

No. 29—A NOTE ON SOME FRAGMENTARY INSCRIPTIONS FROM NAGARJUNAKONDA

(2 Plates)

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Vogel has published a few fragmentary inscriptions discovered from the Mahāvihāra, Site 1, of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.¹ The number of fragments published by him is nineteen; two more pieces related to these inscriptions have recently been noticed by the writer in the collection of fragmentary inscriptions deposited in the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa Site Museum. It has been found in an effort to piece them together that these fragments belong at least to seven different epigraphs coming from one and the same site.

Vogel has numbered these nineteen fragments from M1 to M19: the two recently noticed fragments in the Museum collection may therefore be numbered as M20 (Museum accession No. 2947) and M21 (Museum accession No. 2937).

(i) M1 of Vogel consists of eight lines, engraved just below the carved figures of two recumbent lions, turned sideways. There is no doubt that this pillar-fragment, with an average width of 37 cm., represents the first eight lines of an inscription.

(ii) & (iii) M2 and M9 are incised on the opposite sides of the same pillar, which has an average width of 39 cm. In contents the former is very similar to M1.

(iv) M3 appears to be the lower half of another epigraph dated in the fifteenth regnal year of Virapurushadatta. This inscribed pillar, i.e. M3, was found *in situ* at the Mahāvihāra site, its undressed part going to a depth of 91 cm.

It is evident from differences in the sizes of letters and in the style of writing that these three fragments, viz., M1, M2 and M3, represent three separate records though all of them, including M9, register more or less the same facts and are ascribable to the reign of Virapurushadatta. Thus, the three limestone pillar-fragments contain four different epigraphs which were incised on the rectangular part of the column just below the octagonal middle-portion.

(v) Fragments M4², M5, M10, M16, M18 belong to one and the same epigraph (pl. I). From the point of view of the style of the writing M14 may be taken as a fragment of this inscription. But it has not been included here because of its doubtful character. The restored pillar shows a carving of half lotus medallion on the top and has an average width of about 38 cm. Here also the inscription is recorded just below the octagonal part, separated from the rectangular portion by a half lotus medallion. Traces of fourteen lines are available but originally it must have had seventeen or eighteen lines. M18 and M16 form the first line because of the carving that immediately precedes the inscription. M18 is to be read as *mahāsenā[pati]*³ followed by

¹ J. Ph. Vogel, "Additional Prakrit Inscriptions from Nagarjunikonda", above Vol. XX1, pp. 61-71.

² In two fragments.

³ The macron over *e* and *o* is not used in this article.

[*pari*]gahītaśa of M16 ; M8 comes next succeeded, after a gap, by M5, M10 and M4 respectively. The reading of the available text of the inscription is as follows :

(Upper half)

- 1 mahāsenā[pati] [par]igahītaśa
- 2 [asame]dha-yājisa
- 3 sahasa-hala-sata-sahasā....
- 4 [apati]hata-saṅkapasa Vāsīthīpu[tasa]....
- 5 [bha]gini ma[hāsenāpatisa]

(Lower half)

- 1 [Kāṇḍasirisa]
- 2 [-m]ātā Chāṇṭisiri apa[ṇo]
..... [raṇṇo Māṭharipu]tasa Ikhākunāṇi....
- 4 [āyu-]vadhanīke vijaya-vejayike....
- 5 ..-na[m]ānādesa-samana [āgat naṇ]....[su]kha-nivāṇathanāya bhagavato....
- 6 .. api cha apāno ubhaya-kulasa at[icchita]..... mahācetiya pādāmūli....
- 7 nikapanīke parinametuna ma....
- 8 .. parigahe savaniyutaṇ chātusāla-parigahītaśa....
- 9 .. paṭīṭhapitaṇ [Si]ṇi Virapurishadatasa saṇva 10 5 vā pa 8 di....

(vi) Pillar inscriptions M6, M7, M13, M 17, M19 and M20 (new fragment) can also be joined together (pl. I). M13 comes first followed by M6 on the left and M7 on the right ; M17 succeeded by M20 forms the lower half of the extant epigraph. M 19¹ also possibly belongs to this inscription since the size of the letters and the style of writing are very similar to those of the other fragments. All these pertain to the rectangular part of the pillar having a breadth of 40cm. The full available text of the inscription is as follows : —

- 1 ma.....
- 2 agiho[t-ā].....
- 3 [a]neka-hiraṇṇa-ko[ti]-go.....
- 4 yī.....
- 5
- 6 savathesu apat[ihata-saṅkapasa].....

¹ Not illustrated here. See, Vogel, op. cit., plate facing p. 67.

- 7 Ikhākusa Siri-Chāntamūlasa sa[hodara] [bhagi]ni
 8 [ma]hātalavarasa Vāsiṭhīputa[sa] Ka[m]dasirisa
 9 .. [māhā]talavari....Chāntisiri apano....
 10 Māḥa[riputasa] [Si]ri-Virapu[risadata]sa....
 11 [ve] jayike apicha apano....
 12 [Si]ri Virapu[risadatasā]

(vii) M12 and M15 are fragments of another inscription (pl. II), the reading of which is as follows :

- 1
 2 [mahācheti]ya pādāmū[le] pa[va?]ji.....
 3 .. sava-sā[dhunām] mahā[bhi]khu-saṁ[ghasa]....
 .. nikapani[ke] cha parinametuna....
 5 parigahe.....
 6 paṭiṭhapi.....
 7 vā pa 8.....

