

# KING VALAGAMBĀ'S ROLE IN THE UNCHARTED HISTORY OF THE DAMBULLA CAVE TEMPLE'

The fact that many an ancient rock temple in Sri Lanka traces its origin to the reign of King Valagambā or Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya (103-77 BC) of the Pāli chronicles, even though some of them may yet retain inscriptions of an earlier period, has often puzzled epigraphists and historians. This is often assumed to be a result of a faulty oral tradition, and that appears to be their attitude towards the same tradition concerning the ancient and hallowed Cave Temple of Dambulla.

Recent clearing of the slopes of Dambulla Rock as a part of the Cultural Triangle Project, shows that there had once been a vast complex of more than seventy different habitable caves here, some containing early Brahmi inscriptions which may be traced to a period before King Valagambā. Even Paranavitana had traced one of these inscriptions in the main group of caves to the first Buddhist monarch, Devānampiya Tissa, in the third century BC although his own identification of the site as Chātapabbata of the chronicles, at a later date, makes it more likely that *Devanapiya-maharajha Gamini Tisa* mentioned there, refers to King Saddhātissa (137-119 BC) who, according to the Mahāvamsa Ṭikā (MT, often referred to hereafter, as 'the Commentary,') built a vihāra there (MT.300:12).<sup>2</sup>

However, most scholars do not seem to have considered the possibility that it is not the tradition that is at fault in this regard, but our own interpretation of it in modern times. The preparation of a cave for donation to the ascetic monks of an earlier age, did not carry the same implication as the building of a temple in the later sense, of an institution with legal rights to resources of its own. The first ruler to introduce this new concept as a general rule appears to have been King Valagambā himself.

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2. S. Paranavitana, *Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon Vol.I*: see note on inscription No.835, p. lx.

The first type of donation was of a habitat to members of a timeless Order: "*agata anagata catudisa sagasā dine*" i.e. "Gifted to the Sangha of the four quarters, of the present and the future." Legality of ownership and succession came only with the establishment of a monastery with the endowment of revenues from lands donated for its maintenance in perpetuity. The necessity for such an arrangement arose as a safeguard against the exodus from monasteries for lack of sustenance due to foreign invasions or long periods of drought and famine. The destitution caused by both these circumstances was amply felt by the ruler himself, due to his first hand experiences as a fugitive, during the 12-year drought and famine known as the *Bāminitiyā Sāya*, that may have started before the defeat of King Valagambā in the year 103 BC by seven South Indian armies of invasion which landed at the same time at the port of Mahātitttha.

The privations suffered by this king during his fourteen years of hiding from the enemy included the sharing of food from the begging bowl of a monk who himself had to wander far out from his monastery to gather alms, as well as his seeking refuge in caves of the type occupied by monks, often unprotected from the rains by a drip-ledge. As an outcome of this first hand experience King Valamgambā appears to have introduced two important changes after regaining his throne.

The first of these according to the *Pūjāvaliya* (p. 773) and the *Rājāvaliya* (p. 184), was to see that drip-ledges were cut in caves that were not so protected from the monsoon rains. The second, as pointed out by Paranavitana in the University of Ceylon History of Ceylon (UCHC pp. 244-5), was that he became the first monarch in history to institute the practice of land endowment when establishing monasteries, so that the revenues accruing from it could be used for their maintenance.

Whether these endowments were made only for vihāras attached to the newly built Abhayagiri monastery, as assumed by Geiger (following Baṭuvantudāvē and Sīri Sumaṅgala Thera), may depend on the interpretation of the following verse in the *Mahāvamsa*, which Geiger has consigned to a footnote as being a spurious one, but which appears as verse No. 100 of the 33rd chapter in Buddhadatta Thera's edition of the text:

*Mahā Abhaya bhikkhū te vaddetum dīpavāsino  
Vattaḡamaṇi bhūmino pattim nāma adāsi so.*

However, Geiger has given his translation of it, also in a footnote, (adding that "patti simply means revenue,") as:

To bring prosperity to the bhikkhus dwelling on the island, who belonged to the great Abhaya-giri (community), the lord of the land, Vattaḡamaṇi, made over to them the so-called patti.

If however we take the words *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi* and *Abhaya* as well as *Mahā* and *Bhūmindo* together, (as *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya Mahā Bhūmindo* to mean *Great King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya*) in this verse, as Paronavitana appears to have done, it would seem that the king made no distinction between the Abhayagiri and Mahāvihāra fraternities in his endowment of land revenues to temples, for then we would have to read the statement here, as:

*So Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya Mahā Bhūmindo, te dīpavāsino bhikkhū vaḍḍetum, pattim nāma adāsi* which reads, "The Great King *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya* granted (land-) revenues, so that (the community of) monks in living in the island would increase."

This of course would only mean that he became the first king to initiate that practice on a wide scale, (for the granting of sanghabhoga was known even during Saddhātissa's reign, Mv.33:16). It is however possible that the Mahāvihāra did not avail itself of this facility due to its great concern for the austerity. It is possible that the Mahāvihāra did not have land endowed to it because the monks there were starved out of the premises when king Mahāsena imposed a penalty on whosoever dared to provide them with alms about three hundred years later.

It is possible to think that these two innovations applied by King Valagambā as a general rule, were collectively or severally responsible for the tradition associating many cave temples with this king even where they show evidence of having been used for monastic residence at an earlier date. The reason being that either the drip-ledges of those rock hermitages were cut, or that the proper arrangements for their future maintenance were legally instituted for the first time, only during his reign. **Therefore the tradition that credits King Valagambā with the establishment of so many of the existing rock temples in the land may well have a solid foundation in fact.**

We are fortunate that the tradition pertaining to the Cave Temple of Dambulla in this regard has not been passed down to us only as an oral one. Not only does this temple still receive some revenue from at least a few of the lands stated to have been originally donated by King Valagambā over 2000 years ago, but also a complete list of their names, besides a wealth of other historical data, have been preserved in a remarkable document dating back to the last king of the Sinhala dynasty in the year 1726 AC.

This document, known as the *Daṁbūlu Sīrita* (DS), is a renewal in 1726 of the ancient deed of endowment, by King Vīraparākrama Narēndrasingha (AC 1707-1739). A later renewal dated 1780, done obviously without access to the DS, is the less comprehensive *Daṁbūlu Vihāra Tuḍapata* (DVT) of King Kīrti Śrī Rājasingha (1747-1782). It is worth noting here that the occasion for the drawing up of the DS as stated in that document itself, was the report made to King Narēndrasingha that an earlier deed drawn up under the royal seal (Śrī Sannas Patraya) of King Senarat (1604-1635) had been lost when the house of the incumbent "Gaṇavali" was burgled and set on fire. Lost again from the custody of the Daṁbūlu Vihāra for over a century, these two documents have been traced to the Asgiri Vihāra and published in 1971 by Nandasena Mudiyanse. (According to monks at Dambulla Temple, the present repository of the document is the

result of a sequel to the crowning of the Pretender to the throne at the Dambulla Temple, against British rule in 1848.)

The date for the establishment of the Dambulla Temple is reckoned in the DS in the following manner. It is stated that 1,929 years had elapsed since Dambulu Vihāra "was caused to be built," when the fifteenth year of the reign of King Bhuvaneka Bāhu V of Gampola commenced. It is also stated that the accession of the same monarch came after 1,457 years had elapsed since the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. Taking 543 BC as the beginning of the Buddhist Era and 1372 AC for the accession of Bhuvaneka Bāhu V (1372-1408), there are two ways of reckoning the date for the endowment of Dambulla Temple, both taking us to the year 85 BC or the fifth year after the restoration of King Valagambā to the throne in 89 BC.

The validity and significance of the date 85 BC for the inauguration of the present Dambulla Temple will have to be discussed only after we have traced its earlier history. A good starting point would be to take a look at the list of lands stated to have been originally donated by King Valagambā, as different from those added to it by later kings. It will be seen that those lands had been selected in a peculiar manner so that the first part of each name represents (with two significant exceptions), a part of the human form.

In the following list, the first column gives the names of the villages donated by King Valagambā in the same order as they appear in the DS. The second column gives the name of the bodily part or other object signified, with its English meaning given in the third:

1. Sirāṅgamuva	Sirasa	Head
2. Nalalkumbura	Nālala	Forehead
3. Dāsdeniya	De-ās	Two Eyes
4. Kaṇḍalama	Kan	Ear
5. Kaṇḍalama	Kan	Ear
6. Nikavaṭavana	Nikaṭa	Chin
7. Beligamuva	Beli	Neck
8. Giriyaḡamuva	Giriya	Throat
9. Vālaṃiṭiyāva	Vālaṃiṭa	Elbow
10. Vālaṃiṭiyāva	Vālaṃiṭa	Elbow
11. Baḡaḡamuva	Baḡa	Belly
12. Piṭaḡamuva	Piṭa	Back
13. Ālaḡamuva	Ālaya	Flank
14. Ālaḡamuva	Ālaya	Flank
15. Nidigama	Nidigānma	Sleep
16. Danaḡamuvamulla	Daḡa	Knee
17. Danaḡamuva	Daḡa	Knee
18. Pādeniya	Pādaya	Foot
19. Pādeniya	Pādaya	Foot
20. Dāmvāsara	Dam	Spouse

It is worth noting that in the donations listed above, two pieces of land for each pair of the symmetrical parts of the body have been allocated (except where the pair of eyes was concerned). The two exceptions to anatomical references are No. 15, *nidi* and No. 20, *dam*. We have taken *nidi* to mean 'sleep' though it might as well mean 'treasure.' Similarly, *dam* has been taken to mean 'spouse' (P. *jayampati*, S. *dampati* = 'wife and husband') though it could also mean 'Race,' through *jamma* < *janma* which means *jāti*, a word for race or nation. Then again *dam* could also be from *dharmā*, meaning the *Tripiṭaka*. It is possible that both these latter connotations too could have been implied. We shall have more occasion to discuss these terms later.

What is most interesting to find out would be the reason behind the unique nature of this remarkable gift. There is no parallel to it in the history of the island as we know it.

According to the DS, these village names refer to the bodily parts of the recumbent Buddha image in the temple. The DVT however appears to imply that after having erected a statue of himself within the temple, "King Valagambāhu" donated fields and villages to signify parts of his royal (*Srī*) personage from head to foot ('*Srī pāda padmaya dakvā Srī dēha stāna vasayen . . .* DVT 66). for the maintenance of the vihāra itself. This interpretation seems to be the more credible one because it is not feasible to think (as it is sometimes interpreted to be) that these lands, said to have comprised a part of thirty six thousand acres that once belonged to the temple, were donated for the maintenance of parts of just one Buddha image, when this king is said to have constructed at least 58 of them. Moreover, it is by no means certain that Buddha images were in vogue so early as the first century BC, when the stylized footprint and the lotus flower were commonly used as representations of the Buddha.

A word about the real nature of the names of these villages and fields is not out of place here. It has to be understood that they had not been so named to represent parts of the body. Those syllables in them that were supposed to refer to parts of the human body have entirely different meanings in conformity with the usual pattern of other Sinhala place names. The fact that their locations range from the Anuradhapura District (Nidigama) to the Colombo District (Kandalama near Mirigama, the other Kandalama being near Dambulla) is an indication of the pains taken to select them from among the existing villages. Also note the difference in names of the villages denoting the knees. One is Danagamuva while the other is Danagamuva-mulla. Such non uniformity is an indication that the names were not specially coined for this purpose.

It is also possible that the names, and therefore the locations, of some of these villages have changed during the course of more than two thousand years. This could happen when a particular piece of land became unproductive or got submerged by a new irrigation reservoir. But judging from the change of Sirasgamuwa in the DS to Siṅgadeniya in the DVT, it is most likely that every subsequent monarch who renewed the deeds of Dambulla Temple was particular to see that in finding a substitute for a piece of land lost from King Valagambā's list, the first part of the name of the new land also bore a meaning similar to the original one.

These renewals themselves have been comparatively few, considering the 2000 year history of the document. According to the DS, the first appears to have been done in the reign of King Nissaṅka Malla (1186-1196), 1700 years after the death of the first King Vijaya (in BC 505), which would bring us to the year 1195 AC for this event. The next renewal seems to have been in AC 1387, a date which is given in the DS (p. 56) as the fifteenth year of the reign of King Buvaneka Bāhu V (1372-1408) of Gampola, also given as falling in the year following the lapse of 1929 years after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha. The date of the third renewal as given in the same source (p. 58) was in the reign of King Vimaladharmasūriya (1592-1604) on a Monday which fell on the seventh day after the Vesak Full-moon of AB 2145 (or AC 1602). The fourth renewal with additions to the endowment had been issued as a Charter under the Royal Seal (Sī Sannasa) of King Senarat (1604-1635) in the year AB 2152 or AC 1609 (DS p. 58). It is the loss of this document as mentioned earlier that had led to the issue of the *Darūbulu Sirita*.

In the last (or perhaps the first) instance where the name of a piece of land has changed, *Siṅgā*, the first part of *Siṅgādeniya*, is from *sikhā*, (crest) through the intermediate forms *sikā* and *sigā*, whence *Siṅgā* would also signify *sirasa* or head. (In real etymology *Siṅgādeniya* could mean 'High Valley' while *Sirasgamuwa* means 'The Village for Siras,' where *siras* meant (the cultivation of) *tippili* or *Piper longum*.<sup>3</sup>

It is also to be noted that the name *Baḍagamuva* appears in the DS as *Baṁbagamuva*. But this is probably a copyist's error, for one thing that the Sinhala character for *ḍa* can be easily misread as *ṁba* in an old manuscript. The other reason for taking the real name as *Baḍagamuva* instead of *Baṁbagamuva* is that the latter name is out of place in the context of the others. The present incumbent *Ināmaluvē Sumaṅgala Thera*, as well as the lay trustee of *Dambulla Temple*, also insist that this is *Baḍagamuva*, now partly occupied by a CTB depot (1987), at the third mile on the *Kurunegala - Dambulla road*.

If we accept the tradition contained in these documents, that it was indeed King *Valagambā* who first donated this series of lands to signify parts of his bodily form to *Dambulla Temple*, then we have good reason to search for some compelling reason which would have led him to take such a singular step. For, after all, his major religious edifices were built in the capital *Anuradhapura*, and even the great *Abhayagiri monastery*, historically the most significant of them all, does not appear to have received a gift of such personal significance from this king.

This donation by King *Valagambā* may seem to have something in common with the *tulābhāra* gifts of later centuries. But this endowment antedated the first *tulābhāra* gift on record (Cv.51:128) of King *Udaya II* (887-898 AC) by nearly a thousand years.

<sup>3</sup>. See *Osuvaḅa Namāvaliya* (p.66 v.25) and *Dēṣiya Vaidya Sabdakōshaya* (p.488) for this meaning of 'siras'.

Besides this, King Valagambā being a man of violent temperament was not particularly noted for his personal piety. Two of the nicknames he had acquired during his lifetime bear witness to this.

His real name was Abhaya. *Vatta-gāmanī* Abhaya (is a more complimentary rendering in Pāli, of the Sinhala name Valagamani Abaya, later reduced to Valagam Abā (Nikāya Sangrahaya, DS, etc.) and finally to Valagambā. (The form Valagambāhu found in the DVT is a corruption obviously inspired by later royal names like Vijaya Bāhu, Parākrama Bāhu, etc.) The epithet *Valagamani* could have meant "The Wanderer in the Forest" from *vala*, a forest and *gamani* (Pāli: *gāmin*), a wayfarer. Valagamani Abhaya meaning 'Abhaya the Wanderer in the Forest, was perhaps the appropriate nickname people gave to this king during the fourteen years he was absent from the throne. The name is often written with a cerebral 'ī' as Valagambā, in which case the name (Valagamani Abaya) could mean 'Abhaya the wanderer in disguise' for *vala* means 'to conceal or disguise.'

Whatever it really meant, the king apparently could not live down this nickname even after he regained the kingdom. But learned monks who were his friends would have found a way to give the nickname a more acceptable and courtly interpretation. Fortunately for them the word *vala* could also mean 'circle' in Sinhala, (in Pāli *vatta*). So 'Valagamani Abhaya' would have been taken to mean (rather euphemistically) 'Abhaya who is on Circuit' and officially rendered into Pāli as *Vattagāmanī* Abhaya. This is not unfair by a king who spent over fourteen years literally 'going round' to find ways and means to overthrow the invaders.

The other two nicknames *Pitirāja* (Mv. 33:36) and *Mahākāla* appear to be the ones that forcefully implied his fiery temper. The latter name was used by the naked ascetic Giri who tried to betray the retreating king to the enemy, shouting "The Sinhala, Mahākāla is fleeing" (Mv. 33:43). Paranavitana (UCHC, pp. 169-70) has shown that both these nicknames are in fact appellations of Yama, the Lord of Hell in popular belief. The first of these names has however been rendered to mean 'Father King' because he had adopted the son of his elder brother as his own, and *Mahākāla Sinhala* to mean "The Great Dark Sinhala".

If it was not mere piety, then what was it that impelled this king to reclaim from the jungle and endow so lavishly and in such a symbolic manner, the Dambulla Cave Temple as stated in the traditions preserved in the DS and the DVT? A related question to this is as to what could be the reason for the extraordinary sanctity attached to Dambulla Temple right down the ages to the present day?

Paranavitana tried to find an answer to the latter question and thereby indirectly, to the former too (for the DS and the DVT were not in print at that time and he did not make any reference to the peculiar nature of this endowment) in an article entitled "Dambulla in Ancient Times." published in the 1969 Vesak Number of the Dept., of Cultural Affairs (DAT). Referring to the fact that King Nissanka Malla records his visit

to Dambulla as a famous place of religious worship in the 12th century, together with Kālaniya and Mahiyaṅgana, he says:

Why Dambulla attracted pilgrims in the past, and does so today, has not been given in any historical writing nor is it satisfactorily explained by traditions that have come down from the past. Unlike Kālaniya and Mahiyaṅgana, Dambulla does not figure in the accounts of the visits which the Buddha is believed to have undertaken to this Island. No relic of exceptional sanctity is said to have been enshrined in a stūpa at the place. The caves at Dambulla were occupied from the earliest days of Buddhism in Ceylon by monks who earnestly endeavoured to attain spiritual insight by getting rid of their *upadhis*, but there are scores of other sites in Ceylon which contain such caves, without enjoying a reputation as a place of pilgrimage. (DAT p. 65)

The answer that Paranavitana tried to give centred round a vain attempt to identify Dambulla with ancient Vessagiri without putting forward substantial evidence to justify such identification.<sup>4</sup>

But his reason for trying to make that identification plausible is worthy of our attention:

If we accept that the Vihāra at Dambulla was the ancient Vessagiri, the traditions which associate the place with Vattagāmaṇi Abhaya will be found to be based on historical facts. For we are told in the chronicle that Vattagāmaṇi Abhaya, after he was defeated by Tamil invaders, spent some time at Vessagiri in hiding, together with the members of his family. Dambulla is at a safe distance from Anuradhapura which was under Tamil occupation. (DAT p. 68)

It did not occur to Paranavitana that Dambulla could be one of those other places mentioned in the chronicle with reference to King Valagambā's itinerary as a fugitive. In fact his obsession with the idea that Dambulla was indeed Vessagiri (or Visvagiri) was the very reason that initially threw him off his bearings with regard to the other places, as we shall soon see. In the meanwhile we must quote him again to see the extent of confusion created by this initial mistake.

