

The Hierarchy of the Saṅgha in Medieval Sri Lanka

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1 Introduction

Katikāvatas are a distinct feature that provides a wealth of information regarding Sri Lankan Buddhism. The Katikāvatas' responsibility is to keep the Saṅgha safe by supervising and controlling their actions. In the medieval period, the Sri Lankan kings¹ believed that the integration of the Saṅgha was a significant issue for Buddhism's protection. Consequently, they enacted the Katikāvatas to create a solid system for the Saṅgha.

The Katikāvatas were enacted as supplemental rules for Vinaya. They were explained in simple terms so that the bhikkhus of the period could understand them. The kings entrusted various members of the Saṅgha with enforcing the rules and conducting the appropriate legal actions. They, therefore, granted official and legal status to these members of the Saṅgha.

We located various research studies that partially link the Katikāvatas to the Saṅgha's organizational structure. Rohaṇadhīra's "*Sri Lankāve Saṅgha Saṅvidhānaya*" is one of the most notable studies on the hierarchy of the Saṅgha in medieval Sri Lanka. In his dissertation "*Polonnaru hā Daṁbadeṇi Katikāvata*", Prof. Dhammaviśuddhi describes the Saṅgha's hierarchy according to Daṁbadeṇi Katikāvata and Mahāparākkramabāhu Katikāvata. However, both research studies simply employed the Katikāvatas to construct the Saṅgha's organizational structure.

This study investigates how the Katikāvatas revealed the organizational structure of the Saṅgha and how the king attempted to administrate the society of the bhikkhus in medieval Sri Lanka. To make administration more convenient for the Bhikkhus, the king developed this particular royal administrative system for the Saṅgha. Furthermore, this shows how the king became involved in the bhikkhus' governance in a concealed manner. We can also suggest why the kings were so earnest to establish the hierarchical system in the Saṅgha. They would have wished to maintain the Saṅgha's possessions and the bhikkhus' purity since the kings and chief bhikkhus regained the purity of the saṅgha and the bhikkhus. In the time leading up to the Polonnaruva period, the Saṅgha had long been divided into three sects and many bhikkhus lived like laypeople. The King Parākkramabāhu reunified the sects and dispelled some disgraceful bhikkhus under the assistance of the chief bhikkhus. Such a hierarchical system of the Saṅgha would have been convenient to administrate all the bhikkhus nationwide for the kings as well as the bhikkhus themselves.

To clarify the above points, the Katikāvatas and Sinhalese ancient records have been extensively used. Several scholarly publications have also been used.

2 History of the Saṅgha in Sri Lankan Buddhism

The history of the Sri Lankan Saṅgha commenced from the Anurādhapura period with the mission of Mahinda Thera (247–207 BCE). This was during the reign of the King Devānampiya Tissa (247–207 BCE). The chief minister Mahā Ariṭṭha was recognized as the first member of the Sri Lankan Saṅgha.

¹In this study, I use the term "medieval period" to refer to the duration from the Polonnaruva period (1017–1232) to the end of the Kandy period's conclusion (1469–1815).

His followers and himself received the *pabbajjā* (admission to Buddhism) on the very day of Mahinda Thera and his companions' arrival.² Thereafter, Mahāvihāra monastery, the first Buddhist monastery in Sri Lanka, was constructed by the king and accepted by Mahinda Thera, in collaboration with his companions.

Mahinda Thera granted *pabbajjā* to Bhaṇḍuka and *upasampadā* (higher ordination) to the *sāmaṇera* Sumana³ was to show that *pabbajjā* and *upasampadā* were the essential elements to establish Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Soon after the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Mahāvihāra monastery started to function as the center of Theravada Buddhism in the country. The members of Mahāvihāra monastery are recognized as a sect called Mahāvihāravāsīn (“residents of Mahāvihāra”). There was no other sect except the Mahāvihāra sect. At that period, regardless of their place of residence, all the bhikkhus in Sri Lanka, wherever they lived, owed their ecclesiastical allegiance to the Mahāvihāra monastery in Anurādhapura. Thus all monasteries were virtually affiliated to the Mahāvihāra sect as its branches.⁴

Following the establishment of Mahāvihāra monastery in Anurādhapura, Abhayagiri monastery was built by the King Vaḷagambā (29–17 BCE) and was offered to Mahātissa Tera as the latter's private property. Upon his acceptance of a monastery, the Mahāvihāravāsīn accused Mahātissa Tera, as wanting to use the monastery for his personal property and expelled him from the sect. . Therefore, Mahātissa Tera and his followers went to Abhayagiri monastery and started the Abhayagiri fraternity (*abhayagirinikāya*).

