

LOVELY LADY LANKA: A TENTH-CENTURY DEPICTION.

In the course of my work on the imperial Iksvakus of Anuradhapura (872-1025 A.D.) I have troubled over a beautiful tenth-century literary image of "Lady Lanka" (*Lankangana*). It appears in *Vamsatthappakasini*, the famous *Mahavamsa* commentary, within a narrative recounting of Arhant Mahinda's arrival at Mihintale. In this article I want to share my provisional translation of this passage and some thoughts about its significance with an audience uniquely suited to helping me improve both.

I begin with my translation and, in a long note following the translation, Prof. Malalasekera's edition of the relevant text. My hope is to communicate its beauty and flavor to English readers and to elicit help from Pali scholars here with some of the more difficult compounds. In order to prevent the latter goal from countermanding the former, I have confined translation problems to the notes. I proceed to discuss the significance of this passage in the light of some thoughts I have had about the relationship between literary and epigraphic texts generally, and between *Vamsatthappakasini* and Iksvaku inscriptional rhetoric more particularly.

TRANSLATION

As though he were thinking:

when the consecration festival was held she became the chief queen to be enjoyed by four Sammasambuddhas who arose in this aeon and dwelt in the four postures,¹ worthy to be adorned with the ornaments of their dispensations;

she is endowed with commanding form: superb limbs and digits such as the camps, villages, towns, cities, regions, kingdoms, tanks, pools, ponds, groves and tracts of land that by and by, here and there, [were laid out] in the days of [Sri Lanka's first] five kings, beginning with Vijaya;

she is radiant with the bound-up bun of her gorgeous hair [called] the Mahameghavana Garden, which is braided together by taking up a jungle of flowers and fruits and sprouts and varied² trees nourished by bountiful bodies of water;

¹. These are the four postures for meditation: sitting, standing, walking and lying.

². Read *vicitta* for *vicitta*.

she is full³ of youth;

she shines with a pair of eyes [called] the [Buddha's] Hair Relic and Tooth Relic, which have been installed, being the cause both of human residence and of the eye of wisdom and insight into the nature of similarity and difference as regards meaning, beginning with what is helpful and what is not for those royal knowers [kings] who became her own husbands;⁴

She is radiant with her face [named] Anuradhapura, which is distinguished by a pair of earlobes [adorned with] gold frills [called] the shrines for the images of the Buddha and the images of Mahinda which have been established [there], and a forehead and long nose [called] the royal umbrella and the royal palace;

she [wears] a jewelled girdle, completely beautiful, that is adorned by being pierced with gems which shine because they convey the majestic power [that allows one] to walk through the sky for the mere wishing,⁵ which originate on the side of Adam's Peak and become [strung together into] garlands for her genitalia⁶ [namely] the [Mahavali] River that flows from its source on that peak (which is attended by an utter absence of lust because of the jungle that is seized

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- ³. Accept alternate reading *sampanna* for *samapatta*. Or read "who has come of age"?
- ⁴. This sentence is quite awkward in Pali; this is the best translation I have been able to make. The sense seems to be that people populate Sri Lanka because it is the home of Buddha relics (Buddhism itself), and that the kings of Sri Lanka have special insight into what is right and true for the same reason.
- ⁵. I am not sure how to take *samannita-antalikkhacara-anubhava-sampanna*; this is the best guess I have been able to make.
- ⁶. I follow the alternate mss. reading by omitting *khassa* here; I do not see how "sky" would fit in the construction unless we understand *-mehanassa uddham khassa* or some similar interpolation. Rhys Davids and Stede, *Pali-English Dictionary*, omit the term *mehana*. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, understands *mehana* only as the penis ("membrum virile"). But Virasekera, *Pali Sabdakoshaya* which consistently and most usefully supplements Rhys Davids and Stede and Monier-Williams with common medieval Pali terms they omit, defines *mehana* (neuter) as "*stri ho purusha nimitta* - the organ of generation of either sex". I follow Virasekera in this instance.

