

## Term koṭṭa in early Nepal epigraphy.

Deal with a problem of significance and complexity in detailed examinations of Indian Epigraphy for reconstruction of a history of classic India, American Indologist R. Salomon<sup>1</sup>, the author of recently published monography "Indian epigraphy", as one of major methods for examination of epigraphical sources names a method of comparative analysis, however, only, as a method of reconstruction of damaged inscriptions. But, employment of the named method, alongside with the context analysis of the texts can, apparently to facilitate, also, for more accurate definition of a lot of important terms (for understanding features of development of social and political structure of Indian society, for example), on which inexact interpretation, quite often, a lot of historical surveys are based. As an example of necessity of employment for the such method, in this article will be presented the analysis of the term koṭṭa use in early Nepal Sanskrit inscriptions, important, in my opinion, for understanding features of structure of early Society of Indian subcontinent.

A. Bhattacharya, fairly evolving this term in her monograph<sup>2</sup>, in its interpretation, however, follows traditional way. It is possible to translate this term, in her judgement, as "a fort, fortification", and, as an example, she refers to its similar interpretation of this term in V.V. Mirashi publication of a damaged inscription from the time of Pratiharas from X century (i.e., later, than all inscriptions, mentioned in her monograph<sup>3</sup>). In the interpretation of mentioned term, also, she is based on judgement of known epigraphist D.R. Regmi, interpreting this term as the designation of fortified area on a high altitude or a ridge<sup>4</sup>. In her judgement, the use of the indicated term, which synonym was the term durga, testifies that separate villages (!) already in an early history of Nepal were transformed to fortifications - "well protected areas", "into a cantonment areas" with housing for soldiers, stores for arms etc. (!)<sup>5</sup>

The reason for our analysis of the indicated term, certainly, is not based on mentioned so free and incorrect, in my opinion, its interpretation. This important term is interesting because it meets in epigraphy of different periods of Indian history, in different parts of Indian subcontinent. For the first time it is mentioned in First Minor pillar edict of Ashoka, where it is offered to dispatch "decree" of king in everything, as is usually translated, "mountain areas"<sup>6</sup> (or forts and regions<sup>7</sup>, koṭa-viṣavesu). There is no reliance, that such translation of the term is correct, however of its other mentions in Ashokan inscriptions we have not.

According the "Indian Epigraphical Glossary", the term frequently meets in Indian epigraphy, down to the time of Vijayanagara. It is mentioned here in various combinations, in two major types of meaning: koṭṭa-pāla, koṭa-pāla, koṭṭa-pati, koṭ-ādhikaraṇika, koṭṭa-nigraha or koṭṭa-nigrahin (in all - "the fort"), or koṭaka, koṭṭaka, koṭṭam, koṭṭa-viṣaya (interpreted by D.Ch.Sircar, as "district", including "around the fort"). In its interpretation he is based widely on habitual significance of this term in translations of Tamil inscriptions, in which correctness, also, there is an occasion to doubt.

The term koṭṭa fairly often meets in early Nepal epigraphy<sup>8</sup>. For the first time it meets in one of the early inscription of Vasantadeva (20.9-10 = V.20)<sup>9</sup> from 428 year in the formula concerning to conditions of the grant "according to the stable rules of koṭṭa"<sup>10</sup>. Its such use in similar contexts most often meets in Nepal inscriptions<sup>11</sup> and requires special consideration. The analysis of the contents and place of the noted formula<sup>12</sup> in inscriptions, allows to state some judgments. Here, unconditionally, is spoken not about the fort, fortified area or place, but about certain "traditional rules" or "customs"<sup>13</sup> of koṭṭa, their complex (therefore is spoken about "all" or "basic", śarīra, rules), accordingly to which the grants were made out. Apparently, taking into account a usual conciseness of inscriptions and "conditions" of the grants in charters, this permanently repeating instruction was rather important for Nepal kings. These rules, which the kings followed, were hardly determined by them - in special cases (for example, in the case at decrease of traditional norms of duties) the inscriptions mention "rules established by king"

(narapatikṛta-maryyāda, see, for example Amshuvarman charter from year 31). In the other inscription (54.17 = V.58), quite probably, details about koṭṭa norms is stated.

