

REPRINTS
FROM
The Journal of Oriental Research
MADRAS



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PRINTED AT THE MADRAS LAW JOURNAL PRESS
MYLAPORE

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FIG. 1—SCULPTURED STELA FROM TAKUA-PA.

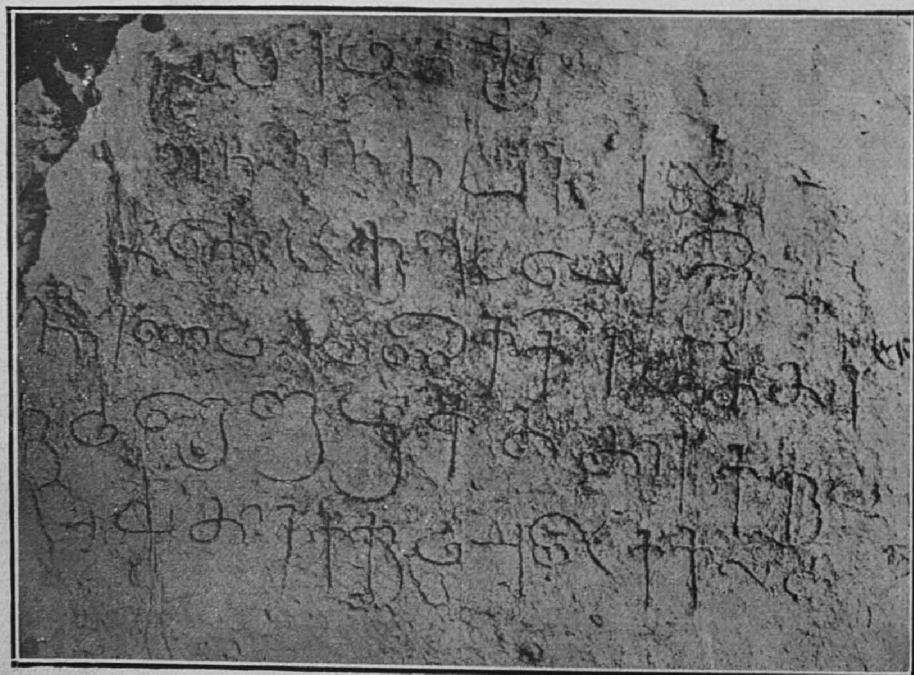


FIG. 2—TAKUA-PA TAMIL INSCRIPTION.

THE TAKUA-PA (SIAM) TAMIL INSCRIPTION

BY

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Discovery and First Report. In 1902, Mr. H. W. Bourke, an engineer of the Royal Siamese Department of Mines, reported to Col. Gerini his discovery in the Takau-pa district (Siam) of some important remains near the upper reaches of the river Takau-pa, remains which marked the site of the old Takau-pa town and which included the inscribed stela that forms the subject of this paper. Mr. Bourke also made a carefully executed squeezing of the inscription and forwarded it to the Colonel. He could not make out the contents of the record, and thought that the language of the inscription might be Sanskrit. But he realised its importance, and saw that it gave evidence of the existence in that neighbourhood of an ancient Indian settlement. "It forms, moreover," he said "a hitherto missing link in the chain of petroglyphic evidence connecting the lower provinces on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula with those adjoining the Kra Isthmus, and proving that the coast in question was dotted practically all the way with Indian settlements and colonies." Citing the expert opinion of Mr. Warrington Smyth on the possibilities of Takau-pa as a harbour, Col. Gerini stated: "There can thus be no doubt that Takua-pa was in the early centuries of the Christian era a well-known harbour and trading centre often resorted to by ships coasting along the Golden Khersonese." All this evidence went to confirm Gerini's identification of Takua-pa with Ptolemy's Takōla and with the Takkōla of the *Milinda Panha*.¹

