

THE DATE OF KHĀRAVELA AND THE EARLY SĀTAVĀHANAS

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Now it is generally accepted that the chronology of Khāravēla is linked up with the early Sātavāhanas. But there is no general agreement regarding the initial date of the Sātavāhanas as well as that of Khāravēla. It varies by several centuries.¹ The chronology of the early Sātavāhanas mainly depends on the testimony of the Purāṇas whereas that of Khāravēla rests on the mention of some contemporary kings and dates in his Hāthigumphā inscription. This inscription of Khāravēla is one of the most disputed documents not only because of its contents but also because of its palaeographical peculiarities. The main reason for this seems to be its irritably worn out condition which gave rise to several variant readings. Here we do not propose to discuss all these variant readings but will concentrate on some facts contained in the epigraph which throws some light on its date.

There are at least three considerations for determining the date of Khāravēla. These are (i) the mention of some contemporary kings, references to dates or era, if any, and, the palaeography. As regards the first there are three names of kings which could be deciphered with various degrees of satisfaction. Of these the reading of the name of Sātakarṇi only is beyond dispute. Of the other two names of *Bahasatimitān* and *Dimita*, very often identified with Demetrius the son of Euthydemes, the reading of the latter is extremely doubtful.² Considering the late date of this inscription, as we shall see shortly, and, the doubts prevailing about the exploit in northern India by Demetrius and, also the paucity of evidence to think of Mathura as his capital, it is impossible to arrive at any conclusion on this basis. If we accept the chronology proposed by us the

yavanarāja may be any Śāka Kshatrapa of Mathura or even the proposed name may be *Vimaka* (Wema Kadphisis) as proposed by Dr. P. L. Gupta.³ Similarly the identification of *Bahasatimitani* or *Bahapatimitani* with Pushyamitra merely on the ground that *Bṛhaspati* (*Jiva*) is the regent, *nakshatrādhīpa*, of the *nakshatra* or zodiacal asterism *Pushya*, also named *Tishya*, in the constellation *Cancer* or the *Crab*, cannot be regarded as final in the absence of more convincing evidence.⁴ In no case *Khāravela* can be regarded as a contemporary of *Pushyamitra* who ruled from about 187 to 151 B. C.⁵ Although Dr. Shashi Kant believes that *Khāravela* ruled from c. 185 B. C. to c. 172 B. C. he does not regard *Pushyamitra* as his contemporary.⁶

But the case of *Sātakarṇi* is worth considering; he seems to be *Sātakarṇi* the First, the third king of the *Sātavāhana* dynasty, variously been assigned a date ranging between 3rd century B. C. to 1st century B. C. Some early scholars such as Rapson and Smith prefer to place the early *Sātavāhanas* in the 3rd century B. C. Their calculation is based on a statement of the *Purāṇas* that the 'Āndhras' ruled for four and a half centuries. However different *Purāṇas* are not unanimous on this point. They also give different names and order of succession of the kings assigned to this dynasty. For example *Matsya Purāna* gives a list of thirty names but says that 'these nineteen Āndhra (kings) will enjoy the earth'. Similarly most of the *Vāyu* manuscripts say that these thirty Āndhras will enjoy the earth but enumerate only seventeen, eighteen or nineteen kings. But almost all the *Purāṇas* are unanimous on the point that the founder of the *Sātavāhana* dynasty was *Simuka*, also variously misspelt as *Śiśūka*, *Sindhūkka* and *Sipraka*, 'will assail the *Kāṇvāyanas* and *Suśarman*, and destroy the remains of the *Śuṅgas*' power and will obtain this earth'.⁸ We have no reason to reject this statement of the *Purāṇas*. If we accept this we get a definite clue for calculating the date of the beginning of *Sātavāhana* dynasty. In the *Purāṇic* lists of the future kings⁹ it is stated that 137 years after the accession of *Chandragupta* *Mauurya* the *Śuṅgas* will rule for 112 years and then the *Kāṇvāyanas* for 45 years whose last king *Suśarman* will be killed by *Simuka*. Thus a total of 294 years had passed away after the accession of *Chandragupta*, say about 324 B. C. when the *Sātavāhana* dynasty was established by *Simuka*, a date which falls in 30 B. C.¹⁰ *Simuka* is said to have ruled for 23 years and his successor *Krishṇa* for 18 years (some times 10 years). Thus the date of *Sātakarṇi* falls in 11 A. D. (or 3 A. D.). We agree with Prof. *Raychaudhury* that *Simuka* was for some years a contemporary of *Suśarman* (40—30 B. C.) and flourished in the first century B. C.¹¹ but are hesitant to accept the view that his reign period be counted from some time before 30 B. C., keeping in view that he established the *Sātavāhana* power after,

