

A Pillar Inscription from Moragahawela¹

MORAGAHAWELA is a village in the Tammanakaduva District, in the North-Central Province. Here a Tamil inscription on a short 3 ft 6 in. pillar was discovered in 1891 by the then Archaeological Commissioner, the late Mr H. C. P. Bell, and recorded in the "Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon" for the year 1891.² The inscription is of 29 lines, running on to two sides of the pillar.

An estampage of this inscription was sent for examination to Śri H. Krishna Sastri Avl., the then Assistant Archaeological Superintendent for Epigraphy in South India. Śri Krishna Sastri made mention of this inscription in his Epigraphical Report for the year 1913,³ and later published the text of this inscription in the fourth volume of 'South Indian Inscriptions.'⁴

This record is written in the **Tamil script** interspersed here and there with Grantha characters. No puḷḷi sign seems to have been used in this inscription. The following words have been inscribed in the Grantha characters :

1. Śri Jebāhu Deva (ll. 1—2) ; 2. Buddha (l. 10) ; 3. Dharmma (l. 16) ; in the word jīvitam (l. 7) the letter jī is written in Grantha, and the rest in Tamil characters.

The inscription is **dated** in the twenty-eight year of King *Jebāhu Deva*. This king is to be identified with Jayabāhu I who ascended the throne in 1114 A.D. Palaeographically, the script agrees generally with the Tamil script of the period. The inscription begins with six figures—a lance and a conch-shell on either side and a crescent moon and sun in the middle—engraved in a line.

1. I am indebted to the Commissioner of Archaeology for providing me with a photograph of this inscription. The photograph in the plate is reproduced with his kind permission.

2. A.S.C.R., 1891, p. 6.

3. Government of Madras Public Department, G.O. No. 961, 2nd August, 1913, (Madras Epigraphical Reports), p. 67.

4. S.I.I., Vol IV, p. 494.

As regards the **orthography**, we may note that there is a confusion in the use of the two letters *ṇ* (ன) and *ṅ* (ṅ). They are not used in accordance with the spelling in standard Tamil. For example, Uḷakāyakkittanēn (உழகாயக்கித்தனென்—ll. 5—6) should have been written Uḷakāyakkittanēn (உழகாயக்கித்தனென்). Other examples of the incorrect use of these two letters are :—*innilam* (இந்நிலம்—l. 12) for *innilam* (இந்நிலம்); *cnṇirpinpu* (என்நிற்பின்பு—ll. 14—15) for *cnṇirpinpu* (என்னிற்பின்பு); *alittānoruvan* (அழித்தாநொருவன்—ll. 16—18) for *alittānoruvan*; and *ācappaṭuvān* (ஆசைப்படுவான்—ll. 27—28) for *ācappaṭuvān* (ஆசைப்படுவான்). The word *tāyckku* (தாய்க்கு) is written as *tākku* (தாக்கு—l. 27) without the consonant *y* (ய). In line 19, there is a peculiarity in the method of writing the word *kōyil* (கொயில்). For the letter *ko* (கொ), the *kompū* is quite clear. *Ka* (க) though a little mutilated, is fairly clear; but, after *ka*, instead of the sign for *ra*, the scribe has put, evidently by mistake the sign for the trilled *ra* (ṛ).

In this inscription occurs the phrase *mūṅṅu-kai* (முன்றுகை—ll. 21—22) meaning "three hands." This phrase is also found in the *Vēlaikkāra Inscription*⁵ at Polonnaruva. Śri Krishna Sastri states in his Epigraphical Report for the year 1913⁶ that *mūṅṅu-kai* is referred to as the name by which a particular community was known. Their duty was the protection of certain charitable endowments to a temple or other similar institutions. Professor S. Paranavitana mentions that this refers to the three divisions of the *Vēlaikkāras*, namely, the *Mahātantrar*, the *Valaṅṅijiyar* and the *Nagarattār*. The term *Mahātantrar* is found only in Ceylon, and its sense is not clear. The terms *Valaṅṅijiyar* and *Nagarattār* are frequently met with in South Indian inscriptions of this period. They are stated as a wealthy and influential body of merchants.⁷ The "three temples" (*mūṅṅu-kōyil*—முன்றுகொயில்—ll. 18—19) occurring in this inscription are the three fraternities (*nikāyas*) of the Buddhists.

A village called *Patālāya* is mentioned in this inscription. Śri Krishna Sastri who read this word as *Patālāya* earlier,⁸ altered its reading when he published the text of this inscription in the fourth volume of 'South Indian Inscriptions,' where it appears as *Pitāvāi*.⁹ The word *Patālāya* is indited very clearly, that there is no room to doubt this reading. It is difficult to

5. E.I., Vol. 18, p. 337.

6. Madras Epigraphical Report for 1913, p. 101.

7. E.I., Vol. 18, p. 334.

8. Madras Epigraphical Report for 1913, p. 67.

9. S.I.I., Vol. IV, p. 494.

identify this village. There is a village named Pataliya in the Hewawisse Korale, in the Kurunāgala electorate, and another named Pataya'a in the Dambadeniya electorate. The village Patālāya of this inscription may be either of this, or, most probably, different from this.

As has already been stated, the inscription is **dated** in the **twenty-eighth year of Śrī Jebāhu Devar**, who is to be identified with *Jayabāhu I*, the younger brother and successor of Vijayabāhu I. According to Geiger's chronological tables,¹⁰ this monarch ascended the throne in 1114 A.D., at Polonnaruva. Therefore, the inscription in question was indited in 1142 A.D. According to the Sinhalese Chronicles, Jayabāhu I ruled only for two years, after which he was deposed by Vikkramabāhu II. But this inscription is dated in his twenty-eighth regnal year, which is an anomaly. Professor S. Paranavitana offers a satisfactory explanation for this anomaly of dating from the coronation of a deposed, and perhaps deceased, king. He feels that one should assume that documents continued to be dated from the accession of Jayabāhu I even in the reigns of his successors, Vikkramabāhu II and Gajabāhu II, as these monarchs were not duly consecrated.¹¹

The **object** of the inscription is to record the donation of one *vēli* of land to a temple of Buddha by one Uḷakāyakkittan, who was born in the village of Patālāya. In the inscription he says that if anyone violates this gift, one will suffer the sin of destroying the three fraternities, and will also reap the sin of failing in the bounden duty of the three divisions of the Vēḷaikkāras. The land measure *vēli*, according to modern measures, is equal to 6.74 acres.

