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(Received on 4. 6. 1965)

I

In this Journal, Volume XXXV, pp. 1 f., Dr. D. C. Sircar has published two Ikshvāku inscriptions from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa¹—one of them being of Virapurushadatta and the other, of his son Ehuvula Chāntamūla.

A. Inscription of Virapurushadatta

This inscription was first edited by J. Ph. Vogel in above, Volume XXI, pp. 63 f., but as the impression supplied to him was not sufficiently good, his readings and interpretation of the record are somewhat inaccurate. Sircar has published a far better facsimile of it in above, Volume XXXV, plate facing p. 4.

Vogel read the second and third lines of this record as follows :

Line 2—Siri-Chāntamūlasa putasa raño Mā[ḍha]riputasa [Ikshākunaṁ] Siri-Virapurisadattasa

Line 3—vasasanaya saṁvachhara viṁsaya[m] vāsa-pakhaṁ prathamam divasam bītiyaṁ....

Sircar has read *vasa-satāya* in place of *vasasanaya* and *Vijaya[m]* in place of *viṁsayaṁ*. These readings appear to be correct from the facsimile published with his article. It is also possible to accept his interpretation of *vasa-satāya* as expressing the wish that the king might live for a hundred years. Again, Vogel, reading *saṁvachhara viṁsayaṁ*, took the date of the record to be the twentieth regnal year of Virapurushadatta. Sircar, on the other hand, reading the words as *saṁvachharam Vijayaṁ*, takes them as denoting the year *Vijaya* of the sixty-year cycle of Jupiter calculated according to the Southern system. The cyclic year *Vijaya* which could have fallen in the reign of Virapurushadatta was that corresponding to A.D. 273 according to the Southern system. "This is a very important addition", says he, "to our knowledge of the history of the Southern Ikshvākus in particular and of the early history of South India in general."

We shall examine in the sequel the correctness of this interpretation, but even if it is proved to be true, it does not enable us to determine the date of the inscription as it is not verifiable. Sircar takes the cyclic year *Vijaya* to correspond to A.D. 273, because he thinks that Virapurushadatta flourished in the second half of the third century A.D. Others may take it as occurring sixty years earlier or later. As the record does not contain any details necessary for calculation, it is not possible to say which of these dates is correct. This mention of the cyclic year *Vijaya* does not, therefore, make any addition to our knowledge of the history of the Ikshvākus or of South India.

We shall next proceed to examine the view that the expression *saṁvachharam vijayaṁ* means the cyclic year *Vijaya* calculated according to the Southern system. This view is untenable for the following reasons :—

(1) Years of Jupiter's sixty-year cycle are not cited in early Indian inscriptions, whether of North or of South India. There were two cycles of Jupiter (1) one of twelve years and (2) the

¹ Macron over *e* and *o* has not been used in this article.

other of sixty years. The first of these is found cited in inscriptions till about the sixth century A.D. The years of this cycle were named after the *nakshatras* with which Jupiter was associated such as *Chaitra*, *Vaiśākha*, etc. The years of this cycle were distinguished from the lunar months of the same names by the prefix of *mahā* in Northern inscriptions. See e.g. the years *Mahā-Āsvayuja*, *Mahā-Mūgha* etc. in the records of the Parivrajaka Mahārājas of North India.¹ Years of this cycle are found cited in some records of South India also; see e.g. the years *Pausha* and *Vaiśākha* in the records of the Kadamba king Mṛigēśavarman,² and *Bhādrapada* in the Pāṇḍaraṅgapalli grant of the Early Rāshtrakūṭa king Avidheya.³ But all these are years of the twelve-year cycle. If any cyclic year was cited in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription, it should have been of this cycle. The year *Vijaya* is not of this cycle.

