

OUTSTANDING ACQUISITION



Seal of Emperor Harsha

New Copper Plate of Emperor Harṣa

Prof. R. C. Sharma

Jñāna-Pravāha is proud to announce the acquisition of a new copper plate with royal seal of Emperor Harṣa (ACC. No. 2002.29 a-b). It is reported to have been recovered from a place near Kurukshetra in Haryana in 1999 and it saw its way to Jñāna-Pravāha, Centre for Cultural Studies, Varanasi, in February, 2002. Smt. Bimla Poddar, Managing Trustee and Sri Suresh Neotia, Chairman, Jñāna-Pravāha Trust very kindly agreed to acquire this important historical document. Prof. K. K. Thaplyal, Prof. T. P. Verma, Prof. Devendra Handa and the present writer closely examined the objects to ensure its authenticity. These two epigraphs, viz., copper plate and seal have been deciphered jointly by the present author, Dr. Pranati Ghosal and Sri Niraj Kumar Pandey.

Written in chaste Sanskrit and incised in the post-Gupta Brāhmī which has been captioned as *siddhamāṭṛkā* by the scholars,¹ it records the land grant given to Bhaṭṭa Ulūkhalasvāmin in the year 23(?) of Harṣa's reign bearing 18 line epigraphs with plate measuring 42.5 cm. in length and 31.5 cm. in width in almost pure copper, but the surface is rather uneven indicates rough handling at certain stage. It weighs 3.80 kg. The seal, which was originally attached but now detached, measures 17 cm. in length and 14 cm. in width, and its weight is 2.05 kg. It is made of mixed metal, which can be called as bronze. One side of the rectangular plate was projected in middle and inserted in the seal, which was subsequently hammered for fixing as there was no existence of the device of welding. This portion is still to be seen in the cavity of the seal. It appears that during the course of fixing of the two, the edges of the seal were twisted inside and therefore some letters in beginning and end of lines have become blurred. Some part of the seal being rubbed off is illegible, but the major part bears sharp inscription in relief and can be read without much difficulty. It bears twelve lines, which contain the genealogy of Puṣyabhūti/Varddhana dynasty from Naravarddhana to Harṣavarddhana with the title of the kings and also of the queens. The top of the seal illustrates a seated bull, Nandī, which symbolizes the faith of Harṣa in Śaivism as also recorded in the epigraph. At the end of the inscription of the seal, one can find traces of the rising sun with two half circles and rays radiating in two directions. This may suggest that most of the rulers of the dynasty were devout Sun-worshippers. The seal is a pre-prepared document, which was released by the State Authority or the King himself at the time of land grant and was fixed with any document i.e. copper plate. It is for this reason that no date or the reason of the accomplished work finds mention.

Earlier Copper Plates

Two more copper plates of Harṣa incised at the time of land grant were recovered in the last quarter of the 19th century. The first was found in January 1888 from Madhuban, a village near Nathupur in Tehsil Sabari, about 50 kms. north-east from Azamgarh.² It is dated in the Samvat 25 of Harṣa which corresponds to 631 A.D. Dr. A. Führer, the then Curator of the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, obtained it from the collection of Azamgarh. It measures 50 x 33 cms. and weighs 3.86 kgs. No ring or seal was, however, recovered with it.

The second copper plate was found in September 1894 at Banskhera, a village about 40 kms. from Shahjahanpur. It measures 47.5 x 32.5 cms. A seal was also shouldered to it but

was blurred to the extent that not a single letter could be made out. The plate is dated in the year 22 of the reign of Harṣa, which corresponds to A.D. 628. This also sought its way to the Lucknow Museum through the courtesy of Lala Kishori Lal, a Banker and Hon. Magistrate of Shahjahanpur.³

Thus it is after more than a century that a new copper plate of the great Emperor of Northern India, Harṣa, has come to light.

