

**A brief history of Patancheru or Pottalakere,
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF PATANCHERU OR POTṬALAKERE,
ANDHRA PRADESH¹

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In ancient times Patancheru and the lands north west of Hyderabad were ruled by a cruel king called the "Talapēta Rāja" because each day he had a subject killed and ruled the country seated on the victim's skull. His power lay in his sorcerers whom he placated with human sacrifices. One day his subjects persuaded the barber to cut off the king's head instead of his hair. Thereupon there was a great celebration. But God revenged the king and cursed the people so that no chameleon chirps in Patancheru to this day—or so the local village myth goes.²

The earliest archaeological evidence from Patancheru is a megalithic stone-circle that probably marked a tomb. It is found near the village and consists of a double concentric circle of stones, the outer about a hundred feet in diameter, and the inner about sixty. Some thirty feet away are the remains of an enclosure formed from large stone slabs.³ Numerous such sites dating back a couple millenia or more, as well as paleolithic sites several hundred thousand years old are found throughout the western Deccan.

Recorded history for Patancheru begins on Thursday, April 8, 700 A.D. when according to the Mayalur Plates the Western Chāḷukyan king Vijayāditya camped here during the fourth year of his reign in (696-733 A.D.).⁴ The inscription notes that the king stayed at Potṭalikānagara. Earlier Fleet had identified this with modern Dappāyakanere in Bellary district.⁵ Recent inscriptional evidence, however, equates

1. Patancheru is located eighteen miles northwest of Hyderabad on the main road to Sholapur (17° 32' N and 78° 16' E). It is the site of the new ICRISAT research station that is seeking to produce hybrid millet, peanuts, gram and other crops for the semi-arid tropics. I would like to thank Dr. Ralph Commings, Director of ICRISAT, for initiating this study and for the grant that made it possible.
2. Mr. T. Maniah of Patancheru has compiled a Telugu history of the area that includes this story.
3. P. Sreenivasachar, The Archaeological Bulletin, No. II: A. P. Government Archaeological Series No. 15. pp. 3-4, and plate 12.
4. Epigraphia Indica, 1959-60. Vol. 33, pp. 311-12.
5. Bombay Gazetteer. Vol. 1, part ii, p. 437, fn. 5.

it with modern Patancheru, eighteen miles northwest of Hyderabad.⁶ The place is also referred to as Hoṭṭalākere in the *Basava Purāṇa* (chapter-2) and in Kannada records of the 11th century as Poṭṭalākere.

According to the plates, while Vijayāditya camped here, he made a grant of the village of Yukrōmbē to a person named Māraśaman of the Vatsya gotra and to other Brāhmaṇas versed in the Vedas. This is one of the first inscriptions of the great Badami Chālukyan king, and the earliest discovered so far in Telugu country. It is also the last one we have composed by Rāma Punyavallabha, the Minister of Peace and War, who had also served Vijayāditya's father, Vinayāditya. The use of the suffix *nagara* in the title, and the fact that the king camped here, would seem to indicate that Poṭṭalīkānagara was already a large and important town by this time.

The next record we have of Vijayāditya is the Nerur plates issued two or three months later. By then the king had moved with his entourage to Rāsin, some two hundred and fifty miles northwest of Poṭṭalīkānagara.

There is no record of Poṭṭalākere for the next two and a half centuries. The Chālukyas split into two branches and the western branch was overrun by the Rashtrakutas (735 A. D.). The latter were fierce warriors who ruled from their capital at Maḷkhēḍ, sixty miles southwest of Poṭṭalākere. They, in turn, were overthrown by Taila II (973-A.D.), a descendent of the Western Chālukyan dynasty. He re-established the Chālukyan suzerainty with Maḷkhēḍ as his capital.

Taila II was succeeded by his son Satyāśraya (997/8-1008 A.D.) who expanded the kingdom and confronted the Chōḷas, who under Rājārāja I had conquered the whole of Southern India and Ceylon, and now were preparing to extend their power into Andhra country.⁷ The Chōḷas ravaged the home territory of the Chālukya monarch, including the major towns around the capital itself. Only with great difficulty was Satyāśraya able to maintain the kingdom.

