

**ISDHOO
LOAMAAFAANU**

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INTRODUCTION

General and Historical

"Loamaafaanu" or "Maaloafaanu" in Dhivehi is a land grant inscribed on a copper plate. The word is really made up of three simple words combined. "Lo" has at its roots the Sinhala word "loho" (metal), "maa" is the Sinhala "maha" (great, large, big) and "faanu" which has as its root Sinhala "pan" (leaf), reminding us of the old ways of writing on leaf, most notably the coconut leaf in the Maldives. The Sinhala term for such documents (if one may take the liberty of calling them as such) is "sannasa" (pl:sannas) which mean grant or a deed granting certain privileges. The Sanskrit word for a "loamaafaanu" is "saasanan". It is surprising to note that this grant is called "thaambra maapanu" (page 38, line 5), which when translated would mean a copper plate grant. (Sanskrit : tamra = copper; maha = great, large, big, important, high, eminent; and parna = sheet).

We have named this "loamaafaanu" as ISDHOO LOAMAAFAANU; Isdhoo being the island where the real grant is based. The island is in Hadhdhummathi (now Laamu Atoll) in the southern half of the Maldives (see glossary).

As clearly stated in this "loamaafaanu" itself, it was written in the third regnal year of the Great King Gadanaadheethya (page 2, line 3; page 38, line 5). It is also stated (page 3, line 3) that it was 582 years after the ascension to heaven of Prophet Mohammed that the whole incident mentioned in the grant itself took place at Isdhoo. It is to be noted here that the date given is not the Hijri year, but the year of the death of Prophet Mohammed. This is in keeping with the Buddhist method of dating from Mahaparinirvana (death of Lord Buddha). If we take the third regnal year of Shri Gadanaadheethya to be the five hundred and eighty second year after the death of Prophet Mohammed, then it must be the five hundred and ninety second year of Hijra. The Hijra took place ten year before the death of the Prophet. Then, Shri Gadanaadheethya came to the throne (the "singaasana", as the Maldivians call it) in the year 589 AH, which corresponds to 1191 AD. We have assumed that the king who bore the "biruda", Gadanaadheethya, was the historical Dhinei Kalaminjaa Fanadheetha Mahaaradhun (see glossary). The Late H.C.P. Bell in his monograph (1940) states that Dhinei Kalaminja came to the throne in 1192 AD. But now with new evidence from the "loamaafaanu" we may put the date within the year 1191 AD. We are therefore, able to date this Isdhoo Loamaafaanu precisely to the year 1194 AD or 592 AH. 119

It is hardly possible to ignore some very important facts concerning the Maldives and the Maldivian society of the period. The most striking point comes from the word SHAVAALAKSHADHEEPA (see glossary). This indeed is an unequivocal reference to the

unitary state of the Maldivian islands, numbering, literally, a hundred thousand. This we believe extended to the boundries of the cultural Maldives of today. Though Islam was not then established as a unifying factor, others such as the language and the all-pervading political power of the ruling king held it as one integral state, even though scattered over a vast area of the sea criss-crossed by many seaways. This is fully illustrated in the "loamaafaanu" by the ruling king's power in granting certain benefices in every part of the country to the newly constructed mosque in Isdhoo. It may also be seen from this, that the country was ruled by the king through his secular power and he derived no ruling authority of any accelesiastical form. For it was not yet a full half century since Maldives officially accepted Islam.

Another interesting fact is the king's order assigning serfs (alhu) to the mosque in a similar manner as would be done at a Buddhist monastery. This could be attributed to the then prevailing influence similar to the dating system. With the serfs he also appoints the "maalimu" and "mudhimu" (see glossary). We also believe here that a purely matrilineal mode of descendancecy was in vogue. For these and many more reasons we believe that though Islam prevailed as the official religion, there were vestiges of the former practice handed down from a pre-Islamic era, which have not been completely done away with.

It is with a sense of tribute and reverence that we note the deep knowledge of Islam and its history the writer of this document possessed. Names of the great prophets and the Companions of Prophet Mohammed and the invocations made in their names, in order that the good deed so devoutly carried out by the great king Shri Gadanaadheethya may be perpetuated, are ample proof of this. The writer also mentions a number of misguided creatures of mankind with whom a destroyer of the mosque may lie in hell.

