

A RE-EXAMINATION OF CHINESE RELATIONS WITH SRI LANKA DURING THE 15TH CENTURY A. D.

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The fifteenth century A. D. can be considered a special period in the long history of relations between Sri Lanka and China. It was not only that Sino-Sri Lankan contacts became more frequent during this period but for the first time the Chinese decisively and effectively intervened in the local politics of Sri Lanka and political relations between the two countries became closer than ever before.

The increased Chinese interest in Sri Lanka is inextricably linked with the great maritime expeditions of admiral Cheng-Ho in the 15th century. The question as to why Cheng-Ho was prompted to undertake those expeditions remains an issue for debate among historians to the present day. According to the *Ming-shih*, the official history of the Ming dynasty (1368 - 1644 A. D.), "after Ch'eng-tsu usurped the throne, his nephew, the legitimate monarch, fled the capital and his whereabouts became unknown. Some believed that he was hiding abroad which made it necessary to despatch missions in search of him". It becomes obvious, however, that an endeavour of such magnitude as Cheng-Ho's extensive maritime expeditions cannot be explained in such simplistic terms.

Since most of these expeditions were conducted during the reign of Emperor Ch'eng-tsu who took the regnal title (*nien-hao*) as Yung-lo, his foreign policy was perhaps a decisive factor in the despatch of Cheng-Ho's missions abroad. According to some scholars, Ch'eng-tsu (also known as Yung-lo) was attempting to expand the existing tribute system and the objective of these expeditions was to bring more countries into the tribute system.² It is also possible that the emperor was interested in opening new areas for Chinese trade and consequently used the expeditions as missions of exploration. It is recorded that Cheng-Ho went as far as Africa, and brought back strange animals such as giraffes, single-humped camels, ostriches, zebras, and 'other treasures,' which suggests, that there was a purpose of exploration behind Cheng-Ho's voyages. Usually, in China, foreign trade was closely supervised by the emperor himself and the officials of the inner court. Since Cheng-Ho was an eunuch attached to the inner court, it is conceivable that he undertook the missions with a commercial motive in mind. The fact that the Confucian minded anti-commercial Chinese bureaucrats strongly opposed the expeditions further implies that there was such a purpose behind Cheng-Ho's expeditions.

However, a more important factor which motivated the Ming emperor to despatch Cheng-Ho on those missions abroad, appears to have been the desire to spread the power and prestige of the Ming empire abroad. The re-emergence of the Chinese (Han) rule over China under the Ming dynasty, after nearly a century of subjugation to the Mongol yoke, would have necessitated a prestigious and unprecedented undertaking such as Cheng-Ho's great maritime expeditions in order to revive the national consciousness of the Chinese.

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Also, as we know, the Mongols built big armadas and invaded Japan and Java displaying their naval might. It is therefore, reasonable to assume that Emperor Ch'eng-tsu decided to pursue a foreign policy which was aimed at surpassing the maritime achievements of the Mongols. Accordingly, a massive demonstration of Chinese naval power was used not only to create a new confidence among the Chinese, but also to convince foreign rulers that it would be wise to establish friendly relations with the Ming empire. As a matter of fact, the Chinese version of the Galle trilingual inscription clearly mentions that the missions were despatched to announce the Ming mandate to foreigners.³

One has now to consider the Sino-Sri Lankan relations during the 15th century A. D. within the framework of the above mentioned aspects of the Chinese policy. Consequently, it becomes apparent that Cheng-Ho's visits to Sri Lanka were not isolated and casual episodes in his travels abroad, but formed a part of Ming foreign policy.

While most of the Chinese sources which refer to the first mission of Cheng-Ho do not mention Sri Lanka by name among the countries visited by him, two of the sources – the *Pien-i-tien* and the *Hsi-yu-chi Fu-chu*, clearly state that Sri Lanka was visited by Cheng-Ho during his first voyage which took place in 1405 A. D.⁴ Both sources give somewhat similar accounts about the visit. They say that Cheng-Ho was sent to Sri Lanka with offerings such as flowers and incense to the Tooth Relic of the Buddha. While the *Pien-i-tien* goes on to say that Cheng-Ho attempted to persuade the king of Sri Lanka to give up heretical practices and adhere to the teachings of the Buddha, the *Hsi-yu-chi Fu-chu* states that Cheng-Ho's purpose in coming to Sri Lanka was to take away the Tooth Relic. Both accounts agree that since the king of Sri Lanka adopted a hostile attitude towards Cheng-Ho he had to leave the island in despair. There is little doubt that Cheng-Ho visited Sri Lanka during the first expedition. The Liu-chia-chiang inscription, while recording the first expedition, mentions only ku-li (Calicut) by name among the countries visited by Cheng-Ho, and describes the rest of the countries as 'other countries.'⁵ Since ku-li (Calicut) is situated not far from Sri Lanka on the western coast of South India, it is quite possible that she was included among countries described as 'other countries' in the Liu-chia-chiang inscription. Further, the *Ming-shih*, while recording the second expedition in 1409 A. D., uses the word 'tsai' meaning 'again', in referring to the visit to Sri Lanka,⁶ which further proves that Cheng-Ho had come to Sri Lanka for the first time during the first voyage. If we believe the account given in the *Hsi-yu-chi Fu-chu*, that he came to take away the Tooth Relic the attitude of the Sri Lanka ruler towards him is understandable, because the ownership of the Tooth Relic was linked with the right to rule in Sri Lanka. Any attempt to remove it would certainly have aroused the anger and hostility of the king of Sri Lanka. Moreover, he would have considered Cheng-Ho's attempt as an infringement of the sovereignty of his country.

