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Methods, Techniques and Challenges in Deciphering the Sa-skaya Codex: Karmavibhāga as the Oldest Sinhala Manuscript into Modern Sinhala

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ABSTRACT

The Sa-skaya Codex is named as Karmavibhāga, is acknowledged as the oldest existing Sinhala manuscript and also possesses significant historical and cultural importance. It has been offered a unique insight into the religious, linguistic, and cultural tapestry of ancient Sri Lankan society. The codex poses significant difficulties for contemporary researchers, because of its outdated language, unique writing style, and physical decay. This research is aimed to create an exact translation of the Sa-skaya Codex into modern Sinhala, while accurately, and it will be maintaining the linguistic subtleties and cultural richness of the original. A multidisciplinary approach had utilized to accomplish this, integrating paleography, philology, and digital humanities. Paleographic examination had been utilized to interpret the script and grasp the writing practices of that time period. Philological methods have been already aided in understanding ancient vocabulary and grammatical forms and allowing them for more context-driven interpretation of the text. Moreover, sophisticated digital technologies those are including high-resolution imaging and machine learning were been employed to restore the faded or impaired portions of the manuscript. The results are highlighting the codex's complexity in language and spelling, demonstrating the development of the Sinhala language across centuries. Additionally, the research uncovers the various historical and cultural details within the manuscript that had not been acknowledged before. As the summary, this study is providing a dependable framework for translating the ancient Sinhala documents and also highlighting the greater importance of safeguarding and interacting with historical manuscripts. It significantly enhances the comprehension of linguistic legacy of Sri Lanka and provides a model that would be able to replicated for future translation efforts concerning early textual traditions.

1. Introduction

Six decades ago, P.E.E. Fernando examined photographs of the Sa-skya Codex at the request of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of Sri Lanka. It was his opinion that, on consideration of its palaeographic characteristics, the Sa-skya Codex should be assigned to the thirteenth century. He suggested that it could even be the original copy made by the unknown author of this text. The Historical Manuscripts Commission, which had among its members *Senarath Paranavitana*, the well-known epigraphist, was more inclined to suggest a date in the twelfth or the thirteenth century. The Commission was also of the view that the manuscript was of great value as a document containing data for the study of the development of the Sinhala script. No detailed study in the lines suggested by the Commission has been made so far. In making a palaeographical analysis of the *Sa-skya* Codex, it is useful to compare it with the *Cullavagga Pāli* manuscript of the H.C.P. Bell collection which is preserved at the Library of the National Museum, Colombo, and the *Mahavagga Pāli* manuscript in the University of Kelaniya collection, photocopies of which are available at the Library of the University of Peradeniya. These two are considered to be the oldest palm-leaf manuscripts found in Sri Lanka. In the following comparative study of the three manuscripts, the letters SC denotes the Sa-skya Codex, CP the *Cullavagga Pāli* and MP the *Mahavagga Pāli*. In addition to these manuscripts, several inscriptions have been utilized for comparison. The comparative study of the palaeographic forms in the *Sa-skya* Codex with those in inscriptions is particularly useful for determining the date of the Codex.

1.1 The Sa-Skya Codex and its Discovery

The discovery of the *Sa-skya* Codex containing the text of the *Karmmavibhāga* was the achievement of a Sri Lankan team of scholars led by the late Professor *Rahul*

Sankrtyayana. This discovery of a Sinhala manuscript at the *Sa-skya* monastery in Tibet was a significant event which brought to light an important aspect of the activities of the Buddhist religious from Sri Lanka. The island had emerged as a foremost centre of Buddhist activity at an early phase of its long history, and the monastic communities living there had begun to maintain contact with centres of Buddhist learning in various parts of Asia. The present edition of the *Karmmavibhāga* is based on the photographs of folios of the *Sa-skya* Codex brought by *Sankrtyayana* from Tibet. The story of this remarkable discovery goes back several decades to the time when this indefatigable scholar who devoted his whole life to research on Buddhism visited Tibet in search of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts. His first visit, made in 1929, did not lead to the discovery of any Sanskrit manuscripts of major significance, but it provided him with the opportunity to secure several manuscripts written in Tibetan and to collect material for his booklet on the history of Buddhism in Tibet (*Sankrtyayana*, 1952). The manuscripts discovered during this visit drew his attention to the possibility of utilizing the Tibetan translations to reconstruct the original Sanskrit texts. In fact, he appears to have formulated a project to reconstruct the *Pramāna-vārttika*, the work on Buddhist logic written by the Indian savant *Dharmmakīrti* in the sixth or the seventh century AC.