Detailed archaeological description. In 1909, Commandant L. de Lajonquiere gave a detailed report of his survey of Siamese Antiquities undertaken in the two preceding years. He divided Siamese Ancient Monuments into three groups: Indo-Cambodian, Hindu (non-Cambodian) and Thai (prior to the foundation of Ayuthia). He included the antiquities of Takua-pa in the

1. J. R. A. S., 1904, pp. 242-7.

second group,¹ and I give a translation of the part of his account that concerns us :

“Still further north (of Province Wellesley), the mouth of the river of Takua-pa, descending from a country essentially rich in mines of tin, appears to have been a very important centre of Hindu colonisation. The mining shafts dug at this epoch are clearly distinguished from modern works by a special technique, of such a kind that one cannot attribute them either to the Chinese who later established themselves in numbers on these coasts, or to the Europeans who in their turn came to establish counting-houses like those of Jungceylang.

“The mine shafts are not the only traces that the adventurers who preceded the Thai have left in these parts. They appear to have constructed in the isle of Thung Tunk (the plain of the monument) at least one edifice in bricks of which unfortunately there remain on the surface of the soil only traces too vague for us to draw any sure inference. . . .

“Farther still, in the interior, upstream from the market of Takua-pa, other sculptures are deposited on the bank of the river, under the first trees of the forest, opposite a hill which dominates the left bank and which they call by the name of Khao Phra Narai, ‘the mountain of Viṣṇu.’ There is a large stela of schistose limestone on which have been sculptured, in high relief, three personages of natural size (*see* figure 1). The stela is broken; the tree against which the three fragments have been supported has grown, and the bark of the trunk has spread itself into a padding on some parts actually covered by it. The principal personage appears to be again Śiva between two feminine divinities or celestial *danseuses*. The costumes, in numerous folds treated with details, the profusion of jewels, the elegant movements of the body, recall very nearly the oldest sculptures of Dravidian India. By the side, a stela carries an inscription in six lines, in archaic characters, which has not yet been translated. Sculptures and inscriptions have been found on the hillock which dominates the opposite bank, but I have been able to recognise only very vague traces of the foundations of a sanctuary, of which the dimensions are far from corresponding to the proportions of the sculptured stela.”

1. BCAIC 1909, pp. 234-6.

The same writer once more described the site of our inscription in the following terms:¹ "In an ancient bed of the river of Takua-pa, near a Buddhist convent named Vat Na Mu'ang, was discovered a stela of sandstone, bearing an inscribed text. The writing is Indian and of an indisputable antiquity, but the document has not yet been deciphered."

In his *Essai D'Inventaire Archeologique Du Siam*, M. Lajonquiere noticed the site at much greater length, and no apology is needed for reproducing his statements (in translation).²

"*Khao Phra Narai*—The mountain of Phra Narai is situated at the confluence of the Khlong Pong and the Khlong Ko Sok (propably Srok?) which descend from the dorsal chain; their union a little more downstream with the Khlong Phra Va forms the river of Takua-pa. (This town, better known at present under the name of Talat Jai, the great market, is at two hours' journey downstream from the first of the two confluences.)

"This is a small hill conical in shape, 40 metres high and covered by forests. On the summit one finds only the debris of bricks and two large flat unwrought stones. These few vestiges appear to be all that remains of a small square sanctuary which measured three metres from side to side in the interior and opened to the East.

"On the opposite side of the Khlong Ko Sok, an ornate stela of three Brahmanical figures which came from this small shrine³ is deposited on the bank. Local tradition says that it had been brought from there by the Burmans, during their last invasion, and deposited at the spot where it now is, to await its transport to Burma. But when they were about to proceed with this operation, there fell such violent rains that the spoliators were constrained to abandon it. It was since broken by the wild elephants which were for long the masters of this region devastated by wars. When the inhabitants returned, they found it in the present state and supported the debris against a tree. This tree with a trunk now twenty metres high, divided in two parts, has framed these debris in the development of its trunks, and the folds of the bark cover them in part. (BCAIC 1909, fig. 27).⁴

1. BCAIC 1910, p. 151.

2. BCAIC 1912, pp. 166-9.

3. This modifies the opinion expressed in 1909 that the dimensions of the stela and the temple do not agree.

4. This is our fig. 1.

"It appears to have been cut in a large slab of schistose limestone, on which three figures came out in reliefs exceeding, at certain points, 90 centimetres in thickness.

