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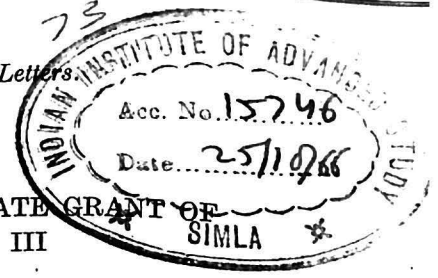
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A NOTE ON THE NESARI COPPERPLATE GRANT OF
RĀSHTRAKŪṬA GOVINDA III

By G. S. GAI

In a note on this inscription published in Volume XXII, No. 1- Letters, pp. 133-34 of this *Journal* Dr. R. C. Majumdar has commented on the reading and interpretation of line 37 of the text edited by G. H. Khare in the *Sources of the Medieval History of the Dekkan*, Vol. I, pp. 15-26. He has supplied the reading of the portion after *api nāma* . . . in that line pertaining to the Vaṅgāla king Dharmapāla and his *lāñchhana*. This portion was left blank by Mr. Khare in his published text. It may be pointed out, in this connection, that when Mr. Khare edited the record, he had access only to the impressions of unsatisfactory nature. But later, when the original plates were secured by him, he made a number of improvements in his published text and included them in Appendix I under Addenda and Corrigenda on pp. 82-84 of the same book. Stating that the correction in line 37 is an important one, Mr. Khare has read the portion after *api nāma* as *kāta(t-ta)thā Bhagavati khyātām Dharmād = Vaṅgāla-bhūmipāt* ||. Unfortunately, this section on Addenda and Corrigenda was not brought to the notice of Dr. Majumdar.

Even in the corrected text of Mr. Khare, it should be read as *Tārā* before *Bhagavati* and not *tathā* as read by him. Dr. Majumdar reads *Bhagavatīm* but the actual reading is *Bhagavati[m]* which should be corrected as *Bhagavatīm*.

Now, as regards the meaning of the passage, it is not possible to agree with the suggestion of Dr. Majumdar that what was taken from Dharmapāla was not the *lāñchhana* or the royal emblem but only the image of the goddess *Tārā Bhagavati* given in the form of a present which puts him (Dharmapāla) in a different category from the other kings defeated by Govinda III. And this has led him to infer that Govinda III might have been attracted to Buddhism. But the language of the passage in question does not support this suggestion. From the statement made in the immediately following verse (text lines 37-38) '*ittham = etān = yathā = nyāni chihmāny = ādāya*, etc.', it is absolutely clear that *Tārā Bhagavati* was a *chihna* or *lāñchhana* of Dharmapāla and that he was defeated by Govinda III like the other kings mentioned in the record.¹ There is nothing to suggest that Dharmapāla was treated in any way different from the other kings. Dr. Majumdar's view is, therefore, untenable.

¹ It may be noted that Govinda's father Dhruva had also snatched away the royal parasol (*śvētachchhatra*) from the Gauḍa king as stated in the Sanjan plates of Amoghavarsha. This Gauḍa king is supposed to have been Dharmapāla (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVIII, p. 239).



SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE MALLASĀRUL COPPERPLATE

By SHYAM CHAND MUKHERJEE

The Mallasārul copperplate inscription of the reign of Mahārājādhirāja Gopa(-Candra), dated in the year 3 (*circa* A.D. 528), has engaged the attention of many scholars, and some interesting deductions have been made by them on its basis.¹ But it appears that new observations can still be made and some passages in it re-interpreted, if it is further studied from a different angle. The purpose of this short paper is to offer fresh suggestions about the following topics connected with it:

- (a) The seal and the invocatory passage.
- (b) Identification of places mentioned in the inscription.
- (c) Officials connected with the administration of the 'bhukti' (division), mentioned in the inscription.
- (d) Terms in it referring to the boundary-posts.

