

## The Ancient names and Builder of the Padaviya and Naccaduva tanks

The Padaviya Tank, which has recently been restored, is one of the largest among the ancient irrigation reservoirs in Ceylon<sup>1</sup>. Standing on the bund, close to the great breach before it was closed, there was a stone slab with an inscription which, in a Sanskrit and a Sinhalese stanza, has recorded that Parākramabāhu I 'caused it to be constructed'<sup>2</sup>. But, as is the case with other ancient irrigation works at which that monarch had set up similar inscriptions, e.g. the dam at Ālahāra, Parākramabāhu only restored this tank. For the *Cūlavamsa* includes Padivāpi in a list of ancient tanks which were breached in his time, and were restored by Parākramabāhu I<sup>3</sup>. Neither the *Cūlavamsa* nor the *Mahāvamsa* has any other reference to the tank under this name; but as it has been called an ancient tank by the chronicler who recorded the events of the reign of Parākramabāhu I, its original construction must have been several centuries earlier, and the name by which it was known in the twelfth century was not the same as its appellation in more ancient times. The *Pūjāvalī* credits Saddhātissa (circa 137—119 B.C.) with the construction of Padī and several other tanks<sup>4</sup>; but the *Mahāvamsa*, in its account of the reign of that monarch, makes no such mention. This statement of the *Pūjāvalī*, therefore, may well be doubted, particularly as there is reason to conclude that irrigation works of such magnitude as the Padaviya were not undertaken at so early a date.

Below the embankment of the Padaviya Tank are to be seen the remains of an ancient city now called Moragoḍa<sup>5</sup>, and on this site have been discovered a pillar-inscription of the reign of Kassapa IV (898—914), which has been deciphered and translated by Wickremasinghe<sup>6</sup>. This document refers to the ancient city by the name of Pādīn-naru<sup>7</sup> of which

1. For a description of the Padaviya tank, see R. L. Brohier, *Ancient Irrigation Works in Ceylon*, Part I, pp. 23—25.

2. Bell, A. S. C. *Seventh Progress Report*, p. 73.

3. *Cūlavamsa*, Chapter LXXIX, vv. 31—38.

4. *Pūjāvalī*, 34th Chapter, edited by Mābōpiṭṭiye Medhaṅkara Thera, p. 8.

5. For an account of the remains at Moragoḍa, see Bell, *Seventh Progress Report*, pp. 41—43.

6. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, pp. 200—207; plate facing p. 204.

7. Wickremasinghe has read the name as Pa(dō)naru and gives Pādān also as a possible reading. The *i*-sign over the *d* is reasonably certain in the estampage; what has been taken as the *ā*- or the right side of the *o*-stroke is extraneous.

the Pāli form would be Pācīna-nagara, 'the Eastern City.' It is thus clear that the city below the embankment of the Padaviya tank was the headquarters of the Eastern District (Pācīna-passa), one of the four main territorial divisions, corresponding in terminology to the disavanis of Kandyan times, of the ancient Rājaratṭha. The name by which the tank itself was known in the twelfth century was thus derived from that of the city close to it, and the district (Padī-ratṭha) in which it was situated. Padī is equivalent to Skt. *prācī* and P. *pācī*; it means 'Eastern,' and was an appropriate name for the most important tank in the Eastern District, Quarter or Province. But it is very likely that such an important tank as Padivāva had its own distinctive appellation before it came to be generally referred to by that of the territory in which it was situated.

