

Six Decades of Indian Epigraphy (1950-2010): Sanskrit and Dravidian Inscriptions

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ABSTRACT

The Epigraphy Branch has been a very important research wing of the Archaeological Survey of India right from its inception in 1887. Since then, it has been conducting epigraphical surveys throughout the length and breadth of the country and has collected a large number of inscriptions. Thus, the Directorate of Epigraphy for Sanskrit and Dravidian inscriptions at Mysore is a rich repository of the estampages of the inscriptions. During the last six decades, there has been tremendous progress in epigraphical research and studies, and the contribution of the Branch in this regard is immense.

This article provides a brief introduction to the Branch, including its aims, objectives, activities and publications. Since a vast period is covered, the study has been categorized into four groups, viz. 1. Inscriptions from north India; 2. Inscriptions from south India; 3. Inscriptions from abroad; and 4. Miscellaneous inscriptions. An attempt has been made to give a kaleidoscopic view of the vast panorama of our inscriptional wealth, right from the third century BC to the Late Medieval period. In particular, many new dynasties that have come to light through inscriptions are highlighted here. On the whole, this review article showcases the rich epigraphical heritage and its contributions in adding new dimensions to not only political history but also to the socio-economic and various other aspects of cultural history.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) was established in 1887 with a view to conduct a comprehensive epigraphical survey and bring to light the results of such a survey and research in the form of various epigraphical publications of the department. The main work involved was (and remains) undertaking extensive explorations in various parts of the country in order to copy the inscriptions available in different regions. The inscriptions thus copied were to be deciphered, transcribed and edited. As pointed out by B. Ch. Chhabra in the ninth volume of *Ancient India*, 'it is epigraphy that has yielded most authentic data for the reconstruction of India's ancient history, not only political and administrative but also religious, cultural, social and commercial. In addition, much welcome light is shed thereby on the contemporary literature and the linguistics.'

During the last one hundred and twenty-four years, the Epigraphy Branch has copied and studied more than seventy-four thousand inscriptions from different parts of India, all of which have been noticed or published in one way or the other in departmental publications. In order to regularly make available the results of these epigraphical researches to historians and research scholars, the following publications were introduced over the years by the ASI and continue to be published to this date.

1. *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy*
2. *Epigraphia Indica*
3. *South Indian Inscriptions*
4. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*
5. *Epigraphia Indica: Arabic and Persian Supplement*

In addition to these publications, a few memoirs and monographs, lists of inscriptions, topographical and other indices have been brought out from time to time. Amongst the monographs, *Karandai Tamil Sangam Plates of Rājēndrachōla I* and *A Copper Plates Hoard of the Gupta period from Bagh* may be mentioned here.

The Branch is headed by the Director (Epigraphy), with headquarters at Mysore. In order to make a detailed study of the Arabic and Persian inscriptions, which form a distinct discipline and constitute important source material for medieval and modern Indian history, a separate branch for Arabic and Persian inscriptions was established in the year 1946, with headquarters at Nagpur. The branch is presently headed by a Director (Epigraphy) for Arabic and Persian inscriptions.

The Epigraphy Branch re-oriented and expanded the scope of its activities when two zonal offices were established in the year 1990, with a view to conducting extensive epigraphical surveys in the northern and southern regions. The Northern Zonal office has its headquarters at Lucknow while the Southern Zonal office has its headquarters at Chennai. Both zonal offices are headed by a Deputy Superintending Epigraphist.

In the early part of the last century, the country was agog with epigraphical activity. Prior to the 1950s, thousands of inscriptions were brought to light, mainly from south India, and they were reported in the *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy*. But after the 1950s, a large number of inscriptions were copied from different parts of India, reported in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* and subsequently edited in various journals, including *Epigraphia Indica* and *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*. The epigraphists of yesteryears worked with tremendous zeal and enthusiasm. They conducted epigraphical surveys throughout the country against heavy odds, and have given us a rich epigraphical wealth. Their contribution is immense in enriching epigraphical studies.

In the last two to three decades, there has been a steady decline in epigraphical studies, with a dwindling tribe of epigraphists. This setback is mainly ascribed to fewer scholars taking up the study of humanities, especially Indology and Sanskrit.

Now, efforts are being made to train young epigraphists to copy, decipher and study inscriptions. Intensive short-term courses are being conducted to impart training in the fields of epigraphy, palaeography and numismatics. Since epigraphy is a highly specialized field, intensive training is required to make professional epigraphists. We have vast epigraphical wealth before us to be exploited and studied, and further enrich our history.

As part of attempts to sensitize students and the public about our rich epigraphical heritage, photo exhibitions of inscriptions are organized under cultural awareness programmes. On the whole, different strategies are adopted to popularize the subject of epigraphy and numismatics.

The inscriptions reviewed here range from the third century BC to the Late Medieval period. Most of the early inscriptions that are dated between the third century BC and the fifth century AD are written in Brāhmī script. This is a very popular script found throughout the country, and it is the mother of all the scripts found in subsequent periods not only in India but even in south-east Asia.

Another major script is Kharoshthī, found mostly in the northwestern part of India and in central Asia from the third century BC to the fourth century AD.

Other important scripts are box-headed and nail-headed characters, mostly found in central India between the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Kuṭila, or Siddhamātrikā, is a very popular and ornamental script found mostly in north Indian inscriptions, and to some extent in south India, from the sixth to the eighth centuries AD.

From the fifth century AD onwards, regional scripts started making their appearance in inscriptions. These included Tamil, Kannada and Telugu. Malayalam script made its appearance

only in the thirteenth century AD. In the north, regional scripts like Śāradā, Gauḍīya, proto-Bengali and early Nāgarī made their appearance from the tenth century AD onwards. Subsequently, in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries AD, other regional scripts like Gurumukhi, Marathi and Gujarati are noticed. Early Brāhmī inscriptions were written in the Prakrit language, and they are found from the third century BC to the third century AD. Prakrit was the popular *lingua franca*, and it was used throughout the country. Along with Prakrit inscriptions, a few Sanskrit inscriptions were found, dated to the early first century AD. With the emergence of the Guptas, Sanskrit became a popular medium of expression from the fourth century AD onwards, both in south and north India. In course of time, regional languages were used to write inscriptions, so that we have inscriptions written in Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu in south India.

Since, a vast period of progress in epigraphical studies has to be reviewed, running to more than six decades, and is far-flung in time and space, for the sake of convenience and understanding, this study has been categorized into four groups: 1. Inscriptions from north India; 2. Inscriptions from south India; 3. Inscriptions from abroad; and 4. Miscellaneous inscriptions. However, for a comprehensive understanding, all the Rock Edicts of Aśoka, from both north and south India, are reviewed in the category of Inscriptions from north India.

In the last six decades, many unique, epoch-making epigraphical discoveries have been made. Intensive and extensive epigraphical surveys conducted throughout the length and breadth of the country have yielded thousands of inscriptions, which shed light on hitherto unknown dynasties. With these inscriptions, a fairly well-knit history may be written on far-flung areas covering vast time and space. The rich mosaic of Indian history became much brighter with the emergence of new inscriptions, which have lent a new dimension and perspective to known history. It is no exaggeration to state that the discoveries made in the last six decades have placed Indian history on a very firm ground. Further, it is stated that the inscriptions reviewed here are very comprehensive but not exhaustive. This study is intended only to highlight some important inscriptions, belonging to various dynasties.

2. INSCRIPTIONS FROM NORTH INDIA

A. Maurya

Many phenomenal epigraphical discoveries were made in the last six decades. Among these are many Aśokan edicts. The inscription discovered near Kandahar, in Afghanistan, stands as a testimony to the vast empire of the emperor Aśoka. It contains two versions of a new edict of Aśoka, one in Greek and the other in Aramaic, issued when ten years of the king's reign had passed.

In the south, many edicts came to light from Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. A Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka was discovered at Udegolam, Bellary district, Karnataka. Engraved on a granite outcrop, this minor Rock Edict mentions the name of Aśoka (*Rāja Aśoko*) followed by *Dēvānampiya*. Its purport is almost similar to the edict of Aśoka found at Niṭṭūr.

Niṭṭūr's minor Rock Edict of Aśoka, inscribed on two boulders of pink granite, is engraved in the Prakrit language using Brāhmī characters of the Aśokan period. Again, significantly, Aśoka's name

is found mentioned at the end of the edict, on the first boulder, and also at the beginning of the next part on the second boulder. A similar edict was discovered at Udegolam and subsequently at Sannati.

Another outstanding epigraphical discovery was an inscription of Aśoka on a rock at Rājula-Mandagiri near Pattikonda in Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh. This is a Minor Rock Edict and its contents are almost identical with those of its counterpart at Yerragudi, 20 miles (32 km.) away in the same area.

In Sopara, Thana district, Maharashtra, an inscription was brought to light that is said to be a broken part of an Aśokan inscription which was discovered by a schoolboy and brought to the notice of N. A. Gore, Assistant Secretary and Librarian of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (BBRAS). On examination, this turned out to be a damaged version of the Ninth Edict. A part of the Eighth Edict had already been found at the same place, and it is now almost certain that Sopara contained a complete set of the Rock Edicts of Aśoka.

Similarly, some more edicts came to light in north India. One is the Ahraura Edict of Aśoka. The text of this edict closely follows that of the Sasaram Minor Rock Edict. In the 1970s, the Pangoraria Rock Edict was discovered in Sehore district, Madhya Pradesh. Of the two inscriptions engraved in Mauryan Brāhmī characters and in the Prakrit language, the first refers to Piyadasi, the king (*mahārāja*), conveying the message of piety through the prince (*kumāra*) Samva during the course of his pilgrimage to U(o)panitha-Vihāra in Maneme-dēsa. The number 256 is mentioned at the beginning of the inscription. The second inscription is a Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka, beginning with the expression of *Dēvānāmpīya*.

A new version of a Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka in the village of Gujarra in Datia district of Madhya Pradesh was another outstanding epigraphical discovery. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the second of the many records of the emperor so far discovered that mentions Aśoka by his personal name. The first is the Rock Edict at Maski. There are some passages in the Gujarra inscription which are not found in any other version of this Minor Rock Edict.

After a lapse of many years, the beginning of 2009 saw the startling discovery of an Aśokan Minor Rock Edict from Basarh, Kaimur district, Bihar, akin to the Sasaram Rock Edict (Fig. 1). A team of officials from the Epigraphy Branch in Mysore made an *in situ* study of the inscriptions, and copied them in presence of B. R. Mani, then Joint Director General, ASI, New Delhi.

Apart from Aśokan Rock Edicts, a few important Brāhmī inscriptions also came to light from different parts of India. It is only with the emergence of dynasties like the Kshatrapa and Śuṅgas in the north and the Sātavāhanas in the south that more and more inscriptions in Brāhmī script and Prakrit language were discovered. These discoveries helped historians to construct a well-knit history, particularly of the ancient period. Further, it may be noted that these discoveries also drew the attention of palaeographers to critically study the evolution of the Brāhmī script.