Satyāśraya was succeeded by his nephew, Vikramāditya V (1008-1015 A.D.) of whose reign little is known. He, in turn was succeeded by his younger brother, Ayyana, who reigned only a few weeks and was succeeded by his younger brother, Jayasimha II (1015-1042 A.D.).

Jayasimha faced the continued onslaughts of Rājendra Chōḷa, and by 1019 A.D. he had moved his capital thirty miles to the south of Maḷkhēḍ to Ētagiri (modern Yādgi) after the old capital was sacked by the Chōḷas.⁸ Shortly thereafter, it appears that Rājendra Chōḷa was drawn back to deal with uprisings among the Pāṇḍyas, Keralas and Sinhalese. Jayasimha, taking advantage of the occasion, attacked his northern territories with some success. Having settled matters within his territories, Rājendra turned to ward off the attack and the conflict ended in a stalemate with the Tungabhadra river tacitly recognized as the frontier between their respective kingdoms.⁹

Soon after 1033 A.D. the capital was shifted to Koḷḷipāke, but the move was temporary, for a number of records dating from 1033 to 1044 A.D. mention Poṭṭalākere as the capital of the Chālukyan empire.¹⁰

Jayasimha II also fought the Chālukyas of Vengi in the east coast of Andhra and the Paramāra king Bhoja to the north with varying degrees of success. One undated inscription from Poṭṭalākere records the gift by the king of land to the astrologer Kommana Jhavvimaya for fixing an auspicious day for one of these expeditions. It was a common practice to attack on an auspicious day and to give a gift to the astrologer if the expedition proved successful.¹¹ A second, dated 1035 A.D. notes that Jayasimha is reigning at Poṭṭalākere and refers to him as Jagadekamalla, "the sole wrestler of the world".¹² Another from Poṭṭalākere dated 1040 A.D. refers to his feudatory, the Ratta Mahāśimānta Ereyammarasa, the Lord of Lattalur.¹³ And a slab in the Hanuman temple in Kannolli, Bijapur District, dated January 1041 A.D., refers to Poṭṭalākere as the capital.¹⁴

Not only was Poṭṭalākere an important political center at this time, it was also a religious center. Jainism and Saivism were locked in a struggle for the patronage of the kings and the loyalties of the people. Saivism with its pageantry and doctrine of equality was popular with

8. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. 36, part 1. p. 220

9. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi, in G. Yazdani, The Early History of the Deccan. pp. 328-29.

10. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. 11, part I, Nos. 68, 74, 92; Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy, 1932-33, App. D No. 122. 1936-37, App. E No. 55, 1954-55, App. B No. 242. 1957-58, App. B No. 376 Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. 7 Sk. 74 and 153; and Journal of the Bharat Itihas Sanashodak Mandal. Vol. 10, p. 88.

11. N. Venkataramanaya, Report on Epigraphy for 1966. No. 129. p. 31.

12. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. 7, App. of South India, No. 157. p. 29.

13. *Ibid.* No. 158.

14. South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. 20 of Archaeological Survey of India. pp. 29-30.

6. P. Sreenivasachar, Kannada Inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh, pp. 4-5; Sasana Sāhitya (Kannaḍa), Vol. 9, pp. 456-57 and 521-25; Epigraphia Indica, 1959-60. Vol. 33, pp. 311-12; and P. B. Desai, Jainism in South India, pp. 212, 293.

7. For a good discussion of this era see K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi, in G. Yazdani, The Early History of the Deccan. pp. 315-454.

the people, but Jainism and its appeal to the intellect and lofty ideals won the support of many of the elite. From the ninth century on, many of the Chālukya and Rashtrakuta kings patronized it, building Jain temples and monasteries and entertaining the leaders in their courts.

