

UNIFYING KINGSHIP

THE REIGN OF PARĀKRAMABĀHU I (1153–1186)

PARĀKRAMABĀHU IS OFTEN remembered, for good reason, as one of the most significant monarchs in Sri Lankan history. After a long period of internecine conflict, he unified the island politically, and ruled for an impressive thirty-odd years. This was a period, it seems, of relative stability in an otherwise turbulent time. He then initiated another unification, with greater ramifications for the later history of the Theravāda: an institutional reconciliation of the island's monastic lineages (*nikāyas*) into a single institution, headed by a single grandmaster (*mahāsvāmin*). This was accompanied by a "purification" (P. *parisuddha*) of the *saṅgha*, meaning in practice the expulsion of "sinful" (*pāpa*) monastics. Later Sri Lankan accounts, compiled by monks who by then associated themselves with the legacy of the Mahāvihāra, interpreted Parākramabāhu's unification and purification on sectarian and doctrinal lines.¹ The *Mahāvamsa* suggests that the purification occurred first, but only to Mahāvihāran monks. The "schismatic" Abhayagiri and Jetavana monks, who preached the "*Vetulla-piṭaka*" (likely a reference to Mahāyāna teachings) as the word of the Buddha, were brought into accord with the purified monk of the Mahāvihāra.² The later *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya* suggests instead that it was only the "ill-disciplined and impure" (Sin. *duṣṣrattipattin kelesana*) monks

1 Tilman Frasch notes that monastic accounts composed *outside* of Sri Lanka, however, seem "far less impressed" by Parākramabāhu's interventions: Frasch, "Kontakte, Konzile, Kontroversen," 139.

2 *Mahāvamsa*, ed. Geiger, ch. 78, vv. 20–28. These events are recounted twice, in *Mahāvamsa* chs. 73 and 78. Two explanations have been offered for this duplication. Geiger suggests that the compiler of this section of the *Mahāvamsa* was attempting to reconcile two separate accounts of Parākramabāhu's reign, and yet somehow did not notice the repetition of this key event at different points in time. Geiger, *Cūlavamsa*, 2:102n2. S. Wickramasinghe suggests instead that chapters 78 and 79 together act as a recapitulation of Parākramabāhu's most notable deeds. Wickramasinghe, "The Age of Parākramabāhu I," 15. We might note that the first of these two accounts, in ch. 73, is both shorter and decidedly less sectarian than the second.

of the Abhayagiri and Jetavana who were expelled. Mahāvihāran monks, apparently, required no purification.³

Modern scholars have therefore tended to interpret these events as a suppression of Mahāyāna Buddhism on the island, and a partisan victory for the “orthodox” Theravāda represented by the Mahāvihāra.⁴ This is a vast overstatement. As R. A. L. H. Gunawardana has long since shown, there is no evidence from the period itself that Parākramabāhu, or those involved in his reforms, were at all concerned with Mahāyāna doctrine or practice, or that the “unification” was intended to bring the Abhayagiri- and Jetavana-*nikāyas* under the Mahāvihāran heel.⁵ However, it is certainly true that the unification and purification favoured the Mahāvihāra, and established the circumstances under which later Lankan monks—including those who wrote the *Mahāvamsa* extension and the *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*—would come to understand themselves as heirs to the Mahāvihāran legacy. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the purification was led by a monk named Mahākāśyapa, the head incumbent of the Mahāvihāra-affiliated Diṃbulāgala monastery. Parākramabāhu’s inscription documenting this purification (discussed further below) itself quotes in Pali from Buddhaghosa’s *Samantapāsādikā* commentary.⁶ Finally, and perhaps most significantly, a series of new scholastic works firmly in the Mahāvihāran textual tradition were composed under Parākramabāhu’s largess, helping to set the future course of Theravāda thought and practice.

This chapter seeks to better understand the motivations behind Parākramabāhu’s reforms, and his relationship to the *saṅgha* in the post-reform period. Central to Parākramabāhu’s intervention into the *saṅgha*—and, therefore, to this chapter—is his “*katikāvata*” inscription (IC 6.13), carved on a monumental scale onto living rock at the site now called the Galvihāra. The inscription, like the earlier *sirit* inscriptions discussed in Chapter One, contains both a set of disciplinary injunctions (the *katikāvata* proper) and a record, in typical inscriptional style, of the circumstances under which those injunctions were promulgated. Unlike those earlier inscriptions, however, this is not directed to a single monastic community, but rather to the

3 *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*, ed. Samaranāyaka, 78–79; see on this account Bretfeld, “Theravāda.”

4 See most influentially Paranavitana, “Mahāyānism in Ceylon”; for a more recent argument see Bechert, “*Nikāyas*.”

5 Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, ch. 9.

6 IC 6.13, ll. 47–48, quoting from *Samantapāsādikā*, ed. Takakusu and Nagai, 4:1232.

entire *saṅgha* across the island. For this reason Ratnapala calls this the first “*sāsana-katikāvata*,” in contrast to the earlier “*vihāra-katikāvatas*,” a model which would be followed by subsequent monarchs from Parākramabāhu II onwards.⁷ However, we ought not to teleologically read this inscription as a first entry in a later tradition. Instead, we must read it in the context of the wider inscriptional and textual corpus available to Parākramabāhu I himself at the time of its creation. When we do so, several new insights become available to us.

First, I argue against the common assumption (again, furthered by later accounts) that Parākramabāhu was motivated in promulgating this *katikāvata* by the exemplar of Aśoka. I suggest instead that references to Aśoka made in the *katikāvata* inscription are in fact unprecedented within the Lankan inscriptional and literary corpus, and so must be treated as intentional innovations rather than timeless motivations. In the following section, I argue instead for millenarian concerns, on an explicitly Buddhaghosan timeframe, as a central motivation behind Parākramabāhu’s *saṅgha* intervention. We then turn to Parākramabāhu’s relationship with the scholar-monk Śāriputra, the first royally-appointed Grandmaster (*mahāsvāmin*) of the newly unified *saṅgha*. This relationship was evidently complex. Śāriputra describes himself, in his own writings, as a grateful recipient of Parākramabāhu’s support and patronage. But, drawing on archaeological evidence, I argue that Śāriputra’s support was vital to Parākramabāhu’s own control over Poḷonnaruva’s hinterlands, in which monastic institutions—now under Śāriputra’s administration, and unified legally and ritually by his jurisprudential interpretations—played a vital role in settling and developing semi-urban communities. This complicates yet further the ideal monk-monarch relationship we have seen described by other actors, like the royal preceptor Mugalan, in previous chapters. Finally, I turn to the wider inscriptional and material evidence available from Parākramabāhu’s reign, and the memory of him and his Grandmaster Śāriputra as key figures in the renaissance of Pali and Sinhala literature throughout the remainder of the early second millennium. This reputation is not entirely unfounded. As Gornall has argued, while royal influence on textual production was overstated by earlier scholars, “the reforms of Parākramabāhu I were a crucial moment in the monastic community’s cultural resurgence.”⁸ However, I show that this interest in Pali literature did not extend beyond the walls of the monastic *vihāra*.

⁷ Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*, 7–8.

⁸ Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*, 19.

The language politics of Parākrāmabāhu's kingship were far more firmly oriented towards Sanskrit and Tamil than they were a form of "Pali kingship."

Setting a Precedent

A common explanation of the motivations behind Parākrāmabāhu's purification and unification of the *śāsana* is that it was intended to emulate the earlier "precedent" of Aśoka, who famously presided over the Third Dharma Council (P. *dharmasaṅgīti*). The extent to which this model is said to have influenced Parākrāmabāhu varies throughout the historiography. Some scholars merely note that Parākrāmabāhu "had before him the example of the Emperor Aśoka,"⁹ or that he "followed the traditional model of Aśoka's *sāsana* reform."¹⁰ Others, however, go further. Stanley Tambiah, in his landmark study of Buddhist kingship across Southern Asia, tells us that the Aśokan precedent "can be shown to have acted down the ages as a model procedure imitated by the Buddhist kings of Ceylon and Siam."¹¹ Tambiah's wording is worth dwelling on. It gives the precedent itself a degree of historical agency, with which it "acts" on or through Parākrāmabāhu and his successors. In this section I argue for a more nuanced understanding of Parākrāmabāhu's relationship to the Aśokan precedent. Rather than simply continuing in an unchanging "tradition" of kings intervening in *śāsana* affairs, I suggest instead that references to Aśoka in Parākrāmabāhu's own account of his 1165 *katikāvata* were a deliberately crafted rhetorical device, employed among other such devices to *create* a precedent for his own intervention. The "tradition" of invoking Aśoka as justification for a *katikāvata* did not motivate Parākrāmabāhu, in other words; it was constructed by Parākrāmabāhu himself.

Arguments of Aśoka's "influence" on Parākrāmabāhu tend to rest heavily on the evidence of the *Mahāvamsa*, which indeed emphasizes the parallels between the two.¹² But Parākrāmabāhu also makes the parallel explicit in his *katikāvata* inscription:

like the great king Dharmmāśoka—who, having enlisted the *mahātera* Mogalliputtis (P. the *mahāthera* Mogalliputtatissa), approved by the Buddha as almost Buddha-like; expelled the sinful (*pāpa*) monks; suppressed

9 Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*, 221.

10 Bechert, "Nikāyas," 15.

11 Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, 168.

12 See, particularly, *Mahāvamsa*, ed. Geiger, ch. 78, v. 6.

(*māḍa*) those with incorrect views (*durllabdhī*); purified the blemishes on the *śāsana*; and caused the Third Dharma Council to be held—

[so too Parākramabāhu,] having exiled many hundreds of sinful monks from the Master's *sāsana*; created a single *nikāya* by unifying what was three *nikāyas*, disunified despite the great efforts of past kings, when there were Great Unfettered Ones (*mahākṣiṇāśrava*) endowed with groups of virtues such as the Six Knowledges (*IC* 6.13, ll. 11–13).

Parākramabāhu is, indeed, very explicitly comparing himself to Aśoka before him. But what prior studies overlook is the extent to which this parallel was itself an innovation on Parākramabāhu's behalf. When Max Deeg writes that Aśoka “had been elevated to a model status such that it became virtually impossible to speak of rulership and not think of Aśoka,” he was referring to the thoughts of premodern Buddhists.¹³ But we might equally take this as a comment on modern scholars, who tend to find Aśokan references wherever we look for them.

