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ஞானப்பிரகாசர் நாற்ருண்டு விழாக்குழு

கொழும்பு.

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THE VELAIKKARA INSCRIPTION AT PADAVIYA

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AN undated Sanskrit inscription from Padaviya, engraved in grantha characters, records the construction of a vihara on the orders of a general called Lokanatha. The institution was named as the Velikkara viharam and was placed under the protection of the Velaikkara regiment.

Paranavitana's reading of the text together with his translation and comments was published in the *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*¹. His decipherment of the epigraph as in the case of several other inscriptions which he edited is excellent but his interpretation of its contents can be questioned. In the first place the last expression, 'Sripater-ihā', in line 7 is translated by Paranavitana as here for the illustrious lord. But here at Sripati appears to be the more appropriate translation as the Sanskrit inscription on the seal from Padaviya testifies that Padaviya was called Sripati-grama in medieval times.

As the inscription commences with a brief eulogy of the Setukula it may be assumed that Lokanatha either belonged to the Setukula or that he was an agent or Samanta of a ruler of the Setukula. Paranavitana argues that the Setukula mentioned in the inscription cannot be

a reference to the Aryacakkravartti dynasty of Jaffna and contends that it refers to a Javaka family from the Malay Peninsula and adduces the following arguments in support of his contention. Firstly, the Aryacakkravarttis were ardent Saivites. Secondly, it is not known that Padaviya was ever under their effective control. Thirdly, 'the date of the record as indicated by its palaeography is somewhat too early for the time in which the Aryacakkravarttis rose to power in Ceylon'².

Further he asserts:

'We have, therefore, to look for the derivation of this Setukula to a quarter outside Ceylon as well as South India Setu meaning causeway, is no doubt the name of a place, and not far from Jaiya, where the only inscription of Candrabhanu has been discovered, and from Ligor with Tambralinga has been identified, there was an ancient kingdom referred to as Ch'ih-t'u in Chinese writings... It could very well be that a scion of the ancient royal family of this region was a companion of Candrabhanu in the latter's attempt to wrest for him the sovereignty over this Island. It is also not impossible that of the Javaka's son who was

1. S. Paranavitana, 'A Sanskrit inscription from Padaviya' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (JCBRAS)*, New Series, Vol. VIII, pt. 2, pp. 261—264.
2. The circular seal with the figure of a Nandi, discovered recently (1970) from an ancient Saivite temple at Padaviya refers to Sripatigrama. The same locality seems to be referred to as Sripati in the Sanskrit inscription from Padaviya. See *Ceylon Observer*, Nov. 28, 1970, p. 2.
3. *JCBEAS*, Vol. VIII, pt. 2, pp. 261—264.

installed as the ruler of the kingdom in North Ceylon by Jatavarman Virapandya' 4

Paranavitana's identification of the Setukula on the basis of the Chinese evidence relating to Ch'ih-t'u is wrong because his assumption that ch'ih-t'u is a Chinese transcription of Setu is erroneous. Ch'ih-t'u is not phonetic transcription of a Malay or Sanskrit name. Ch'ih-t'u means 'the red-earth land' and the Chinese texts give the following description of it:

'The kingdom of Ch'ih-t'u, another part of Fa-Nan is situated in the south seas. By sea one reaches it in more than a hundred days. The colour of the soil of the capital is mostly red, whence is derived the name (of the country) ... 5

It is thus quite evident, that the equation of Setu with Ch'ih-t'u is unacceptable. Therefore, there is no justification for seeking the origins of the Setukula in the Malay Peninsula where a locality called Setu is not known to have existed. Moreover, it may be added that

neither Candrabhanu nor his son could have belonged to the Setukula because they were of the Padmavamsa.

The expression Setu has several meanings; it may denote a dam or dyke, a lake or reservoir, a causeway, a passage or a boundary. It could even signify the sacred syllable Om (which is mantramam Setuh). 7 There were several localities called Setu in South India. The southern extremity of South India was referred to as Setu. The Island of Ramesvaram and the reef of sunken rocks connecting the island of Mannar with Ramesvaram were also called Setu. 8 Besides, there were several localities called Setu in and around Ramesvaram.

