

Raktamālā Grant no. 1, year 159

Arlo Griffiths

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Palaeographic description

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 of *ṇ*; 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 *M* and *T*. 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 (line 15 *nandabhūtiṣya*), and it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the author has at least once confused singular and plural verb forms (lines 21–22 *dāsyatha ... pālayiṣyasi*).

Edition

Seal

<1> maddhyamaṣaṇḍikavīthyāyuktakādhi<2>karaṇasya

Plate

<Page 1r> <1> svasti<.> mahat(i)-rakta-mālāgrahārāt paramabhaṭṭāraka-pādānuddhyātaḥ kumārāmātya-yūthapatir adhikaraṇaṁ ca<2> khuḍḍī-raktamālikāyāṁ brāhmaṇottarān sa-kṣudra-pradhānādi-kuṭumbino bodhayanti<.>

kuddālakhātādhivāsābhyantara<3>-mahatī-raktamālāgrahāra-cāturvvidyābhyantara-kṛo!<au>tṣa-sa-gotra-vājasaneya-brāhmaṇa-nandabhūtir vviññāpayati<.>

ya<4>t pūjyair mmamātīta-sapta-pañcāśad-uttara-śata-sjā!<a>mḥ!<v>atsare govarddhanaka-grāme yathānu{r}vṛtta-vikraya-krameṇa puṇḍra<5> varddhaneya-mahāmātra-suarccasadtḥo?<a>d d(i)nārān upasaṁgr̥hya _ samudaya-vāhyāpratikara-khila-kṣetra-kulyavā<6>pa-dvayam akṣaya-nīvī-dharmmeṇa śaśvat-kālopabhogyḥo?<a><m> dattaka<m><.> tad adhunaikḥānna?<ona>-ṣaṣṭy-uttara-śata-sāmbatsare para<7>ma-devair dugdhotikā-vāstavya-brāhmaṇānām sva-puṇyābhivṛddhaye govarddhanaka-grāmo garuḥptam?<tā>pa-ś(ā)sanenātisṛṣṭa(h)<.><8> tan mayā (pū)jyoparika-brahmadattaḥ _ 'dhikaraṇe vijñāpitaḥ<.>

mama govarddhanaka-grāmḥa?<e> puṇḍravarddhaneya-ma<9>hāmātra-suarccasadttena pañca-mahā-yajña-pravarttanāya mātā-pitrōr anugraheṇa _ samudaya-vāhyāprati<10>kara-khila-kṣetra-kulyavāpa-dvayam akṣaya-nīvī-dharmmeṇa dattaka<m><.> _ sa ca govarddhanaka-grāma<h> parama-devaiḥ sva<11>-puṇyābhivṛddhaye dugdhotik(ā)-v(ā)stavya-brāhmaṇānām gḥa?<u>ruṭṭāpa-śāsanenātisṛṣṭaḥ tan ma[ma] [5+] [tāmra]-patṭḥā?<a><12>-kṣetra [2×](dattaka) _ na vinaśyeta tathā (pra)sādaḥ kriyatām iti<.>

yataḥ Evaṁ vijñāpḥa?<i>to [11+]

<Page 1v> <13> Ādeśo d(ā)kam atra yuktam iti<.>

_ tadadhikaraṇm!<n>ena jñāpita _ Etat-kṣetra-pariva(r)ttena nānya-grāmo dīyatām iti<.>

yata [11+]<14> deśoparika-svāmicandrasyādeśo dattaḥ<.> tava maddhyamaṣaṇḍikānān dhana<h> prati pratipālana<h> prativāsana<h> pratyāya<h> sādhunā yasa[9+]<15> kautsa-sa-gotra-vājasaneya-brāhmaṇa-nandabhūtiṣyaitat tāmra-paṭṭa-parivarttanānyatra grāme viṣayādhikaraṇa __ kṣetraṁ dāpayi(śya)[siti]<.>