to cover it up);

her sides are purified by the sand on her beaches;

she is well-dressed, clothed in the blue clothes [called] the still waters of the ocean that surround [her];

she is fully adorned with the auspicious ornaments prepared for the consecration festival, which were made into gifts for his own beloved friend and sent by Dhammasoka, who was overwhelmed when he saw the various sorts of valuable presents, beginning with gems and pearls, that Devanampiyatissa formerly had sent to him;

she has achieved the height of beauty, brightened by the brightness of the red ornament in the middle of her forehead [called] Sumanakuta⁷ which she displays: the Great Footprint Shrine which was consecrated by our Blessed [Buddha]--the Bull of the Sakyas whose excellent signet ring is his foot⁸--in order to point out the fact that he himself came here (which had as its reason the happiness and the welfare of the world), and [in order to point out] the fact that this Island is its own boss because of the establishment of the Buddha's dispensation [in it];

after beautifying her with the ornaments and cosmetics [called] the establishment and the development of the Buddha's dispensation, I shall make her take off her party dress and shall engage in auspicious dalliances with her, with Lady Lanka

on the full moon day of the month of Poson, rising up into the air from the mountain where stands Sanchi Vihara, [Arhant Mahinda] came to this Island of Sri Lanka,

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7. Note that the analogy runs into trouble here: her forehead has already been identified with the royal umbrella in Anuradhapura, and Sri Pada has already been identified as her genital (*mehana*) region. I suppose either that the authors had to include *lalata* ("forehead") in order to avoid claiming that the Buddha planted his foot in Lady Lanka's lap(!), or that this clause alludes to some competing (or overlapping or otherwise separate) tradition of imagining Sri Lanka to be a beautiful woman.
8. The intent seems to be that the Buddha's foot is marked with symbols like a signet ring, and when he plants it on the earth (as on the top of Sri Pada) it leaves its impression, like a signet ring. How this ties in with *abhisincita*, lit. "sprinkled", I am not clear. The other meaning of *muddika* is grape vine, but that is not much help.

travelling with courage and beauty like a swan-king on the surface of the sky,⁹ and he stood on the Silakuta¹⁰ like a lion on the head of an elephant.¹¹

- ⁹. This metaphor probably goes back to the *Sihalatthakatha-mahavamsa*; cf. *Dpv.* 12:36 and *Smp.* 1:71.
- ¹⁰. Silakuta is a proper name for the highest peak rising up from Mihintale's Ambasthala plateau. Pilgrims climb the 1500-odd steps that lead up to Ambasthala plain and beyond that up to the At Vehera/Mahathupa area. Then they descend back to the plain and climb the Silakuta along treacherous old rock-hewn steps, now reinforced with an iron bar. The view from the top is breathtaking; Anuradhapura is clearly visible in the distance. From the peak, pilgrims look down to the Ambasthala dagaba just as Mahinda and his companions looked down upon King Devanampiyatissa and his 40,000 men more than 2300 years ago.
- ¹¹. G.P. Malalasekera, ed., *Vamsatthappakasini: Commentary on the Mahavamsa* vol. I. (London: P.T.S., 1935)pp. 321-22: imaya imasmim kappe uppannehi catuhi pi sammasambuddhehi iriya pathaviharadihi paribhunjitum ca, tesam yeva sasanalankarapatittharahaaggamahesi va hutva sanjataya abhisekaussavaya, evam kamena Vijayappabhutinam pancannam rajunam kale tattha tattha sannivesita-gamanigama-nagara-janapada-rajadhani-vapi-talaka-pokkharani-uyyanabhumi-mippadesadipavarangapaccanga-rupissariya-samannagataya,sampannasalilasaya-samvaddhapupphaphalapallava-viccittataruvanagahana-racita-Mahameghavanuyyana-kesakalyanena baddhamakutasobhaya, samapattayobbanaya, attano samibhutarajavinnunam hitahitadyatthasamavisamarupadassana-buddhinayanassa jananivasassa ca hetu hutva patitthakesadathadhatu-yamakanayano pasobhitaya, rajabhavana-chatta-pasada-nalata-tunga-nasahi ca, patitthita-buddhapatima-Mahindapatimaghara-hemalata-yamakakannavallihi ca patiranjita-Anuradhapuravadanasobhaya, sampannasubhasahitaya, Sumanakutappabhavanugamehanassa khassa mala hutva takkutapassamhi sanjata-samannita-antalikkhacara-anubhavasam panna-vijjotamanivedhapilandhitamanimekhalaya, tappaticchadaka-vanagahana-suviragasahitaya velavalukasuddhantaya parikhipptva thitasamuddajalanilavasananivattha-suvatthaya, ito Devanampiyatissena pesitam manimuttadi vividhakarasarannakaram disva acchariyabbhutajatena Dhammasokena attano piyasahayassa patipannakaram katva pesitabhiseka-ussava-mangalalankarasajjehi alankatapatiyattaya, amhakam Bhagavata Sakyapungavena attano lokassa hitasukhahetu idhagatabhavan ca buddhasasanapatitthapanayadi pass' imassa sakayattakabhavan ca di petum Sumanakutalalatamajjhe padamuddikavarenabhisincikata-dassitapadacetiyanosilatilakujjalaya, ujjalitarupaggappattaya, Lamkanganaya buddhasasanapatitthapanavaddhamanalankaracunnehi pi susajjitam katva, chanavesam gahapetva, mangalacarittam karissami ti cinto viya, Jetthamulamassasa