B. Kshatrapa

An important dynasty which ruled over the western region, particularly Gujarat, in the second century AD, was the Kshatrapas. Among the many inscriptions that have come to light from this

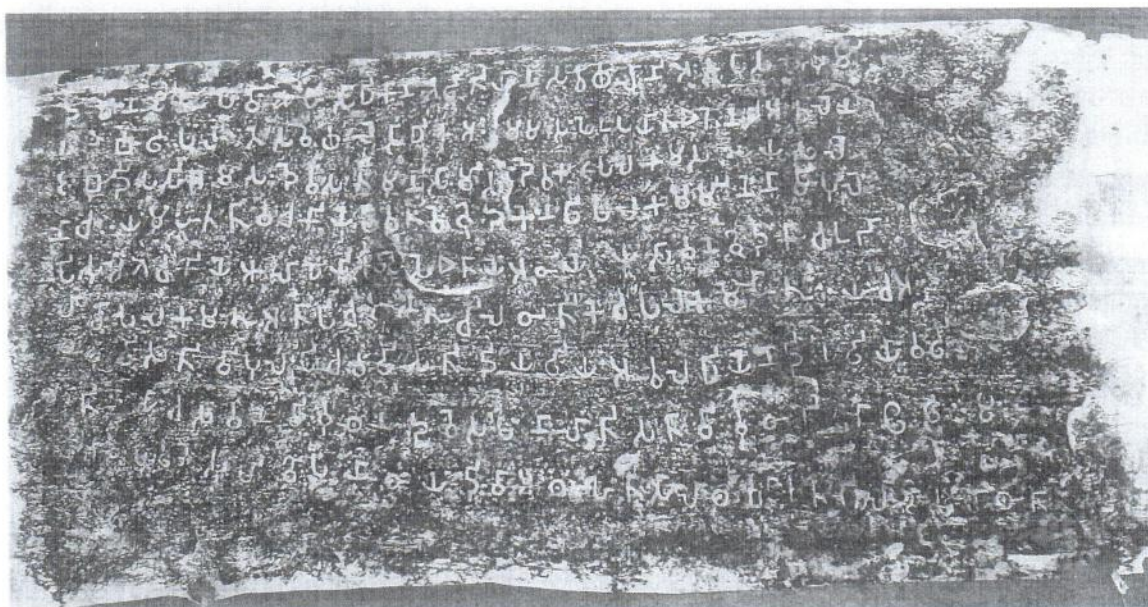


FIG 1 *Basarh rock edict of Aśoka*

region, is a stone inscription from Khavada in Kachchh district. This gives the genealogy of Yasāmōtika, his son *rājan mahākshtrapa svāmin* Chasṭana, his son *rājan svāmin* Jayadāman and his son Rudradāman.

C. Kushan

Many Kushan inscriptions have come to light, with Mathura yielding the largest number. One inscription belongs to king Vāsudēva and is dated to his sixty-fourth regnal year. Written in Prakrit language using Brāhmī characters, it records the setting up of an image of Śākyamuni (i.e., Buddha) and the construction of a shrine for it by a person named Guhasēna.

D. Ābhīra

The Ābhīra inscription preserved in Kachchh Museum, Bhuj district, Gujarat is in Gupta Brāhmī characters, dated Śaka 254 (AD 332). It refers to an Ābhīra king named Īsvaradēva. It is noteworthy that this inscription has contributed new evidence for the history of the Ābhīras, and is the earliest record mentioning the Śaka era by name.

E. Gupta

Another imperial dynasty that ruled over north India was that of the Guptas. Many Gupta inscriptions have come to light in the last six decades. One is a pillar inscription originally found at Supia in

the old Rewa state. It is preserved in the Dhubela Museum, Chhatarpur district, Madhya Pradesh, and it is dated in the Gupta year 141 (AD 460). Thus, it belongs to the reign of the Gupta emperor Skandagupta. The epigraph records the erection of a pillar by Varga-grāmika in memory of some of his deceased relatives.

A very important discovery of two Jaina image inscriptions belonging to the Gupta period was made in Vidisha, Vidisha district, Madhya Pradesh. The inscriptions are engraved on the pedestals of two Jaina images found at Durjanpur, and now preserved in the Vidisha Museum. The inscriptions are in Gupta characters of about the fourth century AD. One of them refers to the making of the image of Chandraprabha by *Mahārājādhirāja* Rāmagupta, while the other refers to the making of the image of Pushpadanta by the same ruler. King Rāmagupta is identified with the imperial Gupta ruler known to be the son of Samudragupta.

During the period under review, several post-Gupta inscriptions came to light. Some of the rulers at this time were feudatories and some were independent rulers. The inscriptions that were discovered belong to the Bhulunda, Manavyani, Vākāṭaka, Śarabhapuriya, Pāṇḍuvarṣī and others' dynasties, all from central India. It may be noted that these lithic and copperplate inscriptions not only furnish a lot of information on political history, but also on socio-economic, religious and cultural history.

F. Bhulunda

This inscription was found in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. It is composed in Sanskrit using southern characters of about the fifth century AD. The inscription, with two dates of an unspecified era and issued from Valkha, refers to the grant of a site for houses in a village named Rohyavāhaka, in the Dasilakapalli-rāshṭra, on the opposite bank of the Narmada river. The land was granted to a number of brahmins, in the year 38 (AD 357). This record is stated to have been inscribed on the copperplate in the year 47 (AD 366), at the orders of the king.

G. Manavyani

This inscription is in the Bramanamata temple near Chhotisadri in Udaipur district. It mentions king Gauri (Śauri), of the Manavyani dynasty, and it is dated Vikrama 547 (AD 490). It is composed in Sanskrit using Brāhmī characters. It reveals, for the first time, the existence of a royal family called Manavyani.

H. Vākāṭaka

Another important dynasty that ruled over central India in the fourth and fifth centuries AD was that of the Vākāṭakas. Many copperplate inscriptions have come to light from their reign, and one such is the Pauni Grant of Vākāṭaka Pravarasēna II, from Bhandara district, Maharashtra. It is in the Sanskrit

language using box-headed characters, and belongs to the thirty-second regnal year of Pravarasēna II. It records the perpetual grant of fifty *nivartanas* (measures) of land to one Durgārya.

A copperplate charter from Mandal, Nagpur district, Maharashtra, belonging to Pravarasēna II of the Vākātaka dynasty, dated in his sixteenth regnal year (fifth century AD) is written in box-headed characters in the Sanskrit language. It registers the grant of the village Mayasagrāma in Bennatata district by Māṭṭisvāmin, son of *Apratigrāhaka* Upādhyāya, a student of the Taittirīyaśākhā belonging to Kautsa-gōtra, for the merit of Ajñabhaṭṭarikā (Fig. 2).

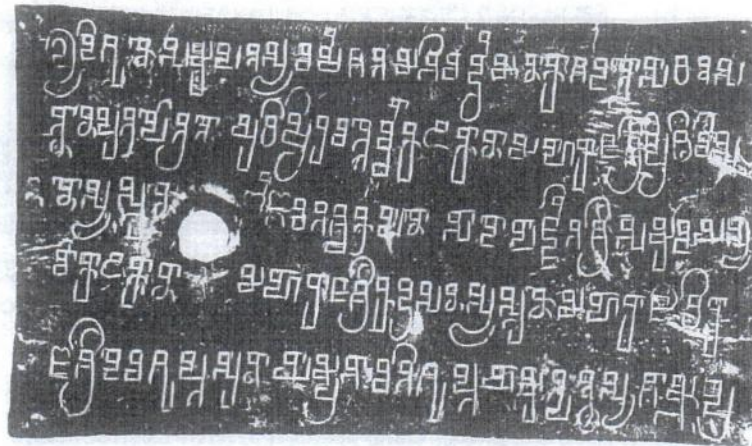


FIG 2 Mandal copperplate inscription of Pravarasēna II

I. Maukhari

A seal from Asirgadh, East Nimar district, Madhya Pradesh, is very significant as it furnishes the genealogy of Śarvavarman, written in late Brāhmī characters in the Sanskrit language. On palaeographical grounds, the seal can be assigned to the sixth century AD (Fig. 3).



FIG 3 Asirgadh seal of Śarvavarman

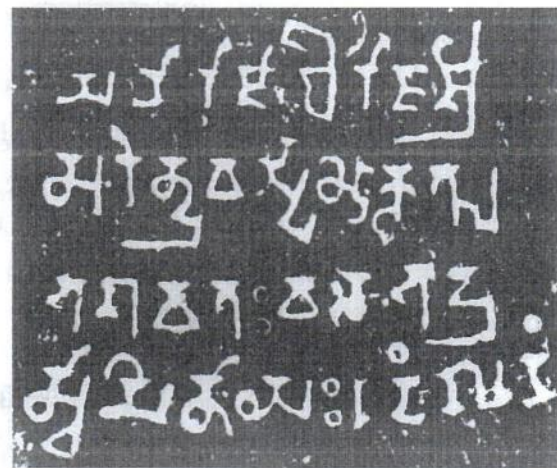


FIG 4 Umachal inscription of Surēndravarma

J. Śarabhapurīa

This grant of king Narēndra of Śarabhapura, Kurud, Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh, is dated in the twenty-fourth year of Narēndra's rule. Narēndra was an early Śarabhapurīa ruler. The inscription records the confirmation of a grant made by his father, and it is addressed to the son of the original donee. The original charter, written on *tāla* leaves, was destroyed in a fire accident, according to the inscription.

K. Bhauma Nāraka

A late Brāhmī inscription from Umachal hill in Guwahati district of Assam, belonging to King Surēndravarma of the Bhauma Nāraka dynasty and written in Sanskrit using Brāhmī characters of the fifth century AD, records the making of a cave temple for the god Balabhadrasvāmin by the king (Fig. 4).

L. Hūṇa

This copperplate charter from Sanjeli, Panchmahal district, Gujarat, is dated in the third regnal year. It is palaeographically datable to the late fifth or early sixth centuries AD. It records some donations made when Tōramāṇa was ruling. It further mentions the construction of a Vishṇu temple by Viradhikya, the queen mother, when *Vishayapati Mahārāja* Bhūta was ruling. It records various taxes that the local traders agreed to donate for the temple's construction.

M. Bhōja

Two copperplate inscriptions in Sanskrit written in southern characters of the sixth to seventh centuries AD were issued from Pṛithvīparvata in the thirty-first year of the reign of the Bhōja king Pṛithivīmallavarman. The copperplates record a grant of land made to the brahmin Śivāryya of Kauṇḍinya-gōtra. For both the charters, the executor (*ājñapti*) was the *bhōjaka* Nidhivara; and both were inscribed by Siridama, who is described in one charter as belonging to the Ādirahānya-kula.

N. Pāṇḍuvamśī

There are many Pāṇḍuvamśī inscriptions. Among them are the two copperplate grants cited here. The first belongs to Mahāśiva Tivara from Bonda, Bilaspur district, Madhya Pradesh, and it was issued in the king's fifth regnal year. It records the grant of Bondaka and Avadika, both situated in Pihasaja-bhukti. The second grant was issued by king Mahāśivagupta on the sixth of the first (i.e., dark) fortnight of Pushya, in his twenty-second regnal year. It records the grant of Sarkarapaṭaka in Layottaka-vishaya. The grants are written in the box-headed characters of the sixth or seventh centuries AD, as used in the copperplate grants of the Pāṇḍuvamśī of south Kosala.

