

Designations of Ancient Sri Lankan Buddhism in the Chinese Tripiṭaka¹

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According to the Chinese literary sources, both Buddhist and secular, a formal diplomatic relationship between China and Sri Lanka started as early as the first part of the fourth century CE. References to the Buddhist tradition existing on this island were made slightly earlier. This article examines all the Chinese references to it found in the Chinese Buddhist canon; they are mainly Chinese translations and transliterations of *tāmrāparṇīya* and *sthavira*. It argues that the Buddhist tradition of ancient Sri Lanka is referred to in the Chinese Buddhist literature by terms such as *tāmrāparṇīya* and in some cases as *sthavira* or **sthaviriya*. It also supports the view that it is *Tāmrāparṇīya* (P. *Tambapaṇṇī[ya]*) rather than *Tāmrāśāṭīya* that is used in Vasubandhu's and Bhavya's works in referring to the ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.

Ancient Sri Lanka, known to the Chinese as “Lion Country” 師子國, had its first official contact with the Chinese empire in the early 4th century CE,² yet

¹The format of the references to Chinese Buddhist texts is that which appears in the Dharma Drum College's electronic version of the Taisho edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka. I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. My thanks also go to the editor, Professor Gombrich, for his kindness and encouragement. All errors remaining are nobody else's responsibility but mine.

²Chu sanzang jijī 出三藏記集, (compl. by Sengyou 僧祐 445-518), T54n2145_p092b. Cf. the Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳, T50n2059_p0410b02-b04. An official history, the Songshu 宋書, mentions that the event took place in 430 and 435 under Emperor Wen's reign. See Songshu, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 8 vols., 1974, pp. 79, 83, 2384. Strictly speaking, the character 師 should be written as 獅, but they are two homophonic characters found interchangeably in ancient Chinese texts. The country's name is even found in sūtras, see Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含經, T02n0125_p0629b05-06, Zhengfa nianchu jing 正法念處經, T17n0721_p0302c29-a03.

with regard to the Buddhist tradition existing in the island, few early Chinese sources specifically mention its name. This holds true for the sectarian affiliation of the two Chinese translations which are now generally believed to have been composed by the Sri Lankan Saṃgha.³ Similarly, there is hardly any information on the affiliated tradition of the more than a dozen members of the Saṃgha who either came from or had stayed in that island before they went to China during the fourth and sixth centuries.⁴ The earliest Chinese work containing information on Buddhism in that country is Faxian's (法顯 ca.337-ca. 442) travel records, the *Gaoseng Faxian zhun* 高僧法顯傳 or 'Biography of the Eminent Monk Faxian', in which he mentions Abhayagiri Vihāra and a monastery called *mohe piheluo* 摩訶毘何羅 (i.e. Mahāvihāra).⁵ Although he also states that he stayed in the country for two years and obtained a *Vinaya* text belonging to the school of Mishasai 彌沙塞 (i.e. Mahīśāsaka), he nowhere specifies the original relationship of these two monasteries with the traditional eighteen Schools.⁶ The fact that he obtained a copy of the Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* could mean many things, among which is the probability that the school of Mahīśāsaka existed there, and that one or both of the two monasteries were using this *Vinaya* text as their disciplinary code.

After Faxian, references to the Buddhist tradition of this country are found mainly in some post-sixth century Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts and in the writings of the Chinese. All the Chinese references can be divided into two clusters, each of which consists mainly of Chinese translations and transliterations of some Indic terms. This essay identifies designations of the Buddhist tradition of ancient Sri Lanka by examining these Chinese references. It first demonstrates that *tāmrāparṇīya* was one of the Indic terms used to designate the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in the works of some early medieval Indian Buddhist masters. The term *tāmrāparṇīya* (P. *tambapaṇṇī[ya]*), together with *tāmrāsāṭīya*, has been at the centre of some discussions as to which of these two originally referred to one or more Buddhist schools of ancient Sri Lanka. Of all the previous treatments on this topic, Lance Cousins' study is the most recent and detailed. He uses a variety of sources and confirms that *Tāmrāparṇīya* rather than *Tāmrāsāṭīya*

³The two works are the *Vimuttimaggā* 解脫道論 (T.32,No.1608) and a shorter version of the *Samantapāsādikā* 善見律毘婆沙 (T. 24, No. 1462).

⁴Chu sanzang jiji, T54n2145_p104b-c; *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, T50n2059_p0345b.

⁵T51n2085_p0864c24-865b13. The phrase in the Taisho edition is 摩訶毘可羅. One anonymous reviewer of this article suggests that the graph 可 may have been a copyist's error for 何, which makes sense, as the Chinese term with 何 better fits the phonetics of mahāvihāra.

⁶Ibid, T51n2085_p0865c10.

was the relevant term.⁷ This study supports his conclusion by using evidence found in Chinese Buddhist sources.

The second part of this essay deals with the Chinese translations and transliterations of *sthavira* or a related Indic term, and identifies the link between this term and the ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition in some Indian Buddhist texts.

1. *Tāmraparṇīya* (*tambapaṇṇī*)

The term *tāmraparṇīya* (or an Indic term closely similar to it, such as *tāmravarṇīya*) appears in four forms in the Chinese texts, three resembling translations and one transliteration, and they all refer to the Buddhist tradition of ancient Sri Lanka. At this point we introduce the first three; the fourth will be treated in due course. The first one is the phrase *tongse dizi* 銅色弟子 or ‘disciples of copper colour’; it is found in Vimokṣaprajñārṣi’s (毘目智仙 516 in China) translation of Vasubandhu’s (fl. 4th CE) *Karmasiddhi-prakarāṇa* or ‘Discussions on the Demonstration of Karma’. In the text, while talking about *ālaya-vijñāna* 阿梨耶識 or ‘clinging consciousness’, Vasubandhu states ‘again [others] name it as different *vi-jñāna* – just as [sometimes people] call “extinction” *samādhi* – for instance, those greatly virtuous disciples of [the School of] copper colour call it “consciousness of existence” 復說異識，如滅三昧。如彼大德銅色弟子，說有分識。⁸ The second Chinese term is the phrase *chi tongye bu* 赤銅鑠部 or ‘school of red copper plates’. This phrase must have been translated from the same Indic term that gave

⁷See his ‘Tambapaṇṇīya and Tāmraśāṭīya’ at <http://www.ocbs.org/images/fellows/lancearticle1.pdf>, accessed in November 2011. The author thanks one anonymous reviewer of this journal for informing me of Cousins’ work.