The Moragoḍa pillar-inscription contains topographical details from which the earlier name of the Padaviya tank can be inferred. The village to which immunities were granted by this edict is said, not only to have been situated in the territorial unit (*kuliya*) called Pādīn-naru, but also to have come within another, possibly smaller, division named Danā-diyadara. Wickremasinghe's reading of the relevant portion of the record is *rañdanā diya-dara*, given as doubtful. What Wickremasinghe has read as *ra* in *rañdanā* is really the *ū* stroke and the right half of the syllable *vū*; there is no support for the nasal before *da* in the estampage that he has reproduced. The correct reading thus is *Danā-diyadārā*, which is the locative form of *Danā-diyadara*. Moreover, the correct form of the name, with a slight difference, is preserved in the pillar-inscription of Udaya II (887—898) at Buddhannehāla<sup>8</sup>, seven miles to the north of Moragoḍa. The village of Nānnaru, with which this edict is concerned, is said to have been in the territorial unit called Danā-dakadara. Wickremasinghe gives the initial *da* of this name as doubtful, but what is visible of it in the estampage precludes it from being read as any other syllable. Wickremasinghe also reads *daka* as *dak*; but the stroke that he has taken as the *virāma* appears to be an extraneous one. Even if we adopt the reading *dak*, it does not much affect the form of the name, for in this period a final or medial vowel was often elided. What is certain is that *daka* or *dak* in the name, as it occurs in the Buddhannehāla epigraph, is a variant form of *diya* in the Moragoḍa inscription<sup>9</sup>. We may, therefore, conclude that *Danā-dakadara* or *-diydara* were alternate forms of the name of the territorial unit in which the villages affected by these two epigraphs were situated.

8. *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. I, pp. 191—200; Plate facing p. 196.

9. *Daka* is the Pāli or Prakrit form from which the Sinhalese *diya* is derived.

The word *dakadara* has been met with in other inscriptions of the ninth and tenth centuries, usually as the second member of a compound of which the first is the name of a tank. The unpublished pillar-inscription found at Galnāva in the Nāgampaha Kōraḷe<sup>10</sup> refers to the village affected by the document as coming under Baḷalu-dakadara. And Galnāva is less than a mile from the main channel (*yōda-āḷa*) issuing from the Baḷalu-vāva. *Daka-dara*, therefore, must have denoted either the main channel from a tank, or the lands irrigated by a tank. The pillar-inscriptions found at Moragoḍa just below the embankment of the Padaviya, and at Buddhanehāla, seven miles north of it, both refer to villages in or on the Danā-dakadara. These two inscribed pillars do not appear to have been removed far from their original sites, and must have been set up in the vicinity of the villages which are mentioned in them, if not in the villages themselves. These two villages must have been situated in the area irrigated by the Padī-vāva, the main channel issuing from which must have continued northwards for at least seven miles. Danādakadara, consequently, must be the old name of the main channel of the tank now called Padaviya and, on the analogy of Baḷalu-dakadara, the conclusion is inevitable that, in the ninth century, the name of this tank was Danā-vāva. And the only name of a tank found in the chronicle with which 'Danā-vāva' can be equated is 'Dhana-vāpi', listed among the irrigation works of Moggallāna II (*circa* 531—551)<sup>11</sup>. The long *ā* in *Danā* presupposes a form *Dhanaka*; the suffix *-ka* is often found added to proper names in documents of the early centuries of the Christian era, and the chronicles, more often than not, make use of the names without this suffix.

The only reference to Dhanavāpi (Danāvāva) in the *Cūlavamsa*, as it has been translated, appears to go against the proposed identification of that tank with Padaviya. For Geiger's rendering of the relevant passage reads: 'He dammed up the Kadamba river among the mountains forming thereby the Pattapāsānavāpi, Dhanavāpi and Garītara tanks'<sup>12</sup>. Padaviya is in no way connected with the Kadamba river (Malvatu Oya), and a tank formed by the damming of that river cannot obviously be the same as the Padaviya. But the passage as it occurs in Geiger's translation does not make much sense when examined along with the relevant geographical data and the methods adopted by the ancients in the construction of tanks. The Kadamba river neither rises in, nor flows through, mountainous country. And the passage quoted above appears to state that by damming

10. *A.S.C., Annual Report for 1895*, p. 9. No. 9 in the list of inscriptions. An eye-copy of this pillar inscription, prepared under Bell's direction, is available in the Archaeological Department.

