

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has made a breakthrough discovery by finding the oldest Sanskrit inscription in Southern India, which also happens to be the earliest epigraphic evidence for the Saptamatrika cult. Epigraphy, the study of ancient inscriptions, has led to this groundbreaking discovery.

In Hinduism, Saptamatrikas are a cluster of seven female deities who are worshipped as embodiments of their respective consort's energy. Additionally, another inscription was found, written in the Prakrit language and consisting of Brahmi characters, belonging to the 1st century A.D.

Crucial Details of the Inscriptions

This discovered inscription carries records of the construction of a Prasada (temple), a mandapa, and the consecration of images by a person named Kartika at the temple of Goddess Saptamatrika at Tambrepe. The location, Tambrepe, is the ancient name of Chebrolou, Andhra Pradesh.

Previous Mentions of Saptamatrika

Mentions of the worship of Saptamatrika have previously been found in the early Kadamba copper plates, along with the early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates dating around 600 A.D.

About the Language and Characters Used

All available records indicate that the discovered inscription, also known as the Chebrolu inscription, is in Sanskrit and uses Brahmi characters. This particular inscription was issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D. Previously, the oldest Sanskrit inscription in South India was believed to be the Nagarjunakonda inscription issued by Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula in the 4th century A.D.

Inscription	Issuer	Date
Nagarjunakonda Inscription	Ikshavaku king Ehavala Chantamula	4th Century A.D.
Chebrolu Inscription	Satavahana king Vijaya	207 A.D.

The Satavahanas

The Satavahanas were a powerful dynasty in Deccan who established their rule after the decline of the Mauryas. Their reign lasted approximately 450 years and they were also known as the Andhras.

The Satavahana dynasty was founded by Simuka, with their most formidable ruler being Gautamiputra Satakarni. During Satavahana's rule, significant advancements were made in the fields of trade and industry. The Satavahanas had an extensive seaport network, with Kalyani on the western Deccan being their largest port. Gandakasela and Ganjam on the east coast were also notable seaports.

Furthermore, the Satavahanas were known to have patronized both Buddhism and Brahmanism. Alongside, they revived Brahmanism with the performance of asvamedha and rajasuya sacrifices and promoted the Prakrit language and

literature.