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Coins and tokens from ancient Ceylon: being a critical survey of the coins and coin like objects unearthed on the island based on a thoroughly annotated catalogue of finds, and supplemented by an analytical part dealing with the island's ancient economy and its trade with the western world

der Reihe / of the series

Ancient Ruhuna; Volume 2 (FAAK Bd. 5)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/46zc-69fz>

Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

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I Basis and background knowledge

1 The history of the national coin collections

In the following chapters, a broad outline will be given of the coin material available in the two governmental collections in Colombo and of their history. Likewise, the role of some of the early researchers is described. A small number of individuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries laid the basis for all scholarly numismatic research to come.

1.1 THE COLLECTION OF THE COLOMBO (NATIONAL) MUSEUM

On 10th September 1873, the Ceylon Public Museum Bill – brought in by the then Governor of Ceylon, Sir William Henry Gregory – was passed; and the Colombo Museum – erected from designs prepared by the Government architect, James G. Smither – was formally opened to the public on 1st January 1877. From the beginning, the museum was mainly devoted to the natural history of the island. Archaeological artefacts (including coins) were collected, but were regarded as ‘Ethnological remains’ and were treated respectively, i. e. as being only of marginal interest. In 1905, for example, Arthur Willey, the then director of the museum, lamented with respect to the ruined cities of Śrī Laṅkā that: “The excavations which have been carried on for many years under the direction of the Archaeological Commissioner have not led to any sensational discovery of buried treasure. Such precious relics as have been unearthed have on the whole been disappointing so far as their intrinsic value is concerned” (Willey 1905: 15). The attitude of the archaeologists was by no means different: “It was disappointing not to find any coins, or anything else of value” (Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, Annual Report 1910/1: 76). Both statements are redolent of luckless treasure seekers, and indeed this behaviour has been called “little more than licensed curio hunting” by John Still (see chapter 1.4), the Assistant of the first Archaeological Commissioner (Devendra 1959: 33).

The general lack of interest in the history and the antiquities of Śrī Laṅkā, with the exception of monumental ruins and inscriptions, was obviously characteristic of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century (Hocart 1928–1933: 73 f.; Deraniyagala 1956–58: 219). In the field of numismatics, even Codrington, the then authority (see chapter 1.4), was sometimes unaware of the importance of a find and the scientific possibilities it offered. Hence, when the two large hoards of Sinhalese mediaeval coins were discovered at Gampola (mediaeval Gaṅgāsiripura; 7,477 specimens) and at Pussellawa (5,218 specimens): “The Hon. Mr. Codrington who inspected these coins reported that they are of no value, and were therefore returned to the finders” (CAR Museum 1925: E 11). Moreover, as late as the early 1950s, the then Archaeological Commissioner judged in ignorance that the discovery of 108 coins of a type very rare until that time, “would result in the type being no longer rare and thus reducing its value to numismatists” (Paranavitana in CAR Archaeology 1952: G 23.97).

In 1887, ten years after the museum’s opening, the coin collection exhibited comprised, “29 ancient coins found in Ceylon, 19 coins of the kings of Ceylon, 9 Indo-Portugese, 212 Dutch, 28 English, and 6 Māldivians”. Besides the eight coins purchased from the Galle Face findings [**123**]⁶ in Colombo, only a few modern pieces were acquired or obtained by exchange (CAR Museum 1887: 134). Some of these came from the private collection of Harry Charles Purvis Bell, who three years later would become the first head of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon. In the course of the 1880s, he donated as well as sold some modern coins to the museum and received in exchange a silver-gilt coin of Vijayabāhu in 1883 and a Tissamahārāma coin (apparently a goddess plaque) in 1888⁷.

⁶ The numbers written in bold script in brackets refer to the numbering in the catalogue section.

⁷ Bell / Bell 1993: 258. For this practice of ‘giving and taking’ see also the chapter on the life of W. H. Biddell.

A First Report on the Exhibited Coins in the Colombo Museum. Colombo [1890] was written by Amyrald Haly, the then director of the museum⁸. There the author paid tribute to Bell's assistance. It must be this publication that is referred to in a harsh criticism released in May 1907: "I am sorry to say the Colombo Museum Coin Catalogue is but a rough Memorandum Book, a list of some one's "money box"; types in chaos, the necessary information conspicuous by its absence, and "gaps" – well, a missing link shows the existence of some chain, but here there is none at all" (Churchill 1907: 9829f.). In the years up to 1930, the museum's coin collection must have increased considerably, as two French visitors handed down the following, admittedly cursory, observation: "Nous ne pouvons que mentionner ici la riche collection numismatique composée de pièces recueillies dans les diverses régions de l'île. On y voit des monnaies grecques et romaines, des sequins de Venise, et des mohours persans, mêlés à des purânas de frappe indienne et à de curieuses pièces d'argent en forme d'hameçons". Additionally, goddess plaques, called 'Anuradhapura coins', were mentioned (Finot / Goloubew 1930: 630).

It was only in 1937 that an Ethnological Department was established with the appointment of Lieutenant Commander Jack R. de la Haule Marett, late of the Royal Navy, as Assistant in Ethnology. The coin collection was part of the collections of this newly created department. The anthropologist Marett was obviously not very interested in this part of his department, so that one year later new coin acquisitions were added to the collections under the charge of H. Leelananda Caldera, the inspector of watch. It was Caldera who looked after the coin collection in the following years, as he had already done prior to Marett's appointment.

In 1942, during World War II, the museum was evacuated because of Japanese naval operations in the sea around Śrī Laṅkā from the first to the ninth of April and the heavy air bombardment of British military bases. These were due to the fact that after the fall of Singapore, the headquarters of the South-East Asia Command were established in Śrī Laṅkā, and the counter-offensive against the Japanese was planned from the island. Besides this, Trincomalee was the only naval base left to the allies.

Returning the collections to the museum after the war, Caldera was still responsible

for the entire collection of antiquities until 1953. In this year, the collections were split, and the coins, currency and medals were handed over to the newly appointed curator in ethnology and archaeology (CAR Museum 1953: E 9). In 1948, one aim among others had been the verification of the coin collection (CAR Museum 1948: F 4). Only one year later, this work had already been completed, and the coins were rearranged and displayed by Caldera in three double-sided cases (CAR Museum 1949: E 10–11). The years after the war saw further intensive verification of the collections. In 1952: "Sectional Registers No. 2 Coins and Currency, and No. 3, Minerals and Gems were recast during the year, and the collections are under verification" (CAR Museum 1952: E 10). Registration and verification of the collections of the entire ethnological section were completed in 1959 (CAR Museum 1959: E 35). The problems encountered during the course of this painstaking verification process are described in 1948: "Sorting and classifying the extensive collections accumulated over 70 years, checking the objects against the entries in the general and sectional registers, preparation of the sectional registers and reconciliation of these registers with the entries in the general register are by no means easy, while the loss of many Museum cupboards taken over by the Military during the war, greatly impeded this work in its early stages" (CAR Museum 1948: F 4). During this process, something must have happened which can only be described as *the creation of the – dubious – 1935 finds*. According to the entries in the inventory of the Colombo Museum, five coin lots⁹ with a total of 630 pieces from Sigiriya [79–83] became part of the museum's collection in 1935. In addition to these, five other coin complexes were allegedly handed over to the museum in this year, viz. six specimens from Buddhist rail [3] and four from Thūpārāma [18] (both Anurādhapura), 57 from Mihintalē [35], 374 from the Kitalagama find [156] and 276 coins of unknown provenance, although these are now assignable with good reasons to

⁸ Unfortunately, this monograph does not seem to be available in western public libraries. It is quoted from Bell / Bell 1993: ch. 32 n. 5.

⁹ Bopearachchi 1990: 28, incorrectly quotes only four lots and a total of 605 pieces, obviously overlooking Walburg 1985: IV 1006. Three years later, the five separate finds have mutated into "un trésor de 605 pièces" (Bopearachchi 1993: 78).

the hamlet of Debarawewa at Tissamahārāma [195]. Curiously, none of these hoards are mentioned in the CAR Museum report of 1935. Likewise, no mention is made in CAR Archaeology 1935 of any hoard of ancient coins discovered in that year. Only two large hoards of Dutch duits and half-duits are recorded, as well as finds of mediaeval Śrī Laṅkān gold coins¹⁰. Remembering the detailed description of the Nāimana find [151] in the 1925 report, as well as the precise record of single finds and mediaeval/early modern coin hoards in the 1920s and early 1930s, there is only one possible explanation for what happened: Due to the confusing and/or fragmentary information preserved, the ten lots were entered into the register together from no. 35–102–14 to 35–111–14 sometime after 1948, probably in 1952 when ‘recasting’ the sectional register on coins and currency.

The inventory entries are extremely brief, simply stating for example “from Sigiriya”; only once is “Sigiriya island” specified. Obviously, more detailed information was no longer at hand when these entries were written. All we know is the fact that these finds must have been discovered sometime before 1959 – the end of the verification programme in the Colombo National Museum. Additional data and suggestions are provided in the catalogue section when dealing with these specific lots.

The following hoards and single finds of Late Roman *æs* coins and Nāimana imitations were stored in the Colombo National Museum in 1978 and were available for study:

Tissamahārāma	513 + 11 fragments
Sigiriya	27
Sigiriya	132
Sigiriya	301
Sigiriya	145
Anurādhapura	1
Anurādhapura	6
Anurādhapura	4
Mihintalē	57
Kitalagama	374
Kosgoḍa	141
Nāimana	300
Unknown	2 + 1 + 1 + 276
Total	2,281 + 11 fragments

In contrast to these figures, we hear in 1984 that: “Le Musée de Colombo possède quelque neuf cent pièces de monnaies romaines. Mis à part trente six d’entre-elles, elles sont toutes illisibles. Le manque d’information précise sur

cette collection ne nous a pas permis d’effectuer une étude sérieuse” (Bopearachchi 1984: 3).

In 1959, a booklet of fifty-six pages and three plates on the history of Śrī Laṅkān coins – written by Caldera – was published in the Sinhalese language¹¹. Entitled *Lankave Parani mila mudal*, it was the first of a series of guidebooks to the Colombo Museum collections. Museum lectures sometimes dealt with numismatic themes. In 1961, Caldera lectured on ‘Coins used in Ceylon during the European Period’, and in the following year ‘Coins of Ceylon’ was the title of a paper prepared by the then curator of archaeology and ethnology, T. Dela. Caldera retired on January 6, 1962, after thirty-seven years of service in the Colombo Museum (CAR Museum 1961/62: E 29).

Only a very few numismatic events are recorded in the history of the museum. In 1933, at the request of C. A. Wood from Kandy, the American Numismatic Society donated (back) to the Colombo Museum thirty *larins* from the Gampola hoard, discovered in 1925 (CAR Museum 1933: F 13). As a result of the activities of (Sir) Paulus Edward Deraniyagala Pieris (1874–1959), Trade Commissioner for Ceylon in London, to make the Colombo Museum better known in England, thirty sets of mediaeval Sinhalese coins were donated to various museums in Great Britain in 1937 (CAR Museum 1937: F 31). Finally, in 1967, a display on the ancient coins of Śrī Laṅkā was prepared for the Śrī Laṅkā exhibition in Melbourne (CAR Museum 1966/67: E 50).

The coin collection housed in the Colombo Museum by no means consisted exclusively of specimens discovered in Śrī Laṅkā, even though, “the original Museum Ordinance states that the Colombo Museum is intended for Ceylon material”. So, for example, a private collection of Indo-Greek coins was acquired by the museum in 1926 (CAR Museum 1926: E 4). Four years later the museum’s collection was enriched by Indian pieces, among them punch-marked coins, donated via the Archaeological Department by the Madras museum (CAR Museum 1930: F 8). Finally, in 1937, the administration report of the Colombo Museum records: “The gift by the British Museum of a parcel of Chinese metal articles including

¹⁰ CAR Archaeology 1935: J 4, under the heading ‘Treasure trove’.

¹¹ The English translation reported in 1960 as being under preparation seems never to have been published.

a few pre-Christian coins and imitations as well as a die for a weight" (CAR Museum 1937: F 31). In this year, the director of the Colombo Museum was granted final permission "to commence a reserve collection of Indian ethnological articles, through exchange". Already, by the end of 1937, the Madras Museum officially signalled its interest in the exchange of ethnological objects. By the intercession of P. E. Pieris, this exchange was extended to British museums as well (CAR Museum 1937: F 20). On the other hand, it was also in 1937 that the director of the Colombo Museum lamented the poor quality of the collections of the ethnological section:

"The poor quality of much of the ethnological collection accumulated since the inception of the Museum is also surprising and this inferiority is very evident on comparing certain of these sections with some private collections accumulated relatively recently.

