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Karam Tej Sarao
Delhi University

Jyoti Dwivedi
Delhi University

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Kāliṅgaratṭha and its Buddhist Connections

Jyoti Dwivedi and Karam Tej S. Sarao*

Invasion of the kingdom of Kāliṅga by King Aśoka and his consequent Dhamma policy is a recurrent theme in the Buddhist folk lore. In fact, the Kāliṅga event is often cited as an example in Buddhism of a cruel king (Caṇḍāsoka) becoming a righteous king (Dhammāsoka) by taking recourse to Buddhavacana. Historians have also debated on the long term consequences of the Kāliṅga War as well as the motive of Aśoka behind the war and its subsequent justificatory politics (Romila Thapar, 1997: 1ff). King Aśoka's reason for conquering the prosperous Kāliṅgaratṭha was that it commercially controlled the coastline for trade through the Bay of Bengal (K.Roy, 2015:15). But as Kāliṅgaratṭha had a powerful army¹ it was not so easy to conquer it and Aśoka's invasion led to death and destruction on a large scale. According to Aśoka's own admission made in his Thirteenth Rock Edict, when in the eighth year (c. 261 BCE) of his reign he invaded and conquered Kāliṅga, the savagery that took place led him to pledge to give up wars of conquest.²

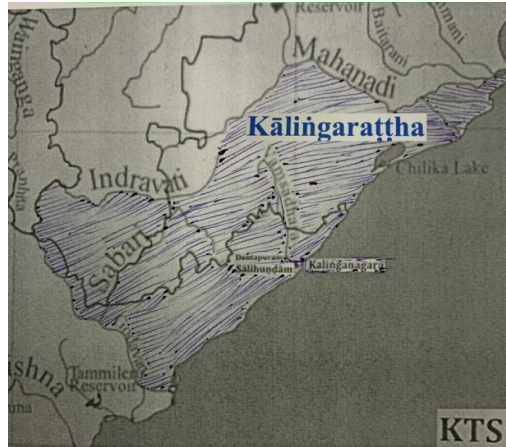
* Jyoti Dwivedi, Research Scholar, Department of Buddhist Studies, Delhi University, Delhi-110007. Email: poojajyoti09@gmail.com

Karam Tej S. Sarao, Pro-Chancellor, S.V. Subharti University, Meerut-250005. Email: ktssarao@hotmail.com

¹ According to the Greek historian Megasthenes, the ruler of Kāliṅgaratṭha had a powerful army consisting of infantry, cavalry, and elephants (see Dolly E. Sequeira, 2020: 45, 46).

² Relevant portions of the Thirteenth Rock Edict read as follows: "King he had been consecrated eight years, the Beloved of the Gods, King Piyadassi conquered the Kalingas. A hundred and fifty thousand people were

Though it is difficult to fix the geographical limits of Kāliṅgaratṭha, the Kāliṅga country, as its boundaries kept shifting



from one ruler to another, its core territory encompassed a large part of present-day Odisha, northern Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Chhattisgarh corresponding to the eastern coastal region between the Mahānādī and the Godāvarī rivers stretching from the sea in the east into the interior demarcated

roughly by a line drawn along the river Indravatī to its confluence with Godāvarī on the west.³

When international commercial activities picked up pace about the middle of the first millennium, the capital of Kāliṅgaratṭha appears to have moved from Dantapura to Kalinganagara.⁴ However, there has been some dispute regarding the exact location of Kalinganagara and it has been suggested that Kalinganagara could be any of the settlements such as Mukhalingam, Nagarakatakam, and Kalingapaṭnam. Fleet (1887: 132), Bhattacharya (1929: 623-625) and R.D. Banerji (1930: 245) have suggested that the capital of Kāliṅgaratṭha must be located in the

deported, a hundred thousand were killed and many times that number perished. Afterwards, now that the Kalinga was annexed, the Beloved of the Gods very earnestly practised *dhmma*, desired *dhmma*, and taught *dhmma*. On conquering Kalinga the Beloved of the Gods felt remorse, for, when an independent country the slaughter, death, and deportation of people... weighs heavily on his mind" (Thapar, 1997:256-257).

