

4 Jayabāhu Dharmakīrti: *Compendium of the Buddhist Lineages* (14th or 15th Century)

Translated and introduced by Sven Bretfeld

Introduction

The following chapter of the *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya*, a history of the Buddhist teaching composed in medieval Sinhalese in the fourteenth century, describes the measures taken by King Parākramabāhu I of Polonnaruva (1153–1186) to stabilise his kingdom. Parākramabāhu I, or the Great, is one of the major heroes of Sri Lankan cultural memory. Politically extremely successful, and no less efficient in establishing religious conformity, his name is often adorned with the title *cakravartin* or “wheel-turning monarch.” This, of course, refers to the ancient idea of a worldly twin to the Buddha. In these later uses of the title, it does not imply a claim of worldwide domination. The chapter is quite cleanly structured along the lines of the *loka-sāsana* distinction. The king’s worldly achievements are described first. Before he could bring peace and order to the *loka* domain, he had to fight several wars – first against rebels within Sri Lanka, then abroad, against threatening powers of South India, and perhaps Burma (it is unclear whether or not Aramaṇa really means Lower Burma here, as it does in later periods). Once he has secured his sovereignty, he sets out to stabilise the kingdom, first establishing a well-structured administrative apparatus as an instrument of centralised authority (the *loka* domain). Next, he purifies the *sāsana*, by having those monks who entertained heretical views cast out of the community. This (allegedly) removed a centuries-old disharmony among the monastic communities of Sri Lanka, which had split into different “sects” (*nikāya*) 1,254 years earlier.

What is not stated here is that Parākramabāhu also seems to have established a centralised hierarchy within the *saṅgha*. This hierarchical apparatus was fully established in somewhat later sources, but the structure – or at least the central idea – seems to stem from Parākramabāhu’s initiative. In the developed system, the complete *saṅgha* of Sri Lanka is centrally administered by a committee of representatives of the major monastic establishments around the island (*kāraka-saṅgha*), headed by a *saṅgha* king (*saṅgharāja*), and two subsidiary hierarchies. Here, again, we recognise the twin structure of *loka* and *sāsana*. In both domains, centralised authority is secured through a similarly structured hierarchical apparatus with authority delegated to various bodies, including the parallelism of a king for the worldly domain, and a monk-king governing the religious domain. Had the text included a description of the religious administration, the parallelism would have been perfect: first, peace and order had to be restored by means of violence (war-

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fare and the eradication of heresies, respectively for the two domains); second, systems of centralised authority are established to prevent future rivalries. A parallel text of the same period (*Daḷadā-Pūjāvaliya*) makes explicit reference to the two wheels, stating: “in order to prevent a fragmentation of control, [the king] (re-)designed the Wheel of Authority (*aṇasaka*) and the Wheel of the Dharma (*dahamsaka*) in Sri Lanka.”

Bibliographical Information

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After the three kings Mahalu Vijayabāhu, Jayabāhu and Vikramabāhu¹ – in the year 1696 after our Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa – a great king named Śrī Saṃghabodhi Śrī Parākramabāhu² arose in Śrī Laṅkā, resplendent with a corona of light, namely the horizon-pervading fame of a king of kings born to the royal dynasty, connected to the succession lineage starting with Mahāsammata.³ Familiar with royal authority and endowed with the [karmic] power of noble meritorious deeds [done in past lives], he subdued 364 independent domains and became the emperor of the island. Then he assembled the Sinhalese troops scattered around the island of Laṅkā which formerly decimated each other by mutual quarrels. From this great Sinhalese army – combining 2,425,000 mercenaries, who had been awarded with golden daggers, with a large army of about 995,000 navy-soldiers, who were likewise decorated for [previous] victories – he selected ten percent and sent 2,125,000 Sinhalese warriors to foreign countries.⁴ Having conquered the countries from the Sōlī and Paṇḍi kingdoms to Aramaṇa, he spread the realm of his sway to both his own country and foreign countries simultaneously. Thinking, “I will bolster the administrative texture of the kingdom in order to prevent any fragmentation of authority in Śrī Laṅkā”, he released the following enactment:⁵ “The efficacy of the principal offices – viz. prime minister, commander in

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1 [editorial note 1 in the original] Vikkamabāhu I.

2 [editorial note 2 in the original] Parākramabāhu I.

3 [editorial note 3 in the original] The mythical first king of human kind.

4 [editorial note 4 in the original] The incorrect calculation is due to a transmission error.