During the third to fourth century, the King Mahāsēna (r. 334–361) built Jetavanārāma monastery under the guidance of Saṅghamitta Tera.⁵ According to the *Mahāvamsa*, the King Mahāsēna imposed a fine on those who gave alms to the Mahāvihāravāsīn, and he destroyed Mahāvihāra monastery onto the ground.⁶ The conflict among the fraternities worsened the schism in the Sri Lankan Buddhism. The fraternal conflict among the three fraternities continued until the period of the King Mahāparākramabāhu (r. 1153–1186), who united the three fraternities after a significant discussion with the Saṅgha. The unification of the Saṅgha was one of the major incidents that occurred during the period of the King Mahāparākramabāhu.

3 The organization of the Saṅgha

A significant characteristic of Sri Lankan Buddhism is that it has a hierarchical structure of the Saṅgha, where each member has his own status and role to assist in its management. This is unexpected, considering the fact that the Buddha Śākyamuni did not grant anyone the authority to supervise the Saṅgha.⁷ We will first review the organization of the Sri Lankan Saṅgha, and thereafter suggestions as to why the

²Mahinda Thera was accompanied by other four bhikkhus—Ittiya, Uttiya, Sambala, and Baddasāla; one *sāmaṇera* named Sumana; and one layman named Bhaṇḍuka (Mhv 12.7–8; 13.17–20; 16.10–11).

³Five or more bhikkhus are required for *upasampadā* (see Vin I 197.10–11.). The reason why Mahinda Thera accompanied the four other bhikkhus.

⁴See Rahula 1956: 303.

⁵It is said in the *Mahāvamsa* that Saṅghamitta Tera from the Vetulla, which was a sect probably belonging to Mahāyāna, were disciples of Mahātissa Tera, who accepted Abhayagiri monastery. Saṅghamitta collaborated with the minister Soṇa against the Mahāvihāra sect. See Mhv 37.10–11.

⁶See Mhv 37.7–9.

⁷In the *Dīghanikāya*, it is described that the Buddha Śākyamuni says that his teaching (*dhamma*) and discipline (*vinaya*) shall be the “teacher” after his demise. DN II 154.1–2. *Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto, so vo mam' accayena satthā*. “Ānanda, whatever teaching and discipline have been taught and laid down by me, that is your teacher after my demise.”

Saṅgha in Sri Lanka was established to be so hierarchical.

3.1 The Grāmvāsīn and the Araññavāsīn

First, we examine two major fraternities in the Mahāvihāra sect: the Grāmvāsīn (“one who dwells in a village”) and the Araññavāsīn (“one who dwells in a forest”).⁸ These two groups of the Saṅgha are considered as sub-sects in the Mahāvihāra. The first allusion to the existence of these two groups in Sri Lanka is made in the *Mahāvamsa* regarding the religious activities of Lajjitissa, the eldest son of the King Saddhātissa (119–109 BCE).⁹ At a maximum, we know that both fraternities existed in a well-organized form during the period of the King Vijayabāhu III (r. 1232–1236).¹⁰ Therefore, it is certain that the origin of the two fraternities’ dates earlier than the period of the King Vijayabāhu III.

It is said in the *Mahāparākramabāhukatikāvata* that the king Mahāparākramabāhu was assisted by a Vanavāsīn (“one who dwells in a forest”), Diṃbulāgala Mahā Kāśyapa Tera.¹¹ The term *vanavāsīn* is akin to *araññavāsīn*. The Vanavāsīn seems to have emerged as an influential fraternity of the Saṅgha during the Polonnaruva period (1053–1232).

