

(1 Plate)

S. SANKARANARAYANAN, OOTACAMUND

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The subjoined inscription,<sup>1</sup> edited with the kind permission of the Government Epigraphist for India, was discovered in 1936 at **Reṇṭāla**, a village in Palnad Taluk, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. It is engraved on a sculptured white marble stone pillar set up on the southern mound of the hillock, locally known as *Stambhālabōḍu* in the village. I visited the hillock in January 1964. The pillar under question measures about 2.65 m in height and about 25 cm × 25 cm at the bottom. An examination of the site gives an idea that the original structure to which the pillar belonged might have been a *maṇḍapa*, circular in shape and having twelve pillars—four pillars set up in the middle, two on either side of an entrance measuring about 90 cm and eight pillars at the end set up in such a way as to form a circle. The inscribed pillar under study appears to be one of the two pillars on the left side of the entrance. Unfortunately the whole structure is completely broken to pieces and lost excepting our solitary pillar. The heights of other broken eleven pillars vary from 10 cm to about 30 cm. The epigraph occupies an area of 75 cm × 24 cm and contains 15 lines. The proper right side of the lower part of the record viz. lines 11-15, is broken away and the number of letters thus lost in each line varies from one (line 11) to four (line 14). The preservation of the record, even in the extant portion, is not quite satisfactory. However, in spite of the fragmentary nature, the purport of the epigraph is far from doubt.

The characters of the record resemble those of the other inscriptions found at Nāgārjuni-koṇḍa<sup>2</sup> and Jaggayyapeṭa<sup>3</sup> belonging to the Ikshvāku rulers Virapurushadatta and Ehuṇḍula-Chantamula and assigned to the middle and the second half of the third century A.D.<sup>4</sup> However, the following peculiarities of our record are noteworthy. Unlike in the above mentioned inscriptions, the middle stroke of the letter *k* and the bottom line of *n* in the inscription under study are straight. Similarly, the bottom line of *ṇ* is also straight though its right end slightly curves downwards. These features suggest a slightly earlier date for our record. The language of the inscription is Prakrit.

The epigraph refers itself to the reign of the **Ikshvāku king rājan Vaseṭhiputa-sīri-Chantamula** and is dated the first day of the first fortnight of the rainy season in the victorious (*viṇaya*)<sup>5</sup> fifth regnal year<sup>6</sup> of the king. The fact that he is referred to simply

<sup>1</sup> *A.R. Ep.*, 1936-37, No. 349.

<sup>2</sup> Above, Vol. XX, pp. 1 ff. and Plates; Vol. XXI, pp. 61 ff. and Plates; Vol. XXXV, pp. 1 ff. and Plates.

<sup>3</sup> *Arch. Surv. South India*, Vol. I, pp. 107 ff. and Plates LXII-LXIII. The macron over *e* and *o* has not been used in this article.

<sup>4</sup> D. C. Sircar, *Suc. Sāt.*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> The description of the regnal year as *viṇaya-saṁvachchhara* (Sanskrit *viṇaya-saṁvatsara*) is rather unusual in the inscriptions of the Ikshvākus. The expression *saṁvachchharaṁ viṇayaṁ* is found in one of the inscriptions of Virapurushadatta as well as in a record of Ehuṇḍula-Chantamula (above, Vol. XXXV, pp. 1 ff) where the word *viṇaya* has been taken to be the name of the first (northern cycle) or the 27th (southern cycle) year of the Jupiter's cycle.

<sup>6</sup> The date has not been correctly read in *A.R. Ep.*, 1936-37, No. 349.

as siri-Chaṇṭamula and not as siri-Ehuvula-Chaṇṭamula, shows that he should be identified with Chantamula I<sup>1</sup> who was the father of Virapurushadatta and grandfather of Ehuvula-Chantamula II. The last named ruler is always referred to in his inscriptions as siri-Ehuvula-Chantamula.<sup>2</sup>

The record commences with the auspicious word *Sidham* followed by an adoration to the Bhagavat.<sup>3</sup> As the record is Buddhist in character, we have to take this Bhagavat to be the Buddha himself. This is followed, in lines 2-4, by the mention of the ruling king and the date of the record referred to above. The following sentence in lines 4-15 states that the stone pillar (*āyaka - skambha*),<sup>4</sup> evidently the one on which the inscription is engraved, was caused to be made by a merchant (*vaṇijaka*) in the *maṇḍapa* of the Buddha-saṅgha. The name of the merchant appears to be Chūtīdhāra-siri (Sanskrit, Chūḍādhāraśrī). He is described as **Gaṇjikuṭa**, the son of a merchant whose name seems to read as Saṅghila, a resident of the town and his wife Haṁghā (Sanskrit, Saṅghā).<sup>5</sup> It is stated that the gift was made for his own longevity and for his continued victory and that in this pious act he was associated with his wife, daughter, a group of his daughters-in-law, his friends and grandsons and with four or five others who were probably related to him in one way or the other. The *maṇḍapa* in which the pillar was set up is said to belong to **Upendragiri-varddhamāna** situated in a *vihāra-maṇḍala*. Unfortunately, the name of the *vihāra* is lost, while the name of the village which is also partly lost appears to read Tuvaṛa. The word *varddhamāna* occurs elsewhere also and appears to be a technical term meaning a type of building.<sup>6</sup> So the compound word Upendragiri-varddhamāna in the present record means a *varddhamāna* built by a person called Upendragiri.<sup>7</sup>