³ See R. Subrahmanyam, 1964: 10; R.C. Majumdar, 1996: 1; B.C. Law, 1973: 64; D.R. Bhandarkar, 1996: 12.

⁴ For instance, towards the end of the sixth century CE, when Hastivarman and Indravarman II began ruling Kāliṅgaratṭha, the charters by these two kings were issued from Kalinganagara indicating that this settlement had become the capital (see B.V. Krishnarao, 1942: 612). See also Monica L. Smith, 1999: 2.

close vicinity of modern Kāliṅgapaṭṇam either on the sea-shore itself where the river Vāṃsadhārā enters the Bay of Bengal or inland close by (Ramachandran, 1950: 137). However, on the basis of some dedicatory inscriptions found in the temple of God Madhukeśvara, G.V. Ramamurti (1896-97: 187-188),⁵ B.V. Krishnarao (1929: 105-115), and B.C. Law (1973: 64) feel that Kāliṅganagara must be identified with the twin villages of Mukhaliṅgam and Nagarakaṭaka which are located on the left bank of the Vāṃsadhārā at a distance of about forty-five kilometres from the sea. Further, both Ramamurti and Krishnarao assert that as Nagarakaṭakam means ‘a Royal Residence in Nagara,’ it ought to be equated with Kāliṅganagara. According to Krishnarao, “Some of the inscriptions of the temple of Madhukeśvara at Mukhaliṅgam speak of the shrine as situated in Kāliṅganagara itself. The city would seem to have been founded in the early part of the sixth century and perhaps by Hastivarman... (and) was merely called *sarvartu-sukhārāṃṇīyaḥ* and *Vijaya*, ‘the victorious city, which was pleasant in all seasons’” (Krishnarao, 1942: 613). In addition, Krishnarao and Ramamurti have pointed out that whereas the sea port of Kāliṅgapaṭṇam has not revealed any ancient site with no ruins worth consideration, Mukhaliṅgam has yielded old bricks, ruins of temples, and ancient carved pillars. Hence, they feel, Mukhaliṅgam is to be archaeologically judged as the site of the ancient capital Kāliṅganagara.⁶ However, in the opinion of Bhattacharya, “the passages occurring in the Mukhaliṅgam inscriptions, viz, *Kalingāvani Nagare*, *Kalingadeśa Nagare* can mean in Sanskrit no more than a town in the country of Kāliṅga or the town named in the Kalinga country (Deśa)” (Bhattacharya, 1929: 625). On the basis of the information provided in the Hātthigumphā Inscription of Khāravēla, Bhattacharya points out that “King

⁵ G.V. Ramamurti, 1896-97: 187-188. According to Ramamurti, the identification of Kāliṅganagara with modern Kāliṅgapaṭṇam on the basis of similarity between the two names is unacceptable. Moreover, according to him, “There are no antiquities, or any traces of them, in Kāliṅgapaṭṇam of a nature which could suggest the fact that its ever having been the capital of the Kalinga kingdom” (*Ibid.* 187). He feels that the three important temples in the vicinity of the twin villages of Mukhaliṅgam and Nagarakaṭakam (literally, ‘a royal residence in Nagara’) and the ruins between them represent the ancient capital of Kāliṅga (*Ibid.* 188).

⁶ Krishnarao, 1942:115; Ramamurti, 1896-97: 188.

Khāravēla clearly mentions in his inscription that just after his coronation, in the first year of his reign, he repaired his capital Kāliṅganagara, of which the gates, city-walls and buildings had been destroyed by storm (*Vāta-vihata-Gopura-pākāra-nivesanam pati-Saṃkhārayati Kalinga-Nagaram*).... This undoubtedly proves the metropolitan city being situated on the sea-side..." (Bhattacharya, 1929: 627). According to Bhattacharya, Mukhalingam being located inland, hence, could not be the capital city of Kāliṅganagara (Bhattacharya, 1929: 627-28). He further points out that the evidence presented in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Chicacole Grant of Indu Varman clearly hints at the capital of the Kāliṅga kings being upon the sea-side (Bhattacharya, 1929: 628-32).

