

Tambapaṇṇiya and Tāmraśāṭiya

Introduction

The earliest list of Buddhist schools, extant in versions of the treatise attributed to *Vasumitra, in Pali and in several other related forms, does not distinguish groups among the different Theriya/Sthāvir(īy)a fraternities. It is therefore only in the lists preserved in the **Tarka-jvālā* attributed to *Bhavya that we first find a group of schools explicitly designated as Vibhajjavādīn.¹ Among them is a school whose name is restored (from Tibetan) as Tāmraśāṭiya. Scholars have differed as to whether this name refers to one or more of the schools of ancient Sinhalese Buddhism or to a (perhaps related) fraternity of mainland origin. In this article I examine the Greek, Pali and Sanskrit evidence for the usage and meaning of Tambapaṇṇi and related words. I then turn to epigraphic sources which confirm that the ‘Tambapaṇṇakas’ were part of the Theriya tradition and probably linked to the Vibhajjavādīns. In the final part of this article I conclude that a variant form of the name Tambapaṇṇi which would be Sanskritized as *Tāmraśāṭiya or similar has given rise to explanations of the meaning as ‘red-coloured’ or ‘copper-coloured’. This in turn has led either to a new Sanskrit form Tāmraśāṭiya or to a Tibetan rendering which later produced a back-formation to Tāmraśāṭiya in the *Mahāvīyūtpatti*.

The name Taprobane

The earliest occurrence of the name Tambapaṇṇi(ī) in the literature of Ceylon has often been considered to be that in the *Dīpa-vamsa*.² There it is the name of the town founded by Vijaya, understood to have later given its name to the whole kingdom. In fact there is some doubt as to whether it is originally the name of a people whose capital city was named after them or vice versa. Or, it could have been the name of a river later extended to the district and people.

The most securely dated of those early sources, which specify reference to an island, are Greek. Two hexameters attributed to Alexander Lychnus of Ephesus (first century B.C.) summarize earlier Greek knowledge:

*The four-sided island of Taprobane, sea-girt and
beast-nurturing, is filled with keen-scented elephants.*³

This is based upon the lost account of Onesicratus who sailed with Alexander’s fleet from the Indus to the Persian Gulf, since similar statements are attributed to Onesicratus by Strabo in his *Geography* which was completed c. 18 B.C.⁴ Onesicratus almost certainly did not sail southwards; so his account is presumably based upon information which he obtained in Sind in 325 B.C. A more detailed account of Taprobane⁵ was given by the Alexandrian Geographer Eratosthenes at the end of the third century B.C. This too is lost, but favourably cited as a reliable source by Strabo. It is clear that Eratosthenes likewise described an island to the south of

1See Cousins, L. S. (2001) On the Vibhajjavādīns. The Mahimsāsaka, Dhammaguttaka,

Kassapiya and Tambapaṇṇiya branches of the ancient Theriyas. *Buddhist Studies Review*, 18, 131–182.. *Bhavya = Bhāviveka's account is now translated in: Eckel, M. D. (2008) *Bhāviveka and His Buddhist Opponents*. Cambridge, Mass.: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University., pp. 113–126.

2Dīp IX 20; 29–32; cf. Mhv VII 38–41; Lok-d v. 238ff. See below for earlier mentions in canonical texts.

3Lloyd-Jones, H. and Parsons, P. (1983) *Supplementum Hellenisticum*. Berlin/ New York: W.

de Gruyter., item 36 (p. 15) [with thanks to Adrian Hollis]

Stephanus of Byzantium: (ed. Meineke, p. 602)

Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ καὶ Λύχνος:

Νῆσος τετράπλευρος ἀλιστέφανος Ταπροβάνη

θηρονόμος πέπληθεν εὐρρίνων ἐλεφάντων.

Compare also ‘Taprobane, mother of Asiatic elephants’

μητέρα Ταπροβάνην Ασιηγενέων ἐλεφάντων

from the geographical poet Dionysius Periegetes (time of Hadrian), line 593.

4Strabo XV 1, 15 and 43; translated with other sources: Robinson, C. A., Jr (1953) *The History of Alexander the Great*. Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University., p. 154.

5Filliozat derives the form Taprobane from Tamil: Or, we may think of Middle Indic (probably Old Gāndhārī) written *Tabrapaṇi for *Tambrapaṇi <Tāmrapaṇi.

India. Strabo, who also refers to the evidence of seafarers, indicates that it is very certain that Taprobane “is a large island which lies in the open sea to the south of India”.⁶ There can then be no doubt that, at least by the second century B.C. and almost certainly at the end of the fourth, the Greeks understood Taprobane to be a large island. There is no evidence that they knew of it as the name of a river.⁷ The Periplus also mentions Taprobane as an island.⁸

The term Tambapaṇṇi(ī) occurs in several slightly different forms in two of the edicts of the Emperor Asoka Moriya: RE II and XIII.⁹ In the former case it is preceded by mention of the Coḷas, Pāṇḍyas, the ‘Satiyaputa’ and the Keralaputra. I take the last two references to be to the kings who are members of the ‘Satiya’ or Keraḷa clan. Unfortunately, the precise construction of the final mention of ‘Tambapaṇṇiyā’ is debatable and it is not quite clear whether we are referring here in the plural to a people: the Tambapaṇṇiyas or in the singular to a place named Tambapaṇṇi or a king reckoned as ‘the Tambapaṇṇi’.¹⁰

The Pali sources

1. Tambapaṇṇi(ī) as a place-name

Already in the late canonical period, in the *Mahā-niddesa* (Nidd I 155; 415) Tambapaṇṇi(ī) occurs in a long list of places to which a person might go, if out of greed he crosses the sea in a boat in search of wealth. Many, but not all, of the places mentioned here are ports; Taxila at least is inland but might be reached by sailing upriver. Presumably for others a land journey would come after travel by sea. Here it could refer either to Ceylon or to a port on the river Tambraparni or to a country of that name.

Remarkably, Tambapaṇṇi(ī) is rather rare uncompounded in prose works, especially if we exclude split compounds and exegesis giving the resolution of a compound. It does not occur at all in the commentaries and subcommentaries traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla with the single exception of a prose

6Strabo II 1,14: ἡ δὲ Ταπροβάνη πεπίστευται σφόδρα, ὅτι τῆς Ἰνδικῆς πρόκειται πελαγία μεγάλη νῆσος πρὸς νότον. Compare Strabo II 5,14; 5,32.

7Weerakkody has devoted a series of studies to earlier classical references to Ceylon. These

have now been collected in: Weerakkody, D. P. M. (1997) *Taprobanê: ancient Sri Lanka as known to Greeks and Romans*. Turnhout (Belgium): Brepols.. See also: Renou, L. (1925) *La Géographie de Ptolémée: L'Inde. (VII, 1-4)*. Paris: E. Champion.; Schwarz, F. F. (1976) Onesikritos und Megasthenes über den Tambapaṇṇi. *Grazer Beiträge*, 5, 233–263.; Karttunen, K. (1997) *India and the Hellenistic world*. Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society., pp. 338–344. Pre-Alexander sources for India (but not for Ceylon) are discussed in Tola, F. and Dragonetti, C. (1998) India y Grecia antes de Alejandro. *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas*, XXXIV, 353–377..

8Casson, L. (1989) *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: text with introduction, translation, and*

commentary. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. p. 89; 230f. Unfortunately the passage (derived from a unique MS) appears corrupt, but the mention of an island is definite and the name <Ta>probane seems unavoidable.