TEXT—SIDE A

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|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. ஸ்ரீ ஜெவா — | 7. ன ஜிவிதம |
| 2. ஹுஷ்வா — | 8. பெற்ற பதா— |
| 3. ககு யாண்டு | 9. லாய ஊரில |
| 4. உயச ஆவ — | 10. நானுஹா— |
| 5. து உ(மு)கா(ய)— | 11. கு இட்டுககுடு |
| 6. ககித்தநெ— | 12. தத இனநிலம |

10. Geiger : Cūlavamsa, Vol. II, p. XIII.

11. E.Z., Vol. II, pp. 200-202.

TEXT—SIDE B

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|----------------|-------------------|
| 13. ஒரு வெலி | 21. தானுவான (மு)— |
| 14. யும எனநி— | 22. னறு கைக— |
| 15. றபின்பு இ— | 23. கும பி(மு)த— |
| 16. ஸ்ரீயசு — | 24. தானுவான |
| 17. ழித்தானொ— | 25. இது ககு ஆ— |
| 18. ருவன முன— | 26. சைப்படுவா— |
| 19. (று கொ)யி— | 27. ன தனதாககு ஆ— |
| 20. (ஹம) அழித— | 28. சைப்படுவா(ந). |

TRANSLITERATION

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| 1. Śrī Jebā— | 15. rpiṇṇu i— |
| 2. hu Dēvar— | 16. ddharmmam a— |
| 3. kku yāṇṭu | 17. litta no— |
| 4. 28 āva— | 18. ruvaṇ mūṇ— |
| 5. tu U(la)kā(ya) — | 19. (ru kō) yi— |
| 6. kkittanē— | 20. (lum) aḷit— |
| 7. n jivitam | 21. tāṇāvāṇ (mū)— |
| 8. peṛra Patā— | 22. nru kaik— |
| 9. lāya ūril | 23. kum pi(la)i— |
| 10. nāṇ Buddhark— | 24. tā ṇā vāṇ |
| 11. ku iṭṭukkuṭu— | 25. itukku ā— |
| 12. tta iṇṇilam | 26. caippaṭuvā— |
| 13. oru vēli— | 27. ṇ taṇ tākku ā— |
| 14. yum eṇṇi— | 28. caippaṭuvā(n) |

TRANSLATION

- (Lines 1—5): In the 28th year of Śrī Jebāhu Devar,
- (Lines 5—14): this one vēli of land in the village of Patālāya, where I, Uḷakāyakkittan, was born, is given by me to Buddha.
- (Lines 14—21): After me, he who violates this gift will suffer the sin of destroying the three temples.
- (Lines 21—24): He also will incur the sin of violating the (bounden duty of the) three divisions (of the Vēḷaikkāras).
- (Lines 25—28): He who desires (to have) this (piece of land) will (incur the sin of the man who would) desire his own mother (for immoral purposes).

Tantric Influence on the Sculptures at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruva

THE sculptures at Gal Vihāra, Polonnaruva, which are undoubtedly the most impressive monuments in this ancient capital of Ceylon, have attracted the attention of both scholars and laymen alike not only because of their colossal proportions but also because of the peculiar iconographic features noticeable in them. Called the Uttarārāma in the *Cūlavamsa*,¹ the Gal Vihāra was constructed about the middle of the twelfth century by King Parākramabāhu I (A.D. 1153-1186). These sculptures which are four in number are carved on a rock boulder lying south-west to north-east. On the left hand side of the rock, as one approaches it, is carved a colossal statue of the Buddha seated on a *vajrāsana*, in the *dhyāna mudrā*, and next to this on the right hand side in an excavated cave is another seated statue of the Buddha in the same *mudrā* and attended by two divinities on either side. To the right of this cave is a statue in the standing position popularly believed to be of Ānanda, the chief attendant disciple of the Buddha. The identity of this statue has not yet been established. At the extreme right of the boulder is a gigantic recumbent statue of the Buddha.²

Perhaps one of the most striking features of the sculptures at Gal Vihāra is the presence of two distinctly marked facial types, neither of which can be traced to an earlier period in the history of Sinhalese sculpture. Of the four colossal statues here, the face of the recumbent statue³ and that of the larger seated Buddha⁴ share similar features while the face of the seated statue in the excavated cave⁵ and that of the standing statue⁶ are invested with similar characteristics. It would appear that in the two larger statues, i.e., in the larger statue in the *dhyāna mudrā* and in the recumbent statue, the sculptor has employed a facial type appropriate to the larger dimensions of the statues while in the two smaller statues the heads which are well modelled and delicately chiselled impart to them a very attractive

appearance. The facial type in the two smaller statues has some affinity with the type found in some of the statues of the Buddha made during the Pala period in Bihar and Bengal⁷ and perhaps in a smaller measure to that found in some Buddha statues of the Gupta period.⁸ The significance of this affinity should be clear in the sequel.

The faces in the two larger statues, i.e., in the larger seated Buddha and the recumbent Buddha, are unusually round and the details are set in a somewhat flat surface, resulting in a dull and uninteresting expression. The nose is stiff and unnatural in both statues and the eyes are set rather high in the face. In the larger seated Buddha the latter circumstance has reduced the breadth of the forehead as well as the volume of hair falling over the forehead.

The full and round face is a characteristic of most Chinese statues of the Buddha, and considering the commercial and cultural relations that existed between Ceylon and China in the twelfth century, it is not altogether impossible that the sculptors who were responsible for the creation of these two statues had Chinese models for their guidance.⁹ Although it is not possible to point to a specific Chinese sculpture (or sculptures) as having inspired these two statues it will be remembered that Ceylon had from at least about the fifth century established relations with China. Even during the twelfth century these relations had remained uninterrupted.¹⁰

A feature that is commonly shared by the sculptures at Gal Vihāra as well as by some sculptures elsewhere at Polonnaruva is the technique of indicating the folds of the robe or other dress by ridges set off by the incision of two parallel grooves on the stone. This device has not been noticed in

7. R. D. Banerji, Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, Delhi, 1933, Plates II(c), XXIV (e) and XXVI(b).

8. Compare the faces of the two statues with that of the bronze Buddha statue now in the Nālandā Museum, Benjamin Rowland, The Art and Architecture of India, 2nd Edition, Penguin Books, 1956, Plate 94(b).

9. It is interesting to note that a king of Ceylon had sent to the Emperor of China a jade image of the Buddha in A.D. 404. Sculptures of the Buddha of the Anurādhapura period had also some influence on the sculptures of the period of the Southern Dynasties of China, see Leigh Ashton, An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Sculpture, London, 1924, pp. 6 and 95. Compare the faces of the Buddha figures under discussion with the face of the Bodhisattva figure in Plate XVII, of the Buddha figure in Plate XXII, Fig. 2 and of the figure of Avalokiteśvara in Plate XXX, Fig. 2 in Leigh Ashton, *op. cit.*

10. For Chinese relations with Ceylon see, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1911-12, Colombo, 1915, p. 64. Also, *Cūlavamsa*, 73, 84.