DISCUSSION

Stylistically, this passage is exceptional. Unlike most of *Vamsatthappakasini*, written in typical, terse commentarial prose, this description of Lady Lanka is composed in the sumptuously thick Sanskrit literary style known as "prose poetry" (*gadya kavya*). Though the author of *Vamsatthappakasini* merely experiments with this style, it was in his day highly developed and favoured by Sanskrit writers in India; his rough contemporary,¹² Upatissa, utilized it masterfully in his Pali *Mahabodhivamsa*.

Two sorts of stylistic criticism might legitimately be raised. There is on one hand a question about the aesthetic quality of *gadya kavya* itself. Many modern critics, especially in the West, have considered it an overly-strained, overly-ornate, overly-difficult *genre*. This seems especially true in translation, given the utter inability of the English language to express beautifully the lengthy and complicated compounds that characterize Sanskrit (and Pali) *gadya kavya* (and the fact that many translators, myself included, sometimes find themselves unable even to comprehend the text in the first place). These problems aside, I myself consider the extended metaphors marvelous, find the ornamentation vivid, and take delight in the challenge afforded by the complexity of *gadya kavya* (even when I cannot meet it); but assuredly this is largely a matter of individual taste.

On the other hand, one might question the skill with which the *Vamsatthappakasini* author utilized the style. I think it fair to say that Pali writers generally faced special difficulties when imitating this style because Pali lacks some of the basic foundations for Sanskrit literary ornamentation, including (in the tenth century, anyway) developed rules for *sandhi* and derivation, and the dual number; the present passage could have been much less awkward in Pali (if not in English) had the language provided its author these devices. Additionally, the metaphor itself runs into difficulties: Lady Lanka's forehead is identified both with Anuradhapura and with Adam's Peak; there is an obvious anachronism in the suggestion that Anuradhapura was adorned with

pannarasuposathadivase, tato Vedisagirivihara-pabbat' akasam uppattitva,
gaganatale hamsaraja va vikkantacarugamanena imam Lankadipam agantva
nagamuddhani siho viya silakutamhi atthasi.

¹². I have speculated in my other work (see below, n. 15) that the composition of *Mahabodhivamsa* belongs to the same period as *Vamsatthappakasini*, i.e., the tenth century ascendancy of the Ikshvaku Empire based in Anuradhapura. There is epigraphic and *vamsic* evidence which can be interpreted to mean that *Mahabodhivamsa* was composed during the reign of Kassapa V (914-923 A.D.) whereas *Vamsatthappakasini*, begun during the reign of Kassapa V, was completed only during the reign of his son, Mahinda IV (956-972 A.D.).

Mahinda-image shrines before the Arhant first came here;¹³ the author (no doubt a Mahaviharan Buddhist monk) seems nervous about discussing Lady Lanka's sexuality. One could easily sustain the argument that his artistry pales in comparison with that of Upatissa.

