Tamil Buddhism is choked by such comments. It should be made clear that the academic study of Tamil Buddhism only explains what Tamil Buddhism was and is, but does not issue recommendations how to instrumentalise for political aims the knowledge gained.

The concept of Tamil Buddhism was a creation by historical linguists in both Tamilakam and Īlam from the 1890s onwards. In Tamilakam the concept was, however, taken up by individuals and groups in an anti-brahmanical spirit; they instrumentalised Tamil Buddhism for raising a consciousness about being non-brahmanical like the Puttar or about belonging to a now downtrodden, but formerly in the past to a high status group like the Śākyas. Tamil Buddhism was used to induce self-respect among individuals and a consciousness of being non-brahmanical “Dravidians”, or as a justification for social climbing.

In Īlam today exists an organised form of denial of Tamil Buddhism among politicians, scholars and monks being part in the Lankan administration. Those who do not deny may connect Tamil Buddhism with terrorism.<sup>160</sup> There is, however, also a tiny opposition which accepts Tamil Buddhism as a historical reality. I refer to the book *Demaḷa Bauddhayā* [“The Tamil Buddhist”] from 2006 by a senior professor in Siṃhala, Sunil Āriyaratna. The title of the book alludes to the Anagārika’s journal *Siṃhala Bauddhayā* which Sunil Āriyaratna explicitly contradicts.<sup>161</sup> There is one more public voice for *Demaḷa Bauddayā* among Siṃhala speakers. Vimalasāra Nāyaka Thera from Vavunīyā dares to say that Kantarōṭai belongs to the Tamils.<sup>162</sup>

The debate about Tamil Buddhism is in the present context a moral debate which is about remedial justice from the side of Tamil speakers in the Tamil Resistance Movement. Political decisions about control of territory has, however, already been made by majority rule based on the ideology of majoritarianism. The state has promulgated

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<sup>160</sup> Siriwardana, Thilanka “Tamil Buddhists and Terrorism”, *Academia.edu*. [http://kln.academia.edu/ThilankaSiriwardana/Papers/368752/Tamil\\_Buddhists\\_and\\_Terrorism](http://kln.academia.edu/ThilankaSiriwardana/Papers/368752/Tamil_Buddhists_and_Terrorism) (accessed: 1 September, 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Sunil Āriyaratna, *Demaḷa Bauddhayā* (Kōḷaṃba: Ās. Goḍagē saha sahōdarayō, 2006), 295.

<sup>162</sup> *BaT* 1, 31–32.

a unitary Constitution in 1972. It rejects separate or autonomous regions in the island. A popularised summary in public debate of this Constitution is: “Sri Lanka belongs to all citizens”. The Government’s duty is to make Tamil speaking areas accessible to all citizens, if necessary by military force.

An obstacle for the implementation of this seemingly democratic program is that Īlam is not a multicultural society where an ethnic majority has *negotiated* with other ethnic minorities and the majority about the distribution of the resources of the country. True, there are several ethnies, but that alone does not constitute a multicultural society. The Vāddō have been assimilated,<sup>163</sup> the Burghers have been given the shivers; many have migrated abroad. In Īlam, Sinhala speakers continuously encounter Tamil speakers and Muslims in violent confrontations.<sup>164</sup> The retrieval by the Tamil Resistance Movement in the 1970s of the demonym “Īlavar”<sup>165</sup> for citizens in TamilĪlam [Fig. 63] confronting it against the demonym “Sri Lankans” is a sign of a deep and long-lasting division.<sup>166</sup> “Īlavar” are in this evaluation not Sri Lankans; these again are not Īlavar. Today the formula “Sri Lanka belongs to all citizens” covers up facts of social confrontations through decades of an expanding monoculture in a state formation. Since 1964, as student and researcher in the history of religions I have followed the development of this state formation into a semblance of a *dharmacracy*.<sup>167</sup> It is question of a *semblance* which is necessary for keeping up the ideology of majoritarianism.

We hear often that it is right to establish Sinhala-Buddhist *vi-hārayas* in the North in areas of Tamil speakers because they have established Caiva kōvils and Christian Churches in the South. The Muslims also have established their mosques in the South. The Presi-

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<sup>163</sup> Peter Schalk, *Vādi into Vanniylāttō. Transformation of Images of the Lankan Vāddō* (Uppsala: AUU, 2004).

<sup>164</sup> See NESoHR, *Massacres of Tamils 1956–2008*. Chennai: Manitham publishers, 2009.

<sup>165</sup> Schalk, *Īlam < Sinhala? ...*, 71–120, 224–230.

<sup>166</sup> Peter Schalk, “Īlavar and Lankans. Emerging Identities in a Fragmented Island”, *Asian Ethnicity* 3:1 (2002), 47–62.

<sup>167</sup> Dharmacracy is an analogous formation to toracracy. See Peter Schalk “The Sinhala Concept of a ‘Dharmacracy’ as an Obstacle to Peace in a Crisis of the State”, *Asian Society in Comparative Perspectives* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 1–26. Id., “The Lankan Mahasangha’s Concept of a Dharmacracy and Society”, *Radical Conservatism. Buddhism in the Contemporary World. Articles in Honour of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s 84th Birthday Anniversary* (Bangkok: International Network of Engaged Buddhism, 1990), 354–359.

dent appears on the public stage and emphasises freedom of religion, but in reality the Constitution has graded this freedom into “foremost” for Buddhism (and less for the others).<sup>168</sup> Religious freedom is curtailed on direct order of the President and on Court order for Kāli kōvils to halt animal sacrifice when at the same time a Buddhist relic is exposed in public in other places.<sup>169</sup> Animal sacrifice is not illegal normally in Īlam. It is allowed in the name of religious freedom. Animal sacrifice (and caste) among Tamils are regularly objects of creating racial hate among Buddhists against Tamils. Violent conflicts appear in areas of Siṃhala speakers between Buddhists on one side and Caivas, Christians, and Muslims on the other. These conflicts confirm again that the island is not a multicultural society.

The discussion around Vallipuram and Kantarōṭai is a good example of the collision between the academic concept of Tamil Buddhism and the political reaction by political Siṃhala Buddhists who deny not only historical facts but who also seemingly in democratic spirit claim that Vallipuram and Kantarōṭai “belongs to all”. Let us now look at Vallipuram and Kantarōṭai from the view point of historians.

Vallipuram has been objectified by many commentators, by Seneraṭ Paranavitana (Seneraṭ Paranavitāna),<sup>170</sup> Alvappillai Veluppillai,<sup>171</sup> K. N. O. Dharmadasa (Dharmadāsa),<sup>172</sup> Ramachnadran Nagaswamy,<sup>173</sup> Chandra R de Silva<sup>174</sup> and myself.<sup>175</sup> Vallipuram is the place

<sup>168</sup> See Peter Schalk, “Present Concepts of Secularism among Ilavar and Lankans“. *Zwischen Säkularismus und Hierokratie: Studien zum Verhältnis von Religion und Staat in Süd- und Ostasien*. Edited by Peter Schalk. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 17*. Uppsala: Universit t Uppsala, 2001, 54–62.

<sup>169</sup> Anon., “Animal sacrifice will not take place this year – Chief Priest Kali Kōvil”, <http://www.tbcuk.net/?p=12415>. <http://www.adaderana.lk/search.php?mode=o&show=1&query=Kali%20kōvil>.

<sup>170</sup> Seneraṭ Paranavitāna, “Vallipuram Goldplate Inscription of the Reign of Vasabha”. *Epigraphia Zeylanica 4* (1934–1941): 229–237.

<sup>171</sup> *BaT 1*, 146–147, 150–151, 165, 230–238. Ālvāpīllai Vēluppīllai, “Religions in Yālpānam up to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century”, *Lanka 5* (1990): 10–42.

<sup>172</sup> K. N. O. Dharmadasa, “A Note on the linguistic Aspect of Peter Schalk’s Paper”, *Serendipity* (1994: 3): 88–90.

<sup>173</sup> *BaT 1*, 220. Nākačāmi Irā, *nākattīvu eṇṇum īlam (ceṇṇai: 1994)*, 220–222.

<sup>174</sup> Chandra R. de Silva, “Vallipuram Buddha Image – Again”, *Serendipity* (1994: 3): 84–85.

<sup>175</sup> *BaT 1*, 147, 212–230. Peter Schalk, “The Vallipuram Buddha Image – Again”, *Serendipity* (1994: 2): 41–48. Id. “A reply to Chandra R. de Silva”, *Serendipity* (1994:3): 85–87. Id. “Reply to K. N. O. Dharmadasa”, *Serendipity* (1994: 3): 90. Id., “The Vallipuram Buddha Image ‘Rediscovered’”, *Dance, Music, Art, and Religion*, edited by Tore Ahlb ck (Åbo: Scripta Donneriani Aboensis 16, 1996), 295–312.

where archaeologists found both a Buddha-stature [Fig. 50–51] and an inscription in Prākṛit from the first centuries AD. The inscription is no source for the statue and the statue is no source for the inscription. What connects the two is the site.<sup>176</sup>

In a heated debate,<sup>177</sup> one party claims that Vallipuram is a former settlement of Siṃhala Buddhism and the other party that it is a former settlement of Tamil Buddhism. So far no political claims are attached, only propositional statements are launched which are true or false.

Strictly speaking, the inscription is not written in Siṃhala, but in Prākṛit which in Īlam transformed into Siṃhala only in about the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Already the use and projection of “Siṃhala” in the past in this connection of the Vallipuram inscription is an anachronism. It is anachronistic to project modern political Siṃhala Buddhism into the distant past.<sup>178</sup> As shown above, the Anagārika Dharmapāla’s ideological construction of the past as *dharmadīpa* in the meaning of “island of the dhamma” implied a suspension of the difference between then and now; for him now is then and then is now. It is an a-historical and anti-historical position.

What is Tamil in this inscription? The Prākṛit used reveals a Tamil substratum in the form of Prākṛitisations of Tamil.<sup>179</sup> Prākṛit was used by Tamil speakers also in the first centuries AD. in several inscriptions.<sup>180</sup> It is misleading to dismiss this by referring to correspondences between linguistic systems of Sanskrit, Pāli and Siṃhala Prākṛit of the period 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>181</sup> This is an attempt to explain the inscription from “inside” Siṃhala-Pāli and to exclude Tamil. Nobody has denied these mentioned correspondences in other cases, but here we also have to reckon with Tamil - in an inscription which has several Tamil terms.

<sup>176</sup> For the relation of the two in space and time see *BaT* 1, 219–220.

<sup>177</sup> See “Susantha Goonatilake, Lessons: Past, Present and Possible futures – Written Submission to LLRC”, *Lankaweb* (26 November, 2011), <http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2010/11/26/lessons-past-present-and-possible-futures/>, 1.

<sup>178</sup> See *BaT* 1, 220. To do this is very popular in by amateur historians. See for example Gam Vaesiya, “Were the Buddhists in Pre-Christian Lanka pure catikkaran ‘Tamils’ whose mother tongue was Sinhala?”, *Lankaweb*, December 5th, 2011, <http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2011/12/05/were-the-buddhists-in-pre-christian-lanka-pure-catikkaran-tamils-whose-mother-tongue-was-sinhala/>

<sup>179</sup> *BaT* 1, 220–224.

<sup>180</sup> *BaT* 1, 224.

<sup>181</sup> Dharmadasa, “A Note...”, 89.

There is no reason after all discussions to change the conclusion from 2002:

Vallipuram belongs to the Tamil-speaking cultural area, and evidently it did so as far back as I can go in history with written documents. The document above is not what Paranavitāna says, a document of Sinhala settlements in Nākattīvu, but a document of Tamil settlements possessed as a fief by a man who had a Tamil name. The Vallipuram inscription is a document that indicates early Tamil settlements in the North. Even if the great King Vasabha ruled the centre of the island, nakadiva was technically a bhoga in Pāli, a “fief”, and it was a Tamil chieftain, Isiki, who was responsible for the building of the vihāra, not the king.

Buddhism was evidently flourishing in this fiefdom. This is indicated by the building of a new vihāra that probably housed the Vallipuram image.<sup>182</sup>

The result of this summarising study is that the Vallipuram inscription documents a Tamil settlement which was responsible for the cultivation of Buddhism.

Now we come to the Vallipuram Buddha image [Fig. 50–51]. It has been objectified in several publications but has not become an object of a heated debate, probably because the produced knowledge has remained within a small circle of researchers. I will give a short summary of what is known.

When the Perumāḷ kōvil at Vallipuram<sup>183</sup> was rebuilt at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a Buddha statue was unearthed 50 yards north-east of the temple. It remained in the temple lumber room until 1902 when it was set up in the Old Park in Yāḷppāṇam under a bō-tree.<sup>184</sup> In 1906, this Vallipuram Buddha image was presented by the governor Sir Henry Blake to the King of Siam, who was particular anxious to have it, because it was supposed to be of an archaic type. This event together with the statue was forgotten. Islanders born after 1906 have never seen it provided they have not seen it in Bangkok in a *vihāra* known as Wat Benchamabopitr (“Wat Benja”), or “Marble temple”.

I focus on the conclusion. The Vallipuram Buddha image is a typical creation of Amarāvātī art which spread to Īlam, where it influenced also the first period of the development of Buddhist art in the Anurādhapura school. So we have a triangle of cultural encounter between Amarāvātī, Anurādhapura in its first phase, and Vallipuram.

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<sup>182</sup> *BaT* 1, 224.

<sup>183</sup> For this kōvil see *BaT* 1, 165.

<sup>184</sup> *The Ceylon Antiquary 1916–17*, Vol 2, part 2, p. 96.



The first phase of the Anurādhapura school was dependent of Amarāvati. Only in the second phase did it produce its own peculiar images.

There are two problems connected with the Vallipuram image. The first is to determine where it was made and the second what it originally looked like.<sup>185</sup> Already when standing in Old Park in Yālpānam it was damaged and had lost part of its right arm and had suffered other minor damages.<sup>186</sup>

I have studied the statue in Bangkok twice in the 1990s. Under the guidance of Duraiswamy Dayalan from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the Uppsala team studied the statue in January 2012 in Bangkok [Fig. 51–53]. Duraiswamy Dayalan put down his observations in writing:

The Vallipuram Buddha presently standing in one of the niches of the vi-hāra in Wat Benja, Bangkok, is in fact an exact imitation of Amarāvati-Nāgarjūṇikoṇḍa sculptures dated to 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century AD., although the stones are altogether different. The Amarāvati sculptures are carved out of Palnad limestone which is soft and sedimentary rock. The colour of the rock is from pale grey to dark grey. The Vallipuram Buddha is most probably carved out of granite which is the magma variety of igneous rock. The stone is well formed and the components of the granite stone such as quartz, feldspar, hornblende and mica are clearly visible in the rock. Hence, it is clear that the stone is definitely from Sri Lanka and only the style of the sculpture is taken from Amarāvati.

The sculpture is standing robustly with a curled hair, elongated ear-lobes, broad nose, thick lips and fleshy cheek and chin. The thick drapery worn by him reaches up to the knee portion. These are the typical character of the Amarāvati-Nāgārjūṇikoṇḍa sculptures dated to 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Century AD. The right hand of the Vallipuram Buddha has been broken and the same is mended with cement concrete. Similarly the wrist and fingers of the left hand are also mended with cement concrete. While mending they added the length of the hand at the wrist so that the hand shown above the shoulder. In fact the left hand is shown well below the level of shoulder in all the Amarāvati-Nāgārjūṇikoṇḍa standing Buddha sculptures of this type.

There is a small socket at the top of the Buddha head found in the Vallipuram Buddha. It is probably to keep the relic, precious materials or some other purposes. The Buddhist centres at Andhra Pradesh, particularly, Amarāvati and Nāgārjūṇikoṇḍa had a close connection with the Sri Lankan Buddhist centres. In fact, one of the vi-hāras excavated at

<sup>185</sup> For an iconographic description of the present shape of the image see Schalk, "The Vallipuram Image 'Rediscovered', 298–300.

<sup>186</sup> *The Ceylon Antiquary 1916–17*, Vol 2, plate 10:2.

Nāgārjuṇikoṇḍa is known as Siṃhala Vihāra. It has been mentioned that the Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka frequented quite often to Nāgārjuṇikoṇḍa and used to stay in this vihāra. Hence, it is clear that the theme and sculptural art might have travelled from Amarāvati to Sri Lanka and they made the sculptures by imitating the features found at Amarāvati. There are a good number of Buddhist sculptures in Sri Lanka which show the affinity of Amarāvati sculptures, although, they are carved at Sri Lanka itself. In addition to this there are a few sculptures found at Sri Lanka which are actually taken from the Amarāvati as they are carved out of Palnad limestone which is the typical stone available in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>187</sup>

We learn from Duraiswamy Dayalan's description that the statue was made in Īlam as an imitation of Āntiram art. The artists may have come from Āntiram and trained artists in the North and in Central Īlam. The statue has nothing to do with peculiar Siṃhala art. Its positioning in Vallipuram does not indicate peculiar Siṃhala interests, but it shows interests from Āntiram which is part part of Dravidian culture. It was a Buddhist centre since the time of Aśoka.

There is an argument for stating that this statue is made in Īlam, but by artists from Āntiram who were faithful to their tradition. In statues from Āntiram the Buddha has a clearly visible wisp of hair in the form of a circular spot known as *ūrṇā*. It is not applied on statues from the same school in Īlam, even in the oldest one from Medavac-ciya dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>188</sup> The Vallipurambuddha had an *ūrṇā*, but it has eroded away. Duraiswamy Dayalan came to the conclusion that "the *ūrṇā* was originally there but it was eroded or cut off. I could see the circle on the forehead indicating the location of *ūrṇā*".<sup>189</sup>

Duraiswamy Dayalan refers to an inscription in Āntiram that verifies the relation between the island and Āntiram. There are several inscriptions.<sup>190</sup> They are of special interest for us because they concern also Kantarōṭai which was also under the influence of Āntiram (see below).<sup>191</sup>

Duraiswamy Dayalan also refers to a *sīhala vihāra* in Nāgārjuṇikoṇḍa. The inscription is from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>192</sup> It should be noted that this designation does not mean that the *vihāra* was

<sup>187</sup> Written communication from July 2012.

<sup>188</sup> *BaT* 1, 217.

<sup>189</sup> Written communication from 9 September, 2012.

<sup>190</sup> J. Vogel, "Prakrit Inscriptions from a Buddhist Site at Nagarjunikonda", *Epigraphia Indica* 20(1929-1930): 1-136.

<sup>191</sup> *BaT* 1, 146-147.

<sup>192</sup> Vogel, "Prakrit...", 22. See also *BaT* 1, 211.

*sīhaḷa*, but that the monks living in it came from *sīhaḷa*. *Sīhaḷa* refers here not to an ethnies or to a demos, but to a toponym which was introduced in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the island in *Dīpavaṃsa* 9:1.<sup>193</sup> The inscription speaks about monks from the island *sīhaḷa* who built a *vi-hāra*. These monks may have been Prākṛit- or Tamil speaking, or both.

The mending of the right arm of the Vallipuram statue [**Fig. 53**] creates a special problem. Is the arm repaired clumsily or is it made to look as an *āśīsa-mudrā* ‘benediction-gesture’ which is a variant of the *abhaya-mudrā*? The *āśīsa-mudrā* is part of the second phase of the Anurādhapura-school with the Avukana statue as main example.<sup>194</sup> This is from the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. This *mudrā* is peculiar to Siṃhala iconography.<sup>195</sup>

The right arm was mended after the statue had been removed from Old Park in Yāḷppāṇam. The administrators of Wat Benja have shown in pictures one series of mending which was done in Bangkok in the 1990s. A pictorial documentation from 1994 with the mended arm is in *BaT* 1.<sup>196</sup> Another documentation for the situation January 2012 appears in this volume as **Figures 51–53**.

What did the original statue look like? There is of course none from Āntiram which has the *āśīsa-mudrā*. It is therefore improbable that the original Vallipuram statue had an *āśīsa-mudrā*. Its application on the statue from Vallipuram may be a result of a clumsy repair or is inspired by the Avukana statue as an attempt to “Siṃhalise” the Vallipuram statue. An intervention from the Siṃhala side is known. President Prēmadāsa requested the Vallipuram statue to be taken back to the island, but he was only promised to get a copy.<sup>197</sup> What happened to that copy is not known. The President was killed in 1993.<sup>198</sup> The conclusion of our examination is that the Vallipuram

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<sup>193</sup> *BaT* 1, 211. For the use of *sīhaḷa* as toponym see Peter Schalk, *īlam<sīhaḷa? An Assessment of an Argument*. (Uppsala: AUU, 2004), 53–70. *Sīhaḷa* became “Ceylon” during the colonial period in the mouths of non-native speakers.

<sup>194</sup> *BaT* 1, 216.

<sup>195</sup> *The Image of the Buddha*, Edited by David L. Snellgrove (Paris: UNESCO, 1978), 142 [**Fig. 95**].

<sup>196</sup> *BaT* 1, 214–215

<sup>197</sup> Schalk, “The Vallipuram Buddha Image ‘Rediscovered’”, 304–305.

<sup>198</sup> For Prēmadāsa’s concept of Buddhism see Peter Schalk, “The Concept of Concord in President Ranasinghe Premadasa’s Buddhist Political Discourse”, *Lanka* 4 (1990), 22–92. See also Josine van der Horst, ‘Who is He, What is He Doing’. Religious Rhetoric and Performances in Sri Lanka during R. Premadasa’s Presidency

image belongs to Āntiram art and has no peculiar traits of Siṃhala-Buddhist art from the second period in Anurātapuram. It has not been possible to come to a solution whether the repair in Bangkok is the result of a manipulation or of clumsiness.

Another site of controversy is Kantarōṭai. The contemporary Siṃhalisation of this site is described by Jude Lal Fernando in this volume. What the site looked like in 1992 before the “reconquest” is well documented.<sup>199</sup> The historical pre-figuration of that site may be found in Guṇṭupallī in Āntiram and points therefore at a Dravidian influence,<sup>200</sup> like in the case of the Vallipuram Buddha image. Not only Āntiram, but also Kēraḷam, being part of Tamiḷakam, stand as possible donator of Buddhism to Yālppāṇam, which Alvappillai Veluppillai has shown.<sup>201</sup> The connection between Āntiram and Īlam has been described elaborately.<sup>202</sup>

There are many other sites, about 40, to be taken up.<sup>203</sup> Like in South India some Aiyaṇār temples have assimilated a Buddhist vi-kāram in Yālppāṇam. Alvappillai Veluppillai has pointed out that when looking for Buddhist remnants one has to go to an Aiyaṇār kōyil and see whether it overlays an original Buddhist sanctuary.<sup>204</sup>

I emphasise also together with Alvappillai Veluppillai the Tamiḷakam perception from the 6<sup>th</sup> century that Nākanāṭu had an autonomously developed Buddhist tradition.<sup>205</sup> This perception of the Northern part being autonomous was still actual during the Marāṭṭi rulers from Tañcāvūr in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They made a distinction between Īlam and Yālppāṇam which they had taken over from the preceding Cēturulers from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards who still remembered the Kingdom of Yālppāṇam.<sup>206</sup>

We have found that in Vallipuram and Kantarōṭai and in many other places Buddhism was cultivated by Dravidian speakers. What follows from that? Absolutely nothing follows from this fact. The same is the case if in these places Buddhism had been cultivated by

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(1989–1993), *Sri Lanka Studies in the Humanities and the Social Sciences 2* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1995).

<sup>199</sup> BaT 1, 147.

<sup>200</sup> BaT 1, 146–147.

<sup>201</sup> BaT 1, 95, 148–149. BaT 2, 553–559, 558, 690–698.

<sup>202</sup> BaT 1, 211–225.

<sup>203</sup> BaT 1, 151–153.

<sup>204</sup> BaT 1, 165.

<sup>205</sup> BaT 1, 147–148, 152–153, 166. See also Schalk, *Īlam <sihaḷa?>...*, 88.

<sup>206</sup> Loc cit. 221–224.

Prākṛit or Siṃhala speakers only. It is not possible to derive logically from such propositions rights of possession of territory. Politicians have to come forward and produce and enforce such a derivation. They have already enforced a political evaluation that wherever Siṃhala-Buddhists have lived, even 2000 years ago, they have the right to possess this territory. Tamil politicians responded that wherever Tamil speakers lived, even 2000 years ago, they have the right to possess this territory. The colonisation or “re-conquest” by the the Government is a political action which is supported by the ideology of majoritarianism. Its cultivation is in the interest of the Siṃhala majority. The problem for the realisation of this interest is that many of the Buddhist places in the North were not cultivated by Siṃhala-Buddhists.

## Conclusion

“Buddhism among Tamils” is indeed a complex conceptualisation. We have to distinguish between Tamilakam and Īlam, between different languages, periods and regions, finally between different interests, religious and political.

“Buddhism among Tamils” is a blanket for several concepts. The most important one is Tamil Buddhism. A minimum definition of Tamil Buddhism is: Buddhism which is transmitted in Tamil and is indigenised in Tamil culture. Tamil religious culture was and still is dominated by Caivam/Vaiṇavam,<sup>207</sup> even in the Diaspora.<sup>208</sup> Therefore Tamil Buddhism will always be related to Caivam/Vaiṇavam, more or less, during different periods.

In Īlam, Tamil Buddhism is hardly visible; it is quenched between three counteracting interests.<sup>209</sup> First, there is political Siṃhala Buddhism which is instrumentalised by the Government to homogenise the culture of the island into one culture as means of consolidating

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<sup>207</sup> For an overview of the religions of the Tamil speakers see Ālvāpillai Vēluppillai, “Religious Traditions of the Tamils”, *Uppsala Studies in the History of Religions* 2 (1995), Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995, 11–20. Id. “The Encounter of Religions in the History of Tamil Culture”, *Uppsala Studies in the History of Religions* 2 (1995), Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995, 21–25.

<sup>208</sup> See Peter Schalk, *God as Remover of Obstacles. A Study of Caiva Soteriology among Īlam Tamil Refugees in Stockholm, Sweden*. Uppsala: AUU, 2004.

<sup>209</sup> See Peter Schalk, “Buddhism among Tamils in Ilam”, *Religio et Bibliotheca. Festschrift till Tore Ahlbäck 14.3.2001*, Edited by Nils G Holm et al. Åbo: Åbos Akademi Förlag, 2001, 199–211.

the unitary state.<sup>210</sup> The Mahāsaṃgha as a massmovement is, however, not only an instrument;<sup>211</sup> parts of it is also an actor who instrumentalises the Government to impose Siṃhala Buddhism,<sup>212</sup> today with the help of an intensive militarisation [Fig. 3–13, 19, 26, 28–31, 36, 38, 42–43, 49]. It is not a question of forceful conversions of Caivas, but of gradual land-grabbing in connection with the “sealing” of a territory by establishing Buddhist sacred architecture. It reduces Tamil interests of control over territory.<sup>213</sup> This kind of expanding political Buddhism has a self-designation which the reader should associate to Hindūtvā; it is Siṃhalatva.<sup>214</sup> Both work against a multicultural society.

Second, there is the traditional Caiva/Vaiṇava xenophobic polemic against Buddhism as an ascetic religion which questions Tamil values. The resistance against Buddhism forced already Aśoka’s missionaries to halt on the Northern frontier of Tamilakam. Especially the asceticism of Buddhism as antisocial behaviour is classified as alien. This Caiva and Vaiṇava polemic goes back to the Pallava period but is today an atavistic hangover.<sup>215</sup>

The present author has been confronted with an evaluation of Tamil Buddhism from a group of Caiva paṇṭitar in Yālpāṇam in 1992. I was invited to present Tamil Buddhism in Īlam to them. They view Tamil Buddhism as an insignificant phenomenon which does not deserve further attention. I agree with the first part, but not with the second part of this view. There is the interest of the historian to study the struggle for survival of a minority religion in Tamilakam and Īlam. There is also the interest of the social scientist to study the gradual integration of Tamil Buddhism as an ideological and political concept in the ideology of the Tamil resistance movement. Finally, there is the interest by Tamil politicians to stop “the re-conquest” by delivering historical counter arguments.

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<sup>210</sup> BaT 1, 34. Peter Schalk, “Sinhalisation as Homogenisation of Culture”, *Sri Lanka: 60 Years of “Independence” and Beyond* (Emmenbrücke: Centre for Just Peace and Democracy, 2009), 133–158.

<sup>211</sup> Peter Schalk, “Operationalizing Buddhism for Political Ends in a Martial Context in Lanka: The Case of Siṃhalatva”, *Religion and Violence in South Asia. Theory and Practice*. Edited by John R. Hinnels and Richard King (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 139–153.

<sup>212</sup> Peter Schalk, “Present Concepts of Secularism...”, 52–72.

<sup>213</sup> See the article by Jude Lal Fernando in this volume (BaT 3).

<sup>214</sup> Schalk, “Operationalising...”, 141–145.

<sup>215</sup> BaT 1, 33.

Third, even within the present Tamil resistance movement some intellectuals among Tamil speakers identify Tamil Buddhism as a masked form of Siṃhala Buddhism, a kind of backdoor which opens up for governmental interests. This conspiratorial speculation functions as a way to choke an academic discussion about Tamil Buddhism. It is also based on ignorance of what Tamil Buddhism is.

Suppose Tamil Buddhism became an accepted category in Īlam, in the governmental administration too. It would make the Tamil speaking community richer. One could add Tamil Buddhism to Caivam, Vainavam, Christianity and Islam. Moreover, it would deprive the Siṃhalatva representatives in the governmental administration and in the Armed Forces of the use of a false historical argument for establishing territorial control and cultural homogeneity under the umbrella of Siṃhala Buddhism only.<sup>216</sup> The toleration of Tamil Buddhism is, however, meaningful only if the traditional bond between Siṃhala Buddhism and claims to the territory of the island is dissolved. We can imagine a return to the canonical meaning of *dhammadīpa* as anybody, anywhere, at any time having the *dhamma* as lamp. This does not contradict indigenisation of Buddhism through different languages.<sup>217</sup> The attributes “Tamil” and “Siṃhala” of Buddhism may be kept but without reference to claims of territory. This is not likely to happen. We see an inflating of “the heritage”; it implies a strive for the maintenance of an indissoluble bond between Buddhism and territory for the benefit of those who want a *sīhaḷadīpa*.

In September 2012 the Government had not considered to abstain for the sake of reconciliation from an emotional appeal to the “heritage”. The “heritage’s” artistic expression in the mass production of nationalistic Buddhist *kitsch* is in full sway.<sup>218</sup> The Government realises, however, that mere might alone is not appreciated; power should be exercised with reference to a package marked by “heritage”. Then, might appears as right and just. The colonisation program must be justified by an appeal to the “heritage” for the preservation of majoritarianism on which the colonisation program is based. The final and ultimate aim is to gain total control over territory which has been administered and possessed for centuries by Tamil speakers. Members of the Tamil Resistance Movement call it *tāyakam* ‘motherland’ which has been rendered as “homeland” in the political discourse in English.

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<sup>216</sup> For an elaboration of this statement see p. 134 in this volume.

<sup>217</sup> For a canonical view of the use of languages in missiological work and its change through Buddhaghosa see *BaT* 1, 39–41.

<sup>218</sup> See pp. 57, 133, 134 in this volume.

# Comments on the History of Research on Buddhism among Tamils

*Alvapillai Veluppillai*

About a decade ago, three books were published on the history of Buddhism among Tamils. Five scholars—Irāmaccantiraṇ Nākacāmi and Turaicāmi Tayālaṇ from Tamiḷakam, Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātaṇ and Ālvāppillai Vēluppillai from Īlam, and Peter Schalk from Sweden, each a specialist in a different academic discipline—were members of a research team working under the direction of Peter Schalk of the History of Religions of Uppsala University of Sweden on Buddhism among Tamils of Tamiḷakam and Īlam. They brought out papers which were then edited by Peter Schalk and and Ālvāppillai Vēluppillai published as two parts—Part 1 and Part 2 of Uppsala University research publications.<sup>1</sup> The third book was that of a Harvard University Professor Anne Monius who brought out a revised version of her doctoral dissertation on imagining a place for Buddhism through a study of Buddhist literary culture and religious community in Tamil-speaking South India.<sup>2</sup> These are all excellent books, and they take modern studies on Buddhism among Tamils, which has gone out of vogue for centuries, to a very high level in international Tamil scholarship.

Peter Schalk's team adopted a historical approach and could not find any evidence for a continuous existence of Buddhism among Tamils after the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. So, their volume stops with the pre-colonial period of both regions which could be dated to the sixteenth century. Anne Monius confined her study to the two existing Tamil Buddhist texts, which are dated to the sixth century and the eleventh/twelfth centuries and so her book also covers time spans within the same period. All the six scholars have made valuable contributions and each of them will be mentioned in relevant places in

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<sup>1</sup> BaT 1; BaT 2.

<sup>2</sup> Anne E. Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).



this paper. There are, nevertheless, a few rough edges in their views which need to be smoothed out. Elucidating, supplementing and highlighting some ideas from these scholars is a very important task which is attempted in this paper.

This paper will be in three parts:

- (1) An outline of the history of research on Buddhism among Tamils.
- (2) Cōla Buddhism and Insular Cōla Buddhism.
- (3) Comments on Buddhism-related developments of pre-Pallava, Pallava and later periods.

## 1 An Outline of the History of Research on Buddhism among Tamils

Peter Schalk has given an excellent survey of the history of research on Buddhism among Tamils.<sup>3</sup> The history of research on Buddhism among Tamils does not go beyond the last 125 years. U.Vē. Cāminātaiyar, the pioneer editor of most of the ancient and some of the medieval Tamil texts, came across the Buddhist *Maṇimēkalai* manuscript, now dated to the sixth century A.D. and felt helpless as Buddhism was not a living tradition among Tamils and the *Maṇimēkalai* text had no commentary, unlike most other old Tamil texts. There were no dependable books in English when he had to write a commentary and bring out the edition of the text in 1899. He also brought out a monograph on the life of the Buddha.<sup>4</sup> His work should be judged as that of a pioneer. His edition of the *Maṇimēkalai* and his commentary became the base for all Tamil Buddhist studies.

T. A. Gopinatha Rao and Vincent Smith made some significant contributions. Gopinatha Rao was the first to study Buddhist architecture and artifacts in Tamilakam. The very influential interpretation about the conversion of Buddhist temples into Caiva or Vaiṇava temples was first propounded by him in 1915.<sup>5</sup> He stated that the well-known Kāmākṣi temple in Kāñcipuram was in all probability originally a goddess Tārā shrine, associated with Buddhism. Buddhism

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Schalk, "Some Indian Scholars on Buddhism among Tamils", *BaT* 1, 96–108.

<sup>4</sup> U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar, *puttar carittiram, pautta tarumam, pautta caṅkam* (Madras: Tiyaṅkarāja Vilās Publication, 1951).

<sup>5</sup> T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Buddhist Vestiges in Kanchipura", *Indian Antiquary* 44 (1915): 127.

was primary and Caivam secondary in his conception of history. He influenced three generations of Tamil scholars.

Vincent Smith, a British scholar, has also contributed decisively to the views of Tamil scholars in their view of the introduction of Buddhism in Tamilakam. He drew up the borders of the Aśokan Empire and he launched the theory of the Mauryan invasion of South India.<sup>6</sup> He stated that “it seems almost certain that the conquest of the Decan was effected by Bindusara”.<sup>7</sup> He misinterpreted a passage in Taranātha’s history of Buddhism. Many of his followers still cling on to his theory. Smith’s influence cannot be said to have been beneficial to Tamil scholarship because he was wrong about a Mauryan invasion of South India and he was wrong about the nature of the Aśokan dharma, which he identified with Buddhism.

Peter Schalk seems to have missed the important contribution of K.V. Subrahmanya Aiyer in his account. The latter’s studies of the ancient cave inscriptions of the Pāṇṭiya country, marks a progressive tendency for his time by identifying them as written in Tamil language, using Brāhmī script and modified Brāhmī letter forms to represent peculiar Tamil sounds. He published his edition in 1924. He was influenced by comparison of caves as well as resemblances in letter forms in Īlam and the Pāṇṭiya country. He identified the Pāṇṭiya caves as caves of Buddhist monks and inscriptions also as referring to Buddhists.<sup>8</sup> This identification is no longer accepted. The same author edited the Larger Leyden Plates,<sup>9</sup> which throws much light on Cōla Buddhism in the eleventh century, as will be demonstrated later in this paper.

The present Tamil scholarly traditions regarding the history of Buddhism among Tamils are influenced by one book in Tamil and by its author, mentioned and quoted in almost all other works: *pauttamum tamiḷum* (Buddhism and Tamil), by Mayilai Cīṇi Vēṅkaṭacāmi, first published in 1940 and then reprinted thrice.<sup>10</sup> He collected archival material and travelled throughout Tamilakam to take pictures of Buddha statues. As professional archaeologists were not yet similarly occupied on this project, his findings became primary sources. His

<sup>6</sup> V. A. Smith, *Asoka. The Buddhist Emperor of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920). Id. *The Oxford History of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921).

<sup>7</sup> *BaT* 1, 101.

<sup>8</sup> K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, “The Earliest Monuments of the Pandya Country and Their Inscriptions”, *Proceedings and Transactions of Third All-India Oriental Conference* (1924): 275–300.

<sup>9</sup> K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyer, “The Larger Leyden Plates of Rajaraja I”, *Epigraphia Indica* 22 (1933): 213–266.

<sup>10</sup> *BaT* 1, 99.

was also the first attempt at writing a history of Buddhism in Tamilakam.

I can think of two reasons why his book had such appeal. The first was the anti-Brāhmaṇa Dravidian movement, which was becoming widespread in Tamilakam, contributed to the acceptance of ideas about a glorious and rational Buddhist past which was undermined by the Brāhmaṇas. Pēriyar E.V. Irāmacāmi, the founder of the Dravidian movement, was inspired by rational elements in Buddhist philosophy which suited his no-god and no-*varṇa*/caste classifications. The second was the Ambedkār movement which encouraged their Dalit followers to convert to Buddhism, a religion with Indian roots but with no *varṇa*/caste distinctions in its teachings. Vēṅkaṭaçāmi brought the views of Gopinatha Rao, Vincent Smith and Subrahmanya Aiyer in the form of one book to the Tamil-reading public. As there was no reference to sources, his statements cannot be verified.

S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar made an important evaluation in 1941 about the role of Caiṇam and Buddhism in South India.<sup>11</sup> He endorsed Smith's theory about the Mauryan invasion of South India and about the invaders reaching the well-known mountain of Potiyil, almost at its southwestern coast. He had a novel, unacceptable theory that the pre-Pallava Tamilakam was a bastion of Vedic religion against Caiṇam and Buddhism but he was correct to consider the latter two religions as weak and marginalized. His analysis of social and political conflict as being caused mainly at a religious level was a progressive step which was taken up by other scholars later.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, the eminent historian of South India and S. Vaiyāpuri Pillai, the editor of the *Tamil Lexicon* of the University of Madras and an outstanding scholar in Tamil literature of the last century, had been sharing notes, which seems to have benefited both. Both of them questioned the whole concept of the Mauryan invasion of the South. Nilakanta Sastri published the concerned article in a not so well-known journal,<sup>12</sup> so it could not influence many of the Tamil scholars. He interprets the four passages about the *mōriyar* in pre-Pallava Tamil literature as intervention by the Mauryas on the northern border of Tamilakam. He argues against Krishnaswamy Aiyangar's theory about the Mauryan invasion reaching Potiyil. He also rejects the view that the Brāhmī inscriptions from Maturai have evi-

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<sup>11</sup> S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, *Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture. Ancient India to A.D. 1300*, vol. 1 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1941).

<sup>12</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, "Buddhism in the Tamil Country", *March of India* 12 A (1956): 51–54.

dence for Buddhism. As a critical scholar, he does not give credence to Hiuen Tsang's account of his travels, which take the establishment of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam to Aśokan times, if not earlier.

In 1979 T. N. Vasudeva Rao came out with a scholarly work, written in English, on Buddhism in Tamiḷakam.<sup>13</sup> This book takes the same stand as Vēnkaṭaçāmi's work on many issues but marks an advance on scholarship on the subject as it advances rational arguments and a critical approach. He argues for the establishment of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam during the Aśokan period but rejects the claims of some scholars to take it to the pre-Aśokan period. He has collected many literary references from the pre-Pallava period of Tamiḷ literature to argue for Buddhist influence.

In 1988 Paula Richman, an American scholar, published her revised doctoral thesis from Syracuse University on the *Maṇimēkalai* under the title *Women, Branch stories, and Religious Rhetoric in a Tamil Buddhist Text*.<sup>14</sup> This was mainly a content study of the *Maṇimēkalai* text, focusing on the role of renunciation in the life of women. This is an important contribution to *Maṇimēkalai* studies.

In 1989, almost 90 years after Cāminātaiyar made a pioneering contribution to Tamiḷ Buddhist studies, Shu Hikosaka, a Japanese scholar, published his revised doctoral thesis from the University of Madras, with the title *Buddhism in Tamilnadu*.<sup>15</sup> He had been heavily influenced by some previous scholars, beginning with Gopinatha Rao, Vincent Smith, Subrahmanya Ayyar, Vēnkaṭaçāmi and Vasudeva Rao. Hiuen Tsang's travel account was an important source for his book. In trying to picture a glorious period of Buddhism in ancient and early medieval Tamiḷakam, he modified Smith's view of the Mauryan invasion of the South under Bimbisāra. According to him, it was Aśoka who penetrated to the Potiyil Mountain in the South. He explained the term *potiyil* as the location of *bodhi*. Buddhism was already there before Aśokan invasions but Aśoka strengthened it. He developed a theory about the existence of *potalaka*, the abode of Avalokita in Tamiḷakam, as a Buddhist pilgrimage site, which he identified with the *potiyil* Mountain. *Vīracōḷiyam*'s allusion to Akattiyaṅ learning

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<sup>13</sup> T. N. Vasudeva Rao, *Buddhism in the Tamil Country* (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Paula Richman, *Women, Branch Stories, and Religious Rhetoric in a Tamil Buddhist Text*, Syracuse (New York: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Shu Hikosaka, *Buddhism in Tamilnadu: A New Perspective* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1989).

Tamiḷ from Avalokita, gave Hikosaka scope to link Avalokiteśvara of the Mahāyāna tradition with Īśvara=Civaṅ of the Tamiḷ Caiva tradition. Shu Hikosaka has attempted to give an apparently historical survey of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam.

The above two latest works kindled interest in Tamiḷ Buddhist studies in wider circles. The Institute of Asian Studies in Madras, in the founding of which Shu Hikosaka played an important role, and History of Religions of Uppsala University of Sweden jointly planned to have an international seminar on Tamiḷ Buddhist studies. Peter Schalk, who did his doctoral thesis in 1972 on Siṃhala Buddhism, began to feel that he needed to study Tamiḷ culture, and if possible, Tamiḷ Buddhism to understand certain aspects of Siṃhala Buddhism. He developed a link program between his department and the University of Yāḷppāṇam in Īlam. Āḷvāppillai Vēluppillai, from the Tamiḷ Department of Yāḷppāṇam University, was the first scholar to come on this link program to work with Peter Schalk on the Caiva saint Campantar's polemics against Buddhists and Caiṇas in his Tamiḷ hymns of the seventh century. So, by 1992, Uppsala had two scholars working on Buddhism among Tamiḷs. John Samuel of the Institute of Asian Studies and Peter Schalk of the University of Uppsala were the organizers of the conference. A few years before this conference, the Institute of Asian Studies held a national conference on the theme *Buddhist Themes in Modern Tamil Literature* and published its proceedings.<sup>16</sup> Two important chapters—chapter 2, dealing with the Theosophical Society located in Ceṅṅnai and Periyār E.V.Rāmasvāmi's and Ambedkār's movements' contributions for the promotion of Buddhism in 20<sup>th</sup> century Tamiḷakam, and chapter 7, dealing with Buddhist themes in Tamiḷ creative writing—are worthy of notice for scholars as these themes were not covered by the six scholars mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

The international seminar in 1992 on Buddhism among Tamiḷs was organized in a broad-based manner to attract scholars from all disciplines studying Buddhism among Tamiḷs, especially in South Asia, so that further research could be planned. Excursions were made to places of historical interest for Buddhist studies in Tamiḷakam and to a special exhibition of the Buddhist collection in Madras Museum. The Conference in Ceṅṅnai was important as a prelude to a systematic study of Buddhism among Tamiḷs but several of the papers also demonstrated the weakness in the approaches of earlier scholars.

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<sup>16</sup> *Buddhist Themes in Modern Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1988).

The proceedings of the seminar were published by the Institute of Asian Studies in 1998 as *Buddhism in Tamilnadu: Collected Papers*.<sup>17</sup>

A second seminar in Uppsala in 1994 was important, as a step forward in activities towards the appearance of *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam* (2002). A discussion about historical and philosophical problems in selected papers took place with participation also of other interested scholars in Uppsala. Turaicāmi Tayāḷaṅ and Irāmaccantiraṅ Nākacāmi, who were active participants in the Ceṅṅai conference of 1992, were special invitees from India for the seminar. The Uppsala research team on the topic expanded into a four member team with their addition.

A third seminar confined to the Tamil Buddhist narrative *Maṇimēkalai* but on an international level took place in Uppsala in 1995. Scholars from France, India, Israel, Īlam, Russia, the U.K., and the U.S.A. participated along with Swedish scholars. Noteworthy highlights of this conference included the participation of Paula Richman from Syracuse University, who had already established a name for herself on *Maṇimēkalai* research, Anne Monius, who was then an emerging scholar on the history of religions among Tamils and who was preparing her doctoral thesis for Harvard University on Buddhism from Tamil texts, and Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātaṅ, Professor of History, formerly of Yāḷppāṇam University and lately of Peradeniya University in Īlam, who henceforth became the fifth member of the Uppsala research team. The seminar resulted in a publication in 1997 called *A Buddhist Woman's Path to Enlightenment*.<sup>18</sup> This volume, very much relevant for the study of Buddhism among Tamils was published as a separate book as otherwise the size of the Uppsala volumes of 2002 could have become unwieldy.

In 1997, Anne Monius submitted her thesis to Harvard University, with the title *In Search of 'Tamil Buddhism'. Language, Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*.<sup>19</sup> A revised version was published in 2001 under the title of *Imagining a Place for Buddhism. Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*.<sup>20</sup>

Though Irāmaccantiraṅ Nākacāmi, Civacuppiramaṇiyam Patmanātaṅ and Āḷvāppiḷḷai Vēluppillai have occasionally commented on

<sup>17</sup> *Buddhism in Tamilnadu: Collected Papers*. General Editor G. J. Samuel (Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> *BaT* 1, 108.

<sup>19</sup> *BaT* 1, 108.

<sup>20</sup> Loc. cit.

some wrong views on the history of Buddhism among Tamils, it was Peter Schalk, as Editor-in Chief of the volumes, who laboriously collected all arguments for the establishment of Buddhism from Gopinatha Rao, Vincent Smith, Krishnasamy Aiyangar, Vasudeva Rao, Cīṇi Vēṅkaṭacāmi, and Shu Hikosaka, in addition to other arguments put forward in *Collected Papers* of 1998 and examined them with a critical historical philological approach.<sup>21</sup> Besides literary sources, he went through all the published reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, the departments of archaeology of the states of Tamilnadu and Kēraḷam, and the Archaeology and Epigraphy reports of the former Travancore State. He was most critical of Hiuen Tsang's travel accounts of the seventh century which he characterizes as mainly a folk-tale and a collection of hearsay. He concludes that Hiuen Tsang did not have first-hand knowledge of Tamilakam. According to him, archaeological evidence shows that Buddhism was established in Kāviri-pūmpaṭṭiṇam of the Cōḷa country in the fourth century AD through Andhra influence and then gradually spread to other parts of Tamilakam. The *Cilappatikāram* and the *Maṇimēkalai*, which are assigned by modern research to the fifth and the sixth centuries, refer to this Buddhist establishment. He also points out that Cōḷa Buddhism (=Buddhism of the period of the Imperial Cōḷas in Tamilakam) and Īḷa-c-cōḷa Buddhism (Insular Cōḷa Buddhism of the same period in the Island) are relatively well-documented. Information about Buddhism among Tamils of other periods, remain rather vague except for a narrative by Cāttaṇār, a Buddhist poet of the sixth century. There is another text by Puttamittiraṇār, a Buddhist grammarian and Peruntēvaṇār, a Buddhist commentator of the eleventh/twelfth centuries. But these fall within the imperial Cōḷa period. So, we will first take up developments in Cōḷa Buddhism and Insular Cōḷa Buddhism which connect developments on both sides of the Palk Straits.

## 2 Cōḷa Buddhism and Insular Cōḷa Buddhism

### 2.1 Cōḷa Buddhism

As Nākaçāmi points out,<sup>22</sup> the story of Cōḷa Buddhism should begin with Cuntarac-c-cōḷaṇ who reigned from 960 to 973. He was Rājarāja

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<sup>21</sup> *BaT* 1, 238–376.

<sup>22</sup> *BaT* 1, 120.

I's (985–1014) father. The commentary of *Vīracōḷiyam* quotes a long poem of 45 lines, more than 40 lines praising the Buddha and imploring his grace for Cuntaraccōlan's prosperity.<sup>23</sup> This poem reflects Mahāyāna thought and strong Caiva/Vaiṇava theological influence on the understanding of the Buddha by the devotee. Nākakāmi refers to the existence of a *cuntaracōla-p-perumpalli*. It is very significant to note here that *perumpalli* meaning 'great monastery' was most probably first coined in Cuntaraccōlan's time. The Caivas of Tamiḷakam have begun using this term for their religious institutions. It is interesting that Syrian Christians in Kēraḷam have been using both *palli* and *perumpalli* to denote their establishments and *perumpalli* as a personal name also. The earliest available Syrian Christian inscription from Kerala of the ninth century uses the word *palli*. When I google – searched online the word *perumpalli*, many words with the English spelling *perumpally* came up, all of them indicating usages in Kēraḷam.<sup>24</sup> Later developments in Nākapattinam regarding *nākapattinam cūḷamaṇivarma vikāram* seems to have a beginning about four decades ago.

Patmanātan has two excellent articles on Nākapattinam Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> The Larger Leyden Plates and the Smaller Leyden Plates, which are so-called because these records are preserved in the Leyden Museum of the Netherlands, are copper plate Cōḷa inscriptions of the eleventh century AD, giving a lot of historically important material about Buddhism in Nākapattinam, the port-city of the Cōḷa empire. The Larger Leyden Plates, also referred to as Ānaimaṅkalam Copper Plates, are one of the biggest Tamiḷ inscriptions in size. It was issued by Rājendra I, incorporating an entire long record of Rājarāja I, his father. It mentions about Cūḷamaṇivarma of Sri Vijaya building a Buddhist *vikāram* in Nākapattinam from 1006 and requesting an endowment from Rājarāja I. The Borobudur monument from Java reflects Mahāyāna with strong Caiva influence. So it is quite possible that the two emperors cooperated in building a big *vikāram* for Buddhism, a marginalized religion among the Tamiḷs. The Cōḷa emperor obliges the Śailendra emperor, readily making Ānaimaṅkalam village, an endowment with immediate effect. The building of the *vikāram*

<sup>23</sup> BaT 1, 118–122.

<sup>24</sup> See SyrianChurch.org/ch/PerumpallyChurch.htm; www.facebook.com/Jenshil.perumpally.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Patmanātan, "Buddhism in Nākapattinam", BaT 2, 569–609. Id. "Texts and Alternative Translations of the Inscriptions on the Pedestals of Bronze Images", BaT 2, 828–834.



seems to have taken a few years to complete. Mara Vijayōttuṅka-varman of Sri Vijaya completes the building and names it as *cūlāmaṇivarma vikāram* after his father. Rājarāja I's record also took a long time to go through different processes of record-making and to be engraved in copper plates.

Rājendra I, the Cōla emperor of the time, incorporates the record of his father within an inscription issued by him. Probably because the Cōla emperor and Sri Vijaya emperor, living far away from each other, were involved in these transactions, the drafter of the Āṇaimaṅkalam Copper Plates felt the necessity to give so much information about this endowment. Most probably, a translation of the inscription was sent to the Sri Vijaya emperor. Āṇaimaṅkalam was a big village, covering about 97 *vēlis* of land. According to the *Tamil Lexicon*, one *vēli* is equivalent to 6.74 acres of land. It had channels of Kāviri river water running through it. It had both irrigable and non-irrigable land. Various professional and artisan groups were living within its borders. All of them would continue to live and carry on their activities, except for toddy-drawers who were prohibited from climbing palmyra and coconut palms. Cultivable land was assessed for their income in grains measure, and cultivators had to pay about sixty percent as fixed contribution annually. About 27 kinds of dues in cash payments were to be collected wherever applicable from other groups in the village. No assessed income and fixed payments are mentioned for cash payments.

The Smaller Leyden Plates were issued by Kulōttuṅkaṅ I, in 1090 A.D., about seventy years after the issue of the larger one. This was done again on the initiative of the emperor of Sri Vijaya, who requested a new charter to sum up all the royal endowments and to accommodate later changes in conditions to endowments. From this inscription much new historical information has come to light. The emperor of Sri Vijaya built another *perumpalli* and named it after Rājendra I as *irācēntiracōlapperumpalli*, but attached it to *cūlāmaṇivarma vikāram*. This *perumpalli* does not have a name commemorating its builder. It is this inscription which mentions for the first time that *cūlāmaṇivarma vikāram* has another name as *irācarācapperumpalli*. The specific introduction of the names of Cōla emperors might indicate that the *vikāram* was intended to cater mainly for Tamil Buddhists. This *vikāram* must have catered also to the traders from Southeast Asia and China, where Mahāyāna was on the ascendant at least in certain regions. In the then contemporary Java, Mahāyāna with Caiva influence, as reflected in the massive seven storey monument of Borobudur, dated to the ninth century, was strong. The Sri Vijaya emperors must have been promoting a

kind of Mahāyāna. Peter Schalk thinks that Mahāyāna, as seen in the *Vīracōḷiyam*, and Cōḷa Buddhism are different.<sup>26</sup> I think that they are one. If the Śailendra emperors adopted a narrow outlook and promoted only their version of Buddhism, it is difficult to explain how endowments from the Cōḷa emperors went on to increase many-fold within 70 years.

In addition to Āṇaimaṅkalam village endowed by Rājarāja I, eight other units of land, spread over three different provinces of the Cōḷa kingdom, had been endowed. The extent of each unit of land, assessed income in grains from each as well as fixed income to be supplied in grains, are mentioned in this inscription. Roughly four times the extent of land and four times the fixed amount of grains are added to what Rājarāja I had endowed. In this connection, it is very interesting to notice that out of the eight endowments, there were two *brahmadeyams*, lands already donated to Caiva/Vaiṇava Brāhmaṇa settlements: *Āṇaimaṅkalam brahmadeyam* and *Pālaiyūr brahmadeyam*. Most probably Brāhmaṇas were moved out and compensated elsewhere. It is quite possible that *Āṇaimaṅkalam brahmadeyam*, only 12 *vēlis* in extent, adjacent to *Āṇaimaṅkalam paḷḷiccantam*, was added to the latter after negotiations began with the Brahamaṇas. There seems to be some mix-up when the inscription mentions about *Pālaiyūr brahmadeyam* of 60 *vēlis* of land and *Kīlcantirapati paḷḷiccantam* of 10 *vēlis* of land—both mentioned as belonging to Aḷa-nāṭu—as it mentions assessed income separately but one fixed income to be supplied.<sup>27</sup> They too might be adjoining each other and they might have been integrated into one unit.

It is interesting to note that the endowment included *paḷḷiccantam irāṅkaḷ*. I feel that there could be some ambiguity as *paḷḷiccantam* could be an endowment to either a Caiṇa or a Buddhist establishment in Tamiḷakam. *Paḷḷiccantam irāṅkaḷ* (=abandoned *paḷḷiccantam*) should be referring to what was once a *paḷḷiccantam* but no longer in use at the time of this inscription. It might have been in disuse as the concerned religious establishment was no longer surviving. If a *paḷḷiccantam* included within belonged to the Caiṇas, the king must have made alternate arrangements for that community as compensation.

The Smaller Leyden Plates specify that the endowments were made for *nivantaṅkaḷ*. According to the *Tamiḷ Lexicon*,<sup>28</sup> the Tamiḷ form of *nivantam* is from Sanskrit *ni-bandha* which has the following two

<sup>26</sup> BaT 2, 840–841.

<sup>27</sup> BaT 2, 563.

<sup>28</sup> TL 4, 2283.

meanings among others: (1) allotted duties, as of servants, (2) temple expenses, associated with ceremonies, rituals and festivals. The *caṅkattār* (= members of the *saṃgha*) of the *vikāram* seems to have derived more authority over people living in *paḷḷiccantam* lands. At the request of the king of Sri Vijaya, *Kulōttuṅkaṇ* I obliges him by removing the rights of *kāṇiyālar* 'proprietors' of their proprietary rights and entrusting them to the *saṃgha*. May be, in Java and adjoining regions, the *saṃgha* of monks under Mahāyāna influence exercised such authority. Here it is also interesting to note that the *saṃgha* of *Cūḷāmaṇivarma vikāram* does not approach the Cōḷa emperor directly but through the emperor of Sri Vijaya. The leading monks from that *vikāram* probably were still coming from Sri Vijaya.

