

The Study of the Historical Records of Xuanzang on Sri Lanka

Dr. Nadeesha Gunawardana

Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.9.06.2019.p9093

<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.9.06.2019.p9093>

Abstract- The main objective of this research paper is to identify the authenticity of the historical facts compiled on Sri Lanka, by Xuanzang. He travelled to India in seventh century C.E. Although he wanted to visit Sri Lanka, he could not visit the island owing to a famine and political unrest in Sri Lanka. He visited Kānchipuram, and there he met the chief monks of Bodhimegehsvar and Abhayadrustra with three hundred other fellow monks, who stayed in South India, owing to the famine and the political unrest that occurred in Sri Lanka. Xuanzang's records of Sri Lanka was based on, what he has heard from the above monks. In this research the attention is made to compare the records of the Xuanzang with the chronicles of Sri Lanka, the Divyāvadāna, the records *Faxian* and the *Jātaka stories*.

Xuanzang reveals two stories regarding the origin of Sinhalese people. One of the stories is much more similar with the Mahāvamsa and the other is similar to that of the Divyāvadāna. It is deemed to study all these literary sources and its influence on the records of Xuanzang. As recorded by Xuanzang, Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka by the youngest brother of Asoka, prince Mahendra, not by his son as the vamsa have. It is presumably wise to critically analyse all these assertions. Xuanzang says that the royal palace is situated next to the alms hall. This can be testified with the archaeological findings and the epigraphical data. There are differences between Faxian's and Xuanzang's descriptions as well. The present study is an attempt to trace the differences between above records.

Xuanzang sheds light on the fraternity of the sangha's, Tooth Relic Temple of Sri Lanka and the ceremonies conducted for the veneration of it, monasteries of monks, trade and the economy. The valuable historical facts can be gathered, which belongs to the 14th century as well. This paper proposes to discuss the significance of all these scenarios.

Index Terms- monks, records, chronicles.

I. METHODOLOGY

The Samel Beal's English translation of the Buddhist Records of Western world, (1906) and the Li Rongxi's the Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions, (1996) were studied. The Max Deeg's unpublished English translation of Xuanzang's document strengthened my knowledge and it contributed me to compile this article. The historical evidences were collected from the Faxian's travel records of, *Divyāvadāna*, *Jātaka* and the theravāda vamsa tradition. The inscriptions belonged to Sri Lanka

have been studied. The evidence of the different texts permits us to conclude with some certainty of what there really existed.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The Geographical location of Sri Lanka has been recorded by Xuanzang. As he has drafted "the Kingdom of Sīṃhala has a circumference of more than seven thousand miles. The great capital has a circumference of more than forty miles"¹ Further he mentions that this land is fertile, and the seasons are hot. Although there are differences in the figures, the Dīpavaṃsa which is considered as the first chronicle of Sri Lanka which has written in 5th Century gives similar description to the Xuanzang.² As mentioned by him the farming is done according to the seasons. The Tōṅigala rock inscription to the third year of king Śrīmegahavarṇa (303-331 C.E.) sheds light to prove that the farming was done according to the seasons.³

It says that this land originally was an island with treasures, (because) there were (so) many rare jewels. The main income of the kings in the Rōhana kingdom was the gem trade. This is one of the main reasons why Sri Lanka is known as "Ratnadīpa". The *Mahāvamsa* refers to eight kinds of pearls, presented to the Emperor Aśoka by the King Dēvānampiyatissa (circa 250-210 B.C.E.). The eight kinds of pearls are horse-pearl, elephant-pearl, waggon-pearl, myrobalan pearl, bracelet pearl, ring pearl, kakūḍha fruit pearl and common pearl.⁴ The Pāli literature *Abhidhānappadīpikā* also reports these eight types of pearl as quoted in *Mahāvamsa*.⁵ As in the record Lanka was settled by ghosts. In most of the literary sources give evidence on this. This doesn't testify that there were ghosts dwelled in Lanka. The analytic approach to be needed on the word ghosts. Why they have addressed the people in Sri Lanka as ghosts? Sri Lanka maintained very close cultural, political and trade relations with South India. Tamil traders were very active in Sri Lanka from the 4th century B.C.E. to 11th century C.E. Most probably the south Indian traders who gained the maximum profit by the trade might have spread the news as the dwellers in Lanka as ghosts. Hence they gained the maximum profit from the trade and could not face any competition for the trading activities.⁶ The Osmund Boppearachchi says during this period, the South Indian traders may have played the intermediary role between the Roman traders and the Sri Lankans.⁷

III. THE APPEARANCE OF SĪMHALESE PEOPLE

Xuanzang describes the appearance of the people of the lion-kingdom as common and dark, they have square chins and big foreheads; their temperament is rude and violent, and they can bear drinking poisoned wine. The people are mostly brave and strong.⁸ What our view is the Xuanzang makes an effort to prove the leonic origin of Sinhalese from these characteristic features. The Xuanzang says the kingdom of Sinhala formerly was addicted to immoral religious worship. It is indisputably clear. The worshiping of ancestors,⁹ worshiping of trees,¹⁰ worshiping of Yaksas,¹¹ worshiping of gods or Devās,¹² Nigaṅṭas,¹³ Śaivaism¹⁴ can be identified. Paribbājakas and Ājīvakas,¹⁵ Pāsaṅḍas and Pabbajitās and many other ascetics, known as Samaṅḍas seem to have been found in fair numbers in the island.

