



The Patlinga Copper Plate Grant Inscription of Dandi Mahadevi

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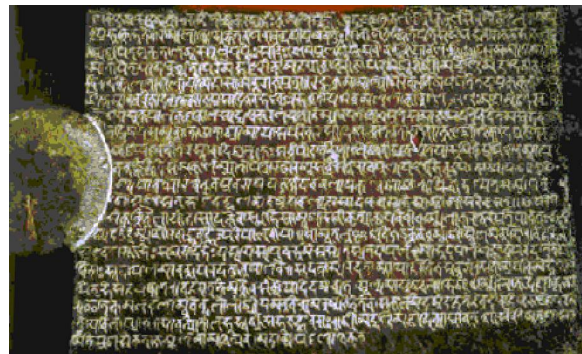
The Patlinga copper plate grant inscription brought to light in April 2006 has thrown new light on the history of Bhaumakara dynasty and the antiquity of Athagarh region. The inscription was discovered in an excellent state of preservation while one Trilochan Pradhan, a farmer, was renovating a dug well in his paddy field in the revenue village of Patlinga, near Athagarh town.

Issued by Bhaumakara queen Dandi Mahadevi, the Patlinga plate is the latest of all her inscriptions discovered so far. The Banpur plate of Dandi Mahadevi had been issued in the Bhauma era 187, whereas the present charter was issued on the occasion of Vishuva Samkranti in the Bhauma year 190, which corresponds to 926 A.D. Thus this inscription extends the chronological limit of Dandi Mahadevi's reign for three more years.

The inscription sheds new light on the administrative formations of Bhaumakara dominions. Dandi Mahadevi is said to have granted the village called Tadata Grama situated in Kontolo Khanda within Santa Mandala under the Dakshina Tosali division of her kingdom in favour of Bhattaputra Daddananda, a learned Brahmin of Kasyapa gotra. The charter begins with a verse

describing the city of Guhesvarapataka from where it was issued. Several other Bhauma documents refer to Guhesvarapataka as a place where the victorious Skandhavara of the reigning monarch is said to have been situated. The word Skandhavara implies a royal cantonment or a capital city. D.C. Sircar locates Guhesvarapataka at about the modern Jajpur. He avers, "The kings of this family granted lands in northern and southern Tosala, the former indicating the Balasore Cuttack region (sometimes with a part of the Midnapur district of West Bengal) and the latter including parts of Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam districts."

Whereas other Bhauma charters mention "Vishaya" as an administrative division intermediate to Mandala and Khanda, the instant inscription carries no mention of Vishaya. One of the Ganjam plates of Dandi





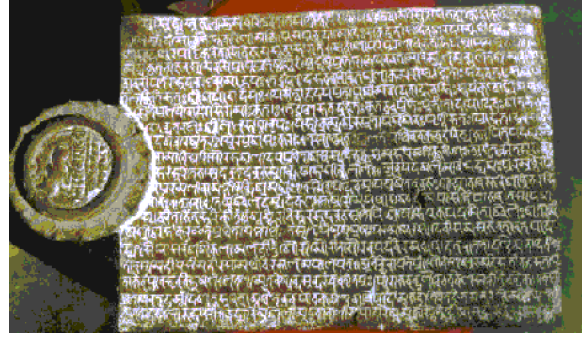
Mahadevi records the grant of a village in the Purva Khanda of the Varadakhanda vishaya in the Kongoda Mandala. On the basis of this, D.C.Sircar seems to suggest that Khanda was designated particularly by its geographical direction like Purva (eastern) and Paschima (western). But the mention of Kontolo Khanda in Patlinga inscription proves that Khandas were also named after the headquarter town, apart from the geographical direction.

The topographical and social description of Kontolo Khanda in the Patlinga plate agrees with the features of the modern Konthol village within Athagarh NAC. The Patlinga village, whence the inscription was discovered, is situated only four kilometers away from Konthol. The Konthol village is a populous habitation with an ancient Brahmin Sasan. Several archeological remains of Konthol like the ancient images of Chamunda (locally known as Dakshina Chandi), Manjusri and Jaina Tirthankaras corroborate the antiquity of the place.

The Santa Manadala ('Santa' originally means a holy person) can be satisfactorily identified with the present Athagarh region, which is replete with ancient rock-cut caves carved on the hillocks for the use of monks, marking out the region as a seat of religion and asceticism.

As regards Tadata Grama, there is no village extant by that name. The reason could be that during 18th century the Gadajat kings of Athagarh renamed several villages in Vaishnavite tradition.

When compared with other grant inscriptions of Dandi Mahadevi, the Patlinga plate is a mere reiteration of the genealogy, religious affiliation and the official hierarchical structure of the Bhaumakara dynasty, with no



variation. It mentions officials like Mahasamanta, Kumaramatya, Auparika, Vishayapati, Tadayuktaka, Dandapashika, *et al.*

The early Bhaumakara kings were Buddhists adorned with titles like Paramopasaka, Paramasaugata and Paramatathagata. But towards the end of Bhauma rule, the queens are endowed with Hindu epithets: Dandi Mahadevi is styled as Parama mahesvari, Paramabhattarika and Paramesvari. Therefore, the beginning of the end of Buddhism in Orissa can be traced to the transition in religious affiliation of Bhauma rulers. As stated in the Patlinga inscription, Dandi Mahadevi was a devout Saivite who granted Tadata village together with the subjects such as Tantuvaya (weavers), Gokuta (milkmen) and Saundika (vintners) to a Brahmin. A ruler practising Hinduism granting an entire village, along with its castes, in Santamandala (named so due to its religious character) to a learned Brahmin represents propagation of Hindu socio-religious order in a region of religious prominence. Therefore, the decline of Buddhism in Orissa, which is attributed to Somavamsi and Ganga rule, should actually be traced back to Bhauma times.

As in other Dandi Mahadevi's charters, in the Patlinga inscription also, the genealogy



begins with the illustrious King UnmattaSimha, and also mentions the ascendancy of queen Gauri Mahadevi, and subsequently of her daughter Dandi Mahadevi, whose virtuous reign has been eulogised in glorious terms. There has been no mention of the marital status of Dandi Mahadevi in any of the inscriptions discovered so far. That a princess was enthroned in the 10th century A.D and her reign was celebrated by her subjects is a monumental tradition bequeathed by the Bhaumakaras, unparalleled in ancient Indian history. The fact that generations of royal women could rise to the imperial throne and shine in administrative

brilliance during the Bhauma period, should find proper appreciation in the gender studies of ancient Indian history. The Patlinga copper plate of Dandi Mahadevi has once again reminded us that the ethos of equality in Oriya society is deep-rooted and time-honoured.

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