Padalanchana at Anuradhapura

The Cūlavamsa, Chapter 54, v. 44, has recorded that Mahinda IV (956–972) restored the beautiful temple of the four cetiyas in Padalāṇchana which had been burnt down by the troops of the Chola King. To the average Sinhalese Buddhist of today, Padalāṇchana would connote one and only one sacred place: that is the Footprint on the summit of the mountain called Siripāda or Samanola-kānda in Sinhalese, Sumana-kūta or Samanta-kūta in Pali, and is generally referred to as Adam’s Peak by European writers. The Footprint on Siripāda is venerated by the Buddhists of Ceylon as one of the sixteen great places hallowed by the Buddha in this Island; it occupies the fourth place in a set of three Pali verses enumerating these shrines, often recited by the faithful in their devotions, the first line of which runs: Mahiyānganaṁ Naśadāpiṁ Kalyāṇāṁ Pada-lāṁchanāṁ. Another well-known Pali verse includes it among four Footprints left by the Buddha at places widely separated in the Buddhist world, the other three being one each on the banks of the Narmada river, on the Saccabaddha mountain and in the city of the Yonakas. The Footprint on Siripāda-kanda in Ceylon has been held in great veneration by the Buddhists of Burma, Siam and Cambodia from the twelfth century up to modern times.

The Chronicle does not, in this place, refer to the Padalāṇchana of the Sumana-kūta or Samantakūta, and such an identification on the evidence of modern usage does not seem to accord with the statement that the shrine of the Pāṇḍya regalia, for Udaya IV fled with them to Rohana. The Chela army pursued the fleeing monarch, but the Sinhalese recovered from the shock of the enemy’s first offensive in time not only to check him before he reached the frontiers of Rohana but also to force him out of the Island and to launch a counter invasion of the Chola dominions, where he was compelled to disgorge the loot that he had taken from Ceylon. Siripāda-kanda is within Rohana and, if the Chela army did not enter that principality on this occasion, they could not have destroyed a shrine on that mountain. Even if we were to argue on the ground that the Peak, being close to the frontiers of Rohana, might have been reached by an enemy who is stated to have failed to penetrate into that principality, the Peak itself, or the wilderness at its foot, was not the type of terrain to which a king in fear of any enemy would have fled. It was in pursuit of Udaya IV that the Chela army might have entered the Peak wilderness, but the Badulla pillar-inscription furnishes us with evidence to indicate that it was to the districts around Mahiyāngana that the Sinhalese monarch fled to elude Parantaka’s army. And it is not necessary to match by the Peak to arrive at Mahiyāngana from Anurādhapura. Moreover, a general operating in a hostile and unfamiliar country would scarcely have undertaken a campaign in such terrain as the approaches to the Peak, and given hostage to Fortune by making himself easily vulnerable in guerilla warfare by the forces of that country acquainted with the topography. If the Cola forces did not penetrate to the wilderness of the Peak, they could not have burned a shrine connected with the Footprint (pada-lāṁchanā) thereon. The shrine of the Footprint which the Cholas burnt down, and which was restored by Mahinda IV, therefore, must have been somewhere else. These or similar considerations must have weighed with Geiger when he, in his translation of the Cūlavamsa, refrained from making the possible identification of Padalāṇchana with Siripāda-kanda, and contented himself with pointing out the only other reference to this name in that chronicle, which states that Vajira, the wife of Sakka-scnapati, had a home built in Padalāṇchana, and granted it to the bhikkhus of the universally revered Thera School. The Peak is hardly a place for the establishment of a convent for nuns who, according to the Vinaya rules, are prohibited from having their places of residence far removed from human habitations.

1. Jhāptara Cōṭappāloha holma Padalāṇchane
   Cūlavamsa cetiyānāṁ sa naṃ pūrīṇaṁ gharanā akā
   This verse can be understood to mean, as in the above translation of Geiger, that there was one shrine for all the four cetiyas. It is more likely that the author meant 'a shrine for each of the four cetiyas.'

2. Yathā Nammottāya mādaṇṭa pūrīṇaṁ ca tëre
   Yathā Saccabaddha-girikā Samantakārāge
   Yathā tathā Yenaka-pūrīṇaṁ ca pūrīṇaṁ
   Thān pāda-lāṁchanāṁ abhāṁ śrīrodd namāmi.

