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Buddhism in Tamilland

The Complexity of Buddhism among Tamil Speakers

Aśoka's Buddhist mission halted in Āntiram (Andhra) in South India, but there were other ways of introducing Buddhism to the further South, to what is called Tamilland (*tamiḷakam*), namely by pilgrimages, trade and royal decree. Buddhism was introduced from the ultimate South too, which is named *īlam* in Tamil and *lankā* in Sanskrit and Pali. It was tamilised into *ilāṅkai* (Schalk 2004a). *īlam* (Ealam, Eelam) refers to the whole island. *tamiḷīlam* (Tamil Ealam) refers in the political rhetoric of the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement to the Northern and Eastern Province.

Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in its historical development is complex. It consists of two main branches. One branch consists of Tamil speakers who have been converted by Buddhists from Caivam/Vaiṇavam in the process of acculturation to Sanskrit or Pali Buddhism and later to Sinhala Buddhism in Īlam/Lanka. This Buddhism is Theravāda, interpreted in the light of a chronicle tradition known as Mahāvamṣa, and other chronicle works. This acculturated Buddhism is visible today in the Northeast of Īlam/Lanka. From Caivam converted Buddhists switch over to use Sanskrit or Pali or Sinhala in Īlam/Lanka when referring to key terms and concepts in Buddhism. They say, for example, *karman* and marginalise *viṇai*. Converters are Sinhala speaking Buddhist monks. The converted are called apostates condescendingly by their former Caiva/Vaiṇava community of Tamil speakers.

Another branch consists of Tamil speakers who have encultured or even incultured Buddhism into their Caivam/Vaiṇavam. They see Buddhism with the eyes of a Caiva/Vaiṇava. They say *viṇai* and marginalise *karman*.

There is also the phenomenon of inculturation. The difference between encultured and incultured is different degrees of indigenisation of Buddhism into Tamil culture. The former produced hybrid forms of Buddhism and Caivam/Vaiṇavam,

for example, in Cōla Buddhism. The latter has passed the stage of hybridity and has interpreted Buddhism in the light of Caivam/Vaiṇavam. Hybridity or even loss of Buddhist identity is the end station of a process of complete inculturation of Buddhism into Caivam/Vaiṇavam.

Indigenisation refers here not least to the use of the language Tamil. Sanskrit and Pali terms and concepts have in the past been translated or better transcreated into Tamil (Velupillai 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c), and there is today the pretentiousness that Buddhism was and is part of Tamil culture. Indigenised Buddhism among Tamils belongs to the past, but the past is retrieved by the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement which tries to show that Buddhism in the Tamil “Home-land” was Tamil, not Sinhala.

Complexity also touches other areas. We must distinguish between Tamilland and Īlam/Lanka, between different languages, periods and regions, and finally between different interests among Buddhists among Tamil speakers, religious and political.

Tamil religious culture was and still is dominated by Caivam/Vaiṇavam, even in the diaspora (Schalk 2004 b). Therefore, Buddhism among Tamil speakers in its three branches should always be related to Caivam/Vaiṇavam during different periods.

Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in its indigenised, encultured and incultured branch appears as Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna. It contains elements of all of them as well as different languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala and Tamil. During the colonial and postcolonial period, even English became a source language. This branch of Buddhism is not bound to one school or sect: it is therefore not tied to any schools’ or sect’s canon (Schalk 2011a), but the acculturated branch is in Īlam/Lanka Sinhala Buddhism using Pali only.

To summarise: “Tamil Buddhist” refers to a person whose mother tongue is Tamil and who confesses to being a converted person from Caivam/Vaiṇavam to Buddhism. “Tamil” does here not refer to his form of Buddhism but his mother tongue. His/her Buddhism may be transmitted in Sanskrit, Pali or Sinhala. This use of “Tamil Buddhist” is today common among political Sinhala Buddhists who acculturate into their political culture Tamil speakers in the Northeast of Īlam/Lanka. Political Sinhala Buddhists accept that Tamil is used during a transitional period.

“Tamil Buddhist” may also refer to a person whose mother tongue is Tamil and whose Buddhism has been encultured or even incultured by Caivam/Vaiṇavam and is part of Tamil culture. This use of “Tamil Buddhist” is today common among members of the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement, which accepts encultured and incultured but not acculturated Buddhism, which is connected by the Government of Sri Lanka with a political agenda for cultural sovereignty.