1. *Cūlavamsa*, Vol. II, ed. W. Geiger, London, 1927, 78, 74.
2. For a full description of these sculptures see Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1907, Colombo, 1911, pp. 7-17.
3. Plate I.
4. Plate II.
5. Plate III.
6. Plate IV.

the sculptures of earlier periods in Ceylon¹¹ and seems to have ceased to find favour with Sinhalese sculptors after the Polonnaruva period. In India, however, this device appears to have been in existence as early as the second or the third century A.D., when it appears for the first time in some of the sculptures from the Amarāvati Stūpa.¹² Though it is not possible to trace its use continuously in later periods in India, it appears to have come into vogue again in the eighth century when it can be noticed in some of the Pāla sculptures of Bihar and Bengal, particularly in the stelae of the Tantric schools, which were being produced in large numbers in this region from about the eighth century to the twelfth century.¹³ This device can also be noticed in some metal sculptures of South India assigned to about the tenth century.¹⁴ Thus it would appear that this device was introduced to Ceylon as a result of contact with Pāla or with South Indian artistic traditions. Another feature that seems to have been introduced in the Gal Vihāra sculptures from the same quarter is the employment of two parallel lines of ridges to indicate the folds of the robe. This feature is not so extensively employed as the one mentioned earlier but can be noticed in certain parts of the recumbent statue at Gal Vihāra, for example, the right hand side of the trunk. As far as the writer is aware this technique does not occur in sculptures made before the Polonnaruva period nor in those made in subsequent periods. It can, however, be noticed in Pāla sculptures and also in some South Indian sculptures of about the tenth century.¹⁵

11. Traces of this technique are noticeable in some early sculptures of Ceylon, e.g., in the Buddha statue from the Ruvanvāsīyā, Anurādhapura, Benjamin Rowland, *op. cit.* Plate 137(A). This technique is found in various stages of development. Possibly the earliest stage of development is seen in sculptures where two grooves are made somewhat apart from each other leaving a flat ridge in between the grooves. In the more developed stages the flat ridge is subjected to further chiselling which reduces it to the form of a cord. The more developed stage is to be seen in the Polonnaruva sculptures. The earlier stage can be seen in an undated Buddha statue in the Bell Collection in the Colombo Museum for an illustration of this statue see, D. T. Devendra, *The Buddha Image and Ceylon*, Kandy, 1957, Plate XVIII.

12. For this technique in the Amarāvati sculptures, see C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures* in the Madras Government Museum, Madras, 1943, Plates XXXIII, 2, and LXII, 2.

13. R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plates V (c) and XXIV (d) where the technique is well developed. The drapery of the Buddha statue from Nālandā, Plate XXIV (d), is very much similar to that in the Polonnaruva Buddha statues. In the statues illustrated in Plates VIII (a), IX (c), XII (a), (b), (c) the technique is rudimentary.

14. F. N. Gravely and T. N. Ramachandran, *Catalogue of South Indian Metal Images in the Madras Government Museum*, Madras, 1932, Plates II, 1, and III, 1; T. N. Ramachandran, *The Nāgapaṭṭināra and other Buddhist Bronzes in the Madras Museum*, Madras, 1954, Plate XVIII, 2 and 3.

15. R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plate XVII (c) and (d). It occurs in Brahmanical sculptures of the period too; see Plates L(a) and LVI(b). Variations of this technique are employed in some Brahmanical bronzes discovered at Polonnaruva, assigned to the 10-13th century, A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Bronzes from Ceylon*, chiefly in the Colombo Museum, Ceylon, 1914, Plates II, Fig. 3, XII and XIII. These bronzes may have been imported to Ceylon from South India.

The Seated Buddha Statue

The two seated Buddha statues, both in the *dhyāna mudrā*, one carved out of the rock, and the other carved out inside the excavated cave and of smaller dimensions than the other, pose a number of interesting problems that deserve to be examined in detail. First, the larger of the two statues has been invested with several features which are not met with in earlier sculptures of the Buddha found in Ceylon, though some of these features are found in later works even upto very recent times.¹⁶ Of particular interest in this sculpture are the following :

1. The representation of the *vajra* alternately with figures of lions in the recessed dado of the pedestal.
2. The *makara-toraṇa* at the back of the statue consisting of three cross bars arched in the middle and terminating in *makara-* heads.
3. The horse-shoe shaped halo around the head of the figure of the Buddha. This consists of two bands of which the outer one is decorated with a tassel design intended to represent beams of light (*ketumālā*) emanating from the head of the Buddha.
4. The over-all pseudo-arch whose terminals are based on the imposts of the *toraṇa*. This arch consists of a series of curves appropriately arranged around the head of the Buddha, opening inwards and meeting in cusps.
5. The representations of *vimānas* arranged two on each side of the arch mentioned above, and the miniature Buddha figures carved inside them.
6. The miniature representations of *stūpas* carved on either side of the arch surrounding the head of the main statue but on the outer sides of the *vimānas*.
7. The base with mouldings surmounting the back-slab in the centre.
8. The shape of the back-slab.

An attempt is now made to examine each of the above features of detail with a view to ascertaining the factors that weighed in the minds of the sculptors when they designed this statue.

16. For example the halo round the head of the Buddha. This halo in later times has taken a different shape.

the *varada mudrā* and the *bhūsparśa mudrā* are also met with.²⁸ Finally, there is also the possibility that though the sculptors who executed these sculptures employed in their work motifs and symbols usually employed in sculptures meant for Tantric worship they, nevertheless, refrained from giving a faithful rendering of the *sādhanas* in their work, lest the Theravāda Buddhists who also must have worshipped at this shrine feel scandalised at being obliged to pay homage to statues made according to the requirements of a cult which at least in public they would not have hesitated to frown upon. The *Nikāyasamgrahaya*, a Sinhalese work of the fourteenth century dealing with the history of the schools of Buddhism in Ceylon from the beginning, makes the statement that a cult called the *Vājirīya-vāda* which was practised by ignorant people as an esoteric doctrine prevailed in this country from the time of King Matvala-sen (A.D. 846-866) upto the time when the book was written.²⁹

6. There are altogether four representations of the *stūpa* in this sculpture, one on each of the outward sides of the two upper floors of the *prāsāda* formed of the *vimānas*. Together with miniature figures of Buddhas, representations of *stūpas* are also employed in stelae used by followers of Tantrism in Bihar and Bengal for purposes of worship.³⁰ The *stūpas* depicted in this sculpture, however, are quite different in shape from the *stūpas* found on the Tantric stelae mentioned above, but closely resemble some of the votive *stūpas* discovered at Nāgapaṭṭinam. In some of these latter *stūpas* the *garbha* increases in diameter towards the top,³¹ a feature shared by brass pots used in South India as well as by the *pūrṇaḥaṭas* found at the portals of the *stūpas* at Anurādhapura, Ceylon. It is also remarkable that the *stūpas* on this sculpture do not resemble in shape any of the *stūpas* already constructed at Anurādhapura and elsewhere at the time when this sculpture was executed. Why the sculptors who were responsible for this statue should seek inspiration in the votive *stūpas* used at Nāgapaṭṭinam in South India in preference to the *stūpas* of Ceylon can be explained if it can be shown that religious connections existed between Ceylon and Nāgapaṭṭinam during the period in question. Even as early as the eighth century when Tantrism began to flourish in India, a well-known master of Tantrism arrived in Ceylon from Nāgapaṭṭinam on his way to China.³² Further-

28. Some of the statues in the exceptional *mudrās* may have been imported to Ceylon.

29. *Nikāya Saṅgraha*, ed. K. C. Fernando, Colombo, 1932, p. 22. There is no doubt that the *vājirīya-vāda* referred to in this work is Vajrayāna. The terms Vajrayāna, Tantrayāna and Mantrayāna indicate the same school of Buddhism, Tantrism.