In the inscription of Shivadeva I, which date was not saved (54.17 = V.58), in a damaged line, is spoken: " and that of you, who is born in [appropriate] gotra, outside of koṭṭa, can live at the other places; for necessary in activity those [lives outside of?] his own koṭṭa... "<sup>14</sup>. Even the damaged phrase allows to repute, that not the fort, but the local, non-state organization is referred to. In other Shivadeva I grant the same term is used twice in connection with boundary definition (54.18-24 = V.58 - koṭṭasīman, tatsīmāparikṣipte ṡsmin koṭṭe), probably, as a synonym for granted village. In other charter of Shivadeva I (60.11-12 = V.65) the term is used in connection with the prohibition from the king for "inhabitants Pheraṅ-koṭṭa and others " to harm to the inhabitants of granted village, and the term koṭṭa is represented itself as designation of territorial organization compared with village, rural community. In the charter of Dhruvadeva and Jishnugupta (100.9-10 = V.108), on the basis of the saved text it is possible to judge that here is spoken about transfer to a temple the Talañju-grāma, becoming (or, literally, "made as") koṭṭa (..... Koṭṭaṅ-kṛtvā pratipāditam). In the charter from 100 year (140.7. = V.146) are spoken about certain "place" (or "centre") of koṭṭa (Koṭṭa-sthānam). In the charters of Shivadeva II (136 = V.143) the term meets in the name of granted village - Avākoṭṭā (136.7), in most often meeting context mentioned above, and in connection with boundary definition, where is spoken about dāvā-koṭṭa (136.17, probably, here it is possible to read the hole word as the name of village).

Based on examined cases, it is possible to approve, that the organizations named koṭṭa had concrete territories, names (Pheraṅ-koṭṭa, Avākoṭṭā), rules, inhabitants, borders, which does not allow to consider this term as designation of "fort", but the local organisation. And even in a unique case in Licchavi's inscriptions, when, in the damaged text, probably, there is a organization named koṭṭa "created" by the king mentioned, without delay, it can be interpret only as the change of the status of mentioned in the same place village (obtained the status of koṭṭa, as a result of king grant), in complete correspondence to usual mentioned traditional norms.

It is possible to judge about significance of such changes of the village's status (which, taking into account permanently repeating the references on the rules of koṭṭa, in many grants) only presumably. That the mention of the rules koṭṭa more often attached with the prohibition of access into the territory of grants for the inter-rural organizations - " adhikaraṇas ", which major functions, apparently, were the tax and fines collection (i.e. fiscal and judicial functions), both these instructions can be linked. And therefore we can judge, that the limitation of "adhikaraṇas" authority in the rural communities<sup>15</sup> took place not only by the prohibition for them of access into the territory of grants, but also by the changes of village's status. And then, it is possible to read formula with the considered term most often mentioned in inscriptions as "according to the rules FOR koṭṭa ", territorial organization, under the status independent from inter-rural "committees- adhikaraṇas ". Thus, the institute of "grants" completely relevant to tradition, had, probably, at the same time, rather pragmatismal social and political idea - change of a social and political structure of society, removing local territorial organizations from under the authority of inter-communal "committees-adhikaraṇas".

The mentions of the various rules for grants are not rare in the early epigraphy in various places of Inda (for example, cāturvedya-grāma-maryyādā, "rules" or "customs" for [grants] of villages for the brahmanas, well versed in 4-th Vedas in Vakataka inscriptions, rules for "brahmadeya" or "agrahara" in inscriptions of Bagh kings). And these grants obviously lead to changes in a social and political structure of society, to appearance of new social organizations - brahmadeyas, agraharas become latter as the designations of quite concrete local organizations. And also it was possible to admit, that the practice of land-grants widely widespread in V-VI AD, alongside with

others, had definite social and political idea, reflecting dynamics of mutual relations of a state authority with local organizations, important changes during formation of an Indian state.

