The Nainativu Tamil Inscription of Parakramabahu I

THE earliest Tamil inscription so far discovered in the Jaffna district is that of Parākramabāhu I, from the sacred island of Naiṉātīvu (known to the Sinhalese in modern times as Nāgadīpa). This is also the only known Tamil inscription of this great Sinhalese monarch. The epigraph is found at the entrance to the famous Nākapūṣaṇi-Ammaṉ Temple. Some forty years back an eye-copy of this record was made by the late Mudaliyar Rasanayagam, who published the text as a foot-note in his book on Ancient Jaffna.[1] Subsequently the Archaeological Department made an estampage of it,[2] and it is from this that I edit this record which is listed as No. 311 (Photograph No.) of the epigraphical collection of the department.[3]

The text edited here is not a complete one. Unfortunately a portion of the slab has been broken off and built into the wall of the Hindu temple. The inscription is incised on both sides of the slab, but again the ignorance of the temple labourers has resulted in the total mutilation of the first part of the record, which is inscribed on the obverse side. The writing on this side has been completely obliterated by the sharpening of metal implements on it. It is too much mutilated to be deciphered with any degree of satisfaction.[4] Luckily the portion of the inscription which records the purpose of the edict and the name of the ruler who issued it has been free from such wanton mutilation. This is because it has been incised on the reverse side. Thus, we are in a position to get a reasonably clear idea of the contents of the epigraph as a whole. The text of our inscription, without the portion

1. Rasanayagam, C. *Ancient Jaffna*, Everyman's Publishers Ltd., Madras, 1926. p. 208.

2. The estampage was prepared by Mr. T. K. Jayasundara in 1949, under the supervision of Dr. S. Paranavitana. I am thankful to Professor K. Kanapathi Pillai for allowing me to use the estampage.

3. I am indebted to the Archaeological Commissioner for permission to reproduce the photograph here.

4. Only a few words such as *adhipati* and *parākrama* could be deciphered without much difficulty.

on the obverse side and the last few lines on the reverse side, comprises twenty-three lines.[5] But there are a few lacunae in the first two lines of our text.

As mentioned earlier, a transcript of the decipherable portion of this record and an English translation were included as foot-notes in Mudaliyar Rasanayagam's *Ancient Jaffna*. The text, as read by the Mudaliyar, is not only incomplete but contains many errors too. There are several points which admit of improvement.[6] Apparently the Mudaliyar was not quite familiar with the Grantha script, and this has led to faulty renderings of the Sanskrit words engraved in that script. The difficulty in deciphering the Skt. word *sneha* in *l.* 9 has made him introduce certain new words which have altered the meaning of the whole sentence. Again, the word *candrāditya* in *l.* 19, and the whole of the Skt. portion appearing after *Parākramabhujo* have been omitted in his text.

The script of this record is Tamil interspersed with Grantha. The last two lines, however, are entirely in Grantha. The main portion of the epigraph on the obverse side also appears to be in Grantha. These characters on the whole, resemble those of the South Indian and Ceylonese Tamil records belonging to about the twelfth century A.D. The language of the main portion of the edict is mediaeval Tamil, but the last two lines are in Sanskrit. There are a few Skt. words in the Tamil portion too.

The orthography exhibits the usual peculiarities of the inscriptional Tamil of the later Cola period. In *ll.* 4 and 8 வேண்டும் (*vēṇṭum*) of the standard Tamil has been rendered in the colloquial as வேணும் (*vēṇum*). The Skt. word *vyavasthā* is rendered here as *vavastai*. This is a peculiarity

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5. The inscribed surface of the stone slab measures 3 ft. 11 in. at the sides, 2 ft. 4 in. at the bottom and 1 ft. 7 in. at the top.