IV. THE PORT AT KĀNCIPURAM

According the Xuanzang's description the port situated near to the Kāncipura could be assessed to Sri Lanka very easily.¹⁶ The *Seehalawaṭṭupparāṇaya*, the oldest existing literary source, written in the 3rd or the 4th century C.E., states that the traders of Sri Lanka had sailed from Mahākoṇḍa and landed at Kāvēripaṭṭana in India and from there they had further been to North India and China. A story says that, to worship the Bō-tree in the Uttarāpatha, nearly sixty monks from the down South in Sri Lanka (Rōhanadesa) had entered Anurādhapura and embarked the journey from the Mahākoṇḍa and disembarked at the Kāvērapaṭṭana.¹⁷ The port Mahākoṇḍa is hither to unknown. This might be the port of Mahātitha (Mānthai). As mentioned, most of the monks might have used this route to visit the Bō-tree.¹⁸ Perhaps the thero Bōdhi might have used this sea rout to visit Kāncipuram. Having met the chief monks of the Bodhimegeśvara and Abhayadantra who have come from Sri Lanka Xuanzang asked few questions on Yogasastra. At the point of Xuanzang, they have not explain it properly as Shilabadra whom he had previously studied with at Nālandā.

V. WHY XUANZANG COULDN'T VISIT SRI LANKA?

The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang was in India for about sixteen years from 630-645 A.C.¹⁹ Although the Xuanzang wanted to visit Sri Lanka, couldn't not visit owing to the famine and the political unrest in Sri Lanka. He has visited to Kāncipuram, and there he met the chief monks of the Bodhimegeśvara and Abhayadrūstra with three hundred other fellow monks who have visited to South India, owing to the political unrest in Sri Lanka. The Xuanzang's records of Sri Lanka was based on, what he has heard from the above monks. It should be happy to noted, that the monk Bodhimegeśvara's name can be identified as the Bodhi in Vaṃsa tradition.

As recorded in the second part of the Mahāvamsa the monk Bodhi dwelled at the monastery of Abhayagiri. The Bodhi thera who had seen many undisciplined bhikkhus in the Abhayuttara vihāra, requested for Sangakamma²⁰ by the king. The king Silāmēghavanna (623-632 C.E.) having accepted the thera's request, allowed him to do the Sanghakamma. Then all the undisciplined bhikkhus who had been expelled from the order, took a counsel together, murdered Bodhi secretly and annulled the

act. When the king heard that, he was worth, seized them all together, their hands cut off and made them guardians of the bathing tanks. Another hundred bhikkhus there he expelled to Jambudipa. As stipulated in the Mahāvamsa in remembrance of Bodhi's efforts king cleansed the order. When the king Silāmēghavanna invited the bhikkhus of the Thera School or the Mahavihara with the others to celebrate together the Uposatha festival, he was refused. The king flew into a rage and offending all respect, he abused and reviled them with harsh words. Then he took himself without demanding pardon of the bhikkhus, to Dhakkhinadesa. There the king was attacked by a disease and died suddenly.

As stipulated in the Mahāvamsa Bodi thera has been killed secretly by a group of monks who stood against his order. Perhaps Bodi thera might have not killed and banished by the country. He might be the one who met by the Xuanzang as Bodimegeśvara. If the Bodi thera has been killed due to the above conflict, there must have been a thera called Bodhimegeśvara among the hundred bhikkhus where the king expelled to Jambudipa. By embedding the Xuanzang's texts into a broader context many historical facts can be textified through Sri Lankan's vaṃsa tradition. The hundred bhikkhus have been expelled to Jambudipa by the king Silāmēghavanna (623-632 C.E.). This incident can be taken as an authentic historical evidence with the help of Xuanzang.

The unexpected death of the king Silāmēghavanna arouse the chaotic situation in Sri Lanka and this background might have made the other monks to visit South India too. The three hundred monks have been met by the Xuanzang at the Kanchipuram. The king Silāmēghavanna has banished only hundred bhikkhus as following the Vaṃsa tradition. The question that would naturally arise is who are these three hundred monks? To which monastery do they belong? What made them to come to Kanchipuram.? The Xuanzang's book recalls us that there was a famine and the political unrest during this particular period in Sri Lanka. Owing to the above incidence the monks from the Abhayagiri vihara as well as Mahavihara made to visit Kanchipuram. It should be noted from the travel records of Xuanzang. There were to historical traditions sprang up based on two monasteries called Abhayagiriya and Mahavihara in Sri Lanka. It should first be emphasized that Xuanzang has associated these two traditions whilst compilation of his historical records. He admits the two different tradition, without being partial has reported it.

VI. THE ORIGIN OF THE SĪMHALESE

Xuanzang's description sheds light on two stories of the origin of the sīmhalese. These two stories have been taken by the two different historical traditions that exist in Sri Lanka. The first story has been taken from Maha viahara tradition. As mentioned by the Xuanzang a king in India had a daughter. When she was sent to the neighboring kingdom to get married, a lion abducted her. They dwelled in the wilderness, in consequence they had two children. When the children are grown up, they were reluctant to stay in the jungle and they secretly came out of the jungle without informing their father, lion. There was no family left and their ancestral line was extinguished. All the people pitied them and immediately provided them with funds. The lion got tempered without seeing his family and started to kill villagers. The king

was unable to settle this devastation caused by the lion. The king announced, “that whoever would catch the lion and free the kingdom from the disaster, would receive a high reward and be honored luxuriantly for his achievement”. Finally the lion was killed by his son and after hearing the relation of the lion and the son, the children were expelled by the king from the county. The boat of the son was carried to Ratnadīpa and the daughter was carried to the west of the kingdom of Persia. Having killed the merchants eventually, the son of the lion was able to establish his power in Ratnadīpa. As recorded by the Xuanzang all the characters are anonymous. This lacunae can be filled by an examination of the vāṃsa tradition in Sri Lanak. As described in the Dīpavaṃsa the king’s name was Vaṅga, king’s daughter was Susīmā, the son’s name was Siṅhabāhu and the daughters name was Siṅhasīvale.²¹ The story is quite compatible with the story of Dīpavaṃsa and the Mahāvāṃsa. The son of the Siṅhabāhu by the name of Prince Vijaya had been banished from India as mentioned in the Vāṃsa tradition in Sri Lanka. Faxian doesn’t mention the story at all.