The Grāmvāsīn and the Araññavāsīn are mentioned in the *Katikāvatas* and were promulgated in the Daṃbadeṇi period. The King Vijayabāhu III received the assistance of Grāmvāsīn, Medhaṅkara Tera, and Araññavāsīn, Medhaṅkara Tera to enact a new *Katikāvata*.¹² This implies that both fraternities of the Saṅgha in that period were relatively independent to each other, had similar statuses in that period and were equal in power. By the time of the Kandyan period (1593–1815), both fraternities were administered by a chief bhikkhu called Saṅgharāja.

The Grāmvāsīn and the Araññavāsīn became two major sects in 1778, after the demise of the last Saṅgharāja of Sri Lanka.¹³ The followers of the Grāmvāsīn and the Araññavāsīn are currently known as the Malvatta Mahā Vihāraya and the Asgiriya Mahā Vihāraya, respectively.¹⁴

3.2 Establishment of hierarchy in Sri Lankan Saṅgha

We will review the hierarchical system of Sri Lankan Saṅgha established in the *Katikāvatas* in 2.3 as follows: What is noticeable among the hierarchy is that the highest rank was named by the king, not by the bhikkhus themselves. This occurred despite all the other lower ranks being named by the bhikkhus and recognized by the king. This means that the king was the de facto administrator of the Saṅgha even though the bhikkhus ruled themselves by their own vinaya and other rules enacted in the *Katikāvatas*. The highest rank no longer exists in modern Sri Lankan Saṅgha. It was extinguished with the extinction of the royal Kandy government of Sri Lanka in 1805.

⁸See Dhammaviśuddhi 1970: 14.

⁹In the Vinayaṭṭaka, it is reported that there were a “forest-dwelling community” (*araññikaṅga*) within the order in Buddhism’s earl period, and that several rules were formulated for them. See Vin II 32.2–3, Vin III 197.3–14, Vin V 10.14–15, MN 69.

¹⁰See Ratnapāla 1971: 48.

¹¹See Ratnapāla 1971: 38.

¹²See Ratnapāla 1971: 47.

¹³The Saṅgharāja is a position that was discontinued after the demise of Asaraṇasaraṇa Weliviṭṭa Saraṇaṅkara Tera (1698–1778), who was the last Saṅgharāja of Sri Lanka.

¹⁴Two major fraternities in contemporary Sri Lanka, are both located in Kandy. Both fraternities belong to the Siam Nikāya.

3.3 Ranks of the Saṅgha

The hierarchical order of the Saṅgha is indicated in the *Katikāvatas*. To administrate the Saṅgha in an official manner, the kings created new positions and united the particular position-holders to lead the community.

The administration of the Saṅgha is entirely the responsibility of the Saṅgha. Each monastery has a *Nevāsika Mahātera*,¹⁵ who is responsible for the disciplining of the Saṅgha. A *Nevāsika Mahātera* can prescribe rules for the dwellers of the monastery and manage the property, and he has the authority to make emergent decisions.

By the time of the medieval period of Sri Lanka, the manner of the administration had become completely systematic and several ranks and positions among the Saṅgha had emerged. We will note the following ranks of the Saṅgha that are indicated in the *Katikāvatas*.

1. *Mahāsvāmi*¹⁶ (The supreme bhikkhu)
2. *Mahātera* (A chief bhikkhu)
3. *Ayatāna* (A head of the main institution)
4. *Ayatān Vāḷata* (A vice head of the main institution)
5. *Pariveṇādhīpati* (A head of the *Pariveṇa*)
6. *Gaṇa* and *Gaṇadeṭṭu* (A *Gaṇa* and a head of a *Gaṇa*)
7. *Kāraḥasāṅgha* (The committee members of the Saṅgha)

3.3.1 *Mahāsvāmi* (The supreme bhikkhu)

Mahāsvāmi is the supreme position of the Saṅgha and this is the only position named by the king. The first bhikkhu who held this position was *Sāriputta Mahātera* (1165–1186),¹⁷ who was a pupil of *Diṃbulāgala Mahā Kāśyapa Mahātera* in the *Polonnaruva* period. This position was first established during the *Polonnaruva* period and continued till the *Daṃbadeṇi* period.¹⁸ During the reign of the King *Vijayabāhu III* (r. 1232–1236), this position was maintained by *Saṅgharakṣita Mahāsvāmi* (1186–1266), who was a pupil of *Sāriputta Mahāsvāmi*. A pupil of *Vanaratana Mahāsthavira, Araññavāsī Medhānkara* was the holder of this position in the reign of the King *Parākramabāhu II* (1171–1236). According to the *Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata*, the title of *Mahāsvāmi* can only be held by one bhikkhu.¹⁹ A *Mahāsvāmi*, the highest rank of the Saṅgha, became official in the *Daṃbadeṇiya* period.

