

## MAÑJUŚRĪ-VASTUVIDYĀŚĀSTRA AND THE ANCIENT SINHALESE MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE

The discovery of the existence of the only manuscript available of the *Mañjuśrī-bhāṣita-vastuvidyāśāstra/citrakarmāśāstra* in a temple near Gampola nearly thirty years ago and its subsequent acquisition by the Department of National Archives are significant events in the history of palmleaf manuscripts in Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup> The importance of this valuable find to the study of ancient Buddhist monastic architecture and iconography cannot be over-estimated. The *Śāriputra-bimbamāna* and the *Ālekhyalākṣaṇa*, two other Sanskrit *śilpa* texts found in Sri Lanka,<sup>2</sup> are works dealing with the art of image-making, while the present work, besides being even more exhaustive than either work in its section on Buddhist iconography, provides us for the first time with a unique account of the method in which Buddhist monasteries were constructed in ancient Sri Lanka.

The work is unmistakably a product of the Mahāyāna school. Apart from its authorship being ascribed to Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom and Learning, it gives descriptions of the five Sambhogakāya Buddhas and the eight Great Bodhisattvas in connection with the arrangement of the statues in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the image-house and also mentions the Buddha Śaktis, Mahayanic gods and minor deities in its section on iconography. The figures of the five Divine Buddhas are among the objects to be deposited in the site of a *caitya* as well as in the reliquary underneath a Buddha statue. It is proven beyond doubt that the enshrining of a *mantra* inscribed on a metal plate in the relic chamber of a *caitya* was also a

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1. This work has been edited for the first time by the present writer and will be published shortly together with an English translation.
  2. *Śāriputra and Ālekhyalākṣaṇa: Zwei Texte zur proportionslehre in der indischen und ceylonischen Kunst.* ed. by Hans Ruelius. Göttingen (1974).

### Mahāyānic practice.<sup>3</sup>

The manuscript contains sixty leaves written on both sides, with six to eight lines to a page. The leaves measure approximately 40.5 cm. by 4.2 cm. and are numbered on the recto from 'ka' to 'ghe', beginning with the second leaf. The recto of the first leaf carries the customary formula *svasti siddham*. The text ends halfway on the recto of the 56th leaf and is followed by a couple of *mantras* and portions of an unknown text in corrupt Sanskrit, which has no bearing on the work under discussion.

The text, written in Sinhalese characters, is fairly legible, and the script reasonably uniform. The manuscript is in good condition except for a few leaves which are damaged at the edges. The text, however, is corrupt, as is the case with most *śilpa* texts, and there are obvious scribal errors, lacunae and interpolations. In keeping with the *śilpaśāstra* tradition, the contents of the text are given in the introductory chapter, although some of the topics listed are not discussed in the text at all.

### The Place and the Date of the Work.

As can be judged from the script and the excellent condition of the material, the manuscript itself cannot be more than two hundred years old. The contents and the treatment, however, indicate that the original text belonged to a much earlier period, dating back perhaps several centuries. Some scholars are prone to believe that the text is a product of South India on the ground that it shares certain common traits with such South Indian *śilpa* texts as the *Kāśyapaśilpa* and the *Mayamata*.<sup>4</sup> We should not be surprised to find one *śilpa* text having much in common with another with regard to subject-matter, style or treatment, even though the two works may have

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3. *Mañjuśrībhaṣita-vāstuvidyāśāstra* (hereinafter abbreviated as *VVS.*) (unpublished typescript), iii, 103-105.
  4. Ruelius, Hans. '*Mañjuśrībhaṣita-citrakarmaśāstra: a Mahāyānic śilpaśāstra from Sri Lanka*', In *Buddhism in Ceylon and Studies on Religious Syncretism in Buddhist Countries: a report on a symposium in Göttingen*, ed. by Heinz Bechert. Göttingen, (1978) p. 98.

been written at places geographically separated from one another. On the other hand, our text displays, as we shall see later, remarkable originality in many respects, and we have yet to find a parallel among the existing Indian treatises on architecture and iconography. In fact, almost all the *śilpa* texts so far discovered in South India deal exclusively with Hindu architecture and iconography, and if any topics relating to Buddhist art have been discussed in them, it has been done so only in a casual manner. Our text, on the other hand, is exclusively devoted to Buddhist art and not a single copy of it has so far been found anywhere in India. We cannot assign any of the existing important *śilpa* texts found in India to a period much earlier than the 10th century A.C., although Acharya attempts to place the *Manasara* as far back as the Gupta period.<sup>5</sup> As work of the later researchers shows, the *Manasara* cannot have been written before the 11th century A.C., and is most probably later than the *Mayamata* (10th century A.C.) and even the *Samarāṅganaśāstradhara* (11th century A.C.).<sup>6</sup> It is also hard to believe that there was any incentive or necessity on the part of South Indian writers to compile Buddhist *śilpa* texts at a time when Buddhist architecture had become a thing of the past in that region.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the various types of *arama* layouts discussed in our text do not conform to any existing *vihara* types in the Deccan, which are mainly carved out of rocks and hill sides.<sup>8</sup> It is quite certain that the types of monastery described herein were those to be located in open space, with a retaining wall supporting a raised quadrangle containing the building complex, which is encircled by a walk and a moat, beyond which lay a coconut, ereca or

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5. P.K. Acharya, *Indian architecture according to Mānasāra-śilpaśāstra*. 2nd ed. New Delhi, (1981) p. 193-198.
  6. Tarapada Bhattacharyya, *A Study on Vāstuvidyā or Canons of Indian Architecture*. Patna, (1947), p. 192-197.
  7. Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture (Buddhist and Hindu Periods)*. Bombay, (1959) p. 71 f.
  8. *op.cit.*, p. 36 f.

bamboo grove;<sup>9</sup> and there are striking similarities between these *aramas* and those found in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva.

The *Bimbamāna*, popularly called *Śāriputra*,<sup>10</sup> written most probably in Sri Lanka (though Coomaraswamy is inclined to believe that it has been written in India<sup>11</sup>), bears many resemblances to the present work with regard to content, language and style. Linguistic evidence too points to the same direction. Expressions like *navadaśa* and *navāṣaṣṭi* for nineteen and sixty-nine respectively betray influence of Sinhala. It is also significant that the work, in its chapter on the *caitya*, enumerates only five *caitya* types, four of which are commonly found in Sri Lanka, but leaves out the *ghaṭākara* (pot-shaped) and the *āmalaka* (myrobalan-shaped) varieties, examples of which can only be seen in India.<sup>12</sup> The terminology used too differs from that of the Indian texts. Our text regularly uses the term *caitya* for the edifice, with one solitary exception,<sup>13</sup> while *stupa* is the more commonly used word in Indian works. The central pillar, standing erect inside the dome of a *caitya*, and the pole which supported the *chatra* are called *gajastambha* or *gajapāda(ka)* and *chatradanda* respectively,<sup>14</sup> as distinguished from the Indian terminology which calls them *yupa* and *yasti* respectively.