9Schneider, U. (1978) *Die grossen Felsen-Edikte Aśokas: kritische Ausgabe, Übersetzung und Analyse der Texte*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz., pp. 24& 77.

10Norman, K. R. (1969) Middle Indo-Aryan Studies VII. *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*, XVIII, 225–31., pp. 227–230 and Norman, K. R. (1997–98) Aśoka's Thirteenth Rock Edict. *Indologica Taurinensia*, XXIII–XXIV, 459–484., p. 474f.

version of a story taken from the *Dīpa-vamsa*.¹¹ There are three passages in later works: *Nalāṭadhātuvamsa*, Ras and Sīh, all three probably referring to Ceylon.¹² To this can be added a passage in Sah and Ras referring to the Tambapañni cemetery.¹³

Even in verse (excluding split compounds) it is relatively unusual and probably due to the requirements of verse composition. This suggests that in the early period there was some awareness of Tambapañni as different from the island of that name. This is explicit in the two *vamsa* works: here we meet the town of Tambapañni, constructed by Prince Vijaya.¹⁴ To be precise, the more detailed (but much later) *Mahāvamsa* (VI 47) account states that Vijaya landed in Laṅkā in Tambapañni-dīpa or °desa.¹⁵ After the episode of the destruction of the *yakkhas*, we are told that he spent some days in the *yakkha* city and then went from there to Tambapañni. He constructed the town of Tambapañni and lived in it.¹⁶ Then we are told the origin of the name: when Vijaya's party landed, they sat down, resting their hands on the ground. Their hands were reddened by the dust and so that region got the name of 'Redhand' (*tamba-pāṇi*); the island was subsequently named after that.¹⁷

The location of the city is not indicated. It is not Anurādhapura, since the founding of that is mentioned subsequently. Later we are told that Vijaya reigned in the city of Tambapañni for 38 years, ruling over the whole of Laṅkā. In a later chapter (XIV 35) Tambapañni and Laṅkā are explicitly identified; so there can be little doubt that for Mahānāma the two are identical. Whether that was so for his sources or at an earlier period is another matter.

In the earlier *Dīpa-vamsa* there are a number of occasions where Tambapañni appears (in verse) as a synonym for Laṅkā or for the island, but we can take most of these as simply short for Tambapañni-dīpa.¹⁸ Probably, after the fifth century A.D., if not earlier, the word by itself in verse passages always stands for the island.¹⁹ More significantly, we learn that "Tambapañni was the capital city of/in that most fair isle. Vijaya dwelt there and

11Sp I 75; cf. Thūp 45.

12NDāṭh (C°) 18 VRI: reign of Kākavaṇṇatissa; Ras (C°1961) 99: Anurādhapura; Sīh

(E°1980) 5: opposed to Jambudīpa.

13Sah (C°1959) 97f.; Ras (C°1961) 193f.

14Dīp IX 28ff.; Mhv VII 39ff.

15Mhv VI 47. Geiger reads: *Tambapañni-dese* with many of his Mss, but his Sinhalese Mss

(and most Sinhalese editions) had *Tambapañni-dīpe*. Later we are told that 'Vijaya' reigned in Tambapañni-nagara: Mhv VII 74. In both cases the Burmese Mss and editions often read *Tampapañni-*. Note that Mhv VI 47 and VII 74 are both final verses of the chapter (in a different metre) and therefore probably not taken directly from an earlier source.

16Mhv VII 38cd–39

katipāhaṃ vasitv'ettha, Tambapañniṃ upāgami ||
māpayitvā Tampapañni-nagaraṃ, Vijayo tahiṃ
vasi yakkhiniyā saddhiṃ, amacca-parivārito ||

38cd is omitted in some editions.

Turnour (E° 1837) had:

Nikkamma yakkha-nagarā katipāh'-accayena so
Tambapañni-'vhaṃ katvā nagaraṃ, tattha saṃvasi.

17The same folk etymology: Dīp IX 28ff; Lok-d vv. 238ff. Since Vijaya and company are

depicted as originally ruffians in the chronicles, this could have had the meaning 'red-handed' or 'bloody-handed'. The story of the queen of king Tamba who was carried off by a *supaṇṇa* to Sedumadīpa (identified by the commentary as Nāgadīpa) may at some point in its history have been another folk etymology for Tambadīpa: J III 187ff.

18Dīp II 2f.; IX 20; XVI 41 (°ike); XVII 5; cf. XV 73 . This is less clear when the reference

may be to the kingdom: IX 5; 9; 14; 37; XII 23; 41; XVII 79; vI (Ce) to 82; 87; XX 30; XXII 15; 61. Some of these may preserve memory of an earlier time when the city or kingdom were distinct from the island.

exercised sovereignty.”²⁰ Similarly we are told that “Vijaya constructed the city of Tambapaṇṇi with fortifications all around on the delightful shore of the river to/in the south.”²¹ This is in itself compatible with a location in Ceylon and that must be the intent of the author of the *Dīpa-vamsa*. Here as often, however, he cites his sources with little editing and we may suspect rather an original location on the south bank of the river Tambraparni.

2. *Tambapaṇṇi-dīpa* as a name for the island of Ceylon

Possibly the first occurrence in Pali of ‘Tambapaṇṇi-dīpa’ is in the *uddāna* to a section of the *Culla-vagga*. This conclusion must be an addition to the text, made either in Ceylon or, less likely, in some area of the mainland under Sinhalese Buddhist influence. I would be inclined to render it simply:

This is the recitation for the preservation of the saddhamma of the Mahāvihāravāsin teachers who are Vibhajjavādins and the bringers of faith to the island of Ceylon.

Since there is no commentary on these two lines, there is no way of being sure of the date, but it seems unlikely to be much after Buddhaghosa at the latest and it could be somewhat earlier. The mention of *dīpa* may be either to distinguish the name of the whole island from that of similarly named districts in Ceylon and elsewhere or to distinguish references to the Tambapaṇṇi school from references to the island.

In the extant *aṭṭhakathā* works *Tambapaṇṇi-dīpa* is the normal expression for the island of Ceylon.²² This unvarying use of °*dīpa*- could possibly be because Buddhaghosa was (South) Indian and therefore more aware of the existence of the river. Remarkably, the word *Tambapaṇṇi* is never found in any form in the commentaries of Dhammapāla and is not very common in the *ṭīkā*s attributed to him.²³ In any case, it seems certain that the expression *Tambapaṇṇi-dīpa* for the island of Ceylon was already frequent in the early pre-Buddhaghosa *aṭṭhakathā* works. Note that *Laṅkā-* is fairly rare in works earlier than the *Mahāvamsa* (other than the *Dīpa-vamsa*).²⁴

Sanskrit sources

According to Edgerton *Tāmra-dvīpa* is an earlier name for Ceylon, but this is probably not correct. He cites it only from versions of the story of the merchant *Siṃhala* found in the *Divyāvadāna* and *Kāraṇḍavyūha*.²⁵ As

19e.g. NDāth (C^e?) 10; Ras (C^e?) 101; Sīh (C^e?) 3; 8; 84; 99; 119; 125; 128. Sīh usually has

Tambapaṇṇi(ya)-dīpa in prose and *Tambapaṇṇi* or a split compound in verse.

