



HAL
open science

New Documents for the Early History of Puṇḍravardhana

Arlo Griffiths

► **To cite this version:**

Arlo Griffiths. New Documents for the Early History of Puṇḍravardhana: Copperplate Inscriptions from the Late Gupta and Early Post-Gupta Periods. *Pratna Samiksha: a Journal of Archaeology*, 2015, New series 6, pp.15-38. halshs-01538645

HAL Id: halshs-01538645

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01538645>

Submitted on 19 Jun 2017

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Copyright

Pratna Samiksha

A Journal of Archaeology

New Series

Volume 6

2015



CENTRE FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES & TRAINING

EASTERN INDIA • KOLKATA

Pratna Samiksha, New Series
is an annual journal published by the
Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training,
Eastern India, Kolkata.

Editorial Address

Pratna Samiksha
Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training,
Eastern India, State Archaeological Museum
Old Building, First Floor, 1 Satyen Roy Road
Behala, Kolkata 700 034
email: castei5n@gmail.com

Editor

Sharmi Chakraborty

Founding Editor

Gautam Sengupta

Editorial Assistant

Mithu Karmakar

Editorial Advisory Board

Krishna Bose

Chairperson, Centre for Archaeological Studies
& Training, Eastern India, Kolkata

Member Secretary

Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training,
Eastern India, Kolkata

K. Paddayya

Professor Emeritus, Deccan College, Pune

B.D. Chattopadhyaya

Former Professor, Centre for Historical Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Pratip Kumar Mitra

Former Keeper, State Archaeological Museum,
West Bengal

Suchandra Ghosh

Associate Professor, Department of Ancient Indian
History & Culture, University of Calcutta, Kolkata

The Director (*ex officio*)

Directorate of Archaeology and Museums,
Government of West Bengal

*The responsibility of the facts stated, opinions expressed
and conclusions reached are entirely those of the author of
the respective article. Centre for Archaeological Studies &
Training, Eastern India does not accept any responsibility for
them.*

© 2015 Centre for Archaeological Studies &
Training, Eastern India

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be
reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any
form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission
of the publisher.*

ISSN 2229 7979

Periodicity: Annual

Subscription (per volume): ₹ 1,000.00

Published by the Member Secretary for the
Centre for Archaeological Studies & Training,
Eastern India (*An Autonomous Institution of the
Government of West Bengal*)
State Archaeological Museum
Old Building, First Floor
1 Satyen Roy Road, Behala
Kolkata 700 034
email: castei5n@gmail.com

Printed in India at Calcutta Art Studio
185/1 B.B. Ganguly Street, Kolkata 700 012
email: caspvt@gmail.com

EPIGRAPHY

New Documents for the Early History of Puṇḍravardhana: Copperplate Inscriptions from the Late Gupta and Early Post-Gupta Periods

ARLO GRIFFITHS

École française d'Extrême-Orient (French School of Asian Studies)

ABSTRACT: From all of undivided Bengal, less than two dozen copperplate charters are known for the entire period preceding the ascent of the Pāla dynasty, and only a single (fragmentary) stone inscription. Two new copperplates have recently come to light, both from the Puṇḍravardhana area, i.e. North Bengal. The first is dated to year 159 of the Gupta era (478 CE), and hence issued during the reign of Budhagupta; the second is dated to the year 5 of a previously unknown king named Pradyumnabandhu, who must have ruled in the period between about 550 and 650 CE—a period for which Puṇḍravardhana had heretofore lacked any historical documentation. This article makes the new inscriptions available in edition with translation and some discussion of what the contents might contribute to the historical study of early Bengal.

KEYWORDS: Puṇḍravardhana, North Bengal, copperplate inscription, Sanskrit, land-sale grant, Budhagupta, Pradyumnabandhu, Garuḍa-seal, Raktamālā, Ghoṇādvīpaka

Preliminary Remarks

Compared to other historical periods and other regions of South Asia, the epigraphic record of pre-Pāla Bengal is slim, in the near-total absence of stone inscriptions and with less than two dozen copperplate charters for the entire period preceding the ascent of the Pāla dynasty. Nevertheless, in recent years, scholarship has seen the discovery of a few new copperplate inscriptions that have surfaced in West Bengal and Bangladesh, elucidating various aspects of the region's early history. Some of these copperplates have entered into public collections, while others are held by private collectors. Among the latter, an unknown number has come into foreign hands. The purpose of this contribution is to publish two documents from private collections that elucidate the early history of the Puṇḍravardhana area, corresponding to what is today northern West Bengal and northern Bangladesh. The first is dated to a year 159, undoubtedly of the Gupta era, i.e. 478 CE, and hence issued during the reign of Budhagupta. The second is dated to the fifth regnal year of

a previously unrecorded king (*mahārājādhirāja*) named Pradyumnabandhu, who must have ruled in the period between about 550 and 650 CE—a period for which Puṇḍravardhana had heretofore lacked any historical documentation. Like almost all previously published pre-Pāla copperplates of Bengal, they belong to the locally prevalent class of 'land-sale inscriptions' (Yamazaki 1982).

Conventions

In my editions, line numbers are indicated in parentheses and marked off from the text proper by use of bold typeface. Prose parts of the inscriptions are run together into single paragraphs; stanzas (here uniformly in *anuṣṭubh* meter) are always indicated as such by a special layout and roman stanza numbering. Consciously breaking with a long-standing tradition in Indian epigraphy, I strive to keep my edited texts as free as possible from editorial elements not reflecting anything in the original, and do not mark emendations in the text, but relegate these to a separate section, presented line-by-line below each inscription, containing observations

on my readings and on necessary emendations. Slight deviations from the norm of Sanskrit orthography, of the type commonly found in manuscripts and inscriptions, are generally not indicated. The following further editorial signs are used:

- (...) graphic elements whose reading is uncertain
- [...] graphic elements wholly lost or wholly unreadable on the plate but restorable on the basis of philological considerations
- +...+ secondary insertions made by the engraver below/above the line
- one totally illegible or lost *akṣara*
- space for one *akṣara* left blank by the engraver
- °V a vowel that forms an *akṣara*, i.e. ‘independent vowel’, of the type V
- the *virāma* sign
- * a consonant stripped of its inherent vowel by other means than the sole *virāma* sign (e.g. by reducing the size of the *akṣara* or otherwise differentiating its shape from the normal *akṣara* with inherent vowel)

I. Conflicting Land Transactions in the Kuddālakhāta Settlement: A Copperplate Inscription of [Gupta] Year 159

This important inscription has been brought to public attention in a recent article published online (Dubey and Acharya 2014). The level of epigraphical scholarship brought to bear on the inscription in that article is not satisfactory, and none of the authors’ historical conclusions are acceptable. For these reasons, it is necessary to submit the inscription to a fresh study, which is attempted below.¹

The plate is held by Noman Nasir, a numismatist based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. I am sincerely grateful to this gentleman for furnishing me the visual documentation on which my work is based and actively contributing to my research in other ways. The plate was salvaged from a scrap metal shop in Dhaka and was said to have been found in Bogra district. This information is not contradicted by the contents of the inscription. On the contrary, the text mentions Puṇḍravardhana and several other names of








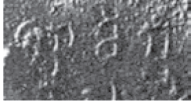
places known from other sources to have been situated in North Bengal.

The text includes the date of 8 Jyeṣṭha in year 159, certainly of the Gupta era, a date which possibly corresponded to Thursday, 11 May 478 CE.² Since Gupta-period inscriptions from greater Bengal are rare to begin with, since the history of their exclusion from or inclusion in publications concerning Gupta epigraphy is a bit haphazard, and since the dating of some plates is or could be object of debate, it will be useful to recall at the outset what other land-sale deeds on copperplate are so far known for this period from North Bengal and the immediately neighbouring areas of present Bihar, and what dates may be assigned to them with what degree of certainty.³ See the table on the facing page. Among the dates indicated in it, two require further comments.

The date of the Paharpur plate falls just short of three months after the date of the plate under study here, and its numeral signs precisely agree with those seen in l. 26 of the present plate.

The date 224, assigned to the Damodarpur plate #5 by scholars since Dikshit 1923–4, has recently come under criticism from Michael Willis (2005: 145 n. 68), who argues for the plate belonging to the reign of Budhagupta.⁴ His argument hinges on the name of the *nagaraśreṣṭhin* Ribhupāla, which has been read both in Damodarpur #5 and #4, the latter indubitably from the reign of Budhagupta. Willis supports his argument by the suggestion that it might be possible to read the date of #5 as 100 50 4. But he fails to note that the reading Ribhupāla in #5 is entirely conjectural, and that this conjecture is unlikely because none of the names of officers positively legible on #5 agree with those on any of the other Damodarpur plates.⁵ Moreover, examination of the available reproduction clearly reveals the middle numeral to be 20, and the first numeral to be different from all preceding specimens of 100 in the table. The first numeral is undoubtedly 200.⁶ My maintaining the dating to 224 GE, i.e. 542/3 CE, is of greatest relevance for the dating estimate of the second copperplate presented below.

Table 1: Gupta-period copperplate inscriptions of Bengal

Copperplate of	Date (Gupta era)	Expressed	References
Dhanaidaha	113	in words: reading unverifiable from published plates	Basak 1923–4, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 16, pp. 287–9; Bhandarkar 1981: 273–6, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 36–7, pl.
Kalaikuri-Sultanpur	120	in figures: 	Sircar 1943, pl.; Sanyal 1955–6; Sircar 1965, III, no. 40A, pp. 352–5, pl. XLVIII–XLIX; <i>not included in Bhandarkar 1981</i> ; Agrawala 1983: 127–30, pl.
Damodarpur #1	124	in figures: 	Basak 1919–20a: 129–32, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 18, pp. 290–2; Bhandarkar 1981: 282–7, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 44–5, pl.
Jagadishpur	128	in figures: ⁷ 	Sircar 1969; Sircar 1973: 8–14, 61–3, pl. I–II; <i>not included in Bhandarkar 1981</i> ; Agrawala 1983: 51–4, pl.
Damodarpur #2	128	in figures: 	Basak 1919–20a: 132–4, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 19, pp. 292–4; Bhandarkar 1981: 288–91, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 46–7, pl.
Baigram	128	in figures: 	Basak 1931–2; Sircar 1965, III, no. 41, pp. 355–9, pl. L–LI; <i>not included in Bhandarkar 1981</i> ; Agrawala 1983: 48–50, pl.
Paharpur	159	in figures: 	Dikshit 1929–30, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 42, pp. 359–63; <i>not included in Bhandarkar 1981</i> ; Agrawala 1983: 98–100, pl.
Damodarpur #3	163 (?)	in figures: conjectural, unverifiable from published plates ⁸	Basak 1919–20a, pp. 134–7, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 34, pp. 332–4; Bhandarkar 1981: 335–9, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 102–3, pl.
Damodarpur #4	unknown, in reign of Budhagupta	relevant portion of the plate lost	Basak 1919–20a, pp. 137–41, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 36, pp. 336–9; Bhandarkar 1981: 342–5, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 104–6, pl.
Nandapur	169	in figures: 	Majumdar 1935–6a, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 48A, pp. 382–4; <i>not included in Bhandarkar 1981 nor in Agrawala 1983</i>
Damodarpur #5	224	in figures: 	Basak 1919–20a: 141–5, pl.; Sircar 1965, III, no. 39, pp. 346–50; Bhandarkar 1981: 360–4, pl.; Agrawala 1983: 123–5, pl.

Description

The plate (Fig. 1) measures 11 × 22.6 cm (excluding the seal) and is engraved lengthwise, on both sides, respectively with twelve and fourteen lines of text. On the whole it is well preserved, although the loss of a segment of about 4.5 cm in length at the right end of the plate has entailed the disappearance of several *akṣaras*, and corrosion has elsewhere occasionally led to the loss or difficult legibility of some more. A seal, which measures 5.5–7 cm in diameter, is affixed to the plate at the left margin of the text (Fig. 2).

The surface of the seal, unfortunately very corroded, is divided into two parts by a double line. The upper part, occupying about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total surface of the seal, shows traces of a so-called Gajalakṣmī device. The lower $\frac{1}{4}$ is occupied by traces of a legend in two lines. This is only the second Gupta-period copperplate inscription recovered from North Bengal with emblem and seal-legend preserved (cf. Khan 2010: 96). Before suffering heavy corrosion, the seal must have been similar to some of the seals shown by Thaplyal 1972 (plates X–XII), as well as to that affixed to the second plate that will be presented (with further references) below. A secondary seal—apparently with a general layout similar to that of the primary seal, although the emblem used here cannot be identified—has been

stamped into the right side of the primary seal. This is the first and only secondary seal attested for the Gupta-period. For more on secondary seals, I refer to my discussion on pp. 28–9.

