# The "Fearless Mountain" That (Almost) Disappeared: Looking for the History of the Abhayagiri-vihāra in Sri Lanka

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**Abstract:** This article traces the history of the Abhayagiri-vihāra in Sri Lanka through the available sources. It attempts to reconstruct parts of the "lost" history of the Mahāvihāra's rival monastery in the *vaṃsa* literature of the latter, but also reexamines the Chinese sources about the two main monasteries of the island and the traces of Tantric Buddhism from the Abhayagiri-vihāra in order to sketch a more multifaceted history of the monastery and its rivalry with the Mahāvihāra than has been undertaken to date with an overreliance on the Pāli sources.

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## Introduction

It is well known how important the role of Sri Lankan Buddhism and its sources has been in the Western discovery of Buddhism and its study. It was the Pāli literature of the Theravādin, first in the form of the Buddhist chronicles, the *vaṃsa*s, and then the corpus of the so-called Pāli-canon, which satisfied the Western taste and appetite for historicity and authenticity, which the sources of the so-called "Northern School" written in Sanskrit and translated into "secondary" languages like Chinese and Tibetan could not provide.[1] As Buddhist Studies scholars know now very well – or, at least, should know – the resulting picture of Buddhist history on the island is partly a constructed one and was projected by scholars exclusively engaged in editing and working on the Pāli canon, like Thomas Rhys Davids, Hermann Oldenberg, and others, but also by Śrī Laṅkān national-Buddhist historians.[2]

However, the history of Buddhism on the island was much more complex than the uniformity of Theravāda and its text corpus implies. Art history and even the sources of Theravāda itself, like the already mentioned *vaṃsa*s, draw a more differentiated picture of the island's Buddhist past. While the modern Theravāda tradition goes back to a royal intervention of king Parākramabāhu I (1153–1186) – who made the Mahāvihāra the dominant Buddhist denomination on the island and thereby solidified the "orthodoxy" of the Vibhajjavāda tradition of Theravāda[3] – historically there were more than one competing monastic centres of Buddhism before that period, particularly during the so-called Anurādhapura period (377 BCE–1017 CE).[4]

The Theravāda chronicles, the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the slightly older *Dīpavaṃsa*, less consistent in terms of form and content, both report the foundation of three major monastic institutions on the island, the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagirivihāra and the Jetavanavihāra. Of the latter two which were abolished as independent monastic institutions and integrated into the Mahāvihāra tradition by the

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[1]   On the early reception history of the *Mahāvaṃsa* see Walters and Colley (2006). It may be noted that this focus on the *vaṃsa* tradition also led to ignoring traces of early Tamil Buddhism (for which see Schalk and Vellupillai 2002).

[2]   Walters (1999: 323) points out: "Not surprisingly, in colonial and postcolonial historiography, the entire history of Anurādhapura has been narrated as a virtual paraphrase of the extant vaṃsa texts." See also Walters (2000). This "tradition" often is rolled forward by modern scholars, as for instance in Trainor, who, although he deals with the period before the dominance of the Mahāvihāra, only briefly mentions the existence of the Abhayagiri and the Jetavana (Trainor 1997: 75–76).

[3]   On Vibhajjavāda see Cousins (2001). On the reform period and its impact on the production of Pāli literature see Gornall (2020).

[4]   For a discussion of the concept of Theravāda see Bretfeld (2012: 288–290).

"reform" of Parākramabāhu I,[5] it is the Abhayagirivihāra which, at times, was the most prominent and dominant monastic institution on the island. From references in Buddhist sources we know that the Abhayagirivihāra possessed its own scriptures, although there is some discussion and disagreement as to how much this literature differed from the Mahāvihāra tradition, i.e., the text corpus preserved in Pāli. There is also no agreement whether the Abhayagirivihāra is, as the Pāli sources want us to believe, in the strict sense a schismatic group of the Theravādin[6] or represents a more diverse and independent Buddhist tradition separate from the Vibhajjavāda of the Mahāvihāra (DEEG 2012: 149–150). Beyond these differences, it is *communis opinio* that the Abhayagirivihāra was more open to different "trends" and practices like Mahāyāna and esoteric Buddhism (Vajra- or Mantrayāna) that developed in the Buddhist *oikoumene* over time.

There seems to be some confusion, or at least, no final agreement as to which "sect" or school the Abhayagirivihāra belonged.[7] The majority of scholars are convinced that the monastery was – like its smaller sibling, the Jetavanavihāra – a branch of the Theravāda, following the narrative of the historiographical sources of a schismatic split from the Mahāvihāra, but there are also hints that the monastery – at least temporarily and partly – may have accepted or supported different *nikāya* or ordination branches (see below).

Linked to the problem of sectarian affiliation is the question of whether and how the Abhayagirivihāra's "canon", or rather its text corpus, was different from the Mahāvihāra. Some "candidates" have been identified as works possibly belonging to the monastery's literature,[8] but even if their Abhayagirivihāra-identity is acknowledged they only give a very restricted glimpse into the literary activities of the monastery. Since there are otherwise only indirect references to such texts in non-Abhayagiri sources, it is difficult to fully answer questions about their extent and content, but it seems very likely that the "canon"[9] of the

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[5]  Much has been written about the personality and achievements of Parākramabāhu, mostly from the Mahāvihāra standpoint reflected in the *Cūḷavaṃsa*: see, for example, PATHMANATHAN (1976).

[6]  Already stated by BAREAU (1955: 241), and, for instance, maintained by CHANDAWIMALA (2016: 5, and implied elsewhere).

[7]  See, for example, GOMBRICH and OBEYESEKERE (1988: 302), who obviously quote a statement of the liberal Śrī Laṅkan monk Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya made in the context of the debate about the re-establishment of the nun ordination in Theravāda Buddhism: "The ordination tradition of the Abhayagiri monastery of Anuradhapura has been preserved in China after the Abhayagiri monks were expelled by the Mahāvihāra; they are Sarvāstivādin."

[8]  See, for example, NORMAN (1991), SKILLING (1993a and 1993b), CROSBY (1999); for a discussion of Chinese translations of texts ascribed to the Mahāvihāra see HEIRMAN (2004).

[9]  In a strict sense, the assumed openness of the Abhayagirivihāra corpus of scriptures would not qualify it as a canon if the latter is defined as a closed corpus of texts – in the sense of "nothing

Abhayagirivihāra differed from the standard Pāli canon, as known in terms of content and structure – also in the particular respect that it seemed to have been more open to inclusion of a wide variety of texts like, for instance, Mahāyāna scriptures and "esoteric" *dhāraṇī*s or *mantra*s and, maybe, even to the acceptance of different Vinaya texts.

The present article[10] is an attempt to collect and contextualise the information about the Abhayagirivihāra from different sources, the textual ones mostly written in Indic languages or Chinese,[11] and to re-contextualise – trying to read these sources against and with one another as well as possible – some of this material in a way which, although it may not answer all questions arising, hopefully instigates new research about and a revision of the history of Buddhism on the island of Śrī Laṅkā which has been, it seems, dominated and restricted either by its view through a Mahāvihāra lens or by quite unsophisticated generalisations about a post-reform Theravāda Buddhism (or both).

### References to the Abhayagirivihāra in Indic Texts and Contexts

The most evident sources for references to the Abhayagirivihāra are the Śrī Laṅkān chronicles, the *Mahāvaṃsa* attributed to Mahānāma[12] (second half of the 5th cent.), and the slightly older and shorter (and also rather disorganised and, in places, inconsistent) *Dīpavaṃsa* (von Hinüber 1996: 89–90, §184). Both sources come from a Mahāvihāra context, but overall, the *Mahāvaṃsa* has a more prominent and clearcut Mahāvihāra bias. I will discuss the relevant passages at some length since they need and deserve, in my view, a more sophisticated and structural analysis than the usual historicist approach.[13] I will restrict myself

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can be added, nothing can be taken away" (Jan Assmann) – as in the case of the so-called Pāli canon of the Mahāvihārin.

[10]  A similar attempt has been undertaken by Tilakaratne (2020), who, however, obviously lacks the competence to analyse the Chinese original sources.

[11]  I have omitted a discussion of the sources presented by Petech ([1953/54] 1988), since they do not contribute to the discussion of the Abhayagirivihāra.

[12]  O. von Hinüber (1996: 91–92, §§185–188, including the commentary), and on *Cūḷavaṃsa*: von Hinüber (1996: 92–93, §189).

[13]  See, for instance, such a rather uncritical paraphrase of the history of the split between the Abhayagirivihāra and the Mahāvihāra in Gombrich (2006: 157–159). An exception is Cousins (2012) who critically assesses much of the material presented here but whose focus is on reconstructing what can be known about the doctrines of the Abhayagirivihārin and who has a tendency to emphasize the relative unity of Śrī Laṅkān Buddhism across the monastic divides. The scholarly approach to the *Mahāvaṃsa* (and the *Dīpavaṃsa*) has, for a long time, not gone beyond a Manichaean-like hermeneutical "either-or": see Frauwallner (1984: 8): "Die Meinungen schwanken dabei von weitgehender Gläubigkeit bis zur schroffsten Skepsis." ("Regarding [the historical value] the opinions oscillate between far-reaching trustfulness and brusque scepticism."). On a more analytic approach see J. Walters' articles listed under References, and Scheible (2016).

here to the narrative passages dealing with the split of the Abhayagirivihāra from the Mahāvihāra,[14] but I am fully aware that a full treatment of the matter would have to include all textual (*vaṃsa*) and epigraphical references to the monastery as well.[15]

Most references to the Abhayagirivihāra naturally are found in Pāli sources of the Mahāvihāra textual corpus. The foundation narrative of the monastery in the *Mahāvaṃsa* is recorded as follows (33.78–83):

> 78. The king of great fame [Abhaya] came to Anurādhapura, killed the Ḍamila Dāṭhika and ruled himself. 79. Thereupon, the king destroyed the grove of the *nigaṇṭha* [Giri] and built a monastery at that place with twelve cells. 80. Two hundred seventeen years, ten months 81. and ten days after the foundation of the Mahāvihāra, the revered king established the Abhayagirivihāra. 82. He convened the [two] Elders who had been helpful to [him] in the past[16] and entrusted the monastery to the Elder Mahātissa. 83. Because the king Abhaya had built it in the grove of Giri, the monastery's name became Abhayagiri.[17]

The only direct reference to Abhayagirivihāra in the *Dīpavaṃsa* is a very brief and confused record of this foundation story (19.14–17):

> 14. [A monastery] was constructed at the place where the *nigaṇṭha* called Giri had resided. This is the origin of the name Abhayagiri. … 16. The ruler Abhaya, the son of Sadhātissa, killed the Ḍamila Dāṭhika, and ruled himself. 17. He constructed the Abhayagiri between the Silāthūpa and the Cetiya. The ruler reigned twelve years and five months.[18]

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[14]  The "imaginary" character of the Mahāvihāra sources has already been emphasized by COLLINS (1990). For most recent discussion of this issue and the relevant text passages see FRASCH (2023: 212–215).

[15]  The "classical" study one should consult in this respect still is GUNAWARDANA (1979). For Sinhalese historiographical records see, for instance, BRETFELD (2001).

[16]  The monks Tissa and Mahātissa who, according to Mhv.33.67–77, had helped the king to consolidate his reign by convincing his rebellious ministers to accept the king's rule.

[17]  *78. Rājā Anurādhapuraṃ āgantvāna mahāyaso, Dāṭhikaṃ Ḍamilaṃ hantvā sayaṃ rajjaṃ akārayi. 79. Tato Nigaṇṭhārāmaṃ taṃ viddhaṃsetvā mahīpati, vihāraṃ kārayī tattha dvā-dasapariveṇakaṃ. 80. Mahāvihārapatiṭṭhānā dvīsu vassatesu ca, sattarasasu vassesu dasamāsādhikesu ca, 81. tathā dinesu dasasu atikkantesu sādaro, Abhayagirivihāraṃ so patiṭṭhāpesi bhūpati. 82. Pakkosayitvā te there tesu pubbupakāriṇo, taṃ Mahātissatherassa vihāraṃ mānado adā. 83. Girissa yasmā ārāme rājā kāresi so 'bhayo, tasmābhayagiri tveva vihāro nāmatu ahu.* (GEIGER 1958: 275). Translation is slightly different from GEIGER (1912: 235). Note that the punctuation – particularly the *commata* after a half-stanza or *pada* – of all *vaṃsa* quotations are my insertions since the footnote format does not easily accomodate a verse-conform presentation.

[18]  *14. Girināmaniganṭhassa vuṭṭhokāse tahiṃ kato, Abhayagirīti paññatti vohāro samajāyatha. … 16. Saddhātissassāyaṃ putto Abhayo nāma khattiyo, Dāṭhikaṃ Ḍamilaṃ hantvā rajjaṃ kāresi khattiyo. 17. Abhayagiriṃ patiṭṭhāpesi silāthūpaṃ cetiyamantare, dvādasavassaṃ*

The *Dīpavaṃsa* story clearly is a corrupt version – not in the sense of chronological order or dependence – of the more detailed *Mahāvaṃsa* narrative which gives an etiology of the Abhayagiri monastery showing post-ex-facto characteristics of over-explaining: giving the name of the king – Abhaya Vaṭṭagāmaṇi (traditional reigning period 103 and c. 89–77 BCE) – would have been consistent enough for making more sense for "fearless mountain"[19], but both versions – the *Dīpavaṃsa*, in an odd way, even exclusively – link the appelativum *giri*, "mountain", to a personal name and make it a *nomen proprium*.[20]

It should be noted that the Abhayagiri monastery was, at the beginning, rather small and, following the logic of the extent *vaṃsa* narrative, still belonged to the Mahāvihāra community, the only one that existed on the island at that time.[21] The slightly negative Mahāvihāra bias evidently anticipates the later schism. The almost obsessive focus on the exact period between the foundations of the two monasteries[22] only makes sense when reflecting such a viewpoint and an attempt to establish the Mahāvihāra as the older and more original institution. In fact, the Buddhist "narrator" should have been happy about the fact that the king had acted in favour of the Buddhist *saṅgha* when he took away the property from the heretics (*nigaṇṭha*) and handed it over to the Buddhists. This attempt to render the Abhayagirivihāra as schismatic almost from the outset probably also led to the not very consistent narrative of a secession still in the ruling period of king Abhaya Vaṭṭagāmaṇi (*Mahāvaṃsa* 33.95–98):

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*pañca māsāni rajjaṃ kāresi khattiyo.*
   Text H. Oldenberg (1879: 101), whose translation (Oldenberg 1879: 209) I adapt. Cousins (2012: 72–73), on the basis of this record which he claims to be the older ("two or three centuries": Cousins 2012: 77) and more authoritative source, tries to assign the construction of the monastery to the earlier king Abhaya Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (161–137 BCE). Taking Abhayagiri as a toponym and *sīlathūpa* as an appelativum, he offers two translations for stanza 17: "He erected the stone *stūpa* of Abhaya Hill [which is] inside the shrine." and "He erected the Abhaya Hill shrine with a stone *stūpa* inside."

19   See Cousins (2012: 74).

20   A name Girika is well known as the name of a demon or as the name of king Aśoka's cruel guardian of the prison "Hell" in Pāṭaliputra (see Strong 1983: 41, 211–213; Przyluski 1923: 131–132, passim), but Giri is, as far as I can see, not attested as a personal name; see also Cousins (2012: 73). In the context of the topography of Anurādhapura which does not have a mountain, the interpretation of the word as a personal name may have seemed more plausible than taking it in its most obvious sense.

21   A similar view is expressed by Kemper (1991: 50–51).

22   See Kemper (1991: 50): "… a precision that suggests more than a casual interest …" One may speculate whether the number of years had been influenced by the chronology of the Theravāda: almost the same number of years passed between the *parinirvāṇa* / *parinibbāna* of the Buddha and the ascension to the throne of Aśoka/Asoka; the "message" then would have been that king Abhaya favoured Buddhism – debunking the *nigaṇṭha*s – in the same way as Aśoka had done, and he would have done this – like Aśoka at the third council of Pāṭaliputra, according to the *vaṃsa*s – by establishing the Theravāda as the "true" representative of Buddhism.

95. Because of the transgression of associating with families, the *saṅgha* ousted the Elder widely known as Mahātissa who had mingled with families. 96. His disciple, widely known as Elder Bahalamassutissa, angrily went to and dwelt in the Abhayagiri, bringing [his] faction there. 97. From then on, these monks did not come to the Mahāvihāra anymore, and thus those belonging to the Abhayagiri left the Theravāda. 98. Those monks belonging to the Dakkhiṇavihāra split from those belonging to the Abhayagiri, [and] thus the monks splitting from the Theravādin were [divided] into two [groups].[23]

The sequence of stanzas is divided into two even parts: 1. the story of a group of monks leaving the Mahāvihāra, and 2. a statement of institutional division. Both parts do not fit each other very well: the rather low-profile expulsion of a monk because of the offense against a Vinaya rule and the move of his disciple and his supporters to a newly founded monastery, the Abhayagiri, is equated with a complete split from the Theravādin[24] fold represented by the Mahāvihāra. Obviously to render the new renegades – who are not given a generic name like Theravāda – weak from the very beginning it is said to have split again immediately after its formation. The terminology used in the text may reveal such an intention: while the first step of separation consists in just not visiting (*nāgamuṃ*) the Mahāvihāra and abandoning (*niggatā*) the Theravāda, it is only after the split – the text uses *pabhinnā* which reminds, of course, of the Buddhist "Ur"-term for schism, *saṅghabheda* – of the Dakkhinavihāra from the Abhayagirivihāra that there is a split (the same term *pabhinnā* is used!) from the Mahāvihāra.

There is, however, a small detail which may reflect the position of the other side, i.e., that of the Abhayagirivihāra: some manuscripts of the *Mahāvaṃsa* insert a stanza after stanza 98 which Geiger in his edition and translation bans into the notes as "spurious"[25]. This stanza reads:

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[23]  *95. Theraṃ kulehi saṃsaṭṭhaṃ Mahātisso ti vissutaṃ, kulasaṃsaggadosena saṃgho taṃ nīharī ito. 96. Tassa sisso Bahalamassutissathero ti vissuto, kuddho 'bhayagiriṃ gantvā vasi pakkhaṃ vahaṃ tahiṃ. 97. Tato pabhuti te bhikkhū Mahāvihāraṃ nāgamuṃ, evaṃ te 'bhayagirikā niggatā theravādato. 98. Pabhinnābhayagirikehi Dakkhinavihārakā yatī; evaṃ te theravādīhi pabhinnā bhikkavo dvidhā.* (Geiger 1958: 276–277). Translation is slightly different from Geiger (1912: 236–237).

[24]  I translate *theravāda* and *theravādin* in a denominational way which reflects the position of the Mahāvihāra, i.e., the conviction that this monastery represents the continuation of the lineage of the orthodox and orthopractic group which claimed to preserve the true teaching of the Buddha after the first split of the *saṅgha* at the so-called council of Vaiśālī into Sthavira and Mahāsāṅghikas. Both terms also could be translated as "teaching of the Elder" and "adherents of the teaching of the Elders". On a possible influence of the story of the council of Vaiśālī of the schism-narrative of the Mahāvihāra (Theravāda-Vibhajjavāda vs. Abhayagiri-Dhammarucika) see Silk (2012: 134–146).

[25]  I guess that the original German was "unecht". Geiger's editorial approach has been criticized by Cousins (2012: 81) who calls this stanza "badly constructed or a later addition".

> To further the monks of the Great Abhaya[giri] living on the island, the
> ruler of the land Vaṭṭagāmaṇi gave [them] profit[26].[27]

The pro-Abhayagiri tenor of this stanza, highlighting the king's support for the
monastery, easily explains why some manuscripts, the commentary – and finally
also Geiger – did not want to include it in the text. I would even go so far to
claim that 98a and the following stanza 99 originally belonged together:

> [The king] erected cells of the monastery as a bond of the group pondering:
> "Thus there will be a restoration."[28]

The reasoning behind my conclusion is that without 98b, stanza 99 would start
quite abruptly after 98 and would be without a clear grammatical subject; but
if it is read as a continuation of 98b the syntax becomes quite natural and the
actions of the king in favour of the monastery – which in this case would be
the Abhayagirivihāra – would just be continued from 98b. Further, if we take
out these two stanzas, the whole story would end quite naturally like a full-
fledged Buddhist council (conventionally called *saṅgīti*) of the Mahāvihārins
with the codification / writing down of the Tripiṭaka (*piṭakattayapāli*) and its
commentary (*aṭṭhakathā* sic!) which underlines once more the monastery's
claim for orthodoxy after what its community considered a schism of the other
part.

