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A bronze statue of a standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum of Art Śaka Samvat 513 (AD 591-592) or Mānadeva (?) Samvat 113 (AD 688-689)?

by Nayanath Paudel (English Translation, Ian Alsop)

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(click on the small image for full screen image with captions.)

August 16, 2022

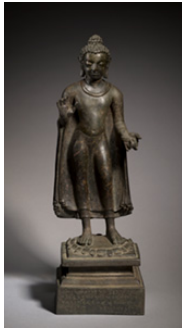


Fig. 1
standing Buddha



Fig. 2
standing Buddha; inscription on pedestal

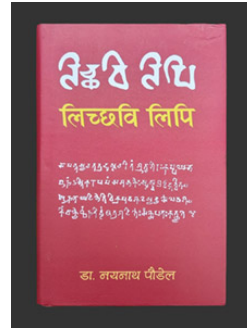


Fig. 3
Licchavi Lipi, by Dr. Nayanath Paudel

In my recently published book titled [Licchavi Lipi](#), I have studied in detail the inscription on the pedestal of the bronze statue of the standing Buddha located in the Cleveland Museum. I decided that Dr. Gautamavajra Vajracharya's date of 513 is not correct: the date of this inscription is 113. [1]

The title of the thirteenth chapter of the book is "Numerical system in Licchavi script" (Licchavi lipimā saṅkhyālēkhana paddhati) In this chapter, after a detailed study of the numerals available in the records of the Licchavi period, it was shown that the writing system of the Licchavi period used a total of twenty-eight types of numerals. This article quotes a small part of the thirteenth chapter of my book, which includes my discussions of the inscription on the base of the Cleveland Buddha.

Table No. 13:25
Writing year dates in Licchavi script (100+)

देवनागरी लिच्छवि	संवत् १०० ३ ज्यैष्ठशुक्लदिवात्रयोदश्याम् संवत् १०३ ३	स्रोत रे.१२८:३७
देवनागरी लिच्छवि	संवत् १०० ९ संवत् १०९ ९	व.०:९
देवनागरी लिच्छवि	संवत् १०० १० ३ संवत् ११३ ३	व.०:४ क्लीमल्याण्ड

The table above presents three examples of the Samvat dates over 100, starting with the date 103 (top). In this first example, the letter "A" is used to indicate "100", and by writing the mark of 3 (three horizontal stripes) on the right side, the year 103 has been made. In the second example we see the number 100 (again, the letter "A") has been combined with the number 9 to form the date 109. In the third example, to write the year 113, first the letter "A" denoting the number 100 was written and then, to the right of that, the symbol for the number 10, and then again on the right the symbol for the number 3 (in this case similar to the modern Devanagari "3"). In the Licchavi script, as in other systems, numbers are written left to right. [ed. In Licchavi dates the left most date represent the "hundreds place" (śatasthāna), the middle place the "tens place" (daśasthāna) and the rightmost the "ones place" (ekasthāna) (see LL, first page of chapter 13)].

Here the first example, the date (MS) 103 (= CE 679) jyaiṣṭha śukladivātrayōdāśyām, is taken from the inscription of Narendradeva's Vajraghar in Deopatan [2] while the second example, date (MS) 109 (= CE 685), is taken from the inscription of Rato Machhindranath's temple [3]. These are examples of 103 and 109 marks.

The third example, the date (MS) 113 (= CE 689) is taken from the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of the bronze standing Buddha of the Cleveland Museum [4]. Gautam Vajra Vajracharya read the Samvat year of this inscription on the pedestal of the statue of the Standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum as (SS) 513 (= CE 591) [5], but based on the script, the Samvat number appears to be (MS) 113.

Now, in discussing this issue, it has to be decided whether the hundreds (śatasthāna) character of the year in this inscription is 100 or 500. For this, we have to look at some of the examples of the morphology of 100 characters and the morphology of 500 characters found in the records of the Licchavi period.

These characters are as follows—

Table No. 13:26
About the shape of the 100 mark and the 500 mark in the Licchavi script

Devanagari	Licchavi	Source	Devanagari	Licchavi	Source
	100 symbol ("a")			500 symbol ("a" w/ additions)	
मानिक्या १५० मा १००को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.२६:३	संवत् ५१२ मा ५०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.४९:१९
संवत् ११३ मा १०० को अङ्कचिह्न		ब.०:४	संवत् ५१६ मा ५०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.५४:१५
संवत् ११८ मा १०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.१३१:१	संवत् ५१६ मा ५०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.५५:१५
संवत् १४८ मा १०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे. १४०:१८	संवत् ५२० मा ५०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.६२:२२
संवत् १५७ मा १०० को अङ्कचिह्न		नो.८१:३५	संवत् ५२० मा ५०० को अङ्कचिह्न		रे.६३:१८

The table above shows in the left column examples of the character representing "100", while the right column shows examples of the character representing "500" in Licchavi inscriptions.