(ya)ta(h)<16> Etad-ādeśād asmāka<m> pūjya-svāmicandrasyādeśo dattaḥ<.> mama paramadaivatoparikapādebhy<o jñā?<a ājñā> dattaḥ<.>

mahatī-rakta-mālā-grahārika-brāhmaṇa-nandabhūti<17>r vvijñāpayati<.> sādhunā govarddhanaka-grāmeya-samudaya-vāhyāpratikara-khila-kṣetra<m> krītvā yan mama dattakam tad adhunā parama-de<vai Ā?<vair Ā>deśādatta(m)<18> Eṣāṁ dugdhotikeya-brāhmaṇānā<m> govarddhanaka-grām<e?<o> mayā<n?<t>isṣṣtas tat-parivarttēna yathānyatra tāmra-paṭṭa-kṣetraṁ bhavet ta(th)<(a)?<ā> prasādaḥ kriyatām iti<.><19> yataḥ Evaṁ-vijñāpitopalabdhat <(s)ai?<svai>r anyatra grāme dāpayiṣyasīti<.>

yataḥ E<dhar?<ta>d-ādeśād asmā<karī> govarddhanaka-grāmeya Akṣaya-nīvi-parivarttēna<20> khuḍḍī-rakta-mālikāyā<m> samudaya-vāhyā-pratikara-khila-kṣetrasya kulyavāpa-dvayaṁ datta<ha?<m> ku 2 te yūyam evopalabhyetona preṣitakenāśma<21>t-sa-viśvāsenādhika<n!<n>ena viśaya-kula-kuṭumbibhi<h> saha{h} Ito naitika-kuddālakḥatikā-ratny-<ā?<a>ṣṭa-navaka-nalābhyām apaviñchya (pa)riniyamya ca dā<22>syatha<.> _ datvā ca śāsvat-kālam akṣa<ya>-nīvi-dharmmeṇānupālayiṣyasīti<.>

_ Uktaṁ ca bhagavatā vyāsenā<.>

1. Anuṣṭubh

ṣaṣṭim var{i}ṣasahasrāṇi
svargge vasati bhū<23> midah _
Ākṣeptā cānumantā ca
tāny eva narake vaseT _

2. Anuṣṭubh

svadattām paradatām vā
yo hareta vasundharāM _
sa viṣṭhāyā<m> krimir bhūtvā
pitṛbhi<s> saha pacya<24>te _

3. Anuṣṭubh

pūrvvadattā<m> dvijātibhyo
yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira{h}
mahī<m> mah<i?<i>mat<ā cch?<āṁ ś>reṣṭha
dā(n)āc chreyo 'nupālanaM _

4. Anuṣṭubh

yamo 'tha varuṇo vāyuh

śakkraḥ śukkr_ṛa?<o><25> vṛhaspati<h> _
candrādityagrahās sarvve
Abhinandanti bhūmidam _

likhitam kāyastha-Āryadāsenam _ tāpitaṁ pusta-pāla-manorathadāse<26>na _ samba
100 50 9 jyeṣṭha di 8<.>

Apparatus

<1> mahat(i) ◇ *mahati* AG. — <1> kumārāmātya-yūthapatir ◇ *kum(ā)rāmātyayūthapatir* AG.

<2> khuḍḍī-raktamālikāyām ◇ *khaḍḍīraktamālikāyām* DB.

<3> -mālāgrahāra- • There seems to be no need to emend this to -mālāgrahāre (loc. sg.) as Dubey & Acharya 2014 propose. (Their *ha* is no doubt an involuntary error). — <3> -cāturvvidyābhyantara- ◇ -cāturvvidyādhyā[ya*]na-ra[ta*]- DB • Our reading, quite evident on the plate, receives confirmation from the phrase *pauṇḍravarddhanakacā-turvvedyavājesaneyacaraṇābhyantara* in the Kalaikuri Copper-plate of Kumāragupta I, line 14. — <3> -k_ṛo!<au>tṣa- • Read -kautsa-, as in line 15. — <3> vvijñāpayati ◇ *v(v)ijñāpayati* AG.

