The Cities of Medieval Sri Lanka (A. D. 1000-1250) Centres of Dynastic Power, Religious Authority and Commercial Activity

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The Polonnaruwa period constitutes a most remarkable phase in the development of inland towns in pre-colonial Sri Lanka. It also witnessed the last and perhaps the greatest phase of constructional activity before the Portuguese conquest. While Polonnaruwa developed as the principal centre of dynastic and military power, many other towns developed in different parts of the island during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Besides, Anurādhapura and Māntai although on the decline, continued to retain their importance in the economic and cultural life of the country. An investigation on the development, nature and functions of these towns may provide valuable insights on different aspects of the social history of the island. A study of these cities is indeed an essential requisite for a proper understanding of the politics, economy and culture of traditional society.

The characteristics of urbanism which is a modern and contemporary global phenomenon cannot be attributed to Medieval Sri Lankan cities.[1] Superficiality, transciency and anonymity which are sometimes considered as the principal features of urbanism could not have been the characteristics of life in medieval Sri Lankan cities. Polonnaruwa and other towns had many characteristics in common with most of their counterparts in the predominantly aggrestic societies of contemporary Asia. Yet, there were some distinctive features which were the expression of environmental peculiarities and the orientation in cultural expression.

Sri Lankan tradition as found in literature and epigraphic records consistently classified all human settlements into three categories, namely *gama, niyangama* and *nagara*. Yet no effort was made to define each of these units in relation to others or on the basis of prevailing life-styles and other considerations. It would however, be unrealistic to assume that these terms had no distinctive connotations for the people by whom they were applied. Some Indian texts seek to define similar categories of human settlements on the basis of territorial size but such traditional explanations are of doubtful validity.[2] The terms *gama, niyangama* and *nagara* as found in Sri Lankan literature and inscriptions had the following respective general connotations: village, market town and town or city.

The village community was predominantly an agricultural one and generally all South Asian villages had many characteristics in common despite ethno-linguistic differences and variations in the patterns of cultural institutions. The noticeable differences among village communities were to a large extent the product of ecological factors. Rural life and

organizations were dominated by land holders through whom the State maintained its links and exercised authority over the countryside where stability and continuity were maintained to some extent through tradition. The pattern of economic activity in the village restricted mobility and the limited needs of the village community that could not be produced or gathered locally were supplied by itinerant traders operating from market towns and cities that were in proximity to them. Villagers lived in houses mostly clustered together over inhabited sites surrounded by open fields often skirted by uncleared woods over most parts of the island. Paddy cultivation and cattle rearing were the two principal sources of sustenance and wealth. The pressure of population could never be felt acutely as new fields and habitation sites could be raised by clearing adjacent jungle land. The fertility of the soil and the supply of water assured by the development of irrigation facilities contributed towards a large surplus of agricultural produce and under such conditions there was no compelling need for peasant cultivators to leave their lands in search of a better living. For them the towns had little or no attraction.

The *Niyangama* or market town was a relatively small unit where traders, artisans and villagers congregated and exchanged commodities; such towns were sited at central places in the countryside so as to facilitate the easy movement of people, vehicles and commodities. They were also reckoned as distinct units for purposes of administration and revenue collection and were generally under the control of mercantile communities. Its principal function was providing facilities for the exchange of commodities produced in the countryside. The relationship between these towns and the villages in economic terms was one of interdependence. The growth of these towns was dependent on the degree of agricultural prosperity in the country as a whole.

The city which had some characteristics in common with the market-town was fundamentally different from the village. It was by no means associated with agricultural production but was almost entirely dependent on the agricultural hinterland for its food supplies. It continually drained the villages of their agricultural produce. In the traditional South Asian societies surplus food production in the countryside was an essential requisite for the development of inland cities. Those cities whose development was stimulated by trade also became centres of craft-production and generated in some measure the supply of money and the flow of goods. The growth of a city like Polonnaruwa also presupposes the development of craft-production but the degree of its development and its relative importance in city life are matters for future archaeological exploration and investigation.

The units called *gama*, *Niyangama* and *Nagara* had a recognizable geographical identity and were reckoned as separate and distinctive units for purposes of social control, land management and revenue collection. The people settled in these units were to some extent differentiated by their economic pursuits, opportunities for securing and accumulating wealth and access to sources of power and authority. The relative isolation of

villages contrasted with the life in the towns which were focal points of spatial mobility and were linked with far away places in the countryside by routes of communications which tended to radiate from the city to the agricultural hinterlands that surrounded or skirted them. There was another important respect in which towns and cities differed from the villages; they lacked the social cohesion and cultural homogeneity of the villages and as will be seen subsequently the towns in the north central plain of the island had composite populations and two distinct cultures articulated by two different religious traditions. The composite character of their population and their peculiar environment made the towns receptive to new social and cultural influences and they served as centres for the assimilation of new ideas, values and techniques through a variety of channels.

Although there could be a wide gap between the people living in the towns and those in the countryside in terms of wealth and access to sources of power and authority they were almost alike in their social outlook and attitudes. The people in the towns could not be alienated from their traditional ways. In technological skills they were in the same stage of development and even in towns there could be little or no upward social mobility. Even the settlement patterns in the villages which were governed by considerations arising from the hierarchial scheme of social organization were reproduced in the towns with the difference that the preponderance of peasant cultivators in the villages was substituted by that of other functional groups in the towns. The villagers and townsmen cherished the social values and cultural traditions which they inherited from their ancestors with an equal degree of concern. The towns and cities which drained the surplus produce from the countryside naturally became the centres of constructional activity and dveloped also as focal points of religious activity and cultural expression. The surplus wealth accumulating in them was partly devoted for the construction and maintenance of religious institutions, works of art and public utility. The cities and towns witnessed a considerable extent of commercial activity which generated some measure of money supply and this contributed substantially to their prosperity. The cities that were the centres of dynastic power never developed corporate forms of organization or association and could never develop a citizen ideal. The population consisted of separate layers and segments performing diverse functions and were kept together and under control through the authority of dynastic power that mobilised their resources.

The information relating to the development of towns is primarily derived from archaeological sources and the Pāli chronicle. The evidence from such sources, although substantial, has its own limitations and has the effect of limiting the scope of our enquiry. They do not shed any light on the demographic pattern or the specific location of the settlements of various functional and social groups. Palace records which may provide some clues on these matters have all been lost and there was no tradition of recording statistical information relating to population by the chroniclers. The Pāli chronicle provides interesting information about the different phases of development of the city but such information is confined only to the capital city of the time. Among the cities of

pre-colonial Sri Lanka, Polonnaruwa occupies a position of pre-eminence in the historiographic traditions; the *Cūlavamsa* devotes three long chapters for the description of constructional activity in that city whereas such activity even in Anurādhapura which had a much longer duration is only incidentally referred to in connection with the activities of some of the most noteworthy rulers. Nevertheless, the descriptions of the city as found in the chronicle are often exaggerated and conventional and no care was taken to present details regarding social life, administration and settlement patterns about which the social historian may be concerned.

