

The Emergence of a New Facet of Our History with the Discovery of the Copper Plate of Codaganga

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A buried element of our heritage was uncovered by the sudden discovery of a rare piece of evidence that was brought to the Archaeological Department from Kurunegala. Four parts of a copper plate with writing on either side of each plate had been inscribed in the Polonnaruwa period during the reign of King Codaganga (1196-97 AD). The Chronicle *Culavamsa* reveals that Codaganga was a nephew of King Nissankamalla (1187-96 AD) who preceded him as the ruler of Sri Lanka. Though the reign of Codaganga was very short, this brings to light a Cola invasion from South India, which was successfully repulsed during this period of reign. The eulogy in this copper plate at the beginning confirms the regency of Codaganga.

The copper plate mentions of a foreign invasion Sri Lanka had experienced during this period. It states that the leaders who repulsed the invading army of Colas (identified as Tamils, who had landed at Mavutu Tota) had been gifted with titles and farm lands.

The undue prominence given to the wars by King Parakramabahu I resulted in some of his generals crowning puppet kings and ruling the country after his demise. The underlying factor emerging from the incidents mentioned in the copper plate is that a certain general with the intention of deposing King Codaganga had foisted an aristocratic of his choice on the throne and had been instrumental in bringing a Cola army from South India, which was summarily routed by the king.

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The copper plate reveals how the Colas, with the four armed forces stormed Mavutu Tota, took over the harbour and subjugated the people whilst making incursions inland. Just two hours before the fifth day of the siege the Cola invasion was quelled. The king elated by the rout of the Cola army by a General named Kilingam Minalnavan is said to have bestowed him with titles and land. These gifts are termed as *Pamunu Dimana* and the presentation of these were considered perpetual by the fact that it was done by the king with an entourage of queens, ministers and generals. The engraving of the copper plate is done by a series of minute punch marks. This method of engraving has hitherto not been found in any inscription either on plate or on rock in Sri Lanka. The moon and the sun engraved on the first copper plate signify that this *Pamunu Dimana* should not be revoked until the moon and the sun continue to exist.

Keywords: four armed forces, titles, ecology, *Pamunu Dimana*