O. Saindhava

This charter is from Ambala, Junagadh district, Gujarat, written in the Sanskrit language, using the southern, box-headed characters of the sixth to seventh centuries AD. It was issued from Kuberanagara, and belongs to the reign of king Ahivarman, son of *Mahāsēnāpati* Pushya. It records a grant, made by the king, of some villages, lands and gardens to the Buddhist nunnery (*bhikshuṇīvihāra*) of Ubheda. The gift was intended for the repairs to the *vihāras*, for materials required for the worship of the Buddha, and for maintaining the members or the *bhikshuṇī-saṃgha*.

P. Pushyabhūti

In 2009, an important copperplate charter belonging to the reign of Harsha of the Pushyabhūti dynasty came to light from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. It is dated in his twenty-second regnal year (AD 628) and is written in Sanskrit with Siddhamātṛikā characters. It records a grant by the king of the village Paṇḍārātḡāka, situated in Saṃvarddha-vishaya and Jayarata-bhukti, as an *agrahāra*, thus exempting it from all taxes to the *bhājita* Ulūkhalasvāmin of the Bhārgava *gōtra* (Fig. 5)

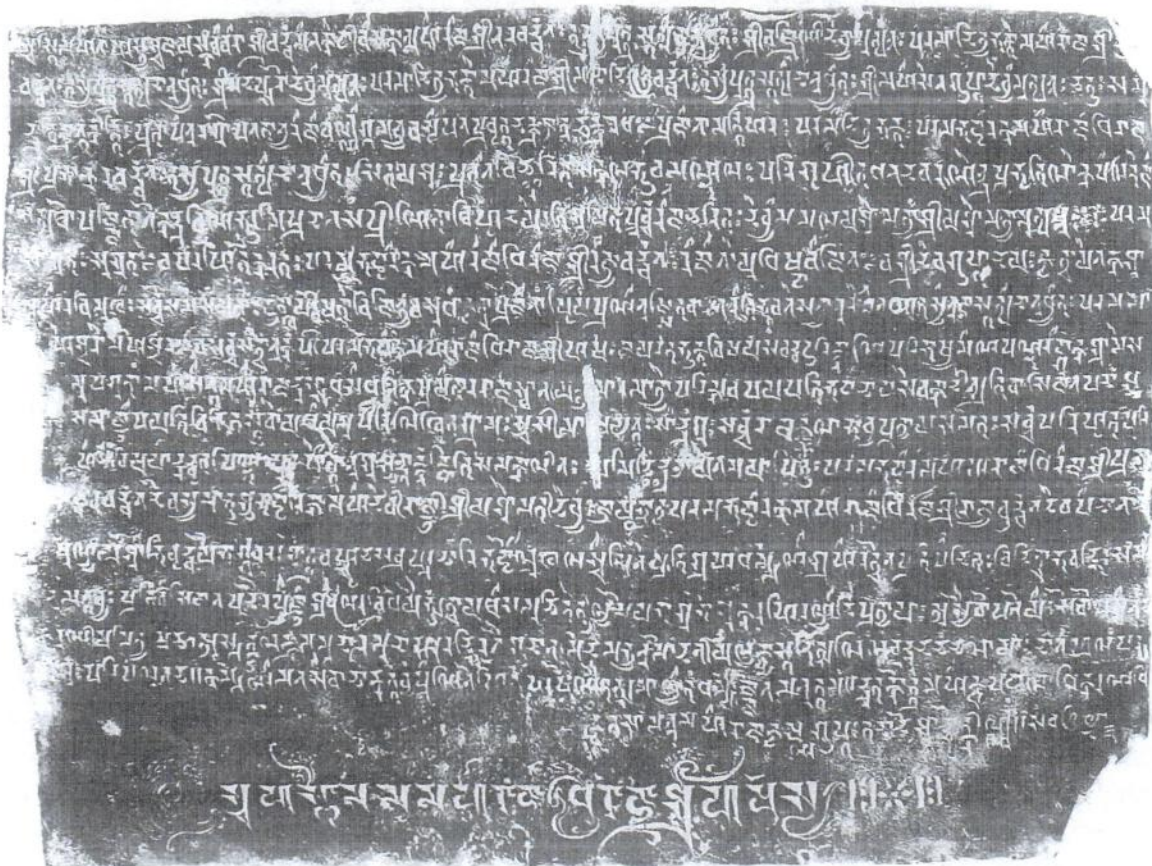


FIG 5 Varanasi copperplate charter of Harsha

Q. Nalas

A set of plates of Bhīmasēna from Pandiapatthar, Ganjam district, Orissa, is dated in the year 89, apparently referring to the Bhauma-kara era of 831 and corresponding to AD 919 of the Gregorian calendar. This charter records the grant of Kūrmatāla-grāma, in Kamaṇḍula-paṭṭa, by the king Bhīmasēna of the Nala dynasty.

R. Eastern Gaṅga

This charter from Gallavalli, Srikalulam district, Andhra Pradesh is dated in the Gaṅga year 393 (AD 890) and is written in the southern script and the Sanskrit language. These are a set of plates issued by Manujēndra, or Manujēndravarmaṇ, in the Gaṅga year 393, probably during the lifetime of his father Devendravarmaṇ. The charter's object was the grant of certain villages in favour of the deity Kanduka Guṇḍēśvara.

During the Early Medieval period, many powerful and imperial dynasties emerged. Several lithic and copperplate inscriptions came to light during this period, they have given a new dimension and perspective to the study of early medieval Indian history. Further, these epigraphs have helped to a very great extent in writing history at both the micro and macro level.

S. Pratihāra

A copper plate charter from Amroha, Moradabad district, Uttar Pradesh, belonging to the Pratihāra Nāgabhaṭṭa is dated Saṃvat 885 (AD 828). Written in Sanskrit using Siddhamātrikā characters, it states that Nāgabhaṭṭa was the son of the king Vatsarāja and queen Sundarī dēvī. It records the grant of an *agrahāra* village named Śāmbhupallikā situated in Guṇaparamaṇḍala by the king for his own merit and that of his parents (Fig. 6).

A copperplate charter of king Harirāja is preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi. The charter records the grant of two *hala* measures of land in the village of Tanda (or Katanda) and ten house sites in Tithasevanigrāma by the king. The grant was made on the occasion of a solar eclipse in Saṃvat 1040 (AD 993).

Another inscription is a *praśasti* belonging to king Raṇapāladēva, dated Vikrama 1100 (AD 1043). It is in praise of the Śaiva ascetic Prabodhaśiva of the spiritual lineage of the Śaiva ascetic Dharmāśanabhu, and was composed by a certain Daśaratha.

Many inscriptions belonging to Gurjara-Pratihāra dynasty have also come to light. One of the inscriptions is in Sanskrit, in Nāgarī characters of the ninth to tenth centuries AD. It is engraved on the pedestal of a stone image of Sūrya, which was found at Mahisantorh in West Dinajpur district. Dated in the fifteenth regnal year of the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Mahēndrapāla I, this epigraph records that the image of Āditya was caused to be made by Lokanandi, the son of Gajanandi and grandson of Vishṇunandi.

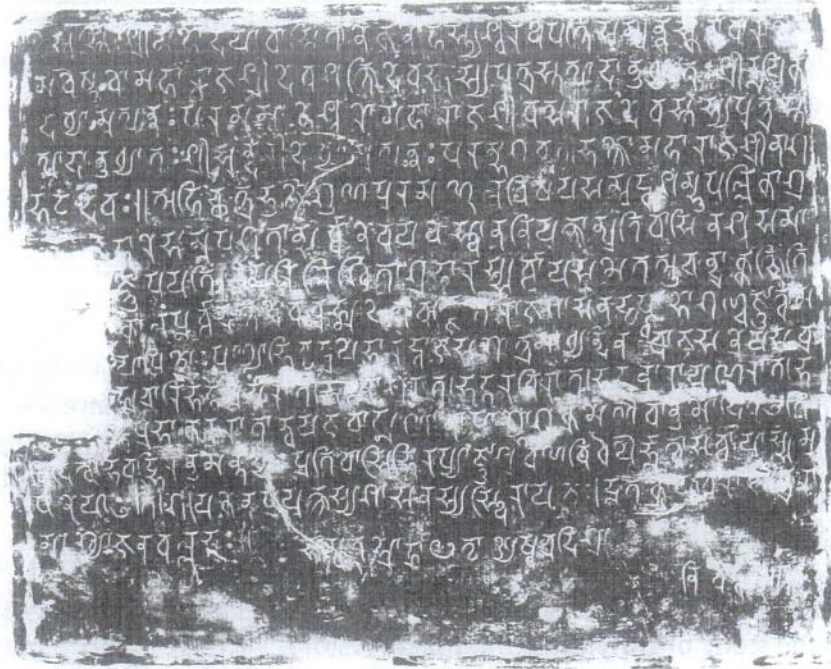


FIG 6 Amroha copperplate inscription of Nāgabhaṭṭa

T. Chālukya of Gujarat

There are a number of inscriptions that refer to the worship of the Sun god. As the inscription cited above refers to the making of an image of a Sun deity, this inscription refers to the construction of a Sun temple. This inscription, from Bhavanath, Sabar-Kantha district, Gujarat, dated Vikrama 1354 (AD 1297) belongs to the reign of king Karṇa II. It records the death of Mañjula of the Śāṇḍilya-gōtra in a cattle raid, and refers to the construction of a temple of the Sun god named after Mañjula by his son Vaijalla. A set plates from Paliad, Gahilwad district, Saurashtra, belonging to king Bhīma I, dated Saṁvat 1112 (AD 1055) and issued from Akasikagrāma, register the royal grant of a piece of land in favour of a *Vasatika* at Bāyada.

U. Sēna

A metal image of Sūrya, recovered from an old tank at Sanokhar in Bhagalpur district, Bihar, was found to bear an inscription of king Ballālasēna. Dated in the ninth year of the king's reign, this is the first genuine evidence of the expansion of Sēna rule over east Bihar.

V. Pāla

A copperplate inscription from Malda, Malda district, West Bengal, belonging to Mahēndrapālādēva of the Palā dynasty, dated in his seventh regnal year (AD 857), is written in proto-Bengali script in

Sanskrit. It refers to the construction of a monastery in the town of Nandadīrghika. It also records a grant for the worship and anointment of Lord Buddha, Prajñāpāramitā and other divinities. The charter was engraved (*utkīrṇa*) by *Sāmanta Māhaḍa* (Fig. 7).

An inscription from Siyan, Birbhum district, West Bengal, was discovered in a *dargah* of *Makhdum Shah Jabal* of the place. It is written in Sanskrit language and Nāgarī characters of about the eleventh century AD, and it belongs to the reign of king *Nayapāla*. It records the construction of several temples, monasteries etc., and the making of an image of gold and silver, probably by the king. It also refers to the king's victory against the forces of the Chēdi king, *Kaṛṇa*.