11. *Cūlavamsa*, Chapter XLI, v. 61.

12. *Cūlavamsa*, translated by Geiger, pt. i, p. 57.

the river at one spot three tanks were constructed. Where tanks have been built by the damming of streams, such obstruction of the natural flow of the water at one point normally results in one tank. These considerations should lead one, not to doubt the identification of Dhanavāpi with Padī-vāva on the evidence supplied by the inscriptions, but to examine, in the light of that evidence, whether Geiger's translation given above faithfully conveys the meaning which the chronicler intended to express. For this, the relevant portion of the Pāli text is given below:

*Bandhāpesi Kadambam ca nadim pabbata-majjhato  
Pattapāsāṇa-vāpim ca Dhanavāpim Garītaram  
Ganhāpesi, sa diḅhāyuhetu kamman ti sādaro  
Likhāpesi ca saddhammam vatthupūjam ca kārayi.*

L. C. Wijesinha, Geiger's predecessor in translating the *Cūlavamsa* gives the following rendering: 'He threw a dam across the Kadamba river, from the middle of the mountain, thinking that such works tended to long life. And from the great love that he bore to his subjects, he built the tanks Pattapāsāṇa, Dhanavāpi and Garītara. He also caused sacred books to be written and made offerings to the sacred objects'<sup>13</sup>. Sumaṅgala and Baṭuvantuḍāve, in their translation of the chronicle into Sinhalese, interpret the passage in the same manner as Wijesinha<sup>14</sup>; in fact the latter's English translation at this point, as elsewhere, leans heavily on the Sinhalese version. Wijesinha's version that the damming of the Kadamba river was undertaken by the king due to a belief that such works tended to long life has been due to taking that the sentence should end with a line. But there was no connection of irrigation with longevity according to ancient beliefs. What the king undertook expecting to live to a ripe old age was the multiplication of sacred books and the offerings to the sacred objects. Geiger has correctly taken the sentence dealing with the irrigation works as ending with *ganhāpesi* in verse 62. But the native scholars who have translated the chronicle into Sinhalese and English, respectively, have been more faithful to the original Pāli, in rendering the passage dealing with Moggallāna II's irrigation works as comprising two separate sentences, than the German professor has been in treating it as a single sentence. For *bandhāpesi*, of which the object is *Kadambam nadim* and *ganhāpesi*, saving the other three proper names as objects, are both finite verbs. There is no word in the original to correspond to 'thereby' in Geiger's

13. L. C. Wijesinha, *Mahāvamsa*, part ii, p. 12.

14. The Sinhalese rendering of Sumaṅgala and Baṭuvantuḍāve *Mahāvamsa*, Part I, (p. 20) reads: පවිතය මැදින් කොළොම් හොය බැඳවී. දිසායුෂක හෙතු ක්‍රියාය පි ආදර සහිත ව පන්ප හන් වැව දන වැව ගඟනර වැව බැඳවී. සදහම්ද ලියවී. තුනුරුවන් පුජා ද කෙළේ.

translation, and *gaṇhāpesi* has been incorrectly rendered by him as a present participle. There is also no justification in the context to assume that the statement in the second sentence is a consequence of what has been stated in the sentence which precedes it.

However, the damming of a river would have been undertaken either for diverting its water into a channel, or impounding it in a reservoir. It is, therefore, not impossible that one of the tanks mentioned in the above passage was formed as a consequence of the damming of the Kadamba-nadī, though the chronicle does not expressly state it to have been so. We have, therefore, to examine the wording of the relevant Pāli passage to ascertain whether the throwing of a dam across the Kadamba-nadī by Moggallāna II resulted in the formation of a tank; we first take into consideration the phrase *pabbata-majjhato*, of which Geiger's rendering 'among the mountains' as well as Wijesinha's 'from the middle of the mountain' are equally inapplicable to an irrigation work connected with that river.