There is no such thing, it seems, as uniform Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in Tamilland and Īlam/Lanka – not even on the score of language. This lack of coherence and the plurality of contents and practises should, however, not prevent us from identifying shifting profiles of Buddhism among Tamil Speakers during periods. Such profiles have dominant religious elements which constitute their profiles. One such profile is, for example, Cōḷa Buddhism (*BaT 2*: 514–518).

On Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in Tamilland

Tamiḷakam means Tamilland. In the pre-colonial period, it referred to the South Indian east coast, South of Āntiram, from Veṅkaṭam to Kanyakumarī (Cape Comorin) including roughly Tamiḷnāṭu (Tamilnadu) and Kēraḷam (Kerala). During the colonial period, a parallel use appeared including the Ceylon area of Tamil speakers too. In widespread use today, Tamilland is idealised: wherever Tamil speakers live is Tamilland. In this article, Tamilland refers to the colonial reference, including South India and Ceylon/Lanka/Īlam.

Let us look at South India first. We turn towards the Pallava period. There is no *institutional* evidence for Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in Tamilland before the Pallavas (*BaT 1*: 83–84, 206, 238–347, Schalk 1994). This statement refers to the present state of all sources made available.

Turaicāmi Tayāḷaṅ, from the Archaeological Survey of India, has registered 80 sites of vestiges still unearthed in Tamilland (*BaT 2*: 559–568); he also has concluded that Buddhism starts with the Pallavas (*BaT 2*: 559). The Pallava period started in ca 400 and ended in about 850. The rulers did not promote Buddhism (*BaT 1*: 66–67, 378) and the Buddhist institutions were in a state of decay caused by a massive attack by the *bhakti/patti*-movement (*BaT 1*: 379, 420–421, 446–486). The Puttar (Buddha) was depicted as being bewildered (*BaT 1*: 382).

We have a piece of useful knowledge about the first Buddhist artefacts in the Tamilland (Schalk 1998). Buddhism was still in the process of being encultured into Tamil culture.

The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang's reports from the seventh century are unreliable when it comes to statistics, but he establishes the fact of the existence of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna institutions in the Tamilland (*BaT 1*: 285–290, 400–403). Sanskrit Teachers' had their influence outside Tamilland (*BaT 1*: 383–387) and the Pāli Teachers marginalised themselves as they insisted on refusing the use of Tamil (*BaT 1*: 387–395).

Kāñci was not a Buddhist site where Buddhism has centralised administratively during the Pallavas (*BaT 1*: 381, 395–397). The *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai tuṟavu* cannot be exploited for backing the statement that Buddhism

flourished in Kāñci (*BaT 1*: 397–400). The rulers of the Pallava dynasty deselected Buddhism consciously (*BaT 1*: 397–420). The reason for this was not only religious but also political (*BaT 1*: 408–413, 421–430, *BaT 2*: 835–842). Narasiṃhavarman II is allegedly an exception. He supposedly built a *vihāra* at Nāka-pattiṇam in the shift from the 7th to 8th century. This initiative cannot, however, be verified (*BaT 1*: 403–408).

The influence of Buddhism in the modern period in Tamilland on literature and social reform movements is insignificant, limited, arbitrary and personalised, in short, contingent (*BaT 1*: 28–29). Possible reasons for the marginalisation and final extinction of Buddhism in Tamilland are given, including intra- and inter-state conflicts with Īlam (*BaT 1*: 83–84, 408–430).

What can we say positively about Buddhism in Tamilland during the Pallavas? I refer to the establishment of the Buddha Monastery in Kāviriṃpūmpattiṇam from the 4th–5th century (*BaT 1*: 430–444). Its original name is unknown. This establishment is the oldest preserved Buddhist *institution* in Tamilland (*BaT 1*: 66–67). The influence from Āntiram is visible in the artefacts (*BaT 1*: 436–438, 444) and the place was well-known in Īlam/Lanka in the *Sīthalavatthuppakaraṇa* as a passage for pilgrims to Northern India (*BaT 1*: 431).

