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# **JOURNAL OF THE EPIGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF INDIA**

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Secretary and Executive Editor  
**K.V. RAMESH**  
  
Editor  
**M.D. SAMPATH**



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*Secretary and* : **K.V. RAMESH**  
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This issue is dedicated to

**Late SRI. H.K. NARASIMHASWAMI**

Retd. Superintendent for Epigraphy

Archaeological Survey of India and

Honorary Fellow of the Society

## EDITORIAL

*It is with a sense of fulfilment that we are placing in the hands of our members the 25th Volume of our journal on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Society. That, even in the face of steady increase in the cost of paper and printing, the Society has been able to bring out this annual issue without any break is no mean achievement. This is in no small measure due to the encouragement and support we have received from the members of the Executive Committee as well as the members of the Society.*

*It is as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the MGM College, Udupi that the Rashtrakavi Govinda Pai Samshodhana Kendra is hosting the Silver Jubilee Congress of our Society at Udupi. It is our bounden duty to place on record our sincere thanks to the authorities of the Academy of the General Education, Manipal, the MGM College and the Rashtrakavi Govinda Pai Samshodhana Kendra for their nice gesture.*

*We are deeply grateful to our Chairman Dr. S.H. Ritti for his guidance, abiding interest and help in running the affairs of our society. Our Secretary and Executive Editor has been elected as the Honorary Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bombay (1999) and has been awarded the Chidananda Praśasti for the year 1999. He has also been invited to be the Honorary Director of the prestigious Oriental Research Institute of the Mysore University (Since October, 1998).*

*Our Editor Dr. M.D. Sampath has taken over as the Director of the Epigraphy branch of the Archaeological Survey of India as the crowning achievement of an illustrious career. Our hearty felicitations to him.*

*We would like to thank our Treasurer, Shri. P. Natarajan who, ever since he assumed the responsibility, has been presenting us with duly attested and audited statements of accounts. We take this opportunity to thank our Auditor Shri K.R. Lakshmish of Muthanna & Co.*

*We are extremely thankful to Dr. S.S. Iyer for helping us in correcting proofs of this issue.*

*We would be failing in our duty if we do not thank Shri S.K. Lakshminarayana of Readyprint and his staff, particularly Mr. Shyam, Ms. Uma and Mr. Manjunath and others for accomplishing this job on time.*

*We conclude as usual with the Society's motto vṛiddhir=astu, 'may there be all round progress'.*

Mysore  
20-04-1999

K.V. RAMESH  
Secretary & Executive Editor

M.D. SAMPATH  
Editor

## CONTENTS

Editorial	i
1. Presidential Address <i>Iravatham Mahadevan</i>	1
2. Shore Temple - South-side: Capital Inscription <i>Michael Lockwood and A. Vishnu Bhat</i>	20
3. Inscribed pottery and a seal from Karnataka <i>A.V. Narasimha Murthy, D.V. Devaraj</i>	26
4. Kerala Inscriptions with special reference to an epitaph from Baliapaṭam <i>M. Ilyas Quddusi</i>	29
5. Kēraḷa Inscriptions - A Study <i>N. Pankaja</i>	37
6. Role of Segmentation Technique for Sample Epigraphy Text: A Case Study <i>H.K. Anasuya Devi</i>	40
7. The rise and fall of a mahāsabhā of Tirunallāru - A case study <i>G. Vijayavenugopal</i>	51
8. An Arabic Epigraph pertaining to early Islamic mission to Kerala <i>G.S. Khwaja</i>	54
9. Historicity of King "Pu" of the Sangsi Memorial Inscription from Kolhapur District <i>H.S. Thosar</i>	58
10. Perso-Arabic Inscriptions from Chitradurga District (Karnataka) <i>M. Yaseen Quddusi</i>	65
11. Kannada inscriptions of Kalyāṇa Chāḷukyas and Hoysaḷas - Recent discoveries <i>M.D. Sampath</i>	69

12. Tiruvidāndai inscription of Vīrapāṇḍyadēva  
*S. Rajavelu* 76
13. Territorial Division as gleaned from Memorial Stones  
*K. Rajan* 79
14. An insight into the past history of Paṇaiyars from the inscriptions  
*T. Thangavel, S. Sowmiyanarayana, J. Chidambaranathan* 92
- ✓ 15. The Hindu Temple at Ayōdhyā - Pre-Bābarī Mosque  
Sanskrit Inscription from Ayōdhyā  
*Ajay Mitra Shastri* 98
16. Temburu Plates of Anantavarman  
*Subrata Kumar Acharya* 106
17. New Pāṇḍya inscriptions from Paṇaiyūr  
*C. Santhalingam* 110
18. Pātagaṇḍigūḍem plates of Ehavala Chāntamūla  
*N.S. Ramachandra Murthy* 114
19. Polity of the Harappan country based on seals readings with Aksha  
*Ramesh Jain* 124
20. The Vēlirs: Were they the Vēlālas?  
*S.D.Nellai Nedumaran, S.Ramachandran* 139
21. Book Reviews:  
*Madhav N.Katti and Leslie C.Orr* 153

## THE EARLIEST INSCRIPTIONS OF KERALA

**Iravatham Mahadevan**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to the Executive Committee of the Epigraphical Society of India for conferring on me the honour of being elected the General President of the XXIV Annual Congress of the Society being held at Thrissur, Kerala, in May 1998. It must indeed be a rare event for an 'outsider' like me, without affiliation to the Departments of Epigraphy of the Central or State governments, universities or other academic institutions, to be conferred this privilege. I accept the honour with humility, regarding it more as a recognition of the contributions made by amateur scholars to Indian Epigraphy.

It is a happy coincidence that another amateur scholar of rare distinction, Sri. N. Sethuraman of Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu, is being honoured at this Congress with the award of the *tāmrāpatra* of the Epigraphical Society of India, which he so richly deserves. Sri Sethuraman's contributions to Tamil Epigraphy, especially his pioneering endeavour to place the vexed Pandyan chronology on a firm scientific footing, needs no elaboration before this well-informed audience. To him I extend, on behalf of all of you and on my own behalf, our hearty congratulations and best wishes for many more years of fruitful service in the cause of Indian Epigraphy.

When I learnt that this Congress is being held at Thrissur, especially to commemorate the Centenary of Epigraphical Research in Kerala, the choice of the topic for my presidential address became almost automatic. I propose to devote this lecture to a study of the earliest known inscriptions of Kerala, availing myself of this unique opportunity to report to the distinguished audience of epigraphists assembled here, the preliminary results of the fieldwork at Edakal and Ezhuttukkallu in Kerala undertaken by me and my colleagues during

1995-96. The objective of the exercise was to copy and publish the six early inscriptions reported from these sites a long time ago, but almost completely forgotten by later researchers. An unexpected bonus has been the fresh discovery by our team of two more Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions at Edakal.

### **Acknowledgements**

The fieldwork reported here is the joint endeavour of two teams of scholars who share the credit for the discovery, re-discovery and revised readings of the inscriptions. However the responsibility for the preliminary interpretations of the readings proposed in this Paper is solely mine; there may be scope here for further improvements.

The members of the team which visited Edakal twice (in October 1995 and again in February 1996) are, besides myself, Profs. Rajan Gurukkal and M.R. Raghava Varier (Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam), Dr. S. Swaminathan (Directorate of Epigraphy, ASI, Mysore) and Sri A. Arumugha Seetharaman, Thanjavur. Excellent local arrangements for the field trip were made by Sri Viswas Metha IAS, Collector of Wynad, who even took the trouble of accompanying us to the cave which can be reached only after an arduous climb.

The members of the team which visited Ezhuttukkallu in October 1995 included, besides myself, Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan (formerly of Calicut University), Prof. M.R. Raghava Varier, Dr. S. Swaminathan and Mr. Donald Davis, Research Scholar, (University of Wisconsin, USA). Our thanks are due to Sri Matthew, District Forest Officer, Nilambur, who provided us with an armed escort for our rather adventurous trip deep inside the Nilambur forest frequented by wild elephants.

### **I. Inscriptions from the Edakal Cave**

Edakal, about 10 km. SW of Sultan's Battery in Wynad District, Kerala, is situated almost at the tri-junction of the present States of Karnataka, Kerala



and Tamilnadu. The hill here is about 1500 ft. above the local ground-level and 4000 ft. above the mean sea-level. On the western slope of the hill near the summit is a large cavern whose walls are covered with pre-historic rock-carvings among which are found a few inscriptions of a later period.

The cave was discovered in 1894 by F. Fawcett, the then District Superintendent of Police, Malabar. He visited the cave several times more during the succeeding two years and made careful drawings and photographs of the rock-carvings. He transmitted the photographs to E. Hultzsch, the then Government epigraphist, for his comments on the inscriptions. Hultzsch made immediate arrangements for taking estampages (see Pl. I, Figs. 1-4) and published a very brief note on them in *ARE* 1897 (Nos. 120-123). He also forwarded more detailed comments on the inscriptions to Fawcett, which were published by him together with the excellent estampages in his Paper (F. Fawcett, 'Notes on the Rock carvings in the Edakal cave, Wynaad', *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XXX, 1901, repr. 1985, pp. 409-21). For a very recent re-interpretation of the rock-carvings, one may consult 'Edakal Rock Engravings: Morphology and Meanings', Rajan Gurukkal, *Lateral Study Series* No. 12, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam.

**A. Inscription No. 1: The Earliest Sanskrit Inscription in Kerala (Pl. I, Fig. 1):**

An inscription in Sanskrit in Southern Brāhmī characters of ca. 5th cent. AD is engraved in a single line on the south wall of the Edakal cave and is still in an excellent state of preservtion. Hultzsch has read and translated the inscription as follows:

*Śrī - Vishṇuvarmma [ṇaḥ\*] Kuṭumbiya-kula-var[d]dhanasya li[kh]ita[m]\**

'The writing of the glorious Vishṇuvarman, the propagator (i.e., descendant) of the Kuṭumbiya family'.

Hultzsch has made the following comments on the text :

'The word *Kuṭumbiya* will now have to be taken as the proper name of Vishṇuvarman's family, while I had originally understood it to be a corruption of *kuṭumbin*, a householder'.

After a long interval of time, B.R. Gopal re-published the inscription (as read and translated by Hultzsch) in his *Corpus of Kadamba Inscriptions*, (vol. I, 1985, No.50). The only additional information we get from this source is that K.V. Ramesh has (in a personal discussion with Gopal) identified Vishṇuvarman of the Edakal cave inscription as a Kadamba king. Even while including the inscription in his *Corpus of the Kadamba Inscriptions*, Gopal has expressed his reservations on this identification (Ibid., p. lxvi).

Our team has re-copied the inscription and has verified *in situ* the correctness of the reading by Hultzsch. However his interpretation needs reconsideration, as we do not hear of the so-called 'Kuṭumbiya family' from any other source. *kuṭumbiya* is in fact the Prakrit equivalent of *kuṭumbika* (Skt.) 'member of a family or household' (see *kuṭumbiya* in the *Illustrated Ardha-Māgadhi Dictionary* by Ratnachandraji Maharaj, repr. 1988.) The inscription belongs to the age of transition from Prakrit to Sanskrit in South India; hence the occurrence of a Prakrit expression in a Sanskrit inscription (or *vice versa*) in this period should not be surprising. The interpretation of *Varddhanasya* as '(of) the propagator i.e., descendant' as suggested by Hultzsch also needs reconsideration. The context indicates that *varddhanasya* has been written in the place of *vardhanasyārthē* 'for the prosperity'. Compare with *vadhanikē* (Pkt.) occurring in similar contexts in the grants of the Early Pallavas (Mayidavolu and Hirahadahalli Plates). Accordingly the translation of the text may be revised as follows:

'(This is) written (*likhita*[*m*\*]) for the prosperity (*varddhanasya* [-*arthē*\*]) of the members of the family (*kuṭumbiya*) and lineage (*kula*) of Śrī Vishṇuvarman'.

The identification proposed by K.V. Ramesh of Vishṇuvarman of the Edakal

cave inscription as a Kadamba king seems quite probable, notwithstanding the reservations expressed by B.R. Gopal. Circumstantial evidence in support of the identification, not noticed so far in this connection, can be summarised as follows:

1. Vishṇuvarman, the Kadamba king (ca. 460-90 AD), made a copper plate grant (Herbata Plates; B.R. Gopal, *Ibid.*, No.35) while camping at Kūḍalūr, to be identified most probably with modern Gūḍalūr, about 30 km. SE of Edakal. It is not improbable that the Sanskrit inscription at Edakal was engraved during Vishṇuvarman's stay at Kūḍalūr (Gūḍalūr) nearby. The date and palaeography of the inscription (in Kadamba characters of the 5th cent. AD) are consistent with this surmise.
2. It is known that Kadamba Vishṇuvarman was a protege and feudatory of Pallava Simhavarman II. Vishṇuvarman claims to have been 'crowned by a Pallava King' (Herbata Plates, *Ibid.*). It is probable that Vishṇuvarman held the territory around Edakal and Nilambur subject to the suzerainty of the Pallavas during this period.
3. The discovery of another copper plate grant issued by Kadamba Ravivarman (ca. 485-519AD) at Nilambur (*Ibid.*, No.17), about 40 km. to the south of Edakal, is further evidence of the presence of Kadamba influence in this region in the latter half of the 5th cent. AD.

The Sanskrit inscription in the Edakal cave, besides being the earliest inscription in this language in the ancient Tamil country (including Kerala), has also turned out to be historically valuable for throwing welcome light on the Kadamba influence in this region towards the end of the 5th cent. AD.

#### **B. Tamil-Brāhmī Inscriptions at Edakal: the Earliest Inscriptions of Kerala**

Hultzsch had copied two brief inscriptions engraved on the north wall of the Edakal cave. They are written in one line, but separated by a slanting natural cleft in between (pl. I, Fig.4). Hultzsch described them as in 'cave characters'

(ARE 1897) and 'unintelligible' to him, 'but decidedly archaic' (in Fawcett 1901). From the reproduction of the estampages, I could see that the 'cave characters' (the older name for Southern Brāhmī) are in fact in Tamil-Brāhmī as indicated by the occurrence of the alveolar  $\eta$  found only in this script.

The hitherto unsuspected occurrence of Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions in Kerala was the main reason for organising the expedition to the Edakal cave. Unfortunately our team discovered that both the inscriptions have been totally destroyed by the mindless vandalism of tourists who have incised modern graffiti over them on the soft rock. At present the only source for reading the two inscriptions is their excellent reproduction in Fawcett's paper.

**Inscription No. 2 (pl. I, Fig. 4, left.):**

The inscription is quite legible. The reading is :

*kō pūti vira*

The inscription records the name of a chieftain (*kō*). *Pūti* is the Tamil form of *Bhūti*, a name which was common among the Tamil Vēḷir clans. The epithet *vira* (read *vīra*) indicates that he was a warrior. The inscription can be dated on palaeographical grounds in ca. 2-3 cent. AD.

**Inscription No. 3 (Pl. I, Fig. 4, right):**

This inscription is somewhat more difficult to make out as it is partly written over the pre-existing rock-carvings. In fact the last character is engraved in a higher register to avoid the rock-carving below. The inscription may be read and translated as follows:

*kō-v=ātāṅ*

'King Ātaṅ'

This is again a personal name, *Ātāṅ* (read *Ātaṅ*) preceded by the title *kō* and the glide -v- between the vowels *ō* - and -*ā*. *Kō Ātaṅ* seems to be the name of a

Cēra prince. On palaeographical grounds the inscription can be dated in 2-3 cent. AD. There were several kings of the Cēra dynasty during the Sangam Age with the name Ātaṅ (e.g. Cēral Ātaṅ). The Pugalur inscriptions of about the same period refer to Kō Ātaṅ Cel Irumporai, a king of the collateral branch of the Cēra dynasty ruling from Karur (I. Mahadevan, *Corpus of the Tamil -Brāhmī Inscriptions*, 1966: No. 56 & 57).

### C. New Discoveries of Tamil-Brāhmī Inscriptions at Edakal.

As I mentioned earlier, our team discovered two more Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions at Edakal during our futile search for the lost inscriptions. These two inscriptions are also engraved on the north wall of the cave and belong to the same period (ca. 2-3 cent. AD).

#### Inscription No. 4 (Pl. II, Figs. I & 2):

The inscription is engraved in bold characters and is well-preserved. The long vertical stroke seen in the middle of the inscription is part of the earlier rock-carvings. There is also a tree-like symbol, probably representing the palm or palmyra, one of the insignia of the Cēra dynasty, engraved at the end of the inscription. This is clearly part of the inscription as it looks quite different from the earlier rock carvings on the wall. The text and translation of the inscription are as follows:

*kaṭummi-puta cēra*

'Kaṭumi-putta, the Cēra'

The occurrence of the dynastic name 'Cēra' in this inscription confirms that the adjoining inscription of Kō Ātaṅ is also a Cēra record.

**Kaṭummi-puta** is a hybrid name, the first part in Tamil and the second in Prakrit. The name recalls *Satiyaputō* occurring in the Jambai Inscription of

Atiyaṅ Neṭumāṅ Añci (ca. 1 cent. AD). *Satiyaputō* is the Prakrit equivalent of Tamil *Atiyamāṅ* (*satiya*>*atiya*; *putō*: *makaṅ*>*māṅ*). Analogously *Kaṭummi-puta* can be interpreted as follows :

*Kaṭummi-* (read *Kaṭumi-*): noun formed from the adj. *kaṭum* 'fierce'; cf. *kaḍimi* (Te.) 'valour, bravery'. The use of the title *kaṭum* was especially popular among the Cēras during the Sangam Age; cf. names like *Kaṭuṅ-kōṅ*, *Peruṅ-kaṭuṅ-kō*, *ḷḷaṅ-kaṭuṅ-kō* occurring in the Irumporai Inscriptions at Pugalur.

*-puta*: (read *-putta*) 'son' (from Skt. *putra*). The term is apparently a translation of Tamil *-māṅ* (<*makaṅ*), lit., 'son', but used as a title of distinction as in *kō-māṅ*, *Neṭu-māṅ*, *Cēra-māṅ* etc.

The two parts of the name may thus be equated to *Kaṭumāṅ* (<*kaṭum-makaṅ*), a title frequently affixed to the names of Tamil kings and chieftains of the Sangam Age. Of particular interest in the present context is the fact that this title was borne by two Cēra kings, namely, *Kuṭṭuvaṅ Kōtai* (*Kaṭumāṅ Kōtai*; *Puṛam* 54:8) and *Māntaraṅ-Cēral-Irumporai* (*Kaṭumāṅ Poraiya*; *Puṛam* 53.5). The historicity of *Kuṭṭuvaṅ Kōtai* is already established by the publication of a silver portrait coin bearing his name (R. Krishnamurthy, *Presidential Address*, 82nd Annual Conference, Numismatic Society of India, Pune, 1996). The palaeography of the coin-legend agrees with that of the present inscription, and both may be assigned to ca. 2-3 cent. AD. As however *Kaṭumāṅ* was a title borne probably by many even among the Cēras, we are not able to determine which Cēra king is referred to in the present inscription.

#### Inscription No. 5 (Pl. III, Figs. 1 & 2):

This Tamil-Brāhmī inscription is found near the western end of the north wall of the cave. It is engraved in bold characters and is well-preserved. This record may also be assigned to the same period as the other three Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions in this cave (ca. 2-3 cent. AD). The text and translation of the inscription are as follows :

*opañ=apa vira-a*

'(Writing) of Oppañ=appa Vīraṅ'

- Oppañ-** : Read *Oppañ*, a personal name derived from *oppu* (Ta., Ka.) 'beauty, elegance'.
- apa** : Read *-appa*; attributive form of *appañ*, a honorific suffix to proper names of men as a term of respect. This suffix is more common in Kannada than in Tamil inscriptions of the early period.
- Vira-a** : Read *Vīra-a*. He was probably a warrior (*Vīraṅ*). *-a* is the genitive case-ending in Old Tamil and Kannada.

#### D. The earliest Vaṭṭeḷuttu Inscriptions of Kerala at Edakal

On the southern wall of the cave, two early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions in Tamil are deeply engraved in bold characters and are still in an excellent state of preservation. Hultzsch recognised one of them (Pl. I, Fig. 2) to be in Tamil and attempted to read it but was unsuccessful. He did not attempt to read the other Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscription. On palaeographical grounds he assigned them to a date 'a little more recent' than the Sanskrit inscription in the cave. Now that we have many more early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions for comparative study, we are able to assign these inscriptions to ca. 5-6 cent. AD. These are the earliest Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions so far known in Kerala. With the recent advances in the study of early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions discovered in Tamilnadu, there is now no problem in reading the similar inscriptions in Kerala.

Inscription No. 6 (Pl. I, Fig. 2):

*pal-puli tātta-kāri*

'Tātta-Kāri of Pal-puli'

**Pal-puli:** lit., 'many tigers', but here the expression occurs as a place-name.

**Tātta-Kāri:** A proper Name. *tātta-* is the attributive form of *tāttan* 'father', but employed here as part of a personal name. *-kāri* lit., 'the dark one' is the name of many gods, especially Vishṇu or Kṛishṇa, but employed here as a personal name.

Incidentally this early Vaṭṭeḷuttu record furnishes a couple of instances of the use of the *pulli* ('dot') to denote basic consonants.

**Inscription No. 7 (Pl. I, Fig. 3):**

The record can be read and interpreted as follows :

*veṅkō-malai kaccavanu catti*

'Kaccavaṅ Catti of Veṅkō-malai'

**Veṅkō-malai:** A place-name. cf. *Veykōṭṭumalai* (*Kanyākumāri Kalveṭṭukaḷ*, IV, No. 38-H.) The Mangalur Plates of Pallava Simhavarman (of the collateral line) refers to a territory called *Veṅgō-rāshtra*. (*Inscriptions of the Pallavas*, T.V. Mahalingam, 1988, No. 14). The Plates are lost and their provenance is unknown. *Veṅkō-malai* referred to in the Edakal Cave inscription was probably included in *Veṅgō-rāshtra*. It is however not possible to say whether *Veṅkō-malai* was the ancient name of Edakal.

**Kaccavanu:** Colloquial form of *Kaccavaṅ* (<Pkt. *Kassava* <Skt. *Kāśyapa*), a gotra-name. The use of dental *n* in the place of the correct alveolar *ṅ* is not an uncommon error in Tamil inscriptions. The *-u* ending of the word probably betrays the influence of Kannada language in this region.

**Catti:** A personal name (<Pkt. *satti* <Skt. *śakti*).

The basic consonants in this inscription are also marked with the *pulli*. Another point of palaeographical interest is the mixture of Southern Brāhmī and early Vaṭṭeḷuttu characters in these two inscriptions. This is of course only to be expected in inscriptions in this region bordering on both Karnataka and Tamilnadu.



### E. Edakal Cave: a Treasure-trove of Ancient Inscriptions

It is an extraordinary fact that seven of the earliest known inscriptions of Kerala, one in Sanskrit in Southern Brāhmī characters, four in Tamil-Brāhmī and two in Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu, occur in a single cave at Edakal, making it a veritable epigraphical treasure-trove. What is perhaps even more extraordinary, and rather inexplicable, is the complete neglect of these cave inscriptions by epigraphists for a period of over a century after their discovery. In the meanwhile, the cave has been attracting tourists mainly on account of its famous rock-carvings, and two precious Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions, including one which is most probably a Cēra record of the Sangam Age, have been lost to tourist vandalism. I have written to the Government of Kerala to take steps for the effective protection of the rock-carvings and inscriptions of the Edakal cave which deserves to be recognised by the Government of India as a monument of national heritage.

### II. Inscription No.8: An Early Vaṭṭeḷuttu Inscription from Ezhuttukkallu (Pl. IV)

Ezhuttukkallu ('inscribed stone') is a large boulder of gneiss rock jutting out from the bed of the Cherupuzha river at a place about 2 km. below its junction with the Karimpuzha river deep inside the Nilambur forest in Malappuram District, Kerala. The place is devoid of any habitation and can be reached only after a long trek through dense forest. A two-line inscription engraved on this boulder is partly submerged in the stream and is fully visible only in extremely dry weather. The inscription is in Tamil engraved in early Vaṭṭeḷuttu and belongs to the same period as the two Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions at Edakal (ca. 5-6 cent. AD).

The inscription was first noticed in the *Malabar Manual* by Logan (1887). The local folklore that the boulder marked the boundary between two Janmis is recorded in the *Manual*. It has also been noted that gold-washing was carried on formerly at Nilambur and the gold so obtained was called '*channam*'.

The *Malabar District Gazetteer* by Innes (1908) also noticed this inscription in 'unknown characters' and alludes to the gold-washing industry and the former existence of gold mines in the area. Government Epigraphist had the inscription copied only in 1958-59 (ARE B.281/1958-59). The brief report notes that the inscription is partly submerged in water. In fact the estampage (which I have seen at Mysore) bears the impression of only the upper line, the other being apparently submerged under water at the time of copying. The report adds that the inscription is in 'archaic southern characters'. However the reading given in the report does not make sense and is not reproduced here.

The first (and so far the only) photograph of the complete inscription was secured in extremely dry weather in 1971 by Profs. M.G.S. Narayanan and M.R. Raghava Varier (Pl. IV). M.G.S. Narayanan presented a paper on this inscription in the same year (M.G.S. Narayanan, 'A Tamil Inscription from Nilambur Forest in Kerala', *Procds. of the First Conference of Dravidian Linguists, Trivandrum, 1971* (1972), pp. 317-321). He has read and translated the inscription as follows:

L.1 *māvakuṭu nīraṇa*

L.2 *vār*

'Animals come for drinking water.'

Not being satisfied with the earlier attempts to read this inscription, I decided to study it *in situ* and reached the site along with an expert group in October 1995. Unfortunately the water level was high and only the upper line was visible. However the stream is shallow and the water crystal-clear and I could make out the short second line (with just two characters) by going under water and feeling the letters with my fingers. The inscription could not however be copied or photographed completely. Fortunately we have the rare and excellent photograph of 1971 clearly showing the details of the inscription.

The inscription may now be read and interpreted as follows :

L.1 *māca-kōṭu nīr=aṇa-*

L.2 *vāy*

'Mouth (*vāy*) of the dam (*aṇa*) (across) the water (course) (*nīr*) at

*Māca-kōṭu.'*

The river at this point narrows down and takes a turn. Further, large boulders are strewn across the bed of the stream connecting the banks on either side during low water-level. This is thus an ideal spot to locate a dam. However no such structure exists now and one may presume that the dam had been washed away during high floods of many centuries. It is also probable that this spot was chosen to put up only a temporary or seasonal dam annually for a specific purpose (discussed below).

*Māca-kōṭu*: lit., 'dark hill'; name of the village; cf. *Māccakkōṭu* (*Kanyākumāri Kalveṭṭukaḷ*, IV, No. 91 / 1969.)

*nīr*: water, water-course

*aṇa*: dam, (Ta. *aṇai*; Ma. *aṇa*)

*vāy*: lit., 'mouth'; here, a sluice-head to allow the surplus water to overflow.

Lexically the most interesting word in the inscription is *aṇa* for 'dam'. While it is true that Malayalam had not evolved as a separate language at this early period, it is equally true that the western dialect of Tamil must have started diverging from the eastern dialects much earlier and the present word *aṇa* is the earliest inscripational attestation of this tendency. It is for Dravidian linguists to decide whether to describe this word as in 'early Malayalam' or 'Proto- or Pre-Malayalam'.

Palaeographically the inscription is remarkable for the mixture of Southern Brāhmī, Tamil-Brāhmī and Vaṭṭeḷuttu characters. Thus, for example, *m* is in Tamil-Brāhmī, *kō* in Vaṭṭeḷuttu, and *ṇa* in Southern Brahmi. As in the case of the Vaṭṭeḷuttu

inscriptions in the Edakal cave, mixture of different scripts in an area bordering Tamilnadu and Karnataka is not surprising.

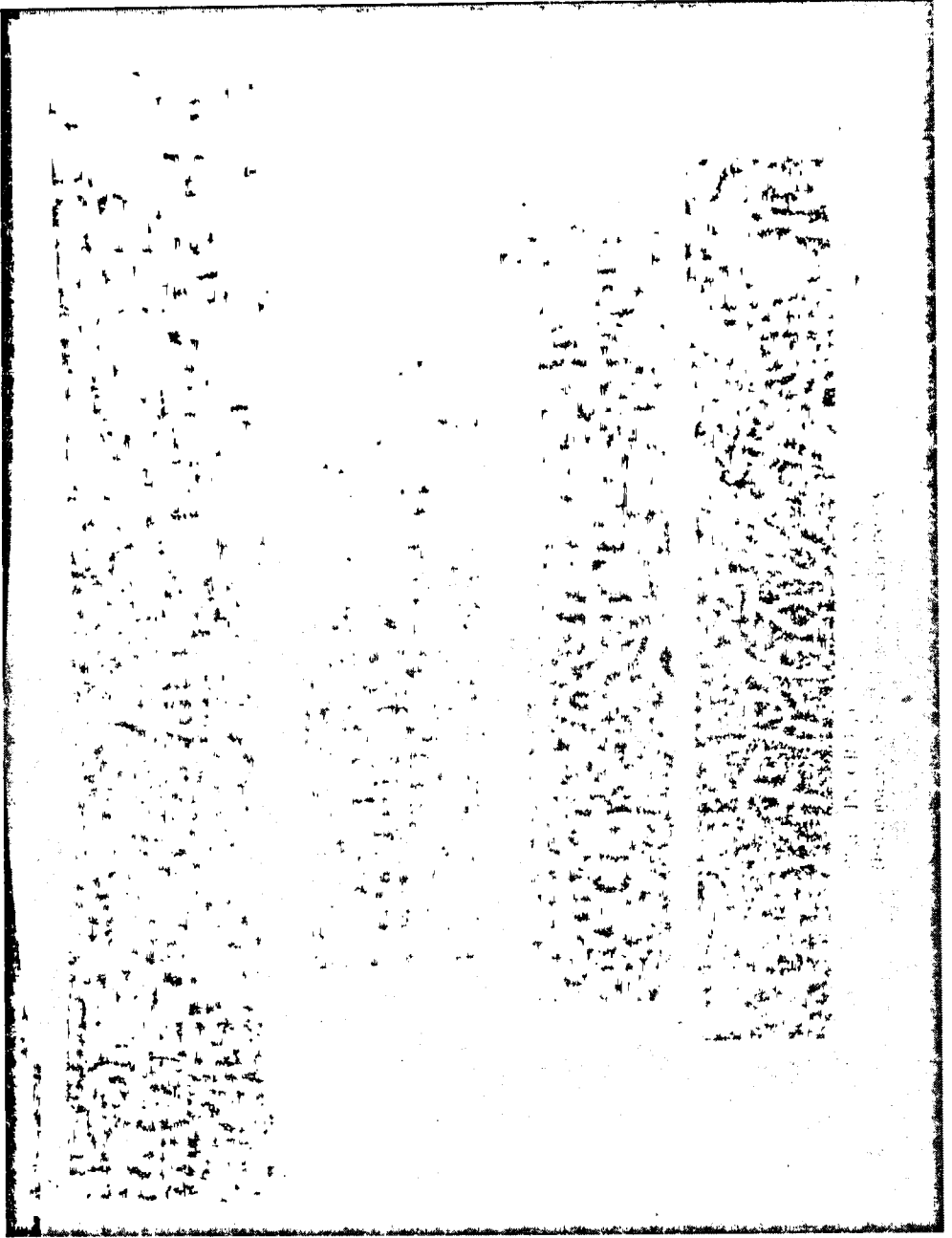
Finally we come to the purpose for which this dam was built. Our study *in situ* has shown that both banks of the jungle stream are too elevated and hilly to have permitted irrigation; nor is there any evidence of a canal branching off from here. It appears that the dam deep inside the dense forest was built not for irrigation, but to arrest the flow of water to facilitate the gold-washing operations known to have been conducted here, as mentioned by Logan and Innes. The dam (permanent or seasonal) must have been abandoned in course of time when the gold-washing operations were suspended due to decreasing availability.

As mentioned earlier, the inscription often gets submerged and it is indeed a wonder it has survived the floods of centuries. But it is certainly in danger of getting eroded and lost sooner or later. I have therefore appealed to the Govt. of Kerala to build a small coffer dam or breakwater upstream to protect the inscription from scouring and keep it 'high and dry' for year-long visibility. I am happy to report that I have been assured by the government that necessary action would be taken to protect this valuable inscription. Let us hope the new dam comes up soon in the place of the old one celebrated in this inscription.

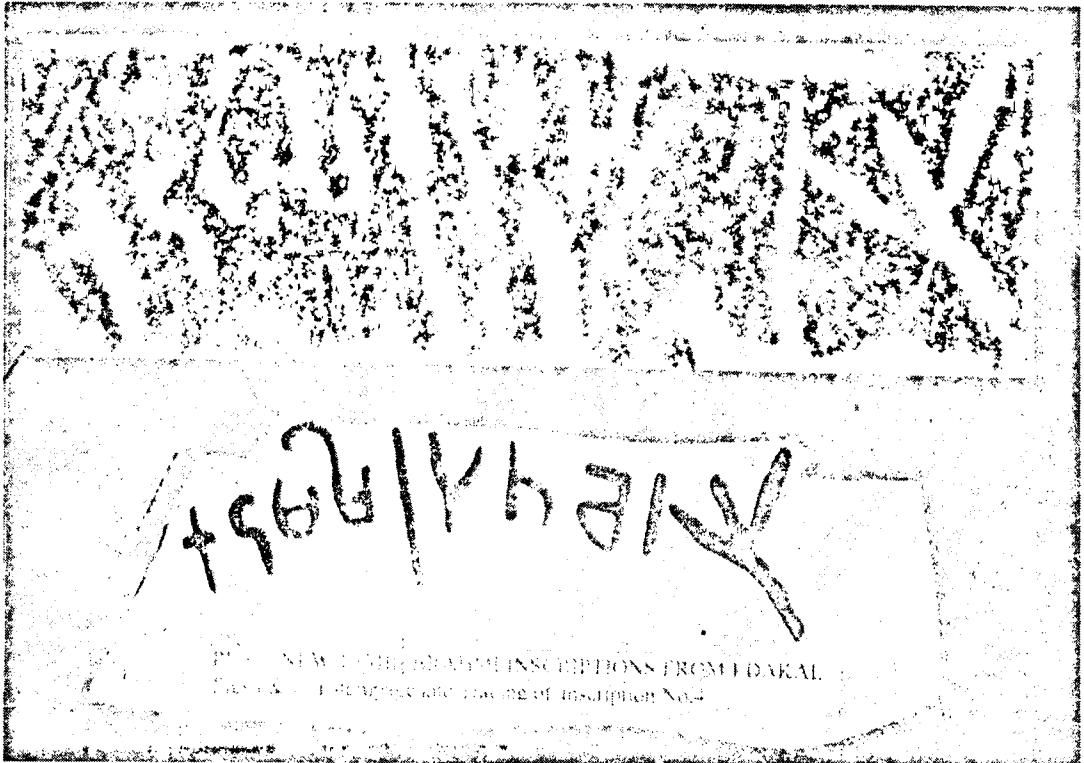
I have come to the end of this rapid survey of the earliest known inscriptions of Kerala studied recently by our teams *in situ*. The most important development is of course the recognition that there are in Kerala inscriptions in Tamil-Brāhmī of about the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, and that at least two of them are records of the ancient Cēra dynasty ruling over the western region of the Tamil country including Kerala during the Sangam Age. We also have in Kerala early Vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions in the transitional period of their evolution from Tamil-Brāhmī to Vaṭṭeḷuttu, with an admixture of elements of Southern Brahmi, a special palaeographic feature of the region. The language of the inscriptions also shows the influence of Kānnada from across the border. Inscriptional evidence is now

available for the beginning of the evolution of Malayalam as an independent language at an earlier period. I hope that our colleagues from Kerala will now pursue these leads and bring to light many more exciting discoveries in days to come.

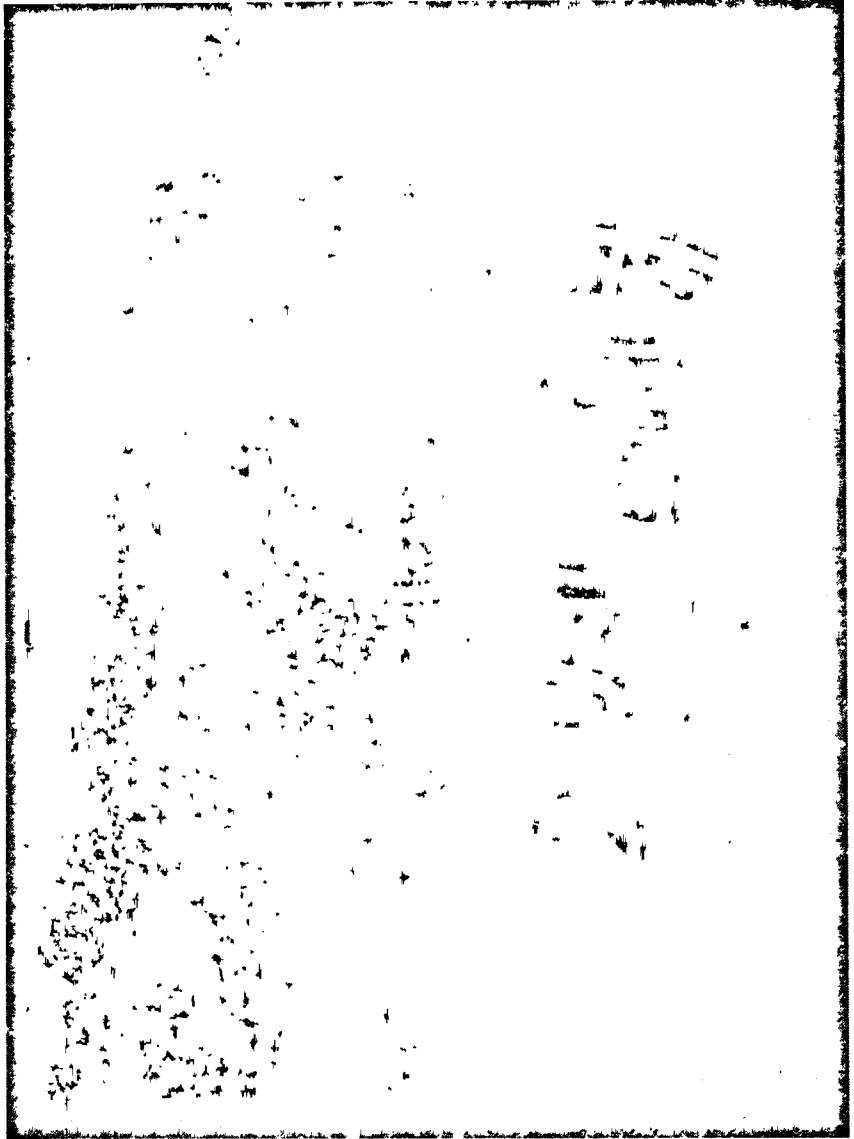
I thank you very much for giving me a patient hearing.



PL.I: INSCRIPTIONS AT THE EDAKAL CAVE  
(Estampages by E. Hultzsch taken in 1896-97)



PL.II : NEW TAMIL-BRĀHMĪ INSCRIPTIONS FROM EDAKAL  
Figs.1 & 2: Estampage and Tracing of Inscription No.4



PL.III : NEW TAMIL-BRĀHMĪ INSCRIPTIONS FROM EDAKAL  
Figs.1 & 2: Estampage and Tracing of Inscription No.5





PL.IV : .VATTEL<sub>U</sub>T<sub>TU</sub> INSCRIPTION AT EZHUTTUKKALLU  
(Photo: courtesy Prof. M.G.S. Narayanan.)

## Shore Temple - South-side: Capital Inscription

*Michael Lockwood and A. Vishnu Bhat*

Excavations carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India, in the sands immediately south of the Shore temple at Māmallapuram, have unearthed remaining parts of what seems to have been a rather large pillar. (The shaft, itself, unfortunately, is missing). Spokespersons of the Archaeological Survey of India have suggested that it should have been a *Jaya-stambha* ie., ‘victory pillar’. The presumed capital of this massive pillar is lying on the ground at the edge of the pond which has recently formed in the cavity of the excavations. Encircling this capital are four inscribed titles, three of which are well-known *birudas* of the Pallava king Narasimhavarma II, and the fourth, not previously found in his inscriptions.

*Śrī Rājasimhaḥ||Śrī Kshātrasimhaḥ||\*Śrī Narēndrasimhaḥ ||Śrī Mahēśvara-chūḍāmaṇiḥ||*

These four titles may be translated as ‘The illustrious Lion among Kings’, ‘The illustrious Lion among Warriors’, ‘The illustrious Lion among Rulers of Men’, and ‘The illustrious Crest-jewel of Mahēśvara’.

Of the three well-known titles of King Narasimhavarmā II, ‘*Rājasimhaḥ*’ was so widely used that he is actually better known today by this *biruda* than by his *abhiṣhēka-nāma*. The title ‘*Kshātrasimhaḥ*’ appears in his Vāyalūr inscription and is incorporated in the inscribed name of his east-facing shrine of the Shore Temple. The title ‘*Narēndrasimhaḥ*’ is found in his major Shore Temple inscription as well as in his Vāyalūr inscription.

There is, however, no previously known appearance of ‘*Mahēśvara-chūḍāmaṇiḥ*’ among the lists of his many *birudas*, though the king has several titles incorporating the element ‘*Chulāmaṇi*’ or ‘*Chūḍāmaṇi*’:

*Kshātrachūḷāmaṇiḥ* (I: 15-2)<sup>1</sup> ° *Chūḍāmaṇiḥ* (III: 15-2), Kailāsanātha Temple, Kāñchīpuram]

*Narēndrachūḷāmaṇiḥ* (I: 13-2), [° *chūḍāmaṇiḥ* (III: 13-2), ditto]

*Śivachūḍāmaṇiḥ* (Shore temple; Vimāna, Kailāsa Kāñchī; Vāyalūr inscriptions)

*Mahēśvara-sikhāmaṇi-dīptamauliḥ* (Vāyalūr inscription)

In the recently discovered Capital inscription, there is a gap between the *mahēśvara* and the *chūḍāmaṇiḥ*- which is a puzzle. However, it doesn’t make sense to read the separated parts as two different *birudas* since there is no *visarga* after *mahēśvara*, and, in the title lists of King Rājasimha, *chūḍāmaṇiḥ/chūḷāmaṇiḥ* always appears together with another element.

‘Śrī’ precedes each of the four titles engraved on the capital, just as it precedes the more than 250 different titles of his engraved in the Kailāsanātha temple, Kāñchī. But there is an interesting twist in this matter which must be noted here.

The earliest editor of the Kailāsanātha titles (in 1890), E. Hultzsch, observed that there were four tiers of titles. He conjectured that the titles on the third tier were the first to be inscribed and that they were engraved at the time of the building of the temple by Rājasimha. The first and second tiers, he thought, were later copies “which were executed by some descendants of Rājasimha.”<sup>2</sup> He goes on to say that the fourth tier “is written in a peculiar ornamental alphabet, which is based on an alphabet of the same type, as that of the first tier;... perhaps the first and fourth tiers were contemporaneous.”<sup>3</sup> So, according to the first editor of these inscriptions, the four tiers of titles at the Kailāsanātha temple were inscribed in the reigns of three successive Pallava kings; the third tier, first, in Rājasimha’s reign; then the first and fourth tiers, in the reign of a ‘descendent’ of his; and, finally, the second tier, during the reign of some even later descendants.

In the decades since Hultzsch’s pioneering work, scholars have realized that the titles engraved on the first and fourth tiers are written in the contemporary, northern, Nāgarī script of the early eighth century A.D.: those of the first tier, in a plain style; and those of the fourth, in a pronounced floriated style, which even incorporates the long, graceful neck and head of birds to represent the medial ‘i’ and ‘ī’. It was observed, further, that the titles of the second and third tiers are written in the southern, Pallava Grantha Script: those of the second tier, in a plain style; and those of the third, in a slightly more ornamental script. And, over the years, scholars have come around to the view that all four tiers of titles were inscribed during the reign of King Rājasimha, himself. In this paper, we would like to go one step further and suggest that all four tiers were the handiwork of one outstanding royal scribe - and that it is the Capital inscription at the Shore temple, Māmallapuram, which holds the key to this insight.

The surprising thing about Rājasimha’s Capital inscription is that while its four titles are written in the southern, ornamental Pallava Grantha script, the *Śrī* which precedes each of these four titles is written in the northern floriated *Nāgarī* script! This would seem to us the playful mixing of styles by a scribe adept at both. The forms at four different levels may represent an artistic *tour de force* of the highest order, *by one single scribe!* These titles deserve more attention from the epigraphical clan than they have heretofore received. Have these titles ever been honored by having their facsimiles published?

One lesson which we can learn from the hand of this extraordinary scribe is that, in the cultural centers of eighth century South India, there was not a trace of the linguistic chauvinism which plagues us today. Southern and northern scripts were both treated with respect.

A final guess: since we have argued elsewhere <sup>4</sup> that Rājasimha’s father, King Paramēśvara, was responsible for the Atiraṇachaṇḍēśvara Cave-Temple inscription at Śāḷuvankuppam, near Māmallapuram, which appears in two versions, one in the southern, Pallava Grantha script, and the other in the northern, Nāgarī script, this scriptal cosmopolitanism could be due to King Paramēśvara’s having taken as his chief queen a

princess from the northern Nāgarī nāḍu! Such an event would then pleasantly account for her son's having honoured her, the dowager Queen Mother, when he, as the reigning sovereign, built his great temple in Kāñchīpuram and had his numerous royal titles engraved first and foremost in the Nāgarī script on the first tier of the dozens of small shrines surrounding the main vimāna.<sup>5</sup>

Never underestimate the power of a woman!

## Notes and References

1. The three numbers in parentheses indicate: 1) on which tier (Roman numeral), 2) on which shrine (using the A.S.I.'s engraved number) and 3) in which ordinal position on the front of each shrine the given title is to be found.
2. *S.I.I.*, Vol.I,p.10.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Māmallapuram and the Pallavas*, p.4., 1982 Madras, Np. 4.
5. Rājasimha's sense of filial devotion to his mother is beautifully evidenced in the poetic inscription on the third shrine to the right of the entrance to the Kailāsanātha Temple complex-an inscription erroneously mixed up by Hultzsch and all later scholars with the so-called 'Queen Raṅgapatākā' inscription, which actually is to be found on the fifth shrine to the right! The inscription on the third shrine (we quote from our article "Pallava Queen Raṅgapatākā's Inscription, *J.E.S.I.*, Vol.IV, pp. 67-69 1977,) which essentially praises Rājasimha's mother, reads:

*Namśśivāya* [|\*].