The relationship between the empires of the Cōḷas and Sri Vijaya were not always smooth. Soon after Rājendra I issued his *Āṇai-maṅkalam* Plates, hostility broke out between the two powers. Rājendra I claims in the *meykkīrtti* portion of his inscriptions that he raided many ports, which he mentions by name, along the coast of the empire of Sri Vijaya and carried away much booty. No reason for the hostility is mentioned anywhere.<sup>29</sup> May be the raid was carried out to open up different ports for access to foreign trade and to do away with the trade monopoly of that empire.

The most important source for substantial information on Buddhism among Tamils, especially from Nākapaṭṭiṇam, comes from Buddhist icons, mainly of bronze, discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their importance was not realized at the beginning, as there was no concerned Buddhist community among the Tamils at that time. Some of the bronzes were sent to Madras Museum, while others were sent to museums in other parts of India and to different places in the world. Colombo Museum too has a number of these bronzes. Some others went into private collections while others got lost. There is a record of about 350 bronzes of medium and small sizes, not all of them sculptural masterpieces. It is surmised that the small sized ones must have been meant for private worship at homes or monasteries. About one-fifth of them have small inscriptions, all of them in Tamil. Most of these inscriptions are just labels. T. N. Irāmaccantiraṇ,<sup>30</sup> Nākacāmi<sup>31</sup> and Patmanātaṇ<sup>32</sup> have deciphered and

<sup>29</sup> K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas* (Madras: Madras University, 1935), 211–220.

<sup>30</sup> T. N. Ramachandran, *The Nagapattinam and other Bronzes in the Madras Museum*, *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, Madras* (1992).

<sup>31</sup> *BaT* 1, 133–144.

<sup>32</sup> *BaT* 2, 826–834.

interpreted them. As Patmanātan points out, it is difficult to choose between different interpretations, as all of them appear plausible.<sup>33</sup> Still, some generalization is possible from these interpretations.

Patmanātan<sup>34</sup> and Nākacāmi<sup>35</sup> argue that Tamil terms for attributes of the Buddha, Buddhist monks and lay followers were liberally taken over from attributes of Caiva/Vaiṇava gods, Caiva/Vaiṇava saints and Caiva/Vaiṇava devotees. These attributes can be analyzed further. These terms, *ālvār*, *perumāḷ*, *nāyaṇār*, *nāyakar*, *tēvar*, etc. were sometimes used interchangeably to denote different categories, showing that no standardized terminology has evolved in the Tamil Buddhist community. The first two terms have clear Vaiṇava background and the third one has a clear Caiva background. The last one is common to both Caiva and Vaiṇava traditions. The term *nāyakaṇ* (=Sanskrit *nāyaka*) is used in many meanings but the term *nāyakar*, in its honorific form, as used here in Buddhist context, may not have been used in previous times to denote a Caiva/Vaiṇava god. Though *nāyakar* was very common in Nākapaṭṭiṇam bronzes, and *nāyaṇār* was used in a couple of instances as in *turai ālvi nāyaṇār* and *periyapillai nāyaṇār*, they were not recorded in any Īlam Tamil inscription. The parallel Caiva term for Vaiṇava *perumāḷ* is *perumāṇ*. The people who came to Buddhism from Tamil Vaiṇava background might have been using terms which they were used to, in the new Buddhist context and the Caivas might have been using terms which they were used to, in their Caiva background. On the whole, terms related to Vaiṇava background predominate both in Tamilakam and Īlam. Looking at religious polemics in Tamil, Caivas and Caiṇas have criticized Buddhism and the Buddhists strongly while Vaiṇava criticisms occur only in a few instances. Probably a section of the Vaiṇavas among Tamils felt comfortable in accepting Buddhism.

Some women—may be some of them nuns—got some of these bronzes made. Some females mentioned in the bronzes have designations like *ammai* as in *tiruvuṭaiyār ammai*; *āṇṭāḷ* as in *alakiyāṇṭāḷ*; and *nācci* as in *periyānācci*; the first one had a parallel in Kāraik-kālammaiṭyār, a female Caiva *nāyaṇār* and the last two, two names of Āṇṭāḷ/Nācciyār, one female Vaiṇava *ālvār*. But the Buddhists seem to have developed a new feminine gender form from *ālvār* as *ālvi*. This form occurs in four different inscriptions, for example *caṅkāḷvi* and

<sup>33</sup> *BaT* 2, 597.

<sup>34</sup> *BaT* 2, 597–603.

<sup>35</sup> *BaT* 1, 137–138.

*tukkai ālvi* [*ālvi* and *ālvi* are variants of the same term].<sup>36</sup> This form does not appear to have been recorded anywhere else in Tamil. No female terms occur in Īlam Tamil inscriptions. In modern Tamil usage, Buddha is rendered as *puttar perumāṇ*. It will be considered strange to use *puttar ālvār* or *puttar perumāḷ*. The fact that a dozen inscriptions refer to *piḷḷai*, a title of peasants, indicates that a substantial number of Tamilakam Tamil Buddhists might have been from the peasant community. Two icons of Avalokiteśvara, one of Tārā and another of Khadiravani Tārā seem to indicate Mahāyāna ideals among these Tamil Buddhists.

One of these bronzes, now with the private collection of Asian Art of Mr. & Mrs. John D. Rockefeller in New York, has a Tamil inscription, which throws plenty of light on an otherwise unknown chapter of Nākapaṭṭiṇam Buddhism. It speaks about *akkacālaipperumpallī*, attached to *irācēntiraccōlapperumpallī* and *patineṇ vicayam*.<sup>37</sup> Here it is important to note the usage of the term *perumpallī* to indicate a subsidiary of the subsidiary of a *makā vikāram*. A similar usage is also found in the Polononaruṅvā Slab inscription of the *Vēḷaikkārar* where the Temple of the Tooth is referred to as *dalaḍāypperumpallī* when it was a subsidiary, attached to *uttorulmūlai*, itself a subsidiary of Abhayagirivihāra<sup>38</sup> *Patineṇ visayam*, also referred to as *patineṇ pūmi* in Īlam Tamil inscriptions, refer to the well-known mercantile guild of the Five Hundred. *Akkacālai*, in relation to the Five Hundred, must refer to the artisan manufactory. During the course of the growth of mercantile guilds, artisans as a community got affiliated to them. From this inscription, we know that the Five Hundred were established in Nākapaṭṭiṇam and an allied community establishes a Buddhist shrine and attaches it to *irācēntiraccōlapperumpallī*. The artisan community of the locality must have accepted Buddhism. The Buddha was referred to as *ālvār*, which was already in use as the designation of Tamil Vaiṇava poet-saints, but later taken up by both Buddhists and Caiṇas among Tamils. In the Buddhist temple was instituted an icon, also referred to as *ālvār*, to be taken in procession around the temple. Taking an icon in procession around a temple is a popular festival in Caiva/Vaiṇava temples. This Buddhist festival was taking place in *akkacālaipperumpallī*, attached to *irācēntiraccōlapperumpallī*, which was attached to *cūḷāmaṇivarmavikāram*. This monastery seems to have accommodated Buddhists of different views.

<sup>36</sup> *BaT* 1, 137; *BaT* 2, 831.

<sup>37</sup> *BaT* 2, 587–595.

<sup>38</sup> *BaT* 2, 738–740.

## 2.2 Insular Cōla Buddhism

Anne Monius<sup>39</sup> and Peter Schalk<sup>40</sup> mention Pāli scholars from Tamiḷakam, writing on Theravāda Buddhism, for example, Dīpaṅkara and Kassapa, identified as Cōla/Choliya in their own writings while occasionally also as Demaḷa, even though they don't seem to be associated with preaching Buddhism in Tamiḷ. There were, of course, Pāli scholars from Tamiḷakam, like Buddhaghosa, Buddhamitta and Jotipāla from the fifth and sixth centuries, who contributed to the Mahāvihāra tradition but they never claimed to be either Tamiḷ or Choliya. After a long break of about five centuries, there were again monks professing allegiance to the Mahāvihāra tradition of Anurātapuram and assigned to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who have written books or commentaries which were well-received by Siṃhala Buddhists. The kind of monastic organization and patronage they had in the Cōla country had not come to light. Whether they could have had a *perumpalli* of their own and attached themselves like *akkacālaipperumpalli*, to *cūlāmaṇivarma-vikāram*, should be investigated. If the Cōla emperors had been hostile and refused patronage to Theravāda Buddhism, it is difficult to explain why those Buddhist monks identified themselves as Choliya/Cōla. Cōla/Choliya might be related to *Cōla-perumpalli*, an establishment which is mentioned in inscriptions on two bronze icons.

Among the Tamiḷ inscriptions found on the pedestals of Nākaṭṭiṇam bronzes, two of them give names of their locations as just *cōla-p-perumpalli*. I think that they might indicate a stage leading to the emergence of Cōla Buddhism. Even though Turaicāmi Tayalaṅ lists all the locations where Buddhist icons/statues had been discovered from various parts of Tamiḷakam with many locations spread throughout the Tamiḷakam coast and dates almost all of them to the eleventh, the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries,<sup>41</sup> no architectural remains or inscriptions had been discovered anywhere else, so that not much could be made out about Buddhism in other parts of Tamiḷakam from them. During this period, the entire Tamiḷakam was part of the Cōla Empire. Only Nākaṭṭiṇam has significant epigraphic evidence and hundreds of Buddhist bronzes, besides a three storey building of a peculiar style, which existed till 1867, before it was de-

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<sup>39</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 123–125.

<sup>40</sup> *BaT* 2, 523–534.

<sup>41</sup> *BaT* 2, 559.

molished.<sup>42</sup> Nākaṭṭiṇam port was in a strategic location to serve as a link for Theravāda Buddhism between Myanmar and Īlam. All Buddhism-related activities in the Cōla Empire which included the entire Tamiḷakam, might have had Nākaṭṭiṇam as their center.

There is clear evidence that the *choḷiya* monks were honored by a Siṃhala king who ruled in the mid-thirteenth century. The *Cūlavamsa* portrays the Choliya monks as far more pure in practice than those of Laṃkā. King Parākramabāhu II, also known as Paṇḍita Parākramabāhu, after sending gifts to the Cōla emperor, invites the Choliya monks to purify the insular *saṃgha* and establish harmony between the two orders.<sup>43</sup> While this complementary attitude to the Choliya monks should be given due importance, it should be noted that both the Cōla empire and the Siṃhala kingdom were going through very troubled times. Māgha of Kaliṅga invaded Polonaruṅvā to press his claim to the Laṃkan throne in 1215 AD and oppressed the people and harassed the Buddhist institutions to press his claim. Māgha controlled the North while the Siṃhala king moved away from Polonaruṅvā to the southwest and established a new capital at Dambaḍeniya. The Cōla Empire just existed in name as the Pāṇṭiyas and other feudatories were challenging it in all directions and the Hoysalas of Karnāṭaka had to intervene in about 1245 to secure the personal safety of the Cōla emperor. Rājarāja III and his successor Rājendra III managed to hold on to the throne till 1279, after which the Cōlas were no longer heard of. The Pāṇṭiyas were on the ascendant from early on in the thirteenth century and by 1250, one can say that they were the dominant power in Tamiḷakam. In this connection it is intriguing to observe that Tēṇuvaraiṇṇar, a Tamiḷ astrologer, claims that he presented to Parākramabāhu I's court for approval, *Caracōtimālai*, a Tamiḷ astrological text. The astrologer claims in his *pāyiram* 'introduction' that this king had the tiger banner.<sup>44</sup> The tiger banner was the banner of the Cōlas throughout their history. From the context, it appears that the Siṃhala king must have been pleased with the *pāyiram*.

The best explanation for change of fronts had to be found in political changes in the region which encompassed South India and Īlam. There were no permanent friends and permanent enemies among the

<sup>42</sup> BaT 2, 577–578.

<sup>43</sup> BaT 2, 528–530.

<sup>44</sup> Ālvappillai Vēluppillai, "toṭakka kāla īlattu ilakkiyaṅkaḷum avarriṇ varalārru ppiṇṇaṇiyum", *īlattu ppaḷaiya ilakkiyaṅkaḷ—varalāru tēṭal* (kolumpu: kumaran puttaka illam, 2009), 3.

political entities of the time. Any kingdom becoming dominant and expansive in South India was a threat to other kingdoms. The other kingdoms fought together to keep the dominant power in check. When the Pallavas were dominant, they claimed to be fighting the Pāṇṭiyas, the Kēraḷas and the Laṃkans. During the early half of the ninth century, the Pāṇṭiyas were on the ascendant; the Pallavas and the Laṃkans were fighting against them. When the Cōḷas began to build up the empire, they dislodged the Pallavas and took over their territory. But the Pāṇṭiyas, the Kēraḷas and the Siṃhalas were fighting against the Cōḷas. From about 1250, the Pāṇṭiyas were fighting in Īlam against the Siṃhalas. It was they who were credited with the founding of the Tamil Yāḷppāṇam kingdom in the north with *ārya-cakkravarttis* in power in late thirteenth century. So, the Cōḷas were no longer the hated foreigners.

The study of Tamil inscriptions in Īlam of the period of the imperial Cōḷas has been going on for about fifty years. The late Kantacāmi Kaṇapatippiḷḷai was the pioneer in the field. Kārttikēcu Intirapālā and Āḷvāppiḷḷai Vēluppillai, his students in epigraphy, continued to work in this field. They were followed by Cellatturai Kuṇaciṅkam in editing a few of these inscriptions, with Seneraṭ Paranavitāna, K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and K.G. Krishnan contributing revised editions of some of them. Patmanātaṅ, has brought up to date the study of all the Tamil inscriptions relating to insular Buddhism with important insights developed among recent epigraphists.<sup>45</sup> Based on his studies and related to research by the other scholars, I can arrange these inscriptions in exact or approximate chronological order. From this, I can draw certain conclusions and highlight some of them to throw some new light on the history of insular Cōḷa Buddhism of that period.

As in Nākaṭṭiṇam, the Cōḷas probably wanted to promote Buddhism among Tamils by establishing a Rājarājapperumpalḷi in the present Tirukōṇamalai District in Īlam. Like the Nākaṭṭiṇam vi-kāram, the Tirukōṇamalai vi-kāram also had another name Velkāmavikāram. There is no information concerning who had it built and whether its other name indicates that it was remodeled from an ancient structure. The Pāli chronicles have no record of either of the two names. Its architecture, as far as it could be made out, seems to have been modeled on Dravidian style, with elements of Laṃkan architecture. This site has the largest number of Tamil inscriptions in the island, even though most of them are fragmentary. Two of these epi-

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<sup>45</sup> Ci. Patmanātaṅ has 13 articles in chapter 6 of BT 2, covering the pages 682–690; 694–776.



graphic records have the *meykīrttis* of Rājendra I but they remain fragmentary so that it is not possible to conclude whether he was directly involved in its construction or whether he made any donation. But these fragments are sufficient proof that this *vikāram* has come into being as early as the reign of the emperor Rajendra I, who issued the Larger Leyden Plates.

On paleographical grounds, all the sixteen inscriptions<sup>46</sup> can be approximately dated to the eleventh century, more or less to the period of the Cōla rule. That these inscriptions belonged to the heyday of the imperial Cōlas also becomes evident from the different names of Tirukōṇamalai region as some of these inscriptions record names of the region as Parakēcari vaḷanāṭu, Abhayāsraya vaḷanāṭu and Irācēntiraciṅka vaḷanāṭu. The term *vaḷanāṭu* is glossed in the *Tamil Lexicon* as ‘fertile tract’. Because of the fertility of the Kāviri delta, the Cōla country by itself and each of its provinces have been designated as *vaḷanāṭu* in medieval times. The Mahāvēḷi delta and tanks like Kantalāy, Periyakuḷam and Patavi/ Padaviya must have inspired the Tamils to name Tirukōṇamalai region as a *vaḷanāṭu*. Within the Cōla country, emperors in the eleventh century frequently changed names of provinces to tally with the titles they assumed. I think that changing the name of the Tirukōṇamalai so frequently implies that the Cōlas considered this region as an extension of Kāviri delta in Cōla maṅṭalam and a special province within Īlamaṅṭalam. These names could not have been used in inscriptions after the end of the Cōla rule in the island. If the Cōlas were not directly involved in the affairs of this *perumpalli*, it is difficult to explain why so many donors—personal names/designations suggest that some of them might be administrators and some others soldiers—came forward to patronize this institution. None of the records suggest that any mercantile guild was involved in this *vikāram*. The fact that nearly three quarters of the Tamil inscriptions of the Cōla period are found in and around Tirukōṇamalai indicates that the Tamils were very active in this region during the Cōla period.

Some of the epithets used for the Buddha among Nākapaṭṭinam Buddhist bronzes were also used for the Buddha in Tirukōṇamalai District. Some of these inscriptions clearly state that donations were made for *nivantaṅkaḷ* ‘temple expenses’ for establishing perpetual lamps, for burning perpetual lamps by donating cash or cattle for the

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<sup>46</sup> CTI 1, 12–19; CTI 2, 1–6; K. Indrapala, “Fourteen Cōla Inscriptions from the ancient Rājarājapperumpalli, Velgam Vihāra / Nātaṅār Koavil”, *Epigraphia Tamulica* (1971): 37–56.

supply of oil. One of them also mentions arrangement for food offerings to the *vikāram*. The donors appear to be supporting the *vikāram* as they were supporting Caiva/Vaiṣṇava temples in Tamiḷakam. *Cūḷavaṃsa* has not even mentioned this development. Evidence is overwhelming to consider this *perumpaḷḷi* as a Tamiḷ Buddhist site.

Peter Schalk talks about two categories, namely Tamiḷ merchants and Tamiḷ mercenaries, supporting Buddhism and fighting for Laṃkan kings. He illustrates his theory by indicating that merchants supported *vikārams* and mercenaries fought for the Siṃhala kings after the latter rid the country of the Cōḷa rule, especially in the remainder of the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD.<sup>47</sup> All Tamiḷ soldiers who remained after the fall of the Cōḷa rule could not be classified as mercenaries of Siṃhala kings. There appears to be a substantial number of Tamiḷ soldiers not associated with Siṃhala kings. Merchants and soldiers were clearly associated in some cases but they could have acted independently of each other also. The Cōḷas and the Tamiḷ merchant guilds were engaged in expansion in Īlam at about the same time, the former from the tenth century and the latter maybe from the ninth century. Mākkōtaippaḷḷi in Anurātapuram, mentioned in a Tamiḷ inscription of the ninth century, appears to be the work of *nāṅku nāṭṭār* from the western coast of ancient Tamiḷakam. But it was with the Cōḷa conquest of the island that a network of towns of the merchant guilds of South India, predominantly of Tamiḷ traders, becomes well-established in various parts of Rājaraṭa ‘the king’s domain’, and some adjoining areas. This network was allowed considerable autonomy, without being tightly controlled by the Cōḷa rulers.

Even after Vijayabāhu drove the Cōḷa rulers out from Polonaṛuvā, the capital city, and established Siṃhala rule, the network of towns of mercantile guilds, continued to function as they did before. Peter Schalk brought to light an article of the eminent South Indian historian, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, to explain how this was possible.<sup>48</sup> Vijayabāhu I found that the capital city was retaken by the Tamiḷ forces remaining in the island, soon after he took it from the Cōḷas. According to Peter Schalk, who quotes from Nilakanta Sastri, Vijayabāhu chose to integrate the Tamiḷ groups into his administration. His successors continued the same practice. There is no indication that he and his

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<sup>47</sup> *BaT* 2, 675–681.

<sup>48</sup> Nilakanta Sastri, “Vijayabahu, the Liberator of Lanka”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Ceylon Branch) 4 (1954): 45–71. Published also in K. A. Nilakaṇṭha Sastri, *Aspects of India’s History and Culture* (Delhi: Oriental Publishers, 1974), 240–259.

successors had a racial view that excluded Tamils from institution-building, just because they were Tamils. The *vaṃsa*-tradition has chosen to depict him as motivated by Buddhism only but his inscriptions give another picture: he also, like the Cōlas, was rational and pragmatic. A sort of military equilibrium when the Tamils also had military strength and the Siṃhala rulers had pragmatism seems to have secured for the Tamils autonomy, while the country flourished under the most acclaimed prominent Siṃhala king called Parākrama-bāhu the Great (1153).

The Cōla emperors held *vēḷaikkārar* regiments in great respect. They were not just mercenaries. This term has been explained in the *Tamil Lexicon* as “devoted servants who hold themselves responsible for a particular service to their king at stated hours and vow to stab themselves to death if they fail in that.” When mercantile guilds established their network of urban centres, they seem to have recruited similarly committed forces for their security. In the Pollonaṟuvā Slab inscription of the *Vēḷaikkārars*, their commitment becomes clear in their declaration that they would, *paṭṭuṇ ketṭuṇ kākkak kaṭavōm ākavum* ‘may we be committed to defend even in the event of death or destruction’. Because one wing of the mercantile guild was rich and the other wing militarily strong, they seem to have functioned as autonomous institutions in towns where they operated. Either as merchants or as soldiers or as both in unity, they were issuing long inscriptions in Tamil, just like their Cōla predecessors had done. They record the charters of one or more mercantile guild, (issued by the Cōla kings in Tamil) in an inscription just like the *praśāstis* of kings and then refer to their transactions. There is no reference to any Siṃhala ruler and there is not even one Siṃhala word in some of these long inscriptions.

These inscriptions use the land measure *vēli* and the liquid measure *uri*, which the Cōlas introduced, many decades after the end of the Cōla rule. Tamil titles of administrative officers like *nāṭāḷvāṇ* and *vēṇāṭuṭaiyār*, never used in Siṃhala administration, have been used, long after the end of the Cōla occupation. Their Tamil inscriptions are spread out in a vast area in Rājaraṭa, stretching from Tirukōṇamalai District in the east, to Mātālē District, on the border of the central mountainous region, and to Kurunāgala District in the border of the southwest coast.

### 2.3 Insular Tamils' Patronage of Buddhism at its Time of Adversity

Some Tamil inscriptions dealing with support to Buddhist institutions were dated in the regal years of Siṃhala kings and they seem to cover the period from about the end of Vijayabāhu I's reign in about 1110 to Niśsaṅkamalla's reign in 1192. The period of time in which merchant guilds continued to maintain their network included the rule of Vijayabāhu I who is hailed as the liberator of the Siṃhalas, Parākramabāhu I who is hailed as the greatest Siṃhala ruler who engaged in military campaigns in South India and Myanmar, and Niśsaṅkamalla, born in Kaliṅga but related to Parākramabāhu as nephew, who had many achievements to his credit as a Siṃhala Buddhist ruler. The dichotomy between merchants and mercenaries seems to have a wide open gap which could be filled by adding another group as officers. Officers could be either administrative or military. I take the definition of the Oxford English Dictionary as 'a person holding a position of authority or trust, especially one with a commission in the armed services.' Soon after Vijayabāhu I's death, there was a conspiracy in which the Buddhist saṃgha was involved to deprive Vikramabāhu I, the son of the deceased king through a Kaliṅga princess, of his rightful claim to the throne and to press the claim of Mānābharaṇa, the son of Mittā, sister of Vijayabāhu I, and a Pāṇṭiya prince. The blow was outwardly softened by declaring Jayabāhu I, the brother of the deceased king, as his successor and crowning him as king, and Mānābharaṇa as the crown prince.

When Vijayabāhu I was waging his war of liberation against the mighty Cōḷa empire, he needed strong Indian allies. Even though the Pāṇṭiyas were Tamils, the Pāṇṭiya dynasty remained irreconcilable enemies of the Cōḷas and they must have been Vijayabāhu I's natural partners in fighting the Cōḷas. So, a Pāṇṭiya prince married Mittā, a sister of Vijayabāhu I. The Kaliṅgas were the enemies of the Cōḷas on the northern border of the Cōḷa empire which included the Eastern Chālukyas of Veṅgi, a Telugu kingdom. Vijayabāhu I took Tilokasundarī, a Kaliṅga princess as his queen to bolster his alliance with the Kaliṅgas. The Kaliṅgas were not Tamils, but were speakers of Ōriya, an Indo-aryan language. Their language had considerable Dravidian influence through Telugu as northernmost districts of Andhra Pradesh were parts of the Kaliṅga kingdom. The Kaliṅgas in the medieval period were Caiva/Vaiṇavas.

On a complaint that Tilokasundarī was disrespectful to the saṃgha, she was disowned by Vijayabāhu after some years and sent

back to Kalinga. Several intermarriages seem to have occurred between the Siṃhala royal family and the Kalinga royal family for more than a century and the Kalinga connection, which the Siṃhala royal family initially sought to defeat the Cōlas, turned into a curse which the Siṃhalas could not shake off.

After Niśśaṅkamalla, the Kalinga faction and Parākramabāhu faction put rival claimants on the throne, one after the other, for one or two years in a period of political instability. This culminated in Māgha of Kalinga's invasion in 1215 to assert his claim to the throne. The Siṃhalaspeaking Buddhists suffered immensely from his invasion. The *-vaṃsa*-literature records the bitterness of the Siṃhalas against Māgha - but maligns the Tamiḷs unfairly. Vikramabāhu I, who was the son of Vijayabāhu and Tilokasundarī, was the chief of Ruhuṇa when his father died. He returned to Polonaruṇvā to claim his inheritance. He was angry with the *saṃgha* for supporting the usurpation. Civil war threatened and people of the country appeared to be divided in loyalty between the consecrated king and the legitimate heir. It was at this critical time that Mugallan, the chief monk, got scared about the safety of the Tooth and Bowl relics of the Buddha and their temple as well as the *saṃgha* in residence there. Two Siṃhala claimants were about to fight a bloody war for the kingdom, and the relics of the Buddha, which some Buddhists describe as the holiest of the holies, were not safe. The chief monk could not trust anybody in the country except the Tamiḷ *Vēḷaikkārar* regiment who could be relied even to lay down their lives, if they pledge to defend the holy shrine. The monk was said to be associated with king's ministers, who must have been ministers of the deceased king. The *Vēḷaikkārars*, on their side, brought the chief of the *Vaḷaṅceyar*, their mercantile guild boss, and officers of *nakaram* 'town', the locality where they stayed. The link among the three groups closely allied to each other in enjoying autonomy, is clearly visible in the words of this inscription.<sup>49</sup>

It is also clear that not all *Vēḷaikkārars* were bound together as one body. There were *Vēḷaikkārars* who had taken service under Siṃhala kings. There is a Tamiḷ inscription from Raṅkoṭ vihāra premises, in which Cētarāyaṇ, a *Vēḷaikkārar* commander, identifies himself as the chief (of army) of *mahāmaṇḍala* and claims that he was Jayabāhu I's *niḷal*,<sup>50</sup> which could mean 'shadow' among other things. He was probably a body-guard of Jayabāhu I, the newly consecrated Siṃhala king.

<sup>49</sup> *BaT* 2, 737–754.

<sup>50</sup> *CTI* 1, 24–26.

It was the security of the Temple of the Tooth, along with the temple that housed the relics and the monks associated with the temple that was of primary concern. The rituals associated with the temple, endowments to the temple, and people who had sought refuge in the temple had to be safeguarded and maintained. These concerns are mentioned in the inscription, and the *Vēlaikkārar* regiment, with the concurrence of the other two associated bodies, accepts full responsibility for the security and maintenance of the temple. There was no reciprocal arrangement as the soldiers receive nothing in return except the honor of having the Tooth Relic temple named *mūnru kait tiruvēlai-kkāraṅ sriḍalatāy pperumpalli*<sup>51</sup> ‘Sacred Shrine [*perumpalli* in this context] of the Tooth of Honorable *Vēlaikkāraṅ* of the three divisions’.

It was the *Vēlaikkāra* regiment that assigned one soldier per unit for the protection of the temple and assigned one *vēli* of land for his maintenance. It was in an honorary capacity that the *Vēlaikkāras*, with deep respect for the Buddhist shrine held in great veneration by *Siṃhala* Buddhists, undertake the risk of death or destruction to themselves and to make good any loss to the temple, again on their own, to the best of their ability. They also take care to warn any possible violators, in their ranks, that they would suffer severe consequences. It was not just the violators, but also those who might incite violation and/or who might agree to do so were warned. They would be punished for infringement of the military code of the regiment. This could be like court-martial of the present day. Their religious susceptibilities, whether they were Buddhist or *Caiva/Vaiṇava*, have also been raised to invoke the evil consequences of heinous acts, according to *Caiva/Vaiṇava* and Buddhist scriptures.

The *Vēlaikkārar* regiments remained not only around *Polonaṟuvā*, the capital but also around *Tirukōṇamalai* in the northeast. The mercantile guild *Aiññūruvar* was very active at *Padaviya*, and their inscriptions mention that they were building *Caiva/Vaiṇava* temples and Buddhist shrines. A Sanskrit inscription at *Padaviya*, engraved in grantha characters of the thirteenth century, records the construction of a *vihāra* by *Lokanātha Daṇḍanāyaka* ‘*Lokanatha*, army commander’, who named it after the *Vēlaikkārarars* and placed it under their protection. There is no mention of any *Siṃhala* king. In fact, during the thirteenth century, the *Siṃhala* kings abandoned their capital in *Polonaṟuvā* and started their Drift to the Southwest, establishing their new capital first at *Dambadeṇiya*. The *Vēlaikkārarars*, attached to

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<sup>51</sup> *BaT* 2, 738.

Aiññūrruvar, seem to have the autonomy to build a Buddhist shrine and to maintain it as their very own, about two centuries after the fall of the Cōḷa rule. The Aiññūrruvar had already Civaṇ and Kāḷi temples at Padaviya.<sup>52</sup> Under not only no pressure from any Siṃhala Buddhist king, but also no inclination to curry favor with any Siṃhala authority, they seem to have established a *vikāram* on their own. The Tamiḷ of Tirukōṇamalai region seem to have patronized both Caiva temples and Buddhist monasteries equally well.

Another Tamiḷ inscription, which is dated in the 18<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Jayabāhu, also mentions Kaṇavati,<sup>53</sup> a *daṇḍanātha* ‘army commander’ taking the initiative to summon four sub-divisions of the Vēḷai-kkārar regiment stationed at Ututturai, near Tiriyāy, named the *vikāram* as *Vikkiramacalāmēkaṇ perumpalli* and instructed them to maintain the establishment. It is not clear whether Kaṇavati was an officer of the king or of the mercantile guild. Whatever it was, it seems that he had acted on his own. Vikramabāhu I, the de facto king from Polonaṇuvā, was still not reconciled with the *saṃgha* and many Buddhist institutions suffered from neglect. The fact that the *vikāram* had been named after a title of the deceased Vijayabāhu I and not after the de facto king Vikramabāhu I, implies the uncertainty prevailing in the country. Unlike in the case of the Slab inscription of the Vēḷai-kkārars, what this inscription mentions appears to be a low-key affair as this *palli* does not appear to be an important one and no Buddhist monk was involved in this arrangement. Probably there were no Siṃhala-speaking Buddhists around to care for this shrine. Kaṇavati should be considered an officer and not just a mercenary. He was not a merchant who was trying to please his clients or customers. There was no reciprocity. Even the four sub-divisions of the Vēḷai-kkārars were not receiving any remuneration for taking care of this *palli*, except having the honour of a half-Tamiḷ designation for it. As the *vikāram* was named after a deceased Siṃhala king, it may be that it had to carry on its Buddhist traditions as of yore.

It was not just the Tamiḷ Vēḷai-kkāra regiments that were active with merchant guilds. There were Tamiḷ *vīrakoṭi* ‘heroism flag (bearers)’ and Tamiḷ *erivīrar* ‘flinging heroes’ also. The former is mentioned in the Budumuttava inscription from Kurunāgala Dis-

<sup>52</sup> A. Veluppillai, “Some more records of *ticaiyāyirattu aññūrruvar*”, *CTI* 2, 7–22. Id. “Five more Inscriptions from Padaviya”, *CTI*, 23–31. K. Indrapala, “An Inscription of the time of Rajaraja Chola I from Padaviya”, *Epigraphia Tamulica* 1:1 (1971): 32–36.

<sup>53</sup> *BaT* 2, 699–703.

trict.<sup>54</sup> It is now a personal name among the Siṃhalas and is written as *Weerakkody* in English. The *erivīrar* regiment assumes prominence in the long Vihārahinna Tamil inscription from Daṃbulla in Mātālē District.<sup>55</sup> Mācēnakāmam, a village, has developed into a *paṭṭiṇam*, with the name *taṇmacākara-p-paṭṭiṇam*. The epithet *taṇmacākara* in Tamil is derived from *dharma sāgara* in Sanskrit and means ‘an ocean of *dharma*’ and in Īlam it could denote only the Buddha. The inscription is found within the premises of the ruins of a *vikāram*, indicating that the *paṭṭiṇam*, “town”, has established close ties with the local *saṃgha*. *Aiññūrruvar* and *nāṇātēci* were the mercantile guilds responsible for establishing this *paṭṭiṇam*. It was again the *erivīrar* regiment who got this inscription made, even though the inscription has the charters of the above two guilds. One of the *erivīrar*, known as *Nāṇātēciyāṇṭāṇ* was taken into custody by *Vēṇāṭaiyār* ‘the lord of *Vēṇāṭu*’, who kept him chained. The significance of the Tamil title in the Īlam context is not clear. The assembly of the *paṭṭiṇam* paid the ransom and got him released.

The *paṭṭiṇam* made the point of honouring the *erivīrar* by giving a silver amulet to each of the soldiers and by renaming the *paṭṭiṇam* as *Eriṇāntānam*, ‘abode of *erivīraṇ*.’ This record also brings out the way the three bodies, the merchants’ wing, the soldiers’ wing and the *paṭṭiṇam*/town interact closely in their matters of concern. Some reciprocity is mentioned in this record. The *erivīrar* gave up their right to collect lamp oil and the *nāṭṭuceṭṭi* gave up the right to collect money levies in the *paṭṭiṇam*. If any of the *erivīrar* violated this promise, he would be stripped of his post and his instrument of authority and then beaten up severely. If he died, he would be given a dog’s burial. Looking at different punishments meted out to violators in different inscriptions makes one realize how autonomous these institutions were and how military discipline must have been maintained. There is no mention of royal authority. Eight *erivīrar* have signed the document.<sup>56</sup> The very first soldier had the title *nāṭṭuceṭṭi* ‘trader of the region.’ This indicates that the distinction between merchant and soldier was not always clear cut.

One can make a few inferences about the flourishing Tamil institutions of Īlam where Tamil inscriptions are generally assigned to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, some of them on paleographical

<sup>54</sup> A. Veluppillai, “A Note on a Fragmentary Tamil Inscription from Budumuttava”, *Journal of Tamil Studies* 32 (1987): 57–66.

<sup>55</sup> *BaT* 2, 713–722.

<sup>56</sup> *BaT* 2, 699–703.



grounds. Some scholars have stretched the date to 1250 A.D., especially because of the Sanskrit inscription of the thirteenth century from Padaviya which mentions a Buddhist monastery, named after the Tamiḷ Vēḷaikkāras and which was to be maintained by the latter. Most inscriptions which could be dated from the regnal year of kings belong to the period from 1110 to 1153 when chaotic conditions prevailed in Rājaraṭa, the king's domain. Vikramabāhu I and Gajabāhu II, his son, were denied their legitimate rights to the throne. They controlled the capital Polonaṟuvā and the northern portion of the country as de facto rulers till 1153 while the southern half of the island, consisting of Rohaṇa and Pihiti Raṭa, were under the control of Mānābharana and his brothers. Neither faction could dislodge the other from each other's strongholds. Even though Jayabāhu I died soon after his accession, nobody else was crowned king of Laṃkā because nobody could control the whole island. The fiction of dating the deceased Jayabāhu as ruler of the country in inscriptions was kept up till 1153 when Parākramabāhu I was crowned king of the whole island.

The *Cūḷavaṃsa* 61.54; 70.53 was critical of Vikramabāhu I and Gajabāhu II, accusing them of harming the Buddhist saṃgha and other Buddhist institutions and favoring alien faiths, which must have been Caiva/Vaiṇava sects. When Vikramabāhu I became ruler, both moveable and immoveable property of the Buddhist temples were plundered. Foreign soldiers, presumably non-Buddhists, were awarded with some of the booty. Some Buddhist monks fled with the Tooth relic and the Bowl relic to Rohaṇa to make sure of their safety. Non-Buddhist soldier beneficiaries seem to have developed into nobles during Gajabahu II's reign. The king's domain of Rājaraṭa was also said to have been filled with heretics. The *Cūḷavaṃsa* claims that heretical nobles from abroad were fighting along with him when he was fighting against Parakramabahu I. The *Kōṇēcar Kalvetṭu*, a Tamiḷ chronicle of the Kōṇēcar Temple of Tirukōṇamalai, gives prominence to Gajabāhu as a major benefactor, who had put up imposing structures for that Civaṇ temple. He seems to have resided occasionally at Kantalāy where he had a *gal-āsana* 'stone seat' with a Tamiḷ inscription which is now almost defaced.<sup>57</sup> This Kantalāy village adjoined a large irrigation tank of the same name, which is within a few miles of the Kōṇēcar temple. It was during this period that Tamiḷs, especially officers, came forward to bolster Buddhist institutions.

The Cōḷa emperors were staunch Caivas and they constructed a Caiva temple in Polonaṟuvā, as soon as they established their capital

<sup>57</sup> A. Veluppillai, "Two Inscriptions from Kantalay", *CTI* 2, 37-41.

there. Other Tamil inscriptions during the period of their rule mention patronage of Civan temples in and around Polonaṟuvāi, Tirukōṇamalai, Padaviya and Mātōṭṭam, but there is no explicit mention of imperial patronage. One Tamil inscription, dated on paleographical grounds to the early eleventh century, mentions the establishment of a Buddhist *paḷḷi* by Aiññūruvar: the Bōlāppaḷḷi of Bahicinakāy in Polonaṟuvā area. This was just a two-line inscription. It is mentioned as the *paḷḷi* of the five hundred of the thousand directions whose fame spreads to eighteen lands.<sup>58</sup> The name of the *paḷḷi* seems to betray Kannaḍa language influence. These merchant guilds of South India had their origins in Karnāṭaka. That these guilds could have Kannaḍa membership is made clear from the Slab inscription of the Vēlai-kkārars, which mentions *vaṭukar* [Kannaḍa and Telugu speaking people, as northerners to Tamilakam Tamils] as a constituent in their organization. So, it is quite possible that Kannaḍa merchants were also in their guild.

There were other Tamil inscriptions which mention the regnal years of Jayabāhu I which deal with Tamils extending patronage to Buddhist institutions. There was a Tamil inscription from Puḷiyaṅkuḷam, in Anurātapuram District, towards the border with Tirukōṇamalai district.<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that this village retains its Tamil name up to modern times. This might indicate that local people there were Tamils till recently. The record is fragmentary, and several key expressions were reconstructed. The date is most probably 1114 A.D., the fourth year of Vikramabāhu I's de facto rule. The donor's title is mentioned as *nāṭāḷvāṇ* 'chief of region,' a Tamil title which occurs frequently in Tamilakam inscriptions. He is an administrative officer, and there is no indication that he is acting under anybody else's instruction. It is surprising that this title occurs in Rājaraṭa, more than four decades after the disappearance of Cōḷa rule. The Buddha is also referred to as *puttar mahādevar*. An endowment to Uttama Cōḷaṅ Ḍs̄varam, a Civan temple from Ātakaḍa, found near a Buddhist shrine near Polonaṟuvā, has already referred to Civan as *mātēvar*.<sup>60</sup> The titles *mahādevar* and *mātēvar* 'great Deva' are variants of the same term. The Ātakaḍa inscription must have been brought to its present site from a ruined Civan temple. It mentions the 28<sup>th</sup> regnal year, but the name of the ruler is missing. It might be Rājarāja I's regnal year because Uttama Cōḷaṅ was his beloved uncle

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<sup>58</sup> *CTI* 2, 12.

<sup>59</sup> *BaT* 2, 754–757.

<sup>60</sup> *CTI* 1, 20–23.

and predecessor on the Cōḷa throne (973–985). On this argument, the Ātakāḍa inscription with the title *mātēvar* for Civaṇ, belongs to 1013 AD. It is also worth noting that Civaṇ temples in Kēraḷam are called *mahādevar* temples. In the Puḷiyaṅkuḷam inscription, this epithet is applied to the Buddha.

Another Tamil inscription from Morakakavelai in the Tambaṅkavai area, adjoining Tirukōṇamalai District, which is dated the 28<sup>th</sup> year of Jayabāhu I, equivalent to Gajabāhu II's de facto rule in 1138, mentions that Ulakāyakittaṇ, who had service tenure land, gave a *vēli* of that land to the Buddha.<sup>61</sup> More than 60 years after the disappearance of Cōḷa rule the land measure of *vēli* seemed to have been in use in the heart of Rājaraṭa. It is curious that he just mentions *puttarkku* (for the Buddha) in the inscription but no name of the Buddhist institution. But he takes care to discourage any future possible violator of his charity after his death. The violator would have destroyed the *mūṇru kōyil* 'three temples.' The three *kōyils* seem to refer to the *tri ratna* – the Buddha, the *dhamma* and the *saṃgha*. The usage of the term *kōyil* in this context implies the sense of veneration the donor had for the concept. The violator also would have wronged the *mūṇru kai* (= 'three arms [of the army]'). That the *vēḷaikkāra* army had such three arms was mentioned in the Polonaṇuvā Slab inscription of the *vēḷaikkārars*. As this statement says indirectly that the violator would suffer punishment from the *vēḷaikkārars*, its implications are that they too were in that area, that they would punish violators of Buddhist charity and that they could punish on their own, without waiting for instruction from a centralized government. The *vēḷaikkārars* stationed in the Tirukōṇamalai region might have exercised some authority over this location. It is important to note that punishment by the king for a violator of charity to the Buddhist institution was not mentioned. The Tamil officer appears to be patronizing a Buddhist institution without caring for the attitude of the de facto king.

One pillar Tamil inscription from Polonaṇuvā, which begins with the 38<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Jayabāhu I, mentions that it was the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Gajabāhu I.<sup>62</sup> This inscription has helped historians conclude that Vikramabāhu I must have been de facto king till 1133. This inscription should be dated in 1148. Ātittamakātēvan deposited 102 *kācus* and stipulated that interest at the rate of one *uri* per *kācu* per month should be supplied to the *puttatēvar* and *vērattālvār* of the *vikāram* at Vijayarājapuram (Polonaṇuvā). The Tamil term of *uri*, a liquid

<sup>61</sup> BaT 2, 722–726.

<sup>62</sup> BaT 2, 706–709.

measure is mentioned. The term *vēram*, as a shortened form of *vikāram* already occurs in *velkam vikāram/rājarājapperumpalli* inscriptions in the eleventh century. Two different Buddha icons appear to be distinguished here on some basis which is not clear. The epithets *ālvār* and *tēvar*, the first one associated with Tamil Vainava saints and the second one associated with both Tamil Vainava and Caiva traditions, have been used in a Buddhist context both at Nākaṭṭiṇam and from different sites in Īlam . The violators of the charity had been threatened that they would suffer the consequences of violating royal orders. This Buddhist institution was located in the capital city and the king was expected to enforce order. The inscription gives executive authority not just to Gajabāhu I but also to his successors.

A pillar Tamil inscription from Hiṅgurakgoḍa was dated to 1150<sup>63</sup> Umpīla Ayittan, who was attached to the *akampaṭi* group of soldiers in the service of Gajabāhu II, sold an *amaṇam* of land which had been given to him as service tenure, and invested the proceeds for a site of the Buddha at Pātoṇi Māsār. The word ‘*amaṇam*’ is a very rare word. The gloss of the *Tamil Lexicon* as “twenty thousand arecanuts” does not seem to have any bearing on the meaning of the term in Tamil epigraphical usage. The *Muṇṇīśvaram* Tamil inscription<sup>64</sup> is the only record that settles the meaning of the term as referring to a land measure. It is still not clear how much extent of land is denoted by this word. Pātoṇi Māsār seems to be a place-name, the significance of which is unknown. It is not clear why the site of the Buddha was not specified as a shrine or *vikāram*. This gift is a clear indication that it was just subsidizing the expenses of a Buddhist institution not taking over of the institution. It is a case of a military officer acting on his own. He who violates this charity will be deemed to have committed an offence against the concerned Buddhist site and will go to hell.

There is an interesting Tamil inscription which has come to light from Mānkaṇāy in Tirukōṇamalai District.<sup>65</sup> It is dated to 1153, the 43<sup>rd</sup> regnal year of Jayabāhu I, the last year of Gajabāhu II, and the year of accession of Parākramabāhu I as the king of the whole island. Mintan Korran, the supervisor of the palanquin bearers of Gajabāhu II, had recorded this inscription. The lands which he had as service tenure were transferred as *pūmi tānam* ‘gift of land’ to *veykavēratt-ālvār* ‘Lord (Buddha) of Veykavikāram.’ After Gajabāhu’s defeat at

<sup>63</sup> *BaT* 2, 709–712.

<sup>64</sup> *CTI* 1, 37–43.

<sup>65</sup> *BaT* 2, 757–767.

the hands of Parākramabāhu, Mānābharaṇa I, from Rohaṇa, a cousin of both Parākramabāhu and Gajabāhu, intervened in their war to occupy Rājaraṭa for a short while. Mānābharaṇa directed that Gajabāhu's order should be honored. This is the only record where a Tamil officer seems to have acted under the order of his boss to transfer his service tenure land to a *vikāram*. Gajabāhu seems to have softened his stand in relation to Buddhist institutions, when he found that he could not resist Parākramabāhu who was backed by the *saṃgha*. Violators of the charity would go to hell. The solemn declaration was made in the name of the Buddha and in the name of Vallavaraiyar [Vigneśvara/Vikkiṅēcuvarar 'the god of obstacles', a Caiva/Vaiṇava god]. This indicates that possible violators could be either Buddhists or Caiva/Vaiṇava and they would be liable to go to hell in either case.

There are no datable Tamil inscriptions patronizing Buddhist institutions during the reigns of Vijayabāhu I and Parākramabāhu I as those kings patronized them lavishly. There is one Tamil inscription from the reign of Niśśaṅkamalla (1187–1196).<sup>66</sup> The king's name indicates his Kaliṅga connection but he was mentioned as Parākramabāhu I's nephew. He identified himself as a Buddhist and he was a great king who must have patronized Buddhism lavishly. The inscription from Paṇḍuvasnuvara refers to the establishment of a *pirivuṇa* at Sripura nakar. It was dated to 1192. Parākrama Atikāri, a vanquisher of the Five (= the Pāṇṭiyas), who was a grandson of *cenevi nātaṅ* (= *senāpati*) *Mēnai*, established the Parākrama Atikārip Pirivuṇa to flourish at the town of Śripura to make the monastery and the temple there pre-eminent. This is a military officer, from a military family. The grandfather of the donor might have served Parākramabāhu I. That the donor had to vanquish the Pāṇṭiyas indicates war against them. During the latter half of the twelfth century, during the reigns of both Parākramabāhu I and Niśśaṅkamalla, the Pāṇṭiya princes were fighting against each other to claim the Pāṇṭiya throne against the Cōḷas and rival claimants to their throne sought help either from the Cōḷas or from Īlam. The Cōḷa Empire tried to maintain their hold with support to some of the Pāṇṭiya princes. So there were proxy wars in the Pāṇṭiya country where armies from the Cōḷas and the Siṃhalas were fighting on opposite sides. Niśśaṅkamalla left an inscription at Rāmeśvaram (Rāma-Īśvara) temple where he claims that he established a temple called Niśśaṅka-Īśvara, presumably by renovating Rāma-Īśvara. He must have been fighting a ruler, supported by the

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<sup>66</sup> BaT 2, 727.

Cōlas.<sup>67</sup> The military officer, mentioned in the Pañḍuvasnuvara inscription, probably found an opening for a distinctive form of patronage for Buddhism in attempting to create scholars among Buddhist clergy. The *pirivuṇa* is an institution for higher education of the Buddhist monks.

All the six datable Tamil inscriptions in the twelfth century after Vijayabāhu I, where insular Tamils extend patronage to Buddhism, have donors who are clearly not merchants. Three donors seem clearly to be military officers, but none of them can be considered mercenary as they were not after pecuniary gain through their patronage.

### 3 Comments on Buddhism –Related Developments in Pre-Pallava, Pallava and later periods

Peter Schalk's periodization of the history of Buddhism of the pre-colonial period of Tamilakam needs some elucidation and other remarks at some boundary lines. Peter Schalk was dealing with the pre-colonial period, the end of which is roughly dated to the sixteenth century. According to him, there are four main periods in Buddhism-related developments of Tamilakam:

1. The Pallava period (ca. 400 to ca. 850)
2. The imperial Cōla period (ca. 850 to ca. 1300)
3. The Pāñṭiya period (ca. 1300 to ca. 1500).
4. The Vijayanagar period (ca.1400 to ca. 1600)

I admit that there is always some problem in arguing that social and cultural changes occurred within boundaries of dynastic rule. Still there seems to be some overlap between (3) and (4). I suggest that we should look into (2), (3) and (4). Peter Schalk's book covers the pre-colonial period but stops with the period of the imperial Cōlas. So (3) and (4) do not seem to have anything significant on Buddhism-related developments among the Tamils. A Pāñṭiya period intervenes between (2) and (4). When does that begin and when does that end? The Cōla dynasty, carrying over the imperial title, disappears forever from 1279. After 1215, it was on steep decline. The Pāñṭiyas were on the ascendant and started challenging the Cōla supremacy. Some other

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<sup>67</sup> G. C. Mendis, *Early History of Ceylon*, Reprint (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1996), 65–66.

feudatories of the Cōlas were also threatening the empire. The Hoysalas of southern Karnāṭaka were expanding almost up to Tirucci in the Cōla kingdom. The Hoysalas had to intervene to save the Cōlas about the middle of the thirteenth century. By 1251, the Pāṇṭiyas have become the imperial power, with the humbled Cōlas surviving in the heartland of the Cōla kingdom. There were repeated Muslim invasions of the Pāṇṭiya kingdom from the Delhi Sultanate from 1310, and within two decades most of Tamiḷakam, with the Pāṇṭiya capital Maturai, becomes Maturai Sultanate. After about fifty years, Vijayanagar absorbs Maturai Sultanate. In the southern districts of the Pāṇṭiya kingdom, the Pāṇṭiyas continued to maintain their rule till about 1600. If there is going to be a Pāṇṭiya period, it should start by 1251 so that about 60 years of their real dominance can be covered. There is some justification to end the Vijayanagar period in ca 1600 as Vijayanagar declined rapidly after 1565. Some of the west European powers established fortified trading stations along the coast of Tamiḷakam and Kēraḷam and gradually actively intervened in political developments. Does the colonial period start from ca 1600? He could have been more explicit.

Peter Schalk brings forward the beginning of established Buddhism in Tamiḷakam to 400 AD, based on the discovery of Buddhist archaeological remains only from that period and the absence of epigraphic evidence as well as clear literary evidence for the presence or influence of Buddhism<sup>68</sup> even though Tamiḷ has considerable source materials for some centuries before that period. He cites Aśokan inscriptions to show that the latter did not say explicitly anywhere that he sent missionaries for the propagation of Buddhism. Peter Schalk does not give credence to later sources and Chinese travel accounts which could not be accommodated with the available facts.<sup>69</sup> He had shown most of what Shu Hikosaka was trying to establish as a new perspective of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam was untenable through arguments based on critical historical philological methods.<sup>70</sup> Nākaçāmi has given his own arguments to show that *potiyil* = *potalaka* (mythical residence of Avalokita in Mahāyāna Buddhism), an equation which Shu Hikosaka introduced for the first time in his book, has no basis in facts.<sup>71</sup> The other four researchers mentioned in the introduction of this article have not commented on Shu Hikosaka by name. But they

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<sup>68</sup> BaT 1, 430–446.

<sup>69</sup> BaT 1, 285–294.

<sup>70</sup> BaT 1, 340–347.

<sup>71</sup> BaT 1, 124–127.

seem to write something else, when they write about Buddhism among the Tamils.

The conclusion of Peter Schalk about the date for the establishment of Buddhism in Tamiḷakam seems to contradict my view expressed in the 2002 volume<sup>72</sup> of the influence of Tamiḷakam Buddhism on Nāgadīpa/Nākanāṭu Buddhism in Yāḷppāṇam and adjacent parts of north Īlam before the fourth century. I have to reformulate my view. There is no conflict between Peter Schalk and myself on Āndhra influence on the Vallipuram Gold Plate inscription and on the Buddha statue, unearthed from Vallipuram, which is now located in Thailand and in limestone *stūpas*, discovered at Kantarōṭai. Āndhra traders might have had contacts with Nākanāṭu and Buddhism might have been established there, even before it was introduced in Tamiḷakam. Āndhra Buddhism was disseminated in Prākṛit, so that practice might have continued among Tamils in Īlam too. The Dravidian influence in the Vallipuram Gold Plate inscription might have been due to influences both from Āndhra and/or Tamiḷ influence in Nākanāṭu.

Even though Peter Schalk agrees with the main thrust of my arguments about the significance of the Vallipuram Gold Plate, he seems to differ from me on the identification of the king Vahaya, mentioned in that inscription. On this point he agrees with Seneraṭ Parānavitana that it should be Vasabha,<sup>73</sup> a second century Anurātapuram king because almost with exactly the same wording and paleography but with the name Vahabha another inscription mentions the establishment of a *vihāra* in the Eastern Province. I can accept his identification and reformulate my view thus. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, this Vasabha is said to have come from Uttaradesa, which must have included Yāḷppāṇam and adjoining areas. He founded the new royal dynasty of the Lambakarṇas which ruled from Anurātapuram for centuries. He probably spoke Prākṛit and he was an ardent Buddhist. He proved his credentials to the *saṃgha* by establishing Buddhist *vihāras* in the north and the east.

I suggest that it is important to examine whether rulers of this dynasty spoke Tamiḷ also and whether they interacted closely with the Nāgas. Vasabha's grandson was Gajabāhu I. Even though Gajabāhu I - Ceṅkuṭṭuvan synchronism is now discredited for chronological studies in Tamiḷakam—it is quite possible that the *Cilappatikāram* narra-

<sup>72</sup> A. Veluppillai, "The History of Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Ilaṅkai", *BT* 1, 145–166.

<sup>73</sup> *BaT* 1, 239.



tive in Tamil preserves the memory of a historical event at a later time when Kayavāku (Gajabāhu) of Ilaṅkai, surrounded by the sea, attended the inauguration of Pattiṇi worship in Vañci, the Cēra capital and brought that worship to Ilaṅkai. In that case, this reference indicates that he took interest in cultural and religious developments in Tamilakam and brought them to the island. The successor of Gajabāhu I was his father-in-law, who was identified as a—Nāga. During the third and fourth centuries AD, many kings from Anurātapuram identify themselves as—Nāga. This might be due to constant intermarriages between Vasabha's dynasty and the Nāgas, which might indicate that Prākṛit Buddhism enabled a section of the Nāgas to be integrated into the major community of the island.

Peter Schalk points out that Buddhism among Tamils in Īlam seems to have been established in the pre-Pallava period, based on epigraphic evidence. Īlam has thousands of Prakrit inscriptions, written in Brāhmī script. No entire Tamil inscription written in Tamil Brāhmī has been discovered in Īlam. Influence of Tamil Brāhmī can be traced in ancient Īlam Brāhmī.<sup>74</sup> Some inscriptions, especially of the north and east and the capital Anurātapuram mention the names of Tamil donors to Buddhist institutions. Many terms in those inscriptions make sense only when they are compared to usages in ancient Tamil.<sup>75</sup> So Peter Schalk concludes that Buddhism in ancient Īlam was promulgated in Prakrit, and Tamils cooperated with the dominant Prākṛit speakers in institution-building for Buddhism.<sup>76</sup>

The *Mahāvamsa* narrates a tradition about the establishment of Abhayagiri Vihāra. King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi of the first century destroyed a Caiṇa establishment under Giri and built the Buddhist Vihāra over its ruins. According to the *Mahāvamsa* 10:77, Paṇḍukābhaya, the third king of Īlam, patronized a Caiṇa monk and gave him a lodging. I think that this must have been the donation that developed into the Caiṇa establishment under Giri. There were Caiṇas in the Pāṇṭiya kingdom and it is understandable that a Pāṇṭiya dynasty ruler could have given patronage to a Caiṇa monk who had moved to Anurātapuram. There

<sup>74</sup> A. Velupillai, "Commonness in Early Paleography of Tamilnadu and Sri Laṃkā", *Proceedings and Transactions of the Fifth International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies, Madurai* (Madurai: International Association of Tamil Research, 1981), 111–120.

<sup>75</sup> A. Velupillai, "Tamil Influence in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Early Brahmi Inscriptions—Part 1", *Journal of Tamil Studies* 16 (1979): 63–78. Id. "Tamil Influence in Sri Lanka with Special Reference to Early Brahmi Inscriptions—Part 2", *Journal of Tamil Studies* 17 (1980): 6–19.

