

# The Tamil Inscription from Hingurakdamana

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The Tamil inscription from Hingurakdamana which is written in an admixture of Tamil and Grantha characters records a gift made to a religious institution by an individual called Ayittan. The inscription which is in a very good state of preservation has been deciphered, edited and published by K. Indrapala<sup>1</sup>, and by A. Velupillai<sup>2</sup> independently more or less at the same time. There are significant differences in their readings of the text and these differences have led to divergent interpretations of the contents of the record. The variations in the two readings are conspicuous with regard to all the four important details of the record: the date of the record, the name of the donor, the institution to which the gift was made and the gift itself.

The two versions of the text as found in the two editions are given below for the sake of comparison:

| Velupillai <sup>3</sup> |    | Indrapala <sup>4</sup> |
|-------------------------|----|------------------------|
| Srī yāṅṭu               | 1  | Srī yāṅṭu <sup>4</sup> |
| Il vatu Gaja            | 2  | O tāvatu Gaja          |
| bāhutēvar a             | 3  | bāhu Tēvar A           |
| kampaṭiccakai           | 4  | kampaṭicc [ivi]kai     |
| yaril Mānnā             | 5  | yaril Mā (na) nā       |
| lāyil Jivita            | 6  | lāyil jivita           |
| m uṭaiya Um             | 7  | m uṭaiya u (ṭa)        |
| pīla Ayitta             | 8  | gamu Ayitta            |
| nen en Jivita           | 9  | nēn eṇ Jivita          |
| m Pilappētti            | 10 | m pilapetti            |
| lōr Maṇamavi            | 11 | lōramaṇam vi           |
| ccuppāṭu Tara           | 12 | ccup Pātō              |
| ṇi mēcāril              | 13 | ṇi Mēcāril             |
| Buddhastāna t           | 14 | Brammastā nat          |
| tukku iṭṭē              | 15 | tukkuiṭṭē              |

1. 'An Agampadi Inscription from Hingurakdamana', *Epigraphia Tamilica*, (ET), ed. K. Indrapala. Jaffna Archaeological Society, June 1971, pp. 14-17.
2. A. Velupillai, *Ceylon Tamil Inscriptions (CTI)*, Peradeniya, 1971, pp. 32-34.
3. *CTI*, pt. I, p. 34.
4. *ET*, I, 1. p. 17.

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|                      |    |                      |
|----------------------|----|----------------------|
| n mēl ituk           | 16 | n mēl ituk           |
| ku Vikkanam ce       | 17 | ku Vikkanam ce       |
| yvār Unṭā            | 18 | yvāruṅṭā             |
| kil <i>Buddhastā</i> | 19 | kil <i>Brammastā</i> |
| nattukku ppi         | 20 | nattukkuppi          |
| ḷa ccārāvā           | 21 | ḷaiccārāvā           |
| r narakampukuvār     | 22 | r narakam pukuvār    |

According to Veluppillai's decipherment the epigraph is dated (ll 1-2) in the eleventh year but in Indrapala's edition the date is given as the fortieth year. The expression *Akampaticcakaiyar* (ll - 3-5) of Veluppillai's version is given as *Akampaticc[vī]kaiyar* in Indrapala's edition of the inscription. The full name of the donor is also given differently as Umpila Ayittan and U(ṭa) gamu Ayittan in the two editions. The most important detail, the name of the religious institution, is also given differently in the two editions. One claims that it was a Buddhist institution - a *Buddhasthāna* while the other contends that it was a Hindu one—a *Brahmasthāna*.<sup>5</sup>

In this article the author proposes to examine the two editions of the inscription, point out their merits and defects and suggest revisions of the readings of the text wherever necessary. The differences in the text as given in the two editions may now be examined one by one in order.<sup>6</sup> As indicated earlier according to Velupillai's decipherment the epigraph is dated (ll 1-2) in the eleventh year but in Indrapala's edition the date is given as the fortieth year. The letters representing the numerals 11 are not at all to be seen and the sign representing the numeral 4 is quite legible and therefore it is suggested that in this instance Indrapala's reading is the correct one.<sup>7</sup>

The full name of the donor is given differently as Umpila Ayittan and, U (ṭa) gamu ayittan in the two editions (ll 7-8) thereby resulting in different translations of the expression. Although the manner in which the letters are incised leave room for ambiguity the reading Umpila Ayittan appears to be preferable.<sup>8</sup>

The expression *Akampaticcakaiyar* is quite clear in the inscription and Veluppillai's reading of this expression is apparently the correct one.<sup>9</sup> Indrapala slightly amends the expression by inserting a sign for the vowel *i* and the letter *vi*. However, there is no justification for amending the text in this manner.