The Tamil work called Tevai ula, mentions a town called Setu. 9 The existence of such a town is suggested by the title Setunakarkavalan, 'the guardian of the town of Cetu', which belonged to the Setupati rulers of Ramnad. 10 A medieval Pandya inscription testifies that Setumulam was on the sea-coast of Sevvirukkai natu. 11 The bathing ghats at Ramesvaram were also known as Setusnanam. 12 Moreover, inscriptions refer

4. *ibid.*

5. Paul Wheatley, *The Golden Khersonese* (Kuala Lumpur, 1966) pp. 26—27.

6. A Liyanagame, *The Decline of Polonnaruwa and the rise of Dambadeniya* (Colombo 1968), pp. 133—134

Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, II, 26, tr. 27.

7. Monier Williams, *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1892, *Tamil Lexicon*, Madras, 1929.

8. According to tradition embodied in the Ramayana of Kampan and repeated in such works as the *Cekaracacekaramalai*, the Tevai ula and the *Cetupuranam* the bridge or Cetu between Lanka and the southernmost point of India was constructed as a passage for Rama's armies.

9. Tevai ula edited by U. V. Caminataiyar (Madurai, 1907) v. 95

10. *Archaeological Survey of Southern India* (ASSI) IV, no. 2. p. 65.

11. *South Indian Inscriptions* (SSI) Vol. VIII : No. 403, 117, of 1903.

12. Tevai ula. v. 95, ASSI, IV : No. 2. p. 65.

to another such locality, Setu Tanukkoti otherwise called Sri rama Setu Tanukkoti.¹³

The expression Setukula may denote either a dynasty or a family which had either come from a locality called Setu or had intimate connexions with such a site. Three lines of rulers, namely the Aryacakravartti chiefs of Cevvirukkainatu in the Pandya kingdom, the Aryacakravartti rulers of Jaffna and the Setupatis of Ramnad had connexions with Setu. Among them the first two were related. The rulers of Jaffna and the Setupatis of Ramnad had the title Setukavalan, 'the guardian of Setu'.¹⁴

The Setupati rulers acquired authority over Ramnad in the early seventeenth century. As they had never exercised authority over any part of Ceylon and because there is a wide gap of several centuries between the date of the Padaviya inscription as suggested by its palaeography and the period of the Setupatis the Setupatis could be conveniently left out of our investigation about Setukula.

The Aryacakravarttis of Sevvirukkainatu held positions of high rank in the Pandya kingdom. Their influence probably

extended to all the localities called Setu in the days of Maravarman Kulasekhara (A. D. 1268—1310).¹⁵ As noticed earlier Setumulam was on the sea-coast of Sevvirukkainatu which was probably the seat of their chieftaincy. Moreover the expression Setu tirumukam (command or order or from Setu) found in one of their epigraphs suggests that Setu was of some significance to them.¹⁶ A member of this family, the general Aryacakravartti invaded Ceylon around A. D. 1284, entered the town of Yapahuwa and seized the the Tooth and Alms bowl relics.¹⁷

The kings of Jaffna, who were called Aryackravarttis were related to the Aryacakravarttis of the Pandya kingdom.¹⁸ Traditions recorded in contemporary Tamil texts claim that the kings of Jaffna were in the lineage of two Brahmins of Rameswaram who had attained the rank of Samantas in the distant past.¹⁹ The kings of Jaffna had the epithet Setukavalan,²⁰ which they probably inherited from their ancestors—the Aryackravarttis of Sevvirukkainatu. They used Setu as a benedictory expression in their inscriptions and coins.²¹ The Kotagama inscription of the Aryacakravartti commences with

13. ASSI, IV : Nos. 4 and 16, pp. 68, 98.

14. S. Pathmanathan, *The Kingdom of Jaffna, circa, A. D. 1250—1450* Ph. D. Thesis (unpublished) University of London. 1969, pp. 403—405.

