

Inscription from Dudhpani. A problem of interpretation of Sanskrit "political" terminology.

The text of an inscription from Dudhpani in Bihar has been published in 1894 by F.Kielhorn. In his commentary he dated it by VIII century, being based on paleography of an inscription, in many respects similar to inscription of Adityasena (647-680)¹ from Aphasad, Later Gupta king . Adjustment of Later Gupta ruling time, in comparison with to what followed J. Fleet and F. Kielhorn, allows for us to date the examined text by VII century. As it is possible to judge from the contents, it has been written down by descendants of its basic heroes and, accordingly, the events described here concern to earlier time, probably, by time of Harsha.

F. Kielhorn did not pay attention to the use in this text with the subject, unusual for Indian epigraphy, so unusual special terminology - the author of the sole publication of this text simply did not know about the existence of tradition of "political literature". Did not pay attention to this fact R.Sh. Sharma, mentioned this inscription as the reflection of the fact of existence the practice of commendation (voluntary transition under protection of "feudal lord"), considerably more well-known in the European sources, rare for the Indian history of that time.

To emphasize important, from our point of view, features of a subject and terminology of the present inscription, we will address to its contents. All events described here concern three little villages - Bhramara-Shalmali and two next to it - Chingala and Nabhutishandaka. It is essential, that these villages mentioned as insignificant settlements, it is emphasized by the use of the term *palli*, small village²,

¹ EI, vol. II, 344-46; K.K.Thapliyal mentioning the examined inscription (K.K. Thapliyal, Inscriptions of the Maukharis, Later Guptas, Pushpabhutis and Yashovarman of Kanauj, Delhi, 1985, p. 45), comes out with the assumption, that Adisimha, mentioned here, and Adityasena Gupta, the son of the friend and favorite of Harsha - Mahasenagupta - the same person. R.Sh.Sharma (R.Sh. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, 1965, p.33), interpreting the text, as one of rare evidences for India about existence of practice of commendation.

² Other meaning - " settlement of a wild tribe " in my mind here is inappropriate - the village obviously was on the important trading way connecting Ayodhya with bay of Bengal - for this reason here have stopped, coming back home, three brothers-merchants.

instead of *grama*, usual term for epigraphy. Adisimha, Adhiraja of Magadha, as here it is spoken, was **formerly** the governor (*Adhipati*) in these villages. The meeting of Adisimha with the main heroes of an inscription - merchant Udayamana and his two brothers stopped in village on road back home from Ayodhya, has taken place, when he (Adisimha), been going to hunt in these places, has preliminary appeared in the village Bhramara-Shalmali and has demanded from inhabitants "*avalagana*", probably, any tribute³. King of Magadha has demanded the tribute **on the road** to hunting, inhabitants, obviously were not ready to such requirement - therefore, it is possible to assume, that it was any irregular, "single" tribute. They have addressed for the help to the rich merchants stayed in the village. The eldest from brothers, Udayamana, has agreed to help. Having paid "*avalagana*", Udayamana became the "favourite" or "friend" (*vallabha*, the term having in epigraphy, more often, a "political" meaning)⁴ of Adisimha. Having carried out some days together with the king of Magadha, Udayamana has received from Adisimha the "diadem" and last, under his request, even has agreed to express (probably, in public) to inhabitants of village his satisfaction. And, after returning, Udayamana has been met by the inhabitants who have addressed to him with words: "Be you here the *raja*, protecting this village ! " Having received his consent, inhabitants have given to him "a rank of the raja" (*rajyapada*) and *have appointed* him " the ruler of the land" (*kshitibhrit*). So, as it is spoken in an inscription, this family (*shreni*) has achieved *the reign* (*rajya*)

It is quite possible, that by the term *palli* the settlements included in a larger rural community - *grama* could be mean. See, for example, the inscription of VI century from Ajjibal, where fixed the grant of Krishnavarman II Kadamba of Kamaka-*palli*, which entered in Girigada-*grama* in Karvanaga-vishaya (EI, XVI, 268). See, also, Medvedev E.M. Sketches of a history of India till XII century, M., 1990, p. 202.

³ The contents of an inscription and the term, more in Sanskrit epigraphy not meeting, do not give the basis more precisely to judge essence of this tribute. R.Sh.Sharma (R.Sh. Sharma, Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, 1965, p.33) counted it as derivative from *olaga* in kannada, D.Ch.Sircar (Indian Epigraphical Glossary, Delhi 1966) - from a similar word in gujarati.

⁴ Though the term *vallabha* not necessarily means the ruler, the subsequent information - that it has been recognized as king and "dependent" ruler in this village and so forth, allows to assume such sense of the use of this term. In the same mean it is used in "Arthashastra" of Kautilya. Not superfluous will note here, that *mitra* (the friend, the ally) more often, also, referred to as the ruler dependent from the dominating king and clearest "display" of such friendship were payments by them the tributes.

and became *the king's family*. Udayamana after returning in Bhramara-Shalmali has sent his brothers to rule in the next villages as "dependent" (*vashya*) governors. One of them is characterized here, as "(possessed) by circle (*mandala*) of the crushed enemies (*amitra*)". From three verses finishing the text it is possible to judge, that a principal cause of drawing up of an inscription was an explanation of mutual relations of three kingdoms and their kings by related connections of their ancestors (descendants of younger brothers of Udayamana continued to rule as dependent from the ruler of Bhramara-Shalmali).