I therefore suggest that 98b and 99 were inserted into the *Mahāvaṃsa* from
an Abhayagiri-related source – maybe the *\*Abhayagiri(mahā)vaṃsa* (see be-
low) – which, of course, would focus on the strong support of the Abhayagiri-
vihāra through the king; a redactor of the *Mahāvaṃsa* may have wanted to
use them to boost the support of king Abhaya for the Mahāvihāra instead, but
unfortunately – and fortunately for us – forgot to change the name Abhayagiri
into the name of his own monastery, the Mahāvihāra.

According to the 37th chapter, the last one in the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the real split[29] –
including the correct interpretation of the Vinaya, taking over the property of

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[26]  Geiger translates *nāma* as "so-called", but at the same time and correctly states that "*patti*
simply means 'revenue'" (Geiger 1958: 237 fn. 1). I think that *nāma* here is to be taken as the
emphasising indeclinable particle.

[27]  *Mahā'abhayabhikkhū te vaḍḍetuṃ dīpavāsino, Vaṭṭagāmaṇibhūmindo Pattiṃ nāma adāsi
so.* (Geiger 1958: 277, critical apparatus, 98b). My translation differs slightly from Geiger
(1912: 237, note 1).

[28]  *99. Vihārapariveṇāni ghaṭābandhe akārayi, "paṭisaṃkharaṇaṃ evaṃ hessatī"ti vicintiya*
(Geiger 1958: 277).

[29]  This is also the view of the *Cūḷavaṃsa* (see below) while the difference in the process of
separation is not really distinguished even by an authority like R.A.L.H. Gunawardana,
who states (Gunawardana 1979: 7): "The schisms which led to the emergence of the three
*nikāya*s had taken place many centuries earlier [than the eleventh century, M.D.]; in fact, the
first schism in Sinhalese Buddhism was in the reign of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī (…). But for a long time,
the *nikāya*s represented little more than rival factions of monks within the capital."

the adversary, and shifting monastic boundaries (*sīmā*) – happens later under the reign of king Mahāsena (274–301 CE) which for the Mahāvihāravāsin community was obviously very traumatic, because of the temporary suppression and destruction of their own monastery.[30] In this narrative, the tone clearly has a stronger anti-Abhayagirivihāra rhetoric (37.1–16):

1. After [king] Jeṭṭhatissa's death his younger brother Mahāsena ruled for twenty-seven years. 2. To perform the royal consecration, the Elder Saṃghamitta, knowing that [his] time had come,[31] came there [to Anurādhapura] from the opposite shore.[32] 3. After [Saṃghamitta] had performed the consecration of the [king] and several other services, he, without constraint, was eager to bring about the destruction of the Mahāvihāra [saying:] 4. "These residents of the Mahāvihāra are not teaching the [true] Vinaya, we are [the ones] teaching the [true] Vinaya.", [he] won the king over. 5. [He] had the king establish a penalty: "Who gives food to a monk residing in the Mahāvihāra, should be punished with [a fine of] a hundred [pieces of coin]." 6. Oppressed by these [measures], the monks residing in the Mahāvihāra abandoned the Mahāvihāra and went to Malaya or Rohaṇa. 7. Hence, this Mahāvihāra was abandoned for nine years and was deplete of monks residing in the Mahāvihāra. 8. The ill-willed Elder informed the ill-willed king: "Ownerless property belongs to the king." 9. Having secured the permission from the king to destroy the Mahāvihāra, the wicked urged people to do so. 10. A supporter of the Elder Saṅghamitta and favourite of the king, the cruel minister Soṇa and shameless monks 11. tore down the excellent seven-storied Lohapāsāda and carried [the material of] all kinds of different buildings from there to the Abhayagiri, 12. [so that] through the many mansions (*pāsāda*) brought away from the Mahāvihāra the Abhayagirivihāra became rich of mansions. 13. Because of the evil friend, Elder Saṃghamitta, and [his] supporter Soṇa, the king, committed much evil. 14. The king took away the big stone image from the Pācīnatissapabbata and set it up at the Abhayagiri. 15. He erected a building for the image, a building for the bodhi [tree], a beautiful hall for the relic, a four-sided hall [and] reconstructed the

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[30] On a critical reading of the *vaṃsa* accounts of that period see WALTERS (1999). For the reigning period of Mahāsena a public controversy between the two monasteries about the correct Vinaya is documented in the *Mahāvaṃsaṭīkā* and in the commentary to the Theravāda-vinaya *Samantapāsādikā*: see O. von HINÜBER (1997).

[31] Geiger translates *kālaṃ ñatvā* as "when he heard the time (of Jeṭṭhatissa's death)".

[32] *paratīrato* probably means that Saṃghamitta came from India. The Mahāvihāra view of things wants to depict, as in other instances, the influence of Saṃghamitta on the king as a corrupt foreign interference; this also implies that the consecration of king Abhaya was, at least from the standpoint of the monastic community of the Mahāvihāra, not fully valid as it was performed by an intruder.

Kukkuṭa[-shrine]. 16. Then the Abhayagirivihāra became fair to behold by the evildoer Elder Saṅghamitta.[33]

The temporary non-existence of the Mahāvihāra and the explicit reference to the Vinaya[34] by Saṅghamitta as the reason for suppressing the Mahāvihāra reveal that this was the real schismatic move of the Abhayagirivihāra forming a new *nikāya* in terms of ordination lineage rather than the move of a group of monks to a newly founded monastery during the time of king Abhaya Duṭṭhagāmaṇi. A fragmentary inscription, probably from the time of Mahāsena, however, supports the view that the king supported the Abhayagirivihārin (and the Jetavanavihārin) and their Mahāyāna (*vetulla*) teaching and tried to force the *saṅgha* of the "five abodes" (*paca-maha-avasa*, Skt. *pañcamahāvāsa*), very likely referring to the Mahāvihāra community, to accept these teachings.[35]

King Mahāsena is, in a way, rehabilitated[36] when he later, prompted by his

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[33]   *1. Jeṭṭhatissaccaye tassa Mahāseno kaniṭṭhako, sattavīsati vassāni rājā rajjaṃ akārayi. 2. Tassa rājābhisekaṃ taṃ kāretuṃ paratīrato, so Saṃghamittathero tu kālaṃ ñatvā idhāgato. 3. Tassa abhisekaṃ kāretvā aññaṃ kiccaṃ c' anekadhā, Mahāvihāraviddhaṃsaṃ kātukāmo asaṃyato: 4. "avinayavādino ete Mahāvihāravāsino, vinayavādī mayaṃ raja" iti gāhiya bhūpatiṃ. 5. "Mahāvihāravāsissa āhāraṃ deti bhikkhuno, yo, so sataṃ daṇḍiyo" ti rañño daṇḍaṃ ṭhapāpayi. 6. Upaddutā tehi bhikkū Mahāvihāravāsino, Mahāvihāraṃ chaḍḍetvā Malayaṃ Rohaṇaṃ aguṃ. 7. Tena Mahāvihāro 'yaṃ nava vassāni chaḍḍito, Mahāvihāravāsīhi bhikkhūhi āsi suññato. 8. "Hoti assāmikaṃ vatthu pathavīsāmino" iti, rājānaṃ saṃñapetvā so thero dummati dummatiṃ. 9. Mahāvihāraṃ nāsetuṃ laddhānumati rājato, tathā katuṃ manusse so yojesi duṭṭhamānaso. 10. Saṃghamittassa therassa sevako rājavallabho, Soṇāmacco dāruṇo ca bhikkhavo ca alajjino. 11. bhinditvā Lohapāsādaṃ sattabhūmikaṃ uttamaṃ, ghare nānappakāre ca ito 'bhayagiriṃ nayuṃ, 12. Mahāvihārānītehi pāsādehi bahūhi ca, Abhayagirivihāro so bahupāsādako ahu. 13. Saṃghamittaṃ pāpamittaṃ theraṃ Soṇaṃ ca sevakaṃ, āgamma subahuṃ pāpaṃ akāsi so mahīpati. 14. Mahāsīlapaṭimaṃ so Pācīnatissapabbatā, ānetvābhayagirimhi patiṭṭhāpesi bhūpati. 15. Paṭimāgharaṃ bodhigharaṃ dhātusālaṃ manoramaṃ, catusālaṃ ca kāresi, saṃkhari Kukkuṭavhayaṃ. 16. Saṃghamittena therena tena dāruṇakammunā, vihāro so 'bhayagiri dassaneyyo ahū tadā.* (Geiger 1958: 319–320). Translation is slightly different and adopted from Geiger (1912: 267–268).

[34]   Although the Vinaya of the Abhayagirivihāra is not extant anymore, there is enough evidence that this Vinaya did indeed differ from the one preserved in Pāli from the Mahāvihāra: see O. von Hinüber (1996: 22, §43).

[35]   Paranavitana (1943); this inscription is also used by J. Walters in his deconstructive analysis of the Mahāsena narrative in the extant *vaṃsa*s (see next note).

[36]   Walters (1997) portrays the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s depiction of Mahāsena's activities with its "happy ending" of the king's full support of the Mahāvihāra as the culmination points of the *vaṃsa*. The *Dīpavaṃsa* (22.66–76; Oldenberg 1879: 113 and 220–221), while not telling the full story, keeps the ambiguity of the king's actions: *75. asādhusaṃgamen' eva yāvajīvaṃ subhāsubhaṃ, katvā gato yathākammaṃ so Mahāsenabhūpati.* ("King Mahāsena, after having beneficial and non-beneficial [deeds] during his lifetime by interaction with the unwise (Dummitta/Saṅghamitta and Pāpasoṇa/Soṇa: see stanza 70–71) went [to an existence after death] according to his actions." My translation differs from Oldenberg's). Walters (1997: 112) explains this difference: "The eyewitnesses [i.e., of the time of the compilation of the

minister Meghavaṇṇābhaya agrees to have Mahāvihāra reestablished and repopulated (Mhv.37.17–25). The satisfaction of the Mahāvihāra community must have been great when Saṅghamitta and his accomplice Soṇa were killed (37.26–28).

Unfortunately, a historical record of the Abhayagirivihāra is not extant, so that we do not know what the Abhayagirivihāra's version of the events was. However, we have enough evidence from Pāli (i.e., Mahāvihāra) sources that such a *vaṃsa* of the monastery did indeed exist: the *Mahāvaṃsaṭīkā* occasionally refers to a *Uttaravihāraṭṭhakathā*[37] which presupposes that its compiler, probably towards the end of the first millennium, had access to a commentary of a Abhayagirivihāra (Uttaravihāra) chronicle. The loss of the Abhayagirivihāra corpus and particularly the *vaṃsa* is particularly annoying in the case of the *vaṃsa* of the monastery which would certainly have provided a corrective to the presentation of the history of Buddhism in Śrī Laṅkā. That such a *vaṃsa* existed has long been recognised (FRAUWALLNER 1984: 20–21) through the references to a commentary, the *Uttaravihāra-aṭṭhakathā*, the "Explanation of Meaning [in the Vaṃsa] of the Uttaravihāra (i.e., the Abhayagirivihāra)", to this lost text referred to in the commentary to the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī*,[38] written sometimes between the 8th and the 12th century.[39] The *Mahāvaṃsa* commentary even mentions an *Uttaravihāramahāvaṃsa,* which seems to be the lost chronicle of the Abhayagirivihāra.[40] The problem with these references is that they only occur – understandably from the standpoint of the Mahāvihārin who obviously rather chose to suppress[41] than to mention the different views of their rivals about the history of and after the division – in the *Vaṃsatthapakāsinī* before the split between the two monasteries[42] – the last mention of the commentary is in chapter 10 (sic!) – and therefore do not extend into the period where the Abhayagirivāsin certainly would have presented their own views of the historical developments. Here, the Chinese records may give – I hope, at

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*Dīpavaṃsa* shortly after the king's death] to Mahāsena's reign were too angry and threatened to simply tell us what actually happened."

[37]   O. von HINÜBER (1996: 92, §188).

[38]   Edited by G. P. MALALASEKERA (1935). I am grateful to Dr. Petra Kieffer-Pülz who made available to me an electronic copy of Malalasekera's edition.

[39]   O. von HINÜBER (1996: 92, §188); while Malalasekera tried to make plausible an earlier date, there is no direct evidence for this.

[40]   See COUSINS (2012: 90–91). I do not know why MALALASEKERA (1935: vol. 1, lxv) identifies this *Mahāvaṃsa* with its own commentary: "Mention is also made of an Uttaravihāra-Mahāvaṃsa, which, from the context, is undoubtedly identical with the U(ttara)V(ihāra) A(ttha)katha …" (additions in brackets are mine).

[41]   See O. von HINÜBER (1996: 92, §188).

[42]   MALALASEKERA 1935: vol. 1, 187, line 5; 247, line 15; 249, line 11; 289, line 20; 290, line 17 (*Uttaravihāraṭṭhakathā*); 134, line 14–15: *Uttaravihāravāsīnaṃ pana Mahāvaṃse: ...* ("in the *Mahāvaṃsa* of the Uttaravihārin: …").

least, to make this plausible – glimpses into the other side of the (hi)story (see below), that is the view of the Abhayagirivihāra: the brief record of Xuanzang about the division and Faxian's report (see below) give a taste of a view of the monastic-institutional history of the island which was – as to be expected – quite different from the *vaṃsa* tradition of the Mahāvihāra for which the most likely source is indeed such a \**Abhayagirivaṃsa*.

Written in an almost triumphal tone then is the *Mahāvaṃsa*'s continuation (*Cūḷavaṃsa*) account of Parākamabāhu's forced unification of the monastic institutions under the umbrella of the Mahāvihāra (78.1–27). Obviously, most of the monks of the communities of the Abhayagirivihāra and the Jetavanavihāra had to be coerced to join the united *saṅgha* under the control of the Mahāvihāra through reordination, i.e., becoming novices (*sāmaṇera*) again in the ordination lineage promoted by the king (78.20–27):

> 20–23. After having purified the Mahāvihāra with great energy, [the king] set out to unify the monks residing in the Abhayagiri[vihāra], followed by [the monks residing] in the Jetavanavihāra, who had seceded [from the Mahāvihāra] since the time of king Abhaya and had split off since the time of king Mahāsena, explaining the Vetullapiṭaka[43] and other [scriptures] as the speech of the Buddha, etc., [although they] are not the word of the Buddha, with those [monks] residing in the Mahāvihāra like glass jewels [mixing] with jewels of all excellent qualities. 24. Void of the essence of the precepts and other [principles] they did not even pleasure in the teaching of the Buddha by the power of the great *saṅgha* and the king. 25. The righteous king examining [them] with those who knew the right conduct did not [even] find one ordained[44] [who] was not corrupted. 26. Thereupon he imposed [once more] the status of a novice on many monks, and gave to those who were of corrupt conduct, after having made them leave the order, positions inside [of his administration].[45] 27. When thus having soon accomplished with great energy purity and unity, he made the *saṅgha* again into what it was at the time of the Buddha[46].[47]

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[43]  Vetullapiṭaka here obviously refers to a collection of Mahāyāna scriptures, maybe including Vajrayāna texts (see below). For a discussion of the term *vetulla* (Skt. *vaitulya*, *vaipulya*) and its wider context in Śrī Laṅkān Buddhist history see Holt (1991: 64–65).

[44]  Geiger translates *upasaṃpanna* as "member of the Order", i.e., someone who has previously received full ordination (*upasaṃpadā*).

[45]  I do not completely understand the meaning of *antara* in *mahāṭhānantare* – Geiger translates "lucrative positions" – but I assume that it means that the king still used the skills which the well-trained, literate ex-monks had. One of the anonymous reviewers pointed out that the term means "office" or "office title".

[46]  I.e., reverted the schism.

[47]  *20. evaṃ Mahāvihāraṃ va mahussāyena sodhiya, paṭṭhāyābhayarājassa kālato vaggataṃ gate 21. Abhayagirivāsī ca bhikkhū Jetavanānuge, Mahāsenanarindassa bhinne*

The last stanza narratively brings to a close a period of division of and domination through the Mahāvihāra's big and, at times, more successful rival – which, at the same time, restores the glorious unity of the *saṅgha* at the time of the Buddha under the leadership of the Mahāvihāra.[48]

Apart from the narratives in the Mahāvihāra chronicles – and I have only focused here on the sequence of substories telling the schism and the reunification and have not discussed the few other instances where the *Mahāvaṃsa* (*Cūḷavaṃsa*) mentions the Abhayagirivihāra and its "destiny" under the rule of various kings[49] – there is archaeological evidence of the monastery in precincts of the ancient capital of Anurādhapura. The site identified with the Abhayagirivihāra, north of the citadel and the other two monasteries, the Mahāvihāra and the Jetavanavihāra, has a monumental *stūpa* (Bandaranayake 1974; Coningham 1999: 2), and the art displays the influence from the Indian subcontinent, particularly from Āndhra.[50] Its size is much larger than that of the Mahāvihāra.[51] Archaeological findings at the Abhayagiri site also seem to confirm the connection with the outer world that characterizes the monastery according to the Chinese sources (Davis 2013: 204–205, 257–258).

Unfortunately, the period which is assumed to be influenced by the Mahāyāna (Vetullavāda in the Pāli sources) is not very well documented in and through textual sources, but there is enough evidence for the existence of Mahāyāna ideas, concepts, material culture and practices which are connected with or ascribed to the Abhayagirivihāra (see, e.g., *Mahāvaṃsa* 36.111: *vetullavādino bhikkhū Abhayagirinivāsino*).[52]

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paṭṭhāya kālato 22. abuddhavacanaṃ yeva Vetullapiṭakādikaṃ, dīpente "buddhavācā"ti paṭipattiparaṃmukhe 23. Mahāvihāravāsīhi samaggayituṃ ārabhi, asesaguṇasālīhi kācamhe ratanehi va. 24. Sīlādisārasuññā te mahāsaṃghassa tejasā, rājino ca tadā buddhasāsane nājjhaguṃ ratiṃ. 25. Tathāpi dhammiko rājā vicārento nayaññuhi, upasampannam ekaṃ pi pakatattaṃ alattha no. 26. Kāresi sāmaṇerattaṃ bahunnaṃ yatinaṃ tadā, dussīle vibbhamāpetvā mahāṭhānantare adā. 27. Evaṃ suddhiṃ ca sāmaggiṃ sampādetvā 'cirena ca, mahussāhena so saṃghaṃ buddhakāle va vattayi. (Geiger 1927: 425–426). Translation differs slightly from Geiger (1930: 103–104).

[48] This is another example of what S. Kemper (1991) has called "The Presence of the Past" in Siṃhala Buddhist culture.

[49] For an overview see Holt (1991: 63–65). Particularly highlighted should be the disruption of the dominance of the then Vajrayāna-oriented Abhayagiri institution in the 9th century discussed by Sundberg (2014).

[50] See Bopearachchi (2020: 11, et passim; examples 23–37; 77–84). It is my pleasure to thank Professor Osmund Bopearachchi for having sent me an electronic copy of his book and for having given me valuable advice on archaeological and art-historical matters.

[51] Stressed and confirmed in conversations (May 2023) by Osmund Bopearachchi.

[52] See the "classical" study of Mudiyanse (1974). Further (as a selection): Bechert (1977), Holt (1991: 66–71), Deegalle (1999).

Inscriptions from the Abhayagiri *stūpa* and other sites show the presence and existence of ideas and concepts – and hence quite certainly also of practices – related to what is called Tantric (Esoteric) Buddhism (Mantra- or Vajrayāna). The importance of the island for the practice of Tantric Buddhism is supported by the Chinese sources (see below). In 1984 Gregory Schopen identified inscriptions from northern *stūpa* of Abhayagiri as *dhāraṇī*s from a text only preserved in Tibetan, the \**Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānahṛdaya* (Schopen [1982] 2005), and the concrete epigraphical and textual evidence has been the object of recent studies.[53]

It is also from the esoteric "period" that other pieces of evidence for the long-distance network of the monastery come. One is the link with esoteric masters like Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra in China (see below). Other close connections of the Abhayagiri with such a distant place like Java, documented by an inscription from Ratu Baka Plateau from the year 856, have been studied recently *ad extenso* and with a focus on the religio-political situation and developments in the wider Asian sphere (Śrī Laṅkā, South-East Asia, East Asia) in the 8th / 9th centuries by Jeffrey Sundberg (2014, 2016a) pointing at a flourishing period of Vajrayāna activities in the Abhayagiri institution under the kings of the Second Lambakaṇṇa dynasty between the late 7th century and the first half of the 9th century.

## Chinese Sources on and References to the Abhayagirivihāra

Chinese sources which mention the Abhayagirivihāra are mostly of a histo-riographical or bio-hagiographical nature. The most extensive Chinese source about the Abhayagirivihāra is found in Faxian's travelogue, which I will discuss in a separate section. In this section, I will first introduce and discuss the Chinese direct or – in my opinion – indirect references to the monastery which, in most cases, corroborate with the Indic material presented in the previous chapter.

