PART IV
CHAPTER IV

EPGRAPHY AND NUMISMATICS
SECTION I

EPIGRAPHY

The history of Bastar during its mediaeval period is, primarily, reconstructed with the help of epigraphy. The inscriptions throw valuable light on the political and cultural history of the region. Welcome light is reflected upon the economic life of this forest kingdom. The inscriptions also help us in determining the chronology of the ruling dynasties. Majority of the epigraphs are found engraved on stone, but the number of copper plate inscriptions is sparse. Only three copper plates, viz., the Rajapura copper plates of Madhurantakadeva and two copper plates of Pamparamajadeva edited by R.B. Hiralsal have been published. Some six or seven copper plates of Nagavamsi rulers of Bastar are, said to be in the possession of Dr. Brahma Deva Sharma, I.A.S., the former Collector of Bastar. These plates are yet to be edited.

It may be mentioned here that records of the early Nalas, ruling over Bastar-Koraput region, have not been found within the limits of Bastar district. Kesaribeda and Podagadh, in Orissa, the find spots of the records of Nala rulers, are located near the bordering region of Bastar district. Both of these places formed a part of former Bastar State. The Nala records have made possible to know something of the early history of Bastar. The

Ajanta inscription of Harisena and the Balaghat plates of Prthvisena II are quite significant in this regards. Epigraphs of the Chalukyas, the Cholas, the Rastrakutas and the Kalachuris of Ratanpur also play an important role so far as the mediaeval history of Bastar is concerned.

As stated earlier, the history of the last ruling dynasty in Bastar is not included in the present work. Apparently, their epigraphs have also been excluded from the present study. The following epigraphs, found beyond the boundary of Bastar district, throw ample light on the history and culture of the region under study.

I. Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta.

II. Rithapur Copper Plates of Bhavadattavarmana, E.I., XIX, pp. 100 ff.

III. Kesariyadesa Copper Plates of Arthapati; E.I., XXVIII, pp. 12 ff.

IV. Podagadh Inscription of Skandavarman; E.I., XXI, pp. 153 ff.

V. Balaghat Plates of Prthvisena II; E.I., IX, pp. 287 ff.

VI. Ajanta Inscription of Harisena; E.H.D., I, p. 187.

VII Aihole Inscription of Pulkesin II; E.I., VI, pp. 4 ff.

VIII Bhandak Inscription of Nannaraja; E.I., XI, pp. 227 ff.


X. Tirumalai Rock Inscription of Rajendra Chola I; E.I., IX, pp. 229 ff.
XI. Tirumukkudal Inscription of Vira Rajendra Chola; E.I., XII, pp. 226 ff.


XIII. Ratnapur Inscription of Kalachuri Jajalladeva I; E.I., I, pp. 38 ff.

XIV. Bilaigarrh Copper Plate of Pithdevadeva II; Utkirna Lekha, No. 18, Verse 18.


XVI. Jhava Stone Inscription of Karna Raja of Kakaira, E.I., IX, pp. 182 ff.

The epigraphs in Bastar district, issued by the ruling families or their subordinates, relate the contemporary history. The list and short description of the nature, script, style and matter of the epigraphs is given below:

1. Errakote Inscription of Eripatibushana (Saka Year 945).

2. Barasur Inscription of Chandraditya (Saka Year 983).

3. Potiner Inscription of Chandraditya (Saka Year 983).

4. Dantewara Inscription of the Saka Year 984.

5. Rajapur Copper Plates of Madhurantakadeva (Saka Year 987).

6. Kuruspal Tank Site of Dharma Mahadevi (Saka Year 991).


8. Kuruspal Stone Inscription of Somesvaradeva.

9. Kuruspal Inscription of Somesvaradeva (Saka Year 1019).

10. Gadia Inscription of Somesvaradeva (Saka Year 1019).

11. Barasur Inscription of Gangamahadevi (Saka year 1030).
12. Gadi Jungle Slab mentioning Rajabhusana Sowesvaradeva (Undated)

13. Narayanapala Inscription of Gunda Mahadevi (Saka Year 1033).


15. Jantasal inscription of the time of Narasimhadeva (S.Y. 1140).


17. Sunarapal inscription of Jayasimhadeva (Undated).


21. Bhairemgarh Incomplete Inscription of the time of Maharaja Jagdevabhusana (Undated).

22. Kanker Plates of Pamparajadeva (Kalachuri Samvat 965).

23. Kanker Plates of Pamparajadeva (Kalachuri Samvat 966).

24. Kanker Inscription of the time of Bhunudeva (S.Y. 1242).

25. Bhairemgarh copper plates of Jagdevabhusana Maharaja (Saka year 935).

26. Bhairemgarh copper plates of K. Bhunudeva Maharaja (Saka year 1017).

The Bastar inscriptions may be divided into two broad classes:

1. Donative,


In fact, the Kanker inscription of the time of Bhunudeva may be regarded as Prasasti. Though, Nayaka Vasudeva, the minister of Bhunudeva is eulogised, the purpose of the Prasasti is donative. The inscription, lying in the verandah of Government High School at Kanker records the
construction of 3 temples and 2 tanks. Written in Devanāgari character, the epigraph is engraved with well formed bold letters. The language is Sanskrit. Verses are composed in Saradulavikridita meter excepting the first and the last verse, which are in Sragdhra and Anustubh respectively. The genealogy of Vaśudeva and Bhanudeva is given in the record which opens with the preamble 'Om Siddhi' and closes with 'Siwan'. The name of engraver Saktikumara is given at the end. The record is dated in Saka Year 1242. 1

The Kuruspala inscription of Somesvaradeva may also be included in this class. It records the grant of a land and describes the exploits of Somesvaradeva as well. 2 The epigraph is written in corrupt Sanskrit pose. The king is compared with Kamadeva.

Rest of the inscriptions and copper plates are donative.

Script and Language:

The Naga-inscriptions bear the Sanskrit language, a few of them are in Telugu. The inscriptions written in Sanskrit have Devanagari script. Some of the records written in Telugu character, such as Barasura inscription of Gangamahadevi, bear the title of the king in Sanskrit. 3

1. E.I., IX, pp. 123 ff.
2. Ibid., X, pp. 25 ff.
3. E.I., IX, pp. 184 ff
The Samskrit used in most of the records is ungrammatical and the spelling is incorrect. This can very well be observed in the Kuruspala inscription of Dharmamahadevi and in the Rajapura copper plates of Mahuranakadeva. All of the records, except the Kan̄ker inscription of Bhānu-deva, are composed in prose. The Rajapura copper plates, the Kuruspal epigraph and the Narayamapur inscription, which are in prose, have the benedictory and imprecatory verses.

**Style and Matter**

All the inscriptions record the land-grants and refer to the donor and his family as well. Naga-epigraphs have long compounds full of set phrases. They contain a long eulogy of the king concern. The inscriptions follow almost the same pattern of phraseology in describing the achievements of rulers. The genealogy of the Naga-dynasty for three generations has been given in only two Naga-epigraphs, i.e. Kuruspala inscription of Somaśvaradeva and Narayamālpa inscription of Gundamahadevi. The records of the Somavamśi rulers of Kan̄ker usually give genealogy of the rulers for four, five or even seven generations. The date is usually given at the end of the Somavamśi (Kan̄ker) inscriptions. In Naga-records it is inscribed either in the beginning or in the middle of the inscription.

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4. E.I., IX, pp. 174 ff; E.I., X, pp. 31ff; E.I., IX, p.163.
5. E.I., IX, p. 179.
6. Ibid., IX, p. 315.
The epigraphs of the kings of Kanker bear the impact of Kalachuris and Nagavamis as well. The eulogistic portions of their records show signs of Naga influence. Naga-epigraphs present South Indian impact so far as the script is concerned.

Mythological Allusions:

The inscriptions of the Bastar district are, in majority, devoid of mythological allusions. The number of epigraphs, which compare the king's deeds with those of the deities, is sparse. The Narayanapala inscription compares Dharavarsha and Somesvaradeva with celebrated king Harischandra in truthfulness. Again, Dharavarsha is stated as Siva and his consort Gundamahadevi as Parvati. She is compared in her various virtues with Parvati. Somesvaradeva is compared with Kamadeva. Except Vyaghra-deva, the Somavamsi ruler of Kanker who is compared to Sun in virtues, none of the kings of this dynasty is compared with any god.

E.R.A.

It appears that Saka era was popular in Bastar region for almost every epigraph is dated in the Saka Samvat. Only two copper plates of Pamarauja dated in Kalachuri Samvat 965 and 966 respectively are exceptions.

to it. These plates indicate Kalachuri's paramountcy over Kanker-region during the first quarter of the 13th century A.D. The Nagavamsi-epigraphs bear Saka era along with the usual details about day, date and the time. The Saka era occurring in Naga-inscriptions indicates that Naga kings of Baster, though subdued by the Kalachuris of Ratangur, did not owe allegiance to them. Otherwise, Kalachuri era would have appeared in their records.