"Loamaafaanu" also enlightens us on the constitution of the Maldives. Some of the various titles then in use came down in history up to the modern times. The office of judges in the system of governing was, indeed, important. There was a judge (Padiyaaru), a chief judge (Uthupadiyaaru) and an administrator of justice (Dhandanaaika). This important function of statehood was, as understood from the document, well developed.

Regarding the names of islands, it may be said that the majority of island names have changed little. These can readily be made out. But there are a few island names which we were unable to reconcile with the modern situation. Some of these islands may have disappeared altogether. Some may have merged with islands bearing a different name and as such lost its own identity, and yet others may have change their names.

A noteworthy feature in the "loamaafaanu" is the complete absence of Arabic personal names for Maldivians. It is quite definite from the "loamaafaanu" that no one, not even the officers charged with judicial office, bore an Arabic name. At the same time we

can be quite certain that the country at this time had officially adopted Islam as the state religion. The writer (whose name and title is given in page 38, line 5 and page 39, line 1) had a deep knowledge of Islam and Arabic terminology. From this we do not hesitate to state that, though Islam was the state religion, few if any had adopted names to go with it, and nationalism was a more powerful force than religion. We also believe that though "sharee-aathu" (see glossary) was mentioned as a code of law, there was yet another, possibly a secular, legal system in existence. Maldivians of the period were more conscious of their national identity than conformity with tradition in faith. The other outstanding feature in names is the identification of a person with his family or clan. Though still prevalent, this custom is no longer observed very much. The Sinhala style "-ge" may have been in vogue with the same connotations then. The present generation uses "-ge" to indicate the house as a domiciliary address. What is mentioned in the "loamaafaanu" in all likelihood was the origin out of which evolved the present usage.

As observed earlier this "loamaafaanu" reveals much about the Maldives of the period. It is for students of Dhivehi Studies to immerse themselves in this deeper and engage themselves in further research and investigation on its religious, historical, linguistic and cultural aspects.

Palaeography

The document is inscribed in the script known as Eveylaa Akuru (ancient letters) in Dhivehi - the earliest writing system known to have been used in the country. This closely resembles the script employed in contemporary Sinhalese epigraphical records such as the document known as the Copper Plate Grant of Panakaduva of Vijayabahu I.

Unlike the Thana script now in use, this script is written from left to right. It is syllabic in structure and the spacing of words is not observed, the writing being engraved in one continuous line broken only at the end of the line. Thus a particular line may begin or end at the middle of a word without any consideration for the natural break in pronunciation. The copper sheets are engraved on both sides, and on each side there are five lines of writing - the exception being the last page (p. 40) which has only one and half lines of writing. On page 1, the short sentence in Devanagari script (given as line 1 in our transliteration) is in reality not a separate line but is inscribed within the seal on the left hand edge of the sheet. As the document was deciphered from photographs, it is not possible to give the dimensions of the copper plates or the size of the letters. Several pages were found with lines partly damaged and hence some letters undecipherable, top and bottom lines being mostly susceptible to such damage.

The letters represent two categories of sounds - i.e. vowels and consonants. In the initial position of a word, vowel sounds are generally represented by separate letters and in non-initial position by fili (vowel strokes). A fili may occur either in front or after a letter, or above or below it. When a consonant is written separately with no fili attached to it, that represents the particular consonant sound with the inherent vowel sound a :e.g.

ക = ka

ഗ = ga

മാ = ma

Consonants are also written in clusters signifying the omission of medial vowels.

In the initial position of words, the vowel symbols that occur are the following. They are listed with their corresponding phonological values.

