

The Date of the Bhūti Vikramakēsari

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By K. A. NILAKANTHA SASTRI

VENKAYYA and I are of opinion that the Koḍumbāḷūr inscription of Bhūti Vikramakēśari must be dated in the tenth century A.D. ; Father Heras proposes a date three centuries earlier. The arguments originally put forward by Venkayya, together with others drawn from Cōḷa inscriptions, have been summarized by me in my paper on the Koḍumbāḷūr inscription to which Fr. Heras has referred in his paper published in a recent issue of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (January, 1934, pp. 33 ff.). I propose here to examine the steps by which Fr. Heras reaches his conclusion.

The first observation to be made is that Fr. Heras misquotes me and ignores most of the arguments I have produced in support of my position—which is, it will be remembered, also that of Venkayya and, let me add, of Krishna Sastri, the two writers who, after Hultzsch, have rightly commanded the greatest authority in the realm of South Indian Epigraphy.

Fr. Heras writes : “ Professor Nilakantha Sastri, moved by ‘ the similarity of names or vague palæographical inferences ’, finally concludes that ‘ we have therefore no reason to accept a date about A.D. 800 for Vikramakēśari in preference to one, say, between A.D. 950 and 970, suggested by considerations urged in the preceding paragraph ’.” What I actually said is, however, this : “ The contemporaneity of Vikramakēśari and Parāntaka II Sundara Cōḷa is borne out in fact by much stronger evidence than the similarity of names or vague palæographical inferences,”¹ and I cited an inscription of this Cōḷa monarch found in Koḍumbāḷūr itself. I may draw attention to the arguments ignored by Fr. Heras by citing just another sentence from the same paper² : “ Thus, the mention of Vikramakēśari’s queens in Rājakēśari inscriptions and the facts that Sundara Cōḷa

¹ *JOR.*, vii, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

is a Rājakēsari, that an inscription of his is found in Koḍumbālūr, and that a general from Koḍumbālūr fought in Sundara Cōḷa's army in the Pāṇḍya country—doubtless in the same war with Vīra Pāṇḍya in which Āditya II, the son of Sundara Cōḷa, distinguished himself—furnish conclusive proof of the political subordination of Vikramakēsari to Sundara Cōḷa Parāntaka II." This Cōḷa monarch reigned c. A.D. 956–970. I have only to add that the second part of Fr. Heras's quotation is the conclusion of my examination of the views of another writer who assigns Vikramakēsari to A.D. 800.

Fr. Heras cites Krishna Sastri in support of the view that the Koḍumbālūr inscription is "much earlier" than the time of Āditya II Karikāla; "much earlier" is a relative expression, and a reference to the *South Indian Inscriptions*¹ would show that Krishna Sastri means by it about twenty to thirty years earlier, not three centuries as Heras supposes. For Krishna Sastri definitely says that Vikramakēsari, also called Madhurāntaka Irukkuvēḷ and Parāntaka Iḷangōvēḷār, was the contemporary of Gaṇḍarāditya, the son and successor of Parāntaka I, whose reign ended about A.D. 950.

At this stage of the argument two general considerations of a decisive character become relevant. First, according to Fr. Heras, the Koḍumbālūr inscription must be assigned to about A.D. 670; now, most decidedly, the script of the record is too far removed from the Pallava grantha script of the seventh century for such a position to be tenable. On this very obvious and decisive fact I can only invite the reader to compare the general look of the Koḍumbālūr record and the individual letters in it with those of any genuine Pallava inscription of the seventh or even the eighth century, and to consider the points made by me regarding the palæography of the Koḍumbālūr record in my edition of it in the *Journal of Oriental Research*.² The second general consideration, in my opinion equally decisive, is the architecture of the

¹ Vol. iii, p. 249.

² Vol. vii, p. 2.

temple. It must be acknowledged that Fr. Heras concedes that the general style of the temples built by Vikramakēsari appears Cōla rather than Pallava, and looks “more of the tenth century than of the seventh”, though he proceeds to weaken the force of this admission by arguing that these temples are “an archæological puzzle”¹; they are nothing of the sort; they fall in a regular line in the evolution of the South Indian temple styles. This, however, is a subject that cannot be pursued here.²

