

THE ASOKAN MISSIONS

EXTENDED MAHĀVAṂSA XII-XIV

EDITED BY

G. P. MALALASEKERA

TRANSLATED BY

ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

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(Extended Mahāvamsa XII-XIV)

edited by

G. P. Malalasekera

(1937 / 2481)

translated by

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

(March, 2012 / 2556)

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Introduction

Texts

Extended Mahāvaṃsa, Chapters XII-XIV, edited by G. P. Malalasekera, Colombo 1937. Reprinted by the Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1988. The text is reprinted here through the kind permission of PTS.

for the variants: Mahāvaṃsa, Chapters XII-XIV, edited by W. Geiger 1908. Reprinted by the Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1958.

The manuscripts that the text is based on are all written in, or copied from, texts written in Cambodian script, and for that reason it is sometimes known as the Cambodian Mahāvaṃsa. However just because the manuscripts are in that script cannot be taken as evidence of its provenance without further indication, which appears to be lacking.

The text has extended the first section¹ of the more usual Mahāvaṃsa in two ways: through addition and through rewriting, adding in further information, some of which, is at least *prima facie*, of some importance, though we have no way of ascertaining its authenticity, as

¹ That is, the first thirty-seven chapters, which is the original rescension of the text, written by Mahānāma in the 5th century of the Christian era.

we cannot even determine the date of the text, beyond it being after Mahānāma's text.²

In the section we are concerned with here the additions are mainly one or two line insertions that clarify, or give additional information, needed for understanding the text.³ The rewrites are generally also expansions, although occasionally they just rewrite one line or one verse with another, which the author thought clarified some point or other.⁴

In my impression this is, for the most part, done in a quite seamless way, and I think if we only had the Extended version, it would probably pass as the work of one author, except in a small number of places where there are grammatical or organisational problems of one sort or another.⁵

According to the editor⁶ the work has drawn upon the Mahāvamsa Ṭīkā (Mahāvamsa-Līnattha), the Buddhāvamsa and possibly its

² Malalasekera, on good grounds, dates it to the 9th-10th centuries: after Mahāvamsa and its Ṭīkā, and before the continuation to the text was made in the 12th century by Dhammakitti.

³ Malalasekera has made a very good comparison of the text with Mhv and its Ṭīkā (which he also edited) in the informative Introduction to his edition.

⁴ 14.26b is an instance of this.

⁵ See 13.26b-28a, where an absolutive sub-clause is left hanging without a finite verb to complete it; and the note to 13.9a where a section appears to be out of place, but it is so in both versions.

⁶ Edition, p. xl.

Commentary, Thūpavaṃsa, Mahābodhivaṃsa, Vinaya Mahāvagga, Jātakaṭṭhakathā and the Samantapāsādika for the extra material. As far as I can see it does not, however, make any direct quotes from these works, and it is still unclear whether the author had other sources available, including all importantly the Sinhala Commentaries.

Translation

As far as I know the translation presented here is the first translation into English of any section from the Extended version of the Mahāvamsa. In preparing the text and translation I have made two versions.

The first gives line by line the text and the translation. In this edition additions are marked as such, and replacements are distinguished in colour and are followed by the original text for comparative purposes. The English only version, however, dispenses with these comparisons and simply presents a rewritten and more fluent translation of the Extended Text.

Places and People

The text concerned is mainly of importance for the information it gives on the spread of Buddhism in the early period of the Dispensation. It provides that information not only as to *where* the religion spread, but also, and perhaps equally important, as to *how* it spread.

As for *where*, the Missions seem to have gone out in all directions: taking Asoka's capital Pātaḷiputta as the centre of the radius, we can see that the Missions went to the North, to Kasmīra-Gandhāra⁷ and to the Himālayan regions; in the West to the Ionian districts,⁸ Aparantikā and Mahārāṭṭha; further South to Vanavāsī and Mahisamaṇḍala, and on to Sri Laṅkā. And in the East, if indeed that is where it is, to Suvaṇṇabhūmi.⁹

In the text below v. 12.7 includes the important information, that besides the monks who were named as the missionaries, there were also other monks accompanying them. We may infer as much, as they would be needed for the ordinations that were given, but some have argued that there were already monks present in the areas visited.¹⁰ Although that is not impossible, given the addition here it would also not be necessary either, and it seems to me that the monks would not have travelled alone on such important missions, but in company of other monks, even when they are only named in the case of Mahinda's mission, which is, in any case, dealt with in much more detail.

⁷ Seemingly treated as one country or district, see the note to v. 3 below.

⁸ Probably around modern-day Pakistan, following the Greek armies had of Alexandria, during his push to the East.

⁹ The location of which is very disputed, and there is no clear answer to where it was. Some believe it was lower Burma, others Central Thailand and still others in India itself. On another occasion the name refers to a site in Sumatra.