(Verse 1) *Bharttuḥ purōnmathana-driṣṭa-dhanurbbalasya*  
*śailādhīrājā-tanayēva vṛisha-dhvajasya* [|\*]  
*Yā kālakāla iti viśruta-puṇya-kīrttēḥ*  
*kāntā nitānta-dayitā paramēśvarasya*||

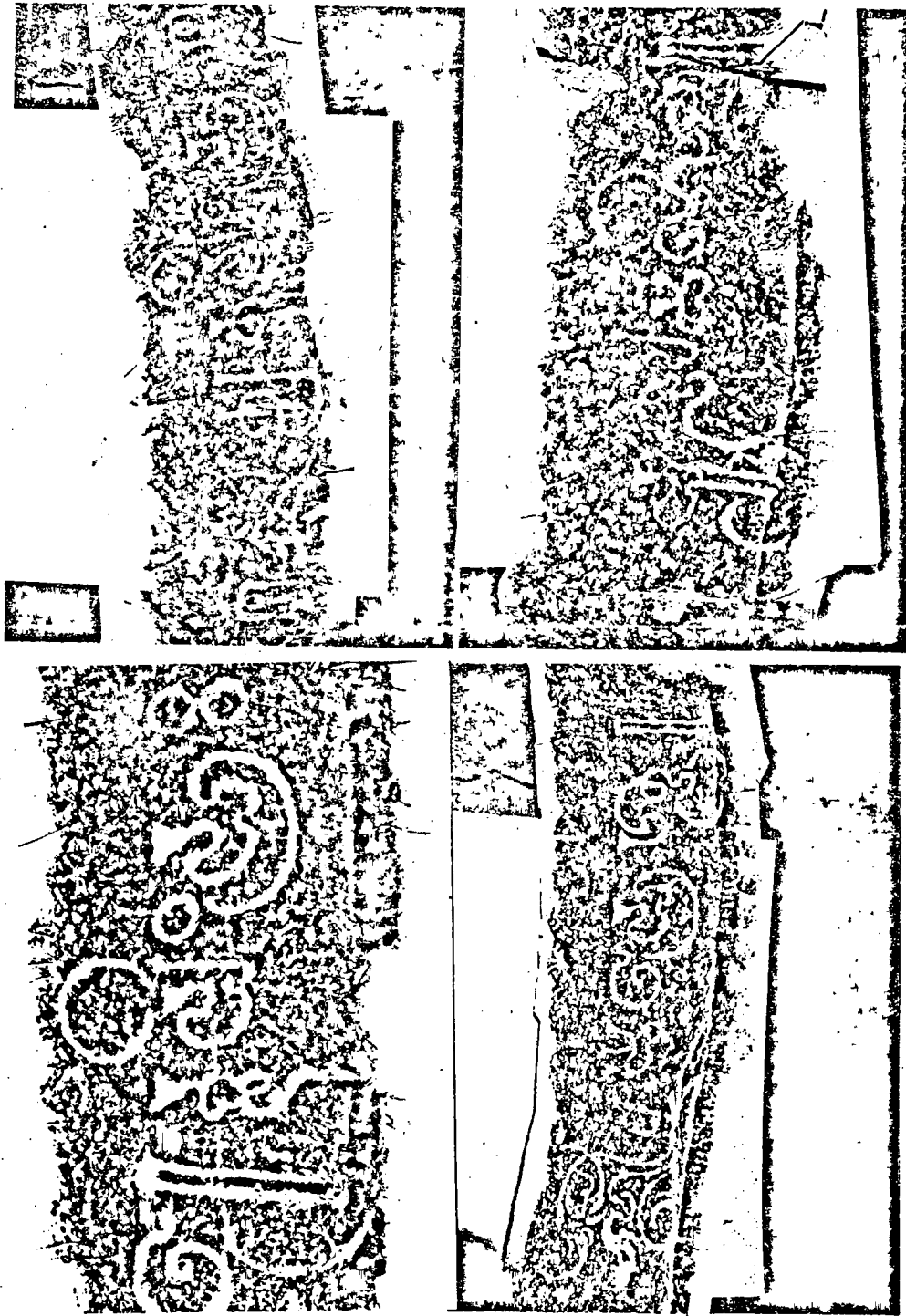
(Verse 2) *Dēvē jagad-valaya-rakṣaṇa-baddha-dīkshē*  
*nirbbhinna-śatru-hṛidayē narasiṃhavishṇau*[|\*]  
*Vāllabhyam-urjjitam-avāpya virājatē yā*  
*nirjjitya-garvam-iva pushkaradēvatāyāḥ*||

Which we translate as:

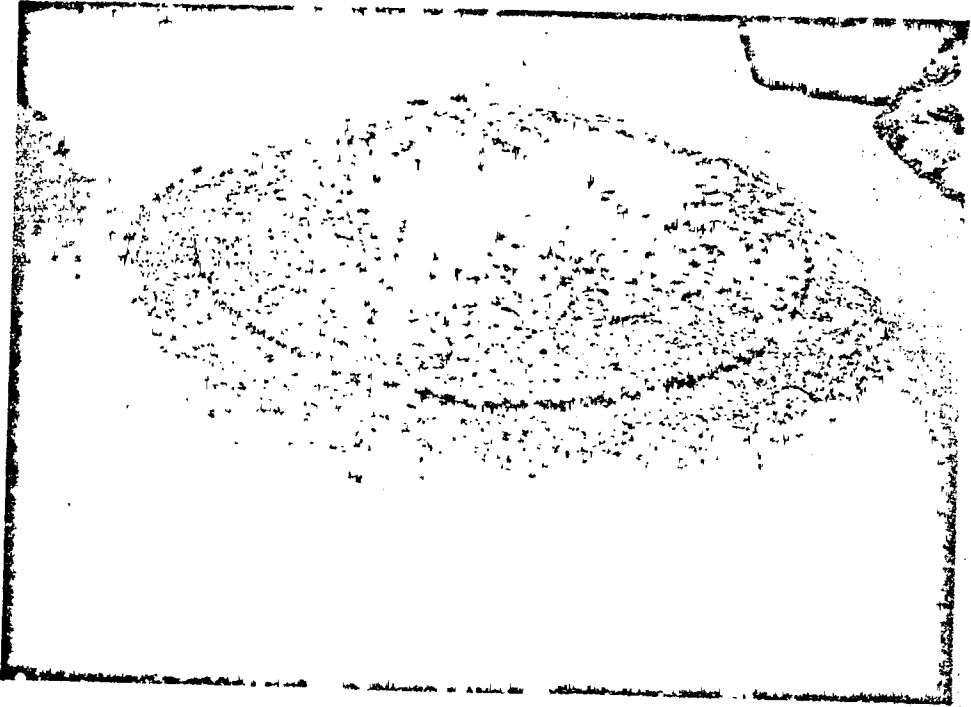
Salutations to Śiva!

(Verse 1) (Her) husband's [i.e., King Paramēśvara's] well-merited fame being widespread as 'Kālakāla' on account of his bow's power (having been made) manifest in the destruction of the (Three) Cities, (thus) like the 'Daughter of the Great King of Mountains', (she), the dearly beloved wife of Paramēśvara, the 'Bull-banned One'.

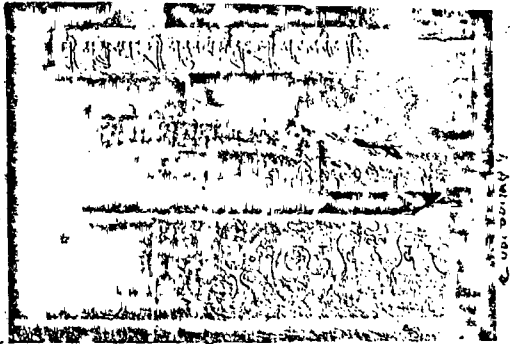
(Verse 2) attaining supremacy [as Queen Mother], shines with surpassing splendor, subduing, as it were, the pride of Pushkaradēvatā [Lakshmī, here, also, Rājasimha's chief queen], while god-like Nārasimhavishṇu [i.e., King Narasimha (Rājasimha)], true to his sacred vow, is protecting the encircling world, tearing out the hearts of his enemies.



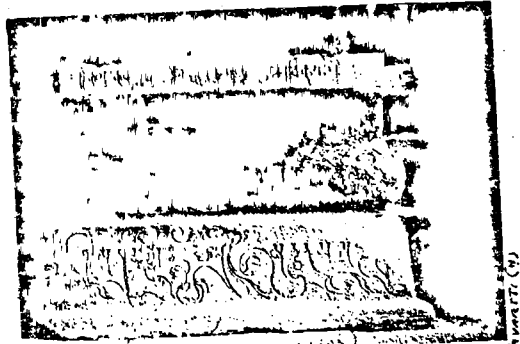
Inscriptions from Shore Temple, Mammallapuram



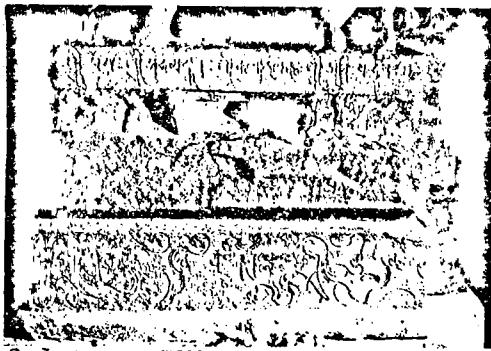
Capital Inscription, Shore Temple, Māmallapuram



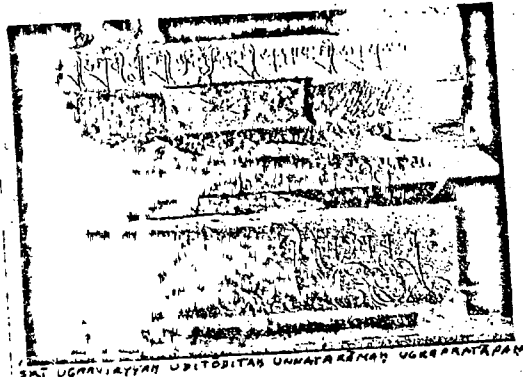
SRI ATYADARAB ANUNYASADYAB AHAVAKSARID



SRI KALANAKAVASITIKH KUDET MANAMNINIKHARAVIKULANAN CABA



SRI MEGHAR ANAMNINIKHAR KULATILAKAN ANIMARDANAN



SRI UGRANIVATYAN UDITODITAS UNHATAKAMAD UGRAPRATAPAN



SRI APARTITAN ANIDANGLAN AKUTOGMIAN UKTJITAN



SRI JAYAPAKAB ATIKAMACANDAR SIKTANAN UDYABHASKARAN

BANDUNTA

## Inscribed pottery and a seal from Karnataka

A. V. Narasimha Murthy

D. V. Devaraj

Inscribed pottery is quite familiar to the students of South Indian epigraphy. Actually hundreds of potsherds with short label-like inscriptions have been found in different parts of Tamilnadu. They are mostly from excavations. In fact Tamilnadu has accounted for maximum number of inscribed pottery. Eversince their discovery at Arikamēḍu,<sup>1</sup> they have been found in most of the excavations which have yielded early historic culture. T.V. Mahalingam has described some inscribed pottery found at Aḷaḡarai and Uṛaiyūr.<sup>2</sup> The latter site excavated by K.V. Raman has also yielded inscribed pottery. Shanmugam has made a comparative study of the palaeography of these pottery found at Uṛaiyūr, Arikamēḍu, Māṅgulam, Aḷaḡarmalai and Sittaṅṅavāśal.<sup>3</sup> Inscribed pottery has been found at many places in Āndhra, the most recent being from the excavations at Vaḍḍamānu<sup>4</sup>. At this site 214 inscribed potsherds have been discovered and they belong to early centuries of the Christian era. But it is curious that so far no inscribed pottery had been reported from Karnāṭaka though many early historic sites have been excavated there. From this point of view the present inscribed pottery assumes importance.

Five inscribed pottery pieces and a seal form the subject matter of this note. Three of them are from Sannati in Gulbarga district while the remaining two are from Talakād. The first site was excavated by D.V. Devaraj and H.T. Talwar and interim report also has been published.<sup>5</sup> According to this report, a good number of inscribed potsherds with incomplete inscriptions have been found. Three pieces have been illustrated here and they have been selected here for study as they appear to be important. One of them has nine letters. The reading suggested is *ya(sa) ri kha po ta da la sa a*. As the inscription is fragmentary this reading does not yield any meaning. What is important is the palaeography of this inscription. Though one would like to date it to first century A.D., a deeper study of the characters would show that it is definitely earlier and may go back to third century B.C. itself.<sup>6</sup> This is supported by the antiquities found in the Sannati excavations. The site has yielded deposits of the Mauryan period in addition to a piece of chunar sandstone, N.B.P., and contemporary pottery. The place has also yielded an Aśokan inscription. A stone medallion with a standing *Yakshi* flanked on either side by swan, peacock, lotus etc, also belongs to the Mauryan period. From all these evidences it becomes clear that Sannati had a well defined culture of the Mauryan period. Thus the present inscribed pottery may be regarded as one of the earliest palaeographic evidence of its kind in Karnataka.

Two more pieces from the same site contain the Brāhmī letter *ma*. Though the pottery is broken there is enough space left and there is no letter on the right. The same comment cannot be made with regard to the space to the left. Perhaps that space might have accommodated one or more letters. The letter is slightly roundish as found in Aśokan inscriptions. It does



not show any nail-head of the later periods. One of them is slightly longish while the other is normal. Considering all these features, these two letters may also be dated to the third century B.C.

The other two pieces are recovered from the excavations conducted at Talakāḍ, the capital of the Western Gaṅgas. The first season's excavations have been completed and the report has also been published.<sup>7</sup> The excavation was continued for the next two seasons under the active direction of Swamy and N.S. Rangaraju. During this period of work, Swamy and Rangaraju discovered this seal and inscribed pottery. One of the pieces is fragmentary and contains four old Kannada letters which may be read as *Rā ma (cha) dē va (?)*. On grounds of palaeography it can be dated to the ninth century A.D. It may be taken as a proper name whether it is read as *Rāmadēva* or *Rāchadēva*. Actually the piece is broken at the point where the last letter is written and hence there may be some doubt regarding the letter *va*. In all probability it may be regarded as *va*. It may become far fetched to connect this with Rāchamalla, a king of the Western Gaṅga dynasty.

The next piece is a rim portion and it contains four letters. It is not possible to identify the first letter as it is highly fragmentary. The remaining three letters may be read as *va ta sa (?)*. This reading also does not convey any sense. However, it may be taken as a personal name as it has *sa* ending.

The third antiquity is a terracotta seal which is circular in shape and measures about two cms in diameter. However, the inscribed portion is flat and smaller and contains a lion in the centre and below are found some letters which may be read as *ga ra cha vi (mi) ta*. If the missing first letter is taken as *gaṅ* it may read *gaṅga rāchavi(mi)ta*. It may also be taken as a personal name.<sup>8</sup> On grounds of palaeography this may also be ascribed to the ninth century A.D. It is interesting to find similarity in respect of the letters *ra* and *cha* in these pieces from Talakāḍ. That the practice of inscribing the pottery continued upto the ninth century A.D. is proved by the Talakāḍ inscribed pottery. The seal itself is an interesting antiquity of the period.

Though these inscriptions do not add significantly to our knowledge of the history of the concerned periods, their very discovery is important. Generally the inscribed pottery so far discovered in South India belong to the early centuries of the Christian era, mostly belonging to the Sātavāhana period. But the pottery of Sannati belongs to an earlier date while the Talakāḍ pottery belongs to a later date. This is also important. Thus the present discovery may be regarded as the first discovery of inscribed pottery in Karnataka.

## Notes and References

1. *Ancient India*, No. 2, pp. 109-14.
2. T.V. Mahalingam, *Early South Indian Palaeography*, pp. 310-11.
3. K.V. Raman, (Ed.): *Excavations at Uraiyur* (1965 - 69), pp. 69-75.

4. T.V.G. Sastry and others: *Vaddamanu Excavations*, pp. 116-140.
5. D.V. Devaraj and H.T. Talwar: *Interim Report on the Excavation at Sannati*, 1993 - 95.
6. Srinivasa Ritti suggested this date and the authors are grateful to him. However, I. Mahadevan thinks that this is too early a date for this inscription.
7. Devaraj and Talwar, *op. cit.*, Illustration 83.
8. D.V. Devaraj, A.V. Narasimha Murthy and others: *Excavations at Talakad*, 1997 Mysore.
9. The authors are grateful to M.D. Sampath, Director of Epigraphy, Mysore for the kind help rendered by him in the course of suggesting the readings of the inscriptions.

# Kerala Inscriptions with special referenece to an epitaph from Baliapaṭam

M. Ilyas Quddusi

## I. Historical Background

From the earliest times, traders from various centres of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf used to frequent the Kēraḷa ports in search of spices and other valuable products.<sup>1</sup> When Islām swept over Arabia, its influence was felt immediately in Kēraḷa also where it began to spread both by conversion and by settlements of Arab traders.<sup>2</sup> According to a doubtful tradition, at the instance of Chēramān Perumāl, Mālik Ibn Dīnār (d. 748 A.D.) and family came to Kēraḷa and founded a series of mosques between Mangalore and Quilon. At the time of Sulaimān's visit in 851 A.D., the number of Muslims was not large in Kēraḷa.<sup>3</sup> Among the notable Arabian travelers, Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. 911 A.D.) and Abū Zaid (916 A.D.) speak of Kēraḷa ports and their commercial activities, while Ibn Ḥauqal, writing in the 10th century, speaks of mosques in Kēraḷa.<sup>4</sup>

From the 12th century onwards, the Zamorin's relations with the Arab traders became intimate and Cālicut attained pre-eminence in the trade of pepper and other spices and the Muslims monopolized the external trade of the coast.<sup>5</sup> Arab merchant-princes had established mainly at Cālicut and Cannanore. Their influence was mainly with the rulers of these two states whose prosperity depended mostly on the export trade. In Cālicut, there were Muslim traders from Hormuz, Cairo, Abyssinia and Tunis who had built mosques there. The Zamorins of Cālicut enjoyed the support of Muslims who contributed largely to the prosperity of their kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Zamorin authority of Cālicut extended from Cannanore in the north to Cochin in the south, to whom the local Kolathiri Rājās of Cannanore paid tribute.<sup>7</sup> The Zamorin's tolerant policy towards the Arab traders and the local Muslims, contributed greatly to the socio-economic progress of the Cālicut kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Their land armies consisted of a sufficient number of Muslims, while their naval power was mainly dominated by the Muslims. Coastal Muslims had been traders and merchants and because of their intense religiosity, most of them, annually performed pilgrimage to Mecca for *Ḥaj*, hence navigation made great progress under them. Kunj 'Alī Marakkār's family had been the hereditary admiral of the Zamorins, whose progeny are still found settled in Ponnāṇi.<sup>9</sup> The tolerant policy and outlook of the Zamorins, was a patent factor for the rapid progress of Islām in the region, as indicated in *Tuhfatul Mujāhidīn*, a work by Shaikh Zainu'ddīn (16th century).<sup>10</sup>

From Cannanore to the south along the coast, principally in towns, Arab Muslims traders had their warehouses and settlements and a local Muslim community grew up around these settlements. Their leadership was in the hands of the Arab merchant-princess, mainly stationed at Cannanore and Cālicut. The Zamorins through these Arab traders were able to equip their army with better arms and Arab horses.<sup>11</sup> By the 16th century, the Muslims occupied a very influential position in the public life of Kēraḷa.<sup>12</sup>

Another dynasty that played very important role in the history of Kēraḷa was the 'Alī Rājās of Cannanore', the only Muslim royal house, that came into prominence in the middle of the 16th century. To begin with, the 'Alī Rājās were the feudatories of the Kolathiris. They had established their political power in and around Cannanore city and enjoyed virtual monopoly of trade in the area. On account of economic affluence obtained through maritime trade and encouraged by the internal dissensions of the Kolathiris, they began to assert their political independence.<sup>13</sup> This caused sometimes strained relations between the Kolathiris and the 'Alī Rājās.

The 'Alī Rājās maintained the Hindu custom of the matrilineal succession. Their fifth ruler 'Alī Mūsā conquered Māldives in 1183-84 A.D., probably as an admiral of the Kolathiris. Laccadive islands were bestowed on the 'Alī Rājās as *jāgīr* for their meritorious services to the Kolathiris and the former had to pay an annual tribute of 18000 *fanams* at Baliapaṭam fort to the latter. The *jāgīr* of these islands and assignments of the port of Cannanore and a few villages in the mainland made the 'Alī Rājās quite strong. Under them, Cannanore had become an international trading centre, carrying on brisk trade in goods of all sorts from great port cities surrounding the eastern rim of the Arabian sea. Being a Muslim principality, the 'Alī Rājās maintained friendly relations with Bījāpūr and other Muslim kingdoms of the south, so also with the Ottoman empire. They were known as the lords of the deep sea or *Sultānul Baḥr*,<sup>14</sup> issuing their own silver and gold coins. Throughout their period, they rendered yeoman service for spread of Islām and building mosques in northern Kēraḷa.<sup>15</sup> This historical background is hereby followed by an epigraphical bird's eye-view of Kēraḷa.

## II Kerala Inscriptions

From Kēraḷa with a 580 kilomēter long sea-coast,<sup>16</sup> so far, 171 Perso-Arabic inscriptions<sup>17</sup> from 28 places,<sup>18</sup> situated in 11 districts (out of 14 districts) of the state, have been copied, which range in their dates between A.H.471<sup>19</sup> and A.H. 1379<sup>20</sup> (1078-1960 A.D.), spanning the period of about nine centuries. Great majority of these inscriptions, is the death-records including those of saints and scholars, harbour-masters, merchants and ship-masters, while the remaining others pertain to construction of mosques, pulpits (of the mosques), *madrassa*, tomb and *'Īdgāh*. Most of the extant records are comparatively recent, but not without importance. Epitaphs of men and women from various walks of life, though contain merely the name and date of the deceased, they have that the deceased had performed *Haj*. Some of them mention the native place of these newcomers or their progeny, thus furnishing data for the study of the relationship and communications between particular places of the two countries.

A vast majority of the inscriptions from Kēraḷa are written in Arabic in *Naskh* characters. Persian with other languages is used in a couple of epigraphs<sup>21</sup>, Urdū in seven and Malayāḷam in the same number, (including three inscriptions<sup>22</sup> wherein Malayāḷam is written in Arabic script). Apart from *Naskh*, other styles used in some of the epigraphs include *Nasta'liq*, *Thulth*, *Kūfī*, *Naskh* in *Ma'kūs* - forming an important aspect in the field of calligraphy - a branch of

fine arts, providing us in whatever form a good number of specimens of Islāmic calligraphy in Kēraḷa. Largest number of inscriptions numbering 49 come from District Kozhikode, followed by Alleppey, 36, Malappuram, 29 and Cannanore, 26. Inscriptions dated between the 11th and 16th centuries come from Cannanore, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Pālghāṭ and Erṇākuḷam Districts.

Place-wise, Alleppey tops the list with recent 36 inscriptions (dated between 1810-1921), followed by Kozhikode with 17 epigraphs. From Baliapaṭam, Cannanore, Kondotti and Ponnāni come 12 inscriptions each. In the entire lot, the only Muslim royal dynasty that finds representation is that of the 'Alī Rājās of Cannanore, and that too surprisingly in a solitary record <sup>23</sup> from a local mosque at Cannanore.

According to Dr. Z.A. Desai, former Director (Epigraphy), in South India, comparatively speaking, Kēraḷa is still the most inadequately represented state, and he gives the reason thereof as under.

"It may partly be due to its being far away from the centre of Muslim authority, which has one of the reasons of non-currency of Persian and Urdu languages there and also due to the highly perishable medium of inscription used there, namely wood instead of stone. Otherwise, the region's close contacts with the Arabs from the earliest period - which explains the currency of Arabic language among the Muslims (including a large number of the descendants of the Arab settlers)- to the present day should have been responsible for a large number of inscriptions."<sup>24</sup>

After this panoramic view of Kēraḷa inscriptions, we come to the main discussion about the valuable epitaph from Baliapaṭam.

### III Epitaph from Baliapaṭam

I had an official occasion to conduct epigraphical survey of the Cannanore District during the month of October 1990. My joy knew no bounds when I came across an unexpected chance-discovery of a fragmentary loose epitaph <sup>25</sup> of a grave on a chesthigh platform near the *Dargāh* of Imām Bukhārī in the locality called Kakulanagara in Baliapaṭam (11 55' N. & 75 22'E), about 8 kilometers to the north of Cannanore.

Cannanore region has a district history <sup>26</sup> of its own, figuring prominently in the early traditional history, connected with the origin and spread of Islām in Kēraḷa. Some of the ancient mosques believed to have been founded by Mālik Ibn Dīnār on the west coast, are located in the Cannanore District.<sup>27</sup>

The travel accounts left by the Arab travellers from the 9th to the 14th centuries, contain ample references to important towns in the Cannanore District and the products and spices they exported. Baliapaṭam, Bekal and Kāsargōḍ are some of the places, figuring prominently in the Arab accounts. Ibn Khurdāhbīh (844-48 A.D.) mentions a place called 'Bābattan', which has been correctly identified with the modern industrial town Baliapaṭam on the south

bank of the Vaḷarpaṭṭaṇam river. Dimishqī (1325 A.D.) refers to the place as 'Buḍḍfattan' with the following observations about it:

"Most of the inhabitants of Buḍḍfattan are Brahmins..... who hate the Muslims; for this reason there are no Muslims living amongst them"<sup>28</sup>

Ibn Baṭūṭa (1345 A.D.) also refers to the place as 'Buḍḍpaṭṭan' and gives the remark about it as under: "It is a large city, situated upon a mouth of the sea. At the coast of the sea is situated a mosque where stay the Muslim travellers, as there are no Muslims in the city. The port of the city is extremely beautiful."<sup>29</sup>

Baliapaṭam earlier called Vaḷarpaṭṭaṇam, has been quite rich in historical associations. One of the Perumāḷs is reported to have built a Śiva shrine along with a fort to protect it. Chirakkal which lies in proximity to the south of Baliapaṭam was the seat of the Kolathiri Rājās who held sway over the whole of north Kēraḷa. Presently there are a dozen mosques in the town, the oldest of which is believed to have been erected by Mālik Ibn Dīnār.<sup>30</sup>

This is the historical background of Baliapaṭam, possessed with the precious epitaph under our persual.

It is a fragmentary loose epitaph in the Arabic language, executed in *Kūfī* characters in low relief on a single rectangular block of yellow sandstone, of which almost half of upper part bearing Quranic verse (Ch.III, part of verse 18), is missing. The extant portion measuring 20 by 17 centimetre bears Quranic text (in continuation with that of the missing upper part), followed by an obituary notice, saying that 'this is the grave of 'Ali bin Kasnūrī, who passed away in (A.H.) 471 (1078-79 A.D.).

The text of the epitaph executed in *Kūfī* characters is plain and without any ornamental flourishes or designs, containing a famous verse<sup>31</sup> from the *Qur'ān*, usually found in epitaphs elsewhere and also in India. With the help of the extant portion of the slab it is not difficult to conjecture that the solid single block of the epitaph contained in all probability ten lines of writing - 4 lines in the missing upper part and 6 lines, as obvious, in the surviving text. The last four lines of the surviving text pertains to the obituary notice. The surviving text is read as under:

### TEXT

(In continuation with the Quranic text, Chapter III, verse 18).

- 1) Huwa'l 'Azīzu'l Ḥakīm. Inna'd-
- 2) īna 'indallāhi'l Islām.
- 3) Hādhā qabru 'Alī bin Kasnū-
- 4) rī raḥmatu'llāh tuwaffā fī
- 5) sinatin ihdā wa sab'īna wa
- 6) arba'u miyatin wa ṣallallāhu 'alā Muḥammad

*Translation*

- (1-2) He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise. The Religion before Allāh is Islām (submission to His Will);<sup>32</sup>
- (3-4) This is the grave of 'Alī son of Kasnūrī, the mercy of God (be upon him) who died in
- (5-6) the year one and seventy and four hundred (i.e. A.H. 471/1078-79 A.D.). And may God's blessings be upon (His Prophet) Muḥammed.

This chance-discovery from Baliapaṭam is very important from various points of view. Indian Islamic inscriptions, as a rule, date from the last decade of the 12th century with the exception of about a dozen bearing earlier dates discovered at Sonapat<sup>33</sup> in Rohtak District, at Nārnaul<sup>34</sup> in Mahendragarh District of Haryāna and at Bhadreshwar<sup>35</sup> in Kutch District of Gujarāt. Much earlier records dated in 8th and 9th centuries in Kēraḷa and elsewhere are reported in traditional accounts from western and southern coastal regions, but none was actually found so far. Our valuable epitaph from Baliapaṭam happens to be the earliest authentic Muslim record discovered so far in India, not to mention Pākistān in the sub-continent where one of still earlier date A.H. 243/857 A.D. has been traced and published.<sup>36</sup> I deem it necessary to clarify that our epitaphic record under reference pertains to the Indian soil and was not brought from outside the country, as we are possessed with other older inscriptions housed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, and one of them fixed in the Red Fort at Āgra, having been brought from various parts of the Islamic world.<sup>37</sup>

Other specimens of inscriptions in *Kūfī* style bearing later dates (than the Baliapaṭam epitaph), come from Cambay<sup>38</sup> and Bhadreshwar<sup>39</sup> in Gujarāt and from Ajmer<sup>40</sup> and Lādnun<sup>41</sup> in Rājasthān. Our epitaph under study is not only the earliest dated record but also the earliest *Kūfī* inscriptions from the Indian soil. All the early stone records in Arabic both from within including that of Baliapaṭam and from outside have their own historical importance and very interesting on palaeographical grounds. On the basis of their collective study, their styles of writing display various phrases of the *Kūfī* script, variety known as ornamental *Kūfī* as employed in certain inscriptions stored in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay and in a number of epitaphs at Bhadreshwar, and the variety termed as plain *Kūfī*, as employed in the epitaph under study.

It is also interesting to note that the epitaph was set up at a time when India was still alien to Muslim rule. It indicates the extent of the permeation of the Muslims with peaceful pursuits and engaged in commercial activities in Kēraḷa, corroborating the statements of the early Arab travellers about the existence of Muslim settlements in various towns, besides indirectly providing evidence of the relations between Western India and other Islamic countries.

To conclude, it may be remarked that the present record from Baliapaṭam is an addition to our source-material for the assessment of the early contact and settlements of the Muslims at various coastal places of Kēraḷa in general and at Baliapaṭam in particular in the 11th

century. It indicates the fact, though indirectly, that Muslim settlements were not confined to Cannanore alone and because of immense commercial activities, apart from Cannanore, Arab Muslims had settled in Baliapaṭam also in view of local, foreign and international commercial activities conducted from these two nearby sea-ports at the Kēraḷa coast. The deceased 'Alī bin Kashnūrī, of the epitaph probably belonged to the trading community of the region whose grave there confirms his close association with Baliapaṭam.

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14. *Ibid.*, p.2-3,6.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 91,94.
16. Menon, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4
17. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (AREp)*, 1953-54, Appendix C, No.111; *Ibid.*, 1959-60, D 170; *Ibid.*, 1965-66, D 36-114; *Ibid.*, 1973-74, D 161-203; *Ibid.*, 1990-91, C 49-70; *Ibid.*, 1992-93, C 30-34.
18. These places are: (1) Alleppey, District Alleppey; (2) Beypore (3) Chāliyam (4) Kollam (5) Quilandy (6) Paravanna (7) Kozhikode (8) Iringal (9) Pudi Angādi (District Kozhikode); (10) Baliapaṭam



(11) Madāyi (12) Cannanore (13) Kottayam (14) Tellicherry (District Cannanore); (15) Cochīn (District Ernāculam); (16) Kāsargod (District Kasargod); (17) Thāzathangādi (District Kottayam); (22) Betat Pudiangādo (23) Kaveriparkarpalli (24) Tanur (District Malāppuram); (25) Ponnāni (District Pālghāt); (26) Quilon (District Quilon); (27) Srinarayanapuram (District Trichur) and (28) Trivandrum (District Trivandrum).

19. It is from Baliapaṭam. *AREp.*, 1990-91, C 54.
20. It is from Quilandy, *AREp.*, 1965-66, D 82.
21. One record is from Trivandrum which is in Arabic and Persian, *AREp.*, 1973-74, D 203. The other record is from Alleppey which is in Arabic, Persian and Urdū. *AREp.*, 1992-93, C 41.
22. These are from Ponnāni in Pālghāt; District, Cannanore and Tellicherry, *AREp.*, 1973-74, D 187; *Ibid.*, 1990-91, C 63, 67.
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33. It is dated A.H. 481/1088 A.D. *AREp.*, 1963-64, D 3003.
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37. Two epitaphs dated A.H. 174(790-92 A.D.) and A.H. 437(1045 A.D.) originally from Persia and the African coast, respectively, are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (*AREp.*, 1952-53, C 25; *Ibid.*, 1970-71, D 3). Dr. Z.A. Desāi, 'Inscriptions from the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay', *EIAPS*, 1957 and 1958, p.2. Of the four *Kūfī* records, three are dated A.H. 326 (938 A.D.), A.H. 410 (1019 A.D.) and A.H. 421 (1030 A.D.). The inscription at Agra belongs to Maḥmūd of Ghaznī (998-1030 A.D.). See Mohd. Ashraf Ḥusain, 'Arabic and Persian Inscriptions in the Agra Fort', *EIAPS*, 1951 and 1952, pp. 1-2.
38. *AREp.*, 1956-57, D 49; *Ibid.*, 1959-60, D 116.
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40. *AREp.*, 1963-64, D 307.
41. *Ibid.*, 1968-69, D 420.

## Kēraḷa Inscriptions - A Study

N. Pankaja

I wish to highlight a few important characteristic features of Kēraḷa inscriptions to draw parallels and equals with those of Tamil inscriptions.

Most of the inscriptions in Kēraḷa, like those in Tamil Nāḍu, are donative in nature. Unlike Tamil Nāḍu, only a very few hero-stone records are available in Kēraḷa.

The structure, format and the contents of the records are simple and short. Inscriptions of Kēraḷa during 9th century A.D. have the following format in sequence.

- a) King's name and regnal year
- b) The name of the donor
- c) The purpose of the grant
- d) The object of the gift.

The language of the early records is mostly Tamil, while the scripts employed are Grantha, Vaṭṭeḷuttu and Tamil. The usage of Malayāḷam dialect as early as the 5th century A.D. is attested by the Eḍakkal Brāhmī inscriptions through the word *Ana* which has been suggested for the first time by Mr. Iravatham Mahadevan.

Like in Tamil Nāḍu, in majority of inscriptions, we get the opposite regnal years, the significance of which is not definitely known.

The reckoning of the dates of the inscriptions are based on the revolution period of Jupiter through the *Zodiac* signs of the Zodiac i.e. *Viyāḷa-Vaṭṭam*. While the dating in Tamil Nāḍu inscriptions are a mixture of unisolar and *Chāndramāna*. According to this *Viyāḷa-Vaṭṭam* the year was named after the sign of Zodiacal constellation in which the planet stays in a sign for a year (approximately).

*Mēḍa-viyāḷattil Mithuna-ñāyirru.*

Perhaps the climatic conditions of Kēraḷa have a bearing on the engraving of inscriptions on stone. They would have chosen the summer season when Jupiter stays in a Zodiacal constellation (*Rāśi*) for a year.

The features do indicate that the records in Kēraḷa contain a few dialectical peculiarities. The king's name and regnal year are expressed by using the dative case. For example,

*Iravikku yāṇḍu aindu and Chaḍaiyarkku muppattañju.*

In the transaction, the structure seems to be in identical use like:

*Kuḍutta Viḍuppērāvadu/cheyda*  
*Vyavasthaiyāvadu/cheyda-kachcham,*  
*Cheydōm*

The only disagreement is that in the auxilliary *āga* that is used in Tamil records.

*Cheyvad-āga*, *cheyvār-āga*, etc., The records of Kēraḷa seem to dispense with this and mention *Kaḍavar*; *perār*, *pōduvadu*, *koḷvadu*, etc. The most deterministic feature in Malayāḷam inscriptions is the dropping of person, name and gender from the entire record, for example, we have *ñān-varum*; *ñāṅgaḷ - varum*; *aduvarum*; *avaḷ-varum*, etc.,

Next is the distinction in the nasal sound. In Tamil there are different forms for *ñ* and *ṇ* having the same sound, but in Malayāḷam, only one *ñ* form with two different sounds is used.

Identical forms occur in the 10th century inscriptions in Tamil Nāḍu and Kēraḷa. Their nature and scope are also identical.

- a) the name and the regnal year of the King;
- b) the place;
- c) the deities; the donor;
- d) the objects gifted, etc.

They end with a phrase about the protection (*rakshai*) of the provisions of the grant.

Sometimes imprecatory verses do occur. The imprecation refers to the agreements of Mūḷikkaḷam. A few inscriptions of the 10th century end with the phrase that those who act contrary to the royal order or who object to the gift are to be punished by the assembly of Mūḷikkaḷam or shall come under the operation of Mūḷikkaḷakkachcham, respectively. The operative part of the record gives some details but are not very so elaborate. The basic structure of the sentence seems to be identical.

The dialectical peculiarities are as follows:

*Muruññaiyūr* for *Muruṅgaiyūr*.  
*Śaṅṅaran* for *Śaṅkaran*  
*Oḍuñña* for *Oḍuṅga*  
*Yedattu* for *Idattu*  
*Oḷḷa* for *Uḷḷa*  
*kāḍaviyar* for *Kaḍavar*  
*paḍuvidu* for *paḍuvadu*  
*chelvidu* for *chelvadu*  
*pandiraṅḍu* for *panniraṅḍu*

We have words like;

*Kachchamāvadu*; *Muḍuppichcha*; *Kelasam adichcha*;  
*Amaichcha*; *Adhikarichcha*; *Iḍivichcha*.

Reversed type occurs in the word;

*chārṅṅavar* for *chārṅṅavar*

A number of instances can be cited for such usages.

Copper-plate inscriptions in Kēraḷa contain two sections:

- a) Sanskrit section, mostly engraved in Grantha script
- b) Tamil section in Tamil language and in Tamil or Vaṭṭeḷuttu scripts.

The Tamil section gives meticulous details in a systematic way. The conditions *Vyavasthai*, the exemption *parihāra*, the *viññapti* who places the petition before the King, the *ājñapti*, who issues the order on the King's approval are given. For example: Māmballi plates of Śrī Vallaban Kōdai dated Kollam 149 (974 A.D.); Tirukkākara inscription of Indukōdai-varman dated (971 A.D.) are specimens for the use of special usages.

Example: *Aṭṭikkoḍuttān* instead of the Tamil usage *aṭṭuvāmānōm*

Other examples are: *nāḷigaiyōm*,  
*sabhaiyōm*, etc.,

Thus the features of Kēraḷa inscriptions cannot be studied in isolation but they have to be examined in relation to Tamil inscriptions.

## Role of Segmentation Technique for Sample Epigraphy Text: A Case Study

*H.K.Anasuya Devi*

### *Introduction*

Referring to the previous papers *Computer Aids to Epigraphy* and *Image Enhancement Techniques for Epigraphy Texts* have been emphasized. In this context, it is possible to create an environment for epigraphists and archaeologists.

This paper deals with how exactly the character is extracted and recognized using the techniques explained below.

### *Methodology*

#### *Data*

Data for the process is Brahmagiri rock inscription belonging to 3rd century B.C. shown in fig.1.

#### *Segmentation*

The approach to image classification attempts to divide the image into regions based on some property. Given an image, the task of dividing it into similar regions can be thought of as classifying each pixel in the image into one of a number of types.

#### *Segmentation by thresholding*

There are two approaches in this category. One is fixed thresholding and the other is variable thresholding. A fixed threshold simply assigns a value of zero to a pixel if it is less than the threshold and 1 otherwise.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{i.e. } a(j, k) &= 0 \text{ if } a(j, k) \leq T \\ &= 1 \text{ otherwise} \end{aligned}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} a(j, k) &= \text{Gray level intensity at the spatial coordinates } (j, k) \\ T &= \text{Threshold value} \end{aligned}$$

Thresholding is not a particularly successful segmentation method unless special lighting is used. This has to be a contrast enhancing and carefully controlled to provide even illumination for the entire image. Although manual threshold setting is the best, histogram method can be used for automatic threshold setting. Essentially the threshold is chosen to lie in the valley of image brightness histogram. In practice, a fixed threshold cannot separate object from background because average intensity is not uniform throughout the image.

A variable threshold assumes that in any given local region, pixels belong to the object will have low brightness values compared to the local mean. One technique is to set threshold

$t(j, k)$  to

$$t(j, k) = k s(j, k) + m(j, k)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} k &= \text{a constant} \\ s(j, k) &= \text{local standard deviation} \\ m(j, k) &= \text{local mean} \end{aligned}$$

Both fixed thresholding and variable thresholding have been applied to the imageries. Average intensity of the image is restored in variable thresholding by the mean value of the local region ( $m(j, k)$ ) and then the standard deviation of the pixel values in the local region ( $s(j, k)$ ) amplified by a suitable constant  $k$  (which is fixed by trial and error method) and added. Result is shown in fig.2.

### *Segmentation by edge detection*

An edge is the boundary between two regions with relatively distinct gray level properties. Basically, the idea underlying most edge detection techniques is the use of first order derivatives. Magnitude of the first order derivative can be used to detect the presence of an edge in an image and the sign of the second derivative can be used to determine whether an edge pixel lies on the dark or light side of an edge. Second order derivative has a zero crossing at the midpoint of a transition in gray level. Zero crossing provides a powerful approach for locating edges in an image.

Laplacian of a 2-D function  $f(x, y)$  is a second order derivative defined as:

$$\text{Laplacian}(f) = 2\text{-nd derivative w.r.t. } x(f) + 2\text{-nd derivative w.r.t } y(f)$$

Above can be implemented in digital form in various ways. For a 3 x 3 region, the form frequently used is

$$\text{Laplacian}(f) = 4z5 - (z2 + z4 + z6 + z8)$$

The matrix is

$$\begin{matrix} 0 & -1 & 0 \\ -1 & 4 & -1 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \end{matrix}$$

It can be seen that the operator is very sensitive to noise (confirmed by the results obtained which are enclosed in fig.3)

### *Segmentation by region growing technique*

As its name implies, region growing is a procedure that groups pixels or sub-regions into larger regions. The simplest of these approaches is pixel aggregation, which starts with a set of "seed" points and from these, grows regions by appending to each seed point those neighboring pixels that have similar properties such as gray level, texture or color. Once the

pixels having different properties are encountered, the process is stopped in that direction. The main problem here is to select the seed point. Seed point should be selected in such a way that it ends up giving the required region.

The main features of the region growing algorithm are

- a) a tracing method
- b) a detection criterion
- c) a tracking criterion

The tracking method employed is omnidirectional curve tracing. Here the tracking direction doesn't follow the raster but traces along the accepted regions. The detection criterion decides whether a particular pixel is a seed point or not. The tracking criterion decides whether a subsequent point can be accepted as a part of the region or not.

The generalized algorithm is as follows:

1. Scan the picture systematically, looking for points that meet the detection criterion. When such a point is found, it becomes the "current point".
2. Examine the neighborhood of the current point and apply an appropriate tracking criterion. As before, this criterion may depend on the gray level, contrast etc. of the candidate point, as well as on its distance and direction from the current point, or from some curve point, or from some curve that extends the curve branch currently being taken.
  - a) If no points as yet unaccepted meet this criterion, tracking of that branch has terminated. In this case, we take the next point on list L as our new current point, and resume tracking. If list L is empty, we go back to step (1).
  - b) If the unaccepted points meeting the criterion all appear to lie on a single curve, we accept the closest of them as belonging to the curve branch being tracked, take it as the new current point, and go back to step (2).
  - c) If these points appear to lie on more than one curve, we may conclude that the curve being tracked has branched, or has crossed another curve. In this case we put all but one of the closest ones on list L for later investigation. The remaining closest point is accepted as the new current point, as in case (b), and we go back to step(2).
  - d) When the systematic scan is finished, the algorithm has terminated.

By the end of the segmentation process, based on connectivity from each pixel, the characters are isolated, in other words as fully connected set of pixels are isolated and is assumed to form a character. This set of connected pixels are represented as separate vectors



for future recognition. Result of this is shown in fig.4.

### ***Data Set preparation***

Once the image is sufficiently cleaned up, the individual characters are extracted for recognition. A database containing all occurrences of each character is built by storing each set in a separate file. One such set is shown in figure 5.

### ***Recognition using invariant moments***

Once extraction of the character is done, the next stage is its recognition. The test character is extracted and stored in a file. It is observed that combinations of 2nd and 3rd order moments give rise to seven invariant moments that are invariant to scaling and rotation. Furthermore they have unique values for each character. At first, invariant moments for the test character are calculated and these values are compared with the values obtained for each entry in the data sets. The character that gives closest difference in the values is taken as the best match. Test character for this operation is figure 6 and the best match is figure 7 as per the result of running moments procedure. It can be easily observed that they are the different forms of the same character. The approach needs to be further refined as it cannot handle intricate differences like signature matching as the criterion adopted is the smallest difference in moment values. This has scope for further refinement so that even intricate details are taken care of.

