

CHANDAVARAM: STUPAS ON AND AROUND SINGARAKONDA

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ABSTRACT

In 2016 the present author started his research on the Buddhist stūpa near Chandavaram, a village in the Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh, India (Figs. 1, 2). The aim was to contextualize its art within the history of Andhra Pradesh and in relation to Buddhist sites like Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. However, the author quickly realized that the site itself is not yet known well enough to justify a work focusing solely on the carvings. The findings laid out in the present paper will hopefully be a service to anyone interested in the site. The present study attempts to be a guide in questions regarding how the site was discovered, what kind of structures it comprised and what can be found in the area that would be of interest for historians.

Keywords: Stupa, Chandavaram, Buddhist, Andhra Pradesh, Singarakonda, Excavation

We find the site discussed in the present paper on the eastern (right) bank of the Gundlakamma River, on a hill called Singarakonda, which stretches for about 1km in a south to north-north-eastern direction. The hillock is approximately 150m tall and consist of blackish layers of shale stone. On its southern slopes are the remains of a Buddhist establishment featuring a large brick-build *stūpa*. The location is commonly referred to as *Chandavaram Buddhist Site* or *Chandavaram Stūpa*. The name points to the nearby village Chandavaram, although in the past this site has been tied to a place called Jagannadhapuram and is in fact closer to the village Vellampalli.¹

In times of precipitation, when its water level is high enough, the Gundlakamma River flows around Singarakonda's western and northern sides and then further eastwards through Prakasam District, until it enters the Bay of Bengal c. 18 km north-east of Ongole.

¹ See Raghavalu 1968: 237. According to Reddy 2014: 138, fn. 2, the site is preferably referred to as Jagannadhapuram by the AP-DAM. However, in his own and all publications by the AP-DAM the site seems to be named after Chandavaram. Although Jagannadhapuram can be found on maps, at present the area contains not much more than wild shrubs and fields.

From the hilltop the Buddhist site Dupadu can be seen in the south-west, lying about five kilometres upstream.² Recently, railing pillars have been found during renovations of a temple ca. 8,5 km north of Singarakonda and more at another temple close by. At least one of the pillars has inscriptions which have been dated to the first century. The finds have been classified to be remains of a Buddhist complex.³ The fact that all three sites are within a few hours of walking distance is evidence for a whole network of sites waiting to be discovered and studied.

The first time a Buddhist site on Singarakonda is mentioned is in a review by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the 1965/66 season, where the site is roughly described in a short paragraph.⁴ Raghavalu, then Minister for Education of Andhra Pradesh, also inspected the site in 1967; he surmised it to hold a large number of sculptures and hence suggested that it should be taken under the protection of the Department of Archaeology and Museums Andhra Pradesh (AP-DAM).⁵ In accordance with his suggestions, the excavations started in 1972 under the supervision of the AP-DAM and continued until 1977.⁶

Raghavalu relates valuable information of the site before its excavation. He mentions a large *stūpa* (Stūpa 1 in the present paper) on Singarakonda covered by debris and describes some of the sculptures that have come to light from brick robbing activities on its western side. He mentions structures that will be later identified as terraces surrounding the *stūpa* and monastic buildings. Raghavalu notes, that sculpted slabs from

² The coordinates are: 15°54'42.00"N 79°22'32.00"E. For a report of the excavations see the annual report of the Andhra Pradesh Department of Archaeology and Museums (AR-AP-DAM): 1976/77: 33. And the review for same season by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI-R): 1976/77, 3; Two sculpted panels are now on display in the Kalachakra Museum in Amaravati (Nos. AM 17, AM 18). See ASI-R: 1977/78, 61 for a first reading of the inscription found on AM 17. Both carvings have been published and described in Pant / Reddy 1988, Reddy 1988 and Reddy 2009: 41-45 (with colour photographs on pls. 23, 24). For a new edition of the inscription on A.M.-17, see EIAD (=Griffith / Tournier 2017) No. 197.

³ The inscribed pillars were found on the premises of the Tripuranthakam Temple (16°0'25.0"N 79°26'9.0"E) on the northern hill of two, west of Tripuranthakam town. In addition to that, Buddhist remains are reported from Bala Tirupura Sundari temple, only 750m south-south-west of the former (16°0'9.80"N 79°25'45.00"E); see Reddy, U. S., Andhra Pradesh: Buddhist pillars found under temple. *Deccan Chronicle*, January 18, 2016 (<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/current-affairs/180116/buddhist-pillars-found-under-temple-in-prakasham-district.html>; accessed March 2018).

⁴ See ASI-R 1965-66: 4; the position of the site given in the text is erroneous. Its correct location can be found using the following coordinates: 15°56'01.7"N 79°25'46.6"E.

⁵ See Raghavalu 1968: 236-8. His reasoning was, that if the ASI were to take over the site, the artefacts uncovered during excavations were in danger of becoming distributed to Museums outside of Andhra Pradesh, while the AP-DAM could help to “regain” what has been lost in the case of the Amaravati Sculptures.

⁶ Summaries of the respective seasons' findings, together with few photographs, have been published in the Annual Reports of the AP-DAM (AR-AP-DAM) and in short by the ASI (ASI-R). See AR-AP-DAM: 1972/73: 13-14; 1973/74: 2-3; 1974/75: 8-13; 1975/76: 12-16; 1976/77: 17-24; ASI-R 1972/73: 3; 1973/74: 7, 35; 1974/75: 6-7; 1975/76: 3-4; 1976/77: 9-10, 58.

the *stūpa* have been used for burials on the western slope of the hillock, consisting of vertical slabs arranged in circles. It is likely that he saw memorial stones, at least two of which have been found on the site (see paragraph on inscriptions below). Importantly he describes another *stūpa* (Stūpa 2 in the present paper) four furlongs away (c. 884 m),⁷ that will reappear as CND III in the excavation reports. According to Raghavalu, this second *stūpa* featured a *harmikā*, topped by an umbrella. He also recorded dome slabs that were repurposed as steppingstones to a *śaiva* temple in Chandavaram, where they have remained until today. An interesting observation of his are remains of a wall running along the Gundlakamma River for about 155m and close to Stūpa 1.

STRUCTURES AT THE SITE

CND I (Figs. 3, 4, 5)

The area called CND I in the excavation reports contains Stūpa 1 on a terrace that has partly been chiseled out of the rock,⁸ together with more terraces that surround the *stūpa* in the east, west and south. A grand stairway in the north leads further up the hill. Votive *stūpas* on lower levels were discovered north-east and east of Stūpa 1.⁹

The first season of excavations started here in December 1972 and lasted until March of the following year.¹⁰ The report states, that a *stūpa* (Stūpa 1) with *āyāga* platforms and a diameter of 40m was exposed. These measurements are off by c. 8 m, as later excavations will reveal the maximum diameter of the *stūpa* to be c. 32 m.

Noteworthy is the reference to a sculpted panel depicting the Buddha's birth in this report. No such depiction is known to the present author. However, related scenes like Asita's prophecy (Fig. 10) and the presentation of the new-born *bodhisatva* to a tree god are depicted. Unfortunately, the confusion of these depictions is just as likely as the theft of a panel from the site.¹¹

In the following seasons the inner structure of Stūpa 1 was examined. The recovery of a relic casket in Stūpa 1 was planned for the season 1975-76 but the topic is

⁷ Another description of its location: *Within a stone's throw* from a small hillock further south of Stūpa 1; see Murthy 2008, 295. This small hillock is CND II mentioned below in the present paper.