Still, the passage is undeniably evocative. It creates a sensuous image of Lanka as a beautiful woman and inscribes this image onto the actual geography of the Island. The sexual innuendo is developed smoothly and naturally from sentence to sentence, almost shockingly eroticising one of the holiest moments in Sri Lanka's religious history. (Though Sanskrit *kavya* regularly develops an erotic mood [*sringara rasa*] based on the meeting and mating of lovers, it is striking to find the mood in a Pali Buddhist text, and especially striking to find it developed around a figure like Arhant Mahinda).

But I want to go a little further than this by suggesting that the passage would have been even more evocative to the tenth century Anuradhapurans by whom and for whom it was composed; the quality of the passage is best understood within its own historical context. We must listen to it with minds imaginatively present in tenth-century Anuradhapura, which is possible only when we reconstruct that period on the basis of contemporary inscriptions (and chronicle records). I shall sketch out such a reconstruction in a moment. First, though, I want to discuss what I consider to be an important methodological breakthrough for the study of South Asian lithic remains, which I attribute to the American historian of India, Ronald Inden.

Inden's work¹⁴ persuasively has made the case that when reconstructing the history of South Asia one must treat epigraphic and literary remains as *intertextual* (i.e. in conversation with each other). The inscriptions from a certain time and place provide the "con-text" in which to understand the literature of that time and place, and vice-versa: neither can be understood fully in the other's absence. Of course on its surface this appears to be nothing new in the study of Sri Lankan history: for more than a century historians have catalogued correspondences (and lacks of correspondence) between certain literary texts (especially *vamsas*) and certain epigraphic texts; the whole pre-modern history of Sri Lanka has been reconstructed largely on the basis of such correspondences between the chronicles and the kings known in inscriptions (and the buildings and other artefacts they left behind). But this "correspondence" is considered

¹³. It is also anachronistic that Mahinda mention the Tooth Relic, which was brought to the Island, by the chroniclers' own admission, more than five centuries after the advent of Mahinda.

¹⁴. In the present context see especially his *Imagining India* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990) and "Imperial Formation/Imperial Purana" forthcoming in Ronald Inden, ed. *Post-Orientalist Approaches to the Study of South Asian Texts*. Inden himself draws upon the works of the great philosopher of history, R.G. Collingwood.

as it were accidental: Mahanama (or whatever author) happened to mention certain events and places and names that are verified (or not) in the known inscriptions and ruins; we all are grateful for each little detail thus preserved. Though cataloguing these correspondences has proven inestimably valuable in sorting out issues like chronology, royal genealogy and the identification of archaeological remains, this is not the sort of intertextuality which Inden has called to our attention.

Rather, Inden argues that a particular literary text, which was composed at a particular moment (or series of moments) and in a particular place (or series of places), enjoys a special sort of "correspondence" to the inscriptions and archaeological remains *of the same time(s) and place(s)*. Inden's own work has focused upon the *Visnudharmottarapurana* which, he demonstrates, was composed at the same time and in the same place as the inscriptions and buildings of the imperial Rastrakutas of eighth- and ninth-century India. This demonstration is significant in its own right; it dates with precision a text which, like most pre-modern South Asian texts, had hitherto been dated within a range of several centuries. But dating the text - i.e., determining precisely the identity of its conversation partners - represents only the first step into what Inden shows to be a bottomless mine of new insights waiting to be extracted. For the intertextuality highlights points of significance which remain invisible if the text and archaeological remains are read in isolation from each other. Thus, the *Visnudharmottarapurana* describes ideal architectural style, but the significance of that description becomes manifest only when we see with Inden that very style characterized official Rastrakuta temples (and stupas); the text contains a recension of the *Ramayana* which seems wholly odd until we see with Inden that Rama's quirky itinerary precisely parallels the "map" of Rastrakuta imperial conquests preserved in royal inscriptions; likewise types of coins, iconographic flourishes, the religious status of the emperor, fine points of epistemology and theology-even the function of various caste groups - can be understood once we see with Inden that the "legends" in the texts preserve the "insides" of historical actions that left as traces of their occurrence the "hard evidence" (inscriptions and other archaeological remains) which we have at our disposal to study today.