⁸*Ye chengjiu lun* 業成就論, T311n1608_0780a27-a28. Here *dade* is likely to be the *bhadanta* in the Tibetan translation (Skilling: 167). The term *tongse* also appears in the translation of the *Fomu da kongque mingwang jing* 佛母大孔雀明王經, where it is used to form the name of a country. The electronic version of the Taisho Chinese Tripiṭaka annotates it as *tāmraparṇī* T19n0982_p0423a27, fn. 51. Also see another translation, the *Kongque wang zhou jing* 孔雀王呪經, T19n0984_p0450b06. In the translation of some other sutras, *tongse* is used to describe the colour of the Buddha’s tongue, being the 60th of the Buddha’s eighty minor marks. See the *Da sazhe Niganzi suoshuo jing* 大薩遮尼乾子所說經, T09n0272_p0344c12 and the *Da Baoji jing* 大寶積經, T11n0310_p0557b18, etc. Yet the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* uses it to describe the thinness of the Buddha’s tongue (*Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T12n0374_p0438b12-b13, cf. T12n0375_p0680a03). Still another text uses it to describe the colour of the Buddha’s fingernails. See *Fo benxing jijing* 佛本行集經, T03n0190_p0696a06; cf. *Da sazhe Niganzi suoshuo jing*, T09n0272_p0343b14.

birth to the first one, because not only do these two phrases partly resemble each other, but, more importantly, it appears in Xuanzang's (玄奘 602-664) translation of the same Indian text: Xuanzang has *chi tongye bu* 赤銅鑠部 as the name of the school which accepts a 'consciousness of existence'.⁹ Judging from the fact that both translations were made from the same Indian text, it is reasonable to believe that 銅色弟子 and 銅鑠部 are just different translations of the same name of the school.

The third Chinese term appears in Xuanzang's translation of Bhavya's (c.500-570) *Mahāyāna Karatala-ratna Śāstra*; it is *tongye bu* 銅鑠部 or 'the school of copper-plates' in a passage which reads 'Again, masters of the School of Copper-plates maintains that the *rūpa* [existing] between [objects] is called "space" 銅鑠部師復作是說: 諸間隙色說名虛空'.¹⁰

The second and third translation terms look so similar, could they both be made from the same Indic term and refer to the same Buddhist tradition? There are several reasons to suggest a positive answer to this question. First of all, they both are Xuanzang's translations. And from the two contexts in which both phrases appear it is clear that they both are translations of the name of a Buddhist school. The difference of one graph between the two Chinese terms might indicate that they are made from the names of two different Buddhist schools, but two traditional Chinese annotations on the translations clearly show that is not the case. The first annotation is seen in a standard glossary of Chinese Buddhist translations compiled not long after Xuanzang's time, defining 銅鑠部 thus: 'It is the School of Elders [which] writes on red copper plates and still exists in the Lion country 上座部也。鑿赤銅鑠書字記文, 今猶在師子國也.'¹¹ The second annotation is a similar but more elaborate account of this school, offered by an unknown Chinese author's commentary on Bhavya's *Mahāyāna Karatala-ratna Śāstra*. It states:

'A hundred years after the Buddha's demise, King Aśoka was destroying Buddhism. His brother was a monk and obtained Arahathship. When [the King] was persecuting Buddhism he was a great elder. Worrying that Buddhism might be replaced by [other religions] and disappear, he had the Tripitaka engraved on copper plates and had them sent to the Lion country. Later on, King Aśoka had faith in

⁹ *Dacheng chengye lun* 大乘成業論, T31n1609_p0785a14.

¹⁰ *Dacheng zhangzhen lun* 大乘掌珍論, T30n1578_p0274b24.

¹¹ See the *Yiqie jing yinyi*, T54.2128, p.0646c16.

some monks and took back the Tipiṭaka on copper plates to circulate. This is why [it] is called the [school of copper plates]; it is the School of Elders. That school established the view that the form between objects is called “space”.

佛去世一百年後，阿輸伽王損壞佛法。時阿輸伽王弟出家，得羅漢果。當滅佛法時，身居上坐，恐佛法更立，無法可得，遂打銅鑊，錐諸三藏，送著師子國。後阿輸伽王得信部之僧，取銅鑊三藏以用流通，因以名焉，即是上座部。彼宗立間隲色，說名虛空。¹²

Although the account of the origin of the school sounds odd, it agrees with the first annotation in saying that it is named ‘School of Copper-plates’ because they used to write on ‘red copper plates.’¹³ Obviously to both authors there seemed to be no need to differentiate ‘red-copper’ from ‘copper’, just as shown in Xuanzang’s two translations. These two annotations also agree that the so-called School of ‘copper plates’ was the ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition and that the tradition was known as Sthavira, a fact on which the second part of this essay will focus. As the first and second Chinese terms were held to refer to the same school, all the three terms are translations of one and the same school (or tradition) of Buddhism. From the last two Chinese authors, it is also clear that the school was understood by Xuanzang and other Chinese Buddhist authors to be a school of Sri Lankan Buddhism.

But is the understanding of the Chinese authors correct? The answer lies in finding the Indic counterpart for these three Chinese terms. Thus, identifying the original form of the Indic term is in order.

Two Indic terms have been suggested as the original of the three Chinese translation terms: *Tāmrāśāṭīyas* and *Tāmraparṇīya*. As early as the 1960s, the

¹²*Zhangzhen lun shu* 掌珍論疏, X46n0788_p0718a03-a08. According to the Japanese Vinaya master Yasutōo’s 安達律師 (ac. 914) *Sanlun zong zhangshu*, in China there were six commentaries on the *Zhangzhen lu* by his time. See T55n2179_p1138a09-a14. The author would like to thank Dr. Wang Zhaoguo of International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies for Romanising the master’s name.