The monk who is suitable to hold the position of a *Mahāsvāmi* should be a former *Mahātera*. Among *Mahāteras*, the most suitable and experienced *Mahātera* is selected as a *Mahāsvāmi*.²⁰

¹⁵Rahula (1966: 135) remarks as follows: “The law of succession and incumbency of Buddhist temporalities in the early period is not well known. Most probably the chief monk of a monastery was appointed by the Saṅgha in the same monastery. We do not know exactly how this was conducted. However, there should be no reasonable doubt that a monk of outstanding ability, knowledge, and character was usually appointed to such posts, according to the *Vinaya* practices. Evidently, no individual monk had the authority to claim the incumbency of a monastery on the ground of pupillary succession or *śiṣyānuśiṣya-paramparāva* as today. The first evidence of incumbency through pupillary succession can be detected in the *Buddhanehāla Pillar Inscription* during the time of *Kassapa V* (913–923) (EZ. I, 194–196).”

¹⁶Also referred to as “*Mahāsāmi*.” See *Rōhaṇadhīra* 1985: 27–43.

¹⁷A famous *Tikācariya* of the *Polonnaruva* period.

¹⁸The exact dates of the duration of the position of a *Mahāsāmi* is uncertain.

¹⁹See *Rōhaṇadhīra* 1985: 27–43.

²⁰See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53.

The Katikāvatas do not specify the qualifications and requirements that are related to the position of Mahāsvāmi. Once the position of Mahāsvāmi becomes vacant, the Saṅgha in both the Grāmvāsīn and Vaṇavāsīn fraternities should assemble in one place and select an appropriate Mahātera from one community.

Most of the bhikkhus who have been selected as a Mahāsvāmi over the centuries were from the Araññavāsīn community.²¹ Among those Mahāsvāmis, especially famous ones are:

1. Śāriputra Mahāsvāmi in the reign of the King Mahāparākramabāhu.
2. Medhaṅkara Mahāsvāmi in the reign of the King Parākramabāhu II.
3. Anavamadarśi Saṅgharāja in the reign of the King Parākramabāhu II.
4. Śīlavaṅsa Dharamkīrti Māhimi in the reign of the King Buvanekabāhu II.
5. Devarakśita Jayabāhu Māhimi in the reign of the King Buvanekabāhu II.
6. Kāragala Vanaratana Māhimi in the reign of the King Parākramabāhu VIII.

Regarding this, a brief comment on synonymous names for Mahāsvāmi should be made. The term Mahāsvāmi is synonymous with several other terms, namely, Māhimi, Nāyaka Tāna, Saṅgharāja, and Tatkāla Sāsanānūsāsaka. These found in the Katikāvatas.

The term Māhimi (“the supreme bhikkhu”) was first used to refer to Śāriputta Mahāsthavira.²² Before the Polonnaruva period, however, the term was never used to refer to a chief bhikkhu or a supreme bhikkhu. For instance, in the Anurādhapura period, the word Mahāsvāmi was not used to refer to a bhikkhu but to represent kings.²³

The term Nāyaka Tāna (“the head Bhikkhu”) is occasionally used for the term *Mahā-svāmi*.²⁴

During the Gampōḷa period (1341–1408), the term Mahāsvāmi was replaced by the term Saṅgharāja (“the king of the Saṅgha”). It is first mentioned in the *Vuttamāla*, composed in the Gampōḷa period.²⁵ Saṅgharāja was originally a position in the Thai Buddhist Saṅgha. We can therefore assume that it was introduced through Thai Buddhism. The position of Saṅgharāja came from Thailand, which was introduced in Sri Lanka along with the introduction of the Burmese upasampadā in 1753. Before 1753, the Saṅgharāja position was called as Mahāsāmi. We found evidence that Mahāsāmi was also from Thai Buddhism. Prof. Rōhaṇadhīra claims that the office Mahāsāmi was already in use even before 1186 in Sri Lanka.²⁶ In the Gampōḷa period Saṅgharāja came to be known as a common name for a Mahāsvāmi.²⁷