Opening and Closing Formula:

The word 'Om Svasti' occurs as opening formula in almost every inscription of the Naga and Somavamsi dynasties of Baster. The word 'Svasti' is generally added to 'Om'. The Kanker epigraph of the time of Bhamudeva has the opening formula 'Om Siddhi' which is an exception. In some of the records the word 'Sri' or 'Sri Maha' finds place at the top of the epigraph.

The closing formula varies from record to record. The Kanker inscription of Bhamudeva has the word 'Sivam' while the other inscription bears 'Mangalam Maha Sri' and 'Svastato Yam-matam-aro...'.

10. Ibid, IX, p. 126.
16. Ibid, IX, p. 188.
occur at the end of some epigraphs. The closing words usually contain the name of the writer such as Pandit Vismu Sharman\textsuperscript{17} and engraver Sav. Keshava,\textsuperscript{18} Sakti Kumara\textsuperscript{19} and Manavśidhi.\textsuperscript{20}

The word 'Om Svasti' was being used as opening formula during the Gupta period. In fact, the 'Om' symbolises the ultimate reality. The tradition of putting the names of writer and engraver at the end of the epigraph goes back to the time of Indo-Greeks, Sakas and Kushānas,\textsuperscript{21} etc.

Impractical and Beneficary Verses and Figures:

The epigraphs of the Maga-dynasty bear impractical and beneficary verses and figures as well.

The verses in Rajapur-plates run as follows:
"If anyone from time to time tries to acquire this land he will be the sinner of breaking a thousand linga, a thousand tanks, and killing a thousand Brahmans and cows"...

..... "He who resumes land given by himself or by another becomes a worm in ordure for sixty thousand years"......

"Common is this religious bridge to princes, and it should be garded by you from age to age. Thus does Ramachandra

\begin{footnotes}
\item[17] E.I., IX, p. 169
\item[18] Ibid, IX, p. 187.
\item[19] Ibid, IX, p. 180.
\end{footnotes}
again and again conjure all future lords of the earth". 22

The figures of a row of 12 hands, a cow, a dagger and shield, Siva-linga, the Sun, the moon and a woman pursued by an ass are incised on the plate. R.B.HIRALAL has given an interpretation to these imprecatory figures. 23 According to him hands are the symbolic expression of benediction on the donor whereas the Siva-linga and the dagger along with the shield (of the king) are the sign of the protector; the Sun and the moon suggest that the grant would last as long as the Sun and the moon endure in the sky. The appropriator of the granted land will be cursed by the cow. The obscene figure of a donkey associated with a woman indicates that the man who breaks this should be so low born.

The Kurusplāla inscription also depicts the figure of an ass associated with a pig along with the imprecatory verse meaning that —he who transgresses the land, should be born of an ass and a pig.

The Narasaynapāla inscription also has two imprecatory verses along with the usual figures of cow and calf, shield and dagger, the Sun and the moon and the Siva-linga. These usual figures occur in Gadia inscription also. 24

The tradition of benediction may be traced back to the Kushana-period. 25 The inscriptions of the Gupta-era

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are full of benedictory verses. The imprecatory verses also find place in the inscriptions from 5th century onwards.

Invocations to Śiva, Kātyayāni,26 Nārayana,27 Rāma, Manikyadevi28 and Vindhyavāsini29 are found in the epigraphs of the Nāgavamsi and the Somavamsi kings of Bastar and Kanker.

Emblems:

None of the seals of the ruling dynasties of Bastar has been found so far. The seal tied to the Rajapur copper plates is broken off. The figures of dagger, shield and Śivalinga occur in the inscriptions and plates of the Naga rulers. The dagger and the Śivalinga is depicted on the Naga-coins also.30 Śivalinga and dagger may be regarded as the emblem of the Naga-dynasty.

27. Ibid, IX, p. 314.
29. Ibid, X, pp. 26 ff.
30. ORHJ, VIII, I, pp. 75-82.
SECTION II

NUMISMATICS

The history of the coinage of Bastar begins with the coins of the Nala-dynasty. Punch marked coins are conspicuous by their absence. Satavahana and Kushana coins found in the adjoining regions do not occur in Bastar.¹

Nala-Coins ¹

In 1939 a hoard of 32 gold-coins of the Nala-rulers has been discovered at village Edeng in Kondagaon tahsil of Bastar district. These were the first coins of the Nala to be found. The hoard contained 29 coins of Varaharaja, two of Arthapati and one of Bhavadattavarman.²

Four coins of the Nala-rulers, deposited in the Lucknow Museum, are published by Rai Bahadur Prayag Dayal.³

Recently two gold-coins of Bhavadatta and one of Arthapati have been noticed in a hoard found at Kulis in Durg district of M.P.⁴

The single die gold-coins of the Nalas are circular in shape. The device and the legends are embossed in relief.