According to a tradition mentioned in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Kāliṅgaratṭha was one of the seven political divisions⁷ at the time of the mythical king Renu.⁸ It has been further mentioned here that at that time, king Sattabhū was its ruler and Dantapura⁹ was its capital.¹⁰ Apart from Sattabhū, the Pāli texts mention the names of Nālikīra/Nālikera¹¹ and Karaṇḍu¹² who

⁷ Kāliṅgaratṭha is not included in the list of sixteen mahājanapadas appearing in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Morris and Hardy (eds.), 1895-1900: vol. i. 213). However, it finds a mention in the extended list of the *Cullavaddesa* (Stede (ed.), 1918: vol.ii.37). Thus, it seems that Kāliṅgaratṭha had not either come into existence or at least had not become an important political entity at the time of the Buddha.

⁸ According to a tradition mentioned in the Nikāyas, on the death of his father King Disampati, Renu is said to have divided his kingdom into seven parts viz. Kāliṅga, Assaka, Avanti, Sovīra, Videha, Aṅga, and Kāsī with their capitals respectively as Dantapura, Potana, Māhissatī, Roruka, Mithilā, Campā, and Bārāṇasī. He himself took Kāsī and gave Kāliṅga to Sattabhū (Morris and Hardy (eds.), 1895-1900: vol. ii.36, 228; Rhys Davids and Carpenter (eds.), 1890-1911: vol. ii.235f).

⁹ Dantapura is now represented by the ruins of the fort of Dantapuram located on the right bank of the river Vamsadhārā at a distance of about twenty-five kilometres inland from Kāliṅgapatnam. This identification is favoured by the similarities of name and geographical location (see B.C. Law, 1954: 149).

¹⁰ Rhys Davids and Carpenter, 1890-1911: vol. ii.235f. The references to Dantapura appear to be of Mauryan and post-Mauryan period (see Sarao, 2010: 48).

¹¹ Once Nālikira visited an ascetic who had camped in the royal park and became annoyed with the ascetic when the latter asked if he was a righteous ruler. He invited the ascetic and his companions to his palace, filled their

were the rulers of this kingdom. Kāliṅgarāṭṭha and its capital Dantapura are prominently mentioned in at least five Jātakas, viz., the *Kurudhamma Jātaka* (no. 276),¹³ the *Cullakāliṅga Jātaka* (no. 301),¹⁴ the *Kāliṅgabodhi Jātaka* (no. 479),¹⁵ *Sarabhaṅga Jātaka* (no. 522),¹⁶ and the *Vessantara Jātaka* (no. 547).¹⁷ According to a

bowls with filth, and had them beaten and attacked by dogs. Consequently, his kingdom turned into a desolate desert and he himself was born in the Sunakha niraya to suffer misery and torture (Fausböll (ed.), 1877-1897: vol. v., 119, 143; Woods, Kosambi, and Horner (eds.), 1922-38: vol.ii. 602ff).