The script used in this inscription is a variety of late eastern Brāhmī consistent with that observed in other inscriptions of the same period. Among noteworthy features are an archaic shape



FIG. 2. Mahatī-Raktamālā plate of the year 159 (Gupta era). Close up of the right side of the seal, showing also the secondary seal

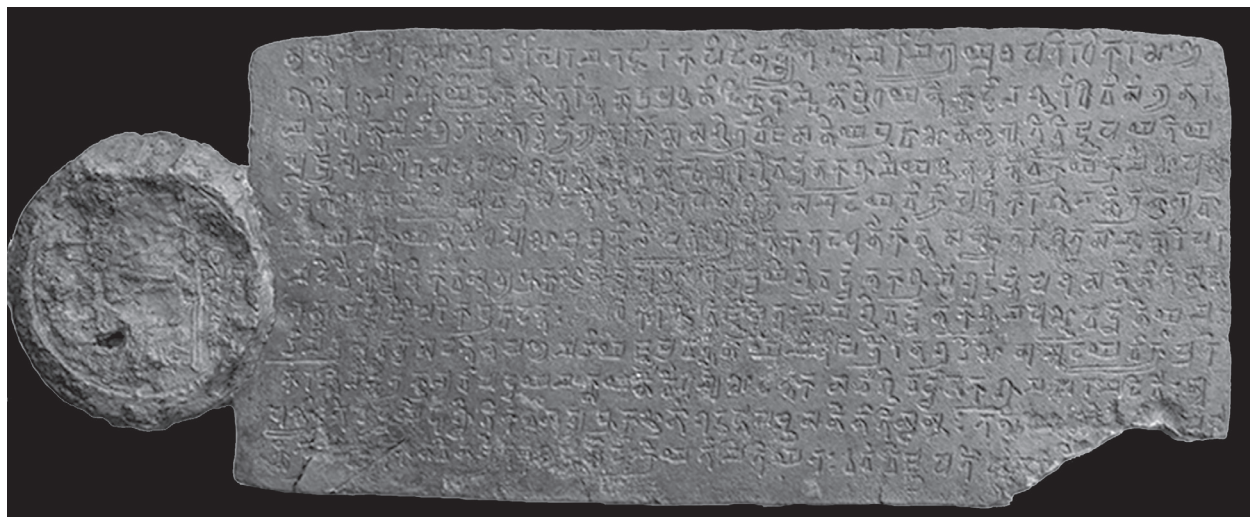


FIG. 1. Mahatī-Raktamālā plate of the year 159 (Gupta era). Overall view

of *ṇ*;⁹ the archaic notation of *-ā* with a downward stroke on the right in *khā*, *go*, *jñā*, *ṇo*, *dhā*, *bo*, *brā*, etc.; the fact that *ṣ* and *s* are not visibly distinguished (leaving the decipherer to choose whichever is required); the fact that medial *i/e* and *ī/ai* are virtually indistinguishable; the use of ‘final’ consonants (here indicated by an asterisk) *m** and *t**.¹⁰

Orthographic deviations from the norm include the ones that are too common to deserve further notice (such as inconsistent distinction between *b* and *v*; doubling of consonants before and after *r*), but also repeated spelling of *n* for *ṇ*. Quite often we must assume involuntary omission of small elements such as *anusvāra*, *visarga*, *ā-* and *e-mātra* to achieve a text that makes sense. In other respects, the Sanskrit usage of the text is not too bad, although one example of substandard declensional ending is found (l. 15 *nandabhūtiṣya*), and it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the author has at least once confused singular and plural verb forms (ll. 21–2 *dāsyatha ... pālayiṣyasi*).

Text and Translation

SEALS

On the primary seal is engraved a heavily corroded legend in two lines, which it is possible to read only thanks to the fortunate circumstance that another unpublished copperplate, probably found at the same site as the one under study here and of unknown present whereabouts, but of which two photos are available, is affixed with the same seal (Fig. 3)¹¹ and that the place of issue turns out to be attested in a difficult passage in l.14 of our plate. The reading of the identical seal legend found on both known specimens is as follows:

- (1) maddhyamaṣaṇḍīkavīthyāyuktakādhi-
(2) karaṇasya

‘Of the council of appointees of the territory of Madhyamaṣaṇḍīka’

The legend on the secondary seal (Fig. 2) cannot be determined with certainty, but the syllables *pate* or *pate* seem legible while an *akṣara tha* can possibly be made out before these on some of the photos at my disposal. A possible restoration



FIG. 3. The seals of the Mahatī-Raktamālā plate and of another plate of unknown present whereabouts

would therefore be *[yū](tha)pate[h]* ‘Of Yūthapati’ or *[yū](tha)pate[h]* ‘Yūthapati’.

OBVERSE (Fig. 4)

(1) svasti mahatīraktamālāgrahārāt parama-
bhaṭṭāarakapādānuddhyātaḥ kum(ā)rā-
mātyayūthapatir adhikaraṇaṅ ca (2) khuḍḍī-
raktamālikāyām brāhmaṇottarān sakṣudra-
pradhānādikuṭumbino bodhayanti
kuddālakhātādhivāsābhyantara(3)maha-
tīraktamālāgrahāracāturvidyābhyanta-
rakotsasagotravājasaneyabrāhmaṇanandabhūtir
v(v)ijñāpayati ya(4)t pūjyair mmamātitasapta-
pañcāśaduttaraśatasāmbatsare govarddhanaka-
grāme yathānurvṛttavikrayakrameṇa puṇḍra-
(5)varddhaneyamahāmātrasuvarccasadattod
d(ī)nārān upasaṁgrhya samudayavāhyāprati-
karakhilakṣetrakulyavā(6)padvayam
akṣayanīvidharmmeṇa śāśvatkālopabhogyo
dattaka tad adhunaikānnaṣaṣṭyuttaraśatasā-
mbatsare para(7)madevair dugdhotikāvāstavyabrā-
hmaṇānā(m) svapuṇyābhivṛddhaye govarddha-
nakagrāmo garu(ṭṭā)paśāsaneṇātiṣṭṭam (8) tan
mayā (pū)jyoparikabrahmadattaḥ ॥dhikaraṇe
vijñāpitaḥ mama govarddhanakagrāma puṇḍra-
varddhaneyama(9)hāmātrasuvarccasadattena
pañcamahāyajñapravarttanāya mātāpitror
anugraheṇa sumudayavāhyāprati(10)karakhila-
kṣetrakulyavāpadvayam akṣayanīvidharmmeṇa
dattaka sa ca govarddhanakagrāma parama-
devaiḥ sva(11)puṇyābhivṛddhaye dugdhotik(ā)-
vāstavyabrāhmaṇānām garuṭṭāpaśāsane-
nātiṣṭṭaḥ tan ma[ma] _ _ _ _ [tāmra]-
paṭṭā(12)kṣetra _ _ (dattaka) na vinaśyeta

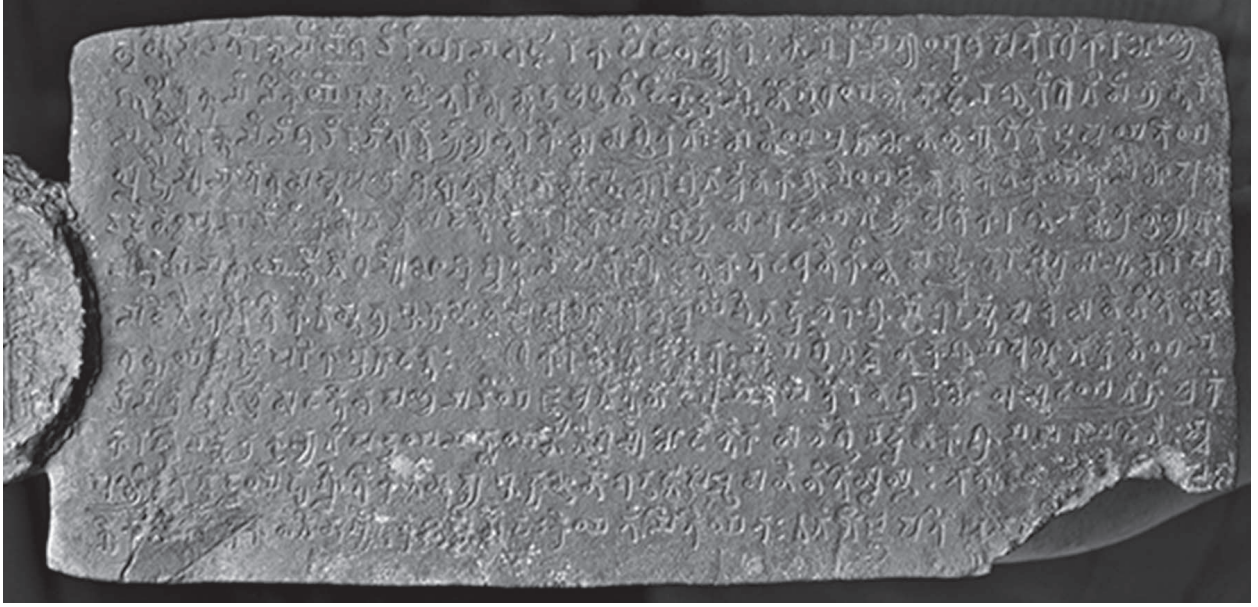


FIG. 4. Mahatī-Raktamālā plate of the year 159 (Gupta era). Obverse

tathā (pra)sādaḥ kriyatām iti yataḥ
°evamvijñāpatopala(b) _ _ _ _ _

REVERSE (Fig. 5)

(13) °ādeśo dakam atra yuktam iti tadadhikarā-
nena jñāpita °etatkṣetraparivartt(e)na nānya-
grāmo dīyatām (i)t(i) yata _ _ _ _ _
(14) deśoparikasvāmicandrasyādeśo dattaḥ tava
maddhyamaṣaṇḍikānān dhana prati pratipālana
prativāsana pratyāya sādhanā yasa _ _ _ _ _
_ (15) kautsasagotravājāsaneyabrāhmaṇa-
nandabhūtiṣyaitattāmrapaṭṭaparivarttanānyatra
grāme viṣayādihikaraṇa [] [] [] [] kṣetraṁ dāpayi(ṣya)-
[sīti] (ya)ta(h) (16) °etadādeśād asmāka pūjya-
svāmicandrasyādeśo dattaḥ mama parama-
daivatoparikapādebhyo jñā datt(ā) mahatī-
raktamālāgrahārikabrāhmaṇanandabhūti(17)r
vvijñāpayati sādhanā govarddhanakagrāmeyas-
amudayavāhyāpratikarakhilakṣetra kritvā yan
mama dattakam tad adhunā paramadevai °ādeśā-
dattaṁ (18) °eṣāṁ dugdhotikeyabrāhmaṇānā
govarddhanakagrāme mayā niṣṣṭas tatparivartena
yathānyatra tāmrapaṭṭakṣetraṁ bhavet tatha
prasādaḥ kriyatām iti (19) yataḥ °evamvijñāpito-
palabdhāt sair anyatra grāme dāpayiṣyasīti yataḥ
°edhardādeśād asmā govarddhanakagrāmeya°-
akṣayanivīparivarttēna (20) kḥuḍḍīraktamālikāyā

samudayavāhyāpratikarakhilakṣetrasya kulyavā-
padvayam dattaha ku 2 te yūyam evopalabhyotona
preṣitakenāsma(21)tsaviśvāsenādhikanena viṣaya-
kulakuṭumbibhi saha °ito naitikakuddālakhāti-
karatnyāṣṭakanavakanalābhyām apaviñcchya (pa)-
riniyamyā ca dā(22)syatha datvā ca śāsvatkālam
akṣanivīdharmmeṇānupālayiṣyasīti °uktañ ca
bhagavatā vyāsenā

- I. ṣaṣṭim bariṣasahasrāṇi svargge vasati
bhū(23)midah
°ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake
vaset*
- II. svadattām paradatām vā yo hareta
vasundharām*
sa viṣṭhāyā krimir bhūtvā piṭṛbhi saha
pacya(24)te
- III. pūrvvadattā dvijātibhyo yatnād rakṣa
yudhiṣṭhiraḥ
mahī mahimatā cchreṣṭha dā(n)āc chreyo
nupālanam*
- IV. yamo tha varuṇā vāyuḥ śakkraḥ śukra
(25) vṛhaspati
candrādityagrahās sarvve °abhinandanti
bhūmidam*

likhitam kāyastha°āryyadāsena tāpitaṁ
pustapālamānorathadāse(26)na samba
100 50 9 jyeṣṭha di 8

