

TOWARDS THE SOURCE-CRITICISM OF SITAVAKAN HEROIC LITERATURE, PART ONE, THE *ALAKESVARA YUDDHAYA*: NOTES ON A FLOATING TEXT

In the sixteenth-century, the source-material for Sri Lankan history bursts into new life.¹ As the first wave of Europeans arrived at its shores, they not only intruded on the island's affairs but lit them up, illuminating for the modern reader the great changes and upheavals that their presence precipitated. But those upheavals also served to disrupt the indigenous literary traditions, as royal courts and monastic centres became embroiled in a struggle for survival. In short, the vast bulk of the evidence from this century is Portuguese. This makes those few Sinhala texts that do survive of tremendous importance, in particular the latter portion of *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* (AY), which I shall discuss in Part One, and the *Sitavaka Hatana* (SH) which will be considered in Part Two.² What did the indigenous inhabitants make of the Portuguese presence? How did their view of it evolve as the century wore on? Indeed, how did their ideas about themselves shift in response to it? And many more such questions would the historian look to such texts to answer.

But they do not yield up their answers easily. Given the sometimes long and complex process of their gestation, and the comparative contextual vacuum in which they sit, these texts are as treacherous as they are important. They deserve sustained source-criticism, but little headway has yet been made. Our discussion here will therefore become technical at times, as potential authorship dates are considered and possible deconstructions – in a very old-fashioned sense! – of the texts into their possible component parts are essayed.³ But the end point of this sometimes convoluted source-criticism is not simply to weigh up the reliability of the information these texts contain. By locating their parts in particular decades and political centres, we can also use them to trace shifts in consciousness between and within generations. For it is now desirable for historians of Sri Lanka to become

¹ Both Sinhala and Portuguese diacritics have been left out here, so as not to clutter up what is already a rather acronym-ridden text. English translations of Portuguese texts have been cited to aid the accessibility of the arguments.

² The *Rajaratnakarya*, written in 1540s Kandy, (S. De Silva 1930), also contains some useful historical data, but is much less important than these two. Part Two will also consider – very briefly – a number of texts which have yet to be authenticated or brought into mainstream historiography.

³ Often Sinhala texts of this period, particularly prose-works and chronicles, are not only authored but edited, compiled, interpolated into and copied.

more attuned to how the mentality or sensibility of their subjects changed over these smaller phases of time as well as over centuries and epochs.

Although literary scholars may want to take issue with my use of the term 'heroic literature', it is intended merely to draw attention to the common preoccupation with celebrating the martial feats of the protagonists. But we can only make a preliminary contribution towards the objective of thoroughgoing source-criticism, in the hope that Sinhala experts working with the full complement of original documents will give further attention to them and to their inter-relationships. Here, I have worked with the aid of a translator on the published editions only.⁴

The puzzle of the latter portion of the *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* is that it seems to float high above the manifest loyalties and biases that we tend to expect from primary narrative sources. Or rather, it seems to waft around between different perspectives, refusing to settle on any one with consistency. Here I shall attempt to pin down that part of the narrative concerned with the sixteenth century, and in particular, from the 1540s onwards.⁵ This latter portion, which ends in 1593, is the only Sinhala chronicle of the period. However, it was incorporated into the more famous chronicle known as the *Rajavaliya*, which was last updated in the late-seventeenth-century, and it is to the *Rajavaliya*, which has existed in English translation since 1900, that scholars have generally turned.⁶ In fact, the AY has a somewhat different narrative to the *Rajavaliya* in points of detail (if not in any greatly significant points of historical fact), and, most intriguingly, in its apparently non-judgemental approach to the business of narration.

Some of the most eye-catching moments in the *Rajavaliya* occur when the author pauses the narrative to let loose a scathing attack on those kings who had consorted with the Portuguese and on the cultural evils that followed.⁷ For example, Bhuvanekabahu VII (1521-51)

⁴ My deepest thanks to Nilmini Dissanayake, who has shouldered the bulk of the mental labour behind this project. I am also grateful to C. R. de Silva for his readiness to share his experience of such matters with me. Lacking Sinhala myself, it will be clear that I am not the best person to take this source-criticism forward.

⁵ I shall not enter here into the debate on the 'first encounter' issue as conducted by Michael Roberts and C. R. de Silva.

⁶ One exception is C. R. de Silva who has privileged the use of AY as a source in his contributions to the K. M. de Silva (ed.) 1995, and in other essays such as De Silva 1994. The B. Gunasekera 1900 edition has been superseded by the Suraweera 2000 edition (henceforth '*Rajavaliya*') used here.

⁷ Suraweera, p. xii, in his introduction notes this difference too.