¹⁰ See Prapod Assavariruhlakarn: *The Ascendency of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, p. 61 (Silkworm Books, Bangkok, 2010).

We can compare for this v. 6, which simply says: “He¹¹ sent the Elder Majjhima to the Himālayan districts.” But later when we come to v. 45-47 the text itself states that at least four other Elders accompanied him, and that between them they converted five countries.

Methods of Conversion

As to how the Missions went about their work, that also is very interesting. Gathering the evidence here we can see that it was not simply a didactic exercise, in many places the monks had first to prove that their powers were superior to the local deities – Nāgas, Yakkhas and the like – which they encountered in the border countries.

One of the most dramatic accounts is the first one given in detail of Majjhantika in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, who overcame the Nāga King Āravāla and his companions, established them in the Refuges and Precepts and gave them good advice on proper behaviour before giving any formal Dhamma teaching to the populace.

A similar story is told of the two Elders Soṇa and Uttara, who were sent to Suvaṇṇabhūmi, and defeated a demoness who was eating all the children born in the King's palace. One of the Elders created with his psychic powers a larger army of demons and chased the original group out. Again this is before any formal teaching took place.

In other cases a display of supernatural powers certainly is said to have helped: Rakkhita stood in the sky to do his preaching in

¹¹ It refers to the Elder Moggalitissa, who directed the Missions.

Vanavāsī. Mahinda was able, through his psychic powers, to hide – and later reveal – his companions, and also showed his powers by speaking the King's name before it was given.¹² Even the novice Sumana who accompanied them on the Mission made his voice heard over the whole Island, announcing the time for the teaching.

Not that the teaching was unimportant, indeed in some cases it appears to have been all that was needed: Mahādeva in Mahisamaṇḍala, Dhammarakkhita in Aparantikā, Mahādhammarakkhita in Mahāraṭṭha, Mahārakkhita amongst the Ionians and Majjhima and his companions in the Himālaya had no other recourse but the teaching, at least in the way it is recorded here.¹³

The Results

In all cases, however, eventually it was the teaching that brought about the conversions, and with them numbers of ordinations, and thereby the final establishment of the Dispensation in the country. And here there is another important thing to note: although in some cases it is only stated that ordinations took place, in others it specifies how many were male and how many female, and the latter were occasionally in the majority, as in Aparantikā.¹⁴

¹² This at least seems to be the purport of this obscure passage.

¹³ It is interesting to note that the most popular teachings were either similes or stories of Heaven and Hell.

¹⁴ See v. 40 below.

In Suvāṇṇabhūmi also one and a half thousand women are said to have gone forth; and famously in Sri Laṅkā Mahinda had to send back to the home country and get his sister Saṅghamittā to come to give Bhikkhuni ordination to Queen Anulā and one thousand of the palace women.¹⁵

One more important thing to notice is the record of the attainments: eighty thousand in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, forty thousand in Mahisamaṇḍala, sixty thousand in Vanavāsī, thirty-seven thousand in Aparantikā, eighty-four thousand in Mahāraṭṭha, one hundred and seventy thousand amongst the Ionians, eight-hundred million in the Himālaya, sixty thousand in Suvāṇṇabhūmi and but a thousand in Laṅkā.

Evidently these figures cannot be taken literally, but they surely do reflect a remembrance about the Missions, as they are said to have occurred in every district reported.

What we have here then is perhaps not so much an accurate, newspaper-like report of the Missions, which is something we have no right to expect anyway. But certainly we can understand that, for the compilers, these reports of overcoming local dieties, the displays of magical powers and attainments were at least as an important part of the Missions' successes, as the teaching of the Dhamma, the large-scale conversions and ordinations were, and were probably regarded as no more exceptional than them either.

¹⁵ I hope this part of the story will be told in another translation later.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu

March 2012

XII. Faith in Various Districts

1. Summary (vv. 1-9)¹⁶

The Elder Moggaliputta, the light of the Dispensation of the Victor,¹⁷ having brought the Third Council¹⁸ to a close, while looking towards the future and to the establishment of the Dispensation in the border countries, during the month of Kattika¹⁹ sent various Elders on Mission here and there.

He sent the Elder Majjhantika to Kasmīra-Gandhāra,²⁰ saying: “Establish the Dispensation there in the country.” He sent the Elder Mahādeva to Mahisamaṇḍala. To Vanavāsī he sent the Elder Rakkhita by name. The Ionian²¹ by name Dhammarakkhita he sent to Aparantikā.

¹⁶ The titles within the chapter are given by the translator to help give context.

¹⁷ I.e. the Buddha, often called Jina or Victor in the texts.