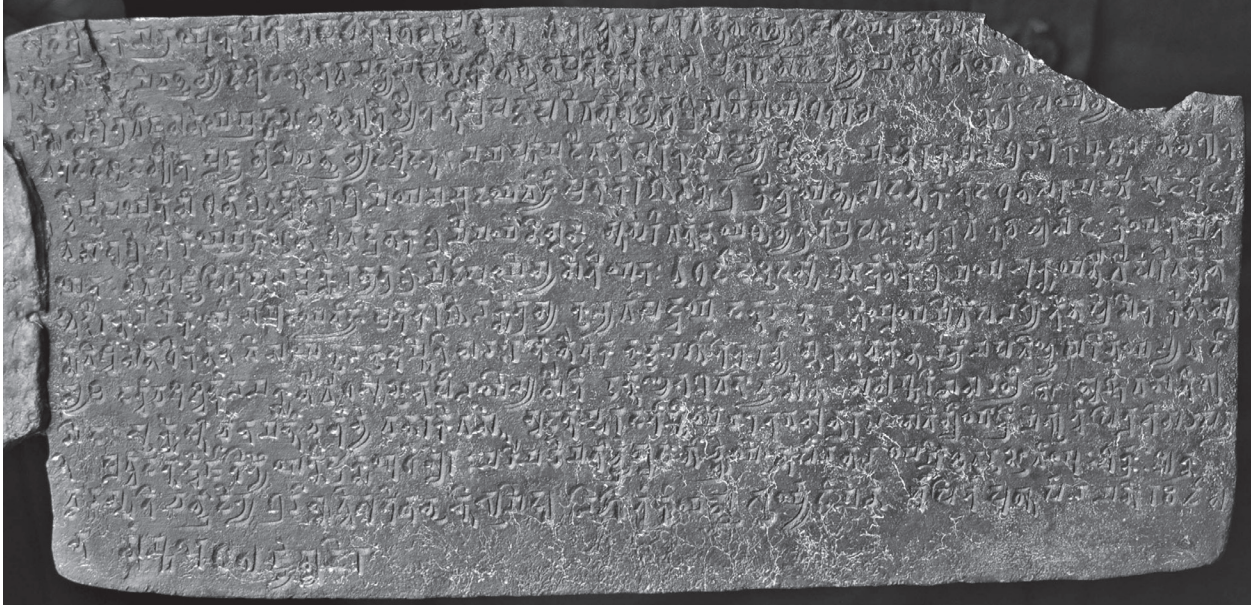


Fig. 5. Mahatī-Raktamālā plate of the year 159 (Gupta era). Reverse

Notes on readings

1. *mahatirakta-*: emend *mahatīrakta-*.
3. *-cāturvidyābhyantara-*: cf. the phrase *puṇḍravarddhanakacāturvedyavājesaneyacaraṇābhyantara* in the Kalaikuri-Sultanpur plate, l. 14.
3. *-kotsa-*: read *-kautsa-*, as in l. 15.
4. *-śatasāmbatsare*: read *-śatasamvatsare*.
4. *yathānurvṛttavikraya-*: emend *yathānurvṛttavikraya-*.
- 4–5. *puṇḍravarddhaneya-*: cf. l. 3 of the Jagadishpur plate, although its editor Sircar there reads *puṇḍravarddhaneya*, emending *ya* to *ye* (and judges that *puṇḍravarddhaneya* ‘in the sense of *Puṇḍravarddhana-vāstavya* does not appear to be quite happy’, 1973: 13).
5. *suvarccasadattod d(ṛ)nārān*: several parallels in the Gupta corpus suggest that we need an ablative ending before *dīnārān*. The obvious emendation is *suvarccasadattād*. Cf. l. 9.
6. *-bhogyo dattaka*: emend *-bhogyam dattakam*.
6. *adhunāikānnaṣṭyuttaraśatasāmbatsare*: emend *-samvatsare*. The numeral *ekānnaṣṭi*, although apparently very rarely used, is justified by Pāṇini (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 6.3.76) and is confirmed by the figures in l. 26.
7. *-grāmo*: one could emend *-grāme* to resolve the problem caused by the author thinking of two subjects, the land and the village.
8. *-dattaḥ □□dhi-*: there is a gap between the two words. One actually has the impression, as in l. 15, that space was consciously left blank to be filled in later. Was *-datto bhuktyadhi-* intended, or *-dattas tadadhi-* (cf. l. 13)?
8. *-grāma*: emend *-grāme*.
9. *sumudaya-*: emend *samudaya-*.
10. *dattaka*: emend *dattakam*.
10. *govarddhanakagrāma*: emend *govarddhanakagrāmaḥ*.
- 11–12. *[tāmra]paṭṭākṣetra*: emend *tāmrapaṭṭākṣetra*. Cf. l. 18.
12. *°evamvijñāpatopalab*: comparison with l. 19 suggests that we may restore here the form *°evamvijñāpatopalabdhāt*, and then emend to *-vijñāpitopa-*.
13. *ādeśo dakam atra yuktam*: I translate on the basis of the conjecture *ādeśo dattaḥ kim atra yuktam*. Other solutions are imaginable for the textual problem which is compounded by the fact that the words before *ādeśo* are lost. I have considered but rejected the possibility of reading *ādeśodakam* as a single

- word, because the word *ādeśo* is in this grant systematically followed by the word *datta* (except in two cases of the compound *etadādeśād*).
13. *tadadhikaranena*: note *n* for *ṇ* (*-karaṇena*) as in l. 21.
13. *-parivartt(e)na nānya-*: emend *-parivarttenānya-*? Alas, too much of the context here is damaged to be sure what meaning was intended.
13. After *yata* follows a lacuna. On the basis of the sequence *yataḥ °evamvijñāpitopalabdḥāt* in l. 19 and the probable occurrence of the same in l. 12, it may be proposed to restore here *yata[h °evamvijñāpitopalabdḥāt]*.
14. *dhana prati pratipālana prativāsana pratyāya*: presumably, anusvāra signs must be restored at the end of every word except *prati*.
15. *-bhūtiṣyaitat: bhūtiṣya* or *bhūtiṣya* (the two are graphically indistinguishable in this script) is a substandard gen. sg. form which ought to have been *bhūter* in chaste Sanskrit.
15. *-varttanānyatra*: emend *-varttenānyatra*. Cf. ll. 13 and 18.
15. *viṣayādhikaraṇa* □□□□ *kṣetraṁ*: as in l. 8, it seems that some space has been voluntarily left blank. As in l. 18, I expect an instrumental form preceding the causative form of the root *dā* to express the indirect agent, perhaps *viṣayādikaraṇakuṭumbibhiḥ* (cf. Damodarapur plate #3, l. 10).
16. *asmāka*: emend *asmākam*. See also l. 19.
16. *-candrasyaśeśo*: emend *-candrasyaśeśo*.
16. *-pādebhyo jñā*: emend *-pādebhya °ājñā*.
17. *-kṣetra*: emend *-kṣetraṁ*.
17. *-devai °ādeśādatt(ā)*: emend *-devair ādeśād dattam*? The construction seems a bit strange.
18. *-brāhmaṇānā*: emend *-brāhmaṇānām*.
18. *tatparivarttena*: the first two *akṣaras* seem to bear *e*-mātras (*teṭpe*), but perhaps these are merely accidental strokes.
18. *tatha*: emend *tathā*.
19. *-labdhāt sair*: emend *-labdhāt svair*. Or read *-labdhāt kair*? Or *-labdhāt mair*?
19. *°edhardādeśād asmā*: emend *°etadādeśād asmākam*, after l. 16.
20. *-mālikāyā*: emend *-mālikāyām*.
20. *dattaha*: emend *dattam* or *dattam** (*ha* resembles *m**).
20. *evopalabhyotena*: emend *evopalabhyaitena*.
21. *saviśvāsenādhikanena*: emend *saviśvāsenādhikaranena* (with *n* for *ṇ* as in l. 13).
21. *-kuṭumbibhi sahaḥ*: emend *-kuṭumbibhiḥ saha*.
21. *naitika-*: this could also be read *nītika-*.
21. *-khātikaratnyāṣṭakanavaka-*: emend *-khātikāratnyāṣṭakanavaka-*.
21. *(pa)riniyāmya*: cf. the Baigram plate, l. 18–19 (emended): *darvvikarmmahastenāṣṭakanavakanalābhyaṁ apaviñcchya cirakālasthāyituṣāṅgārādīnām cihnaiś caturddiśo niyāmya dāsyatha*; the Nandapur plate, l. 14–15: *darvvikarmmahastenāṣṭakanavakanalābhyaṁ apaviñcchya cirakālasthāyituṣāṅgārādīcihnaiś caturddīnīyamitasammanām kṛtvā dāsyatha*. I do not know any example of the verb *pariniyam* in comparable context.
22. *akṣanīvidharmmeṇānu-*: emend *akṣayanīvidharmmeṇānu-*.
- 22–5. Emended text of the four admonitory stanzas:
- I. ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svarge vasati bhūmidah
ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake
vaset
- II. svadattām paradatām vā yo hareta
vasundharām
sa viṣṭhāyām krimir bhūtvā piṭṛbhis saha
pacyate
- III. pūrvvadattā dvijātibhyo yatnād rakṣa
yudhiṣṭhira
mahīm mahīmatām śreṣṭha dānāc chreyo
'nupālanam
- IV. yamo 'tha varuṇo vāyuḥ śakraḥ śukro
bṛhaspatiḥ
candrādityagrahās sarve abhinandanti
bhūmidam

TRANSLATION

(1–2) Hail! From the Mahatī-Raktamālā ('Major Red Garland') *agrahāra*, the princely advisor (*kumārāmātya*) Yūthapati, graced by the feet of the Supreme Lord (*paramabhaṭṭāraka*, i.e. king Budhagupta), and the council, inform the householders both modest and prominent, etc., Brahmins being foremost among them, at

Khuḍḍī-Raktamālikā (‘Minor Red Garland’):

(2–3) ‘Nandabhūti, Brahmin of the Vājasaneyā (school of the Yajurveda) and Kautsa *gotra*, belonging to the community of (Brahmins) studying the four Vedas of the Mahatī-Raktamālā *agrahāra* within the Kuddālakhāta (‘Spade-dug’) settlement (*adhivāsa*) informs (us, as follows):

(3–8) “In the elapsed year one hundred and fifty seven (of the Gupta era), to me were given by your Honors, after (your Honors) had received *dīnāras* from the *mahāmātra* of Puṇḍravardhana (named) Suvarcasadatta, by the procedure of sale in accordance with custom, two *kulyavāpas*¹² of uncultivated land, without revenue charges and yielding no tax, in the village Govardhanaka, as a permanent endowment to be enjoyed in perpetuity. The Supreme Lord (*paramadeva*) has now, in the year one hundred and fifty-nine, for the sake of the increase of his own merit, granted that (land), (i.e.) the village Govardhanaka,¹³ with a *garuṭṭāpa* charter,¹⁴ to the Brahmins residing in Dugdhotikā. Therefore (*tad*), the honourable governor Brahmadata was informed by me in the [GAP] council (as follows):

(8–12) “Two *kulyavāpas* of uncultivated land, without revenue charges and yielding no tax, in the village Govardhanaka, were given to me by the *mahāmātra* of Puṇḍravardhana (named) Suvarcasadatta, for the purpose of the regular performance of the five great sacrifices in favour of (his) mother and father, as a permanent endowment. And the Supreme Lord has, for the increase of his own merit, granted that village Govardhanaka, with a *garuṭṭāpa* charter, to the Brahmins residing in Dugdhotikā. Therefore, in order that the copperplate field gifted to me ... not be lost, may a grant be made (to me)!”.

(12–13) “In consequence of the understanding of this information ... an instruction (*ādeśa*) was given [by Brahmadata to determine] ‘what is fitting in this case?’ It was made known by his council: ‘Let no other¹⁵ village be given in donation by exchange for this field.’

(13–15) “In consequence of this ... the (following) instruction was given (by Brahmadata) to the country’s governor Svāmicandra:¹⁶ ‘Your protection for the wealth of the (inhabitants of)

Madhyamaṣaṇḍika, (your) lodging (of them), (your) tribute ... by the reliable ... in exchange for this copperplate field, you will have a field in another village be given by [GAP] of the district council to Nandabhūti, Brahmin of the Vājasaneyā (school) and Kautsa *gotra*’.”

(15–16) In accordance with this instruction, an instruction of the honourable Svāmicandra has been given to us: ‘To me, a (royal) order has been given from his excellency (Brahmadatta) the governor of (king Budhagupta) the devout worshiper of the Lord (*paramadaivata*):

(16–19) “Nandabhūti, Brahmin of the Vājasaneyā (school) and Kautsa *gotra*, of the Mahatā-Raktamālā *agrahāra* informs: ‘The uncultivated land, without revenue charges and yielding no tax, in the village Govardhanaka, which the reliable one had bought and given to me, that has now been given by the Supreme Lord in accordance with an instruction. The village Govardhanaka has been released by me to those Brahmins of Dugdhotikā. May a grant be made so that there will be a copperplate-field elsewhere in exchange for it.’ In consequence of the understanding of this information, you will have (a copperplate field) in another village be given by your own (subordinates).”

(19–22) ‘In accordance with this instruction, in exchange for the permanent endowment belonging to the village Govardhanaka, we have given a pair of *kulyavāpas* of uncultivated land in Khuḍḍī-Raktamālikā, without revenue charges and yielding no tax. 2 *ku*[*lyavāpa*]. Having understood (this), for this reason (*ītas*) together with this dispatched (member of) council who enjoys our confidence [and] with the householders of the good families of the district, you there yourself will give (them) after dividing and demarcating¹⁷ (them) with eight by nine *nala* of the governmental (? , *naitika*) cubit of Kuddālakhāta.¹⁸ And after giving (them), you must safeguard (them) in perpetuity as a permanent endowment.’

(22) And the reverend Vyāsa has said:

I. The giver of land resides sixty thousand years in heaven; the one who challenges (a

donation) as well as the one who approves (of the challenge) will reside as many [years] in hell.