[b]y joining hands with the Pratikal committed acts of foolishness by entrusting the care of the prince brought up by himself to the Pratikal king. Let it be known that on account of this foolish deed that the said king Bhuvanekabahu caused harm to the people who would be born in future Sri Lanka and... to the Buddha Sasana as well.⁸

It is important to note that none of these intemperate interjections can be found in the AY: they represent another perspective altogether. By contrast, the latter portion of the AY is a strangely neutral chronicle, in two senses. First, it is difficult to locate its authorship in any of the principal royal centres of Kotte (or Colombo), Sitavaka, or Kandy. Second, it seems to be drained of the religious, cultural, or ethnic antagonisms which the animate equivalent section of the *Rajavaliya*. Now, the *Rajavaliya* has lifted its caustic judgements of Bhuvanekabahu directly from the *Sitavaka Hatana* of 1585, expanding and repeating them a good deal in the process.⁹ But, the silence of its sister text, the AY, suggests that such antagonisms were not the highest concern for all parties to the wars of the sixteenth-century history; one could say that such passions were still in embryonic or localized form. Indeed, in this light, the AY is revealed as wonderful evidence for the way in which, for all the interventions of the Portuguese, much of the political activity in Sri Lanka was still driven by indigenous motors – by the conflicts arising between and within the dynast-centred ‘galactic polities’.¹⁰ When explanations for conflicts are given (sometimes they are not; we merely hear of one prince ‘creating disturbances’ in the territories of another), they are nearly always located in the jostling for status between or within the different branches of the royal families. What is at issue here is the desire to enforce a recognition of superiority as an end in itself, rather than as simply a means to governmental control or the extraction of wealth.

A good example of how the text reads politics as the negotiation of personal status relationships occurs with the reason given for Karaliyadde Bandara’s revolt against his father Jayavira. In order to give the reader a flavour of the text, a long quotation follows in rather literal translation:

When the Great King Mayadunne had built a city in Deraniyagala and was living there, a royal prince and royal princess were born to Kiravelle Bisu

⁸ *Rajavaliya*, p. 75. The author is clearly informed by a karmic understanding of causation. Here. See similar comments on pp. 73-4, pp. 76-7.

⁹ Compare *Rajavaliya*, p. 75 with *Sitavaka Hatana*, verses 348-52, in Paranavitana (ed.) 1999.

¹⁰ This term is taken from the work of Stanley Tambiah. See for example, Tambiah 1976. ↵

Bandara, sired by King Jayavira who was reigning in Udarata. When King Bhuvanekabahu was alive, the royal princess was given in marriage to King Dharmapala [and] let it be known that Bhuvanekabahu died. The royal prince became known as Karaliyadde Bandara. While living in Udarata, the chief queen of this king [mother of Karaliyadde Bandara] died, and thereafter King Jayavira got the relationship wrong, took a queen from Gampola dynasty, had a prince, disfavoured Karaliyadde Bandara.¹¹ That king got to hear of this and came to Dumbara Pansiyapatthuwa. He got some chiefs from the low country, had secret talks with the Great King Mayadunne, created disturbances for his father the king, and without letting him [the father] stay in the Udarata, chased him away.¹²

Sometimes the wars of early sixteenth-century Kotte appear to resemble nothing so much as particularly extravagant family squabbles: the three princes fight as siblings do, but there are moments of happy reunion also. Indeed, when they make peace at one point it is ascribed to their fraternal feelings – rather than simply because diplomatic or military considerations demand it.¹³ The AY becomes most

¹¹ ‘Got the relationship wrong’ appears in Suraweera’s translation of the *Rajavaliya*, p. 78, as ‘not caring for proper relationships.’ The ‘disfavouring’ here is probably with regard to succession. The ‘wrong relationship’ of Jayavira’s union seems to be a reference to a breach of some marital principle, but it may refer to over-reaching of his status in his choice of the Gampala clan, or simply to the consequent dislodging of the then heir-apparent, Karaliyadde.

¹² AY, p. 36. My translator is not a professional scholar, and has not transliterated according to a standard scheme. I hope the following is clear enough nonetheless: ‘Mayadunne maharajjuruwo Deraniyagala nuwara karawa veda indina kala Udarata rajakarana Jayaweera rajathema thamahata jathaka kota Keerawelle Bisobandara vedu rajakumarayakuth rajakumariyakuth vuha. Rajakumarikawa Buvanekabahu rajjuruwan veda inna avadhiye Dharmapala rajahata saranamagul kota Buvanekabahu raju ukuth vuva y datha yuthu. Rajakumarathema Karawuliyadde Bandaraya y namin prasiddha viya. Udarata indina kala mey rajahuge maubisaw ukuth vuvayin pasu Jayaweera raju thema nekam waradawa Gampala rajavaliyen bisokenakuth gena kumarayan laba Karawuliyadde Bandarata ahitha vuha. Eay bava dana rajathema Dumbara pansiyapatthuwa avith patharatin pradhaneenuth labagena Mayadunne maharajjuruwange rahas kathawenuth piyananwu rajjuruwanda perali kota Udarata hariye sitiya nodhi elawa gatthaha.’

¹³ AY, p. 32 ‘King Mayadunne and King Raigama had consultations and then created disturbances in the lands belonging to Bhuvanekabahu. Because they were brothers they re-established friendship again several times.’ Sinhala version: ‘Mey akarayen nobo davasak giya kala Mayadunne raju ha Raigama raju ha katha karagena Buvanekabahu rajahata ayithi ratawal viyavul kireemath sahodara heyin keepa warak navatha santhana weemath viya’

pernickety on points of fact when it comes to genealogical data, which it relates in considerable detail, its complexity compounded by the tendency for both men and women to marry several times in all sorts of combinations. Clearly, it was important to get such matters right for questions of succession. Another taster:

Vidiye raja living in Palanda took as wife Mahatikiribandara, a daughter of king Mayadunne; his son Wijepala Astana having taken as wife Kudatikiribandara, a granddaughter of that great king; and [Vidiye] created trouble for the Pratikals and without protecting the great king Mayadunne created disturbances in those lands as well and announced the honour title of Kuttarayakandan Taniyawallan Ekangaweeran Madiyathrumanthan and displayed this in four directions.¹⁴ At that time, Rajasinha, the blessed prince of king Mayadunne, of about 12 or 13 in age, was known as Tikirirjurubandara and had not even been separated from the foster mothers. On that occasion this Tikiribandara was given permission to go to war against King Vidiye attended by Wickramasinha Mudali and the great army.¹⁵

The Portuguese are certainly accorded an important role, but appear nonetheless as rather secondary to all of this. One reason why the perspective of the text is difficult to determine then, is that the author(s) have made it their business to record the details of all the royal families, whether based in Kotte, Sitavaka, Kandy. Moreover, the text displays a generic reverence for kingship – as opposed to

¹⁴ The *Rajavaliya*, p. 77, says that Banôara assumed the title of '*Tuttarâyankanada Eka-anganvira*', which I am told is very difficult to translate – perhaps 'hero of the village training ground' - but is heroic rather than regal (my thanks to Prof. R. Paranavitana and Prof. K. N. O. Dharmadasa for this.)

¹⁵ AY, p. 37. 'Vidiye rajathema Palanda indagena Mayadunne rajjurwange diyani vu Mahatikiribandara doliyata gena mey maharajjurwange minibiriya Kudatikiribandara Wijepala Asthana kiyana thamage puthrayata doliyata gena inda Prathikanundath peraliyata yodha Mayadunne maharajjuruwannuth pathu nokara eay ratawalatath avul kara Kuttarayakandan Tanniyanwallan Ekangaweeran Madiyathrumanthan kiyana viridhu namuth kiyawa satharadisawata viridhu pumbawa indina kala Mayadunne rajjuruwange sri kumrawu Rajasinha maharajathema ekalata vayas dolaha dahathuna mattama athuwa Tikirirajjurubandara namin kirimawungen ven vunath natha. Eay prasthawata Wickramasinha Mudaliyarun ha mahasenawa piriwara kota Vidiye rajjuruwann ha uddhayata mey Tikiribandarata avasara devuha.'

reverence only for 'our king' – and often uses stock phrases of respect or eulogy to describe them all.¹⁶ Having said that, it does seem as if the Kandyan kings come off somewhat the worse in this regard, and indeed, the text is least well informed about the business of the highland kingdom: we hear almost nothing about this royal family from the accession of Karaliyadde Bandara onwards.¹⁷ We have seen Jayavira Bandara subject to some rebuke at this point; he is then described as having laid his crown 'at the exalted feet of great king Mayadunne and worshipped him'.¹⁸ From this we can suggest that we should be looking to Kotte or Sitavaka for the authorship of the latter portion of the AY.

It is then not so surprising that the cultural or religious factors are not much in evidence in the AY, when not even the strategic or economic dimensions to conflict are acknowledged: all are reduced to status struggles and disputes over succession, and the maintenance of 'proper relationships'. We are faced with a text rooted in the world of the palace and the training ground, a world away, it would seem, from the concerns of the Pali monastic chronicles, which routinely dwell at length on works of religious patronage and so on. This kind of text stands then as very useful counter-balance to the *vamsas*, from which Lankan history is inevitably heavily weighed down with religious ballast. These reflections resonate with Suraweera's comment that the Sinhala is of a somewhat crude and demotic nature.¹⁹ It may have been authored by a military man or at least a secular official at the court. If there is a generic reverence for kings, so there is also a generic glamourisation of warrior nobles and a concern to mention those commanders or soldiers who distinguished themselves in battle – whichever 'side' they happened to be on.

A good example of this arises with the end of Vidiye Bandara. For reasons we shall explore below, it seems as if the relevant portion of the AY was written by the enemies of Vidiye Bandara rather than those close to him. But nonetheless, we are told of a warrior, one Vijayakon Mudaliya of Ambepitiya, who defends his

¹⁶ For example, even Vidiye Bandara, is referred to as staying in Raigama with the respectful or honorific terms '*veda sitiya*', p. 36.

¹⁷ AY, p. 36, which corresponds to *Rajavaliya*, p. 78.

¹⁸ The highlands are mentioned again on p. 39, but this is in the context of the story of Rajasinha's defeat of Vidiye Bandara. Incidentally, this respectful reference to Mayadunne comes in a portion of the text that I shall argue was written by a Kotte Christian. This highlights the dangers of using such terms of respect to determine the allegiance of the author, for the reasons given above, but also because it was an easy enough matter for the later Sitavakan authors (circa 1562 and 1593; see below) to alter the language in this regard as they made their compilations.