ക	a
കയ	a
കായ	aa
കിയ	aa
കി	i
കിയി	i
കു	u
കുമ	e or ee
കു	o or oo

In a few instances, the symbols *ക*, *കയ*, *കായ*, *കി*, *കിയി*, *കു*, *കുമ*, and *കു* (a, aa, i, u, e and o) are found to occur in non-initial positions too as in the following words :

ക	in	കായതി	(ga-athi)
കയ	in	കായ്യാ	(shadhiaa)
കി	in	കിയാ	(pagaai)
കി	in	കിയതി	(vyauthi)
കു	in	കുമക	(passieka)
കു	in	കുതി	(vaothi)

In the non-initial position, the following fili (vowel strokes) are used to represent vowel sounds :

ക	aa	കായ്യാ	(vadhaarai)
ക	i	കി	(vathi)
ക	ii	കിയി	(nukee)
ക	u	കിയതി	(maarasun)
ക	u	കിയതി	(numarai)
ക	u	കിയതി	(puvaka)
ക	u	കിയതി	(rudin)
ക	uu	കിയതി	(muudhimata)
ക	e/ee	കിയതി	(sindhe/aneka)
ക	ai	കിയതി	(viidhelai)
ക	o/oo	കിയതി	(kotu/shobuma)


Only one symbol is written for both e and ee (ඉ) and similarly, one for both o and oo (ඔ). However, it is possible to surmise that in actual pronunciation, the difference in length was obtainable, as the words given above would show. This feature is not unusual to Indian scripts.


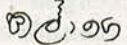
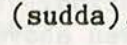

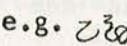
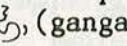

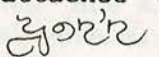
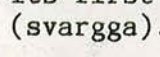
The consonant symbols recorded in the document and their phonological values are given below:



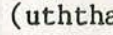
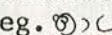
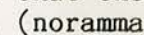

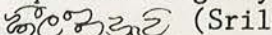

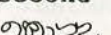


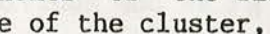
ඔ	k
ඔ	kh
ඉ	g
ඊ	t
උ	d
ඌ	n
ඍ	th
ඎ	dh
ඏ	dh
ඐ	dh-h (aspirate dh)
එ	n
ඒ	p
උ	b
ඌ	m
ඍ	y (This symbol is apparently used for both a and y)
ඎ	r
ඏ	l
ඐ	v
එ	ś
ඒ	sh
උ	s
ඌ	h
ඍ	lh

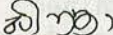
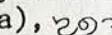

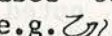
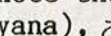

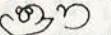
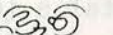

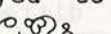
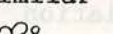
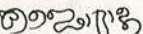
As shown above, two aspirate symbols are recorded - viz. aspirate kh (ඔ) and aspirate dh-h (ඐ). However, it is likely that the aspirate quality was not obtained in actual pronunciation, and these letters were pronounced k and dh respectively. Instances of the same word being spelt with the two different symbols in different places (e.g. කාපුර and කාපුර for kaapurun) support this conclusion. (It may be noted here that old Sinhalese had lost the aspirate sounds at a very early stage.) Similarly, though there are three sibilant symbols corresponding to palatal s, cerebral sh and dental s in Sanskrit, it is likely that they were pronounced alike. In the case of both aspirates and sibilants, it is likely that the symbols were used to represent conventional spelling. On the other hand, it is likely that the dental n and cerebral n carried a distinct difference in pronunciation though this difference is lost in modern Dhivehi.

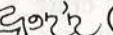
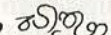
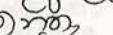
In the writing system, certain "consonantal strokes" are also employed with some consonant symbols :

- (a)  . This is used to indicate that the inherent vowel in the consonant is deleted. eg. මාස්ඨිඩා (masdhida). It corresponds to the sukun in the Thana script.

- (b)  . This is used to indicate that the consonant to which it is attached is to be doubled. e.g.  (Kallage),  (sudda).
- (c)  . This is used to indicate that the consonant to which it is attached is preceded by a nasal consonant - e.g.  (vansa);  (gangaa).
- (d)  . Placed above the letters, this is used to indicate that the consonant cluster to which it is attached has the consonant r as its first sound - e.g.  (puurbbe),  (svargga).

Double consonant clusters (i.e. doubling of the same consonant) is met with in many places in the document, and this is represented in the script in several ways. The system of doubling found in such words as kallage was described earlier. Doubling of the consonant  (tha) is usually effected by attaching the symbol  to the bottom of the letter - e.g.  (uththara). The most frequent method of writing a double consonant cluster is by placing the two consonant symbols together so that they touch one another - eg.  (kaatta),  (noramma). In the case of  (n), one letter is placed slightly higher in the line than the other - e.g.  (Srilannadhuvi). When two consonants are thus written touching one another, the fili denoting the vowel e (i.e. ) in respect of the second consonant is placed in front of the cluster - e.g.  (komme). Similarly in case of the vowel o, the two components of the fili ( and ) are placed on either side of the cluster, e.g.  (dhuppolhee).

