

## Reconsidering the Rummindeī Pillar Edict of Aśoka: In Connection with 'a piece of natural rock' from Māyādevī Temple

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### §1. The problems

In 1992 by the request of the Lumbini Development Trust, the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) started the planning of restoration of Māyādevī Temple, and carried investigations and excavations into effect at this site over a period of ten years since 1993. In the meantime as the result of excavation under leadership of Mr. Satoru Uesaka, JBF, a piece of natural rock was unearthed from directly below the center of Māyādevī Temple. It is presumed that when Aśoka erected the stone pillar at Rummindeī, he would lay underground as Marker Stone of birthplace. Consequently in this article, I shall examine the former studies of the concerned inscription, make clear the change of problems, and investigate the relationship between this inscription and the 'a piece of natural rock,' and its consistency.

### §2. Former studies of the Rummindeī inscription

Theories of A.A. Führer, G. Bühler, Vincent A. Smith, A.C. Woolner, E. Hultzsch, D.R. Bhandarkar, J. Bloch, Amulyachandra Sen, Naresh Prasad Rastogi, W.P. Gurugé and K.R. Norman (A. Barth, R. Pischel, F. Basak, S. Paranavitāna, D.E. Hettiratchi, H. Falk, J. Irwin and K.L. Janert).

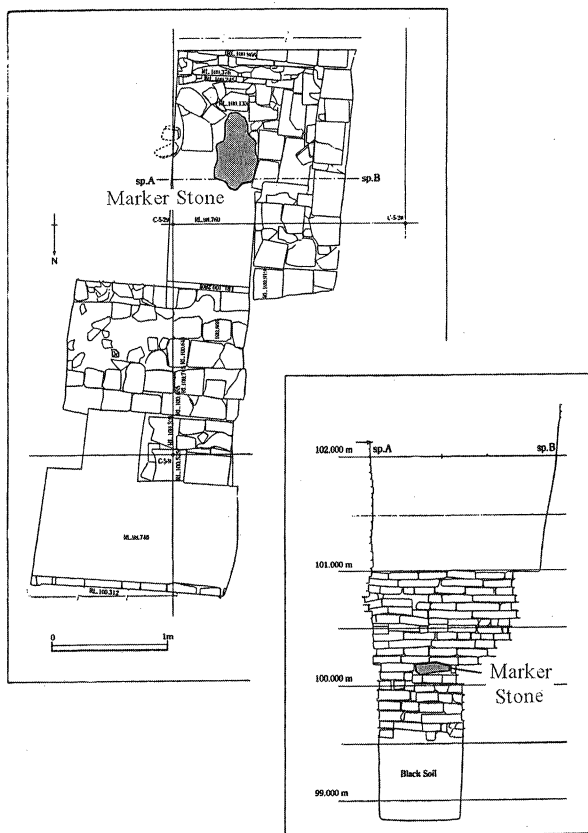
### §3. Archaeological contexts of a piece of natural rock from Māyādevī Temple

Mr. Uesaka states a report of a piece of natural rock as Marker Stone on the Archaeological Survey of the structure of Māyādevī Temple.

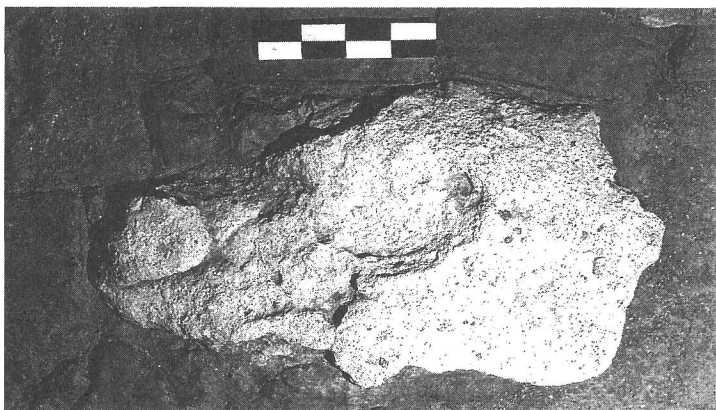
Mr. Uesaka has referred to the archaeological contexts of 'a piece of natural rock' which gave the historical points of view for the construction of Māyādevī Temple

( 2 )      Reconsidering the Rummindel Pillar Edict of Aśoka (K. TSUKAMOTO)

(Archaeological Research Report on Māyādevī Temple Excavation Project, JBF, Tokyo, 1995.4.5): “A piece of natural rock (a hard conglomerate with the dimensions of 70cm × 40cm × 10cm with the axis running in the south to north direction and containing a lot of pebbles) is found at the center of the top of the discovered level.