Archaeological explorations and excavations which have been in progress, although intermittently, for nearly a hundred years have until recently been conducted haphazardly and amateurishly without due concern for the problems relating to the social and economic aspects of city-life. The architectural remains are primarily confined to the royal and monastic establishments and as such our perceptions about the cities and the social life characteristic of them would tend to be lopsided. Such establishments certainly dominated the landscape of the capital city. The immensity of the dimensions of such establishments and the glowing descriptions of the city as found in the chronicle pre-suppose that there were large numbers of people of various functional groups engaged in the performance of services required for the maintenance of such establishments.

Polonnaruwa

The development of dynastic power and the expansion of trade resulting from agricultural prosperity and the growth of new settlements in the outlying provinces led to the development of many towns during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The larger towns were still confined to the north central plain while a number of small towns were emerging in the south western and southern parts of the island which acquired an increasing importance in the political and economic life of the country on account of the growth of their material and manpower resources. Polonnaruwa was in a most flourishing state as it was the principal centre of dynastic and military power while Anurādhapura was on the decline although it retained its pre-eminence as a sacred city. Among the other towns of this period were Mātota, Padaviya, Vahalkada, Panduvasnuvara and Mahanāgakula. The first three among these towns owed their importance to the growth of trade and were dominated by mercantile interests while the last two were regional centres of dynastic power and owed their development to the confluence of political and military events in the island.

The city of Polonnaruwa which came into prominence in the eleventh century flourished for a period of nearly two centuries and as a centre of dynastic power it had a short duration in comparison with the earlier capital. It had its origins in the late Anurādhapura period and as suggested by its alternate name *Kandavuru nuvara* it had its beginnings as a military outpost of the Anurādhapura rulers. It also served as a secondary capital for the Kings of the late Anurādhapura period some of whom chose to live in that city whose surroundings, presumably,

provided them with a relatively greater measure of peace and security. The earliest reference to it in the Pāli chronicle is found in the account of Aggabodhi III (628) who is credited with the construction of Mahāpāna-dīpa vihara at Pulatthinagara.[3] Aggabodhi IV (667—683) and Aggabodhi VII (772—777) spent the last days of their respective reigns at Polonnaruwa.[4] Towards the end of the eighth century Mahinda II (777—797) is said to have constructed in this city two monasteries, the Dāmavihāra and the Sannīratittha.[5] Udaya I (797—801) moved out of Anurādhapura and took up residence at Polonnaruwa after suppressing the rebellion organized against him by the *Senapati* and *Yuvarāja*.[6] The chronicle records that he constructed halls for accommodating cripples, the blind and sick persons in Pulatthinagara. Pulatthinagara is again mentioned in the Chronicle in connection with some occurrences in the reign of Sena I (833—853). Udaya, one of the princes at the court of Anurādhapura seized a princess under the King's protection and fled with her to Pulatthinagara. Later a reconciliation was effected between this prince and the king who had fomerly disapproved of Udaya's action.[7] In the early tenth century Kassapa IV (898—914) is said to have constructed hospitals at Anurādhapura and Pulatthinagara for combating the upasagga disease.[8] As testified by the Pāli chronicle Pulatthinagara which came into the limelight in the seventh century continued to acquire an ever increasing importance. Yet it did not develop into a big city until it became the centre of political authority in the eleventh century. In the later Anurādhapura period it had royal residences, some monasteries and hospitals, the architectural remains of which have not been brought to light so far.

The development of Polonnaruwa as a political and military stronghold was prompted by strategic and perhaps also by economic considerations. The eastern portion of the northern plain had acquired a relatively greater importance since the construction of Minneriya, Kaudulu wewa, Giritale, Kantaḷāi and other large tanks. It had become the most favoured area for development and the exploitation of the immense resource potential in that region by the state, demanded direction from a centre that was much closer than Anurādhapura. The development of this part of the country which enriched the king's resources and enhanced his power enabled the rulers of Anurādhapura to make determined efforts to control the south eastern principality of Rohana, the rulers of which sought to assert their independence whenever opportunity availed. The physiographic features of the land were always to their advantage.

The strategic importance of Polonnaruwa lay in the fact that it controlled access into Rohana and from Rohana into the northern plain through the passes at Dastota and other nearby centres where two routes of communication from the southern principality one running along the littoral and the other through the inland tracts converged. Considerations of military strategy demanded a concentration of military power in and around Polonnaruwa for defending the northern plain from attacks directed from the south and for maintaining some semblance of authority over Rohana. As such a need was felt in greater measure during the period of Chola rule than in earlier times, the Cholas naturally made Polonnaruwa the principal centre of their administration in the

island. The Cholas seem to have realized the strategic advantages of Polonnaruwa to a greater extent than the local rulers of the preceding period and chose it in preference to Anurādhapura as the principal base of their political and military power in the island. Its proximity to the eastern littoral with its port of Gokaṇṇa which assumed some significance in the context of the development of Chola sea power and its involvement in seaborne commerce was perhaps another vital consideration.

The fact that Polonnaruwa became the principal political and military stronghold of Chola power in the island is well attested by historical and archaeological evidence. The *Cūlavamsa* asserts that 'with Pulatthinagara as base, the Cholas held sway over Rajarata as far as Rakkhapāsāna kaṇṭha.[9] This claim is further supported by other references to Chola military activities in the island.[10] The claim made in the Pāli chronicle regarding the status of Polonnaruwa is corroborated by archaeological evidence. Chola presence in Polonnaruwa in sufficient strength is attested by the provenance of Chola architectural monuments and inscriptions which are among the oldest antiquities from Polonnaruwa which acquired the new name of *Jananāthamangalam*, after one of the epithets of the Chola King Rājarāja I.[11] Among the architectural monuments of Polonnaruwa, Siva devales 2, 5. and 6 belong to the period of Chola occupation. The Chola inscriptions from Polonnaruwa which include those of Rajendra I and Adhirajendra record the names of a number of Chola dignitaries and officials who were present in the city.[12] Another noteworthy record which could be assigned to the period of Chola occupation is a brief Tamil inscription which testifies that the South Indian mercantile group called Ayyāvole were settled in a quarter of the city and had constructed within it a Buddhist monastery.[13] The composite character of the society and cultural traditions of Polonnaruwa had its roots in the period of Chola occupation. The military and mercantile communities of South Indian origin which were established in the city during the early eleventh century became an important and influential element in the city. References in the *Cūlavamsa* suggest that Polonnaruwa was a fortified walled town provided with gates which commanded access into it when it was stormed by the armies of Vijayabāhu I in 1070.[14] The traces of Chola fortifications have not hitherto been brought to light through archaeological excavations.

Vijayabāhu I celebrated his coronation in the old city of Anurādhapura after having vanquished the Cholas but after a brief sojourn of three months there, he returned to Polonnaruwa where he settled down permanently. The city was rebuilt and fortified again by the new ruler. In relation to Vijayabāhu's undertakings in this respect the Chronicle asserts:

> "In Pulatthinagara he had a high and strong wall built, provided with a long, broad deep trench and equipped with high parapets difficult for the foe to reduce." [15]

The remains of the walls and fortifications raised by Vijayabāhu, like those of the Cholas, cannot be identified. In the reign of this monarch the city acquired a new dimension by developing the characteristics typical of the capital city of a Sinhalese Kingdom. The capital cities of the Sinhalese monarchs always had a dual character; they were not merely the strongholds of dynastic and military power but also were the centres of religious authority. The close connection that had existed between the monarchy and the Buddhist monastic institutions since pre-Christian times had resulted in a conception of kingship which represented the monarch as a custodian of Buddhism and its institutions. The idea that the island of Lanka belonged to Buddhism was encouraged and this was further accentuated by the development of large monastic institutions maintained with revenues of government and land grants. Some of the monarchs even claimed that they underwent the royal consecration for the sake of defending the alms bowl and ascetic robes of monks. All this meant a large concentration of monastic establishments in the capital city. The process of establishing large monastic institutions in Polonnaruwa was initiated by Vijayabāhu I and almost completed by Parākramabāhu I and some of his immediate successors.