His next place of sojourn is given as Silāsobbhakkhaṇḍaka, which has not yet been identified, but which according to the commentator, was to the south of Vessagiri. From Dambulla, therefore, he was moving closer to the hills. The commentator's further explanation that the

<sup>4</sup>. See Anuradha Seneviratne: *Golden Rock Temple of Dambulla*, pp.26-7 for his reasons to reject this identification.



place was close to the Pabbatavihāra is of no help. From Silāsobbhakhaṇḍa, Vattagāmaṇi is said to have moved his residence to Mātuvelanga near Sāmagalla. The commentator states that Sāmagalla was known in his time as Moragalla. This is Moragalla in the Kandapalle Korale of the Matale District. (DAT p. 69)

The two statements that I have underlined here contradict each other in spite of Paranavitana's assertion that Moragalla (pronounced as Mōragalla in Pāli) can be described as being situated in the area of the lower ranges of the Malaya mountains. The Moragalla that he has identified (shown as Moragolla in the Nalanda Topo Sheet) is more to the west in the Māyārata, than to the south (of Dambulla) where the Malaya proper lay. Furthermore, both Pabbata Vihāra and Silāsobbha could have been more easily identified than he thought by their etymology and their bearings as given in the Commentary, if he had not strayed so far off the course by fixing his first point of reference, Vessagiri, at Dambulla.

Another point to note in this quotation is that Paranavitana has taken the liberty to spell the Pāli name *Silāsobbhakhaṇḍaka* as **Silāsobbhakhaṇḍaka**, with an aspirated 'kha.' This is not only incorrect but is also misleading as we shall see when discussing the meaning of the name later on in this study.

It is pointless to recount here the arguments that have been put forward and generally accepted by scholars, against the authenticity of the name Vessagiri given to some ruins close to what is now called Isurumūṇiya in Anuradhapura itself. In any case, it was right inside the enemy territory after the fall of Anuradhapura, for King Valagambā to call even a brief halt there during his headlong flight in which he had to abandon even the Alms Bowl Relic, which like the Daladā in later times, would have represented the palladium of royalty then.

Vessagiri was only the first stop, and a brief one at that, in the king's flight from Anuradhapura. If it was not so close to the capital as the place now misnamed Vessagiri, then it is also hardly likely to have been so far off as Dambulla. Not only is Dambulla at a distance of 41 miles from Anuradhapura, but then, as now, it would have been directly on the trunk route between the ancient capital and the hill country and the obvious road that his pursuers were likely to choose.

An overloaded carriage such as the one in which King Valagambā fled, could have been easily overtaken by them unless he could have put them off his tracks early in the flight by turning off into a by-way. Here we must remember that the danger of being overtaken was so great that at the very beginning itself, i.e. soon after passing Giri the Nigantha, and after that, the southern gate of the capital, the king was obliged to allow his favourite queen Somādēvi to alight from the overburdened carriage, giving the pregnant queen Anulādēvi and the two young princes a chance to escape with him.

Vessagiri forest, where the king concealed himself (*abhinilīyi*) with his family after having abandoned his carriage, was in the vicinity of the (perhaps dilapidated) monastery by that name constructed by King Devānampiya Tissa about two centuries before this. They could hardly have tarried there more than a day or two under the ignominious circumstances in which the royal family had to share the food from the begging bowl of a Buddhist monk.

This monk, who was to play a decisive role in the fortunes of the king and later in the turn of events that decided the vicissitudes of the Buddhist Order for the next thirteen centuries, is called Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera or Thera Mahātissa of Kupikkala (Vihāra) in the Mahāvamsa. When we try to identify the places later, it will be seen that this monk had to wander as far as six miles or more from his own Vihāra to the foot of Vessagiriya in search of alms, the meagre fare of which he fed the royal family. There upon the king is said to have been so moved that he immediately wrote a deed, improvising a '*ketaka*' (Pandanus) leaf, for the want of better writing material under the circumstances, granting revenues from some lands (a *sanghabhoga*) to the thera's Vihāra (at Kupikkala).<sup>5</sup>

Thereafter, the monk apparently returned to his own Vihāra and the king and family went to a place called Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka where he sojourned for some time. The Mahāvamsa Commentary states that this was a place to the south of Vessagiri Vihāra and near Pabbata Vihāra (MT.616.7). This would mean that Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka was to the south of Anuradhapura and that Vessagiri was more or less in line and between these two places, for to begin with, the king was fleeing through the southern gate of the city to avoid the enemy who marched down on the capital from the north.

In searching for the location of Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka we have to remember that here the latter part of the name, *kaṇḍaka*, is consistently spelt in the Pāli texts without the aspirated '*kh*' that Paranavitana has taken for granted. In the UCHC (p. 169), he has taken this part of the name to mean '*kaḍa*' (in Gal-heba-kaḍa) in Sinhala, following the Sinhala translation of the Mahāvamsa by Sri Sumaṅgala Thera and Batuvantudāvē.

The Pāli for Sinhala '*kaḍa*' is '*khaṇḍaka*' and not '*kaṇḍaka*.' It is difficult to think that this is an orthographical error in the Pāli texts, for we also know that if '*kha*' is to occur in such a compound it should also have been preceded by another '*k*' which is unaspirated, thus: *Silāsobbhakkhaṇḍaka*. Therefore we have to analyze the compound here as *Silāsobbha* + *akaṇḍaka* and not as *Silāsobbha* + *khaṇḍaka*.

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<sup>5</sup>. We shall have occasion to discuss this incident and the location of Kupikkala Vihāra later on, but for now, we must try to follow the king's itinerary to identify at least one of the places mentioned in the account with some degree of probability if not of certainty, so that it could provide us with some bearing or clues towards the identification of others.

The term '*akaṇḍaka*' in Pāli is traced to *a* + *kaṇḍaka* meaning a place which is 'safe, secure, free from robbers' (PTSD) hence, what we would call a refuge or 'sanctuary' today. A possible 'Elu' or old Sinhala form of *akaṇḍaka* is *akaṭaka*, which has given rise to the reading *Silāsobbhakaṭaka* in some of the MSS and which is the one that has been given preference by Geiger in his edition of the Pāli text (Mv. 33:51,87). Therefore '*Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka*' would mean "The Sanctuary of Silāsobbha."

To consider the meaning of the first part of the name, Silāsobbha, we may separate out its components as *Silā* + *sobbha*. A Sinhala word for *silā* meaning 'rock' is *gal*, and *sobbha* means a 'pool' or 'waterhole' for which the Sinhala term *wala* is as appropriate as the term 'heba.' Hence *Galēwala* meaning 'The Pool on the rock' may be considered to be the name which has been translated into Pāli as Silāsobbha.

Therefore we have the etymology of the name in support of identifying Silāsobbha as being the place still going by the name of *Galēwala*, though it is now often incorrectly spelt as *Galewela*, which would mean 'Paddy-field on the Rock,' an almost total impossibility in practical terms. The 'pool on a rock' which gave the place its name is perhaps to be recognised today in the name *Galapiṭa Vāva* or 'tank on the rock,' about one and a half miles on the road to Dambulla from Galewela.

Hence, *Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka* means *Galēwala Sanctuary* identifiable with the township now called Galewela at the strategic junction of roadways in the Kandapalla Korale of the Matale District (where it will be remembered, Moragolla is also situated).

We have other evidence too in support of this identification. As mentioned earlier, the sanctuary at Silāsobbha was situated to the south of Vessagiri (and therefore of Anuradhāpura) according to the Commentator. Galēwala is also situated more or less to the south of Anuradhāpura at distance of about 42 miles, as the crow flies. It is also in the ancient division of Māya Raṭa where according to the *Rājāvalīya*, King Valagambā spent his exile 'hiding in caves.'

The commentary also gives us the further information that Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka was near Pabbatavihāra, (*Pabbatavihāra samīpe*). This too can be identified with the archaeological site at the foot of the mountain marked in the Nalanda topo sheet as *Vihārakanda* (1227'). It can be said to be near Galēwala (or Silāsobbha) for it is only about 3 miles to the northwest of that place. Furthermore, Moragolla, the site identified by Paranavitana as Moragalla of the Commentator, is also located only about 2 miles to the north of Vihārakanda, a name which translates into Pāli as *Pabbatavihāra*.

As *kanda* and *pabbata* both mean 'mountain,' *Vihāra-kanda* (*Vihāra*-mountain) is practically the same as *Pabbata-Vihāra* (Mountain-Vihāra). The archaeological site there could be the same as that of the '*Pabbatārāma*' (Mountain-abbey) built and presented to the monk Kambugallaka Tissa by a general of King Valagambā, whose name is also given as Pabbata in the chronicle.

Therefore, now we have sufficient cause to set aside the statement made by Paranavitana in his article on Dambulla, as regards the possibility of identifying Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka, that "The commentator's further explanation that the place was close to Pabbata-vihāra is of no help." It is precisely that explanation that not only confirms our identification of Galēwala as the site of Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka but also lends some support to Paranavitana's own identification of Moragolla as the location of 'Moragalla' of the Commentator, though less conclusively.

Now, according to the commentary, Vessagiri should have been to the north of Galēwala or the Silāsobbha. Its location would have been long forgotten even before the *Mahāvamsa* came to be compiled, for Vessagiri had been constructed about eight hundred years before that by King Devānampiya Tissa. The *Mahāvamsa* takes the meaning of *Vessa* from *Vaisya*, a caste or 'clan,' for which another word would be *Vamsa* (ancient Sinhala *Vas*) where in both languages the term could also mean 'Bamboo' in addition to 'clan or lineage.'

Three (wondrously-carved) bamboo staffs were among the gifts sent by King Devānampiya Tissa to the Emperor Asoka and they are said to have been gathered from the foot of Chātāpabbata. It is possible that Vessagiri also was associated with the Bamboo plant. In Sinhala, *Vasse-giriya* or *Vamsē-giriya* would mean 'the Mountain of the Bamboos' because *vas* and *vamsa*, both mean 'bamboo.'

Now, as pointed out earlier, in Sinhala as well as in Pāli, the word *vamsa* has also the other meaning 'race, lineage, clan' etc. Taken in this sense, *Vamsēgiriya* as a variant of the name *Vassēgiriya* could easily be interpreted to mean Vessagiri or the Mountain of the Vessas because the inhabitants of the area who were ordained as monks and lodged in a monastery built on the slopes of that hill, happened to be all of the *Vessa* (i.e. *govi* or cultivator) clan or *vamsa*. This probably happened when the name came to be transliterated into the Pāli for recording purposes, while the original name meaning 'The Mountain of the Bamboo' continued to be in common usage.

The Pāli interpretation could also have been influenced by the fact that the Vessas or *govi* people were also known as *Vamsakkāras* or those of 'lineage,' while curiously enough another class of ordinary people also bore the similar name 'Vamsakāra,' *Vaskaru*, or *Vasvaru* meaning, bamboo- or reed-workers.

When the popular word for bamboo changed to *raṇa* (short for *raṇa-vas*, the yellow or 'golden' bamboo), *Vassē-giriya* could easily become *Raṇavēkanda* (Mountain of the Bamboo) without any change in meaning, as *vē* after *raṇa* may serve as 'of' in English and the word *kanda* is the same as *giriya*. When the name changed to *Ranavekanda* it could hardly have been recognised as being the mountain once called *Vassē-giriya*, *Vamsēgiriya*, or *Vessagiri* of the Pāli chronicles.

The reason for our analysis of the name in this manner is the fact that directly to the north of Galewela and at a distance of ten and a half miles as the crow flies is a

mountain surrounded by at least four ruined sites and which could be supposed to be the place referred to in the Commentary as Vessagiri, though more evidence would be required to confirm it as a fact.

This hill still bears the name Ranavēkanda (1070'), or the Mountain of the (Golden) Bamboo. It is also situated just where one would expect to find Vessagiri after following the directions given by the Commentator for identifying Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka as the sanctuary of King Valagambā at Galēwala.

According to Sorata Thera's Sinhala Dictionary (SSD), the word *raṇa* means *raṇa-baṭa*, or the golden reed (*Bambusa vulgaris*). We get it in place names like *Raṇavana* (Bamboo Grove, or simply 'The Golden Bamboo' if *vana* is taken to be a transmutation of *una* also meaning 'bamboo,') and *Raṇasgalla* (*Raṇa-vas-galla* or the Grove of Golden Bamboos). But again, *raṇa* (from *araṇa* < *āraṇya*) has the other meaning 'monastery' too, according to the same authority. This would give the name Ranavekanda the meaning 'Mountain of the Monastery.' A more common meaning of *raṇa* (from *araṇa*) would be *vana* or forest. This would give the meaning 'Mountain of the Forest' to Ranavekanda. Both these names are not incompatible with the suspicion that it was the site of Vessagiri, a monastery, which according to the chronicle (Mv.33:48) was surrounded by a forest, referred to as 'Vessagiri-vana' in the days of King Valagambā.

The fact that an irrigation tank with two ruined sites, one below its dam, and situated on the northeastern slopes of Ranavekanda, is still called Ranava (from *Rana-vāva*=Bamboo Tank) would strongly suggest the meaning 'Monastery Tank' for it, although the other meaning of *raṇa*, that connotes 'The Tank of the Golden Bamboos,' is also possible.

*Vessagiriya* as *Ranavēkanda*, would be at a distance of about 32 miles to the southeast of Anuradhapura and six miles to the northwest of Dambulla, both distances measured as the crow flies. It was not only off the trunk route to the hill country but also at a sufficient distance away from the ancient capital to avert pursuit during the course of a single day.

It is quite likely that King Valagambā and his family would have tarried at Vessagiri forest only for a brief stop-over, if not for any other reason, on account of the difficulty of obtaining food and shelter. This is also probably the reason for referring to Silāsobbha or Galēwala, as *akaṇḍaka* or 'sanctuary' in contrast to Vessagiri which is not referred to even as *vihāra*, but only as *vana* or forest during that time, (another clue which points to the fact that it could not have afforded sanctuary to the royal family, except very briefly). Therefore it is more likely that the best part of the seven months that elapsed between his defeat and his arrival at the permanent sanctuary of Sāmagalla, was spent at Galēwala.

This duration of seven months is reckoned from two statements in the *Mahāvamsa* account. One of them (Mv.33:61) states that the total period for the five Tamil usurpers at Anuradhapura was 14 years and 7 months. This would also be the period during which King Valagambā was absent from the throne. Therefore when we are also informed that the king spent 14 years of this time hiding at Sāmagalla (MV.33:53) it is clear that he could have spent only seven months at both Vessagiri and Silāsobbha taken together.

The fact that King Valagambā lived at Sāmagalla a total period of fourteen years, which is twenty--four times the duration of his stay at Vessagiri and Silāsobbha put together, indicates that it was strategically the most important place in the whole episode. This is something that has been overlooked even by scholars like Paranavitana.

The location of Sāmagalla was not known to the Commentator of the *Mahāvamsa*. He was not convinced by the current interpretation (*vohāra*) of its location as *Moragalla* and therefore only went so far as to record what had been told to him: "*tam pana idāni Moragallan' ti voharanti*" (i.e. "It is now adjudged to be '*Moragalla*'"). Hence Geiger was wrong to take this as a statement of fact and then proceed to estimate the time lapse between the compilation of *Mahāvamsa* and of its Commentary on that basis, thereby drawing upon himself an adverse comment (though for a different reason) from Malalasekara.<sup>6</sup>

One reason why Moragolla had been suggested as the site of Sāmagalla could be that it was close to Silāsobbha or Galēwala which was also the other sanctuary for this king. It is also a place which is close to Pabbatavihāra or Vihārakanda, a location which we know for certain that the Commentator also was aware of during his day.

The meaning of *Sāmagalla*, could also have been misconstrued, because in Pāli as well as in Sinhala, the word *sāma* (Skt. *śyāma*) has the meaning 'blue.' The Sinhala for 'blue' is *nil* (Skt. *nila*) and because of this the word *Sāmagalla* can also be taken to be the same as *Nilgala*, for *gala* and *galla* can also have the same meaning. But another meaning for *gala* is 'throat' or 'neck,' which would make *Nilgala* mean Bluethroat. Now, *Nilgala*, (Skt. *Nilakanṭha*) or 'Bluethroat' is another name for the peacock, for which the Pāli word is *Mora*. Therefore whoever suggested to the Commentator that Moragolla was the location of *Sāmagalla*, had mistaken the latter to mean *Mora* or 'peacock.' This seems quite likely because the word *Mora* even without the long *ō*, also meant 'peacock' (SSD), although it usually refers to a tree (*Euphoria longana*), which makes 'Moragolla' mean the 'Grove of Mora Trees.'

From the strategic point of view too, there is nothing to be seen at the site of Moragolla, to make it a better sanctuary for a fugitive king, than Galēwala situated so

<sup>6</sup> G.P. Malalasekara, Introduction to the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, (MT p. cv) and W. Geiger, *The Dīpavamsa and Mahāvamsa*, p. 33.

close to it. Perhaps its proximity to the other two places, Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka (Galēwala) and Pabbatavihāra (Viharākanda), that were known during the time of the Commentator, also had some influence on the guess that it was the site of Sāmagalla of the chronicle.

Perhaps the main argument against the recognition of Moragolla as the site for Sāmagalla can be that it is not in keeping with what we know about the character of King Valagambā to have allowed such an important place in his career to go into oblivion, as Moragolla appears to have done, without some lasting memorial or act of gratitude to commemorate its services to him. It is on record that this king built the Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka Cetiya at Anuradhapura, no doubt as a monument to commemorate his sanctuary for seven months at Galēwala or Silāsobbha (Mv.33:87). It is therefore quite out of character if he did not honour the more important sanctuary at Sāmagalla, where he spent fourteen years in a similar manner. In his adversity, King Valagambā appears to have fulfilled many vows to show his gratitude to people and places that helped him to survive to rule again after evading the enemy for so long.

