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PART I

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AN INSCRIPTION FROM THE MUNNĪSVARAM SIVA TEMPLE¹

A Tamil inscription of four long lines is found above the foundation of the Munnīsvaram Siva temple in the Chilaw District of the North Western Province. Along with the Kōṇēsvaram temple at Trincomallee and the Kēthiccuram temple at Mannar, Munnīsvaram is considered one of the ancient Siva temples in Ceylon. The present inscription does not mention anything about the beginnings of this temple. The temple is said to be already famous when the inscription was made. The first attempt at a study of this inscription was made about eighty years ago by G. M. Fowler of the Ceylon Civil Service.² He had given only a translation of the text of the inscription. He had not given the text. He says that parts of the inscription were illegible and that he had considerable difficulty in reading the text. On examining the photograph of the inscription, I find that I am in agreement with the author of the paper. His translation is more or less accurate. The last few letters in each line of the inscription cannot be recognised except for one or two letters. Fowler's translation seems to cover even those parts. Therefore it is difficult to comment on those parts.

The record was inscribed in the fifteenth century. The donor was said to be Parākramabāhu who was a Śrī Saṅgabōdhi, reigning in Jayavardhana Kotte. He is identifiable with Parākramabāhu VI. His regnal years were given as 1412 - 1467³. As the record was issued in his thirty-eighth year, the date of issue must be about 1450 A.D. The script is quite close to modern Tamil script.

1. This was numbered 2181 of 1950 in the Reg. of Inscriptions

2. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) Volume 10 No. 35, 1887, pp. 118-119.

3. University of Ceylon - History of Ceylon. p. 847

The record contains an admixture of Sanskrit words and Grantha letters. The beginning of the inscription is in Sanskrit language and in Grantha letters. The inscription ends with a Sanskrit sloka in Grantha letters. The record has a number of epithets for the royal donor. The description of the ruler as 'Samantapatra Sarapāravindan' meaning 'worshipper of the lotus feet of Śrī Samantapatra (Buddha)' is quite common in the Sinhalese inscriptions of the period. The Sanskrit phrase 'Āditya vamsa' means the Solar dynasty. The word 'abhi-jāta' means man of noble descent.' The name Rājādhirāja occurs for the first time in the Cōla records of the eleventh century but in this record, it is only a title. The name 'Pararāja-sēkaraṇ' was quite common among the contemporary kings of the Jaffna kingdom. The last two titles were meant to extol the particular ruler in comparison with the other rulers. The rulers of the kingdom of Kotte were claiming overlordship over the whole island of Ceylon. Bhujaṅga means 'snake'. This word is some-times used to refer to the God Śiva who was adorned with snakes. But here it also is used as an epithet to royal donor. Fowler translates this as serpent to the royal and mercantile races. The title tribhuvanaccakravattikaḷ, 'Emperor of the Three Worlds' was also very commonly used in the Tamil inscriptions of late medieval period. Varma, a title of Kṣatriyas becomes Vatmar in Tamil. Saṅgabōdhi was a title assumed by the Buddhist kings. The king's name Parākramabāhu has honorific particle both at the beginning and at the end, śrī at the beginning and tēvar (dēva) at the end.

According to Fowler, the Sanskrit portion at the end is a sloka, meaning "To this effect, this was caused to be inscribed by Parākraman through the grace of Moṇḍiśvarar who is an ocean of wisdom and lord of all the different classes of gods". The last portion of the sloka cannot be read now. The section meaning 'Parākraman through the grace of Moṇḍiśvarar' cannot be made out.

The Grantha script is used in the body of the inscription to write words of Indo - Aryan origin. Īśvaram meaning 'temple of God' occurs in the compound

Moṇṇiśvaram. Jayavardhana means that which confers victory. Pūji -, from the word pūjikkira, is a Tamilised verbal base from the Sanskrit pūjā. Sīmai, from sīmā, means land. When Sanskrit words are Tamilised, it is a common rule to change -ā ending Sanskrit words into -ai ending Tamil words as illustrated in this inscription in sīmai and pūjai. Sugandha in Sanskrit means perfumes. Abatam is a derivative from Sanskrit a - baddha meaning disaster, calamity etc. Batam must be the opposite of it. There is a Sanskrit compound 'sarama svapaṇam' which Fowler has translated into 'proficient in all the sciences'. Sarama means the end. Sva paṇa may be a derivative from sarva-ābharana, meaning the person who wears everything as ornament. Sthrā means perpetual, irrevocable. Candrāditya means the Moon and the Sun. Candrāditya -varai, meaning 'till the Moon and the Sun last' is a very common phrase occurring in the Tamil inscriptions. Kṣētra means field. Pāraṃpariyamāka is a phrase meaning generation after generation. Vignam is obstacle. In the Sanskrit loan-word māsam, 'sa' is written in Grantha and the rest in Tamil.