- II. The one who would steal land given by himself or another becomes a worm in excrement and is cooked with his ancestors.
- III. You, Yudhiṣṭhira, most excellent of kings, must strenuously protect land previously given to brahmins. Safeguarding is even better than giving.
- IV. Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Śakra, Śukra, Bṛhaspati, Candra, Āditya and the Grahas: they all rejoice in one who gives land!

(25–6) Written by the scribe Āryadāsa, heated by the record-keeper Manorathadāsa. Year 159, Jyeṣṭha day 8.

Date

The inscription is dated to year 159, Jyeṣṭha day 8. As suggested to me by Michio Yano, whom I thank for his help in dealing with this issue, we may approach the conversion of this date by counting back from the Eran stone pillar inscription of year 165 (Bhandarkar 1981, no. 39), which gives the earliest date with specification of weekday in the Gupta corpus. The dating parameters of the latter are:

Year: 165

Date: Āṣāḍha, *śuklapakṣa* 12

Weekday: Thursday

This, according to Fleet (1891: 377), can be converted as:

Year: 484 CE

Date: June 21

Weekday: Thursday

As Fleet indicates, the year also corresponds to 407 Śaka current (*varṭamāna*). This in turn is equivalent to 406 Śaka elapsed (*atīta*). The date of the inscription that concerns us here is six years before this:

Year: 159

Date: Jyeṣṭha, 8

Weekday: not specified

Thus 159 Gupta is 401 Śaka current or 400 Śaka elapsed, i.e. 478/9 CE.

We lack several parameters that would be required to be able to determine with certainty

the precise Julian date. The *pakṣa* (waxing or waning) is rarely specified in any Gupta-period inscription, and we do not have any explicit statement at all as to whether the system of month naming was *pūrṇimānta* or *amānta*.¹⁹ It is also uncertain whether the system for day-numbering was continuous (from 1 through 30) or resumed from 1 at the second *pakṣa* (1–15+1–15). Given these facts, three *prima facie* equally viable conversions may be obtained using the Pancanga program developed by Michio Yano and Makoto Fushimi (<http://www.cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~yanom/pancanga/>), in which the years are reckoned as *atīta*:

pūrṇimānta: 478 5 11 Thursday, 400 Śaka, Nija-Jyaiṣṭha, *kṛṣṇapakṣa* 8

pūrṇimānta/amānta: 478 5 25 Thursday, 400 Śaka, Nija-Jyaiṣṭha, *śuklapakṣa* 8

amānta: 478 6 9 Friday, 400 Śaka, Nija-Jyaiṣṭha *kṛṣṇapakṣa* 8

However, we actually do have reason to assume that the day-counting system was continuous (1–30), because day numbers higher than 15 are found in the Baigram plate (l. 25) and in the Mankuwar image inscription of Kumāragupta I (Bhandarkar 1981, no. 25, l. 2), respectively of 128 and 129 Gupta. Therefore, the third option may be cancelled (because day 8 in a month named in the *amānta* system would fall in *śuklapakṣa*). If, furthermore, we accept one of the main results of Fleet's research (1891: 397), namely that “the pūrṇimānta arrangement of the lunar fortnights is the one that was used for the Gupta years during the period in which these records were written”, then we can narrow down our conversion to Thursday the 11th of May 478 CE.

Narrative Structure

The text comprises several levels of reported speech, and its structure is not immediately evident. Damage to the last three lines of the obverse and the first three of the reverse causes some uncertainty, but the following scheme represents my understanding of the narrative structure of the text.

- Introduction: locus of emission of the charter, speakers and addressees (through l. 2 *bodhayanti*)
 Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council to addressees (l. 2 *kuddāla-* – l. 3 *viññāpayati*)
 Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council (ll. 3–4 *yat* – l. 8 *viññāpitaḥ*)
 Nandabhūti to Brahmadata and his council (l. 8 *mama* – l. 12 *kriyatām itī*)
 Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council (l. 12 *yataḥ* – l. 13 *jñāpita*)
 Brahmadata’s council (l. 13 *etatkṣetra-* – *dīyatām itī*)
 Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council (l. 13 *yata* – l. 14 *dattaḥ*)
 Brahmadata to Svāmicandra (l. 14 *tava* – l. 15 *dāpayiṣya[sīti]*)
 Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council to addressees (l. 16 *etadādeśād* – *dattaḥ*)
 Svāmicandra to Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council (l. 16 *mama* – *dattā*)
 Brahmadata to Svāmicandra (l. 16 *mahatī* – l. 17 *viññāpayati*)
 Nandabhūti to Brahmadata (l. 17 *sādhunā* – l. 18 *kriyatām itī*)
 Brahmadata to Svāmicandra (l. 19 *yataḥ* – *dāpayiṣyasīti*)
 Yūthapati and *viṣaya* council to addressees (l. 19 *yataḥ* *edhardāśād* – l. 22 *-pālayiṣyasīti*)
 Admonitory formulae (l. 22 *uktañ* – l. 25 *bhūmidam*)
 Colophon (l. 25 *likhitam* – l. 26 *di ḡ*)

Protagonists

As noted above, the plate is dated to year 159 in numeral signs (l. 26), but—uniquely in the corpus of early land-sale inscriptions from Bengal—the date is additionally expressed in words (l. 6). This date falls during the reign of Budhagupta, and it is certainly this king who is indicated with the synonymous designations *paramabhaṭṭāraka* and *paramadeva*. The latter epithet is known to me elsewhere only in the Shankarpur inscription (168 GE, Jain 1977) which states (emended): *samvatsaraśate ’ṣṭaṣaṣtyuttare mahāmāghasamvatsare śrāvaṇamāse pañcamyām paramadevabudhagupte rājani*. A further epithet used to designate the king in our inscription is *paramadaivata*. This last term is known to have been used—specifically in the Puṇḍravardhana area (Bakker 2014: 242–3 n. 689)—by Kumāragupta I, Budhagupta and the king with name ending in *-gupta* during whose reign the Damodarpur plate #5 was issued. As shown by Sircar (1974), the epithet *paramadaivata* may but need not have been a synonym of *paramabhāgavata*, i.e. an indication that the ruler in question was of Vaiṣṇava faith; it may less specifically have designated its bearer as ‘a great devotee of the gods in general or of one of the great gods’.

Despite the absence of explicit mention of the name Budhagupta, this king’s role in the present document is more prominent than that of any king in any other Gupta-period inscription of Puṇḍravardhana, none of which are concerned

with direct royal intervention in local affairs. The present inscription for the first time provides evidence of a royal land grant in the area, and for the first time gives an impression of how the interests of individual citizens could become caught between policies of local and central administration.

Among other individuals involved in the proceedings recorded in the inscription I may mention first the *kumārāmātya* named Yūthapati. Although *yūthapa* in stanza XVIII of the Indian Museum plate of Dharmapāla (Furui 2011a)—a Puṇḍravardhana inscription of the late eighth or early ninth century—is the name of a function, the otherwise unattested word *yūthapati* must be a proper name here, as is indicated by the immediate juxtaposition of the term *kumārāmātya* with proper names in other Gupta-period inscriptions (e.g. Damodarpur #1, l. 4; Baigram, l. 1).

The highest provincial administrator (*uparika*) at the time of our inscription was named Brahmadata, no doubt the same as the one who was serving at the time of issue of Damodarpur plate #3 (see Bakker 2014: 243). It seems necessary to assume the involvement of councils (*adhikaraṇa*) at two levels: that of the *viṣaya*, led by Yūthapati, and that of a superordinate level whose name is not mentioned in the text, but may naturally be assumed to have been the *bhukti*, given the involvement of this Brahmadata.²⁰ It is remarkable that the text leaves open a gap precisely where (in l. 8) one might have expected

this to have been specified. The text does not clarify the relation of these administrative bodies to the *vīthyāyuktakādhikaraṇa* mentioned in the seal legend.

An officer styled *deśoparika* and named Svāmicandra seems to be mediating between *uparika* Brahmadata and *kumārāmātya* Yūthapati with his *adhikaraṇa*. The same name is that of a *vīthimahattara* figuring in the Kalaikari-Sultanpur plate, l. 5. The fact that 39 years separate the two inscriptions makes it a bit unlikely that we are dealing with two moments in the life of a single individual, although this possibility cannot be excluded.

The names of plaintiff Nandabhūti and of the original donor Suvarcasadata are not found in any other sources.

The Meaning of *garuṭṭāpa*

One of the most interesting novelties of this inscription is the expression *garuṭṭāpa* occurring in lines 7 and 11. The expression being unknown elsewhere, it can easily be misread, as was done by Dubey and Acharya (2014) who read *gu^oupta*. The first *akṣara* cannot be *gu*, because the medial *u* when attached to *g* normally turns to the right and returns upward (as it does with *tu* and *bhu*). The *akṣara* here is simply *ga*, as is confirmed by the *ga* in *bhagavatā* in l. 22, showing exactly the same shape. The *akṣaras ru* and *°u* are very close to each other in this script—cf. their shapes in *°uktañ* (l. 22) and *varuṇā* (l. 24). While the reading of the third *akṣara* is difficult in l. 7, it is unmistakably *ṭṭā* in l. 11; a hypothetical reading *ga^oṭṭā* would defy understanding, whereas for my preferred reading *garuṭṭāpa*, I can offer the following interpretation. I propose to take it as a compound *garuṭ+tāpa*, with *garuṭ* an apparently unique stem hypostatized from the common words *garuḍa* and *garuṭ-mant*, and *tāpa* somehow related to the word *tāpita* that is commonly found on early Bengal copperplates,²¹ as it is here in l. 25, and for which Sircar (1966: 338) suggested the meaning: ‘heated [for affixing the seal to a copperplate grant]’. There must then be a connection with the expressions *garuṭmadāṅka* and *garuḍājñā* found elsewhere in Gupta inscriptions (see Raven 1994: 3, 161). It is

relevant also that the epithet *garuḍaketuḥ* is used in the opening *maṅgala* stanza of the Eran pillar of the reign of Budhagupta, year 165 (Bhandarkar 1981: 340), which although invoking Viṣṇu (*caturbhujā*) on the surface, may perhaps also be read as applying to the king. Hence I propose that *garuṭṭāpa-sāsana* means ‘a charter with [the imperial] Garuḍa seal’, and refer to Raven (1994: pl. 15–24) and Willis (2009: 31, fig. 19) for illustrations of what this royal emblem may have looked like. It is no coincidence that the expression is in both of its occurrences connected to the issuance of imperial orders, and it is no surprise that our copperplate itself, which reports on but does not itself represent an imperial charter, bears no Garuḍa emblem on its seal.

Toponyms

Certain examples of toponymic continuity between ancient and modern Bengal are known, such as the place name Vayigrāma which no doubt corresponds to the modern name of an epigraphic find-spot Baigram. However, because I have no first hand knowledge of the field in North Bengal, and do not have access to relevant sources such as detailed maps, I am unable at the time I am preparing this article for publication to provide any identifications of the toponyms mentioned in the inscription—Mahatī-Raktamālā, Khuḍḍī-Raktamālikā, Kuddālakḥāta, Govardhanaka, Dugdhotikā and Madhyamaṣaṇḍika—with toponyms of modern Bangladesh or West Bengal.²²

Still, I may note that the *adhivāsa* named Kuddālakḥāta, where was situated the Mahatī-Raktamālā *agrahāra* from which the inscription was issued, must correspond with Kuddālakḥātaka in the Jagajjibanpur (or Tulabhita) plate of Mahendrapāla (mid-ninth century, Bhattacharya 2005). There, it is likewise the place from which a grant was issued (ll.28–9: *kuddālakḥātakasamāvāsitaśrīmajjayaskandhāvārāt*) but simultaneously the name of a *viṣaya*, in ll.30–1: *śrīpuṅḍravardhanabhuktau kuddālakḥātakaviṣaye nandadīrghikodraṅge śimā*. It again figures as name of a *viṣaya* in the Jajilpara plate of Gopāla III (first half of the eleventh century, Sanyal 2010:

109; Misra and Majumdar 1951), ll.21–2: *śrīpuṇḍravardhanabhuktau kuddālakḥātaviṣayasambaddha*. Perhaps this evidence from Pāla-period grants may be taken to indicate that the otherwise somewhat unclear term *adhivāsa* in our text, translated above as ‘settlement’, denoted an administrative division of the district level. The place names in our inscription must probably be sought in the same area as those mentioned in the Pāla-period grants, whose provenances in present West Bengal are clear.

Our plate was issued from an *agrahāra* in Mahatī-Raktamālā to addressees in Khuḍḍī-Raktamālīkā. On place names with Mahā- and small counterparts, see Sircar 1983: 27 n. 5. At least one other contemporary plate was issued from an *agrahāra*, namely the Nandapur plate, from the Amvilagrāma *agrahāra*. It was apparently a common practice for the council (*adhikaraṇa*) to hold seat in such Brahmin settlements.

The toponym Madhyamaṣaṇḍika, found both in the seal legend and in l. 14, may perhaps be connected with Ṣaṇḍadvīpa in line 6 of the plate of the time of Pradyumnabandhu to which I now turn.