A. *The seal and the invocatory passage*

It is interesting to note that the seal of king Vijayasena, affixed to the Mallasārul copperplate, bears in relief a standing figure of a two-armed male deity (one arm upraised and the other on hip) with an oval-shaped 'cakra' in the background. This male deity has been identified by N. G. Majumdar with Lokanātha and the 'cakra' with the 'Dharmacakra' of the Buddhists.² In order to support his contention this scholar has referred to the invocatory passage of this copperplate inscription which runs thus:

L.1. (Jayati Śrī-Lo)kanāthaḥ yaḥ puṁsām sukṛta-karmaphala-hetuḥ | Satya-tapo-maya-mūrttir-loka-dvaya-sādhano dharmmaḥ ||—verse 1.

Tadanu jītaḍambha-lobhā jaya-

L.2. (nti cirāya (para)hitārthāḥ | Ni(rma) tsarāḥ sucaritaiḥ para-lokajigīṣavaḥ santāḥ ||—verse 2.

According to the said scholar, this invocatory passage refers to the Buddhist trinity—Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha. He is inclined to emend the reading 'Santāḥ' into 'Saṅghaḥ', and Lokanātha, according to him, is Buddha himself. Dr. Sukumar Sen,³ however, is of opinion that the reference in the invocation is to god Viṣṇu himself, Avalokiteśvara being included due to syncretistic ideas, as a form of Viṣṇu. On the basis of the coincidence between the invocatory passage of the Mallasārul Inscription 'Jayati Śrī-Lokanāthaḥ yaḥ puṁsām sukṛtakarmaphala-hetuḥ | Satya-tapo-maya-mūrttirlokadvaya-sādhano dharmmaḥ' ||—verse 1;⁴ and lines

¹ *Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā*, Vol. XLIV, p. 17ff.; *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIII, p. 157ff. (ed. Nanigopal Majumdar), and *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 359ff. (ed. D. C. Sircar).

According to Dr. R. C. Majumdar (*History of Bengal*, Vol. I, p. 54), the year 3 of Gopacandra of the Mallasārul C.P. may be equivalent to the Christian Year 528.

² Mr. Ajit Ghose thinks that this is not a 'cakra', but 'rays coming out from the body of Avalokiteśvara'. For his view see *J.I.S.O.A.*, Vol. XIII, p. 49ff.

³ *Prācīna Vāṅglā O Vāṅgālī*—Dr. S. Sen, pp. 32-33. But, this scholar has subsequently changed his former view and has identified the deity in question with Dharma Ṭhākura. But it should be borne in mind that the worship of the deity is of comparatively late origin (i.e. *circa* sixteenth century A.D.)—*Dharma Ṭhākurer Itihāsa*, reprint, pp. 14-15.

⁴ *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 360.

1-2 of Part II of the Besnagar Inscription of Heliodoros 'Trini amuta-padāni (iya) (su)-anūṭhitāni | Neyamti (svagaṃ) dama cāga apramāda' ||,¹ he has come to the conclusion that Avalokiteśvara of the Mahāyānists has been transformed into a notable form of god Viṣṇu in Bengal under the name of Lokanātha (early in the sixth century A.D.). In his opinion the adoration of Lokanātha produced in Bengal an idea which was somewhat similar to that of 'Bhakti'. But, it may be pointed out that besides the said Besnagar passage, cited by Dr. Sen, two other passages—one from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* ('Tapodanamārjjavamahimsā satyavacanam'—III. 17.4), and the other from the *Bhagavadgītā* ('Dānam damaśca... tapa ārjjavaṃ || Ahimsā satyamakrodhastyāgah sāntirapaiṣunyam', etc., XVI. 1-2)—are expected to help us much better in elucidating this idea. These passages tally well with the Mallasārul passage (11.2). Some other *Gītā* and *Mahābhārata* verses may be taken into account for this purpose (cf. III. 7 and XVIII. 3 and 5; XI. 7.23. 5, XII. 5.43. 22).²

