



Holy Ground – Where Art and Text Meet

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Hans Teye Bakker

# Holy Ground

## Where Art and Text Meet

*Studies in the Cultural History of India*



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## Preface

I descended to the field of classical indology from the lofty heights of western philosophy. As a graduate student I had spent four years studying two giants of European thought, Aristotle and Hegel, whose respectful student I still consider myself to be. But circumstances not defined by philosophy led me to the discovery of the world outside Europe. Indian philosophy was for me an obvious anchor as was the comparative study of religions. As my knowledge of Sanskrit increased and my understanding of the depth and beauty of Indian culture widened, I jumped on the opportunity offered to me to study the history of one of India's most sacred places, Ayodhyā, which became the subject of my PhD research. I had landed on holy ground.

The studies presented here take their start from 1986, the year that my Ayodhyā book was published. Thirty-one articles are collected in the present volume; they span a period of thirty years, during which I worked mainly at the Institute of Indian Studies of the University of Groningen. They are the backbone of my research and naturally follow the intellectual development that informed my academic career.

The reader may notice a gradual shift away from theoretical, say philosophical subjects to a historical, cultural orientation in which two mainstreams come together, strands that I found entwined in the holy ground that was my first object of research: the Sanskrit textual tradition, including epigraphy, and the material culture as expressed in works of religious art and iconography. It was only while working on this volume that I gradually discovered that the history of holy places has been a leitmotiv throughout my scholarly endeavours. And this has been so because I have been and still am fascinated by the potential for understanding, if text and art are studied in close combination in the actual field where they meet: two types of sources that release their maximal informative power when they are bound to one and the same locality. After Ayodhyā my attention focused on the culture of Vidarbha, in particular during the two centuries of Vākāṭaka rule. My second monograph, *The Vākāṭakas*, which appeared in 1997, thus carried the subtitle: *An essay in Hindu Iconology*. Hegel's place was taken by Panofsky.

Apart from this general intellectual direction, there have been two major challenges which, more than anything, have enriched my research and left their imprints on this volume. One is the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription* found on the Rāmagiri (Ramtek), the other the discovery of the 'original' *Skandapurāṇa*, found in ancient Nepalese manuscripts in the National Archives (Kathmandu).

Our edition of the first, the KNT inscription, has gone through two subsequent revisions. The first edition (Bakker & Isaacson 1993) is given here as study No. 6, in which later revisions and conjectures are added to the apparatus and footnotes, including conjectures published here for the first time. The second revised edition is contained in Bakker 1997, and the third, partial edition (Bakker 2010c), is our study No. 17.1. The importance of this inscription for the history of the Gupta–Vākāṭaka age cannot easily be overrated. Evaluation of its content has informed studies Nos. 7, 14, 15, and 17.2–3 of this volume.

The second discovery has resulted in the critical edition of the *Skandapurāṇa*, of which so far five volumes have appeared (SP I, II A, II B, III, IV), and at which a varying team of scholars has been working since the 1990s of the last century. This work has prompted a series of articles by several authors with the common subtitle *Studies in the Skandapurāṇa*. Of these, three have been selected for the present volume, studies Nos. 10, 13, and 27. The SP project has also resulted in a third monograph, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa* (Bakker 2014).

In selecting these thirty-one studies out of a total of eighty-five articles I applied—in addition to considerations of quality—the general, though flexible rule not to include those articles that may be considered preparatory studies, that is studies whose final form has been integrated in a (later) monograph, edited volume, or introduction to our edition of the *Skandapurāṇa*. This entails that some subjects that have occupied me a great deal may appear underexposed in the present volume, such as, for instance, the critical edition of Sanskrit texts,<sup>1</sup> the history of Vārāṇasī,<sup>2</sup> or the archaeology of the Vākāṭaka sites, Ramtek and Mansar.<sup>3</sup> With one exception, No. 30 (Bakker & Bisschop 2016), I have selected articles that were written during my work at the University of Groningen, that is until 2013. Study No. 17 combines and integrates three articles that were published separately.<sup>4</sup> Two essays are published for the first time in the present volume: No. 16, an English translation of an article originally published in Italian (2010), and No. 31, my valedictory lecture (2013), which concludes this book. The articles selected for this volume are marked by an \* in the reference list; the latter contains only works referred to in this volume and does not comprise a complete bibliography.

The critical reader may ask what aim is served by another edition of articles that have already been published. The question contains the answer. The present volume not only collects and reproduces articles that have been published, but it edits them again. I have taken the liberty of revising the original publications, in some cases rather thoroughly, and I have brought their contents in agreement with my other writings. In so doing I have tried, to the best of

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1 See e.g. the *Prolegomena* to our *Skandapurāṇa* edition, Volume 1 (SP I).

2 See e.g. the *Introduction* of *Skandapurāṇa* Volume 2 (SP II A).

3 Dealt with in e.g. Bakker 1997; Bakker 2004d; Bakker 2008.

4 Bakker 2010c, 2012, 2013b.

my ability, to put them in accordance with the latest insights. In brief, the aim has been to make my published work more consistent and up-to-date as far as possible. This does not imply that I have rewritten earlier work. My intention has been to strike a balance between leaving the original article intact wherever possible and reformulating and emending the existing publication when needed. When my views have changed in such a way that rewriting would affect the original too much, I have presented my changed position in footnotes.

The revision described above has a few important consequences. All articles have been typeset anew. Preliminary Abstracts, Acknowledgements, and Keywords have been left out. The separate bibliographies have been assembled in one list of references at the end of the book. The text of the studies has been newly divided according to headings and subheadings which appear in the Table of Contents. In order to serve the aim of welding a collection of studies into a real unity, I have added hundreds of cross-references. Illustrations have been inserted whenever I found them useful and the volume is concluded by an Index.

The book is divided into three parts: I *Early Studies (1986–2000)*. II *Studies in the Early History and Culture of North India*. III *Studies in Early Saivism*. As most divisions, this arrangement is relatively arbitrary. It precludes a strict chronological order of the original publications and allows a thematic ordering only to some extent. This compromise between chronology and themes means to facilitate a ready access of the reader to the subject of his/her interest, whereas the sequence of studies opens the possibility to continue the development of a theme as it has evolved in my thinking. Where a thematic sequence was not possible it is hoped that cross-references may guide the reader further. Despite selection and revision, a certain amount of redundancy could not be avoided.

This volume has been composed as part of my work as curator at the British Museum (2014–2019) for the project: *Beyond Boundaries: Religion, Region, Language and the State* (ERC Project no. 609823). I am grateful for all the help I have received from my colleagues in this project and the museum staff. Special thanks are due to Dr Michael Willis who as ‘Principal Investigator’ has initiated and guided this project. I am grateful to Dr Dory Heilijgers for proofreading and making the Index. I also thank Prof Harunaga Isaacson (Hamburg) and Prof Peter Bisschop (Leiden) for permitting the inclusion and reissue of articles that we wrote together (Nos. 6, 11, and 30).

Hans Bakker  
British Museum, 1 May 2019



PART I

# Early Studies

1986–2000



# An Indian Image of Man\*

## An Inquiry into a Change of Perspective in the Hindu World-view

### INTRODUCTION

In his *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie* the renowned German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel made the following observation.

Dieses Hervortreten des Geistes hängt nach der geschichtlichen Seite damit zusammen, daß die politische Freiheit aufblüht; und die politische Freiheit, die Freiheit im Staate, hat da ihren Beginn, wo das Individuum sich als Individuum fühlt, wo das Subjekt sich als solches in der Allgemeinheit weiß, oder wo das Bewußtsein der Persönlichkeit, das Bewußtsein, in sich einen unendlichen Wert zu haben, zum Vorschein kommt,—indem ich mich für mich setze und slechthin für mich gelte. [...] Da fällt uns zuerst der Orient auf; [...] denn [...] der Geist geht wohl im Orient auf, aber das Verhältnis ist so, daß das Subjekt, die Individualität nicht Person ist, sondern als untergehend im Objektiven bestimmt ist. Das substantielle Verhältnis ist da das Herrschende. Die Substanz ist da teils als Übersinnliches, als Gedanke, teils auch mehr materiell vorgestellt. Das Verhältnis des Individuums, des Besonderen ist dann, daß er nur ein Negatives ist gegen das Substantielle. Das Höchste, wozu ein solches Individuum kommen kann, ist die ewige Seligkeit, welche nur ein Versinken in dieser Substanz, ein Vergehen des Bewußtseins, also Vernichtung des Subjekts und somit des Unterschieds zwischen Substanz und Subjekt ist. Das höchste Verhältnis ist so die Bewußtlosigkeit. Insofern nun die Individuen diese Seligkeit nicht erlangt haben, sondern noch irdisch existieren, so sind sie aus dieser Einheit des Substantiellen und Individuellen heraus; sie sind im Verhältnis, in der Bestimmung des Geistlosen, sie sind Substanzlose und—in Beziehung auf politische Freiheit—Rechtlose. Der Wille ist hier kein substantieller, sondern ein durch Willkür und Zufälligkeit der Natur (z.B. *durch Kasten*) bestimmter, – ein Wesen der innerlichen Bewußtlosigkeit.<sup>1</sup>

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\* The first version of this article was published in: Kippenberg, H.G., Yme B. Kuiper and Andy F. Sanders (eds.), *Concepts of Persons in Religion and Thought*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York 1990. pp. 279–307. Religion and Reason 37

<sup>1</sup> Hegel 1940, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Vorlesungen 1825/26), 225 ff. In later lectures Hegel considerably modified his views, though he stuck to his own conviction that the determinism entailed by the birth within a distinct caste precludes true morality (Sittlichkeit). See Bakker 1994a, *Die indische Herausforderung*, below, pp. 28 f., pp. 40 f.

Though, admittedly, long as a quotation, this passage from Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* presents in a nutshell a central idea in modern European understanding of man: the concept of person or individuality and how it may account for the Western ethos as being apparently fundamentally different from the Indian. And when it is objected that the view quoted is an early nineteenth century one, and worse, one of Hegel, let me draw your attention to Marcel Mauss's treatment of the history of the notion of 'the person', in which he needs only one paragraph to explain that our notion of person, though it would not seem to have been completely absent from the ancient Indian mind, 'was dissolved (again) almost irrevocably': the 'self' (i.e. the ego) is according to one school of Indian thought ('Brahmanists') an 'illusory thing', to another, the Buddhists, a 'separable compound of *skandha*', the annihilation of which is to be sought.<sup>2</sup> What a sad world we must be prepared to arrive in when we pass through the customs at Delhi Airport!

M. Mauss's student, Louis Dumont, fully envisaged the intricacies and limitations of comparing the experience of existence ('Existenzerfahrung') in two entirely different socio-cultural contexts. At the outset of his *Homo Hierarchicus* Dumont warns the reader never to lose sight of an ambiguity in our notion of 'the individual': (1) 'l'agent empirique', (2) 'l'être de raison, le sujet normatif des institutions' (Dumont 1966, 22). Whereas the individual in the first sense is virtually co-existent with the human race, the second seems more peculiar to our society 'comme en font foi les valeurs d'égalité et de liberté, c'est une représentation idéelle et idéale que nous avons' (Dumont 1966, 22). To designate this second category we should employ, unlike Dumont, the word 'person' and use it as an operational definition of an individual who somehow conceives, or is supposed to conceive of himself, rightly or wrongly, as an (ethical) value *sui generis*, 'la mesure de toutes choses', and end in itself.<sup>3</sup>

As Dumont has argued, the idea of an individual as 'person' is an ideal and sociologically speaking an impossible one, since hierarchy appears to be 'une nécessité universelle'.<sup>4</sup> It is not our intention to give an assessment of

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2 Mauss 1980, 75 f. Cf. Sanderson 1985, 190 f.

3 Dumont 1966, 23. By taking this definition as our point of reference we align ourselves with the concept of person as current in post-Kantian Western philosophy, a tradition that is understood in Hubbeling's concept of 'person<sub>c</sub>' and 'person<sub>e</sub>' (Hubbeling 1990, 17 ff.). On the other hand, we refer to 'man' by the term 'individual', conceiving of him as characterised by selfconsciousness and/or will—that is without any implication of moral and aesthetic categories. To avoid misunderstanding, it may again be stated explicitly, that we consider these definitions 'operational', hence neither propositions concerning the 'real' nature of human beings can be derived from them, nor value judgements.

4 Dumont 1966, 300. For a critical evaluation see i.a. Burghart 1983, in particular with respect to Dumont's concept of the 'renouncer', which appears sociologically and religiously to be a more complex phenomenon. Though, undeniably, the ethos of the renouncer and the householder differ in several important aspects, I agree with Richard Burghart's view, developed in reaction to Dumont's simplifications, saying householders and renouncers operate through 'two different conceptual universes', that the latter is too much a theoretical construction. Burghart 1983, 650. Cf. Van der Veer 1986, 61–67.

Dumont's work, nor to focus on the caste system and its counterpart, 'renunciation' (*saṃnyāsa*), social institutions that, despite some modifications, seem to be giving way but slowly (cf. Dumont 1966, 289f.). In view of the overall religious setting which encompasses Indian society, we intend to give an appraisal of the traditional Hindu understanding of individual man by focusing on some religious currents that made their appearance in northern India from the 12th century onwards. From it we may gain an impression of whether Indian thought approximates and appraises our ideal of 'personhood' or develops its own categories.<sup>5</sup>

## THE INDIAN UNDERSTANDING OF PERFECT MAN

To speak of Indian society and culture without unwarranted generalisations inevitably means limiting the scope of investigation to a particular milieu. Of the four main social and religious groups in North India—Muslims, Sikhs, Jainas, and Hindus—we shall chiefly be concerned with the last, though the Muslim impact cannot be ignored. Another complication lies in the fact that European influence since the 18th century has significantly altered the traditional world-view, which has led to new departures in Indian philosophy. We shall leave them aside as far as possible. Yet, we shall begin by presenting a contemporaneous instance of the 'empirical agent' in virtue of his being the 'raw material' or '*matière première principale de toute sociologie*' (Dumont 1966, 22). In order to minimize distortion caused by modern influences it is taken from a traditional, orthodox, and conservative Hindu milieu.

### *The 'Raw Material'*

On one of my tours around the holy places of Ayodhyā accompanied by my aged host, a learned and devout brahmin who was held in high esteem by the local priesthood and monks, the city magistrates, and the populace alike, I spoke to him:

Pandit ji! One of the essential differences between us Europeans and you Indians is, it seems to me, that, suppose that we would believe that we were to be reborn on earth, we would be happy and rejoice at this good prospect, whereas you take quite the opposite stance, considering it a punishment from which one has to liberate oneself as soon as possible by subduing one's individuality or *karma*.

My guide fully disagreed with the view. He, convinced that he will come back on this earth, explained to me that the idea of being born again as a human being was attractive to him just as to me, since it would enable him to live

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5 It cannot and should not be the aim of this paper to assess the Indian image of man in terms of 'true' and 'false', or 'inferior' of 'superior' with regard to our own notions. What we do aim is to point out some significant differences between the Hindu and our own cultural traditions in respect to the conception of the world and hence of man.

in and experience the proximity and love of god. For the ordinary Hindu of today god is experienced through his presence in certain landscapes, the temple and the heart. To this I may add what everyone knows who has visited Hindu temples, viz. that the atmosphere there is usually one of great joy and exuberance, which strengthens the individual and makes it worthwhile to be present in the flesh and in the company of fellow devotees. There can be little doubt that many a Hindu experiences a great measure of liberty and solidarity, though perhaps not equality, in the daily routine of his religion. To understand this ethos in its genesis we should consider the religious currents that informed it.

### *The Sufis*

The extent to which Islam and the spread of Sufism influenced the patterns of religiosity in northern India is a matter of much debate and appears to be difficult to define. That this influence has been considerable, especially on the level of popular religion, cannot be denied but is too easily underestimated due to one-sided attention to the higher written expressions of Indian culture.<sup>6</sup> Although the notion of ‘direct influence’ itself is opaque and mostly not explicitly defined we would subscribe to the view expressed by Charlotte Vaudeville who notes:

Even when the influence of Islam does not appear to have been direct, it certainly acted as a catalyst, helping to release and bring to the fore deep undercurrents which were already present in the lower strata of Indian society, as they reflected the culture of the masses and their own religious aspirations.<sup>7</sup>

We are even inclined to go one step further and maintain that the impact of Islam/Sufism, whether ‘directly’ or not, has been one of the main factors in effecting a significant change in the image of man in North India. The central notion of Sufism, viz. that of *fanā* or ‘passing away’ (i.e. evanescence of all awareness of an empirical ego and hence of that ego itself) as propounded by Abū Yazīd of Bisṭām (better known as Bāyazīd), although not entirely unknown to earlier Sufis,<sup>8</sup> may or may not have been developed in the middle of the ninth century under the influence of Indian thought which had reached Bāyazīd via his teacher Abū ‘Alī al-Sindī,<sup>9</sup> yet when it was imported into India again by the Sufi holy men of the 13th and 14th centuries it bore the mark of Islamic monotheism. Mystic enrapture (*sukr*) of the kind that led Bāyazīd to exclaim: ‘Glory be to me, how great my glory!’ or ‘I sloughed off my self

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6 Gonda 1960–63 II, 102: ‘Der direkte Einfluß des Islam auf den Hinduismus ist—von den nachher zu erwähnenden Erscheinungen abgesehen—sehr gering gewesen, jedenfalls beträchtlich geringer als die Veränderungen, die er selbst erfuhr.’

7 Vaudeville 1974, 118. Cf. Schimmel 1980, 38.

8 The Koran commentary ascribed to Dja ‘far al-Sādik (d. AD 765) describes the phenomenon of *fanā* with reference to the passage of Moses in the burning bush. ‘Next to [God] is no room for Moses.’ Gramlich 1965–81 II, 330. Cf. Crollius 1978, 28 f.

9 Zaehner 1960, 93 ff. Cf. Gramlich 1965–81 II, 317.

as a snake sloughs off its skin: then I looked into my essence (or self) and lo! I was He!', or al-Husayn b. Maṣūir al-Ḥallādj's renowned heresy '*ana 'l-ḥakk*' ('I am the Truth (or God)'), though by no means completely alien to Sufism, appears, nevertheless, to have been an exception rather than the rule; it should, probably, not be interpreted in terms of complete identity of god and human soul.<sup>10</sup> If, at all, a comparison with Indian mystic illumination is apposite, the Sufi experience should be compared with theistic schools within Hinduism rather than with monistic ones such as that of, e.g. Śaṅkara (cf. Crollius 1978, 89 f.).

The theory of *fanā* was supplemented by the characteristic concept of *baḳā* or 'continuance in god'. Admittedly, all individual features of the human soul are believed to be lost in the process of *fanā*, but the soul as such, as unconditioned receptacle in which and through which god reveals his own true nature remains essentially different from the divinity itself. In other words, it would be better to think of an inward transformation of the human individual when he enters into a supra-natural mode of subsistence which, however, is not fully detached from the ordinary conditioned (empirical) state, since the mystic falls back to it whenever his ecstasy ends (often thought necessary in order to fulfil the injunctions of the Koran). Hence there is no question of merger or total absorption in god or the absolute once and for all,<sup>11</sup> and theoretically it remains even possible that the mystic would be damned on the Day of Resurrection.

In this respect Islamic/Sufi eschatology differs fundamentally from the classical Hindu concept of *mokṣa* which designates an irreversible permanent state. Accordingly, for the Muslim the individual retains a value per se, as a means by which god steers the created world and a medium through which he sees or loves himself. The relationship of soul and god is mostly expressed in terms of love (*'ishk*)—renunciation of the empirical ego (*nafs*), and turning towards god is conceived of as an act of love—and the human being appears as a vital element in the divine plan when Sufis answer the question as to the meaning of creation by referring to the words: 'I was a hidden treasure and I desired to

10 Nicholson 1963, 152 ff.; Rizvi 1978 I, 58; Gramlich 1965–1981 II, 321 ff.:

Aber es bleibt immer ein Letztes und Höchstes, für das man immer noch dableibt, dem man sich nicht entziehen kann, weil es niemals tiefer steht als der Entwerdende. Mag man auch für sonst nichts mehr da sein, für Gott ist man immer noch da. Ein radikales Zunichtwerden, das einem selbst vor Gott zu einem puren Nichts werden lässt—ein *fanā* u *'ani llāh*, ist für den Sufi undenkbar.

11 Cf. the doctrine of Abu 'l-Ḳāsim al-Djunayd of Baghdad summarized by Zaehner 1960 152:

The relationship between God and the *rūh*, or higher soul, is an eternal one in which God is *mustaulī*, 'absolutely predominant' and *mustathir*—he appropriates each elected soul to himself in a manner that is peculiar and individual to each and every soul so elected. In mystical experience this relationship will be revealed to the soul in a flash of intuition in which it not only realizes that it has its being outside time, but that it has forever a unique relationship with God. When the vision passes the soul suffers bitter anguish...

be known; therefore I created the creation in order that I might be known.<sup>12</sup>

It is necessary to distinguish explicitly the spirit expressed in this Tradition from the idea underlying the conception of the world as illusion (*māyā*) or play (*līlā*) of god as taught by Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja respectively. Though in neither conception the individual is an end in itself, the Muslim's view attaches a greater significance to the individual human being by accrediting him with a certain measure of responsibility for the course of history, which is conceived of as linear, heading towards the Last Judgment,<sup>13</sup> thus opposing the predominantly anti-historical Hindu view which conceives of time as a cyclic process which conforms to an immutable law and tends to render all idiosyncratic effort as futile and transient. It is evident that the Muslim world-view fosters a more dynamic attitude towards the environment (Entwistle 1985, 6, 10).

The doctrine of divine love (*‘ishk*), on the other hand, referring to an emotional experience that enables the mystic to approach god personally, with or without his help (and this question has divided the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja into two schools), though sometimes believed to be of Christian origin (Nicholson 1963, 10 f.), is one of the central ideas of Sufism that concurs so much with the Hindu conception of (emotional) *bhakti* that it may account partly for the successful accommodation of Sufism in India.

Notwithstanding that it shared, besides some ritualistic practices that we shall note below, asceticism, mysticism, and several religious ideas with theistic currents in medieval Hinduism, the entry of Islam in India, even when mediated by its main vehicle, i.e. Sufi holy men, meant the introduction of another system of belief, that is to say another image of man, which was *sui generis* in spite of the fact that it had imbibed many elements from neighbouring religions. Its specificity finds expression in the relationship that is thought to exist between man and god, and it may be best illustrated by the way the figure of the prophet as the perfect man, the archetype, came to be considered in Sufism.

In discussing the theological differences between the figure of Christ and of Muḥammad with regard to the concept of personality, Nicholson observed:

Allah is the Creator, and though the metaphor of 'creation', which implies His transcendence, is often exchanged for 'emanation', which implies His immanence, yet all beings, including Mohammed himself are on one side of their nature His

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12 Nicholson 1963, 80: *Ḥadīth kudsī*.

13 Cf. Böwering 1980, 165 f., describing the tradition of Sahl Al-Tustarī:

Tustarī's range of mystical ideas depicts man as being driven in his inner dynamics to his ultimate destiny, described by the events of the Day of Resurrection. This post-existential Day, beyond the phenomenal existence of man in the world of creation, introduces man to his final and lasting state in the eternal presence of the Transcendent, and opens up for him the life of paradise, gratified by the bliss of theophanic encounter. [...] The theophany, as the perpetual self-manifestation of the divine Reality, thus transfigures man through its irradiation, transforms him through its illumination, and brings his life of ultimate destiny and final glory to fulfilment.

Cf. *op. cit.* 264 f.

creatures, His slaves, absolutely inferior to Him. And Allah in His essence is One. In His essence there can be no interplay of personality. The Islamic conception of plurality in the Divine Unity signifies not the relation of persons within that Unity, but the relations existing between the Unity and the manifold aspects in which it reveals itself. All these aspects are reflected in the Perfect Man, who may therefore be considered as the personified Idea in and through whom the Divine nature makes itself known. While the Christian doctrine expresses 'the realisation of human personality as characterised by and consummated in the indwelling reality of the Spirit of Christ, which is God', in Mohammedan theology the main stress falls on Revelation.<sup>14</sup>

We may add that in Hindu theology as reflected in Sanskrit literature up to the time of the introduction of Islam in India the main emphasis fell on merging into god.<sup>15</sup>

The expansion of Sufism in India was largely due to the order of the Čishtī. Although there had been earlier contacts, the actual history of Sufism in South Asia started with the arrival in AD 1161 of Khwādja Mu'īn al-Dīn Čishtī (d. 1236) in Lahore and the subsequent foundation of his *khānqāh* (monastery) in Ajmer (1194). The *khānqāhs* became the centres through which Sufism diffused. It was probably the most organised form of religion extant in northern India in the 13th century and as such may have had an impact on the evolution of monasticism within rival Hindu sects (see below p.12). The Čishtī order obtained its expansive character as a result of the policy of Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā (d. 1325), the third in (spiritual) descent of Mu'īn al-Dīn, whose *khānqāh* was in Delhi and who ordained that the apprentices (*murīds*) of a *shaykh*, or head of the *khānqāh*, as soon as they were given the status of *khalīfa* (spiritual successor), had to move together with their own disciples to another city, generally their native place, in order to found a new centre.<sup>16</sup>

As a matter of course the Sufi orders did not meet with the same impediments from the government as their Hindu counterparts, but the individualistic attitude of the Sufis on the one hand, and their continuous suspiciousness in the eyes of the *ulamā* on the other, largely prevented the majority of them from engaging in politics. Up to the time of Muḥammad b. Tughluq, the middle of the 14th century, they remained generally aloof from political power and of-

14 Nicholson 1964, 95.

15 This may be illustrated by examples taken from two texts, the *Bhagavadgītā* (14.27; 6.20–27; 12.9–10; 11.54; 6.31) and the *Agastyasamhitā* (23.46; 20.24; 20.29–32; 5.38–39; 19.23–24). Both teach primarily the doctrine of devotion to a personal god (Kṛṣṇa/Rāma), yet acknowledge two methods (*yoga*) of reaching him: worship of a god who loves his devotees for whose sake he has descended to earth, and meditation on the absolute divinity. Though both texts declare that the method of devotional service and activity (*bhakti*) is to be preferred in the present circumstances, the ultimate state attained by both methods is more or less the same, viz. union, that is submersion into the divine. The *Bhagavadgītā* stands at the beginning of devotional Hinduism, the *Agastyasamhitā* concludes, as it were, the pre-Muslim era of North India.

16 Mujeeb 1967, 138; Schimmel 1980, 26f; cf. En.Is. II, 51.

ten criticised officials or even the sultan,<sup>17</sup> whereas the egalitarianism of Islam made the Sufi movement the first one to defy the caste system, on principle.