Poṭṭalakere itself had become one of the major Jain centers. Brahmaśiva, the great Jain author, came from the town. According to the *Basava Purāna* it contained seven hundred *basadis* or Jain temples and twenty thousand Jain saints.¹⁵ Poṭṭalakere was also the seat of a school of Jain sculpture. The craftsmen carved megajinas, or Jain statues, ten feet tall, made of finely polished black stone, and similar to those carved at Kopananpura. They also had their own distinctive style exemplified by the three jinas in the padmasana postures that are found only on inscriptions in villages around modern Patancheru.¹⁶

Although Jainism was preeminent for a time, Saivism was not dead. It won out over Brahmanism with its emphasis on sterile rituals and became the religion of the populace. Two of the leading Vira Śaiva saints, Dēvara Dāsīmāyā and Śankara Dāsīmāyā, were associated with Poṭṭalakere.¹⁷ According to the *Basava Purāna* and the *Chamabasava Purāna* the former was responsible for converting Jayasimha II to Saivism.¹⁸

According to this story Jayasimha II, known also as Desinga, was a Jain but his first wife, Suggale Dēvi, was a staunch Saivite. The queen was sad and withdrawn because her husband supported Jainism generously, and spent a great deal of money to destroy Saivism. One day the king's Jain mentor complained of the cruelty of the Saivites, so the king ordered them all to leave his lands. When the queen fell at his feet and begged that her Saivite guru, Dēvara Dāsīmāyā, be permitted to stay, the king pointed out that no Saivite would be safe in the kingdom, not even in the court. Moreover, he noted that he and his queen should share the same religion. The queen suggested a contest between the sages and vowed to convert if it could be shown that Jainism was superior. The king agreed to the contest and promised to convert if Saivism won out.

15. Chapter two. Cited in Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. 1, part 2. p. 437, fn. 5.

16. S. G. Murthy, Jain Vestiges in Andhra. pp. 49-50.

17. P. B. Desai, Jainism in South India. p. 212.

18. Chapter two and Channabasava Purana. The story is given in detail in T. Manaiiah's manuscript. Brief references to it are found in the Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. 1, part 2, p. 437, fn. 5, and in Nilakanta Sastri, The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi, in G. Yazdani, ed., The Early History of the Deccan. p. 329.

On the day of the contest, all the courtiers and villagers took an oath to follow the religion of the winner. The king's mentor gave a strong defense of Jainism and sealed his argument by putting an angry cobra into a box, daring Dēvara Dāsīmāyā to take it out bare handed—that is, if he believed that there was a god and one who would protect him. Chanting his mantras, the guru reached in, took it and shook it, and it became a lingam made of *chandrakanta* or moon-stone. Thereupon all the people converted to Saivism. The Jain temples were destroyed and Saivite ones were built.

The story may be stylized, and indeed it is copied in the Tamil story in which Mangayarkkarasi, the Chōḷa princess, brings about the conversion of her husband, the Pāṇḍya king, Neḍumāra.¹⁹ Nevertheless, there is inscriptional evidence that the Jain temples in the region, including those in Poṭṭalakere were destroyed and burned.²⁰

Jayasimha II was followed on the throne by his son Someśvara I (1042-1068 A.D.). Bilhana credits him with building the city of Kalyāṇi and making it more beautiful than all the other cities in the world, and the Chōḷa inscriptions begin mentioning this city as the Chālukyan capital after his accession to the throne. Earlier inscriptions describe Kalyāṇi as a *neleviḍu* or permanent camp, so it is clear that Someśvara did not found the city. Rather, it appears that he moved the capital from Poṭṭalakere to Kalyāṇi and added to the buildings and amenities of the latter.²¹

In his early years, Someśvara was successful in expanding his empire over coastal Andhra and parts of North India. However, the Chōḷas defeated him in a series of battles, and at one point captured Kalyāṇi and sacked the countryside around Poṭṭalakere (approximately 1048 A.D.). Despite these setbacks, Someśvara maintained a lifelong struggle with the Chōḷas and maintained his kingdom.