5. S. Pathmanathan, *Tamilccācaṅkaḷum Iḷa varalārru ārayeciyum' Iḷaṅtenral*, Colombo, 1972, pp. 13-36.

6. All the points raised here have been discussed in detail in the author's (Tamil) article contributed to the *Iḷaṅtenral* (1972), pp. 20-21.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

There is no trace of the vowel sign for *i* over *ca*, and the letter *vi* is not at all to be seen. Moreover the expression *Akampaticci[ivi]k aiyar* as given in Indrapala's version of the text is illogical and his translation of this expression as 'Akampati palanquinbearers' does not make any sense. *Akampatis* and *civikaiyār* are two different social groups performing different functions. The former were a class of soldiers who found a place mainly in the armies of the Cōla and Sinhalese kings.<sup>10</sup> while the *civikaiyār* were palanquin bearers. There is no evidence to suggest that these two groups were affiliated socially or even functionally. Besides, the expression *Akampaticcakaiyar* is a compound of the words *akampati* and *cakaiyar*. The word *cakaiyar* may have been derived from either of the Sanskrit words *sakha*<sup>11</sup> (friend or companion) or *saha*. The expression *akampatic cakaiyar* could, therefore be explained as one that denotes a group of *Akampatis*. *Ayittan*, the donor of the gift, evidently belonged to the group of *Akampati* soldiers in the service of Gajabahu.II

The object that was given by *Ayittan* is also given differently in the two editions. *Veluppillai's* reading of the relevant section as *Or maṇaviccup-pātu* is wrong and the translation of this and other related expressions as 'gave one *Maṇaviccuppātu* from his lands for maintainance known as *Pilappēru*, to the Buddhist shrine at *Taraṇimācār*' is confusing and even misleading. The correct reading is *Ōr amaṇam viccu*, as *Indrapala* has deciphered and what is implied is that *Ayittan* sold an *amaṇam* (of land) from the lands he held as life-tenure at *Mān(a)nālāy* and made a gift from the proceeds of the sale to the shrine at *Pātōṇi mācār*.

The most important detail in the inscription is the name of the religious institution. It is not difficult to decide which of the two readings *Buddhasthāna* or *Brahmasthāna* is the correct one. The palaeography of the contemporary and other Tamil inscriptions in the Island could be a useful and reliable guide

10. The explanation that the expression *Akampatiyār* is formed by the combination of the word *Akampu* and *Aiyār* does not appear to be convincing. Such an explanation presupposes that the word *akampatiyār* denotes servants of the inner apartments. Moreover, the word that denotes inner apartments is *akam* and not a *akampu*. Sources relating to Histories of Medieval South India and Sri Lanka, testify that the *Akampati* were primarily soldiers. It is suggested that the word *Akampati* is a combination of the word *ahan* (Sanskrit, meaning day) and *paṭi* (wage). It may have signified a distinct group of soldiers who were originally paid daily wages. The conditions of service could have been changed in course of time as according to necessity and convenience. The *Akampati* soldiers have been serving in Sri Lanka from the eleventh century onwards. *Parākramabāhu I* (11 3-1183) had a large contingent of soldiers who belonged to that group. An inscription of *Nissankamalla* refers to the *Akampati* forces in the service of that monarch. The rulers of *Dambadeniya*, *Gampola* and *Kotte* are also known to have employed *Akampati* troops. Four classes of *Akampatis*, namely *Rajā-Muhukala*, *Netti* and *Sala* are mentioned in the Sinhalese sources. See *Nikayasan, grahaya*, p. 18. *Ceylon Journal of Science* (G), part II, pp. 137, 139, *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. III, p. 240; M. B. Ariyapala, *Society in Medieval Ceylon*. 2nd. edition (Colombo, 1966), p. 162.

11. *Madras Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. III, pt. 1, p. 1218.



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in any attempt to decipher this particular word.<sup>12</sup> In the opinion of the present writer the reading *Brammasthanā* has to be ruled out on account of three considerations. To begin with it should be noted that this particular expression, is a Sanskrit one which is engraved in Grantha characters. Firstly, there is no sign for the guttural consonant *h* and if *Brahmasthanā* was actually the expression that was meant the absence of the sign *h* will be very unusual.

However, in the Tamilised form of this expression - *pirammasthanam* the labial nasal is doubled but in this inscription the expression in question occurs in its Sanskrit form on account of which it is indited entirely in Grantha characters. Secondly, there are no clear signs for *ma* in this expression. The grantha characters for *ma* were written, as could be seen from the Mahākiri-ndagama epigraph, in an entirely different manner.<sup>13</sup> What is identified as *ma* in one of the two editions of this inscription is in fact *da*. Lastly, the initial letter of the expression which Indrapala deciphers as *Bra* is altogether a different one. In a conjunct consonant the letter *ra* is usually represented by an arc like curve written beneath almost the full length of the letter representing the other consonant, but in this record the sign beneath *ba* appears to be the one for the short vowel *u* which is usually represented by a hook-like sign written beneath a consonant. Therefore the initial letter could be deciphered as *bu* and not as *bra*. On account of the foregoing considerations the correct reading would be *Buddasthanā*. There is an orthographic error in this expression as the correct form is *Buddhasthanā*. In this word as recorded in the inscription the dental unaspirated sonant instead of being followed by its cognate aspirate is repeated. It may be assumed that this error was due to a slip on the part of the engraver of the record or the person who drafted the text of the record.