In the top row, the left example of 100 character in Mānikyā 150 presented in the table above is taken from the inscription of Khapinche-tol in Patan of Vasantadeva's time dated (SS) 452 (= CE 530) [6] while on the right, the example of 500 marks in the year (SS) 512 (= CE 590) is taken from the inscription of Shivadeva + Bhaumagupta at the foot of Vishnupaduka [7].

In the second row, the example of the 100 character in the year (MS) 113 (= CE 591) is taken from the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of Standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum [8], while on the right the example of the 500 mark in the year (SS) 516 (= CE 594) is taken from the inscription of Patan Bhimsensthan of Śivadeva + Aṃśuvarmā [9].

In the third row, the example of the 100 character in the year (MS) 118 (= CE 694) is taken from the inscription in Nala of the time of Śivadeva II [10], while the example of the 500 character in the year (SS) 516 (CE 594) is taken from the record of Śivadeva + Aṃśuvarmā in Bhaktapur Golmadhi tol [11].

In the fourth row, the example of the 100 character in the year (MS) 148 (= CE 724) is taken from the inscription of Minanatha [12] while the example of 500 character in the year (SS) 520 (= CE 598) is taken from the inscription of Śivadeva + Aṃśuvarmā in the Dharmapur [13].

Finally, in the fifth row, the example of the 100 character in the year (MS) 157 (= CE 733) is taken from Jayadeva II's important Pashupati inscription [14] while the example of the 500 character in the year (SS) 520 (= CE 598) is taken from the inscription of Śivadeva + Aṃśuvarmā's at Khopasi [15].

Thus the table above presents examples of the figure of 100 and the figure of 500 which are engraved in various records of the Licchavi period. What is clear from these examples is that if the letter "A" is alone, its value is 100. Adding two horizontal marks to the right side of the letter "A" gives the value 500. [16]

This can be further clarified as below -



In the image shown above on the left, when writing the year (MS) 157 (= CE 733) in Jayadeva II's Pashupati's inscription [17], no added lines appear to be drawn on the right side of the main vertical bar of the letter "A". In the inscription of Śivadeva + Aṃśuvarmā at Khopasi [18], when writing the year 520, the

main bar of the letter "A" is drawn, and on the right side, two lines are drawn and slightly bent down. Therefore, the number 100 and the number 500 can be easily identified from the two images shown above.

Let us now look at the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of the Standing Buddha at the Cleveland Museum [19].



In the image shown above, and in fig 2 and Fig. 2 detail, from the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of the Standing Buddha at the Cleveland Museum [20], it is clear that no line has been drawn to the right of the main bar of the letter "A". Therefore, it can be clearly stated that it is only the letter "A" and its value is "100".

Now let's also consider the character for "3" in the Cleveland inscription from the paleographic point of view - Scribe expert Shankarman Rajbanshi in his book Licchavi Script Collection said, "The number 3 has three stripes in the Licchavi script. In (more) recent times, it has been found to be like the "3" digit of the present Devanagari alphabet." [21]

Looking at the records of the Licchavi period, this statement seems to be correct. Let's look at two examples:



On the left, in the inscription of Amśuvarma of Hadigaun [22], of the year (MS) 32 (= CE 608) where "Devasya Pu 3" is written, three stripes are given for the mark of 3. On the right, in the inscription on the pedestal of the statue of the Standing Buddha in the Cleveland Museum [23], when writing the year 113, for the 3, it is found that a character almost identical to the present Devanagari letter for 3 has been used. From this, it is clear that this record is of a later date. [***Ed In the slightly later inscription of the date (MS) 103 (= CE 679) shown above in Table No. 13:25 [24] we find the same use of 3 stripes for the "3". This is only ten years earlier than the Cleveland Buddha inscription, indicating that the Cleveland inscription shows a relatively recent development. We plan to add a section to this article with a more complete analysis of the characters for the number 3 in the Licchavi period in the near future].

Therefore, from the above example and discussion, the symbol for "100" on the base of the Standing Buddha (Cleveland) is only the letter "A", it does not have the horizontal lines attached to it indicating "500"; and it looks a little later from the point of view of the rest of the script, especially the use of a later version of the character for 3. Thus Gautamavajra Vajracharya's reading of the year (SS) 513 (= CE 591) in this inscription is not correct: it can be concluded that the correct reading is Samvat (MS) 113 (= CE 689) 98 years later than previously supposed.