In order that the Sufi *shaykh* could sustain his authority, against the *‘ulamā’* on the one hand and the people on the other, the possession of *karāma*, supernatural power, became essential (Mujeeb 1967, 118). It appears that by the second half of the 14th century Sufism was firmly established. By that time succession to the *shaykh* was becoming hereditary and the *khānqāh* evolved into an institution of vested interests (Mujeeb 1967, 162). A debate with Hinduism ensued. As far as metaphysics was concerned, Indian Sufism accepted on the whole the doctrine of the immanence of god, or ‘unity of phenomena’ (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*).<sup>18</sup> The austerity tended to slacken and the status of the *shaykh* was increasingly seen in terms of divine grace or favour rather than of self-discipline. The esteem in which he was held gradually began to assume enormous proportions like that of his Hindu counterpart, the *guru*. In sum, Sufism became integrated in the course of development of North Indian society and religion as a whole in which it remained a dynamic factor.<sup>19</sup>

This is not the place to deal with the forms of popular syncretistic religion that ensued on the periphery of Islam among the lower strata of society where large groups had nominally embraced the new faith and that made, for instance, the cult of saints (*pīr/shaykh*) and tombs ubiquitous.<sup>20</sup> There are two Sufi practices of great consequence that deserve to be noted: *dhikr* and *samā’*.

Among the traditional orders that were established in India the Čishtī order was the only one that accepted *samā’* (‘audition’), i.e. listening to song and music, as a legitimate (not contrary to the *sharī‘a*) means to pursue spiritual aims. Music seems to have been able to bridge the gap between Hindus and Muslims more than anything else, and its acceptance by the Čishtīs greatly contributed to their success.<sup>21</sup> Early Indian Sufi literature (14th century) provides ample evidence of the ecstasies evoked by Hindi songs and refrains, and the tradition mentioned by Vaudeville that Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn ‘is supposed to have said that God himself had spoken to him in the *purbi* (‘Eastern’, i.e. Avadhī?) language!’ is to be seen in this light.<sup>22</sup> The prestige attached to *samā’* was no Indian innovation but goes back to the early days of Sufism as it was often seen as homologous with *fanā’* itself (Nicholson 1963, 59 ff.).

Of all the observances the Sufis brought with them into India none found such fertile soil as *dhikr* (‘recollection’), which involves the practice of repeating the

17 Mujeeb 1967, 139 ff.; cf. En.Is. II, 51.

18 Mujeeb 1967, 289; McGregor 1984, 23; Schimmel 1980, 23, 41 f.

19 Mujeeb 1967, 290.

20 See Crooke 1926 I, 201 ff.; Ahmad 1964, 155 ff.; Herklots 1975, *passim*.

21 Mujeeb 1967, 167: ‘By the time of Shaikh Gēsū-darāz (d. 1422) Indian music had been studied and Hindi devotional songs had come to occupy a very significant position in the *samā’*’. Cf. McGregor 1984, 23 f.; Schimmel 1980, 14, 24.

22 Vaudeville 1974, 90; cf. McGregor 1984, 26 f.; Lawrence 1978, 31 f.; Mujeeb 1967, 167 f.

name of god or some religious formula like, e.g. *lā ilāha illā ʿllāh* ('there is no god but Allah'). Like the concept of *ʿishk*, the practice of *dhikr* is sometimes thought to derive from Christian origins,<sup>23</sup> but in Sufism it became the main means of concentrating. Communion with god (or interiorization of god) evolves from uninterrupted (mechanical) repetition of the syllables that constitute his Name, which is gradually spiritualized.<sup>24</sup> The practice resembles the one known in Hinduism as *nāmajapa* or *nāmakīrtana*. It can hardly be a coincidence that the cult of the Name, as *inter alios* promulgated by the Sants (see below), was so fervently adopted in that part of India and in that very period that witnessed the introduction and establishment of Sufism.

From all that has been said it ensues that the greatest impact was felt on the popular level. Sufism largely contributed to the (religious) emancipation of the lower strata of society and it was there that it found its most competent rivals. Already the first Sufis to settle in India are reported to have been forced to measure their *karāma* against the *siddhi* (occult power) of the Yogis.<sup>25</sup> Both parties frequently claim to have won over the champions of the other to their own creed (Vaudeville 1974, 94).

The appearance of 'Warrior Sufis', on the other hand, may shed a more grim light on their relationship with the Yogis.<sup>26</sup> It does not seem improbable that the Sufi *fakīrs* imparted a stiff dose of Islamic self-assertiveness and militantism to their Hindu counterparts.

### *The Yogis*

The frequent mention of Yogis in medieval Indian texts refers to a rather ill-defined group of practitioners of *yoga* which may range from itinerant charlatans, conjurers, and wonder-workers of all sorts to sincere ascetics who through rigorous self-discipline endeavoured to transcend the human condition, to attain a state of complete autonomy by defying the laws of nature. In many cases they would not have belonged to any particular school or organisation, and attempts to unite the various and often legendary traditions of individual adepts into one framework, like that of the 84 *siddhas* or of the 9 *nāths*, were certainly made in retrospect. The Yogis of the 13th and 14th centuries were the heirs of a rich and long tradition of uncompromising experiments with human physiological and psychological processes. Physiological exploration of the human body had led to a system of discipline that is usually designated as Haṭhayoga.

23 Nicholson 1963, 10; En.Is. II, 223 f.

24 Gramlich 1976 II, 379: 'Der Dīkr kann eine rein äusserliche und mechanische Repetition eines Namens Gottes sein. In dieser Form ist er kein mystisches Phänomen. Aber er ist seinem Wesen nach dazu angelegt, in mystische Sphären überzugreifen.' For a description of this process see *op. cit.* 378 ff.

25 Shaykh Safī al-Dīn of Uch (Bahawalpur distr. Pakistan), middle of the 11th century, is said to have defeated a Yogi in a super-natural contest (Rizvi 1978 I, III f.), and similar stories are told of later Sufi *shaykhs*, as for instance Khwādja Muʿīn al-Dīn (Rizvi *op. cit.* 117; cf. Vaudeville 1974, 94) and many others (Mujeeb 1967, 165).

26 Eaton 1978, 19 ff.; cf. Farquhar 1925, 440 f.

In addition to the movement that sought complete control over mind and body by means of self-restraint, there had evolved a school of alchemy (*rasāyana*) which developed proto-chemical theories with respect to the effect of chemical compounds (in particular of mercury, *rasa*) on the human body. Its aim was to immunize the body, to prevent its decay and to facilitate yogic techniques.

In the centuries under discussion a group of wandering Yogis appeared on the scene who cultivated the ‘sciences’ of Haṭhayoga and Rasāyana, and considered themselves to be the descendants of the semi-mythological preceptors Macchendraṅg and Gorakhnāth. These so-called Nāth Yogis or Gorakhnāthīs stood outside the pale of orthodoxy and must have enjoyed great popularity. Nothing is known about the earliest form of their organisation, but the oldest centres or monasteries (*maṭhas*) may date from the 14th century.<sup>27</sup> They were not the first sect within Saivism to be organized into monastic orders,<sup>28</sup> yet their organising may have found a stimulus in their Sufi antagonists, as has been suggested above.<sup>29</sup>

Reason why attention is paid to the Nāth Yogis in the present context is that they represent an influential and significant popular phenomenon that contributed largely to the image of the perfect man in the eyes of the common people. The Nāth Yogis embody the belief that the individual human being, irrespective of caste, can attain perfection in this body, here and now. As inheritors of the alchemic tradition, the Yogis tend to identify the supra-natural or ‘divine body’ (*divyadeha*), which is attained in the highest state of perfection (i.e. when identity with Śiva is realised), and the natural body that is transmuted to perfection by yoga (*siddhadeha*). In this connexion they subscribe to the position expressed in the alchemic text *Rasārṇava* (1.8–9):

Release during life-time (*jīvanmukti*), i.e. realisation of one’s identity with Śiva, is attained by him whose body is no longer subject to decay and death, O Great Goddess. Even for gods this is a precious thing (*durlabha*). But release (*mokṣa*) that is accompanied by the break-up of the body, that kind of release is useless, for, O Goddess, even a donkey is liberated when his body falls apart.

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27 Briggs 1938, 86; Unbescheid 1980, 197; cf. White 1996.

28 Cf. the Pāśupata (Bakker 2007; below, pp. 527 ff.), the Dasnāmī (Sarkar 1958) and Kālāmukha orders (Lorenzen 1972, 103 f.).

29 The abbots (*mahanṭ*) of the Gorakhnāth monasteries, for instance, are frequently called *pīrs* (Briggs 1938, 8; Vaudeville 1974, 95). Ghurye 1953, 157 makes some interesting remarks:

First, the most important centres of the Nāthapanthīs are situated in predominantly Muslim localities. [...] Second, the partiality of the Nāthapanthīs for the goddess Hingalaj on the Makran Coast (see Bakker & Entwistle 1983, 73–85) must have brought them in close contact with Muslim population. Third, we know it from history that the Nāthapanthīs had repeated trouble with the Muslims. The temple of Gorakhnātha at Gorakhpur is known to have been destroyed by the Muslims twice or thrice, the Nāthapanthīs having rebuilt it every time. The daily course of life that is lived at Nāthapanthī centres, typically in the past, approximates the life of the Muslim Pir.

Accordingly, the Nāth Yogis claim, by means of iatro-chemical methods and yogic techniques, i.e. through a course of bodily perfection (*kāyasādhanā*), to be able to rejuvenate the body, to make it immutable, and consequently to postpone death *ad libitum*. If he wishes, the Yogi may, at a certain point, decide to dematerialize his body and to assume a divine body. The divine body (*divyadeha*), which can be obtained within the material frame, although it is considered to be nothing else than Śiva's own nature (*śivatādātmya*), is paradoxically, accredited with some individuality of the empirical Yogi.<sup>30</sup> Thus the (divine) bodies of the great preceptors, as e.g. Gorakhnāth, are 'believed to be eternally present in order to assist the yoga aspirants in their pursuit, which, again, recalls the notion of the Bodhisattva and may testify to a Buddhistic background (notably the Sahajiyā school of Vajrayāna) of the Nāth cult.'<sup>31</sup> Unlike the Buddhists, however, the Yogis believe in the immortality of the body (*kāyasiddhi*) and, consequently, are concerned with physiological and psycho-chemical processes rather than with the psychological intricacies of meditation (Das Gupta 1969, 247 f.).

The Yogi adepts consider themselves, and are considered, as individuals who have succeeded in transmuting their bodies, and thus to have won over time and death. They have gained perfect control over their nervous system, including the autonomic nervous system, and by so doing have attained the status of perfect man as well as of 'perfect instructor' (*sadguru*); in other words, they are conceived of as true gods on earth. The sturdy and austere character of the Yogis accounts for the many (occult) powers ascribed to them. Like their modern congeners, the adepts of body-culture, they inspired awe and veneration in the general public, and often would not have desisted from using their bodily prowess to lend force to their cause. The Nāth Yogis were the first Hindu sect that took to arms, possibly in imitation of their Sufi brethren.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Sants*

The cultural forces, exemplified by Yogis and Sufis, which manifested themselves in northern India during the 13th and following centuries, the tendency to reassess the position of the individual in the socio-religious context and to make a stand against orthodoxy in favour of the religious sentiments of the masses,

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30 The paradox between the retained individuality in the state of *jīvanmukti* and the simultaneous realisation of Śiva-hood may be and is explained away by postulating a second ultimate state of release (*parāmukti*). This state is described as *sahaja*, i.e. 'natural', in which the all-encompassing form of the Yogi manifests itself. See Das Gupta 1969, 169, 220 f.

31 Cf. Das Gupta 1969, 220, 253; McGregor 1984, 21.

32 Lorenzen 1978, 68. There is a spurious verse in the *Kabīr Bījak* in which a Yogi carrying arms is criticised (Lorenzen *op. cit.* 61). The earliest hard testimony to Yogis behaving as warrior ascetics seems to be the armed clash between Yogis and Nāgas of the Dasnāmī order that was witnessed by the emperor Akbar in AD 1567 (Lorenzen 1978, 68 f.; Pinch 2006, 28 ff.; below, p. 63).

the spirit that fostered egalitarianism in defiance of the caste system—this crucial shift in the Indian cultural pattern reached its acme in the movement of the Sants. The Sants, i.e. the saints, are the pivot of cultural developments in northern India during the period under consideration (the 14th to 16th centuries). For the first time the lower classes, cotton-printers, weavers, cobblers, barbers, and butchers raised their voices, and soon the country resounded with their devotional vernacular poetry, which rapidly attained to an astonishingly sophisticated level. We may conceive of the Sant movement as the first successful reaction of the indigenous genius against the foreign domination to which it had become exposed.

As a matter of fact, the Sant movement was deeply influenced by Islamic attitudes. Its uncompromising monotheism and devotion towards one transcendent god, its rejection of idol worship, and its refusal to attach much significance to caste distinctions are not conceivable without the incitement of Islam. These concessions went so far that the Sant movement can hardly be considered as pertaining to Hinduism in the traditional sense. In fact its exponents were individualists who rejected the traditional precepts and practices of Islam and Hinduism alike and who created a cultural synthesis that stood on its own. They were zealots, hankering for God, and they harnessed their lives in order to contact Him. Socially they were neither wandering ascetics nor settled monks or householders. The orthodox division of the four stages of life did not concern them. They were unorganized and exalted laymen, who renounced as much of their social and religious duties as possible in order to devote themselves to singing the Name of god. Their world-view was basically puritanical and in several respects they resembled the protestant movement of the 16th century Europe. Their enthusiasm may have inspired the masses, but the following they attracted became organized only after their death. This was the case, for instance, with Kabīr who, more than any of his contemporaries, embodied the Sant movement.

Kabīr, a weaver of Islamized stock (*julāhā*), active in the mid 15th century, promulgated devotion to an unqualified (*nirguṇa*) ultimate being that reveals itself graciously to the devotee through its Name. The Name of god, mostly RĀMA,<sup>33</sup> is the mystical scheme that connects the ineffable being with those who love him (it?). By repeating the Name of god the devotee becomes imbued with it, unites with god.<sup>34</sup> Though the god of the Sants can hardly be called personal, the relationship between god and soul is, paradoxically, described in terms of love (*prema-bhakti*). It may be clear how much this movement owed to Sufism. Not only the doctrine of love and grace as the medium between this and

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33 See below, p. 466.

34 Kabīr, quoted in Tulpule 1984, 143:

Repeating 'Thou, Thou', I became Thou;  
in me, no 'I' remained.  
Offering myself unto Thy Name,  
wherever I look, Thou art.

the transcendent realm, but especially the only ritual acknowledged to celebrate god, the repetition (*japa*) and singing (*bhajan*) of his Name, in solitude or in communal sessions (*samkīrtana*), are in harmony with Sufi conceptions.

We would be mistaken, however, if we attributed the spread of this type of devotion exclusively to Sufism. Its success is as much, or probably more, due to ideas that had already emanated within Hinduism itself.<sup>35</sup> The foundations of emotional devotionism (*bhakti*) were laid in South India in the second half of the first millennium of our era, and northern India was on the verge of embracing this new form of religion, when the course of history took a new turn with the Muslim invasions. The belief in the efficacy of sound in the process of religious emancipation is an old all-Indian phenomenon (see below, p. 543), which had its theoretical basis in the 'Platonic' theory of the eternity of phonic archetypes constituting, as it were, a realm of 'phonic ideas' which underlies the phenomenal reality (*śabdabrahman*). This conception was common property of Yogis, Sants, and Bhaktas alike. I have shown elsewhere (Bakker 1986 I, 72, 78) that this doctrine of sound was reformulated in a devotional framework in North India during the 12th century and that the repetition (*japa*) of god's Name (RĀMA) was already recognized as a means of release a century before the Sants declared it to be the only one.<sup>36</sup>

The rise of the cult of the Name appears to be characteristic of religious developments in northern India where, initially, Muslim authority had prevented the growing stream of devotionism from taking shape in the sensuous 'materiality' of idol worship and temple cult. Here, as contrasted with southern India, the resources of popular religiosity, explored by the emancipating forces at work, were primarily led into individualistic and non-visual aesthetic channels. Gatherings where the ordinary devotee could participate in recitation and singing the praise of god, where he could indulge himself in music and songs in his mother tongue, and where the gap between god and votary was bridged, not only by the enrapture provoked by these performances, but also by the proximity of god-men who were not separated by hieratic distance—these experiences were new departures which would inform Hinduism in the following centuries and would put the Name of god on the tongue of the masses (cf. Vaudeville 1974, 54).

All authors who have dealt with the Sants, and especially Vaudeville (1974, 120), have pointed out how much this movement was indebted to the Yogis.

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35 Cf. Ahmad 1964, 142:

Thus, most of the ideas underlying all varieties of the Bhakti movement such as religion of love, monotheism, revolt against the formalism of orthodoxy and the basic principles of egalitarianism are of Hindu origin. They were brought into relief by Muslim example, stimulus, and challenge.

36 This theoretical background explains the schematic function attributed to the Name of god by the Sants. The Name is a sort of cosmic force or *mantra* that can be appropriated by the devotee rather than a sign that conveys god's personality. It embodies the quintessence of his being, but this quintessence is devoid of personality (*nirguṇa*).

Although Vaudeville exaggerates the Yogis' contribution, since much that she ascribes to Nāth influences may actually be attributed to the common stock of esoteric occultism developed in Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās, Śaiva Āgamas, and Śākta Tantras, the important point to note is that the Sants shared with the Yogis this anti-brahmanical individualistic self-asserting ethos. Unquestionably, the verses of the Sant poets generally contain a stronger moral and social emphasis than those of the Yogis, yet also in the teachings of the former one would look in vain for a philosophy that establishes the ethical value of the individual per se. Kabīr's god, despite being conceived of as the 'perfect instructor' (*sadguru*), a concept borrowed from the Yogis, is no person and hence no ethical substance. The greatness of Kabīr lies in his waywardness, in his courage to break with conventional codes, in the superb manner in which he interprets the deepest religious sentiments of the ordinary people. As the greatest of the Sant poets, the personality of Kabīr epitomizes the self-esteem of the lower castes whose exalted voice he was.

### *The Bhaktas*

However, there was a more down to earth, pedestrian strand in this outburst of devotion. It seems, a priori, very unlikely that the majority of devotees, who since time immemorial had approached god through an idol, i.e. who had worshipped his visual manifestations (*saguṇa*), would give up the habits under the influence of such ecstasies like Kabīr. The Sant owed his popularity to his charisma, to the fact that he was recognized as the embodiment of perfect man, but this does not imply that his followers shared his view of the absolute. Moreover, it could well be that many of the Sants themselves were in reality more closely affiliated to Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* as the doctrine of *nirguṇa* would suggest. There seems to be sufficient evidence for the view expressed by me earlier (Bakker 1986 I, 123) that, from their inception, the Sant movement and the cult of the Name were in constant touch with Vaiṣṇava religion from which they partly derived and into which sections of them would eventually be reabsorbed. This view receives support from Friedhelm Hardy's observations, which led him to infer: 'that a simplistic usage of terms like *nirguṇa*, *sant*, *advaita* etc. creates lines of demarcation which, by using a different type of conceptual framework, reveal themselves as artificial' (Hardy 1983b, 149).

The soil on which an emotional type of *bhakti* directed either to Kṛṣṇa or to Rāma could grow was prepared before the Muslim conquest. The germs of devotion towards Rāma were still couched in an intellectual and ritualistic framework peculiar to the Pāñcarātra tradition, but remarkable concessions to popular demand were already made. The *Agastyaśaṃhitā* (12th century), for instance, acknowledged the singing of god's Name, RĀMA, and the 'remembering' (*smaraṇa*) of his exploits as suitable methods, open to everyone, for realizing god (Bakker 1986 I, 67 ff.). Somehow the pedantic and hieratic 'higher' Hinduism of the North interacted with the more personal, emotional forms of Visnuism of the South, but exactly how this process operated remains

largely unsolved. The growth of the *bhakti* movement during the 13th to 15th centuries is eclipsed by that of the Saints.

This is not the place to dwell at length on the early forms of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* that evolved in South India. A most significant contribution to its understanding was made by Friedhelm Hardy (Hardy 1983a). From it we learn that the earliest Vaiṣṇava mystics, the Ālvārs, started from anthropocentric premises. A positive world-view rooted in the self-awareness of the individual as a psychosomatic being combined with aesthetic sensibility. From it arose the aestheticizing attitude towards the natural environment which was employed 'to visualize and savour' human emotions (Hardy 1983a, 444). Mystic experiences were expressed by means of symbols derived from sensuous experiences and sexual imagery was used to express and evoke intensity of emotions. The awareness of the limitations of the human condition turned god into a distant beloved, which made feelings of separation (*viraha*) the emotional cornerstone of this type of *bhakti*. The relationship between god and Bhakta was basically an interpersonal one. But though god as another, as 'you', is fundamentally different from the ego, he, being as Kṛṣṇa the personification of beauty and love, allows a meeting halfway through his incarnations 'in a variety of concrete forms available to the I's senses and emotions: in the temple *vigrahas* (i.e. images), and similarly in poetry and in the heart.' (Hardy 1983a, 443; cf. below, p. 551).

The main vehicle in which the emotional and sensuous *bhakti* of the Ālvārs was exported to the North was the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (9th century/early 10th century). It conveyed a religious attitude that was basically anthropocentric, maintaining 'the validity of the whole person (body, senses, emotions, mind)' (Hardy 1983a, 553). Intrinsically related to this self-awareness is the conception of an absolute being that is avowedly personal, endowed with qualities such as love, grace, beauty, and compassion. In later centuries poems deriving themes and inspiration from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* began to circulate in northern India. It would seem that in particular Bengal, where a Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā cult developed by integrating elements of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* and 'tantric' *sādhana* (the latter we already encountered while discussing the Nāth Yogis),<sup>37</sup> played an important role in the transmission of the spirit of southern devotion into the northern realm.

Another, indirect, channel through which the *bhakti* movement was infused into upper India was the Viśiṣṭādvaita and kindred schools. From the 10th century onwards learned brahmins of the South, trained in Vedantic philosophy, were engaged in coming to grips with popular devotion which tended to undermine their position. By far the greatest figure that emerged from this encounter was Rāmānuja (late 11th century). Rāmānuja succeeded better than anyone before or after him in coming to terms with *bhakti*—on the one hand by transforming the abstract absolute of Advaita into a personal god

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37 For reasons of space this interesting cult should presently be passed over. The reader is referred to Dimock 1966; Das Gupta 1969; S.K. De 1961.

endowed with (ethical) qualities who contains the world and the souls within him (*advaita*), yet remains distinct from them (*viśiṣṭa*), thus leaving scope for a personal relationship between god and man, the latter's liberation being ultimately dependent on the former's grace (*prasāda*)—on the other hand by reformulating *bhakti* in intellectual terms, thus providing it with a theological basis that made it eventually acceptable for the brahmins of the North. The order in which Rāmānuja's followers were organized, the Śrīsampradāya, seems only to have slowly penetrated into the North, but other southern Ācāryas, founders of orders (*saṃpradāyas*), like Nimbārka (12th century?) and Madhva (13th century) also contributed to the (organized) spread of *bhakti* all over India.<sup>38</sup>

In this context an idea propounded by Hardy seems to me to have a particular relevance. He points out that inherent in the *bhakti* experience of separation (*vīraha*) is the urge to overcome the spatial and temporal distance from god: 'a *bhakti* that defined itself by reference to space and time began to use space and time to "materialize" itself' (Hardy 1983b, 144). The spatial interval was crossed when the southern Bhaktas moved northwards and recovered the putative sites where Kṛṣṇa's amorous adventures had taken place according to the texts. In this way the mythical spatial realm elaborated in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was reified in Vṛndāvana and its surroundings, Vraja, and one of India's most important pilgrimage centres sprang into existence.

But something more happened. As we have seen, the North with its growing individualism was well prepared to receive the subjective emotionalism of the South and so the ecstatic cult of the Name was easily harmonized with the sensuality of southern devotion as soon as the political situation had stabilized and the socio-religious atmosphere became less tense.<sup>39</sup> But the northern attitude of not being satisfied with halfway solutions, the unquestioned belief that the individual could ultimately transcend his limitations and unite with god—be it in his own immortalized body as aspired to by the Yogis, or in a spiritual state of total merger as aimed at by the Sants and, to some extent, by the Sufis—this disposition contrived a means of crossing the 'temporal' separation as well. The tendency of the Ālvārs to substitute aesthetic experience for spiritual illumination was brought to its logical conclusion. A trend to identify *bhukti* (enjoying the world of the senses) and *mukti* (release from the pangs of the human condition) could already be indicated in the *Agastyasamhitā* (Bakker 1986 I, 74), and a similar thought was expressed in the *Rasārṇava* quoted above (p. 12). The social and religious condition that had evolved in northern India in the 15th and 16th centuries was ripe for a theory which proclaimed that, although Viṣṇu's *avatāra* as Kṛṣṇa in Vraja had happened a long time ago, his subtle presence in the places of dalliance (*līlā*) had not vanished at all. To experience

38 Apart from the Vaiṣṇava orders the Śaiva Dasnāmī order seems also to have contributed to diffusion of Viṣṇu *bhakti* in the North. See Hardy 1974; cf. De 1961, 23 ff.

39 Outstanding exponents of the blending are e.g. Caitanya and Tulsī Dās. Cf. Bakker 1986 I, 124.

his presence and to participate in his eternal sports only required the special eye and disposition of the Bhakta. The state of auto-suggestion pursued by the devotees allows them to perceive in the impoverished copses, pointed out to them by local pandits, the luxuriant forests in which Kṛṣṇa sported. The holy sites were no longer seen as 'souvenirs' of a far past, but as actually imbued with divine presence. The whole sacred complex of Vṛndāvana, like the city of Ayodhyā for the Rāma Bhakta (Bakker 1986 I, 139 ff.), turned by the end of the 16th century into a 'mega-avatāra' of the realm of myth. Sacred sites became conceived of as true replicas of paradise and god's eternal *līlās* as being enacted simultaneously on two planes, unmanifest (*aprakāṣa*), i.e. in heaven, and manifest (*prakāṣa*), i.e. cognizable in the phenomenal world. The Bhakta needed only to cultivate this hyper-sensitivity, this faculty to envisage, through the profane, the underlying divine aesthetic quality in order to realize communion with god.

In order to explain this possibility of transcendental rapture, poetic aesthetic theory was reformulated in a theological context of *bhaktirasa* (De 1961, 166 ff.). God himself and his divine retinue are the containers of sublime emotions (*rasa*) that are pursued by the Bhaktas. The soteriological effect of the earthly holy places is due to their underlying divine beauty which, when perceived by the eye of the Bhakta, evokes in him the very emotions that identify him with the archetypal divine actors. In his phantasy the devotee plays the role of one of god's intimates.

In this way something of a revolution was accomplished in the Indian world-view as represented in more literate forms of so-called higher Hinduism. Instead of seeking release from this world the Bhakta plunges into it. Instead of hoping to reach heaven and not to be born again the Bhakta intensifies his earthly experience and hopes to prolong it in a subsequent life. The ideal Bhakta transcends the limitations of the human condition, which are invigorated by the laws and rules of caste and society. Hence the *bhakti* movement contributed largely to the ideal that emerged in the first half of the second millennium, according to which each individual, irrespective of caste, could attain to and participate in the divine, not in a nebulous hereafter, but here and now. At the same time it led the masses safely back into the fold of Hinduism. In this respect the *bhakti* movement that manifested itself throughout northern India in the 16th and 17th centuries may be seen as a successful restoration. But the background from which this movement emanated, the religious compound of Sufis, Yogis, Sants, and popular religion had effected a lasting change of perspective. *Mokṣa*, release, became something that should preferably be experienced in this world. As we have seen, this new ethos was anticipated by the Ājvārs (cf. Hardy 1983a, 484, 430, 448 ff.), and in several Sanskrit texts datable before the Muslim period, but its full growth only took place in 16th century North India. It is here, where the vernacular tended to fuse with the Great Sanskrit Tradition, that in an outburst of devotional poetry lyrics such as the following could be produced.