At the place where he escaped the enemy when betrayed by Giri, the naked ascetic, he is said to have thought: "If my wish be fulfilled I will build a vihāra here" (Mv.33:44). It was there that this king built the great Abhayagiri Monastery, famous unto this day. According to the Commentary, it was to the Thera Mahātissa of Kupikkala (who fed him from his begging bowl) that the king gifted this monastery. We have already seen how he gave a 'sanghabhoga' written on a pandanus leaf to the same Thera on the first occasion he met him at Vessagiriya.

Then again, near the place where his favourite queen Somādevi alighted from the chariot to make it lighter (and apparently also with the intention of allowing herself to be captured with the royal diadem in order to prevent the monarch and the rest of his family falling to the same fate) King Valagambā built the Somārāma monastery. (Mv.33:84)

Yet again, the value of a drip-ledge cut along the overhang at the entrance to a cave to keep out rain water was realised by this king when he was hiding in caves. And as mentioned earlier, the Rājāvaliya (Rv p. 184) states that he later ordered that drip ledges should be cut in all cave temples in the island. No recorded history however is necessary to substantiate this fact, for the tradition is still alive in the memory of the common man.

Therefore, Moragolla cannot be Sāmagalla, if not for any other reason, for the fact that this king would hardly have failed to honour his sanctuary for 168 months when he remembered to put to Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka Cetiya named after the place which afforded him sanctuary for less than 7 months.

But appropriately enough, we have on record in documents like the DVT and the DS, what appears to be a characteristically symbolic act of gratefulness shown by King Valagambā to the cave temple at Dambulla, the reasons for which have so far not

been satisfactorily explained. This is the grant made to Dambulla of revenues from lands named after every part of his body, as seen from that list we have considered earlier.

The very magnitude and personal nature of the gift made by King Valagambā to the Dambulla Temple makes it stand out as being of greater significance to himself than the construction of Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka Cetiya or any of his other religious works. Could this be an indication that Sāmagalla the secret hiding place of king Valagambā, was none other than the vast cave-complex on the forested slopes of Dambulla Rock itself, as the oral tradition alive to this day would maintain?

What other reasons do we have to support this hypothesis? On the other hand if Dambulla was the real Sāmagalla, how could the fact have escaped being mentioned in the chronicles and the Commentary? The intuitive genius of Paranavitana can be our guide in this inquiry. In his article 'Dambulla in Ancient Times' that we have referred to earlier, he says:

Our lack of knowledge about the reason for the sanctity of Dambulla is due to the ancient name of the place being not known. Hence, we do not know whether the place is referred to in the chronicles. (DAT p. 65)

Having made this observation, Paranavitana went only so far as to identify correctly the ancient name 'Chātapabbata' for Dambulla. That discovery by Paranavitana is perhaps the greatest contribution made by any scholar up to now, to the task of unravelling the mystery behind the ancient history of Dambulla. His attempt to identify Dambulla with Vessagiri, however, was something that took him completely off the real track.

Therefore let us take a close look at names like Dambulugala, Daṁbulla, and Chātapabbata (along with some of the alternatives for the one last mentioned) to be found in the Mahāvamsa Commentary and elsewhere in ancient literature. Their etymology may help us to recognise yet other names which are referable to, but not so easily recognised as belonging to Daṁbulla.

1. Chātapabbata is mentioned in the chronicles as the place where the bamboo staffs sent as gifts to Emperor Asoka were said to have been found. Paranavitana's identification of Chātapabbata with Dambulla is on the basis of an inscription in one of the caves to be found there, which mentions the fact that a Thera named Sedadeva constructed a stūpa called *Catavana ceta* at this place and made a donation to it. Here "*Catavana*" (pronounce Chātavana) has been recognised as the forest (*vana*) around Dambulla Rock which has been referred to as *Cata(pavata)*.

This inscription referred to as No. 1145 in the Register of the Archaeological Department has not been fully edited or published yet. But a picture of an estampage taken from it is to be found in Anuradha Seneviratna's *Golden Rock Temple of Dambulla*



(p. 23). However, the comments of that writer on Paranavitana's failure to prove the accuracy of the distance to the place from Anuradhapura, as vaguely stated in the Commentary, are not sufficient reason to doubt the veracity of this identification.

The Commentator had the only information that Chātapabbata was to the southeast of Anuradhapura (MT.300:10-14) which is correct for Dambulla. He had no precise information to give about the distance and so he has remarked that it was, "said to be more than two yojanas ahead" (*atireka-yojana-dvayamattake ti vadanti*). The fact that Dambulla is to the southeast and 'at a distance of more than two yojanas' cannot be doubted when we consider the fact that the place is 36 miles as the crow flies, in that direction from Anuradhapura, as reckoned by Paranavitana. (Other implications of this statement will be discussed when we come to the name *Sāpav*).

The fact that King Saddhātissa is said to have built a vihāra there, in the Commentary, is also confirmed by an inscription at Dambulla as mentioned at the outset. Furthermore, as we shall now see, the Pāli term *Chātapabbata* and the Sinhala name 'Daṁbulugala' have a strikingly similar etymology in the two languages.

2. *Daṁbulugala*: Had Paranavitana gone on to analyze the meaning of 'Chātapabbata,' he would have been in for a pleasant surprise. According to the PTSD, the word '*chāta*' meaning 'hungry' is comparable to its Sanskrit form '*psāta*' which in turn is derived from '*bhas*.' The Sanskrit/English Dictionary by Monier-Williams (MWD) gives the word '*bhasman*' meaning '*what is pulverised or calcined by fire*,' and '*ashes*' as equivalents for '*bhas*.' Therefore we may take these two also as possible meanings for '*chāta*.'

If we split the word *Daṁbulu* as *Daṁbu* and '*lu*' we get for *daṁbu*, a meaning similar to meaning quoted above for *chāta*. According to the SSD, the word *daṁbu* has the Sinhala meaning *dāvunu deya* or '*what has been consumed by fire*' and *daṁbuva* is a term for 'land in which the jungle has been cut and burnt for a hēna.' The syllable *lu* found at the end of *Daṁbulu*, may be considered in this particular instance, to be used as a suffix to form an adjective from the noun *daṁbu*, just as the adjective from *gāta* (knot) is *gātalū* (knotty).

Therefore, in this sense *Daṁbulu-gala* would mean 'the rock which has the appearance of a slashed and burnt hēna.' That is the general appearance of the immense, smooth boulder of Dambulla Rock which Emerson Tennent described as "unconcealed by any verdure except a few stunted plants in such crevices as retain sufficient moisture to support vegetation." It is quite likely that the vernacular name *Daṁbulugala* was translated into the literary language Pāli, as *Chātapabbata*, with this particular meaning in mind.

But we cannot be too sure that this was the original meaning of *Daṁbulu* in the name *Dambulugala* itself. Once the literary name came to be accepted, however, other meanings of the word *chāta* as well as of the original vernacular term *daṁbulu*, came

to be used in many other names for this place that have found a place in ancient literature.

The word *chāta* has been used for translating *daṁbula* into Pāli under the assumption that the word is a compound of *daṁbu* and *lu*. But it could also be assumed to have been formed from the two words *damba* and *ulu* (used as the adjective from *ulla*), which would give a different meaning altogether. That seems to be the basis of the next name.

3. *Daṁbulla* is another name, the adjective from which can give an entirely different but equally cogent meaning to *Daṁbula Galgē* or Dambulla Cave. This meaning too is important for us as it seems to be the basis for at least two other ancient names for Dambulla that we shall have to discuss.

Here we shall see *Dambulla* as consisting of the two words *daṁba* and *ulla*. *Daṁba* is a less known word for 'rock' (SSD). As an example for this use of the term, Sorata Thera gives *Mahagiri Daṁbē*, the 'Great Mountainous' (*maha giri*), 'Rock' (*daṁbē*), the pilgrim's name for the steep climb on the last stage of the ascent to Sṛī Pāda. The word *ulla* is a common place-name termination indicating the location of a freshwater spring, as in *Giri-ulla*, the "Rock Spring" or *Tuṁbulla* (< *tuṁba* = *Leucas marrubioides*, a semi aquatic herb), the "Tuṁba-plant Spring" etc. Hence *Daṁbulla* can also mean "Rock Spring."

The name Dambulla meaning 'Rock Spring' could refer to only one thing, the seemingly miraculous, perennial drip of cool, fresh, water during all seasons from the roof of the Great Cave at Dambulla under which monks have placed a pot and which before that would have formed a shallow pool on the floor of the shrine. In this sense, *Daṁbula Galgē* would mean 'The Cave of the Rock Spring' and *Daṁbulugala*, 'The Mountain of the Rock Spring.' In both instances, *ulu* is used as the adjective from *ulla* (a freshwater spring). This meaning for *Daṁbula* also appears to have been acknowledged at a very early date as seen from the next name we have to discuss.

4. *Nādināgapa* is one of the three alternatives to *chāta* in *Chātapabbata*, appearing as variant readings in different manuscripts of the Commentary (MT.300:fn.8). On separating out the words in this compound we get *Nādi* (noisy), *nāga* (cobra), and *pa* (drinking place or pool < *pa* = to drink, or < *āpa* = water).

Therefore, *Nādināgapa Pabbata* would mean 'The Mountain of the Noisy Cobra's Pool.' This could be a name arising from an episode in which resident monks at Dambulla were disturbed by the incursion of a hissing cobra that came to drink from the pool of water inside the cave. The next name also seems to have originated from a reference to a pool of water at this cave.

5. *Jambukola-lena* is the name by which the chronicle refers to the Dambulla Cave temple in the reign of King Vijaya Bāhu I (A.C. 1055-1110). It is so used to

differentiate it from Jambukola Vihāra which was a temple that existed in Nāgadīpa or the Jaffna Peninsula from the time of King Devānampiyatissa at least up to the 12th century (Mv.20:25, Cv. 60:60). Discussing the meaning and location of the latter place is not within the scope of this paper, but it may be said that there is sufficient cause to think that the temple at Nāgadīpa too had the origin of its name *Jambukola* in a rock-spring situated near it.

The word *kola* (kōla) in *Jambukola* could be an adaptation of Sanskrit *kūla* meaning 'a pond or pool' (NWD). *Jambu* is the Pāli for the Sinhala word *daṁba* meaning the fruit of *Syzygium cumini*, also called *daṁbu*, which when ripe has (and signifies) the purplish, blue-black colour associated with *jhāmaka*, the Sanskrit for 'burnt brick,' a word to which the Sinhala *daṁba* meaning 'igneous rock,' could perhaps be traced. Hence *Jambukola-lena* would mean the 'Cave of the Rock Pool.' Whether the chronicler intended *jambu* to mean 'rock' or not, the word *Jambukola* is a fair rendering into Pāli form of the Sinhala name *Daṁbulla* (*Daṁba-ulla*) of which one meaning is *Rock Spring* or *Rock Pool*.

There is yet another name which has its source in the meaning 'Rock Pool.' But before coming to that we have to study another name arising from *chāta* which will bring us to a trail that leads to the connection between Dambulla and King Valagambā.

6. *Chātavihāra* was the name given to the temple built by King Saddhātissa (137-119 BC) at Chātapabbata (Dambulla) according to the Commentary (MT.300: 12-14). This reference in the Mahāvamsa Tikā has escaped the notice of both the great scholars, Paranavitana and Nicholas. Had Paranavitana noticed it, he would not have made the following statement (published in 1970) after he had recognised Chātapabbata to be Dambulla Rock:

Neither tradition, nor the chronicles, associate the name Saddhātissa or Devānampiyatissa with Dambulla, the history of which before Vijaya Bāhu I is a blank so far as the present name is concerned. (IOC Vol.I p. lx)

This name *Chātavihāra* could be regarded as a rendition into Pāli of the Sinhala name *Daṁbulu-vihāra*, where the terms *chāta* and *daṁbulu* are indicative of the meaning derived from the scorched appearance of the rock. But the next name goes to another implication of the meaning of *chāta*.

7. *Chātavāhapabbata* is a name that has been used as an alternative to Chātapabbata in the Commentary ('*Chātavāhassa nāma pabbatassa pādami*' MT.300:9). Here the term *vāha* meaning 'to lead, flow or bring' is used with *chāta* in a way that the name Chātavāhapabbata would connote 'the mountain which leads to hunger.' This shift in meaning of *chāta* has been translated into the vernacular in the two names that follow.

8. *Sāgiri* is a name which may be considered to be a direct translation of the name *Chātapabbata* into Sinhala (if indeed it is not the original name which has been rendered into Pāli as *Chātapabbata*). *Sā*, is the Sinhala for *chāta* (= *chātaka*) meaning 'hunger or famine' and *giri*, for *pabbata* or mountain.

We come across this name in the very ancient story of Dhammadinnathera in Vedeha Thera's 13th century book, the 'Rasavāhini' (p. 128). Here, *Sāgiri* has been mentioned as the residence of *Bahulamassu* Tissa Thera. This is the same as *Bahalamassu* Tissa Thera of the chronicle, the famous pupil of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, the benefactor of King Valagambā at Vessagiriya. The two names are so peculiar to these two individuals that they cannot be mistaken for any others in the whole history of the island. Paranavitana translated Bahalamassu as 'Bushy Beard' (< *bahala* or *bahula* = abundant, and *massu* = beard). The name *Kupikkala* has however defied translation up to now, even by scholars of his calibre.

The Commentator explains that 'his pupil' meant 'one who resided with the Thera Mahātissa' (*tassa sisso'ti tassa Mahātissatherassa saddhivihāriko* - MT.623:3). Therefore, we know for certain that as pupil monks usually do, Bahalamassutissa Thera resided in the same monastery called *Sāgiri*, as his teacher Mahātissa Thera of Kupikkala (*Vihāra*). In other words, we have the evidence here to conclude that Kupikkala was another name for *Sāgiri*, or *Chātapabbata*, which we have already identified as Dambulla. The identity of *Sāgiri* and *Chātapabbata* is further confirmed by the etymology of the name Kupikkala.

9. *Kupikkala Vihāra* is a very singular name that can only be explained as a (perhaps coded) variation of the name *Chātapabbata*, a fact which makes its identification with '*Sāgiri*' of the *Rasavāhini* all the more plausible. It was explained earlier that the latter identification was also based on semantic grounds which equated both terms *chāta* and *sā* with 'hunger' or 'famine.' In *Kupikkala* too we get the first two syllables giving a similar meaning. The prefix *ku* originating in the Sanskrit, indicates 'deficiency or paucity,' while the work *pik* which it may be considered to qualify, is most probably a variation of *bik* for *p* and *b* sometimes interchange e.g. *Abaya* = *Apaya* (IOC Vol.I, p. 98 insc.No. 1206 fn.1).

Therefore, *kupik* can be considered as a variation of *kubik*. Now *bik* is the old Sinhala for the Pāli word *bhikkhā* which means "alms" or "begged food." Hence *ku* + *bik*, and therefore *kupik*, (like P. *dubbhikkha*, Skt. *durbhiksha* and Elu *dubik*) means "paucity of alms" or "starvation." The word *kala* (< Skt. *kātha* = stone; MWD) is an older form of *gala* (SSD) meaning *rock*, or *mountain* (the same as *pabbata* and *giri*). Hence it is easy to recognise in '*Kupikkala*' the meaning "Starvation Rock," which is a reflection of some other names for Dambulla Rock, like *Chātapabbata* and *Sāgiri*, where *Chāta* and *Sā* also mean "starvation." Thus the elusive *Kupikkala Vihāra* is none other than *Dambulu Vihāra*.

This identification of Dambulla as the situation of *Kupikkala Vihāra* by its etymology taken together with the data culled from ancient literature to indicate that it was in fact the residence of the famous pupil of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, gives us the clue we needed to strengthen our suspicion that the name *Sāmagalla* also refers to Dambulla. The Mahāvamsa, too, states that on coming to Sāmagalla, King Valagambā again met Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, 'who had helped him before' at Vessagiri. (MT. 616:10-13, Mv.33:52)

That we too have not strayed outside the trail laid by King Valagambā in following the clues provided by the etymology of place names is further confirmed by the next old name for Kupikkala Vihāra, at Dambulla.

10. *Kemgalu (Vihāra)* is the name for Kupikkala as it appears in the 14th century work, *Nikāya Sangrahaya* (p. 65). There, Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera is referred to as "*Bagiri Vehera piligat Kemgalu vāsi Tissa Maha Terahu*" i.e. 'that Mahātissa Thera who was a resident of Kemgalu (Vihāra) who accepted the Abhayagiri Vihāra.' As we have already found enough reason to think that Kupikkala refers to Dambulla or Sāmagalla, we may tentatively take *Kemgalu* (adjective from *Kemgalla*) to be another word for *Dambulu* or *Sāmagalu*.

In searching for the etymology of *Kemgalla*, we may first consider *kem* as the adjective from *kema* meaning 'rock pool' for which we earlier came across the alternative adjective *dambulu* (from *damba* and *ulu*). The second part of the name, *galla*, can be used here with the same meaning as *gala* denoting 'mountain.' Hence, in this sense, *Kemgalla* would mean the same as *Damba-ulu-gala* or 'Mountain of the Rock Spring.' This name would thus help to confirm our suspicion that the original significance of the name Dambulugala came from its rock-spring rather than from *dambulu* as 'chāta' or hunger. But there is no doubt that both meanings of the name were equally applicable in those early days.

On the other hand, another possible interpretation of the meaning of *Kemgalla* could be from *kem* = "protection". (SSD) from P. *khema*, (Skt. *kshema*) meaning 'a place of security' (PTSD) connoting 'sanctuary.' Thus the name '*Kemgalla*' could be taken to mean '*Sanctuary Rock*' which is also a meaning of *Sāmagalla*.

11. *Sāmagalla*, the name of the hideout of King Valagambā after he left Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka or the Sanctuary of Galēwala, has been already postulated by us as belonging to Dambulla. Besides its colour significance discussed earlier, the Sinhala word *sāma* (P. *sāma*) has also the meaning 'peace, tranquillity' connoting "safety, security" and therefore, 'refuge or sanctuary.' Thus, the name *Sāmagalla* shares with *Kemgalla*, the common meaning *Sanctuary Rock*, while at the same time disclaiming any link with the better known names that circled round the meanings 'rock pool' and *chāta* or 'hunger' for Dambulla.