II. Sale Deed of the Village Mastakaśvabhra Issued under Pradyumnabandhu, Regnal Year 5

The second copperplate inscription to be presented here is a land-sale deed that, like the first, almost certainly originates from somewhere in northern

Bangladesh, although no information is available on its provenance other than what can be deduced from the text itself. The plate is now held in Hong Kong in the collection of François Mandeville, who purchased it from a dealer in Milan (Italy) in or around the year 2012. I am pleased to record here my gratitude to this gentleman for all he has done to facilitate my research on this plate.

It is the first specimen from North Bengal of a specific group of land-sale grants, datable to the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh, none of which however contains any internal absolute date, all being dated in regnal years of kings whom it is generally impossible to date with a degree of precision comparable to that of the land-sale grants of the Gupta era. All specimens known so far come from the south and centre of present West Bengal, and the south of present Bangladesh. As above, I furnish at the outset a table showing the group of inscriptions among which the plate to be presented below finds its place (Table 2).²³

Description

The plate (Fig. 6), which is on the whole very well preserved, measures 37 × 24 cm and is engraved lengthwise, on only one side, with twenty-one lines of text. A seal, which measures 5–7 cm in diameter, is affixed to the left margin of the text, bears two lines of text and is stamped with a secondary seal. Almost the whole of the text is preserved.

Table 2. Copperplate land-sale grants of Bengal datable between the end of the Gupta-period and the ascent of the Pāla-dynasty

Name of plate	Dated to the reign of	References
Kotalipada	Dvādaśāditya, year 14	Furui 2013
Faridpur A	Dharmāditya, year 3	Pargiter 1910: 193–8; Sircar 1965: 363–7
Faridpur B	Dharmāditya, no year stated	Pargiter 1910: 199–202; Sircar 1965: 367–70
Jayarampur	Gopacandra, year 1	Sircar 1965: 530–1; Srinivasan 1972; Tripathy 1997: 174–9
Faridpur C	Gopacandra, year 18	Pargiter 1910: 203–5; Sircar 1965: 370–2
Mallasarul	Gopacandra, year 33	Majumdar 1935–6b; Sircar 1965: 372–7
Kurpala	Samācāradeva, year 7	unpublished, but mentioned by Khan 2007
Ghugrahati	Samācāradeva, year 14	Bhattachali 1925–6; <i>not included in Sircar 1965/1983</i>
Panchrol	Śaśāṅka, no year stated	Sircar 1983: 727–30; Furui 2011

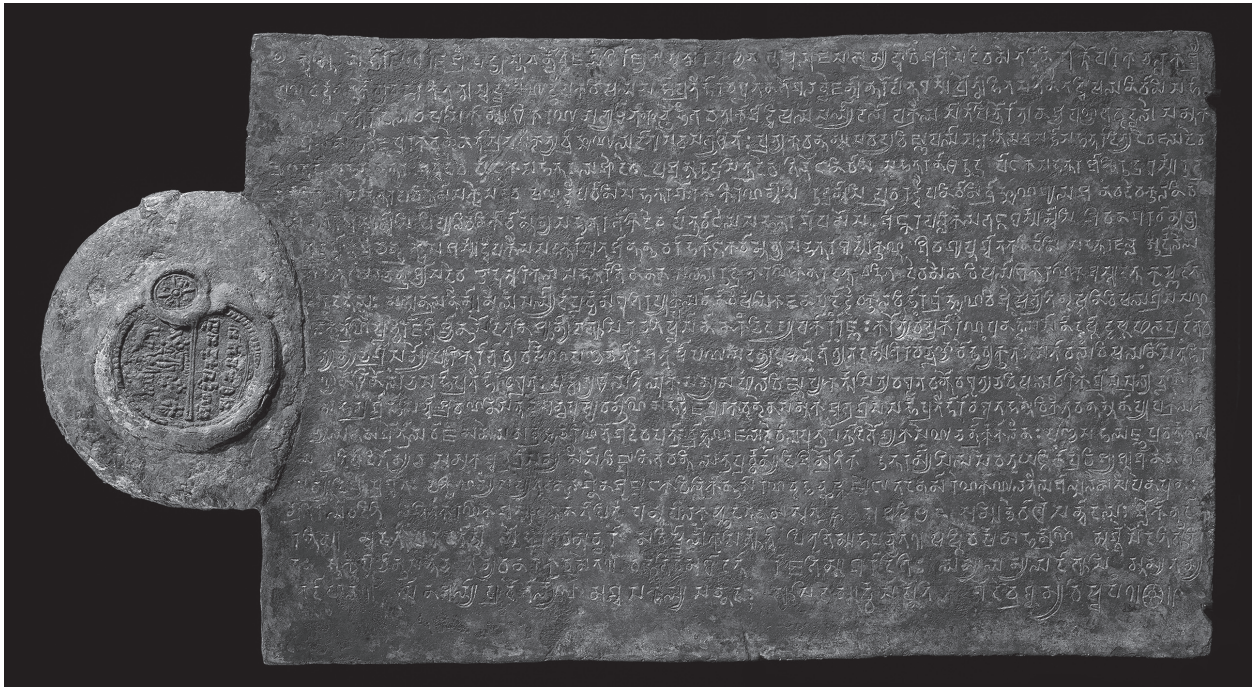


FIG. 6. Plate of Pradyumnabandhu, regnal year 5. Obverse with seal

The principal seal (Fig. 7) shows a beaded border, inside which the surface is divided into upper and lower halves by a double line. The lower half bears the legend whose reading is presented below. The upper half is dominated by a standing figure on a *padmāsana*, wearing an *uttariya*. The figure's very broad hips convey that she is a female figure. Since two elephants are



FIG. 7. Plate of Pradyumnabandhu, regnal year 5.
Close-up of seal

facing each other on either side of the figure's head, we are clearly dealing with a so-called Gajalakṣmī device. Minor figures, presumably representing *nidhis*, are kneeling or sitting cross-legged at either side of Lakṣmī's feet. A small tree, perhaps representing a *kalpadruma*, stands to her far right, and it would presumably have had its pendant on her far left, but the relevant part of the principal seal has been sealed over with a secondary seal.²⁴ The latter shows a simple wheel or flower-like ornament with four main spokes or petals branching off from an axle or pericarp (Fig. 8): one *akṣara* is engraved in each one of the interstices, but alas I am unable to determine what word (or name) they compose.

The parallels for this kind of secondary seal known to me are observed on the Kotalipada plate, the Tipperah plate of Lokanātha (Basak 1919–20b), the Kailan plate of Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta (Sircar 1947: 222), the Kalapur plate of Maruṇḍanātha (Gupta 1967: 69, facing plate; Sircar 1973: 15)—and on the plate presented in the first section of this article. In all of these cases we see on the primary seal variants of the same iconography that is found on the primary seal



FIG. 8. Plate of Pradyumnabandhu, regnal year 5.
Close-up of secondary seal and an impression thereof

here, and all are endowed with short inscriptions also on the secondary seals, although some have not been read; all those that have been read state the name of the ruling king in the genitive, according to Sircar (1973: 16) ‘to indicate that they had countersigned the original documents afterwards incised on the copperplates’ (cf. also Khan 2010: 97).

The script, which is identical on plate and seal, is a variety of Late Eastern Brāhmī that may palaeographically be assigned to about the sixth century CE. Among noteworthy features, I may mention the following. Vocalization *ā* is without exception in the form of a hook open toward the right placed on top of the *akṣara*, not recorded by Dani (1986) but well attested in Bengal epigraphy, for instance in the Kotalipada plate. For vocalization *ī*, we consistently find a shape, not represented by Dani, which is formed

by a wave first moving upwards, then turning downward and finally slanting back in upward direction, again a feature shared with the Kotalipada plate. The *akṣaras ka* and *ra* have long descenders; *ṣa* and *sa* are clearly distinct, *ṣa* being based on the shape of *pa*; the shape of *ya* is always tripartite, consistently with an outward curl at the left extremity. By contrast with the Kotalipada plate, the shape of *ha* is here consistently one that resembles the type ‘*ha* with its base dipping down’ (Dani 1986: 289). The shape of *dh* has a pronounced dent in the left bulge, a type not recorded by Dani. The opening symbol is that which current scholarship considers to represent the word *siddham* (see Griffiths and Southworth 2007: 352 n. 10 for references); the final fleuron is a variant of the wheel motif (Sarkar and Pande 1999: 58), the best parallel known to me being found in a late-eighth-century inscription of Campā in modern Vietnam (Griffiths and Southworth 2011, face A, end of l. 7, fig. 3).

The spelling and language is on the whole correct. The sign for *b* is occasionally used in distinction from *v*. There is one case of spelling *ṛ* for *ri*. The form *karmmam* in l. 13 either represents a substandard shift from consonantal to thematic declension, or its apparent case ending could be interpreted as a case of hiatus bridging *m*.²⁵

Text and Translation

SEAL (PRIMARY, Fig. 7)

(1) ghoṇādvīpakaviṣaye

(2) °adhikaraṇasya

‘(Seal) of the council in Ghoṇādvīpaka district’

SEAL (SECONDARY, Fig. 8)

Illegible. Given that only four *akṣaras* seem to be engraved, a hypothetical reading *pradyumnabandhoḥ* must be excluded.

PLATE (Fig. 6)

(1) ☉ svasti ma(hā)rājādhirājaśrīpradyumnavandhor vvijayādhirājasamvatsar[e] pañcama °āśvayujamāsasya dvāvīmśatime divase tad-viniyuktoparikacellake śrī(2)puṇḍravarddhana-bhuktau vyavaharati tatsamvaddhagoṇādvīpa-

kaviṣaye mahāpratīhārāvadhūtena bhogalavdhe
 janmāntaropāttadharmmaprotsāhitamatena
 tad-
 viṣayanivāsimahā(3)mahattaramahattarādayo
 v(ai)ṣayikās sādḥikaraṇā °abhyarthitā °icche
 haṁ bhavatsakāśād viṣayamaryyādayopakrīya
 mātāpittor ātmanāś ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye
 mastaka(4)(śvabhra)grāma(m) saha
 vijapūrakavṛndena tāmrapaṭṭikṛtya vrāhmaṇāya
 dātum evam abhyarthitāḥ pratyuktavantā
 samavadya vijñāpayāma °iti yatra
 mahāmahattarādityadevajayadeva(5)[śi]-
 (vabhad[r]o) (ma)h(ā)mahattaraśarvvadevapā-
 ṭakamahattarayaśodevapraśastarudramittra-
 devabhiloṭanivāsimahattaranātharudrapāṭaka-
 mahattaraśāntirudradharmmarudra(6)vā-
 (rṣagrime)yamahattarapavittasomakṣema-
 deṣaṇḍadvīpavāsimahattaragorakaki-
 raṇasvāmīrudrasvāmīpravardvīpanivāsivrāh-
 maṇaguyaśanavadevakulanivāsi(7)mahattara-
 śambhusvāmīpippalivanikāvāstavyamahattarab-
 hākidevapātravāṭeyamahattaragopasoma-
 śāṅkarapallīkeyabhaṭṭadharmmasvāmīśiva-
 nagaravāstavya(8)bhadrasvāmīśricandraṣema-
 śarmmadvīpakīyamahattarāmṛtaśāntanuvārāha-
 koṭṭakavāstavyamahattaradharmmakunḍa-
 śivaguptakhātakanivāsimahattarajalla-
 °ārdraleya(9)mahattarajālacandraśyāmadeva-
 °audumvarīkeyamahattarābhīnandanamalaya-
 rudrakaraṇīkanaradatta°eḍita(nu)devasena-
 viṣayādḥikaraṇīkaśambhudattakṛṣṇa-
 datta(10)porudattā+da+yaḥ sanmantrayantī
 smāstīyaṁ maryyādā pūrvvasādhubhir apy
 u+pa+krīya nānāvaiśaiyikajanapadād devaku-
 lavihārabrāhmaṇavīśeṣebhyo tiṣṭhāni viṣaya-
 grāmamaṇḍa(11)lakṣettrāṇi pūrvvarājabhiś
 cānumoditāni śūnyā ca bhūmir avatiṣṭhamānā
 na kaṁ cid apy upakāraṁ rājñāḥ karoty
 evaṁprakāreṇa punar ddiyamānā
 drṣṭādṛṣṭaphalapradā bhava(12)ty asya ca
 grāmasyoparikarā bhāvyaṁvarṣiṇa pañca-
 catvāriṁśat kārṣapaṇā yad anyad v[i]ṣayā-
 bhāvyaṁ tad asmābhir avacūrṇya voḍhavyaṁ
 kutaḥ yato vayaṁ viṣayanimittāṁ hira(13)ṇy(e)-
 nārthino yaṁ ca mahāpratīhārāvadhūtaḥ
 prahvo (bh)arthayati yuktam asya saphalaṁ
 vijñāpyakarmmam ity avadhṛtavanto vadḥṛtya
 ca viṣayavārikai grāmamūlyam

cūrṇikā(14)sahasra(m) grāhayitvā śravaṇani-
 mittāṁ ca gandhapuṣpavastrāṇi saha (v)ijapūra-
 kavṛndena mastakaśvabhra-grāmaṁ mahāpratī-
 hārāvadhūtahaste vikṛitavantā tenāpy upakrīya
 k(ā)(15)ty(ā)yanasagotrāya vājasaneyasa(v)rah-
 macāriṇe bhogadevaputtrā(ya) vrāhmaṇajaya-
 devāya puttrapauttrādibhogyakrameṇācandrā-
 rkkakālīnaḥ pañcamah(ā)yajñapravarttan(ā)ya
 (16) ya pratipādito sya ca mastakaśvabhra-
 grāmasya sīmāliṅgāni bhavanti yatra pūrvva-
 syāṁ diśi srotikā °uttarasyaṁ iyam (e)va
 tṛghaṭṭikāṁ praviśya śmaśānena paści(17)ma-
 syāṁ diśy o(ptr)akh(ā)taḥ dakṣiṇasyāṁm apy
 (e)tadanulagnena śṛṅgāṭakavillikānusāreṇa
 vṛhacchāṅkajoṭā tadan(u)sāreṇa kāṇālatīyāśā-
 lmalīsamīpena punaḥ (18) srotikā yāvad iti
 l(i)khitāṁ kāraṇīkaśam(bhudatte)na tāpitāṁ
 pustapālākṛṣṇadattena samvat · 5 °aśva di 20 2
 °asminn evārthe manvādayaḥ ślokān
 udāha(19)ranti sma