The Liu-chia-chiang inscription mentions, that, in the seventh year of Yung Lo (1409 A. D.), Cheng-Ho "commanding the fleet went to the countries (visited) before and took the route *via* Hsi-lan-shan (Sri Lanka). It's (king) Ya-lieh-k'u-nai-erh was guilty of gross lack of respect and plotted against the fleet, . . . Owing to the manifest answer (to prayer) of divine power, (the plot) was discovered and thereupon the king was captured alive". The inscription goes on to say that he was captured and presented to the emperor in the ninth year of Yung-Lo (1411 A. D.) as a prisoner.⁷ Subsequently, he was pardoned by the Emperor and

returned to Sri Lanka. The *Ming-shih* records a similar incident during the second voyage of Cheng-Ho. It does mention, however, that this second voyage began in the fifth year of Yung-Lo (1408 A. D.)⁸ This apparent discrepancy in the dates need not detain us for the *Ming-shih* might well have dated the beginning of the expedition from the date on which the imperial order was given to undertake the voyage rather than the actual date of its commencement.

The contemporary Chinese work the *Hsing-ch'a sheng-lan*, says that during the seventh year of Yung-Lo (1409 A. D.) Cheng-Ho visited Sri Lanka and made offerings to a temple in southern Sri Lanka, bestowed gifts on the king and chieftains of Sri Lanka and set up an inscription.⁹ The reference to the inscription should be to the Galle trilingual inscription which records some offerings made by Cheng-Ho. It is also dated in the same year.¹⁰ Professor Duyvandak has quite convincingly argued that the Galle inscription was composed and inscribed in China and brought to Sri Lanka in 1409 A. D.¹¹ Accordingly, there is little doubt that it confirms the information given in the *Hsing-ch'a-sheng-lan* that offerings were made to a temple in southern Sri Lanka. The trilingual inscription mentions that offerings were made to the Buddha and to the deity Tenavarai-nayanar who is identified as Devundara *deviyō* by Paranavitana.¹² Accordingly, the reference in the *Hsing-ch'a-sheng-lan* could be to the shrine of Devundara *deviyō* (Upulvan) at Devundara which was a place of worship for both Buddhists and Hindus alike.

Thus, two important events had taken place during the third expedition (1409-1411 A. D.) as far as the history of the island is concerned : (a) Cheng-Ho bestowed gifts on the chiefs and the king, made offerings to a Buddhist temple, and set up the inscription during the onward journey in 1409 A. D., (b) confrontation with Ya-lieh-k'u-nai-erh (Alagakkonāra) took place in 1411 A. D.

We can glean from Chinese sources referring to Cheng-Ho's two visits prior to the encounter with Alagakkonāra, that Cheng-Ho's activities in Sri Lanka aroused suspicion in the mind of Alagakkonāra. Cheng-Ho's unsuccessful attempt to obtain the Tooth Relic, the distribution of gifts to the chiefs, and finally, the setting up of an inscription must have been considered by Alagakkonāra as interference in the internal politics of Sri Lanka on the part of Cheng-Ho. Bestowing gifts could have been taken as an effort to undermine the authority of Alagakkonāra. Also, it is important to note that normally it was the tradition in Sri Lanka that only kings or his closest officials were allowed to set up inscriptions. In that context, it is not surprising if Alagakkonāra was outraged by Cheng-Ho's behaviour. Here, we should remember that it was not only a case of setting up an inscription without the authority of the king, but also that it was done by a foreigner. If we agree with the view put forward by Joseph Needham that Cheng-Ho must have personally handed over the presents to the representatives of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims,¹³ then, there appear to be more grounds for Alagakkonāra's suspicions. Viewed in that perspective, we cannot totally blame Alagakkonāra (as the Chinese sources do) for trying to harm Cheng-Ho.

Looking at Chinese foreign policy at the time, it can be conjectured that Cheng-Ho was trying to persuade Alagakkonāra to accept the supremacy of the Ming emperor. The fact that he betowed gifts to the king leads one to think in that direction. However, as discussed above, Cheng-Ho's own activities would have negated that objective and resulted in the retaliatory measures adopted by Alagakkonāra. Perhaps, Alagakkonāra was not aware of the grave consequences of his decision to attack the Chinese forces, even though there was justification for his action.