"The most important, at the centre, represents Śiva standing. The head, (of which the cover has been removed) disappears under a fold of the bark; the feet are broken; they form one piece with a small plinth and tenon lying on the side of the tree. The bust is nude; collars made of gold adorn the neck; above (these) hangs a necklace of pearls increasing (in size) as it descends lower; a girdle of rectangular plaques of gold goes round the chest above the breasts; a thick ribbon woven of many rows of pearls is attached by a wrought buckle on the left shoulder and falls on the right hip; a girdle with a large wrought buckle holds round the edge a long *sarong* with many folds; along the thighs fall the folds of embroidered cloth and cordons from which hang button-like ornaments. The god is represented with four arms; we see only right front and the left front arms; the right posterior arm is only indicated by the lines of its fracture. The fore-arm of the right front arm is raised, the wrist is adorned by three bracelets; the hand, open and raised, is adorned with rings for the little and ring fingers, the thumb appears to hold a cord, which, passing above the right shoulder, comes to attach itself to the thumb of the left front arm. The hand of this arm is supported on the hip; its wrist has three bracelets of which two are of pearls; a large wrought bracelet adorns the biceps.

"The figure which, on the stela common (to all of them), is placed to the right of the god is without doubt that of his wife Pārvaṭī. Probably the Goddess is represented as seated, but the lower part of the body is missing, or is masked by the ligneous developments of the trunk which form a natural niche round the bust. The head is dressed in the form of a high cylindrical chignon formed of tresses gathered up in front and held in position by golden ornaments; a golden crown with two large ear-laps sustain this edifice of hair. The countenance is round, the eyes lightly turned up, the nose is broken, the mouth with a thick lower lip is well designed; the bust is nude, a large necklace of pearls hangs on the chest between the well marked breasts; a cordon passed over the left shoulder falls above the right hip; the right arm encircled by pearls at the level of the biceps is lowered and covered largely by the bark; the left arm is

raised, the hand supporting the head-dress; we can only see the upper part of the *sarong* and the knot of the belt.

“The figure to the right represents a *danseuse*; resting on the left knee with the left hand on the hip, she stretches towards the god her right arm which is broken; her head, inclined to the right, is dressed as a high conical chignon held in position by a crown of gold; the face is round, with eyes half-closed with the very curved and slightly upturned eyebrows; the nose, the mouth with thick lips, the accentuated chin, are of a pretty design; a necklace hangs on the chest; a cordon passed over the left shoulder hangs between her two well-developed breasts; the bust is nude, the waist supple and elegant; the left arm is adorned at the biceps by a bracelet worked in a rosaceous pattern, and at the wrist by three bangles; the pelvis and the legs are very tightly draped in a long *sarong* which descends in multiple folds; the feet with anklets of metal are nude.

“These three figures of natural size are very superior as sculpture to what we have so far found in Indo-China.”

“*Inscription of Takua-pa*—An inscription was found on the Khao Phra Narai at the same time as the stela of which we have just spoken. Transported at first to the Vat Vieng which is near, then to the Vat Na Muang which is in the environs of Talat Jai, it has been replaced, on the demand of the inhabitants of the Canton, by the side of the three statues.

“It is an unwrought slate-coloured slab, polished only by the flow of water. On the surface so obtained has been engraved an inscription of six lines, in cursive characters carelessly traced which seem nevertheless to be very legible. (IV or V century)”.