But, as we have seen, it is not a total fabrication to conceal the real identity of the place. Such falsification with the intention of misleading others would have constituted a breach of the Vinaya rules if it was deliberately done by a monk, like Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, for instance, to whom we may have to give the credit for coining this name in order to preserve the secrecy of the king's hideout. He was a very pious observer of monastic vows, in spite of the charges of indiscretion in this regard brought against him later by the orthodox school. The chronicle itself states that he was careful even to avoid a minor breach of discipline by giving (even though to a king) of 'untouched alms' from his begging bowl. If he did coin the name Sāmagalla, he was not actually falsifying the real name of the place.

For besides the indirect relationship that the name Sāmagalla bears to one meaning of Kengalla as 'Mountain of the Rock Spring' also used for Daṃbulugala, there is yet another connection with the latter name, which would require considerable linguistic skill to understand.

In discussing how the name Sāmagalla could have got confused with Moragalla, we found that one meaning of *sāma* which bore relationship to a colour which we called 'blue.' But the word *nil* (P. *nīla* or *sāma*) did not refer to the light of a relatively narrow band of wavelengths as it does today. In the primitive division of colours into 'dark, light, and pure,' the latter two refer to whites and reds while "Nīla serves as a general term to designate the 'coloured black,' as opposed to 'coloured white' (*pita*, yellow)" (PTSD). This would give to *sāma* or *nil* the meaning *daṃbu* or the blackish purple colour of the ripe *daṃba* fruit, which makes the name *Daṃbu-lu Gala* or *Sāmagalla* mean "Blue-black Rock." Hence to a discerning linguist, the name *Sāmagalla* could also provide a clue to its real meaning as *Daṃbulugala*, and the inventor of that name would be exonerated of a possible intent to perjure himself!

The foregoing analysis of the name Sāmagalla and the fact that it is stated to have been the sanctuary to this king for as long as fourteen years, in contrast to the seven months at Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka, and the mere day or two at Vessagiri, should prove sufficient cause to set aside Parānavitana's identification of Dambulla with Vessagiri. But before we can conclusively accept the identification of Sāmagalla with Dambulla there is yet another test it has to pass. That is the verification of the fact that Sāmagalla is situated, as stated in the chronicle, near the place called Mātuvelaṅga, which has so far not been satisfactorily identified.

*Mātuvelaṅga* has been so enigmatic a name that few have ventured to figure out even what it means. Only Nicholas, in his "Historical Topography of Ancient and Medieval Ceylon" (HTAMC), seems to have tried to guess its meaning and location. Referring to Velaṅgāvītthika (and Mātu) vihāras stated to have been constructed by King Saddhātissa, he has suggested that Mātuvelaṅga appears to be "a composite of Mātu and Velaṅgāvītthika: perhaps the two Vihāras were close together and merged at a later date" (HTAMC p. 109). The location he suggests is Moragalla, the same place as had been suggested for the location of Sāmagalla by Parānavitana.

King Saddhātissa passed away in 119 BC and his fourth son Abhaya (i.e. Valagambā) came to the throne in 103 BC. Therefore, if there was a merger of the two vihāras as suggested by Nicholas, it should have taken place in the short space of less than 34 years between the accession of Saddhātissa in 137 BC and that of Valagambā in 103 BC. We have no other examples of the merger of two vihāras, and we know that the boundaries of an 'uposathāgāra' of a vihāra are considered to be inviolable, once they have been fixed. Therefore, we have to look for another explanation of this name.

The Commentator has passed on to us the information he had that Mātuvelāṅga refers to *Mātuvelāṅga of Malaya*, (*Sāmagalla-samīpago'ti Malaye Mātuvelāṅgasāmagallassa samīpagato* - MT.616:8-9). This is going to be very useful, for it not only states in which of the early provincial divisions this place was situated, but also points to the fact that Mātuvelāṅga is not a proper name as such, but some kind of feature of a land division like the Malayarata.

In searching for a clue as to what this feature could be we find that in *Mātuvelā-āṅga*, the middle term *velā* means a *river's edge, boundary or limit*. The last term *āṅga* could mean 'angle, corner, part, or section.' Therefore, *Malaye-velāṅga* would mean '*part of the boundary of the Malaya region.*' To ascertain exactly to which part of the Malaya boundary this name refers to, we have only to find the right meaning of *Mātu*. Generally, this is a word that is taken to mean "mother's," also occurring as *mātika*, which pronounced with the final vowel lengthened, as *mātikā*, would mean '*channel or water-course.*'

That, apparently, is the meaning of *Mātu* in *Malaye Mātuvelāṅga*, for streams and watercourses have been used as natural land boundaries, which are recorded to have been delineated and officially fixed for the first time under King Paṇḍukābhaya in 427 BC (Mv.10:103). Looking at the topo sheet for Dambulla one may see that even today, the provincial boundary between the NCP and the CP in which the greater part of the Malaya region lay, runs at a distance of only about one and a half miles from the northern end of Dambulla rock, along the considerable stream called Daṁbulu Oya.

The bund of an ancient irrigation channel about three and a half miles in length also runs close to, and almost parallel to, Daṁbulu Oya, branching off that stream at a point due west of Dambulla Rock and flowing north to meet another feeder of the same stream going by the name Mīrisgōni Oya. Either of these water courses, the Daṁbulu Oya or the irrigation channel beside it, could be the *Mātu* or *mātikā* which signified the ancient boundary between Malaya Rata and Māya Rata at this point. It is the topographical feature referred to in the chronicle as Mātuvelāṅga and explained in the Commentary as the *Mātuvelāṅga of Malaya*.

Therefore, we have both etymological as well as topographical evidence in support of the identification of Dambulla Rock as Sāmagalla of the chronicle. That identification would also explain why King Valagambā lavished such a magnificent and personally significant endowment on Daṁbulu Vihāra, as evidenced by the list of twenty

villages, eighteen of them named after the different parts of his physical form, that he granted to it (as stated in the Daṁbula Sīrita and the Daṁbula Vihāra Tuḍapata).

This is a donation which appears to be the fulfilment of a vow, insuring the person of King Valagambā together with that of his favourite queen, and the safety of his life during his nightly rest. While it is in line with his other acts of indemnity like the building of the Abhayagiri for his friend-in-need, the Thera Mahātissa of Kupikkala, the Sōmarāma Monastery in gratitude for the safe return of his favourite queen from abroad, the Siḷāsobbhakaṇḍaka Cetiya to commemorate his sanctuary at Galēwala, and the establishment and endowment of the Dambulla Cave Temple, which outshines them all by the very personal nature of its significance to King Valagambā.

Therefore, not only is Paranavitana correct in suspecting that the chronicle did in fact refer to Dambulla by other names that scholars had previously failed to recognise, but the two-thousand-year-old legend brought down to us by word-of-mouth that King Valagambā's hideout was at Dambulla is also true. Geiger's respect for the oral tradition also stands vindicated by this discovery of another example of its credibility. He had written in *Culture of Ceylon in Medieval Times*:

If we bear in mind the tenacity in the East of traditions connected with certain localities, we cannot merely ignore such traditions, but try to discover the kernel of historical truth they contain. (p. 22)

It may be mentioned here, in passing, that the site of the *Velāṅgāvītthika* Vihāra searched for by Nicholas may be found at the newly discovered ruins of *Vālaṁiṭṭiyāva*, nine miles to the southeast of Dambulla. It is also situated in the low-lying paddy land at a corner formed by the boundaries between the Wagapanaha Pallesiya Pattuva and the Kandapalla Korale. The names *Velāṅgāvītthika* and *Vālaṁiṭṭiyāva* both have the same etymology, for *Vāla* is the Sinhala equivalent for the Pāli *Velā* (SSD), and *viṭṭhi* is not Pāli at all, but a transliteration of the Sinhala *viṭiya* for which another term is *miṭiya* (low-lying land). As pointed out earlier, the final *ka* in such places, signifies the genitive or locative case, so that *Velāṅgāvītthika* Vihāra in Pāli would stand for *Vālaṁiṭṭiyāva* Vihāra in Sinhala.

The significance of including *Nidigama* and *Damvāsara* in the list of donations to Daṁbula Vihāra, as implied earlier, assumes that *nidi* referred to 'sleep' and *dam*, to the 'spouse' or queen of this king. But that is not intended to preclude the possibility that other meanings of the latter word, like 'race' and 'religion,' were not implied too. It is quite plausible to think that King Valagambā was indemnifying the safety of the Buddhist Dharma and the sovereignty of the Sinhala race. Both of these were important for his claim to kingship, and they were in the greatest jeopardy during the period between the years 103 BC and 89 BC. The role played by Daṁbula Vihāra in this hour of great national crisis could also be the reason for its extraordinary sanctity.



To get back to our task of following up the itinerary of King Valagambā, we may assume that the seven months that elapsed between the day that he met the Thera Mahātissa for the first time at Vessagiri, and the day that he called on the monk for the second time at Sāmagalla near Mātuvelaṅga of Malaya would have provided sufficient time for the cultivating of the lands granted in the form of a 'saṅghabhoga' on that first occasion. When the king arrived there from Silāsobbha or Galēwala only nine miles away, Mahātissa Thera had already arranged with a local chieftain (raṭṭhika) named Tanasīva for the safety and sustenance of the royal visitor and his family (still in disguise), as a part of his contract that allowed him the use of the land that now belonged to the vihāra. For the obvious need of security in the circumstances, Tanasīva himself was not told of the real identity of his wards.

In looking for a possible location for the residence of the royal family at Dambulla, we have the statement quoted earlier, that it was near Sāmagalla at the stream boundary of the Malaya region, i.e. in some place between Dambulla Rock and the Daṁbulu Oya running to the west of it. There is a small irrigation reservoir close to the northern end of Dambulla Rock bearing the very interesting name '*Halu-āpulū Vāva*' or the 'Tank where the Robes were washed.' It is no doubt an ancient name which is marked on the one-inch map as Haluepulu Wewa.

The word *halu* refers to royal apparel. The significance of the word as king's apparel is seen, for instance, in the office of *Haluwaḍḍana Nilamē*, who supervised the King's Dressing Room or *Halu Maṇḍapē* during the Kandy period.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore *Halu-āpulū Vāva* may refer to the place where a king's robes were brought for laundering, and as there was hardly a kingdom so close to Dambulla at any time in history, it is possible to link this place with King Valagambā hideout close to the Dambulla Rock. *Halu-āpulū Vāva* is just close to the point where the connection from the Matale road meets the Kurunegala road, prior to both these joining together shortly before coming to the Mirisgona Oya Junction. It may not be feasible to look for any archaeological evidence of the royal residence, for the king's family lived disguised as ordinary people and their house would have had nothing to differentiate it from an ordinary subject's dwelling.

Dambulla was an even better place for gathering intelligence than Galēwala for close to it is a nexus of main roads from Anuradhapura--Trincomalie through Vijitapura near Polonnaruwa, Kelaniya through Kurunegala, and the Malaya region through Matale. A view from the top of Dambulla Rock would give a bird's eye view of all these approaches. The wooded slopes of the rock on the southern side were dotted with nearly seventy caves concealed by vegetation which could provide a safe hiding place or sleeping quarters that would be hard to trace even in broad daylight. The king could also keep his contacts with his former trysting place at Silāsobbha or Galēwala, with little risk of revealing his real hideout.

<sup>7</sup> John D'Oyly, *A Sketch of the Constitution of the Kandyan Kingdom* p. 199.

Nothing is recorded in the chronicle of what King Valagambā did during the period that his disguise was intact. But an unfortunate incident which led to the death of Tanasiva towards the end of those fourteen years forced the king to declare his identity and openly engage in rallying his forces to attack the invader. In Paranavitana's words, Tanasiva's death occurred in the following manner:

Fate, however, deprived Tanasiva of the possible benefits of having stood as host to the legitimate sovereign, though unwittingly. This was due to an incident between his wife and Queen Anulā - the sort of incident that commonly arises among women due to petty jealousies. When the two ladies went into the jungle to collect herbs, Tanasiva's wife, it is said, struck the basket of the royal Anulā with her foot. Though in adversity, Anula could not brook this insult from an inferior, and came crying to Vattagāmaṇi with the complaint. The king thought it best to leave the place before matters came to a head, but Tanasiva's wife, on her part, felt herself to be the aggrieved party, and apparently complained about the matter to her husband. From Tanasiva's point of view, it was a case of strangers paying him with base ingratitude for all he had done to them in their need. Bursting with indignation, he went forth with his bow to teach the ungrateful strangers a lesson. Vattagāmaṇi was thus forced to defend himself, and shot Tanasiva to death. (UCHC p. 169).

The real incident between Queen Anulā and Tanasiva's wife, however, seems to have occurred under different circumstances than those described above, and the offence committed by the latter does not appear to be of such a trivial nature, either.

That there was something amiss in the story here has been also noted by Buddhadatta Thera in his *Corrections of Geiger's Mahāvamsa* (CGMv). Referring to the latter's translation of verses 62, 63 (63, 64 in MT.) of chapter 33, he says:

'When one day, in Malaya, Anulādevī went to seek her (daily) portion the wife of Tanasiva struck against her basket with her foot' is the translation of:

*'Gatāya tu nivāpattham Malāye 'nulādeviyā  
bhariyā Tanasīvassa pādā pahari pacchiyam'.*

The translation is right according to the standing text. But in my opinion the text here is corrupt or some lines are missing. The words *nivāpa* (= food) and *pacchi* (= basket) suggest that they were gone for collecting some herbs, etc. But it is impossible to think that an ex-queen and a wife of a headman of a province had gone for such a work. The commentary and the MSS do not help to correct the text. In my opinion the word *nivāpa* stands in place of *nivāsa*. Then the

meaning of the passage should be: 'of the queen Anulā who had gone to live in Malaya'. I suggest to do so on account of the narrative disconnected with the 53rd verse of the same chapter. . . .

In his edition brought out in 1934 Geiger has mentioned this correction and has said 'But I believe that *nivāpatham* is necessary to explain why the queen wore a basket (*pacchi* in *d*).' My answer to this is: it is not *pacchi* but *kucchi* (= belly). (CGMv. pp. 35-36)

In the passage quoted above, Buddhadatta Thera's view about the significance of the word *Malaya* in this context has to be accepted as correct. But Geiger is correct in rejecting his suggestion that *nivāpa* should be read as *nivāsa* and *pacchi* as *kucchi*, which seems to be unwarranted, although it must be remarked that one MS of the Extended Mahāvamsa appears to have contained the reading *piṭṭhiyam* (back), instead of *pacchiyam*. But this could be the result of the copyist having misread *piṭṭakāṃ* (which also means *pacchiyam* or 'basket') as *piṭṭhiyam*. His remark that the Commentary does not help to correct the text is valid, but what he failed to observe was that the explanation given in the Commentary (quoted below) makes any such correction unnecessary.

The error in interpretation of the chronicle, at this point, seems to have originated with Geiger himself who translated verse 53 (v.54 in MT.) of chapter 33 of the Mahāvamsa:

*Tassa so Tanasīvassa raṭṭhikassantike tahim  
rājā cuddasa vassāni vasi tena upatṭhito.*

as:

Then in the house of Tanasīva, his subject, the king lived fourteen years, maintained by him.

The error has occurred because of Geiger taking *santike* (near) to mean 'in the house of.' It is clear that the king was not living in the same house as Tanasīva. The Commentary also explains the meaning at this point with '*Tanasīvassa samīpe*,' where like *santike*, the word *samīpe* also has the meaning 'near' or 'close to' Tanasīva, (MT.616:14). Therefore, it cannot be doubted that the king's family resided in a separate house in the vicinity of (the residence of) Tanasīva.

That this was the case is also borne out by verses 64 and 65 of the same chapter in the Mahāvamsa where it is stated that the king and his family left their residence before Tanasīva 'hastened forth' (from his own house) 'grasping his bow.'

Then again, the Commentator explains that the particle *tu* in *gatāya tu nivāpatham* (Mv.33:62) clearly shows that the queen had gone to the house of Tanasīva

for receiving provisions (MT.617:24). This contrasts with Paranavitana's assumption that "the two ladies had gone into the jungle to collect herbs" (UCHC p. 169).

The term *nivāpatham* is interpreted as 'to collect provisions' because *attham* means 'for the purpose of' and *nivāpa* means 'gift portion, ration' (PTSD). The real situation, therefore, had been that Tanasīva was bound by the terms of his contract to supply regular rations to the king's household. The practice seems to have been also for the queen to go to collect the rations personally, instead of waiting for it to be delivered, so that any suspicion that she was of the royal family would be averted. Under those circumstances, Tanasīva's wife would have considered herself to be superior to this family of dependents, and treated the disguised queen who came there to collect rations regularly with contempt. But when she went so far as to kick aside the food basket brought in by Anulā Devi to carry her rations, the latter could not bear the insults any further. What followed this incident, as described by Paranavitana (before he discovered the real Acchagalla or Ākāsacetiya mentioned in this episode), also needs to be updated:

The king was no longer in a position to keep his identity a secret, for the people of the place would not have allowed an unknown person who killed their chief to go unscathed. He, therefore, proclaimed his identity, and found the people loyal to their legitimate sovereign. He gathered around him a number of followers, among whom were eight noted for their military exploits. With this slight improvement in his fortunes, Vaṭṭagāmaṇi sought out the *thera* who had helped him in his adversity, and conducted a festival at a monastery named Acchagalla, presumably the residence of the *thera*. The place must be on the way from the highlands to Mahāgāma, for we next meet Vaṭṭagāmaṇi, at Ākāsacetiya, to the east of Mahāgāma. Vaṭṭagāmaṇi's plan appears to have been to follow the example of his great predecessor, Duṭṭhagāmaṇi, and lead the people of Rohana, who had so far never borne the yoke of foreign domination, and could be relied upon for their loyalty to his house, against Tamils ruling at Anurādhapura. (UHCH p. 170)

Here Paranavitana has suggested that the residence of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, who had helped King Valagambā, could have been *Acchagallavihāra*. But we have found that the name Kupikkala referred to Dambulla, which was in fact the resident vihāra of this *thera*. The other mistake is that he supposed that King Valagambā had gone to Rohana for the performance of the religious festival, because he planned to lead the people of that region to fight the invader. These assumptions have no doubt followed from his identification of Acchagalla with Ākāsacetiya found in the south of the island.

But that this was not so is proved by the fact that Paranavitana himself later discovered, in the *Māyaraṭa* itself, the site of two inscriptions (Nos. 1051 & 1052 in IOC Vol.I) referring to their location as *Acagirika* and bearing the name of a king called Gāmaṇi Abhaya, two names which could in fact refer to *Acchagalla* and *Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya* respectively of the chronicle.