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9. VVS., ii, 555-576.

10. This work was first published under the title *Śāriputra-śravaṇo-bimbapramāṇam*, along with a commentary in Sinhala by M. Sirivimala Thera in 1924. Subsequently Hans Ruelius prepared an edition of *Śāriputra and Ālekhyalakṣaṇa*, together with a German translation for his Ph.D. of Göttingen University. See note 2 above.

11. A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, 2nd ed. New York, (1979) p. 163.

12. VVS., iii, 4-6.

13. *op.cit.*, iii, 578.

14. *op.cit.*, iii, 86-96.

Although our temptation to conclude that the *Vāstuvidyāśāstra* is indebted to the *Mayamata* and the *Kāśyapaśilpa* on account of certain similarities the three works share is irresistible, the *Vāstuvidyāśāstra's* originality in content and treatment and the absence of conclusive evidence that it had any knowledge of any of the Indian *śilpa* texts cannot be overlooked. If we do accept the *Vāstuvidyāśāstra's* indebtedness to the *Mayamata*, we must take the 10th century A.C. as its upper limit. That the *Mayamata* was a popular work in Sri Lanka is borne out by the fact that a later Sinhalese work on secular architecture has been named after it. But the latter work is definitely much later than the 13th century. On the other hand, the affinities noticeable in these works may rather suggest their dependence on a common source than one work influencing the other.

The first few centuries beginning with the 4th century A.C. were a period when the several Mahayanist sects had been vigorously campaigning against the Theravadins for religious supremacy. On several occasions the Theravadins even abandoned the Mahavihara, their stronghold, when their very existence was threatened by the hostile attitude of the ruler who had been won over by the Abhayagiri Fraternity.<sup>15</sup> Although the Mahayanists could never dominate the religious scene but for brief durations, they continued to exercise a strong influence on the religious life of the community right into the beginning of the second millennium. Nonetheless, the dawn of the 13th century saw a decline of Buddhism in general in Sri Lanka. The Mahayanists could never recapture their lost position, and it is very unlikely that any Mahayanist texts were written after this period. The 12th century was not only the period in which most of the Buddhist monasteries and other edifices were erected in Polonnaruva but also a time which saw a revival of Pali and Sanskrit scholarship.<sup>16</sup> We may, therefore, fix the 12th century A.C. as the lower limit for the work.

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15. *Mahāvamsa*, ed. by Wilhelm Geiger, P.T.S., (1958) xxxvii, 3-7; 32-38. See also Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. Colombo, (1956) p. 78-111; G.P. Malalasekera, *The Pali Literature of Ceylon*. Colombo (1928) p. 51-64.
16. University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I, Pt. 2. Colombo, (1960) p. 585-604; E.W. Adikaram, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*. Migoda, (1964) p. 91 f.

The internal evidence, however, points to a much earlier date. The section coming under the present survey (i.e., Chapters 1 & 2) is entirely devoted to the layout of Buddhist monasteries and the description of their important edifices. A striking feature of the architecture of these buildings is the exclusive use of brick and timber for the superstructure. There is express mention of the employment of wooden columns even for the image-house, the largest building next to the *caitya*, but no evidence at all of the use of stone pillars.<sup>17</sup> Senake Bandaranayake observes that the increasing use of stone for building purposes in Sri Lanka is a trend that started around the 5th century A.C.<sup>18</sup> In this connection Chapter 3, dealing with *caitya* construction, is also significant. The type of *caitya* discussed here clearly belongs to a date earlier than the 7th century A.C. The important features of the type of *caitya* discussed in the work, such as the *gajastambha* made of wood (which was later replaced by the stone pillar), the pile of wooden umbrellas (the prototype of the present spire), the gem-depository (*ratnanyasa* or *yantragala* in Sinhala) placed above the uppermost chamber, and the strong possibility of the reliquary being placed in the *harmikā* (*sivuraskoṭuwa* in Sinhala), all heavily favour a very early date. Thus, if the work has recorded the practice that was in vogue in its day, it should belong to a date not later than the 5th or 6th century A.C.

Of the four types of monastery which sprang up in and around Anuradhapura and attained full development in the 8th century A.C., the organic monastery represented by the Mahavihara, the Abhayagirivihara and the Jetavanavihara is undoubtedly the earliest, with a history dating back to the 3rd century B.C. Although these monasteries evolved round four major edifices, viz., the *stupa*, the *bodhiveśman* or *bodhi-ghara*, the *uposathagrha* and the image-house (which joined the group rather late), scholars and archaeologists have found it difficult to discern in these monasteries any preconceived architectural plan. However, the *Mahābodhivaṃsa*, a Pāli work

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17. VVS., ii, 354 f., 447.

18. Senake Bandaranayake, *Sinhalese Monastic Architecture; the Viharas of Anuradhapura*. Leiden, (1974) p. 25.

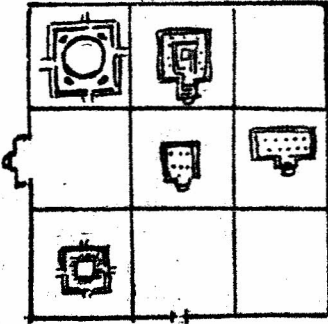
written in the last quarter of the 10th century A.C.<sup>19</sup> and the *Saddharmalaṅkāraya*, a Sinhalese classic composed between 1398 and 1410 A.C.,<sup>20</sup> record that the Mahāvihāra was planned at the behest of Devānampiyatissa in accordance with the layout known as Simhāvīkranta, one of the twenty-four types of *arama* layout described in our text. From the almost identical accounts given in the two works it may be surmised that the positioning of the edifices according to the Simhāvīkranta layout followed the posture assumed by an imaginary lion looking back, with its head turned from the right. Explaining the positions of the nine major edifices within the monastery precincts, the two works state that the *bodhīghara*, the *prasāda*, the assembly-hall (*sannipatasāla*), the *dhatughara*, the *rāsīmālika*, the refectory (*bhattasāla*), the *mahathūpa*, the well and the image-house were to be located at the points where the tip of the tail, the right foot, the left foot, the naval, the left side of the belly, the right hand, the left hand, the neck and the gaze of the lion, (sitting in relaxed position and looking back by turning its head from the right) touched the ground.<sup>21</sup> This arrangement, however, would fit better into the Simhārama proper, with the main entrance to the west, than to either of the Simhāvīkranta types given in our text. It appears that the Simhārama layout, with the main entrance in the east, was thought by the author of the *Mahābodhivamsa* (whose tradition the latter work closely follows) to be the regular type and the layout, with the main entrance to the west, to be its *vīkranta* (or alternate plan), whereas our texts has two separate plans for the Simhāvīkranta.<sup>22</sup> The *Saddharmaratnākāraya*, another Sinhalese classic belonging to the same period, gives the credit of replanning