killing Suśarman in that year. We also do not know how he arrived at the dates of the kings of this dynasty when he assigns c. 60-37 B. C. to Simuka and c. 37-27 B. C. to Krishṇa and c. 27-17 B. C. to Sātakarṇi.¹² Similarly Dr. D. C. Sircar also, though he arrives at the same date of 30 B. C. for Simuka,¹³ assigns Sātakarṇi I a rule about the end of the first century B. C.¹⁴ It is not clear how he proposes to accommodate three Sātavāhana kings who ruled for about 59 years within the remaining last thirty years before the beginning of the Christian era. Under the rigours of this view he speculates the existence of another Sātakarṇi II¹⁵ and assigns the Sāñchi inscription on the southern gate of the main stupa to him. In his support he brings out a passage from the *Periplus of The Erythrean Sea* and observes that 'Saraganus may be regarded as a Greek corruption of Sātakarṇi and the elder Saraganus of the *Periplus*, who appears to be the earlier, of the two rulers of that name, may be no other than Sātakarṇi I of the Sātavāhana dynasty; but the language of the passage seems to suggest that the northern Konkan passed from the elder Saraganus (or his successor, a younger Saraganus) to Sandares shortly before the time of the author, i. e. some time about the middle of the first century A. D. This Sātakarṇi, therefore, may have been a descendant of Sātakarṇi I.¹⁶ He is hesitant also in accepting Sātakarṇi I as the contemporary king of Khāravela. Commenting on the word *Sātakamni* occurring in the Hāthigumphā inscription he observes as follows:

This king seems to be that Sātakarṇi who ruled shortly after the husband of Nāganika according to the Purānas. Palaeographically the Hāthigumphā inscription is slightly later than the Nānāghāt records. It may be pointed out that the letters of the Sāñchi inscription of Sātakarṇi (Plate in *J. B. O. R. S.*, 1917) resemble the script of the present record and may belong to Sātakarṇi II. Of course, if this slight development is overlooked, we may identify both these Sātakarṇis with Sātakarṇi I. But it should be remembered that the big Nānāghāt record was possibly engraved after the death of that king.¹⁷

Here it seems that according to Prof. Sircar there are two main difficulties in accepting the supposed two Sātakarṇis as the same person; firstly the early date of Sātakarṇi whom he puts in about the end of the first century B. C.; secondly the palaeographic consideration of the records concerned. We will take the palaeographic problem later but should consider the date first.

As regards the date Prof. Buhler observes that the 'characters of the Nānāghāt inscriptions belong to a period anterior by about 100 years to that of the edicts of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi I, and his son Vāsishṭhīputra Pulumāyi'.¹⁸ Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi is roughly assigned a reign period of 24 years between 106-30 A. D.¹⁹ If we accept

Buhler's estimate regarding the date of Sātakarṇi it falls in the first quarter of the first century A. D.; a date which agrees with our calculation falling between A. D. 11 and 29. Mention of Sātakarṇi in Khāravēla's inscription indicates that the former was an elder contemporary of the latter. Thus the date of Khāravēla must fall in the second (or even third) decade of the first century A. D.

The second consideration is the mention of some dates in the epigraph of Khāravēla. In the line 16 of the inscription earlier scholars read and interpreted '165th year of Rajā Muriyakāla.'²⁰ But now nobody accepts the existence of a Maurya era in this inscription as the revised reading does not permit any such assumption.²¹ The second passage which mentions some date in the sixth line of the epigraph runs as follows:

Pañchame cha dāni vase Nānda-Rāja ti-vasa-satao (ghā)ṭitam Tanasuliya vāḥa panāḍim nagaram pavesa(ya)ti.

Here Nandarāja has been taken to be a king of the Nanda dynasty of Magadh, and the expression *ti-vasa-sata* is either 103 or 300 years. If we accept this the expression cannot mean 103 years because it will synchronize with the reign period of the Mauryas; and the Mauryas find no mention in the epigraph. Similarly it should not be taken, as matter of fact, 300 years but rather three centuries in 'round number'.²² Some scholars have tried to count this from 324 B. C.,²³ the supposed date of accession of Chandragupta Maurya, or two years earlier *i. e.* from 326 when the Nanda dynasty may have been overthrown.²⁴ In our opinion this loose expression of 'three centuries' may be counted from any date in the late 4th century B. C. when Nandas were in power and might have invaded Kalinga, and does not affect the date of Khāravēla who flourished in the early 1st century A. D. De la Vallee-Poussin maintains Khāravēla to be 'après-beaucoup après 150', probably early 1st century A. D.²⁵