The emperor was succeeded by his son, Someśvara II (1068-1076 A.D.) who had a difficult and harassed reign. He placed his younger brothers, Vikramāditya and Jayasimha, over the southern portions of the empire, but the former was politically ambitious and took on all the trappings of independence. When Someśvara allied himself with the Chōḷas to suppress the rebellion, he was captured and placed in prison by his younger brothers.

19. Dynasties of the Kanarese District, p. 437, No. 5; and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi. In G. Yazdani, The Early History of the Deccan p. 329.

20. S. G. K. Murthy, Jain Vestiges in Andhra.

21. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Chālukyas of Kalyāṇi, in G. Yazdani, ed., The Early History of the Deccan. p. 330.

Vikramāditya VI took the throne in 1076 A.D., and ruled for a full half-century. With the exception of putting down some internal uprisings, the reign was largely characterized by peace and prosperity. Learning and the arts were encouraged.

While Kalyāṇi remained the capital, the emperor apparently was more often than not out of the city in camp throughout the empire. On Saturday, June 20, 1080 A.D., an auspicious day for there was a solar eclipse, he ordered Mahāmandalēśvara Brahmādhiraṅga Udayāditya Dēva to give twenty-four martsus of land at Poṭṭalakere to Acharya Sūryābharana Pandita, the pontiff of the Taṅgina matha after washing the Acharya's feet. This was for the repair of the Bhogēśvara temple and for the maintenance of the students in the seminary. The king also gave a gift to the Acharya through his minister.²² In 1082 A.D. the emperor established a temporary residence and military camp in Poṭṭalakere.²³ And on September 16, 1084 A.D. Vikramaditya's wife made a gift of land in Poṭṭalakere to the diety Ādityadēva.²⁴ At this time the town is still referred to as a capital town.

Vikramāditya was followed by his son, Somēśvara III (1126-1138 A.D.). On October 26, 1126 A.D., Somēśvara set out for battle after consulting the astrologer Nānaya Bhata. On February 20, 1127 A.D. he was crowned Emperor Somēśvara III and took the title Sarvajña Chakravarti, "the Omniscient Emperor".²⁵ On that occasion he gave the astrologer the right to collect a measure of grain (*koḷaradāya*) in Poṭṭalakere in gratitude for choosing a day when he was successful in battle. On the whole, his reign was marked by continued peace and prosperity.

Jagadekamalla II (1138-1155 A.D.) took the throne on the death of his father. Little is known of his reign. He, in turn, was succeeded by his younger brother Tailapa III (1155 - 1163 A.D.). But Taila was a weak ruler, unable to stem the dismantling of the empire. The Kalachuryas on the south revolted and took Kalyāṇi and the Kākatīyas on the east captured him in battle. Our last glimpse of Poṭṭalakere during the time of the Chāḷukyas comes in 1160 A.D., when Taila and his son Somēśvara IV, headquartered there after fleeing Kalyāṇi.²⁶

Somēśvara IV (1184 - 1200 A.D.) would briefly revive the outer form of the empire, and, for a time, rule again from Kalyāṇi, but his feudatories were increasingly restive and on his death they would declare their independence.

With the collapse of the Western Chāḷukyan empire, Poṭṭalakere came under the rule of the Kākatīyas who set up their capital at Warangal. Poṭṭalakere was probably a small feudal outpost of the Kākatīyas, near the border with the Yadavas to the northwest and the Hoyasalas to the south. There it was subject to the changing fortunes of these kingdoms and overrun by armies attacking the capitals of their enemies.

This was also the time when the conflict between the Jains and Saivites became intense.²⁷ Although Jainism survived for some centuries in the Deccan, its death blow had been struck.

For four hundred years we have no record of Poṭṭalakere. The Muslims had invaded the north, and, in time, the Bhamanis who served as governors for the Delhi Sultans declared their own independence and established a kingdom in the Deccan. In 1363 A.D. the Bhamani Sultan defeated the Raya who had replaced the Kākatīyas as the rulers in the area, and made them vassals. This time the Raya king gave Golconda hill and its surrounding area to the Sultan in tribute.