¹⁹ See Suraweera's introduction to the AY.

master to the death in a desperate battle in Jaffna, how he kills 60 Tamils before falling dead at the 'exalted feet' of Vidiye.²⁰ This 'heroic' warrior-ethos aspect to the AY also works towards establishing its apparent neutrality. What we see here perhaps is a concern to elevate the business of all warrior-princes, and if one's enemy is thereby elevated then victory over him will only be so much the greater. Indeed, it is a common feature of heroic literature that the hero is ennobled through the ennobling of his enemy. Particularly over the latter half of the sixteenth-century in Sri Lanka, we see a general inflation of the status of the military professional as the island is plunged into permanent warfare between Sitavaka and the Kotte-Portuguese forces. And we see a king – Rajasinha – with *de facto* power from the 1560s onwards, who appears comparatively uninterested in the business of public religious patronage and peacetime government, and who stands as an exemplification of the warrior ideal. It is no surprise then that Rajasinha's authority reaches its apogee in the 1580s, we see the birth of the war-poem or *hatana* genre with the appearance of the *Sitavaka Hatana* (circa 1585; to be revived again in the mid-seventeenth century under Rajasinha's namesake). The *hatanas*, just like the AY, are demotic in language and secular in concerns, although thereafter they diverge in many ways: the *hatanas* are very loud about their allegiances, indeed they often descend into the disparagement of enemies. We are returned again to the puzzling neutrality of the AY.

All of this explains a good deal, but it does not yet quite explain satisfactorily the failure to acknowledge the role of religion in shaping the conflicts of this time. That role would have been evident as early as the 1540s, when the first Christian mission arrived, and proceeded to shatter old alliances, forge new ones, ratchet up succession disputes and eventually serve to shape the symbolism of campaigns directed against the Portuguese presence. My argument here turns on the question of authorship. I shall suggest that a certain portion of the text, at least that dealing with 1505-57, was composed by a Kotte Christian aristocrat who may have been concerned to downplay the divisive implications of his faith.

In order to do this we need to try to perceive the sources which the final compiler of the AY has run together to form his text. I shall tentatively suggest that one can distinguish three 'ur-sources', which correspond to

²⁰ AY, pp. 40-1. The *Rajavaliya*, p. 82, has it that this hero was the son of one Vijayakon Mudaliya of Ambepitiya, whereas the AY appears to suggest (although it is opaque here) that it was his father. It is highly odd that the AY does not have the sentence explicitly stating that Vidiye Bandara died in this encounter (which the *Rajavaliya* has), just as it does not mention Mayadunne's death.

- (1), pp. 28 to 37, that is from 1505 to early 1557, when we hear of Dharmapala's conversion, written by a Kotte Christian.
- (2) pp. 37 to 42, that is from 1555 to 1562, to the end of the Battle of Mulleriyava (circa 1562), written from a Sitavakan perspective.
- (3) pp. 42 to 44, the events in Sitavaka of 1593.

We ought to acknowledge the risk of tendentiousness incurred by breaking up the narrative of the AY into its constitutive chunks in this way. This is because of the possibility that each successive author has glossed over or manipulated his sources to a considerable extent. For example, the final author/compiler may have altered details of previous accounts in order to enhance the images of Mayadunne and Rajasinha. Moreover, the author(s) may have broken up their sources as they employed them. If we compare, for example, the AY with the *Rajavaliya*, we see that the latter has significantly changed the order in which events are narrated. Nonetheless, we would expect much greater fidelity to previous arrangements within one textual tradition such as the AY, and, furthermore, we know that often 'authors' acted as little more than compilers, running together many texts with little thought for coherence.

There are at least two fairly stable facts:

- At least one source for the text was written by a Christian.
- One 'authorship' ends shortly after 1562, because the Battle of Mulleriyava is the latest event to be described before the text then skips 30 years or so to Rajasinha's death in 1593.²¹ (The reasons for dating the Battle of Mulleriyava as described in the AY to the early 1560s will be discussed in Part Two.) Moreover, the earlier section was probably authored before the abandonment of Kotte in 1565 because this fact is not recorded the AY; the *Rajavaliya* has to interpolate it. This is also why the AY does not mention Mayadunne's death, because it occurred long after the bulk of the text was written.

²¹ Note the *latest* event. The *last* event to be described is a highly distinctive riverine skirmish at Mapiṭigama or Ruggahavatta, in which the Sitavakans forced a water-borne siege-tower to retreat by firing cannon at it. In the Portuguese sources (Diogo do Couto in Ferguson 1993: 208-11, Queyroz 1992: 345) this takes place before either of the two candidates for the Battle of Mulleriyava; in the AY, it takes places 'several days' after it. These discrepancies do not impinge upon the general point here that the narrative clearly ends in the early 1560s. The possibility that there was a second battle of Mulleriyava in the 1580s will be discussed in Part Two.

The final section is then a short 'add-on'. It uses the indigenous dating system for the first time in the text since the fifteenth century. It appears to display some reverence for Rajasinha, whose death is recorded as a momentous event, and it has detailed knowledge of the internal events in the Sitavaka court immediately following Rajasinha's death. However it only seems to describe the events of 1593, ending with the battle of Orutota of that year.²² It is therefore possible that it was written by a Sitavakan noble who defected to Kotte in this time, and was concerned to describe the collapse of that polity.

The evidence for a Christian authorship of the first block rests on the manner of describing the Christian faith, in which the word 'our' stands out. For example:

At that time, a ship left the Pratikal district of Sri Jambudhvipa and due the divine Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ came by sea without any harm'.²³

'In a few days, the army Chief, Thammita., having completed his various duties, came to the divine faith of our Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords' [*devati devavu apage jesus Christu devasamayamehi*]. This passage also describes how many of the nobles of Kotte established themselves as of the Christian religion [*Christiani samayamahe*] at the same time.²⁴

Clearly, however, this is a Christian without a dogmatic animosity towards Buddhism as he has been quite prepared to copy Buddhist phrasing from the fifteenth-century portion of the text. Further clues from this portion point to a Kotte-centred, somewhat pro-Portuguese perspective. Mayadunne's rebellion against his brother Bhuvanekabahu is described as the former 'not paying heed to seniority'.²⁵

²² AY, p. 44. See Queyroz 1992: 417 on the battle, a defeat for the Portuguese. The final paragraph of the AY also describes the general defections to the Kotte-Portuguese following Rajasinha's death.