Studies of the Inscription. In 1913 Hultzsch published¹ a tentative study of the inscription from the impression sent to Gerini by Bourke and ‘a photograph of the back of the impression’ supplied by Finot, published by Hultzsch and now republished with this article (fig. 2). Next year, the same scholar gave a much more satisfactory interpretation with a fresh reading.² Lastly, T. A. Gopinatha Rao made another attempt to interpret this brief but very interesting and in some ways enigmatic record in the course of a discussion on the *maṇi-grāman*.³

1. JRAS 1913, pp. 337 ff.

2. JRAS 1914, pp. 397 ff.

3. E. I, XVIII, pp. 71-2.

It seems to me that the full import of parts of the inscription has not been brought out in any of these discussions, and that there is some uncertainty still hanging round some of the readings proposed by Hultzsch. This is my reason for attempting this fresh study, besides the desire to bring together in one place all the chief archaeological notices of the inscription and the circumstances leading to its discovery.

The interpretation of the sculptures. It will be seen that Lajonquiere is inclined to identify the three sculptured figures as Śiva between two feminine divinities, or, on a second view, with Pārvatī to his right and a *danseuse* to his left. We are not aware that Śiva is ever thus represented between two feminine forms. Unfortunately, we get no clue from the face of the god, which is invisible and which may be expected to carry a third frontal eye on the forehead, or from any emblems of the god or the attendant females. The only guiding factor is the presence of the inscription which, though it is engraved on a separate slab, seems still to be closely connected with the sculptures and has the same provenance as the sculptured slabs themselves. The inscription clearly bears the name Nāraṇam of a tank the digging of which is recorded in it. This factor, and the name of the hill from which they come, the mountain of Viṣṇu, would lead one naturally to expect that the sculptures represent Viṣṇu and his two consorts—Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī. The exquisite ornamentation of all the figures, and the absence of any Śaiva symbols whatsoever—it must be admitted that there are not any Vaiṣṇava symbols either—may lend support to this suggestion. From the sketch before us, we see that the female figure to the left of the god, Bhūdevī, is clearly seated, though the posture of the figure on the right, Śrīdevī, is rendered doubtful by its lower portion being overspread by the bark of the tree. And it is also a matter for consideration whether these goddesses can be represented as seated in the presence of a standing figure of Viṣṇu.

The inscription. I now proceed to give my reading of the inscription noting and explaining my differences from Hultzsch's second reading of the record published in 1914 :

1. . . [ra]varman ku[ṇā*]
2. . . mān tān naṅ[ū*]r[u*]ḍai[yā*]
3. n toṭṭa kuḷam pēr śrī [Avani*]
4. nāraṇam maṇikkirāmattār[k*]
5. kum senāmukattārkkum
6. . patār-kkum aḍaikkalam.

Speaking generally, the considerations on which Hultzsch fixed the date of this inscription in the eighth or the ninth century A. D.¹ are perfectly valid, as a comparison of the letters *t*, *na* and *ṇa* in this inscription with the same letters in the Pallava Tamil records of the period mentioned will easily show ; the sign for the medial *ā* being joined to the preceding consonant, and the use of the short vertical stroke on the top of a letter for marking the *virāma* are also unmistakable signs of the antiquity of our record. To take one by one the points of doubtful reading in it :

Line 1.—The first letter may be a grantha *ra* with the upper half mutilated, if we neglect the small stroke to the left of the letter proceeding from its base. The letter before *ku* was at first read by Hultzsch as *t*, and later as *n* with the *virāma*. If it is a *n* with *virāma*, the vertical stroke of the main letter is missing, as may be seen by comparing it with *n* with a *virāma* occurring twice in the next line. The letter may be a *ta* and Gopinatha Rao prefers this reading. The word *madaku*, a sluice, suggests itself, if we put aside the associations in our mind arising out of a constant study of late Pallava and early Cōla Tamil records. But this line and the beginning of the next are so fragmentary that one can hardly be sure of one's ground in interpreting their purport. Hultzsch recognises the traces of a *ṇa* after *ku*, whereas Gopinatha Rao reads it as *ya* to bring it into line with the Tamil inscriptions of South India which invariably give the *yāṇḍu*, regnal year, after the king's name. The letter is very indistinct, and I am more inclined to agree with Hultzsch.