The text of this inscription forces to reflect on two essentially important problems, the unequivocal attitude to which by indologists, in our opinion, always created the certain obstacles for correct understanding of the contents of sociopolitical relations in India in an antiquity and the Middle Ages. First of all, I have mean unambiguity of representations about structure of "states" in an Ancient and the Middle Ages, about the logic of their creation⁵. And, as consequence, a frequent incorrectness of interpretation of "political" terminology by indologists, which always understood the term *raja* "king", as a designation of the head of "state", the term *rajya*, a kingdom, as a designation of territory of the state, accordingly, *desha*, *vishaya* and so forth - as designations of "administrative divisions", "districts", and terms by which designated, for example, the persons collecting taxes, were as designations of "officials".

The using of "political" terminology draws here special attention because these "rajas" ruled in small *villages-palli*. Usual for epigraphy, shastras and literature interpretation of terms "*raja, rajya, mandala*" and so forth looks inconceivable in a context of an examined inscription. Certainly, it is necessary to take into account, that the Indian inscriptions could exaggerate or embellish considerably feats fixed in them, gains the tituls of rulers. Following tradition, using vocabulary, special terminology of the epos and shastras, they could transform the description of ordinary event into an epic narration or follow in its description by the model of shastra. Such method of a statement looks

⁵ See, more in detail, the State in a history of a society. M., 2001, p. 4-6, 9-15. Strictly speaking, in representations of indologists about creation of the states in an Ancient and the Middle Ages there is nothing unusual and specifically "Indian". It, more likely,

quite natural for the Indian tradition, the logic of its use is clear also - authors fixed events how they should be submitted from their point of view. But in this case the concrete designation of a place of events sharply contrasts with the pomp characterization of mentioned persons and it allows to judge with the big share of confidence reliability of the examined text.

Does not cause doubt knowledge and use by authors the subjects of the epic literature. It is possible, that they use even local variants of a Mahabharata (it is possible to guess about it by the using as epithets not only the names of Arjuna, Karna, but also the known negative hero, king Jarasandha). And the authors knew the terminology of the “political” literature - about brother of Udayamana, Ajitamana (literally - "invincible"), dependent king in "palli” Chingalaya it is spoken, as about the king possessed *a mandala* of the crushed enemies. As reliability of the events, quite rational explanation of which stated here, as **brothers-merchants** became **rulers** in three "villages-palli” does not cause doubt, important the question raised here - by what bases were guided the authors of an inscription naming brothers as *rajās*, and one of them, even the ruler *of a mandala*. Recognition generalizations in social and political terminology in the sources, when by one term (for example, "servant", "dignitary", "friend - ally") could be called representatives of various levels of public hierarchy here does not give an opportunity to clear a situation as the question is quite concrete events at the lowermost level of public structure. The village which ruled by Udayamana hardly was on periphery of areas of distribution of the Indian textual tradition for which use of the term "king" (*raja*) always meant presence of the public status, rights, duties and performance of corresponding rituals by him. That authors of an inscription followed tradition of the text - the contents of an inscription, use of traditional epithets and terminology testifies. Accordingly, there should be enough many strong reasons to speak about "kings" in villages.

The explanation of features of the researched text, as well as an explanation of the reasons of the uncertainty of social and political terminology, as it is represented to me, need to search not in remoteness from a real life of literary tradition to which followed epigraphy, but in discrepancy its categorial apparatus with categories of the European

interpretation of corresponding materials in spirit of concepts of statehood prevailed at

historical science. The insufficient attention to this problem conducts, sometimes, to a mechanical identification Sanskrit and special "state" terminology (in this case) of the European science. The reason and, simultaneously, consequence of it is discrepancy of representations about folding and evolution of statehood in India in an Ancient and Middle Ages.

Quite clearly, that a lot of the phenomena of the Indian culture is not reduced to names which more often we apply to them, considering, for example, upanishadas, as the monuments of philosophical idea, dharmashastras - as "collections of laws"⁶. The names fixed in dictionaries which we use for translation of group of Sanskrit terms having political, social, fiscal character used for transfer and judgement of the facts of a real life and political practice of that time are even less correct. And through such translation of terminology sometimes the concepts thrust to the Indian texts, which form the basis for judgements about reliability - unauthenticity of texts, about time of their creation, etc. We marked very many such discrepancies at the analysis as literary sources, as epigraphy.

It is remarkable, that if to look at the information of the Indian texts, not imposing them ready universal model of structure of the state⁷ it is possible to find a line of the important parallels with an examined inscription in authoritative texts. It is known the construction of "public hierarchy" mentioned in Manava-dharmashastra and resulted in Mahabharata, too, where the ruler of village is called as "adhipati" and, simultaneously, *gramika* (the head of village), and "rulers" of ten, twenty or 100 villages – *isha*, that the ruler of 100 villages is called *adhyaksha* (supervisor) (VII. 114 - 116). Vishnumriti follows such model, naming the rulers of village, 10, 100 settlements and areas simultaneously by terms *adhipa* and *adhyaksha* (and already at a village level such "ruler - supervisor" is allocated with the right to give inhabitants *of a privilege - parihas*⁸). There are not contradiction in constructions of the states in the Indian "political"

the end of XIX - XX centuries.