15. *ibid.*, pp. 17—178

16. *Madras Epigraphic Reports (MER)* No. 11 of 1903, SII, Vol. VIII, No. 396.

17. *Culavamsa (Cv.)* XC vv. 43—47.

18. *The Kingdom of Jaffna*, p. 182—183.

19. *ibid.* *Cekaracacekaramalai* edited by I. C. Irakunataiyar, Kokkuvil, 1942, *Cirappuppayiram*

20. *Cekaracacekaramalai, Cirappuppayiram*, v. 2, vv. 76, 86, *Taksinakailasapuram*, edited by P. P. Vaithilinga Tecikar (Point Pedro, 1916), *Cirappuppayiram*.

21. *The Kingdom of Jaffna*, pp. 403—407, S. Gnanapragasar, 'The Forgotten Coinage of the Kings of Jaffna', *Ceylon Antiquary*, V (IV), p. 179; H. W. Codrington, *Ceylon Coins and Currency* (Colombo, 1924) p. 75.

the expression *Setu*.²² Moreover, the legend *Setu* was inscribed on all the coins issued by the rulers of Jaffna. The use of *Setu* by the rulers of Jaffna may indicate that they had a sentimental attachment to the localities called *Setu* in the place of their origin South India.

Among the rulers of Ceylon only the kings of Jaffna are known to have had connexions with *Setu*. It may therefore be suggested that the *Setukula* mentioned in the inscription from *Padaviya* may refer to the *Aryacakravartti* dynasty of Jaffna. *Paranavitana's* arguments against the identification of the *Setukula* with the ruling house of Jaffna may now be examined one by one in order to ascertain whether they are by any means valid. The fact that the rulers of Jaffna were ardent *saivites* cannot be a valid argument against such an identification because a *saivite* ruler need not necessarily be antagonistic to Buddhism as *Paranavitana* is inclined to suggest.²³ The establishment of a Buddhist monastery could have been the result of the efforts made by an *Aryacakravartti* to pacify the Buddhists in his attempt to consolidate his authority around *Padaviya*. Indeed the *Yalppana-vaipavamalai* asserts that some of the early rulers of Jaffna treated *Saivites* and Buddhists alike with impartiality.²⁴

Palaeography is not a serious obstacle in identifying the *Setukula* with the royal

family of Jaffna. *Paranavitana* assigns this inscription to the thirteenth century on palaeographic considerations and as the *Aryacakravarttis* exerted influence in North Ceylon from at least A.D. 1284 onwards it could be assumed that this inscription was set up at a time when an *Aryacakravartti* conquered the northern parts of Ceylon and was stabilising his power there.

Another argument raised by *Paranavitana* is that *Padaviya* is not known to have ever been under the effective control of the kings of Jaffna. This could be a forceful argument against identifying the *Setukula* with *Aryacakravartti* dynasty only if it could be shown that *Padaviya* was included within the dominions of another Ceylonese dynasty. After *Magha's* conquest of *Rajarata* around 1215 none of the Sinhalese kings is known to have ever exercised any control over *Padaviya*. Throughout the period of *Magha's* rule in North Ceylon *Padaviya* was under his effective control.²⁵ Indeed in the thirteenth century *Padaviya* was an integral part of the northern kingdom. The *Javakas* led by *Candrabhanu* who superseded *Magha* in the northern parts of Ceylon had brought *Padaviya* under their sway as testified by the *Culavamsa* which asserts:

'At that time the lord of men *Candrabhanu* formerly beaten after

22. H. W. Codrington, 'The problem of the Kotogama Inscription', *JCBAR*, Vol. XXXII, No. 85, 1934, pp. 214—225.

23. A sixteenth century Tamil inscription from *Tirukkivil* which records some donations to a Hindu shrine refers to *Cankapotivarman Vicayapakutevar* — a Buddhist king as *sivagnana Canikarikal*. However, the use of such an epithet does not imply that *Vicayapakutevar* was a *Saivite*. Similarly the description of *Setukula* as one that is devoted to Buddhism in a record that relates to a Buddhist foundation need not necessarily imply that the *Setukula* was a family of Buddhist rulers. See K. Velupillai, *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions* pt. II (*Peradeniya* 1971), pp. 5—6.