In East Asian contexts, of course, explicit references to Aśoka, and to the hagiographic *Aśokāvadāna*, are plentiful.¹⁴ Evidence of Aśoka's legacy in South Asia is less copious. The Sātavāhanas—arguably the imperial heirs to Aśoka's Mauryan polity—famously included an image of Aśoka, unambiguously labelled “*Rāyā Asoko*,” among those of their dynastic founders on the great *stūpa* at Kanaganahalli. The second Gupta monarch, Samudra (r. 335–376) left an inscription on an Asokan pillar. But these were outliers in the wider corpora of both Sātavāhana and Gupta inscriptional corpora, which are otherwise disinterested in drawing connections or parallels to Aśoka.¹⁵ Aśoka is similarly “ignored or reduced to a mere name in the dynastic lists of the *purāṇas*,” compiled throughout the first half of the first millennium CE.¹⁶ We do know that the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang was very interested in Aśoka's legacy during his travels through South Asia, and he tells us that local guides were eager to identify Aśoka's inscriptions as belonging to that king—even if modern scholarship suggests that the guides were unable to actually decipher the content of the inscriptions.¹⁷ But there

13 Deeg, “Aśoka,” 363.

14 Balkwill, “Metropolitan Buddhism,” 36–37; Barrett, “Stūpa, Sūtra, Śarīra,” 14–22; Bryson, “Images,” 100; Deeg, “Aśoka,” 370–72; McBride, “King Chinhüŋ,” 51. On the *Aśokāvadāna* see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*.

15 Sinopoli, “On the Edge of Empire,” 159–61.

16 Thapar, “Ashoka,” 34.

17 Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 6–7.

is little evidence that memories of Aśoka were of particular relevance to his political heirs in Southern Asia throughout the first millennium.

The situation may have differed in first-millennium Sri Lanka. The first-millennium historical narratives—the *Dīpavaṃsa*; *Mahāvamsa*; and Buddhaghosa's *Samantapāsādikā*—do laud Aśoka as a great monarch, and as a partisan for the institutional legacy with which the Mahāvihāran monks identified. Although these accounts are firmly hagiographic, it is likely that the “historical Aśoka” did indeed have a hand in introducing Buddhism to the island, and that his overtures to Lankan kings made quite an impression. Aśoka's regnal name, Devānam Piya (“Beloved of the Gods”) was emulated by multiple early Sri Lankan monarchs.¹⁸ This influence lasted throughout the first millennium. The ca. tenth century *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* attributes its elaborate *abhiṣeka* consecration ritual (discussed further below) to Aśoka, suggesting that he remained an influential reference point for idealized kingly behaviour throughout these centuries.

But, beyond the regnal name of early monarchs, these textual references to Aśoka do not seem to have translated into the realm of kingly practice. Aśoka does not appear to be referenced in any extant inscriptions prior to Parākramabāhu's invocation in the Galvihāra *katikāvata*. Lineages are frequently traced back to other varying-historical kings—particularly to Ikṣvāku, the mythical progenitor of the Solar Dynasty—and references are often made to Buddhism's long-past arrival on the island's shores. But Aśoka's name is never once mentioned in inscriptions as the monarch who sent those first missionaries; events so extensively lauded in the textual tradition. Nor is his memory invoked as a standard for kingship against which one might measure up. Aśoka may have come to serve as a “paradigm” for Buddhist kingship, as Tambiah and others have claimed, but there is no evidence of that paradigm in the inscriptions of Lankan kings prior to Parākramabāhu. To say only, then, that Aśoka's reform “became a model for later reforms” is to miss a crucial point: this particular later reform intentionally *made* that of Aśoka into its model.¹⁹ There is, in fact, good reason to think that we have gotten the association between Aśoka and Parākramabāhu entirely backwards. Rather than Parākramabāhu being “inspired” by a pre-existing memory of Aśoka, it is the later memories of Aśoka which were inspired by Parākramabāhu.

18 Deeg, “Aśoka,” 372.

19 Bechert, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, 31.

This reverse-attribution can be illustrated by turning, once again, to the title *cakravartin*. We have already noted that this title was unknown in pre-Poḷonnaruvan inscriptions; that it enters Sri Lankan political discourse first in Tamil-language inscriptions; and that Gajabāhu II was the first monarch (based on extant inscriptions) to use the title in Sinhala, with the notable prefix *aṇa-sakviti*. I argued in the preceding chapter that this prefix both (1) served a similar function to that of the *bala-cakravartin* in John Strong's reading of the *Aśokāvadana*, distancing the "mere" earthly *cakravartin* from the superhuman *cakravartins* of canonical and scriptural sources; and (2) drew specifically on Buddhaghosa's articulation of distinct *cakras* for kings (the *āṇā-cakka*) and monks (the *dhama-cakka*) in his account of Ajātaśatru, in which the former is firmly subordinate to the latter. In that chapter, I also began to argue, on the basis of their shared "treaty" inscription, that there may have been more continuity between Gajabāhu and Parākramabāhu than the *Mahāvamsa*'s telling lets on.

This argument is further supported by Parākramabāhu's reference, in the *katikāvata* inscription, to himself as an *ājñā-cakravartin*: the Sanskrit cognate of Gajabāhu's Sinhala *aṇa-sakviti*. The full section reads:

the Great King Śrīsaṃghabodhi Parākramabāhu—being anointed with the anointment of sole sovereignty over all the earth of Lanka, [and] possessing an abundance of manifest merit (*puṇya*)—having seen, while enjoying royal comforts, the gentlemen within the *śāsana* who were hell-bound, having been afflicted by the poisons of "lack of practice" (*apratipatti*) and "bad practice" (*duṣpratipatti*) caused by lack of knowledge (*ajñāna*) and bad knowledge (*durjñāna*; see further below); [thought] "If an *ajñā-cakravartin* like myself, seeing a stain like this, became indifferent with respect to the very pure Buddha-*śāsana*, [then] the Buddha-*śāsana* would be destroyed [and] many beings would go to hell. It would be good to do great service for the Buddha-*śāsana*, which was established for five thousand years" (*IC* 6.13, ll. 7–9).

Because Aśoka is so often considered a *cakravartin* by modern scholars, it would be easy to assume that Parākramabāhu was, once again, modelling himself after the earlier monarch in this claim to *cakravartin* status. But as I have shown elsewhere, Aśoka was simply not recognized as a *cakravartin* (let alone an "*ājñā-cakravartin*") in the first-millennium Sri Lankan textual tradition.²⁰ If Parākramabāhu did intend to link himself with Aśoka through this title, it was to the best of our knowledge a link being forged for the very first time.

20 Shirley, "Towards an Intellectual History of *Cakravartin* Kingship," 192–95.

Why might this *ājñā*- prefix have appealed to Parākramabāhu, beyond simply the link to Gajabāhu? We ought to note the significance of the context in which Buddhaghosa deployed the *āṇā-cakka/dhamma-cakka* distinction: Ajātaśatru's patronage of the First Dharma Council, an attempt to reconcile contradictions within the *saṅgha*. There is a clear parallel to the context of Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* inscription, in which he presents himself—like Ajātaśatru, in Buddhaghosa's narrative—as merely providing the opportunity for venerable monks like Mahākāśyapa to correct infelicities within the *saṅgha*. This parallel does not so readily apply to Gajabāhu, of course, who used the title *aṇasakviti* long before Parākramabāhu claimed to be an *ājñā-cakravartin*. Nonetheless, the adoption of this title by Gajabāhu and then Parākramabāhu left its mark on the later textual tradition.

Later Pali-language accounts of the Third Dharma Council follow their first-millennium predecessors in not naming Aśoka as a *cakravartin* of any kind. Sinhala-language texts post-Parākramabāhu, however, seem to be increasingly preoccupied with the “two wheels” model of sovereign-*saṅgha* relations. The *Pūjāvaliya* does not include the “I have the wheel of command” phrase in its account of the First Dharma Council.²¹ Nor does it refer to Aśoka by any form of *cakravartin* title. But it *does* warn us that it is the decline of the king's *ājñācakra* which leads to the decline of the *dharmacakra*.²² It later exhorts Lanka's kings to protect *both* of these wheels above ruling their own kingdom or securing the inheritance of their family.²³ The fourteenth century *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya* goes further, calling Aśoka an *ājñācakravartin*—the same title used in Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* inscription.²⁴ This is, to my knowledge, the earliest explicit reference to Aśoka as a *cakravartin* in the Sri Lankan textual tradition. It is no coincidence that it appears with the same distinctive prefix we have traced through the inscriptions of Gajabāhu II and Parākramabāhu I.

What I am suggesting here is that Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* cannot be explained as mere repetition of an earlier precedent, stretching back to the memory of Aśoka's patronage of the Third Dharma Council. Rather, it was an intervention into *saṅgha* affairs on a scale not previously witnessed within Lanka, for which Parākramabāhu intentionally *crafted* precedents: a parallel to the deeds of Aśoka (as recorded in earlier Pali texts), yes; but also

21 *Pūjāvaliya*, ed. Kiriālle Ñāṇavimala, 739.

22 *Pūjāvaliya*, ed. Kiriālle Ñāṇavimala, 733.

23 *Pūjāvaliya*, ed. Kiriālle Ñāṇavimala, 746.

24 *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*, ed. Samaranāyaka, 60.

an evocation of the “two wheels” of sovereign-*saṅgha* relations articulated by Ājatasātru (also as recorded in certain Pali texts, and drawn on earlier by Parākramabāhu’s uncle Gajabāhu II). Later accounts, from the *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya* onwards, would both take these two distinct points of reference at face value and conflate them. This resulted in the modern notions that Parākramabāhu intervened in the *saṅgha* “because” that is what Aśoka did; and that because Parākramabāhu associated his intervention with (*ājñā*) *cakravartin* status, so too must Aśoka be an *ājñā-cakravartin*.

This leaves open the question of motivation. If Parākramabāhu did not carry out his purification and unification of the *śāsana* because of a pre-existing Aśokan precedent, why did he do so? In the following section I suggest one possibility: a millenarian concern with the decline of the *śāsana*, framed in explicitly Buddhaghosan terms.