¹³Xuanzang reports that what was recited at the Buddhist council held in King Kaṇiṣka’s reign was also engraved on copper leaves. See his *Datang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, T51n2087_p0887a05-a14, cf. the *Datang Da ci-en si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 T50n2053_p0231b23-c04. There is a case of engraving government policy on copper leaves recorded in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*. See the *Genben shuo yiqieyou bu pinaiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, T23n1442_p0646a08-a10. The *Yiqie jing yinyi* (T54n2128_p0367b03-b06), quoting from the *Xiyu ji* 西域記, also says that for lack of paper the Indians used copper leaves as one of many types of writing materials.

late Taiwanese scholar monk Yinshun (印順 1906-2005) had already provided the Sanskrit term *Tāmrāsāṭīyaḥ* as the Indic original of the ‘school of copper plates’ and ‘school of red-copper plates’, and his view is widely accepted in Chinese academia.¹⁴ Peter Skilling in his lengthy and informative article admits that Bhavya’s *Karatala-ratna* is only existent in Chinese translation, but follows the Sanskrit restoration of Louis de La Vallée Poussin and N. Aiyaswami Sastri in accepting the term 銅鑠部師 or ‘masters of the school of copper plates’ as ‘*Tāmrāsāṭīyas*’.¹⁵ He also notes that Lamotte had restored this term to Sanskrit as ‘*Tāmrāparṇīyanikāya*’.¹⁶ What is more, after surveying all the cases in which the uses of ‘*Tāmrāsāṭīyas*’ and ‘*Tāmrāparṇīya*’ seem uncertain, Skilling suggests the discrepancies were unlikely to be caused by the Tibetan translations, and concludes that ‘*Tāmrāsāṭīyas* must be accepted as the primary form of the great majority of available texts’, brushing aside the Chinese reading on the ground that Chinese translation ‘poses difficulties’.¹⁷ Skilling’s choice appears to be problematic; as also shown by Lance Cousins’ study, it is extremely likely that the problem lies with the Tibetan translations.¹⁸ In fact, Skilling’s article has a perfect example which shows that where *Tāmrāparṇīya* is used in the Sanskrit version of a text, *Tāmrāsāṭīya* is used in the Tibetan translation.¹⁹ Unless one can prove that the composition of the Sanskrit version postdates that of the Tibetan, one cannot give priority of acceptance to the Tibetan version.

A careful analysis of relevant Chinese evidence shows that for the Chinese term 銅鑠部師 Lamotte’s ‘*Tāmrāparṇīyanikāya*’ is the closest one. That is to say that the Chinese term 銅鑠部 (or all the three Chinese terms just investigated above) may have been translated from *Tāmrāparṇīya*. There are a couple of rea-

¹⁴ *Yuanshi fojiao shengdian jicheng* 原始佛教圣典集成, 3rd ed., Taiwan: Zhengwen Publishing House, 1971), pp. 9, 89. The latest study that maintains this view is Mun-Keat Choong’s *The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism: a Comparative Study Based on the Sūtrāṅga Portion of the Pāli Saṃyutta-Nikāya and the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama* (Harrassowitz, 2000), pp. 3, 6. He repeated this assertion in ‘The Importance of Pali-Chinese Comparison in the Study of Pali Suttas’, papers presented at the conference *Exploring Theravāda Buddhist Studies: Intellectual Trends and the Future of the Field of a Study*, National University of Singapore, 2004, at http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/abstracts/abs_theravada.pdf, accessed in 2008.

¹⁵ Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature in Tibetan Translation’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, Vol. XIX, 1993, p. 160. cf. fn.2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155, fn.4; p. 172.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-65.

¹⁸ Lance Cousins arrives at a similar conclusion by using other evidence. See his ‘Tambapaṇṇiya and Tāmrāsāṭīya’, p. 12.

¹⁹ Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 160.

sons for this supposition. Firstly, a Chinese transliteration that is highly likely to have been based on something like *tāmraparṇīya* was identified by the Chinese with one of the Chinese terms above. The transliteration is *duomoluoba* 多摩羅跋 and appears in two passages of Prabhākaramitra’s (波羅頗蜜多羅 564–633) translation of the Indian master Jñānaprabha’s (智光 7th cent.) 般若燈論釋 or *Exegeses of the Prajñāpradīpa*.²⁰ In the first passage, the author says, ‘*Duomoluoba*, the heretics, state that in the ultimate sense there is *tathāgata*. This is because [they] are attached to that which is expediently established 多摩羅跋外道說言, 第一義中有如來, 取施設故.’²¹ Again, a shorter passage expounding a verse on the nature of *nirvāṇa* reads:

‘By nature *nirvāṇa* is not an entity that is produced by causes, but it can be expediently established, just like the horn of a hare. So claimed the followers of the *duomoluoba*, Sautrāntikas and other [schools].’

涅槃非是體, 無因能施設故, 譬如兔角。多摩羅跋及修多羅人等言。²²

In the latter case, after the quoted passage there is a pair of brackets in which this is included: ‘*Duomoluoba* is “red copper plate” in the Tang [dynasty] language 多摩羅跋者, 唐言赤銅鑠.’ Thus by the Tang dynasty this transliteration and 赤銅鑠 were already thought to have been made from one and the same Indic term. In fact, an exact transliteration is also found in many Chinese translations of Mahāyāna scriptures that were made before the Tang dynasty.²³ Jizang’s (吉藏 549–623) exposition of this transliteration is 葵香, ‘fragrance of sunflower’, although a Tang glossary offers 藿葉, ‘fragrance of a certain pulse plant’.²⁴ The

²⁰ According to the Tang Biographies of Eminent Monks Jñānaprabha was a monk from central India and a disciple of Xuanzang’s teacher, Śīlabadhra. In 626, he was invited at the suggestion of Xuanzang to the Chinese court and helped translate some Buddhist texts. See *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T. 50, No. 2060, p. 439c. A lexicographical text compiled later than the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* dates his arrival in China one year later. See *Fanyi mingyi ji*, T. 54, no. 2131, p.71a.

²¹ *Banruo deng lun shi* 般若燈論釋, T30n1566_p0118b04-b05.

²² *Ibid*, T30n1566_p0128c11-c12. Due to ignorance of Theravādin thought, the present author has not been able to locate these two tenets in Theravādin literature.

²³ *Chengshi lun* 成實論, T32n1646_p0273c17; the *Da fangdeng daji jing* 大方等大集經, T13n0415_p0830a20, etc.; the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 T09n0262_p0021c22, p0032b21, etc, and many other sūtras.