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19. G.P. Malalasekera, *op.cit.*, p. 256; University of Ceylon. *op.cit.*, vol. I, pt. I, (1959) p. 393.
20. P.B. Sannasgala, *Sinhala Sāhitya Vamsāya*, Colombo, (1961) p. 227; see also C.E. Godakumbura, *Sinhalese Literature*, Colombo, (1955) p. 89 f.
21. *The Mahābodhivamsa*, ed. by S. Arthur Strong, London, (1891) p. 137; *Saddharmalaṅkāraya*, ed. by K. Jñānavimala Thera. Colombo, (1954) p. 409.
22. *VVS.*, ii, 166-171.

the Mahāvihāra on the lines of Simhāvīkrānta to Duṭṭhagamaṇi. It is interesting to note that, in the account given here, the *dhatughara*, which was probably no longer considered a must in the shrine complex, has been omitted, and the well has been replaced by the Kanṭhaka *stupa*.<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 1)

Despite the fact that these are the first references we come across to the earliest monastery in Sri Lankā, supposedly being laid out according to an established plan, it is very unlikely that Dēvanampiyatissa, or for that matter even Duṭṭhagamaṇi, had any prior knowledge of such a *śilpaśāstra* lore. The account given in the *Mahabodhivamsa* may, therefore, be described as an attempt to provide a scientific

base to the already existing plan of the Mahāvihāra. Nevertheless, these references may be accepted as valuable evidence to prove that the *Māñjuśrī-vastuvidyāśāstra* has recorded a *śilpaśāstra* tradition that was very much alive in Sri Lankā, at least during the latter part of the first millennium.



Simhārāma with  
Entrance in the west.

Fig. 1

#### The Ārama Layout.

As has been just mentioned, the *Vastuvidyāśāstra* describes in detail the layout of twelve different monastery types, with an alternate (*vikrānta*) plan for each, thus making a total of twentyfour basic types. The number goes up as each basic type gives rise to variant plans, according as the main entrance is located in the east, south, west or north. Two types of *ārama*, together with their *vikrāntas*, may have the main entrance in any of the four directions, two types in the east or west, two types in the south or north, one type in the east or south, yet another type in the west or north, two types in the east only, and the remaining two in the south only.<sup>24</sup>

23. *Saddharmaratnākaraṇya*, ed. by Śrī Sugūṇasāra Devānanda Thera. Colombo, (1955) p. 358.

24. *VVS.*, ii, 117-276.



The *Vāstuvidyāśāstra* thus provides us with the earliest examples of monasteries being planned strictly according to a preconceived scheme. The base for this scheme is the *vastumāṇḍala*, a kind of mystic diagram, which in the present case is a grid containing nine or twenty-five equal squares. The *vastumāṇḍala* grids used for preparing the layout of Hindu temples are more elaborate, usually containing sixty-four or eighty-one squares.<sup>25</sup> Another difference between these grids and those described in our text is that the former are mainly used for laying out the ground-plan of a single structure, whereas the purpose of the latter is to help locate the various edifices in a particular monastery complex.<sup>26</sup> The *Vāstuvidyāśāstra* is silent about the different edifices being planned according to *vastumāṇḍalas*, although there is no doubt that some such method was followed in preparing ground-plans of such complex edifices as the image-house.

The grid of nine squares is called the *pīṭha* and that of twentyfive the *upapīṭha*. Six of the twelve types of *arama* are laid according to the *pīṭha* plan, while the rest follow the *upapīṭha* plan. The Hastyarama and the Gokularama, two types which have some relevance to our study here, are of the *upapīṭha* variety. The Śimharama just mentioned above is laid according to the *pīṭha* plan. (Figs. 2 & 3)

Each square, or *koṣṭha*, in the *vastumāṇḍala* is dedicated to a *vastudevata*, or deity presiding over the site, by whose name the *koṣṭha* is generally known. Thus the *koṣṭhas* of the *pīṭha* grid are named after the eight deities, Īśa, Āditya, Agni, Yama, Nirṛta, Varuṇa, Vayu and Soma, with Brahma occupying the central *koṣṭha*.<sup>27</sup> In the twenty-five-square grid Brahma remains in the centre, while the *dikpālas* are pushed to the four corners and four middle *koṣṭhas* on the periphery. Thus

25. See Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, vol. 1, Delhi, (1946) p. 46-50. Even the *VVS* recommends the grids Paramaśayika (81 squares), Maṇḍuka (64 squares) and Sthāṇḍila (49 squares) for arranging the statues in the sanctum sanctorum (vi, 52-101).

26. See *op.cit.*, p. 227 f.

27. *VVS*. ii, 157 f.

the deities occupying the 16 outer *koṣṭhas* in clockwise direction starting from the north-eastern *koṣṭha* are as follows: Īśa, Jayanta, Āditya, Bhr̥śa, Agni, Vitatha, Yama, Bhr̥ṅgaraja, Nir̥ṭa, Sugr̥iva, Varuna, Śośa, Vayu, Mukhya, Soma and Aditi. The eight inner *koṣṭhas* are occupied by Āpavatsa, Aryaman, Savitr̥, Vivasvat, Indra, Mitra, Rudra and Pr̥thivīdhara.<sup>28</sup>

VĀYU	MUKHYA	SOMA	ADITI	ĪŚA
ŚOŚA	RUDRA	BHŪMINDRA	ĀPAVATSĀ	JAYANTA
VARUNA	MITRA	BRAHMĀ	ĀRYA	ADITYA
SUGRĪVA	INDRA	VIVASVAT	SĀVITR̥	BHR̥ŚA
NIR̥ṬA	BHR̥ṅGA-RAJA	YAMA	VITATHA	AGNI

### UPAPĪṬHA GRID

Fig. 2

A sacred rule governing the allocation of buildings within a monastery is that any particular edifice in the complex should confine itself to one *koṣṭha* only and never encroach upon a neighbouring *koṣṭha*. If done so, the consequences will be disastrous.<sup>29</sup> As a general rule, a single *koṣṭha* in the *upapīṭha* plan holds only one edifice, particularly if it is of the major type. Several unimportant buildings may, however, be included within one *koṣṭha*, but this is not the regular practice. The *pīṭha* grid, as it contains only nine squares, has to accommodate more than one building in a single *koṣṭha*. But even here care has been taken to leave, as far as is practicable, one whole *koṣṭha* for a major edifice.

Prematilleke and Roland Silva were the first to suggest that the formal layout of the *pabbata-viharas* evinced influence of Mahayana,<sup>30</sup> the validity of which has been questioned

28. *op.cit.*, ii, 95-104.

29. *op.cit.*, ii, 88, 90-94.