As regards the palaeography of this epigraph it undoubtedly belongs to the 1st century A. D. Similarly the records of the Nānāghā belonging to the time of Sātakarṇi or his wife Nāganikā also cannot be separated by a wide gap. Sri R. P. Chanda, although does not try to date the inscriptions from the third century B. C. to the second century A. D. individually, but chronologically arranges them in the following order:²⁶

1. Edicts of Aśoka.
2. Nāgārjunī Hill cave inscriptions of Aśoka's grandson Daśaratha.
3. Besnagar Garuḍa pillar inscriptions (*sic*).
- 4 (a) Inscriptions on the railing of Stūpa I at Sānchī.
(b) Inscriptions on the railings of Stūpa II at Sānchī.

- (c) Bharhut railing inscriptions.
 - (d) Inscriptions on the remnants of the old Bodh Gaya railing.
5. (a) Besnagar Garuḍa pillar inscription of the year 12 after the installation of *mahārāja* Bhāgavata.
 - (b) Inscriptions of Nāganikā, widow of the Āndhra king Śātakarṇi I in the Nānāghāt cave.
 - (c) Bharhut *torāṇa* (gateway) inscription.
 6. Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela, king of Kalinga.
 7. Sañchī *torāṇa* inscriptions.
 8. Inscriptions of the time of Soḍasa.
 9. Inscriptions of Kanishka.

Thus R. P. Chanda brackets the Nānāghāt cave inscriptions with those at the Besnagar Garuḍa pillar, belonging to mahārāja Bhāgavata and, the Bharhut *torāṇa*. Then he puts Hāthigumphā and the Sañchī *torāṇa* inscriptions, both mentioning the name of Śātakarṇi I. Thus Chanda's Nos. 5 to 8 may be taken roughly to belong to the early 1st century A. D. (or close of the 1st century B. C.)²⁷. Obviously palaeography was not the only consideration for giving this order to the inscriptions before Śrī Chanda. A study of the history of the development of the Brahmī script in this period reveals that there were many tendencies influencing the formation of the individual letters.²⁸

Until the close of the first century B. C. the Brahmī script developed uninterrupted on the old traditional lines established during the time of Aśoka. Its growth was very slow and to some extent static. The tool and the technique of writing was almost the same as used in the Aśokan inscriptions. The changes which had taken place till the end of the 1st century B. C. were mainly due to the fact that the art of writing was becoming known to more and more persons with increased chances of introducing individual mannerisms and personal habits. This and the teacher-taught traditions paved the way for freaks, seemingly developing into regional traits. But by the close of the first century B. C. the Śakas established themselves in north-west India and they introduced some revolutionary changes in the art of writing Brahmī script. The tendency to equalise the verticals of letters like *pa*, *la*, *sha*, *sā*, and *ha* and to angularise the curves had already started during the first century B. C. This change was led by the coins, obviously influenced by the Greek lettering. The Śaka Kshatrapas used an edged pen for writing which gave a new face to the Brahmī letters, producing an effect not dissimilar to Greek lettering. Dr. A. H. Dani rightly observes that 'this was not

an isolated phenomenon' and 'the well known use of square omicron on the Śaka and Parthian coins' can be related to this.²⁸ The inscriptions of the Kshatrapas of Mathura are well marked for their neat and well formed letters. These new tendencies were accepted in other parts of the country also. But in remote areas like Orissa and Mahārāshtra etc. they reached gradually. This is the reason why we find older forms persisting along with the new forms in the inscriptions of these areas. Scribe's hand and personal mannerism also may be held responsible for such differences. Therefore while other evidences agree in pointing out a contemporaneity of two sets of inscriptions the palaeography should not be regarded as a serious objection. Palaeographic difference is much wider between the Nānāghāt and the Sāñchī *torāna* inscriptions which are regarded as belonging to Sātakarṇi I,²⁹ when we compare it with the Hāthigumpha inscription of Khāravela. If one compares the beautiful carved inscriptions of Rishabhadatta at Nāsik with that of the badly carved one at Karle belonging to the son of Rishabhadatta one may find such differences. A look at the tables analysing the individual letters of the Hāthigumpha inscription and those of the early Sātavāhanas found at Nāsik and Nānāghāt will make our point clear.

Thus on the basis of the arguments indicated above we may conclude that Sātakarṇi I (C, 11—29 A. D.) of the Sātavāhana dynasty was an elder contemporary of Khāravela who ruled in the first quarter of the first century A. D.