The city of Polonnaruwa reached the highest stage of development during the reigns of Parākramabāhu I (1153—1186) and Nissankamalla (1187—1196) whose reigns together constituted a most remarkable phase of constructional activity in the island. Under them dynastic power which attained the highest level of development displayed a measure of efficiency and competence that was seldom rivalled in the whole range of the island's pre-colonial history. The system of artificial irrigation was developed to its peak and functioned to the full measure of its capacity. A major achievement of Parākramabāhu was the giant Parākramasamudra which put into shade all earlier hydraulic constructions. The vastly accumulated resources of the state were diverted towards the enlargement of the city and for the provision of public amenities. An attempt was made in the twelfth century, with some measure of success, to revive the tradition of monumental architecture that was characteristic of Anurādhapura up to the end of Mahasena's reign. Under Parākramabāhu and his successors, court life at Polonnaruwa was characterized by a degree of sophistication, luxury and grandeur that was seldom rivalled in Sri Lanka.

Polonnaruwa which was rebuilt and enlarged by Parākramabāhu was about twice as large as Anurādhapura and was crowded with a number of buildings belonging to the royal and religious establishments. It is claimed that the city which was renamed as Parākramapura under him encompassed an area which was seven *gāvutas* long and four *gāvutas* broad.[16] The excavated architectural remains of Polonnaruwa are mainly confined to what are known in modern times as the promontory, the citadel and the quadrangle of which the last was occupied, as suggested by architectural remains, almost exclusively by monastic establishments while both monastic and royal establishments were to be found scattered over the other two segments of the city.[17] The architectural remains of the royal palace and other establishments are very imposing and occupy

a prominent position among the excavated ruins. The secular aspects of the city were not so thoroughly and completely overshadowed by religious establishments as in Anurādhapura.

The constructional activity undertaken by Parākramabāhu I in the city about which a detailed account is found in the *Cūlavasmsa* was very extensive and encompassed both the royal and monastic establishments. The account of the rebuilding of Pulatthinagara is of considerable historical importance as it provides detailed information on the major architectural undertakings of the reign.[18] The account is by no means altogether reliable as the main aim of the Chronicler was the glorification of the King rather than the presentation of historical information. Exaggeration and poetic embellishments have found their due place in this account and no attention was paid to precision and accuracy of historical details. As could be expected the details relating to monastic establishments are fuller and relatively more precise than those relating to secular monuments. It should, however, be noted that in its essential points the *Cūlavamsa* account, in this instance, is substantially corroborated by archaeological evidence. It provides an insight into the measure of Parākramabāhu's competence and resources and the magnitude of his architectural undertakings.

The royal establishments of Parākramabāhu and his successors were complex and vast and were spread over the citadel area and the promontory. In the chronicler's opinion Polonnaruwa was rebuilt and embellished in such a manner as to reflect the extra-ordinary power and glory of the King. The palace he erected is said to have consisted of seven storeys with a thousand chambers and supported by hundreds of columns and was named Vejayanta.[19] In its immediate neighbourhood were such edifices like the *Hemamandira*, *Dhāranighāra*, *Mandalamandira* and the *Pañcasattimandira* for conducting religious ceremonies and expiatary rites for the royal household.[20] The structure called *Sarassatimaṇḍapa* was in the form of a theatre for staging musical performances and dances for audiences comprising the royalty and other members of the court. Another notable monument which is said to have been constructed by Parākramabāhu is the *Rājavesiyabhujanga mandapa*.[21]

Among the architectural remains of the royal establishments of Parākramabāhu which are mainly confined to an oblong area roughly 440 yards by 246 yards within the citadel only those relating to the palace and the *Rājavesiyabhujanga mandapa* have been identified.[22] The palace was certainly a solid structure of monumental proportions provided with upper storeys as suggested by its remains. The central edifice of its architectural complex is 650 feet square and the area enclosed by galleries is of proportionate dimensions. The main flights of steps facing east leads to an imposing pillared hall which is 102 feet by 42 feet in dimension. There are in the palace over fifty small cells ranged in two or three rows surrounding the apartments other than the main hall. There are still the remains of a broad flight of granite steps which led to the upper storeys of the palace. The walls of the palace are extraordinarily thick in the central block and still stand to a height of 30 feet in some places.[23] The 'pavilion' called *Rājavesiyabhujanga*, the remains of which are imposing

was a stately building designed as an audience hall. It was raised on a stone stylobate of three receding tiers of high elevation and was provided with four rows of stone pillars.[24] Parākramabāhu had a second palace in the city. It was located in the Dīpuyyāna, far outside the citadel, and intended as a pleasure resort. It was a minor version of the main palace in the citadel. For some reason unknown to us Nissankamalla decided to move out of the palace of his great predecessor and took up residence at a one erected on the embankment of the Topawewa. It consisted of a number of buildings arranged without a general plan and among its components the council chamber and the audience hall are noteworthy. It has been designed on the same lines as the pavilion in the citadel, than which it is slightly larger. The inscriptions indited on its pillars are of unusual interest as they indicate the places reserved for various high dignitaries of state when the King held council while he was seated on his lion throne.

Parākramabāhu is also credited with having laid out two large parks, the Nandana and the Dīpuyyāna, which were provided with all kinds of trees, creepers and flower plants. A number of pools including the *Silāpokkharani* were among the major attractions of the Nandana park. The *Silāpokkharani* presently known as Kumara pokuna, is situated outside the citadel wall near its south-eastern corner. This bath which was approached from the citadel by a flight of steps leading towards it was filled with water conducted along the underground passages from the moat by spouts and whenever necessary, it was emptied by an underground passage on the eastern side.[25] The Dīpuyyāna occupied a stretch of land between the two branches of a stream and was made most pleasant and delightful on account of its natural surroundings.

Parākramabāhu is also credited with having surrounded the fortified portion of the city with a succession of four walls of which each outer one was of a lower elevation than the inner one.[26] The three suburbs, Vijita, Rajakulāntaka and Rājavesibhujaṅga [27] which he is said to have created in the vicinity of the city have disappeared without leaving behind any traces and even the sites where they were located cannot be identified. In the words of the chronicler 'the all wise King had different kinds of streets laid down many hundreds in number, adorned with many thousands of dwellings of two, three and more storeys and provided with various bazaars where all wares were to be had and in which, day by day there was incessant traffic of elephants, horses and chariots.[28] Although this description is an exaggerated one it could not be totally discarded on the grounds that it is not corroborated by the findings of archaeology.

