

ŚĀRADĀ INSCRIPTION FROM MIR ALI - NORTH WAZIRISTAN. A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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This Śārāda inscription was found at Mir Ali, North Waziristan. Mr. Ihsan ullah, who brought the inscription for analysis, told that it was picked up from a pile of stones collected from a huge archaeological mound by one of his relatives for the construction of his house. Realising the importance of the stone as a valued piece of antiquity because of the unusual writing on it, he brought such a heavy stone all the long way to Peshawar, using public transport, for analysis. Subsequently, along with other colleagues of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, We visited the house of the relative of Mr. Ihsan ulla where the inscribed stone was placed. Partially badly defaced, it was not possible to read it on the spot and, with the owner's permission, it was kept for a while for minute examination.

This is one of the important chance discoveries that help in the reconstruction of the history of the region¹. The present inscription, written in Śārādā characters, shows that the history of the site goes back at least to the Hindu Shahi's period.

The stone bearing the inscription is quartzite and measures 38 x 33 x 7.5 cm. The engraved surface is 27 x 20cm having ten lines of inscription. The average size of an individual letter varies between 1.5 x 2.3 cm. Part of the inscription is very defaced and the proposed reading is, therefore, not so certain.

Transliteration:

- L. 1. oṃ lyoḥṇya saṃvatśare abhṛsatāle iti
- L. 2. name/mi paṃcatṇī kīlaṃ /-bhe/bhibhṛimo/so paścakṛipakta
- L. 3. racakārmasyo supileguptaramiva sidhami/pikṛivaha

¹ Another important inscription is the Tochi valley bilingual inscription (Dani 1964 and Habibi 1969).

- L. 4. ra śrī chaṃṃikacut śrī vidīyacandramṃaṣaḍyama
 L. 5. khalīgadhatānedākuhekhanā vītāsusya khaṇa
 L. 6. vaṇe/ṇokāhabaṭosua varnu/suvaṇūtrojāṃ bhatadbivarddhalattā pra
 L. 7. śivamcavakatalo/e ṣatāddhramcale kaṣeṭakārdasu
 L. 8. sidhākya śetatimttīṇiṃ satāyamadatlabdhaṇacaliṣama
 L.9. vetisya ta/ḍavahīla śramamcaviddhipuindralalleta uka
 L.10. ṇetapaṃyāṭhādoṭajapvāndragrahāsena (seta)//la/

Palaeography:

The medial *ā* is marked by a hook attached to the right upper end of the right part of the letter. The medial *i* and *ī* are formed by long curves drawn to the left and the right respectively. The small and sickle shaped curves are used for the medial vowel *e*. The medial vowel *o* is expressed by the superscribed flourish.

The letter *ka* shows a rounded loop on the left, caused by the connection of the lower end of the bent bar with the foot of the vertical. Occasionally the loop is angular. All *ka* letters in the Śāradā² and Proto-śāradā³ inscriptions from Hund show almost an angular loop. It is very difficult to keep uniformity in shapes of the letter because the material used for the present inscription is very hard. On contrary, it is easy to keep harmony in shaphes of letters in soft material like marble, used for the Hund inscriptions.

The top being flat, the letter *kha* has a big round loop attached to the bottom of the right vertical. The Śāradā inscription from Hund shows angularity in the shape of letters. The letter *ga* flat at the top, sometimes, has the upper bar much extended.

There is no uniformity in the shape of the letter *ca*; rounded, square, and triangular forms are available. One of the types is similar to the S.P.S. museum image inscription⁴. The quadrangular type of *ca*, like Brahmor copper plate⁵, is also available. There is only one example of the letter *cha*, which is similar to the Surgal copper plate inscription⁶.

² Rehman 1979.

³ Nasim Khan 1999.

⁴ Deambi 1982.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

The letter *ṭa* is of rounded form and similar to the Dewai and Barikot inscriptions⁷. The letter *ḍa* retains the post- Gupta style. The nasal *ṇa* is of the Gilgit Manuscripts⁸ type except for the upward stroke on the right of the letter present in the inscription.