The last Saṅgharāja was Asaraṇa Saraṇa Veliviṭa Saranaṅkara Saṅgharāja Tera. After Saranaṅkara Saṅgharāja Tera of the Kandy period, no monks were appointed as a Saṅgharāja. After the Kandy period, the responsibilities and powers of a Saṅgharāja were divided and given to those belonging to either Asgiriya monastery or Malvatta monastery. The two head Bhikkhus of these two monasteries are still active as the successors of Saṅgharāja.²⁸

²¹See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 117.

²²See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 117.

²³See Geiger 1960: 26.

²⁴*nāyaka-tānaṭa anukūlavā vasana kenakun...* “One who lives according to the supreme monk’s [instruction]...” See Ratnapāla 1971: 53.

²⁵See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 118

²⁶Rōhaṇadhīra 1985: 32.

²⁷See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 118.

²⁸See Rōhaṇadhīra 1985: 27–43.

Finally, *Tatkāla Sāsanānusāsaka* (“the advisor of Buddhism”)²⁹ is another term used to refer to a *Mahāsvāmi* in *Katikāvatas*. The connotation of the term itself indicates that a particular *bhikkhu* acted as an advisor to all *bhikkhus* during the *Daṃbadeṇiya* period.

3.3.2 Mahātera (A chief bhikkhu)

Mahātera, also referred to as *Mahāsthavira*, as the second-highest rank after *Mahāsvāmi*. There were two seats for *Mahātera*: one was *Grāmavāsī Mahātera* and the other was *Araññavāsī* or *Vanavāsī Mahātera*. Once a *Mahāsvāmi* position becomes vacant, one of the two *Mahāteras* is selected as a *Mahāsvāmi*.³⁰ When selecting a *Mahātera*, the approval of all the members of the *Saṅgha* in the whole of Sri Lanka is necessary.³¹ It is unclear as to how they voted to select a *Mahātera* during the *Daṃbadeṇiya* period. Moreover, it is unclear as to whether they listened to all the *Saṅgha* of one fraternity, as is in the modern practice, or if they listened to the *Saṅgha* in the whole country.

According to the *Katikāvatas*, the king should salute a *Mahātera* who is selected by the *Saṅgha* by the whole country.³² The king’s salute signifies the legal and official recognition of the chosen *bhikkhu* as a *Mahātera*.³³ During the *Daṃbadeṇiya* period, there was an age limit for this position. Only a *bhikkhu* who was over twenty years old after receiving *upasampadā* was nominated for a *Mahātera*.³⁴ Furthermore, the *Katikāvata* emphasizes that a *bhikkhu* who becomes a *Mahātera* should have several auspicious characteristics.

Different roles are assigned to a *Mahātera* from the *Grāmavāsin* and one from the *Vanavāsin*. A *Grāmavāsin Mahātera* should be able to preserve the *paṭimokkha* and *saṅghasāla*; should have a broad knowledge on *tripiṭaka* along with a comprehensive knowledge of commentaries; should be able to advise others; and should have an exemplary character. A *Vanavāsī Mahātera* should also have the similar qualifications as a *Grāmavāsī Mahātera* and he should be a good practitioner as anyone else in the community of forest dwelling.³⁵

3.3.3 Ayatāna (A head of the main institution)

Ayatāna, which is also termed as *Āyatana*, *Mūḷa*, *Samūha*, and *Mūlāyatana*,³⁶ and is the third rank of the medieval Sri Lankan *Saṅgha*. In the latter half of the *Anuradhapura* period, *Ayatānas* played an

²⁹See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 48, 98, 108.

³⁰See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53; *Jayatilake* 1955: 13.

³¹*tunrajayē Saṅghayāge anumātiyen...* “With the approval of the great *Saṅgha* in three kingdoms...” See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53.

