

DIPLOMATIC
OF
SANSKRIT COPPER-PLATE GRANTS

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PREFACE

The scholarly essay, to which what follows is but an inadequate preface, represents the first systematic effort to apply to the field of Indian documentary studies the discipline of form-criticism, or to be more precise, the canons of the science of Diplomatic ; and if I may be permitted to be personal for a moment, it is the outcome of a request which nearly a decade ago I was privileged to make to its distinguished author, Dr. B. C. Chhabra, to explore the possibility of adapting this new science to the needs of the student of Indian historical documents. Though concerned primarily with a special class of legal documents, viz., Sanskrit land-grants on copper-plates, the essay not only brings to light the basic facts, many of which are quite new, in regard to the evolution of a most important document-type of Classical India, but indicates also the manner in which similar formal analysis could be attempted of other classes of historical or legal documents, and, what is more, opens up an entirely new vista for documentary research promising fruitful and fascinating results. Originally published in *The Indian Archives* (Vol. V, No. 1), it has since been lying buried among the old files of that journal. Its reissue in the present form, which enables it for the first time to reach a wider public, has been made possible through the generosity of its learned author, who not only permitted us to reprint it but took immense care in seeing it through the press. Our grateful thanks are due to him.

In claiming the present study to be the first of its kind it is not certainly my intention to imply that Indian documentary forms have received no scholarly attention before. J. F. Fleet's article on Epigraphy in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, for instance, shows a keen awareness of the formal elements in Sanskrit epigraphic records. The same awareness is equally reflected in Dr. U. N. Ghoshal's great pioneer work, *Contribution to the History of the Hindu Revenue System* (Calcutta, 1920). The subject has been attacked by Dr. S. N.

Sen from the point of view of the Maratha historian, and in his *Administrative System of the Marathas* (2nd edition, Calcutta, 1931), he has given us not only a lucid account of Maratha documentation practice but an excellent, though brief, history of the evolution of a special type of Maratha documents, viz., Maratha deeds of gift. The Mughal practice in the field of documentation has likewise been described with great erudition by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in his *Mughal Administration* (1st edition, 1921), and by Ibn Hasan in his *Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (London, 1936). The list could be enlarged by taking into consideration similar studies published in more recent times in different learned journals. But brilliant as all these studies are they hardly touch more than the fringe of our subject and show little awareness of the value of formal analysis and form-criticism.

Importance Yet the importance of these disciplines is obvious enough. They are as inseparably connected with the field of historical research as any other branch of study ancillary to it, like chronology and numismatics for instance. The fact is that a very large proportion of the material available to the historian in this country today consists of documents which are at best no more than estrays from what once probably were genuine archival collections, public or private. Most of these no longer possess any easily discernible links with the collections to which they may have originally belonged, nor any distinguishing marks enabling their ready identification for what they really are. All such documents require to be assessed individually, almost piece by piece, till their authenticity can be established beyond all reasonable doubt. In this task of evaluation the science of Diplomatic can serve as a most helpful guide.

It is a general experience that documents having a common source, place and date of origin tend to conform almost to an identical pattern, a pattern which reveals itself not only in the structure of their text and in the sequence of the different parts of which it is composed, but in the very phraseology and the formulary used, in the methods of engrossing, validation, dating and conveyancing, in the style of writing, in the manner of arranging the text on the sheets on which it is written and even in the way in which the sheets are folded. It is the business of Diplomatic to study the

patterns reflected in various types of documents and to determine the formal characteristics of each type. These characteristics, when precisely determined, make possible careful comparison of documents of unknown authorship, provenance or date with those whose authenticity is beyond doubt, and are thus of utmost help in identifying the former. This is particularly the case when a number of documents emanating from the same authority are known. Thus a stray letter alleged to have been written by Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi in 1856 could be shown to be a clumsy forgery because the method of its dating and validation and its very formula widely deviated from those evinced by the authentic letters of the Rani, of which several examples are available among the records in the custody of the National Archives of India. Even in cases of spurious documents embedded in a genuine archival collection the comparative method outlined above has often been found to be the chief means of exposing their true character. Thus a letter believed to have been written by Nana Saheb of Bithur in 1879, found among the records of the late Foreign Department, could be easily proved as spurious as the formal features of the documents had nothing in common with those of the known letters of Nana.

It is hardly necessary to stress here that for an efficient use of the method outlined above what is most essential is a careful examination of the formulae in which the documents concerned may be drawn up; for when other distinguishing marks are absent it is the formulae which can be of utmost help in assessing the genuineness of documents of doubtful authenticity. Thus the genuineness of the Gaya land-grant attributed to Samudra Gupta (339 A.D.) could be established beyond doubt because of the close similarity of its formula to that of the Nalanda grant of the same monarch (335 A.D.). For undated documents, even when they are in original, the formulae serve as a better guide for dating than handwriting. The reason is not far to seek. There are certain drafting conventions which appear for the first time about a particular date. If a document exemplifies such a convention, then it must have been written after that date. Then there are formulae which tend to disappear, and a document drawn up according to any such obsolete formula must have antedated its disappearance. The formulae are equally helpful in determining

the authenticity of transcripts which, incidentally, constitute a very large proportion of the extant historical documents. Here no external feature can be of any use whatever.

The science of Diplomatic derives its importance from yet another use to which it can be and is often actually put. Before a document can be properly utilised it is essential that the formal element in its text should be clearly distinguished from the factual, so that the one may not be easily confused for the other. There are certain documentary formularies which are quite significant, while there are many others conveying very little meaning. When a Hidayat Khan, for instance, describes himself in an imperial *farman* as a "servant" of the mighty Alamgir Badshah (S. M. Jaffar : "An important farman of Aurangzeb" *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings*, Vol. XXII, 1945, p. 53 ff) he means precisely what he says, for the Khan, after all, was no more than an imperial functionary carrying out his master's orders. But when a Lord Lake applies to himself an epithet like "Shah Alam Badshah Ghazi's servant" it may be taken for granted that he intended it to be nothing more than a formal expression of courtesy (*Farman* of Lord Lake, 3 July 1805 in K.M. Jhaveri, *Imperial Farmans*). The phrase "World-protecting", likewise, conveys a definite meaning when used in a document as an epithet of the great Akbar, for the sway of his protective arms extended to the farthest corners of his far-flung empire, which was the material expression of the œcumene or the cosmopolitan world-state which it was his life's ambition to build up (*Ibid.*, *Farman* dated A.D. 1577). But similar high-sounding sobriquets as applied to the great Emperor's effete successors in the Mughal documents produced during the eighteenth century or later read just like empty phrases. It has to be recognised, therefore, that formularies often outlive the circumstances to which they may have owed their origin, and tend with passage of time to become frozen into meaningless words, having no use beyond enshrining the memory of a past that has long ceased to exist. Such words can hardly bear any relation to facts, and are often in direct conflict with them.

Documentary phraseology often serves to indicate a position *de jure*, rather than a position *de facto*. If, for instance, one were to believe only in the wording of the *sanad* granted by Nawab Mir Jafar

to the East India Company in 1758 one would be perfectly justified in concluding that what the latter got in consequence was no more than the Zamindari right over a territory surrounding Calcutta which covered as many as 882 sq. miles of area. The transaction, as is well known, however, involved the signing away of the full sovereign rights over the entire territory. Literally interpreted full 'Zamindari' rights would normally mean no more than the 'renting' of a specified tract of land. It is however very much to be doubted if this interpretation would be valid where the beneficiary of the right is an overmighty subject. Even in the celebrated imperial grant of 38 villages to the East India Company (1717), a grant conferring full Zamindari rights, it is specifically stated that the Company should merely 'have the renting of the town petitioned for'. The phraseology evidently implied that the proprietary right was retained by the grantor. But did that represent the correct state of affairs ?

