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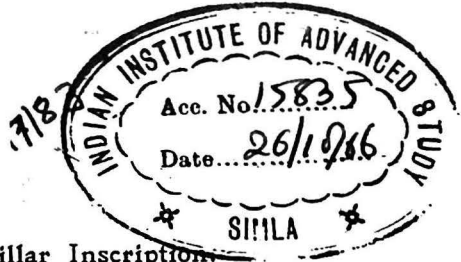


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41. Dinājpur Pillar Inscription

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The stone pillar, 8'—4" in height, that bears this short inscription in three lines, embodying a single stanza in *Sārdulabikrīḍitā* metre, now stands in the garden in front of the palace of the Mahārājā of Dinājpur. The pillar was brought to Dinājpur by Mahārājā Rāmnāth in the eighteenth century. The inscription was published by Westmacott with Dr. Rājendra Lāla Mitra's translation and comments, and a crude lithograph in the *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. I, pp. 127—128. Dr. Mitra's translation was criticised by Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar in a letter published along with Westmacott's paper, which drew forth a reply from Dr. Mitra, and a rejoinder from Dr. Bhandarkar. The controversy rested there, and the inscription slipped out of the memory of the scholars, for it finds no place in Dr. Kielhorn's list of Inscriptions. It is briefly noticed by the late Dr. Bloch in the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey, Bengal Circle, for the year 1900—1901, where he wrongly reads *Gauḍapati* as *Sidapati*. Drs. Mitra and Bhandarkar failed to come to any agreement as to the meaning of the compound *Kuñjaraghatāvarṣeṇa*, the former taking it in the sense of "in the year 888", and the latter as an adjunct of the subject *Gauḍapati* and meaning "he who pours forth an array of elephants." But whatever the real meaning of *Kuñjaraghatāvarṣeṇa* may be, there can be no doubt about the purport of the inscription. It records the erection of a temple of Śiva by a Lord of Gauḍa, belonging to the *Kāmbōja* family; and it is possible, with the help of the letters and historical data furnished by other documents, to approximately ascertain the date of this unknown *Gauḍa* king, and thereby recover a forgotten chapter of the early history of Bengal.

The letters are very carefully and beautifully incised. While discussing the peculiarities of the letters of the *Khālimpur* grant of *Dharmapāla*,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kielhorn notices the following peculiarities:—letters like *pa*, *ma* and *sa* are mostly open at the top, and the lower part of *ma* throughout is formed by a straight arm, pointing in a forward direction to the left, and shows nowhere a loop or round knob. He then observes in a note:—"In the Ghōsrāwā inscription of the time of Dēvapāla (*Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XVII, p. 309, plate) the *m* with the loop is still

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, vol. iv, p. 243.

the exception, but in the Badāl pillar inscription and in the Bhāgalpur plate of Nārāyanapāla it is used throughout." In the Dinājpur pillar inscription *ma*, *pa* and *sa* are not open at the top, and it shares these peculiarities, as well as the loop or knob of *ma*, with the Badāl pillar inscription.<sup>1</sup> Nārāyanapāla is the great-great-grandson of Dharmapāla. Therefore the Dinājpur inscription cannot be assigned to an age much earlier than that of the Badāl pillar inscription. The other limit may be roughly fixed by comparing the letters of our inscription with those of the *Devapādā* inscription of Vijayasena.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the development of the Eastern varieties of the Nāgari alphabet, Bühler writes in his *Indian Palæography*:—"Towards the end of the eleventh century the Nāgari inscriptions of Eastern India show such distinct traces of changes leading up to the modern Bengali writing, and these changes become so numerous in the twelfth century, that it is possible to class their alphabets as Proto-Bengali. An approximate idea of the Proto-Bengali may be obtained by comparing the characters of the following documents, represented in our plates:—(1) of the Deopārā Prasasti of about A.D. 1080-90 [pl. v., col. xviii], which includes Bengali *e*, *kha*, *na*, *ta*, *tha*, *ma*, *ra*, *la*, *sa*."<sup>3</sup>

Of these letters *ta*, *tha*, *ma*, *ra*, *la* and *sa* occur in the Dinājpur inscription; and a comparison of these with those of the *Dēvapādā* inscription forces upon us the conclusion that the Dinājpur inscription belongs to an earlier epoch. The use of the superscript *r* indicates that it cannot be placed later than the tenth century. It shares with the Badāl Pillar inscription, the superscript *r* in all cases where *r* forms conjuncts with letters that follow it. Thus we have *rbb* in line 1, *ryg* in line 2, and *rṣ* in line 3. The superscript *r* is also used in the Nālandā inscription<sup>4</sup> of the eleventh year of Mahipāla and the Sārṇāth inscription<sup>5</sup> of Samvat 1083 (A.D. 1026) of the same king. But in the Dinājpur grant of Mahipāla, the Gayā inscription of the fifteenth year of his son Nayapāla, and in the Āmgāchi grant of Nayapāla's son Vighrahapāla III—in fact in all inscriptions executed in Bengal in the eleventh century, "*r*, preceding another consonant, is often written by a short line, sideways attached to the right side of the *akṣara* of which it forms part, not by the superscript sign."<sup>6</sup>

With the help of the historical data furnished by other inscriptions it is possible to fix the date of the *Gauḍapati* of the foreign Kāmboja family with greater precision. In the

<sup>1</sup> *Epi. Ind.*, vol. ii, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> *Epi. Ind.*, vol. i, p. 305.