³²*mahārajāṇan lavā vaṇḍavā Mahāsthavira padaviya dī...* “One [who is to be a *Mahāsthavira*] should be saluted by the king and given the position of a *Mahāsthavira*.” See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53.

³³See *Rōhaṇadhīra* 1974: 186.

³⁴*visivas pīruṇahot [...] Māhimīyan vahanseṭa ikbitikoṭa tibiyā yutu.* “If [a *bhikkhu*] has completed twenty years of *vaskāla* (rainy periods), he can be appointed [as a *Mahātera*], which is second in status only to a *Mahāsvāmi*.” See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53.

³⁵*mekī guṇanuvāṇa ātivā āraṇyaka siyallaṇṭa vadā āraṇyaka pratipattiyehi yedī...* “A *bhikkhu* who possessed the aforementioned virtues and wisdom, and who is foremost in practicing the precept pertaining to *Arañña-life*...” See *Ratnapāla* 1971: 53, 147.

³⁶The term *Āyatana* generally refers to a region, place, spot, or haunt. In many instances, *Mūḷa* and *Āyatana* are synonymously used to refer to a residence. *Samūha* also means an assembly of the *Saṅgha*.

important role. It is firstly found that in the *Daṁbadeṇi Katikāvata*.³⁷ The number of the bhikkhus who can act as an Ayatāna is not clearly stated in the Katikāvata. However, Rōhaṇḍhīra (1974) is inferred from the statement of the *Śrī Laṅkāve Saṅgha Saṁvidhānaya* that there were eight Ayatānas at least in the Polonnaruwa period.³⁸

In the Katikāvatas, the kind of bhikkhus are classified according to those who are appropriate to hold this position. Only a bhikkhu who acts as a sthāvira, namely, one who has lived as a bhikkhu for a decade or more, can be an Ayatāna. He should be well disciplined and endowed with virtue and wisdom. He should not be attached to the requisites (*darugam* or *vaṭanāpasa*) that are gained from the villages of his own monastery area. He should be from such higher castes, such as Saṅgamu and Gaṇavāsi.³⁹ The bhikkhu who is to be appointed as an Ayatāna should be recommended by a Mahātera and appointed by the king.⁴⁰ Traditionally, the villagers took care of the monks and assisted with the management of the monasteries.⁴¹

3.3.4 Ayatān Vāḷata (A vice head of the main institution)

Ayatān Vāḷata is another position that is mentioned in the Katikāvatas.⁴² The bhikkhu who is to become an Ayatān Vāḷata must be recommended by the Saṅgha and appointed by the king. This position serves as a deputy for an Ayatāna.

The bhikkhu who is to be appointed to this position should possess several qualities and fulfill the requirements that are described in the Katikāvatas. The Katikāvata emphasizes that an Ayatāna cannot appoint an Ayatān Vāḷata as his own deputy.⁴³ The bhikkhu who is supposed to be an Ayatān Vāḷata should not be attached to the gains and should come from higher castes, such as Saṅgamu and Gaṇavāsi. The appointment of Ayatān Vāḷata should be developed by a Mahātera.

3.3.5 Pariveṇādhīpati (A head of the Pariveṇa)

The director of each educational institution is called Pariveṇādhīpati. Even today this position is found in the monastery education system in Sri Lanka. The bhikkhu who is to be appointed to this position must have the power and knowledge to educate Sāmaṇeras and any others who are willing to study the Buddha's teachings.⁴⁴ The Katikāvatas specify the requirements and the qualifications for a Pariveṇādhīpati.⁴⁵ Having appropriate and adequate knowledge is the most important requirement. In addition, the Katikāvatas state that he should be a sthāvira.

This position is appointed by a Mahātera under his supervision.⁴⁶ The Katikāvatas do not state that

³⁷See Ratnapāla 1971: 53.

³⁸See Rōhaṇḍhīra 1974: 210–211.

³⁹Noble people who are responsible for the management of the monastic property and the fields. See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 120.

⁴⁰DK 35. See Ratnapāla 1971: 53.

⁴¹See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 121.

⁴²See Ratnapāla 1971: 53.

⁴³DK 36. See Ratnapāla 1971: 53.

⁴⁴See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 125.

⁴⁵See Ratnapāla 1971: 54.