The view of Dr. Sen, as has been referred to above, seems to be plausible enough. In this connection it should be observed:

- (i) Lokanātha as one of the 'Vibhavas' of Viṣṇu has been referred to in the *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā*.³ Inclusion of Lokanātha in the above lists of 'Vibhavas' of Viṣṇu is evidently an attempt at sectarian synthesis, and it is very likely that the deity on the seal of the copperplate represents such an aspect.
- (ii) The invocatory passage of the copperplate may well refer to Viṣṇu and it corresponds well with the last verse of the Besnagar Inscription and certain verses from the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*.
- (iii) The deity, hence, may very well be identified with Viṣṇu.

The 'Cakra', represented on the seal of the copperplate and identified by Majumdar with the Buddhist 'Dharma Cakra', may stand for the 'Sudarśana Cakra' of Vāsudeva—Viṣṇu, one of the best revered symbols among the early Pāñcarātrins and the Vaiṣṇavas.

It may not be out of place here to refer to a tendency prevailing in the medieval times to incorporate the Buddhist deities into the Brahmanical pantheon,⁴ but it should be borne in mind that Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha of the Mahāyānists has imbibed many traits of Viṣṇu—Vāsudeva, for the idea of Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva is much older than that of the former. So, it may be concluded that the deity represented on the seal may be identified with Avalokiteśvara or Lokanātha, who has imbibed many of the traits of Viṣṇu—Vāsudeva.

For the sake of understanding the idea, underlying the invocatory passage, its English translation—hitherto unattempted—may be given here

¹ *Select Inscriptions*, Vol. I, p. 91.

² *Gītā*—P. Tarkabhusan's edition; and *Mahābhārata*—P. Tarkabhusan's edition. Also, see Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri's *Early History of the Vaiṣṇava Sect*, pp. 88-89.

³ *Introduction to the Pañcarātra and the Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā*, pp. 43-46—Schrader; *Development of Hindu Iconography* (2nd edition), pp. 391-92—Dr. J. N. Banerjea.

⁴ Sometimes, Viṣṇu features were also present in the Buddhist images like Avalokiteśvara, etc. J. N. Banerjea has noticed the existence of a variety of Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara images of syncretistic type, which again combine in them the Vaiṣṇava and the Mahāyāna Buddhist elements (cf. Surohor Viṣṇu from Dinājpur district, Bengal). Mention may be made in this connection of a six-armed image of Viṣṇu-Lokeśvara (wrongly described as Hṛiṣikeśa by M. Ganguly) found at Sāgardighi, Murshidabad district, Bengal, belonging to circa eleventh century A.D. It is a fine specimen of syncretistic type—Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 555-56.

Sanskrit Text :—

L.1. (Jayati Śrī-Lo)kanāthah yaḥ puṁsām sukr̥ta-karmmaphala-
hetuḥ | Satya-tapo-maya-mūrttirloka-dvaya-sādhano dharmmaḥ ||—
(verse 1).

Tadanu jita dambha-lobhā jaya-

L.2. (nti cirā)¹ ya (para) hitārthāḥ | Ni(rma) tsarāḥ sucaritaiḥ
paraloka-jigīṣavaḥ santaḥ ||—(verse 2)...

English Translation :—

Victory be to Śrī (Lord) Lokanātha, who is the root-cause of the well-executed deeds of the people—the embodiment of truth and meditation, and a go-between of the two worlds (heaven and earth)—so far as the religious performances (dharma=dharmakārya?) are concerned. Then victory be to the saints (either devout followers of Lord Lokanātha, or saints in the ordinary sense of the term), who have conquered pride and avarice, who are bent on doing good to people (in the sense of ānata), who strive for the well-being of the people (in the sense of ayāna), or who are anxious to do good to the people (in the sense of ākula), who are non-malicious by nature and who aspire to conquer heaven by dint of good deeds.² Here, the term 'dharma' does not indicate the Buddhist 'Dharma', but the 'dharma' as understood by the followers of the Brāhmaṇical religions. The expression 'dharma-sādhana' may be equated with 'dharmānuṣṭhāna'. For the use of 'dharma' in the latter sense, please refer to the following expressions occurring in the present inscription:

(a) kriyamāna puṇyaskandheṣu in line 11, (b) dharma-ṣaḍbhāgo, (c) dharma-saṁyukta(m) and (d) satata-dharma-kriyā-varddha-mānāyām (in line 3). In order to support my contention, I would like to refer to a passage of the *Viṣṇudharmasūtra* (II. 16-17). It provides that the 'dharma', common to all men, comprises the following: forbearance (kṣamā), truthfulness (satyaṁ), restraint of mind (damah), cleanliness (śaucam), charity (dānam), control of senses (indriyasamyamaḥ), non-injury to animals (ahiṁsā), compassion (dayā), straightforwardness (ārjjavaṁ), freedom from avarice (lobhaśunyaṁ) and many other religious merits. For a similar idea, reference may be made to verse No. 6 of the 'Kāśikhanda' section of the *Skanda Purāṇa* and verse No. 237 of the 'Uttarakhanda' section of the *Padma Purāṇa*. The *Viṣṇudharmottara* passage, too, refers to non-injury to animals (ahiṁsā) and truthfulness (satyavacanam).

B. Identification of places mentioned in the Inscription

This inscription records purchase of land by Mahārāja Vijayasena and the gift of the same to one Vatsasvāmin of the Ṛgvedic school, to enable him to conduct the five daily sacrifices. The land given to Vatsasvāmin

¹ 'Jayanti cirāya'—These two words may as well be read as either (a) jayantyānatāya, or (b) jayantyākulāya, or (c) jayantyayānāya. After a careful scrutiny of this portion of the above C.P. it may be observed that 'nti' portion of the word 'jayanti' has not been properly read and it should be read as 'ntyā' (jayantyā). Restoration of the 'cira' portion of 'cirāya' is doubtful. So, it is better to read it either as 'ānata', or 'ākula', or 'ayāna'—each of which may suit the context well. Preference should be given to the word 'ānata'.

² Alternative Translation:

'Victory be to . . . meditation and just like the bridge of dharma, i.e. religious or pious performances, between the two worlds.'

was situated in Vetragarttā of Vakkattaka-vīthi within the jurisdiction of Vardhamāna-bhukti.

It may be of some interest to say here something about the administrative units prevalent in this period. A 'grāma' (village) was possibly the smallest unit. Sometimes, the name of the villages ended with the term 'agrahāra', e.g., Godhagrāmāgrahāra and Ambilagrāmāgrahāra. Though an 'agrahāra' was considered as more important and better developed than any ordinary 'grāma', the latter could have been raised to the status of an 'agrahāra' for administrative and economic needs.¹ But their number was very insignificant. Sometimes, the term 'vāṭaka' also (probably a variant form of 'pāṭaka', meaning half of a village) was added before 'agrahāra'. Curiously enough, the relevant passage of this grant (11. 5-7) does not refer to any 'viṣaya', though 'vīthi' and 'bhukti' are mentioned in it. It is interesting to note that the present inscription, though it refers to a 'viṣayapati' in line 4, does not mention 'vīthipati'.

The expression 'punyottara-janapadādhyāsitāyā(m) . . . Vardhamāna-bhuktau', occurring in line 3 of the inscription, most probably refers to the fact that the 'Vardhamāna-bhukti' was situated in the holy land of 'Uttara Janapada'. This holy land may stand for 'Uttara-Rāḍha'. In the *Jaina Bhagavatī Sūtra*, Lāḍhā (Rāḍhā) is mentioned as one of the sixteen 'janapadas'. Rāḍha is also mentioned in other Brāhmanical texts.

It is very difficult to identify the place-names mentioned in lines 5-8 and 15 (where the boundary of the village being donated is given) of this copperplate inscription.