²⁴ *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏, T34n1721_p0567c23-c24, and the *Yiqie jing yinyi*, T54n2128_p0476a10.

Mahākaruṇa Sūtra explains that the fragrance is so called because it is found on the shore of a sea called *duomoluoba*.²⁵ Both meanings of this transliteration are included in the 12th century *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集 ('Collection of terms and their meanings found in the translations'); the author Purun (普潤 1086-1158) provides two explanations for *duomoluoba*, one of which goes 'or some say [it means] "red copper leaf" 或云赤銅鑠.²⁶

Even if the Chinese identification of *duomoluoba* with 赤銅鑠 is not convincing, the phonetics of the transliteration does resemble the sound of the initial three syllables of *tāmrāparṇīya*. This phonetic resemblance does not exist between the Chinese transliteration and *tāmraśāṭīya*. As for why the last two syllables of the Indic term are not reflected in the Chinese transliteration, the answer is that this is how Indic terms were translated and transliterated into Chinese.²⁷ In this case there is omission of the final syllable, which is common in Chinese Buddhist translations. For instance, the Chinese transliteration of 'Ānanda' is *anan*, *shelifu* is for 'Śāriputra', and *pini* for 'Vinaya'.

Secondly, a comparison of the Chinese translations, i.e. 銅鑠 and 赤銅鑠, and the dictionary meaning of *Tāmrāparṇīya* also supports the Chinese attribution. In the paragraphs above, 銅 and 赤銅 are translated respectively as 'copper' and 'red copper'. In ancient Chinese texts, this character also refers to 'bronze', and 'red bronze' would refer to 'copper' or 'foreign bronze' as translated in the *Fan fanyu* 翻梵語, 'Translating the Sanskrit, a proto-dictionary of Chinese and Sanskrit believed to have been compiled by the learned monk Baochang (465-535?).²⁸ Elsewhere in the Chinese Buddhist translations, 銅 was used by the translator of the

²⁵The *Beihua jing* 悲華經, T03n0157_p187b18-b19, etc.; the *Dacheng bei fentuoli jing* 大乘悲分陀利經, T03n0158_p0252b22-b23. References to Tambapaṇṇi as a place or even as a river are found in the Pāli literature too. See Cousins' 'Tambapaṇṇiya and Tāmraśāṭīya', pp. 2-3.

²⁶T54n2131_p1104b07-09.

²⁷Indeed, various Buddhist translators applied a variety of ways to render Indic terminology into Chinese, which itself is an important separate topic of Buddhist Studies, so there might be some other explanations for this. It could be that the original was not Sanskrit at all, or due to the accent of the translator who recited the text, to name just two. But in the case in question, it must be a Sanskrit word, as the author was an Indian master who happened to be Xuanzang's study mate. Accent is not a likely explanation, as accent is hardly reflected in the number of syllables. For a study on ancient Chinese Buddhist lexicographers' remarks on the accent issue in translations, see Huang Renxuan 黃仁瑄, 'Tang Wudai fodian yinyi zhong de "Chu Xia" wenti' 唐五代佛典音义中的“楚夏”问题. *Nanyang shifan xueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 南阳师范学院学报(社会科学版), 2010, 9:1, pp. 42-46.

²⁸For the dating of the *Fan fanyu*, see Chen Shiqiang 陳士強, *Da zangjing zongmu tiyao (wenshi zang)* 大藏經總目提要(文史藏), vol. 2, pp. 272-277.

Madhyamāgama to render an equivalent of the Pāli *kaṃsa* in the *Anaṅgana sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*.²⁹

鑠 and 鑠 have been translated as ‘plate’. They are interchangeably used in the Chinese Buddhist canon.³⁰ The early Tang Buddhist glossary, the *Yiqian jing yinyi* 一切經音義 or ‘The sounds and meanings of [the terms] found in all the scriptures’, mentions that they both are pronounced the same as the simpler character 葉 or ‘leaf’.³¹ In fact, the literal meaning of 鑠 and 鑠 is ‘thin metal plate’. It is as thin as a ‘leaf’, hence both characters contain a 葉 or ‘leaf’, and they both are often substituted for by the latter.³² So the Chinese terms can be translated as either ‘copper plate’ or ‘copper leaf’. Skilling informs us that the literal meaning of *tāmraśāṭīya* is ‘copper-clothed’ and that *tāmra* is taken to mean ‘red’ in the old Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary, the *Mahāvvyutpatti*; thus ‘*Tāmraśāṭīyas* should be taken as “the followers of *Tāmraśāṭas*”’.³³ Clearly, the term *Tāmraśāṭa* cannot be translated as ‘copper plate’ or ‘red copper plate’.

Yet M. Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* explains *tāmra* as ‘darkening’, which, if stretched a bit, is close to the definition ‘red’ given in the Tibetan dictionary as well as to the Chinese translation ‘copper colour’ 銅色.³⁴ The dictionary tells us that *tāmra* also means ‘copper’ when used in a compound. The example provided is ‘*Tāmra-dvīpa* found in the *Divyāvadāna* (xxxvi) as “copper-island”’.³⁵ A similar example can be seen in the *Fan fanyu*, in which the transliteration of *duomonaga* 多摩那竭 is interpreted as 洋銅城 or ‘foreign-bronze city’, which suggests that the Indic original term was *tāmranagara*.³⁶ Monier-Williams’ dictionary also gives ‘leafy’ as the literal meaning of *parṇya*.³⁷ Indeed, the definition of the term *Tāmraparṇīya* and *Tāmravarṇīya* made in this dictionary is

²⁹See *Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經 T01n0026_p0566b10 and MN. 5: 25.

³⁰For evidence, see *Da baoji jing*, T11n0310_p0423c10-c11, *Zengyi ahan jing*, T02n0125_p0805c17, etc.

³¹T54n2128_p0857b01.

³²For its literal meaning see Wang Li 王力, et al. ed. *Wang Li gu hanyu zidian* 王力古汉语字典, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000, 2003 reprint, p. 1537. Peter Skilling’s translation suggested by Paul Harrison is ‘ore ring’, which is incorrect. See his ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 160, fn.2.

³³Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 166.

³⁴M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, reprint 1999), p. 438.