Distinguishing Features

The important features of the epigraphy under discussion are as under:

1. It is reported to be found in Haryana region not far from the capital of Harṣa, i.e. Thaneshwar.
2. It records the reigning year of Harṣa 23, which should correspond to A.D. 629.
3. The name of scribe in this case is missing, although in the earlier copper plates their names are clearly mentioned. The Madhuban grant records the name of scribe as Gurjara while the Banskhera plate mentioned the scribe's name as Īśvara.
4. There was no royal seal attached to Madhuban grant and the seal with Banskhera is so blurred that nothing could be made out. On the contrary, the seal with the newly discovered plate is almost clear. This furnishes the genealogy of the dynasty and the titles of the kings as recorded in the plate and other seals of Harṣa like Nālandā clay seal.⁴
5. The letters in the present copper plate are better and sharper than in the other earlier two plates.⁵
6. The land grants in Madhuban and Banskhera record that each were given to two *brāhmaṇas* but the new discovery reveals that only one *brāhmaṇa* namely Bhaṭṭa Ulūkhalasvāmin was fortunate to gain this favour.
7. The earlier copper plates record the name of the *dūtaka* (carrier of the land grant and Royal Command) as Skandagupta but in case of the new find, it is Kṛṣṇagupta. Both were of high rank and enjoyed the title of Mahārāja.
8. The present copper plate begins with two auspicious words, i.e. *Om* and *Svasti*. *Om* is in the symbolic form and can be explained as *siddham* also. But this symbolic letter is quite clear in the beginning of the epigraph.
9. The Madhuban copper plate does not contain the signature of the King but the Banskhera copper plate does bear the beautiful letters and the same trend has been followed in the new discovery, which makes the document as confirmed and authentic. This also suggests that Harṣa was not only well read but also had an excellent hand in calligraphy and particularly in putting his signatures. On the whole, the last line bearing his authority is stylized in shape and a great deal of aesthetic sensibility of the Emperor can be guessed. It precedes with a figure of peacock with large stylized plumage and terminates with a floral motif flanked by two vertical lines. The letter *dhī* in center of this line looks like a full vase *pūrṇaghāṭa* with foliage issuing from its brim, as noticed in the *śaṅkhalipi*. This may perhaps suggest the abundance and prosperity of the King and his age.
10. Both copper plate and seal mention that the dynasty had faith in three sects, i.e.,

Sūrya, Buddha and Śiva. Rājyavaraddhana, Ādityavaraddhana and Prabhākaravaraddhana have been mentioned as *parama āditya bhakta*, i.e., the devout sun worshippers. Rājyavaraddhana II, the elder brother of Harṣa is recorded as *saugata*, i.e., having faith in the Buddha and *sugata* himself behaving as Bodhisattva. On the other hand, Emperor Harṣa is mentioned as *parama Māheśvara*, i.e., staunch devotee of Śiva and himself full of compassion like Maheśvara.