30. P.L. Prematilleke & R. Silva, A Buddhist Monastery Type of Ancient Ceylon showing Mahayanist Influence in *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 30 (1968), p. 61-84.

by Bandaranayake.<sup>31</sup> However, the *Vāstuvidyāśāstra* bears evidence, as will be shown later, that Mahayanist influence

VĀYU	SOMA	ĪŚĀ
VARUNA	BRĀHMĀ	ĀDITYA
NIRRTA	YAMA	AGNI

### PĪṬHA GRID

Fig. 3

played a major role in the laying out of monasteries according to a strictly regulated scheme even before the *pabbata-viharas* came into existence. The majority of these *viharas* in fact represents only the final phase of the decline of this influence. Commenting on the planned layout of the *pabbata-viharas* Prematilleke and Silva rightly observe that the four buildings in the sacred quadrangle are not symmetrically positioned, and have attempted to explain this seemingly irregular layout from functional, aesthetic, religious and superstitious viewpoints.<sup>32</sup> A.M. Hocart too seems inclined to think that Mahayanism has something to do with this laxity of orientation, which he views as a general tendency that is seen in Sri Lankā.<sup>33</sup> But we now know for certain that this seemingly asymmetrical layout has been one which has been carefully designed by the planners, whose first consideration was the conformity to the accepted *śilpaśāstra* tradition, which could have certainly been influenced by one or more of the above factors.

The location of the edifices is generally determined by the position of the main entrance, though there are a few buildings which are almost always located in specific areas. The work divides all edifices into two groups, the major (*mūkhya*) and the minor (*gaṇa*).<sup>34</sup> The major edifices are

31. S. Bandaranayake, *op.cit.*, p. 69 f.

32. P.L. Prematilleke & R. Silva, *ibid.*, p. 64 f.

33. A.M. Hocart, 'Archaeological Summary' in *Ceylon Journal of Science*, vol. 2, Section G. (Dec. 1928-Feb. 1933) p. 11.

34. *VVS.* ii, 531.

five in number. They are the four most important sacred buildings, namely, the *cāitya*, the *bodhiveśman*, the *prati-mālaya* and the *sabha* and the *prasāda*, which was certainly the residential quarters of the monks.<sup>35</sup> The word *prasāda* has been indiscriminately used by many scholars to denote various types of ecclesiastical and residential buildings, sometimes in a generic sense to mean any type of building. But our text expressly states that the *prasāda* is the place of residence for the monks, most probably for the chief incumbent and other senior monks of the monastery.<sup>36</sup> Its location generally away from the centre of the quadrangle, more specifically on the periphery or close to it, also corroborates this statement. Senake Bandaranayake is, therefore, quite correct in including the *prasāda* among the residential buildings of a monastic establishment.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the *sabha*, now generally known as *prasāda*, was a religious building and occupied a vantage position, often at the very centre of the complex. The name *sabha* itself suggests that it was used as an assembly-hall, where the community of monks gathered to perform ecclesiastical acts. It was in all probability a single-storeyed building, rectangular in shape and smaller than the image-house.

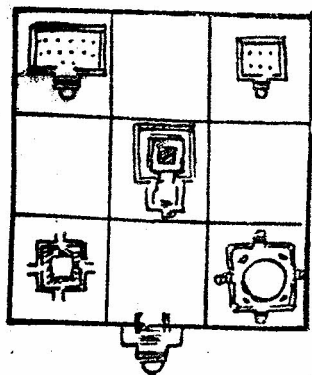
In each of the forty-six layouts pertaining to the twenty-four types of *arāma* described in our text, these five major edifices are located according to a specific scheme. Eight of the twelve major types receive their names from animals and objects, whose form one may visualize (of course with a liberal play of imagination) by following the positions of these five edifices in the respective types. We have thus the Hastyārama (elephant-shaped), the Śiṃhārama (lion-shaped), the Daṇḍārama (club-shaped), the Padmārama (lotus-shaped), the Bhujaṅgaphaṇārama (cobra-hood-shaped), the Hamsapakṣa (swan-winged), the Navākara (boat-shaped) and the Cakrārama (wheel-shaped). The Bhikṣuṇyārama, as the name suggests, should be a nunnery. How the other three types, the Anvārama, the Śītalāgulma and the Gokulārama received their names is hard to guess. (Figs. 4 & 5)

35. *op.cit.*, ii, 532.

36. *op.cit.*, i, 319.

37. S. Bandaranayake, *op.cit.*, p. 266 f.

Although the positions of the several edifices vary according to the types of *arāma*, the application of certain common principles in their distribution within the monastery precincts is clearly discernible. The *caitya* and the *bodhi-veśman*, for instance, are located in such a way that they are the two edifices that first catch the eye of the devotee who enters the sacred precincts. They usually stand on either side of the pilgrim entering the monastery and rarely are both placed on the same side. This point is amply illustrated by the existing *pabbata-vihāras*. The image-house is generally located in one of the *koṣṭhas* in the inner row of the grid, sometimes in the central *koṣṭha* and rarely in the last row of the *upapīṭha* plan. Senake Bandaranayake may be correct when he says that the image-house was the latest



Padmārāma with  
Southern Entrance

Fig. 4

addition to the group of major edifices.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, by the time the *Vastuvīdyāśāstra* was written, the image-house as a major sacred edifice had come to stay. And from the elaborate description it gives of its superstructure, with its various architectural features and decorative elements, it can be guessed that it was rated second only to the *caitya*, to which the work devotes a whole chapter.<sup>39</sup>

#### The Pabbata-vihāras

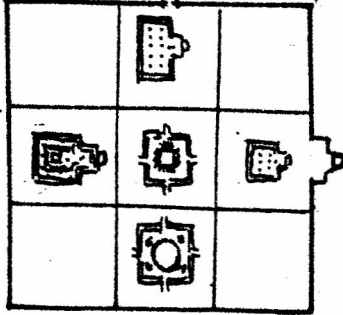
In the *pabbata-vihāra*, the only self-contained Buddhist monastery type belonging to the early period, the image-house is a regular feature. Bandaranayake places this unique class of religious establishments between the 7th and the 10th centuries.<sup>40</sup> But to trace their origin we may have to go several centuries back. The monastery at Kaludiyapokuṇa near Sigiriya (the ancient Dakkhinagiri-vihāra) was originally built

38. *op.cit.*, p. 194.

39. *VVS.*, ii, 320-430.

40. *op.cit.*, p. 26 f.

by Saddhātissa in the 1st century B.C.<sup>41</sup> and later restored or re-built by Dhātusena (6th century A.C.).<sup>42</sup> An inscription found on a guardstone in this monastery has been dated in the 7th century.<sup>43</sup>



Anvārāma-vikrānta

Fig. 5

Another very early site is Pācīnatissapabbata-vihāra, which was excavated during the period 1941-1945. This interesting monastery was founded by Jetṭhatissa I (c. 263-273 A.C.), who like his famous younger brother Mahāsena, appear to have been a supporter of the Mahayanists, for we hear that he removed the great stone image of the Buddha from the Thuparama and installed it in the new monastery.<sup>44</sup> Certain

archaeological finds unearthed at this site belong to the medieval times, which fact testifies that the monastery remained popular even after the capital was shifted to Polonnaruva.<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 6)

The present ruins at Puliyankulama, lying to the north-east of Anurādhapura, belong to another ancient monastery of the *pabbata-vihāra* type, which Geiger identifies with the *Sotthiyakara-vihāra* established by Śrimeghavarṇa (c. 301-328), son of Mahāsena.<sup>46</sup> Although he made amends for the wrongs perpetrated by his father on the Mahāvihāra, if we can rely on the account given by Fa Hsien, the Abhayagiri-vihāra was the

41. *Mahāvamsa*, ed. by Wilhelm Geiger, xxxiii, 7.