5. Part I, p. 182, footnote 5.
Thus, these two references to a Padalanchana in the Cūḷavamsa, in themselves, contain evidence to show that Sumana-or Samanta-kīṭa was not meant by them; but they do not indicate where in fact this Padalanchana was. The evidence necessary to identify the Padalanchana referred to in these two contexts of the chronicle, is forthcoming in the old Sinhalese glossary to the Mahābodhiyavaṃśa (Mbh.), a text ascribed to the Polonnaruva period, but for which the tenth century would not be a date inconsistent with its language. The Pali Mahābodhiyavaṃśa, in the section named Mahārāja-pattigahanaakathā, gives an account of the legendary visits to this Island by the four Buddhas of this kalpa, mentioning in particular the spots hallowed by each of the Buddhas spending a few moments seated in meditation thereon. The account of the visit of Kakusandha, the first Buddha of this kalpa, ends with the statement that the Teacher, after allowing the site of the future Thūpārāma, and after preaching the dhamma, proceeded to the terrace named Ratana-mañjaka, rose into the air from that site, and returned to Jambudīpa. The Sinhalese gloss explains Ratana-mañjaka, not only by giving the Sinhalese equivalent of the name, Ruvana-mañjāyehi, but also with the comments: Ḥe dān satara-Buddha pada-lasa pādum-desē maha-sā-tānīhi,9 that is at present the site of the main cetiya (stūpa) in the shrine of the Footprints (padalasa) of the four Buddhas.

Konāgamana, the second Buddha of this kalpa, is said to have hallowed the same spots as did his predecessor. He likewise terminated his tour of Anurādhapura at the future Thūpārāma, and rose into the air for the return journey from Sudassana-mañāka to the east of the last mentioned place. For Sudassana-mañāka, the Mbg.,10 has the following gloss: Sudassana-mañāyehi, ḍhe dān Padalasa pādum-desen devana maha-sā tān,11 that is at present the site of the great cetiya which is the second from the east at Padalasa.12 The corresponding account of the visit of the Buddha Kasapa ends with the statement that the Teacher rose to the air for the return journey from the Somanassa-mañāka, which, too, was at the east of the site of the future Thūpārāma. The gloss in the Mbg.11 for Somanassa-mañāla is Somanassa-mañāyehi: ḍhe dān Padalasa pādum-desen devana maha-sā tān,13 at the Somanassa-mañāla, that is at present the site of the great cetiya, which is the third from the east at Padalasa.14 The historic Buddha, during the last of the three visits he is believed to have paid to Ceylon, rose to the air for the return journey after spending a few moments on the site of the future Sīla-cetiya. The gloss of the Mbg. on the word Sīla-cetiyaṭṭhāne of the Mahābodhiyavaṃśa is Sāla-sā-tānhi du, ḍhe Padalasa satara-vana kīṭa dāgāba ya,15 also at the site of Sāla-sā; that is (at present) the small fourth dagāba at the Padalasa.

The Sinhalese word padalasa, in the above extracts from the Mbg., is the exact equivalent of the Pali Padalāñchana. At the Padalasa, according to the Mbg., there were four cetiyas, evidently built respectively over Footprints left by the four Buddhas of this kalpa. The Cūḷavamsa states that, at the Padalāñchana, where a shrine or shrines were restored by Mahinda IV, there were four cetiyas. It is therefore reasonable to take the Padalāñchana referred to at Cūḷavamsa, LIV, v. 44, as identical with the Padalasa of the Mbg. Three of the cetiyas at this Padalasa (Padalāñchana) were believed, at the time the Mbg. was written, to mark three legendary sites which are definitely stated in the Mahābodhiyavaṃśa as well as in the Mahāvamsa, to have been at the east of the Thūpārāma. A shrine here might well have been burnt down by the Chela troops in the reign of Udaya IV, for they occupied Anurādhapura and also consigned to the flames the Temple of the Tooth, the Dhammasanāgani House and the Mahāpāli within the city (Cūḷavamsa, LIV, v. 45). The Padalāñchana referred to in the Cūḷavamsa, LIV, 44, was thus situated to the east of the Thūpārāma. The other reference in the Cūḷavamsa to the Padalāñchana, as we have seen, informs us that a residence for nuns was established there. A site to the east of the Thūpārāma would not have been inappropriate for a nunnery.

Three of the four Footprints to the east of the Thūpārāma were left by the three previous Buddhas rising to the air from that spot. Mihintale is also eulogised in the Mahābodhiyavaṃśa13 as being sanctified by the Footprints of the three previous Buddhas. According to the Mahāvamsa, it was on this hill, known by three other names in these mythical times14, that the three previous Buddhas alighted on their visits to the Island. The ancient belief thus seems to have been that an indelible impress of a Buddha’s foot would remain at a spot from which he rose to the air or to which he alighted. In these actions, greater pressure would naturally have been exerted on the ground by the feet than in normal walking.