- ¹² According to a tradition mentioned in the Jātakas, one day in his park he and his retinue ate mangoes from a tree laden with fruit and consequently, the entire tree was stripped bare. While returning to his palace, he noticed the sorry state of the tree and compared it with another tree which, having no fruit, was spared such destruction. Consequent to this reflection, he became a Pacceka Buddha and went to the Nandamūla-pabbhāra with three other persons, viz., Naggaji, Nimi, and Dummukha. The story of the *Kumbhakāra Jātaka* is based on these four persons (Fausböll, 1877-1897: vol. iii.376ff).
- ¹³ Once when the kingdom of Kāliṅga suffered from severe drought and consequent scarcity of food, the Kāliṅga king practised the Kurudhamma. This resulted in heavy rain and the end of famine in his country.
- ¹⁴ Kāliṅga, king of Dantapura, in his eagerness for a fight, picked a quarrel with Assaka, king of Poṭali, who in turn with the advice of his minister Nandisena, accepted the challenge. Kāliṅga was worsted in battle, and had to surrender his four daughters with their dowries to Assaka.
- ¹⁵ Culla Kāliṅga, the son of the king of Udantapura became an ascetic in the Himavā where near his hermitage lived the king of Madda with his wife and daughter. With the consent of the king and his wife, Culla Kāliṅga married the princess, and to these two was born a son whom they called Kāliṅga. Later, when the king of Dantapura dies, Kāliṅga was crowned king. Later, Culla Kāliṅga paid great honour to the Mahābodhi Tree for seven days.
- ¹⁶ While on his way to quell a rebellion, Daṇḍaki, the king of Kumbhavatī, a city in Kāliṅga, had insulted a monk called Kisavaccha under the impression that insult inflicted on Kisavaccha would bring him luck. On the contrary, gods were greatly incensed with Daṇḍaki and destroyed him and his country (Trenckner and Chalmers (eds), 1888-1896: i.378; Woods, Kosambi, and Horner, 1922-38: vol. ii.599ff; Fausböll, 1877-1897: vol.iii.463; vol.v.133ff; 267).
- ¹⁷ The Kāliṅga brāhmaṇas asked for and obtained Vessantara's white elephant that he may bring the drought in Kāliṅga to an end. Also it has been mentioned in the *Vessantara Jātaka* that Jūjaka and Amittatāpanā were from the brāhmaṇa village of Dunnaviṭṭha which was located in Kāliṅgarāṭṭha (Fausböll, 1877-1897: vol.vi. 521, 541).

tradition mentioned in the *Buddhavamsa* (Jayawickrama (ed.), 1974: xviii.6.) and the *Daṭṭhāvamsa* (Coomāra Swāmy Muttu (trans.), 1874: 37-38.), after the Mahāparinibbāna, the left eye-tooth of the Buddha was taken from among the Buddha's relics and was handed over by Khema Thera in Dantapura to Brahmadata, king of Kāliṅgaratṭha. King Brahmadata enshrined it in a temple specifically built for this purpose. Thereafter the Tooth-Relic remained at Dantapura's Relic Temple in the care of the succeeding kings of Kāliṅgaratṭha¹⁸ until it was taken to Sri Lanka during the reign of King Sirimeghavanna (362-409 CE) by Hemamālā, daughter of Guhasīva, king of Kāliṅga, and her husband Dantakumāra, a prince of the Ujjenī royal family.¹⁹ Consequently, the tooth became the rare object of reverence in Sri Lanka from which her kings drew their inspiration, power, and protection (Geiger and Rickmers (trans.), 1929-30: xxxvii.92). Kāliṅgaratṭha also played an important role in the transmission of the branch of the Sacred Mahābodhi Tree. Eight prominent families of Kāliṅgaratṭha were included by Aśoka in the entourage that escorted the Tree on its journey to Sri Lanka (Takakusu and Nagai (eds.), 1947-1975: vol.i.96). Kāliṅgaratṭha also became the home of Asoka's brother Mahāthera Tissa who became known as Ekavihāriya and spent the later years of his life here with his teacher Dhammarakkhita (Woodward (ed.), 1940-59: vol.i.506-507). Asoka is said to have built for Mahāthera Tissa the Bhojakagiri Vihāra in Kāliṅgaratṭha at a cost of one crore (coins) (Woodward (ed.), 1940-59: vol.i.506).

According to another tradition mentioned in the Pāli texts, perhaps the most noteworthy connection between Kāliṅgaratṭha and Sri Lanka is the former's connection with King Vijaya, the founder of Siṃhālā race. Susīmā, the grandmother of King Vijaya

¹⁸ Kalyāni Inscription of Dhammaceti (king of Pegu) engraved in 1476 CE talks of a cave constructed at the instance of the Mahārājā of Cīnadesa, on the seashore, where the Holy Tooth relic was deposited in the course of its transit from Kāliṅgaratṭha to Laṅkādvīpa in the charge of Daṇḍakumāra and his wife Hemamālā (Ko, Taw Sein 1893: 45).