20Dīp IX 30–31: *Nāma-dheyyaṃ tadā āsi; Tambapaṇṇī ti taṃ ahTM.*

Paṭhamaṃ nagaraṃ Tambapaṇṇi [Laṅkā-]dīpa-var’-uttame.

Vijayo tahiṃ vasanto issariyaṃ anusāsi so.

(31b is hypermetric: either *Laṅkā* or *dīpa* must be omitted)

21

Dīp IX 34: *Tambapaṇṇi dakkhiṇato nadī-tīre var’-uttame*

Vijayena māpitaṃ nagaraṃ samantā-puta-bhedanaṃ.

Or, *puta-bhedana* = ‘wharf’ (Allchin) ?

22

My software gives a count of 67 occurrences in the *aṭṭhakathā* works on the VRI CD (version 3).

23

The absence also of *Sīhaḷa-* in the *aṭṭhakathā* of Dhammapāla (with only one occurrence of *Laṅkā*) shows clearly that he is not drawing on Sinhalese traditions very much in these works.

24

Sv II 611; Spk III 143; Vibh-a 444 (*ti-yojana-satike*); Sp I 70; 92–94; VII 1415; It-a II 154.

25

Schlingloff has shown, they are dependent on the version of the legend found in the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins*, which is itself influenced by the story of Vijaya; so this is not a particularly early form of the name of the island and must be derived from Tāmraparṇī or something similar.²⁶

Tāmraparṇa or Tāmravarṇa is found in a list of the nine divisions of Bhārata-varṣa in a number of *Purāṇas*, but there is no way of determining whether this is some kind of reference to the island of Ceylon, to a territory in South India or both.²⁷ This is possibly related to a geographical description in the *Mahābhārata* which refers to an area in the shape of a hare whose two ears are Nāgadvīpa and Kaśyapadvīpa.²⁸ Ceylon is, of course, shaped like the silhouette of a upright, seated hare and the Jaffna peninsular with its nearest island are already named as Nāgadīpa²⁹ and Kāradīpa (modern Kāratīvu) in the commentary to the *Akitti-jātaka*.³⁰ Tāmraparṇī³¹ is also found as the name of a river in Tamilnad (near the latitude of Anurādhapura) i.e. the modern Tambraparṇi. Another standard list in the *Purāṇas* gives it in an account of rivers in different areas as one of the rivers flowing from Mt Malaya.³² Still other passages include it as one of various *tīrthas* or simply as a river;³³ so too in the *Mahābhārata*.³⁴ The account of Sahadeva's *digvijaya* in the *Mahābhārata* mentions the *dvīpa* called *tāmra*.³⁵ Similarly, Kālidāsa depicts the Pāṇḍya princes as bowing down to Raghu (on his victorious

Accad. delle Scienze di Torino, LVIII, 605–630., p. 617 etc. (BHSD s.v. Tāmradvīpa(ka)).
26

Schlingloff, D. (1987) *Studies in the Ajanta paintings: identifications and interpretations*. Delhi: Ajanta Publications., pp. 256–264 (bibliography). The earliest version of the story of Siṃhala (illustrated in 29 scenes in Ajaṅṭā cave XVII) is found in the *Vālāhassa-jātaka*: J II 127–130. Two versions of different date are found in the *Mahāvastu*: Mvu III 67–76; 286–99.
27

e.g. Agni-p 118.4; Brahma-p (Screiner/Söhnen) 19.6f.; 27.15; Brahmāṇḍa-p II 16.9; Kūrma-p (A.S. Gupta) I 45.23; Liṅga-p I 52.27; Matsya-p 114.8; Mārkaṇḍeya-p LVII 7; Varāha-p (A.S. Gupta) 85 1.3; Vāyu-p I 45.79; Viṣṇu-p (Pathak) II 3.6; (some refs from trsl.). Compare also: Br̥hatS XIV 11–16 which assigns various countries, mostly in South Asia, to the *nakṣatras* in groups of three (i.e. a central region and eight directions). The list for the south begins with Lankā, ends with Tāmraparṇī (*sa-Tāmraparṇīti vijñeyāḥ*) and mentions the Āryakas and Siṃhalas (or Āryaka-Siṃhala) *en route*. Since it includes various places, peoples, countries, mountains, perhaps rivers, as well as various locations mentioned in mythic contexts from religious literature, it is doubtful whether anything can be gained from this eclectic passage.

28

Mbh 6.7.52f. (ed. Belvalkar, 1947):

*Yāṃ tu p̥rcchasi mā rājan divyām etāṃ śaśākṛtim,
pārśve śaśasya dve varṣe ubhaye dakṣiṇottare;
karṇau tu Nāgadvīpaṃ ca Kaśyapadvīpaṃ eva ca
Tāmravarṇaḥ śīro rājañ śrīmān Malaya-parvataḥ
etad dviṭīyaṃ dvīpasya dṛśyate śaśa-saṃsthitam.*

vl. *Kāśyapadvīpaṃ*; vll. *Tāmraparṇa-* and *Tāmraparṇī-*; *śīlo*.

Trsl. (Roy 1887): ‘mountains of Malaya ... having rocks like plates of copper’.

29

There is in fact some discussion as to whether the name Nāgadīpa applied to the Jaffna peninsular or to a nearby island or both: Geiger, W. (1960) *Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz., p. 8. Of course, the shoreline may not have been the same in the past.

30

Ja IV 238 = Cp-a 22: *Nāgadīpa-saṃīpe Kāradīpe otari*. References to Nāgadīpa are numerous in Pali works; see in particular: Vibh-a 433 = Sv III 899 = Ps IV 117 = Mp I 91; SpK II 230; Mp I 446; Vibh-mṭ (B^c) 211: (*Atha vā udake ti Nāgadīpaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ; thale ti Jambudīpaṃ*).

31

Mss quite often read *Tāmravarṇ-*, but this is generally rejected by editors.

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journey) and giving him choice pearls “at the mouth of the Tāmraparṇī.”³⁶ Likewise, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* we meet the description of the journey which the monkeys must make in search of the lost Sītā. After the river Kāverī and Mt Malaya they must cross the crocodile-haunted river Tāmraparṇī.³⁷ The rushing of the river to the sea is compared to a young girl in love rushing to (immersed in) her lover. The river is described as hidden by heavenly woods of sandal trees and decorated with islands.³⁸ The mention of islands is a normal epithet for rivers and may have no special significance here. It certainly cannot give any support to the idea that there could be a Tāmraparṇī-dvīpa other than Ceylon.

The dating of these sources is difficult, since material could easily have been added at various points. Suffice it to say that the geographical division into the nine parts of Bhāratavarṣa in Mbh and the *Purāṇas* adds nothing in any case nor does the mention of the pearls in the *Arthaśāstra*. From Kālidāsa we can be confident that a river in the far south named Tāmraparṇī was recognized by the middle of the first millennium A.D. Presumably Kālidāsa’s source was the kind of material we find in the *Purāṇas* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, but there seems no way of being confident of a B.C. date for this.³⁹ That said, it is difficult to see why it should not be old. The name of a river is only likely to change radically when speakers of a new language come into an area and, even then, it is perhaps more likely that its form would change than that a completely new name would be given. But examples

32

e.g. Bhāgavata-p V 19.18; X 79.16; Brahma-p (Screiner/Söhnen) 19.13; Brahmāṇḍa-p II 16.36; Kūrma-p (A.S. Gupta) I 45.36; Matsya-p 114.30; Mārkaṇḍeya-p LVII 28; Śiva-p X(?) 18.12; Varāha-p (A.S. Gupta) 85 1.11; Vāyu-p I 45.105; Viṣṇu-p (Pathak) II 3.13; cf. also Garu

a-p I 55.10; Vāmana-p (A.S. Gupta) 13.32 (some refs from trsl.).