9. Mahābodhiyavaṃśa, XVI, vv. 75–165 and I.
The *Mahāvamsa* (XXXIII, 24) informs us that a Silācetiya was founded by Lajjītissā (*cīca* 119—110 B.C.) to the east of the Thūpārāma. We are not told here that this monument was built over a Footprint of the Buddha, but the location of the Silācetiya15 to the east of the Thūpārāma by the *Mbh.* would justify us in the assumption that the *stūpa* was built to mark a spot believed at that time to have been the last at which the Buddha sat in meditation on the third visit. The *Dīpavaṃsas* (XIX, 13) also credits Lajjītissā with the construction of the Silāthupa, without, however, stating where it was. There was, however, no unanimity in ancient times about the identity of this Silācetiya or-thiipa. The devotees of Mihintalē, it appears, were not content with that sacred hill having the Footprints of the previous Buddhas only. For we are told by the *Pañjavali*16 that the last place hallowed by the Buddha on the third visit to this Island was Maha-sala-sāya (P. Mahā-sīla-cetiya) at Mihintalē. The existence, in ancient times, of a Silā-cetiya at Mihintalē is attested by the *Mahāvamsa* as well as the Habarana rock inscription of about the fourth century.17

A third Silā-thūpa of an early date is referred to in the *Dīpavaṃsas* (XIX, 17) in a verse which has not yet been satisfactorily interpreted. In recording the establishment of the Abhayagiri Vihāra by Vaṭṭagāmanī Abhaya, this chronicle says: *Abhayagiriṁ paṭīṭhapesi Silāthūpaṁ cetiyaṁ antare.* Oldenberg’s translation of this half-verse is: 'He erected the Abhayagiri (monastery) between the Silāthūpa and the Cetiya.'18 The use of the word antare in this verse, following a noun in the accusative case, is paralleled by *Dakkhiṇa-vihāram antare* at XXII, 58, where antare clearly means 'in' or 'within,' not 'between.' *Silāthūpaḥ* as well as *Abhayagiriṁ* are objects of *paṭīṭhapesi.* The translation would thus be: 'He established the Abhyagiri (monastery and) the Silāthūpa which is within (its) cetiya.' What the text connotes is that Vaṭṭagāmanī built the Silācetiya which forms the core of the Abhayagiri Dāgāba, the huge pile built encasing this being the work of later hands. As the ancient belief was that the Silāthūpa marked the site from which the Buddha rose to the air to return to Jambudīpa from Ceylon, and thus received the Footprint of the Master, such an interpretation of the above verse would accord with the claim of the inmates of the Abhayagiri Vihāra, recorded by Fa-Hien, that the *stūpa* of this monastery was built over a Footprint of the Buddha.19

It would, of course, be an invidious task, particularly at this distance of time, to adjudicate between the claims of various religious institutions for the possession of the Silāthūpa. The shrine of this name within the establishments which acknowledged the authority of the Mahāvihāra was located, according to the *Mbh.*, at the Padalāñchana to the east of the Thūpārāma. The only ancient *stūpa* at present to be seen to the east of this Dāgāba is that now popularly, but erroneously, believed to be the shrine erected over the ashes of Sanghamittā-theri.20 This is evidently not the Silāthūpa, for it is not built of stone. It may be one of the four *cetiyas* at the Padalāñchana. The reference to three of these monuments as *maha-sa, great cetiya,* was probably in comparison with the fourth, which is called a *kudā (small) dagāba,* and not on account of their actual size. The remains of the Silācetiya and the other two *cetiyas* might well have been cleared away when the site came to be used as the cremation ground for the abbots of the Bō-tree temple in modern times. No thorough investigations on the site are practicable due to the presence of the monuments (alu-vihāres) built in memory of these dignitaries. It is also not impossible that the four *cetiyas* of the Padalāñchana at Anurādhapura were further to the east, and that their remains had to yield place to the bungalows for medical officers erected by the Public Works Department.

Yāh kim ci samudaya-dhamman sabbaṁ taṁ nirodha-dhamman!

S. PARANAVITANA

15. *Silā-thūpa* and *Silā-Cetiya* are synonymous.
20. Sanghamittā’s body, taken out of the city by way of the eastern side of the Thūpārāma and not on account of their actual size. The remains of the Silācetiya and the other two *cetiyas* might well have been cleared away when the site came to be used as the cremation ground for the abbots of the Bō-tree temple in modern times. No thorough investigations on the site are practicable due to the presence of the monuments (alu-vihāres) built in memory of these dignitaries. It is also not impossible that the four *cetiyas* of the Padalāñchana at Anurādhapura were further to the east, and that their remains had to yield place to the bungalows for medical officers erected by the Public Works Department.

Yāh kim ci samudaya-dhamman sabbaṁ taṁ nirodha-dhamman!

S. PARANAVITANA

20. Sanghamittā’s body, taken out of the city by way of the eastern side of the Thūpārāma and not on account of their actual size. The *cetiya* in her honour was built to mark a spot within sight of the great Bodhi tree (Mahābodhi-pada) at Padalāñchana.