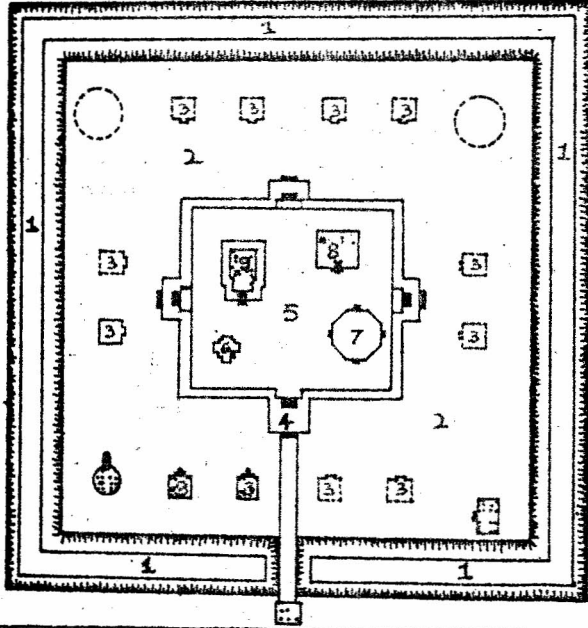
42. *Cūlavamsa*, ed. by Wilhelm Geiger, vol. 1, P.T.S., (1925) xxxviii, 45-50.

43. *Ceylon Journal of Science*, vol. 2, Section G, p. 108.

44. *Mahāvamsa*, xxxvi, 127 f.

45. *Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Report for 1940-45*, I, p. 22-25.

46. *Cūlavamsa*, tr. by Wilhelm Geiger, Pt. 1, Colombo, (1953) p. 6, Footnote 1.



- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1 Moat              | 6 Bodhiḡṛha    |
| 2 Lower Platform    | 7 Caitya       |
| 3 Dwelling Cells    | 8 Uposathagṛha |
| 4 Pathway           | 9 Pratimāgṛha  |
| 5 Raised Quadrangle |                |

### Pācīnatissapabbata

Fig. 6.

establishment, as proven by the plaques containing *dharaṇīs* and *mantras* addressed to Mahāyanic divinities, found in the debris

most prestigious monastery during Śrī-meghavarna's time. This shows that the monarch was more favourably disposed towards the Mahāyana fraternity.<sup>47</sup> If Geiger's identification is correct, the Sotthiyākara-vihāra was rebuilt by Sena I in the 9th century (833-853 A.C.) under the name Pubbarāma,<sup>48</sup> which in the next century was restored by Uda Mahāyā and renamed Uda Kitagbōpav (Udaya-Kittaggabodhi-vihāra) after himself and his son.<sup>49</sup> This monastery remained throughout a branch of the Abhayagiri-vihāra, the stronghold of the Mahāyanists.

The Vijayārama, situated about three miles north of Anuradhapura, is the other *pabbata-vihāra* which was undoubtedly a Mahāyanist

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47. Hiuen Tsiang. *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, tr. by Samuel Beal, London, (1884) p. lxxv-lxxix.
48. A.M. Hocart, *ibid.* p. 10 f.; *Cūlavamsa*, ed. by W. Geiger, vol. 1, 1, 69.
49. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, vol. 1, p. 182.

of the delapidated *caitya*.<sup>50</sup> Although the present ruins have been dated between the 7th and the 9th century A.C., as can be judged from the Sinhala script on the plaques, Burrows believes the original monastery to be several centuries anterior to the Christian era.<sup>51</sup>

The Toluvila ruins at Anurādhapura, which have been assigned to the 9th century,<sup>52</sup> belong to a *pabbata-vihāra* of a unique type, with two almost identical raised quadrangles, one containing the sacred shrines and the other housing a magnificent image-house surrounded by residential buildings within the same moated site and connected by a straight pathway.<sup>53</sup> The arrangement of the shrines in the sacred quadrangle follows a pattern similar to that adopted in the other Mahāyānic monasteries mentioned above.

However, the most important of the *pabbata-vihāras* relevant to our present study consists of the monastic ruins at Pankuliya on the left bank of the Malvatu-oya about 2½ miles north of Anurādhapura. While all the other *pabbata-vihāras* have a separate raised quadrangle to accommodate the sacred shrines, around which are scattered the dwelling cells of the monks and other ancillary buildings in a lower platform, the monastery at Pankuliya has all the buildings located in one large quadrangle. An inscription of Abā Salamevan Abhaya (Mahinda IV), found among the ruins, is an indication that the monastery was restored by the monarch in the 9th century. Mahinda IV is not known to have built any new monasteries but restored a number of them, where he has left his inscriptions.<sup>54</sup> If the monastery was in a ruined state in the 9th century, requiring restoration, it must have originally been built at least a couple of centuries earlier.

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50. A.S.C.A.R. (1891) p. 5; Sessional Paper xii (1896), Appendix A, p. 464-67.

51. A.S.C.A.R. (1891) p. 2.

52. A.S.C.A.R. (1894) p. 4 f.

53. See *Sessional Paper xii*, (1889) p. 4 f.

54. *Cūlavamsa*, ed. by Geiger, vol. 1, liv, 40-47.



It should now be clear that all these *pabbata-vihāras* have been either restored or completely renovated several times, thereby making it difficult for us to get a clear picture as to how they looked in their original state. My attempt in the ensuing pages is, therefore, only to trace the development of these so-called *pabbata-vihāras* by examining these ruins in their present state and with the help of the information furnished by the *Vastuvidyāśāstra*.

The type of monastery described in the *Vastuvidyāśāstra* bears close resemblance to these *viḥāras* in that both types have been laid according to some clearly identifiable plan. But the two types differ widely in one respect. In one type all the residential and other ancillary buildings are located together with the sacred edifices in the same precinct, while in the other the four sacred buildings are located in a small quadrangle, with residential buildings accommodated in an outer platform lying between the quadrangle and the moat. The *prasāda*, which was reckoned as a major edifice in the former, has been reduced to a second-rate building and banished from the sacred quadrangle of the *pabbata-viḥāras* to the surrounding dwelling platform, and in some cases to the so-called 'shrine complex', which is connected with the main quadrangle by a pathway. The term 'shrine complex' for this cluster of buildings appears to me a misnomer because an image-house is the only sacred edifice that can be found among the several buildings in this complex. Toluville, which has the most perfect building complex, proves beyond doubt that it contained living quarters. There is an excellent urinal stone at the south-east corner (Agnibhāga), while the *bhojanāśālā* and the *bhaktālaya* (kitchen) can be identified in the north-east corner, more precisely in the Jayanta and Īśā bhāgas respectively.<sup>55</sup> These provide sufficient evidence to prove