<sup>3</sup> *Ind. Palæography*, *Ind. Ant.*, vol. xxxiii, app., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> *J. and P. A.S.B.* of 1908, plate vi.

<sup>5</sup> *Arch. Surv. Ind. Rep.* 1903-4, p. 222, and plate lxiv, 4.

<sup>6</sup> *J.A.S.B.* of 1892, Part I, p. 78; Cunningham's Report, vol. iii, plate xxxvii; *Ind. Ant.*, vol. xxi (1892), p. 97.

Dinājpur grant of Mahīpāla I, whose Sārnāth inscription is dated in Sam. 1083 (A.D. 1026), it is said of the donor:—

“ हतसकलविपक्षः सङ्गरे बाहुदर्या-  
दनधिहत-विलुप्तं राज्य मासाद्य पिश्यम् ।  
निहित-चरणपद्मो भूभृतां मूर्ध्नि तस्मा-  
दभवद्वनियालः श्रीमह्वीपालदेवः ॥ (verse 11).”

“From him (Vigrahapāla II) has sprung the protector of the earth, the illustrious Mahīpāladeva. In the pride of his arm having slain in battle all opponents, and having obtained his father's kingdom which had been snatched away by people having no claim to it, he has put down his lotus foot on the heads of princes.”

The “people having no claim” who deprived Mahīpāla's father or grandfather of his kingdom, was no other than the Lord of Gauda of the Kāmoja family mentioned in the Dinājpur pillar inscription. In the Pāla period of the history of Bengal, from about A.D. 800 to 1100, there is only one epoch, that between the reigns of Nārāyanapāla and Mahīpāla I, of which we have not as yet found any memorial in Varendra (North Bengal). Before this epoch, reigned in succession the first five Pāla Kings—Gopāla I, Dharmapāla, Dēvapāla, Vighrapāla I (*alias* Surapāla) and Nārāyanapāla. Of Bengal, before Gopāla I and of that king himself, Tārānāth writes (quoted by Cunningham, Arch. Sur. Ind., Vol. XV, p. 148):—

“In Orissa, Bengal, and five other provinces of the East, every Kṣatriya, Brāhmaṇa and merchant (Vaiśya) made himself the chief of the districts; but there was no king ruling the whole country.

“The widow of one of these departed chiefs used to kill every night the person who had been chosen as king, until after several years Gopāla, who had been elected king, managed to free himself and obtained the kingdom. He began to reign in Bengal and afterwards conquered Magadha.”

A line in Dharmapāla's Khālimpur grant (verse 4) confirms Tārānāth's version of the way in which Gopāla obtained the kingdom. The line runs:—

“मात्यन्यायमपोहितुं प्रकृतिभिर्लक्ष्म्या करं ग्राहितः ।”

“He was elected king by the people to put an end to anarchy (the condition of the fishes).” This confirmation of Tārānāth's account of the rise of the Pāla dynasty by an almost contemporary record warrants us to hold that the uncorroborated portion of his narrative, that Gopāla “began to reign in Bengal and afterwards conquered Magadha,” may not

be baseless, and that Gopāla was a native of Bengal. Mr. V. A. Smith in his well-known *Early History of India* (Second Edition, p. 367) accepts this part of Tārānāth's account as genuine history, and the only possible objection to it based on the Nālandā and Bodh Gayā inscriptions of Gopāla is untenable, for it has been shown<sup>1</sup> that on palæographical grounds these inscriptions cannot be pushed back to the time of Gopāla I, but must be assigned to the time of Gopāla II, grandson of Nārāyaṇapāla and the grandfather of Mahīpāla I.