³⁵Ibid, p. 143. Cf. Peter Skilling ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 161. Lance Cousins suggests that even this name may have been derived from ‘*Tāmraparṇī* or something similar’. See his ‘*Tambapaṇṇiya* and *Tāmraśāṭīya*’, p. 5.

³⁶T54n2130_p1039b18.

³⁷M. Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 606.

‘an inhabitant of Ceylon’; the combination of the literal meanings of *tāmra* and *parṇya* is almost a perfect match to the literal translation of 銅鑠 (‘copper leaf’). If we ask what may have been the Indic term for 赤銅鑠, the answer would depend on how we take the meaning of the character 銅: if it means ‘bronze’, ‘red-bronze’ or ‘foreign bronze’ would be ‘copper’. So 赤銅鑠 would be nothing other than *tāmrāparṇīya*. Besides, it has already been demonstrated that Xuanzang, who employed both 銅鑠 and 赤銅鑠 in different translations to translate one Indic term, and other Chinese authors equated these two Chinese phrases as the name of the same Sri Lankan Buddhist school. All this strongly shows that either *Tāmrāparṇīya* or *Tāmravarṇīya*, but not *Tāmrāśāṭīya*, was the original Indic term behind the Chinese translations and transliterations.

Thirdly, a search for where the *Tāmrāparṇīyas* were may support the Chinese view. Information on the Pāli form of *Tāmrāparṇīyas*, i.e. *Tambapaṇṇi*, may be of some help for this point. Lance Cousins’s detailed study on *Tambapaṇṇiya* and *Tāmrāśāṭīya* makes it sure that *Tambapaṇṇi* was located in Sri Lanka.³⁸ Again, according to a recent study, Sri Lanka was known as *Taprobane* by the ancient Greeks by the end of the 3rd century BCE.³⁹ *Taprobane*, like *Tambapaṇṇi*, could have also been derived from the original Sanskrit *Tāmrāparṇīya* or *Tāmravarṇīya*. This suggests that the *Tāmrāparṇīya* referred to by Vasubandhu and Bhavya was no other Buddhist tradition than the one prevailing in Sri Lanka at the time.

This suggestion can be further supported by circumstantial evidence. While discussing the varying readings of the term *su-arthaṃ su-vyañjanam* Skilling remarks that ‘the reading preferred by the Theravādins was known to Vasubandhu.’⁴⁰ And according to Chinese Buddhist translations Vasubandhu in three of his works refers to the same school (his other two works will be discussed in the next part of this essay). Skilling also notes: ‘Bhavya in chapter 4 of his *Tarkajvālā*, *Śrāvakatattvāvatāra*, cites four verses from a text of Ārya Sthavira Abhayagirivāsins.’⁴¹ So when Bhavya attributes a view on ‘space’ to a school which was translated into Chinese as 銅鑠部 and identified by the Chinese tradition as a Buddhist tradition of ancient Sri Lanka, it is unlikely that he had no idea where the school was. If both Vasubandhu and Bhavya knew the location of the school, could it be that the Chinese translators of their works, one of whom was Xuanzang, got it wrong? This

³⁸ See his ‘*Tambapaṇṇiya* and *Tāmrāśāṭīya*’, esp. pp. 6, 10.

³⁹ Duane W. Roller, *Eratosthenes’ Geography: fragments collected and translated, with commentary and additional materials* (Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 178, 180.

⁴⁰ Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 176.

⁴¹ Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 142.

school, as seen above, was regarded as a Buddhist school of Sri Lanka by both Xuanzang himself and some other Chinese authors. At least Xuanzang seems to have known clearly where Sri Lanka was, because in his travel records, the *Datang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 or *Journey to the West*, he notes that the Sri Lankans were practising Mahāyāna Sthaviras, the origin of which can be traced to the Buddhism brought by Mahinda, and that there were Mahāvihārins and Abhayagiri-vihārins, and the former rejected Mahāyāna teachings.⁴²

Fourthly, the current understanding of the provenance of *Tāmraśāṭīyas* also favours the Chinese attribution. There are no major controversial views on the identity of *Tāmraśāṭīyas*. Nalinaksha Dutt suggested that *Tāmraśāṭīyas* were an offshoot of the Sarvāstivāda.⁴³ Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya seconds this view.⁴⁴ So do Ashok Kumar Anand, Bibhuti Baruah, and the well known Vietnamese master Thich Nhat Hanh.⁴⁵ Yinshun rightly pointed out long ago that the *Tāmraśāṭīyas*, whom he too mistakenly believed to be ancestors of the Theravādins, were descendants of the Vibhajyavādins.⁴⁶ Skilling remarks that *Tāmraśāṭīya* was a Buddhist school of India, and his justification is that *Tāmraśāṭīyas* and Theravādins of Sri Lanka originally branched off from the same Sthaviras so they share some tenets.⁴⁷ Again in his treatment of ‘affiliation of *Tāmraśāṭīyas*’ Skilling writes “Sthavira” as used by Sumatiśīla, Asaṅga, and Hsüan-tsang may well refer to the broader Vinaya lineage of the *Tāmraśāṭīyas*: that is, they were not the Sthaviras but rather one of several schools of the Sthavira fold in India, along with at least the Mahīśāsakas and the Vibhajyavādins.⁴⁸ All these seem to agree that *Tāmraśāṭīyas* may not have been located in ancient Sri Lanka, at least at the time when this term was referred to in the texts at question. But as the preceding paragraph shows,

⁴²Datang xiyu ji 大唐西域記, T51n2087_p0934a10-a24.

⁴³Buddhist Sects in India (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998, reprint of the 1978 second edition), p. 49. This may explain the colour of their robes. According to the *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi*, no school wore red robes, but the robe of the Sarvāstivādins was dark red; see *Da biqiu sanqian weiyi* 大比丘三千威儀, (T24n1470_p0925c29-926a01) and the *Shelifu wen jing* 舍利弗問經 (T24n1465_p0900c14), of which the translator is unknown.

⁴⁴*Buddhism in the History of Indian Ideas* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1993), p. 218.

⁴⁵Ashok Kumar Anand, *Buddhism in India: from the Sixth Century B.C. to the Third Century A.D.*, (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1996), p. 113; Bibhuti Baruah, *Buddhist Sects and Sectarianism* (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2000), pp. 18, 29, 44; Thich Nhat Hanh, *Master Tang Hô: First Zen Teacher in Vietnam and China* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2001), p.62.