¹⁹ At first Guhasīva did not pay honour to the Tooth-relic of the Buddha which was in his capital, but later, having seen a miracle, he became a Buddhist and paid the relic all homage. Dantakumāra, the son of the king of Ujjenī, came to Dantapura to worship the Tooth Relic and, while there, married Hemamālā, Guhasīva's daughter. He brought the Tooth Relic to Ceylon in the reign of Siri Meghavanna (Coomāra Swāmy, 1874: 60-79).

was a Kāliṅga princess who was married to the king of Vaṅga (B.C. Law, 1958: ix.2ff.). We are also told in the *Cūlavamsa* that during the reign of Sri Lankan King Aggabodhi II (601-611 CE), the king of Kāliṅga arrived in Sri Lanka along with his wife and a minister and joined the Saṃgha under Jotipāla (Geiger and Rickmers, 1929-30, xlii.44ff). It has also been mentioned in the *Cūlavamsa* that the queen consort of Sri Lankan king Mahinda IV (r. 975-991) hailed from Kāliṅga and Tilokasundarī, the wife of King Vijayabāhu I (r. 1055–1110) was a princess from Kāliṅgaratṭha (Geiger and Rickmers, 1929-30, lix.30). The connection between the two kingdoms and their royal dynasties was so strong that descendants of the rulers of Kāliṅgaratṭha are, in fact, said to have many times ruled over Sri Lanka (Geiger and Rickmers, 1929-30, lxiii.7, 12f). But it was King Kāliṅga Māgha (r. 1215-1236), an offspring of the Chodagaṅgā dynasty of Kāliṅgaratṭha (Barnett, 1999: 89), who was “an unjust king” and caused incomparable damage to Sri Lanka and Buddhism.²⁰

The site of Sālihuṅḍām, located at 18°20'02"N and 84°02'38"E in Gara mandal of Śrīkākulam district of Andhra Pradesh, is one of the most important Buddhist sites of Kāliṅgaratṭha.²¹ First excavated by G.V. Ramamurti in 1919, this site has yielded half a dozen structural stūpas (of apsidal, circular, and oblong shape), relic caskets, *caityas*, votive stūpas, and vihāras built between the third century BCE and the twelfth century CE. These archaeological remains now exist on the crest of the hill on the south bank of river Vaṃśadhārā about five kilometres from the now-defunct seaport of Kāliṅgapaṭṇam. In all likelihood,

²⁰ Māgha. A usurper from Kāliṅga who came to Ceylon with a band of Kerala warriors in about 1215 CE, deposed the reigning king, Parakkamapandu II., blinded him, and occupied the throne at Pulatthipura. Being a bigoted Hindu, he destroyed the Buddhist religious buildings and burnt their books. He persecuted the people in various ways and distributed their land among his warriors. He ruled for twenty one years, and seems to have been succeeded at Pulatthipura by Jayabāhu (Geiger and Rickmers, 1929-30, lxxx.58ff). During part of his reign, Vijayabāhu III ruled over a portion of Ceylon (*Ibid.*10ff).

²¹ This settlement, a protected Archaeological Survey of India site, but poorly maintained, is spread over an area of about sixty acres and is known to have had two other names viz., Śāliṅgāṭikā (Rice Emporium) and Sālyapeṭikā (Relic Box) (See Subrahmanyam, 1964: 4).

Sālihuṇḍām served the religious and spiritual needs of the capital of Kāliṅgaratṭha. As Kāliṅgapatnam was once a busy port that carried on maritime trade with South East Asia and the Roman empire and Buddhist missionaries travelled from here to popularize Buddhism in South East Asia, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.²²

It may not be out of place to mention two inscriptions from Sālihuṇḍām Vihāra that hint at its international profile.