⁸ See Murthy 1997: 131, pl. X. His descriptions are unfortunately limited to a fraction of the whole site, but they contain many important details concerning the Stūpa 1 and its renovation, as well as the only plan of the site that has ever been published.

⁹ Subrahmanyam only refers to six votive stūpas to the east of Stūpa 1; see Subrahmanyam 2005: 463. It is unclear if that includes the one found towards the north-east of Stūpa 1 mentioned above.

¹⁰ See AR-AP-DAM: 1972/73, 13-14; ASI-R: 1972/73, 3.

¹¹ More than 10 sculptures have been stolen from the site Museum in a series of raids organized by art traffickers linked to Subhash Kapoor in the years 2000 and 2001. Through the efforts of the present author and the staff of the National Gallery of Australia a sculpture could be repatriated to India from Australia in 2016. For this case see Arlt 2017, Arlt & Folan 2018; for similar cases see Pachauri 2006; about Kapoor see also Kumar 2018.

not brought up in the respective report of the following seasons.¹² It is likely that no relics have been found at all. The report of season 1974-75 details observations made probing the inner features of Stūpa 1 and the terraces surrounding it; a groove to fix sculpted panels onto the dome is found on top of the drum. Apart from the outlines of substantial terraces constructed on the hill no traces of buildings constructed on them are recorded.¹³

The stairs linking Stūpa 1 with a monastic complex on a higher level of the hill are preceded by an entrance that, judging from its layout, could have been lockable with a door.¹⁴ On the opposite side of this entrance and to the north-west of Stūpa 1 a rectangular platform can be seen on an excavation photograph.¹⁵ It is possible that the *buddhapāda* now housed in the Panchayat office in Chandavaram were found on that platform, unfortunately both are not mentioned in any of the reports (Fig. 6).

The dimensions of Stūpa 1 in its last phase of construction are as follows: The diameter of the drum was c. 32 m at a height of 1.5 m. The diameter of the dome was c. 27.3 m at a height of 7 to 8 m. We know the height, because lower parts of the *harmikā* were still in place. The platform on which the *stūpa* rests had a semi-circular shape with a diameter of almost 50 m (east to west).¹⁶ The *harmikā*, measures 5.1 m x 5.1 m; its original height is unknown and no railing or umbrella were discovered on it.¹⁷ The drum was furnished with four *āyāga* platforms measuring 6 m in width and 1.45 in depth.¹⁸ Traces of the railing surrounding the *stūpa* have been found. Early in the excavations three phases of construction of the *stūpa* were pointed out, but not dated.¹⁹

A visualisation of suggestions and descriptions in Murthy 1997 (Figs. 3, 4) are helpful for a basic understanding of what we are dealing with, especially now that the

¹² See AR-AP-DAM: 1974/75, 15. Apart from claims on unscientific websites no evidence that relics were discovered can be referred to.

¹³ See AR-AP-DAM: 1974/75, 8-12; ASI-R: 1974/75, 6-7. The terraces and their structural phases are best described in Murthy 1997.

¹⁴ See AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76 (plates not numbered). It is possible that structures stood on these platforms, as a relief discovered in Kanaganahalli suggests; see Poonacha 2011, 361, Pl. LV.C. Good pictures have also been published in Meister 2007, figs. 11 and 12 and online by Christian Luczanits CL00 38,12-38,17; see <http://www.luczanits.net/gallery3/index.php/docu/Kanganhalli> - last accessed February 28th 2019. For a discussion and contextualisation of this carving and its inscription at the site see Arlt forthcoming.

¹⁵ An image of the platform can be found in AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76 (plates not numbered).

¹⁶ See Murthy 1997: pl. X.

¹⁷ See, AR-AP-DAM: 1973/74, 2.

¹⁸ The term *āyāga* (sometimes *āyāka*) is probably best explained in the paper by von Hinüber as being identical to Pāli “offering”; see von Hinüber 1974: 358 n. 15.

¹⁹ See, AR-AP-DAM: 1972/73, 14. The best description can be found in Murthy 1997: 130-137. A proponent for four periods has been Subrahmanyam; see Subrahmanyam 2005: 462-63. His suggestion is based on the theory, that the *stūpa* was not Buddhist in the beginning, but a place dedicated to the worship of *nāgas*.

dome of the *stūpa* has been transformed and sealed with new bricks. The visualisations also show, as the present author would like to think, that we are most likely dealing with a development far more complex than something that can simply be broken down into three phases.

The present author is convinced that a dating of the earliest structural phases of the Stūpa 1 is not yet possible, while a dating of the later phases of Stūpa 1 can be vaguely achieved by dating its art.

The decoration, consisting of carved slabs on the *stūpa*'s dome and drum, was partly preserved *in situ*, although the site was reported to have been exploited for building material prior to and during excavations.²⁰ In the 1990s Murthy reported that forty-six (broken) drum slabs could still be found *in situ* and twelve more on the *āyāga* platforms.²¹ The drum slabs are a bit wider than 1 meter and must have stood c. 1.5 m tall.

Given the maximum circumference of the drum is close to 32 m with the *āyāga* projections measuring 6 m in width, we can roughly fit 17 to 18 drum panels into each quadrant. These drum panels, as we can see from their remains, are similar to those from Jaggayyapeta, or Kanaganahalli for instance. They are bordered by a pilaster on one or either of their sides, covering and locking in place at least one of their neighbors. Excavation photographs suggest that possibly 10(!) panels covered each of the *āyāga* platforms, with six panels on the longer and two on either of the shorter sides.²²

The dome panels belonging to Stūpa 1 are c. 2.8 m tall and c. 0.7 m wide. They are made of a local (?) stone, the colouring of which ranges from a spotty reddish brown to a light grey. At the *stūpa* they were placed in a groove on top of the drum and leaned against the dome (Fig. 4).²³ While the drum panels overlap with each other on their sides, the dome panels do not. They are slightly fluted on their back sides to fit next to each other, which distinguishes them from those in Kanaganahalli for instance.²⁴ Most panels bear an ornamental band on one or either of their sides, while others have none. After the excavations, a few were given to the Hyderabad Museum, but most remained at the

²⁰ See Raghavalu 1968: 237 and AR-AP-DAM: 1972/73, 13. Murthy 1997, 142 states that the site was looted by “robber gangs” and reports a casing slab to have been stolen in 1988.

²¹ See Murthy 1997: 136. According to Reddy 2005: 82, 60 of 116 are still available.

²² Compare AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76: pls. not numbered with Subrahmanyam / Reddy 2012: 28 = Arlt 2017: fig. 2.

²³ See Murthy 1997, 135. The groove is visible in almost all photographs of the *stūpa* taken during the excavation.

²⁴ See Poonacha 2011, 88-91, fig.24.

site.²⁵ A number of reliefs had been stolen from the site Museum in the early 2000s (see n. 11 below).