<4> mmamātīta- • Dubey & Acharya 2014 emended *mama tātaiḥ*. See *mayā* in line 8. Or read *mama* in every instance? — <4> yathānu{r}vṛtta- • If there really is a *repha*, then emend *yathānuvṛtta*. Our reading is supported by the Damodarpur copper-plate, line 7 *vikrayo 'nuvṛtaḥ*. — <4> puṇḍra<5> varddhaneya- • Cf. perhaps the Jagadishpur plate of the Gupta Year 128, line 3, although Sircar 1969–1970, there read *puṇḍravarddhaneya*, emending *ya* to *ye* (and explicitly rejecting the reading *puṇḍravarddhaneya*).

<5> -suarccasatt_ṛo?<ā>d d(i)nārān • To us it seems likely that the engraver actually wrote *dī*, as is required. Several parallels in the Gupta corpus suggest that we need an ablative ending before *dīnārān*. The obvious emendation is *suarccasattād*. Cf. line 9.

<6> -bhogy_ṛo?<a><m> dattaka<m> DB • We accept the emendation suggested by Dubey & Acharya 2014.

<7> -devair dugdhotikā- ◇ -*devair-Puśvotika*- DB • The reading of Dubey & Acharya 2014 reflects an impossible sandhi. — <7> -brāhmaṇānārīn ◇ -*brāhmaṇānā(rī)* AG. — <7> -grāmo • One could emend -*grāme* to resolve the problem caused by the author thinking of two subjects, the land and the village. — <7> garu_ṛptam?<ṭṭā> ◇ *garu(ṭṭā)pa*- AG; *ḡgū?<gu>ptāpa*- DB • The word *garuṭṭāpa* actually looks like *garuṭṭāmpa*- and would not have been identifiable without the parallel in line 11. — <7> -ś(ā)sanenātisṛṣṭa(h) ◇

-śāsanenaniṣṭam DB • Dubey & Acharya 2014 emended to -śāsanenaniṣṭam, presumably an involuntary error for -śāsanenāniṣṭam.

<9> samudaya- ◇ su?<a>mudaya AG.

<12> Evarṁ vijñāpa?<i>to° ◇ Evarṁvijñāpatopala(b)° AG • Griffiths 2015, p. 21: Comparison with line 19 suggests that we may restore here the form *Evarṁ vijñāpatopalabdhāt*, and then emend to -vijñāpitopa-.

<13> Ādeśo d(ā)kam ◇ Ādeśo *dakam* AG • In the first edition Griffiths 2015, the translation was based on the conjecture *ādeśo dattaḥ kim atra yuktam*. A new examination of the plate leads to the possibility to read a *ā* for *dākam* which makes sense in the sentence. — <13> -pariva(r)ttena ◇ *parivartt(e)na* AG • -pariva(r)ttena nanya-: emend -parivarttenanya-? Alas, too much of the context here is damaged to be sure what meaning was intended. — <13> nānya-grāmo dīyatām iti ◇ *nānya-grāmo dīyatām (i)t(i)* AG.

<15> -bhūtiṣyaitat • *bhūtiṣya* (indistinguishable graphically from *bhūtisya*) is a sub-standard gen. sg. form which ought to have been *bhūteḥ* in chaste Sanskrit. — <15> -varttanānyatra • Emend -varttenānyatra? Cf. lines 13 and 18. — <15> °yi(ṣya)[sīti] (ya)ta(h) ◇ °*yiṣ*?<ṣ>*ya*[*tha*][6+]*yataḥ* DB • Dubey & Acharya 2014 read *yataḥ* at the end of the line, but this reading cannot be confirmed. — <15> kṣetraṁ ◇ *kṣetra*<*m*> DB • The *anusvāra* is clearly present.

<16> asmāka<m> • As already suggested by Dubey & Acharya 2014, this must be corrected to *asmākaṁ*. See also line 19. — <16> -candrasyādeśo ◇ *candrasy*?<a><ā>*deśo* AG. — <16> dattaḥ mahatī- ◇ *datt(ā) mahatī-* AG.

<17> -kṣetra<m> • As already suggested by Dubey & Acharya 2014, this must be corrected to -*kṣetraṁ*. — <17> dattakaṁ ◇ *dattaka*[*m*] DB • The *anusvāra* is clearly present. — <17> -datta(m) ◇ -*datt(ā)* AG.