<sup>76</sup> *BaT* 1, 225–226.

is an anomaly about the date because on the date given in the *Mahāvamsa* the Jains might not have been in Maturai. But modern researchers reject the highly improbable long reigns assigned by the chronicle to rulers before Devānampiya Tissa. When Vijaya, the first legendary ruler died without an heir to the throne from his marriage to a Pāṇṭiya princess, he was succeeded by Paṇḍuvasudeva and after the latter by Paṇḍukābhaya. Even though the *Mahāvamsa* has taken pains to hide the true identity of the rulers who go by the name Paṇḍu, it makes sense to infer that as there was no heir to king Vijaya, the successors must have come from the queen's Pāṇṭiya dynasty.<sup>77</sup>

Whatever the origin of the Abhayagiri Vihāra might have been, Tamiḷs seem to have maintained a close relationship with it. Soon after its origin, a Tamiḷ monk seems to have built a terrace for Tamiḷ householders, mainly traders, on a boulder close to the *vihāra*. Inscription no. 94 in Paranavitāna's edition of ancient Brāhmī inscriptions deals with this information. Peter Schalk has carried out a critical study of this inscription and improved on Paranavitāna's and Vēluppillai's elucidations.<sup>78</sup> Very soon, rivalry develops between Abhayagiri Vihāra and Mahāvihāra, established by Mahinda, an Aśokan emissary during Devānampiya Tissa's reign. The Mahāvihāra followed a conservative line to preserve what they considered pure Buddhism. Peter Schalk<sup>79</sup> and Anne Monius<sup>80</sup> mention details of Buddhist monks from Tamiḷakam who were loyal to Mahāvihāra. Patmanātaṅ mentions a recently discovered fragmentary Tamiḷ inscription from the premises of the Abhayagiri vihāra,<sup>81</sup> which could be dated to the eighth century on paleographical grounds. It mentions the building of a platform sixteen feet by sixteen feet with dressed up stones by the side of a Buddhist shrine. This is proof that Tamiḷ Buddhists existed in Anurātapuram in the eighth century. It could indicate that monks from Abhayagiri maintained contacts with different parts of South and Southeast Asia. Abhayagiri vihāra went for innovations probably because of the developments in Buddhism from the outside world. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, kings generally settled the disputes by taking the side of the Mahāvihāra. Under the influence of Choḷika Saṃghamitta, king Mahāseṇa in the fourth century demolished the

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<sup>77</sup> A. Veluppillai, "The Pandya Rule at the Beginning of Ancient Lankan History", *Airāvati (Felicitation Volume in honour of Irvatham Mahadevan)* (2008): 263–274.

<sup>78</sup> *BaT* 1, 348–373.

<sup>79</sup> *BaT* 2, 523–534.

<sup>80</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 121–127).

<sup>81</sup> *BaT* 2, 682–690.

Mahāvihāra and punished its monks.<sup>82</sup> But the situation was made good for the Mahāvihāra during the reign of his successor.

Anne Monius speaks only about Tamilakam and excludes the Tamil factor in Īlam in her study. I feel that there is enough evidence to imagine that the north of Īlam had some individuality of its own from early historical times. She seems to reject the identification of Mañipallavam of the *Mañimēkalai* with Nayiñātīvu and ignores the identification of Nākanātu of the *Mañimēkalai* with Nāgadīpa of the *Mahāvamsa*. The first identification seems to have been made first in the *Tamil Lexicon*, in its gloss on *Mañipallavam*, even though it does not mention the name of *Nayiñātīvu* as such. I made both identifications in an article, published in 1997.<sup>83</sup> Even though I am aware that no archaeological remains have come to light in Nayiñātīvu, except for a twelfth century Tamil inscription of Parākramabāhu I, which deals with foreign trade overseas and with shipwreck and consequences, which itself might indicate that this island was situated in a strategic location. Both Tamils and Siṃhalaspeaking Buddhists seem to accept this identification. There is no evidence that the Siṃhala-speaking Buddhists care much for the *Mañimēkalai* account, but they believe in the *Mahāvamsa* account of the second visit of the Buddha to the Nāgadīpa where the Nāgas gifted him a throne. They have established a Nāgadīpa Vihāraya in that island, and thousands of pilgrims visit the island annually except during the time of the recent armed ethnic conflict.

According to Anne Monius, it is not possible to identify the Mañipallavam as it is totally a fantasy. She says:

The contours of the extended Buddhist world are both terrestrial and fantastic, alternately portrayed with realism or in vividly creative strokes of imagination. Mañipallavam, some several hundred miles (in Tamil, 30 yōcanai, Sanskrit yojana) to the south of Pukār (vi. 211–212), for example, is squarely located, for any reader with the slightest geographical sense, near no known island or tract of land and serves as home for two important and other-worldly sites: the bejeweled lotus seat of the Buddha that

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<sup>82</sup> BaT 1, 444–446.

<sup>83</sup> A. Veluppillai, “Historical Background of the *Mañimēkalai* and Indigenization of Buddhism”, A Buddhist Woman’s Path to Enlightenment. Proceedings of a Workshop on the Tamil Narrative *Mañimēkalai*, Uppsala University May 25–29, 1995. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Historia Religionum* 13 (Uppsala: ACTA, 1997), 53–94.

grants knowledge of former births (vii. 43–53) and Kōmuki Lake which harbors the Buddha’s bowl relic, until Maṇimēkalai appears to claim it.<sup>84</sup>

The *Mahāvamsa* speaks about a gemset throne in Nāgadīpa, hallowed by the visit of the Buddha himself and that was the reason for Siṃhala Buddhists to make it a pilgrimage site. I cannot understand why she wants to take *Maṇipallavam* several hundred miles away from Pukār. Wikipedia.com gives the following elucidation on *yojana*: Yojana is a Vedic measure of distance used in ancient India. The exact measurement is disputed amongst scholars with distances being given between 6 to 15 kilometres (4 to 9 miles).<sup>85</sup>

So, I say that the distance can be anything between a minimum of 120 miles and a maximum of 270 miles, which cannot be described as several hundred miles away. About this word, the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (New Edition) by M. Monier-Williams (reprint 1976) has the following to say:

...a particular measure of distance, sometimes regarded as equivalent to 4 or 5 English miles, but more correctly = 4 krosas or about 9 miles; according to other calculations = 21/2 English miles; and according to some = 8 krosas.

Taking these comments together, it is clear that the distance mentioned as *yojana* is not clear cut and it could be anything more than 120 miles. We have no means of finding out how much distance Cāt-tanār, the author, could have meant.

The *Tamil Lexicon* has the following to say on the *Maṇipallavam*: “An island, 30 *yōjanas* to the southeast of Kāvīrippūmpattīnam, said to contain a footprint of the Buddha on a pedestal.” The *Tamil Lexicon* takes the word *Maṇipallavam* from the *Maṇimēkalai* and equates it to the *Mahāvamsa* account about Nāgadīpa. Nayiṇātīvu is a small island of about four square miles, the westernmost of the seven islands attached to Yālppāṇam, except for Neṭuntīvu, which is far away from the cluster of the other six islands.

About the identification of *Maṇipallavam* with *Nayiṇātīvu*, Peter Schalk says that it stands on shaky foundation as no archaeological evidence has come to light.<sup>86</sup> Only because *Maṇipallavam* has been described as a lonely small island with its adjacent mainland to the east described as Nākanāṭu in the *Maṇimēkalai*, the identification I suggested seems credible.

<sup>84</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 103.

<sup>85</sup> en.wikipedia.org/wiki/yojana (Accessed: July 11, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> *BaT* 1, 94–95.

There is an alternate suggestion also. Probably to get over the non-existence of any ancient Buddhist remains in Nayaṅāṭivu, the late Professor of Tamil of the University of Ceylon, Kantacāmi Kaṇapattipillai, who taught me the *Maṇimēkalai* text about fifty-seven years ago, identified Maṇipallavam with Vallipuram village, situated along the northeast coast of Yāḷppaṇam peninsula (oral communication in class room setting). An ancient Buddhist icon, which has been brought to Thailand, and an ancient inscription of about the second century A.D., had been unearthed from there. This satisfies the need for archaeological and epigraphic remains. Remains of the foundation of ancient buildings as well as ancient coins and megalithic urns have been discovered there.

The present Vallipuram village is situated about two miles from the sea coast where mounds of sand dunes intervene for more than a mile between the coast and the inhabited portion of the village. There is an *āḷvār/Māyavaṇ* (Viṣṇu) temple, located close to the site, where the Buddhist remains were discovered. In between this temple and the village site, with about three hundred metres or more on either side, there is a big lotus pond. This could have been the Kōmuki pond from which the bowl relic appeared. The temple area might have looked like an isolated area to the heroine *Maṇimēkalai* and *Āputtiraṇ*, because human settlement, if we project the present situation, was far away. But the problem here was the description of Maṇipallavam as an island which Vallipuram was not and the location of Nākanāṭu to the east of Maṇipallavam while Vallipuram is located in the northeastern coast of Nāgadīpa. There is no land to the east of Vallipuram. I think that the text *Maṇimēkalai* seems to have combined facts and fantasies over the tradition about Nākanāṭu and a gem-set throne in Nāgadīpa, mentioned in the *Mahāvamsa*.

Anne Monius has the following to say:

Although the historical record is scanty, the *Maṇimēkalai* provides several hints that that this imagined connection between Kanchipuram and Cāvakam does not arise from nothing, that it is not a wholly created space like the magical island of Maṇipallavam.<sup>87</sup>

I wish to point out that as the *Maṇimēkalai* text is dated in the sixth century, Kāñcipuram, as the capital of the Pallavas, was just rising to prominence. Cāttaṅār might have had high hopes about Kāñcipuram emerging as a great Buddhist centre to replace Pukār. But it was not to be. Mahendravarman I, who ruled up to 630 AD, managed to reach

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<sup>87</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 111.

Tirucci rock and mentioned in an inscription left there about his dream of controlling Kāviri delta. The Pallava dominance in South India became secure only when they began to control the Kāviri delta. Peter Schalk, after an exhaustive search, points out that Kāñcipuram had some vihāras but never attained the status of a great Buddhist centre. Historically, it was Nākapattinam which replaced Pukār.<sup>88</sup> As Anne Monius dismisses Maṇipallavam as mere fantasy, she ignores Nākanāṭu also, which included Maṇipallavam. The names of the king, queen and princess of Nākanāṭu are mentioned as having conch-bangle as part of their names. Yālppāṇam Lagoon, especially around Nayiṇātīvu, is wellknown for conch fishery. Conch remains have been discovered in archaeological sites in various parts of Yālppāṇam from about the beginning of the historical period. When editing the Valipuram Gold Plate in 1936 in *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Parānavitāna himself commented that at one time the northern peninsula (Nāgadīpa) and the rest of the mainland (Laṃkāḍīpa) might have been considered as two separate entities.

Nāga worship might have been very important among certain communities in Tamiḷakam. Nair/Nāyar, the dominant community in Kēraḷam, which was part of ancient Tamiḷakam, have continued to keep Nāga shrines within their home compounds. Though not popular to the same extent, the northern province of Īlam preserves quite popular Nāga shrines. On the eastern coast of Yālppāṇam peninsula is a Nākar Kōyil ‘Cobra Temple’ and a village of that name. This temple attracts pilgrims from other parts of the peninsula and beyond during annual festival times. Nayiṇātīvu has a large Nākapūcaṇi Temple (Temple for goddess having cobra as ornament) which also attracts pilgrims from far away places during festival times. What I am trying to illustrate is that Nāga worship seems to have prevailed from early times and what we in north Īlam have now seem to be its remnant. This cobra worship could have linked Kēraḷam, which was a part of ancient Tamiḷakam and the north of Īlam. Some Tamiḷ poets and musicians mentioned in the earliest strata of Tamiḷ literature are identified as *Nāka(nār)*, probably signifying their Nāga identity.

The legend about the three visits of the Buddha to three different locations in the island of Īlam, far away from each other, raises the possibility that at least the author of the legend must have considered the three regions as separate entities. On the first visit of the Buddha to Mahiyaṅgana, by the side of the Mahāveligaṅgā, he had to scare away the Yakkha inhabitants to flee to the highlands, as they were

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<sup>88</sup> BaT 1, 395–397; BaT 2, 534.

considered unfit to receive the message of the Buddha. The Buddha had a much better reception during his second visit to the Nāgas in Nāgadīpa and in his third visit to the Nāgas in Kaliyāni (modern Kālaniya), close to modern Colombo. It was the Kaliyāni Nāga ruler who persuaded the Buddha to leave his footprint on Camantam/ Sumanakuṭa, what is now Adam's Peak. It is important to note here that Cāttanār introduces in his narrative allusions to locations said to have been sanctified by the second and third visits of the Buddha to the two Nāga chieftaincies and completely ignores his first visit to the Yakkhas as well as what the Siṃhalas claim as interactions of their ancestors with the Yakkhas as well as their traditions in Anurātapuram. I think that he apparently realized a Tamiḷ connection in the *Maṇimēkalai* narrative linking Pukār, Maturai, Vañci and Kāñcipuram of Tamiḷakam, Nākanāṭu (including Maṇipallavam) and Camantam of Īḷam, and Nākapuram of Cāvakam.

Anne Monius compares the importance given to Akattiyaṇ<sup>89</sup> first in the *Maṇimēkalai* and then in the *Vīracōḷiyam* in a Buddhist context as a culture hero and master of Tamiḷ language, but in a Caiva context he is extolled continuously and profusely in Tamiḷakam and secondly in many Southeastern countries, especially in Java inscriptions and literary texts. I find this very interesting. It is difficult to conclude where this tradition could have originated and then spread to the other side of the Indian Ocean. I am not aware of any Siṃhala source which extols Akattiyaṇ. Tamils in Tirukōṇamalai District in the eastern coast of Īḷam have preserved a Civaṇ temple with the name *akattiyaṭ tāpanam* 'establishment of Akattiyaṇ'.

Peter Schalk had quoted and discussed Burton Stein's class conflict theory which allegedly explained the underlying reality of the *bhakti* movement in Tamiḷakam, as involving a conflict between agricultural classes of peasants on the Caiva/Vaiṇava side and mercantile and tribal groups on the Buddhist and Caiṇa side. Peter Schalk has pointed out that mercantile groups in Tamiḷakam, especially during the Pallava period, were not powerful as imagined by Burton Stein. There was no evidence of collaboration between the Buddhists and the Caiṇas, and there was no evidence that tribal groups cooperated with mercantile groups.<sup>90</sup>

Here, I wish to point out that the base of the Tikampara Caiṇas of Tamiḷakam and Karnāṭaka have been peasants. The characteristic base of the Śvetāmbara Jains of Gujerat, Rajasthan and elsewhere is

<sup>89</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism...*, 113–114.

<sup>90</sup> *BaT* 1, 421–424.

merchants, which Burton Stein seems to have wrongly identified with Digambara Jains.

Peter Schalk had also quoted and discussed Kamil Zvelebil's theory that the Caiva/Vaiṇava *patti* movement was aimed at the Caiṇa and Buddhist leanings of the Chālukya kings, who were fighting continuously on the northern frontier of the Pallava kingdom. I agree with Peter Schalk's observation that the Chālukyas were Caiva/ Vaiṇava even though they extended occasional patronage to Caiṇam also.<sup>91</sup> No evidence has come to light for their patronage of Buddhism.

Peter Schalk's suggestion that antipathy of the *patti* movement to Buddhism was directed against Ilaṅkai seems to make some sense. He puts forward his own theory of the importance of the Rāmāyaṇa story of the Rāma-Sītā-Rāvaṇa complex, justifying the killing of Rāvaṇa and projecting Rāvaṇa to the Simhala king of Lanka as deserving destruction.<sup>92</sup>

I wish to point out that in Caiva *patti* (*bhakti*) literature, the allusions are to a story of a Rāvaṇa-Śiva-Rāma complex. These allusions to Rāvaṇa, a vast majority of them occur in Caiva devotional hymns, are ambivalent in their attitude. These hymns emphasize the arrogance of Rāvaṇa, which is regarded as evil. But he was redeemed by his *patti* to Civaṇ. The hymns do not justify Rāma's killing of Rāvaṇa as that approach would be favorable to Vaiṇavam. They do not mention Rāma except in the context of the Rāmeśvaram shrine.

The allusions to Rāvaṇa appear to refer to a Śiva *Purāṇa* and *Liṅga Purāṇa* story<sup>93</sup> that Rāvaṇa, because of his arrogance, tried to lift Mount Kailāsa, the mythical abode of Śiva, to take it to Laṅkā for private worship by his aged mother. Śiva punished him, by pushing down, with his toe, the mountain on Rāvaṇa's shoulder. Rāvaṇa cried aloud, earning the title *rāvaṇa*, which means 'he who cried aloud.' Rāvaṇa obtained Śiva's favor with an improvisation. He broke one of his twenty limbs, and using it as a musical instrument, sang *sāma-veda*. Śiva was pleased; he appeared before Rāvaṇa, freed him from his suffering and gave him boons, such as a long life and a mighty sword. Even though the epic *Rāmāyaṇa* justifies Rāma's killing of Rāvaṇa and considers it as the fulfillment of the aim of that particular incarnation, the Śaivites have another perspective. According to them, killing Rāvaṇa, a Śaiva devotee, was a heinous sin from which Rāma had to get expiation. Even according to the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma

<sup>91</sup> *BaT* 1, 426–427.

<sup>92</sup> *BaT* 1, 416–420.

<sup>93</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravana) (accessed on July 18, 2012).



as a *kṣatriya*, should not have killed Rāvaṇa, a brāhmaṇa from his father's side and so needed expiation. As soon as Rāma lands at a small island on his return to the other coast, he sets up a Śivaliṅga and inaugurates its worship at Rāmeśvaram, which means the Śiva temple established by Rāma. Even though Śaiva poems of the seventh century mention these things, the Tamil version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* story by Kampar of the twelfth century, has not included this episode, maybe because he thought that it might detract from the greatness of Rāma, who was considered an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* epic story has an underlying tone of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava rivalry. The immensely popular television presentation of *Rāmāyaṇa*, produced in Hindī and dubbed in English in India, had Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, his brother, wearing the Vaiṣṇava forehead mark of sacred white clay, while Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna, his brother, wear the Śaiva forehead mark of sacred ashes, when they were fighting each other. It is quite possible that Appar and Campantar in the seventh century, who had to convert the Caiṇa-leaning Pallava and Pāṇṭiya kings, were warning them against arrogance in dealing with Civaṇ and his devotees. There is some limitation in projecting hatred of Buddhist kings of Laṃkā as *ilaṅkai arakkaṇ* (= *rākṣasa* in Sanskrit) at such an early period. Even though the *Mahāvamśa* gives importance to invasions and occupations of Laṃkā by Tamil adventurers from the second century B.C., it does not mention any reprisal attacks from Laṃkā on Tamiḷakam till about the ninth century. At different times some adventurers from Tamiḷakam (who had been identified as non-Buddhist in the *vamśa*-tradition) invaded the island, dispossessed indigenous rulers and established their own rule from Anurātapuram. Rulers who organized resistance against these adventurers were said to have used furtherance of the cause of Buddhism as their rallying slogan.

Campantar was from the Cōḷa kingdom and there was no indication in his roughly four thousand verses or in his hagiography that he had any dealings with the Pallava king. Appar's hagiography mentions that he had a brush up with a Pallava king, now identified as Mahendrarman I, but after the latter's reported conversion to Caivam, there seems to be no record of any relationship between them whatever.

How the prevalence of Tamil Buddhism, both in Tamiḷakam and Īlam, came to an end has only to be conjectured. Nāgasamy puts for-

ward the view that Muslim invasions of Tamiḷakam in the fourteenth century seem to have led to their disappearance.<sup>94</sup>

Peter Schalk seems to suggest that in Īlam, it could be due to the change in the military and political equation when the Cōḷas declined and fell and the Siṃhala Buddhist rulers became dominant in Īlam.<sup>95</sup> I want to point out that in Īlam, especially after Māgha's invasion, the Siṃhalas seem to drift to the Southwest, almost abandoning Rājarāṭa, where Tamiḷ Buddhists were active during the previous period. The core territory of Rājarāṭa gradually becomes a malaria-ridden jungle, which is rarely mentioned in history till the modern period. In the broader field of South and Southeast Asia also, vast changes were taking place. Arabs and other Muslims were establishing international networks of traders, even in Tamiḷakam and Kēraḷam. Muslim traders from Gujerat played an important part in converting rulers of Sumatra, Java, and Malaya to Islam from Buddhism. So there was no support for Buddhism in Tamiḷakam from that region. Most probably the Tamiḷ merchant guilds could not carry on business in the changed scenario. We get only one Tamiḷ inscription from Kalutara, probably of the fifteenth century, which mentions *aiññūrruvar*, the merchant guild.<sup>96</sup> It mentions an arrangement assigning income from some taxes payable to a Kāḷi temple, for its maintenance.<sup>97</sup> Parākramabāhu VI allowed some warriors from the Coromandel coast (Cōḷamaṇṭalāk-karai) to settle along the Southwest coast of Īlam. They probably needed a Kāḷi temple to continue their religious traditions for some time before their conversion to Buddhism of Siṃhala speakers.

The 'vamsa' tradition, especially from the *Mahāvamsa* and *Cūlavamsa*, projects an antipathy between insular Buddhism and the Tamiḷs. Buddhism was a marginalized religion among Tamiḷakam Tamiḷs from ancient times. So resistance was built against the Tamiḷ rulers, even when they were exemplary in virtue like Eḷāra, because they were not Buddhists. The legendary account of the three visits of the Buddha to sanctify the island and to seal it for Buddha *sāsana* (interpreted narrowly as Mahāvihāra tradition of Theravāda Buddhism) to shine throughout the island seems to have had such an impact that guaranteeing equality of opportunity in a unitary set-up or sharing the territory or sharing power in a realistic fashion with the Tamiḷs in the island, appears as a blasphemy to the Siṃhalaspeaking

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<sup>94</sup> *BaT* 1, 144–145.

<sup>95</sup> *BaT* 2, 681.

<sup>96</sup> *CTI* 1, 44–45.

<sup>97</sup> A.Veluppillai, "A Grant to Kali from Kalutara," *CTI* 1, 44–45.

Buddhists. This tradition seems to be using the designation *Tamiḷs* just to denote the *Tamiḷs* from the mainland at the earlier stage but extended it at a later period to cover anyone from India.

*Siṃhala* people seem to have had contacts with people from *Karṇāṭaka*, *Kēraḷam*, *Tamiḷakam*, *Āntiram*, and *Orissa* in that later period, but all of them were identified as *Tamiḷs*, as observed by *Gananath Obeyasekara*, the eminent anthropologist, elsewhere. There were regions like *Āndhra*, *Karṇāṭaka* and *Orissa* where Buddhism was strong in ancient times, but gradually Buddhism disappeared from those parts of Peninsular India. Invaders, trouble-makers, traders and migrants from any of these regions were called *Tamiḷs* because there was no common designation at that time to cover the speakers of all the Dravidian languages or to cover the several communities and cults who go by the name of *Caiva/Vaiṇavas* today. Even *Māgha* of *Kaliṅga* was characterized as a *Tamiḷ* because invaders from the mainland were not distinguished neatly. The vicious cycle of Buddhist hatred of the *Tamiḷs* seems to have originated against invaders and conquerors from *Tamiḷakam*. Later when *Siṃhala* ethnicity developed, it developed into hatred of the invaders and conquerors anywhere from India. This hatred is now projected to the *Tamiḷ* ethnicity. The situation has changed dramatically in the modern period as there cannot be any invasion from anywhere in Peninsular India. The *Siṃhalas* are unable to break away from the many historical myths, some of which they had constructed, expanded and elaborated on demonization of the *Tamiḷs*. Their hatred of India is projected to modern day insular *Tamiḷs*, whose demand for a political space like equality of status in a united country or for a federal constitution or for separation is met with brute force, again and again.

*Cōḷa* Buddhism and insular *Cōḷa* Buddhism are well-documented attempts when a section of the *Tamiḷs* followed and patronized Buddhism. This was completely ignored by the *vaṃsa*-tradition which continued its animosity towards the *Tamiḷs* and the *Cōḷas* except at one point, mentioning *Parākramabāhu II* inviting monks from the *Cōḷa* country to purify the *Siṃhala* Buddhist Theravāda *saṃgha*. Unfortunately, these forms of Buddhism among the *Tamiḷs* disappeared. In *Īlam*, the *Tamiḷ* Buddhists must have been absorbed into either *Siṃhala*-speaking Buddhist or *Tamiḷ* *Caiva/Vaiṇava/Muslim* populations.



# ‘Sanskrit is the Mother of All Tamil Words’: Further Thoughts on the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its Commentary

Anne E. Monius

Peruntēvaṇār’s rather startling comment on the *Vīracōḷiyam*’s opening verse on *tātu* (Sanskrit *dhātu*, verbal roots)—claiming not only that “Sanskrit is the mother of all Tamil words” (*tamiḷ collir̥ku ellām vaṭanūlē tāy āki*), but that all Sanskrit usage applies to Tamil as well (*aṅkuḷḷa vaḷakku ellām tamiḷukkum peṟum*)<sup>1</sup>—has prodded me over the past decade to think further about both the eleventh-century theoretical text attributed to Puttamittiraṇ and its twelfth-century commentary. While my earlier published work on the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary focuses on “the importance of language and literary aesthetic vision in the imagining of religious identity and community,”<sup>2</sup> many questions about the two texts remain unanswered: how might one make sense of the extremely complex, many-layered influences of Sanskrit grammatical and poetic theory in the *Vīracōḷiyam*? Why do the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary stand alone in so explicitly weaving Tamil and Sanskrit theory together in this way until the seventeenth century?<sup>3</sup> How are the obviously Buddhist elements of the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary best understood alongside contem-

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<sup>1</sup> Puttamittiraṇ, *Vīracōḷiyam Peruntēvaṇār iyarriya urai uṭaṇ*, ed. Kā. Ra. Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippu Kaḷakam, 1970), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Anne E. Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India* (New York: Oxford, 2001), 136; see also Anne E. Monius, “The Many Lives of Daṇḍin: The *Kāvyaḍarśa* in Sanskrit and Tamil”, *The International Journal of Hindu Studies* 4/2 (April 2000): 1–37.

<sup>3</sup> The seventeenth-century *Ilakkaṇa viḷakkam* attributed to Vaittiyanāta Tēcikaṛ, for example, is the first text after the *Vīracōḷiyam* to integrate the study of grammar and poetics in the manner of the earlier (perhaps fifth-century) *Tolkāppiyam* (see Vaittiyanāta Tēcikaṛ, *Ilakkaṇa viḷakkam mūlamum uraiyum*, ed. M. R. Civaprakācam (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippu Kaḷakam, 1973). Also in the seventeenth century, the *Pirayōkavivēkam* of Cuppiramaṇiya Tīṭcitar provides the first attempt at integrating Sanskrit and Tamil grammatical principles since the *Vīracōḷiyam* (see Cuppiramaṇiya Tīṭcitar, *Pirayōkavivēkam mūlamum uraiyum* [Ceṇṇa-paṭṭaṇam: Vittiyāṇupāḷaṇa Yantiracālai, 1957]).

porary theoretical developments in Tamil literary culture during the Cōla period?

Much recent work on both the *Vīracōliyam* itself and on the wider medieval Tamil literary world in which it participates allows for a more nuanced reading of the text and its commentary on multiple levels. Studies by various scholars of Tamil linguistics, for example, have explored in depth the unique features of the *Vīracōliyam*'s treatment of *eḷuttu* (phonology, literally "letter") and *col* (morphology, literally "word") in its two opening chapters, particularly in view of their obvious engagement with Sanskrit traditions of *vyākaraṇa* or grammatical theory.<sup>4</sup> Various scholars have similarly done much to map out broader developments in Tamil poetic theory—and literary and religious culture more generally—in the era of the *Vīracōliyam*'s composition.<sup>5</sup> This essay revisits both the *Vīracōliyam* and its commentary as theoretical enterprises that attempt to integrate at least two intertwined sets of discursive practice: (1) the study of Tamil grammar and poetics as a single topic, and (2) the approaches to

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Ce. Vai. Caṇmukam, "Vīracōliyam: oru molīyiyal āyvu", *Molīyiyal* 4/1–2 (1980): 425–488; Cu. Irācārām, *Vīracōliya ilakkaṇa kōṭpātu* (Nākarkōvil: Irākavēntirā, 1992); Mu. Caṇmukam Pillai, "Vīracōliyam: The Earliest Contrastive-Transfer Grammar in Tamil", in *Buddhism in Tamilnadu: Collected Papers*, ed. R. S. Murthy and M. S. Nagarajan (Cennai: Institute of Asian Studies, 1998), 339–344; Ālvāppillai Vēluppillai, "Some Significant Aspects of the *Vīracōliyam* and its Commentary", in *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam Part Two: The Period of the Imperial Cōlar*, ed. Peter Schalk and Ālvāppillai Vēluppillai (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2002), 644–662; T. Aji, "A Comparative Study of *Viracoliyam* and *Prayoka Vivekam*", PhD Dissertation (University of Kerala, 2007); Rosemary Hepsy, "A Comparative Study of *Viracoliyam* and *Neminathan*", PhD Dissertation (University of Kerala, 2007); and K. Nachimuthu, "Negotiating Tamil-Sanskrit Contacts: Engagements by Tamil Grammarians", paper delivered at the Workshop on Bilingual Discourse and Cross-Cultural Fertilisation: Sanskrit and Tamil in Medieval India, Cambridge University, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Indra Manuel, "Treatises on Alaṅkāra Śāstra in Tamil", in *Heritage of the Tamils: Language and Grammar*, ed. S. V. Subramanian and K. M. Iruappan (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1980), 602–648; Indra Manuel, *Literary Theories in Tamil (with Special Reference to Tolkāppiyam)* (Pondicherry: Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, 1997); Jennifer Steele Clare, "Interpreting the Flawless Story: Tamil Commentaries of the Chola Period", MA Thesis (University of California, Berkeley, 2005); Whitney M. Cox, "Making a Tantra in Medieval South India: The *Mahārthamañjarī* and the Textual Culture of Cōla Cidambaram", PhD Dissertation (University of Chicago, 2006); Jennifer Steele Clare, "Canons, Conventions, and Creativity: Defining Literary Tradition in Premodern Tamil South India", PhD Dissertation (University of California, Berkeley, 2011); Kārttikēcu Civatampi, *Tamiḷil ilakkiya varalāru* (Cennai: New Century Book House, 2007); and Marutur Araṅkarācan, *Ilakkaṇa varalāru* (Cennai: Maṇivācakar Patipakam, 2008).

grammar and poetics taken by earlier scholars working in both Tamil and Sanskrit. Recognizing the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary as distinct yet obviously intimately related theoretical endeavors, both are set here in the broader contexts of developments in Tamil theory itself, in the emergence of South Indian commentarial practices on grammatical and literary topics, and in wider patterns of grammatical and theoretical engagement on the part of Buddhist scholars throughout South Asia working in multiple languages. What renders the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary so unique in Tamil literary and grammatical history (their open acknowledgement of theoretical indebtedness to *vaṭanūl*, “northern” or Sanskrit sources, their insistence on theorizing both grammar and poetics as part of a single project during a thousand-year span when no other scholars do so in Tamil) seems much less striking in the context of Buddhist innovations in grammar and poetics throughout the medieval South Asian world. On the other hand, contextualizing the two works more firmly in their South Indian (i.e., non-Buddhist) intellectual milieu (reading both less for their Buddhist elements, more for their primary comments regarding Tamil grammatical and poetic theory) sets each in a complex network of arguments and counter-arguments regarding the very nature of language and literature. In other words, reading the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary as both Buddhist *and* Tamil, as both unique *and* fully participating in broader conversations across the spectrum of South Asian Buddhist and South Indian Tamil intellectual cultures serves to highlight certain aspects of both texts that have thus far received little scholarly attention.

## The *Vīracōḷiyam* and its Commentary

As numerous studies of the *Vīracōḷiyam* make clear,<sup>6</sup> the first verse of the *pāyiram* or introduction (of unknown authorship) attributes the text to one Puttamittiraṅ (Sanskrit Buddhāmitra, literally “friend of the Buddha”), the “lord of Poṅṅarri” (*poṅṅarri man*).<sup>7</sup> The location of Poṅṅarri has been the source of considerable scholarly disagreement; Vēluppillai—by process of elimination, based largely on comments in the text regarding where Tamil usage has become corrupt—identifies Poṅṅarri with modern-day Poṅṅētti on the eastern coast of the Pāṅṅiya country.<sup>8</sup> Dating of the text has largely relied thus far on a ref-

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Monius, *Imagining a Place*, 116–136; Vēluppillai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 644–646.

<sup>7</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Vēluppillai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 646.

erence to the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s royal patron in the third verse of the *pāyiram* as *Vīracōḷaṅ*, generally identified as an epithet of *Vīrarācēntira* (Sanskrit *Vīrarājendra*) *Cōḷa*, who ruled briefly in the third quarter of the eleventh century (1063/1065 to 1069/1070).<sup>9</sup>

Even a cursory glance at the *Vīracōḷiyam* reveals its indebtedness to earlier Tamil traditions of theorizing both grammar and poetic language as part of a single project, embodied in the earliest extant theoretical text in Tamil, the perhaps fifth-century *Tolkāppiyam*. Like its predecessor, the *Vīracōḷiyam* analyzes both Tamil grammar and poetics, its first three chapters mirroring those of the *Tolkāppiyam*: *eḷuttu* (phonology), *col* (morphology), and *poruḷ* (poetic content), but splitting the last into three distinct chapters on *poruḷ* (a treatment of classical *Caṅkam* poetics), *yāppu* (prosody), and *alaṅkāram* (poetic ornament, from Sanskrit *alaṅkāra*). Yet the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s other obvious project—theorizing Tamil grammar and poetics through lenses first developed for Sanskrit—is signaled as early as the third verse of the *pāyiram*, where the text to follow is characterized as “summarizing” (*cirukku*)<sup>10</sup> its five topics “according to the traditions of Sanskrit texts” (*vaṭanūḷ marapum*).<sup>11</sup> While only one specific *vaṭanūḷ* is ever cited by the *Vīracōḷiyam*—the text mentions *Taṅṭi* or *Taṅṭiyār* three times in its treatment of *alaṅkāram* or poetic ornament and follows *Daṇḍin*'s *Kāvyaḍarśa* quite closely in the ensuing discussion—the influence of Sanskrit theorization is evident in each section of the Tamil text.<sup>12</sup>

That the *Vīracōḷiyam* also seeks to tie the language and poetics it theorizes through frameworks both Tamil and Sanskrit to some sort of Buddhism or Buddhist community is also made clear as early as the second verse of the introductory *pāyiram*. Here the text is described as explicating “the cool Tamil that was ... heard by *Akattiyaṅ* at the side of *Avalōkitaṅ* of beautiful qualities” (*āyum kuṇattu avalōkitaṅ*

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Lexicon of Tamil Literature* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 587, 772.

<sup>10</sup> The *Vīracōḷiyam* does a formidable job of such “summarizing”, reducing the 1500-plus verses of the *Tolkāppiyam* to a mere 181.

<sup>11</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam*, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Leading *Caṅmukam* Piḷḷai to suggest that the *Vīracōḷiyam* might be a “contrastive-transfer grammar” attempting to teach a second language (Tamil) through the application and transfer of categories from the student's first language (Sanskrit) (“*Vīracōḷiyam*: The Earliest Contrastive-Transfer Grammar in Tamil”, 339–344). *Vēluppillai* has argued that the first two chapters of the text provide a compelling description of *Cōḷa*-era inscriptional Tamil (see *Ālvāppillai Vēluppillai*, “*Vīracōḷiyam* as a Grammar for Inscriptional Tamil”, in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference-Seminar of Tamil Studies*, vol. 1, ed. R. E. Asher (Madras: International Association of Tamil Research, 1971), 345–348.



*pakkal akattiyaṅ kēṭṭu . . . taṅ tamiḷ*),<sup>13</sup> thus claiming that the great sage Akattiyaṅ (Sanskrit Agastya)—portrayed as master of both Tamil and Sanskrit throughout South Indian literary tradition—learned Tamil from the great *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. Avalōkitaṅ/Avalokiteśvara is again invoked in verse 83 that concludes the *Viracōḷiyam*'s discussion of morphology (*col*), a section of the text particularly laden with Sanskrit terminology and definition; here the language thus described is named “the true Tamil of Avalōkitaṅ whose glory shines in a thousand ways” (*āyiram vitattil poliyaṅ pukaḷ avalōkitaṅ mey tamiḷē*).<sup>14</sup>

In a penultimate commentarial verse, the *Viracōḷiyam* commentary is attributed to one Peruntēvaṅ (Sanskrit Mahādeva), who composed this “brief commentary” (*polippurai*) as a “duty” (*kaṭaṅākavē*) for “those who study Tamil language with affection” (*naviṅṅāṅ tamiḷ kātaliṅ karṇavarkkē*).<sup>15</sup> The reference to compositional “duty” (*kaṭaṅ*) has led several scholars to suppose that Peruntēvaṅār was Puttamittiraṅ's own student, placing him in the late eleventh or early twelfth century.<sup>16</sup> The many poetic illustrations that the commentary deploys—drawing from the Caṅkam classical anthologies, the fifth-century *Tirukkuraḷ*, the (now-lost) *Kuṅṭalakēci*, the tenth-century *Yāpparuṅkalam* of Amitacākarar and its anonymous commentary, and a host of other unidentified sources—reveal a broad engagement with Tamil literature composed largely before the twelfth century. As such, Peruntēvaṅār's work marks the beginning of a veritable explosion in the production of Tamil commentaries on grammar, literary theory, and literature itself; fully half the extant commentarial literature in Tamil can be dated between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Viracōḷiyam*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Viracōḷiyam*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> *Viracōḷiyam*, 284.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Vēluppillai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 646.

<sup>17</sup> Nakkīraṅār's eighth-century commentary on the fifth- or sixth-century *Iraiyāṅār akapporuḷ*—a treatment of the love (*akam*) themes of classical poetry—is widely taken to be the first Tamil commentary, although, as Wilden correctly points out, “with Nakkīraṅ we are already faced with a fully developed specimen of commentarial idiom and technique” (see Eva Wilden, “Introduction: Between Preservation and Recreation—Tamil Traditions of Commentary”, in *Between Preservation and Recreation: Tamil Traditions of Commentary: Proceedings of a Workshop in Honour of T. V. Gopal Iyer*, ed. Eva Wilden [Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry and l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2009]), 37. For an overview of Tamil commentary, see Thomas Lehmann, “A Survey of Classical Tamil Commentary Literature”, in *Between Preservation and Recreation: Tamil Traditions of Commentary: Proceedings of a Workshop in Honour of T. V. Gopal Iyer*, ed. Eva Wilden (Pondichéry: Ins-

The commentary obviously shares with its root text the goal of providing a theory of language and poetics as part of a unified or integrated enterprise, and expands considerably upon the relationship between Tamil grammar and forms of poetic expression and those of *vaṭanūl* at multiple points. Yet the commentary is perhaps most striking for the many poetic examples it invokes—from sources as yet unidentified—that provide a glimpse of a perhaps much larger Buddhist literature composed in Tamil.<sup>18</sup> Multiple references are made to the *pōti* (Sanskrit *bodhi*) tree, to many celebrated scenes from the Buddha's previous lives as *bodhisattva*, and to the (now-lost) Buddhist narrative poem, the *Kuṇṭalākēci*. Citations from non-Buddhist works also appear to focus on Buddhist-friendly themes, such as the transience of human attachment and the misery of unchecked emotion.<sup>19</sup>

## The *Vīracōliyam* and its Commentary in their South Indian Context

When considered in light of Tamil literary and grammatical theory in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries (and the medieval Cōla period more generally), both the *Vīracōliyam* and Peruntēvaṅār's commentary are quite striking in multiple ways. Among the most obvious, perhaps, is the *Vīracōliyam*'s return to the authority of the *Tolkāppiyam* to frame the discussion of Tamil grammar and poetics in terms of *eḷuttu*, *col*, and (an albeit expanded sense of) *poruḷ*. As mentioned briefly above, no other Tamil theoretical text apart from the *Vīracōliyam* treats phonology, morphology, and poetics as integral aspects of a single theory of language and literature in the millennium that separates the *Tolkāppiyam* from the *Vīracōliyam*'s nearest chronological successor, the seventeenth-century *Iḷakkaṇa viḷakkam*.<sup>20</sup> While the

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titut Français de Pondichéry and l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2009), 55–70.

<sup>18</sup> Aside from the *Vīracōliyam* and its commentary, the only other extant Buddhist text in Tamil is the perhaps sixth-century narrative of a young courtesan who becomes a Buddhist nun, the *Maṇimēkalai* attributed to Cāttaṅār. See Monius, *Imagining a Place*, 13–115.

<sup>19</sup> As above, see Monius, *Imagining a Place*, 137–155, for a discussion of Peruntēvaṅār's poetic citations and their potential significance.

<sup>20</sup> The *Iḷakkaṇa viḷakkam* is followed by the *Toṅṅūl viḷakkam* of Vīramāmuṅivar (also known as the Italian Jesuit missionary, Constantino Giuseppe Beschi) in the eighteenth century (Ceṅṅai: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippu Kaḷakam, 1984), the *Muttuvīriyam* of Muttuvīra Upāttiyāyar in the nineteenth century (Ceṅṅai: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippu Kaḷakam, 1972), and the *Cāminātam* or *Cūvāminātam* of Cāmi Kavirācar (Aṅṅāmālainakar: Aṅṅāmālai Palkalai Kaḷakam,

production of literary and grammatical theory appears to accelerate during the period of Cōla dominance, the forms such theorizing takes are narrower in scope, focusing either on a specific aspect of Tamil poetics or on *eḷuttu* and *col* to the exclusion of *poruḷ*.<sup>21</sup> The late twelfth and early thirteen centuries, for example witness the appearance of the *Nēminātam* attributed to Kuṇavīrapaṇṭitar<sup>22</sup> and the *Naṇṇūl* of Pavaṇanti,<sup>23</sup> both of which address Tamil phonology and morphology but not poetics, the latter often deemed the “most distinguished and popular grammar of liter[ary] Tamil” that remains “valid for formal standard language.”<sup>24</sup> Theoretical treatises on particular aspects of literature begin with the *Kaḷaviyal* or *Iraiyāṇār akapporuḷ* briefly cited above, dating perhaps to as early as the fifth or sixth century and focused on the treatment of classical *akam* or love themes;<sup>25</sup> other Cōla-era works on *akam* poetics include *Tamiḷ neṟi viḷakkam* (anonymous, ninth century),<sup>26</sup> *Kaḷaviyaṟkārikai* (also anonymous, twelfth or thirteenth century),<sup>27</sup> and *Akapporuḷ viḷakkam* (twelfth century, attributed to Nārkaṅkavirāca Nampī).<sup>28</sup> *Puṟam* or heroic themes are similarly taken up in the ninth-century *Puṟapporuḷ veṇṇpā mālai* attributed to Aiyaṇāritāṇār.<sup>29</sup> The *Yāpparuṅkalam* and the *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai* (both perhaps tenth-century)<sup>30</sup> focus primarily on

1976), also in the nineteenth century.

<sup>21</sup> Commentaries on the *Tolkāppiyam* (no less on the *Viracōḷiyam*) produced in this period are, of course, an exception, and will be taken up for further discussion below.

<sup>22</sup> Kuṇavīrapaṇṭitar, *Nēminātam*, ed. Kā. Ra. Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippu Kaḷakam, 1964).

<sup>23</sup> Pavaṇanti, *Naṇṇūl mūlamum Maṟilainātar uraiyūm* (Ceṇṇai: Vaijayanti Accukkūṭam, 1918).

<sup>24</sup> Zvelebil, *Lexicon*, 478.

<sup>25</sup> *Kaḷaviyal eṇṇu Iraiyāṇār akapporuḷ Nakkīraṇār aruḷiya urai uṭaṇ* (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippu Kaḷakam, 1969). For a full translation of the text with Nakkīraṇār’s commentary, see David C. Buck and K. Paramasivam, trans., *The Study of Stolen Love: A Translation of Kaḷaviyal eṇṇu Iraiyāṇār Akapporuḷ with Commentary by Nakkīraṇār* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> *Tamiḷneṟi viḷakkam mūlamum paḷaiya uraiyūm*, ed. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar (Ceṇṇai: La Jarnal Accukkūṭam, 1937).

<sup>27</sup> *Kaḷaviyaṟkārikai urai uṭaṇ*, ed. Es. Vaiyapuri Piḷḷai (Madras: B. B. Press, 1931).

<sup>28</sup> Nārkaṅkavirāca Nampī, *Akapporuḷ viḷakkam paḷaiya urai uṭaṇ*, ed. Kā. Ra. Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippu Kaḷakam, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Aiyaṇāritāṇār, *Puṟapporuḷ veṇṇpā mālai* (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippu Kaḷakam, 1967).

<sup>30</sup> The latter is assumed by many scholars to be the author’s own condensation of the former. See Amitacākarar, *Yāpparuṅkalam paḷaiya virutti urai uṭaṇ* (Ceṇṇai: Ulaka Tamiḷāṟeycci Niṟuvaṇam, 1998); and *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai Kuṇacākarar iyaṟriya urai uṭaṇ*, ed. and trans. Ulrike Niklas, Publications du Département d’indo-

Tamiḷ prosody, while the twelfth-century *Taṅṭiyalaṅkāram*<sup>31</sup> treats forms of poetic adornment or embellishment and, like the final chapter of the *Viracōḷiyam*, draws its inspiration from Daṇḍin. A wholly new form of literary theorizing—the *pāṭṭiyal* analysis of all poetry as royal praise—also begins in the twelfth century.<sup>32</sup>

Yet as the *Viracōḷiyam* signals some manner of fealty to the authority of the *Tolkāppiyam*'s theoretical stance, the text also decidedly ignores or eschews those narratives of the sources of the *Tolkāppiyam*'s authority that were widely circulating in Tamiḷ literary culture by the eleventh century. According to the well-known story first laid out in Nakkīraṇār's eighth-century commentary on the *Iraiyāṇār akapporuḷ*, the Pāṅṭiyaṇ kings of Maturai established three literary *caṅkams*, the first of which included both Akattiyaṇār or Akattiyaṇ (from Sanskrit Agastya) and Śiva himself, and which looked to the Akattiyaṇ's text, the *Akattiyam*,<sup>33</sup> as its primary theoretical reference. The two subsequent *caṅkams* diminished in size and longevity, and the *Tolkāppiyam* assumed its place alongside the *Akattiyam* as a primary reference work during the second *caṅkam*.<sup>34</sup> Tamiḷ texts after Nakkīraṇār's commentary increasingly position Akattiyaṇ as both the conduit of Sanskritic culture to the South and the devotee of Śiva who first learned Tamiḷ from the lord himself;<sup>35</sup> indeed, the association of

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logie, 79 (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> *Taṅṭiyalaṅkāram mūlamum teḷivuraiyum*, ed. Mu. Caṅmukam Piḷḷai (Ceṅṅai: Mullai Nilaiyam 1999).

<sup>32</sup> For the most compelling treatment of *pāṭṭiyal* theorization to date, see Clare, "Canons, Convention, and Creativity", 59–83.

<sup>33</sup> The status of the *Akattiyam* as the first true Tamiḷ grammar has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Although no such text has survived, the *Akattiyam* is quoted in the commentaries on the *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti*, and *Naṅṅūḷ*. Chevillard claims that the *Akattiyam* is quoted a full eighteen times by Mayilainātar in his thirteenth-century commentary on *Naṅṅūḷ* (see Jean-Luc Chevillard, "The Pantheon of Tamil Grammarians: A Short History of the Myth of Agastya's Twelve Disciples", in *Écrire et transmettre en Inde classique*, ed. Gérard Colas et Gerdi Gerschheimer, *Études thématiques*, 23 [Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2009], 264), for example; Zvelebil (Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* [New York: E. J. Brill, 1992], 246) is somewhat less sure of such an attribution: "In Mayilainātar's commentary on *Naṅṅūḷ*, and in Caṅkaranamaccivāyar's gloss on the same grammar, we find sixteen short *sūtras* of unequal length (all in all 48 lines) which are possibly genuine fragments of an old grammar, perhaps the *Akattiyam*."

<sup>34</sup> For an English translation of Nakkīraṇār's narrative of the three *caṅkams*, see Buck and Paramasivam, *Stolen Love*, 4–6.

<sup>35</sup> For surveys of the references in both Tamiḷ and Sanskrit to Akattiyaṇ/Agastya and his evolving mythology, see Chevillard, "Pantheon of Tamil Grammarians";

Akattiyaṅ/Agastya with Śiva would eventually spread far beyond the Tamil-speaking region to Southeast Asia and Nepal.<sup>36</sup> As Kampan proclaims in the twelfth century (and in a decidedly Vaiṣṇava context), Akattiyaṅ “gave [the world] Tamil, as the god [Śiva] whose red eye burns in his beautiful forehead gave [it to him].”<sup>37</sup>

While not all Cōla-era grammatical or poetic theories necessarily link the origins of Tamil to Śiva, Akattiyaṅ, or the narrative of the three Pāṇṭiyaṅ-sponsored *caṅkams*<sup>38</sup>—the tenth-century *Yāpparunkalakkārikai*, for example, associates Tamil grammar with the Pāṇṭiyaṅ ruler and “the sage of the mountain” (glossed by the commentator as Akattiyamuṇivar) without any mention of divine beings or poetic assemblies—<sup>39</sup> the *Vīracōḷiyam* does more than simply elide any linkage of Akattiyaṅ to Śiva in the manner of the *Yāpparunkalakkārikai* and other texts and commentaries authored (perhaps) by Jains.<sup>40</sup> In its first mention of Akattiyaṅ (in the second verse of the *pāyiram*, as noted above) the source of Akattiyaṅ’s Tamil is not Śiva but Avalōkitāṅ, associated in the following verse not with any *caṅkam* sponsored by Pāṇṭiyaṅ kings but with Vīracōḷāṅ, and in the previous verse with “he who sat in eminence under the *pōti* tree” (*pōtīyīṅ mētakku iruntavaṅ*), that is, the Buddha.<sup>41</sup> In the only other mention of Akattiyaṅ by name in the *Vīracōḷiyam*—in verse 76, in the midst of the discussion of *kiriya* (Sanskrit *kriyā*) or finite verbs—the first- and second-person endings of *tēṅ*, *ēṅ*, *ir*, *irkaḷ*, and so forth are said to be those of the “true Tamil spoken by Akattiyaṅār of Mount Potiyam” (*potiyattu akattiyaṅār coṅṅa mey tamīlkkē*).<sup>42</sup>

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Zvelebil, *Companion Studies*, 235–261; and William Spencer Davis, Jr., “Agastya: The Southern Sage from the North”, PhD Dissertation (University of Chicago, 2000). Davis usefully organizes the long history of Akattiyaṅ narratives in Tamil according to how their respective authors view the relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit (270–318).

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Carol Radcliff Bolon, “Images of Agastya in Nepal”, *Artibus Asiae* 51/1-2 (1991): 75–89.

<sup>37</sup> Kampan, *Irāmāyaṅam: āraṇiya kāṅṅam* (Aṅṅāmalainakar: Aṅṅāmalai Palkalai Kaḷakam, 2010), verse 2762, vol. 1, 161: *nerri umiḷ ceṅkaṅ/taḷal purai cuṅar kaṅavuḷ tanta tamīl tantāṅ*.

<sup>38</sup> See Clare, “Canons, Conventions, and Creativity”, 12–31, for an extended discussion of the complex ways in which scholars after Nakkīraṅār are both indebted to his narrative of *caṅkam* and *Tolkāppiyam* authority and also deviate substantially from it.

<sup>39</sup> Amitacākarar, *Yāpparunkalakkārikai*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> See Clare, “Canons, Conventions, and Creativity”, 29.

<sup>41</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam*, 81.

Thus the *Vīracōḷiyam* stands alone in both (1) ignoring contemporary narratives of Akattiyaṅ, Pāṇṭiyaṅ poetic assemblies, and Śiva and (2) assigning the origins of Tamil to an at least quasi-divine figure who is other than Śiva. In the context of grammatical and literary theory produced in Tamil during the centuries of Cōḷa rule, in other words, its identification of the *bodhisattva* Avalōkitaṅ as the source of “the true Tamil” the text describes constitutes something of an audacious argument, a re-centering of the origins of Tamil grammar and poetics away from Pāṇṭiyaṅ courts and Śaiva devotees.

That such “true Tamil” born of Avalōkitaṅ and sanctioned by Akattiyaṅ is theorized through “the tradition of Sanskrit texts” (*vaṭanūḷ marapum*)<sup>43</sup> alongside the commitment to the basic approach of the *Tolkāppiyam* (as noted above) renders the *Vīracōḷiyam* absolutely unique in Tamil grammatical and literary theory until the early modern period and the analogous efforts of the *Pirayōkavivēkam*.<sup>44</sup> Yet the *Vīracōḷiyam*’s appropriation of the analytic lenses of *vaṭamoli* or *vaṭanūḷ* is quite markedly different—and differently marked—according to the specific topic under discussion. While its treatment of *eḷuttu* and *col* reveals a consistent interest in appropriating for Tamil the technical vocabulary of Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa* discourse and its understandings of word-formation,<sup>45</sup> the ensuing discussions of *poruḷ* and *yāppu* draw little upon *vaṭanūḷ*; in its final chapter on *alaṅkāram* or poetic ornament, however, the *Vīracōḷiyam* explicitly names Taṇṭi or Taṇṭiyār (Sanskrit Daṇḍin) three times as the source of the discussion,<sup>46</sup> and, indeed, the Tamil text’s indebtedness to Daṇḍin’s *Kāvya-darśa* is obvious throughout.<sup>47</sup>

The *Vīracōḷiyam*’s level of engagement with Sanskrit is complex, displaying neither the “shallowness” of other medieval Tamil treatments of *vaṭanūḷ*<sup>48</sup> nor the clumsiness of earlier Tamil efforts at “first translation”;<sup>49</sup> the *Vīracōḷiyam* clearly knows—and anticipates an

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<sup>43</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Although, as above, the seventeenth-century text does not address issues of poetic theory.

<sup>45</sup> For the most developed discussion of the *Vīracōḷiyam*’s use of Sanskrit analytic practice in its first two chapters to date, see K. Meenakshi, “Sanskrit Grammars as Models for Writing Tamil Grammars”, *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* 22/1-2 (1983-1984): 61–85.

<sup>46</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verses 141 (198), 147 (202), and 160 (239).

<sup>47</sup> See Manuel, “Treatises on Alaṅkāra Śāstra”; and Monius, “The Many Lives of Daṇḍin”.

<sup>48</sup> Clare, “Interpreting the Flawless Story”, 25.

<sup>49</sup> Chevillard’s characterization of the *Tolkāppiyam*’s initial efforts as “translating” the thirty-two aspects of argumentation enumerated in Sanskrit *śāstra* as the *tantra-yukti* (Tamil *tantiravutti*); see Jean-Luc Chevillard, “The Metagrammatical Vocabulary

audience who knows full well—both extant Tamil literary and grammatical theory and their nearest Sanskrit analogues. The chapter on *eḷuttu*, for example, organizes itself entirely around *canti* (Sanskrit *sandhi*), the morphophonemic changes wrought by the combination of letters. Three verses in particular (10-12) transliterate critical Sanskrit terms into Tamil and apply basic rules of *vaṭamoli* to euphonic combination. *Ulōpam* (Sanskrit *lopa*), *ākamam* (Sanskrit *āgama*), and *ātēcam* (Sanskrit *ādeśa*), for example, describe processes of elision, augmentation, and substitution;<sup>50</sup> Sanskrit rules of vowel incrementation—*kuṇam* (Sanskrit *guṇa*) and *virutti* (Sanskrit *vṛddhi*)—are also introduced.<sup>51</sup> The *Viracōḷiyam* gives more attention to *col* than any other topic (fifty-five verses), and the basic organizational structure of the discussion reveals something of the text’s deep commitment to theorizing Tamil language through Sanskrit analytic frameworks. Not only are the six *paṭalam* or sub-chapters organized around basic topics of Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa*—*vēṛrumai* or cases (nine verses), *upakāra* or noun-verb relationships (six verses), *tokai* or compounds (eight verses), *tattita* or nominal derivatives (eight verses), *tātu* or verbal roots (eleven verses), and *kiriya* or verbal derivatives (thirteen verses)—but evidence of direct borrowing or paraphrasing from known Sanskrit sources is also evident (although, unlike the final chapter’s invocation of Taṇṭiyār, no specific texts or scholars are mentioned). The *Tolkāppiyam* defines *col* as that which conveys meaning;<sup>52</sup> the *Viracōḷiyam* borrows directly from the Sanskrit tradition of defining *pada* in the manner of Pāṇini, stating that the particle *-cu* is added to nouns in the nominative singular and then dropped.<sup>53</sup> In the same vein, Subrahmanya Sastri offers compelling evidence that the *Viracōḷiyam*’s treatment of *tokai* or compounds (Sanskrit *samāsa*) paraphrases, at least in part, the *kārikas* on *samāsa* attributed to Vararuci.<sup>54</sup> The first verse on *tātu* (Sanskrit

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lary Inside the Lists of the 32 *Tantrayukti*-s and its Adaptation into Tamil: Towards a Sanskrit-Tamil Dictionary”, in *Between Preservation and Recreation: Tamil Traditions of Commentary: Proceedings of a Workshop in Honour of T. V. Gopal Iyer*, ed. Eva Wilden (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry and l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 2009), 71–132.