CND I-A (FIG. 5)

In 1974-1975 excavations were initiated north of Stūpa 1 that revealed traces of a monastic complex, which will be called “Monastery 1” or CND I-A in later reports.²⁶ A substantial set of stairs leads to this complex from Stūpa 1 on a lower level. The presence of “megalithic burials” in the area around “Monastery 1” is mentioned.²⁷ The excavations showed that “Monastery 1” was built on a raised c-shaped base,²⁸ open towards Stūpa 1 in the south. Enclosed by the c-shaped base was found a courtyard with traces of 16 pillars set up in a 4 x 4 pattern. The southern entrance was flanked by two apsidal shrines with *stūpas* in their apses.

The eastern and western wings of the c-shaped structure feature 6 cells each; 7 rooms are on the northern wing.

In 1976-77 parts of the monastic establishment were unearthed north and west of “Monastery 1”: “Monastery 2” (north and west of “Monastery 1”) and “Monastery 3” (north of “Monastery 2”).²⁹

Apart from a single monk’s cell on its eastern end almost no structural remains are recorded from “Monastery 2”; a kitchen and refectory area has been proposed in here.³⁰

Traces of an apsidal temple, another 16-pillared pavilion and remains of four cells were discovered in “monastery 3”.³¹

²⁵ At present some pieces are stored in the TSAM (6646, 6647, 6650, 6651) while two are shown in the Amaravati Museum and interpretation center in Amaravati, featuring an older number from the TSAM: A.M.-14 (66454), A.M.-15 and A.M.-16 (6645). Judging from the inventory numbers, it can be estimated that at some point at least nine reliefs were transferred to the Hyderabad Museum.

²⁶ The present author uses the designations of the distinct areas in the monastic complex given in the excavation reports (i.e. monastery 1, 2, 3) only for the sake of an easier understanding of these reports. The author does not think, however, that these so-called “Monasteries 1, 2, 3” are necessarily distinct monasteries but rather different areas of one large complex.

²⁷ See AR-AP-DAM: 1974/75, 8-13; ASI-R: 1974/75: 6-7.

²⁸ See AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76, 12-16; ASI-R: 1975/76: 3-4.

²⁹ See and compare descriptions in AR-AP-DAM: 1976/77 and 17-24, ASI-R: 1976/77, 9-10.

³⁰ His suggestion is based on the interpretation of circular holes in the rocky surface as pounding and grinding places; see Subrahmanyam 2005, 463.

³¹ See and compare descriptions in AR-AP-DAM: 1976/77 and 17-24, ASI-R: 1976/77, 9-10. The present author has been unable to safely trace the mentioned apsidal structure.

CND II (FIG. 2)

A circular structure housing a limestone *stūpa* is recorded south of Stūpa 1. The whole structure was found stretching 10.75 m in a south to north orientation with its entrance at the southern side, opposite of a second *stūpa*.³² Traces of the foundations are still visible on a small hill south-west of Stūpa 1. Unlike the CND I complex this area is not taken care of. The remains are overgrown with thorny shrubs and crumbling.

CND III (FIG. 2)

A *stūpa* (Stūpa 2) featuring spokes was discovered south of Stūpa 1 and CND II,³³ together with traces of an apsidal temple. Stūpa 2 was found to be enclosed by a dais. The dimensions given in the report (l, w, h: 17.3 cm, 55 cm, 65 cm) can only be incorrect. The length of 17,3 given in cm and mm (!) must be taken in m and cm, otherwise the following statement makes no sense:

No wall was found in existence in the north-west corner. Each wall at its centre had a rectangular step 1.70 x 1.52 m. preceded by a half moon stone in brick, to facilitate easy passage to the top dais which as to the right of the step in the south-east corner was a *vedika* of 2.10 X 1.40 m. size.³⁴

It is very important to note that not all sculpted panels were found at Stūpa 1, but also hail from Stūpa 2 and the present author would like to use this opportunity to repeat his proposal made in an earlier paper, that some – possibly all – of the known drum panels featuring mason marks hail from that second *stūpa*.³⁵ We know for certain that two panels inscribed with mason marks were found at this *stūpa*.³⁶ Both are carved from a stone that is unlike the drum panels which we find on Stūpa 1 (in many cases still *in situ*). While those of Stūpa 1 are of a light-colored limestone. The other panels' colors can vary from grey to a reddish brown and are similar to the dome panels of Stūpa 1.

It seems that it would make sense to assume that all similar looking drum panels which have been marked with a mason mark (i.e. a number) belong to a set. Another carving that is recorded from Stūpa 2 depicts a male worshipper.³⁷ Unfortunately, it is damaged and stored in a way that prevents it from being checked for a mason's mark.

³² See Subrahmanyam 2005, 463.

³³ See AR-AP-DAM: 1973/74: 3; ASI-R: 1973/74, 7, 35. This observation is important, as later authors tended to confuse the wheel-shaped plan of Stūpa 2 to be a feature of the larger Stūpa 1.

³⁴ See AR-AP-DAM: 1974/75, 13. The measurements regarding the *vedikā*, a term that is often used for a platform in the excavation reports, come without an indication of what they denote; it is unlikely that any of the dimension given are an indication of height.

³⁵ See Arlt, *in print*.

³⁶ See AR-AP-DAM 1974-75: 13 for a description of two panels, one of which is now in Hyderabad, the other one in Amaravati

³⁷ See, AR-AP-DAM 1974/75. Both carvings are now at the Chandavaram storage.

An inscribed pillar – possibly an umbrella shaft – could hail from Stūpa 2, but unfortunately no proof thereof can be provided here. Because of its inscription it has been mentioned in almost every publication related to the site, but curiously never been published before (Fig. 7).³⁸

FORD AND GHAT

Late excavations in 1994/95 revealed a bathing *ghat*, that is probably, but not necessarily, identical with the wall Raghavalu described running along the river.³⁹ It is unclear whether the modern ford across Gundlakamma River at the northern end of Singarakonda is to be identified with the “fort” mentioned in the same report. As no fortification has been reported/is visible otherwise, the author concludes that the excavator is indeed referring to a ford. This is corroborated by the discovery of the above mentioned *ghat* and further sculptures during the same excavational campaign, both of which suggest works in an area close to the river.⁴⁰ Satellite imagery from 1965 shows a path from Vellampalli towards the Buddhist site that is still in use today (Fig. 1), but not identical with the later(?) built ford further north.

UNDOCUMENTED SITES

Close to the site Museum there are two post or pounding holes cut into the ground. A path starting in the monastic complex and leading to the tip of Singarakonda crosses several small manmade shale stone platforms, as well as a circular heap of shale stone flakes. For the pounding holes and the approximate location of the path see Fig 5.

At the eastern foot of Singarakonda brick bats of historic dimensions are scattered across the landscape. These, however, are all modern and most likely a surplus of the recent renovation activities at the site.

East of the Stūpa 1 several circular heaps of shale stone flakes with holes in their center can be seen. Most appear to be between one and two meters in diameter, but their outlines are hard to trace now. It is very likely that these are the remains of the six votive

³⁸ The identification is based on the assumption that the *stūpa* with umbrella and *harmikā* mentioned by Raghavalu is identical with Stūpa 2 and corroborated by the fact that nothing like an umbrella has been reported elsewhere in the reports and the improbability that the rather tiny shaft would have been visible when planted on the *harmika* of Stūpa 1. The disc-shaped section of an umbrella made of stone is documented in an unpublished photograph taken inside the former site Museum and appears to have been stolen in the early 2000s.