<18> tat-parivarttena • The first two *akṣaras* seem to bear *e-mātras* (*tetpe*), but perhaps these are accidental strokes. — <18> ta(th)i(a)?<ā> ◇ *tathā* DB; *tatha* AG.

<19> -vijñāpitopalabdhāt *i*(s)ai?<svai>r anyatra ◇ *vijñāpitopalabdhāt sair anyatra* AG • Or read -*labdhāt kair?* Or -*labdhātmair?* — <19> Eidhar?<ta>dādeśād asmā<kaṁ> • We rather emend *Etadādeśād asmākaṁ*, after the sequence in line 16.

<20> dattaiha?<m> ◇ *datta*ha DB • Dubey & Acharya 2014 suggest to emend to *dattam*. We accept this suggestion. — <20> evopalabhyetona preṣitakenā° • Cf. Khoh Plates of Mahārāja Śarvanātha (see Fleet 1888, N° 31 and Bhandarkar 1927–1936, N° 1201), plate 1,

lines 14–15: *te yūyam evopalabhyājñāśravaṇa-vidheyā bhūtvā samucita-bhāga-bhoga-kara-hiraṇyāvātāy[ā]dipratyāyān upaneṣyatha*. Read -°nupreṣita-?

<21> °kaṇ!<ṇ>ena • Emend °karanena (with *n* for ṇ as in line 13). Dubey & Acharya 2014 simply read *saviśvāsenādhikena* without noting the engraver’s error. — <21> -kuṭumbibhi<ḥ> saha{ḥ} • Dubey & Acharya 2014 read *kupamiti sahaḥ*, with suggestion to emend to -*kupena saha*. — <21> (pa)riniyamyā • Cf. Baigram plate, line 19 *niyamyā* and Nandapur plate, lines 14–15.

<22> akṣa<ya>-nīvī-dharmmeṇānu° • Dubey & Acharya 2014 read *akṣayanīvidharmeṇa bhū°* noting neither the missing *akṣara* nor the gemination after *r*. — <22> °pālayiṣyasīti • Dubey & Acharya 2014 read °*pālayismasoti* which they suggest to emend to °*pāle śāsati*.

<23> ṣaṣṭim var{ī}ṣasahasrāṇi ◇ ṣaṣṭim bar{ī}ṣasahasrāṇi AG • Dubey & Acharya 2014 read ṣaṣṭim varīṣa° with a correction to varṣa° which we adopt as well.

<24> pūrvvadattā<m> ◇ pūrvvadattā AG. — <24> varuṇo ◇ varuṇā AG.

<26> 100 50 9 jyeṣṭha di 8 ◇ 100 50 30 jyeṣṭha di 9 DB • The reading of the numeral signs is quite clear if one consults the table of Chakravarti 1938, p. 389, and is moreover confirmed by the reading in line 6. See the Paharpur CPI dated to the same year, with these same numerals, in line 20.

Translation

Seal

Of the council of appointees of the territory of Madhyamaṣaṇḍika

Plate

<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), as well as the council, inform the householders both modest and prominent, etc., consisting chiefly of Brahmins,¹ at Khuḍḍī-Raktamālikā (‘Minor Red Garland’):

¹The expression *brāhmaṇottarān* occurs in several other plates: Baigram Charter of the Time of Kumāragupta I, line 2; A grant of land in the Tāvira district, line 6; Paharpur Charter of the Time of Budhagupta, line 3; Nandapur Plate of 169 GE, line 1 and A second grant concerning the Raktamālā, line 2. The translation suggested here corresponds to the specific meaning of the compound *brāhmaṇottara-* reported by Apte 1890, p. 1174. If we only follow the meaning given by Apte 1890, N° 8, p. 408 and Monier-Williams 1899, p. 178 for the word -*uttara* in *fine compositi*, the translation would be “followed by Brahmins”.