There is another piece of information, regarding the origin of the Siṅhalese, which is not highlighted in the Maha vihara vāṃsa tradition or the Theravada vāṃsa tradition. This story has been taken from a tradition belonged to the Abayagiri. Xuanzang emphasized, this story is in the Buddhist texts. We can find this story only in the Divyāvādāna and the Jātaka.²² This story is more compatible with the Siṃhalāvādāna, in Divyāvādāna. As mentioned in the text of Xuanzang there was a great merchant leader on the Jambu-continent called Sengjia, and his son was called Simhala. He embarked together with five hundred merchants, set to sea in order to collect jewels, and the wind drifted them on the waves until they reached the treasure-island. Thereupon the merchant leader had pleasure and amused himself with the queen of the *rakṣa*-women in that island. Each of the other merchants also found a matching partner, and after a year, all the *rakṣa*-women bore a child. Then, one night, Siṃhala had a nightmare and knew that they were not in a lucky situation he secretly looked for a way out. He arrived at an iron prison and then heard the sound of wailing. He then climbed on a high tree and asked: “Who is retained here to make these sad complaints?” The inmates said: “Do you not know? The women in the city are all *rakṣas*. They said: “We heard that on the shore of the ocean there is a divine horse, and that if one implores, it sincerely, it will certainly save us all.” When Siṃhala heard this, he secretly told the other merchants that they should go to the sea shore together and put their energy in looking for help. Thereupon the divine horse came and said to the men: “Each of you should grasp my mane and not look back; I will save you. The divine horse leaped up high to its cloudy path and crossed over to the other shore of the ocean. When the *rakṣa*-women suddenly realized that their consorts had escaped they told each other about it and wondered where they could have gone; each of them took her child, went forth and back in the sky. Having encountered the merchants, they shed tears and started weeping. The merchants fell in love again, could not master their emotions. The *rakṣa*-women congratulated each other, took those merchants and carried them away. Only Siṃhala in his steadfast wisdom did not waver in his determination. Thereupon the *rakṣa*-queen returned to the Iron City without her husband and the child. The other *rakṣa*-women said to her that she is not capable enough to take her husband and

wife back and should not live there. Then the *rakṣa*-queen took her own child, flew in front of Siṃhala and used all her seductive power to lure him into coming back. The *rakṣa* princess went to the Siṃhala’s home and cheated his father too by convincing relation of the Siṃhala and the son. Siṃhala’s mind did not change and he refuse by saying that she is a *rakṣa*.

Thereupon the *rakṣa*-woman accused Siṃhala before the king. The king was delighted by her delicate beauty and said to Siṃhala: “If you have to abandon this woman, leave her in the inner palace.” Siṃhala said: “I am afraid that this will become a disaster. Because she is a *rakṣa*, she only partakes of flesh and blood.” The king did not listen to Siṃhala’s words. In the later half of the night she flew back to the treasure-island, summoned the other five hundred *rakṣa*-demonesses and went with them to the royal palace and killed everyone. The next day morning nobody knew the reason of this disaster. Siṃhala explained everything and having seen the distinguished features of the siṃhala, ministers helped him to become the king of this particular area. Later Siṃhala destroyed the Iron City and the iron prison, rescued the merchants and gathered many pearls and jewels. He recruited people to move to the treasure-island and live there, founded a capital and built settlements, and finally a kingdom existed there. According to the name of the king the kingdom was called Siṃhala.

The above story illustrates “The top of the gate-tower two banners were erected, indicating as signs luck or evil. In case of lucky circumstances the banner of luck moved, in case of evil matters the banner of evil moved”.²³ This could be admitted as modern days, the giving signals through flags might have existed in the pre historic period in Sri Lanka.

Although this story quite compatible with the Divyāvādāna, there exists few discrepancy. It is indisputably clear Xuanzang gives us the whole story, but Divyāvādāna doesn’t reveal the whole story and it says, for the further clarification to refer the Rakshasi sutra.²⁴ Either Divyāvādāna or Jātaka don’t give us the full story of this. This lacunae can be only filled up by the records of Xuanzang. Faxian does not mention the story at all.

As in the previous story Sri Lanka was ruled by a princess *rakṣa*. This testifies that the administrative powers were vested even to the women. As mentioned in the Mahāvāṃsa goddess were worshiped by the people even in the 5th century B.C.E.²⁵ The king Paṇḍukābhaya (5th B.C.E) has constructed house for the yaksani Valavāmukhī within the royal precincts and made early sacrificial offerings. It is undisputable that the women were privileged. It is completely different from the social structure that was existed in India by this time.