³⁹ See Ramalakshman 2002; 61.

⁴⁰ in 2016 two sculpted slabs were found in the Gundlakamma River; see, Anonymous, 1st Century Buddhist panels found. *The Hans India*, November 27, 2016 (<http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Andhra-Pradesh/2016-11-27/1st-Century-Buddhist-panels-found-/265796>; accessed March 2018). The location given in this article is obscured; for the name of the village read: Vellampalli.

stūpas mentioned in the excavation reports, as nothing else in the area could be identified as such.

Between CND II and CND III there is what appears to be an artificially created steep depression of a perhaps a dozen meters in depth and circumference. The author got the impression that this area might be of some archaeological significance, unfortunately there was not enough time or equipment for a superficial examination.

COINS

Coins with standing bull were collected from the surface where exactly is not stated.⁴¹ Another report states that led coins with bull and horse on the obverse were discovered in association with rouletted ware.⁴² Copper coins of *Siri Yaña* are recorded.⁴³ One coin bearing the legend of *Rano Sri Satakarnisa*,⁴⁴ with a bull on obverse is reported from a drain on the eastern wing of “Monastery 1”.⁴⁵ More coins, the character of which remains unspecified, have been found during the 1990s campaign mentioned above.⁴⁶

Most interesting are the coins found in the drain of “Monastery 1”, as we learn something about the context in which it was found and some of the led coins with bull on obverse that turned out to bear a *Mahatalavara*-legend. The bull-type of such coins has otherwise only been found in Vinukonda; 36 km north-east.⁴⁷

Bhandare, who adds to Reddy and Reddy’s reading of the legends points out, that a feudatory named *Mukhadalapakam* is mentioned in their legends.⁴⁸ Since no other places besides Vinukonda, the closest major urban center are reported that yielded this kind of coin it may be assumed that it is a local type. Unfortunately, the coins are too unique, to affix a precise date to them. They could hail from *Sātavāhana*-times or later.⁴⁹

⁴¹ See AR-AP-DAM: 1972/73, 14.

⁴² AR-AP-DAM: 1974/75, 13.

⁴³ Quoted from AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76, 14; also ASI-R: 1975/76, 4. All that can be learned from the reports is the identity of the ruler named in the legend. The legend itself however is not reproduced.

⁴⁴ See AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76, 24; in ASI-R: 1976/77 9 the legend is reported to read: *Rano Siri Satakarnisa*, again it is probable that only the assumed identity of the ruler is given in the report, and not the true legend on the coin. If the report is indeed correct, this find would be surprising, since the type of coin has otherwise not been reported this far south, but in the Krishna- Godavari Divide region in Coastal Andhra Pradesh; see Bhandare 1998, to whom I am thankful for his personal comments regarding this matter.

⁴⁵ Ramalakshman 2002, 61.

⁴⁶ AR-AP-DAM: 1975/76, 24.

⁴⁷ The coins in question are square in shape, their legends are first read by Reddy / Reddy 1993, 42-43.

⁴⁸ The amended reading is: *Mahatalavarasa Mukhadalapakamasa*; see Bhandare 1998, 357.

⁴⁹ Although it seems likely and appears to be a default opinion, there is not enough evidence for a good guess when or if Chandavaram has been under *Sātavāhana* control at any point in time.

INSCRIPTIONS

The scholars associated with the Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa project (EIAD, see Griffiths & Tournier 2017), as well as the present author, have added to our knowledge regarding inscriptions discovered at the site. Altogether seven inscriptions have been discovered so far, another one in Tripuranthakam and one at the Dupadu *stūpa*.⁵⁰ From the site three inscriptions are mason's marks, two are records on memorial stones, an illegible inscription can be found on a drum panel and a donatory record can be found on a small pillar, possibly the shaft of an umbrella hailing from one of the smaller *stūpas* (e.g. Stūpa 2). More inscriptions are mentioned but not published in the 1990s excavations.⁵¹ A much later inscription in uneven lines on two sides of an oddly shaped stone is stored in the Panchayat office Chandavaram, together with the sculptures found at the *stūpa*. Ultimately nothing about this inscription and its provenance is known. It is not mentioned in any of the excavation reports.

Most of the early Brāhmī inscriptions have now been inventoried and edited by EIAD.⁵² Two of the mason marks discovered by the author, and a first image of the inscribed pillar shaft shall be published here for the first time, together with the pillar discovered at the Tripuranthakam temple 8km to the north of the Singarakonda. The following inscriptions are edited according to the conventions followed by EIAD.⁵³

a) Mason mark on a drum panel in the Telangana State Museum, Hyderabad (TSM 6650) depicting a *stūpa* with a *nāga*, Fig. 8., 10 4 The number is carved on the top left corner of the panel's sculpted face

b) mason mark on a drum panel in the Panchayat office, Chandavaram depicting the great departure, Fig. 8. 10 7, The number is carved in the centre and above the carving on the panel's sculpted face

EIAD 237 – mason mark on a drum panel in the Telangana State Museum, Hyderabad (TSM 6651) Fig. 8, 10 8 - The number is carved on the top right corner of the panel's sculpted face

EIAD 241 – on an umbrella shaft (?) in the Panchayat office, Chandavaram, Fig.7

⁵⁰ The panel is now exhibited in the Amaravati Museum and Interpretation Center, A.M.-17. The inscription is in one line above the carving of a *stūpa*. Damage on the stone has compromised the readability. The first publication is in Hanumantha Rao et al. 1998: 124; for the best edition so far see EIAD (=Griffith / Tournier 2017) No. 197.

⁵¹ Ramalakshman 2002, 61.

⁵² EIAD 237 – mason mark on a drum panel in the Telangana State Museum, Hyderabad (TSM 6651); EIAD, 238 – bearing faint remains of a donative inscriptions in two lines – on a drum panel in the Telangana State Museum, Hyderabad (TSM 229); EIAD 239 – on a memorial stone in the Panchayat office, Chandavaram; EIAD 240 – on a memorial stone in the Panchayat office, Chandavaram; EIAD 241 – on an umbrella shaft (?) in the Panchayat office, Chandavaram.

⁵³ See <http://hisoma.huma-num.fr/exist/apps/EIAD/conventions.html> (last accessed October 3, 2019).

- (1) Cadam(u)ghasa pu-
- (2) tasa haghasa (d)[e]-
- (3) yadhama bhagava-
- (4) t[o]

The pious gift of Hagha (Skt. Saṃgha), the son of Cadamugha (Skt. Candramukha).