Figure 1: Sālihuṇḍām

The first inscription, the Sālihuṇḍām Buddhist Pot Inscription, exists on the body of a pot used for drinking purposes. It has been incised very lightly and executed neatly and artistically to the extent that the circular or concentric form of the pot is maintained, the mouth, the inscription, and the outer edge of the pot all being in circles. The language of the inscription is Prākṛit and the script is Brāhmī of the second century CE, if not of an earlier period (Ramachandran, 1964: 135). The script is similar to that of the well-known Mathurā Inscription of Huviṣka of 106 CE. The text of this inscription reads as “*Haṃkuda(or de)yika-rāṭṭavālaka-vacchiyāna[m]-Kaṭṭahārāma*” (Ramachandran, 1964: 136). Ramachandran has translated it as “(This pot belongs to) the Kaṭṭahārāma (or Kaṭṭahāra ārāma) of (endowed by) the sons (offsprings) of the Rāṣṭrapālaka (by name) Haṃkudeyika” (Ramachandran, 1964: 136). It may be inferred that the Kaṭṭahāra Ārāma was the donation of the sons of Rāṣṭrapālaka who may have hailed from a place

²² The discovery of rouletted ware sherds in Sālihuṇḍām as well as Kāliṅgapatnam and Roman coins at Kāliṅgapatnam indicates towards frequent commercial contacts of this place with both the Roman empire and South East Asia (see Subrahmanyam, 1964: 8-9).

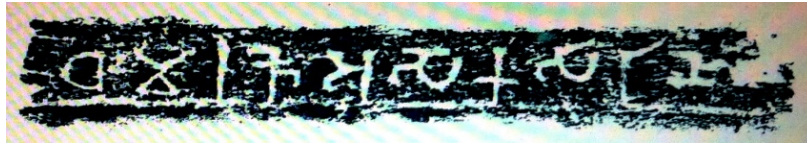
called Hamkudeyi or Hamkudayi. However, as suggested by Ramachandran, Hamkudeyi or Hamkudayi sounds like Kaludayi, a Buddhist name and therefore in all probability it was the name of the Rāṣṭrapālaka referred to in the inscription (Ramachandran, 1964: 136). On this basis, the inscription may be translated into English as “(The endowment of this pot to) the Kaṭṭahāra Ārāma (is by) the sons of Hamkudayi, the Rāṣṭrapālaka.”

The name of the monastery to which the drinking pot belonged is mentioned as Kaṭṭahārāma and on this basis it has been suggested that the *caitya* in which the pot was found was included within the monastic confines of the Kaṭṭahārāma wherein the other *caityas* were also located on the slope of the Sālihuṅḍām hill along with the *mahācaitya* and the apsidal *caitya* on top of the hill “more than a hundred feet high” (Li, 1996: 271) as Xuanzang describes and are easily visible from the sea shore (Ramachandran, 1964: 137).

In all probability the settlement name *Kaṭṭaha* is connected to the site of *Kaṭāha* in Palembang²³ and the overseas colonization from Kāliṅgarat̥ṭha (Ramachandran, 1964: 136). It is highly probable that this settlement was one of the

²³ Indianized Śaivite Hindu kingdom, known as Kalingga (Javanese: Karajan Kalingga), was located on the north coast of Central Java that came into existence in the present day Indonesia during the sixth century CE. It was the earliest Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in Central Java and together with the kingdoms of Kutai and Tarumanagara was the oldest kingdom in the history of Indonesia. The Tukmas Sanskrit Inscription written in Pallava script which belongs to the Kalingga period talks about a clear spring water that was so sacred that it was venerated as the equivalent of holy Gaṅgā's source in India. This inscription carries Hindu signs and metaphors, such as *triśūla*, *kamaṇḍalu* (water jar), *paraśu* (axe), *kalacengkha* (shell), *cakra* (wheel) and *padma* (red lotus) representing different Hindu deities. The Chinese sources mention that the kingdom of Kalingga was an important destination for Chinese monks who went there to learn Sanskrit and collect important Buddhist *sūtras*. Atiśa is said to have studied here before moving to Tibet as a Buddhist missionary. Yijing mentions that the capital city of the Kingdom of Kalingga was located at Palembang and that it was a famous centre of Buddhist learning. He further mentions that the king of Kalingga offered support to over a thousand monks at his court. Yijing was also an eye witness to the importance of Buddhism in Kalingga Kingdom as early as the year 671 CE, and he, in fact, advised future Chinese pilgrims to be in residence for a year or two at Palembang (see Bentley, 1993: 72).