²³ AY, p. 28.

²⁴ AY, p. 37. C.R. de Silva 1994: 319 says that a deliberate copying error in the *Rajavaliya* may have transformed *Khristu Samaya* (Christian faith) into *Khristu Samayama* (Christian farce), but also records a comment by Goonewardena to the effect that that *Samayama* need not have pejorative connotations in this context. Whatever the case, it is clear that the original author was referring to Christianity with the greatest respect, referring to the religion as 'divine' and Christ as 'Lord of Lords'.

²⁵ AY, p. 33, which was transferred into *Rajavaliya*, p. 72. In the same vein, the account of Dharmaparakramabahu's first dealings with the Portuguese in the moment of 'first contact' (p. 29) is presented as a pragmatic military decision.

Bhuvanekabahu's policy of sending an embassy to Lisbon to recognize the superiority of the Portuguese king is represented as a practical move of military necessity. As for Bhuvanekabahu's death, caused by a Portuguese bullet that may or may not have been stray, the text is not prepared to blame the Portuguese, merely noting that some say it was deliberate, some say it was unintentional.²⁶

What is very interesting, however, is the way the text deals with Bhuvanekabahu's assassination of his son Prince Jugo in the final weeks of 1544, a fact which never made it into the *Rajavaliya*, but which is substantiated by contemporary letters.²⁷ The AY tells us that Bhuvanekabahu ordered Vidiye Bandara to kill Jugo Bandara because he considered him to be powerful and capable of harming Dharmapala. The AY is right to hint that succession disputes lie at the bottom of this: Dharmapala had just been established as heir to the throne. But the AY does not mention that Jugo Bandara was allying himself with the Portuguese and promising to convert to Christianity as a result; nor does it mention that two other disinherited princes fled to Goa and did convert, from where they posed a very real threat to Bhuvanekabahu. Indeed from this time, Bhuvanekabahu's attitude to Christianity was ambivalent, to say the least, and sometimes manifested itself in outright persecution of converts. None of this is relayed by the AY. Equally, the role of religion in Jayavira Bandara's dealings with the Portuguese and his conflict with his son Karaliyadde is not mentioned.²⁸ It would not have been in the interests of a Kotte Christian, still committed to asserting the legitimacy of the Kotte crown over all subjects, the converted and the heathen alike, to remind his readers or listeners of the religious dimensions to political authority.

But what happens after this passage on page 37? There are three possibilities.

(a) We have the same authorship, by a Kotte Christian aristocrat, up to the end of the Battle of Mulleriyava, circa 1562. This at least has the advantage of simplicity. One might suppose that it would be principally men of Kotte who would be interested in updating a text which, in its entirety, principally or at least initially concerns Kotte history. But this is unlikely for reasons that will become apparent below.

(b) It is all by a Kotte Christian up to the battle at Denipitiya, page 41. This battle took place during the resumption of war between Kotte and Sitavaka in 1556.²⁹

²⁶ AY, p. 35. This does not have the sentence 'the truth of it god only knows' which made its way into the *Rajavilya*, p. 75, but which is consonant with the tone of the AY here, suggesting that the *Rajavaliya* drew upon a slightly different recension of the AY.

²⁷ AY, p. 33, which corresponds to *Rajavaliya*, p. 73. Contemporary references in Perniola 1989, p. 55, 92-3; Gaspar Correia in Ferguson 1935-6: 324.

²⁸ AY, p. 36.

²⁹ See K. M. De Silva (ed.) 1995: 88; this corresponds to *Rajavaliya*, p. 82.

Vidiye Bandara bulks so large in the AY, taking up pages 36-41, that one might think that this section was written shortly afterwards, by someone concerned to recount his whole career and rebellion. There was motive enough for Kotte men to be fascinated by Vidiye Bandara, and he seems to have made a deep impression on the Portuguese *casados* too, to judge by the great quantity of material on him in Queiros' *Conquista*.³⁰ Also, there are grounds for thinking that one recension of the AY may have stopped at this point.³¹ Indeed, this is the place where the *Rajavaliya* interpolates Mayadunne's death, which is very odd, given that it does not actually occur until 1581.³² However, all this ignores what I take to be Sitavakan perspective of these years, and it is difficult to believe that a Kotte Christian, even one concerned to downplay the political implications of the Christian mission, would have refrained from pointing out the destruction of churches and general iconoclasm of Vidiye Bandara's rebellion.³³

(c) The Kotte Christian authorship ends here, and from p. 37 paragraph 2 to page 42, we have a Sitavakan perspective. This is my favoured explanation for many reasons: Firstly, this would explain why the events are narrated a little out of sequence, so that Dharmapala's conversion (which happened in early 1557, representing the end of the Kotte portion) is followed immediately by an account of the marriage between the houses of Vidiye Bandara and Mayadunne, and the latter's decision to attack the former (which happened in 1555). The text then takes up the story of how Vidiye Bandara was defeated.

