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“ADMINISTRATIVE” TERMINOLOGY  
IN EARLY EPIGRAPHY AND EVOLUTION  
OF ANCIENT INDIAN STATE STRUCTURE (I-V SEC. A.D.)

The approach to interpretation of an administrative terminology of inscriptions quite often is determined by a complex of general representations about the state and state structure in ancient India. A lot of the terms, usually, are interpreted, as a designations of the administrative posts, though sometimes it is not supported not only by meaning of the terms, but also by information about the persons, which is named by them. A question on, whether is the term a designation of a post or title is not mentioned at all, also as the question about a parity of sanskrit terminology from ancient or medieval texts with terms widely used in researches, conceptual on character: office, administration, department, bureaucracy, official, having rather concrete sense. It is represented for us especially important. Their usual understanding (for which stands the whole complex of representations about the organisation of state and society) requires, in our opinion, significant limitations.

Structure of the relations within the states in the first half of I millennium A.D., as we have shown in our researches, essentially differed. Though the affinity to the king and his court yard, main source of grants, titles and new “posts” was the important factor, most likely, the administrative functions (first of all, tax collection) within the such states were executed, mainly, by the local rulers, aristocrats, chiefs of local territorial organisations, including communal by the type and so

on. In this connection, the specified persons were called by court titles, and thus were included in court hierarchy. And the acquisition of the title not always meant execution of the duties, certain sort of the state service, appropriate to literal meaning of the title and, probably, conducted only to fastening personal connections between the local elite with the king.

It is important to notice that in ancient Indian epigraphy of the various periods always there is a certain common term, by which the administrator from any level is designated. So, for example, although the structure of the society in time of Mauryas was extremely various, most part of “political élite” associates in Ashokan inscriptions with *mahamatras*. *Mahamatras* (dignitaries), as testify Ashokan edicts, played important role at a courtyard of Mauryas, together with *kumaras* ruled in the large parts of “Mauryan Empire”. Thus named the administrators in large and small cities, territories, and *parishads*. It is represented for us not accidental, that the local authorities of different levels within the huge empire, in edicts from the west and south, from Kalinga, Surashtra and Sannati could be called by the similar term. At the same time, each concrete “administrator”, local leader, called *mahamatra*, and thus included in imperial “political élite”, quite could, as it is represented for us, simultaneously to call itself differently, keeping traditional, intelligible for the area population titles.

For Satavahanas epigraphy such universal term was *amacha* (Sanskrit *amātya*). In the grant from 18 year “from victorious military camp” Svami Gotamiputa Siri-Satakarni notifies Vishnupalita, *amacha* in Govardhana, informing him about the grant of his personal (king’s own, it is emphasized in the text) field. This grant, as is spoken in the text, was “approved” by other *amacha*, Sivaguta and the order of king “should be transferred” to the last. According to the grant of king Gotamiputa Satakarni from 24 year, which “should be transferred” for Samaka, *amacha* in Govardhana, for the monks, instead of earlier granted field, the new one was given, part of king’s property, on the border of city. In an inscription from 19 year of Vasishthiputa Siri Pulumavi, the king addresses to Sivakhadila, *amacha* in Govardhana, and informs him about the grant of the village Samalipada instead of granted earlier village Sadasana. The incomes from village are offered to be used for repair of a temple. It is spe-

cially mentioned that the village should govern just by the monk’s organisation. In an inscription from Karle from 14 year, after the reference to *amacha* in Mamala, is spoken about the grant of the village Karajika to the temple Valuraka.

Simple interpretation of this term in historiography, as designation of the state administrators, “governors” looks doubtful. In inscriptions there are no detailed information about their mutual relation with king. Actually, even a verb *ānapayati* there are no bases to translate in any cases, as it is usually done – “orders” (for a line of translations of early inscriptions it is typical the unreasonable use of imperative, strongly changing the sense, including, instead of optative). The command, as such, in inscriptions simply is not present. King, gives orders with his own property (field or taxes from village) only notifies *amachas*, not requiring from them concrete actions. In Ashokan “edicts” such reference by the expression “from words” is used which in later inscriptions is replaced by *vaktavya* (“should be informed”), “notifies ... let to you will be known” or by similar expressions, which sense is reduced to the notification of the villagers and local authorities, that they did not break the rules of grant. The same sense is meant, probably in other grants of Satavahanas, or – what the reason it is to notify so polite the official, which is obliged to carry out the orders of the chief of state, how *amacha* can “approve” the decisions of king?