24. *Yalppana Vaipavamalai*, edited by Kula Sabanathan (*Colombo*, 1953) pp. 35—46.

25. *Culavamsa*, LXXXIII : 15—18

hard fighting, having collected from the countries of the Pandus and Colas and elsewhere many Damila soldiers, representing a great force, landed with his Javaka army in Mahatittha. After the king had brought over to his side the Sinhala dwelling in Padi, Kurundi and other districts he marched to Subhagiri.²⁶

As the Javaka kingdom in North Ceylon which was ruled over by the Javakas was subsequently conquered by the Aryacakravarttis it could be inferred that Padaviya was under their sway during the early days of their career in North Ceylon. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that the kingdom of Jaffna was larger in extent in the earlier centuries than what it was during the sixteenth century.²⁷ The *Taksinakailasapurāṇam* and a Sinhalese text, the *Nampota*, indicate that the region of Trincomalee was included in the Tamil Kingdom.²⁸ Thus it has

been seen that none of the arguments adduced by Paranavitana against identifying the Setukula with The Aryacakravarttis is cogent and convincing.

The contents of the inscription do not show the precise relationship between the Setukula eulogised in the beginning of the record and the general Lokanatha who caused the vihara to be constructed. Therefore there are several possibilities. If we assume that the Setukula is a reference to the Aryacakravarttis Lokanatha could have been either a king of Jaffna or he himself could have been a scion of the Aryacakravartti family. Another possibility is that the Setukula was different from the ruling house of Jaffna and that it was a family of local chieftains that held sway over Padaviya and if it was so Lokanatha could have been a general of a local chieftain or he himself could have been such a chieftain. Setu formed the initial element of the names of some Tamil chiefs. Some chieftains of South

26. *Culavamsa*, LXXXVIII : 64

27. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the kingdom of Jaffna included the territories that roughly correspond to the present Northern province. As regards the extent of Jaffnapatnam Queyroz says :

"This modest kingdom is not confined to the little district of Jafanapatao because, to it is added the neighbouring lands and those of the Vanni which is said to be the name of the lordship which they held before we obtained possession of them, separated from the preceding by a salty river, and connected only to the isthmus of Pachilapala, within which were the lands of Beligama (Valikamam), Temarache (Tenmaracci), Badamarache and Pachilapala forming that Peninsula, and outside it there stretch the lands of the Vanni crosswise, from the side of Mannar, by the river Paraguil, which lands in the Vanni and of others which stretch as far as Triquilemale."

In another context he mentions that the lands of the Vanni which belonged to the kingdom of Jaffnapatao, began from the western coast. See *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* by Queyroz, trans. Fr. G. Perera, (Colombo 1930) pp. 47, 151

28. In the earlier centuries the authority of the kings of Jaffna seems to have extended over the Trincomalee region. A Sinhalese text, the *Nampota* of the 14th century attests that Trincomalee (Gonagama) was included within the Tamil kingdom (Demalapattanam) The *Taksinakailasapurāṇam* suggests that Cekaracacekaran was ruling over the town of Tirukonamalai. *Nampota*, pp. 5-6 *Taksinakailasapurāṇam*, p. 78.1

India and Ceylon had the name Seturayan.²⁹ In its account of the Vanniyar who came from the Tamil country and occupied certain localities in North Ceylon the Vaiya refers to a chief called Setuvanta Maluvarayan.³⁰ Setarayan, a Velaikkara general of the reign of Jayabahu was the chief of the division called Mahamandala in the twelfth century.³¹

The Velaikkarar are mentioned in five of the inscriptions hitherto discovered in Ceylon,³² and among these the one from Padaviya is the latest. Its historical significance lies partly in the fact that it establishes that the Velaikkara regiment was a force in the politics and society of the Island even in the thirteenth century. Moreover, it adds to our knowledge of the history of this regiment in Ceylon.