This inferiority is probably explained to some extent by the fact that dealers in antiques prefer to sell them to visitors to the Island who readily pay high figures for anything they regard as novel. The remaining articles are then either taken to private collectors in Ceylon or brought to the Museum. Apart from the prevalent traffic in antiques to tourists, there is said to be an organized collection of old jewellery which is brought to central depots, melted and cast into bars" (CAR Museum 1937: F 19).

Bearing in mind additionally the rich collection of coins discovered in Śrī Laṅkā and now in The British Museum (de Silva 1975), and the private collections that existed and still exist on the island, one has to suspect that the museum collections, especially the reserve collections, were and remain far from representative.

Besides the small number of numismatic activities organised by the museum, there was also in the 1920s and 1930s a small circle of engaged amateurs – in the best meaning of the word – who prepared the ground for current scientific research on the numismatic history of the island. As the main actors during this time, Humphrey William Codrington, Walter Howard Biddell, Leslie de Saram, and Paulus Edward Deraniyagala Pieris must be mentioned. For the preceding decades the names of Harry Charles Purvis Bell (the Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon from 1890 to 1912 and member of the Committee of Management of the Colombo Museum until 1922), and that of his assistant,

John Still, must also be added. By his engagement, Bell was able in some cases to secure for the Colombo Museum a certain amount of coins before the hoards these specimens had been taken from were irretrievably dispersed. After Bell's death, some Śrī Laṅkā coins from his private collection found their way to The British Museum via his daughter, Miss Zoë Iris Bell¹². The rest of his personal collection of antiquities, which included a small number of coins, she sold for the price of 2,000 Rupees to the Colombo Museum. The bulk of Bell's coin collection is presumed to have been sold after his death to private collectors in Śrī Laṅkā (Bell / Bell 1993: 259). Thus, for example, almost all Maldivian coins in the former Biddell collection (see chapter 1.3) show as origin H. C. P. B.(ell). Biddell's 'Roman' section comprised 88 Nāimana imitations bought in the Colombo Pettah and 250 genuine late-Roman coins. It is open for question whether these 250 specimens had been those that Bell 'secured' from the large Balapitiya hoard [133], discovered in 1896.

Today, it is estimated that the coin collection of the Colombo National Museum comprises more than 100,000 pieces¹³.

1.2 THE COLLECTION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

Very little information is available concerning the numismatic collection of this institution. In 1906, we come across a short notice¹⁴ concerning this topic, which is worth quoting in full:

"The large and varied collection of metal work and coins collected by the Archaeological Survey during its fifteen years' work was overhauled, chemically treated (to prevent further corrosion), and docketed by Mr. J. Still, the Assistant to the Archaeological Commissioner, in the course of the year.

The 'Catalogue of finds' prepared by Mr. Still, and an Album of photograph illustrations, have been handed over to the Director

¹² These can be traced out in the compilation of de Silva 1975.

¹³ This number is to be found in an article in the feature section of the Sunday Observer of 2.1.2000: Ranjith Hewage (Colombo National Museum), 'Colombo National Museum celebrates 123rd anniversary'.

¹⁴ ASCAR 1906: 25, under the heading MISCELLANEOUS. Archaeological "Finds".

of the Colombo Museum, to be issued as a publication of that Department”¹⁵.

In December, on the decision of the Government to transfer all portable “finds made by the Archaeological Survey to the Colombo Museum... the greater part of the antiquities hitherto stored at Anurādhapura (stone carvings, bricks, and pottery, metal work and coins, crystals, &c.) were sent down to Colombo in one hundred and twenty packages. Mr. Still will docket and arrange these at the Museum”. According to another source, only 118 of the announced 120 packages arrived at Colombo¹⁶.

The complete transfer of finds, including the coins, discovered during the work of the Archaeological Department from 1890 to 1905 to the Colombo Museum, as ordered by the government, was continued during the following decades. However, obviously not all finds were handed over to the museum, as there was a residual collection left with the department (Uduwara 1990: 159). When moving the headquarters of the Archaeological Department from Anurādhapura to Colombo in 1930, where it was housed in a part of the museum building, the more important coins in the department’s collection were transferred to the museum (Fernando 1990: 83). It already becomes evident at this point, that from the beginning the interwoven relations between the Archaeological Department and the Colombo (National) Museum offered much room for creating error and confusion concerning the coin hoards and single finds discovered. This is increased when taking into consideration the various relocations of the Archaeological Department¹⁷

1930	from Anurādhapura to Colombo; there housed in the museum building
1932	to a one-room building in Colombo
March 1942	collections and part of the library to Anurādhapura; rest of the library to Polonnaruwa
April 1943	to Nawala
Nov. 1944	to Gangodawila
April 1946	to Colombo

In the course of these several moves, partly in unsettled wartime conditions, coins as well as written information may have been mislaid. Many data had already been irretrievably lost

some decades before. It was only in 1921 that the then Archaeological Commissioner, Arthur Maurice Hocart, opened a register of finds, trying to convince his staff “who unfortunately are too much inclined to trust to their memories” of the necessity of such a register (ASCAR 1921: 5.7; Uduwara 1990: 159). Hocart’s predecessor, Edward Russell Ayrton, had registered all finds only in his field books. These had been lost during the period after his death in 1914, before the appointment of a new Archaeological Commissioner in 1921. Hence, most finds prior to 1921 are of little scholarly value, as their place of origin is unknown. Archaeological work practically ceased from 1914 to 1921; partly due to World War I, and afterwards, due to the absence of an Archaeological Commissioner (Finot / Goloubew 1930: 628). Therefore, we have good reasons to believe that during this period of time, no finds were made at the known archaeological sites.

In the 1930s, coin finds may have been lost because of the sudden, anxious desire for people to find hidden treasure, thus helping them to escape the consequences of the severe worldwide economic crisis (Fernando 1990: 79). Treasure hunting had always been a problem in Śrī Laṅkā, as it has been elsewhere. In 1890, the newly-appointed Archaeological Commissioner supported an initiative trying to protect objects of archaeological interest by legislative means. In order to be informed about finds being made, Bell suggested an increase in the rewards offered to the finders: The administration should pay the, “full value of the materials of any treasure trove (as distinct from their adventitious value as objects of archaeological interest) plus one-fifth of such value, whenever it is decided by Government to acquire such treasure, or any portion of it” (JCBRAS 12.42, 1891; Proceedings 1890: 28). The legislative council accepted this in 1891. In 1900, on the instigation of the Archaeological Commissioner,

¹⁵ In 1909, it was stated that Still’s ‘Catalogue of Archaeological Objects’ was in course of preparation (ASCAR 1909: 26).

¹⁶ Bell / Bell 1993: 260, based on C. J. de Saram, ‘The Emergence of the British Official as a Collector of Antiquities in the Colonial Period of Ceylon, with special reference to the role of H. C. P. Bell in the growth of the collection in the Colombo National Museum’: a paper presented for the course leading to the Master of Science Degree in Architectural Conservation of Monuments and Sites. ACOMAS, Faculty of Architecture, University of Moratuwa, 2nd May, 1983 (from Bell / Bell 1993: 295).

the protection of antiquities was enforced. All removable objects of archaeological interest, i. e. all things antedating the end of the Kingdom of Kandy in 1815, were declared crown property. The purchase of illegally unearthed antiquities was strictly forbidden by penalty. It is open for discussion whether these two measures had any effect on illegal treasure hunting. The only large hoards the Archaeological Commissioner had knowledge of during this time were those discovered in 1896 on two small islets in the Madu Gaṅgā (see the two Balapiṭiya catalogue entries 133 and 134).

By the end of 1950, finds of all kinds had been added to the department's collection to a degree that made it desirable to have a separate archaeological museum. It was at this point that the relations between the Archaeological Commissioner and the Director of the Colombo National Museum became strained¹⁸. As a result, it must be argued that in the following years no coin finds were handed over from the department to the museum. The large Rekawa hoard [161], for example, which passed into the possession of the department in 1957, was still kept there in 1978. Therefore, over the course of time, two separate coin collections came into being; one in the department and one in the museum.

In 1978, at least¹⁹ two large hoards of Late Roman *æs* coins were available for study in the Archaeological Department

Rekawa	1,588 + 16 fragments
Kuliyapiṭiya	1,396 + 85 fragments

In 1984, it is stated on the contrary that: “Le ‘Department of Archaeology Colombo’ n’a pu nous donner aucune information supplémentaire” (Bopearachchi 1984: 3). Additional mention is made in the department's inventory of the large hoard discovered in Debarawewa(tissa). Concerning this hoard it is asserted that: “Mis à part cette brève notice <sc. CAR Archaeology 1950, G 32>, nous ne savons rien de ce trésor pourtant extrêmement important” (Bopearachchi 1984: 2f.). See however the relevant catalogue entry below [195].

For the period 1970–1990, only a single find of mediaeval Sinhalese gold coins is reported (Uduwara 1990: 162).

Of the planned series of numismatic publications to be edited by the Archaeological Department, only one monograph in Sinhalese dealing with punch-marked coins has so far been released (Sirisoma / Amarasinghe 1986).

1.3 NEW EVIDENCE: THE BIDDELL DOCUMENTS

Besides the official sources of information, much valuable knowledge can occasionally be gained from the notes of individuals like Walter Howard Biddell²⁰. He was an enthusiastic collector of coins and seals (his seal collection comprised 22 objects in 1935)²¹, and of other items of antiquity as well. As early as 1914/1915, he began to catalogue his coin collection, and much later, he ‘archived’ this fragment of his first catalogue.

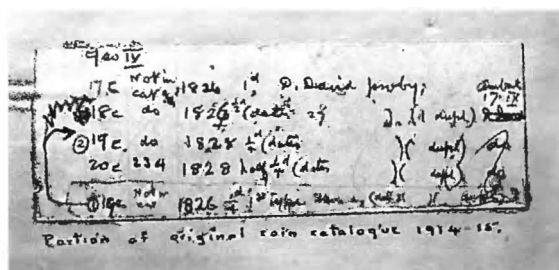


Fig. 1. Fragment of Biddell's first coin catalogue.

Besides coins and seals, Biddell also collected minerals and prehistoric artefacts. As irrigation engineer and a member of the Irrigation Department, he travelled frequently and was often present when soil was removed and finds were made²². As a government official, he naturally

¹⁷ According to Fernando 1990: 77f.

¹⁸ Fernando 1990: 84. In 1959, it was said that a return of finds from the museum to the department was not possible “because of certain administrative difficulties” (Devendra 1959: 37).

¹⁹ A third large hoard was briefly shown to the present writer a day before his departure, following a one-month stay in Colombo, by the late M. H. Sirisoma, the then Assistant Archaeological Commissioner. He had ‘discovered’ a plastic bag with c. 2,000 small *æs* coins ‘by haphazard’ in the drawer of his writing desk.

²⁰ The few but informative details about the role Biddell played in the cultural life of Śrī Laṅkā from the 1930s onwards were primarily gathered from directories and from the administration reports of the Director of the Colombo (National) Museum. Born on 26th June 1890, he must have been the son of either John E. Biddell, Planter, Abbotsleigh, Hatton or of S. C. Biddell, Planter, Shawlands, Lunugala, both mentioned in “Ferguson's Ceylon Handbook and Directory, 1908–9”, p. 1376.

²¹ CAR Museum 1935: F 21. The most prominent item was a large intaglio listed as no. 1. According to a journal entry (p. 69) this had been discovered near Weuda [108] and was acquired by Biddell in 1931 (see catalogue section of this study).

²² See the catalogue entries on Kele Karambewa [74], and Kalpiṭiya [95], and also Hocart 1928: 164. In October 1923, he was in charge of village tanks investigation in connection with the Northern line railway accident.

had contacts with colleagues from other departments. Many of his coins were obtained from or per C. T. Symons, a government analyst. Other men who, like Biddell, had to travel extensively because of their profession, wrote valuable compilations important for Śrī Laṅkā numismatics and history. Henry Parker, also an irrigation engineer in the service of the government, gained merit by collecting and publishing ancient inscriptions, reporting on the discoveries in Tissamahārāma and writing a monograph on *Ancient Ceylon*. Charles Hubert Biddulph²³ (not to be confused with W. H. Biddulph, perhaps a relative; see the first Mātara [144] catalogue entry), in the service of the Indian Railways, contributed to the ancient numismatic history of South India; closely related to that of Śrī Laṅkā. Shortly before his death in October 1966, he had finished a study on the Śrī Laṅkā goddess plaques. Finally, Cyril Wace Nicholas collected first-hand information as warden of the Wildlife Department, enabling him to write the still fundamental *Historical Topography of Ancient and Medieval Ceylon*.