The Bhamani empire broke up into four parts about 1500 A.D. and the Quṭb Shāhīs chose Golconda as the capital for their kingdom. Many wars were fought between the four kingdoms, including a decisive battle between Jamshīd Quṭb Shah and Alī Barīd of Bidar fought in 1544 A.D. near Patancheru, it was now called,²⁸

Patancheru began to be overshadowed by its new neighbour, but it remained an important town. From 1550 to 1580 A.D. it was the seat of a jagir or large estate ruled by Mal'k Amīn ul Mulk, Alaf Khān Bahādur, known also as the Amīn Khān. He was the Vazier and Mir Jumal of Ibrāhīm Quṭb Shāh, the king, and his son Muhammad-Qulī Shāh.²⁹ Patancheru was again a centre of courtiers, scholars, poets, musicians, soldiers, and harlots - the last of whom gave their name to one of the streets. One of the poets, Ponniganti Telaganarya, composed the *Yayaticharitra*, an extensive history of the Amīn Khān.³⁰

According to the *Yayaticharitra*, the Amīn Khān did much to improve his petty capital: building a mosque and new gates in the fort maintaining choultries or feeding halls, digging wells, and planting gardens,

27. Note S. G. K. Murthy, Jain Vestiges in Andhra.

28. H. K. Sherwani, The History of the Quṭb Shāhi Dynasty. p. 87.

29. A. A. Bilgrami, Landmarks of the Deccan. p. 28; and H. K. Sherwani, The History of the Quṭb Shāhi Dynasty; pp. 182-84.

30. T. Maniah, manuscript.

22. N. Venkataramanayya, Report on Epigraphy for 1966. No. 131. p. 32.

23. South Indian Inscriptions. Vol. 9, part 1, p. 167; and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, The Chāḷukyas of Kalyāṇi. In G. Yazdani, ed., The Early History of the Deccan. p. 366.

24. N. Venkataramanayya, Report on Epigraphy for 1966. No. 160. p. 40.

25. P. Sreenivasachar, Kannada Inscriptions of A. P. pp. 4-5, 17-19; and N. Venkataramanayya, Report on Epigraphy for 1966. No. 158. p. 40.

26. D. P. Desai, Jainism in South India pp. 211-12.

and parks. Patancheru was now one of the four "Entrance Cities" to the new city of Bhagnagar, later called Hyderabad, which was founded by Muhammad Quli in 1590. The others were Ibrāhīmutnam, Bhōngīr and Narkonḍa. The five hundred square miles bounded by these cities was a place of groves, gardens and parks. It was perhaps during this time that one of the eight large gates of the Golconda fort was named for Patancheru.³¹

In 1596. A.D. (1066 A.H.) the Amīn Khān completed the Jamay Masjid. The mosque was built for the king at a cost of Rupees two lakhs.³² The following year the aged Khān died and was buried in the large domed tomb in Patancheru.

Babi Bibi, one of the Khan's three wives, was famous because of her compassion for the poor and the young. One of his sons was an emissary to the court of the great Mogul Emperor, Akbar; a second who knew Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Telugu, served as secretary to the Golconda Sultan; and the third succeeded his father as the Amīn Khān and jagirdar, and served in the Golconda court. In 1628 A.D. the Sultan issued a farman that the young Khan should prevent Syed Babu from bringing water to a certain piece of waste land in Kachireddipalli, now the site of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT).³³

By 1635 A.D. Patancheru had become the headquarters of a Pargana or district³⁴ and in 1687 A.D. it was overrun by Aurangzeb in his conquest of south India. According to local history, many of the Hindu temples were destroyed and the mosque in Patancheru was constructed from their broken remains.³⁵ The tomb of Nizamuddin Shaheed, a great soldier and saint in Aurangzeb's army, and a large earth mound called the "Gange Shadan"—reported to be the mass grave for the soldiers killed in battle at that time—are found in the town, further evidence of the carnage.³⁶

31. A. A. Bilgrami, Landmarks of the Deccan. pp. 109-10 and H. K. Sherwani. The History of the Qutb Shāhi Dynasty. pp. 182-84.