The large royal, military and monastic establishments concentrated in Polonnaruwa presuppose an abundance of material and manpower resources at the disposal of the state. The extensive constructional and acquisitive activities required an impressive organizational infrastructure under central direction. Such a structure seems to have existed under Parākramabāhu and Nissankamalla in a most developed form. Specific areas of governmental activity were traditionally placed under what may loosely be described as 'Departments' under the direction of

dignitaries appointed by the King but these were not well defined and there was no clear demarcation of functions. Most of them were involved in some way in constructional and acquisitive activities which were the two principal concerns of the state. A re-valuation of the evidence relating to them and a definition of their functions in terms of constructional and acquisitive activities may shed new light on some aspects of government and life in the capital city.

There are a few incidental references in inscriptions to constructional activities undertaken by dignitaries some of whom were in the service of the monarchs of Polonnaruwa. The slab inscription of the Veḷaikkāras from Polonnaruwa records in its introductory portion that the Tooth Relic Temple was constructed under the direction of Senapati Deva on the orders of the King, Vijayabāhu.[29] The recently discovered Tamil slab inscription of the Veḷaikkāras from Mayila wewa (Mayilaṅkulam) testifies that the general Kaṇṭan Kaṇavati constructed a Buddhist temple named *Vikkirama calāmēkan perumpaḷḷi* and placed it under the protection of the Veḷaikkāra army settled at the locality of Uṭuturai [30] during the time of Vikramabāhu.

There are at least three such references in the inscriptions of Nissaṅkamalla. The Ruvanvelisaya inscription of this ruler states that the Ruvanvelisaya was placed by the King under the charge of a dignitary called Loke Arakmena who was instructed also to restore the *Mirisaweti* and other monuments in Anurādhapura.[31] Another inscription of the same King, from Polonnaruwa states that the great general Tāvarunāvan constructed a priceless circular relic house called Ratnagiri on the orders of the King.[32] Yet another inscription of Nissaṅkamalla, the Tamil inscription from Panduvasnuvara, records the construction of a monastery by a certain Matimān pañcaran who is described as a Senapati.[33] That military commanders and ministers were involved in directing the construction of irrigation works is attested by two inscriptions dated in the regnal years of Queen Kalyāṇavati. The Miṇipe slab inscription of her eighth year which eulogizes the general Bhāma and records some work he had undertaken for the restoration of irrigation works at Miṇipe provides the important information that the irrigation channel at Miṇipe was formerly constructed under the direction of the minister named Mē Kit nā. [34] The Badalagoda slab inscription provides interesting information about the constructional work undertaken at the town of Mangalāpura in Dakkhinadesa under the direction of the general Ābo (navan). The irrigation tank in the locality which had its embankment breached at three places was restored on his initiative. Besides, he had the canals restored and constructed a new sluice called the Adhikāra sluice. After the restoration of the tank and its canals the lands in the neighbourhood were brought back under cultivation.[35] It is clear from these epigraphic references that military commanders and other dignitaries of high rank were entrusted with the task of directing constructional activity within the limits of the capital city as well as in other localities. A considerable number of dignitaries assisted by a large number of functionaries serving in a subordinate capacity must have been engaged in supervising and directing constructional activty in Polonnaruwa. Such work also involved the

collection and transportation of granite boulders, bricks, timber and other building materials in enormous quantities. Building materials had to be obtained from sites which were located at considerable distances from the city. The Galpota inscription, for instance, states that the stone on which the text of the inscription was indited was transported from the locality called Sāgiri by the King's warrior under the direction of Adhikārin Jaṭa danavu Mand Nāvan.[36] This evidence from the Galpota inscription is of utmost importance as it testifies that warriors in the service of the King were involved in constructional activity and transportation. That there was some institutional arrangement for providing transport facilities is suggested by the designation Yān-tān-nāvan occurring in an inscription of the Polonnaruwa period. The expression Vahananāyaka,[37] the Sanskrit equivalent of this designation, recorded in the concluding portion of the same epigraph confirms that the dignitary who had this designation was the head of a group of functionaries specifically concerned with the provision of transport facilities required for the constructional and acquisitive activities of the state. Such activities in the city of Polonnaruwa required the mobilization of skilled and unskilled labour in monumental proportions but we have no means of determining precisely the means and extent of such mobilization. It may be assumed on the basis of slight evidence from the *Cūlavamsa* that compulsory service or *corvee* was an important source of labour supply for the great establishments of the city.[38] Large numbers of artisans and workmen who took up temporary residence at building sites had to be provided with food supplies and accommodation.

The city of Polonnaruwa undoubtedly supported a large population the size of which cannot, however, be determined. The chronicles provide little information on social conditions and archaeology sheds no light on social stratification. The city had to be provisioned with grain and other items of food but textual descriptions of the city and architectural remains do not give any idea about storage facilities in the city. The establishments in the city were almost entirely dependent on the surrounding hinterland and other regions within the kingdom for food supplies. Surplus agricultural production from almost all divisions within the kingdom were transferred to the city in the form of royal dues but little is known about the processes of collection, transportation and re-distribution of agricultural surplus production.

The land revenue which was the mainstay of the economic strength of the dynastic state was collected both in kind and money. The details of the revenue settlement effected by Nissankamalla may provide some hints about the potentialities of agricultural production as a source of revenue for the government. He stipulated that the tax on an *amuṇa* (sowing extent) of field of the highest productivity should not exceed one *amuṇa* and three *pälas* and a cash payment of six *madaran* coins. Fields of middling quality had to pay to the state one *amuṇa* and two *pälas* of paddy and four *madaran* for the yield of every *amuṇa*. The corresponding levy on the least productive field was fixed at one *amuṇa* and one *päla* and three *madaran*.[39] By such an arrangement large quantities of grain and money may have been obtained as land revenue. Besides, customs and tolls on

merchandise at ports and market centres were an additional source of lucrative income for the government. The monetary resources of the state were augmented by the supply of coins and precious metal, the flow which was generated by a well balanced external trade. A considerable degree of monetary circulation in the economy was sustained by agricultural prosperity and a flourishing trade. As the minting of coins was a royal prerogative the monarch could enhance his monetary power in proportion to the quantities of precious metals at his disposal. The discovery of coins issued by the rulers of Polonnaruwa in prolific quantities and epigraphic references to the extravagance of rulers in expenditure testify that the monetary power of the rulers of Polonnaruwa was most remarkable in the latter half of the twelfth century which significantly constituted the peak period of constructional and cultural activity in Polonnaruwa. The coins turned out of the royal mints of Polonnaruwa in the twelfth century were almost entirely of copper. Although the minting of coins in gold practically ceased after the reign of Vijayabāhu I, there are several references in inscriptions to the supply of coined and uncoined gold in substantial quantities. Inscriptional references to the use of *Kāmbodin* gold may suggest that Cambodia and the adjoining countries could have been the sources for the supply of gold required in the island. The enhancement of the monetary power of the state may partially explain the unprecedented extravagance and splendour of courtlife, the steady growth of military power and extensive constructional activity in Polonnaruwa especially during the reigns of Parākramabāhu and Nisssankamalla.