Line 2.—I read *Naṅg[ū]r[u]ḍai[yā]* for Hultzsch's *Naṅgū-ra[ḍ]ai*. The sign of the medial vowel in *kū* and *ru* is by no means distinct, the less so in the latter case than in the former. Comparing however the *ḍai* of 1. 6 in *aḍaikkalam* with the blurred letters following *naṅgūru* in this line, it is possible to make out a part of *yā* following a not very well formed *ḍai* ; and this naturally suggests my reading. Whether the phrase is to be completed by the initial *n* of the next line, or some letters are missing at this point, is not easy to decide. I am inclined to the former alternative.

Line 3.—Hultzsch says : " After *śrī* (in this line) there are traces of a Grantha *a* and of a *va*: I feel tempted to supply the

1. JRAS 1913, pp. 337-8.

word *avani*." Risky as this statement appears, it is possible that the ink-impression he was using gave him a more satisfactory clue to this suggestion than the present photograph seems to do. I am inclined to accept it as it fits in very well with the historical probabilities of the case, as will presently become clear.

Line 6.—The first legible letter in this line is doubtless *pa*. I am unable to accept the conjecture of Hultzsch—' *mulu* '. Gopinatha Rao's reading [*ku*] *la* [*t**] *tārkkum* seems to me even less defensible. In fact, neither of these readings is an improvement on the original reading of Hultzsch [*chāpa*] [*t**] *tārkkum*.

The purport of the inscription : Omitting the uncertain portions, the inscription may be rendered thus : " The tank called Avani-nāraṇam dug by the Lord of Naṅgūr (is placed under) the protection of the members of the Maṅigrāmam, the residents of the military camp and . . . "

Hultzsch observed : " The builder of the tank, whose first name ended in *ravarman* (perhaps Bhāskaravarman ?) evidently was a person of royal descent, and '[Avani] Nārāyaṇa', 'a Viṣṇu on earth,' was a surname of his, after which he called the tank dug by himself ". I have shown above how the lacunæ and the difficulties in first line and the beginning of the second render them very insecure as a basis for any historical deductions. And Gopinatha Rao is possibly right when he observes : "Dr. Hultzsch's remark, that the remnant of the Sanskrit name *ravarman* in the first line of the record might perhaps be that of Bhāskaravarman, is evidently due to his conviction that the Maṅigrāmattār were members of a trading community belonging to the Malabar coast of the time of the Malabar king Bhāskara Ravivarman."

Now, Avani-nārāyaṇa, is well-known as the surname of the Pallava king Nandi-varman III, the period of whose rule may be taken to be 826-850 A. D. The village Kāverippākkam was called Avani-nārāyaṇa-caturvēdimāṅgalam evidently after him,¹ and the anonymous, but possibly contemporary work, *Nandikalambakam* repeatedly applies the name Avani-nārāyaṇa² to Nandivarman III, the hero of the poem. This name occurs in the form *avani-nāraṇan*, recalling the name *avani-nāraṇam* of the tank mentioned in our inscription, thrice³ in the *Kalambakam*

1. 391 of 1905, 394 of 1905 etc.

2. See verse 3 in the opening and verses 18 22, 64, and 66.

3. vv. 18, 22, 66,

while in the remaining instances we have the more regular form *avani-nārāyaṇan*.