<sup>50</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* verse 10, 8.

<sup>51</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* verse 12, 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Tolkāppiyam: collatikāram Iḷampūraṇar urai*, ed. Aṭikaḷācīriyār, Tamil Palkalai Kaḷakam Veḷiyiṭu, 101 (Taṇcāvūr: Tamil Palkalai Kaḷakam, 1988), verse 152, 142: *ellā collum poruḷ kuri taṇavē*.

<sup>53</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* verse 33, 29; see also Pāṇini, *The Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Śrīṣa Chandra Vasu (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), i.4.14, 173: *suptāntam padam*.

<sup>54</sup> P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, “History of Grammatical Theories in Tamil”, *The*

*dhātu*) or verbal roots explicitly states that Tamiḷ *tātu* should be formed by analogy with those of *vaṭanūl*.<sup>55</sup> As noted above, the interweaving of Tamiḷ and Sanskrit becomes even more apparent in the final chapter on poetic ornament, in the direct (and repeated) citing of Taṅṭiyār as the source of the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s treatment of *alaṅkaram*, beginning with a beautiful image of literature personified, with poetic language as its body (*urai uṭalāka*), life or breath as its content or theme (*uyir poruḷāka*), rhythm as its complexion (*vaṅṅam . . . nira-māka*), style as its movement (*naṭaiyē celavāka*), and *alaṅkāram* as its ornamentation.<sup>56</sup> The formation of Tamiḷ words in accordance with Sanskrit principles, and the composition of Tamiḷ poetry in accordance with Sanskrit theories of *alaṅkāra* or ornamentation—all framed with the authoritative *Tolkāppiyam* rubric of treating grammar and poetics as a single topic—constitute the heart of the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s project.

The *Vīracōḷiyam*'s innovations, however, are by no means limited to the incorporation of Sanskritic principles of language and poetics. In the context of outlining classical Caṅkam *akam* poetics in its chapter on *poruḷ*, to cite but one example—a uniquely Tamiḷ literary milieu that does not easily allow for the intervention of *vaṭanūl*—the *Vīracōḷiyam* echoes the *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti*'s division into four thematic categories of *akam*, *puṛam*, *akappuṛam*, and *puṛappuṛam*<sup>57</sup> and offers its own unique list of twenty-seven elements of *akam* poetry; various of these elements in combination yield the other three thematic categories of *puṛam*, *akappuṛam*, and *puṛappuṛam*.<sup>58</sup> The *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary provides an extended treatment of *meyp-pātu* as an aspect of *akam* poetics, defined by Peruntēvaṅār (perhaps quoting another source) as “the manifestation that arises in the body and the verbal expression [of that state]” (*meykkaṭpaṭṭu viḷaṅkiya tōṛṛam . . . ceppal*).<sup>59</sup> As Manuel's survey of Tamiḷ literary theory concludes, “the VC [*Vīracōḷiyam*] has developed a unique structure of love poetry”<sup>60</sup> with a particular focus on the proper language of poetry,<sup>61</sup> while its commentary theorizes unique elements in the sequence of *akam* poetic events.<sup>62</sup>

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*Journal of Oriental Research, Madras* 7/4 (1933): 378–381.

<sup>55</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 60, 67.

<sup>56</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 141, 198.

<sup>57</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 84, 89; and *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti* on verse 96, 561–619.

<sup>58</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verses 87–89, 90.

<sup>59</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 94, 102.

<sup>60</sup> Manuel, *Literary Theories in Tamil*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 83–84.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 561–563.



Much scholarship on the *Vīracōliyam* to date has asked whether or not this analysis of Tamil grammar and poetics through Sanskrit lenses adds anything to the development of Tamil theory, whether it “works” or simply serves to “violently dragoon Tamil language and grammar into the groove of Sanskrit.”<sup>63</sup> Yet whether or not the *Vīracōliyam* and its project of analyzing Tamil through Sanskrit finds an audience in the language politics of Tamilnāṭu today, that very project itself epitomizes the processes of vernacularization that swept across South Asia in the medieval period: the theorization through Sanskrit of local languages and literatures at the nexus of high culture and royal power.<sup>64</sup> Yet unlike the other vernaculars of southern India—Malayālam, Telugu, and Kannaḍa—Tamil had already been theorized apart from direct references to *vaṭamoli* in the *Tolkāppiyam* and its successors. The *Vīracōliyam* “difference” lies in its paraphrasing of Pāṇini and Vararuci, in its organization according to Sanskrit discursive practices of phonology and morphology, and in its direct rendering of the work of Daṇḍin into Tamil.

In the context of alternative approaches to grammatical and literary theory extant in Tamil in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the projects of the *Vīracōliyam* and its commentary emerge as highly contested. On the one hand, Puttamittiraṅ and Peruntēvaṅār participate in much wider scholarly conversations of their day regarding the nature of language, literature, genre, and the work of commentary itself; both the *Vīracōliyam* and its commentary demonstrate extensive engagement with theoretical and literary sources in both Tamil and Sanskrit. Peruntēvaṅār, for example, cites the *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Yāpparuṅkalam* and its *virutti*, and other works now lost, and in addition names Aviṇayaṅār,<sup>65</sup> Mayēcuvaraṅār, Kākkaipāṭiṇiyār,<sup>66</sup> and several others (all of whom are known only through these and other fragmentary references). Yet, on the other hand, the positions that each assumes—often rooted in the two texts’ commitment to weave together Tamil and *vaṭamoli*—reveal vernacularization to be a contentious project in the Tamil-speaking region on multiple levels.

First, perhaps, is the issue of what actually constitutes “Tamil.” What does the *Vīracōliyam* mean precisely by the “cool Tamil” (*taṅ tamiḷ*) that will be explained according to the “traditions of northern

<sup>63</sup> Subrahmanya Sastri, “History of Grammatical Theories”, 396–397.

<sup>64</sup> See Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 283–436.

<sup>65</sup> *Vīracōliyam* commentary on verse 83, 88.

<sup>66</sup> Peruntēvaṅār mentions Mayēcuvaraṅār and Kākkaipāṭiṇiyār in *Vīracōliyam* commentary on verse 123, 166–167.

texts” (*vaṭanūl marapum*)?<sup>67</sup> Before the emergence of colonial Tamil language politics in the early twentieth century, the relationship of “Tamiḷ” to language, culture, region, people, and even divinity is surprisingly difficult to pin down.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, for the Cōḷa-era theorists and commentators with whom Puttamittiraṅ and Peruntēvaṅār engage, what counts as “Tamiḷ” is a matter of obvious debate. Nakkīraṅār’s eighth-century commentary on the *Iraiyāṅār akapporuḷ*, for example, rather stunningly equates the subject matter of his root-text—*akam* poetics—with “Tamiḷ”: “What does this book describe? It describes Tamiḷ” (*innūḷ eṅ nutaliṅṅō eṅiṅ tamiḷ nutaliṅṅu eṅpatu*).<sup>69</sup> While Nakkīraṅār seems here to mark the classical Caṅkam poetics of love as the epitome of literary expression in Tamiḷ, subsequent theoretical and commentarial works will continue to debate the status of the Caṅkam anthologies, the proper relationship of Tamiḷ to *vaṭa-moḷi*, and the geographical region where “proper” standardized Tamiḷ is spoken. As Clare’s work has compellingly demonstrated, for example, Cōḷa-era commentators on the *Tolkāppiyam* aim “to define a standard Cōḷa Tamil language that united Tamil speakers within a multilingual mileu.”<sup>70</sup> *Tolkāppiyam* commentators such as Iḷampūraṅar (eleventh-century), Cēṅāvaraiyar (thirteenth-century), Pērācīriyar (also thirteenth-century), and Naccīṅārkkīṅiyar (fourteenth-century) all locate the epicenter of standard Tamiḷ in the heart of Cōḷanāṭu, “north of the Vaikai river, south of the Maruta river, east of Karuvūr, west of Maruvūr.”<sup>71</sup> In addition to identifying the Cōḷa heartland as the region of standard Tamiḷ usage, the *Tolkāppiyam* commentaries also largely follow Nakkīraṅār in focusing on the classical Caṅkam anthologies as the heart of the “literary” in Tamiḷ. Pērācīriyar, for example, a century after Peruntēvaṅār, more or less rejects any literary innovation that cannot be traced to either the *Tolkāppiyam* or the Caṅkam works themselves.<sup>72</sup> For a wide swath of Tamiḷ scholarship of the Cōḷa era, “Tamiḷ” unites Cōḷanāṭu and the *Tolkāppiyam*, Caṅkam poetics and literary canon.

<sup>67</sup> *Viracōḷiyam pāyiram* verses 2–3, 1.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the recent survey of pre-modern references to “Tamiḷ” in Blake Wentworth, “Insiders, Outsiders, and the Tamil Tongue”, in *South Asian Texts in History: Critical Engagements with Sheldon Pollock*, ed. Yigal Bronner, Whitney Cox, and Lawrence McCrea, *Asia Past and Present: New Research from AAS*, 7 (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2011), 153–176.

<sup>69</sup> *Kaḷaviyal eṅṅu Iraiyāṅār akapporuḷ*, commentary on verse 1, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Clare, “Interpreting the Flawless Story”, 20.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> See Clare, “Canons, Conventions, and Creativity”, 15–26, for an excellent discussion of Pērācīriyar as the “most conservative” (15) of *Tolkāppiyam* commentators in his rejection of post-Caṅkam literary developments.

In such a commentarial context, the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s approach to Tamil as both language and literature positions itself quite uniquely. Certainly Puttamittiraṅ and his commentator share in the appeal to Cōḷa patronage that marks so much scholarship of their day; in addition to the explicit mention of Vīracōḷaṅ in verse 3 of the *pāyiram* noted above, for example, the *Vīracōḷiyam* identifies the “pure Tamil” (*centamiḷ*)—that begins with initial sounds *ka-*, *ta-*, *ca-*, and so forth—as that spoken by Vīrarācēntiraṅ, glossed by Peruntēvaṅār as Vīracōḷamakārācāvaṅ.<sup>73</sup> Yet the geographic heartland of *centamiḷ* interestingly does not mirror the boundaries of the Cōḷa kingdom that so many medieval *Tolkāppiyam* commentators cite. While the *Vīracōḷiyam* itself echoes the *Tolkāppiyam*'s *pāyiram* in tracing the boundaries of good Tamil from Vēṅkaṭam to Kumari,<sup>74</sup> the commentator more narrowly locates the four boundaries (*innāṅku ellai*) of *centamiḷ* as the eastern ocean (*kuṇakaṭal*), Kumari, Vēṅkaṭam, and *kuṭakam* or the western ghats (thus effectively eliminating the Malayāḷam-speaking region).<sup>75</sup> As noted briefly above, Vēluppiḷḷai argues by process of elimination that the *Vīracōḷiyam* actually considers the ancient realm of the Pāṅṭiyaṅs to be the true center of *centamiḷ*; references to corrupt usages in other parts of the Tamil-speaking region, from Koṅkumaṅṭalam to Toṅṭaimaṅṭalam and even Cōḷamaṅṭalam suggest,<sup>76</sup> perhaps, that the text recenters *centamiḷ* in the region that had long been associated with both the *Tolkāppiyam*<sup>77</sup> and Caṅkam poetry.<sup>78</sup>

In other words, the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary both participate in the praise of Cōḷa royal patrons that marks much medieval textual production in Tamil, yet also seek to locate the epicenter of standard, “proper” Tamil beyond the Kāviri river valley. Is this a nod of respect to the broader geographical vision offered by the *Tolkāppiyam*, or, as Vēluppiḷḷai speculates, perhaps the work of a Pāṅṭiyaṅ viceroy of sorts to the Cōḷa ruler,<sup>79</sup> paying homage both to his patron and to the traditional identification of his region as the heartland of proper *centamiḷ*? The historical situation that generates this unique

<sup>73</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 7 and commentary, 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 8, 7; see *Tolkāppiyam: eḷuttu atikāram Iḷampūraṅar urai uṭaṅ* (Ceṅṅai: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippu Kaḷakam, 1996), 10.

<sup>75</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 8, 7.

<sup>76</sup> Vēluppiḷḷai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 646.

<sup>77</sup> The *pāyiram* to the *Tolkāppiyam* claims that the text was first recited before the Pāṅṭiyaṅ ruler; see *Tolkāppiyam: eḷuttu atikāram*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Nakkīraṅār states simply that “the Pāṅṭiyaṅ kings instituted the three Caṅkams”; see *Kaḷaviyal enru Irāiyaṅār akapporuḷ*, commentary on verse 1, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Vēluppiḷḷai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 653.

Cōla-era vision of Tamil-speaking geography will perhaps never be known for sure, but the efforts of both text and commentary to shift contemporary attention away from Cōlamanṭalam as the heart of literary and grammatical culture certainly signals some manner of deliberate authorial choice.

Returning to Nakkīraṇār's eighth-century equation of Tamil with the central theoretical project of the *Iraiyānār akapporuḷ*, the commentator on the *Vīracōḷiyam* clearly shares much in common with his contemporaries' analyses of the *Tolkāppiyam*, yet the actual content of the commentary marks Peruntēvaṇār's work as quite unique in several respects. As the recent work of both Clare<sup>80</sup> and Wilden<sup>81</sup> makes clear, medieval commentary provides an important locus for the construction of "a Tamil literary past via a process of selection and evaluation,"<sup>82</sup> a selection process whose criteria often includes concern about ethics or morals.<sup>83</sup> In other words, by the twelfth century and Peruntēvaṇār's interpretation of the *Vīracōḷiyam*, the processes of debating literary tradition, of selecting and excluding extant works as properly "literary" or not, and of highlighting various aspects of literary works via citation was already well under way. While the *Vīracōḷiyam* follows the basic commentarial practices of Iḷampūraṇar and Nakkīraṇār, Cēṇāvaraiyar and Pērācīriyar, what counts as authentic Tamil "tradition" shares far more with the *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti*'s wide-ranging approach to literary theory and poetic canon than with the *Tolkāppiyam* commentators' focus on the hegemonic authority of the root-text, Caṅkam literature, and its close derivatives.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Peruntēvaṇār cites forty-five verses from the *virutti* in his treatment of *yāppu* alone.

What precisely is recognized as "literary" in the *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary, and thus constituted as relevant to Tamil grammatical and literary history? Not surprisingly, the commentary provides glimpses

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<sup>80</sup> Clare, "Canons, Conventions, and Creativity".

<sup>81</sup> Eva Wilden, "Canonisation of Classical Tamil Texts in the Mirror of the Poetological Commentaries", in *Between Preservation and Recreation: Tamil Traditions of Commentary: Proceedings of a Workshop in Honour of T. V. Gopal Iyer*, ed. Eva Wilden (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry and l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2009), 145–165.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>83</sup> Wilden, "Introduction", 43. For more on the moralizing interpretive force of Tamil commentary, as well the role of commentary in the stabilizing of texts themselves, see Norman Cutler, "Interpreting *Tirukkuraḷ*: The Role of Commentary in the Creation of a Text", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112/4 (1992):549–566.

<sup>84</sup> See Clare, "Canons, Conventions, and Creativity", 26–58, for a discussion of the *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti*, especially its innovations in *akam* poetics and its general approach to Tamil literature and literary theory.

of a perhaps once substantial Buddhist literature in Tamil, verses from texts now lost but also known to non-Buddhist commentators.<sup>85</sup> Peruntēvaṇār, for example, cites the *kaṭavuḷ vāḷttu* or benediction from the (now lost) *Kuṇṭalakēci*, a verse that refers to Buddha's constant efforts on behalf of others;<sup>86</sup> elsewhere the *Kuṇṭalakēci* is cited as “the first *kāvya* entirely in *viruttam* meter” (*kuṇṭalakēci mutalāṇa kāppiyam ellām viruttamām*)<sup>87</sup> and is noted, along with the Jain *Utayaṇaṇ katai*, for its rigorous poetic style (*vali*) and difficult poetic complexity.<sup>88</sup> Far more commonly cited are verses with obvious Buddhist inclinations but of no known or extant source, ranging from simple lines of praise to the Buddha as “great physician” (*maruntu mākkumē*)<sup>89</sup> to twelve illustrations of praise-poems in honor of both Buddha and king.<sup>90</sup>

Yet other aspects of Tamil literary tradition in Peruntēvaṇār's day are neither excluded nor ignored; praise of the Buddha and *bodhisattva* is embedded in a Tamil literary canon that is both inter-sectarian and thoroughly ethicized. Jain verses are cited quite frequently as illustrations, from the eighth-century book of moral maxims known as the *Nālaṭiyār* and the eleventh-century long narrative poem, the *Cūlāmaṇi*.<sup>91</sup> The fourth- or fifth-century *Tirukkuraḷ*—perhaps authored by a Jain, but eventually claimed by every religious community in the Tamil-speaking region—is quoted a staggering fifty-eight times throughout the commentary; as demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>92</sup> Peruntēvaṇār's selections from the *Tirukkuraḷ* largely ignore the text's emphasis on the delights of wedded love, focusing instead on verses emphasizing duty, honor, generosity, and the despair wrought by unchecked passions. Yet Peruntēvaṇār claims more than Buddhist and Jain poetics (and moral maxims) for Tamil literature; he also quotes

<sup>85</sup> In his commentary on the *Tolkāppiyam*, for example, the great fourteenth-century scholar, Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar (a Śaiva brahmin), cites a verse depicting the *bodhisattva*'s giving of his own flesh to a hungry tiger (*puṇirru paṇiyuḷanta puli piṇavu taṇātu . . .*) that is also cited in the *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary (on verse 102, 114); see *Tolkāppiyam: poruḷatikāram Nacciṇārkkīṇiyar urai*, vol. 1 (Cennai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpattippu Kaḷakam, 1967), commentary on verse 76, 233.

<sup>86</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verses 107 and 121–122, 125 and 164–165. The verse is identified as belonging to the *Kuṇṭalakēci* only in the fifteenth-century anthology known as the *Puṇṭattiraṭṭu* (*Puṇṭattiraṭṭu*, ed. I. Iḷaṅkumaraṇ [Cennai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpattippu Kaḷakam, 1972], 2).

<sup>87</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 127, 175.

<sup>88</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 144, 201.

<sup>89</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 107, 124.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 115, 140–146.

<sup>91</sup> Both cited in *Vīracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 109, 130.

<sup>92</sup> Monius, *Imagining a Place*, 150–153.

occasionally from Caṅkam *akam* poetry, but, again, with a distinct selection that emphasizes themes of separation, loss, and transience. The commentator selects verses from the *akam* anthology known as *Kuruntokai*, for example, that focus on the anguish of unchecked love: “I pine and suffer great affliction on a bed of ill sleep”<sup>93</sup> and “oh great one, are the houses pleasing to those left alone?”<sup>94</sup> Three short lines from *Puranānūru* are drawn from a poem on the *kāñci* theme of transience that imagines the devastation of a great city after battle.<sup>95</sup> While the bulk of Peruntēvaṅār’s citations are drawn from unknown sources (that also appeal to the perhaps Jain author of the *Yāpparuṅkalam virutti*), even extant Tamil literature—at the heart of the *Tolkāppiyam*’s canon of Caṅkam classics—can be productively aligned with the Buddhist values of the root-text and its commentator.

Given its primary project of describing Tamil grammar and literary expression through the lenses provided by *vaṭanūl*, it is perhaps not surprising that the *Viracōliyam* and its commentary present unique understandings of literary genre. The ways of classifying literature are taken up for discussion three times in the root-text, the first in the treatment of prosody or *yāppu*. Here Puttamittiraṅ divides *ceyyuḷ* or poetic composition into two types: *pattiyam* (literature in recognized forms and meters) and *kattiyam* (divided into two classes: poetry in deficient or incorrect form and prose suffering from similar errors).<sup>96</sup> Later the *Viracōliyam* adopts the classification scheme of Daṇḍin in his *Kāvyaḍarśa*, outlining four types of poetic composition: *muttakam* (Sanskrit *muktaka*), the single-stanza poem; *kuḷakam* (Sanskrit *kuḷaka*), the five-stanza poem; *tokai* (a Tamil translation of the Sanskrit *koṣa*) or anthology of verses; and *kāppiyam* (Sanskrit *kāvya*), defined by Puttamittiraṅ as a “great work” or *mānūl*.<sup>97</sup> After carefully distinguishing between *viraviyal* as the mixing of Sanskrit letters or sounds (*vaṭa eḷuttu*) with Tamil and *maṇipravāḷam*—as the mixing of Sanskrit words (*teyva col*) with Tamil—<sup>98</sup> the *Viracōliyam* offers a two-fold system of literary classification into *turaikkavi* and *kiḷavikkavi*. The first is characterized by a list beginning with eight

<sup>93</sup> *Kuruntokai* 216 in *Viracōliyam* commentary on verse 117: *yāṅē tōṭu ār el vaḷai nekila ēṅki/pāṭu amai cēkkaiyiṅ. . .*

<sup>94</sup> *Kuruntokai* 124 in *Viracōliyam* commentary on verse 117: *iṅiyavō peruma tamiyōrkku maṇaiyē?*

<sup>95</sup> *Puranānūru* 345, cited in *Viracōliyam* commentary on verse 117, 154.

<sup>96</sup> *Viracōliyam* verse 110, 131.

<sup>97</sup> *Viracōliyam* verse 176, 268.

<sup>98</sup> *Viracōliyam* verse 180, 283. Note the Puttamittiraṅ twice states earlier that Sanskrit letters (*eḷuttu*) should not occur in Tamil poetry (*Viracōliyam* verses 142–143, 199).

themes, from the scorn of a king (*maṛam*) to the effusive babbling of a drunkard (*kaḷi*) and the power of magicians (*campiratam*).<sup>99</sup> All eight characteristics mentioned by name are recognizable as (or recognizable translations of) the fourteen to eighteen different elements of the *kalampakam*, literally “mixture,” an extremely productive genre first theorized in the twelfth-century *Paṇṇiru pāṭṭiyal*.<sup>100</sup> *Kiḷavikkavi* is simply said to exude excellence (*tīram*) and possess many fine qualities (*pala pōkkum*). The result of poetry (*poruḷ*) is said to be *dharma* (*aṛam*), *kāma* (*iṇpam*) and *mokṣa* (*vīṭu*).<sup>101</sup> In commenting on the root-text’s treatment of *cittirakkavi* (a form of poetry untheorized in Tamil before the *Viracōḷiyam*’s appropriation of Daṇḍin), Peruntēvaṇār offers yet a fourth mode of classifying literary texts: as *taṇinilai ceyyuḷ* (isolated stanzas), *toṭarnilai ceyyuḷ* (connected stanzas), and *taṇippāta ceyyuḷ* (single stanza).<sup>102</sup>

In short, both Puttamittiraṇ and Peruntēvaṇār seem remarkably flexible about classifying Tamil literature, willing and able to work with multiple systems that basically treat both form and content. In other words, two of the systems above classify by stanzaic form, one on the basis of acceptable and unacceptable usage. The *Viracōḷiyam*’s listing of the thematic elements found in *turaikkavi* in its final verse—perhaps a nod toward the emerging theorization of all Tamil literature in terms of praise genres to the king in the *pāṭṭiyal* grammars—also implies some form of critique, as *turaikkavi* is marked as distinct from the “excellence” (*tīram*) and “many fine qualities” (*pala pōkkum*) of *kiḷavikkavi*. Is this intended to separate proper *kāppiyam* from new forms of poetic theorization and production?<sup>103</sup>

Placed in the context of Tamil theoretical and commentarial literature produced prior to and during the Cōla period, the *Viracōḷiyam*’s (and its commentary’s) intellectual projects come into sharper focus. Like the ninth-century Kannaḍa *Kavirājamārgam* discussed at

<sup>99</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* verse 181, 283. Unfortunately, Peruntēvaṇār does little more than gloss the verse.

<sup>100</sup> See *Paṇṇiru pāṭṭiyal*, ed. K. R. Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār (Ceṇṇai: Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpattippu Kaḷakam, 1963), 129–130.

<sup>101</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* verse 181, 283.

<sup>102</sup> *Viracōḷiyam* commentary on verse 179, 280. Aṭiyārkkunallār’s thirteenth-century commentary on the *Cilappatikāram* provides an explanation for *toṭarnilai ceyyuḷ* as a poem uniting *akam* and *puṛam* elements with its stanzas (called here *taṇi ceyyuḷ*) connected either by content or by poetic form; see Iḷāṅkō Aṭikaḷ, *Cilappatikāram mūlamum arumpata uraiyum Aṭiyārkkunallār uraiyum*, ed. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar (Ceṇṇai: Ṭāṭṭar U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar Nūlnilaiyam, 1978), 6.

<sup>103</sup> Manuel, *Literary Theories in Tamil*, 174, speculates that *turaikkavi* might correspond to “folkloric literature” and *kiḷavikkavi* to “classical” literature.

length by Pollock,<sup>104</sup> the *Vīracōḷiyam* “self-consciously theorizes the relationship between vernacular and cosmopolitan ways of literary practice”;<sup>105</sup> unlike the *Kavirājamārgam* in its Kannaḍa literary context, however, the stance taken toward *vaṭanūl* in the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary are controversial minority positions in a Cōḷa-era literary culture more keenly interested in preserving the traditions of the *Tolkāppiyam* and the Caṅkam anthologies as authentically “Tamiḷ,” positions that would not be attempted again for another five hundred years. In the commentarial practices of Nakkīraṅṅār and Pērācīriyar, Iḷampūraṅṅar and Cēṅāvaraiyar, Tamiḷ language and literature are identified largely in terms of *Tolkāppiyam*, Caṅkam, and Śiva. That Puttamittiraṅṅ grounds his treatment of Tamiḷ-through-Sanskrit in the authoritative structures of the *Tolkāppiyam*—and addresses his verses throughout to Tamiḷ language personified as a beautiful woman—<sup>106</sup> obviously signals an intention to root the appropriation of *vaṭanūl* in unequivocal respect for, even devotion to, the beauties of Tamiḷ and the authority of Tamiḷ theory. The closest analogues to the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary in the Cōḷa period are, interestingly enough, theoretical texts assumed to be of Jain authorship: the *Yāpparuṅkalam* and its anonymous *virutti* and the *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai*, all of which, in addressing issues of prosody, assume the *Tolkāppiyam* to be simply one authority among many.<sup>107</sup> Does this perhaps suggest that the construction of a *Tolkāppiyam*- and Caṅkam-based literary history is primarily a project of Śaiva brahmins? Indeed, in considering the unique place of the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary in Cōḷa-era processes of vernacularization (and the resistance to the same), does it matter in any way that both author and commentator demonstrate explicitly Buddhist inclinations?

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<sup>104</sup> Pollock, *Language of the Gods*, 330–379.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>106</sup> This begins as early as *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 1, 2, which ends with “oh divine language” (*tē moḷiyē*), glossed by the commentator (2) as “address to a woman” (*tē moḷiyē eṅṅpatu makaṭṭū muṅṅilai*).

<sup>107</sup> The twelfth-century *Taṅṅiyalaṅkāram*—as above, an independent treatise interpreting Daṅṅin’s *Kāvyādarśa* for Tamiḷ—is difficult to assign to any particular religious inclination.



## The *Vīracōliyam* and its Commentary in the Buddhist World of South Asia

That the *Vīracōliyam* and its commentary take up the project of theorizing Tamil grammar and poetics via Sanskritic frameworks as Buddhists, in the name of Avalōkitaṅ and in order to explicate the poetic expression of the *bodhisattva*'s acts of self-sacrifice, seems less surprising, perhaps, in the context of Buddhist innovation in multiple languages across pre-modern South Asia. Although the *Vīracōliyam* stands out in Tamil literary history not only for the theoretical positions it assumes but for its very existence as a Buddhist text composed in Tamil, both the text and its commentary share in much broader patterns of Buddhist grammatical and literary production. Both texts' Buddhist inclinations, in other words, seem more than coincidental.

Before considering how Puttamittiraṅ and Peruntēvaṅār participate in broader movements within a South Asian Buddhist theoretical world, it is important to acknowledge some key differences in each text, particularly in regard to intellectual focus. While the *Vīracōliyam*, for example, might stand out today for being the first Tamil text to say explicitly that it follows a particular Sanskrit thinker in its treatment of *alaṅkāram*, the text actually devotes considerably more verses (fifty-five) to *col* (morphology) than to any other topic (*alaṅkāram*, by contrast, receives forty-one verses of attention, *yāppu* thirty-six, *eḷuttu* twenty-eight, and *poruḷ* a mere twenty-one); only the *col* chapter is further subdivided, in this case into six distinct treatments of word-formation based on Sanskrit models. In theorizing Tamil grammar and poetics "according to the traditions of *vaṭanūl*" in only 181 verses, Puttamittiraṅ displays the most theoretical interest in Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa* and Daṇḍin, and devotes the least attention to the topic of *akam* and *puṛam* poetics (*poruḷ*). On the other hand, Peruntēvaṅār's commentarial interests are somewhat the reverse; he devotes relatively little attention to *eḷuttu* and *col*—<sup>108</sup> primarily glossing and explaining the verse in the root-text—but exerts much greater energy on explicating and providing illustrations for the chapters on poetics, particularly *alaṅkāram* and *yāppu*.<sup>109</sup> While grammar, in other words, demands most of Puttamittiraṅ's theoretical attention, the explication of literary forms and the anthologization of Tamil verses amenable to Buddhist sensibilities constitute the bulk of Peruntēvaṅār's effort.

<sup>108</sup> Twenty-five and sixty-two pages, respectively, in the Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār edition.

<sup>109</sup> In the Kōvintarāca Mutaliyār edition, eighty-nine pages are devoted to *alaṅkāram* and seventy-five to *yāppu*. *Poruḷ* again receives the least attention (thirty-four pages).

While Vēluppillai is correct, in part, in stating that “it is not possible to find anything Buddhist within the grammatical portion of the [*Vīracōḷiyam*]”<sup>110</sup>—the section on *col* concludes with a verse outlining the qualities “true Tamil”<sup>111</sup> and attributes such language to Avalōkitan—the larger project of the text itself, particularly in its appropriation of *vyākaraṇa* lenses in its second chapter, might be considered “Buddhist” from multiple perspectives. First, the *pāyiram*’s association of Avalōkitan with Akattiyān (and the association of both with Sanskrit and Tamil) echoes a long tradition of Buddhist claims to the origins of Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa* (and their Śaiva counter-claims). While it is possible that the now-lost *Bṛhatkathā* draws the oldest connection between Śiva and Pāṇini,<sup>112</sup> the first clear textual attestation to the long Pāṇinian tradition that Śiva himself gave the grammarian the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* can be found in Haradatta’s *Padmañjarī*, a commentary on the *Kāśīkāvṛtti*; perhaps not coincidentally, Haradatta composed his text in South India during the Cōḷa period.<sup>113</sup> The same verse that Haradatta cites is repeated again in the benediction of the tenth-century *Rūpāvatāra*, a rearrangement of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* attributed to the tenth-century South Indian or Sri Lankan Buddhist monk, Dharmakīrti (more on this text below): “Greetings to Pāṇini, he who received the Sanskrit alphabet (*akṣarasamāmnāya*) from Maheśvara and recited the entire grammar.”<sup>114</sup> Counter to this claim are many Buddhist attestations to the contrary, that the ultimate source of Pāṇini’s intellectual achievement is not Śiva but the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara.<sup>115</sup> Tāranātha’s sixteenth-century history of Indian Buddhism, for example, describes Pāṇini in a number of ways: as a brahmin sympathetic to Buddhism<sup>116</sup> and as Avalokiteśvara himself.<sup>117</sup> Bu-

<sup>110</sup> Vēluppillai, “Some Significant Aspects”, 645.

<sup>111</sup> *Vīracōḷiyam* verse 83, 86, including both the proper usage of Sanskrit words (*vaṭacol kiṭappu*) and Tamil tradition (*tamiḷ marapu*).

<sup>112</sup> See Madhav M. Deshpande, “Who Inspired Pāṇini? Reconstructing the Hindu and Buddhist Counter-Claims”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117/3 (1997):453, for the chain of circumstantial evidence leading back to Guṇādhyā’s text.

<sup>113</sup> Deshpande, “Who Inspired Pāṇini?” 448–449.

<sup>114</sup> Dharmakīrti, *Rūpāvatāra*, ed. M. Rangacharya, vol. 1 (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1927), 1: *yenākṣarasamāmnāyam adhigamya maheśvarāt/kṛtsnaṃ vyākaraṇam proktaṃ tasmai pāṇinaye namaḥ*. Dharmakīrti goes on to praise the Buddha in the following verse (more on that below).

<sup>115</sup> See Deshpande, “Who Inspired Pāṇini”, 453–462, for a survey of the relevant Buddhist materials.

<sup>116</sup> Tāranātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, ed. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), 16.

<sup>117</sup> Here Tāranātha cites a prophesy in the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* that the grammarian will eventually gain enlightenment (*History of Buddhism*, 83).

ston's fourteenth-century history explicitly states that Buddhist tradition holds the *bodhisattva* to be the source of Pāṇini's text.<sup>118</sup> Thus the *Viracōḷiyam*'s identification of Avalōkitaṅ (rather than Śiva) as the source of Akattiyāṅ's Tamil—and the insistence throughout that the Tamil language described in accordance with *vaṭanūl* is the “true Tamil” of Avalōkitaṅ—reflects broader trans-regional and inter-sectarian conversations about the authoritative source of language and its theoretical analysis, conversations in which Buddhist scholars were active participants.

More than merely claiming the language it describes for the *bodhisattva*, the *Viracōḷiyam*'s theoretical content actively participates in a robust Buddhist tradition of grammatical innovation, from early “practical” grammars such as the *Kaumāralāta* and *Kātantra* to more complex treatments of Pāṇini and Patañjali in the fifth-century *Candravyākaraṇa* attributed to Candragomin.<sup>119</sup> Of particular interest in the case of the *Viracōḷiyam* is the tenth-century *Rūpāvatāra* attributed to Dharmakīrti (widely assumed to be of Sri Lanka or South Indian origin) cited above. Notable primarily for being the first text to recast the *sūtras* of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* in the so-called *prakriyā* style,<sup>120</sup> the *Rūpāvatāra* obviously circulated widely in Cōla South India. Numerous inscriptions, for example, attest to the importance of the text in Sanskrit curricula throughout the Cōla realm, recording donations for the upkeep of both teachers and students of the *Rūpāvatāra*.<sup>121</sup> Dharmakīrti's text even warrants a mention in Tamil in the commentary on Amitacākarar's tenth-century *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai*; in explaining the import of the text's title in his comment on the first verse, Kuṇṇacākarar notes that his root-text contains mnemonic verses, like the “leading verses” (*nītakacculōkam*; Sanskrit *nītakasloka*) in the *Urūpāvatāram* (Sanskrit *Rūpāvatāram*).<sup>122</sup>

In light of the *Rūpāvatāra*'s full-scale rearrangement (and thus reinterpretation) of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* as the project of a Buddhist

<sup>118</sup> Bu-ston, *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, trans. E. Obermiller, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica, 26 (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1986), 167.

<sup>119</sup> For a survey of Buddhist contributions to Sanskrit grammatical theory, see Deshpande, “Who Inspired Pāṇini?”, 456; and Hartmut Scharfe, *Grammatical Literature*, A History of Indian Literature, ed. Jan Gonda, 5.2.2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 162–167.

<sup>120</sup> See K. S. Lalithambal, *Dharmakīrti's Rūpāvatāra—A Critical Study*, Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica, 153 (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1995), 3. *Prakriyā* grammars rearrange the *sūtras* of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* topically for greater clarity.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, the discussion by K. A. Nilakantha Sastri, “A Note on the *Rūpāvatāra*”, *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras 8 (1934): 277–278; and George Cardona, *Pāṇini: A Survey of Research* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), 285.

<sup>122</sup> Amitacākarar, *Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai*, commentary on verse 1, 3.

monk, the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s recasting of the *Tolkāppiyam* through *vaṭanūl* seems considerably less revolutionary. Although one cannot claim with any certainty that the Sanskrit *Rūpāvatāra* provides a model for the *col* chapter in the *Vīracōḷiyam*, a number of parallels between the two texts are certainly suggestive. Like the three verses of the Tamil *pāyiram*, for example—that link together in quick succession the Buddha, Avalōkitaṅ, Akattiyaṅ, Vīracōḷaṅ, Tamil, and Sanskrit—the benedictory verses that open Dharmakīrti's Sanskrit text praise in equally quick succession *both* Śiva and the Buddha. After the verse cited above that claims Maheśvara gave Sanskrit and *vyākaraṇa* to Pāṇini, Dharmakīrti goes on to praise the Buddha as *sarvajña*, “all-knowing”: “Having bowed to the all-knowing one who is of limitless good qualities, I write this small, beautifully and straightforwardly assembled *Rūpāvatāram* for the purpose of instructing children.”<sup>123</sup> In a manner similar to the *Vīracōḷiyam*, in other words, the *Rūpāvatāra* draws out a lineage for the language it goes on to describe, through multiple figures both divine and human, some straightforwardly Buddhist and others not.

Like the *Vīracōḷiyam*, the *Rūpāvatāra* also offers a rearrangement and substantial condensation of its authoritative root-text. As above, the Tamil text narrows the 1500-plus verses of the *Tolkāppiyam* to 181; the Sanskrit text, in turn, completely reassembles the *sūtras* of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and leaves out nearly half, virtually eliminating any reference to Pāṇini's rules governing Vedic usage and focusing instead on classical Sanskrit. Moreover, as its title suggests, the *Rūpāvatāra* focuses far more on the proper forms of Sanskrit words, rather than on Pāṇinian rules of derivation. In appropriating the frameworks of *vaṭanūl* to analyze Tamil, the *Vīracōḷiyam* echoes the *Rūpāvatāra* in emphasizing proper form over any elaborate processes of development or adaptation. In fact, the Tamil text's chapters on *eḷuttu* and *col* follow the topical order of the *Rūpāvatāra*'s chapters on *saṃjñāvatāra* and *saṃhitāvatāra* (dealing with phonemic articulation and forms of *sandhi*, respectively, the topics taken up in the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s *eḷuttu* discussion), and on *vibhatyāvatāra* (*verrumai* or declension), *kāra-kāvatāra* (*upakāra* or noun-verb relationship), *samāsāvatāra* (*tokai* or compounds), *taddhitāvatāra* (*tattita* or nominal derivatives), and a long, ten-part section on *dhātu* (that covers the *Vīracōḷiyam* material under *tātu* and *kiriya*, verbal roots and their derivatives).

Not only does the *Vīracōḷiyam* participate in a radical rethinking of grammatical theory as an explicitly Buddhist project in a manner akin to the *Rūpāvatāra*, but the Sanskrit text might itself have pro-

<sup>123</sup> Dharmakīrti, *Rūpāvatāra*, 1: *sarvajñam anantaḡuṇaṃ praṇamya bālaprabodhanārtham imam/rūpāvatāram alpam sukalāpam rjṃṃ kariṣyāmi*.

vided source material for Puttamittiraṅ. Both texts engage in strategies of innovation in *vyākaraṇa/eḷuttu/col* claimed for Buddhism that resonate throughout the subcontinent from the earliest fragments of the *Kaumāralāta*.<sup>124</sup> The *Rūpāvatāra* offers the first full-scale recodification of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* in homage to Pāṇini, Maheśvara, and the all-knowing Buddha; the *Vīracōḷiyam* presents the first—and only, for another half-millennium—full-scale rethinking of the *Tolkāppiyam*'s grammar through the frameworks of Sanskrit *vyākaraṇa* in the name of Avalōkitaṅ, Akattiyaṅ, and Vīracōḷan. The moves to edit out references to Vedic, to replace Śiva with Avalokiteśvara, to integrate Tamil and Sanskrit theories of language, perhaps point to wider patterns of Buddhist innovation.

Similar patterns of creativity can be seen in Buddhist contributions to literature and literary theory throughout pre-modern South Asia, providing a broader context in which to evaluate both Puttamittiraṅ's incorporation of Daṇḍin and Peruntēvaṅār's broad anthologizing of a Tamil literary history sensitive to Buddhist ethical concerns. Buddhist contributions to both *kāvya* and *alaṃkāraśāstra* are far too many and diverse to be considered in any depth here. From Aśvaghōṣa's pioneering work in the second century through the influential plays of Candragomin and Harṣa,<sup>125</sup> Buddhist poets and playwrights contributed significantly to courtly literary cultures across India for more than a millennium. In the evolution of Sanskrit intellectual and literary practices, and in light of Aśvaghōṣa's early heroes who attain *nirvāṇa* in the closing scene, Buddhist theorizers were likely the first to add *śāntarasa*—the emotional experience of “the peaceful”—to the list of eight *rasas* first championed by (the Śaiva) Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Stray references point to the work of a Buddhist dramaturgist named Rāhula as incorporating *śānta* as a ninth *rasa*;<sup>126</sup> certainly the Buddhist plays *Lokānanda* and *Nāgānanda* play a critical role in the medieval development of Kashmiri theories of poetic *rasa*.<sup>127</sup> Mahimabhaṭṭa's eleventh-century refutation of the idea of poetic suggestion (*dhvani*) championed by Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta relies heavily on the work of the Buddhist logician, Dharmakīrti; Mahimabhaṭṭa's *Vyaktiviveka* argues that the savoring of *rasa* is made possible by inference (*anumāna*) alone, effectively aligning literary theory with a Buddhist epistemology.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Scharfe, *Grammatical Literature*, 162.

<sup>125</sup> For an overview of these works, see A. K. Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990), vol. 2, 142–181; vol. 3, 66–75; and vol. 4, 52–65.

<sup>126</sup> Warder, *Indian Kāvya*, vol. 1, 40.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 40.

<sup>128</sup> For a discussion of Mahimabhaṭṭa's *Vyaktiviveka*, see Lawrence J. McCrea, *The*

In the context of such widespread and enduring Buddhist contributions to the development of both Sanskrit literature and Sanskrit literary theory, Puttamittiraṇ's interest in interpreting Daṇḍin for Tamiḷ poetry, no less Peruntēvaṇār's work of gathering together a body of Tamiḷ literature that both illustrates well the compatibility of Tamiḷ with *vaṭamoḷi* and speaks to worldviews compatible with Buddhism, again render the association of each project with Avalōkitan and the Buddha something other than coincidental. Although obviously composed in Tamiḷ rather than in Sanskrit, the interest in using extant theory in new ways—and thus pushing both literary form and theory forward—on the part of both the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary reflects much wider Buddhist patterns of innovation and creativity.

## Concluding Thoughts

In returning to the *Vīracōḷiyam* and Peruntēvaṇār's commentary after a decade of further thought and much new scholarship on South Indian history and literature, both texts now appear simultaneously both more “Tamiḷ” and more “Buddhist,” thoroughly embedded in complex ways in the scholarly conversations flowing through the Cōḷa courts of medieval Tamiḷnāṭu, yet equally situated in much broader currents of explicitly Buddhist discourses of grammar and poetics. Both texts' “Tamiḷ” and “Buddhist” inclinations perhaps go a long way toward explaining their relative uniqueness in South Indian literary history, their originality in analyzing Tamiḷ through Sanskrit lenses, as well as their somewhat stunning lack of any obvious successors to that project for at least five centuries. As “Tamiḷ” texts, the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary chart a unique course in theorizing Tamiḷ directly through *vaṭanūḷ*, although framed by the *Tolkāppiyam*; although a move typical of vernacularization processes in other linguistic regions, in the context of an emerging brahminic focus on Caṅkam poetry and the *Tolkāppiyam* as authentically Tamiḷ, Cōḷa, and Śaiva, theirs was a minority position at best. In wedding the treatment of Akattiyaṇ's Tamiḷ as “divine language” to Avalōkitan and the Buddha, the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary perhaps fell into disuse as a still-enigmatic community of Tamiḷ-speaking Buddhists disappeared, if such a community ever existed at all.

As the first intentional theorization of Tamil grammar and poetics through principles developed for an unrelated language, the work of Puttamittiraṅ and Peruntēvaṅār marks an important point in South Indian intellectual history. The continuing story of the relationship of Tamil to *vaṭanūl*, of theory in multiple languages to literary composition in multiple languages, certainly merits further scholarly investigation, as does the Buddhist contribution to such efforts.





# Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī – Again

*Peter Schalk*

## Introduction

Intellectuals loyal to the Government in Īlam/Laṃkā have recently put much effort into launching a homology between King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (Siṃhala: Duṭṭagāmuṇu) and Eḷāra (Tamiḷ Ellāḷaṅ) on one side and President Mahinda Rajapaksa (Rājapakṣa) and Veluppillai Prabhakaran (Vēluppillai Pirapākaraṅ) on the other. A homology conveys the impression that as A is related to B, C is related to D. As Duṭṭhagāmaṇī was victorious over Eḷāra so was Mahinda Rajapaksa over Vēluppillai Pirapākaraṅ. The “conclusion” is that Mahinda Rajapaksa is a modern Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. I found 9090 entries on 26 December 2010 in Google which were influenced by this homology. The more frequently it is presented the more credible it becomes, it seems. Quantity is, however, not convincing in this case, but is persuasive, and so is this homology itself. Homologies are relevant in exact sciences, but when applied to history they become instruments of propaganda. They imply an approximation of identity between A and B and between C and D and between A/B and C/D. They also imply a synchronisation of A/B and C/D to overcome the cleft of time difference. This alienates homologies from critical historical writing. Homologies imitate, not copy, selections of the past. They may just end up in comedy or even ridicule like in the case of the launched homology by the governmental administration in 1995 between King Kaṇakacūriyaṅ and Sapumal Kumārayā from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on one side and President Chandrika Kumaratunga-Bandranaike (Candrikā Kumarāṇatuṅga-Bandaranāyaka) and General Anuruddha Ratwatte (Ratvatte) on the other side.<sup>1</sup> This kind of historical homologies are regularly made by historians with a political agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Schalk, “Conjuring up Spirits from the Past’. Identifications in Public Ritual of Living Persons with Persons from the Past”, *Ritualistics. Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Ritualistics Held at Åbo, Finland, on July 31–August 2, 2002*, edited by Tore Ahlbäck (Åbo: Donner Institute, 2003), 189–207.

Some intellectuals try to nuance; they emphasise that Duṭṭha-gāmaṇī was not complete anti-Tamiḷ. He had a monument erected after Elāra, a memorial in Anurādhapura. Duṭṭha-gāmaṇī was not simply a victorious Rambo-type hero; he was allegedly a hero of a noble character honouring the memory of his enemy. When we apply this to Mahinda Rajapaksa, we can expect from him that he demonstrates his noble character by honouring Veluppillai Prabhakaran by building a memorial at Muḷlivāykkāl. This has not happened and will not happen, but still the homology is cultivated, especially by media, but of course in a mutilated and twisted way.

The event of building a monument was emphasised in a speech by a Yālppāṇam born attorney by the name of George R Wiley who welcomed Mahinda Rajapaksa as a modern Duṭṭha-gāmaṇī on his visit to Houston on 19 October, 2010.<sup>2</sup> Wiley realised that his homology was not perfect when confronted with the present reality. All knew at that point of time that Mahinda Rajapaksa had not only Veluppillai Prabhakaran killed, but that he had also desacralised the *tuyulum illankaḷ* ‘abodes of rest’ [Fig. 54], the war memorials of the combatants of the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement. He had sent bulldozers to eliminate these memorials [Fig. 34, 56], but during the whole armed conflict war memorials of the Tamiḷ Resistance Movement were destroyed [Fig. 54, 56]. Memorialisation of the Resistance Movement’s *māvirarkaḷ* ‘Great Heroes’ has been suppressed in Īlam after May 2009, but cannot be suppressed in the Diaspora [Fig. 57].<sup>3</sup>

When Wiley made his speech, all knew that the President had a memorial established close to Muḷlivāykkāl [Fig. 32–33, 47] to demonstrate the victory over “the terrorist” Vēluppillai Pirapākaraṇ. Wiley has not reproached or even accused Mahinda Rajapaksa for *not* having built a monument over Veluppillai Prabhakaran in Putukkuṭiyirippu close to Muḷlivāykkāl. Instead, Wiley realised the paradigmatic force of the homology. He tried to circumvent its logical and very embarrassing consequence. He twisted therefore the reference to the monument from being a physical monument over the enemy into being a monumental political programme by Mahinda Rajapaksa, a monument that created justice for the Tamiḷ speakers. He advised the

<sup>2</sup> Wiley, George R. Brave Speech by Tamil Attorney. [Video], <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=in27dumagww&feature=related>.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Schalk, “On Resilience and Defiance of the Īlamtamiḷ Resistance Movement in a Transnational Diaspora”, Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe. Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives, *Dynamics in the History of Religions*, Vol. 1. Edited by Volkhard Krech, Marion Steinicke (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 391–411.

President to be noble like Duṭṭhagāmaṇī by returning Sri Lanka into that paradise which it once was for all citizens (sic). Wiley asked Rajapaksa implicitly to build a monument over himself. He explicitly advised the President not to let a Prabhakaran ever rise again. Wiley did not burden the President with a demand to demonstrate his noble character in the footsteps of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.

Homologies can be dangerous stuff. Lankan ideological historiography has more than one.<sup>4</sup> History is apprehended as heritage or as imitation of the past.<sup>5</sup> The Eḷāra-Duṭṭhagāmaṇī narration told by historians was a favourite theme during the long conflict. Ju. Ri. Jayawardhana and Raṇasiṃha Prēmadāsa also were identified with Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, and Velupillai Prabhakaran with Eḷāra as their counterpart. Even the Tamil Resistance Movement took it up and created an *Ellāḷaṅ Force*. What is black for one party is beautiful for another. Some Tamil speakers felt and still feel sympathy with Ellāḷaṅ, of course not because he was a loser in the battle with Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, but because he was a victim with whom Tamil speakers can identify. He, being a just King – even in the evaluation of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī – was killed unjustly. The Tamil historian James Rutnam describes Eḷāra as an aged, but valiant King who was struck down and killed in single combat by the much younger Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.<sup>6</sup> On the Government side the President is celebrated because he was a victor over “Eḷāra” who was a loser, a “terrorist”, who evidently does not deserve to be honoured by a monument close to Muḷḷivāykkāl where he was killed – or anywhere else.

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<sup>4</sup> See p. 129 in this volume.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Schalk, “Conjuring...”, 190–192. Id., *Cāvilum vālvōm*, „Auch im Angesicht des Todes werden wir leben“: *Īlamtamile sein im Krieg und in der Fremde* (Dortmund: Internationaler Verein Emigrierter Tamilischer Schriftsteller e.V., 2006), especially chapter 4 and 5. To this should be added: *Die Lehre der Befreiungstiger Tamililams von der Selbstvernichtung durch göttliche Askese*. Vorlage der Quelle *Überlegungen des Anführers (talaivarin cintanaikaḷ)*. Tamil, Deutsch, Englisch, Schwedisch, Sinhala. Ediert, übersetzt, kommentiert und herausgegeben von Peter Schalk unter Mitarbeit von Ālvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai, Anonymus und Astrid van Nahl, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 28* (Uppsala: Universität Uppsala, 2007), especially chapter 10.14.

<sup>6</sup> James Rutnam, *The Tomb of Elara at Anurādhapura* (Jaffna: Jaffna Archaeological Society, 1981), 1.

## History contra Heritage

To deconstruct this homology it is necessary to approach the sources. To begin, I must introduce here a distinction between “history” as a critical study of the past,<sup>7</sup> and “heritage” which is a conscious selection of past events which supports political or ideological (religious) interests at a given time. In the heritage of a person, family, nation or state are usually only included those events which give a positive image of the past, events which are monumental and exemplary to be repeated in the future. Enemies are usually demonised in a construction of a heritage. Embarrassing and painful events are denied or excused. If there is a defeat on a battlefield it is immediately balanced by a great victory. There is room for Eḷāra in the construction of a heritage in the *Mahāvamsa*,<sup>8</sup> but only as loser, defeated and killed by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. He formulated in the name of the Buddha an ethical/religious principle which justifies the killing of even a just king under special circumstances. This principle became one of the pillars in *siṃhala urumaya* ‘Siṃhala heritage’. This principle is unique in world history. We find many examples of justifications for killing tyrants, but no example of justification of killing a just King.

True, there is room for Tamil speakers in the national heritage-construction of Prākṛit and Siṃhala speaking Buddhists, but only as aliens or as settlers of a late period. In some cultures even negative events are included in the national heritage, like the Holocaust in some modern post-war constructions of Germany’s national heritage, but of course not as exemplary acts. They are integrated as warning, as *Mahnmal* ‘exhortatory memorial’. The UN has also integrated Auschwitz in the world heritage as exhortatory memorial. True, the Government of the island has included Muḷlivāykkāl in its national heritage - not in the form of an exhortatory memorial which memorialises tens of thousands killings of civilian Tamil speakers by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces - but as a triumphant martial memorial of victory over terrorism [Fig. 32–33, 49].

The consciousness of the heritage is expressed visually in painting, sculpture and architecture, not to forget music, all based on Bud-

<sup>7</sup> An example of such a study is Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, *Von Jaffna nach Kilinocchi: Wandel des politischen Bewusstseins der Tamilen in Sri Lanka*, Beiträge zur Südasiensforschung, Südasiens-Institut Universität Heidelberg. Bd. 199 (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> *The Mahāvamsa*, Edited by Wilhelm Geiger. London: Pali Text Society, 1958. *The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, translated by Wilhelm Geiger and Mabel Haynes Bode. London: Pali Text Society, 1980 [1908].

dhism. When we come to political Buddhism in Īlam these expressions are of special kind of creative art which we know as *kitsch*. This German globalised word is usually explained by trash or junk, but here I take the word as technical and descriptive one. It is a special kind of art which renounces originality. *Kitsch* goes for imitation of originals, which introduces a quantitative aspect of beauty expressed in the duplication of imitations *en masse* [Fig. 39, 40]. Quality is measured by quantity which should convey a massive impression. We know this method of mobilising masses developed by totalitarian states.

The Buddha statues in Fig. 39–40 are imitations of the famous *samādhi* statue in Anurātapuram from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. I say imitation, not copy. The producers have decided to solve an iconographic problem in the way how Alexander opened the famous Gordian knot. They made the robe fall in folds which is not visible on the original. Moreover, the original has a stone block behind the head which suggests that a halo was fixed to it. There is no sign of it in the imitations. They are all moulded in the same mould. *Kitsch* is reduced to a feeling of triviality and banalisation of Buddhist thought - in the evaluation of the critical and knowledgeable beholder.

The Government of Sri Lanka has taken great interest in promoting this *kitsch* and has appointed the Defence Department to enforce the production of it. There is a strong element of militarisation in this *kitsch*<sup>9</sup> which exempts it from the demands of the open market. This again has resulted in a suspension of the distinction between *Edelkitsch* ‘noble kitsch’ for higher demands and *Massenkitsch* ‘kitsch for masses’ for lower demands. All *kitsch* has become noble *kitsch* for the masses which is imposed in Tamil areas and in parts of the world in Lankan embassies [Fig. 39–40]. A state’s engagement in martial art is not rare, but these states are usually totalitarian states, are in a pressed situation of war or are dependent of ultranationalist movements. The Tamil Resistance Movement also engages in the spread of noble *kitsch* to its sympathisers.

Political Siṃhala Buddhism instrumentalises *kitsch* to project two sentiments, one of purity and one of danger. Purity is expressed in the mass production of Buddha statues, of *malāsnayas* ‘flower seats’ which receive flowers by venerating visitors, and of *vihārayas* ‘monasteries’ which are established in areas of Tamil speakers under control of the military administration [Fig. 3–8, 15–17, 20–23, 25–

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<sup>9</sup> See Fig. 3–13, 19, 26, 28–31, 36, 38, 42–43, 49 in this volume.

**27, 35–43].**<sup>10</sup> Purity stands here for the safe world and for harmony. This harmony is, however, endangered by dirt which is a traditional attribute associated with Tamil speakers, especially from the Cōla period onwards. Usually a lotus [Fig. 31–32, 42] which is also an expression of purity cleans itself from the dirt in its muddy surrounding. So does the Government of Sri Lanka through its military organisation. The lotus is also mass produced. The combination of the lotus representing the pure, safe world, and of violent exorcism is also symbolised [Fig. 30–32].