Millennial Discipline

As Ratnapala points out, the island-wide scale of Parākramabāhu’s *katikāvata* marks an important departure from earlier, community-specific interventions into monastic discipline.²⁵ We might wonder what prompted—or, more cynically, justified—such an increase in the scale of royal intervention. In this section, I suggest that Parākramabāhu’s intervention speaks to what we might call millenarian concerns about the inevitable decline, and eventual disappearance, of the Buddhist *śāsana*. I refer to these concerns as “millenarian” to align them with broader studies of:

movements and sects that embrace ideologies positing the (typically traumatic) end of one era, promising relief from the sufferings of this world and its present age, and purporting to give rise to salvation in a new “golden age,” “heaven on earth,” or realized utopian social order.²⁶

In recent years, such concerns have increasingly become the subject of analysis as “an active and motivating force in Buddhist history.”²⁷ However, given the explicitly Abrahamic origins of the term “millenarian,”²⁸ it would

²⁵ Ratnapala, *The Katikāvatas*.

²⁶ Hall, “Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements.”

²⁷ Turner, *Saving Buddhism*, 24.

²⁸ From the Latin *millēnārius*, “containing a thousand.” We also frequently see references to millennialism, from Latin *mille-annus*, “one thousand years.” Both refer to the thousand-year reign of Christ prophesied in Revelations 20:2–7. As discussed

be prudent to consider how exactly we are applying this term to historical Buddhism (i.e., prior to sustained contact with Christianity).

We can heuristically divide Buddhist attitudes towards decline into two broad groups, which I term “pessimistic millenarianism” and “optimistic millenarianism.” The former holds that the decline of the Buddha-*śāsana* is already too advanced to allow one to make significant soteriological progress within this life. This may also be compounded with concerns about the moral degradation of the world which is said to accompany such *śāsana*-decline. The only option available to pessimistic millenarians (in a Theravāda context, at least) is to await the salvific coming of the future Buddha Maitreya. This attitude motivated a large range of historical, Maitreya-oriented movements throughout Theravāda Buddhist history.²⁹ However, this “pessimistic” view does not account for the frequent occurrence, throughout Buddhist history, of individuals and groups who believed that *śāsana* decline—while inevitable—can be slowed down, or perhaps even temporarily halted, by their devout efforts; or, at minimum, that these efforts are worthwhile activities in and of themselves within certain timeframes.³⁰ I refer to this attitude as “optimistic millenarianism,” to capture the fact that it is motivated by dire eschatological concerns, but maintains the possibility of these concerns being delayed or even averted. The possibility of averting decline, I suggest, lies behind many key moments of “reform” throughout Buddhist history. This includes the *katikāvata* of Parākramabāhu I inscribed on the rockface of the Galvihāra.

Concerns with such decline suffuse the Galvihāra inscription, from the very opening lines. These read:

Our Buddha, having fulfilled the thirty perfections [in] a period lasting 104,000 innumerable and unlimited eons (*kalpas*); having ascended the seat [under] the Mahābodhi, which was the field of battle with Māra; having defeated the irresistible Māra with his entourage; having obtained a state of omniscience; having—by proceeding like a great raincloud [over the] four continents for forty-five years, extinguishing the beings aflame with the fires of sin (*kleśa*), in one hundred thousand *koṭis* (a crore, ten million) of various *kalpas*, with the ambrosial waters of *dhamma*—completed the duties [incumbent upon] every Buddha; passed away with the sphere of *nirvāṇa*

below, the number “one thousand” does not (consistently) have significance within Buddhist prophecies we might otherwise consider “millenarian.”

29 Collins, *Nirvana*, ch. 5.

30 Blackburn, “Buddhist Technologies”; Fräsch, “Buddhist Network”; Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*; Turner, *Saving Buddhism*.

without remainder (*nirupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇadhātu*) in the Sāla-tree Grove of the Malla Kings, near the city of Kusināra;

from the day of the Great King Valagam Abhā, four hundred and fifty-four years later;

when the *śāsana* was declining (*piriyemin*), its *nikāya* having been schismed [for] one thousand, two hundred, and fifty-four years;

arisen in the Solar Dynasty, from the lineage beginning with Mahāsammata; the king of kings, lustrous with rays of fame extended in various direction, the Great King Śrīsaṃghabodhi Parākramabāhu (*IC* 6.13, ll. 1–6).

Prior scholarship on this dating has, understandably, focused on the ability this gives us to specifically date Parākramabāhu's inscription (1,708 years after the Buddha's death, or 1165 CE). Taking this as a starting point, and the length of reigns given in texts like the *Mahāvamsa*, we can then calculate the regnal years for all other monarchs in Sri Lankan history. However, too little attention has been paid to Parākramabāhu's own calculations. As Anne Blackburn has shown, in reference to the inscriptions of the Sukhothai monarch Mahādharmarāja I, a monarch's ability to accurately reckon the precise date—specifically in reference to the decline of the Buddha-*śāsana*—was a significant technique of statecraft across the Indian Ocean world.³¹ We have good reason to believe that Parākramabāhu, too, was interested in such chronological accuracy because of concerns about decline. We might return here to how he describes his own assessment of the state of the *saṅgha*, and his motivation to intervene:

the Great King Śrīsaṃghabodhi Parākramabāhu—being anointed with the anointment of sole sovereignty over all the earth of Lanka, [and] possessing an abundance of manifest merit (*puṇya*)—having seen, while enjoying royal comforts, the gentlemen within the *śāsana* who were hell-bound, having been afflicted by the poisons of “lack of practice” (*apratipatti*) and “bad practice” (*duṣpratipatti*) caused by lack of knowledge (*ajñāna*) and bad knowledge (*durjñāna*; see further below); [thought] “If an *ājñā-cakravartin* like myself, seeing a stain like this, became indifferent with respect to the very pure Buddha-*śāsana*, [then] the Buddha-*śāsana* would be destroyed [and] many beings would go to hell. It would be good to do great service for the Buddha-*śāsana*, which was established for five thousand years” (*IC* 6.13, ll. 7–9).

As in the extract above, the language is decidedly Sanskritic rather than Pali-inflected. Nonetheless, there are two pieces of evidence here which strongly suggest that Parākramabāhu was thinking about *śāsana*-decline in

31 Blackburn, “Buddhist Technologies,” 76.

a uniquely Buddhaghosan manner; in other words, that he was drawing on what we might call a Theravādan textual tradition.

First, Parākramabāhu characterized the *śāsana* as being “established for five thousand years” (*pasvādahasak pavatnā*). Presumably by this he means that the *śāsana* was expected to last for five thousand years before its eventual, inevitable, disappearance. This temporal scale seems to be unique to Buddhaghosa’s chronology of *śāsana*-decline. As Jan Nattier has shown, the earliest such chronologies (including those given within the Pali Canon) assign an expiration date of just five hundred years.³² Notoriously, this date is given in texts dealing with the first ordination of female monastics (such as the *Gotamī-sutta*, and the opening of the *Vinaya’s Bhikkunīkkhandhaka*). In these texts, the Buddha is reported to have said that the inclusion of female renunciants reduced the lifespan of his *śāsana* from one thousand to a mere five hundred years. However, Buddhists living later than five hundred years after the death of the Buddha, and so in the period in which the *śāsana* ought to have died out, experienced what Nattier calls “a crisis of historical self-consciousness.” Many therefore revised their interpretation so that only the “true” *dharma* (the *saddharma*) would expire after five hundred years, but some version of the *dharma* would continue for varied periods thereafter: up to one thousand years after the Buddha’s death; or 1,500 years; or even as distant as ten thousand years (in some texts preserved only in Chinese canons). To our knowledge, however, only Buddhaghosa settled on a *śāsana* expiration date of five thousand years after the Buddha’s death.

It is possible, of course, that Buddhaghosa did not do so in isolation. Similar chronologies may have been outlined in texts of the Abhayagiri- and Jetavana-*nikāyas*, no longer extant. However, I have found only one earlier inscription which similarly refers to a five-thousand-year period. This is the Nelūbāva inscription of Gajabāhu II (*IC* 6.10, discussed in the preceding chapter), which records his donation to the Great Stūpa of the Mahāvihāra, said to have been established for five thousand years (in the same phrasing, *pasvādahasak pavatnā*). This stūpa is said to have been built by Duṭṭhagāmaṇi in the second century BCE, which might appear to be a different timeframe to that invoked by Parākramabāhu (five thousand years since the death of the Buddha). But we might note that this stūpa contains Buddha-relics: ongoing manifestations of the Buddha himself in the world. Buddhaghosa tells us that the final, total disappearance of the *śāsana* at the end of its five thousand years will be marked by the spontaneous disappearance of

32 Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, ch. 3.

all Buddha-relics; both *śāsana* and relics therefore have a coterminous five-thousand-year expiry date. We might therefore take Gajabāhu's Nelūbāva inscription as referring to the establishment of these *relics* for five thousand years, in conformity with Buddhaghosa's chronology of decline. If so, this common phrasing *pasvādahāsak pavatnā* in their inscriptions is yet another indication of an interest in Mahāvihāran texts shared by both Gajabāhu II and Parākramabāhu I.

The Galvihāra inscription aligns with a Buddhaghosan chronology of decline in more than just the sheer number of years until the total disappearance of the *śāsana*. Buddhaghosa offers us two distinct accounts of how the *śāsana* will gradually fade and ultimately disappear. The shorter of these accounts is found, in identical wording, in his commentaries on the *Bhikkunīkhandhaka* and the *Gotamī-sutta*: the two texts which blame the hastening of decline on female ordination.³³ This is the version which explicitly lays out a five-thousand-year chronology. A second, variant account is found in the early leaves of Buddhaghosa's *Manorathapūraṇī*.³⁴ Here, Buddhaghosa outlines five different kinds of "disappearances": the disappearance of attainments (*abhiḡamas*) of higher states of enlightenment; of proper Buddhist practice (P. *paṭipatti*; Skt. *pratipatti*); of learning (*pariyattī*), specifically the study of Buddhist scriptures; of the external signs (*līṅga*) of monastic discipline such as the wearing of robes and observance of chastity; and finally, once again, of the Buddha's relics. Modern scholars have tended to conflate these two accounts of decline, and assume that each of the five "disappearances" will occur in sequence, over a thousand-year period each. Chris Clark has shown, however, that this is not the case. There is no indication in Buddhaghosa's *Manorathapūraṇī* account that these five disappearances are sequential, or tied to a specific thousand-year span each.³⁵ Clark identifies the source of the confusion as George Cœdès's reading of a Thai inscription of Mahādharmarāja I (dated 1357). This inscription does indeed tell us that each of the "disappearances" takes place in thousand-year stages. Cœdès seems to have assumed that this sequential order was implied in the *Manorathapūraṇī* account.³⁶

33 Respectively *Samantapāsādikā*, ed. Takakusu and Nagai, 6:1291 and *Manorathapūraṇī*, ed. Kopp, 4:136–37.

34 *Manorathapūraṇī*, ed. Walleser, 1:87.

