

GUNDARAM INSCRIPTION: HISTORY

NEWS: Gundaram inscriptions in Telangana's Peddapalli shed light on Satavahana era

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The ASI's discovery of eleven Satavahana-era inscriptions in Telangana's Gundaram Reserve Forest reveals early political, religious, and dynastic ties between the Satavahanas and Chutu dynasty. The findings highlight Telangana's ancient cultural significance and its link to the Asmaka Mahajanapada.

Context: Discovery of Satavahana Era Inscriptions in Telangana

- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** recently documented **eleven early inscriptions** during a survey in the **Gundaram Reserve Forest** in **Telangana**.
- These inscriptions date from the **1st century BCE to the 6th century CE**, covering a broad historical range from the **Satavahana period** to early post-Satavahana times.
- They provide **valuable evidence** about the **political, cultural, and religious landscape** of the Deccan region during ancient times.

About the Gundaram Inscriptions

- **Location:** Engraved on a rock surface known locally as **Sitammalodi**, situated in the **Gundaram Reserve Forest**.
- **Chronology:** Spanning the **1st century BCE to 6th century CE**, these inscriptions reflect evolving **dynastic, religious, and linguistic patterns**.
- **Script & Language:** Inscriptions are likely in **Prakrit and Brahmi**, the standard epigraphic language/script of the time.

Key Findings from the Inscriptions

- **Royal Names Mentioned:**
 - **Kumara Hakusiri** and **Kumara Sakasiri**: Associated with the **Satavahana royal line**.
 - **Haritiputra lineage**: A reference to the **Chutu dynasty**, suggesting **dynastic coexistence or alliance**.
- **Social and Political Linkages:**
 - One inscription records a **Chutu dynasty person** excavating a cave for **Buddhist monks**, calling himself a **"friend" of a Satavahana prince**.
 - This indicates **political diplomacy, social ties, or religious patronage** between dynasties.

- **Religious Symbols:**
 - **Trident (Trishula)** and **Damaru** symbols found—typically associated with **Shaivism**.
 - This is the **earliest known instance of such religious iconography** appearing alongside inscriptions in **South India**.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - Reinforces **Telangana's historical association with Asmaka Mahajanapada**, one of the **sixteen Mahajanapadas** in ancient India.
 - Sheds light on **early Buddhist patronage**, cave excavation traditions, and **dynastic connections** in the Deccan.

Asmaka Mahajanapada – A Southern Mahajanapada

- **Time Period:** Part of the **16 Mahajanapadas** (~6th century BCE).
- **Capital:** Identified variously as **Potana or Potali**.
- **Location:** Situated in the **southern region of India**, along the **Godavari River**.
- **Importance:**
 - Only Mahajanapada located in the **Deccan**, representing early **urbanization and political centralization** in southern India.
 - Later became **core territory for the Satavahana dynasty**.

Satavahana Dynasty – The First Major Deccan Power

- **Time Period:** Circa **1st century BCE to 3rd century CE**.
- **Founder:** **Simuka**, emerged post-Mauryan Empire.
- **Capital:** **Pratishthana** (modern-day Paithan, Maharashtra).
- **Territory:** Spanned **Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka**, and parts of **Madhya Pradesh**.

Notable Rulers:

- **Simuka:** Founder, laid political foundation.
- **Satakarni I:** Performed **Ashvamedha sacrifice**, expanded influence.
- **Gautamiputra Satakarni:** Most powerful ruler, known for:
 - Defeating **Western Kshatrapas**

- Reviving Satavahana power
- Patronizing both **Brahmanical and Buddhist** traditions
- **Vasishthiputra Pulumavi and Yajna Sri Satakarni**: Stabilized and maintained Satavahana rule.



Cultural & Economic Contributions:

- **Trade**: Controlled **Dakshinapatha**, connected inland trade to **maritime routes**, engaged with **Roman Empire**.
- **Religion**: Strong patrons of **Buddhism**, supported cave complexes like **Ajanta, Karla, Amaravati**.
- **Architecture**: Built **stupas, chaityas, and viharas**—notably the **Amaravati Stupa** and structures at **Nagarjunakonda**.
- **Coinage**: Issued coins in **lead, copper, and silver**, inscribed in **Prakrit and Brahmi**.

- **Literature:** Promoted **Prakrit**; the **Gatha Saptashati**, a romantic poetry collection, is attributed to this era.

Chutu Dynasty – Regional Power in Deccan

- **Time Period:** Active from **1st to 3rd century CE**.
- **Alternate Name:** Also known as the **Ananda Dynasty**.
- **Capital:** **Banavasi**, in present-day **Karnataka**.
- **Political Status:** Likely **feudatories or successors** of the Satavahanas.

Key Features:

- **Royal Symbolism:** Associated with the **Naga (serpent) clan**, evident from coinage and emblems.
- **Notable Rulers:**
 - **Mulananda Chutukulananda:** Earliest recorded king.
 - **Siva Skanda Naga:** Known through coins, possibly the most prominent king.
 - **Hariti Putra Viragnaka Chutukulananda:** Mentioned in inscriptions like Gundaram.
- **Religion:** Seem to have supported **Buddhism and Shaivism**, similar to Satavahanas.

Decline:

- Overthrown by the **Kadamba dynasty**, whose founder **Mayurasharma** established power in the **mid-4th century CE**.

Historical Importance of the Gundaram Findings

- **Bridges Epigraphic Gaps** in Telangana's early historical narrative.
- Provides a **direct link between archaeological evidence and textual history** of early dynasties.
- Enhances our understanding of **inter-dynastic relations**, religious transitions, and **southern India's Mahajanapada heritage**.
- Marks an important site for **further archaeological investigation and heritage conservation** in the Deccan.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/gundaram-inscriptions-in-peddapalli-district-shed-light-on-satavahana->

[era/article69521393.ece#:~:text=In%20a%20significant%20breakthrough%20for,located%20about%2010%20km%20away](#)