WHAT shall I do, once I have arrived in *Vaiṣṇava* (Paradise), where there is no banyan where *Kṛṣṇa* plays the flute, no *Yamunā* river, no mountain *Govardhan*, [or] cow of *Nanda*?

WHERE there are none of those bowers, creepers, and trees, and no gentle fragrant wind blows, no cuckoo, peacock, or swan sings; what is the joy of living there?

WHERE *Kṛṣṇa* does not place the flute on his lip and fill it with sound; no thought, word, or deed gives rise to the thrill and rapture of love, my friend!

WHERE there is no earthly *Vṛndāvana*, father *Nanda*, [or] mother *Yaśodā*,

*Govinda* says: ‘abandonning the Lord and the joy of *Nanda*’s homestead (i.e. *Braj*): living there (i.e. *Vaiṣṇava*) [would be] a misfortune!’<sup>40</sup>

This brings us back to the pandit of *Ayodhyā*, i.e. the ‘raw material’. It has become evident that the attitude towards life assumed by this devout brahmin adheres to the Hindu tradition that culminated in the 16th century. For him, as a sincere *Bhakta*, experiencing the proximity of god consists in cultivating the emotions that are evoked in the practice of worship and in participating in god’s divine play as enacted every day in his temples and the landscape of his holy sites.

## EPILOGUE

Let us return to our initial question with respect to the concept of ‘person’ in the traditional Indian context. Despite the value attached to each individual soul, to the concrete human being of flesh and blood as the ultimate medium through which the divine play (*līlā*) is enacted, we are reluctant to designate the self-perception of the ideal *Bhakta* in terms of ‘personhood’ in the Western sense as defined at the outset. In fact, North-Indian *bhakti* has removed itself from the ‘humanist’ or anthropocentric world-view of the *Ājivās* in inverse proportion to its ambition to attain union with god. In this respect it is indifferent as to whether union is pursued by means of aesthetics or *yoga*. What makes an

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40 A poem (Pada 574) ascribed to *Govindasvāmī* and datable in the 16th century. Another version of the same poem is found in *Paramānanda-Sāgara* (Pada 1371). Cf. the famous poem of *Raskhān* quoted in *Entwistle* 1987, 71:

SHOULD I be a man, then let me, *Raskhān*, mingle there with the herdsmen of *Gokul*.  
 IF as a beast, then how should I live but ever grazing among the cows of *Nanda*?  
 IF a stone, then one of the very hill that he made an umbrella for *Braj* against the  
 torrents of *Indra*.  
 IF as a bird, then let me dwell for ever in the boughs of a *kadamba* on the banks of  
 the *Yamunā*.

individual in traditional Hindu culture a 'person' is not so much his supposed intrinsic human capacity to act as a morally autonomous being within social ramifications,<sup>41</sup> as his realisation of an inner autonomy, i.e. of his potential capacity to transcend his natural as well as social definiteness by appropriating a system of religious symbols; in other words, his acknowledgement as a person in the Hindu context rather depends on the measure in which he succeeds in manifesting himself as enacting or personifying these symbols, or, to formulate it differently, his personhood, rather than something given, is something that can be acquired by degrees.

To give an example, the Bhakta, for instance, aspires to emancipation by evoking an emotional state (*bhāva*) that is traditionally ascribed to one of the archetypes affiliated with god. Thus he may identify himself with the milkmaids (*gopīs*) who develop their erotic feelings for Kṛṣṇa (*mādhurya-rasa*), or, he may assimilate to Hanumat, the servant of Rāma, in order to experience god's proximity through sentiments of service and submission (*dāsya-rasa*). By integrating his religious and social life as much as possible his endeavour and zeal may be translated into social esteem and prestige.

A central category in this process is the notion of an eternal self or soul essential to each human being, which forms part of the divine and which only awaits emancipation. Partly, the degree of this emancipation is thought to be represented by caste. However, the institution of renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*) as well as the context of popular devotional religion offer alternative symbol-systems, which may lead man up the rungs of Jacob's ladder within this life. All this amounts to what is already almost an intellectual cliché, viz. that, rather than promoting the ideal of Homo Aequalis, traditional Hindu culture fosters man as a Homo Hierarchicus.

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41 For the development of ethical thought in Neo-hinduism under Western influence see especially Hacker 1978.



# Die indische Herausforderung\*

Hegels Beitrag zu einer europäischen  
kulturhistorischen Diskussion

## EINLEITUNG

In den Jahren 1979, 1980 und 1981 erschienen drei Bücher, die sich jeweils mit Hegels Indien-Konzeption als zentralem Thema befassen. Der Tatsache ihres kurz aufeinanderfolgenden Erscheinens ist es wahrscheinlich zuzuschreiben, daß die Autoren dieser drei Arbeiten wenig Gelegenheit hatten, um die Beiträge jeweils der beiden anderen zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. Und dementsprechend lassen sich diese drei Monographien als relativ unabhängige Forschungsbeiträge der Orient-Rezeption Hegels betrachten. Umso bemerkenswerter ist es, obwohl die drei Bücher in Aufbau und Umfang sehr unterschiedlich sind, daß die drei Autoren darin übereinstimmen, gegen die weitverbreitete Auffassung Stellung zu beziehen, daß sich Hegels Interpretation der indischen Kultur hauptsächlich auf sekundäre und dubiose Informationen stützte, die ihm ausschließlich dazu dienten, seine Vorurteile über den Wert nichteuropäischer kultureller Leistungen zu bestärken. Vorurteile, die mit einem absoluten, rigiden Interpretationsschema verbunden wären, mit dem Hegel versuchte die Diversität der Weltgeschichte zu einer Einheit zusammenzuschmieden, und die eine unbefangene Kenntnisnahme und wissenschaftlichen Urteilsfindung im Wege gestanden hätten.

Im Jahr 1979 erschien in Paris Michel Hulins Buch *Hegel et l'Orient*; 1980 erschien in Rom Ignatius Viyagappas *G.W.F. Hegel's Concept of Indian Philosophy* und 1981 in Basel/Stuttgart Wilhelm Halbfass' *Indien und Europa*, das im ersten Teil unter anderem Hegel behandelt. Es ist nicht meine Absicht, diese drei Arbeiten hier miteinander zu vergleichen oder zu besprechen, noch ihre soeben dargelegte Position zu bestreiten.<sup>1</sup> Im Gegenteil, ich denke, daß Hegel mit seinen Kenntnissen und Einsichten in bezug auf die indische

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\* The first version of this article was published in: Bakker, H., J. Schickel und B. Nagel, *Indische Philosophie und europäische Rezeption*. Dinter Verlag, Köln [1994]. pp. 33–56. *Dialectica Minora* 5

1 Vgl. Walter Jaeschke zu Hegels *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Teil 2, p. xi:

Nichts ist Hegels Vorgehen weniger angemessen als das gängige Bild des Kathederphilosophen, der den bunten Reichtum der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit durch ein vorfabriziertes Netz abstrakter Bestimmungen zur fahlen Rason bringen will.

Kultur die überwiegende Zahl seiner Zeitgenossen weit übertroffen hat. Vielmehr ist es mein Ziel, diese Position anhand einer historischen Analyse der Entwicklung, die sein Denken über Indien und insbesondere die indische Philosophie durchlaufen hat, näher zu illustrieren. Diese Möglichkeit bietet uns die kritische Ausgabe der *Einleitung*, die den ersten Teil von Hegels *Vorlesungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie* bildet und von Johannes Hoffmeister 1940 herausgegeben wurde. Der Text von vier zweijährlich gehaltenen Vorlesungszyklen dokumentiert den Entwicklungsgang eines Denkers auf eine, verglichen mit den meisten Philosophien der Geschichte, ungewöhnlich detaillierte Weise. Desto auffälliger ist es, daß keiner der drei genannten Autoren, wie es mir scheint, von den philosophisch-historischen Möglichkeiten dieses ‘document humain’ ausführlich Gebrauch gemacht hat.<sup>2</sup>

### DIE JAHRE 1820–1825

Erst in den letzten zehn Jahren seines Lebens, während seiner Zeit als Philosophieprofessor an der Universität von Berlin, einer Periode, die den glänzenden Höhepunkt seiner Karriere bildete, hat sich Hegel intensiv mit Indien beschäftigt. In seine *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* 1820/21 integriert er zum ersten Mal ein Kapitel über *Die symbolische Kunstform*, das er u.a. der indischen Kunst gewidmet hat.<sup>3</sup> Im Jahre 1821 erscheinen ebenfalls die *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, worin er im § 355 ein Bild der orientalischen Rechtsordnung gibt, das hauptsächlich auf Stuhrs *Vom Untergange der Naturstaaten* basiert und mit der Auffassung seiner Zeit von einem Orientalischen Despotismus übereinstimmt.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Eine detailliertere Erforschung der Entwicklung von Hegels Konzeption der indischen Philosophie im allgemeinen (einschließlich des Buddhismus), die jetzt auf der Basis der von Walter Jaeschke herausgegebenen kritischen Ausgabe der *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (Phil. d. Rel. I, II, III), möglich wäre, kann erst im Rahmen weiterer Forschungen vollständig zu ihrem Recht kommen.

3 Hegel stützt sich hauptsächlich auf den zweiten Druck der Arbeit von Creuzer, *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, der ihm 1819 vom Autor persönlich zugesandt wurde. Hegel *Briefe* II, 217 f. In bezug auf seine Definition von Symbol und das indische Material siehe auch Gaeffke 1984, 85 f.

4 *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* § 355:

Dieses erste Reich ist die vom patriarchalischen Naturganzen ausgehende, in sich ungetrennte, substantielle Weltanschauung, in der die weltliche Regierung Theokratie, der Herrscher auch Hoherpriester oder Gott, Staatsverfassung und Gesetzgebung zugleich Religion, so wie die religiösen und moralischen Gebote oder vielmehr Gebräuche ebenso Staats- und Rechtsgesetze sind. In der Pracht dieses Ganzen geht die individuelle Persönlichkeit rechtlos unter, die äußere Natur ist unmittelbar göttlich oder ein Schmuck des Gottes, und die Geschichte der Wirklichkeit Poesie. Die nach den verschiedenen Seiten der Sitten, Regierung und des Staats hin sich entwickelnden Unterschiede werden, an der Stelle der Gesetze, bei einfacher Sitte, schwerfällige, weitläufige, aber gläubische Ceremonien, – Zufälligkeiten persönlicher Gewalt und willkürlichen Herrschens, und die Gliederung in Stände eine natürliche Festigkeit von Kasten.

In den darauffolgenden Jahren stürzt Hegel sich, sofern wir seinem Biographen Rosenkranz Glauben schenken mögen, ‘mit wahrer Begeisterung und gewohnter Nachhaltigkeit’ in die Studien der morgenländischen Kulturen.<sup>5</sup> Ein erster Niederschlag dieser Studien findet sich in den *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, die Hegel erstmals im Winter 1822/23 hält,<sup>6</sup> und in denen der Abschnitt über Indien selbst siebenzig gedruckte Seiten umfaßt.<sup>7</sup> Im Grunde geht es hier um die Widerlegung der (von ihm bestrittenen) Geschichtsauffassung, die, in Deutschland durch Herder initiiert, um Zeitalter der Romantik einen großen Anhang erworben hatte und derzufolge Indien als Wiege und Urbrunnen aller Reinheit und Weisheit betrachtet wurde. Vor allem Friedrich Schlegel konstruierte in seinem Werk *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* einen Entwicklungsgang der Menschheit, der diametral demjenigen von Hegel gegenüberstand. Schlegel sah im Verlauf der Geschichte nur einen Verfall, demgemäß die ursprüngliche reine göttliche Emanation durch den Verstand allmählich korrumpiert und verdunkelt wird.

Ohne die stets erneuerte Anregung dieses belebenden Prinzips (d.h. ‘das immer von Zeit zu Zeit geschehene Eingreifen der orientalischen Philosophie’) würde der europäische Geist sich wohl nie so hoch erhoben haben, oder doch frühe (sic) wieder gesunken sein. Auch die höchste Philosophie der Europäer, der Idealismus der Vernunft, so wie ihm griechische Selbstdenker aufstellten, würde wohl, an die Fülle der Kraft und des Lichts in dem orientalischen Idealismus der Religion gehalten, nur als ein schwacher prometheischer Funke gegen die volle himmlische Glut der Sonne erscheinen, nur geraubt und immer wieder zu erlöschen drohend.<sup>8</sup>

Schon bald fühlte sich Hegel diesem ersten deutschen ‘Indologen’ aufgrund seiner eigenen Studien überlegen und bemerkt über ihm, daß ‘er zwar einer der ersten Deutschen sei, die sich mit indischer Philosophie beschäftigt haben; aber er ist noch nicht weit damit gekommen; es zeigt sich gelegentlich, daß er weiter nichts als die Inhaltsangabe des Ramayana gelesen hat.’<sup>9</sup>

5 Rosenkranz 1844, 378.

6 Der Handschrift nach zu urteilen, die Hegel selbst für seinen ersten Vorlesungszyklus über die *Philosophie der Religion* 1821 verfertigte (alle Nachschriften dieser Vorlesungen sind verlorengegangen), hat er hierin die indische Religion als solche noch nicht behandelt (siehe Phil. d. Rel. II, 4–29). Hingegen behandelt er in den Vorlesungen 1824 ausführlich die indische Religion unter dem Titel *Die Religion der Phantasie*.

7 Wir verweisen auf die Edition von G. Lasson von 1923. Ob die Vorlesungen 1822/23 tatsächlich so umfangreich gewesen sind, läßt sich momentan nicht exakt feststellen, da diese Vorlesungen noch nicht in der kritischen Ausgabe vorliegen. Zur Illustration dient allerdings eine Bemerkung Hegels, die er anlässlich seiner Vorbereitungen zu diesen Vorlesungen in einem Brief an Ed. Duboc am 22. Dezember 1822 niederschrieb.

Meine Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte machen mir sehr viel zu tun. Ich bin in Quartanten und Octavbänden zunächst noch von indischem und chinesischem Wesen beschäftigt. Es ist mir aber ein sehr interessantes und vergnügliches Geschäft, die Völker der Welt Revue passieren zu lassen. Aber ich weiß noch nicht recht, wie ich sie bis auf diese unsere letzte Zeit auf Ostern durchkriegen soll. (Hegel, *Briefe* II, 366 f.)

8 Fr. Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe* VIII, 305.

9 *Einleitung*, 294.

Trotzdem ist es wichtig zu bemerken, daß die Struktur von Hegels Geschichtsauffassung die von Schlegel in vielerlei Hinsicht reflektiert.<sup>10</sup> Beide haben eine idealistische und evolutionäre Geschichtsauffassung und beide sind sich darin einig, daß Indien am Anfang dieser Evolution steht. Nur was für Schlegel die höchste Stufe bedeutet, ist für Hegel die niedrigste. Ist für Schlegel der natürliche Staat ein paradiesischer, in dem die göttliche Emanation noch in ihrer vollen Reinheit erfahren wird, so ist für Hegel 'die erste Existenz des menschen . . . die tierische Existenz. Die natürliche unmittelbare Einheit ist so nicht die wahrhafte Existenz der Idee, vielmehr ihre niedrigste, unwahrste Stufe.'<sup>11</sup> Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt charakterisiert Hegel in seiner *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* die Inder als ein 'an geistiger Substantialität leeres Volk' (*op. cit.* II, 391). Und um der romantischen Schwärmerei ein für allemal ein Ende zu setzen, scheut er, aus den 'Annalen englischer Offiziere' schöpfend, selbst nicht vor Bemerkungen von äußerst zweifelhaftem Gehalt zurück: 'List und Verschlagenheit ist der Grundcharakter des Inders; Betrügen, Stehlen, Rauben, Morden liegt in seinen Sitten; demütig kriechend und niederträchtig zeigt er sich dem Sieger und Herrn, vollkommen rücksichtslos und grausam dem Überwundenen und Untergebenen' (*op. cit.* II, 391). Es ist daher nicht verwunderlich, daß wir im ersten Vorlesungszyklus, in dem Hegel die Geschichte der Philosophie vorträgt, im Wintersemester 1823/24, noch nicht Kapitel E der *Einleitung*, das den Titel *Die orientalische Philosophie* trägt, antreffen. Deshalb nicht, weil im Orient von Philosophie überhaupt nicht die Rede sein kann. Dementsprechend lehrt Hegel im Kapitel *Der Anfang der Geschichte der Philosophie*:

Es irren so alle diejenigen, welche die Einheit des Geistes mit der Natur für die vortrefflichste Weise des Bewußtseins annehmen. Diese Stufe ist vielmehr die niederste, unwahrste; sie ist nicht durch den Geist selbst hervorgebracht. Sie ist das orientalische Wesen überhaupt. Hingegen die erste Gestalt des freien, geistigen Selbstbewußtseins und damit der Anfang der Philosophie ist in dem griechischen Volke zu finden.<sup>12</sup>

Dieses Urteil des berühmten Philosophieprofessors der von W. von Humboldt ausdrücklich als 'philosophische' gestifteten Universität von Berlin, die außerdem als Mittelpunkt des wiederauferstandenen preußischen Staates betrachtet werden sollte,<sup>13</sup> sozusagen ex cathedra, stieß Indien von seinem Sokkel, was zu weitreichenden Folgen für die Rezeption Indiens führte. Es bedeutete den Todesstoß für den schwärmerischen Enthusiasmus für alles 'Östliche', wie er besonders die deutsche Romantik dominierte, oder—wie Peter Gaeffke bemerkt: 'He came to the most negative conclusions, his judgement guided the official academic world (Karl Marx included), drove Schopenhauer into isolation and

10 Hulin 1979, 53.

11 Phil. d. Rel. II, 152 (1824). Vgl. II, 424, 427 (1827).

12 *Einleitung*, 227.

13 *Hegel in Berlin*, 18.

killed the hopes for a new Renaissance based on the writings of the classical Indians.’<sup>14</sup>

Doch scheint die Frage berechtigt, ob Hegels Folgerung wirklich so negativ war. Kann das Bild Indiens, so wie es in der *Philosophie des Rechts*, der *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* und den *Vorlesungen* der Jahre 1820–1824 skizziert wurde, tatsächlich als repräsentativ für Hegels Konzeption des Orients betrachtet werden? Sicherlich wurde und wird es von vielen als die für Hegel repräsentative Vorstellung betrachtet, worin man zugleich die Ursache sehen kann, warum diese Vorstellung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert von so großen Einfluß gewesen ist. Seit Hegel ist die indische Philosophie von der allgemeinen Geschichtsschreibung der Philosophie ausgeschlossen.<sup>15</sup> Der weitaus überwiegende Teil der Philosophiestudenten, die die philosophischen Fakultäten der Universitäten heutzutage verlassen, wissen von der Tradition der indischen Philosophie nicht mehr, als daß sie besteht, daß Kenntnisse darüber für eine gute Einsicht in die Philosophiegeschichte allerdings nicht unentbehrlich sind und daß ihre Ausübung in den Händen einer äußerst selekten Gruppe Sanskritisten oder anderer Liebhaber von Exotischem liegt, die aus Mangel an philosophischer Schulung nicht in der Lage sind, auf verantwortete Weise den wahren philosophischen Gehalt dieser Tradition zu konzipieren.

Aber ich schweife ab. Wir stellen uns die Frage, ob Hegels Schlußfolgerungen in bezug auf die indische Kultur tatsächlich so negativ waren. Sie waren es sicherlich in den Jahren 1820–1824, aber eine nähere Betrachtung der in der Periode zwischen 1820 und 1830 verfassten Schriften läßt sehen, daß hier ein wichtiger Umschlag stattgefunden hat, der die indische Kultur in einem anderen Licht erscheinen läßt.

Um diese Entwicklung gebührend beurteilen zu können, ist es notwendig, daß wir uns bewußt sind, daß vor 1824 in Europa so gut wie nichts über die philosophische Tradition Indiens als solche bekannt war. Zwei Sanskrit-Werke, die Upaniṣad-Kollektion, aus dem Persischen übersetzt von Anquetil-Duperron (1801/02) und die *Manusmṛti*, übersetzt von William Jones (1796) waren Hegel zwar bekannt, doch schienen sie ihn eher in der Auffassung bestärkt zu haben, die er auch noch in den Vorlesungen von 1825/26 wiederholt, nämlich daß das, was allgemein unter indischer Philosophie verstanden wird, eigentlich zu den Religionen gerechnet werden müßte. Dem Mangel an Individualität zufolge, der die indischen Gottesgestalten kennzeichnet, was damit zusammenhängt, daß das Moment der subjektiven Freiheit unvollständig entwickelt ist, erscheinen

<sup>14</sup> Gaeffke 1982, 550.

<sup>15</sup> Halbfass 1981, 166. Es ist bezeichnet, daß in der Neuauflage von Hoffmeisters kritischer Edition der *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* von 1940, die 1959 von Friedhelm Nicolin herausgegeben wurde, das Kapitel über die *orientalische Philosophie* weggelassen wurde und wir daher noch stets auf entweder die unzuverlässige Rezension von Michelet oder die ziemlich seltene Kriegsedition von Hoffmeister angewiesen sind. Die von Klaus Grotzsch seit 2016 herausgegebene Edition der *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Meiner Verlag, Hamburg) muß hier ausser Betracht bleiben.

die religiösen Vorstellungen der Inder mehr als allgemeine Vorstellungen und wecken damit den Eindruck philosophische Gedanken zu sein.<sup>16</sup>

### *Neue Einsichten*

Die Vorlesungen, die Henry Colebrooke ab 1823 vor der Royal Asiatic Society in London hält, *On the Philosophy of the Hindus*, sorgen für eine Veränderung. Zwei Essays, der erste über das Sāṃkhya und der zweite über die Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika erscheinen 1824 in den *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* vol. I. Es ist bezeichnend für Hegels Arbeitsweise und seine wissenschaftliche Einstellung, daß er aufgrund dieser Publikation bereits 1825 seine Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie um ein Kapitel beträchtlich erweitert, dem er den Titel gibt: *Die orientalische Philosophie*, in dem er außerdem eine kurze Abhandlung über Konfuzius und das Orakelbuch *I Ching* aufnimmt (*op. cit.* 272 ff.). Die bereits oben zitierte Passage aus den Vorlesungen 1823/24, in der die Einheit von Geist und Natur als ‘das orientalische Wesen überhaupt’ bezeichnet wird, kommt nicht mehr vor.

Wie gründlich Hegel seine Meinung geändert hat, ist ebenfalls aus der Passage zu ersehen, worin er mit Bezug auf den Sāṃkhyistischen Evolutionsprozesses bemerkt: ‘Dies hat viel mehr Tiefe, als das Gerede von der unmittelbaren Einheit des Geistes mit der Natur. Wenn man sagt: die Alten, die Orientalen und auch die Griechen, haben gelebt in Einigkeit mit der Natur, sind nicht herausgetreten aus dem Stand der Natur, so sind dies Ausdrücke, mit denen entweder gar nichts oder etwas sehr Schiefes, Oberflächliches gesagt ist’ (*op. cit.* 307). Der Akzent verlegt sich nunmehr auf das Prinzip der Freiheit, das die Anerkennung des menschlichen Individuums als Person einschließt, womit ein Fehlen desselben in der östlichen Philosophie als Grund dafür gesehen wird, daß sie sich noch nicht vollständig von der Theologie gelöst hat.<sup>17</sup>

Infolgedessen lehrt Hegel im Wintersemester 1825/26:

In der Geschichte tritt die Philosophie also da auf, wo freie Verfassungen existieren [...] In der orientalischen Welt kann aber von eigentlicher Philosophie nicht die Rede sein; denn um ihren Charakter kurz anzugeben, der Geist geht wohl im Orient

16 ‘Ihre religiösen Vorstellungen sind ihre Philosophie, so daß die Interessen der Religion dieselben sind, die wir in der Philosophie finden’ (*Einleitung*, 289), und: ‘Im Ganzen sind die Vedas der Inhalt der indischen Philosophie’ (*op. cit.* 289 f.).

17 *Einleitung*, 266:

[...] daß das Prinzip der Freiheit und Individualität in allen anderen Religionen, besonders im griechischen und mehr noch im germanischen Prinzip, mehr hervortritt. Die religiösen Vorstellungen erscheinen daher sogleich mehr individuell, mehr in Gestalt von Personen. In der orientalischen Religion ist aber das Moment der Subjektivität, der subjektiven Freiheit noch nicht genug ausgebildet, sondern sie hat mehr den Charakter der Allgemeinheit; und so sind auch die religiösen Vorstellungen mehr allgemeine Vorstellungen und erscheinen so leicht als philosophische Vorstellungen oder Gedanken.

Siehe oben, p. 3.

auf, aber das Verhältnis ist so, daß das Subjekt, die Individualität nicht Person ist, sondern als untergehend im Objektiven bestimmt ist.' (*op. cit.* 227)

Diese Präambel, die einen zentralen Gedanken der Hegelschen Philosophie zum Ausdruck bringt, muß in diesem Kontext wohl in erster Linie als eine Grundsatzerklärung betrachtet werden, deren Zielsetzung darin besteht, das dialektische Gebäude des philosophischen Systems als Ganzes, wie es vor allem in der *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* entwickelt wurde, nicht anzutasten. Das hält Hegel allerdings nicht davon zurück, einige Vorlesungen später zu erklären, daß man neuerdings, dank des Engländers Colebrooke, wirklich philosophische Systeme der Inder kennengelernt hat (*op. cit.* 294).