## **Notes and References**

1. Rafael C. Gonzalez and Richard E. Woods, *Digital Image Processing*
2. Mike James, *Pattern Recognition*
3. Rosenfld and Kak, *Image Processing* Vol. 2.
4. Lawrence O’Gorman and Rangachar Kasturi, *Document Image Analysis*
5. M. A. Sid Ahmed, *Image Processing*
6. Various IEEE papers pertaining to image processing and pattern recognition

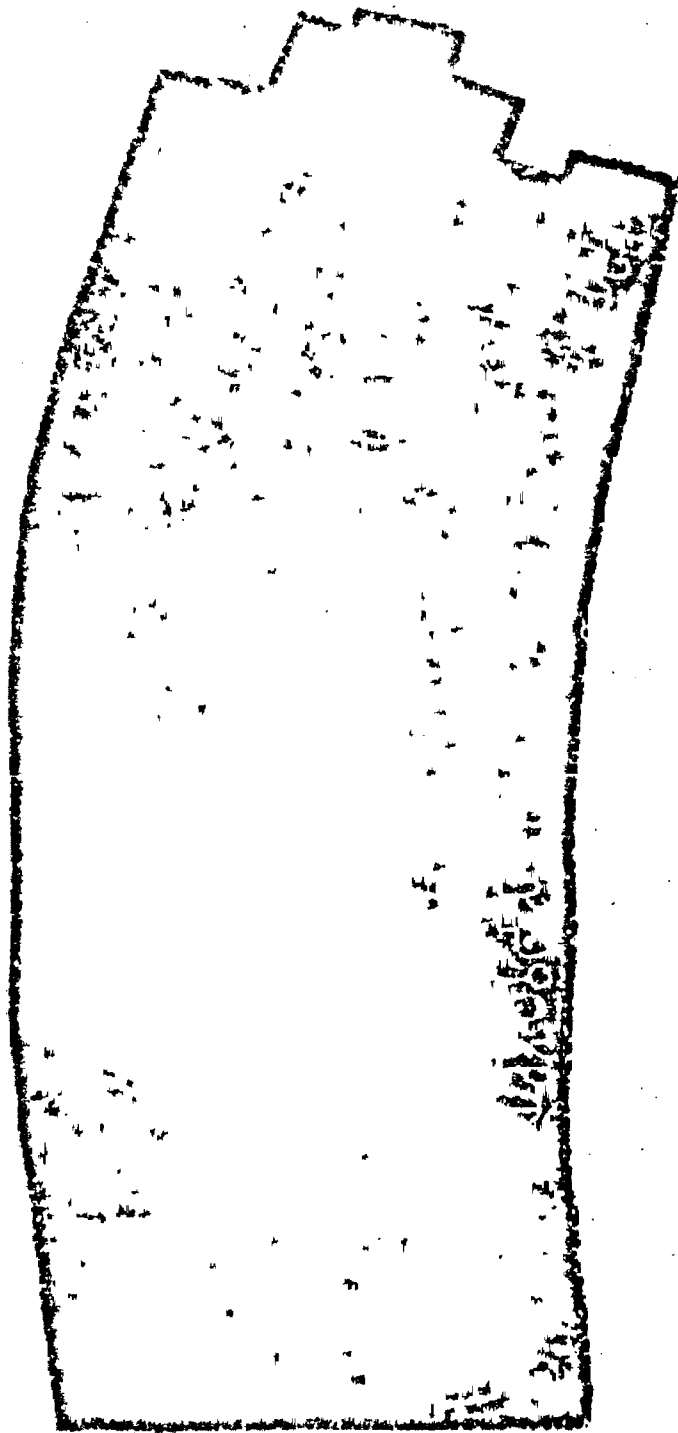


Plate 1: Brahmagiri Rock Inscription

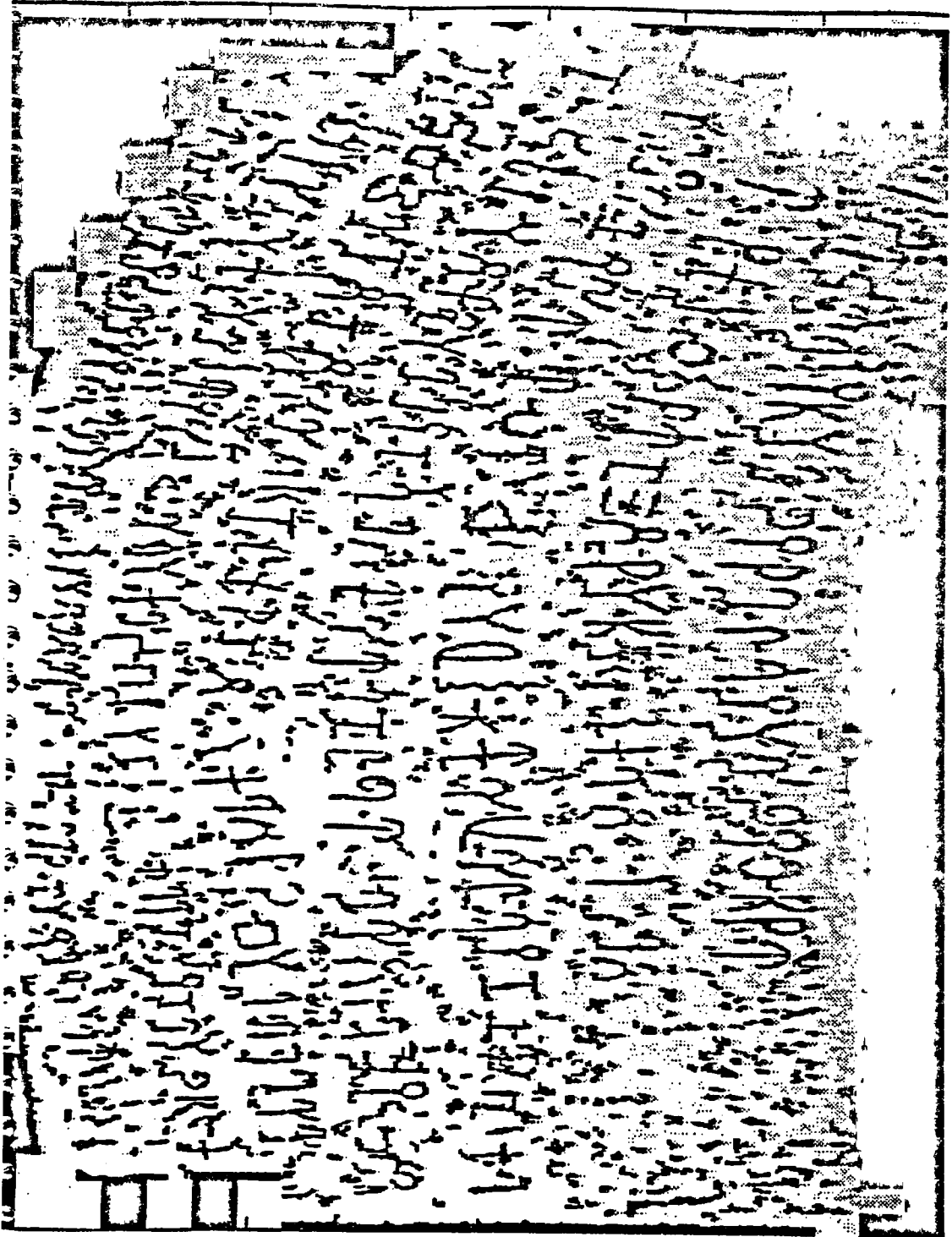


Plate 2 : Variable Thresholding

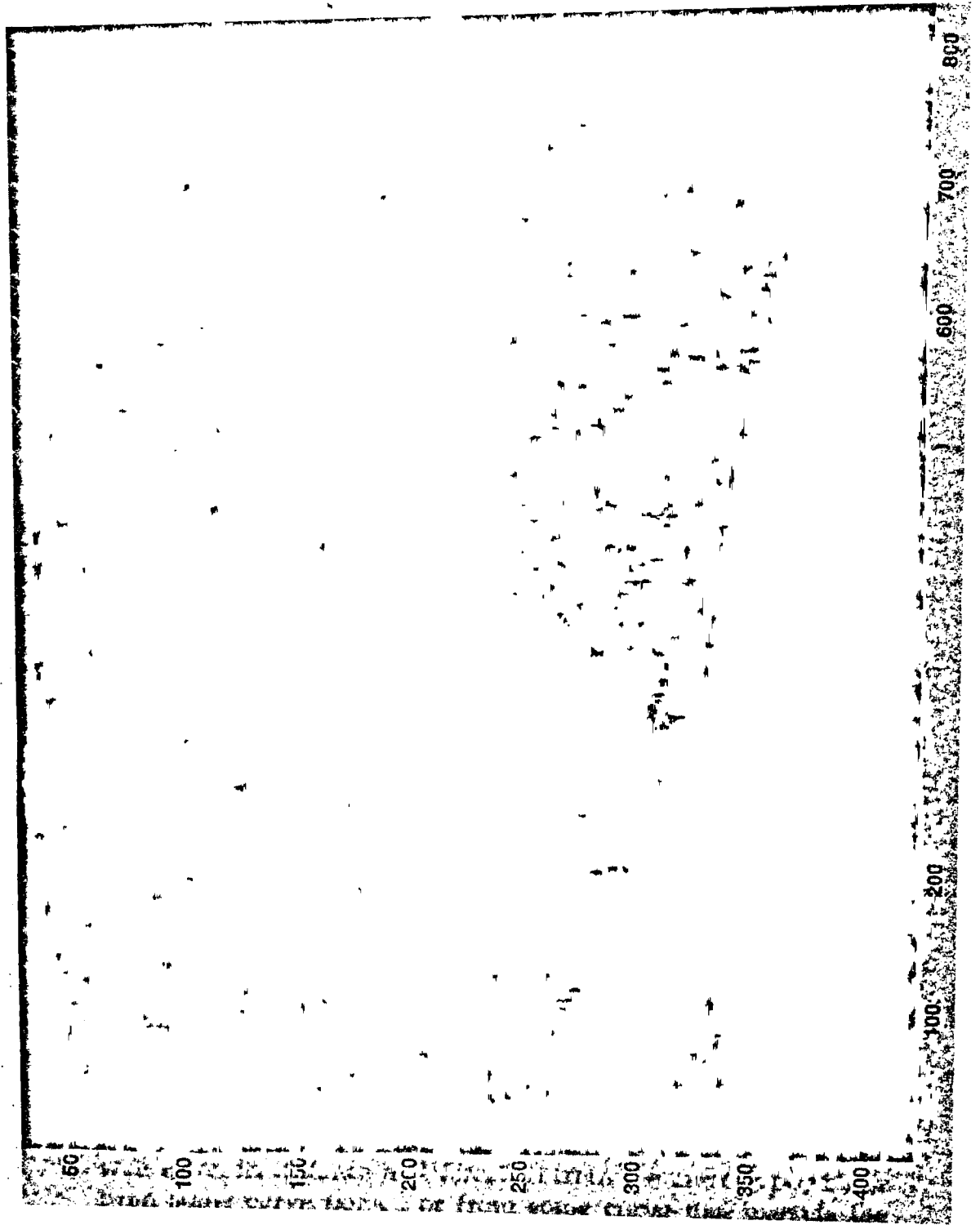


Plate 3 : Edge Detection

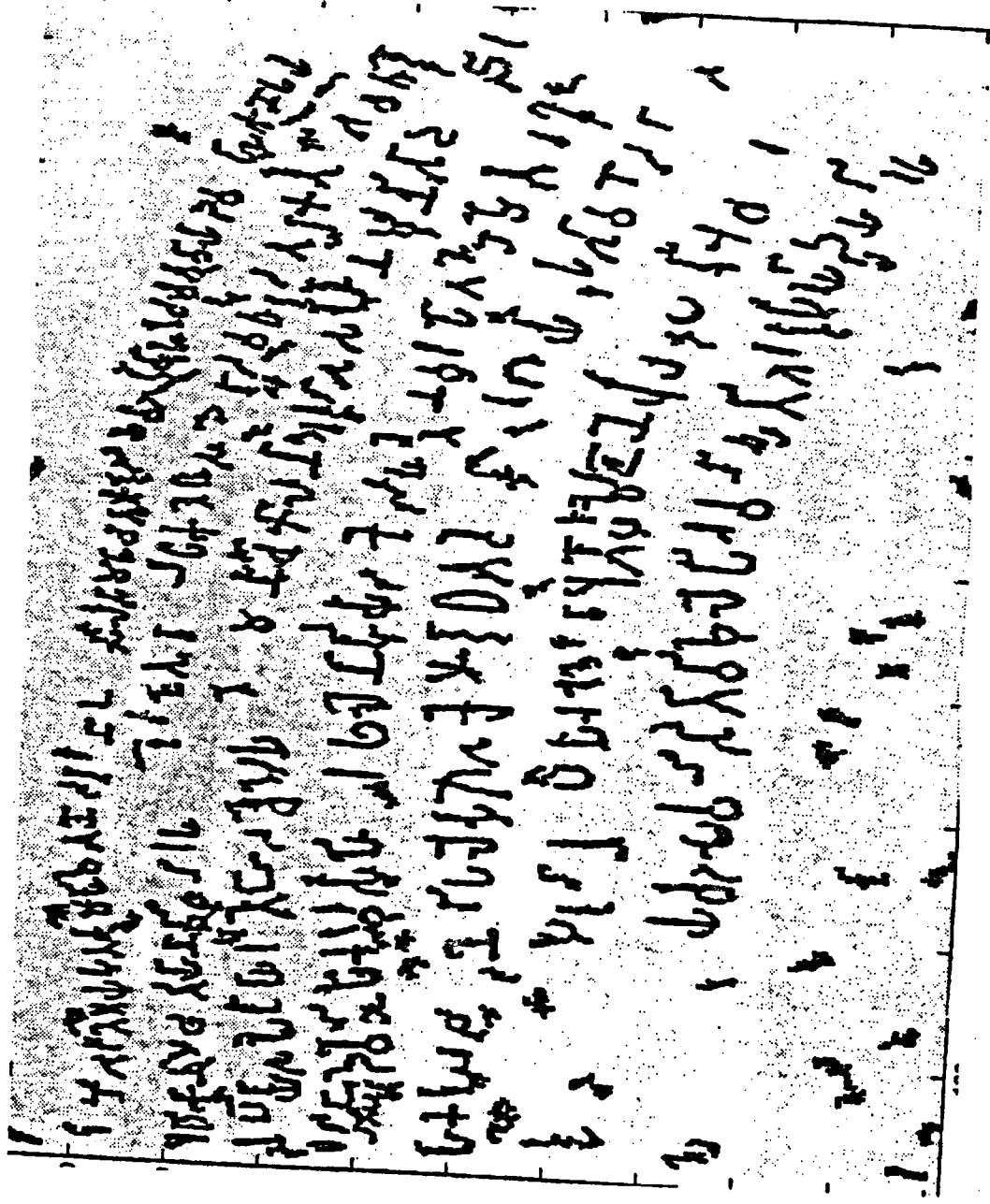


Plate 4 : Region Growing

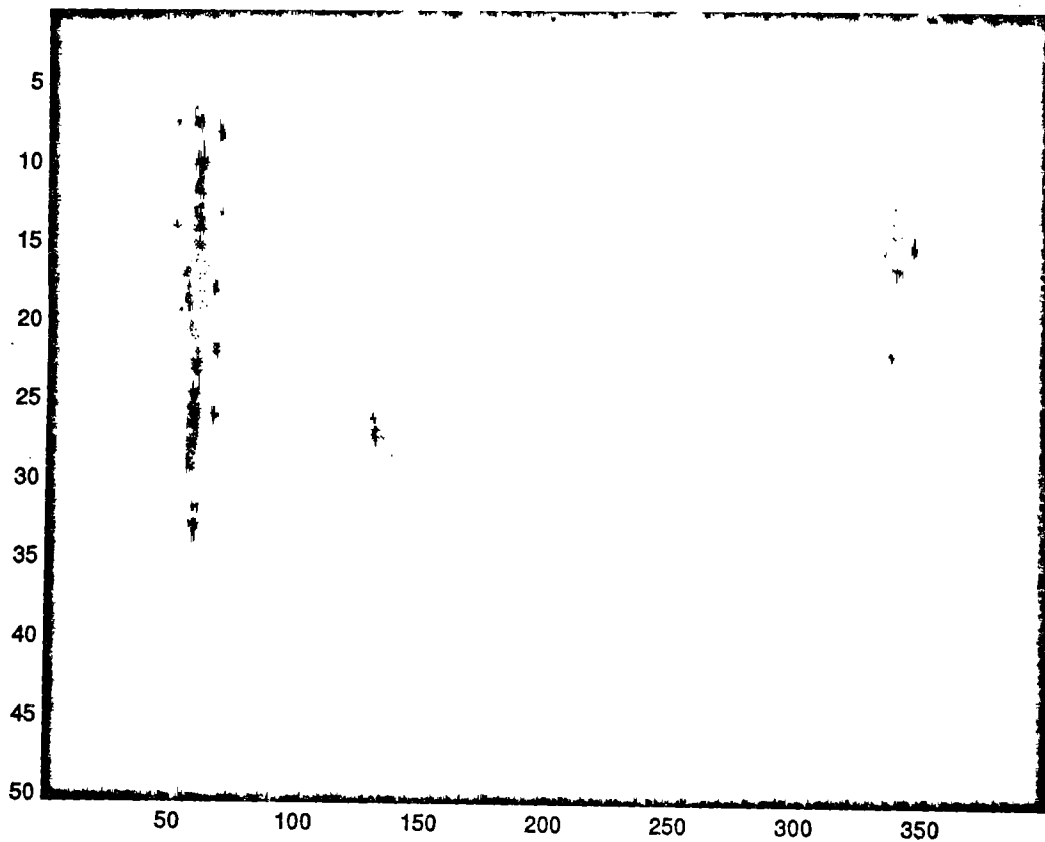


Plate 5 : Data Sheet

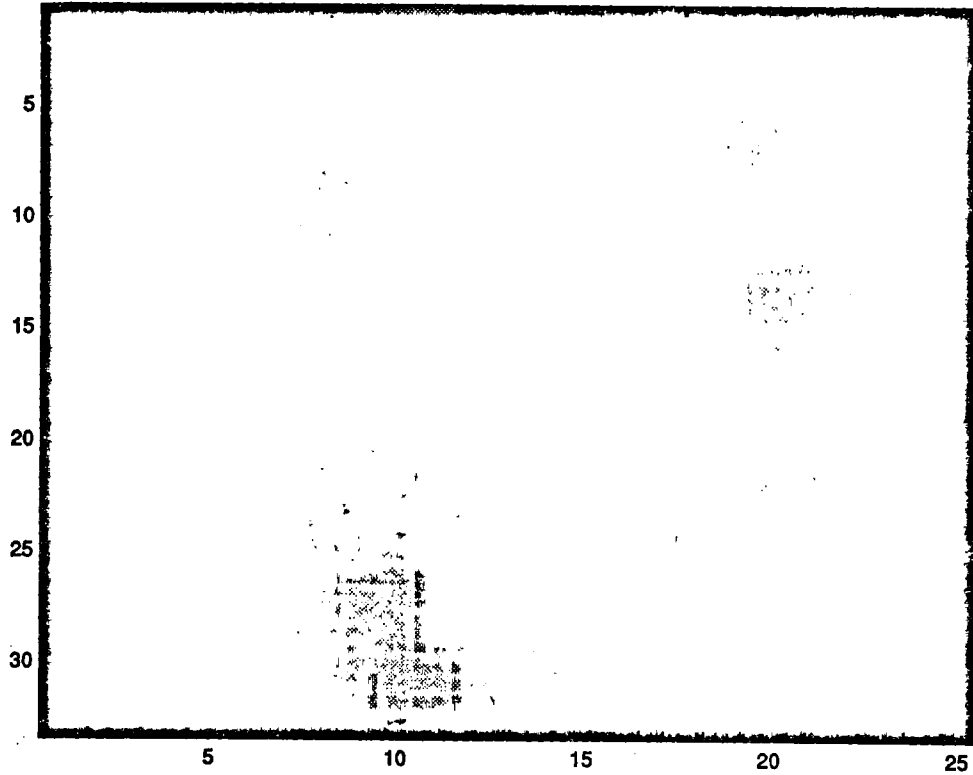


Plate 6 : Input Character for Moments

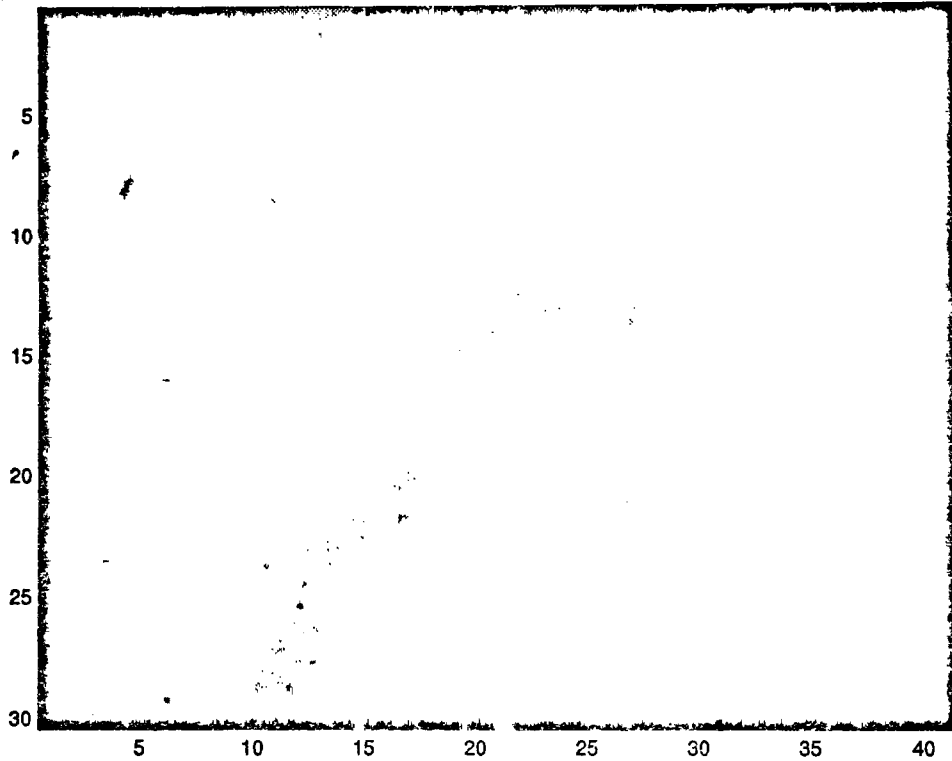


Plate 7 : Recognised Character



## The rise and fall of a mahāśabhā of Tirunallāru - A case study

G. Vijayavenugopal

Tirunallāru, a small village near Kāraikkāl under Pondicherry Union Territory, is now famous for its Śanīśvara shrine. But during the Chōla period it was a celebrated Śiva temple under the control of a *mahāśabhā* of Tirunallāru. It received extensive patronage from the Chōla kings starting from Rājādhirāja I (1017 - 1054 A.D.) to Rājendra III (1245 - 1279 A.D)

An inscription belonging to the 28th regnal year (1046 A.D) of Rājādhirāja I mentions Tirunallāru as a *brahmadēya* of Muḷaiyūr-nāḍu in Uyyakkonḍār-vaḷanāḍu. An inscription belonging to the 30th regnal year of Rājādhirāja I (1048 A.D) gives the list of *Bhaṭṭas* belonging to Kāśyapa and Gautama gōtras who were looking after the temple administration at Tirunallāru. These were generally referred to as Śivabrāhmaṇas. However, in the year 1048 A.D. i.e. during the 30th regnal year of Rājādhirāja I, the place Tirunallāru is mentioned as Śrīchōḷēndrasimhach-chaturvēdimaṅgalam and members of this village *śabhā* got 50 *kāśus* from *dēvakaṇṇmis* of Tirunallāru and purchased land for the provision of Māśi festival. This *brahmadēya* status of Tirunallāru and the accompanying *mahāśabhā* was in vogue upto the time of Kulōttuṅga I (12th cent. A.D.)

During the reign of Vikramachōla the Śivabrāhmaṇas donated some lands, as tax free, for *pōṇakappuṇam* for the lord of Tirunallāru. In an inscription of the 8th regnal year (1126 A.D) of Vikramachōla it is mentioned that the lands were donated tax free by the *mahāśabhā*. Unfortunately the inscription is not clear and damaged in some places and as a result one couldn't identify the name of the *mahāśabhā* i.e., the place name. Vikramachōla's inscription issued in his 15th regnal year (1133 A.D) mentions that the Śivabrāhmaṇas who have *kāni* lands have received 25 *kāśus* from Chīriḷaṅgōppurriḍaṅkonḍāṇ, a vēḷḷāḷa, for a perpetual lamp in the temple so that the clan of Chōlas prosper, they win at wars, the Māyēchchuram prosper, the village also prosper. Significantly there is no mention of either the *mahāśabhā* or the *brahmadēya*. By the reasons given for the setting up of a perpetual lamp one may infer that here, is an attempt to get the attention of the king towards this temple and village. Before this, three inscriptions belonging to the periods of Rājādhirāja I and Rājendra (1055 A.D.) mention about different *mahāśabhās* in Muḷaiyūr-nāḍu donating lands to perform rituals and festivals in Tirunallāru temple. In the 35th regnal year of Rājādhirāja I (1053 A.D) the members of the *mahāśabhā* of Iḍaiyārṟukkudi in Maurgal-nāḍu in Rājarāja-vaḷanāḍu donates lands to Tirunallāru temple to celebrate the 6th day festival during the month Māśi for carrying the idol in procession. Similarly an inscription issued in the 3rd regnal year of Rājendra II (1055 A.D) mentions that the members of *mahāśabhā* of Kāyakkudi, a *brahmadēya* in Kurumbūr-nāḍu in Jayaṅgoṇḍachōla-vaḷanāḍu donated lands to Tirupuvaṇasundarēśvar donated by Pūraṇi Mānikkam, a servant maid of the king's place. Similarly another inscription issued in the 8th regnal year of Rājendra II (1059 A.D) mentions that the members of the *mahāśabhā* of Śrī Arumoliḍēva-charuppēdimaṅgalam, a *brahmadēya* in Muḷaiyūr-nāḍu in Atirājarāja-vaḷanāḍu after getting 80 *kāśus* from the Mūlaparuḍaiyar Ādichaṇḍēśvaradēvar of Tirunallāru temple purchased lands and donated them to Tirunallāru

temple. These suggest that after the gradual decline of the *brahmadēya* of Tirunallāru a few attempts were made by other *brahmadēyas* to keep the festivals and rituals alive at Tirunallāru temple. In fact the *Śivabrāhmaas* who were in charge of Tirunallāru temple got 66 *kāśus* from one Tañjai-chīruḍaiyāl, a lady from Thaṅjāvūr, and bought lands and through the paddy which came as interest agreed to offer food to Pirāṭṭiyār, the presiding goddess at Tirunallāru. What is interesting here is that the activities of the *mahāsabhā* or *brahmadēya* are not found mentioned in yet another inscription of Rājendra II (1059 A.D)

In fact the decline has started even by the time of Kulōttuṅga I. An inscription issued in the 25th regnal year of Kulōttuṅga I (1094 A.D) gives the name as Virudarājabhayaṅkara-chaturvēdimāṅalam (instead of Tirunallāru) and mentions an important event that has happened. It states that “*Ivvāṇḍu innālvaraiyil ivvūr payirēṟṟāmai kiḍandamaiyil*” which means “that since the lands of this village were not cultivated till this day, in this year and lay waste” and adds that the members of the *mahāsabhā* had got 5 *kāśus* from the *mūlaparuḍaiyar* Ādichaṇḍēsvaradēvar and bought lands and through the interest accrued, agreed to perform *ardhajāmapūja*. The land was sold by Ilukkantiṟattu..... Kramavittan. This name reminds one of the *Śivabrāhmaṅas* of this place mentioned earlier. Similarly another inscription of Kulōttuṅga I issued in his 31st regnal year (1101 A.D) mentions that since the land produce is not enough to pay taxes (*varikku uḍal pōdāmaiyl*) *kāśus* were got from Ādichaṇḍēsvarar of Tirunallāru temple. These references clearly reveal the declining status of the *sabhā* by not paying taxes and not raising crops. The renaming of Tirunallāru into Virudarājabhayaṅkarach-chaturvēdimāṅalam suggests the attempt on the part of the King to revive the status of Tirunallāru temple by reorganizing the *mahāsabhā*.

Again this reorganised *mahāsabhā* with the new name made its own efforts to revive the pride of Tirunallāru temple. An inscription of Kulōttuṅga I issued in his 47th regnal year (1117 A.D) states that the *mahāsabhā* got 28 *kāśus* from the temple and purchased lands and donated to the temple. It is also stated that this was done in order “to attain victory by the King”. Similarly another inscription of Kulōttuṅga I issued in his 40th regnal year (1110 A.D) states that the *mahāsabhā* donated lands to a *maṭha* created by one of the *śivabrāhmaṅas*. These show attempts made by the reorganised *sabhā* to keep alive the temple activities.

During Kulōttuṅga II's period an important event has taken place. This clearly reveals the decline of the *mahāsabhā* and *brahmadēya* status of Tirunallāru. According to the inscription of Kulōttuṅga II issued in his 3rd regnal year (1135 A.D) the king issues a memo. The inscription mentions a request made by one Vikramachōla-Kāśyapa that the lands donated during the period of Kulōttuṅga I (during his 39th and 45th regnal years) were not enough and requests the king to donate more lands and made them as *kāṇi* of those who already had this *kāṇi* and also named it as Tirunallāru *brahmadēyam*. This clearly reveals that the old name and *brahmadēya* status were lost and now a fresh request is made to restore the old status.

Subsequently some interesting developments have taken place. An inscription belonging to Kulōttuṅga II issued in his 5th regnal year (1138 A.D) states that the members of the

*mahāsabhā* of Kāyakkudi, a *brahmadēya* in Kuṟumbūr-nāḍu in Uyyakkoṇḍār-vaḷanāḍu, met at a *maṭha* called Kulōttuṅgaochōḷaṅ-tirumaḍam in the Tirunallāru temple street and resolved to donate (tax free) lands to the temple of Tirunallāru.

Similarly an inscription belonging to Rājarāja II issued in his 19th regnal year (1165 A.D) does not mention the name of *brahmadēya* or *mahāsabhā* of Tirunallāru and simply states that the Śivabrāhmaṇas (who have the 30 day cycle) of Tirunallāru temple donated some lands.

An inscription belonging to Rājarāja III issued in his 26th regnal year (1241 A.D) states that the temple trustees, the *mahēśvaras* and the *nāṭṭavars* of Muḷaiyūr-nāḍu met at Nāḍudaināyakan-tirumaḍapam in the temple of Tirunallāru and levied a fine from the Śivabrāhmaṇas for their failure to supply rice, pounded rice, gingelly oil, tree oil etc., in respect of an early endowment. The signatories included Śivabrāhmaṇas Tiruvidi-āṇḍārgal, dancing girls, Śrīpādam-tāṅguvār and Tēvāra singers, temple accountant etc. This inscription mentions about the enquiry made by officials including *nāṭṭavars*.

This makes a full circle. The lands were once owned by *nāṭṭavars* from whom the king created the *brahmadēyas* and *dēvadānas*. Since the *brahmadēyas* cannot pay taxes and cultivate lands and as time passed they gradually lost their power and position. Subsequently the *nāṭṭavars* gain supremacy in administering the temples and the lands.

During the period of Rājendra III, the waning period of the Chōḷa supremacy, an inscription issued in his 4th regnal year (1249 A.D) records that the *ūrkkil-iṟaiyili-pramāṇa isaiivut-tiṭṭu* was issued by *ūravar* of Nelvāychchēri Anapāyamaṅgalam in Muḷaiyūr-nāḍu to the temple authorities exempting taxes on the lands endowed by the donor Ponnālyān Nachchiṅārkkiniyan for food offerings to the god on the days of Bharani in the months of Aippaśi and Chittirai. This clearly reveals the raising hand of the *ūravars* in the temple administration.

Thus the study of the inscriptions of the Chōḷa period found at the temple of Tirunallāru reveals the rise and gradual decline of a *brahmadēya* and its *mahāsabhā* and the rise of *nāṭṭārs/ūravars* in gaining an upper hand in the administration of temples and villages subsequently.

# An Arabic Epigraph pertaining to early Islamic mission to Kerala

G.S. Khwaja

It is well-known to all that Muslim Arab merchants had a good rapport with coastal cities of western and southern India even before the arrival of muslim invaders through north-western land routes. My paper is an effort to critically examine the epigraphical as well as literary sources corroborating the history of Indo-Arab relations.

Recently an Arabic epigraph from Kāsargod has come to light which is quite important in this regard. This epigraph was copied in 1990 by Dr. M.I. Quddusi, who has kindly allowed me to use it for the purpose of this study.

Kāsargod City is the head quarters of a district of the same name in the State of Kerala, lying in 12°30' northern latitude and 75°00' eastern longitude, where still stands one of the earliest mosques built on the coast of the Indian land.<sup>1</sup> Though renovated in early 19th century the Jami Mosque stands on the remains of the structure raised by Mālīk bin Dīnār - the missionary of Islam who landed on Indian soil early as in the 7th century through sea route. The epigraph under study is carved on a wooden plank above the central door of the main prayer hall of the said Jami Mosque.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabic inscription written in beautiful Naskh style occupies 14 x 77 cms. area. The three-lined text is as follows:

## TRANSLITERATION

1. Hādha Masjidi Mālīk ibni Dīnār wa sāfara jamā'atan min a'l-'Arab il-a'l-Hind li 'imāratil masājīd wa izhāri dīn a'l-Islām wa hum Sharaf Ibni Mālīk wa akhūhu min a'lūmmi Mālīk ibni Dīnār wa ibni akhīhu
2. Mālīk ibni Ḥabīb ibni Mālīk wa ghairahum wa rasala fī baladata Kāncherkot wa bania fīhā masjidan Jāmi'an, yauma a'l-athnain, ath-thālīth 'ashr min shahri Rajab sana ithnī wa 'ashrīn min al-Hijrat-an-Nabawiyya, wa ja'la fīhā ibnū qāḍiyan
3. Yusamma Mālīk ibni Aḥmad ibni Mālīk qaddasa-Allahu rūḥahum wa nawwara ḍarīḥahum wa nafa'na mim-barakātahum, thumma tajjada ba'dahu al-qadīm mim-mālahu, ṣāḥibi baladata, sana alaf wa miatain wa thalathata wa ashrīn min al-Hijrah.

## TRANSLATION

This is the mosque of Mālīk bin Dīnār who travelled from Arabia to India, for constructing mosques and propagating Islam, along with a party consisting of his son Sharaf, his maternal uncle (name not given), his nephew Mālīk son of Ḥabīb son of Mālīk and others. They reached Kāncherkot (i.e. Kāsargod) and constructed Jami Mosque on Monday, the 13th Rajab, the seventh month of Islamic calendar, year 22 after the migration of the Prophet = 643 A.D.,

June 7. He appointed his grandson named Mālīk, son of Aḥmad son of Mālīk, as *qādī* of the town. May Allah sanctify their souls and glorify their graves. The mosque was renovated out of the funds contributed by one of the residents of the town, in 1223 after Hijra = 1808 A.D.

The contents of the epigraph are self explanatory recording the visit of an Islamic mission to the Indian coast as early as A.H. 22.

The history of early Indo Arab relations is full of fiction and folk-lore; specially that of the 7th century in which Muslim Arab preachers had come to Malabar coast is really a mess of events. The most popular anecdote is of the Chēra ruler Chēraman Perumāḷ of Cranganore, his travel to Mecca along with an Arab party, his embracement of Islam thereupon and death at Zūfār while on the way back to India. In support of this story the most often quoted work is *Tuḥfat-ūl-Mujāhidīn* an Arabic history work of 15th century by Shaiḫh Zainu'd-Dīn of Malabar. Even *Tārkh-i-Firishṭa* - a Persian work and *Kēraḷōtpati* - a Malayalam source also derive the theme from none other than *Tuḥfa* but no serious work of history takes it as a factual event.<sup>3</sup>

*Tuḥfa* itself rejects out-right its authenticity categorising it as a mere tradition. Some Malayalam books of Maplas mention the epitaph of the deceased king's grave at Zūfār (Yemen) which records the name of the king as 'Abdullāh Sāmārī (variant of Zamorin) who died in A.H. 216 (831-32 A.D.)<sup>4</sup> According to Panikkar's views the Titular name Chēramān Perumāḷ is not enough to pin-point the exact name and reign of the Chēra ruler because no inscription, coin or document have come down to us.<sup>5</sup> In this way the story of Chēramān Perumāḷ remains shrouded mystery.

But in this mist remains clear the personage of Mālīk bin Dīnār and his mission because the arrival of his party has never been denied by any one. The people of Kāsargod even now enthusiastically celebrate his arrival in the form of an yearly festival.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the literary sources the epigraph under reference happens to be the only epigraphical source recording the event of the arrival of an Islamic mission at the Indian coast (Kāsargod). Though it was set up at a later date i.e., A.H. 1223 = 1808 A.D but it seems that, while renovating the old mosque, citymen rerecorded the version of the old epigraph which might have existed on wooden lintel of the main door, where the present version exists.

The date mentioned in this epigraph that of construction of the mosque as being A.H. 22 is debatable because of its proximity to the period of Prophet Muḥammed (d. 632 A.D.). If we believe this then Mālīk bin Dīnār must have been among the *ṣaḥābīs* (companions) of the Prophet which, biographical works do not substantiate.<sup>7</sup>

Mālīk bin Dīnār al-Sāmī with the agnomen Abū Yaḥyā, was a *tabá-tábáí* (i.e., second line follower of the companions of the Prophet) and being contemporary to Ḥassan Baṣārī and Rābiá Baṣariya achieved great reputation as a preacher and moralist. He copied the Holy Quran for his livelihood and died in A.H. 130/747 - 48 A.D. just before the epidemic

of plague at Basra (Iraq)<sup>8</sup>. It means that the date of Mālik bin Dīnār's visit to India should have been a little later than that of the epigraph. The death of Mālik bin Dīnār in India and the existence of his grave in Malabar are also mentioned in the local traditions and history. The claim of his grave having been located at Calicut, Kasargod, Cranganore etc. is nothing but a fanciful idea. But the grave of Mālik bin Dīnār's grandson Mālik, son of Aḥmad, son of Mālik is undoubtedly situated within the premises of the Jami mosque of Kāsargod, who as per our record had been appointed as the *qāḍī* (Judicial Magistrate) of the town.<sup>9</sup>

So far as the events of propagation of Islam and construction of mosques (at different places) mentioned in the epigraph are concerned we find mention of early mosques and settlement of descendants of Mālik bin Dīnār in different places along the western coast. For example, at Kollam stands a mosque built by Ismā'īl, the grandson of Mālik bin Dīnār who also lies buried in the compound of the same mosque. Mālik bin Dīnār's nephew Mālik, son of Ḥabīb of our epigraph lies buried, besides his wife, within the mosque built by him at Cranganore. At Quilon itself there are a good number of the descendants of Mālik bin Dīnār. In his travelogue Ibn-i-Batūṭa has mentioned many places where Islamic Mission did preaching and erected mosques. They are Eclimaravi (i.e., Ras Heli), Jarfatan (i.e., Sandapur), Dahfatan (i.e., Telecheri), Fandrina (i.e., Chalyam), Baknur (i.e. Barkur) and Majrur or Majlur (i.e., Mangalore)<sup>10</sup> At all these places we can find even now a good number of Muslims claiming lineage to Mālik bin Dīnār.<sup>11</sup>

The interesting part of this record is the establishment of the office of the *qāḍī* at Kāsargod, which hints at the existence of a settlement of the Arab and Indian neo-muslims here which necessitated the institution of *qaḍāat* to deal with cases of social or quasi-religious nature like solemnization of marriage, opinion in jurisprudence, guidance for law of inheritance and other matters of day-to-day life to be disposed of by an Islamic authority. I think it was the first statutory office ever established in India by the Muslims.

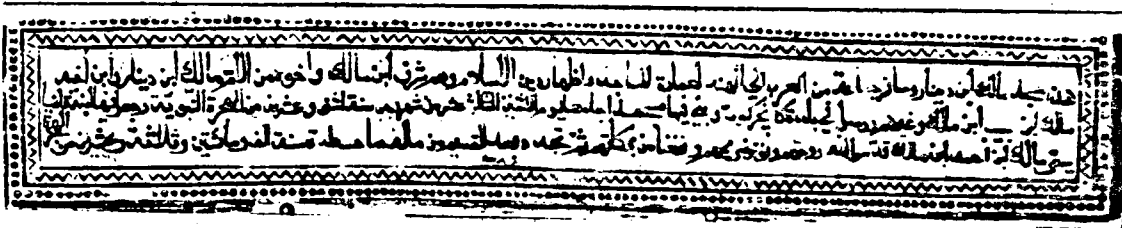
The form in which the name of the township of Kāsargod is written in the Arabic text of the inscription becomes another interesting point for the place-name studies. The place-name is Kāñcherkot. Despite the non-existence of 'Cha' phoneme in Arabic, the name Kāñcherkot attracts special attention as the recording of the place name with the specification of the pronunciation should be taken as a conscious effort.

At the end in the light of the epigraph under study we can conclude that despite different historical theories shrouded in the mist of time, the arrival of the Islamic mission of Mālik bin Dīnār, and establishment of the earliest mosques and office of the *qāḍī* in India were factual events.

## Notes and References

1. *Gazetteer of India and Pakistan*, Vol. II (New Delhi, 1953) p.599; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XV New Edition (Oxford, 1908) p.68.

2. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*, 1990-91, Appendix C, No. 68.
3. Shaikh Zainu'd-Dīn Mābarī - *Tuhfatu'l-Mujāhidīn*, (Tr. Aligarh, 1942) pp. 14-19; Qādi Athar Mubārakpūrī-*Khilāfat-i-Rāshida Aur Hindustān* (Delhi, 1927) p.48.
4. Zūfār is a coastal town within Ash-Shihr territory of Ḥaḍramaut region of erstwhile Eden (Arabia) which now falls in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. One should not confuse it with another Zūfār in Oman. See Ibn-i-Baṭūṭa - *'Ajā'ib-u'l-Asfār* (Tr.) vol. II (Lahore, 1898) p.284; Mābari *op. cit.*, p.17; For map see Rābi' Nadewī-*Jazīrat-'ul-'Arab*, (Lucknow, II edn.1983) facing p. 172.
5. K.M. Panikkar - *A History of Kerala* (Annamalainagar, 1960) p.5.
6. A. Sreedhara Menon - *Kerala District Gazetteers - Cannanore* (Trivendrum, 1972) p. 722.
7. Dārā Shukūh - *Safīnatul-Auliya* (Kanpur, 1900) p. 119.
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9. Menon - *op. cit.*, p. 722.
10. Mābarī - *op. cit.*, p. 16; Ibn-i-Baṭūṭa - *op. cit.*, p. 284.
11. Mirzā Bismillāh Baig - *Tadhkira-i-Qāriyān-i-Hind*, Vol.I (Hyderabad, A.H. 1389) p. 87.



Arabic epigraph pertaining to early Islamic Mission

## Historicity of King "Pu" of the Sangsi Memorial Inscription from Kolhapur District

*H.S. Thosar*

Sangsi is a village in the Gaganbavda taluk of Kolhapur district in Maharashtra, where a stele has been enshrined long back. It has a panel of sculpture depicting a lady lying amidst the consuming flames of fire, surrounded by lamenting women. On the top of this scene is an inscription of two lines in box-headed early Brāhmī script of the southern type. The said inscription was first noticed by J.F. Fleet in the last decade of the last century. He states<sup>1</sup>:

"The only other record in "box-headed" characters in this part of the country known to me so far is a fragmentary inscription on a sculptured stone at a temple at Sangsi near Bawda in the Kolhapur state. The sculpture represents a woman on a funeral pyre and the inscription records that the stone was set up by a prince, whose name is broken away, in affectionate memory of his beloved wife Pālidēvi".

Local people believe that the stele is memorial stone of a woman who had committed Sati. The inscription was first edited by the Late H.D. Sankalia and M.G. Dikshit<sup>2</sup>. These editors also described the stele as a memorial stone of a Sati. Dr. B.Ch. Chhabra and N. Lakshminarayana Rao contradicted this view and pointed out that it was a memorial stone set up by a king in memory of his deceased queen<sup>3</sup>. P.B. Desai, who re-edited this epigraph subsequently upheld the opinion of Chhabra and Rao<sup>4</sup>. As a matter of fact Fleet had expressed the same opinion nearly hundred years back, as seen from the extract of his paper cited above. There is thus no doubt that the stele was caused to be erected by a king in memory of his departed queen.

Fleet has deciphered the name of the queen as Pālidevi, but all the other editors have corrected it as Hālidevi. A close scrutiny of the estampages and photographs of the inscription reveals that the reading Hālidevi is correct. It is also in keeping with the naming pattern and contents of personal names current during the early centuries of the Christian Era.

Unfortunately the letters containing the name of the king have been broken and consequently the identity and historicity of this king are still behind the curtain of obscurity. All the editors have stated that the letters of this inscription are closely akin to the Tālagunda inscription of Kadamba king Kākusthavarman<sup>5</sup>. They have assigned the inscription in question to an early Kadamba king belonging to the 5th century A.D. Sankalia and Dikshit have taken it as an evidence of the extent of the Kadamba kingdom upto Southern Maharashtra. All the editors have deciphered only the first letter of the king's name which is 'Pu'. P.B. Desai has observed that there are four letters in the king's name. He tentatively suggested 'Pushpāyudha' 'Pushpadhavaja' as the complete name; but, later on, he himself withdrew this inference as no such name occurs in the whole Kadamba genealogy known so far. He preferred to call the king as 'Pu' from the initial letter of his name.



Due to this situation the historical contents of the Sangsi inscription have still remained unknown. The epigraph cannot be assigned to the Kadambas; because no king of this dynasty had 'Pu' as the initial letter of his name. Secondly, from the fourth to the sixth century A.D. the Kolhapur-Belgaum region was ruled over by the Rāshtrakūṭas of Mānapura. In this dynasty also there was no king having 'Pu' as the first letter of his name<sup>6</sup>. After the fall of the Rāshtrakūṭa house of Mānapura, the whole Northern Deccan was occupied by the Chalukyas of Vātāpi. Thirdly, though Kadamba Mayūrarman is credited with the conquest of Western Maharashtra right upto Trikūṭa and Aparānta, on the evidence of the Chandravalli inscription, recently a scholar has challenged the earlier reading of it. Even if we accept it for the sake of argument, it seems to have been a mere raid, because except a few coins of the Kadambas, no other authentic evidence is available, indicating the inclusion of the Kolhapur region in the Kadamba kingdom<sup>7</sup>. Occurrence of few coins cannot be treated as a conclusive evidence of the Kadamba jurisdiction over this region. In the light of these facts, it is proved beyond doubt that king 'Pu' of the Sangsi inscription was not a Kadamba prince at all and he flourished prior to the rise of the Rāshtrakūṭas of Mānapura i.e. middle of the fourth century A.D.

As a matter of fact the earlier editors have proposed fifth century A.D. as the probable date of this inscription on two main grounds i.e., its box-headed characters and their close similarity with the letters of the Tālagunda inscription cited above. A minute observation of the letters of the Sangsi memorial inscription and their comparison with some newly discovered inscriptions reveals that barring the boxes the letters of this inscription are closer to the Banavāsi<sup>8</sup>, Vāsana<sup>9</sup> and Sannati<sup>10</sup> inscriptions of Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi than the Tālagunda inscription. On this ground the Sangsi memorial inscription will have to be assigned to the same date as that of the Banavāsi and Vāsana inscriptions referred to above and the name of king 'Pu' will have to be reconstructed as Puḷumāvi. Following are the points in favour of this conclusion:

1. The most common palaeographic characteristic between the Sangsi, Banavāsi and Vāsana inscriptions is the artistic writing style of the letters in some of which an upright stroke stretches right upto the bottom and the angular curve stands affixed all towards the left. This feature palaeographically distinguishes the Sangsi inscription from the Tālagunda inscription because the writing style of the latter is more ornate and artistic which indicates the archaic nature of the Sangsi inscription. The curves at the bottom of the Tālagunda inscription are also different from that of the Sangsi inscription.
2. The Banavāsi inscription is an epitaph set up by Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi in memory of his deceased queen; so also is the Sangsi memorial inscription. The name of the king mentioned in the Sangsi inscription starts with the letter 'Pu' and consists of four *aksharas*. P.B. Desai has proposed the probable reading of the second letter as 'pa', whereas Sankalia and Dikshit have suggested its reading as 'lu'. The reading 'lu'

seems to be more likely as seen from the vague lines of the broken letters after 'Pu'. On the basis of the first two letters 'Pu' and 'Lu', the full name of the king will have to be reconstructed as 'Puḷumāvi' and since such a memorial stone is known to have been set up by Vāsishṭīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi at Banavāsi, king 'Pu' will have to be identified with the same Sātavāhana king. The matronymics Vāsishṭīputra and the epithet Śivaśrī have not been recorded in the Sangsi inscription probably due to the *Śardūlavikrīḍita* metre in which the matter has been composed.

3. Another factor indicating the more archaic nature of the Sangsi memorial inscription than the Tālagunda inscription is the style of the sculptures carved on the stele. P.B. Desai who has suggested 500 A.D. as the probable date of this epigraph himself states that "the sculptures of this stele are comparable stylistically on one side with the early sculptures on the stūpa railings at Bhārhut and Amarāvati and on the other with that of Ajanṭa and Bādāmi". On the basis of their refined execution, clarity of expression, wealth of minute details, general impressiveness and realistic nature, the sculptures of the Sangsi stele are assignable atleast to the third century A.D. In spite of this reality which has been noted by P.B. Desai, the inscription under study was assigned by him to the fifth century A.D. mainly because of the boxes.
4. Students of Epigraphy are well aware of the ever-changing hypotheses of notions and conceptions with regard to problems connected with epigraphic studies. The probable date of the beginning of the box-headed writing is one of such problems. At one time it was assigned to the seventh - eighth century A.D. It went on being pushed back with the discovery of new material. At present the middle of the fourth century A.D. is treated as the probable date of the commencement of this style. If the identification of king 'Pu' with Puḷumāvi is accepted, the antiquity of the box-headed writing system will have to be pushed back at least by one more century. Considering the factors discussed above, the Sangsi memorial inscription can be ascribed to the first half of the third century A.D. in spite of its box-headed characters. V.V.Mirashi has proposed the same date to the Malhāra copper-plate grant of Ādityarāja even though it is written in Sanskrit language and box-headed style<sup>12</sup>. Mirashi's view has been contradicted by Ajaymitra Shastri<sup>13</sup>. But from this example atleast we can have a reappraisal about the date of the beginning of the box-headed style. It seems to be a device applied for the ornamentation of letters. In the Banavāsi inscription cited above in place of boxes there are triangles at the top of some letters. This triangle might be the fore-runner of the box, which is of a quadrangular shape.
5. In the Sangsi memorial inscription the name of the deceased queen is mentioned as Hālidēvi. This name is also suggestive of the contemporaneity of this inscription with the Sātavāhana epoch. One of the Sātavāhana kings bore the name Hāla. Common men and women of this age also were named similarly. An inscription from Kaṇhēri belonging to the reign of Mādharīputra Śakasēna records the gift by Hālanikā, the

daughter-in-law of *Grihapati* and merchant Vishnūnandi from Kalyan in the Thane district of Maharashtra<sup>14</sup>. Another early Prakrit inscription from the same place records the name of *Sthavira Hālaka*<sup>15</sup>. It has been rightly pointed out by some scholars that the name 'Hāla' itself is a corrupt rendering of 'Sāta' which was the main content of the names of a number of Sātavāhana kings and their contemporaries. In the Banavāsi inscription the deceased queen is designated as 'Mahādēvi' i.e. chief queen. If her identification with Hālidēvi of the Sangsi memorial inscription is accepted, besides Nāganikā Gautami and Balaśrī, the name of one more Sātavāhana queen will be added to the known history of the Sātavāhana dynasty.