Kāviriṃpūmpattiṇam was situated in the area of the ancient Cōlas which was conquered by the Pallavas. The Buddhist institution was founded before that conquest and had, therefore, nothing to do with the Pallava rulers. True, they tolerated its existence, but the general impression is that they exposed Buddhism to decay (*BaT 1*: 378–430). There is a detailed description of this critical place which can be called the cradle of Buddhism in Tamilland (*BaT*: 430–446). Turaicāmi Tayāḷaṅ has given an illustrative picture of Kāveriṃpūmpattiṇam as a cosmopolitan centre of ancient Tamilland (Dayalan 2019). Irāmacantiraṅ Nākakuvāmi (Rāmachandran Nagaswamy) has made an in-depth study of the Buddhist images and sacred architecture in Kāviriṃpūmpattiṇam and other places (*BaT 1*: 127–129).

In this area of the old Cōlas, we also find a monk known as Coḷika Saṃghamitta in the reign of King Goṭhābaya (309–322 or 249–262). The monk's story is told in the *Mahāvamsa* 36: 110–113. It tells about his travelling between this area and the island (*BaT 1*: 444–446).

We conclude that both Āntiram and Īlam influenced Kāviriṃpūmpattiṇam and that the finds show Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna expressions (*BaT 1*: 285–290).

From the time of Narasiṃhavarman's II rule is a record about a Buddhist monk, Vajrabodhi by name, who was skilled in tantric rituals, but this monk left the Pallava court for China and therefore no trace is visible in the form of successors in the Pallava area (*BaT 1*: 405–406). We can add Vajrayāna to the collection of Buddhist currents of ideas during the Pallavas.

The contemporary retrieval of Bodhidharma as a son of a Pallava King has no basis in Tamil sources; it depends on an individual non-consensual reading of a Chinese origin. The present inflating of wishful thinking in visual media about an invented personal history of Bodhidharma in Tamilnāṭu may help to create interest for Tamil Buddhism, but it is done in a way that may lead to a disappointment when facing the void. We do not find an indigenous form of Buddhism among Tamil speakers related to the Pallava Court, but we see a document written in Sanskrit at the Court by Mahendra Vikrāma Pallava in about 600. It is called *Mat-tavilāsa prahasana* and describes Buddhism as a religion in decay (*BaT 1*: 116–118). It shows that the Court acted not out of pure xenophobia against Buddhism. It tried to argue with many examples that Buddhism was allegedly unworthy to exist within Pallava culture. The Pali commentators in Tamilland had difficulties in acculturating Caivas and Vaiṇavas.

Literary Tamil Buddhist Works

We must turn to the civil Society outside the Court to find pro-Buddhist literary creations, to the *Cilappatikāram* which has references to Buddhist institutions, and to the work *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* which is a missiological Buddhist work (Pathmanathan 1997). In *BWPE* is an introduction which summarises the research on *Maṇimēkalai tuṟavu* about the *Cilappatikāram* about earlier research, authorship, genre, dating, sectarian affiliation, historical setting, interpretative themes like causation, Gods and the Buddha, the soul, the *amuta curapi*, “reformed Buddhism”, rituals, and gender (*BWPE*: 9–34). These two literary creations do not represent specified schools/sects, but especially *Maṇimēkalai tuṟavu* has much information about non-Buddhist schools. This information has been worked upon by the author Cāttaṅār into a personalised version of indigenised or enculturated Buddhism among Tamil speakers. Ālvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai has reasonably decided the date of this work until about 550 (*BWPE*: 16–21, 54–57). We accept this dating until other new facts appear.

Ālvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai also emphasises the way Cāttaṅār has indigenised or enculturated Buddhism by communicating a broad set of Buddhist terms in Tamil as translations from Sanskrit and Pāli (*BWPE*: 75–80, 90–91, 94. Monius 2001). This translating is a significant part of the profile of Buddhism during the Pallava period alongside with the pluralism of traditional Buddhist ideas. Let us give two examples of the former: Anne Monius and Araṅkarācaṅ Vijayalaṭcumi have focussed in a study how Cāttaṅār has used the concept of *karman* in his Tamil translation *viṇai* in a similar but not identical way as was done by the Sarvāstivādins in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam* (Monius 1997).

Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai has made an in-depth study of the concept of rebirth in *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* and noted an abundance of stories about rebirth which contrasts sharply with the scarcity of such stories in other Tamil narrative poems (Veluppillai 1997).

A continuous debate is going on today between scholars as to whether *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* should be read as a source for historical facts as does Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai or as a dream book as does David Shulman (Shulman 1997).