33

e.g. Bhāgavata-p IV 28.35; XI 5.39; Brahmāṇḍa-p III 13.24f.; IV 33.52; Kūrma-p (A.S. Gupta) II 36.21f.; Matsya-p 22.49; Nārada-p I 6.30; Nīlamata-p (V.Kumari) v.95; Śiva-p II 12.33; II 15.4; Vāyu-p 77.24f. (cf. Rām); Viṣṇu-p (Pathak) II . To these may be added: Mārkaṇḍeya-p LVIII 27–29, refers to both Siṃhalas and Tambapaṇṇis; Liṅga-p I 52.27 (Tāmra-dvīpa); Vāyu-p I 38. 8 & 18 mentions a Tāmra-varṇa mountain and lake. (Some refs from trsl.)

34

Mbh 3.86.11: *Tāmraparṇīṃ tu Kaunteya kīrtayisyāmi; tām śṛṇu.*

35

Mbh 2.28.46: *dvīpaṃ tāmrahvayaṃ.*

36

Raghuvamśa IV 50:

*Tāmraparṇī-sametasya muktā-sāraṃ mahodadheḥ |
te nipatyā dadus tasmai yaśaḥ svam iva saṃcitam ||*

37

Rām 4.40.17cd–18:

*Tāmraparṇīṃ grāha-juṣṭāṃ tariṣyatha mahānadīm.
Sā candana-vanair divyaiḥ pracchannā dvīpa-śālinī
kānteva yuvatīḥ kāntaṃ samudram avagāhate.*

Manuscripts of the northern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* have variants which eliminate Tāmraparṇī. John Brockington (personal communication) tentatively suggests that these may be secondary readings.

38

Compare: Mbh 1.64.24: *dvīpavatyā ... Gaṅgayā<ā>*. The mention of sandal may be due to the Tāmraparṇī having its source in the Malaya, the proverbial sandal mountain.

39

cf. Brockington, J. L. (1998) *The Sanskrit epics*. Leiden: Brill., pp. 199; 388f.

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of both occurrences could easily be cited.

Some attempt has been made to argue that the term *dvīpa* could refer to an area at the mouth of the river Tāmraparṇī. This is not in itself impossible — the word *dvīpa/dvīpa* certainly covers a range of possibilities, including peninsulas as well as islands of every size from a tiny islet to a continent and there is no reason why it could not apply to a tongue of land between two rivers (“the modern doab”). However, the fact remains that there is no actual case found in texts or epigraphs where the name Tāmraparṇī-dvīpa is applied to somewhere other than the island of Ceylon. So this remains a mere conjecture.

Significance is sometimes attached to mentions of pearls in connexion with Taprobane. Already in the *Arthaśāstra* we meet a type of pearl named *Tāmraparṇika* (in a list of articles to be received into the treasury).⁴⁰ But since there were pearl fisheries both at the mouth of the river and on the shores of the island, this probably does not add anything either way.⁴¹

All our data would in fact seem to be compatible with the possibility that the incoming speakers of a North Indian language, traditionally led by Prince Vijaya, established their kingdom on both sides of the Gulf of Mannar.⁴² There could have been a pre-existing people centred on the river Tambraparni in the extreme south of Tamilnadu.⁴³ (At a later date, according to La Vallée Poussin, Korkai/Kolkai at the mouth of the river Tambraparni was the seaport for the Pāṇḍya kingdom.⁴⁴) In that case both their capital city and the name of the people could have been some ancestral form of Tambapaṇṇi. They might already have extended their territories into northern Ceylon.⁴⁵ Or, the creation of a dominion spanning the Gulf could have been the work of ‘Vijaya’

40

Arthaśāstra (ed. R.P. Kangle) p. 41 (Trsl. p. 111): *Tāmra-parṇikam pāṇḍyāvātām pāśikiyam kauleyam caurṇeyam māhendram kārdamikam srautasīyam hrādīyam haimām ca mauktikam*. Varāhamihira (BṛhatS LXXXI 2) mentions eight kinds of pearls of which the first is Siṃhala- and the fourth Tāmraparṇi-. The Periplus also identifies both the island of Taprobane and an unnamed place along the mainland coast as sources of pearls. The Periplus is now known to date from the mid first century A.D. See Casson 1989 p. 6. An inscription at Bodhgayā apparently refers to Ceylon as Āmra-dvīpa: CII, III, p. 274ff. Megasthenes is also cited (by Strabo and Pliny) as mentioning Taprobane as a source of pearls.

41

For Ceylon, note that Devānaṃpiya Tissa sent gifts of pearls from the seashore to Asoka: Dīp XI 18ff.; Mhv XI 14; Vijaya gave ‘gifts’ of pearls and gems to the Pāṇḍya king in order to obtain wives for himself and his followers: Mhv VII 49; 73.

42

A capital city on the south bank at the mouth of the Tambraparni would be somewhat over 150 miles from Anurādhapura. More significantly, since the speakers of proto-Sinhalese almost certainly arrived by sea, it would as a port have quick access to all the coastlands on the island of Ceylon — at favourable times of year more rapid access than would be possible from Anurādhapura.

43

These might have been Dravidian speakers. Or, a mixture of Dravidian speakers and those using language(s) from some other non-Indo-European language group. We can be confident that linguistic variety would have been greater at an earlier date. In Europe today only very few non-Indo-European languages are found (e.g. Basque and some Finno-Ugrian languages) and some of those are recent arrivals, e.g. Magyar and Turkish. Many more were extant in classical times. The earlier pattern was certainly one of distinct and not obviously related languages in many relatively small areas. This was still the case in many parts of the world until recently.

44

La Vallée Poussin, L. d. (1935) *Dynasties et histoire de l'Inde depuis Kaniṣka jusqu'aux invasions musulmanes*. Paris: E. de Boccard., p. 252.

45

It is impossible to say whether the Pāṇḍyas were originally in this area, subsequently being pushed back into the hinterland by ‘Vijaya’ and his followers. If that were so, they would have recovered a part or all of their earlier territories at a later date.

and his successors. In either case the name of the kingdom would derive from the capital city, subsequently extended to the ruler(s) and people.

If so, the reference in Asoka's inscriptions may in fact be to a kingdom or people which included both the southernmost part of Tamilnadu and all or part of the island of Ceylon.⁴⁶ It is at any rate unlikely that there was any significant polity further south than 'Taprobane' at an accessible location or Asoka would certainly have mentioned it. Given the explicit mentions in the chronicles of clear links between Asoka and Devānampiya Tissa, it is very difficult to believe that reference is not being made to that connexion. It is in any case highly probable that the Mauryan emperors would have had a strong relationship with speakers of a mutually-intelligible language in the south.