The Ming rulers, while adopting peaceful means of persuasion to win the allegiance of foreign countries towards China, did not hesitate to use force against those who tried to thwart their attempts. Accordingly, Alagakkonāra's bid to capture Cheng-Ho would have undoubtedly been viewed as a challenge to Chinese power and as a repudiation of the wishes of the Ming Emperor. There were other instances where the Chinese resorted to firm action under similar circumstances. For instance, in his first voyage, Cheng-Ho encountered the powerful Chinese pirate Ch'en Tsu-yi who plundered merchants and hindered Cheng-Ho's fleet at San-fo-chü (Sri Vijaya). In a bloody battle he was defeated and captured.¹⁴ During the fourth expedition, Cheng-Ho took military action against Su-kan-la (Sukarna?) who forcibly overthrew the former pro-Chinese king of Su-men-ta-la (Sumatra).¹⁵ Even in the case of Japan, Ming rulers used force and threat in order to make Japan accept Chinese suzerainty.¹⁶

According to a contemporary Sinhalese literary work, the *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, Vīra Alakeśwara (Alagakkonāra) fell into the trap of the Chinese because of his former *karma*, and was taken to China.¹⁷ The *Rājāvaliya* which was written into its present form a few centuries later, mentions that 'Dos raja' of Mahācīna invaded Sri Lanka and captured king Vijayabāhu, and took him to China.¹⁸ To the present day, the *Rājāvaliya* reference to the invader as 'Dos raja' has not been properly explained.¹⁹ It may well be that 'Dos' 'දොස්' is a scribal error for 'Hos' 'හොස්' for, in Sinhalese there is a close similarity in the writing of the two words.²⁰ As such, 'Hos' in the original manuscript must have become 'Dos' in the later ones. This seems plausible in view of the several versions of the *Rājāvaliya* which existed.²¹ Thus, the Sinhalese chronicler of the *Rājāvaliya* appears to have referred to Cheng-Ho as 'Hos' raja taking only his second name. In Chinese (as well as in Sinhalese) it is sometimes common to use only the main name when referring to persons. For instance, in the *Ming-shih* itself Cheng-Ho is sometimes referred to as 'Ho'.²²

The encounter between Cheng-Ho and Alagakkonāra seems to have taken place in early 1411 A. D., for it is recorded that he returned to China in July 1411 A. D. It is clear from the account given in the *Pien-i-tien* that the forces of Alagakkonāra adopted a clever battle strategy, but his plans were leaked to the enemy by his own people, and this contributed significantly to Cheng-Ho's victory.²³ The account leads one to think that Alagakkonāra had enemies in his own camp. The plausibility of such an occurrence is strong in view of the fact that there was an intense power struggle among members of the Alakeśwara family.²⁴

Alagakkonāra was captured and taken to China along with members of his family and the court. Even though they were pardoned by the Chinese emperor, he decided to replace Alagakkonāra with someone else. According to the *Ming-shih*, he asked the captives to select

from their 'tsu' (tribe/clan) a virtuous person to be appointed king. Then the *Ming-shih* goes on to say, "There was one Yeh-pa-nai-na. All captives praised his good virtues. Thereupon, envoys were despatched with the (emperor's) seal to bestow on him the kingship"²⁵. Thus, it is quite clear that Yeh-pa-nai-na was selected because of his 'good virtues'. The Chinese word 'tsu-jen' (See * 1) does not necessarily mean a family member. It can be taken to mean 'a member of his tribe' which implies the Sinhalese race. Also, we know from the Sri Lankan sources that the Alakeśwara family did not regain power after the capture of Alagakkonāra by the Chinese. Therefore Yeh-pa-nai-na was possibly not a member of the Alakeśwara family but someone else.

There is no evidence in the Chinese sources for us to believe that Yeh-pa-nai-na was present in China at that time, and that kingship was conferred upon him in person. The *Ming shih* and other sources merely say that all captives praised his virtues and "thereupon envoys were sent proclaiming him as king." Accordingly, the question raised by scholars such as Paranavitana, Somaratne and others about his presence in China does not arise at all. A close scrutiny of the Chinese sources reveals that Yeh-pa-nai-na was not present in China when he was proclaimed king; nevertheless, envoys were despatched to Sri Lanka with the emperor's seal and the proclamation.

The identification of Yeh-pa-nai-na has baffled many a historian. There is little doubt that it is a Chinese transcription of the Sinhalese word 'āpānan'. Paranavitana has identified 'āpānan' with Parākramabāhu VI. While agreeing with Codrington's view that Parākramabāhu VI could not have been among the captives of Cheng-Ho, he suggests that Parākramabāhu would have arrived in China separately.²⁶ However, it should be pointed out that there is no evidence to show that Parākramabāhu VI was known as āpāna prior to his accession to the throne. On the contrary, according to the evidence we have, he was leading a clandestine life in fear of the Alakeśwaras. The view put forward by Somaratne on the basis of the evidence found in the *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, that Yeh-pa-nai-na should be identified with Parākramabāhu Āpāna is a more tenable proposition.²⁷ A recently found source, the *Asgiri Talpata*, which is believed to be of a later date than the *Saddharmaratnākaraya*, also refers to a king Parākramabāhu who ruled at Senkadagala from B. E. 1952 (1409 A. D.)²⁸ It appears that he was put on the throne as a challenge to Vīra Alakeśwara. It may be that both sources refer to the same person. Although the *Asgiri Talpata* does not give the date when Senkadagala Parākramabāhu ended his reign, it says that he was exercising authority in B. E. 1956 (1413 A. D.).