Außerdem präsentiert Hegel eine kommentierte Wiedergabe von Colebrookes Essay über das Sāṃkhya mit vielen wörtlichen übersetzten Zitaten, gefolgt von einer knappen, nicht ausgearbeiteten Wiedergabe des Essays über die Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. Daß diese erste Bekanntschaft mit der Indischen Schule der Philosophie Hegel nicht direkt von ihrer Tiefe und der Systematik ihres Gedankenganges überzeugen kann—Hegel vermißt vorläufig noch die logische Ordnung und sieht in den 25 *tattvas* (Prinzipien) des Sāṃkhya nur eine oberflächliche, trockene, ideenlose Aufzählung (*op. cit.* 302)—kann ihm kaum zur Last gelegt werden, da Colebrookes Essay, um die Wahrheit zu sagen, zwar als grundlegend angesehen werden kann, sich aber darum noch keineswegs als eine beispielhafte philosophische Studie erweist. Colebrooke beschränkt sich hauptsächlich auf eine deskriptive Wiedergabe dessen, was in einer viel zu kurzen Fassung in den *Sāṃkhyakārikās* steht.<sup>18</sup>

Ein weiteres Problem besteht darin, daß Colebrooke technische Ausdrücke aus dem Sanskrit mechanisch übersetzt, mit leider nicht immer gelungenen englischen Äquivalenten, die, sofern der traditionelle Kontext nicht streng im Auge behalten wird, unvermeidlich zu Fehlinterpretationen führen müssen. So wird *puruṣa* mit 'soul' übersetzt, *buddhi* mit 'intelligence' und, eine Quelle der Verwirrung, *ahaṃkāra* mit 'consciousness.' Michel Hulin, der Hegels Sāṃkhya-Interpretation analysiert hat, bemerkt zurecht, daß: 'il n'y a donc rien d'étonnant à ce que, sur de nombreux points de détail, Hegel soit victime de certaines confusions. L'étonnant est plutôt que ses erreurs caractérisées ne soient pas plus nombreuses et plus graves.'<sup>19</sup>

Sowohl diese Umstände als auch die Tatsache, daß Colebrooke sein Exposé der *Kārikās* mit einigen Doktrinen aus den *Kapila* zugeschriebenen

18 Was Hegel im indischen Denken, d.h. im Sāṃkhya, im besonderen vermißt, ist der logische Zusammenhang von Begriffen bzw. Bestimmungen, die das Denken (dialektisch) strukturieren. Dieser Mangel ist, unserer Ansicht nach, eher der Übersetzung Colebrookes als dem Sāṃkhya selbst zu zuschreiben, und wir werden noch sehen, daß Hegel später selbst diese Auffassung korrigiert. Vorläufig glaubt er allerdings, diesen Mangel der Struktur des indischen Denkens im allgemeinen zuschreiben zu können, die alle Subjektivität des Ichs, und somit alles Besondere im Allgemeinen, Abstrakten auflöst, d.h. in ihre formlose intellektuelle Substantialität (*op. cit.* 335).

19 Hulin 1979, 119.

*Sāṃkhyasūtras* vervollständigte, dessen apokrypher, post-Vedānta Charakter selbstverständlich noch nicht zu Buche stand, erklärt, wie es möglich war, daß der Kern des Sāṃkhya, nämlich sein radikaler Dualismus, Hegel letztendlich größtenteils entgangen ist. So erwähnt er in einer Passage, die laut Hoffmeister, speziell zu den Vorlesungen von 1825/26 gehört, und die, wie Hulin scharfsinnig feststellt (*op. cit.* 119 f.), auf eine falsche Interpretation Hegels von Colebrookes Übersetzung der *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 21 zurückzuführen ist: 'Die Idee bei den Indern ist also, daß die Einheit der Natur und der Seele, die an sich vorhanden ist, aufgehoben wird durch die Schöpfung und erst zur wahrhaften Einigkeit wird, indem sich die Seele durch Erkenntnis (d.i. Abstraktion von der Natur) von dem Geschaffenen befreit.'<sup>20</sup>

Hegel, der seine vorgefaßten Ideen, daß das *brahman* als absolute Substantialität für alles indische Denken ein fundamentales Dogma bedeutet, niemals gänzlich überwunden hat, kann in seiner monistischen Umdeutung des Sāṃkhya-Systems außerdem durch eine weitere kryptische Passage in Colebrookes Essay bestärkt sein, worin dieser sich auf die *Sāṃkhyasūtras* (SS) stützt, die tatsächlich, im Gegensatz zu den Kārikās, eine undifferenzierte, kosmische *buddhi* (*liṅga*) lehren, die sich am Anfang jeder Schöpfung manifestiert und sich dann in Individuen differenziert (SS 3.9–10), welche beliebig als 'Gott' (*īśvara*) bezeichnet werden kann, angesichts der Tatsache, daß sich alle Akte, einschließlich der Erkenntnisakte, aus ihr entwickeln (*sarvavit*, *sarvakṛt*, SS 3.56–57)—eine Entwicklung die im Prinzip der *ahamkāra* hypostasiert ist (SS 6.64–65).<sup>21</sup> Hiermit beschließen wir die erste Auseinandersetzung Hegels mit der indischen Philosophie, wie er sie in seinen Vorlesungen 1825/26 zum Ausdruck brachte.

## DIE JAHRE 1826–1831

Eine dritte Phase seines Studiums der indischen Kultur setzt in der zweiten Hälfte des Jahres 1826 ein,<sup>22</sup> als sich sein Interesse auf den allorts Be-

<sup>20</sup> *Einleitung*, 307.

<sup>21</sup> Colebrooke 1824, 37 paraphrasiert:

He (i.e. Kapila) acknowledges indeed a being issuing from nature (i.e. *prakṛti*), who is intelligence absolute (*sarvavit?*); source of all individual intelligences; and origin of other existences successively evolved and developed. He expressly affirms 'that the truth of such an *īśvara* is demonstrated', the creator of the world, in such sense of creation: for 'the existence of effects', he says, 'is dependent upon consciousness [N.B. d.h. *ahamkāra*], not upon *īśvara*'; and 'all else is from the great principle, intellect'.

Wer kann es Hegel verübeln, daß er aus dieser Passage nicht mehr herausholt als (*Einleitung*, 317 f.):

Capilas Gott ist also die Schöpfung der absoluten Substanz, der Natur; diese Schöpfung läßt er gelten; . . . Capila sagt, daß, 'die Existenz von Wirkungen von dem Bewußtsein abhängt, nicht von *īśvara*' . . . und daß 'alles Andere von dem großen Prinzip, der Intelligenz', herkommt und dann der individuellen Seele, die es bestätigt.

<sup>22</sup> Hegel, Brief an Daub (19-12-1826) (*Briefe* III, 149 ff.).

wunderung hervorrufenden Text richtet, den man ‘avec une révérence presque religieuse,’<sup>23</sup> in aller Munde führte, die *Bhagavadgītā*. Die direkte Anleitung zu deren Studium boten zwei Vorträge, die der Ex-Innenminister von Preußen Wilhelm von Humboldt, im Juni 1825 und 1826 an der Berliner Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften mit dem Titel *Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gīta bekannte Episode des Maha-Bharata* gehalten hatte, und zu deren Rezension Hegel von der Sozietät für wissenschaftliche Kritik, die er selbst kurz zuvor (im Juli 1826) mit gegründet hatte, eingeladen wurde.<sup>24</sup> Die Rezension wurde in der Form zweier Artikel in den Jahrbüchern dieser Sozietät 1827 publiziert.

### *Die Rezeption der Bhagavadgītā*

Die Geschichte der *Bhagavadgītā*-Rezeption im Westen bietet sich als Leitfaden an, um die Entwicklung der Indologie und des ‘Orientalismus’ der letzten 200 Jahre zu untersuchen.<sup>25</sup> Ich werde diese Geschichte hier nur kurz bis zu dem Punkt ins Gedächtnis rufen, wo Hegel seinen kritischen Stempel auf die weitere Entwicklung drückt.

Auf Anraten des ersten englischen Generalgouverneurs Warren Hastings widmet sich Charles Wilkins, ein leitender britischer Beamter in Bengalen, der direkten Übersetzung eines Textes aus dem Sanskrit in eine europäische Sprache. Seine *The Bhāgvāt-Geetā, or Dialogues of Krêêshna and Ârjôôn* erscheint 1785 in London.<sup>26</sup> Das Suchen nach dem mysteriösen Osten im Zeitalter der Aufklärung erreicht damit seinen abschließenden Höhepunkt, und ein neues Zeitalter, das der wissenschaftlichen Indologie, wird damit eingeläutet. Zwei Jahre später übersetzt Parraud diese englische Ausgabe ins Französische und 1802 erscheint die deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Majer (*Asiatisches Magazin* von Klaproth). Innerhalb eines Jahres nach seiner Ankunft in Indien gründet der ‘Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Fort William,’ der enthusiastische und geniale William Jones die ‘Asiatic Society of Bengal.’ 1808 erscheint in Kalkutta, wo inzwischen einige Druckereien tätig waren, in indischer Schrift, die *editio princeps* der *Bhagavadgītā*,<sup>27</sup> allerdings in solch kleiner Auflage, daß diese Edition innerhalb von zehn Jahren derart selten wird, daß August Wilhelm Schlegel, für seine eigene Ausgabe das Exemplar seines Freundes C. Fauriel benutzen muß,<sup>28</sup> der, wie auch August Wilhelms Bruder Friedrich, der ersten

23 Langlois 1824, 106.

24 Hegel in Berlin, 106 ff.

25 Eine gute Grundlage für ein solches Studium bieten Callewaert und Hemraj in ihrem *Bhagavadgītānūvāda. A study in transcultural translation*.

26 Die erste Sanskrit-Druckerei in Calcutta stiftete Charles Wilkins 1778. Hier wurden anfänglich Sanskrittexte in Bengalischen Schriftzeichen gesetzt (Kirfel 1915, 275; vgl. Priolkar 1958, 55). Schon früher war in Calcutta 1792 Jones’ Edition vom Kālidāsa *Ṛtusamhāra (The Seasons. A descriptive poem by Cālidās in the original Sanskrit)* erschienen (Windisch 1917–20, 24).

27 Diese lithographische Ausgabe wurde in der Bābūrām Press in Khidarpoor–Calcutta gedruckt. Einem noch früheren Datum entstammt eine Blockdruck-Ausgabe in Devanāgarī-Schrift, die in Miraj 1805 gedruckt wurde (Priolkar 1958, 33 f., 346).

28 Schlegel BhG, viii.

Generation der Sanskritisten in Europa angehörte.

Wie das Schicksal so spielt, wurde Paris zu Napoleons Zeiten zum Zentrum des Sanskrit-Studiums, als Alexander Hamilton, ein englischer Marineoffizier, der während seines Aufenthalts in Indien im Dienste der Ostindischen Kompanie Sanskrit gelernt hatte, im Jahre 1803 die Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris aufsuchte, um die Handschriften der *Hitopadeśa* zu kollationieren und schließlich, durch den Bruch des Friedens von Amiens, von der französischen Regierung in Paris zurückgehalten wurde, wo er allerdings die Freiheit erhielt, seine orientalischen Kenntnisse zu nützen, und mit dem Katalogisieren der Sanskrit-Handschriften in der Bibliothek betraut wurde.<sup>29</sup> Es ist vor allem dem Einfluß seines Schülers der ersten Stunde, Friedrich Schlegel, der 1808 seine Arbeit *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder* veröffentlicht, zuzuschreiben, daß aus ganz Europa, aber vor allem aus Deutschland, Studenten nach Paris ziehen, um die Ursprache, das Sanskrit, zu lernen. 1808 kommt Othmar Frank, 1812 Franz Bopp nach Paris, gefolgt von seinem zukünftigen collega proximus, August Wilhelm Schlegel, im Jahre 1815. Dieser, wie auch sein späterer Kritiker Langlois, studierte Sanskrit bei unter anderem Léonard de Chézy, der ab 1815 den ersten Lehrstuhl für Sanskrit am Collège de France innehatte.

Eine zweite Generation Sanskritisten verbreitet sich über das postnapoleonische Europa. Von nationalistischen, anti-französischen Sentimenten geleitet, entwickelt sich in Deutschland im zweiten und dritten Jahrzehnt des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts ein kulturelles Klima, in dem die gerade entdeckte Erkenntnis der indo-europäischen Sprachverwandtschaft und deren ältester bekannter Repräsentant, das Sanskrit, in den Dienst einer reaktionären, chauvinistischen Geschichtsauffassung gestellt wurde, die den germanischen Stamm zum direkten Erben dieser 'Urquelle' von Sprache und Weisheit ernannte. Trotz des Einspruchs von Gelehrten wie Bopp wird das Indo-Europäische zum Indo-Germanischen. So sagt auch Hegel, obwohl völlig frei von romantischer Sehnsucht nach dem Urvolk, der Ursprache und der Urreligion, als er die Geschichte der Philosophie periodisiert: 'Die europäischen Völker, insofern sie der Welt der Gedanken (der Wissenschaft) angehören, sind germanisch zu nennen; denn sie haben in ihrer Gesamtheit germanische Bildung.'<sup>30</sup>

Es ist dasselbe Klima, das A.W. Schlegel zum unversöhnlichen Kritiker der klassischen französischen Literatur machte, was ihm den beißenden Hohn Heines eintrug: 'Wir sahen mit stolzer Freude, wie unser kampfflüstiger Landsmann den Franzosen zeigte, daß ihre ganze klassische Literatur nichts wert sei. [...] Sein Refrain war immer, daß die Franzosen das prosaischste Volk der Welt seien und daß es in Frankreich gar keine Poesie gäbe.'<sup>31</sup>

Obwohl nüchterner, wissenschaftlicher und mit größerer Sachkenntnis als sein Bruder, stimmen viele Gesichtspunkte August Wilhelms mit denen von

<sup>29</sup> Schwab 1950, 741.

<sup>30</sup> *Einleitung*, 237 (1823/24).

<sup>31</sup> *Die romantische Schule* (Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften* V, 4141).

Friedrich überein, wenn er zum Beispiel, anonym gegen Hegel polemisierend, in bezug auf Indien bemerkt (Ind. Bibl. II, 425),

Daß hier kein Fortschritt vom Sinnlichen zum Geistigen statt gefunden hat, was die meisten neueren Theoristen der Religionsgeschichte als den allgemeinen Gang haben vorstellen wollen, sondern vielmehr das umgekehrte; daß nicht nur Vielgötterei und Mythologie, sondern auch Anthropomorphismus spätere Zutaten gewesen sind; und daß in einer unbekanntem Vorzeit die Brahmanen [...] die reinste Verehrung des göttlichen Wesens gelehrt haben, wovon sie den Namen führten.

Nicht nur seine erste Kenntnis des Sanskrit erwirbt August Wilhelm in der prosaischen Hauptstadt Frankreichs, sondern auch vier Handschriften der *Bhagavadgītā*, und, dem Vorbild einiger der elegantesten Pariser Handschriften folgend, entwirft er voller Stolz eine *devanāgarī* Letter, die mit Unterstützung der preußischen Regierung gegossen wird, zum Nutzen der neu gegründeten Preußischen Rhein-Universität zu Bonn, an der A.W. Schlegel 1818 zum ersten deutschen Professor für Sanskrit berufen wurde.<sup>32</sup>

Schlegels kritische Ausgabe und Übersetzung der *Bhagavadgītā*, die 1823 in Bonn erscheint, schuldet Paris somit einiges, aber die wachsende Rivalität zwischen beiden Ländern infolge eines stark aufkommenden Nationalchauvinismus—das neue deutsche Selbstbewußtsein, das in der Idee des germanischen ‘Volkstums’ resultierte, ein Selbstbewußtsein das, ideologische Auswüchse, wie sie z.B. die von Klaproth darstellen,<sup>33</sup> außer Betracht gelassen, in der Tat auf hervorragende wissenschaftliche Resultate verweisen konnte, welche im Ausland nicht immer ohne Neid registriert wurden —,<sup>34</sup> diese wachsende Animosität kann ebenfalls dazu geführt haben, daß Schlegels Kommilitone Alexandre Langlois seine *Bhagavadgītā*-Ausgabe in vier aufeinanderfolgenden Artikeln im *Journal Asiatique*, mit allmählich abnehmender Höflichkeit einer detaillierten, ja selbst pedantischen Kritik unterwirft. Daß der politische Kontext in dieser wissenschaftlichen Debatte eine Rolle spielt, wird bereits auf der ersten Seite der Rezension Langlois’ deutlich, als dieser sein Bedauern darüber beteuert, daß obwohl das Material und das Wissen in Frankreich anwesend sind, die Ehre, diesen Sanskrittext als erste in *nāgarī* mit einer Übersetzung herausgegeben zu haben (Langlois spricht hier von einer ‘trophée élevée à la gloire littéraire d’une nation’),<sup>35</sup> Deutschland gebührt. Aber etwas der nationalen Ehre meint Langlois retten zu

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32 Schlegel BhG, vii; Kirfel 1915, 276 f.; Kirfel 1944.

33 Schwab 1950, 198 ff.

34 Vgl. auch Colebrookes Schreiben an H.H. Wilson (24-12-1827):

Careless and indifferent as our countrymen are, I think, nevertheless, that you and I may derive some complacent feelings from the reflexion that, following the footsteps of Sir W. Jones, we have with so little aid of collaborators, and so little encouragement, opened nearly every avenue, and left it to foreigners, who are taking up the clue we have furnished, to complete the outline of what we have sketched.

Zitiert in: Windisch 1917–20, 36. Vgl. Kirfel 1944, 14 ff.

35 Langlois 1824, 105.

können, indem er darauf weist, daß Schlegels Arbeit von noch vorzüglicherer Qualität gewesen wäre, wenn er alle Hilfsmittel hätte benutzen können, die ihm in Paris zur Verfügung gestanden hätten, nämlich die Kenntnis ihres gemeinsamen Lehrmeister Chézy und, noch wichtiger, der Kommentar von Śrīdhara,<sup>36</sup> der in einem Manuskript der Nationalbibliothek verfügbar gewesen wäre. Den größten Teil seiner kritischen Bemerkungen, die er zurecht äußern konnte, hat Langlois diesem Kommentar entnehmen können.

Schlegel muß sich in steigendem Maße an dieser Rezension gestört haben, und konnte es in seiner gekränkten Eitelkeit daher nicht lassen, einer Replik von Humboldts, mit dem Titel, *Mit Bezug auf die Beurtheilung der Schlegelschen Ausgabe im Pariser Asiatischen Journal*, die er in seiner eigenen *Indischen Bibliothek* veröffentlichte, die folgenden begleitenden Worte voranzustellen: 'Herr Langlois hat seitdem mit seinen Kritiken fortgefahren, und zwar auf eine Weise, welche mich bewogen hat, seine Befugnisse zum Richteramt etwas näher zu prüfen, und für so viele Bereitwilligkeit im Zurechtweisen ihm den Gegenstand einer gründlichen Zurechtweisung zu leisten.'<sup>37</sup> Langlois' angekündigter abschließender fünfter Rezensionsartikel ist daraufhin nicht mehr erschienen. Von Humboldts Replik auf Langlois' Kritik, in Briefform an Schlegel gesandt (1825) und von diesem zusammen mit seinen eigenen Anmerkungen gedruckt,<sup>38</sup> folgen zwei Vorträge an der Berliner Akademie, in denen von Humboldt als erster Europäer beabsichtigt, eine inhaltliche Beurteilung und philosophische Betrachtung der Gītā vorzunehmen.

#### *Von Humboldts Bhagavadgītā Vorträge und Hegels Kritik*

Wilkins Übersetzung, A.W. Schlegels Ausgabe und Übersetzung, Langlois' Rezension und die drei Essays von von Humboldt hat Hegel allesamt studiert und für seine eigenen zwei Gītā-Artikel benutzt, wobei noch hinzugefügt werden muß, daß er in seinem 'gelehrten Freund und Kollegen Herrn Bopp' (Hegel

36 Es handelt sich hier um die *Subodhinī* von Śrīdhara Svāmin (AD 1350–1450).

37 Ind. Bibl. II, 219.

38 In der *Indischen Bibliothek* II, 218–258, 328–372. Die Leser des *Journal Asiatique* (JA) wurden durch folgende Lesermitteilung aus Berlin auf diese Replik aufmerksam gemacht (JA VII (1825), 192): 'On nous (d.h. Société Asiatique) annonce en même temps que l'on ne tardera pas à lire dans le nouveau cahier de la *Bibliothèque indienne* de M. G. de Schlegel, la réponse à quelques-unes des attaques et des critiques dont le bel ouvrage de ce dernier, le *Bhagavad-Gītā*, a été l'objet.' 1826 erscheint schließlich ebenfalls im JA eine Replik von A.W. Schlegel auf Langlois' Rezension (JA IX (1826), 3–27): 'Je n'en ai choisi que quelques-unes des plus frappantes (méprises), et j'ai écrit ces observations en français, afin que M. Langlois eût toute facilité pour me réfuter, s'il le juge à propos.' (*op. cit.* 27), woraufhin Langlois reagiert (und offenbar nicht als einziger, siehe *Note de la Commission*, JA IX (1826), 185 f.), indem er ebenfalls einen Brief an die Redaktion des JA sendet, der im JA IX (1826), 186–189 erscheint. Hierin teilt er mit, da es sich herausstellte, daß Herr Schlegel wissenschaftliche Kritik persönlich nicht vertragen kann, daß er von weiteren Rezensionen absehen werde: 'je sacrifie volontiers de dangereux honneur d'annoncer encore que je ne suis pas toujours de l'avis de M. Schlegel.' (*op. cit.* 189).

BhG, 170) eine zuverlässige Informationsquelle (besonders in bezug auf die epische Literatur) und Autorität in allem, was Indien und das Sanskrit betrifft, direkt zur Hand hatte. Im Gegensatz zu von Humboldt, der die Gītā als Werk an sich ‘abgesondert für sich, als ein Ganzes’ (Humboldt BhG, 190) behandelt, ohne andere Quellen der indischen Philosophie und Literatur in Anspruch zu nehmen, nimmt Hegel sich die Mühe, die Einsichten, die er aus seinem Studium Indiens und vor allem aus Colebrookes Essay gewonnen hat, in seiner Betrachtung der *Bhagavadgītā* zu verarbeiten. Und darin unterscheidet sich seine Beurteilung wesentlich von der von Humboldts. An Stelle einer *philosophia perennis* à la von Humboldt weist Hegel der Gītā ihren Platz im historischen Kontext zu. Kann sich von Humboldt nach Hegels erstem Artikel, der mit den höflichsten Worten formuliert ist und der, oberflächlich betrachtet, keine all zu schwere Kritik befaßt, noch geschmeichelt fühlen,<sup>39</sup> so reagiert er auf das Erscheinen des zweiten Artikels nicht mehr direkt, schreibt aber in einem Brief an Friedrich von Gentz (1. März 1828): ‘Hegels lange Rezension über mich kann ich am wenigsten billigen. [...] Die ganze Rezension ist aber auch gegen mich, wengleich versteckt, gerichtet und geht deutlich aus der Überzeugung hervor, daß ich eher alles als ein Philosoph bin.’<sup>40</sup>

Hegels zweiter Artikel über die *Bhagavadgītā* richtet sich auf eine Passage aus der Gītā, worin eine Hierarchie von ‘Methoden’ und ‘Wegen’ gelehrt wird, die alle auf das höchste Ziel hinführen. Das Herausnehmen dieser Passage als Kernpunkt der Analyse ist an sich wissenschaftlich legitim und gibt Hegel die Gelegenheit, auf natürliche Weise all seine Kenntnisse und Einsichten von der indischen Kultur systematisch auszuarbeiten, hat allerdings zur ungewünschten Folge, daß er den Hauptakzent auf einen für die integrale Gītā sekundären Aspekt legt und dadurch eine verzerrte Vorstellung vom Text im Ganzen hervorruft.<sup>41</sup>

Die betreffende Passage, BhG 12.8–11, lautet folgendermaßen:

RICHE deine Gedanken ausschließlich auf Mich, dringe mit deinem Geist in Mich ein, dann letztendlich wirst du, ohne Zweifel, wahrlich in Mir wohnen. (8)

ABER bist du nicht imstande, deinen Geist ohne zu wankeln in Mich zu versenken (*samādhātum*), dann mußt du, O Dhanamjaya, versuchen, Mich mit Hilfe methodischer Übungen (*abhyāsayoga*) zu erreichen. (9)

UND solltest du auch zu diesen Übungen nicht imstande sein, mußt du dich gänzlich den Werken weihen, die auf Mich gerichtet sind (*matkarmaparamo*); auch wenn du deine Taten um Meinetwillen verrichtest, wirst du dein eigentliches Ziel erreichen. (10)

BIST du aber ebenfalls nicht imstande, dies zu tun, nimm dann deine Zuflucht zu

39 Hegel, *Briefe* III, 152.

40 Zitiert aus Hegel, *Werke*, Edition Moldenbauer und Michel (1970), *Anmerkungen der Redaktion zu Band 11*, 579 f.

41 Vgl. Hulin 1979, 213.

Meiner Disziplin (*madyoga*): verzichte auf die Früchte all deiner Werke, selbstbeherrscht. (11)<sup>42</sup>

Von Humboldt zählt diese Passage ‘zu den schwierigsten der Gītā’ (*op. cit.* 171) und zurecht bemerkt Hegel, daß zwischen den ersten beiden *ślokas*, 8 und 9, und den letzten beiden, 10 und 11, sich ein Widerspruch befindet. In den ersten beiden Methoden tritt ein ‘rein negative Verhalten des Geistes’ auf, das für die indische Religion im Ganzen typisch ist und ‘im Widerspruche mit dem Handeln steht, zu welchem Krischna früher den Ardschuna aufgefordert hat.’ (Hegel BhG, 157). Und wer würde es Hegel bestreiten, wenn er infolgedessen bemerkt: ‘Es macht eine der tädiösen Seiten des Gedichtes aus, diesen Widerspruch der Aufforderung zum Handeln und der Aufforderung zu der handlungslosen, ja ganz bewegungslosen, alleinigen Versenkung in Krischna immerfort hervorkommen zu sehen und keine Auflösung dieses Widerspruchs zu finden’ (*op. cit.* 157 f.). Hegel stellt fest, daß dieser Widerspruch schon den Vedas zugrundeliegt, in denen einerseits zum sakralen Handeln gerufen wird, andererseits zum Versenken in die absolute Substantialität (*op. cit.* 180). Aus dieser Antinomie, die wir tatsächlich durch die gesamte indische Kulturgeschichte verfolgen können, leitet Hegel seine zentralste These in Beziehung auf die indische Zivilisation ab, die wir, angesichts ihrer Wichtigkeit für die Indien-Rezeption, in ihrer Vollständigkeit zitieren möchten. Hegel BhG, 158:

Unmöglich aber ist diese Auflösung, weil das Höchste des indischen Bewußtseins, das abstrakte Wesen, Brahman, in ihm selbst ohne Bestimmung ist, welche daher nur außer der Einheit und nur äußerliche, natürliche Bestimmung sein kann. In diesem Zerfallen des Allgemeinen und des Konkreten sind beide geistlos, – jenes die leere Einheit, dieses die unfreie Mannigfaltigkeit; der Mensch, an diese verfallen, ist nur an ein Naturgesetz des Lebens gebunden; zu jenem Extrem sich erhebend, ist er auf der Flucht und in der Negation aller konkreten, geistigen Lebendigkeit.