Archaeological context of Marker Stone from Māyādevī Temple



‘A piece of natural rock’ (70cm × 40cm × 10cm) as Marker Stone from the structure belonging to Maurya Period (B.C. 3 century) of Māyādevī Temple (Japan Buddhist Federation)

In the ‘Conclusion’ of the above-mentioned survey, Dr. Hideichi Sakazume (Professor at Rissho University, Archaeology) has brought the historical process of ‘a piece of natural rock’ as Marker Stone, which was laid underground, to a conclusion from the comprehensive points of view on the base of the result of archaeological survey at Māyādevī Temple.

1) A small chamber, which was structured on the Chamber-2 at stage I, belongs to stage II. A period of time between stages I-II is short. 2) A flat stone was set up deliberately in the Chamber-2, when the base of stage I was structured. The ingredient of stone is Pebbly Sand Stone brought from northern Sivalik Hills, which was regarded as Marker Stone to indicate the birthplace of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Its existence was deliberate in Chamber-2 continuously since stage I. 3) Fragments of Aśokan pillar were unearthed from Chamber-2, 5 and 8, presumed to be the structure of stage I. 4) The ‘stone of unarranged form’ were detected from a bored hole of east brick-wall of the Chamber-2, in which Marker Stone was laid underground. It proves that, when these stones were put into Chamber-2, the stratum filled with solid was removed again, and then the Chamber would be filled with remains including the fragments of Aśokan pillar. 5) The Marker Stone found in Chamber-

2 is a piece of natural rock of the district. Before the king Aśoka set up Rummindeī Pillar already, ‘a piece of natural rock’ as Marker Stone, which handed down that “the Buddha Śākyamuni was born here,” were known among the Śākyas in the district.

#### §4. Reconsidering the Rummindeī inscription: correction and its grounds

In the §2, I have surveyed the former studies of the Rummindeī inscription and made clear grounds of theories of each scholar. Problems of inscription are put together:

① *silā-vigaḍabhī^cā*, and ② *ubalike-kaṭe aṭhabhāgiye ca*

I will verify the suitability of theories in view of the present situation of archaeological investigation and excavation in recent years as follows:

① Laying underground of ‘a piece of natural rock’ construction of surrounded wall and setting up the stone pillar (*silā-vigaḍabhī^cā kālāpita silāṭhabhe ca usapāpite*)

This phrase is composed of Morphology-Declension and Semantics. Firstly, the Morphology-Declension of phrase is divided into two classes: (a) *silā-vigaḍabhī cā* ... ca, and (b) *silā-vigaḍabhīcā*. Secondly, Semantics of phrase is divided into three groups as follows:

- 1) Bühler transliterated *silā-vigaḍabhī cā*, and understood to be *cā*=Skt. *ca* (and), which he considered as a conjunction with the preceding phrase. But the preceding phrase finishes by ‘*ti*.’ The indeclinable *ti* (Skt. *iti*) is used at the end of the quotation, and expresses the cause, reason and object for the subject. Bühler thinks that *vigaḍabhī* in *silā-vigaḍabhī* (nom.sg.f.) is a compound adjective (*Karmadhāraya*), qualifying *silā* and equivalent to Skt. *vikaṭābhī*: *silā+vigaḍabhī*<Skt. *silā-vikaṭābhī*=*śilā-vikaṭa+abhrī* (f.) / *śilā-vikaṭa+abhra-* (m.) ‘a stone (slab) bearing a big sun (?)’
- 2) Smith, as Charpentier, transliterated *silā* (nom.sg.f.) *vigaḍabhīcā* (nom.sg.f.), and regarded the latter as the adjective phrase of the former. His presumption, that the pillar were once surmounted by the effigy of horse (‘a stone bearing a horse’), based on the record of Hiuen Tsang, whom Hultzsch also follows. Rastogi regards it as a derivative from *śilā-vikṛta-bhitti*, and translates it ‘a figure of stone.’
- 3) On the contrary, Bhandarkar understood to be *silā-vigaḍa-bhīcā*= *śilā-vikaṭa-bhityā* (ins.sg.f.) <*śilā-vikaṭa-bhitti-*, ‘an enclosure or railing made of stone’, and takes it as the