However, *Sankrtyayana* soon realized the enormity of the methodological problems involved in such a venture and that the phenomenal effort required for such a task would be in vain if a manuscript containing the original Sanskrit text were to be in vain if a manuscript containing the original Sanskrit text were to be discovered at a later date. The search for this lost Sanskrit text and its commentaries took him back to Tibet on several more missions. It was on the second of such visits that the manuscript containing the text of the *Karmmavibhāga* was discovered.

1.2 Literature Review

In May 1936 *Sankrtyayana* visited the Sa-skyapa monastery which is situated about eighty kilometres to the north of the Mount Everest. This monastery was founded in 1073 by *KhondKon-mchog rgyal-po* (An-che Li, 1945; Shoju Inaba, 1963). The Sa-skyapa school of Buddhism which emerged under the leadership of the teachers of this monastery was to become one of the most influential in Tibet. It was influenced by the *Yogaācāra* teachings and propounded the *hetuphalavada* or "the doctrine of cause (*rgyu*) and effect ('*bras*)" as well as the view that all phenomena appear only in the mind. The Sa-skyapa teachers emphasized the value of meditation and, in their ritual, gave an important place to the worship of the *Bodhisattva Manjusrī*.

The rise of the Sa-skyapa to the preeminent position was to a considerable extent due to the patronage it received from the Mongol rulers. *Kun-dga rgyal-mtshan*, also known as the *Sa-skyapa Pandita (Sa-skyapa-pan-cen)*, was the abbot of this monastery when he was invited to the court of Godan in about A.D. 1244. He succeeded in winning the patronage of this powerful Mongol ruler. With Phags-pa, the next hierarch who led the Sa-skyapa monastery from 1253 to 1280, the relations between the monastery and the Mongol rulers reached the most crucial phase. Phags-pa was invited to the court of *Khublai Khan*. He made such a favourable impression on the Mongol ruler that he was requested to administer the ritual consecration and to initiate the emperor and the members of his court into the *Hevajra* circle. Consequently, he was appointed "royal preceptor" (*ti-shih*) and "teacher of the kingdom" (*kuo-shih*). Phags-pa utilized his position of influence to initiate a major venture of Buddhist scholarship in China, the compilation of a new edition of the Tripitaka. The emperor also appointed another Tibetan monk to the position of the Head of the Department of Fine Arts, and this move was to facilitate the penetration of

Tibetan influences into China. *Khublai Khan* conceded to *Phags-pa* authority over Tibetan affairs and exempted the monastic estates from taxes and interference by Mongol couriers who had often used monasteries as posting stations. In making these concessions the Mongol ruler was probably trying to win over the support of the Buddhist clergy led by *Phags-pa* and to extend his control over Tibet. However, the relationship between the Sa-skyapa monastery and the house of the Mongols was symbiotic in nature in that it also enabled *Phags-pa* and his successors to assume an increasingly crucial political role and to become the virtual rulers of Tibet.

The influence, the power and the intense scholarly activities of the Sa-skyapa monastery were only distant memories at the time of *Sankrtyayana*'s visit. By this time, the *Chag-pe-lha-khang* Library at the *Lha-khang-chemo* College of this monastery, built by *Phags-pa*, was rarely used. The Mahayana concept of *dharmmadhātu*, which stressed the importance of the doctrinal aspects of Buddhism, was having a paradoxically maleficent effect on Buddhist manuscripts. Rare manuscripts, which were held to be particularly sacred relics, were traditionally deposited within images and stūpas and thus lost to the world of Buddhist scholarship. *Sankrtyayana* found that a particularly unfortunate practice had come into vogue. He noted that relics of the *dharmmadhātu* type were supposed to be endowed with miraculous healing powers and that Tibetan monks were wont to give pieces torn off sacred manuscripts as gestures of special favour to devotees who pleased them with valuable presents. The *dharmmadhātu* dissolved in water, was considered to be a "mixture" with most potent curative properties (*JBORS*, 1935).