35 Clark, "A Note on the Disappearance."

36 Clark, "A Note on the Disappearance," 105. I have consulted the inscription in translation. Griswold and Nagara, "Epigraphy of Mahādharmarāja I," 98–101.

In other words, the “five stages of decline over five thousand years” model may have originated later than previously assumed. It appears explicitly in Mahādharmaśāstra’s 1357 inscription; I suspect that it is also implicit in, and the motivation behind, Parākramabāhu’s *katikāvata*. Parākramabāhu dates his inscription 1,708 years after the death of the Buddha: firmly in (and approaching the end of) the second of the thousand-year periods. This is the period in which (according to the sequential model) proper practice, *paṭipatti*, will slowly decline and eventually disappear forever. In Buddhaghosa’s account, the decline of practice is really a decline in monastic discipline (*śīla*): over the course of the millennium, small lapses eventually lead to more grievous infractions, finally resulting in the “disappearance of the last monk, either by breaking with discipline or the end of their life.”³⁷ It seems, to me, to be an unlikely coincidence that Parākramabāhu tells us his intervention into the *saṅgha* was motivated by the sight of monks bound for hell because of the poisons of “lack of practice” (*a-pratipatti*) and “bad practice” (*duṣ-pratipatti*) among the monks, necessitating disciplinary reform.

These two references together—the five-thousand-year establishment of the *śāsana* and the apparent decline in proper practice—seem to place Parākramabāhu’s inscription firmly in a Buddhaghosan understanding of *śāsana* decline. It should therefore be little surprise that to remedy this decline, he turned to Mahākāśyapa—a monk leading the Diṃbulāgala Vihāra, a monastery “dwelling in [the legacy of] the Mahāvihāra” (*mahāvihārādhivāsin*), Buddhaghosa’s own institution—to remedy the twin poisons of *a-pratipatti* and *duṣ-pratipatti* supposedly afflicting the *saṅgha*. We might also attend here to the cause (literally “root”) of these poisons given in the extract above: *a-jñāna* and *dur-jñāna*, respectively a “lack of” and “bad” knowledge. Given that Buddhaghosa distinguished between the decline of *paṭipatti* and the decline of *pariyatti* (“learning,” or more specifically scripture) as distinct phenomena, this cannot refer to a lack of/bad knowledge *in general*. Rather, I suspect that it refers specifically to knowledge about the proper conduct or practice expected of Buddhist monks. In other words, to exactly what the *katikāvata* proper, as formulated with the input of the *mahāvihārādhivāsin* Mahākāśyapa, seeks to address.

The *katikāvata* consists of a series of injunctions, each concluding with the polite imperative *yutu*, literally “is it proper” (from Skt. *yukta*). The first

On this inscription and the significance of its dates, Blackburn, *Buddhist-Inflected Sovereignties*, 84–85.

37 *Manorathapūraṇī*, ed. Walleser, 1:87.

of these injunctions (ll. 18–24) sets out the duties of fully ordained monks, divided into those engaged in scholarship (*granthadhura*, lit. “the book task”) or meditation (*vidarśanadhura*). The second injunction (l. 25) sets out, in considerably less detail, duties for novices (*heraṇanu*, from P. *sāmaṇera*). Among these duties are the study of ten named works, divided by ordination status and capacity.³⁸ In keeping with Parākramabāhu’s focus on proper practice, we should note that the majority of the texts are concerned with monastic discipline; we might further note that only two (the *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa-vinisa* and *Heraṇa-sikha*, both Sinhala-language disciplinary manuals) are not written in Pali. Despite the heavily Sanskrit-inflected Sinhala in which these injunctions are written, in other words, this is a firmly Pali-oriented curriculum of monastic discipline. The following injunctions are concerned with monastic travel outside of the *vihāra* (three *yutu* clauses, ll. 26–30); the daily routine of all members of the *saṅgha* (one clause, ll. 30–37);³⁹ proper decorum, particularly in interactions with others (seventeen distinct clauses, ll. 37–47); conditions of admittance to the monastic order (five clauses, ll. 48–49); and finally disciplinary procedure (two clauses, ll. 50–51). I read these together as seeking to thoroughly regulate every aspect of monastic practice. With the *katikāvata* so articulated, none could possibly plead “lack of knowledge” (*a-jñāna*) as justification for lack of practice (*a-paṭipatti*).

Together, the above suggests that a Buddhaghosan chronology of decline provided the context for Parākramabāhu’s unification and purification of the *saṅgha*, with its particular focus on monastic “practice” (P. *paṭipatti*). He attempted to rectify this *paṭipatti* decline on a scale not evident in the earlier disciplinary inscriptions of Anurādhapuran kings, which seem to have been confined to the inhabitants of single monasteries, rather than to

38 Fully ordained monks are enjoined to study “[1] the *Kudusikha* (P. *Khuddasikhā*) and [2] *Pāṃok* (P. *Pātimokkha*) from the Vinaya, and also [3–5] the three *Dasadham-sūtras* (P. *Dasadhamma-sutta*) and [6] the *Anumāna-sūtraya* from the *Sutata* (P. *suttanta*, i.e., the *Sutta-piṭaka*)” (l. 19). Those unable to carry out this task are encouraged instead to study “[7] the *Mul-sikha* (P. *Mūlasikkha*) and [8] the *Sekhiyā*, [and also] recite [9] the *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa-vinisa*” (l. 22). Novices are to study only the *Sekhiyā*, *Dasadham*, and additionally [10] the *Heraṇa-sikha* (l. 25). The latter work, like the *Sikhavaḷaṇḍa*, is an early Sinhala-language disciplinary manual (Godakumbura 1955, 18–19). I do not include among these ten works the *Catusampajamṇā-kathāya*, which lays out a daily agenda to be followed by meditation-focused monks (l. 24).

39 This clause addresses “elders, novices, middlers, every dweller in the *saṅgha*.” I therefore take this as intentionally more capacious than the earlier sections addressed specifically to either ordained monks or novices; *all* of those in the *saṅgha* must follow this particular routine, no matter their rank or specific tasks.

the entire monastic order. Moreover, Parākramabāhu's precise calculations that he lived in the second millennium after the Buddha's death, and the references to the decline of *paṭipatti*, suggest that he understood the latter to be a feature of this particular millennium, in ways that the later Thai inscription of Mahādharmarāja I would make more explicit. In other words, this may be an early witness of the "five stages of decline across five millennia" model which modern scholars would read back into Buddhaghosa's *Manorathapūraṇī*.

This acceptance of a Buddhaghosan chronology, and therefore evidence of engagement with Buddhaghosa's works, seems to have been connected with the appointment of the monk Mahākāśyapa to lead Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* creation. Of course, we cannot be certain of the causality. Was a *mahāvihārādhivāsin* monk appointed to this position because Parākramabāhu was already inclined towards a Buddhaghosan eschatology? Or was it Mahākāśyapa himself who framed the *katikāvata* in the millenarian context laid out by his Mahāvihāran predecessor? How might we further connect Sundarā's earlier patronage of Mahākāśyapa's monastery, or the time a young Parākramabāhu spent (per *Mahāvamsa* ch. 66, vv. 110–158) as an honoured guest in the court and kingdom of Sundarā's son Gajabāhu II? The available evidence offers no clear answers to these questions. It does, however, strongly suggest that these are questions worth asking. There were more factors involved in Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* inscription than later narratives would have us believe.

Parākramabāhu and the Grandmaster Śāriputra

The *katikāvata* inscription laid out a clear disciplinary and textual foundation for the newly unified *saṅgha*, based on a corpus of Pali *vinaya* texts with Sinhala commentaries. However, the *saṅgha* must still have been divided on a large number of interpretive points—including points of *vinaya* interpretation, which if unaddressed might threaten the *saṅgha*'s ritual and legal integrity. Further intervention was necessary. As Alastair Gornall has convincingly shown, the "reform" of the *saṅgha* was by no means a single event, but rather a process which continued long after the deaths of Parākramabāhu, Mahākāśyapa, and many others involved in the initial *katikāvata*.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, a significant first step in this process was taken

40 Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*, 43–48 and *passim*.

by the monk Poḷonnaruve Śāriputra (P. Śāriputta, Sin. Sāriyut), the first Grandmaster (*mahāsvāmin*) of Parākramabāhu's newly unified *saṅgha*.⁴¹

Śāriputra played a key role in the post-*katikāvata saṅgha*. In addition to his formal administrative role as head of the *saṅgha*, he produced a rather staggering volume of scholarly literature, spanning three languages and a range of subjects. Only five of these works are still confirmed extant:

1. The *Sārāthadīpanī*, a Pali subcommentary on Buddhaghosa's *Vinaya* commentary called *Samantapāsādikā*.
2. The *Pālimuttakavinayavinicchayaśaṅgaha* (sometimes called *Vinayaśaṅgaha*), a Pali compendium based on the *Sārāthadīpanī*.
3. The *Anuttānatthadīpanī* (sometimes called *Vinayaśaṅgaha-ṭīkā*), a Pali autocommentary on the *Vinayaśaṅgaha*.
4. The *Sārāthamañjūsā*, a Pali subcommentary on Buddhaghosa's *Aṅguttaranikāya* commentary called *Manorathapurāṇī*.
5. The *Abhidharmārthasaṅgraha-sannaya*, a Sinhala commentary on Anuruddha's (ca. tenth century) *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*.

Additionally, references in both the colophons of these works and in the later *Saddhammasaṅgaha* (a bibliographic work dated to the fourteenth century) have allowed Primoz Pecenko to identify a further six works.⁴² None are confirmed extant; the only one about which we have further information is the *Pañcīkālāṅkāra*, a Sanskrit commentary on the grammatical work *Cāndravyākaraṇaṭīkā*.⁴³ For the remaining five, nothing more is known than their names (respectively *Visuddhipathasaṅgaha*, *Kammaṭṭhānasaṅgaha*, *Maṅgalasuttaṭīkā*, *Sampasādanī*, and *Padāvatāra*).