According to the Valāhassa Jātaka there were she goblins in the town called Sirisavatthu in Ceylon. These she goblins used to come to the merchants with the children on their hips in order to make them imagine that there is a city of human beings. Once the five hundred shipwrecked traders were disembarked and the she goblins came up to them and enticed them, till they brought them to their city. The chief she goblin took the chief man, and the others took the rest, till five hundred had the five hundred traders; and they made the men their husbands. When her man was asleep, the chief she-goblin rose up, and made her way to the house of death, slew some of the men and ate them. The others did the same. When the eldest she goblin returned from eating men's flesh, her body was cold. The eldest merchant embraced her, and perceived

that she was a goblin. Then the chief trader with two hundred and fifty, who were ready to obey him, fled away in fear of the goblins. At that time, the Bōdhisattva had come into the world as a flying horse.²⁶ From Himalaya he flew through the air until he came to Ceylon. There he passed over the ponds and tanks of Ceylon, and ate the paddy that grew wild there. As he passed on thus, he thrice uttered human speech filled with mercy, saying—"Who wants to go home? who wants to go home?" The traders heard his saying, and cried—"We are going home, master!" they climbed up, some laid hold of his tail, and some remained standing, with a respectful salute. Then the Bōdhisattva took up even those who stood still saluting him, and conveyed all of them, even two hundred and fifty, to their own country, and set down each in his own place; then he went back to his place of dwelling. The she-goblins, when other men came to that place, slew those two hundred and fifty who were left, and devoured them. Xuanzang's description illustrates the whole story of the above.

VII. THERAVĀDA TRADITION

There is another piece of information which contribute historical facts about the Mahendra thera. Mahendra was the half-brother of Aśoka (mother's brother)²⁷ In dress he arrogated the style of the king, he was extravagant, wasteful and cruel. The people were indignant, and the ministers and aged officers complained him to the king. When the king was about to punish the Mahendra, he asked an extension of his life for seven days. On this the king placed him in a dark dungeon, and placed over him a strict guard. He was provided with every kind of exquisite mat and every necessary article. Last day he mounted into the air and exhibited his miraculous powers. Late emperor Aśoka constructed a dwelling place for his brother. Here we are lucky enough to get biographical data of Mahendra thera, which Vamsa tradition do not speak. It is presumably wise to critically analyse all these assertions. The writers of vamsa might have purposely didn't mention the weaknesses of the Mahendra as he was called as the *dīpapasādaka*.

As in the text the king Aśoka's younger brother, Mahendra has introduced the Buddhism to Sri Lanka. According to the vamsa tradition Mahendra was the son of Aśoka. Mahendra has been highly exaggerated in the vamsa tradition. Faxiana doesn't speak even a single word on Mahendra. The question arises here is what made Faxiana not to mention about Mahendra thera? Perhaps, most probable Faxiana associated with the monastery of Abhayagiriya. He was there for two year. It is quite questionable why Faxiana doesn't mention about Mahinda or Mahendra. By embedding the Xuanzang's description we are lucky enough to hear about Mahendra thera.

As in the Xuanzang's records the king Aśoka's younger brother Mahendra gave up the (wordly) passions, set (his) mind to the fruit of sainthood, achieved the six supernatural powers and the eight liberations, walked through the air and travelled to this kingdom in order to propagate the true dharma and to spread the inherited teaching. He further says there are several hundred monasteries and more than twenty thousand monks who follow the *dharma* of the Sthavira-nikāya of the Mahāyāna.

VIII. THE SCHISM

This description recalls us two hundred years after the advent of the teaching of the Buddha different groups of the *saṅgha* arrogated as schools. This evidence can be elucidated with the help of vamsa tradition in Sri Lanka. The king Vattagāmani Abhaya (89-77 B.C.E) having constructed the monastery of Abhayagiri and donated it to Mahātissa thera who has assisted him. Therefore Mahātiss thera was expelled by the brotherhood from the Mahā Vihara monastery.²⁸ The Mahātissa thera was accompanied by the Bahalamassutissa, and moved in anger to the monastery of Abhayagiri, abode there forming a separate faction. It is indisputably clear that the Xuanzan gives the authentic data about the fraternity of saga. As in the text the *nikāya* of the residents of the Mahāvihāra reject the Mahāyāna and study the Hīnayāna; the other is called *nikāya* of the residents of the Abayagiriya who simultaneously study the two vehicles, developed a broader *tripitak* and whose monks' keeping of the precepts is pure and true. Xuanzang further mentions that the contemplation and wisdom is strong and clear, whose demeanor can serve as a model, of the theras at the monastery of Abayagiriya. This evidence can be testified with the one of inscriptions which is in the Colombo national museum today. This inscription has been found at the premises of the Jetavanārama. This has dated to the king Mahasena's period (276-303 C.E). As mentioned in the inscription rules and regulations have been imposed to the monks who dwelled at the Panca mahā āvāsa or five main monasteries that existed in the Anurādhapura period. The Mahāvihāra, the Isurumuni, the Chētiyagiri, the Thūpārāma and the Vessagiri were considered as the panca mahā āvāsa. The word "nana magina pavanēna" symbolizes that "they have engaged with sin in various ways". There is another piece of information which contributes to strengthen the above fact. The Thero Sanghamitta who has visited Sri Lanka during the 3rd C.E said "The dwellers in the Mahā vihara do not teach the true vinaya, we are those who teach the true vinaya"²⁹ The deterioration of the vinaya of the monks may have caused the demolition of the Mahāvihāra during the period of the king Mahasena with the help of Sangamitta thero. The king has established a royal penalty whosoever gives food to monks dwelling in the Mahāvihāra is liable to a fine of a hundred pieces of money. Xuanzang's perception of the Abhayagiri monastery can be taken as an authentic data. The Mahāvihāra has become the owner of massive land and the properties owing to the donation of rulers as well as the laymen approximately 600 years from 3rd B.E.C to the 3rd C.E.

IX. LOCATION OF TEMPLE OF TOOTH RELIC

Xuanzang illustrates to the side of the royal palace is a monastic structure, more than one hundred feet high, containing the Buddha's tooth. The building is glittering of pearls and is adorned with precious jewels. On the top of the monastic structure a pillar is erected as a sign, on top of which one has installed a big padmaraga. The king bathes the Buddha's tooth three times a day, washes it with scented water or heats it with incense powder, and this service is very particular as a practice of offering. Senaka Bandaranayake suggests that the building known today as Daḷadāgē Tooth Relic Temple could be the royal palace.