If Gopāla began to reign in Northern Bengal, it goes without saying that his mighty successor Dharmapāla, who could unmake and make kings in far-off Kānyakubja, retained possession of this province. The memory of Dharmapāla's son, and successor Devapāla, and his daughter Bimalā, is traditionally connected with Yogigophā and a neighbouring village, within the jurisdiction of thānā Pātnitalā, District Dinājpur, and not far from Bānnagar, the place where our inscribed stone pillar was originally found. A few miles to the east of Yogigophā, in a village called Haragauri after a temple of Haragauri situated on a mound in it, stands the so-called Badāl pillar of Bhatta Gurava, minister of Nārāyaṇapāla. The vast ruins still called *Dewānbāri* and the numerous big tanks in the vicinity of the pillar indicate that the hereditary ministers of the early Pāla Kings had their home there. Of the three succeeding kings, Rājyapāla, Gopāla II, and Vighrahapāla II, son, grandson and great-grandson respectively of Nārāyaṇapālā, no memorial has as yet been discovered in Dinājpur; but of the later Pāla Kings, Mahīpāla I and his successors, memorials abound in the district. No less than three copper-plates, viz. of Mahīpāla I, Vighrahapāla III and Madanapāla, have been discovered in Dinājpur, donating lands in the Kotivarsa Viṣaya, which, according to Sanskrit lexicons, is synonymous with Devikote and Bānapura (Bannagar). These and other records, such as the Sārṇāth inscription of Kumāradevi, wife of King Gobindacandra of Kanauj (A.D. 1114-1154), whose maternal grandfather Mahana was king Rāmpāla's viceroy in Anga,<sup>2</sup> Sandhyānkara Nandi's Rāmpālaṣarita, and the grant of Vaidyadeva of Kāmrupa,<sup>3</sup> prove that the later Pāla Kings retained possession of Varendra with only a short intermission owing to the rebellion of the Kaivarta chief Divyoka till the rise of the Sena Kings. It may, therefore, be safely concluded that the Kāmbojas conquered Varendra in the interval between the time of Nārāyaṇapāla and Mahīpāla I, very probably in the reign of Vighrahapāla II, and that their power was overthrown by Mahīpāla I early in the eleventh century or a little earlier. If we take *Kuñjaraghatā-*

<sup>1</sup> Journal and Proceedings of A.S.B., 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. Ind., vol. ix, p. 311.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. Ind., vol. ii, p. 350

*varṣeṇa* of the inscription in the sense of Saka 888 (=A.D. 966) it fits in well with the data of history and palæography.

One other question that suggests itself in connection with this inscription is, who were the Kāamboja conquerors of *Gauḍa*? What country was then known as the land of the Kāambojas? According to Foucher, Nepalese tradition applied the name *Kāamboja-deśa* to Tibet.<sup>1</sup> The Gaudapati of the Kāamboja family probably came from Tibet, Bhutan or some other Himalayan country at the head of a Mongolian horde, who are now represented by the Koch and the Paliyas of Northern Bengal, also known as Rājbanśis. These Koch-Rājbanśis of Varendra must be distinguished from the Rājbanśis living on the eastern side of the Karatōyā, who form a caste quite distinct from the Koch caste of that region. That these Koch are not late comers to Varendra, but were settled here even in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., is evident from Minhajuddin's account of Muhammad Bakhtiyār's journey to and back from Tibet and Kāamarupa.<sup>2</sup>

The inscription is very skilfully engraved at the base of the pillar and covers a space 1' 1" by 2"; the letters, on an average, are a little over  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch in length.

*Text.*

(L. 1) ओं

दुर्वारारि-वह्यिनी-प्रमथने दाने च विद्याधरैः  
सानन्दं दिवि-

(L. 2)

यस्य मार्गण-गुण-ग्रामग्रहो गीयते ।  
काम्बोजान्वयजेन गौडपति-

(L. 3)

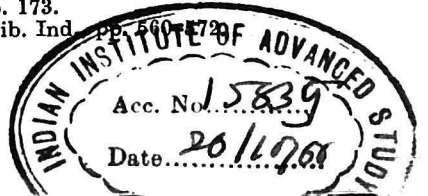
ना तेनेन्दुमौले रथं  
प्रासादो निरमायि कुञ्जरघटा-वर्षण भूभूषणः ॥

*Translation.*

This temple of the moon-crested [Siva], an ornament of the earth, was built [completed] in the year 888 by that king of Gauda of the Kāamboja family, whose ability in subduing the irresistible forces of the enemy, and whose discrimination of the merits of the suitors in giving gifts are sung by the Vidyā-dharas in heaven with delight.

1 Smith's Early History of India, 2nd Ed., p. 173.

2 Tabakat-i-Nāsiri, Raverty's Translation, Bib. Ind.



ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥  
 श्रीमद्भगवत्पुस्तके अष्टादशोऽध्यायः ॥  
 श्रीकृष्ण उवाच ॥ अहो भवति धर्मोऽसौ ॥  
 यदा यदा धर्मो नश्यति ॥  
 तदा तदा मां भवति ॥  
 कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवाः ॥  
 माम्काङ्क्षन्तुः शर्मणोऽपि ॥  
 पाण्डुपुत्रो वीर्यवान् ॥  
 युधिष्ठिर उवाच ॥ १ ॥

THE DINAJPUR PILLAR INSCRIPTION.  
SAKA YEAR. 888.