My own work perhaps brings the point "closer to home" for readers of this journal because I have been applying Inden's insights to the texts and inscriptions of tenth century Anuradhapura.¹⁵ I am certainly not the first person to notice that certain details provided in *Vamsatthappakasini* illuminate certain words, phrases and names in the inscriptions of this period, especially the famous slab inscriptions of Kassapa V and Mahinda IV. But I go further when I treat the sum total of these correspondences as

¹⁵. See my "Positivist Paradise Lost: On The History of the Sri Lankan Pali Chronicles" forthcoming in Ronald Inden ed. *Post-Orientalist Approaches to the Study of South Asian Texts and Rethinking Buddhist Missions* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1992). As neither of these works is yet widely available, I have placed copies in the Comparative Religion Library of the Dept. of Philosophy, University of Peradeniya.

evidence that *Vamsatthappakasini* - hitherto dated rather vaguely between the 6th and 13th centuries - was actually composed during the reigns of these two kings. Here the proof is in the pudding: once this initial hypothesis is put to work, deeper and deeper correspondences render its veracity increasingly clear. I shall not rehash the long list of such literary-epigraphic correspondences that I have already charted out in other work, beyond detailing by way of example the correspondences embodied in our depiction of Lovely Lady Lanka. But it is important to repeat in this context some by-products of my thought about the intertextuality of *Vamsatthappakasini* and the Iksvaku inscriptions, namely conclusions that I already have been able to draw about the Iksvaku dynasty, in order to frame the context in which I want readers to imagine Lady Lanka.

That the Iksvakus were the most powerful dynasty to arise in Anuradhapura, at least since the time immediately following Dutthagamani, and perhaps ever, is clear in the sheer bulk and range of inscriptions they left behind. The Iksvakus erected their distinctive pillar inscriptions in great number all over the Island; the aforementioned slabs of Kassapa V and Mahinda IV, at the key monasteries in and around Anuradhapura itself, are probably the finest inscriptions in the Island's history. The unity of the Island under Iksvaku rule is also evident in our image of Lady Lanka, an image of Anuradhapuran primacy ("her face") in a singular Lanka ("her sides are ... the sand on her beaches"). Central in the Iksvaku rise to power was a new prominence accorded the Mahavihara, which henceforth would never again play second fiddle to its more-cosmopolitan rivals, the Abhayagirivihara and Jetavanavihara; both *Vamsatthappakasini* and the lithic record provide ample evidence that the Iksvakus enforced this displacement of the Mahavihara's rivals. The new Mahaviharan centrality is confirmed by the special mention it receives (as "Mahameghavana Garden") in our depiction of Lady Lanka ("the bound-up bun of her gorgeous hair"). It is relevant to note in this context that "Mahameghavana" as a designation of the Mahavihara appears for the first time in the lithic record only in an inscription of Iksvaku Mahinda IV himself.¹⁶

The significance of the Mahavihara-supporting Iksvaku kings was not confined to the Island. Perhaps the most important point that becomes visible once we read Iksvaku inscriptions and *Vamsatthappakasini* intertextually is that during the tenth century Anuradhapura became a major player in Indian imperial politics. After centuries of submitting to Indian overlords including the Guptas, Pallavas and Rastrakutas, the Sri Lankans under Sena II (853-87), founder of the Iksvaku dynasty,¹⁷ rose up to defeat

¹⁶. The term appears in the Vessagiri slab inscription of Mahinda IV (see EZ 1:33: *Mahamevna Tisaram-rad-maha-veheri...Mahamevna-nakahi*).

¹⁷. The characteristic claim of the Iksvaku kings, namely that they are the descendants of Iksvaku (Oka, Okkaka), first appears in an inscription of Sena II's younger brother and successor, Udaya II (see EZ 6,1:12f.) where he calls his brother Sena II (in Paranavitana's translation) "descended from the lineage of Oka, the victorious hero, comparable to a forehead ornament unto the Island

Madurai in collusion at least with Pandya and Chola allies. This remarkable achievement - arguably the first and most important Sri Lankan military victory ever scored on the mainland - ushered in a century characterized by an increasingly strong network of alliances focused upon Anuradhapura (which came to include Kerala, Chera, Kalinga, Burman and Javanese allies in addition to the Pandyas) supporting an increasingly explicit Sri Lankan attempt at securing universal overlordship (i.e., imperial hegemony in the subcontinent). In my own reading of these turbulent years, after the death of the last Rastrakuta emperor in 963, A.D., and until his death in 972, Mahinda IV of Sri Lanka not only *claimed* to have achieved this imperial primacy but had, in fact, achieved it. This was the last time that Buddhism - and Theravada Buddhism, no less! - would dominate Indian imperial politics; the imperial (and Saiva) Cholas made the defeat of Sri Lanka the primary goal in their own rise to imperial supremacy. But the fact that the Sri Lankan kings, with some of their alliances still solid, continued to mount formidable challenges to Chola power even into the thirteenth century, indicates how powerful they must have been at their zenith under Mahinda IV.