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55. All stone slabs which formed the foundation of the building identifiable as the kitchen have just been removed by someone and the dead grass was the sole witness to its one-time existence. All traces of this structure will thus soon vanish from the site. A few stone blocks from the site of the *bodhiḡhara* at Puliyankulama have similarly disappeared. In view of this continued vandalism, it is essential that better security measures be taken to protect these very important sites, particularly those situated close to human settlements.

that at least the chief incumbent resided within the precinct. There are stone foundations of at least two structures which may have served as residential quarters, one in the Indrabhāga and the other in the Vitatha and away from the main entrance. The stone-paved space between the four corner-pillars at the back, which is a regular feature of the *prasada*, can be seen in both structures. Whether these paved spaces were landings for wooden stair-cases<sup>56</sup> or bore masonry cupboards for the storage of books,<sup>57</sup> the residential function of these buildings cannot be disputed. A section of the community of monks attached to the *vihara* may have lived in the numerous *kuṭīs* in the area lying between the two quadrangles but probably visited the complex for purposes of bathing, taking meals etc. The central shrine may have invested the residential precincts with a touch of sanctity. It may also have served as the main shrine for the resident monks in their daily obeisances, while the lay devotees could use the shrines in the sacred quadrangle. Wikramagamage observes that some of the larger dwellings of the *saṅgha* at Anurādhapura appear to have served as places of worship, with a statue of the Buddha installed in the centre of the ground floor.<sup>58</sup> This too shows that there was a need for the resident monks of an *avasa* to have objects of worship close at hand for the performance of their daily rites. (Fig. 7)

There has been no consensus of opinion about the identification of this main shrine in the Toluville complex. There is very little evidence to support the view that it may have originally been a *bodhigāra*.<sup>59</sup> The edifice as it stands today possesses all the essential features of a typical *prati-magṛha*.<sup>60</sup> The absence of any trace of the principal diol and

56. A.S.C.A.R. (1892). p. 3.

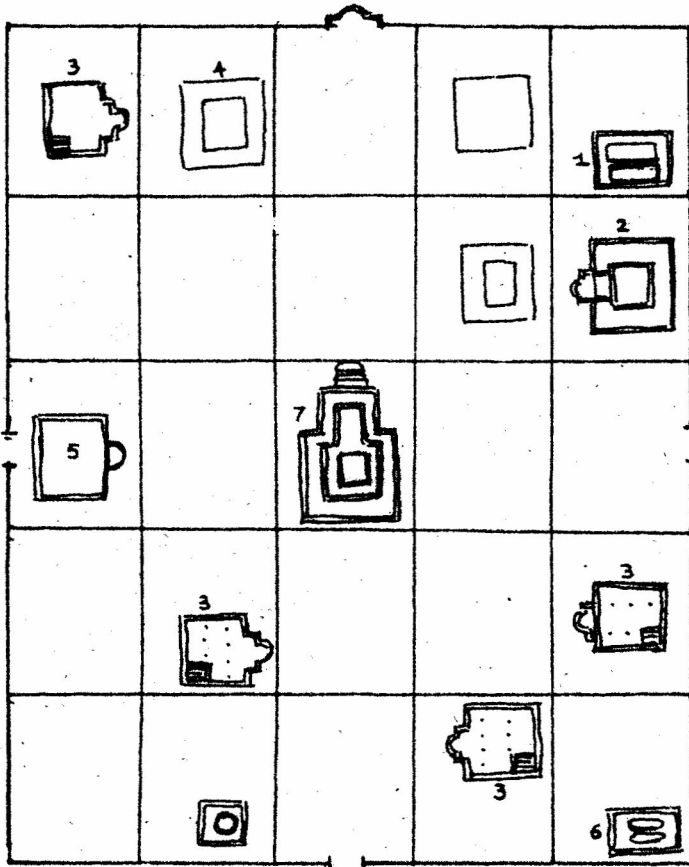
57. Prematilleke and Silva, *ibid.*, p. 67, 79.

58. Chandra Wickramagamage, *First Report of the Archaeological Excavations at the Abhayagiri Vihara Complex* (Sept. 1981 - April, 1982), Colombo, (1984) p. 3.

59. See S. Bandaranayake, *op.cit.*, p. 182 f.

60. Cf. Prematilleke and Silva *ibid.*, p. 68; A.S.C.A.R. (1894) p. 4.

the fact that the sanctum sanctorum floor bears no evidence of its having been paved cannot be taken as valid arguments in support of a *bodhi*ghara theory. Both image-houses at



### TOLUVILA - RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX

- 1 Kitchen?
- 2 Refectory
- 3 Prāsādas
- 4 Hospital?



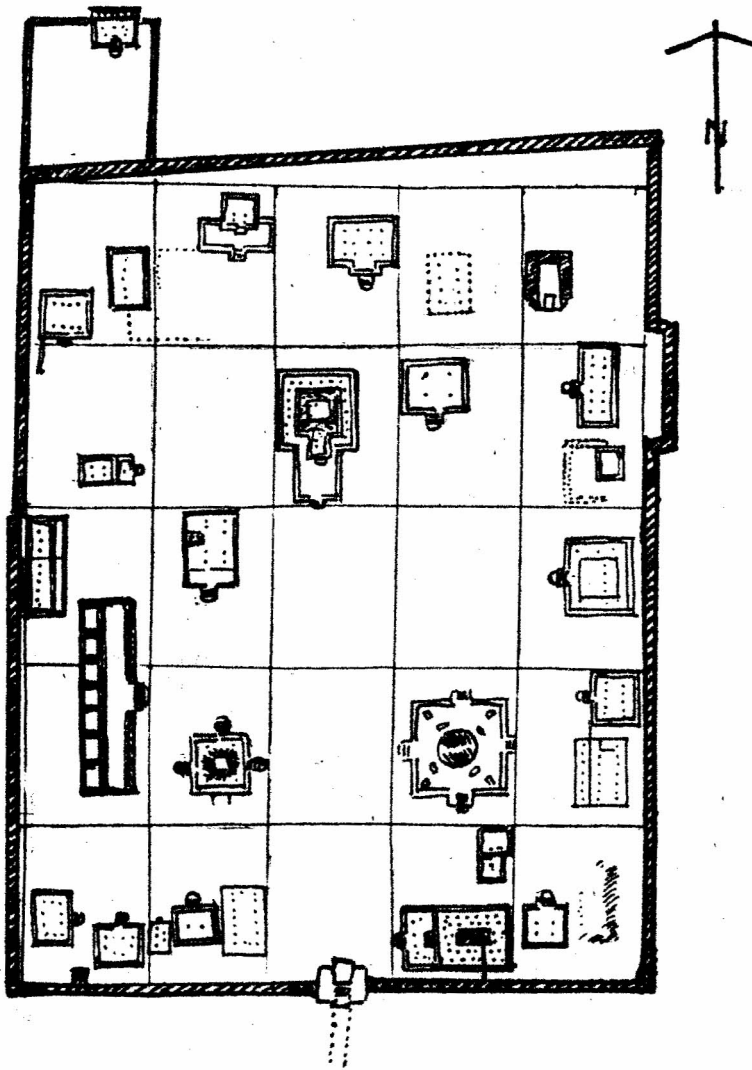
- 5 Bath-house?
- 6 Lavatory
- 7 Image-house

Fig. 7

Vijayārāma and Puliyankulama are without their principal idols. The presence of the *yantragala* and the absence of the statue would only suggest that the statue has been destroyed by treasurer-hunters. The large size of the *yantragala* and of the pedestaled stone-seat is ample evidence to show that they appertained to an image of considerable proportions. And the stone floorings in the image-houses in the sacred quadrangles at Toluville and Pacinatissa-pabbata too have partly or totally disappeared today. It is quite possible that these excellent stone slabs have been removed by the villagers. On the other hand, an image-house may have satisfied the needs of a community of monks better than a *bodhi* tree.