The *mu* in the name of the donor's father is to be expected but only faintly visible.⁵⁴ A *ma* as seen by previous editors of this inscription could be a blunder on the carver's part.⁵⁵

Cadamugha occurs in an inscription on a drum panel close to the eastern *āyāga*-platform of the Kanaganahalli Stūpa.⁵⁶

The four-sided shaft is c. 1.20 m tall and c. 10-15 cm wide on each side. On one side the upper end is decorated with the image of a *stūpa*, beneath which the inscription can be found. The carving of a bird mentioned by Ramalakshman could not be seen by the present author. Another suggestion by the same author has been the explanation of the current name of the settlement Chandavaram: According to Ramalakshman "Candamagha" would have been a local ruler and his name the eponym of Chandavaram. Even if we read "Candamagha", this claim is not substantiated by the inscription itself. Furthermore, nothing indicates Candamugha to be a ruler. The possibly connected inscription mentioned below (EIAD 600) suggests that his father has been a *gahapati śreṣṭhin*.⁵⁷ The shaft is broken off just above the depiction of the *stūpa*'s *harmikā*, in a location where usually a set or cluster of umbrellas would be carved.

EIAD 600 – on a pillar found on the Tripuranthakam temple premises, Fig. 9

- (1) gahapatisa seṭhisa
- (2) cadamūkhasa deyadhamma 卐⁵⁸

The pious gift of the householder, the foreman Cadamūkha (Candramukha).

⁵⁴ I wish to thank Vincent Tournier (Paris) for his comments and suggestions regarding my previous edition and interpretation of this inscription and the relevant *akṣara* in particular.

⁵⁵ See ASI-R 1976/77, 58, Hanumantha Rao et al. 1998: 123, no. 1; Ramalakshman 2002, 116.

⁵⁶ The inscription has recently been edited, translated and commented on in Nakanishi / von Hinüber 2014, p. 112, no. V.2,12: *koṭurakasa cadamughasa sabhāt[u]kasa dāna*. For the localization of the panel at the site See Arlt (forthcoming).

⁵⁷ See Ramalakshman 2002, 116.

⁵⁸ The present author is thankful for the amendments made on his reading of this inscription by Vincent Tournier and the comments made by Arlo Griffiths (Paris) regarding an earlier discussion of this inscription by K. Muniratnam (Mysore) in 2017, during a conference in Pondicherry

There are of course several possible translations for the status / profession of the donor. Since householder is still a common translation for the *gahapati* it is used here as a neutral placeholder.⁵⁹ The additional title *seṭhi* (*śreṣṭhin*), however we decide to interpret it, underlines the exceptionally high social status of the donor. For a possible connection to EIAD 241 see comments on the inscription above. It is very unfortunate, that at present not more can be said about the site or other finds made there. The pillar (c. 2.73 m tall, 20 x 30 cm wide) is four sided with an octagonal section in the upper half. The transition from four to eight sides is facilitated by four half lotus rosettes on the upper and lower ends of the octagonal section. The inscription discussed here is written on the upper end on one face of the upper four-sided section and on one of the wider sides. On the neighboring face of lesser width and to the left, just beneath the octagonal section, a medieval inscription of 30 thinly carved lines can be found.

AFTER THE EXCAVATIONS

In the early 1980s, photographs of the excavations were exhibited in the Victoria Jubilee Museum in Vijayawada.⁶⁰ A site Museum was constructed in the late 1980s and in the 1990s more excavations were carried out near the site.⁶¹ The excavated structures were gradually strengthened with new bricks.⁶² A lot of renovation done in recent years has changed the site,⁶³ altered the looks of Stūpa 1 and lead to the destruction of valuable information.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Nakanishi / von Hinüber (2014) have frequently translated the term *gahapati* with banker. In EIAD (=Griffith / Tournier 2017) the term is usually translated as notable which reflects the notion that *gahapati* is more of a title than an occupation.

⁶⁰ See ASI-R 1980/81, 117. Now Bapu Museum.

⁶¹ See Ramalakshman 2002, 61. The activities are reported for 1994/95. However, they appear in a list of activities for the season 1996/97.

⁶² During a debate of the Rajya Sabha then Minister of State of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Shivraj Patil informed the audience that the government of Andhra Pradesh would grant 5.176 million Rupees (= in 1988 ca 300-320 million €) for the development of Buddhist sites, including Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Chandavaram, Guntupalli and Sankaram to act in accordance with a decision made by the Rajya Sabha; see Official Debate of the Rajya Sabha December 7, 1988, 40-41.

⁶³ As stated above, the ground plan of Stūpa 2 which resembles a wheel with spokes has been confused to be a structural feature of Stūpa 1. Renovations carried out in the 1990s or shortly before led to the addition of spokes to the outer ring walls of the *stūpa*'s drum. The aim of this addition was to prevent further disintegration of the drum by rainwater, that entered the inner structures of the *stūpa* since the excavations; see Murthy 1997, 142.

⁶⁴ After 2012 and before 2018 a few dozen *in situ* stumps of the *stūpa* railing have disappeared during renovations. This undermines any attempt to take their measurements, which might show different phases of the railing's construction. The only measurements available are (width x depth) 35cm x 20cm at an 33cm interval; see Murthy 1997, Pl. XI. Tests on the now scattered remains prove the above measurements to be a sample.

These developments are the results of good natured plans for the development of the site, presented 2006 and granted 2007; see Official Debate of the Rajya Sabha, December 19, 2006, 163-166; Anonymous, A bit of this and that. *The Hindu*, July 14, 2007 (<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp->

ART AND DATING

Some of the drum panels of depicting *stūpas* are quite similar in style to those discovered in Dupadu.⁶⁵ Similar depictions of *stūpas* featuring narratives on their drums are primarily known from the later phase of the Amaravati Stūpa or Nagarjunakonda art. If these panels are contemporary with each other remains open, but likely.

There are clearly two kinds of drum panels to be found in Chandavaram. Those mentioned above, which are made of a greyish brown stone and the limestone panels decorating the drum of Stūpa 1.

As stated above, a relative dating of some of the sculptures is possible and this should in turn provide us with a timeframe for the latest phase of the *stūpa*.

A depiction of the Dhanapāla narrative for instance is probably not older than second century CE. The only carving similar to a panel depicting the Rāmagrāma Stūpa has been dated to first century CE.⁶⁶ The existence of a re-carved dome panel (Fig. 10) can be taken as a sign for two phases of dome panels.⁶⁷ We should accept, however, that this is no prove for two phases, only for two attempts at carving. On top of that, different phases of dome panels do not necessarily prove that the *stūpa*'s dome was decorated before its last structural phase.

Most of the extant dome panel depict three events of the Buddha's life (enlightenment, first sermon, *parinirvāṇa*). The aniconic mode of depicting the Buddha in these carvings is no indicator for an early dating, especially if we take into account the frequent use of that formula in late panels of the Amaravati *stūpa*.

The ornamental bands bordering the edges of the panels and dividing the scenes are at times quite simple, while in other instances they are more intricate. Certainly not all of the dome panels have been made by the same sculptor(s) and probably not at the same day, but this does not eliminate the possibility of their creation over a period of a few years or decades.

metroplus/a-bit-of-this-and-that/article2250465.ece; accessed March 2018); and among others Murali, S, Buddhist Stupa gets facelift in Prakasam, *The Hindu*, April 20, 2015 (<http://www.thehindu.com/-news/national/andhra-pradesh/ancient-buddhist-stupa-gets-facelift-in-prakasam/article7122301.ece>, accessed March 2018). A guidebook for tourists that includes Chandavaram and features its *stūpa* on the frontpage has been published by the AP-DAM; see Subrahmanyam / Reddy 2011, 14.