It is conceivable that the Chinese were compelled to accept the reality of the situation that existed at the time by proclaiming as king the person who had gained control of the island after Alagakkonāra's departure to China. The *Saddharmaratnākaraya* states that Parākramabāhu Āpāna ruled Sri Lanka until the month of Poson in B. E. 1958 (current) i. e. May/June 1414 A. D. when Parākramabāhu VI ascended to the throne.²⁹

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Based on a reference found in Couto's *The History of Ceylon*, Somaratne suggests that Parākramabāhu Āpāna was murdered on the same night that he arrived in Sri Lanka from China.³⁰ However, it should be pointed out that there is no evidence in Couto's work which leads one to come to such a conclusion. Couto clearly says that it was the king who was captured by the Chinese that was murdered,³¹ and, as Somaratne himself agrees, Parākramabāhu Āpāna was not the king who was taken as captive to China. Further, as suggested above, Parākramabāhu Āpāna probably would not have gone to China at all. Also, it is very unlikely that the Chinese opted to remain silent if their appointee was murdered on the same night of his arrival in Sri Lanka. The Chinese sources mention taking military action against Su-kan-la who overthrew the former king of Sumatra who was loyal to the Chinese.³² Moreover, at a time when the Ming rulers were bent on displaying their power and prestige abroad with a mighty navy at their command, it is highly inconceivable that the Chinese decided to tolerate such a high handed action. Therefore, we can safely conclude that it was not Parākramabāhu Āpāna that was murdered in the manner described by Couto.

On the other hand, Couto's reference may be taken as an indication of the killing of Alagakkonāra (Vīra Alakeśwara), who according to the Chinese sources, returned to Sri Lanka after he was pardoned by the Chinese emperor. The fact that we do not hear anything about him or the Alakeśwara family after their capture by the Chinese, further implies such a notion. Here, we should note that Couto has mixed up the names of the persons concerned. Couto mentions that the king who was captured by the Chinese was Vijayabāhu, and he was murdered on his return by Alakeśwara in order to remain in power.³³ The Chinese sources, however, quite clearly and unanimously mention the name of the king who was captured by Cheng-Ho as Alagakkonāra (Alakeśwara). Therefore, it is quite possible that Couto, while incorporating the different traditions concerning the episode prevalent at his time (end of the 16th century), made some errors. It may be pertinent to mention that even the author of the *Rājāvaliya* when referring to the Chinese invasion has made similar errors. The fact that Couto did not have a first hand knowledge of the island and collected his material from Sinhalese princes who were living in Goa, further casts doubts on the accuracy of some of his information. Therefore, we may assume that Alagakkonāra was killed on the same day that he arrived from China either by Parākramabāhu Āpāna or by his successor (depending on the date of his return).

If we agree that Parākramabāhu Āpāna was proclaimed king by the Chinese in 1412 A. D., it appears that he ruled until about May/June, 1414 A. D. Consequently, he should be called Parākramabāhu VI, and, the king hitherto known as Parākramabāhu VI should become Parākramabāhu VII. In fact, the Chinese sources mention that Yeh-pa-nai-na was also known as Pu-la-k'o-ma-pa-ssu-la-ch'a (Parākramabāhu raja).³⁴ Here, Somaratne's suggestion that any Āpāna who later became king would have been called 'raja', and therefore that this can be taken as reference to Parākramabāhu Āpāna, seems more convincing than Paranavitana's view that it refers to Parākramabāhu VI (according to the suggestion made above – Parākramabāhu VII).³⁵ Hence, we may conclude that Parākramabāhu Āpāna later became known as Parākramabāhu raja.

As Somaratne has correctly pointed out, the evidence found in the *Saddharmaratnā-karaya* and the *Kāvyaśekaraya*, clearly reveals that Parākramabāhu VII ascended the throne in the current year of 1958 B. E. which began in May-June 1414.³⁶ Since the *Saddharmaratnākaraya* states that the event took place in the month of Poson, with the demise of Parākramabāhu Āpana, the correct date of accession of Parākramabāhu VII to the Kotte throne, has to be taken as June 1414 A. D. The evidence we gather from the *Pūpiliyāna Document* No. 11., the *Samandevāle Sannasa*, and the *Denavaka Sannasa*, also can be taken to substantiate this view.³⁷

It appears however, from the *Alakeśvara Yuddhaya* and the *Rājāvaliya*, that Parākramabāhu VII ruled at Raigama for over three years before moving into Kotte.³⁸ Along with the evidence we obtain from the Chinese sources that Alagakkonāra arrived in China in July 1411 A. D., we can assume that both Parākramabāhu VI and Parākramabāhu VII, began to compete for the throne of Sri Lanka sometime before that date. Somaratne places the deportation of Alagakkonāra in April/May 1411 A. D.,³⁹ Accordingly, it seems possible that while Parākramabāhu VI succeeded Alagakkonāra at Kotte, Parākramabāhu VII ascended to the throne at Raigama. The statements found in the *Pancikā pradīpaya* and the *Nāmāvaliya*, to the effect that Parākramabāhu VII occupied the throne in 1955 B. E. (1411 A. D.), have to be taken as evidence which substantiates that proposition.⁴⁰