The letter *ta* with a loop closely resembles the Sarahan Prasasti inscription⁹. There is a close similarity between in the shape of the letter *tha* of the present inscription and that of the Proto-śāradā from Hund¹⁰ and Śāradā inscription of Sarahan Prasasti¹¹. The letter *da* is of the Sungal copper plate inscription type¹². The nasal *na* is of the Hatun and Gilgit Manuscripts type and retains the form of the 6th and 7th century A.D¹³.

The difference between *pa* and *ma* is very difficult to make.

The semi-vowel *ya* is of the tripartite type and shows similarity to the Hatun inscriptions and in some cases to the Sarahan Prasasti inscription¹⁴. The letter *va* is more similar to the Srinagar inscription¹⁵.

The sibilant *śa* has a rounded top. The lingual *ṣa* is similar to the Srinagar inscription¹⁶. The dental *sa* shows sometimes a loop on its left.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nasim Khan 1999.

¹¹ Deambi 1982.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

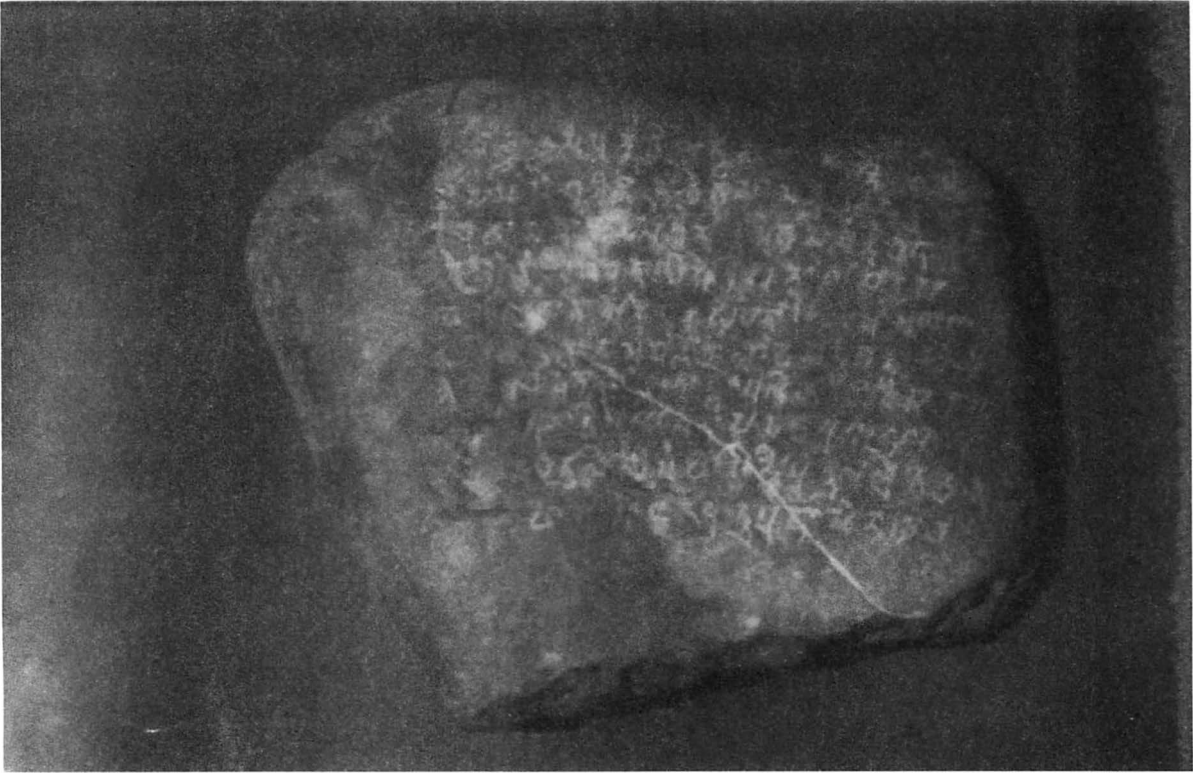
¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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