This is at Tōnigala in Peravili Pattuva of the Puttalam District, close to the thirty-nine and half mile-post on the road to Puttalam from Kurunegala. The place is also called Paramākanda and it is situated in the ancient division of Māyārata, and found about 46 miles to the west of Dambulla. If the tradition recorded in the Rājāvaliya knew this location of Acchagalla, it is easy to see how he thought that Māyārata was the area of King Valagambā's hideout, just as Ākāsacetiya, in the south, misled Parānavitana (initially) and Geiger to suppose that it was in the Ruhuna instead.

Of the king named 'Devanapī(ya)-maharājha Gamīni-Abaya' appearing in these inscriptions, Parānavitana says:

This king has been identified with Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya, but with no convincing reason being given therefor. The monastery named Acagirika may be the same as Acchagalla (*giri* and *gala* are synonymous in old Sinhalese), at which Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya is reported to have celebrated a religious festival, while he was conducting his campaign against the Tamil rulers at Anurādhapura. If so, it may be presumed that the monastery received benefactions from him even after he came to the throne. The Gāmaṇi Abaya of Tōnigala inscription may, therefore, be Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya, who is recorded to have granted lands to Buddhist *vihāras*. Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's patronage of the religion did not manifest itself in the form of making grants of lands to monks or monasteries. (IOC Vol. I, p. lxii and p. 82)

This identification of *Acchagallavihāra* in Māyārata is in accord with our evidence that most of King Valagambā's activities during this time were confined to that ancient province as recorded in the Rājāvaliya, although his last hideout at Sāmagalla was just outside its border. This fact will also be seen to be crucial when we come to identify another place called Kambuḡalla (or Hambuḡalla) which was earlier thought to be in Ruhuna, where no trace of such a place has been found. To come to that, let us resume the narrative of King Valagambā's activities at Acchagalla.

One day a general of the king, Kapisīsa by name, went up to sweep the courtyard of the Ākāsacetiya at Acchagalla. The term Ākāsacetiya itself has not exactly been a proper name, for Sorata Thera quotes the Visuddhi Mārga Sannaya to show that Ākāsa Dāgāba (which is the same as Ākāsa Cetiya) had been a class of cetiyas built (on high places) so that they appeared to be in the sky (SSD p. 122). The Pāli terms *Ākāsa* and *Accha* also share the same meaning of "shining, bright, illuminated etc." Therefore, Ākāsacetiya would also have been a term used for referring to the dāgāba built atop *Acchagalla* at Paramākanda near Tōnigala.

While coming down the steep pathway after his work, Kapisīsa met the king ascending the steep incline with his queen. To make way for royalty, the warrior is said to have sat down (on account of the steepness of the path). The king saw this as an act of defiance of his authority for no subject may sit in the presence of his monarch without

leave to do so. Angered that he did not bow to him, King Valagambā slew Kapisīsa on the spot.

When the other seven leaders of the army heard of this high handed act they were angered at the king and deserted him in a body, apparently with the intention of getting back to their homes near Dambulla from where they had been recruited.

This incident would have spelt disaster for the Sinhala cause at this crucial juncture if not for what followed immediately afterwards. The disappointed warriors wandering through a forest pathway between Acchagalla (i.e. Paramākanda near Tōnigala) and Dambulla were waylaid by bandits who stripped them of all their belongings, including, it appears, their clothing too. After this ordeal, the destitute soldiers had to take refuge in a temple which was called *Kambugallaka Vihāra* in the Commentary, (MT.618:9). But Geiger seems to have preferred the reading 'Hambugallaka vihāra' found in some of his manuscripts of the text. However, Malalasekara (in MT.) as well as Buddhadatta Thera (Mv.) have preferred the reading *Kambugallaka* which appears to be the correct one (for all MSS of the Commentary also have referred to the chief incumbent there as *Kambugallakamahātissathera* MT.619:29).

To return to our story, the learned ("bahussuta Catunikāyika") monk of this vihāra, *Kambugallaka Mahātissa Thera*, gave these ex-military refugees food and clothing that he had received as alms, and only after they were fully refreshed did he inquire about their predicament. When they told him all that had taken place, the wise monk realised the gravity of the whole situation and its implications for the future of the country, the Sinhala race, and the Buddhist faith. Therefore, he convinced them that it was only by finding ways to work with the king that they could solve the problems facing the religion and the country as a whole.

When the indignation of the erstwhile generals against the king had subsided, the monk decided to bring about a reconciliation between them and the king, and for this purpose he sought the help of the Thera *Kupikkala Mahātissa* whose influence with the monarch was now well known. This suggests that the temples *Kambugallaka vihāra* and *Kupikkala vihāra* were not very far from each other. In order to find what this place was, we have to go into the etymology of the name *Kambugallaka*.

At the outset we have to recognise that the final syllable *ka* in *Kambugallaka* is an addition to the real name which is *Kambugalla*. It is added to signify 'belonging to.' For instance *ka* in *gāmaka* signifies one who 'belongs to' a *gāma* or village: hence *gāmaka* means 'a villager.' In the same way the terms *Kambugallaka vihāra* and *Kambugallaka Mahātissathera*, stand for 'The *Kambugalla Vihāra*' and 'Mahātissa Thera of *Kambugalla*,' respectively. Therefore, the name of the place we are in search of would be just *Kambugalla*.

We are already familiar with the word *galla* often used for Pāli *pabbata* (which in turn has been used in place of Sinhala *kanda*, as in the instance of *Pabbatārāma* which

we found to refer to Vihāra-kanda). That leaves us with *kambu*, which is the Pāli word for 'conch' or 'shell' (of a snail-like creature). The Sinhala for *kambu*, or shell, is *beli* from which we get *bellā*, a seashell, or snail. The word *bellā* is obtained by adding *ā* to the stem *beli*, so that *beli* + *ā* results in the intermediate form *beliyā* (with the euphonius augmentation of 'y') which would be the older usage for *bellā*, meaning a shelled gastropod.

Therefore, *Beliyākanda*, the 'Chank' or 'Conch' (-shaped) Mountain,' could be the place referred to as *Kambugalla* in the chronicle. The 2014 foot high peak of Beliyakanda can be seen six miles to the southwest of Dambulla Rock. The closely placed contour lines of Beliyakanda which are over a mile wide at the base of its peak (the shell) taper off in a south-westerly direction to a long and narrow point which could be imagined as the tapering projection at the mouth of a chank or conch shell. At this point which is about one and a half miles south of the village of Beliyakanda, are situated the ruins of an ancient temple which could be those of Kambugallaka Vihāra of the first century BC. This is near a village now called Gerandigala, which is slightly to the east of a point that is about two miles to the north of Galēwala on the Kekirawa road from there.

The two theras, one of Kambugallaka and the other of Kupikkala, were able to bring about a reconciliation between the king and his alienated generals. Thereafter, it is said, the thera Kambugallaka Mahātissa (of Beliyākanda Vihāra) also became a confidante of the king (*raññā saddhim viśāsiko ahośi*). The reconciled parties, that is the king and the generals, jointly made a respectful request of the two peace-maker monks, saying (according to the Commentary): "If we win the war with the Damilas, then you must visit us when we send messengers." Thereafter being satisfied with the success of their peace mission, the monks are said to have returned 'each to his own place,' that is to Kupikkala (or Dambulla) and Kambugallaka (or Beliyakanda) viharas respectively.

The king as well as his generals who now became his ministers kept their word almost as soon as they defeated the last of the five Damilas, Dāṭhika, and captured Anuradhapura. The king forthwith destroyed the *ārāma* of Giri, the naked ascetic, and built there the Abhayagiri monastery, as he had vowed on the day that he was betrayed to the enemy by Giri. According to the Nikāya Sangrahaya this happened 217 years after the establishment of the Buddhist religion in Lanka. Taking the traditional reckoning of that date as falling in the year following 307 BC, and subtracting 217 years from it we arrive at 89 BC, or the same year as King Valagamba's recapture of Anuradhapura for the establishment of the Abhayagiri Monastery.

As mentioned earlier, the Commentary makes it clear as to which of the two Mahātissa Theras this monastery was gifted by specifically stating that it was to the thera of Kupikkala vihāra, which we have already recognised to be the Dambulla temple. The Daṁbulu Sirita also mentions this fact (rather parenthetically one might think), although it refers to the recipient only as "The Mahāthera named Tissa who was the (king's)

former benefactor." But this too could be a vestige of the tradition associating Abhayagiriya with Dambulla which later generations of monks living at the latter place wanted to forget.

In the light of our discovery that Sāmagalla and Kemgallā meaning Sanctuary Rock (or Sanctuary Mountain) are alternative names for Dambulla, some doubt has to be cast on the theory (or tradition) recorded in the chronicles for the origin of the name Abhayagiri: "Since King Abhaya (Valagam Abhaya) built it on the place of the *ārāma* of the (nigaṇṭha) Giri, the vihāra received the name Abhayagiri." Seeing no other reason for the term 'giri' in a place that was entirely flat, it is possible that they surmised that the name *Abhayagiri* was a combination of the king's own name with that of Giri, the king's enemy who was also the former occupant of that place, in spite of the unlikelihood of such a thought ever occurring to King Valagambā himself.

Even the record left behind by the Chinese traveller Fa-hsien (AC 399-414) makes no mention of the nigaṇṭha named Giri in connection with the name *Abhayagiri* which he calls the 'shrine of the No-Fear Mountain.' In this case, too, the literal meaning of *Abhaya* (=no-fear) and *giri* (=mountain) approximates to the meaning of *Sāmagalla*, or *Kemgalla* (of the NS), where *sāma* (as well as *kem*) means 'peace' or 'no-fear' and *galla* means *giri* or 'mountain.'<sup>8</sup>

It is difficult to think that King Valagambā would have wanted to associate his own name with that of his enemy, the naked heretic who betrayed him, in an attempt to make him a captive of the invaders, or immortalise that association of names by erecting a great memorial for it. This affinity between the meanings of *Sāma* and *Abhaya* makes it very likely that Abhayagiri was so named because King Valagambā wanted it to be his memorial to his fourteen year sanctuary at Sāmagalla. This supposition becomes all the more irresistible when we consider the fact that Sāmagalla, or 'Sanctuary Rock,' was the king's code name for Dambulla Rock, his secret hideout for the best part of the period between 103 BC and 89 BC.

If it is objected that the word *giriya* in 'Abhayagiriya,' could not refer to 'rock or mountain' as there was no such feature near the place (except the man-made mountain of a *dāgāba* which came to be built only after it got that name), it may be pointed out that *giriya* also stands for 'house' (Skt. *griha*, P. *ghara*, Elu *gara*) in Sinhala (SSD). Then again, the term *giri* appears to have been optional in the name, which could not happen if the proper name *Giri* was implied by it. The alternate names like *Abhaya-uttara* (Mv.33:119) *Abhaya-acala* (Cv.48:135) *Abhaya-gallaka* (Mv.34:38) and *Apahaya-gara* (EZ. IV.141,282) used for 'Abhayagiri' illustrate this point.

Just as Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka-cetiya was built as a memorial to King Valagambā's sanctuary at Galēwala it is conceivable that Abhayagiriya, meaning Abhaya's House or

<sup>8</sup> H.A. Giles, *The Travels of Fa-hsien* p. 71.



Sanctuary House (if not 'Sanctuary Rock') was built to commemorate his more important hideout at Sāmagalla or, in particular, the house that gave the king (Abhaya) refuge (abhaya) at that place.

The fact that King Valagambā had built the Abhayagiriya for this purpose immediately after re-capturing Anuradhapura would also explain why, according to the account given in the DS and the DVT, he could afford to forget doing anything for Dambulla Temple for another four years without suffering from a pang of guilt.

All these nuances of thought and feeling in the mind of King Valagambā could not have been accessed and made available for the official record, the keeping of which was until then the sole prerogative of the Mahāvihāra monks who had ceased to enjoy the king's confidence. For they decided to expel the king's benefactor and mentor, Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera from the Order on what would seem to us today and to the king even then, a very trivial, though technically correct charge.

This lapse of confidence between royalty and the record keepers would also be one reason for the identity of Chāta-pabbata, Kupikkala and Sāmagalla with Dambulla to have remained a secret for so long a time. It is also possible that, as the Mahāvihāra monks were aware that those hailing from Dambulla were responsible for the first schism in the Sangha in this country, they not surprisingly ignored the place for about twelve centuries after that.

Why Dambulla came to be mentioned again only during the reign of King Vijaya Bāhu I (AC 1055-1110) in the eleventh century can also be explained by the same assumption. The Mahāvihāra as well as the other two fraternities were almost non-existent at that time for the king had to send for monks from Burma to get a chapter of five monks to perform the ceremony of Higher Ordination or *Upasampadā*. It is therefore possible that Dambulla was revived under the Mahāvihāra by King Vijaya Bāhu and recorded in the Mahāvamsa where it is referred to as Jambukola vihāra (Cv. 60:60).

Thereafter, it was Parākrama Bāhu I (1153-1186) who performed the Herculean task of bringing together the three fraternities in AC 1165 and recorded the fact in the Galvihāra inscription. Could it also be that the stigma attached to the ancient names for Dambulla was one reason that led King Nissaṅka Malla (1186-1197) to rename the temple as Suvarṇagiri Guhā? For the inscription in which he had recorded this name also says that he too had to reunite the Sangha of the three nikāyas which had been divided for a long time. (EZ.I, p. 134)

These possibilities may not appear to be too far fetched, when we start to recapture some of the history of the Abhayagiri Monastery subsequent to its occupation by monks from the Dambulla temple headed by Bahalamassutissa Thera, the defiant pupil of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera.

Before we come to discuss those repercussions of King Valagambā's association with Dambulla more fully, we must resume the narrative of events following his recapture of Anuradhapura. There are also some loose ends in the account given so far that have to be explained, such as how the Dambulla temple had come to be reclaimed by the jungle immediately after Abhayagiri was built, so that it had to be re-established on a new footing only four years later, as claimed by the DVT and the DS.

We have also to find what happened to Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, the key figure behind King Valagambā's surviving to rule the island again. History is totally silent about his fate after the expulsion order was declared against him by the Mahāvihāra. But from what we know about his personal piety it is difficult to think that he acted defiantly like his pupil or that after being defrocked, the king neglected this sagacious adviser and friend, and let him go unrewarded.

Following the king's example in building the Abhayagiri Vihāra for the chief monk of Dambulla, the seven generals who had now become the king's ministers also built various vihāras for their saviour, the chief monk from Beliṃkanda Vihāra named Kambugallaka Mahātissa Thera. On his part this thera is recorded as having distributed these vihāras amongst various members of the Sangha who were reciters of the Five *Nikāyas* (MT. 622:11). This is interesting, for there was much concern at the time for the necessity to preserve the purity of the texts which were handed down orally till then, and the learned Thera himself is described as a reciter of the Four *Nikāyas* (*Catunīkāyikathero* Mv.33:72). There is no doubt that the *Nikāyas* referred to here are the five divisions of the Sutta Pitaka of the Pāli Canon, the first four of which were memorised by a thera described as *catunīkāyika*.

The Mahāvamsa mentions only five of the seven ministers of King Valagambā. The names of the last two ministers, and the vihāras they constructed in the following list, are from the Dipavamsa which mentions all seven (Dīp. 19:20).

- |            |   |  |
|------------|---|--|
| 1. Uttiya  | : | Dakkhina Vihāra to the south of the city |
| 2. Mūla    | : | Mūlavokāsa Vihāra (same area as Nō. 1)   |
| 3. Sāliya  | : | Sāliyārāma (location not given).         |
| 4. Pabbata | : | Pabbatārāma (location not given).        |
| 5. Tissa   | : | Uttaratissārāma (location not given).    |
| 6. Deva    | : | Devāgara (jointly by Uttara and          |
| 7. Uttara  | : | Deva: location not given).               |

According to Dipavamsa account, the vihāra constructed by the minister Tissa was not Uttaratissārāma, but just Tissārāma. The Dipavamsa account here seems to be more accurate according to the identification of Tissārāma by Nicholas, as the ruins of the Nuwarakanda cave complex in the Kurunegala district where an inscription (IOC I, No.913) has been read as "The great cave of Kanha Tissa the amacca of Piti (rāja) is given to the Sangha" (HTAMC p. 103). Another inscription (IOC I.No.923) here refers to a Thera named Dhammakatika Tissa (Damakatika Tisa) who could be the same as

Kambugallaka Tissa Thera, for the latter being a *Catunīkāyika*, would be designated a *Dhammakatika*, or a 'Reciter of the Dhamma' as opposed to a *Vinayakathika* or Exponent of the Vinaya Rules, a speciality of the Mahāvihāra.

Another of these vihāras mentioned in the *Dīpavamsa*, but not identified so far, is the *Devāgāra* said to have been jointly donated by the ministers *Deva* and *Uttara*. It could be suspected to be situated at the *Uturupavu-vihāra* located about a mile north of Gokarella at the 12th mile post on the road to Dambulla from Kurunegala. Two cave inscriptions (IOC I. Nos. 944) & 945) found here refer to *Uttara* and *Deva* as the respective donors. It was mentioned earlier that *Vihārakanda*, situated not very far from Beliyakanda or Kambugalla, could have been the site of Pabbatārāma, which at a later time came to be called *Pabbatavihāra* in Pāli.

Next, we may proceed to examine the possibility of finding some trace of evidence of what happened to Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera after he became a laymen. The Mahāvihāra is not likely to have been too ready to keep records of a person whom they considered to be the prime cause of the first schism in the Buddhist Saṅgha in this country, which was to keep it divided for 1,254 years to come until Parākrama Bāhu I succeeded in bringing them under one fold again in 1165 AC.

Although other sources may have contained evidence about Kupikkala Mahātissa's fate after he became a layman, it would have been difficult to keep track of the same for two reasons. One is that the real significance of the first part of his name, Kupikkala, which indicated the village or vihāra from which he hailed, had not been understood before. The other reason is that after a monk leaves his robes, he is not likely to use his exact monastic name as a layman.

Even if it was known that *Kupikkala* referred to Dambulla, the name he seems to have assumed as a layman would not have provided an easy clue to connect him with that place. It was pointed out earlier that '*kupik*' means '*dubik*' or 'starvation,' 'famine' etc. The Pāli word for this is *dubbhikkha* meaning 'famine,' is also associated with *dubbuṭṭhi* or 'drought.' Following the same play on words that led him to coin names like *Sāmagalla* and *Kupikkala* for Dambulla, this remarkable ex-monk appears to have assumed the epithet *Dubbuṭṭhi* in place of *Kupikkala*, before his name *Mahātissa*, after he became a layman. There is little doubt that it is his name as *Dubbuṭṭhi Mahātissa*, that has come down to us in a story named after **Dubbiṭṭhi** Mahātissa ('Mahātissa of the Drought') in at least three ancient books, the *Sahasavattuppakarana* (SVP p. 160), the *Rasavāhinī* (RSV p.166), and the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* (SDLK p. 676).