5 [editorial note 5 in the original] Several items of the list are not fully clear.

chief, heir apparent/vice king, heir presumptive/second vice king, chief secretary, chief administrator of the provinces, assistant minister, chief juridical officer, head of the mercentile groups, principal legal secretary, principal secretary for envoys, chief intelligencer, chief physician, chief astrologer and chief educator – as well as eight councils of scholarly experts, eight offices of trade taxes, four offices of finances, eight centres for elephant taming and 18,000 abodes for outcasts – all this shall be maintained without interruption.” Having issued this ordinance, he enjoyed strong royal governance.

With citizens save and happy, delighting through the virtues of the king,
Who exists for the protection of the people, pleasing in its forms,
Is the golden Pulatthinagara,⁶ with its houses tall like the king of mountains,
Home of great noble lords, the most excellent among the cities.⁷

In the area of the thus-described city of Poḷonnaru⁸ he had beautiful monasteries constructed: Purvārāma, Dakṣiṇārāma, Paścimārāma, Uttārārāma, Kapilavastu, Isipatana, Kusinārārāma, Vēḷuvanārāma, Jētavana, Laṃkātilaka, Trivaṃka, Ātubadlena and others.⁹ In these he made a Mahāsaṃgha of several thousand [monks] spend the rainy seasons. He caused to be build 360 Pariveṇas named with bardic epithets referring to his own recent heroic deeds:¹⁰ God of Death for the Coḷa Dynasty of Hostile Kings, Uprooter of Haughty Kings, Subduer of False Believes, Armour Against Injustice, Knower of the Constituents of Power, Conqueror of All Directions, Victor over the Enemies of Endless Love, Diamond Cage for those Having Come for Refuge, Heroism and Brilliancy that Foil the Opponent’s Plans, The Stainless One, Ruby Crest-Gem of All Sciences, Designer of Action and Counter-Action, Pararājagodhūmaghaṭṭanagharaḍa (?), Aivararāyagaḍa (?), Brother to the Wives of Other Men, Paramour of the Enemy King’s Courtesans, etc. Giving continuous support to 3,700 ordained Bhikṣus, he was living a contented life.

Then he heard how the Śāsana has been in decline for 1,254 years since the 15th year of the aforementioned King Vaḷagam Abhā up to the 4th year of his own reign, after the emergence of Split-Nikāyas due to evil monks who were accepting non-Dharmas as the Dharma, like the Vaitulyavāda and other non-Dharmas, which were – as explicated earlier – unfortunately transmitted after being produced by Tīrthakas of other [religious systems] in order to destroy the Śāsana. After he learned

⁶ [editorial note 6 in the original] Polonnaruva.

⁷ [editorial note 7 in the original] Various verses like this occur in Cūlv 73 which describes Parākramabāhu’s restoration of Pulatthinagara.

⁸ [editorial note 8 in the original] Pulatthinagara.

⁹ [editorial note 9 in the original] On these monasteries see Cūlv [Cūlavamsa] 73, Nicholas 1960, pp. 463–465 and Seneviratna 1998, pp. 91–204.

¹⁰ [editorial note 10 in the original] Some names are corrupt or unclear. They are discussed in the philological notes to the text edition.

about this issue he thought: “If a powerful Cakravartin like me, having repeatedly heard of the filth that has now befallen the utterly pure Śāsana of the Buddha, remained indifferent, the Śāsana of the Buddha would perish. Many living beings would go to hell. [Therefore,] I have to serve the Śāsana of the Buddha which is to persist for 5,000 years.” With his heart moved by compassion based on wisdom, he thought: “With which reverend’s help can I serve the thus violated Śāsana and cleanse it so that it is stainless again?” Then he approached the Mahāsaṃgha of the Mahāvihāravāsin headed by the Thera Mahākāśyapa of the Audumbagiri forest-hermitage who was endowed with a bulk of various virtues like complete faultlessness, helpful to the threefold Śāsana. Having informed them about the matter, he sent for several hundred ill-disciplined, evil Bhikṣus of the three Nikāyas Dharmaruci, Sāgalika and Vaitulyavāda who spoil the unstained Śāsana of the Omniscient One with their wrong practices. He assembled them in a creeper-bower and, standing there through the three watches of the night, he had them all removed from the Śāsana. Having [thus] purified the Śāsana of the Buddha he unified the three Nikāyas. By the power of this meritorious deed he was reborn, at the end of his life, as a god-king named Naradēva with the lifetime of a kalpa on top of a mountain of gold and silver in the Himālaya region which shines because of 84,000 golden mountain peaks.

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