Dissimilar consonant clusters are also written in the same way by placing the two consonant symbols together touching one another - e.g.  (sinthaa),  (pange). In such clusters the fili for the vowels e and o are attached in the same way as for two consonant clusters. The symbol  is used to denote the final ya in a consonant cluster - e.g.  (vyana),  (vathye). Similarly the symbol  attached to the lower part of the letter is used to mark the final ra of a cluster - e.g.  (krana),  (dhriti). The consonant stroke "r" which denotes r as the first member of a cluster was described above - e.g.  (svargga). In some instances, conjoint symbols comprising the components of the two letters are employed to write dissimilar consonant clusters - e.g.  (laksha),  (pansha)  (kandoraai).

Three consonant clusters are also found. But in most such cases, two of them comprise the doubling of the same consonant, to which a third dissimilar consonant is added - e.g.  (puurbbe),  (siththra). One exception is  (thantra) - a cluster of three dissimilar consonants.

Occasionally, the same word is found spelt in more than one way - e.g. ද්‍රාගදාඞී (dhragadaai) and ද්‍රාගදාඞී (dhraggadaai); ත්‍රේ (thre) and ත්‍රේ (ththre); වීන (viana) and වීන (vyana).

Apart from such variations, some scribal errors are also noticed, where a letter or a fili is found inadvertently omitted, or the wrong letter used - e.g. මල (male for maale); සහල (sadhala for sakala).

Language and Grammar

In respect of the format, language and grammatical structure, the document closely resembles ancient Sinhalese inscriptions of about the 10th century A.D. The document can be divided into two broad sections. The first traces the geneology of the reigning monarch and continues in the form of a birudha (panegyric) to him in pedantic prose. The second section forms the actual message to be conveyed, i.e. the grant of land and other benefices, immunity from dues, assignment of serfs and other injunctions. This is followed by an exhortation regarding the consequences of the violation of the grant. The document concludes with the names of the scribe and the signatories to the grant. Thus in format it is identical with the Hadhdhummathi (Dhabidhoo) Loomaafaanu already published, and is very much similar to Sinhalese documents of a similar nature.

The text is written in a rambling language with long meandering sentences running to great length wherein the subject-predicate structure is obscure. A single sentence could run to several pages, joined together with a series of absolutives and ending with the finite verb dhinu (gave). The subject of the sentence is often lost sight of and left to be understood from the context. Hence the language and the syntactical features share much in common with the contemporary Sinhalese inscriptions - the notable divergence being in the vocabulary. (The loomaafaanu contains a large number of vocables unfamiliar to Sinhalese. This will be discussed later.)

The nominal inflection in this phase of the language seems to agree more with ancient Sinhalese than with modern Dhivehi. For example, the genitive suffix -ge which in modern Dhivehi is used with animate and inanimate nouns, is here confined to the animate alone, as in Sinhalese. On the other hand, the use of the locative in the inanimate used here to denote the possessive sense, (e.g. madhulhe - of the atoll, geme - of the village, sime - of the boundaries) is a regular feature in old Sinhalese. This locative suffix -e in itself is a feature shared in common with old Sinhalese. The plural declension is confined to the animate, while in the inanimate, the stem form of the noun is mostly used to denote the plural. An exception seems to be avurodhun (years) appearing in the geneological section of the document where the language is of a pedantic nature.

Of the nominal inflection, the animate genitive in -ge is met with quite frequently. Forms attested are in the singular (rasge, kallaage, sudeage, develaage) and also in the plural (rasunge, meesunge, minivanunge). Using the stem form without a suffix to express the possessive sense is found in many instances, both in the singular (aidiga = of Aidiga, budhya - of Budhya) and in the plural (maarasun = of the great king; raadagurun = of the royal preceptor - honorific plural). This possessive in -ge and the use of the zero suffix to express possession are all too familiar to a student of old Sinhalese. A peculiar possessive formation is rasunasya in the geneological section where the Sanskrit genitive suffix -sya is clearly in evidence.