The change of the vowel *u* to *i* in *Dubbiṭṭhi* can be explained by the fact that the intermediate form of the Pāli word *vuṭṭhi* meaning 'rain' (which becomes *buṭṭhi* in the compound *du + vuṭṭhi*, ('scarcity of' + 'rain') could also be *viṭṭhi*, for its later (Elu) form known to us, is *viṭi* for 'rain' (SSD).

All three versions of the story state that Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa was a resident of Mahelanagara, which was the last fortress to be taken by King Dutthagāmaṇi on his march to capture Anuradhapura: hence, probably situated close to the eastern or northern entrance to the city. According to the story, too, it was not so far from the Abhayagiri; consequently, five hundred monks from that monastery found it none-too-difficult to walk to the place on being invited there one morning for breakfast.

Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa is referred to as an *issara* or 'lord' in the RSV, while the SDLK calls him a 'Minister' (*amatyayek*) and the SVP prepared from a fragmentary manuscript does not provide his name with any title. On the day of the story he is said to have been engaged in a *Vapmagula* or ceremonial ploughing involving hundreds of retainers. This is usually conducted by a ruler or overlord of a district. Therefore, it is possible that after he became a layman, King Valagambā provided his former friend-in-need with a title and a large estate to go with it, as one might have expected him to do, by making him the overlord of Mahelanagara.

The details of the story also should be briefly recounted here, for they provide us additional clues to confirm the identity of Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa with the former Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera. They also provide evidence of the interesting fact that issuing an IOU on a loan, (called *inaṭṭana* in Pāli and *ṇayapata* in Sinhala) was practised in this island as far back as the first century BC.

The debtor of Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa had been in obvious concern for having to repay his loan. It is said that 'a loan often loses both itself and friend.' Therefore, watching the extensive preparations afoot on the eve of the ploughing ceremony he planned some mischief to hamper the proceedings. Having gone to the Abhayagiri Monastery, this man had conveyed the message to the chief incumbent Tissa Thera (no doubt the former pupil of Mahātissa, the well known Tissa Thera with the nickname Bahalamassu) inviting him to come for breakfast the following morning with five hundred monks to the house of Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa. The false messenger would have been well aware that the close relationship between the two Tissas would have ensured that such an invitation would be readily accepted by the monk.

When the monks arrived there next morning, perhaps late owing to the long walk, Mahātissa's wife received them respect-fully. But not seeing the master of the house (who had gone to the fields by then) and observing no preparations for an alms-giving afoot, the leading monk Tissa asked her whether the unusual hullabaloo at the house was due to some other undertaking being in progress. She is said to have admitted that the *Vapmagula* was taking place, that day, but that it was her great pleasure to handle the necessary arrangements for both occasions. So saying, she improvised a morning meal of gruel for the monks, and started to prepare their midday meal, for which also she invited them to stay.

After Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa had arrived from the fields he paid obeisance to them and was told by Tissa, the chief monk, that they certainly would not have come if

they had known that the *Vapmagula* had been arranged for that day, but that they had done so without knowing the fact because of the invitation carried to them by his messenger. But Mahātissa who was equal to the occasion handled the situation by outwitting his enemy in a characteristically Buddhist way.

Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa told Tissa Thera that the man who had gone to them was his debtor who had planned to disrupt the arrangements for his ploughing ceremony. But that in doing so, he said, the man had actually done him a great favour. For had he not also arranged for him to acquire great merit on the same day by feting such pious and benevolent monks to his home? Therefore, he declared, that it was now his turn to return that favour. Thus, taking the IOU given to him by the debtor, he tore (lit. 'split') it and scattered the pieces. (*Ḥṇa-paṇṇam phāletva vissajjervā* RSV p. 167). After making along speech in which he summed up the qualities of a good friend, he is said to have stated that his former debtor would be made his lifelong friend, because he had helped him thus to achieve his own self-improvement!

A vestige of the former teacher pupil relationship between Dubbiṭṭhi Mahātissa and Tissa, the chief monk of the Abhayagiri monastery, comes to the surface here. For this story, as related in all three books, shows that it was the host and layman, that drew a moral from the situation and made the customary oration after the repast. This prerogative would normally have belonged to the chief monk present and hardly ever to the lay host, if not for the fact that the latter was once the teacher of the former.

The name of the chief monk of Abhayagiri given just as 'Tissa' thera in the RSV, is given as Tissadattha in the SVP, and as Tissadanta in the SDLK. But the two latter names may be variations of Tissa-dandha, meaning 'Tissa the Dud' because one significance of *datta*, is related to *dandha*, a word that means 'stupid.' This is most probably another derogatory epithet for this monk named Tissa who had come in haste to defend his teacher from the jungle caves of Dambulla with an unshaven face and was promptly dubbed *Bahalamassu* or 'Bushy Beard' at the capital. The monks of the Mahāvihāra were naturally very particular about propriety even in such little matters.

It is also interesting to note that in this story the name Abhayagiri Vihāra of the later book SDLK is given as Abhayuttara Vihāra (i.e. Northern Abhaya Vihāra) in the RSV, while the oldest of the three, the SVP, refers to it simply as Abhaya Vihāra, i.e. 'Vihāra of Abhaya' or 'Sanctuary Vihāra,' names that we have discussed before. Therefore it looks as if the use of the latter part of the name *giri*, in 'Abhayagiri' was optional at first.

What happened to the Dambulla Temple at this time is linked with the dismissal of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera from the Order. After he had accepted the Abhayagiri Vihāra, that new monastery also appears to have been initially considered to have been attached to Mahāvihāra, for it was from the latter place that he is said to have been expelled.

At that time, Dambulla Vihāra appears to have been in the charge of his pupil Bahalamassutissa Thera, for he is referred to as the chief monk there in Dhammadinna thera's story mentioned earlier. According to the NS, he seems to have gone to the capital in order to argue the case against the expulsion order being discussed against his teacher.

The Mahāvamsa however, does not say that Bahalamassutissa Thera was also expelled, as the NS does, but that he went in anger (over the action taken against his teacher) and occupied the Abhayagiriya along with a breakaway faction. As the Abhayagiri was built to accommodate five hundred monks, and the followers of Bahalamassu Tissa Thera were not that many at the capital, it is reasonable to think that he drew all who remained at Dambulla to make the complement. That perhaps is how Dambulla Vihāra came to be deserted in the year 89 BC when all this happened.

As it is not the usual thing to totally desert a temple, voluntarily, especially when there was no compelling disability to keep it going, it is possible that at least a raw neophyte was left behind at Dambulla as a caretaker. It is perhaps the incident in which this neophyte failed in his duty, in the absence of a teacher or other monk to guide him in that forsaken place, that has come down to us as a rare instance where the name Chatapabbata is mentioned in the commentaries of the Pāli Canon.

It is perhaps the downfall of this last neophyte that is recorded as an example of the power of the female voice over the male, in the Manorathapūranī. About this reference to Chātapabbata, Adikaram says: "A young bhikkhu residing in this monastery, is mentioned as having come to grief as far as his higher life was considered, on listening to a woman's voice" (EHB p. 110). The single Pāli sentence (Man.I p. 26) is nothing much to go by, but it shows that the incident had led to consequences that were remembered even as late as the 4th Century AC when Buddhaghosa wrote the commentaries.

The name Chatapabbata apparently ceased to be used for Dambulla, after the cave temple there came to be deserted and reclaimed by the forest. The Dambulu Sirta which records the events said to have taken place there only four years afterwards, makes no mention of that name. Perhaps, it became necessary to re-establish the temple here, under a different name, for more than one reason, and one of them was this scandalous incident. It was the type of incident which would have been taken note of by the inmates of the Mahāvihāra at a time when attention was focussed on Dambulla and the monks who had come from that place to the capital to create a great stir in the controversy regarding the proper norms of ecclesiastical conduct. Because it happened at that place, then known as Chātapabbata, it would have been remembered as another example of the apparent laxity of discipline in the monastery there.

This could be one reason why the SDLK (p. 594), repeating the story of Dhammadinna-thera in Sinhala, refers to *Sāgiri mahāvihāra* of the RSV (p. 128) as *Yeheligiri-vihāra*, giving us yet another ancient name for Chātapabbata, or Dambulla.

*Yeheli* means 'Female Friend' and it could also be taken as an intentional pun or *Sā* which is also the Pāli pronoun 'she.' Therefore, the name *Yeheligiri*, meaning 'The Mountain of the Girl Friend,' could have been a derogatory name for *Sāgiri* or Chātapabbata, arising from the scandalous downfall of this last resident of the monastery under that old name.

The name *Yeheligiri* is mentioned in Sigiri Graffiti too (p. 117), printed as Yehe(ni)giri. Paranavitana has however explained that the *aksara* in brackets "can also be read as *li* or *di*." A visitor from *Yeheligiri* whose name is given as Meyalu wrote a verse (No.190) on the Mirror Wall comparing the glance of fond intimacy cast on him by a female figure among the frescoes above, to 'a drop of water visible at the tip of a beetling rock after piercing through (a mass of) solid stone.' (*Ganagal bind-āra silaga dut pānittak seya*, where *sila* = *hela*, a cliff or beetling rock).<sup>9</sup> This ancient folk poet from *Yeheligiri* seems to have drawn his inspiration for this bit of imagery from the drops of spring-water issuing out of the rock ceiling of the Dambulla Cave in his home town of *Yeheligiri*, thus confirming the identity of the two places.<sup>10</sup>

Even today, Dambulla is connected with the peculiar place-name *Ināmaluwa*. The administrative division next to that in which Dambulla is located is called '*Ināmaluwa Korale*' while on the range of mountains spreading northwards from Dambulla Rock is the peak named *Ināmaluwa*. Here, the term *inā* means 'to be enamoured, bewitched, or enchanted' and a *maluwa* refers to a terrace used by monks for meditation. Hence *Ināmaluwa* means "**Enchantment Terrace.**" Could this place-name be one that harks back to an incident that took place in the days of King Valagambā, where a young monk left robes after being enamoured by the song of a young woman picking firewood in the jungle near Dambulla, as mentioned in the *Manorathapūraṇi*?

<sup>9</sup>. The verse (Sigiri Graffiti No.190) reads as follows:

*Ganagal biṇḍāra silaga dut pānittak seya*  
*Senehin ma lad vismb ju no hay tipa akmay vuyu*

<sup>10</sup>. This may, with a bit of poetic license, be translated as:

The pledge of intimacy I had with love from you is  
like a drop of water that has seen the rock's end,  
having pierced (a heart of) solid stone. Alas, it stays  
unrequited because you abide aloft, for ever!

Paranavitana's translation is more literal and somewhat different because he had no knowledge of *Yeheligiri* being a name for Dambulla Rock.

The story of Dhammadinna-thera as it appears in the oldest of the three books, the SVP (p. 121), refers to the residence of Bahulamassutissa Thera, not as Sāgiri or Yeheligiri but as *Vāḷagiri*, which also may be considered as one more nickname for Chātapabbata. The Abhidhānappadīpikā (v. 934-A) gives the meaning "serpent" to the word *vāḷa*, where (as in *Vāḷagiri*) the 'l' is a cerebral letter. This is similar to the use of that other name *Nādināgapa Pabbata* for Chātapabbata which as we discovered means "the Mountain of the Noisy Cobra." Therefore, *Vāḷagiri*, meaning the 'Serpent Mountain,' could be seen as a variation of the name *Nādināgapa Pabbata*.

But as *vāḷa* also means "rude persons" (ibid.), it could be another derogatory name for Chātapabbata, with the meaning 'Mountain of the Rude Persons,' particularly because Bahulamassutissa Thera, its chief incumbent, as well as his followers who came to quarrel at the Mahāvihāra, were considered "rude persons" by the monks living at the latter place. So there appears to be some wit, humour, sarcasm, too, in the play on words in designing these aliases like 'The Mountain of the Rude Persons' for the name Chātapabbata. As we had found eleven other names for Chātapabbata, earlier, the last two names bring the total discussed so far to thirteen.

There is yet another name for Chātapabbata, as a variant reading in the texts, which may help us to understand the conditions which led to the abandonment of that monastery at this time. That is the name *Vāsabha Pabbata* ('Vāsabhassa Pabbatassa' MT.300:fn.8). This name appears to be a compound of *bha* meaning *hīna*, implying 'contempt or abuse,' and *vāsa*, meaning 'habitation.' Therefore, *Vāsabha* would mean "The Contemptible Abode." One reason for this name could be the implications of *chāta* as a place for starvation. But the name "Mountain of the Contemptible Abode," or *Vāsabha Pabbata* (the fourteenth name for Dambulla, that we have discussed), could also be a result of the contempt with which the place was looked upon after the *parājikā* or transgression of monastic vows committed by its last occupant, referred to in the Manorathapūranī, and implied by the other name *Yeheligiri* or 'Girl Friend's Mountain.' It is a name that proves why no other monk could have been persuaded to occupy the Dambulla caves after that incident, until a completely new beginning for it was ceremonially ushered in by royal decree, as described in the Daṁbūlu Sīrita.

The occasion for this royal intervention is said to have been the information received, when the king inquired about the state of the mountain and forest fastnesses, (*giri dūrḡa vana dūrḡādiyehi pravutti āsū tānēdī*, DS p. 54). This is the kind of phraseology used to denote the appointment of a royal commission for the demarcation of boundaries and taking a census of "man and beast" (*minihā hatā*), for the purpose of reckoning the revenues due to the crown. For instance, in the Matalē Kadayim Pota, the stock taking recorded there is said to have been preceded by Sub-king Vijayapāla of Godapola having made the similar inquiry: *Mātalē ratē minihā hatā kavula manda kiyā āhum bālum kaḷa tānēdī*.<sup>11</sup> This seems to have been a practice coming down from the 5th century BC when the first such census was taken by King Paṇḍukābhaya.

<sup>11</sup>. H.A.P. Abhayawardhana, *Kaḍa-im-pot Vimarśanaya*, p. 223.



On this occasion, a Vāddā (aboriginal hunter) is said to have informed King Valagambā of the existence of a mountain cave in Daṁbulugala. This was perhaps how the king first came to know of the total abandonment of the vihāra at his secret jungle hideout. Thereafter, he is said to have come to the Dambulla Cave, in full state, accompanied by the men of his fourfold army and the ladies of his court to take in hand the construction work there and to establish the temple "so that the customary acts of worship would be performed in the future without being scorned" (*Puda sirit matu nopirihelā pavatvana lesa*: DS p. 55).

A new line of pupillary succession was also established at the same time because a monk named Jayamaṅgala Sumana who had no relationship with the line that ended with Bahulamassu Tissa Thera was installed by the king as the first recipient of the second endowment of lands that he made to the new Daṁbulu Vihāra. That was perhaps how the old endowment of a *saṅghabhoga* (on a Pandanus leaf) to Kupikkala Mahātissa's vihāra here by the same king came to be automatically annulled.

According to the DS, this was also the occasion on which the drip-ledge over the principal cave (said to be 140 cubits in length) was cut. If so, it is reasonable to suppose that none of the seventy or so smaller caves had these before 85 BC. It is also then that the primeval forest around the caves is said to have been cleared to demarcate the boundaries of the vihāra and to erect parapet walls, perhaps so that no faggot-picking female with her lonesome song, may trespass on its precincts in the future. But there is some doubt about the details of the statues said to have been erected at the same time, especially those for Sṛī Vishnu, Maithrī, Nātha, etc., which could not have come into Buddhist places of worship until much later. This could be the result of the hiatus caused by a renewal of the document after the original had been lost.

However, the statement that a statue of himself was erected in the same cave by King Valagambā need not be doubted. For it is quite likely that it was to the bodily parts of this statue that the names of eighteen of the twenty estates gifted to the vihāra on this occasion could have referred to, although the later tradition at Daṁbulu Vihāra maintained that they related to those of the recumbent Buddha statue. It is possible that the offering of this statue of himself (together with the lands that signify every part of his physique) signified the offering of himself, body and soul, as it were, for the maintenance of Daṁbulu Vihāra (for the protection it afforded him from injury to his bodily form - a misfortune that could have disqualified him from aspiring to regain his throne).

The date given for this inauguration of the new vihāra (without any reference to its old names associated with Chāta Vihāra constructed there by King Saddhātissa) was calculated as 85 BC from the statement in the DS that 1457 years since its inauguration had elapsed when King Bhuvaneka Bāhu V (1372-1408) of Gampola came to the throne. We saw that this had taken place after the customary stocktaking of the kingdom's resources, which in the case of King Paṇḍukābhaya happened 10 years after his accession, but in the case of King Valagambā, 18 years after his first consecration in 103 BC.

The break in the line of pupillary succession was also necessary because the old line now led by Bahulamassu Tissa Thera had lost its interest in Dambulla. The fact that for at least four years, the old Chātavihāra had been taken over by the jungle is also a reason for the old associations of the place to have been forgotten. Apparently the new line of succession beginning with Jayamaṅgala Sumana Thera had no first hand knowledge of King Valagambā's earlier associations with that place as a refugee. All these contingencies go to confirm the plausibility of the date 85 BC given in the DS for the endowment and building of the new vihāra at Dambulla.

This would have naturally paved the way for the loss of a direct tradition through the monks of that vihāra, about its earlier literary names like Chātavihāra, Kupikkala, Sāmagalla and so on. In the same way the facts concerning the secret refuge for the king, and the arrangements made for his maintenance by the vihāra, would also have ceased to be remembered. But the tradition was carried to the Abhayagiri monastery and maintained in its records, called the Uttaravihāra Atthakathā, from which the cryptic account concerning King Valagambā's itinerary as an exile from the throne, could have been gleaned by the author of the Mahāvamsa.

Though the Chātapabbata tradition was lost from its birth place at Dambulla, it appears to have been kept alive at the Abhayagiriya by the monks who had gone there from Dambulla, for many more centuries to come, until they too probably forgot the location of its source, and remembered it only as a tradition. At first, the leadership at the Abhayagiri Monastery was undoubtedly in the hands of the group that hailed from Chātavihāra, and they appear to have continued to identify themselves as such, in the line of pupillary succession. They seem to have done this by forming themselves into a new sect called Dhammarucikas or the Dhammaruci Nikāya. The name Dhammaruci means 'those who are fond of the Dhamma' as opposed to one who belonged to the Mahāvihāra, and was regarded as a Vinayaruci<sup>12</sup> or 'one who insists on the Discipline' by followers of Bahulamassu Tissa Thera. The Mahāvamsa clearly states that this was one of the two sects, that were of purely indigenous origin (Mv 5:13). Therefore the version given in the NS about their becoming followers of a Vajjiputtaka thera named Dhammaruci, from Pallavarāma in India, has to be taken with some caution, for we have seen that the leadership was retained by Bahulamassu Tissa Thera himself.