¹⁸ Traditionally said to have been called by King Asoka after purifying the Sangha, and intended to confirm the true teachings. The traditional date is around 250 years after the Buddha's parinibbāna. However, Asoka doesn't mention it in his Edicts, which must put at least his part in the Council in doubt.

¹⁹ I.e. November.

²⁰ Text: *Kasmīrā*, treating them as two here, but referential *raṭṭhasmiṃ* below is singular. There is a map showing the locations of these destinations here: <http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Maps/Map-12-Asokan-Missions.htm>.

²¹ Or, we might say now, the Greek.

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To Mahāraṭṭha²² he sent the Elder by name Mahādhammarakkhita. He sent to the Ionians the Elder Mahārakkhita. He sent the Elder Majjhima to the Himālayan²³ districts. To Suvaṇṇabhūmi he sent two Elders, Soṇa and Uttara.

All of these Great Elders went with five besides themselves, to be able to give the higher ordination in the border countries.²⁴

He sent these five Elders: the Great Elder Mahinda, and the Elders Iṭṭhiya and Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasāla,²⁵ his attendant monks, saying: “You must establish in the pleasant Isle of Laṅkā the pleasant Dispensation of the Victor.”

2. Majjhantika in Kasmīra-Gandhāra (vv. 10-32)

Then in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, the Nāga King Āravāla, the one of great power, destroyed the ripe crops by making the rain known as hail fall into the lake,²⁶ and all was violently upset.

²² Now called Maharashtra.

²³ Lit: *place endowed with snow*.

²⁴ See the introduction for a consideration of the importance of this addition.

²⁵ From the text below we know that two others accompanied Mahinda to Laṅkā, they are the novice Sumana, and the upāsaka Bhaṇḍuka.

²⁶ *Samudda* normally means ocean or sea, but Kasmīra-Gandhāra was a long way away from the ocean, and the word can cover any large body of water, which is what is meant here.

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The Elder Majjhantika went quickly through the air and walked up and down on the top of Āravāla's lake, then he stopped and having sat down, he instantly lay down.

Seeing that, the young Nāgas became angry and informed the Nāga King, saying: “God-King! This solitary shaveling covered with only one cloth²⁷ lay down on this lake²⁸ of water and is now walking up and down on it.”

Having heard their words the Nāga King, of great power, came out from his dwelling and did various fearful things: great winds did blow, a cloud thundered and rained, thunderbolts crashed, lightning struck here and there, trees and the tops of the mountains all fell down, and deformed Nāgas frightened people on all sides.

He himself angrily fumed and burned in many ways, and he sent all the Nāgas, saying: “Please go, seize and kill them.”

The Elder having repelled all those fearful things with his psychic power said this to the Nāga King, showing his supreme strength: “If the world together with its gods were to try to frighten me they would not be able to give rise to fear and fright in me.

²⁷ This must be reporting the Nāgas' impression, as monks necessarily have three robes: a lower robe covering the waist and legs, an upper robe covering the body, and an outer robe, similar to the upper robe, but thicker to protect against cold weather.

²⁸ Cf. SED: *karṣū*, *Us f. (Uṇ. i, 82) a furrow, trench, incision ŚBr. KātyŚr. &c.; a river, canal...*

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Even if you took up the whole earth with its oceans and mountains, Great Nāga, and were to throw them at me from on high, there is no possibility of giving rise to fear and fright in me. Assuredly, it would only be for your own distress, Snake-King.”

Having heard that, he was crushed, and the Elder taught the Dhamma, and the Nāga King was established in the Refuges and Precepts, and there and then eighty-four thousand Serpents²⁹ were also very quickly established in the Refuges and Precepts.

In the Himālaya many Gandhabbas, Yakkhas and Kumbhaṇḍakas, very quickly had been established in the Refuges and Precepts, but the Yakkha named Bhaṇḍaka, together with the Yakkhinī Hāritā, and their five-hundred children attained Path and Fruit.

Then the Elder Majjhantika said this to all the Nāgas: “Do not give rise to anger in the future as in the past, do not destroy the crops, for breathing beings desire happiness. Develop loving-kindness towards beings, let humans live happily.” Like this they were admonished and they henceforth followed the path.

Then the Snake-King made the Elder sit down on a jewelled couch and stood near by fanning him. The humans who were residing in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, in order to worship the Nāga King, after discussing the Elder of great power and worshipping the Elder, sat down on one side.

²⁹ Another term for Nāgas.

The Elder taught them the Dhamma about the Simile of the Poisonous Snake.³⁰ For eighty thousand of them there was a penetration³¹ of the Dhamma, and one-hundred thousand men went forth³² in the presence of the Elder.