Secondly, this lengthy account of Vidiye Bandara's defeat, pp. 37-41, seems to have been written at a time when Rajasinha's *de facto* authority was already established, because Rajasinha's greatness is presaged and he is presented as the key figure in wars against Vidiye Bandara. It is as if the purpose of this part of the text is to explain and record how Rajasinha established his greatness: so much attention is focused on Vidiye Bandara because he was the first great adversary against whom Rajasinha proved himself.³⁴ After hunting down and defeating his quarry in the

³⁰ Queyroz 1992: 302-15 and *passim*. This material clearly derives from *casado* oral tradition and Queiros therefore struggles to fit it into his chronology.

³¹ Some *Rajavaliya* MSS end with the conclusion of the reign of Mayadunne. Suravira's introduction (p. xlvi) seems to suggest that this is because they were following some copies of the AY which end there.

³² We shall attempt to resolve this in Part Two of this paper. The *Rajavaliya* follows the AY until the acquisition of the Matota Disava by Sitavaka. But then *Rajavaliya* has an additional sentence p. 82, describing Mayadunne's death – compare with AY, p. 41.

³³ My thanks to C.R. de Silva for this point.

³⁴ AY, p. 39 says that then Rajasinha was in Alutnuvura by morning and the enemies ran off in every direction, numberless were killed and sixty pairs of Vidiye's hill-country army were captured – which is exactly as in *Rajavaliya*, p. 79. Incidentally, the *Rajavaliya* deliberately

highlands we are told that 'on that day the armies of Lanka [*Lanakave Senava*] gave the name Rajasinha. From that time he became known as Rajasinha.'³⁵

Thirdly, Vidiye Bandara appears to be disparaged a couple of times in this portion, but these come in the context of his failure to acknowledge Sitavakan superiority. In the first block (1505-57), Vidiye Bandara is mentioned as rebelling against the Portuguese.³⁶ But from the start of the second block, the drama concerns his relationship with the Sitavakan kings. Twice, Vidiye Bandara is displayed in a less than flattering light by being described as being overcome with fear [*bhayin thathigena*].³⁷ This is the poor man's condition as he decides to abandon his army without telling them and hotfoot it to Kandy. 'In the night he got onto the shoulders of a man and went to *Kanda uda* [Kandy]'.

Fourthly, a number of clues in this portion of the text suggest that it was written at a time when it was clearly very important to clarify and preserve the distinction between Rajasinha's *de facto* rule (his rise is glorified, he is given control of the armies) and Mayadunne's *de jure* sovereignty (because Mayadunne is referred to as the great king, one who is genuflected to). On Page 37, paragraph 2, the young prince is given permission to fight Vidiye Bandara; in the next paragraph 'he worshipped at the exalted feet of Mayadunne'. Subsequently, it is made explicit that Rajasinha's authority derives from his father.³⁸ This ties in perfectly with this authorship dating to just after the battle of Mulleriyava which took place in the early 1560s, during which Rajasinha's pre-eminence was firmly established, and after which Mayadunne recedes to the background. The battle of Mulleriyava seems fresh in the memory of the author, as does the ravaging of Kotte coastal villages in these years: indeed it despairs that 1000 pages of writing would not be enough to record

misses out the fact that Sitavaka was in league with the Portuguese to crush Vidiye Bandara. Instead it has it that Tikiri Bandara defeats and captures Vidiye Bandara by himself. In this, the *Rajavaliya* is again following the *SH*, whose version of events was more suited to the image of Rajasinha I that prevailed at the time of Rajasinha II or his successor.

³⁵ *Senava* can also mean the people. It is often very difficult to distinguish which meaning is implied by context.

³⁶ AY p. 36. It is significant here that Vidiye Bandara is presented as opposing the Portuguese rather than as opposed to Dharmapala. One might expect the latter from a Kotte Christian concerned to assert the viability of Kotte sovereignty. Equally, however, a Kotte Christian might want to present Vidiye Bandara's campaigns as directed against the Portuguese so as not to emphasize the treachery and dishonour done to Dharmapala as a result. Once again, the prospect of later re-writing also has to be considered.

³⁷ AY, pp. 39 and 40 Again Vidiye Bandara is overcome with fear. This time he gets on a ship and flees to Jaffna.

³⁸ AY, p. 39 paragraph 2.

all the destruction that occurred.³⁹ It is possible that this part of the text is even the early stages of a royal chronicle commissioned by Rajasinha.⁴⁰

Fifthly,—this is a minor point—Dharmapala recedes from the picture somewhat in this portion.⁴¹ In particular, it is principally the Portuguese who are portrayed as Rajasinha's enemies. The text refers to the 'pratikal armies' at the Battle of Mulleriyava. If this was written by a Kotte man we would expect the Sinhalese Kotte commanders and troops to be accorded a more prominent place.