As Duṭṭhagāmaṇī has killed Eḷāra, so Mahinda Rajapaksa, represented by an anonymous hero, has killed Vēluppillai Pirapākaran. This close belonging together of purity and exorcism of evil is expressed in art of *kitsch* in Buddhist triumphalist statues like the one established by the military in Muḷlivāykkāl [Fig. 32–33, 47]. This *kitsch* retroactively leads the beholder to the “heritage”. Mahinda Rajapaksa just imitated the past with all its legends about victories against the Tamil speakers. He created an imagination of a safe world by using the gun according to the accepted principle “war for peace” from the 1990s. On the gun [Fig. 32, 49] sits a peace dove! In Fig. 31 we find an imitation of the known motive of God holding the globe in his hands conveying the message “in God we trust”. We find sculptures like that in Western cemeteries. In Fig. 31 the globe is replaced by Laṃkā and the four hands belong... to whom?

Why is the Government so interested about this kind of political Buddhist *kitsch*? This unusual enforcement by the Defence Department to spread *kitsch* is part of the Government’s colonisation program in the North and East. In these areas the Defence Department spreads its *kitsch* which is beheld not by Tamil Caivas, Christians or Muslims, but by Siṃhala-Buddhist speakers who come as visitors, pilgrims, and finally and ultimately as settlers. They are moved to accept the re-conquest of territory and to support in their own interest the ideology of majoritarianism which legalises the colonisation program within the parliamentary system - at least in the eyes of its Buddhist beholders. This *kitsch* would have been revealed as trash or junk and rejected if it had been exposed to a historical-critical analysis of “the heritage”, but it is not in the interest of the Government and its dependent media to support such an analysis. Furthermore, expressions of political Siṃhala-Buddhism, especially through Buddhist *kitsch*, is connected with strong demands for territory, but not for any soil. It is the territory of the constitutional unitary state.

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<sup>10</sup> See the article by Jude Lal Fernando in this volume, especially pp. 199–201.

Therefore, voices which speak for Tamil Buddhism which are connected with counter demands for an autonomous territory must be silenced.

To close up, the distinction between history as a critical study of the past and as a constructed heritage based on selected sources is theoretical, but it should be held up as guideline. A modern historian should not be a custodian of a constructed national heritage, but should be an analyser and synthesiser of fragments of the past based on *all* available sources. One of the important custodians of the heritage of Siṃhalatva<sup>11</sup> in Īlam/Laṃkā was the late monk Walpola Rāhula (Walpoḷa Rāhula, 1907–1997) whose works I will take up here.

## Historisation

Custodians of a heritage usually claim to be historians also. They want the flair of academic truthfulness. They historicise their heritage constructions.<sup>12</sup> Historicising implies here that a new event is related to a past event which objectively can be said to be invented, mythical or real, which is already known or unknown, but which from the custodian's side is always regarded as true. Let me give an example. The concept of a unitary state was introduced in 1972 in the Lankan Constitution, but its introduction was facilitated by relating it to the concept of “rule under one umbrella” which was allegedly accomplished already by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. Ideologues, especially Walpola Rāhula, masterminded this historicisation. He created an impression of a continuous more than 2000 years old tradition of a unitary state.

There are aggressive, active, revisionist historicisations, some of low and others of high sophistication. The first repeat the old slogans of war, or at least allude to them. I refer to the naming of military regiments which often bear the names of killers of Tamil speakers from the past, like Gemunu Watch Regiment and Gajaba Regiment. Both are named after famous exterminators of Tamil speakers, after

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<sup>11</sup> For the concept of *Siṃhalatva* see Peter Schalk, “Operationalizing Buddhism for Political Ends in a Martial Context in Lanka: The Case of *Siṃhalatva*”, *Religion and Violence in South Asia. Theory and Practice*, Edited by John R. Hinnels and Richard King. Oxon: Routledge, 2007, 139–153.

<sup>12</sup> For the concept of „historicisation“ – German “Vergeschichtligung” – see Peter Schalk, “Vom Krieg geprägte Vergangenheitsaufarbeitungen in Īlam/Laṃkā”, *Geschichten und Geschichte. Historiographie und Hagiographie in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*, edited by Peter Schalk et al., *Acta Universitatis Upslensis, Historia Religionum* 30 (Uppsala: AUU, 2010), 548–584.

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (101–77/161–137) and Gaḷabāhu (174–196/114–136). These historicalisations are historical pastiches; they retrieve the past, but only by imitating it. This is true especially of one monastic group with the significant name *Jātika Hāla Urumaya* ‘National Siṃhala Heritage’. Its value system is widely used in other right-wing political parties and by individuals. It teaches Siṃhalatva similarly to Indians teaching Hindūtvā and similar to how Germans taught Christianity in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup> A part of the German Protestant Church taught “German Christianity” which had an anti-semitic base. In all these cases democratic pluralism is the adversary.

The monk Walpola Rahula belongs to the more sophisticated custodians of a heritage which is historised by him and given the flair of an academic production. He spent many years in Paris, where he had learned the craft of historical-philological criticism. One of his books is significantly called *Bhikṣuvagē Urumaya*, ‘The Heritage of the Monk’.<sup>14</sup> It first appeared in Siṃhala in 1946 and was then translated into English as *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* from 1974.<sup>15</sup> The monk, according to him, should perform social services to the people, which really meant political services. He glorified war-inspired monks in the *Mahāvamsa* (who were even advocates of violence), which he then repeated in a later book, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* from 1956.

Walpola Rahula felt himself called to emerge politically, first socialist, then nationalistic-Siṃhala. So we know him since the 1950s. In 1956 he praised the historical Siṃhala speakers as a new breed of healthy young blood, who gave themselves to Buddhism. He published “a call to the whole Siṃhala race” in *The Independent* of 1 February 1992, in which he demanded that the peace proposal of the Minister C. Tōṇṭamāṇ (Thondaman) should be dismissed. He had suggested that the government should start peace talks with the LTTE. Walpola Rahula, now VC of the University of Ceylon, claimed that the war first should be brought to an end before peace talks started. He implicitly called for a war for peace. Walpola Rahula was by no means alone. The following long-established Buddhist organizations supported his slogan that peace should be established only after completion of successful war: Supreme Council of the Sangha, Mahabodhi Society, Young Mens’ Buddhist Association, Dharma

<sup>13</sup> Peter Schalk, “Twisted Cross: The Religious Nationalism of the German Christians”, *Studia Theologica: Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 52.1 (1998): 69–79.

<sup>14</sup> Walpoḷa Rahula, *Bhikṣuvagē urumaya* (Kalaniya: Vidyalankara Press, 1946).

<sup>15</sup> Walpola Rahula, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu: The Buddhist Tradition of Service* (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 98–119.



Vijaya Foundation, All Ceylon Buddhist Women's' Congress, Sri Lanka Temperance Association, All Ceylon Buddhist Congress, Buddhist Theosophical Society, World Buddhist Women's' Congress, Sasana Sevaka Society. The slogan “war for peace” became an identity marker for the regime of President Candirikā Kumarāṇatuṅga-Bandaranāyaka who was backed up by the Buddhist organisations mentioned above. The theme of war for peace continues a phrase which seems to be as old as war itself and is repeated in every generation: *paritur pax bello*, ‘peace is gained by war’.<sup>16</sup> The Government side launched in 1995 the battle cry “war for peace!”, in Siṃhala *samaya saṅdahā yuddhaya*.<sup>17</sup>

Now back to Walpola Rahula’s first political work, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*. He argued that the political monk is not a new creation which is right of course. It is true that the figure of the anti-Tamiḷ martial monk has a strong presence in tradition. We shall meet a famous martial monk in the role of a King below. We also know that this tradition did not remain unchallenged. Of this we hear nothing.

The main historical problem in Walpola Rahula’s work lies in the fact that “tradition” in his context not only refers to the Siṃhala-Buddhist tradition, but also to the canonical tradition of the *Vinaya*, albeit the existence of Tamiḷ speakers is not even suggested in the canon, nor is the political monk glorified in the *Vinaya*. Walpola Rahula could not say to the public “the Buddha taught this, but I teach that”. He is expected to say “the Buddha taught this and I do the same”. The reader of Walpola Rahula’s anachronism and of his persuasive-constructed understanding of an artificially prolonged tradition is brought to the conclusion that it is in the spirit of the canonical tradition.

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<sup>16</sup> This formulation goes back to Cornelius Nepos (100–125) to his work *De viris illustribus*.

<sup>17</sup> Chandrika Kumaratunga, “The Address Made at the Inaugural Meeting of the ‘Sudu Nelum’ Colombo, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1995”, <http://www.presidentsl.org/data/speech/1995/19950708SuduNelum.htm> (31. März 2005). – For more on the justification of violence see Tessa Bartholomeusz, “In Defense of Dharma: Just War Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka”, *The Ethics of War in Asian Civilizations: A Comparative Perspective*, edited by Torkel Brekke (London: Routledge, 2006), 179–180. Elizabeth Nissan, “Some Thoughts on Sinhalese Justifications for the Violence”, *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, edited by James Manor (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 175–186; Elizabeth Harris, “Buddhism and the Justification of War: A Case Study from Sri Lanka”, *Just War in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Paul Robinson (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 93–108.

Walpola Rahula introduced in the 1940s a relativistic principle and casuistic interpretation of the *Vinaya* to facilitate for monks the encounter with the modern world.<sup>18</sup> He relied on the testimony of the Buddha that minor rules could be changed which actually happened already in the days of the Buddha. This brings him to the conclusion that the *Vinaya* could be changed with changing economic and social conditions.<sup>19</sup> This was not seriously disputed, but at stake are not the minor rules, but the figure of the monk as a political monk, whose goal in life has no support in the *Vinaya*.

Walpola Rahula has two faces. In his account of the true teachings of the Buddha in the book *Budun vadāla dharmaya* from 1964,<sup>20</sup> translated into English in 1959 under the title *What the Buddha Taught*,<sup>21</sup> is said that the Buddha did not teach just war.<sup>22</sup> In his other works, however, he wants to justify the war-loving monk's political involvement based on his ethical relativism, which he ascribes to the Buddha himself.

*Lakdiva budusamayē itihāsaya*,<sup>23</sup> 'History of Buddhism on the island of Lanka', was published in 1989 by Walpola Rahula. It contains the legend of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī as the founder of the kingdom, and his religious war is classified as a just war. The king is presented as keeper of the Siṃhala race. An English version appeared as early as 1956, in the wake of the above-mentioned book about the legacy of the monk. Apparently it was not necessary for the author to revise its war-inspired views expressed later, which reached a climax in 1992 (see below).

Walpola Rahula does not distinguish between Buddhist politics and political Buddhism. The former is within the frame of a canonical tradition which advises a ruler to incorporate Buddhist morality like compassion in his political program. The latter instrumentalises Buddhism to achieve a political aim as ultimate aim.<sup>24</sup> This ultimate aim

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<sup>18</sup> An important and elaborate work that completes my work about Valpaḷa Rāhula is H. L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), especially chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> Rahula, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Walpoḷa Rāhula, *Budun vadāla dharmaya* (Dehivala: Bauddha saṃskṛtika madhyasthānaya, 1997 [1964]).

<sup>21</sup> Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, revised edition (Bedford: Gordon Fraser, 1972 [1959]).

<sup>22</sup> Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 84.

<sup>23</sup> Walpoḷa Rāhula, *Lakdiva budusamayē itihāsaya: Anurādhapura yugaya, Kri. Pū. 3 siyavasē siṭa kri. va. 10 siyavasa dakvā* (Kōlamba: Guṇasēna, 1989).

<sup>24</sup> For this distinction see Peter Schalk, "Political Buddhism among Lankans in the

is to strengthen the unitary state, Siṃhala *ekīya rājya*, against the Tamil Resistance Movement which goes for two nations and two states, but also against the opposition in the home front which strives for a united state, Siṃhala *eksat rājya*, and of course also against every form of a secular state.<sup>25</sup> Walpola Rāhula speaks of Buddhist politics but means sometimes political Buddhism.

## The Sources

A source for the Eḷāra-Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story is the *Mahāvamsa* from the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The *Mahāvamsa* exists now on Internet, in Pāli and English translation, even in a Tamil translation. It is easy to come over the original text. There is no excuse anymore for not using it.

Another source is the *Dīpavamsa*.<sup>26</sup> It is also written in Pāli and is translated into English. It was created about 100 years earlier and is shorter than the *Mahāvamsa*. There are no earlier sources available for the Eḷāra/Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story, but there are a number of later sources which can be used for studying the reception of the Eḷāra-Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story.<sup>27</sup> I take up here some other sources in Pāli and Siṃhala, but mainly one source, the *Mahāvamsa*, for the study of the recent reception in the work by Walpola Rahula.

A comparison between the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* shows interesting contradictions. Through the dominance of the *Mahāvamsa* in the following centuries these contradictions were forgotten. The *Dīpavamsa* has been marginalised either by prejudice against the historical value of the *Dīpavamsa*, by ignorance or by a

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Context of Martial Conflict”, *Religion, Staat, Gesellschaft: Zeitschrift Für Glaubensformen und Weltanschauungen* 2.2 (2002): 223–242.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Schalk, “Present Concepts of Secularism among Ilavar and Lankans“, *Zwischen Säkularismus und Hierokratie: Studien zum Verhältnis von Religion und Staat in Süd- und Ostasien*, edited by Peter Schalk, *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum* 17 (Uppsala: AUU, 2001), 37–72.

<sup>26</sup> The *Dīpavamsa. An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*. Edited and Translated by Hermann Oldenberg. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982 (Reprint).

<sup>27</sup> Sven Bretfeld, *Das singhalesische Nationalepos von König Dutthagamani Abhaya: Textkritische Bearbeitung und Übersetzung der Kapitel VII.3–VIII.3 der Rasavahini des Vedeha Thera und Vergleich mit den Paralleltextrn Sahassavattuppakarana und Saddharmalankaraya*, *Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie*, Band 13 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2001).

conscious deselection.<sup>28</sup> What historians like Walpola Rahula present today is a typical construction, based on the *Mahāvamsa*, of a “heritage” glorified by Siṃhala-Buddhist ethnonationalists.

Tamiḷ historians have not contributed to question seriously this heritage; they have swallowed the facts which were presented to them, even if they have another evaluation of these facts (Eḷāra is not a loser, but a victim). Even James Rutnam who did a deep study of Eḷāra’s tomb suspended to look in the *Dīpavaṃsa*.<sup>29</sup>

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī was a king of Prākṛit speakers, who according to the *Mahāvamsa* after a long war against Tamil speakers on 32 battlefields in a last duel fight defeated the ruling Tamil King Eḷāra in Anurādhapura. When it comes to the dating of kings, we have two possible chronologies. The first is from the German indologist William Geiger, the second is from the Lankan archaeologist Seneraṭ Paranavitāna and his school in Pēradeṇiya. Both have good reasons for their chronologies. Historians mix them sometimes. I will always give both. The first is Geiger’s, the second the Pēradeṇiya School’s. Both chronologies are based on the same sources concerning Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, namely the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*. The dating of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is 101–77/161–137. The dating of Eḷāra is 145–101/no dating. The dates indicate the time of their ruling, not their total lifespan. The two dates show differences, but they do not concern us. Both will fall into what is called the early Anurādhapura period. The political, economic and religious center was from the 3rd century BC a city-state founded in Anurādhapura, in Tamiḷ presented as Anurātapuram. It was the center of decisive, sometimes fatal events for the state formation up to the 12th Century.

Now follow some introductory words about these two sources, the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvamsa*. Both are written in Pāli which is a literary language. They were only in the 19th Century translated into Siṃhala, after which they could become popular books. The *Dīpavaṃsa* ‘Chronicle of the island’ includes 22 chapters, stretching from the mythical tale of the three arrivals of the Buddha Sākyamuni to the

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<sup>28</sup> The history of research on the generation and reception in Pali of the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvamsa* up to to 14th century has been summarised in Sven Bretfeld, Das singhalesische Nationalepos von König Dutthagamani Abhaya: Textkritische Bearbeitung und Übersetzung der Kapitel VII.3–VIII.3 der Rasavahini des Vedeha Thera und Vergleich mit den Paralleltexten Sahassavattuppakarana und Saddharmalankaraya, *Monographien zur indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie Band 13* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2001), XII–XL. For scholars’ interpretation see Ibid., XVII–XX1.

<sup>29</sup> Rutnam, *The Tomb...*

reign of King Mahāsenā (334–361/274–301). It was compiled shortly after his death and completed. There is no known compiler. The distance of time between Eḷāra/Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and the codification of their life-story in the *Dīpavaṃsa* is about 400 years.

*Mahāvāṃsa* means ‘Great Chronicle’. The *Mahāvāṃsa* includes 37 chapters and extends from the arrivals of the Buddha up to Mahāsenā. It was compiled and completed towards the end of the 5th Century. The work is attributed in a commentary, not in the *Mahāvāṃsa* itself, to the Buddhist monk Mahānāma. The distance between the event and its codification is about 500 years. There is preserved no eyewitness report about Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.

One should speak in this case of the first part of the *Mahāvāṃsa*, because to this work were added three more parts later. These last three parts are known by the name *Cūlavāṃsa* ‘Little Chronicle’,<sup>30</sup> but it is more comprehensive than the first part. Those who wish to see continuity between all parts speak only on the *Mahāvāṃsa* as a unit which is numbered continuously from chapter 1 to 100. The second part includes Chapter 37: 50 to 70 and was developed by a monk named Dhammakitti compiled in 1186. The third part includes the chapters to 90: 104 and was in the 14th compiled century by an unknown poet. The fourth part includes Chapter 90: 105 to 100 and was completed by the monk Tibbotuvāvē about 1782, shortly before the arrival of the first British.

It is important to see that the *Mahāvāṃsa* is no single work with its 100 chapters; it is a concoction of different parts which must be dealt with separately. They originated in different periods and were created by different authors. Walpola Rahula skips without explanation the fourth part about the beginning of colonial period and insists in using the name of *Mahāvāṃsa* for all parts. This creates the impression of an organic continuity. Moreover, there is no provision which says that the *Mahāvāṃsa* is ended with the fourth part. There is no closed *Vāṃsa* canon. A fifth part which extends into our time could be added. It would not astonish me to find that the present President Mahinda Rajapaksa has a fifth part written which glorifies him.

Both chronicles are written by Buddhists. The *Dīpavaṃsa* is anonymous, but the content reveals that the authors were insiders, nuns and/or monks. In the case of the *Mahāvāṃsa*, we know the name of three Buddhist monks, who have written different parts. It is

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<sup>30</sup> *Cūlavāṃsa: Being the More Recent Part of the Mahāvāṃsa*, edited by Wilhelm Geiger. Vols 1–2 (London: Pali Text Society, 1980 [1925–1927]).

important to know that all these monks belonged to the same school tradition, the Mahāvihāra tradition of the Theravādins within Hīnayāna Buddhism. They reflect a concord of view. Therefore it is not totally wrong to see an *ideological* continuity in the whole of the *Mahāvamsa*. Both chronicles and their successors are created for the purpose of consolidating a self-image of the Buddhists of the island, in the *Mahāvamsa* in conjunction with the idea of a centralized state. This self-image proclaims that the island's destiny as a whole is to become a Buddhist country as a centralized state. This image is unfolded in the *Mahāvamsa* and is retrieved today by Siṃhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalists as the heritage's ultimate concern for the island. From this perspective, the Kings are valued by the monks/nuns as good or bad. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī turns out very well because he killed the Tamil king Eḷāra, not because Eḷāra was evil or unjust. On the contrary, it is said that he was a just King. He was, according to the *Mahāvamsa* – not to the *Dīpavamsa* – killed because he was not Buddhist, and therefore he was an obstacle for the predestined spread of Buddhism. This part of the heritage is paradigmatic. Rulers in the chronicles are not only judged individually for their merits, but they were also idealized as paradigms for the following period. It is now important to see that the earlier source, the *Dīpavamsa* has a completely different explanation for the killing of Eḷāra (see below). Let me just note that it is the *Mahāvamsa*, not the *Dīpavamsa*, that defines the conflict between Tamil and Prākṛit speakers as a religious conflict. Today the influence of this part of the *Mahāvamsa* on media is intensive. How often have I seen the statement that the conflict between Tamils and Siṃhalas is religious, is a conflict between Hindus and Buddhists?

The chronicles are post-canonical. There are no claims in them that they are words of Buddha. No one has claimed of that being the case. The chronicles have, however, a special status as being central for the construction of a national “heritage”. They contain a high-profile doctrine of *jus ad bellum* ‘just war’, and of *jus in bello* ‘equitable way of warfare’, both in the name of Buddha. For some Buddhists of today, these passages are embarrassing, but within political Buddhism these chronicles are ideal role models. They are not classified as time- and locally-related statements without any claim to succession. The actual historical impact of the *Mahāvamsa*, having been retrieved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, throws its shadow on education, on the popularization of history, on media and on ongoing controversies in the conflict between government loyalists and resistance fighters of the Tamil movement.

In addition to the chronicles, there are also Prākṛit inscriptions from pre-Christian times which are usually short. Some of them are approximately from the same time as Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. These inscriptions are aware of the title *gāmaṇi*, which refers to a local ruler. There are many men from the ruling class mentioned and they are described briefly, but there is no reference to a king of a centralized state.<sup>31</sup> Attempts by Seneraṭ Paranavitāna to project Duṭṭhagāmaṇī into these inscriptions are speculative. This does not suggest that Duṭṭhagāmaṇī did not exist, but that he played a limited role in his lifetime.

If these inscriptions are not rewarding as source for the Duṭṭhagāmaṇī-Eḷāra story there is another hypothetical source. Versions of events which are identical or similar in the *Mahāvam̐sa* and *Dīpavam̐sa* go back to a common written source for both in Eḷu, a literary forerunner in Prākṛit of Siṃhala. This source is not preserved anymore, but there are references to this now lost chronicle in Prākṛit-Eḷu.<sup>32</sup> Both chronicles end with King Mahāsenā (274–301, 334–361) which indicates that they had the same source as basis ending with this king.

What is surplus in the *Mahāvam̐sa* in relation to the *Dīpavam̐sa* can be understood as a new creation or borrowing from other sources by the monk Mahānāma, the supposed compiler of the *Mahāvam̐sa*, in the end of the fifth century. The content of the *Dīpavam̐sa* is then primary to the content of *Mahāvam̐sa* not only in time, but above all in relation to the now lost original written transmission of the Eḷāra-Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story in Prākṛit-Eḷu. We cannot exclude also that the *Dīpavam̐sa* has consciously deselected material from this common source.

The *Dīpavam̐sa* has been regularly marginalized as source for two reasons. Wilhelm Geiger found it to be a clumsy work, more a dry list of names and things than a chronicle, containing many repetitions and mnemonic verses for the reciter of the episodes.<sup>33</sup> His argument is esthetic, but in his German academic tradition sloppiness is also a sign of unreliability, albeit he does not say explicitly that the *Dīpavam̐sa* is not trustworthy.

<sup>31</sup> *Inscriptions of Ceylon 1, Containing Cave Inscriptions from 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C. to 1<sup>st</sup> Century A. C. and Other Inscriptions in the Early Brāhmī Script*, edited by Seneraṭ Paranavitana, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon (Colombo: Department of Archaeology, 1970), LV, LXX.

<sup>32</sup> For the used sources see Sven Bretfeld, *Das singhalesische Nationalepos...*, XXVIII–XXXIII.

<sup>33</sup> Wilhelm Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times*. Edited by Heinz Bechert. 2., unveränderte Auflage (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 71.

The other reason for marginalizing the *Dīpavaṃsa* in the modern period is that it cannot be exploited for promoting Siṃhala-Buddhist ethnonationalist aims. This is possible with the *Mahāvaṃsa* that is one of the pillars of Siṃhalatva. The *Dīpavaṃsa* corresponds to our idealizing image of Buddhism as a non-violent religion which resists attempts to be instrumentalised for political aims. The *Dīpavaṃsa* mentions realistically cruel events in the political world, but does not excuse or even sanction a fitting selection of them by a Buddhistised just-war theory.

### Eḷāra in the *Dīpavaṃsa*

Tamiḷ scholars have made themselves dependent on the *Mahāvaṃsa* for their study of Eḷāra. Therefore we cannot expect any new facts from them. Irācanāyakam in his book on *Ancient Jaffna* from 1926 followed closely the *Mahāvaṃsa* and added fanciful narrations of the type “it is said that...”<sup>34</sup> They are useless as historical documents because they cannot be checked, but they convey all a positive image of Eḷāra.

We are now concentrating on the killing of Eḷāra by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, first in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and then in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. In the *Dīpavaṃsa* the story of Eḷāra includes sections 18: 49–54. We do not even learn that he was a Tamiḷ and non-Buddhist. The name Eḷāra is a Prākṛit corruption of Tamiḷ Ellāḷaṇ. Those who do not know the phonetic rules for transforming Tamiḷ into Prākṛit will not suspect that Eḷāra was a Tamiḷ speaker. This we learn only in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. This omission in the *Dīpavaṃsa* to record such information has been used to criticize the historical value of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, but there is another way to look at this omission. It was not in the interest for the compiler(s) to provide this ethnic information because their interest was another to which I shall come below. The *Dīpavaṃsa* does not define the conflict in religious or ethnic terms, but as what? Let us go step by step.

Eḷāra is represented as *khattiya* ‘warrior’ in a series of royal succession. Eḷāra murdered his predecessor, who in turn had murdered his predecessor. Those murdered were two warriors, Sena and Gut-taka, who *rajjam dhammena karayum*, ‘ruled justly’ for 22 years.

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<sup>34</sup> C. Rasanayagam, *Ancient Jaffna. Being a Research into the History of Jaffna from Very Early Times to the Portugese Period* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1984 (1926)), 66.



Their names alone do not reveal that they were Tamil speakers, but this time they are said to be Tamil speakers. Evidently they were not tyrants and usurpers because they had ruled justly for 22 years. Why were they killed?

Eḷāra was not the first ruler who assassinated his predecessor, and he was not the last. The murder of predecessors in dynastic systems of government is not rare; it is a natural result of power struggles within and between dynasties. Eḷāra found that his predecessor was an obstacle in his own expansion and killed him in an intradynastic struggle. From the perspective of the historian, the role of Eḷāra as killer who is killed later himself is expected. Dynastic killings belonged to normalcy. Eḷāra had spent his time and stood in the way for a young warrior of a neighboring dynasty on the island. Intra- and interdynastic struggles alternated. The Prākṛit speakers had several dynasties, a *sūriyavaṃsa* and a *candravaṃsa*. There were subclans to the former like the Kāliṅga princes and the Lambakaṇṇas. The *āriyavaṃsa* was classified of being of lower rank in spite of its high status name.

The *Dīpavaṃsa* refers to six Tamil rulers and in no case in pejorative way (*Dīpavaṃsa* 18: 47, 20: 15–17). These are the mentioned Sena and Gutta (177–155, no date) and Pulahattha, Bahiya, Panayamāra, Piḷayamāra and Dhātika who reigned in succession (43–29, 103–89).

Eḷāra, according to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, had ruled for 44 years justly by the four ways of avoiding desire (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), fear (*bhaya*) and delusion (*moha*). He lived up to norms of Buddhism, but his religion is never characterised. If the reader of the *Dīpavaṃsa* does not know what the *Mahāvaṃsa* says about Eḷāra, he would not even guess that Eḷāra is not a Buddhist. All the demerits he avoided, desire (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), fear (*bhaya*) and delusion (*moha*) are also explicitly classified as vices by Buddhism.

Eḷāra could also do wonderful deeds. When it rained day and night, he caused the rain to fall only at night. Why was he murdered? There is no explicit reason given in the *Dīpavaṃsa* but it conveys the impression that the time had come for Eḷāra to be eliminated by a warrior, whose name was Abhaya and who was surrounded by ten soldiers and a war elephant called Kaṇḍula. This warrior is known as Duṭṭhagāmaṇī in the *Mahāvaṃsa*.

In the *Dīpavaṃsa* is no mentioning of Abhaya killing Eḷāra in single combat. We learn only that Abhaya killed 32 kings and then reigned alone. These 32 Kings were not classified as Tamil speaking kings and not as non-Buddhists (*Dīpavaṃsa* 18: 54). In the *Dīpavaṃsa* neither alienation of nor xenophobia against Tamil speakers

are visible. Abhaya's victory is therefore not given an ethnic touch by pinpointing Prākṛit speaking Buddhists as standing against Tamil speaking non-Buddhists. The picture is that of two power-hungry dynastic leaders standing against each other in a war for territorial gains.

If we had only the *Dīpavaṃsa*, Abhaya's attack could be described as a struggle between dynasties. These had not yet formed nation states that relied on a linguistic or religious basis and on a continuous territory, but whose unity and continuity was *symbolized* by the dynasty whose state formation was composed of different linguistic and religious communities. Loyalties were not defined ethnically, but in relation to the dynasty. Pledges of allegiance from different ethnic groups were placed on rulers. The presentation by Walpola Rahula of the pre-colonial state as a linguistic, racial, religious, national and centralized unitary state even at Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's times is a retrospective and rude anachronistic projection.

Interdynastic wars were common in South Asia in the pre-colonial period. The kingdoms in South India fought each other and within their reach was also the island. Also Prākṛit speaking rulers on the island went to wars of conquest to South India and collaborated with the Pāṇṭiyas against the early Cōḷas. It's amazing: The armies of these Prākṛit speaking rulers were in part Tamil-speaking mercenaries. Such wars were economic, territorial, and sometimes religious, but only when it came to save the own religion. Wars of conquest were legitimate means to increase the treasure of the own kingdom. In Indian law books such as the *Arthasāstra* conquest was presented as a legitimate and necessary source for enriching the treasury. Treasures on the island were often hidden in Buddhist monasteries. Therefore, these were a natural target of looting by South Indian armies. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's own wars of conquest against 32 rulers followed this pattern. The imperial Cōḷas in the 11th and 12century, plundered Buddhist monasteries of the island, but at the same time constructed a huge Buddhist monastery for Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia, though not a single Cōḷa ruler was personally attracted to Buddhism.<sup>35</sup> The Cōḷas were crude pragmatists. They needed the Buddhists of Sri Vijaya for the recovery of trade with Southeast Asia, and they needed the Buddhist monasteries on the island for their plundering. Moreover, there were no recognized borders. The frontiers shifted constantly, depending on how a ruler could defend them. Might was right. The Cēras, the Pāṇṭiyas, the Cōḷas and the Prākṛit speaking rul-

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<sup>35</sup> *BaT* 1, 133–145.

ers of the island were all educated in this martial ideology.

Let us now turn to Walpola Rahula. He neglects the *Dīpavaṃsa*. In doing so he escaped the view of the nature of the struggle as interdynastic between Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. Walpola Rahula followed the view of the *Mahāvaṃsa* that represents the struggle as a religious war. His assessment of the *Mahāvaṃsa* as authentic and impartial source is underlined by him. After all, the view of the *Mahāvaṃsa* is his view.

### Eḷāra in the *Mahāvaṃsa*

Now we go to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, especially to section 21: 1–145, 25: 1–116. The starting point of the story is that the Tamil speaking King Eḷāra occupied Anurādhapura and that there was total of 32 small kingdoms of Tamil-speaking rulers. In this point the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* agree. Let us reduce the kingdoms to chieftains, but still the modern concept of Siṃhalatva of Tamil speakers being late-comers and invaders to the country, settling first in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, has no backing in the pillar-source of Siṃhalatva, in the *Mahāvaṃsa*. It shows that from the start of historical times we find both Tamil and Prākṛit speakers.

In the *Mahāvaṃsa* too Eḷāra is presented as a just ruler against friend and foe. 44 years he ruled. Also in dispute Eḷāra precipitated fair verdict. His righteousness enabled him to perform miracles, such as regulation of the rainy season. We learn that he was Tamil, and of high lineage (*ujujātiko*) and he came from the Cōḷa country (*coḷa-raṭṭha*). Evidently, the alleged author of the first part of the *Mahāvaṃsa* felt a need to identify Eḷāra as Tamil and as an alien. The present stereotype of Tamil speakers being aliens has here its origin. If this information was in the common source for both the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* the former left it out because the authors' interest was another.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century when the *Mahāvaṃsa* was compiled a hostile and intransigent attitude towards Tamil rulers was intensified. This attitude is already visible in the *Mahāvaṃsa* 33: 75 that falls in the period of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī (29–17, 89–77). The heads of the Saṃgha were asked whether it was possible to have a Tamil-speaking ruler. Their answer was no. They were not satisfied with a just ruler; they wanted a Buddhist ruler. *Mahāvaṃsa* 33: 75 is regularly retrieved today by

Siṃhalatva forces.<sup>36</sup> This stand would make power sharing – following the Northern Ireland model in the island today – impossible. I think of power sharing between Caiva and Bauddha heads of state.

This assessment from *Mahāvamsa* 33: 75 was retrieved at a time in the 5th Century, when the islanders had already made some bad experiences with invasions from South India and learned that Tamil culture was barbaric, precisely because it was not Buddhist. Such a bad experience was the South Indian invasion in the time of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī (29–17/89–77), by the assistance of a traitor whose *brāhmaṇa* origin is emphasized (*Mahāvamsa* 33: 37–55). The implication is that the conflict is religious, conducted by Caivas against Buddhists. This priest and seven Tamil speaking, warlike invaders from South India stole the crown, and the war broke out. The intruders took by force one of the women of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇī with them, and even more, they robbed a relic of the Buddha, his begging bowl, and took everything with them to South India. This description, which depicts the Tamil invaders as barbarians, is missing in the *Dīpavamsa*. It seems that the story in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, or roughly half a millennium after the events, grew and was inflated and popularized in a very short time. Evidently the Prākṛit rulers had made definitive decision to eliminate the Tamil influence on the ruler's level.

Now back to Eḷāra. Why had he to be removed? In section 21: 21 is stated that he did not know about the three jewels, about the doctrine of the Buddha. In 21: 34 we learn that he had his own false view (*kudīṭṭhī*) not destroyed. What this false view was, we do not learn, but we can conclude that it was regarded as incompatible with Buddhism. He probably adhered to post-vedic traditions prevailing in Tamilakam and Īlam. In short, Eḷāra did not meet the new requirement to be a Buddhist ruler. It was not enough to be just and live according to Buddhist norms. He had to be eliminated.

In section 22 of the *Mahāvamsa* the life story of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is told. He predicted that he would spread Buddhism throughout Laṃkā. As a young warrior, he was preparing for the fight with Eḷāra (22: 65–69). He learns (23: 9) that Tamil speakers had disgraced (*asakkāram karonte*) *thūpas*. *Thūpa* Pāli, Sanskrit *stūpa*, is a memorial which preserves relics of the Buddha or relics of near ones to the Buddha.

In section 25, we reach the climax. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī took to the north from the South in Rohaṇa to reach Anurādhapura. He held a spear to which a relic (*dhātu*) was attached (25: 1). He invited the

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<sup>36</sup> For a comment see *BaT* 1, 210f.

Buddhist monks to go in the frontline of the army. The monks' blessing (*maṅgalam*) and protection (*rakkhā*) was needed (25: 3). 500 monks accepted. They said to do repentance (*daṇḍakamattham*) because they had to pay an earlier debt.

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī made an assertive oath in 25: 16-18 which clearly reveals his war as a religious war. He said [the truth is] that he is fighting not for the happiness of government power (*rajjasukhāya*), but to stabilize the regulation of order of the Fully Enlightened (*saṃbuddhasāsanassa*). If he speaks the truth, the armor of his mercenaries should light up. That happened.

To the reader today this statement seems to contradict what is conveyed in the *Dīpavaṃsa* where Duṭṭhagāmaṇī as dynastic ruler eliminates rulers from other dynasties for power and for nothing else. The *Mahāvaṃsa* “corrects” the *Dīpavaṃsa* by ascribing a Buddhist motive to Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.

All local Tamil rulers were defeated, and he went further up to Anurādhapura. Eḷāras warriors were defeated. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī triumphantly entered Anurādhapura. This scene was repeated by President Mahinda Rajapaksa after the defeat of the LTTE in 2009. An almost life-size image of the President, flanked by a military commander, and led by a Buddhist monk, was visible when entering the city of Colombo from the international airport.<sup>37</sup>

The duel between Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī remained. At the southern gate of the city Duṭṭhagāmaṇī killed Eḷāra. Then the *Mahāvaṃsa* produces a section of the triumphalism of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī who had united Laṃkā *ekātapattakam* ‘under one umbrella’ (Mhv 25: 71). This expression occurs repeatedly and is retrieved today as forerunner of the unitary state (see below).

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī made people come and he organised a *pūja* ‘honouring’ for Eḷāra. He had the body of Eḷāra burnt at the place of their duel and had a *cetiyaṃ* ‘sanctuary’ built. He *parihāram adasi* ‘made an encircling’ (Mhv 25: 73). This is the traditional way to honour a dead person and to separate him from the living.

The Tamil historian James Rutnam has rightly pointed out that the word *cetiyaṃ* creates a problem. According to him a *cetiyaṃ* is a *stūpa*,<sup>38</sup> but he had better say that it can be a *stūpa*. The word refers to a sanctuary which can be another sacred building. Rutnam also

<sup>37</sup> Darani Rajasingham Senanayake, “Buddhism and Legitimation of Power: Democracy, Public Religion and Minorities in Sri Lanka”, *ISAS Working Paper* 99 (November, 2009), 15–16.

<sup>38</sup> Rutnam, *The Tomb...*, 3.

highlights a reference in the commentary to the *Mahāvamsa* where the tomb is said to be an *eḷārapaṭimaghara*, ‘image house of Eḷāra’,<sup>39</sup> which hardly fits into the concept of a *stūpa* which is not an image house. Today there is no image house visible, but a *stūpa* called Dakkhina thūpa built in the second century AD. [Fig. 50]

Today it is difficult to understand that Duṭṭhagāmaṇī honoured Eḷāra, but this honouring was nothing special; it can be interpreted as a normal and expected way of warrior ethics to mark out a final separation from an enemy. Strictly speaking there was nothing special about Duṭṭhagāmaṇī’s *pūja*. Personal feelings of grief are not necessarily involved.

Evidently, Duṭṭhagāmaṇī’s arranging of a *pūja* cannot be accepted by anti-Tamiḷ interest groups. Today Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is not expected to honour Eḷāra who together with Māgha (1214–1235, 1215–1236) represent Tamiḷ evilness *per se*, (albeit the latter was no Tamiḷ).<sup>40</sup> Therefore, reinterpretations of Eḷāra appear. In the *Rājavaliya*, a 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicle in Siṃhala, Eḷāra is depicted as an evil man. He is described as invader and as ruling *adharmayen* ‘injustly’.<sup>41</sup> One of Dutugāmuṇu’s fighters addressed Eḷāra [Eḷāra] as *nivaṭo demaḷo*<sup>42</sup> ‘worthless Tamiḷ’. He did not say “worthless ruler”, but “worthless Tamiḷ”, thereby emphasising ethnicity. All these points contradict the *Dīpavamsa* and in this case even the *Mahāvamsa*. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century we have reached the point not only when Duṭṭhagāmaṇī’s honouring of Eḷāra has been replaced by dishonoring him, but also when “Tamiḷ” has become a pejorative.

Sven Bretfeld has made a study of the reception of the Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story in the *Rasavāhinī* in Pāli from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, composed by the monk Vedeha Thera, and found that no more positive qualities are attributed to Eḷāra. He is characterised as enemy of Laṃkā and the Tamiḷs in general are defined as enemies of the Buddha and are defamed as “Tamiḷ dirt”.<sup>43</sup> The text gives a special reason for this negative evaluation. In Anurādhapura the *damiḷā* ‘the Tamiḷs’ had turned the city into a cemetery, they had destroyed the Cetiyas and all around were human bodies lying. They climbed the bodhi tree,

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 2. *Vamsatthappakāsinī*. Commentary on the *Mahāvamsa*. Vol 2. Edited by G. P. Malalasekera (Oxford: PTS, 1935), 483.

<sup>40</sup> For Māgha see *BaT* 2, 532 and Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai’s remark on pp. 73, 79, 100, 101 in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> *Rājavaliya*, *Rājavaliya*, Edited by E. Vi, Suravīra, Kolamba, 1997 (1976), 175.

<sup>42</sup> *Rājavaliya*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Bretfeld, *Das singhalesische Nationalepos...*, XXXIX, 15, 109: *Idan’ āyam damiḷakacavaram jhāpetva sambuddhasāsanam sobhetum kālo ti...*[= Ras VII.3].

cut its branches and spread dirt on it, they broke the statues of the Buddha, and *anācaram karonte te tiracchānā damiḷā* ‘the Tamils behaved immorally like animals’.<sup>44</sup> In another text in Siṃhala from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, *Saddharmālamkāraya*, non-Buddhist Tamil speakers were animalised as cattle, dogs and mice.<sup>45</sup>

By retrieving the past and synchronise it with and approximate it to the present parties of the conflict anti-Tamil sentiments are again generated. One part of it is the devaluation of Eḷāra who represents the Tamils. In this connection we can see the statement that this *cetiya* which we see today at the Southern gate, named Dakkhina thūpa [Fig. 55], is the tomb of Eḷāra, was rejected by Seneraṭ Paranavitāna in the 1950s. He wanted to see this tomb, the Dakkhina thūpa, as the tomb of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī. This was refuted by the Archaeological Commissioner Raja de Silva in 1957, but Paranavitāna’s view became the official view of the state.<sup>46</sup> The honouring of Eḷāra has no more physical base.

Paranavitāna’s intervention resulted in withholding or even suppressing of official information about the traditional view of the identity of this place as Eḷāra’s tomb at the Southern gate of Anurādhapura [Fig. 55].<sup>47</sup> If there is no tomb for Eḷāra, he cannot be honoured. If there is a *thūpa* for Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, he can be honoured instead of Eḷāra, which happened in 2011 when President Mahinda Rajapaksa honoured in Anurādhapura the publically exhibited alleged ashes of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī,<sup>48</sup> of his alter ego. In a way, he honoured himself. These ashes have been examined by experts, but the result has not been made public. My present view is that the Dakkhina thūpa contains other relics than those of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī or of Eḷāra. Stūpas were not built for Kings. The *cetiya* built for Eḷāra by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī was not a *stūpa*, but an *eḷārapaṭimaghara*, ‘image house of Eḷāra’ as mentioned by the *Vaṃsatthappakāsini*. This image house is no more, but the memory of a *cetiya* for Eḷāra was kept alive even in the *Thūpavaṃsa* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The *Thūpavaṃsa* has taken over

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 31 [= Ras VII.4].

<sup>45</sup> *Saddharmālamkāraya*, Kiribatgoḍa: Simāsahita ām. Di. Guṇasenā saha samāgama, 1971, 550.

<sup>46</sup> See Raja de Silva, “Politicising archaeology: The tomb of Elara and ashes of Dutugemunu”, *Transcurrents*, <http://transcurrents.com/news-views/archives/709>.

<sup>47</sup> For the discussion see Rutnam, *The Tomb...*

<sup>48</sup> Anon., “President Rajapakse inaugurates the exposition of King Dutugemunu ashes 18-5-2011”, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=siYSBaxq-Fo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=siYSBaxq-Fo)

without modification the formulation from the *Mahāvamsa* that *ajjāpi* ‘even to this day’ kings, on reaching this spot do not have their drums sounded there (as a sign of honour).<sup>49</sup>

We realize that the story above about Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Eḷāra is based on the *Mahāvamsa* only. It is missing in the *Dīpavamsa*. It could have been taken from a special source, one that was not common to both, by the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* to glorify Duṭṭhagāmaṇī as a noble character who abides to his warrior ethics.

The duel between Eḷāra and Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is one of the major events in the *Mahāvamsa*. The story seems to be a theatrical dramatization and poetical exaggeration by the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa*. To this dramatization and exaggeration belongs the establishment of a *cetiya* and the image making of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī’s noble character by his honoring of his adversary. There is no tradition and convention of interdynastic duels of that kind between leaders of inimical armies in the history of Īlam/Laṃkā. The duel between the two as told in the *Mahāvamsa* is the only one known, but the compiler was a learned man. He may have studied oral versions of the *Mahābhārata* or of other epical traditions where many interdynastic duels are narrated.

Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, having defeated 32 Tamil rulers, ‘ruled Laṃkā under one umbrella’ (*ekachattena Laṅkārajjam akāsi*, 25: 75). This reference to one umbrella is also a poetic exaggeration. It refers to sole authority on the island, here to sole authority under a Buddhist leader. Such an authority was never established in total.

The image of the single umbrella has often been highlighted in the chronicles and inscriptions up to modern times. However, it was modernized by formulating it as a conception of the unitary state which is mentioned in the present Constitutions from 1972 and 1978. The modern unitary state was historised by being associated with the past perception of the state under one umbrella. This connection between sole reign under one umbrella and the modern unitary state is indeed a gross anachronism, but anachronisms are common in heritage language. They make the new look old and age induces confidence. This linking to the past gives the unitary state also religious sanction, not in the Constitution itself, but in comments on the Constitution by extremist Buddhist groups of which the Government has become dependent to stay in power. The reality is, however, that only by the British empire an integrated state was formed in 1833. This

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<sup>49</sup> The Chronicle of the Thūpa and the Thūpavamsa, Being a Translation and Edition of Vācissaratthera’s Thūpavamsa, *Sacred Books the Buddhists* 28, Edited by N. A. Jayawickrama (London: Luzac & Company, 1971), 87, 214.



colonial state-formation was the precursor of the present unitary state. The present nation state of Laṃkā was prepared by foreign colonials,<sup>50</sup> not by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.

We conclude that the *Mahāvamsa*'s anti-Tamiḷ xenophobia in section 25 was based on the view that a Tamiḷ ruler was impossible not because he was Tamiḷ, but because he was not Buddhist. The Tamiḷ ruler was a representative of all Tamiḷs. From this follows that if the Tamiḷ ruler had been a Buddhist there would be no xenophobia. This idea is implicit in *Mahāvamsa* 25: 101–115. There it is said that Duṭṭhagāmaṇī was joyless because he had destroyed millions of living beings. This is the so called “Buddhist remorse” introduced by Aśoka's remorse of having killed many humans and which is here copied by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.

Buddhist saints, known as Arahants, who claimed to be infallible, comforted him by saying that he had killed only one and a half human. One of them had accepted the refuge formula to Buddhism and the other five precepts. These killings will not prevent him from coming into heaven. The others which he had killed were just like brutes (*pasusamā*) who held a wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhī*) and demonstrated misconduct (*dussīlā*). Humans who have not at least partly accepted Buddhism are not humans. They are beasts. It has no after-effect to kill these beasts (who were Tamiḷ speaking non-Buddhists). This story was radicalised through the centuries. When we come to the Rājavalīya from the 17<sup>th</sup> century we learn that (Dutu)gāmunu killed 1 080 000, but this act was balanced against a long enumeration of merits of (Dutu)gāmunu for the establishment of the *buddhaśāsanaya*.<sup>51</sup> For this he would be assigned to sit on the right side of Maitru budu. No remorse is mentioned because there is perfect balance between demerits and merits.

*Mahāvamsa* 25: 101–115 has been retrieved through the centuries and is in the modern period a *carte blanche* for killing non-Buddhist Tamiḷ speakers in pogroms which the world has witnessed several times, above all in 1983. It is meaningless to criticize an old source, but this past is consciously repeated, in the present time by Walpola

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<sup>50</sup> For a historical analysis of this process see L. A. Jude Lal Fernando, *Dynamics of essentialist Representations of Nationhood and the Politics of Interpretation: The Role of Religion in the Making and Unmaking of the Sri Lankan Nation State*. Being a thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy in the University of Dublin (Dublin: Irish School of Ecumenics, 2008), especially chapter 4.

<sup>51</sup> *Rājavalīya*, 189.

Rahula.<sup>52</sup> Consider the content of this message of this repetition: If you kill a non-Buddhist Tamil speaker, you need not to regret. The majority of Tamil speakers on the island are non-Buddhists.

The compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* appears to us today as inhuman and paradoxically as anti-Buddhist, but he was a child of his time. He was dependent of an accepted postvedic, panindian, religious principle in the tradition of *Dharmaśāstra*. It said that humanity is graded from the state of a non-human beast to the divine ideal man and that the parameter is the intensity of *dharma* which the man has internalized in his life. The view that religion determines the quality of humanity was and still is the recommended way in many religions spread globally. For Mahānāma, the alleged compiler of the *Mahāvamsa*, the *dharma* was the Buddha Dharma. At his time there was no global view that humanity is one or that every religion had the key to humanity.

It is important to see that the *Mahāvamsa* does not say that a Tamil speaking person cannot become a human. Quite the contrary, Mahānāma holds a door open for Tamil speakers to become Buddhists and by that to become humans. Only later this door was closed after the many invasions from South India and after the introduction of racism by the colonials. When Tamil and Siṃhala speakers are seen as different races their qualities cannot be changed. It is not possible to change the race like a snake its skin.<sup>53</sup> A Tamil speaker was, is and shall be a non-Buddhist who is a beast. To this comes a long polemical tradition within Tamil Caivam against Buddhism which also prevented conversions of Tamil speakers to Buddhism.<sup>54</sup> Tamil speaking Buddhists are rare today and are classified as anomalies from both sides.

Mahānāma also reflects the view of a just war of his time in the fifth century AD. If we fight for religion, in his case for Buddhism, warfare is not only permitted; it becomes a duty. Exactly the opposite was taught by the Buddha Sākyamuni.

The doctrine of just war involves the doctrine of the law to instigate a war (*jus ad bellum*), and the doctrine of the right to choose the means of war (*jus in bello*). Both rights were actualized by Duṭṭha-

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<sup>52</sup> Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon: The Anurādhapura Period, 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC–10<sup>th</sup> Century AC* (Colombo: Gunasena, 1966 [1956]), 80.

<sup>53</sup> *BaT* 1, 49. *BaT* 2, 840–842.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Schalk, “The Caiva Devaluation of Pautta and Caiṇa Asceticism in Pre-colonial Tamilakam”, *Asceticism and Its Critics: Historical Accounts and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Oliver Freiberger (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), 117–130.

gāmaṇī implicitly, or better, were attributed to him by the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa*. This doctrine of just war is still defended by monks today - with reference to Duṭṭhagāmaṇī who is memorialized<sup>55</sup> and whose martial career is revived today in classrooms.<sup>56</sup>

## The *Dīpavaṃsa* contra the *Mahāvamsa*

We now come to the difference of representation in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvamsa*. In the first Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is a warrior who fights an interdynastic struggle for power. In the second he is a religious crusader who for the defense of Buddhism leads a war against non-Buddhists. This change in the image of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī by the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* in the 5th Century was accomplished to justify the killing of Eḷāra, albeit he was just. When it comes to rescue religion everything is permitted, even enthusiasm for the war by Buddhist monks. This justification was promoted in a particular historical situation in the 5th Century in connection with a particular political interest.

The compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* from the 5th Century looked back. He obviously knew the story of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and he could see that some similarities existed in his own time, above all the continued invasions from South India. In the 5th Century ruled a king named Dhātusena (460–478/455–473). As a youth he had to flee to Rohaṇa to escape Tamil speaking invaders. He decided to become a monk and passed the first ordination (*pabbajjā*), but he devoted his life to the armed resistance. He was an armed Buddhist monk. Dhātusena destroyed six dominant Tamil-speaking predecessors, who allegedly had attacked Buddhists (*Cūḷavaṃsa* 38: 34). The similarities to Duṭṭhagāmaṇī are evident, his life as a refugee in Rohaṇa and the total dedication to martial Buddhism.

At the time of Dhātusena the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* lived, I suppose. The compiler chose to expand the story of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, but in such a way that the reader could see the similarities to Dhātu-

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<sup>55</sup> See Peter Schalk, “Operationalizing Buddhism for Political Ends in a Martial Context in Ilam/Lanka: The Case of Siṃhalatva”, *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, edited by Richard King, John Hinnels (London: Routledge, 2007), 145–149.

<sup>56</sup> Silke K. Yasmin Fischer, *Erzähltradierung als Interpretationsprozess. Eine diachrone Analyse zweier staatlicher Buddhismus-Religionsbücher aus Sri Lanka. Studies in Oriental Religions 61* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 131–140.

senā. It is also expressly stated in the *Cūlavamsa* that Dhātusena had a “clarification” (*dīpikā*) of the *Dīpavamsa* ordered and paid 1000 gold pieces (*Cūlavamsa* 38: 59) for its accomplishment. I suggest that this “clarification” is the *Mahāvamsa*, in which multiple sources and interpretations have been processed. The *Mahāvamsa* seems to be the result of a purchase order to contract a monk (Mahānāma) to glorify Dhātusena. When the compiler of the *Mahāvamsa* says “Duṭṭhagāmaṇī” he thinks “Dhātusena”. It is not an unusual tactic in a global perspective that rulers are imagined in the light of a high status, famous predecessor and are made to mimic him. Implicitly, the *Mahāvamsa* manipulates a current homology: As Eḷāra is related to Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, so are the Tamil invaders related to Dhātusena.

Now we come back to Walpola Rahula. He constructed an image made of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī which was modern. It revolved around an image of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī who had allegedly started a Siṃhala-Buddhist, culturally and racially homogenized, island-wide nation-state. This has to be defended against colonialism and against Tamil speakers. A chapter in *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* is about Buddhism as the national religion of the people of the Siṃhalas. Walpola Rahula historised this picture by projecting it into the *Mahāvamsa*. This “historising” should make it clear that this unitary state of Laṃkā is allegedly nothing new, but is a legacy (that conveys a feeling that a tree has in its roots, to speak with Nietzsche).<sup>57</sup> Moreover, this Siṃhala-Buddhist heritage is not only harmless sentimental nostalgia, but is also war mongering against Tamil speakers today.<sup>58</sup> The representa-

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<sup>57</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, 1873/74, Vorwort, <http://www.historiaprogeschichte.de/?column=4&document=19&language=de&templateset=1&language=de&templateset=1> (accessed: 31 March, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Schalk, “‘Unity and Sovereignty’: Key Concepts of a Militant Buddhist Organization in the Present Conflict in Sri Lanka”, *Temenos* 24 (1988), 55–82. Id., “Buddhistische Kampfgruppen in Sri Lanka”, *Asien: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur* 21 (Okt. 1986), 30–62. Id., “Kette ohne Anfang und Ende: Die Welt der Fundamentalisten in Sri Lanka ist hermetisch gegen Kritik versiegelt”, *Der Überblick: Zeitschrift für ökumenische Begegnung und internationale Zusammenarbeit* 33 (März 1997), 83–88. Id., “Lejonet och tigern: Kampen med symboler i Sri Lanka”, *Svensk Religionshistorisk Årsskrift* 2 (1986): 45–76. Id., “Fundamentalism, Ultimate Truth, Absolutism, Inerrancy and Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka”, *Fundamentalism in the Modern World. Volume 1: Fundamentalism, Politics and History: The State, Globalisation and Political Ideologies*, edited by Ulrika Mårtensson (London: I B Tauris, 2011), 52–74. – The official website of the Sri Lanka Army published in February 2008 a narration about a monk who disrobed and became a soldier. He was killed. The comment was: “Undoubtedly, Sanjeewa who was cast in a heroic mould made up his mind to give up robes and join the army through his love for the

tives of the present political administration are deeply influenced by Walpola Rahula's "historisation". The war appears as just if one assumes that the unitary state has existed continuously for 2,000 years as *dhammadīpa*, 'island of the doctrine', to fulfill its historic destiny foreseen allegedly by the Buddha in the *Mahāvamsa*. I have elsewhere in detail described the semantic shifts and manipulations of this concept.<sup>59</sup>

## Summary and Conclusion

There is of course no homology between Eḷāra/Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Vēluppillai Pirapākaraṇ/Mahinda Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa is no modern Duṭṭhagāmaṇī who honored his adversary. Rajapaksa dishonored him by not following the rules of martial ethics. James Rutnam had other doubts about Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's noble character: A young man to kill an old man is not noble.

The historical Duṭṭhagāmaṇī may have been a *gāmaṇī*, a local chief, known in his own time for his martial ambitions and dedication to Buddhism. His story has been inflated in the lost source that was exploited by the compliers of the *Dīpavamsa* and *Mahāvamsa*. The *Dīpavamsa*, four hundred years after Duṭṭhagāmaṇī, depicts him as a common and power-hungry leader who eliminates Eḷāra, a representative of a competing dynasty in the island. His religion and ethnicity was not of interest. The *Dīpavamsa* in this case has a sense for historical realism that has gone lost in the *Mahāvamsa*. The *Dīpavamsa* is a primary source for the development and reception of the Duṭṭhagāmaṇī story in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the *Mahāvamsa* for the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

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country". Anonymus, "Monk Turned Soldier Now Martyr", <http://www.army.lk/morenews.php?id=10997> (22. Februar 2008). Sanjeewa was not the only monk who became a soldier. See Anon., "Buddhist monks recruits Sri Lankan Army for war against Tamils", Now Public May 5 2009, <http://www.nowpublic.com/world/Buddhist-monks-recruits-sri-lankan-army-war-against-tamils> (accessed: 2 September, 2012). Sanjeewa had famous forerunners, one of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's ten martial heroes, Theraputtābhaya, and King Dhātusena.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Schalk, "Semantic Transformations of the *dhammadīpa*", *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, hg. von Mahinda Deegalle (London: Routledge, 2006), 86–92. Id., "'dhammadīpa' saṃkalpayēhi aitiḥāsika parivartanaya", *Budusamaya saha śrī laṃkāvē janavārgika ghaṭṭanaya* (Oslo: bauddha saṃgamaya, 2003), 77–107.