30. R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plates II (c), III (c), V (a), VIII (c) etc.

31. T. N. Ramachandran, *op. cit.*, Plates XII (1), XIV (1-4) etc. These *stūpas* are assigned to the early Coḷa period.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

more when the influence of Śaṅkarācārya became a dominant force in South India many Buddhists of this region trekked to Ceylon and other countries favourable to Buddhism. King Parākramabāhu I in whose reign these sculptures at Gal Vihāra were set up invited monks from South India to come over to Ceylon³³ and some of these South Indian monks made a very substantial contribution towards the development of Buddhist thought in Ceylon. It is possibly through these contacts that the motif of the pot shaped *stūpa*, *ghaṭākāra-stūpa*, was introduced to Ceylon.

7. and 8. As is seen clearly in Plate II the whole sculpture terminates at the top in the base of a *vimāna* somewhat longer than the base of the *vimānas* situated on the lower floors. This and the sockets above it accommodated the topmost *vimāna* of the *prāsāda* as was shown in 4 above. This *vimāna*, it may be remarked once again, should have contained the miniature figure of the *dhyāni* Buddha associated with Buddha Gautama.

The shape of the dressed back-slab on which the main figure and its appurtenances have been carved is also of great significance in that it has the same shape as some of the Indian Tantric stelae of the Pāla period. As it is, today, it is semi-circular in shape at the top. When the *vimāna* that is missing today was intact it should have had a shape similar to that of some of those Indian Tantric stelae in which the upper part tapers into a point somewhat in the manner of Ceylon guard-stones having the shape of a conventional cobra hood. To take a particular Indian stele, this sculpture resembles in respect of shape in a most remarkable manner a stele from Bihar now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, depicting Bodhisattva Lokeśvara.³⁴ Like the sculpture at Gal Vihāra the iconography of this stele is unconventional in that it conforms to no *sādhana* so far discovered. The stele is undated but cannot belong to a period later than the twelfth century.

Finally it may be stated that the fore-going analysis has shown that this sculpture was designed and executed in conformity, to some extent, with the concepts formulated in the *sādhanas* and that it was intended to be a Tantric *maṇḍala* in concrete form for the use of the followers of Tantrism in Ceylon, though it may have at the same time been an object of worship to the orthodox Buddhists of the country as well.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

34. R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plate XV (d) and p. 94.

Sculptures in the Vijjādhara-Guhā

In its main aspects the chief sculptured figure in this excavated cave is the same as that of the sculpture discussed above. It is a figure of a Buddha posed in the *dhyāna mudrā*, seated on a throne of which the dado is decorated with alternating figures of the *vajra* and of the lion. At the back of the statue is a *makara-toraṇa* with only one *makara*-head on each side flanked by figures of *vyālas*. Behind the head of the main figure is an oval shaped plain halo. Above the head is carved the underside of a *chatra*. On either side of the halo are the figures of two divine beings of whose bodies only the waist upwards is shown, the rest of the body being intended to be covered by the topmost cross bar and the impost of the *toraṇa*. On a recessed pediment on either side of the main figure are the standing figures of two *cāmara-dhārī* or fly-whisk bearers. The *cāmara-dhārī* on the right hand side proper of the main figure holds the fly whisk with the right hand and supports it with the left, while the *cāmara-dhārī* on the left proper holds the fly whisk with the left hand and supports it with the right. Once again the dressed back slab is semi-circular at the top and is neatly and clearly demarcated from the surface of the original rock, and the whole ensemble bears a remarkably close resemblance to the Tantric stelae of Bihar and Bengal, one significant difference being that the *āsana* projects forwards considerably in contrast to the *āsanas* in the Indian counterparts.

These features make it clear that this sculpture is an attempt to represent the Buddha Gautama at the moment of his enlightenment, who is then called in Tantric terminology the Vajrāsana Buddha. In the *Sādhanamālā* the characteristics of the *vajrāsana* Buddha are laid down as follows: "The worshipper should meditate himself as (*Vajrāsana*) who displays the *bhū-sparśa mudrā* in his right hand while the left rests on the lap. He is dressed in red garments and sits on the *vajra*-marked double lotus placed on the four Māras of blue, white, red and green colour. He is peaceful in appearance and his body is endowed with all the major and minor auspicious marks. To the right of the God is Maitreya Bodhisattva who is white, two armed, and wears the *jaṭā-makuṭa* (crown of matted hair) and carries the chowrie-jewel in the right hand and the *nāgakeśarī* flower in the left. Similarly, to the left of the principal God is Lokeśvara of white complexion, carrying in his right hand the chowrie and the lotus in the left."³⁵

35. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Calcutta, 1958, p. 78.

It will be noticed at once that the sculpture in the Vijjādhara-guhā does not conform to this description in all its details. The most noteworthy defect in the sculpture in this respect is that the main figure is in the *dhyāna-mudrā* and not in the *bhū-sparśa-mudrā* as indicated in the *Sādhanamālā*. In Ceylon, as was stated earlier, the commonest *mudrā* employed in seated statues of the Buddha is the *dhyāna mudrā*. Either because of this practice or because of the circumstances referred to above in the discussion of the other seated Buddha at Gal Vihāra the sculptors who executed this have deviated from the requirements of the *Sādhanamālā*. The double lotus seat has been provided but it is not marked by a representation of the *vajra*, which is however repeated in the dado of the *āsana* thrice. The four Māras mentioned in the *Sādhanamālā* are the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Indra.³⁶ Of these it will be seen that the sculptor has provided only the figures of Brahmā and Viṣṇu.

The two attendant Bodhisattvas while otherwise conforming to the requirements of the *Sādhanamālā*, do not seem to be carrying in their hands either the *nāgakeśarī* flower or the lotus; instead each *cāmara-dhārī* employs both his hands to hold and support the *cāmara*. But these figures have been invested with characteristics associated with Bodhisattvas, characteristics such as the *makara-kunḍala*, the *upavīta*, a variety of neck ornaments and a rudimentary *kīrti-mukha* on the drawers. It can, therefore, be taken that these two *cāmara-dhārīs* were designed to represent Maitreya and Lokeśvara even though their full iconographical paraphernalia have not been provided.

