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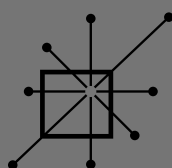
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The Battle for Jambudvīpa: Pseudohistory in Sri Lanka





The Battle for *Jambudvīpa*: Pseudohistory in Sri Lanka

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**Abstract**

This study critically examines contemporary efforts to reinterpret *Jambudvīpa* by relocating key Buddhist sites from their historically recognised locations in India to Sri Lanka. An analysis of the works of selected Sinhalese authors and organisations demonstrates how such claims, often framed as expressions of cultural pride or nationalist revival, contradict well-established archaeological, textual, and epigraphic evidence. Although presented in patriotic terms, these narratives lack scholarly credibility and advance ideological agendas aimed at reshaping national identity through religious history. This study underscores the importance of rigorous, evidence-based historiography in countering pseudohistorical claims and promoting a balanced understanding of Sri Lanka's Buddhist heritage.

Keywords

Historiography, Pseudohistory, Historiographical Narrative, National Identity



Introduction

Humans are constantly striving to comprehend their own identities. Questions such as “what is our identity?” and “what is the nature of our existence?” demonstrate a profound inquisitiveness regarding the self and the state of being. Frequently, dissatisfaction with established academic histories leads individuals to seek historical narratives that glorify past generations. Throughout human history, there has been a tendency to fill this gap in knowledge by distorting historical events and constructing new legends.

Despite material evidence allowing for a discussion of a past spanning 125,000 years, the prevailing belief among the general populace is that the history of Sri Lanka begins with the arrival of Prince Vijaya from India in the 6th century BCE. This preference indicates that academic history has not resonated with the broader public, prompting many Sri Lankans to turn to social media and the internet in search of their historical roots, where the creation of false myths is a common phenomenon. This discussion focuses on one such case.

This disconnection between academic narratives and public imagination has created a vacuum. Many Sri Lankans, dissatisfied with conventional textbook history, have turned to YouTube channels, blogs, and social media platforms for more emotionally resonant or nationalistically appealing stories. These online spaces frequently disseminate simplified, mythologised, or outright fabricated versions of history. The internet thus plays a crucial role in amplifying pseudohistorical claims that challenge established scholarly consensus.

The historical narratives in Sri Lanka have a crucial impact on shaping national identity and cultural continuity. However, these narratives are often manipulated to serve contemporary socio-political agendas. One such example is the reinterpretation of the term “*Jambudvīpa*,” which historically refers to India, claiming it as Sri Lanka or part of Sri Lanka. This distortion of historical legitimise political power, foster a sense of cultural superiority, and further divisive ideological agendas.

This phenomenon reflects how history can be selectively used or fabricated to serve ideological goals. As Benedict Anderson notes, such fabricated narratives help forge imagined national continuities that strengthen collective identity (Anderson, 2006). Similarly, Hayden White argues that historical narratives are constructed and rhetorical rather than strictly factual (White, 1973). David Lowenthal adds that public memory often reshapes historical knowledge, prioritising heritage over empiricism (Lowenthal, 1998).

This study adopts a qualitative and historiographical method, relying on textual analysis of primary sources (e.g., *Pali Canon*, epigraphs, ancient chronicles) and contemporary publications



advocating alternative claims. Public discourse, including social media narratives and blog content, was reviewed to understand how pseudohistorical claims are popularised. Self-published works were evaluated for discursive framing, publication context, and historiographical validity.

Understanding the historical context and traditional significance of *Jambudvīpa* is crucial for critically assessing contemporary claims. By examining traditional Buddhist cosmology and modern reinterpretations, this study seeks to clarify the complex interplay among history, identity, and politics in Sri Lanka. This work attempts an academic reading of the ideology that positions Sri Lanka as *Jambudvīpa*, intending to uncover the underlying motivations and implications of such historical reinterpretations.

Jambudvīpa in Ancient Historiography

The term “*Jambudeepa*” is derived from the Pali language, corresponding to the Sanskrit “*Jambudvīpa*”. This term is significant in the context of ancient texts and is formed by combining “*Jambu*” and “*Deepa*” (A Sanskrit English Dictionary, 412).

