

THE KĀPITTHAKA OF VARĀHAMIHIRA

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Varāhamihira was one of the few Indian astronomers who did not mention his own date in any of his writings. But he has stated his own name, his father's name and the place where he was educated. The relevant *śloka* in this connection is the following:—

आदित्यदासतनयस्तदवाप्तबोधः
कापित्यके सवितृलब्धवरप्रसादः ।
आवन्तिको मुनिमतान्यवलोक्य सम्यग्
होरां वराहमिहिरो रुचिरां चकार ॥

बृहज्जातके ६. २७

A question of considerable interest to scholars is the identification of the place where he received enlightenment. Where is this place Kāpitthaka situated? Cunningham in his *'Ancient Geography of India'* says that Sankisa, on the bank of the Kalinadi in U.P. was called Kia-pi-tha or Kapitha by Huen Tsang. Further, Kielhorn² notes that the word Kapitthikāyāh mentioned in the Madhuvana plates of Harṣavardhana may be the kia-pi-tha of Huen Tsang identified by Cunningham as Sankisa. He further suggests that this is probably the Kāpitthaka of Varāhamihira. This interpretation would have been satisfactory had no other theory been proposed. There are, however, two other identifications by other scholars.

I

Sudhākara Dvivedi in his गणकतरङ्गिणी, where he gives short summaries of the lives of Indian astronomers, reads काम्पिल्लके for कापित्यके and understands it as कालपीनगरे ! He concedes that there is an alternative reading—कापित्यके. How काम्पिल्लके can be construed as कालपीनगरे is difficult to understand; for a place of the name काम्पिल्य is shown by Cunningham in one of his maps. It lies on the bank of the Gangā not far from Sankisa. Kālpi on the other hand is on the bank of Yamunā.

II

About 15 miles to the east of the present city of Ujjain, on the Ujjain-Makshi Road, lies an ancient village called Kāyathā. That the village is very ancient is undoubted. Excavations have recently been carried out there by archaeologists of the Vikram University which show a chalcolithic culture.³

Scholars of Central India claim that Kāyathā is the Kāpitthaka of Varāhamihira. In the 'विहम स्मृतिग्रन्थ' (Hindi) there are three references to Kāyathā as Varāha's Kāpitthaka. The claim, however is only in the form of assertions. No attempt is made by any author to prove the claim, nor is there any reference to earlier papers on the subject.¹

The archaeological discoveries indicate that the place must have been a centre of culture from prehistoric times. A number of images of deities, including the Sun, have been found. No inscriptions of any kind were, however, discovered; and there is no direct or indirect proof to associate the place with Varāhamihira.

From Indore, via Makshi, Kāyathā is about 50 miles distant. It is situated on the banks of the river Choti Kali Sindh which is a tributary of the Chambal. The association of this place with Varāhamihira was brought to my notice at Indore by a friend who was formerly Collector of the district in which Kāyathā lies. We visited the place in April 1969 and saw the excavations carried out there. But we could not meet anyone locally who could give us details of the discoveries. Later I was able to meet Dr. V. S. Wakankar who led the survey team and who was kind enough to give me a copy of the Kāyathā Excavation number of the *J. V. K. Univ.* and discuss the subject with me.

We saw a signboard in the village giving the name of the place as 'Kapitthanagarī'. Whether this was really the ancient name of the place or was adopted by local enthusiasts who were eager to seal the association with Varāhamihira is difficult to say. There is no doubt, however, that the place deserves to be called Kapitthanagarī today owing to the number of Kapittha-wood apple-trees growing on the banks of the river.

CONCLUSION

It will be seen that there are three sites which could be considered as Varāhamihira's places of education. (1) Sankisa or Kia-pi-tha, (2) Kālpī and (3) Kāyathā. The second may be rejected outright as Kāmpillaka could not be interpreted as Kālpī. Between the remaining two I am inclined to accept the last as most probable. For one thing there is an early reference in a manuscript which says that the place is situated in Mālwa. Secondly, since it is recognised that Varāhamihira belonged to Ujjain there is a greater possibility of his being educated in Mālwa than in far off U. P. Thirdly, it is not improbable that a name like Kapittha or Kāpittha may degenerate after a sufficiently long time into Kāyathā.

REFERENCES

- ¹ I have referred to this point in a footnote in my paper on 'The date of Varāhamihira'. *Annals B.O.R. Institute* (1968) p. 347.
- ² *J.R.A.S.* (1897) p. 422.
- ³ See 'The Vikram' Kāyathā Excavation Number (1967).
- ⁴ There is, however, a manuscript commentary at the Scindia Oriental Institute Library at Ujjain, on the *Bṛhajjātaka* of Varāhamihira by Pandit Sivalala Pathaka in which the author gives both the place names Kāmpilyaka and Kāpitthaka explaining the first as Kāmpel and the second as Kāyathā; and states that both these places are near Ujjain, in Mālwa. (*ibid.*, p. 38).