Monastic Establishments and Religious Monuments

As the monarch was represented as the custodian of Buddhism and its institutions he was obliged to construct and maintain temples and monasteries and protect centres of pilgrimage. He was expected to support the fraternities of monks and provide them with the four requisites and conduct festivals. A major portion of the resources at the King's disposal was committed for the cause of Buddhism and its institutions. Monks belonging to the various fraternities were assembled and accommodated at exceptionally large monastic dwellings in the city premises. The Tooth Relic and the Alms Bowl, the most venerated relics, were almost always under the custody of the monarch and had by this time become a sort of national palladium, symbols for the legitimation of political authority. The Tooth Relic temple was mostly constructed in close proximity to the royal palace. Chronicles and inscriptions claim that three successive temples were constructed respectively by Vijayabāhu I, Parākramabāhu I and Nissankamalla. The *Wata dāge* and the *Hata dāge*, two of the finest and imposing monuments of Polonnaruwa were presumably designed as temples for enshrining the Tooth Relic.

The process of constructing large monastic establishments at Polonnaruwa was begun under Vijayabāhu I. He is said to have constructed a number of monasteries in the city and invited many members who belongd to the three fraternities to reside in them [40] but the only monument of his reign, the architectural remains of which are still preserved is the so-called Atadāge identified as the temple of the Tooth Relic by means of the Tamil inscription set up by the Velaikkāras who were charged with the responsibility of protecting and maintaining it.[41]

Parākaramabāhu I is credited with the construction of eight monasteries of which the Jētavana was presumably the largest. 'Within its precincts were a round stone temple for the Tooth Relic, the Tivanka image house, a stupa, three sermon halls, two libraries, seventy-five parivenas and a hundred and seventy eight small residences. Eight ponds were built for the use of inmates. In all, there were five hundred and twenty buildings within the monastic grounds'. Apart from these buildings Parākramabāhu I is credited with the construction of eight mansions, each three storeys in height within the precincts of the Jētavana monastery.[42] Another mansion complete with chambers was built for the thera Sāriputta who lived, together with the incumbents of the eight fraternities at the Jētavana monastery.[43]

Another monastic complex of large proportions completed by Parākramabāhu I was the Ālahaṇa parivena which included within its precincts the monumental stupa now known as the Kirivihāra. It is said to have consisted of forty long pāsādas, eight small pāsādas and six gate towers and was surrounded by outer walls. The five-storeyed image house called Laṅkātilaka which was embellished with ornamental work of high quality and the two massive cetiyas each of which was named respectively after the two queens, Subhadda and Rūpavati, are said to have been among the outstanding monuments constructed within the premises of the Ālahaṇa parivena.[44] The Gal Vihara, Rankot Vihara, Potgul Vihara and the Satmahal pāsāda were among the other monumental edifices constructed in Polonnaruwa during the twelfth century.

The monasteries in Polonnaruwa as suggested by their architectural remains and descriptions in the chronicle undoubtedly accommodated several hundreds of monks but there are no means for determining even roughly their numbers. The vast monastic establishments of Polonnaruwa in comparison with those of Anurādhapura had only a very brief period of existence. They were in occupation at most for only a period of three generations since the coronation of Parākramabāhu in Polonnaruwa. When arrangements were made to hold a synod for the purification and re-unification of the fraternities under a single leadership it would appear that there were not many monks in the capital city. Most of them had evacuated the modest monastic centres established by Vijayabāhu I in consequence of the hostility of Vikramabāhu who deprived the monasteries of all their endowments. There was no constructional activity of any significance after the twelfth century and the years of strife and instability that followed the demise of Nissankamalla were not conducive for a peaceful and comfortable life in the monasteries. Māgha's conquest of Polonnaruwa resulted in their abandonment and destruction. There is no evidence of their re-occupation in the subsequent period and when efforts were made to undertake restoration work in Polonnaruwa during the late stages in the reign of Parākramabāhu II (1236—1271) the monasteries in the city were in an advanced state of dilapidation.[45] The final abandonment of the monasteries of Polonnaruwa presumably provided a fresh impetus to the development of regional monastic centres which had their origins in earlier centuries.

The inscriptions of the Polonnaruwa period do not provide any information about land grants made to monastic establishments in the city. Besides, there is no evidence of any kind about the institutional arrangements the monastic establishments had for the management of their resources. In the *Cūlavamsa,* however, there is a solitary reference to an endowment made by Vijayabāhu I to one of the monasteries established by him at Polonnaruwa. It records: "For the provision of food, he granted to the community of monks the whole district of Aḷisāra together with its residents and canals".[46] It is possible that some of the other monastic establishments were also endowed with similar grants of land. It would appear that the monastic organizations of Polonnaruwa did not have the solid economic foundations and the institutional framework for the management of property which provided an element of stability for the monastic establishments of Anurādhapura. The close connection between the monarchy and the monastic establishments and the concentration of such establishments at the capital was not always to their advantage. On account of such a relationship institutional Buddhism was heavily dependent on state support. The monastic establishments could become vulnerable particularly in times of invasions, dynastic instability and whenever the Kings withheld support.

The architectural remains of no less than sixteen Hindu temples scattered over the city suggest that Hindu communities formed an important element in the population of Polonnaruwa since the eleventh century.[47] The Hindu monuments which have survived in different states of preservation are of modest proportions by contemporary South Indian standards but still they claim our attention on account of the quality of their architectural design and artistic merit. The two most noteworthy example are the ones designated by modern archaeologists as Siva devales No. 1 and 2 of which the second named Vānavanmādevi īsvaram was a Chola foundation as testified by the inscriptions of Rājendra Chola I (1014—1044) and Adhirājendra (1067—1070) found indited on its walls.[48] The details found in these inscriptions show that this temple was provided with adequate arrangements for regularly conducting rituals and religious services as well as for the management of its affairs. The larger of the two monuments, Siva devale I, which is architecturally more evolved than its Chola counterpart could be assigned to the twelfth century on the considerations of its architectural style. The contents of an inscription found inside this temple suggest that King Nissankamalla (1187—1196) had performed the lustral bathing in connection with the ceremony of *Navagraha sānti* propitiating the nine planetary gods.[49] The *Cūlavamsa* records that King Parākramabāhu I constructed thirteen temples for the gods and restored nine (Hindu) temples which were in a state of disrepair. The same chronicle, however, in another instance states that this King had caused to be renovated twentyfour temples of gods.[50] But, no Hindu temple, the chronology of which could be attributed to the reign of Parākramabāhu has hitherto been recognized among the architectural remains of Polonnaruwa. Architectural remains do not suggest a strict residential segregation of the Hindu communities from the rest of the city population as in Anurādhapura. The bronze figures representing the deities of the Saivite pantheon discovered in substantial numbers, mainly

from the premises of Siva devales No. 1 and No. 5,[51] suggest that a local school of bronze casting deriving inspiration from the Chola tradition of metal sculpture had flourished in the city. The bronzes unearthed from the architectural remains of Polonnaruwa represent the largest single collection ever found in the island. Besides, they are most remarkable on account of their artistic quality and the level of craft production attained by artisans involved in metal casting.

Polonnaruwa, like Anurādhapura, stood in the open plains and had no natural defences. A large standing army had to be maintained for providing security and for asserting royal authority over the whole Kingdom. The vast resources in monetary power and the accumulation of grain in the capital city enabled the rulers to maintain large armies in the twelfth century. The gradual and unprecedented growth of the military establishment was a characteristic feature of the Polonnaruwa period. The great army of the Veḷaikkāras established in Polonnaruwa was a large one consisting of many divisions and the revolt of this army in the reign of Vijayabāhu I had resulted in the King's flight and the eclipse of royal authority in Polonnaruwa for a brief period.[52] The incident highlights the enormous strength of the military establishments especially when we consider that the Veḷaikkāra army was only one among the many large armies which were maintained by the King.