⁴⁶Mun-Keat Choong, *The Fundamental Teachings of Early Buddhism: A Comparative Study Based on the Sūtrāṅga Portion of the Pāli Saṃyutta-Nikāya and the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama*, pp. 3, 6.

⁴⁷Peter Skilling, ‘Theravādin Literature’, pp. 172-173.

⁴⁸ibid, pp. 173-74.

the school referred to by both Vasubandhu and Bhavya was located in Sri Lanka. Moreover, the school's tenet of *bhavāṅga-vijñāna* mentioned by Vasubandhu is, to use Skilling's own words, '...equivalent to the *bhavaṅga-viññāna* well known in the literature of the Mahāvihāravāsins.'⁴⁹

So far it can be established that as far as the Chinese Tripitaka can tell, the original Indic term referred in Vasubandhu's and Bhavya's texts and translated or transliterated as 銅色弟子, 銅鑠部, 赤銅鑠部 and in some cases 多摩羅跋, is *Tāmrāparṇīya* or *Tāmravarṇīyas*, which represents nothing but the name of the ancient Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition.

2. *Sthavira* (**Sthaviriya*)⁵⁰

As mentioned above, two Chinese texts also identify 銅鑠部 (*Tāmrāparṇīyas*) with *shangzuo bu* 上座部. The term *shangzuo bu* means 'school of elders'. *Shangzuo*, as a noun, means 'upper seat', standing for the person qualified to sit on it, hence it means 'an elder' or 'elders'. *Bu* means 'school', roughly corresponding to *-vāda*. This term is the commonest, and semantically correct, Chinese translation of Sthaviravāda or simply Sthavira. This term, as is well known, designates one of the two earliest divisions of the Buddhist Saṃgha. But it is not the earliest Chinese term for the word *sthavira*, since according to the *Fan fanyu sitapiluo* 私他毘羅, along with *potanduo* 婆檀多, seems to have been introduced early on.⁵¹ In this work 婆檀多 is said to mean 'greatly virtuous' and 私他毘羅 'elder/s'.⁵² Due to the loss of Chinese Buddhist translations, it is impossible to know from where the author of the *Fan fanyu* received his information, but judging from the pronun-

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 169. Cf. Lance Cousins, "Tambapaṇṇīya and Tāmraśāṭīya", pp. 12-13.

⁵⁰ By common philological convention, an asterisk before a word indicates that it is a hypothetical reconstruction. Sthaviriya seems not to be attested in Sanskrit.

⁵¹ The second complete transliteration of *sthavira* is found in the travel records of another Tang traveller monk and translator, Yijing (義淨 635-713). While defining the monastic rank and its corresponding epithet Yijing offers a complete phonetic translation of *sthavira*, *xitapiluo* 悉他薛羅, and annotates it with "the rank of dwelling", because ten years after taking higher ordination a monk is qualified to dwell alone. See his *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳, T54n2125_p0220a21-a22. The character 薛 was mistaken by the copyist as well as the editors of the Taisho canon as *xue* 薛. In Wang Bangwei's annotated edition, 悉他薛羅 is restored to *sthavira*, but no mention of the character 薛 is made. See his *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan jiaozhu* 南海寄歸內法傳校注, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), p.131.

⁵² *Fan fanyu*, T54n2130_p1024a15-a16, cf. T54n2130_p0983a11, p0998c13. In the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (T25n1509_p0073b09), 婆檀多 is written as 婆檀陀 and an annotation is provided '[it means] "greatly virtuous" [venerable monk] in the Qin language 秦言大德'.

ciation of the two phrases there is no doubt that they are a phonetic translation of *bhadanta sthavira*.

Then the term *sthavira* was rendered phonetically as *tipilü* 體毘履, as found in the *Wenshu shili wen jing* 文殊師利問經 or ‘Sūtra of Mañjuśrī’s Enquiries’, a Mahāyāna sūtra translated by Saṃghapāla (僧伽婆羅 460 ~ 524), and as *tapiluo* 他鞞羅/他俾羅 in the *Shiba bu lun* 十八部論 or ‘Treatise on the Eighteen Schools’ attributed to be Paramārtha (真諦 499-569) and in the *Shelifu wen jing*.⁵³ The reason why these two transliterations are believed to be of *sthavira* is two-fold. First, they both are mentioned in the texts as one of the earliest two Buddhist schools; in fact the *Shiba bu lun* quotes some passages verbatim from the *Shelifu wen jing*. Second, immediately after the transliteration in both texts, there is a bracketed annotation saying, respectively, ‘In our language it means “elder”’ and ‘it means school of elders.’ Here, we too cannot be certain when the annotations were added, but a simple check of the phonetics of the Chinese transliterations against that of *sthavira* will show that they are correct.

Although Indic languages and Chinese are different in many respects, one of which is a problem of matching tones (i.e., long vowels are not easily displayed in Chinese phonology), we can still restore sounds reasonably well, especially consonants, even though the pronunciation of many words in ancient Chinese differs from the modern one.⁵⁴ From a comparison between the Chinese phonetic transliterations and the suggested *sthavira* it seems that the original’s initial ‘s’ was lost or omitted. That is to say, the Chinese term may have been made from an Indic

⁵³T.14, No. 468, p. 501b01-b28; T. 49, No. 2032, p.17b28-c22; T24n1465_p0900b27-28. Cf. the *Yibu zhi lun* 部執異論, T49n2033_p0022c06-c10. For annotations, see, T14n0468_p0501b02, T49n2032_p0018a14. It seems common to restore *senqie poluo* 僧伽婆羅 as ‘Saṃghavarman’. The present author just cannot see how *-varman* matches the sound of the last Chinese character, although both *varman* and *pāla* mean ‘protector’.