In ancient Pali and Sanskrit, “*Jambu*” (*Syzygium cumini*) refers to the same fruit, Damba in Sinhala. In Sanskrit, ‘Jambu’ corresponds to the Sinhala terms ‘*Mādam*, *Baludham*, and *Damba*’ (Sanskrita Sabdārṇava, 73). According to Sanskrit texts, “*Ramyate bhakshyate sarve assaphalang iti jambu adate*,” meaning “sweet for everyone to eat,” explains the name “*Jambu*” as denoting something enjoyable by all. These texts also mention “*Jambu*” in medical treatises such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Susruta Samhita*, where “*Jambu*” appears frequently. Additionally, in *Rājanighaṇṭu* of Narahari, “*Jambu*” is described as a large, dark tree with a sweet smell and sturdy leaves that bear blue fruits (*Rājanighaṇṭusahitho Dhanvantariya Nighaṇṭuh*, 186). The ‘Jambu’ tree’s accepted botanical identity is *Eugenia jambolana*, commonly known as the rose apple. This species is native to the Indian subcontinent whose cultural and medicinal significance has been well documented in classical Indian pharmacopoeias and botanical treatises. These studies affirm that *Jambudvīpa* originates from this tree and that alternative claims lacking empirical botanical support are untenable (A Sanskrit English Dictionary, 412; Van Reede tot Drakenstein 1678, 18; Van Reede tot Drakenstein 1684, 29).

In Pali, the term “*deepa*” corresponds to “*dvīpa*” in Sanskrit. “*dvīpa*” originates from the combination of “*dvi*,” meaning “two” phonetically, and “*pā*,” which denotes various meanings, including water consumption. Applied to the *bhūvādi gaṇa* of verbal roots, “*pā*” signifies drinking. In this context, “*dvīpa*”, implying “one who drinks twice”, came to denote an elephant or an elephant-like creature, as elephants first take water into their trunks and subsequently drink it.



The land that safeguards humans from water and shields against famine is metaphorically called “*dvīpa*” or “*Deepa*”, signifying double protection. This term also refers to a land, a continent, or an island (Liyanage, 2024).

Consequently, “*Jambudeepa*” in Pali and “*Jambudvīpa*” in Sanskrit refer to a continent or land named after a “*Jambu*” tree. Linguistically, there is no obstacle to considering “*Jambudvīpa*” as a mountainous continent. This concept has been translated into Sinhala as “*Dambadiv*” or “*Dambadiva*”. Early references from Eastern religious literature indicate that *Jambudvīpa* is one of the seven islands constituting the world, encircling the great Mount Meru, which is believed to be the earth’s axis. This cosmological belief is steeped in mythological embellishments, such as descriptions of a colossal Jambu tree on *Jambudvīpa*, which is said to have a circumference of 15 yojanas, a height of 100 yojanas, and branches spreading 100 yojanas on either side.

The popular term “*Jambudeepa*” originates from a Jambu tree, and this connection is mirrored in Pali grammar. “*Jambudeepa*” is cited in various texts as “*Jambuya lakkhitho kappattaikadippbhavena va kappattano deepo Jambudipo.*”¹ “*Jambuya Pannatho Lakkhitho Deepo Jambudipo.*”²

In Buddhist cosmology, *Jambudvīpa* is one of the four continents surrounding Mount Sumeru and is considered the most significant, as it is the only place where Buddhas can be born. This belief underscores the reverence of *Jambudvīpa* within the Buddhist tradition. Historically, *Jambudvīpa* has been synonymous with the Indian subcontinent, a region integral to Buddhism’s origins and spread.

Buddhist cosmology describes a vast and complex universe of multiple realms and worlds. Within this cosmological framework, the human realm is divided into four continents, a different type of being. These continents are:

Jambudvīpa,

Pubbavideha

Aparagoyana

Uttarakuru³

1 Abhidhanappadipika Suchi (Colombo: Royal Press, 1874), p. 134.

2 Pannjasekhara Thero, Kalukondayave, ed., Maharupasidhi (Colombo: Gunasena Press, 1964); Gnanaloka Thero, Kodagoda, ed., Payogasiddhi (Colombo: W.E. Bastian and Co., 1974).