I will start with a text that unfortunately no longer exists, but which must have contained some information about all three monasteries in Śrī Laṅkā around the time of Faxian's visit. The dictionary *Fan-fanyu* 翻梵語, "Translating Sanskrit"[54], which is dated to the year 517 and the compilation of which is attributed to the well-known monk Baochang 寶唱 (466–518), quotes the names of all three monasteries in transliteration and translation from the fourth fascicle of a source called *Liguo-zhuan* 歷國傳, "Record of Travelling through [Foreign] Kingdoms" (T.2130.141c.6–8):

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[53]  Chandawimala (2017); Powell (2018), which includes discussion of the treatise on architecture and sculpting from Śrī Laṅkā, the *Mañjuśrībhāṣitavāstuvidyāśāstra*. My thanks go to Osmund Bopearachchi for bringing this valuable University of California M.A. thesis to my attention.

[54]  For this understudied early Chinese Buddhist dictionary see Vira (1943), and C. Chen (2004).

Apoqili-si:[55] translated as[56] "Monastery Fearless". Mohebihe-si: should be Mohepiheluo, translated as "Great Monastery"[57]. Qi'nabiheluo: should be called Ponapiheluo, translated as "Monastery Excellent Forest"[58].[59]

The *Liguo-zhuan* is quoted several times in the *Fan-fanyu* and, according to the information given in the dictionary, must have been a work consisting of four fascicles. The Tang monk Dajue's 大覺 (fl. beginning of the 8th cent.) sub-commentary to the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* or *Sifen-lü*, the *Sifen-lü-chaopi* 四分律鈔批, ascribes this work to Shi Fameng 釋法猛 (X.736.1028b.10–11):

> The "Record" is means "Record of Travelling through [Foreign] Kingdoms". The "Memoirs of Travels through Foreign Kingdoms" of Shi Fameng of the Jin dynasty is called "Record".[60]

Nothing is known about a monk Fameng earlier than this bit of information from Dajue's commentary. In the *Gaoseng-zhuan* (519), however, a travelogue of four fascicles is ascribed to the monk Fasheng 法盛 from Turfan / Gaochang (T.2059.337b.1–3):[61]

> At that time, there was another *śramaṇa* from Gaochang, Fasheng [who] also travelled through foreign kingdoms [and] compiled a record [of his journey which] comprised four fascicles.[62]

Fasheng is known from other sources as a monk who travelled to the Western Regions while the name Fameng is only attested in the sources mentioned

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[55] 阿婆耆梨 / *ʔa-ba-gji-li: it is obvious that on syllable / character is missing (*ye* 耶 / *jia*?) after the first two syllables / characters: the transliteration Apoye 阿婆耶 / *ʔa-ba-jia, for Abhaya is well attested in the *Shanjian-lü-piposha*, allegedly a translation of the Pāli Vinaya commentary *Samantapāsādikā* (T.1462.684c.8, et passim; on this text see PINTE 2011–2012, and on its affiliation with the Abhayagirivihāra HEIRMAN 2004). For similar mistakes or shortcomings in the *Fan-fanyu* see the following notes and PINTE 2012. (The Early Middle Chinese reconstructed forms in this article, marked by *, follow PULLEYBLANK 1991).

[56] Following the usual pattern of the text, *zhuan yue* 傳曰 should be read as *yi yue* 譯曰, "translated as …".

[57] 摩呵比呵 / *ma-xa-bji-xa, corrected to 摩訶毘訶羅 / *ma-xa-bji-xa-la, and translated as Dasi 大寺.

[58] 祇那比呵羅 / *gji-na'-bji-xa-la, "corrected" to Ponapiheluo 婆那毘呵羅 / *ba-na'-bji-xa-la, translated correctly as Shenglin 勝林, with *sheng* 勝, "victorious", obviously rendering Jeta. The "full" transliteration may be reconstructed as *Qituoponapiheluo 祇陀婆那毘呵羅: both Qituo 祇陀 for Jeta (Jeṭṛ) and *pona* 婆那 for *vana* are attested in Buddhist texts, including the *Fan-fanyu*.

[59] 阿婆耆梨寺，傳曰：無畏寺也。摩呵比呵寺，應云摩訶毘訶羅；譯曰：大寺。祇那比呵羅，應云是名婆那毘呵羅；譯曰：勝林寺也。

[60] 傳謂歷國傳也；晉朝釋法猛遊外國記云傳也。

[61] This seems to be identical with the work with the same title attributed to Shi Fasheng 釋法盛 in *Suishu* 隋書 33, an information repeated in *Xin-Tangshu* 舊唐書 58, although according to these historiographical sources the travelogue had only two fascicles.

[62] 時，高昌復有沙門法盛，亦經往外國，立傳，凡有四卷。

above. It is very likely that (Fa)meng 猛 was, at some point, misread for (Fa) sheng 盛 and the wrong name was then perpetuated in some texts like Dajue's. The confusion may have been furthered by the name of another monk, Zhimeng 智猛,[63] who had already gone to the Western Regions before Fasheng, had also composed a travelogue and knew Fasheng (see below).

According to the catalogue *Lidai-sanbao-ji* 歷代三寶紀, compiled by Fei Changfang 費長房 (second half of 6th century), Zhimeng went from Liangzhou 涼州 (in the modern province of Gansu) to Yangdu 楊都, i.e., Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing 南京), and there he met Faxian (T.2034.85a.7–11):

> Parinirvāṇasūtra in twenty fascicles; the text above has twenty fascicles altogether. During the reign of emperor Wen of the [Liu-]Song [dynasty] (424–453), a *śramaṇa* from Yongzhou, Shi Zhimeng travelled through the Western Regions to look for special *sūtra*s. [He] brought back Sanskrit books from India. [His] way led [him] through the Jade Gate (Yumen 玉門), [and he] translated [texts] in Liangzhou. In the fourteenth year of [the era] Yuanjia (438), [he] went to and arrived in Yangdu [where he] stayed with Faxian.[64]

Zhimeng's biography in the *Gaoseng-zhuan* (T.2059.343b.1–c.10)[65] does not record a visit by Fasheng to Śrī Laṅkā, but he obviously had close contact with Faxian who, according to the *Mingseng-zhuan* / *Meisō-den-chō*, had prompted Fasheng to travel to India when he met him after Zhimeng's return from India (see below).

Fasheng was very close to the well-known Indian translator-monk Dharmakṣema / Tanwuchen 曇無讖 (aka Tanmochen or Damochen; 385–433)[66] – who happened to have collaborated with the already mentioned Zhimeng who had received in Pāṭaliputra (Huashi 華氏, Skt. Kusumapura, the alternative name of the city) a copy of the *(Mahāyāna-)Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* which was then translated by Dharmakṣema, and a copy of the *Mahāsāṅghikavinaya*.

The *Meisō-den-chō* 名僧傳抄, "Summary of Biographies of Illustrious Monks", a Medieval Japanese summary of Baochang's lost *Mingseng-zhuan* 名僧傳,[67] only contains a short biographical sketch of Fasheng which, in its original and full-

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[63]  On Zhimeng see the detailed study by J. Chen (2004).

[64]  般泥洹經二十卷；右一部合二十卷。宋文帝世雍州沙門釋智猛遊歷西域，尋訪異經。從天竺國齎梵本來。道經玉門，於涼州譯。元嘉十四年流至楊都，與法顯同。

[65]  Unfortunately, Zhimeng's original biography in the 26th fascicle of the *Mingseng-zhuan* (X.1523.350a.18) is not extent and the *Mingseng-zhuan*-chao does not contain a paraphrase of it.

[66]  See J. Chen (2004).

[67]  See the recent, detailed study of the *Meisō-den-chō* and *Mingseng-zhuan* and the latter's relation to the *Gaoseng-zhuan* by Lee (2020).

fledged form may have given more details about his travels, particularly because Baochang, the compiler of the collection, is also attributed the compilation of the *Fan-fanyu* and therefore certainly had access to Fasheng's original travelogue. The selection of a section of Fasheng's travels on the Northwest of India, Gandhāra, about the famous gigantic wooden Maitreya statue on the upper course of the Indus[68] may be explained by the monk's particular interest in this region, also reflected in the only translation which is preserved, the famous story of the *bodhisattva*'s self-sacrifice to the hungry tigress in one of his previous existence (T.172: *Pusa-toushen-siehu-qita-yinyuan-jing* 菩薩投身飼餓虎起塔因緣經, "Avadāna of the Erection of the Stūpa of the Bodhisattva Feeding the Hungry Tiger").[69] He went to India together with a group of other monks (X.1523.358c.16–20):

[His] original surname was Li, [and he] was from Longxi[70]. Resided in Gaochang. With nine years [he] left the household, diligently read and recited [the *sūtra*s] and always said: "My three fixed [roots] are not yet planted, the five *skandha*s arise and perish, the meeting [with Maitreya] is still far away – and [all of this] through [my] stupid desire. If [I] have not cut of the three poisons, how [can I] strive for liberation?" At the age of nineteen, [he] met the *śramaṇa* Zhimeng [who] had returned from the foreign kingdoms and told [him] about the sacred traces [of the Buddha]. From this [Fasheng] took the aspiration [to see] them, took leave from his parents and followed [the example] of [his] teacher-friend [Zhimeng]. Together with twenty-nine [other monks he] went far to India, travelled through all the kingdoms, looked for the left spirit [of the Buddha], experienced all the auspicious signs, paid veneration and made offerings to [karmically] enhance [his] three deeds (action, speech, thoughts).[71]

Unfortunately, the *Meisō-den-chō* does only give the beginning of the original biography so that we do not get details about the rest of Fasheng's journey, but it may be assumed that he went, as had his predecessors Faxian and Zhimeng, to Magadha (Pāṭaliputra) and then followed Faxian's route to Śrī Laṅkā, where he then very likely would have resided in the Abhayagirivihāra like Faxian before him – the prominent position of the monastery in the list in the *Fan-fanyu* makes this even more probable.

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[68] On this gigantic Maitreya statue see DEEG (2005: 112–117), and in the wider context of the Maitreya cult DEEG (1999).

[69] On the localization of this narrative in Gandhāra and the references to it in the Chinese Buddhist travelogues see DEEG (2022).

[70] = 隴西, a region in south-east of the modern province of Gansu.

[71] 本姓李，壟西人。寓于高昌。九歲出家，勤精讀誦，每曰："吾三堅未樹。五眾生滅。合會有離。皆由癡愛。若不斷三毒。何求勉脫？"年造十九，遇沙門智猛從外國還，述諸神迹。因有志焉，辭二親，率師友。與二十九人遠詣天竺，經歷諸國，尋覓遺靈，及諸應瑞，禮拜供養，以申三業。

Such an itinerary becomes quite likely when we look at the list of eight monasteries (in a list of twenty-two in total) of the *Liguo-zhuan*, where the last three are the Śrī Laṅkān ones, probably as the monasteries of the last country visited during Fasheng's journey. Of the other five of the *Liguo-zhuan*, only one is identifiable: Liyue-si 離越寺[72] the name of which can be reconstructed in Sanskrit as *Revatavihāra (or *Raivatavihāra).[73] A monastery of that name is mentioned in the extreme northwest of the subcontinent and was obviously linked to the story of the *ṛṣi* of the same name subdued by the Buddha during his visit in the region,[74] but in the context of the *Fan-fanyu*'s list and of what we know about the destinations in India of Chinese Buddhist travelers at the beginning of the 5th century, I suggest that this name here refers to the (Mahāyāna-)monastery of the famous lay-master Raivata in Pāṭaliputra, also visited and mentioned by Faxian and Zhimeng.[75]

It can be concluded from these pieces of information and evidence that there existed, at the beginning of the 5th century, a veritable network of monks, some Indian but mostly Chinese, who went to India, and obviously some also went on to Śrī Laṅkā. It seems that Fasheng's travelogue contained information about the three monasteries in Śrī Laṅkā, and the order of the names of these monasteries with Abhayagirivihāra listed first may confirm the importance or even predominance of the monastery around the late 4th or early 5th century.

This timeframe leads us to another potential and well-known piece of evidence for the activities of the Abhayagirivihāra, the story of the ordination of Chinese nuns in the first half of the 5th century, by a small community of nuns brought from the island by the ship owner Nanti 難提 / Skt. Nandi(n) and the monk Saṅghavarman / Sengjiabamo 僧伽跋摩 (Heirman 2001: 295 and 2007: 181–184; Deeg 2005: 177–178).

The story is related at some length in the biography of the Chinese nun Sengguo 僧果 in Baochang's *Biqiuni-zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (T.2063.939c.13–24):

[72] T.2130.41c.3: 離越寺：應云離婆多；譯曰星名。 ("Liyue-si: [the name] should be Lipo-duo; translated as 'name of a constellation'.")

[73] 離越 / *li-wuat*, "corrected" in the *Fan-fanyu* into Lipoduo 離婆多 / *li-ba-ta*.

[74] Da-zhidu-lun 大智度論, T.1509.126c.2–5; for more details see Lamotte (1944: 548, and 550–551, note 1 ["IVᵉ étape"]).

[75] Faxian calls him Luowosipomi 羅沃私婆迷 / *la-ʔawk-si-ba-mɛj*, *Raivatasvāmi(n) / *Rāvatasvāmi(n) – *svāmi(n)* possibly being a title (abridged for *vihārasvāmin*?) rather than part of the name – who was also called Mañjuśrī, master of the Mahāyānasaṅghārāma in Pāṭaliputra. The name form used by Zhimeng is Luoyue 羅閱 / *la-jwiat*, *Raivata. For a detailed discussion of the name(s) and their reconstruction and the texts see Deeg (2005: 388–392).

In the sixth year of [the era] Yuanjia, the foreign ship owner[76] Nandi(n) brought *bhikṣuṇī*s from the kingdom of Siṃhala[77] [who] arrived in the Jingfu-si in the capital of the Song. Not long afterwards, [they] asked [Seng]guo: "Have there already been nuns from foreign kingdoms to this kingdom before?" [She] answered: "None so far." [They] also asked: "[When] the nuns first received the precepts, did [they] receive [them] then from the two *saṅgha*s [of monks and nuns]?"[78] [She] answered: "[They] only received [them] from the great *saṅgha* [of monks]. Doing it the original way was just the beginning of receiving the precepts, [and this] is only a means to raise perseverance in the mind of people. Therefore, [our case] is like the eminent example of Mahāprajāpati having [accepted] the eight [special points of] veneration,[79] having received the precepts and having become the teacher (*ācārya*) of five hundred daughters of the Śākyas." Although [Seng]guo answered in that way, [she] had doubts and consulted about all this with the Tripiṭaka[-master Guṇavarman]. The Tripiṭaka[-master] gave the same explanation. [But] again [she] inquired: "Should [we] receive [ordination] once more?" [Guṇavarman] answered: "The levels of [keeping] the precepts, contemplation and wisdom [develop] from being minute to becoming perceivable, it is beneficial and good to receive [the precepts] once more." After ten years, the ship owner

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[76]  *bozhu* 舶主: In Guṇavarman's biography in the *Gaoseng-zhuan* (T.2059.340c.7), Nandin is called "merchant"; hence, he is rather the owner of the ship than the captain which does, of course, not exclude the possibility that he had navigational skills. Early Tang sources even attribute the translation of a *dhāraṇī* (collection?), the *Qing-Guanshiyin-pusa-xiaofu-duhai-tuoluoni(-zhou)-jing* 請觀世音菩薩消伏毒害陀羅尼(呪)經, "Dhāraṇī of Requestion the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to Remove Poison", to Nandin (Fayuan-zhulin, T.2122.736c.22f.; *Zhongjing-mulu*, T.2146.116c.5; etc.); the not very reliable *Lidai-sanbao-ji* attributes two more translations to the foreign Indian layman (*waiguo-jushi* Zhu 外國居士竺) Nandin (T.2034.71c.25–72a.4).

[77]  Shizi(-guo) 師子(國), literally: "son of a lion", the Chinese name for Siṃhala which Faxian seems to relate to the eponymic hero of the same name of the Sinhalese foundation myth: see DEEG (2005: 193–194).

[78]  I do not understand Tsai's translation "… how did the Chinese women who became nuns receive the monastic obligations …" (in relation to the Chinese text) and her interpretation of *shoujie* 受戒 as referring to the eight obligation mentioned later (TSAI 1994: 54 and 133, note 92). R. Li's translation is more truthfully rendering the original Chinese.

[79]  I.e., the eight *gurudharma*s (Pāli *garudhamma*) which nuns have to follow: 1. a nun always have to be respectful towards a monk, even if she is much older in terms of ordination age and the monk is younger; 2. a nun is not allowed to spend the rainy season at a place where there is no monk; 3. nuns have to ask for the date of *uposatha* and for exhortation fortnightly; 4. after the rainy season, a nun has to report before both communities (i.e., of monks and of nuns) what was seen, heard and suspected (confess); 5. a nun who has committed an offense has to undergo penance through both communities for half a month; 6. when a woman has exercised the six rules for two years, she should ask both communities for higher ordination; 7. a nun should never abuse a monk; 8. a nun should never exhort a monk.

Nandi(n) once more brought a nun [called] Tiesaluo[80] from the kingdom of Siṃhala and ten others.[81] The nuns who had arrived first had already mastered the language of Song (i.e., Chinese) and asked Saṅghavarman [to establish] the borders of an ordination platform[82] in the Nanlin-si[83], [and] gradually more than three hundred [nuns] received [the precepts] a second time.[84]

The Tripiṭaka-master (*sanzang*) in this narrative can be identified clearly as Guṇavarman / Qiunabamo 求那跋摩 / *guw-na'-bat-ma* (367–431), who, according to his biography, hailed from the northwest of the subcontinent (Jibin

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[80] 鐵薩羅 / *tʰɛt-sat-la* (later alternative name form Tiesuoluo 鐵索羅, e.g. in Daoxuan's commentary to the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya,* T.1804.51.c20f.), Pāli *Tessalā? Tsai (1994: 54) reconstructs Tessara; or on p. 134, note 94: Dewasara, obviously following the reconstruction by Li (2002: 104) as Devasārā which is impossible because *tie* 鐵 / *tʰɛt* cannot transcribe *deva*; closest to my reconstruction is Shih (1968: 138, in Saṅghavarman's biography): Tissalā. In the Pāli sources, only Tissā is attested (Malalasekera 1974: vol. I , 1019, s.vv. 2. and 6.) as the name of a Śākyan nun and a Śrī Laṅkān nun skilled in the Vinaya (*Dīpavaṃsa* 18.30). Tessalā, as a diminutive form of Tissā – with the suffix -*lā* and vowel graduation (ablaut) *e < i* – would therefore be an appropriate name for a nun who would follow the example of such predecessors. The *Dīpavaṃsa*, despite its general shortcomings as a consistent and "reliable" source, is interesting insofar as the nun Tissā is part of a long list of nuns who are lauded because of their knowledge of the Vinaya under the Abhaya (Oldenberg 1879: 98 and 206). Although the *Dīpavaṃsa* is a Mahāvihāra source, this list may well contain nuns who were rather belonging to the Abhayagiri and therefore may represent "material … ascribed to the Uttaravihāra, which is identical with the Abhayagirivihāra (…) has been suppressed in M[a]h[ā]v[aṃsa]" (O. von Hinüber 1996: 90, see also 92).

[81] Other sources like the biography of Guṇavarman in the *Gaoseng-zhuan* refer to eight nuns who arrived as the first batch (T.2059.341a.29f.), and Tiesaluo coming with three other nuns (Daoxuan's Vinaya commentary, T.1048.51c.21). This makes more sense since it would explain why the full ordination had to be postponed until the full quorum of ten or more nuns prescribed for a proper ordination was achieved. In the *Biqiuni-zhuan*, Baochang does not give a concrete number for the first group but then seems to conflate both numbers (8 + 3 = 11).

[82] *tanjie* 壇界: the term reflects the connection between the original Indian concept of a "border" (*sīmā*, *jie* 界) for specific monastic actions (*karma*) and the ordination platforms (*jietan* 戒壇, which originally seems to correspond to Pāli *upasaṃpadā(sīmā)maṇḍala*) in China of which the present example is one of the oldest textual pieces of evidence. See Newhall (2022: particularly 81–82) on the Guṇavarman-Saṅghavarman episode.

[83] In modern Nanjing.

[84] 及元嘉六年，有外國舶主難提，從師子國載比丘尼來，至宋都住景福寺。後少時，問果曰："此國先來已曾有外國尼未？" 答曰："未有。" 又問："先諸尼受戒，那得二僧？" 答："但從大僧受。" 得本事者乃是發起受戒。人心令生殷重是方便耳。故如大愛道八敬得戒，五百釋女以愛道為和上。此其高例。" 果雖答然，心有疑，具諮三藏。三藏同其解也。又諮曰："重受得不？" 答曰："戒定慧品從微至著，更受益佳。" 到十年，舶主難提復將師子國鐵薩羅等十一尼。至先達諸尼已通宋語，請僧伽跋摩於南林寺壇界，次第重受三百餘人。 See also Li (2002: 103–104); Tsai (1994: 53–54).