The other interesting feature of this sculpture, the figures of Brahmā and Viṣṇu placed on either side of the halo of the main figure, is best described in the words of H. C. P. Bell, who was one of the pioneers of archaeological investigation in Ceylon. "Under the canopy," says Bell, "and between the peaked finials of the *toraṇa* and the Buddha's haloed head, two Hindu *deviyo*, one on each side, are figured from the knee upwards in three-quarter length. Both gods—Vidyādhara to the Sinhalese chronicler—are four armed. The lower pair of arms and hands are held in front of the body with palms joined in sign of adoration; the back arms, held with elbows bent, grasp in the hands the insignia appropriate to each

Nispanmayogāvalī, ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, Baroda, 1949, Introduction p. 21.

deviyā. Both are garbed much after the fashion of the *cāmarakārayo*.³⁷ Bell rightly concludes that the figure to the right of the Buddha is Brahmā and that to the left Viṣṇu. It may be remarked here that these two deities together with Indra and Śiva were called *Māras* because they were considered hostile to the Buddha before they were admitted to the Buddhist pantheon by the followers of Tantrism.

It will thus be seen that in spite of the inconsequential deviations from the *Sādhanamālā*, the sculptor in this instance too has attempted to make a sculpture of the Vajrāsana Buddha on the lines of a Tantric stele. Thus we see in these two seated Buddhas of Gal Vihāra the results of an attempt made by Sinhalese craftsmen of old to combine artistic traditions of South India, Bihar and Bengal with those already existing in the country to produce a set of images that would assist the spiritual development of the followers of Tantrism as well of Theravāda Buddhists—a set of images which have between them contributed the greater share of the grandeur that is Gal Vihāra.

Tantrism in Ceylon

In the fore-going analysis it has been shown that it was Tantric concepts that determined the form and content of the sculptures of the two seated Buddhas at Gal Vihāra. It is perhaps not out of place here to inquire to what extent Tantrism prevailed in this country in the twelfth century when

37. For Bell's description, see Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1907, p. 12.

In both pairs of attendant deities there are deviations from the *sādhanas* and the *śāstras*. In the figures of the two deities which I identify as Maitreya and Lokēśvara the *nāgakeśarī* flower and the lotus are missing though they have been provided with *cāmaras*. Such deviations are to be met with in Indian sculpture. For a Vajrāsana-buddha-bhaṭṭāraka group where the figures of Maitreya and Lokēśvara are provided with only the *nāgakeśarī* flower and the lotus, see R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plate XXXI. The *makuṭas* of the two deities are not *jaṭa-makuṭas* as prescribed but can be regarded as belonging to the type of *makuṭa* known as *karaṇḍa-makuṭa*, which is shaped like a basket held upside down, the basket having the form of a reversed cone, broad at its mouth and narrow at its bottom, J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, University of Calcutta, 1941, p. 313. In the *Nispanna-yogāvālī*, a work of the eleventh or the twelfth century dealing with the preparation of Tantric *maṇḍalas*, Brahmā is described as follows: *Tatra haṃse brahmā pīṭhaścaturmukhaścaturbhūjō'kṣasūtrābhṛtsavyetarābhyām kṛtāñjalirdaṇḍakamaṇḍaludharah*. In the same work Viṣṇu is described as *'garuḍe viṣṇuścaturbhūjaścakraśamkhabhṛtsavyavāmābhyām mūrḍhni kṛtāñjalirgadāsārṇi gadharah*. For the two descriptions see *Nispanna-yogāvālī* ed. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, p. 61. In the sculpture in the Vijjādhara-guhā the details of the insignia carried by the two gods have been obliterated. Brahmā in his rear left hand carries a lotus but the object in his rear right hand cannot be identified. It looks like a book but should probably be a rosary. The two front hands do not carry any objects but are clasped in an attitude of worship. Brahmā is also shown as having one head and not four. His vehicle, the Indian goose, and the staff and the pitcher are also not shown. Similarly the iconography of Viṣṇu has been simplified. He is shown as carrying a conch and a *cakra* in the rear hands, while the front hands are shown in an attitude of worship. For the position of Hindu gods in the Tantric pantheon, see Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, p. 345.

the Gal Vihāra was constructed. The Mahāyāna form of Buddhism was introduced to Ceylon in the beginning of the third century and continued to be a potent force through the centuries in spite of the intermittent opposition of the orthodox Buddhists. When the Tantric form of Buddhism began to flourish in India in the eighth century its influence was immediately felt in Ceylon and according to the *Nikāyasaṅgrahaya* it was formally introduced to Ceylon in the reign of King Matva-la-sen,³⁸ i.e., King Sena I whose reign lasted from A.D. 846-866. But there is evidence to show that Tantrism existed in Ceylon even before the reign of King Sena I. Chinese documents, for example, refer to two masters of Vajrayāna or Tantrism who visited Ceylon in the beginning of the eighth century. One of them a monk named Vajrabodhi, on his visit to Ceylon, is said to have worshipped at the Holy Tooth of the Buddha which at the time must have been enshrined at Anurādhapura, the capital. His pupil Amoghavajra, a Vajrayāna teacher from northern India, who had already contributed towards the propagation of Tantrism in China, visited Ceylon about the year A.D. 740. In Ceylon he is said to have met a teacher called Samantabhadra by name, who probably was also an exponent of Tantrism. He also sought for the scriptures of the esoteric sect, i.e., Tantrism, and is said to have obtained more than five hundred *sūtras* and commentaries. Further he received instruction in the technique of the ritual, in the *samaya*, in the *mudrās* of the various deities, their forms and colours, in the methods of arranging altars and banners, and in the literal and intrinsic meanings of the texts.³⁹ That two Indian masters of Tantrism who were interested in propagating their doctrine in China should come to Ceylon for the purpose of receiving instruction in the theory and practice of Tantrism is ample evidence for the flourishing state of this particular doctrine in Ceylon in the eighth century. At the time when the Gal Vihāra sculptures were set up, Tantrism appears to have received a fresh impetus at the hands of King Parākramabāhu I at whose direction several religious edifices for the benefit of the orthodox Buddhists were constructed. According to the *Cūlavamsa*, in the course of building *vihāras* and other monastic edifices at Polonnaruva, Parākramabāhu built a beautiful *dhāraṇīghara* for the recitation of magic incantations⁴⁰ and another house called the *maṇḍala-mandira* for listening to the birth stories of the Great Sage, which were related by a teacher appointed

38. See note 29.

39. For Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, see, Chou Yi-Liang, *Tantrism in China*, Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Vol. VIII, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., 1944-1945 pp. 272-307 and appendices. For other evidence of the existence of Tantric cults in Ceylon at the time see, *History of Ceylon* Vol. I, Ceylon University Press, Colombo, 1959, p. 384.