11. Despite beautiful calligraphy and clear incision there are a few omissions and alterations in the document due to the slight error of the scribe. In line 1, last letter 't' in word *skandhāvarāt* is missing. In line 4, *na* was left out in word *bhuvana* but later incised below. In line 7, vowel ā is missing in *prā*. In line 7 itself, the last letter *yaḥ* is confusing in the word *satyānurodhena*. In line 8, in word Bhaṭṭāraka, letter *ra* was left out but marked later and it is very small and insignificant. In line 9, in word *Mahāsāmanta*, *ma* is missing after *sā*. In line 13, word *jyeṣṭha* is incised as *jāṣṭha*. In line 14, the last word is recorded as *sṭhānam* instead of *sthānam*. In line 15, Lakṣmyā is misspelt as Lyakṣmyā.
12. The perusal of the genealogical table suggests that the first three kings, i.e., Naravaraddhana, Rājyavaraddhana and Ādityavaraddhana were simply Mahārāja and must have been viceroys or subordinate rulers. The next three kings, i.e., Prabhākaravaraddhana, Rājyavaraddhana and Harṣa were, however, independent rulers and this fact is suggested by their titles as *parama bhaṭṭāraka mahārājādhirāja*. This trend is followed by the queens also as the first three, i.e., Vajriṇī, Apsaro and Mahāsenguptā are mentioned simply as Devī but the last queen, viz., Yaśomatī the mother of Rājyavaraddhana and Harṣa, had additional titles as *Paramabhaṭṭārikā Mahādevī*.
13. Some technical terms, designations, titles, etc. have been recorded and these resemble the mention as in earlier two copper plates to a large extent. Accordingly, *Mahārāja* is a feudatory title and was enjoyed by the ministers, the relatives of the King, high noble men and sometimes high ranking officers. *Mahāsāmanta* or *Sāmanta* were certainly somewhat lower than *Mahārāja*. *Rājāmātya* or *Kumārāmātya* were ministers or governors of the Province or head of the regional administration. *Dūtaka* was a high-ranking officer who carried the charter or King's order to local officer. He enjoyed the title of *Mahārāja*, *Mahāpramātā* and *Mahāsāmanta*. *Rājasthāniya* is a word, which is difficult to explain but it may mean an officer dealing with the kingdom or head of the province or may be a local representative of the King, hence *Rājasthāniya*. *Daussādhasādhanika* literally means an accomplisher of difficult task. May be a highly trained and skilled police or military officer for performing emergent and adventurous type of work like the present day Rapid Action Force. *Pramātri* was a land surveyor and *Mahākṣapaṭalādhikaraṇādhikṛta* probably means the highest Revenue Officer who also dealt with the legal affairs and land management. The word *bhaṭa* and *cāta* are to be explained as regular soldiers and as ad-hoc soldiers or new recruits respectively.⁶
14. The new copper plate and the earlier plates record the division as *bhukti*, which can be compared with the present Commissionary and was administered by *uparika* or *Kumārāmātya*. The *viṣaya* was next lower administrative unit just like the district of

present day and it was headed by *viṣayapati*. The lowest unit was the *grāma* or village and in the present case the village Paṇḍārāṅgāka fell in *viṣaya samvardha*, which was again a part of *bhukti* Jayarata. Agrahāra was a village, which was gifted to and administered by the *brāhmaṇas* and their benefits went to them.⁷

15. The land grants generally mentioned some taxes, which were exempted when the village was gifted away. Accordingly, *udraṅga* was the main land tax. *Uparikara* was an extra tax. Term *pratyāya* stands for all dues. The expression *sarva rājakula bhāvya pratyaya* means all dues or taxes, which were to be paid to the royalty or state. *Tulyameya* was a tax imposed on the articles of merchandise nature. *Bhāga* was king's share of grain, *kara* a tax in kind, *bhoga* periodical offerings, *hiraṇya* tax in cash. *Bhāga bhoga kara* is sometimes written as a compound word and should mean a tax in shape of *bhāga* or *bhoga*, as explained. The grants also mention a proverb type term as *bhūmicchidra nyāya*, i.e., a piece of barren or jungle land brought under cultivation. It means that when the village was gifted, the donee enjoyed all the rights and could also exercise his authority on the nearby barren or unused land.⁸ As conjectured by other scholars line seven hints to the murder of Rājyavarddhana II by Śaśāṅka of Gauḍa through mischief. This shocking incident is, however, shrouded with multiple layers of mystery.⁹
16. All the three grants of Harṣa were issued from the military camp (*jayaskandhāvāra*) and not from the capital. This may perhaps suggest the celebration of victory or some other important occasion of which one item must have been the donation of land or a village (*agrahāra*) to the learned Vedic Brāhmaṇas. The administrative and financial benefit of such gift was availed of by the donee while the religious merit went to the King's parents and his elder brother as recorded in the epigraph.