1. Malhar (Sagar), 1978, pp. 4, 6, 21; HGDHO, p. 151
on the obverse leaving the reverse blank. Made on thin sheets of gold, these coins bear beaded border, and are divided into two parts by horizontal lines. The figure of a couchant humped bull and the crescent appear on the upper half. The lower half of the coins bear the legend of the king in the box-headed Brahmi script of 5th century A.D.

Nala-coins may be divided into two main classes on the basis of their size and weight. The coins of the larger variety, weighing from 19.7 to 24.6 grains each, have the diameter of 20 to 21 mm., while the smaller coins, 7.5 grains in weight, are about 16 mm. in diameter. The larger coins are further divided into two types by professor Mirashi.

This subdivision is based on the shape and position of the crescent and the posture of the bull on the coins. On some of the coins the bull is shown facing right, while on others it faces left. Similarly, the crescent is depicted behind or in front of the bull. The Edenā-hoard contained 22 small coins of Varāharāja.

The coins of Varāharāja bear the legend 'Śrī Varāh' or 'Śrī Varāharāja'; 'Śrī Bhavadavataraśaya' and 'Śrī Arthapatirājasa' respectively. Coins of Skandavarman and other later Nala-rulers have not been found so far. The coins of Varāharāja appear to be the earliest and those of Arthapati the latest.

6. JNSt, I, pp. 28 ff.
The Nala-coins struck on an indigenous weight standard do not show any foreign influence except the use of genitive in coin-legends of Bhavdatta and Arthapati. The smaller coins represent a 'MASAKA' of five rattis. The Arthasastra describes a small gold-coin MASAKA which is 5 rattis in weight. "Svavara-masakam Parama va gurih".

The region of Bastar was occupied by the Somavamsi Panduvamsi kings of South Kosal, the Bastrakutas, the Chalukyas and the Cholas after the Nalas. Curiously, no coin of these dynasties yet turned up. It seems that the dynasties which ruled over Bastar one after the other had nominal lordship. Their rule lasted for short spell of time. This appears to be the reason that they refrained from issuing their respective currency in Bastar. Nonavailability of the coins of local chieftains, who ruled as representatives of above mentioned dynasties, is a matter of surprise.

Naga-Coin:

The Bastar region witnessed an era of stability during the Naga-reign. The Somavamsi kings of Bastar issued gold coins. The number of their coins is very meagre. It is interesting to note that coins of the Naga rulers have not been found in Bastar. The only hoard containing their gold coins was discovered in the Dumadi forest near

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6. Arthasastra, II, 19
Kodinga of Koraput district as early as 1957. The hoard was found by a girl of Sighaiguda village.

The Kodinga hoard contained 28 gold-coins of the Naga kings. 26 of those coins bear the legend Rajabhushana. One each bear the legend Prapagandabhairava and Ranabhushana, respectively.

The concavely shaped obverse of the coins bear the name of the king in embossed letters of Old Telugu script belonging to 11th-12th centuries A.D. The figure of either a sword/dagger or a Sivalinga, flanked by dots is depicted on every coin at 6 O’clock. The standing figure of a tiger is shown at the centre on each coin. Tiger is the royal emblem of the Naga dynasty of Bastar.

Coins bearing the legend 'Rajabhushana' may be attributed to Rajabhushana Dharavarsha and Rajabhushana Somesvaradeva, the Naga dynasty kings of Bastar. Coins, with the legend 'Prapagandabhairava' was issued by Somesvaradeva who acquired the title of Pratigandaabhairava. He is mentioned in the Narayanasapala inscription as Rajabhushana Pratigandabhairava Somesvaradeva. Ranabhushana of the coin may also be identified with Rajabhushana Somesvaradeva as records of the Naga dynasty do not mention any king known as Ranabhushana. The coins prevalent during the Naga-reign were known as Gadvanka. Inscriptions of the Naga rulers.

refer to the Gadyanka.11

The gold-coins of the Nala and Naga rulers of Bastar are indicative of their prosperous reign. No coin other than the gold has been noticed so far. It is a matter of great surprise. The Nagas, having a vast empire, must have had their coins of other categories also.

A thorough probing may reveal a few more varieties of coins minted in Bastar during the Naga-rule.

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