罽賓).[85] Guṇavarman had strong Śrī Laṅkān connections,[86] but he also had converted the queen-mother and the king of Shepo 闍婆 / *dzia-ba* (probably modern Java) before coming to China after having been invited by emperor Wen 文 (aka Taizu 太祖; r. 424–453) of the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479). As a Northwesterner, he probably was ordained in the Dharmaguptaka lineage, and one of the translations dealing with monastic rules but also *bodhisattva*-precepts attributed to him is indeed related to the rules for nuns of this *nikāya*, the *Sifen-ni-jiemo* 四分尼羯磨 (*Sifen-biqiuni-jiemo-fa* 四分比丘尼羯磨法 / *Dharmaguptaka-bhikṣuṇīkarma(dharma)*, T.1434).

Since Guṇavarman died before the re-ordination of the Chinese nuns, it was the Indian monk Saṅghavarman / Sengjiabamo 僧伽跋摩 / *səŋ-gɨa-bat-ma*, who organised and performed the ceremonies. Saṅghavarman's biography[87] clearly states that he travelled to China via the land route,[88] but it is an interesting detail that he returned to India by a merchant's ship,[89] and it is quite likely that he did so via Śrī Laṅkā. Among the translations attributed to Saṅghavarman is a *Vinayamātṛka* of the Sarvāstivādin, the *Sapoduo-bu-pini-modelejia* 薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽 (T.1441). He also collaborated with Faxian's traveler-companion and translator Baoyun 寶雲[90] for the translation of Dharmatrāta's

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[85]  *Gaoseng-zhuan*, T.2059.340a.15–342b.10; for complete French translations see Chavannes (1904), without the death poem at the end, and Shih (1968: 125–137).

[86]  T.2059.340b.5–6: 後到師子國，觀風弘教，識真之眾咸謂已得初果，儀形感物，見者發心。 ("Later, [Guṇavarman] arrived in the kingdom of Siṃhala [where he] observed the customs to spread the teaching; the whole *saṅgha* who knew the truth called [him] '[one who] had already attained the first fruit'; [his] demeanour and appearance had a [strong] impact on people, [and] those who saw him developed faith [in the *dharma*].") I am tempted – and have given into this temptation in my translation – to read into the term *shizhen-zhi-zhong* 識真之眾 a reference to the *saṅgha*, in which case this may more specifically refer to the part of the island's monastic community with the true interpretation of the *dharma*. The only other detail about Guṇavarman's stay in Śrī Laṅkā is provided in Guṇavarman's own death poem (*yiwen* 遺文) where he states that in Siṃhala he resided at a place called Jieboli 劫波利 / *kap-pa-li^h*, which can be reconstructed as *Kapāli(n) according to later Chinese glosses as in the Silla monk Uŏnhyo's / Yuanxiao's 元曉 (617–686) (T.1773.303a.16): 劫波利：此云捉髑髏鬼。 ("Jieboli: this means 'Skull-Grasping Ghost'.") Such a place name is, as far as I know, not attested in sources on Śrī Laṅkā, but is known from Maitreya-related texts to be the birthplace of the *bodhisattva* Maitreya near Vārāṇasī.

[87]  *Gaoseng-zhuan*, T.2059.342b.11–c7; French translation by Shih (1968: 138–140).

[88]  T.2059.342b.12–13: 以宋元嘉十年，出自流沙，至于京邑。 ("In the tenth year of [the era] Yuanjia of the [Liu-]Song (443) [Saṅghavarman] left [his home country] and arrived in the capital via the 'Flowing Sands' (i.e., the Tarim basin).")

[89]  T.2059.342c.6–7: 元嘉十九年，隨西域賈人舶還外國。不詳其終。 ("In the nineteenth year of [the era] Yuanjia (442) [Saṅghavarman] returned to the foreign kingdoms on the boat of a merchant from the Western Regions. No details [are known] about the end of his [life].")

[90]  According to Faxian's record, Baoyun returned to China after having reached Puruṣapura (Peshawar). As has been noticed (Deeg 2005: 524, note 2352; Lettere 2020: 262) this does not fit well with the description in the biography according to which he must have stayed

*Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya-śāstra* / *Za-apitan-xin-lun* 雜阿毘曇心論 (T.1552), a connection which again highlights the already mentioned network of Chinese and Indian monks involved in travelling and translating in the first half of the 5th century.[91]

As I have already noted elsewhere (Deeg 2009), from a modern scholarly standpoint it is somewhat surprising that, although the whole narrative is about the correct transmission of the ordination lineage for nuns from Śrī Laṅkā to China, the Vinaya lineage (*nikāya*) to which the Śrī Laṅkān nuns belonged is not mentioned at all. Yet, we may ask ourselves whether this kind of question is not rather of modern scholarship while for the Chinese the most important part was a correct ordination and establishment of a continuous transmission lineage for the *bhikṣuṇīsaṅgha* in China through both the *saṅgha* of monks and the *saṅgha* of nuns. Although the monastic provenance of Guṇavarman, Saṅghavarman and particularly of the group of Śrī Laṅkān nuns (did the latter belong to the ordination lineage of the Mahāvihāra, the Abhayagirivihāra or the Jetavanavihāra?) is not mentioned directly in the sources, the relative prominence of the Abhayagirivihāra in Chinese sources of the early 5th century may allow the conclusion that this group of Śrī Laṅkan monastics really hailed from this monastery. From this, the answer arises to an, at least, theoretical question, which may shed some light of the Vinaya-understanding of the Abhayagirivihāra at that time: how did the ordination work when the nuns may have been accepting, for the time being, the usual assumption about the Vinaya-tradition of the Abhayagiri – were Sthaviravāda / Theravāda and the presiding monk (originally Guṇavarman, but in reality Saṅghavarma) very likely belonged to a different *nikāya*, for instance, the Dharmaguptaka?[92] From a (Mahāvihāra-)

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longer and maybe travelled more extensively (T.1059.339c.25–27): 雲在外域遍學梵書、天竺諸國音字，詁訓悉皆備解，後還長安。 ("In the foreign regions, [Bao]yun widely studied Sanskrit scriptures and the writing systems of all kingdoms in India [so that he could] fully master [their] interpretation; then [he] returned to Chang'an."; slightly differently translated by Shih 1968: 123–124). Unfortunately, Baoyun's travelogue – T.2059.340a.13f. 其遊履外國，別有記傳。 ("There is a special record about his travels through the foreign kingdom."; see also Shih 1968: 125) – is not extant (Chavannes 1903: 431). For a study of Baoyun's biography with due emphasis on Baoyun's multiple connections and collaboration projects see Lettere (2020); on his translation work with Saṅghavarman see Lettere (2020: 265).

[91] Zhongjing-mulu, T.2146.146b.22, et passim. On the text and its importance for Chinese Abhidharma reception see Dessein (2010). The subsequent translations of the text by Faxian and Buddhabhadra (c. 418), Īśvara and Guṇavarman (426) and Saṅghavarman and Baoyun (434) (see Dessein 2010: 57–58) seems to be another indicator for the "network" of Indian and Chinese monks mentioned.

[92] Paradoxically, this is a problem which also arises in modern attempts to re-establish the extinct *bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha* in the Theravāda tradition (and in Tibetan Buddhism) where the ordination lineage of the Chinese nuns assisting the ordination would be Dharmaguptaka while the ordained nun(s) will be Theravāda. Although the episode discussed here is very much used in

Theravāda standpoint, at least, the matter is less trivial than one may think, as the aggressive-polemic portrayal of the origin of the Abhayagiri-nikāya in the *Mahāvaṃsa* (see above) and the fact that during Parakkamabāhu's reform the Abhayagiri monks had to disrobe and be re-ordained clearly show. One conclusion could be that the Abhayagiri-nikāya had a more open approach to different Vinaya-traditions, allowing the participation of monastics from other traditions and the application of non-Theravāda Vinaya rules and regulations. The latter point seems to be supported by the fact that Faxian got hold of a *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya* in the Abhayagirivihāra (see below).

The story of the nuns' ordination in China through Śrī Laṅkān nuns and an Indian master and the biographical details of the monks involved, Guṇavarman and Saṅghavarman, fit well into the already mentioned network of travelers between China and South Asia: they all share an interest in Vinaya matters and had connections with Śrī Laṅkā. It is very likely that they resided, like Faxian and probably Fasheng, in the Abhayagirivihāra, and that the nuns travelling from the island to China hailed from this monastic community as well.

## Faxian's record of the Abhayagirivihāra

As is well known, the famous Chinese traveler-monk Faxian stayed for the last two years in South Asia in Śrī Laṅkā before he returned via the sea route to China, passing through maritime Southeast Asia. The king ruling the island at the time of Faxian's visit was, with all likelihood, Upatissa I (370–412).[93] The Chinese monk resided at Abhayagiri(vihāra) (Faxian: Wuwei-shan 無畏山) and gives a relatively detailed account of the history of the island which differs in some important points from the narrative of the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the *Dīpavaṃsa* (and the *Cūḷavaṃsa*). In most cases, I tend to see these differences reflecting the narratives of the Abhayagirivihāra's own chronicle or *vaṃsa*[94].

In this article, I will not discuss the full account of Śrī Laṅkā in Faxian's record but will restrict myself to the discussion of the parts of the account which are directly related to the Abhayagirivihāra:[95]

> [Before], the Buddha came to this kingdom to convert an evil *nāga*. Through his supernatural power to appear at a [different] place, he started off with one foot in the north of the royal capital and arrived with the

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the argumentation in favour of such a re-establishing, the possible "mixed" lineage has, as far as I am aware, not been focused on in the discourse around the whole issue.

[93] See DEEG (2005: 157–158).

[94] This approach hopefully will relativise the negative bias regarding the source value of Faxian as, for instance, expressed by SKILLING (1997: 93: "the redoubtable pilgrim Fa-hien").

[95] For a discussion of the whole account of the Lion Island (Faxian: Shizi-guo 師子國), see DEEG (2005: 156–179, and [German translation]).

other foot on the peak of the mountain. The distance between both traces [of the footsteps] is fifteen *yojana*[96]. A king had a large *stūpa* erected on top of the footstep in the north of the city, forty *zhang*[97] high, adorned with gold and silver, and studded with many precious stones. Also, next to the *stūpa* a monastery (*saṅghārāma*) was erected which was called "Without-Fear-Mountain" (*Wuwei-shan* 無畏山: *Abhayagiri*) where five thousand monks reside. A Buddha-hall was constructed [there], equipped with gold and silver inlays and with all kinds of [other] jewels. Inside is standing a statue [made] of green jade[98], three *zhang* high. The seven precious items radiate light from its body [which] lets appear [the statue] so gravely and solemnly that words cannot describe it. In [its] right hand it is holding an invaluable pearl.[99]

The "peak of the mountain" (*shanding* 山頂) clearly refers to the Sri Pada or Adam's peak. There may have been a pilgrimage trail between the two footprints (*buddhapāda*), as indicated by the biography of Vajrabodhi (see below) who went from Anurādhapura to the Sri Pada via a *stūpa* of the Buddha's eye.

The visit of the Buddha to which Faxian refers at the beginning, is the third recorded in the Mahāvihāra *vaṃsa*s. According to these sources, the Buddha follows an invitation of the *nāga* king Maṇiakkhika after having mediated in a conflict between two other *nāga* kings on his previous visit.[100] The extant *vaṃsa*s only mention one footprint, i.e., the one on the mountain. This is not very surprising since the other footprint would have been underneath the main *stūpa* of the great rival monastery of the Mahāvihāra. A comparison between the size of the Abhayagiri *stūpa* and the measure – a height of over 90 m – given by Faxian shows that the monk's description indeed refers to this *stūpa*. It is quite probable that the narrative tradition of the Abhayagiri-monastery's foundation contained a story according to which the Buddha left another footprint at the place where the great *stūpa* was erected later. This would also explain another discrepancy between Faxian's record and the extant *vaṃsa*: according to the latter, the Buddha had landed in Kalyāṇī (modern Kelaniya) and taken his famous step to Sri Pada (Samantasumanakūṭa) from there, while Faxian's

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[96]  The length of an Indian *yojana* in Faxian (and other Chinese travelogues) is notoriously resisting a clear definition. If one assumes 240 km as the distance between Anuradhapura and Srī Pāda, the length of a *yojana* would be 16 km.

[97]  One *zhang* 丈 measures c. 2.3 m.

[98]  *qingyu* 青玉 may mean "made of turquoise". Jade may refer to a semi-transparent material or stone.

[99]  T.2085.864c.21–27: 佛至其國，欲化惡龍。以神足力，一足躡王城北，一足躡山頂，兩跡相去十五由延。於王城北跡上起大塔，高四十丈，金銀莊校，眾寶合成。塔邊復起一僧伽藍，名無畏山，有五千僧。起一佛殿，金銀刻鏤，悉以眾寶。中有一青玉像，高三丈許，通身七寶焰光，威相嚴顯，非言所載。右掌中有一無價寶珠。

[100]  *Dīpavaṃsa* 2, *Mahāvaṃsa* 1.44.

footprint would have been in Anurādhapura. That the Mahāvihāra chronicles do not refer to the foundation legend of their rivals is understandable.

The *vaṃsa*s contain references to the Buddha statue and the precious pearl although, again, they do not specify that these were located in the precincts of the Abhayagiri-vihāra.

Faxian's record continues with a description of the arrival of a sapling of the *bodhi*-tree but does not give the name of the king and, more strangely, does not link this episode with Aśoka:

> An earlier king of this kingdom had sent [a mission] to Central India to fetch a sapling of the *aśvattha* tree.[101] He planted it next to the Buddha-hall, and the tree [grew] twenty *zhang* high, slanting in southeastern [direction]. [Another] king was afraid that [the tree] could collapse, and therefore he supported the tree all around with eight [or] nine pillars. Where pillars and tree met, the tree sprouted down to the ground and stroke roots. [The tree] measures four arm spans. Although the pillars split in the middle, [they] embraced the tree on the outside, and people did not remove them. A monastery was built underneath the tree,[102] and inside is a seated [Buddha-]statue[103] which is continuously venerated by monastics and laypeople.[104]

The episode is the famous bringing of a branch of the *bodhi*-tree to Śrī Laṅkā as described in detail in the *vaṃsa*s (*Dīpavaṃsa* chapter 16.1; *Mahāvaṃsa* chapter 18: Mahābodhigahaṇo, "The Receiving of the Mahābodhi" & chapter 19: Bodhi'āgamano, "The Arrival of the Bodhi[-tree]")[105] where this is part of establishing links between Aśoka and the island's king Devānaṃpiyatissa and of the story of the introduction of Buddhism on the island. According to Faxian, the original tree growing from the branch/sapling would be located in the Abhayagirivihāra.

In the *Dīpavaṃsa*, king Devānaṃpiyatissa's messenger Ariṭṭha only asks Aśoka/ Asoka to send his daughter, the nun Saṅghamittā, to the island to instigate the

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[101] *beiduo-shu-zi* 貝多樹子: *beiduo* / \*paj^h-ta is an older transliteration, reduced to a binom by dropping the initial syllable (*as-*), from a Northwest Prakrit (Gāndhārī \*aspatha) for Skt. *aśvattha*. I take *shuzi* 樹子 in the sense of offspring / sapling.

[102] Maybe rather a temple (*Dīpavaṃsa* 22.56: *mahābodhighara*).

[103] This statue may be reflected by the throne of stone (*silāpallaṅka*: *Dīpavaṃsa* 22.56f.) erected by king Abhaya Meghavaṇṇa.

[104] T.2085.865a.2–7: 其國前王遣使中國，取貝多樹子，於佛殿傍種之。高可二十丈，其樹東南傾，王恐倒，故以八九圍柱拄樹。樹當柱處，心生，遂穿柱而下，入地成根。大可四圍許，柱雖中裂，猶裹其外，人亦不去。樹下起精舍，中有坐像，道俗敬仰無倦。

[105] I am not taking into account here the relatively late (10th cent.?) *Mahābodhivaṃsa*; on this text see O. von HINÜBER (1996: 93–94, §191).

first nun ordinations, and it is Aśoka who sends a branch of the original tree.[106] The *Mahāvaṃsa*, however, agrees with Faxian's report that it was the Śrī Laṅkān king who asked for a branch of the tree:

> One day during the rainy season when he was sitting next to the Elder in his own city, the great lord remembered the words spoken by the Elder to send for the Mahābodhi and for the Elder [Saṅghamittā]; and he took counsel with his ministers to urge his own sister-son and minister called Ariṭṭha [to undertake] this task; having thought [about it] and taken advise, he addressed him with the words: "Oh dear, can you go to Dhammāsoka to bring the Mahābodhi and the Elder Saṅghamittā here?" …[107]

Overall, it is interesting to see that the two Mahāvihāra *vaṃsa*s do not claim the tree for the Mahāvihāra but seem to follow a strategy of "vagueness" concerning the place where the branch took root. The *Dīpavaṃsa* (16.30–32) stays unspecific about this site. The *Mahāvaṃsa* presents a rather complex "journey" of the branch when it arrives on the island and then states that it took root in the Mahāmeghavana, an area so broad and unspecific that it can hardly claim to designate the later Mahāvihāra, although the text states that the branch left the city through the southern gate of Anurādhapura before reaching its final place and thereby indirectly claims the original tree for the Mahāvihāra. Interestingly, the tree passes through several places before it arrives at its final destination, first coming from the coast to the area of the future "Eastern Monastery" (aka Pācīnārāma[108]),[109] then passing the village of the *brāhmaṇa* Tivakka (?),[110]

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[106] 16.1. *Caturaṅgiṇiṃ mahāsenaṃ sannayhitvāna khattiyo, tathāgatassa sambodhiṃ ādāya pakkamī tadā.* ("The warrior (Asoka) arrayed the fourfold great army and proceeded taking the *sambodhi*[-tree] of the Tathāgata with him.")

[107] *Mahāvaṃsa* 18.*1. Mahābodhiṃ ca theriṃ ca ānāpetuṃ mahīpati, therena vuttavacanaṃ saramāno sake pure 2. antovassekadivasaṃ nisinno therasantike, sahāmaccehi mantetvā bhāgineyyaṃ sakaṃ sayaṃ 3. Ariṭṭhanāmakāmaccaṃ tasmiṃ kamme niyojanaṃ, mantvā āmantayitvā taṃ idaṃ vacanam abravi: 4. "tāta sakkhisi gantvā tvaṃ Dhammāsokassa santikaṃ, mahābodhiṃ Saṃghamittaṃ theriṃ ānayituṃ idha?" [...]* (Geiger 1958: 140).

[108] See Malalasekera (1974: vol. II, 177, s.v.).

[109] *Mahāvaṃsa* 19.*33. Mahābodhiṃ dasamiyaṃ āropetvā rathe subhe, ānayanto manussindo dumindaṃ taṃ ṭhapāpayi 34. pācīnassa vihārassa ṭhāne ṭhānavicakkhano, pātarāsaṃ pavattesi sasaṃghassa janassa so.* (Geiger 1958: 151). "On the tenth [day, the king] mounted the Mahābodhi[-tree] on a beautiful wagon, and the ruler of men, [able] to discern the [right] places, led this ruler of trees to the place of the [future] eastern monastery and provided a morning meal for the people and the *saṅgha*." This stop was considered quite important as Mahinda himself gave a lecture to the king and the community.

[110] *Mahāvaṃsa* 19.*36. Therassa sutvā kāretvā saṃñāṇāni tahiṃ tahiṃ, paribhuttesu ṭhānesu nisajjādīhi satthunā, 37. Tivakkassa brāhmaṇassa gāmadvāre ca bhūpati, ṭhapāpetvā mahābodhiṃ ṭhānesu tesu tesu ca …* (Geiger 1958: 152). "When [the king] had heard [the instruction] of the Elder, [he] had buildings made here and there at places which were frequented by the teacher (i.e., the Buddha) for sitting down and other [activities], and the master of the earth put down the Mahābodhi at the gate of the village of the *brāhmaṇa*

through the northern gate into the city, and from the southern gate to its final place.[111] It is not clear why such a route with a clear deviation to the north of the city was taken in the first place – the *Mahāvaṃsaṭīkā* interestingly has not much to say about this route and the individual places[112] – and one gets the impression that the branch first went from the "Eastern Monastery" to the site where the Abhayagirivihāra and that the *Mahāvaṃsa* tries to cover this up by not dropping the name of the rival monastery and instead to insert an "unsuspicious" place, the village of the *brāhmaṇa* Tivakka.