⁴⁶*Nāyakatān dakvāliyyūtu*. “[He] should be examined by a Nāyakatera.” See Ratnapāla 1971: 54.

a Mahātera should directly appoint the bhikkhu as a Pariveṇādhpati, but merely state that he should be appointed according to a Māhatera's guidance.⁴⁷

3.3.6 Gaṇa and Gaṇadeṭu (A Gaṇa and a head of a Gaṇa)

The term Gaṇa here refers to a group of bhikkhus. Even in early Buddhism, this term was used to describe a group of bhikkhus.⁴⁸ Gaṇadeṭu refers to a head bhikkhu of a Gaṇa.

The Katikāvata uses the term Gaṇa in various occasions.⁴⁹ At the end of the Polonnaruva period, there were seven Gaṇas and one head bhikkhu for all the seven Gaṇas.⁵⁰ An inscription dated between 1202 and 1208 also states that there were seven Gaṇas. Paraṇavitāna (1914) remarks that the monks in Sri Lanka at that time were divided into seven Gaṇas.⁵¹ However, in the *Mahāparākramabāhu Katikāvata*, it is noted that the bhikkhus of each monastery were also regarded as a Gaṇa.⁵² Even in present Sri Lanka, the monks of certain specific monasteries are sometimes called Gaṇa.⁵³

Gaṇadeṭu, also referred to as Gaṇadeṭutera, is a head of a Gaṇa. A Gaṇadeṭu has a responsibility to appoint each bhikkhu of his Gaṇa to their respective appropriate activities.⁵⁴ A Gaṇadeṭu must also work under the supervision of a Mahātera. If a Gaṇadeṭu violates any rules or if he does not complete his responsibilities, he should be punished by a Mahātera. When a bhikkhu belonging to one Gaṇa wishes to enter another Gaṇa, a recommendation of the Gaṇadeṭu of his former Gaṇa is required.⁵⁵

The whole office of the Gaṇadeṭu is appointed by the Saṅgha. Those who have experience as a Sthavira are considered as eligible for a Gaṇadeṭu.⁵⁶ The manner of appointing a Gaṇadeṭu is not specified in the Katikāvatas.

3.3.7 Kārakasaṅgha (The committee members of the Saṅgha)

Kārakasaṅgha is the lowest stage of the hierarchical system of the medieval Saṅgha. The Saṅgha members are considered as a group of legislators, for they sometimes they act as the group of a judiciary board. In the Daṃbadeṇi period, Kārakasaṅghas created the *Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata*. When a rule for the Saṅgha is prescribed, it should be prepared by Kārakasaṅghas and sent to a Mahāsvāmi. Kārakasaṅghas are classified into two main groups: Grāhavāsī Kārakasaṅgha and Vanavāsī Kārakasaṅgha. One Kārakasaṅgha

⁴⁷See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 125.

⁴⁸Vin I 197.13–14

⁴⁹See Ratnapāla 1971: 38, 40, 52, 54, 55, 63.

⁵⁰See Dhammaviśuddhi 1995: 125.

⁵¹See Paraṇavitāna 1914: 260.

⁵²DK 42 (cf. Ratnapāla 1971: 55): *nan gaṇayekin ā saṅgakenekun tamā kerehi vasavathot geṇehi terungen sammatayak hō patkaḍak hō pāvīdi kenekun dāka mut no rāṇḍaviyā yutu*. “If a bhikkhu who belongs to a certain Gaṇa (monastery) [wishes to] shift his residence to another Gaṇa, no lodging ought to be given to him without obtaining a document of recommendation or seeing a bhikkhu (an emissary) from the head tera of the [former] Gaṇa.” This quotation suggests that a Gaṇa is recognized as a specific monastery. It may be stated that in that period the monks of each monastery were regarded as a specific Gaṇa.

⁵³Presently, the term Vihāra Gaṇa refers to one specific monastic tradition. Mahānāyakateras of the Malvatta fraternity and the Asgiriya fraternity are selected only from their particular Vihāra Gaṇas. See Mangala 2019: 38–39.

⁵⁴See Ratnapāla 1971: 38.

⁵⁵See Ratnapāla 1971: 40.