Whether this second chunk (1555-1562) was added to an existing copy of the AY in the 1560s (perhaps by a defector from Kotte to Sitavaka, once the latter had tightened its grip on the Kotte hinterland), or whether it existed as a separate text which the 1590s author then inserted into his compilation, is impossible to tell. As for the final portion of the text concerning the events of 1593, it is interesting that it tells us of the arrival of Mannamperuma from the 'Soli country' (India) and his rivalries in the Sitavaka court, but does not tell us that he came in company with fakirs and was ridiculed as a result, which is an interpolation of the *Rajavaliya*.⁴² The latter pauses to recapitulate the arrival of Mannamperuma (he had already made his appearance in the narrative before this point) as a means of passing judgement much in the manner that it had recapitulated Bhuvanekabahu's reign in order to pass judgement. The 1593 author was quite aware of Rajasinha's Saivism; indeed he gives us invaluable contemporary evidence of the latter by saying that on his death Rajasinha passed to Kailasana. But he does not pass any judgement on this. The *Rajavaliya* author has copied the whole sentence on Rajasinha's death from the AY but missed out this final clause. In other words the *Rajavaliya* is at once more concerned to deprecate Saivism than the AY and yet more concerned to free Rajasinha himself from the taint of Saivism. In the first years of the Kandyan kingdom we see an attempt to denigrate the Sitavakan project, as is evident in the oral histories that the first Dutch visitors to the island put on record, full of rumours of Rajasinha's parricide and his tyranny.⁴³ But by the 1630s and the accession of Rajasinha II we clearly have an attempt to resurrect and cherish the legacy of the Sitavakan resistance.

³⁹ See K. M. De Silva (ed.) 1995: 90, on the destruction of villages in the years 1557-62. the AY seems to attribute the destruction to both sides.

⁴⁰ Note that the actual transfer of office to Rajasinha in 1580 is not mentioned.

⁴¹ Dharmapala is mentioned as part of the 1555 Kotte-Sitavaka league (p. 37) and in taking the armies up to meet Vidiye Bandara (AY, p.40 /*Rajavaliya*, p. 81).

⁴² So once again the author of the *Rajavaliya* was drawing on another source (this time, intriguingly, of Sitavakan rather than Kandyan origin) in order to read back religious antagonism onto that period.

⁴³ See Strathern (forthcoming).

Much more could be said on the contrasts between the AY and the *Rajavaliya*, with the *Sitavaka Hatana* as sort of triangulation between them. A thoroughgoing analysis of their inter-textuality would reveal a good deal more about how political culture shifted between the mid-sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth century, and between Kotte, Sitavaka, and Kandy.⁴⁴ In the AY, reflecting the history up till 1562, the Portuguese are almost just one more force sucked into 'galactic-political' squabbles. By the time of the writing of the *Rajavaliya*, there is a great sorry story of foreign interference and oppression to be told. Clearly the author of the *Rajavaliya* was somewhat at war with his primary source for the sixteenth century, a source which should, in his eyes, have told this story but instead was frustratingly neutral and sometimes favourable to Kotte. So this Kandyan author turned to the *Sitavaka Hatana* to supply the cultural and religious antagonisms he felt the narrative required. Sometimes it does this loudly, sometimes subtly. In its account of the Battle of Mulleriyava, the AY tells us that

.... fought at a place called Mulleriya Oya and the captains and the Portuguese fought powerfully⁴⁵ and many men of the Sitawaka army fell and several of the *Illangam* and powerful *palisakkarayo* fell and the Sitawaka army broke. Then the great king Rajasinha and Wickramasinha *mudali* and *Illangam palisakkarayo* with elephants and horses leapt and fought and the Portuguese without going back even a foot fought and many Portuguese fell.⁴⁶

The reference to the Portuguese not retreating is ambiguous, but it seems to accord a rare courage to the enemy in their refusal to rout. In Suraweera's translation of the *Rajavaliya*, we are told that 'The Pratikal forces were massacred, *not permitted to*

⁴⁴ One small example: the *Rajavaliya* refers to Alakesvara in a derogatory way whereas the AY refers to him as the 'great minister'. Clearly this reflects a particular desire to remind court officials of their inferiority to true kings.

⁴⁵ There is some ambiguity over who exactly is fighting powerfully here.

⁴⁶ AY, p. 41. In Sinhala, the longer passage reads: 'Ikbithi prathikanungen yuddhayata itha daksha vu kappiththoth boho Prathikanun gena avuth Maedanda wadilagena rata adassi karana nisa Rajasinha rajjuruwan ha Wickramasinha mudaliyarun athulu vu boho senawak ilangamwala panikkiwaruth athuluwu boho palisakkaraya senawath athun asun gena Mulleriya oyayi yana thanadhi yuddha kala thana kapiththoth Prathikanuth balagathu satiyata yuddha kala thana Sitawaka senawagen boho senawakuth wait ilangamwalinuth balagathu pallissakarayo keepathenekuth weti Sitawaka senawa bindunu kala Rajasinha maharajjuruwo Wickramasinha mudaliyaruth ilangamwala palisakkaroyath athun asun samaga pana yuddha karana kala Pratikano adiyak pamanawath pasu nowa yuddha kota nathak Prathikano watunaha.'

retreat even by a single foot' [emphasis added].⁴⁷ Now the sense is that so powerful was the Sitavakan onslaught that the Portuguese were trapped and unable to run away. The victory – which indeed the *Rajavaliya* explicitly announces and the AY merely implies – was all the more complete.