Certain formularies have to be included in documents as a matter of legal or politico-legal form. It is not always possible to put a literal construction on them. In a *farman* of Shah Jahan (1654 A.D.), for instance, the expression "faithful to Islam" occurs as one of the epithets of Rana Raj Singh of Udaipur (Sh. Abdur-Rashid, "Two farmans of Shah Jahan" *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings*, Vol. XXVIII, 1951, pp. 74-77). It does not certainly follow that the phrase expresses the precise relationship in which the illustrious ruler of Udaipur stood with the Islamic religion. To take a further example. It is known that the freehold grants of the Maitraka dynasty of Kathiawad usually include a clause specifying that "no one is to obstruct the donee in cultivating or causing to be cultivated...the land" gifted to him (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XVI, No. 4). Since the donees in these cases were invariably always Brahmins, who were not expected to cultivate their lands personally, it is very clear that the expression 'cultivating' has been used in the documents to comply with what was only a legal formality, and not an actual requirement. Yet the very expression has sometimes been used as evidence to prove that the Brahmin holders of freehold lands were as often their own cultivators as not. Examples like these can be multiplied *ad infinitum*, but those cited will suffice to show how unsafe it may be to take conventional documentary phraseology in a strictly literal sense.

Once the magnitude of the difficulties which confront a document-interpreter is fully grasped, it will immediately become clear why so much attention has been devoted in the West to the problem of form-criticism. (Western awareness of the problem can in fact be traced as far back as the days of Innocent III, who for the first time drew up definitive rules for determining the genuineness of Papal letters, though it was not till 1681 that an authoritative enunciation of the general principles of form-criticism was undertaken. This task was successfully accomplished in that year by Jean Mabillon in his celebrated treatise *De re diplomatica libri sex*. His work supplied the basis of all future efforts in the field in France, leading ultimately, in 1821, to the foundation of the Ecole des Chartes, where the subject is still being taught on a scientific basis to future historians and archivists. In England the subject received formal recognition in 1896 when Reginald Lane-Poole (1857-1939) was appointed the first lecturer in Diplomatic at Oxford. The subject now prominently figures in the syllabus of the Archival Course of the University of London. In Germany the subject blossomed into existence with the publication in 1672 by Hermann Conring of the first German treatise on Diplomatic. The work begun by him has been advanced by a succession of brilliant scholars, including Johannes Bohmer, Karl Stumpf, Julius Ficker, Theodor Von Sickel and Harry Breslau. Among Italian exponents of the new science mention may be made of Scipione Maffei (1675-1755), Angelo Fumagelli (1728-1804), Luigi Marini (1742-1815) and Luigi Schiaparelli (1871-1934). Advances made in the field by distinguished scholars in other Western countries are equally worth nothing. One very significant by-product of these advances, be it noted in passing, has been the rapid growth and development of an entirely new branch of history, viz., the history of administration. Criticism of documents inevitably leads to the study of the organisations which produced them independent of their form and writing ; and, if I may be permitted to echo one of the greatest scholars in the field of modern Diplomatic, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, no history of an administrative institution can be completed without a comprehensive study of either the forms of documents it produced or the way in which they were written. The fact that administrative history is not making much headway in this country is largely attributable to our long neglect of the science of documentary criticism.)

The brief account given above of the scope and value of the new science, will, I hope, make comparatively easy a correct understanding of the significance of Dr. Chhabra's pioneer work in the field of Sanskrit Diplomatic. I have no doubt that this work will stimulate further fruitful discussion on the subject and will encourage other scholars to extend the study to fields other than that of Sanskrit copper-plate grants.

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DIPLOMATIC OF SANSKRIT COPPER-PLATE GRANTS

ARCHIVES as a science in India is still in its infancy. Compared to that, the science of diplomatic has not yet been born in this country. Even the meaning of *diplomatic*, as the name of a distinct branch of study, is little known, except to archivists. It has nothing to do with *diplomacy* and is not to be confused with *diplomatic* which is an adjective derived from *diplomacy*. For the exact connotation of *diplomatic*, as the designation of a special science, as also for the history of the origin and development of that science in Europe, the reader is referred to the excellent essay by Sir Edward Maunde Thompson in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th edition, Vol. VIII, pp. 300-06), which, I must gratefully record, has been my chief guide in preparing this note.

Briefly, the term *diplomatic* signifies 'a critical study of diplomas'. *Diplomas*, for the purpose of this study, embrace all kinds of documentary sources of history, such as charters, grants, deeds, acts, treaties, contracts and the like. It may be borne in mind that diplomatic is distinct from epigraphy. The two have different functions to perform. Diplomatic concerns itself chiefly with the mode in which an instrument is couched, its form, style and characteristic conventional phraseology, leading to a comparative study of these features in order to distinguish one set or class of records from another. Epigraphy, on the other hand, deals primarily with the interpretation of the contents of an ancient record, taking into consideration its language, palaeography and orthography. The object of both diplomatic and epigraphy, however, is one and the same, namely, to deduce history, though in doing so the one largely supplements the other.

The science of diplomatic is new in India in the sense that the immense documentary materials, especially stone inscriptions and copper charters relating to the early period, have practically not yet

been subjected to a systematic study along truly 'diplomatic' lines. ¹In Europe, this science sprang into being towards the close of the 17th century. And, significantly, the very first beams of its search-light fell on certain monastic documents. In India, where the material is much vaster in extent and dates from a remoter antiquity, no serious attempt seems to have been made in the past at analysing it that way.]

The treatises like the *Lekhapaddhati* (No. XIX of the Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Baroda) and Kshemendra's *Lokaprakāśa*, a few extracts from which are given in Appendix IV to the published edition of the *Lekhapaddhati*, may be considered as attempts in that direction, but they fall short of the standard required. They give specimens of certain types of documents as prevalent in a restricted locality during a particular period. They are late works and take no notice of the Sanskrit copper-plate grants with which we are familiar, not to speak of studying their diplomatic.

"The Roman diploma", Sir Edward informs us, was "so called because it was formed of two sheets of metal which were shut together (Gr. διπλοῦν to double) like the leaves of a book". The grants with which

Substance

we are concerned here were formed originally in that very fashion. The metal used in their case has all along been copper. As to why copper was singled out for such title-deeds is more than can be said here. This much, however, is certain that, once copper was adopted for that purpose, it became traditional to use that alone. There is an anecdote in Ballāla's *Bhojaprabandha* which sort of corroborates this tradition. The Paramāra king Bhoja, famous for his munificence, once, while out for a ride, came across a Brāhmaṇa who was carrying a leathern vessel for a water-jar. This surprised Bhoja ; for, it did not assort well with the high caste of the individual. He stopped the horse in front of the holy personage and asked him the reason. The latter's reply is summed up in the following couplet :

asya śrī-Bhojarājasya dvayam=eva sudurlabham ।

śatrūṇāṃ śṛṅkhalair loham tāmraṃ śāsanapatrakair ॥ (verse 162)

This hyperbolic utterance, characteristic of classical Sanskrit

poetry, signifies that 'while Bhoja is reigning king, iron and copper both have become extremely rare ; the former, because large quantities of it have been consumed in forging chains for capturing his foes ; and the latter, because it is being largely used for registering the land-grants he is daily making'. This was the reason, so to say, why the learned twice-born was obliged to use a leathern pot instead of a decent bronze jug.