6. The errors are as follows:
    (1) *puṭu* for *pala* in *l.* 6.
    (2) *cantāl ittuṟai* for *cantu nanṭuṟai* in *ll.* 6-7.
    (3) *cantikku* for *kūṭa* in *l.* 8.
    (4) *nāvāy* for *nām* in *l.* 9.
    (5) *oṭum panṭāra cēvaikku* for *mēl snēham uṇṭālalāl* in *ll.* 9-10.
    (6) *cema pākam* for *cempākam* in *ll.* 16 & 17.
    (7) *vyavastai* for *vavastai* in *ll.* 19 & 21.
    (8) *ceytu koṭuttu* for *ceytuṁ kuṭuttu* in *l.* 21.
    (9) *parākkaṟama pūjō* for *parākrama bhujo* in *l.* 22.

which is due to Sinhalese influence. In South Indian records it appears normally as *viyavastai* (*S.I.I.*, Vol. I,p. 65). Sometimes the *ya* is dropped and it is written as *vivastai* (*Madras Lexicon*, VI, p. 36). But it is not known to occur as *vavastai*. In the Sinhalese records it appears as *vāvasthā* (*E.Z.* Vol. I, p. 33). The Tamil *vavastai* of our record seems to have been derived from this Sinhalese form.

No regnal year or date is found in the preserved portion of the record. But at the end of the record, in *ll.* 22 and 23, occurs the statement that this edict (*vavastai*) was issued by Deva Parākramabhuja, the emperor of all Sinhala ...." The name Parākramabhuja is the Skt. equivalent of the Sinhalese Parākramabāhu and may refer to any of the Sinhalese rulers with this name. It is necessary to examine such evidence as we can find in this document as well as outside to decide which of the many kings named Parākramabāhu is the one who issued this edict. On palaeographical grounds this record may be assigned to the twelfth or the thirteenth century. Therefore, the Parākramabāhu of our inscription must be either the first or the second of that name, since all the others ruled very much later. Since the interval between the reigns of the two monarchs is only seventy-two years—a very short period within which to decide a date by depending solely on the development of the script—it is rather difficult to settle the question on purely palaeographical grounds. The difficulty is further aggravated by the fact that no other Tamil inscription of either of these monarchs has been discovered so far, thus rendering a comparison of the scripts impossible.

The late Mudaliyar Rasanayagam, when quoting this record, remarked that "the edict appears to have been promulgated by one Parakrama Bhuja who is taken to be Parākrama Bāhu the Great," and added that "Parākrama Bāhu I is called Srimat Parākrama Bhuja in the Pandawewa inscription (Muller's *AIC*, No. 142)."[7] This was apparently stated in support of the identification of Parākrama Bhuja of our record with Parākramabāhu I. Such a method of identification is highly unsatisfactory since Bhuja is synonymous with Bāhu and, therefore, could refer to any one of the rulers named Parākramabāhu.[7a] Hence, we have to look for other tenable reasons for the identification of this monarch.

7. Rasanayagam, *op.cit.* p. 209.

7a. The inscription referred to by the Mudaliyar does not actually belong to the reign of Parākramabāhu I. It is a record of King Nissanka Malla, wrongly ascribed to Parākramabāhu I by Muller. (This was pointed out by Professor Paranavitana).

It is only with the help of the provenance of this epigraph and its contents that one could settle this problem. The decipherable part of the record contains certain trade regulations concerning wreckages off the port of Ūrātturai i.e. present-day Kayts. The fact that this edict was issued not by any subordinate official but by the king himself shows that the monarch was in supreme control of the northernmost regions of the island. Parākramabāhu II cannot lay claim to such authority over the northern regions. The period of his rule was one during which the whole of Rajarata was in the hands of Māgha, the invader from Kalinga, with whom Parākramabāhu II was at war. The *Cūḷavaṁsa* specifically mentions that Ūrātota (Ūrātturai) was one of the places where the garrisons of Māgha and his sub-king Jayabāhu were posted.[8] Although Māgha's forces were ultimately vanquished in the reign of Parākramabāhu II himself, the monarch died soon after the occupation of Polonnaruva.[9] Therefore, he could not have exercised his authority in the northernmost regions and been in a position to issue at any point in his reign an edict at Ūrātturai.