(Royal palace?)



(Tooth relic temple?)

As denoted by the Xuanzang to the side of the monastic structure containing the Buddha's tooth is a small monastic structure also glittering of an embellished with many jewels. Inside is a golden statue of the Buddha, casted in the corporal size. The former king of this kingdom and its *usniṣ* embellished with a very valuable jewel. This building could be easily identified.



(image house)



(Image house)

This could be considered to be an image house built in the gediga architectural tradition in the period between 7th -9th Century. The gedige is known as Ginjkavasatha in Pāli and accordingly the whole image house is built using only bricks. It is evident from the arched roof of the structure, made in brick walls. Architectural analysis shows that the structure is designed mainly to the Pallava architecture. The patronage of its construction is unknown. No evidence of the image of the Buddha is available at present. As Xuanzang records a story of a thievish servant has stolen the gem that embellished the usnisa. This story doesn't reflect in any vamsa tradition.

X. MAHĀPĀLI ALMS GIVING HALL

As in the Xuanzang's description, to the side of the royal palace there is a huge kitchen through which eighteen thousand monks are fed every day. The king Devampiyatiss (250-210 B.C.E) constructed the Mahāpāli alms hall for the monks.³⁰ When the monks come at the time of the meal, they carry their alms bowls and receive the food, and after they have eaten, each of them returns to his cell. The travel reports in the accounts of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims claimed to have found realistic descriptions of the geographical features of sites.³¹ Further it has recorded since some decades, however, there is political turmoil in the kingdom, and since they have not yet selected a ruler to continue this action and it was given up. Following the due clarification this was the time of the king Silamegavanna in Sri Lanka (623-632 C.E). Faxian says that there five thousand to six thousand monks dwelling at the capital city.³²



(Gruel trough of the Mahāpāli alms giving hall)



(Well of the Mahāpāli alms giving hall)

XI. THE TRADE OF PEARLS

Pearl (*mutthu* in Tamil and Sinhala) is considered as the queen among the jewels. Though, the pearls were available in the Persian Gulf, a richer source was in the Gulf of Mannar at the tip of the peninsular India, facing the coast of Sri Lanka. This region also has one of the most productive chank fisheries in the world.³³ The chief sources of pearls were located in South India and Ceylon.³⁴ Xuanzang testifies this as follows in a nook of the kingdom at the shore of the sea the ground produces a lot of precious jewels, and when the king comes in person to the ancestral temple, the deities present him with valuable items. There is a law that they have to pay taxes according to how many gems that they receive. Faxian says the amount of this taxation is 3/10.³⁵ The occurrence of chank and pearl shell remaining all along the North Western Sri Lanka and in Jaffna peninsula indicates an exchange network from the Southern and South Western coast of India to the coastal Sri Lanka.³⁶

XII. CHENG HO'S VISIT TO SRI LANKA

Xuanzang's record sheds light on the Cheng Ho's visit to Sri Lanka. This part has been added by the later period. Cheng Ho has visited twice to Sri Lanka. In his first visit Cheng Ho attempted to persuade Vira Alakeshvara to give up his heretical practices and adhere to the teachings of the Buddha. The Vira Alakeshvara oppose this and attempted to kill the Cheng Ho. Having convinced this, Cheng Ho sailed to China again. As a result of this, emperor of the China send the Cheng Ho again with another troop and they fought with the Sinhalese arms nearly six days and finally they return to China having done a ceremony to the Tooth Relic.

It was not an accidental landing but a deliberate and integral aspect of the foreign policy of the Min dynasty. The Mahāvamsa doesn't speak about this invasion of Cheng Ho that it would hurt the national pride of the Sinhala people to know that their ruler was carried away to China as a prisoner. The Chinese historical sources on the other hand are very eloquent regarding this event because it would certainly add to their self-esteem and imperialistic vision of the world, to say that a ruler of the far famed Chetsee-kouo or the kingdom of the lion as the Chinese called Sri Lanka was a captive in the court of the Ming Emperor.³⁷ We are

lucky enough to get facts of Cheng Ho's invasion from the Saddarmaratnākara³⁸ and the Rajavaliya.³⁹ According to the Saddarmaratnākara, Alakeshwara has been deceived or cheated by Chines.

XIII. CONSTRUCTION OF THE SHRINE ROOM

As in the book once, the particular king in Sri Lanka had a brother and he became a disciple of Buddha. The king's brother or the thēra visited India to worship the holy traces of Buddha. He was treated with disdain as a foreigner. On this, he returned to Sri Lanka, and he was disappointed and convinced it to the brother king. The king in Sri Lanka sent envoys to the Maha Rāja, the ruler of the India, with all the jewels, and requested from him to give the permission to build a place of rest between their journey to India. The ruler of the India, the Maha Rāja permitted to the king in Sri Lanka to take one of the places in which Tathagata has left the traces of his holy teaching to construct the resting place. The king in Sri Lanka selected the place where the Bōdhi tree located and then sent all the jewels of the country to build this convent to entertain priests of this country, he caused to be engraved this proclamation on copper.⁴⁰ This evident can be testified from another Chines source as well. Van-Hi-unt mentions in the book of Hint -wo -uan the emperor Samudragupta (335-380 C.E) has constructed a convent to entertain the priest in Sri Lanka at the request of the king Kirtimegavanna (303-331 C.E).⁴¹

Xuanzang says two miles away for the monastery of Kapothika a particular king Sri Lanka has constructed a shrine room, stupas and statues. As he further says king has visited the above place and this was situated on the top of the small mount at the city of Magada.⁴² The king's name couldn't be identified from the Vamsa tradition.