meaning, ‘an huge stone wall.’ Fleet regarded *silāvigada* as *silā* (stone) + *avi* (enclosure, fence, wall) + *gaḍa* (screen), and understood to be ‘stone wall which is an enclosure and screen.’ Bloch transliterated *silāvigadabhī cā*, and to be understood ‘une muraille de pierre.’ Sen regards it as a derivative from *śilā-vikṛta-bhittā*, ‘a stone-made railing.’ Gurugé takes it as ‘a stone wall,’ and has presumed that the pillar would be in existence before the edict was scribed. Norman understood to be *silāvigadabhī cā* (=ca), and supposed that two elements in a sentence are put down by *ca ... ca* (the Coordinate conjunction). Considering not only the linguistic reasoning, but also the historical background, the missing script resulted from the surface of the material upon which scribe’s exemplar was written, and so on, he regards this phrase as *silāvigadabh(i)īca*, ‘and a wall from, or decorated with, stone.’ This was the latest theory proposed before the ‘stone being in its natural condition’ was unearthed.

Of the above mentioned former theories, 1) and 2) in Semantics were proposed on the presumption that five pieces of Mauryan polished Chunar sand stone might be the fragmentary parts (mane) of the Aśoka’s Horse capital surmounted over present inscribed pillar as the mention by Hiuen Tsang. Certainly the effigy of animals surmounted Aśokan Pillars, but there was no inscription mentioned of the pillar capital. On the contrary, I think that 3) was connected to construct the early structure of Māyādevī Temple and to set up the stone pillar for commemoration. It has indicated a new point of view for reconsidering the Rummindei inscription that this investigation and excavation of Māyādevī Temple disclosed the ‘stone being in its natural condition’ and the structure enclosed it.

Up to now the compound *silāvigadabhīcā* was divided into *silā-vigada-bhīcā*, but by External Sandhi in Skt./Pkt., the rule of -a/-ā+a/-ā->-ā- is adapted: *silāvigada-bhīcā*<*silā*’*vigada-bhīcā*=*silā*+*avigada-bhīcā* will be presumed.

The *Pāia-Sadda-Mahaṇṇavo*, s.v. *vigada*, *viaḍa*=*vikaṭa*<*vikṛta*; Pischel, §219: AMg. *vigaḍa*=*vikṛta*. From this compound we suppose *silā*’*vigaḍa*<*śilā*+*avikṛta*-. Monier Monier-Williams’ *SED*, s.v. *avikṛta*, mfn. ‘unchanged, not prepared, not changed by artificial means, being in its natural condition’, therefore *śilā* (stone)-*avikṛta* (not changed by artificial means), i.e. a stone being in natural condition is identified to the ‘a piece of natural rock’ unearthed from Māyādevī Temple. After Gautama Buddha’s Nirvāṇa (death), when His Four Holy Places (the site of birth,

Lumbinī; the site of enlightenment, Buddha-Gayā; the site of first preaching, Mṛgadāva; and the site of death, Kuśinagara) had become the sites of Buddhist pilgrimage (*DN.* ii.5.8.), the ‘stone being in its natural condition,’ handed down that “the Buddha Śākyamuni was born here,” would be already in existence in the site of Lumbinī.

In this inscription *bhī* and *cā* are inscribed close to each other, then two akṣaras are regarded as a word; I presume the derivation *-bhīcā=bhiccā<\*bhi(t)tyā=bhittiyā* (ins.sg.f.)<*bhitti-*. MMW’s *SED*, s.v. *bhitti*, f. ‘a wall, partition, panel.’ It will point to the wall enclosed to protect the ‘stone being in its natural condition.’ In this case there is no subject word for *kālāpita* (nom.sg.f.), but it suggests this structure itself, or means a part of the structure-complex. Consequently the sentence of this inscription points out that “he (Devānāmpriya Priyadarśin=Aśoka) caused to be made (*kālāpita*) [the structure] with the enclosure (or the wall) (*bhīcā*) [to protect] the ‘stone being in its natural condition’ (*silāvigaḍa*), i.e. a piece of natural rock [handed down] that the Buddha Śākyamuni was born here (*hida Budhe jāte Sakyamunī ti*), and (*ca*) caused a stone pillar (*silāthabhe*) to be set up (*usapāpita*).”

② Free of tax/cess and reduction of share to the village of Lumbinī

In the phrase *ubalike* (nom.sg.m.) *kaṭe* (nom.sg.m.), Bühler understood to be *ubalika<avabalika-/apabalika-*, ‘free of taxes,’ Smith interpreted it as ‘released from religious cesses,’ and Thomas, Sen and Rastogi who considered it as the derivation *ubalika<udbalika*, followed Smith. Lyall understood it as ‘tenure of land on rent less than full assessment,’ and Bloch understood it as *ubalika=ubbalika=ucchu-ka*, ‘exempté de *bali*.’