The *Mahāvaṃsa* also reports that offshoots of the *bodhi*-tree were planted along the way of the branch and at other places across the island:

> Each one of the eight offshoots of the *bodhi*-[tree] was installed respectively at the port Jambukole at the place where the Mahābodhi had stood [right] after having disembarked the ship, in the village of the *brāhmaṇa* Tivakka, and also in the Thūpārāma, in the Issarasamaṇārāma, in the court around the first Cetiyapabbata, in the village of Kājara, and in the village of Candana. The other thirty-two offsprings of the *bodhi*[-tree] from four [of its] ripe fruits [were planted] everywhere, here and there, in monasteries at places [one] *yojana* [from each other].[113]

In the light of the fact that the *Mahāvaṃsa* admits at least forty trees of the first and second generation on the island – and it is even likely – that the Abhayagirivihāra had a tree of its own[114] which it would then claim, of course, to be the original one growing from the branch brought from India. Faxian's hesitance to drop the name of Aśoka, the Indian king who sent the sapling to

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Tivakka, and at this and that place …"

[111] *Mahāvaṃsa* 19.*39. Mahābodhiṃ pūjayanto rattiṃdivaṃ atandito, ānayitvā cuddasiyaṃ Anurādhapurantikaṃ, 40. vaḍḍhamānakachāyāya puraṃ sādhu vibhūsitaṃ, uttarena duvārena pūjayanto pavesiya 41. dakkhiṇena duvārena nikkhamitvā pavesiya, Mahāmeghavanārāmaṃ catubuddhanivesitaṃ …* (GEIGER 1958: 152). "Venerating the Mahābodhi unrestingly day and night, [the king], on the fourteenth [day] when the shadow was increasing, led [it] near Anurādhapura, the city well adorned with, entering through the northern gate and leaving [the city again] through the southern gate, and entered the Mahāmeghavana park which had been arranged for the four Buddhas [of the past] …".

[112] MALALASEKERA (1935: vol. 2, 404–405).

[113] *Mahāvaṃsa* 19.*60. Patiṭṭhāpesuṃ aṭṭhannaṃ Jambukolamhi paṭṭane, mahābodhiṭṭhitaṭhāne nāvāyorohaṇe tadā, 61. Tivakkabrāhmaṇaggāme, Thūpārāme tatheva ca, Issarasamaṇārāme, Paṭhame cetiyaṅgaṇe, 62. Cetiyapabbatārāme, tathā Kājaragāmake, Candanagāmake cāpi ekekaṃ bodhilaṭṭhikaṃ, 63. sesā catupakkajātā dvattiṃsabodhilaṭṭhiyo, samantā yojanaṭṭhāne vihāresu tahiṃ tahiṃ.* (GEIGER 1958: 154–155).

[114] This is, in fact, supported by *Cūḷavaṃsa* 37.91, where king Sirimeghavaṇṇa (see below) is said "to have built a stone terrace and a handsome wall beside the Bodhi tree Tissavasabha in the Abhaya-vihāra" (see translation by GEIGER 1929: 7). GEIGER 1929 (7, note 3) opines that Tissavasabha refers to the man who planted the tree, but I think that "Bull of Tissa" as the name for the tree makes perfect sense if one assumes that this name is linked to the original planting of the tree through king Devānaṃpiyatissa.

Śrī Laṅkā according to the Mahāvihāra *vaṃsa*s, may have been caused by his awareness that there were two trees in the two main monasteries claiming the same authenticity of being a sapling from the original *bodhi*-tree which was brought from India to Śrī Laṅkā when Buddhism first took hold on the island.

Faxian continues with an account of what must have been the most important Buddhist event in the capital, the procession of the tooth relic:

> Always mid-March, the tooth of the Buddha is taken out [of the relic shrine]. Ten days before, the king has an elephant decorated, and has an eloquent man put on royal garb, ride on an elephant, beat the drums and recite:

> "For three *asaṃkhyeya[-kalpas]*[115] the *bodhisattva* has, without consideration for his [own] body and life, has caused [himself] suffering by abandoning kingdom, spouse and children, by tearing out and giving to others [his] eyes, by cutting off his flesh to exchange [it for the life] of a dove, by ripping off and distributing his head, by throwing his body in front of a tigress, and by not being stingy with his brain and marrow. Because of such various painful deeds he achieved Buddhahood, explained and taught the *dharma* in the world for forty-five years, converted living beings, brought peace to the restless ones and converted the ones who were not converted yet, and when his karmic connection (*yuan* 緣) with the living beings was exhausted, he entered *parinirvāṇa*. Since the *nirvāṇa*, [since] the Eye of the World[116] was extinguished, one thousand four hundred and ninety-seven years have passed, and the living beings constantly experience suffering. [Now,] ten days after I will have retreated, the tooth of the Buddha should be brought out and be carried to the Abhayagiri monastery. Monastics and laypeople in the kingdom and those who want to increase their merit[117] should prepare the streets, solemnly decorate the alleys and lanes, and arrange for everything needed for offerings [such as] flowers and incense."

> After [the man] has announced this, the king gives the instruction to position five hundred statues of the different reincarnations of the *bodhisattva* along both sides of the street, such as Sudāna[118], [his] reincarnation as Śyāma[119], as the king of the elephants, as a deer, or as a horse. All these figures are painted with different colours and decorated so that they look like [real] living beings.

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[115] *asengzhijie* 阿僧祇劫: "immeasurable (Skt. *asaṃkhyeya*) *kalpa*s".

[116] *shiyan* 世眼: Skt. *lokacakṣus*, is an epithet of the Buddha.

[117] *yuzhi-fu-zhe* 欲殖福者.

[118] Xudana 須大拏 / *suǝ-da'-nɛ*.

[119] Shan 睒 / *ɕiam'*.

After that, the tooth of the Buddha is brought out and is toured around in the middle of the street. Along the street, donations are made [to the relic] until it reaches the Buddha-hall of the Abhaya[giri] monastery. Crowds of monastics and laypeople are gathering, burn incense and kindle lamps. There are continuous *dharma*-services[120] the [whole] day and night. After ninety days, [the tooth relic] returns to the monastery in the city. On each fasting day,[121] the doors and gates of the city monastery are opened, and [the relic] is offered and venerated according to the *dharma*.[122]

The *Cūḷavaṃsa* records that a festival in honour of the tooth relic was established after its arrival from India under king Sirimeghavaṇṇa (traditionally first half but corrected to the second half of 4th cent.):[123]

In the ninth year of this [King] a Brahman woman brought hither (to Anurādhapura) from the Kaliṅga country the Tooth Relic of the Great Sage (Buddha). In the manner set forth in the Chronicle of the Tooth Relic the Ruler received it with reverence, paid it the highest honours, laid it in an urn of pure crystal, and brought it to the building called Dhammacakka built by Devānaṃpiyatissa on the royal territory. Henceforth this building was the temple of the Tooth Relic. The King his heart swelling with joy, spent 900000 (kahāpanas) and arranged therewith a great festival for the Tooth Relic. He decreed that it should be brought every year to the Abhayuttaravihāra, and that the same sacrificial ceremonial should be observed.[124]

(GEIGER 1929: 7–8)

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[120] *fashi* 法事: Skt. *saṅghakaraṇīya*.

[121] One of the anonymous reviewers suggested that Chinese "fasting day" in the Śrī Laṅkan context refers to the full-moon day.

[122] T.2085.865a.–20b.8: 佛齒常以三月中出之。未出十日，王莊校大象，使一辯說人，著王衣服，騎象上，擊鼓唱言：「菩薩從三阿僧祇劫，苦行，不惜身命，以國、妻、子及挑眼與人，割肉貿鴿，截頭布施，投身餓虎，不悋髓腦，如是種種苦行，為眾生故。成佛在世四十五年，說法教化，令不安者安，不度者度，眾生緣盡，乃般泥洹。泥洹已來一千四百九十七年，世間眼滅，眾生長悲。却後十日，佛齒當出至無畏山精舍，國內道俗欲殖福者；各各平治道路，嚴飾巷陌，辨眾華香，供養之具！」如是唱已，王便夾道兩邊，作菩薩五百身已來種種變現：或作須大拏，或作睒變，或作象王，或作鹿馬，如是形像，皆彩畫莊校，狀若生人。然後佛齒乃出，中道而行，隨路供養，到無畏精舍佛堂上。道俗雲集，燒香，然燈，種種法事，晝夜不息。滿九十日，乃還城內精舍。城內精舍至齋日，則開門門戶。禮敬如法。

[123] See DEEG (2005: 165–166). On the relic and its history see also JAYAWARDENA (1975).

[124] *Cūḷavaṃsa 37.92. navame tassa vassamhi dāṭhādhātuṃ mahesino, brāhmaṇī kāci ādāya Kāliṃgamhā idh' ānayi. 93. Dāṭhādhātussa vaṃsamhi vuttena vidhinā sa taṃ, gahetvā bahumānena katvā sammānam uttamaṃ, 94. pakkhippitvā karaṇḍamhi visuddhaphaḷikhubbhave, Devānaṃpiyatissena rājavatthumhi kārite 95. Dhammacakkavhaye gehe vaḍḍhayitvā mahīpati; tato paṭṭhāya taṃ gehaṃ Dāṭhādhātugharaṃ ahu. 96. Rājā satasahassānaṃ navakaṃ puṇṇamānaso, vissajjetvā tato 'kāsi dhāṭhādhātumahāmahaṃ. 97. Anusaṃvaccharaṃ netvā vihāraṃ Abhayuttaraṃ, tassa pūjāvidhiṃ kātuṃ evarūpaṃ niyojayi.* (GEIGER 1925: 6–7).

In contrast to this rather brief note, the slightly earlier Dhāṭhāvaṃsa, mentioned in the quoted passage of the *Cūḷavaṃsa*, describes the primordial festival of displaying the tooth relic by king Sirimeghavaṇṇa (Kittisirimegha) in a way which is quite similar to the grandeur depicted in Faxian's record:

> The king then went to his palace and, quickly illuminating the movements of the lotus-like faces of the people who were hoping to greet the relic gave order to prepare the city and the road [leading to] the monastery.[125] The driveway was swept, the dust being settled by sprinkling of water, made pleasant by strewing out of sand, [and] erected and the vaults were prepared, decorated with gold, etc., and studded with the forms of tigers, etc. The heat of the [sun]rays was held back by the shadow [of canopies], the rows of banners moved by the wind displayed [their] dance, the streets had achieved the colour like the lines [of trees] in spring forests through rows of well-grown plantain trees. Hundreds of freshly filled jars showed that the expected bliss of heaven and final release [from *saṃsāra*] will be fulfilled, and an inauspicious day became an auspicious day through aromatic smoke produced by essence of camphor, *tagara* and *āgaru*. … The lord of Laṅkā placed the relic of the ornament of the Three Worlds[126] on the best of chariots yoked to stallions as pale as the moon and made bright by the shining of jewels and, after having prostrated [in front of it], spoke the words: "…" Then the king, skilled in suitable conduct, sent off the splendid driverless chariot [and] went himself with a big crowd performing an incomparable special [act of] adoration. With the multitude of shouting of the big crowd of people, the widespread roaring neighing of the horses, the great thunder of the drums, the trumpeting of the elephants the city appeared like a stormy ocean. The ladies of the households [who] had gone to both [sides] of the street were joyful, threw golden ornaments[127] through the windows, let rain [down] showers of flowers which were beneficial for all and whirled around [their] garments over their own heads. When the chariot, like a ship sailing on the surface of the sea, had arrived near the eastern gate of the city, the assembly of monks and all men there were satisfied and venerated [the relic] in different ways. After having performed a circumambulation of the city, the best of chariots went outside [of the city] through the northern gate and, like a merchant ship at a landing place, stopped at the place where

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[125] It is difficult to decide whether in the compound *vihāra-* is to be taken as singular or plural. I translate as singular since the only monastery mentioned in the text is the Abhayagirivihāra (Abhayuttara- vihāra- in stanza 67).

[126] *tilokatilaka* obviously is a poetic construction (*tiloka* + *tilaka*) in which *tilaka*, usually "spot, mark", has a metaphorical meaning in the translated sense (see Böhtlingk and Roth 1855–1875: vol. 3, 337b, s.v. 4, "die Zierde von Etwas").

[127] *kanakābhataṇe* to be emended to *kanakābharaṇe*.

the sage Mahinda had delivered a speech about the *dhamma*. At this place, the lord of Laṅkā took the most excellent tooth relic of the victor out of the jewel-studded relic box like the moon [emerging from] the evening cloud and showed [it] to the people in the provinces, the settlements and the cities. … The lord of Laṅkā, after having venerated the priceless relic of the omniscient, enlarged the residence of the tooth relic by spending nine *lakh*, and daily paid honour [to it] in the royal quarters. The king called Kittisiramegha brought the relic to the Abhuttara-monastery (i.e., the Abhayagirivihāra), and truthfully inscribed an edict [establishing] the custom to provide for an adoration [of the relic] in this way every year.[128]

As pointed out by Tilman Frasch (2010, 2017: 67–70, 2023: 215), the relic had played a quite important role in the "triangle of power" of the king and the two competing monasteries in the fourth and probably also early fifth centuries when Faxian had stayed on the island. The festival of the relic was still a relatively recent event. It may well be, as Frasch suggests, that king Sirimeghavaṇṇa chose the Abhayagirivihāra as the hosting monastery for the newly arrived tooth relic because the Mahāvihārins were "initially rather hostile against towards the tooth relic and its veneration" (Frasch 2010: 650). Since both texts, the *Cūḷavaṃsa* and the *Dāṭhāvaṃsa*,[129] were composed or compiled at a time when the

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[128] *Dāṭhāvaṃsa 5.47. Rājā tato bhavanaṃ eva sakkaṃ upecca, dhātuppaṇāmaṃ abhipatthayatam janānaṃ, khippaṃ mukhambujavanāni vikāsayanto, sajjetuṃ āha nagarañ ca vihāramaggaṃ 48. Sammajitā salilasecanasantadhūlī, racchā tadā 'si pulinattharaṇābhirāmā, ussāpitāni kanakādivicittitāni, vyagghādirūpakhacitāni ca toraṇāni 49. Chāyānivāritavirocanaraṃsitāpā, naccaṃ va dassayati vātadhutā dhajālī, vīthī vasantavanarājisamānavaṇṇā, jātā sujātakadalītarumālikāhi 50. Saṃsūcayanti ca satam navapuṇṇakumbhā, saggāpavaggasukham icchitam ijjhatīti, kappūrasāratagarāgarusambhavehi, dhūpehi duddinam atho sudinaṃ ahosi […] 53. Laṅkissaro 'tha sasipaṇḍaravājiyutte, ujjotite rathavare ratanappabhāhi, dhātuṃ tilokatilakassa patiṭṭhāpetvā, etaṃ avoca vacanaṃ paṇipātapubbaṃ […] 55. Rājā tato samucitācāraṇesu dakkho, vissajji phussaratham aṭṭhitasārathiṃ taṃ, pacchā sayaṃ mahatiyā parisāya saddhiṃ, pūjāvisesam asamaṃ agamā karonto 56 Ukkuṭṭhinādavisarena mahājanassa, hesāravena visaṭena turaṅgamānaṃ, bherīravena mahatā karigajjitena, uddāmasāgarasamaṃ nagaraṃ ahosi 57. Āmoditā ubhayavīthigatā kuliṭṭhī, vātāyanehi kanakābhataṇe khipiṃsu, sabbatthakaṃ kusumavassam avassayiṃsu, celāni c'eva bhamayiṃsu nijuttamaṅge 58. Pācīnagopurasamīpam upāgatamhi, tasmiṃ rathe jaladhipiṭṭhigate 'va pote, tuṭṭhā tahiṃ yatigaṇa manujā ca sabbe, sampūjayiṃsu vividhehi upāyehi 59. Katvā padakkhiṇam atho puram uttarena, dvārena so rathavaro bahi nikkhamitvā, ṭhāne Mahindamunidhammakathāpavitte, aṭṭhāsi titthagamitā iva bhaṇḍanāvā 60. Ṭhane tahiṃ dasanadhātuvaraṃ jinassa, Laṅkissaro ratanacittā karaṇḍagabbhā, sañjāghanā iva vidhuṃ bahi nīharitvā, dassesi jānapadanegamanāgarānaṃ […] 66. Laṅkissaro pi navalakkhaparibbayena, sabbaññudhātum atulaṃ abhipūjayitvā, taṃ dantadhātubhavanaṃ puna vaḍḍhayitvā, antopuramhi paṭivāsaram accayittha 67. Dhātuṃ vihāram Abhayuttaram eva netvā, pūjaṃ vidhātum anuvaccharam evarūpaṃ, rājā 'tha Kittisirameghasamavhayo so, cārittalekkham abhilekhayi saccasandho; quoted after Rhys Davids' edition (Rhys Davids 1884: 148–150); see also the translations by Coomara Swamy (1874: 75–79), and Law (1925: 48–51).*

[129] The author of the text is a monk called Dhammakitti who, according to O. von Hinüber (1996: 94–95, §193) can be dated to the 13th century. The *Cūḷavaṃsa*'s, the early part of

Mahāvihāra had secured supremacy, the Abhayagirivihāra had been reintegrated in its fold, and the tooth relic was under the Mahāvihāra's control and in the new political centre in Polonaruva, Mahāvihāra authors do not seem to have a problem recognising the fact that in the past, it had been the Abhayagirivihāra which had been given the right to receive – and, according to Faxian – house the relic, although the *Cūḷavaṃsa* seems to be reluctant to describe the grandeur of the festival.

Faxian's description of the Mahāvihāra[130] is quite neutral and does not reflect any rivalry or competition with his "own" monastery and, with 2000 monks more than its competitor, the predominance of the Abhayagirivihāra. The most important "feature" of this monastery is the cremation of an (anonymous) *arhat*:

> Seven *li* to the south of the city is a monastery called Mahāvihāra with a population of three thousand monks. [Once] there was a monk of high virtue who kept the monastic rules in such a pure and correct way that all people in this kingdom assumed that he was an *arhat*. When he was dying, the king came to visit him. He convened the monks according to the *dharma* and asked [them]: "Has [this] *bhikṣu* reached enlightenment?" Thereupon, [the monks] answered truthfully: "He is an *arhat*." After he had died, the king arranged a funeral for him according to the rules of the Vinaya related to *arhat*s. Four or five *li* to the east of the monastery, he erected a massive funeral pyre, three *zhang* broad and wide and of about the same height. Sandalwood, *agaru*[-wood][131] and all [the other] fragrant timber was put on top of it. Staircases were constructed at all four sides. Pure and perfectly white felt[132] was put on top of it, and [everything] around was covered with strings of leaves and grass[133]; a palanquin[134] was made which looked like a local[135] hearse[136], but without

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which was compiled by another monk called Dhammakitti, dated to the second half of the 12th century by O. von Hinüber (1996: 88, §182), reference to this text suggests that either the author of the *Cūḷavaṃsa* is later, or the author of the *Dāṭhāvaṃsa* is earlier.

[130] Mohebikeluo 摩訶毗可羅 / *ma-xa-bji-kʰa'-la*: bikeluo for *vihāra* is a *hapax legomenon* in the Buddhist canon. If Faxian's transliteration here does not reflect a local idiosyncretic pronunciation (*Mahāvikāra), this seems to be a mistake for *biheluo* 毗訶羅.

[131] *chensui* 沈水: Skt. *agaru* or *aguru*; *Amyris agalocha*, or similar plants. Cp. the description of Rāvaṇa's funeral in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Caland 1896: 168), or in the same text of Daśaratha's funeral (Caland 1896: 169) where sandalwood and flowers are also mentioned.

[132] In the ancient Indian funearl ritual the corpse is covered with an unused white garment (Caland 1896: 16) or a linen cloth (funeral of Rāvaṇa, Caland 1896: 168).

[133] *mengyi* 蒙藉: this may correspond to the scattering of grass and flowers around the pyre in the Vedic ritual: Caland (1896: 37).

[134] *yu* 輿: originally, a wheel-less palanquin or sedan chair.

[135] *cijian* 此間: "local" here refers to China.

[136] *shuanju* 輴車: according to the Vedic ritual, this should be a chariot (Caland 1896: 20), but the accounts of Mahinda's funeral in the *vaṃsa*s (see below) rather support a wheel-less

[the embellishments] of dragons and fish.