Most of these terms of administrative units, designations and taxes have been translated as per their explanation. Dr. Bühler has translated the Madhuban copper plate and our translation largely follows the same trend but some variations are obvious. For example, word Śrī preceding the name is suggestive of auspiciousness and need not be repeatedly translated as 'illustrious.'

References

1. Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, Vol.II, 1983, p. 221 and p. 224
2. Bühler, G., *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.I, 1892, pp. 65-75
3. Bühler, G., *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol.IV, No.29, pp. 208-11
4. Thaplyal, K.K., *Inscriptions of Maukharis, Later Guptas, Puṣyabhūti and Yaśovarman of Kanauj*, 1985, p. 186, Pl. XIX
5. *Ibid.* Pl. XVII and XVIII
6. Thaplyal, K.K., *op. cit.*, pp. 92-94
7. *Ibid.* pp. 97-98
8. *Ibid.* p. 101
9. *Ibid.* pp. 68-70

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TEXT

1. ॐ स्वस्ति महानौहस्त्यश्वजयस्कन्धावारा(त्) श्रीवर्द्धमानकोटीवासकः महाराज श्री नरवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः श्रीवज्रिणीदेव्यामुत्पन्नः परमादित्यभक्तो महाराज श्री ... (राज्य-)
2. वर्द्धनःतस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः श्रीमदप्सरोदेव्यामुत्पन्नः परमादित्यभक्तो महाराज श्रीमदादित्यवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः श्रीमहासेनगुप्ता-देव्यामुत्पन्नः चतुः समु-
द्रातिक्क्रान्तकीर्तिः प्रतापानुरागोपनतान्यराजा वर्णश्रमव्यवस्थापनप्रवृत्त-चक्र एकचक्ररथ
3. इ (व)प्रजानामार्तिहरः परमादित्यभक्त परमभट्टारक महाराजाधिराज
4. श्रीप्रभाकरवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः सितयशप्रतानविच्छुरित-सकलभुवनमण्डलः
परिगृहीतधनदवरुणेन्द्रप्रभृति लोकपालतेजा-
5. सत्पथोपार्जितानेकद्रविणभूमिप्रदानसंप्रीणितार्थिहृदयोतिशयितपूर्वराज-चरितः देव्याममलयशोमत्यां
यशोमत्यामुत्पन्न... (परम-)
6. सौगतः सुगत इव परहितैकरतः परमभट्टारक महाराजाधिराज श्रीराज्यवर्द्धनः राजानो युधि (दु)ष्टवाजिन इव
श्रीदेवगुप्तादयः कृत्वा येन कशा-
7. प्रहारविमुखाः सर्वे समं संयताः उत्खाय द्विषतो विजित्यं वसुधां कृत्वा प्रजानां प्रियं
प्र(र)णानुज्झितवा(*)नरातिभवने सत्यानुरोधेन(य)। तस्यानुज-स्तत्पादानुध्यातः परममा-
8. हेश्वरो महेश्वर इव सर्व्वसत्(त्)वानुकम्पी परमभट्टारक महाराजाधिराज श्रीहर्षः
जयरतभुक्तविषयसंवर्द्धदुरिक्ताणि परिभाष्यमाणा पण्डाराट्गाक ग्रामे स-
9. मुपगता महासा(म)न्त महाराजदुस्साधसाधनिकप्रमातारराजस्थानीय-(कु)मारमात्यो-
परिकविषयपतिभटचाटसेवकादीन्प्रतिवासिजनपदांश्च
10. समाज्ञापयति विदितस्तुवो यथायमुपरिलिखितग्रामः स्वसीमा(प)र्यन्तः सोद्रङ्गः सर्व्वराजकुलाभाव्य
प्रत्यायसमेतः सर्व्वपरिहृतपरि-
11. हा(रो) विषयादुद्धृतपिण्ड(:) पुत्रपौत्रानुगश्चन्द्रार्कक्षितिसमकालीनः (भू)मिच्छिद्रन्यायेन मया पितुः
परमभट्टार(क) महाराजाधिराज श्रीप्रभा-
12. करवर्द्धन देवस्य मातुश्च भट्टारिका महादेवी राज्ञी श्रीयशोमती देव्याः (ज्ये)ष्ठभ्रातृ परमभट्टारक
महाराजाधिराज श्रीराज्यवर्द्धनदेवपादानां च
13. पुण्ययशोभिवर्द्धये भार्गवसगोत्रवह्वच सब्रह्मचारी भट्टोलूखलस्वामिने प्रतिग्रहधर्मणाग्रहारत्वेन प्रतिपादितः
विदित्वा भवद्भिः रस-
14. नुमन्तव्यः प्रतिवासिजनपदैरप्याज्ञाश्रवणविधेयैर्भूत्वा यथासमुचिततुल्यमेय- भागभोगकरहिरण्यादिप्रत्यायाः
अन्यैवोपनेयाः सेवोपस्थानं च
15. करणीयमित्यपि च। अस्मत्कुलक्रममुदारमुदाहरद्भिरन्यैश्च दानमिदमभ्यनुमोदनीयं।
ल्यक्ष्म्यास्तडित्सलिलबुदबुदचंचलायाः दानफलं पर-
16. यशः परिपालनं च।। कर्मणा मनसा वाचा कर्त्तव्यं प्राणिने हितं हर्षेणैतत्समाख्यातं धर्म्मार्ज्जनमनुत्तमं।।
दूतकोत्र महाक्षपटलाधिकरणाधि-
17. कृत सामंतमहाराज कृष्णगुप्तः तदादेशाच्चोत्कीर्णं।। संव 20 () 3
18. स्वहस्तेन मम महाराजाधिराज श्रीहर्षस्य