⁵⁶Rohaṇadhīra 1974: 262.

consists of twenty bhikkhus, including a Mahāsvāmi. All the Kārakasaṅgha members should possess a proper knowledge of Dhamma and Vinaya. Presently, the bhikkhu who wishes to be a Kārakasaṅgha should face a test by his own sect.

A Kārakasaṅgha has several responsibilities. When the position of a Mahāsvāmi falls vacant, one of Mahāteras should be selected as a next Mahāsvāmi. The process of selecting a Mahāsvāmi goes through the meeting of Kārakasaṅghas. If any problem occurs among the bhikkhus, it is also Kārakasaṅghas who solve it.

When selecting a bhikkhu for a Kārakasaṅgha, the bhikkhus that represent the Saṅgha of the whole country must be responsible for the decision. The bhikkhus who are particularly familiar with Vinaya are selected as Kārakasaṅghas.

4 Conclusion

We can conclude that this study covers important aspects of the Sri Lankan Saṅgha's society through the Katikāvatas and several related historic records. We discovered that all of the Katikāvatas enacted between the Polonnaruva and Kandy periods contained not only the rules related the bhikkhus' life, but also significant historic information about the Saṅgha's society in Medieval Sri Lanka.

We have seen how the Katiāvatas set up an organizational structure to control the Saṅgha in medieval Sri Lanka. The kings in the medieval period enacted the Katikāvatas in addition to the Vinaya regarding the royal law since they considered the imposition of extra-disciplinary rules above Vinaya as being necessary for controlling the Saṅgha. Furthermore, the kings supported the bhikkhus in creating a hierarchical system of the Saṅgha. Most of the appointments were approved by the kings. The Katikāvatas articulated all the bhikkhus' duties and responsibilities, from the highest position to the committee members of the Saṅgha. The royal system was thus used to form the hierarchical system in the Saṅgha.

All these constructs indicate a strong connection between the kings and the Buddhist community. The kings maintained their rights and power in the Saṅgha to a certain degree. The kings created the posts and delegated the responsibility to them with the approval of the Saṅgha. The kings' influence on certain aspects of the Saṅgha's activities is evident.

The Vinaya system, which was formerly used to administrate the Saṅgha, was reinforced by this newly established system. It was specifically the hierarchical system that strengthened the administration of the Saṅgha in medieval Sri Lanka.

Abbreviations and Literature

(1) Pāli

The system of abbreviations of Pāli texts follows *A Critical Pali Dictionary*.

(2) Sinhalese

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(3) English

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中世スリランカにおけるサンガの階級制度

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ティカーワタは、比丘の生活と寺院管理を統括する、王権により制定された条例である。それはまた、スリランカのポロンナルワ時代からキャンディ時代までのサンガの階級制度について、貴重な情報を提供している。紀元前三世紀のマヒンダ長老の来島で始まったスリランカのサンガの社会は、時代とともに様々な役割が付与されるようになった。特にサンガの階級については、国王がそれを望み、サンガの最高階級は王権と共同で任命されていた。

本論文では、スリランカのポロンナルワ時代からキャンディ時代までのカティカーワタをもとに、サンガの階級制度を明示する。それによって、比丘たちがどのような役割を果たす者であったかが、比丘たちに振り分けられた役職から読み取れよう。比丘たちの階級制度は、元々インドの仏教にも、スリランカ仏教にも見られなかったものであるが、仏教と比丘たちが全国に広まったことにより、比丘たちと寺院の管理に比丘たちの中からそれぞれの役職を作る必要が生じたと考えられる。一方、仏教を保護することは王権の責務の一つとなるが、そうであっても、世俗の王権にはサンガに命令する権利が元々なかった。そこで、年齢や経験によって主な長老比丘たちと国王が共同してサンガに階級的な組織を作り、王権が仏教を保護する一方、同時にサンガの管理・支配をもしてきたと考えられる。各時代ごとのカティカーワタに見られるサンガの階級制度の変遷は、王権と仏教の関係の変遷をも示すことになる。王権と比丘サンガの共同作業により、比丘たちが自ら管理できるように定められたカティカーワタが、戒律で定められた比丘たちの活動を外護する仕組みになっているといえよう。