Though the term *amacha* in epigraphy, as well as in Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* has usually uncertain meaning (“colleague”, “associate”), in the mentioned cases, we can interpret “*amacha*” as the local leader. Therefore, in these causes mentioned the areas, where *amachas* ruled (for example, Govadhane *amacha* is called in the text of the grant in Govadhana-Ahara, Mamale *amacha* is called in the text of the grant in Mamala Ahara).

In an inscription from Kanheri is spoken about Shateraka, “universal associate” (*vishvasya amatya*) of Vasishthiputra Satakarni’s empress (meaning of the term may be the same type as *sarvadhyaksha*, “universal overseer” from Vakatakas epigraphy). Though the contents of an inscription is possible to interpret differently – as his personal gift or the gift which has been carried out by the request of empress, in any case Shateraka’s title, empresses “uni-

versal associate” has not concretely – administrative sense. This Shateraka was, probably, noble “servant” (in the widest sense of the word) of empress, received in this connection in an inscription (and, probably, in a reality), mentioned title.

It is necessary to emphasize, that the term *amacha* in inscriptions I-IV A.D. from Western India meets infrequently. It is determined not only by small number of “king’s inscriptions”, but, it is quite possible also because this term not means the certain social status – as well as in *Arthaśāstra* and in inscriptions by this term called different representatives of various levels of public hierarchy *only* as a designation of their connections with kings. Therefore, in “private” (“individual”, i.e. made not on request of the king) inscriptions, the term *amacha* is usually supplemented by definition “king’s” or with king’s name. So, for example, in an inscription from Kuda is spoken about the daughter of *rayamacha* Hala, in one inscription from Nasik – about the gift of Mahahakusiri Bhatapalika, daughter of *rayamacha* (“king’s associate”), Arahahaya Chalisalanaka, wife of *rayamacha* Agiyatanaka Bhadakarika (i.e. about the group or dynasty of “king’s associates”), in the other – about the gift of Ayama from Vacha (Vatsa) *gotra*, *amatya* (“associate”) of the king, *kshatrapa svami*-Nahapana.

About the real status of the persons, which could be mentioned in inscriptions with a title “king’s associate”, their place in the society, we can learn, being based on a general context of the information of the temple inscriptions I-IV A.D. from Western India about the authors – donors, in the certain degree reflecting the structure of society in that time. Incomparably wider terms not connected usually with the state, king’s administration, and imperial authority – *mahāmata*, *mahābhoja*, *mahārathin*, *kumāra* and so on here are used.

For Gupta inscriptions the term *kumaramatya* used, as the term, by which any representative of authority, from different levels could be designated, from the courtier or the governor of wide territory, up to the local chief. It specifies, on my sight, the important general feature of the evolution of the social-political relations in ancient India.

For Mauryas, probably, there was a characteristic a greatest degree of autonomy of local authorities, probably, only formally subordinated to Magadhan king. In the time of Satavahanas – it is possible to speak about arrangement of the relations between the Supreme king and the

local leaders, which receive a title *amātya* (Shankararya, for example, in IX A.D., in the commentary for Nitisara of Kamandaki, interprets the term *amātya*, as in the *Gṛihyasūtras* – “from a word – the house” – this fact shows, that the real meaning of this term remained actual). Having similar meaning in *Arthaśāstra* the term *amātya* means not only co-operation with king or king’s service, but also some restrictions of local authority, are emphasized with his loyalty to the Supreme ruler, constancy of connections of the person, named *amātya* with the king. By this meaning of term, as it is represented for us, it is possible to understand an origin of term *kumāramātya*, characteristic for Gupta epigraphy, which occurrence reflects important tendency in evolution of the so-cio-political structure of the Ancient society.