After ascending the throne, Parākramabāhu VII, appears to have decided to establish friendly relations with China. The *Ming-shih* states that the king of Hsi-lan-shan (Sri Lanka) came personally to China to pay tribute to the Chinese Court in 1416 A. D. and 1421 A. D.⁴¹ Nevertheless, as Somaratne has correctly pointed out, there was no possibility for Parākramabāhu VII to be in China at the times mentioned.⁴² As such, someone else would have deputed for him. Somaratne suggests that the yuvaraja – his brother, who was also known as Parākramabāhu, would have headed the missions. Whoever headed the missions, the mission of 1416 A. D. can be considered as an effort to appease the Chinese emperor and win his support and endorsement, by Parākramabāhu VII who overthrew the Chinese-appointed king in the struggle for power.

The *Ming-shih* records that in the fifth year of Hsuan-te (1430 A. D.), Cheng-Ho was sent to Sri Lanka on a 'pacifying mission.'⁴³ It may be that as Paranavitana suggests, Parākramabāhu VII, once secure in power, was not enthusiastic about maintaining relations with China, which prompted the Ming emperor to despatch Cheng-Ho on a pacifying mission⁴⁴. Whatever the case may have been, Cheng-Ho seems to have attempted to convince Parākramabāhu of the benefits he could gain as a result of maintaining cordial relations with China. It is also plausible that Cheng-Ho exhibited his naval might in order to persuade Parākramabāhu to resume sending embassies to China. In fact, the Liu-chia-chiang inscription, referring to the expedition in 1430 A.D., says that Cheng-Ho arrived in Sri Lanka with his fleet "in order to make known the imperial commands."⁴⁵ Therefore, it may well be that Cheng-Ho adopted the 'carrot and stick' approach in his dealings with Parākramabāhu VII. However, the fact that Cheng-Ho had to make another trip to Sri Lanka again in 1432 A. D. suggests that Parākramabāhu VII could not be persuaded by Cheng-Ho's efforts in the first instance.

The Nan-Shan Temple Slab inscription while giving a detailed account of the countries visited by Cheng-Ho records that he arrived in Sri Lanka at Pie-lo-li on the 28th November 1432 A. D.⁴⁶ The Lin-chia-chiang inscription refers to that expedition but does not mention the names of the countries visited. Pie-lo-li has been identified with Weligama and Beruwala.⁴⁷ Whichever the place, it is possible that it was the port of entry during Cheng-Ho's earlier trips to Sri Lanka as well. It was only after two attempts that Cheng-Ho's efforts bore fruit, for the *Ming-shih* records that a tribute mission from Sri Lanka arrived in China in the eighth year of Hsuan-te (1433 A. D.)⁴⁸. Perhaps, Parākramabāhu VII was made to realize the danger of ignoring the wishes of the Chinese Emperor in no uncertain terms by Cheng-Ho. In any case, 1433 A. D. is important as the year in which Sino-Sri Lankan relations warmed up once again. It is recorded in the *Ming-shih* that tribute missions from Sri Lanka were received in China in the first and tenth year of Cheng T'sung (1436 A. D. and 1445 A. D.), and, in the third year of Tien Shün (1459 A. D.)⁴⁹. The Chinese sources referred to earlier generally agree that Sri Lanka did not despatch tribute missions after 1459 A. D. It may well be that Parākramabāhu VII decided that there was no purpose in sending any more missions to China. In this regard, we may note that by then Sri Lanka was firmly united under him and no apparent outside threat to the security of Sri Lanka emerged after that time.

Referring to Cheng-Ho's missions to Sri Lanka after 1411 A. D., Somaratne suggests that Cheng-Ho mistook Parākramabāhu VIII for Parākramabāhu Āpāna, and that this was the reason why there was no enmity between Cheng-Ho and Parākramabāhu VII even after the killing of Parākramabāhu VI by Parākramabāhu VII. Somaratne further says that the Chinese possessed a meagre knowledge concerning the internal political situation of Sri Lanka which, in turn led to Cheng-Ho's misunderstanding.⁵⁰ However, if we agree that Cheng-Ho visited the island several times after 1405 A. D., as Somaratne himself does, it is unbelievable that the Chinese possessed only a meagre knowledge of the internal politics of Sri Lanka and that it was possible for Parākramabāhu to hide the truth from him. Moreover, as we discussed earlier, we have definite evidence regarding Cheng-Ho's involvement in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it cannot have been ignorance on Cheng-Ho's part which made him forget the killing of Parākramabāhu VI who was proclaimed king by the Chinese. It is more reasonable to assume that both parties agreed to bury the hatchet and accepted the reality of the situation.

