

GREEK MYTH IN THE MAHAVAMSA

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The title of this work, which I have undertaken and now completed may raise many an eyebrow. It may be a cause for wonder how on earth myths from Greece could have found their way into the ancient Sinhala chronicle, the *Mahavamsa*, when Greece is a land so distant from Sri Lanka, and the relative civilizations so alienated from each other in their origin and development - except perhaps that they happen to be, ultimately of Indo-European origin.

In the question raised it is the answer. The Greeks of the time of our concern were not of Greece, but of a land in the neighborhood of Sri Lanka, with which it had the most mitigate connections, and from where it not only drew her Sinhala ancestry and royalty, but the religion of Buddhism itself - North-Western India. Thus among the wealth of material that appear to have emanated from there to that reservoir of tradition and story upon which the *Mahavamsa* drew, the *Atthakatha Mahavamsa* (or *Mahavamsa* of the Ancients) it is no surprise to find some Greek-influenced story and story-motifs.

This was always suspected of our very foundation myth, the legend of Vijaya and Kuveni. But there are three or four others as well, which I have brought into my study, the story of Unmadacitta, the story of Viharadevi - and possibly, though not easily recognizable - the fantasy of Subha and Yasa.