Scholars like N. G. Majumdar and Sukumar Sen have tried to identify some of them in the pages of *Epigraphica Indica* and *Calcutta Review* respectively.² I have no objection in agreeing to the following identifications made by these scholars:

I. (a) Godhagrāma=Gohagrāma on the Dāmodar river to the south-east of Mallasārul in the district of Burdwan (identified by Majumdar and accepted by Sen).

(b) Vakkattaka=Baktā (according to Majumdar) or Bāktā (spelt differently by Sen), to the east of Gohagrāma.

(c) Khaṇḍojotikā=Khāṇḍjuli between Mallasārul and Gohagrāma (identified by Majumdar and accepted by Sen).

(d) Śālmali=Mallasārul or simply Sārul (according to Majumdar) while Śimuldāṅgā (according to Sen). But, it seems to me that the latter is right in identifying this place with Śimuldāṅgā (Sanskrit Śālmali=Bengali Śimul).

(e) Ardhakaraka=Ādrā, two miles to the north of Gohagrāma (Majumdar could not identify this place, and it was left to Sen to do so).

I do not subscribe to the following identifications made by the above scholars:

II. (a) Āmrāgarttikā=Āmbahulā to the south of Mallasārul (identified by Majumdar and accepted by Sen). After consulting the Gazetteer (1901) and Census Reports (1931 and 1951) of the district of Burdwan, I think that Āmrāgarttikā may better be identified with Āmur in Galsi P.S.

(b) Kapisthavāṭaka=Kaitārā, near Ādrā (identified by Sen). But in my humble opinion it may as well be identified with Kasbā in Galsi P.S.

¹ *Some Historical Aspects of Inscriptions of Bengal*—Dr. B. C. Sen, p. 493.

² *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 155-61 (for N. G. Majumdar's article); *Calcutta Review*, 1938 (March), p. 364 (for Sukumar Sen's article).

(c) Madhuvātaka=Mahodā or Maoḍā (it was Sen who identified this place with Madhuvātaka). But this place may better be identified with Mahulārā in Galsi P.S. Place-names in the thana-maps of Burdwan district have led me to do so.

III. There are also other place-names in this inscription, which neither of the two scholars could identify. They are: (a) Vaṭavallaka, (b) Koḍḍavira, (c) Vettragarttā, (d) Vindhyapura and (e) Nivr̥tavātaka. An attempt may be made here to identify these place-names. I have not been able to identify the last two place-names, viz. Vindhyapura and Nivr̥tavātaka. According to me, (a) Vaṭavallaka may be identified with Bāblā in the Galsi P.S. I have gone through the Gazetteer and Census Reports of the district of Burdwan, and am definite about this identification. Next place is (b) Koḍḍavira. I think that Koḍḍavira has not been correctly read. The correct reading will be something like Koṃḍdavira. Koṃḍdavira may be identified with Koṃḍapur in the Galsi P.S. Next comes (c) Vettragarttā. I think that it can be identified with Betur near Pātrasāyar in the eastern fringe of the district of Bankura and situated near the river Dāmodar, just opposite Gohagrāma. In ancient times, Betur was probably included in the district of Burdwan, and the river Dāmodar had probably a different course at that time.

C. *Officials connected with the administration of the 'bhukti' (division), mentioned in the inscription*

From a study of line 3 of the inscription, it is clear that the officials connected with the administration of 'Vardhamāna-bhukti' were present on the spot at the time of the issue of the grant. The word 'pūjyānvarttamānopasthitata' may be a scribal error for 'pūjyān-Vardhamānopasthitān'. The words, 'varttamāna' and 'upasthita', convey almost the same meaning; and it was not the intention of the composer of this grant to use two words conveying the same sense. If this suggestion is accepted, then it may be observed that the city of Vardhamāna was the headquarters of the 'Vardhamāna-bhukti'; and the officials connected with the administration of this 'bhukti' were present at the city of Vardhamāna when the grant was issued. Names of these officials as well as their true designation are given below¹:

(a) Kārttākṛitika—It is very difficult to say what is really meant by the use of this particular term. As regards its true implication scholars are not of uniform opinion. Thus, while Dr. B. C. Sen thinks that it refers to 'an officer in charge of manufactures', Dr. D. C. Sircar is of opinion that it indicates 'a superintendent or a manager of state affairs'. But these two scholars are not very sure about their explanations. In page 502, footnote 9, of his *Select Inscriptions* the latter has suggested (chiefly dwelling upon the suggestion made by K. G. Goswami, Śāstrī) that the term might indicate 'a judge of an appellate court'. But, it is better to accept his first suggestion. On a similar occasion, a similar view was given by Hopkins (cf. 'kṛtakṛtyeṣu cārthānām viniyojakāḥ', *J.A.O.S.*, Vol. 13, pp. 128-29). This term may, however, refer to a 'superintendent, expert in the handling of secretariat works'.² It may be pointed out here that the Pāla inscriptions are quite familiar with the term 'Mahākārttākṛitika'.

¹ *Dacca History of Bengal*, Vol. I (ed. R. C. Majumdar), pp. 265, 269-70, 277-78; *Some Historical Aspects, etc.*, B. C. Sen, p. 503; *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 359-60, and also *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, p. 183.

² Kārttākṛitika—By disjoining the 'sandhi', we get two forms—kārta and ākritika. By adding the suffix 'an' after 'krta' the word 'kārta' is formed. For the duplication of 'ta', please see Pāṇini's *Sandhiprakaraṇa*. 'Ā' of 'ākritika' has been

place) and other government buildings. This term was not certainly used in order to indicate a supervisor of temples and rest-houses including the 'dharmaśālās' ('āvasatha' meaning also a 'dharmaśālā'), for which the term 'Devadroṇī' was used. According to Dr. B. C. Sen, it indicates an officer in charge of dwellings for pupils and ascetics.¹

(n) Devadroṇī-Sambaddha—The term was generally used in order to denote the designation of a class of officers 'superintending the procession of idols of the temples', but it might have been used to denote that 'officer who was in charge of the temples and temple-properties' (cf. Verāval inscription, line 12; and Karamdāṇḍā stone inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I, line 11). Some have taken 'Devadroṇī' in the sense of temples and sacred tanks belonging to these temples.

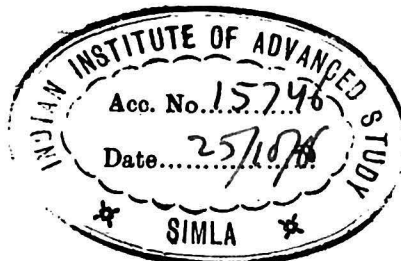
D. Terms in it referring to the boundary-posts

This inscription refers to some boundary-posts in lines 15-16:

'Kīlakāścātra kama(lā)kṣa-mālāṅkitā(h) caturṣu dikṣu nyastā bhavanti'(|). This line shows that the boundary of the plot of land given to Vatsasvāmin was duly marked out by four posts—a system that is followed even in modern times. These posts are said to have borne the impress of a string of lotus-seeds. It is no doubt unique of its kind. The boundary-posts (kīlakas) are expressly mentioned only in this inscription. No earlier use of this word can be found in other inscriptions. Sometimes, pillars were also decorated with a rosary of beads or a string of lotus-seeds. It is known to students of Hindu Iconography that the beads, worn by the deities, were generally of two varieties—(a) rudrākṣa and (b) kamalākṣa. A rosary of beads or a 'rudrākṣa-mālā' is generally found in the hands of Brahmā, Śiva and Sarasvatī, but it may appear in the hands of other deities also.² Similarly, a string of lotus-seeds may be found in the hands of goddess Lakṣmī.

¹ B. C. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

² *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. I, Description of terms, T. A. G. Rao; J. N. Banerjea, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-304.



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