Of course depicting Sri Lanka as a beautiful woman is not exactly indicative of imperial power; our image seems calculated more to arouse the emotions of her residents than to broadcast her significance to imperial vassals and rivals abroad. A much clearer imperial image is found in Mahinda IV's co-called Jetavanarama (actually Abhayagirivihara) slab inscription, in which the Tooth Relic, rather than the eye of lovely Lady Lanka, is compared to "the crest jewel on the crown of Anuradhapura".¹⁸ Still, our passage also contains unmistakable allusions to the new imperial claim Buddhism launched through Anuradhapura in the tenth century. Most important, Mahinda recalls that the Buddha placed his Sri Pada upon Adam's Peak "[in order to point out] the fact that this Island is its own boss because of the Buddha's dispensation [in it]"; Buddhism justifies the revolt against non-Buddhist Indian overlordship which the Ikshvaku kings were actually effecting. That the Buddha's visit to the Island "had as its reason the happiness and welfare of the world" reinforces the notion that Anuradhapura has the implicit right to rebel for the sake of Buddhism. Moreover, Mahinda twice mentions the royal consecration (*abhiseka*), a ritual whose prominence in Ikshvaku world-making is clear from the surviving lithic and literary evidence of tenth-century Anuradhapura. The first (and as far as I know only) specific *abhiseka* liturgy in the

of Sirilak, he of abundant splendour, a mass of splendour, who by its fulness illuminated the whole expanse of Dambdiv and conquered Madhura".

¹⁸. EZ 1:22: *Anurapura vutun sadu sil-mini-men muni-rad-hu vara Dalada...* Note at least that here too the Island is personified with Anuradhapura as its face/head.

entire Sri Lankan literature is found in *Vamsatthappakasini*;¹⁹ the first Sri Lankan lithic references to royal consecration ceremonies appear in the Iksvaku inscriptions.²⁰ Underscoring Anuradhapura's new international significance is the gaze upon Lady Lanka coming from the Buddha and Arhant Mahinda, who from the Sri Lankan perspective are the two most important Indians ever to live (and, conveniently, heirs to powerful Indian kingdoms): the Buddha plants his foot to predict Lanka's future greatness; Mahinda is drawn by her charms to inseminate Lanka with the Buddhist tradition that would become the foundation for Iksvaku power.

But the clearest indication that our depiction of Lady Lanka belongs to tenth-century Anuradhapura is found in several of the passage's specific geographical details. There is an intentional *double entendre* in the reference to Lady Lanka's "jewelled girdle" adorning her "genitalia" (the Mahavali River), for "Jewelled Girdle" (*manimekhala*) was also the name of a tank, built by the founder of the Iksvaku dynasty, Sena II, along the Mahavali.²¹ The reference to the shrines of the Hair Relic and Tooth Relic (Lady Lanka's eyes) is striking because these two relics appear together for the first time in the aforementioned so-called Jetavanarama slab inscription (no.1) of Mahinda IV. The Iksvaku emperor recounts his creation of a special casket for the Tooth Relic and a stupa for the Hair Relic in the process of enumerating his gifts to the Mahavihara.²²

¹⁹ *Vams.* 1:305ff. Note that *Vams.* details a correspondence between the gifts sent by Asoka to Devanampiyatissa, and the consecration vessels, a correspondence which is also indicated in our passage; Asoka, the universal Buddhist overlord *par excellence*, himself appointed Sri Lankan kings with imperial significance/access to imperial power! Moreover, *Vams.* specifies (p. 307) that the clay for manufacturing the vessels must be taken from seven sites which turn out to be the seven most important sites within the Mahavihara itself (cf. *Dpv.* 13:30f.; *Mhv* 15:26f.); the imperial consecration is attained, literally, at the feet of the Mahaviharan monks!