Since that time until now those in Kasmīra-Gandhāra are light up with the monastic robe, finding support in the three objects.³³

3. Mahādeva in Mahisamaṇḍala (vv. 33-34)

The Elder Mahādeva went to the district of Mahisamaṇḍala and preached the Discourse on the Divine Messengers³⁴ in the midst of the people. Forty thousand people purified the Dhamma-Eye,³⁵ and forty thousand people went forth in his presence.

³⁰ Probably SN 35. sut. 238, although there are others that include a relevant simile. An appropriate simile for Nāgas to learn, there four poisonous snakes represent the four elements, which are subject to disintegration.

³¹ I.e. they attained Path and Fruit. *Abhisamaya* is the noun regularly used in this connection. Cf. *passim*.

³² I.e. ordained as monks. Technically *pabbajjā* is the lower ordination, which is normally followed by *upasampadā*. But here and elsewhere in this text it appears to be used as a shorthand to indicate both. It appears from this again, that Majjhantika must have been the leader, and was probably accompanied by at least four other monks, to make up the number required to give the higher ordination.

³³ The three objects of reverence, i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

³⁴ MN 130. Another simile, this time about the signs of sickness, old age and death, which one heedless ignores.

³⁵ I.e. they attained path and fruit.

4. Rakkhita in Vanavāsī (vv. 35-37)

The Elder Rakkhita went to Vanavāsī and while standing in the sky preached the Thematic Discourses on the Unknown Beginning³⁶ in the midst of the people. For sixty-thousand people there was a penetration of the Dhamma, and around thirty-seven thousand went forth in his presence.

Five hundred monastic dwelling places were established in this district, and the Elder established the Dispensation of the Victor³⁷ in that place.

5. Dhammarakkhita in Aparantakā (vv. 38-40)

The Ionian Elder Dhammarakkhita went to Aparantikā and preached the Discourse on the Simile of the Mass of Fire³⁸ in the midst of the people, and thirty-seven thousand breathing beings who had assembled together tasted³⁹ the Deathless Dhamma of the one skilled in what was Dhamma and not Dhamma.

A thousand of men and even more women than that from the Noble families, having renounced the world, went forth.

³⁶ SN 15. Similes about the extreme length of Saṃsāra.

³⁷ Another epithet for the Buddha.

³⁸ AN Bk. 7 sutta 68, on the preference of embracing fire over embracing a woman.

³⁹ Lit. *drank*.

6. Mahādhammarakkhita in Mahāraṭṭha (vv. 41-42)

The Seer Mahādhammarakkhita went to Mahāraṭṭha and preached the Birth Story called Mahānāradakassapa⁴⁰ in that place. Eighty-four thousand people attained Path and Fruit but thirteen thousand people went forth in his presence.

7. Mahārakkhita amongst the Ionians (vv. 43-44)

The Seer Mahārakkhita went to the locality of the Ionians⁴¹ and preached the Kāḷakārāma Discourse⁴² in the midst of the people, and one hundred and seventy thousand breathing beings attained Path and Fruit, and one thousand went forth.

8. Majjhima in the Himālaya (vv. 45-47)

The Seer Majjhima, together with four Elders,⁴³ went into the Himālaya district and Set Rolling the Dhamma Wheel,⁴⁴ and eight-hundred million breathing beings attained Path and Fruit.

⁴⁰ Ja 544. On Heaven and Hell.

⁴¹ This was probably not Ionia itself, but where the Greeks were still stationed on the edge of India, possibly around what is now Pakistan, following the campaigns of Alexandria the Great.

⁴² AN Bk. 4 sut. 24. On the lack of conceit in the Buddha in regard to sense objects.

⁴³ According to the Dīpavaṃsa the companions were named Kassapagotta, Durāsada (= Dundhubhissara in MhvṬ), Sahadeva and Mūlakadeva, though these names are given in different forms elsewhere.

Seperately these five Elders brought faith to five countries, and a hundred thousand men in the presence of each of the Elders went forth,⁴⁵ having faith in the Dispensation of the Perfect Sambuddha.

9. Soṇa and Uttara in Suvanṇabhūmi (vv. 48-62)

The Edler Uttara together with the Elder Soṇa, of great psychic power, went to Suvanṇabhūmi, but at that time whenever children were born in the King's Palace, a fierce demoness, having left the ocean and eaten it, would then depart.

Then in the King's Palace a prince had been born and people, having seen the Elders, thought: 'These are friends of the demons.' Thus thinking to kill them they approached with weapons.

Having seen them holding weapons in their hands, he asked: "Why did you come?"

"These children born in a Royal family are eaten by many demons, and you are friends with these demons."

When this was said, those Elders said this to those people: "We are virtous ascetics, who are restrained from killing breathing beings, having unmatched goodness, we are not friends of the demoness."

⁴⁴ A play on words, the Dhammacakkappavattana, which was the First Discourse of the Buddha, is found at SN 56.11.