The Sri Lankan mission to the Chinese Court in 1445 A. D., was headed by one Yeh-pa-la-mo-ti-li-ya (Jayapāla Mudaliyā),⁵¹ who has been correctly identified by Paranavitana as minister Jayapāla of Salavata mentioned in the *Guttala-Kāvya*.⁵² The Chinese sources referred to above, reporting the last mission (in the period under discussion) from Sri Lanka to China in 1459 A. D., gives the name of the ruler who despatched it as Ko-li-sheng-hsi-lahsi-li pa-chiao-la-jo. This should be taken as a reference to Parākramabāhu VII, for, there was no other ruler at that time in Sri Lanka who could have despatched a mission to China. However, no one has been able to explain satisfactorily the meaning of 'Ko-li' - the initial two syllables of the name, Paranavitana has convincingly argued out that attempts to equate it with 'So-li' and 'Savulu' are not acceptable.⁵³ Although it bears close similarity to 'So-li' meaning Chola, it is very unlikely that Parākramabāhu VII used an epithet denoting a connection with the Cholas of South India.

On the other hand, if we can take the Chinese character 'ko' (See * 2) as a copyist's error for 'chieh' (See * 3), then, it makes sense. Such errors are not uncommon in copying Chinese characters. For instance, in copying the very name Ko-li-sheng-sha-la-hsi-li-pa-chiao-la-chiao, the *Chao-kung Tien-lu*, uses the character 'T'suo' (See * 4) for 'sheng' (See * 5) which is used in other Chinese texts as the third syllable.⁵⁴ Accordingly, it is quite possible the copyist missed the radical (See * 6) and copied only the phonetic part of the character giving it a different pronunciation. If we accept 'chieh' instead of 'ko' for the first character the first two characters can be read as 'chieh-li' which corresponds to 'tri' in Sinhalese. Accordingly, we can combine the same with the rest of the characters and read as 'Chieh-li-sheng-sha-la' (Trisimhala) and equate with part of the epithet 'Trisimhalādhiśwara' used by Parākramabāhu VII, in his *Oruwala Sannasa*.⁵⁵

Concerning the Sino-Sri Lanka relations during this period, Mendis Rohanadeera has advocated the view that it was not Parākramabāhu VII (according to him Parākramabāhu VI), who maintained relations with China. Based on the *Asgiri Talpatha*, he argues that the king who maintained relations with the Chinese was Dedigama Parākramabāhu who was a contemporary of Parākramabāhu VII.⁵⁶ He has based his theory on the assumption that since Dedigama Parākramabāhu was a direct descendent of Parākramabāhu Āpāna who was the Chinese appointee to the Sri Lanka throne, it is more reasonable to believe that the Chinese were interested in establishing cordial relations with him.

However, it should be noted that apart from the *Asgiri Talpatha*, of which the authenticity is not established as yet, there is no other evidence to show that there was an independent ruler who could maintain relations with the Chinese, when Parākramabāhu VII was ruling at Kotte. Rohanadeera's explanation that Dedigama Parākramabāhu would have remained as a *sāmanta* king under Parākramabāhu of Kotte, and sent embassies abroad, seems unacceptable in view of the fact that the Chinese sources clearly mention that the missions were dispatched by the king of Sri Lanka. Rohanadeera's other suggestion that he connived with the Chinese⁵⁷ is unrealistic and cannot be substantiated by any evidence. Moreover, it is very unlikely that Parākramabāhu VII, who was powerful enough to invade even South India, would have tolerated and remained silent about such an alliance between the Chinese and a local ruler of Sri Lanka.

It is true as both Paranavitana and Somaratne have pointed out that the tribute sent by the Sri Lankan king in no way minimized his prestige.⁵⁸ On the contrary, it would have helped the Sri Lankan ruler to reap commercial and political benefits from his association with the Chinese. As a matter of fact, several contemporary Chinese sources bear testimony to the prevalence of close trade relations between the two countries.⁵⁹

* 2 葛 * 3 藁 * 4 坐 * 5 生 * 6 木

It may be of interest to find out the items that formed the tribute which was sent from Sri Lanka to China. The mission of 1445 A. D. headed by Minister Jayapāla took with them pearls and precious stones as tribute.⁶⁰ In 1449 A. D. it is recorded that the Sri Lankan envoys offered tribute consisting of precious stones and crystals (shyui-ching.)⁶¹ The *Hsi-yang Ch'ao-kung Tien-lu*, which gives detailed accounts about tribute offered to the Chinese emperor by the countries in the 'western ocean,' lists several items that were taken to China by the Sri Lankan envoys.⁶² They included, precious stones, coral, gold, crystals, baby elephants, various kinds of fragrance, sandal wood, myrrh, fine cotton cloth, rattanware, aloes, golden orioles, black pepper, small bowls, medicine, etc., They are referred to as local produce.

From the foregoing it is clear that Parākramabāhu VII despatched six missions to the Court of the Ming emperor, in 1416 A. D., 1421 A. D., 1433 A. D., 1436 A. D., 1445 A. D., and 1459 A. D. No other king of Sri Lanka has sent so many missions to China in the history of the island. Also, as shown above, the great Chinese admiral Cheng-Ho visited Sri Lanka on at least five occasions, in 1406 A. D., 1409 A. D., 1411 A. D., 1430 A. D., and 1432 A. D. The period *circa* 1400 to 1460 was thus an era during which there was exceptionally close political contact between Sri Lanka and China.