Mit genialer Intuition bemerkt Hegel, was keiner seiner indologischen Wegbereiter in dieser Deutlichkeit gesehen hat, daß der Ausdruck *abhyāsayoga* in *śloka* 9 (‘methodische Übungen’) auf die Yoga-Techniken verweist, wie sie in den *Yogasūtras* gelehrt werden, und nichts mit den Methoden des *bhaktiyoga* und den *karmayoga* zu tun hat, worauf in den letzten beiden *ślokas* verwiesen wird. A.W. Schlegel übersetzte diesen Ausdruck mit *assiduitatis devotio* (Schlegel BhG, 179), laut von Humboldt ein ‘sehr dunkler Ausdruck’ (*op. cit.* 170), den auch dieser nicht erhellen kann. Hegel aber, auf Colebrookes Darlegung der *Yogasūtras* bezugnehmend,<sup>43</sup> bemerkt, daß dieser Ausdruck auf ‘die dem Höchsten, der Erreichung der Seligkeit vorhergehende Stufe’ (*op. cit.* 159) verweist, nämlich die ‘Ausübung gewaltsamer Zurückziehung und das Aushalten in der Einförmigkeit eines taten- und gedankenlosen Zustandes’ (*op. cit.*

42 MBh 6.34.8–11 (= BhG 12.8–11). Übersetzung von mir.

43 Colebrooke 1824, 36.

158), und mit dieser Auslegung des Ausdrucks ist er in Übereinstimmung mit Śaṅkaras Erläuterung.<sup>44</sup>

Wie gut er sie getroffen hat (wenn wir eben von dem Wort ‘gedankenlos’ absehen), macht auch der uns inzwischen zur Verfügung stehenden *Yogasūtra* Text (YS) mit Vyāsa's Kommentar deutlich, der in Oberhammers Analyse folgendmaßen lautet:

‘Übung (i.e. *abhyāsa*) ist hier die Bemühung um Beständigkeit (*sthītau*)’ sagt er YS 1.13 und meint damit, wenn wir Vyāsa glauben dürfen, die Bemühung, den Bewußtseinsstrom durch Ausschaltung des Wechsel der Gegenstände zu einem ruhigen Strömen zu bringen, um so die ‘Beständigkeit der Rezeptivität’ (*sthītiḥ*) des psychischen Organs voll herbeizuführen.<sup>45</sup>

Diese ‘Übung’ ist, laut Oberhammer, Teil des ‘Unterdrückungsyoga’, der in einem Zustand gipfelt, in dem ‘die Rezeptivität des psychischen Organs frei von jeder Eigentätigkeit des psychischen Organs’ (vgl. Hegels ‘gedankenlosen Zustand’), ‘nur mehr Rezeptivität für das in ihr erscheinende eigenwesen der transzendenten Geistesseele’ ist, d.h. daß diese Erfahrung ‘grundsätzlich nicht mehr Erfahrung von etwas ist, und zwar weder im Sinne eines Gegenstandes noch im Sinne eines kategorialen Subjekts,’<sup>46</sup> welches Hegel, gemäß seiner These, daß Bewußtsein ohne Inhalt kein Bewußtsein ist, mit den Worten zum Ausdruck bringt:

Diese Vollendung bestimmt sich als dauernden Zustand der Abstraktion—perennierende Einsamkeit des Selbstbewußtseins, die alle Sensationen, alle Bedürfnisse und Vorstellungen von äußeren Dingen aufgegeben hat, somit nicht mehr Bewußtsein ist, — auch nicht ein erfülltes Selbstbewußtsein, welches den Geist zum Inhalte hätte und insofern auch noch Bewußtsein wäre; ein Anschauen, das nichts anschaut, von nichts weiß, — die reine Leerheit seiner in sich selbst. (Hegel BhG, 181)

Diese Einheit mit dem *brahman* bestimmt somit ebenfalls die Natur des *brahman* selbst, und zwar als ‘reine Allgemeinheit’ oder ‘reine Substanz,’ die von aller Besonderheit, ‘somit auch von der Besonderheit eines Objektes gegen ein Subjekt abstrahiert ist’ (*op. cit.* 185). Diese Abstraktion läßt, wie wir gesehen haben, eine Versöhnung mit dem Besonderen (Partikulären) nicht zu.<sup>47</sup> Dies ist die unüberwindbare Dichotomie, die Hegel zufolge allem indischen Denken

44 Śaṅkara *ad Bhagavadgītā* 12.9:

[...] *cittasyaikasmīn ālambane sarvataḥ samāhṛtya punaḥ punaḥ sthāpanam abhyāsas tatpūrvako yogaḥ samādhānalakṣaṇaḥ* [...]

Methodische Übung bedeutet, den Geist stets erneut auf einen (Bewußtseins-)Inhalt richten, nachdem man ihn von allem anderen entledigt hat; dies geht der höchsten Yoga(-stufe) voraus, die sich kennzeichnet durch die Versenkung.

45 Oberhammer 1977, 139.

46 *Op. cit.* 161 f.

47 Zurecht bemerkt Hegel, daß dieses leere abstrahierende Denken auch in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte anzutreffen ist:

Wenn wir Europäer sagen, Gott ist das höchste Wesen, so ist diese Bestimmung ebenso

zugrundliegt, das dementsprechend nur von einem Extrem, der ‘Substanz ohne Subjektivität,’ ins andere, die Mannigfaltigkeit der natürlichen Wirklichkeit, übergehen kann, ein Übergang, den Hegel des öfteren als einen ‘haltungslosen Taumel’ bezeichnet.<sup>48</sup>

Nun kann diese ‘Übung’ außer in dem ‘Unterdrückungs-yoga’ genauso gut in der theistischen Form der Meditation angewandt werden, eine Meditation, worin Gott, unter anderem durch das Wiederholen des OM-Klangs, zum Bewußtseinsinhalt gemacht wird.<sup>49</sup> Zweifellos hat diese Art der Meditation mehr Verwandtschaft mit dem von Kṛṣṇa gelehrten Weg in der *Bhagavadgītā*, wenn er sagt: ‘Richte deine Gedanken ausschließlich auf Mich, durchdringe Mich mit deinem Geist.’ Und hiermit stoßen wir an einen zweiten Punkt, an dem Hegel der *Gītā* nicht gerecht wird, da er aus Kṛṣṇas Aussprachen, in denen dieser Sich selbst mit der Silbe OM, mit den Vedas, oder mit allem, ‘was ist und nicht ist,’ gleichstellt (BhG 9.17, 19), folgert, daß Kṛṣṇa eigentlich nichts anderes als eine Personifikation des *brahman*, d.h. Brahṁā darstellt. Diese Äquivalenz konstatierend, illustriert er anhand der verschiedenen Mythen, daß Brahṁā nur eine oberflächliche Personifikation des *brahman* ist, eine leere Form, kein individuelles Subjekt, und deshalb kein Gott im Sinne der christlichen Tradition.<sup>50</sup> Hiermit verschwindet aber auch Kṛṣṇa als persönliche Gottheit, zu der hin alle Wege der *Gītā* führen, als sinnvolles Ziel und als liebevoller Helfer, vollständig aus Hegels Blick.

Was mit dieser Betrachtung der zwei bereits genannten ‘Methoden’ gewonnen ist, ist eine gründliche Analyse des Begriffs *brahman* und damit eine Untermauerung seiner Beurteilung des indischen Denkens. Außerdem bietet sich ihm die Gelegenheit, einige sogenannte ‘Versuche’ zu analysieren, in denen beabsichtigt ist, die Pluriformität der natürlichen Empirie mit der abstrakten allgemeinen Substanz zu verbinden; und in diesem Verband führt Hegel einige Kosmogonien an, die er Colebrookes *Essay On the Vedas* entnimmt.<sup>51</sup>

Der wichtigste dieser ‘Versöhnungsversuche’ ist die indische Vorstellung, die in der Kaste der Brahmanen den eigentlichen Repräsentanten von Brahṁā und damit vom *brahman* in der Welt sieht: ‘Brahṁā existiert in den Brahmanen; [...] er selbst wird verehrt, indem sie verehret werden, sie sind seine Existenz; er ist sie als selbstbewußte Existenz; sie sind seine ununterbrochene Inkarnati-

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abstrakt und dürftig, und die Verstandesmetaphysik, welche das Erkennen Gottes, d.h. Bestimmungen von ihm zu wissen leugnet, fordert, daß die Vorstellung von Gott sich auf dieselbe Abstraktion beschränke, von Gott nichts weiter wissen soll, als was Brahman ist.

(Hegel BhG, 188. Vgl. Phil. d. Rel. II, 243).

48 Hegel BhG, 183. Vgl. Phil. d. Rel. II, 226 f. (1824).

49 Siehe Oberhammer 1977, 171. Vgl. BhG 8.8–14.

50 In diesem Zusammenhang macht Hegel eine bemerkenswerte Aussage (Hegel BhG, 186): Es ist in der Betrachtung der Religionen von unbedingter Wichtigkeit, die bloße Personifikation des Gottes oder eines Gottes, die man in allen Mythologien finden kann, von der Persönlichkeit, die er dem Gehalte nach ist, zu unterscheiden.

51 Colebrooke 1806; Hegel BhG, 196 ff.

on. [...] Der Inder hat an dem Brahmanen den gegenwärtigen Gott vor sich' (*op. cit.* 210 f.). Die Brahmanen stehen somit, dank ihrer Geburt (und dieser entscheidende Faktor macht für Hegel diesen 'Versöhnungsversuch' letztendlich wertlos), auf einem Niveau, auf dem das Denken und die Vertiefung in das *brahman* natürlich sind, im Gegensatz zu den anderen Ständen, die sich nur durch Askese und Yoga-Techniken oder religiöse Kulte diesem Ziel nähern können (*op. cit.* 201). In diesem Zusammenhang erzählt Hegel ausführlich die Geschichte von Viśvāmitra aus dem *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>52</sup> Diese besondere Stellung der Brahmanen scheint Konsequenzen für das Paradigma zu haben, dementsprechend die Interpretation der Weltgeschichte zu erfolgen hat, wie wir sogleich sehen werden.

Hegels Analyse der zwei erstgenannten Methoden, die den umfassenden letzten Teil seines zweiten Gītā-Artikels einnimmt (*op. cit.* 157–204), erläutert eine Anzahl von Gedanken und Einsichten, die seiner Beurteilung der zwei letztgenannten 'Wege', die sich auf das Handeln beziehen, implizit zugrundeliegen. Sie werden im ersten Artikel und in der ersten Hälfte des zweiten Artikels behandelt. Daher überrascht es uns nicht, wenn die devotionelle Variante des *karmayogas*, auch *bhaktiyoga* genannt, in Hegels Analyse ein wenig verkümmert, gemäß seiner formalen Interpretation der Figur des Kṛṣṇa.<sup>53</sup> Der bereits konstatierte Bruch zwischen einerseits dem transzendenten, völlig unbestimmten *ens realissimum* und andererseits der Pluriformität der bestimmten natürlichen Wirklichkeit, führt Hegel zu der Annahme, daß die vorgeschriebenen 'Werke' (*karma*), selbstlos im Dienste Gottes ausgeführt (*madartham api karmāṇi kurvan*), nicht in dem christlichen Sinne aufgefaßt werden dürfen, 'daß in jedem Stande, wer Gott fürchtet und Recht tut, ihm angenehm ist; denn dort gibt es keinen affirmativen Zusammenhang zwischen einem geistigen Gott und den Pflichten und somit kein innerliches Recht und Gewissen, denn der Inhalt der Pflichten ist nicht geistig, sondern natürlich bestimmt' (*op. cit.* 155). Es ist offensichtlich, daß Hegel die Seite der Gītā völlig ignoriert, wie sie so schön im achtzehnten Vers des sechzehnten Gesanges ausgedrückt wird:

SIE, die Egoismus, Macht, Eitelkeit, Begierde und Wut zugetan sind, sind abgünstige Leute, die Mir sowohl in ihrem eigenen als auch im Körper des anderen schlecht gesinnt sind.

Auf der anderen Seite korrigiert Hegel hiermit die hyperbolische Idealisierung von von Humboldt, der in der Lehre des *karmayoga* 'unläugbar philosophisch eine an das Erhabene grenzende Seelenstimmung' sieht (von Humboldt BhG, 195). Und hiermit sind wir bei Hegels eigener Beurteilung des *karmayoga* angekommen.

52 *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.52–57; Hegel BhG, 167 ff. Vgl. Phil. d. Rel. II, 492–494 (1831).

53 Zurecht bemerkt Hulin: 'La participation d'amour à Krishna et à ses oeuvres, thème majeur de la *Bhagavad-Gītā*, est donc assimilée par lui à l'ascèse purement physique qui mène à l'hébétéude.' (Hulin 1979, 214).

Hierin zentral steht seine gerechtfertigte Annahme, mit der er sich wesentlich von von Humboldt unterscheidet, daß, wenn die Gītā vom *karma*, von den Werken, spricht, hiermit die Summe von Handlungen gemeint ist, die sich direkt aus der Sammlung der traditionellen Vorschriften ergeben (die mehr oder weniger als religiöse eingestuft werden können) und von der jeweiligen Kaste oder Klasse abhängig sind. In Arjunas Zweifel geht es nicht, wie von Humboldt es gerne sehen würde, um eine Familienethik. Es ist nicht die Liebe zu den Verwandten, die Arjuna treibt, sondern die Furcht, vor der Zerstörung der natürlichen Ordnung als indirekte Folge seines Handelns, dadurch nämlich, daß den Witwen keine geeigneten Ehemänner mehr zur Verfügung stehen, und sich deshalb die Kasten vermengen müssen, so daß die geforderten Ahnenopfer nicht mehr in der erforderlichen Weise erbracht werden können usw.

In der Kṛṣṇas Ratschlägen kann Hegel ebensowenig eine ‘moralische Bestimmung’ finden, doch legt er großen Wert darauf, daß der Schwerpunkt mehr auf die Intention als auf die Handlungen selbst gelegt wird. Das Handeln in Übereinstimmung mit den Vorschriften, die der Ordnung der Kasten entstammen, ungeachtet dessen, ob hierbei von den Früchten derselben Abstand genommen wird oder nicht—und die insofern nicht auf einer vernünftigen Vereinbarung basieren, in der jedes Individuum als prinzipiell gleichgestelltes Wesen, d.h. als Person, Anerkennung findet—kann in Hegels Betrachtungsweise, die letztendlich eine kantianische ist, niemals einem sittlichen Handeln entsprechen. Hegel führt verschiedene Stellen der Gītā an, in denen gelehrt wird, daß die kasten-gebundenen Werke durch natürliche Qualitäten (*guṇa*) bestimmt werden, d.h. biologisch durch die Geburt in eine spezifische Kaste (*svabhāva*, BhG 18.42 ff.) determiniert sind.

Es ist eher für wichtig anzusehen, es bemerklich zu machen, daß auch in diesem Gedichte, welches dies große Ansehen indischer Weisheit und Moral genießt, die bekannten Kastenunterschiede ohne die Spur einer Erhebung zur moralischen Freiheit zugrunde liegen. (*op. cit.* 154)

Das Handeln gemäß der Kastenvorschriften mit dem Verzicht auf die Früchte, sollte allerdings nicht mit dem Handeln aus Pflicht verwechselt werden:

Die Pflicht ist etwas anderes als jene bloß negative Gleichgültigkeit gegen den Erfolg. Je sinnloser und stumpfer ein *opus operatum* vollbracht wird, eine desto größere Gleichgültigkeit gegen den Erfolg ist darin vorhanden. (*op. cit.* 152)

Im Sinne Hegels kann eine Handlung nur dann als moralisch gelten, wenn ihr eine freie Willensentscheidung zugrunde liegt. Jedoch ist dies bereits durch die Determination ausgeschlossen, die die Geburt in eine bestimmte Kaste zu implizieren scheint, ‘diese Institution welche Sittlichkeit und wahre Bildung ewig unter den Indern unmöglich gemacht hat und macht’ (*op. cit.* 154).

Es ist zweifelhaft, ob diese Darstellung der indischen Zivilisation zurecht besteht. Hegel läßt hier nämlich außer acht, daß diese natürliche Determination selbst wiederum eine Folge einer immateriellen ‘Gewinn- und Verlustrechnung’, der *karma*-Doktrin, ist, und daß eben dadurch der *dharma* (Ordnung) die ma-

terielle Realität transzendiert. Überhaupt spielt bei Hegel die Lehre von der Wiedergeburt und damit die Lehre von der überindividuellen Vergeltung von guten und schlechten Taten keine bedeutende Rolle. In einer endgültigen Beurteilung würde auch viel davon abhängen, wie man selbst Sittlichkeit zu definieren gedenkt. Daß Hegel hiermit ebenfalls eine philosophische Fundierung seiner Ansichten angegeben hat, wie wir sie noch in einer kulturgeschichtlich unnuancierten Form in der *Philosophie des Rechts* und der *Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* angetroffen haben, wird wohl niemand bestreiten wollen.

### SCHLUSSBETRACHTUNG

Betrachten wir abschließend noch einmal, ob diese tiefere Einsicht Hegel veranlaßte, seine Vorlesungen, da, wo sie Indien betreffen, zu ändern. Da wir uns speziell auf seine Rezeption der indischen Philosophie richten, kann ich in diesem Kontext nur kurz auf die Änderungen eingehen, die in den nicht-philosophiehistorischen Vorlesungen vorgenommen worden sind.<sup>54</sup> Von den Vorlesungen sind bis heute nur die *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* vollständig, differenziert nach Vorlesungsjahren herausgegeben. Diese Ausgabe allerdings macht einmal mehr deutlich, daß Hegel ständig das Material seiner Vorlesungen entsprechend dem neuesten Stand von Einsichten ergänzte und änderte, und dies scheint vor allem der Fall gewesen zu sein, wo er den Begriff *brahman*/Brahmā behandelte. Verglichen mit dem Vorlesungszyklus von 1824 ist Hegels Analyse der indischen Religion 1827 bereits systematischer und dadurch prägnanter. Die von Jaeschke als ‘Sondergut’ vermerkten Beilagen der Zykli von 1824 und 1827, von denen ein wesentlicher Teil wahrscheinlich auf die verlorenen Nachschriften des Vorlesungszyklus von 1831 zurückzuführen ist, lassen allerdings vermuten, daß er vor allem für diesen letzten Zyklus die Zeit gefunden hat, seinen Vorlesungsstoff gründlich umzuarbeiten.<sup>55</sup> Inhaltlich scheinen viele dieser Veränderungen mit dem übereinzustimmen, was wir in den *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* antreffen, die Hegel in den Wintersemestern 1827/28 und 1829/30 vor einem stets wachsenden Auditorium gehalten hat,<sup>56</sup> und worauf wir uns jetzt beschränken wollen.

54 Siehe oben, n. 2 on p. 24.

55 Siehe Phil. d. Rel. II, 222–228, 237–239, 245–246, 475–478, 485–486, 492–494. Vgl. den Kommentar des Herausgebers der Phil. d. Rel. II, xi.

56 Dies für sich genommen ist eine textinhaltliche Bestätigung einer von Jaeschke aufgrund seiner textkritischen Analyse gewonnenen Vermutung, daß die betreffenden Sondergut-Passagen zum Vorlesungszyklus von 1831 gehören. Auch bei einigen, von Jaeschke nicht näher bestimmten Sondergut-Passagen (Phil. d. Rel. II, 237f.) scheint aus textimmanenten Gründen die Zugehörigkeit zum letzten Vorlesungszyklus sehr wahrscheinlich, obwohl nicht völlig auszuschließen ist, daß die früheren Herausgeber (Marheineke und Bauer) dem Text eigene Formulierungen, dann aber im Geiste des letzten Vorlesungszyklus, hinzugefügt (vgl. Jaeschke *op. cit.* I, lxxxiii sq.).

Zuerst fällt auf, daß das Kapitel aus der *Einleitung* mit dem Titel *Der Anfang der Geschichte der Philosophie*, das in den Vorlesungen von 1825/26 bereits signifikanten Änderungen unterzogen wurde, 1827/28 und 1829/30 nahezu völlig verschwand. Die vorausgesetzte Einheit von Geist und Natur als ‘das orientalische Wesen überhaupt’, sowie auch das ‘Prinzip der Freiheit’ als *conditio sine qua non* der philosophischen Reflexion sind gestrichen. An deren Stelle geht Hegel schlichtweg davon aus, daß die Geschichte der Philosophie dort anfängt, ‘wo der Gedanke rein hervortritt, wo er allgemein ist, und wo dieses Reine, dieses Allgemeine das Wesentliche, Wahrhafte, Absolute ist, das Wesen von Allem’ (*Einleitung* 224), was den Osten, obwohl die griechische Welt explizit genannt wird, nicht mehr prinzipiell ausschließt. Hingegen beginnt er seine Vorlesung über Indien 1827/28 mit der Bemerkung: ‘Im allgemeinen ist es gleich zu bemerken, daß wir auch bei ihnen abstrakte Philosophien und die Ausbildung einer sehr formellen Logik antreffen’ (*op. cit.* 288). Es kann nicht geleugnet werden, daß wir es hier mit einer radikalen Standpunktveränderung zu tun haben. Die Frage, die sich uns in diesem Verband stellt, eine Frage, deren Hegel sich bewußt gewesen sein muß, ist, wie diese neue Sichtweise in Übereinstimmung zu bringen ist mit den Gesetzmäßigkeiten der Selbstentfaltung des Geistes in der Weltgeschichte, oder mit anderen Worten, wie sie sich zum Ganzen des Hegelschen Systems verhält.

Vorerst sei darauf verwiesen, daß Hegel mit diesem Problem nicht mehr ganz ins Reine gekommen ist.<sup>57</sup> Jedoch ist er in keiner Weise dieser indischen Herausforderung aus dem Wege gegangen. Eine Lösung, für die wir glauben Andeutungen in seinen späteren Vorlesungen zu finden, hat er vielleicht durch die Differenzierung der indischen Kulturträger zu erreichen versucht. So wie auch in Griechenland nicht jeder in der Lage war, sich zum Philosophen zu entwickeln (schließlich wurde der Großteil der Bevölkerung unfrei geboren), ist in Indien einem jeden diese Position versagt. Vor allem die Klasse der Brahmanen muß als Vertretung eines geistigen Niveaus betrachtet werden, auf dem sich das philosophische Denken entfalten konnte. Wie wir gesehen haben, verkörpern die Brahmanen nach Hegels Ansicht das Denken des und die Vereinigung mit dem *brahman* (*op. cit.* 292). Das, was durch andere Klassen nur, entweder durch Riten, d.h. durch religiösen Kultus, oder durch asketische Gewalt, d.h. mittels eines Yoga-Kurses, zu erreichen ist, nämlich die Erhebung zum *brahman*, ist für die Brahmanen auf eine dritte Art und Weise erreichbar, und zwar dem Weg folgend, der die eigentliche Philosophie ausmacht, ‘das Gehen durch den entwickelten, durch den bestimmten Gedanken’, und Hegel fügt, einer Entschuldigung gleich, hinzu: ‘Von dieser war uns bisher wenig bekannt’ (*op. cit.* 293).

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<sup>57</sup> Hegels Zweifel in Bezug hierauf kommt in seiner achten Vorlesung im Wintersemester 1829/30 in der Aussage zum Ausdruck:

Die orientalische Philosophie begegnet uns also zuerst. Wir können sie als den ersten Teil, also als wirkliche Philosophie ansehen, können sie aber auch als vorausgeschickt, als Voraussetzung der Philosophie ansehen, und machen den Anfang erst mit der griechischen Philosophie. (*op. cit.* 373)

Nach diesen Feststellungen werden wir uns nun dem Problem widmen, bis zu welcher Stufe Hegel zufolge sich der Geist in Indien entwickelte. Selbstverständlich bleibt bestehen, daß diese außereuropäische Entwicklung im Ganzen in der Geistesgeschichte Europas aufgehoben ist. Gerade der Verlust der Vermittlung, des begrifflichen Denkens, das das abstrakte Allgemeine mit dem Besonderen, Bestimmten, verbindet und somit konkret macht, macht das indische Denken 'abstrakt' und deshalb zu einer Vorstufe der europäischen Entwicklung (*op. cit.* 373). Aber das ändert nichts an der Tatsache, daß das indische Denken trotzdem eine gewisse Relevanz sogar in Beziehung auf die rezentesten Entwicklungen des europäischen Denkens besitzt. In seinen späteren Vorlesungen sieht Hegel diese Relevanz insbesondere in der Form eines Gegensatzes zwischen dem europäischen Denken einerseits und dem indischen andererseits; beide extrem in ihrer Einseitigkeit, beide aber auch, und dies ist in gewisser Weise revolutionär, in diesem Sinne mehr oder weniger gleichwertig.

Einen ersten Ansatz dieser Auffassung trifft man bereits in den Vorlesungen von 1825/26 an (*op. cit.* 333), jedoch verleiht die tiefere Einsicht in die Natur des *brahman*, die Hegel in seiner Untersuchung der *Bhagavadgītā* erworben hat, der Indien–Europa–Dialektik erst seine wirkliche Bedeutung und Schärfe. In seinen Vorlesungen 1829/30 wird diese Dialektik folgendermaßen entwickelt.

Das neuere europäische Vorstellen und Denken hat das In sich sein des Subjekts, die subjektive Freiheit zur Grundlage. Ich weiß, bin überzeugt, meine Meinung, meine (sic) Wille gilt mir. Diese Bestimmungen, die mit der subjektiven Freiheit zusammenhängen, machen im Europäischen den Gegensatz gegen die substantielle Einheit aus. Das Extrem, das Einseitige des europäischen Denkens enthält alle Zufälligkeit des Wollens, Vorstellens und Denkens. Es ist insofern das Extrem der Eitelkeit. Gegen dieser (sic) Extrem, diese einseitige Subjektivität ist im Orientalischen die gediegene Einheit vorherrschend. In dieser ist keine Eitelkeit; sie ist der Boden, worin sich alle Eitelkeit aufzehrt. Das Orientalische hat deswegen [...] Interesse für uns; es ist dies, den Geist zu baden in dieser Einheit, die ewig und ruhig ist, damit er sich reinige von aller Eitelkeit, Zufälligkeit usf. Die Stärke des Geistes erwirbt sich nur durch das Zurückgehen in die absolute Einheit. Das Schwache ist das bloße Bestehen für sich, das bloße Verharren in sich, d.i. eben das Sichverlieren in die Eitelkeit. Diese Bestimmung haben wir also festzuhalten. (*op. cit.* 287 f.)<sup>58</sup>

Hegels Dialektik liegt mit Sicherheit auch eine Polemik zugrunde, eine Diatribe, die er mit seinen Zeitgenossen, insbesondere den sogenannten Romantikern, führt, und die von Otto Pöggeler als kulturelle Kontroverse folgendermaßen beschrieben wird.