⁴⁵ That means, I believe, a hundred thousand went forth in the presence of each of the Elders.

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At that moment the demoness said to her assembly: “I will eat the children”, and quickly left from the waters. Having seen them, the multitude cried out a loud cry: “The noble⁴⁶ demons have come to eat us all!”

The Elder, having created twice as many fearful demons, surrounded that demoness and her assembly on all sides. After seeing that created demoness' assembly in all directions and considering: ‘This is now theirs’, fearfully she ran away.

Having placed a protection of that district on all sides the Edler taught the Brahmajāla Discourse⁴⁷ in that gathering, and set up the multitude in the Refuges and Precepts.

But for sixty thousand there was a penetration of the Dhamma, and three and a half thousand sons of good families went forth. One and half thousand daughters of good families also went forth.

Since that time when a prince was born in the King's Palace the Kings gave them the names of Soṇa and Uttara.

The very sympathetic Victor, gave up and renounced attainment of the Deathless happiness, and sought⁴⁸ the

⁴⁶ A strange epithet to use here.

⁴⁷ DN 1.

⁴⁸ Karimsu is plural, which doesn't fit with the subject.

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benefit of the world here and there. Whoever would benefit the world needs also be heedful.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Twelfth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Faith in Various Districts*

XIII. Mahinda's Journey

1. To Vedisa (vv. 1-8)

Then the Great Elder Mahinda, who had twelve Rains,⁴⁹ being of great intelligence, when ordered by his preceptor and the Community to bring faith to the Lankan Isle sought the right time and thought: 'King Muṭasiva is old, he is unable to uphold the Dispensation, if his son Piyatissa were to become King he would be able to uphold the Dispensation of the Teacher, therefore the time has not arrived for me to go to the Island.'

In the meantime Mahinda, having made a resolution to go later, went to the noble Dakkhiṇagiri⁵⁰ in order to see his relatives, and after worshipping his preceptor and Community, he asked the King⁵¹ and took with him four Elders, and his sister Saṅghamittā's son, the novice Sumana, who had the six deep knowledges and great power.

To give favour to his relatives he went to Dakkhiṇagiri and while walking from one place to the other six months passed by. Having by and by reached his Mother Devī's city Vedisagiri he saw his Mother,

⁴⁹ In the monastic life seniority is counted by the number of Rains Retreats one has completed. At twelve Rains Mahinda would still be quite a young monk.

⁵⁰ It was a state (janapada) situated more or less where Madhya Pradesh is now, having Ujjeni (modern Ujjain) as capital.

⁵¹ King Asoka, his Father.

and when Devī had seen her dear son she prepared food for him and his assembly and made the lovely monastery called Vedisagiri, and then announced it to the Elder.

2. Asoka's Children in Avanti (vv. 9-13)

While he was enjoying the country of Avanti, which was given to him by his Father, Prince Asoka, on his journey to the city of Ujjenī arrived at the city of Vedisa and dwelt in that noble city. Receiving there a girl named Devī, a merchant's daughter, he took ahold of that beautiful and handsome girl in the noble city of Vedisa, cohabited with her, and through him she conceived⁵² a child.

In Ujjenī she gave birth to a son, prince Mahinda, and after two years had passed also to a daughter Saṅghamittā,⁵³ and fourteen years after his child, he attained his coronation. At that time she⁵⁴ was dwelling in the city of Vedisa.

⁵² Lit: *an embryo took hold*.

⁵³ It is clear from this that Devī was more of a courtesan, and not the main Queen (Aggamahesī), who is named elsewhere in the Chronicle (5.85) as Asandhamittā; the latter died quite early and Asoka then raised Tissarakkhā to Queen.

⁵⁴ Presumably referring to Devī.

3. Determining the Time (vv. 12-21)

Then the Elder, after residing there, thinking: ‘This is the right time,’ and ‘in the coronation festival which is ordered by my Father the Great King Devānampiyatissa will partake,⁵⁵ and having heard about the virtues of the Three Objects from the envoy may he understand. May he ascend mount Missa⁵⁶ on the fast day⁵⁷ in the month of Jeṭṭha,⁵⁸ and we will go on the same day to the noble Isle of Laṅkā.’

Then the god Inda⁵⁹ came into the presence of the Elder and Sakka said this to the Great and Supreme Elder Mahinda: “Venerable Sir, now the King Muṭasiva has died and his son Devānampiyatissa⁶⁰ is ruling the country, therefore, venerable Sir, this is the right time to go to the Island, go to bring faith to Laṅkā, as predicted by the Sambuddha, and we will provide the support for you there.”

⁵⁵ Although he partook in the coronation, it appears he did so without attending, probably simply by sending tribute and good wishes.

⁵⁶ Later called Mahintale, i.e. *Mahinda's Plain*.