On May 25th, 1936, the *Chag-pe-lha-khang* Library was opened for *Sankrtyayana*. When the clouds of dust which greeted this rare opening of its doors had subsided, *Sankrtyayana* and his companions beheld

"rows of open racks where volumes on volumes of manuscripts were kept." Among the "many thousand volumes" found in this library were some of the important manuscripts of Sanskrit texts that *Sankrtyayana* was searching for. These included a commentary on the *Pramāna-vārttikā* written by *Dharmmakīrtti* himself, a sub-commentary on the same by Kanakagomin, a complete version of the *Pramāna-vārttika-bhaya* of *Prajñākara Gupta*, and the *Yogācārabhūmi* of *Asanga*. This was indeed a rich collection. Since photographic material was inadequate, *Sankrtyayana* and *Abhayasimha* had to make hand-copies of the important manuscripts. From May 26th the two scholars worked earnestly on this task. *Abhayasimha* mentions that he copied about 250 to 350 strophes each day. The Sa-skya monastery is situated about 4485 metres above sea level. The altitude and the exceptionally cold weather affected the Sri Lankan's health, and he had to leave Sa-skya in about the middle of June (*JBORS*, p.6). *Sankrtyayana* continued to work alone. By the last week of July, he had copied the works relevant to his study of the *Pramāna-vārttikā*, and he had also compiled a catalogue of palm-leaf manuscripts found in the library (*JBORS*, p.6).

In his catalogue *Sankrtyayana* lists fifty-seven manuscripts bound in thirty-eight volumes. Of these the thirty-seventh volume was written in the Sinhala script. Since *Sankrtyayana* and *Abhayasimha* had to devote themselves to the time-consuming task they had originally set for themselves, they could not afford the time to make anything more than a brief perusal of the volume of Sinhala writings. *Sankrtyayana* records that this volume contained ninety-seven palm-leaves each of which measured 18 1/4 by 1 1/4 in. (46 x 3 cm.) and that there were seven lines of writing on each folio. It was his opinion that these folios belonged to two distinct manuscripts. He listed fifty of the palm-leaves as forming one manuscript and noted that the first folio of this manuscript

was missing. *Sankrtyayana* states that the phrase *bhogina vessantara* occurs on the last folio of this manuscript and proceeded, on the basis of this reading, to identify it as a copy of the *Vessantara Jātaka*. He listed the remaining forty-seven palm-leaves in the volume as forming as forming the second manuscript. *Sankrtyayana* did not try to identify this manuscript, but he gave a reading of its opening lines as follows: *namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa Sanji (?) kadasanusa(?)* (*JBORS*, p.6). *Sankrtyayana* refers to a third Sinhala manuscript which he identified as the *Kalacakraṭṭika*. Unlike the other two manuscripts, it is said to have been written on paper and to have consisted of forty-seven folios (*JBORS*, p.6). Evidently, he could not spare the material to photograph this manuscript.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Decipherment of the Sa-Skya Codex

Photographs of the manuscripts found during *Sankrtyayana*'s expeditions in Tibet are now preserved at the National Archives in Colombo. In its report for the year 1960/1961, the Historical Manuscripts Commission of Sri Lanka drew attention to the importance of *Sankrtyayana*'s discovery. It did not cite *Sankrtyayana*'s view that there were two distinct palm-leaf manuscripts but merely referred to a manuscript which was said to contain the text of the Sinhala prose work called the *Karmavibhāga*. This manuscript was described as "a unique document." (*The Annual Report of the Government Archivist 1960/61*, 1963) In the introduction to their edition of the *Karmavibhāga* published in 1961, *Medaungoda Vimalakīrtti* and *Nāhinne Sominda* state that, during the course of the preparation of their edition, they attempted to consult the Sa-skya Codex. They had to abandon their attempt since they found it difficult to decipher the manuscript (Māda-

uyangoda Vimalakīrtti and Nāhinne Sominda, 1961).