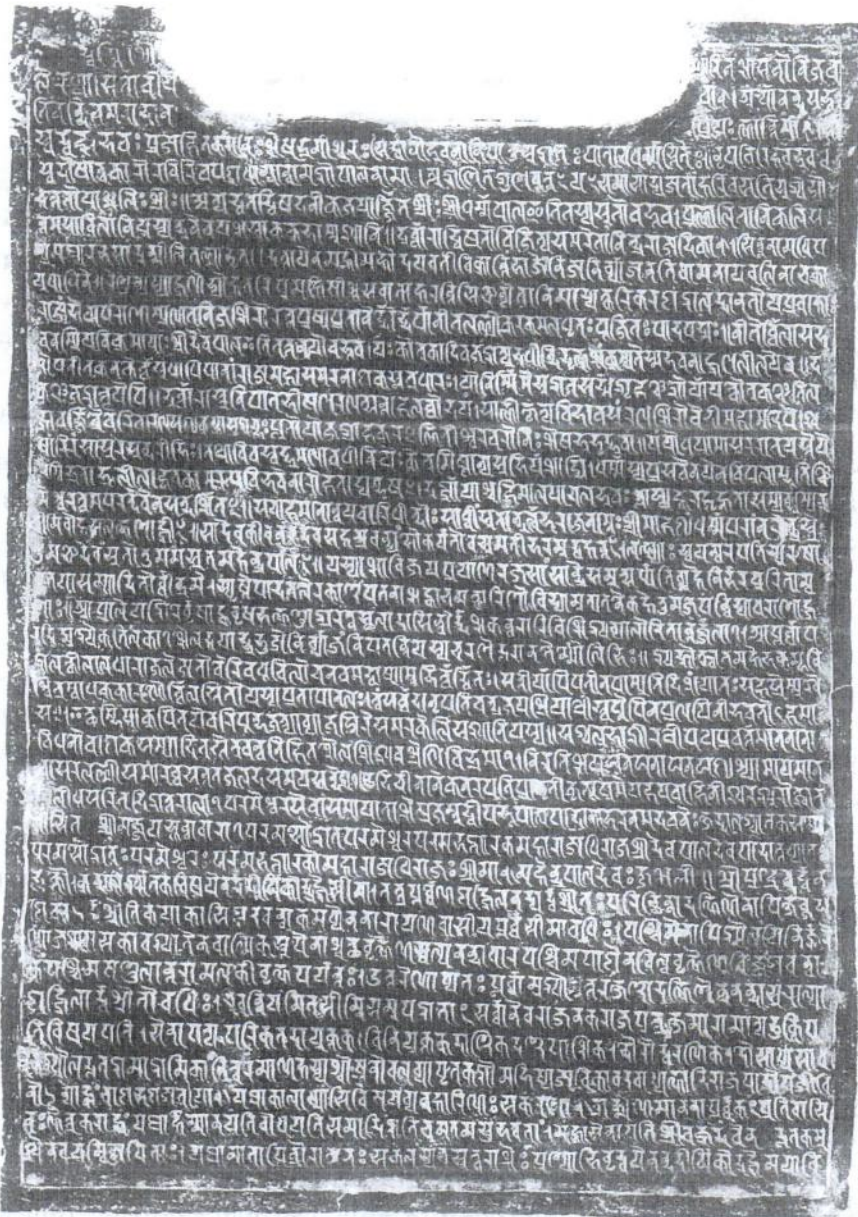


FIG 7 Malda copperplate of Mahēndrapālādēva

W. Paramāra

This inscription from Bhojpur, Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh, is engraved in characters of the eleventh century AD. It is carved on the pedestal of a *tīrthaṅkara* image in an old Jaina temple in the village. The first of two inscriptions, it is damaged and fragmentary, and belongs to the reign of king Bhōja dēva. Its discovery at Bhojpur is interesting, as it suggests that the village derived its name from the Paramāra king Bhōja (AD 1000-55).

Another record, engraved on the pedestal of an image of Pārśvanātha, records the setting up of two Jaina images by Chillaṇa, the son of Rāma and grandson of Nemichandra, in the reign of king Naravarman (AD 1097-1111).

X. Gāhaḍavāla

This rock inscription of Pratāpadhavala at Tarachandi, Shahabad district, Bihar, dated Vikrama 1225 (AD 1169), records an announcement by *Mahānāyaka* Pratāpadhavala, the lord of Japila, to the effect that the brahmins of Svarṇahala, or Suvarṇahala, had bribed Deu, a servant of king Vijayachandra of Kāṇyakubja, and received from him a forged copperplate grant by virtue of which they were fraudulently enjoying two villages called Kalahand and Vadayilo. The document was signed by *mahārāja-putra* Śatrughna.

A copperplate inscription, now preserved in the Allahabad Museum, records a grant of the Gāhaḍavāla king Govindachandra issued in the Vikrama year 1711 (AD 1115). A later Gāhaḍavāla king named Avadakkamalla is mentioned in a Kausambi inscription of the Vikrama year 1294 (AD 1238).

Y. Chandella

This Chandella copperplate inscription is in the custody of Taufiq Ahmed Chisti, a bookseller of Amroha, Amroha district, Uttar Pradesh. Though the charter is of fragmentary nature, the details regarding the grant it mentions, and historical portions of the inscription are not lost. It is written in Sanskrit language and early Nāgarī characters. The charter belongs to the reign of Śrī Vidyādharaḍēva, dated Vikrama 1069 (AD 1011). It records the grant of land to more than twenty brahmin donees, exempting it from all encumbrances and taxes. This is a very important grant as far as this ruler is concerned (Fig. 8).

A set of copperplates preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras, belonging to king Madanavarman, is dated Vikrama 1192 (AD 1136). It mentions *rājñī* Lakhamadēvī and *Mahārājñī* Valhanadēvī, and it records a land grant in favour of several brahmins.

Z. Yajvapāla

A hero-stone inscription belonging to the reign of king Yajvapāla Gōpāla from Bangla, Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh, is dated Vikrama 1338 (AD 1281). It records the death of certain persons

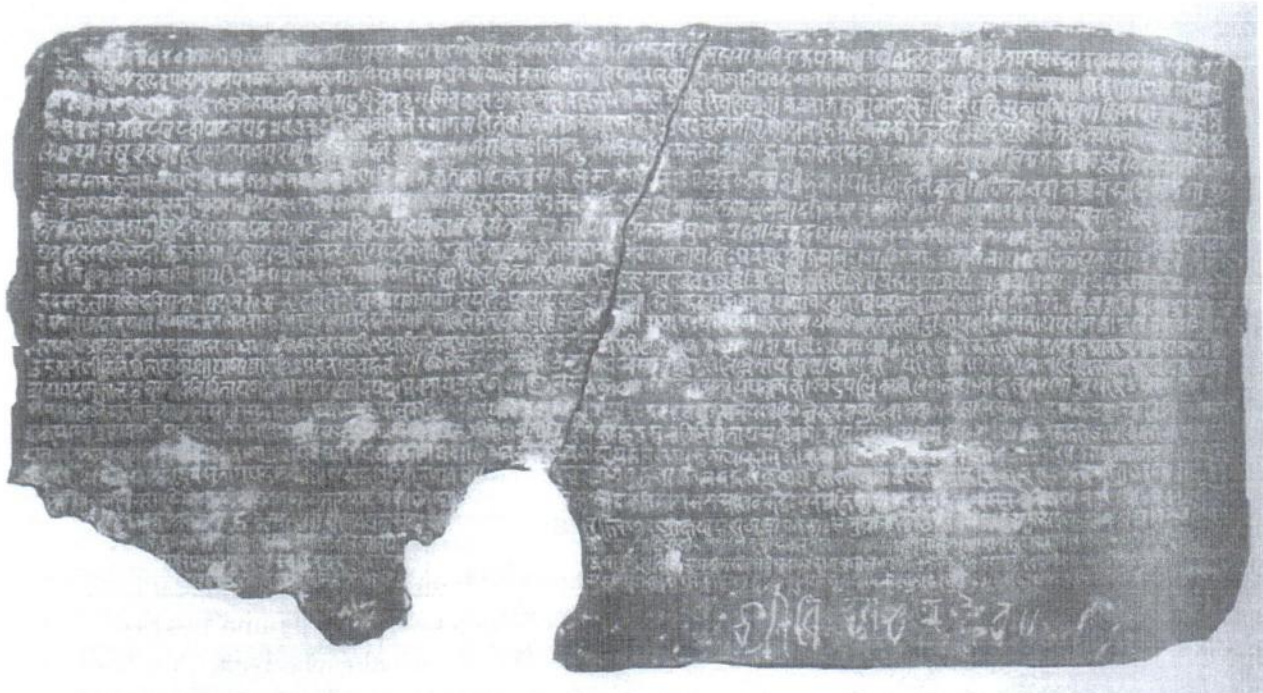


FIG 8 Amroha copperplate inscription of Vidyādharaḍēva

in a battle fought on the bank of the Valuka, or Valua, on behalf of the Yajvapāla king Gōpāla of Nalapura (Narwar) against the invading army of the Chandella king Vīravarman. As the plain of Bangla lies below the hill-fort of Narwar, the records show that the Chandella army succeeded in reaching the very heart of the Yajvapāla kingdom.

AA. Chahamāṇa

This inscription from Jalor, dated Vikrama 1331 (AD 1274), is of *mahārājikula* Chāchigadēva of the Jalor branch of the Chahamāṇa dynasty. It registers certain grants to the god Mahāvīra in the Chandanavihāra of the Jaina monastery attached to the Nānakīya-gachchha on the occasion of the *ashṭhanika* festival.

AB. Gajapati

Two charters of Gajapati Raghudēva are highlighted here. He is the son of Paraśurāma, the younger brother of Kapileśvara, the founder of the Sūrya-vaṃśa of Orissa. The first charter records the grant of a village on the occasion of a lunar eclipse in Śaka 1376 (AD 1454), and the second grant was made two years later.

Raghudēvapura is situated at Goda, i.e., Godavari. It may be noted that the ancestry of Kapileśvara is now known for the first time, as Raghudēva is said to have been the governor of

Rajamahindra, under his uncle Kapilēśvara, who is mentioned as the grandson of Kapilēśvara I, son of Jageśvara and younger brother of Balarāma.

AC. Ahom

Epigraphical surveys conducted in the north-east region yielded many inscriptions. An Ahom dynasty inscription from Guwahati, Kamrup district, Assam, dated Śaka 1666 (AD 1744) (guṇa-guṇa-guṇ-abja) was recovered from the Amratkeshvara temple on Kamakhya hill. It records the construction of the *maṭha* by *Bṛihat phukhana* Taruṇaduvara, by orders of Svargadēva Pramattasiṃha of Śakra-vaṃśa.

AD. Mughal

A Mughal inscription from Gwalior is engraved on a stone slab built into the *chhatrī* near Mansingh's palace inside the fort. This Sanskrit inscription in Nāgarī characters, dated Vikrama 1661 (AD 1604), records the construction of *Suprabhāvēdi* by Śravakas Śośha, Śrīpāla, Nārāyaṇadāsa, Bhōjarāja etc., during the reign of Jalāl-din (ie., Jalal-u-ddin Akbar). It mentions *Bhaṭṭāraka* Jagadbhūshaṇa, the disciple of Jñānabhūshaṇa, the disciple of Śilābhūshaṇa who was the disciple of *Bhaṭṭāraka* Dharmakīrtti of Valātkāra gaṇa, Bhāratīya-gachchha and Mūla-saṃgha, and also refers to an otherwise unknown local chief Rājasimha who was the son of Karṇēśa.