⟨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 Kuddālakḥāta (‘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 (i.e. Yūthapati and his council), after ⟨your Honors⟩ had received *dīnāras* from the *mahāmātra* of Puṇḍravardhana (named) Suvarcasadatta, by the procedure of sale in accordance with custom, two *kulyavāpas*² 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,³ with a *garuṭṭāpa* charter,⁴ to the Brahmins residing in Dugdhotikā. Therefore (*tad*) the honorable governor Brahmadatta was informed by me in the [2+] 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 favor 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 copper-plate field gifted to me [11+] not be lost, may a grant be made ⟨to me⟩!”

⟨12–13⟩ “In consequence of the understanding of this information [2+](line 12), an instruction (*ādeśa*) was made known by his council about what is the appropriate donor (*dāka*) in this case :‘Let no other⁵ village be given in donation by exchange for this field.”

⟨13–15⟩ In consequence of this [11+](line 13) the (following) instruction was given (by Brahmadatta) to the country’s governor Svāmicandra:⁶ “Your protection for the

²On this measure, see Maity 1970, pp. 52–59.

³Or, if one emends *-grāme*: ‘in the village Govardhanaka’.

⁴See my discussion of the term *garuṭṭāpa* below.

⁵Or, if the emendation *-parivarttenānya-* is adopted: ‘Let another ...’. Making this emendation seems required by what follows.

⁶The 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: ...’. But since we have a sequence of instructions, 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.

wealth of the <inhabitants of> Madhyamaṣaṇḍika, <your> lodging <of them>, <your> tribute [9+] by the reliable (*sādhunā*) [9+] in exchange for this copper-plate field, you will have a field in another village be given by ____ 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 honorable Svāmīcandra 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 Mahatī-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 copper-plate-field elsewhere in exchange for it.” In consequence of the understanding of this information, you will have <a copper-plate 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-Raktamālīkā, without revenue charges and yielding no tax. 2 *ku*<lyavāpa>. Having understood <this>, for this reason (*itas*) 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 demarcating⁷ <them> with eight by nine *nala* of the governmental (? , *naitika*?) cubit of Kuddālakḥāta.⁸ And after giving <them>, you must safeguard <them> in perpetuity as a permanent endowment.”

⁷The meaning of *pariniyāmya* follows from the comparison between the two passages in *caturddiśo niyāmya* and *caturddiśiniyāmitasamānānāṁ kṛtvā* in the Baigram and Nandapur plates cited in my note on the reading *pariniyāmya*, and the consequent comparison of those two passages with the present one.

⁸Instead of *naitika*, reading *nītika* could give a similar sense derived from *nīti*, but it is imaginable (in view of the ambiguity of the sandhi *ito n-*) that the intended word is *anaitika/anītika*, while at least the latter option would in turn be susceptible to two interpretations: *an-ītika* (see Edgerton 1953, Dictionary s.v.) and *a-nītika*. None of the options seems to correspond to anything we find in related contexts (on which, see Majumdar 1929, pp. 84–5), and the meaning remains uncertain. In the Faridpur plate of Gopacandra year 18, lines 18–19, we read: *pratitadharmmaśīlaśivacandrahastāṣṭakanavakanalenāpaviñchya*. Perhaps this parallel constitutes an argument for reading *nītika*- and interpreting the sandhi as resulting from *anītika*- ‘free of calamities’, hence yielding a positive attribute to the geographic qualification *kuddālakḥātika*. 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 impr. 1996, p. 576 on the terms *tatratyadeśavyavahāranala* and *samataṭṭīyanala* in Sena inscriptions). The use of the term *aratnī* for ‘cubit’ instead of *hasta* attested in other early Bengal inscriptions is also noteworthy.

⟨22⟩ And the reverend Vyāsa has said:

1.

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.⁹

2.

The one who would steal land given by himself or another becomes a worm in excrement and is cooked with his ancestors.¹⁰

3.

You, Yudhiṣṭhira, most excellent of kings, must strenuously protect land previously given to brahmins. Safeguarding is even better than giving.¹¹

4.

Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Śakra, Śukra, Bṛhaspati, Candra, Āditya and the Grahas: they all rejoice in one who gives land!¹²

⟨25–26⟩ Written by the scribe Āryadāsa, heated by the record-keeper Manorathadāsa. Year 159, Jyeṣṭha day 8.

Commentary

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 *et al.* 1981, № 39), which gives the earliest date with specification of weekday in the Gupta corpus. The dating parameters of the latter are:

Year: 165

⁹This verse corresponds to the verse numbered 123 among the Stanzas on Bhūmidāna listed by Sircar (see Sircar 1965, appendix II, pp. 170–200), except for the verb used in the *pāda* b.

¹⁰This verse corresponds to the verse numbered 132 among the Stanzas on Bhūmidāna listed by Sircar (see Sircar 1965, appendix II, pp. 170–200).

¹¹This verse corresponds to the verse numbered 131 among the Stanzas on Bhūmidāna listed by Sircar (see Sircar 1965, appendix II, pp. 170–200), but shows a different reading of its first *pāda*.

¹²This verse corresponds to the verse numbered 4 among the Stanzas on Bhūmidāna listed by Sircar (see Sircar 1965, appendix II, pp. 170–200); with different readings in each *pāda*.

Date: Āṣāḍha, śuklapakṣa 12

Weekday: Thursday

This, according to Fleet 1891, p. 377, can be converted as:

Year: 484 CE

Date: June 21

Weekday: Thursday

As Fleet 1891 indicates, the year also corresponds to 407 Śaka current (*vartamāna*). 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 inscriptions, and we do not have any explicit statement at all as to whether the system of month naming was *pūrṇimānta* or *amānta*.¹³ 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 (line 25) and in the Mankuwar image inscription of Kumāragupta I (Bhandarkar *et al.* 1981, N° 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

¹³See Yano 1994, p. 229.

śuklapakṣa). If, furthermore, we accept one of the main results of Fleet’s research (Fleet 1891, p. 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 line 2 *bodhayanti*)

Yūthapati and viṣaya council to addressees (line 2 *kuddāla-* – line 3 *vijñāpayati*)

Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and viṣaya council (lines 3–4 *yat* – line 8 *vijñāpitah*)

Nandabhūti to Brahmadatta and his council (line 8 *mama* – line 12 *kriyatām iti*)

Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and viṣaya council (line 12 *yataḥ* – line 13 *jñāpita*)

Brahmadatta’s council (line 13 *etatkṣetra-* – *dīyatām iti*)

Nandabhūti to Yūthapati and viṣaya council (line 13 *yata* – line 14 *dattaḥ*)

Brahmadatta to Svāmicandra (line 14 *tava* – line 15 *dāpayi(śya)[sīti]*)

Yūthapati and viṣaya council to addressees (line 16 *etadādeśād* – *dattaḥ*)

Svāmicandra to Yūthapati and viṣaya council (line 16 *mama* – *dattā*)

Brahmadatta to Svāmicandra (line 16 *mahatī* – line 17 *vijñāpayati*)

Nandabhūti to Brahmadatta (line 17 *sādhunā* – line 18 *kriyatām iti*)

Yūthapati and viṣaya council to addressees (line 19 *yataḥ edhardāśād* – line 22 – *pālayiṣyasīti*)

Brahmadatta to Yūthapati and viṣaya council to addressees (line 19 *yataḥ edhardāśād* – line 22 – *pālayiṣyasīti*)

Admonitory formulae (line 22 *uktañ* – line 25 *bhūmidam*)

Colophon (line 25 *likhitam* – line 26 *di* 8)

Protagonists

As noted above, the plate is dated to year 159 in numeral signs (line 26), but — uniquely in the corpus of early land-sale inscriptions from Bengal — the date is additionally expressed in words (line 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): *samvatsara-śāte ṣṭa-ṣaṣṭy-uttare mahā-māgha-samvatsare śrāvaṇa-māse pañcamyāṁ paramadeva-budhagupte 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, pp. 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, but 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 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 2011) — a Puṇḍravardhana inscription of the late 8th or early 9th 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, line 4; Baigram, line 1).