After a detailed discussion of this issue B.M. Barua concluded:

*From these facts one cannot but be led to think that Tāmrāparṇī ... , which was originally a riverine region in the southernmost part of South India below the Pāṇḍya territory, came to denote afterwards, probably in about the Mauryan time, also the north-western sea-coast region of Ceylon between the Nāgadīpa and the river Kalyāṇī, and ultimately the island of Ceylon.*⁴⁷

This conclusion may well be essentially correct, but the most likely time for an extension of the territory would be the time of the arrival of speakers of a North Indian dialect. While it is likely that that corresponds to some kind of military rule, especially given the violent nature ascribed to Vijaya and his followers in their youth, it remains also possible that the language spread out from trading centres. (In either case, we can be confident that the present-day inhabitants of both Ceylon and South India are as much descended from the people who were in the area before the arrival of either Indo-Aryan or Dravidian speakers as they are both descended from both groups of newcomer.)

That the people on both sides of the gulf of Mannar were closely related in Mauryan times is to some extent corroborated by the archaeological finds from Pomparippu (in Ceylon near the coast opposite the Tambaparni estuary). These have shown strong resemblances between urn burials in that area and those from Adichanallūr in South India (third century B.C.).⁴⁸ It may also be noted that the archaeological evidence now gives strong support for a substantial rebuilding of Anurādhapura in the fourth century B.C. which may well correspond with the location of the monarchy at that site in the reign of Paṇḍukābhaya, as recorded in the chronicles. An earlier capital in South India would obviously not appear in the Ceylon archaeological record.

Some historians have argued on the basis of inscriptions from the second and first centuries B.C. that the rulers mentioned in the chronicles rarely controlled the whole island and some were ruling simultaneously in different areas.⁴⁹ This is may be the case at that time, but it is unlikely to have been the pattern in the third and fourth

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Subsequently, warfare between the Sinhalese rulers and incoming and/or returning Dravidian speakers will have pushed the Sinhalese back. Or, since the island was under 'Damiḷa' rule for significant periods of the second and first centuries B.C., we can also envisage successful revolts by Sinhalese nobles. In any case, the historical situation was undoubtedly more complex than our sources permit us to reconstruct.

47

Barua, B. M. (1946) *Asoka and his inscriptions. Written in Commemoration of the Fifty-fifth birth-day of Dr. B. C. Law*. Calcutta: New Age Publishers., p. 115.

48

Ragupathy, P. (1987) *Early settlements in Jaffna: an archaeological survey*. Madras.; Boisselier, J. (1979) *Ceylon: Sri Lanka*. Geneva: Nagel., p. 91; Coningham, R. A. E. and Allchin, F. R. (1995) The rise of cities in Sri Lanka. In Allchin, F. R. (Ed.), *The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia. The Emergence of Cities and States*. pp. 152–183. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., p.164; 170ff.; Coningham, R. and Allchin, F. R. (1999) *Anuradhapura: the British-Sri Lankan excavations at Anuradhapura Salagha Watta 2*. Oxford: Archaeopress..

49

Ray, H. C. and Paranavitana, S. (1959) *University of Ceylon History of Ceylon. Vol. I From the Earliest Times to 1505. Part I Up to the End of the Anurādhapura Period*. Colombo: Ceylon University Press., pp. 98–105 (L.S.Perera). See also Coningham, R. A. E. (1995) Monks, caves and kings: a reassessment of the nature of early Buddhism in Sri Lanka. *World Archaeology*, 27, 222–42.. Some of this seems questionable. Use of the title *rāja* does not in itself indicate any kind of kingly status; indeed it has long been known that this is a title which does not necessarily entail any kind of sovereignty. Hence, for example, Fleet argued

centuries, a period when we would not expect to have inscriptional evidence.⁵⁰ We might also expect a more equal military situation between Dravidian and Sinhala speakers after the period of widespread trade relations under the Mauryas.

None of this tells us what language the name is derived from. If it comes from a pre-existent city, people or river, then it would not be likely to be a word of Indo-Aryan origin. Even if the prior inhabitants of the area were Dravidian speakers, that does not guarantee a Dravidian origin. Many names of rivers in the Tamil country are supposed to be from a prior linguistic substratum; so that might be the case here. On the other hand, the name might have been bestowed by ‘Vijaya’ and/or his followers, in which case it would have been in an early form of Middle Indian.

The inscriptional evidence

Post-Asokan inscriptional evidence for the use of the terms Tambapaṇṇi and Tambapaṇṇaka is limited but important. In 1955–56, during the excavation of a monastic site at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, a stone slab was discovered near the entrance to the *stūpa*.⁵¹ The slab contained a third century A.D. inscription in a type of Pali (underneath an incised pair of feet with a *bodhi* tree in railing to one side), referring “to the Theriya teachers, followers of the Vibhajjavāda, bringers of faith to the Kashmir, Gandhāra, Bactrian⁵² and Vanavāsa peoples and to ‘Tambapaṇṇi-dipa’, dwellers in the Mahāvihāra”.⁵³

It is possible that Mahāvihāravāsīn here refers to the Mahāvihāravāsīns as the specific school centred on the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura. However, this has been doubted by some scholars because there are references to a *mahāvihāra* at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in other inscriptions. In fact, referring just to the Pali literature, there are a great many references to various *mahāvihāra* in Ceylon and we do sometimes find mention of named individuals dwelling in such and such a *mahāvihāra*. Other examples are found in Sanskrit texts and inscriptions. But all references to Mahāvihāravāsīns in isolation seem to designate the school of the Great Monastery in Anurādhapura and I do not believe that the case can be any different here — in a sentence referring specifically to *nikāya* allegiance.

As Sircar and Lahiri point out, this inscription is closely related to another Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscription, an inscription which states that the female lay disciple (*uvāsikā*) Bodhisiri constructed a *cetiya* hall in the Cula-Dhammagiri-vihāra (Cūḷa-dhamma-giri-vihāra) in the eastern part of Vijayapura at Siri-pavata (Śrī-parvata), dedicated to certain *ācāriyas* (sic).⁵⁴ Some characters which probably specify more about these teachers are

against its translation by ‘king’: JBBRAS XVI p. 114n. Only the title *devānampriya* seems to definitely be applied to what we would call a king; perhaps sometimes *mahārāja*. So local princes calling themselves *rāja* may simply be vassals; no doubt in practice the degree of their independence depended upon the current strength of the centre.

50

It is worth noting that an analogous partial break up of earlier large-scale states is evidenced for the mainland of the subcontinent and for parts of Hellenistic Asia at the same date.

51

Sircar, D. C. and Lahiri, A. N. (1960) No. 46 — Footprint Slab Inscription from Nagarjunikonda. *Epigraphia Indica*, XXXIII, 247–50..

52

The term *yavana* can refer to Greek populations remaining in the North-West or elsewhere from the period of the Indo-Greek kings or before. More probably in this context it refers to the people of the rest of Kuṣāṇa territories in the North-West i.e. not Kashmir or Gandhāra. This approximates to the area of the old Bactrian Greek kingdom prior to its expansion into Gandhāra.

53

‘*ācariyaṇaṃ Theriyaṇaṃ Vibhaja-vādānaṃ Kasmira-Gaṃdhāra-Yavana-Vanavāsa-Tambapaṇṇi-dipa-pasādakanāṃ Mahāvihāravāsīnaṃ*’. If it is assumed that early Pali was written without double consonants, long vowels and *anusvāra*, this inscription as a whole would represent a transitional stage to standard Pali orthography. See Norman, K. R. (1992) The Development of writing in India and its effect upon the Pāli Canon. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens*, XXXVI, 239–249., especially p. 247f. Norman assumes that the standard orthography was already adopted when the Canon as a whole was written down in the first century B.C., but I would be inclined to suspect that it came later.

missing, but we are then told that they brought faith to Taṃbapaṇṇi-dīpa and to eleven other places, including the three other places mentioned in the inscription discussed above. Then we learn that these teachers are ‘*Theriyānaṃ Taṃbapa<ṃ>nakānaṃ*’ i.e. Theravādins of the Taṃbapaṇṇaka school.