nodal places from where Buddhism and Indian culture travelled towards Southeast Asia and beyond. The connections of *Kaṭṭaha* have also been seen in the Tamil name Kaḍāram located near Nāgapatnam (Ramachandran, 1964: 136). Further, *Kaṭṭaha* has also been linked to the *Kaṭṭahāra Sutta*²⁴ that was preached by the Buddha to the Kaṭṭahārakas of Kosala on the basis that the *mahājanapada* of Kosalaratṭha was located in the neighbourhood of Kāliṅgaratṭha, and the river Vamsadhārā, on which the Kaṭṭahāra Ārama was situated, flows through the territory of Kosala before it enters Kāliṅga region (Ramachandran, 1964: 8-9).



(Camera copy of the facsimile from *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XXXI, 1955-56: opposite page 87).

The second inscription known as the Sālihuṇḍām Buddhist Slab Inscription is a Prakrit inscription that exists on a slab that formed part of the top frieze of stones on the exterior surface of the *mahācaitya*. According to A.S. Gadre (1955-56: 87), it is a fragmentary record “as traces of letters proceeding and following this inscription can be seen on the inscribed stone itself.”²⁵ It reads: “*Dhamma(mā) raño Asokasirino.*” However, Gadre feels that it should be read as “*Dhammārāño Asokasirino*” and translates it as

²⁴ Some pupils of a Bhāradvāja brāhmaṇa; faggot-gatherers (*kaṭṭahārakā*), came across the Buddha engaged in meditation in a forest in Kosala and informed their teacher of it. He went to the Buddha and questioned him as to his purpose in dwelling in the forest. The brahmin expressed himself as being pleased with the information (Feer, 1884-1898: vol.i.180).

²⁵ However, D.C. Sircar disagrees and feels that the record does not seem to be fragmentary as on the stone slab on which the space occupied by the writing is 22" by 2" (an *akṣara* being 1½" in height), there is no space for letters before the record in ten *akṣaras* while there is what looks like a damaged punctuation mark after it (see Gadre, 1955-56: 87, fn3). However, according to Sircar, it is quite likely that some or most of the (now missing) slabs of the entire top frieze of the stūpa or of a part of it were inscribed and the inscription went round the drum of the stūpa in one line (see Gadre, 1955-56: 87,fn 6).

“the religious edicts (*dharmā*) of the illustrious (king) Aśoka”. His reasoning is that the epithet *dharmarāja* is applied in the Buddhist literature to Cakravartins, and that it is often applied to the Buddha.²⁶ Gadre has hinted at the high probability of the Sālihuṇḍam *mahācaitya* having been built during the Mauryan period (Gadre, 1955-56: 87). Thus, according to him, it is only to be expected that “a reference is made to Aśoka’s religious records in this inscription incised at a later stage by devotees” (Gadre, 1955-56: 87). Although it is difficult to speculate on the purpose of this inscription, both Sircar and Gadre feel that an ancient tradition ascribing a Buddhist structure at Sālihuṇḍām to Aśoka was in fashion in the region, the label referring to it having been affixed to it at a later date (Gadre, 1955-56: 88 fn.3). As the slab bearing the inscription was put up long after Aśoka to indicate that the original structure was raised by him, it may be translated into English as “Of illustrious Aśoka, the pious king.” Though Sircar tended to date this inscription in the second century CE, Gadre has suggested that its Brāhmī script is of about the beginning of the Common Era and hence on palaeographical grounds should be dated in the second-first century BCE (Gadre, 1955-56: 87-88).