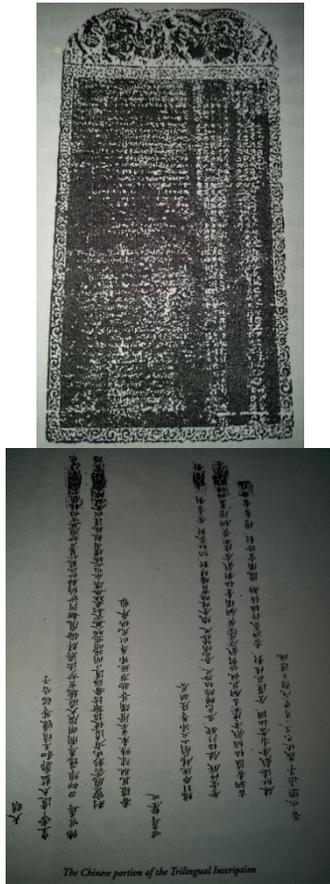
XIV. RULES AND REGULATIONS

As Xuanzang mentions we can observe that, there were similar rules and regulations were existed India and Sri Lanka. The monks who experts with vinaya sutra and abhidhamma were treated differently. He who can entirely explain on class of these books is exempted from the control of the Karmadana. If he can explain two classes, he receives in addition the equipment of an upper seat (room), he who can explain three classes has allotted him different servants to attend to and obey him, he who can explain six classes of books is allowed a surrounding escort.⁴³ The content of the tablets of Mahinda IV (956 - 972 C.E.) at Mihintale are the best inscription at evidence on the administration of a monastery. As mentioned in it, to the monks who reside in this Vihāra and reading the *Vinaya Piṭaka* shall be assigned five *vasag* of food and raiment: to the monks who read the *Sutta- Piṭaka*, seven *vasag* and to the monks who read the *Abhidamma pitaka* twelve *vasag* have been given.⁴⁴

XV. TRILINGUAL INSCRIPTION OF CHENG HO

Queyorz Father Fernao De has mentioned about this inscription in his book called The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon.⁴⁵ As mentioned in the above book, the inscription has been kept near the temple of Trincomalee.

The Trilingual inscription



This might have kept there to pay homage to the statues there.⁴⁶ This bears the date 15 February 1409 and is now preserved in the National Museum Colombo. It was discovered in 1911 by a provincial Engineer called H. E. Tomlin at a culvert in the town of Galle. It is written in one slab in three languages Chinese, Persian and Tamil. The Chinese letters are well preserved there. The Persian letters are largely defaced but what is readable makes it clear that this too lists offerings to the light of Islam. The Tamil inscription follows the same pattern and the beneficiary is Tenavaria Nayanar. S. Paranavithana identifies as the deity as Devinuvra or Vishnu. The translation of the Chinese version, as published in the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* is given below.⁴⁷

The Ming Emperor ordered the Sri Lanka captives to select a worthy member of their tribe to be their ruler and the choice fell on Yeh-pa-nai-na according to the Chinese account. Accordingly he was sent back to Sri Lanka bearing the seals of office and proclaimed king under the power and the guidance of the Ming Emperor. The Alakesvara was also sent back. There is a dispute among Sri Lankan scholars regarding the identity of Yeh-pa-nai-na, the nominee of the Chinese Emperor. S. Paranavithana identifies him as Parakramabahu VI of Kotte whereas other scholars are of the view that he was Parakrama Apana. G.P.V. Somaratne deriving his evidence from Portuguese and Sinhala sources has arrived at the conclusion that Parakrama Apana the new king was assassinated on the same night as he arrived in Sri Lanka in 1414 C.E. and Parakramabāhu VI who had been ruling

in Rayigama for 3 years became king of Kotte. He was the last great ruler of Sri Lanka who unified the country and ruled till 1467.

XVI. CONCLUSION

Mas Deeg says some of the details may be carefully reconstructed by the information given by Xuanzang. But It should be kept in mind that he is not to be taken as a trustworthy witness in all cases, and also that what he saw or reported on need not necessarily have been so two hundred years earlier when Faxian was there.⁴⁸ As far as the above facts are taken in to account, it is understood that Xuanzang's description demonstrates the historical, social, economic and cultural aspects of ancient Sri Lanka, while giving a considerable contribution to the restoration of the Sri Lankan history as well. Xuanzang always give more detailed information than the laconic Faxian. The present work owes much to the professor Max Deeg, the chair professor of the School of History, Archaeology and Religion in the Cardiff University in UK. He is the one who encouraged me to write this article by providing, all the reading materials.

1. Rongxi Li (1996), 323.
2. Oldenberg Hermann (1992), 1:18, (17:1,2)

(The excellent island of Lanka is thirty two yojanas long, eighteen yojanas broad, its circuit is one hundred yojanas; It is surrounded by the sea).

3. Wickremasinghe Don Marino De Silva & Codrington (1933), vol. iii: 178. Pitadada hasa, akala hasa, made hasa in these three words, hasa stands for Pāli sassa (Skt. śasya) and means 'harvest' or 'crop'. From these terms, it becomes apparent that in ancient Sri Lanka there were three crops of paddy during the year, just as there are today in the villages of the North-Central Province where fields are irrigated by means of tanks and do not depend on the uncertain rainfall. The names of the three crops occurring in this inscription, two can be identified with their modern equivalents. Akala (from Skt. akāla, 'out of season') is the crop now known as yala. The yala crop is sown at the time of the south west monsoon which, for these parts of Sri Lanka, brings only a small quantity of rain. The principal harvest of the year in all parts of Sri Lanka is now known as māha, a word which is a contraction of maha-hasa; and is sown during the north east monsoon. The name corresponding to this in the present inscription is pitadada. There is no doubt that the word stands for māha as its being first mentioned points to it as the principal harvest of the year. The third crop called because it intervenes between the two major harvest.
4. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 11:14.
5. Childers (1976), 1061.
6. Casson (1991), 8-11.