Nandivarman, it is interesting to observe, is also described as the master of a navy. He is called : *āṭkulāṅ-gaḍar-paḍai-yavani-nāraṇan*,¹ i.e., Avani-nāraṇa with the crowded naval force. The expression is indeed capable of being interpreted otherwise into : "Avani-nāraṇa with the crowded ocean-like army;" and excellent analogies for this interpretation may be found in the phrases : "*vilvēlik-kaḍarrāṇai*", 'the ocean-like army surrounded by bows,' of the Vēḷvikūḍi grant; and "*vēṛkaḍar-paḍai-vēndar*"² i.e., "the kings with ocean-like armies (armed with) javelins," of the *Nandikkalambakam* itself. But there can be no manner of doubt attaching to the meaning of another phrase applied to Nandi III in the *Kalambakam*³, viz., *nuraiveṇḍirai-nārkaḍar-koru-nāyakan*, 'the unrivalled lord of the four seas with white foaming waves.' In the light of this description of the king, the interpretation we have put on the phrase "*āṭkulāṅ-gaḍar-paḍai*" seems to be at least as natural, if not more so, as the alternative interpretation suggested.

The mention in the *Kalambakam* of the navy (*kaḍar-paḍai*) of Nandivarman III is quite in keeping with the presence of the *Maṇigrāmam* on the opposite coast of the Bay of Bengal in the Malaya peninsula, as attested by our inscription. The navy need not necessarily have been a fighting navy in the modern sense of the term; the expression used may be interpreted as a loose reference to the flourishing state of the mercantile marine of the country.

The *Maṇigrāmam* is well-known as a powerful mercantile corporation mentioned in several inscriptions in South India, and apparently in the enjoyment of continued prosperity for a period of several generations. There were other corporations of a more or less similar nature, like the Añjuvaṇṇam, Vaḷañjīyar, Nānādeṣi or Tiṣai-yāryirattu Aiññūrruvar who are also known to have had a share in the overseas trade of Southern India, and who appear to have maintained bands of armed mercenaries for the protection of their interests.⁴ These merchant-guilds enjoyed extra-

1. v. 18.

2. v. 26.

3. *ibid.*

4. See my paper on 'A Tamil Merchant guild in Sumatra' in the *Tidschrift Voor Indische Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde* Vol. 72 (1932), Pt. ii.

territorial rights and were more or less autonomous self-regulating bodies. It is possible that the *Senāmukham* of our inscription mentioned next to the members of the *Maṇigrāmam* was an armed camp of soldiers maintained for their protection by the colony of South Indian merchants settled there. Though the *Mayamata* and the *Kāmikāgama* agree in defining *Senāmukha* as a well-guarded place including the king's palace and residences of members of all castes, we shall not be wrong in assuming that in the present context the term is more loosely used to mean the residential quarters of the soldiers employed by the *Maṇigrāmam* of Takua-pa.

The Viṣṇu temple on the top of the hill must have been built for the use of the Tamil settlers in Takua-pa. From the description of the statues by Lajonquiere and their close resemblances with Pallava sculptures in many details, we may infer that the work was done by artisans from South India employed by these Tamil settlers. Neither the presence of Tamil settlers in such numbers as to require a permanent temple for their worship, nor even the presence of Tamil soldiers, can justify the inference that the Tamils were in the enjoyment of any political power in this region. The celebrated Cūḍāmaṇivarma Vihāra was built in Negapatam in the heyday of Cōḷa ascendancy by the kings of Śrī Vijaya (Sumatra) for the benefit of their citizens settled in the South Indian emporium for purposes of trade, and neither the construction of the Vihāra nor the presence of Sumatrans in Negapatam meant any detraction from the sovereignty of the Cōḷa power. Likewise the Tamil settlers in Takua-pa must be taken to have enjoyed their possessions in this region by the sufferance of the local powers.

The condition of the foreign trade of South India in the days of Nandivaram III is casually attested by the inscriptions of his reign. An inscription from Kāñcīpuram² dated in his eighteenth year grants a licence to the people of Kudiraiccēri, (possibly the same as modern Kudiraippaḷlam in the Poṅṅēri Taluq of the Chingleput district), enabling them to sell in their shops all articles beginning with camphor and ending with sandals :

1. EI, XVIII, p. 72 quotations by Gopinatha Rao.

2. I owe this reference to Miss C. Minakshi, M.A., research scholar in the University Department of Indian History.

Kudiraiccēriyār-kkaṟpūram talaiyāga-cceruppu-kkaḍaiyāga-ellā vyāpāramum kaḍai ēri vāṇigañjeyya-ppeṟuvadāga-ppanittōm.