- I. svadattāṁ para(da)ttāṁ vā yo hareta
 vasundharāṁ
 sa viṣṭhāyāṁ kṛmir bhūtvā piṭṛbhis saha
 paccate ||
- II. ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svargge modati
 bhūmi(20)daḥ
 °ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake
 vaset · ||
- III. vahubhir vasudhā dattā rājabhis
 sagarādibhiḥ
 yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya (21)
 tadā phalaṁ ||
- IV. yānaśayyāprado bhāryyām* sukham
 akṣayyam annadaḥ
 bhūmidas sarvvam āpnoti godo vradhnasya
 viṣṭhapa(m) || ⊗ ||

Notes on readings

1. *-samvatsar[e] pañcama:* or read
-samvatsarapañcama? No trace of *-e* can be
 made out with certainty, and although it
 is possible to assume that it was originally
 written and since effaced, assuming its
 original absence could be supported, e.g., by
 the sequence *vijayarājyasamvatsarāśate* in the
 Karamdanda inscription of Kumāragupta
 (Bhandarkar 1981: 281, l. 3 with n. 5).

4. *samavadya*: it seems that this needs to be emended *samudya* or (although neither of these forms would be acceptable in chaste Sanskrit) *samodya* or *samvadya*.
4. *iti yattra*: perhaps to be read as *ity attra*. It seems that *iti* would have been better suited after *dātum*.
5. *-[śi](vabhad[r]o)*: if the reading is correct, then emend *-śivabhadrā*.
6. *-ṣaṇḍadvīpavāsimahattara-*: perhaps emend *-ṣaṇḍadvīpanivāsimahattara-*.
6. *-guyāśa-*: emend *-guhayaśa-*. Cf. the Kotalipada plate, l. 5.
9. *-°eḍita(nu)-*: the reading is very uncertain as a whole, the presence of a fourth *akṣara* even more so.
10. *sanmantrayantī*: emend *sanmantrayanti*.
10. *-vaiṣaiyika-*: emend *-vaiṣayika-*.
12. *bhāvyanivarṣiṇa*: emend *bhāvvyavarṣiṇa*.
13. *bhyarthayati*: a middle verb form would have been better here. Maybe *-ti* is simply a mistake for *-te*.
13. *-vārikai grāma-*: emend *-vārikair grāma-*.
- 15–16. *-pravarttanāya ya*: dittography, emend *-pravarttanāya*.
16. *tṛghaṭṭikām*: emend *trighaṭṭikām*.
17. *o(ptr)akh(ā)taḥ*: perhaps read *oṣṭhakhātaḥ*? Or read/understand *ā parikhātaḥ* ‘up to the ditch/moat’?
17. *śṛṅgāṭakavillikānusāreṇa*: emend *śṛṅgāṭakavillikā tadanusāreṇa*?
- 19–21. Emended text of the four admonitory stanzas:
 - I. svadattām paradatām vā yo hareta
vasundharām
sa viṣṭhāyām krimir bhūtvā pitṛbhis saha
pacyate
 - II. ṣaṣṭivarṣasahasrāṇi svarge modati bhūmidah
ākṣeptā cānumantā ca tāny eva narake vaset
 - III. bahubhir vasudhā dattā rājabhis sagarādibhiḥ
yasya yasya yadā bhūmis tasya tasya tadā
phalam
 - IV. yānāśayyāprado bhāryām sukham akṣayyam
annadaḥ
bhūmidas sarvam āpnoti godo vradhnasya
viṣṭhapam

TRANSLATION

(1–3) Hail! In the fifth year of the victorious suzerainty of the suzerain of great kings Śrī Pradyumnabandhu, on the twenty-second day of the month Āśvayuja, when his appointee as governor, (named) Cellaka, was managing affairs in Śrī Puṇḍravardhana province,²⁶ when the Ghoṇā-island district falling under it had been obtained as fief by the great chamberlain Avadhūta, (at that time) the people of the district, beginning with the great notables and the notables, together with the council, were requested by him (i.e. Avadhūta) whose mind was inspired by merits acquired in a previous life.²⁷

(3–4) ‘I wish to make donation of the village Mastakaśvabhra along with its citron-grove to a Brahmin, after purchasing [it] from you, in accordance with the custom of the district, for the sake of increasing the merit of my parents and myself, and after making it a tract of land with copperplate (deed of purchase).’

(4–10) They answered: ‘We inform (as follows) after having spoken together.²⁸ In this matter (*yatra*), the great notables Ādityadeva, Jayadeva and Śivabhadra; the great notable Śarvadeva; the hamlet notables Yaśodeva, Praśastarudra and Mitradeva; residing in Bhiloṭa, the notable Nātharudra; the hamlet notables Śāntirudra and Dharmarudra; from Varṣagrīma (?), the notables Pavitrasoma and Kṣemadeva; residing on Ṣaṇḍa-island, the notables Gaurakakiraṇasvāmin and Rudrasvāmin; residing on Pravara-island, the Brahmin Guhayaśas; residing in Navadevakula, the notable Śambhusvāmin; residing in Pippalivanikā, the notable Bhākidēva; from Patravāṭa, the notable Gopasoma; from Śaṅkarapallika, Bhaṭṭadharmasvāmin; residing in Śivanagara, Bhadrāsavāmin, Śrīcandra and Kṣemaśarman; from the island, the notable Amṛtaśāntanu; residing in Varāhakoṭṭaka, the notables Dharmakuṇḍa and Śivagupta; residing in Khātaka, the notable Jalla; from Ardrala, the notables Jālacandra and Śyāmadeva; from Audumvarika, the notables Abhinandana and Malayarudra [as well as] the scribes (*karaṇika*) Naradatta, Eḍitanu and Devasena; the district councilors Śambhudatta, Kṛṣṇadatta, Paurudatta, and others, have deliberated.’²⁹

(10–13) ‘They have confirmed (*avadhṛtavantas*): “There is this custom—also by good people in the past, fields in the surroundings of district villages have been purchased from various people of the district, and donated to temples, monasteries and excellent Brahmins; and kings in the past have given their consent. And the land renders no benefit whatsoever to the king as long as it is lying fallow; if (on the other hand), it is once again, in the stated fashion, made the object of donation, it will yield fruit in this world and the next.³⁰ And this village’s additional taxes (*uparikara*) for the coming years are forty-five *kārṣāpaṇas*. What other income of the district there will be, that must be divided and borne by us.³¹ From what source? (We do not have any source from which to pay these taxes.) Therefore, on account of the district, we are in need of cash. And this great chamberlain Avadhūta humbly requests an act that is proper and fruitful for this (village), object of (the present) report”.³²

(13–14) ‘And after having confirmed (this), we have let the district arbitrators³³ receive a thousand *cūrṇikās*³⁴ as price of the village as well as incense, flowers and garments on the occasion of hearing (of the king’s assent?),³⁵ and we have sold the village Mastakaśvabhra, along with its citron grove, into the hand of the great chamberlain Avadhūta.’

(14–16) And after he had bought it, by him it has been made over to the Brahmin Jayadeva, belonging to the Kātyāyana *gotra*, student of the Vājasaneyana (school of the Yajurveda), son of Bhogadeva, to be enjoyed in sequence by his sons, grandsons, and so on, as long as moon and sun shall last, for purpose of the regular performance of the five great sacrifices.

(16–18) And the boundary markers of this village Mastakaśvabhra are, in this connection (*yatra*): in the East, the stream; in the North, the same, after it has entered the Trighaṭṭikā (river) by the cremation ground; in the West, the Opra (?) canal; in the South, too, along the latter, after the Śṛṅgāṭaka (‘Crossroad’) pond, the Bṛhacchaṅkajoṭā (‘Great-Conch-Joṭā’); after the latter, down again to the stream near the silk cotton tree of Kāṇālātī.

(18) Engraved by the scribe Śambhudatta,³⁶ heated by the record-keeper Kṛṣṇadatta. Year 5, day 22.

(18–19) And Manu and so on used to cite stanzas in this same sense:

- I. The one who would steal land given by himself or another becomes a worm in excrement and is cooked with his ancestors.
- II. The giver of land revels sixty thousand years in heaven; the one who challenges (a donation) as well as the one who approves (of the challenge) will reside as many [years] in hell.
- III. Numerous kings, starting with Sagara, have given land. Whoever holds land at a given moment, to him does the fruit belong.
- IV. One who gives a carriage or bed obtains a wife; one who gives food [obtains] permanent bliss; one who gives land [obtains] everything (at once); one who gives cattle [obtains] the summit of the sun.

Protagonists and date

This plate is the first document that will allow scholars to begin to fill the long gap in early Puṇḍravardhana history between the last Damodarpur plate (224 GE, i.e. 544 CE) and the first plate of Dharmapāla in the late eighth century.³⁷ The name of the ruling sovereign (*mahārājādhirāja*) Pradyumnabandhu was not previously known from any historical sources, as far as I am aware. His name, with suffix *bandhu*, seems somewhat unusual for an Indian king, and may be intended as a synonym of Kṛṣṇa. It is perhaps no coincidence that the *Harivaṃśa* and several purāṇic sources situate in Koṭīvarṣa-Bāṇapura, an important site in the religious landscape of ancient Puṇḍravardhana, ‘a conflict between *Śaiva* and *Vaiṣṇava* forces, centring around the mythological Bāṇa, the demon king ruling the city’, relating ‘how Kṛṣṇa and his companions attack Bāṇa and his demons in this city, in order to rescue the captive Aniruddha, Kṛṣṇa’s grandson’ (Bakker and Yokochi 2014: 251; see also Yokochi 2013: 306–8). That said, there is nothing in the text of the inscription that obliges us to assume that Pradyumnabandhu’s

center of power was in Puṇḍravardhana. His capital may have been elsewhere, as was that of the Gupta kings, and this is perhaps suggested by the fact that his appointee Cellaka is stated to have been serving as governor (*uparika*) in this province (*bhukti*), still quite in the style of all the locally found inscriptions of the Gupta period. This Cellaka and the great chamberlain (*mahāpratīhāra*) named Avadhūta are, just as their sovereign Pradyumnabandhu, entirely unknown from other historical sources.

It is impossible to be any more precise about the date of the present inscription than to say that it most likely dates after the complete dissolution of Gupta power in North Bengal, i.e. after 544 CE, and that it is unlikely, from palaeographic perspective, to be later than 650.

Toponyms and Landscape Indications

The name of the district (*viśaya*), Ghoṇādvīpaka ('Ghoṇā-island'), suggests that Ghoṇā might have been the name of a river, an assumption that could be supported by a passage from the *uttarabhāga* of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* that figures several names of Śākta deities at least two of which known to be names of rivers: *añjanī mohinī māyā vikatāṅgī nalī tathā | gaṇḍakī daḍakī ghoṇā śoṇā satyavatī tathā ||*.³⁸ However, it is also possible that *ghoṇā* here has its lexical meaning of 'nose' or 'beak', and that we are dealing with a descriptive toponym 'nose island', perhaps suggestive of the shape of a formation in the landscape. I am unable to identify the precise location of this, or any of the other principal place names, on a map.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the village whose donation, 'along with its citron grove' (if *bījapūrakavṛnda* is not itself a toponym), is the object of this record, is called Mastakaśvabhra, while two place names in *-śvabhra* and even a specific landscape indication *bījapūraka*, are also found in the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla (Kielhorn 1896–7, ll. 30–9), in the context of a village Krauñcaśvabhra that lay in *śrīpuṇḍravardhana-*

bhuktyantaḥpātivṛyāghrataṭīmaṇḍalasambaddhamahantāprakāśaviśaya 'the district Mahantāprakāśa forming part of the Vyāghrataṭī circle of the Śrī Puṇḍravardhana province'. I do not find toponyms in *-śvabhra* in any other inscriptions of Bengal, and hence infer that this element may have been in vogue for forming toponyms only on a local level. Since the find-spot of the Khalimpur plate lies within a few miles from the citadel of Gaur (cf. Bhattasali 1935: 76), there is reason to explore the possibility that the places intended in that plate—as well as ours—lay in the same area.