The *Mahāvamsa* presents Duṭṭhagāmaṇī as a noble character: He honors allegedly his adversary and transforms him into a Buddhist crusader against non-Buddhist Tamil speakers at a time when King Dhātusena needed ideological support by the Mahāsaṃgha for his extermination of Tamil speakers. Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's and Dhātusena's wars were allegedly just because their ultimate aim was the preservation of Buddhism. Walpola Rahula retrieves this image in his own crusade against aliens comprising colonials and present Tamil speakers of the resistance movement who by association are connected with the invaders of the past. This way of constructing a Siṃhala-Buddhist heritage amounting to the slogan "war for peace" covers the complexity of the present conflict.

We can learn an important lesson by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's triumphalism over Eḷāra. It resulted allegedly in a "rule under one umbrella". This concept is retrieved today and is interpreted as unitary state which is a centralised and culturally homogenous state based on political *siṃhala budu samayam*.

Let us not forget that "the rule under one umbrella" in the past and present was and still is about control of territory through colonisation by the centralised power in Jayawardhanapura. To achieve this control the present controllers, the Tamils in their *tāyakam* 'motherland', must be deprived of their control. To justify this, the ideal "heritage" is retrieved from the past represented by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī's conquest and victory over Eḷāra [Fig. 1, 24]. This retrieval eliminates the last moral scruples and mobilises the Siṃhala speaking masses politically; it contributes to create a base for majoritarianism in Parliament. Minority rights were eliminated from the Constitution already in 1972. The retrieval of *urumaya* 'heritage' is decisive for the formation of majoritarianism. No Government has yet made the attempt to push through the colonisation program in areas of Tamil speakers without having first retrieved the "heritage" with the help of custodians like Walpola Rāhula. A critical approach to this "heritage" by promoting *tamilppauttam* is rightly classified as dangerous for the preservation of the unitary state.<sup>60</sup> It questions the ideological base of majoritarianism.

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<sup>60</sup> Goonatilake, "Lessons...", 1.

# **Conversion to Buddhism as a Form of Socio-political Protest: Tamiḷ Sub-nationalisms and the Ambedkar-Model of Buddhist Conversions in Yālppāṇam 1962–64**

*A. J. V. Chandrakanthan*

## **1 Introduction**

This article highlights a short period in Yālppāṇam when in 1962 a small group of Tamiḷ speakers converted to Ambedkar-Buddhism and later re-converted to Caivam. Some reflections on conversion precede the central part of this paper.

Religious conversion, commonly known as proselytization is a politically explosive topic in many countries of the South Asian region. In the colonial and post-colonial periods politically motivated conversions were not uncommon in the Indian subcontinent or among its neighbours. Certain individuals and families embraced the religion of the colonial masters out of inner conviction or for political patronage, while others resorted to a different religion than the one they had inherited from birth as a form of social and political protest. This paper will focus on the latter.

Conversion is an intriguing religious phenomenon that has been a topic of critical study by Christian scholars, both in the fields of systematic and moral theology for several centuries. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it has also become a theme of critical analysis in secular disciplines as sociology, political science and in the study of the history of religions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See among others, Peter van der Veer, “Conversion and Coercion: the Politics of Sincerity and Authenticity”, 1–14; also “Poetics and Politics in an Age of Mass Conversion”, both articles in *Cultures of Conversion*, edited by Jan N. Bremmer, Wout J. van Bekkum and Arie L. Molendijk (Leuven: Peters, 2006), 31–51. See also K. N. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and other Essays* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Pvt Ltd., 1997), see esp. the chapter on “the Meaning of Conversion”, 34–46. Christopher Lamb, M. Darrol Bryant, “Introduction: Contours of Controversy and Commitment in a Plural World”, edited by Christopher Lamb, M.

Religious or spiritual conversion from one religious persuasion to another by individuals, families, groups or communities could be classified under broad categories as a sudden or a gradual change prompted or caused by identifiable or unexplainable external inducements or supernatural internal experiences. In the external realm, conversion is often attributed to such phenomenon as miraculous experiences, visions, divine inspiration, or at times to economic, social and political coercions.

Such convictions as a sudden spiritual transformation, the personal discovery or foretaste of a mystical-spiritual aura of one's deep-seated search or an intrinsic spiritual quest serve as the justification for the claim of conversion in the internal forum. As we shall point out later, the above categories may also be safely applied to "reversion" i.e. re-conversion to the original religion by persons or groups that belonged to a different religious persuasion at the time of their birth.

Theological studies on conversion seek to understand largely the spiritual and intrinsic transformation of persons and communities and confine the cause of conversion much to the internal forum while sociological studies have drawn attention to the external causes of conversion. However, in specifying the internal and external factors one cannot convincingly draw a fine line on a religious phenomenon like conversion. There are many complexities involved between the enticing factors in the external arena and the determining factors of the internal forum. Empirical assessment confirms that in the political arena religious conversion can also be used as a tool of manipulation by those who wield power and seek political expediency. In such situations coercion can be real, subtle, covert or overt.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper my intention is to study the fact and the actual phenomenon of conversion from one religious camp to another as a way of open and public protest against the former; by extolling the latter as more relevant and emancipatory because it promises social equality, freedom and non discrimination as an integral part of its religious doctrines.

Coupled with political and social protest, sometimes this form of conversion also accompanies a public pronouncement, action and often with a mass acclamation. A rapid social emancipation of communities that are oppressed and subjected to various forms of dis-

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Darrol Bryant, *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies* (London: Wellington House, 1999). See esp. 1–22.

<sup>2</sup> See Lamb, Bryant, "Introduction...", 2–12



crimination in the name of religion is often advocated openly as the motivating factor in this form of conversion. Thus, in certain cases of prominent public conversions, the desire for changing one's religious affiliation is done with a radical call to the entire community. Conversion as a protest in this context is catapulted by the tyranny of oppression suffered in the name of religion by individuals, communities or groups who were relegated to the lower rungs in the social hierarchy with a doctrinal sanction. In such contexts, a strong vocal protest against the religion into which one was born prior to conversion to another religion becomes not a hidden but an open and vibrant public act. In addition to this protest there are also testimonies of conversions motivated by ethno-political advancements and/or for the sake of reaping socio-political advantages. These external motivations often serve as inducing factors in the background.

## 2 Conversion and Reversion

Let me now examine the external and empirically visible acts and aspects of conversion and reversion as expressly articulated by public announcement with or without ritual acts that are integral to the public confirmation of conversion.<sup>3</sup> Here I shall also draw attention to certain prominent individual conversions that have a covert or an overt socio-political agenda. Within the Sri Lankan context, some often-quoted examples in this category are the reversion to Buddhism by a former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, viz., Solaman Vest Rijvē Dayas Baṇḍāranāyaka (S.W.R.D Bandaranaike), whose ancestors were Buddhists but he was born to parents who became Christians. Thus he was baptized Christian. Baṇḍāranāyaka unceremoniously reverted to his ancestral religion, Buddhism, when he entered the Sinhala political podium in the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> Another example is the former Sri Lankan President Juniyas Ricaḍ Jayavardhana's (J. R. Jayawardene's) father who was also said to be a baptized Christian. Following the withdrawal of the British colonialists from Ceylon, Baṇḍāranāyaka and Jayavardhana chose to embrace Buddhism as they enter-

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Ambedkar insisted that a public and visible ritual must accompany one's entry into Buddhism as a new convert.

<sup>4</sup> Heather Selma Gregg, *The Causes of Religious Wars: Holy Nations, Sacred Spaces and Religious Revolutions*, PhD Dissertation (Boston: MIT), 2004, 115–116. It is interesting to note that after the death of Jayavardhana, his grandson wrote in the *Island* news paper that Jayawardene in his last days was reading the Bible! <http://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/16639/56191324.pdf> (June 10, 2012).

tained political ambitions. Similar examples can be found also among Tamil speaking Caivas and Christians, and Siṃhala speaking Buddhists and Christians.

A critical review of the conversion of Baṇḍāranāyaka's father from Buddhism to Christianity discloses the fact that political objectives and privileges conferred by the British colonial powers served as incentives to embrace Christianity. Some wealthy individuals from the Siṃhala community were enticed to an easy and swift upward social mobility by the ladder of religion toward the pinnacles of political power. Needless to emphasize that in many conquered territories of the Western colonialists and their respective religious leadership worked hand in glove with each other for the sake of ensuring stability and order of governance. Political analysts confirm that Baṇḍāranāyaka's reversion to Buddhism was done for his own swift political expediency at a time when the British were gradually losing grip on the island's political governance while a strong Siṃhala-Buddhist "identity affirmation" was gaining ground. Contemporary scholars on Sri Lankan political history blame Baṇḍāranāyaka for planting the seeds of a Siṃhala-Buddhist hegemony and extremism to reap short-term personal political benefits.<sup>5</sup>

Bandaranāyaka's conversion was not a social protest; nor was it done for any kind of social emancipation. But his re-conversion at least in terms of his political achievements was a success story vis-à-vis the enhancement of his *political career*. But success was not always the end result of the other side of the axis of conversion; namely conversion as a social protest.

It is fitting at this point to do a brief comparative analysis between conversion undertaken for political expediency and conversion chosen as a form of socio-religious protest with an emancipatory agenda. I shall indicate also the benefits and burdens of resorting to this process by individuals and communities and present a critique of the consequences of this protest in order to see whether post-conversion life bestowed on those converts the freedom, social respectability and the egalitarian sense of social relationships they envisioned. The question also remains whether the change of religious identity via conversion enhanced converts to realize their full potential in terms of education, employment, political participation and social well being.

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<sup>5</sup> See among others, A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1988), 126–127. Also S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed: Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 58–68 and 122–128.

Today, it is interesting to note that in the official website of the Bahujan Samaj Party,<sup>6</sup> the events accompanying Dr. Ambedkar's announcement that he will soon change over to another religion and his exhortation to his followers that they too should follow suit etc. are placed under the subtitle, *Political career*. This categorization was not an accident. Ambedkar sought a religious remedy to an issue that had serious social and political overtones within the Indian national polity. But the question is, was he successful in his protest? The present day reality in India will not permit us to give an affirmative answer. Caste-based discriminations, murders, mayhem and mutilations are on the increase and the legal system is helplessly turning a blind eye to the horrors perpetrated in the name of religion by Hindu fundamentalist groups and their political patrons.

### 3 Social Protest and the Dynamics of Religious Conversion

The "Protest-oriented" conversion that created some visible waves of change in the post-colonial period in the Indian subcontinent was inaugurated and encouraged by Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's (Babasaheb) beginning from October 1956. It continued to flourish even after his death in December 1956. Undoubtedly his declaration and desire to embrace Buddhism was compelled by a number of discriminatory socio-political factors which were legitimized by the Hindu religious ethos and its doctrinal hermeneutics of the caste hierarchical structure.

Dr. Ambedkar's protestant action led to significant mass conversions from among his own caste community and from other socially marginalized groups who shared this disappointment and dissatisfaction with the Hindu religious identity they had inherited at birth. Then, as well as now, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's (Babasaheb) conversion to Buddhism is understood, interpreted and followed by many as a vocal and vibrant social protest against the Hindu religion's caste-based oppressions and discriminations.

During his life time and after his death Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was recognized and respected as an erudite lawyer, an eminent co-architect of the Indian Constitution, a committed social re-

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<sup>6</sup> Kanshi Ram, a loyal and principal follower of Ambedkar founded the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which is now the main political vehicle for the Dalit movement in India.

former who worked assiduously for the emancipation of the Dalits across India and particularly in his native State of Maharashtra, a strong advocate against Hindu religious discrimination of the untouchables and a fearless critic of the leading figures of Indian independence, including Mahātmā Gāndhi, and also of the pan-Indian political instrument, namely, the Indian National Congress.

Despite India's claim as being a secular State and Dr. Ambedkar's personal participation of being the co-architect of the Indian constitution, Ambedkar was powerless to bring about social change toward social equality. The obstinacy and rigidity of caste-based oppressions in the Indian social arena continued unabated. Constitution was a mere paper-promise that contained only sublime ideals far removed from reality. He felt forced to choose the radical path of socio-religious protest.

As recorded by Dr. Ambedkar in his writings, these caste-based discriminations and oppressions were personally suffered by him in his professional and political life; he also was a witness to the sufferings and oppressions faced on a daily basis by his caste community known as the Mahars.<sup>7</sup> His conversion was therefore intended by him as a determined and deliberate way forward in the direction of social emancipation of communities oppressed by caste-based aggression, and in this case sanctioned by the Hindu religious ethos and doctrines.

Among others, the Ambedkar Model of religious Conversion has the following elements that are easily discernible from his public speeches, writings and a host of other publications.

- a) It was a personal and communitarian protest directed against the Hindu religion which permitted inequalities and social discriminations in the name of religion.
- b) He was motivated by the strong belief that Buddhism possessed the perfect answer to his search for meaningful social equality, egalitarianism and freedom from all forms of discrimination.

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<sup>7</sup> Ambedkar strongly believed that Mahar people were an ancient Buddhist community of India and that they were treated as outcasts because they refused to renounce their Buddhist practices. He wrote a book on this topic, entitled *Who were the Shudras?* In his writings Ambedkar also claimed that he made a serious study of Buddhism for several years. It is claimed that in the 1950s, Ambedkar turned his attention fully to Buddhism and travelled to Īlam (then Ceylon) to attend a convention of Buddhist scholars and monks. He also founded the Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha, or the Buddhist Society of India. His book, *The Buddha and His Dhamma* was published posthumously in 1956. <http://bspindia.org/bhimrao-ambedkar.php> (Accessed April 10, 2012).

c) It was indirectly a challenge to Hindu religion to transform and modernize its creeds.

As expected this form of religious protest had its ripple effects in other States of India where caste-based discriminations continued unabated. Tamilnāṭu<sup>8</sup> and the neighbouring country Ceylon began to voice their protest in similar strain.<sup>9</sup> Added to this was the fact that Ambedkar in the 1950s visited some Buddhist monks in Ceylon and his conversion ritual was officially administered by a Sinhala speaking Buddhist monk on October 14, 1956.<sup>10</sup> Ambedkar emphasized to his followers who embraced Buddhism that a public and visible ritual should always accompany the act of conversion to Buddhism. Perhaps he did this to counter the Hindu ritual of *upanāyana* by which the high caste Hindus are officially initiated and confirmed in Hindu religion with the placing of the sacred thread on the one received in to the fold.

#### 4 Tamil Subnationalisms and Political Responses

The fact that the Tamil community especially in and around the city of Yālpāṇam has wittingly or otherwise nurtured a caste-ridden social composition with various layers of high and low stratification is well documented by social analysts and historians.<sup>11</sup> Tamil subnationalism refers to the conglomeration of more than twenty different caste

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<sup>8</sup> For more on this, see Gnanamony Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity: A Buddhist Movement Among Tamils under Colonialism* (New Delhi: New Age International Publishers, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Later, we shall briefly discuss the effects of his public act of conversion on Buddhism in Īlam. The mass conversion of Dalit Tamils in Meenakshipuram to Islam was seen as a ripple effect caused by the Ambedkar model of conversion. See K. N. Kadam, *The Meaning of the Ambedkarite Conversion to Buddhism and other Essays* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Pvt Ltd., 1997). Also Rashid Salim Adil, Yoginder Sikand, "Politics of Conversion" in *Counter Currents*.  
<http://www.countercurrents.org/dalit-sikander030404.htm> (no date given).

<sup>10</sup> After meetings with the Sri Lankan Buddhist monk Hammalawa Saddhātissa, Ambedkar organized a formal public ceremony for himself and his supporters in Nagpur on 14 October 1956. Accepting the Three Refuges and Five Precepts from a Buddhist monk in the traditional manner, Ambedkar completed his own conversion.  
<http://socialjusticeforall.weebly.com/conversion-to-buddhism.html>

<sup>11</sup> See among others Michael Y. Banks, "Caste in Jaffna", *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and Northwest Pakistan*, edited by E. R. Leach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1953).

groups which are commonly classified with the misnomer “minority Tamils”. Some of these caste groups were economically dependent on the so called upper Vellālar caste for their survival and sustenance. It is also true that almost all non-Vellālar caste groups suffered discrimination at varying degrees depending on their particular position on the caste ladder.

The domination of the Vellālar caste was also partly facilitated by its numerical, economic and political strength. Caste stratification received a quasi-legal approval under the Portuguese and the Dutch and early British periods. The codification by the Dutch of *Tēcavalamai* legal provisions based on the customs prevailing among Yālpṇam Tamils, is said to have helped to perpetuate at least some of the discriminations in terms of land ownership, sharing of water and agricultural resources, means of production and other facilities as transport and trade.

Bryan Pfaffenberger observed that a key element in Vellālar thinking was that “Jaffna is, by dint of tradition and history, a preserve for Vellalar culture and Vellalar privileges..”<sup>12</sup> This form of thinking excluded non-Vellālar caste groups and thereby prevented an overarching Tamil identity stretching to the whole island. Even in the 1970s the term Tamilar was in common parlance exclusively used as a reference to the Vellālar caste rather than the Īlam (Lankan) Tamils as a unified whole.<sup>13</sup>

There were many sumptuary restrictions that had the force of law under the Dutch and the early British regimes, and persisted well into the 1960s. Some of these blatant discriminations suffered by minority Tamils are graphically presented by Bryan Pfaffenberger. He records that

In Jaffna in the 1940s and 1950s, for instance Minority Tamils were forbidden to enter or live near temples; to draw water from the wells of high caste families; to enter laundries, barber shops, cafes, or taxis; to keep women in seclusion and protect them by enacting domestic rituals; to wear shoes; to sit on bus seats; to register their names properly so that social benefits could be obtained; to attend school; to cover the upper part of the body; to wear gold earrings; if a male, to cut one’s hair, to use um-

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<sup>12</sup> Bryan Pfaffenberger, “Fourth World Colonialism, Indigenous Minorities and Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka”, *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 16, 1 (January–March 1984), 18.

<sup>13</sup> Bryan Pfaffenberger, “The Political Construction of Defensive Nationalism: The 1968 Temple Entry Crisis in Sri Lanka”, *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity & Identity*, edited by Chelvadurai Manogaran and Bryan Pfaffenberger (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 149.

brellas; to own a bicycle or car, to cremate the dead; or to convert to Christianity or Buddhism. To enforce these sumptuary restrictions extra legally, Vellālar have been ready to field gangs of thugs to punish upwardly-mobile Pallar or Nalavars. Such gangs pollute Untouchable wells with dead dogs, fecal matter, or garbage; burn down Untouchable fences or houses; physically assault and beat Minority Tamils; and sometimes, kill them. Preceding the Maviddapuram crisis were several altercations in which Minority Tamils had died.<sup>14</sup>

The situation was ripe for overt and covert political intervention by the Siṃhala government and the stage was well set by the Tamil members of the Ceylon Communist party. Pfaffenberger summed it up saying that

The volatile and discriminatory caste system of Jaffna exposed the peninsular not only to intervention by the Colombo government but also exposed it to interference by new missionary organizations—not Christian, but Buddhist. Claiming their religion does not recognize caste, Buddhist missionary organizations sought to convert Minority Tamils to Buddhism by offering them incentives such as education in the Sinhala Language. Just prior to the Maviddapuram fracas, three prominent Buddhist monks visited Jaffna villages that had been torn by caste-related violence (Chanakanai and Kankesanthurai) in an effort “to bring about a settlement between minority Tamils and high-caste Hindus”—a settlement that Tamil political leaders had so far failed to achieve. Fear was widespread among Tamil leaders that the Colombo government might use such conversions as the stage from which to launch a government—funded political base in Jaffna.<sup>15</sup>

Given the prevailing political tensions between the Siṃhala majority and the Tamil ethnic nationality this fear was both real and volatile.

The controversial role played by Cellappā Cuntaraliṅkam (Chelappah Suntharalingam) Member of Parliament and a Cambridge educated Professor of mathematics in the Māvittapuram temple entry issue is still shrouded in mystery. It appears that he solidly stood against the minority Tamils worshipping in this historic Temple. The attitude he displayed represented the attitude of the Vellālar caste that did not support the minority Tamils in their struggle for equality in worship in many leading Hindu temples in Yālpāṇam.

Toward the late 1950s Vijeyānanda Dahanāyaka (Wijeyananda Dahanayake) who was the Minister of Education in the Baṇḍārānāyaka government established about fifteen primary and secondary

<sup>14</sup> Pfaffenberger, “The Political Construction...”, 148.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 154–155.

schools in the areas largely populated by minority Tamils.<sup>16</sup> Under various guises the upper caste groups and their leadership opposed this move. It was argued that opening schools only for the minority children would lead to a form of caste based segregation forever. Tamil minority communities were unwilling to buy this reasoning. They interpreted it as a flimsy argument advanced by the high caste Hindus to deflect the proposal to establish schools for the underprivileged. However, most of these schools were established in the district of Paruttitturai (Point Pedro). Ponnampalam Kantaiyā, Member of Parliament for that constitution, gave his whole-hearted support to this project undertaken by the Ministry of Education.

Needless to say that religion and politics are inextricably interwoven in the Siṃhala polity. The Baṇḍāranāyaka years from the mid 1950s initiated a consolidation of this process which his widowed wife Sirimāvō Ratvattē Dayas Baṇḍāranāyaka completed with the unilateral introduction of the Republican constitution of 1972.<sup>17</sup> She was Prime Minister from 1960 to 1965 and this was a period in which the Ceylon Communist party made strong inroads into Tamil politics, especially among those groups that were victims of the caste-based discriminations unscrupulously practiced by the *Caiva-Vellālar* community.<sup>18</sup>

The caste-centred discriminations based on Caiva/Vaiṇava religion became a highly charged political issue and the government of Sirimāvō purportedly intervened on behalf of minority Tamils. Sirimāvō's ascendancy to political power was buttressed by the Communist allies from every hue, Ceylon Communist party as well as the Maoist, Marxist/Trotskyite comrades. There were many Tamil Communist supporters who stood on the side of the Siṃhala government. Foremost among these was the Tamil social reformer Mutar Kanapatipillai Cuppiramaṇiyam (M. C. Supramaniam).<sup>19</sup> "Em. Ci.", as he was popularly known, was also the President of the *Cirupānmai tamiḷar makācapai* 'Minority Tamils' Mahāsabha' and provided strong political and moral support for the agitation in the Temple Entry Crisis at the Hindu village of Māvīṭṭapuram in 1968.

<sup>16</sup> See Es. Cantirapōs, *Enṇak kōlaṅkaḷ* (Chennai: Mithra Arts & Creations Pvt. Ltd., 2007), 224.

<sup>17</sup> The Republican Constitution was unilaterally enacted in Parliament and Ceylon became the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Tamils who were a major minority were not party to the constitution nor did they vote in favour of it.

<sup>18</sup> See, Pfaffenberger, "The Political Construction...", 143–168.

<sup>19</sup> See Es. Cantirapōs, Em. Ci., *Oru camūka viṭtalaip pōrāḷi* (Chennai: Mithra Arts & Creations Pvt. Ltd., 2008), esp. 20–87. Also Id., *Ennak kōlaṅkaḷ...*, 223–224.



“Em. Ci.” became an appointed Member of Parliament representing minority Tamils. He was also opposed to some of the policies of the Federal party which had the majority of elected Tamil seats in parliament. In the State Assembly that was convened to introduce the Republican Constitution in May 1972, he voted in favour of the Siṃhala Constitution while the Federal Party opposed it. This was interpreted by the Federal party as a form of betrayal of the larger Tamil national interests. “Em. Ci.” probably thought that by standing on the side of the Siṃhala government he may be able to win the legitimate rights for the minority Tamils. But history has proven otherwise.

Veḷḷālar caste domination and its resultant discriminations<sup>20</sup> catapulted a vocal socio-political protest in the form of a short-lived conversion to Buddhism in such villages as Caṅkāṇai, Kāṅkēcanturai, Puttūr and Karaveṭṭi in the mid-1960s.

The Temple entry crisis and the growing political and social discriminations that were meted out to the minority Tamils, culminated in the declaration by a group of minority leaders, their families and children of their desire to convert to Buddhism. This was materialized with the formation of The *All Ceylon Tamil Buddhist Association (Akila Ilaṅkai Tamiḷar Pauttac Caṅkam)* in 1962. The following were the office-bearers of this Association:<sup>21</sup>

President:	Taviṭ Mārimutu Vairamuttu, J.P.
Joint Secretaries:	K. Kanagalīkam, V. Mārkkkaṇṭu
Vice-Presidents:	N. Ciṅṅattampi, M. Poṅṅuturai, S. Kiruśnacāmi
Treasurer:	S. Iyāturai

They jointly ventured into the task of establishing Tamil Buddhist schools to respond to the need for education of minority Tamil children and to facilitate the religious needs of the newly converted Tamil Buddhist children. Four schools were established in four villages in the Paruttitturai district. These are:

*Puthoor Panchaseela Vidyālaya*  
*Atchuvēly Shree Vipasi Vidyālaya*  
*Karaveddy –Kanpolla ShreeNaratha (Kanpollai)*<sup>22</sup>  
*Alvāi Somage Vidyālaya*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See, P. Kaṅakapāpati, *Emmai Vaala Vaithavarkal* (Colombo: Chemamadu Pathipakam, 2012), 222–237.

<sup>21</sup> For more on this see, Es. Cantirapōs, *Eṅṅak kōlaṅkaḷ...*, 223.

<sup>22</sup> See *Loc.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Although the names of the schools are referred to with the names of major townships or Villages, the actual schools were established in the adjacent villages

These were primary and secondary schools that were specifically established for the education of minority Tamil children with a (Siṃhala) Buddhist curriculum. For various social and contextual political reasons these schools gradually became Tamil schools for all Tamil children in the area and the short lived Buddhist religion eventually lost its fire and fervour.

In retrospect, conversion to Buddhism was seen only as an abortive short cut to sharp and swift social emancipation. By climbing the ladder of Buddhism the minority Tamils hoped for a social egalitarianism they thought was enshrined as a fundamental Buddhist religious principle. Thus, those who opted to climb this ladder were soon disillusioned as their expectation was elusive and unattainable.

On the part of the SLFP government which is known for its Siṃhala-Buddhist extremism, this provided an opportunity to make inroads into the Tamil community with a divide and rule policy as well as to gain vote banks for its unsuccessful candidates among the so called Tamil sub-nationalist groups. But this was a short-lived political ambition.

## 5 Conversion to Buddhism and Reversion to Caivam

Religious conversion and reversion within and without the Siṃhala Buddhist nationality in Īlam, raises a number of questions. Is the present Lankan brand of Theravāda Buddhism a non-missionary religion or has it failed as missionary religion? Is political Buddhism a religiously justifiable reality against the backdrop of the Buddha's teaching on non-attachment? Why did the minority of Tamil Buddhist converts so quickly and unceremoniously abandon their new religion? Are the Caivas/Vaiṇavas around them to be blamed solely for this abandonment? What form of sustainability did the Siṃhala Buddhist officialdom provide for the new converts? Or did they ever provide a system that would enable the continuity of their newly founded mission?

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where minority Tamils lived in significant numbers.—I am thankful to Mr Tiru Tirucelvam, Editor in Chief of *Tamils' Information* a monthly published in Toronto, Canada and Mr P. Kaṇakacapāpati, Emeritus Principal, Mahajana College, Tellipalai for the information they provided me about some of the events and persons related to the Buddhist conversions in Yālpṇam and the subsequent establishment of the above-named schools.

These and several other similar questions can be raised. Our singular response is that ever since Siṃhala Buddhism chose to remain as an ethno-linguistic homogeneity, it lost its life sap of missionary motivation and enthusiasm.

The Tamil ethnic nationality in Īlam was well aware of this major lacuna in Siṃhala Buddhism. They did not pay serious attention to the glamorous conversion ritual that was given wide publicity by the Siṃhala government's media. The Tamils knew that solely due to the lack of religious and socio-economic sustainability this conversion will wither away and die in a matter of months. As expected it did. Ever since Buddhism in Īlam began to apply Siṃhala ethnicity as a defining adjective of its religious identity, Buddhism in Īlam lost its missionary essence.



# War by other Means. Expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamiḷ Region in “Post-War” Īlam

Jude Lal Fernando

## Introduction

On May 18, 2009 the Lankan Government (GoSL) officially declared its military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who ran a *de facto* state in the North and East of Īlam for nearly twenty years.<sup>1</sup> This victory and the take-over of the North and East were called “second Independence”, with which the territorial control by the Lankan state over the whole of island became total. The Lankan President’s victory speech reflected the imagination of “re-conquest”: where he referred to ancient, medieval and modern invasions that were successfully overcome by great Siṃhala warrior-kings of the island.

We are a country with a long history where we have seen the reign of 182 kings who ruled with pride and honour that extends more than 2,500 years. This is a country where kings such as Dutugemunu, Valagamba, Dhatusena and Vijayabahu defeated enemy invasions and ensured our freedom.<sup>2</sup>

The President was awarded the highest honour by the chief *saṃgha* of the two main Malvatta and Asgiriya Buddhist chapters for his ideological, political and military achievement in defeating the LTTE and “uniting” the island under one rule. His title of the honour was *viśva-kīrti śrī trisiṃhalādhiśvara*, which means “Universally Renowned Overlord of the Blessed Three Siṃhala Regions”; representing the President as one in the line of ancient epic kings who have united the island against “foreign” invasions.<sup>3</sup> In this way the political and mili-

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<sup>1</sup> Īlam is a Tamiḷ toponym for Laṃkā. TamiḷĪlam is a part of Īlam in the North-East. Īlaṅkai is a Tamilised form of Laṃkā.

<sup>2</sup> Mahinda Rājapakṣa, “President’s Speech to Parliament on the Defeat of the LTTE”, [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org/South%20Asia%20Terrorism%20Portal), *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/President\\_speech\\_parliament\\_defeatofLTT E.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/President_speech_parliament_defeatofLTT E.htm) (accessed 9/01/2012).

<sup>3</sup> The three Sinhala regions were called Rohaṇa, Piḥṭa and Māyāraṭa, and were

tary leadership of the country is honoured by the Buddhist *saṃgha* for reclaiming the whole of the island for Siṃhala Buddhists. The entire territory of the island is believed to be an essential part of Siṃhala Buddhism: in this belief—what has been achieved is a return to a glorious past, rather than to a newly constructed present and a future. The ideological marker of this victory—Siṃhala Buddhist nationalism—has two features, unitary state structure and cultural homogenisation. Thus, the military victory meant reinforcement of these two features over the entire island. In keeping with this ideology, the expansion of Siṃhala variant of Buddhism into the Tamil region has become one of the highly contentious developments in the “post-war” era. The main focus of the present paper is to examine this expansion, and how the religiosity it propagates is implicated with cultural, socioeconomic, politico/military and geopolitical dimensions. Finally, it intends to highlight certain ethical, legal, religious and ideological/political issues arising from the expansion, and challenges these pose to justice and recovery in the island.

This paper has four parts. First, it will conduct a historical, contextual and conceptual analysis of terms such as expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism, “post-war” era, Tamil region, etc.

The second part will examine how the 2002 Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) and peace process, between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the LTTE—which treated both parties with *parity of esteem*—was perceived by the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist groups as justification of “Tamil invasion” of the Siṃhala Buddhist land and a gross violation of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country (the only Siṃhala Buddhist state in the world). The recognition of LTTE on the same level as the GoSL in the peace process was seen as de-legitimising of the unitary state and its accompanying right to

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ruled by three different kings at the time of Portuguese conquest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This does not include Yaḷppānam kingdom in the North. Out of 2500 years of recorded history – which has been written in *vaṃsīc* literature through a Theravāda Buddhist sectarian perspective – the island has been a set of kingdoms throughout most part of this period. At different periods of 2500 years of history, for about 250 years, there have been kings who claimed authority over other smaller kingdoms in the island. Memory of this short period has become a justification for a perennial existence of a Sinhala Buddhist unitary state for 2500 years. The conflicts and wars have been dynastic conflicts some of which were associated with monastic politics. Imagination of the island as a single state structure in *vaṃsīc* literature is part of this monastic politics which has been employed by the colonial and post-colonial practices in modern times to legitimize unitary state structure and Sinhala Buddhist cultural homogenization throughout the entire island. See H.L. Seneviratne, *Buddhism, Identity and Conflict* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2002).

Siṃhala Buddhist cultural homogenisation throughout the entire island. It is important to understand this opposition for us to analyse the “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region which takes place with and after the collapse of the peace process, and the complete military takeover of the Tamil region by the GoSL in 2009. This part will examine the convergence of diverse Siṃhala nationalist groups against the 2002 CFA, and how the religiously defined political imagination of the military campaign against the LTTE gained preponderance amongst the Siṃhala nationalists. One of the notable developments during the peace process was the campaign led by Jātika Heḷa Urumaya (JHU) claiming a Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the North and East of the county 60–70 % of which came under the *de facto* state of the LTTE.

The third, and, the major part of this work, will focus on the ways and means (hitherto worded as “types”) of expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region spearheaded by the President, the Prime Minister and the Government, the security forces and the Buddhist monks. This section will carry a considerable number of photographs as evidence of this expansion. The military as an apparatus of the state’s political and ideological power will be analysed.

The fourth part will investigate the ethical, religious and ideological/political issues arising from the close (inseparable?) relationship between, the state, the military, the middle classes and the Buddhist monks.

## 1 Conquest or “Re-conquest”?

What does expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism mean? The ideological justification for the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region is based on a collective imagination of nationhood, informed by a belief in the perennial existence of a Siṃhala Buddhist state; where Siṃhala ethnicity, Buddhism, the entire land of the island and the state are seen as inseparable “givens”. In this sense, within the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist discourse, the expansion is a “re-conquest” whereby the rightful Siṃhala Buddhist heritage is secured through a military victory in the North and East of the island; meanwhile, it figures as a conquest within the Tamil nationalist discourse. In theorising collective imaginations based on ethnic attachments, Clifford Geertz uses the term “givens” not to uphold a conception of primordial essence, but to analyse the collective belief in such an es-

sence by those who live in a particular community.<sup>4</sup> For Max Weber, belief in an ethnic identity does not necessarily form a group with a collective identity. Such belief “facilitates” group formation and gains force within the political field as it “inspires the belief in a common ethnicity” no matter “how artificially” this political community is organised.<sup>5</sup> The process of facilitation and inspiration engages with new interpretations in answer to “who we are and what we are?” determined by the power dynamics of the political community and leads to imagined horizontal communities called nations that are sometimes believed to possess a perennial past.<sup>6</sup> The theoretical debate on the phenomenon of nationalism has mostly revolved around the antiquity or novelty of ethnic ties that inform nationalist sentiments. However, what is more important is to focus on the political dynamics of the essentialist representations (imagination based on beliefs) of nationhood and its historical process, rather than arguing the novelty or antiquity of these imaginations. As Craig Calhoun points out, the persuasive force of nationalism is not its antiquity, but “its immediacy and givenness” within a particular historical context.<sup>7</sup> What makes a belief believable, is the public acts of its interpretation determined by the power dynamics of the historical context; immediacy arises within these power dynamics.

It is within the immediacy of the socioeconomic and political transformations of the colonial period that the “givenness” of Siṃhala Buddhist national identity, with the two aforementioned main features, was imagined. The pre-colonial texts *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Mahāvāṃsa* and *Cūlavāṃsa* (“vāṃsic texts”), that had been written within sectarian and dynastic conflicts, were read as national texts—through positivist view of history initiated by the colonial officers: privileging the Siṃhala Buddhists (Aryans) as “true heirs” of the entire land and others, mainly Tamils (Dravidians), as invaders.<sup>8</sup> In this new reading the

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<sup>4</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 259.

<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, “The Origins of Ethnic Groups”, *Ethnicity*, edited by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson points out how through “print capitalism” nations are imagined as horizontal communities among the people who are not known to one another. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London / New York: Verso, 1991), 42–43.

<sup>7</sup> Calhoun Craig: *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Marisa Agnell, “Understanding the Aryan Theory”, *Culture and Politics of Identity in Sri Lanka*, edited by Mithran Tiruchelvam and C. S. Dattathreya (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1998), 58–60. Pradeep Jeganathan, “Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura”, *Unmaking the Na-*



soteriological and ethical meanings of *dhammadīpa* which means “having the *dhamma* as guiding light” (Pali canonical meaning), and its pre-colonial sectarian and parochial meaning propagated by *Mahāvamsa* (post-canonical meaning) where the “island of Laṃkā” was seen as “having *dhamma*” (not only Siṃhalas, but also Tamils and others could be Buddhists): were transformed into a racialised and territorialised sense of *dhamma*.<sup>9</sup> With this, other forms of being Buddhist were subjugated. This imaginative ordering of the island’s collective identity and landscape was associated with the physical ordering of the island by the colonial Government. As part of the colonial conquest diverse regions were amalgamated into one centralised state through the building of roads and administrative structures. This centralised state (given constitutional legitimacy in the 1972 constitution which claimed to replace the prior, colonially designed, constitutions) was fundamentally a unitary state: which became necessary for the British Raj to maintain political/military control of the island in ruling the Indian subcontinent. All of the colonial powers considered the island of Laṃkā a strategic location in the Indian Ocean; while the emerging Siṃhala Buddhist nationalists perceived the unitary state-structure, covering the entire island, to mark its perennial existence - it belonged to them. During the clearing of jungle to build roads, ruins of Anurādhapura, the city-cum-battleground between the ‘siṃhala’ king Duṭṭhagāmiṇī and “Tamil invader” Eḷāra of *Mahāvamsa* was “discovered” leading to an archaeological, aesthetic and historiographic interpretation of the landscape in a manner that “nationalised Anurādhapura”.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the British Empire was conquering a land, within which another conquest by the Siṃhala Buddhists was being set in motion against Tamils and Muslims. Within the immediacy of Christian proselytism, a rationalist interpretation of Buddhism came to the fore facilitated by its Western sympathisers as opposed to the *mythos* of Christianity, Hinduism, and even folk religions within popular Buddhism itself.<sup>11</sup> Those who spearheaded the nationalist discourse belonged to a particular class defined by wealth acquired through colonial plantations, trade, liquor, renting and

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*tion: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*, edited by Pradeep Jeganathan Qadri Ismail, (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association, 1995), 112–116, 122.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Schalk, “Semantic Transformations of *dhammadīpa*”, *Buddhism, Conflict, Violence and in Modern Sri Lanka*, edited by Mahinda Deegalle (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 86–92.

<sup>10</sup> Jeganathan, “Authorizing History,...”, 128–130.

<sup>11</sup> Seneviratne, *Buddhism...*, 3.

graphite mining, as well as English-education. They were joined by the Siṃhala-educated *saṃgha*, village school teachers, *āyurvedic* physicians, minor civil servants and so forth.<sup>12</sup>

All the above factors give evidence to the fact that Siṃhala Buddhism which is racialised, territorialised and rationalised is interwoven with socioeconomic, political and geopolitical factors. Yet, such colonial construct is believed to be a “given” from time immemorial; given by the Buddha himself to the Siṃhala race. This is the pure form of Buddhism that should be protected and propagated. The aim of the “re-conquest” by the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalists that has been taking place since colonial times is to regain this imagined past, the ideal society which, in fact, reflects more a projected vision of conquest than a received past as stated earlier. Echoing Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864-1933) who was the pioneering articulator of Siṃhala Buddhist nationalism—as a racialised, territorialised and rationalised discourse—on 20<sup>th</sup> of April in 2012 Ināmaḷuvē Sumaṅgala Thera led a mob of Buddhist monks and lay men and women towards a Muslim mosque and a Caiva temple in Daṃbulla/ Tampuḷlai (in the north-central province of Īlam), demanding the demolition of these religious sites—calling them “illegal” constructions—stated that intellectuals throughout the world (*muḷu lōkayēma buddimatun*) recognise the greatness of Buddhist *dhamma* (*bududahama*), and Buddhists cannot allow their heritage to be destroyed. The Thera’s argument was that no other religious site should exist in the sacred region surrounding the ancient Daṃbulla royal temple.<sup>13</sup> Another monk who spoke at the demonstration said that this demand will be carried out throughout the island, as Buddhists hold the first and foremost position in the country. The demonstrators marched chanting the first stanza of a popular Siṃhala song, *mē siṃhala apagē raṭayi, apa ipādunu mārēṇa raṭayi* [‘This is our Siṃhala country, the country we were born and where we will die’].<sup>14</sup>

The process of spatial “re-conquest” that had already begun during the colonial period through the ordering of landscape, initially by

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<sup>12</sup> For a class analysis of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism see Kumari Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflict in Sri Lanka: the Emergence of Sinhala–Buddhist consciousness, 1883–1983* (Colombo: Sanjiva Books, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> Ināmaḷuvē Śrī Sumaṅgala Mahānāyaka, “Protect Buddhist Heritage of Dambulla”, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cesXRERrUiw&feature=related), 20 April, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cesXRERrUiw&feature=related> (accessed: 06/06/2012).

<sup>14</sup> Anon., “In Sri Lanka, Dambulla City Muslim Mosque attacked by Buddhist Monks”, [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTchxH8RKJw&feature=related), 23 April, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTchxH8RKJw&feature=related> (accessed: 01/06/2012).

building roads, continued later through Siṃhala colonial settlements and restoration of ancient hydraulic works for irrigation in the bordering areas of the North and East as far back as 1920s. Some of these settlements had to be abandoned due to malaria and harsh conditions in the region (called Rājarāṭa ‘the country of Kings’) that was the historical location of *vaṃśic* texts, and was covered with thick forest when the British arrived in the island. However, the process of Siṃhala settlements was accelerated in 1930s and 1940s, especially after the granting of universal franchise that led to the formation of state councils in 1931 and 1936. These councils were dominated by majority Siṃhala political elite, who pioneered the Siṃhala settlements with the support of the colonial Government.<sup>15</sup> They were planters whose acquisition of land in the predominantly Siṃhala south had deprived many Siṃhala peasants of their land as the population increased. The Siṃhala ministers of the state council also carried out a campaign in the 1940s, to restore the city of Anurādhapura and build a new town. Within the existing town area 75 percent of inhabitants were Tamils and Muslims.<sup>16</sup> Some politicians also made speeches glorifying the greatness of Rājarāṭa and its Siṃhala Buddhist heritage. The first prime minister of independent Laṃkā—formerly one of the key ministers of state council under the colonial Government—claimed ancestral relations to the ancient families of Rājarāṭa.<sup>17</sup> After independence in 1948 a new town was built separating it from the newly restored ‘sacred city’. All the residents who were mainly Tamils and Muslims were removed from the ‘sacred city’, and the area became exclusively Buddhist as every other place of worship was removed and their original locations obliterated.

The Anurādhapura that was created in the decades after Independence does not represent a return to any original condition. It was, rather, a new creation—a very concrete manifestation of current ideas about the ancient past and its relation to the present.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Michael De Vroey, N. Shanmugaratnam, *Peasant Settlements in Sri Lanka* (Louvain-la-Neuve Tricontinental Centre, 1984), 22. Also see Nadarajah Shanmugaratnam, “Colonial Agrarian Changes and Underdevelopment”, *Capital and Peasant Production: Studies in the Continuity and Discontinuity of Agrarian Structures in Sri Lanka*, edited by Charles Abeysekera, (Colombo: Social Scientists Association, 1985), 1–31.

<sup>16</sup> Nira Wickramasinghe, *Ethnic Politics in Colonial Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1995), 122–123.

<sup>17</sup> Wickramasinghe, *Ethnic Politics...*, 124.

<sup>18</sup> Elisabeth Nissan, “History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation”, *Social Analysis* 25:1 (1989): 67.

Even though land of the Siṃhala peasants was conquered for expansion of plantations, the ideology of “re-conquest” of the North and East supplied “solutions” to landlessness. The landless peasants too were materially absorbed into the imagined past of a pristine Siṃhala Buddhist heritage through new Siṃhala settlements.

It was the Indian labourers brought by the colonial government who cleared the thick jungles when ordering the landscape so to built roads to facilitate a centralised state, and restore the ruins of Anurādhapura. They were also plantation labourers who were settled in the central province in the island; and who had to be brought by the colonial governments in the initial stage of plantations, as Siṃhala peasants already had some arable land and agricultural work in the villages. It is in the second stage, of expansion of plantations, that they lost some land.<sup>19</sup> The wealth that the colonial government accumulated through exploitation of the Tamil plantation labourers was then used to build Siṃhala settlements and for the restoration of irrigation works and Buddhist sites in line with the colonial policy of “preservation of the peasantry”. This policy must be analysed within the overall strategy of the British Raj, which necessitated political/military stability on the island for ruling the whole of Indian subcontinent. The belief in Siṃhala Buddhist pristine past, as opposed to the others, aptly served the geo-strategic interests of the empire despite the fact that this “givenness” entered into conflict with the immediacy of Christian proselytism associated with the empire. In this sense, the form of Siṃhala Buddhism that was propagated was associated with a particular economic (dependent capitalism based on plantations), and political (unitary state) structure which was colonial, and a strategic interest which was imperialistic. It was the British colonial state (unitary state-structure) and its economy that was dominant,—shared by the Siṃhalas—while the Siṃhala Buddhist “freedom struggle” was geared against the Tamil plantation labourers as early as the end of nineteenth century; the Muslims in the 1910s; and Indian-origin urban workers in the 1930s. Within the emerging nationalist meta-narrative Tamil plantation labourers were invaders who defile pure Siṃhala Buddhist culture with their Hindu practices, and grabbed land that had belonged to the Siṃhalas. Therefore, “re-conquest” continued. After Independence in 1948, a process completing the “re-conquest” was enacted with the abolition of citizenship rights of the plantation sector Tamils in 1948 and 1949, declaration of Siṃhala as the only official language in 1956, and thereby, dominance in public

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<sup>19</sup> De Vroey, Shanmugaratnam, *Peasant Settlements in Sri Lanka...*, 15.

and state sector employment, as well as standardised university entrance in 1971. Post-colonial nation-building—facilitated through Westminster parliamentary democracy of majority rule—meant completion of heretofore partial “re-conquest”. The public face of Sinhala Buddhism has to be understood in light of the discussed socio-economic, political/military, ideological and geopolitical layers of meaning.

What is the Tamil region? In the “immediacy” of the process of discrimination, Tamil nationalist sentiments were formed not on the basis of an attachment to a glorified past, but as a demand for equality and justice against discrimination; evolving from a phase of federalism into national independence. The “re-conquest” of Sinhala Buddhist nationalists was seen as a conquest by the Tamils; and Sinhala Buddhism as its ideological justification. Even though the material and ideological basis of Sinhala Buddhist state had already been built during the colonial period, and reinforced in the post-colonial, nation-building phase, both the unitary state and its exclusivist ideology gained a constitutional status in the 1972 constitution (called the Republican Constitution). It gave primacy to Buddhism, while the process towards such exclusivism was accompanied by violent suppression of Tamil dissent since 1950s. With the completion of “re-conquest” Tamil demand changed from federalism to national independence in 1976. Within the above historical process of oppression, the Tamil region came to be seen as a Tamil homeland that would guarantee the collective rights and aspirations of the Tamils as a people and a nation. Yet, demands made by the Tamil political parties have been seen as part of an invading agenda, one perceived by the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist groups as a perennial invasion that should be confronted. The core of the Tamil national movement (both unarmed and armed phases) was secular, based on modern principles of self-determination. Counter-violence in the armed phase which targeted several key Buddhist places of worship was tactical, not fundamentalist in the sense of Taliban’s destruction in March 2001 of the two Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan. Here the word tactical means part of an overall political and military strategy. LTTE’s counter-violence directed towards certain Buddhist sites was not based on an intolerant religious ideology, but as a reaction to the close association of these sites with the Sinhala political leadership and the military. These sites became symbolic locations for the unitary state structure which were frequented by the Sinhala political leaders and the military to acquire blessings for their military operations against

the Tamil region. In this way counter-violence directed towards these locations (there have been two main attacks) became part of an overall political and military strategy of the LTTE in facing the war waged by the Lankan state. However, within an imagined past of Tamil invasion these manoeuvres were seen as part of a continuous onslaught against the sole land of pure Buddhism. As the entire land was perceived to be *dhammadipa*, the *de facto* state that the Tamil national movement (led by the LTTE) built in the Tamil region was experienced as conquest by none other than the “enemies of [Siṃhala] Buddhism”. Finally, opposition to the 2002 CFA and peace process, which accorded *parity of esteem* to both the GoSL and the LTTE, and, the subsequent “post-war” military expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region, may be understood within these power dynamics of imagined past and identity.

What does “post-war” era mean? This phase is often called either “post-conflict” or “post-war”. The term post-conflict is used mainly by governments and NGOs who analyse the conflict as an outcome of the armed resistance of Tamil nationalism. This perspective does not pay attention to the historical roots of Tamil resistance outlined above. While, post-conflict terminology is used in academic literature where there are formal peace agreements and processes, such as of South Africa, Northern Ireland etc. This term could have been used on the basis of 2002 CFA and peace process (to be discussed in detailed in the next section), as there was a recognition for political negotiations to address the root causes of the conflict, but not to refer to the phase after 2009 military victory of the GoSL that consolidated the unitary state-structure and its ideology, which are the root causes of the conflict. The term “post-war” is used to refer to the end of the armed phase of the conflict, but not to the end of the conflict itself. Even though this term captures the reality of the conflict to a certain extent, it also tends to conceal how a war could be pursued by many other means even after official announcement of its end. For example, expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism in the Tamil region is a war by other means. These means pre-existed the armed phase and led to the armed conflict. After the 2009 military victory, they have been intensified so that cultural homogenisation is achieved through a phase of accelerated militarisation and colonisation. Therefore, “post-war” must to be understood with a nuanced meaning. The expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region in this phase could be better analysed by focussing on the power dynamics in the period of the CFA and the peace process. After situating the subject matter within a historical, contextual and conceptual analysis I presently move on to the second

part of the discussion, where I will analyse the power dynamics of the peace process itself that gave a new life to the ideology of “re-conquest”.

## 2 2002 Peace Process: Overcoming “Re-conquest” and Conquest?

The Parliamentary electoral defeat of the People’s Alliance led by President Candrikā Kumārānatuṅga (Chandrika Kumaratunge) in December 2001 was a result of the failure of her military campaign to regain the North and East, and the economic collapse that her government had to face. Kumārānatuṅga’s proposed constitutional reforms while presenting a package of devolution of power to the Tamil region, attempted to constitutionalise the power of the *saṃgha* in state affairs. That is, by establishing a high *saṃgha* council to determine all Buddhist affairs of the island.<sup>20</sup> Her military campaign begun in 1995 was called “war for peace”, and though initially apparently successful, particularly in getting hold of Yālpāṇam peninsula in the North, by 2001 had faced a considerable number of setbacks due to the military achievements of the LTTE in other regions of the North and East. Setbacks against the LTTE and the economic collapse that the GoSL faced altered for the time being the mindset of the Sinhala political elite and its constituency; demoralising the spirit of “re-conquest”, and leading to the defeat of the government. Then came to power Ranil Vikremasīṃha’s (Ranil Wickremasinghe’s) United People’s Front, which expressed a non-militaristic readiness to resolve the national question, and while Kumārānatuṅga remained President, Vikramasīṃha formed the government as Prime Minister with a majority in the Parliament.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This was only in the Draft Constitution that did not come into effect. See Peter Schalk, “Present Concepts of Secularism among Īlavar and Lankans”, *Zwischen Säkularismus und Hierokratie. Studien zum Verhältnis von Religion und Staat in Süd- und Oastasis. Acta Univeritatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 17* (Uppsala: AUU, 2001, 63–66). — Ālvāpīḷḷai Vēluppīḷḷai points out how President Kumārānatuṅga calculated that the devolution package would not face opposition from the Buddhist clergy if their position in the state is constitutionally guaranteed through setting up of a Supreme Council. See Ālvāpīḷḷai Vēluppīḷḷai, “Sinhala Fears of Tamil Demand”, *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, edited by Mahinda Deegalle (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 94–95.

<sup>21</sup> Sri Lanka has both a Presidential and a parliamentary system where the President has been constitutionally vested with executive powers to the extent of overrul-

The ideology and the agenda of “re-conquest” were temporarily put aside by the Siṃhala political elite, and space was created for political negotiations between the GoSL and the LTTE. The 2002 CFA and the peace process between the GoSL and the LTTE reflects the weakening of the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalism, both as a political power and as an ideological movement due to LTTE’s *de facto* state in the North and East of the island.<sup>22</sup> The peace process, in fact, was a result of a balance of power. The LTTE entered into the peace process from a position of power, but the GoSL was in the position of weakness. In the CFA, the LTTE-administered Tamil region was recognised as the line of control between the two parties. This problematised the constitutional privilege that Siṃhala Buddhism enjoyed throughout the island, particularly in the Tamil region. LTTE upheld a secular ideology in its political imagination of the state of Tamilīlam as opposed to the religiously defined ideology of the Lankan state. Therefore, the balance of power functioned as a counterforce to Siṃhala Buddhist cultural homogenisation in the Tamil region. For the Tamil national movement this helped contain further conquest. However, within seven years from 2002 this power balance gradually changed. Siṃhala Buddhist ideology both as a political power and as an ideological movement peaked dramatically after 2006; particularly during the election campaign and after the electoral victory of the United People’s Alliance (UPA) which was formed by SLFP with the support of JHU and JVP (Janatā Vimukti Peramaṇa) which fundamentally opposed the peace process. Though JHU and JVP were marginal powers at the time of the signing of the CFA, by 2004 both parties entered into alliances with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which was then led by President Kumārānatuṅga (also posed against the CFA). The temporary political division within the Siṃhala elite—between the United National Party’s (UNP) Vikramesiṅha and Sri Lanka Freedom Party’s (SLFP) Kumārānatuṅga—was capitalised to the maximum by the JHU and the JVP, representative mainly of the middle classes, without whose support no traditional party (UNP and SLFP) led by the Siṃhala elite political families could come to power. This

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ing the parliament and the judiciary. President Kumārānatuṅga did not use her executive powers to overrule the CFA, but criticized the agreement while making alliances, as the leader of SLFP, with JHU and JVP to oust the UNP-led government and thereby facilitated the reinforcement of the ideology of “re-conquest”.

<sup>22</sup> For some useful insights regarding the *de facto* state of the LTTE see Kristian Stokke, “Building the Tamil Eelam State: Emerging State Institutions and Forms of Governance in LTTE-controlled Areas in Sri Lanka”, *Third World Quarterly* 28: 6 (2007): 1197–1201.



alliance between the SLFP, and JHU and JVP was strengthened in the Presidential election of Mahinda Rājapakṣa in 2005 meanwhile the chief aim was to oppose the CFA and to re-establish unitary state structure.

From the moment of its signing the JHU opposed the CFA on the basis of the belief in a glorious past of a Siṃhala Buddhist state which legitimises the unitary state structure and cultural homogenisation of the entire island. Referring to the period that followed after the 2002 peace process, Campika Raṇavaka (Champika Ranawake), the theoretician and the national organiser of JHU, writes as follows:

The time was ripe for bikkhus to step forward. We set the stage in 2003 for the formation of the National Sangha Council—a powerful new bikkhu front led by Ven. Ellawala Medhananda Nayaka Thero. Many respected bikkhus... supported us. Defeating terrorism and the preservation of the unitary system of the island were the main conditions put forward by our bikkhus to the Presidential candidates seeking their response.<sup>23</sup>

He also states that he was motivated to fight against “terrorism” on 14 May, 1985 when the LTTE attacked the devotees of Śrī Mahā Bodhi in the city of Anurādhapura.<sup>24</sup> This is the location of the Bo tree which is believed to be an offshoot of the very tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. The JHU claimed that it aims to build a *dhammarājya* ‘Buddhist state’, which has been termed in academic literature as *dharmacracy*.<sup>25</sup> The JHU slogan was *marabiya nāti, kusagini nāti, turuliya āti dāhāmi dāyak* ‘a land of dhamma without fear of death, without hunger, full of flora and fauna’. The first characteristic of this land (without fear of death) refers to defeat against “LTTE terrorism” that has generated fear in the country. The first step towards that end was the abrogation of the CFA and the adoption of a military solution against the LTTE.

The LTTE’s principle of secularity was perceived either as a Western Christian conspiracy, or as a Hindu invasion; a barrier to the maintenance, consolidation and expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region. One of the key areas of the peace process was rehabilitation, reconstruction and demilitarisation of the Tamil region.

<sup>23</sup> Patali Champika Ranawaka, *Charge of the Lion Brigade: Sri Lanka’s Epic Victory over Terrorism* (Colombo: Neo Graphics, 2009), 16–17.

<sup>24</sup> Pathali Campika Raṇavaka: *Paṭisōtagāmīva: Svayaṃ Likhita Caritāpādanaya* (Colombo: Neo Graphics, 2009), 37–38.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Schalk, “Fundamentalism, Ultimate Truth, Absolutism, Inerrancy and Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka”, *Fundamentalism in the Modern World 1*, edited by Ulrika Mårtensson et al. (London/New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011), 53–74.