When the time for the cremation[137] had come, everybody, the king, the people, and the fourfold community, came together and made offerings of flowers and incense. [Along the way] of the hearse to the funerary place, the king had donated [additional] flowers and incense. After the offerings were finished, the palanquin and the flowers were sprinkled with ghee[138] and [finally] set on fire. While the fire was burning, all people venerated [the pyre] full of devotion[139], everybody took off their outer garment[140] and threw [it together with their] feather fans and umbrellas[141] into the fire to feed the pyre. After the pyre had burnt down, the bones were collected[142] and a *stūpa* was erected [for the relic]. Unfortunately, when Faxian arrived, he did not find [the *arhat*] alive but only his tomb.[143]

It is the last sentence which, in my opinion, prevented a positive identification of the *arhat* in Faxian's record.[144] The description is detailed enough to only refer

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palanquin or bier (*kūṭāgāra*: "a temporary or moveable pavilion, a canopied litter", Cone 2001: 723b).

[137] 闍維 *duwei*: see Pāli *jhāpita*, "pyre".

[138] *suyou* 酥油: Skt. *ghṛta*. For the pouring of fat and scattering grass and fragrant substances on the pyre see Caland (1896: 48).

[139] This may correspond to the *anuśaṃsana* in the ancient Indian ritual according to the Taittirīya school (Caland 1896: 66).

[140] Here, Faxian may have interpreted an old purification ritual – the burning of the upper garment which becomes impure through contact with the corpse – in a rationalist way; the cremation of an *arhat* would hardly have caused impurity although the old cleansing procedures were still maintained – as expressed in Guṇaprabha's *Vinayasūtra*: see Schopen (1994: 65). It has to be admitted that the general problem with a direct comparison of Faxian's account with the older Indian sources is that the ancient ritual texts deal with the cremation itself only very briefly (Caland 1896: 63), but instead focus on the cleaning process after the cremation during which the upper garment is not worn (Caland 1896: 76–77).

[141] *yuyi-sangai* 羽儀傘蓋: the explicit mentioning of fans may be linked with the old custom of fanning the corpse which Caland (1896: 171), explains as a means "to shake of the soul" ("die seele abzuschütteln"); in a ritualized form, fanning is also practiced in case of the bones and ashes after the cremation (Caland 1896: 135, 139, 149) and is also found in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Caland 1896: 170).

[142] The collection of the bones was already part of the ancient Indian funeral practice: see Caland 1896: 99–105.

[143] T.2085.865b.12–26: 城南七里，有一精舍，名摩訶毘可羅，有三千僧住。有一高德沙門，戒行清潔；國人咸疑是羅漢。臨終之時，王來省視，依法集僧而問：“比丘得道耶？”其便以實答言：“是羅漢。”既終，王即案經律，以羅漢法葬之。於精舍東四，五里，積好大薪，縱廣可三丈餘，高亦爾，近上著栴檀，沉水諸香木，四邊作階上，持淨好白㲲周匝蒙積。作大轝床，似此間輀車，但無龍魚耳。當闍維時，王及國人，四眾咸集，以華香供養。從輿至墓所，王自華香供養。供養訖，舉著積上，酥油遍灌，然後燒之。火然之時，人人敬心，各脫上服，及羽儀，傘蓋，遙擲火中，以助闍維。闍維已，收檢取骨，即以起塔。法顯至，不及其生存，唯見葬。

[144] For a detailed discussion of this problem see Deeg (2005: 168–171).

to a very eminent individual in the history of the island – and the only *arhat* whose funeral is described in detail is Mahinda, the famous "missionary" of Śrī Laṅkā and son of Aśoka, according to the *vaṃsa*s, son of Aśoka. A cremation of an *arhat* just before Faxian's stay on the island is rather unlikely; although there are narratives about *arhat*s in later periods,[145] an *arhat* of the status as described by Faxian would have belonged to *illo tempore* of a time when the *dharma* was still fully intact, was a *saddharma* – and it certainly was not in the view of a Chinese Buddhist who thought to be living, at best, in the period of the *prātirūpakadharma*.

In the *vaṃsa*s, the *parinirvāṇa* of Mahinda and his cremation are described in detail. There, the *parinirvāna* happens on the Cetiyapabbata (*Mahāvaṃsa* 20.32) and the body is then transferred to the Mahāvihāra, ordered by king Uttiya, and finally is cremated at a place east of the monastery (*Mahāvaṃsa* 20.34–47):

> When king Uttiya heard this he went thither, stricken by the dart of sorrow, and when he had paid homage to the *thera* and oft and greatly had lamented (over him) he caused the dead body of the *thera* to be laid forthwith in a golden chest sprinkled with fragrant oil, and the well closed chest to be laid upon a golden, adorned bier; and when he had caused it then to be lifted upon the bier, commanding solemn ceremonies, he caused it to be escorted by a great multitude of people, that had come together from this place and that, and by a great levy of troops; commanding due offerings (he caused it to be escorted) on the adorned street to the variously adorned capital and brought through the city in procession by the royal highway to the Mahāvihāra. When the monarch had caused the bier to be placed here for a week in the Pañhambamālaka – with triumphal arches, pennons, and flowers, and with vases filled with perfumes the *vihāra* was adorned and a circle of three *yojana*s around, by the king's decree, but the whole island was adorned in like manner by the decree of the *deva*s – and when the monarch had commanded divers offerings throughout the week he built up, turned toward the east in the Therānaṃbandhamālaka, a funeral pyre of sweet smelling wood, leaving the (place of the later) Great *thūpa* on the right, and when he had brought the beautiful bier thither and caused it to be set upon the pyre he carried out the rites of the dead. And here did he build a *cetiya* when he had caused the relics to be gathered. Taking the half of the relics the monarch caused *thūpa*s to be build the the Cetiya-mountain and in all the *vihāra*s. The place where the burial of this sage's body had taken place is called, to do him honour, Isibhūmaṅgaṇa. From that time onwards they used to bring the dead bodies of holy men from three *yojana*s around to this spot and there to burn them.[146]

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[145] The stories discussed by Walpola Rahula ([1956] 1993: 219–229) are often about the weaknesses and deficiencies of these *arhat*s.

[146] *34. Taṃ sutvā Uttīyo rājā sokasallasamappito, gantvā theraṃ ca vanditvā kanditvā bahudhā*

The major differences in comparison with Faxian's report are that in the *vaṃsa* no doubt is expressed about Mahinda's status of an *arhat* and, of course, that the name of the *arhat* is given. While in the report of the *vaṃsa* the body is moved around, Faxian does not give any concrete name where the individual events happen, although it seems to be clear that they are to be located in the sphere of the Mahāvihāra. It seems as if the source of the information about the affiliation of the famous *arhat* which Faxian received, was not as straightforward as far as the importance of the arhat was concerned, and this may well have originated from an Abhayagiri point of view who could hardly negate the role of the *arhat* for the introduction of Buddhism in Śrī Laṅkā but also could not claim this *arhat* for themselves.

Despite the similarities – both accounts locate the pyre to the east of the Mahāvihāra, a feature which corresponds astonishingly well with the Brahminical rules for funerals[147] – Faxian is more detailed about the details of the ritual elements of the cremation. This could be due to a stronger emphasis on ritualistic which were reflected in the source of information about the funeral of the *arhat* which were available to Faxian (Abhayagirivaṃsa). One would, in the first instance, think that the instructions given by the Buddha about how to deal with his body after his death and the account of his cremation in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*[148] may have had an impact on the description, but apart from some common places (erection of the pyre, kindling of the pyre) and the general parallels with the Vedic funerary practices which have already been highlighted by WALDSCHMIDT (1948: 263–264), the

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*bahuṃ. 35. āsittagandhatelāya lahuṃ sovaṇṇadoṇiyā, theradehaṃ khīpāpetvā taṃ doṇiṃ sādhu phussitaṃ 36. Sovaṇṇakūṭāgāramhi ṭhapāpetvā alaṅkate, kūṭāgāre ropayitvā kārento sādhukīḷanaṃ 37. mahatā ca janoghena āgatena tato tato, mahatā ca baloghena kārento pūjāvidhiṃ 38. alaṅkatena maggena bahudhālaṅkataṃ puraṃ, ānayitvāna nagare cārevtā rājavīthiyā 39. Mahāvihāraṃ ānetvā ettha Pañhambamālake, kūṭāgaraṃ ṭhapāpetvā sattāhaṃ so mahīpati 40. – Toraṇaddhajapupphehi gandhapuṇṇaghaṭehi ca, vihāraṃ ca samantā ca maṇḍitaṃ yojanattayaṃ 41. ahu rājānubhāvena, dīpaṃ tu sakalaṃ pana, ānubhāvena devānaṃ tathevālaṅkataṃ ahu – 42. nānāpūjā kārayitvā taṃ sattāhaṃ so mahīpati, puratthimadisābhāge Therānaṃbandhamālake 43. kāretvā gandhacitakaṃ Mahāthūpaṃ padakkhiṇaṃ, karonto tattha netvā taṃ kūṭāgāraṃ manoramaṃ. 44. citakamhi ṭhapāpetvā sakkāraṃ antimaṃ akā, cetiyaṃ cettha kāresi gāhāpetvāna dhātuyo. 45. Upaḍḍhadhātuṃ gāhetvā Cetiyapabbate pi ca, sabbesu ca vihāresu thūpe kāresi khattiyo. 46. Isino dehanikkhepakataṭṭhānaṃ hi tassa taṃ, vuccate bahumānena Isibhumaṅganaṃ iti. 47. Tato pabhuti ariyānaṃ samantā yojanattaye, sarīraṃ āharitvāna tamhi desamhi ḍayhati.* (GEIGER 1958: 161–163). The same events are described in *Dīpavaṃsa* 17.95–109.

[147] According to the *śāstra*s, the corpse is to be carried through the eastern (alternatively the western) city gate to the cremation place: see CALAND 1896: 23). The direction east may have been influenced by the fact that the word for "east" in Skt., *pūrva*, also has the meaning "front, ahead", and that the regulation stipulates that nobody in the procession is supposed to look back – originally probably to avoid a return of the dead.

[148] For an analysis of the different versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* with respect to the instructions and the funeral / cremation see WALDSCHMIDT (1948: 210–216, 263–265).

funeral of the Buddha (e.g., the use of coffins, the washing of the body, miraculous events) is too extraordinary to have been the direct model for a funeral even of an eminent *arhat* like Mahinda. Some of the details given for the funeral, however, correspond astonishingly well with the regulations of a funeral in the Brahminical ritual *śāstra*s (see the notes to the translation above), although Faxian claims that they are drawn from Vinaya-rules about *arhat*s (which do not, as far as I know, exist in any of the monastic codes[149]).

Faxian then continues with what is obviously part of the foundation story of the Mahāvihāra – although the parallel story in the *Mahāvaṃsa* does not mention the name of the monastery, but only describes the establishment of the vast monastic boundary (*sīmā*) of the terrain on which the Mahāvihāra will be erected (see below):

> The king at that time was very pious and dedicated to the Buddhist *dharma*. He wanted to erect a new monastery for the *saṅgha*. First, he convened a large assembly and fed [the monks]. After having made his offerings, he selected a pair of excellent cattle, adorned their horns with gold, silver and [other] precious items and made a golden plough. [Then], the king himself plowed [some] *qing*[150] of land an all four sides [of the land]. After that, he distributed [it to the *saṅgha*], donated families, fields, and houses and documented this [donation] on iron plates.[151] From these times, these [plates] were passed on from generation to generation, and no[body] dared to abandon or to change them[152].[153]

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[149] For a discussion of funeral arrangements for (ordinary) monks in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* see Schopen (1994). The focus in these sources is clearly on the treatment of the body (*śarīrapūjā*) and of the relics and the erection of funeral *stūpa*s or *caitya*s.

[150] 1 *qing* 頃 = 100 *mu* 畝, c. 11.39 English acres, about 4,000 square meters. The text does not specify how many *qing* 頃 were marked by the king, but since, according to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *sīmā* was supposed to have encompassed the area of the *saṅgha* of *Anurādhapura*, it must have been a respectable area.

[151] Most royal inscriptions on metal in India are on copper or bronze plates, iron being used extremely rarely: see Salomon (1998: 129–130). On royal donation inscriptions on metal plates in early and medieval South Asia – but not from such an early period (Maurya, 3rd century bce) as assumed in Faxian's record – see Salomon (1998: 113–115), and Schmiedchen (1993). Faxian's remark that nobody dared to change the regulation of the king may reflect the part of the inscriptions protecting the donation from being reversed: see Schmiedchen (2011: 154).

[152] This remark indicates that, in principle, the king could reverse or change the conditions of the donation. In concrete terms, king Mahāsena who favoured the Abhayagirivihāra did indeed try to change *sīmā* of the Mahāvihāra in favour of the other monastery.

[153] T.2085.865b.26–c1:　時王篤信佛法，欲為眾僧作新精舍。先設大會，飯食供養已，乃選好上牛一雙，金銀寶物莊校角上。作好金犁，王自耕頃四邊，然後割給民戶，田，宅，書以鐵券。自是已後，代代相承，無敢廢易。"

The odd point here is that the foundation of the Mahāvihāra by establishing the boundary of the territory (*sīmā*) happens after the cremation of the *arhat* but still during the rule of the same king who by now has turned into a fervent follower of Buddhism, while according to the *vaṃsa*s this all happens before the death of Mahinda under the rule of king Uttiya's older brother and famous predecessor, king Devānaṃpiyatissa (*Mahāvaṃsa* 15.180–194).

Again, it seems as if Faxian's source wants to reduce the importance of the Mahāvihāra by ascribing its foundation after the passing away of Mahinda and thus weakening the direct link between the monk and the monastery: while in the *vaṃsa*s the king donates the monastery directly to Mahinda and thereby gives the new monastery its status and authority, this connection between the king, the *arhat*, and the monastery is absent in Faxian's record; there, the king not only has initial doubts about the status of the monk but also donates the terrain for the Mahāvihāra to an anonymous *saṅgha*. All of this would make sense in a version of the events in an *Abhayagiri-vaṃsa*: the existence and importance of the famous Buddhist monk and Aśoka's son could not be denied, but his link with the king and with the competing monastery was, let us day, neutralised.

An interesting test case for the credibility of Faxian and the formation of different versions of certain events in different *vaṃsa* traditions is the next sub-episode in Faxian's record describing the demarcation of the area which is donated to the *saṅgha* and on which the new monastery is to be built. In the standard version of the *Mahāvaṃsa* (as edited and translated by Geiger) there is only one verse (v.190) according to which the king is ploughing the boundary in a circle (-*vaṭṭi*), and then Mahinda in a kind of final act marks the boundary, probably to give the action more authority as indicated by the earthquake occurring at that time:

> He (i.e., the king) thus approached the Elders and paid his respects to these to whom respect was due; he then [ploughed] a circular furrow, making it [start] on the opposite bank of the Kadamba-river[154], and letting it end when the river was reached again. When the king had declared the marks by the simple[155] furrow for thirty-two *mālaka*s[156], and and for the Thūpārāma; when the marks had been announced, the loft-minded great Elder (Mahinda) declared the inner marks of the *sīmā* according to the rules, then fixed the inner boundary-marks[157] likewise according

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[154] I.e., east of Anurādhapura.

[155] *dīna*, "mean, inferior, etc.", not translated by Geiger, here obviously refers to the fact that the king's boundary was an outer and secondary one which had to be confirmed by Mahinda.

[156] The *mālaka(sīmā)*, aka *khaṇḍasīmā*, is also called "being located lower" (*nīcavatthuka*) and is a way to divide the "great boundary" (*mahāsīmā*) into smaller, more manageable areas: see KIEFFER-PÜLZ (1992: 192–194). It is also interesting that the number of *mālaka*s is thirty-two, the same number as that of the main marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of a Buddha.

[157] The space between two *sīmā*s, in this case obviously between the outer one marked by the

to the custom; and thus the powerful one (i.e., the king) established the *sīmā*s on the same day, [and] the great earth shook when the fixing of the boundaries was completed.[158]

However, in some manuscripts, the event is elaborated in more verses. There, the king is ploughing the wide area with a golden plough:

> Going to the other shore of the river with the Elders, [the king] went [on] ploughhing with a golden plough; the two auspicious elephant Mahāpaduma and Kuñjara were yoked to the golden plough, and the great warlord of the four parts of the army, the warrior, the tamer of foes first made visible with the plough the furrow at the *mālaka* of Kunta, [with] adorned filled pitchers, beautiful flags of different colours, vessels with ground sandalwood, golden and silver staffs, mirrors heavily [adorned] with flowers, baskets precious through blossoms, umbrellas [made] of arch[-like] banana[-leaves],[159] etc., encompassed by selected women, sounding various musical instruments, encompassed by those who had plenty of power, filling the four quarters with auspicious songs of praise, and together with hundreds of people waiving their clothes to express their praise the king went ploughing in festive devotion and performed a circumvention of the city and the monastery until [he], going and stopping [on the way], reached the river again and accomplished the *sīmā*.[160]

I only give the first eight stanzas of a total of twenty which Geiger considers them an early insertion into the *Mahāvaṃsa*;[161] these verses correspond almost

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king and the inner one established by Mahinda. On this space (*sīmantarikā*) see Kieffer-Pülz (1992: 91–96 and 249–252).

[158] *Mahāvaṃsa* 15.190. … *Tattha there upāgantvā vanditvā vandanārahe 191. paṭititthakaṃ kārayanto Kadambanadiyā va so, sītavaṭṭiṃ kurumāno nadiṃ patvā samāpayi. 192. Raññā dināya sītāya nimitte parikittiya, dvattiṃsamālakatthaṃ ca Thūpārāmatthaṃ eva ca 193. nimitte kittayitvāna mahāthero mahāmati, sīmantaranimitte ca kittayitvā yathāvidhi 194. abandhi sabbasīmāyo tasmiṃ yeva dine vasī, mahāmahī akampittha sīmābandhe samāpite.* (Geiger 1958: 127). Translation adopted from Geiger (1912: 111).

[159] I take the accusatives starting with *samalaṃkaṭaṃ* and ending with *toraṇakadalichattādiṃ* as quasi-adverbial.

[160] *1. Saha therehi gantvāna nadiyoparititthakaṃ, tato kasanto agamāsi hemanaṅgalam ādiya. 2. Mahāpadumo Kuñjaro ca ubho nāgā sumaṅgalā, suvaṇṇanaṅgale yuttā; paṭhame Kuntamālake 3. caturaṅginīmahāseno saha therehi khattiyo, gahetvā naṅgalaṃ sītaṃ dassayitvā arimdamo 4. samalaṃkaṭaṃ puṇṇaghaṭaṃ nānārāgaṃ dhajaṃ subhaṃ, pātiṃ candanacuṇṇaṃ ca soṇṇarajatadaṇḍakaṃ 5. ādāsaṃ pupphabharitaṃ samuggaṃ kusumagghiyaṃ, toraṇakadalichattādiṃ gahititthiparivārito 6. nānāturiyasaṃghuṭṭho baloghaparivārito, thutimaṅgalagītehi pūrayanto catuddisaṃ 7. sādhukāraninādehi celukkhapasatehi ca, mahatā chaṇapūjāya kasanto bhūmipo agā 8. vihāraṃ ca puraṃ ceva kurumāno padakkhiṇaṃ, sīmāya gamanaṭṭhānaṃ nadiṃ patvā samāpayi.* (Geiger 1958: 331–332, Appendix B).

[161] See his discussion in Geiger (1958: xxxvi–xxxvii).

verbatim to *Dīpavaṃsa* 14.28–34[162] which shows that they are older than stanza 190 in Geiger's edited text. The other twelve verses are mostly dedicated to the namedropping of the thirty-two *mālaka*s. The description of the king's action in this version is quite close to Faxian's report (golden plough, emphasis on the size of the marked area). One possibility to explain the "downsizing" of the king's action to stanza 190 – the *Mahāvaṃsaṭīkā* only comments on this[163] – and the parallels between Faxian and the longer part in both the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the alternative *Mahāvaṃsa*-reading may be that these originally were part of the *Abhayagirivaṃsa* version of the story which could, in the end, not be accepted by the Mahāvihārins.

Faxian's report ends with a list of the manuscripts which he obtained during his stay on the island:

> Faxian stayed in this kingdom for two years, searched for [texts and finally] obtained a *Vinayapiṭaka* of the Mahīśāsaka[164], [and also] obtained a *Dīrghāgama*, a *Saṃyuktāgama* and also a "Sundered Collection"; all these [texts] were not yet available in the land of the Han.[165]

The texts which Faxian brought back from Śrī Laṅkā were almost certainly acquired in the Abhayagirivihāra.[166] Among them were a *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya* which may be taken as an indicator that the Abhayagirivihāra had a more liberal attitude towards the *nikāya* affiliation of canonical texts.[167] As for the language, it can be assumed that they were in Sanskrit rather than in Pāli.[168] Of the other two texts, the *Dīrghāgama* (*Chang-ahan* 長阿含) was not translated because another version (T.1) had already reached China and had been translated by Buddhayaśas and Zhu Fonian in 413, but the *Saṃyuktāgama* (*Za-ahan* 雜阿含) brought back by Faxian was translated later (T.99) by Guṇabhadra (fl. 435–443).[169]

An interesting case is the *Zazang* 雜藏 the title of which, in Sanskrit, could be \*Saṃyuktapiṭaka* or \*Kṣudrakapiṭaka*, the last reconstruction being the

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[162] OLDENBERG (1879: 75 [edition] and 181–182 [translation]).