To catalogue his coin collection Biddell had a specially designed journal printed, with pages numbered from 1 to 391, which is now in private possession in Colombo. Thanks to the generosity of its present owner, copies of the pages concerning the antique coins of the former Biddell collection were made and given to the present author as early as 1978, to be analysed and the results published. Likewise, many pages of Biddell's copy of Codrington's *Ceylon Coins and Currency* have survived, showing many valuable remarks written in the margins by Biddell's hand. In 2003, H.-J. Weisshaar (*Kommission für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen [KAAK]*, previously *Commission for General and Comparative Archaeology [KAVA] of the German Institute of Archaeology*) was permitted to completely photograph the journal, Biddell's copy of CCC, and many additional documents. With the help of this archive, now digitally preserved, we are able to reconstruct the exact description of a Byzantine gold coin [239.7] that had once been part of the Colombo Museum collection but was later lost. Codrington could only describe this coin from memory (Codrington 1924: 45, top of the page). According to Biddell, this specimen originally formed part of the collection of H. C. P. Bell, the first Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon, but it was not to be found among his coins. A rubbing, preserved

from Bell's papers, is affixed to p. 45 of Biddell's copy of CCC. On the reverse side of this rubbing is written "W. H. R (?Ravenscroft) 7. VII. 89". Unfortunately, the place of discovery is not mentioned. The rubbing shows a *solidus*, struck by Heraclius and Heraclius Constantinus from 613 to c. 625 (MIB 8 type; the rubbing does not allow a more precise identification). According to an additional note in this context, a piece like the one described was "br(ough)t. to office by goldsmith c. June '41". Judging from various hand-written remarks, Biddell obviously had no intimate knowledge of the peculiarities of Byzantine coinage. Misled by the often very crude lettering on the doubtless genuine Byzantine coins, he classified most of his pieces as "Gaulish", "Barbaric", or Nāimana imitations. However, according to his descriptions of these pieces, and the preserved rubbings, we can be certain that they were genuinely Byzantine.

In his journal, and in his copy of CCC, Biddell compiled all the information available about the coins in his collection, and about coin finds made on the island in general. As can be gathered from Biddell's remarks and from Codrington's introduction, the latter used this collection when writing his monograph on *Ceylon Coins and Currency*, published in 1924, but in fact released only in 1925 (CAR Museum 1927: E 8). Another coin collector of that time was the solicitor Leslie William Frederick de Saram, of whose collection Biddell was well informed. In his copy of CCC (p. 38), we find a marginal note referring to the description of a *denarius* of Lucius Verus: "L(eslie) de S(aram) He bought very many of his coins – e. g. Solidi & Venetians – in London!". According to some further notes in Biddell's hand, he knew that the *denarii* of Tiberius, Iulia Domna, and Iulia Mamaea, described by Codrington 1924, p. 38, were also in the possession of de Saram; two Constantinian *æ*s coins belonged to him as well²⁴. Concerning the coin of Tiberius, Biddell noted down that

²³ For a detailed description of his life and work see Jensen 1999.

²⁴ Codrington 1924: 39f.: posthumous issue with *vn mr* and Constantinopolis 2. According to marginal notes in Biddell's CCC, the following coins were also part of the de Saram collection: *Solidus* of Constantinus XIII (p. 45) – Gupta (p. 49, all gold coins mentioned except no. 2 of Candra Gupta which was in the possession of H. W. Codrington; p. 50, two silver pieces of the type described).

it “seems a remarkable coincidence, or is this my coin?”. This refers to the piece described by Codrington 1924, p. 37, of which type Biddell, like de Saram, also possessed a specimen; Biddell’s having been unearthed in Karambewa [74]. These data are of special interest and importance as they suggest that a certain number of coins described by Codrington were most probably not discovered in Śrī Laṅkān soil but purchased abroad.

In 1934, the author who published the Gampola Larin hoard expressed his thanks to Biddell, who was then residing in Kandy at “Alta”, Upper Lake Road, for his help in preparing the manuscript (Wood 1934: 5, 40). Two years later, Biddell moved to Anurādhapura where he lived at “Dorrington”, Abhayagiri Road, until his death in 1964.

The first mention of Biddell’s name in connection with the Colombo Museum was in 1935 (CAR Museum 1935: F 3). In that year, he was appointed a member of the Committee of Management of the Colombo Museum. This committee had been reconstituted in 1933, and was intended to be, “a managing body responsible for the general policy of the Museum” (CAR Museum 1933: F 3). After his first three-year period on the committee, he was renominated in 1938 for another three years, together with L. de Saram (CAR Museum 1938: F 3). First nominated in this year was P. E. Pieris, Trade Commissioner in London and another coin collector and benefactor of the Colombo Museum, as well as of The British Museum in London to which he presented coins discovered in Śrī Laṅkā (see Walburg 1996). Like Pieris, Biddell also donated coins to The British Museum; for example, 72 items of the large Mātara hoard [144] of Nāimana imitations unearthed in the 1920s. Another small collection, consisting of 45 items of ancient and mediaeval Śrī Laṅkān coins and goddess plaques, is preserved in The British Museum under W. H. Biddell’s name (de Silva 1975: 210–214). Biddell acquired some of these coins from the W. Raymond Jacks collection, of which others passed into the possession of The British Museum in 1959 as a bequest (see Walburg 1996: 62; Walburg 1997a: Appendix.).

In 1937, Biddell expressed his willingness to write a, “contemplated guide book about coins and seals” on the collections of the Colombo Museum (CAR Museum 1937: F 28). However, as far as can be seen, this work was never done.

In a manner unthinkable today, but normal for high-ranking people at that time, Biddell received coins from the Colombo Museum; for example, twelve mediaeval Sinhalese gold coins from the 127 piece Galpottagama hoard (near Anurādhapura), obviously as reward for his report on this find. On the other hand, he also donated coins from his own collection to the museum: “W. H. Biddell, Esq. – One kaha-vanu – Mediaeval Sinhalese gold coin of type 11 (i) to be sent for assay” (1937) and “Mr. H. W. Biddle <sic>, Anuradhapura. – Twelve coin moulds of Lion coins of Parakrama Bahu VI. of Kotte” (1936). In 1938, he also gave in part-exchange one of the early mediaeval Śrī Laṅkān gold coins to the collection of The British Museum in London. When in 1933 the American Numismatic Society returned thirty specimens of the famous Gampola hoard to the Colombo Museum, Biddell had obviously been involved in a ‘private’ transaction as well. On one of the unpaginated pages in his journal, he noted: “Exchanged with Amer.(ican) Num.(ismatic) Soc.(iety) for *larins* ex Gampola find 14.XI.33”. Below this heading, he has specified on the left hand side the coins he gave to the ANS, and on the right hand side the *larins* he received, again headed: “Received from Amer. Num. Soc. were”. Among the coins he gave away were, “13 Naimana Indo-Roman some HCPB(ell) rest mine ex Matara”. In connection with the Nāimana imitations that had been part of the former Biddell collection, we come across a problem. We know from his records that he donated specimens of this kind to The British Museum as well as to the American Numismatic Society. We further know that when designing new coin boxes and trays for his collection in September 1932, he planned three trays with 12 × 12 holes each (= 432) for the Indo-Roman section. However, in his journal he has only listed on pp. 51 to 59 the descriptions of types following the classification arranged by Codrington 1924. Only in one single case (p. 53, no. 1121), does he mention a specimen from the Valaichchenai find as being in his possession. This is the coin published in Codrington 1924, type 3 (IV), figured suppl. pl. 3. Nowhere else in the Biddell documents are other coins of this kind listed or described. Thus, what happened to these specimens unfortunately remains obscure. In the same way as Biddell, P. E. Pieris also exchanged coins with the Colombo Museum. In 1927 for example, he donated four Telugu gold *fanams* and received in exchange two

1.4 THE EARLY RESEARCHERS: JOHN STILL AND HUMPHREY WILLIAM CODRINGTON

Although self evident, it should be emphasised again that any study on ancient coins from Śrī Laṅkā must naturally be based on an analysis of the material on as large a scale as possible. Any previously published information has to be credited, although depending to a certain degree on the capability of the person dealing with the subject. In the field of numismatics we are fortunate enough to possess many profound works which enrich our own investigations. In the present case, one is inclined to believe that the famous and often-quoted monograph written by Humphrey William Codrington on *Ceylon Coins and Currency* takes first place. However, we actually have to go back to the very beginning of the twentieth century to meet John Still, the real pioneer of ancient Śrī Laṅkā numismatics.

John Still was the assistant of H. C. P. Bell, the first Archaeological Commissioner of Ceylon, from 1902 to 1907. Formerly, from 1897, he had worked as a tea-planter, and was afterwards employed as Additional Land Settlement Officer in the Land Settlement Department in Colombo from 1908. Though his career in the Archaeological Department was a very short one, he left, besides others, some numismatic writings, which must still be regarded as fundamental. He was the first person to make a serious attempt to analyse the Roman coins unearthed in Śrī Laṅkā. The results of his investigations were published in 1907 (Still 1907), and it was this article on which H. W. Codrington, seventeen years later, based his list of Roman coins found in Śrī Laṅkā. Likewise, Still first drew attention to the existence of the Nāimana imitations and made the first analysis of this coin-type. His contributions to Śrī Laṅkā's ancient numismatics also comprised two further articles of great value. In the first, he described a large hoard of punch-marked coins discovered in Anurādhapura (Still 1907a), while in the second he came to the correct conclusion that the so-called goddess plaques are not coins (Still 1907b), a fact that some hard-line 'monetarists' deny even today (see chapter 3.2.1). Although each of his articles comprise only a few pages, his observations are so exact and his deductions so perceptive that there was no need to fill further columns. Moreover, he studied Sinhalese coins to the extent that he was able to write on forgeries of them (Still 1906). His

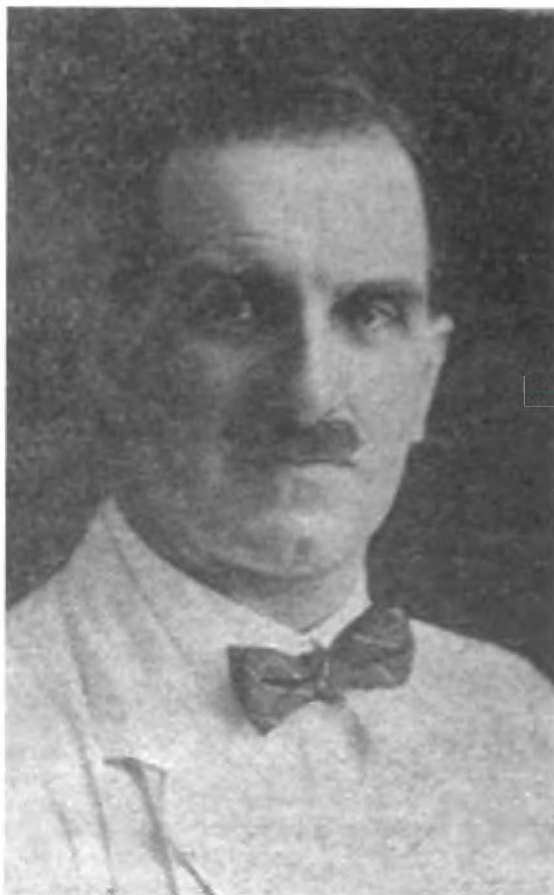


Fig. 4. Humphrey William Codrington (1879–1942).

scientifically most valuable publication, however, is the *Catalogue of finds of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, deposited in the Colombo Museum* (Colombo n. d.) which was released in 1909 or 1910 for private use only. Exclusively with the help of this compilation, we are now able to shed some light on the large number of Roman coins allegedly unearthed in Sigiriya (see chapter 2.2).