Divergent views have been expressed by different scholars about the date Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi and his exact order in the Sātavāhana genealogy. Some scholars hold the view that there were in all four kings in the Sātavāhana dynasty having the name Puḷumāvi<sup>17</sup> whereas according to others, there were only three Puḷumāvis and Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi was the third and the last ruler of this dynasty who flourished during the first half of the 3rd Century A.D.<sup>18</sup>.

For a pretty long time the Myākdōni inscription was the only known epigraphic record belonging to the reign of Puḷumāvi<sup>19</sup>. During the last two decades three more inscriptions of Puḷumāvi have come to light. These are the Banavāsi inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi<sup>20</sup>, the Vāsana inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra Śrī Puḷumāvi<sup>21</sup> and the Sannati inscription of Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi<sup>22</sup>. These four inscriptions come from the Bellary, North Kanara, Dharwad and Gulbarga district of Karnataka respectively. If the identification of king 'Pu' of the Sangsi inscription with Puḷumāvi is accepted, it will be the fifth known inscription of this king.

While editing the Banavāsi inscription A.V.Narasimhamurty and H.R. Raghunath Bhat attributed the epigraph to Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi, the 25th king of the Sātavāhana genealogy. Ajaymitra Shastri not only upheld this view but attributed all the coins bearing the name Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi to the same king. According to him this Puḷumāvi was the uterine brother of Puḷumāvi, standing at no.24 in the puranic genealogy and Vāsishṭhīputra Sātakarṇi who has been given no.24a by Pargiter<sup>23</sup>. This view is difficult to accept considering the naming pattern of that age. How can two sons of the same mother bear the same name? K.G. Krishnan has rightly pointed out that the Sātavāhana kings adopted the name Sātakarṇi and Puḷumāvi alternately, i.e. in succeeding generations<sup>24</sup>. Puḷumāvi no.25 of the puranic genealogy must have belonged to the 2nd or 3rd generation from his namesake no.24. There is no authentic evidence showing that he was a Vāsishṭhīputra. Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi was probably the last king i.e., no.30 of the puranic genealogy. Following are the points in support of this presumption.

- 1) Almost all the Purāṇas are unanimous on one point that the last king of the Sātavāhana dynasty bore the name or title Puḷumāvi.
- 2) All the four inscriptions of Puḷumāvi known so far come from Northern Karnataka.

If the identification of king 'Pu' of the Sangsi inscription with Puḷumāvi is accepted, this will be his fifth known inscription. Though the Sangsi inscription comes from Maharashtra, its provenance is very close to the northern border of Karnataka. This will indicate that under this king the Sātavāhana empire had been cut to a small size comprising the northern part of Karnataka and its adjacent parts from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Such a situation had occurred only at the fag end of the Sātavāhana rule<sup>25</sup>, because the nucleus of the Sātavāhana empire i.e. the Nasik-Paithan area of Northern Maharashtra had been occupied by Ābhīra Īśvarasēna following the end of Yajñaśrī Sātakarṇi's reign as revealed by the former's Nāsik inscription<sup>26</sup>. The Ikshvākus established their independent power in Andhra Pradesh after the end of Chaṇḍa Sātakarṇi's reign<sup>27</sup>. The Sātavāhana kingdom had remained only to the extent of ancient Kuntaladēśa. That is why all the known inscriptions of Puḷumāvi came from this region. On this background Puḷumāvi of these inscriptions will have to be identified with 30th king of the Sātavāhana genealogy.

- 3) The identification of Puḷumāvi mentioned in the Myākdōni inscription with the last Sātavāhana king has been accepted by majority of the scholars. It was assigned to earlier Puḷumāvi by Sukhtankar on the basis of the reading of the regnal year as 8. Now it has been redeciphered as 6. So this problem has been sorted out.
- 4) The Vāsana inscription has rightly been attributed to the last Puḷumāvi because palaeographically it is closer to the inscriptions of the later Sātavāhana king Vijaya Sātakarṇi as well as some of the inscriptions of the Ikshvāku kings from Andhra Pradesh. The deity name Chaṇḍaśiva Mahādēva is also significant as it may have been built by Chaṇḍaśrī or his successor Puḷumāvi in memory of his predecessor as pointed out by M.J. Sharma. The Vāsana inscription further reveals that this Puḷumāvi was a Vāsishṭhīputra.
- 5) A.V. Narasimhamurthy and Raghunath Bhat have assigned the Banavāsi inscription to the latter half of the 2nd century A.D., but they themselves have pointed out that "the epigraph is more recent than the Nasik inscription of Gautamī Balaśrī and the inscription at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Jagayyapēṭa". Therefore the present writer upholds the view of M.J. Sharma who has assigned both the Vāsana and Banavāsi inscriptions to the last Puḷumāvi.
- 6) On the basis of the identification of the king 'Pu' as discussed above, the Sangsi Memorial inscription has to be assigned to the last Puḷumāvi.
- 7) Palaeographically the Sannati inscription appears to be very close to all the four inscriptions of Puḷumāvi referred to above. Secondly this Puḷumāvi is a Vāsishṭhīputra. These factors as well as the provenance of the Sannati inscription of Puḷumāvi suggest that he too was the last Sātavāhana king.

The present study brings to light the following facts about the closing years of the Sātavāhana rule:

- 1) During the reign of Vāsishṭhīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi, the Sātavāhana empire had been reduced to a very small size comprising the northern part of Karnataka and its bordering area of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Due to the loss of Paithan and Vijayapuri, the last Sātavāhana king probably seems to have shifted the royal seat to Sannati in the Gulbarga district of Karnataka as revealed by the excavations at this place. Banavāsi and Kolhapur were probably the provincial headquarters where the epitaphs of Puḷumāvi's deceased queen were found.
- 2) Puḷumāvi probably could not check the fast disintegration of the Sātavāhana power. After seven years' rule he seems to have lost this remnant kingdom to Chuṭukulānanda Sātakarṇi who was probably his governor at Banavāsi.

When this paper was presented at the XX Annual Conference of the Epigraphical Society of India at Bangalore, K.V. Ramesh provided the information that recently an inscription has been reported from Sannati in Karnataka which is datable to the 3rd century A.D. and which contains boxes on the top of its letters. The author is grateful to K.V. Ramesh for confirming his presumption about ante-dating the beginning of the box-headed style of writing.

## Notes and References

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5. Lewis Rice, *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol.VII, p.200ff; F. Kielhorn, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.VIII. pp.24-36. 1905-6.
6. V.V. Mirashi, "*Rashtrakutas of Manapura*", *ABORI.*, Vol.XXV, pp.36-50.
7. I owe this information to K.V. Ramesh.
8. A.V. Narasimhamurthy and H.R. Raghunath Bhat, *Studies in Indian Epigraphy*, Vol.I, pp.34-39.
9. M.J. Sharma, *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.XLI, pp.154-58.
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18. K.V. Ramesh, *Sātavāhana names and dates*, *op.cit.*
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## Perso-Arabic Inscriptions from Chitradurga District (Karnataka)

*M. Yaseen Quddusi*

So far only seven Perso-Arabic inscriptions from Chitradurga District of Karnataka have been noticed. These inscriptions were copied by me in November 1988. These inscriptional slabs form a part of a tomb or mosques or graveyard. The earliest inscription in the present collection is from Molakalmuru, a taluk headquarters (Chitradurga). It is dated A.H.1196 (1781-82 A.D.). The others in chronological order are from Chitradurga proper dated A.H.1199 (1784-85 A.D.) followed by Mauludi year 1215 (A.H.1202=1787-88 A.D.), A.H.1228 (1813-14 A.D.) etc. These inscriptions are the part of regional history of the 18th and 19th centuries.

### I. Inscription Dated A.H.1196 (1781-82 A.D.) from Molakalmuru

This inscription dated A.H.1196 (1781-82 A.D.) is from the Jami Mosque of Molakalmuru. It is in Arabic executed in Nastaliq characters. The next of the record is a chronogrammatic phrase *Baitu's-Sulatu's Mumin* i.e. a house for offering prayers - yielding A.H.1196 apart from giving the same date in figures. The text is silent about the builder. But it is evident that the construction of the mosque took place during the time of Hyder Āli.

### II. Inscription dated A.H. 1199(1784-85 A.D.) from Chitradurga.

The second epigraph is related to the tomb of the local saintly figure Shah Ahmad of Chitradurga. The text of the main epigraph is of only two verses in Persian executed in fairly Nastaliq characters. It records that the new beautiful or elegant tomb of Shah Ahmad was build during the time of Sultan i.e., Tipu Sultan by Daulat Khān in A.H. 1199 (1784-84 A.D.). Thus it mentions the time of the ruling Sultan, name of the deceased Shah Ahmad and Daulat Khān as the builder of the tomb in A.H. 1199.

Historically speaking, this part of Karnataka along with the famous fort of Chitradurga was captured by Hyder Āli. After the occupation, one Daulat Khān was appointed custodian of the fort. In the light of the present record it is evident that Daulat Khān remained posted there with his charge at Chitradurga under Tipu Sultān.

### III. Inscription Dated Mauludi year 1215 A.H. 1202 = 1787-88 A.D.

This third inscription is also from the same place appearing on the main entrance of the tomb proper of Shah Ahmad. The text in Persian verse executed in fairly Nastaliq characters eulogies the greatness of Shah Ahmad and construction of his dome at the instance of t<sup>h</sup> Sultan in Mauludi Year 1215 (A.H. 1202 = 1787-88 A.D.). In the presence of these two epigraphs, it is clear that actually the work of the tomb complex started in A.H. 1199 (1784-85 A.D.) was finally completed with the construction of a dome over the grave of Shah Ahmad in Mauludi 1215 (A.H. 1202 = 1787-88 A.D.).

The available sources are silent about the life and times of Shah Ahmad. The present inscription clearly brings him to light that he was a saintly character. The ruler and his officials had great veneration and total respect towards Shah Ahmad. It is also certain to say that he resided at Chitradurga, breathed his last there and the Sultan out of his great devotion ordered for the construction of the present splendid tomb which is intact with a high plinth. It would not be out of place to mention that when I visited the tomb during my official visit in 1988, one Sayyid Ataullah Shah, the Manager of the tomb of Shah Ahmad presented some old records and documents in Persian by which several concessions and grants were made for the welfare and upkeep of the dargah of Shah Ahmad. An annual urs is also celebrated.

#### IV-V. Miscellaneous Inscriptions

An epitaph found near Ashur Khana at Chitradurga records the death of one Shaikh Ibrahim, Jamadar in A.H. 1228 (1813 A.D.). The other from the same place mentions the death of one Nawaz Bibi, wife of Hayat, the Hawaldar in A.H. 1235 (1819-29 A.D.). These two records indicate that since the days of Hyder Āli and Tipu Sultān, the Muslim families settled at Chitradurga remained there under the Wodiyars of Mysore.

The earliest Urdu verse inscription of the district is from the Jami Mosque in Chikpet of Chitradurga. It records the construction of a *hauḍ* (tank) and *Fawwara* (fountain) of the mosque by Umar. The text of Urdu verses was composed by the poet Nusrat. The work was completed in A.H. 1269 (1852-53 A.D.). The earliest Urdu inscription from Bangalore is dated A.H. 1263 (1846 A.D.) and from Mysore A.H. 1253 (1837-88 A.D.). Thus such inscriptions are helpful to assess the development of Urdu in Karnataka.

Last but not the least, one visitors record of the 18th or 19th century finds representation on a rock close to the fort. One Muhammad Hasan Khan probably paying a visit to the city-fort, got his name engraved as a momento. On the whole, these inscriptions constitute a source material related to the socio-cultural and building activities in this region.

#### Notes and References

1. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (*AREp.*), for the year 1988-89, Appendix C Nos. 117-126.
2. *AREp.*, 1988-89, C No. 123.
3. *Ibid.*, No. 117.
4. Mahmud Bangalori, *Tarikh-i-Saltanat-i-Khudadad* (Bangalore, IInd Edition, 1939), p.131; *Sahifa-i-Tipu Sultan* (Bangalore, 1946), letter Nos. 130, 264, 310, 342, 408, & 412 mentioning the officials posted at Chitradurga including Daulat Khan under Tipu Sultan.
5. *AREp.*, 1988-89, C No. 118.

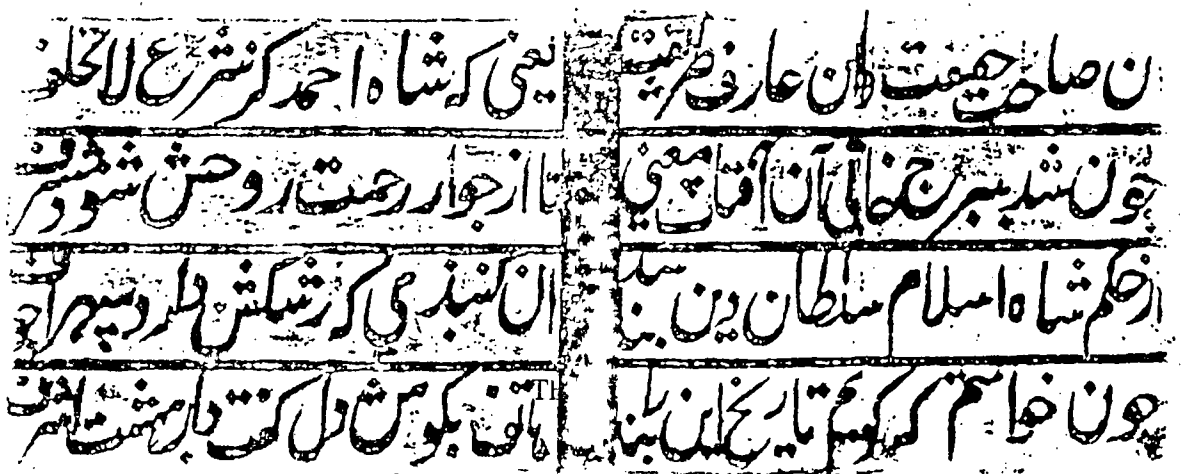


6. Mauludi or Muhammadi year: Tipu Sultan's new era was styled as the Mauludi era and is dated from the year 609 A.D., when the Prophet of Islam (Hadrat Muhammad) announced himself as the Messenger of Allah (God). There is a difference of about 13 years between the Hijri year and Mauludi year/era. See for details Mir Mahmud Husain, *Riyasat-i-Mysore Ke Farsi, Arabi Aur Urdu Katbe*, (Bangalore, 1980), pp. 147-48.
7. Both the inscriptions related to the tomb of Shah Ahmad have been noticed by B. Lewis Rice in *Epigraphia Carnatica* Vol. XI (Bangalore, 1903) providing full text in English and translation but without its text in Persian or photograph. The date of first inscription A.H. 1199 (1784 A.D.) is correct but the second date given by him is not 1784 A.D. It is dated in Mauludi era obtained through a chronogram by zar system i.e., 1215 (A.H. 1202=1787-88 A.D.). See pp. 6-7 & 1)-11. The same error is found in the *District Gazetteer of Chitradurga* (Bangalore 1967) p. 62. Mir Mahmud Husain has given text in his book and its date correctly, pp.79-80.
- 8-9 *AREp.*, 1988-89, C Nos. 123 & 124,
10. *Ibid.*, No. 120.
11. *Ibid.*, for the year 1994-95, C No. 62.
12. *Ibid.*, No. 79.

## Inscriptions From Chitradurga (Karnataka)



I: Inscription Dated A.H. 1199 (1784-85 A.D.) From the Tomb of Shah Ahmad, Chitradurga



II: Inscription Dated Mauludi year 1215 (A.H. 1202 - 1787-88 A.D.) From the same place.

## Kannada inscriptions of Kalyāṇa Chālukyas and Hoysalas - Recent discoveries

M.D. Sampath

### Introduction:

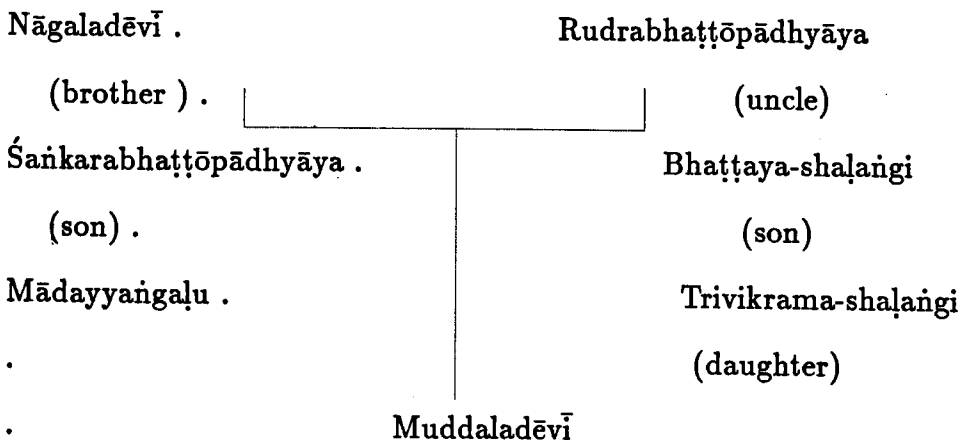
The survey recently undertaken by the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India in the districts of Gulbarga in Karnataka and in the districts of Medak and Huzurnagar in Andhra Pradesh has yielded a number of Kalyāṇa Chālukya inscriptions ranging from the period of Sōmēśvara I to Sōmēśvara IV. In the Javargi Taluk of Gulbarga District, we have come across a good number of Chālukya records, a majority of which belong to the period of King Tribhuvanamalla (i.e., Vikramaditya VI). Though the inscriptions of Vikramaditya VI are more in number, only a few of them are of some value to know about the activities of his chiefs and officers. A few are taken up for examination and study.

### Inscription from Aṅkalga:

From Aṅkalga comes another first year record Tribhuvanamalla (Vikramāditya VI). It falls in the cyclic year Piṅgaḷa which, along with other details of date, viz. Bhādrapada, ba.13, Sunday, correspond to 17th September 1077 A.D. It registers the grant of the village Aṅkulage in Kaṁpaṇa-50 in Tardavāḍi-1000 as *Sarvvanamasya* by his predecessor Trailōkyamalla (i.e., Sōmēśvara I) on the occasion of the *dharma* marriage of Muddaladēvī, daughter of Rudrabhaṭṭōpādhyāya and his wife Nāgaladēvī. During the reign of King Tribhuvanamalla, his *mahāpradhāna daṇḍanāyaka* Mādayya, the uncle of Śaṅkarabhaṭṭōpādhyāya, the brother of Nāgaladēvī raised the temple of the deities of Trimūrti including the deity of Śaṅkaradēva in the village Aṅkulage and made endowments of lands for worship and offerings to these deities, besides the re-grant of an *agrahāra* village by the Rudrabhaṭṭōpādhyāya, whose relationship with the donee *mahāsāmantādhipati* Śaṅkarabhaṭṭōpādhyāya is referred to above.

The taxes collected on different products in exchange of paddy within the four villages are of importance to understand the economic condition of the period. The grant lands were measured by a rod called *Māṅikēśvara-kōlu*.

### Genealogy of Muddaladēvī available from Aṅkalga Inscription:



### Inscription from Ijēri:

Inscription from Ijēri dated in the Chālukya Vikrama year 12, Prabhava, Vaiśākha śu.3, Thursday, corresponding to 1087 A.D., April 8 also belongs to the reign of Tribhuvanamalla (Vikramāditya VI)

It states that, while the king was at his capital Kalyāṇapura, Āhavamalla, son of Permmāḍidēva, granted lands for the offerings and repairs to the temple of the deity Śaṅkaranārāyaṇadēva and the same was entrusted to Mallikārjjuna-paṇḍita. There is a reference to the Kālāmukha-sthāna in this record and it is quite probable that the donee belong to this sect. Āhavamalla mentioned in this record is not the predecessor of Tribhuvanamalla but only a chief, since the former is not credited with the usual regal titles attributed to a king.

### Inscriptions from Kuḷagēri:

Two inscriptions from Kuḷagēri belonging to the same reign are of interest. The first record dated in his 25th year (1100 A.D.) refers to an officer *Achchupannāyad-adishthāyaka-daṇḍanāyaka* Mahāvishṇudēvarasa and records the grant of income from taxes by the above officer and the *setṭi-guttas* of Pagaliṭṭage-300, Achchaḍi-Kāliseṭṭi of Tilivalḷi, Bīchiseṭṭi of Kōṇagiri, Singiseṭṭi of Diṇoṇi and Eṇeyamaseṭṭi of Savaṇūr, for the worship and offerings to the deities Nāgēśvaradēva, Rāmēśvaradēva and Bhōgēśvardēva of the place Kuṇilaṅgeṇe. The *nānādēśis* are entrusted with the task of carrying out the above endowment.

The second inscription dated Śaka 1026, Pārthiva (1104 A.D) states that when king Tribhuvanamalla performed *tulā-purusha-mahādānas*, on the bank of the river Tuṅgabhadra at Paṁpāsarōvara, queen Maḷaladēvī granted lands as *sarvvanamasya* for the charity of the tank (*pushkariṇi*) caused to be excavated by Mahadēvaṇṇa, son of Haṁpakavi of the *bhatta-grāma* Kuṇilaṅgeṇe. The term *hokkaraṇa* is the *tadbhava* form of the word *pushkariṇi* meaning 'a tank'. This inscription furnishes for the first time the fact that the residence of Haṁpakavi and his son Mahadēvaṇṇa was Kuṇilaṅgeṇe.

In continuation of the above record, there is one of Chālukya king Jagadēkamalla dated in the sixth year of his reign, Rudhirōdgāri corresponding to 1143 A.D. This record refers to a *mahāpradhāna-Śrīkaraṇa, heri-Kannaḍa-sāndhivigrahi, pasāyita* and *daṇḍanāyaka* Bammadēvarasa as the ruler of the *bhatta-grāma* Kuṇilaṅgeṇe. Apparently this officer is the same as the *sēnādhipati Kannaḍa-sāndhivigrahi* and *paṭṭasāhiṇi* Bemmaṇayya, the governor of Banavase-12000 division at that time. It is evident from these two inscriptions that *bhatta-grāma* Kuṇilaṅgeṇe was a centre of learning during the 12-13th centuries A.D.

### Inscription from Kallūra:

A record from Kallūra belonging to king Tribhuvanamalla is dated in his 27th year (1102 A.D.) and refers to *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* Rēvarasa of the Haihaya family as *mūvaṇigaṇḍa*

*Maṅgalapurada-maṅḍalikaragaṇḍa* and as the ruler of Kembhāvi. He is stated to have made endowments of lands and house-sites for the worship and offerings to the temple of the deity Lōkēśvara. This Rēvarasa can be identified with the help of known inscriptions.

The genealogical account of the Haihaya family given in the Kembhāvi record of 1054 A.D., has been discussed by Dr. Fleet in detail. The Kembhāvi record mentions Rēvarasa as the great grandson of Chanda I, the grandson of Nimba and the son of Chanda II. An inscription from Yēwūr confirms the relationship between Rēvarasa and Chanda. The Rēvarasa of the Māṅvi record dated 1052 A.D. is probably the same as his namesake mentioned in the Kembhāvi inscription. Between the date of Kembhāvi inscription and the date of Kallūra inscription under discussion, the gap is about 48 years. Rēvarasa who was administrating Eḍedoṛe-1000 division under Sōmēśvara I is probably one of the predecessors of Rēvarasa of the present record, who was hitherto unknown.

### Inscription from Andōla:

The Andōla inscription is important and interesting from the point of view of Chālukya history. It belongs to the reign period of Tribhuvanamalla and dated in his 40th year. The details of date Manmatha, Bhādrapada ba.11, Thursday correspond to 1115 A.D., September 16. It describes his son king Āhavamalla as *Chālukya-Vikrānta-tuṅga* and as the ruler of Nariyambole-70. He is also eulogised as *dharma-dharmātma* and *nūtana Śrī Harsha*, which titles are known for the first time. Āhavamalla got a temple raised to god Chenna Mādhavadēva at Anadole (i.e., Andōla) and endowed lands for the offerings to the same god. The queen Mālikabbe described at length in this record appears for the first time. The record mentions a general of Tribhuvanamalla *viz.*, Mallarasa or Malli-daṇḍanātha and registers the gifts made by him in the presence of *nālvar-gāmuṇḍas*, the *mahājanas* and the *praje* of *pañcha-maṭhas*, to the temple priest.

The reference to the temples of Vishṇu *viz.*, Vishṇupada and Mādhava-dēvatā bhavana in this record and to the munificent gifts made to the deity Mādhava indicate the leaning of the general to the Vaishṇava sect.

### Inscription from Koṇḍaguli:

The Koṇḍaguli record of Tribhuvanamalla dated in the Śaka year 1030, Manmatha (1115 A.D) states that while the king was camping at Jayantipura, two of his chiefs *mahāsāmanta* Baisarasa and Handiyarasa were governing the Hagaritṭige-300 division. They are not known so far from any other record. The *prabhu* of the village Chikka Koṇḍaguli, *viz.*, Billarasa, son of Bammarasa, who is eulogised at length, got the Śivaliṅga named Mallikārjjuna consecrated and granted lands along with income from taxes. The above division was held as a fief(*manneya*) by the chiefs Baisarasa and Handiyarasa. These two chiefs and other officers further made endowments of lands to the temples of Mallikārjjuna, Sōmēśvaradēva and Kēśavadēva. These lands were measured by *Māṅikēśvara-kōlu* and *Voraṭina-kōlu*. *Voraṭana-mattar* is another measuring unit found employed in this place, indicating thereby

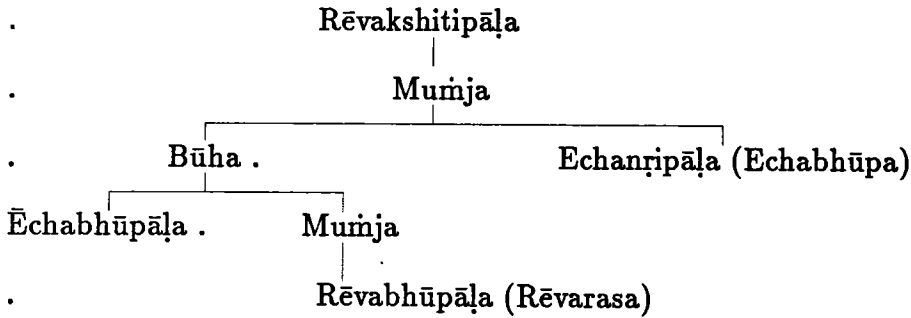
that the above measuring *kōlu* was used for the above unit of measure. It is stipulated that revenue from the sale of any animal product, should go to the deity. Also, it is interesting to note that from out of the *tippe-sumka* collected from the village, two shares and one share have been earmarked to the *prabhus* and the deity respectively. The tax terms *hēru* and *hon*, meaning respectively cart or head load and gold, are commonly found used in many of the records from Karnataka.

### Inscription from Yaḍrāvi:

This inscription contains two parts, of which the first one traces the genealogy of the Chāḷukya king Tribhuvanamalla and his subordinate chief Ēcha-nṛipāla of the Haihaya lineage. It also describes vividly the genealogy of his minister Dāsirāja. This minister is stated to have built a *satra* (charitable feeding house) as an institute which fetches merit at all times.

The second part of the record is dated in the Chāḷukya Vikrama year 46, Plava, Pushya śu.10, Sunday corresponding to 1121 A.D., December 25. During this year, Rēvarasa is stated to have made endowments of tax income to provide for the lamp and offerings to the god Svayambhudēva at Eḷarāva (Yaḍrāvi).

Like the chiefs of Moraṭa and Araḷu of the Haihaya family mentioned elsewhere in the records, the chief Rēvarasa styles himself as the lord of *Māhishmatipura* and *Madhyadēśādhiśvara*. It is likely that these families belong to one and the same stock. The genealogy of the family of Rēvarasa can be traced as follows:



### Inscription from Huzūrṅagar:

A Sanskrit and Telugu inscription from Huzūrṅagar in the Nalgonda District, Andhra Pradesh belonging to the reign of Tribhuvanamalladēva is dated Śaka 1045, Śōbhakṛit, corresponding to 1122 A.D. It records the gift of land by Kāṭimayya-nāyaka for the maintenance, worship and offerings to the deity Kōṭēśvaradēva, while *daṇḍanāyaka* Gōvindarāja was ruling over Koṇḍapalli. The Chāḷukya general governing Koṇḍapalli-sīmā had extended his territory upto the present Huzūrṅagar in the Nalgonda District where his inscriptions are found. Gōvindarāja and Gōvinda-daṇḍēśa referred to in the inscriptions of Tripurāntakam, Hanumakoṇḍa and Gaṇapēśvaram are one and the same. He was the nephew of Anantapāla-daṇḍanāyaka, the famous *brāhmaṇa* general of Vikramāditya VI.

In the Hanumakoṇḍa inscription of the Kākatiya king Prōla II, he is stated to have captured and released Gōvindarāja and also bestowed the kingdom on Udaya-kshiti.

**Text:**

*Gōvindarāj-āhvayaṁ baddhv=ōnmuchya tad=*

*Ōdaya-kshitibhṛitē rājyam dadau līlayā||*

Gōvindarāja is also credited with the title *Śauchā-Gāṅgēya* in his Tripurāntakam inscription dated 1126 A.D. In the Buruzugaḍḍe inscription of King Tribhuvanamalla, there is reference to *danḍanāyalka* Anantapāla and to the exploits of the general Gōvindarāja in extending his territory to the borders of Pānugallu-rājya, wherein Huzurnagar lies.

Since the date of our inscription is only a few years earlier to the date of the Tripurantakam inscription, it is quite possible that the general Gōvindarāja and Gōvindarasa are one and the same and thus the present record gives the earliest reference to this Chālukya general.

**Inscription from Vaḍagēra:**

From among the inscriptions of this king, the Vaḍagēra inscription is not only interesting but also very important from the point of view of Chālukyan chronology. It is dated in the Chālukya Vikrama year 1, the other details of date given being Naḷa, Phālguṇa, śu. 5 and Thursday. The record registers the grant of 205 *mattars* of land by the chief Ballavarasa at the request of *Mukhari-maṇḍalika* Dāyimayya for the worship, lamp, food-offerings and repairs to the temple of the deity Dāyimēśvara consecrated by him at Oḍalagere on the occasion of the *paṭṭa* of Eḷerāve (i.e., Yaḍrāvi). He was in turn a disciple of Malayāḷa-panḍita, who is described as *Eḷemala-simha-pariṣaṇ-maṇḍaliya*, etc. Further, it records the gift of tax income from the lands of Paḍuvanūr as *bhaṭṭa-vṛitti* to the *bhaṭṭas* engaged in writing and teaching the commentaries on *vyākaraṇa*, *nyāya* and *vaiśēshika*.

The tax terms *perjjuṁka* (major taxes) and *bilkode* (not explainable) mentioned in this record are of interest. The grant is said to have been issued from his camp *Naḍaviy-uppayana-vīḍu*. It was perhaps near the findspot of the record Vaḍagēra. (i.e., ancient Oḍegere mentioned in Yēwūr inscription of Kalachurya king dated 1179 A.D.)

The date of the record has been differently fixed by the scholars. The Chālukya Vikrama year 1, Naḷa, Phālguṇa śu. 5, Thursday seem to correspond to 1077 A.D., February 2, when the *tithi* was *saptami*.

Different scholars have differently equated the details of the date with 1076 A.D., February 12, 1077 A.D., January 31st and 1078 A.D., February 19th.

Prof. Nilakanta Sastri has suggested the date of 11th February 1076 as its equivalent and takes it to be the date of the coronation of the king. It has been variously argued that the date of this inscription must be taken to be that of his coronation, that of the first anniversary of his coronation and that of the grant recorded in it to mark his coronation.

It may be noted in this connection that records from Hannali and Kurva in Raichur District give the date as first regnal year, Naḷa, Chaitra śu.5, Sunday which seem to correspond to 1076 A.D., March 13th. If this date is taken to be earliest date, then 1077 A.D., February 2 suggested for the Vaḍagēra record should be taken to be the date of regular coronation *i.e.*, (*paṭṭabandhōtsava*). Hence, it cannot be taken to be the anniversary of the coronation or any other occasion.

In this connection, we may have to examine the records from Yēwūr dated in the cyclic year Piṅgala, Śrāvaṇa, Paurṇami, Sunday, Sōma-grahaṇa and in his 2nd regnal year corresponding to 1077 A.D., August 6 and the record from Aṅkalga dated Chāḷukya Vikrama year 1, Piṅgala, Bhādrapada ba.13, Sunday corresponding to 1077 A.D., September 17.

The date of the Aṅkalga record can be taken as genuine, if the equivalent of Vaḍagēra record is accepted as 1077 A.D., falling in the 1st year of his reign, whereas the date of the Yēwūr record does not seem to be correct taking the above arguments into consideration.

Vaḍagēra appears to have been once upon a time a well-known centre of learning since provision was made for the exposition and writing of commentaries on *Vyākaraṇa*, *nyāya*, etc. There must have been a brahmin settlement in this village, since the donation has been given as *bhaṭṭa-vṛitti* which was entrusted to the teachers whose ancestry is known from this record.

A few inscriptions of the Hoysaḷas have been noticed in the recent years. Of these, two inscriptions copied from Niṭṭūr in Mālavalli Taluk in Mandya District are of historical importance. They belong to the reign of Vīra Narasiṃhadinva. One of them is dated in Śaka 1188, Krōdhana, Āsvayuja ba.12, Wednesday corresponding to 1265 A.D., October 7. It states that Kētaya-daṇṇāyaka, son-in-law of Sōmeya-daṇṇāyaka was ruling from his *nelevīḍu* Hoṃganūr in Chikka-Gaṅgavāḍināḍu. The inscription registers the gift of wet and dry lands at Jēyagavudanaḥalli to the temple of the deity Sōmanāthadēva which was caused to be constructed by him. This deity was worshipped by Haradayadēva of Niṭṭūr. He was the preceptor of Vīraghaṃṭaiya, Bhīmaṇa and Mosañaiya, who were the sons of Dēvaṇa and Allāḷadēvī of Āḍamaḷale.

The division Chikka-Gaṅgavāḍi-nāḍu may be identified with the areas of the Maddūr and Maḷavalli region. Kīlele-nāḍu mentioned in our record was a sub-division of Chikka-Gaṅgavāḍi-nāḍu and it is in this division that the places Niṭṭūr and Maddūr were included.

The temple of Sōmanāthadēva was built by Kētaya and named at after his father Sōmeya-daṇṇāyaka. Kētaya-daṇḍanāyaka, a donor of a record from Vaidyanāthapura dated 1261 A.D. is described as *māvana-gandhavāraṇa*. The grant was made to the deity Vaidyanātha of Maddūr in Keḷale-nāḍu (*Ep. Carn., Vol. VII, Mu. 69*). We come to know from the above two records that in the division Kīlele-nāḍu, the villages Niṭṭūr and Maddūr were included.



The second inscription also belongs to the reign of Vīra Nārasimha. It is dated Śaka 1206, Svabhānu, Chaitra śu.1, Thursday. The details of date seem to correspond to 1284 A.D., March 23, but the *tithi* was *pañchami* and not *prathamā*. This inscription confirms the inclusion of Niṭṭūr in Kīle-nāḍ (i.e., Kīlele-nāḍu) in Chikka-Gaṅgavāḍi. It states that the king got the temples of Aḷagaperumāḷudēva and Gōpināthadēva erected respectively at Māḷigehāḷa and Niṭṭūr and endowed lands for worship, lamp, food-offerings and *khaṇḍasphuṭita-jīrṇṇ-ōddhāra*, etc. to these deities, on the occasion of *Uttarāyaṇa-saṁkramaṇa*.

## Tiruvīḍandai inscription of Vīrapāṇḍyadēva

S. Rajavelu

Tiruvīḍandai is a small village on the eastern coast of Chingleput Taluk in the Chingleput District, about 42 kms. from Chennai on the Chennai-Mahabalipuram Road. This village is said to be an important and famous religious centre being one of the 108 *Vaiṣṇava divyadēśas* referred to in the *Nālāyiradivya Prabhandam*. The Varāhaperumāḷ temple in this village has yielded 27 inscriptions which attest to the flourishing condition of the temple and the village during the Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya regimes.<sup>1</sup> The earliest inscription of this place belongs to Kṛishṇa-III, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king, dated in his 20th regnal year i.e., 959 A.D.<sup>2</sup>

The name of the village Tiruvīḍandai is derived from the ancient name Tiruvīḍavandai (-<sup>o</sup> v-yēndai). The presiding deity Varāhadēva holds the goddess of wealth Lakshmi on his left side (*iḍam*). The prefix *Tiru* denotes the sacredness and the suffix *yēndai* gives the meaning wealth or prosperity. Hence, the name Tiruvīḍavandai came into existence.

The subjoined inscription<sup>3</sup> under study engraved on the south wall of the *maṇḍapa* of the temple in this village, is edited here on account of its importance in the village administration and cultural history of the medieval Tamil country.

This inscription is dated in the 10th year of the Pāṇḍya ruler Māṇavarmaṇ Vīrapāṇḍyadēva corresponding to 1344 A.D. According to this inscription, one Emperumāṇ ḍiḍiyār (i.e., *dēvaraḍiyāl* - Temple woman) Nāchchi *alias* Piḷḷai Maṇaiḍermāṇikkam, daughter of Āyiravaṇṇ Māṇikkam of Tiruvīḍavandai *alias* Aśurarkula-kālanallūr, purchased some land from the *ūrār* of Tiruvīḍavandai as *kāṇi* which was earlier received by the said *ūrār* from the *sabhā* of the same place.

During the 10th year of the king, one Vīrapāṇḍya Kāliṅgarāyar, probably a high official, imposed a fine (*daṇḍam*) on Nāchchi, the *dēvaraḍiyāl*. In order to pay the fine, she was forced to sell her land in public auction. But since none of the villagers came forward to buy the land, the *Nāṭṭār* and *ūrār* called upon the *sabhaiyār* to buy the land as the *sabhā* was having money (*mudal*) with them. But the *sabhā* refused to purchase the land as they said that they had no money to purchase it. The *nāṭṭār* and *ūrār* again suggested to the *sabhaiyār* that they could ask the *tāṇattār* (the temple authority) to buy the land as *tirunāmattukkāṇi* since the *sabhaiyār* had no money.

The *sabhā* finally approached the *tāṇattār* who agreed to buy the land. They sold some jewels belonging to the temple god to the *ūrār* for 200 *paṇam* and consequently purchased three *vēli* of land as *tirunāmattukkāṇi*. This sale deed was finally signed by the temple accountant.

From the above facts, the roles of the *nāṭṭār*, *ūrār* and *sabhaiyār* are clearly known. This village boasted of both *sabhā* and *ūr* side by side. The brahminical (*sabhā*) and non-brahminical (*ūr*) assemblies together accepted the endowments in favour of the temple.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is known from one instance that the *ūr* of this village functioned independently and accepted an endowment to the temple without any consultation with its sister-body, the *sabhā*.<sup>5</sup> The present inscription also gives the clue that the *ūrār* enjoyed more privileges and called upon the *sabhaiyār* to buy the land from the lady.

It is also interesting to note that the lady was forced to sell her land in public auction in order to pay the fine imposed by Kāliṅgarāyan. But nobody came forward, including the *sabhā* even after the suggestion made by the *ūrār* and *nāṭṭār*. The *sabhā* totally rejected the proposal on the pretext that they had no money in their possession. It could also be inferred that the *dēvaraḍiyāḷ* might have been involved in certain immoral activity because of which her property may not have been considered worthy of purchase. So this kind of social custom obviously prevailed in those days. It is also possible to suggest that the temple authorities (*tāṇattār*) purchased the land at last in order to accord sanctity to the property and indirectly redeem the sinner. It is concluded that the lady's sin was absolved with the help of the village's administrative (i.e., *sabhā*, *ūr*) bodies and hence the latter supported the people in all respects.

The *tāṇattār* was a temple authority mostly connected with the *sabhā*. They were the inner body of the *sabhā* which received temple endowments and maintained them. The financial position of the *sabhā* was also very bad as can be inferred from our inscription. Generally the *sabhā* was more wealthy than any other village assembly. But during this transaction, it was not in a position to buy the land. Thus the *ūrār* received the jewel of the god which was in the possession of the *tāṇattār* and made the payment of 200 *paṇam in lieu* of which the *tāṇattār* bought the land as *tirunāmattukkāṇi* and paid the fine to Kāliṅgarāyan on behalf of the lady.

Vīrapāṇḍiyak-Kāliṅgarāyar who imposed the fine on the *dēvaraḍiyāḷ* perhaps belonged to the king's office as minister. Hence, the *nāṭṭār* were also involved in this transaction. The name Kāliṅgarāyar also suggests that he was a minister under Vīrapāṇḍya. Generally the name Kāliṅgarāyar was attached to high office under the Pāṇḍyas, as also to the royal throne which too was known as Kāliṅgarāyaṇ.

Another interesting factor that deserves to be mentioned here is that the *dēvaraḍiyāḷ* Nāchchi *alias* Maṛaipērmāṇikkam, daughter of Āyiravaṇ Māṇikkam committed some crime. The imposition of fine was recorded in our inscription though the nature of the crime is not known. It leads to the clue that she might have committed some act of immorality. The amount of fine 200 *paṇam* was also heavy during this period.

### Text

1. Svasti śrī [||\*] Kōmāraṇmar Tirubhuvanach-chakkaravattigaḷ Śrī Vīrapāṇḍiya dēvaṛkku yāṇḍu 10
2. pattāvadu Tulā-nāyarru-pūrva pakshattu prathamaiyum nāyarruk-kilamaiyum perra svāti nāḷ Jayaṅko -

3. ṇḍachōḷa-maṇḍalattu-Āmūr-kotṭattup-Paḍuvūr-nāṭṭut-Tiruv-iḍavandai āṇa Aśurarkula  
kālanallūr Emberumāṇa -
4. ḍiyāril Āyiravan Māṇikkattinṇ magal Nāchchi āṇa Pillai Maraipēr ... Māṇikkattukku  
ivvūr Ūravar emberumāṇā -
5. r pakkal koṇḍuḍaiya kāṇiyai ivaḷukku virru ivaḷ koṇḍu-uḍaiya kāṇi ivaḷai uḍaiyār Vīra  
pāṇḍiya -
6. k-Kāliṅgarāyar deṇḍam nichchayitta paṇattukku ivaḷ koḷvīr-uḷirov-eṇṇu kūra koḷḷuvār-  
illādapadiyālē nā -
7. ṭṭārum ūravarum ..... - āṇa nīṅgaḷē koḷḷakkaḍaviyāṇa <sup>6</sup> eṇṇu sabhaiyāraich - cholla  
ivargaḷum eṅgaḷukku koḷḷa mu -
8. dalillai eṇṇu śolla uṅgaḷukku mudalillai āgaiyāl tirunāmattuk-kāṇi-āgak=koḷḷu(ḷu)ṅgaḷ  
eṇṇu tāṇattārkkū nāṭṭā-
9. rum ūrārum śollugaiālē dāṇam-āga irundu tiru-ābharanattai virru śabhaiyār ūravarṅku  
virra sādaṇappadi
10. paṇamirunūrum kuḍuttu tiru nāmattuk-kāṇi-āga koṇḍa nilam mūṇṇu vēliyum koḷḍōm  
tāṇattārōm paṇiyāl ivai
11. kōvil kaṇakku Nittakalliyāṇappiriyaṇ eluttu [||\*]

## Notes and References

1. The inscriptions of this place are included in the *AREp.*, Nos. 258-283 of 1910 and some of them are published in *S.I.I.*, Vol. III.
2. *AREp.*, 1910, No. 270.
3. *Ibid.*, 1910, No. 277.
4. *S.I.I.*, Vol. III, Nos. 180 and 186.
5. *AREp.*, 1910, No. 268.
6. Read as No. 268 *koḷḷakkaḍavir.*

# Territorial Division as gleaned from Memorial Stones

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## Introduction

Commemoration of heroism is a universal act. Paying homage to the departed soul by erecting a memorial or edifice in honour of the people who laid down their lives for the sake of their society is an age-old practice in India. The character and design, the media and content of the memorials varied through the ages and space. The early memorial stones were put up in memory of the heroes who died in cattle raids but later these were erected to honour the deceased, who died in other circumstances too. The megalithic tombs, *stūpas*, memorial stones, pillars and other allied ancient architectural edifices found in south India are basically memorials. The evolutionary process of these memorials is well attested by literary and material records. This paper attempts to explore the territorial aspect of the region as gleaned from memorial stones. However, a short introduction is necessary to understand the nature of these memorials.

The basic theme connected with memorial stones in Tamil Nadu is cattle lifting or cattle retrieving. The earliest record on memorial stone is found in the Saṅgam literature of the 1st century A.D. and the latter has been described by more than 25 poets (Table 1). However, the archaeological data so far discovered goes only to 4-5th century A.D. Thus, the non-availability of the Saṅgam period memorials poses a serious problem in applying the descriptive data of the Saṅgam literature to the later memorial stones. Though the tradition continued further there is a possibility of minor changes in that tradition in the following centuries.

The absence of Saṅgam Age memorial stones as on today induces one to have a second look on the descriptive nature of the literary data. The study of inscribed potsherds from the Saṅgam Age sites like Arikamēḍu (Wheeler 1947), Koḍumaṅal (Rajan 1994), Uṟaiyūr (Raman 1969) and Ālaṅguḷam (Majeed 1992) and from the coins issued by Chēra kings Kollipoṟai and Mākkōtai and Pāṇḍya king Neḍuñcheliyaṅ (Krishnamurthy 1997) and from the cave inscriptions found throughout Tamil Nadu with much concentration in and around Madurai (Mahadevan 1966: 57-73), clearly demonstrate that the script used during the Saṅgam period was undoubtedly Tamil-Brāhmī. The occurrence of Tamil-Brāhmī inscriptions of the Saṅgam age king Atiyamāṅ at Jambai on the bank of the Peṅṅaiyār (Nagasamy 1981) found in the memorial stone yielding area clearly establishes the fact that this memorial stone yielding area too used the Tamil-Brāhmī script for their writing during the Saṅgam Age. Further the recent findings of Indalūr memorial stone (Mahadevan 1997: 1-9) and Araśalāpuram memorial stone near Eṅṅāyiram (Rajavelu 1996: 88-89) clearly show the evolution of the Vaṭṭeḷuttu script from Tamil-Brāhmī around the 4th century A.D. If we take this into consideration, the obvious inference would be that the memorial stones of Saṅgam Age must have been written in Tamil-Brāhmī script. But the earliest inscribed memorial stones so far discovered in

Tamil Nadu carry only Vaṭṭeḷuttu script which developed out of Tamil-Brāhmī script around 4-5th cent A.D. The memorial stones are found with much concentration in the region of Dharmapuri and North Arcot, particularly in the taluks of Cheṅgam, Harūr, Ūttaṅgarai, Dharmapuri and Kṛishṇagiri (Rajan 1997: 251-270). This region was ruled by Adiyamān, Naṅṅan and Malaiyamāṅ lines of the Saṅgam period. Quite interestingly none of the memorial stones carry their names. Instead they carry the name of the Pallava kings. All evidences so far found in the form of ceramics, coins, seals, rings and rock beds belonging to the Saṅgam period contain the Tamil-Brāhmī script, whereas the available memorial stones are engraved in Vaṭṭeḷuttu script. This clearly indicates that these belong to the post-Saṅgam period. Thus, the non-occurrence of Tamil-Brāhmī script and of the names of the Saṅgam Age rulers and the occurrence of the Vaṭṭeḷuttu script and of the names of the Pallava kings clearly establish the fact that they belong to the Pallava period only.