⁵⁴On the study of ancient Chinese phonetics with the aid of Chinese Buddhist translations, some works deserve to be mentioned here. Yu Min 俞敏, ‘Houhan Sanguo fanhan duiyin pu’ 后汉三国梵汉对音谱, a journal article collected in his *Yu Min yuyanxue lunwen ji* 俞敏语言学论文集, Beijing: Shangwu yishu guan, 1999, pp. 1-62. W. South Coblin, ‘Remarks on Some Early Buddhist Transcriptional Data from Northwest China’, *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. 42, (1994), pp. 151-169. Shi Xiangdong 施向东, ‘Shiliu guo shidai yijing zhong de fanhan duiyin’ 十六国时代译经中的梵汉对音, a journal article collected in his *Yinshi xunyou: Shi Xiangdong zixuan ji* 音史寻幽——施向东自选集. 2008, pp. 75-85. Seishi Karashima, ‘Underlying Languages of Early Chinese Translations of Buddhist Scriptures’, in Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring eds., *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture - Festschrift in Honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*. Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing 2006, pp. 355-366.

original something like *thavira*.⁵⁵ There could have been a two-fold reason for this omission: either the foreign master who recited the original scripture omitted the ‘s’ sound while it was being translated into Chinese, or the original Indic word used to represent *sthavira* was a word without the ‘s’ sound in the texts undergoing translation, just as the Sanskrit word *skandha* becomes *khandha* in Pāli. After all Saṃghapāla was a foreign master who originally came from a country in which Pāli was the main Buddhist language. Needless to say there is still an issue of the accents of foreign translators who came from different parts of India—a phenomenon already noticed by Chinese Buddhist lexicographers.⁵⁶

With the omission of ‘s’, the remaining part of *sthavira* sounds more like *tapilū*, *tipilū*, and *tapiluo*. The Chinese phonetic system, ancient and modern, does not have a ‘v’ sound, so the letter ‘v’ in the word was transliterated as ‘b’ or ‘p’, which is also reflected in the transliterations of other Indic words such as *binaiye* 鼻奈耶 for the term *Vinaya*, *poshupandou* 婆藪槃豆 for Vasubandhu, *pilanpo* 毗藍婆 for *vairambhaka*, etc.⁵⁷ In many languages b and p are not easily distinguished; even today in the English pronunciation of some south and south-east Asians, ‘p’ is always sounded like ‘b’, or vice versa. Therefore *-thavi* sounded like *tapi* or *tabi* to the Chinese. The ancient pronunciation of the Chinese graph 履 may sound something close to *lu* instead of today’s *lǚ*; all *ü* sounds in contemporary Chinese phonetics were pronounced as *u* in the past. An evidence for this change of sound is the Vinaya master’s name Upāli, which was transliterated most often as *youboli* 優婆離. The first character of this phrase is now pronounced as *jāu*, which does not sound like the corresponding part of the original Indic term. In the past it must have been pronounced as *u*. Again, in ancient Chinese phonetics, there was no such sound as the Indian or English ‘r’, although in the sound presenting system of modern Chinese there is a roman letter ‘r’, but it is pronounced quite differently from the Indian or English ‘r’. So since the earliest translations, the letter ‘r’ was always pronounced as ‘l’; the evidence is too prolific in the Chinese translations to need further documentation.⁵⁸ This change, as K. R. Norman’s study shows, also

⁵⁵Both *sthavira* and *sthevira* can be found in Edgerton’s *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970. 2009 reprint, p. 611.

⁵⁶For a study on this topic, see Huang Renxuan 黄仁瑄, Tang Wudai fodian yinyi zhong de “Chu Xia” wenti 唐五代佛典音义中的“楚夏”问题. *Nanyang shifan xueyuan xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 南阳师范学院学报(社会科学版), 2010, 9:1, pp.42-46.

⁵⁷This phenomenon also appears in the case of some Sanskrit words and their Pāli derivatives. For instance, the Sanskrit word *nirvāṇa* becomes *nibbāna* in Pāli.

⁵⁸For instance, *Indranīla* as *yintuoluoniluo* 因陀羅尼羅, *pundarīka* often as *fentuoli* 芬陀利, etc.

exists in the changes between Sanskrit and Pāli words.⁵⁹

Furthermore, also with the initial 's' omitted, *sthavira* (or **sthaviri[ya]*) was once transliterated as *tapili* 他毘梨 in Paramārtha's translation of Vasubandhu's *Xianshi lun* 顯識論 or 'Treaties of Illustrating Consciousness'. There the term again refers to a school holding the tenet of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*.⁶⁰ This immediately reminds us of the school of *Tāmrāparṇīyas* referred in Vasubandhu's other work discussed above. A closely similar but longer transliteration is found in Paramārtha's translation of Vasumitra's *Samayabhedopacakra*, the *Bu yizhi lun* 部異執論 or 'Treatise of Different Views of the Schools'.⁶¹ This transliteration is *tapiliyu* 他毘梨與 and can perhaps be tentatively restored as **sthaviri[ya]*. It appears twice in the same paragraph that discusses the origin of the eighteen schools.⁶² The first appearance certainly refers to one of the two earliest schools, i.e., the Sthaviras, and the second is equated with Haimavata or 'School of Snowy Mountains'. This term in Paramārtha's translation of the same Indian text is rendered as *shangzuo dizi bu* 上座弟子部 or 'School of the Elders' Disciples', which is quite close to Xuanzang's rendering, i.e. 'Shangzuo bu 上座部', in his translation of the same text.⁶³

According to two Chinese glossaries of Sanskrit terms, *tipilü* 體毘履 and *tapili* 他毘梨, are believed to be titles of monastic ranks, and they mean, respectively, 'elders 老宿' and 'virtuous elders 宿德'.⁶⁴ One glossary also contains *xitina* 悉替那 as a transliteration of 'elders', of which the source does seem to be extant.⁶⁵

This is enough to show that the Chinese terms 私他毘羅悉他薛擺, 他鞞羅/他俾羅, and 體毘履 are all transliterations of Sthavira and that 他毘梨 and 他毘梨與 are transliterations of *Sthaviriya. They all stand for the same as 上座

⁵⁹K. R. Norman has shown that the interchangeability between b and p, r and l, and t and d existed for a very long time in ancient India. See his *A Philological Approach to Buddhist Studies (Buddhist Forum V)*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1997), p.67. In fact there is a handy example: *gili* in the *Isigili-sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN: 116) is also written as *giri* in *Abhayagiri*.

⁶⁰‘若是他毘梨部, 名有分識。有者, 三有, 即三界也 T31n1618_p0881a03-04. Actually before this translation, Sengyou in his *Chu sanzang jiji* recorded that there was a translation by the title of 他毘利, which he annotated as 'virtuous elders' (T55n2145_p0013b17).