(2) The sixty-year cycle of Jupiter, to which the year *Vijaya* belongs, came into vogue much later. As Sircar has pointed out, the first known instance of it is the year *Siddhārtha* mentioned in the Mahākūṭa pillar inscription of the fifth regnal year of the Early Chālukya king Maṅgaleśa.⁴ This is taken to correspond to Śaka 523 or 601 A.D. Kielhorn was doubtful about this cyclic year; for he pointed out that the earliest inscription in his *List of Inscriptions of South India* in which a Jovian year is undoubtedly quoted is the Alas plates of Gōvinda II, dated in the Śaka year 692 (770 A.D.).⁵ If the word *vijaya* in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription denotes a year of the sixty-year cycle, its mention would be earlier by about five centuries than the first known undoubted mention of such a year. This makes Sircar's interpretation of *saṁvachharam vijayam* extremely doubtful.

(3) Even supposing that the word *vijaya* in the aforementioned Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription denotes the cyclic year of that name, why should we understand it as cited according to the Southern system as Sircar supposes? The years of the sixty-year cycle cited in inscriptions of both North and South India upto Śaka 855 are invariably according to the Northern system.⁶ Why should we take the supposed cyclic year *Vijaya* as cited according to the Southern system which did not come into vogue for nearly seven centuries thereafter?

For the reasons stated above, Sircar's view that the word *vijaya* in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription under discussion denotes a year of that name in the sixty-year cycle of Jupiter reckoned according to the Southern system is untenable. The Christian equivalent of the date, viz. 273 A.D. is therefore very doubtful.

What is then the meaning of the expression *saṁvachharam vijayam* in that inscription? It evidently means 'a victorious year'; cf. *vaijayike saṁvatsare* which occurs in a similar context in several early inscriptions.⁷ The present record is in Prakrit. In Prakrit the adjective or subordinate word is often placed after the *viśeshya* or the principal word. Cf. *senāye vejayamtiye*,

¹ *CII*, Vol. III, pp. 95 f.

² *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. VII, pp. 35 f.; Vol. VI, pp. 24 f.

³ Above, p. 22. See also, *Studies in Indology*, Vol. I, p. 184.

⁴ *Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 16 f.

⁵ Kielhorn, *A List of Inscriptions of Southern India*, p. 3, note 3.

⁶ Kielhorn has shown that the cyclic years are cited according to the Southern system from Śaka 855 onwards (*Ind. Ant.*, Vol. XXV, p. 288). A grant of Gōvinda IV dated Śaka 851, recently found in Vidarbha, which I have edited in this Journal (above, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 257 ff.) cites a cyclic year according to the Northern system. The first record of that king's reign in which a cyclic year is cited according to the Southern system is dated Śaka 855.

⁷ *CII*, Vol. IV, p. 15; p. 609 etc.

bhikhūnaṃ Teraṇhukānaṃ etc. in the Nasik Cave inscriptions.¹ *Vijayaṃ* which follows *savachharaṃ* therefore means 'victorious'.²

The expression *saṃvachharaṃ vijayaṃ* thus means 'a victorious year' in the reign of Vīrapurushadatta. It has no reference to any cyclic year and does not correspond to 273 A.D.

B. Inscription of Ehuṃvula Chāntamūla

This inscription is incised on a lime pillar found at the site named 'Burning Ghat' at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. It is in an unsatisfactory state of preservation. It refers itself to the reign of Ehuṃvula Chāntamūla, son of Vīrapurushadatta and grandson of Chāntamūla. Its date occurs in line 2, which Sircar has read as follows :

Siri-Virapurisadattasa putasa raṃṇo Vasīṭhiputasa [Ikḥā]kuna siri-Ehavaḷa-Chatamulasa savachharaṃ Viḷa....[mha]-pa [2] diva 1....

As the inscription is badly preserved it is not possible to be quite certain about the readings, but from the published facsimile of it they appear not unlikely. Here also Sircar takes *vijaya* as a year of the sixty-year cycle of Jupiter calculated according to the Southern system and understands it as corresponding to 333 A.D. The objections raised above to a similar interpretation of the word *vijaya* in the aforementioned inscription of Vīrapurushadatta apply in this case also and need not be repeated here. But apart from them it appears very curious that both these inscriptions should cite the same cyclic year *Vijaya*. This in itself should make the proposed interpretation doubtful. It seems very unlikely that the years of the same name *Vijaya* are cited in the records of two successive Ikshvāku kings separated by exactly sixty years. It seems better to understand the expression *saṃvachharaṃ vijayaṃ* in the sense of 'a victorious year'.