However, they were able to obtain readings of some isolated words which they compared with parallel word- forms in the manuscripts used for their edition, and it was their opinion that the examples from the Sa-skya Codex represented an earlier stage in the evolution of the Sinhala language. (Māda-uyangoda Vimalakīrtti and Nāhinne Sominda, 1961) Each of the photographs supplied by the National Archives contained reproductions of a number of folios varying between nine and twelve. Most of the photographs had been serially numbered, and, those which had not been numbered had been assigned numbers by the present writer for the purpose of identification. Generally the photographs of the obverse and reverse sides of each set of palm-leaves bear the same number. The need to distinguish each photograph in such pairs has been taken into consideration in the allocation of numbers. Thus, for instance, the obverse of the sixth folio in the first photograph bears the number 1.6 while the reverse is identified by the number 1(2).6. In certain instances, four photographs or two sets were found to bear the same number. In such instances one set will be cited as the A set and the other as the B set.

The tasks of deciphering and editing will have been rendered much easier if the folios had been carefully arranged for photography so that the obverse side of a set of palm-leaves would appear in one photograph and the reverse side in another photograph bearing the same number. However, in several instances, the obverse sides of some folios and reverse sides of other folios appear together in the same photograph. Sometimes it was also found that the reproduction of the obverse of a palm-leaf appears in one set of photographs while that of the reverse appears in a set of photographs bearing a different number. Consequently, it will be found that one side of a folio bears the

number 6.11 while its other side is identified by the number 1.9.

It is clear from the photographs that the palm-leaves constituting the Sa-skya Codex were not in a good state of preservation at the time they were found. Some were so brittle that they were evidently damaged while they were being arranged for photography. In at least five instances, the palm-leaves had been damaged after one side had been photographed but before the other side could be photographed. (Māda-uyangoda Vimalakīrtti and Nāhinne Sominda, 1961) Some of the fragments, arranged together to constitute a single folio for photography, did not yield a continuous reading, and, on closer scrutiny, it was found that the fragments had been mismatched. In such cases, the identity of each fragment is separately denoted (e.g. 3B.3a and 3B.3b). In these instances, the fragments of the same folio are to be found in different sets of photographs (Māda-uyangoda Vimalakīrtti and Nāhinne Sominda, 1961).

The minute size of the characters in the form they appear in the photographs meant that decipherment was possible only with the help of a magnifying glass. The lack of clarity in some of the photographs and the palaeographic characteristics of the manuscript made the decipherment a difficult and time-consuming task. Since some palaeographic forms, like the signs for medial a and a, could be easily mistaken for each other, in many instances, obtaining a reading of a folio was as exacting as deciphering an early medieval epigraphic record. The decipherment of the manuscript took in all about two years of sustained effort.

During the course of the decipherment, it was found that a large number of folios had been photographed more than once. Table 3 lists such instances of duplication. It will be noted that there are 102 additional reproductions of folios or fragments of folios in the photographs studied by the present writer.

Four of the entries in Table 3 (Nos. 95,96,98,99) represent fragments arranged as two folios in the photographs. This would imply that 100 of the 291 reproductions of pages of manuscript are "double takes" and that we have before us reproductions of actual pages of the *Sa-skya* Codex. It will be evident from Table 4 that readings of a total of 197 folios or fragments of folios have been obtained. Fourteen of these passages represent fragments of seven folios which had been inadvertently placed in different sets of photographs. Hence the corrected total of pages read would be 190. As noted earlier, one page does not carry any Sinhala writing. Thus, in all, 191 out of 194 pages (97 palm-leaves) found by *Sankrtyayana* and categorized under two different manuscripts have now been studied.