Keeping this in mind, systematic explorations carried out in the northwestern parts of Tamil Nadu brought to light 274 memorial stones, of which 224 are inscribed and the rest are uninscribed (Table 2). These memorial stones are dated between the 5th century and 13th century A.D. Most of them belong to the Pallava period i.e., to the 5th-9th century A.D.

Though most of the memorial stones generally refer to the Pallava kings and are concentrated in the districts of Dharmapuri and Tiruvannamalai districts (Table 3), one hardly come across any memorial stone in the core Pallava region i.e., in and around Kāñchīpuram. This concentration can be observed in the taluks of Cheṅgam, Harūr, Ūttaṅgarai, Kṛishṇagiri and Kaḷḷakuṛiḇchi, (Table 4) all of which fall in the middle part of the Peṅṅaiyār valley. Though the Pallavas fought a number of battles with the Chalukyas there is hardly any memorial stone in memory of their soldiers. Further, the Pallava kings did not prefer the Vaṭṭeḷuttu script for their official work. It is, thus, to be explained that the erection of memorial stones and usage of Vaṭṭeḷuttu must have been confined to certain ethnic groups.

It is noteworthy, that only a few memorials speak of any genuine warfare between dynasties so well known to us and that the rest confine themselves to the prosaic pattern of cattle raids and their rescue. Though the Tamil literary conventions held such cattle raids as a preliminary step leading to a battle between the two contending parties, the material evidence so far available fail to support this view.

The political condition that prevailed in the region is totally different from the one found in the core Pallava region. Though the memorial stones refer to the region of the Pallava kings there is hardly any evidence to prove that the Pallava ruler was involved in their activities. The Pallavas did not interfere in the social life of the remote areas. Since the memorial stones are closely associated with the local people, they used extensively the local dialect. Thus any inferences from these memorial stones can reflect only the local activities confined to certain sub-region.

## Territorial Division

The recent exploration carried out in the Dharmapuri (Rajan 1991: 367-52), North Arcot (Rajan 1993: 35-47) and South Arcot (Rajan 1997: 275-334) areas clearly indicate that the practice of erecting memorial stones is in fact an extension of the practices of the megalithic people who occupied this area prior to 3-4th c.A.D. Therefore, a close study of the Saṅgam literature coeval with the later phase of the megalithic phase and the lithic evidence of the memorials give a good picture on the emergence of territorial divisions in this area (Table 5 and see map).

The territorial division like *Mīvenāḍu*, *Velkalināḍu*, *Gaṅganāḍu*, *Puṛamalināḍu*, *Kōyinūrṇāḍu*, *Mērkōvalūrṇāḍu*, *Vānakōpāḍi*, *Nuḷambapāḍi*, etc., indicate that these were named after some clan, physiography or place name. The Saṅgam anthology *Ahaṅāṇuru* (17, 44, 113, 325) gives some names like *Nannaṅ*, *Gaṅgaṅ*, *Katti*, *Adiyaṅ* and *Pannaṅ* who were recognised as chiefs (*vēl*) in this region. As stated earlier in the early stage the poet who spoke about the memorials as *Paḍukkai* (megalithic cist) mentions only the clan name and not of any king's or chief's name (Table 2). Hence, it seems that the clan leader who led the cattle raids later became a leader or *vēl*.

The territorial divisions like *Mīvenāḍu* and *Kīlvenāḍu* found in Cheṅgam area and *Velkalināḍu* and *Velanāḍu* found in Dharmapuri area might have been named after some *vēl* only. The vaṭṭeḷuttu inscriptions give the name of territorial divisions like *Mīvenāḍu*, *Eyilnāḍu*, *Kīlvenāḍu*, *Mīkoṅṛraināḍu*, *Puṛamalināḍu*, *Palināḍu*, *Gaṅganāḍu*, *Kōvūrṇāḍu*, *Mērkōvilūrṇāḍu*, etc., and the later memorial stones give the territorial divisions like *Velkalināḍu*, *Kōyanūrṇāḍu*, *Tāyanūrṇāḍu*, *Paṅgaḷanāḍu*, *Siṛupalūrṇāḍu*, etc.

In some cases the earlier *ūr* (village) became the nucleus of a *nāḍu*, a territorial division incorporating several contiguous villages. For instance, the Sirupalūr of 6th century A.D. became *Siṛupalnāḍu* in 9th-10th century A.D. (Nagasamy 1975: 86) and Kōyilūr of 7th century A.D. became *Kōyilūrṇāḍu* in 9th century A.D. (Nagasamy 1975: 102). The geographical factors like the river course, size and position of the mountain, landscape, fertility of the soil and administrative terms in the field work and the non-occurrence of any administrative terms in the memorial stone inscriptions suggest that this *nāḍu* division hardly played any administrative role. In the same manner the suffix *pāḍi* was just a village in earlier stage. For instance, *Karuṅgālipāḍi* in *Mīvenāḍu* (Nagasamy 1975: 113), *Iramandaipāḍi* in *Mērkōvilūrṇāḍu* (Nagasamy 1975 : 51), etc., could be cited. In later inscription particularly from the 9th century onwards we come across bigger territories with *pāḍi* suffix like *Vānakōpāḍi* and *Nuḷambapāḍi* (Nagasamy 1975 : 102).

The natural barriers like river and mountains were generally kept as boundary between two *nāḍus* (see Map). The *Mīkoṅṛraināḍu* (southern part of Cheṅgam taluk) and *Mērkōvilūrṇāḍu* (south-eastern part of Cheṅgam) were separated by the Peṅṅaiyār river which runs there from north to south. The *Mīkoṅṛraināḍu* and *Mīvenāḍu* occupying the

northern part of Cheṅgam are again kept apart by the river Peṅṅaiyār where it runs west to east. *Mikōṅṅraināḍu* and *Puramalaiṅnāḍu* (western part of Harur taluk of Dharmapuri district) were separated by the Vaniyār, a tributary to river Peṅṅaiyār. Similarly, *Gaṅganāḍu* (western part of Uttangarai taluk of Dharmapuri district) and *Mīvenāḍu* were separated by the river Pāmbār, a tributary to Peṅṅaiyār. *Eyilnāḍu* (Tiruppattur taluk) and *Mīvenāḍu* were separated by the Javādi hills which runs between Cheṅgam and Tiruppattūr.

The inscriptions available within a territorial division sometimes are confined to one ruler. The rulers like Perumbāṅaraiśar and Vāṅakōvaraiśar ruled *Vēnāḍu* (Nagasamy 1975 : 77) and *Mikōṅṅraināḍu* (Nagasamy 1975 : 54) respectively. Here too, till Mahēndravarmaṅ's 20th regnal year only, ūr level rulers are mentioned rather than *nāḍurulers*.

The above said inferences are derived after taking extensive field survey in the region. Location of each memorial stone has been plotted with geographical indicators so that territorial affinity could be easily assessed.

## Notes and References

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Table 1

## References found in Sangam Literature on Memorial Stones

Poem Name	Poet	Patron	Poem No.	Verse	Remarks
Ahanānūru	Karuntodai Kavinar	-	109	<i>ambin viśai ita viḷintōr ennu varambu ariya uval itu pattukkal</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Ahanānūru	Vemparrūr Kumaranār	-	157	<i>vil ida viḷintōr paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Puraānūru	Irumbidar- talaiyar	-	3	<i>ambuvida vintor vambap paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Ahanānūru	Irangukudi Kunrranāḍan	-	215	<i>ambin eval atavar aal alittur uyartta anjuvaru paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Ahanānūru	Madurai Eelattu Pudan Tevanar	-	231	<i>patukalottu uyartta mayirtalai paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Ahanānūru	Kavanmullai Putarattanār	-	151	<i>paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Narrai	Madurai Palli Marutañkilār- maganār Sokuttanār	-	352	<i>paḍukkai nilal otukku itam</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Kuruñtogai	Virrūru Muteyinanar	-	372	<i>paḍukkai entombing cist</i>	Cairn circle
Aiñkurunūru	Otalantaiyar	-	362	<i>paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist
Ahanānūru	Māmūlanār	Chēralātañ Atiyañ Mōriyar	91	<i>paral uyar paḍukkai</i>	Cairn circle
Kuruntogai	Madurai Marudan Iḷanāganār	Nāñmaranñ Vḷuti	77	<i>uval itu paḍukkai nedunal yanaikku itu ilal akum ariya kanam</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist

Ahaṇṇūru	Kuḍavayir Kirattanār	Gaṅgaṅ Katti Naṇṇaṅ	35	<i>vil er valkai vilu totai maravar val an paḍukkai kadavut penmar nadukal</i>	Cist with menhir
Ahaṇṇūru	Eyinthai magan Iṅgkiranār	Poraiyan Titiyan	289	<i>uyar paḍukku.... netunilai naḍukal</i>	Cist with menhir
Puraṇṇūru	Urāiyūr Iṅam Poṅ	-	264	<i>paral udai marungin paḍukkai certti ini nattanare kallum kanroḍu karavai ottiya netuntakai</i>	Cairn circle entombing cist menhir cattle retriever
Ahaṇṇūru	Noipatiyār	-	67	<i>peeli sutiya pirangu inali naḍukal ... nirai kandanna uval idu paḍukkai</i>	Cist with menhir for a cattle retriever
Ahaṇṇūru	Sīttalai Sāttanār	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	53	<i>eluttudai naḍukal painting</i>	Menhir with
Aiṅkurūru	Otalantaiyār	-	352	<i>vilu totai maravar vil itat tolaintor eluttutai nadukal</i>	Menhir with painting
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Maruthan Iṅnaganār	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	131	<i>kantrin katai mani uku nir tutaitta retriever</i>	Menhir for a cattle
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Marutan Iṅnāganar	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	269	<i>nattapolum nata netunkal</i>	Menhir
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Marudan Iṅnāganār	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	297	<i>pem mutir nadukal peyar payam patarat tonru kuyil eluttu</i>	Menhir with an engraving
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Marudan Iṅnāganār	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	343	<i>naḍukal..... kur uli kuyinra</i>	Menhir with engraving kotumai eluttu
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Marudan Iṅnāganār	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	365	<i>atta naḍukal aal ena utaitta kana yanai</i>	Menhir or anthropomorphic
Ahaṇṇūru	Madurai Marudan	Nāṇmarāṅ Valūti	387	<i>nirai nilai naḍukal herostone</i>	Menhir/

Puraṇānūru	Āvūr Mūlan kilār	Killivalavaṇ Nānmarāṇ	261	<i>nirai ivan tantu naḍukal akiya venvelvitalai</i>	Menhir for a cattle retriever
Puraṇānūru	Avvaiyār	Atiyamān Neḍumān Añji	232	<i>naḍukal peeli suttu</i>	Menhir
Puraṇānūru	Pottiyār	Kōperuñ Chōlaṇ	221	<i>naḍukal ayinan</i>	Menhir/ herostone
Puraṇānūru	Pottiyār	Kōperuñ Chōlaṇ	223	<i>naḍukal ayinan</i>	Menhir/ herostone
Puraṇānūru	Allūr Nan Mulliyar	-	306	<i>naḍukal kai toḷutu</i>	Menhir/ herostone
Puraṇānūru	Aiyūr Mudavanār	Killi Vaḷavaṇ	314	<i>naḍukal</i>	Menhir/ herostone
Puraṇānūru	Madurai Aruvai Vaṇigan Ilavēttanār	Paśumpuṭ Poṇaiyaṇ Pari	329	<i>putai naḍukal</i>	Manhir/ herostone with bas relief
Malaipadu- kaḍām	Perunkavu- śikaṇār	Nannaṇ	388	<i>nanutai maravar chella nalisai peyarotu naṭṭa kal</i>	Menhir/ herostone with bas relief/ painting

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Inscriptions**

Time	Total no. of inscriptions Inscribed	Un- inscribed	Vaṭṭeḷuttu	Tamil	Grantha	Kannada	Total
400-600	28	1	28	—	—	—	29
601-800	90	4	86	4	—	—	94
801-1000	73	5	6	64	2	1	78
1001-1200	18	10	—	17	1	28	—
1201-1400	9	18	—	9	—	—	27
1401-1600	6	12	—	6	—	—	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>274</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>274</b>		<b>224</b>				

**Note:** The transformation from the usage of Vaṭṭeḷuttu script to Tamil script could be seen in the period between 800-900 A.D.

Table 3

## Districtwise Distribution of Memorial Stones

District	A.D.400- 600	601- 800	801- 1000	1001- 1200	1201- 1400	1401- 1600	Total
Dharmapuri	13	42	30	19	21	12	137
Tiruvannamalai	5	37	16	3	-	-	61
Vellore	-	3	19	3	-	1	26
Villupuram	9	3	4	1	1	-	18
Chengleput	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Salem	-	6	4	-	-	1	11
Erode	-	-	1	2	3	2	8
Coimbatore	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Karur	1	2	-	-	-	2	5
Tiruchchirapalli	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Thanjavur	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Madurai	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Ramanathapuram	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Virudhunagar	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Kanyakumari	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>274</b>

**Table 4**  
**Talukwise Distribution of Memorial Stones**

Sl.No.	Taluk	A.D.400- 600	601- 800	801- 1000	1001- 1200	1201- 1400	1401- 1600	Total
1.	Agastheswaram	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
2.	Achchirapakkam	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
3.	Bhavani	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
4.	Chengam	5	36	16	3	-	-	60
5.	Denkanikottai	-	-	1	2	5	2	10
6.	Dharmapuri	-	7	5	3	1	5	21
7.	Dharapuram	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
8.	Erode	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
9.	Gudiyattam	-	-	8	1	-	1	10
10.	Harur	7	19	7	3	1	-	37
11.	Hosur	-	-	-	2	1	2	5
12.	Kangayam	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
13.	Kallakkurichchi	5	1	1	-	-	-	7
14.	Kumbakonam	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
15.	Kamuti	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
16.	Krishnagiri	1	6	6	5	8	2	28
17.	Karur	1	2	-	-	-	2	5
18.	Madurai	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
19.	Namakkal	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
20.	Omalar	-	5	-	-	-	-	5
21.	Palacode	-	-	-	2	1	-	3
22.	Pennagaram	-	2	5	2	3	-	12
23.	Palladam	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
24.	Polur	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
25.	Perundurai	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
26.	Panruti	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
27.	Rajapalayam	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
28.	Rasipuram	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
29.	Salem	-	1	1	-	-	-	2
30.	Tirukkoyilur	1	-	1	1	1	-	4
31.	Tiruppattur	-	1	4	2	-	-	7

32.	Tiruchchirappalli	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
33.	Uttangarai	5	8	6	-	1	1	21
34.	Vaniyampadi	-	1	3	-	-	-	4
35.	Vellore	-	-	4	-	-	-	4
36.	Villupuram	3	2	1	-	-	-	6
37.	Walajapet	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

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Total	29	94	78	28	27	18	274
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**Table 5**  
**Talukwise Distribution of Memorial Stones**

Sl.No.	Village	Taluk	Nadu	Location
1.	Chindalpāḍi	Harur	<i>Puṟamalaiṉāḍu</i>	South of Peṇṇaiyār and west of Vaṇiyar
2.	Kailavaram	- do -	- do -	- do -
3.	Kurumpaṭṭi	- do -	- do -	- do -
4.	Nadiyanūr	- do -	- do -	- do -
5.	Navalai	- do -	- do -	- do -
6.	Bontai	Chengam	<i>Mīkoṇṇaiṉāḍu</i>	South of Peṇṇaiyār and east of Vaṇiyar
7.	Chinnaianpēṭṭai	- do -	- do -	- do -
8.	Kōṭṭaiyūr	- do -	- do -	- do -
9.	Pudunattam	- do -	- do -	- do -
10.	T.Vēlūr	- do -	- do -	- do -
11.	Aiyattampālayam	Chengam	<i>Mēkōvalūrṉāḍu</i>	East of Peṇṇaiyār
12.	Kīṟāvandavāḍi	- do -	- do -	- do -
13.	Sāttanūr	- do -	- do -	- do -
14.	Eḷanguṇṇi	Chengam	<i>Mīvenāḍu</i>	North of Peṇṇaiyār and east of Pāmbār and west of mountain running between Chengam and Tiruvaṇṇāmalai
15.	Karuṅgālipāḍipaṭṭi	- do -	- do -	- do -
16.	Naḍuppaṭṭi	- do -	- do -	- do -
17.	Puliyānūr	- do -	- do -	- do -
18.	Tālaiyūttu	- do -	- do -	- do -
19.	Periyakōlapāḍi	Chengam	<i>Kīlvēnāḍu</i>	South of Cheyyār and east of the mountain running between Chengam and Taṇḍrāmpaṭṭu
20.	Sandūr	Krishnagiri	<i>Veḷālanāḍu</i>	East of Peṇṇaiyār

21.	Karuṅgālipāḍi- -paṭṭi	Chengam	<i>Teṇvēnāḍu</i> (it emerged in 10th c.A.D from <i>Kiḷyēnāḍu</i> )	North of Peṇṇaiyār and west of the mountain)
22.	Kundu Reḍḍiyūr	Tiruppattur	<i>Eyilnāḍu</i>	North of Javādi hill and west of Vāṇiyampāḍi
23.	Aśanampaṭṭu	Vellore	<i>Palināḍu</i>	South of Pālār and north of Javādi hill
24.	Rāmakṛishṇāpaḍi	Uttangarai	<i>Gaṅganāḍu</i>	North of Peṇṇaiyār and west of Pāmbār
25.	Oḍḍampaṭṭi	- do -	- do -	- do -

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## An insight into the past history of paṛaiyars from the inscriptions

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There is a popular belief prevalent in our society that the Indian caste system is immutable and hence the society is as such ever since historical times. This leads to a misconception that the so called untouchables were ever so in history. In this paper we are to study the past of paṛaiyars, whose nomenclature has found a place in the English vocabulary in the sense of untouchables. The earliest mention about castes and especially paṛaiyars in Tamil literature was in a Puṛaṇāṅṁuṛu verse written by Māṅguḍi Marudaṅ.

*“Tuḍiyaṅ Pāṇaṅ Paṛaiyaṅ Kaḍambaṅ eṅṛu  
innānkallātu kudiyaṅ ilave”*

This verse highlights four sects (Tuḍiyaṅ, Pāṇaṅ, Paṛayaṅ, Kaḍambaṅ) which are explained as proper *kuḍigaḷ* (sects based on the institution of family - probably a patriarchal one). It should be remembered here that the four sects were mentioned in the masculine gender and three of the above four sects, i.e., Tuḍiyaṅ, Pāṇaṅ and Paṛaiyaṅ are experts in music. (Tuḍi, Paṅ, Paṛai). It is a known fact among anthropologists that in a tribal set-up ancestral worship, warding-off evil spirits and magical rites were accompanied by music and dance. The relationship of these sects with music probably suggests their monopoly over priestly rituals in the remote past.

It won't be a blunder if we correlate this concept with another popular saying among the rural folk that *“Pārppāṅṁukku mundiya paṛaiyaṅ kētpāṅṁṛu kiḷchchādiyāṅṅē.”* This saying portrays the paṛaiyars as the forerunners to pārppaṅṁar or brahmins and who due to socio-historical reasons declined from their status. This idea is further reinforced by a song sung during cremation rituals by the paṛaiyars at the burial ground. They sing this song irrespective of the fact, whether the departed individual belongs to a higher caste or lower caste. The song is quoted below:-

*“mundi pirandavaṅ nāṅ  
mudal pūṅṁl tarittavaṅ nāṅ  
śāṅgu paṛaiyaṅ nāṅ  
chādiyil mūttavaṅ nāṅ”*

The above verse claims that the paṛaiyars stood at the top in the caste hierarchy and they were the priests of the society, who wore the sacred thread called *pūṅṁl*. It would be noteworthy to incorporate here an information gained from a new find. It is a ring found at Karūr in Tamilnadu which belongs to the Saṅgam age. The ring contains a seal with an inscription *“vēḷichchāmbāṅ”*<sup>1</sup> ..... if we interpret this term *vēḷichchāmbāṅ* as *“vēḷichchāmbāṅ”* (i.e., *chāmbāṅ* who conducted sacrifices - probably to a deity - on behalf of

the king or the society), it may not be wrong. Till date paraiyars are called chāmbāṇ in the southern districts of Tamilnadu. There is a village called chāmbavar-vaḍakarai in Tirunelveli district. These instances add strength to our interpretation.

Another historical fact that can't be missed is that the castes in Tamilnadu have been divided into two segments i.e., valaṅgai (Right hand) and idaṅgai (Left hand). The valaṅgai castes claim superiority over the idaṅgai castes. In later times idaṅgai castes claimed to exercise the rights enjoyed by the valaṅgai castes previously. Here we must mention the fact that paraiyars were all along classified as a valaṅgai caste.<sup>2</sup> From all the above versions it can be surmised that paraiyars once held socially higher status. This paper aims to appraise the position of paraiyars in the past and to rise some important questions concerning their status as gleaned from inscriptions, especially of the later Chōla period.

In the inscriptions of the Chōla period we came across many residential colonies expressed by the term "chēri". Each caste or a section of the society had its own chēri. Kammāṇachchēri, Paraichchēri, Īlachchēri, Valaichchēri and Tīṇḍāchchēri (artisans colony, paraiyars colony, Īla colony, valayars colony and untouchables colony).<sup>3</sup> Even the residential quarters of brahmins have been mentioned by the term "chēri".<sup>4</sup> So, it is evident that chēris existed as exclusive residential areas of castes. In all the cases, except Tīṇḍāchchēri, the term "chēri" was prefixed by a caste name. But, Tīṇḍāchchēri probably contained some subjugated groups who were treated as untouchables. The paraiyars were not considered as untouchables in the Chōla period, as they did not reside in the Tīṇḍāchchēri.

Apart from having lived in a separate chēri, the position of paraiyars seems to have been very close to Īlas, as paraichchēri was adjacent to Īlachchēri.<sup>5</sup> Īlachchēris contained the koṭṭākāram or place where people of higher strata resided. If paraiyars were untouchables as of now, how could their settlements have been located adjoining the Īlachchēri and koṭṭākāram?<sup>6</sup>

Further, the paraiyars had separate cremation grounds (*paraichchudukāḍu*)<sup>7</sup> which reveals their dignified status in the then society. Absence of community burial sites or cremation grounds for some other castes betray their insignificance in the society. The allocation of a separate cremation ground and the practice of cremating the dead shows their dignified identity.

### Educational and Occupational Status of Paraiyars.

It was very common that the priesthood had its own prominence in early societies. In some pre-historic societies oligarchy was prevalent. Even in a monarchy the priests held high positions and advised the rulers in many aspects. In this context it can be noticed that "kaṇiyaṇ", "arivaṇ" and "valluvaṇ" were held in high esteem in the Saṅgam Tamil polity. The Tamil names kaṇiyaṇ and arivaṇ mean more or less the same as being learned or having the capacity to predict the future. The present ḍay chākkai kaṇiyaṇs and valluvars constitute the sub-sects of paraiyars even now. A very detailed study in respect of these names was done by the scholar Thiru. Guna.<sup>8</sup> These arivaṇs had a prominence in the then society. As a proof of this we can cite a reference in *Tolkāppiyam*.

“*maṛuvil śeyti mūvagaikkālamum*  
*neriyiṅ āṛriya aṛivaṅ tēyamum*”<sup>9</sup>

The mention of *aṛivaṅ tēyamum* represents the fields of their activity or their jurisdiction over the subjects approved by the then prevalent political system. It was a sort of autonomy enjoyed by the *aṛivars*. For instance the *aṛivaṅs* served as the priests in the marriage ceremonies among *kuṛavēr*<sup>10</sup>. These *aṛivaṅs* probably through calculating the positions of planets and constellations understood the past and hence they were called *kaṇiyaṅs*. Many scholars have accepted the theory that the famous author Tiruvalluvar who wrote Tirukkural belonged to the caste *valluvar* which is a sub-sect of the *paṛaiyar* caste. Even the Saṅgam poet *Kaṇiyaṅ Pūṅkuṅṛaṅ* who wrote the immortal *Puraṅāṅṇūrū* verse starting with the lines “*yādum urē yāvarum kēḷir*” belonged to the *paṛaiyar* sect.

These *aṛivaṅs* and *kaṇiyaṅs* held close relationship with the king. This fact is gleaned from the following lines which occur in *Śilappadikāram*:

“*āsāṅ peruṅkaṇi aruntiṛal amaichchar*  
*tāṅnait talaivar tammōḍu kuḷi*”.

The post *peruṅkaṇi* may be equated with that of “*chelvachchēṇai valluvamutumakaṅ*” which occurs in *Peruṅkatai*. That *valluvars* were connected with the military becomes evident from an inscription from Tiruviśālūr which belongs to the 10th century A.D. “(*ippaḍai paḍaivalluvaṅ nāgiriyaṅ kātāṅṇa avanti kātu Pallavariyaṅ*).”<sup>11</sup> Though we are not sure about the exact social status of *valluvars* in 10th century A.D., it won't be wrong if we conclude that they were not treated as untouchables. Due to their proximity to kings, their past dominant positions and literacy they were regarded as an elite group and were conferred with royal titles like *Pallavariyaṅ*, etc., even after the society had taken to the vedic *varṇāśrama* system.

In this context, “*nīyāya śēkararāṅa valluvar*” which occurs in an inscription from Mānūr (Tirunelveli dist. T.N.) attains significance. *Valluvars* who had the legislative power were considered as experts in legal matters. Some *valluvars* occupied crucial posts in the bureaucracy and gifted lands to the temple. One such *valluvaṅ* named *Sōpānattu Mātaṅ* is mentioned in an inscription of the 13th century A.D., found recently in the *Agnitīrtham* at *Rameswaram*<sup>12</sup>. It seems that in some aspects they retained their honourable position even in the changed social set-up.

Some *Chākkai-kūttars* who were regarded as *paṛaiyars* had, in olden days, served as “*ulpaḍu karmat-talaivar*” (chiefs of confidential departments under the king). This fact is mentioned in *Śilappadikāram* (4th-5th century A.D.), In the 7th century A.D., when *Mahēndravarma Pallavaṅ* was ruling, one *Ēraṅ* son of *Chākkai Paṛaiyan* died in a battle to save the village *Tuḍari* of *Kiḷvēṅāḍu*. A hero-stone was erected in his honour. Some other *paṛaiyars* who shed their lives in the battles are also mentioned in hero stone inscriptions belonging to 6th-7th century A.D. Their names are mentioned as *Paṛai Kaṭṭiyār*, *Paṛai Māriyār* and *Paṛaiyaṅ Puḷiyaṅ*. Survivors of these *paṛaiyar* families or the legal heirs of these *paṛaiyars*

could have been honoured with some title deed or a post in the royal military by the then rulers. In many cases cultivable lands could have been gifted as a reward for their heroism. They would have been considered as the right hand of the rulers. This seems to be the main reason why paraiyars were accorded valaṅgai status even in the later days.

When agricultural expansion was taken up on a massive scale during Chōla period (in the 9th-10th century A.D.) paraiyars who had gained good experience in irrigation and cultivation were settled in the Chōla heart-land. In the Chōla inscriptions paraiyars are in general denoted by the term uḷapaḷaiyars<sup>13</sup> (paraiyars engaged in cultivation). An inscription belonging to the period of Rājarāja Chōla mentions kīlaichchēri and mēlaipaḷaiyachchēri in Venkōṅkuḍi village, both occupied by uḷapaḷaiyar. The settlements of paraiyars were near agricultural lands and the irrigation channels went abetting paḷaiyachchēri<sup>14</sup>. In some other inscriptions terms like paḷaiyaṅ-vayal,<sup>15</sup> paḷaiyaṅ-vāsakkal<sup>(16)</sup> are mentioned. In the reign of Śrīmāra Śrīvallabha (815-862 A.D.) a paḷaiyar by name Pūvaṅ=paḷaiyaṅ bought some dry lands from the village *sabhā* of ḷayāṅkuḍi village and made them cultivable<sup>(17)</sup>. The terms like paḷaiyaṅnūraṇi and paḷaiyaṅkuḷam occur in inscriptions. Such occurrences establish the fact that the majority of paḷaiyar caste people were engaged in agriculture and allied works. As a consequence paḷaiyars were treated as veḷḷāḷars, and this fact is expressed in an inscription engraved at Tirumuruganpūḍi (Coimbatore district) Muruganāthar temple. This inscription belongs to the period of Koṅgu Chōla king Vikrama (1255-63 A.D.). It reads as follows:

“*Vellāla māppuḷḷigalil sōḷan paḷaiyaṅāṇa Dhaṅapāḷan.*” It is obvious that paraiyars possessed agricultural lands and had social status. Even as late as in 16th century (Nāgama nāicker's period) kāṇiyāṭchip-paraiyars<sup>19</sup> along with veḷḷāḷars and tantrimār (royal officials) were enjoined to pay the taxes due for letting the temple lands uncultivated. That paḷaiyar caste people were not treated as slaves, but were title-holders (kāṇiyāṭchi) is revealed by such inscriptions. One Poyyā Tamil Nambi hailing from the paḷaiyar caste was conferred the title “*Śudrā rāyar*”, and his request to provide him with lands was accepted by the king. The inscription which mentions the incident belongs to the period of Vīra Chōḷaṅ (1183-1206 A.D.)<sup>(20)</sup>.

### The Decline of Paraiyars

The decline of the status of paraiyars in the society was not a sudden event. It seems to have started during the Bhakti age (from 6th century A.D.) when Vedic modes of worship took a stronghold on the social life of Tamils. The non-Vedic religions like Jainism and Buddhism seem to have patronised the paraiyars as it is only in *Śilappadikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai* and *Perunkatai*, that we get many references about vaḷḷuvar, kaṇiyaṅ and chākkai paḷaiyaṅ. Scholars like Vaiyapuripillai and Iravatham Mahadevan have written that Tiruvaḷḷuvar was perhaps a jain. When the grip of these non-Vedic religions on Tamil society was lost, paraiyars in general and vaḷḷuvars in particular lost their prominence.

Inscriptions belonging to 16th-17th centuries A.D. show that the residential quarters of paraiyars was denoted by the term puḷaṅchēri<sup>21</sup> and in some cases paḷḷars gained an upper-hand over paraiyars by getting the privileges once enjoyed by paraiyars<sup>22</sup>. But

to respect the age old sentiments and to assure the peaceful co-existence of communities paraiyars were accorded some special privileges concerning temple rituals and village festivals. According to a folk tradition which is prevailing in Tiruvaraṅkuḷam (Pudukkottai district) "the temple car once stuck fast and whenever an attempt was made to drag it the axil tree broke. Thereupon the god appeared in a vision and apprised the devotees that the car could be moved only when a paraiyar riding on a white elephant broke the coconut offering and touched the car ropes."<sup>23</sup> Many such compromises were made in the name of God. Another such instance is noticed in a function concerning the village deity of Perukaḷūr (Pudukkottai district) The prasāda is distributed among the devotees belonging to all castes by a paraiyar who officiates as the priest once in a year, when the annual festival takes place.

Similar antecedents can be noticed in inscriptions. In an inscription from Ālaṅguḍi, Pudukkottai district one vaḷḷuvar performing pūjās in a temple is mentioned. ("malaiyakam Araṅgasvāmiyāruku paiviḍai śeyyum vaḷḷuvar")<sup>24</sup> The fact that vaḷḷuvars were performing pūjās in the temples can be corroborated with the custom still in vogue in a temple at George Town, Chennai. During the festival of marriage ceremony to the goddess a paraiyar is usually chosen to tie-up the sacred tāḷi (māṅgaḷ, a sūtra) to that deity on behalf of god.<sup>25</sup> This may be considered as a relic of the past, when the aṛivaṅṅ served as a spiritual medium possessed by the deity and preached oracles in a trance.

## Notes and References

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## The Hindu Temple at Ayōdhyā Pre-Bābarī Mosque Sanskrit Inscription from Ayōdhyā

*Ajay Mitra Shastri*

### I

#### Introductory

Hindus of all denominations who constitute a vast majority of India believe that god Rāma was born at Ayōdhyā (Fyzābād district, Uttar Pradesh, India), and to them it is as holy as Bethlehem and Kābā to the Christians and Muslims respectively. And there too it is traditionally held for quite sometime that the actual spot of Rāma's birth is represented by the site where stood the controversial structure known as Bābarī Masjid which is again believed to have housed an old shrine marking it. Ever since the erection of this mosque in 1528 A.D. during the reign of the Mughal ruler Bābar the Hindu psyche has been feeling hurt resulting in a running controversy, often verging on hatred and hostilities, between the Hindus and Muslims. We have concrete evidence of this ill-feeling between the two communities dating at least from the sixties-seventies of the eighteenth century A.D. when an Austrian Jesuit missionary named Joseph Tieffenthaler visited Awadh (1766-71 AD). He left an account in Latin whose French rendering under the caption *Description Historique et Geographique de l'Inde* has been published. He observes that the Hindus held that a Mughal emperor (Bābar or Aurangzeb) had destroyed the birth-place building (viz., shrine) but they continued to worship Rāma on a square platform (*Bedi*) by going around it three times and prostrating on the ground and they also held an annual fair to mark Rāma's birth-day in the month of Chait or Chaitra (cited in Koenraad Elst, *Ram Janmabhoomi vs. Babari Masjid: A Case Study in Hindu-Muslim Conflict*, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1990, p.74). It is also referred to as Janmasthan or Janmabhūmi Masjid in revenue records and some Persian and Urdu books because it was known by this name among the Muslims, which was enough to show that the Mosque stood on the spot traditionally believed to be god Rāma's birth-place.

During the last nearly five decades the controversy has become especially acute and has been grossly politicised with most political parties fanning the communal passions of the Muslims with the vested motive of using them as vote bank. We need not recount here the various events and debates which are too wellknown. Under these circumstances an accidental epoch-making archaeological discovery has finally clinched the issue by proving incontrovertibly the existence of a Hindu shrine prior to the erection of the Bābarī Masjid which forms the theme of the present paper.



## II

## The Inscription

In course of the demolition of the disputed structure commonly called Bābarī Masjid at the town of Ayōdhyā (Fyzābād District, Uttar Pradesh, India) on 6th December, 1992, one of its walls yielded a huge lithic slab bearing a large important epigraph. As it was intact at the time of its discovery, it was presumably embedded in the lower portion of the wall, probably within about four feet. However, either during transit to its present locus or at the locus its right upper portion developed an oblique vertical crack resulting in the damage to a few letters towards the end of the first few lines. The slab is presently kept under tight government custody at the Rāmkaṭhā Kuñj at Ayōdhyā where, with the permission of the Lucknow Bench of the Allāhābād High Court, we<sup>1</sup> had an opportunity to examine it *in situ* on 14-15 September 1996 followed by an examination of an estampage at the Lucknow Bench on the next two days. Despite the original slab being damaged at a few places and the not too satisfactory condition of the estampage we were able to decipher it almost completely specially at crucial places. This decipherment was revealing in as much as it established the existence of a Hindu shrine at this site at least about four centuries prior to the erection of what was, till the 6th of December 1992, called Bābarī Mosque, without any shadow of doubt.

The slab is of buff sandstone and rectangular, measuring approximately 5 x 2.25 ft. It bears a long inscription comprising twenty lines in the Nāgarī script datable to about mid-twelfth century A.D., a date vouched for by its internal evidence as well as will be seen in the sequel.<sup>3</sup> The record, but for the singular exception of a short auspicious formula (*maṅgalācharaṇa*) at the beginning, is composed throughout in high-flown Sanskrit stanzas in a variety of classical metres. There are in all about thirty verses.<sup>4</sup> The inscribed slab was evidently fixed at the entrance of the temple of Viṣṇu-Hari the construction of which is recorded in the inscription on it.<sup>5</sup> The present paper is intended to highlight the contents of this record in so far as it has a bearing on the instant issue.

Though the epigraph is pronouncedly Vaiṣṇava in its contents, it commences with the Śaivite formula *Ōm namaḥ Śivāya* (salutation to Śiva), probably because the ruler who got it inscribed was a devotee of god Śiva, which indicates the cordiality that characterised the relationship between the votaries of the two religions. Import of the opening stanza cannot be made out owing to its highly mutilated condition. The next three verses (lines 2-4) appear to refer to a king who is spoken of as an ornament of the earth and a *kshatriya* ruling family whose members were determined to rescue all the *kshatriyas* who had earlier been reduced by the son of sage Bhṛigu (Bhārgava, viz., Paraśurāma) and his descendants (Bhārgaviyas) and were always ready to support the gods and the brāhmaṇas and the needy. Very significant is the next stanza (lines 4-5) referring as it does to the birth-place (*janmabhūmi*) of a king whose body was without a parallel (*apratima-vigraha*), who was an abode of great valour (*ati-sāhasa-sahasra-samidha-dhāmā*), the most desired by the whole world (*jagad=ishṭatamaḥ*) and who freed the gods from their worries.<sup>6</sup> Most probably the reference is to Lord Rāma's birth-place.<sup>7</sup>

Verses 6-7 (lines 5-6) contain the description of some king, probably claiming origin from the same line, who was not interested in worldly matters and, according to the following stanza (lines 6-7), he coronated his son Sallakshaṇa as his successor during his own life-time. Sallakshaṇa's achievements are eulogised in verses 9-15 (lines 7-11). He is said to have been endowed with superhuman valour (*amānusha paurusha*) which was unique in the world (*viśva-vilakshaṇam*). He appears to have demonstrated his abnormal bravery in some battles and rendered, we are told, the empire free from troubles (*nishkaṇṭakam sāmraḷya-partichchhadam*). Though not stated explicitly, these successes were most probably won on behalf of the Gāhaḍavālas whose vassals his successors are said to have been. His fief probably extended upto the Himālayan lands (*tarāi*) in the Basti-Bahrāich region, and there is an exaggerated description of his fame being sung by the womenfolk in the Himālayan caverns, the slopes of the Kailāsa mountain, the top of the Mēru mountain, on the banks of the divine river (Gaṅgā) as well as the surroundings of the Malaya mountain and other regions. He was so charming that his company was desired by even the heavenly ladies. His demise is then described eulogistically.

Sallakshaṇa had probably two sons named Alhaṇa and Mēgha and was followed by the former<sup>8</sup> who was most probably the elder of the two.<sup>9</sup> He is said to have been affectionate to the good and a valiant point of the saw to the boasting ones, viz., enemies (*praṇaya-peśalaḥ satām garjjatām krakacha-kōṭir=udbhataḥ*). He also won successes in battles and is said to have brought back the goddess of fortune which is fickle by nature (*ānināya .... prabhūtām prakṛiti-chañchalām śriyam*).<sup>10</sup>

As we have seen above, Alhaṇa had a younger brother named Mēgha, and as at the time of his death his own son was too young, he was succeeded by his younger brother (*anuja*), perhaps cousin, Nayachandra who was the (or a) son of Mēgha who was most probably the younger son of Sallakshaṇa. Regarding Nayachandra's career we get more specific information. He was a contemporary of the well-known Gāhaḍavāla king Gōvindachandra (c.1114-55 A.D.) of Kanauj. By the latter's great favour he got the fief of the Sākēta region (*Sākēta-maṇḍala-patitva*).<sup>11</sup>

He fought some wars for his overlord and is said to have ensured the stability of his kingdom. He was learned (*śrutādhya*) and highly liberal making costly gifts and is eulogised as a wish-giving tree (*kalpa-vriksha*). His most remarkable act, however, was the erection of a huge beautiful stone temple dedicated to god Vishṇu-Hari which is described in some detail. We are told that he built it with the object of crossing the worldly ocean, viz., getting liberated from the chain of birth and death. It was constructed with a series of heaps of huge stone blocks dressed with chisels and adorned with a golden cupola. Such a highly wonderful temple was not erected by any earlier king.<sup>12</sup>

Nayachandra was succeeded by his younger brother, i.e., cousin, and son of Alhaṇa<sup>13</sup> named Āyushyachandra who, it is averred, was not compared by the poets either with Sāhasāṅka or Śūdraka, to wit, he excelled them both in valour as well as poetic talent.<sup>14</sup> No one dared to string his bow before him. He had his headquarters at Ayōdhyā which is said to have housed high-rising buildings and temples (*uddāma-saudha-vibudh-ālayaniṁ=Ayōdhyām=adhyāsyā*). He had thousands of wells (both

ordinary as well as stepped ones), rest-houses (*dharmaśālās*) and tanks executed all over the Sākēta region.<sup>15</sup> His fief extended upto the Himālayan region, and the people inhabiting the Himālayas are said to have sung the songs of his fame and they are described as enjoyable by female musk deers. His handsome physique is compared to the holy city of Kāśī, endowed with the Avimukta (*tīrtha*) which was the cause of the attainment of beatitude (*nirvāṇa*).<sup>16</sup> He is said to have excelled by his achievements god Vishṇu's ten incarnations of whom the killer of Hiraṇyakaśipu, viz., Nṛsiṃha, humbler of the demon king Bali, viz., Vāmana, and the destroyer of the wicked ten-headed (Rāvaṇa), viz., Daśaratha's son Rāma, are specified. He with his terrible arms is said to have averted fear from the west (*pāśchātya-bhīti*). The inscription ends abruptly with the name of Āyushyachandra.<sup>17</sup> Probably it is incomplete and there were a few lines below the extant text.

Āyushyachandra's comparison (or lack of comparison) with Sāhasāṅka and Śūdraka is highly significant and most probably deliberate. Both were renowned poets besides being great monarchs. The comparison must refer to both these facets of their personality; otherwise any other comparison would have done. Moreover, it is the renowned poets (*kavīndras*) who are said to have refrained from such an analogy. It is therefore certain that Āyushyachandra was a talented Sanskrit poet and most probably he was responsible for composing this beautiful inscription.

Nayachandra, the third member of the feudatory line, was clearly a vassal of the Gāhaḍavāla king Gōvindachandra by whose great favour he is stated to have received his fief of the Sākēta-maṇḍala. The dates of the inscriptions of this most powerful Gāhaḍavāla monarch range from 1114 to 1154 A.D. The first definitely known member of the line, viz., Sallakshaṇa, must have therefore flourished in the second half of the preceding century at the earliest. He and his successor Alhaṇa appear to have been vassals of the Gāhaḍavāla monarchs Chandradēva and his son and successor Madanachandra. Though not stated explicitly in the record, the battles fought by Nayachandra's two predecessors consequently must have been on behalf of their Gāhaḍavāla masters. It was sometime during Gōvindachandra's long reign that the chieftainship of the Sākēta region extending right upto the Himālayan tarai in the Śrāvastī area was formally assigned to Nayachandra and the latter's successor Āyushyachandra continued in the same capacity.

We learn from the *Mirāt-i-Masūdī* of Abdur Rahmān Chishtī that Sayyid Sālār Masūd led a Muslim invasion and in the course of his march he had encamped at Satrakh (perhaps Sākēta) but was worsted and killed in an engagement at Bahrāich on Sunday, 14th June, 1033 A.D. at the hands of Rāi Sahar Deo who had organised and led a confederacy of Hindu chiefs against this offensive. Rāi Sahar Deo also lost his life in this encounter.<sup>18</sup> Local legends call Sahar Deo Suhildēva. There are also local traditions regarding the Āyushavāṁśa of Śrāvastī flourishing about the same time which included kings Sohatra and Āyusha.<sup>19</sup> It is tempting to identify the chiefs Suhildēva or Sōhatra and Āyusha of these legends with our Sallakshaṇa and Āyushyachandra respectively. However, in view of the insurmountable chronological difficulties these equations cannot be upheld and the sameness or similarity of these names may be treated as purely accidental.<sup>19</sup>

Even though the temple of Vishṇu-Hari is said to have been erected by Nayachandra himself, in all likelihood he was acting in this matter as a proxy for his Gāhaḍavāla suzerain Gōvindachandra. We have explicit evidence to show that there was in existence at Ayōdhyā the image or shrine of Vishṇu-Hari at the same site at Ayōdhyā during Chandradēva's reign. One of his Chandrāvati grants of Vikrama samvat 1150 corresponding to 1093 AD, which was issued from the Svargadvāra *ghāt* at Ayōdhyā speaks of his presenting to the god golden ornaments studded with precious gems.<sup>20</sup> It is not known if it was only an image or a shrine, but the latter appears more likely. It is likely that the temple, if already in existence, had been damaged due to some unknown calamity and had to be built afresh or that the old structure was deliberately replaced by a much more beautiful one during Gōvindachandra's time by his protege Nayachandra. It can further be concluded that the tradition about Vishṇu-Hari goes back to a substantially earlier period, say at least tenth century A.D. And as the present inscription referring to the construction (or reconstruction) of this temple has been found in the debris of the Bābarī Mosque, it may be regarded as certain that the temple was located at this site. The case is comparable to that of the temple of Dharmahari which was also demolished by Aurangzeb to make room for a mosque and the inscription referring to it<sup>21</sup> was found in the ruins of one of the mosques at the Svarḡadvāra *ghāt* (the locality popularly known as Trētā ke Ṭhākur) showing that it was built by the Gāhaḍavāla king Jayachandra. It has made it possible to locate the site of the Dharmahari temple which was otherwise uncertain. With the discovery of these two inscriptions the sites of all the seven Hari shrines<sup>22</sup> have been located.<sup>23</sup>

The Vishṇu-Hari shrine has been eulogised in the *Ayōdhyā-māhātmya* section of the *Skanda-purāṇa* also, though traditions about it differ from recension to recession.<sup>24</sup>

The inscription was certainly in the nature of the *pratiṣṭhā-śāsana* (installation charter) put up on the wall by the side of the entrance gate. This is demonstrated by the employment of the word *idam*, 'this', in verse 21 (lines 14-15) describing the erection of the temple. It is imperative to account for the queer circumstance that the temple was erected by Nayachandra and the installation inscription (or the inscribed slab) was put up during the time of his cousin and successor Āyushyachandra and calls for an explanation. It appears that Nayachandra passed away shortly after the construction of the temple but prior to the installation of the divine image, and it was left to Āyushyachandra to have the consecration ceremonies (*pratiṣṭhā*) performed and to compose the inscription in question and have it incised on the slab that has come to be located accidentally on 6th December, 1992. And this should leave absolutely no doubt about the location of the Vishṇu-Hari temple at the site of the disputed structure.