Equally productive is the dative formation in -ta which is shared by both animate and inanimate nouns, and which happens to be the dative suffix in Sinhalese as well. The animate noun has recorded forms in the singular (maalimakata, muudimakata) and in the plural (dheyvataainata, veeranata, meesunata, korunata). The inanimate records forms only in the singular, and such forms are found in profusion (masdhidata, verata, isdhuvata, kulayata). Similarity with old Sinhalese is obvious.

As in old Sinhalese, locative case is recorded only for inanimate nouns, and the suffix is -e, which too is common to both languages. Several singular forms are found - e.g. mathye, vathye, dise, masdhide, geme, bithe and so forth. An exceptional locative form is bimeki - "on a piece of land" (p.3), and the case suffix used here (i.e. -i) seems to be a contraction of the old Sinhalese -hi (cf. Sinhalese - bimek-hi). It is interesting to note that -e, though it is the singular suffix, is also used with plural nouns as in sime "in the boundaries".

Another interesting aspect of the nominal inflection is the formation of the ablative (-i.e. the idea "from"), which has close affinity with the old Sinhalese model. The inanimate takes for the most part, the ablative suffix -en (dhunien, gemen, mathyen), and its variant -un is also attested (ratun, pagun). Only singular forms of the ablative are recorded. The animate noun forms the ablative by attaching the postposition "kren" to the oblique case form (e.g. minivanun kren, dhuveseen kren, dhareen kren, mathanamin kren). This is identical with the Sinhalese model - the postposition used being "keren". In the animate, only plural forms are recorded in the document.

Also available is the accusative case which in the inanimate singular carries no suffix - the stem form itself being used to give the accusative (object) sense. Examples are many. To cite a few - masdhidu, mumbaru, rat, vathi, gevathi, imi, svargga, pen, paru, verimaana. As noted above, avurodhun is available in the plural. In the animate, several plural forms carrying the suffix -un and its variant -in are noted. To cite a few examples - kaapurun, meesun, alhun, bandaarain, dhareen. The formation in both the animate and the inanimate is identical with the Sinhalese model.

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A few instrumental case forms are also noted. In the animate singular, the nouns *beni* and *malu* stand in the stem form and convey this sense. In the plural, *-un* and *-in* are the case suffixes (e.g. *peythaambarun*, *rasun*, *kamgathivarakun*, *dheyvathaain*). In some instances, *radhun* and *maarasun* though singular, take the plural suffix - another example of the honorific plural. In all aspects, similarity with old Sinhalese is clear. Nominative case forms are rare. One clear example is *padibathaa*. *Masansree* in the list of signatories may also be taken as in the nominative.

Coming to the verbal inflection, a noteworthy feature is that though the document is of considerable length, finite verbal forms recorded are few in number. Out of them, the most frequently found is the passive form *dhinu* (gave) which is the equivalent of the Sinhalese *dhini* found so often in the inscriptional language. A few first person, singular, present tense forms are noted - e.g. *kiyami* (I say), *marame* (I kill), *kreme* (I do). The third person, plural, present tense form *kiyathi* (they say) and its variant *kyathi* are found. In the third person, singular, past tense, *lee* (he wrote) is recorded. *Kiyathi*, *kiyami* and *lee* have the identical forms in old Sinhalese, while *marame* and *kreme* have the Sinhalese equivalents *marami* and *keremi*.

Of the verbal forms, absolutive is the most productive. One category of absolutives is formed with the suffix *-e* (e.g. *bidhe*, *vedhe*, *gene*, *nikme*) which corresponds to the suffix *-a* in old Sinhalese. Another category takes the suffix *-ai* (*upurai*, *gasai*, *sadhai*, *obai*) of which the Sinhalese variant *-ay* is frequently found in inscriptional Sinhalese. Also in the causative are such forms as *kiavai*, *karavai*, *gasvai*, *sitvai*, and they bear close affinity with Sinhalese. *Kot*, *kotu* and *dhee* are other absolutive forms which have the identical forms in Sinhalese. Compound absolute forms such as *balai gene* (Sinhalese - *balaa gena*) are also attested.