It may be observed that the verse cited above furnishes us with a common Sanskrit term for a land-grant : *tāmra-śāsana-patraka* 'copper grant-leaf' or, in other words 'copper-plate grant', 'a title-deed or charter incised on sheets of copper'. In actual use, we find its variants such as *tāmra-śāsana*, *tāmra-paṭṭa*, *tāmra-paṭṭikā*, *tāmra-phalī*, etc. Very often the first component is omitted, and we have only *śāsana* used in the sense of 'grant' or 'royal grant'. It is sometimes loosely applied also to the land or village granted, when it becomes an equivalent of Persian *inām*. Its use can be traced in quite early works of Sanskrit literature. Vishṇuśarman, for instance, employs it in the very beginning (*kathāmukha*) of his *Pañchatantra*, where he is promised by the king Amaraśakti a reward of a hundred villages, if he made the king's sons proficient in polity. The actual expression used is : *tad=āham tvām śāsana-śatena yojayishyāmi* 'I shall then confer a hundred *śāsanas* on you'. *Śāsana*, as a written or engraved document, containing a title-deed, an evidence or a certificate of the conveyance of a piece of land or a village, is found employed by Bāṇa in his *Kādambarī* in his description of Chandrāpīḍa's victorious march (*digvijaya*) :*kurvan kīrtanāni lekhayañ śāsanāni pūjayann=agrajanmanah*,.....'erecting temples, causing land-grants to be written, honouring Brāhmaṇas.....' (p. 225, 7th edition, "Nirṇayasāgar" Press, Bombay). We have, in fact, instances where kings made donations of land or villages at holy places, where they had gone on pilgrimage, or at military camps in the course of their warlike expeditions. Such copper-plate grants mention, as their places of issue, the names of the sacred spots (*tīrthas*) and the encampment sites (*vāsaka*, *skandhāvāra*, etc.) concerned. An explanation as to how the term *śāsana* came to denote 'the land or village granted' is to be found in some of the grants themselves. In stating the fact of a land or village being given as a gift, the phraseology differs in different grants. Some have *tāmra-śāsanen=ātisrṣṭaḥ* 'donated by means of a copper charter'.

Others have *agrahārikṛtya pradattaḥ* 'given, after having made it into an *agrahāra*'. An *agrahāra*, it may be pointed out, is the proper term for an *inām* land or village. Likewise, in some other grants, we have *śāsanikṛtya pradattaḥ* 'given, after having made it into a *śāsana*'. It is thus obvious that, while *śāsanena* denoted 'by means of a charter' or 'through the instrument of a written deed', *śāsanikṛtya* becomes synonymous with *agrahārikṛtya*, *śāsana* in such a case denoting the same thing as *agrahāra* 'a gift village', or 'a gift land'.

We have just noticed that a diploma was so called because it was formed of *two sheets of metal*. In the case of the Sanskrit copper-plate grants, however, the number as well as the size of such sheets varies largely. The earliest grants so far discovered mostly consist each of three sheets of modest dimensions, the whole set weighing some few ounces. As in the fields of art and literature, the tendency noticeable in the case of these grants also is 'from simplicity to complexity'. The climax is reached in some copper charters belonging to the Chōḷa rulers in the south of India. The Tiruvālaṅgāḍu charter of Rājendra-Chōḷa I (A.D. 1012-1044),¹ for instance, consists of 31 large sheets, strung on a massive ring nearly 17 inches in diameter. The plates and the ring together weigh 200 lbs. or 2½ maunds. This record has been beaten by a very recent find, in the shape of another charter of Rājendra-Chōḷa I himself, from Karandai near Tanjore. It consists of as many as 55 large sheets which alone (without the ring) weigh 216 lbs. It may be observed here that these two lengthy grants are composed partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil.

An idea of how a normal Sanskrit copper-plate grant looks may be formed from the accompanying illustration (Pls. I-II). Here we have a perfect specimen. The illustration shows the engraved sides of the plates taken out from the ring on which they were originally strung. It represents the Śāsanakoṭa charter of the Gaṅga king Mādhavavarman I (towards the close of the fifth century A.D.).² It consists of 4 plates, each measuring 7 inches broad by 2 inches high and about 1/16" thick. Each plate has a ring hole, 3/8" in diameter, in the centre of its left-hand margin, through which passed a copper

1 *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1903-04*, pp. 233-5.

2 *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 234-9.

ring. The ring measures $2\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter. Its two ends are soldered underneath an oval seal of the same metal, measuring $1\frac{7}{16}$ " by $1\frac{1}{4}$ ". Its counter-sunk surface bears the figure in relief of an elephant, the insignia of the Gaṅga rulers. The animal is shown standing and facing the proper left.

How the size, the shape, the arrangement of writing, etc., varied in different places as well as in different periods will, by the way, be apparent from the subsequent illustrations (Pls. III-VII), every one of which is given here mainly for the purpose of demonstrating some characteristic traits or special features with regard to the structure of the document. Before we pass on to the question of the structure, we may say a word as to the process of engraving. This is incidentally revealed by a copper plate discovered from a ruined *stūpa* at Kasiā in the Gorakhpur District of the Uttar Pradesh. It bears thirteen lines of writing, of which only the first is engraved, while the remaining ones are written in black ink : 'The inscription was first written out in ink on the plate, and when the ink dried the plate was given to the engraver to cut the written letters into the metal'.³ The engraving was usually done by a goldsmith or a brazier, which fact was duly mentioned at the close of a charter, as we shall presently see. The job in most cases was neatly done, as will be borne out by the given illustrations.

The documents with which we are concerned here are in the nature of title-deeds of land-grants. They are royal charters issued in favour of certain individuals, mostly Brāhmaṇas, or religious institutions such as temples, monasteries or the like. A king, for example, donates a whole village or a piece of cultivable land; and, in proclaiming the donation, he states the occasion, specifies the purpose, describes the donee, lays down the conditions, defines the boundaries and issues instructions to his officials as well as to the people concerned as to the non-infringement of his orders in respect of the donation. In some cases, the king's orders are issued direct

3 *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1910-11, p. 74, Plate XXXIX.*

by himself, while in others, they are conveyed by a conveyancer. This fact is specifically mentioned in the records, wherever necessary. If certain other formalities are observed, as demanded by special circumstances, these are recorded in detail. The record of the entire transaction is couched in judicial phraseology which follows more or less a set pattern. And, in order that this record may not easily perish, it is engraved on sheets of copper. These, in their turn, for the sake of authentication and to preclude any tampering, are strung on a ring, mostly of the same metal, the two ends of which are secured, by soldering, under a lump of metal, the upper surface of which is flattened and is embossed with the seal of the king. The form, the size and the contents of the seal again vary, which we shall discuss in the sequel. This completed a grant: the engraved copper sheets arranged book-wise and strung on a copper ring, the two ends of the ring secured under the royal seal. Any tampering with the seal or the ring would render the grant null and void.

It may be remembered here that the old title-deeds that form the subject of our discussion have now lost all their legal and juridical value (except in the case of certain late grants, whose number is negligible). They have, however, gained immense importance as historical documents. It, therefore, does not matter much if we cut open the ring and take out the copper sheets, which we invariably do in subjecting them to historical examination and specially in photographing, or preparing inked estampages of, the engraved sides thereof for illustrative purposes. This *bona fide* violence to an ancient record has no detracting effect.

We now come to the pith of the matter : the structure of such documents. As we have just remarked, they are couched in judicial phraseology which follows more or less a set pattern. For our purpose, we may split it into three broad

Structure sections : *Preamble, Notification and Conclusion.*

All the Sanskrit copper-plate grants have these three things, though in varying degrees and with certain omissions and alterations of details in each section. The preamble generally comprises (1) invocation, (2) place of issue, (3) name of the grantor with his titles and ancestry, and (4) address. The notification likewise consists of (5) specification of the gift,

(6) name of the grantee, (7) occasion, (8) purpose, and (9) boundaries. The conclusion contains (10) exhortation, (11) name of the conveyancer, (12) date, (13) name of the writer, (14) name of the engraver, and (15) authentication. The seal, though superimposed, is considered a part of the authentication itself. We now proceed to consider these sections and subsections, one by one, in the given order.

PREAMBLE

Invocation.—As a rule, a charter opens with a *maṅgala* or an auspicious invocation. This has, by the passage of time, lent itself to a great variety. As is noticeable in the stone inscriptions, the earliest instances of copper charters, too, begin with the well-known formula *siddham*. Literally it means ‘accomplished’ or ‘has been successful’, but it may more freely be rendered as ‘luck !’. The antiquity of the use of this word of magic import is proved by Patañjali’s comments, in his *Mahābhāṣya*, on the very first of Kātyāyana’s *vārttikas* on Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. The *vārttika* in question reads *siddhe śabd-ārtha-sambandhe*, using *siddha*, in its locative form, to start with. Patañjali draws pointed attention to its use by saying :

*māṅgalika āchārya mahataḥ śāstr - aughasya
maṅgal - ārtham siddha - śabdām āditāḥ prayunkte*

‘The auspicious teacher, desirous of success, employs the word *siddha* at the very outset for auspiciousness to the great volume of the scientific treatise (undertaken by him)’.