The two words *bhogina vessantara* read by *Sankrtyayana*, which led him to believe that one of the manuscripts contained the text of the *Vessantara Jataka*, are to be found in Folio 5B (2).5. The two words are from the Pali strophe in the colophon which reads as follows:

*karmmavibhaga nimi ---
 imina [punnakammena ya va buddho
 bhavamaham
 mahosadhova nanena jotisetthiva bhogina
 vessantarova danena hotu mayham bhava
 bhava*

In this strophe the author expresses the wish that, till such time he becomes a Buddha, he be born in each of his future births as individuals who will be like *Mahosadha* in wisdom, Joti, the guild-leader, in wealth, and *Vessantara* in generosity. Just as much as it is evident that the term *Vessantara* in this passage does not indicate the name of the text, the words *karmmavibhaga nimi* which precede the strophe make it clear beyond doubt that the identification proposed in the report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission is correct. The manuscript contains the text of the early medieval Sinhala

work called the *Karmmavibhāga* which is also known from other manuscripts.

The second passage read by *Sankrtyayana* in what he categorized as a separate manuscript of 47 palm-leaves is to be found in Folio 1.1. *Sankrtyayana*'s reading of the penultimate word is incomplete and that of the last word is inaccurate. The correct reading of the relevant passage is as follows:

*svasti, namo tassa bhagavato arahato
 sammasambuddhassa - sanjiva kalasutra
 samghata raurava mahaurava tapa
 pratapa aviciya yana ata-maha-
 narakayehi adi narakaya kanda kanda
 [k]ota yamapalun sinduna laddahu mehi
 la detiyi sanjiva nam viya*

These are, in fact, the opening lines of the *Karmmavibhāga*. Thus, we find that that 96 of the 97 palm-leaves, categorized by *Sankrtyayana* as belonging to two distinct manuscripts, are clearly from the very same manuscript.

During the course of the decipherment of the *Sa-skya* Codex it became clear that the folios had not been arranged for photography in their proper sequence. Though each palm-leaf bears a symbol indicating its sequential position, the pins used to fasten the palm-leaves on a board for photography generally cover these symbols. Consequently, the identification of the sequential position of most folios presented a formidable problem. On completing the decipherment, the many pieces of this gigantic jig-saw puzzle were put in place with the aid of a comparative study of two other manuscripts and the printed version of the *Karmmavibhāga* (Mādayangoda Vimalakīrti and Nāhinne Sominda, 1961).

It will be evident from a perusal of that there are hiatuses at six different places of the text. Since 96 of the 97 palm-leaves found by *Sankrtyayana* have been now studied, it would appear that the *Sa-skya* Codex was

incomplete at the time of its discovery and that several palm-leaves had been lost either in Tibet or during the course of its long journey from Sri Lanka to Tibet. However, the text presented in the Sa-skya Codex amounts to a substantial portion of what may be termed, as we shall see later on, the earliest known version of the *Karmmavibhāga*.

3. Results and Discussion

Though, as noted earlier, the *Chag-pe-lha-khang* Library where the Sa-skya Codex was found had been built in the time of *Phags-pa* (A.D. 1253-1280), many manuscripts which had belonged to earlier hierarchs of Sa-skya were brought to this library not long after it was built. (JBORS,1937) Though, as noted earlier, the *Chag-pe-lha-khang* Library where the Sa-skya Codex was found had been built in the time of *Hphags-pa* (A.D. 1253-1280), many manuscripts which had belonged to earlier hierarchs of Sa-skya were brought to this library from their original locations not long after it was built. (JBORS,1937) In fact, it is evident from some of the manuscripts in this library found and catalogued by *Sankrtyayana* that they had been brought to Tibet long before the time of *Hphags-pa*. The manuscript of the *Pramāna-vārttika-bhāṣya* discovered by *Sankrtyayana* belonged to a monk called *Dānaśrī* who came to Tibet with *Śākya Śrī Bhadra* in A.D.1203. (JBORS,1937) It is stated in the colophon of the *Gandavyūhasūtra*, another manuscript from the same library, that it belonged to *Śrī Kīrttidhvaja*. (JBORS,1937) Similarly, the extensive manuscript of the *Satasahasrika-prajñāpāramitā*, containing 1160 palm-leaves, which was found in the same collection as the *Karmmavibhāga*, bears the statement that it was "corrected" (*śoddhite*) by *Kīrttidhvaja* (*Satasahasrika-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, 1937).