⁵⁷ That is on the Full Moon day, the fast days are observed on the New Moon and Full Moon days.

⁵⁸ The month after Visakhā, normally falling in June.

⁵⁹ Also called Sakka below.

⁶⁰ The name means: Tissa, Beloved of the Gods.

Devī's sister's daughter's son,⁶¹ Bhaṇḍuka by name, having heard the Dhamma preached by the Elder to Devī and attained the Fruit of Non-Returner, dwelt in the presence of the Elder.

4. Arrival in Laṅkā (vv. 22-29)

After dwelling in the delightful city of Vedisa for thirty nights thinking: ‘This is the right time for the journey’, he said: “We will go now to the supreme Isle,” and having advised them thus on the fast day of the month of Jeṭṭha⁶² the Elder Mahinda, with the four Elders, Sumana and Bhaṇḍu the householder, by announcing their humanity,⁶³ having risen in succession from the monastery into the clouds those Elders, shining like kings of geese in the sky, in an instant came here and stood resembling clouds on the mountain there on the top of the delightful mount Missaka.

Standing like geese on the mountain peak were the Community Elder known by the name of Mahinda, then the Elders Iṭṭhiya, Uttiya, Bhaddasāla and Sambala and the novice Sumana, who had the six deep knowledges and great power, and the young man Bhaṇḍuka, these seven who had seen the Truth. Thus these Great Elders lit up the Isle of Laṅkā.

⁶¹ I.e. Devī's grand-nephew.

⁶² Normally falling in June.

⁶³ The text must be corrupt here, as there is no need to announce their humanity! *Vaṃsaṭṭhappakāsinī*: *manussabhāvajānanāya*.

XIII. Mahinda's Journey – 25

As predicted by the Sage on his last resting place⁶⁴ for the benefit of Laṅkā, through the virtue of the faith of Laṅkā, he who, through being of benefit to Laṅkā, was like the Teacher,⁶⁵ through the protective gods of Laṅkā came to reside there.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Thirteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Mahinda's Journey*

⁶⁴ I.e. the Buddha on his death bed in Kusināra.

⁶⁵ I.e. Mahinda.

XIV. Entry into the City

1. The Meeting (vv. 1-15)

Over two hundred years after the Emancipation of the Sambuddha Mahinda established the Dispensation in this Isle on the very day the root of the constellation of Jeṭṭha was reached.⁶⁶

The King assembled his ministers there in the city and had it proclaimed: “Please call a festival for us.”

The King Devānampiyatissa, having given a water-sport for the city-dwellers, went for the sport of deer-hunting. Surrounded by forty-thousand of his men running on foot he came to mount Missaka.

The god of the mountain, wishing to show him the Elders took a form like an elk grazing in the thicket. The King, having seen him, thinking: ‘It is not proper to shoot one who is heedless,’ therefore struck his bow-string, and the elk ran to the top of Ambatthala,⁶⁷ and pursuing from behind he also ascended Ambatthala.

The King chased along, but he ran within the presence of the Elders, and with the Elders not so distant the elk himself vanished. The Elder, thinking: ‘Seeing many people he will be fearful,’ determined: ‘Let the

⁶⁶ I.e. the full moon day in May-June.

⁶⁷ A plain in front of the Missika mountain, it means: Mango Plain.

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King see no one other than myself,' and having made the resolution he showed himself immediately.

Having seen the King come, Mahinda came from afar, and the Elder said: "Tissa, Tissa, come hence!" Having heard the word 'Tissa' the fearful King reflected: 'There is some other man by name Tissa born here in this Isle, for one who is able to speak my name is not found,⁶⁸ but this solitary shaveling, wearing his patchwork robe, a cloth died with yellow dye, called me by name Tissa. What is this: a human or a non-human being?'

Understanding the King's thoughts the Elder said this: "We are ascetics, Great King, disciples of the King of the Dhamma, having compassion on you, we have come here from the Rose-Apple Isle."

Having heard this word of the Elder, he became without fear, and remembering his friend's⁶⁹ message he considered: 'He is an ascetic'. Having put aside his bow and arrow he approached the Seer and greeting the Elder he sat down in his presence.

⁶⁸ The syntax here is very obscure, and I cannot explain *gahetvā*. In the original he appears to call the name to calm him and let him know he is a friend.

⁶⁹ Presumably meaning Asoka.

2. The Questions (vv. 16-33)

Then the men who had come with him surrounded them and he showed the rest of his friends, the Great Elders. After seeing them the King said: “When did these come?” “They came with me,” said the Elder, and again the King asked this: “Are there other strivers like these in the Rose-Apple Isle?”

He said: “The Rose-Apple Isle shines with the dyed robe, moreover in that place there are those with the Three Knowledges, psychic powers, skill in mind-reading, Worthy Ones with Divine Hearing, and many disciples of the Awakened One.”