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3. *The Galle Trilingual Inscription*, Chinese version edited in Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization of China*, Vol. IV, Pt. III, Cambridge, 1971, p. 532.
4. *Pien-i-tien*, ch 66, p. 10a-b.
5. Liu-chia-chiang Inscription, Translated with the original text, by J. J. L. Duyvandak, in *True Dates of the Chinese Maritime Expeditions in the Early Fifteenth Century*, *T'oung Pao*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 341-412.
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8. *Ming-shih*, ch. 234, p. 3.
9. *Hsing-ch'a Sheng-lan*, Taipei edition, ch. 3, pp. 3-4
10. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, (hereafter cited as *EZ*), Vol. III, Oxford University Press, 1928-33, pp. 331-339

11. Duyvandak, *op. cit.*
12. *EZ*, Vol. III, pp. 331-339
13. Joseph Needham, *op. cit.*
14. Duyvandak, *op. cit.*
15. *ibid.*
16. Wang Yi-tung, *Official Relations Between China and Japan*, Harvard University Press, 1953, pp. 10-81.
17. *Saddharmaratnākaraya* (hereafter cited as *SRK*), ed, Dharmakeerthi Sri Sugunasara Thero, Colombo, 1955, p. 317.
18. *Rājāvaliya*, ed, B. Gunasekera, Colombo, 1926, p. 46.
19. Paranavitana has attempted to use it as evidence to prove his Kalinga in Malaysia theory. See, S. Paranavitana, *Ceylon and Malayasia*, Colombo, 1966, p. 145.
20. I am grateful to Dr. P. B. Meegaskumbura, Department of Sinhalese, Peradeniya Campus, for enlightening me on this point.
21. G. V. P. Somaratne, *Political History of the Kingdom of Kotte 1400-1521*, Colombo, 1975. PP. 3-22.
22. *Ming-Shih* ch. 304, p. 3 & ch. 326, p. 6. The Chinese name 'Ho', due to some inadvertence on the part of the manuscript writer must have become 'Hos'. Later, as suggested in the present paper, possibly due to a scribal error came to be written as "Dos". Finally, as some of the ola manuscripts of the *Rājāvaliya* show, the name of the Chinese invader was written as 'Dolos' raja. (See for instance, nos. 277592, 227597, and 277329 in the Manuscripts Collection of the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.) Therefore, the Chinese name 'Ho' appears to have undergone several transformations in the hands of Sinhalese manuscript writers.

It is quite probable that the *Rājāvaliya* manuscript writers continued their reconstruction of the word 'Ho' which was undoubtedly an unfamiliar name for them, until they found an acceptable and familiar Sinhalese form. In linguistic terms such changes can be explained as 'milch cow' emendations or hyper-corrections. It may be pertinent to mention that in some places in several manuscripts the letter "ඪ" in the word "මහ විදාන" (Great China) has been replaced by the letter "ඪ" and "මහ විදාන" has become "මහ විදාන" by great virtue). (See the manuscripts referred to above).

23. *Pien-i-tien, op. cit.*, It is interesting to note that some of the *ola* manuscripts of the *Rājāvaliya*, while referring to the invasion of “Dos’ raja state that he arrived in Sri Lanka with Tamil soldiers. (See nos. 277576 and 277329 in the Manuscripts Collection of the University of Peradeniya). According to another manuscript, ‘Dos’ raja even came to terms with Ārya Cakravarti, the king of Jaffna. (See no. 277203 - 1 of the above collection). Accordingly, it may be that since Cheng-Ho visited South India several times during his journeys, he recruited some soldiers from South India for his planned attack on Alagakkonāra’s forces. Perhaps, he also sought the support of Ārya Cakravarti in his effort to defeat Alagakkonāra. However, none of the Chinese sources mention anything about an alliance between Cheng-Ho and the Tamils.

Another point which can be noted in this connection is that both names Yeh-pa-nai-na and Yeh-pa-la-mo-ti-li-ya denotes some Tamil influence. The initial syllable ‘Yeh’ in both name and the word ‘mo-ti-li-ya’ appears to have been derived from Tamil. However, no definite evidence can be adduced to prove that they were taken from Tamil. As we know, during the Kotte period there was a strong Hindu-Tamil influence on the culture of the Sinhalese. In fact, according to contemporary literary work, the *Girā Sandesaya*, Tamil literary works were studied along with Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit works at the leading academic institution the Vijayabā Pirivena. (See, Munidasa Kumaranatunge, ed. *Girā Sandesa Vivaraṇaya*, Colombo, 1953, p. 64). Accordingly, some Sinhalese names and words would have been influenced by Tamil in their pronunciation.