On the other hand, Parākramabāhu I was in supreme control of the whole island. There is contemporary and reliable evidence to prove that Ūrātturai was an important naval and commercial centre in his time. The Tiruvālaṅkāṭu Inscription,[10] a Coḷa record dated in 1178 A.D., informs us that Parākramabāhu I was building ships and assembling troops at Ūrātturai and other places in order to make a fresh invasion of South India. Thus, of the rulers who bore the name of Parākramabāhu, it was the first of that name who was actually in control of Ūrātturai, and, therefore, was in a position to issue an edict there setting out certain customs regulations.[11] Further, Parākramabāhu I is well-known for his organisation

8. *Cūḷavaṁsa*, ed. Wilhelm Geiger, London, 1925, 1927. Ch. 83; v. 17.

9. *Cūḷavaṁsa*, Ch. 89; v. 71; *History of Ceylon*, Vol. I. Pt. I, Ceylon University Press, Colombo, 1960, pp. 628-629.

10. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXII, pp. 86-92. Ed. Venkatasubba Aiyar, V.

11. Professor Paranavitana informs me that King Nissaṅka Malla, too, called himself Parākramabāhu in some of his inscriptions, and that, therefore, this record can well be one of Nissaṅka Malla, although he himself feels that this record very probably belongs to Parākramabāhu I. This light thrown by the professor poses a serious problem regarding the identification of the ruler who issued this edict. The provenance of the record will not help us in any way, since Nissaṅka Malla was also in supreme control of the whole island. The fact that the name Parākrama has been mentioned twice again in the unpublished section of the record (see supra note 3a) and the fact that none of the usual *birudas* of Nissaṅka Malla are to be met with in this record may suggest that this was issued by Parākramabāhu I. But this is not conclusive. In the absence of any definite evidence to prove that this edict was issued by Nissaṅka Malla, we may tentatively attribute this to Parākramabāhu, whose name finds mention several times in the record. Further, literary and epigraphic evidence shows that Parākramabāhu had more to do with the northern part of Ceylon, especially with Ūrātturai, than Nissaṅka Malla.

of state trading with foreign countries.[12] This edict must have been issued as a result of this organisation. Hence, Parākramabhuja of our inscription could only have been Parākramabāhu I. He is referred to here in poetic phraseology as *Deva Ripurāja Vaṃśa Dāvānala(s) Sakala Siṃhala Cakrava(rtti)*. The record would, therefore, have been inscribed during the latter half of the twelfth century A.D.

The contents of this inscription give an insight into the type of customs regulations that were obtaining in the time of Parākramabāhu I. This edict, apart from proclaiming that foreign traders should be given protection, contains two regulations regarding wrecked merchandise. Wrecked vessels which had brought elephants and horses for the king had to surrender a fourth share of their cargo to the treasury. But those laden with ordinary merchandise had to pay a half share to the treasury. Ceylon had been importing horses from pre-Christian times,[13] but the import of elephants is rather interesting. We know from other sources that Ceylon was exporting elephants for a long time and that "the Ceylonese elephant was much prized for its intelligence and docility".[14] But during the twelfth century Ceylon was importing elephants from Burma, and, in fact, one of the reasons for Parākramabāhu's invasion of Rāmañña was the attempt of King Alaungsitthu to control the elephant trade with Ceylon. The late Mr. C.W. Nicholas was of the opinion that the only object in importing elephants into Ceylon from Burma would appear to have been to secure tusked animals since "the Ceylon race has the lowest proportion of tuskers among the Asiatic elephants".[15] The tusked animals were needed for Ceremonial as well as military purposes.

The geographical name Ūrātturai occurring in the record is one of the few earliest recorded place-names of the Jaffna peninsula, after they became Tamilised. Hence its importance to the study of local nomenclature. The place-names of the Jaffna peninsula have a very strong Sinhalese element in them, thereby preserving memories of an earlier Sinhalese occupation of that area.[16] Hence they constitute a useful body of evidence for the

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12. *Cūlavaṃsa*, Ch. 69: vv. 27 ff: *U.C.H.C.* Vol. I, Pt. 2, pp. 549-550.