From the time of Cāttaṅār, Buddhism is classified not just a contingent expression of religiosity, but as a religion, as an autonomous institution, alongside with other religions, but as the ultimate one, in Cāttaṅār's evaluation. *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* would have been a good start for the formation of an institutionalised, and indigenised Buddhism among Tamil Speakers (Schalk 2012) were it not for the fact, shown by Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai, that this work was forgotten; it had no continuous reception. Only in the 1890s with Caminātaiyar's edition was this work retrieved from oblivion.

To conclude, if *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* is today taken as the profile of Buddhism for the Pallava period, then, if we follow the intentions by the author Cāttaṅār, we face a non-sectarian version of Buddhism which, however, is compatible with late Hīnayāna traditions. These have much in common with early Mahāyāna doctrines. This version of Buddhism is indigenised not only through language but also by a key concept of Tamil culture, which is Chastity (*BaT 1*: 55). The girl Maṇimēkalai is an exemplary case of Chastity.

The current selection of *Renunciation of Maṇimēkalai* as a representative for the Pallava period and indigenised Tamil Buddhism through the ages is symptomatic of a lack of sources. This selection approaches a manipulated historical writing that suspends the pluralism of Buddhist ideas during the Pallava period and following periods.

On Buddhism during the Imperial Cōḷa Period

We come now to the imperial Cōḷa period (ca. 850 to ca. 1300) (Spencer 1983). The Cōḷa rulers did not allow any visible influence of Buddhism at their Courts. In that way, they followed the Pallavas. Still, like the Pallavas, the Cōḷas were pragmatic and allowed the establishment of a vast Buddhist institution at Nākapattinam in the 10th and 11th century as Buddhist centre specialised on trade with Southeast Asia (*BaT 2*: 534-553). It replaced Kāvīrippūmpattinam in the South, away from the political and cultural centres of the Cōḷas who were dedicated Caivas and who actively promoted Caivam by royal protection.

Irāmaccantiraṅ Nākacuvāmi has studied the bronzes and votive *stūpas* from Nākapattīṇam (*BaT 1*: 129-145). This study, which is fundamental for the study of Cōḷa indigenised Buddhism, was extended by Sivasubramaniyam Pathmanathan (*BaT 2*: 584–609) who also made an in-depth study of the historical setting of that place (*BaT 2*: 569–584).

Caiva Polemic against Buddhism

Caiva polemic against Buddhism continued intensively in works like the *tirukkalampakam* (*BaT 2*: 519, 632–644), *civañāṇacittiyār* (*BaT 2*: 519–521, *BaT 2*: 785–810), and *periyapurāṇam* (*BaT 2*: 521–522). Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai has shown that in *nīlakēci* and in other works the Jainas too kept up the same polemic (*BaT 1*: 167–203, *BaT 2*: 609–631). A Tamil Buddhist work, *kuṅṭalākēci*, survived these attacks only in fragments (*BaT 2*: 518, 611–614).

The Pāli ācariyas continued to cultivate their relations to Īlam/Lanka but made no progress in Tamilland after Buddhaghosa’s legacy to spread Buddhism in Pāli only (*BaT 2*: 517, 523–534). The Pāli ācariyas are an example of trying to acculturate Tamil speakers to Pali Buddhism.

The Vaiṇavas also joined in the attack against Buddhist institutions (*BaT 2*: 523–534). Buddhism was indeed harassed during its whole history in Tamilland in the pre-colonial period.

Buddhists and Caiṇas

First Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai (*BaT 1*: 467–476), then Anne Monius, got the impression that Buddhists were treated better than Caiṇas. We have doubts. We all agree that we cannot use the story, wrongly ascribed to Campantar, about the impalement of 8000 Caiṇas (*BaT 1*: 451, Schalk 2006a) as an argument. The story was probably a fiction, let go to be used for mentally terrorising the Caiṇas. The argument for the alleged better treatment of Buddhists is quantitative; the Buddhists are scolded fewer times than the Caiṇas, and qualitative, the Caiṇas are scolded harsher than the Buddhists. This evaluation is not immediately convincing. “More often” and “harsher” may be misleading. We must consider that the Caiṇas have survived throughout the centuries. They have a continuous tradition of more than 2000 years in Tamilland. They have been able to preserve a vast treasure of Tamil-Caiṇa literature, and that the Cōḷa royal Court integrated them to the chagrin of Caiva critics. The Caiṇas even today are statistically identifiable in Tamiḷnāṭu. We can say nothing like that about the Buddhists.