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1 Salomon, R. Indian Epigraphy. Austin, 1998. It is necessary to mark, that there are not so many publications in a historiography, where discussed the general problems of systematisation of epigraphy, general principles of examination of inscriptions etc. It is possible only to mark only known books of D.Ch. Sircar (Sircar D.Ch. Indian Epigraphy. Delhi, 1965; Sircar D.Ch. Indian epigraphical glossary. Delhi, 1966), which importance R. Salomon fairly marks. The reason of such situation are obvious - complexity and multistage work with epigraphy (deciphering, translation, analysis, each of such stages requires the high specialization), necessity of knowledge of numerous types of scripts, languages (including their dialects) etc. Some researchs are known, where the attempt is made to decide general problems of examination of epigraphical texts on the basis of the analysis of the group of these sources, first of all so-called. "Land-grants" (see, for example, Chhabra B.Ch. Diplomatic of Sanskrit Copper-Plate Grants. - in: Indian Archives, 1951, № 5; Prakash, Om, Early Indian Land-Grants and State Economy). The deficit of such common researchs, in my opinion, is one of the important reasons for tolerance of a lot of stereotypes, existing in a historiography from a beginning XX centuries, for example, in research of a history of forming and evolution of social and political structure of Indian Society and State, numerous examples of a familiarity in the interpretation of epigraphy in concrete regional historical researches (especially, indian) on which materials, quite often, the researches of other scholars are based. One of such stereotypes, for example, which often discussed in our papers - "centralized bureaucratic state» in Ancient India. [back](#)

2 A. Bhattacharya, Nepalese Inscriptions in pre-Nevari eras: An annotated bibliography, Calcutta, 1994. [back](#)

3 The similar references to translations of the later texts and the interpretation of the special terminology, often meet in an Indian Historiography. [back](#)

4 Regmi D.R. Ancient Nepal. Calcutta, 1960, p.191. [back](#)

5 A. Bhattacharya, Nepalese Inscriptions in pre-Nevari eras., p. 74. [back](#)

6 It is impossible to understand why this "edict" is offered to dispatch only in "mountain areas". [back](#)

7 This interpretation looks better. It is possible to suppose, that here we have the interesting uncommon instance of duality, usual mentioned as pura-janapada, pura-rashtra etc. On the other hand it is better, from my mind, to interpret both these terms as having the similar meanings - different "regions". [back](#)

8 The question on a possibility of the uniform interpretation it (as, however any other terms) in sources of different time, from different locations - special and should be decided separately in each concrete case (this question, even in relation to the interpretation of the term kotta in the present examination is not put). [back](#)

9 At the number of an inscription we use a serial number of an inscription in our database (up to 164 numbers it is the same as the numbers in the list of A. Bhattacharya), in brackets we marks the numbers in publications (V = D.V are given. Vajracharya, Lichchhavi Kal Ka Abhilekha (in Nepali), Kathmandu, 2003 Vir Era). [back](#)

10 sushita-kotta-[ma]ryyādaḥ [back](#)

11 sarvva-kotta-maryyād-opapannatvād - 54.8=V.58;

Koṭṭamaryā(d-opapanno) - 55.9=V. 59;

Sarvakōṭṭamaryyādopapanna - 62.7 (=V.67);

sarvakōṭṭamaryyādā - 116.13(=V.124);

śārīra-kōṭṭ-obhay-ānekamaryyād-opapannaḥ - 122.7(=V.129);

śārīrakoṭṭamaryyādopapannaḥ - 127.6 (=V.133);

śārīrakoṭṭamaryyād-opapannaḥ 128.6-7 (=V.134);

śarīrakoṭṭamaryādo[paṇṇa]ḥ - 132.5.(=V.139);

koṭṭamaryādopaṇṇaḥ - 136.7.(=V.143).

Koṭṭamaryādāsmābhiḥ prasādikṛtā, 138.24 = V.145; 70.11-12 (= V.73), 71.14-15 (= V.74).

[back](#)

12 To the mentioned cases is possible to join one more - in the charter of Jayadeva II from 137

year is spoken that the village is made as "the grant" accordingly to "the rules" of koṭṭa [back](#)

13 maryada, about correspondence of grants to other rules, not mentioned directly, the

inscriptions speak similarly often. [back](#)

14 smad-gotraṅgā ye koṭṭād bahir nyatra nivaseyus-teṣāṅ-kāryya-prayojane svakoṭṭā..... [back](#)

15 About what is spoken directly and often in inscriptions. [back](#)