13. *Mahāvaṃsa*, Ch. 21: v. 10. Horses were imported in large numbers to South India from the Middle East at this time and some of them were shipped to Ceylon from there. Parākramabāhu is said to have devoted special attention to training youths to ride horses and elephants. Horses and elephants were used in the civil wars during the time of Parākramabāhu. (*Cūla.* 70: v. 229).

14. C. W. Nicholas & S. Paranavitana. *A Concise History of Ceylon.* Colombo, 1961. p. 225.

15. Ibid. p. 225.

16. Fr. S. Gnanaprakasar. *A Critical History of Jaffna* (Tamil). Achchuvely, 1928, pp. 29-36; *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register*, Vol. II, Pt. 2, pp. 54-58; 167-74.

study of the early Tamil settlements in Jaffna. Unfortunately, very few records of the early forms of the place-names have come down to us and, thus, the establishment of the sound-pedigree of most place-names is rendered difficult. Ūrātturai is one of the few place-names the sound-pedigree of which could be established with a fair amount of satisfaction. The earliest literary references to this place are found in the *Pūjāvaliya*,[16a] the *Rājā-valiya*[17] and the *Cūlavaṁsa*.[18] In Pali it was known as *Sūkaratittha* while the Sinhalese form was Hūrātoṭa or Ūrātoṭa. With the settlement of the Tamils in this area it became Tamilised.[19] In Tamil while the first element of the Sinhalese name was retained, the second element came to be replaced by a Tamil synonym. Thus, it became Ūrātturai (*turai* = *toṭa*).[20] It appears in this hybrid form in the inscription of Rājādhirāja II[21] and in our record. This form has come down to modern times and is still used in popular parlance. But scholars have distorted its form and given it a pure Tamil look in its written form. This is how it has come to be written as *Ūr-kāvar-ṟuṟai*.[22] The Hollanders gave it a Dutch name, Kayts, by which it is still known in English.

<div align="center">TEXT</div>

1. .... nāṅkaḷ
2. . e .... ūrātturai
3. (yil) paratēcikaḷ vantu
4. irukka vēṇumeṉṟum

16a. *Pūjāvaliya*, ed. A. V. Suraweera, Colombo, 1961, p. 116.

17. *Rājāvaliya*, ed. B. Gunasekara, 2nd Edn., Colombo, 1955, pp. 16, 42, 44.

18. *Cūlavaṁsa*, 83: v. 17. Ūrātoṭa is also referred to in the *Nikāya-Saṅgraha*, (v. 23).

19. The Tamil element in this Sinhalese place-name and the language of the record show the extent of Tamilisation in the North during the twelfth century. The retention of the Sinhalese element in the place-nomenclature helps to establish the extent to which a Sinhalese population survived after the Tamil conquests and settlements. A considerable percentage of Sinhalese names and the occurrence of Sinhalese-Tamil compound names are circumstances that point to a long survival of a Sinhalese population and an intimate intercourse between the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

20. The phenomena of sound-substitution and word-substitution are both of frequent occurrence among the place-names of Jaffna.