The inscription is dated in the 40th year. Obviously it is not the regnal year of Gajabāhu whose reign lasted only for about two decades (1132-1153). Indeed the inscriptions issued during the time of Gajabāhu were not dated in his regnal years. They were all dated in the regnal years of Jayabāhu I (1110-1111).<sup>14</sup> Therefore it may be assumed that the epigraph from Hingurakdamana is dated in the 40th year of Jayabāhu I.

Jayabāhu, however, did not rule for such a long period, nor did he live for that length of time. When Jayabāhu was consecrated king after the death of his brother Vijayabāhu I, (1055-1110), Mānābharāṇa, the eldest son of Mitta, attained the rank of Mahādipāda. The claims of Vikramabāhu (1111-1132), the son of the previous king, were overlooked. Vikramabāhu, however,

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12. See *CTI*, pt. I, plates on pp. 30, 4 .

13. *CTI*, Pt., plate on p. 30.

14. S. Pathmanathan, 'The Tamil Inscription from Mānkanai', *Pavalār Thuraiappapillai Nootandu Vilzha Malar*, (Tellippalai, 1972) pt. II, pp. 81-88.

ousted Jayabāhu and his partisans from Rajarata and subsequently ruled that principality from Polonnaruwa. Jayabāhu lived at Mahānāgakula with his nephew, Kirtthi Siri Megha and died a few years after his deposition.

Despite the deposition and death of Jayabāhu, the official documents in all the three principalities of Rajarata, Māyarata and Ruhuna (which were under three different rulers) were dated in the regna<sup>1</sup> years of Jayabāhu for a long period - until the accession of Parakramabāhu I. <sup>15</sup> This practice was unusual. It has been argued that this was due to the fact that the rulers of the three principalities were not consecrated kings. The descendants of Mitta, particularly Mānābharāṇa I and Mānābharāṇa II were content with the rank of Mahādipāda and Ādipāda respectively. They did not assume royal titles because they could not dislodge their rivals from Rajarata, the king's province. They had to record their documents in the regnal years of Jayabāhu, presumably on account of two considerations. Firstly they were not consecrated kings. Secondly they did not either acknowledge the authority or recognize the claims of Vikramabāhu and Gajabāhu who held Rajarata.

Gajabāhu II is not known to have borne any consecration name. The inscriptions engraved in Rajarata during his time also were dated in the regnal years of Jayabāhu. This may suggest that Gajabāhu, like his father Vikramabāhu<sup>16</sup>, was not consecrated. After the deposition and especially since the death of Jayabāhu, Vikramabāhu had a stronger claim than his cousins - Mānābharāṇa, Kitthi Siri Megha and Siri Vallabha - to the throne of Polonnaruwa. Nevertheless, despite their long reigns and effective control over Rajarata, Vikramabāhu and his son refrained from assuming royal titles and also from undergoing the ceremony of consecration as kings. This would seem inexplicable. The customs regarding succession to the throne had probably become confused owing to the influence of matriarchy in the royal family during this period.

This inscription which adds little to our knowledge of the history of this period appears to contain the earliest reference to the *Akampatis* in Ceylon. The gift made by Umpila ayittan - a Tamil to a Buddhist shrine is significant. He might have been a Buddhist.

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15. Ibid., p. 8 .

16. As regards Vikramabāhu the *Culavamsa* asserts '... without the royal consecration it is true, he held away as monarch in Rājaraṭṭha', Cv., LX, 13.



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TEXT

|                       |    |   |
|-----------------------|----|---|
| 1. Srī yāṅtu 4        | 1  |    |
| 2. O tāvatu Gaja      | 2  |    |
| 3. bāhutēvar A        | 3  |    |
| 4. kampaṭicckai       | 4  |    |
| 5. yaril Mān(a)nā     | 5  |    |
| 6. lāyil jīvita       | 6  |    |
| 7. m uṭaiya Um        | 7  |   |
| 8. pila Ayitta        | 8  |  |
| 9. nēn en jīvita      | 9  |  |
| 10. m pilapētti       | 10 |  |
| 11. l ōramaṇam vi     | 11 |  |
| 12. - ccuppātō        | 12 |  |
| 13. ṇi mācāril        | 13 |  |
| 14. Buddasthānat      | 14 |  |
| 15. tukku iṭṭē        | 15 |  |
| 16. n mēl ituk        | 16 |  |
| 17. ku Vikkanam ce    | 17 |  |
| 18. - yvāruṅṭā        | 18 |  |
| 19. kil Buddastā      | 19 |  |
| 20. nattukkuppi       | 20 |  |
| 21. laiccārāvā        | 21 |  |
| 22. r narakam pukuvār | 22 |  |

TRANSLATION

In the 40th year (of his majesty) I, Ayittan, of the group of *Akampaṭis* (in the service) of Gajabāhudevar sold one amanam (of land) of the *pilappēru* of my *jīvitam* (life tenure) at Mān(a) nālāy and gave (the proceeds) to the Buddhist shrine at Pātōṇi mācār. Those people, if at all there be some, who cause obstruction to this grant will be in the wrong as regards the Buddhas-thāna and they will enter hell.