The inscription under study is **important** in more than one respect. It is the **only known record of the time of the Ikshvāku king Siri-Chantamula I** discovered so far, though he is known from the inscriptions of his successors.<sup>8</sup> While Chantamula I is often credited with the performance of *Agnihotra*, *Agnishṭoma*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha* and with other pious deeds like *sahasrahala* in the records of Virapurushadatta and Ehuvula-Chantamula II, the present record does not refer to such acts. This silence may perhaps be due to the fact that Chantamula I had

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, where the king has been identified with Ehuvula-Chantamula. However, Shri H. Sarkar, in a communication sent to the Government Epigraphist for India, suggested that the king mentioned in this record might be Chantamula I. Cf. also *A. R. Ep.*, 1943-44 and 1944-45, No. E 43.

<sup>2</sup> See above, Vol. XX, p. 24, pillar inscription II, etc.

<sup>3</sup> On the other side of the pillar the words *namo Bhagavato Būdhasa sagasa* are engraved in slightly later characters.

<sup>4</sup> The term *āyaka-khambha* (or *ayaka*) occurs in all the three Jaggayyapeta pillar inscriptions (*Arch. Surv. South. Ind.*, Vol. I, p. 110, Nos. 1-3) and it has been suggested that the expression denotes 'gate-pillar' as the word *āyaka* may mean 'entrance' (*Ibid.*, p. 111, f.n.1).

<sup>5</sup> The Uppugundūr (near Chinna-Gaṇjam) inscription of Virapurushadatta describes the donor Saṅghila as the grandson of another Saṅghila of Dharmākata (above, Vol. XXXIII, p. 191). It also mentions the donor's female relative Saṅghanikā.

<sup>6</sup> See P. K. Acharya, *A Dictionary of Hindu Architecture* s.v. The word *vaḍhamāna* also occurs in the compound *Sethivara-vaḍhamāna* (Sanskrit *Śreṣṭhivara-varddhamāna*), *Mahārāja-vaḍhamāna* (Sanskrit *Mahārāja-varddhamāna*) in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions (above, Vol. XXXV, pp. 9 and 19) and also in the compound *Ukhasiri-vaḍhamāna* (Sanskrit *Rikshaśrī-varddhamāna*) in the Ghaṇṭasāla inscriptions (*ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 3). It is not unlikely that these expressions also denote *varddhamāna* type of buildings built by the respective persons. (Cf. *ibid.*, Vol. XXXV, p. 8, f.n. 1; p. 19; also see *ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 2).

<sup>7</sup> Here the context as well as the parallel expressions like *Sethivara-vaḍhamāna* in other inscriptions referred to above, preclude the possibility of taking the word *Upendragiri* as a name of a hill. Personal names ending in *giri* like Dhanagiri (Sanskrit, Dharmagiri), Dhanagiri, Mahāgiri, Mūlagiri, Nandagiri, Sihagiri (Sanskrit *Sinhagiri*), Yasogiri (Sanskrit *Yaśogiri*), etc. are met with in the early inscriptions. (Cf. Lüders' *A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions*, Nos. 209, 217, 290, 315, 335, 456, 601, 898, 1093, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> Above, Vol. XX, p. 1 ff., Vol. XXXV, pp. 6-7 and 9.

not performed such deeds before the date of the record under study. If the performance of *Aśvamedha*, etc. by Chantamula I is proof of his success against his Śātavāhana overlords,<sup>1</sup> then it is not unlikely that he could not completely throw off the Śātavāhana yoke till his fifth regnal year although he was a powerful feudatory and mentioned his own regnal years. The simple title *rājan* assumed by Chantamula I in the present record may also indicate his feudatory position on the date of the record. For, in all the records of his successors he is always endowed with the title *mahārāja* denoting his sovereign status which he must have attained later. However, one cannot be quite sure on this point, as there are records of Virapurushadatta of which some refer to him simply as *rājan*, while others bearing the same date endow him with the title *mahārāja*.<sup>2</sup>

The Buddhistic nature of our record indicates that during the reign of Chantamula I, Buddhism received royal patronage though the king himself was a staunch follower of the Brāhminic religion and performed the Vedic sacrifices.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, he appears to have followed the example of the later Śātavāhana rulers who, though Brahminical in faith, favoured Buddhism.