AE. Marāṭhā

A Marāṭhā inscription, from Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, is engraved on the copper *śikhara*, i.e., the *vimāna* of the Bṛihadīśvara temple. This inscription is in three versions, viz., Tamil, in Tamil script; Sanskrit, in Grantha; and Marathi in Nāgarī. Dated Śaka 1765 (AD 1843), it records the consecration of the *śikhara*, *ashṭabandhana* and *kumbhābhishēka* by Śivājī, the reigning king. It also refers to the precious consecration in Śaka 1651 (AD 1729), during the reign of Sarabhoji-mahārāja of Thanjavur.

3. INSCRIPTIONS FROM SOUTH INDIA

A. Sātavāhana

Many significant inscriptions, particularly in the early 1960s, were brought to light from Nagarjunakonda, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh.

After the dismemberment of the Mauryan empire, Sātavāhanas were one of the major dynasties that emerged in the south. A pillar inscription of Gautamīputra Vijaya Śātakarṇi, dated in his sixth regnal year came to light from Nagarjunakonda. This is the only known inscription of this ruler, who is otherwise known from the *Purāṇas* and coins.

The important Buddhist site of Sannati in Gulbarga district of Karnataka has yielded a large number of Brāhmī inscriptions from the Sātavāhana period. One of these inscriptions belongs to Vāsiṭhīputra Śrī Śātakarṇi of the second century AD and records the military achievements and exploits of Śātakarṇi, who is described as *Abhagavāhana*, *Sātavāhana*, lord of Beṃṇākāṭa, Vidabha, Uparigiri, Aparānta, Asaka, Mūḷaka, etc. (Fig. 9).



FIG 9 Sannati inscription of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi

B. Ikshvāku

Another important dynasty that succeeded the Sātavāhanas is that of the Ikshvākus. A number of inscriptions are known from Nagarjunakonda. One of these inscriptions records, in six different versions, the erection of a temple by *talavara* Elisiri, son of Gaṇḍi and grandson of *Sēnāpati* Anikki, in the eleventh year of the rule of Ehuvalaśrī. Another epigraph, engraved on a pillar, refers to the construction of a temple of god Pushpabhadra and the erection of a *dhvaja-stambha* in front of it in the sixteenth year of Ehuvala-Chāntamūla by his son Purushadatta.

Phanigiri, a potential Buddhist site situated in Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh, has yielded a number of early Brāhmī inscriptions and most of them belong to Ikshvāku rulers. Among them, one historically important inscription belongs to Rudrapurushadatta, dated in his eighteenth regnal year (fourth century AD). Till now, we had records belonging to the eleventh regnal year of this king. This inscription extends the reigning period of this king. This inscription records the erection of a pillar containing the *dharmachakra* by the chief physician (*aggrabhishaja*) (Fig. 10).

Another inscription is from Alluru, Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh. It is an *āyaka* pillar near the *stūpa*-mound containing a third century AD inscription, dated in the eighth regnal year of

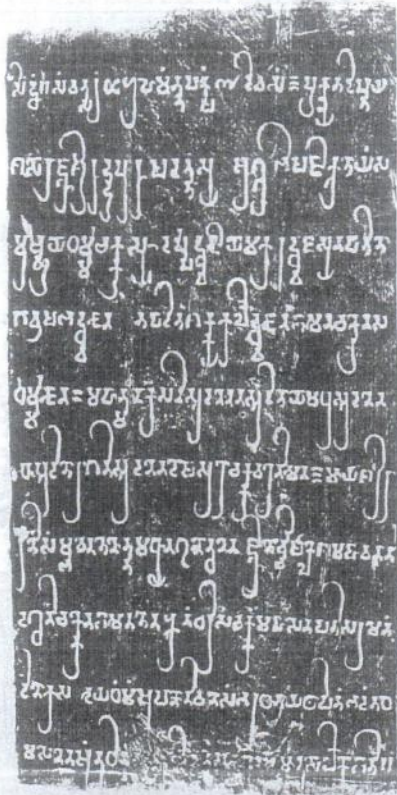


FIG 10 Phanigiri inscription of Rudrapurushadatta

FIG 11 Allahabad inscription of Śālaṅkāyaṇa

Ehavula Chāntamūla, the Ikshvāku king of Vijayapurī (Nagarjunakonda). The place is referred to as 'Halura', i.e., Alluru, The inscription states that one Venhuri, a resident of Haluru, and his associates installed the pillar as a pious gift to the *āchāryas* of the Puruvaśaila sect.

C. Śālaṅkāyaṇa

An inscription of Śālaṅkāyaṇa, now preserved in the Allahabad Museum in Uttar Pradesh, belonging to the second-third centuries AD and written in both Prakrit and Sanskrit languages using Brāhmī characters, mentions Bhūtila, the *amātya* of Śālaṅkāyaṇa (Fig. 11).

D. Early Kadamba

Early Kadamba inscriptions were noticed from Gudnapur, North Kanara district, Karnataka. Engraved on the four faces of a square pillar, this inscription is written in southern box-headed characters of about the end of the fifth century AD, in Sanskrit. It belongs to the reign of king Ravivarman of the early Kadamba dynasty, and registers gifts made by the king of some villages and lands, after purchasing them from the brahmins, to the temple of the god Manmatha built by him. It gives the genealogy of the king as mentioned in the famous Tālaguṇḍa pillar inscription of Śāntivarman.

E. Pallava

Among the early Pallava charters and inscriptions, the important ones are highlighted here. One charter, dated to the sixth regnal year of Pallava king, Simhavarman (AD 550-75), the father of Simhavishnu, records the grant of lands in Amanserkkai and Tamar to the Jaina saint Vajranandin of Paruttikkunru. This is the earliest Tamil copperplate inscription of the Pallavas of Kanchi.

Another fifth century AD charter is written in Sanskrit, and was recovered from Jalalapuram, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. It is dated in the nineteenth year of the reign of Simhavarman, son of Skandavarman and grandson of Viravarman. It records the gift of the village Vesanta in Dattapati to Jyeshthaśarman of Gautama-gōtra. It further states that Rahasyādhikṛita Kulippotta, the *ajñapti* of the charter, wrote the record.

An inscription from Kanchipuram, engraved in characters of about the eighth century, is dated in the eighteenth regnal year of king Narasingappottariyar Narasimhavarman II. It refers to the activities of the Ājivikas, and to a temple of Arivar (i.e., the Arahāt).

F. Rāshtrakūṭa

Another important dynasty that held sway in the south is that of the Rāshtrakūṭas. In the last six decades many important inscriptions of this dynasty have come to light. One such is a charter from Nevari, Satara district, Maharashtra, issued by the Rāshtrakūṭa king Govinda III in Śaka 727 (AD 805). It records the grant of Nesarika-grāma in Chandagada-vishaya, while the king was camping at Suguturu. The importance of the inscription lies in the fact that it mentions the *chihnas* snatched away by the Rāshtrakūṭa king from thirteen rulers defeated by him. One of these defeated rulers was Dharma of Vaṅgāla.

Another inscription is from Chennur, Adilabad district, Andhra Pradesh, dated Śaka 863 (AD 941), Sarvari belonging to the reign of Akālavarsha, i.e., Kṛishṇa III (AD 939-67). This inscription mentions that Arikesari-arasa, a scion of the Chālukya family and a feudatory of the Rāshtrakūṭa monarch, registered the grant of an *agrahāra* by Baddega, who was the son of Guṇagarasa and is described as a subordinate of Chālukya Arikēśarin.

Another noteworthy copperplate is from Andura, Akola district, Maharashtra, dated Śaka 851 (AD 929-30). This Sanskrit charter, written in early Nāgarī characters, belongs to the time of Rāshtrakūṭa Govinda IV, and it records the grant of the village Elauri in Vadanera to eight hundred brahmins on the occasion of the *Paṭṭabandha* ceremony.

G. Nolamba

This Nolamba inscription is from Navalal, Dharmapuri district, Tamil Nadu. The epigraph in Kannada characters of the tenth century AD is dated in the fifteenth year of the reign of Vira-Nolamba. It records the death of Prituva, the son of Puliyanna, who was ruling over Nanilur, and fought to save the honour of certain women.

H. Chōla

A large number of Chōla inscriptions have come to light. Some of the most significant inscriptions are highlighted here. This Chōla inscription from Srivaikuntam, Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, is dated in the fifteenth regnal year of the Chōla king Rājarāja I. This inscription, in Vaṭṭeluṭṭu characters, records a gift of land by purchase by Adigal Niradi, alias Parakēsari Mūvēndavēḷān, hailing from Urrukkadu on the southern bank of the Kaveri river in the Chōla country, for burning lamp, and for feeding daily at noon ten scholars well-versed in the *Vedas* and *Śāstras* in the temple of the god at Srivaikuntam, a *dēvadāna* in the village Varaguṇa maṅgalam in Tiruvaludi-Valanāḍu. It also states that the *mahāsabhai* of the village exempted the lands from tax.

A unique inscription from Uttaramerur, Chingleput district, Tamil Nadu, dated in the twelfth regnal year (AD 919) of Parāntaka I and written in Tamil language and characters, contains elaborate rules for selecting members to serve in the various committees of the brāhmanical assembly. It lays down that only persons of impeccable character and capacity, with a sound knowledge of the *Vedas* and *Dharmaśāstras*, were eligible to stand for election. The method of selecting members through a pot ticket system is detailed. It is also recorded that if the members so selected are found inefficient, they are to be sacked. The names of various committees that governed this village are also given (Fig. 12).

Another inscription was recovered from Vakkadi, North Arcot district, Tamil Nadu. This incomplete inscription in Tamil characters, is dated in the fourth year (AD 955-56) of the reign of Chōla Rājendra II. It registers a gift of land, made tax-free, as *Vēdabhogaṃ* for teaching *Taittīryavedaṃ*, by purchase from the *sabhai* of Nigarilisolach-chaturvedi-maṅgalam in Pariyur-nadu, a sub-division of Palkarak-kottam in Jayangondasola-maṅgalam by Satti Arinjiyappirattiyar.

This Tamil inscription from Shivapuram, Chingleput district, Tamil Nadu, engraved on the wall of the Śiva temple, is dated in the twenty-seventh regnal year (AD 1044-45) of Rājādhirāja I. It records the provisions made for various services rendered by *manigal*, *patiyar*, musician playing on *vīṇā* and *udukkai* in the temple of Śrī Rājarājēśvaram.



FIG 12 Uttaramerur inscription of Parāntaka I

Another Chōḷa inscription from Uyyakkondan-Tirumalai, Tiruchchirapalli district, is dated in the third regnal year (AD 1015) of Rājēndra I. It records a grant of tax-free land to reciters of *tiruppadiyam* in the temple of Vilumiyadēvar in Karkudi by the king, while he was taking food in his palace at Palaiyaru, at the instance of Sēnāpati Raman Rājarājan, alias Rājarāja-Brāhmrāyan.