Coming back to the *pabbata-vihāras*, the concept of a building complex for residential purposes, separate from the quadrangle of sacred shrines, appears to be a later development. In the earliest monasteries there is no doubt that the monks resided within the same precincts as the sacred edifices. Among the *pabbata-vihāras* Pankuliya perhaps represents the earlier phase, when the *arāma* precincts were one self-contained unit. We find it difficult to agree with the view that the non-religious buildings could not be located outside the quadrangle on account of the surrounding land being marshy, forcing the architects to accommodate them in the quadrangle itself.<sup>61</sup> If the land was marshy, the first reaction of the architects would have been to abandon the site instead of violating the accepted canons of *vastuśāstra*. The other alternative would have been to locate the sacred quadrangle in such a way as to give room for an outer bay to accommodate the other buildings. It is, therefore, very unlikely that they straightaway went for the third alternative. I am inclined to think that Pankuliya provides the best example among the existing ruins, of the earliest type of *pabbata-vihāra*, while the Vijayārāma and the Pacinatissa-pabbata represent the intermediate stage, when the non-religious buildings were taken out of the sacred precincts and accommodated outside it but within the dwelling platform surrounding the quadrangle. Toluville and Puliyankulama perhaps represent the culmination of this development, with separate residential

61. Prematilleke and Silva, *ibid.* p. 65.



## PANKULIYA

SHOWING GOKULĀRĀMA-VIKRĀNTA LAYOUT

(with caitya, bodhivesman, pratiṃālaya & prasāda  
in Savitṛ, Indra, Bhūmindra & Soma respectively)

Fig. 8.

precincts centering round an image-house located either inside or outside the area girdled by the moat and connected to the shrine complex by a road. (Fig. 8)

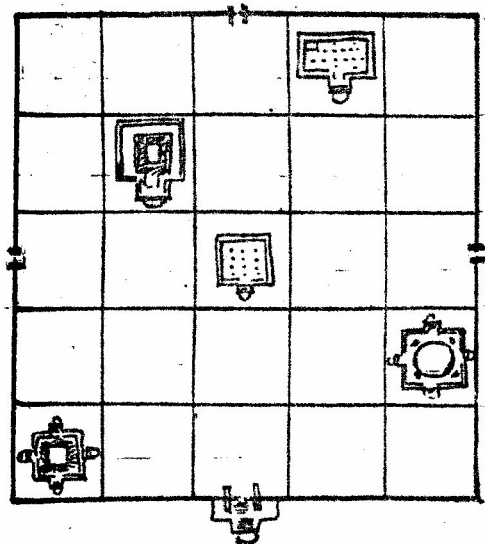
The type of *ārāma* discussed in the *Vāstuvīdyāśāstra* must belong to the earliest phase represented by Pankuliya, when all buildings, religious, ecclesiastical and residential, were dispositioned within one complex. It must, however, be pointed out that, as far as the placement of the sacred edifices goes, all the *pabbata-viharas* except Pankuliya follow the layout of the Hastyārāma described in our text, quite apart from the fact that the ancillary buildings are located outside the quadrangle. Judging from the positions of the three sacred edifices and the *prasāda*, Pankuliya appears to follow the layout of the Gokulārāma-vikranta with the entrance from the south. Since all the ancillary buildings in this complex have not been properly identified and our text does not mention the locations of most of such buildings in its description of the Gokulārāma, we are unable to say whether the layout of Pankuliya fits exactly into the Gokulārāma pattern. All the other *pabbata-viharas* mentioned above, with the exception of Toluville, follow the Hastyārāma layout, with the main entrance in the south, while Toluville roughly corresponds to the Hastyārāma, with the main entrance in the north. (Fig. 9)

Of the provincial *pabbata-viharas* the Magulmahāvihāra clearly belongs to the Hastyārāma type with the entrance in the south, Vessagiri and Pudukunavi (in the Gal Oya valley) to the Hastyārāma with the entrance in the east, while both Kaludiyapokuna and Mānikdena (in the Matale District) correspond to the layout of Toluville. (Fig. 10 & 11)

#### The Types of Building in the Monastery Complex.

The work discusses the architecture of the image-house in great detail. It speaks of two types of image-house, minor (*alpa*) and major (*mahat*), the former having one to three storeys and the latter with four to twelve storeys. The stylobate (*masuraka*) the wooden columns and the entablature (*prastara*) receive full treatment. Three varieties of raised floor of the *garbhagṛha* are also described. The image-house was undoubtedly the most beautiful expression of Sinhalese

monastic architecture. Its high basement was adorned with various mouldings and the walls richly decorated with *pañjaras*. An imposing ornamental arch (*torana*) in front greeted the visitor.<sup>62</sup>



Distribution of the pañcāvāsas in Hastārāma with southern entrance

Fig. 9.

As I have dealt with the *stupa* in some detail elsewhere,<sup>63</sup> here it would suffice to say that it was still the most conspicuous edifice in a monastery complex, but definitely of modest proportions when compared with the great *stupas* of Mahavihara and Abhayagiri-viharas. The architecture of the other three edifices, the *bodhiveśman*, the *sabha* and the *prasada*, was marked by a simplicity befitting a monastery of the followers of the Dispassionate One.

The work mentions more than twenty types of ancillary buildings which might well belong to an *arama* of average size. Of these the *bhojanasāla* (refectory) and the *bhaktālaya* (kitchen) are the most common buildings which would have been indispensable adjuncts to any monastery complex.<sup>64</sup> It appears that sometimes provisions were brought by the devotees, who prepared the meals in the kitchen and served them to the monks in the *bhojanālaya*.<sup>65</sup>

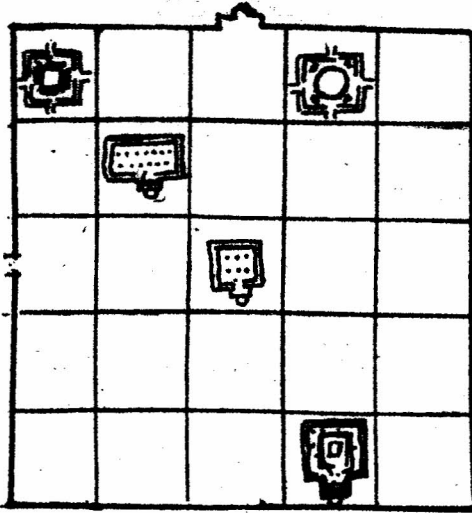
62. See note 39 above.