Of the two geographical names occurring in this record, the village **Tuvara** where the Upendragiri-vardhamāna was situated may be identified with modern Rentāla, the findspot of the inscription. **Ganjikūṭa**, the home town of the donor's father, may be indentified with either Chinna-Gaṇjam or Padda-Gaṇjam in Bapatla Taluk, Guntur District.

TEXT<sup>4</sup>

1 Sidha[m]<sup>5</sup> |<sup>6</sup> Namō Bhagavato [I\*] Rāmṇo Vase.

2 ....<sup>7</sup> siri-Chaṁtamulasa vijaya-

3 [saṁ]vachhara[r̥m] pachama[r̥m] 5 vās[ā]ṇa[r̥m] pakha[r̥m]

4 padhamam̐ 1 divasa[r̥m] padhamam̐ [1] |<sup>6</sup> nakare Ga[r̥m]-

5 jikūṭe vathavasa vaṇijaka[sa\*] Saṁghi-

6 [la]sa bhariya[ya\*] cha vaṇijakiṇiya Haṁ-

7 ghaya putana<sup>8</sup> vaṇijakena Chuṭi[dhā]-

8 [ra]<sup>9</sup> sirīṇa<sup>10</sup> sa-bharyakeṇa sa-dhutuke-

9 na sa-[suṁ]<sup>11</sup> ha-vī(ni)vahena sa-mita-natuke[na]

10 [sa]-pacha-chatumhi apaṇo āyu-vadha-

11 .<sup>12</sup> [kaṁ] v[i]jaya-vejayikaṁ cha game **Tuva[re]**<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D. C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., above, Vol. XX, p. 19, C. 2, p. 20, C. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. D. C. Sircar, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> From the impressions.

<sup>5</sup> The final *m* is written slightly below the line.

<sup>6</sup> This punctuation mark is indicated by a small horizontal stroke.

<sup>7</sup> The damaged letters are obviously *thiputasa*.

<sup>8</sup> Read *putana*.

<sup>9</sup> In the original pillar very faint mark of *ra* appears before *si*.

<sup>10</sup> Read *sirīṇa*.

<sup>11</sup> This letter, originally written as *ā*, is corrected into *su*.

<sup>12</sup> The lost letter may be restored as *nī*.

<sup>13</sup> Indistinct trace of this letter may be found in the impression.

- 12 .....<sup>1</sup> v[i]h[ā]ra-ma[m]ḍale **Upedagiri-vadha-**  
 13 ....<sup>2</sup> gavato Budhasa saṁghasa  
 14 ....<sup>3</sup> ḍave selāmay[o] āya-  
 15 .<sup>4</sup> khabho karito ti |

## TEXT IN SANSKRIT

- 1 Siddham | Namō Bhagavate | Rājño Vāsishṭhi-  
 2 putrasya śrī-Śāntamūlasya vijaya-  
 3 saṁvatsare pañchame 5 Varshānām pakṣhe  
 4 prathame 1 divase prathame 1 | nagare Gañji-  
 5 kūṭe vāstavyasya vaṇījakasya Saṁghi-  
 6 lasya bhāryāyāś=cha vaṇījakānyāḥ Saṁ-  
 7 ghāyāḥ putreṇa vaṇījakena Chūdādhā-  
 8 raśriyā sa-bhāryeṇa sa-duhitrike-  
 9 na sa-snushā-nivahena sa-mitra-naptṛikena  
 10 saha pañcha-chaturbhiḥ ātmanāḥ āyur-varḍha-  
 11 nikaḥ vijaya-vaijayikaḥ<sup>5</sup> cha grāme Tuvare  
 12 ..... vihāra-maṇḍale Upendragiri-varḍdha-  
 13 māne bhagavato Buddhasya saṁghasya  
 14 ..... maṇḍape śailamayāḥ āya-  
 15 ka-skambhaḥ kāritaḥ iti [ || ]\*

<sup>1</sup> Two letters seem to have been lost here which apparently contained the name of the *vihāra*.

<sup>2</sup> The three letters which are lost here are obviously *māne Bha*.

<sup>3</sup> Of the four letters which are broken away and lost, the last one may be restored as *ma*.

<sup>4</sup> The broken portion of the pillar here must have been big enough to accommodate five letters. But as the usual expression is *āyaka-khabha* or *°skambha*, only one letter viz. *ka* appears to have been lost. Thus the last line *ka-khabho*, etc. appears to have been engraved in the middle. Cf. above, Vol. XX, Plate facing p. 18, B. 4, line 7 and Plate facing p. 19, C. 2, line 12.

<sup>5</sup> Better *vaijaya-vijayikaḥ*.