40. *Cūlavamsa*, 73. 71.

for the purpose.⁴¹ There is no doubt that the *dhāraṇī-ghara* referred to in the *Cūlavamsa* was a house where the followers of Tantrism met to recite *dhāraṇīs*.⁴² The term *maṇḍala-mandira* also suggests a building required for Tantric worship, although the author of the *Cūlavamsa*⁴³ explains the purpose, for which the building was set up in a different way. A *maṇḍala* in Tantric terminology is a magic circle where the position of Buddhas and related Bodhisattvas is indicated either through graphic representations or through symbols assigned to these divinities. According to the *Hevajra Tantra*, an important Tantric text, the ordering of the *maṇḍala* and the initiation of the pupil should take place in a *maṇḍalāgāra*.⁴⁴ The *maṇḍala-mandira* of the *Cūlavamsa* connotes the same thing, and if so, it may be taken that what Parākrāmabāhu really built was a hall where Tantric rituals were performed and not a place where *Jātaka*-stories were related. Probably the author of the *Cūlavamsa* confused the representations of Bodhisattvas with *Jātaka*-stories, i.e., stories of Bodhisattvas.

King Parākrāmabāhu is also credited with having built a house called the *pañcasattati-mandira* "for the reception of the magic water and the magic thread given him by the yellow robed ascetics."⁴⁵ Here again the word *pañcasattati* is suggestive of Tantrism and may very well be the name of a Tantric text and the *pañcasattati-mandira* may have been a place where this particular text, was recited. A work by this name has not been found among the numerous texts on Tantrism, but a work called *Saptasaptati*, which is a commentary on the Tantric treatise *Vajracchedikā* is known to exist.⁴⁶

The *dhammāgāra* built by King Parākrāmabāhu, according to the *Cūlavamsa*, was "resplendent with a series of pictures of Buddhas which

41. *Ibid.*, 73. 72.

42. A *dhāraṇī* is a short formula intended to represent a particular Tantric text. Thus if a *dhāraṇī* of a particular text is recited a hundred times such repetition will be as effective as repeating the text an equal number of times.

43. The authorship of the first part of the *Cūlavamsa* which includes the history of the reign of King Parākrāmabāhu I is generally attributed to a Buddhist monk named Dhammakitti who lived in the reign of King Parākrāmabāhu II in the 13th century, *Cūlavamsa*, Vol. I, ed. W. Geiger, London, 1925, p. iii; G. P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*, London, 1928, p. 142. Some scholars, however, believe that this work was compiled in the time of King Parākrāmabāhu I or at the latest in the reign of Queen Lilāvati, (1197-1200), C. E. Godakumbura, *Cūlavamsa—Its Authorship and Date*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, Vol. XXXVIII, Colombo, 1949, pp. 123-125. Even if it is accepted that the relevant part of the *Cūlavamsa* was composed in the reign of Queen Lilāvati or even earlier, it is possible that the buildings concerned were put to uses other than those for which they were strictly meant.

44. The *Hevajra Tantra*, Part II, ed. D. L. Snellgrove, London, 1959, p. 34.

45. *Cūlavamsa*, Vol. II, 73. 73.

46. *Minor Buddhist Texts*, Part I, ed. Giuseppe Tucci, Rome, 1956, p. 32 et seq.

were painted on silk."⁴⁷ The description of the paintings would suggest Chinese paintings of Tantric *maṇḍalas* and such paintings going as far back as the twelfth century are still to be found in China and elsewhere.⁴⁸

The name given in the *Cūlavamsa* to the excavated cave at Gal Vihāra also appears to be suggestive of Tantric worship and ritual. It is usually believed that the name Vijjādhara-guhā had been given to this cave because there were figures of *vidyādharas* among the sculptures in the cave.⁴⁹ We have, however, seen that there are no such figures there, unless the two attendant Bodhisattvas and the gods Brahmā and Viṣṇu can be regarded as belonging to the category of *vidyādharas*. It is, nevertheless, not possible to class these well known Bodhisattvas and gods with nondescript godlings such as *vidyādharas*. Even if these Bodhisattvas and gods were regarded as *vidyādharas*, it would seem unlikely that such an unimportant aspect of this shrine as the figures of these deities would have been used as a basis for its name. Thus some other explanation has to be sought for the name of this cave as given in the *Cūlavamsa*. In Tantric terminology the word *vidyādhara* does not only mean a super-human being possessed of magical power, but also has the sense of one who possesses *mantras*, magical formulae employed in Tantric ritual.⁵⁰ It has also the sense conveyed by the term *dhāraṇī*. For example one of the Tantric texts now lost in the original but extant in a Chinese version is given the names *Vidyādhara-piṭaka* and also *Dhāraṇī-piṭaka*.⁵¹ Thus the name Vijjādhara-guhā may quite probably have been given to this cave by virtue of its being at that time a place where Tantric worship took place in the form of the recitation of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*. It is also to be noted that in the worship of the Vajrāsana-Buddha, which, it has been shown, is the theme of the sculpture in the Vijjādhara-guhā, the worshipper is enjoined upon to recite several *mantras* specifically stated in the *sādhana*s.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Cūlavamsa*, II, 73. 77 : *paṭṭhōpitasabbaññubimbamālāvāṇītam*. This does not necessarily mean the paintings were of the Buddha, as Geiger translates the phrase. It may be that the paintings were of different Buddhas.

⁴⁸ For a detail from 'a long scroll of Buddhist images' drawn by Chang Sheng-wen between 1176, see *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. VIII, Plate 15.

⁴⁹ Even Bell thought that the chroniclers believed that the attendant deities were *vidyādharas*, see

⁵⁰ Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *The Vidyādharapitaka*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1895, p. 433 and p. 435.

⁵¹ See the paper referred to in note 50.

⁵² *Sāghanamālā* Vol. I, *Vajrāsana-sāghanam*. In the excavation of the Pabulu Vehera at Polonnaruwa a small copper plaque containing a modified form of a well known Tantric *mantra* was discovered.

The text of this *mantra* written in the Sinhalese script of 9th or 10th century reads as follows : *śrīpādme svastī*. Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1937, Colombo, 1938, p. 11.