List of references cited in notes; and bibliography:

The primary reference used by the author of this article, cited first (when it is used), is: **Regmi**: Regmi, D. R. 1983. Vol. III. The citations give the Vol. III inscription number followed by the line number in that inscription: eg. 128:37 = Vol. III, inscription no. 128 (photo CXXVIII), line no. 37 (in this example the 37th line of Narendradeva's Vajraghar inscription). The list of references is largely supplied from Mary Slusser's *Nepal Mandala*, Appendix IV, p 403 ff; and the bibliographical material of the references is largely taken from the *Nepal Mandala* bibliography (where further valuable and extensive information can be found on the referenced journals).

Licchavi inscriptions references:

- AS:** *Abhilekha-samgraha* (Abhilekha-samgraha and Samśodhana-maṇḍala 1961-1964)
- Bendall:** *A Journey of Literary and Archaeological Research . . .* (Bendall 1974)
- DV:** Vajracharya, Dhanavajra, 1975 *Licchavikalaka abhilekha*
- DV MS:** Mary Slusser, 1982. In *Nepal Mandala* followed the numbers assigned to the inscriptions in DV
- Gnoli:** *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters* (Gnoli 1956)
- Indraji:** *Inscriptions from Nepal* (Bhagwanlal Indraji and G. Bühler 1880)
- Joshi:** *Nepālako prācīna abhilekha* (H. R. Joshi 1973)
- Levi:** *Le Népal*, vol. 3 (Levi 1908)
- MS:** Mary Shepherd Slusser, 1982. *Nepal Mandala* Appendix IV, p. 403
- Pūrṇimā:** (Full Moon). A Nepali-language quarterly of the research of Samśodhana-maṇḍala
- Regmi:** Regmi, D. R. 1983. *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*. New Delhi: Abhinav. Citations give Vol III page number and inscription number: eg. 128:37 = Vol. III p. 128, no. 37
- SS:** *Samskṛta-sandeśa*; (The Sanskrit Message). A monthly Sanskrit-language journal 1953-1954

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Vajracharya, Gautamavajra, 1975, reading and translation of the inscription on the base of the Cleveland Buddha, p. 93 in Appendix in Slusser, Mary Shepherd, 1975, "On the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft", *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIX, (1975-76) pp 80-95

Footnotes:

1. Nayanath Paudel, *Licchavi Lipi*. Kathmandu: Pramila Paudel, 2078 Chaitra 27, Ramnavami; chapter 13, pp 568 - 573.
2. Regmi. 128:37; Indrajī 13; Gnoli 73; *Pūrṇimā* 4:2, 119-121; Joshi 137; DV MS 133.
3. v. 0: 1; AS 5 p. 10; Joshi 138. DV 137.
4. v. 0: 4; MS 194.
5. (MS 194) Mary Shepherd Slusser and Gautamavajra Vajracharya, "on the Antiquity of Nepalese Metalcraft" *Archives of Asian Art* vol 29, 1975-76, p. 80-95.
6. Regmi. 26: 3; AS I, p. 25; Joshi 31; DV MS 28.
7. Regmi. 49:19; *Pūrṇimā* 4:3, 331-332; Joshi 57 DV MS 54.
8. v. 0: 4, MS 194.
9. Regmi. 54:15; IP I, p p . 55-56; Gnoli 23 *Pūrṇimā* 5:2, 102-103; Joshi 63; DV MS 60.
10. Regmi. 131: 1; AS 5, p. 11 Joshi 140; DV MS 138.
11. Regmi. 55:15; Bendall 1; Gnoli 24; *Pūrṇimā* 5:2, 103; Joshi 64; DV MS 61.
12. Regmi 140:18; Indrajī 14; Gnoli 80; Joshi 152; DV MS 146.
13. Regmi. 62:22; Levi 11; Gnoli 30; Joshi 70; DV MS 67.
14. Gnoli 81:35; Indrajī 15; SS 1:1, 1-7; Joshi 155; DV MS 148.
15. Regmi. 63:18; Levi 12; Gnoli 31; Joshi 71; DV MS 68.
16. ed. The character for 300 is quite similar to the character for 500 in Licchavi script; see Paudel VS 2078 (2022) *Licchavi Lipi*, pp 536-543, especially tables 13-11 - 13-12
17. Gnoli 81:35; Indrajī 15; SS 1:1, 1-7; Joshi 155: DV MS 148.
18. Regmi. 63:18; Levi 12; Gnoli 31; Joshi 71; DV MS 68.
19. v. 0: 4.
20. v. 0: 4 MS 194.
21. Rajbanshi, Shankar Man, 1964, *Licchavilipi-samgraha* [A Collection of Licchavi Characters] (Kathmandu: Bir Library, VS 2021 [1964] , p. dha.
22. Regmi. 74:13; Levi 14; Gnoli 36; *Pūrṇimā* 4:2, 123 ; DV MS 77.
23. v. 0: 4; MS 194.
24. Regmi. 128:37; Indrajī 13; Gnoli 73; *Pūrṇimā* 4:2, 1 1 9-121; Joshi 137; DV and MS 133.

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