One reason for the survival of the Caiṅas is the ability to adapt themselves to Tamil culture by using Tamil from their first appearance in Tamilland in the 2nd century AD., and their willingness to take over Caiva forms of worship. In cases where the Buddhists acted like the Caiṅas, they could suspend for some time their complete marginalisation but could not prevent it from happening from about the 14th century AD. and onwards. To give one illustrative example: The complete marginalisation of the Pāli *ācariyas* is due to their unwillingness to use Tamil in their *dhammadūta* work (*BaT 1*: 387–395. *BaT 2*: 523–534). Another reason was that Jainas were not regarded as a threat like the Pali Buddhists in a protracted inter-state conflict with Īlam/Lanka (*BaT 1*: 409–430).

Cōḷa Buddhism

The dominance of Caivam was unquestionable, and it greatly influenced also, the profile of the surviving Buddhism. We call it Cōḷa Buddhism, which is in Caivam enculturated and inculturated Buddhism. As a source, we have the inscriptions of the bronze pedals in Nākapattinam. The Buddhology in them is so close to Caiva theology that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the one from the other (*BaT 2*: 828–834). The reader gets the impression that Cōḷa Buddhism is on its way to being assimilated into Caivam. Today this assimilation is sometimes completed as we can see today in Tamilnāṭu from the ritual treatment of surviving statues of the Buddha from the Cōḷa period (Srivathsan).

Cōḷa Buddhism too was encultured and incultured in Caivam in Lanka during the Cōḷa period. Today we find artefacts like statues of the Buddha, once belonging to a Buddhist institution wholly integrated and assimilated in Caiva Temples (*BaT 1*: 91–93). Irāmaccantiraṅ Nākacuvāmi has reproduced a Caiva ideology of assimilation of other religions (*BaT 1*: 115–116, *BaT 2*: 644–662). There was an interaction between monastic centres in South India and Īlam/Lanka (Pathmanathan 2006). In this case, we can speak of inculturation of Buddhism into Caivam. Buddhism is interpreted from a Caiva point of view. Incultured Buddhism differs from encultured Buddhism by the latter's still hybrid setting of Buddhism and Caivam.

Vīracōḷiyam

We find in the *Vīracōḷiyam* and in its commentary an emotional and devotional form of Mahāyāna which also comes close to Caiva *pakti* (*bhakti*), and it appealed to Tamil sentiments: The relation between Avalōkītāṅ (Avalokiteśvara) and Civaṅ was mediated through the personality of Akattiyār (Agastya). Caiva *pakti* is

pointed out as a source of influence on the *Vīracōḷiyam* and its commentary, but a part of the concretisations given for this influence can as well be traced to a Buddhist tradition that may have influenced Caiva Devotion (Vijayavenugopal 1979).

This kind of emotional and devotional Buddhism was also closely connected with intensive Sanskrit studies which gives it a unique profile. Anne Monius writes:

The formation of Tamil words in accordance with Sanskrit principles, and the composition of Tamil poetry in accordance with Sanskrit theories of alaṃkāra or ornamentation – all framed with the authoritative Tolkāppiyam rubric of treating grammar and poetics as a single topic – constitute the heart of the *Vīracōḷiyam*'s Project (Monius 2001, 142–148).

The project's relation to persons and not to Buddhist institutions prevented a continuous transmission over time through these institutions. The *Vīracōḷiyam* project, as described above, is mainly a linguistic project to study Tamil through Sanskrit, not a religious one. It had a patron in the second half of the 11th century known as *Vīra Cōḷaṅ*, but there is no indication that he patronised Buddhism.

Irāmaccantiraṅ *Nākacuvāmi* has translated and commented upon passages from the *Vīracōḷiyam* (*BaT 1*: 118–122). *BaT 2* contains an analysis, Tamil texts in transliteration and translations from this Buddhist devotional tradition, presented by *Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai* (*BaT 2*: 522, 644–662). We give here an example, *Vīracōḷiyam*, *yāppuppataḷam*, 11, *urai*, that illustrates the view that even the highest god of *smārta* Hinduism, *Brahmā*, worships the Buddha.

When celestial beings from all eight directions, led by *Brahmā* came and worshipped (Your) feet-flower with clean flowers, entreated and enquired, You preached kindly for the benefit of our scared people, to whose evil bond, lust, wild rage and difficult to remove delusion were serving as strong instruments; You also told them mercifully to proceed on the path of virtue, leading to happiness (*BaT 2*, 816).