The next point made by Fr. Heras is that there was no Cālukya empire or emperor in the ninth or tenth century, and Samarābhirāma could not have killed a Cālukya emperor in that period. The inscription says of Samarābhirāma: *Adhirājamangalājaru yo nijaghāna caḷukkim*. The verb *nijaghāna* may mean either “killed” or simply “attacked”, “set upon”; and there is not a word about the Cālukya having been an emperor. Hence the statement that Samarābhirāma “killed the Cālukya emperor” has no support from our sources. Again, the existence of Cālukya chiefs at Bādāmi or elsewhere under the Rāṣṭrakūṭas is not “an unwarranted assumption” on my part, or so “absolutely improbable” as Fr. Heras thinks. Fleet drew pointed attention to the traditions which connected the later Cālukyas of Kalyāṇi and the earlier Bādāmi line, and discussed the data regarding Ayyaṇa I and Vikramāditya IV, the contemporaries of Rāṣṭrakūṭa Kṛṣṇa II and his successors³—all on the evidence of an early eleventh century grant. He also drew attention to the line of Arikesari, the patron of the Kanarese poet Pampa, c. A.D. 941–2 and Pampa’s data on the Cālukyas of this line have received confirmation from two grants of this ruler Arikesari II.⁴

¹ *Ante*, 1934, p. 38, n. 3.

² I have with me photographs of several Cōla temples with *vimānas* like those of the Koḍumbālūr temples; they are not “without precedent and without consequent, totally unique in South Indian architecture” (Heras).

³ *Bombay Gazetteer*, I, part ii, pp. 378–380.

⁴ *Bom. Gaz.*, *ibid.*, p. 380; the Kollipara plates of Arikesari edited by Somasekhara Sarma in the Telugu journal *Bhārati*, vii, pp. 297–317.

I suggest that some feudatory of Cālukya extraction might have accompanied Kṛṣṇa III in his invasion of the Cōla kingdom at the end of the reign of Parāntaka I, and might have been either defeated or killed at Adhirājamangalam; and I see nothing improbable in this.

The presence at Śittaṇṇavāśal of rock-cut caves of the time of Mahendravarman I, and the practice of subordinate petty kings claiming for themselves an exaggerated share in the campaigns of their overlords, are well known; but these have obviously no probative value with regard to the age of the Koḍumbāḷūr chiefs, unless there be other independent grounds pointing to a seventh century date; as a matter of fact, not only are no such grounds present, but there are several which render such a date impossible.

Fr. Heras says: "The Karnūl plates of Vikramāditya I inform us that Pulakeśi II was defeated by three allied kings", and then he argues that Narasimhavarman I Pallava, Mānavammā of Ceylon, and Paradurgamardana were the three opponents of Pulakeśi. There is much confusion here. The Karnūl plates under reference say nothing of Pulakeśi II except his defeat of Harṣavardhana. Of Vikramāditya I they say, indeed: *sva-guroś-śriyam avani-pati-tritayāntarītām ātmasātkṛtvā*, meaning: "Who acquired for himself the (regal) fortune of his father, which had been interrupted by a triad of kings."

It should be noted that the "three kings" were the enemies not of Pulakeśi, but of his *śri*, i.e. his kingdom. This is obviously a reference to the period of confusion in the Cālukya kingdom that followed the Pallava invasion of Vātāpi (c. 642), and the interval of about thirteen years between that invasion and the accession of Vikramāditya I. I think the identity of the three monarchs was very satisfactorily established long ago by Fleet,¹ on the evidence of the

¹ *Bom. Gaz.*, I, ii, p. 362; *Mad. Chr. Coll. Mag.*, 1927, p. 241. The verse in the Haidarābād plates is: *mṛdita-Narasimha-yaśasā | vihita Mahendra-pratāpa-vilayena | naya(e)na vijit-Ēśvareṇa | prabhunā Śrī-Vallabhena jitaḥ.*

Haidarābad plates of Vikramāditya. They were no other than the three successive Pallava monarchs, Narasimha I, Mahendra II, and Paramēśvara I. More recently Dr. N. Venkataramanayya has made an alternative suggestion that the *avanipatitritaya* means the rulers of the three branches of the Pallava line, the *trairājya-pallavas* of some other inscriptions of this period.¹ In any event, there is no need to go outside the line of Pallava rulers for recognizing the identity of the foes of Vikramāditya I.

The remarks of Fr. Heras on Samarābhirāma and his reign will not bear scrutiny; and his bold simplification of Pallava history in this period is entirely unwarranted, and his observations on the relations between the Pallavas and the chieftains of Koḍumbāḷūr contain some baseless assumptions. The Gadvāl plates of Vikramāditya say that Uragapura was in the *Cōlika viṣaya*; but it is hard to see how this statement of a geographical fact warrants the inferences that the Pallavas had lost the southern provinces to the Cōḷas, and that the Koḍumbāḷūr chieftains had become subject to the latter. If that was the course of events, one wonders why Vikramāditya, whose aim was to chastise the Pallavas, should have encamped in the Cōḷa country. The exact manner of Pulakeśi's death is not known; Fleet did not commit himself to any definite statement on this point, while Smith said with becoming caution²: "In A.D. 642 he (Narasimhavarman I) enjoyed the satisfaction of taking Vātāpi, the capital of his enemy, Pulakeśin II, who presumably *then* lost his life." Now, Fr. Heras identifies Adhirājamangala with Maṇimangala³ or some other unnamed battle in the series of victories claimed for Narasimha in the

¹ *Mad. Chris. Coll. Mag.*, 1929 (Jan.), p. 12.