For Pre-Gupta epigraphy a title “king” (*rājan*) is used by the rather limited circle of the rulers. Even the great king Aśoka, ruler of the huge empire, modestly calls itself in edicts as the “king of Magadha.” As it is represented, similar “modesty” of the rulers was connected not only to main features of organisation of an “empire” (as *mandala* by the type), but also with a complex representation about the socio-political structure of a society and imperial power. The ruler accepted a title *rājan*, usually, not only by his own desire, but also in process of his acceptance by the upper part of public hierarchy. For the royal consecration, for example, it was necessary to follow the certain traditional norms, to execute certain rites and ceremonies, to have king’s essence by the birth and much another. It is need to mark here, certainly, exclusive role of king’s authority in the Indian tradition already at the earliest stages of it’s development – it is supported by the role of the complex of “imperial” rites, detailed developed already in Post-Vedic literature.

Ushabhadatta, the ruler in a significant part of the Shakas state, following in his polity to the norms of *Dharmarāja* in his inscriptions never calls itself as the “king” (emphasizing only his own belonging to a Kshaharata imperial family), though mentions fulfilment of *abhiṣeka* after a lot of “virtuous acts”. By the information of epigraphy from the Shaka-Satavahana time we can judge about the existence at this time of a much wider circle of the rulers not having a title *rājan* – local rulers, named by titles “prince” (*kumāra*), “great warrior” (*mahārathin*), “the great owner” (*mahābhoja*) and so on.

Consolidation of relations within the state and the support by kings of the separate local leaders, chiefs of local organisations (called therefore, *amātya*, associate) naturally led not only to their strengthening, but also to increase of their social status. Probably, it was one from the reasons, why in the Gupta time epigraphy we meet already much more often with a title king (*rājan*). Accordingly, each of such “kings” was interested in consolidation within their territories, in transformation of their dependent local leaders into “associates” (*amātya*), “group of the supporters” (*pakṣa*). The increase of a circle of leaders having an opportunity to call itself as the kings (*rājan*), naturally led to decline the status of this title. Therefore, for Gupta epoch is characteristic not only representation about the set of kings having different status (and, accordingly, different titles) but also decline the status of the persons with titul *rājan*. It concerns, in our opinion, to a title *kumāra*, by which in Ashokan epigraphy only the rulers in a large part of Maurya empire named (edicts mentioned only five such *kumāras*), and in Satavahana-Shaka epigraphy only separate local kings. In Gupta time, probably, already each of king’s “associate” (which circle, also has increased), being is connected to king and raising, thus, his status in a society, was considered as connected with “imperial essence”, worthy with the title *kumāra*. Gupta epoch, as it is represented, was the turning point in development of state structure in India. Numerical changes – sharply increased claims on “imperial” authority from the local rulers, each of which now received the right to call himself *kumāra*, in Gupta and, especially, in Post-Gupta epoch (VI-IX cent. A.D.), when “princes” (*kumāras*), naturally turn to “kings” (*rājan*) have resulted in qualitative changes. The evolution of traditional representation about exclusiveness of imperial authority (*rājya*), which has become accessible to many rulers, reflected, probably, process of evolution of political structure of the Indian society which has become one of the reasons that the political history India down to epoch of Muslim states did not know any more such large and rather long time lived states, as Maurya, Satavahana and Gupta empires.

All is higher stated allows for us making a line of conclusions concerning the structure of the ancient states and their “administration”. Ancient Indian “empires”, probably, were under construction, mainly, as associations of various dependent and half-dependent terri-

tories. Just it can explain the impressing scales of their conquests and simultaneous weakness, more precisely to understand feature of their internal policy and to explain a line of details of a political history of northern India in the first half of I millennium A.D. The association of dependent territories, basic elements of such empires hardly was stable. In such conditions, easing of military power or change of the ruler order to constant struggle for throne and eventually, resulted such states in disintegration. The dependent territories kept, as the whole in frameworks of empires, had their own traditional organisation, administration, norms and traditions.