Two main sub-committees were proposed to implement these aims. The military was expected to withdraw from the civilian properties and public places that they had occupied, and a process of reconstruction was intended. This included all places of worship reflecting the secular and pluralist character of the peace process. The JHU viewed this secular and pluralist character as a sign of the age of decline of the Siṃhala Buddhist unitary state, its purity, territorial integrity and sovereignty. The “re-conquest” was envisaged not in the form of conversion to Buddhism, but as an ethno-religious homogenisation of the entire island through a military takeover of the North and East.

Comparably, the JVP’s opposition to the CFA was grounded on the need to protect the unitary state in view of reaching its socialist goals. However, as both parties not only shared the spirit of “re-conquest” but also competed for the same constituency of rural and urban middle classes, the JVP also utilised the names of warriors and kings (imagined as Siṃhala Buddhist) of the past, as symbols in their campaign in an attempt to authenticate the party’s variety of patriotism. While JVP saw the legitimacy given to the *de facto* state of LTTE as a part of an imperialist strategy of “divide and rule”, the JHU perceived it as a conspiracy against the only Siṃhala Buddhist state in the world where Siṃhala Buddhism and land, state structure are inseparable “givens”. Buddhism is seen as an essential feature of Siṃhala ethnicity and state structure. The JVP’s political position was that political power of the state should not be devolved on religious or ethnic basis, but any citizen should be able to settle down wherever s/he wishes whereas the JHU upheld that the Siṃhala Buddhists have primacy of place in the island as they are the “true nationals” and the others are only “citizens”.<sup>26</sup> Subtle differences between the two positions vaporised in the public domain because the unitary state structure cannot be justified without an imagined glorious Siṃhala Buddhist past. Both parties called the Tamil national armed resistance *siyaḷu praś-nayangē mav praśnaya* ‘the root (mother) problem of all problems’ (in Īlam). Therefore, both positions, while mutually enriching one another contributed to the ideology of “re-conquest” based on an ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage which is the fundamental standpoint of JHU. It is important to note the power dynamics of this religiously supported campaign, as the religious support has implications for the later military campaign and the “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala

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<sup>26</sup> For a justification of this position by JHU theoretician, see Pathalī Campika Raṇavaka, *Siṃhala Abhiyōgaya* (Colombo: Dayawansa Jayakody and Company, 2001), 138.

Buddhism into the Tamil region. Meanwhile, the two parties competing with each other for the urban and rural middle class voter base among the Siṃhalas meant that public discourse was transformed into an anti-CFA, anti-LTTE and anti-Tamil rhetoric.

There were many concrete political actions that were taken by both the JHU and JVP in strengthening the public discourse of “re-conquest”. The JVP’s propaganda secretary, Vimal Vīravamaṣa (Wimal Weerawansa), visited the military camps to politicise the soldiers and was a key member of the National Patriotic Front (NPF) where Āllē Guṇavaṣa Thera (who wrote a popular song depicting soldiers that fight for the country as those who acquire merits to reach *nirvāṇa*), and Guṇadāsa Amarasēkara (Gunadasa Amarasekara), one of the leading theoreticians of *jātika cintanaya* ‘national ideology’, which argues for the hypothesis of the clash of civilisations, were prominent members. The NPF launched a campaign called *manel mal viya-pāraya* [‘Water Lilies Movement’] to boost the morale of the soldiers and to cater to their welfare.<sup>27</sup> Water lilies are popular offerings of Buddhists who frequent monasteries, and the Buddha’s enlightenment is associated with the water lily blossom.

The JHU adopted a different radical set of actions. The party leader, Ellāvala Mēdhānanda Thera, also known a historian, undertook travel to the predominantly Tamil speaking (Hindu and Muslim) Eastern Province to publicise (according to the party), how the Siṃhala Buddhist ancient sites have been “vandalised”, “desecrated”, “destroyed” and “occupied” mainly by the LTTE, Muslims and by treasure hunters.<sup>28</sup> In a political move to “discover” ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the Tamil region, the Thera, with the support of the military, trespassed the line of control between the GoSL and LTTE that had been demarcated by the CFA as a step to ceasing hostilities. Campika Raṇavaka states, that attempts made by the Thera to conduct archaeological investigations in the LTTE-administered areas in the East were planned as a party decision in a move to oppose the CFA and to regain Siṃhala Buddhist heritage.<sup>29</sup> The pictures of Mēdhānanda Thera with the Lankan soldiers walking the jungles examining archaeological sites often accompany articles with sense-

<sup>27</sup> Anon., “Manel Mal – Song: Sri Lanka”: [http://www.metacafe.com/watch/763015/manel\\_mal\\_movement\\_song\\_sri\\_lanka/](http://www.metacafe.com/watch/763015/manel_mal_movement_song_sri_lanka/) (accessed: 12/06/2012).

<sup>28</sup> These expressions could be found throughout many of the texts written by the Thera. See for example Ellawala Medhananda, *The Sinhala Buddhist Heritage in The East and The North of Sri Lanka* (Colombo, Dayawansa Jayakody and Company, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Raṇavaka: *Paṭisōtagāmīva ...*, 103.

tionalist headings, such as *jātika urumaya soyā koṭi kaṭaṭa giya gamanak*, ‘a journey to the mouth of the Tigers in search of our national heritage’.<sup>30</sup> In one article the Thera writes that it was the Siṃhalas who built the Buddhist heritage in the Eastern Province,<sup>31</sup> and claims that the Buddha visited the Eastern Province as it had already been inhabited by a people, giving the impression of the Siṃhalas being on the island long before Buddhism arrived. According to the Thera the Buddha visited Cēruvilai, Dīgavapiya, Mahiyaṅganaya, and also Tisamakārāma, the region that borders the Eastern and Southern Provinces of the island.<sup>32</sup> Any ancient site, for him, becomes a Siṃhala Buddhist heritage; administrative structures, irrigation systems, and Buddhist sites as all built by Siṃhalas—the architects of Lankan civilization.

The main text written by the Thera, which is also translated into English (Medhananda, 2005), has many statements feeding the imagination of the Siṃhala people with an ancient heritage that has been destroyed:<sup>33</sup>

- The caves, that were used by mendicant monks one time, to give the holy message of peace, are now used by blood thirsty terrorists.<sup>34</sup>
- Non-Siṃhala settlements over Buddhist ruins, is a common site.<sup>35</sup>
- Today it is an LTTE base, and no one can go there.<sup>36</sup>
- Many valuable sculptural pieces of religious value have been taken for their secular use.<sup>37</sup>
- Treasure seekers have done harm to the stūpa. A kōvil is built at the site using Buddhist architectural remains.<sup>38</sup>
- The non-Siṃhalas have occupied many lands and paddy-fields that were owned by Siṃhalas a few years ago.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda: *Kaḍunu Visiruṇu Sellipi: Ellāvala Himiyangē Viviḍa Lipi Ekātuva –1* (Colombo, Published by the Author, 2009), 187.

<sup>31</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda: *Kaḍunu ...*, 242.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>33</sup> The Sinhala text, Ellāvala Mēdhānanda: *Pācīna passa – uttara passa, nāgenahira paḷāta hā uturu paḷātē siṃhala Buddhist urumaya*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Colombo, Dayawansa Jayakody and Company, (2003) 2008. The English version is Ellawala Medhananda, *The Sinhala Buddhist Heritage in The East and The North of Shri Lanka* (Colombo, Dayawansa Jayakody and Company, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Ellawala Medhanda: *The Sinhala Buddhist Heritage...*, 205.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>36</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 33.

- A Muslim watcher appointed by the archaeological department has not succeeded in the upkeep of the place.<sup>40</sup>
- Though many ruins are scattered all over the area, no authority had given any interest over the place.<sup>41</sup>
- It is with great patriotism we invite the Siṃhala people to colonise these areas once again.<sup>42</sup>
- ...these two stupas were also dug into by seekers of treasure.<sup>43</sup>
- Except for a few families that live at the foot of the mountain, the whole area is covered with thick jungle.<sup>44</sup>
- Treasure hunters digging into the relic chamber can be seen.<sup>45</sup>
- Sea erosion over a period of 1000 years resulted in the decay.<sup>46</sup>
- All means of access to the area have been forcefully jeopardized by the Muslims and continual damage is done to what is remaining.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the fact of recognition of the destruction of the ancient sites by treasure hunters (perhaps connected to the Siṃhala politicians, police and security forces) and natural causes, the Tamiḷs and Muslims, particularly the LTTE and the Muslim politicians in the Eastern Province are still being held as mainly responsible for the loss and destruction of ancient artefacts.

Often it was depicted that the Tamiḷs and Muslims have a deliberate plan to invade and destroy not only the Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the North and East, but also in the entire country. LTTE's attacks on the outer wall of the temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in the Central Province and in the area surrounding Srī Mahā Bodhi in Anurādhapura were given as examples of an all out invasion of the country. Meanwhile, the attack in the Central Province was an attempt to resist the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Independence of GoSL, planned to be held in the vicinity of the temple (with Prince Charles as the guest of honour). It was promised to the Siṃhala constituency that security forces would complete the military takeover of the main A9 road and annex the Northern Tamiḷ region to the South before the celebration. The other attack was carried out with a range of one mile distance of Srī Mahā Bodhi belonging to the area of the 'sacred city' built obliterating other places of worship as mentioned in the previ-

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 85.

ous section. Moreover, the attack took place in the aftermath of the 1983 Tamil pogrom; burning of Yālpāṇam library in 1981, and killing of Tamil political prisoners, as a form of counter violence. The civilian deaths in both attacks reinforced the Siṃhala Buddhist rhetoric of victimhood.

In the view of Mēdhānanda Thera what has been “discovered” in the North and East and in the rest of the country were not *pura vastu* ‘ancient artefacts/sites’, but *pūjābhūmi* ‘sacred sites/lands’,<sup>48</sup> instantiating a concrete manifestation of the territorialisation of *dhammadīpa* evocative of a primordial essence. In this sense, it is not only Anurādhapura, but the entire island which is sacred. This belief gives absolutist value to the link between Siṃhala ethnicity, Buddhism and territory not only legitimising a “just war”, even justifying natural disasters like tsunami as the karmic effects of the desecration of *dhammadīpa*. In an open letter to President Kumārāṇatuṅga the Thera gives a list of sites that are allegedly destroyed by the Muslims and Tamils in the Eastern Province. He writes that he wonders sometimes whether the Province was destroyed by the tsunami as a karmic effect of these acts.<sup>49</sup> The title of this letter gives the name of Kālīṅga Māgha—a pre-colonial South Indian invader who destroyed Buddhist sites in dynastic warfare—to those who destroy Buddhist sites in the present, creating the impression that the present Tamil national movement now destroys such sites being the reincarnation of former invaders.<sup>50</sup> No distinction has been made between pre-colonial dynastic wars, and post-colonial ethno-nationalist conflicts. He also has a separate article on how those who destroy sacred sites are punished by the karmic effects of their actions.<sup>51</sup>

In his works, the Thera claims that contrary to the figures of ancient Buddhist sites in the North and East of Īlam issued by the country’s Commissioner for Archaeology tallying 276, there are at least 500 such places in the entire Tamil region. He writes: “...but I am not satisfied as I know that there are still more places undiscovered in the two areas...”,<sup>52</sup> while supplying contradictory figures about the number of ancient sites in the Tamil region throughout his work (most of which are round).

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<sup>48</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Jātika Urumayē Piya Saṭahan-2* (Colombo, Dayawansa Jayakody and Company, 2010), 241.

<sup>49</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Jātika Urumayē Piya Saṭahan-2*, 196.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–149.

<sup>52</sup> Ellawala Medhananda, *The Sinhala Buddhist Heritage...*, 10.

Referring to the ancient Siṃhala Buddhist sites in the Eastern Province in a recent paper articles re-published in the book *Kāḍuṇu Visiruṇu Sel Lipi* [‘Broken and scattered stone plates’] Mēdhānanda Thera writes:

We believe that there have been 8000 villages here. Therefore, according to characteristics of ancient settlements that we have recognised, we can conclude that there have been 8000 irrigation tanks and 8000 vihāras-tānas here <sup>53</sup> [translated from Siṃhala].

Elsewhere he writes that there are thousands of archaeological sites that have not been identified by the archaeological department.<sup>54</sup> In an article from 2001, he identifies over 100 Hindu (Caiva, Vaiṇava) kōvils built over Buddhist *malāsanayas*.<sup>55</sup> When this articles was written the LTTE administered around 60–70 percent of the North and East. Yet, it is not clear how the Thera came to this figure.

Citing another number he writes that there have been around 500 monks in Dīgavāpi in early Buddhist history in the Eastern Province and their monastery must have spread through 500 acres.<sup>56</sup>

In the writings of Mēdhānanda Thera, there are also constant references to the resources of the region:

There are 103 rivers in the country that flow to the ocean. Out of these, 64 flow to the sea in the North and East and these locations where the rivers meet the sea have been ports.<sup>57</sup>

It has to be mentioned here how Tirukōṇamalai has been one of the most strategic ports in the Indian Ocean since the time of Portuguese conquests in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, “the economy of the land was based on agriculture and trade”. The Eastern Province was full of paddy fields; thus “an economic miracle”.<sup>58</sup> Referring to the Yālppāṇam peninsula in Northern Province, the Thera writes that at one stage “the whole area of Yāpanaya [Yālppāṇam, Jaffna] was lighted with yellow robes” and the rulers of Anurādhapura considered this region as part of their kingdom and built many Buddhist sites that have been later destroyed.<sup>59</sup> He gives a list of 45 places of Buddhist ruins in Yālppāṇam peninsula alone, considered to be Siṃhala Bud-

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<sup>53</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Kāḍuṇu...*, 187.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>58</sup> *Loc.cit.*

<sup>59</sup> Ellawala Medhanda: *The Sinhala Buddhist Heritage...*, 275.

dhist sites.<sup>60</sup> Commenting on Vauniya [Vavuniyā, Vavuniya] district which is to the North of Anurādhapura the Thera writes as follows:

Numerous Buddhists lived in Vauniya. Therefore, many Buddhist monasteries and malāsanayas sprang up throughout. A number of inscriptions prove the Buddhist and Sinhala heritage, but it is sad to say that the LTTE has included it into their imaginary kingdom of Eelam. The region is also seen as the location of many ancient irrigation tanks, canals and banks.<sup>61</sup>

The imagined glorious past is not only religious, but also economic and geo-strategic (as ports). In fact, it is difficult to separate these factors from the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology.

When a careful survey is conducted, it can be observed that after the peace process the frequency of TV and radio programmes, news paper articles, and books written on the Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the North and East increased compared to other periods in the preceding 30 years of armed conflict. Most articles on the ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the North and East were written by Mēdhānanda Thera, which then appeared in a number of leading Siṃhala newspapers such as *Divaina*, *Dinamina*, *Lakbima*, *Laṃkā-dīpa*, *Boduhaṅḍa* (all widely read). These articles were also compiled into books and published by a leading publisher in Colombo, as well as by the Thera himself. He also participated in a weekly television programme called *siṃhalē mahāvaṃśa katāva* 'story of the great chronicle of the Siṃhala land'. A similar pattern could be observed in the early 80s under the leadership of Cyril Mathew, a minister of the UNP government who was known for his anti-Tamiḷ rhetoric and one of those allegedly responsible for the anti-Tamiḷ pogrom of 1983. He also wrote and appealed to UNESCO compiling a list of ancient sites that have been destroyed; generating an anti-Tamiḷ ethos among the Siṃhala Buddhists.<sup>62</sup> Both the works of Mēdhānanda Thera and Cyril Mathew have been quoted by a Siṃhala academic in his work *Demaḷa Baudḍhyā* ['Tamiḷ Pauttar/Tamiḷ Buddhist'], which recognises clearly the existence of Tamiḷ Buddhism (*tamiḷppauttam*) in the North and East of the island.<sup>63</sup> However, for the above political leaders what may be found in the Tamiḷ region is evidence for Siṃhala Buddhism. Ac-

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 277–278.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>62</sup> Caluwadewage Cyril Mathew, *An appeal to UNESCO to safeguard and preserve the cultural property in Sri Lanka endangered by racial prejudice, unlawful occupation or wilful destruction* (Colombo: Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs, 1983).

<sup>63</sup> Sunil Ariyaratna, *Demaḷa Baudḍayā* (Colombo, S. Godage and Brothers, 2006).



ording to another Buddhist monk, Daṃbara Amila Thera who is the senior lecturer in archaeology in Jayawardanapura University in Colombo, Mēdhānanda Thera could be a very good informant to the archaeological department but he does not have a scientific training or expertise to scrutinise ancient history and archaeology.<sup>64</sup> However, Campika Raṇavaka hails the Thera as one of the few foremost historians and archaeologists that the country has ever produced.<sup>65</sup> Often the JHU propaganda campaign published photos of the Thera with the military, examining ruins of a site. Some of the publications of Mēdhānanda Thera, for instance, were launched in the most prominent auditoriums in Colombo with the participation of key Siṃhala political elite.

The resulting immediacy of “givenness” is constructed through “print capitalism” thus feeding the imagined community of the Siṃhala Buddhist nation, which is perceived to be under threat due to a peace deal with the “Tamil invader brokered by the Western powers.” It is often stated that the destruction that this invasion has caused is not second even to that of Māgha. In fact, the Tamil national movement is called Māgha(s) projecting a primordial, perennial antagonism between the Siṃhalas and Tamils (and Muslims) despite the latter group not being related to the Māgha invasion.<sup>66</sup> This process of construction takes place within the attempted negotiation of power among the Siṃhala social classes, namely between the elite and the middle classes led by the latter’s intelligentsia. Raṇavaka acknowledges that JHU is similar to BJP ( Bharatiya Janatha Party) in India and is led by middle class intellectuals in Īlam.<sup>67</sup> In the process of construction of an essentialist identity, there is no need for the scientific deconstruction of historiography or for analysis of archaeological findings; and, what *appears* as truth is declared as reality.

As said, the Eastern Province was the main focus of the anti-CFA campaign of JHU. A group of US naval officers who conducted a security/military assessment of the area surrounding Tirukōṇamalai harbour, several months after the CFA was signed, had reiterated the importance of guaranteeing “security” in the region in any future war effort due to its strategic importance. As an initial experimental step

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<sup>64</sup> “Maha ran nidhāna hō daṃbaran piḷima purā vidyādayaṇṭa kavādāvat hamu vī nāhā-pūjya daṃbara amila himi”, [www.divayina.com](http://www.divayina.com), 20 May, 2012, <http://www.divayina.com/2012/05/20/feature20.html> (accessed: 07/06/2012).

<sup>65</sup> Raṇavaka, *Paṭisōtagāmiva...*, 118.

<sup>66</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Jātika Urumayē Piya Saṭahan-2*, 191.

<sup>67</sup> Raṇavaka, *Paṭisōtagāmiva...*, 100.

in the “re-conquest”, in May 2005, a Siṃhala organisation in the strategic city of Tirukōṇamalai unlawfully erected a Buddha statute in the town centre, supported by the police and military, though this was opposed with demonstrations, and shutting down of shops by Tamil and other civil society groups in the region. It was reported that 15 grenades exploded in the area; one person was killed and several were injured. A court order was issued to remove the statue, but the JHU opposed it in the Parliament accusing the LTTE of attempting to deprive the Siṃhala Buddhists of their right to religious freedom. The government, which even at this stage had to distance itself from such acts due to the internationally accepted peace process, stated that it will resolve the issue justly and fairly by all concerned and in conformity with the law.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to perceiving Muslim and Tamil leaders as invaders, Campika Raṇavaka also interprets the rise of Christian evangelical sects in the Tamil region as an outcome of the policy of LTTE “appeasing the Christian West.”<sup>69</sup> The JHU also worked with Tiyaṅkarājā Makēsvaraṇ (T. Maheshwaran), a Caiva parliamentarian based in Colombo to propose an anti-conversion bill. The former President Kumārāṇatuṅga, in an address at a meeting at the South Asia Policy Research Institute in Colombo on 27 November 2011, revealed how JHU made attempts to persuade her to build Siṃhala villages on the border of Tamil Yālpāṇam peninsula. According to her, the JHU had also built Buddhist sites in the fully Tamil or Muslim areas in the East. She claims to have arrested around 60 JHU activists accused of attacking Christian places of worship in the South.<sup>70</sup> While Mēdhānanda Thera, in the aforementioned public letter to President Kumārāṇatuṅga admonished her about these steps reminding her of the ancient role of the *saṃgha* to advise the King, and the responsibility of the latter to protect the *saṃgha* and the land—the Aśokan model of polity. Campika Raṇavaka in his memoirs remarks how the former President did not keep to her promises and could not be trusted.<sup>71</sup> The JHU also capitalised on the internal party-political rivalries within SLFP, between the President Kumārāṇatuṅga and the Prime Minister

<sup>68</sup> Anon., “LTTE Appeal for Calm in Trincomalee”, *Tamil Guardian*, 01 June, 2005, 4. <http://www.Tamilguardian.com/tg300/p4.pdf> (accessed: 07/06/2012).

<sup>69</sup> Raṇavaka: *Paṭisōtagāmīva...*, 105.

<sup>70</sup> Ranga Jayasuriya, “The military is taking over large chunks of land in the North-Chandrika Kumaratunga,” [www.srilankabrief.org](http://www.srilankabrief.org), 27, November, 2011, <http://www.srilankabrief.org/2011/11/military-is-taking-over-large-chunks-of.html> (accessed: 07/06/2012).

<sup>71</sup> Raṇavaka, *Paṭisōtagāmīva ...*, 135.

Mahinda Rājapakṣa, siding to promote the latter.

In a decisive intervention, the JHU carried out a fast-unto-death campaign in front of the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic (Sri Daḷada Maḷigāva), against the Proposed Tsunami Operational Mechanism (PTOMS) between the GoSL and the LTTE in 2005, which was signed by the government under enormous international pressure. It also obtained a court order against the mechanism and finally made a pact with the SLFP's Presidential candidate Mahinda Rājapakṣa. The pact was signed in the vicinity of the temple and was called *Daḷadā Sammutiya* ['Sacred Tooth Relic Consensus']. Campika Raṇavaka in his memoirs names the Presidential candidacy of Mahinda Rājapakṣa as *Mahindāgamanaya* 'the advent of Mahinda' evoking the memory of the Mahinda Thera, who is said to have first preached *dhamma* to the islanders in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.<sup>72</sup> The Presidential election manifesto of Mahinda Rājapakṣa was named *Mahinda Cintanaya* ['Ideology of Mahinda'] and in the election campaign he was called *Deveni Mahinda* ['the second Mahinda']; thus posed to be a new Mahinda who will lead the nation, and attributed with the characteristics of Dutugāmunu (Duṭṭhagāmiṇī), the epic warrior king of the *Mahāvamsa*, said to have united the country against non-Buddhist forces in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. As Dutugāmunu is said to have lived in the south of the country: so the new Mahinda. This leadership is mandated to reclaim the Siṃhala Buddhist heritage of the entire island, and particularly of the Tamil region; taken from its worthy and rightful heirs, the Siṃhala Buddhists, by the LTTE with the support of imperialist and anti-Buddhist powers in the form of a deadly trap that is the CFA.<sup>73</sup>

Even though consequent upon the re-enforcement of the ideology of "re-conquest" shared by SLFP; JHU and JVP could contribute to the victory of United People Alliance's (UPA) Presidential candidate Mahinda Rājapakṣa in December of 2005, this alone could not alter the power dynamic between the GoSL and the LTTE as long as the latter had a material base of the *de facto* state with civil and military power. It was rather the US and UK governments' non-equidistant approach to peace processes, and the EU ban imposed on the LTTE that provided the UPA-led government with the material conditions (through military, economic and diplomatic support) to implement the ideology of "re-conquest". With this support the weakened Siṃhala political elite were strengthened and the agendas of JHU and JVP became practicable. As the thick jungles were cleared in the ordering of

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 95–128.

landscape by the colonial government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, using the labour of Tamil plantation workers, so the *de facto* state of the LTTE where at least half a million people lived was “cleared” using a high intensity war with massive human costs, all for to implement the unitary state. It is such kind of state structure that was needed by the aforementioned international powers, also joined by India and China. By mid 2009 the power of the Lankan state had been rendered total again, with the imposition of the unitary state structure; and the LTTE’s secular *de facto* state that had operated as a counter-force to cultural homogenisation, dismantled. A religiously defined form of nationalism has superseded a secular form of nationalism.

In his address at the celebration of the military victory over the LTTE in May 2009, President Mahinda Rājapaksa, referred to foreign invasions from ancient times to the contemporary period, and held in high esteem the security forces which fought the war against the LTTE. He not only stated that the nation is Buddhist, but also claimed a moral high ground by stating that the soldiers waged the war with compassion towards the Tamil civilians. While the former President Kumarānatuṅga called her war in the 1990s “a war for peace,” President Mahinda called his war a “compassionate humanitarian operation” led by an army that upholds Buddhist ideals. The two positions, despite bolstering the same dogma of the unitary state, and giving supreme position to Buddhism in the country, reflect two different political climates that brought the respective Presidents into power. President Kumarānatuṅga came to power in the mid 1990s after a long war with the promise of peace, yet what peace meant was never clearly outlined. When she started war it could not be waged without referring to peace. President Mahinda came to power during a period of peace with an explicit promise of protecting the unitary state and safeguarding Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist ideology. As Buddhism is involved, the war could not be waged without claiming to maintain the moral high ground denoting the benevolence of the regime. However, this latter is entangled with a fundamentalist belief that the land was given by the Buddha himself to the *Siṃhalas* to protect Buddhism, and the territory, ethnicity and *dhamma* are inseparable in constituting the state.

A state cannot maintain its fundamentalism without a heavy military might. Thus by May 2009, the Lankan state had reached the apex of its Siṃhala Buddhist fundamentalist stature not only ideologically but militarily. It is this ideology and its movement that underpin the “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region, such that expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region and

militarisation of the region are inseparable. Ideologically, it goes without saying that the military takeover spreads the light of *dhamma* to the region dispelling the darkness of the “terrorists.” As the colonial officers brought light to Anurādhapura, the region has become an attraction and “jungle” has been cleared. A battle between “good” and “evil” is imagined here, as the Buddhist forces struggling to subdue the armed Tamil national movement, respectively. The re-conquest is also a duty and a service, not an invasion or domination; the regime is benevolent. It is *Mahindagamanaya* ‘the advent of Mahinda’! It is Second Independence! Amidst scores of deaths the “inevitable achievement” is appreciated by UN Security Council, the White House and the European Union on the same day, 13 May, 2009. After visiting the island during the final phase of the war a well-known scholar of ethno-nationalism in Īlam captures the local and international dimensions of “just war” as follows:

An almost life-size image of the President, flanked by a military commander, and led by a Buddhist monk, which was visible when entering the city of Colombo from the international airport, during the last months of the conflict in May 2009, was one of the symbols of the “just war”. Simultaneously, it is arguable that the JHU’s “just war” rhetoric which draws from the Mahavamsa story of the defeat of the Tamil King Elara by the valiant King Duttugemunu, has also been inspired by and articulated alongside the global “war on terror” resulting in the form of a public religion that mobilises and rearticulates the symbols, words and texts of the faith with a contemporary meta-narrative of globalisation—“the war on terror.” The JHU monks argued that the island has historically been the land of the Buddha and the country’s “territorial sovereignty” and “national security” (essentially Westphalian concepts that underwrite the modern nation-state system), must hence be ensured to protect and preserve the religion, particularly against the LTTE fighting for a separate state for the Tamil minority in the northeast of the country. Thus too unfolds the dialectic of the enlightenment and modernity in Sri Lamkā.<sup>74</sup>

In the aftermath of the military victory, a year later, the President Rājapakṣa seeking a re-election addressed Tamils in Yālppāṇam in the North saying, *We are Siṃhalas, the country too is Siṃhalese, you Tamilians just listen.*<sup>75</sup> This is what *Mahindāgamanya* ‘the advent of

<sup>74</sup> Darini Rajasingham Senanayake, “Buddhism and Legitimation of Power: Democracy, Public Religion and Minorities in Sri Lanka”, *ISAS Working Paper* 99 (2009): 15–16.

<sup>75</sup> Anon., “We are Sinhala. Country is also Sinhala. Those who are listening are Tamils’. President Rajapakshe’s style of address to the Northern Tamils”, *www.lankaenews.com* (04 April, 2010), <http://lankaenews.com/English/news.php?>

Mahinda' means for the Tamils at present; the Buddhism they know in their region is nothing else, but a religion of conquest and oppression.

The expansion was not a conquest, but a legitimate "re-conquest"; one to regain the pristine Siṃhala Buddhist heritage. But it is neither a doctrinal nor a soteriological heritage. It is not a moral heritage either, but a religious, cultural, socioeconomic and political heritage which had to appear moral and benevolent: in other words, a religious expansion interwoven with other factors, and a military expansion with a religious ideology. The ethno-religious ideology that demands this conquest also has a socioeconomic and political base. Likewise, there is a geo-political dimension involved. As the war unfolded with "re-conquest" of the Eastern Province and parts of the Northern Province on to the west, the government-owned English weekly published a short article commending the work of Mēdhānanda Thera (republished by the Thera in one of his books).

As the security forces march forward towards the North it seems to be that we are discovering more and more hidden stories of our lands, those we have "lost" in the sea of time.<sup>76</sup> The title of the piece goes: In Search of the Magnificent Past of Mannar: An Attempt to Unearth the Undiscovered History.<sup>77</sup> **[Fig. 1–2]**

Mannār here is the Tamil port city of the Northwest and the closest point to India. The article focuses on four categories of "discovery"; ancient Siṃhala Buddhist kingdoms and sites, irrigation tanks as sources of economic wealth, and ports as geo-strategic and commercial locations.<sup>78</sup> These writings clearly reflect how expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism is not a mere religious expansion but a political economic and geo-strategic project. Therefore, in exploring the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region what has to be examined is not simply the appearance of Buddha statues, *vihārayas* and *stūpas* but also the material basis of Siṃhala Buddhist nationalism and its two main features; for no religion exists as an abstract category, but as a concrete, socioeconomic and political structure embedded in a particular culture. Its ideology can be liberating or enslaving, and appear to be liberating. The socio-political structure that is being built in the aftermath of the military victory is based on the ideology that Siṃhala ethnicity, Buddhism and unitary state structure have

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id=9347 (accessed: 09/06/2012).

<sup>76</sup> Ellāvāla Mēdhānanda, *Jātika Urumayē Piya Saṭahan–2*, 284.

<sup>77</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 284.

been inseparable from time immemorial. Under this ideological scheme peace is assured only when the Tamil region is brought under the power of the unitary state where Sinhala Buddhism, which means Sinhala administration, business, trade, middle classes, education, cultural symbols and so forth, can flourish. Expansion of Buddhism into the Tamil region has to be understood in light of this historically constructed form of Buddhism within the attendant colonial and post-colonial practices. In the next, third and major section, I strive to demonstrate how this expansion unfolds in the “post-war” era.

### 3 Expansion of Sinhala Buddhism into the Tamil Region

Moving to the third part of our discussion let me now identify the manners (types) of expansion of Sinhala Buddhism into the Tamil region,—what may be termed “war by other means”—and explore how the power of the state and its ideology are consolidated. These types of expansion are interwoven with cultural, economic, political/military and geopolitical factors, and are as follows:

- I. Establishment of Buddha statues and *malāsanayas* ‘flower seats’ in military camps, police stations and settlement of monks;
- II. Establishment of Buddha statues and *malāsanayas* in new public places, and plans to settle monks;
- III. Renovation of modern Buddhist sites and settlement of monks;
- IV. Arrival of Sinhala Buddhism with Sinhala colonies;
- V. Organisation of Buddhist rituals and festivals in the Tamil region;
- VI. Building Buddhist sites on or close to other religious sites;
- VII. Declaration of ancient Buddhist sites in the region as Sinhala Buddhist heritage;
- VIII. Building of Sinhala Buddhist sites at geo-strategic locations;
- IX. Destruction of LTTE cemeteries and monuments while building GoSL war memorials;
- X. A Sinhala Buddhist site at Mullivāyakkāl;
- XI. Consolidation of Sinhala Buddhism throughout the entire island.

Each type should not be treated as discretely separated from the others, as two or more may blend together at one location. For example a military camp, a public place and a commercial location can exist at the same site as a Buddhist *malāsanaya*. This is recognised in the analysis of military, economic and political factors involved in these locations. The categorisation of types, however, helps us to understand the diversity of means utilised in consolidating the unitary state structure and in the process of cultural homogenisation through the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism.

### I. Establishment of Buddha statues and *malāsanayas* in military camps and police stations and settlement of monks

The word for shrine is *malāsanaya* ‘flower seat’ or *pūjayanaya* ‘shrine for veneration (of the Buddha)’. Building of Buddhist *malāsanayas* in military camps is not a “post-war” phenomenon. It has been a practice since the militarisation of the Tamil region by the Lankan security forces long before the Tamil armed resistance came into existence. Different sizes of Buddhist *malāsanayas* which house a Buddha statue have become an essential element in the structure of a military camp and a police station and it is difficult to find one without one such. This reflects the collective perception that Buddhism, Siṃhala ethnicity, state structure, the military and the police are inseparable from one another. Though it is also important to note that not all military camps and police stations in the predominantly Siṃhala areas in the South have such *malāsanayas*. Nor can one find any official statement, which says that the Lankan military is a Buddhist army. The same military was instrumental in suppressing the two Siṃhala uprisings in 1971 and 1987–89 (led by the JVP) in the south of the country. In the latter period it has been estimated that at least 600 Buddhist monks were killed by the military with another 60,000 mostly Siṃhala Buddhists. The government’s stated aim was to build a *dharmīṣṭa samājayak* ‘a righteous society’. In counteracting the religious connotations of this term the JVP used a secular word to state their aim; that is *sādhāraṇa samājayak* ‘a just society’. Ironically, the militarisation of the Tamil region took place with the full support of the JVP. In the Tamil region the military now becomes a Siṃhala Buddhist army whose aim is to protect the state, and the state-backed supremacy given to Buddhism.

When interviewed by my informants, the soldiers do not explicitly state that they build Buddhist *malāsanayas* in the camps because



Buddhism is the state's foremost religion. Instead, they usually say that these *malāsanayas* are built for them to perform their religious observances as they do not have such *malāsanayas* in the area. On the one hand, this response reveals that Buddhism is not the predominant tradition in the Tamil region, and on the other hand, it gives the impression of the right to religious freedom. However, there is also a sizable number of Siṃhala Christians who work in the military, yet Christian *malāsanayas* with statues cannot be found in military camps. It could also be observed that as the military camps get established the Buddhist *malāsanayas* too get modified. The novelty in the "post-war" period is that there is a rapid growth in such *malāsanayas* as the military camps continue to increase. There is also a process of renovation and expansion of existing ones. Some have been extended into *vihārayas* 'monasteries' where Buddhist monks have come to reside. A good number of these *malāsanayas* are located in between the main road, and the barbed-wire fence of the camp. Some are located inside the camps and could be seen from the roads. There are also *malāsanayas* inside the camps that are not visible when looking from the main road. Within 129km, along the main A9m road from Ōmantai to Yālppāṇam there were 12 clearly visible Buddhist sites of worship. Within 33.8 km road from Yālppāṇam to Paruttitturai there are five such places. There were also at least 20 such locations from Matavācci to Maṇṇār visible from the road. The figures came from a random count done by a team of Tamils and Siṃhalas as part of a human rights training programme they underwent which was jointly organised by two human rights organisations in Yālppāṇam and Colombo in 2010. By 2012 number of Buddhist statues from Omantāy to Yālppāṇam increased to 29.<sup>79</sup> There are also three main sites along the Pūnakari Road from Maṇṇār to Yālppāṇam, and it has been reported that 28 Buddhist statues have been brought to the Palāli High Security Zone in Yālppāṇam peninsula from the south of the island as reported by *Utayan* newspaper.<sup>80</sup> [Fig. 3–6]

Some of these camps with Buddhist *malāsanayas* have been built near ancient religious sites such as Kīrimalai, Kōṇēsvaram, Mātakal, Tirukkētisvaram which have been claimed as Siṃhala Buddhist sites by the JHU. In these cases the claim to an ancient heritage and the

<sup>79</sup> Imaad Majeed, "Misguided Buddhist Zealots", *www.sundayleader.lk*, 05, February, 2012, <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2012/02/05/misguided-Buddhist-zealots> (accessed: 15/06/2012).

<sup>80</sup> Anon., "ciṃkaḷa mayamākkappaṭum tamiḷarkaḷiṇ piratēcaṅkaḷ", [http://online.uthayan.com/News\\_More.php?view=essay\\_more&id=4374017202178354](http://online.uthayan.com/News_More.php?view=essay_more&id=4374017202178354) (accessed: 06/06/2012).

building of Buddhist *malāsanayas* by the military and police bodies overlap.

The reason behind a rapid increase in building such sites by the military and police can be explained only through an analysis of the state ideology that conditions the military, not by reference to the rights to religious freedom discourse. The latter is interpreted through the state's religious ideology. The military victory of the GoSL is a victory for Siṃhala Buddhism as a state-centred, ethno-religious tradition. In other words, on the one hand, Siṃhala Buddhism cannot be propagated in the Tamil region without the military, and, on the other hand, the state has no ideological justification to militarise the region without treating the entire island as a Siṃhala Buddhist heritage. In the popular war songs the military is seen as the *mura dēvatavō* 'guardian gods' of the *dhammadīpa* 'land of *dhamma*'—where the meaning is not moral, but territorial. It is through these guardian gods that the lost Siṃhala Buddhist heritage is regained. Although guardian gods do not occupy the highest place in Buddhist soteriology in the present historical phase of the island it is believed that without them (the military), *dhammadīpa* could not be protected.

Even though the power of the Lankan state has been made total with the military victory over the LTTE, further increase in military camps with Buddhist *malāsanayas* is a clear reflection of a fear of future resistance by the Tamil people. What would the focal point of resistance be? What would the target of resistance be: the military or Siṃhala Buddhism? Could the two be separated? This will be determined by how the Siṃhalas distinguish between the state, the military, and Buddhism as an ethical/soteriological tradition in the future.

## II. Establishment of Buddha statues and *malāsanayas* in new public places and plans to settle monks

Buddhist places of worship have been built not only in military camps, but also in public places in the Tamil region, particularly in the "post-war period." One such main site is at Kanakārayaṅkuḷam on the A9 road between Vavuniyā and Yālpāṇam where a sampling of the Śrī Mahā Bodhi in Anurādhapura 'sacred city' has been planted on around 20 feet-high mound. The place is guarded around the clock by four soldiers who live in a nearby military barrack. One of them has revealed to my informant that those who guard the sampling are

not supposed to eat meat. A soldier also operates as a tourist/pilgrim guide at this site and gives the history of Śrī Mahā Bodhi and how the sampling was brought here after the military victory over the LTTE. According the soldier-guide, the location had been an ancient Buddhist site whereas the Tamil inhabitants from the area claim that the piece of land belongs to a farmer. **[Fig. 7]**

As it was mentioned earlier of the work of Mēdhānanda Thera, often one finds a lament concluding each analysis of an ancient site in reference to its current status. One such reference is that the landscape has become a private property of a farmer or any other ordinary person who is either Hindu or Muslim (non-Buddhist). The soldier-pilgrim/tourist guide also reveals to the visitors future plans of arranging for Buddhist monks to reside at the site. This, in a way increases the enthusiasm of the tourist-devotees, mostly Siṃhala Buddhists, to contribute to the project readily. According to the tourist guide those devotees who pass through the A9 route daily in their thousands seem to donate generously to maintain and expand the site. It has been observed that the location is continuously expanding. Closer to this site, three roads in Kaṇakārayaṅkuḷam have been given Siṃhala names—Kōsala Perērā Māvata, Anura Perērā Māvata, and Pūjya Yaṭirāvaṇa Vimala Thera Māvata. The first two are names of soldiers who took part in the war, and the last is the name of a Buddhist monk.<sup>81</sup>

On the same A9 road, near Maṅkuḷam junction one can find a newly built large Buddhist *stūpa*. The location is being designed as a proper Buddhist monastery with the aim of bringing in monks to reside there. A plan for expansion is visible. This junction and the above Kaṇakārayaṅkuḷam junction are the key business locations in Kiḷinocci (Kilinochichi) district that connect several roads from four directions, and Maṅkuḷam is the main junction between Vavuniyā and Kiḷinocci towns. **[Fig. 8]**

It is also a known fact that the military runs a large number of businesses in the region, particularly by the side of the A9 road. In this sense the building of a large *stūpa* at a key commercial junction in the region not only has a religio-military dimension, but also an economic (commercial value) aspect. Another Buddhist *malāsanaya* has been built at Parantaṅ junction, which connects the A9 road to two other directions. While in the Eastern Province near the seven hot water wells in Kiṅṅiyā there is a new Buddhist *malāsanaya* built.

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<sup>81</sup> M. A. Sumanthiran, “Situation in North-Eastern Sri Lanka: A Series of Serious Concerns”, Tabled in Parliament on 21 October, 2011, Section, 7.3.

This is a famous tourist location.

It is not only beside the main roads that these sites are being constructed, but also in the intersecting junctions in interior areas of the Tamil region where the military engage in farming, fishing and other small businesses. New Buddhist *malāsanayas* can be found in Mullaitivu district, and in Mallāvi, Vaṭakau and Tarmapuram in Kilinocci district. The motivation behind building these sites in public places such as main junctions is not only to secure the unitary state and the primacy of Buddhism in the land, but also to secure key commercial, economic and natural resources in the Tamil region. These types of public locations overlap with ones claiming ancient sites as Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the case of the *malāsanaya* with Bō sampling in Kaṇakārayaṅkuḷam.

Buddhist *malāsanayas/pūjayanayas* have also been built at these junctions. [Fig. 9–11]

They are frequently visited by Siṃhala Buddhists who travel on the A9 road as tourists to the Northern Province. In the “post-war” era it is difficult to distinguish between tourism and religious pilgrimages. During the first year after the official completion of the war it has been estimated that at least half a million Siṃhalas travelled along the A9 road to the North as tourists. The expressed intension of most of these Siṃhalas was to visit the Nayaṇātivu (Nāgadīpa) Vihāraya in the North which had been under the control of Lankan security forces for a long period. While newly constructed Buddhist sites are also becoming places of devotion to them, visitors come to the many war memorials and museums built by the military exhibiting key locations and weaponry used by the LTTE. The latter locations have attracted more Siṃhalas to the region than the religious sites. However, as the war has been justified by the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology of “re-conquest”, the newly built Buddhist sites become part of war tourism endowed with a religious sense rendering it into a religious pilgrimage. Since many pilgrim/ tourists stop at these key junctions commercial enterprises of the military thrive, and it is a common practice amongst the pilgrim/tourists to give donations to the religious sites there. It is not only the above category of people who frequent these locations, but also politicians, investors, business persons, constructors, Siṃhala labourers brought from the South, traders, NGOs, journalists, etc. [Fig. 12–13].

In this manner, “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil Region is intrinsically interwoven with trade and commerce whereby the key public and economic locations of the Tamils have been occupied. This war by other means deprives the people in the

region of the wherewithal of basic livelihood. Such public locations have therefore become symbols of Siṃhala Buddhist domination, and targets of Tamil resistance. Would reconciliation be possible in such a context of “war by other means”?

### III. Renovation and Expansion of Modern Siṃhala Buddhist Vihārayas

*Vihāraya* refers to a Buddhist monastery. The word “modern,” here refers to Siṃhala *vihārayas* that were built in recent history in the Tamil region. These were built for the veneration of the Buddha by Siṃhala migrant fishermen, workers, traders and state and public sector employees of the region, mostly after Independence in 1948. With the escalation of conflict these *vihārayas* had to be abandoned as the Siṃhala migrants moved back to the South. One can find such temples on Matu Road and South Bar in Maṇṇār district, in Kiḷinocci town of Kiḷinocci district, and in Yālppāṇam town in the North. In the “post-war” period these have been expanded and renovated including facilities for the Buddhist monks to reside. It is important to note how the public and state sector is in collaboration with the military in renovating these sites. At the same time, some of these renovations were followed by Siṃhala settlements. One clear example is the Madhu Road housing scheme that followed the reconstruction of the *vihāraya* and a pilgrim house which were assisted by the military. The People’s Bank of Sri Lanka raised 60 million Lankan rupees from its employees for this housing scheme.<sup>82</sup> The political imagination of Siṃhala Buddhist ideology is so powerful that, in some Siṃhala Buddhist re-readings of history, perhaps this area could fall into the category of ancient Siṃhala Buddhist sites in the Tamil region. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the housing scheme (which was attended by the President’s brother Basil Rājapakṣa, a key minister of GoSL, the military officers and the *saṃgha*) the incumbent of the newly reconstructed Śrī Bodhirājāramaya on Madu Road, K. Siri Bharathi Nāyaka Thera, said:

A three-decade war came to an end under the correct leadership and guidance of the President and our country has seen peace once again. Madhu Road is a historic village. The residents were able to come back to the village after an unfortunate event in 1985 only by the guidance of the

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<sup>82</sup> Anon. “People’s Bank Remain Committed to Uplifting NE Lives”, [www.peoplesbank.lk](http://www.peoplesbank.lk) (15 October, 2011), [http://www.peoplesbank.lk/news/news\\_13](http://www.peoplesbank.lk/news/news_13) (accessed: 08/06/2012).

President after peace was obtained...In addition, they have made provisions for these houses to be divided amongst the people with no racial discrimination.<sup>83</sup>

However, according to a human rights observer, out of fifty houses, forty have been given to Siṃhala families, five to Tamil families and five to military officials who have been assigned to the security of that village. It is not only the military that is involved but also the state and public sector employees who are ready to contribute to the furtherance of the attaching ideology expressed in such schemes. [Fig. 14]

In Tirukōṇamalai district existing *vihārayas* have been given vast tracts of land for expansion of *vihāraya* property. These lands have been taken over from displaced Tamils.<sup>84</sup> The “post-war reconstruction” is based on the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology whereby thousands of thus displaced Tamil families have not only been excluded from new housing and construction projects, but also deprived of their land. In this sense “post-war reconstruction” bodes the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region and is intrinsically interwoven with the “re-conquest” of land and property by the Siṃhalas.

In terms of new pilgrim resorts that have been built, both Matu Road and Kīlinocci temples cater to Siṃhala pilgrims who travel to the North. New facilities have been built for such pilgrims to rest. During the peace process during 2002–2006 there were many Siṃhala pilgrims who travelled this route. Their point of contact or places of rest were either LTTE or Tamil civilian run shops or restaurants. The ethos of that period was based on mutual respect and *parity of esteem* between the two communities. In the “post-war” era this ethos has been radically transformed. The Siṃhala pilgrims encounter only the Siṃhala soldiers, their shops and restaurants, and rest at *vihārayas*. The mood is triumphalistic, justified by the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology the pilgrims and hosts share. In this, dignity or *parity of esteem* between the two communities is absent. Instead, what exists is a dehumanising relationship of subjugation of one community by another. In this sense there have been two kinds of peace in the island during the last decade, one was based on *parity of esteem* and

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<sup>83</sup> Loc.cit.

<sup>84</sup> Anon. “Buddhist Viharas grab Tamil land for Sinhalacisation in Trincomalee”, [www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=34812), (22, January, 2012), <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=34812> (accessed: 08/06/2012).

the other, based on subjugation of a people by ethno-religious military might. Meanwhile providing the temples with new facilities has been prioritised, creating continuous delays and refusals of resettlement of the displaced Tamils in their villages and towns. This has deeply polarised the two ethno-nationalist communities, with Siṃhala Buddhist acting as an identifiable key contributor to the polarisation. In this way “post-war reconstruction” is in practice a “war by other means”. [Fig. 15–17] The universal ethical principle of egalitarianism in Buddhism has been subordinated to a particularistic Siṃhala Buddhist ethic that privileges one ethno-nationalist group over another. Could such a form of Buddhism have any potential for the building of peace in the island? The following type of expansion will demonstrate how the ideology or re-conquest is in fact reinforced through a new round of Siṃhala settlements in the Tamil region.

#### IV. Arrival of Siṃhala Buddhism with Siṃhala colonies

Expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism also takes place with a new round of Siṃhala settlements in the Tamil regions. In this case, Siṃhala Buddhists are settled by the GoSL, the military, and the Buddhist monks. Often the statement of GoSL, JHU and JVP that every citizen has a right to live wherever she chooses translates as part of the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology to claim the right to the entire island. Such a right is essentially inseparable from the right to build Buddhist places of worship in the Tamil region. In a very comprehensive report issued by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) in Colombo, it has been pointed out how the process of “siṃhalacisation” of the Mullaittivu and Vavuniyā districts has been exacerbated in the “post-war” era; a process that had already started in the Eastern, and the border regions of the Northern Provinces even prior to the escalation of the conflict. As shown in the first section of this article, this has been the practice since the colonial period and was intended to “preserve the peasantry” (Siṃhala), who became landless due to expansion of plantations in the South. This process has not only engulfed any peasant revolt arising in the South, but also incorporated them into the state structure and the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology. In the “post-war” era new Siṃhala settlements have also been set up in the districts of Kīlinocci, Maṇṇār and Yālpāṇam. Some of these settlements are occupied by the Siṃhala families from the South, while others are for military cantonments. The CPA report comments as follows:

When the war ended, several returned to the North in search of their land and property and began to restart their livelihoods. While some have legitimate claims, there are concerns that there is a state sponsored scheme to encourage more Siṃhalas to claim land in the North, reside in these areas and commence livelihoods.<sup>85</sup>

In the Tirukōṇamalai district of the Eastern Province, a Siṃhala colony of 110 families has been settled in Pacccūr village in the Müttūr Division, which is a traditional Tamil village. A *vihāraya* and a school have been constructed to cater to the settlers' religious and educational needs. Settlement of Siṃhala Buddhists in the North and East have been recommended by Mēdhānanda Thera, who argues that had Buddhist settlements been built by the government near and around the areas of ancient sites with residential facilities for the monks, the ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage could have been saved.<sup>86</sup> One of the clear examples of demand for Siṃhala settlements in the Tamil region could be found under the leadership of Ampitiyē Sumanaratne Thera, the chief incumbent of the Maṅgalārāma vihāraya in Maṭṭa-kkaḷappu town in the Eastern Province. The Thera carried out two fast-unto-death campaigns between September 2010 and February 2012, demanding Siṃhala settlements, new *vihārayas*, the renovation of existing ones, the appointment of Siṃhala-speaking civil servants and facilities to the temples, in the predominantly Tamil (Caiva/Vaiṇava and Muslim) district. In a revealing interview to *Sunday Leader* he acknowledged the demographic and economic realities of the area.

If this was a Siṃhala Buddhist area I could have gone around and collected some food. But there are no Sinhala Buddhists in Batticaloa District making my life very difficult... The only help I get to maintain this temple is from the Tamils in the area. They love the temple. This temple is a place for national unity. But many in the Tamil community in Batticaloa themselves are helpless due to extreme poverty. How can I expect them to help?<sup>87</sup>

In Tirukōṇamalai district, new land has been allocated to existing *vihārayas* in the villages of Pulmōṭṭai, Ilāttikkūlam, Tiriyaṅ and Cempi-

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<sup>85</sup> Bavani Fonseka, Mirak Raheem, *Land in the Northern Province: Post-War Politics, Policy and Practices* (Colombo, Centre for Policy Alternatives, December, 2011), 194.

<sup>86</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Pācīna Passa ...*, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Udara Soysa, "Batticaloa Prelate Fighting a Battle for Survival", [www.Sunday leader.lk](http://www.sundayleader.lk), (09 May, 2010), <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2010/05/09/batticaloa-prelate-fighting-a-battle-for-survival/> (accessed: 15/06/2012).



yaṅ Malai. It has been reported that around 400 acres have been further granted by the GoSL to these temples at the request of Buddhist monks. In Maṭṭakkaḷappu district large numbers of Buddhist monks have been frequenting the villages of Vākarai, Kirāṅ, Vavuṇativu, Vellāveḷi and Paṭṭippālai in search of lands for Siṃhala settlements and *vihārayas*.<sup>88</sup> This type of expansion overlaps with claims to ancient sites as Siṃhala Buddhist heritage since, for instance, the above mentioned village, Tiriyāy is one of the places where Siṃhala settlements have been legitimised on the basis of such a claim. **[Fig. 18]**

On the one hand, establishment of Siṃhala settlements has necessitated the setting up of Buddhist places of worship in the Tamil region, and, on the other hand, claims to an ancient Buddhist heritage have legitimised the establishment of Siṃhala colonies. Siṃhala Buddhist monks frequent these settlements and plans are underway for their permanent residency in the region. Each of these villages with Buddhist sites and monks cannot function without the support of the military. These new settlements radically change the demography of the region and incorporate Siṃhala civilians into the military mechanism. In the existing old Siṃhala settlements, civilians were armed as home guards and were used as a buffer zone in the war (with Israeli advice), for which they became targets of LTTE counter-violence. In the “post-war” context these buffer zones have moved into the heart of the Tamil region.

Land, colonies and military have become an essential part of Siṃhala Buddhism in the Tamil region. Can the displaced Tamils then, separate this form of Buddhism from Buddhism as an ethical/soteriological tradition? Can this be a concern at all, as long as the material basis for livelihood has been denied them? Could the Buddhists in Īlam separate themselves from this form of Buddhism while they benefit from the expansion through triumphalism, trade, commerce, land, resources, colonies, income etc?

## V. Organisation of Buddhist Rituals and Festivals in the Tamil Region

It could be observed that in strictly Hindu, Muslim or Catholic locations like Yāḷppāṇam town, Muruṅkaṅ, Maṅṅār town and Pēcālai village *pirit* ceremonies are organised for *pōya* days and other occa-

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<sup>88</sup> Anon. “STF appropriates Tamil land to erect Buddhist temple in Batticaloa”, [www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com), 24, October, 2010, <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=32286> (accessed: 15/06/2012).

sions throughout the night with loud-speakers. *Pirit* ‘protection’ is the name of a ritual that by recital of Buddhist text in Pāli and Siṃhala protects the listeners. Some of the ceremonies also have processions through the areas surrounding the *vihārayas*. In Yālppāṇam town, school children were forcibly taken by the military to perform Tamil cultural dances in the processions as ritual dances. Those parents of the children who have objected have faced harassment from the military. This shows how the Buddhist rituals and festivities have been militarised and racialised even though some of these rituals have heavy Hindu influence. [Fig. 19]

Often, the right to use loudspeakers in public places for religious festivities, ceremonies and rituals has been part of the discourse on religious freedom in the island of Īlam. In “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism this right has been interpreted as the right of military camps and the Buddhist monks to use the public address system for such practices in strictly Hindu or Christian areas where there is no Buddhist public.

The most celebrated moment of Buddhist rituals and festivals in the “post-war” Tamil region was the GoSL sponsored celebration of 2600 *Vēsak* festival in May 2011. *Vēsak* is the Buddhist commemoration of the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha. A close Siṃhala friend of mine who frequents the Tamil region, after visiting Vaṇṇi during the week of *vēsak* in 2011, in an email sent to several friends wrote as follows:

In this tragic and contradictory situation I had the opportunity to visit the Northern part of the country, the land of the Tamils, which is now invaded under the Sinhalese armed forces. There are no Buddhists in the North except the occupying army. Though the fact is so, the whole of North, from Vavuniya to Jaffna along the A-9 road, was full of colourful vesak decorations, huge lanterns and flying Buddhist flags as if the people of the North, the Tamils are Buddhists. A number of vesak dāsel had been set up in several places. All these were done by the occupying SL Armed Forces and Police who are responsible for the massacre, as a sign of subjugation of the Tamils by the Sinhalese Buddhists.<sup>89</sup>

The event was called *Samḃuddha Jayantiyā* and it coincided with the week of the second anniversary commemorating the final battle between the GoSL and LTTE which has been named by Tamils as *Mullivāykkāl Niṇaivut Tiṇam* ‘Mullivāykkāl Remembrance Day’. While there were thousands of lamps and lights lit in commemoration of the Buddha during this week, the Tamils in the North and East were pro-

<sup>89</sup> Anon. *Email sent to the author*, dated: 06/06/2011.

hibited by the military from conducting any memorial ceremonies for those killed in the final battle. Ironically, on *vēsak* day the Siṃhala Buddhists decorate the graveyards of their loved ones lighting lamps to remember them. The lamps and lights of *vēsak* signified the *dhamma* that has overtaken *avijjā* ‘ignorance’, *lobhā* ‘greed’ and *dosa* ‘hatred’, but as the meaning of the light of *dhamma* has been territorialised and racialised, there was no visible social and religious space in the Siṃhala society for the ethical/ soteriological aspect of Buddhism to see the silent weeping of the Tamils who are desperately in need of remembering the loved ones, whose graveyards are unknown.

The military does not permit holding of public Hindu or Christian rituals to remember those who have been killed in war. These ceremonies could be conducted in private, whereas the Buddhist monks who conduct public ceremonies on *pōya* days in the Tamil region (solely to the soldiers) commemorate the soldiers killed in the war. This shows how “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region has played a role in depriving Tamils of their right to remembrance. Denial of the memory of loss of the Tamils in war is legitimised by the “just war” logic of the regaining of a lost Siṃhala Buddhist heritage. It can be observed that there are a few Buddhist monks in the island who would lead the devotees to an inclusive remembering of the dead (both Tamil and Siṃhala) in their public rituals, but they interpret these deaths as a result of a futile war waged by the “terrorists” because of the latter’s craving for land. The unitary state structure again features as an unchangeable “given”.