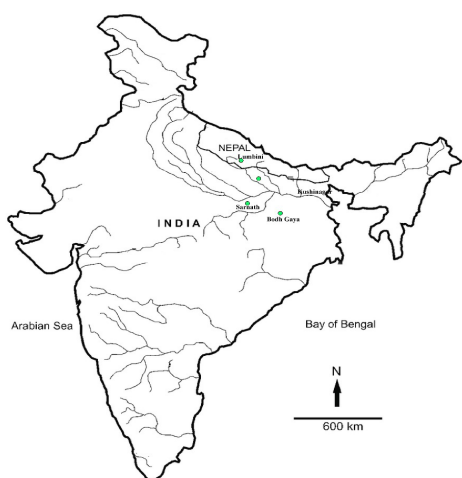
3 Lalwani, K. C., ed., Bhagavati-sūtra (Bombay: Jain Cultural Research Society, 1973), Ch. VIII, q. 51; Upadhyaya, A. N., and Jain, Hiralal, eds., Tiloka-Pannatti, Vol. I (Lucknow: Bharatiya Jnanapitha, 1936), 143; Jambu-Pannat ti-Saṅgaho,

Among these, *Jambudvīpa* was considered the most significant. It is often identified with the Indian subcontinent, particularly Northern India, where the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and preached his teachings. The term “*Jambudvīpa*” is derived from the Jambu tree (Indian blackberry or rose apple tree), which is said to grow in abundance.

Jambudvīpa holds a prominent position in various Buddhist texts, including the *Pāli Canon* and *Mahayana* scriptures. It is described as the central continent where significant events took place in the life of the Buddha (see Figure 1). For example:

- **Birth of the Buddha:** The Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, was born in **Lumbini**
- **Enlightenment:** The Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in **Bodhi Gaya** (Buddhagaya)
- **First Sermon:** The Buddha delivered his first sermon at **Isipatana** in Sarnath, near Varanasi
- **Passing Away:** The Buddha’s passing away (*Parinirvana*) occurred in **Kusinara**

These events underscore the sacred geography of *Jambudvīpa* in the Buddhist tradition, making it a central locus of spiritual significance. Historically, *Jambudvīpa* has been identified with the Indian subcontinent, particularly in modern-day Northern India and Nepal. Buddhist and non-Buddhist ancient Indian texts frequently refer to *Jambudvīpa*, reinforcing its association with this geographical area.⁴ Additionally, the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who travelled through the Indian subcontinent in the 7th century CE, repeatedly referred to the land he visited as *Jambudvīpa*, documenting numerous Buddhist sacred sites.⁵



This identification is further supported by epigraphic evidence such as the Ashokan pillar inscriptions at Lumbini and Sarnath, which firmly situate the Buddha’s life events in present-day India and Nepal. Epigraphic records from the Mauryan Empire, especially the edicts of Emperor Ashoka, use the term “*Jambudvīpa*” distinctly to denote the known

4 Vol. 7 (Sholapur: Jivaraj Jain Granthamala, 1958), 3; Venkitasubramonia Iyer, S., trans., *Varāha-Purāṇa* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003), ch. 74; for Pāli commentarial sources, see *Papañcasūdanī*, Vol. II, 917; Smith, Helmer, ed., *Sutta-Nipata Aṭṭhakathā*, Vol. I (London: Pāli Text Society, 1913), 59.

5 Li, Rongxi, trans. *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*. (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995).



territories, or “earth”, under Mauryan rule in India. There is no indication that this term was ever applied to Sri Lanka or Southeast Asian regions in these imperial contexts. Thus, the Indian and Sri Lankan epigraphical usage of “*Jambudvīpa*” corroborates the identification of the Indian subcontinent as the historical and political referent of the term.⁶

In Sri Lankan historiography, the connection to *Jambudvīpa* has been highlighted to underscore the island’s ties to the sacred geography of Buddhism. Ancient texts such as the *Mahāvamsa*⁷ and *Dīpavamsa*⁸, chronicles of Sri Lankan history, emphasise the island’s Buddhist heritage and its links to the Buddhist heartland in India.

The Reinterpretation of *Jambudvīpa* in Contemporary Sri Lankan Historiography

Building on the discussion in the introduction, this section explores how certain modern Sri Lankan writers reinterpret *Jambudvīpa* as geographically located within Sri Lanka. It highlights the most influential figures and texts promoting this view and analyses the historical, religious, and political motivations driving these claims. The analysis draws on both published works and digital media to trace the construction of this alternative sacred geography.