The End of Buddhism in Tamilland

In the 14th century, the lamp of Buddhism in Tamilland was extinguished (*BaT 1*: 29). *Āḷvāpiḷḷai Vēluppiḷḷai* has found an inscription from 1580 in *Kumbakōṇam* of a Caiva *kōyil* which remembers the existence of a former Buddhist Monastery. Buddhism had become a mere memory in the 16th century. Only at the end of the 19th century was Tamil Buddhism retrieved by *Cāminātaiyar* from the past. His legacy was a text edition and a creation of a Tamil Buddhist terminology to be used in philological work (*BaT 1*: 96–98). This initiative was the beginning of modern studies about Buddhism among Tamil Speakers.

Buddhist Activists in the 20th Century in Tamilland

Buddhist activists in the 20th century used this legacy from Cāminātaiyar for their purpose. Ayōttitācar was one of them. He founded the *Dravida Buddha Sangham* in 1898 at Irāyapēṭṭai (*Ayōttitācar cintāṇaikaḷ* 1999, Aloysius 1998) later called South India *Sakya Buddha Association*. In 1911 Ayōttitācar succeeded in convincing the British administration that Buddhism should be classified as being separate from Caivam and Vaiṇavam (Perumal 1998, 529–542, 530–531). We have a case of de-assimilation, de-enculturing and de-inculturing of Buddhism among Tamil speakers.

There is a link from Ayōttitācar to the rationalists within the Dravidian Movement from the 1930s onwards, and to the Ambedkar Movement (Perumal, 530). An anti-Brahmanical polemic and empathy for the downtrodden, especially the Dalits, connect them. What today internationally is called “socially engaged Buddhism” has roots in these movements.

It should be mentioned here that the *South India Sakya Buddha Association* in Cēṇṇai was not united with the *Mahabodhi Society* which had been founded 1892 in Cēṇṇai under the influence of the Anagārika Dharmapāla. Ayōttitācar had useful contacts with anticolonial monks in Īlam/Lanka, but not with anti-Tamil zealots. Ayōttitācar thought that the downtrodden under his protection were derived from the Śākyas and that his form of Buddhism preserved the pure teaching of the Puttar (Aloysius, 56). Ayōttitācar’s focus was social, not ethnic like the *Mahabodhi Society’s* in Cēṇṇai.

The *Mahabodhi Society* in Cēṇṇai has since its foundation in 1892 had a mis-siological approach but in the ethnic spirit of the Anagārika Dharmapāla. He interpreted the canonical concept *dharmadīpa* as referring to the island Lanka which was the island of the *dhamma* and also the island of the Sinhala speakers (Schalk 2006c). In the 1980s and the 1990s, the monks and the Society as such were regularly in confrontation with solidarity groups of Tamil speakers, sympathisers of the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement, who suspected the monks of being agents for the political and military interests of the insular Government (Aloysius, 56).

Today, Buddhists cannot be given more than a dash in the contemporary census of Tamiḷnāṭu and Kēraḷam, former central areas of Tamilland. The Caiṇas fare better: 0.01 % of the population. It is of interest to explain why Caiṇam has been somewhat better off than Buddhism. Royal patronage was not refused to them as strictly as to the Buddhists (*BaT I*: 25). As mentioned above, the Caiṇas adopted the language Tamil soon after they arrived in Tamilland in the pre-Pallava period, and they adopted local customs without letting themselves to be assimilated

(*BaT 1*: 25). Caiva and Vaiṇava xenophobia also hit them hard, but they survived (*BaT 1*: 25–28).

On Buddhism among Tamil Speakers in Īlam/Lanka

In the North, in Yālpṇam, Buddhism is quenched between counteracting interests (Schalk 2001a).

First, there is the traditional Caiva/Vaiṇava xenophobia polemic against non-enculturated and non-inculturated Buddhism as an alien ascetic religion which questions Tamil values. Especially the asceticism of Buddhism as antisocial behaviour is classified as alien. This Caiva and Vaiṇava polemic goes back to the Pallava period but is today still a hangover (*BaT 1*: 33). Even encultured Buddhism is looked at with suspicion.

We have been confronted with an evaluation of encultured Buddhism from a group of Caiva paṇṭitar in Yālpṇam in 1992. We were invited to present this kind of Tamil Buddhism in Īlam/Lanka to them. They listened intensively, but their evaluation was negative. They viewed encultured Tamil Buddhism as an insignificant phenomenon which does not deserve further attention. We did not agree. There is the interest of the historian to study the gradual integration of Buddhism into Caivam. There is also the interest of the social anthropologist to study the confrontation between the Government of Sri Lanka loyalists and the Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement concerning acculturated Buddhism.