Alongside this can be placed a short inscription from Bodhgayā which refers to the donation of Bodhirakkhita, the Taṃbapaṇṇaka.⁵⁵ This has usually been taken to refer simply to the island i.e. ‘Bodhirakkhita, the inhabitant of Ceylon’. However, that interpretation became established before the discovery of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa inscription. In fact, it seems more likely that it has the same meaning at Bodhgayā as it does there, especially since the name ‘Bodhirakkhita’ sounds like the name of a monk. So I would incline to take it as “<this is the> donation of Bodhirakkhita, of the Taṃbapaṇṇaka school.”

Before turning to the central question of who these Taṃbapaṇṇakas are, it is important to note that Bodhisiri mentions in her inscription that she had previously made donations at eleven other monasteries.⁵⁶ One of these is a Great Monastery (Mahāvihāra). Significantly, another is referred to as the Sinhalese monastery (Sihaḷa-vihāra); so the presence of Sinhalese monks in Andhra in the reign of Mātharīputa or earlier cannot be disputed. The reference to a ‘Sinhalese monastery’, presumably the one with the shorter inscription discussed above, would seem to imply that in the present case the Taṃbapaṇṇakas are not Sinhalese. This may be why they do not refer to themselves as Mahāvihāravāsins.

A charter on five copper plates from the region of modern Andhra Pradesh records the establishment of a monastery and other donations at Guṇapāsapura, concluding with the statement that the donative order was made by the *rājan* Harivarman for the Tāmbraṇṇī(?)ya)s.⁵⁷ Harivarman was the son of the Viṣṇukuṇḍi vassal, king Pṛthivīśrīmūla and so must date from the late sixth century.

***Taṃbapaṇṇī(ī)ya/°ika* in Pali works**

Much earlier than the *Dīpa-vaṃsa*, ‘Taṃbapaṇṇiyā’ in the plural occurs in the *Parivāra* some thirteen times. There it is a name for the monks of the island.⁵⁸ For the present purpose, what is of interest is the later occurrence of *Taṃbapaṇṇiya* in the *niḡamanas* of several texts. So Dhammasiri, the author of *Khuddas*, is described as *Taṃbapaṇṇiya-ketu*. This could either be referring to him as Sinhalese or as a member of the *Taṃbapaṇṇiya* school. Clearer, perhaps, is the reference to Buddhadatta as *Taṃbapaṇṇiya* in the *niḡamanas* to Utt-vn and Vin-vn. Since Buddhadatta is generally considered to have been South Indian and certainly wrote there, this poses a problem. The author of Vin-vn-pt in the thirteenth century is aware of this and comments that *Taṃbapaṇṇiya* means either ‘born in *Taṃbapaṇṇī*’ or ‘known there’ or ‘come from there’. More probably, these references do indeed evidence a period when the name was current for the Sinhalese school.⁵⁹

54

EI XX 22f.

55

Bodhirakkhitasā Tabapanakasa dānaṃ. See: Cunningham, S. A. (1892) *Mahābodhi*. London., p. 16. A sealing from Rajbadidanga dating to the seventh or eighth centuries A.D. was read by B.N. Mukherjee as referring to Tamavanika-bhikṣunam: Das, S. R. (1973) An Inscribed Terracotta Seal from Rajbadidanga. *Indian History Congress, Proceedings of the 34th Session*, 45–49..

56

Strictly speaking, only the first two and the last are specifically stated to be monasteries, but Mahā-dhammagiri must in fact be a monastery, since Cūḷa-dhammagiri is referred to as a *vihāra*; so the names are simply shorthand and probably all eleven are in fact monasteries.

57

<U>*ddiśya Tāmbraṇṇīyāt(yān) śāsana<ṃ> Harivarmanā rājñā kṛta. Iha stheyād idam ā candra-tāraḱaṃ(kam)*. Ramesan, N. (1962) *Copper Plate Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh Government Museum Hyderabad (Vol. I)*. Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh., pp. 241–248; plates XIV (a–c); corrected by Sankaranarayanan, S. (1977) *The Viṣṇukuṇḍis and their Times. (An Epigraphical Study)*. Delhi: Agam Prakashan., pp. 95; 185–187.

58

Vin V 3 etc.: *Vinayaṃ te vācayimṣu, Piṭakaṃ Taṃbapaṇṇiyā*. The exact number of times this usage occurs varies with the editions and manuscripts, depending on how far the repetitions are expanded. The *ṭīkās* take *Taṃbapaṇṇiyā* as locative, but it is certainly nominative plural.

Tamba&Tāmr6

Tuesday, May 18, 2010

L.S. Cousins

It is likely that the name *Tambapaṇṇiya* originally referred simply to monks living in the kingdom of Taprobane. Subsequently, around the second or third centuries A.D., when missionaries went out from there into South India (and perhaps South-East Asia) they would naturally be referred to as *Tambapaṇṇiyas*. Then by extension the name *Tambapaṇṇiya* would be adopted by their disciples and so a monastic fraternity known by that name would come into being on the mainland. Later this name (like Vibhajjavādin) tended to go out of use and was gradually replaced by Theriya and Theravādin (no longer used by most other non-Mahāsamghika schools) or by Mahāvihāravāsin, etc.

As we have seen, Tambapaṇṇi is given a folk etymology which depends on the similarity to *tamba-pāṇi* ‘copper hand’ or ‘red-handed’.⁶⁰ Since both double consonants and long vowels (including *anusvāra*) were not written in earlier Brahmī orthography, the written form **tabapaṇi* could render either *tambapaṇṇi* or *tamba-pāṇi*. Such origin stories for the names of towns are notoriously unhistorical, but it does indicate clearly that the Pali is derived from a Sinhala Prakrit form written as **ta[m]bapaṇi* or **ta[m]bavaṇi*. If this is a compound in which the first component is equivalent to Sanskrit *tāmra-*, then the second member could in principle be derived from various Sanskrit forms, e.g. *varṇya* or *parṇya* or *pāṇi*. Any of these is possible and more than one explanation may well have been current. Quite possibly a different folk etymology was adopted in the Abhayagiri-vihāra or elsewhere.

In later Sinhalese a number of forms are current. Sinhalese dictionaries give various contracted forms, such as: *tamvānna(ā)*, *tammānna* and even *tammen* and *tam^hben(-div)*. It is not clear if all of these have a Sanskritic origin. In any case, we might suppose that the normal form was at some point similar to **tambavaṇṇa-* and/or **tambavaṇṇi-*, since intervocalic -p- early became -v- in Sinhalese Prakrit.⁶¹ In most Middle Indic dialects -p- likewise becomes -v-. In effect, *tāmra-varṇa-* and *tāmra-parṇa-* would become homonyms both in Ceylon itself and in at least some areas of mainland India.