⁶¹The Taisho edition has 部執異論; here the editorial wording of early Chinese editions is followed.

⁶²For the whole paragraph, see *Bu yizhi lun*, T49n2033_p0022b28-c11.

⁶³T49n2031_p0015a21,15b10-b11.

⁶⁴The *Fanyi mingyi ji*, T54n2131_p1074c12-c15. Cf. The *Fan fanyu*, T54n2130_p1024a15, T54n2130_p1041a15. Both terms are restored to Sanskrit as *sthavira* by the CBETA.

⁶⁵The *Fanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集, T54n2131_p1074c15.

部 (Sthavira). Some cases of 上座部 have been identified with *Tāmrāparṇīya* in the preceding discussion. What must be discussed at this point is 他毘梨, as it also concerns our subject matter—the school of ancient Sri Lankan Buddhism. Thus we now turn to the question: ‘Why is 他毘梨 (**Sthaviri[ya]*) the same as 赤銅鑠部 (*Tāmrāparṇīya*)?’

The fact that 赤銅鑠部 and 他毘梨 are the same Buddhist school is plain in the translations that contain these two terms. As pointed out above, 赤銅鑠部 is referred in Vimokṣaprajñarṣi’s translation of Vasubandhu’s *Karmasiddhi-prakaraṇa* and 他毘梨 in Paramārtha’s translation of Vasubandhu’s *Xianshi lun*. They are both referred to by the same author as a Buddhist school holding the tenet of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*.

These two terms are also generally considered to be 上座部 (Sthaviravāda) and Vibhajyavādins in Paramārtha’s translation of Vasubandhu’s *Mahāyānasaṅgraha-bhāṣya*, which in fact is the earliest extant translation that renders Sthaviravāda in this way.⁶⁶ The term is mentioned in two places where *ādāna-ālaya* (阿陀那阿梨耶) or ‘clinging store consciousness’ is the topic of discussion. In both places Vasubandhu states that this consciousness is also called 有分識 (‘consciousness of existences’) by the School of Elders and the Vibhajyavādins.⁶⁷ In fact, that these two Buddhist traditions recognize a ‘consciousness of existences’ is also found in the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* (*Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論) translated by Xuanzang in 659.⁶⁸ In this translation, Xuanzang also uses 上座部 for the School of Elders.

有分識 ‘consciousness of existences’ is accepted by the *Tāmrāparṇīyas*, who refer to it as *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa*. So by the tenet of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* all 赤銅鑠部 (*Tāmrāparṇīya*), 他毘梨 (**Sthaviriya*), 上座部 (Sthavira) and Vibhajyavādins are linked together. Considering the fact that Vasubandhu in three of his works refers to a school as accepting such a tenet, it can well be imagined that these three schools are one and the same. Indeed, we may doubt that the Sthavira in one of Vasubandhu’s works means *Tāmrāparṇīya* and refers to a school which is an offshoot of the Sthaviras and still exists in the author’s time, as this would mean

⁶⁶Translated in 563 as *She dacheng shilun* 攝大乘釋論, T. 31, No. 1595. There seem to be two different copies of the translation. See *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄, T55n2146_p0141c06-c07, T55n2147_p0159c09, T55n2148_p0193c11-c12.

⁶⁷T31n1595_p0160c05-160c10, T31n1598_p0386b16-b17. According to the *Shenmi jietuo jing* 深密解脫經 (*Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*), *ādāna-vijñāna* and *ālaya-vijñāna* are the same consciousness by different names. See T16n0675_p0669a22-a25, Cf. T16n0676_p0692b14-b17.

⁶⁸T31n1585_p0015a21-a22. Cf. Peter Skilling ‘Theravādin Literature’, p. 157.

that he linked the same tenet with different schools in his different works. That is unlikely. As mentioned above, both Bhavya and Xuanzang qualified Abhayagirivihārins as Sthavira, which suggests that a tradition of Sri Lankan Buddhism used to be known as Sthavira. Besides, the doubt would conflict with the attribution, demonstrated above, of the Chinese masters, among whom was the translator Xuanzang. The point here is that the Sthaviras and *Tāmrāparṇīyas* in Vasubandhu's works are the same school that existed in Sri Lanka, even though 'the Theravādins of Ceylon do not portray themselves as part of a "Greater Sthavira School" of Jambudvīpa, about which they are silent, but rather repositories of the pristine Sthavira lineage.'⁶⁹

Conclusion:

The above discussion reflects that it was *Tāmrāparṇīya*/*Tāmravarṇīya*, not *Tāmrāśāṭīya*, that is referred in the works of Vasubandhu and Bhavya, and that the term referred to a Buddhist tradition existing in ancient Sri Lanka. Even though it is a view common to all Buddhist traditions that Sthavira refers to one of the two earliest Buddhist divisions, the evidence relating to the doctrine of *bhavaṅga-viññāṇa* and the Chinese attributions, of which some were made not long after the Indian authors' time by translators such as Xuanzang, this term or *Sthāviri[ya] in Vasubandhu's *Xianshi lun* 顯識論 must also mean *Tāmrāparṇīyas*. And the Chinese authors, including Xuanzang, may have followed Vasubandhu and Bhavya and simply considered *Tāmrāparṇīyas* to be Sthaviras. This leads to the conclusion that according to the Chinese Buddhist sources, including translations of Indic Buddhist texts and the works of some Chinese Buddhists, the Buddhist tradition/s of ancient Sri Lanka is/are known by the designations *Tāmrāparṇīya*, *Sthāviri[ya] and Sthavira.

Be that as it may, apart from Bhavya and Xuanzang, who clearly label Abhayagirivihārins as Sthaviras, most of the Chinese references are not clear as to which particular sect of Sri Lankan Buddhism they are referring to, although by that time there already existed different sectarian Buddhist traditions on the island. This was due at least partly to the fact that the Indian authors were not specific regarding their origins. This gap might not be filled even if we could locate all the doctrinal points mentioned in this study in the Theravādin sources, as the sectarian divisions of today's Theravādins are not the same as those in the past. This

⁶⁹Peter Skilling, 'Theravādin Literature', p. 174.

indicates that although the information offered by the Chinese Tripitaka can be useful to the study of other Buddhist traditions, it has some limitations too.

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