⁶⁵ At least three more similar drum-panels depicting *stūpas* are in and outside of the Panchayat office in Chandavaram. They are described in Reddy 1997, 54 and Reddy 2005, 81: Reg. nos. 13, 15 and 11 or 12 or 11 the last given differently in Reddy 1997 / 2005.

⁶⁶ See Zin 2016, 761, according to Shimada's definition, the panels belong to the first type of dome slabs which he dates to B.C. 50 – 50 A.D; see Shimada 2013, 107-109. Shimada's dating of some of the sculptures in this group seems to early to the present author; see Arlt forthcoming.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of this panel's iconography see Arlt *in print*.

There are more possible explanations for the low degree of uniformity regarding the ornamental décor and shape of the dome panels, than distinct phases of construction. No inscription informs us about how the construction of the *stūpa* and its décor have been financed. The décor of the Kanaganahalli *stūpa* has retained a great level of apparent uniformity, probably over several centuries. This certainly has to do with the proximity to an important urban center (modern Sannathi) and the incidentally greater number of steady wealthy donors. Chandavaram, in a rather remote area, might have seen fewer phases of relative wealth and hence developed in an entirely different pattern.

The dome and drum panels mentioned above are made of a stone that seems to be local. However, the often-plain drum panels of Stūpa 1 are made of limestone. This implies that the dome and the drum panels are not from the same structural phase of Stūpa 1. It is logical, that the limestone panels came after the last extension of the drum, that probably preceded the last great efforts of work on the dome erected above the drum.

The following tentative scenarios may be suggested:

After the drum was enlarged for the last time, limestone panels were fixed to it and the *āyāga*- projections. Dome panels may have been fixed before but surely during the last expansion of the dome. Since it was only slightly enlarged and the drum quite wide (Figs. 3, 4) the builders would have been able to re-fit older dome panels together with new ones.

The last extension of the dome happened - judging from the datable dome-panels - probably during the first to second centuries CE. During that time, the drum panels that are not made of limestone were probably added to Stūpa 2.

In Kanaganahalli, the evidence suggests that the *āyāga* platforms were constructed at around the same time when the drum was expanded for the last time. However, reconstruction and transformation of these platforms is also very well attested. I have suggested that the *stūpas* in Kanaganahalli and Chandavaram probably developed in different ways, but what this development in Kanaganahalli clearly shows, is that we probably should not imagine the development of a grand and complex structure like a *stūpa*, to have taken place in clear distinct phases, but more like a continuous process that will be accelerated or slowed down by outside factors. This might be especially true for the process of decorating the structure with sculptures.

Future studies will hopefully help to reconstruct the economic and political history of the area.

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FIGURES

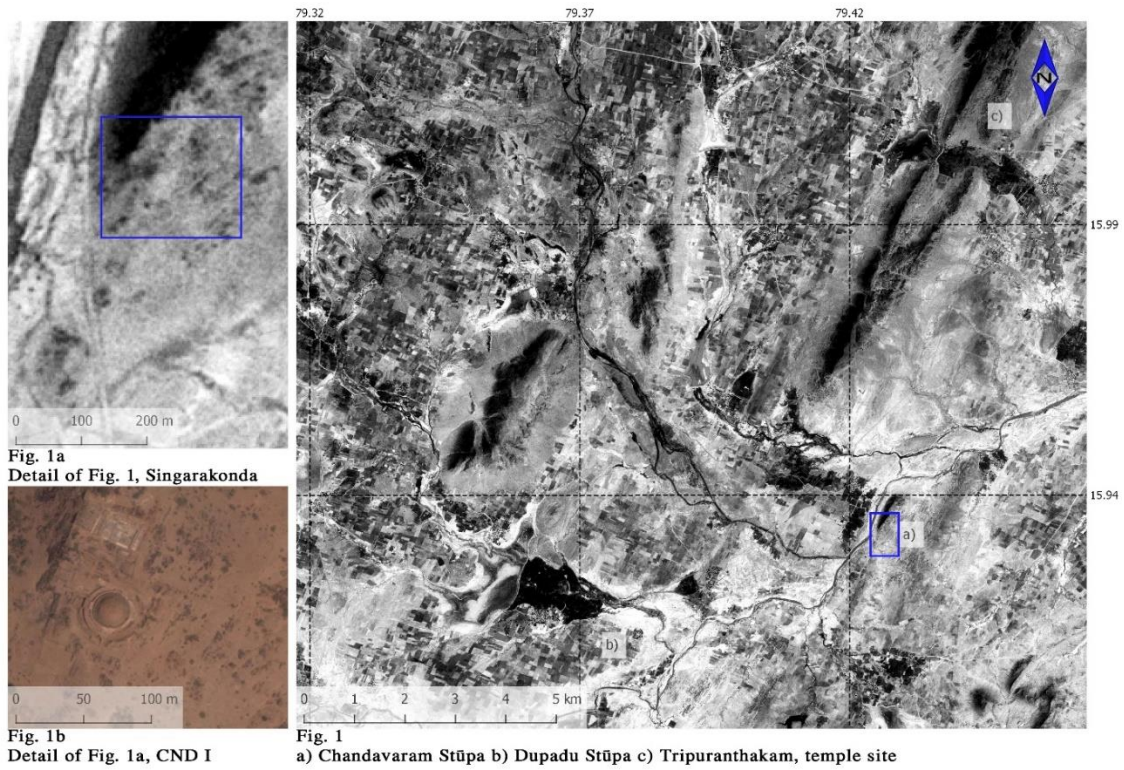


Fig. 1, NASA Satellite image No. DS1025-1055DF114 part b, captured October 9, 1965

Fig. 1a, detail of Fig. 1; Fig. 1b, detail of 1a; Satellite image captured February 17, 2010