The text was jointly deciphered by Prof. R. C. Sharma, Dr. Pranati Ghosal and Sri Niraj Kumar Pandey.

Translation

- L.1 Om! All good! From the victory camp possessing large boats, elephants and horses at Śrī Varddhamānakoṭī, the king Śrī Naravarddhana his son followed (meditated upon) the footsteps (successor of his father) and born from Śrī Vajriṇīdevī, a great devotee of Sun, the great king Śrī (Rājya)
- L.2 Varddhana. His son who (also) followed (or meditated) the footsteps (of his father) and born from Śrī Apsarodevī, a devout worshipper of Sun, the great king, Śrī Ādityavarddhana. His son following (father's) footprints (successor), born from Śrī Mahāsenaguptadevī
- L.3 (whose) fame crossed the four oceans and who through his sovereign power protected other kings and remained busy in ensuring the four-fold order of the society and who like Sun (*ekacakra ratha*) dispelled the sufferings of people, sincere worshipper of Sun, the supreme lord and (also) the paramount king
- L.4 Śrī Prabhākaravarddhana. His son who followed (his) footsteps (successor) and whose glory radiated in the whole world like that of Kubera, Varuṇa, Indra, etc.
- L.5 who excelled the earlier kings through satisfying the needy persons by gifting away the righteously acquired items of their choice like land and wealth, born from Yaśomatīdevī of spotless fame, devout
- L.6 worshipper of Saugata (Buddha) who like Sugata (Bodhisattva) always thought of the welfare of others, the supreme lord, the king of great kings, Śrī Rājyavarddhana who subdued the kings such as Devagupta in the battle-field like wicked horses controlled by plying of whips
- L.7 (and) turned their heads and set them right, (who) after uprooting the foes, conquering the territory and accomplishing deeds of his subject's interest, (even) gave up his life in his enemy's house to honour the truthful conduct. His younger brother following his footsteps (succeeding) who is staunch
- L.8 devotee of Śiva (and) kind to all like Śiva (Himself), supreme lord, paramount emperor Śrī Harṣa (declares) the village Paṇḍārāṭgāka in the district (*viṣaya*) of Samvarddha of Jayarata division (*bhuktī*) after specifying
- L.9 in presence of the assembled feudal chiefs, Mahārāja, high police officer, land surveyor, head of province, ministers, divisional head, district chief, regular and ad-hoc soldiers, other servants and residents of the area
- L.10 'Let it be known to you all that the above stated village with its boundaries, with land tax, the taxes and dues paid to the state and all benefits
- L.11 so far accrued to district will (be transferred) to the donee in-heritance from son to grandson for indefinite period till moon, sun and earth (exist), including barren and forest land, for the increase of glory and merit of my father supreme lord king of kings
- L.12 Śrī Prabhākara Varddhana Deva and mother, the supreme lady, the great queen Śrī Yaśomatī Devī (and) elder brother supreme lord king of great kings venerable Śrī Rājyavarddhana Deva to