Kīrttidhvaja, or *Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan* as he was known in Tibetan, was a leading translator of Buddhist Sanskrit works into Tibetan. He was also the hierarch who held

the "chair" of the Sa-skya monastery during the period A.D. 1172- 1216 (G. N. Roerich, 1988) In this context, it is relevant to note that, according to *Sankrtyayana*, the Sinhala texts he found originally belonged to a Sri Lankan monk called *Anantaśrī* who, like *Śākya Śrī Bhadra*, had come to Tibet in the time of *Śrī Kīrttidhvaja* (JBORS, 1937). Unfortunately, *Sankrtyayana* does not reveal the source of this valuable information. The Sa-skya Codex makes no mention whatsoever of *Anantaśrī*.

Evidence in the Tibetan source's points to the fact that, despite the immense distance between the two centres of Buddhist learning, several Sri Lankan scholars were known to Tibetan Buddhists. One of the earliest references is to *Prithivibandhu* whose commentary (*vrtti*) on the *Saddharma-pundarīka* was obviously held in very high regard (Rockhill, 1884).

This extensive work which is in eight parts is to be found among the texts included in the Tibetan Tripitaka. The text which bears the number 5518 extends from folio 198a to 347a in Vol. CVII of Suzuki's edition. It is one of the two works in this volume. Together with the preceding text in this volume, the *Arya-gambhira-samdhi-nirmocana-sūtra-tīkā* of *Ven-tshig*, bearing the number 5517, it had been translated from a Chinese original. In the colophon *Prithivibandhu* (*Sahi rtsa-lag*) is introduced as a teacher from *Simhaladvīpa* (*sin-ga-lahi slon-po*) (Suzuki (ed), 1957).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The name of the Tibetan translator is not mentioned in the colophon, but it seems very likely that *Chos-grub*, who translated the preceding work (No. 5517), was responsible for translating *Prithivibandhu*'s work from Chinese into Tibetan. Most probably, the original version of the Sri Lankan teacher's work was in Sanskrit, and the fact that it was translated into Chinese, and from that language into Tibetan, clearly reflects the

high regard the text was held in the world of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist scholarship. However, though the writer and his work were known in Tibet, it seems most unlikely that he had visited Tibet. Unfortunately, there are no references to *Prithivibandhu* in the Buddhist tradition of his native land.

If the influence of Sri Lankan scholarship reached Tibet early through the intermediary of Chinese clerics, it would appear that the honour of being the first Sri Lankan to participate in the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet belongs to a woman, a nun named *Candramālī* (or *Candramālā* (Tib. *Candiramāle*, *Candiramālā*). Though the exact details about *Candramālī*'s travels are not known, like her spiritual forebears of an earlier epoch who had braved the hazards of voyages to China, she appears to have successfully overcome the rigours involved in the long journey over rugged terrain infested by highwaymen to reach Tibet. (Widenfeld and Nicolson, 1968) This second Sri Lankan whose name appears in the Tibetan Tripitaka was remembered for her contributions as a translator.

Candramālī reached Tibet in the early part of the eleventh century when a revival of Buddhism was beginning in that land under the leadership of *Ye śes*, a monk of noble origin, who was opposed to those Tantric traditions which placed emphasis on sexual ecstasy. As Bu-ston points out, *Ye śes* was bent on directing Tibetan Buddhism along different paths and, with this end in view, sent many young monks to study in India and invited renowned Indian scholars to come and work in Tibet. Tibetan scholars who were to play a vital role in later times like *Rin-chen-s'an-po* were among those sent by *Ye śes* for higher studies in India. Several leading Buddhist scholars from India, especially from the centres in the Northeast, came to Tibet to participate in this new awakening. Among them were *Dīpankaraśrījñāna*, *Dharmapāla*, *Śākyaprabha*, *Buddhapāla*, *Padmākara Gupta*, *Gayādhara* and

Kamalagupta. (Obermiller, (tr.) 1921) Some of the other Buddhist scholars from India who worked in Tibet as contemporaries of *Ye śes* were *Jinamitra*, *Śīlendrabadhi*, *Jñānasiddhi* and *Dānaśīla*. (Bischoff, 1968) There is a strong possibility that *Candramālī* accompanied these scholars who came from the Indian centres of learning.