Compared with Still, Codrington (Fig. 4) was mainly a compiler, who impresses his readers even today with the vast amount of detail amassed in his book *Ceylon Coins and Currency*. Codrington had already outlined the skeleton of his book in 1916: On the occasion of the general meeting of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, held in the Colombo Museum on 6. October, he delivered a lecture entitled *Ceylon Numismatics* in which he demonstrated his already widespread general knowledge. Referring to this monograph in an

unfinished and unposted letter to a friend²⁷, Biddell wrote the following ambiguous passage: “I think it save to assume that you have not seen Codrington’s great book on *Ceylon Coins and Currency*. Dip into it when you get a chance: it will make your hair stand at end! – particularly the kaleidoscopic variations of weight, fineness and rating. All that will simply provide a vast and most complex mass of figures. I have started on conventional basis but torn it all up as useless to you”. When taking a closer look at his work, we have to realise that he only very rarely took up a definite position on a particular subject and that he was sometimes a little uncritical when he collected his data. In his preface, Codrington mentions the private collections he used when compiling his list of coins, viz. H. C. P. Bell, W. H. Biddell, L. de Saram, and P. E. Pieris. De Saram at least had bought many of his coins in London (see chapter 1.3 dealing with the Biddell documents) and we may suspect that, due to his position as Trade Commissioner in London, Pieris had done this as well. For example, the *denarius* of Hadrianus mentioned by Codrington on p. 38 formed part of Pieris’ collection, who *believed* that he had purchased it in Colombo (Pieris 1912: 145); however, he might have bought this piece in London as well. The coin of Vespasianus described by Codrington on p. 38 was probably part of the Biddell collection and bought in Colombo Pettah. In his journal, Biddell comments: “If mine (ex Colombo Pettah) Moor Jeweller, surely second brass. 2 Sept 1921”. Two unidentified gold coins sold by Codrington to Biddell in July 1932 originally formed part of a lot of three purchased by Codrington in Amsterdam. The corresponding entry in Biddell’s journal on p. 63 reads “UNIDENTIFIED. From Lord. Grantleys sale. lot 1947 Schul.(man) s(ai)d ? Ceylon. HWC(odrington) p(ai)d. fl(orins): 140/- for three. Thirds of little value”; the weights given are 88.8 grains (5.75 g) and 86.4 grains (5.59 g). The auction sale referred to here was that held by J. Schulman, Amsterdam, on 12. December 1921 (Catalogue de la grande collection de monnaies de l’Inde, etc. du Right Hon^{ble} Lord Grantley). Lot 1947, belonging to the section ‘Varia’, is described as “Deux monnaies d’or, imitations du type Gupta, avec bordures de globules (Ceylon?) et monnaie d’or (Inde du Sud) avec figures incertains. Or, gr. 17.14, 3 ps”. Although the two coins mentioned were not incorporated by Codrington into his monograph because of their non-Śrī Laṅkān

origin, this nevertheless gives an idea of the various sources the coins listed by Codrington could have come from. According to marginal notes in Biddell’s CCC, the following coins also belonged to the latter: Tetradrachm (no. 2) of Aurelianus (p. 37) – Second brass of Claudius (p. 38) – *Antoninianus* of Tetricus (p. 39) – Nāimana imitations (p. 45, 11.[ii.]; p. 46, [5] [i], [ii] and [iii.1]; p. 47, [6.2], [7] and [8.2]) – Kuṣān (p. 49, one piece, bought in Colombo) – Gupta (p. 49, no. 2 of Candra Gupta). These few hints already gathered suggest a necessity to be cautious when using the data and assumed facts of Codrington’s chapter IV, dealing with Roman and Byzantine coins, the more so when keeping additionally in mind where some of the coins from the private collections used by Codrington were purchased (see Biddell’s remark quoted in chapter 1.3 concerning the de Saram collection, based on his intimate knowledge of it). Nevertheless, we have to state that Codrington’s monograph on *Ceylon Coins and Currency* is still unequalled in respect to the material collected, and that nothing comparable can be named that covers the whole period from antiquity to modern times. However, it must be stressed again that this book should be used with reserve.

The importance of ‘background knowledge’ cannot be overestimated, especially when dealing with Asian finds reported by pioneers like Codrington. An interesting parallel can be quoted from China. Two Roman gold coins – one of Constantinus, the other of Constans – purchased by the famous Sir Aurel Stein and published by him in a list of acquisitions from Serindia, were cited as proof of trade relations between Rome and China (White 1931). However, from Stein’s diary, published elsewhere, it becomes clear that he had bought these two coins from a wandering Hindu moneylender, who had brought them from Bokhara (Raschke 1974: 42). This ‘buying elsewhere and by the way’ might also be an explanation for the presence of the dubious Alexandrian tetradrachms in Śrī Laṅkā. The eighteen specimens recorded by Codrington²⁸, dating from the first to the third century, may have been purchased in Cairo by travellers like Codrington, Pieris, de Saram, and others, when returning from Europe to Śrī Laṅkā via Egypt. A comparable phenomenon is reported

²⁷ Again the above-mentioned R. L. Spittel.

²⁸ Codrington 1924: 36f. and 250. See also the Kurunēgala District catalogue entry [105] and the commentary given there.

from Britain, where in 1908 a 'hoard' of forty-six Egyptian billon tetradrachms dating from Nero (54–68) to Carinus (283–285) came to light in London, but: "Authenticity of hoard provenance <is> doubtful" (Coin Hoards 7 [1985]: no. A 169). These coins, assuming that they had indeed been discovered in Britain, are definitely excluded as proof of direct trade contact between Britain and Egypt, but are interpreted as being probably souvenirs or exotic items 'wandering' from hand to hand (Drexhage 1998: 196). Generally, all hoards of Alexandrian coins found outside of Egypt must be suspected as being secondary finds (Coin Hoards 7 [1985]: 88f.).

EXCURSUS: THE LIFE AND CAREER OF
H. W. CODRINGTON

Thanks to newspaper articles²⁹, obituaries³⁰, and information gathered from various other sources, we are well informed of the life of HWC. Born in Henley-on-Thames on 25th September 1879, he was a nephew of Oliver Codrington, then librarian of the Royal Numismatic Society in London. It was most probably through his uncle that Codrington first came in contact with the fields of oriental numismatics and history, as the former had written a manual on Muslim numismatics and was obviously also interested in the coins of India and Tibet. In fact, before focusing on the numismatic history of Ceylon, his nephew published in 1914 the first part of the "Catalogue of the Coins in the Colombo Museum" dealing with the Muhammadan and European coins³¹ as well as an article on the "Coins of some kings of Hormuz"³². In 1918, he wrote on "The Persian Weight Standard in Mediaeval India"³³ and, with his museum catalogue, Codrington also did pioneer work in the field of Maldivian numismatics, as he was the first to be able to ascribe some of the *larins* to particular rulers.

Educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford, where he took his B. A. degree, Codrington entered the Ceylon Civil Service (C. C. S.) on 21st November 1903. Four years later he is mentioned as an officer of the fourth class with a salary of 6,750 rupees = £ 450 (for comparison: 10,000 acres of Crown Land [c. 15½ sq miles] were bought in 1909 for 4,750 rupees and 50 cents). He was acting at that time as Office Assistant to the Government Agent for the Western Province, and residing in Colombo. In 1908 he was nominated

unanimously as successor to the Archaeological Commissioner by H. C. P. Bell, the then acting Commissioner and by the Ceylon Governor, Sir Henry Edward McCallum. However, the Colonial Office in London insisted on employing a professional archaeologist.

Up to 1923, we find Codrington residing for relatively short periods at various places:

1913–1914	Kegalla, Ceylon
1915	Puttalam, Ceylon
1916	Kegalla, Ceylon
1917–1918	Crab Mill, Ilmington, Shipston-on-Stour, Gloucestershire
1919–1922	Kandy, Ceylon (where he finished his numismatic monograph)

His career in the Ceylon Civil Service saw him as Government Agent of Uva and Sabaragamuwa, Controller of Revenue and, for a short time, as Postmaster General. In World War I, he served as Lieutenant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (R. A. O. C.). In 1923 he returned to Colombo, where he lived until 1931. Having retired from the post of Government Agent of the Central Province, he left the island on 18th October 1932³⁴ and moved to Great Britain, where he lived in London until his death on 7th November 1942 (1932–1936 at 43 Palace Gardens Terrace, W. 8 and 1937–1942 at 142 Oakwood Court, W. 14).

Besides the merit Codrington undoubtedly gained in the field of numismatics, he was a historian of considerable reputation. His "A short history of Ceylon", published in 1939, was the first reliable condensed history of the island based on original sources. His knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhalese, and Tamil was helpful in this undertaking, as was his ability to read Portuguese, Dutch, French, and German. Little known is another book written by him and released also in 1939. The Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, Rome published an edition of a seventh century Syriac manuscript, provided with a translation and notes in Latin: *Anaphora Syriaca Severi Antiocheni. Editit et vertit Humphridus Gulielmus Codrington.*

²⁹ Mendis 1937; Anonymous 1939.

³⁰ Anonymous 1942; Paranavitana 1945.

³¹ Codrington 1914; reviewed by Allan 1914.

³² Codrington 1914a.

³³ Codrington 1918.

³⁴ In July, he had once more sold some coins of his collection to Biddell, for example the Gupta *N stater* published by Codrington 1924 on p. 49, 13.(g)(2) and two unidentified *N* coins.

2 Coins from archaeological excavations

Coins from scientifically-conducted archaeological excavations are the most reliable sources a numismatist can ever hope to get. Combined with the ascertained context of the finds by the archaeologists, they provide insights into the monetary and economic history of a given area at a given time.

2.1 ANURĀDHAPURA

Ancient coins of different types have been unearthed at various places in the former capital of Śrī Laṅkā since the late nineteenth century [1–26]. In alphabetical order these are: Abhayagiri, Buddhist rail, the Citadel, Galge rock, the Geḍigē area, Jētavanārāma, Nuwarawewa, the Site of the Samadhi statue, Thūpārāma, Tissārāma, Toluvila, and Vessagiriya. Moreover, there are other finds from unspecified areas within the city. Many of the coins were unearthed in the course of modern archaeological excavations. However, most of these are not yet published in a satisfactory manner (see *Introduction*). The specimens discovered here cover almost the whole range of coin types known from the island: Indian silver and silver-plated punch-marked coins and ingots, as well as a terracotta mould for casting punch-marked coins; elephant & swastika coins; tree & swastika specimens; and those of the rectangular bull type. On the other hand, not a single coin of the lion & swastika type, known from Tissamahārāma, has been discovered³⁵. Additionally, there are also a few Indian coins.

The Late Roman *æs* coins cover the normal range of types from the fourth and fifth centuries that are known from many other places in Śrī Laṅkā, supplemented by a few Nāimana imitations. Compared with the number of Roman coins unearthed at Sigiriya and Tissamahārāma, the specimens discovered in Anurādhapura are very few (see the tabular synopsis in chapter 4.1.1).

However, to come to a better understanding of the monetary and, by inference, the general

economic conditions in the ancient capital, we have to wait for the detailed publication and evaluation of the coins unearthed during the course of the recent archaeological excavations at Abhayagiri, Jētavanārāma, and on the Citadel (for the latter see *Commentary* on [7]).

2.2 SIGIRIYA

The documentation of the Sigiriyan finds is somewhat puzzling. According to Still (1907: 174f.), 1,675 Roman coins had been unearthed in Sigiriya before 1907. However, an entry in the *Catalogue of finds of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, deposited in the Colombo Museum* (compiled by John Still 1906–1907, Section [V]: [a] Gold; [b] Silver; [c] Copper), reads as follows: “About 1,600 small copper coins; most, if not all, of which are Roman. These are not yet sorted and identified. Locality: Sigiriya and Anurādhapura” (p. 16. no. 46). This catalogue prepared by Still, “was printed for private circulation only” (Willey 1910: 57). Which of these two contemporary notices however is correct? Were the c. 1,600 coins discovered exclusively in Sigiriya, or in Sigiriya and Anurādhapura, as the document quoted above suggests? It is quite astonishing that Still was able to give the exact number of coins found in Sigiriya, and that he could identify 36 different coin types, whereas for Anurādhapura he only vaguely mentions that, “Roman coins have frequently been found in small quantities at a number of different places”. At the latter site, only one coin each of Theodosius and Arcadius and two imitations could be identified. With the exception of, “a small and hopelessly corroded coin” (Bell 1895: 53), “and three or four “third-brass” oboli of the later Roman Empire” (Bell 1896: 253), no coins were unearthed in Sigiriya during the course of the archaeological works carried

³⁵ There is only one specimen quoted by Bopearachchi / Wickremesinhe (1999: E.10) that allegedly came from Anurādhapura.

out between 1895 and 1897 (Bell 1895, 1896 and 1897). During the years 1904–1910³⁶, five Late Roman *æ*s coins were discovered in the Sigiriya dāgoba in 1910, but this is all [78]. From 1913 to 1922 there seems to have been very little archaeological activity at Sigiriya, with only some clearing on the site reported for the financial year 1921–22 (Hettiaratchi 1990: 49). So – where did the quoted 1,675 coins come from?

A quarter of a century later a phenomenon occurs that can best be described as *the dubious Sigiriyan finds of 1935*.

It was already outlined in chapter 1.1 that the finds allegedly handed over to the Colombo National Museum in 1935 were almost certainly not unearthed in that year. This also applies to the five lots from Sigiriya [79–83]. This assumption is supported by the fact that the normally well-informed W. H. Biddell had no knowledge of these finds, as there is no corresponding hint of them in his collector's journal or in his copy of Codrington's *Ceylon Coins and Currency*. In this connexion, one has also to be reminded of the fact that in the same year (1935) Biddell was appointed a member of the Committee of Management of the Colombo Museum and therefore had access to first-hand information. Thus he knew, for example, about the gold coins discovered at Mātara or in its vicinity in 1935.