Vishṇu's manifestations (*avatāras*) had since very early times come to be treated as Vishṇu himself. Not to speak of the literary evidence which would take us much early, we may mention here only a couple of important early references from inscriptions about whose date there can be absolutely no question. A fragmentary lithic record from Kauśāmbī (modern Kōsām, Allāhābād district) dating linguistically and palaeographically from around mid-second century A.D. refers to some pious act (installation of an image or erection of a shrine) of god Rāma-Nārāyaṇa (*bhagavato Rāma-Nārāyaṇasya*) by a householder (*ga-*

*hapati*), showing unquestionably that Rāma had already come to be treated as one with Nārāyaṇa or Vishṇu himself.<sup>25</sup> Another, and even more significant, reference comes from a rather unexpected quarter. It is met with in a Bāgh (Dhār district, Madhya Pradesh) plate of one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful, Mahārājas of Valkhā, namely Bhulūṇḍa, issued in the year 47 of an unspecified era.<sup>26</sup> The charter commences with the invocation of Vishṇu's eight-armed Ananta-śayana (reclining on the cosmic serpent Ananta) form which is eulogised in the sequel as breaking the haughtiness of the demons Bali, Naraka, Namuchi, Kēśin, the Kāliya snake, the ten-headed one (*daśa-vadana*, viz., Rāvaṇa), Kāmsa, Chāṇūra, Arishṭa and Śīsupāla, and as Varāha (the boar incarnation) rescuing the earth, and without any beginning, middle and end.<sup>27</sup> Some epigraphists refer the dates of the inscriptions of the Valkhā Mahārājas (and, of course, of the inscriptions in question) to the Kalachuri-Chēdi era commencing in 248-49 A.D.,<sup>28</sup> while others regard them as the years of the Gupta era with its epoch lying in 319-20 A.D.,<sup>29</sup> the latter theory being preferable.<sup>30</sup> The date of this record would, following these two view-points, give us 295-98 or 366-67 A.D. Thus oneness of god Vishṇu with his incarnations is indisputably documented to have been well-established by mid-second century A.D. and must have become deep-rooted in public mind much earlier. It is, therefore, very likely that god Vishṇu-Hari, whose shrine was already in existence during the reign of the early Gāhaḍavāla king Chandradēva was reconstructed/renovated during his descendant Gōvindachandra's time had, Rāma, son of Daśaratha, for its presiding deity. There is atleast nothing improbable in this surmise.

Whatever that be, the foregoing discussion would show indubitably that we now have an incontrovertible epigraphic evidence to prove the existence of not just a non-denominational Hindu but a Vaishṇava shrine at the site of the controversial structure at Ayōdhyā during the closing years of the eleventh century A.D. and its reconstruction/renovation sometime about mid-twelfth century AD. The inscribed slab recovered from the debris of what was known as the Bābarī Masjid was originally embedded on the front wall near the entrance of this shrine that was demolished during and at the command of the first Mughal emperor Bābar by his officer Mīr Baquī or Baquī Tāshkintī to make room for a mosque that was erected by him in 1528 AD.<sup>31</sup>

## Notes and References

1. viz. backwall. Probably its inscribed side was on the back.
2. The team of experts included besides the present writer T.P.Verma, Sudha Malaiya and D.P.Dubey. Also present on the occasion were S.P.Gupta and Prof.B.R.Grover, G.C.Tripathi and D.P.Dubey had an opportunity to examine the estampage again on 29-30 October, 1996.
3. The inscription refers twice to the Gāhaḍavāla king Gōvindachandra who ruled in 1114-54 AD.
4. *Vide* T.P.Verma, A.K.Singh, Sudha Malaiya, Ajay Mitra Shastri, G.C.Tripathi and D.P.Dubey, "Notes on Rāma Janmabhūmi Inscription", *Itihas Darpan*, Vol.III, No.2, December 1996, pp.61-73.
5. Verse 21, lines 14-15.
6. The *janmabhūmi* is styled a *dhāma* or sacred spot.

7. Notwithstanding the possibility of some other meanings, this is the most likely and best interpretation.
8. The name is also spelt as Allaṇa.
9. Alhaṇa's successor Nayachandra is described as his younger brother or cousin and son of Mēgha (*tasy-ānujo* and *Mēgha-sutaḥ*) in the same vein. *Vide* verse 19, line 13.
10. For his description, see verses 16-18, lines 11-13.
11. *Gōvindachandra-dharaṇīndra-guru-prasādāt*  
*Sākēta-maṇḍala-patitvam=alābhi yēna.*  
Verse 9, lines 13-14.
12. *Ṭaṅk-ōtkhāta-viśāla-śaila-śikhara-śrēṇī-śilā-saṃhati-*  
*vyūhair=Viṣṇuharēr=hiranya-kalāśa-śrī-sundaram mandiram*  
*Pūrvair=apy-akṛitam kṛitam nṛipatibhir=yēn-ēdam=ity-adbhutam*  
*saṃsār-ārṇava-śīghra-laṃghana-laghūn pādān dhiyā dhyāyatā*  
Verse 21, lines 14-15.
13. That he was son of Alhaṇa (*Alhaṇa-sūnūr=ēva*) is emphatically mentioned. See verse 22, line 16.
14. *Na Sūhasānkēna na Śūdrakēna*  
*tasy-ōpamānam vidadhuh kavīndrāḥ*  
Verse 23, line 16
15. *Uddāma-saudha-vibudhālayanīm Ayōdhyām=*  
*adhyāsya tēna naya-nihnuta-vaiśasēna*  
*Sākēta-maṇḍalam=akhaṇḍam=akāri kūpa-*  
*vāpī-pratiśraya-taḍāga-sahasra-miśram*  
Verse 24, line 17.
16. *Avimukta-viśālākṣhī lalitā nanditā sadā*  
*Kās-īva yasya dēha-śrīḥ satām nirvāṇa-kāraṇam*  
Verse 26, line 18.
17. For the description of Āyushyachandra, see verses 22-30, lines 16-20.
18. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by her own Historians*, II, 1867-77, pp.513-49.
19. Kerrim Grafn V.Schwerin, "Saint Worship in Indian Islam: The Legend of the Martyr Salar Masud Ghazi", *Rituals and Religion among Muslims of the Sub-continent*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad, pp.143-61, Lahore, 1985, cited by D.P.Dubey in his "Ayōdhyā Stone Inscription of Āyushyachandra", *Him-kānti: Archaeology, Art and History: Prof.K.P.Nautiyal, Felicitation Volume*, eds. B.M.Khanduri and Vinod Nautiyal, p.216, note 7, 1997, Delhi.  
For another view, see T.P.Verma, "Studies in Epigraphy", Presential Address, *Indian History and Culture Society*, 19th Session, 1995, Gorakhpur, D.P.Dubey, *op.cit.*, p.214.
20. *Haimāni yēna maṇibhiḥ khachitāny=anarghair=*  
*dattāni Viṣṇuharayē cha vibhūshṇāni*  
D.C.Sircar, "Some Gāhaḍavāla Grants", *E.I.*, Vol.XXXV, p.203, f.n.verse 8.

21. A. Fülhrer, *The Sharqi Architecture of Jaunpur with Notes on Zafarabad, Sahet-Mahet and Other Places in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Archaeological Survey of India (New Series), Vol. I, p.68, 1889, Calcutta, Hans Bakker, *Ayodhya*, pp.52-53, Edgert Forsten, Groningen, 1986.
22. The seven Haris (Saptaharis) are Chandrahari, Bilvahari, Guptahari, Chakrahari, Bhartṛihari, Dharmahari and Vishṇuhari.
23. For the traditional account including myths about their origin and location, *vide* Hans Bakker, *op.cit.*, Part II.
24. *Ibid.*, Part I, pp.53-54; Part II, p.256-65. All the different recensions of *Ayōdhya-māhātmya* are critically edited and analysed by Hans Bakker.
25. Ajay Mitra Shastri, "Rāma Cult: Earliest Epigraphic Evidence", *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, Vol. XX, 1994, pp.1-3.
26. K.V.Ramesh and S.P.Tewari, *A Copper-plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh*, p.1, lines 1-5 Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi-Mysore, 1990, which reads as under:  
*Bhagavataḥ*  
*sur-āsura-nar-ōraga-gurōr=amara-vara-ripu-rudhira-sṛita-sara-prasarasy-*  
*aikārṇṇava-vipula-vimala-paryyanka-tala-sāyinaḥ*  
*nābhi-sambhav-āravinda-shatpad-ōpagīyamāna-nidrasya*  
*śaṅkha-bāṇa-śakti-chakra-nandaka-jvalaṅgad-āgra śūla-bhāsvar-āshṭa-bāhuśālinah*  
*Bali-Naraka-Namuchi-vara-turaga-bhujaga-Daśavadana-Kaṁsa-Chāṇur-Ārishṭa*  
*Śīsupāla-darppa-mathanasya jaga-skann-ōddharaṇa-Varāhasya*  
*anādi - madhya - nidhanasya*  
*sura-gaṇ-ālaṅkarishṇōs=trailōkya-prabhavishṇōr=asura-gaṇa-jishṇōh.*
27. The inestimable value of this passage for the religious history was first brought out by us in our review of the book in the *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India*, Vol.XVIII, p.129, 1992.
28. V.V.Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, IV, pp.5-12, Government Epigraphist for India, Ootacamund (now Mysore), 1955.
29. K.V.Ramesh and S.P.Tewari, *op.cit.*, Introduction, pp.viii.
30. *Vide* our review in *op.cit.*, pp.126-27. Thus the inscription belongs to the later half of the third or fourth century AD.
31. For the text and English rendering of the Persian inscription see A.Führer, *op.cit.*, p.67.

## Temburu Plates of Anantavarman

*Subrata Kumar Acharya*

This set of plates was discovered from the village Temburu in Patapatnam taluk of Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. B.N. Shastri of Hyderabad secured it from G.V. Sitapati and published it in the Telugu monthly, *Bhārati*, Vol. 42, pt. 8 (August, 1965), pp. 81-87 and plates. The record is now preserved in Navodaya Samiti Office, Hyderabad. I now re-edit it from the photographs kindly supplied to me by M.D. Sampath, Director (Epigraphy), Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore

This is a set of three copper plates with slightly raised rims, each plate measuring about 17 cm x 7 cm. There is writing on four sides of the set, the outer sides of the first and third plates being left unwritten. There are in all twenty-eight lines of writing; each of the four inscribed sides contain seven lines. There is a hole of about 1.5 cm in diameter in the middle of the left margin of each plate for the ring to pass through. The circular ring is 10 cm in diameter and its ends are soldered together to the base of a circular seal which is 3 cm in diameter and bears the figure of a bull. The three plates together weigh 1335 gm while the seal weighs 350 gm.

The characters belong to what D.C. Sircar calls 'the Eastern variety of the Northern Alphabet'. But they can very well be described as a variety of proto-Nāgarī that was current in the charters of the Eastern Gaṅgas of Kalinga from the middle of the ninth century A.D. They closely resemble those of the Chidivalasa plates of Dēvēndravarman V of Gaṅga year 397<sup>1</sup> and the undated Nirakarpur plates of the time of Dēvēndravarman V.<sup>2</sup> The initial *a* occurs in ll. 10, 16, 25, 26; *i* in l. 17; *u* in ll. 15, 19; and *e* occurs in l. 14. Optionally the consonant *da* is written closely after the initial *e* and it is very difficult to distinguish the two. The letters *cha* and *va* are also not easily distinguished. The language is Sanskrit and the epigraph is composed in both prose and verse. Of orthographical peculiarities mention may be made of the occasional duplication of the consonants followed by the *rēpha* such as *nirmmā* (l. 2), *sarvva* (l. 12), etc., unnecessary doubling of the consonants as in *ssakala* (ll. 3-4) and *vvājapēya* (l. 25); wrong interchanging of the class nasals as in *maṁḍalē* for *maṇḍal* (l. 10) and *sāmantēṇa* for *sāmantēna* (l. 28); use of class nasals in place of *anusvāra* as in *-dattāmpara* for *-dattām para* (l. 23) and *-nikōṭi* for *-m kōṭi* (l. 26), omission of *anusvāra* and *visarga* as well as words and letters, etc.

The charter is not dated. But it refers to the occasion of the grant which is a solar eclipse in the month of Mārgasīra.

The inscription begins with the symbol for the expression *siddham* and the word *svasti* which are followed by reference to the Gaṅga capital, *Kalinganagara*, whence the charter was issued. Then follows in lines 2-10 the description of the reigning Gaṅga king Anantavarman. The king is endowed with the epithet *paramamāhēśvara* as well as the title *mahārāja*. Lines 10-12 say that the king had granted the village named Siviḍi, included in Kalingamaṇḍala,



to Gochchhādīkshita of Bhāradvāja *gōtra*. The village was exempted from all taxes and the *chāṭas* and the *bhaṭas* were forbidden to enter it. The grant was made on the occasion of a solar eclipse in Mārgaśira *amāvāsyā*. Lines 13-14 refer to the names of some of the officers or important persons such as Vishṇuśiva Āchārya, Bhāṇudēva *Mahattara*, Dēvubhaṭṭa, Mauchandrabaṭṭa and Dēvadēva *rahasi*, who were probably present at the time of the grant. Lines 15-21 describe the boundaries of the gift village and then follow the imprecatory verses. The charter ends with the reference to the writer Māṇikahasta śrī sāmanta.

The identification of Anantavarman, the issuer of the grant under discussion, cannot be precisely determined. But the reference to Gōjādīkshita, who is said to have previously acquired the village of Siviḍi (*Siviḍi-grām-ārjjita Gōjādīkshita*, l. 21) in the Chidivalasa plates of Dēvēndravarman V, son of Bhūpēndravarman, of Gaṅga year 197 (A.D. 895) makes it apparent that Gochchhādīkshita, the donee of our charter, is the same as Gōjādīkshita of the Chidivalasa plates. The other donees of the latter, such as Ādityabhaṭṭa, Yajñabhaṭṭa and Khaṇḍidēvabhaṭṭa were all residents of Siviḍi, descendants (*vamśajēbhyaḥ*) of Gōjādīkshita and also belonged to the Bhāradvāja *gōtra*. Besides, Māṇikahasta, the writer of the document, is also known to us from the Nirakarpur plates of Udayakhēḍi of the time of Dēvēndravarman V. Lines 34-35 of this set of plates can be deciphered as Śrī Māṇikahastarāja-suta=Kārahasta li[khita], meaning Kārahasta, the son of Śrī Māṇikahastarāja, is the writer (of the charter). This Māṇikahastarāja, the father of Kārahasta, is no other than Māṇikahasta Śrīsāmanta of our grant. It is, therefore, legitimate to infer that Anantavarman of the Temburu plates and Dēvēndravarman of the Chidivalasa and Nirakarpur plates are not far removed in point of time, and that they can be separated only by a generation. In this connection attention may be drawn to the occasion of the grant which is stated to have been a solar eclipse in the month of Mārgaśira. From L.D.S. Pillai's *Indian Ephemeris* we come to know that Solar Eclipse on Mārgaśira *amāvāsyā* occurred on the following days of the 9th century: November 29, 802 A.D. Tuesday; November 30, 810 A.D., Saturday; December 9, 820 A.D., Sunday; November 30, 829 A.D., Tuesday; December 22, 846 A.D., Wednesday; December 11, 866 A.D., Wednesday; and December 1, 894 A.D., Sunday. Of all the dates, December 11, 866 A.D., Wednesday, is more acceptable on the ground (i) that a king named Anantavarman III, son of Dēvēndravarman IV, was ruling over Kalinga in Gaṅga year 358 (856 A.D.), the date of the Tekkali plates<sup>3</sup>, (ii) that Gōjādīkshita was an ancestor of the donees of the Chidivalasa plates of Dēvēndravarman of Gaṅga year 397 (895 A.D.), and (iii) that Māṇikahasta was the father of Kārahasta, the writer of the undated Nirakarpur plates of the time of Dēvēndravarman V. Thus, there is every reason to believe that the date of the grant is December 11, 866 A.D., Wednesday. But the difficulty with regard to the identification of Anantavarman, the donor of the present plates, is that there are two rulers bearing the same name who ruled over Kalinga successively. While Anantavarman III, the son of Dēvēndravarman IV, ruled in Gaṅga year 358 (856 A.D.), the date of the Tekkali plates already referred to above, Anantavarman IV, the son of Bhūpēndravarman and elder brother of Dēvēndravarman V, ruled in Gaṅga year 383 (881

A.D.), the date of the Kalahandi plates.<sup>4</sup> However, an identification of Anantavarman of our plates with Anantavarman III of the Tekkali plates seems to be more reasonable.

Of the geographical names, Siviḍi is also known to us from the Chidivalasa and the Nāpitavāṭaka<sup>5</sup> plates of the time of Dēvēndravarma where it has been mentioned as a bordering village of the gift villages like Kandalivāḍa or Kandakavāṭaka and Nāpitavāṭaka respectively. It can be identified with Chidivalasa in Narasannapet taluk of Srikakulam district. Kaliṅgamaṇḍala, which obviously refers to the kingdom of the Eastern Gaṅgas, is also mentioned in the Ramapuram plates of Vajrahastadēva II of year 495 (993 A.D.)<sup>6</sup>, the Chicacole plates of Madhukāmārnavadēva of year 526 (1024 A.D.)<sup>7</sup>, the Maliaputti plates of Anantavarman of year 550 (1048 A.D.)<sup>8</sup> and so on. But the present grant contains the earliest reference to Kaliṅgamaṇḍala.

### Text

1. Siddham svasti [||] [Amarapurānukāriṇah] sarvvartu-sukha-ramaṇīyād=vijaya-[vataḥ]  
Kaliṅga[naga]-rādhivā-
2. so(sa)[kāt] sakala-bhuvana-nirmmalā-(nirmāṇ-ā) dhipatyam bhagavatō Maheśvara-  
pranāmā -
3. dapa(d=vi)gata-kali-kalaṅkō vinaya-naya-sampadā-parisphand-ādhigata-ssa(sa) -
4. kala-Kaliṅ-ādhirājyam(jya)ś=chaturī(r-u) dadhi-taraṅga-mēkhal-ā
5. vani-tala-pravitat-āmala-yaś-ānēka-samara-saṅkshōbha-
6. jani[ta]-jaya-śavdo(bdaḥ) Mahēndra saritā payo payo ga dhauta dānō
7. Gaṅg-āmala-kula-pratishṭha-pratāp-ātīsay-ānāmita-samasta-

### Second Plate, First side

8. sāmanta-[chakra]-chudāmaṇi-prabhā-maṅjarī-pu[n̄ja]-rañjita-charaṇō(ṇaḥ)-
9. mātā-pitri=pād-ānudhyāta-paramamāhēśvarō mahārāja-
10. Śrī Anantavarmma Kaliṅgamaṇḍa(ṇḍa)lē Mārgaśīrshy-āmāvāsyā-
11. yām sūryagrahaṇē Bhāradvāja-gōtra Gōchchhādīkshītāya-
12. Siviḍi-grāma datam sarvva-kara-parihāram chāṭa-bhaṭa-apravēsa
13. Vishṇuśiva-āchārya Bhāṇudēva-mahattara Dēvubhaṭṭa Mau-
14. chanda(ndra)bhaṭṭa Kopaucha-gāmuḍa (?) Dēvadēva-rahasi etai shpa(ś=cha-pa)rikrā-

### Second Plate, Second side.

15. ntaṁ pūrvvēṇa tintalī-vṛiksham uruchhunḍivā-sētu trighāṭe pāshā-

16. ṇa=śchaturaśra-pāshhāṇam girivaṭa ajānandi vyāghrataṭāka tri -  
 17. ghāṭa | dakshinēna nandi-vāpī tintalī-rādhana-vṛiksha[h] trighāṭa iri-  
 18. ṇeka pālāni || paśchimēna karañja-haladra śikhar=ākṛi -  
 19. ti-silā tintalī trighāṭa | uttarēna maudara-vṛiksha tinta-  
 20. lī rajaka-vāpī dēvat-āyatana dharanī parvvatikāy-ōtta-  
 21. rēna mahāparvvatikāyā-mastakēna trighāṭāt-pūrvv-ōttarā -

**Third Plate, First side.**

22. mābhūdā-pari (phala)-śaṅkā vaḥ para-dān=ēti pāṛthiva(vā)[h] | sva dānāt=pha-  
 23. lam-ānantyaṁ para-dān-ānupālanam | sva-dattām-(m)-para-dattām-(m)-vā  
 24. ya[t]nād-raksha Yudhishṭhira | mahī[m] mahimata(tā)[m] śrshṭha dānāch=chhrēyō=  
 25. nupālana[m] | aśvamēdha-sahasrāṇi vvā(vā)japēya-satāni cha [|] gavā -  
 26. nīkō(m kō)ṭi-pradānēna bhūmi-harttā na śudhyati | (||) anyāyēna hṛitā bhū(bhū)  
 mir=anyā-  
 27. yēna tu hāritā | (||) haratō hārayantaś=cha hanaty=āsapta-  
 28. maṁ shu(ku)lam | (||)Māṇikahasta Śrīsāmantēṇa(na) likhitam | 0 (||)

**Notes and References**

1. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters*, 18(2) 1982, pp. 77-81 and Pls.
2. *Journal of Bihar Research Society*, 35, pp. 1-10 and Pls.
3. *Epigraphia India*, Vol. 26, pp. 174-77.
4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, pp. 317-22.
5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, pp. 189-92.
6. *Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*, Vol. 35, pp. 177-82.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, pp. 168-80.
8. Not yet published. But the text of the inscription appears in the book of N, Mukunda Rao, *Kalinga under the Eastern Gangas (C. 900 A.D. to 1200 A.D.)*, 1991, Appendix II, pp. 209-10, Delhi.

## New Pāṇḍya inscriptions from Paṇaiyūr

C. Santhalingam

Paṇaiyūr, a small village is situated 10 kms. away from Karivalamvandanallūr in Sankarankoil Taluk, Tirunelveli Dt., Tamilnadu. On the South of Panaiyur, a small brook flows and it is named as Nikshēpa Nadi by the local people. This river which is dry for most of the year originates at the western Ghats and flows through Paṇaiyūr, Karivalamvandanallūr and then towards East. It is interesting to note that a Roman Coin has been collected earlier at Karivalamvandanallūr.

On the northern bank of this Nikshēpa Nadi, a later Pāṇḍya Śiva temple was found which is in a dilapidated condition. By the best efforts of the local people this temple is under renovation and is being readied for Kumbhābhishēkam in the near future. A separate shrine dedicated to goddess Mīnākshī was also constructed on the left side of the Śiva temple during 16-17th c.A.D. A small enclosure wall comprising these two temples with a *gōpura* in the eastern side now remains partly ruined.

The Śiva Temple consists of a *garbhagrīha*, *ardhamaṇḍapa*, *Mahāmaṇḍapa* and an open *mukhamaṇḍapa*. *Garbhagrīha* and *ardhamaṇḍapa* might have been constructed during 13th century A.D. which is devoid of divine figures in the niches, a characteristic feature of the Pāṇḍya area. *Mahāmaṇḍapa* and *mukhamaṇḍapa* which had been constructed during 16th century were renovated in later days. During that renovation some of the inscribed stones were misplaced and left uncared for. Because of the downfall of the later Pāṇḍyas this temple missed royal patronage and lost its importance. Sculptures like Nandi and Sūrya dating back to 13th c.A.D. remain intact and nine inscriptions found in the walls and loose stones speak of the hoary past of this area. These inscriptions are brought to light in our recent survey which give some valuable information on the history of Later Pāṇḍyas.

Among the nine inscriptions found here, seven belong to the later Pāṇḍya rulers of 13th century A.D. and the rest belong to the Tenkāśi Pāṇḍyas 16th of century A.D. An inscription found in a broken stone gives no other detail except mentioning the 15th regnal year of Māravarmaṇ Sundara Pāṇḍya I who gave away the Chōḷa-nāḍu. Nothing more can be had because the inscribed stone is broken and incomplete. Another fragmentary inscription also gives only some tax names. Two fragmentary inscriptions have been found in the front walls of the *garbhagrīha* of the Mīnākshī shrine which are also datable to the 13th century A.D. on palaeographical grounds. The existence of one Śiva temple Bhūmṁśvaram-udaiyār at Paṇaiyūr is mentioned in one of these inscriptions. An individual by name Eḍuttagai Alāgiyāṇ had established a *sandhipūjā* in the name of Rājākalanāyaṇ. 35 *mā* extent of lands were donated to the Gaṇēśa temple in the Nannīrturai-udaiya-nāyaṇār Śiva temple at Nāgamaṅalam in Teṇ Āri-nāḍu. The present Chokkanātha temple is mentioned as Nannīrturai-udaiya-nāyaṇār temple in the inscriptions and the village Nāgamaṅalam might have been a part of Paṇaiyūr. The geographical division Teṇ Āri-nāḍu comprises the present Sankarankoil taluk region.

An inscription engraved in the 10th regnal year of king Sundara Pāṇḍya is found on the southern wall of the outer *maṇḍapa*. But the identity of this Sundara Pāṇḍya is not known because there were several Sundara Pāṇḍyas mentioned during this period. This inscription records the land donation by the natives of Nāgamaṅgalam to the Nannīrturai-udaiyār temple. The donated land formed part of a tank Śēndanēri *alias* Peykuḷam at Śaḍagōpa-vaḷāgam in Nāgamaṅgalam. It was left uncultivated for a long time but the waste land tax was paid by the native people. When the situation turned worse, and as the people were not able to pay even that tax, they decided to donate the entire land to the temple itself.

On the northern wall of the outer *maṇḍapa* is engraved an inscription which mentions the name of the king as Tribuvana-Chakravarti Kōnēriṇmaikoṇḍāṇ. The regnal year is not given. But the inscription may be dated to the 13th c.A.D. on palaeographical grounds. It states that the residents of Paṇaiyūr *alias* Pavitra Māṇikkapuram donated some lands to the *Dēvakaṇṇmis* and *Śivabrāhmaṇas* and for the daily offerings to the temple. The donated land was owned by a royal official Ponparri-udaiyāṇ of Śeyyanam *alias* Parākrama Pāṇḍyanallūr in Miḷalai-kūrṅam. The residents purchased the land from him and in turn donated it to the temple. A tank Karuṇākara-pēreri, Vaipāru(river), Pumatva-chaturvēdimaṅgalam and Paṇaiyūr channel formed the four boundaries of the donated land. Many land taxes were exempted to this donated land.

The amount of taxes were fixed according to the fertility and productivity of the land and crops. For the (*piśāṇam*) first crop of wet land four *kalams* of paddy and 1/4 *kāśu* were levied as tax. Half of this tax was extracted for the next crop (*kuruvai*). Dry land crops were levied at 1/4 of the first mentioned crop. Lands already donated as *dēvadāna*, *paḷlichchanda*, for *maṭha* and *śālās* were exempted. Rest of the cultivable land and habitation lands alone were donated. As per the order of an officer Ayvanampūvarāya, a new village was created in this land and named as Tirujñānasambandanallūr. It should be mentioned here that a number of newly created villages were named as Tirujñānasambandanallūr in the Pāṇḍya region<sup>1</sup> after the saint Tirujñānasambanda, first among the Tēvāram trio, who lived in the early seventh century and caused the renaissance of Śaivism against Jainism and Buddhism. New villages and maṭhas were created in the name of Sambanda in order to commemorate his achievements against the external religious anarchism.

One more inscription found on the southern wall of the *garbhagrīha* in the Śiva temple mentions the name of the king as Kōnēriṇmaikoṇḍāṇ. It may also belong to the 13th century A.D. though the identity of the king is uncertain. It reveals the donation of 30 *mā* extent of land for the day to day expenses of the temple and to maintain a *sandhi pūjā* in the name of Rājakkalṅāyan. This *sandhi* was established by one Tirunīlakaṇṭa Rājāditta Nāyaṅār *alias* Toṇḍaimān who was a maternal uncle of the king mentioned in this inscription. The land will be under the direct supervision of the Toṇḍaimān; some officials, Okkūruḍaiyān of Miḷalai-kūrṅam and Tērpoliyaninṅrān Pallavarāyan are mentioned as the executors of the donation.

Tirunīlakaṇṭan Rājakkalṅ Nāyan Toṇḍaimān is mentioned in an inscription found at Mēlmaṅgalam village in Periyakulam Taluk, Madurai District. This inscription belongs to 26th regnal year of Jaṭavarman Virapāṇḍya I (1253-83)<sup>2</sup> If we were to take these

two Toṇḍaimāns as one and the same, then the king mentioned as Kōnēriṇmaikoṇḍān in the Paṇaiyūr inscriptions and Mēlmaṅgalam inscription are identical. The epithet Rājākkaḷnāyan is associated with Māṇavarmaṇ Vikrama Pāṇḍya V (1323-1330). Many *Rājākkaḷnāyan-sandhis* were established in his name at the temples like Chidambaram, Vṛiddhāchalam, Tiruvayīndirapuram, Tiruvāmattūr and Tirumānikuḷi.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the identity of the king Kōnēriṇmaikoṇḍān mentioned in this inscription still remains doubtful.

The other two inscriptions belong to Teṅkāsi Pāṇḍyas. On the southern wall of the *garbhagriha*, an inscription is found and it gives the name of the king Parākrama Pāṇḍya and his seventh regnal year and Śaka year as 1471. This king Parākrama Pāṇḍya ruled this area during 1543 to 1551 A.D. He had other names like Kulaśekhara, Vīraveṇbāmālai, Tirunelveli Perumāḷ, etc. He is the son of Abhirāma Parākrama. Inscriptions of this king were found at Sāmbavar Vaḍakarai, Karivalamvandanallūr, Teṅkāsi, Kurṅālam etc.

On request of his son the king Parākrama Pāṇḍya donated some lands to the Śiva temple at Kīlāṅkāṭṭūr in Vaḍavāriṇāḍu. The donated land was at Paṇaiyūr and under the irrigation of Mantikuḷam *alias* Chokkanāthapērēri. The name Mantikuḷam is still in vogue to a certain tank at Paṇaiyūr. Mantikuḷam, Peykuḷam, Chokkanāthapērēri, Śēnthanēri are the different names for one and same tank.

The name of the son of the king is damaged but the natal star is mentioned as Mūlam from which we can assume his name might be Guṇarāma because one Guṇarāma the eldest son of Parākrama, who was born with Mūla star is mentioned in an inscription at Teṅkāsi.<sup>4</sup> He did not want to be a king. His younger brother was Varatuṅgarāma (1586-1595).

Another inscription engraved on the southern wall of the outer *maṇḍapa* belongs to the fifteenth regnal year of Aḷagan Perumāḷ Ativīrarāma Śrīvallabha (1563-1583). He was the builder of Kulaśekharamuḍaiyār temple at Teṅkāsi. He was a good Tamil scholar, who translated Naidatam, Kūrmapurāṇa, Kāsikāṇḍa, etc. from Sanskrit into Tamil.<sup>5</sup> This inscription mentions some land donation to the Chokkanātha temple. The inscription is incomplete and somewhat damaged with a number of symbols and signs not easily identifiable. Names of officials from Kanapērkūrṅam (present Kāḷaiyār Kōil) are also mentioned.

### General Information:

From the nine inscriptions found in this temple some more light has been thrown on the history of this region. The village Paṇaiyūr was within the division of Ari-nāḍu, which comprise the area of modern Sankarankoil Taluk. <sup>6</sup> It was divided into Ten Āri-nāḍu (South) and Vaḍa Āri Nāḍu (North) in later days. Originally Paṇaiyūr was an agrarian village, then it annexed a township by the name of Pavitira-māṅikkapuram. A new agrarian village was also established in the name of Tirujñāna-sambandar and called Tirujñānasambandanallūr.

Nāgamaṅgalam mentioned in the inscriptions was a brahmin settlement and it may also have been a part of Paṇaiyūr Śiva temple in which the presiding deity named as Nannīrturai-uḍaiya-nāyanār (lord of good water ghāṭ) since it is built on the banks of a brook. This Tamil name is later on Sanskritised as Nikshēpa Nadi. One more Śiva temple

viz., Bhūmīśvaram also existed here during 13th c.A.D. but its whereabouts are not known today. So, the present day Paṇaiyūr was a flourishing religious centre, during later Pāṇḍya days with Tirujñānasambanda-nallūr (agrarian village), Pavitra-māṇikkapuram (mercantile town) and Nāgamaṅgalam (brahmin settlement) forming parts.

Perumpaṅṅapuliyur Nambi, the author of *Tiru Ālavāyudaiyār Tiruvilaiyāḍal-purāṇam* (*Madurai Mīnākshi Sundarēśvara temple purāṇa*) was born at Śellinagar. This Śellinagar is identified with this Paṇaiyūr by U.V. Swaminatha Iyer.<sup>7</sup> However, more evidences are necessary.

Our present survey reveals the availability of black and red ware potsherds and a number of ash mounds which attest to the hoary past of the village even from the early centuries of the Christian era. Karivalamvandanallūr is a neighbouring historical place wherefrom a Roman Coin was collected and a number of later Pāṇḍya inscriptions are also found.

## Notes and References

1. *Thiruvekambam Inscriptions*, (unpublished) recently discovered by State dept. of Archaeology, Tamilnadu.
2. *Melmaṅgalam Inscriptions* (unpublished) recently noticed by State Dept. of Archaeology, Tamilnadu.
3. N. Sethuraman, *Pāṇḍiyar Varalāru*, p.131.
4. *AREp.*, 1917, N. Sethuraman, the Later Pandyas, *JESI.*, Congress, Trichy 1993, No.538.
5. N. Sethuraman, *op.cit.* p.10
6. Y. Subbarayalu, *Some reflections of Pāṇḍimaṅḍalam* in *Damilica*, Vol.I, State Dept. of Archaeology, Tamilnadu.
7. *Tiru Ālavāyudaiyār Tiruvilaiyāḍal Purāṇam* Ed.U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, p.18. 1972.

## Pātagaṇḍigūḍem plates of Ehavala Chāntamūla

N.S. Ramachandra Murthy

The subjoined grant under study comes from a place called Pātagaṇḍigūḍem, hamlet of Kallacheruvu village in Kamavarapukota-mandal, West Godavari district.

The grant consists of 5 plates, soldered to a circular ring, with a roughly oval seal, which is worn out completely. The plates measure 22.5 cms, long and 7 cms wide, while the ring is 7cms in diameters. There is a round hole in the top portion for the ring to pass through. There is writing on all the five plates, excepting on the 1st side of the first plate. There are 3 lines on each side of all the plates, with only one line on the 2nd side of the 5th plate, thus making 25 lines in all. The plates are in a fairly good state of preservation, causing no problem for decipherment. On a general look, the plates seems to bear close similarity to other copper plate grants of the early historic period<sup>1</sup> (viz.) the Sālaṅkāyana charters from Ēlūru and Kānukollu, the Koṇḍamuḍi plates of Bṛihatphalāyana Jayavarman, the Mattepāḍu grant of Dāmōdara Varman, and the early Pallava charters of Śivaskandavarman from Hirehaḍagalli and Mayidavōlu.

The characters of the grant belong to the southern variety of Brāhmī, prevalent in the lower Krishna valley during 3rd - 4th c.A.D., particularly at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Jaggayyapēṭa. While a general study of the characters show close resemblance to those occurring in the lithic records of the Ikshvākus at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Jaggayyapēṭa, a closer study reveals variations in respect of few characters. They are *a*, *ā*, *i*, *cha*, *ṇa*, *dha*, *na*, *ya*, and *ha*. These characters, instead of conforming to those occurring in the Ikshvāku records, reveal close affinity to those occurring in the Sālaṅkāyana plates of Vijaya Dēvavarman<sup>2</sup> and Vijaya Nandivarman<sup>3</sup> and the Koṇḍamuḍi plates of Jayavarman<sup>4</sup>. The language of the grant is Prakrit prose, as in other contemporary records, except for imprecatory verses at the end, which are in Sanskrit.

The grant begins with invocation to *Lord Buddha*, described a *Sarvajña* i.e., the omniscient, an expression not met with in the Ikshvāku records so far.<sup>5</sup> It then mentions an order issued by the Ikshvāku king Ehavala Chāntamūla, accompanied by the bodyguards (*sābbhittāṇaiḥ*) the performer of *śvamedha* sacrifice and who showered bounteous gold coins, from his military camp of *Dhaṇakaḍa*. It then states that the king instituted a permanent endowment (*akhchayanīvi*) as *bhikku bhōga* for the enjoyment and rest of the visitors (*āgaṇṭuka*) residents (*vatthavvāṇāri*) and mendicants (*pavvayitāṇām*) of the *mahāvihāra* of *Piṭhuṇḍa* on the occasion of building a quadrangular cloister (*chātussāla*) in the (courtyard) of the western gate (*avaraddāre*) for his own merit as well as for his longevity, strength and welfare (*puṇṇōppan-āyubalavaddhaṇaddham*). The grant was to be strictly followed by the venerable elders and *parivrājakas*. The endowment comprises of two pieces of arable or ploughable land (*halakkhēttasa*) measuring 32 and 64 *niyattana*s (*nivartana*s) respectively. Of them the former i.e., 32 *nivartana*s of land lay on the way to the *Paṭṭagrāma*, inhabited by the kinsfolk (*sakulatha*) of the (*mahāchēlaka*) chief mendicant of the *mahāchaitya* which



stood to the north of the *mahāvihāra* in the city of Pithuṇḍa. The latter i.e., 64 *nivartanas* of land lay between the elephant pond on the north and (*Puppakalasa*) flowerpond on the west of Pithuṇḍa. The order was issued on the first day in the 4th *hēmanta* of the year (abraded) during the reign of *Ehavala Chāntamūla* by the executor (*ājñapti*) *Aggasūri*. In the end the grant entails, whoever, it be, the king (*rājño*) or *rajamatiā* (king's ministers) or *talavara* or *mahātavalara*, grabs the land or abets in grabbing the land, due to desire or anger, or greed or avarice, shall suffer from the sins accrued out of the Five great sins.

Coming to the importance of the grant, at the outset it must be pointed out that it is the earliest copper plate grant of Andhra and the only copper plate grant of the Ikshvākus<sup>6</sup>. The language, text and expressions of the grant reveal that it is less archaic than the later Ikshvāku records and they are akin more to the contemporary or near contemporary records i.e., Ēlūru and Kānukollu plates of Śālaṅkāyana Vijaya Dēvavarman and Vijaya Nandivarman respectively, the Koṇḍamuḍi plates of Brīhatphalāyana Jayavarman, and finally the early Pallava charters of Śivaskandavarman from Hirahaḍagalli and Mayidavōlu. This becomes clear from a comparison of the expressions like *Bhagavatō* (11 : 1), *akkhaya hiramṇakōṭi* (11 : 8) *appaṇē* (11 : 11) *avaraddārē* (11 : 5 - 6) *aṇuṭṭhiya kāritaṃ* (11 : 11) and *akkhayanivi* (11 : 11) which seem to resemble such expressions like “*anēka hirmṇakōṭi ppadāyih*” (11 : 1, p. 21); *ikhākūṇām* (11 : 3, 4, p. 21) *aṇuṭṭhitam*, *puradisābhāgē* (62, p. 22) and *puvadārē* (.....) occurring in the Ikshvāku records. Similarly expressions like *Dhanakadātō* (11 : 2) *aṇavēti* (11 : 4) *ettha* (11 : 5) *amhēhi* (11 : 6) *vatthavvāṇa* (7) *pavvayitā* (11 : 7 - 8) *āṇatti* (11 : 20) *vissāmaṇattham* (11 : 8) *anuṭṭhiya* (.....) *āyubalavadhaṇattham* (11 : 12) *sampadattam* (11 : 20) *kātūṇam* (11 : 13) *niyattaṇa* (11 : 5) *amhēhi* (11 : 6) *vatthavvāṇa* (7) *pavvayitā* (11 : 7 - 8) *āṇatti* (11 : 20) *yissāmaṇattiham* (11 : 8) *anuṭṭhiya* (.....) *āyubalavadhaṇattham* (11 : 12) *sampadattam* (11 : 20) *kātūṇam* (11 : 13) *niyattaṇa* (11 : 15) and *halakkhēṭṭa* (11 : 15) correspond to *kuduratō* (11 : 2) (of the Koṇḍamuḍi plates) and *Kāñchīpurato* (11 : 1) (Mayidavōlu plates) *dhammāyubalavatthaṇattham* (11 : 7-8 of Kānukollu plates) *sampadatta* (11 : 15 of Kānukollu, and Mayidavōlu plates), *kātūṇa* (11 : 28 Kānukollu plates : (11 : 2) and Koṇḍamuḍi plates (11 : 10 of Ēlūru plates of Dēvavarman). The above study reveals that the present grant falls in between the late lithic records of the Ikshvāku king Ehavala Chāntamūla and the earliest Prakrit charters of the Śālaṅkāyanas (*viz*) the Ēlūru plates of Vijaya Deva Varman and the Kānukollu plates of Vijaya Nandivarman respectively, who began ruling over Vēngi, during the 1st quarter of 4th century A.D. This is supported from the fact that the grant is dated during the regnal period of the king (year lost) Ehavala Chāntamūla, whose reign began from 270 A.D.<sup>7</sup> Since, he is said to have ruled for 24 (twentyfour) years.<sup>8</sup>, his last date would be 270 + 24 i.e., 284 A.D. In the absence of the regnal year, the record can be assigned to a date after 294 A.D. i.e., to the closing years of the 3rd century A.D, since, the last known date of Ehavala's son and successor Rudrapurishadatta is 306 A.D.<sup>9</sup>.

The next important problem that draws our attention is the identification of *Pithuṇḍa* which is a matter of controversy among scholars. From the present record, we understand that Pithuṇḍa was a flourishing town and contained a *mahāchaitya* and a *mahāvihāra*. It also furnishes the names of two places situated on the north and west (*viz*) “*hatthivāri*”

or 'Vahatthivāri' and *puppakalasa* respectively. Pithuṇḍa appears for the first time in the Hāthigumpha inscription of Khāravēla,<sup>10</sup> according to which Khāravēla in his 2nd regnal year, disregarding (*achitayita*) Sātakarṇi despatched an army to the Western regions, which reached Kaṇhabeṇṇa and threw the city of the *Mūshikas* into consternation. Again in the 3rd year, the same record states "the market town of Pithuṇḍa founded by the Ava king was ploughed down with asses".<sup>11</sup> According to Ptolemy it was *Pithundra*, a city which no longer exists, but which was an important port town even in 1st century A.D.<sup>12</sup> According to the classical writers, "Pithundra was the capital of Maisolia region, which extended between the rivers Kṛishṇa and Gōdāvāri."<sup>13</sup> B.C. Law opines that ithuṇḍa is the same as Pithuṇḍaga or Pṛithuṇḍaka alias Pṛithurāshṭra, which is but the Greek form of Pithunda.<sup>14</sup> Prof. Sylvain Levi refers to the story of Samudrapala in Section XXI of the Jaina "*Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra* in which there is mention of *Pithuṇḍa* as a seacoast town."<sup>15</sup> He further states that Ptolemy locates Pithundra in the interior of Maisolia between the mouths of the rivers Maisolos and Manadas i.e., between the delta of the Gōdāvāri and Mahānadi, nearly at equal distance from both. It would therefore be convenient to search for its location in the interior of Chicacole, and Kaliṅgapaṭṇam, towards the course of the river Nāgavati.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, R. Subrahmanyam, while editing the Guntupalle Brāhmī Inscriptions of Siri Sada, basing on the occurrence of the epithets "*mahāmēghavāhana*" and *Kaliṅga-mahishakādhipati*" identified Pithunda with Guntupalle, which was ploughed down with asses by Khāravēla, during his campaign towards west.<sup>17</sup> Another writer B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao, identifies *Pythuṇḍa* with modern Bhaṭṭiprolu in Guntur District, famous for the Buddhist stūpa that yielded the relic caskets containing the mortal relics of the Lord.<sup>18</sup> According to him Bhaṭṭiprōlu was a flourishing city with a *nigama sabha* (trade guild) and a *rāja* (king). Further, it was the scene of bitter conflict between Jainism and Buddhism. It stood on the banks of the river Kṛishṇa, not far from the sea, and thus conforms to Ptolemy's description of Pithuṇḍa being a port-city. Its total disappearance was probably due to the terrible havoc wrought by Khāravēla.<sup>19</sup> From the above study we understand that two places viz., Guṇṭupalle and Bhaṭṭiprōlu, claim identification with Pithunda. Before examining their claims, we must bear in mind that the identification of Pithuṇḍa, till now centred round the Khāravēla - Sātakarṇi synchronism. But now, the present plates add another dimension, i.e., Ikshvāku hegemony over it. To take up first the Khāravēla Sātakarṇi synchronism, till recently, scholars opined that the Nānēghāṭ inscription of Nāganika and the Hāthigumpha inscription were contemporary <sup>20</sup> i.e., 2nd century B.C. But in recent years some scholars assigned both the records to the latter half of 1st century B.C.<sup>21</sup> During this period, Khāravēla, unable to bear Sātakarṇi's conquest of Magadha, proceeded towards west, to stall Sātakarṇi's campaign. On the way, he seized the *Mahishaka* region i.e., Gōdāvāri - Kṛishṇa - Guntur districts, comprising Dhānyakaṭaka - Velpur area on the south bank of the river Kṛishṇa, where he appointed Aira chiefs to rule over.<sup>22</sup> Among them were the Sada chiefs, whose numerous coins and inscriptions were found at Velpuru - Dhānyakaṭaka and Guṇṭupalle. Thus, Khāravēla's occupation of *Mahishaka* territory in coastal Andhra is an established fact. After this, Khāravēla advanced towards Teliṅgāna and reached Mūshikanagara situated on the bank of the river Mūsi, where he was repelled by the Sātavāhana forces.<sup>23</sup> The above study leads us to believe that Pithuṇḍa

must be looked for in Mahishaka-maṇḍala i.e., Godavari - Krishna - Guntur districts, and more precisely near *Kaṇha-beṇṇa* i.e., Kṛishṇaveṇṇā. But the identification of Pithuṇḍa with either Guṇṭupalle or Bhaṭṭiprōlu seems to be untenable, for, the former i.e., Guntupalle does not stand to Ptolemy's description of being a port city. Further, no habitation site of urban nature with Buddhist vestiges which continued till the middle of 4th century A.D. i.e., Ikshvāku period is known in its vicinity. As regards Bhaṭṭiprōlu, it is interesting to point out, that the name Bhaṭṭiprōlu or any name bearing etymological similarity does not figure in any contemporary or near contemporary records. Further, there is no village bearing a similar name as Pithuṇḍa in its neighbourhood.

On the other hand, Pithuṇḍa must be looked for in the territory lying in close proximity to Dhañakaḍa, Dhañakaṭa or modern Dharaṇikōṭa, situated on the south bank of river Kṛishṇā, which was captured by Khāravēla and from where Ehavala Chāntamūla issued the present grant. Here it is necessary to bear in mind that Ehavala Chāntamūla, could not have built a *chātussāla* and made donation for a *mahāvihāra*, situated far away from his (*skandhāvāra*) camp. Further, the record is very clear in mentioning that Ehavala built only a *chātussāla* in the western gate of the *mahāvihāra* of Pithuṇḍa, which implies that Pithuṇḍa was already a flourishing Buddhist Centre. This draws our attention to a recently discovered Buddhist site viz., Vaḍḍamānu, ancient Vardhamāna, situated within a short distance of about 10 kms. south-east of Dharaṇikōṭa - Amarāvati. Excavations conducted here laid bare a number of Buddhist *chaityas*, and a wide array of antiquities comprising innumerable coins, label inscriptions and inscribed pot-sherds. According to the excavations, the site at Vaḍḍamānu, flourished from about 3rd - 2nd century B.C. to 5th - 6th century A.D. i.e., Mauryan to Vishnukunḍi times.<sup>24</sup> Stratigraphically, the site revealed four periods of occupation. Of them, in the upper levels of period I were found inscribed potsherds datable to 300-200 B.C. To the same period also belong the rock cut Brāhmī inscription of Sōmaka and the ..... To the next period, i.e., Period II belong the coins with lion motifs and legends, bearing names Sivamaka Sadā, Asaka Sadā and Siri Sada, assignable between 100 B.C. and 150 A.D. Among them were Siri Sadā and the first Sadā king, who established hegemony over *Mahishaka* region, which includes Vaḍḍamānu.<sup>25</sup> The next period i.e., Period III is mainly characterised by the appearance of a large number of Ikshvāku coins - belonging to the first three members, along with Sātavāhana coins. Among them, the coins of *Ehavala Chāntamūla* bear elephant to the right with legend reading *Eha* on the obverse while on the reverse is Ujjain. To the last period i.e., Period IV belong the coins of the Vishnukunḍis. This gains support from set I of the recently discovered copper plate grant of Prīthvī Śrī Mūlarāja (6th century A.D.) which mentions a *mahāvihāra* belonging to the *Āryabhikshu Saṅgha* established earlier by Mahāmēghavāhana, to which monks thronged from all the quarters.<sup>26</sup>

This clearly proves that the place where Khāravēla reached near *Kaṇhabeṇṇa* was undoubtedly Dhānyakaṭaka. Further, Vaḍḍamānu was originally a Jaina centre as revealed from a potsherd label reading *Samprati mahāvihāra*<sup>27</sup>. Further, Set I of the Koṇḍaviḍu plates, mention a territory called *Tālupāka-vishaya*<sup>28</sup> corresponding to modern Amarāvati Tāḍikoṇḍa region in Guntur district, in which lay Tāṇḍkoṇḍa a reputed Buddhist centre belonging to

Śākya Bhikshu Saṅgha to which monks came and went from all the four directions.<sup>29</sup>

It is interesting to find in it the term '*Hastivāri*'<sup>30</sup> which seems to correspond to the *Hatthivāri* of the present grant probably meaning Elephant's pond. On the other hand, if it is read as *Vahatthi-vāri*, meaning perennial flow of water, it seems to correspond to the river Kṛishṇa, to the north of Vaḍḍamānu. Thus it appears reasonable to identify Pithuṇḍa of the present record with either Vaḍḍamānu or Tāṇḍikoṇḍa of the Koṇḍaviḍu plates or a place in their neighbourhood. In support of this can be cited the village Kalvacheruvula occurring in the Koṇḍaviḍu grant,<sup>31</sup> which probably corresponds to the *puppa kalasa* (Flower pond) of the present grant.