²⁰ The earliest reference to the royal *abhiseka* is in an inscription of Dappula IV (924-35), published at *EZ* 5:139. By the time of Mahinda IV this inscriptional claim had become explicitly one of imperial significance; in the so-called Jetavanarama slab inscription (no.2) Mahinda IV claimed to have been "consecrated with the consecration into world supremacy" (*EZ* 1:234f.: *lov utura bisevnen bisesva*).

²¹ See *Cv.* 51:72; cf. *EZ* 1:227.

²² *EZ* 1:222: *muni-rad-hu Dalada-karandu kara...Un-lom-da-ruvanat mandos bandu Rak-sa-ge kara...*

Finally, we should note that in these same so-called Jetavanarama slab inscriptions we find the only lithic references to Mahinda-images post-dating the 1st c. A.D. Mahinda IV claims amidst a list of general repairs effected at the Abhayagirivihara that "having placed large rubies in the eyes of the great stone image of Mahinda he made a net of gold for its feet".²³ In the list of gifts to the Mahavihara he indicates that there, too, he placed rubies in the eyes of the great stone image (presumably a matching image of Mahinda Thera).²⁴ So there were at least two Mahinda-image shrines in the Anuradhapura of Mahinda IV: one at the Mahavihara and one at Abhayagirivihara. The anachronistic mention of Mahinda-image shrines in our depiction of Lady Lanka (her ear ornaments) reminded its tenth-century audience of the special prominence accorded Mahinda Thera by his namesake, the emperor.

This long list of lithic-literary correspondences is not as random as may at first glance appear. Instead, it allows us to understand the *Vamsathappakasini* depiction of Lovely Lady Lanka as a coherent image of the Sri Lanka in which tenth-century Anuradhapurans actually lived. Not only does it encapsulate the most important elements of Iksvaku ideology - the unity of the Island, the primacy of the Mahavihara, and Anuradhapura's imperial significance - it evokes what must have been the actual geography of the Sri Lanka which the Iksvaku emperors constructed. With a little imagination, we can visualize Lady Lanka in body as well as spirit.

Kneeling, with her knees at Batticaloa and Tirukkovil, and her toes in Galle and Matara, her lap is Adam's Peak; from it flows the Mahavali, sensuously adorned with the jewelled girdle that remains discretely obscured from view by the lush jungles of the Central Highlands. Her gaze outward from Anuradhapura is toward the south and east, for we see the bound-up bun of her beautiful hair (i.e., the Mahavihara) situated behind and below (i.e., west and south of) her nose/forehead (i.e., the royal palace in the center

²³. EZ 1:221: *Mihind-maha-sal-pilime tul (dati) minin as tabava (ra)n-muva pada-dala kara...*

²⁴. EZ 1:222: *Maha-sala-pilime darang-minin as tabava...* At EZ 1:228 the editor/translator Don Martino De Silva Wickremasinghe takes this, as too (EZ 1:239) an additional reference to the Abhayagiri maha-sala-pilime in the matching so-called Jetavanarama slab inscription (no.2), to mean great stone images of the Buddha. He provides no justification for this assumption; presumably he simply assumed that a great stone image at either of the major monasteries would have been of the Buddha. But in the present context, given that the first mention of a maha-sala-pilime in the so-called Jetavanarama slabs stipulates that it is an image of Mahinda, and given that the image of Mahinda was the one with ruby eyes, it is much more likely that in all three instances the reference is to great stone images of Mahinda Thera, rather than of the Buddha (though both monasteries would also, of course, have contained Buddha-images).

of the city). Her earlobes - to the southwest (i.e., somewhere in the Mahavihara) and the northeast of the city center (i.e., somewhere in the Abhayagiri) - are adorned with Mahinda-shrine-ornaments:the ruby-eyed Mahindas of Mahinda IV. Her mouth is formed by the Kadamba River and - reflecting the encounter she anticipates with her lover, Mahinda Thera, as well as the imperial glory now illuminating her face - Lady Lanka is smiling.

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