

A COPPER PLATE INSCRIPTION FROM SOUTH KANARA

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The grant about which I am speaking now is engraved on one side of a single copper plate, measuring 12.5 × 23.5 cms. and weighing 150 gms. The plate in question was handed over sometime back by Dr. P.N. Narasimha Murthy, Rtd. Principal, M.G.M. College, Udupi to Dr. K.V. Ramesh. I am thankful to Dr. Narasimha Murthy for generously permitting me to speak on this charter at this Congress. This rectangular plate has at the top centre the figure of Liṅga, placed on a stylized Damaruga pīṭha and flanked by figures of Sun and the crescent Moon. The text engraved below these figures consists of 27 lines, written in Kannada characters of the middle of the 15th century A.D. Barring the initial invocatory verse “*namastuṅga...*, etc.”, which is in Sanskrit language, the rest of the text is in Kannada language. As for its orthography, the invocatory verse in Sanskrit is full of errors. The Kannada text, which follows, also betrays a number of ungrammatical colloquial usages, which are, however, commonly met with in all the Kannada inscriptions of the period in question. Notable among such orthographical features are : (1) the engraver has not, most of the times, distinguished between ḍ, ḍh and d. (2) In all cases, *anusvāra* and cerebral *ṇ* are used in combination.

After the invocatory verse, the details of the date are given in lines 3 and 5, as Śaka 1353, Virōdhikṛit Saṁvatsara, Mārgaśira śu. 5 Ā (i.e., Ādityavāra). These details of date regularly correspond to 1431 A.D., November 10, f.d.t. 0.31. Next follows the introduction of the ruling king Pratāpadēvarāya, who is stated, in lines 6 and 7, to be ruling over the four oceans from the city of Vijayanagari. From lines 7 to 10, we learn that at that time Maṅgaḷūrū-rājya was being administered by Aṁṇappa, the son of Dēvarāja, on the orders of the imperial minister (*Pradhāna*) Hariyappa-daṇṇāyaka-oḍeya. This is followed by the information, in lines 10 to 13, that the present inscription was a charter given, with the pouring of water, to Kaṇavvōji Subhaṇṇa, who was the *pādamūli* among the two brothers who had gone over to Puttūru in the principality of the Baṅga chieftain Pāṇḍyaparasa.

The actual purpose of the grant is recorded in lines 14-26. The details of the grant recorded may be stated as follows: When Kriyāvatiḍeva, who was serving as an officer under Aṁṇappa, the governor of Maṅgaḷūru-rājya, had gone on a visit

to Puttūru, *pādamūli* Kaṇavvōji Subhaṇṇa had also gone there and had installed (the image of) the god Mahādēva and was offering worship. The god having been thus installed on the ground, the case of Subhaṇṇa's indigence was placed before the people of the region (*sīmeyavarū*). In response to the request made to them in the presence of the (installed) deity, the charter was got engraved recording the grant of lands for Subhaṇṇa's subsistence and for carrying on worship to the deity. The grant, which was made with the pouring of ablutionary water, included a piece of land called *kambala-timāru*. The said lands were purchased from the Baṅga chieftain Pāṇḍyaparasa at a cost of two hundred twenty three *varāhas*. It is stipulated that the land thus granted was to be enjoyed perpetually by the donee and his descendants and that they should pay the taxes regularly from time to time. The text ends in line 27 with the mention of a certain Nāgaṇṇa described as a *vīra*.

There are a few phrases of lexical interest used in this record. In line 17 it is stated that the god Mahādēva installed by Subhaṇṇa had become *bhūgata* (*bhūgatavādarimda*). In present day Kannada, the expression *bhūgatavāgu* means 'go underground'. But the original Sanskrit expression *bhūgata* actually means 'being or existing on the earth' (Monier Williams' Sanskrit English Dictionary, q.v.). We may, therefore, conclude that by the expression '*bhūgatavādarimda*', the fact that Subhaṇṇa had installed the deity on the ground is meant. We can infer an extended meaning to this expression by assuming that Subhaṇṇa, having installed the deity Mahādēva at Puttūru, had placed the Vijayanagara governor as well as the people of that region (*sīmeyavarū*) under obligation to help him continue to offer worship to the deity for which purpose there was need to sustain him by giving him the grant of land. The expression *kambala-timāru* is interesting in the historical context in which it is used. It is well known that buffalo races are organised ceremonially in a popular festive ritual at the commencement of the sowing season by the Tuḷuvas. The *kambala-timāru*, which formed part of the land granted to Subhaṇṇa was obviously being used for conducting these buffalo races.

The donee is said to have migrated to Puttūru along with his brother (name not given) from the banks of the Pulinā river (to be identified). He is described as *pādamūli*, by which it is most likely that Subhaṇṇa's devotion to the god Mahādēva is emphasised for the word *pādamūla* literally means 'a man of devotion'.

