Ancient history of the Deccan

Jouveau-Dubreuil Gabriel
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Author: Jouveau-Dubreuil Gabriel

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Archéologie du Sud de l'Inde—[Annales du Musée Guimet-Bibliothèque d'Etudes—Tomes vingt-sixième et vingt-septième.]


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The Pallavas.—Sold by the Author, 6, Dumas Street, Pondicherry, 1917 (Price 2 Rupees).

Pallava Antiquities, Vol. II.—With 8 plates.—Sold by the author, Pondicherry, 1918 (Price As. 12).

Conjevaram inscription of Mahendravarma I.—Sold by the author, Pondicherry, 1919. (Price As. 4).
ANCIENT HISTORY
OF THE
DECCAN

BY
G. JOUVEAU-DUBREUIL
Doctor of the University of Paris,
Professor, College, Pondicherry.

TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH
BY
V. S. SWAMINADHA DIKSHITAR, B.A., I.T.,
Officier d'Académie
Professor of English, Colonial College, Pondicherry.

Lawrence P. Briggs,
Consul of the United States of America

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ABBREVIATIONS.

A. D. Anno Domini (After Christ).
A. S. W. I. Archaeological Survey Western India.
B. C. Before Christ.
Ind. Ant. Indian Antiquary, Bombay.
Laiders's list. List of inscriptions in Ep. Ind. Vol. X.
Rapson. Catalogue of the coins of the Andhra dynasty, the Western Ksatrapas, etc, in the British Museum, by Prof. Rapson, London.
INTRODUCTION

India may be divided into two parts, the North and the South. From the remotest times, this division has been adopted by the Indians who have given the name of Dakshaṇa (Dakshipatī) or 'The South' to all the Country that extends from the Narbada to the extremity of the peninsula. In this work, we shall use the word Deccan to designate the ancient Dakshaṇa, but with this little restriction, that the three Southernmost kingdoms of Chōḷa, Chēra and Pāṇḍya, which have always remained a little isolated, shall be excluded. We shall therefore call "The Deccan" the large tract of country which is bounded on the north by the Narbada and the Mahānadi, on the east by the Bay of Bengal, on the west by the Arabian Sea, on the south by the Nilgiri Hills and the Southern Penyār (which reaches the sea near Cuddalore and which is the northern boundary of the Chōḷa country according to the poetess Avvaiyar).

We have limited our subject in extent; let us now proceed to fix a time-limit for it. "Ancient History of the Deccan" means for us "the history of the Deccan in ancient times" and
the words "ancient times" denotes the 9 centuries extending from 261 B.C. to about 610 A.D., that is to say, from Asoka to Pulakeshin II. In fact, we have no historical document anterior to Asoka; and so we shall begin our history from the time of this king, about 261 B.C., (the Kalidaga war). On the other hand, from the time of Pulakeshin II, about 610 A.D., we have a large number of historical documents and the history of the Deccan is mostly known. It is therefore this historic period between 261 B.C., and 610 A.D., that is denoted by the words, "Deccan in Ancient times" and that we are going to study in this work.

The only book in which we find some information on their subject is the "Bombay Gazetteer" Vol. I. Part II (1896) which contains two works: "Early History of the Deccan" by R. G. Bhandarkar and "Dynasties of the Kanarese Districts" by J. F. Fleet. This book is well-known and there is no need to praise it here. But to-day it has one defect; it is twenty-five years old and during this last quarter of a century numerous discoveries have been made and "The Bombay Gazetteer" Vol. I. Part II. is not at all "up to date". Besides, this book itself does not contain, strictly speaking, the history of the Deccan in ancient times. The portion concerning the ancient times is very succinct, for, in 1896, the number of documents concerning it was small. Moreover, the Bombay Presidency does not by itself constitute the whole of the Deccan.

We may therefore say that today the History of the Deccan is quite a new subject. The student who wishes to know what was the History of the Deccan between 261 B.C., and 610 A.D., does not know what books to consult. This history is lost in obscurity. Still it is not the documents that are wanting; for the dynasty of the Kadambas alone, we have about thirty copper-plates. We have also plenty of information about the Pallavas and the Gangas. Why then is the chronology of these dynasties so mysterious? I thought that what was wanted most at the present time was to arrange the parts and make a whole work of it; I thought that a complete and attentive study of all the documents we actually possess will throw a flood of light on the darkness, bring order out of chaos and, in short, give birth to, what we have not had up to.
the present, the Ancient History of the Deccan.