The date given in the Commentary (MT 176:27ff) for this event, as 217 years after the establishment of Buddhism in the island, is also the same as that given in the NS for the opening of Abhayagiri Monastery (in 89 BC). In the Story of Dubbitt̥hi Mahātissa we saw that Bahulamassu Tissa Thera was the head of Abhayagiri at this time. The name Tissa also appears to have passed on along the line from teacher to pupil as a mark of their pupillary succession from the line of Mahātissa Thera of Chātapabbata.

<sup>12</sup> The information that the Mahāvira held that "The Vinaya is the very life of the Religion" (*Vinayo nāma Sāsanaṣṣa āyu*: Samantapaśādikā), was given to me by L.P.N. Perera. See also E.W. Adikaram, EHB p.78.

When the Dhammarucikas broke away from the Abhayagiri, evidently wanting to dissociate themselves from Vaitulyavāda which became rife there in AC 252, their leader was a Thera named Tissa with the epithet Ussiliyā (a Sinhala nickname meaning 'high-crested,' perhaps because he was careless about shaving his head regularly). So after going by the name Dhammaruci Nikāya, or the Sect that favoured the Dhamma (i.e. Sutta Pitaka) for 341 years, they now reverted to what could be supposed to have been their original, but unproclaimed name, the *Sāgalikas*, or *Sāgalīya Nikāya* which means the 'Sect hailing from *Sāgala*.'

The name *Sāgala* is only another version of the other name *Sāgiri*, for in Sinhala, *gala* and *giri* both stand for Pāli *pabbata* and *Sā* is the Sinhala word for Pāli 'Chāta.' Therefore *Sāgiri*, *Sāgala* and *Chātapabbata* are three different versions of the same name. It will be remembered that *Sāgiri* was the name given for the resident vihāra of Bahulamassu Tissa Thera in Dhammadinnatherassa Vatthu of the Rasavāhini. This makes it almost certain that the *Sāgalika Nikāya* represented the sect that had descended from the line of pupillary succession of Bahulamassu Tissa Thera, if not of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, who first accepted the Abhayagiri monastery from the king after having come there from Chātapabbata, *Sāgiri* or *Sāgala* 341 years before this. We may now consider *Sāgala* to be the fifteenth in our list of names for ancient Dambulla.

The 'Thera named *Sāgala*' who is supposed to have given his name to the *Sāgalika Nikāya* according to the *Nikāya Saṅgrahaya* could therefore have been the Thera Ussiliyā Tissa himself who hailed from line of Chātapabbata monks, or one of his pupils. The Dhammarucikas seem to have lost ground to the Vaitulyans that they once welcomed to Abhayagiriya -- the camel that had been allowed to put its head inside the tent had finally succeeded in ousting the Arab from it, so to say. Although this monastery would have expanded during the preceding three centuries and more, the numbers that adhered to the tenets of the original Dhammaruci sect and broke away as *Sāgalikas*, had by then dwindled to only 300 according to the NS.

As it is the Dhammarucikas themselves who are said to have accepted the Vaitulyavāda, it is certain that some of them continued to remain behind at the Abhayagiri. This, no doubt, was the reason that those who left Abhayagiri to take up residence at the Dakkhina Vihāra changed their name to *Sāgalika* (or *Sāgalīya*) during the reign of King Goṭṭābhaya (AC 249-262). According to the Commentary, the *Sāgalikas* are said to have accepted the Vepulla or Vaitulya doctrines only when they took up residence at the Jetavana Vihāra built by King Mahasen (or Mahāsena, AC 274-301). The leader of the *Sāgalikas* at this time, was also named Tissa, and called Kohon Tissa (or Hypocritical Tissa) in the NS. We do not know whether the name Tissa went down from teacher to pupil after this, but the *Sāgalīyas* are mentioned in the Mahāvamsa even up to the tenth century, when Kassapa IV (AC 898-914) is recorded to have built the Kassapasena Monastery for them.

The Dhammarucikas also are mentioned as having received Dhammārāma and another vihāra called Hadayunha Parivena built by the same king (Cv.52:17,18). As both

these Nikāyas were formed by monks of the Abhayagiri Monastery, who claimed pupillary succession from Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera, the Chātapabbata connection appears to have become an important aspect of the claim to orthodoxy by both the Dhammarucika and Sāgalika sects. The monks of Chātapabbata as well as those of Mahāvihāra owed their title to orthodoxy by reason of their claims to pupillary succession from Arahant Mahinda of Cetiyaṭpabbata.

When the Sāgalikas broke away from the Dhammarucis of Abhayagiri, they apparently did so on the grounds that their's was the sole right to claim descent in pupillary succession from Mahātissa Thera of Chātapabbata (who was also a product of the ācārya school through Arahant Mahinda of *Cetiyaṭpabbata*) as evidenced by the name that they adopted to differentiate their group. The term *Sāgalika* (or *Sāgalya*) is from the Sinhala form of the name *Chātapabbata*, which is *Sāgiri* or *Sāgala*. So, the Dhammarucis were left without a claim to represent orthodoxy.

But the similarity between the names *Cetiyaṭpabbata* and *Chātapabbata* (after the exact location of the latter place had long been forgotten, and even the Sāgalikas who claimed it as their spiritual home had ceased to use that Pāli name for it) would have led the Dhammaruci school to think that they could regain their prestige, and vicariously, their claim to orthodoxy too, by occupying Cetiyaṭpabbata (Mihintale).

Therefore, the Dhammarucikas with their physical infrastructure in the great Abhayagiri Monastery, made use of the opportunity provided by King Mahasen's persecution of the Mahāvihāra, to occupy *Cetiyaṭpabbata* with its associations of the hallowed memories of Arahant Mahinda, as their spiritual home.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to this, Cetiyaṭpabbata had the Sinhala name *Sāgiri* (<P. *cetiya*=S. *sā* and *pabbata*=*giri*) with its great similarity to *Sāgiri* (or *Sāgala*) the spiritual home of the two Tissa Theras of *Chātapabbata*, from whom both the Dhammarucikas and the Sāgalikas claimed to have descended in pupillary succession. The Sāgalikas at Jetavanārāmaya now had only their name as a claim to orthodoxy while the Dhammarucikas at Abhayagiriya, physically occupied Cetiyaṭpabbata itself and consciously or unconsciously identified its Sinhala name *Sāgiri* (Cetiyaṭpabbata) with *Sāgiri* (Chātapabbata).

That is how the almost apocryphal name Chātapabbata could have got its paradoxical Sinhala name *Sāpav* (lit. Cetiyaṭpabbata) that we find in the Sinhala Bōdhivaṃsa (SBv) and the Mahābōdhivaṃsa Grantthipada Vivaraṇa (MBvGv). The fact that this is actually a name used for Chātapabbata is seen from its context which says that it was the place where the Bamboo shafts sent to Emperor Asoka were found (SBv

<sup>13</sup>. Mv 39:75. The mistranslation here by Geiger to the effect that the Dhammarucis occupied Mahāvihāra at this time is corrected by Rāhula Thera. (HoBC p. 95).

p. 185). The original Pāli Mahābodhivaṃsa (MBv) which was a source book for the Mahāvamsa Commentator, had actually contained the name *Chātapabbata* where *Sāpav* is given in the SBv. Its Glossary which has come down to us as the MBvGv referred to above, explains the term *Chātapabbata Nitamba* in that text, as "'nurapurata agni desehi yojanekin matuyehi *Sāpav-venehi*" (MBvGv p. 130) i.e. "In the forest of *Sāpav*, a yojana ahead to the southeast of (A)nurapura."

Because the real *Sāpav*, *Sāgiri*, or *Cetiyapabbata* of the Abhayagiri Fraternity was actually one yojana ahead, but to the east, instead of to the southeast of Anuradhapura, it is possible that the obscure tradition and the facts of the situation had got mixed up by the time they came to be recorded in the Pāli MBv. The reference and the bearings given are those for the *Sāgiri* (Chātapabbata) of the Jetavana Fraternity while the distance is that for the *Sāgiri* (*Sāpav* or *Cetiyapabbata*) of the Abhayagiri Fraternity!

The Commentator who may have used the MBvG or its precursor in the Pāli language, as his source for this information, would have spotted the confusion of the two names here. He appears to have tried to correct it by adding an extra yojana to the distance, preceded by the word '*atireka*' meaning 'in excess of.' Thus, by placing *Sāpav* (as *Chātapabbata*) more than two yojanas from the city, he has tried to avoid possible confusion with the real *Sāpav* (as *Cetiyapabbata*). That was the best he could do because he himself was unaware of the actual distance and location of Chātapabbata, though he knew that it was not the *Sāgiri* of Mihintale, which was only one yojana ahead and to the east rather than to the southeast.<sup>14</sup>

The importance that the Dhammarucika sect attached to their new-found connection with *Cetiyapabbata* or *Sāpav*, comes to the surface again more than half a century after King Mahasen. Among the many religious edifices built or repaired by King Dhātusena (455-473 AC) was the Ambathala-vihāra, on *Cetiyapabbata*. This work he had undertaken with the intention of giving it back to the Theravādins of the Mahāvihāra. But the Dhammarucikas pleaded with that king and obtained it for themselves instead (Cv.38:76).

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<sup>14</sup>. This is another instance of the meticulous scholarship of the Commentator who has preserved without embellishment a tradition that he himself could not fully understand to be unravelled with the aid of corroborating evidence available to us over a thousand years later. It is this type of objectivity displayed by him, which led Malalasekera to remark that "Whoever be the author of the MT. and whatever be the exact date of its compilation, it must be admitted that, for the age in which it was written, the work has been done with remarkable ability and efficiency." (MT Introduction: p. cx)

The Sāgalikas who did not have a great monastery of their own at this time (although they did have a tradition of descent from the orthodox school of Chātapabbata or Sāgala signified by their very name) got their own great superstructure, too, in the Jetavana Monastery built for them by King Mahasen at the same time as the Dhammarucikas of Abhayagiriya got Cetiya-pabbata or *Sāgiri*. Thus both the Dhammarucika and the Sāgalika Fraternities now came to have each its great monastery and a claim to its own spiritual home, the first being called *Sāgiri* (*Cetiya-pabbata*) and the other, *Sāpav* (*Chātapabbata*), which by then was only a memory.

The name *Sāpav* as an alternative for Chātapabbata, though it could have been no more than a literary one (and perhaps a mistake at that), may be added on as the sixteenth in our list of old names for Dambulla. While we are at it, we may add to it the name *Suvarnagiri Guhā* (mentioned but not included, earlier) that King Nissaṅka Malla has given to the place in the inscription he left to posterity at Dambulla. The name meant 'The Cave of the Golden Mountain' because he is recorded as having covered the images there in gold leaf. Also, if we take the Sinhala version of it coming in the Daṁbulu Sirita as *Raṅgiri Dambulla* (DS p. 56), we have now eighteen names for this place in our list.

The Daṁbulu Sirita has rendered a useful service to us in our reconstruction of the history of King Valagambā's connections with Dambulla, and its repercussions in the history of Buddhism in the island within the succinct framework provided for it by the cryptic tradition preserved in the Mahāvamsa. It has also proved its historical value by providing us with a clue to a possible solution for another mystery concerning King Valagambā.

It is recorded in the Mahāvamsa as well as the Dīpavamsa that the momentous event of committing the Pāli Tripitakā to writing occurred during this king's reign (BC 103-77). The Nikāya Saṅgrahaya and the Daṁbulu Sirita give the additional information that it was done under the protection of an un-named local chieftain at the Aḷu-lena (Aḷuvihāra) in the district of Mātula. But this information alone does not answer the question as to why King Valagambā himself played no part in that great undertaking.

The answer to this is perhaps to be found in the statement in the Daṁbulu Sirita, that (the commencement of) the recital and writing down of the Tripitaka occurred 439 years, 9 months and 10 days after the Parinibbāna of the Buddha (DS p. 55).

But the same date is given in the Nikāya Saṅgrahaya to the accession of King Valagambā. This does not tally with the date arrived at by Geiger which he obtained by adding up the regnal periods prior to this king as stated in the Mahāvamsa. The NS interpretation of that date cannot be accepted as correct for still another reason. For if two such important events as the accession of King Valagambā and the beginning of the Aḷuvihāra Saṅgayanā coincided so exactly to the very day, the fact would not have been so easily omitted from other documents like the chronicles.

As the writing of the Tripitaka took place at a place close to Matale, which is only 47km south of Dambulla, it is also possible that it was a precursor of the Daṁbulu Sirita that provided this date in the first place, to the author of the Nikāya Saṅgrahaya. That Aluvihāra in Matale and not Mahāvihāra in Anuradhapura was chosen for the purpose is also an indication that the capital had already fallen to the enemy by that date, an event recorded to have happened five months after King Valagambā's accession.

Another reason to doubt the accuracy of the NS in this regard is that it being essentially an ecclesiastical history, the date preserved there is more likely to have originally related to an important event in the history of the Śāsana, like the writing down of the Tripitaka, rather than to the exact day for the accession of a king, which is something out of context in this work.

The total duration of the periods of rule of all the monarchs up to King Valagambā, as given in the Mahāvamsa, when taken together with the periods recorded as interregna, amounts only to 439 years 1 month and 25 days after the accession of King Vijaya, which should be the date for his accession and not 439 years 9 months and 10 days after Parinirvāna of the Buddha, as given in the NS. (For the coming of the first King Vijaya, is also counted as coinciding with the beginning of the Buddhist Era.)<sup>15</sup>

There is a difference of approximately 7 months and 15 days between these two dates, which may be taken as the time that elapsed between the accession of King Valagambā to the throne, and the beginning of the Dhamma Saṅgāyanā at Aluvihāra. If we deduct the 5 months that this king ruled before being defeated and forced to flee as a refugee, we get 2 months and 15 days after the fall of Anuradhapura for the commencement of the Saṅgāyanā for the first commitment of the Tripitaka to writing.

The threat posed by the advent of Mahāyāna influences came only after the construction of Abhayagiri 14 years later. So the vicissitudes resulting from the great famine and drought prevailing at this time taken together with the fall of the Buddhist monarchy appear to have been the main causes which impressed upon the Saṅgha the urgent need to commit the Tripitaka to writing.

This would explain why the king himself was not in a position to participate in any manner in this great event, and had to leave the initiative to a local chieftain. For by the date that fell 2 months and 15 days after his defeat, he was in hiding in disguise at Silāsobbhakaṇḍaka (Galēwala).

Therefore, all the evidence available is very much in favour of the record in the Daṁbulu Sirita, that the date 439 years 9 months and 10 days AB was actually the date for the commencement of the writing down of the Tripitaka at Aluvihāra (in 103 BC),

<sup>15</sup>. See the introduction to Geiger's English translation of the Mahāvamsa, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

rather than for the accession of King Valagambā (as stated in the NS) which is an event that happened seven and half months earlier, according to the Mahāvamsa.

The Mahāvamsa and its Commentary also have proved their worth as works of great scholarship, where the record of this episode is concerned. Not having further evidence in support of it, the authors have been very careful to preserve even a cryptic record without trying to elaborate it by drawing on the oral traditions that would have been fresher in folk memory then, than they are today.

It is perhaps fitting to bring this examination of a previously uncharted area of history to a close by presenting another of those cryptic but interesting names for ancient Chātavihāra or Dambulla Temple. For it was the figuring out of the etymology of place names that helped us to decipher the real significance of the ancient records which have been later corroborated by other evidence.

*Jātavihāra* is a name for Chātapabbata found in one of the manuscripts of the Vamsathappakāsini or Commentary to the Mahāvamsa (MT 300:fn 8). It is easy to dismiss this name as an orthographical error for *Chātavihāra*, because the Sinhala characters to represent *chā* and *jā* are very similar. But the scholarly editor of the MT has not done so. Therefore, we may subject this name, too, to etymological analysis.

The word *jāta* as it occurs in compounds like *jātassara* to signify 'a natural pond or lake' means 'natural' as opposed to 'artificial.' The latter part of the name *vihāra* is a word which originally meant an 'abode,' later an 'abode for bhikkhus,' and finally a 'shrine.' Therefore, *Jātavihāra* would mean 'Natural Shrine' or more poetically, "Nature's Shrine."

The spectacular rock formation with its seemingly magical rock-spring in a cave of the largest proportions to be found anywhere in whole the island, and the panoramic view from its bare summit would have no doubt been *Nature's Shrine*, where prehistoric man came to worship, as early as in the period of the Stone Age. Some reasons for thinking so about these caves at Dambulla are given by Raven Hart in his book *Ceylon History in Stone* as follows:

How far these caves go back as places of worship no one can guess: without doubt older beliefs worshipped there before Buddhism since the mystery of caves and the large horizons of high places have appealed to the religious spirit of all mankind. (p. 30)

In conclusion it may be recounted that we found a very cogent reason for justifying the peculiar nature of the gift of 20 villages, 18 of which have names signifying parts of the human body, to Dañbulu Vihāra by King Valagambā. We have been able to identify with a fair degree of certainty, the location of his sanctuary (*akanyūka*) at *Silāsobbha* (Galēwala). Its proximity to Pabbata Vihāra, as stated in the Commentary, has been confirmed by the identification of that place as Vihārakanda near Galēwala.



His most important sanctuary for 14 years called *Sāmagalla* (The Blue-black Rock) and its vicinity *Malaye Māuvelariga* have been identified as Dambulla Rock and the Stream Boundary of the Malaya region formed by the Dañbulu Oya flowing close by.

Paranavitana's latest identification of *Acchagalla* as the ruins at Tōnigala in the Puttalam District is conclusive. It contains two inscriptions referring to the place as *Acagirika*. This identification is further confirmed by naming *Kambugallaka* (Shell Rock) as Belyakanda placed between that location and Dambulla. As we have been able to show that Kupikkala is another name for Dambulla, the geographical distribution of these three places confers credibility on the details of the account given in the Mahāvārṣa of the crisis between king and his generals which was settled by the intervention of the two Tissa theras from Kambugallaka and Kupikkala.

That the pledges made by the grateful generals on this occasion had been fulfilled by them has been shown to be true by the discovery of clues leading to the possible identification of some of the places where they built vihāras for that purpose.