The word *pabbata* (Skt. *parvata*) has been used in Pāli and Sanskrit texts not only to denote a great mountain such as the Himalayas, but also an ordinary rock boulder. The cluster of boulders to the south of the Āḷāhana-pariveṇa at Polonnaru is called Gopāla-pabbata in the *Cūḷavaṃsa*<sup>15</sup>. The word may also be used of any hill or eminence. Being the first member of a compound, *pabbata* may be treated as in the singular or in the plural number. *Majjha* (Skt. *madhya*), of which the usual meaning is 'middle,' may also denote 'interval,' 'interspace,' 'opening' or 'gap.' The word is used adverbially with the ablative termination *-to*; this is perhaps due to the author of the *Cūḷavaṃsa* translating into Pāli a word like *mādin* in the Sinhalese source that he utilised. Such a form, though having the instrumental-ablative termination, is locative in sense; compare, for example, an expression like *etek tānin in Sigiri Graffiti*, No. 482. *Majjhato* may, therefore, be translated as 'between.' *Gaṇhāpesi* is the causative third person singular in the past tense from the root corresponding to Skt. *grah*, of which the primary meaning is 'to take' or 'seize,' but may acquire various shades of secondary meanings. Forms from this root have been used in the *Cūḷavaṃsa* to indicate the construction of tanks; compare, for example, *gaṇhitvā* in chap. 38, v. 41 and *gāhayi* in chap. 42, v. 8. Thus, the correct literal translation of the passage in the chronicle dealing with the irrigation works of Mahinda II would be: 'And (he) dammed the Kadamba-nadī between (two) rocks (or ridges. He) also built the Pattapāsāṇa tank, the Dhana tank and Garītara.'

Referring, as it does, to the construction of a dam across a river like the Maḷvatu Oya, the first of these two statements in the chronicle would indicate a point in its course where it flowed between two rocks or elevated grounds on either side. Let us now examine whether any of the tanks referred to above has been built by damming the Maḷvatu Oya at such a point. For this, it is necessary to ascertain the modern name of a tank, other than the Dhanavāpi, mentioned in the passage quoted above. Fortunately, we have inscriptional evidence for the identification of the first named tank, Pattapāsāṇavāpi.

The Sinhalese form of this name would be *Patpahaṇ*. Two fragmentary inscriptions of the ninth century, one found at a place named Ihalagama and the other at Māvataṅvāva, both in the Kalāgam Kōrale of the Anurādhapura District<sup>16</sup>, inform us that the respective villages to which immunities were granted by the edicts engraved on the pillars were in a territorial division called Patpahaṇ-bim. In the ninth and tenth centuries, districts were generally named after the most important villages or townships within their boundaries, and such villages or towns were invariably situated by the side of a large tank. The town or village and the tank generally bore the same name. The important tank closest to Māvataṅvāva and Ihalagama, therefore, must be the Patpahaṇ-vāva (Pattapāsāṇa-vāpi). Ihalagama is seven miles, and Māvataṅvāva four miles, from the Nāccadūva tank, a major irrigation work of ancient days. Consequently, we have to conclude that the modern Nāccadūva and the ancient Patpahaṇ (Pattapāsāṇa) are identical<sup>17</sup>. And this is what Parker says of the manner in which the Nāccadūva tank was built by the ancient Sinhalese engineers. 'A careful examination of the valley<sup>18</sup> showed that at 3½ miles below the dam<sup>19</sup> in the river, two ridges projected into it, leaving a gap of only a mile between their ends. In order to increase the water supply it was then decided to raise an embankment across the valley at this spot, closing up this gap,

16. A.S.C. Annual Report for 1895, p. 9. Nos. 31 and 32 of the List of Inscriptions. I am indebted to Mr W. S. Karunaratna for checking the readings of these two inscriptions in the eye-copies in the Archaeological Department.