REFERENCES:

1. *CHI*, Vol. I, p 642 and pp. 481 ff. and also Sten Konow, *Acta Orientalia*, I, 1923. p. 12 ff. for various dates proposed.
2. Cf. Tarn, W. W., *Greeks in Bactria and India*, pp 457—58. 'In 1919 the late Dr. Jayaswal and the late Professor R. D. Banerji made a fresh examination of the rock, and Jayaswal announced that he had read the word Yavānarāja, followed by the proper name Dimata; he has stated that he found the syllable-ma clear and ultimately with great difficulty read Dimat(a). This reading, and its interpretation as the Greek king Demetrius, were accepted both by Banerji and by Dr. Sten Konow. Konow, however, said of his own reading: 'I can see Yavānarāja, as read by Mr. Jayaswal, and of his Dimata the ma is quite legible; he did not say if he could see the supposed faint traces of the rest of the word..... Jayaswal's version in 1927 was: 'On account of the report (uproar) occasioned by the acts of valour i. e. the capture of a fortress etc. previously mentioned the Greek king Demet(rius) drawing in his army and transport retreated to abandon Mathura. 'Then in 1928 Jayaswal puts for-

ward a totally different view: what the inscription refers to, he said, is the Greek king (he does not say Demetrius) being beaten off from Pataliputra when he attacked it and retreating to Mathura.'

3. In a discourse Dr. P. L. Gupta, formerly the Curator of the Patna Museum, said that 'after checking the plaster cast of the inscription placed in the Patna Museum he came to the conclusion that the name concerned may be Vimaka.' Palaeographically it is not unprobable as in a worn out inscription like this *va* and *da* may look similar, *ma* is common to both versions and *ta* may be read as *ka* also. Though this is a very tempting suggestion but its probability is very remote as Wima Kadphises cannot be placed in the first half of the first century A. D.
4. Raychaudhuri, H. C., *PHAI*, p. 374.
5. *Ibid*, p. 378.
6. Shashikant, *Hāthigumphā Inscription of Khāravela and the Bhabru Edict of Asoka*, Delhi, 1971, pp 39—43.
7. Pargiter, *DKA*, p. 36.
8. *Ibid*, p. 38 and 71.
9. *Ibid*, pp. 70—71.
10. Raychaudhuri, H. C. *op. cit.* pp. 403ff.
11. *Ibid*.
12. *Ibid*, pp. 414 ff.
13. *AIU*, p. 195.
14. *Ibid*, p. 200.
15. *SI*, p. 215, fn. 1.
16. *AIU*, pp. 199—200.
17. *SI*, p. 215, fn. 1.
18. *ASWI*, Vol. V, p. 65.
19. Sircar, D. C., *AIU*, p. 202.
20. For detailed discussion see *CHI*, Vol I, pp. 481—82 and *PHAI*, p. 373 ff.
21. Sircar, D. C., *SI*, p. 218, fns. 13, 14, 15 and for the Sanskrit version see p. 221.
22. For arguments see Banerjee, R. D., *JBORS*, 1917, pp. 495 ff.
23. Raychaudhuri, H. C., *op. cit.* p. 406.
24. Cf. Sircar, D. C., *SI*, p. 215, fn. 7.

25. L. de la Vallee-Poussin, *L'Inde aux temps des Mauryas et des barbares. Grecs. Scythes, Parthes et Yue-tchi*, p. 198, as quoted in *GBI*, p. 457, fn. 3.
26. *Mem. ASI*, No. 1, pp. 14-15.
27. Cf. Verma, T. P., *PBS*, p. 62.
28. *IP*, p. 52.
29. See *PHAI*, pp. 415-16.
30. *ASWI*, Vol. IV, pl. lii, nos. 5 & 7 and pl. xlviij no. 11.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AIU* Age of Imperial Unity, History and Culture of Indian People, Vol. II.
- ASWI* Archaeological Survey of Western India.
- CHI* Cambridge History of India, Vol. I, ed. E. J. Rapson, 1st Ind. Reprint.
- DKA* Dynasties of the Kali Age, by F. E. Pargiter, London, 1913.
- GBI* The Greeks in Bactria and India, by W. W. Tarn, Reprint in 1966.
- IP* Indian Palaeography, by A. H. Dani. London, 1963.
- JBORS* Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna.
- Mem ASI* Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.
- PBS* Palaeography of Brahmi Script, by T. P. Verma, Varanasi, 1971.
- PHAI* Political History of Ancient India, by H. C. Raychaudhri.
- SI* Select inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization by D. C. Sircar, Second Edition.