The central question at issue now is: Were these five lots part of the legendary 1,675 Roman coins allegedly discovered in Sigiriya before 1906/7? The facts listed for the '1935 finds' and those of pre-1906/7 date seem to be in favour of this assumption. However, if this holds true or not, we have to ask about whereabouts of the remaining c. 1,000 coins, irrespective of whether they had been unearthed in Anurādhapura or Sigiriya. In 1978, there was no trace of these coins either in the Archaeological Department, Colombo or in the Colombo National Museum – not even a written hint. An additional argument for the suggestion that the '1935 finds' are indeed part of the pre-1906/7 discoveries might be deduced from the state of affairs at that time in the Archaeological Department, from where the Colombo Museum received the finds (see chapter 1.2 on the numismatic collection of the Archaeological Department). When registered in the journal of the Colombo Museum in 1935 (or possibly even later?) it was perhaps known only that these coins had once been unearthed in Sigiriya, but not when or under

what circumstances – if indeed these were ever known? See also the commentary to the Mihintalē hoard [35], which was probably discovered prior to 1907.

In the 1930s, only a very few archaeological activities are reported from Sigiriya. In 1934/35, during the years of the country-wide Malaria epidemic, no work seems to have been done there, as activities are reported only in 1933 and then again in 1936 (Fernando 1990: 77 and 103).

The confusion concerning the five 1935 finds is topped almost 60 years later by Bopearachchi, when he simply adds together the total number of coins from four of these hoards [79, 80, 82, 83] thus finally creating a new "trésor de 605 pièces"³⁷. Moreover, he should also have added the 25 Sigiriyan pieces from 1935 [81] which had been lent to the Jaffna Museum in 1945³⁸.

The majority of coins unearthed during the course of the archaeological excavations under the UNESCO – Sri Lanka Project of the Cultural Triangle from 1982 onwards, have not yet been published in an adequate manner, i.e. in their archaeological context (see 86–88).

2.3 TISSAMAHĀRĀMA

Before dealing with the results of the recent archaeological excavations at Tissamahārāma, it seems worthwhile to gather together all the other relevant numismatic data known from this site.

Two large coin hoards were discovered here in 1950 and at some time prior to 1966, both found in association with a religious building: A pot containing 2,828 coins was dug up only half a mile from Māṇik vihāra [195], and 513 pieces were discovered at Rajamahāvihāra [198]. For the latter, a grant of land is attested in a fifth century inscription. King Mahānāma (409–431) gave 9,000 *karīsas* at Padanagala / Palitotugama to the vihāra, which is equivalent

³⁶ See the relevant ASCAR volumes.

³⁷ Bopearachchi 1993: 78 and 1993a: 254. Three years earlier he knew better: "In 1935, four separate batches comprised of 605 Roman and Indo-Roman coins found in that area were given to the Colombo National Museum" (1990: 28).

³⁸ The fifth hoard was obviously overlooked by Bopearachchi when adding the numbers given in Walburg 1985: IV 1001 to 1004; but IV 1006, with its 25 specimens, also belongs to this group.

to about 36,000 acres (Müller 1883: no. 67; Nicholas 1959: 61). The monastery was still in existence in the mid seventh century, as attested by a later grant (Nicholas 1959: 61). This clearly shows the importance of the Rajamahāvihāra at that time, and indicates that it must have had an enormous income. Māṅik vihāra is also reported to have been still intact in the seventh to eighth centuries (Nicholas 1959: 61). According to the excavator, it is probably the same monastery that tried, perhaps as early as the late fifth century, to get a firm footing in the citadel of Tissamahārāma³⁹.

Of another hoard allegedly unearthed at Tissamahārāma [192], only three coins from “about 367 Roman copper coins and their local imitations” were published. The existence of two other, extremely large hoards from this site [202, 203] must be seriously doubted.

Contextual finds from Tissamahārāma, like those unearthed during the course of recent German – Śrī Laṅkān archaeological excavations conducted by Hans-Joachim Weisshaar (*Kommission für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen*) are only known from one other excavation. It dates back to 1883⁴⁰, when Henry Parker discovered four (or possibly five) late-Roman *æs* coins, supplemented by four goddess plaques and one elephant & swastika specimen. Meanwhile, our knowledge has been greatly enriched by the addition of numerous new coin types to the list of site finds: Indian punch-marked coins, South Indian coins, Śrī Laṅkān ingots, coins from Palestine, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Aksūm, and imitations of Late Roman *æs* coins. The number of Late Roman coins has considerably increased. Maneless lion tokens have been discovered, as well as a great number of goddess plaques. Up to the end of the 2005 excavation campaign, the following clearly identifiable coins and coin-like objects had been unearthed in layers that can be ascribed to these datable phases:

c 2 1st century BC

- 2 Indian silver punch-marked coins
- 2 Indian imitation silver-plated *æs* punch-marked coins
- 3 lion & swastika⁴¹
- 2 tree & swastika
- 1 “earliest inscribed coin”
- 9 goddess plaques

d 1 1st century

- 3 Indian imitation silver-plated *æs* punch-marked coins

- 1 lion & swastika
- 3 tree & swastika
- 30 goddess plaques

d 2 2nd century

- 9 Indian silver punch-marked coins
- 4 Indian imitation silver-plated *æs* punch-marked coins
- 1 tree & swastika
- 1 South Indian small *æs* coin
- 58 goddess plaques

d 1st–2nd century

- 1 goddess plaque

e 3rd century

- 18 Indian silver punch-marked coins (hoard)
- 6 Indian silver punch-marked coins
- 2 Indian imitation silver-plated *æs* punch-marked coins
- 2 Śrī Laṅkān silver ingots
- 1 Śrī Laṅkān silver-plated *æs* ingot
- 23 goddess plaques

f 1 4th century

- 4 Indian silver punch-marked coins
- 1 Indian imitation silver-plated *æs* punch-marked coin
- 1 Śrī Laṅkān silver ingot
- 1 Roman *æs* coin
- 1 maneless lion token
- 3 goddess plaques

f 2 4th–5th century

- 2 Indian silver punch-marked coins
- 4 Roman *æs* coins
- 1 maneless lion token
- 11 goddess plaques

f 4th–5th century

- 1 bull/dot coin
- 1 Nāimana imitation
- 5 goddess plaques

³⁹ Weisshaar 2002: 300, where a date after 700 is given. This was modified on the basis of new archaeological data (personal communication H.-J. Weisshaar, [Dec. 2002]) to “probably end of 5th century”.

⁴⁰ In 1817, Tissamahārāma was not even a dot on the map: see Bertolacci 1817.

⁴¹ The third specimen comes from the 2006 excavation campaign at Tissamahārāma. It is thus not listed in the catalogue section (which closes with the 2005 campaign) but only numerically incorporated here.

- e – f* 3rd–5th century
 1 maneless lion token
- early g* 5th–6th century
 1 Indian Mahāraṭhi coin
 1 Roman æs coin
- g* 5th–7th century
 6 Indian silver punch-marked coins
 2 Indian imitation silver-plated æs punch-marked coins
 1 Śrī Laṅkān cast imitation Indian silver punch-marked coin
 1 Śrī Laṅkān silver ingot
 1 Palestinian (Ascalon) æs coin
 29 Roman æs coins
 1 Roman/Byzantine/Vandalic æs coin
 5 Nāimana imitations
 1 Roman or imitation æs coin
 1 Aksūmite æs coin
 1 Egyptian (cast imitation of an Aksūmite æs coin)
 1 South Indian small æs coin
 10 goddess plaques
 1 maneless lion token
- f – g* 5th–7th century
 1 Roman æs coin
- g – h* 5th–9th century
 1 Indian silver punch-marked coin
 5 Roman æs coins
 1 goddess plaque
- h* 8th–9th century
 1 Indian silver punch-marked coin
 1 Śrī Laṅkān silver-plated æs ingot
 1 Phoenician (Tyros) æs coin
 1 Nāimana imitation
 1 goddess plaque

Generally, the number of coins discovered seems to be relatively meagre. However, we have to bear in mind that these coins are site finds that do not come from religious centres like Abhayagiri [1, 2] and Jētavanārāma [13, 14] in Anurādhapura. They have been discovered, on the contrary, in a secular environment, indeed in a workmen's quarter. Compared with the number of coins from the Anurādhapura citadel [5–8], not including the goddess plaques found there, the result is not too bad for Tissamahārāma. In addition, it must be pointed out that, unlike Anurādhapura, the city of Tissamahārāma has so far only been only scratched archaeologically. Unfortunately,

some areas of Tissamahārāma are out of reach of the archaeologists due to their topographical situation (Weisshaar *et al.* 2001: 26).

The data obtained from the Tissamahārāma excavations since 1992 are essential for the understanding of the monetary history of Śrī Laṅkā, as they give some insight into the use of coins through several centuries. The excavated areas are named Tissa 1 (*Workmen's Quarter*), Tissa 2 (*Court Garden*), and Tissa 3 (*Sarvodaya*). Judging from the stratified specimens, there was only a modest usage of coins during the first century BC and the first century. A more intensive utilisation emerged during the course of the second century, and was further developed in the third, when Śrī Laṅkāns began to produce cast imitations of the Indian silver punch-marked coins then in circulation. The established use of this kind of coin, traded from the subcontinent to the island, is also attested by a treasure trove [185] datable to this period (phase c). Judging from traces found on two specimens, these coins had originally been wrapped in a piece of cloth. Close to the place of discovery, five additional punch-marked coins were unearthed [185] in the same layer as the hoard. According to the excavators, these single finds probably do not belong to the hoard. However, four of the five specimens are of the same kind as those found in the hoard, while the fifth coin is an imitation of uncertain date. Therefore, we may interpret the hoard and the single coins as a unity. The majority of specimens date from the Maurya/Śuṅga period⁴², while five specimens are from earlier periods. All coins are heavily worn, and most of them almost totally. Accordingly, the weight of the coins is generally lower than the estimated standard weight of about 3.4 g⁴³; only one specimen exceeds 3 g. The light weight of our coins, due to long circulation, is normal and comparable to worn specimens in the collection of The British Museum (Allan 1936: *passim*). From the hoard's structure and the worn state of the specimens we may deduce with some certainty that the coins had been in continuous circulation from at least the middle of the

⁴² According to Gupta / Hardaker 1985: 10, they date from c. 270 to 175/50 B.C.

⁴³ Allan 1936: clxii (3.3–3.4 g); Gupta / Hardaker 1985: 2 (3.3–3.5 g); Mitchiner 1978: *passim* (3.6 g). The average weight of about 2.9 g given by Sirisoma 1987: 3, obviously refers to the worn specimens found in Śrī Laṅkā.

second century BC, when the production of punch-marked coins ceased, to the third century when the hoard was deposited and then lost. We have, of course, no idea when and in what state of preservation these coins were transferred from India to Śrī Laṅkā. From the epigraphic records, it becomes apparent that punch-marked coins, or *kahāpanas*, are regularly mentioned only from the second century onwards. The results from the Tissamahārāma excavations now perfectly confirm this observation. Likewise, the archaeological data are in perfect accordance with the testimony of the Dipavaṃsa. It is only during the reign of King Abhaya, i. e. Abhayanāga (291–299) that silver pieces, referred to by the term *rūpiyā*, are attested for the first time⁴⁴. In contrast to other contemporary records, where the term *kahāpana* is commonly used, we here have the unequivocal expression ‘silver’. Allegedly, the king donated 200,000 (pieces of) silver to the *saṅgha*. Therefore, we may conclude that the widespread use of imported Indian punch-marked coins in Śrī Laṅkā commenced during the third century – perhaps early in this century or even in the transitional period from the second to the third century. The fourth century is not very noticeable, and it seems to return to the modest scale of the first century BC/first century. With the arrival of Roman and other western coins in the fifth century, a revival of monetary activity is observable, including the manufacture of the Nāimana imitations. A solitary piece of the latter type was discovered in phase h, datable from the eighth to ninth centuries. We must naturally be very cautious in deducing the circulation of imitations to this period based only on the presence of a single specimen. Presumably, from the late fifth to early sixth centuries, all coin types known from preceding centuries and collected in the fifth century start to dwindle, or their use ceases more or less abruptly. Broadly speaking, ordinary money was driven out by gold coins that began to appear during the transition from the fifth to the sixth century. Only faint traces of their former existence are occasionally recognisable today (see index entries referring to Roman and Byzantine gold coins and the analytical *part IV* below).

The Roman coins so far unearthed at Tissamahārāma are in absolute accordance with the bulk of identifiable Roman coins discovered from all parts of the island. Though comparatively few in number, they perfectly reflect

the chronological and typological structure recognisable in large hoards, and in the total survey of all Roman coins as well. Here we must recall the observation that all of the Roman coins hitherto unearthed in Tissamahārāma were discovered in layers belonging to late phase f – h, datable to the period from about 450 to the ninth century. Even the solitary, well-preserved Æ 2 specimen – a coin type that was withdrawn from circulation in the Roman Empire by a decree given in 395 – was unearthed in a phase g layer (fifth to seventh century). The same is true of a coin in superb condition that is datable to 355–360. This strongly indicates that even the fourth century specimens, and those in the transition from the fourth to the fifth century, only came into use in Śrī Laṅkā sometime during the second quarter of the fifth century, i. e. in about 425 to 450. In other words, the archaeological data from Tissamahārāma testify that there was no constant inflow of Roman coins to Śrī Laṅkā from the fourth century onwards, but only a very few transfers during the fifth century. This finding, in itself, stands in absolute contradiction to one of the generally accepted, established “facts” of research on west-to-east trade in late antiquity. According to the *communis opinio*, the Roman Empire’s eastern trade revived again during the reign of Constantinus I, i. e. in the first half of the fourth century. From that time onwards, a constant cash flow from the Mediterranean to South Asia is allegedly observable, but ceases towards the end of the fifth century. This is definitely *not* the case.