Among Śāriputra's extant writings, the *Vinaya* works are particularly significant. Kate Crosby has suggested that these served an important function in the newly unified *saṅgha*, of reconciling—or, at least, attempting to reconcile—potentially conflicting interpretations of monastic law.⁴⁴ This gives us some indication of why Śāriputra might have been so important to

⁴¹ Śāriputra does not use this title in his own works. However, see Rohanadeera, "Mahāsāmi Sangha Rāja."

⁴² Pecenko, "Śāriputta and His Works." On the *Saddhammasaṅgaha* see Norman, *Pāli Literature*, 179–80.

⁴³ Dragomir Dimitrov has identified a manuscript in Cambridge University Library (Or.1278) as a potential copy of this work: Dimitrov, *The Bhaikṣukī Manuscript of the Candrālāṅkāra*.

⁴⁴ Crosby, "Śāriputta."

Parākramabāhu: he was, perhaps, responsible for maintaining the internal cohesion of his newly unified *saṅgha*. He seems to have been largely successful in this endeavour within the island itself, although further afield his interpretations were met with more reservation. A South Indian monk, Cōḷa Mahākāśyapa, wrote his own *Vinaya* treatise, the *Vimativinodanī*, in response to Śāriputra's *Sārattḥadīpanī*, in which he famously accuses Śāriputra of having been waylaid at one point by the teachings of "schismatics like the Abhayagiri."⁴⁵ This suggests that, in Mahākāśyapa's eyes, the true heirs to the legacy of the Anurādhapuran Mahāvihāra's textual tradition were not to be found on Lanka, but rather across the Palk Strait in the Cōḷa heartlands: a significant claim.

Even if his interpretations were not universally accepted, it seems that Śāriputra was a major figure on the island itself, enjoying considerable royal favour. His major *Vinaya* sub-commentary, the *Sārattḥadīpanī*, concludes by describing the rather opulent circumstances of its production:

This commentary (*vaṇṇanā*) for the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā*, which is undertaken to enhance the *sāsana* and for the sake of skill in the *vinaya*, called *Sārattḥadīpanī*, is complete; it comprises in total 30,000 *ganṭhas*.⁴⁶ I, invited by this Lord of Men Parākramabāhu—illuminator of the *sāsana*, who longs for the continuance of the good *dhamma*—in the beautiful [*vihāra*] built by him, adorned with a hundred terraces/palaces (*pāsādas*, Skt. *prasādas*), lush with various excellent trees, a place to delight in meditation, dwelling in this Jetavana, which abounds in cool waters, have made this sound analysis, complete in both meaning and letter.⁴⁷

Here Śāriputra tells us that not only did Parākramabāhu commission the sub-commentary; he also established a rather well-furnished monastery for the Grandmaster. The archaeological record seems to support Śāriputra's claims. A large monastic complex is located directly north of the city, and while it does not have a *hundred* terraces or palaces, it is generally identified as Śāriputra's Jetavana. This choice of name should not escape our notice. The primary reference is the Buddha's own historical monastery; the more proximate connection, of course, would have been Anurādhapura's Jetavana monastery and associated *nikāya*. This is a useful indication that neither Parākramabāhu nor Śāriputra, despite their Mahāvihāran leanings,

⁴⁵ See most comprehensively Kieffer-Pülz, "Die Klassifizierung."

⁴⁶ While *grantha/gantha* often means a discrete textual composition (a "book"), Lawrence McCrea has suggested in personal communication that here it might follow South Indian usage in referring to a smaller unit of text-length.

⁴⁷ *Sārattḥadīpanī*, Chatṭha Saṅgāyana edition, 3:418.

were as hostile to the Mahāvihāra's rivals as later accounts made out. The *Mahāvamsa*, significantly, seems to have renamed the monastery "Āḷaḥaṇa," likely to remove the association with the Anurādhapuran *nikāya*.⁴⁸

Whatever the name, the scale of Śāriputra's monastic dwelling is indicative of the benefits he received from royal patronage. In several of his writings, he attributes this patronage to the support of Diṃbulāgala Mahākāśyapa, the monk appointed by Parākramabāhu to oversee his *katikāvata* interventions.⁴⁹ It seems likely that Mahākāśyapa was Śāriputra's monastic preceptor, formally sponsoring his higher ordination, and that he introduced Śāriputra to the king. Śāriputra in turn seems to have leveraged his own position to elevate his own chosen disciples: many of those involved in the great flourishing of Pali and Sinhala literature in the subsequent generation identify themselves as Śāriputra's students, and thank him for his support.⁵⁰ As Alastair Gornall has argued, we cannot simplistically reduce the efflorescence of Pali-language writing post-Parākramabāhu I to the largess of kingly patronage.⁵¹ However, it is clear that elite monasticism was closely entwined with the royal court during Parākramabāhu's reign.

Our sense of this entanglement is strengthened by recent archaeological findings in the hinterlands of both Poḷonnaruva and, for an earlier period, Anurādhapura. Historians had generally assumed that the settling and administration of the hinterland was largely the responsibility of monarchs in Southern Asia: this is, after all, what Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, the most famous Sanskrit-language treatise on kingship, tells us.⁵² However, it has become increasingly evident that in both Sri Lanka and South India, religious institutions often formed the nucleus of emergent communities, and in various cases served as an administrative, commercial, and even industrial hub as those communities developed. During the Anurādhapura period, the existence of three rival *nikāyas* with distinct networks of monastic communities across the hinterland resulted in a heterarchical pattern of settlement and administration.⁵³ Once the *saṅgha* was unified by Parākramabāhu, however, this inter-*nikāya* rivalry was no longer a factor, and so the hinterland

48 See *Mahāvamsa*, ed. Geiger, ch. 78, vv. 48–70. This is the name most commonly used today.

49 See, e.g., *Sāratthadīpanī*, Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana edition, 1:1–3.

50 It is for good reason that Chapter Ten of Malalasekera, *Pāli Literature* is titled "Śāriputra's Circle."

51 Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*.

52 See, e.g., the discussion in Coningham et al., "The State of Theocracy," 700–1.

53 Coningham et al., "Archaeology and Cosmopolitanism."

could be settled in a more centrally planned manner.⁵⁴ The ongoing unity of the monastic community, in other words, was central to the ongoing unification of the island's non-monastic communities beyond the royal city itself. Given this context, it is little wonder that Śāriputra and his textual project of reconciling disciplinary differences received so much royal support.

In short, it seems that Śāriputra's intellectual output was (in his own words) the product of royal patronage; that he leveraged his position to further the careers of his chosen disciples; and that all of these efforts may have served to settle and administer Poḷonnaruva's hinterland, through the establishment and development of new monastic communities under Śāriputra's authority. This is, it seems to me, a thoroughly political context. To acknowledge this is not to suggest that the *saṅgha* was merely a tool of royal (or "state") control. As Gornall has shown, the *saṅgha* maintained and asserted its own legal and political independence throughout this period.⁵⁵ However, it does suggest that Śāriputra's writings on kingship—and his references to Parākramabāhu in particular—should be taken very seriously indeed.

The volume of Śāriputra's writings, and the extent to which he recycled materials from earlier works, makes it difficult to survey his writings on kings and kingship comprehensively. Nonetheless, comparing the penultimate verses of his *Sāratthadīpanī*—his longest and perhaps most influential work—with the later *Anuttānatthadīpanī* provides us with a sense of how he may have thought about the proper relationship between kings and the Buddha-*sāsana*. The *Sāratthadīpanī* concludes:

sadā rakkhantu rājāno dhammeneva imampajaṃ |
niratā puññakammesu jotentu jinasāsanaṃ ||

May it always be **by dhamma** that kings protect this world, and devoted to acts of merit make shine the *sāsana* of the Conqueror!⁵⁶

The penultimate line offers us a rather explicit exhortation to future kings: that they protect the world (meaning, in practice, the people in the world, from both external threats and hardship) by *dharma*. The emphatic particle *eva* after *dharma* above adds considerable weight to this exhortation: it is *by dharma and dharma alone* that kings should carry out their fundamental duty. The *Anuttānatthadīpanī*, Śāriputra's commentary on his own *Vinaya* compendium, which Kate Crosby has shown is in turn closely based on the

⁵⁴ Manuel et al., "Low Density Urbanism in Medieval Sri Lanka."

⁵⁵ Gornall, *Rewriting Buddhism*, 135–37, 205–8, and *passim*.

⁵⁶ *Sāratthadīpanī*, Chatṭha Saṅgāyana edition, 3:418.

Sāratthadīpanī, offers a variant reading. The *Anuttānatthadīpanī* closely follows the colophon of *Sāratthadīpanī*, but with one important shift in this penultimate verse:

*sadā rakkhantu rājāno **dhammañ c’eva** imampajaṃ |*
niratā puññakammesu jotentu jinasāsanaṃ ||

May it always be **dhamma** and this world that kings protect, and devoted to acts of merit make shine the *sāsana* of the Conqueror!⁵⁷

This is a minor shift in reading, which—in the absence of robust critical editions of both texts—could be due to little more than scribal errors. But both readings are, at minimum, metrically valid. This could suggest a shift in the imagined relationship between kingship and *dharma*: in the earlier *Sāratthadīpanī*, *dharma* guides or otherwise enables kings to carry out their protective duty towards the world; in the later *Anuttānatthadīpanī*, kings are responsible for protection of world and *dharma* alike. In both formulations, the relationship between king and *dharma* is significant. But the later places, perhaps, more of an obligation on the king: not just to be guided by the *dharma*, but to actively protect and preserve it.