It was indeed traditional in olden days for a pupil, when he was initiated in the art of writing, to start with this very *siddham*. An echo of this tradition is found in a story related in the *Divyāvadāna*,⁴ a well-known collection of early Buddhist legends. The relevant part of the story may, in translation, read like this : “They named the baby boy Panthaka. When he grew big enough, he was taken to the teacher for learning *lipi* or the art of writing. His memory was, however, so slippery that it could not retain the two syllables *si* and *dhām*. Speak *si*, and he would forget *dhām* and vice versa”. Obviously, the pupil was required, before learning to write any letter of the alphabet,

4 Edited by E.B. Cowell and R.A. Neil, Cambridge, 1886, p. 486.

to learn writing the word *sidham* (which, of course, is the Prakrit, and thus a more popular form of the Sanskrit *siddham*). The purpose in so doing has always been to have an auspicious start, spelling success or fortune.

It may, in passing, be remarked that our earliest grants are in Prakrit or in Prakrit and Sanskrit mixed. And they do begin with this luck-spelling formula of *siddham*.⁵ Later on, this verbal formula assumed also a symbolic form, the symbol consisting of a mere flourish or a spiral, while, at the same time, certain other auspicious formulas, such as *om* and *svasti*, also made their appearance. Some scribes were not satisfied with only one such formula. They used more than one. The auspicious syllable *om* also began to be expressed by a special symbol. This created a confusion, as a result of which one and the same symbol is read as *siddham* by some and as *om* by others. Attention is invited to a brief but illuminating note on this point by the late Dr. N.K. Bhattasali.⁶

As time rolled on, this invocation affair was extended from mere syllables and words to passages and whole verses in praise of the favourite deities of the grantors, some of which have poetic glamour about them. Herein we have a beginning of the growing complexity.

Let us have a few illustrations of the *maṅgala*. The Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pl. I) begins with the spiral symbol, denoting *siddham*, followed by a passage, hailing the god Viṣṇu : *jītam bhagavatā gataghana-gagan-ābhena Padmanābhena*. The Chittagong plate of Kāntideva (Pl. III) begins with the flourish, denoting likewise *siddham*, followed by the word *svasti*.⁷ The symbol of *siddham* or *om* in the beginning of the Prince of Wales Museum plates of Dadda III (Pl. IV), which likewise is followed by the word *svasti*, is again different in shape.⁸ The Īpūr plates of Mādhavavarman (Pl. V) have simply *svasti* for

5 See, for instance, the Hirahaḍagalli plates of the Pallava king Śiva-skandavarman, and the Bāsim plates of the Vākāṭaka king Vindhyaśakti II, in the *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. I, p. 5 and Vol. XXVI, p. 151, respectively.

6 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XVII, p. 352.

7 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 317.

8 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 199.

invocation.⁹ Instances of the elaborate type of invocation are quite numerous. A sample may be seen in the Rewah plates of Trailokyamalladeva, which begin with *Oṃ namaḥ Śivāya Gaṇapataye namaḥ* followed by three invocatory verses, the first praising Kṛishṇa, the second Śiva and the third (borrowed from Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaadarśa*) Sarasvatī.¹⁰

Place of Issue.—After the invocation, the scribe usually mentions the name of the place from which a charter is issued. In most cases, the capital city or the seat of government is the place of issue. Sometimes it happens to be a royal camp, either in the course of a military expedition or on a pilgrimage. We know from the passage quoted from Bāṇa's *Kādambarī* how princes used to issue grants while advancing on their victorious marches. As in the case of invocation, so in mentioning the place of issue, too, the writer of a charter often finds excuse enough to display his poetic propensities. He enlarges upon the theme so much that we have often a charming description of the city or the camp, buzzing with life and overflowing with wealth, instead of a mere prosaic mention of its name.

It may be pointed out that, in many charters, the place of issue is not mentioned at all—it is taken for granted there, while in some others, it occurs not immediately after the invocation, but after the name of the grantor and all that goes with it. The following instances will make the point clear.

Dadda's grant (Pl. IV) has simply *Śrī-Bharukachchhāt* 'From the prosperous (city of) Bharukachchha' without any embellishment. So has Kāntideva's plate (Pl. III) only *Śrīmaj-jaya-skandhāvārāt Varddhamāna-pura-vāsakāt* 'From the glorious and victorious camp-residence at the city of Vardhamāna'. Mādhavavarman's Ipūr charter (Pl. V) likewise has *Vijaya-skandhāvārāt-Kuḍāvāḍa-vāsakād* 'From the victorious camp pitched at Kuḍāvāḍa', not after the invocation, but after the king's name (in text line 8). The Śasānakoṭa plates (Pls. I-II), on the other hand, omit this item altogether. An instance of the elaborate mention of the place of issue may be found in the Sonapur plates

9 *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, p. 336.

10 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXV, p. 5.

of Janamejaya, where the invocation is followed by a long prose passage, covering nine lines of writing, describing the place of issue : *amala-maṇi-kuṭṭima-sadana.....śrīmad-Ārāmād*, 'From the prosperous Ārāma, which.....'.¹¹

Name of the Grantor.—This item in the preamble has proved to be the most prolific source of history, specially dynastic and chronological ; for, it is here that a charter-scribe is found expatiating most. In earlier grants the name of the royal donor is coupled with a title or two, besides the name of his father and occasionally also of his grandfather. This bare outline has progressively expanded into descriptive genealogies and strings of epithets in later charters. The theme readily lent itself to the art of poetry and as a result we have substantial portions of grants filled with racy and ornate descriptions, in prose or in verse, introducing the grantor. His military exploits and those of his ancestors have received special attention. This fashion grew to such an extent that a scribe often felt impelled to attribute vague and imaginary victories where actually none was due. Physical charms as well as qualities of head and heart, real or otherwise, have been given equal importance in such descriptions. However irrelevant such eulogistic narrative might have been to the concerned title-deeds when these were yet legally valid, their significance at present is manifold. Even their fancies and hyperboles have their own value, for poetics, if not for pure history. They shed welcome light on many an obscure aspect of a past event, and thereby enrich history. A few examples will illustrate their nature.

The whole of the Sāsanakoṭa charter (Pls. I-II) consists of 24 lines of writing. Of these, the first eleven are devoted to mentioning the grantor. Immediately after the invocation, the grantor's family, Jāhnavēya *kula*, is mentioned (in line 2), then his *gotra*, Kāṇvāyana (in line 4), then his father's name, Koṅgaṇivarman (in line 5), and this is followed by his own name, Mādhavavarman (in line 11). The intervening space is filled with jingling prose, describing the father and the son. Mark, for example, the alliteration in *sva-bhuja-javaja-jaya-janita-sujana-janapadasya*, 'of one who has produced lands (inhabited) with good people by the conquests born of the impetuosity of his own arms'. This is one of the attributes of the father. Which lands, when conquered, how, etc., are naturally the things an historian is least

11 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 250.

concerned with in such a case as this. The eloquent statement may, on the other hand, be a delight to a votary of Polyhymnia.

In Kāntideva's grant (Pl. III), which is incomplete, lines 4-16 describe the grantor and his parents, father Bhadradatta and mother Vindurati. The description consists of six ornate verses followed by a prose passage. After the invocation and the mention of the place of issue in line 1, the scribe gives another invocatory verse in praise of the Buddha, under the name of Jinendra, in order to show that the person described thereafter, namely Bhadradatta, was a follower of the Buddha.

In Dadda's charter (Pl. IV), on the other hand, we find not only the father or parents, but some of his distant ancestors as well. The description is in prose throughout, which is in the style of Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*, and covers the first 14 lines of the total 30.

In the charters of certain other dynasties, such as Kalachuri, Rāshtrakūṭa, Maitraka, Chōla, Chālukya, Paramāra and Pāla, we have extensive genealogical descriptions, preceding the grantor's name. They are usually fanciful, but do contain pieces of vital information as well. Those of the Eastern Chālukya rulers give even the length of each ruler's reign, precisely in years, months, and days.