Landscape indicators or toponyms including the word *śāmalī* (here, l. 17) are also observed in the Mallasarul (l. 7) and Khalimpur plates (l. 37). The element *joṭā* (or derivatives), indicating some kind of waterway or canal, is found repeatedly in the cited passage of the Khalimpur plate, as also in the Mallasarul (l. 7) and Ghugrahati plates (ll. 18–19). The word *trighaṭṭikā* (l. 17) is also found in Faridpur plate B (ll. 23–4), but Pargiter's translation 'three ghats' does not fit in our context, and it seems Trighaṭṭikā must be a hydronym.

The toponym Audumvarika, which underlies the derivative adjective *audumvarikeya* in l. 9, may have been the same as the *viśaya* named Audumvarika in the Vappaghoshavata grant of Jayanāga (Barnett 1925–6, l. 3). It may further be asked whether Śivanagara (l. 7) is identifiable with the aforementioned important Śaiva site at modern Bāṅgaḍh (Yokochi 2013, Bakker and Yokochi 2014), and whether Varāhakoṭṭaka (l. 8) might be connected with the series of Vaiṣṇava foundations recorded in the Damodarpur plates #4 and #5 (Willis 2009: 92–3). If so, it is necessary to assume that the administrative situation has changed vis-à-vis the Gupta period, when those sites lay in Koṭivarṣa-district; in our plate, all toponyms mentioned in connection with the notables, etc. are explicitly stated to lie within the Ghoṇādvīpaka district (ll. 2–3).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: My research in Bengal epigraphy, of which this article is the first fruit, could not have been undertaken without all the help I have received for several years now from Ryosuke Furui, who shared with me many photos of Bengal inscriptions and made the relevant publications accessible to me, never tiring to satisfy my limitless thirst for scans from works that are difficult of access. I gladly express here my special gratitude to this excellent friend and scholar, who took the trouble to read and comment on my work published here at various stages of its gestation. Drafts were also read by Hans Bakker, Cédric Ferrier, Rajat Sanyal, Annette Schmiedchen and Yuko Yokochi, who made several useful comments. Other scholars who shared their expertise on specific issues are thanked, where appropriate. Finally, I acknowledge with pleasure the enthusiastic support that I received from the respective owners of the two copperplates studied here, who both kindly agreed to their names being mentioned. May they become an example to other private owners of valuable archaeological artefacts.

NOTES

1. The article Dubey and Acharya 2014 was helpful as a starting point for editing the text, but I have not deemed it useful to report any of the numerous variants of reading between my edition and that of the two Indian scholars. I leave it to the interested reader to compare their edition (which is unaccompanied by any translation) with mine and judge the merits of each.


2. For the demonstration of how this Julian date has been obtained, see p. 24.

3. In a recent overview of Gupta history, it is asserted that there are only ‘six chartes du Nord-Est’ (Ferrier 2015: 267 n. 71). Evidently, the author has not counted any of the charters excluded from the revised edition of *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. III (Bhandarkar 1981), because they do not make explicit mention of any Gupta monarch. Like Ferrier, I exclude from my count the three copperplate grants issued by Vainyagupta who ruled in Samatāṭa (far eastern Bengal) in the early sixth century, because this ruler has now been shown definitively not to have belonged to the ‘imperial’ Gupta dynasty (Furui forthcoming), because his inscriptions are not land-sale grants, and because they relate to a region rather distant from Puṇḍravardhana.

4. Willis’ argument was accepted without further ado by Ferrier (2015: 262 n. 12 and 267 n. 71).

5. See the clear and persuasive exposition of the relevant facts provided by Bakker (2014: 58, 242 n. 689, 244 n. 692, 246), whom I follow in rejecting Willis’ argument. The following demonstration that 200 20 4 is the most likely reading is my own addition.

6. See Gokhale 1966: 41. The figure 200 is differentiated from 100 by a stroke descending from the top right. The example from the Mahānāman inscription of 268 GE (see Tournier 2014: 3) is

particularly instructive:  (extracted from a photo by R. Furui of the stone which is held at the Indian Museum, Kolkata, reg. no. 2593).

7. I use an extract from a photo kindly supplied by Ryosuke Furui. I must admit that the reading of the date of this plate seems somewhat problematic to me, but I have no better proposal than the year 128 read by Sircar; I have extracted the figures to reflect this reading, although cutting further to the right would have revealed that it is not straightforward.

8. See Bakker 2014: 243 n. 690. I do not agree with Bakker that ‘the figure 3 is clearly visible’.

9. The type called ‘looped variety of the open-mouthed *ṇa* of the north’ by Dani (1986: 282).

10. For *m**, see ll. 23, 24, 25; for *t**, see l. 23. The graphic representation of consonants without inherent vowel is not discussed systematically Dani’s handbook (1986), nor in Bhandarkar 1981 (see observations on pp. 243, 277 and 283). See Majumdar 1935–6a: 53 for good examples of *m** and *t** from the Nandapur plate. See also Dikshit 1929–30: 59 for good examples of ‘terminal *m*’ in the Paharpur plate.

11. This correspondence was pointed out to me by Noman Nasir, who shared with me the photos that are at his disposal of the other plate. These were taken without prior cleaning of the plate, and the charter is hence only partly legible, but from the photos it is clear that it concerns a land transaction in the same area as the one recorded on our plate, because the toponym Raktamālāgrahāra occurs several times.

12. On this measure, see Maity 1970: 52–9.

13. Or, if one emends *-grāme*: ‘in the village Govardhanaka’.

14. See my discussion of the term *garuṭṭāpa*, p. 26.

15. Or, if the emendation *-parivarttenānya-* is

adopted: ‘Let another ...’. Making this emendation seems required by what follows.

16. The lacuna at the beginning of this sentence may perhaps be filled in with: ‘In consequence of this having been thus reported and understood’ (see my note on line 13 above). An alternative translation for the preserved part of the sentence could be: ‘was given the (following) instruction of the country’s governor Svāmicandra: ...’. However, since we have a sequence of instructions, and while both source and recipient of the instructions are expressed in the genitive, as we see in line 16, it seems best to interpret Svāmicandra here as the recipient.

17. The meaning of *pariniyama* follows from the comparison between the two passages in *caturddiśo niyama* and *caturddiñiyamitasammanam kṛtvā* in the Baigram and Nandapur plates cited in my note on the reading *pariniyama*, and the consequent comparison of those two passages with the present one.

18. Instead of *naitika*, reading *nitika* could give a similar sense derived from *niti*, but it is imaginable (in view of the ambiguity of the sandhi *ito n-*) that the intended word is *anaitika/anitika*, while at least the latter option would in turn be susceptible to two interpretations: *an-ītika* (Edgerton 1953, Dictionary s.v.) and *a-nitika*. None of the options seems to correspond to anything we find in related contexts (on which, see Majumdar 1929: 84–5), and the meaning remains uncertain. In the Faridpur plate of Gopacandra year 18 (see Table 2), ll. 18–19, we read: *pratītdharmmaśīlaśivacandrahastāṣṭakanavakanalenāpaviñchya*. Perhaps this parallel constitutes an argument for reading *nitika* and interpreting the sandhi as resulting from *anitika* ‘free of calamities’, hence yielding a positive attribute to the geographic qualification *kuddālakhātika*. This is the only such geographic definition of a unit of land measurement in the Gupta-period corpus, and the phenomenon is subsequently attested no earlier than in the Sena corpus (cf. Gupta 1996: 576 on the terms *tatratyadeśavyavahāranala* and *samataṭṭyanala* in Sena inscriptions). The use of the term *aratnī* for ‘cubit’ instead of *hasta* attested in other early Bengal inscriptions is also noteworthy.

19. See Yano 1994: 229.

20. Damodarpur #3, ll. 2–3: *tatpāda[pari]grhīte puṇḍra[vardhana]bhuktāv uparikamahārājabrahmadatte samvyavaharati*.

21. The formula with *likhitam* and *tāpitam* is found in the Jagadishpur plate, ll. 27–8. The Dhanaida plate ends in l. 17 after a lacuna with ... *ya[m] su(?) śrībbhadrena(ṇa) utkīrṇam sthambheśvarādāse[na]*, where

utkīrṇam stands in the sense of *likhitam*, and one may speculate that a *tāpitam* has been lost in the lacuna. Further occurrences are found, shortly after the Gupta period, in the Mallasarul and Jayarampur plates (for which, see Table 2) and in the plate of Pradyumnabandhu’s year 5, edited below, l. 18.

22. On the issue of the identification of ancient toponyms, see Sanyal 2010.

23. I follow the chronological sequence proposed by Furuī (2013: 94).

24. On the iconography, cf. Banerjea 1956: 193–6. Besides the comparanda from Thaplyal 1972, referred to above (p. 18), see the nice specimen of a seal from Basarh at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (AC1993.239.7), viewable through the LACMA’s website. I thank Ellen Raven for discussing the iconography with me and furnishing these references.

25. Cf. Furuī forthcoming. See also the case in Faridpur plate A, ll. 19–20: *anugrahāya-m-udakapūrveṇa*.

26. For similar expressions, see Damodarpur plate #1, ll. 3–6 (emended): *tanniyuktakakumārāmātyavetravarmāy adhiṣṭhāṇādihikaraṇaṅ ca nagaraśreṣṭhidhṛtipālasārthavāhabandhumitraprathamakulikadhṛtimitraprathamakāyasthaśāmbapālapuroge samvyavaharati*; Damodarpur plate #3, ll. 1–2 (emended): *puṇḍravardhanabhuktāv uparikamahārājabrahmadatte samvyavaharati*.

27. Cf. Jayarampur plate, l. 7: *sākṣād dharmma ivopāttajanmā*. Despite the availability of this parallel, the idea of an embodied Dharma does not seem to suit our context.

28. The placement of *iti* in l. 4 is somewhat problematic. In a personal communication, Yuko Yokochi suggests to me that the structure is strange because the content of the *vijñapti* comes after *iti*, due to the length of what was informed. I translate as though one more *iti* stood between *dātum* and *evam*.

29. In translating all the references to the places of residence of the members of council, I have assumed that no significant difference of meaning is conveyed by the choice of terms (*ni*)*vāsin* or *vāstavya* (both rendered as ‘residing in’), while both of these seem also to be synonymous with the use of a nominal derivative in *-eya* (‘from’).

30. Cf. the Panchrol plate, ll. 23–5 (emended): *civakhīlaśūnyāvaskarāyām bhūmāv avatiṣṭhamānāyām na kāñ cid arthamātrām rājñah puṣṇāty aśya ca rājño dharmaphalaśadbhāgaprāptir asty eva yato dīyatām iti*; and the Ghugrahati plate, ll. 13–15 (emended): *rājño dharmārthanīṣphalā yā tu bhogyā kṛtā bhūmir nṛpasyaivārthadharmakṛt tad asmaī vrāhmaṇāya dīyatām iti*.

31. On the sense of the word *ābhāvya*, see Furuī

(2011a: 150): ‘accompanied by all the contributions supposed to go to the royal family (*rāja-kulābhāvya-sarva-pratyāya-sameta*)’. It is glossed as ‘income or proceeds’ by Sircar (1966: 1). In the present context, one might wonder if it means income from the district to the king, or separate revenue to be collected and used at district level, because the translation of *voḍhavya* depends on this. I settle in favour of the former interpretation by comparing the Mallasarul plate, ll. 12–13 (emended): *tat sampadyatām asyābhīprāya ity asmadvārakṛtair anena dattakadīnārān [saṁgrhya] vīthyām samvibhajyāsmadvettragarttāgrāme ’ṣṭābhyaḥ kulyavāpebhyo yathocitām dānam tadvīthīsamudaya eva prāṇāyāyam voḍhavyam ity avacūrṇyāṣṭau kulyavāpā mahārājavijayasenasya dattāḥ*. See Sircar 1965: 375 n. 5, who explains ‘*prāṇāyāyam* = honestly. *vīthīsamudaye* = in the revenue, i.e. revenue account, of the *vīthī*. *voḍhavya* = to be borne. *dāna* = *deya* = dues. *avacūrṇya* = *apaviñchya*’.

32. It is difficult to know how to divide the text into sentences in line 13. I only know one Bengal inscription using *yuktam* in a similar context, i.e. the Panchrol plate, ll. 21–3 (emended): *etaddharmmasahitavacanām upaśrutyāsmābhir yair uparīkhitakair anyonyāvadhāraṇayāvadhṛtam yuktam ayām prārthayate*.

