

BOOK REVIEW

Sinhala Gazetteers and Onomastic Literature

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KADAIMPOT VIMARŠANAYA by Dr. H. A. P. Abhayawardena, Colombo, Department of Cultural Affairs, 1978, xxxv, 262p. 18 plates, (maps, facsim., illus). Bibliog., Rs. 50.00

Kaḍaimpot generally rendered into English as 'boundary books' have remained in oblivion for nearly two centuries. Eminent scholars such as Louis de Soyza, Modder, Hugh Neville, Lawrie, Codrington, W. A. de Silva and S. Paranavitana have made sporadic references and have appreciated the Kaḍaimpot in their respective writings. Nevertheless they have not been subjected to any serious scientific investigation. This lacunae is now filled by Dr. Abhayawardena in his Doctoral Dissertation "*Kaḍaimpot Vimarśanaya*" recently published by the Department of Cultural Affairs. It is at once a pioneer work and a comprehensive study of a class of literature hitherto 'forgotten' but has remained authoritative and respectable for over 400 years from the 13th century. As the author has pointed out they occupied a very important place in the Royal Archives of the Sinhala kings, often referred to for data on geophysical features, agriculture, irrigation, castes, families, *rājakāriya* and many other aspects of the social structure leading to the irresistible conclusion that the gazetteers of a later date had their origin in Kaḍaimpot. Indeed, Kaḍaimpot seem to have been the gazetteers of medieval Sri Lanka. It is noteworthy that as late as 1833 Kaḍaimpot information remained in force as is evident from the fact that British Administrators used them for the demarcation of district boundaries of the island.

In a lengthy discussion of seven chapters running to 181 pages Dr. Abhayawardena, having analysed the meaning of 'Kaḍaim' and the origin and spread of the Kaḍaimpot tradition, proceeds to show the significance of not only Kaḍaimpot but also various other works such as Land Registers (*Lēkammiṭi*), *Vittipot*, ballads such as *Gajabāpuvata* and *Mandārampura Puvata*, travelogues and descriptions like *Daṁbadiva Vistaraya*, *Kuruṇāgala Vistaraya*, *Hatarakōraḷē Vitti* and *Grāma Nāma Vistaraya*, all of which have an affinity to Kaḍaimpot. Much valuable, albeit obscure, information is recorded in

these works on political, social, cultural and economic conditions of contemporary Sri Lankan society. Of interest particularly to the geneologist is the description of family histories of the noblemen who shaped the destinies of the Kandyan Kingdom during the so-called Dutch period of Ceylon history. The text of the six works on which the study is based has been painstakingly edited as acknowledged by Prof. D. E. Hettiarachchi.

A noteworthy feature of the work is the attempt made to reconstruct the 'Tri-Siñhalē': Ruhuṇu, Māyā, and Pihīṭi, the oldest geographical divisions of the island so often mentioned in literature, and to map out not only the boundaries but also villages, cities, districts and important landmarks such as rivers, lakes, fortresses and religious places as recorded in the *Kaḍaimpot*. These maps undoubtedly are a valuable contribution to the cartographical history of the island, for they are entirely based on local tradition and supplement our knowledge of the historical geography of the island from the Greek 'Taprobana' to British 'Ceylon'.

The reproduction of a considerable number of symbols used for the identification of important points in the boundary lines referred to in the *Kaḍaimpot* and actually discovered by the author, with brief but penetrating discussion, stimulates further research into what may be called 'social symbology', a subject of great importance which merits the attention of not only the historian but the sociologist and archaeologist as well. A number of superb colour reproductions of old wall paintings relevant to the subject add colour to the work. The well documented text with a comprehensive bibliography makes *Kaḍaimpot Vimarṣanaya* a book for the serious reader of Sri Lanka's past and a valuable addition to Ceylonians collectors. It may be remarked that with this study two unidentified subjects in Sinhalese literature, namely 'gazetteers' and 'onomastic science', seem to emerge.

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සෑම මාසික දිනුම් ඇදීමකදීම ඔබට බද්දෙන් නිදහස් තැගි 32 ක් දිනා ගැනීමේ වාසනාව ගෙන එයි. පළමුවන තැගි රු. 10,000/-, දෙවන තැගි රු. 5,000/- හා රු. 500/- බැගින් සැතපිළි තැගි 30 යි.

*** උපයනවිට ඉතිරිකිරීම.**

ඔබේ සේවා ස්ථානයේ සිටම මුදලත්, කාලයත් ඉතිරිකර ගැනීමේ පහසුව මේ ක්‍රමයෙන් සැලසේ. ඔබ කළයුත්තේ මාසික ඉතුරුම් මුදල පවිපතින් අඩුකර ගන්නා ලෙස සේවා යෝජකයාට දැන්වීම පමණි.

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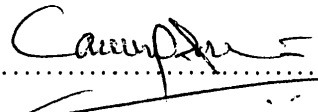
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