Recently, there has been a movement to reinterpret *Jambudvīpa* by referring to Sri Lanka rather than India. This reinterpretation serves various sociopolitical and cultural objectives, including reinforcing national identity and religious pride. Contemporary texts and statements by certain Buddhist monks and writers assert that crucial events in the Buddha’s life occurred in Sri Lanka. These claims are frequently backed by misinterpretations of archaeological findings and ancient texts despite lacking scholarly consensus or rigorous historical proof. Proponents of this reinterpretation frequently cite the Sri Lankan archaeological sites as evidence of the country’s ancient Buddhist heritage. However, mainstream archaeological scholarship typically places these sites within Sri Lanka’s well-documented historical and cultural development, distinct from the traditional events associated with *Jambudvīpa*.

6 Hultzsch, E., ed., *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. III (Calcutta: Government of India, 1895), 138; Sircar, D. C., *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), 133; Wickremasinghe, Don Martino de Zilva, and Codrington, H. W., eds., *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 198; Wickremasinghe, Don Martino de Zilva, ed., *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), 33.

7 Geiger, Wilhelm, trans. *The Mahāvamsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), chs. 3, 5, 10, 40, 42.

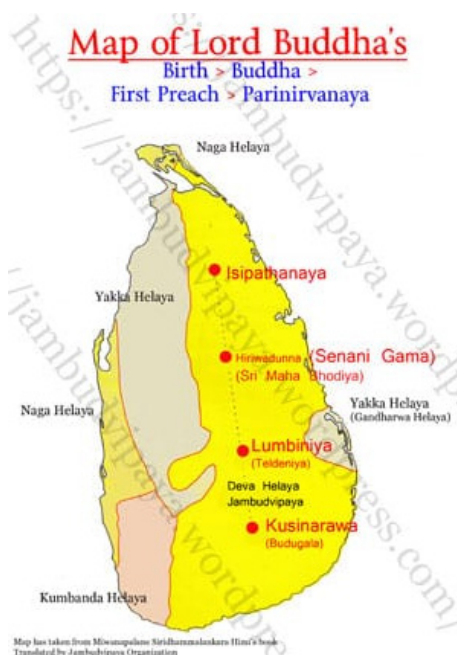
8 Oldenberg, Hermann, ed. and trans. *The Dīpavamsa: An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record*. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1879), Ch. 9, vv. 21–22; Ch. 6, v. 1.



In modern Sri Lanka, the concept of *Jambudvīpa* has been reinterpreted and sometimes distorted to construct specific historical narratives that serve various political and ideological agendas. These narratives often emphasise a glorified and ancient connection to the Buddhist world, legitimising contemporary political power and cultural identity. This reinterpretation is evident in the works of several modern Sinhalese authors and organisations.

Meewanapalane Dhammalankara Thero's Reinterpretation

In the *Tripitaka Pāli* and related commentaries, as well as in later Buddhist literature, the term "*Jambudeepa*" is frequently used. However, Meewanapalane Dhammalankara Thero refers to it as "*Janbudvīpa*." Instead of the letter "M" (halanta M) in "*Jambudeepa*," he artificially created the term "*Janbudvīpa*" by using the letter "N" (Siri Dhammalankara Thero, 2016, 9). He further divides the term Jan+Budh+Dvīpa, which linguistically and contextually misrepresents the original meaning. Dhammalankara Thero's interpretation posits that the term "*Buddha's Born Island*" (Jan+Buddh+Dvīpa) signifies that a Buddha can attain the supreme state of Buddhahood only on the island of Sri Lanka. He asserts that *Jambudipa* (*Janbudvīpa*) is located in the interior of Sri Lanka (Siri Dhammalankara Thero, 2016, 6). This effort by Dhammalankara Thero attempts to localise all significant places mentioned in the *Tripitaka* to Sri Lanka, asserting that present-day Sri Lanka, once known as "*Sivhelaya*" (four Sinhalas), is the true *Jambudvīpa*, and not India. It appears that Meewanapalane Thero has adopted the views of Professor Chaigyong Brahmawong, who has published papers arguing that India was not the birthplace of the Buddha.