33. The term *viṣayavārika* is not found elsewhere in early Bengal inscriptions. Ryosuke Furui has recommended me to compare it with the functionaries named *kulavārika* and *vārakṛta*, appointed as arbitrators by the *adhikaraṇa* and *mahattaras*, in the Faridpur C, Mallasarul and Ghugrahati plates. Sircar (1965: 371 n. 5 and 375 n. 3) has suggested that *kulavāra* possibly means ‘arbitrator’, and that the meaning of *vārakṛta* seems related.

34. Comparison with l. 12 suggests that taxes were

calculated in the currency unit of *kārṣāpaṇa* (Sircar 1966: 149), whereas land was paid for in cowrie shells: according to Chattopadhyaya (1977: 53), the term *cūrṇikā* ‘possibly meant a sum of the value of 10 *kaṇardas* or cowries used as coins’. While the unit figures elsewhere in early Bengal epigraphy only in the Jayarampur plate (l. 31), the unit *kārṣāpaṇa* seems not to be used anywhere else in Bengal epigraphy at all (see Chattopadhyaya 1977: 57–60). Our plate thus provides valuable new light on the monetary system of early post-Gupta Bengal.

35. The meaning of the expression *śravaṇanimittam* in this context is not clear to me, and I can find no parallels for it in other inscriptions. The phrase *ājñāśravaṇavidheya*, frequent e.g. in the Pāla corpus, is translated by Kielhorn (1896–7: 254—Khalimpur plate, l. 55) as ‘ready to obey our commands’.

36. Ryosuke Furui points out to me that *karaṇika* here could also be an abbreviation of *adhikaraṇika*, if this Śambhudatta is the same as the *viṣayādhikaraṇika* of that name who figures in line 9.

37. Cf. Furui (2015: 267): ‘The political condition of Puṇḍravardhana after the mid-sixth century is unclear, due to the lack of contemporary sources. It can be surmised retrospectively from the inscriptions of the ninth century that this sub-region also experienced some tendencies witnessed in the other sub-regions.’ The inscription nicely confirms Furui’s surmise.

38. *Liṅgapurāṇa*, *uttarabhāga*, chapter 27, stanza 158. On the textual history and ritual context of this part of the *Liṅgapurāṇa*, see Sanderson 2009: 250, 258. Yuko Yokochi points out to me that *ṣoṇā* might be the river Son, though it is usually denoted by the masculine noun *ṣoṇa*.

REFERENCES

- Agrawala, Prithvi Kumar (1983). *Imperial Gupta epigraphs (Guptādhivājalekhamāṇḍala)*. Ancient Indian epigraphical sources (Pratnābhilekhasamhitā) 10.1/Shilpa 2. Varanasi: Books Asia.
- Bakker, Hans T. (2014). *The world of the Skandapurāṇa: northern India in the sixth and seventh centuries*. Supplement to Groningen Oriental Studies. Leiden: Brill.
- Bakker, Hans T. and Yuko Yokochi (2014). ‘Goddesses from the East: Bangarh or Koṭivarṣa’, Hans T. Bakker (ed.), *The World of the Skandapurāṇa: Northern India in the sixth and seventh centuries*, pp. 241–61. Supplement to Groningen Oriental Studies. Leiden: Brill.
- Banerjia, Jitendra Nath (1956). *The Development of Hindu Iconography*. Second edition. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press.
- Barnett, Lionel D. (1925–26). ‘Vappaghoshavata Grant of Jayanaga’, *Epigraphia Indica* 18: 60–4.
- Basak, Radhagovinda (1919–20a). ‘The Five Damodarpur Copper-Plate Inscriptions of the Gupta Period’, *Epigraphia Indica* 15: 113–45.
- _____. (1919–20b). ‘Tipperah Copper-Plate Grant of Lokanatha: The 44th Year’, *Epigraphia Indica* 15: 301–15.

- Basak, Radhagovinda (1923–4). ‘Dhanaidaha Copper-Plate Inscription of the Time of Kumaragupta I: The Year 113’, *Epigraphia Indica* 17: 345–8.
- _____(1931–2). ‘Baigram Copper-Plate Inscription of the [Gupta]-Year 128’, *Epigraphia Indica* 21: 78–83.
- Bhandarkar, Devadatta Ramakrishna (1981). *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, Bahadur Chand Chhabra and Govind Swamirao Gai (eds), *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* 3 (revised edition). Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
- Bhattacharya, Suresh Chandra (2005). ‘The Jagajjibanpur Plate of Mahendrapāla Comprehensively Re-Edited’, *Journal of Ancient Indian History* 23: 61–125.
- Bhattachali, N.K. (1925–6). ‘The Ghugrahati Copper-Plate Inscription of Samachara-Deva’, *Epigraphia Indica* 18: 74–86.
- _____(1935). ‘The New Śaktipur Grant of Lakṣmaṇa Sena Deva and Geographical Divisions of Ancient Bengal’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, pp. 73–113.
- Chattopadhyaya, B.D. (1977). ‘Currency in Early Bengal’, *Journal of Indian History* 55(5): 41–60.
- Dani, Ahmad Hasan (1986). *Indian Palaeography*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dikshit, K.N. (1923–4). ‘A Note on the Dates of the Gupta Copper Plates from Damodarpur’, *Epigraphia Indica* 17: 193.
- _____(1929–30). ‘Paharpur Copper-Plate Grant of the [Gupta] Year 159’, *Epigraphia Indica* 20: 59–64.
- Dubey, D.P. and S.K. Acharya (2014). ‘Raktamāla Copper-Plate Grant of the [Gupta] Era 180’, *Journal of History and Social Sciences* 5. <http://jhss.org/articleview.php?artid=232>.
- Edgerton, Franklin (1953). *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, 2 vols. William Dwight Whitney Linguistic Series. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ferrier, Cédric (2015). *L’Inde des Gupta (IVe-VIe siècle)*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Fleet, J.F. (1891). ‘The Gupta-Valabhi Era’, *Indian Antiquary* 20: 376–89.
- Furui, Ryosuke (2011a). ‘Indian Museum Copper Plate Inscription of Dharmapala, Year 26: Tentative Reading and Study’, *South Asian Studies* 27(2): 145–56.
- _____(2011b). ‘Panchrol (Egra) Copperplate Inscription of the Time of Śaśāṅka: A Re-Edition’, *Pratna Samiksha*, New Series 2: 119–30.
- Furui, Ryosuke (2013). ‘The Kotalipada Copperplate Inscription of the Time of Dvādaśāditya, Year 14’, *Pratna Samiksha*, New Series 4: 89–98.
- _____(2015). ‘Variegated Adaptations: State Formation in Bengal from the Fifth to the Seventh Century’, Bhairabi Prasad Sahu and Hermann Kulke (eds), *Interrogating Political Systems: Integrative Processes and States in Pre-Modern India*, pp. 255–73. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors.
- _____(forthcoming). ‘Ājīvikas, Mañibhadra and Early History of Eastern Bengal: A New Copper Plate Inscription of Vainyagupta and Its Implications’.
- Gokhale, Shobhana Laxman (1966). *Indian Numerals. Building Centenary and Silver Jubilee Series* 43. Poona: Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute.
- Griffiths, Arlo and William A. Southworth (2007). ‘La stèle d’installation de Śrī Satyadeveśvara: une nouvelle inscription du Campā trouvée à Phước Thiện’, *Journal Asiatique* 295(2): 349–81.
- _____(2011). ‘Études du Corpus des inscriptions du Campā II. La stèle d’installation de Śrī Ādideveśvara: une nouvelle inscription de Satyavarman trouvée dans le temple de Hoà Lai et son importance pour l’histoire du Pāṇḍuraṅga’, *Journal Asiatique* 299(1): 271–317.
- Gupta, Chitrarekha (1996). ‘Land-Measurement and Land-Revenue System in Bengal under the Senas’, Debala Mitra (ed.), *Explorations in Art and Archaeology of South Asia: Essays Dedicated to N.G. Majumdar*, pp. 573–93. Calcutta: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal.
- Gupta, Kamalakanta (1967). *Copper-Plates of Sylhet, Volume I (7th–11th Century AD) Containing Copper-Plates of Bhāskaravarmā, Maruṇḍanātha, Śrichandra, Govinda-Keśava and Išāna*. Rasheedistan: Lipika Enterprises.
- Jain, Balchandra (1977). ‘Shankarpur Plate of Budhagupta and Harivarman: Gupta Year 166’, *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India (Bharatiya Purabhilekha Patrika)* 4: 62–6.
- Khan, Ayoub (2007). ‘Bengal Copperplates: Provenances and Preservation Data’, *Pratnatattva: Journal of the Department of Archaeology, Jahangirnagar University* 13: 5–36.
- _____(2010). ‘Some Comments on the Seals of Bengal Copperplates’, *Journal of Bengal Art* 15: 95–108.
- Kielhorn, F. (1896–7). ‘Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapaladeva’, *Epigraphia Indica* 4: 243–54.

- Maity, Sachindra Kumar (1970). *Economic life in northern India in the Gupta period (cir. A.D. 300–550)*. Revised second edition. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Majumdar, N.G. (1929). *Inscriptions of Bengal*, vol. III: *Containing inscriptions of the Chandras, the Varmanas and the Senas, and of Išvaraghosha and Dāmodara; edited with translation and notes*. Rajshahi: Varendra Research Society.
- _____(1935–6a). ‘Nandapur Copper-Plate of the Gupta Year 169’, *Epigraphia Indica* 23 (appeared 1940): 52–6.
- _____(1935–6b). ‘Mallasarul Copper-Plate of Vijayasena’, *Epigraphia Indica* 23 (appeared 1940): 155–61.
- Misra, Sri Pramatha Nath and R.C. Majumdar (1951). ‘The Jājilpārā Grant of Gopāla II, Year 6’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society (Letters)* 17(2): 137–44.
- Pargiter, F.E. (1910). ‘Three Copper-Plate Grants from East Bengal’, *Indian Antiquary* 39: 193–216.
- Raven, Ellen M. (1994). *Gupta gold coins with a Garuḍa-banner, Samudragupta-Skandagupta*, 2 vols. Gonda Indological Studies 1. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- Sanderson, Alexis (2009). ‘The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period’, Shingo Einoo (ed.), *Genesis and Development of Tantrism, Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series* 23: 41–349. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo.
- Sanyal, Niradbandhu (1955–6). ‘Sultanpur Copper-Plate Inscription’, *Epigraphia Indica* 31: 57–66.
- Sanyal, Rajat (2010). ‘Copperplate Inscriptions of West Bengal: Finding Find-Spots and Locating Localities’, *Pratna Samiksha*, New Series 1: 107–34.
- Sarkar, H. and B.M. Pande (1999). *Symbols and Graphic Representations in Indian Inscriptions*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International.
- Sircar, D.C. (1943). ‘Kalaikuri Copper-Plate Inscription of the Gupta Year 120 (AD 439)’, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 19: 12–26.
- _____(1947). ‘The Kailan Copper-Plate Inscription of King Śrīdhāraṇa Rāta of Samataṭa’, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 23: 221–41.
- _____(1965). *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, volume I: *From the Sixth Century BC to the Sixth Century AD*, 2nd edn. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.
- Sircar, D.C. (1966). *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- _____(1969). ‘Jagadishpur Plate of the Gupta Year 128’, *Epigraphia Indica* 38: 247–52.
- _____(1973). *Epigraphic Discoveries in East Pakistan*. Calcutta: Sanskrit College.
- _____(1974). ‘The Royal Epithet “paramadaivata”’, *Studies in the Political and Administrative Systems in Ancient and Medieval India*, pp. 265–70. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- _____(1983). *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, volume II: *From the Sixth to the Eighteenth Century AD*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Srinivasan, P.R. (1972). ‘Jayarampur Plate of Gopachandra’, *Epigraphia Indica* 39: 141–8.
- Thaplyal, Kiran Kumar (1972). *Studies in Ancient Indian Seals; A Study of North Indian Seals and Sealings from circa Third Century BC to Mid-Seventh Century AD*. Lucknow: Akhila Bharatiya Sanskrit Parishad.
- Tournier, Vincent (2014). ‘Mahākāśyapa, His Lineage, and the Wish for Buddhahood: Reading Anew the Bodhgayā Inscriptions of Mahānāman’, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 57: 1–60.
- Tripathy, Snigdha (1997). *Inscriptions of Orissa, volume I (circa fifth-eighth centuries AD)*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research and Motilal Banarsidas Publishers.
- Willis, Michael (2005). ‘Later Gupta History: Inscriptions, Coins and Historical Ideology’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd Series, 15(2): 131–50.
- _____(2009). *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yamazaki, Toshio (1982). ‘Some Aspects of Land-Sale Inscriptions in Fifth and Sixth Century Bengal’, *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture* 43: 17–36.
- Yano, Michio (1994). ‘Calendar and Related Subjects in the Nīlamatapūrāṇa’, Yasuke Ikari (ed.), *A Study of the Nīlamata: Aspects of Hinduism in Ancient Kashmir*, pp. 223–36. Kyoto: Institute for Research in Humanities, Kyoto University.
- Yokochi, Yuko (2013). ‘The Development of Śaivism in Koṭīvarṣa, North Bengal, with Special Reference to the Koṭīvarṣa-Māhātmya in the Skandapurāṇa’, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56: 295–324.