The gradual and unprecedented growth of the military establishments had begun to strain the resources of the rulers. In the early twelfth century, for instance, Vikramabāhu and his cousins were forced by circumstances to levy excessive taxes in order to support their armies. Moreover, Vikramabāhu is said to have misappropriated the properties that belonged to the Buddhist religious institutions in order to maintain his armies. The wars of unification and conquest waged by Parākramabāhu I had led to a further development of the military establishment. The reigns of Pārakramabāhu I and Nissaṅkamalla constituted the peak period in the development of military establishments in Polonnaruwa. The imposition of excessive taxation by Parākramabāhu, a measure for which he was condemned by his successor, was doubtless prompted by a need to enhance monetary resources required to support large armies involved in campaigns in foreign lands. The military establishment was also a source of instability and contributed to the erosion of state power as in the last days of the Anurādhapura Kingdom. The over-growth of the military establishment undermined royal authority in Polonnaruwa towards the end of the twelfth century and the influential and powerful generals who became over mighty subjects began to play the role of King-makers and their activities contributed to the fall of Polonnaruwa.

The Lesser Dynastic Centres.

Besides Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa the most important towns that flourished during the Polonnaruwa period were Mātota (Māntai, Mātoṭṭam), Paḍaviya, Vahalkaḍa, Mahānāgakula and Uddhanadvāra. The last three among these were regional centres of dynastic power and they owed their origins and development to the confluence of political and military

events in the island during this period. They were of modest proportions and relatively had a short duration. Mahānāgakula, on the banks of the Walawe Ganga came into prominence when it was occupied by Vijayabāhu I after he evacuated the town of Kajāragama in consequence of a raid by the Chola armies.[53] When Vijayabāhu took up residence in Polonnaruwa after his consecretion as ruler of Lanka the prince who had the rank of *Ādipāda* was sent to Mahānāgakula to exercise authority over the principality of Rohana. Jayabāhu and Vikramabāhu who held that position successively in the reign of Vijayabāhu I were living at Mahānāgakula.[54] When Vikramabāhu occupied Polonnaruwa after dislodging the monarch Jayabāhu and his nephews from there, they occupied the southern and western portions of the island. The monarch Jayabāhu and his sister Mitta lived at Mahānāgakula from where Kit Siri Megha, the second son of Mitta, administered the south-western half of the principality of Rohana.[55] When he took charge of the government of Dakkhinadesa on the death of his elder brother, his younger brother Siri Vallabha was left to rule over the reunited principality of Rohana, from Mahānāgakula.[56] He was succeeded by his energetic son Mānābharana II who made a strong but unsuccessful attempt to secure for himself the throne of Polonnaruwa. Even after Parākramabāhu's conquest of Rohana, Mahānāgakula retained its position as a centre of political authority. The general Adhikārin Bhūta who was appointed to govern Rohana took up residence in that town.[57] In his inscriptions Nissankamalla claims to have constructed royal palaces there. In the absence of any architectural remains it is not possible to form any idea about the size of this town and its population. The constructional activities of the rulers established at Mahānāgakula were negligible.

Pāṇḍuvasnuvara, established by Parākramabāhu I as the capital city of the principality of Dakkhinadesa during the second quarter of the twelfth century seems to have been an important town in the island during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It occupied a central position in the principality and the flourishing agricultural communities in its neighbourhood contributed in no small measure to its prosperity. The efficient exploitation of the resources of Dakkhinadesa by Parākramabāhu when he was the ruler of that principality favoured the speedy development of the town. The constructional activities undertaken by Parākramabāhu while he was ruling from Pāṇḍuvasnuvara appear to have been impressive and archaeological evidence suggests that it was a large and prosperous town. The major constructions of Parākramabāhu were the royal palace and the large tank referred to in the Pāli Chronicle as Parākramasamudra. The reservoir was constructed by means of enlarging the original tank called Pāṇḍavāpi.[58] Parākramabāhu is credited with having enlarged the town after he had secured the throne of Polonnaruwa. In connection with his constructional activities at Parākramapura the chronicle asserts:

> 'Hereupon the all-wise prince laid the foundation of the town called Parākramapura. It was furnished with gates and towers, with walls and moats, streets, pāsādas and shops and adorned with parks which were embellished with pāsādas erected there for the shelter of many hundreds of bhikkhus who strove after moral discipline and other virtues. It was superb, prosperous and wealthy like Ālakamandā, the town of the gods, and ever crowded with people".[59]

The foregoing account is undoubtedly an exaggerated one. Nevertheless, it suggests that Parākramapura was a town of considerable importance and that it received sufficient attention from Parākramabāhu even after he had moved out of it since his conquest of the northern principality of Rajarata. There is some archaeological evidence which partially corroborates the *Cūlavamsa* account. The royal palace was built within a walled citadel in the neighbourhood of the tank. Its ground plan which is similar to that of Polonnaruwa consists of a rectangular area enclosed by galleries with an entrance on the eastern side of the hall. Its galleries measure 268 feet east to west and 168 feet north to south. The dimensions of the ground plan suggest that the palace was one of very large proportions.[60]

Pāṇḍuvasnuvara was in its essential features a small version of Polonnaruwa supporting military and monastic establishments of considerable size and had a composite population. That there were some Tamil Buddhist monks is suggested by the Tamil inscription of Nissankamalla from Pāṇḍuvasnuvara which testifies that the general called Matimān Pañcaran constructed a Buddhist monastery.[61] The Tamil mercantile community called Aññurruvar seems to have played an important role in trading activities in and around the town. The evidence from the inscription of the Ayyāvoḷe from a locality close to Pāṇḍuvasnuvara which refers to the pathway leading to the paṭṭinam seems to suggest that they had a settlement referred to as paṭṭinam in the city of Pāṇḍuvasnuvara.[62]

Uddhanadvāra came into prominence on the division of Rohana between the two brothers Kit Siri Megha and Siri Vallabha during the early twelfth century. Siri Vallabha ruled over the eastern half of the principality from Uddhanadvāra which was of some strategic importance.[63] When the principality of Rohana was re-united under Siri Vallabha on the death of Mānābharana I in Dakkhinadesa, Uddhanadvāra was abandoned as a political and administrative centre but it continued to be a major military outpost of the rulers of Rohana until Parākramabāhu's conquest of the south-eastern principality.[64] There are no architectural remains of any significance at Udundora which is identified as Uddhanadvāra mentioned in the chronicles.

Commercial Centres: Padaviya, Vahalkada and Māntai.