*Aṭha-bhāgiye* (nom.sg.m.) Bühler interpreted as ‘sharer in wealth, partaking of the king’s bounty,’ Smith understood to be ‘to pay [only] one-eighth as land revenue.’ Pischel understood it as *aṭha=aṣṭa*, ‘with eighth plots of assessable land,’ Fleet understood it as ‘paying an eighth (of the grain harvest).’ Hultsch regarded it as ‘free of taxes, and paying (only) an eighth share (of the produce),’ and Sen and Rastogi also followed him.

Bloch understood it as “une contribution différant de l’impôt,” regarded it as “l’Arthaśāstra en effet distingue *bali* de *bhāga* et *ṣaḍbhāga*. Ou alors il s’agit non de la dispense totale d’une espèce d’impôt, mais de la réduction de l’ensemble, définie par *aṭṭhabhāgiya*.”

R. Dikshitar, in his book *Mauryan Polity*, presumes of the revenue source of Mauryan Dynasty on the authority of the *Arthaśāstra* as follows: The primary revenue source consists of the various kinds of land tax (*bali*, apparently an occasional levy such as those mentioned in 5.2) as income from crown lands worked by the *sītādhyakṣa* (the director of agriculture) (*sītā*, 2.15.2) and share of produce private lands (*bhāga*, 2.15.3), which was supported traditionally by the *Manusmṛti* (304-5).

On the contrary, Megasthenes (Strabon, *Geographia*, XV.1.40) said that the whole of country is of royal ownership; and the farmers (γεωργοί) cultivate it for a rental in addition to paying a fourth part of the produce. The above-mentioned two descriptions, as Hopkins has pointed out (*JAOS* XIII, p.88), are inconsistent. But by the *Arthaśāstra* (2.6.3; 2.15.3; 2.24.16), the share of a king was usually one-sixth (*ṣaḍbhāga*). This agrees with that Aśoka made the village of Lumbinī paying only an eighth share for a sixth share of the produce in the Rummindei inscription.

Furthermore, as the aggregate income, Dikshitar points out the food tax (*piṇḍakara*) received from the village community as a whole, not from individual cultivators, and the army provisions (*senābhukti*) collected from the village community when the army passed through. The land tax (*bali*) was a customary tax imposed to lands since the early Vedic age (*Ṛg-Veda*, X.173), and let a king cause the annual revenue in his kingdom to be collected by trusty (officials) (*Manusmṛti*, vii.80). It was different from *ṣaḍbhāga* (a sixth share of the produce). This is provided by the fact that *ubalike* (<*udbalika*-) and *aṭṭhabhāgiye* (<*aṭṭhabhāgiya*-<*aṣṭabhāgika*-) was conjugated by ‘ca’ (and) in the Rummindei inscription. Thomas (*JRAS* 1909, 466-7) has thought that *ubalike* (<*udbalika*-) is free of taxes (*bali*), and *aṭṭhabhāgiye* (*aṣṭabhāgika*-) means to repeal the usual *ṣaḍbhāga* (a sixth share of the produce) and to collected only an eighth share (*aṣṭabhāga*).

## §5. Conclusion

Through above reconsidering the Rummindei pillar inscription, I will propose the correction of the text and its translation.

[Text]

(A) *Devānapiyena Piyadasina lājina vīsativasābhisitena atana āgāca mahīyite*  
[/\*]

(B) *hida Budhe jāte Sakyamunī [']ti silā[']vigaḍabhicā kālāpita silāṭhabhe ca usapāpite [/\*]*

(C) *hida Bhagavaṃ jāte [']ti Lumminigāme ubalike kaṭe aṭhabhāgiye ca [/\*]*

[Translation]

(A) When king Devānāmpriya Priyadarśin had been anointed twenty years, he came himself and worshiped (this spot).

(B) He caused to be made [the structure] with the enclosure (or wall) [to protect] the stone being in its natural condition, *i.e.* a piece of natural rock [handed down] that “the Buddha Śākyamuni was born here”, and caused a stone pillar to be set up.

(C) Since the Blessed one was born here, the village of Lumbinī was exempt from taxation, and paying (only) an eighth share ([for a sixth share] of the produce).

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\* For the notes of this article, see K. Tsukamoto, Reconsidering the Rummindei Pillar Inscription of Aśoka: In Connection with ‘a piece of natural rock’ from Māyādevī Temple, in: *Lumbini, The Archaeological Survey Report 1992~1995*, Japan Buddhist Federation, Tokyo 2005, pp.191-207.

〈Key Words〉 a piece of natural rock, Rummindei Edict of Aśoka, śilā’vigaḍa-,  
Māyādevī Temple

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