Perhaps the most striking discussion of kingship in Śāriputra’s corpus comes from the historical introduction (*nidāna-kathā*) of the *Sāratthadīpanī*, in which he includes a full procedure for the royal *abhiṣeka* consecration ceremony. He borrows this procedure from an earlier text, the ca. tenth century *Vamsathappakāsini*, which has already been productively analyzed by both Sujatha Gunasena and Jonathan Walters.⁵⁸ At minimum, this is the procedure which Śāriputra is implicitly suggesting that kings like Parākramabāhu *ought* to follow. It is at least possible that Parākramabāhu underwent this particular procedure himself. What is most interesting about this procedure is that Buddhist monks are nowhere to be seen in the ritual. The consecration is instead to be carried out by a *kṣatriya* maiden, the hereditary royal priest (*purohita*), and the treasurer (P. *seṭṭha*), respectively representing the communities (*gaṇas*) of *kṣatriyas*, Brahmins, and householders. We might reasonably interpret the *kṣatriyas* as representing military power held by regional political elites, with the “*kṣatriya* maiden” as a stand-in for marriage alliances made with those groups; the treasurer and householders would therefore represent economic power. But why Brahmins and a hereditary priest instead of Buddhist monks? After all, we saw in Chapter Four

⁵⁷ For an edition and translation of the *Anuttānatthadīpanī* colophon see Crosby, “Śāriputta,” 52–53.

⁵⁸ Gunasena, “Kingship,” ch. 4; Walters, “Buddhist History,” 130.

that patronage of a *brahmadeya* was, for most modern historians, evidence that Gajabāhu II was an inadequately Buddhist monarch—and yet here we have Parākramabāhu’s favoured monk Śāriputra claiming that Brahmins were central to an important royal ritual.

What seems to be at work here is a division of ritual labour between monks and Brahmins, with the performance of *royal* rituals left to the latter. We should not take this, for the reasons outlined above, as a genuine disinterest in what we would today call “the political.” After all, as Joseph Walser points out, “the fact that religious virtuosi and texts from time to time make a *display* of being distinct or indifferent to political concerns and stakes is not really an argument that they were not essential to the exercise of political authority.”⁵⁹ We might instead interpret this division of labour as an attempt by monks like Śāriputra to set themselves aside from and above such mundane concerns as the consecration of kings—all the while, as the evidence documented above suggests, they were both engaged with the affairs of the court and furthering the practical control of Poḷonnarvan monarchs in the hinterlands. Whatever Śāriputra’s motivation for ascribing to Brahmins and the royal *purohita* such a central role in the *abhiṣeka*, it reflects a broader trend across Buddhist Southeast Asia. Still today, hereditary Brahmins are employed in the Thai monarch’s *abhiṣeka* consecration.⁶⁰

What makes the relationship between the consecrators and consecratee in Śāriputra’s *abhiṣeka* procedure yet more striking is that it is conditional. Each of the three consecrators approach the king in turn, and while pouring sacred water over his head recite a variant of the following:

Lord, with this consecration all the groups of *khattiyas* (Skt. *kṣatriyas*) make [you into their] consecrated *mahārāja*, for the purpose of their own protection. Rule, firm in the *rājadhammas*, through *dhamma* and impartiality (*sama*, Skt. *sama*)! Have a heart of paternal compassion, and a heart of goodwill (*hita*), tranquility (*sama*, Skt. *śama*), and loving-kindness with respect to these same groups of *khattiyas*! And let them protect, defend, and guard you [in turn].

...

Those who say the above [then say further], as though cursing the king: “If you rule according to our words, that is beneficial (*kusala*). If you do not, may your head split in seven!”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Walser, *Genealogies*, 266.

⁶⁰ McGovern, “Balancing the Foreign and the Familiar”; Skilling, “King, *Śaṅgha*, and Brahmins.”

⁶¹ *Sārattadīpanī*, Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana edition, 1:146–47; quoting from *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, ed. Malalasekera, 1:305.

This seems, in many ways, to be a return to the “elective” model of political thought introduced in Chapter One. The king is elected by, and to represent the interests of, three powerful communities—and, crucially, if the king fails to live up to expectations, there is an explicit and dire penalty.⁶² “Kingship” here is something granted, which must be performed according to strict moral expectations (the ten *rājadharmas*, through *dharma* and impartiality), else it can once again be taken away. To be clear, if this *abhiṣeka* procedure was actually practised in medieval Sri Lanka, the “election” described here was almost certainly symbolic. But such symbols of support from elite communities nonetheless had power. More importantly, that Śāriputra chose to copy such a procedure (and such a threat!) from the *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī* into his own *Sāratthadīpanī* provides us with an interesting insight into his views on kingship. Despite the gratitude he shows to his kingly patron in the final verses of the *Sāratthadīpanī*, his *abhiṣeka* procedure suggests that he did not believe kingship to be unconditional.

Śāriputra’s relationship with Parākramabāhu was evidently complex, and possibly even conflicted. On the one hand, both men clearly benefitted from their association with the other. Śāriputra had a position of prestige from which he could write his scholarly texts and guide the newly unified *saṅgha* across the island. Parākramabāhu, meanwhile, ensured that the *saṅgha* stayed unified on disciplinary grounds, and saw an increasingly centralized network of monastic communities settle and administer the hinterlands of his realm. At the same time, we should not reduce this relationship to a purely symbiotic union: the “thugs and legitimators” model of Ernst Gellner, in which monks happily (re)produce the ideological basis for kingly rule.⁶³ As the example above demonstrates, Śāriputra’s *abhiṣeka* procedure suggests that his view of kingship was not unconditional, but rather in service of elite communities and constrained by moral expectations. Looking forwards, as Gornall has shown, monk-monarch relations even after Parākramabāhu’s *katikāvata* were rarely stable and often contentious. They were, however, always intertwined. The *nature* of the relationship,

62 This threat of a head splitting into seven pieces originates in the *Upaniṣads*, and was later incorporated into Pali canonical materials. Black, *The Character of the Self in Ancient India*, 80–88; Black, “Ambaṭṭha and Śvetaketu,” 154–58. Black shows that head-splitting is a motif characteristic of formal debate (*brahmodya*) and, even in the early Pali materials, is invoked only as a forfeit for loss in debate rather than a punishment for wrong-doing. This seems very distinct from the context presented in the *abhiṣeka* procedure, which borrows the wording but not the *brahmodya* context.

63 Gellner, *Plough, Sword, and Book*; for its application in Buddhist Southern Asia see Collins, *Nirvana*, 12.

and the obligations owed by a king to the *śāsana*, was ever up for debate. But the centrality of this relationship to the functioning of a Buddhist kingdom was not.

The Politics of Language and the Languages of Politics

We have seen that the explosion of Pali scholasticism associated with Śāriputra and his disciples was thoroughly enmeshed with, and perhaps even indebted to, royal patronage. But we should not mistake this efflorescence of Pali-language monastic scholarship, even if attributed to Parākrāmabāhu's largesse, as evidence of a newfound interest on his behalf in what we might call "Pali kingship." There is little evidence that this royal interest in Pali literary productivity was reflected in Parākrāmabāhu's material culture—his inscriptions and edifices—or in how Poḷonnaruva's kings (from Parākrāmabāhu onwards) represented themselves as kingly. Parākrāmabāhu's reign may have ushered in an "Augustan Age" for Pali, as Malalasekera describes it, but this did not extend beyond the realm of monastic textuality.

Parākrāmabāhu's inscriptions are particularly useful evidence for us because, despite the praise heaped upon him as a patron of scholarly works (discussed above), we know of no literary works which were created directly under Parākrāmabāhu's patronage, or which position their authors as members of his court. This means our only written evidence of his vision of kingship comes from his inscriptions, of which only nine are extant.⁶⁴ None, tellingly, is written in Pali: all are written in some combination of Sinhala, Tamil, and Sanskrit. We have already noted in the (Sinhala-language) *katikāvata* inscription itself a decided preference for Sanskrit loanwords over Pali; this is reflective of the language practice among his other Sinhala-language inscriptions, none of which is marked by clear Pali loanwords. This suggests far more continuity with the visions of kingship described in earlier chapters than the explosion of Pali literature might suggest.

This continuity with earlier models of kingship is perhaps most evident in the inscription at Devanagala, created in Parākrāmabāhu's twelfth regnal year (ca. 1165 CE). As Ranawella notes, the opening of this inscription is nearly identical to those of Vijayabāhu and, before him, Mahinda IV—but

⁶⁴ Namely *IC* 6.13 through 16; *IC* 6.18 through 22; and *TISL* 53. *IC* 6.17 marks a private donation which happens to be dated in a regnal year of Parākrāmabāhu I; *IC* 6.23 (which is included in the Parākrāmabāhu chapter of *IC*) marks a donation by his widow Candavatī, which is discussed in Chapter Seven below.

it also closely follows the inscriptions of Gajabāhu II and Sundarā (e.g., *IC* 6.9 and 7 respectively, discussed in the preceding chapter).⁶⁵ In fact, other than the final line—offering an explanation for the name Parākramabāhu (“Whose Arms Are Mighty”)—every clause is borrowed from earlier inscriptions:

Born in the royal lineage of Okā (Skt. Ikṣvāku)—who excelled in a collection of virtues resplendent, unequalled, and supreme in the world and who subjugated the other *kṣatriya* families of Jambudvīpa—lord by descent of the earth of the island of Lanka who is the primary consort to the best of the *kṣatriya*; who anointed the heads of other kings with the rays of light reflected from his own toenails; who surpassed the sun in ascetic heat (Skt. *tapas*), Mehesuru (Maheśvara, i.e., Śiva) in expressed anger, Uvindu (Upendra, likely Viṣṇu) in pride, Surindu (Indra) in kingly conduct, the God of Wealth (Kubera) in continuous giving, Kitisuru in *satseta*, Suraguru (Bṛhaspati) in essential wisdom, the moon in munificence, Kadavu in bodily excellence, [and] the *bodhisattva* in the splendour of compassion; who, having mounted the scale-pan adorned with vestments which radiate kingly splendour, including the crown, had narratives of his glory spread across the entire world, by filling the ocean—which is the heart of every pauper spread across various countries (*deśas*)—with the flood of alms, [consisting of] unlimited and varied gems and treasures from the wishing-tree of his own body; who has the might (*parākrama*) of a lion in crushing the skulls of elephants, which are enemy kings: Parākramabāhu *vat himiyan vahansē* (*IC* 6.15, ll. 1–11).

Other inscriptions, meanwhile, incorporate more extensive uses of Sanskrit verse than we have seen in earlier periods. These inscriptions have only recently been made available to scholars in *Inscriptions of Ceylon* vol. 6; even here the Sanskrit is imperfectly edited, with no translations attempted. One inscription (*IC* 6.16) is absent altogether, as Ranawella was unable to locate an estampage within the Department of Archaeology archives. A set of pillar-inscriptions (*IC* 6.18–22) record, in both Sinhala and Sanskrit prose, irrigation works carried out by Parākramabāhu “for the benefit of the entire world” (*viśvalokārtham*). It is unclear why it was important to Parākramabāhu that these particular works have bilingual pillars established for them; nor is it clear why one of these pillars features an additional Sanskrit verse, which sadly has so far frustrated editorial attempts.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ranawella, in *IC*, 6:42.