He asked: “By what means did you come?” “Neither by land nor by water did we come,” he said, so he understood: ‘They came through the air.’

Enquiring, the One with Great Wisdom asked him a wisdom question, and one question after another the Master of the Earth answered in this way and that:

“This tree, King, what is its name?”

“The name of this tree is mango.”

“Aside from this, are there other mangos?”

“There are many mango trees.”

“Aside from this mango and those mangos, are there other trees?”

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“Venerable Sir, there are many other trees, and those trees are not mangos.”

“Aside from those mangos and those not mangos, are there other trees?”

“There is this mango tree, venerable Sir,”

“Lord of Men, you are wise!”

“Do you have relatives, King?”

“There are many, venerable Sir,”

“Are there others who are not relatives, King?”

“There are many who are not relatives,”

“Aside from these and the others, is there anyone else?”

“There is myself,”

“It is good!” he said.

Having understood: ‘He is wise,’ the Elder taught the very wise Master of the Earth the Short Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Foot.⁷⁰ At the end of the Teaching, together with forty-thousand of his men, he established him in the Refuges.

⁷⁰ MN 27. About others who come to refute the teaching of the Buddha, but end up as his disciples; and the gradual Path leading to Awakening

3. Ordination and Teaching (vv. 34-50)

In the evening an offering of food was brought to the King, then after hearing the Discourse that was spoken by Mahinda, although the Lord of the Earth knew: ‘They will not eat now’, thinking: ‘It is not suitable to eat without having asked,’ and ‘It is right to ask,’ he invited the Seers to the meal, saying: “What will you eat, venerable Sir?”

“We do not eat now.”

When this was said the King inquired: “What is the right time?”

“Starting from dawn up and till the middle of the day.”

When the right time was told, he spoke thus: “We will go to the city,”

“You go, Great King, we will take up residence here.”

“If that is so, let this young man come with us.”

“This young man has come to Path and Fruit,⁷¹ King, understood the Dispensation, and is seeking the going-forth, therefore he must dwell in our presence, we will give him the going-forth now, but you can go, Lord of the Earth.”⁷²

“In the morning I will send a chariot, standing in that you can proceed to the city,” and after worshipping the Elders he led Bhaṇḍu

⁷¹ As stated above in 13.21 he had attained the third Path and Fruit.

⁷² *Bhūmipa*, which I can't find listed anywhere, is presumably for *Bhūmipati*.

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to one side and asked what the Elder referred to, and he told the King all: “God-King! These five monks have destroyed the pollutants, they are Great Elders of Great Wisdom, who have developed analytic knowledge.”⁷³

After rejoicing: ‘I have received the Elders,’ he thought: ‘This is a gain for me.’ Because of Bhaṇḍu's lay appearance the Lord of Men lost his fear, knowing he had the nature of a man.

Saying: “We will let him go forth,” the Elder, in that village boundary gave to the young man Bhaṇḍuka the going-forth and the higher ordination, and at that very instant he also attained Worthiness.

Then the Elder addressed the novice Sumana: “Please announce the time for listening to the Dhamma now.”

“When sounding it how far, venerable Sir, shall I announce it?”

“Over the whole of Tambapaṇṇī,”⁷⁴ and when this was said, he said: “It is good!”

The novice attained a basis in the four absorptions⁷⁵ and after making a resolution and rising from it, through his own psychic power he

⁷³ It means the four branches of analytical knowledge: *attha-*, *dhamma-*, *nirutti-* & *paṭibhāna-paṭisambhidā*; *analysis of meanings, conditions, language and improvisation*.

⁷⁴ Another name for Laṅkā, some derive the word from *Tamba* + *Paṇṇī*, meaning *Copper Leaf Tree*; others associate it with the Tamil words *Tamira-barani*, meaning *Copper River*, perhaps referring to the Mahāveli River.

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three times sounded it through the whole of Laṅkā, announcing the time for the Dhamma Teaching.

The King, who was sitting on the side of the Four Nāgas tank eating, after hearing that roar, sent his ministers to them. Having quickly gone and worshipped them all, they asked: “Is there some danger?” He said, “There is no danger, the time was being announced to hear the Sambuddha's words.”

Having heard the roar of the novice, the Earth-Gods announced it too, and in succession the sound thus rose up to the Brahmā world.

With the announcement a great many gods assembled and the Elder taught the Discourse on the Peaceful Mind⁷⁶ in that assembly. An uncountable number of the gods penetrated the Dhamma and many Nāgas and Supaṇṇas were established in the Refuges.

Just as when the Elder Sāriputta spoke this Discourse an uncountable number of the gods penetrated the Dhamma, so did the gods who assembled around the Elder Mahinda.