Address.—The royal order is addressed to certain dignitaries and officials as also to the rural inhabitants, who are immediately concerned with the land or village donated, as rate-payers. The list of state officials, which in many cases happens to be a pretty lengthy one, is highly instructive, specially with regard to the administrative history. The officials addressed do not belong to the revenue department alone, but include also those of the police, the judiciary, the military, and the royal household. In this way, one often gets a more or less complete picture of the administrative machinery of a particular state. Many of the official designations still present difficulty as to their correct connotation.

In addressing his officials and the ryot, the king often shows the courtesy of greeting them and enquiring after their welfare before issuing the command. As required by legal etiquette, the royal donor himself, in most cases, is described as *kuśalin*, which literally means

‘in good health’, but which carries with it the implication that the donor was in his full senses and was not under the influence of some disease or intoxicant while making the donation so that the title-deed issued in favour of the donee might be recognised as a fully valid document, legally speaking.

The item of address is totally absent in some charters, while in some others it is worded differently from what has been adumbrated above, as may be clear from the following instances.

The Sāsanakoṭa plates (Pls. I-II) omit the address altogether. The Chittagong charter (Pl. III) has *śrīmān Kāntidevaḥ kuśalī Harikelā-maṇḍale bhāvi-bhūpatīms=tad-ātma-hitam=idam bodhayati viditam=astu vaḥ*, “the illustrious Kāntideva, being in good health, informs the future kings of Harikelā maṇḍala as follows, for their own good : ‘Be it known to you’.” The expression *viditam=astu vaḥ*, *viditam=astu bhavatām*, *astu vaḥ saṁviditam*, or the like, is of most frequent occurrence, calling attention to the notification that follows immediately. In the case of Kāntideva’s charter, it may be observed that it ends with the expression *viditam=astu vaḥ* itself. In other words, this charter consists only of the preamble and lacks in the other two sections, the *Notification* and the *Conclusion*, though it is provided with the royal seal. It is in that sense an incomplete record. It is guessed that ‘such unfinished plates were kept ready in office and filled in with the remaining portion at the time of the actual grant.’¹² We know of more instances of such a practice of keeping blanks in readiness.

The address in Dadda’s grant (Pl. IV) follows the set formula more closely : *śrī-Daddaḥ kuśalī sarvān-eva rāja-sāmanta-bhogika-vishayapati-rāshṭra-grāma-mahattar-ādihikārik-ādīn samanudarsayaty=astu vaḥ saṁviditam*. The persons addressed herein include the contemporary rulers and the chiefs of the contiguous territories besides the grantor’s own officers, but not the ryots. The Ipūr charter (Pl. V), on the other hand, is addressed only to the ryots, the residents of the village granted :*grāma-janān sarvān=evam=ājñāpayati*. The expressions *kuśalī* and *viditam=astu vaḥ* are missing in this record. For a more perfect example, we may refer to the Svalpa-Velura grant

12 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 314.

of the Gaṅga king Anantavarman,¹³ wherein the long list of officers is headed by the Brāhmaṇas and the expressions used are:*kuśālī... yath-ārham mānayati=ādiśati cha viditam=astu bhavatām ...*, '...being in good health, duly honours and commands.....' The corresponding passage in the Baripada Museum plates of Devānanda¹⁴ has :*yath-ārham mānayati bodhayati kuśalayaty=ādiśati cha*, '.....duly honours, intimates to, enquires after the health of, and commands.....?' In these last two examples, the persons addressed by the royal donor include both officials and villagers.

NOTIFICATION

Notification is the central theme of a charter. As shown above, its contents can be divided into five main items : specification of the gift, name of the grantee, occasion, purpose and boundaries. It may be added that these items do not always occur in the order stated. Besides, all the charters do not necessarily have all the five items. Since the circumstances in each grant happened to be different, the recorded details must necessarily differ widely. We shall illustrate these after explaining the nature of the five items of our classification.

Specification of the Gift.—The gift usually consists of a village. Occasionally more villages than one are donated; and conversely, not a whole village, but a field or a number of fields constitutes the gift. In any case, the grant specifically states its name and location, district or some other territorial division, *vishaya*, *maṇḍala*, *bhukṭi*, *vīṭhī*, *pattalā*, or the like. Often the donated fields bear proper names ; otherwise the extent of the plot granted is specified in the current measure, *hala*, *nivartana*, *pādāvarta*, *kulyavāpa*, etc.

Name of the Grantee.—This means the party in whose favour the land is alienated. The party may consist of a single individual or a number of individuals. We have instances of land-grants, where hundreds of donees have to share one *agrahāra*. As stated already, such donees are usually Brāhmaṇas. While recording their names, the grants often mention the names of their fathers, *gotras*, *pravaras*, *charaṇas* and the particular Vedic schools to which they belong.

13 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 135.

14 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 79.

Occasionally the place from which a donee originally hailed is also recorded. In the event of a temple or a monastery being the beneficiary, the deity or the committee concerned is so named.

Occasion.—Since these donations are mostly of a religious character, they are made often on such occasions as a particular *saṃkrānti*, an eclipse of the sun or of the moon, a fast, a feast, a specially holy function, etc. A visit to the sacred spot, a temple or a confluence of rivers equally marks the occasion for a charity. Cases are also known where a gift of land is given at the instance of the donor's mother, wife or some other relative, which implies that the resultant merit is to go to the person in whose behalf the gift is made. It goes without saying that all gifts were sanctified by the libation of water—*udaka-pūrvam*, *saliladhārā-puraḥsaram* or *udakātisargeṇa*—, as required by the rituals, to ensure the religious merit to the desired individual.

In some grants, no such occasion is detailed, while in some others, only the date of the grant, either in the regnal year of the donor or according to some era, takes its place.

Purpose.—The purpose of a grant is likewise clearly stated, which is generally two-fold : the accretion of merit to the donor, and a certain obligation on the donee. In most cases a donor specifically states in the grant that he has given a particular gift for the increase of the religious merit of his parents and of himself, or for ensuring longevity, strength, glory and prosperity to himself. As for the donee's obligation, he is charged with the duties of performing daily rites, conducting worship, feeding monks, or the like, as the case may be. In a particular grant, the expenses involved being met from the income derived from the donated land. Where no such return is desired, and the donee is to enjoy the gift as he pleases, the fact is so mentioned. His rights, privileges, exemptions and immunities, concerning the land granted, are clearly stated. In some cases, certain taxes have to be paid by the donee. Besides, he is seldom allowed the right to deal arbitrarily with offenders and thieves. Such rates and reservations are normally specified in the grants.

Boundaries.—The parcel of land or the village granted often

happens to have its boundaries already well-known to the villagers around. In such a case no boundaries are defined at all, or else the fact that it goes with its well-known limits is so mentioned. Otherwise its boundaries, *sīmāḥ*, *āghāṭāḥ*, *āghāṭanāni*, etc., are properly defined. For this purpose, mostly natural land-marks are resorted to, such as hillocks, brooks, prominent single trees or groves, and are noted in the charter concerned. Where a large area is involved, the job of defining boundaries becomes an elaborate affair. A regular *kariṇī-bhramaṇa* is undertaken, which means a high official seated on a she-elephant, followed by a number of subordinates, takes a ride round the land to be alienated, the subordinates marking off the boundary and noting down the details as the procession proceeds. This sort of procedure is known from certain South-Indian records such as those of the Chōḷa monarchs.