In the Tibetan as well as the Mongol versions of the Tripitaka *Candramālī* is introduced as a *yoginī* from Sri Lanka and a translator of Buddhist texts of the *Tantrayāna*. (Louis Ligeti, 1942-4) In the Beijing edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka, she is credited with the translation of five texts, and in these tasks she was a collaborator of *Ye śes* himself. The works in question are 1. *Śrī jñāna-guhyatantraraja* (No. 37), 2. *Śrī-jñānamalantraraja* (No. 38), 3. *Śrī-jñānajvalatantraraja* (No. 39), 4. *Śrī-vajrarajamahātāntra* (No. 48) and 5. *Śrī-rāgarajatantraraja* (No. 50). (Suzuki (ed.), The Tibetan Tripitaka)

There is another text in the same edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka which bears the name *Śrī-candramālā-tantraraja* (No. 40) and, as such, raises the possibility that it was one of her original works. (Suzuki (ed.), The Tibetan Tripitaka) In Bischoff's list the first five as well as the sixth are cited as *Candramālī*'s translations and two more are added to the list: 7. *Śrī-ratnajvalatantraraja-nāma*, 8. *Śrī-sūrya-cakra-tantraraja-nāma* while, in the case of another, 9. *Śrī-ñca na na saya?* *tantraraja*, she is cited as a co-translator with *Ye śes*. (Bischoff, 1968) In the catalogue of the Mongol Tripitaka prepared by Ligeti, *Candramālī* occurs together with *Ye śes* (Belge) as the co-translator of the first five works while *Gayādhara* and *Ye śes* (Belge) are cited as the co-translators of the sixth work. (Ligeti, 1942-4) What is of interest here is not merely that *Candramālī* was a Sri Lankan scholar and translator who worked in Tibet: she is in fact the only *Tantrist* nun from Sri Lanka known to us from historical records.

Evidence for the presence of another Sri Lankan scholar in Tibet is to be found in the *Kanjur* division of the Tibetan *Tripitaka*. Buxton refers to this monk as *Anandaśrī*, but the colophons of the Tibetan and Mongol versions of the *Tripitaka* suggest that the reading *Ānandaśrī* (A nan da sri, var. A nan da sari) may be preferable, (Obermiller, E. (tr.) 1932) and in the present work, we shall be using this reading of the name. The Sri Lankan monk is first mentioned in connection with thirteen *sūtras* included in the *Ser-phyin* section of the *Kanjur*. The thirteen tracts which are all to be found in Volume XXI of the Tibetan *Tripitaka* are: i. *Dharmacakra-pravarttana-sūtra* (No. 747), ii. *Jātaka-nidāna* (No. 748), iii. *Ātānātiya-sūtra* (No. 749), iv. *Mahāsamaya-sūtra* (No. 750), v. *Maitrī-sūtra* (No. 751), vi. *Maitrībhāvanā-sūtra* (No. 752), vii. *Pañca-śikṣānusamsā-sūtra* (No. 753), viii. *Girimānanda-sūtra* (No. 754), ix. *Nandopananda-nāgarāja-damana-sūtra* (No. 755), x. *Mahākāśyapa-sūtra* (No. 756), xi. *Sūrya-sūtra* (No. 757), xii. *Candra-sūtra* (No. 758) and xiii. *Mahāmangala-sūtra* (No. 759). (Suzuki, (ed.) 1956) The thirteen *sūtras* are grouped within the *Ser-phyin* section in the versions of the *Tripitaka* found in Beijing and Berlin as well as in the Mongol version examined by Ligeti but, in the Narthang and Kumbun editions, they are to be found within the *mDo* section. (Ligeti, 1949) However, it is noteworthy that, in all these instances, the thirteen tracts are treated as one unit and are accompanied by a single colophon to be found at the end of the *Mahāmangala-sūtra*. This is probably because of their specific and common, if not also atypical, origin.

