

THE BUDDHIST MONASTERIES OF POLONNARUVA

H. T. Basnayake

The ancient city of Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka covers an area of about 300 acres. The area partially excavated at present extends upto a distance of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from north to south, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from east to west. Within this excavated area lies the old fortified city or citadel of Polonnaruva, oblong in shape, covering an area of about twenty five acres surrounded by a brick rampart, the length of which is 3168 feet on the north, 5346 feet on the west, 3016 feet on the south, 5544 feet on the east. There were apparently four gateways to the citadel, but they were not set at the cardinal points, perhaps due to topographical reasons. The streets ran north-south and east-west but were not aligned in straight lines. Another cross brick rampart divides the city into two parts, of which the southern sector is larger than the northern.

Within the precincts of the southern sector and abutting the Parākrama samudra, the great man-made lake of Polonnaruva, is the inner citadel. This inner citadel situated on a higher level covers an area of about 1320 feet by 722 feet. The area of the inner citadel is exclusively occupied by the royal palaces and other courtly buildings. To the west of the citadel is an apparently reclaimed area of ground projecting out into the lake where Parākramabāhu's successor, Nissankamalla built his council chamber and other structures. The inner citadel contains the palace of Parākramabāhu I and other buildings erected by him. The chronicle says that Parākramabāhu I laid out two gardens, the Nandanuyyāna and the Dipuyyāna within the citadel.¹ It is quite likely, as suggested by Hocart, that the park-like area to the east of the citadel may be the Nandanuyyāna, while the Dipuyyana may have been in the adjoining area where the present rest house stands.² Geiger too suggests that the Dipuyyāna was this latter extent of land which he describes as a promontory.³ Taking into account the topography of this particular area, the opinions of these two scholars seem acceptable. Thus it appears that the inner citadel had been entirely set apart for buildings and pleasure gardens used exclusively for royalty.

1. *Cōlavamsa* (Cv.) (tr. Geiger P. T. S. London 1923) 73 v. 95 ff; 113 ff.

2. *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*, (MASC.), Vol. II, p. 1 ff.

3. Cv. pt. II p. 14, fn. 2.