⁶⁶ See discussion in Shirley, “Buddhism, Gender, and Politics,” 200–1.

One more pillar inscription is worth particular attention. This is dated in Parākramabāhu's regnal years, but is attributed to an official (*adhikāra*) called Tiṣyādimāra (Sin. Tisa Mārana), carrying out orders on behalf of the monarch, and supposedly expressing Parākramabāhu's own words (*vadan*):

[Sinhala prose:] Śrī! On the second day of the month Vāp in the ninth year of Śrīsaṅghabodhi Parākramabāhu *vat himiyan vānse*—who is descended from the royal lineage which descends from Mahasamuva (Mahāsammata); possessing glory, fame, and lustre spreading across the ten limits; being furnished with epithets (*viruda*) such as “Lover of Enemy Kings’ Concubines” (*arirājaveśyābhujāṅga*)—this [inscription] praises the [village] Mārānhālla, founded by the *adhikāra* Vatakāmi Dālābim Tisa Mārānāvanā *svāmī*, who possesses the epithet “Terror of Other Kings” (*pararājabhayaṅkara*), while he was the *atvasundhura*⁶⁷ of the Māyā Country, so that it may last for a long time, until the dawn of a *kalpa*, for five thousand years.⁶⁸

[Sanskrit verse:] Śrī! [The above was done] by the minister Tiṣyādimāra—the Terror of Other Kings, who is titled in recognition of his public works (*vāstukarma*) as an *adhikāra*—on the orders of King Śrīsaṅghabodhi, named Parākramabāhu, who is associated with teachings which delight the mind.

[Sinhala prose:] These are the words [of] Pārākum, called Lord Śrīsaṅghabo, who preserves the earth-maiden which illuminates the Lord of Lanka (IC 6.14).

Tiṣyādimāra's inscription operates in multiple linguistic registers to an even greater extent than the irrigation pillar-inscriptions described above. Here we see names and epithets articulated in both Sanskritic and “pure” (*eḷu*) Sinhala forms, including the rather striking “Lover of Enemy Kings’ Concubines” (*arirājaveśyābhujāṅga*) for Parākramabāhu. This does indeed seem to have been a regnal name used by Parākramabāhu: it appears in the later *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*, where we are told it was (rather incongruously!) applied to a monastic *vihāra*.⁶⁹ Further evidence for its contemporary usage by Parākramabāhu himself is discussed below.

For now, let us note that these inscriptions together suggest for Parākramabāhu an interest in Sanskrit-language inscriptional practices which exceeds that of any preceding Lankan monarchs. With the notable exception of the famous Jetavana inscription (*EZ 1.1*), written entirely in

⁶⁷ An official title related in some way to regional administration.

⁶⁸ The temporal range intended here is unclear. Given that a *kalpa* is so much longer than “five thousand years,” it seems to me that this is merely rhetorical repetition and exaggeration for emphasis.

⁶⁹ *Nikāya-saṅgrahaya*, ed. Samaranāyaka, 78.

Sanskrit verse and in Nāgarī script, Sanskrit had been almost entirely peripheral to Lankan inscriptional culture prior to the reign of Parākramabāhu.⁷⁰ We ought also to note that our earliest evidence of Parākramabāhu's interest in Sanskrit comes, once again, from the "treaty inscription" discussed in the preceding chapter; we might therefore suspect that this, too, was an interest which emerged in some conjunction from his uncle.

Finally, we have Parākramabāhu's sole extant inscription in Tamil, located on the northern island of Nainativu (T. Nayaṇāṭivu, Sin. Nāgadīpayā). Even at this early stage, there was clearly some degree of affinity between the Tamil language and Sri Lanka's north. The most straightforward explanation for this is simply that this was, by Parākramabāhu's time, already a predominantly Tamil-speaking region, even before the rise of a distinct Tamil kingdom ruled by the Āryacakravartti dynasty in later centuries.⁷¹ The contents of the inscription provide us with insights into what we might call Parākramabāhu's foreign trade policy. In particular, the inscription outlines the policies he employed to incentivize the import of horses and elephants, important military assets for which he also tells us he had a particular fondness (*snēha*). After a sadly effaced introduction, the remaining text tells us of Parākramabāhu's wishes:

This order (*vivastai*, Skt. *yavasthā*) [section effaced]...that foreign merchants come and stay at Ūrattuṛai (Sin. Ūrātoṭa, now Kayts); that they are protected; that foreign merchants from many ports come and gather at our own port; that, due to Our affection for elephants and horses, when a ship which carries elephants and horses for Us is destroyed, one quarter [of the salvaged goods] is for the Treasury, [and] the [remaining] three parts should be reserved for the owner; that when a [regular] trade-ship is destroyed, half is for the Treasury, half should be reserved for the owner. Lord Parākramabhujā, forest-fire for the lineage(s) of enemy kings, *cakravartin* of all Sinhala, made this order [and] had it carved on stone and on copper to last as long as the sun and moon (*TISL* 53)

We see here again the title *cakravartin*, here qualified not with reference to a wheel of command but rather to the entirety of "all Sinhala." That this instance appears, again, in a Tamil-language inscription, further supports the argument that this title entered the Lankan repertoire via Cōḷa usage, not as a reference to Pali-language canonical texts. Even here, however, Parākramabāhu seems to be drawing heavily on Sanskrit influences. His

⁷⁰ As the opening section of *EZ* 1.1 is missing, it has not been definitively dated, but is tentatively assigned to the early ninth century.

⁷¹ Indrapala, "Dravidian Settlements"; Kulasuriya, "Regional Independence."

titles are written in Grantha script to accommodate Sanskrit, rather than Tamil, phonetics.

These inscriptions together speak to a radically alternate language of politics in Parākramabāhu's reign than the existing historiography would have it. If anything, the language of kingship under Parākramabāhu was more linguistically diverse than ever, drawing on Sanskrit to an unprecedented degree while continuing to produce Sinhala- and Tamil-language inscriptions. We see further evidence of this transcultural engagement in architectural remains: specifically, in the "Tivaṅka" image-house located three kilometres north of the city gates; and in an unusually named council hall constructed within the royal palace complex.

None of Poḷonnaruva's vaulted image-houses contain inscriptions, frustrating attempts to definitively date their construction. However, we might look here to the *Mahāvamsa*'s later description of an image-house constructed by Parākramabāhu to house a three-jointed (P. *ti-vaṅka*, likely Skt. *tri-bhaṅga*) Buddha-image.⁷² This almost certainly describes the central Buddha statue of the northernmost image-house, which does indeed bend at the hips and slightly at the knees; as the head is missing, the neck bend cannot be made out (Fig. 11). The image-house is today called, I think accurately, the Tivaṅka. The Tivaṅka image-house is particularly noteworthy for the murals painted on its inner walls, which were the best-preserved examples of Poḷonnaruva-period art—until, sadly, they were extensively damaged by careless colonial explorers.⁷³ The murals in the *maṇḍapa* (entrance hall) were likely painted over during the reign of Parākramabāhu II (r. 1236–1270), and so reflect a slightly later art style.⁷⁴ However, those in the inner shrine (*garbhagrha*) and antechamber (*antarāla*) may be original. They bear a stylistic resemblance, with their striking red ochre, to other art from the Poḷonnaruva period, including that near Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* inscription.⁷⁵ Two of the figures in the Tivaṅka mural are also posed in the same uncommon crossed-arm posture as one of the great statues near the *katikāvata*.⁷⁶ All of this strongly suggests that Parākramabāhu was indeed

⁷² *Mahāvamsa*, ed. Geiger, ch. 78, vv. 39–40. The northernmost "Tivaṅka" image-house was extensively refurbished during the reign of Parākramabāhu II, in whose court the *Mahāvamsa* extension was composed. This might explain the composer's familiarity with Poḷonnaruvan architecture.

⁷³ Bandaranayake, *Rock and Wall Paintings*, 79.

⁷⁴ Paranavitana, "Religion, Literature, and Art," 611.

⁷⁵ Bandaranayake, *Rock and Wall Paintings*, 88.

⁷⁶ Devendra, "An Unusual Hand Position"; Bandaranayake, *Rock and Wall Paintings*, 80.

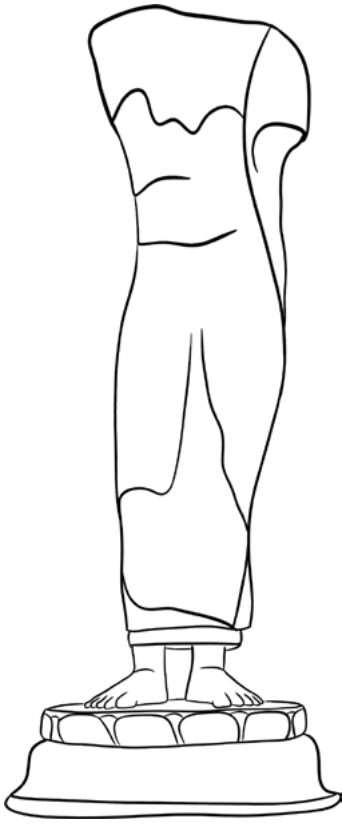


Figure 11. Statue in the northern image-house. Illustration by Natalia Lopez-Barbosa, after photographs by Tyler A. Lehrer and the author. Used with permission.

the patron of this image-house, and these murals, as suggested by the *Mahāvamsa*.

Given this, we might return again to Bandaranayake's discussion of these buildings' architectural influences. As noted in Chapter One, the Tivaṅka was constructed in a decidedly South Indian aesthetic, modelled (directly or indirectly) on a Śiva *devālaya* constructed in Poḷonnaruva by the Cōḷas. Even the titular Buddha-image echoes, to an extent, the classic three-jointed (*tri-bhaṅga*) pose characteristic of Cōḷa period statuary. The *tri-bhaṅga* posture was known in Sri Lanka even before the Cōḷa period, and had been used in earlier statues like the famous bronze Tārā (ca. seventh or eighth century) now in the British Museum.⁷⁷ It is therefore difficult to say whether the three-jointed Buddha statue erected by Parākramabāhu in his

Tivaṅka image-house took inspiration directly from Cōḷa bronzes of Śaiva deities, or from earlier Lankan bronzes of Mahāyāna figures like Tārā. In either case, the image-house and its statue reveal a far more inclusive vision of Buddhism than the extant historiography of Parākramabāhu's reign might suggest—one clearly engaged with wider regional artistic and architectural developments.