32. A. A. Bilgrami, Landmarks of the Deccan. p. 28.

33. ICRISAT was founded in 1972 by an agreement between the Government of India and the Ford Foundation acting on behalf of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. It is sponsored by the World Bank and the FAO and serves as a world centre for the improvement of sorghum, millet, pigeon peas, chick peas and peanuts and for the development of non-irrigational farming systems in the semi-arid tropics.

34. T. Manaiiah notes that the praises of the town are sung in the book *Qurisid Jaha*.

35. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series : Hyderabad State. pp. 140-41.

36. T. Manayva manuscript.

According to an inscription dated July 30, 1698 A.D. (A.H.1110), Nawab Jānsipār Khān and Rustam Dil Khān ordered Hāji Khān, the shiqdār, to construct a *sarā'i* near Patancheru.³⁷ This was a mosque built in the form of a small fortress with strong doors and a number of rooms. It was becoming customary for the Nawabs of that day to live in Hyderabad and to maintain their jagirs through vassals. At this time the Deccan was ruled by a subahdar appointed by the Mughal emperor.

With the collapse of the Mughal empire, Nizam-ul-Mulk Bahadur, Fatch Jung established the State of Hyderabad (1724 A.D.). The territory surrounding Hyderabad city was called the Airaf Balda and was *sarfkas* land—land belonging to the Nizam. Its revenues were used to maintain the royal household. In addition, regular jagirs of various types were given to maintain noble families (*zat*), and to support military forces (*paigah*). In time, through deficit spending, the Nizams were also forced to grant territories as security for loans, or for raising additional troops. The creditors and officers had the right to recover their loans and expenses by collecting the revenues on these irregular or *tankhahi* jagirs. It appears that Patancheru was given as a *tankhahi* jagir to Ghalib-ud-Dowlah Bahadur by the early 19th century for the purpose of raising troops.³⁸ The surrounding territories in the Patancheru Parganah were given as *tankhahi* and *zat* jagirs to Muslim money lenders and noblemen, most of whom belonged to the Bahadur lineage.³⁹

The financial stability of the kingdom was threatened by the continued deficit spending and the loss of revenues as ever more lands were given as *tankhahi* jagirs. It was only when Salar Jung I was appointed as the chief minister in the court that state solvency was restored. Under his careful planning the jagirs were gradually resumed or restored to the status of state territories through the payment of the debts. Patancheru was resumed in 1849 A.D. at a cost of Rs. 46,249 and 13 annas.⁴⁰ Many of the surrounding territories in the parganah were resumed between 1853 and 1859. However, we do have the record of one of the neighbouring villages being granted as a new jagir to Izzat Yavar Jung Bahadur in 1865 A.D.⁴¹

For a final picture of Patancheru's history we must turn again to local myths. Kaveti Bagadu and Krukala Jogadu, two famous highway robbers, roamed the area around the town during the reign of the sixth Nizam. In the manner of Robin Hood, they robbed the rich

37. Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy, 1963-64. p. 118. T. Manaiiah gives the inscription but dates it to 1709 A.D.

38. Moulavi Ali. Hyderabad (Deccan) under Sir Salar Jung. pp. vi-vii.

39. *Ibid.* pp. xxx, l-ii, liv-lv, lvi-lvii and map.

40. *Ibid.* pp. vi-vii.

and gave to the poor. Their speciality was to collect dowries for poor brides, so they were welcome at most weddings. Moreover, because of a powerful "escape" magic they brewed from certain leaves, they were never caught. The irony of the story is that in time the government appointed one of them as a policeman, not knowing his trade.⁴²

Today Patancheru appears much like many of the other towns of Andhra Pradesh, and like many of them, it has a rich history. But Patancheru is again gaining prominence, now as the site of ICRISAT, the new international agricultural research centre. As such it holds the prospect for significant advances in the area of food production and of international cooperation in the scientific world, and for a modern India.

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