As for orthography, pullis are not used for consonants. Long -e and long -o are not distinguished from their short counterparts respectively. The name of the temple is given as Moṇṇiśvaram. U - and o - are back-vowels and the change of u- to -o- occurs in a number of Tamil words. Double alveolar nasal -ṇṇ- changes into double cacuminal nasal -ṇṇ-. Short -i- seems to have been written for long -i- in sīmai. Sīmai is the word in current usage in Ceylon Tamil today. The assimilation of -rk- into -r- as in tampirāṇārku and nampimārku also occurs frequently in the Tamil inscriptions of South India. Change of -rk- into -rṇ- occurs in nampimārku.

Some terms used in the inscription are worth discussion. The date of the grant is given as 'pattām pakkam'. Pakkam is a Tamilised form of Sanskrit pakṣa meaning lunar day. Therefore the date is the tenth lunar day but the significance of muṇ is not clear. It may refer to the tenth lunar day of pūrva pakṣa. The God of Munnīśvaram is referred to as tampirāṇār. Pirāṇ is

probably derived from பெரு-மை. This word can be compared with brhan in Sanskrit nominative singular of brhat, 'lord', 'God', 'Siva' etc. In the word tam-pirāṇ, tam is a prefix which might be the adjectival form of tām, third person plural pronoun. Saint Suntharar is referred to as tampirāṇ - rōlar, i.e. the comrade of Siva. In this context also, tampirāṇ means Siva. The ending -ār in tampirāṇār is honorific plural sign. Priests of this temple are referred to as nampimār. Nampi is one of the titles of temple priests. Nampi also means the noblest among men. Nampi, as a temple priest, was probably a late usage. Mutalmai means headship and in the context the chief priest. In the compound tirunāmattukkāṇi, nāma is Sanskrit meaning name. Tiru is an honorific prefix. Tirunāmam means sacred name, name of a deity or holy person. Tirunāmattukkāṇi, therefore means, land assigned to a deity, as bearing his name; temple land. Uṭaimai means the state of possessing, having. Therefore uṭaimaippanam should mean 'the money to be obtained by the mutalmais as chief priests', in the context. Kaṇṇi means to direct or command. Aruḷ in kaṇṇipittaruḷinaimai is an auxiliary meaning 'grace'. It can also be taken as an honorific particle to denote the action of royal donor. Paṇam means a particular coin, usually a small gold coin. The word paṇa was in usage in North India. This word was spelt as fanam in English. Amaṇam seems to be a land measure⁴. Amutu is a Tamil derivative from Sanskrit amṛta, 'ambrosia'. Ambrosia was the food of the gods. Amutu is used in Tamil to refer to the food offering to the God and then to all articles connected with food offering to the God. Amutu, occurring alone, means cooked rice offering to the God. It is also used like an honorific particle, having been suffixed to food articles as in the following instances, kaṇṇiyamutu (curry) and ilaiyamutu (betel) occurring in the inscription. This kind of usage occurs in South Indian Tamil inscriptions also.

4. According to the Tamil Lexicon, amaṇam refers to 20,000 arecanuts. University of Ceylon-History of Ceylon—pp. 375-76 refers to pamuṇu form of land tenure, an estate possessed in perpetuity by a family in hereditary succession or by an institution. But they are not appropriate here.

The object of the inscription is to record donation to the temple, to the priests and to the chief priests. The king had granted both lands and money to each of the above category. Those who cause any damage to the land would be guilty of five great sins or pañca mahā pātakam. That means, they will enter the lowest hell. Those who protect the grant would reach the highest heaven or sāyucciya patam. The five great sins are killing a Brāhmaṇa, drinking intoxicating liquors, stealing gold, committing adultery with the wife of a guru and associating with anyone guilty of these crimes. According to the Saiva Sidhānta, there are four stages of heaven:- sālōkyam, sāmīpyam, sārūpyam and sāyucyāyā. Sāyucyāyā is said to be the highest stage.

Text

Transliteration

1

Svasti śrī samantapadra
caraṇāravintan āditya
vamsābhijāta rājādhirāja
Pararājaśēgara bhujaṅga
Śrī Saṅgabōdhivatmar āga,
Tribhuvanaccakravattika| Śrī
Parākramabāhutēvar yāṇṭu 38
āvatukku muṇṇ pattiṁ pakkam
Moṇṇīśvaramuṇṇaiya tampirāṇārai
pūjikkira nampimārai Jayavadhana
kkōṭṭaikkū aṭaittuviṭṭu
sarama svapaṇam tā purōhi ...
... .. tt ... my ...