The Mongol version of the colophons of the *Kanjur* were published by Ligeti and, subsequently, they were translated into German by Bischoff. According to this colophon, the translation of these works was carried out at the *Thar-pa glin* (Island of Deliverance) monastery. The Tibetan monk *Sūryadhvaja* (*Ñi-ma rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po*) who undertook this task worked in collaboration with *pandita Ānandaśrī* who is

described as a monk of Brahmana lineage from *Simhadvīpa* (*Singa glin-pa*). It is further stated that *Ānandaśrī* was a scholar who had mastered the three *pitakas* and that he had come to Tibet from the *Vajrāsana* monastery at Buddha Gayā in the time of the Tibetan patriarch *Kīrttidhvaja*. The translation was carried out at the latter's request. *Sūryadhvaja* who jointly participated in the translation work is also credited with the tasks of correcting and editing the Tibetan versions. This may imply that the initial translations had been prepared by *Ānandaśrī*. The close relations which came to develop between Sa-skyā hierarchs and the Mongol court evidently paved the way to a further step in the penetration of the knowledge of these *sūtras* for, subsequently, they were also translated into the Mongol language by *Punyamangalam* and *Siteu bayasi*.

The collaboration between *Ānandaśrī* and *Sūryadhvaja* finds mention in Buxton's chronicle in the following words: "My own teacher Ni-ma-gyal-tshen-pal-s'a-n-po studied in Nepal for fourteen years and translated 14 *sūtras*, the *Giryānanda* etc. with the assistance of *Pandit Anantaśrī* (*Ānandaśrī*).\" (Obermiller, (tr.) 1932) Buxton's statement about the two scholars collaborating in the translation of fourteen different *sūtras* does not find corroboration in the Tibetan *Tripitaka*. There is, however, another reference in the *Tripitaka* to *Ānandaśrī* participating in the translation of one more text. It occurs in the colophon of a text of the *Ratnakūṭa* class called the *Ārya-maitrī-sūtra-nāma* where it is stated that "the great" *Ānandaśrī* collaborated in the work of translating it to Tibetan." It is possible that this was the fourteenth text that Buxton was referring to. In this last colophon *Ānandaśrī* is described as "the leader of many thousands of Sri Lankan monks." It is also stated that he had come from the site of the Vajra-throne (Buddha Gayā) and was known for his proficiency in both Indian and Tibetan languages. It is also stated that the translation had been carried out at the Sa-skyā

monastery in the year 1850 after the *nirvāna* of the *Śākyamuni*, which is equivalent to *circa* A.D. 1206 (Bischoff, 1968).

It would appear that *Ānandaśrī* had achieved a fairly high proficiency in Tibetan which enabled him to undertake scholarly tasks which find mention in the Tibetan records. The exegetical text *Kārya-karana-bhāva-siddhi* of *Jñānaśrīmitra* had been translated into Tibetan by Kumārakalaśa at an early date, and *Ānandaśrī* is said to have revised this translation (Suzuki, 1962). However, it is noteworthy that the translator of *Jñānaśrīmitra*'s work is described as *Bal yul gyi pandita* and literally this would mean a scholar from Nepal". (Jäschke, 1988) We have noted that the earlier references were to a scholar from Sri Lanka (*Singa glin-pa*). Two possible explanations come to mind. It would be more prudent to suggest the translator of *Jñānaśrīmitra*'s work was a scholar from Nepal of the same name but distinct from the translator of the works cited previously. We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that the Sri Lankan scholar who had spent quite some time in Nepal during his journeyed from Buddha Gayā to Tibet that in some quarters he was associated with Nepal.

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