The interpretations presented by Dhammalankara Thero and his associates are misleading and promote nationalistic agendas. They criticise the historical research and writings of Western scholars like George Turner and Wilhelm Geiger, accusing them of distorting the history of Sri Lanka. Dhammalankara Thero's proponents argue that the established history of Sri Lanka, as constructed by Westerners, lacks credibility and authenticity.

Dhammalankara Thero's statements challenge the historical understanding of Jambudipa by claiming that this name has historically referred to India. They argue that *Tripitaka's* references to places associated with the Buddha are locations within Sri Lanka, such as Teldeniya for Lumbini



and Hiriwadunna for Bodh Gaya. This interpretation contradicts established historical and archaeological evidence that supports the Indian subcontinent as the true *Jambudvīpa*, where the Buddha lived and taught.⁹

For example, they assert that Siddhartha Gautama was born in *Heladiva* (Sri Lanka) rather than Lumbini in Nepal and that key locations in the Buddha's life, such as

- **Lumbini:** Buddha's birth location is in Teldeniya, Kandy.
- **Bodh Gaya (Buddhagaya):** Identified as Hiriwadunna, Anuradhapura, where Buddha attained enlightenment.
- **Isipathana:** The site of the first sermon is claimed to be Isinbassagala Viharaya, Anuradhapura.
- **Kusinara:** The place of Buddha's passing is stated to be Budugala, Ratnapura. (See Figure 2)

They claim that the historical sites in India are merely replicas created by King Ashoka and not the original locations.

Archaeological and epigraphic studies provide compelling evidence that sites such as Lumbini, Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar, central to the Buddha's life events, including birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and Parinirvana, are located within present-day India and Nepal. Excavations and inscriptional findings at these key locations confirm their authentic status as Buddhist sacred sites, and any assertions placing them in Sri Lanka contradict the broad consensus established by mainstream archaeological and textual research (Cunningham et al., 2013).

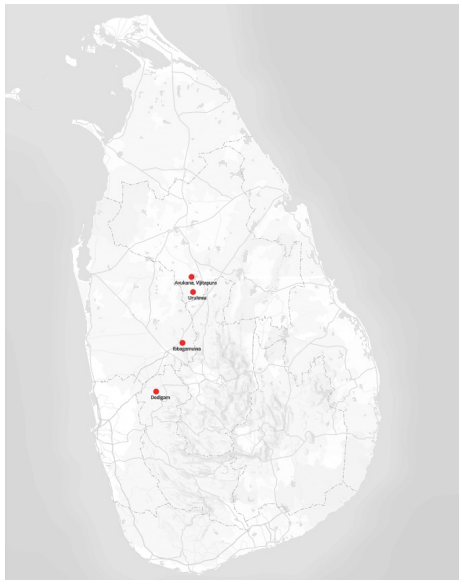
This controversial interpretation, although creative, is inconsistent with the archaeological record and scholarly support. It represents an attempt to redefine Buddhist geography and history in a way that aligns with nationalistic sentiments rather than historical accuracy. Dhammalankara's methodology in presenting these claims undermines the credibility of established historical sources and misleads readers by promoting skewed versions of history.

The Ariyakammattana Organisation and Its Reinterpretation

Ariya Kammattana is an organisation established to advocate for a particular perspective and promote a region in Sri Lanka called *Jambudvīpa*. This group was conceptualised and

⁹ "Jambudvipaya," October 26, 2010, accessed June 18, 2024, <https://jambudvipaya.wordpress.com/2010/10/26/dvipa-mean-island-island-in-asia-is-sri-lanka/>.

developed in Europe and is led by Ariyamagga, who presents himself as a Buddhist monk. They make multiple claims regarding the locations of key Buddhist sites (see Figure 3).



- **Lumbini:** Identified as Dedigama Kotawehera, Kegalle District.
- **Bodhi Gaya:** Located in Urulewa, Andiyagala Grama Sewa Division, Anuradhapura District.
- **Isipathana:** Proposed to be in the Ibbagamuwa and Mawathagama areas, North Western Province.
- **Kusinara:** Claimed to be in Avukana and Vijitapura, Anuradhapura District.¹⁰

The Ariyakammattana organisation challenges conventional historical narratives without sufficient evidence or adherence to academic standards by reinterpreting these sacred sites.

Other Contemporary Works

Several contemporary Sinhalese texts have contributed to this narrative revisionism. Prominent examples of this manipulation can be found in the writings of various modern Sinhalese authors, who claim that Sri Lanka is the original *Jambudvīpa*. Prominent examples include the following.