Let us now notice a few concrete examples. The notification in the Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pl. I), in translation, reads as follows : "On the 10th day of the bright fortnight in the month of Phālguna in the first year of his own (reign) with his extensive sovereignty ever on the increase, (the illustrious Mādhavavarman) has given to Dharaśarman of the Vatsa *gotra* and the Taittirīya *charaṇa*, for his own welfare, the village named Velputtoru, in the district of Paru, as a gift to a Brāhmaṇa, carrying all the (customary) exemptions, with the libation of water." The notification in Dadda's grant (Pl. IV) is of a more detailed nature. It is quite a lengthy one, but we may notice its salient points. It begins with the statement of purpose which is 'the increase of glory and merit, in this world and hereafter' for the donor and his parents. Then come the names of the district and the granted village with the specification of the rights to be enjoyed by the donee, including the collection of various taxes in cash and kind. The gift is a perpetual one to be enjoyed by the donee and his descendants. Then follow the names of the donee, his father, *gotra*, place of origin, etc. The libation of water is mentioned last. The occasion of the gift, the mention of which was omitted at this place, is stated towards the end, just before the mention of the year, as a supplement. This is remarkable inasmuch as it gives the additional information that the gift was accompanied with an elephant and a chariot. The occasion bespeaks its propriety, as it was the *Ratha-saptamī*, 'the Chariot-seventh day',

the 7th day of the bright fortnight in the month of Māgha, on which day, whatever its astrological significance, the gift of vehicles is supposed to assure the donor an abundance of vehicular luxury in his future birth. Instances of notifications wherein boundaries are also stated may be found in other records such as the Chevūru charter of Amma I.¹⁵ This particular record happens to be noteworthy in some other respects as well. The donee here is not a Brāhmaṇa but a warrior who receives the gift of a village in addition to certain high distinctions as a reward for his meritorious services and devotion to the king. The occasion of the gift is the *annaprāśana* ceremony¹⁶ of the baby prince.

CONCLUSION

Like the preamble, the concluding part of a charter is historically important for the incidental details it contains, though it might not have been so very material to the title-deed as such. The broad sections into which we have divided such details are six : exhortation, name of the conveyancer, date, name of the writer, name of the engraver and authentication. The remarks made in connection with the notification, as to the change of order or optional omission of certain details, apply to the conclusion as well.

Exhortation.—The notification of a grant is usually followed by words of exhortation or admonition, addressed by the royal donor to the future kings of his own house, to the contemporary rulers, to those who might replace him or his descendants by conquest, to his own officials and dependants, as also to his subjects, especially the villagers vitally concerned with the land granted, to the effect that they should all respect the grant made by him. The last-named group is specially advised thereafter to pay all their dues—taxes and revenues, in cash and kind—regularly to the grantee and live amicably with him. These appeals and warnings are reinforced by allusions to the ephemeral nature of worldly existence, to the permanency of *dharma*, to the merit and good reward that might result from honouring and maintaining the grant, and to the hell and suffering that might befall those

15 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 46.

16 This occurs during the sixth month after the child's birth ; see *Manusmṛiti*, *Adhyāya* II, v. 34.

who would, on the other hand, confiscate or violate it. In this context, various benedictory and imprecatory verses are quoted from the *Mahābhārata* and the *dharmaśāstras*. A goodly collection of such verses, culled from old Sanskrit copper-plate grants, may be found in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1912, pp. 248-54, 476 ; and 1913, p. 388. A more representative one, by Sri P.V. Kane, in Hindi, may be seen in the *Bhāratīya Anuśilana* (Ojha Presentation Volume, Allahabad, 1933), Section V, pp. 3-15.

Let us see what the examples selected by us contain by way of exhortation. The Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pls. I-II) has a prose passage, threatening the confiscator of the grant with the infliction of the five major sins.¹⁷ This is followed by three corroborating verses, here ascribed to Manu. The exhortation in Dadda's grant (Pl. IV) is more elaborate, covering as it does about nine lines of writing, out of the total of thirty (text lines 20-28). Here a long prose passage is followed by four customary verses, ascribed to Vyāsa. In the prose passage, which is highly ornate, it is first stated in a general way that nobody should interfere with the grantee who, it is declared, is at liberty to enjoy the land granted in whatever way he pleases, by tilling it himself or by leasing it out to someone else. Next, the grantor addresses the future kings of his own lineage as well as others, asking them to accord their approval to the grant made and to maintain it, thinking that the merit of the grant is equally to be shared by them, that fortune is fickle and that life is impermanent. Lastly, the confiscator is threatened, as usual, with the infliction of the five major sins. The Īpūr plates (Pl. V) have a much simpler exhortation. Herein the king's men are advised to collect no rent from the village granted and to see that it is duly protected. One of the customary verses is then quoted, but it is preceded by the name of the conveyancer, the significance of which we now consider.

Name of the Conveyancer.—The word conveyancer is to be understood here in its literal sense, 'one who effects the conveyance',

17 The *dharmaśāstras* recognise five major sins and as many as fifty-one minor sins, *mahāpātakas* and *upapātakas*. Regarding their nature, see the *smṛitis*, e.g. of Manu and Yājñavalkya, XI, 54, and V, 229-36 respectively.

and not in its usual technical sense, 'lawyer who prepares documents for conveyance of property'. Perhaps the term messenger conveys the idea better, the original Sanskrit being *dūta* or *dūtaka*. It has been observed that the king's order as to the grant of a village or land is issued not always by the king personally. It is more often conveyed through an intermediary. This important function is entrusted to a high officer, occasionally even to the prince royal. In the event of such an order emanating from the king himself, the fact is so mentioned, and the phrase used is *ājñā svayam*, *sva-mukh-ājñā*, or the like, 'order himself', 'order from his own mouth', etc. The Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pls. I-II) is an instance of this. It has *sva-mahārāja-mukh-ājñāptyā* (correct grammar requires *mahārāja-sva-mukh-ājñāptyā*), which is more explicit and means 'by the order from the Mahārāja's own mouth'. Dadda's charter (Pl. IV) does not mention this item, while in the Īpūr plates (Pl. V) the royal donor's own son figures as the agent : *asy=ājñā priya-putraḥ Mañchyaṇṇabhaṭṭārakaḥ*, 'its order is (the king's) dear son, His Highness Mañchyaṇṇa'. The Svalpa-Velura grant has the illustrious *Mahāsāmanta* Aśokadeva as its *dūtaka*, the title *Mahāsāmanta* indicating a high dignitary.¹⁸

Date.—The simple item of dating a charter again presents some variety. In many charters no date is given at all, while in others only the year is recorded. The year mentioned may be a regnal one or it may be according to some era prevalent in that particular region at the time of the grant. Where fuller details are given, we have reference to the month, the fortnight, the day, but seldom to the week-day. When the week-day also happens to be specified, the date can be verified and its equivalent, say in the Christian era, can be ascertained precisely. Occasionally the date of the actual grant happens to be different from the one on which the document is engraved on the plates. The date of the grant very often finds a place in the *Notification* itself, and is not repeated in the *Conclusion*, as in the case of the Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pls. I-II), for example. This is dated in the first regnal year of the donor. And, though it specifies the month (Phālguna *māsa*), the fortnight (*śukla paksha*), and the date (*tithi daśamī*), it cannot be verified for want of the week-day and a well-known era. Dadda's grant (Pl. IV) mentions a date which gives a

18 *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 136.

more definite clue. It states the year, *Samvat* 427, which, it has been possible to ascertain, follows the Kalachuri reckoning and corresponds to A.D. 675. The day of the grant is stated to be the *Ratha-saptamī*, the 7th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Māgha. The Īpūr charter (Pl. V) is again dated in the regnal year, and the date is mentioned right at the end : *pravarddhamāna-vijaya-rājya-samvatsare saptātriśe (saptatrimśe) gi pa 7 di X V*, 'in the thirty-seventh year of the reign of increasing victory, the 15th day of the 7th fortnight of the hot season.' The abbreviations *gi*, *pa* and *di* used here deserve special notice. They stand respectively for *grīshma* 'hot season', *paksha* 'fortnight' and *dina* 'day'. This practice is followed in many charters. Again, what is of interest for the history of astronomy is the mention, in earlier charters, of seasons as subdivisions of a year, instead of months.