The Tivaṅka murals are also noteworthy in this regard. We have noted that the murals in the *maṇḍapa* likely belong to a later period, but that those of the sanctum and antechamber seem to be original (and stylistically match those found near Parākramabāhu's *katikāvata* inscription). Many are fragmentary, and those on the southern wall of the shrine proper are extremely damaged by exposure. Nonetheless, a coherent program can be discerned in what remains, and in the records left by earlier observers.⁷⁸ While the outer

⁷⁷ British Museum number 1830,0612.4.

⁷⁸ Bell, *ASCAR* 1909; Godakumbura, *Tivaṅka Pilimageyi Bitusituvam*; Bandaranayake, *Rock and Wall Paintings*, 80–87.

murals all display scenes from *jātaka* stories, those in the sanctum focus on the Buddha himself as an object of worship and devotion. In the narrow ante-chamber, the southern wall is crowded with ranks of divine beings engaged in homage; the northern wall is largely effaced. The focal point of the scene is missing, but this may well be the moment in which the gods entreat the Buddha to be reborn as a human, and eventually attain Buddhahood. The figures are human-sized, giving the effect that those in the passageway are themselves part of the divine crowd.

The southern wall of the sanctum once displayed an image of the Buddha seated on a throne, with two devotees in attendance. This mural is now entirely destroyed by colonial-era negligence. On the northern wall, a vast mural depicts the Buddha descending from the Trāyastrimśa Heaven on three parallel ladders after preaching the *abhidharma* to his deceased mother. This is a classic scene of Buddhist visual art, witnessed from an early period.⁷⁹ Here, as in other depictions, the Buddha is accompanied by the gods Brahma and Indra, both with their distinctive iconography. What distinguishes this image from many others, however, is that Indra, the king of the gods, holds a jewelled parasol—the classic symbol of royal authority—above the Buddha’s head.⁸⁰ More divine figures watch on from the eastern wall of the shrine, facing the colossal, three-jointed Buddha statue itself. None of the five still visible can be positively identified, but they are generally understood to represent those who greeted the Buddha on his return from Trāyastrimśa.⁸¹ These images together convey two clear messages to the visitor: the Buddha is to be worshipped, and he is to be treated like a king, even by the very gods themselves. We might recall here the discussion, in Chapter Two, of Vijayabāhu’s hierarchy of kingship, which explicitly positioned deities like Viṣṇu and Śiva below the Buddha; a similar logic, I suspect, was at work in the visual program of Parākramabāhu’s Tivaṅka image-house.

Finally, we have further evidence of Parākramabāhu’s engagement with more regional practices of kingship—and their gendered implications

79 See, e.g., the Gāndhāran panel from the early centuries CE now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, accession number IS.11-1947.

80 The parasol alone has long stood in for the Buddha during the “aniconic period” of Buddhist art. I am not familiar, however, with earlier images of Indra specifically holding a parasol over the Buddha’s head, and Indra is not typically mentioned in textual accounts of the scene.

81 On the identity, and gendered implications, of these figures as described in textual sources, see Young, “Female Mutability and Male Anxiety.”

—within the royal palace complex itself. We have already noted above that at least one contemporary inscription (IC 6.14) attributed to him the rather striking epithet “Lover of Enemy Kings’ Concubines” (*arirājaveśyābhujāṅga*). This is very clearly not the language we see used to describe kingship in sources like the Pali canon. Instead, this points us towards discourses, emerging in Sanskrit-language literature (such as the *Kāma-sūtra*) from the Gupta period (ca. 350–550 CE) onwards, regarding the king’s idealized masculinity as made evident in his (hetero)sexual relations with large numbers of palace women.⁸² These women were generally confined to a dedicated part of the palace called the “Inner City” (*antaḥpura*),⁸³ which was ordered both hierarchically and spatially. Principal wives occupied apartments at the centre, while lower-ranked entertainers, concubines, and courtesans (including *veśyās*) were more peripherally located.⁸⁴ We know that Parākramabāhu, like most Lankan kings before him, had multiple wives, who are discussed further in Chapter Seven. This epithet, and its invocation of *veśyās*, suggests a further interest in the full hierarchy of royal women as described in Sanskrit texts. With this in mind, we might look to the structure on the east of the royal palace complex which is called, in an inscription near its entrance, the Rājaveśyābhujāṅga-maṇḍapa, “Hall of the Lover of Royal Concubines.” There is archaeological evidence that the current structure was refurbished by later monarchs.⁸⁵ However, the similar epithet, and the *Mahāvamsa*’s description of Parākramabāhu having built “a beautiful *maṇḍapa* named Rājavesibhujāṅga,” strongly suggest that he had a hand in the original.⁸⁶ This structure is known today as the “Council Chamber,” presumably following the *Mahāvamsa*’s comparison of the Rājaveśyābhujāṅga-maṇḍapa to the Sudharmā *sabhā*, the assembly hall of the Gods. This would also agree with the *Arthaśāstra*’s dictum that the assembly hall be located east of the royal quarters, with the Inner City to the west.⁸⁷ If this was indeed Parākramabāhu’s assembly hall—the seat of his power, in which his subjects would approach his person to make petitions or give obeisance—then it

⁸² See, generally, Ali, *Courtly Culture*; on dating see his p. 20.

⁸³ I avoid the term harem, for reasons laid out in Ahmed, “Western Ethnocentrism”; Foster, “Colonialism and Gender in the East.”

⁸⁴ Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 219–20.

⁸⁵ Paranavitana, “Religion, Literature, and Art,” 602.

⁸⁶ *Mahāvamsa*, ed. Geiger, ch. 73, vv. 87–91.

⁸⁷ Ali, *Courtly Culture*, 38–43.

seems to have been named for his engagement with the *Kāmasāstric* pursuit of concubinal pleasure.

All of this together presents a far more cosmopolitan image of Parākramabāhu than the extent historiography might allow. He was a patron of Pali-language monastic scholarship, yes; he also seems to have invoked a Buddhaghosan chronology of decline in his *katikāvata*, which enabled the eventual ascendancy of Mahāvihāra- and Pali-oriented Buddhism in Sri Lanka and, arguably, across Southern Asia. But he also created more inscriptions in Sanskrit than any earlier Lankan monarch; he created shrines and Buddha images which draw upon South Indian aesthetics; and he used an epithet (after which he named his own assembly hall) which boasts of his virile and polygynous masculinity. This cannot be reduced to a conservative, insular, “Sinhala Buddhist” kingship (whatever such a narrowly defined cultural construction might look like). This was a thoroughly transcultural presentation of monarchy; firmly grounded in a Buddhist “substructure” but fully participant in wider practices of idealized kingship.

Conclusions to Chapter Five

The shadow of Parākramabāhu’s parasol is cast long across history. Memories of his rule spread rapidly across the Indian Ocean region, and were invoked by later monarchs in support of their own political projects.⁸⁸ More recently, Polonnaruwa’s newest urban development plan articulates a desire to “to redevelop this glorious city anew” on the model of Parākramabāhu’s “golden age.”⁸⁹ His vision of kingship, in other words, is one that has stood the test of time.

This chapter has not sought to challenge or undermine such assessments of Parākramabāhu’s reign as a “golden age.” Indeed, there is much to support such a claim. It seems to have been a period of relative stability in a time otherwise marked by political turmoil. However, this chapter has sought to nuance Parākramabāhu’s legacy, by interrogating how exactly he presented himself as such an ideal king. It would be easy to follow the cue of the later *Mahāvamsa*, which presents him as a partisan for the Mahāvihāra and a fierce opponent to “inadequately Buddhist” rivals like Gajabāhu II. However, I have suggested that Parākramabāhu was a far more cosmopolitan king than such narratives let on. The text and content of his *katikāvata* inscription certainly suggest some leanings towards a Pali-language form

⁸⁸ See particularly Blackburn, *Buddhist-Inflected Sovereignties*, 148–57.

⁸⁹ Polonnaruwa Urban Development Plan 2019–2030, 1:115.

of Buddhism, which is unsurprising given his relationship with the monk Dīṃbulāgala Mahākāśyapa. But his wider inscriptional oeuvre, and material evidence from his edificial constructions across Poḷonnaruva, shows that he was aware of and participant in more diverse—linguistically, aesthetically, performatively—practices of kingship. And while he may well have been an important patron and sponsor of the scholar-monk Śāriputra, their relationship had pragmatic dimensions which belie the simple division of political kings and legitimating monks.

Only nascent in this chapter is the question of gender politics. We have noted only one piece of evidence that gender was at all on Parākramabāhu's mind: his epithet (*ari*)*rājaveśyābhujāṅga*, “Lover of (Enemy) Kings’ Concubines.” This speaks, I have suggested, to an engagement with Sanskritic ideals in which kingly masculinity is performed through (hetero)sexual relationship with a variety of royal women. The women themselves, however, seem to be otherwise entirely absent from the story. Other than the implicit existence of these *rājaveśyās*, we would hardly know that Parākramabāhu had any consorts at all. Given the argument made in Chapter Three—that royal women only become “visible” in the absence of stable, centralized, masculine rule—this is perhaps hardly surprising in the reign of Parākramabāhu, the most stable and centralized of all Poḷonnaruva's monarchs.

Yet in the period following his rule, two of the three longest-ruling monarchs—Lilāvatī (who ruled for three to five years, spread across three separate reigns in 1197–1200, 1209–1210, and 1210–1211) and Kalyāṇavatī (six years, 1202–1208)—were, respectively, the widows of Parākramabāhu I and Niśśaṅka Malla (the third of these long-reign monarchs, ruling for nine years between 1187 and 1193). Clearly, something shifted dramatically between the reign of Parākramabāhu, in which royal wives seemed all but invisible, and the first reign of his own widow Lilāvatī, a decade later. In the following chapter I suggest that the reign of Niśśaṅka Malla was a crucial turning-point in this regard.