Lionel Casson has convincingly shown that, at the time of the Periplus the starting point for ships leaving Egypt for India, was the ports of Myos, Hormos and Berenice. It is now believed that the goods to be exported were brought via the Nile and from there, transported across the desert by camel or donkey to the corresponding ports. The proper time to leave Egypt for India was July. Making use of the South West monsoon winds, the ships,

sailed through the Gulf of Aden and reached the ports of the west coast of India in September or in October. The return journey had to be scheduled for the month of November taking advantage of the North East monsoon winds. Merchants hardly had a month to sell their goods and load their ships with new merchandise. Sailors may have not continued their voyage up to Sri Lanka, for risk of missing the North-East winds which assured their return journey. It was certainly more profitable for the merchants to buy the Sri Lankan products from the Indian markets, rather than spending a year on the island waiting for the next North East monsoon.

7. Boparachchi. O (2008), 4.
8. Rongxi Li (1996), 326
9. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:85. The mention is made that the slave woman who had helped the king Pandukābhaya in time past and was re born of yaksini, to thankful to her the king has made a house at the South gate of the city.
10. The trees are called chetiyas. It is believed that the Bo tree was worshipped in Mohenjodaro (Marshall John, vol . i: 63). The king Pandukābhaya settled Vyādha deva the god of huntsmen in Palmyra tree near the Western gate of the city (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 1:89). There is no other evidence to prove that the Palmyra palm was included in the category of sacred trees. The Mahāvamsa further mentions banyan tree was dedicated to the yaksa king Vaisravaṇa (1950, 1:89).
11. The king Pandukābhaya (5th B.C.E) has constructed houses for the yakṣas such as Citrarāja and the Kāvela. The mention is made in Mahāvamsa as follows “he settled the yakkha Kālvēla on the east side of the city, the Yakkha Cittarāja at the lower end of the Abhaya tank” (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:84).
12. The same king has housed the yaksani Valavāmukhī within the royal precincts and made early sacrificial offerings them and to other yakṣas (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:86).
13. There were three famous Nignthans called Jotiya, Giri and Kumbanda. The king Pandukābhaya built a house for the nigantha Jōtiya east ward of the lower cemetery (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:97).
14. The Mahāvamsa shed light on the Sivika Sāla build by king Paṇḍukābhaya. The Mahāvamsatikā gives two interpretation as hall where the śivalinga was deposited and a lying in home (2001: 223).
15. The king Pandukābhaya has built a monastery for praibbrājakas and a house for ājivakas (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:101-102). The various Pāsandas and samanasa also live during this period. These two categories were known in this island as Panduvāsdeve disembarked here in the guise of Paribbarājakas and princess Bhaddakachayanā disembarked as nuns. Tāpasa were also lived during this period (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:96). It further gives details that the five hundred families of various beliefs also lived (Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:100).
16. Buddhadatta P. (2014), 311.
17. Buddhadatta P. (1958), 35.
18. Buddhadatta P. (1958), 37-39.
19. Wang B.& Sen. Tansen (2011), 95
20. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 44:75-80

21. Oldenberg Hermann (1992), 9:2.
22. Fausboll. V (1962), no. 195, 89-91.
23. Rongxi Li (1996), 326.
24. Senevirathna N.A (1999), 467
25. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 10:86.
26. Anderson, Catalogue of the Indian Museum, 189. On one side of a pillar in a Buddhist railing at Mathura, is a flying horse with people clinging to it, perhaps intended for this scene.
27. Rongxi Li (1996), 92-93.
28. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 33:95.
29. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 37:4,5.
30. Geiger Wilhelm (1950), 20:17-27.
31. Deeg Max (2003), 8.
32. Balagalle G. Vimal (2017), 97.
33. Ray H. P (1994), 14.
34. Verma V. K (2009), 73.
35. Balagalle G. Vimal (2017), 94.
36. Seneviratne S. (1985), 522; Ray H. P (1994), 14.
37. Dewaraja Lorna (2000), 197.
38. Wimalakitti M.& Indavamsa H. (1962), 263.
39. Premananda V (1926), 74.
40. Rongxi Li (1996) 134-135.
41. Seneviratne, John M. (1915), vol. xxiv: 75.
42. Rongxi Li (1996), 184-185.
43. Rongxi Li (1996), 81.
44. Wickremasinghe D.M.D.Z. (1912), vol. i: 100.
45. Perera S.G (1930), 18.
46. Hettiarachchi S.B (2004), 301.
47. Paranavitana S. (1928), 331-341.
48. His Majesty, the Emperor of the Great Ming dynasty had dispatched the eunuchs Ching-Ho, Wang Ching-Lien, and others to set forth his utterances before Buddha, the World Honoured One, as follows: Deeply do we reverence you, Merciful and Honoured One, whose bright perfection is wide embracing, and whose ways of virtue passes all understanding, whose law enters into all human relations, and the years of whose great Kalpa (period) are like the sand of the river in number, you whose controlling influence ennobles and converts, whose kindness quickens, and whose strength discerns, whose mysterious efficacy is beyond compare!