17. Parker is inclined to give credence to a tradition which credits Mahāsena with the construction of the Nāccadūva tank (*Ancient Ceylon*, p. 408f). R. L. Brohier (*op. cit.*, pt. 2) in the diagram facing p. 16 states that the Nāccadūva tank was built in 866—901 A.D., with as much of assurance as that it was restored in 1906 A.D., on the strength of evidence summed up in the text as follows: 'The ancient name of this tank has not been definitely identified. There is a tradition that it was built by Mahāsena (277—304 B.C.) and that this tank is the Mahadaragala of the *Mahāvamsa*, but in one or two instances it has been accepted by students of Sinhalese history that the works date from the time of King Sena II (866—901 A.D.). Nevertheless, conjecture—both in respect of the derivation of the name and the period in which it was constructed—will ever present an alluring quest.'

18. Of the Maḷvatu Oya.

19. From which a channel led to the Nuvaravāva.

15. Chapter LXXVIII, v. 65. See Geiger's translation of the *Cūḷavaṃsa*, pt. 2, p. 110, n. 1.

and impounding the floods in the reservoir thus formed, which is now termed Nāccadūva'<sup>20</sup>.

It will thus be seen that the description in the chronicle of the manner in which the Kadambanadī (Malvatu Oya) was dammed in the reign of Moggallāna II agrees very well with the constructional details of the Nāccadūva Tank. The chronicler, or the sources which he utilised, must have made a particular mention of the river being dammed between two ridges as it was considered in ancient times to be a proof of the skill of those responsible for the selection of the site. Indeed, the selection of this site for the throwing of the dam across the river has greatly minimised the labour and expenses of constructing the tank, for such a large reservoir as the Nāccadūva has a bund not exceeding a mile in length, whereas some other reservoirs of comparable size have bunds twice or thrice that length.

Thus, though the chronicle does not expressly state that the throwing of a dam across the Kadambanadī had as its consequence the formation of the three tanks named in the passage quoted, it has been found that one of them, the Pattapāsānavāpi, was formed as a result of that work. It might, therefore, be argued that the other two tanks named in the passage were also similarly formed. Against such an argument is the fact that this particular manner of throwing a dam has been noticed along the course of the Malvatu Oya only at this point ; Nāccadūva Tank is the only major irrigation work for the building of which this river has been dammed. It is possible that there are small village tanks constructed by damming the river on its upper course ; but such minor works are not likely to have been undertaken by kings. Of the irrigation reservoirs of Moggallāna II, therefore, it was the Pattapāsānavāpi alone that was a result of the damming of the Kadambanadī. The lack of precision in the text of the *Cūlavamsa* at this point may be explained by assuming that, in the old Sinhalese source utilised by its author, there was a statement that the Patpahaṇvāva was constructed by the damming, in the manner above described, of the Malvatu Oya, followed by another recording the building of the other two tanks, and that the chronicler recorded the damming of the river in one statement and the building of all the three tanks in another.

Dhanavāpi could not thus have been connected with the Malvatu Oya, and its identification with the Padaviya Tank is not discredited by the reference to it in the *Cūlavamsa*. That reference furnishes evidence, when taken together with the inscriptions referred to above, that Moggallāna

II was the original builder of two stupendous tanks ; the Padaviya and the Nāccadūva. Even if he was the builder of one only of these tanks, he deserves a place among those ancient rulers of the Island who, by their public works, ensured the prosperity of the land. The greatness of Moggallāna did not rest solely on his achievements as a tank-builder. His valour was proved in the single combat that he fought to wrest his patrimony which had been usurped by his younger brother. He was a poet as well, and encouraged learning. In the words of the chronicle, his feeling for his people was like that of a mother for a son of her own body. Now that the two great irrigation works of this monarch are once more functioning to make large areas of the Island productive, it is hoped that the people who benefit from them today will not allow his name to fall into oblivion.

S. PARANAVITANE

20. *Ancient Ceylon*, p. 405.