Author	Title (Sinhala & English Translation)	Publication Details
Jayaratna Pathiraarachchi	<i>Budun Upan Deshaya Lankawai</i> (The Birthplace of Buddha is Sri Lanka)	Self-published Date not specified, Sri Lanka
Jayaratna Pathiraarachchi	<i>Pavatina Lanka lthihasaya Harida?</i> (Is the Current History of Sri Lanka Correct?)	Self-published Date not specified, Sri Lanka
Jayaratna Pathiraarachchi	<i>Gautama Budurajanana Vahansē Vādasit Indrasala Guhāva</i> (The Cave of Indrasala where Gautama Buddha Resided)	Self-published 2005, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

¹⁰ Ariyakammattana. "Four Buddhist Sacred Sites." Accessed June 18, 2024. <https://ariyakammattana.org/true-sacred-sites/four-buddhist-sacred-sites/>.



Mukalangamuwa Pannyananda Thero	<i>Sammāvat Suraki Hela Bhikshu Sangharatnaya</i> (The Monastic Order that Protected the True Discipline)	Self-published Date not specified, Kotugoda
Mukalangamuwa Pannyananda Thero	<i>Meth Bosath Bavata Gautama Budunḡen Vivarana Labu Dutugāmunu Maharajan</i> (King Dutugemunu: The One Prophesied by Gautama Buddha as Metteya Bodhisattva)	Self-published Date not specified, Kotugoda
Mukalangamuwa Pannyananda Thero	<i>Apata Ahimi Kala Ape Urumaya</i> (Vols. 1–4) (Our Lost Heritage)	Self-published 2007, Kotugoda, Sri Lanka
Mukalangamuwa Pannyananda Thero	<i>Budunḡe Urumaya Siri Lak Deranai</i> (The Heritage of Buddha is Sri Lanka)	Self-published 2009, Kotugoda, Sri Lanka
Hiran Shashi Herath	<i>Budunḡe Deshaya</i> (Vols. 1 & 2) (The Land of Buddha)	Self-published 2013, Kotugoda, Sri Lanka
Maheshi Panatigala	<i>Upaṇ Deshayē Idak Natī Vū Gotamanam Hela Budun</i> (The Hela Gotama Buddha who Lost a Place)	Self-published 2014, Sri Lanka
Susanta Dias	<i>Janbudvīpaye Athulata Kathāva</i> (The Story Inside of Janbudvīpa)	Self-published 2009, Malabe, Sri Lanka
Susanta Dias	<i>Tunvana Dharma Sanghayanawe Athulata Kathāva</i> (Inside the Third Buddhist Council)	Self-published 2011, Malabe, Sri Lanka
Susanta Dias	<i>Pabbatha Raja Missaka Pavven Magadha Deshaya Wimarshanayak</i> (Investigation into Magadha from the Mountain of Missaka by Pabbatha Raja)	Self-published 2013, Malabe
P. S. T. Chulavansa	<i>Budun Nohadunana Indiyāvē Dakuṇu Deshaya</i> (The Southern Land of India that Did Not Recognise the Buddha)	S. Godage & Brothers, 2016, Colombo, Sri Lanka
P. S. T. Chulavansa	<i>Atīta Śrī Vibhutiya hā Kīrula Pāṇadi Hela Rajavaru</i> (Past Glory and Crowned Sinhala Kings)	Self-published 2003, Sri Lanka

In recent years, pseudohistorical narratives have proliferated across digital platforms, with Facebook emerging as a particularly influential space for promoting revisionist claims. Groups such as *Dambadiva Soya* (*Searching for Dambadīva*), facebook.com/groups/194078818364652 and facebook.com/groups/939125576293982 actively advocate the view that key events in the Buddha's life took place in Sri Lanka rather than India. Posts in these forums often feature slogans like “*Helabima upan Gothama nam Hela Budhun*” (“The Buddha named Gotama, born in Sri Lanka”), linking Sri Lanka directly to the ancient concept of *Jambudvīpa*. Another group, *Sivhelaya hā Janbudvīpaya* (*The Four Sinhalese Lands and Janbudvīpa*), facebook.com/groups/438819816235573, reinforces this narrative.