Another Chōḷa inscription from Bahur, Puducherry district, engraved on the west wall of the Muleshvara temple, is dated in the eighteenth year (AD 1029) of the reign of Rājēndra I. It states that the assembly of Vahur, alias Alagiyasola-chaturvvedimangalam, met at the Alagiyasolan-ambolam in the village on the night of Friday śu. 1, in the month of Dhanus, in the sixteenth year (1 December 1027), along with Kappurar Udaiyar Nilan Venkadanar. They directed that the Tank Committee may collect a stipulated levy of paddy per season from the tenants belonging to villages outside, and that all the tenants of the village, aged between 10-80, except the untouchables, shall remove annually earth in the tank from a pit, measuring 2 x 2 x 1 kol of four spans.

A Tamil inscription from Vengalam, Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu, dated in the fifth regnal year (AD 1250-51) of king Rājēndrachōḷa III, records the gift of income from specified toll taxes on the loads of merchandise in favour of the deity Rājarājēśvaramudaiya-nayanar, at Veṅkulam by the guild of the merchant community (*pardinen-bhūmi-vanika-nagarattār*), obviously of the locality.

I. Eastern Gaṅga

This inscription from Ravada, Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, records a gift of five *maḍas* (of gold) to maintain a lamp in a local temple. The gift was made by Uttamagaṅga Dharma-śeṭṭi, a merchant of Malimaṅḍalam, and several others. It is written in Tamil and dated in the sixty-fifth year of the rule of king Anantavarmadēva (Chōḷagaṅga). The importance of the inscription lies in the fact that it demonstrates contact between merchants on the western coast of south India with the Visakhapatnam region.

Chittivalsa has yielded three inscriptions in Visakhapatnam district. These three epigraphs, engraved on two granite pillars near the Travellers' Bungalow in the village, are dated respectively in the fifth, eleventh and twenty-first years of Anantavarman Choḷagaṅga. They record variously the levy of a sixteenth share of each *achchui* on pilgrims going for tonsure to the temple of Gokaṛṇēśvara-mahādēva at Guḍivāda in Paṭṭaṅam (Kaliṅgapatnam) towards the expenses for maintaining a perpetual lamp; the grant of land for offering to and worship of Gokaṛṇa-Rājanārāyaṇēśvara mahadeva at the place by one Rājanārāyaṇa with the consent of Jeddapa-nāyaka; and also the gift of land for providing offerings to the same deity.

J. Chāḷukya

A Kannada inscription from Naregal, Haveri district, Karnataka, is engraved on a slab set up in the eastern side of Sarveshvara temple. It belongs to the reign of Jayasimhadēva (Jayasimha II) and is dated Śaka 955 (AD 1033). It refers to the death of one Chiddhara Jōgimayya Gōsāsa on the given date (Fig. 13).

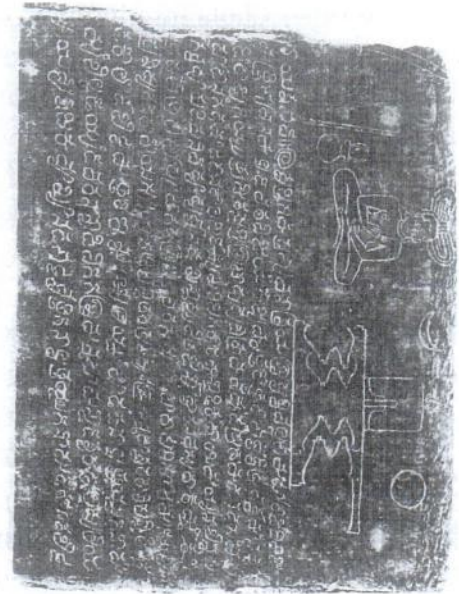
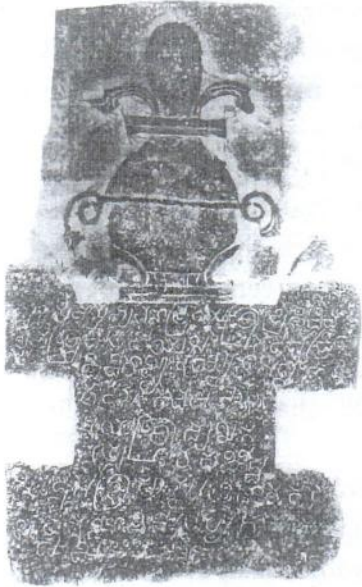


FIG 13 Naregal inscription of Jayasimha II FIG 14 Vaḍḍagere inscription of Tribhuvanamalla

Another inscription from Vadagere, Gulbarga district, Karnataka, belongs to Tribhuvanamalla (Vikramāditya VI) and is dated in the Chālukya Vikrama year 1 (AD 1077). It records the royal grant of 205 *mattars* of land by Ballavarasa at the request of maṇḍalike Dāyimayya for worship, offerings and repairs in and to the temple of Dāyimēśvara, installed on the occasion of his coronation (Fig. 14).

A record from Gangapuram in Mahabubnagar district, records that Vikramāditya VI, in the 16th year of his reign (AD 1091), registered a gift of land as *Jyōtivṛitti* to Ādityabhaṭṭa mahōpādhyāya and Viddanabhaṭṭa, two astronomers of Trailōkyamalla-Śrī Keśavapura.

A copperplate charter from Narihalla, Bellary district, Karnataka, was discovered in the project area of the place. It is written in the Sanskrit language using Nāgarī characters, and dated Śaka 969 (AD 1047). It belongs to the reign of king Āhavamalla (Somēśvara I) and records the grant of 300 *nivartanas* of land in Veguragrāma. The grant was made by the king from his camp near Kalyāṇa in Mayūrakhaṇḍikā, on the occasion of *Makarasaṃkrānti*. It was intended for renovation, worship and offerings to the Traipurausha temple at Ponnumguḍa, situated in the Vilvolovishaya, and for feeding two hundred students and teachers in various *Śāstras* in the same temple.

This Chālukya inscription from Konakondla, Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, is of the Chālukyan king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramāditya VI, dated AD 1082. It records the construction of the Jaina *basadi* by the king's subordinate in Chitta Jinālaya at Kondakunda. The Jaina *basadi* was further endowed with gifts of land for the *dīpa*, *naivēdya*, etc., of the deity.

Another inscription from Syed-chincholi, Gulbarga district, Karnataka, engraved on a slab, contains two inscriptions, one issued in the forty-sixth regnal year (AD 1122) of the Chālukya Vikramāditya VI, and the other in the seventh regnal year (AD 1173) of the Kalachurya Rāyamurārī Bhujabalamalladēva. These are of interest as they refer to the existence of a *purāṇa-khaṇḍika* (College for Purāṇa Studies), provided for in these grants.

A record belonging to the reign of the Chālukya king Tribhuvanamalla, dated Vikrama 45 (AD 1120) records that Gaṅgarāśi committed suicide at the callous destruction of a Śiva temple at Maniyur, and that *Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* Ahumallarasa and Perggade Ādityanāyaka, along with thirty-two *Mahājanas* of Maniyūr, made a land gift to his son Singarāśi. An inscription of Sōmēśvara from Kolanupaka, Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh, dated Śaka 968 (AD 1046), records a remission of taxes by Kommanayyarasa, who ruled over Kollipake-7000 division. Another record dated Śaka 969 (AD 1047), records a gift of income on the levy on salt (*lavaṇaya*) for the upkeep of a tank by the six *śeṭṭis* and one hundred and twenty *nagaras*, obviously of Kollipāke.

A beautiful sculpture of a lady holding a plaque inscribed with a Sanskrit verse in praise of Chālukya Vikramāditya is found on the wall of the Śiva temple at Jalasaṅgi in Bidar district. This indirectly furnishes the date for the construction of the temple.

Another inscription from Peddachappali, Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh, dated in the ninth regnal year of the Western Chālukyan king Sōmēśvara III, refers to one of his subordinates, Mallidēva Mahārāja, bearing the title *Trailokyamalla*, and ruling from the latter capital Vallur. One *Yuvarāja* Āhavamalladēva made a gift to the Śaiva-*maṭha* of the Pāśupata sect.

Three records belonging king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramāditya VI, from Kolanupaka, Nalgonda district, Andhra Pradesh, dated in the twelfth, thirteenth and sixteenth regnal years (AD 1088, AD 1089 and AD 1092), mentions the king's feudatory Toṇḍayachōla-mahārāja. One of them mentions Rāmēśvara Paṇḍita as a pontiff of the Kālamukha sect. The pontiff received, for the Uttarēśvara temple, an endowment of money collected from officials and shops. Prince Somēśvara figures in one of the records as performing the following *mahādānas*: *guḍaparvata*, *Śarkaraparvata*, *lavaṇaparvata* and *gōsahasra*, on the occasion of *Akshaya-tṛitīya*; and in another as endowing a village to the temple of Arṇbikādēvī of Arṇbaratīrtha.

K. Modha Chief

These two charters belong to the Modha chief Vijjala of Samyana, and are dated Śaka 969 (AD 1040) and 975 (AD 1053) respectively. The earlier of them records the grant of the *Siridika* of the village Kamadda in favour of certain householders and scholars attached to the *maṭhika* at Samyana by the chief in consultation with his ministers Mummaraka and Domabalaiya. The latter inscription registers, as a permanent endowment, the grant of three *drammas* received periodically as *siridika* in respect of Enasa-grāma, in favour of the same scholars and householders of the same *maṭhika*.

L. Raṭṭa Chief

A Kannada inscription from Kabbur, Belgaum district, Karnataka, is dated Śaka 1126 (AD 1204) and belongs to the reign of Kārta Vīryadēva, the Raṭṭa chief of Saundatti, ruling from Velugrāma (modern Belgaum). It records a gift of money income derived from the sale of horses to the god Kalidēvasvāmi of the *piriyagrahāra* Kabbur.

M. Kākatīya

An inscription of Kākatīya Gaṇapati from Kolanupaka in Nalgonda district is dated Śaka 1142 (AD 1220). It records the consecration of various deities at Śrīśaila temple, and the temple's four cardinal gates, viz., Mantrakūṭa, Drākshārāma, Kallipāka and Kālēśvra. It also records the consecration of a *saharsa-liṅga* and endowments made to them.

An inscription from Motupalli, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, belonging to the Kākatīya Gaṇapatidēva is dated Śaka 1166 (AD 1245) and is written in Sanskrit and Telugu language using Telugu characters. This is an *abhaya-sāsana* (an edict assuring safety) to foreign traders on seas. It refers to the collection of custom duties on the cargo in the event of shipwreck in his territory (Fig. 15).

Another record, belonging to the rule of the queen Rudrāmbā (AD 1260-91), gives an account of a branch family of the Chālukyas and their relationship with the queen. It also mentions a canal dug at Kollipāka by a servant of this family.

N. Yādava

This inscription from Adaki, Gulbarga district, Karnataka, of the Yādava king Singhaṇa is dated in his fifteenth regnal year, Sobhakrit (AD 1243). It records the gift of oil for burning a perpetual lamp in the Teṅkaṇa- Koppuva-Jinālaya of god Pārśvanātha at Aḍaki, by the *mummuridānas*, *Ubhayanādēsis*, *prabhas* and *mūligaru*.

O. Pāṇḍya

Two Tamil inscriptions from Chidambaram, South Arcot district, Tamil Nadu, probably from the time of Jaṭavarman Sundarapāṇḍya I (c. AD 1251-70) is engraved in the Naṭarāja temple. It records a grant of land for maintaining a library established by Svāmidēva at the temple. The library is stated to contain manuscripts in Tamil and Grantha scripts, including that of *Siddhānta Ratnākara*. One of the inscriptions gives a list of scholars versed in the *Purāṇas*, astronomy etc., employed in the library.