However, the identical nature of the present grant and the early Sālaṅkayana charters, as pointed out already, in respect of language, expressions and palaeography betray Ikshvāku influence over the latter and thus preclude us from venturing to locate Pithuṇḍa in the vicinity of Dharaṅikōṭa. On the other hand, they present a case for Vēṅgi region, i.e., in the vicinity of Pedavēgi, the capital city of the Sālaṅkāyanas, which also yielded Buddhist remains, nor far from Kolleru, a lake connected to the sea, and known as Kunāla in ancient times. This leads us to surmise that the Sālaṅkāyanas were probably in the service of the Ikshvākus. But the absence of archaeological or epigraphical data in the territory of Vēṅgi belonging to the Ikshvākus does not support this. Further, the region around Kallacheruvu, the findspot of the present grant, also does not contain any habitation site of ancient times. Lastly, attention may be drawn to the name of a village called Uṇḍi which seems to be the suffix of Pithuṇḍa, on etymological grounds. Its location on a feeder channel for Kollēru, seems to conform to Ptolemy's description. However, the absence of archaeological data goes against it. In this context we may examine the name of another place i.e., *Piṭhāpuram* in East Godavari district. In the Allahabad pillar inscription it was called as *Pishṭhāpura*, which seems to be the Sanskrit version of Prakrit *Piṭtha* or *Pitta*. The suffix Pura conforms to its being a town since ancient times.

Its situation in close proximity to Kākināḍa on Bay of Bengal conforms to Ptolemy's description of its being a port town. Further in close proximity lay a Buddhist site at a place named Timmavaram, where James Burgess discovered uninscribed relic caskets resembling those of Bhaṭṭiprōlu in all respects. Thus on etymological grounds, Piṭhāpuram also claims identification with Pithuṇḍa, though not with certainty.

Thus, Pithuṇḍa seems to defy identification.

### Text

#### First Plate, Second Side

1. Siddham Namō Bhagavatōssa(sa)rvajñāyā Vijayakkhaṇi -
2. dhāvārā Dhankaḍātē mahārāja asamēdha -
3. yājī akkhaya hiraṇṇakōṭi ppadāyīh Ikkhākūṇam -

**Second Plate, First Side**

4. ramṇō Siri Ehavala Chāttamulavammā anavēti -
5. ettha Pithuṇḍe sābhittāṇē hi mahāvihārasa ava -
6. ra ddārē chātusāle amhēhi kāritam etassa ya khaṇḍa -

**Second Plate, Second Side**

7. pulla saṇṭhappasa chātusāle āgaṇṭuka vatthavvāṇām pavva -
8. yitāṇām vissāmaṇattham ramṇō Ehalavatthataṇo vattha -
9. vēhi pavvayitē hi avaraddāra sēliyēhi -

**Third Plate, First Side**

10. ārya yakkhapamuhēhi anuṭṭhiya sāsana(m)
11. kāritam akkhayanīvi vikātūṇam raṇṇō appaṇō
12. puṇṇōppaṇāyu balavatthṇattham āyaṇḍatāraka (m)

**Third Plate, Second Side**

13. kātūṇe Pithuṇḍā mahāvihārasa nagarassa uttara di -
14. sāye mahāsētiya mahachē(e)lakasa etthassakula -
15. ttha Paṭṭaggāma patthē halakkhēttasa niyattaṇa batti sa-

**Fourth Plate, First Plate**

16. 30 2 nidē janipōli Pithuṇḍassa uttara disāye va -
17. hatthivārī pachhima disāyē puppakalasē ha -
18. lakkhēttasa niyattaṇa chātusaṭṭhi 60 4 nidē janippōli -

**Fourth Plate, Second Side**

19. avaraddarī chātusālassa hala bhikku bhōga kātṭuṇa -
20. samya p dattam āṇatti mahātalavara Aggasūrō samvachharam -
21. hēmam 4 divasam 1 jē cha ettakā rājāṇō raja -

**Fifth Plate, First Side**

22. mattāvā talavara mahātalavarā vā jō etassahala bhikku
23. bhōgassa rāgēna kōdhaeṇa vā lōbhēṇa mōhēṇa vā -
24. harati harātiti vā hara(m)ttam vā anuvattatī sō

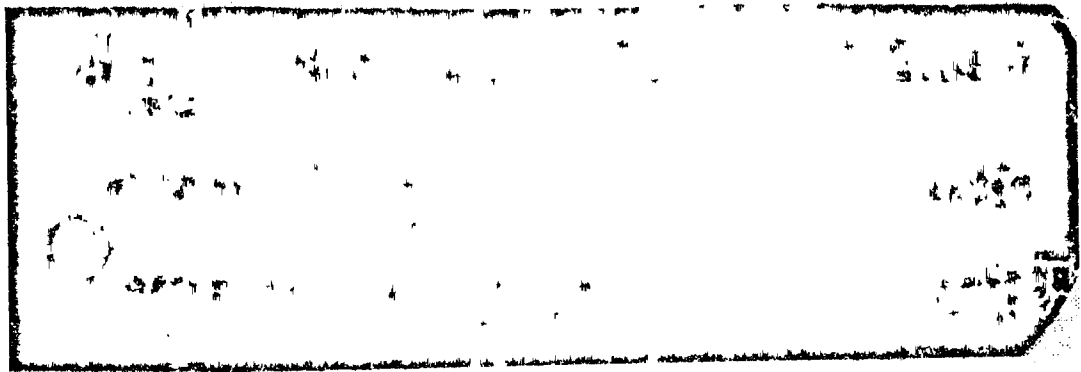
### Fifth Plate, Second Side

25. pañcha mahāpātakēṇa sa pu ..... tthatiti.

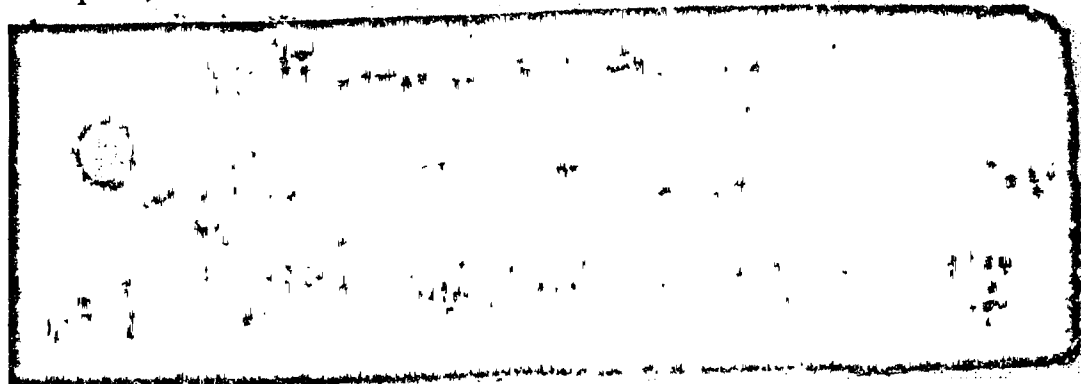
### Notes and References

1. A comparison of the present charter with other contemporary or near contemporary grants points out that they are all similar in shape and size, ranging between 8 and  $5\frac{1}{4}$ " in length and  $3\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " breadth.
2. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. IX, pp. 56-69.
3. *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 1-7.
4. *Ibid*, Vol. VI, pp. 315-19.
5. In almost all the Ikshvāku records Lord Buddha is described as *devarajasa* (c3 of *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX) *Sama Sanhudhasa* (C4 of *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX) *Buddhasa* (Vol. XX) and of *aggapogalasa* (*E.I.*, XX).
6. Hitherto, the earliest known copper plate charters in Andhra were the Sālañkāyana charters, viz., the Koṇḍamuḍi plates of Bṛihatphalāyana Jayavarman, the Mattepāḍu grant of Dāmōdaravarman and finally the early Pallava charters from Hireāhadagalli and Mayidavōlu all belonging to early 4th century A.D.
7. R.Subrahmanyam, *A Catalogue of Ikshvāku Coins in A.P. Govt. Museum*, pp. 6.
8. *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XXXV, pp. 12-13.
9. D.C. Sircar, while editing the inscription of *Ehavala Chāntamūla*, basing on the occurrence of the cyclic year 'Vija' assigned his reign to 333 A.D. i.e., 60 years after Vīrapurishadatta's last known date 273 A.D. But the fact that the Ikshvākus did not rule for more than a century, it would be hard to agree to the above date, which eventually extends the Ikshvāku rule till the middle of 4th century A.D. i.e., 350 which according to him, was the last known date of Rudrapurishadatta.
10. *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX, pp. 71-81, 7; 11, and pp. 86-87 ll : 4.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 88
12. Macrindle, *Ancient India as described by Ptolemy*, p. 62, also *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX, pp. 78, *J.B.O.R.S.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 151.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
14. B.C. Law *Geography of Early Buddhism*, 1932, Ch. IV. pp. 65.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. R.Subrahmanyam, *Guntupalli Brāhmī Inscription of Khāravēla*.
18. *Religion in Andhra, op.cit.*, pp. 177.

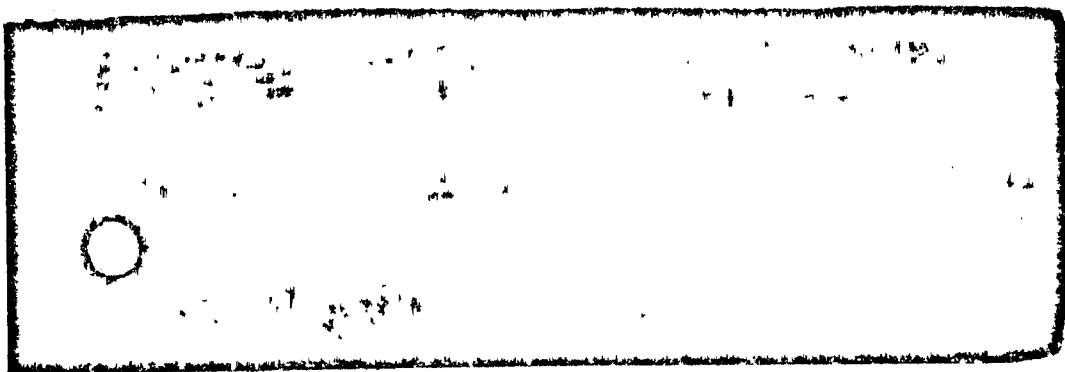
19. *Ibid.*, also Hāthigumpha record, *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX, p. 88.
20. Originally Sri Jayaswal and other scholars assigned the record to 2nd century B.C. *Ep.Ind.*, Vol. XX.
21. In recent years, scholars like Sircar, D.M. Barua, A.M. Sastri, I.K. Sharma and others believe that it belonged to the 1st century B.C. See *Select Inscriptions.*, pp.215; *IHQ.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 469 and *Coinage of the Satavahanas from Excavations*, pp. 103-09.
22. P.V.P. Sastry, *Sathavahana Epoch - New light*, pp. 22.
23. The river Mūsi is a tributary of the river Kṛishṇa joining it near Vaḍapalli in Nalgonda district. Therefore Mūsikanagara mentioned in the Hāthugumpha inscription must be identified with Vaḍapalli, P.V.P.Sastry, *op.cit.* pp. 22.
24. T.V.G. Sastry, *Vaḍḍamānu Excavations*, pp. 22.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
26. V.V.Krishna Sastry, *Three grants of Pṛithviśrī Mūlarāja from Koṇḍaviḍu*, p. 3.
27. *Vaḍḍamānu, op.cit.*
28. Three grants, *op.cit.*, pp. 3.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, ll : 20
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, ll : 9.



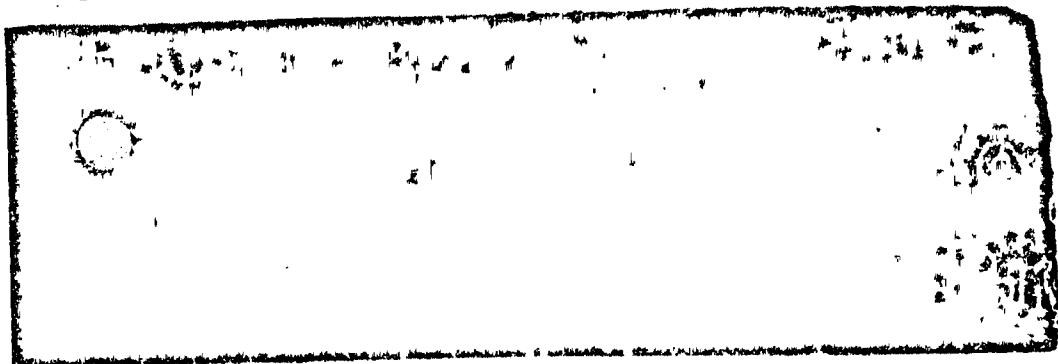
First plate, Second side



Second plate, First side



Second plate, Second side



Third plate, First side

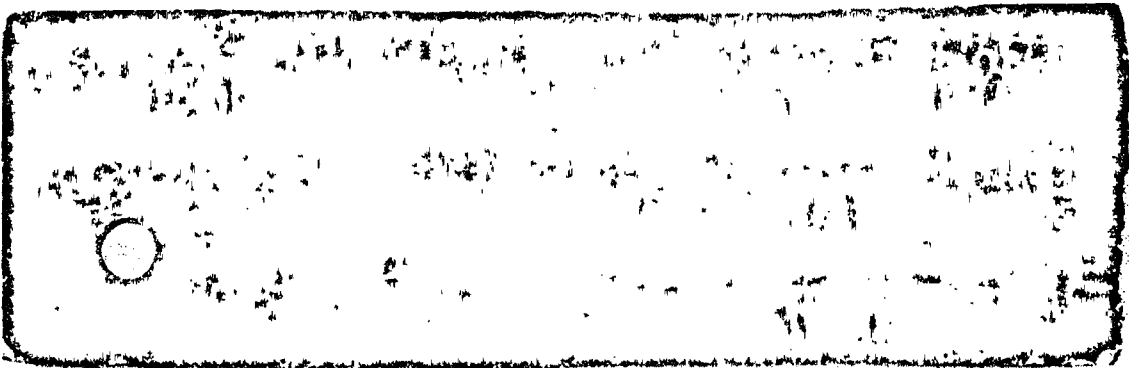




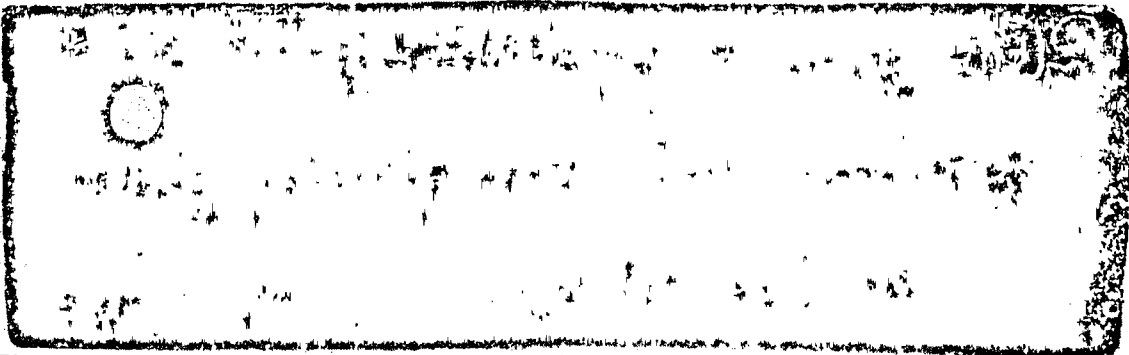
Third plate, Second side



Fourth plate, First side



Fourth plate, Second side




Fifth plate, First side

## Polity of the Harappan country based on seals readings with Aksha

Ramesh Jain

Aksha is the name being given here to the 'staff' of the Harappans (Please see figure-1 for its illustration). It is found depicted on almost all seals and sealings with Unicorn motif. The figure of this unique object, which Mahadevan has named as Field Symbol No. 85 and has described as 'the special cult object (the so called 'manager' or 'incense-burner'), portrayed in front of the mythical animal. Its shape looks like a one-legged instrument, fixed on the ground and which generally appears to be reaching to the shoulder height of the Unicorn.

There are also seals and sealings with Aksha alone, when it is depicted without the company of Unicorn. Such seals and sealings, as per Mahadevan's record, come only from Harappa. Primarily this name 'Aksha' is obtained from the decipherment of the sealing numbering 4321<sup>1</sup>. In this sealing, the Harappan sign  numbering 347<sup>2</sup> gives this phonetic value 'Aksha' standing as an independent word. M. Williams, among other meanings, gives the following meanings of the word Aksha - an axle, axis, a wheel, car and the beam of a balance, etc. It led to the further enquiry into this term and its history. And so far the best meaning and its explanation seems to come from Late V.S. Agarwal's book on Indian Art<sup>3</sup>. There, writing on 'the Vedic symbols in Art', he discusses the symbolism of chakra (wheel), Yūpa or Yajñīya Stambha (Yajña Pillar) and Jyōtirīṅga or Prakāśa-stambha (Pillar of Light), etc. There, he equates Yajña with universe, and its holding pillar is designated as Yūpa and which in turn is the sign of Dharma, the moral order. Likewise Brahma itself is equated with sun<sup>4</sup> and sun, it is told, is the visible form of Jyōtirīṅga. And millions of such suns form the chain of Aksha (Aksha-paramparā). The same is taken to be the fire-pillar (Śiva's Agni-skandha).

In another place he discusses 'chakra', the wheel. It is taken to be the symbol of Sun or the time (the time-wheel). There he notices that the Aśokan pillar at Sārnāth was originally a Chakra-stambha (a wheel pillar) which had a huge wheel at its top. As per Buddhists, it was called Dharma-chakra only. So it appears, the Dharma-stambha with Chakra or Chakra-dhvaja (the wheel flag) is Yūpa in another form. As said in Stambha-sūkta (*Atharva-vēda* 10/7) all worlds and all gods are in stambha's shadow. Do not such expressions make one to expect that this Harappan illustration may be a symbol of world-order or Dharma in the form of a pillar or a parasol?

Earlier in a research paper entitled 'The Harappan country, A case study of the Application of the Time-scale in the Town and Country Planning'<sup>6</sup> we discussed, at length, the statement of Late Anand Coomaraswamy, that in any traditional society every human operation was a metaphysical rite. In continuation, there was also recognised the truth of his hypothesis that there existed a correlation between the ancient's planning and constructions and the cosmic or supramundane prototypes.<sup>7</sup> One such supramundane prototype, in the case of the Harappans, appears to be the figuration of Vāstu-purusha-maṇḍala (figure No. 2). In

continuation of my above mentioned research paper, it can be stated here that to make the Vāstu-purusha-maṇḍala applicable to the Harappan nation, one needs to tilt it on 45° to the right, bringing the head of the 'Purusha' on the east-west cardinal line (figure No. 3).

As far as the process of decipherment and the question of the phonetic values of the Harappan signs are concerned, the main characteristics, as mentioned in my research paper entitled 'Harappans wrote in vedic language'.<sup>8</sup> Now, the main characteristics may again be enumerated as:-

- i) The language of the Harappan is Vedic.
- ii) The direction of reading is from Left to Right.
- iii) There are no half vowels in the Harappan signs except  $\begin{matrix} | & | \\ | & | \end{matrix} = i/\bar{i}$
- iv) In the absence of comas, full stops and the demarcations of word-limits/sentence limits, the reading of an inscription always remain fluid.
- v) There are multi-level script structures and determinatives to establish 'reading and their meanings'.
- vi) In the body of literature, there comes nothing to knowledge which is temporary in nature. Almost every information one gets is of permanent nature.
- vii) The subject matter is Vedic and Pauranic in nature and it covers the whole range of the then Indian social structure. The main thrust of the writings is on astronomical consideration, including the changing hours of the day, the months of the year, etc. It can be further added here, regarding the subject matter of the inscriptions, that it is important to note - "since almost every statement falls under the category of 'indirect-expression', should not these be taken as examples of 'Parōksha-priyatā' of the Vedic Hindus"? The message of the inscriptions has a strong ascetic bias.
- viii) There appears to be an underlying linear structural element with phonetic overtones, in the case of the Harappan signs. This structural element having no clear cut demarcation, in the shape of the Harappan sign, leads one to different words.
- ix) All such words which appears to be coming from a single Harappan sign, they, normally converse on narrow mythological beings, such as Śiva, Rīṣabha etc.
- x) The question arises, 'Does the phenomenon, as stated in 'viii' and 'ix' developed after the episode which is associated with Indra, the grammarian or it already existed in the Harappan tradition? Indra is traditionally given credit for dividing words (written?) in ancient Sanskrit literature, for the sake of creating clarity and better comprehension in communication through language/script.

Here, there is also the question of the steps by which it is reached to the stage of the Brāhmī alphabets. Did they first break the 'word' and then they dispersed from the original Harappan site or the vice versa? By dividing the word into two they got the resultant pure consonant (the half consonant) and to which was later added a stroke to complete an independent consonantal letter, having a basic vowel sound as they have come to be recognised as Brāhmī alphabets. The illustration of this additional vowel stroke to the halves are most clearly observable, in the case of Brāhmī numerals, which are identical with the Phoenician alphabets, in reverse order, from '+' to 'o' (from 4 to 10) with the presence of the additional strokes.

To this, at present, it can be further added, here that the most outstanding characteristic of the Harappan inscriptions is its extreme 'Sūtra' - like approach. On the line of Max Mueller<sup>9</sup>, one may say - "an engraver rejoiceth in the economising of a 'dot' as much as in the birth of a son". Likewise, in the process of deciphering, another important thing which comes to mind is that the engraver of the inscriptions, in general, seems to be defining, in terms of a few signs and some supporting illustrative/determinative diagrams, a well codified picture which might have earlier worked for the sake of communication, in place of the writing. Hundreds of such pictures are not only found engraved on the pillars, *tōraṇas* (gateways) and walls of the ancient Indian Stūpas and temples but they are still being painted or engraved in modern Indian places of worship.


As far as the word formation from the Harappan signs is concerned, it can be added here that the vowel signs (the *mātrā*-marks) which are not added to the Harappan signs are to be added by the reader as part of the grammatical knowledge required for reading the inscriptions. Because the signs have syllabic sounds and inherent in them are the consonants and vowels. And these inherent vowels appear to include 'r', 'l', 'h' and almost all nasal sounds. As if this was not enough to make the readings fluid, the verbs were generally given in their most basic form to be rendered grammatically as per the positional requirements by the reader.

For the sake of clarity, in addition to the following decipherment of 9 inscriptions with Aksha engraved in their association, a chart (Figure-4) is being given here, showing the phonetic values of the Harappan signs which are involved in these inscriptions, along with the word formations, if any, on the basis of individual Harappan signs.

The inscription No. 1 gives two probable Sanskrit words, i.e., (i) Dvāra-pada (seat at the door) or (ii) Dvāpara (that die or the side of the die with two spots, the Die personified, the ages with number two or Name of the 3rd of the 4 Yugas or aeons of the world.<sup>10</sup> The third Sanskrit word come from the same basic phonetic value, say - Dva Pura (the two houses/capitals). The decipherment of this pair of the Harappan signs can be of extremely vital importance, as it occurs, as per Mahadevan,<sup>10</sup> 291 times. The association of the title

- 'Two Houses' with Aksha opens up new possibility about the polity of the Harappans. Because many scholars have earlier been talking of two probable capitals of this great civilization, i.e., Harappa and Mohen-jo-daro. Likewise the two chambered citadel of the Harappans is another possibility associated with Dvāpara or Dva-pura.

In case of the second inscription, we have the Sanskrit words, such as - 'Rājaksha' and 'Rajaksha' from one probable sequential approach in its decipherment. But if the sequence is turned, we may get the words, such as Jāraksha or Jaraksha meaning, respectively, an Aksha of a Jāra (a paramour) or the Aksha of old age (a Vānaprastha's stick?). It is worth noting here that a king is an Indra on the earth and Jāra is a characteristic of Indra.

In the 3rd inscription, we come across the Sanskrit word Bhāra which is equated by M. Williams with Bhāra-yashti and he further suggests it to be a name of Vishṇu. Though usually from the Harappan sign  the phonetic value 'Vṛita' is taken, it is equally possible to get from it the word 'Bharata'. In that case the full alternate expression would be - 'The Bhāra-yashti of the door of Bharata, which is wish-granting'.

The 4th inscription is an example of the Harappan poetic expression. There appears to be emerging the two word images belonging to Śiva cult of the historic period. It further underlines the possibility of the prevalence of a socio-religious cult having a strong ascetic bias in the Harappan period. In the case of the 5th inscription again the reader is being advised to visit or attend the Gopa's Aksha. But the possibility of getting the word 'Ayati' (non-ascetic) from the two signs on the side of the figure of Aksha, suggests the presence of two socio-political orders. One order purely connected with the royal authority and the other, probably of a higher magnitude having added strength of the ascetic sanction. Inscriptions such as the 6th and the 7th simply add to the side of ascetic bias of the Harappa social order. The inscription No.7 seems to be informing the presence of 6 fold duties and controls of state over its subjects.

Eighth inscription of the present selection seems to be of paramount importance as it clearly tells of the presence of the concept of the six gifts or duties and controls of the state over its subjects. Ādipurāṇa enumerates six such gifts:-

*asirmasṭhi kṛishirvidyā vāṇijyaṁ śilpamēva cha|  
kamāṁnimāni Sōdhāsyuh prajājīvanahētavaḥ||*



*Ādipurāṇa, 16/179*

Though the ninth inscription is primarily included in the present selection, only to give an idea of the monumental size of Aksha in relation to the human figure, it further adds to the ascetic bias of the Harappan socio-moral order. The first reading which stands better chances of proving itself to be correct, tells us that 'when a house (the human body) is acquired, it, by covering, conceals (the soul).

Though these decipherments are still in their infancy and fluid, as said above, due the nature of the writing system itself, they seem to be coming in support of the vocabulary used by R.S. Bisht, the main excavator of Dholavira, when he identifies the three main divisions of the township and names their residents as - Paramēshṭhin, Madhyamēshṭhin and Avamēshṭhin<sup>12</sup>. Could not these Paramēshṭhins of the citadel be (i) Arhantas, (ii) Siddhas, (iii) Āchāryas, (iv) Upādhyāyas and (v) Sādhus on the authority of the most revered Jain Mantra called pañcha Namōkāra? This priestly elite as occupants of the citadel - complex seems to be finding approval of B.B. Lal when he states - "the occupants of the Citadel - complex, who in all likelihood included priestly elites, also controlled a certain amount of surplus of the food produced by the community."<sup>(13)</sup>

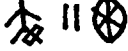
Whether these Akshas were simply a building type used for the purpose of community gathering under an umbrella or were purely symbolic erections to remind the citizens of their *Dharma* (duties) and to bless the faithfuls, one thing is certain that they were given shape on the basis of a supramundane prototype. An Arni, a churner, a potter's wheel and the temple-bell all such basic instruments were the outcome of the same prototype. Each one of them was so useful in daily life as it was holy to a believer.

## The Decipherment of Nine Inscriptions with Aksha

Sl.No.	Inscription No. as per Mahadevan 1997 and the Harappan signs with phonetic value in Dēvanāgarī	Phonetic Values in Indo-Romanic and their word-meanings as per Monier-Williams Dictionary	Remarks
1	2	3	4
1.	4441 310001  द्वार पद / द्वापर 28590 द्व पुर	i) <i>Dvāra Pada</i> Door region The place of the Aksha, the staff. or ii) <i>Dvāpara</i> Aksha, the staff is symbolic of Dvāpara. or iii) <i>Dva Pura</i> The two puras Aksha, the staff is symbolic of Dva-pura (the citadel of a Harappan city).	Here, on the reverse side of the inscription, there is the figure of Aksha. Probably the inscription simply informs the reader that the Aksha belongs to Dvāpara or it belongs to the Door - region '/to the 'Seat at the Door'.
2.	4652 21001  राजाक्ष जरक्ष or रजक्ष जारक्ष 28590	i) <i>Rājaksha/Jaraksha</i> The Aksha, the staff of the ruler/Vānaprastha. or ii) <i>Rājaksha/Jāraksha</i> Aksha of light/The sun beam. (Sun is <i>Jāra</i> of <i>Ushas</i> )	Here, on the reverse side of the inscription, the presence of the figure of the Aksha, probably stands as an illustration of the inscription. The inscription here may also mean 'Up-hold or visit the Aksha'. Or, in the case of second reading, it may simply be a praise of the Aksha.

3.

4665 21001



भार द्वार वृत्त

28501


आवृ

*Bhāra Dvāra Vṛita**Bhāra (Yashṭi)*

Door Circle The Bhāra's staff (Vishṇu's Dvaja?) is at the door-circle *Āvri*

To grant wishes

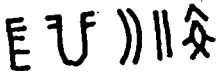
Aksha, the staff of the door circle of Bhāra grants wishes.

Here, the presence of the figure of Aksha on the reverse of the inscription illustrates the Bhāra (Yashṭi) which is the subject matter of the inscription and which is supposed to 'Wish Granting'. M. Williams equates 'Bhāra' with 'Bhāra-Yashṭi' and further tells - "it is - 'name of Vishṇu' and 'name of a prince". It is of extraordinary interest to note that the sign  by its very shape guides the reader to come to a word which should mean 'load or burden' and phonetically it stands for two basic sounds. (bha) and (ra); hence the Vedic word, 'Bhāra' which stands for 'load' as well as for the meaning 'sustenance'.

Here, Aksha is introduced as 'a wish-granting institution' and the reader is probably advised to visit the same.

4

440 310001



प यः पावृषग / विषन्

28590

*Pa Yaḥ Pā Vṛishaga/ Vishaṅga*

To control | To Drink or to keep Watch| Vṛiṣaga (Śiva?)/Vṛishaga (Chandan tree?)

(i) Vṛishaga (Śiva) by drinking (the Poison?) who controls (it).

or

(ii) By keeping watch over/protecting from the clinging (snakes?) who controls (them)

As per M. Williams, Vṛishaga's meaning is 'going on a bull' or 'Name of Śiva'. This meaning appears to be going well with the word 'pā' which means 'drinking' as Śiva is known for drinking the poison to contain it. The first sign stands for the verb 'to control' or to 'contain' which again seems to be going well here to support the reading. In case of the second alternate reading, the last two signs read - 'Vishaṅga' meaning 'hanging on' and the word 'pā' which also stands for the meaning 'to keep watch' or 'protecting from'.



5.

4321 210001

यः अह्न गोप स्व

28501

अयति

or

आयत

*Yah Aksha Gopa Sva*

Who/Staff/Ruler/self which  
is the ruler's own staff  
(Aksha)/(reader's) own ruler's  
staff.

Ayati or Ayata Non-ascetic  
or To arrive/It is non-ascetic  
or Take Shelter/Visit.  
or

Take shelter/Visit

- i) It is ruler's own staff  
[hence it is] non-ascetic.  
ii) It is [our] own ruler's  
staff, visit/take shelter  
[here].

Rest of the word-meanings remain-  
ing the same, there emerges the pic-  
ture of the 'Chandana'-tree which  
protects itself from 'the poisonous  
snakes hanging from its branches'.  
In both these 'images' there appears  
to be the presence of Śiva, as he is  
also known for carrying snakes on  
his person. In any case, the objec-  
tive of the inscription appears to be  
to describe Śiva to whom the Aksha  
belongs.

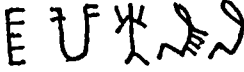
However, the question arises - can  
there be a single 'writing' which  
may create two word-images simul-  
taneously? If so, then, this kind of  
Harappan inscriptions may be ex-  
amples of their poetry.

If there is any truth in the read-  
ing of the inscription on the side  
of the Aksha being 'Ayati' mean-  
ing 'non-ascetic', then the inscrip-  
tion here suggests that there must  
be expected more than one Aksha  
type.

But, in the case of the second read-  
ing being correct, it may be suggest-  
ing the reader to visit the Aksha, as  
it belongs to their own ruler.

6.

4320 211001



प यःरह गण्ड गण

28590

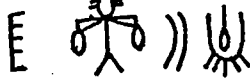
*Pa Yah Rah Gaṇḍa*  
Gaṇḍa To control who to  
disown/Bond/ Society.

They control/govern the  
society who disown their  
personal bonds with it.

The sign stands for  
the meaning 'to disown'. Ideograph-  
ically the human figure with the  
raised hands of the sign reminds one  
of the Hindi idiom 'Hātha Uṭhānā'  
which means literally - 'Raising  
hands' and it stands for the meaning  
'to disown'. The message of the in-  
scription here is 'Renunciation' dis-  
owning the social bonds and keeping  
them under control.

7.

4322 210001

प पास्त्य पा  
आपन स्रव

28590

*Pa Pāstyā Pā Āpana*  
*Srava*

To control| House/The  
material world| To keep  
watch | Coming in and go-  
ing out.

i) Control by keeping  
watch [on the cycle of]  
coming in and going out  
of the house (the material  
world).

ii) By keeping watch on  
coming in and going out  
[of the breath] control the  
house (the body).

This inscription has the depiction of  
Aksha figure on its reverse. It ap-  
pears to be recording the message  
of the social order which Aksha rep-  
resents.

The sign gives the word  
'Pāstyā' meaning 'house'. In the  
language of 'Śramaṇika'-orders or  
of the Upanishads the word 'house'  
may stand for human body. The  
house is supposed to be under con-  
trol by keeping watch on the move-  
ments of the visitors (prāṇa).

Hence the message is 'the owner of  
the house (Jīva) should keep watch,  
on the movements of the visitors to  
the house and keep it under control.

8.

4256 108511



शास षड



पुरदान प्रदान

*Śāsa Shada* Govern-  
ment/Six

Pura Dana/Pradāna City  
or state or subjects / con-  
trols / Gifts or teachings.

i) A government [has] six  
controls over the state  
(city).

ii) There are six gifts/teachings  
of a government [for its  
subjects]

It is another example of recording  
the message 'Social-order' to the  
reader in the form of inscriptions as-  
sociated with Aksha. Here, the mes-  
sage is 'There are six gifts/teachings  
(faculties?) from the government.  
Are they: Asi, Masi, Kṛishi, Vidyā,  
Vānijya and Śilpa?

9.

4309 215401

व यः सन्

or an Ideograph

28511

यदा उपनं/  
आपन

21

आवृत वृ

*Va Yah San*Name of Varuṇa|Who| The  
ideograph of Aksha

or

Dwelling|Who| To obtain/  
like.*Yadā Upanam/Āpana*When| To enter/approach  
*Avṛita Vṛi*

To cover/To conceal

i) Aksha, the staff which  
[is of] Varuṇa when it ap-  
proaches, by covering [it]  
conceals [the stary sky or  
the dark night].

or

ii) When one finds/likes  
'real' dwelling and enters  
into, it covers and con-  
ceals [all falsehood].

In this case the figure of Aksha is shown with small human figure. Mahadevan describes it as - 'Person' carrying the special cult object (the so called 'Manager' or 'incense burner') under the description for the field symbol numbering '54'. On the reverse side of the tablet, there is the figure of Aksha along, and in addition, there is, also, the inscription. It is important to note here that, in the photograph, as published by Mahadevan on page 809, in his concordance (1977), the Harappan signs with the Field Symbol '54' are not clearly visible. Therefore, the decipherment of this script may not be sufficiently authentic. But this example is particularly being given here as it establishes the nature and size of Aksha in relation to humans. The depiction of human figure in the presence of Aksha clearly establishes the monumental character of Aksha.

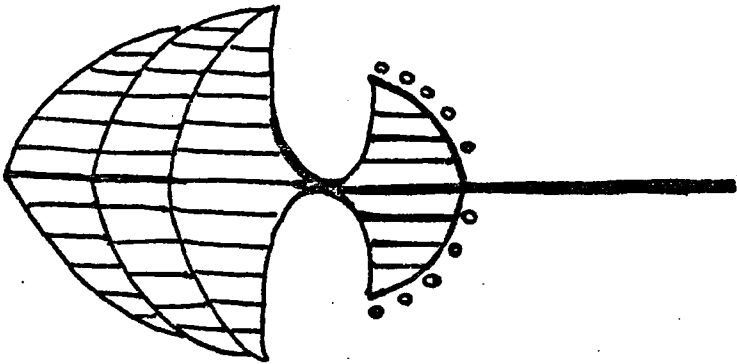
On the obverse the sign could be an ideograph for Aksha and for sign stands for the word 'Va' which is also the name of Varuṇa. In that case the total inscription will read 'The Aksha which is of Varuṇa, when it approaches, it conceals by covering the darkness and falsehood.'

## Notes and References

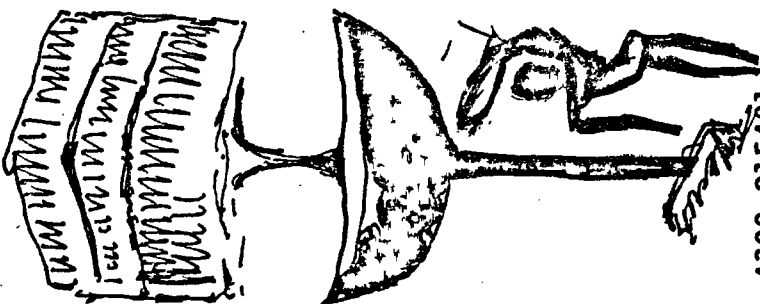
1. Iravatham Mahadevan, *The Indus Script*, p 106, 1977, N. Delhi.
2. *Ibid.*, p 35.
3. V.S. Agarwal, *Indian Art (Bhārtīya Kalā, Hindi*, pp. 60 - 62, Varanasi.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 60/25 to 35.
5. *Ibid.*, pp.61 to 62.
6. *Journal of M.A.C.T.*, Bhopal, Vol. 26(1993), pp.131-39.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 37
9. Monier Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 503, 1988, New Delhi.
10. Iravatham Mahadevan, *The Indus script*, p. 739.
11. V.S. Agarwal, *Bhāratīya Dharma Mīmānsā*, pp. 17-23, Varanasi.
12. 'Dholavira : New Horizons of the Indus Civilization, by R.S. Bisht, *Purātatva*, No. 20 (1989-90); *IAS*, p. 72, New Delhi.
13. B.B. Lal, *The Earliest Civilization of South Asia*, p.231, 1997, New Delhi.

## Figures

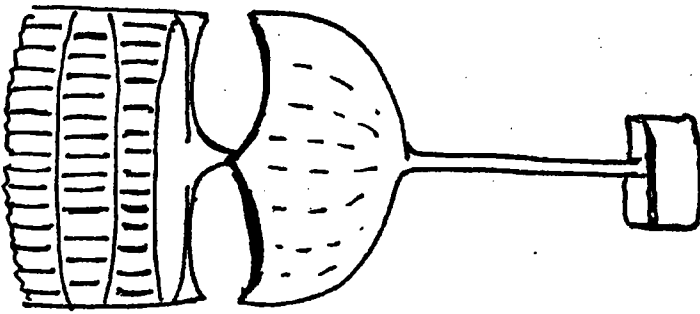
1. Different kinds of Aksha figures as engraved with these inscriptions.
2. Figures of Vāstu-Purusha-Maṇḍalas as published in Vistāra (catalogue of the exhibition on the Architecture of India) published by the Festival of India, 1986.
3. A simplified figure of Vāstu-Purusha-Maṇḍala as acceptable for the Harappan nation.
4. Chart of the phonetic values of the Harappan signs.



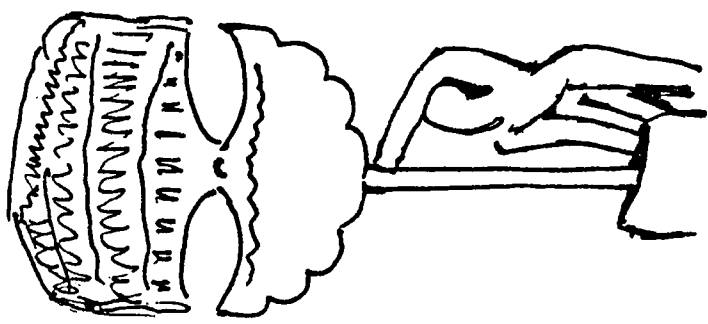
4256 108511



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H-196 A



H-196 B

Figure No.1 : Different kinds of Aksha figures as engraved with the inscriptions.





FIGURE NO. 4  
Phonetic Values Of the Harappan Signs

Sl. No.	Signs	Sign Numbers Mahadevan 1977	Pronunciation Indo- Romanic	Dēvanāgarī	Word Formations If any	Word Meanings English	Hindi	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1.		267	Para/Pada	पर/पद	पर/पद	Para/Pada	At/Seat	उपर/पद
2.		391	Vṛita	वृत्	वृत्	Vṛita	Circle	वृत्
3.		8	Rah	रहू	रहू	Rah	Disown	त्याग देना
4.		40	Bhara	भर	भार	Bhāra	Bhāra/Yashtī	भारयष्टि
5.		59	Sa	स				
6.		47	Gaṇa	गण	गण	Gaṇa	Society	समाज
7.		48	Gaṇḍā	गण्डा	गण्ड	Bond	बंधन	
8.		328	A	अ				
9.		347	Aksha	अक्ष	अक्ष	Aksha	Staff/Shade	दण्ड छतरी
10.		342	Yah	यः	यः	Yah	Who/Which	चो
11.		345	Yata	यत				
12.		336	Apana	अपन	आपन/उपन	Apana/ Upanam	Approached Entered	पहुंचकर / प्रवेश करके
13.		337	Upanam Srava	उपनं सव	उपनम् सव	Upanam Srava	Entry & Release	प्रवेष्टा एवं साव
14.		294	Pā	पा	पा	Pa	Drinking/ Watching	पीना/पहसा देना
15.		293	Dana/Dhana	दन/धन	दान	Dāna	Gift/ Teaching	दान/ शिक्षा
16.		86	Ja	ज				
17.		87	Vṛi	वृ	वृ	Vṛi	To Conceal	छाया देना
18.		102	Ksha	क्ष				
19.		176	Pa	प	प	Pa	To Control	दमन करना
20.		99	Dva/Dvāra	द्व/द्वार	द्व/ द्वार	Dva/Dvāra	Two/Door	द्व/द्वार
21.		109	Shada	षड्	षड्	Shaḍa	Six	इ
22.		135	Gopa	गोप	गोप	Gopa	Ruler	शासक
23.		211	Śa	श				
24.		155 <sup>1</sup>	Sana	सन्	सन	Sana	To acquire	हासिल करना
25.		141	Vṛita	वृत्	वृत्	Vṛita	Circle	वृत्

<sup>1</sup>It may only be an ideograph for Aksha



## The Vēlirs: Were they the Vēlālas?

S.D.Nellai Nedumaran

S.Ramachandran

### Introduction:

Saṅgam literature speaks about Vēḷir, a clan of royalty, who seem to have ruled parts of Tamil Nadu from very early times. In fact, they were the original kings of Tamil Nadu before it was subjugated by the vēndars (emperors,) i.e. Chēra, Chōḷa and Pāṇḍyas. The vēndar<sup>1</sup> who established themselves as the masters of the soil married girls belonging to the Vēḷir clan and accorded many privileges and status to the Vēḷir<sup>2</sup>. Some of the Vēḷir seem to have married the daughters of vēndar though it was not a common occurrence. In due course, the Vēḷir clan lost its individual identity and was recognised as a constituent of Tamil nobility i.e., Kshatriyas of Tamil Nadu.

### Dissimilarities between Vēḷirs and Vēḷāḷars

Most of the scholars who have dealt with the above subject have either identified Vēḷir, with Vēḷāḷar or traced the origin of the Tamil Vēḷāḷar to the Vēḷir clan<sup>3</sup>. They have no doubt studied the subject matter exhaustively but failed to observe the glaring dissimilarities between the Vēḷir and Vēḷāḷar. First of all, it can be pointed out that the term vēḷāṇvāyil occurs in *Perumbānāṅṅrupaḍai*. Generally 'vāyil' denotes those who serve as intermediaries. (*Tol.Purat.28*) There is no mention of Vēḷāḷar in Saṅgam literature but there are lot of references about Vēḷir, connecting them with the rulership over the soil<sup>4</sup>. But, *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammar which is silent about Vēḷir equates Vēḷāḷar with the Sūdra Varṇa<sup>5</sup> and points out that the only avocation of the Vēḷāḷar was agriculture. (This clearly shows that the *Poruḷatikāram* of *Tolkāppiyam* or *Marabiyal* must have been written after the Saṅgam period). The trend of connecting Vēḷāḷar with agriculture is reflected even today in the term of Vēḷāṇmai or Vellāmai used in the sense of cultivation. The term Vēḷāṇmai occurs in this sense in *Kalittokai* (verse 101:45). In a *Paripāḍal* verse (no.20, line 63) the term *vēḷāḷar* occurs, in the sense of a ploughman.

### Heroic age of Tamils

The Saṅgam literary works (3rd century B.C.-4th century A.D.) represent an earlier epoch, in which heroism in battle and gallantry in public life, were lauded. It was the heroic age in which the Tamil state was in a formative stage. The process of transformation was recorded in the verses sung by bards, minstrels and poets.

In the archaeological parlance, the Saṅgam period can be termed as the period of Megalithic civilization in which the torch bearers of the civilization were well-versed in iron smelting. They seem to have migrated from other parts of India to Tamil Nadu, probably through Karnataka.<sup>6</sup> The technological advancements of the Megalithic folk naturally lead to

their supremacy over other earlier inhabitants of Tamil Nadu including the Vēḷir. The upper strata of the Megalithic folk might have been the vēndar. This process was not sudden but which continued for several centuries before and after the Christian era. The earliest limit may be fixed as 8th century B.C. and the later limit as 4th century A.D.

### The Institution of Vēḷam

Local chiefs, both tribal as well as republic, who opposed the establishment of the Megalithic people were subjugated and their women folk were taken captive of. This is revealed in some references about Koṇḍi-magaḷīr in *Paṭṭiṇappālai*<sup>7</sup> and āḷil peṇḍir in *Narriṇai*<sup>8</sup>. Such institutions of captive women were probably called Vēḷam. Though there is no mention of the word Vēḷam in Saṅgam literature, references about the institution of Vēḷam<sup>9</sup> and Vēḷāṭṭi<sup>10</sup> (mistress as well as servant maid) abound in the inscriptions belonging to 8th to 13th centuries A.D. It will not be anachronistic, if we perceive that this institution had its origin in the heroic age itself. Children born to such Vēḷāṭṭis might have been called *Vēḷāḷar*. This interpretation seems to be logical, as, according to *Tolkāppiyam*, Vēḷāḷars were equated with the Dasyus (children of servant maids) mentioned in the Vēdas and accorded Sūdra status, as per the Varṇāśrama order, based on the Vēdic socio-political system<sup>11</sup>.