Such a study is very important, as it is the history of nine glorious centuries of this large country. The documents that we have concerning the Deccan of the ancient times enable us to conclude that all this period was one of high civilisation and historical celebrity. We shall see that during the epoch of Asoka, the Deccan was not at all uncivilised. The art of writing was known a long time before it and the inscriptions of Asoka were read and understood very well at that time. From a military point of view, the Deccan was never more powerful than at the time of Satakarni who, without doubt, succeeded many times in vanquishing the kings of the northern countries and annexing a part of their territories. From a sculptural point of view, the Deccan, like the North, was inspired by the Greek and Roman arts and the marbles of Amaravati can be compared to the sculptures of Gandhara. If now we consider the monuments, the Deccan is much superior to the North. If we compare the ancient monuments of Northern and Southern India we find that the North is relatively poor. In the Deccan there is a very large number of sculptured rocks at Udayagiri, Junnar, Ellora, Nasik, Karhedi etc. And speaking only of the chief of them, which are the monuments in the north that will bear comparison with the grand Chaitya at Karli that is equal in its dimensions to the Gothic Cathedrals, or with the monasteries of Ajanta with their marvellous painting? There is, it is true, the great Stupa at Sanchi, but this monument is in Bhilsa near Deccan; it may even be considered a monument of the Deccan, since its balustrade which is the cause of all its celebrity has been sculptured, as is evident from an inscription, by the workmen of one Satakarni, that is to say, a king of the Deccan. Writing the history of the Deccan therefore means writing the history of the most remarkable monuments of India.

If we look at a map we find that the Deccan is an immense country, almost one half of India. If we examine the monuments, we shall have the certainty that this country has enjoyed a high degree of civilisation and if we bear in mind that the history of the Deccan in ancient times is the history of nine glorious centuries, we cannot but conclude that this history is well worth studying and that it must come out of the
almost complete obscurity in which it has remained up to the present day.

This book is up to date as far as the documents available in India up to the end of 1919 are concerned.
CHAPTER 1.

THE EARLY KINGS

§ 1. Aśoka.

One of the well-known events in the history of Aśoka is the conquest of Kaliṅga which probably took place about 261 B.C. and it is not astonishing to find an inscription of Aśoka at Dhauli. This town situated in the delta of the Mahanadi is in all probability the ancient Tosali, capital of the kingdom of Kaliṅga; for, according to Mr. Haraprasad Sastri, Tosali is etymologically identical with Dhauli. It is not more astonishing that there is another inscription at Jaugada (Ganjam District, Madras Presidency), as this place certainly formed part of the kingdom of Kaliṅga (concerning the Kaliṅga edicts, see Ind. Ant., Vol V, pp. 82-102; see also Arch. Surv. Southern India, Amarāvatī, by Burgess, pp. 114-25).

The discovery of an inscription at Sopāra (Thānā District, Bombay Presidency) near Bombay, has proved that the north-west of the Deccan as well as the north-east where Kaliṅga is situated has been under the domination of Aśoka. But the discovery, in 1892, of the inscriptions of Aśoka near Siddāpura, in Mysore, which have immortalised the name of Mr. Rice, has caused very great surprise. They did not, in fact, think that the empire of Aśoka extended up to the southernmost part of the Deccan. One very important point in the history of India was thus well established. So, the discovery, (see Hyderabad Archæological Series No 1) only a few years ago, of an
inscription at Miski (Lingsugur Taluq, Raichur District) in the State of Hyderabad has caused no surprise.

The Siddapura edicts (near Brahmagiri, in Molakalmuru taluk; see Ep. Carn. Vol. XI, MK, 21, 14, 34, and Mysore and Coorg from inscriptions by Mr. Rice, page 11; see also Fleet, J. R. A. S., for 1903, page 829 and J. R. A. S., for 1904, pages 1 and 355) present certain peculiarities which have been pointed out by Bühler and especially "the particular uncouth form of "ma" with its abnormally large upper limbs" (which re-occurs in the inscriptions on the crystal prism from the Bhaṭṭi-prāṇa stūpa, Ep. Ind. Vol. III. page 135). These details are very important. One is indeed led to believe that the edicts were engraved by the emissaries of Aśoka who came from the north, but that the people of those distant countries, where the edicts were published, understood very little of those inscriptions that were written in a language and an alphabet almost unknown to them. We may also suppose that at the time of Aśoka the people of Mysore were almost savages. On the contrary, the Siddapura inscriptions prove that South India had a special alphabet which Bühler has called "Drāviḍi" and that the art of writing was known many centuries before Aśoka, for, in the III century B.C. the alphabet of the South has had time to vary from that of the North. Besides, the special alphabet used in the Siddapura inscriptions proves that the edicts of Aśoka were engraved by some Southerners who must therefore have understood the language of Aśoka and attained as high a degree of civilisation as the northerners.

It is almost certain that Aśoka led only one expedition, that to Kaliṅga. But how did the rest of the Deccan come under his domination? It is to be supposed that, at the accession of Aśoka, the whole of the Deccan except Kaliṅga was already in the possession of the Mauryas. There are also, in Mysore, certain legends about the Mauryan king Chandragupta (see "Mysore and Coorg from inscriptions" by Mr. Rice). We may also suppose that the rest of the Deccan quietly submitted on hearing of the conquest of Kaliṅga. Be it as it may, it is certain that the whole of the Deccan was under the suzerainty of Aśoka and that, consequently, the political unity of India was a fait accompli, twenty-two centuries ago.