2

ceyti kēṭṭu muṇṇu nampimārṇku
niṇṇa moṇṇīśvarattil simaikkū
uṭṭaṭṭa kṣētran tampirāṇārku
tirunāmattukkāṇiyāka karpit -
taruṇināmaikkū pūjai kkāṇiyāka
iluppaitēṇiyil vayal aṇaṇam
irupattiraṇṭum kōṭṭaipiṭṭiyil vayal
aṇaṇam muppatum mutalmaikkū
karpitta Tittakaṇaiyil vayal
aṇaṇam eṭṭum itukkuḷ
kuṭiyiruppuṇ kāṭum ākavum ...
... .. va

3

uḷḷatum munṇāḷi ariciyil amutu
 kariyamutu ilaiyamutu sugandha
 mutalāṇavaiyum nampimārku māta
 monṇukku paṇam muppatum
 mutalmaikku uṭaimaiṇṇam
 māsa monṇukku ovvoruvarṇup
 patinonṇum ivarkaḷukku pāramparya
 māka candrādityavarai sthrāmāka
 naṭakkumpaṭi monṇisvaramuṭaiya
 tampirāṇāna Umkayi ...

... .. a

4

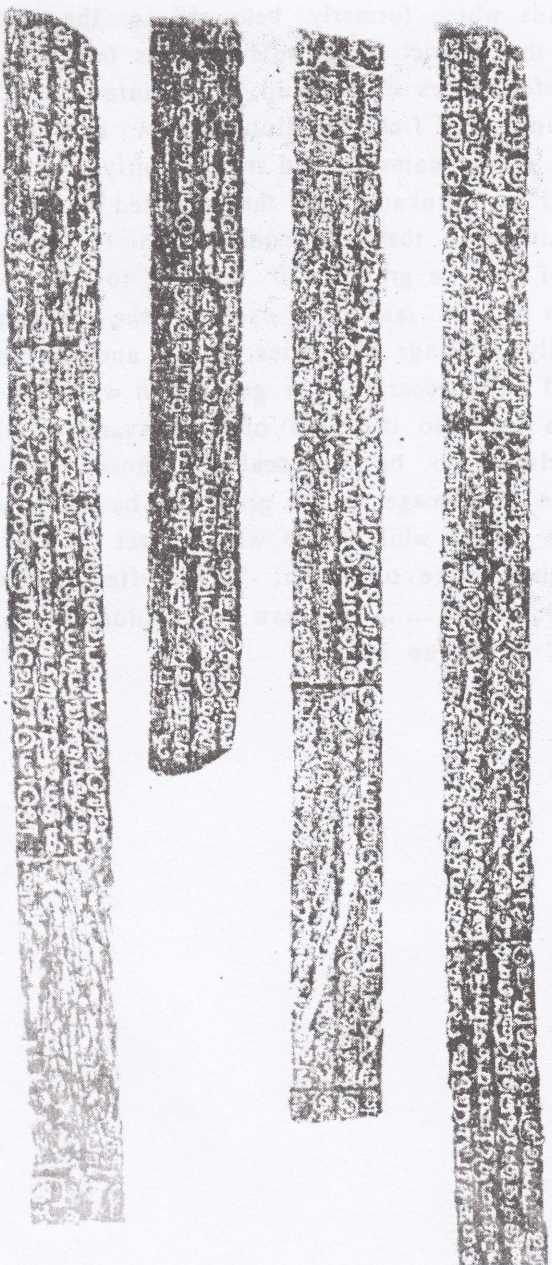
vignam anṇiye irukka kkarṇpit -
 taruḷiṇa inta kkāṇikku abatam
 ceytavarkaḷ pañca mahā pātakam
 ceytavarkaḷākavum itukku bataṇ
 ceytavarkaḷ sāyuccya patattaip
 perakkaṭavarākavum
 taddamgaṇanathalla Saiva aran
 mahodayomon

... .. ta.

Translation

(with some alterations of G. M. Fowler's).

Hail Prosperity! On the tenth lunar day in the 38th year of his reign, Sri Parākramabāhu tēvaralias Sri Saṅgabōdhi vatmar, worshipper of the lotus feet of Samantapatra, of Solar dynasty, king of kings, emperor of the three worlds and the like of God Siva, invited to the Jayawadhana Kotte, the nampimār who officiate before the God of Monṇisvaram and addressing himself to the Brahmin pandit who is proficient in all sciences amongst them, inquired into the circumstances of that temple and bestowed



Inscription from Munneswaram
By courtesy of the Ceylon Government Archaeological Department.

the lands which formerly belonged to the priests, lying within the district of Moṇṇiṣvaram as temple land. For the performances of worship, he granted to the priests, 22 amaṇams of field at Iluppedeniya and to the chief priests, 30 amaṇams of field in Kottapiṭiya and 8 amaṇams of field in Tittakaṭai with the inhabited places and forests appertaining to these. In addition to the offering of 3 nālīs of rice, he granted 30 fanams to the priests per mensem and 11 fanams to each of the chief priests for the daily offerings of curries, betels and perfumes to be enjoyed from generation to generation while the Moon and the Sun exist, to the God of Moṇṇiṣvaram which is hereby declared to be irrevocable. Those who cause any obstacle or damage to the grant will be guilty of the five heinous crimes while those who protect it will attain the the highest stage of heaven. To this effect this was caused to be inscribed ocean of wisdom in Saivism and lord of all divine beings.