2.4 MĀNTAI⁴⁵

According to general opinion, the most important harbour in Śrī Laṅkā throughout the centuries was supposedly Māntai, in the northwest of the island. Examining the available sources carefully however we get a different impression. In 1860, the unrivalled Sir James Emerson Tennent⁴⁶ characterised Māntai in the following way:

⁴⁴ Dpv. 22.37. PTS 575: rūpiya = silver, see Sk. rūpya “of splendid appearance”, and quoting a source where this expression is meant collectively for any transactions in “specie”.

⁴⁵ The following passage is a slightly revised version of an article originally published in German: Walburg 1997.

⁴⁶ Colonial Secretary of Ceylon from 1845 to 1849.

“Mantotte, . . . although it existed as a port upwards of four hundred years before the Christian era, was at no period an emporium of commerce. Being situated so close to the ancient capital, Anarajapoorā, it derived its notoriety from being the point of arrival and departure of the Malabars who resorted to the island; and the only trade for which it afforded facilities was the occasional importation of the produce of the opposite coast of India”⁴⁷.

However, just as in the case of the South Indian towns of Muziris and Madurai, the former existence of a Roman colony at Māntai was postulated by some scholars early in the nineteenth century (Casic Chitty 1847/8: 77f., n. †). The reference cited in fact dates back to Valentyn, who in 1724 published a description of Ceylon which in part relates back to that of the sixteenth century Portuguese historian do Couto (Arasaratnam 1978: 94). Even in the mid twentieth century, the possible validity of such an idea was still being taken into consideration (Malhotra 1958: 138).

In 1982 and 1984 archaeological excavations were carried out at Māntai under a Śrī Laṅkān – American co-operation. The chief American excavator condenses the apparently successful result of this undertaking in the one sentence: “Further, Mantai was the leading port for Sri Lanka as a whole for at least fifteen hundred years”, beginning as early as the fifth century BC and lasting up to the eleventh century (Carswell 1992: 197). Another participant in the project waxes lyrical when describing ancient Māntai:

“Throughout the first millennium A.D., Mantai functioned as a major entrepot in the international trade between East and West. In its portside market mixed the luxury ceramics and silks of the Far East with the gold, pearls, stones, spices and fabrics of India and the wines, fabrics, glass, ceramics and horses of Egypt and Iran . . .” supplemented by “. . . glazed ceramics and glass vessels from Iraq and Egypt, of lapislazuli from Afghanistan, of ceramics and carnelian from Gujarat, of basalt from the Deccan Plateau, of Amarāvati marble from South India and of stone ware and porcelain from China” (Prickett-Fernando 1990: 120).

It is difficult to find two statements as contrary as those of Tennent and Carswell / Prickett-Fernando. Hence we need to check in detail the results of the 1982/1984 excavations⁴⁸, to see whether they really yielded data profound enough to disprove Tennent’s

critical analysis. These, of course, have to be more convincing than the vague reference to a *Μοδούτου ἐμπόριον* mentioned by Ptolemaios as being situated in the north of the island (Carswell 1992: 199). In fact, a second trading place, *Ταρακόρι ἐμπόριον*, is also mentioned on the northeast coast of the island, and not on the north-west (Ptolemaios, *Geographia* VII.4.7). The faint suggestion of connecting *Μοδούτου* with Mantoṭte/Māntai had, by the way, already been put forward 164 years earlier⁴⁹. Moreover, it is also insufficient to simply distort an ancient written source to make it more convenient for one’s own interpretation. The *Periplus Maris Erythraei* does not state, “that the northern part of the island, called Palaisimoundou and formerly Taprobane, was civilized and produced pearls, precious stones, muslin, and tortoise shell” (Carswell 1992: 199). The quoted translation of the *Periplus* in fact reads somewhat differently: “Its northern part is civilized, and the passage to it is long, and it is so large that it reaches nearly to the coast of Azania opposite. It produces pearls”⁵⁰. The articles mentioned were produced on the island but not necessarily in the north of it, as Carswell tries to suggest. It is completely misleading to use the sources cited above to show the alleged importance of the north western part of the island.

All recent articles dealing exclusively or only incidentally with Māntai’s mercantile role, astonishingly lack the most important source in this field – the coins⁵¹. Writing about trade without evaluating the coins found there, documenting the kind of trade, seems to be a

⁴⁷ Tennent 1860: 499. For him (p. 481), as well as for Delbrueck 1956: 291, it was taken for granted that, based on Kosmas, the port of trade called by the latter *Fremdenhafen* (port for foreigners) was situated in the south of the island. Interestingly, Cook 1951: 54 and 329, calls Mantoṭa merely a landing-place.

⁴⁸ The first account of the excavations is seemingly an article published in *The Illustrated London News* (Carswell 1983).

⁴⁹ Heeren 1832: 27ff., adopted by Ritter 1836: 26 as well as by Lassen 1857: 243, and recently revived by Faller 2000: 125 n. 602. For Mango 1996: 156, the equation Māntai = Modoutou has already become a fact.

⁵⁰ Huntingford 1980: 54, and similarly Casson 1989: 89 and Weerakkody 1997: 225: “There are produced in it <i.e. the island> pearls . . .”.

⁵¹ Barnes 1994, when reviewing a volume devoted to the subject of ‘Rome and India’, made a similar observation: “Unfortunately, however, there is no sustained discussion of the numismatic evidence”.

hazardous enterprise⁵². On the one hand, the chief American excavator stubbornly passes over the coins discovered at Māntai (Carswell 1990, 1992, 1996a), while on the other hand, another American participant of the campaigns demands their publication (Prickett-Fernando 1990: 117). The identifications of the first coins unearthed were available to the excavators as early as 1984, and those of almost all the specimens from February 1988. These had been previously mentioned only in an unpublished seminar paper from 1987, written by the late Martha Prickett and entitled, “The metal objects from Māntai”. It is frustrating to hear Prickett-Fernando lament the meagre archaeological data, while simultaneously refusing to use the numismatic evidence at her disposal in the form of 136 specimens⁵³. Before going into detail, a remark of Carswell’s must first be disputed. His statement that some cowries discovered at Māntai, “must have been used as small currency” (Carswell 1990: 27) is unsustainable from an economic point of view. Firstly, any chronological context is missing from Carswell’s remark, and secondly some explanatory comments are necessary concerning the principle elements of the pre-monetary forms of exchange media, sometimes wrongly called ‘primitive money’. As early as the ninth century, *Cypraea moneta* belonged among the most important articles of export, and were shipped from the Maldives west-southwest of Śrī Laṅkā. Ships laden with cowries sailed to all parts of the world but: “They never formed a currency in Ceylon, or on the Malabar Coast (where they were native), but they increased in value as they travelled inland and their travels led them to Eastern Asia and Western Europe”⁵⁴. Only in this one sentence is a condensed description of one characteristic of this kind of money given: At their place of origin, as well as in the near vicinity, the cowries could never have had any great value because of their abundance there, and thus could not have functioned as money. Śrī Laṅkā, early Arabic and European written sources are consequently absolutely mute regarding the use of cowries in Śrī Laṅkā (Codrington 1924: 16). For Central India, however, Fā-Hien attests the use of cowries in mercantile transactions in about the year 400: “In buying and selling commodities they use cowries” (Fā-Hien, ch. XVI).

One additional cowry specimen can be quoted from Tissamahārāma, engraved with a design on its upper side. It was thus most

probably used as a toy, a piece of jewellery, or as an ornament, rather than as a form of money (Parker 1884: 46 [5]).

Concerning the coins discovered at Māntai, the excavators’ right to publish them first is, of course, undisputed. Moreover, no-one else has more detailed information to be able to do this better. However, they have obviously never made use of their *ius primae noctis*, though it was announced from 1987 that the preliminary reports of the 1982 and 1984 campaigns, written by M. Prickett and comprising four and thirteen pages of manuscripts respectively, were ‘in press’ (Prickett-Fernando 1990: n. 1, 1990a: 77). The manuscript by Prickett dealing with the 1980 campaign was still unpublished in 1996 (Bopearachchi 1996: bibliography). Moreover, it is to be suspected that the final report, already in planning in 1988 and according to Carswell in 1990, “in the final stages of preparation”, will never be published. From the documentary point of view, Māntai has always been neglected. The results of the excavations carried out in the 1960s and 1970s have not been published either (Silva / Bouzek 1990: 123). Under these circumstances, it seems justified to question the mercantile role Māntai played in antiquity. In dealing with this topic, coins naturally play a deciding role.

We must start with the central point of dispute. Since the last century, there has been a long-standing debate on the nature of the ‘goddess (or Lakṣmī) plaques’. Scholars are at variance concerning the question as to whether these upright, rectangular plaques in different sizes are coins or not (We have proved in chapter 3.2.1 of the present study that these objects are small votive offerings and/or amulets).

⁵² For example Charvát 1993 and Bopearachchi 1996. For reasons of bibliographic completeness only, Shinde 1987 and Silva/Bouzek 1990 should also be mentioned.

⁵³ Permission to use, evaluate and publish the identifications was granted to Prickett-Fernando in a letter dated 6.9.1988 in response to her inquiry. Of the 136 specimens sent to me, 90 had been unidentifiable. The total number of coins found in the course of the 1982 and 1984 excavations was only slightly higher (176 coins). The identified specimens had already been published cursorily in Walburg 1994: 335 n. 44, and one would therefore have expected their evaluation at least in Bopearachchi 1996.

⁵⁴ Quiggin 1949: 28f.; see also Sircar 1968: ch. XVII, Aumann 1974: 6–11 and Greifenstein 1990: 29–32. For the nineteenth century, it is attested that cowries functioned as small change in Bengal: Lassen 1857: 245.

Prickett-Fernando should have been aware of this controversial debate when without hesitation she cited twenty-five goddess plaques and only two punch-marked coins in support of her statement that Māntai had already been, “a prosperous commercial center” in the Early Historic Period, from about the third century BC to the third century (Prickett-Fernando 1990: 117). The archaeological data described at the same time in regard to Māntai’s early architecture seems rather to speak in favour of an assembly of shelters than of a prosperous port-town. The dilemma arising from this discrepancy, i. e. on the one side the wishful thinking of having excavated an emporium, and on the other, the meagre archaeological data supporting this assumption, is avoided by Prickett-Fernando by stating baldly: We do not have enough data yet. In other words, we need to have more data to support the above-described view. However, until we have these – or not – the author should be more cautious in giving her opinion about an emporium that most probably never existed in the way described.

Returning to the coins, we find the same astonishing treatment of the material. Thirty coins, of which twenty-five are not coins at all, are used to define a major center of commerce. Of the remaining five specimens, three coins experience an amazing mutation. These completely unidentifiable pieces are suddenly, “probably of Roman origin” (Prickett 1987). This interpretation is entirely speculative and does not stand up to further scrutiny. Ultimately, Prickett-Fernando knows this, and consequently she should have avoided any hint to a possible Roman element within the coin material. Having a fair knowledge of Śrī Laṅkā numismatics, she should have recognised the chronological trap, and should not have fallen into it. If her assumption was correct, we would be in the fourth to fifth century, and not in the Early Historic Period. This, in consequence, leads to two different solutions to the chronological problem: Either we must give up the Roman element entirely, or we have to revise the chronology of Māntai. The objection that the pieces in question are Roman and of an early date can be refuted. All identifiable Roman coins from Māntai are of fourth to fifth century date. In addition, the total survey of Roman coins discovered in Śrī Laṅkā contradicts the presence of early specimens. Finally, the unidentifiable coins from Māntai are of small size and thus are not

what one would expect for Roman money to Śrī Laṅkā up to the end of the third century. From the numismatic point of view, the Early Historic Period, even up to the fifth century, has to be regarded as insignificant. The Roman element is abandoned by Prickett-Fernando in a following publication (1990: 117) and she passes over in silence the existence of the three unidentifiable coins.