4. Entering the Town (vv. 51-80)

At daybreak the King, having sent the driver to yoke the chariot, said: “In order to lead those Elders here go quickly to mount Missaka.”

⁷⁵ The four absorptions (*jhāna*) give one the strength of mind to effect psychic powers.

⁷⁶ AN Bk. 2, Sut. 31. On gratitude.

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After yoking and driving the chariot and putting it aside at mount Missaka, and having worshipped the Supreme Elder, he said to them: “Mount the chariot, and let us go to the city.”

“We do not mount chariots, you go and we will follow after you.”

After saying this and sending the driver away with a good and delightful mind, and ascending into the sky, at the east of the city, on the place of the First Shrine, the ones with great power descended.

On that place where the Elders first crossed over, a Shrine was made, so it is said today, and therefore it is called the First Shrine.

Having dismissed⁷⁷ the driver, the King had a pavilion made in the inner residence having a decorated canopy.⁷⁸

Having heard from the King of the Elders' virtues, all the women in the harem desired to see the Elders, therefore the Master of the Earth had a delightful pavilion made inside the Royal Grounds, covered and decorated with white cloth and flowers. Having heard in the presence of the Elder that they had given up using high seats he had a doubt: ‘Can the Elder sit down on a high seat or not?’

The driver, who was thinking about this, went to the door of the First Shrine, and having seen the Elders standing in that place, and putting

⁷⁷ Dictionaries: *pahiṇāti*, with retroflex *ṇ*. Printer's error?

⁷⁸ These two additional lines seem to only repeat what is said in verse 58 below, and one wonders whether they were meant to replace them?

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on their robes, was greatly surprised in mind, and after going to the King announced: “They are coming, God-King.”

The King, after questioning the driver, said: “Look here, did the Elders stand in the chariot or did they all come to the city on foot?”

“They did not mount the chariot, God-King, but following me they came and are now in front of the western door.”

Having heard that, he said: “These Noble ones do not desire chairs, therefore it is good to spread out a cover on the floor,” and having gone in front he respectfully worshipped the Elders, taking the Great Elder Mahinda's bowl from his hand, and with manifold respect and worship he led the Elder to the city.

Having seen the designated seats the fortune-tellers predicted: “Having taken the ground, they will be Lords of this Isle.”

The Lord of Men brought those Elders to the noble harem, and having seen the prepared seat, the Elder thought thus: ‘The noble Dispensation of the Teacher has been established in the Isle of Laṅkā, having spread a cloth on the unmoved earth it will continue.’

There they sat down on the seat of cloth, according to their worth,⁷⁹ and the King himself satisfied them with rice-gruel, staple and non-staple foods.

⁷⁹ It means that they sat in line according to their seniority.

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At the conclusion of his duties concerning the meal he sat down nearby, he had his younger Brother, the deputy King Mahānāga's wife, Anulā, who resided in the Royal Palace, summoned and said: “Pay your respects and worship in front of these.”

Queen Anulā came with five hundred women and worshipped and honoured the Elders and then took a seat on one side.

At the end of the meal duties, raining Dhamma-jewels down on the King, the Queen, the women and the multitude, the Wise One taught the Ghosts Stories and the Divine Mansions, and also the Thematic Discourses on Truth⁸⁰ to the assembled multitude, and having heard them five-hundred women attained the First Path and Fruit.

Having heard of the Elders' virtues from those who had seen them on the previous day, many desired to see the Elders, and the city-folk gathered and made a loud noise all around the King's Gates.

The King heard the commotion and questioned them and understood, and the Master of the Earth gave orders to his ministers, saying this: “Here they are all crowded together, clean up the State Elephant's stall and the city-folk can see the Elders there.”

Having cleaned up the Elephant stall and quickly decorated it with canopies and so on, they prepared the seats according to their worth,

⁸⁰ I.e Petavatthu (KN 7), Vimānavatthu (KN 6) and SN 56.

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and after going there and sitting down on the seat the Elder, the Great Preacher, preached the Discourse on the Divine Messengers.⁸¹

Having heard it, the city-folk who had gathered round, gained faith, but a thousand breathing beings attained the First Path and Fruit.

In the Isle of Laṅkā, he who was like the Teacher, the incomparable Elder, resolved on the good of Laṅkā in two places, after speaking on Dhamma in the language of the Isle he thus made the True Dhamma descend on the Isle of Light.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Fourteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Entry into the City*

⁸¹ MN 130. As Mahādeva did in Mahisamaṇḍala above, v. 33.

The first translation into English of a section from the Extended version of the Mahāvamsa. The text is mainly of importance for the information it gives on the spread of Buddhism in the early period of the Dispensation. It provides that information not only as to *where* the religion spread, but also, and perhaps equally important, as to *how* it spread.