21. Supra, note 10.

22. cf. *Ilattu Vālvum Valamum*, Kanapathi Pillai, K. pp. 100-101 (Madras, 1962). An attempt has been made here to establish the sound-pedigree of the name in the reverse order. It purports to be in conformity with strict phonological law but it fails to fit the known historical facts. It is a cardinal principle of place-name studies that no phono-logical explanation of a place-name can be admitted which does not fit the known topo-graphical or historical facts. Further, the author has not shown any early forms of the name in support of his contention. It should be noted that the first principle of place-name etymology is that there must be early name forms on which to found the explanation. Ref. *An Introduction to the Survey of English Place-Names*—ed. A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton. University Press, Cambridge, 1929, Pt. I, p. 6: *The Concise Dictionary of English Place Names*—Ekwall, E. (Oxford, 1940), pp. vii & viii.
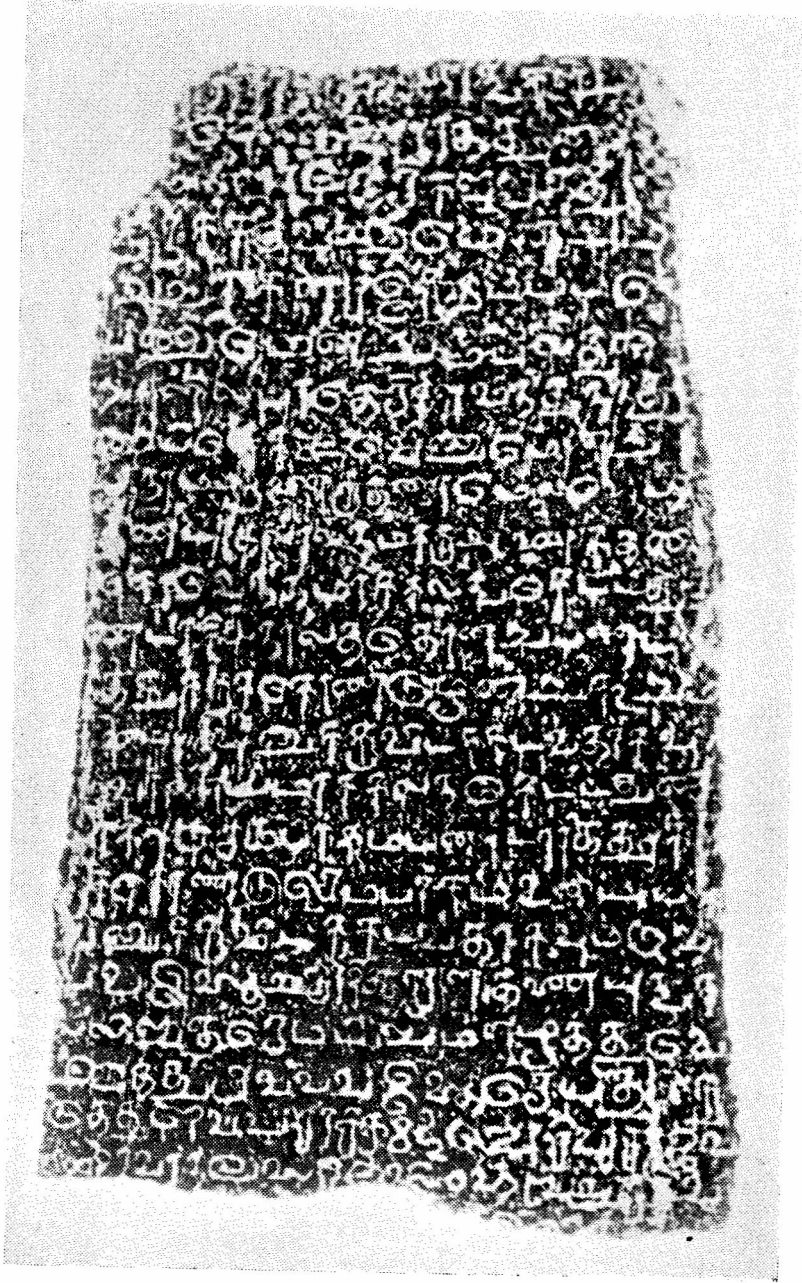
Nainativu Inscription of Parākramabāhu I