This mention of camphor is particularly interesting as affording further confirmation of what is suggested by the Takua-pa inscription, *viz.*, the growth and persistence of an active commercial contact between the kingdoms of Southern India and those of the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago. Camphor from Malaya and Sumatra was an important article that entered into the commerce of the Indian ocean and that is mentioned by Arab writers from the ninth century onwards under the name Fansuri, from Fansur the name of a Sumatran kingdom noted by Marco Polo as the home of the best camphor in the world.¹

It is found thus that the various lines of evidence fit into one another very easily and naturally, and the Takua-pa Tamil inscription just furnishes a peep into an aspect, long since forgotten, of the economic relations of South India with the outside world in the ninth century A. D. The evidence from the contemporary inscriptions of Nandivarman's reign and from the literature of his time also goes to confirm the indications furnished by this isolated Tamil record in a foreign land. Just as the Lobœ Toewa Tamil fragment from Sumatra dated in Śaka 1010 forms a unique piece of evidence of the maritime pursuits of the Tamils in the age of the Great Cōlas, so also the Takua-pa inscription deserves to be recognised as equally valuable evidence attesting similarly the maritime trade relations of the late Pallava period, about two centuries earlier than the date of the Sumatran record.

A word on the author of the tank in Takua-pa before we close. If my reading is accepted, it will be seen that he calls himself 'Naṅgūruḍaiyān', Lord of Naṅgūr. Hultsch read the phrase as : 'Naṅgūr-adai . . . totta', translated it into: "which was dug near Naṅgūr", and added : "Naṅgūr seems to have been the Tamil name of the old Hindu settlement, the existence of which has been proved by Gerini". The Indian settlers in the Eastern countries are known often to have carried with them many Sanskritic place-names of legendary fame, but we have not so far come across any other instance of such a definitely Tamil name as Naṅgūr, with the common *ūr* ending in these lands. However that may be, I am tempted to suggest that the Naṅgūruḍaiyān of our inscription was a native of South India, and

1. Yule and Cordier ii, 299 and notes.

was so called because he was born in or held a fief in Nāṅgūr. This place is celebrated in Tirumaṅgai Ālvār's hymns as the cradle of heroes who distinguished themselves, apparently, in the wars of the Pallava monarchs whose sway extended over the Tanjore district and whose feudatories the Nāṅgūr chiefs must have been.¹ It is also known that Nacciṅārkkīṇiyar notes that early Cōḷa king Karikāla married a daughter of the Nāṅgūr chiefs (Vēḷir). Nāṅgūr may well be written as Naṅgūr in epigraphs, and there is nothing improbable in our assuming that in an age when people were living up to the active Tamil ideal of crossing the oceans, if need be, in search of wealth, *tirai-kaḍal-ōḍiyuntiraviyam-tēḍu*,—a prominent noble from Nāṅgūr went over to Takua-pa and became the author of some charitable works in that locality. The name he gave to the tank was reminiscent of the political allegiance he owed to Nandivarman III.

1. *Periya Tirumoli* IV 1, 2; 5, 6; 6, 2; 7, 1.

SELECT OPINIONS.

Hermann Jacobi, Professor of Sanskrit, University of Bonn, 14th December, 1926.—I have perused your New Journal of Oriental Research with great interest. I heartily wish you success in your meritorious undertaking.

L. D. Barnett, School of Oriental Studies, London, 19th December, 1926.—It seems to me to be a good beginning to the enterprise which I hope will be very successful. Some of the matter is very good indeed.

J. Jolly Wurzburg, Germany, 20th December, 1926.—This evidently is a periodical of great promise, with every chance of success.

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