These platforms, typically lacking scholarly oversight and often populated by anonymous contributors, provide fertile ground for the rapid spread of misinformation. Memes, doctored maps, and emotionally appealing rhetoric enable these narratives to gain traction, particularly among audiences with limited access to or familiarity with established archaeological and textual scholarship.

Scholarly works by Cunningham have extensively documented the location of ancient Buddhist sites in the Indian subcontinent, supported by inscriptions, travelogues, and stratigraphic studies. These works contrast nationalist reinterpretations that rely on reinterpretations of Pāli terms or unverifiable oral traditions (Cunningham, 1854).

Distorted Historical Narratives

As previously discussed, these reinterpretations disregard the substantial body of textual, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence that consistently locates early Buddhist geography in the Indian subcontinent, not in Sri Lanka.

A detailed analysis of recent nationalist Sri Lankan writings reveals how the concept of *Jambudvīpa* has been selectively reinterpreted to construct politically motivated historical narratives. Several contemporary texts attempt to link historical events and sacred sites to *Jambudvīpa*, despite lacking credible historical or archaeological support. Through the strategic manipulation of historical and religious concepts, these narratives promote distorted myths about Sri Lankan Buddhist history in support of nationalist and religious ideologies. As previously outlined, these authors and organisations misattribute key Buddhist sites to Sri Lanka, despite evidence placing them in India and Nepal.

While lacking credible historical substantiation, these claims aim to elevate Sri Lanka's spiritual and cultural status within the broader Buddhist world. This distortion is not limited to literary works. Public monuments, educational materials, and even government declarations have sometimes propagated these narratives, further embedding them into the national consciousness. The reimagining of *Jambudvīpa* thus functions as a tool for constructing a distinct national identity, reinforcing political legitimacy and cultural pride.

Their supporters frequently praise those who endorse these perspectives as patriots, devout individuals, innovative thinkers, and intellectuals capable of independent thinking. However, scholars and critics who challenge such distortions often face backlash and accusations. They are labelled as traitors, religious dissenters, culturally inferior, pro-Indian, or outdated traditionalists. Their integrity is attacked, and character assassination becomes a common tactic. These tactics



silence dissent and facilitate the broader dissemination of pseudohistorical views. Much of this content circulates on social media platforms via anonymous or inauthentic accounts, further distorting public understanding.

Conclusion

The case of *Jambudvīpa* vividly illustrates the broader epistemological tensions between evidence-based historiography and myth-inflected nationalist narratives. In this context, history emerges not as a fixed record of the past but as a negotiated cultural resource. It becomes vulnerable to selective appropriation and reinterpretation in service of modern identity politics and ideological agendas.

The contestation over sacred geography in Sri Lanka reveals pseudohistory as more than a challenge to academic integrity. It offers a crucial lens into the societal values, anxieties, and aspirations that shape collective memory and identity. Engaging responsibly with these dynamics is essential for scholars promoting historical literacy and nuanced public understanding, particularly in societies marked by complex cultural and religious landscapes.

As misinformation proliferates across digital media, historians must preserve academic accuracy and intervene in public discourse. This includes creating accessible and engaging scholarship that reaches beyond the academy.

Sri Lanka's experience underscores the importance of critical historiographical methods, interdisciplinarity, and public scholarship. These approaches are indispensable for countering misinformation, fostering dialogue, and bridging the gap between archaeological evidence and popular belief. They help reveal the layered processes through which communities construct and contest their historical narratives.

Producing historical knowledge today requires active engagement with the broader public. This involves employing transparent and reflexive methodologies while remaining attentive to the shifting terrains of cultural politics and collective memory. Such vigilance is necessary to strengthen the resilience of historical narratives against distortion and manipulation.

Ultimately, these efforts contribute meaningfully to building an inclusive and informed national identity that honours Sri Lanka's rich archaeological heritage while acknowledging the pluralistic nature of its society. In an increasingly interconnected world, where historical narratives intersect with international Buddhist relations, maintaining scholarly rigour and openness is vital for upholding academic truth and for fostering cross-cultural understanding and peace.



Ongoing scholarly vigilance and public engagement remain essential to safeguard history from politicisation and to ensure its role as a source of shared knowledge and social cohesion. Therefore, the responsibility for safeguarding the historical record must be shared across scholarly, educational, and public platforms.

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