### Formation of the Vēḷāḷa Caste

The course of socio-political history of Tamils which faced many vicissitudes is reflected in successive, literary works. The formation of state, expansion of agriculture through clearing the forests, bringing vast tracts under the plough and starting massive irrigation projects needed man power. For tapping this man power, prisoners of war and men folk born in the Vēḷams were utilised<sup>12</sup>. This naturally led to the entrenchment of Vēḷāḷar as an indispensable caste in the socio-political hierarchy. This trend which started in the heroic age itself grown fully in the Kaḷabhra period and is reflected in the post-Saṅgam works i.e. the didactic literary works like *Tirukkuḷ* etc.<sup>13</sup> which belong to the 4th to 7th centuries A.D.

The Vēḷāḷar who were born out of wed-lock<sup>14</sup>, and who followed the matriarchal system of inheritance gained some sort of recognition, due to their numerical strength and in due course became indispensable, as they gained experience in land revenue administration, after the heroic age (4th-7th century A.D). The Kaḷabhra interregnum, which had the backing of Jaina and Buddhist clergy probably created a conducive atmosphere for the elevation of the status of Vēḷāḷar. But this was only one phase of the metamorphosis. In the all India context also, a major transformation was taking place, and that was due to the rapid strides achieved in trade and agriculture under Gupta patronage<sup>15</sup>. Vaiśyas, who were previously engaged in agriculture, became full fledged traders and sūdras (slaves) became agriculturists. Kūla Vāṇikaṅ Chīṭṭalaich-Chāṭṭaṅṅār, the author of *Maṇimēkai* (6th century A.D.) is a typical example for the process of the above transformation. His forefathers were probably Vaiśyas engaged in agricultural pursuits. Chīṭṭalaich-Chāṭṭaṅṅār, might have become a trader in cereals, and by travelling extensively, might have attained the knowledge about various countries and far off lands, which is reflected in his literary work.

### The Vēlir before Kaḷabhra Interregnum

The ruling class which consisted of the Vēlir before the advent of Megalithic civilization (i.e. 10th-8th centuries B.C.) was not totally extinguished after their conquest by the vēndar. Those who were prepared to move with the changing times and who proved their mettle in specific instances were recognised as a class of nobility, and some of the Vēlir were probably appointed as Āchāṇ and Ēṇādi (preceptors of martial arts and chiefs of the defence forces) by the emperors. For example, we can cite the name of a Saṅgam poet Maturai Vēl Āchāṇ<sup>16</sup>, a Malaiyamān chieftain, Chōḷika Ēṇādi Tirukkaṇṇaṇ<sup>17</sup>, and a Chēra general Chōḷiya Ēṇādi Tirukkuṭṭuvaṇ<sup>18</sup>.

### A Hindsight on the origin of the Vēlir

Efforts to trace the origin of the Vēlir have been made already by reputed scholars<sup>19</sup>. It has been pointed out that the ancestors of Iruṅkōvēl, ruled over Dwāraka 49 generations before him<sup>20</sup>. This *Puṛaṇāṇūru* verse (written around 1st century A.D.), which mentions this quasi-historical fact is reliable, as it tallies with the findings of S.R.Rao who has conducted offshore excavations at Dwāraka in Gujarat<sup>21</sup>. The Yadu Kula ancestors (of Vēlirs) ruled over Dwāraka around 1200 B.C. as per the findings of Rao. Another striking fact mentioned in the above *Puṛaṇāṇūru* verse which has also been proved is that the rampart of Dwāraka was built with copper or stones containing copper ores<sup>22</sup>. That the soil of Dwāraka area contains copper ore deposits is a fact established by geologists also. It can be conjectured that the Yadu Kula state of Dwāraka represented the Chalcolithic stage of civilization and it was brought to an end by people who knew iron smelting technology. The Musala Parva story in *Mahābhārata* can be cited in support of our argument. The arrogance of the Yadu Kula folk which earned the curse of a Ṛishi led to the down fall and dispersal of their clan and the accidental death of their legendary hero Kṛishṇa by iron implements and weapons (probably by people representing the Megalithic civilization.)

It was after this catastrophe, that the Vēlirs migrated to Vēlpulam (Karnataka) and Tamil Nadu.

### The origin of Vēlirs from Taḍavu

The origin of Vēlirs is said to have been from the Taḍavu of a northern sage<sup>23</sup>. This sentence which is found in the *Puṛaṇāṇūru* verse has been interpreted as a reference to the Hōmakunḍa or sacrificial pot of a northern sage. But the word *taḍavu* has got another meaning. The words *taḍam*, *taḍavu* or *taḍākam* means a 'water source'. These words are still used in the sense of a spring or a pond in a hill<sup>24</sup>. If we take this reference in *Puṛaṇāṇūru* to mean a water source in a hill, it tallies with the descriptions found in the historical folk ballad namely the Valaṅgai Mālai (1600 A.D.). In this ballad the past glory of the Chāṅṛōr-(Nāḍār)-kulam is brought out vividly. The ancestors of Chāṅṛōr-kulam, according to this ballad, were called Valaṅgai Vēl and Vēlir and they were said to have been born in a spring called Ēlāchunai through the conjugal union of the Sage Vidyādhara-muṇi with the

seven daughters of Nāga Rāja. This description is repeated in many panegyric poems and copper plate documents belonging to the Chāṅṅrōr-kulam<sup>25</sup>. It is not known whether any social document belonging to other communities contain this reference. This was not a mere folk belief, but a historical fact. A sect of Chāṅṅrōr or Nāḍār community called Vēḷāṅ Chāṅṅrār has been recorded in the *Ceylon Gazetteer* published in the year 1824 A.D.<sup>26</sup>

### Vēḷir and Vēḷvi

Even if we take the etymological origin of the word Vēḷir from Vēḷvi (sacrifice)<sup>27</sup>, it can be argued that the tribal sacrificial rites as well as modes of worship were conducted with the offerings of water (*abhishēka*) and not with fire. Such tribal modes of worship as well as sacrifice were practised by the neolithic folk who had not mastered the technology of creating fire. Even the stories which deal with the origin of deities indirectly point out to this fact. Muruga Vēḷ, the tribal deity of Kuravars was believed to have been born in a water source<sup>28</sup>. But later myths describe Murugaṅṅ as Agni Putra. This was probably due to the Vēdic belief of the purificatory quality of fire.

The theory that the Vēḷir originated from the Hōmakuṇḍa or sacrificial pot, has to be viewed in the context of Madukkōḷ Vēḷvi mentioned in *Śilappatikāram*<sup>29</sup>. The fermentation of toddy was considered as an auspicious symptom heralding the presence of a divine force. It will be interesting to note here that Balarāma or Vāliyōṅṅ who was related to the Yadukula and who was the Nāgarāja was fond of intoxicating brew. He had the *Tāladvaja* (*paṅṅaikkōḷi*) as his banner. The Vēḷirs might have discovered the technology of toddy tapping from the palm-tree and this toddy (*peṅṅaippilī*)<sup>30</sup> was equivalent to the Sōmapāna of the Vedic period. And this Madukkōḷ Vēḷvi might have been the tribal counterpart of the Vēdic Sōma-yāga, which had its origin in the Neolithic or Chalcolithic period.

It is a point of interest to be that the famous Pāri Vēḷ, liberally distributed toddy and beef to poets and brahmins like Kapilar, is mentioned in a *Puṅṅāṅṅūru* verse<sup>31</sup>.

The symbol of pot can be taken as the *taḍavu* form which the Vēḷirs were born. The Vēḷichchāṅṅār or Mūḷikkalattu Oḷukkavic-Chāṅṅrōr were considered to have hailed from Mūshika kula, the clan of Vēḷ Nanṅṅṅṅ.

### The relationship of Vēḷir with Vēḅdar

The word Vēḷ is used in connection with warfare in the Saṅgam literature<sup>32</sup>. Even the deities Murugaṅṅ and Maṅṅmataṅṅ who were mentioned as Muruga Vēḷ and Kāmavēḷ in the Saṅgam literature, attained the suffix Vēḷ due to their proficiency in warfare. Murugaṅṅ was the Dēva Sēnāpati and Kāma Vēḷ was adept in piercing the hearts of lovers through his five weapons (*aiṅṅkaṅṅai*). Maṅṅmataṅṅ is referred to as Peruvēḷ (the great hero) in *Peruṅkatai* (6th century A.D.)<sup>33</sup>.

According to the Purāṅṅas, Puru and Yadu were brothers. The *praśasti* portions of the copper plate inscriptions of the Pāṅḍya kings (9th - 10th centuries A.D.) trace the origin of the Pāṅḍyas from Chandra-kulā and the King Purūravas.<sup>34</sup>

One verse from *Kalittogai*, a Saṅgam literary work, describe that Kuḍam Chuttuṁ Nalliṇattu Āyar<sup>35</sup> (probably *Ayvēlu*) who originated from a pot, were cousins of the Pāṇḍya kings. These Nalliṇattu Āyars were distinct from Pulliṇṇattu Āyar<sup>36</sup>, who were the Ahirs (or Āhiras) the clan which was later accommodated in the Yadava clan as per the hypothesis propounded by Suvira Jayaswal<sup>37</sup>. Some ruling houses belonging to the Vēḷir clan retained their status and privileges after the conquest of southern India by the kings and other colonisers and gradually claimed the lunar racial origin. For example, the Vēḷkula Chāḷukyās who boasted of having Mahāsēna or Muruga as their progenitor and who claimed to have been brought up by the seven celestial mothers were later identified as the kings of the lunar race<sup>38</sup>. The Ēy Vēḷir who did not forget to mention their Yadukula origin were nevertheless proud of their lunar racial connections.<sup>39</sup>

### Connecting link between Vēḷirs and Vēḷāḷars

One major aspect which was the connecting link, though in a remote manner, between the Vēḷirs and Vēḷāḷars was the attention shown towards agriculture and land revenue administration by the Vēḷirs in the pre-Saṅgam period. Proper irrigation through storing of water and cultivating the soil with plough or Nāñcil (Skt: ('Lāṅgala')) were introduced by the Vēḷir clan<sup>40</sup>. In a sense, Vēḷirs were the organizers as well as managers of the productive forces. Even the word Vēḷvi attained meaning of production, as it was used in the term Ērkkaḷavēḷvi later<sup>41</sup>.

The administrative or politico-geographical units of Nāḍu were organized and administrated by Vēḷirs<sup>42</sup>. This process was probably initiated around 1000 B.C. in Tamil Nadu, and was in an embrionic stage, upto the advent of the Megalithic civilization.

The term *Nāḍaṇ* has been used as an epithet of Vēḷirs in the Saṅgam literature<sup>43</sup>. This shows that administration of the tract was based on agriculture and land revenue administration. But we have to remember that the state was not a well established one with the regular bureaucracy, at that time. As it was the prehistoric period, the system of governance was kept in the hands of the *gaṇa* or republics like Vṛishṇis of Yadu-kula. The Lichchhavi clan in which Buddha (5th century B.C.) was born can be compared with Vēḷirs<sup>44</sup>. Even Śuddhōdana, father of Siddhārtha, was said to have been a skilled tiller of soil, according to D.D.Kosambi<sup>45</sup>.

### Co-existence of Vēḷi Kulam and Vēḷāḷar Kulam

Tamil society went through many major changes during the Kaḷabhra period. In a bid to reform the institutions of marriage and family, Vēḷāḷar who were born out of wed-lock, were also accorded some status in the society, and the institution of marriage was introduced among them, by the ruling house of that time. Kaḷabhas "of the Kali age" might have been Vaiśyas well versed in agriculture. They might have opted for Vēḷāḷar status later.

*Tolkāppiyam* says that in olden days marital rituals were conducted for the three higher *varṇas* (i.e. *Antaṇar*, *Araśar* and *Vaṇigar*) only, but gradually those rituals were introduced

among the Vēlāḷar also.<sup>46</sup> As Jainism and Buddhism preferred peaceful avocations, Vaiśyas and sūdras were patronised by these religions. Epics like *Śilappatikāram*, *Maṇimēkalai* and *Peruṅkatai* were the products of this period and these epics give vivid details of the changed scenario.

When Pallavas in the northern parts and Pāṇḍyas in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu were ascending on the political horizon (6th-7th centuries A.D.), they had to take into account the prevailing socio-political environment, and in many cases, they took care to get their orders ratified by the Nāṭṭārs or local agriculturists.<sup>47</sup> In some cases, the Pāṇḍya kings had to intervene and restore the rights of the earlier title holders like Brahmins, when their endowments had been encroached by sūdras.<sup>48</sup>

In the 9th century, when the Chōḷa empire started its long innings, Vēḷkula Chāḷukyās<sup>49</sup> were ruling in Karnataka and Āy Vēḷir were ruling the southern extremity of Tamil Nadu. These Vēḷkula kings were considered as kshatriyas. The Chinese pilgrim Hūen Tsang has testified to this fact.<sup>50</sup> An inscription belonging to the period of Āditya Chōḷa (9th century A.D.) mentions the title Chembiyaṅgaṅga Tamilavēḷ conferred on Vikkiyaṅgaṅga as a caste suffix (*kulappeyar*).<sup>51</sup> Similarly the name ḷachchāṅṅraṅgaṅga munnūruva perumāṅṅgiya chōḷa vēḷ ēṅṅādi (Tirukkaṅṅapuram, inscription can be cited here.)

It gives us a glimpse on the practice of kings conferring the title *vēḷ* on the nobility or people of the royal clan, who assisted them. In later times (13th century A.D.), when the Chōḷa king Rājarāja III accepted defeat at the hands of Māraṅvarmaṅga Sundara Pāṇḍya and preferred to be his subordinate, the Pāṇḍya king conferred the title Māvēḷ on Rājarāja III.<sup>52</sup> Such instances show that using the title *Vēḷ* as a suffix was the prerogative of the kshatriyas.<sup>53</sup> But the caste name Vēḷāḷaṅga was not used as a suffix by people belonging to that caste.

Chēḷkilār, who served as a minister under the Chōḷa reign, and who was a Vēḷāḷar, mentions the Vēḷir-kulam, as a constituent of royalty and distinguishes it from the Vēḷāḷar caste, which is denoted by the terms such as Vēḷāṅga-kuḷi, Sūdranaṅga-kulam and nālāṅga-kulam (the fourth *varṅga*)<sup>54</sup>.

### Vēḷ and Vēḷāṅga were these terms synonyms?

In the inscriptions belonging to the later Chōḷa and Pāṇḍya period (10th century A.D. to 14th century A.D.) we come across many officials having the suffix Mūvēṅdaveḷāṅga added to their names. Some scholars, who have studied this feature, opine that the post of mūvēṅdaveḷāṅga was held by Vēḷāḷars. It is true that this post seems to have been connected with land revenue administration. It seems that some Toṅḷaimaṅḷala vēḷāḷar like Cīrukuṅṅra nāṭṭuk - kārikaikkulattu kaṅḷan Mādhavaṅga were appointed as vēḷāṅga by Kulōṅṅtuṅga Chōḷa.

That the titles mūvēṅdaveḷāṅga and Vēḷāṅga were conferred on officials who were engaged in land revenue administration and that might have been the reason why people belonging to different strata of life and hailing from various castes obtained this title from the successive kings as the Chōḷa reign (10th-13th centuries A.D.) became broad based, encompassing all the

subjects through a perfect revenue network. Local talents and the native genius were taken into account and traditional expertise was incorporated in the Chōḷa revenue set up. Later Pāṇḍya kings also followed the system introduced by the imperial Chōḷas. The following evidences can be cited in support of our argument.

*antaṇar vēlāṇ*<sup>55</sup> (Brahmin)  
*tillai mūvāyiram vēlāṇ*<sup>56</sup> (dikshitar)  
*nāṇmarai vēlāṇ*<sup>57</sup> (one who was wellversed in the Vēdas)  
*vēdi vēlāṇ*<sup>58</sup> (brahmin)  
*Śrīmūlasthāṇa vēlāṇ*<sup>59</sup>

These names belonged to the Brahmin caste. The following names denote men from other castes.

*karaiya vēttuvaril vēlāṇ*<sup>60</sup> (fisherman)  
*tattāṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>61</sup> (goldsmith)  
*vētkōvaṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>62</sup> (potter)  
*akampati vēlāṇ*<sup>63</sup> (servants in the harem)  
*kōḍukulavaṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>64</sup> (royal clan)  
*ukirai vellāḷar vēlāṇ*<sup>65</sup> (a division of Vellāḷa caste)  
*pallavaraiyar vēlāṇ*<sup>67</sup> (Nāṇādēsi merchants or Dēsikar)  
*aṇukka vēlāṇ*<sup>68</sup> (body guards)  
*pilllai vēlār*<sup>69</sup> (vellāḷar)  
*tēvaraḍiyāril vēlāṇ*<sup>70</sup> (courtesan caste)  
*ettivēlāṇ*<sup>71</sup> (trader)  
*viyāpāriyāṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>72</sup> (trader)  
*chittiramēli vēlāṇ*<sup>73</sup> (chittiramēli guild)  
*araiyaril vēlāṇ*<sup>74</sup> (local chief)  
*tonḍaimāṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>75</sup>  
*pūvāniya vēttuvaril vēlāṇ*<sup>76</sup>  
*vānātirāyaṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>77</sup>  
*akampati mudaliḡalil vēlāṇ*<sup>78</sup>  
*teṇṇilakṅgai valaṇchiyaril vēlāṇ*<sup>79</sup>  
*paṇāṅkāḍi kuḍiyuḍaiyār vēlāṇ*<sup>80</sup>  
*koṅga vēlāṇ*<sup>81</sup>  
*chēra vēlāṇ*<sup>82</sup>  
*kuḍimakkalil vēlāṇ*<sup>83</sup> (vēlāṇ among the commoners)  
*samaya nārāyaṇa vēlāṇ*<sup>84</sup>  
*orriaraśḡalil vēlāṇ*<sup>85</sup> (ruler of Tiruvorriyūr)  
*vēlārmagaṇ nādālvāṇ*<sup>86</sup>

“Vēttakkudaiyān . . . . mūvēndavēlāṇ” hunter tirbe “Ādittan Sūryaṇ āṇa Tennavaṇ mūvēndavēlāṇ”

*Nādālvāril vēlāṇ*<sup>87</sup>  
*āriyapurōchaṇ vēlāṇ*<sup>88</sup>  
*maṇikkirāma vēlāṇ*<sup>89</sup>  
*sēṇātipatigalil vēlāṇ*<sup>90</sup>  
*chēdirāya paṇmaril vēlāṇ*<sup>91</sup>  
*vellālaril vēlāṇ*<sup>92</sup>

### Nādālvār Vēlāṇs

Sēṇātipati Parakēsari Mūvēndavēlāṇ was the brother of Vīramādēvi, wife of Rājēndra

Chōla I. He was the chief of the military force and belonged to the Chōla royal clan. But he had the title Mūvēndavēḷāṅṅ.<sup>93</sup>

Another Sēṇa called Śōlai Māṅikkam had the title *Uttama Chōla Mūvēndavēḷāṅṅ*. He served under Rājendra Chōla I.<sup>94</sup>

Some officials occupying the higher echelon in the Chōla hierarchy had the title *Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ*. One such Āḍaiyūr Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ was called Rājarājaṅṅ Paraniruparākatār *alias* Vīachōla Iḷāṅgōvēḷār.<sup>95</sup> He was the lord (*kiḷḷāṅṅ*) of Nāḍār in Tiraimūr-nāḍu and lived in the 12th century A.D. The great scholar T.A.Gopinatha Rao concluded that this Āḍaiyūr Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ must have belonged to the Chōla royal clan. The title Iḷāṅgōvēḷār seem to have been borne by the royalty.

Another Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ by name Kulōttuṅga Chōla Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ was called Vēḷāṅṅ Kāḷaiyaviṅṅṅ. This Vēḷāṅṅ *alias* Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ lived in the 12th century.<sup>96</sup>

One Virudarājabhayaṅkara Muraśu Nāḍāḷyāṅṅ is mentioned in an inscription from Bangalore. He was the son of the Chōla Vēḷār who was occupying the post of Nāṭṭukkāmuṅḍar in the 12h-13th century A.D.<sup>97</sup>

#### Vēḷār Kāṅi and Vēḷḷāṅṅkāṅi: holdings of Govt. officials

It seems that the title deeds given in favour of these Nāḍāḷyārs were generally called Vēḷār Kāṅi. In an inscription belonging to the period of Māṅavarmaṅṅ Kulaśēkara Pāṅḍya, Nāḍāḷyārs of the Āḍaṅūr area (Tirumayam taluk, Pudukkottai District) proclaim that Vēḷār Kuḍikāḍu was their traditional holding.<sup>99</sup> Such instances show that the dominant group among the Vēḷārs or Mūvēnda Vāḷārs consisted of the nobility or the royalty.

Some of the Vēḷāḷars who had the title Vēḷāṅṅ or Mūvēndavēḷāṅṅ are mentioned in the inscriptions. The caste name Vēḷāḷar and the suffix Vēḷāṅṅ are mentioned separately. Equating Vēḷāṅṅ with Vēḷāḷar caste is certainly wrong. The terms Vēḷḷāṅṅ Kāṅi, Vēḷḷāṅṅvagai nilam and Vēḷḷāṅṅ-suḍukāḍu can't be taken to mean the possession of Vēḷāḷars. Talaivāyachchēri which consisted of Talaivāyach-Chāṅṅrōr (nobility who looked after the sluices) had Vēḷḷāṅṅvagai lands under their possession and Vēḷḷāṅṅ-suḍukāḍu for their use.<sup>99</sup> In another instance, the title holding of a noble man Orri arasaṅṅ or Orri maṅṅṅṅ had been classified as Vēḷḷāṅṅkāṅi.<sup>100</sup> There is not even a single instance to show that such holdings were the possession of Vēḷāḷars, where as there are many inscriptional evidences to prove that Vēḷāḷars were serving as cultivating tenants for the lands of brahmins and Peruṅkuḍigaḷ.<sup>101</sup> So this term Vēḷḷāṅṅ might have been used as an adjective in the sense of direct governmental control and nothing more.

The Chittiramēḷi Periyānāṭṭār who originated from the four *varṅas* (*chāturvarṅasya-kulōdbhavam*)<sup>102</sup> and who gradually got accommodated in the Vēḷāḷa caste did not claim the title Vēḷāṅṅ as their prerogative.

Documents belonging to the Koṅgu Vēḷāḷa gavuṅḍars speak of their status as Kumāravargam of Pāṅḍya kings.<sup>103</sup> This statement can be compared with the above



mentioned inscriptional versions of the Chittiramēli Periyānāṭṭār guild. Koṅgu Vēlāḷa gavuṇḍars probably originated from the nobility of the Pāṇḍyakulam through the institution Vēḷam. They were not inclined to claim Kshatriyahood but were content with the status of Vēḷāḷar.<sup>104</sup>

### Conclusion

To sum up, from the statement of Karpiyal of *Tolkāppiyam* Poruḷadikāram (142) which deals with the marriage systems of the ancient Tamils and the restrictions listed by the commentators like ḷampūraṇār (11th century A.D.) and Nachchiṇārkkīṇiyar (13th century A.D.), it is certain that the Vēlir who had marital connections with the kings would never have become Vēḷāḷars. Ladies of the Vēlir clan, who were married to kings, were called “vēlvikkilatti”, a high sounding honorific. Even “Vēṭṭal” meant the marital ritual. The inscriptions, copper plate grants and other documents belonging to later ages also support this view. Further, one may understand from ancient history that the Vēlir had rights to possess holdings like royal drum, sceptre, chariots, crown, elephants, etc., in par with the kings. It has to be remembered here that not even a single copper plate document belonging to the Vēḷāḷa caste claim their origin from the Vēlir or try to claim the titles Vēḷāṇ or Vēḷḷāṇ as theirs. There is valid ground for the claim of Kshatriyas or the nobility like Chāṇṇōr-kulam to these titles than for the claim of Vēḷāḷars.

### Notes and References

1. *Puraṇānūru* 345:7.

2. *Paḍirupattu*:

“Udiyanchēralukku Veliyaṇ Vēṇmāl Nallīni īra makaṇ Imayavarampaṇ Neḍuñchēralātāṇ” - Patikam in II decade)

“Kuḍakkō Neḍuñchēralātāṅku Vēḷāvikkōmāṇḍēviīra magaṇ Āḍukōṭpāṭṭuch-Chēralātāṇ” (Patikam in VI decade).

“Chelvakkāḍuñkōvukku Vēlvikkōmāṇ Patumāṇḍēvi īra magaṇ Peruñchēral Irumpōrai” (Patikam in VIII decade).

“Kuṭṭuvaṇ Irumpōraikku maiyūr kilāṇ Vēṇmāl Antuvaṇ Chellai īra magaṇ ḷāñchēral Irumpōrai” (Patikam in IX decade).

The term Vēlvikkilatti which occurs in Śilappatikāram is also significant.

3. See “A forgotten chapter in South Indian History” in Prof. V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar Centenary Volume: “*Studies in South Indian History and Culture*” edited by Dr.R.Nagasamy.

4. “*tonmutir vēlir*” (*Puraṇānūru*, 24:21, *Narīnai* 280:8).

“*vēntarum vēlirum pūvantu paṇiya*” (*Paḍirupattu* 30:30, 88:13; *Ahaṇānūru* 331:13.

“*nārapattoṇbadu valimuraṇai vanda vēliruvēḷē vārapōr aṇṇal*”. - *Puraṇānūru* 201.

“*tērvēḷāy*”

“vēlpōr vēndarum vēḷirum”

“malaikeḷunāṭaṁ Māvēḷaṁ”

“neḍuvēḷ ātaṁ”

“vāṭṭāru vēḷ eḷṇyātaṁ”

“vēḷ vēḷātaṇēḷmi”

“Vēḷ Pāri”

“Āyaṇḍiraṁ”

“Vēḷpēkaṁ”

“Vēḷevvi” - *Puraṇāṇūru* 24, 233-(F.N), 133, 105, 8, 396, 338 etc.

*Ahanāṇūru* 61.

5. *Tolkāppiyam.*, *Akattinaiyiyal* - 31; *Maṇḍiyal*: 78-81. The term Sūdra does not find mention in *Tolkāppiyam*. But the caste next to Vaiśya (i.e. vēḷāḷar) can undoubtedly be equated with the Sūdra Varṇa.
6. See S.Ramachandran, “*Saigakāla Uṇṇattikkaruviḷaḷ*”, *Āyvuvaṭṭak Kaṭṭuraigaḷ*, Vol.3, 1997, Chennai.
7. *Paṭṭinappālai* 246.
8. *Nāṇṇai* 394.
9. “Vēḷattup peṇḍāṭṭi Kaḷḷichchi uttamātāni.” See *Pudukkōṭṭai Inscriptions*. Similar to Vēḷam, Vēḷāḷar, the Vēḷakkārapaḍais of Later Chōḷas originated.
10. Pārttipasēkarapuram copper plate of Āy King Kōkaruṇaṇṭaḍakkaṇ. Many scholars have discussed this matter.
11. *Tolkāppiyam: Maṇḍiyal.*, 81.
12. Forced labour (*viṣṭi* or *vetṭi*), and two types of prisoners of war i.e., *dāsa* and *britya*, are mentioned in the inscriptions of Aśoka (See: “Past and Prejudice” by Romila Thapar). According to Tamil tradition, Karikāla Chōḷa took many soldiers from ḷḷam as captives and engaged them in the construction of the grand anaicut across the river the Kāvēri. There were many such instances in history.
13. *Paṭṭiṇṇēḷkaṇakku* or the Eighteen minor works.
14. *Tolkāppiyam*.
15. Suvira Jayaswal, *Changes in the Status and concept of the Sudra varṇa in early middle ages*, I.C.H.R., 41st session proceedings.
16. *Puraṇāṇūru* 305.
17. *Ibid*.
18. *Ibid.*, 394.
19. See: *Prof.V.R.Ramachandra Dikshitar Centenary Volume*.

20. *Puraṇāṇūru* 201. The title “*Sēṭṭiruṅō*” mentioned in this poem means “Jyēshṭa Iruṅō” and in some 8th century inscriptions, Iruṅōvēḷs are mentioned as Iruṅkō mūttaraiśaru (*ancient Iruṅō kings*)
21. S.R.Rao (un published report).
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Puraṇāṇūru* 201.
24. *Tamil Lexicon.*
25. A. Dasarathan, ed. *Valaṅgai Mālai* (in print). Chennai; Nellai Nedumaran (ed). “*Chāṁrōrkula Samutāya Āvaṇaṅgaḷ*” - *Tiruvidaïmarudūr copper-plate*, etc. See also: “Decline and Fall of Veḷḷai Nāḍār” by S.D. Nellai Nedumaran and S.Ramachandran, 1997.
26. *Ceylon Gazetteer*, 1824.
27. In a seal belonging to the Saṅgam period discovered at Karuvūr (Karūr district, Tamil Nadu) by Alakkudi Arumuga Sitaraman is engraved an inscription written in the Brāhmī script. It reads as ‘Vēḷich Champṇā’. The word *Vēḷi* can be derived from the verb *vēḷ* (to do sacrifice).
28. *Tirumurugārūppadai.*, lines 253-54, *Peruṅkatai* 42:229-31.
29. *Śilappatikāram.* 3:28:149, The term *hōmakunḍa* seems to have been derived from *Sōmakunḍa*. It seems that Iruṅōvēḷ, who was also called “*Sēṭṭiruṅō*” (Jyēshṭa Iruṅō), performed *Sōmayāga*. In the Kaśākkuḍi plates of Pallava, one recipient of the grant was called *Seṭṭiruṅō Sōmayāji*.
30. *Paṭṭiṁappālai*, 89.
31. *Puraṇāṇūru*, 113.
32. *Ibid.*, 20 etc.
33. *Peruṅkatai*, 42:55-56.
34. *Pāṇḍiyar Cheppēḍugaḷ*, 10.
35. *Kalittogai.*, 113.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Suvira Jayaswal, *Vaiṇavattin tōṛramum vaḷarchiyum.*
38. *Piṅgaḷanigaṇḍu*, 416
39. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, I, pp.187-93.
40. S. Ramachandran, *op.cit.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Puraṇāṇūru*, 24: 18-22, 117:3.
43. *Ibid.*, 135:13.

44. *Ibid.*
45. D.D.Kosambi (Tr. *Indiyāvāṅ Nāgarikamum, Paṅpāṭum Atāṅ Makkaḷum*).
46. *Tolkāppiyam: Poruḷ, Karpiyal, Nachchinārkkūṅiyar commentary.*
47. *Pallaṅkōyil copper plate grant of Siṃhavarman* (6th century A.D.), *Śasanamālai*, published by S.Rajam, Chennai, 1960.
48. *Pāṇḍiyar Cheppēḍugaḷ Pattu* (Tamil) pp.38 and 135. *Ep.Ind.*, Vol.XVIII., pp.291-309. One Sēṭṭiruṅgo Sōmayāji is mentioned as a donee in the Kaśākkūḍi copper plates of Nandivarman Pallavamalla II, (*Pallavar Cheppēḍugaḷ Muppaḍu*, p.146). His name suggests that his ancestors were patronised by the Settiruṅgōvēḷ kings, for having performed the Sōmayāga.
49. The meykīrtti of Rājādirāja I. in: *Muppaḍu Kalvēṭṭugaḷ*, 1992: Also see: Sēnthan Dīvākaram (*Nikaṇḍu*).
50. Hūen Tsang, (Asian Educational Services).
51. *S.I.I.*, Vol.III, Part III, No.89.
52. The Meykīrtti of Māṅavarmāṅ Sundara Pāṇḍiya.
53. Even the Pāṇḍya kings, when their power was waning, used to be called as Vēḷ. Sivala Māṅaṅ, the Teṅkāsi Pāṇḍya king (16th century A.D.) was called Sivala vēḷ. See: *Sivalamāṅaṅ katai*, U.V.Swaminathaiyar Library, 1982, Chennai. In the inscriptions belonging to 1552 and 1564 A.D., the names of the then Pāṇḍya kings have been mentioned with the suffix Vēḷ. *S.I.I.*, Vol. XXVI, Nos. 538-39.
54. *Periyapurāṇam: Iḍaṅkūḍi Nāyaṅārpurāṇam* - verse 3: ‘annakarattṅṅilirukkum vēḷirkula araśāḷittu’. *Cheruttuṅai Nāyaṅāṅ Purāṇam* - verse 2: ‘tiruntu vēḷāṅkūḍi mudalvar .... Cheruttuṅaiyār; *Iḷaiyāṅkūḍi Māṅānāyaṅāṅ Purāṇam* - verse 1: ‘Sūttira nāṅkulam ..... *Iḷaiyāṅkūṭippati Māṅāṅāṅ*’; *Ēyarkōṅ Kalikkāma Nāyaṅāṅ Purāṇam* - verse 207; Nālāṅkulattil Perukunalam uḍaiyār ..... vēḷāṅmai mikka tiruṅāyṅū kīḷavar’.  
Please refer to the term, “Koḍumbāḷūrḷ Kuricugaḷ” *S.I.I.*, Vol. VIII, No.624.
55. Tiruvḷimīḷalai; S.No.567-568/1977, *Nannīlam volume*, Tamil Nadu Archaeological Dept.
56. *S.I.I.*, Vol.8 No.43.
57. Tiruvḷimīḷalai, S.No.575/1977, *Nannīlam Volume*, Tamil Nadu Archaeological Dept.
58. *S.I.I.*, Vol.7, No.499.
59. *S.I.I.*, Vol.22, Part I, No.198.
60. *Āvaṅa Iḍaḷ* 3, Pulavar S.Rasu, p.22.
61. S. Krishnamurthy, *Vikkiramaśiṅgapura Ulā*, p.93.
62. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XIV, No.233.
63. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXII, No.239.

64. *Tiruvīśaiyalūr, Varalāru*, Vol.5, 1995, p.9, *Nannilam*, Vol.55/1977.
65. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*.
66. *Nannilam Inscription* No.471.
67. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions* 471.
68. *Varalāru Idal* 3; Alundūr Inscription, *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*.
69. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, 312.
70. *Ibid.*, 97.
71. *Śāsanamālai*, p.33; Tiruvah̄indirapuram, Kaḷalūr.
72. *Nannilam Inscriptions*, Vol.I. S.No.17/1977.
73. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XVII, No.695; Vol.XXVI, No.320.
74. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*: Tirugōkarṇam, Ālaṅkuḍi vaṭṭam; S.Ramachandran, "Murampāṅ Inscriptions." *Varalāru Idal* 5, 1995, *S.I.I.*, Vol.V. No.466. Nan. Kal 26/1977.
75. *S.I.I.*, Vol.IV, No.862.
76. *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol.III, p.666.
77. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, No.715.
78. *Ibid.*, No.338.
79. *Ibid.*, No.995.
80. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XIV, No.157.
81. *S.I.I.*, Vol.V, No.281.
82. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, No.541.
83. *S.I.I.*, Vol.VII, No.788.
84. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXVI, No.276.
85. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XVII, Nos.701, 708, 722, 725.
86. *Epigraphia Carnatika*, Vol.IX, Kolar 186; Bangalore 85.
87. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXIII, No.401.
88. *S.I.I.*, Vol.VII, No.797.
89. *Tirikkōḍikka Inscriptions*, *AREp.*, 1931, No.46.
90. *A.R.E.p.*, 1918, No.75; 1915, No.XXIII, p.118. *S.I.I.*, Vol.23, No.1.
91. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, No.372.

92. *A.R.Ep.*, 1918, No.434; 1913, No.56; *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, No.36. *S.I.I.*, Vol.III, Part 2, No.68; *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXIII, No.485.
93. *A.R.Ep.*, 1915-16, p.118.
94. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXIII, No.1, Tiruvisaiyalūr.
95. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *Sentamū*, Pilavaṅga varuṣham, Kārttigai mādam, p.49.
96. *S.I.I.*, Vol.XXIII, No.401. Perukaraṇai, Mudukuḷattūr.
97. *Epigraphia Carnatika*, Vol.IX, Bangalore 85.
98. *Pudukkottai Inscriptions*, No.395.
99. *Peruvuḍaiyār Temple Inscriptions*, (Dr.R.Nagasamy, p.150): “Veḷḷāṅ chuḍukāḍum, Koṭṭāraṅgaḷum, ta-laivāychchēriyum, ḷāchēriyum, Kammaṇachchēriyum....”
100. *S.I.I.*, Vol.VIII, Nos.570, 689.
101. “Pirāmaṇar peyarāl peyarkkaḍamai chūṭṭi Veḷḷāḷar agaṅgaḷil pukku koḍukkādu ḍiyavum” - *Inscriptions from Maṅṅārkuḍi*, (12-13th century A.D.), *S.I.I.*, Vol.VI, No.58.  
Peruṅkuḍiḷaḷ peyarāl kaḍamaikku Veḷḷāḷarai chiraippidittal ivargaḷ agaṅgaḷil oḍukkudal cheyyakkaḍavadalla-dākgavum - *S.I.I.*, Vol.VI, No.48. Another inscription from Tiruppātirippuliyūr (*S.I.I.*, Vol.VII, No.759) says that in the reign of Perumāl Vikkrama Pāṇḍya (14th century A.D.) Veḷḷāḷar, Aḷavar, Paḷḷiḷaḷ and Parampar served as cultivating tenants to Brahmins. Similar instances are recorded in other places also. (For detailed study of Peruṅkuḍiḷaḷ .....)
102. “Largest Provincial Organizations in Ancient India.” - by K.V.Subramaniya Aiyar. *QJMS.*, Vol.55 (1954-55).
103. *Pāḷaiyappaṭṭu Vamśāvaḷi Tokutiḷaḷ: Pāḷaiyakōṭṭai Paṭṭakkārar Āvaṅgaḷ.*
104. *Koṅgu Maṅḍala Samudāya Āvaṅgaḷ*, ed. by S.Rasu, Tamil University, Tanjavur, Kaṅṅakula Paṭṭayam, p.91.

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## Book Reviews-I

*Kannada University Epigraphical Series, Vol. I : Bellary District (Kannada Viśvavidyālaya Śāsana Saṁpuṭa, I : Ballāri Jille)* - edited by Dr. Devarakonda Reddy with the assistance of Shri Kalavira Manvachar, Dr. K.G. Bhat Soori and Dr. D.V. Paramashiva Murthy; printed by Satyasri Printers, Bangalore and Published by Director, Prasaraṅga, Kannada University, Hampi, Bellary District. First Impression 1998, pp LXXX + 712 and 16 plates, Price Rs. 600/-.

The volume contains six hundred and thirty five inscriptions from eight taluks of Bellary District. Of them two hundred and ninety two epigraphs are hitherto unpublished. The editors have accomplished a pains taking task by copying these new inscriptions, inspite of the difficulties they had to encounter in that process. Dr. Chandrashekara Kambara, the former Vice-chancellor of the University, initiated the scheme of publishing inscriptional volumes, districtwise, from the districts which formed parts of erstwhile Bombay Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka, Madras Karnataka as well as the areas outside Karnataka, which had a bearing on the history of Karnataka; Dr. M. M. Kalburgi, the present Vice-chancellor has provided the required fillip in getting the volume out of the press as per schedule and Dr. A. V. Navada, Director, Prasaraṅga of the University has taken keen interest in the publication of the volume neatly; all of them deserve the grateful thanks of the research scholars.

In the preparation of the volume, it is evident the editors have followed in general the pattern of *South Indian Inscriptions*, published by the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India and that of *Epigraphia Carnatika* (revised) being published by the University of Mysore. The present volume contains the contents page, preface, editorial; alphabetical list of villages of the District arranged Talukwise, Introduction (i.e. general introduction) both in English and Kannada, texts of Inscriptions with introduction in English and its Kannada summary, Index (*padasūchi*) and plates, and serves as a useful reference work to the research scholars. However, its utility would have increased if a dynastic Index had been provided on the pattern of *South Indian Inscriptions* or *Epigraphia Carnatika* volumes. The Index (at the end) i.e., *padasūchi* could have been a little more elaborate just as the index to *S.I.I.* volumes. It can also be emphasized here that, using diacritical marks (i.e. macrons over letters) in the English portion for indicating the exact pronunciation, is very necessary in case of such research publications. I also suggest that in respect of inscriptions, which do not furnish the details of date, it would be better to indicate the palaeographical dating of the records, which is not done in the case of a few records. As regards Prakrit inscriptions, the texts of which are provided in the Kannada script, it would be more useful if their Roman or Nāgarī transliteration is also provided. It can be sincerely hoped that necessary improvements will be made, keeping these suggestions in mind, in the volumes to be brought out in future, so that their reference value will increase manifold. The attention of the editors is also invited towards some obvious errors which have crept in same pages (for example page : III, 1, 17,

8, 12, 373 etc) by oversight and here it is not proposed to go into greater details for want of space. The general introduction furnishes some very useful information relating to the political, social, literary and cultural history of the periods to which the epigraphs belong. The editors have also taken pains to provide a thorough reading of the texts. The volume in general is very useful. It also highlights the importance of latest discoveries. The editors and the authorities of the University have to be heartily congratulated for placing the present volume in the hands of research scholars.

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## Book Reviews - II

*Epigraphia Carnatica*, Volume X - Hassan District, edited by Dr. A.V. Narasimha Murthy (Hon. Editor), Sri S. S. Jagirdar, H.M. Nagaraja Rao, K. Mohammad Shariff and K. Krishnaveni (Epigraphical Assistants), published by Kuvempu Institute of Kannada Studies and printed by Director, Prasaraṅga, University of Mysore with the help of Graphics, Prabhat Offset and D.T.P. Centre and C.F.T.R.I., Mysore, 570 006, (Revised edition of Vol. V by the Institute), 1997; pp. CIV + 1000 and VIII plates, Price Rs. 600/-

The volume containing in all 471 inscriptions from Arasikere and Channarayapatna Taluks of Hassan District is Serial No. 10 in the revised series being published by the University of Mysore. The volume contains alphabetical Index of villages of both the Taluks, Dynastic Index of inscriptions, a synchronised list of inscriptions indicating their earlier references, a general introduction, texts of inscriptions (in Kannaḍa script with Roman transliteration in some cases), translation of inscriptions and index - both in Kannada and English. The editors have rendered a commendable service to the cause of epigraphy by revising the texts of the already published inscriptions, incorporating at the same time 29 new epigraphs and providing comprehensive introductory notes in respect of all records. In the general introduction some very important historical facts have been brought to light for the first time, enhancing the research value of the publication. Amongst the epigraphs, those belonging to the dynasties of Gaṅgas, Chālukyas, Hoysaḷas, Vijayanagara and Mysore rulers and other minor ruling families provide a comprehensive account of these ruling families and enable us to update our knowledge of the political, socio-economic and cultural history of nearly 1,500 years. The texts of inscriptions earlier edited by Shri. B.L. Rice have been made up to date by a thorough revision. A few of the inscriptions newly discovered bring to light some hitherto unknown facts enabling us to understand the history of the period more comprehensively. The volume is neatly printed. It is a matter of satisfaction that in the recent years, the Institute of Kannada studies has been bringing out the *Epigraphia Carnatica* volumes in quick succession and as per schedule. The editors and the concerned authorities deserve our sincere appreciation and heartfelt thanks for placing in the hands of the research scholars the present volume, which is weighty both in its form and contents.



### Book Review-III

#### The Early Chōlas: History, Art and Culture by S.Swaminathan (pp. 240 + 26 plates; 1998, Sharada Publishing House, 1998, Delhi)

This new volume makes a substantial and valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Chōla period. It focuses on the period of Parāntaka I, whose reign of nearly fifty years comprises the first half of the tenth century. As Dr. Swaminathan makes abundantly clear in the course of his presentation, this period was witness to a number of political, economic and religious developments which were of considerable significance for the character of polity and society in subsequent times. Given that the period during which the later Chōla kings ruled has perhaps received more scholarly attention, Dr. Swaminathan's project of examining and elucidating the events and circumstances of the earlier era is to be commended.

The book rests firmly on the evidence of the inscriptions of the period of Parāntaka's reign (907-955 A.D.). In addition, the author has taken care to situate this period historically, with reference to evidence from earlier and later times, and he has drawn, wherever possible, on art, historical, architectural, and literary materials to complement the epigraphical evidence. The focus on this particular phase of Chōla period history, with its relatively narrow scope, allows the reader, on the one hand, to appreciate the features and institutions that are specifically characteristic of this period, and, on the other, to discern the crucial changes that took place over the course of these fifty years. By producing a comprehensive portrait of this single period, Dr. Swaminathan has provided us with an important building block for the larger project of reconstructing the history of medieval Tamil Nadu as a whole.

The book is divided thematically, with major chapters on political history, administration, social and religious conditions, economic conditions, and art and architecture.

There are two useful appendices, including lists of temples that have been attributed by various scholars to the period of Parāntaka I and the texts of a number of the more significant inscriptions of the period. Not only in these appendices, but throughout the book, there are a number of very valuable lists and tabulations prepared by the author; these include, for example, lists of tax terms with definitions, the names of Brahman settlements mentioned in inscriptions of the period, and references to bronze images that appear in the inscriptions. These lists, as well as the factual details presented in the rest of the book, are provided with thorough documentation, so that the interested reader can easily track down the epigraphical sources being used.

The reconstruction of the political history of this period presents a number of challenges. In the absence of Parāntaka's own *prasastis* – with the exception of the rather brief specimens that appear in the two extant copper-plate inscriptions from this period – historians have relied heavily on the *prasastis* of later Chōla kings for “information” about Parāntaka's military conquests and political career. Dr. Swaminathan is more cautious, and is scrupulous

about distinguishing between claims made by the later kings about their forebear, on the one hand, and the evidence that emerges from the stone inscriptions of Parāntaka's own period relating to his battles and the extent of his domain, on the other. This allows the author to piece together a more accurate and persuasive account of Parāntaka's political fortunes and relations with other South Indian rulers. The chapter on social and religious conditions is the longest in the book, which seems entirely appropriate, given the wealth of information—often neglected—which the Chōla period inscriptions contain relating to these aspects of life. The author brings forward some fascinating material relating to different segments of society and sectarian communities. The picture he draws of temple life is vivid and comprehensive, with detailed information about the roles of temple personnel and the character of deities worshiped and services offered. The book's final chapter on art and architecture also contributes greatly to our understanding of the character of social and religious life in this period. I especially appreciate Dr. Swaminathan's efforts to coordinate the information derived from study of the inscriptions with his observations gleaned through field study at the temples where the inscriptions are engraved. For example, his consideration of Parāntaka's role in the construction of the Gōmuktīśvara temple at Tiruvāḍuturai depends on his reading of an inscription with reference to the physical fabric of the temple itself. In my view, such efforts to "restore" the texts of inscriptions to their material matrix are critical if we are to develop in the sophisticated use and analysis of epigraphical—and art historical—evidence.

At the end of this volume, there is a section of photographs of temples constructed during Parāntaka's reign which beautifully complement the discussions of religion and art and architecture in the body of the book. This is a fitting end to a book that has been produced in a very attractive fashion, and with a good deal of care.

*Leslie C. Orr*

## **Honorary Fellows**

1. Shri Krishnadeva
2. Dr. H.V. Trivedi
3. Dr. R.S. Sharma
4. Shri K.G. Krishnan
5. Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra
6. Prof V.B. Kolte
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## **XXV Annual Conference**

**Venue: Udupi (Karnataka)**

**General President : Prof. S.R. Goyal**

**Scholar to be honoured : Shri P.R. Srinivasan**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> April 1999**