Engraved in characters of the thirteenth century AD, two Tamil inscriptions from Dharbharanyeshvar temple in Tirunallar, Commune Karaikkal district, belong to the twenty-second regnal year of the reign of Pāṇḍya king Jaṭavarman Kulaśēkhara. Both state that a certain Periyayan Mudichchonattukonar owed 25,000 Valal-Valitirandan-panam to one Savaripperumal Monaimamarudan Akalaukanadalvar of Ambar alias *Vikramaśolapuram*, and absconded. On the latter's petition the *nāṭṭavar* intervened and sold the lands of the debtor to the creditor for the same amount, as the former had no heir and as there was none to purchase the above property.

P. Telugu Chōḍa

Some of the inscriptions that are highlighted here are of extreme importance from the point of view of economic history, particularly with regard to the system of taxation. This inscription from

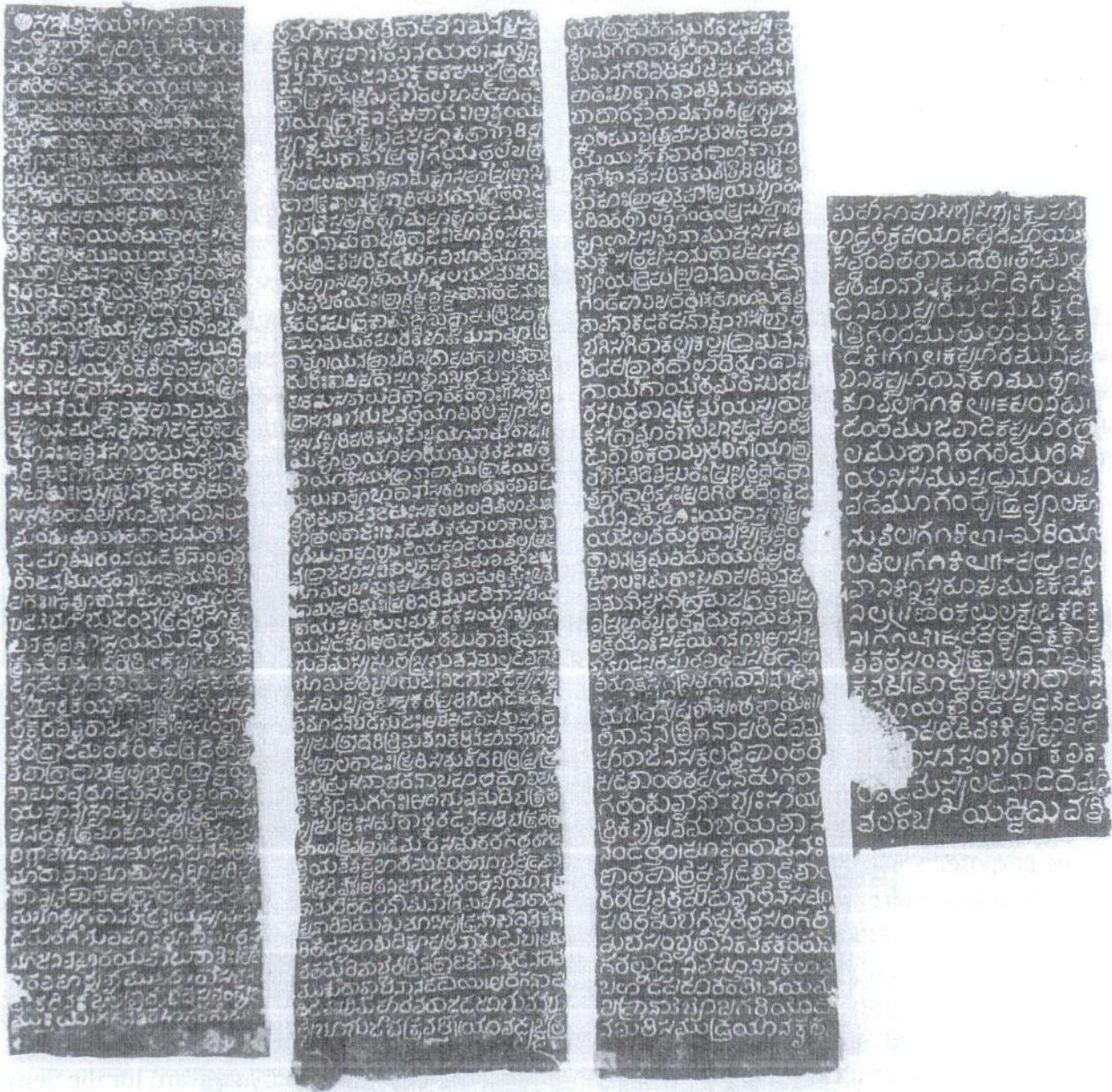


FIG 15 Motupalli inscription of Gaṇapatidēva

Krishnapatnam, Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, is dated Śaka 1201 (AD 1279) in the second regnal year of the Telugu-Chōḍa king Tribhuvanachakravartiga Irumaḍi Tirukkalatidevar. It states that the Anjvannavaṇikar of Malaimaṇḍalam, Nānādesippadinenbhūmi-samasta paradevigal, the nāḍu and the nagaram having met at the Ainnūrvan-tirukkavanam Kolliturai alias Gaṇḍagōpālapaṭṭinam, decreed the assignment of the income from levy at the rate of one-fourth paṇam percent on commodities exported and imported through that port to the god Manumasiddhiśvamī-udaiya-nāyanār.

Q. Hoyasala

A set of five copperplates from Anekannambadi, Mysore district, with a ring and without seal, belongs to the Hoyasala king Narasiṃha III, dated Śaka 1141, Bahudānya saṃvatsara (AD 1219). It records a grant to *mahā-agrahāra* Pragurvi, Ballapura, for the study of Vedic literature and for the maintenance of Keshava temple.

R. Redḍi Chiefs

This copperplate inscription from Pinapalli, East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh, is in Sanskrit language and Telugu characters. It belongs to the reign of Allada Vema, the Redḍi chief of Rajahmundry, and is dated Śaka 1346 (AD 1424). It records the grant of the village Pinapanala by the chief to his minister Śrīgiri, who underwent the *agni-divyam* to prove that he was not guilty of *svāmi-drōha*. It also furnishes the genealogy of the Redḍi chiefs.

S. Vijayanagara

A Vijayanagara copperplate grant from Dadadi-Kotakonda, Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh, is wrongly dated Śaka 1311 (AD 1389) (the correct date is probably Śaka 1411, or AD 1489). This charter of Sāḷuva Narasiṃha in Telugu language and characters states that the region around Yādavadurga and Drōṇāchala having become deserted, the king proclaimed the grant of *kanāchi* rights to those who came forward to settle them. In response to the proclamation, people from several places such as Guddali, Billakalu, Bamala, Manukoti, etc., approached the king and secured the right for settlements in Daladuli-Kotakonda, which was one of the deserted regions thrown open for the purpose.

Another inscription from Agaram in North Arcot district, in Tamil characters is dated Śaka 1391 (AD 1469). It belongs to the reign of king Mallikārjuna mahārāyar, and refers to the dedication of bonded labour in a group (*Kottu-aḍimai*) of a Kaikkoḷa family of thirteen members of Agaram who sold themselves to the temple of Perumāḷ Amāi-Katta-Appan for a sum of 2,380 *paṇam* paid in an auction by the *Samaya-Kumārār* Vanniya Timmaya-nāyakkar, the *śrīkāryam* of the temple, with the stipulation that the male members will perform the duties of watch and ward for the deity (*tirumei-kāval*), and the female members will perform dance and song.

A similar transaction, referred to in another inscription from the same place, took place in Śaka 1393 (AD 1472) during the governorship of Rājaśekhara-mahārāja, in respect of four persons for a sum of 200 *paṇam* received from the same person.

An inscription from Cholasamudram, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, is dated Śaka 1439 (AD 1517). It mentions *mahāpradhāna rāyasam* Koṇḍamarasa as the son of Timmarasa and grandson of Śrīpatyāchārya of Bhāradvāja-*gotra* and *Ṛik-śākhā*, and records a gift made by him to the goddess Chaudēśvari for progeny to his overlord Kṛishṇadēvarāya. The officer bears the titles

Simhādri-Śrī Kusuma-jayastambha-kāryanirvāhaka, Chapannadēśa-chitralipilekha-kōvida, etc. A label on a sculpture shows that the latter represents Koṇḍamarasa.

Another long inscription of Kṛishṇadēvarāya from Chikalaram, Raichur district, Karnataka, refers to the king's conquests of the forts of Rāichūru, Alampur, Manuva, Hanumgal and Magade. It further records a grant of the village Chikalaparavi to Tiruveṅgalanātha by the king who, on a visit to Kūḍalur at the confluence of rivers Krishna and Bhaimarathi, along with his queens Chinnadēvī and Tirumaladēvī, performed the *ratnadhēnu*, *gōsahasra* and *kanakāśva mahādānas*.



FIG 16 Kamalapur copperplate inscription of Kṛishṇadēvarāya

Many copperplate inscriptions of the Vijayanagara dynasty have come to light. These are written in Nandināgarī characters and Sanskrit language. One of the charters is from Kamalapur, Bellary district, Karnataka, dated Śaka 1447 (AD 1526) and belongs to Kṛishṇadēvarāya. It records the grant of the village Beṭṭakoṇḍa Vyāsasamudra (renamed Kṛishṇarāyapuram) to Vyāsātīrtha, a disciple of Brahmanyātīrtha (Fig. 16).

4. INSCRIPTIONS FROM ABROAD

In these last sixty years, a number of inscriptions have come to light from neighbouring countries. It is a well-known fact that, along with Indian culture, the Indian script and language, too, travelled beyond the seas. Brāhmī and its derivatives appear as the scripts of these inscriptions. A large number of Sanskrit inscriptions have been reported from south-east Asian countries. For many years, the ASI has been very closely associated with the conservation and preservation of some of these monuments.

A. Afghanistan

An interesting inscription is of Khingala-shāhī, dated in the eighth regnal year of the Shāhī dynasty of Kabul, Afghanistan. It is written in the Siddhamātrikā characters of the sixth or seventh centuries AD. It is engraved on an image of Mahā-Vināyaka, now worshipped by the Hindu residents of Kabul, and it records the installation of the image by a Shāhī king.

An inscription reported from Kandahar, Afghanistan, engraved on the pedestal of a stone image of Umā-Mahēśvara is in the Sanskrit language and written in late Brāhmī characters of about the sixth century AD. It contains a verse in Anuṣṭubha metre in praise of Śiva, describing him as the very embodiment of the three gods (i.e., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahēśvara), performing the triple role of Creator, Protector and Destroyer.

B. Bangladesh

An inscription reported from Dhaka, Bangladesh, engraved on the pedestal of a Viṣṇu image, is written in characters of about the tenth century, in the Sanskrit language. This inscription seems to speak of the image of Nārāyaṇa, set up by a person called Śrīnivāsa, son of one Īśvara.