The monuments at Tantri-malai⁵³ are also of considerable interest as evidence in support of the existence of Tantrism in Ceylon in the twelfth century. The chief monuments here are a seated Buddha image in sunk relief and a recumbent Buddha image, both similar to those at Gal Vihāra. The sedent Buddha, which does not appear to have been completed, is accommodated on a plain *āsana* behind which is a *makara-toraṇa* similar to the one in the Vijaḍhara-guhā. The *vajra* symbol does not appear anywhere in the *āsana*. Two *cāmaradhāris* are placed alongside the halo of the Buddha on either side of it. On each side of the recess where these figures are sculptured are incised four panels. Only one of these eight panels contains any sculpture. It is possible that these panels were intended to carry the figures of the last seven Buddhas and Maitreya, a theme sometimes found in Pāla sculpture.⁵⁴ The whole sculpture, apparently, was intended to be a *vajrāsana* Buddha, when completed. The site where these monuments are situated has been called by a Tamil name, Tantri-malai, Tantric Hill, from the time it had been re-discovered in the last century. It is not possible to ascertain whether this name has been traditionally handed down from early times, and, if not, by what name this site had been known when the monuments were constructed there. The name Tantri-malai may possibly have preserved a suggestion of the Tantric associations of the site, and as these monuments are also assigned to a period not far removed from the time when the Gal Vihāra sculptures were set up,⁵⁵ the name Tantri-malai provides some measure of testimony to the existence of Tantrism in Ceylon in the twelfth century. There is thus sufficient evidence to show that Tantrism was a living cult in Ceylon in the twelfth century, and that it was in order to meet the spiritual needs of the followers of this cult that the two seated Buddha figures at Gal Vihāra were constructed.

It may also be pointed out that even before the time of King Parākrama-bāhu I attempts had been made to adopt Tantric forms of sculpture in Ceylon. A stone stele⁵⁶ of the same shape and with the same iconographic

53. For an account of the monuments at Tantri-Malai, see Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1896, Colombo, 1914, pp. 7-8. Plate XXXI in this report contains an illustration of the sedent Buddha. See also Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report, 1907, Colombo, 1911, p. 33 for an account of the sedent Buddha.

54. For a sculpture of this subject see, R. D. Banerji, *op. cit.*, Plate XXXI (b).

55. John Still, Tantrimalai, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch*, Vol. XXII pp. 81-82; Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report, 1896, p. 8; the same Annual Report for 1907, p. 34.

56. Plate V.

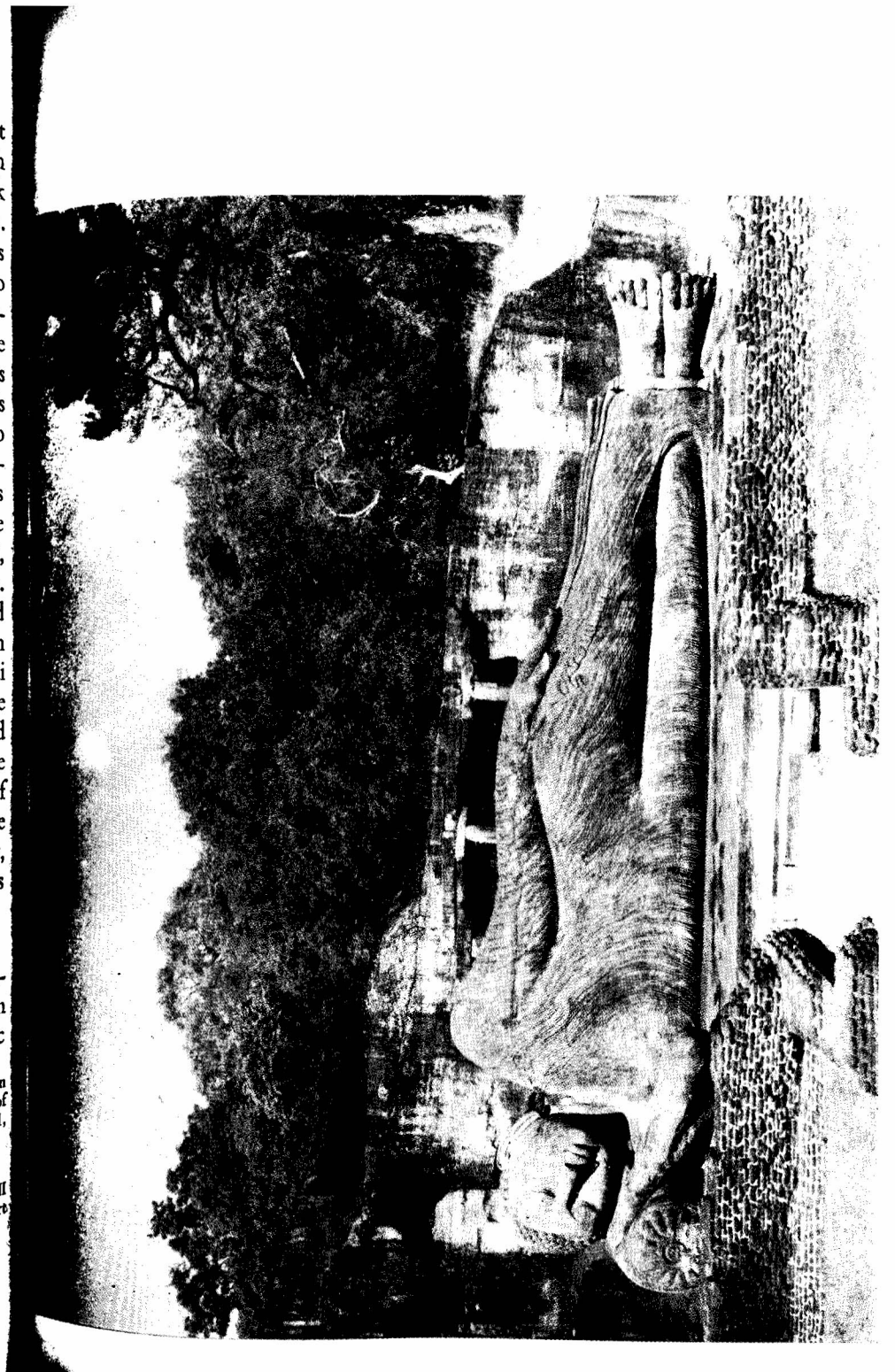
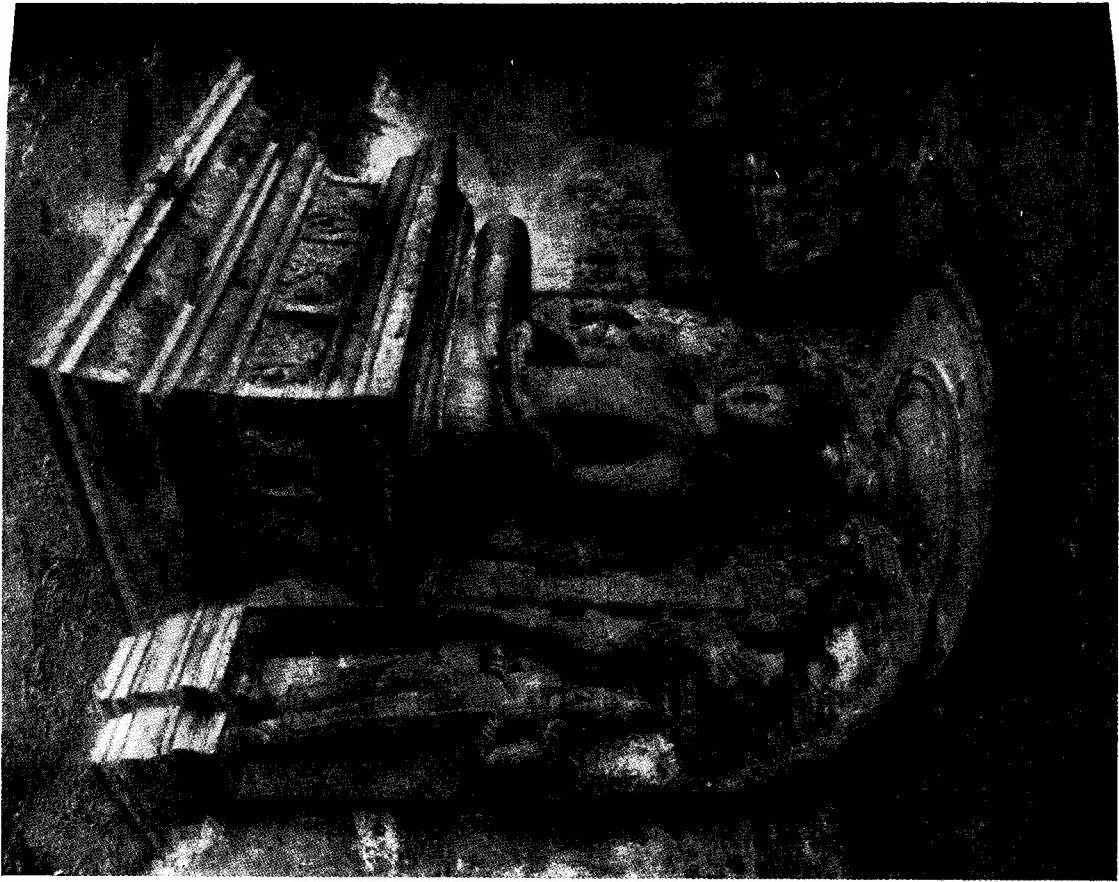