In 1992, acculturated Buddhism was not yet on the table. The Tigers' Movement had a say, and it did not allow missionary activities by Sinhala Buddhists in Yālpṇam and other areas of their rule.

Before 1990 and after 1995 there were and still are today political Sinhala Buddhists which push and pull the Government to homogenise the culture of the island into one Sinhala Buddhist culture as a means of consolidating the Unitary State (*BaT 1*: 34. Schalk 2009). “Buddhism” refers to Theravāda Buddhism in Pali and Sinhala.

The Great Assembly leading a mass movement is, however, also an instrument (Schalk 2006b) for the Government to homogenise the culture of the island (Schalk 2001c) backed by an intensive militarisation (*BaT 3*: Fig. 3–13, 19, 26, 28–31, 36, 38, 42–43, 49).

There are no forceful conversions of Caivas, Christians and Muslims but of gradual land-grabbing in connection with the “sealing” of territory by establishing Buddhist sacred architecture. It deprives Tamil interests of control over the territory (Fernando 2013). This expanding political Buddhism has a self-designation which the reader should associate to Hindutva; it is Sinhalatva which is a self-

designation by political Sinhala Buddhists (Schalk 2006b). Both movements work against a multicultural society, albeit they are forced by the international community to preserve multiculturalism, at least as a transitional stage.

From the beginning of the 19th century when an anticolonial wave went high, the view was launched by political Sinhala Buddhists that the North has been Sinhala Buddhist from the time of arrival of Buddhism in Lanka. They could point to many places with a Buddhist character. The Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement has reacted by characterising these places as Tamil Buddhist places. The controversy is persevering even today. It is about who has cultural sovereignty in what Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement calls its *tāyakam* “Motherland”. It is transcreated into English as “Homeland”. Buddhism among Tamil Speakers has been and still is an issue in a highly political debate in Īlam/Lanka.

There is, of course, the interest of Tamil politicians to stop “the re-conquest” of the Government of Sri Lanka by delivering historical counter-arguments. Within the present Īlattamiḷ Resistance Movement, some intellectuals among Tamil speakers identify Buddhism among Tamil speakers as a masked form of Sinhala Buddhism, a kind of backdoor which opens for governmental interests. This conspiracy theory is not speculative; it is realistic. Tamil speakers are acculturated into Sinhala Buddhism in the following way: Pali Buddhist texts are translated into Sinhala and from Sinhala into Tamil. The result is Sinhala Buddhism in Tamil attire. The Buddhist messengers have found a way to win hearts and minds for Buddhism by dressing Sinhala Buddhism in Tamil attire.

Yāḷppāṇam is one centre for the propagation of Buddhism, but there is also another one, the Trust Monastery, in Kaḍuvela close to Colombo, where we find a dominant Buddhist population. The Sanskrit/Sinhala name of the Monastery is *śraddhā vihāraya*. These two centres are different. We should not blend them. The Trust Monastery has a global ambition to reach Tamil speakers on the Internet, but also to reach Tamil speakers in the Highlands of Īlam/Lanka. There is no point in doing missionary work in Tamil where Sinhala speaking Buddhists live in the heartland of Buddhism in Lanka.

The Trust Monastery in Kaḍuvela is part of a worldwide Buddhist organisation with a TV channel and a webpage with a section on Tamil Buddhism. It has resources to spread the teaching of the Buddha in Sinhala, Tamil and English to every part of the island Īlam/Lanka and abroad. It has at least one monk whose mother tongue is Tamil, and it has an office where the translation work from Sinhala to Tamil is organised.

There is no publicised connection between the two monasteries Yāḷppāṇam and Kaḍuvela.

The Serpent Monastery in Yāḷppāṇam is surrounded by a dominant Caiva population which shows its irritation about the missionary activities by the Serpent Monastery in the Northern Province. The Monastery is surrounded by the Īḷattamiḷ Resistance Movement opposing to the Monastery's activities. The Īḷattamiḷ Resistance Movement interprets these activities in political terms as Buddhisation in connection with "Sinhalisation, Militarisation and Colonisation". There is no indication that this Movement is against "idealised" or "pure" Buddhism, but it is against Buddhism connected with "Sinhalisation, Militarisation and Colonisation", i.e. political Buddhism.

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