[163] See GEIGER (1958: xxxvi).

[164] *Mishasai* 彌沙塞: T.1421, alias *Wufen-lü* 五分律, translated by Buddhajīva / Fotuoshi 佛陀什 (fl. 423–24) and Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (fl. 397–434).

[165] T.2085.865c.24–26:　法顯住此國二年，更求得彌沙塞律藏本，得長阿含雜阿含，復得一部雜藏；此悉漢土所無者。

[166] For a discussion of these texts see DE JONG (1981).

[167] DE JONG (1981) seems to avoid the question of the provenience of these texts, although he discusses the *Mahīśāsaka-vinaya* at some length.

[168] On a different opinion – that the literature of the Abhayagirivihāra was mainly written in Pāli, Prakrit or some kind of hybrid Sanskrit – see COUSINS (2012: 85).

[169] On the identification of T.99 with the manuscript brought back by Faxian see GLASS (2010).

preferable one. It is normally assumed that this is the relatively short text called *Zazang-jing* 雜藏經 (T.745) which Faxian translated, but this identification is more than doubtful because of several reasons: The numeral classificatory *bu* 部 is normally not used for a single *sūtra* but for a set of texts.[170] The title of is *Zazang-jing* is not identical with *Zazang* but could just mean "(a) *sūtra* from the *Zazang*". A *Zazang*, on the other hand, is well attested in the Chinese canon: it is usually considered a "basket" (*piṭaka*, *zang*) outside of the standard Tripiṭaka (see below[171]). The famous Kumārajīva (344–413), for instance, is said to have learnt the (or a) *Zazang* in Kaśmīr at the very young age of eight.[172]

What this *\*Kṣudrakapiṭaka* / *Zazang*[173] was said or thought to really have comprised may be concluded from contextualising minor pieces of information found in the Chinese canon, although it seemed to have been quite an open repository for all kinds of texts. The "Foreword" of the *Ekottarikāgama* / *Zengyi-ahan-jing* 增壹阿含經, translated by Gautama Saṅghadeva (fl. 383–398), for example, has the following stanza about the Buddhist canon:

> The *sūtra*s [as] the first basket (*piṭaka*), the Vinaya [as] the second basket, and the *sūtra*s of the Abhidharma[174] make up the Three Baskets (*tripiṭaka*); the profundity of the meaning of the Vaipulya-Mahāyāna[175] and the [other] *sūtra*s form the "Basket of Miscellaneous" (*Zazang*).[176]

An even longer and more varied list of texts or text genres included in the *Zazang* is given in the report of the council of Rājagṛha of the *Dharmaguptaka-*

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[170] For instance, Sengzhao 僧肇 (c. 374–414), in his foreword to the *Chang-ahan-jing*, states this *Āgama* of thirty *sūtra*s is one *bu* (T.1.1a.13).

[171] This is also the position in other texts like the *Fenbie-gongde-lun* 分別功德論 (T.1507) and the *Xuanji-sanzang-ji-zazang-zhuan* 撰集三藏及雜藏傳 (T.2026): Palumbo (2013: 214 and 221).

[172] T.2059.330b.11–12: 什至即崇以師禮，從受雜藏，中、長二含，凡四百萬言。 ("When [Kumārajīva] arrived [in Kaśmīr, he] paid the veneration as a teacher [to Bandhudatta] and received from [him] the *Zazang* and both the *Madhyama-* and *Dīrghāgama*, altogether in four million words.") Palumbo (2013: 105) suggests that *Zazang* may be a mistake for *Za-ahan* = *Saṃyuktāgama*, but the text of the *Gaoseng-zhuan* explicitly states that Kumārajīva received two *āgama*s (*erhan*) from Bandhudatta.

[173] *Zazang* has been discussed by Palumbo (2013: 105–108).

[174] *Apitan-jing* 阿毘曇經: *jing* here just means "text" and is not to be taken literally in the sense of *sūtra*.

[175] *Fangdeng-dasheng* 方等大乘: this refers to the *Mahāyāna-sūtra*s in general as being extensive and vaste (*vaipulya* / *fangdeng*): see, for example, the *(Mahāyāna-)Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* / *Da-banniepan-jing* 大般涅槃經 translated by Dharmakṣema / Tanwuchen 曇無讖 (385–433) (T.374.405b.5–6): 何等名為祕密之藏？所謂方等大乘經典。 ("Which [texts] are called the secret basket? These are the *Vaipulya-mahāyāna-sūtra*s.").

[176] T.125.550c.9–10: 契經一藏，律二藏， 阿毘曇經為三藏；方等大乘義玄邃， 及諸契經為雜藏。 See also the discussion by Palumbo (2013: 222–223), who translates this differently.

*vinaya* / *Sifen-lü* 四分律, translated by Buddhayaśas / Fotuoyeshe 佛陀耶舍 (fl. 408–412), Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 (fl. 365–?), and others, where the *Zazang* obviously belongs to the *Sūtrapiṭaka* (T.1428.968b.23–26):[177]

> Such [texts] as the *Jātaka*s[178], the "Sūtra of Origin"[179], the "Sūtra of Good Causes"[180], the *Vaipulyasūtra*s, the "Sūtra of What Has Not Yet Been"[181], the "Sūtra of Similes"[182], the *Upadeśa*[183], the "Sūtra of the Meaning of Phrases", the "Sūtra of Dharma-Phrases"[184], the *Pārāyaṇasūtra*[185], the "Sūtra of Various Difficulties"[186], the "Sūtra of the Verses of the Saints"[187] – these [texts] were collected [by Ānanda] as the *Kṣudrakapiṭaka*.[188]

The *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* / *Da-zhidu-lun*, "translated" by Kumārajīva and commenting on the "gift of the *dharma*" (*fashi* 法施), gives a similar list without specifying the *Zazang*'s content but without mentioning the concept of the Tripiṭaka so that here the *Zazang* seems to be treated as equal[189] (T.1509.143c.23–25):

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[177] Similar but not identical lists of twelve texts, without referring to the *Zazang*, can be found in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Prāsādikasūtra* of the *Dīrghāgama* (T.1.16c.15–17 and 74b.20–23), the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (Dharmarakṣa's translation: T.222.197a.28–b2; Xuanzang's translation: T.223.220b.25), Kumārajīva's translation of the *Mahāratnakūṭa* (T.310.436a.14–16), etc.

[178] *Sheng-jing* 生經. While in this case it is certain that this refers to a *jātaka*-collection, it is more difficult to reconstruct the titles of some of the other texts; in some cases – as for instance with the *Vaipulya* or the *Avadāna*s –, the question also arises whether the title is referring to just one *sūtra* or several.

[179] *Ben-jing* 本經: through its position – being listed after the *jātaka*s – it is almost certain that this is an abbreviation for a title (or rather genre) like *Benqi-jing* or *Benyuan-jing* 本緣經 and refers to a biography or biographies of the Buddha.

[180] *Shanyinyuan-jing* 善因緣經: *\*Sunidānasūtra?*

[181] *Weicengyou-jing* 未曾有經: *\*Adbhutasūtra*? A *sūtra* with a similar title, *Si-weicengyoufa-jing* 四未曾有法經, has been translated by Dharmarakṣa / Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (233–310), but the relation – if there was any at all – between these two texts has to remain unclear.

[182] *Piyu-jing* 譬喻經: *Avadāna(-sūtra(s))*.

[183] *Youpotishe-jing* 優婆提舍經 / *\*ʔuw-ba-dɛj-ɕia*'°, also called *Lunyi* 論議.

[184] *Juyi-jing* 句義經 and Faju-jing 法句經: *Padārtha(-sūtra)* and *Dharmapada(-sūtra)*.

[185] *Boluoyan-jīng* 波羅延經 / *\*pa-la-jian-*°, *Pārāyaṇa-sūtra*.

[186] *Za'nan-jing* 雜難經: ?; whether there is a connection to the extant and early *Weiri-za'nan-jing* 惟日雜難經 (T.760), attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙 (fl. 222–252) but not included in the list of authentic translations or works by NATTIER (2008: 121–145), is unclear.

[187] *Shengjie-jing* 聖偈經: *\*Sthaviragātā(-sūtra)*, maybe the *Anavataptagāthā*.

[188] 如是生經、本經、善因緣經、方等經、未曾有經、譬喻經、優婆提舍經、句義經、法句經、波羅延經、雜難經、聖偈經,如是集為雜藏。; see also PRZYLUSKI (1926: 194–195). A similar but shorter list is found in the *\*Vinayamātṛka* / *Pini-mu-jing* 毘尼母經 (T.1463.818a.25b1).

[189] Similarly in T.212.610c.11–12 et passim.

Furthermore, there are people saying: "Humans are instructed through four baskets: 1. *Sūtrapiṭaka*; 2. *Vinayapiṭaka*; 3. *Abhidharmapiṭaka*; 4. *Kṣudrakapiṭaka* (*Zazang*) – these are the 'gift of the *dharma*'."[190]

In a later passage about the third of the three categories – the Buddhist scriptures – connotating the term *dharma* (*fa* 法) the *Mahāyānasūtra*s appear grouped together with the *Zazang* and, at least, belong to the same group of texts (T.1509.412a.8–9):

The four baskets, namely the *Āgama*, the *Abhidharma*, the *Vinaya,* [and] the *Kṣudrakapiṭaka* [and] the *Mahāyānasūtra*s like the *Mahāprajñā-pāramitā,* etc.[191]

It seems very probable that the *Zazang* brought back from Śrī Laṅkā to China by Faxian was a "Miscellenea" which contained a mixture of different *sūtra*s including Mahāyāna and other texts (biographies and other narratives[192]), which were not part of the standard *āgama*-collections. Such a collection most likely came from the Abhayagiri-vihāra with its inclusivist tendencies.

## Xuanzang's account of Śrī Laṅkā

For a slightly later period, one may expect to learn more about the Abhayagirivihāra in the most used and most detailed Chinese travel record of Xuanzang 玄奘 (600/602–664), the *Datang-Xiyu-ji* 大唐西域記 ("Record of the Western Regions of the Great Tang"), commissioned by the second Tang emperor Taizong 太宗 (598–649; r. 626–649) after Xuanzang's return to China in 645 and submitted to the throne in 646. Although according to his biography, he did not visit the island because he was told that it was in turmoil (see below), his account of Śrī Laṅkā is quite extensive, particularly about the eponymic foundation story of the island which he calls Siṃhala (Sengjialuo 僧伽羅 / *səŋ-gia-la*).[193]

As far as the Abhayagirivihāra is concerned, Xuanzang's account is certainly the first one to ascribe to the monastery, in concrete terms, a more "liberal" attitude than the conservative Hīnayāna-based Mahāvihāra (T.2087.934a.14–19):

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[190] 復次，有人言：以四種法藏教人：一、修妬路藏，二、毘尼藏，三、阿毘曇藏，四、雜藏，是為法施。 See also LAMOTTE (1949: 692–693).

[191] 四藏：所謂阿含、阿毘曇、毘尼、雜藏、摩訶般若波羅蜜等諸摩訶衍經。

[192] In a note to the title of the early partial biography of the Buddha, the *Xingqi-xing-jing* 興起行經, translated by Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 (fl. 194–210), it is said that this text was part of the / a *Zazang* (T.197.164a.2). Four other examples of stories from the *Zazang* are given in Baochang's *Jinglü-yixiang* 經律異相 (T.2121.9c.15–22; 70a.29–b12; 161a.10–c7; 241b.10–23).

[193] For an analysis of this etiological story explaining the name Siṃhala see DEEG (2005: 193–194).

[There were] several hundred monasteries and more than twenty-thousand monks [who] followed the *dharma* of the Sthavira-Mahāyāna. More than two hundred years after the arrival of the teaching of the Buddha split into two sections: one is called the section of the Mahāvihāra-dwellers[194] [who] reject the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) and study the Small Teaching (Hīnayāna). The second is called the section of the Abhayagiri-dwellers[195] [who] learn both vehicles (*yāna*) and propagate the Tripiṭaka [more] broadly.[196] The practice of the precepts (*śīla*) of the monks is austere, [their] contemplation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) are solid and clear, [their] demeanor is exemplary – many [of the monks] are like this.[197]

Xuanzang agrees fairly with the *vaṃsa* tradition that there was a split about two hundred years after Buddhism was brought to Śrī Laṅkā by Mahinda / Mahendra – according to Xuanzang the younger brother of king Aśoka –, but his account diverges from the *vaṃsa* version insofar as the Abhayagiri community is not described as a schismatic group but that the two communities parted from each other in a "natural" way; Xuanzang does not give a concrete reason for this division. Interestingly, this pattern (or "mode") of describing the division of the *saṅgha* into two branches (*bu* 部), namely the Sthavira (Shangzuo-bu 上座部) and the Mahāsāṅghika (Dazhong-bu 大眾部), and not as a schism of one group splitting from an original (orthodox) group but as an almost normal development is found and in Xuanzang's account of the first council at Rājagṛha and then repeated in Huaihai's 懷海 (749–814) *Baizhang-conglin-qinggui-zhengyi-ji* 百丈叢林清規證義記 (Deeg 2012: 146–147).

For Xuanzang, the Abhayagiri community obviously represents Buddhist orthodoxy and orthopraxy, comprising both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna.[198] The praise of the monks at the end of the paragraph, particularly with the emphasis on contemplation (*ding* 定) and wisdom (*zhi* 慧) and the extended canon, refers to such a community.

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[194] Mohepiheluo(-zhu-bu) 摩訶毘訶羅(住部) / *\*ma-xa-bji-xa-la-˚*; *-zhu* 住 obviously translates the Skt. ending *-vāsin* (Mahāvihāravāsin).

[195] Abayeqili(-zhu-bu) 阿跋耶祇釐(住部) / *\*ʔa-bat-jia-gji-li-˚*.

[196] *hongyan sanzang* 弘演三藏: *hongyan* normally means "to spread, propagate (a teaching)", but the meaning here seems to be more specific and to indicate an extended or more inclusive (*hong* 弘) Tripiṭaka or canon which included the Mahāyāna scriptures – the Pāli *Vetulla-piṭaka* – and possibly Abhidharma treatises like the *Mahāvibhāṣā* translated by Xuanzang.

[197] 伽藍數百所，僧徒二萬餘人，遵行大乘上座部法。佛教至後二百年，各擅專門，分成二部：一曰摩訶毘訶羅住部，斥大乘，習小教。二曰阿跋耶祇釐住部，學兼二乘，弘演三藏。僧徒乃戒行貞潔，定慧凝明，儀範可師，濟濟如也。 The translation above differs in a few details from my previous one in Deeg (2012: 152).

[198] On the Chinese distinction between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna see Deeg (2007).

Xuanzang statement that the monks of the island practice the Mahāyāna-Sthaviravādin, Dasheng-shangzuo-bu 大乘上座部[199], first seems a bit puzzling since Xuanzang gives this description right after the conversion of the island through Mahendra and before mentioning the division of the island's *saṅgha* into two fractions instead of, as usual, at the very beginning of this general description of the status or situation of Buddhism on the island. Scholars have not much thought about and addressed these details, but for the potentially correct and cohesive interpretation of the passage in the Record I suggest that one should follow the narrative sequence and assume that the Buddhism which the island had before the division was that of the Mahāyāna-Sthavira. In the framework of the overall ductus of Xuanzang's account, which clearly favours the Abhayagirivāsin and portraits the Mahāvihāravāsin as deviant, this makes sense: the split into two groups means that it was the Mahāvihāra that fell off the right doctrine of the Mahāyāna-Sthaviravāda and degraded themselves to Hīnayāna-followers. The claim in Xuanzang's brief historiographical sketch then would be that the Buddhism of the island had been Mahāyāna-oriented and Sthaviravāda in terms of monastic lineage from the very beginning, and that it was the Abhayagirivihāra tradition which preserved this original state. This would be the version of the Abhayagirivihāra tradition – probably "inscribed" in its lost *vaṃsa* – and it would indeed support Jonathan Walters' innovative and provocative reading and critical interpretation of the Śrī Lāṅkan sources that the Mahāvihāra was a radical Theravāda newcomer with the claim of its own institutional and dogmatic purity and an opposition to the inclusivism of the Abhayagirivihāra, which then, in the *vaṃsa*s of this "new" monastery, created its own continuous lineage and distinct identity against the other monastic institution(s) on the island (WALTERS 1997).

As already mentioned, Xuanzang did not visit Śrī Laṅkā since, according to the Biography, the *Datang-Daciensi-sanzang-fashi-zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 compiled by Xuanzang's disciple Huili 慧立, he met a larger group of monks from the island who warned him not to go there:

> The city of Kāñcī[pura][200] is India's port on the Southern Ocean, and going to the kingdom of Siṃhala by sea is a three-day journey. Before [Xuanzang] left [for Siṃhala], the king there had died and there was upheaval through famine in that kingdom. There were over three hundred monks like the *bhadanta* Bodhimegheśvara ("Ruling the Cloud of Enlightenment")[201] [and] Abhayadaṃṣṭra ("Fearless Tooth")[202] who had

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[199] I have discussed this term at some length in DEEG (2012: 150–156).

[200] The full name is given earlier (T.2053.241c.13): Jianzhibuluo 建志補羅 / *kianʰ-tɕiʰ-pɔ-la*.

[201] Putimiqi(…)shifaluo 菩提迷祇濕伐羅 / *bɔ-dɛj-mɛj-gji-ɕip-buat-la* (the *fanqie* 抑鶏反 after qi suggests *ʔji* instead of the standard *gji*), translated as Zizi-jue-yun 自在覺雲.

[202] Abayedengsezhaluo 阿跋耶鄧瑟哳羅 / *ʔa-bat-jia-dəŋʰ-ʂit-tɕiat-la*, translated as Wuwei-ya 無畏牙.

fled to India and arrived in the city of Kāñcī[pura]. After the *dharma*-master had met them, [he] asked the monks: "[I] assumed that the *bhadanta*s of that kingdom [could] explain the Tripiṭaka of the Sthavira-nikāya and the Yogā[cārabhūmi-]śastra [to me] and wanted to go and learn to study [there] – [but] why did the masters come [here instead]?" [They] told [him]: "The king of our kingdom has died, and the people are experiencing a famine [so that we] could no longer rely on [their support]. [We] heard that Jambudvīpa is rich, happy and safe; this is the place where the Buddha was born, and [where] all the sacred traces are – that is why [we] came [here]. Among those who know the *dharma*, we are unsurpassed, [so] if the elder monk [Xuanzang] has doubts, [he] may feel free to ask." The *dharma*-master quoted [some] principal matters from the core text of the Yoga[cārabhūmiśāstra] and asked them [about their meaning], but [they] were not able to give an interpretation exceeding [the one given] by Śīlabhadra.[203]

The account is – or, at least, tries to be – authentic as the names of individual monks of the large group indicate. Already in Tāmralipti, Xuanzang had heard that the monastic communities on the island were Sthaviravādin and that there was a tradition of studying and interpreting the Yogācārabhūmiśāstra, and the Biography gives this as the main reason for Xuanzang to travel to the coast opposite of the island for an easier and safer journey.[204] There probably was enough other opportunity to learn about the island in the Śrī Laṅkān monastery at Bodhgayā (see above), possibly at Nālandā, and from monks Xuanzang met on his way.[205]

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[203] T.2053.241c.25–242a.6: 建志城即印度南海之口，向僧伽羅國水路三日行到。未去之間而彼王死，國內飢亂。有大德名菩提迷祇(抑雞反)濕伐羅(此云自在覺雲)，阿跋耶鄧瑟哳羅(此云無畏牙)，如是等三百餘僧，來投印度，到建志城。法師與相見訖，問彼僧曰："承彼國大德等解上坐部三藏及《瑜伽論》，今欲往彼參學，師等何因而來？"報曰："我國王死，人庶飢荒，無可依仗。聞贍部洲豐樂安隱，是佛生處，多諸聖跡，是故來耳。又知法之輩無越我曹，長老有疑，隨意相問。"法師引《瑜伽》要文大節徵之，亦不能出戒賢之解。

[204] T.2053.241a.3–10: 是時，聞海中有僧伽羅國(此云執師子也)，有明上座部三藏及解《瑜伽論》者。涉海路七百由旬，方可達彼。未去間，逢南印度僧相勸云："往師子國者不須水路，海中多有惡風、藥叉、濤波之難，可從南印度東南角，水路三日行即到。雖復跋履山川，然用為安穩，并得觀烏荼等諸國聖跡。" ("At that time, there were monks from the kingdom of Siṃhala (this means 'Grasping the Lion') who understood the Tripiṭaka of the Sthaviranikāya and [could] explain the Yogā[cārabhūmi-]śastra. [But] only after navigating seven hundred *yojana* via the maritime route that [kingdom] could be reached. Before [Xuanzang] went, he met monks from South India [who] gave [him] the [following] advice: 'To go to the Lion Kingdom (Siṃhala), there is no need to go by sea [as] on the ocean there is the danger of adverse winds, *yakṣa*s and high waves; [you] can get there via the sea route in three days from the southeastern corner of South India. Although [you will have] to travel over mountains and across rivers, this route is safe and smooth, and [you] also can look at the sacred traces of kingdoms like Uḍra, etc.'").