The genesis of the supposititious commerce between the Roman Empire and Śrī Laṅkā during the Early Historic Period dates back to the year 1984: “The far-ranging nature of the trading contacts underlying this prosperity is indicated from reports of Roman coins from the site <Māntai>” (Carswell / Prickett 1984: 61). At that time, both authors placed the end of the Early Historic Period in the second century. A more honest handling of the existing literature dealing with Roman coins allegedly unearched in Māntai would have been helpful for those readers unfamiliar with this topic. Quoting the earliest apparent notice concerning the discovery of Roman coins in Śrī Laṅkā in 1584/5 (Māntai [63]), the authors (Carswell / Prickett 1984: 23) unfortunately forgot to mention the total number of coins found – one gold coin and two (or three) copper coins. Nothing definite is known about these specimens apart from the fact that the gold coin was lost when the ship of João de Mello de Saõ Payo, then Governor of Mannār, sank on its voyage to Portugal in 1592. The second authority quoted, which speaks of many coins dating to the Antonines, was already second-hand in 1907, and was based on a record that was sixty years older⁵⁵. These coins have also never been published in detail. A solitary coin, most probably a Roman Billon-Tetradrachm, for which no place of finding was ascertained, was nevertheless assigned to Māntai (Still 1907: 170, quoting Stark 1847/8: 157). The climax of this confusion is reached when consulting an economic survey of antiquity published in 1906 (Speck 1906). It is true that in vol. 3.2 p. 931 mention is made of many coins from the reign of Augustus to the Antonines having been found in Mantoṭṭe, but in vol. 1 p. 201 this statement refers to coin finds discovered in Śrī Laṅkā *and* India. If the second quotation is right, then the large numbers of Roman coins allegedly found would come to nothing,

⁵⁵ Carswell / Prickett 1984: 61f., quoting Still 1907. The latter is based on Casie Chitty 1847/8: 77f. n. +.

and so would the alleged international harbour of Māntai as well. Furthermore, we have to ask whether this statement should perhaps be confined only to India, because large quantities of early Roman coins have only been unearthed on the subcontinent (Berghaus 1992).

Quoting the “Roman coins” from Pidarikulam at Giant’s Tank, about ten kilometres inland from Māntai, as an additional proof for “economic prosperity” and the “far-ranging nature of the trading contacts” of this region, seems to be a little bit bold. Firstly, Carswell and Prickett must be corrected in that Still never mentions this place, though both authors cite him as authority (Carswell / Prickett 1984: 61 f., quoting Still 1907). The first reference to it is by Codrington (Codrington 1924: 33). It is probable that only a single Late Roman *æ*s coin was discovered there (see Pidarikulam [71]).

Proceeding to the Middle Historic Period, from the fourth to the eighth century, we come across the first reliably dated coins, represented by a total of nine Roman and imitation specimens. Three coins of the Pallavas, discovered at Māntai, are from this period as well. Some additional pieces from this dynasty have been unearthed at Tirukēśvaram, Tarakundu, and Kantarōḍai, in the extreme north of the island (Codrington 1924: 83). During this period, two invasions of the Pallavas took place. The first of these was conducted by Simhavishṇu⁵⁶ in the second half of the sixth century or at the beginning of the seventh century. In the second case, the Pallava King Narasiha (= Narasimhavarman I) invaded with a mighty army to support the accession of Mānavanma to the Śrī Laṅkān throne at the end of the seventh century. The fleet coming from South India disembarked at ‘the port’ (Clv. 47.53), i. e. at Māntai.

Quoting the travels of Fā-Hien from the beginning of the fifth century as evidence for an early, regular contact by sea between Tām(r)alīpti (modern Tamlūk near the Hooghly estuary) in the Gulf of Bengal and Mahāittha (= Māntai) is an original interpretation⁵⁷. The traveller mentions neither the Śrī Laṅkān seaport of destination nor the name of the place where he embarked on his return (for the possible, reconstructed route see below)⁵⁸. A second traveller of the fifth century, the well-known monk Buddhaghosa, may also have known this route. This is asserted by Gunawardana, quoting as his source the Samantapāsādikā: “It is implicit in the Samantapāsādikā that it was

quite usual for people to take ship to Tāmralīpti from Mahāittha” (Gunawardana 1990: 32). One step further, Karunatilaka simply omits the word ‘implicit’, thus converting a suggestion into a fact⁵⁹. Such a procedure is not entirely helpful.

Sometimes it is much more promising to ask about things that are *not* there than to deal with the well-known. If taken for granted that the two authors just mentioned were right, at least a few Gupta coins of fourth to sixth century date should have been discovered at Māntai, as Tām(r)alīpti belonged, as is generally known, to the Gupta realm. To put it briefly, there is not a single coin of this dynasty attested, free from doubt, in the whole of Śrī Laṅkā. There are no published specimens from excavations, nor are any mentioned in either the Administration Reports of the Archaeological Department or in the Reports of the Director of National Museums.

The Early Mediaeval Period, which according to Prickett-Fernando lasted from about the eighth to the thirteenth century, shows evidence of more activity:

- one coin of the South Indian Pāṇḍyas, datable from the eighth to the beginning of the tenth century
- twenty-three coins of the same dynasty, but from the mid ninth to the tenth century
- one Indian specimen struck by Rāja Rāja Coḷa
- four Śrī Laṅkān coins of twelfth to thirteenth century date, and one not clearly assignable piece of the same date

The largest quantity of Pāṇḍyan coins of the ninth and tenth centuries hitherto unearthed in Śrī Laṅkā originated from Tirukēśvaram, the location of a famous Hindu shrine, near Māntai. Another fourteen specimens are also reported from this area as having been discovered at Attikkuli, close to the Giant’s Tank (Codrington 1924: 86–89). This supports the data from Māntai and shows clearly that up to

⁵⁶ Codrington 1924: 83. According to Mitchiner 1979, the reign of Simhavishṇu is dated c. 575–600, while Elliot 1886: 41 n. 4, gives the beginning of the seventh century.

⁵⁷ Gunawardana 1990: 32, and parroted without criticism by Karunatilaka 1990: 145.

⁵⁸ Both the authoritative translations by Beal 1884 and Legge 1886 are mute in this regard.

⁵⁹ Karunatilaka 1990: 145. However, the accompanying n. 39 refers to Fā-Hien.

the end of the eighth century this place must have been economically unimportant. The comparatively large number of coins found struck from the middle of the ninth century could be interpreted *prima vista* as proof of increasing trading activity. However, unfortunately this is exactly the time when the Pāṇḍyan king, with mighty forces, invaded Śrī Laṅkā during the reign of Sena I (831–851). This invasion took place, as usual, in the north of the island (Clv. 50.12). Hence, it seems more logical to understand the South Indian coins found in the northern part of Śrī Laṅkā as relics of the invasion and of the presence of the Pāṇḍyas (who incidentally proceeded to the capital where they plundered the town and the vihāras), than as witnesses of prospering trade. After the army had left the island via ‘the seaport’, Māntai again found itself the centre of interest during the reign of Sena II (851–885). This time, Śrī Laṅkā troops embarked here to sail to South India in order to devastate the Pāṇḍyan capital Madhurā (Madurai). While the army was ‘on duty’ in South India, the Śrī Laṅkā sovereign resided in Māntai and welcomed the returning, victorious army there (Clv. 51.44–46). From the description in the Cūlavāṃsa, we have to ask what was worse for the town, the invasion of the enemy or the departure of its own army. A closer look at the Mahāvāṃsa and Cūlavāṃsa shows that Māntai, from the first century BC to the thirteenth century, had often had the dubious pleasure of having been the starting or finishing point in bilateral dealings between Śrī Laṅkā and South India. One of these ‘events’ is described in some detail in the Cūlavāṃsa (47.53–55), narrating the invasion of Mānavamma (the latter king of this name, 676–711). When coming with his fleet from South India: “The whole ocean was a (floating) town. Having reached the port he landed with his army, remained there a few days that his troops might rest, took Uttaradesa (the North Province), brought the inhabitants into his power and began with his invincible great army to march on the town”.

The Śrī Laṅkā kings involved after Sena II were Kassapa V, Dappula IV, Udaya III, Mahinda V, Vijayabāhu I, Parakkamabāhu I, and Vijayabāhu IV⁶⁰. Thus it seems more justified to characterise Māntai as a kind of naval base than to classify it once again in the universal manner as a “dynamic emporion” (Bopearachchi 1996: 63). Perhaps one should consider the fact that Māntai, just like the old capitals of Anurādhapura, Sīgiriya, and Pol-

onnaruwa, had been fortified with a rampart and double moat. It is hardly believable that merchants should have chosen such an unsafe and exposed port for trading their expensive, luxury goods, not knowing when the next major ‘event’ would take place.

The alleged Pāṇḍyan coins with inscriptions of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, cited by Carswell and Prickett for the Early Mediaeval Period, do not cause any problem. Their statement to this effect is simply annoying and its disproof is only tedious. The authorities quoted by Carswell and Prickett to support their assertion are unfortunately of little help

- The list of finds published by Boake in 1887 merely lists: “Two copper coins and a fragment” (Boake 1887: 112). However, the two authors regrettably forgot to mention that according to a note in Boake’s article: “The copper coins found were of the ‘Bull and Fishes’ type”. These are of ninth to tenth century date.
- Still rightly observed that among the coins discovered at Māntai: “The commonest coin is of the ‘bull and fishes’ type”. The complete ensemble consisting of, “Pandyan and Choliyan coins and a few Sinhalese massas”⁶¹, corresponds exactly with the coins unearthed by Carswell and Prickett in the 1980s. In both cases, the ‘bull and fishes type’ is dominant.
- The last informant mentioned is Codrington⁶². On the relevant pages, it is only stated that the majority of Pāṇḍyan coins discovered in Śrī Laṅkā have been found at Tirukēśvaram. Specimens from other places are listed individually. Māntai is named only once, for a specimen of the ‘horse and fishes type’ datable to the ninth to tenth century.

Here it is important to distinguish between the general place of discovery and the exact find spot. It is true that Māntai and Tirukēśvaram are mentioned synonymously, and we here have to leave aside the question of the validity of this usage, but as find spots the two

⁶⁰ Clv. 52.72, 53.5, 53.47, 55.15, 58.14, 76.85, and 88.63. See also Geiger 1960: § 98.

⁶¹ Quoted by Carswell / Prickett 1984: 28.

⁶² Carswell / Prickett 1984: 60, quoting Codrington 1924: 86–89.

places have to be treated separately⁶³. Of the coins described by Carswell and Prickett, not a single specimen has been discovered at Māntai. Almost all coins of this type are in fact from Attikkuli.

The impression gained from personal examination of the coins, as well as from the published data, supports what can be deduced from the catalogue of coins exhibited at the Colombo Museum, published in 1908. The catalogue entries range from punch-marked coins to British specimens of the nineteenth century. Of the 447 coins listed, only two of the ‘bull and fishes type’ are described as having been found at Māntai (Still 1908: nos. 243 and 244).

Dealing again with the real facts and their interpretation, Carswell excellently demonstrates how it should not be done. It is an original point of view to declare that a solitary Persian clay bulla is “material evidence for Sasanian presence in Mantai” (Carswell 1992: 199). This statement is supported by the presence of “Sasanian-Islamic ceramics”, which are neither specified nor dated. These finds, according to Carswell, are witness to the existence of a “Sasanian outpost known to have existed on the island”, and Māntai is naturally a “strong candidate” for this role. This idea is not as innovative as it sounds, and it has been repeated by Carswell/Prickett since 1984, when they correctly mention the literature from where it is derived⁶⁴. This probably points to a community of Christians, attested in Śrī Laṅkā from the middle of the sixth century. However, with regard to its importance (see Colless 1970: 21f.) this community should probably be sought for in Anurādhapura. The account of Kosmas Indikopleustes is normally quoted in this context. The Persian ships mentioned by him – always keeping in mind the clay bulla and Sāsānian-Islamic ceramics – inescapably headed for Māntai in the interpretation of recent scholars. The problem of identifying ‘the harbour’ is solved in a very interesting and individual way by Prematilleke: “The Egyptian sailor, Cosmas Indicopleustus, of the 6th century makes specific mention of Mantai as a trading station between China and Sri Lanka”. Regrettably, the author does not mention the edition or translation of Kosmas’ he used to support this revolutionary discovery⁶⁵.

The clay bulla⁶⁶ just mentioned deserves some consideration. Three impressions can be recognised, interpreted by Carswell as, “a two-humped Bactrian camel, a persian inscription,

and a Nestorian cross” (Carswell 1990: 26). Two years later the Bactrian camel had mutated into merely “an animal” (Carswell 1992: 199), to become, four years later, “a two-humped quadruped, like the camels so common and still used in Mongolia on the Central Asian trade routes”. The Persian inscription is now, “probably a name” (Carswell 1996: 209). According to Prickett-Fernando, the impressions represent a two-humped camel, a Persian name, and a Nestorian cross; she identifies this object as an “imported storage jar stopper” (Prickett-Fernando 1990a: 74 n. 22). Both scholars date the artefact from the sixth to seventh century. The form and placement of the impressions do not seem to be arbitrary. Each embedded into an oval form, the animal and the script have been placed close together, while the cross within a rectangular field has been impressed separately. The alleged Bactrian camel is in fact a Gōpatśāh (See Yarshater 1983: 442); a winged, man-headed, fabulous creature wearing a headdress. The illustration published by Carswell is clear enough to be certain about this identification. This fabulous creature from Iranian mythology is also depicted on the reverse of two coins unearthed during the course of archaeological excavations at Qasr-i Abu Nasr⁶⁷. Because of the creature’s crown, these coins cannot be dated prior to the reign of the Sāsānian king Xusrō II (591–628). For the representation of this mythical creature on coins we have a certain *terminus post quem* in the form of another Arab-Sāsānian

⁶³ See for example Rāma-Nāthan 1887. On maps, both places are represented separately.