The Velaikkara troops came to the Island during the period of Cola rule and subsequently after the fall of Cola power they served in the armies of the Sinhalese kings. Vijayabahu (1055—1170) Jayabahu (1110—11), Gajabahu II (1132—1135) and Parakramabahu (1153—86) had contingents of Velaikkara troops in their armies. The Velaikkarar were employed also by private individuals and religious dignitaries to protect religious institutions and their endowments. An inscription engraved in the 42nd year of Vijayabahu I testifies that a Velaikkara

was entrusted with the task of protecting and maintaining the endowments made by a Brahmin lady to the Hindu temple of Tenkailasum.³³ The Polonnaruwa slab inscription of the Velaikkaras attests that the grand thera Mugalan summoned the Velaikkara regiment and entrusted them with the protection and maintenance of the Temple of the Tooth Relic at Polonnaruwa.

There are many similarities in the form and contents of the Polonnaruwa slab inscription of the Velaikkarar and the Sanskrit inscription from Padaviya. The initial portion of the former is in Sanskrit while the latter is entirely in that language. The Sanskrit portion of the inscription from Polonnaruwa is engraved in Grantha characters while the epigraph from Padaviya is entirely of Grantha script. It may be suggested that some of the Velaikkarar were literate and that some of them were fairly well versed in Tamil and Sanskrit as to be able to draft texts of records grammatically and even poetically.

Both inscriptions relate to Buddhist foundations. The inscription from Polonnaruwa asserts that the Temple of the Tooth Relic was caused to be constructed by the general Deva. The Padaviya inscription testifies that the Viharam was constructed by the general Lokanatha. The Temple of the Tooth Relic was named as the Velaikkara Daladaypperum-

29. Seturayan, a chief of the Vanniyar is said to have controlled the fort of Tiruvitaiccuram in Tontaimantalam. See William Taylor, *An Analysis of the Mackenzie Manuscripts*, (Madras, 1838,) section 3.

30. Vaiya ed. S. Gnanaprasasar, (Accuveli, 1921,) p. 28.

31. *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, pt. I. pp. 24-26.

32. *Epigraphia Zeylanica* (EZ), III: no. 33; *SII*, IV: 1396, 1398; *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions*, pt. I, p. 26.

33. EZ III: No. 33.

palli while the monastery at Padaviya was called the Velaikkara Viharam. Both institutions were placed under the Velaikkara regiment for protection.

Transliteration of Text

Svasti Sri (*) Buddha-dharmmakhandavima

la-gunottunga-Ratnatrayika

sthitih) Setu-kulah (*) kanti-lak(s)m(yu)

j(yva)lam ratna rajita karandam

srīmat-Sri-Lokanathahva(ya-da)-

ndan(a)yaka - karitam Sripateh-ihpa

Sri-Velaikkara-namankitam-ida
m Viharam rakshitum sthapitam(*)
Srih *34

Translation

The Setu family is established in the Buddha dharma which is unblemished, exalted with many virtues and is adorned with the triple gems (Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha). This vihara, glorious with beauty and splendour, with its spire adorned with gems and caused to be built here at Sripati (grama) by the general named Lokanatha, has been named after the (regiment of) Velaikkara and placed under their protection. Prosperity.

34. The reading of the text is entirely that of Paranavitana but the translation is revised by the author.

LOVE THRO' STUDY

"He (Fr. Gnanapragasar) loved the language (Tamil) which God had given him for his mother tongue, and laboured with all the ardour of his soul and the keenness of his intellect to honour it and praise God for it, by making a deep study of its literature and grammar. Not satisfied with all this, he delved into the very foundation of Tamil Language, its connections with other Languages, and sought to establish a theory which would give it a priority, hitherto unclaimed."

— Rt. Rev. Dr. Edmund Pieris, o. m. i.