The *Rajavaliya* does not have much on the years 1565-85 because of the great hiatus in the AY. But then it seems that the *Rajavaliya* starts to draw on new material before returning to the AY for the events of 1593. This material largely concerns Rajasinha's invasions of Kandy, the conflicts between his two generals, Vikramasinha and Senerat, and the early story of Konappu Bandara, who would go on to re-found the Kandyan kingdom as Vimaladharmasuriya I.⁴⁸ What is missed out here, however, is the whole 'Christian experiment' in Kandy – the rule of Karaliyadde Bandara, and the brief enthronement of Yamasinha and his son known only as Dom Joao. Instead we merely get what looks like a piece of oral tradition about Konappu Bandara's heroic martial feats in Goa, and then his rise to the throne. It is possible that the source used by the *Rajavaliya* used here is the *Yav-Ra-sin-Rajavaliya*, in the Nevill collection Or. 6606(86).⁴⁹ At any rate, we are clearly given a Buddhist version of Kandyan history with the Christian taints left out.⁵⁰

In conclusion, there are perhaps five ways of bringing the floating *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* back down to earth and staking down its authorial sensibilities: different readers will no doubt want to accord a different weight to each one!

(1) In it prevails a heroic warrior ethos which works to glorify all participants in the great martial clashes of the time – enemies included.

(2) In it prevails a generic reverence for the Sinhalese royal family. And this reflects an important quality of political emotion in the sixteenth-century: that beyond the bloody struggles between the various royal cities or 'kingdoms', some sort of tenuous, abstract or ideal unity was perceived to hold them together.

⁴⁷ *Rajavaliya*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ *Rajavaliya*, pp. 86-8.

⁴⁹ This tells us of Vikramasinha's treachery to Rajasinha arising from jealousy towards Senerat Mudali. It ends abruptly at the point where he joins Dharmapala after a night attack on Senerat. It also describes Konappu Bandara being sent for from Goa and takes up his history after he has tricked the Portuguese and established himself at Kandy.

⁵⁰ We get a clearly upcountry perspective in *Rajavaliya* p. 96-7, (which, incidentally, increasingly refers to 'Sinhala forces'), where we are told that the Kandyan princes were not able to collect soldiers from the low countries to attack the Portuguese, and 'in view of their ungratefulness' returned to the hill-country'

These two concerns – the martial and the marital – easily predominate. Hence our authors were most interested in recording the principal battles and military campaigns on the one hand, and the various familial relationships (births, deaths, marriages) of the sprawling royal families of Lanka, on the other. They simply did not consider it their business to explain or examine the wider causes and implications of war. But one can also suggest particular motivations or conditions which may have invited the silences of each ‘author’:

(3) The Kotte author (1505 to early 1557) may have sought to drain the events of their religious significance in order to draw attention away from the doubts about the legitimacy of Christian Princes.

(4) The Sitavaka author (1555-62) does not indulge in broader cultural and religious antagonisms because these were not universally considered to be fundamental aspects of political conflict in the period leading up to 1562. To be sure, such antagonisms had already appeared with the iconoclastic campaigns of Vidiye Bandara and then the destruction of the Temple of the Tooth in 1557 – a marvelous propaganda opportunity for Mayadunne. But while the *Sitavaka Hatana* of the 1585 would seize upon that opportunity with glee, this portion of the AY suggests that there were others in the Sitavakan camp who were still liable to interpret conflict in the entirely traditional terms of status struggle. Moreover, in the earlier phase of his reign, Rajasinha’s projection of his rulership may have centred more on martial feats rather than cultural guardianship.

(5) As for the Sitavaka author for the short comment on 1593, if he was a defector to the Christian Dharmapala it may again have been impolitic to explicitly introduce such themes into his narrative. And, by this time, the Theravada traditions of kingship had everywhere fallen into disarray, with Christianity exerting its influence in Kotte and Kandy, and Rajasinha’s own religious activity having become increasingly directed by his personal relationships with the deities who could grant him his victories to the detriment of his public sacred duties. Many traditional political niceties had lost ground in the perpetual battlefield of late-sixteenth century Sri Lanka.

Works Cited

- De Silva, C. R. (1994), 'Beyond the Cape: The Portuguese Encounter with the Peoples of South Asia', in S. Schwarz (ed.), *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters Between European and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge), 295-322.
- De Silva K. M. (1995) (ed.), *University of Peradeniya History of Sri Lanka. Volume II, from c.1500 to c. 1800* (Peradeniya).
- De Silva, S. (1930) *Rajaratnakaraya* (Colombo).
- Ferguson, D. (1993) (ed. and trans.), *The History of Ceylon from the Earliest Times to 1600 A.D. as related by Joao de Barros and Diogo do Couto* (New Delhi, 1993).
- (1935-6), 'The Portuguese in Ceylon in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century. Gaspar Correa's Account', *Ceylon Literary Register*, 4: 41-61, 189-211, 265-73, 320-26, 359-66.
- Paranavitana, R. (1999) (ed.) *Sitavaka Hatana* (Colombo).
- Perniola, Vito (1989) (ed.), *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, The Portuguese Period. Volume 1, 1505-1565* (Dehiwala).
- Queyroz, Fernão de (1992), *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, trans., and with introduction by S. G. Perera, 3 vols. (New Delhi,).
- Suraweera, A. (1964) (ed.) *Alakesvara Yuddhaya* (Colombo)
- (2000) (trans.) *Rajavaliya* (Sri Lanka).
- Strathern, Alan (forthcoming), *Kingship and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Sri Lanka* (Cambridge).
- Tambiah, S. J. (1976), *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge).

ALAN STRATHERN