The highest provincial administrator (*uparika*) at the time of our inscription was named Brahmadatta, no doubt the same as the one who was serving at the time of issue of Damodarpur plate #3 (see Bakker 2014, p. 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 Brahma-

datta.¹⁴ It is remarkable that the text leaves open a gap precisely where (in line 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* Brahmadatta and *kumārāmātya* Yūthapati with his *adhikaraṇa*. The same name is that of a *vīthimahattara* figuring in the Kalaikari-Sultanpur plate, line 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 Suvarcasadatta 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 & Acharya 2014 who read *ḡū?<gu>ptāpa*-. 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 line 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* (line 22) and *varuṇā* (line 24). While the reading of the third *akṣara* is difficult in line 7, it is unmistakably *ṭṭā* in line 11; a hypothetical reading *ga Uṭṭā* would defy understanding, whereas for my preferred reading *garuṭṭāpa*, I can offer the following interpretation. I propose to take it as a compound *garuṭ+ṭāpa*, with *garuṭ* an apparently unique stem hypostatized from the common words *garuḍa* and *garuṭ-mant*, and *ṭāpa* somehow related to the word *tāpita* that is commonly found on early Bengal copper plates,¹⁵ as it is here in line 25, and for which Sircar 1966, p. 338 suggested the meaning: ‘heated <for affixing the seal to a copper-plate grant>’. There must then be a connection with the expressions *garuṭmadaṇka* and *garuḍājñā* found elsewhere in Gupta inscriptions (see Raven 1994, pp. 3, 161). It is relevant also that the epithet *garuḍaketuḥ* is used in the opening *maṅgala*

¹⁴Damodarpur #3, lines 2–3: *tat-pāda[pari]grhīte puṇḍra[vardhana]-bhuktāv uparika-mahārāja-brahmadatte saṁvyavaharati*.

¹⁵The formula with *likhitāṁ* and *tāpitāṁ* is found in the Jagadishpur plate, lines 27–28. The Dhanaida plate ends in line 17 after a lacuna with [...] *ya[m] <su?> śrībhadrēna(na) utkīrṇaṁ sthambheśvara-dāse[na]*, where *utkīrṇaṁ* stands in the sense of *likhitāṁ*, and one may speculate that a *tāpitāṁ* has been lost in the lacuna. Further occurrences are found, shortly after the Gupta period, in the Mallasarul and Jayarampur plates (for which, see the table on p. 15 below) and in the plate of Pradyumnabandhu’s year 5, line 18.

stanza of the Eran pillar of the reign of Budhagupta, year 165 (Bhandarkar *et al.* 1981, p. 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, figs. 15-24 and Willis 2009, p. 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 copper-plate 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.¹⁶

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-9th c., Bhattacharya 2005–2006). There, it is likewise the place from which a grant was issued (line 28–29: *kuddāla-khātaka-samāvāsita-śrīmaj-jayaskandhāvārāt*) but simultaneously the name of a *viṣaya*, in lines 30–31: *śrī-puṇḍravardhana-bhuktau kuddāla-khātaka-viṣaye nandadīrghikodraṅge sīmā*. It again figures as name of a *viṣaya* in the Jajilpara plate of Gopāla III (first half of the 11th c., Sanyal 2010, p. 109; Misra & Majumdar 1951), lines 21–22: *śrī-puṇḍravardhana-bhuktau kuddāla-khāta-viṣaya-sambaddha*. 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-Raktamālikā. On place names with Mahā- and small counterparts, see Sircar 1983, p. 27, n. 5. At least one other contemporary plate was issued from an *agrahāra*, namely the

¹⁶On the issue of the identification of ancient toponyms, see Sanyal 2010.

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 Madhyamaśaṇḍika, found both in the seal legend and in line 14, may perhaps be connected with Śaṇḍadvīpa in line 6 of the plate of the time of Pradyumna-bandhu.

Bibliography

First edited by Arlo Griffiths. Re-edited here with small improvements based on direct inspection of the plate. The text has been encoded by Amandine Wattelier-Bricout adding some readings from Dubey & Acharya 2014 in the apparatus.

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