63. E.W. Marasinghe, 'New Light on Ancient Sinhalese Stupa Architecture in The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities, vol. 10 p. 105-121.

64. See VVS. ii, 512-524.

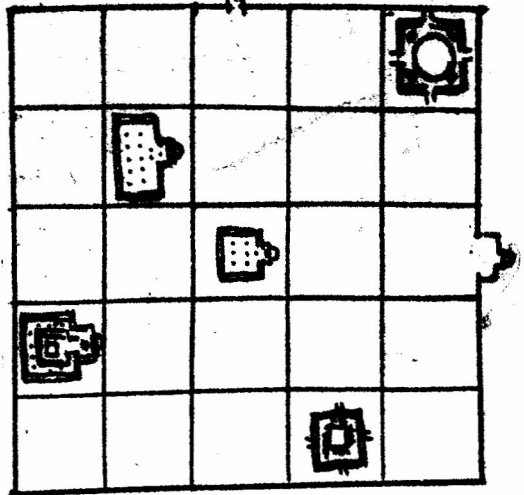
65. See *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, vol. III, London (1933) p. 258-260; Hiuen Tsiang, *op.cit.* Vol. 2, p. 250.

The text confirms that the refectory had an open quadrangle in the centre (*catusśāla*) around which the monks sat for meals. The kitchen, which was smaller than the refectory, was situated almost always close to the latter, sometimes



Distribution of the pañcāvāsas in Hastyārāma with northern entrance.

Fig. 10.



Distribution of the pañcāvāsas in Hastyārāma with eastern entrance.

Fig. 11.

in the same *koṣṭha*, but generally in the adjacent *koṣṭha*. These two buildings were often located in the north-east quarter of the *ārāma*, specifically in the *Īśa*, *Jayanta* and *Aditi bhāgas*. This is amply corroborated by the majority of the existing sites in Anuradhapura. Sometimes they occupy the *Vāyu*, *Mukhya* or *Soma koṣṭhas* and seldom the *Nirṛta* or *Sugrīva*.

Next in importance comes the nondescript *pratiharmya*, which in all probability was a residential building for visiting monks. The *prasāda* proper is occasionally referred to as *harmya*, and the *pratiharmya* may, therefore, denote an additional *prasāda* meant for the use of visiting brethren from outside. There is no regular location fixed for this building, but it was usually positioned away from the main shrines, thus increasing the possibility of its being a hall of residence. Unfortunately the *Vastuwidyāśāstra* is quite silent about its functional use. The only other building about which the work has something



to say is the *homaśālā*, which appears to be a hall for meditation rather than a sacrificial hall.<sup>66</sup> It was always placed very close to the entrance, sometimes directly facing the entrance. It is, however, difficult to guess why a meditation hall was located in an area least congenial for serious meditation.

Two other interesting types of building mentioned are the *yakṣadhāman* (demons' lodge) and the *divyamandapa* (gods' pavilion). It is possible that these two edifices were set apart for housing statues of Mahāyānic demons, gods and goddesses. The *yakṣadhāman*, like the *homaśālā*, either directly faces the visitor or stands very close to the entrance. The *balipīṭha* stood almost always to the left of the *yakṣadhāman* and may have served as the altar on which oblations were offered to the demons and departed spirits. Similarly the *havyaśālā*, which was generally confined to the south-east quadrant, must have served as the hall where oblations were offered to the deities. The *divyamandapa*, on the other hand, is situated away from the entrance and the sacred shrines.

The hospital (*rogālaya*) is located almost regularly in the Mukhya *koṣṭha* and seldom in the Vāyu or Soma. The bath-house (*varīśālā*) is always confined to the south-west quadrant and often located in the Varuṇa or Mitra *koṣṭha*. The flower-hall (*puṣpamandapa*) is always in the Sugriva *koṣṭha*. It is difficult to say what purpose was served by this building. It was probably a small room where fresh flowers were kept to be used for the daily offerings by the monks. The urinal (*srutaśālā*) and the lavatory (*malamokṣa*) have been mentioned only once in connexion with the Gokulārāma with the southern entrance. In this instance, quite logically, the urinal is placed in the Vāyu and the lavatory in the Varuṇa, the Śosa lying between these two *koṣṭhas*, apparently being considered unsuitable for locating buildings. At Toluṅga, which has the main entrance in the north, the placing of the urinal and the lavatory in the Agnibhāga is perfectly in order. Two other popular structures are the granary (*dhanyaśālā*) and the drumming-hall (*bherigṛha*), the former generally favouring the Pṛthivīdhara and Āditya *koṣṭhas*, the latter usually occupying one of the several outer *koṣṭhas* lying between Varuṇa and Agni. The other buildings mentioned in the

work are the dance-hall (*nṛtyamandapa*), the preaching-hall (*dharmamandapa*) and the *vyakhyanamandapa* (lecture-hall?).

Every *ārāma* has two gates, the main gate (*mahādvāra*) or entrance, and the side gate (*pakṣadvāra* or *ksudradvāra*), which is most probably the exit. The latter is placed always on the side which the devotee who has entered the precincts reaches last in the course of his peregrination in circumambulatory order. Thus, if the entrance is in the east, the side gate or exit is located in the north. This rule has been strictly adhered to in all cases without exception. The same practical consideration must have definitely influenced the placing of the entrance and exit of the *pratimagṛha* of this period. The sacred quadrangles of most of the *pabbata-viharas* have, however, entrances/exits in all the four directions.

#### Summary.

In the foregoing pages I have attempted to establish that the *Vastuvidyāśāstra*, attributed to Mañjuśrī speaks of an architectural tradition pertaining to Buddhist monasteries, which belonged to a very early period in the history of architecture in Sri Lanka. This is supported by internal as well as external evidence, which help us to assign the work to the 5th or 6th century A.C. Unfortunately, the type of monastery envisaged in the work has vanished without trace from the Mahameghavana, giving way to the great monasteries that began to grow around the great *stupas*. Perhaps the only vestiges that still remain of this great tradition are noticeable in the so-called *pabbata-viharas*, the monastery at Pankuliya providing the best example. Until the present excavations in the Anuradhapura area are properly carried out and completed, we may have to rest content with the evidence already available in our attempt to relate the theory set out in the *Vastuvidyāśāstra* to the actual practice that obtained in its day among the adherents of the Mahayāna school in Sri Lanka.<sup>67</sup>

E.W. MARASINGHE

67. A summary of this paper was presented at the *First National Archaeological Congress* held from 28th to 30th November, 1986, at the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, Colombo.