The growth of the two towns, Padaviya and Vahalkada, was largely connected with the development of trade. They rose to prominence on account of their central position in the eastern belt of the north central plain. They were surrounded by a number of agricultural communities which owed their prosperity to the Padaviya and Vahalkada tanks. The architectural remains of Buddhist and Hindu religious establishments spread over a considerably large area testify that Padaviya was a large town enjoying remarkable prosperity during the eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The oldest among the inscriptions at Padaviya was set up in the reign of Kassapa IV (896—913) and it records the grant of certain immunities to lands irrigated by the waters of the Padonnaru tank.[65] Another inscription, which could be assigned to the reign of Parākramabāhu I

on the basis of its palaeography and contents, claims that this tank was restored by that monarch.[66] It may therefore be assumed that this tank was utilised for providing irrigation facilities to the full measure of its capacity in the latter half of the twelfth century. A major portion of the architectural remains of the ancient town that have been brought to light so far is mainly to be found below the tank bund, at a site now known as Moragoda. In the opinion of Brohier 'the focal point of ancient habitation under Padaviya would appear to be the site still buried in forest on the down-stream slope on the eastern section of the bund and west of the modern sluice'.[67] The archaeological remains show that Padaviya had a mixed population during the Polonnaruwa period and these remains represent two cultures, Hindu and Buddhist, which flourished together in general harmony. The archaeological remains which include inscriptions, remnants of temples and monasteries and statuary are remarkable on account of their artistic quality and historical importance.

It would appear that Padaviya became a military outpost and administrative centre during the period of Chola occupation. Besides, it became a market centre of considerable significance. Architectural remains suggest that there was a considerable extent of constructional and cultural activity in this town which had as its nucleus a walled enclosure about 8 acres in extent, seemingly laid out in streets.[68]

The Ayyāvoḷe, a composite body of itinerant traders of South Indian origin, were well established at Padaviya. Two Tamil inscriptions which record their activities testify that their settlement at Padaviya was sufficiently large and important so as to be constituted as a *nakaram*, 'town'.[69] One of these inscriptions testifies that this town was known as Ayyampoḷil paṭṭinam. Although one of the epigraphs in fact refers to the establishment of this *nakaram* the details relating to that process are not clear as the relevant portions of the text are badly damaged. As these inscriptions refer to markets and shops it may be assumed that the township established by the Ayyāvoḷe at Padaviya had a market centre organized and controlled by them. Among the trading communities which are said to have played a prominent role in the activities of the *nakaram* are the *paṭineṇpūmi* ceṭṭis, Virakkoṭi and the Ticai Āyirattu Añṉūṟṟuvar. Besides, these inscriptions refer to military bodies and soldiers who were associated with the Ayyāvoḷe.[70]

The mercantile and military communities settled at Padaviya were closely associated with the foundation and maintenance of religious institutions during this period. The fragmentary inscription of the twenty sixth year of Rājarāja testifies that the temple of Iravikula Māṇikkesvaram was endowed with several kinds of lamps, vessels and money by merchants, soldiers and a few others some of whom could be identified as Chola officials.[71] One of the benefactors of this shrine is referred to as a Nānādesi merchant. One of the short Tamil inscriptions found among the remains of Siva devale No. 1 at Padaviya records that a foundation stone was laid by a certain merchant, Teci Ticaiyāyic ceṭṭi.[72] Another epigraph mentions a similar stone laid by another merchant from Padaviya (Padiyil Vaṇikan).[73] One of the two long inscriptions of the Ayyāvoḷe at Padaviya

records that the people of the *nakaram* were dedicated to the service of Siva.[74] Besides, reference is made to the temple dedicated to the goddess Kāli as well as the gift of an image (of a deity) made by the Ayyāvoḷe. There was at Padaviya, as at Kantaḷāi, a Brahmin settlement during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The Sanskrit inscription on a recently discovered seal describes Padaviya as a locality inhabited by Brahmins.

The Buddhist architectural remains at Moragoda consist chiefly of a dagaba mound, with steps leading to it flanked by very plain balustrades rounded at the end. The figure of a large standing Buddha and a mutilated sedant Buddha are among the principal iconographic remains at the site. There is yet another coterie of Buddhist ruins in the jungle to the east of the modern sluice. On this site there are the ruins of a dagaba and buildings in an advanced state of ruin.[75] A Sanskrit inscription indited on a slab serving as a platform of the dagaba outside the ancient walled city of Padaviya, and which could be assigned to the late thirteenth century on palaeographic consideration records the construction of a Vihāra by Lokanātha, a general of the Vēḷaikkāras.[76] The monastery was named after the Vēḷaikkāra regiment and placed under its protection. The evidence from this inscription suggests that the Vēḷaikkāras were settled at Padaviya. As Lokanātha is referred to as a Daṇḍanāyaka in the inscription it may be inferred that the Vēḷaikkāra army under his leadership was a large one. The architectural remains of religious monuments and epigraphic references to cultural activity suggest that there were many religious establishments spread over a considerably large area at Padaviya. It would appear that it was a relatively big town supporting a large population which comprised several communities some of which enjoyed a high degree of affluence. This is remarkable as dynastic power was not involved in its development to any considerable extent. It would appear that it was the largest among the inland towns developed in the island outside the centres of dynastic power during this period. Its development may to some extent indicate a change in patterns of demographic distribution and trade in the north central plain. Such an impression seems to be strengthened by the evidence relating to another town, Vahalkada, which flourished during this period.

Agricultural prosperity in the surrounding localities generated by the adequate supply of water from the Vahalkada tank and its location where many pathways converged favoured the growth of Vahalkada as a mercantile town of modest proportions. In the eleventh century the Ayyāvoḷe who had established themselves at Vahalkada gained control over the town. It was converted into a Nānāteciya Vīrapaṭṭinam and the government at Polonnaruwa seems to have acquiesced with this sort of arrangement. This Vīrapaṭṭinam of the Ayyāvoḷe was a corporate organization having the characteristics of an autonomous town as in the case of its counterparts dotted over a number of localities in contemporary Deccan and South India. Significantly the inscription set up by the Ayyāvoḷe at Vahalkada does not mention the name of the King or even his regnal year. Instead it commences with a brief *prasasti* of the Ayyāvoḷe.[77] They were presumably left to themselves with little or no interference from the court and its officials.

One of the inscriptions left behind by the Ayyāvoḷe seems to record some steps taken by a representative gathering of the many component groups of the town. Among the notables who participated in the proceedings were 'the chief of "the guild" of boatmen at Māntai', 'the chief of the customs post', a certain Vikkan Iḷapiyānai who was the superintendant of the streets', Vikramātittan, 'the leader of the workmen of the mint', the leader of the army of Vaḷañceyar and the leader of the army of the Valaṅkai division.[78] Apart from the Ayyāvoḷe the other mercantile communities that were represented were the Vaḷañceyar and the Vīrakkoṭi, the Ceṭṭis and Ceṭṭiputras. South Indian inscriptions testify that many groups of commodity producers were gathered under the leadership of the Ayyāvoḷe and other mercantile communities in the townships called Vīrapaṭṭinam. There is no means of determining whether such artisan communities and others involved in commodity production were settled in the townships called Vīrapaṭṭinam established by the Ayyāvoḷe in Sri Lanka. The reference to Vikramātittan of "the mint", *akkasālai*, in one of the inscriptions from Vahalkada is intriguing as no specimens of coins issued by the Ayyāvoḷe have hitherto come to light. It is unlikely that the *akkasālai* mentioned in this inscription was intended for minting coined money especially because the minting of coins was a royal prerogative. In the circumstances one has to think of other more plausible explanations. It is possible that this *akkasālai* was intended for assaying gold or for smelting metal and if this explanation is accepted it has to be presumed that there were artisans engaged in production in the Vīrapaṭṭinam at Vahalkada referred to as Kaṭṭanēri in the inscription. Another explanation, is that Vikramātittan who belonged to one of the communities grouped under the Ayyāvoḷe, could have been involved in the supervision of work regarding the issuing of coins from a local mint. Such an explanation presupposes that the Ayyāvoḷe had close connections with the monarchy. The inscriptions of the Ayyāvoḷe from Vahalkada shed little or no light on their trading activities. Their inscriptions from other localities show that spices, elephants and horses were among the commodities handled by them.[79] The Vīrapaṭṭinam at Vahalkada was not the only township that was established by the Ayyāvoḷe in the island. There were some other such units as testified by the evidence from the inscriptions of the Ayyāvoḷe from Padaviya, Viharehinna and Detiyamulla but the details about their organization have not been preserved in the inscriptions that have been discovered hitherto.[80] The existence of corporate units called Vīrapaṭṭinam endowed with military power raises some serious doubts about the generally held assumption that the administration of the Polonnaruwa Kingdom was a highly centralised one.