² *E.H.I.*, p. 495.

³ This identification is improbable. Inscriptions, M.E.R. 359 and 360 of 1921, show that this name was applied to Tiruvadi in South Arcot in the tenth and eleventh centuries. *Pariya-bhūmaṇimangala* is now read "Pariyala Maṇimangala" (Hultzsch). Apparently Fr. Heras has not noticed this.

Kūram grant of Parameśvara and elsewhere. Pulakeśi II could have died but once ; it is easy to accept Smith's surmise, because it is most probable ; but if he died in the sack of Vātāpi, he could not have died at Maṇimangala or any other battle that we might postulate ; and it is difficult to believe that if Pulakeśi died there, this fact escaped the notice of his Pallava rivals, or that they omitted to record this capital fact in unmistakable terms, instead of merely claiming to have beaten him and driven him from the field. On the other hand, if the Cālukya emperor did not lose his life in battle in Maṇimangala or some other place in the south, the statements of the Koḍumbālūr record regarding Samarābhirāma and the battle of Adhirājamangala cannot be brought into any relation with the Pallava-Cālukya conflicts of the time of Pulakeśi II. These considerations show that the elaborate chronological scheme¹ constructed by Fr. Heras rests on very insecure foundations.

But the most surprising part of Fr. Heras's thesis is his explanation of Vikramakēsari's campaign against the Pallavas. He postulates a Cōḷa revival led by Kōccengaṇṇān, in which the Koḍumbālūr chiefs took part, and as a result of which the Pallavas lost the southern part of their kingdom, though only for a time ; for the Pallavas recovered the lost territory soon after, and inscriptions of the later Pallavas from the reign of Nandivarman II are found in the Pudukkotah state. Evidently Fr. Heras does not know, or has overlooked, several well-known facts regarding Kōccengaṇṇān. This king is mentioned in the most ancient Tamil anthologies—the *Puranānūru* and the *Narrinai*, and is the hero of an equally ancient war-poem, the *Kaḷavaḷi Nārpadu*. Again, he had become a legend by the time of the Tamil Śaiva saint, Appar, the contemporary of Mahendravarman I. Śengaṇṇān does not belong to the late seventh century A.D., but to a time three or four centuries earlier. And there is not the slightest evidence in epigraphy or literature of any attempt on the part of the Cōḷas to regain

¹ p. 41 of his article.

their lost position before the reign of Vijayālaya, in the middle of the ninth century. The Cōḷas were one of the "three crowned dynasties" of the Śāngam age; then, after an interval of confusion—the "Kaḷabhra interregnum", as it may conveniently be designated—followed a period of three centuries (seventh to ninth) when the Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas divided South India between themselves, the Cōḷas having simply disappeared from history. If the fact that the Gadvāl plates mention Uṛaiyūr as located in the *Cōḷika viṣaya*, and that the Koḍumbāḷūr inscription (of which the date is the subject under discussion) mentions a marriage alliance between the Koḍumbāḷūr line and the Cōḷas and a success of Vikramakēsari against the Pallavas, if these are the only data on which Heras's theory of a temporary success of the Cōḷas against the Pallavas rests, and if we are further required to believe that this Cōḷa revival was led by Kōccengaṇṇān, a king whose name had begun to gather legends round itself by the beginning of the seventh century, no apology is needed for our declining to accept the conclusions of the learned Father.

This discussion has shown that at every stage the argument of Fr. Heras by which he seeks to establish a seventh century date for the Koḍumbāḷūr inscription breaks down under examination. On the other hand, I should not omit to say once more that the title "conqueror of Vātāpi" applied to Paradurgamardana in the Koḍumbāḷūr inscription is not susceptible at present of a satisfactory explanation. But as against this one fact that cannot be explained on the assumption of a tenth century date for that inscription there are, as we have seen, quite a host of insuperable difficulties created by our postulating a seventh century date for it; and not among the least important of such difficulties is that of explaining Vikramakēsari's opposition to Vīra Pāṇḍya, and the names of his sons Parāntaka and Ādityavarman.

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