Name of the Writer.—The task of drafting or writing out a charter was, as a rule, entrusted to a responsible official. His name and occasionally also his designation are duly mentioned. He often gives his father's name, too. This factor has proved helpful in some cases, especially in determining the chronology of certain rulers whose order of succession was otherwise indeterminate. A part of the chronology of the Gaṅgas of Śvetaka has, for instance, been established that way.¹⁹

In this connection, the Śāsanakoṭa plates (Pls. I-II) simply state *Somaśarmmaṇā likhit = eyan = tāmra-paṭṭikā*, 'this copper-plate (charter) has been written by Somaśarman,' while Dadḍa's grant (Pl. IV) has *likhitam mahāsāndhivigrahādhipatinā Durggabhaṭasūnunā Saṅgullena*, '(this) has been written by Durggabhaṭa's son Saṅgulla, the Chief Officer of Peace and War (or the Minister of External Affairs)'.

Name of the Engraver.—While the function of drafting a document was admittedly of sufficient importance to make the name of the scribe figure prominently in it, the job of copying it on the sheets of copper and engraving it was more or less a mechanical process hardly justifying such an exaltation of the brazier or goldsmith responsible for it. And yet it was evidently a common practice in India to acknowledge the engraver's help by making a suitable mention of

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. XXV, p. 240.

his name in a charter. This throws a welcome side-light on the social history of the country. Evidently the society in those days recognised the worthiness of all useful occupations and accorded each its due share of respect. We have instances in certain Chōla grants where the writer and the engraver also receive each a share in the land granted, presumably as fees for the services rendered by them.

Sometimes it is difficult to interpret with certainty the word *likhitam* in the original, which literally means 'written'. Though very often it refers to the drafting or composing of the record, yet in some cases it alludes to the copying of the draft on the metal sheets for the guidance of the smith who was charged merely with the engraving of it. Thus there were three different processes involved : composing, writing and engraving. An instance where *likhitam* stands for writing, as distinct from 'composing' is supplied by the Salem charter of Śrīpurusha. It ends with *sarvva-kal-ādharabhūta-chitrakal-ābhijñena Guruśishyeṇ=edaṁ śāsanam likhitam*, 'this charter has been written by Guruśishya, an expert in the art of painting, the basis of all arts'.²⁰ A look at the facsimiles of the plates will bear it out that the elegant forms of the letters did require a skilled artist to write them in ink for the guidance of the engraver. In this instance the names of the composer and the engraver are not mentioned. Hammering the metal into plates or sheets good enough to receive the engraving was another process in which the engraver was assisted by another metal worker. Some charters mention the name of such an unskilled or semi-skilled worker as well. The Neulpur grant of Śubhākara²¹ informs us that 'it was written by the *Mahākshapaṭalika Bhogika* Brahmadatta ; heated by the *peṭṭapāla* Nārāyaṇa; and incised by the *taṭṭhakāra* Eḍadatta.' By 'heated' here is meant 'shaped into a plate by heating the metal'. What exact occupation is meant by *peṭṭapāla* has not yet been ascertained, while in *taṭṭhakāra*, likewise a Prakrit form (Sanskrit *tashṭakāra*), one may easily recognise the Hindi *ṭhaṭherā* and the Panjabi *ṭhaṭhyār*, which means 'brazier' or 'copper-smith'. The proper expression, denoting 'engraved', in Sanskrit is *utkīrṇa*, and this is what is used in the Neulpur grant as well as in most of the other Sanskrit copper-plate grants. Bharatabala's

20 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 150.

21 *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, p. 5.

charter ²² has *utkīrṇañ=cha suvarṇṇakār-Eśvaraputreṇa Mihirakeṇa*, 'and (it) has been engraved by the goldsmith Īsvara's son Mihiraka'. Besides *taṣṭakāra* and *suvarṇakāra*, we have other smiths as well mentioned as engravers, such as *kāṁsyakāra* (Hindi *kaserā*), 'worker in white brass'.

In the charters, the illustrations of which accompany this paper, no engraver is mentioned.

Authentication.—By authentication we mean the marks or signs that prove the validity and the genuineness of a charter. As indicated above, the most prominent of such marks is the royal seal. Apart from this, there is the sign-manual of the king, as in the case of Dadda's grant (Pl. IV), which has, at the very end, *sva-hasto mama śrī-Daddasya* (followed by an ornamental flourish, marking the auspicious closing of the deed), '(this is) the own sign-manual of me, the illustrious Dadda'. It may be observed that this signature or stamp of the king is in characters different from those of the grant itself. The Svalpa-Velura grant ²³ was attested or registered (*lāñchhita*), by the chief queen (*mahādevī*) Vāsabhaṭṭārikā. This was obviously another way of authentication, in addition to the royal seal. This latter took various shapes. The earlier ones are simple and contain an emblem or two, forming the royal insignia or coat-of-arms. Later on, legends also make their appearance. On the seals of the Vākāṭaka charters we have metrical legends only, and no emblem. But, most of the seals contain both a legend and an emblem combined. The seal of the Śāsanakoṭa charter (Pl. II) shows only the figure of an elephant, standing, facing the proper left, as already noticed. The seal of Kāntideva's charter (Pl. III) is more elaborate. This illustration shows it separated from the plate below, but in reality it is soldered to the top of the plate above the engraved part. It has a raised rim with pointed ends. 'It is divided into two panels. The upper one bears in relief the figure of a seated lion inside a temple. The temple is indicated, as in many sculptures in Bengal, by a trefoil arch with flagstaffs on both sides. The seated lion is represented with mouth open and all the four paws in front. Across the lower panel of the

²² *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVII, p. 143.

²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 136.

seal is the legend *śrī-Kāntidevaḥ*. The letters are engraved in bold relief on a raised space. The seal is supported, at its lower end, by two figures of serpents, with raised hoods, whose interlaced tails and parts of the bodies are soldered both to the raised rim of the seal and the plate'.²⁴ The circular seal of the Īpūr charter (Pl. VI) is much worn out. 'It is divided by a cross-line into two sections. The lower section bears, in relief, the legend *śrī-Mādhavavarmā* in two lines. Above the line seems to be a figure of Lakshmī or a Svastika on a pedestal, flanked by two lamp-stands and surmounted by the sun (?) and the crescent of the moon'.²⁵ The most excellent specimen of a royal seal, attached to a charter, is perhaps the one belonging to the Choḷa monarch Rājendra-Choḷa (Pl. VII). It is about 4 1/2" in diameter and is provided with 16 knobs, at about equal intervals, around the margin, the whole of it so designed evidently to give the appearance of an expanded lotus. The central portion of the seal is flattened and marked off by a circular line. It contains the following emblems, constituting the Choḷa coat-of-arms. The most conspicuous of the emblems is a pair of fish—the scales, fins, gills, eyes and snouts of which are clearly delineated—facing which is a tiger, seated dog-fashion, with its tail brought forward between the legs and touching one of the two fish. Over the tiger is seen a parasol (*chhatra*) flanked by two flywhisks (*chāmaras*). In the space between the parasol and the left flywhisk is a miniature representation of the sun while the crescent is faintly visible to the left of this flywhisk. Two lamp-stands are figured, one to the left of the fish and the other to the right of the tiger, forming a straight row with them. Each stand has a cloth knotted round the middle of it, while a wick-lamp is shown burning in each. Below this row of emblems is figured a strung bow, the curved side down. Around the circle which encloses all these symbols is engraved a metrical legend in characters of the Choḷa-Grantha type which reads—

*Etad = Rājendra - Choḷasya Parakesariyarmmaṇaḥ
rājad - rājanya - mukuṭa - śreṇi - ratneshu - śāsanam*

24 *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 313-14.

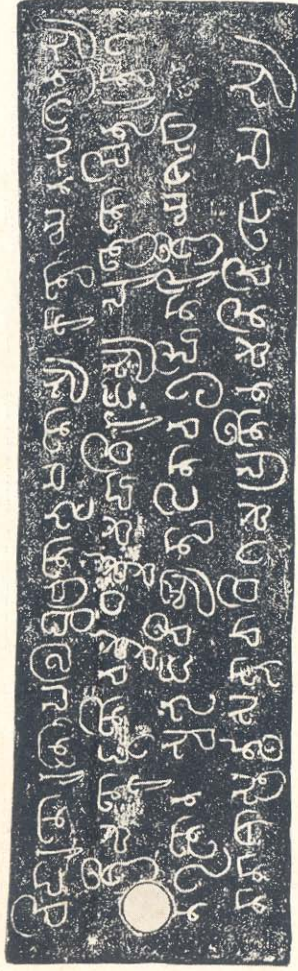
25 *Ibid.*, Vol. XVII, p. 334. The details cannot be made out from the illustration.