5. avarkaḷ raksaippaṭa
6. vēnumenṟum pala tu-
7. ṟaikaḷil paratēcikaḷ vantu nantu
8. ṟaiyi(l)ē kūṭa vēnumenṟu
9. (m) nām āṉai kutirai mēl snēha[23]
10. (mu)ṇṭātalāl namakku āṉai kutiarai
11. koṭu vanta marakkalaṅ keṭṭatu
12. ṇṭākil nālattonru paṇṭā
13. (ra) ttukuk koṇṭu mūnṟu kūrum
14. (u)ṭaiyavanukku viṭak kaṭavatākavu
15. (m) vāṇiya marakkalaṅ[23a] keṭṭatuṇ
16. ṭākil cem pākam [24] paṇṭārattuk
17. (ku)k koṇṭu cem pākam uṭaiya
18. (va)ṇukku viṭak kaṭavatākavum iv
19. (va)vastai[25] candrādityaru(ḷ)ḷataṉaiyuṁ[26] ka
20. lliluñ cempilum eluttu ve
21. (t)ṭi vittu[27] ivvavastai ceytuṅ ku
22. ṭuttu deva(h)parākramabhujo ripurāja va
23. (ṁśa)[27a] dāvānala(s)[28] sakala siṁhala cakrava
24. (rtti) . . . .[29]

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23. *Sneham* —Skt. " friendship or love". The word is used here in a peculiar way. The use of this word in any other sense is not known. Perhaps the horses and elephants were liked by the king for their value.

23a. A distinction is made in this record between the vessels that brought horses and elephants to the king and those that were laden with merchandise. The former could not have been state vessels, since the record refers to owners of these vessels. Perhaps specially chartered vessels were used to import the horses for the state. This might have been the reason why only a quarter of the cargo of these vessels were seized by the Treasury when these got wrecked, whereas the other merchant vessels had to surrender one half of their merchandise.

24. *Cempākam*—Tam. *Cem*—Skt. *Bhāga* (cf. Skt. *Samabhāga*)—an exact half. This is a rather rare word, But its equivalent *cempāti* (translated by E. Hultzsch as 'better half') is met with in South Indian inscriptions, e.g. Maṇimaṅgalam Inscription of Rājarāja II. *S.I.I.* Vol. I, p. 80.

25. *Vavastai*– Skt. *vyavasthā* through the Sinh. *Vavasthā* became *vavastai*.

26. *Candrādityar uḷḷataṉaiyum*—Lit. "as long as the Moon and Sun exist." This is a very common phrase in South Indian as well as Ceylonese records. e.g. *Ep. Zey.* Vol. III, pp. 66 & 311.

27. *Kalliluñ-cempilum eluttu reṭṭuvittu*—Another phrase of frequent reference in South Indian and Ceylonese records. Apparently a copy of the edict in a copper plate was kept in the Treasury.

27a. *Vaṁśa*—This word is not very clear. It could also be read as *ranga*, meaning 'forest,' but it is very probably *vaṁśa*.

28. *Ripurāja Vaṁśa Dāvānala*—A *biruda* of the ruler. cf. "Destroyer of elephant-like enemies (*ripu caraṇan*)" in *E.Z.* Vol. I, p. 25. Indian rulers, too, had similar *birudas*: *ripurāja gopi* (*E.I.* XIX, p. 284), *ripu sarpa garuda* (*E.I.* XV, p. 26), *ripu bhūpāla kālakūṭa* (ibid. p. 94), *ripu kula kāla* (ibid. p. 104).

Dāvānala is a term met with in Sinh. literature also, e.g. *Dahamasaraṇa*, pp. 12 & 244.

29. The Sanskrit portion of the record is in verse. It is in the Vasantatilakā metre.

Translation

1 .... we ....

2-4 .... that foreigners should come and stay at Ūrātturai, that they should be protected, and that foreigners from many ports should come and gather in our port; as we like elephants and horses, if the vessels which bring elephants and horses unto us get wrecked, a fourth (share of the cargo) should be taken by the Treasury and the (other) three parts should be left to the owner; and, if vessels (laden) with merchandise get wrecked an exact half should be taken by the Treasury and (the other) exact half should be left to the owner. This regulation shall be (enforced) as long as the sun and moon last. (This regulation was) caused to be inscribed on stone as well as copper. This regulation was framed and issued (by) Deva Pararamabhujo (who is like) a wild conflagration unto the dynasty[30] of enemy kings, the overlord of all Siṃhaḷa .... framed and issued this regulation.

<div align="right">KARTHIGESU INDRAPALA[31]</div>