Schlegel und seine Freunde [...] nahmen—das ist Hegels Kritik—das Ich nicht als Prinzip der Selbstgewißheit, das den einzelnen bindet, sondern als

58 Eine offenbare Vorstufe dieser Eitelkeitsdialektik, derzufolge die indische Auflösung im *brahman* noch als 'Eitelkeit' betrachtet und verglichen wird mit europäischen (deistischen) Strömungen, begegnet uns in einer Sondergut-Passage (Phil. d. Rel. II, 240ff, vgl. 463), die Jaeschke einem (undatierbaren) 'Convolut' (Sammlung von Notizen Hegels) zuschreibt.

die Willkürfreiheit des einzelnen selbst, vor allem als den Künstler, der im ästhetischen Spiel mit allem und jedem über die substantiellen Bedingungen hinaus ist. Als dieses ästhetische Verhalten seine eigene Leere erfuhr, habe man in unklarer Irrationalität, z.B. in der Religion, eine neue Erfüllung gesucht (wobei an Novalis und Schleiermacher zu denken ist, aber auch an die vielen Konversionen romantischer Künstler).<sup>59</sup>

### *Schlussmoral*

A.W. Schlegel, dessen frühere Werke, man denke an seine Shakespeare-Studien und die *Bhagavadgītā*-Edition, von Hegel sehr geschätzt wurden, gibt 1827 nach einer Periode der Abwesenheit wieder eine Reihe von Vorlesungen an der Universität von Berlin, die auch von Hegel besucht und desweiteren von ihm mit den Worten kommentiert werden: 'Tief kann er freilich nicht gehen, aber für sein Publikum ist seine deutliche und beredte Art sehr passend.'<sup>60</sup> Unter diesem Publikum befand sich auch Heinrich Heine und sein Bericht legt nahe, Hegels Schilderung vom Extrem der Eitelkeit konkret der Person August Wilhelm Schlegels zuzuschreiben, dessen Abgetakeltheit von Heine wie folgt beschrieben wird:

Aber er hatte unterdessen nichts Neues gelernt, und er sprach jetzt zu einem Publikum, welches von Hegel eine Philosophie der Kunst, eine Wissenschaft der Ästhetik, erhalten hatte. Man spottete und zuckte die Achsel. Es ging ihm wie einer alten Komödiantin, die nach zwanzigjähriger Abwesenheit den Schauplatz ihres ehemaligen Succes wieder betritt, und nicht begreift, warum die Leute lachen statt zu applaudieren. Der Mann hatte sich entsetzlich verändert und er ergötzte Berlin vier Wochen lang durch die Etalage seiner Lächerlichkeiten. Er war ein alter eitler Geck geworden, der sich überall zum Narren halten ließ. Man erzählt darüber die unglaublichsten Dinge.<sup>61</sup>

Es wird nicht ohne Ironie gewesen sein, aber desto kennzeichnender für seine virtuose Dialektik, daß Hegel dem ersten deutschen Professor in der Indologie zur Genesung von seinem Unglück ein Bad im indischem *brahman* empfohlen haben soll.

Was die inhaltliche Auseinandersetzung mit der indischen Philosophie in seinen Vorlesungen von 1827/28 und 1829/30 betrifft, werde ich mich kurz fassen. Hegel bringt eine nicht wesentlich von seiner '*Bhagavadgītā*-Version' abweichende Betrachtung über den Begriff *brahman* ein (*op. cit.* 286 f. u. 291 ff.). Außerdem revidiert er im positiven Sinne seine Meinung über das Sāṃkhya. Sah er in den Vorlesungen von 1825/26 in den *tattvas* des Sāṃkhya-Systems nur eine trockene, ideenlose Aufzählung, beurteilt er sie jetzt doch als 'einen sinnigen Zusammenhang, eine sinnige Form darin' (*op. cit.* 304).

<sup>59</sup> *Hegel in Berlin*, 115. Vgl. Halbfass 1981, 115 f.

<sup>60</sup> *Hegel Briefe* III, 165.

<sup>61</sup> *Die romantische Schule* (Heine, *Sämtliche Schriften* V, 419 f.).

Hiermit müssen wir unsere Betrachtung zu Hegels Bemühungen, um mit der Herausforderung ins Reine zu kommen, die die Entdeckung der indischen philosophischen Tradition ihm bietet, abschließen. Es möge deutlich geworden sein, daß seine Ansichten nicht unabhängig von dem Stand des Wissens und der Haltung in bezug auf die indische Zivilisation zu seiner Zeit gesehen werden können.

Während Hegel einerseits in diese Zivilisation tiefer eindringt, als die meisten seiner Zeitgenossen, entlehnt er andererseits hieraus eine Einsicht, die seiner Stellungnahme gegen die herrschende romantische Orientrezeption eine gewisse Autorität und Treffsicherheit verleiht. Seine philosophische Analyse ist eine andauernde Polemik gegen alle diejenigen, die in der indischen Kultur eine Alternative sahen, ein Vorbild, nach dem sich auch der westliche Mensch richten sollte. Es ist dieser Mythos, den Hegel gnadenlos abbricht. Obwohl er nicht leugnet, daß das indische Denken in gewisser Weise auch für uns von Bedeutung sein kann, weist er damit zugleich auf dessen Begrenztheit, auf sein historisches Niveau in der Geistesgeschichte der Menschheit, wohin kein Weg zurückführt. Und damit kommt der romantische Traum zu einem Ende. Wie beeindruckend die *Bhagavadgītā* auch jetzt noch ist, sie ist es als historisch-literarisches Dokument. Für den entwickelten europäischen Menschen des neunzehnten oder zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts kann sie niemals ein Evangelium sein. Dies ist die Einsicht, die wir bzw. ich an erster Stelle Hegel verdanke.



# Ayodhyā : le nom et le lieu\*

## AYODHYĀ CONÇUE : LE NOM

Mais si ces noms absorbèrent à tout jamais l'image que j'avais de ces villes, ce ne fut qu'en la transformant, qu'en soumettant sa réapparition en moi à leurs lois propres; ils eurent ainsi pour conséquence de la rendre plus belle, mais aussi plus différente de ce que les villes de Normandie ou de Toscane pouvaient être en réalité, et, en accroissant les joies arbitraires de mon imagination, d'aggraver la déception future de mes voyages.<sup>1</sup>

C'est ainsi que Marcel Proust décrit les lois spécifiques qui régissent le processus de l'imagination littéraire. Cette imagination peut prendre son essor à partir d'une réalité géographique à peine esquissée. S'appuyant sur la mystique des noms, on transforme et redéfinit cette réalité en lui attribuant des traits particuliers variés—et la transposant ainsi dans le domaine de la fiction où elle trouve son existence idéale; 'ils exaltèrent l'idée que je me faisais de certains lieux de la terre, en les faisant plus particuliers, par conséquent plus réels' (*ibid.*).

D'une façon analogue le nom 'Ayodhyā', évocateur de la gloire héroïque d'un âge révolu, a dû se confondre avec la réalité historique de la vie quotidienne de l'Inde du Nord dans l'imagination créatrice des auteurs de l'Épopée indienne. Nous connaissons le résultat de cette fusion créatrice: ce fut le monde romanesque du *Rāmāyaṇa* dont le foyer était la ville d'Ayodhyā, bâtie jadis par Manu, le progéniteur de la race humaine. La ville s'étendait sur douze lieues et possédait des rues et des forums larges au tracé magnifique; elle était embellie par des portes massives, des hôtels sublimes et des palais dorés.<sup>2</sup>

On trouve déjà le mot *ayodhyā* ('imprenable') dans l'*Atharvaveda* 10.2.39 et dans le *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 1.27.2–3, comme épithète de la forteresse (*pur*) des dieux. Dans toute la partie narrative du *Mahābhārata*, qui constituait probablement la partie la plus ancienne de l'Épopée, et dans les parties analogues de la littérature purānique (désignée par *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*), Ayodhyā figure comme la capitale ancienne de la dynastie des Ikṣvāku qui régnait dans le

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1 Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I, 387.

2 Rām. 1.5.6 sqq.

lointain âge de Tretā. Bien que la ville soit reliée au pays des Kōsala,<sup>3</sup> elle n'est nulle part mentionnée comme étant située au bord de la rivière Sarayū. Pareillement, dans les parties anciennes du *Rāmāyaṇa*, il est seulement suggéré que la capitale de Rāma était située près de la Sarayū,<sup>4</sup> et on n'y indique que très vaguement son emplacement en le désignant comme la capitale du Kōsala.<sup>5</sup> On doit, d'ailleurs, noter que dans les parties anciennes du *Rāmāyaṇa* l'emplacement non seulement d'Ayodhyā était imprécis mais aussi celui de la Sarayū. Il est fort probable que la rivière Sarayu, connue déjà dans la littérature védique, coulait à travers le Punjab.<sup>6</sup> Lorsque le peuple aryen pénétra dans le bassin du Gange il désigna peut-être une des rivières du *janapada* de Kōsala par le nom 'Sarayū' en souvenir de la rivière de leur ancienne patrie: ainsi, on a probablement ici un cas de transfert toponymique. Aujourd'hui encore, trois rivières dans le bassin du Gogra sont appelées Sarjū.<sup>7</sup> L'imprécision de l'emplacement de la ville d'Ayodhyā dans les portions anciennes de la littérature épique, est, comme on pouvait le prévoir, en accord avec la nature en grande partie fictive de ces textes. Dans ce contexte, on peut aussi songer aux nombreuses difficultés que l'on rencontre lorsqu'on veut déterminer la route exacte d'Ayodhyā à Laṅkā qu'avait empruntée Rāma.<sup>8</sup>

Une équipe d'archéologues indiens célèbres a essayé par une série de fouilles de retrouver les endroits cités dans le *Rāmāyaṇa*, mais en vain, comme on aurait pu prévoir si on avait ajouté foi à la remarque de Sankalia: 'Careful study of the descriptions of Laṅkā and Kiṣkindhā shows that the poets have created imaginary cities, though this imagination was no doubt helped either by a sight or description of the cities of India in the beginning of the Christian era or later.'<sup>9</sup> Comme la ville sacrée actuelle d'Ayodhyā semblait, de façon évidente, être la preuve de l'historicité de la capitale de la dynastie solaire, la remarque de Sankalia ne fut jamais considérée comme applicable à cette ville. Cependant, à l'exception des textes épiques, il n'existe aucune preuve en faveur de l'existence réelle d'une capitale ancienne de Daśaratha et de son fils; et personnellement je suis convaincu que tout effort pour retrouver la topographie du *Rāmāyaṇa* doit être considéré comme un gaspillage d'ingéniosité.

3 Par ex., MBh 3.75.3, où la capitale du roi R̥tuparṇa s'appelle Kosalā.

4 Rām. 2.43.13, 2.32.15, 2.32.18, 2.70.19. Cf. Bakker 1986 I, 9.

5 Rām. 2.43.7, 3.35.23.

6 Bhargava 1964, 96 sq.

7 V. Bakker 1986 II, 47 sqq.

8 Bakker 1986 I, 10; Bakker & Entwistle 1981, 110 sq.; cf. Iyer 1940; Joshi 1975–1976, 100 sqq.; Joshi 1979–1980, 107 sqq.

9 Sankalia 1973, 153 sq.

## AYODHYĀ RETROUVÉE : LE LIEU

Ailleurs j'ai démontré<sup>10</sup> longuement que les textes anciens qui parlent d'une part d'Ayodhyā et d'autre part d'une ville appelée Śāketa, peuvent être divisés en deux groupes distincts. A l'exception de deux passages dans le canon pāli, qu'on peut démontrer n'avoir été à l'origine qu'un seul texte,<sup>11</sup> qui font mention d'un lieu sans importance nommé Ayodhyā au bord du Gange,<sup>12</sup> et d'un autre passage dans le *Sthānasūtra* du canon jain,<sup>13</sup> qui, dans l'énumération des territoires et de leurs chefs-lieux—en grande partie mythologiques—présente Ayodhyā comme la capitale de Mahāvideha, Ayodhyā semble figurer en tant que nom de ville ancienne uniquement dans la littérature épique déjà mentionnée qui s'occupe principalement du savoir traditionnel; alors que Śāketa en tant que nom de lieu ne figure point dans ces textes. Par contre, les anciens textes qui parlent de Śāketa, d'abord, ne mentionnent jamais Ayodhyā, et, de plus, ils sont nettement d'une autre nature. On peut à peine douter qu'il s'agit de cas historiques réels dans les canons des deux traditions hétérodoxes, ainsi que dans les textes sanskrits comme le commentaire de Patañjali sur Pāṇini,<sup>14</sup> ou dans ceux un peu plus récents, comme le *Yugapurāṇa*,<sup>15</sup> la *Mahāmāyūrī*,<sup>16</sup> et le *Kāmasūtra* de Vātsyāyana,<sup>17</sup> de même que dans l'oeuvre du géographe grec Ptolémée qui parle de la ville de Σαγῶδα.<sup>18</sup> En lisant ces textes nous avons l'impression de trouver une ville réelle qui a joué un rôle important dans l'histoire ancienne de l'Inde septentrionale, et qui, par communis opinio, est identifiée avec l'emplacement occupé actuellement par la ville d'Ayodhyā. Ce fait historique est en outre attesté par une inscription en caractères kuṣāṇa sur le piédestal d'une statue du Bouddha trouvée à Śrāvastī et qui raconte la donation de cette statue par un certain Sihadeva de Śāketa.<sup>19</sup>

En bref, l'ancienne question de savoir si Śāketa et Ayodhyā étaient deux villes voisines,<sup>20</sup> identiques,<sup>21</sup> ou différentes,<sup>22</sup> dans la période qui s'étend jusqu'aux premiers siècles de notre ère, trouve sa réponse dans la théorie de l'existence d'une ville historique sur l'emplacement actuel d'Ayodhyā depuis au moins le VI<sup>e</sup> siècle avant J.-C.,<sup>23</sup> qui s'appelait Śāketa, et d'une autre ville, fictive,

10 Bakker 1986 I, 4 sqq.

11 Bareau 1979, 75.

12 *The Saṃyuttanikāya* III, 140, IV, 179.

13 *Sthānasūtra* (*Thānasūya*), 637 (II, 435<sup>v</sup>).

14 Patañjali *ad* Pāṇini, 1.3.25.

15 *Yugapurāṇa* 1.94–95, 1.116–119.

16 Lévi 1915, *Mahāmāyūrī*, 1.10, 65, 68.

17 *Kāmasūtra* 2.9.30.

18 Ptolemaeus, *Geographia* VII, Cap. 1, § 71; Renou 1925, p. 56.

19 Mitra 1971, p. 78.

20 Rhys Davids 1903, p. 24.

21 Cunningham dans *Archaeological Survey of India, Reports* I, 317; P.V. Kane, IV, 798; Law 1943; Petech 1976, p. 440.

22 E.B. Joshi dans *Uttar Pradesh District Gazetteers*, Uttar Pradesh 1960, p. 31; cf. M. C. Joshi 1979–80, 108 sq.

23 Cf. IAR 1980, p. 52.

Ayodhyā, particulière à la tradition épique, et dont l'origine se perd, de l'aveu général, dans les temps préhistoriques et, par conséquent, se trouve au-delà des confins de la recherche historique.

Si nous fixons maintenant notre attention sur la partie de la littérature épique qui a pu être ajoutée à la souche première pendant les époques kuṣāṇa et gupta, nous constatons un changement significatif. Il y a une description d'Ayodhyā dans le premier livre du *Rāmāyaṇa*, où la ville est située explicitement au bord de la rivière Sarayū.<sup>24</sup> Le caractère essentiellement fictif de la ville se reflète dans sa description imaginaire stéréotypée,<sup>25</sup> mais dans le livre VII l'endroit où Rāma s'est noyé est désigné spécifiquement par Gopratāra (Rām. 7.110.20), emplacement qui figure aussi dans la liste des lieux sacrés que donne le *Tīrthayātrāparvan* du *Mahābhārata* (MBh 3.82.63–65). Nous pouvons concevoir ces deux démarcations comme l'aboutissement d'une tendance à matérialiser l'emplacement de la ville légendaire. Cette matérialisation (réification), ce processus par lequel un nombre croissant de personnes est amené progressivement à envisager la ville de Sāketa comme l'emplacement de l'Ayodhyā épique, ne doit aucunement être vue comme un phénomène isolé. A la même époque—soit à partir du 1<sup>er</sup> siècle jusqu'à la fin du IV<sup>e</sup>—et lié, pour ainsi dire, dialectiquement à ce processus de réification, il y a la déification du héros du *Rāmāyaṇa*. Pendant ces siècles, justement, la doctrine des réincarnations de Viṣṇu, désignées au début comme des 'apparitions' (*prādurbhāva*),<sup>26</sup> mais bientôt appelées 'descentes' (*avatāra*), fut universellement reconnue.<sup>27</sup> Ceci prit place à l'époque même où il y eut le développement rapide du culte hindouisant des temples, dans lequel les idoles furent considérées comme des divinités véritables incarnées.

De ce même développement résulta le besoin d'envisager un lieu où l'unique descente de Viṣṇu en tant que roi futur d'Ayodhyā avait eu lieu : un vrai dieu descendant sur terre a besoin d'un sol ferme et réel, si tant est qu'il descende. En fait cette adoration des images et des emplacements topographiques n'était que l'inversion dialectique de l'idée de la divinité incarnée. Cette idée de la descente de dieu, une fois mise en relation avec le héros du *Rāmāyaṇa* entraînant la déification de Rāma, mena à l'attribution d'une signification nouvelle à un endroit terrestre peu exceptionnel, ce qui aboutit finalement à l'homologation de Sāketa et d'Ayodhyā, autrement dit, à la réification d'Ayodhyā. Le processus que je viens de décrire inspira de nouvelles activités littéraires et théologiques. Il produisit non seulement un développement de cette littérature qu'on appelle la *Rāmakathā*,<sup>28</sup> mais il ouvrit aussi des possibilités à de nouveaux créateurs de mythes, en particulier dans le milieu jaina. Pendant les siècles en question,

24 Rām. 1.5.5.

25 Cf. Ghosh 1973, 49 sq.; Schlingloff 1969, 5 sqq.

26 Hacker 1960a, 47–70; MBh 12.326.76–81; PPL p. 514 sq.

27 Hacker 1960a, *passim*; MBh 3.260.5; Rām. 1.15.3; Bhāsa, *Abhiṣekanāṭaka* 4.12–14, 6.27–30.

28 Bulke 1971; Bakker 1986 I, 60 sqq.

un corpus considérable de mythologie avait été reçu et élaboré à l'intérieur du jainisme. Une grande partie de ce corpus n'était pourtant pas issue des traditions spécifiquement jainistes, mais était déjà connue sous des formes brâhmaniques.<sup>29</sup> Dans cette fusion, la mythologie du clan des Ikṣvâku fut liée à la notion des *tīrthaṅkara* et des *cakravartin*. Ainsi dit-on que le premier *tīrthaṅkara*, Rṣabha, était né à Ikkhāgabhūmi,<sup>30</sup> ou Viṇīyā (Vinītā), comme cette ville est appelée dans le *Jambūdvīpaprajñapti* (I, p. 112). La ville mythologique de Viṇīyā ne peut être que l'Ayodhyā épique désignée sous un autre nom. Et vu que Sāketa était déjà connu dans le jainisme comme un des lieux sacrés, sanctifié par les séjours de Mahāvīra,<sup>31</sup> les jainas n'hésitèrent pas à confondre Viṇīyā, Ikkhāgabhūmi, Aojjhā et Sāketa. Ce phénomène semble avoir eu lieu à la même période où les mythes de Rāma étaient incorporés dans la mythologie jaina, c'est-à-dire pendant les premiers siècles de l'ère chrétienne, ainsi qu'il est attesté pour la première fois dans le *Paūmacariya*.<sup>32</sup>

La première phase de ce processus de réification du lieu légendaire fut achevée à l'époque des Gupta et aboutit à l'acceptation générale de l'identité entre Ayodhyā et Sāketa. Le fait que cette identification n'était pas universellement reconnue sous le règne des premiers Gupta semble être implicite dans quelques textes purâniques, qui attribuent aux rois Gupta la souveraineté sur la ville géographique de Sāketa plutôt que sur la ville fictive d'Ayodhyā.<sup>33</sup>

C'est seulement à partir du moment où le nom d'Ayodhyā a été employé pour désigner une ville existante que nous pouvons espérer trouver des preuves archéologiques corroboratives. On trouve, en effet, de tels témoignages dans les inscriptions laissées par les Gupta, aux V<sup>e</sup> et VI<sup>e</sup> siècles.<sup>34</sup> La consolidation finale fut réalisée quand la cour royale des Gupta fut transportée temporairement de Pāṭaliputra à l'ancienne ville de Sāketa, ou dans un endroit avoisinant, nouvellement aménagé, connu depuis comme Ayodhyā. Fort probablement, cet événement eut lieu pendant le règne de Kumāragupta I ou bien de Skandagupta (415–467 apr. J.-C.).<sup>35</sup> C'est peut-être à ceci que fait allusion Kālidāsa dans le *Raghuvamśa*,<sup>36</sup> de plus, la théorie que nous venons d'avancer expliquerait pourquoi dans le *Raghuvamśa*, pour la première fois, Sāketa et Ayodhyā sont identifiées de façon catégorique.<sup>37</sup>

29 Jha 1978.

30 *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu, § 206.

31 *Vipākasūtra* (*Vivāgasūya*): 14 (p. 23<sup>r</sup>); 6 (p. 8<sup>r</sup>); 34 (p. 95<sup>v</sup>).

32 *Paūmacariya*, v. index, s.v.: 'Aojjhā', 'Kosalapurī', 'Paḍhamapurī', 'Viṇīyā', 'Sāeya', 'Sākeyapura.'

33 Pargiter 1913, p. 53.

34 EI X (1909–1910), 70–72 (cf. Bakker 1986 I, 28); EI XV (1919–1920), 143 (cf. Bakker 2014, 242, 245–47); CII III (1888), 256: l'inscription apocryphe sur plaque de cuivre de Gayā de Samudragupta, probablement une fabrication du début du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

35 Takakusu 1904, 283 sqq.; Xuanzang, *Xiyuji* I, 106; Frauwallner 1951, p. 30; Bakker 1986 I, 29.

36 *Raghuvamśa* 16.25–42; Kṣīrasvāmin's *Kṣīrataraṅgiṇī*, 274 sq.; Frauwallner 1951, 30; Bakker 1982a, 103–126.

37 *Raghuvamśa*, 5.31, 13.79, 14.13; cf. *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* (BḍP) 3.54.5, 54.

Une deuxième phase de ce processus de réification/déification s'accomplit quand la signification religieuse de la manifestation de Viṣṇu, comme Rāma, reçut une impulsion nouvelle. Lorsque, à partir du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, Rāma fut reconnu non pas simplement comme une incarnation de Dieu, mais comme la manifestation de sa nature la plus véritable et la plus secrète, le prestige de sa demeure terrestre augmenta en raison directe. En même temps que la construction des premiers temples dans lesquels l'idole principale de Viṣṇu était conçue comme (l'incarnation de) Rāma,<sup>38</sup> Ayodhyā, ainsi que d'autres emplacements particuliers à l'intérieur d'Ayodhyā, furent reconnus comme des lieux sacrés, *tīrtha*.<sup>39</sup> Ces endroits et leurs contenus n'étaient plus uniquement de simples réifications d'un passé glorieux, mais furent considérés petit à petit comme des représentations d'une réalité divine.

Finalement, à la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce processus trouva son accomplissement dans la conception de deux villes parallèles. La ville terrestre d'Ayodhyā avec son appareil de lieux sacrés fut considérée comme la réplique fidèle d'un modèle éternel et céleste, Vaikuṅṭha, le paradis de Viṣṇu.<sup>40</sup> Ce qui peut paraître comme une de ces ironies de l'histoire, c'est le fait que, précisément dans le milieu de la secte dite Rasika de la Rāma-bhakti, le nom archaïque de Sāketa fut repris pour désigner cet archétype céleste, Vaikuṅṭha, le *bhogasthala* ('lieu de la jouissance') de Rāma.<sup>41</sup> Les adeptes et les pèlerins qui visitaient (et visitent encore) cette réplique terrestre, la ville sacrée d'Ayodhyā, pensaient être dans le 'champ du jeu', *līlāsthala*,<sup>42</sup> de Rāma et participer à son jeu (*līlā*), et, quand ils prenaient le *prasāda* (aliment sacralisé) que les prêtres leur donnaient, ils pensaient prendre part à la jouissance éternelle et bienheureuse de Rāma.

### *Illiers-Combray*

Il se pourrait bien que les flots de proustiens qui visitent le village d'Illiers,<sup>43</sup> à 25 km au sud-ouest de Chartres dans la France d'aujourd'hui, avec l'intention de participer au monde esthétique créé par l'auteur de *A la recherche du temps perdu*, entretiennent de semblables sentiments. Les pèlerinages organisés par la 'Société des Amis de Marcel Proust'—en particulier pendant la Journée des Aubépines, cet 'arbuste catholique et délicieux'<sup>44</sup>—exhalent sans aucun doute un air quasi religieux, et nous ne serons pas étonnés d'y trouver un processus actif de 'réification.'<sup>45</sup> Nous retrouvons non seulement la maison de

38 CII IV.2, 457; CII IV.1, 346–458; Führer 1891, 89; cf. Bakker 1986 I, 64 sq.

39 EI IX (1907–1908), 304; Kielhorn 1886, 7; EI XIV (1917–1918), 194; *Smṛtyarthasāra* (Salomon 1979, p. 106); cf. Bakker 1986 I, 49 sqq.

40 *Bṛhadbrahmasaṃhitā* 3.1.50–119; Śrīnivāsādāsa, *Yatīndramatadīpikā*, p. 55; *Ayodhyā-māhātmya* (v. Bakker 1986 II, 8 sqq.); cf. De 1961, 334 sqq.

41 Siṃha 1957, 273; *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* (v. Bakker 1986 III, App. 1, No. 6); Bakker 1986 I, 139 sqq.; cf. Jīva Gosvāmī par rapport à Vṛndāvana (v. De 1961, 334 sqq.).

42 Siṃha 1957, 272 sqq.

43 V. annotation à Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, III, 1289.

44 Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I, 140.

45 Bouchart 1982.



Plate 1

*La maison où Tante Léonie achetait ses madeleines*

Tante Léonie du roman (hébergeant actuellement le Musée Marcel-Proust), mais aussi, pour prendre un exemple, la maison où cette tante achetait ses madeleines,<sup>46</sup> ces ‘gâteaux courts et dodus... qui semblent avoir été moulés dans la valve rainurée d’une coquille de Saint-Jacques.’<sup>47</sup>

L’analogie avec Sāketa–Ayodhyā peut s’étendre plus loin, car, en 1971, Illiers fut officiellement reconnu comme Combray et fut rebaptisé ‘Illiers–Combray’, comme l’attestent les panneaux installés à la gare et à l’entrée du village, aussi bien que le nom figurant dans le *Times Atlas of the World*.

Et de même que les pèlerins médiévaux de Saint-Jacques, à leur retour de Santiago de Compostela, visitaient l’église de Saint-Jacques d’Illiers, avec les célèbres coquilles de Saint-Jacques cousues ‘à leurs casquettes, les apportant chez eux en triomphe, à leurs propres gens’,<sup>48</sup> les adorateurs modernes de Marcel Proust visitent l’église de Saint-Hilaire et achètent leurs ‘petites madeleines’ comme des souvenirs, dans l’espoir qu’ils pénétreront dans le monde imaginaire de Combray aussitôt qu’ils goûteront ce gâteau trempé, et que,

toutes les fleurs du ... jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis, et l’église, et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela qui prend forme et solidité... , ville et jardins, sortiront de leur tasse de thé.<sup>49</sup>

46 Ruyter 1984, p. 14.

47 Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I, 45.

48 *Liber Sancti Jacobi, Codex Calixtinus*, Vol. I : *Texto*, 153. Cf. Sumption 1975, 174.