Tambapaṇṇi(ī)(ya) and Tāmraśāṭiya as the name of a school

Most of the early information on the Buddhist schools is contained in versions of the Sarvāstivādin list produced by **Vasumitra*. Probably because this was written in the North-West, it shows no awareness of the Ceylon school. So it is only in the earliest extant accounts independent of Vasumitra that an equivalent school to the Tambapaṇṇiyas is mentioned. This is found in the writings attributed to **Bhavya* (preserved only in Tibetan). In fact **Bhavya* gives three versions, but one is derived from Vasumitra. Both of the other two (usually considered to come from Mahāsamghika and Pudgalavādin sources) give a list of four Vibhajjavādin schools, the first of which is the Mahīśāsakas. The order of the other three in **Bhavya*’s lists varies, but they are otherwise the same: **Dharmaguptaka*, **Kāśyapīya* and **Tāmraśāṭiya*. It is the last of these with which we are mainly concerned at this point.

There are a number of references, mostly preserved in Tibetan, to a school whose name has been restored as Tāmraśāṭiya. In fact, however, the name Tāmraśāṭiya is found in Sanskrit only in the ninth century *Mahāvīyutpatti*. There has been some debate among scholars as to whether the form there is in fact authentic or an erroneous back-formation from the Tibetan.⁶² The word Tāmraśāṭiya corresponds (Skilling) to Tibetan *Gos dmar (ba’i) sde (pa)* or *Gos dmar can gyi sde* (Skilling = ‘red-clothed’ or ‘copper-clothed’). This is the standard Tibetan translation used in a dozen cases from 800 A.D. onwards. The Sanskrit form Tāmrapaṇṇiya is twice found in the *Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā*, extant only in two later Mss, but the (earlier) Tibetan translation is as above. The Sanskrit form Tāmravarṇīya is found in the extant Ms dating from c. 1100 of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-vṛtti* and was translated into Tibetan in the eleventh century as: *btsun pa zaṅs mdog* (Skilling = ‘copper’; ‘colour’). La Vallée Poussin proposed emending the Chinese of the

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It would have been most current before the separation of the Abhayagiri school from the Mahāvihāravāsin tradition, which I take to have probably happened in the third century A.D. in the reign of Mahāseṇa.

60

Geiger (Mhv Trsl. p. 58 n.2): a “play on the word *tamba-pāṇi*, red hand”.

61

Geiger, W. (1938) *A grammar of the Sinhalese language*. Colombo: The Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)., §41: “internal p was already softened to v in inscriptions of the 2nd and 3rd c. A.D.”. Note also *tam^hbavan < tāmra-varṇa*: Geiger, W. (1941) *An etymological glossary of the Sinhalese language*. Colombo: Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)., p. 61.

62

See Skilling, P. (1993) Theravādin Literature in Tibetan translation. *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, XIX, 69–201. which gives an important survey of the data.

Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa to an equivalent of Tāmraparṇīya.⁶³ It also occurs in the Chinese translation of *Bhavya's **Karatalaratna* = Taisho 1578, 274b24, given by Paul Harrison (Skilling p. 160) as *t'ung-hsieh-pu-shih* "the masters of the *t'ung-hsieh* school" with *t'ung* meaning copper or bronze, *hsieh* ore or ring. (Could this last take *varṇa*- in the sense of pigment ?)

Although originally a Middle Indian variation equivalent to the Pali *tambapaṇṇīya*, **tambavaṇṇīya* might have early been interpreted as 'reddish-coloured'. It is possible that the Tibetan translators are rendering that. Since *varṇa*- is given the lexical meaning of 'a covering, cloak, mantle', they could easily have understood it as meaning 'wearing coverings of a reddish or brownish colour'.⁶⁴ In that case Tāmraśāṭīya would be a mistaken back-formation from Tibetan.

If that is not acceptable, there is another alternative. Chinese sources from at least the fifth century A.D. (Lamotte, *History*, Trsl. p. 536) suggest that Buddhist schools were sometimes distinguished by the colour of their dress. If the colour of the robes of monks coming from the south or from Ceylon was distinctive, the name **Tambavaṇṇīya* could easily be understood as referring to the colour of their robes. The name Tāmraśāṭīya would then be a (learned) Sanskritization of such a Middle Indic form.

The Tibetans and Chinese may have met various forms corresponding to Tāmraśāṭīya, Tāmraśāṭīya or Tāmraśāṭīka. Indeed, as we have seen, Tāmraśāṭīya is just what we find in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-vṛtti* of Vimuktisena.⁶⁵ It has long been known that Vimuktisena belonged to a Puṅgalavādin ordination lineage;⁶⁶ possibly Vimuktisena's use of the form Tāmraśāṭīya may be due to his source having been mediated through a form of Middle Indian in which -p- has become -v-.

The **Tāmraśāṭīya* school is also mentioned by Vasubandhu as teaching the **bhavāṅga-vijñāna* and explicitly identified with the **Ārya-sthāviras* by commentators.⁶⁷ In any case, it is very difficult to believe that Vimuktisena's reference refers to any school other than the Theravādins of Ceylon, since he refers to the Tāmraśāṭīyas as using the form: *Akaniṣṭha* for the name of the Brahmas of the highest of the Pure Abodes.

63

Siddhi p. 179: the text in fact has "tche-t'ong-k'o-pou: tche, 155, rouge; t'ong, 167 et 6, cuivre; k'o, 167 et 8, lingot; mais ce dernier caractère peut être corrigé ye, 142 et 8, feuille, avec la même phonétique)".

64

MW & Apte: 'covering' 'robe' (lexical). BR cites from *Amarakośa* and other lexical sources.

65

Pensa, C. (1967) *L'Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛtti di Ārya-Vimuktisena. Primo Abhisamaya. Testo e note critiche*. Rome: Is.M.E.O., p. 30. Skilling confirms the reading from the Tibetan translation.

66

The information was known to both Bu ston and Tāranātha, presumably from the colophon to this text. That colophon is translated from Tibetan in Wayman, A. (1961) *Analysis of the Śrāvakaśāstrīya Manuscript*. Berkeley: University of California Press., p. 38 and Edward Conze reports it from the (unique) Sanskrit manuscript in his review of Wayman's work in I-IJ VII (1964) p. 230. It is confirmed in Pensa, *op. cit.*, p.1: *Kaurukullārya-Saṃmatīyasyā*^o. Note that the statement merely means that Vimuktisena was a Kaurukulla (Kurukula) and that the Kaurukullas are to be categorized as belonging to that one of the four divisions of the monastic order known as the Ārya-Saṃmatīyas after the most influential member (at the time this division was adopted). It does not necessarily mean that they were a branch of the Sāmitīyas proper. The data is compatible either with the possibility that they are a late branch of the Sāmitīyas or with the possibility that this is an alternative name for one of the three or four original divisions of the Puṅgalavādins. However, in view of this reference, the Kaurukullas/Kurukulas cannot have anything to do with the Pali Gokulika, as supposed by me previously (Cousins 1995, p. 29, n. 12).

67

Schmithausen, L. (1987) *Ālayavijñāna. On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies., Vol. II, n. 68.

This corresponds exactly to Pali Ākaniṭṭha.⁶⁸ Vimuktisena points out that others use the form Aghaniṣṭha and indeed that is certainly the case for some surviving Sanskrit sources, particularly Sarvāstivādin ones.

Whatever may have been the situation at an earlier date, it may well have been true in Vimuktisena's time⁶⁹ that this latter form of the name of these gods, perhaps originally characteristic of the Sarvāstivādins, had become somewhat dominant because of the great influence of that school in the period after Vasubandhu. So Vimuktisena refers to the, by then growing authority, of the Ceylon school out of a wish to support his own preference.