C. Myanmar

Impressions and photographs received from the Director of the Archaeological Survey, Burma, were examined by the Epigraphy Branch. This data pertains to epigraphs from *stūpa* sites at Vesali, near Mrohaung. This inscription belong to kings Nitichandra and Vīrachandra of the Chandra dynasty of Arakan. These kings ruled in the sixth century AD. These are the only lithic record of the kings so far discovered, although their coins are already known.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

Some of the inscriptions recently discovered at Amaravati, which can be assigned to the second or third centuries BC on palaeographical grounds, suggest that the celebrated Buddhist *stūpa* of Amaravati was originally built in that age. The most important among these epigraphs is a fragmentary record on a block of stone, which was apparently cut out from a pillar of the Aśokan type, with traces of the original Mauryan polish. The palaeography, language, style and contents of this inscription suggest that it might be part of a yet unknown pillar edict of Aśoka. It is not impossible that Aśoka was responsible for the construction of the original *stūpa*.

Many early Brāhmī inscriptions have come to light. Two among them are from Pugalur, Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu. They are engraved on the brows of the two caves to the south of Arnattar hill. The two inscriptions, in characters of about the first century AD, record the excavation of the *palli*, and the cutting of the rock respectively.

Another very important inscription is from Sittanavasal, Pudukottai district, Tamil Nadu, belonging to the first century BC. It states that the bed was caused to be made by Iḷayar or Śrupōṣil for Kavuti, born at Kumuḷūr in Erumai-nāḍu (Fig. 17).

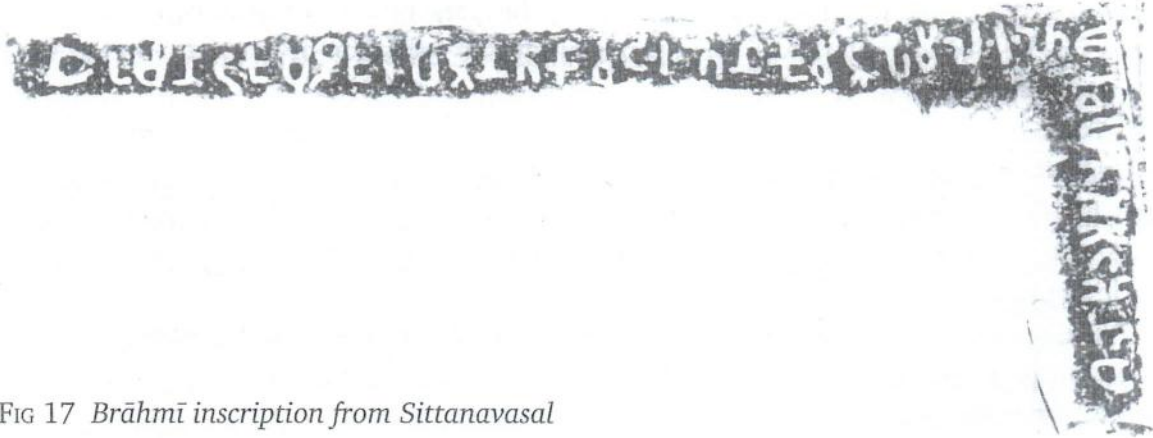


FIG 17 Brāhmī inscription from Sittanavasal

A fragmentary inscription was found engraved on a broken slab in Chidiya, Mahendragarh district, Haryana. It is now preserved in the Haryana Prantiya Sangrahalaya, Jhajjar. It is written in the Sanskrit language, using Brāhmī characters of the first and second centuries AD. The inscription refers to the reign of a Gautamīputra (whole name is lost), who is described as the son of Śivaśarman, as belonging to the Kausiya-*sagōtra*, and as a constant drinker of the sacrificial *soma* juice.

A stone, obviously forming part of the top-frieze of the exterior surface of the drum of the *Mahāchaitya* at Śālihuṇḍam in Srikakulam district, Andhra Pradesh, bears an inscription written in characters of about the second century AD. It reads: *Dhamma-raño Aśoka-sirino* (Dharmmarāja, the king Aśoka).

A Prakrit inscription in Brāhmī characters of about the second century BC is engraved on a pillar set up in front of the Amleshvara temple in Pratapgarh, Chittorgarh district, Rajasthan. It records the making of the *sēlabhuja* by the *Bhāgavata* Utararakhita, the son of Pona and a resident of Aparakada.

Arachchalur, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nādu, has an early Brāhmī inscription, written in characters of about the third century AD, on the bed of a natural cavern in the Nagamalai hill. The two-line inscription reads:

*Eḷuttum puṇarattāṇ maṇiya vaṇṇakkaṇ
Ādaṇṇ dēvaṇ sāṭṭaṇ*

(This bed donated by a merchant of beads named Maṇiya Vaṇṇakkaṇ Ādaṇ dēvaṇ)

A chart of some vocalic forms of the letters *ta* and *ka*, such as *ta*, *tit e tai* and *kai*, is engraved on either side of the above inscription. This seems to suggest that Tevan-chāttan composed the charts, which probably represent notations of dance.

An inscription in Tamil language and characters of about the tenth century AD, engraved on a loose slab, seems to record the construction of a tank, called Tali-eri, and the endowment of money for its maintenance by Vanjivel Tali, alias Tenavan Perariyan. It is dated in the one hundred and seventieth year, obviously of the Kollam era, of the reign of Ko-Travi-Kodai.

A fragmentary inscription from Tiruchchirappali, Tamil Nadu, in Tamil characters of the tenth century AD, is engraved on a stone block built into the wall of the central shrine of the Tiruttantonrishvara temple in Uraiyur. It records the presentation of *brahmaratham* and other honours for the Vedic scholars who were proficient in the recitation of the *Vedas* and in the Vedic *mantras*, *bhāshya* and *śāstra*.

Two Sanskrit epigraphs, one in Nāgarī and the other in Kannaḍa, the former on the wall of the *maṇḍapa* and the latter on the wall of the shrine of the Vīra-Nārāyaṇa temple, are both dated in the Chāḷukya-Vikrama year 29 (AD 1104). They record endowments of lands and money by the Paramāra prince *Kumāra mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Jagaddēva*, a feudatory of Tribhuvanamalla, to the god Jagaddēva-Nārāyaṇa.

The money endowment was collected from the villages included in Kollīpake-7000 division, at rates of five, four and three gold coins (*Uttama-gaṇḍa-chihnas*) respectively from the village depending on whether they were classified as *Uttama*, *madhyama* or *adhama*. The epigraphs vividly describe the Arbuda mountain and trace Jagaddeva's ancestry from Harsha.

Seventy-eight Sanskrit label inscriptions were recovered from Kumbhakonam, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu. They are written in Grantha characters of the twelfth century AD. Engraved below the panels around the eastern *gōpura* in the Sarangapanisvami temple, these inscriptions give the names of the dance poses (*karaṇas*) as detailed in the Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and as they are depicted in the panels.

A damaged epigraph was discovered on a slab from Nallūr, Calicut district, Kerala, written in the Tamil language and using Vaṭṭeluttu characters of about the twelfth century AD. It is dated in the eleventh year of the reign of Ko-Adichchan (Adityan)-Kodai. It records the provision made for the recitation of *Bharata*, for the teaching of *Nirutta*, and for *śānti* (worship). It refers to a chief of Vemedu and to a Koyilad-Karigal.

Four short Sanskrit inscriptions in the fort at Warangal, Andhra Pradesh, speak of the poet Narasimha. One of them refers to the poet's ten *rūpakas*, and to his prose-work entitled *Malayavati*.

The other works of the poet referred to in these inscriptions are the *Kākatīya-Charita* in eight cantos, which he claims to have completed in a single day, and a commentary on the *R̥gveda*. In one of the inscriptions, the poet describes the elephant of the Kākatīya king Pratāparudra, who seems to have been his patron.

One of the poems engraved on a huge rock in Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh, in Nāgarī characters and attributable to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries AD, refers to a work on *Yōga-śāstra* by Narasimha-maharshi, son of *Rājaguru* Viśvēśvara Paṇḍita. The latter may be identical with the celebrated Viśvēśvara-śāmbhu, the *dīkshā-guru* of Kākatīya Gaṇapatidēva.

The other inscription, in Telugu characters, is a beautiful lyrical composition containing in all sixty-two verses in the *Śārdūlavikrīḍita* metre. The composition is a graphic account of the love, separation and marriage of a *siddha* couple. Narasimha, the author, figures in four previously known short Sanskrit inscriptions discovered in the same place.

An inscription from Acrachchalur, Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, is written in characters of about the thirteenth century AD. It is engraved on the north and east walls of the central shrine in Saravaliṅgamurthi temple. It belongs to the reign of Tribhuvana chakravarti Konerimei-koṇḍān and records a grant of privileges, such as blowing the double conch, beating the drum, wearing sandals and white-washing their respective houses on auspicious and inauspicious occasions, to the Kanmalar caste in Kangēyanāḍu and Pundraināḍu.

An inscription from Kadkani, North Kanara district, Karnataka, is written in Kannada (script and language) and engraved on a hero-stone near a dilapidated Śiva temple. It belongs to the reign of *Banavasi-puravarādhīśvara Mahāmaṇḍēśvara* Parikantadēva and is dated Śaka 1039 (AD 1117). It records the death of Niduka in a battle fought at a place called Hubbasa. Another inscription, which is badly damaged, also belongs to the reign of the same chief and seems to record a grant of money in connection with the heroic death of Mamalidēva.

A Tamil inscription from Virapandiyampattanam, Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, dated Kollam 563 (AD 1387-88) is engraved on a stone in the Makhdum mosque. It records the conferment of the names of Udayamattanḍa-pperumpalli and Udayamattandakkadiyar on the Jumattuppalli and Kadiyar Abu-vakkar respectively, in Sonadu Koṇḍa-anppattinam, and also records a grant to the mosque of one-fourth per cent of the value of commodities that passed through the port.

A Tamil inscription from Kovilur, Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, dated Śaka 1303 (AD 1382) belonging to Savana Udayar, records a resolution of a brahmin assembly that the bridegrooms among them should pay only eight *kalañju* of gold and eight *kalañju* of silver for the jewels of their brides, and that he who violates this rule will be excommunicated.

This inscription of Mustafa Khan, from Mustabada, Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, dated Śaka 1482 (AD 1560), records the remission, by *Khān-e-Āzam* Mustafa *Khān*, an officer under Qutab-il-mulk (11) of Golkonda, of taxes like *Kamparapusunkam*, *tiru-katnalu*, *sanchi-paikalu*, *gollamkaram*, etc., levied on members of various communities of Mustabada.

Another record refers to the construction of a tank and the planting of a garden by Narasimha-panḍita, for the merit of the *Khān*.

6. CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this review article to give a bird's eye view of how a large number of inscriptions belonging to different dynasties, as well as some miscellaneous inscriptions, have come to light in the last six decades, and have unfolded themselves in manifold ways and laid before us rich primary source material for writing volumes of Indian history.

Further, there is a great need to conduct more intensive and extensive epigraphical surveys to discover more new inscriptions before they are lost or damaged. As we are aware, urbanization has taken a heavy toll on archaeological sites, monuments and even on inscriptions. Hence, we must take urgent measures to protect and preserve inscriptions. We have the responsibility of preserving our vast epigraphical wealth, which forms part of our great cultural heritage, and to pass it on to posterity.