24. *University of Ceylon, History of Ceylon*, (hereafter cited as *UHC*), Vol, I, pt. II, Colombo 1960, p. 650.
25. *Ming-shih*, ch. 326, p. 5.
26. *UHC*, Vol. I pt. II, pp. 665–668. Later, Parnavitana in his work *Ceylon and Malaysia*, Colombo 1966, p. 143 ff, claiming Malayan descent for Parākramabāhu VI interpreted Yeh-pa-nai-na as “Lord of Java” However, the unsatisfactory nature of Parnavitana’s effort to trace Parākramabāhu VI’s origin to Malaysia has been clearly shown by W. M. Sirisena in his article Was Parākramabāhu VI of Ceylon a Javaka? See, *The Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. II, No. 2, July 1971, pp. 1-14.
27. *SRK, op. cit.*
28. *Asgiri Talpata*, ed. M. Rohanadeera, Nugegoda, Vidyodaya University Press, 1969, p. 9.
29. *SRK, op. cit.*
30. Somaratne, *op. cit.*, p. 73 & p. 94.
31. Diego do Couto, *The History of Ceylon from Earliest Times to 1600 A. D.* trans. D. Ferguson, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)*, Vol. XX. No. 60. p. 67.

32. Duyvandak, *op. cit.*
33. Here, we should note that Couto has mixed up the names of the kings concerned. See, *UHC*, Vol. I, pt. II, pp. 663-664.
34. *Huang-ming si-yi K'ao*, ch. 8, p. 5., *Wu-hsueh-pien*, ch. 68, p. 5a.

Here it should be mentioned that in *Wu-hsueh-pien*, there is no such term as 'Seay-pa-nai-na'. It appears that Tennent's translator has incorrectly read the Chinese character 'yeh', as 'seay'. See E. H. Mathews, *A Chinese English Dictionary*, Harvard University Press, 1950., p. 390. Parnavitana uses the incorrect rendering found in James Emerson Tennent's *Ceylon*, to substantiate his 'Kalinga in Malaysia' theory. See S. Parnavitana, *Ceylon and Malaysia* p. 143.

35. *UHC*, *op. cit.*, p. 665, Somaratne, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
36. *SRK*, *op. cit.*, Somaratne, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
37. *EZ*, Vol. II, pp. 52-53
38. *Alakeśwarayuddhaya*, ed. A. V. Suraweera, Colombo, 1965, p. 21.
39. Somaratne, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
40. *Nāmāvaliya*, ed., Nanavimala Colombo 1961, stanza 285, *Pancikāpradīpaya*, ed. Sri Dharmarama Colombo 1896, p. 168.
41. *Ming-shih*, uh. 7, p. 4 & 8. Parnavitana erroneously refers to these missions as having been recorded in *Wu-hsueh-pien*. See, *UHC*, *op. cit.*, p. 665.
42. Somaratne, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.
43. *Ming-shih*, ch. 326, p. 6
44. *UHC*, *op. cit.*, p. 668.
45. Duyvandak, *op. cit.*
46. Translated into French in P. Petlliot, *Les Grands Voyages Maritimes Chinois au Debut de XVe Siecle T'oung Pao*, May-June 1900. pp. 307-310. Quoted in Hsi Yun-ch'iao, San-pao Tsai-chien Hsi-yang K'ao, *Nang-yang Hsueh-pao*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, Singapore, 1948, pp. 48-49.
47. Pie-lo-li has been identified by Sylvain Levi as Beligama (Weligama) on the southern coast of Sri Lanka. See, Sylvain Levi, *Les Missions de Wang Hiuen-T'se Dans L' Inde. T'oung Pao*, May-June 1900, p. 439, and by J. V. G. Mills, Translation of Ma Huan's *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, Cambridge, 1970. p. 125, note 9, as Beruwala.

48. *Ming-shih*, *op. cit.*
49. *ibid*
50. Somaratne, *op.cit.* , p. 74.
51. *Ta-ming Yi-tung-chih*, ch. 40, p. 90., *Tsing-ming Si-yi- K'ao*, dh. 8 p. 5., *Hsi-yang Ch'ao-kung Tien-eu*, ch. 15, p. 10.
52. *UHC*, *op. cit.*, p. 665.
53. *UHC*, *op. cit.* 668-669.
54. *Hsi-yang Ch'ao-kung Tien-lu*, ch. 15, p. 10.
55. *EZ*, Vol. III, p. 64. Thus the Chinese rendering can be taken as a transcription of Trisimhaladhiśwara Srī Parākramabāhu.,
56. M. Rohanadera, *Asgiri Talpatin Aluthvu Lanka Itihasaya*, Nugegoda, Vidyodaya University Press, 1970, p. 28-34, pp. 41-42.
57. Rohanadeera, *op. cit.*,
58. *UHC*, *op. cit.*, pp. 667-668. Somaratne, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.
59. *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, Taipei 1962 pp. 46-50., *Tao-i Chih-lueh*, Pt. II, ch. 28, p. 25. *Hsing-cha Sheng-lan*, *op. cit.*
60. *Hsing-ming Hsi-yi K'ao*, p. 6
61. *Ta-ming Yi-tung-chih*, ch. 90, p. 10.
62. *Hsi-yang Ch'ao-kung Tien-lu* ch. 15, p. 10.