PLATE I — Recumbent Buddha, Gal Vihāra



Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of Egypt

PLATE II — Seated Buddha, Gal Vihāra



Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon
PLATE III — Seated Buddha in Cave, Gal Vihāra



Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon

PLATE IV — Standing Figure, Gal Vihāra



Courtesy, Archaeological Survey of Goplon

PLATE V — Stela in Gadhige at Nālanda

SCULPTURES AT GAL VIHARA, POLONNARUVA

characteristics as are found in the stelae of the Pāla period is found incorporated into one of the walls of the so-called *Gedīgē* at Nālanda,⁵⁷ which was evidently an image-house where Tantric worship had been performed when it was in use. The stela contains the figure of a deity with two attendants on either side, the one on the deity's proper right being in an attitude of worship, while the one on his proper left stands holding some unidentifiable object in his hands. The main figure most probably represents Bodhisattva Lokeśvara, one of the many forms of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who has been entrusted with the salvation of the world in the present age.

As regards Ceylon's connections with the north eastern part of India during the Pāla regime there is hardly any evidence either in the Chronicles or in the other historical documents of Ceylon, though there is a considerable body of evidence to show King Parākramabāhu's relations with other parts of India. It is very likely that Buddhist scholars and savants who lived in Ceylon at the time as well as others who lived in the preceding centuries had cultural ties with centres of learning in north eastern India such as Nālandā which flourished as an international university for over eight centuries almost upto the beginning of the thirteenth century, exerting influence over the whole of South East Asia. Scholars from Nālandā also visited countries such as Ceylon, China, Korea and even Japan.⁵⁸ There is, however, definite archaeological evidence to show that Ceylon had direct or indirect contact with this part of India when Tantrism was a flourishing state there. A few stone stelae in the Pāla style have been found in Ceylon⁵⁹ and some stone inscriptions containing Tantric *dhāraṇīs* written in the Nāgarī script used in north eastern India about the ninth century have also been discovered in the vicinity of the Abhayagiri Stūpa at Anurādhapura.⁶⁰ Thus there is reason to believe that some of the Tantric conventions and the stylistic peculiarities of Pāla sculpture noticed in the two statues at Gal Vihāra examined above were introduced from the region of Bihar and Bengal at some stage before the commencement of the reign of Parākramabāhu I. Even in the reign of this ruler contact between Ceylon and this region may have remained uninterrupted.

57. For an account of the *Gedīgē* at Nālanda, see Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1911, Colombo, 1914, pp. 43-50. This building is assigned to about the 8th century, and very probably the stela referred to in the text belongs to this period. For the date of the *Gedīgē*, see Survey of Ceylon, Vol. I, Ceylon University Press, Colombo, 1959, p. 401.

H. D. Sankalia, The University of Nālandā, Madras, 1934, p. 201.

Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1950, Colombo, 1951, pp. 7 and 25.

History of Ceylon, Vol. I, Ceylon University Press, 1959, p. 384; Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1940-45, Colombo, 1947, p. 41.

Finally there is the question whether the standing figure popularly believed to be of Ānanda and the recumbent Buddha at Gal Vihāra were also meant to be objects of worship and meditation to the followers of Tantrism. There are no special iconographic features in these two statues that would enable one to identify them as Tantric images but they certainly appear to have formed an integral part of the ensemble of sculptures at Gal Vihāra.⁶¹ In the absence, therefore, of any evidence to the contrary, it can be taken that these two statues together with the two seated Buddha statues formed one whole Tantric temple, the Uttarārāma, which, then, would have been a special contribution made by King Parākramabāhu I to serve the needs of the followers of Tantrism of whom there must have been considerable numbers among his subjects.

P. E. E. FERNANDO

61. According to the *Cūlavamsa*, King Parākramabāhu had three grottoes made, namely, the Vijjādhara-guhā, the cave with the image in sitting posture and the grotto with the recumbent image, *Cūlavamsa*, Vol. II, 78. 73-75. The standing figure is not mentioned here and may have formed one shrine together with the recumbent statue. It is invested with characteristics usually associated with figures of the Buddha, the exception being the position of the hands. The ground plan of the brick structures at this site shows that there were four separate shrines including one constructed over the standing figure, demonstrating perhaps that the figure represents the Buddha. Paranavitana thinks that the figure represents the Buddha as *para-dukkha-dukkhita*, 'he who is sorrowing for the sorrows of others,' History of Ceylon, Vol. I, University of Ceylon Press Board, Colombo, 1959, p. 605. For the plan of Gal Vihāra, see Archaeological Survey of Ceylon Annual Report 1907.