49 Adaptation libre de Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, I, 47 sq.



# Ayodhyā: A Hindu Jerusalem\*

An Investigation of 'Holy War' as a Religious Idea  
in the Light of Communal Unrest in India

## INTRODUCTION

Since the cultural discovery of India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Indian culture and society have been widely regarded as more than ordinarily pacifistic and moral. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), for example, speaks of the brahmins as a 'gentle race of men', 'happy lambs' whose idea of God is 'great and beautiful' and whose 'morals are pure and lofty' (Bakker 1988, 99). This idealized image was enhanced in the twentieth century by the manner in which India freed itself from colonial rule; the non-violent resistance that Mahatma Gandhi both preached and practised. On the other hand, as every student of India knows, there have been few periods, even up to the present century, during which the South-Asian subcontinent has been free of war. And this fact seems to have been accepted by the Indians themselves as more or less in the natural order of things. Until the establishment and enforcement of the *Pax Britannica*, the waging of wars against rival rulers was generally regarded as one of the natural political tasks of kings and the aristocracy.<sup>1</sup>

How is this contradiction to be explained, and how has the image of a peaceful and peace-loving India managed to remain prevalent in the face of the historical facts? The answers to these questions should probably be sought in the first place in the ambivalent attitude towards violence and the use of force found in India's own culture and world-view. This ambivalence may be seen as an inevitable product of the tension between conflicting traditional values,<sup>2</sup> which on the one hand sanctioned countless armed conflicts yet on the other

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1 In the famous Indian handbook on policy, the *Arthaśāstra*, the king is regularly referred to as *vijigīṣu*, 'he who wishes to conquer', an epithet which is not given a religious justification. The duty of the nobility (*kṣatriya*) is defined as: 'Studying (the Vedas), performing sacrifices (with the help of brahmin priests), dotation, living by arms (*śāstrā-jīvana*), and protection of beings' (AS 1.3.6).

2 Heesterman 1985 has traced the origin of this conflict in the Indian tradition to the opposition between the Hindu ideal of world-renunciation and the reality of social conditions.

hand never seems to have directly involved Hinduism in the start of a war.<sup>3</sup> Not surprisingly then, several scholars have excluded India from the scope of their investigations into 'holy war'. These scholars regard the pluriformity of polytheism as the main reason that Hinduism appears to differ fundamentally from the monotheistic (Abrahamic) religions as to the legitimization of the use of force for religious aims.<sup>4</sup> We shall refer to this theory as the 'polytheism thesis'.

### HOLY WAR AS A RELIGIOUS IDEA

On the eve of the deadline of the UN's ultimatum to Irak (15 January 1991) the British prime minister John Major declared in the House of Commons that the now inevitable war is a 'just' one. At the same time Saddam Hussein calls on all Muslims to fight under Irak's banner, as it leads them on to a holy war, *jihād*, to be fought by 'believers' against 'infidels'.

It cannot but be noted that both speeches make use of concepts developed during the early Middle Ages in the two great monotheistic traditions, which apparently still retain some currency, and indeed evocative force. In the predominantly secular society of late twentieth century England a summons to a 'holy war' would hardly have an effect, except to provoke ridicule and suspicion. Instead, we find an appeal to a concept first developed by St. Augustine, namely that of a *bellum justum* ('just war'), which can be shown to be the source of the idea of a crusade.<sup>5</sup> Saddam Hussein's proclamation of a *jihād* has almost equally venerable precedents. The aim of summoning 'believers' to a holy war against 'infidels' is to mobilize the strength and motivation of the faithful in a military enterprise, to suppress fear of physical danger, and to encourage actions which frequently are opposed to the direct personal interests of the individual.

Such declarations and exhortations on both sides are clearly primarily intended to raise morale among both soldiers and civilians. In other words, their value is chiefly propagandistic, and this is certainly an important aspect of the phenomenon of holy war. It would however be a serious mistake to imagine that this alone could provide a full or adequate explanation of the phenomenon.

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3 Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (ERE) s.v. 'War' (XII, 677): 'While the Vedas are sufficiently war-like, and Brahmanism gives a consecration to the military caste, the mild spirit of Hindu religion tended to view war under the repugnant aspect of murder.'

4 Burkert 1986, 81 ff.; Colpe 1984; Kippenberg 1991a. Cf. also Bruce Lawrence's (1990, 107) restriction of the fundamentalist world-view to monotheistic traditions (cf. Kippenberg 1991b).

5 ERE s.v. 'War' (XII, 682): '[Augustine] had no difficulty in deciding that there are unjust and just wars [...] Just wars are those which are waged to inflict punishment, or to secure reparation for injury or (as in OT) by express commandment of God' (ref. to *Quæstiones in Josue* III<sup>2</sup>, 584f.). For a study of the development of the idea of a crusade from this concept cf. Vanderjagt 1991.

It is necessary to ask a more fundamental question: why is it that the call to a holy war has any stimulating or propaganda effect in the first place? To answer this we will have to investigate problems in the field of religious studies: what are the religious ideas and beliefs of the 'believer' to whom such a call is directed, and what framework of action is directly associated with them?

When a modern researcher of war and peace, the polemologist Hylke Tromp, concludes that we should forget about 'the faith, ideology and sacred fire' of soldiers on the field of battle because they only go forward because they have no alternative, if they do not want to lose the respect of others and their own self-respect' (Tromp 1991), this may seem to suggest that cultural anthropological questions and questions such as posed in the previous paragraph are irrelevant. However, the self-image which determines the content and force of this 'respect of others and self-respect' is in fact the product of the individualization of the cultural and religious values of the society which the soldier is called upon to fight for.<sup>6</sup> It is this self-image that war-propaganda aims at building up and strengthening, in order to break down any innate repugnance against killing fellow men.<sup>7</sup> To understand what ultimately motivates the individual soldier to place his duty as soldier above personal safety it is necessary to focus on the social, cultural and—in the case of holy wars—particularly the religious values and symbols which constitute this self-image.

Fear and violence are universal basic experiences and thus important constituents of all religions (von Stietencron 1979). But this has not always resulted in them giving rise to collective violence sanctioned by religion. What then specifically distinguishes holy wars from war in general?

As has been noted above, some scholars have seen the answer to this question in some common element of the three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Significantly, Colpe does not consider Hinduism at all in his two articles *Zur Bezeichnung und Bezeugung des Heiligen Krieges* (1984), while as to the polytheism thesis he remarks with reference to ancient Greek history that:

Da, wo innerhalb eines polytheistischen Systems Götter Kriege führen, [...] da verbleibt der Heiligkeitscharakter ausschließlich ihnen und teilt sich dem Kriege nicht mit; wo dies nicht der Fall ist, kann der Krieg heilig genannt werden. (Colpe 1984, 199)

Similarly, in his *Krieg, Sieg und die olympischen Götter der Griechen*, Burkert has stated with regard to the polytheistic structure of Greek religion:

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6 Cf. Mead 1964, 244 f.:

The individual enters as such into his own experience only as an object, not as a subject. [...] Existence of private or 'subjective' contents of experience does not alter the fact that self-consciousness involves the individual's becoming an object to himself by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within an organized setting of social relationships, and that unless the individual had thus become an object to himself he would not be self-conscious or have a self at all.

7 Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1975, 146; Gladigow 1986, 151 ff.; Kippenberg 1991a.

Auch wenn die Städte je ihre Stadtgottheit haben, so sind diese Götter doch 'vielverehrt', haben an vielen Orten ihre Heiligtümer; keine Stadt kann sich auch auf die Götter ganz verlassen; ein Gott behält es sich vor, für welche Seite im Krieg er Stellung nimmt [...] man sieht nicht sich selbst als die allein Bestätigten, Bevorzugten, die Auserwählten eines 'heiligen Kriegs'.<sup>8</sup>

Although the term 'holy war' (ἱερός πόλεμος) seems to have been used first by the Greeks, they appear to have meant something quite different from the phenomena we are concerned with here (Brodersen 1991).

As is clear from a glance at the literature on this subject, especially Colpe's work, the definition of 'holy war' itself is considerably problematic. Agreement may be reached easily enough on the meaning of the word 'war' but 'holy' and the idea of 'holiness' have been understood in very different ways by various scholars. Kippenberg (1991a) has pointed out that 'the word "holy" should be freed from its connotations of irrationality, with which especially R. Otto has associated it, and should rather be connected with "the uncommon" ("nicht-alltägliche") in contrast with "the common" ("alltägliche") (M. Weber), and with "collective" in contrast with "individual" (E. Durkheim)'. By such a definition all wars are 'holy', and in view of the large number of wars which have taken place on the South-Asian subcontinent, the polytheism thesis would have to be considered to be directly refuted. On the other hand, the historical material definitely suggests that holy wars form a separate category, and for heuristic reasons too it seems desirable to narrow the scope of our definition in some way.

The narrowest definition of a 'holy war' would be a war waged in the name of God by people who believe that by doing so they fulfil His will and carry out His plan. Some of the Christian crusades may be taken as examples of such wars. The *deus vult* of Pope Urban II's address in Clermont in AD 1095, and the consequence of this 'will' are well known. However, it seems questionable whether the Islamic *jihād* can in all circumstances be comprised within this definition.<sup>9</sup> A compromise, which comes close to the ordinary usage of the

8 Burkert 1986, 82 f. See also Brodersen 1991.

9 Noth remarks in his *Heiliger Krieg und Heiliger Kampf in Christentum und Islam* (1966, 21 f.):

Fassen wir als 'heilige Kriege' bewaffnete Unternehmungen auf, bei denen die Religion allein das Gesetz des Handelns bestimmte und nicht zugleich Volkswohl, Landesverteidigung, Staatsinteresse oder nationale Ehre mit im Spiel waren, dann hat es 'heilige Kriege' im Islam auf staatlicher Ebene nie gegeben. Missionskriege, die als heilige Kriege angesprochen werden können, waren die Kämpfe der Muslims noch nicht einmal zu Lebzeiten des Propheten. In der Folgezeit wurde der Missionskrieg zwar theoretisch konzipiert, aber nicht in die Tat umgesetzt.

Cf. also Weippert 1972, 490:

Der 'Heilige Krieg' als eine von 'profanen' Kriegen unterschiedene Institution ist weder im Alten Testament noch in außer-biblichen altorientalischen Texten nachweisbar. Es empfiehlt sich, den—auch sonst problematischen—Terminus zu vermeiden, wenn auf den von G. v. Rad und seinen Vorgängern und Nachfolgern damit bezeichneten Themenkreis Bezug genommen wird.

term and seems at least to provide a working definition with some heuristic value, is to define those wars as 'holy' in which religious or pseudo-religious concepts play a dominant role; i.e. armed conflicts in which a major appeal is made to the religious convictions of the combatants, in which (at least) one side claims possession of absolute theological truth and which is fought with the conviction that this truth must be victorious, for the greater glory of God and for the weal of mankind.

*Five conditions of 'holy war'*

In this connection five conditions for religiously motivated violence formulated by H. von Stietencron (1974, 334) appear to be relevant. The first of these is the belief of the side that knows God to be with it in its own superiority—frequently this may apply to both parties. An extreme case of such a conviction is the idea of a 'chosen people' as found for instance in the school of the *Deuteronomium* (7:1-5, 20:16). Research carried out since von Rad's *Der heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (1952) has, however, demonstrated that the kinds of warfare, including the 'ban-practice' preached in the Laws of War (Deut. 20), were also known in Assyria, and in fact were common practices of war in ancient times.<sup>10</sup> The notion of being 'the Lord's chosen people' too is found not only in Judaism; it was used, for instance, in Calvinistic propaganda during the Dutch–Spanish Eighty Years War (Huussen 1991).

One condition for holy wars thus would appear to be the notion of exclusivity which attributes absolute status to one's own beliefs. At the same time the opponent, who is fighting against the good, is demonized, that is, seen as a threatening embodiment of evil. Religions which develop such dyadic concepts and can sanction wars as 'holy', are in consequence confronted with the problem of the theodicy; the vindication of the existence of evil in the world.

Two of the conditions formulated by von Stietencron do not appear to be necessary conditions for a holy war: namely the belief that there is no second earthly existence ('Einmaligkeit des Lebens'), and the 'close connection between religion and secular violence'. The latter should probably be regarded as concomitant rather than conditional.<sup>11</sup> Another condition should however

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<sup>10</sup> Weippert 1972, 485 ff.:

Wichtig erscheint mir jedoch die Erkenntnis, daß diese Motive in den assyrischen Königsinschriften eine legitimierende Funktion haben. Sie sollen zeigen, daß in den Kriegen des Königs und seiner Truppen der Wille des Reichsgottes Assur und der anderen großen Götter vollstreckt wird, daß der König als vicarius deorum auf die Weisung und mit dem Beistand seiner 'Herren' handelt. [...] Die Legitimation kann auch propagandistisch verwendet werden, etwa bei öffentlich zugänglichen Siegessteinen. Auch in Israel läßt sich die legitimierende Funktion der Motive vom göttlichen Eingreifen in Kampfhandlungen mit einiger Sicherheit feststellen (*op. cit.* 487 f.).

The 'polytheism thesis' should be examined further with respect to this historical material. This is, however, beyond the competence of the present author.

<sup>11</sup> The papal proclamation of crusade can, on the contrary, not be regarded separately from attempts to bring complete power (*plenitudo potestatis*) into the hands of the

be mentioned, which undoubtedly plays a central role; namely that of 'community'. The importance of this factor can only be realized when we consider religions such as Hinduism which place little explicit emphasis on the 'community of believers' and do not have the kind of organisational structure necessary to form such a single community.

The common acceptance of an exclusive truth unites believers into a community. Each member of such a community considers himself as taking part in a *summum bonum* that transcends the individual. In situations of crisis, such as a war, this can lead to the member of the community giving up his life for the common good. Martyrdom is always founded on such feelings of community.<sup>12</sup> Kippenberg has rightly emphasized that martyrdom and holy war are related themes; the concept of a 'holy war' would not be complete without the idea of meritorious and exemplary suffering of the just (Kippenberg 1991a). On the other hand, it must be noted that the presence of these conditions does not necessarily lead to 'holy' wars, as is shown for instance by the fact that the crusades were legitimized by the Roman Catholic but not by the Orthodox Church (Palmer 1991).

### THE HINDU RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL REALITY OF WAR

To pursue our investigation into collective religious violence in the historical and contemporary reality of South Asia in relation to Hinduism, it is necessary to introduce a chronological differentiation. Early Hinduism, before Muslim dominance (c. AD 1200), unquestionably taught an absolute truth as the basis of the entire universe and the final aim of all living beings. However, as argued by Hacker (1983), this truth had a diffuse, all pervasive, inclusive ('inklusive') nature and was thus the opposite of exclusive. God transcends the world but is simultaneously omnipresent in it. Such a world-view can have no fundamental opposition between good and evil. This characteristic of early Indian thought can be illustrated by a passage from *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 3.1.

Indra said to him: Know me alone; for I hold this alone to be the most beneficial thing for a man, that he should know me. I slew the three-headed son of Tvaṣṭar.

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church. Cf. Noth 1966, 21 f.: 'Der Charakter des islamischen Staates (oder später der islamischen Staaten) als Gemeinschaft, in der Religion und Politik untrennbar miteinander verbunden waren, [...] verhinderte es, daß der Kampf gegen Ungläubige ein reiner Religionskrieg wurde.'

12 Cf. Mead 1982, 173: 'The individual may indeed sacrifice the physiological organism for the benefit of the group; man as an organism may go down and give his life for the group which persists. Body and mind thus have different unities.' Though Noth (1966, 135 ff.) emphasizes the personal character of both the Islamic duty of *jihād* and the Christian vow to take up the cross—which both promised the individual the fruits of martyrdom in the hereafter—we should not lose sight of the fact that in both cases the individual was strongly reminded of his holy duty by a collective body, either the Church of Rome or the Islamic state, the avowed beneficiaries of the individual's sacrifice.

I gave the Arunmukha ascetics to the hyenas. After breaking many promises, in heaven I crushed the Prahlādīyas, in the sky the Paulomas and on earth the Kālakhāñjas. Yet not one hair of mine (having done this) was destroyed. And no hair will be destroyed of him who knows me, by any deed; not because of theft, not because of infanticide, not because of matricide and not because of patricide. Even if he commits evil, the colour does not leave his face.<sup>13</sup>

This viewpoint is connected with a concept of time different from that found in the Abrahamic religions. The infinity of time is regarded as cyclic, and the notion of a final period in which the highest divine aim shall be realized and towards which the history of mankind tends (a *civitas dei*) is practically absent. From a divine standpoint, *sub specie æternitatis*, worldly activity is a spectacle (*tamāsū*), a drama, the play (*līlā*) of God. In such a view there is no place for martyrdom. Individual self-sacrifice, which is of course as common in India as elsewhere, in the first place yields benefits for the same individual in an ensuing existence.

The hypocrisy of martyrdom (described by von Stietencron (1979, 330) as ‘besondere Raffinesse’), which conceals the egotistical desire for the martyr’s crown in the hereafter under altruistical motives of self-sacrifice for a common goal, the weal of all, is not found in Hinduism, at least not in the early period. Hinduism is a religion that aims at individual liberation, and only to a far lesser extent than the Abrahamic religions unites believers into a single community with a common goal.<sup>14</sup> This may perhaps be connected with the fact that a plurality of deities is worshipped, but this connection does not appear to me to be intrinsic. It is clear that, also in the early period, a deep con-

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13 Cf. *Bhagavadgītā* 10.3.6,38:

I am the gambling of cheaters, the energy of the energetic ones. I am conquest, I am resolve, I am the vigour of the vigorous. [...] I am the rule of the subduers, the policy of those ‘who wish to conquer’, I am the silence of things hidden, I am the knowledge of those who know.

*Agastyasamhitā* 5.47 (Barkhuis 1995 II, 27): ‘For those who live, having realized that the self is eternal Rāma, there is no misdeed and no misfortune arising from a misdeed.’

14 This is not to say, of course, that community did not exist in South Asia. But communities were basically founded in the social ramifications of caste and village. Though Stein rightly attributes a significant role to religion (worship) in the formation of communities on local and regional level (see below, p. 165), the postulated ‘segmentary state’ testifies *eo ipso* to the limitedness of the communities involved. Stein 1991:

Community must be understood according to the usual English signification of being simultaneously a people and a place, rather than in its limited and debased usage as sub-caste or religious group. [...] However, in addition to the sharing of sentiments and values, community is also about shared rights or entitlements over human and material resources. Thus, in its particularities and under conditions of premodern technology, community pertains to smaller, local spatial entities.

The picture becomes more complicated when we take Buddhism into consideration. Already in an early stage Buddhism tended to extend the community of monks (*saṅgha*) to the community of all followers of the Buddhist faith. Consequently in that community the concept of the Bodhisattva, the one who temporarily sacrifices his own salvation for the benefit of all, could arise.

viction of a single, all-compassing and absolute divinity underlies this outward polytheism.<sup>15</sup>

We shall investigate whether a change has recently been taking place in regard to this last point. For it appears that a tendency can be detected among the Hindu population today to define itself as the community of Hindus, and this tendency seems to be connected with a shift in emphasis which has brought the monotheistic aspect of Hinduism to the fore and given it tangible form.

### *The advent of Islam*

Such tendencies generally have a long history. As has been shown in Lorenzen's study (1978), *Warrior Ascetics in Indian History*, before the Muslim conquests India did not have any holy wars, either in the sense defined above or in the sense of 'wars fought by holy men'. But with the introduction of Muslim rule in North India, a change takes place, although this does not directly result in a holy war. Hindus are obstructed in the observance of their religious practices, and the religious interests vested in temples and monasteries are threatened with confiscation or destruction. At the same time the advent of Islam leads to conflicts between Hindu Yogis and Muslim *faḳīrs* (see above, p.11), and the system of traditional education, which ensured the continuity of cultural and religious values, was seriously undermined. The state of affairs may be illustrated by a description of the razzia of Maḥmūd of Ghazni, who destroyed the great temple in Somnāth (Gujarat) in AD 1024–25.

In the year 414 AH Maḥmūd captured several forts and cities in Hind, and he also took the idol called Somnāt. The idol was the greatest of all the idols of Hind. Every night that there was an eclipse the Hindus went on pilgrimage to the temple, and there congregated to the number of a hundred thousand persons. [...] One thousand Brahmans attended every day to perform the worship of the idol, and to introduce the visitors. Three hundred persons were employed in shaving the heads and beards of the pilgrims. Three hundred and fifty persons sang and danced at the gate of the temple. Every one of these received a settled allowance daily. [...] He reached Somnāt on a Thursday in the middle of Zī-l Ka'da, and there he beheld a strong fortress built upon the seashore, so that it was washed by the waves. [...] Next morning, early, the Muhammadans renewed the battle, and made great havoc

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15 For instance expressed in the *Bhagavadgītā*: 'There is nothing transcending me, O Dhanamjaya: this universe is strung on me like pearls on a string' (BhG 7.7). 'I know all beings, past, present and those to come, O Arjuna, but no one knows me' (BhG 7.26). 'But there is another, Highest Person, who is referred to as the Supreme Soul: He is the eternal Lord who pervades this universe and sustains it.' Cf. Chaudhuri 1980, 148 f.:

In the foreground stands one object of faith for all Hindus. It is a genuine, monotheistic, personal God. [...] Though he is a personal God, he is never thought of or spoken about as an anthropomorphic God in a physical form. [...] Nevertheless, this Bhagavan has never been worshipped, nor has he ever been an object of regular prayer. [...] Below this God there was the specific world of the Hindu gods [...].

Cf. below, pp. 443 f.

among the Hindus, till they drove them from the town to the house of their idol, Somnát.<sup>16</sup>

It is a well-authenticated fact that when Mahmúd was about to destroy the idol, a crowd of Brahmans represented (to his nobles) that if he would desist from the mutilation they would pay several crores of gold coins into the treasury. [...] Mahmúd replied: 'I know this, but I desire that on the day of resurrection I should be summoned with the words, 'Where is that Mahmúd who broke the greatest of the heathen idols?' rather than by these: 'Where is that Mahmúd who sold the greatest of the idols to the infidels for gold?'<sup>17</sup>

A dreadful slaughter followed at the gate of the temple. Band after band of the defenders entered the temple to Somnát, and with their hands clasped round their necks, wept and passionately entreated him. Then again they issued forth to fight until they were slain, and but few were left alive. [...] This temple of Somnát was built upon fifty-six pillars of teak wood covered with lead. The idol itself was in a chamber. [Mahmúd] seized it, part of it he burnt, and part of it he carried away with him to Ghazní, where he made it a step at the entrance of the Jámi'-masjid. The worth of what was found in the temple exceeded two millions of dinars, all of which was taken. The number of slain exceeded fifty thousand.<sup>18</sup>

It is therefore hardly surprising that in the following centuries a number of groups of Hindus formed military organizations to defend such religious interests. However, significantly enough this process only appears to have taken place among groups which already formed a religious community, namely various orders of ascetics or monastic orders. Of course these were also the groups whose direct interests were particularly threatened. Resistance was naturally also offered by the Hindu kingdoms, but the resultant conflicts did not essentially differ from early wars between Hindu rulers themselves, as may also be illustrated by the fact that many Hindus served in the armies commanded by and fighting for Muslims. It is important to note that there never was a popular Hindu uprising against the new Muslim rule.

The lack of unity within the Hindu world is even more apparent from the reports that have come down to us of the actions of these militarized orders (*akhārās*). The earliest battle known to us in which armed religious ascetics took part, in Thanesar, AD 1567, was between two Hindu orders (*akhārās*), and was motivated not by a desire to protect Hindu religious values but rather to secure the interests of one order against claims of a rival group. Abu 'l-Faẓl has given us an eyewitness account in his *Akbar Nāma*.

There are two parties among the Sanyāsīs (i.e. Śaiva ascetics): one is called Kur, and the other Pūrī. A quarrel arose among these two about the place of sitting. The asceticism of most of these men arises from the world's having turned its back on them, and not from their having become coldhearted to the world. Consequently they are continually distressed and are overcome of lust and wrath, and

16 Ibn Asir's *Kāmilu-t Tawárikh*, Elliot and Dowson 1867-77 II, 468 f.

17 Mulla Ahmad Tattawí's *Tárikh-i Alfí*, Elliot and Dowson 1867-77 II, 471 f.

18 *Kāmilu-t Tawárikh*, Elliot and Dowson 1867-77 II, 470 f.

covetousness. The cause of the quarrel was that the Pūrī sect had a fixed place on the bank of the tank where they sate and spread the net of begging. The pilgrims from the various parts of India who came there to bathe in the tank used to give them alms. On that day the Kur faction had come there in a tyrannical way and taken the place of the Pūrīs, and the latter were unable to maintain their position against them. [...] The two sides drew up in line, and first one man on each side advanced in a braggart fashion, and engaged with swords. Afterwards bows and arrows were used. After that the Pūrīs attacked the Kurs with stones. [...] The Kurs could not withstand them and fled. The Pūrīs pursued them and sent a number of the wretches to annihilation.<sup>19</sup>

It is therefore clear that the case of these militarized ascetic orders (*akhārās*) falls under the first type of movement differentiated by Lorenzen (1978, 63), namely 'a movement concerned with the protection of specific, local economic and social interests and privileges'. A larger framework which could have mobilized the Hindus as a single community against the new Muslim rule simply did not exist.

## THE SEGREGATION OF THE HINDU AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

### *The idea of the Rāma rājya*

To trace developments further we will now turn to a particular religious centre, situated centrally in northern India: the city of Ayodhyā. The sacredness of this town was (and is) founded on the belief that in the distant past the god Viṣṇu was born there as the son of King Daśaratha. This particular incarnation of Viṣṇu is named Rāma. This belief belongs to the cultural heritage of every Hindu. The story of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* as Rāma is told in the ancient Sanskrit epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as in countless later, vernacular versions of that story.

The figure of Rāma has developed into the archetype of the just king in Indian culture, the ruler who brings happiness and prosperity to all his subjects. He is introduced in the *Rāmāyaṇa* 1.1.2–4 as follows.

Who is there in this world today who is virtuous? Who is mighty (heroic), knows the *dharma*, is grateful (*kṛtajña*), speaks the truth and firmly keeps his vows? Who is possessed of good conduct, and who is well-disposed towards all living beings? Who is wise, who is skilful, and who alone is beautiful to behold? Who is self-controlled and has conquered (his) wrath; who is wise and free from envy? For whom do (even) the gods feel fear when his fury is roused in battle?

The answer to all these questions is of course King Rāma. His rule, popularly called *Rāma rājya*, as depicted in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and later literature, represents the ideal society, and Rāma himself personifies simultaneously the ideal king and God. The sixteenth century *Rāmacaritamānasa* describes his divine reign thus:

19 Abu ḏ-l-Faḏl's *Akbar Nāma* (transl. Beveridge), Vol. II, 423. Cf. Lorenzen 1978, 68 f.; Pinch 2006, 28 ff.; Clark 2006, 62.

When Rāma sat upon his sovereign throne, the three spheres rejoiced and there was no more sorrow. No man was any other's enemy, and under Rāma's royal influence all ill-feeling was laid aside. Everyone devoted himself to his duty in accordance with his caste and stage of life, and ever found happiness in treading the Vedic path. Fear and sorrow and sickness were no more. [...] Sole monarch of the land engirdled by seven seas was Raghupati (i.e. Rāma) in Kosala—no great dominion for him in each of whose several hairs dwelt many a universe. [...] The bliss and prosperity of Rāma's realm neither Serpent King nor Sarasvatī can describe. All who dwelt therein were generous and charitable and did humble service to the Brāhmans. Each husband was true to one wife, and each wife was loyal to her husband in thought and word and deed.<sup>20</sup>

As I have attempted to demonstrate elsewhere, the religious cult of this incarnation of Viṣṇu only assumes significant proportions in the period that saw the forces of Islam threatening to destroy Hindu society, many centuries after the formation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* itself (Bakker 1986; 1987). It is only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that Ayodhyā develops into a pilgrimage centre in which the spot where Rāma was born, the Rāmājanmabhūmi, is the main attraction. A coincidence? Or is there some intrinsic connection between the Muslim invasions and the rise in importance of this god-king as a symbol for traditional Hindu values? In any case, there can be no doubt that as the time-honoured model of justice (*dharma*) and of regal fame and power (*kṣatra*), Rāma was remarkably well suited to develop into a symbol of the struggle against the forces that undermined traditional Hindu society and its values.<sup>21</sup> It is not possible to go further into this problem here; for our present purpose it is sufficient to remark that in the course of the second millennium Rāma, together with his birth-place Ayodhyā, came to occupy an increasingly important and central role in Hinduism.

