1 Introduction

The argument of this chapter can be summarized as follows:

1. We learn from the Cūlavamsa that a monk named Jotipāla played an important role in the Buddhism of the island of Ceylon at the end of the sixth century and during the early decades of the seventh century. In a previous article, I have discussed his important role in the development of the Pāli tīkā literature.¹ In the first section of this chapter I briefly review the evidence we have for his work in Sanskrit.

2. The Visudhimagga with the Commentary written by King Parākramabāhu II (Vism-sn) cites passages from a work called the Āryasatyāvatāra (ĀS) and from another which is named either Jñeya-sampatti-ṭīkā or Jñeya-saptati-ṭīkā (JS-ṭ). Given the manner in which they are cited, it seems likely that this refers to a single work and its commentary – the Āryasatyāvatāra would be the name of a work in kārikās, which would have an accompanying commentary, both being associated with the name of Jotipāla. The Jñeya-saptati-ṭīkā would be the name of this commentary.

3. One of the views given in the JS-ṭ passages in Vism-sn is attributed in Sumangala's twelfth century commentary on the Abhidhammāvatāra (Abhidh-av-ṭ) to Jotipāla. A passage in Abhidh-av-ṭ which gives a saying of Jotipāla is described in the thirteenth century tīkā to the Saccasaṅkhepa as from the Aṅneyya-sattati-ṭīkā.

4. Vism-sn contains around sixty-six Sanskrit citations. A few of these are from general Indian sources, from the grammatical literature or from the literature of non-Theravādin forms of Buddhism. The great majority are specific to the Theriya Abhidha(r)mma tradition.

5. Conclusion: Jotipāla emerges as a major figure who defended the position of the Mahāvihāravāsins in Sanskrit, very much the literary

¹ Cousins, 2011.
language of the day. It seems likely that the Sanskrit language played a
greater role in the history of the Theriya school of Southern India and
Ceylon than has been hitherto realized. This no doubt accounts for
some of the increasing North Indian awareness of Theravāda during this
period.

2 Who was Jotipāla?

It is clear that Jotipāla was a figure of major importance in the Abhidhamma
tradition of the Mahāvihāravāsins. He is frequently cited by Sumaṅgala in the
early thirteenth century and by Parākramabāhu II in the mid thirteenth.
Indeed at Abhidh-av-ṭ II 177 and 185 he is cited with Dhammapāla in second
place! His Anuṭīkā is a commentary on the Mūla-ṭīkā of Ānanda – either the
extant one or an earlier one on which the present Anuṭīkā is based. The ideas
of Ānanda are extremely important to the development of the Abhidhamma
component of the ṭīkās, but completely unknown even to Nidd-a and Paṭis-a.
If he is identified, as seems likely, with the Jotipāla mentioned in the Ćulavaṃsa,
then his floruit would be ca. 600 CE.

Heinz Bechert points out that Mahāyāna influences reached their zenith in
Ceylon in the eighth and early ninth centuries.² This receives striking support
for the present period from the accounts of Xuanzang 玄奘, writing only a little
earlier. According to the Chinese pilgrim, there were 10,000 ‘Sthavira’ monks in
100 monasteries in the Tamil country and 20,000 ‘Mahāyāna Sthavira’ monks
in 200 monasteries in Ceylon.³ These are clearly intended as round figures
but even so there are obvious problems. The ‘Mahāyāna Sthaviras’ in Ceylon
and at Bodhgayā can only refer to the Dhammarucikas (and Sāgalikas?), but
the Mahāvihāra tradition cannot have been totally absent from the island!
Xuanzang must be getting his information on Ceylon from Mahāyānist sources,
probably directly or indirectly from the monks of Bodhgayā – possibly it was
simply assumed that all monks in the island were of the same school as those
present in the north of India. I take it that in ‘Mahāyāna Sthavira’ ‘Mahāyāna’
is an epithet, not part of a school name and simply means Sthaviras who also
practice Mahāyāna.⁴

The information concerning the Tamil country which Xuanzang may have
visited in person might be more reliable. Even so it cannot be literally true. We

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⁴ A different view: Deeg, 2012.