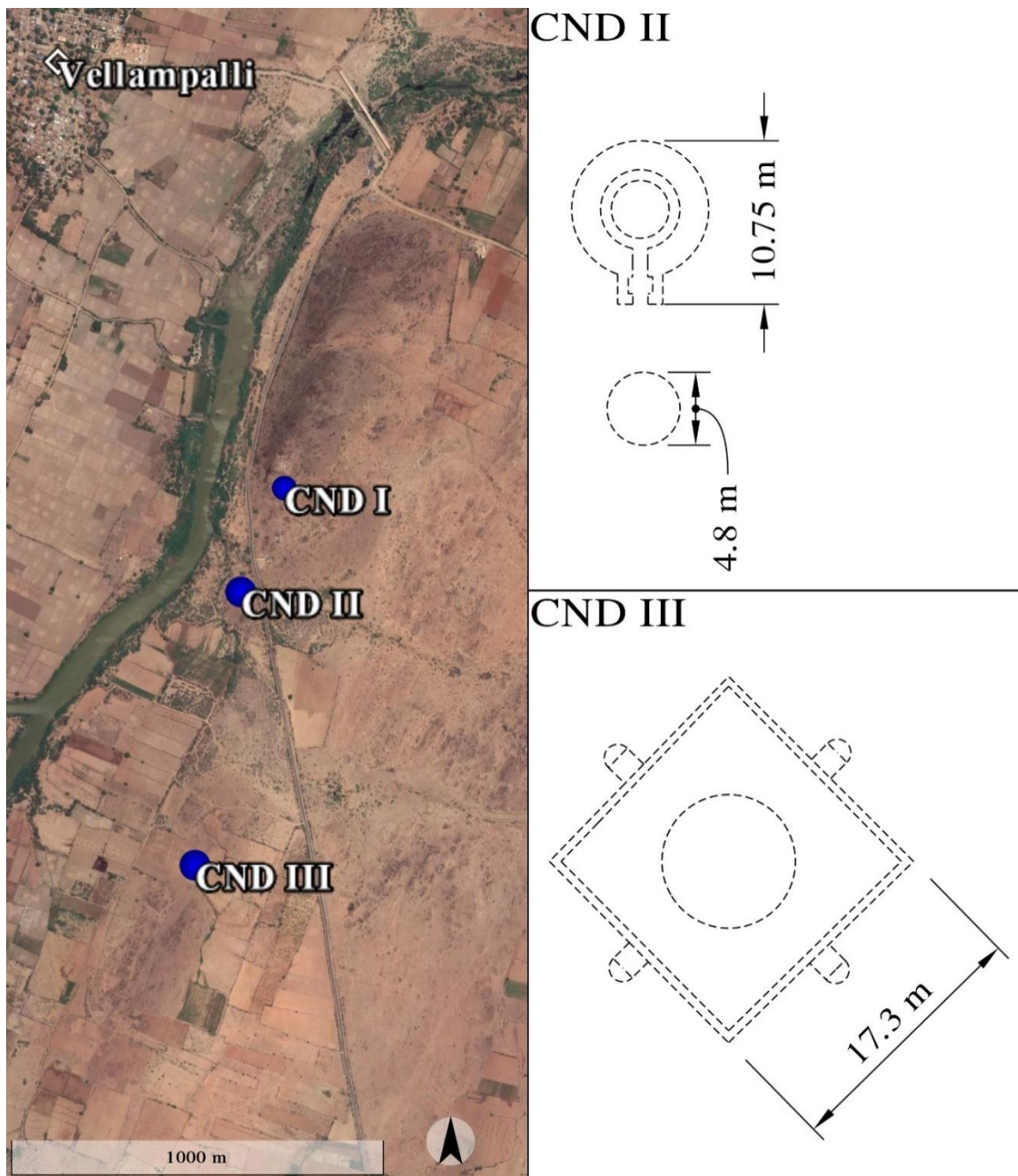


Fig. 2, Plan with areas as designated in the excavation reports CND I – Stūpa 1, CND II – traces of two stūpas, one of them in a circular building, CND III – Stūpa 2 and remains of apsidal temple Satellite image captured July 5, 2019. Drawings by present author.

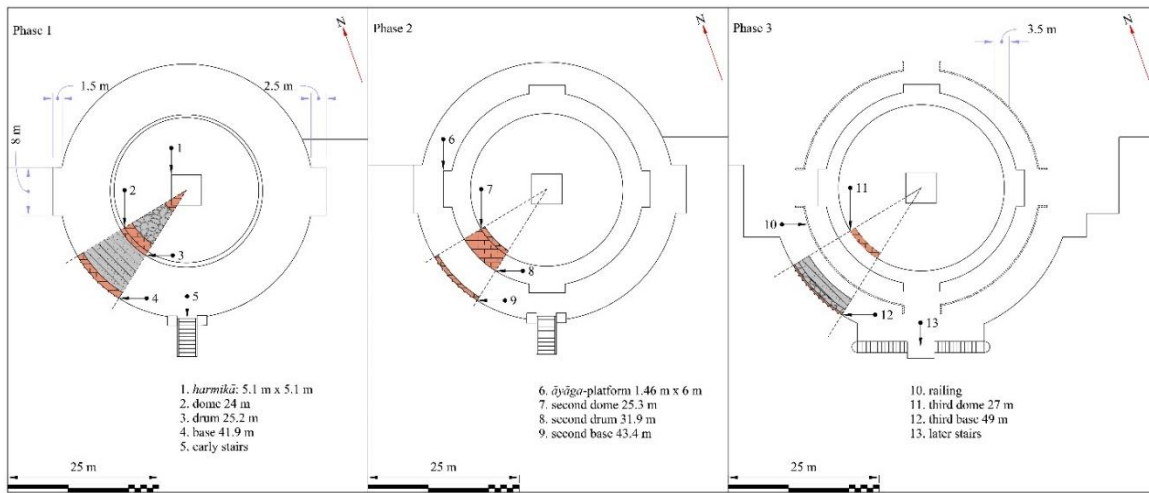


Fig. 3, Inner structure of Stūpa 1 and surrounding terrace according to Murthy 1997 and excavation reports. Drawing by present author.

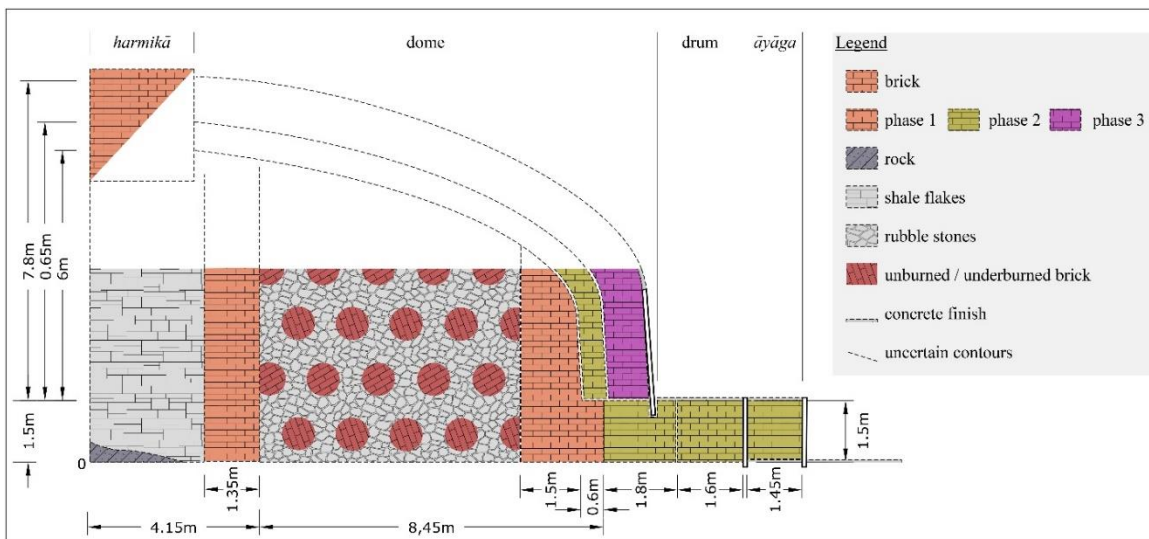


Fig. 4, structural details of Stūpa 1, in section from center to drum. All measurements after Murthy 1997. Different phases are indicated by coloring; M = center of stūpa. Drawing by present author.