Having discussed in detail the contents of this single copper plate, I would like to add here a historical assessment of this inscription. Though the charter was issued in Śaka 1353 equivalent to 1431 A.D., the writing of the Kannada alphabet, on the face of it, appears to be of as slightly later date. However, the inscription contains a number of verifiable historical facts. 1) It refers itself to the reign of the Vijayanagara King Dēvarāya II, who reigned from 1422 to 1449 A.D. The charter further refers to the governorship of Aṇṇapa over Maṅgaḷūru-rājya. We know from other inscriptions from the region that *mahāpradhāna* Aṇṇapa oḍeya was the governor of Bāarakūru-rājya and/or Maṅgaḷūru-rājya for nearly a decade and that in A.D. 1431, he was indeed the governor of Maṅgaḷūru-rājya as stated in our charter. As a matter of fact, Aṇṇapa oḍeya's career in South Kanara spanning over nearly a decade between 1431-39 A.D. was an eventful one. In 1434-35 A.D., when Aṇṇapa was governing Bāarakūru-rājya on the orders of Siṅgaṇa-daṇḍanāyaka, Aṇṇapa-oḍeya, for some unknown reason, attacked the village of Śivalḷi as a result of which, the holy image of Lord Kṛishṇa of Uḍupi had to be taken away to some other place, thus resulting in temporary discontinuance of the ritualistic worship of the deity. The residents of Śivalḷi were deeply aggrieved by this action of the governor. They were, however, pacified by municipal administrators of the city of Bāarakūru, who also requested the king to restore the status quo. On the king's orders, Aṇṇapa instructed a certain Siṅgarasa-oḍeya to restore Lord Kṛishṇa's image to the temple and to make a number of grants to the deity.

In 1438 A.D., Aṇṇapa became the governor of the entire Tuḷurājya (i.e., Bāarakūru and Maṅgaḷūru-rājyas, Haive-rājya (the southern parts of North Kanara District) as also Koṅkaṇa-rājya (Goa). Here again, because of certain political compulsions (*rājakāryada-mēle*), he marched against *mahāmaṇḍalēśvara* Bhairavadēva-oḍeya, the ruler of Nagire-rājya and defeated him. It is possible that the Nagire ruler had become recalcitrant, forcing Aṇṇapa to take punitive action against him by invading his principality.

The Baṅga chieftain Pāṇḍyaparasa-oḍeya, from whom the gift lands were purchased, is also known to us through inscriptions. In an inscription from Paḍuva Paṇaṃbūru (Dakshina Kannada District), he is referred to as the son of Viṭṭaladēvi and as the nephew of his predecessor Pāṇḍyaparasa. Like many other local ruling families, the Baṅgas also followed the Aḷiyasantāna-kaṭṭu.

Amṅapa-oḍeya is stated to have been appointed as the governor of Maṅgalūru-rājya by *Pradhāna* Hariyappa-daṅṅāyaka. We know that one Hariyappa-daṅṅāyaka-oḍeya is mentioned in South Kanara inscriptions of this period as an imperial officer and also as being present in the Court of the Hoysala queen Chikkāyitāyi, who was in-charge of Hoysala interests in the Tulu Country, on behalf of her husband Ballāḷa III. His mention as the appointer of Amṅapa-oḍeya as Vijayanagara governor and the fact that the gift lands had to be bought on payment from the local Baṅga chieftain further confirm the already known fact that the Vijayanagara kings did not interfere with the local administrators. Their interests in safeguarding their hold on the coastal region was more or less limited to trade purposes, particularly for the import of war horses.

Text

1. Namas-tuḡa śirachi(ś - chu)m̄bi chaṁdra-chāmara-chāra-
2. vē [*] trayi(trai)lōkya-nagar-ā[ra*]m̄bha m̄lastambā(bhā)ya Śam̄-
3. [bha*]vē [||*] svasti śrī-jayābyu(bhyu)daya-Śālivāhana - Śakha(ka)-
4. vara(ru)sha 1353 nē vartamāna Virōdhikru(kṛi)t-nāma
5. saṁvatsarada Mār(ge)rgāsira śu 5 Ā-lu śrīmatu
6. Vije(ja)ye(ya)nagariyalu Pratāpa-Dēvarāyaru
7. chatusa(s-sa)mudrava pālisuvali pradā(dhā)na Hariya -
8. ppa-damṅāyaka-vode(ḍe)yara nirūpadim̄dā(m̄da) Mam̄-
9. gaḷṅra-rājyavanu Dēvarājagaḷa maga Amṅapa -
10. gaḷu āluvali Pā[in*]ḍyaparasarāda Baṅgara stā(sthā)nada -
11. lu Puḷinā-nadī -tīradim̄da baṁda am̄ṅa-ta(m̄)maim̄di-
12. rali pādāmulu Kaṇavṅōji Subhaṅṅage barasiko -
13. ṭṭa tam̄braśāsana da(dhā)re paṭṭi kramava(ve)m̄ta(te)m̄dare
14. Amṅappagaḷa keḷage tiḷunādiya adi(dhi)kāravanu m̄a-
15. ḍuva Kriyāvati dēvarugaḷavaru
16. Puttūrige bijeya māḍidali nīvu yilige baṁdu Mahadēvaranu

17. pratishṭe(ṣṭhe) māḍi puje maḍuvali śri devaru blugata -
18. vadarinda ni[in*]ma sti(sthi)tiyanu sinicya[va*]ra munt(i)ndi)-
19. ṭṭu biinapa māḍidake devara saninidi(dli)yalu kra-
20. yake koṇḍainta brahmadāyavanu da(dha)reya(ye)ra(re)du
21. śīla-śasana barasi naḍisidallade niinma jivanake pa[in*]-
22. ḍyapa - arasarada Baṅgariinda krayake koṇḍa kamba -
23. ḷa timaru muntāgi inmura ippaṭṭa muru
24. varahada bhumiyanu nivu saṁtana paraṇpa
25. yavagi baḷi anubhaviśi kalakalake sistanu te-
26. ttu bahadeindu da (dliā)radatta maḍi koṭṭad-agi a
27. de vīranu Nagarīṇa.