[205] Directly after abandoning his plan to visit the island, Xuanzang travelled with about seventy

It is more than likely that these two monks and their group belonged to one specific monastic tradition of the island. If they were the major source of information for Xuanzang, and because of the content of his account they seem to have been Abhayagiri monks. The two monks, Bodhimegheśvara and Abhayadaṃṣṭra, are not known from other sources, but the names look authentic. Their names are clearly given in the Sanskrit[206] which may be another indication that they were Abhayagirivihāra monks.[207]

When looking at the account of the events in the *Cūḷavaṃsa* at the time of Xuanzang's attempt to visit the island, probably around 637, then this time can be identified with the rule of king Aggabodhi III Sirimeghavaṇṇa in the *Cūḷavaṃsa*.[208] For this period, the *vaṃsa* does not reflect the upheaval which caused the monks to flee the island, and it would be interesting to see what the Abhayagiri tradition itself would have had to say about the reigning period of this king. As for now, the only observation that can be made is that it cannot be excluded that Xuanzang's biography is referring to an event or a series of events – a famine combined with (or caused by?) the death of a king[209] – which are, for whatever reason, not documented in the existing sources.

## Esoteric connections

The fact, already discussed earlier, that the Abhayagirivihāra in the second half of the first millennium – called "[t]he 'first wave' of esoteric Buddhism" by Acri (2016: 13)[210] – had adopted esoteric Buddhist practices, is confirmed by Chinese sources[211], particularly in the extant biographical material on the two

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Śrī Laṅkān monks (Shizi-guo-seng 師子國僧), probably of the same group, from Draviḍa in the South in northwestern direction to Koṅkanapura: T.2053.242c.23–25.

[206] Bodhimegheśvara would be *Bodhimeghissara, Abhayadaṃṣṭra *Abhayadāṭha in Pāli; see also Tilakaratne (2020: 270).

[207] Although Tilakaratne (2020) is willing to take this as a proof that the monks were from the Abhayagiri, one has to be careful here as we do not know whether Śrī Laṅkān monks – including those from the Mahāvihāra – generally did not use the Sanskrit forms of their names when going to India. For Sanskrit in Śrī Laṅkān Buddhism see Bechert (2005).

[208] According to de Silva (1981: 567), following the University of Ceylon's *History of Ceylon*, Aggabodhi III ruled from 628–639 (two reigning periods).

[209] There is, of course, a possibility that Xuanzang met the monks after the death of Aggabodhi III. In this case, either the date of the meeting must have been later (639), or the dates of the king, whose regnal period was quite troubled by interregna and upheavals of rival noblemen, have to be adjusted / rectified.

[210] The 14th century Śrī Laṅkan Nikāyasaṅgraha refers to the introduction of Tantric Buddhism to the island to monks from a place called Vajraparvata and also mentions a number of Esoteric texts followed by monks from Vajraparvata; see Acri (2016: 9). On Esoteric Buddhism in Śrī Laṅkā see Cousins (1997).

[211] I add this part for the sake of completeness, but for a more detailed and excellent discussion of the material, I have to refer the reader to the research of Jeffrey Sundberg and Rolf Giebel

Tang esoteric masters Vajrabodhi / Jin'gangzhi 金剛智 (671–741)[212] and Amoghavajra / Bukong(jin'gang) 不空(金剛) (705–773) who paid visits and both had close links with the island's esoteric community in the Abhaya-girivihāra.

The clearest reference to the monastery is found in Vajrabodhi's biography by his lay-disciple and scholar Lü Xiang 呂向 (fl. first half of the 8th cent.), preserved in Yuanzhao's 圓照 (fl. 778) catalogue *Zhenyuan-xinding-shijiao-mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄. According to this biography which, as SUNDBERG and GIEBEL (2011: 133–148) have well demonstrated, differs from other and later vitae in Zanning's 贊寧 (919–1001) *Song-gaoseng-zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (T.2061.711b.5–712a.18) particularly in the early part concerning India and Śrī Laṅkā,[213] Vajrabodhi, who received the precepts and ordination at Nālandā and travelled all over India and received the highest esoteric initiations, is finally told by the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara to go to Śrī Laṅkā:

> [Vajrabodhi] received the consecration of the five sections,[214] and there was no [text] in the treasury of the secret [teachings] of the Buddha [that he] had not mastered fully. Finally, [he] took leave from [his] master Nāgabodhi[215] and returned to Central India [where he] visited and venerated the numinous *stūpa*s of the eight marks.[216] Later, there

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(particularly in SUNDBERG and GIEBEL 2011, but also in other publications by Sundberg) and, from a slightly different, East-Asian angle, BABA (2017).

[212] I am not convinced of the reconstruction of the name as Vajrabuddhi as proposed by SINCLAIR (2016), and accepted by J. Sundberg. Sinclair's argument, that *zhi* 智 does not translate Skt. *bodhi*, is incorrect: there are instances where this equation is made: see, e.g., in the early dictionary *Fan-fanyu* (see above): T.2130.983a5.f. glosses *anouduoluosanmiaosanputi* 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提, Skt. *anuttarasamyaksaṃbodhi*, as *wubu-zhizhi* 無不知智 or *wubu-zhidao* 無不知道; see also 993b.9 (*puti* 菩提 = *dao* 道 = *zhi* 知), and similarly 1047b.12. Moreover, most sources transliterate the name as Bariluoputi 跋日羅菩提 / *\*bat-ɲit-la-bɔ-dɛj*, the earliest occurrence of the transliteration being found in Zhisheng's 智昇 (fl. 669–740) catalogue *Kaiyuan-shijiao-lu* 開元釋教錄 (T.2154.553a.20; echoed by Yuanzhao: T.2157.852b.21).

[213] Translated by CHOU (1945: 274–275).

[214] According to SUNDBERG and GIEBEL (2011: 181, note 31), the five "families" or *kula* (usually more literally translated as *zu* 族): *tathāgata-kula*, *vajra-kula*, *ratna-kula*, *padma-kula*, and *karma-kula*.

[215] Longzhi 龍智: the reconstruction of the name of Vajrabodhi's teacher has caused some discussion, focusing on the element *zhi* 智, whether it stands for *-bodhi*, *-buddhi*, or, as SUNDBERG and GIEBEL (2011: 179–180, note 27) suggest, *-jñā* / *-jñāna*. Since I keep the "old" name form Vajrabodhi (see above), I consequently reconstruct Nāgabodhi for Longzhi.

[216] *baxiang-lingta* 八相靈塔: this is a *hapax legomenon* in the Buddhist canon, but it is clear that what is meant are the eight *stūpa*s at the eight *mahāsthāna*s of the Buddha's life (Lumbinī, Kapilavastu, Bodhgayā, Sārnāth, Rājagṛha, Sāṃkāśya, Śrāvastī, Kuśinagara), all situated in the central region (*madhyadeśa*) of Northeast India. SUNDBERG and GIEBEL (2011: 135) translate "the holy *stūpa*s commemorating eight events [in the life] of the Tathāgata [i.e., Śākyamuni]".

was a three year[-long] drought in South India. The king of this [region], Narasiṃhapotavarma[n],[217] sent envoys to invite the *ācārya*[218]. In his own palace, [he] built a consecrational *bodhimaṇḍa*[219] to ask for rain. At that time, sweet timely rain was falling, and the king and [his] officials were happy and thereupon built a monastery for the *ācārya* to stay [in which he] resided for three years. To the south of the kingdom, next to the ocean, there was a monastery [dedicated to] the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. At the side of the gate, there was a *nyagrodha*-tree, already withered and frail for some time. The *ācārya* fasted and practiced the Way for seven days, and the tree grew vigorously again. As a response [to this], the *bodhisattva* appeared and said the following: "What you have learned is now fully accomplished, [and you] should go to the Lion Kingdom (Siṃhala) to visit and venerate the tooth [relic] of the Buddha, to climb Mount Laṅkā[220] and venerate the traces of [the footprint of] the Buddha. On [your] way back, [you] should go to the Middle Kingdom (i.e., China) and pay respect to the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. That kingdom has a karmic connection with you, and [you] have to go [there] and transmit the teaching and save the living beings." Hearing these words, [he] was overwhelmed with joy and consolation. When all the monks [and his] followers heard these words, the *saṅgha* of the monastery said: "When the *bodhisattva* arrives, the branches and leaves of the *nyagrodha*-tree flourish, [when he] leaves, [they] wither and become frail – take this as a sign." After three weeks, [he] returned and took leave from the king of this kingdom, led eight [of his] disciples, [both] laypeople and monastics, to the Lion Kingdom, [and they finally] reached the city of Laṅkā[221]. The king [and his] official and the four[fold] community of [monks, nuns, male and female laypeople] welcomed and paid respect to the *ācārya* with incense and flowers, and [when they all] arrived next to the palace, [the visitors] went to the monastery of king "Without Fear"[222] and venerated the tooth

[217] Naluosengjiabuduomoma  捺羅僧伽補多鞣摩  /  *najʰ-la-səŋ-gia-pɔ'-ta-mat-ma*, identified with the Pallava-king Narasiṃhavarman II Rājasiṃha (r. 690–728?): see Sundberg and Giebel (2011: 181, note 32).

[218] *heshang* 和上.

[219] *guanding-daochang* 灌頂道場; Sundberg and Giebel (2011: 135) translate "*abhiṣeka* site".

[220] I.e., Śrī Pada or Adam's Peak.

[221] I.e., the capital Anurādhapura.

[222] Wuwei-wang-si 無畏王寺: it is not necessary to emend *wang* 王 to *shan* 山 to achieve a match with Abhayagiri as suggested by Sundberg and Giebel (2011: 181, note 36); the name would reflect the memory of the monastery having been founded by king Abhaya (see above). It cannot be excluded that a name *Abhayarājavihāra was in use – which, in a way, would have been a "rationalization" of the name Abhayagiri (see above on the origin of the element *-giri* in the name). The choice of this name may also be influenced, as Sundberg and Giebel notice as well, by the intention to highlight the royal patronage which the monastery received.

[relic] of the Buddha; [they] took incense and flowers and offered [them] with all sincerity, and as a reaction [to this veneration], the tooth [relic] of the Buddha emitted a radiant light which appeared [like] an umbrella in the sky [covering] a wide space. The whole great community saw this auspicious sign. Then, [they] resided in this monastery for half a year and made offerings [to the relic], and eventually went in southeastern [direction] to Mount Laṅkā. On their way, [they] venerated the *stūpa* of the Buddha's eyes[223]. …[224]

The text then goes on to describe in detail Vajrabodhi's conversion of the king of the southern kingdom of Rohaṇa (Luhe'na 嚕呵那 / *lɔ-xa-na'*)[225] from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna and the climbing of and the activities on Mount Laṅkā (Śrī Pada), including the veneration of "trace of the Buddha" (*foji* 佛跡), i.e., the footprint (*buddhapāda*). Vajrabodhi stayed in Śrī Laṅkā for one year before

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[223] *foyan-ta* 佛眼塔. I do not necessarily think that this has anything to do with an eye-relic of the Buddha – the only one which is attested in the sources being the eyeball-relic only mentioned by Xuanzang in Western Gandhāra (Haḍḍa). It may have been a *stūpa* which had Buddha-eyes painted on the *harmikā*-like part above the dome (*aṇḍa*) of the *stūpa* – as in the case of the Nepalese *caitya*s, the best known being Svayambhūnāth and Boudhnāth in Kathmandu. The Buddha eyes do, of course, express the Buddha's ability to view and see everything in the world / cosmos. Information about this *stūpa* of the Buddha-eye seems to have been brought to China either by Vajrabodhi or Amoghavajra: the famous Japanese monk and traveler to Tang China Ennin's 圓仁 (794–864) inventory of the texts and other items acquired in the major Buddhist places in Tang China, the Nittō-shingu-shōgyō-mokuroku 入唐新求聖教目錄 (cp. Kominami 2016 and 2017), contains an entry about a Foyan-ta-yang bing ji, yijuan 佛眼塔樣并記，一卷 "model of and note on the *stūpa* of Buddha's eye, one fascicle" (T.2167.1084c.11), preceded by an entry on the (painting of the?) Buddha footprint and note (*foji bing ji*佛跡并記; probably the one in Śrī Laṅkā) immediately followed by entries on the paintings of the portraits (*zhenying* 真影) of the three patriarchs of Esoteric Buddhism in China, Vajrabodhi, Amoghavajra, and Śubhakarasiṃha (1084c.12佛眼塔樣并記 14). Anzen's 安然 (841–) later catalogue Sho-ajari-shingon-mikkyō-burui-sōroku 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄 (T.2176.1132a.16) confirms this under the category *takan* 塔龕, "*stūpa*s and shrines".

[224] T.2157.875b.12–c2:　受五部灌頂，諸佛祕要之藏無不通達。遂辭師龍智，却還中天，尋禮如來八相靈塔。其後南天三年亢旱。其王捺羅僧伽補多絥摩遣使迎請和上。於自宮中建灌頂道場請雨。其時，甘澤流澍，王臣欣慶，遂為和上造寺安置，經餘三載。國南近海有觀自在菩薩寺。門側有尼枸陀樹，先已枯領。和上七日斷食行道，樹再滋茂。菩薩應現而作是言：「汝之所學今已成就。可往師子國，瞻禮佛牙，登楞伽山，禮拜佛跡。迴來可往中國，禮謁文殊師利菩薩。彼國於汝有緣，宜往傳教，濟度群生。」聞是語已，不勝忻慰。僧徒咸聞其語，寺眾乃曰：「若菩薩降臨，尼拘陀樹枝葉滋榮，去即枯領。以此為侯。」經三七日，却迴辭其國王，將領弟子道俗八人往師子國，至楞伽城。王臣四眾以諸香花迎禮和上，至其宮側，復往無畏王寺，頂禮佛牙，持諸香花，精誠供養，遂感佛牙放光空中，成蓋普現。大眾咸覩斯瑞。便住其寺半年，供養，遂詣東南往楞伽山。逕中路禮佛眼塔。　See also the translation by Giebel in Sundberg and Giebel (2011: 135–136); for a full discussion of this biography see ibid. I only reproduce the brief relevant passage because I think that some more contextualization with the Abhayagiri institution can be extracted from this part of the biography.

[225] See Sundberg and Giebel (2011: 182, note 38).

he returned to South Indian from where he then traveled to China via Śrī Laṅkā and Śrī Vijaya.

In the light of this text and other evidence, Sundberg and Giebel already have discussed and emphasised the importance of Śrī Laṅkā as the transmission "hub" of Buddhist esoteric teaching and practice. What is, in my opinion, interesting in Vajrabodhi's early Indian "career" as told by Lü Xiang is the fact that after having received the esoteric initiation rites, he visits the places linked to either the major episodes of life of the Buddha Śākyamuni (the eight *mahāsthāna*s), eminent *stūpa*s (*stūpa* of the eye of the Buddha), or the Buddha's relics.[226] This includes Śrī Laṅka as a region sanctified by the well-known visits of the Buddha Śākyamuni to the island (Adam's Peak) and by the relics (tooth-relic in the Abhayagirivihāra), both recommended by the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara. Lü Xiang's quite detailed reference to Vajrabodhi's visit to and veneration of the tooth relic enables us to establish – after Faxian's and Xuanzang's reports – another historical point of reference to the destiny of this relic against the silence of the Pāli sources caused by their Mahāvihāra bias.[227]

When Vajrabodhi's disciple Amoghavajra[228] travelled to Śrī Laṅkā (probably 742, returned to China 746), he is received and hosted by king Śīlamegha / Shiluomijia 尸羅迷伽 / *ɕi-la-mɛj-gia (Aggabodhi VI, r. 741–781).[229] The *Cūḷavaṃsa* ascribes to this king the erection of a building in the Abhayagirivihāra (Abhayuttaravihāra).[230] Amoghavajra's biography describes a meeting with and esoteric instruction through a master called Samantabhadra / Puxian 普賢[231] who most certainly resided in the Abhayagirivihāra. This seems to be confirmed by the biography of Amoghavajra in Yuanzhao's catalogue according to which the king had Amoghavajra stay in the monastery of the Buddha's tooth [relic] (*foya-si* 佛牙寺), i.e., the Abhayagirivihāra[232] – while the other sources are

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[226] On the importance of space in Buddhist narratives see Deeg (2023). On the role and function of *stūpa*s and relics in East-Asian esoteric Buddhism see Orzech and Sørensen (2010: 149–152); ibid. on Amoghavajra's translations of texts related to *stūpa*s and relics.

[227] On this "dearth of references" see Strong (2004: 194).

[228] On Amoghavajra's life and biographies see Chou (1945), Orlando (1981), Goble (2019), Yang (2018).

[229] The Chinese transliteration of the king's name is mentioned later in the biographies when Amoghavajra hands over the king's message (*biao* 表) to the Chinese emperor (T.2056.293a.16–17, T.2061.712c.10–11).

[230] *Cūḷavaṃsa* 48.64. Translation: Geiger (1929: 116). The name of the building is Sabhattudesabhoga, and it is not clear what its structure or function was.

[231] E.g., T.2061.712c.1–4 (*Song-gaoseng-zhuang*).

[232] T.2157.881b.1; see Yang 2018: 253–254. Another indirect piece of evidence of the connection of the emerging Chinese esoteric community with Śrī Laṅkā may be added to these accounts. The Sino-Korean traveler-monk Hyecho / Huichao 慧超 (var. 惠超) may have accompanied Amoghavajra on this trip: see Deeg (2010: 206–209).

silent about the concrete place of residence and only record that Amoghavajra was hosted by the king in the palace for seven days (T.2061.712b.27–28).

## Conclusion

The Chinese sources confirm what can be concluded from the material of and scant and partly distorted textual sources about the Abhayagirivihāra from the island: for long periods in history, it was this monastery which enjoyed the support of rulers and wealth, and it probably was successful in doing so by being able to absorb and integrate new developments and tendencies in the history of Buddhism, and thereby it stayed connected and exerted, at times, considerable influence on other Asian regions.

One could read the present collection of sources, material and evidence as an extension of Jonathan Walters provocative statement that "the Mahāvihārin accounts of history were fiercely debated and countered by chroniclers and commentators of the rival Abhayagiri and Jetavana *vihāras*" (WALTERS 1997: 102). Although this "fierce debate" is, in a way, hidden under the surface of the historical dominance of the Mahāvihāra and is only graspable in the aggressiveness and polemics of the Mahāvihāra emic discourse, the reading together of more material and textual evidence is enabling us to gain glimpses into the historical reality of intra-Buddhist competition and conflict in the history of Śrī Laṅkā in the first millennium CE, which the Pāli sources with their Mahāvihāra bias alone do not intend to and cannot provide.[233]

## Author's note

This article is a revised and largely extended English version of my original contribution "Abhayagirivihāra – Geschichte und »Geschichte« eines ceylonesischen Klosters" to the Festschrift for my late Leipzig colleague Heinz Mürmel (1944–2019), a scholar of the Theravāda tradition (among some other remarkable expertise). Colleagues have been asking me to produce such a version for a while now, and I am very grateful to the editors of the reinstituted prestigious journal and feel honored to be given the opportunity to publish it in the present form. While my interpretation of Faxian's record has remained, more or less, the same – although considerably extended by presenting and analyzing the Indic sources – as in the original German version, the rest of the paper contains material not discussed in the original paper. Most of the material used in the original German article has been rearranged, revised, and bits and

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[233] Of course, the one-sidedness of the Śrī Laṅkan Mahāvihāra sources have been noticed by many scholars before, but it is only in more recent scholarship that due note has been given to non-Śrī Laṅkan sources to find a more balanced view of the island's history in a wider geographical and historical context: see, e.g., SUNDBERG (2014).

pieces referred to in the footnotes in the previous publication could be elaborated in a way which the spatial restriction in the original publication did not allow for. I would like to thank Andrea Acri (Paris) and the two anonymous reviewers for their corrections and suggestions. All remaining errors and mistakes are, of course, my own.

## Abbreviations

Mhv.    *Mahāvaṃsa.* Ed.: Geiger (1958).

Skt.    Sanskrit.

T.    *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō.* Ed.: Takakusu and Watanabe (1924–1934).

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