⁶⁴ Carswell / Prickett 1984: 21 and 36, quoting the suggestion of Whitehouse / Williamson 1973: 43f. (“... Cosmas described the principal port of Ceylon, almost certainly Mahatittha...”).

⁶⁵ Prematilleke 1990: 233. Lokubandara 1990: 21, was ill-advised to accept this statement unverified.

⁶⁶ In an obviously out-dated encyclopædia article we are forced to read: “The discovery of Sasanian clay bullae in excavations at Mantai in Sri Lanka (unpublished) reflect the far-flung trade relations of Persian merchants”. (Frye 1993: 62, and again 1993a: 76f. with n. 9).

⁶⁷ Illustrated and discussed in detail by Frye 1973: 28–32 and Gyselen 2000: types 6–8 and p. 65 “... a mythical animal composed of the body of a zebu and a human bearded head wearing a diadem and a winged crown surmounted by a crescent and a star. This being seems to correspondent closely to the description of the Gōpatśāh, a legendary figure, half bull, half human, who was a king in Iranian mythology”. Thus, Carswell has confused the outline of a humped bull with that of a camel.

copper coin (Gyselen 2000: type 8; Album / Goodwin 2002: 497). Together with the reverse described above, it shows on its obverse two frontal busts; one large, the other small. This combination is derived from Byzantine *solidi* of Heraclius depicting the emperor together with one of his sons, struck from 613 (MIB 8). However, the copper coins most probably belong, and the bulla probably as well, to the time of the Umayyad Governors of the Persis, i. e. to the second half of the seventh century. French scholars have meanwhile deciphered the unread Pahlavi characters as 'pz'd plhwyh = abzāy farrōxih, i. e. "May the fortune/joy/happiness increase!"⁶⁸ This is indeed a somewhat uncommon 'Persian name' (Prickett-Fernando)⁶⁹.

The profound relationship between Persia and Śrī Laṅkā in general, and with Māntai especially, conjured time and again by Carswell, should have left, besides bulla and some potsherds of uncertain date, at least a faintly visible numismatic trace. However, the list of Sāsānian coins recorded from Śrī Laṅkā is as short as it is disappointing:

- two small *æs* coins of Šāpūr II, 309–379, one in each of the large hoards of Roman coins from Rekawa [161] and Kuliyaṭīya [115]. A third one is said to have been unearthed at Jētavanārāma, Anurādhapura
- one Sāsānian or Indo-Sāsānian *æs* coin from Kapuhena [160]
- two small *æs* coins allegedly of Yazdgard I, 399–420 (Codrington 1924: 50, of unknown provenance)
- one gold coin, allegedly from Anurādhapura [29]
- a few silver coins are in private collections:
 - ▷ An anonymous collection contains five coins, bought from a jeweller in Colombo. One coin each of Xusrō I, Hormizd IV, and Xusrō II were published in 1993 (Bopearachchi 1993: 79) and again as, "hitherto unknown in Sri Lankan context" in 1995 (Bopearachchi 1995: 135).
 - ▷ Four pieces from the Wickremesinha collection, one each of Šāpūr II, Kavād I, Hormizd IV, and Xusrō II, were published in 1999 (Bopearachchi/Wickremesinha 1999: 24 and 76). Allegedly discovered at Tissamahārāma (Akurugōḍa) there is in fact absolutely no proof for this provenance (see the

final entry for Akurugōḍa [193] in the catalogue section).

- ▷ In the Biddell documents, only one coin of unknown provenance is mentioned.

It is unnecessary to enter into the particulars of this short list, except to point to the number, type, origin, and date of the coins. In a marginal note on p. 16 of his copy of CCC, Biddell confirms Codrington's observation (ch. III, section X.) that few Sāsānian copper coins (Biddell remarks "! only") had been discovered in Śrī Laṅkā. These conclusions cannot in the slightest degree be harmonised with the scenario developed by Carswell for Māntai. Additionally, it is to be suspected that the ruins of Zoroastrian buildings, conceived by Carswell/Prickett as standing alongside those of Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim origin, will, sadly never come to light (Carswell / Prickett 1984: 21).

Changing from the Persians to merchants adhering to the Muslim faith, the picture just drawn is the same. Not even one, solitary Arab coin has so far been discovered at Māntai, but all the known finds originate from the region between Colombo and the Kandyan highlands (Codrington 1924: 157f.). For the existence of, "early Arabic inscriptions on tomb stones from this site <i. e. Māntai>" (Carswell 1990: 26 and 1992: 200) there is absolutely no evidence in any of the recent literature. In fact, there is not a single Arabic inscription attested for Māntai⁷⁰. What remains in the way of evidence are the potsherds. However, without knowing the exact number of pieces found nothing definite can be said. The only quantitative information given by the excavators is confined to a label of, "over 10 items" for each type of ceramic cited (Prickett-Fernando 1990a: 82f.). This is not entirely helpful, as even a single pot, dish, etc. may break into 'over 10 items'. As in the case of the Sāsānians, the presence of

⁶⁸ Personal correspondence with Ph. Gignoux and R. Gyselen, both at the Université de Sorbonne, Paris. I am most grateful to both these scholars for their kind help. For the translation of the two words, see the relevant entries in MacKenzie 1971.

⁶⁹ Carswell's original description – a two-humped Bactrian camel, a Persian inscription, and a Nestorian cross – has been adopted by Bopearachchi 2001a: 107, regrettably unaware of the results of recent research (Walburg 1997: 17).

⁷⁰ See Kiribamune 1990, Dewaraja 1990, Shukri 1990, and Devendra 1990, which can also be consulted for the geographical distribution of known Arabic inscriptions.

the Arabs in resident communities at Māntai cannot be verified. The erroneous assumption that Māntai had been *the* port of Arabian intermediaries dates back to the early nineteenth century (Bertolacci 1817: 18f.). However, the convincing refutation of this theory, and the identification of Galle, on the southwest coast of the island, as the chief commercial port for both Arabian and Chinese shipping, already dates from about the middle of that century (Tennent 1860: 498–502 and 520).

The same scepticism has also to be applied to the Chinese finds from Māntai. *Mutatis mutandis*, the objection just put forward against the Arabic ceramics can similarly be applied to the Chinese pottery too. The numismatic data are, again, contradictory to the assumption of an international emporium at Māntai, now with the participation of the Chinese. In this case, we are fortunately not confined to the coins alone but have additional written sources at our disposal. We first have to ask about the, “quantities of copper cash wanted for adjusting the balance of trade”⁷¹. These were apparently necessary because the barter trade carried out between the Chinese and the Śrī Laṅkāns in the first half of the seventh century was unbalanced due to the much more valuable goods of the Śrī Laṅkāns. The Chinese had to pay the difference in cash. The high appreciation of Chinese coins on the island could still be observed in the fifteenth century (Ma Huan, *Ying-yai sheng-lan* 129). Ascertained finds of Chinese coins, of any period whatsoever, are hitherto unattested at Māntai. It is a general feature of the north of the island that Chinese coins are hardly ever found there. Large hoards are only reported from the former capitals of Polonnaruwa [337f.] and Yāpahuwa [342]. As far as can be seen, the majority of the coins discovered can be assigned to the Northern Sung Dynasty (960–1127). Compared with Śrī Laṅkā, a much larger number of these specimens has been discovered in South India along the Coromandel Coast, in the Coḷa realm (Cribb / Potts 1996: 114f.; Gupta 1995; Shuomin 1995; Mitchiner 1995: 235f.). Although they controlled the northern part of Śrī Laṅkā as well, the Coḷas apparently traded with China from their own mainland territory, and not from Māntai. South Indian merchant guilds were present on the island, but none are known to have traded from this port (Indrapala 1990).

Up to this point, visible, solid facts have been discussed, offered by Carswell to support his hypothesis of the status of Māntai as the

leading port of Śrī Laṅkā for at least 1,500 years. Reaching now the realm of the invisible, Carswell becomes prophetic. Although admitting that there are no traces today of the well-constructed highroad that supposedly connected Māntai, “in its heyday”, in a “symbiotic relationship” with the capital city of Anurādhapura, he is nevertheless convinced about the former existence of such a road. Furthermore, according to Carswell, there must have been, “in all probability an intermediary settlement of some size, for the distance (some 80 km as the crow flies) suggests a two-day journey” (Carswell 1992: 197). In all probability this road did not exist. On the antique road map drawn by Cook, based on the Mahāvamsa, Māntai is only one station on the coastal road connecting the extreme north via Puttalam, Chilaw, Kelaniya, and Kōttē with Dondra in the extreme south (Cook 1951: fig. 9). The last place named was already known to Ptolemaios in the second century as *Δαγάννα πόλις ἰερά Σελήνη* (Geographia VII.4.5). Anurādhapura, on the other hand, is linked by road only to the east (Trincomalee), to the south (Tissamahārāma), and to the south-west (the Colombo area). Only from the reign of Parakkamabāhu I (1153–1168) do we get an indirect hint to the existence of a road connecting Polonnaruwa, via Anurādhapura, with Māntai, as one of the fourteen gates of Polonnaruwa was named the ‘Mahātitha Gate’ (Clv. 73.163). A distance of eighty kilometres as the crow flies necessarily means at least one hundred kilometres when taking into account the geographical conditions. This, of course, was not to be done in two days. For comparison, a well-trained Roman legionary normally marched 20 km a day on a well-built road (KIP 5: 500). Calculating other factors such as heat, water and food supply, necessary rest-stops, the speed of beasts of burden, etc., the journey would have lasted at least three to four days. Following the logic of Carswell, we would consequently need to search for two or three ‘settlements of some size’ serving as resting places (but why must these have been ‘of some size’?). Here, much more credit must be given to the thoughts of Bopearachchi who assumes that the waterway on the Aruvi Aru was a connecting link between Māntai and Anurādhapura (Bopearachchi

⁷¹ Tennent 1860: 521, quoting the Sui Shu (History of the Sui Dynasty), AD 633, book 81, p. 3.

2001a: 98f.). Taking for granted the navigability of this river from Anurādhapura to the coast in antiquity, and the suitability of the riverboats for coastal navigation, this waterway, of an equal length of about 100 km, must have been the better choice. However, this train of thought is purely academic in light of the preceding discussion.

Concerning Māntai's chronology there seems to be a general dissent. Here, we need not ask for the beginnings of the settlement, now supposedly obscured in the dark of pre-Christian centuries, but rather for its termination. Carswell lowers the veil on Māntai, as on Anurādhapura, after an unspecified but nevertheless disastrous Coḷa invasion that devastated the entire north of the island. Admittedly speculative, Carswell sends the resident merchants there into exile to south Indian Negapatam (modern Nagappattinam)⁷². So far so good, but he would have been well-advised to rely on stratigraphy and historiography to place these events at the beginning of the eleventh century – as, incidentally, he had done two years earlier (Carswell 1990: 28) – than for some obscure reason to now fix the destruction of

Anurādhapura at the beginning of the tenth century (Carswell 1992: 197f.). It is a matter of known fact that in 1017 Rājendra Coḷa dethroned Mahinda V and made Śrī Laṅkā a province of his empire (Clv. 55.16). It was only about forty years later that a Śrī Laṅkā monarch again ascended the throne. According to Prickett-Fernando, Māntai still existed up to the thirteenth century, and died gradually from the eleventh century up to that time, indicated archaeologically by sporadic single and surface finds (Prickett-Fernando 1990). A twelfth century edict is addressed to merchants resident in the port of Uratturai, situated off the island's northern tip on modern Kayts (Indrapala 1990: 155), and is a hint to the relative insignificance of Māntai during the reign of Parakkamabāhu I (1153–1168).

An unfortunate chronological disarray is caused by Shinde. He obviously confuses the great Coḷa invasion mentioned above with minor incursions during the reigns of Udaya IV (945–953) and Mahinda IV (956–972). Hence, he razes Anurādhapura to the ground just a little too early, “around 957 A.D.” (Shinde 1987: 330).

⁷² Carswell 1992: 203 n. 2. This idea is not as innovative as it may seem. It was formulated two years earlier by Tampoe 1990, addendum. This thought, expressed as a possibility, is already taken by Prematilleke 1990: 235, as an established fact.