‘Whereas Ceylon’s mountainous isle lies in the south of the ocean, and its Buddhist temples are sanctuaries of your gospel, where your miraculous responsive power imbues and enlightens. Of late, we have dispatched missions to announce our mandate to foreign nations, and during their journey over the ocean they have been favoured with the blessing of your beneficent protection. They escaped disaster, or misfortune and journeyed in safety to and fro. In everlasting recognition of your supreme virtue, We therefore, bestow offering in recompense, and do now reverently present Buddha, the Honoured One, oblations of gold and silver, gold embroidered jeweled banners of variegated silk, incense burners, and flower vases, silks of many colours in lining an exterior, lamps and candles with other gifts, in order to manifest the high honour of our worship. Do you, Lord Buddha, bestow on them your regard’!

List of Alms bestowed at the Shrine of the Buddhist Temple in the mountain of Ceylon of offerings

1,000 pieces of gold, 5,000 pieces of silver, fifty rolls of embroidered silk in many colours, fifty rolls taffeta in many colours, four pairs of jeweled banners, gold embroidered, and of variegated silk, to pairs of the same picked in red, one pair of the same in yellow, one pair in black, five antique brass incense burners, five pairs of antique brass flower vases picked in gold on lacquer with gold stands, five pairs of yellow brass candle sticks picked in gold on lacquer, with gold stands, five yellow brass lamps picked in gold on lacquer with gold stands, five incense vessels in vermilion red, lacquered gold picked on lacquer, with gold stands, six pairs of golden lotus flowers, 2,500 catties of scented oil, ten pairs of wax candles, ten sticks of fragrant incense.

49. Deeg Max (2003), 16.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

- [1] Buddhist records of Faxian, Balagalle G. Vimal, Sinhala translation, S. Godage publishers, Maradana, Colombo, 2017.
- [2] Buddhist records of the Western World, Buddhadatta Polwatte, Sinhala translation, S. Godage Publishers, Maradana, Colombo, 2014.
- [3] Dīpavaṃsa, Gunawardana Nadeesha, Sinhala translation, S. Godage international publishers, Maradana, Colombo, 2016.
- [4] Dīpavaṃsa, □āṇavimala Thēra, Kiriellē. Sinhala translation, M. D. Gunasēna Publishers, Colombo, 1959.
- [5] Dīpavaṃsa, Oldernberg. H., Asian Education Services, New Delhi, Madras, 1992.
- [6] Divyāvadāna, Senevirathna N.A., S. Godage international publishers, 1999.
- [7] The Divyāvadāna – A collection of Early Buddhist legends, Cowell E.B., & Neil R.A., reprint, Amsterdam, Oriental Press, 1970.
- [8] Epigraphia Zeylanica, vol. III Paranavitana. S, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1928.
- [9] Epigraphia Zeylanica, Wickremasinghe Don Marino De Silva & Codrington, vol. III. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, vol. ii & iii, Oxford University Press, London, 1933.
- [10] Epigraphia Zeylanica, Wickremasinghe Don Marino De Silva, vol. i, Oxford University Press, London, 1912.
- [11] The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions, Li Rongxi, Translated by the Tripitaka-Master Xuanzang under Imperial Order, Composed by Śramana Bianji of the Great Zongchi Monastery (Taishō, Volume 51, Number 2087), Berkeley 1996.
- [12] The Jātaka, Cowell. E.B, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1901.
- [13] The Jātaka, Fausboll. V, Pali text society, London, 1962.
- [14] The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon, Geiger Wilhelm, Ceylon Government Information Department, Colombo, 1950.
- [15] Rājāvaliya, Premananda V, Colombo, 1926.
- [16] Saddarmaratnākara, Wimalakitti M. & Indavaṃsa H., Colombo, 1962.
- [17] Sīhalawattuppakarana, Buddhadatta Polwatte, Anula printers, Maradana, 1958.
- [18] The Temporal and spiritual conquest of Ceylon of Queyorz father Fernao de, Perera S.G, A.C. Richards, acting government printer, Ceylon, 1930.
- [19] Translation of Xuanzang record Deeg Max, , unpublished, in print.
- [20] .Vaṃsattappakasini Amaravaṃsa therā & Disanayaka Hemachandra, Sinhala translation, S. Godage international publishers, Maradana, Colombo, 2001.

Secondary Sources

- [21] Boparachchi, O, Tamil Traders in Sri Lanka and Sinhalese Traders in Tamil Nadu, International center for Ethnic Studies, Colombo, 2008.
- [22] Casson. L., Ancient Navel Technology and the Route to India, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1991.
- [23] Childers, R. C., Dictionary of the Pāli language, edited, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1979.
- [24] Deeg Max, The Places Where Siddhartha Trod: Lumbini and Kapilavastu, Lumbini International research Institute Occasional papers, 3, 2003.
- [25] Dewaraja Lorna, “Cheng Ho’s visits to Sri Lanka and the Galle trilingual inscription in the National Museum in Colombo”, Essays in History and Sociology: in Honour of Professor W.M. Sirisena, 197-219, 2000.
- [26] Hettiarachchi S.B, “A study of the Cheng Ho”, Anumodana, Felicitation volume of the professor Anuradha Senevirathana, 2004.
- [27] Ray H. P., The Winds of Change, Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early South Asia, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994.
- [28] Seneviratna S., Social Base of Early Buddhism in South East India and Sri Lanka, PhD thesis Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1985.
- [29] Seneviratne, John M, 1915, “Some notes on the Chinese references to Ceylon”, JRASCB, vol. xxiv, 1915.
- [30] Verma, V. K., Trade between Early Historic Tamil Nadu and China, 16th Issue, Ramjas College, Delhi University, Delhi, 2009.
- [31] Wang Bangwei & Sen Tansen, India and China Interactions through Buddhism and Diplomacy, A collection of Essays by professor Prabodh Chandra Bagchi, Anthem Press India, 2011.

AUTHORS

First Author – Dr. Nadeesha Gunawardana, email: nadee@kln.ac.lk, Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.