

A STUDY ON THE TERM “ARUMAṆA” IN POLONARUWA INSCRIPTION OF KING VIJAYABĀHU I

Ven. Sukha

PGIHS, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

The term *arumaṇa* refers to Mon people living in the lower part of Myanmar. *Rāmaññadesa* means the country of the Mon people. Sri Lanka and *Rāmañña* country have embraced *Theravāda* Buddhism since King Asoka’s missionary activities. Buddhism was the factor that brought the two countries into having close relations. *Theravāda* Buddhist Canonical texts were introduced into *Rāmaññadesa* from the great monasteries of Sri Lanka. In the 11th century, the canonical texts and learned monks, laymen, and king Manuhā were brought by King Anawratha to Pagan, the then capital of Myanmar. In inscriptions and the Pāli chronicles of Sri Lanka, Myanmar was, in the ancient time, referred to by several names: Arumaṇa or Aramaṇa, and Rāmañña. In the Polonnaruwa Inscription of King Vijayabāhu I, which is lying to the west of Vihāra No. 1, about 50 feet north-east of the *Latāmaṇḍapaya*, ancient Myanmar is known as *Arumaṇa*. The inscription, which is believed to have been engraved after the death of King Vijayabāhu I, consisting of 49 lines, of which the pertinent passage lines 6 to 11, tells us that King Vijayabāhu, having defeated the *Coḷa* army, restored *Theravāda* Buddhism with the help of monks from *Arumaṇa*. Some scholars tried to identify the place mentioned with some location in India, but they have failed to consider it as a place in Myanmar. This paper will discuss the term *Arumaṇa* in the Inscription. Critical method and comparative method are applied using primary and secondary sources to deduce conclusion that the term *Arumaṇa* may be a corruption of the term *Rāmañña*, referring in whole to ancient Myanmar. This is corroborated by Sri Lankan chronicles such as *Cūlavamsa*, *Rājāvaliya*, and *Nikāya-saṅgrahava* adding more details state that twenty learned and well-conducted monks who carried with them books were invited from *Aramaṇa* or *Rāmañña*. The old Burmese chronicle, *Sāsanāvamsa*, also mentions Anawratha’s friendly relations with King Vijayabāhu. The term *Rāmañña* refers to Mon people living in the lower part of Myanmar. However, due to the long-term relationship between Lower Myanmar (*Rāmaññadesa*) and Sri Lanka, the whole country was known by Sri Lankans as *Arumaṇa*, *Aramaṇa*, and *Rāmañña* in ancient times. Having examined from Sri Lanka and Myanmar sources, Myanmar and Sri Lanka have maintained a long-term relationship helping each other. Based on various accounts in Sri Lanka and Myanmar sources, the term *Arumaṇa* on the inscription of King Vijayabāhu I suggests that the name was probably applied to the Land of Myanmar.

Keywords: Rāmañña, Arumaṇa, Sri Lanka