The present participle is formed (as in Sinhalese) with the suffix *-na*. To cite a few examples; *dhakvana*, *kрана (=karana)*, *idhuna*, *vadhina*, *negena*. With *kotu* are found such participial forms such as *dhakvane kotu*, *sadhane kotu*, *vane kotu* and so forth, which have the Sinhalese equivalents *dhakvanu kota*, *sadhanu kota*, *vanu kota* and such. The past participle has such forms as *vee* (Sinhalese *vuu*), *keruvee* (Sinhalese *karavuu*), *dhin* (Sinhalese *dhun*), *nukkee* (Sinhalese *nokii*) and *thibi*, while the involitive verb yields such forms as *negunu*, *obuna*, *vuna*, the formation of which corresponds to Sinhalese.

Of the particles, the emphatic particle "me" (Sinhalese *ma*) is frequently met with. So is the conjunctive particle "i" (Sinhalese *ya/yi*) which takes the form *-aai* in combination with other words (eg. *pagaai*, *bollaai*, *bulathaai*, *puvakaai*). The negative particle is "nu" corresponding to "no" in Sinhalese - e.g. *nukkee*, *nugatha*. The quotative has "vi e" which has the Sinhalese equivalent "yi" or "kiyaa".

Of particular interest are such compound formations as maithakun (mother and all children), dharithakun (all children), thinmaun (mother and two children.) Such compounds seem to be a feature peculiar to Dhivehi.

As observed earlier, the syntactical pattern of the language of this document is very much in agreement with the old Sinhalese inscriptions. Sentences are usually long and complex ending with the verbal form "dhinu" (gave) with the subject (the king) understood. The length of the sentence is broken up into a large number of clauses each ending with an absolute form (e.g. upurai - having uprooted, veedhelai - having freed). Royal injunctions within main sentences are punctuated with participial forms coupled with the absolute kotu (e.g. sadhanee kotu - having made to be decorated, dhenee kotu - having made to be given, dhakvaneer kotu - having made to be presented). (In the present translation, we have not translated all absolute forms with "having...." as that would not read very well in English). In introducing lists of benefices or grants, sentences with finite verbs kiyathi (they say), kiyami (I say) are found, but the subject is not expressed. A sentence with distinct subject-finite verb relationship is "Maarasun vidhaalheen theeperudhuvi maanse vasu sudhisira kisenu brokeminata dhaa aa idhuna surisiru nam padibathaa lee" (As the king proclaimed, the padibathaa named Surisiru, born of the womb of Sudhisira of the clan of Maanse of Theeperudhoo, begotten by Brokeminata, wrote) occurring at the end of the document.

While in orthography, grammar and syntax the document agrees closely with old Sinhalese, the vocabulary is of a more heterogenous nature. A large majority of words could be traced to Sinhalese, or their Sinhalese equivalents could be found. In the birudha portion, and also scattered in the document are many Sanskrit words too. Then there is a large number of words which can be considered as confined to Dhivehi or used in particular Dhivehi meanings (e.g. athelhu, athpathpaagu, dragadu, varuvaa, maavaruvaa, mudhalu, beesvai and so forth). Some Sanskrit words are also used in meanings peculiar to Dhivehi (e.g. dheyvathaain, dharma, veera, samsaara). In addition, there is a good number of words of Arabic (and some Persian) origin, especially in the expression of religious concepts and practices (e.g. sheriaathu, shadhiaa, shaadhat, sunnath, mumbaru, dhunie, kiaamath, ramadhaan, masdhidu and so forth).

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This document was deciphered and transliterated entirely from photographs, and at no stage of the process did the authors have the benefit of seeing the original loomaafaanu. It is likely that at least some of the lacunae in the decipherment could be filled if the original document is examined, as minute details are not discernible on the photographs. Bracketed portions in the text indicate conjectural reading owing to damage to the plates.

The system of transliterating Dhivehi words and the text in English letters used in this publication is the one that is currently employed officially in the Republic of Maldives.

Plate numbers are given in accordance with the sequence of plates in the original text, and correspond to the page numbers of the transliteration and the translation.

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Hassan Ahmed Maniku
G.D. Wijayawardhana

Colombo
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