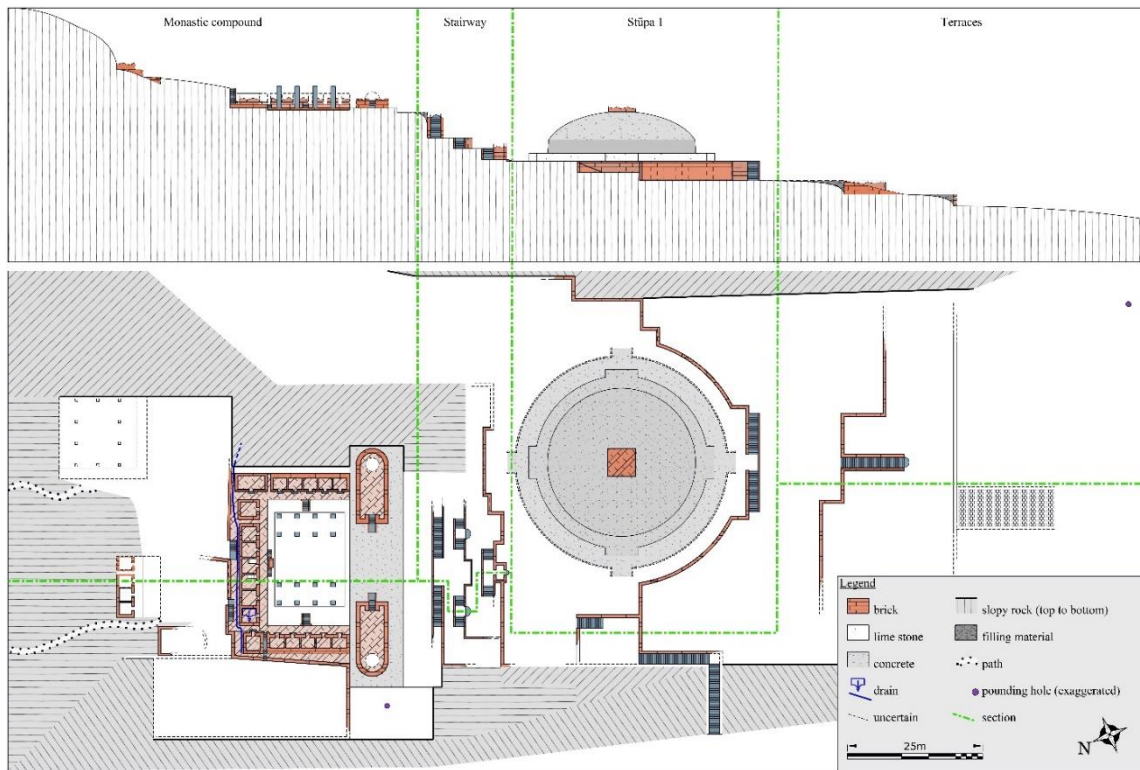


Fig. 5, Plan of CND I and CND I-a. Drawing by present author.



Fig. 6, Buddhapāda (67cm long, 60cm wide), Panchayat office, Chandavaram. Photograph by present author.



Fig. 7, Inscription on a sculped pillar, Panchayat office, Chandavaram. Photograph by present author.

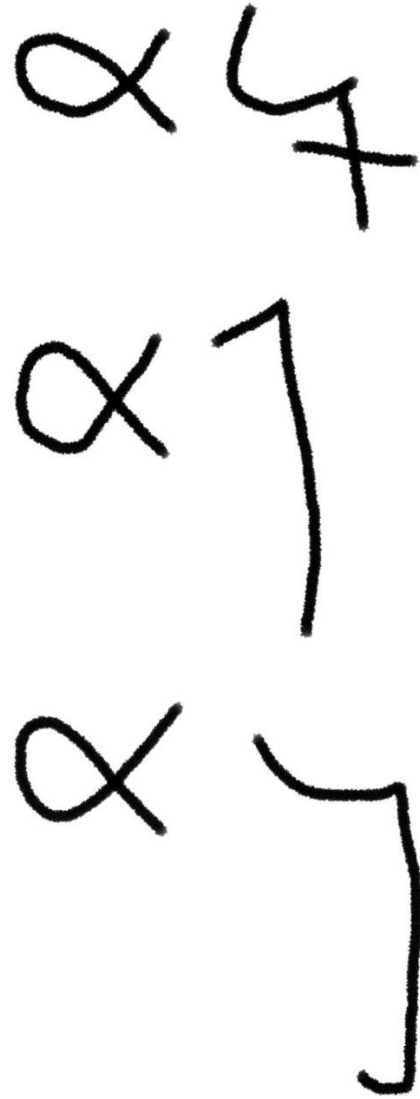


Fig. 8, Mason marks / numbers written on drum panels (from top to bottom: 10 4, 10 7, 10 8). After photographs by present author.

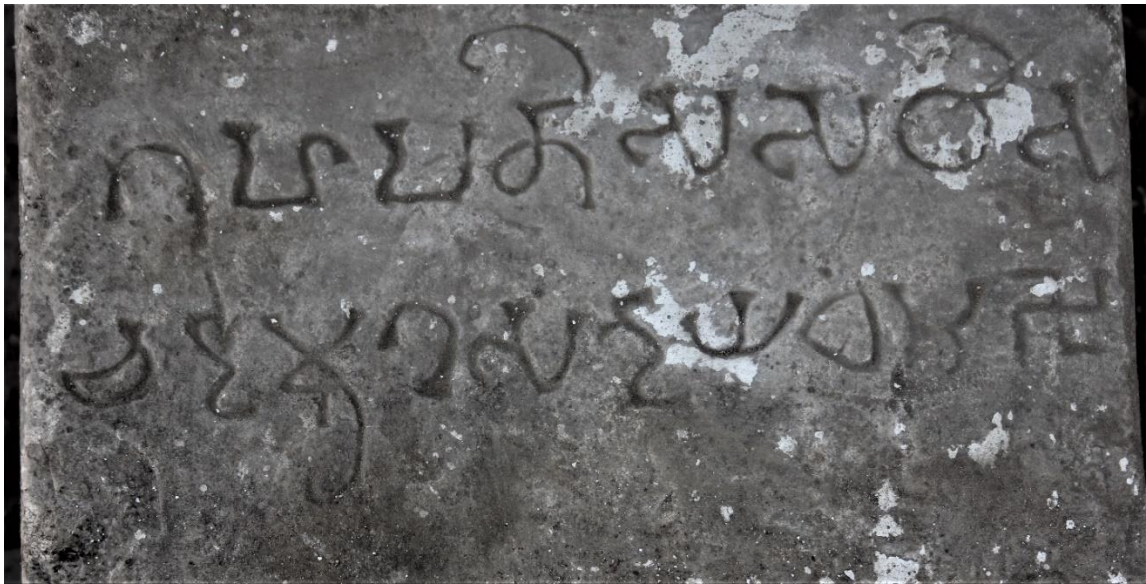


Fig. 9, Inscription on a pillar, premises of the Tripuranthakam temple. Photograph by present author.



Fig. 10, Dome panel in the Telangana State Museum (TSM 6647, 69cm wide x 164cm tall.) carved on both sides: left (front) top: Asita's prophecy; bottom: visit to Śākyavardhana. Right (back) *dharmacakra* on a pillar behind an empty throne and flanked by sitting worshippers (upside down and unfinished). One third of the panel is broken off. Photographs by present author.