Māntai, which owed its initial development to its location on the mouth of the Malwatu Oya or Aruvi Āṟu and its proximity to the pearl banks, had gradually developed as the principal emporium of the island and a flourishing centre of international seaborne commerce and attained the peak of its development by the eighth century. Archaeological evidence suggests that the city of Māntai continued to prosper until the twelfth century owing to the flourishing commerce which had been the mainstay of its economic support. Archaeological excavations have not been undertaken systematically and extensively at Māntai and the available information is

too vague and fragmentary that it is still not possible to make a proper assessment of the settlement pattern and social and cultural life characteristics of the city in the days of its prosperity. Archaeological artifacts in the form of pottery and other wares brought to light in recent excavations show that between the eighth and eleventh centuries which represent the ultimate phase of its prosperity it had been a centre of great commercial activity owing to the extensive seaborne trade in which traders having ramifactions with commercial centres in West Asia and the Far East had participated. Such an impression is supported by the presence in almost equal quantities of artifacts of West Asian and Far Eastern origin. Besides, it was a centre of great importance in the Indo-Ceylon trade as suggested by the provenance of coins issued by the rulers of the Deccan and South India in substantial quantities.

In the eleventh century the city of Matoṭṭam seems to have been an important stronghold of the Cholas. It was renamed as Rājarājapuram after Rājarāja and constituted as a separate unit for purposes of administration and the port-dues, customs and tolls levied on markets and merchandise on transit were an important source of revenue for the government.

The population of Māntai was a composite one and partly a floating one. Although life in the city was doubtless dominated by mercantile interests its population consisted of diverse elements which included artisans, weavers and sea-faring communities. The mercantile communities established at Māntai were of several categories. Some of them, cargo-shippers and those who were involved in the import-export trade that passed through the Indo-Ceylon straits, had a sort of dual domicile as in much later times. There were others like the *Caṅkarapaṭiyar*, *Vāḷaikkāy Vāṇiyar*, *Verṟilai Vāṇiyar*, groups of petty traders, who were permanently settled in the town and were supplying specific commodities to the local residents and religious establishments.[81] Māntai seems to have maintained close links with the principal dynastic centres and other inland towns in Rajarata through groups of traders involved in the distribution and collection of merchandise. The reference to the chief of the "guild" of boatmen at Māntai in an inscription set up by the Ayyāvoḷe at Vahalkada may suggest that the mercantile communities who were established in some of the inland towns had close links with the traders and cargo-shippers of Māntai.

The discovery of beads, potsherds, ornaments of gold and silver, iron implements and sawn pieces of conch shell and many other artifacts may, perhaps, suggest that it was once a great centre of craft production. The references to taxes on looms in a Chola inscription implies that there were at Māntai a community of weavers engaged in the production of cloth.[82] Trade and craft production generated some measure of prosperity and there is some evidence to show that some of the residents of Māntai lived a life of luxury and comfort. One of the Chola inscriptions incidentally mentions a certain Kunran Kāman who owned a house, a mansion and a garden.[83]

The ancient and famous shrine of Tirukkētīsvaram which enjoyed the support of mercantile and seafaring communities had developed into a great centre of pilgrimage and Saivite religious tradition. It was presumably rebuilt and renamed Rajarājesvaram during the period of Chola rule[84] Another Saivite temple that flourished at Māntai during the eleventh century was Tiruvirāmēsvaram. Both these temples were maintained partly with endowments made by government officials. The maintenance and administration of the endowments made to one of these temples was entrusted to three groups of Tamil traders settled in the city.[85] On account of the brisk trade between Māntai and the ports of the Malabar and the Coromandel, several groups of traders, artisans, warriors and sea-faring communities from the neighbouring South Indian Kingdoms reached Māntai in successive waves and in ever increasing numbers and spread over the hinterland behind it. Archaeological evidence suggests that Māntai lost its pre-eminence as a major centre of transhipment and sea-borne trade by the end of the eleventh century. There are no monumental remains that could be assigned to the period that followed the fall of Chola power in the island; nor are there any textual or epigraphic references to commercial and cultural activities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Accumulation of silt and other geographical changes, the changes in the pattern of international trade, the confluence of political and military events, significant changes in the pattern of demographic distribution and the development of entrepots on the eastern littoral may have been among the factors that were responsible for its decline. Māntai lost its pre-eminence and steadily declined after the twelfth century and since the late thirteenth century the great-road which had linked it with the inland cities of Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa, for the most part, became covered with impenetrable jungle. Yet on account of the pearl fishery and the coastal trade with South India, Māntai was not entirely abandoned but its importance as a commercial centre had greatly diminished.

In conclusion it may be stated that the eleventh and twelfth centuries witnessed the last and the greatest phase in the development of towns in the whole range of the island's history before the European Colonial conquest of the island. Polonnaruwa which was established originally as a military outpost of the Anurādhapura Kingdom gradually developed as the principal centre of dynastic authority and military power. It attained the peak of its development during the latter half of the twelfth century when as a result of extensive constructional activity royal and monastic establishments were created on an impressive scale. There was an unmistakable inter-connection between the development of dynastic power and the growth of the city. It served as the centre for the direction of organizational, acquisitive and constructional activities which involved the process of collection, transportation and redistribution of surplus agricultural produce.

The growth of the military, monastic and royal establishments which at times over-strained and exhausted the resources of state and contributed partially to its decline was made possible by an agricultural and commercial prosperity generated by the development of major irrigation works based on the river valley systems and a well balanced exernal trade.

The growth of the other inland towns, particularly in Rajarata, may be explained against the background of great advances made in agricultural production and internal trade. Their general prosperity and the affluence of the mercantile interests established in them was reflected to some extent by the construction of many elegant monuments of modest proportions and the establishment of religious and cultural institutions. The growth of such towns was symptomatic of a phase of societal change characterized by the development of local centres of power. These towns were in some cases autonomous units where the socially dominant groups maintained armed retainers for purposes of defence and made arrangements for the provision of public amenities. Military power was no longer a monopoly of dynastic power. Such developments undoubtedly represented an initial stage in the erosion of central authority. It would appear that there were considerable changes in the pattern of demographic distribution. The development of Polonnaruwa and other inland towns seems to suggest a much larger concentration of settlements in the eastern half of the north central plain.

NOTES :

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