Whatever the ritual form it would take, commemoration of the loss of lives is a catalyst for resistance for the Tamils. Could that memory be erased by denial of public remembrance of loss and promotion of Siṃhala Buddhist rituals in the Tamil region?

## VI. Building Buddhist Sites on or Close to Other Religious Sites

The national question in Īlam is not a religious conflict in the sense of a Buddhist-Hindu conflict, but it has serious religious implications.<sup>90</sup> As seen before, it is a conflict based on two distinct and radically dif-

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<sup>90</sup> Perry Schmidt-Leukel argues that the conflict is fundamentally a religious one based on the memory of pre-colonial Hindu-Buddhist rivalries in the Indian subcontinent that led the Theravada Buddhists to find a safe haven in the southern part of the subcontinent which is the island of Lanka. Perry Schmidt-Leukel, “Buddhist-Hindu Relations”, *Buddhist Attitudes to Other Religions*, edited by Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Munich: EOS, 2008), 143–171.

ferent forms of ethno-nationalisms; one is an ethno-religious nationalism (Siṃhala Buddhist), while the other a secular-ethno nationalism (Tamiḷ), each with competing claims to territory. The former claims the entire island as the heritage of Siṃhala Buddhists, whereas the latter claims the North and East as the traditional homeland of the Tamiḷs. The former grounds its argument based on a belief in a perennial past that has been religiously defined. The latter justifies its demand on the basis of a series of historical grievances that have been caused by colonial and post-colonial state-building.

Even though there was a demand made on the military during the 2002 peace process to vacate all the places of worship that they occupied, in the “post-war” era building of Buddhist sites on or in close proximity to Hindu and Christian sites (aided by the military) has rapidly increased. Often the Tamiḷ parliamentarians of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) raise this issue in the parliament detailing such expansions. According to C Yokēcuvaraṅ (S. Yogeswaran), TNA Parliamentarian for Maṭṭakkaḷappu district in the Eastern Province, the *ilīṅkam* (*liṅga*) in the Kaṅkuvēli Civaṅ kōvil in Mūtūr in Tirukōṇamalai district, Verukalpālai Murukaṅ kōvil and Verukal Kallaṭi Nīliyammaṅ kōvil have been destroyed and replaced with *malāsanayas/pūjayanayas*.<sup>91</sup> In one of its Situation Reports the TNA also stated that in Kōkkiḷāy in Mullaitivu district, a Hindu temple (Piḷḷayār kōvil) which was damaged during the war has been demolished and replaced by a *malāsanaya* instead. [Fig. 20]

Kōkkiḷāy borders the Tirukōṇamalai district and the area is near a lagoon full of marine resources and connected to the sea. One can also travel easily to Tirukōṇamalai district by the lagoon for trade and commerce. Siṃhala fishermen have been settled there. It has been reported by the TNA that a Buddhist statue has been placed in Kiṅṇiyā in Tirukōṇamalai district at a site where seven hot wells and a Piḷḷayār kōvil are situated, and where the Caivas used to perform certain religious ceremonies.<sup>92</sup> Kōkkiḷāy is one of the cases which reflects the overlapping of types of expansion through Siṃhala settlements with the construction of Buddhist sites on or around other religious sites. Kiṅṇiyā is another case where expansion by the acquisition of public locations (hot wells are a tourist attraction), and the building of

<sup>91</sup> Anon., “Traditional Hindu Temples in East Destroyed, Replaced with Buddhist Viharas: MP”, www.Tamilnet.com, (17 August, 2010), <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=32433> (accessed: 10/06/2011).

<sup>92</sup> M. A. Sumanthiran, *Situation in North-Eastern Sri Lanka: A Series of Serious Concerns*, (Tabled in Parliament on 21 October, 2011, Section, 7.3).

Buddhist sites in and around other religious sites overlap with one another. In Tantamalai, Maṭṭakkaḷappu district in the Eastern Province, the Kantavēḷ Murukaṅ Caiva kōvil has been demolished by the Lankan military to build a *malāsanaya*. While a group of Siṃhalas, led by a Buddhist monk and aided by the police and the military, have started building a *vihāraya* in the traditional Caiva site of Kaccaikoṭi in Cuvāmimalai in the same district.<sup>93</sup>

In Maṅṅār district of the Northern Province, Muruṅkaṅ on the Matavācci-Maṅṅār Road had its extant small *malāsanaya* expanded and a new *vihāraya* built on. The existing small *malāsanaya* was set up by the military just near the Caiva kōvil and this was done in the 1980s. The new expansion is named *Purāṇa Rāja Mahā Vihāra* which means ‘ancient royal great monastery’, giving the impression that the location was a work of an ancient king. With the new expansion a monk has moved there for permanent residency. The location is well-lighted throughout the night for security reasons, but this lighting also gives an imposing outlook to the site which the other places of worship in the region do not have. **[Fig. 21]**

Kaṅakāmpikai Ammaṅ is the guardian god of Tamils in Vaṅṅi region that covers the districts of Mullaittivu, Kiḷinocci and parts of Maṅṅār in the North. The *kōvil* is located on the bank of the Iranaimadu Tank in Kiḷinocci, where formerly the political headquarters of the LTTE was based. A Tamil politician who supported the GoSL’s war against the LTTE, Āṇantacaṅkari (Ananda Sangaree) has accused the military of blocking the *kōvil* with barbed-wire and building a *vihāraya* nearby named *Vāvsiri Vihāraya*, ‘monastery at a beautiful lake’. **[Fig. 22]**

In Kirusṅapuram in the Kiḷinocci district the Caiva kōvil of god Vināyakaṅ ‘Remover of Obstacles’ (Piḷḷaiyār, Gaṇeśa) has been demolished by the Lankan military and a Buddha statue has been constructed over it. The Caiva kōvil was built 30 years ago by a population of Tamil plantation workers who settled in the area after fleeing from 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom.

Tirukkētisvaram, Tirukkōṅēsvaram, Nakulēsivaram, Munṅēsivaram, and Tōṅṅēsivaram are the five major ancient religious sites that are highly regarded by the Caivas. The first three have been occupied by the military in the North and East. In Maṅṅār district, in Tirukkētisvaram a small Buddhist place of worship named *Mahātota Rāja Mahā Vihāraya* was built initially by the military in close proximity

<sup>93</sup> Anon., “Kōvil Vināśakara Budu Piḷima Hadana Hamudāva”, <http://vikalpa.org>, (06 June, 2012), <http://vikalpa.org/?p=10867> (accessed: 10/06/2011).

to the Caiva kōvil and a Buddhist monk has come to reside there. The Government Agent of Maṅṅār district officially ordered the construction of a large *vihāraya* in the vicinity of Tirukkētisvaram Caiva kōvil on 04 May, 2012.<sup>94</sup> The military also continues to block the renovation of the Caiva kōvil. In the meantime, a pilgrim's rest has been built for the Siṃhala Buddhists who frequent the area. **[Fig. 23]**

Another variant of this expansion has been reported from the Maṭṭakkaḷappu district in the Eastern Province. In Kaṅṅaiyapuram village in Vellāveli the Special Task Force (STF) of the Lankan Government has cleared a location with the support of the Caiva villagers promising the latter that the STF would build a Caiva kōvil. Subsequently, construction items have been brought to the site to build a *vihāraya*.<sup>95</sup> Would such an expansion result in a Buddhist-Hindu conflict?

As a reaction to some of the above developments, an organisation called Global Peace Support Group has made an appeal on 25 March, 2010 to Hindus in India under the heading "Sinhalese Buddhism is waging a war against Hinduism in Īlam". The opening of the appeals reads as follows:

We, the Hindus of Sri Lanka, have the duty to tell the World Hindus the truth of our plight to save Sanatana Dharma — the Eternal Universal Righteousness in the Siva Bhumi Sri Lanka.<sup>96</sup>

A Hindu writer admonishes Indian Hindus for aiding the GoSL to destroy what the writer calls *civa-p-pūmi* 'land of Civaṅ':

The Eelam Tamil Saivaism is an integral part of the culture and traditions of the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sinhalese know that well, which is the reason they are building Buddhist structures all over the Tamil homeland to mark the conquest of Eelam Tamils. The Indian Hindus who cry for the destruction of even a tiny Hindu Temple in Pakistan and Bangladesh are not paying any attention to the destruction of Hindu Temples in Tamil homeland.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Anon., "Sinhala GA officially orders Buddhist construction at Thirukketheeswararam", [www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com) (06 May, 2012), <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35153> (accessed: 11/06/2012).

<sup>95</sup> Anon., "STF appropriates Tamil land to erect Buddhist temple in Batticaloa", [www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com), (24 October, 2010), <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=32286> (accessed: 15/06/2012).

<sup>96</sup> Anon., "The state sponsored destruction and desecration of Hindu Temples is continuing in North East", [www.globalpeacesupport.com](http://www.globalpeacesupport.com) (25 March, 2010), <http://www.globalpeacesupport.com/2010/03/the-state-sponsored-destruction-and-desecration-of-hindu-temples-is-continuing-in-the-north-east> (accessed: 16/06/2012).

<sup>97</sup> Anon., "The Buddhist shrines and the archaeological offensive in Tamil Homel-

This seems to reflect a clash between two forms of religious fundamentalisms, rather than a conflict between two forms of nationalisms. While Hindūtvā ideology upholds a pan-Hindu South Asia, the JHU sees that it is similar to Hindūtvā in certain characteristics, particularly as it represents the native middle classes. The JHU theoretician, Campika Raṇavaka does not see the Tamil national movement as part of Hindūtvā agenda, even though he refers to South Indian invasions in the past. Raṇavaka approvingly reveals how the Indian ambassador in Laṃkā at a meeting with the JHU leadership in Colombo saw similarities between the Hindūtvā movement and the JHU.<sup>98</sup> He also points out how Tiyākarājā Makēsvaraṇ, the Caiva Parliamentarian has made attempts to build a relationship with the Hindūtvā movement and JHU. This reflects that the “common enemy” of both Hindūtvā and Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist (Siṃhalatva) forces is the principle of secularity in their own lands, which will deprive them of their privileged position on the basis of an ethno-religious majoritarian identity. Despite the fact that there are attempts to imagine a *civappūmi* amongst some Tamils, these attempts have been marginal and the Tamil national movement has upheld the principle of secularity rather than an ideology based on a *civappūmi*.

It is not only the Caivas/Vaiṇavas who have been affected but also the Christian communities. In Tirukkētīsvaram, the military also has blocked the construction of a Christian church. Some Christian families who have recently moved into the region continue to demand it be built. However, in an interview with a human rights activist from the area who is also a Catholic, I was told that he does not approve of the demand by Christian families to put a church in the vicinity of one of the revered sites of the Hindus. In Valveṭṭitturai in Yālppāṇam district a Buddha statue has been installed by the military in front of a Roman Catholic Church. This led a TNA Parliamentarian to appeal to the Vatican to take diplomatic measures to stop the construction. There are also reports of similar happenings in the predominantly Roman Catholic Maṇṇār Island.

Appeals made to Vatican and to Hindus in India are perceived by the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist groups as part of an international conspiracy to destroy the Siṃhala Buddhist collective identity of the

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and. The Buddha is being used for the purpose ethnic cleansing and destruction of Hindu temples while the Indian Hindus are busy appeasing Sinhalese”, www. Lanka-newspaper.com, (06 March, 2011), [http://www.Lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/3/65160\\_space.html](http://www.Lankanewspapers.com/news/2011/3/65160_space.html) (accessed:15/06/2012).

<sup>98</sup> Raṇavaka, *Paṭisōtagāmiva ...*, 100.

country. This perception continues to justify the rhetoric of victimisation that they wield, that it is the Siṃhala Buddhists who are being persecuted and whose heritage has been grabbed away by others. This rhetoric forgets the fact that the GoSL could not have won the war without the political, military and diplomatic support it received from major world powers to the effect of dismantling the 2002 peace process. It was because the latter needed a strong state on the island as part of a shared geo-political strategy, that the GoSL was strengthened, so to protect the unitary state against the LTTE. This does not mean that the global powers want Siṃhala Buddhist nationalism. Internally, it would be hard however, to think that the idea of a unitary state structure could be promoted without the Siṃhala Buddhist nationalist ideology. The proponents of this ideology not only gained confidence, but also material support through the actions of the global powers to implement the agenda of “re-conquest”. In this way the material conditions for the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region have been created by geo-political interests. An analysis conducted without a geopolitical perspective could fall into the danger of reducing the conflict into a perennial Buddhist-Hindu conflict.

Could India or the European Union who claim to uphold the principle of secularity be supporters of the Lankan state and continue to aid “post-war reconstruction” which manifests the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism?

## VII. Declaration of Ancient Buddhist sites in the Region as Siṃhala Buddhist Heritage

The Minister for Cultural and Arts Affairs of GoSL, T. B. Ekanāyaka told *Daily News* (a GoSL owned paper), that the Central Cultural Fund has already initiated the process of identifying archaeological sites in the districts of Yālpāṇam, Kiḷinocci, Maṇṇār and Mullaittivu. It was also reported that UNESCO is contributing to the above fund.<sup>99</sup> Identification of ancient sites in the Tamil region is one of GoSL’s “post-war reconstruction” efforts. Even though both Mēdhānanda Thera and the Siṃhala academic, Sunil Ariyaratna admit that in the past there have been Tamil devotees of *vihārayas*, it is not clear, especially in the writings of the former, that there were Tamils who were Buddhists. For the Thera, all the ancient Buddhist sites in the

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<sup>99</sup> Priyanka Kurugala, “Archeological sites to be renovated”, [www.dailynews.lk](http://www.dailynews.lk), (08 July, 2011), <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/07/01/news43.asp> (accessed: 16/06/ 2012).



North and East are evidence of Siṃhala Buddhism and the work of Siṃhala Buddhist kings who protected Buddhism and had authority over the entire island. The debate over Buddhist sites in the North and East has emerged into the public domain as never before in the “post-war” era. A parliamentarian from TNA, S. Sritharan, said to the Parliament on 12 December, 2011 that there is archaeological evidence to prove that there have been Tamil Buddhists in the region, but some elements connected to GoSL continue to attempt to prove that these are Siṃhala Buddhist settlements.<sup>100</sup> A Siṃhala political commentator in the newspaper *The Nation* wrote the following response to the Parliamentarian:

Now there’s nothing to link ‘Tamil’ to ‘Buddhist’ in the evidence except the fact that these artefacts have been unearthed from areas where Tamils now form the majority. Concluding in this manner is akin to saying that there were white people who held Mayan beliefs because some Mayan artefacts have been unearthed in some spot in the Andes where whites now reside. It is like saying that the discovery of a Nestorian cross is evidence of Christians having played a key role and one equal to the role of Buddhists in building a civilization. — What is interesting about the statement is the fact that the TNA has finally understood that it has to back rhetoric and claim with fact and substantiation. The long years of Eelam posturing was bereft of any reference to ‘Tamil Buddhists’ except from the staunch Tiger-supporting Peter Schalk, whose efforts were largely ignored by the Christian-dominated articulators of Eelam mythology. The current ‘latching-on’, then, indicates a) the recognition that history will preside over claim-verification and b) there’s very little fuel in the Tamil Nationalism bus to take the country towards any significant landmark along the road to Eelam.<sup>101</sup>

As the debate continues both in and outside the Parliament, the name-board for the ancient Pautta site Kantarōṭai in Yālppāṇam peninsula has been changed into Siṃhala calling it *Kadurugoḍa Vihāraya*. This, and the Mallakam Buddhist site have been named as *Kadurugoḍa Vihāraya* and *Tissa Vihāraya* respectively by the Ministry of Buddha Sāsana on its website.<sup>102</sup> [Fig. 24–25]

<sup>100</sup> Anon., “Archeological evidence to prove “Tamil Buddhist””, [www.dailymirror.lk](http://www.dailymirror.lk) (12 December, 2011), <http://www.dailymirror.lk/news/15393-archaeological-evidence-to-prove-Tamil-Buddhists.html> (accessed: 16/06/2012).

<sup>101</sup> Malinda Seneviratne “If it is about territory, then it is about history”, <http://malindawords.blogspot.com>, 19 December, 2011, <http://malindawords.blogspot.com/2011/12/if-its-about-territory-then-its-about.html> (accessed: 16/06/2012). Also published in *The Nation*, 18 December, 2011.

<sup>102</sup> *Temple Directory*, [www.Buddhistdept.gov.lk](http://www.Buddhistdept.gov.lk), <http://www.Buddhistdept.gov.lk/>

Another location that has been claimed as a Siṃhala Buddhist site is Mātakal, the North-western tip of Yālpāṇam peninsula, one of the two ports that is closer to Tamilnāṭu in India. It is argued that the emissaries of Aśoka who brought Buddhism to the island landed at this port; and a *viḥāraya*, a pilgrim's rest and a tourist centre have been built in Tiruvaṇinilai in Mātakal area giving the impression that at the time of the arrival of Buddhism it was the Siṃhalas who inhabited the location. Resembling the family members of Aśoka who brought Buddhism to the island, the family members of the Lankan President, his wife and son, brought a statue of Saṃghamittā (daughter of Aśoka who was the first Buddhist woman missionary to the island), to be enshrined in the newly built *viḥāraya* in the location.<sup>103</sup>

**[Fig. 26]**

Even though “post-war” era in the North started in 2009 it had already begun by 2008 in the Eastern Province, after the Lankan security forces took over the LTTE-administrative areas of that region. Even prior to this period the predominantly Muslim area Dīgavāpi has been the site of conflict between the Muslim leadership and the JHU. The area has a good number of ancient Buddhist sites and the Muslim politicians have been accused by JHU of taking over the land of the area. The latter obtained a court order halting the resettlement of 500 Muslim families after 2004 tsunami, but that was the only area that was available for resettlement. According to a report issued by the International Crisis Group in 2008 despite the fact that the Dīgavāpi *viḥāraya* already has around 500 acres, the JHU upheld that the land should be greater yet still.<sup>104</sup>

In Tirukōṇamalai district the case of Samudragiri Vihāraya is another location of “re-conquest” of the region by reference to an ancient past. It is believed that the royal emissaries who arrived from India carrying a sampling of the Bo tree under which the Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment landed at this port around 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. Both Mātakal and Tirukōṇamalai areas have geo-strategic importance which will be discussed in the next section. Claims to ancient Siṃhala Buddhist sites have also resulted in the establishment of Siṃhala settlements in Tirukōṇamalai district. As it was pointed

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web/index.php?dis=51&tname=&div=&btnSubmit=Search&task=&option=com\_temple (accessed: 16/06/2012).

<sup>103</sup> Anon., “First Lady and her son visit Jaffna”, [www.srilankaguardian.org](http://www.srilankaguardian.org) (5 June, 2010). <http://www.srilankaguardian.org/2009/06/first-lady-and-her-son-visit-jaffna.html> (accessed: 17/06/2012).

<sup>104</sup> International Crisis Group, “Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province: Land, Development of Conflict”, *Asia Report* 159 (15 October 2008).

out earlier, under the type of expansion by Siṃhala colonies in the case of Tiriyāy, a Buddhist monk has demanded from the government a vast tract of land for Siṃhala settlement around the ancient site, acquiring the lands that formerly belonged to Tamils. This is a case similar to Dīgavāpi.

The Lankan President has appointed a Siṃhala Buddhist monk as the curator for the archaeological sites and artefacts in the Yālpāṇam peninsula. The officers of the archaeological department, who are Siṃhalas, frequent the ancient sites declaring them tourist sites reflecting a “post-war” development in the region. Some of these locations are also to be established as world heritage centres with international aid. Some of these cases also overlap with a variety of expansion through the acquisition of public places mentioned earlier; such as, Kaṇakārayaṅkuḷam where a sampling of the Śrī Mahā Bodhi has been planted beside the A9 road. Campika Raṇavaka of JHU is said to have used his portfolio as the Minister for Environment of GoSL to construct Buddhist sites in the Tamil region in the name of protecting the environment. Another prominent member of the JHU, Udaya Gammanpila, states that there are “no ethno-religious constraints in Sri Lanka”, and that the party has “never objected to the building of Hindu *malāsanayas* in any part of the island”. “so why Buddhist statues should be treated any differently? When the accusations of cultural intrusion were brought up, harmony among communities is disturbed by making an issue of this”. He gives three reasons for Buddhist statues existing in these areas, in a way summing up the above mentioned varieties of expansion:

Firstly, there are tens of thousands of Buddhist soldiers stationed in the area, for whom these statues are a place of worship. Also, during the war many sites of archaeological value were destroyed. Buddhist stupas and statues have been built in these areas due to this. There are also many Buddhists who make pilgrimage to the North, and on their way stop by at the many Buddha statues. So there is a clear purpose, it should not become an issue.<sup>105</sup>

It has been reported that the claim to ownership of ancient sites through archaeological findings is associated with newly planted information and archaeological artefacts. In a detailed well-researched report compiled by the Minority Rights Group International in 2011, it has been revealed by means of eye-witness accounts of some resi-

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<sup>105</sup> Imaad Majeed, “28 Buddha Statues erected along A-9 high way since war ended in May 2009”, [www.transcurrent.com](http://www.transcurrent.com) (19 February, 2012), <http://transcurrents.com/news-views/archives/8355> (accessed: 20/06/2012).

dents in Tirukōṇamalai, in the Eastern Province, that such artefacts were planted by unknown persons in some areas: They say people came at night, on motorcycles, with sacks full of items which they planted in the area. Those interviewed for this report were insistent that state officials are involved in these incidents.<sup>106</sup>

There are also reports that Lankan soldiers have threatened the Hindu priest and devotees in a *kōvil* in Kilinocci district, that the former would destroy the *kōvil* site and accusing the later of burying ancient Buddha statues, scriptures and archaeological findings under the *kōvil*.<sup>107</sup> In this manner, the claim to an ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage justifies the acquisition of land by the GoSL, its military, and the Buddhist monks. A report issued by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in 2008 documents how arbitrary the process of claiming ancient Siṃhala Buddhist heritage really is, just as is the building of Buddhist sites and Siṃhala settlements in the Tamil region. A Tamil human rights campaigner interviewed by ICG spoke as follows: “Wherever there is a peepal tree and a Buddha statue we will be in trouble”.<sup>108</sup>

Some of the locations of “re-conquest” such as Kaṇakārayaṅkuḷam are well-kept areas in the whole of North and East. Here, “well-kept” means well-cleaned, grass-moved, and aesthetically designed. The landscape has been ordered out of the “wild” as it was done during the colonial period in “discovering” the Sacred City of Anurādhapura; and made ready for religious worship, tourism, settlement and businesses. The “wild” here, in the post-colonial phase, means the *de facto* state of the LTTE which came into existence as a secular state structure as result of resistance to a religiously defined unitary state. As Mēdhānanda Thera believes these locations are not archaeological sites, but ‘sacred sites’. Siṃhalas who visit these locations make of them a part of their lives, unlike the people who visit the pyramids in Egypt.

It is clear that representations of the past have been determined by the politics of the present. Would a scientific deconstruction of history help resolve the ethno-nationalist conflict in Īlam? Would the historical fact that there was Tamil Buddhism in the Tamil region change the

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<sup>106</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *Report: No War, No Peace: The Denial of Minority Rights and Justice in Sri Lanka* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2011), 14.

<sup>107</sup> “SL army threatens to destroy Sivan temple to construct Buddhist Vihara in Killinochchi”, [www.Tamilnet.com](http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35061) (02 April, 2012), <http://www.Tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35061> (20/06/2012).

<sup>108</sup> International Crisis Group, “Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province: Land, Development of Conflict”, *Asia Report* 159, (15 October, 2008): 38.

mindset of the Siṃhala constituency? Such awareness may be helpful, but as long as the power dynamics behind the construction of meta-narratives are not challenged from the perspectives of their victims, corrective knowledge about history will only be a marginal factor.

## VIII Building Siṃhala Buddhist Sites at Geo-strategic Locations

Transformation of geo-strategic locations into a “sacred space” is another type of “post-war” expansion that can be noticed in the Tamil region. The Lankan naval force has extended its base by acquiring private lands in the above mentioned Mātakal area, and are in the process of transforming the region into a “sacred place”; claiming it as a Siṃhala Buddhist heritage. **[Fig. 27]**

The area has been declared a high security zone, where civilians are not allowed to reside while permanent naval cantonments have been constructed.<sup>109</sup> The northern sea and the coast have been pivotal for both the Lankan state and the Tamil national movement. The former would not have direct access to Bay of Bengal without this region, while for the latter the region provides for the livelihoods of people, and helps to maintain cultural and trade contacts with Tamilnāṭu in India. The ownership of the region also provides the Tamil national movement with a military/political/strategic power balance vis-à-vis the Lankan and Indian governments in achieving the objective of the state of Tamililam. In sacralising a geo-strategic location like Mātakal on the basis of an Aśokan Buddhist lineage, the Lankan state justifies its unitary structure as having a perennial existence, while depicting Aśokan Buddhism as Siṃhala Buddhism. Such an ethno-religious ideology happens to serve the interests of the major powers such as India, China and USA in securing a unitary state structure against the Tamil national movement.

The north-western sea and the coast in the Tamil region are the other closest point to Tamilnāṭu. As shown earlier, Mēdhānanda Thera’s claim (which was highlighted in the government-run *Sunday Observer* newspaper), that ports of this region were constructed and controlled by the Siṃhala Buddhist kings and the region had Siṃhala *vihārayas*, are attempts to sacralise geo-strategic locations in the Tamil territory. **[Fig. 28–29]**

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<sup>109</sup> Anon., “SL military grabs more land in Maathakal”, [www.tamilnet.com](http://www.tamilnet.com) (14 July, 2012), <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=35384> (accessed: 25/07/2012).

On an administrative level, the entire district of Mannār populated by the Tamils where the North-western sea and coast are located, has been brought under the archaeological province of Anurādhapura; the imagined “sacred city” of the Siṃhala Buddhist civilisation. A large Buddha statue has been built near the Yālpāṇam harbour making it clearly visible to the vessels that reach the shore. In similar fashion the claim to ancient sites in the Tirukōṇamalai area is also of geo-strategic import, whereby the sacralisation of these locations mean territorialisation of Buddhism throughout the entire island (*dhamm-dīpa*—island as *dhamma*), while this is possible only through the unitary state structure.

As shown earlier, a geopolitical analysis of the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region is of the utmost importance for us to understand the international implications of the conflict. An analysis conducted through the single state lens would therefore be seriously misleading.

## IX. Destruction of LTTE Cemeteries and Monuments and Building of GoSL War Memorials

The Lankan military has built a large number of war memorials in the Tamil region. These do not have necessarily Buddhist symbols. They reflect the “heroism” of the soldiers. However, in the inscriptions on the memorials it is written that they offered their lives for the *baumika akandatvaya* of the country, i.e. ‘the territorial integrity’ [of the island]. [Fig. 30–33]

War museums too have been built in Kiḷinocci and Mullaittivu to display the weaponry that was used by the military and the LTTE during the war. Some key properties that have been damaged by war are being displayed as tourist attractions, for instance, a giant water tank damaged during the war has become such an exhibit. Observers say that the construction of these memorials, exhibits, visitor’s centres and restaurants have been prioritised in the “post-war reconstruction” efforts of GoSL. All of these memorials and centres lie amid thousands of displaced people who live in temporary huts, with only bear minimum access to basic facilities, or none at all! This process was preceded by the destruction of all the LTTE cemeteries and memorials. In effect, it is not only ancient history that has been reinterpreted, and selectively and exclusively depicted, but also the most recent history (of the last 10–20 years) has been so falsely represented. [Fig. 34]

Denial of the memory of resistance is essential for the consolidation of the military might of the Lankan state and its ethno-religious ideology. Such denial is not only a denial of memory but also a denial of the aspirations to a secular state in the Tamil region. Broadly, it blocks the memory of the multiple socioeconomic, agricultural, fisheries, and cultural, educational, artistic as well as political achievements of the Tamil national resistance that has been destroyed.

## X. A Siṃhala Buddhist Stūpa at Muḷlivāykkāl

Muḷlivāykkāl is the location in Vanni where the last battle between the Lankan military and the LTTE took place. For the Tamils, the name of the location is associated with the memory of mass atrocities committed by the GoSL's security forces during the last phase of the war. Since the formal end of the war, the last day of the final battle is remembered by the Tamils as *Muḷlivāykkāl Niṇaivut Tiṇam*. The name of the location has informed the popular imagination of Siṃhala society as recalling war victory. Campika Raṇavaka of JHU who is also a key Minister of GoSL used this name in a press conference to threaten Tamil Parliamentarians saying that the latter should not try to create another hundred Muḷlivāykkāls. If they try, the GoSL and the JHU are ready for it.<sup>110</sup> The particular location has become a tourist attraction for the Siṃhalas, but Tamils who travel across the area are not allowed by the military to get down from their vehicles so to visit the location. A new Buddhist stūpa has been constructed at the site with full Siṃhala name boards, opened on the third anniversary of the final battle. This construction reflects the role that Siṃhala plays in deeply polarising the Tamils and Siṃhalas. **[Fig. 35, 49]**

A location that symbolises mass atrocities for one community has become a place for the triumphalism and religious fervour of another community. While this and other types of expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism have become symbol of subjugation for the Tamils, there is a new process that has been initiated to additionally memorialise the war victory throughout the entire island by building Buddhist stūpas which will be discussed in the next section.

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<sup>110</sup> Anon., "Minister threatens Tamils with 'hundred more massacres'", [www.jdslanka.org](http://www.jdslanka.org) (17 June, 2012), <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/2012-01-30-09-30-42/politics-a-current-affairs/10-sri-lanka-minister-threatens-Tamils-with-hundreds-of-massacres> (accessed: 25/06/2012).

## XI. Consolidation of Siṃhala Buddhism throughout the Entire Island.

The website of the GoSL's defence ministry has announced a new ["post-war"] project to build nine Buddhist stūpas in nine provinces of the island. The defence ministry website states that this is done "in appreciation of the noble service rendered by the armed forces and the police to defeat terrorism and bring lasting peace to the country."<sup>111</sup> The titles given to the stūpas read differently in English and Siṃhala. For example, the English version "Triumphant Stūpas," whereas the Siṃhala wording is *saṅdahiru seya*, meaning 'stūpas of the sun and the moon'. The combination of the images of sun and the moon imply eternity. The image on the website gives the impression that they are to be built on ancient ruins. **[Fig. 36–38]**

A well-coordinated island-wide network has been established to encourage the public to contribute to the fund. All the police stations and all the branches of the Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank of Sri Lanka have set up counters to sell tickets that would raise funds to buy cement and bricks.

It is important to recall that the nine provinces are colonial legacies that were carved out of diverse regions for administrative purposes. Building nine stūpas in nine provinces reflects a belief in a perennial existence or imagined past, even as these provinces were colonial demarcations actually. Notably, for this project the public are requested to contribute to the buildings. Moreover, the defence ministry is charged with its oversight and not the Buddha Sāsana Ministry or Cultural Ministry. This shows that defence is inseparable from Buddhism, and the manner in which the Siṃhala Buddhist public are motivated by this religio-military imagination.

Building nine stūpas in nine provinces will contribute to internally consolidate the power of the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology throughout the island. At the same time, the GoSL has taken steps to build its image as a Buddhist country internationally. As a mark of celebration of the 2600<sup>th</sup> *vēsa*k festival Buddha statues similar to Samadhi statue will be sent to Lankan overseas missions worldwide. A large number of these statues were brought from the Mātara in the Southern Province to Colombo in a procession accompanied by a large number of Buddhist monks chanting *pirit* throughout the procession. The Minister for Foreign Employment Promotion, Dilan Perera, has told the

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<sup>111</sup> Ministry of Defence, " 'Sandahiru Seya', The Triumphant Stupa", (20 April, 2012), [www.defence.lk](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=SandahiruSeya), <http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=SandahiruSeya> (accessed: 25/06/2012)



media that the aim of this action is to promote Theravāda Buddhism internationally:

These Buddha statues will help promote Theravada Buddhism in the world and also promote characteristics of Lankan Buddha statues. Sri Lankans abroad will get the chance to worship these Buddha statues.<sup>112</sup>

**[Fig. 39–41]**

As another move of this Siṃhala Buddhist missionary effort a Bō sapling of Śrī Mahā Bodhi was donated to Bodh Gayā in India in order to commemorate the 2600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment. The sapling was paraded throughout Yālpānam peninsula accompanied by Buddhist monks with heavy military protection before it was sent to India. A stone inscription was set up in Mātakal to mark the occasion. It stated both in Tamiḷ and Siṃhala that it is the President Rājapakṣa as *śrī trisiṃhalādhiśvara* the 'Lord of Three Siṃhala Regions' who sent the sapling to India. Emperor Aśoka is mentioned in the inscription as the one who sent the first sapling to the island of Laṃkā indirectly depicting the President as another emperor.<sup>113</sup> **[Fig. 42–43]**

Building of the stūpas locally, sending a Bo sapling to India and sending Buddha statues globally reflect the state sponsored movement towards both internal and external consolidation of the Siṃhala Buddhist image of the island. The Prime Minister also has launched a programme to teach English to the monks with the intention of sending them overseas to preach *dhmma*. This appears to recall the Aśokan model of propagation of Buddhism, nevertheless, what is questionably getting propagated is an ethno-religious ideological complex, characterised by a belief in an exclusivist form of national identity and a unitary state structure. In this, a particularistic ethic has been championed as opposed to the universal appeal of Buddhism. Such particularistic ethic denies responsibility for any violation of human rights by GoSL and its military in the war against LTTE.

Could the above image-building save GoSL from growing accusations of human rights violations including war crimes and crimes against humanity? What about the global powers *de facto* responsible for creating the material conditions for such crimes? Could the uni-

<sup>112</sup> Mandana Ismail Abeywickrema, "Building an image of a secular state gets a beating", [www.thesundayleader.lk](http://www.thesundayleader.lk/), (12 June, 2011), <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2011/06/12/building-an-image-of-a-secular-state-gets-a-beating/> (accessed: 25/06/2012).

<sup>113</sup> Anon., "Colombo exploits Buddhism to consecrate Genocide", [www.tamil net.com](http://www.tamilnet.com/), <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=79&artid=33537> (accessed: 26/07/2012).

versal appeal of Buddhism calling for treatment of all peoples as equals be applied both to GoSL and the global powers in seeking justice for the victims of war? Would that not be the true Aśokan model of Buddhism?

## Conclusion

What are the ethical/soteriological, legal, religious and political/ ideological issues arising from the “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamiḷ region and in what way might these be resolved? To answer this question, in the preceding section, after the analysis of each type of expansion I attempted to raise certain pertinent questions that would give some points for reflection. Let me now systematically explore the various available responses to this question raised above.

There are those who propose a paradigm based on national unity through promotion of Buddhism in the Tamiḷ region. The idea of national unity has two aspects. One is turning Tamiḷs, particularly Tamiḷ Caivas/Vaiṇavas, into devotees of *viḥārayas* and the other is incorporating Tamiḷs into Siṃhala culture, and converting them to Buddhism. With regard to the first aspect, as earlier shown, Mēdhānanda Thera, admits that there have been Tamiḷ devotees of *viḥārayas* in the past when arguing for the unitary state structure.<sup>114</sup> The monk in Maṭṭakkaḷappu town sees the existence of the *viḥāraya* in the town as having strategic importance for national unity under the unitary state construction where Tamiḷs and Siṃhalas can meet. The paradigm of national unity could be seen in the statements of chief monks of various Buddhist Chapters in the Siṃhala Buddhist sāsana. In an article titled “An Analysis of the Selected Statements Issued by the Mahanayakas on the North-East Problem of Sri Lanka” written by Venerable Akuratiyē Nanda Thera this paradigm is explained as follows:

Page 2 has raised the question of resettling displaced Sinhalese who lived in the Jaffna Peninsula before 1997. They are 23,000 in number. In the same statement, the present and the future conditions of the sacred Buddhist sites scattered all over in the North and East are reminded of. Since most of the Sinhalese who are displaced are Buddhists, their resettlement and renovation of the sacred Buddhist sites seem to have been considered

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<sup>114</sup> Ellāvala Mēdhānanda, *Pācīna Passa ...*, 462–468.

inter-connected. The dreamland of the Mahanayakas is a united Sri Lanka where all communities can live together. To bring Sri Lanka back to lasting peace, the right of all communities to live anywhere within Sri Lanka according to their wish has to be re-established. Sri Lanka should belong to all, irrespective of ethnicity and should be the homeland of all. None of the statements provided herewith goes against this. Therefore, resettlement of the Sinhalese in Jaffna is essential to create a Sri Lanka of trusted peace. This becomes most significant and imperative in the context that the LTTE has extended its hand of friendship to the displaced Muslims.<sup>115</sup>

What is the difference between the above position of chief monks and that of JHU? Both positions claim a Siṃhala Buddhist heritage in the Tamiḷ region and promote settlement of Siṃhalas wherever they wish to live. Does this mean that the chief incumbents are also followers of the JHU ideology? This aspect of the paradigm of national unity is moralising and takes for granted both unitary state structure and cultural homogenisation. It features reference to lost heritage that has been gained and to a “re-conquest” of one’s own land which was deprived of one for a long time.

Is there yet a moderate form of Buddhism, particularly as a public discourse in Īlam? The Buddhism that exists in the country is inextricably interwoven with the unitary state, the Siṃhala ethnicity and the territorialisation of *dhamma*. Could such Buddhism be moderate? The role of JHU is to be the vanguard of this ideology which is shared by Siṃhala society. Is such an ideology redeemable?

The other aspect is promoted by the Siṃhala academic Sunil Āriyaratna in his work *Demaḷa Bauddayā*, where he clearly acknowledges the existence of Tamiḷ Buddhists in the Tamiḷ region, who had contributed to the development of Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent. He argues that the conflict in the island could have been resolved had the Siṃhala monks preached *dhamma* in Tamiḷ and built a Tamiḷ Buddhist *sāsana* instead of building a Siṃhala Buddhist *sāsana* in the Tamiḷ region. If this had happened, the perception that the Tamiḷs are enemies of Buddhism and that the *Siṃhalas* are enemies of Tamiḷs could have been avoided.<sup>116</sup> The Prime Minister who is also the Minister for Buddha Sāsana and Religious Affairs announced a programme to teach Tamiḷ to Buddhist monks with the aim of serv-

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<sup>115</sup> Akureṭṭiyē Nanda, “An Analysis of the Selected Statements issued by the Mahanayakas on the North-East Problem in Sri Lanka”, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 10 (2003): 146.

<sup>116</sup> Āriyaratna, *Demaḷa Bauddayā*, 9–10.

ing the above two aspects of national unity.<sup>117</sup>

Could Buddhism unite Tamils and Sinhala? Could *dhamma* be preached in an ideological vacuum purely as a way to spiritual emancipation? If *dhamma* was to become meaningful to its listeners should it not address the concrete realities that they encounter which entail socioeconomic and political issues of the day? Within the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist discourse, the unitary state has to be protected first, for the *dhamma* to be preserved and for this purpose the path to *nirvāṇa* can be postponed in following a military path. With such a justification of war could the victims of this war, mainly the Tamils, be attracted towards *dhamma*? With such justification of the war on offer in what way could the memory and the pain of loss be interpreted? In a song written by Sunil Ariyaratna, Emperor Aśoka's regret for waging wars is recalled to convince the LTTE in an indirect way about the futility of war which is caused by attachment to land. Such attachments are not seen in the problematic of the unitary state structure, which is taken for granted as an unchanging entity.

Another response is based on legal perspectives. Legally, Īlam does not have special laws that regulate construction of places of worship. This is given as evidence of religious freedom in the country where any person can practice one's religion without any obstacle.<sup>118</sup> General laws that govern any other construction are meant to regulate religious constrictions too. The argument of JHU is that there are many Hindu shrines in predominantly Sinhala areas. Similarly, there can be Buddhist shrines in the Tamil areas too.<sup>119</sup> Those who analyse the crisis in the country as a result of the collapse of law and order therefore might emphasise the need to introduce special laws to govern the construction of religious sites as there are hundreds of both such constructions, and demands to remove them that have led to religious disharmony in the country. They would also reiterate the need for due process and mechanisms of accountability based on the notion of good governance in resolving the issue. The *Tamil National Alliance*

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<sup>117</sup> Wijayaratne, "Bikkhus to be trained to preach in English, Tamil", [www.dailynews.lk](http://www.dailynews.lk), 28 December, 2011. <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/12/28/news30.asp> (accessed: 27/06/2012).

<sup>118</sup> S M Wijayaratne, "Buddha Sasana Ministry ready to regulate places of worship in Sri Lanka", [www.asiantribune.com](http://www.asiantribune.com) (12 June, 2005), <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2005/06/12/buddha-sasana-ministry-ready-regulate-places-worship-sri-lanka> (accessed: 26/06/2012).

<sup>119</sup> Imaad Majeed, "28 Buddha Statues erected along A-9 high way since war ended in May 2009", [www.transcurrent.com](http://www.transcurrent.com), 19 February, 2012, <http://transcurrents.com/news-views/archives/8355> (accessed: 20/06/2012).

(TNA) which continue to oppose the building of Siṃhala Buddhist sites in the Tamil region in a Parliamentary debate reported in the *Daily News*, revealed that there are at least 1700 places of worship in the region that have been destroyed by war. The TNA Parliamentarian has appealed to the government to pay grants allocated for the renovation of these places directly, rather than channelling the funds through local authorities who are corrupt in the area.<sup>120</sup> These places include majority of Hindu temples, Christian churches and Muslim mosques, and a few *vihārayas* which were built before the war. There are three main points in the Parliamentarian's appeal; attending to "post-war reconstruction", adoption of an equidistant approach to all religions and tackling of corruption. All of these constitute good governance.

The biggest question however, is could the above move originate from a state structure that is ideologically fixed on privileging Siṃhala Buddhism? Could the political will to change this state structure be generated without deconstructing the imagined community of the Siṃhala Buddhist nation?

The types of expansion discussed above have clearly shown how "victor's peace" translates into consolidating the unitary state structure based on the ideology of "re-conquest", rather than adopting an equidistant approach to all ethnic and religious groups. The model of good governance based on law and order does not resolve the fundamental issues of the unitary state structure and its constitutive ideology. It is only by a process of changing the power dynamics (both local and international) which currently maintain the unitary state; and, by a process of exposing the contradictions within the imagined exclusivist community of Siṃhala Buddhist nation that the "National Question" in Īlam can be resolved.

What are the ethical and political aspects of this process?

While new Siṃhala Buddhist sites are being built in the Tamil region it has been revealed by a member of the Opposition in the Parliament that at least 2016 *vihārayas* have been closed, mainly in the Siṃhala areas, due to lack of resources to maintain them.<sup>121</sup> While schools in the Tamil region have been destroyed by war [Fig. 45], it has also being reported that hundreds of rural schools in the Siṃhala

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<sup>120</sup> Sandasen Marasinghe, Irangika Range, Disna Mudalige, "Government aware that religious background is necessary for spiritual development, *www.dailynews.lk*, (03 December, 2011), <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/12/03/pol01.asp> (accessed: 26/06/2012).

<sup>121</sup> Marasinghe et al., "Government..."

areas have been closed due to increasing poverty and privatisation of the education system. A large number of *daham pasal* ‘Dharma (Sunday) Schools’, have been closed in the rural areas, while in urban areas the number of students has dwindled due to competitive education system that demands attendance of tuition classes on Sundays. The move made by the GoSL to make attendance at *Daham Pasal* compulsory for educational qualifications from 2012 will exclude the children of the Siṃhala Buddhist rural poor from the mainstream education further still.<sup>122</sup> [Fig. 43]

Ironically, as this happens the Tamil school children are forced to sing the “national anthem” in Siṃhala in the Tamil region. According to *Divaina* newspaper which champions the ideology of “re-conquest” and gives publicity to the work JHU and Mēdhānanda Thera ( who has been removed from party leadership since 19 June, 2010) from January to May of 2012 there have been 113 destructions of archaeological sites which have been destroyed by treasure hunters. 338 arrests have been made.<sup>123</sup> Daṃbara Amila Thera giving an interview to the same paper holds Mēdhānanda Thera responsible for spreading a wrong view about ancient sites giving the impression that these have treasures like gold and silver.<sup>124</sup> While the nationalist euphoria of “re-conquest” is kept alive through different types “post-war” expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region, as exemplified by the construction of *Triumphant Stupas* in all nine provinces of the island, a crisis deepens in the Siṃhala society.

Might raising public awareness about above contradictions help deconstruct the exclusivist nationalist ideology, so to change the power dynamics of the unitary state?

However, while Tamils are continually subjugated those differently oppressed social classes amongst the Siṃhalas are made to believe that the entire land belongs to them. The mechanism of “preservation of peasantry” that was started during the colonial period is modified in many ways to the end of re-enforcing the unitary state structure and incorporating the Siṃhala poor into its ideology. 2600 children were to be given lower ordination at the celebration of the 2600<sup>th</sup> *vē-*

<sup>122</sup> S M Wijayaratne, “Bhikkus to be trained to preach in English, Tamil”, [www.dailynews.lk](http://www.dailynews.lk) (28 December, 2011), <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/12/28/news30.asp> (accessed: 27/06/2012).

<sup>123</sup> Anon., “Pura vidyāva kaṇḍa āyubovaṃ!”, [www.divayina.com](http://www.divayina.com), 20 May, 2012, <http://www.divayina.com/2012/05/20/feature21.html>, (accessed 27/06/2012).

<sup>124</sup> “Maha ran nidhāna hō daṃbaran piḷima purā vidyādayaṇṭa kavādāvat hamu vī nāhā-pūjya daṃbara amila himi”, [www.divayina.com](http://www.divayina.com), 20 May, 2012, <http://www.divayina.com/2012/05/20/feature20.html> (accessed: 07/06/2012).

sak. According to the Prime Minister these children were to be chosen from the poor Sinhala families, so that turning them into monks would mean they are taken out of the cycle of poverty to be educated in monasteries. The public were even invited to donate, and the government promised to allocate funds for the task.<sup>125</sup> The state also has inaugurated a scheme to pay a monthly subsistence to the monks in the North and East who face economic hardships and thereby encourage them to move to the Tamil region. The new Sinhala settlements and military cantonments, just as the many privileges given to the security forces and police, including special allowances, facilities, and permission to start businesses, farming, and fishing in the Tamil region, have incorporated different lower social strata of the Sinhala society into the state structure and its ideology. The commercial and trading sectors that belong to the Sinhala middle classes have been given almost all the contracts of “post-war reconstruction” in the Tamil region, where many Sinhala labourers have been brought from the South to work in the region. These moves have united different Sinhala social classes with the political elite under the ideology of “re-conquest”, who would otherwise have many a social and economic divisions separating them.

The Prime Minister held a ceremony in the Tirukōṇamalai District to honour the relatives and family members of Buddhist monks who ‘sacrificed’ their lives in war to protect Sri Lanka. In that ceremony it was announced that the government will grant Rs. 10,0000 to 502 places of worship in the region.<sup>126</sup> Through such schemes besides the many Sinhalas, some Tamils and Muslims will be incorporated into the unitary state. However, such incorporations cannot contain large sections of oppressed social classes in the Sinhala society, such as workers, fishermen and women let alone the Tamils. Within two years after the formal completion of the war there already were two massive demonstrations amongst the Sinhalas against the GoSL demanding reduction of fuel prices and reversal of pension cuts. During these protests one fisherman and a worker were killed and many others were injured due to shooting by the police. At the time of writing there are continuous demonstrations in the Tamil region against kill-

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<sup>125</sup> ANI, “Child abuse fears over Lankan PM’s monk Plans,” *Asian News International(ANI)*, (16, October, 2010), <http://www.punemirror.in/printarticle.aspx?page=comments&action=add&sectid=5&contentid=2010101620101016234356170321b4c42&subsite=> (accessed: 27/06/2012).

<sup>126</sup> Anon., “Sri Lanka to establish Buddhist temples in all countries”, *www. Buddhistchannel.tv* (28 October, 2010), <http://www.Buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=43,9634,0,0,1,0> (accessed: 28/06/2012).

ings, abductions, “disappearances” and rapes, and demanding access to land, farming, fishing etc. These are political locations that have a potential to challenge the power dynamic of the Siṃhala political elite and the middle class intelligentsia, who uphold an imagined Siṃhala Buddhist nation. [Fig. 46]

Does Buddhism in Īlam have potential to contribute to such a process?

Another perspective regarding the construction of Siṃhala Buddhist sites in the Tamil region is put forward by NGOs and humanitarian workers: Why should such activities be prioritised when there are hundreds of thousands of displaced Tamils (and Muslims) without facilities? This arises from the principles of humanitarianism that uphold basic human needs such as food, shelter, clothing and health-care as fundamental to life over any religious observance. This perspective could perhaps draw on Buddhism for humanism, which doctrinally upholds ethical/soteriological principles as the most fundamental teachings of the Buddha.

In a field visit by a NGO which was joined by a Buddhist monk and a few Christian leaders to Mullikulam area in Maṇṇār district where around 400 displaced Tamil families have been living under trees for years Buddhiyāgama Candraratana Thera, who was a member of the field team, shared his thoughts with the people which can be found in the report compiled by the NGO concerning the people of Mullikkulam. I received this unpublished report in an email dated 20 January, 2012:

I was shocked to see this situation. I am a sinner to see all these sufferings of the people here in Mullikulam. What is the crime these people committed to live under the trees like animals? All these people are brothers and sisters of our society. We all have serious responsibility to see the situation critically and to help them. We should be shamed to see these people living like this.<sup>127</sup> [Fig. 45, 47]

In the exclusivist ideological interpretation of Buddhism in Īlam where it is argued that the unitary state has to be protected for the *dhamma* to be preserved, a war has been justified which killed, maimed, raped and displaced thousands of Tamils. The Siṃhala soldiers who fought the war are either seen as guardian gods or as those who acquire merits to reach *nirvāṇa*. This interpretation and its military path promoted by the middle class intelligentsia, the *saṃgha* and the Siṃhala political elite have subjugated the Tamils, structurally

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<sup>127</sup> Anon., An email sent to the author: dated 20 January, 2012.



and culturally destroyed the Tamil region, and has suppressed the ethical/soteriological principles of Buddhism. Even the author of *Mahāvamsa*, the post-canonical Pāli chronicle which justified war to protect Buddha sāsana (note: not Siṃhala Buddhist sāsana) could not hide the regret of the warrior king about the killing of non-Buddhists in war. In the colonial and post-colonial racialisation of Siṃhala Buddhism in Īlam such regret is missing from the public domain regarding the killings of Tamils. Instead, a triumphant mood prevails in the country. This triumphant mood is given a religious dimension where the Siṃhala Buddhists are made to believe through the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism into the Tamil region, that the *Buddhadhamma* can permeate throughout the island with a military victory. The leaders have become *bodhisattvas* or incarnations of ancient kings and the military has become *guardian gods*. This type of religion has buried the collective conscience of the Siṃhala society. It is only the victims who have the power to awaken the collective conscience of Siṃhala society and light the path of *dhamma*. Candraratana Thera's above statement reflects a sense of guilt and compassion that can contribute to the awakening of collective conscience within the Siṃhala society. Intellectuals like Professor Sucarita Gamlat (Sucharita Gamlath) and artists like Dharmasiri Bandaranāyaka have taken a principled position in their works against the ideology of "re-conquest". Professor Gamlat has been writing a well-researched set of articles to a mainstream Siṃhala newspaper deconstructing the ideology of "re-conquest". Even though such voices have been marginalised they carry the potential to awaken the moral conscience within the Siṃhala society. Both secular and religious humanists need to politically engage in changing the power dynamics that reinforce the Siṃhala Buddhist ideology. The said reinforcement is fomented through alliances between the political elites and the middle class intelligentsia. Without a political engagement of ethical/soteriological principles of Buddhism, they will remain abstract categories within the Siṃhala society ensuring that the ideology of "re-conquest" is predominant. This ethical/ stereological political engagement requires identification with the Tamils and their collective aspirations, and the oppressed Siṃhala social classes. It is only such an identification that can compound the power dynamic of the ideology of "re-conquest".

The report of the Minority Rights Group International documents a statement of a Tamil human rights campaigner which expresses how Tamils view the "post-war" expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism:

In Sri Lanka there has always been Tamil Buddhism. Tamils also believe in aspects of Buddhism and respect it. Now they are trying to Siṃhalacize all of this and they don't acknowledge Tamil Buddhism.<sup>128</sup>

Tamiḷ resistance to colonial and post-colonial practices of oppression has given rise to Tamiḷ national consciousness based on the modern principles of nationhood, homeland and self-determination. Buddhist sites in the region are treated as an ancient cultural heritage in this modern mode of national consciousness. There are also some modern writings in Tamiḷ that have captured the ethical/soteriological principles based on compassion within the context of suffering of the Tamils, where the Buddha is depicted crying at seeing the killing of Tamils. Professor Kārtikēcu Civattampi (Karthigesu Sivathamby)—one among many Tamiḷ intellectuals who had a rapport with Siṃhala and Buddhist progressive intellectuals—laments over the lack of Siṃhala translations of these works.<sup>129</sup> One of the well-known Tamiḷ poets of the modern generation puts across in powerful metaphorical language how Siṃhala Buddhist nationalists have to “kill the Buddha” first in order to carry out the expansion of Siṃhala Buddhism to Tamiḷ areas by killing Tamiḷ people and destroying their culture and region. The background to the poem is the burning of the Yāḷppāṇam Library in 1981 by Siṃhala racist groups backed by Government ministers:

*Last night, in my dream,  
Lord Buddha was shot dead  
Government policemen in plain clothes  
Shot him.  
He lays on the steps  
of Jaffna Library,  
soaked in blood.  
In darkness of the night  
the ministers arrived, furious:  
“His name wasn't on our list.  
so why did you kill him?  
“No, no”, they said,  
“No mistake was made, But,  
if we hadn't killed him,*

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<sup>128</sup> Minority Rights Group International, *Report: No War, No Peace: The Denial of Minority Rights and Justice in Sri Lanka* (London, Minority Rights Group International, 2011), 14.

<sup>129</sup> Karthigesu Sivathamby, *Being a Tamil and a Sri Lankan* (Colombo: Aivakam, 2005), 184.

*we wouldn't have been able to kill  
even a fly.  
Therefore..."  
"Alright. But  
get rid of the corpse at once",  
the ministers said and disappeared.  
The plain-clothes policemen  
dragged the corpse inside.  
They covered the Buddha's body  
with ninety thousand books  
and lit the pyre with the Sikalokavada Sutta.  
Lord Buddha's body turned to ashes.  
and so did the Dhammapada.<sup>130</sup>*

Buddhism among Tamils in the modern period can have meaning only to the extent that there is space in Sinhala society for the new interpretation of the Buddha given by the Tamil poet. The politicisation of such literary, cultural and social spaces of new interpretations could contribute to a movement of resistance to the oppressive military campaign of Sinhala Buddhist re-conquest that not only subjugates Tamils, but also "kills the Buddha" among the Sinhalas!

In a move to reinterpret Buddhist principles within the context of war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed against the Tamil people by the GoSL, Sulak Sivaraksa, one of the judges of the People's Tribunal of Sri Lanka makes a special appeal to the Sinhala Buddhists:

We would like to appeal to the Sinhala Buddhists first of all to acknowledge the crimes that they committed against their own Tamil sisters and brothers... Rejoicing at the war victories, when thousands have been killed, "disappeared", maimed, raped and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and detained, is totally against the dhamma ... It is the ideological attachment to a majority dominated state that has caused the war and led to enormous suffering. The notions of minority and majority are wrong perceptions. We are interrelated or "interbeing." One who realises interbeing is fearless. It is this fearlessness that can help transform the colonial construction of the Lankan unitary state. This construction is based on greed and hatred... The Lankan state needs a transformation.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Sascha Ebeling, "Love, War, and the Sea Again: On Poetry of Cheran", *The Tamils: From the Past to Present*, edited by Peter Schalk, Ruth van Nahl (Colombo/Chennai: Kumaran Book House, 2011), 76.

<sup>131</sup> Permanent People's Tribunal, *People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka* (Dublin: PPT and

In internationalising the context, the Tribunal also found the US-led Governments and the EU responsible for the breakdown of the 2002 peace process with the dismantling of *parity of esteem* between the GoSL and the LTTE.<sup>132</sup> The ideology of “re-conquest” could not have succeeded if not for the material conditions created by the above powers in view of protecting the unitary state structure as a strategic location in South Asia. In envisioning and building a future movement of resistance to the conquest it is important to focus both on the transformation of local power dynamics and a politicisation of ethical/soteriological principles of Buddhism, as well as the geopolitical dimensions of the ethno-nationalist conflict in the island of Īlam.

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IFPSL, 2010), 23–24.

<sup>132</sup> Permanent People’s Tribunal, *People’s Tribunal...*, 20.

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