Sāsanakota Plates of Gaṅga Mādhavarman : 1st year

Scale : Three fourths ; a = Obverse, b = Reverse



i



ii a



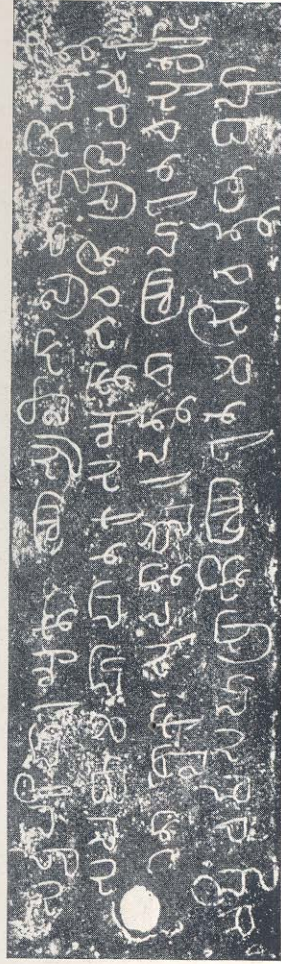
ii b



iii a

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Sāsanakota Plates of Gaṅga Mādhavarman : 1st year (contd.)
with Seal (bottom)



iii b



iv a

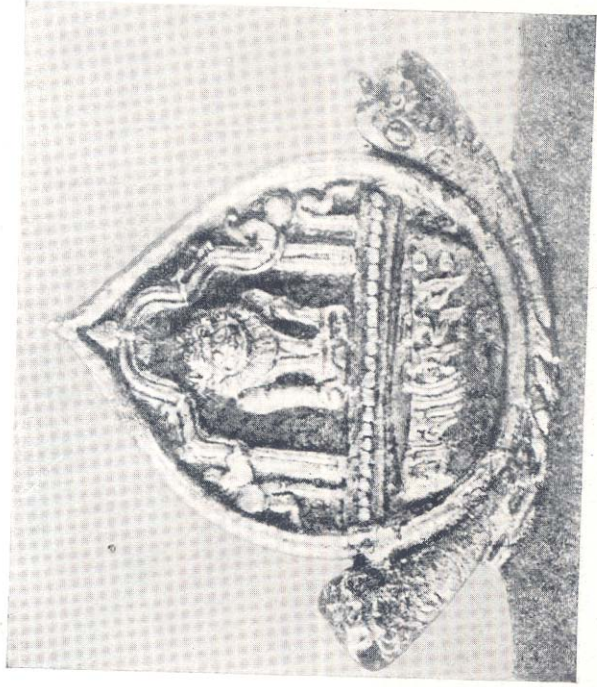


iv b



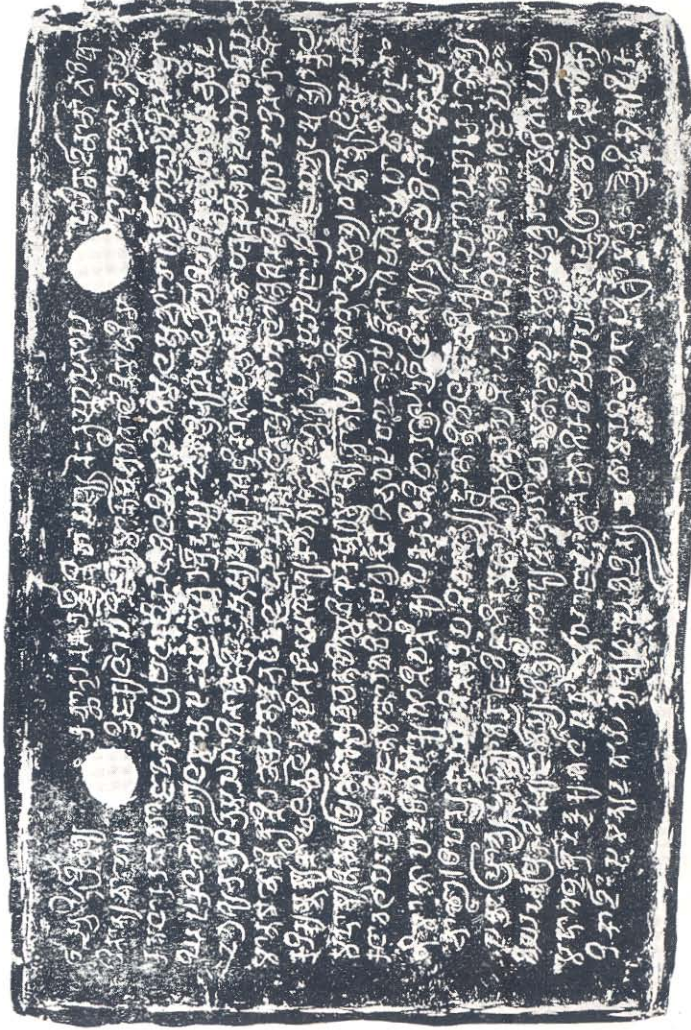
PLATE III

Chittagong Copper-plate of Kāntideva with Seal (top)
Scale : Three fifths



भूम्नि प्रीमहयश्चवाता उ वहुमानपरवाद्वा उ
 मोपमनत्रिन लत्रपविष्टाश्च यो ज्ञानानपगतमङ्गलं
 ज्ञोक्तव्यं भुक्तोक्तव्यमनयश्च यद्वान्नानमूर्ध्वो गमाभिविमान
 श्रुतयोक्तिवक्तुः ॥ तदुक्तिवलेनपुक्तिमुक्तमर्थो द्विचविक्रितमिय
 मयः ॥ मङ्गयन्पयकरनः श्रुतः प्रीमहमनोयः ॥ तस्मिन्
 कोषितज्ञानेनपरागनाभायणावतिनेकयः नान्नाशोपमनः
 प्रकलितयदिमान्योक्तुः ॥ तस्मिन्मोनीमङ्गुल्युक्तवप
 मुक्तमुनायवोक्तिमननोययावहुवर्णवप्रिया ॥ तस्मादोग
 क्षिमानमानमनिलेनदीकुतैर्दुक्तमृद्वद्वल्लानादिविह
 यपादुप्रानोयमनान्मोयः प्रकृतागमनिमयकृष्टिमान
 कोष्टयलोद्याश्चानुषामहुक्तपवत्योयातवाञ्चकः ॥
 यद्वहुवर्णमहुष्टिनिप्यकणिचकृमलामावतस्थितवाभा
 याश्चानुवापिरप्यमुः ॥ अथवस्थितरुमज्जिनायाभिनासि
 कानुवेकगणनवृक्षुषणः परमयो
 यानुष्ठानः परमश्रुतोयोमोक्षवि
 भिन्नेवः कुगली। इति कला मपुतेनवि
 तस्यैवोपयतिस्मिन्ममुवः ॥

Scale : One half





Īpūr Plates of Govindavarman's son Mādhavarman

Scale : Three fourths ; a = Obverse, b = Reverse



i



ii a

॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

ii b

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥
 ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥

iii

The Seal of the Ipūr Plates
Full size



The Seal of the Larger Plates of Rājendra-Chola

Full size



‘This is the order of Rājendra-Choḷa, alias Parakesarivarman, on the crest-jewels of the reigning kings (*i.e.* to be obeyed by them).’

This completes the account, in bare outline, of Sanskrit copper-plate grants. It is needless to say that in this general description many important details may have escaped notice. It may, however, succeed, within its limited scope, in showing the nature and main features of the class of documents as also what an historian may expect to find in them. The mass of Sanskrit copper charters requires to be classified dynasty-wise and the charters of each dynasty to be studied in detail, along ‘diplomatic’ lines, in order to deduce full historical facts from them. The present brief treatment may serve as a mere pointer in that direction.

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