⁶ See, more in detail, Vigasin A.A. Foreword to translation of Pandey R.B. Ancient Indian domestic ceremonies. M. 1990.

⁷ The similar picture turns out by consideration of *adhyaksha*, known term from Kautilya's "Arthashastra".

⁸ So generalized are called in epigraphy in numerous grants of a various sort - privileges (immunities) reduced, mainly, to clearing from taxes.

literature – as “raja” can be called the ruler of “empire” (*mandala*), the ruler of kingdom (*rajya*) included in a mandala, an "ally", the ruler, which territory included in the territory of rajya, according to the concept of "*saptanga*". We can see quite real political context in titles, used since the time of Kushanas, such as "king of kings" (maharajadhiraja, rajadhiraja, etc.) Looking to epigraphy of I half of I millenium AD we have many reasons to see in the mentioned terms quite certain sense - rulers, persons possessed authority within the framework of this or that territory (it is unimportant, whether there were they representatives of nobility, local elite, officials of the organizations of communal type, each of which could be interpreted as personal servant of king) were perceived as the persons who are carrying out management of this territory, executing the functions of "managers", “officials”. The Indian inscriptions of I half of I millenium AD do not fix any other "special" administration.

In sequence of events stated in an inscription a number of the important details which existence we have the right to guess is meant. First of all, I have in a kind the form of board in mentioned "villages". Obviously, before occurrence of merchants here there were neither "ruler", nor representatives of king's authority, especially, - "king's administration". King has collected **inhabitants** of three villages and has addressed to them with the requirement about tribute, **inhabitants** have addressed for the help to merchants, **inhabitants**, meeting Udayamana after he has returned from Adisimha, have addressed to him with the request to become their ruler. Originally, the authority in recognizing, as a unit villages (constant allocation allows us to guess Bhramara-Shalmali as **the main**) was, probably, in hands of the local rural organization. This local organization was used, probably, before occurrence of merchants as administrative structure - anyway here there were no other institutes for gathering state taxes. This organization, probably, through elders, has addressed to merchants with the request to begin to rule in these villages.

Appearance the merchants in a village, which, certainly, did not travel alone and without protection, the situation with the arrival of king Adisimha and his requirement about payment tribute has served as the reason of surprisingly easy and fast change of authority - so, anyway is spoken in an inscription. The king of Magadha obviously did not disturb by such change of authority – he had not different ways for reception the tributes from

inhabitants of villages, except for "detours" of such territories. Even on the contrary - occurrence of the rulers in the given territory, responsible for gathering taxes was favourable for him (to provide always more easy loyalty and humility of the individual governor).

It is possible to assume the certain benefit which was seen by inhabitants of villages that "kindly merchants" become rulers of this territory. Obviously, Bhramara-Shalmali was near to the important trading road from Ayodhya to bay of Bengal (therefore brothers here have stopped). Here groups of robbers operated, from which "rulers"-merchants could provide more effective protection. An occasion to call them as rulers there were the riches of the brothers who have paid for inhabitants the tribute for Adisimha (thus, hardly merchants would began to pay, not assuming to receive from inhabitants something in exchange). And, at last, an occasion to call brothers-merchants as rulers, quite there could be an ease from which they could agree with Adisimha.

It is no doubt that the invitation to rule in three villages was quite favourable to brothers-merchants. Along with change of the public status with more honourable, they have undertaken a duty "to protect" territory of villages (a duty in the Indian tradition always meaning payment by inhabitants of such territory for protection) to provide payment the taxes of inhabitants of this territory to the Supreme ruler. Brothers-merchants are called in an inscription as *rajas* because they became those in essence, having undertaken duties to protect the inhabitants, to carry out the control over gathering of taxes, contacts (reduced, probably, to regulation of payments) with powerful Supreme king of Magadha, representing and protecting interests of territory. The contents of relations of *rajas-merchants* and the inhabitants of three villages quite corresponds to relations king - subject in the Indian tradition.

We marked earlier, that in the Indian sources any territory (including, empires) can be comprehended as the big family, a clan or a tribe, inhabitants living on such territory, subjects of the rulers - as children, clan's members, parts of such territories - as the grounds of separate families, their governors - as "brothers and sisters" of the king. And hardly it is necessary to reduce such judgement of them only to ideology, to underestimate their real value. Any *king-raja* in the Indian sources could, simultaneously be called, as "master", "owner - ruler" (*svamin*), "supporter", "the head of family"

(bhartar), etc. In this case we have a return case when the authority of the ruler of village associates with king's *(rajya)*, and he is called *raja* or the owner of *a mandala* ("empire", i.e., the several other territories dependent on such ruler), that so logically follows from the contents of relations within the such territory.