- L.13 Brahmacārī Bhatta Ulūkhalasvāmin of Bhārgava *gotra* (clan), of Vahvṛca (Ṛgvedī *sākhā*) a righteously accepted *agrahāra* (gift of village), this command be known to you
- L.14 and agreed upon by all residents of the area and neighbourhood. They should (henceforth pay) all tax and fee like *tulyameya* (merchandise tax), *bhāga* (king's share), *bhoga* (periodical offerings), *hiranya* (cash in gold), other benefits due to royalty and service due to him
- L.15 be offered (to him, donee).'
"This donation should be consented upon by our family members and others. The fortunes are unstable and move like bubble of water or lightening (so) fruit of donation and fame
- L.16 of others should be protected."
"Harṣa declares that the welfare of all beings through deeds, mind and speech be performed and excellent merit be earned." The *Dūtaka* carrier (or messenger) of this grant is the chief revenue officer,
- L.17 nobleman Mahārāja Kṛṣṇagupta and under his instructions this order is ingraved (in) year 20 3(?) (A.D. 629?)
- L.18 (It has been) signed personally by me Mahārājadhirāja Śrī Harṣa.

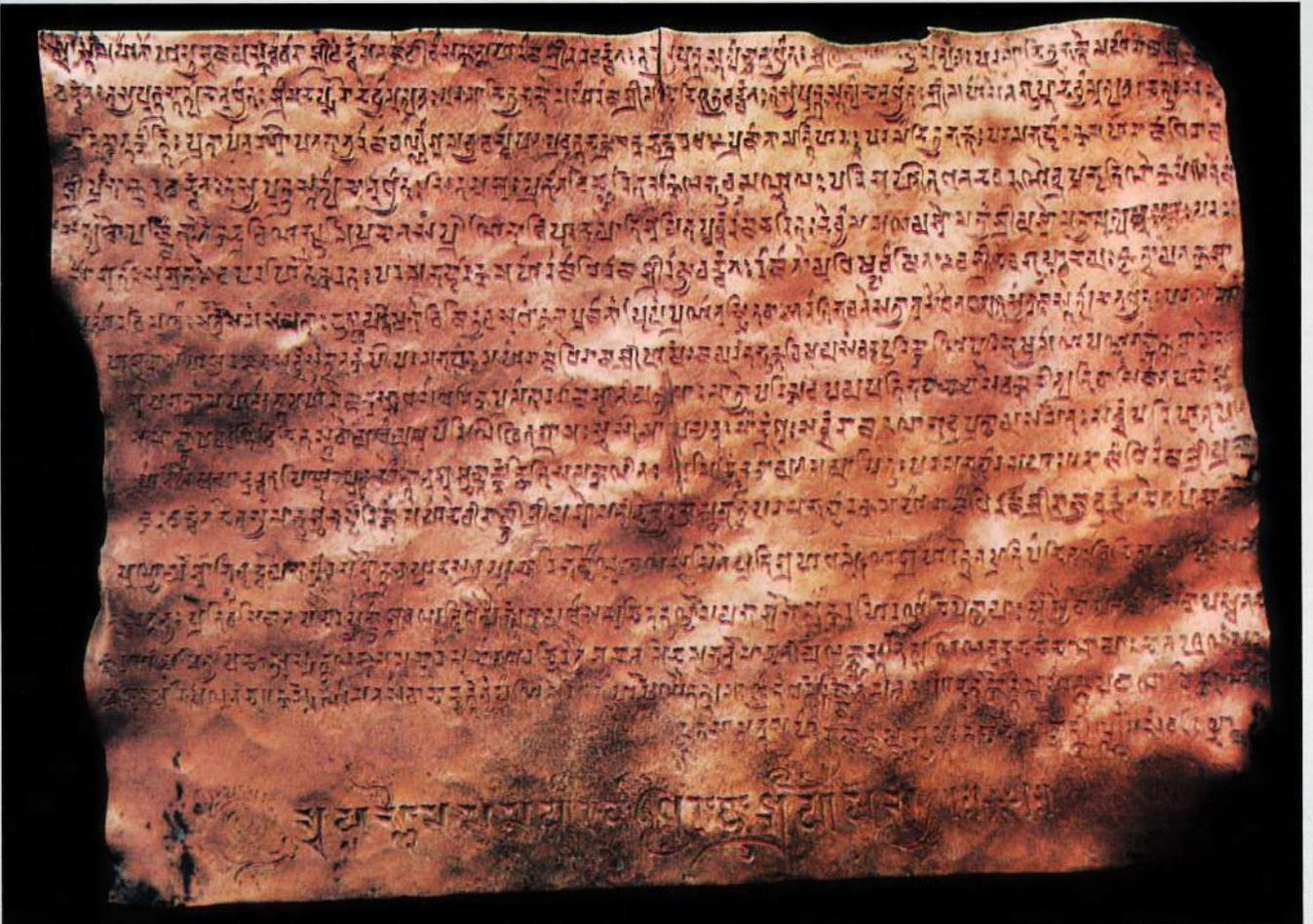
Seal With Copper Plate