The archaeological remains of the saṃghārāma of Sālihuṇḍām show the transformational history of Buddhism beginning with Theravāda and then passing through Mahāyāna, Tantricism, and finally some sort of crypto-Buddhism. Thus, one is not surprised to see sculptures of three-headed Mārīci, Tārā, Maitreya, Akṣobhya, Dhyāni, and Amitābha alongside various Brāhmaṇical-Hindu deities at Sālihuṇḍām.²⁷ The archaeological remains at Sālihuṇḍām also indicate towards this site being a meeting ground between the southern and northern architectural styles.

Buddhism appears to have begun to decline in Kāliṅgarāṭṭha in the post-Gupta period. Talking about Kāliṅgarāṭṭha and the

²⁶ But the editor, D.C. Sircar, cites the *Samantapāsādikā* (Takakusu and Nagai, 1947-1975, vii. 309) where Aśoka is represented as a *Dvīpa-Cakravartin*. The epithet *dharmarāja* is most appropriate for Aśoka. According to Sircar, it is a complete inscription. The slab bearing it was put up long after Aśoka to indicate that the original structure was raised by him (see, Gadre, 1955-56: 87 fn.3).

²⁷ See Gadre, 1955-56: 87-88; Amareswar Galla, 1982.

declining fortunes of Buddhism there during the first half of the seventh century, the famous Chinese traveller, Xuanzang, says-

The country of Kāliṅga is more than five thousand *li* in circuit and its capital city is over twenty *li* in circuit. The crops are sown in the proper seasons and both flowers and fruit thrive. Woods and marshes extend to several hundred *li* at a stretch. It produces darkish wild elephants that are valued by neighboring countries. The climate is hot and the people are irascible and violent by custom; most of them are rash and impetuous by nature, though they are trustworthy and faithful. They speak in a quick and fluent manner with correct pronunciation, but their phraseology is quite different from that of Central India. A few of them believe in the right Dharma but the majority follow the heretics. There are more than ten monasteries with over five hundred monks who study the teachings of both the Mahāyāna and the Sthavira schools. There are over one hundred deva temples and the heretics are numerous; most of them are *nirgranthas*.

Not far to the south of the capital city is a stupa more than one hundred feet high built by King Aśoka. Beside it are traces where the four past buddhas sat and walked up and down. On the great ridge of a mountain in the north frontier of the country is a stone stupa more than a hundred feet high. This is the place where a *pratyekabuddha* entered nirvana at the beginning of the present *kalpa*, when the human life span was countless years. (Li, 1996: 271).

Interestingly, king Indrabhūti in his Vajrayāna-Tantric work *Gyānasiddhi* of the eighth century CE refers to Jagannātha as the Buddha (Patel, 2007: 39). The Bhaumakaras of this kingdom (c.736-950 CE) followed the Pāla lead in adopting Buddhist epithets while supporting a variety of religious institutions. Buddhism definitely appears to have hit the floor in most parts of Kāliṅga region from about the Somavaṃśī period (eighth-ninth century CE), with some Buddhist *siddhas* staying active in remote areas (Tripathy, 1988: 241). However, after the Turuṣka attacks of Vikramaśilā and Odantapurī, some of the Buddhist monks from there appear to have moved into the Kāliṅga region. However, as described by Vasu, the kind of Buddhism that survived here had become “a kind of crypto-Buddhism,” a synthesis of Tantra, Buddhism, and Vaiṣṇava themes (Vasu, 1911: 29). Clearly, Buddhistic elements had been overwhelmed by Brāhmaṇic ideas (Omvedt, 2003: 212). For instance, in the sixteenth century, Achutānanda Das in his *Śūnya Saṃhitā* is described as wandering in the forest in search of the Lord, who tells him to “take refuge in the Buddha, in mother Ādiśakti as the

first primordial energy (i.e. Dharma) and in the Saṃgha... know that the Buddha is none else but Brahman himself” (Vasu, 1911:113).

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140 *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 22, 2021-22

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142 *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 22, 2021-22

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