Though the Mahāvārṣa mentions only the construction of a memorial by the king to honour his sanctuary of seven months at Silāsobbha, we have been able to recognise the fact that he also built a much larger memorial in honour of his other sanctuary for 14 years, at *Sāmagalla*, by erecting a great Monastery for the Thera Kupikkala Mahātissa and named it Abhaya-giri which is a different form of the code name '*Sāma-galla*' for Dambulla.

It was seen that the name Abhayagiri, need not necessarily be a combination of the king's name Abhaya, and Giri his enemy, whom he had no reason to edify.

We have traced how this undertaking led to two other important developments. One was the temporary abandonment of Dañbulu Vihāra and its re-establishment (under a different line of monks starting with Jayamaṅgala Sumana Thera) by King Valagambā four years later, in 85 BC. We have seen that most of the villages that he endowed to Dañbulu Vihāra on that occasion to ensure revenues for its maintenance are still to be traced on the map while many of them still serve that end two thousand years later.

Tracing this four-year hiatus in the continuity of the Dañbulu Vihāra, which before that had been known as Chātavihāra, (or Sāgiri-mahāvihāra) helped us to clear the discrepancy between the tradition and the epigraphical record for the date of the establishment of the Dambulla Cave Temple in antiquity. We were also able to show, by taking into account a hitherto unnoticed statement in the Commentary (MT 300:12-14), that the inscription referring to the donation of the Great Cave to the Saṅgha of the four directions by a king called 'Gāmaṇī Tissa, the Friend of the Gods' (IOC I, pp. lx & 64) refers to the establishment of the Chātavihāra by King Saddhātissa (BC 137-119). This had happened before the monastery came to be re-established as Dañbulu Vihāra by King Valagambā in 85 BC as a result of the events that took place after his accession some eighteen years before this occurrence.

The other was that which led to graver consequences following the expulsion of Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera for his close association with the king. This was technically a breach of monastic discipline for which the Mahāvihāra expelled him from the Order. We saw how this led to a split between the exponents of the Vinaya Pitaka or the Books of the Disciplinary Rules (at Mahāvihāra) and those who held the Dhamma or the Doctrines of the Sutta Pitaka to be more important, and called themselves the Dhammarucikas (at the new monastery of Abhayagiri).

As there had been a schism on the same lines (The Vinayaḍhara-Dharmadhara Controversy) within the Sangha with parallel divisions among their lay followers even during the lifetime of the Buddha himself, this new development at Anuradhapura has to be regarded as a division within the Theravāda School itself. That accounts for the fact that the kings who supported the Abhayagiri and Jetavana fraternities while patronising the Mahāvihāra also have not been regarded as being guilty of apostasy.

We saw that having been reduced to the necessity of rejecting the authority of the Mahāvihāra, this new fraternity had to maintain its authenticity by recourse to its spiritual connection with Dambulla or *Chātapabbata*, also known as *Sāgiri* and *Sāgala*. We saw how this rift led to the formation of the Sāgalika sect and to the establishment of the Dhammarucikas (who had finally adopted Mahāyānistic doctrines several centuries afterwards) at Abhayagiri and Sāgalikas (who still wanted to claim allegiance to orthodoxy) at Jetavana as rivals to the Mahāvihāra -- all resulting from King Valagambā's associations with Dambulla.

In addition to what has been already discussed about the name Valagambā, it is noteworthy that Mahācūli Mahātissa (BC 77-63), the successor of Valagambā, constructed a vihāra called *Vālagāma Vihāra* (EMv.34:9 & MT.625:4). Although Geiger has preferred an alternate reading *Jālagāma* (Mv.34:9) for this, it is possible that Mahācūli built this shrine at the Valagāma (lit. 'village in the jungle') near Dambulla Rock to commemorate the place where he spent his boyhood with the fugitive royal family. (The ruins of this vihāra have not been identified so far, though Nicholas considers it to have been in the Anuradhapura District.) We have already seen that one name for Dambulla Rock was *Vālagiri*.

In Kandyan times, Valagam or 'Olagam' as they had come to be called by then, referred to paddy-lands cultivated by absentee landlords, according to Codrington (ALTRC p. 4). It is also known that a resident of an Olagāma (or 'Valagama') was outside the pale of the law.<sup>16</sup> Thus another possible way of explaining the meaning of the name *Valagambā* could be that, as a result of King Abā (i.e. Abhaya) having lived as a Valagam-kārayā (or outlaw) for 14 years, he came to be called *Valagam Abā*.

<sup>16</sup> I am indebted to the scholar and writer Sri Charles Silva for this piece of information.

We have been fortunate in being able to trace not only the enigmatic meaning of the name Kupikkala, but thanks to the old records in the SVP, also to discover what happened to the remarkable historical figure bearing that name after he returned to lay life, and continued to maintain the cordial relationship with his pupil who became the head of Abhayagiri Monastery.

Above all, we have been able to uncover the reasons for the hitherto inexplicable aura of extraordinary sanctity attached to the Dambulla Temple which had puzzled a great archaeologist like Paranavitana, by tracing its role in saving Buddhism and the Sinhala Race and their ruler, in a phoenix like fashion from the ashes of perhaps the gravest crisis ever faced by them up to then.

A surprising result of this investigation has been the unexpected discovery of the fact that Daṁbulu Vihāra had kept alive the tradition of the exact date (AB 439 years, 9 months, 10 days) for the commencement of the Convocation for committing the Pāli Canon to writing for the first time, at Aluvihāra. This has cleared some of the mystery that has so far surrounded the event. We found that this fact would have been recognised much earlier had scholars been able to compare the report about it in the DS with the spurious interpretation of the date in the Nikāya Sangrahaya.

What is so remarkable is that the bits of information gathered here from a wide variety of sources, put together with the evidence gleaned by etymological analysis of place names etc., and by reading between the lines of the ancient records, fall into place, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to form a composite picture that is surprisingly clear. The whole episode so envisaged, finally, is very much in line with the oral tradition regarding the ancient history of Dambulla.

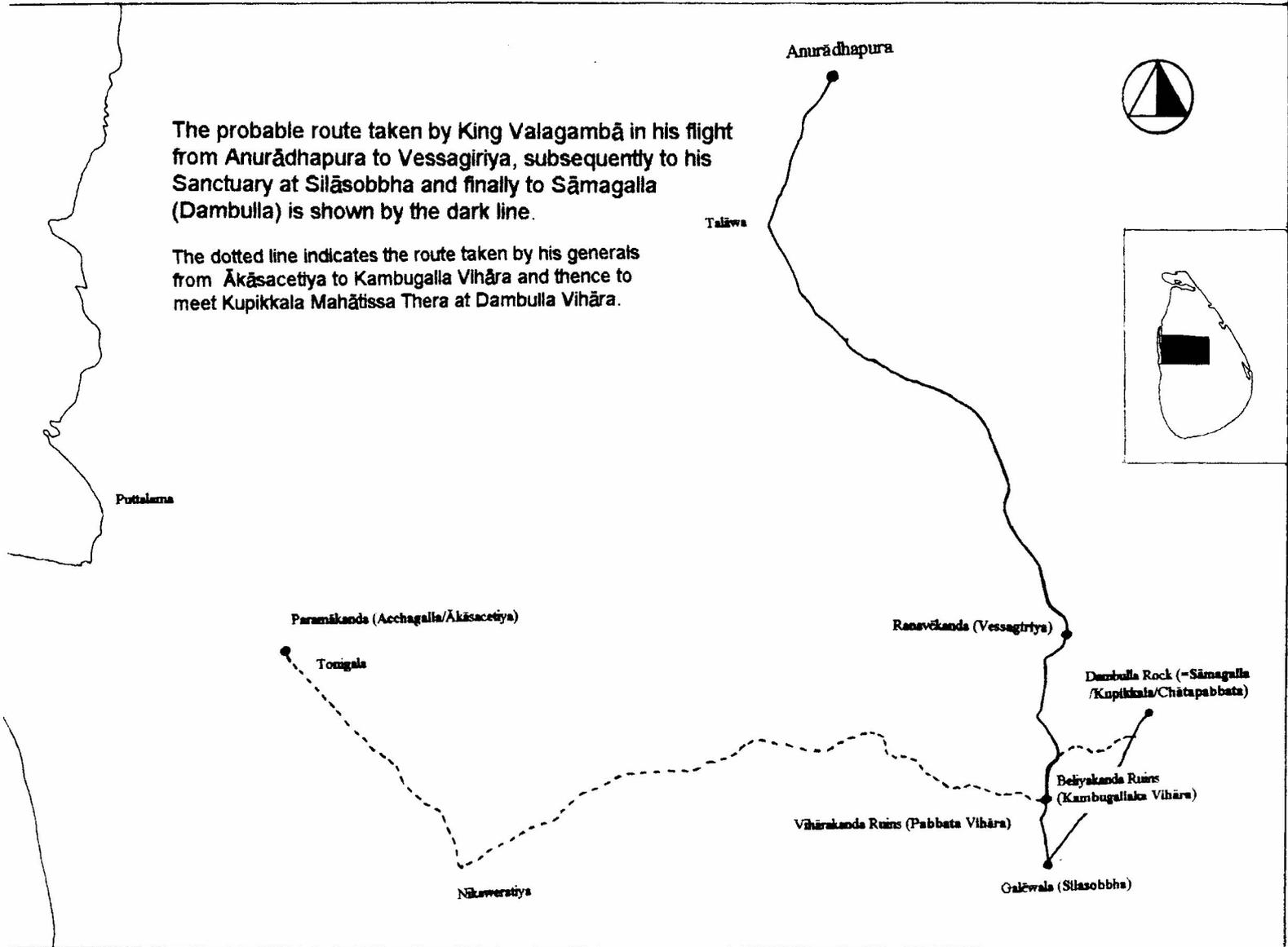
## Appendix I

## SOME IDENTIFIABLE PLACES AND THEIR MAP COORDINATES

Ancient Name	Present Name	District	One-Inch Sheet	Coordinates
Acchagalla	Tonigala	Puttalam	Galgamuwa	79°59'E - 07°54'N
Ākāśacēṭṭya	Paramākandā	Puttalam	Galgamuwa	79°59'E - 07°54'N
Ālagamuwa	Elagomuwa	Kurunegala	Nalanda	80°26'E - 07°46'N
Ālagamuva	Elagamuwa	Matale	Elahera	80°43'E - 07°40'N
Baḍḍagamuva	Badagomuwa	Kurunegala	Kurunegala	80°23'E - 07°30'N
Bellgamuwa	Bellgamuwa	Matale	Nalanda	80°33'E - 07°43'N
Chātapabbata	Dambulla	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Cēṭṭiyapabbata	Mihintale	Anuradhapura	Medawachchya	80°31'E - 07°21'N
Damvāsara	Danwehera	Matale	Nalanda	80°38'E - 07°43'N
Danagamuva	Denagamuva(?)	Kurunegala	Kurunegala	80°21'E - 07°19'N
Danagamuvamulla	Denagamuva(?)	Kurunegala	Kurunegala	80°23'E - 07°39'N
Dāsdeṭṭya	(Desdeniya-) Udawela (2)	Matale	Nalanda	Not in the map
Devāgāra	Uturupahuwa	Kurunegala	Nalanda	80°28'E - 07°35'N
Halūpūḷūvāva	Haluepūḷūwewa	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Kambugalla Vihāra	Bellyakanda Ruins	Matale	Nalanda	80°35'E - 07°48'N
Kaṇḍalāma (I)	Kandalāma	Matale	Dambulla	80°42'E - 07°52'N
Kaṇḍalāma (II)	Kandalāma	Gampaha	Gampaha	80°08'E - 07°15'N
Kuppkalā Vihāra	Dambūḷū Vihāra	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Mātuvelāṅga	Dambūḷū Oya Bend	Matale	Dambulla	80°37'E - 07°52'N
Mōragalla	Dambulla Rock	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Nalākūmbura	Nayakumbura (2)	Matale	Nalanda	80°41'E - 07°46'N
Nidīgama	Nidīgama	Anurāpura	Dambulla	80°36'E - 07°57'N
Nikawajavana	Bintembura (3)	Matale	Nalanda	80°39'E - 07°49'N
Pādeṭṭya (I)	Padeniya	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Pādeṭṭya (II)	Siyambalawewa (4)	Matale	Nalanda	80°38'E - 07°50'N
Pabbatavihāra	Vihārakanda Ruins	Matale	Napamda	80°31'E - 07°46'N
Sāgiri-mahāvihāra	Dambūḷū Vihāra	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N
Sāmagalla	Dambulla rock	Matale	Dambulla	80°38'E - 07°51'N

The probable route taken by King Valagambā in his flight from Anurādhapura to Vessagiriya, subsequently to his Sanctuary at Silāsobbha and finally to Sāmagalla (Dambulla) is shown by the dark line.

The dotted line indicates the route taken by his generals from Ākāsacetiya to Kambugalla Vihāra and thence to meet Kupikkala Mahātissa Thera at Dambulla Vihāra.



Ancient Name	Present Name	District	One-inch sheet	Coordinates
Silāsobbha	Galapita Wewa	Matale	Nalanda	80°34'E - 07°46'N
Silāsobbhakagāka	Galwela (-sanctuary)	Matale	Nalanda	80°34'E - 07°45'N
Siragamuva	Tittaweligolla <sup>15</sup>	Matale	Nalanda	80°39'E - 07°49'N
Vālamitīyāva (I)	Welamitīyawa	Matale	Nalanda	80°36'E - 07°45'N
Vālamitīyāva	Welamitīyawa	Kurunegala	Dandegamuwa	80°13'E - 07°27'N
Velaṅgāvatīhika	Welamitīyawa	Matale	Nalanda	80°36'E - 07°45'N
Vessagiri	Kanawekanda Ruins	Anuradhapura	Dambulla	80°34'E - 07°54'N

1. Lawrie A C, *Gazetteer of the Central Province of Ceylon*(LG) see p. 158 under Desdeniya, for change of name, and p. 848 under Udawela for services rendered to Dambulla Temple.
2. LG p. 638, see under Nayakumbura
3. LG p. 104, see under Bintembura
4. LG p. 799, see under Siyambalawewa
5. LG p. 828, see under Tittaweligolla

## Appendix II

## REFERENCES TO THE 19 NAMES FOR DAMBULLA

Name	Sources
Chātapabbata	MT 300:9 Mv 11:10, MBvB p. 130 DAT
Chātavāha Pabbata	MT 300:9
Chātavihāra	MT 300:13
Dambulla	Common name
Dambulugala (Dambuluvihāra)	DS p. 54, DVT p. 65
Jātavihāra	MT 300:fn 8 (= Chātapabbata)
Jambukola-lena	Cv 60:60 as opposed to Jambukolavihāra in Nāgadīpa (Mv 20:25)
Kemgalu (-vihāra)	NS p. 65 (of Kupikkala Mahātissa)
Kupikkala (-vihāra)	MT 620:24, Mv 33:49, = Sāmagalla Mv 33:51,52
Nādināgapa Pabbata	MT, 300:fn 8 (= Chātapabbata)
Riri Dambulla	DS p. 56
Sāgala	(Sāgalikas)
Sāgiri mahāvihāra	RSV p. 128 (of Bahulamassutissa)
Sāpav (for Chātapabbata)	SBv p. 185, MBvGv p. 130
Sāmagalla (= Kupikkala)	Mv 33:51, MT 616:13
Suvarnagiri Guhā	EZ I p. 134
Vāḷagiri Vihāra	SVP p. 121,122, (of Bahulamassu Tissa Thera)
Vāsabha Pabbata	MT 300:fn 8 (= Chātapabbata)
Yehelligiri Vihāra	SDLK pp. 594/5 (of Mahādāliyyā/Bahula- massu Tissa Thera) Sigiri Graffiti No.190

## Abbreviations Used:

ALTRC	<i>Ancient Land Tenure &amp; Revenue in Ceylon</i> : Codrington
CGMv	<i>Corrections to Geiger's Mahāvamsa</i> : Buddhadatta Thera
CP	Central Province
Cv	<i>Cūlavamsa</i> : ed. W. Geiger (numbers refer to the chapter and verse in the Pāli text separated by a semicolon.)
DAT	<i>Dambulla in Ancient Times</i> : S. Paranavitana.
Dīp	<i>Dīpavamsa</i> : ed. H. Oldenberg (numbers refer to the chapter and verse in the Pāli text, separated by a semicolon.)
DS	<i>Dāmbulu Sirita</i> : ed. Nandasena Mudiyanse (numbers refer to the page in <i>Sāstrīya Lipi Sangrahaya</i> .)
DVT	<i>Dāmbulu Vihāra Tudapata</i> : ed. Nandasena Mudiyanse.
EHB	<i>Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon</i> : E.W. Adikaram.
EZ	<i>Epigraphia Zeylanica</i>
EMv	<i>Extended Mahāvamsa</i> : ed. G.P. Malalasekara.
HOBC	<i>History of Buddhism in Ceylon</i> : W. Rahula Thera.
HTAMC	<i>Historical Topography of Ancient and Medieval Ceylon</i> : C. Nicholas.
IOC	<i>Inscriptions of Ceylon</i> : ed. S. Paranavitana
MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
MT	<i>Mahāvamsa Tīka</i> (Vamsatthappakāsini): ed. G.P. Malalasekara (numbers refer to the page and line, separated by a colon.)
MBv	<i>Mahā Bodhivamsa</i>
MBvGv	<i>Mahā Bodhivamsa Granthipada Vivaraṇaya</i>
Mv	<i>Mahāvamsa</i> : ed. W. Geiger (numbers refer to the chapter and verse in the Pāli text separated by a semicolon.)
MWD	Monier Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary
NCP	North Central Province
NS	<i>Nikāya Sangrahaya</i> : ed. D.P.R. Samaranayaka.
P	Pāli
PTSD	Pāli Text Society (Pāli-English) Dictionary
Pv	<i>Pūjāvaliya</i> : ed. K. Nānavimala Thera.
RSV	<i>Rasavāhini</i> (Part II): ed. Sāranatissa Thera
Rv	<i>Rājāvaliya</i> : ed. A.V. Suravira.
S	Sinhala
SBv	<i>Sinhala Bōdhivamsaya</i> : ed. Paravahara Pannananda Thera
SDLK	<i>Saddharmalankaraya</i> : ed. K. Sarananda Thera.
SG	<i>Sigiri Graffiti</i> : ed. S. Paranavitana.
Skt	Sanskrit
SSD	<i>Sri Sumangala Sabdakoshaya</i> : W. Sorata Thera,
SVP	<i>Sahassavathuppakaranam</i> : ed A.P. Buddhadatta Thera.
UHCH	<i>University of Ceylon History of Ceylon</i>



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