Bull

1. (सिद्धम् महाराज) श्री नरवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः श्री वज्रिणी
2. (दे)व्या(मुत्पन्नः) परमादित्यभक्तो महाराज श्रीराज्यवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्त(त्)
3. (पादानुध्यातः) श्री अ(प्स)रोदेव्यामुत्पन्नः परमादित्यभक्तो महाराज श्रीमदादित्य-
4. (वर्द्धनः तस्य) पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यातः श्री महासेनगुप्तादेव्यामुत्पन्नः चतुः समु-
5. (द्राति)क्क्रान्त कीर्तिप्रतापानुरागोपनतान्यराजो वण्णाश्रमव्यवस्थापनप्रवृ(त्त)-
6. चक्र एकचक्ररथ इव प्रजानामार्तिहरः परमादित्यभक्तः परमभट्टारक
7. महाराजाधिराज श्री प्रभाकरवर्द्धनः तस्य पुत्रस्तत्पादानुध्यात (अतिशयित)
8. पूर्वराजचरितो देव्याममलयशोमत्यां श्रीयशोमत्यामुत्पन्नः परमसौगत सु(ग-)
9. त इव परहितानुरतः परमभट्टारक महाराजाधिराज श्री राज्यवर्द्धन (स्त-)
10. (स्या)नुजस्तत्पादानुध्यातः परमभट्टारिका महादेवी श्री यशोमत्या(दे-)
11. (व्या)मेवोत्पन्नः परममाहेश्वरः महेश्वर इव सर्व्व (स-)
12. (त्वानु) कम्पकः परमभट्टारक महाराजाधिराज श्रीर्ह(षः)

Radiating Half Sun

NB: The seal furnishes the same genealogy of the royal dynasty as recorded in the copper plate, hence no separate translation is given.



Copper Plate of Emperor Harsha of year 23