Skilling mentions several further doctrines attributed to the Tāmraśāṭiyas and related schools. Notable is a version of a well-known verse giving stages in a version of the *citta-vīthi*, cited in the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*. The Pali parallel is found in a number of commentarial passages, almost certainly taken from an earlier source.⁷⁰ Although clearly related, this seems to be a significantly different version of the consciousness process to that usually found in Pali. So it is important that it is attributed simply to the *Āgama* of the Sthaviras, rather than to the Tāmraśāṭiyas specifically. The particular concept of the *bhavaṅga* consciousness is explicitly ascribed to them as well as to the Sthāviras in general, to the Vibhajyavādins and to the Mahīśāsakas. Probably it was in some version inherited by all the Vibhajyavādin schools.

Equally critical is Yaśomitra's attribution of the notion of the heart-base to the Tāmraparṇīyas or Tāmraśāṭiyas. In Pali sources the *vatthu* or physical base for mind consciousness is first mentioned in the *Paṭṭhāna*, simply as *vatthu*. Thereafter it acquires the name *hadaya-vatthu*, although the term *vatthu-rūpa* is nearly as frequent in the earlier commentaries.⁷¹ The concept was probably not shared with most other ancient schools and hence strongly suggests a Ceylon-based tradition, although it is not impossible that it could have been current also in other closely related traditions.

Skilling rules out an identification with the Mahāvihāravāsins on the grounds that Yaśomitra specifically claims that the Tāmraśāṭiyas teach that heart-base is found even in the formless realm. Although this is no doubt correct, it should be noted that Buddhaghosa attributes such a view to the Viṇḍavādins.⁷² It was therefore a matter of debate in Ceylon and presumably advocated by one or both of the non-Mahāvihāravāsin schools or, at least, by some of their members. Skilling in fact states: "Yaśomitra may be referring to the Abhayagirivāsins, to the Jetavanīyas, or to a branch of the Sthaviras settled in Āndhradeśa, the 'Andhakas' of the *Kathāvatthu-atṭhakathā*." The last is a mistake. The author of the *Abhidhamma commentary* specifically identifies the Andhakas as four of the Mahāsaṃghika schools. Yaśomitra cannot be referring to them. We can be sure that whatever the correct form of their name might be, the Tāmraśāṭiyas/Tāmraparṇīyas with whom we are concerned here are quite certainly either Abhayagirivāsins or Sāgaliyas, most probably the former. However, early references to the Tāmraśāṭiyas may well precede awareness of the existence of the three branches of later Sinhalese Buddhism.

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cf. Buddha-c V 47 and references in BHSD.

69

Vimuktisena is believed to have written in the sixth century A.D. The name Tāmra-parṇ(ī)ya probably went out of general currency soon after this, when the notion of the four *mahā-nikāyas* came into widespread usage.

70

Sv I 194; Ps I 262; Spk III 191; Abhidh-av 165; Dhs-a 356.

71

The term *hadaya-vatthu* is first found at Mil 281 and in the writings of Buddhaghosa.

72

Ps IV 20. The second part of Yaśomitra's comment (on Abhidh-k I 17cd) is taken from Abhidh-k-bh VIII 3, not as a citation from the Tāmraparṇīyas, as supposed by Skilling.

Synopsis

Taprobane

1. To summarize, using the English equivalent for Tāmraparṇī: Taprobane is the ancient name for the kingdom established by ‘Vijaya’, for the people of that kingdom, for the city which was its early capital, perhaps also for the surrounding district, and for the nearby river. If the name originally referred to a more limited area, it soon came to refer to the whole kingdom and its people.
2. There is no way of knowing whether Taprobane was a name established in the locality or one brought by incoming speakers of an Indo-Aryan language. If local, then it is uncertain whether the linguistic base would be Dravidian or other.
3. We find it in scattered early, if rather undateable, sources. Either the kingdom of Taprobane or the people of Taprobane — the Taprobanics — are already referred to in the inscriptions of Asoka. Strabo attributes the use of the name Taprobane for the island to Onesikratos and Eratosthenes; so it was almost certainly current from early Mauryan times.
4. The Pali form Tambapaṇṇi(ī)(ya) must be reasonably old, given its occurrence in the *Parivāra* and *Mahāniddeśa*. Taprobanic monks are mentioned more frequently in Pali commentarial works. Some of these mentions seem to refer already to a Taprobanic school or tradition in the Buddhist Order.
5. In most Middle Indic dialects -p- becomes -v-. In effect then *tāmra-varṇa-* and *tāmra-parṇa-* would become homonyms in at least some areas of mainland India.

Tambapaṇṇiya and Tāmraśāṭiya

6. The combined information from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa makes it clear that the Taprobanics were Theriyas and Vibhajjavādins. *Vasumitra does not know the Taprobanics either under that name or under a name corresponding to Tāmra-śāṭiya. This may be because it had not yet been realized in Kashmir or neighbouring parts that the Ceylon school had become a separate branch. Or, *Vasumitra may predate that event.
7. There are a number of references, mostly preserved in Tibetan, to a school whose name has been restored as Tāmraśāṭiya. The Sanskrit form Tāmraśāṭiya is attested only from the *Mahāvīyutpatti*. It corresponds (Skilling) to Tibetan *Gos dmar (ba'i) sde (pa)* or *Gos dmar can gyi sde* (Skilling = red-clothed or copper-clothed). This is the standard Tibetan translation used in a dozen cases from 800 A.D. onwards.
8. Sanskrit: Tāmraparṇīya is twice found in the *Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā*, extant only in two later Mss, but the (earlier) Tibetan translation is as above. Sanskrit: Tāmraparṇīya is found in the extant Ms (c. 1100 A.D.) of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-vṛtti* and was translated into equivalent Tibetan in the 11th century.
9. La Vallée Poussin (followed by Lamotte) proposed emending the Chinese *Karmasiddhi-prakarāṇa* to an equivalent of Tāmraparṇīya,⁷³ but the passage appears corrupt. It also occurs in the Chinese translation of *Bhavya's **Karatalaratna* = Taisho 1578, 274b24.

73

Siddhi p. 179: the text in fact has “tche-t’ong-k’o-pou: tche, 155, rouge; t’ong, 167 et 6, cuivre; k’o, 167 et 8, lingot; mais ce dernier caractère peut être corrigé ye, 142 et 8, feuille, avec la même phonétique”.

10. It may be suggested that Tāmraṅga or a similar Middle Indic form, originally a

variant for Tāmrapaṅga/Tambapaṅga, has been interpreted as meaning ‘red-coloured’ or ‘copper-coloured’. Possible the Tibetan translators are rendering that, since *varṇa-* is given the lexical meaning of ‘a covering, cloak, mantle’ (MW). In that case Tāmraśāṭiya would be a mistaken back-formation from Tibetan.

11. Chinese sources from at least the 5th century A.D. (Lamotte Trsl. p. 536) suggest that Buddhist monks of different schools wore robes of different colours. If the colour of the robes of those from the south and/or Ceylon was distinctive, the name *Tambapaṅga could easily be understood as referring to the colour of their robes. The name Tāmraśāṭiya would then be a (learned) Sanskritization of such a Middle Indic form.

12. Early references to this school must precede awareness of the existence of the three Sinhalese branches. Some are probably based on the specific doctrines of the Abhayagiri or Dhammarucika school, undoubtedly better known in Mahāyāna circles.

Abbreviations used in this paper are those of the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*.

9913 words + footnotes

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