II

The Ābhīra Interregnum in the Ikshvāku Period

In this Journal, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 197 f. Dr. D. C. Sircar has edited an inscription of the Ābhīra king Vasuṣheṇa. It records the installation of the god Aṣṭabhujaśvāmin by a number of persons. It refers itself to the reign of the aforementioned Ābhīra king and bears a date which was at first read as 9.³ Sircar has drawn attention to the similarity of the symbol denoting it to the *akshara le* and has taken it as 30. As the record is very badly preserved, it is not possible to say if the reading is correct ; but supposing it to be so, we proceed to examine Sircar's theory about this date.

Sircar refers this date to the era of 248 A.D. and takes it as equivalent to 278-79 A.D. As he had taken the date of the previously discussed inscription of Vīrapurushadatta mentioning the cyclic year *Vijaya* to be 273 A.D., he supposes that the Ābhīra king Vasuṣheṇa must have invaded the lower Kṛishṇā valley and ousted the Ikshvāku king. He ruled there for some time, but was later vanquished by Ehuṃvula Chāntamūla, since, according to him, a record of the latter mentioning the same cyclic year *Vijaya* and therefore of the date 333 A.D. has been found at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. There was thus an interregnum in the Ikshvāku period when the Ābhīras ruled in the lower Kṛishṇā valley.

¹ Above, Vol. VIII, pp. 71 f.

² [In this connection it may be pointed out that in the Prakrit inscription from Reṇṭāla belonging to the time of Chāntamūla I (above, pp. 29 ff.) the adjective *vijaya* precedes the principal word *saṃvachharaṃ* and that the expression *vijaya[m] saṃvachharaṃ pachamaṃ* in that record shows that the word *vijayaṃ* cannot be taken in any sense other than 'victorious'.—Ed.]

³ *Indian Archaeology—A Review*, 1958-59, p. 8.

We have seen above that the date of Virapurushadatta's inscription containing the expression *samvachharam vijayam* cannot be fixed as 273 A.D. It is also not certain that the year 30 in Vasusheṇa's inscription is recorded in the Ābhīra era of 248-49 A.D. Sircar was previously very doubtful if that era was founded by the Ābhīra king Īśvarasena.¹ He *now* thinks that this is probable.² This is a welcome change in his view, but he is now going to the other extreme and advocating that the Ābhīras extended their sway as far as the eastern coast. This means that they ruled over an extensive empire extending from the western to the eastern sea. There are, however, no indications of the extension of Ābhīra imperial power to the lower Kṛṣṇā valley. From some early inscriptions of the era found in Western Mahārāshṭra, Gujārāt, Kōṅkan and Central India we can infer that the Ābhīras had incorporated these territories into their kingdom; for an era generally spreads with the extension of political power; but apart from the present doubtful case, we have no evidence of the Ābhīra era being current in Andhra.

There is one more indication which seems to show that the record under discussion is *not* dated in the Ābhīra era.

The earliest date of the era, viz. the year 9 in a Nasik Cave inscription of its founder Īśvarasena is a season date, i.e. it is recorded in season, fortnight and day. But *all* subsequent dates of the era have been recorded in lunar month, fortnight and *tithi*. The date of the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription of Vasusheṇa is a season date. If the year 30 of that inscription had been recorded in the Ābhīra era, it would, in all probability, have been recorded in lunar month, etc.

The date of the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscription of the Ābhīra king Vasusheṇa is therefore regnal and is not recorded in the Ābhīra era.

The palaeographical evidence of the inscription shows that Vasusheṇa flourished after the known Ikshvāku kings. He may therefore have overthrown the last of them and occupied the lower Kṛṣṇā valley where he seems to have ruled for some years. Later, he may have been overthrown by the Pallavas, since we have no other inscription of the Ābhīras from this part of the country.

There is thus no evidence to prove that there was an Ābhīra interregnum in the Ikshvāku period of Andhra history.

¹ *Ind. Hist. Quart.*, Vol. XXII, p. 156 f.

² Above, Vol. XXXIV, p. 201.