Without any doubt the above is the lower half of an inscription. M 11¹ appears to be a fragment of the same but it cannot be joined with any other piece.

M21 which reads as follows stands as an isolated fragment :

- 1
 2 aneka-hi[raṇa-koti]....
 3yi.....

Leaving aside the three doubtful fragments, *viz.*, M11, M14 and M21 (not illustrated), one may definitely see the traces of at least seven epigraphs—more or less same breadth of the pillar-fragments also suggesting that these pillars originally belonged to one *maṇḍapa*-complex, associated with the *Mahāvihāra*. Vogel has rightly concluded that the "epigraphical records engraved on the pillars are not identical and do not represent a single text. On the other hand, the preserved portions show recurring passages, which are also found in the *āyaka* pillar inscriptions belonging to the Mahāchetiya and in the first Apsidal Temple Inscription E".² In fact, the last-mentioned inscription, from the point of view of wording, comes very close to those from the *Mahāvihāra*. Further, all of them record the same fact, namely, the foundation of the pillared hall surrounded by four monastic wings or *chatuḥśālā-maṇḍapa* by Chāntisiri, the aunt and mother-in-law of the

¹ Not illustrated here. See, Vogel, *op. cit.*, plate facing p. 67.

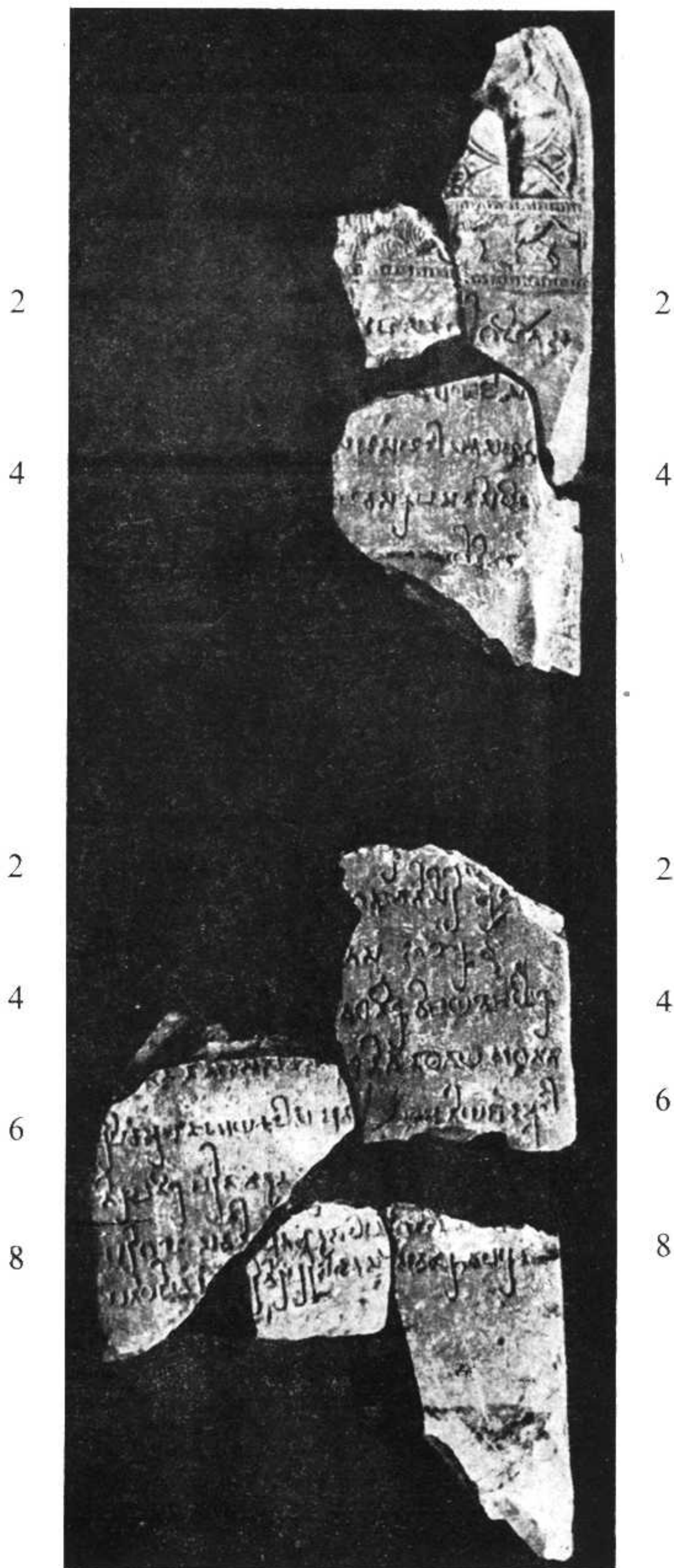
² Above, Vol. XXI, pp. 64-65.

reigning monarch. In all likelihood these inscriptions bore the same date *i.e.*, the eighth rainy season of the fifteenth regnal year of Māṭharīputra Virapurushadatta. Why so many inscriptions registering the same facts were installed there is difficult to ascertain; at the Sarvadeva Temple also, six or seven copies of the same text, dated in the eleventh regnal year of Ehuvala Chāmtamūla, were affixed on different *maṇḍapa* pillars.¹

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 147.

A NOTE ON SOME FRAGMENTARY INSCRIPTIONS FROM NAGARJUNAKONDA — PLATE I

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From Photograph



From Photograph



From Photograph