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## Review Article

# THE DATE OF INCISION OF JUNĀGADH ROCK INSCRIPTION OF RUDRADĀMAN: INFERRED FROM THE JUNĀGADH ROCK INSCRIPTION OF SKANDAGUPTA

Jappen Oberoi\*

Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology Panjab University,  
Chandigarh, India

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### ABSTRACT

A perusal of the Junāgadh rock inscription of Rudradāman will suffice in discerning that the epigraph does not supply us with the date of its incision, the only date given in the record coheres with the bursting of the embankment of the Sudarśana lake in consequence of an incessant downpour. The epigraph was composed and inscribed after the embankment had been restored, strengthened and enlarged. If we can deduce the time taken by the restoration process, we can narrow down the period of the composition and incision of the inscription with considerable accuracy. A provisional solution can be supplied by the Junāgadh rock inscription of Skandagupta, which the present paper intends on providing.

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### INTRODUCTION

The subject of more than half of the total lines of the Junāgadh rock inscription of Rudradāman is the Sudarśana lake. The storm by which the Sudarśana lake was devastated is stated (in lines 4 and 5) to have taken place on the first of the dark half of Mārgaśīrsha in the 72nd year.<sup>[1]</sup> Taking the date as belonging to the Saka samvat, the year of the storm and consequently of the bursting of the embankment of the lake comes out to be 150 CE. The record is silent about the date of its composition and incision.

One conjecture regarding the date was put forth by Bhagvanlal Indrajī<sup>[2]</sup> who surmised that the inscription could not have been written immediately after the destruction of the lake in the year 72 for on the one hand the record states that the work was abandoned by the king's ministers because it was found too difficult and on the other hand the numerous exploits of king Rudradāman enumerated by the inscription could not have been performed in a few years. He concluded that the date of incision of the inscription falls in the year 80 of the kshatrapa era, or even a little later.<sup>[3]</sup> This even later date was followed by Ajay Mitra Shastri who placed the incision in circa 165 CE.<sup>[4]</sup> Bhagvanlal Indrajī who based his objection on the belief that

Rudradāman mounted the throne in year 70 can be discarded for we now know that Rudradāman had succeeded Chashtana as the king of Western Kshatrapas in c. 140 CE<sup>[5]</sup> and even if we assign eight to ten years to the political aggressions of Rudradāman like Indrajī, there is a strong possibility that Rudradāman had completed his conquests by 150 CE. Secondly, the statement concerned with the opposition from *mati-sachiva* and *karma-sachiva*<sup>[6]</sup> might have been mentioned to over-dramatize the situation so as to amplify the magnitude of the task undertaken by Rudradāman and Suviśākha. Even if the statement be accepted as factual, a compassionate ruler and an efficient administrator like Rudradāman<sup>[7]</sup> would not have let the apathy of his office-bearers' prolong the lamenting of his subjects and the restoration process would have been executed expeditiously. The inscription affirms that the objective was achieved in 'not too long a time'.<sup>[8]</sup> Thus the delay should not have exceeded a few months.

It is not completely impossible that the epigraph got engraved in the year 150 CE.<sup>[9]</sup> The Hāthīgumphā inscription of Khāravela informs us that as soon as he was anointed, in the first regnal year he caused repairs of the gates, walls and the buildings of the city, which had been damaged by storm in the city of Kaliṅga and he caused the erection of the embankments

\*Corresponding author: **Jappen Oberoi**

Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology Panjab University, Chandigarh, India

of the lake called after Khibīra Rishi and of other tanks and cisterns.<sup>[10]</sup> The Junāgadh rock inscription of Skandagupta records that the embankment of the Sudaršana lake burst in consequence of excessive rain, at night, on the sixth day of the month Prausthapada in Gupta year 136 and the resultant breach was filled up and the embankment renewed under the orders of Chakrapālita after *two months' work* in the month of Asāḍha in Gupta year 137<sup>[11]</sup> (Italics mine). The breach during the time of Rudradāman was of approximately 26,225 cubic meters while the damage at the time of Skandagupta was of about 10,400 cubic meters.<sup>[12]</sup> Even if we assign a whole year for the restoration work because the volume of repair was more in Rudradāman's case with the technology being slightly less advanced than in Skandagupta's time and nearly a year's delay due to the indifference of his office-bearers, the composition and incision should be placed in c. 152 CE, if not in 152 CE itself.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Notes and References

1. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol VIII, p. 41
2. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol VII, p. 258
3. *Ibid.*
4. A.M. Shastri, *The Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas: A Historical Framework*, Dattsons, Nagpur, 1998, p. 167, n. 16
5. *Ibid.*, p. 156
6. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol VIII, p. 44
7. Ajay Mitra Shastri (*The Sātavāhanas and the Western Kshatrapas: A Historical Framework*, Dattsons, Nagpur, 1998, p. 158) has very rightly stated that Rudradāman was not only a great general and a ruler but was also solicitous of the well-being of his subjects. The part of the inscription (vide *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol VIII, pp. 47-49) which eulogises Rudradāman proclaims that, he showed compassion, the towns, marts and rural parts of his territories were never troubled by robbers, snakes, wild beasts, diseases and the like, all his subjects were attached to him, deposed kings were reinstated by him, who day by day was in the habit of bestowing presents and honours, and without oppressing the populace by taxes, forces labour and acts of affection sponsored the restoration process from his own treasury. Even if we discount the encomiastic fancy of the composer, the administrative qualities of a ruler who had himself acquired the title of Mahākshatrapa, was the lord of many provinces, had humbled the Yaudheyas, humiliated Sātakarni, and had appointed for the benefit of the inhabitants of Ānarta and Surāstra an able governor in Suviśākha, are axiomatic. Suviśākha, who by his proper dealings and views in things temporal and spiritual increased the attachment of the people, is described as able, patient, not wavering, not arrogant, upright and not to be bribed and who by his good governance accentuated the spiritual merit, fame and glory of his master.
8. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol VIII, p. 49
9. The Junāgadh rock inscription of Skandagupta gives two dates in the context of Sudaršana lake. The first date of (Gupta) year 136 concerns itself with the bursting of the embankments and the second date of (Gupta) year deals with its restoration (D.R. Bhandarkar, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum III*, ASI, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 304-305). The Junāgadh rock inscription of Rudradāman, gives us only one date pertaining to the breach. The possibility, albeit miniscule, of the year of the storm, the consequent collapse of the earthwork and its repair being the same cannot be denied.
10. *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol XX, p. 86. B.M. Barua, disagreeing with K.P. Jayaswal, translates the activities of Khāravela's first regnal year differently- "And as soon as he was anointed, in the very first year, His Majesty caused the gates, walls and buildings that had been damaged by stormy wind to be repaired in the city of Kalinga, and caused the embankments of the deep and cool tanks to be built up, and also caused the work of restoration of all the gardens to be done at the cost of thirty-five hundred-thousand coins and thus enabled the people to be pleased" (vide B.M. Barua, *Old Brāhmī Inscriptions in the Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1929, p. 41). B.M. Barua's translation doesn't affect the present discussion that Khāravela got built the embankments of multiple water reservoirs within one year.
11. D.R. Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 297-298
12. R.N. Mehta, "Sudaršana Lake" in *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Oriental Institute, Baroda, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1-2, p. 27
13. The material used would have been stone and clay in both cases. It is safe to say that the technology employed and the material used in the repair of embankment of Sudaršana lake did not witness much advancement. The devastating storm took place on 16th November of 150 CE (*Epigraphia Indica*, Vol VIII, p. 41). So, the date of incision of the inscription should be placed between 16th November of 150 CE and 16th November of 152 CE. Kielhorn's assumption regarding the composition of the inscription in 151 or 152 CE seems to be the correct one (*Ibid.*).

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