Until the end of Great Moghul rule, that is to say till the beginning of the eighteenth century, Ayodhyā was the capital of one of the provinces of the Muslim empire in northern India. In consequence, Hindu sects had few rights to defend in the city. Pilgrimage was tolerated, but the cream of the profits from it was taken by the Muslim rulers in the form of a tax on pilgrims. It was forbidden to build temples or monasteries of more than a certain dimension in the city, and the existing temples fell into decay and disappeared or were replaced by mosques. The latter happened to the temple on the alleged spot of Rāma's birth, which dated to the early eleventh century. This small temple was replaced by a mosque, the so-called Babri Masjid, in AD 1528, during the reign of the first Moghul emperor, Bābur,<sup>22</sup> a deed of far-reaching consequences.

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20 Tulsī Dās, *Rāmācaritamānasa* (*Uttarakhandā* Cau. 18.4–Cau. 21.4), transl. W. Douglas P. Hill.

21 See also Freitag 1989, 30 f.

22 Bakker 1986 I, 44 f., 133 f., II, 146 f.

*The Kingdom of Avadh*

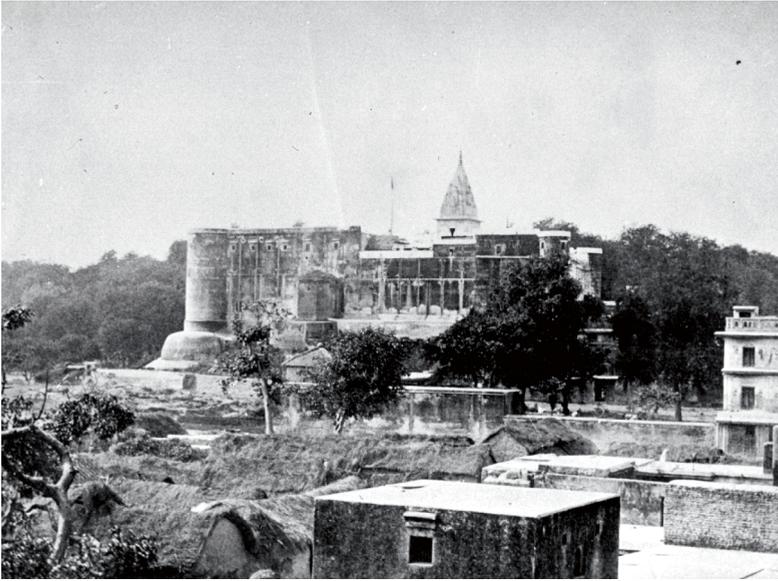
After the death of Aurangzeb in AD 1707, central Muslim rule in northern India was weakened to such an extent that regional and local rulers could found small independent kingdoms. Ayodhyā became the capital of the virtually independent kingdom of Avadh, ruled by the former governor of the Moghul province, the nawāb Saʿādat Khān, a Shiite Muslim of Persian descent. However, the power of the rulers of Avadh had been weakened so much that the execution of their authority came to lie more and more in the hands of allied Hindu leaders and landowners. Even the military power of the Islamic nawābs of Avadh was partly dependent on the services of Hindu ascetics.<sup>23</sup> The logical outcome of this situation was that Muslim authority lost its control over the activities in and around the Hindu holy places. The organization and management of the birth-city of Rāma came into the hands of Hindu monastic orders, who did not hesitate to use force in order to drive one another from economically lucrative spots. A Vaiṣṇava source describes the situation as follows.

At that time [...] when the occasion of Rāma's birth came, people went to Kosalapur (i.e. Ayodhyā) and assembled there—who can describe the enormous crowd? At that place there was an unlimited (number of) strong warriors in *saṃnyāsīn* garb, carrying weapons, with matted hair and ashes smeared on every limb—an unlimited army of soldiers taking pleasure in battle. Fighting with the *vairāgīns* broke out. This fight was of no avail (to the *vairāgīns*), owing to lack of strategy. [...] They made a mistake by going there towards them; the *vairāgīn* garb became a source of misery. All people dressed in *vairāgīn* garb fled—through fear of them (scil. *saṃnyāsīns*) Avadhpur was abandoned. Wherever they (scil. *saṃnyāsīns*) happened to find people in *vairāgīn* garb, there they struck great fear into them. Through fear of them everyone was frightened and wherever they could they took shelter in a secret place and hid themselves. They changed their dress and hid their sectarian markings—no one showed his proper identity.<sup>24</sup>

Inevitably, the Vaiṣṇava orders armed themselves too. The evolving military orders were organized on the model of their Śaiva counterparts, into *akhārās*, 'wrestling-schools', and during the eighteenth century their fort-like monasteries appeared throughout North India. One of these orders succeeded in wresting the control over some of the important holy places in Ayodhyā from their Śaiva adversaries. And as a reward for services rendered to the Nawāb of Avadh—a Shiite, as remarked above—the Vaiṣṇavas were even granted permission to build a fort-monastery at a mere 700 meters distance from the Babri Masjid. This so-called 'Fort of Hanumān', the Hanumāngarhī, has remained the most important and frequently visited monastery-cum-temple in Ayodhyā until today (Bakker 1990c).

<sup>23</sup> Sarkar 1958, 123 ff.; Barnett 1980, 56 f.

<sup>24</sup> *Śrīmahārājacaritra* of Raghunātha Prasāda, pp. 42 f.



*Plate 2*  
*Ayodhyā: Hanumāngarhī (before 1870)*



*Plate 3*  
*Ayodhyā: Monks of the Hanumāngarhī (before 1870)*

For our subject, it is important to keep in mind that even in this period of religious turmoil and anarchy the conflict still remained internal, and is limited to certain local centres. There still was no common Hindu attack on the strongholds of Islam, as represented for instance by the Babri Masjid at the Rāmājanmabhūmi. It is true that religious interests and emotions played a major part in these conflicts, but the fight was hardly, if at all, inspired by religious ideology. Nor was there as yet any mobilization of the Hindu masses which did not belong to any organisation of ascetics or monks.

*The emerging conflict around the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā*

It is interesting to observe that while official Muslim authority in North India continued to weaken during the nineteenth century and became more and more dependent on the support of the Hindu aristocracy, the political contrast between Muslim rulers and Hindu subjects changed in character and focus and began to take the form of a religious conflict which both sides attempted to decide in their favour by all means, including the use of force. It should of course be remembered that by that time the Muslim segment of the population was no longer confined to the ruling classes, since large groups from lower strata of the Hindu society had converted to Islam. This new development, the religious conflict that was to take such a threatening form in the twentieth century, both under British Rule and in the post-colonial period, can be traced and illustrated with reference to the events in Ayodhyā.

On the eve of Britain's annexation of Avadh, while the ruler of Avadh, Wājīd ʿAlī Shāh, was already no more than a puppet of the British, groups of Sunnis rose in protest against the permissive attitude of their Islamic government. They demanded to be allowed to build a mosque on the site of the Hanumān-garhī.<sup>25</sup> Inevitably, this resulted in a direct conflict with the ascetics of the fort-monastery. Despite attempts by British troops, with the sanction of Wājīd ʿAlī Shāh, to separate the combatants, fighting broke out between Hindus and Muslims, and the Muslims were forced to retreat into the Babri Masjid on Rāma's Birthplace. The Hindus stormed the mosque and seventy Muslims were killed, after which Hindu wrath turned against the Muslim population of the city and led to large-scale plundering.

A considerable number of Muslims, led by militant mullahs, gathered from all parts of Avadh and proclaimed *jihād* against the Hindus of Ayodhyā. Feelings ran high, and the situation grew ever more explosive—partly because Hindus slaughtered a number of pigs on the day of the burial of the Muslims who died in the Babri Masjid—and this resulted in the first direct confrontation between Hindu and Muslim populations as such.

The Islamic campaign set out from Lucknow, the new capital of Avadh, under command of the Maulvi Amīr ud-Dīn alias Amīr ʿAlī, who was hailed

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<sup>25</sup> Bhatnagar 1968, 117 ff.

as the fifth imām. Despite desperate attempts on the part of Wājid ʿAlī Shāh, who had the *jihād* pronounced unlawful by both a Shiite and a Sunna court, Amīr ʿAlī continued his march, leaving a wake of destruction. But before this mob reached Ayodhyā, they were intercepted by government troops under British command. Consultations ensued with the lawful Muslim authorities in Lucknow, in the course of which the British far-sightedly pointed out that if the rebellious Muslims were permitted to build their mosque on the site of the Hanumāngarhī, chaos would immediately result, with the Hindus in their turn claiming their rights to the holy places now occupied by mosques in Ayodhyā, Benares etc. But the consultations and all attempts at negotiation yielded no result, and finally the *jihād* of Amīr ʿAlī ended before the British cannons of Captain Barlow. Four or five hundred Muslims perished, Amīr ʿAlī among them. Two months later, in February 1857, Avadh was annexed by the English, who eventually ‘put up a railing around the Babri Masjid to prevent disputes’.<sup>26</sup>

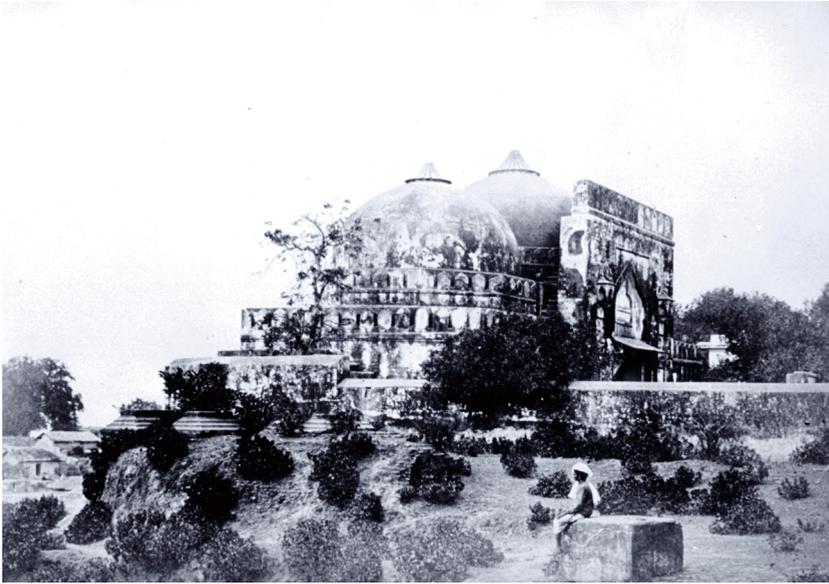


Plate 4  
*Ayodhyā: Babri Masjid (before 1870)*

This harrowing episode clearly shows that large-scale conflicts between Hindus and Muslims did not directly spring from the historical situation of an Islamic

<sup>26</sup> Carnegie 1870, 21; for this episode see also Bhatnagar 1968; Bakker 1986 II, 147 f.

ruling class and an oppressed Hindu population. The religious conflict only took the form of popular movements when Muslim authority was about to topple and both segments of the population attempted to take the law into their own hands. With the restoration of government control and the emergence of the modern state, these movements subsequently became increasingly directed against public authority, which they tried to undermine, no matter whether this authority was exercised by British colonial power or the democratically chosen government of the Republic of India.<sup>27</sup>

From a core of a small number of Sunni mullahs and trained Hindu ascetics, the awareness of being a group with common religious beliefs that differ fundamentally from those of the opposing group spreaded out among both the Hindu and Muslim population during the nineteenth and twentieth century. In other words, the feeling of 'community' arose also within the Hindu population, stimulated, among other things, by the regularly recurrent conflicts around the spot of Rāma's birth, the Babri Masjid. An additional factor was that in accordance with British colonial policy the Hindus were now officially defined as a separate category from the Muslim segment of the population. In connection with the colonial census reports, the individual citizen was compelled, for the first time in the history of India, to explicitly state whether he was of the Hindu or Muslim faith. The combination of such factors meant that Hindus of all castes and sects were forced to reflect on what made them Hindus and distinguished them from their Islamic fellow citizens.<sup>28</sup>

With the restoration of central rule by the colonial authorities, the role of the armed Hindu ascetics was greatly diminished. Some of them served as mercenaries in the colonial army, and some were of assistance to the authorities in times of crisis, such as the Rebellion of 1857,<sup>29</sup> but they played no further important role as a military power. Instead one could say that their militant character gradually spread over the Hindu population in general. The most gruesome consequence of this development (so far at least) took place during the period of de-colonization, when British India fell apart into two states: the secular state of India and the Islamic Pakistan. This 'partition' was accompanied by massacres, carried out by both sides, which are estimated to have cost half a million lives. But even after the secession of Pakistan some 40 million Muslims remained inhabitants of the state of India, a number which had already doubled in 1981.<sup>30</sup> Since the secession India has fought two wars with Pakistan, and the present unrest in Kashmir could be the prelude of a third.

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27 On similar processes in Islam, cf. Lawrence 1990, 240.

28 In this connexion it is significant that the term (and concept) 'Hinduism' was first introduced by the missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society in Bengal at the beginning of the 19th century (Ward 1817, 348, 427), for lack of an adequate indigenous term. See van den Bosch 1990, 18.

29 Especially the descendants of Gosāin Umrāvgeri (Pinch 2006, 2290; Fyz. Gaz. 163).

30 According to the *2011 Census of India* Muslims comprise about 14% of the total population of India.

Nonetheless such wars between states, fought over territorial disputes, should not be called 'holy wars', also because Hindus, Muslims and even Sikhs have fought on both sides in them.

### AYODHYĀ: A HINDU JERUSALEM

For our present subject it is more fruitful to look at the current situation in India—which, it must not be forgotten, is a secular state. This situation is characterized by the disintegration of the population into several sections whose identity is chiefly based on religious beliefs. This is generally referred to as 'communalism'. In regard to the Muslim segment, a world-wide tendency towards fundamentalism has undoubtedly played a role in India too. Numerous accusations have been made by Hindus that Islamic organizations in India are being financially supported by the Arab oil-producing nations. Another danger is of course seen in Pakistan, which is said to aim at destabilizing India via the Islamic population; particularly by fanning the flames of Sikh violence in the Panjab and, most recently, by causing the turmoil in Kashmir.

These geo-political factors have no doubt strengthened the self-awareness of the Hindus as forming one community. A common ideology, which could (and increasingly does) unite the still largely fragmented Hindu population under a single banner, has been developed on the basis of the mythology of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In this ideology, Rāma is the deity who in the past created and ruled the ideal state here on earth. Through the inevitable process of historical decline, this state has since disappeared, but can, if all Hindus were to unite in working towards it, be recreated in the future. This new utopic reign, the *Rāma rājya*, which will of course encompass only the Hindu faithful, may be compared with the eschatological ideal of the *civitas dei* reified in the reconquered earthly Jerusalem.<sup>31</sup>

For the Hindu believer of the present, a holy place like Ayodhyā or Braj (associated with Viṣṇu's incarnation as Kṛṣṇa) is more than a sacred remembrance of the past; it is an actual hierophany of the paradise of Viṣṇu/Rāma/Kṛṣṇa. The holy spots in Ayodhyā represent the manifest (*prakāṣa*) forms of transcendent (*aprakāṣa*) archetypes in the paradise *Vaikuṅṭha* (see above, p. 19). The occupation of the central and most holy site by a mosque is therefore a direct encroachment on the holy or divine itself. From such a point of view, the fight for control of Rāma's Birthplace can be seen as a divine fight. A historical, religious ideal is transformed into a political programme.<sup>32</sup>

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31 For St. Augustine the New Jerusalem was not a historical geographic reality, but the City of God situated at the end of time. In the eleventh century, however, when Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade, this idea became reified in the actual Jerusalem that only awaited emancipation from its desecration by the Gentiles (i.e. Muslims). (Robertus Monachus 1866, 729).

32 Cf. Riesebrodt 1990, 243.

The ideology which aims at restoring Rāma's rule in its pure form by eliminating the profane encroachments on it has become a politic factor of increasing importance, particularly in North India, where the oppositions between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are most deeply felt, and where, as we have seen, the historical developments took place which gave the Hindu community its cohesion. This ideology is connected with the attempts on the part of fundamentalist Hindu groups, such as the Rastriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to make India a national Hindu state (*Hindū Rāṣṭra*), just as Pakistan is an Islamic state and Khalistan a wished-for Sikh state.<sup>33</sup> On the religious level this ideology has led to the monotheistic aspect of Hinduism being articulated and assuming tangible, personal form, embodied by Rāma. It is in this light that the exorbitant success of the *Rāmāyaṇa* television series should be seen. This series enthralled the Hindu population to such an extent that riots broke out when power-failures interrupted television-reception, and a television-station was stormed when the series (already stretched as far as human ingenuity could manage) finally came to an end without a sequel, 'the later deeds of Rāma' (a kind of *Uttararāmacarita*) being announced.

As the re-capture of Jerusalem was the central theme in the ideology of the Christian crusades, so the re-possessing of Rāma's Birthplace, the Rāmājanmabhūmi, gradually came to be central in this newly developed Hindu ideology.<sup>34</sup>

As we have seen, after the annexation of Avadh the English erected a fence around the Babri Masjid to prevent Hindus and Muslims from fighting over the spot. This policy was continued by the government of independent India. Hindus and Muslims alike were prohibited from entering the mosque. It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss all the incidents that took place around this holy spot in the last hundred years. It should however be mentioned that in 1949, in the aftermath of the partition, the Hindus succeeded in installing an

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33 For more information on the history and background of the RSS see Anderson and Damle 1987. Though it is not the aim of the present paper to depict the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, several tendencies indicated here are evidently at the core of the fundamentalist world-view as described by Riesebrodt 1990, 214 ff. Cf. also Freitag 1989.

34 In the early phase of Hindu fundamentalism (as embodied in the RSS) the 'liberation' of Rāma's Birthplace in Ayodhyā did not yet take a special place. Gradually it was realized however, that to combine fundamentalist aims with a pilgrim's goal like Ayodhyā had unparalleled mass-mobilizing potential. A similar process seems to have taken place in the history of the crusades:

Der Einfluß des Pilgerwesens, wenn nicht auf die Entstehung, so doch auf den Character schon der ersten kriegerischen Orientfahrten der Abendländer ist bekanntlich sehr stark gewesen, und die Verbindung von Wallfahrt und Heidenkrieg kann geradezu als typisch für die gesamte Kreuzzugbewegung gelten. Den Anstoß dazu hat wiederum Urban II. gegeben, indem er das Wallfahrerziel Jerusalem zum Marschziel der geplanten Orientexpedition bestimmte. Daß Urban Jerusalem in seinen Kreuzzugplan aufnahm, ist wahrscheinlich aus Gründen der Werbung geschehen, denn—wie Erdmann überzeugend hat nachweisen können—sah Urban den Zweck der Orientexpedition nicht in der Eroberung Jerusalems, sondern allgemeiner in der Befreiung der Orientalischen Kirchen. (Noth 1966, 128)

image of Rāma and his wife Sītā inside the mosque. As may be understood, this again led to serious riots between the Muslims and Hindus, and numerous legal actions were undertaken by both sides. The judge finally decreed that during the lengthy process of legal settlement the mosque should remain closed.

*The fight for the Rāmajanmabhūmi/Babri Masjid*

In this way all went relatively well until 1984. In that year the fundamentalist Hindu organization Visva Hindu Parisad (VHP), a sister organization of the RSS, starts a new campaign to ‘liberate’ the Birthplace of Rāma, that is to say, to pull down the mosque and replace it by a large Hindu temple.<sup>35</sup> This movement scores its first success in 1986, when a lawyer from the neighbouring city of Faizabad procures a court judgement which declares the closure of the mosque to be legally unfounded. The gate of the fence is opened, and a stream of Hindus enters the mosque to worship the idol of Rāma which has remained there all these years.

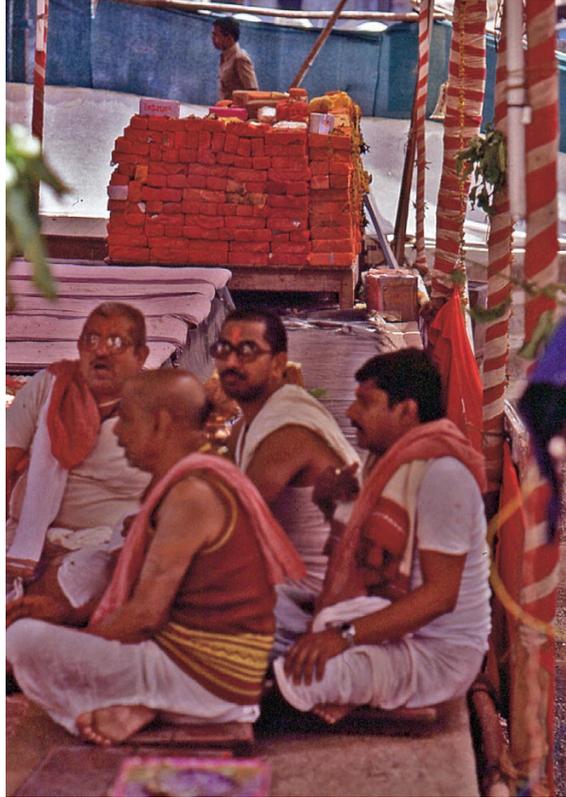
As may be imagined, with the VHP growing more and more successful and winning more and more adherents, a large number of politicians seek to connect themselves with this popular movement. In particular, right-wing Hindu politicians united in the Indian People’s Party (BJP) expect—rightly, as has since emerged—to be swept to political power on the shoulders of this mass-movement. On the Muslim side, a national action committee is started to protect the Babri Masjid. The ruling Congress Party of Rajiv Gandhi, which traditionally is dependent to a high degree on votes of the Islamic section of the population, desperately tries to avoid the looming Scylla and Charybdis by portraying itself as the defender of India as a secular and united state. This tight-rope feat becomes increasingly difficult, however, as the polarization of Hindus and Muslims continues.

In the election-year 1989 the VHP, supported by the politicians of the BJP, make a brilliant move. In order to mobilise as large a mass of Hindus as possible for the ‘liberation’ of Rāma’s Birthplace, a new campaign to replace the mosque by a temple is launched. The model for this was Somnāth, where, after the destruction of the Hindu temple by Maḥmūd of Ghazni, and despite the razing of later rebuildings by Muslim rulers, a large Hindu temple had recently been erected. The idea behind the campaign was that action committees should be formed in all cities and villages with more than two thousand inhabitants, to consecrate a number of bricks in accordance with Vedic ritual. These bricks, consecrated in long and elaborate ceremonies (always something capable of rousing Hindu enthusiasm), should then be brought in procession to Ayodhyā, and, after much orthodox ceremony surrounding the laying of the first stone on the site of the mosque, should then be used to build the new temple. This campaign may be said to have been largely successful.

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35 As described in van der Veer 1987, this campaign found little support from the monasteries and temples in Ayodhyā itself, which feared that the turmoil involved would endanger their own income.

When I visited India in the autumn of 1989, the election-campaign was in full swing, and the disputed Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā had become its central and dominant theme. The leaders of the Indian People's Party openly backed the brick-campaign of the VHP. All over the country bricks were being consecrated with much pomp and ceremony.



*Plate 5*

*Nasik: Consecration of bricks for the Rāmājanmabhūmi Temple*

The processions bearing the consecrated bricks often passed through districts and villages inhabited by Muslims, and this frequently led to bloody riots. Rajiv Gandhi's ruling Congress Party was put under so much pressure that it finally gave in and gave permission for the first stone of the planned temple to be laid on 9 November 1989, 60 meters in front of the gate of the mosque. A total of 300,000 consecrated bricks streamed into Ayodhyā, and hundreds of people died, frequently in horrific fashion, in the ensuing violence. A curfew was imposed in many places, including Benares. Hindu youths marched provocatively through the streets, chanting slogans like the following:

THAT Hindu whose blood does not boil has water in his veins,  
youth that does not serve Rāmājanmabhūmi is youth lived in vain.<sup>36</sup>

An illustration of the clashes that resulted is provided by the occurrences in Bhagalpur, a fairly ordinary village in Bihar, as reported in the Indian press (*Hitavada* 19-11-1989).

It was Friday, October 27: the Muslims had just said their prayers in the newly built makeshift mosque when they found themselves surrounded from all sides by fierce mobs. One pretext trotted up by them was the presence of a Rajpur imām to read the *namāz*. ‘Why bring an outsider’, they asked. The Muslims explained there was nobody educated enough in the village to preside over the Friday prayers, but the mob wouldn’t listen. The scared Muslims gathered in the house of Minnat Mian, the only building without a thatched roof that would not collapse when torched. Later in the afternoon, the local head of police along with some policemen made their appearance and assured them safety.

Meanwhile, houses in the Muslim quarter had begun being set ablaze with both sides exchanging brickbats. ‘My hands were aching, we had hurled so many stones’, recalled Suleiman.

When night fell, the stone throwing stopped but the houses continued to burn. Suleiman and a few others managed to escape to Rajpur but the rest stayed put in Minnat Mian’s house. One escapee was killed, but late in the evening an army contingent arrived. The army officer personally counted the number of people sheltering in the house and handed over charge to the local policemen, leaving word that he would return next morning to remove them elsewhere. When he did, almost all of them were dead. It was the silence of the graveyard.

Fundamentalist organizations sanction the use of force on the part of the Hindus. A statement is issued saying that (*Hitavada* 13-11-1989):

[The laying of the foundation stone] is the result of sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of Hindus over centuries to redeem Ramājanmabhūmi and establish the temple. ‘The restoration of the Birthplace of Rama’ is symbolic of re-establishment of our national pride just as the reconstruction of the great Somnāth temple was.

Nor are any scruples felt about annexing and misusing, not to say abusing, the spiritual legacy of Mahatma Gandhi in support of the new ideology (*Hitavada*): ‘When Mahatma Gandhi envisaged freedom, he dreamt of and defined the independence as “Rama rajya.” His whole life was inspired by Lord Rama.’<sup>37</sup> The *Times of India* (7-11-1989) rightly remarks in a commentary that:

36 *jīs hindū kā khūn na khaule, khūn nahīn vah pānī hai | janmabhūmi ke kām na aye, vah bekār javānī hai ||* (*India Today* October 31, 1989, 29).

37 The nature of this ‘abuse’ can be illustrated when we apply the typology of ‘religious revivalist movements’ proposed by M. Riesebrodt 1990, 18 ff. Riesebrodt reduces this type of movements to a ‘Krisenbewußtsein’ as a result of ‘rapider sozialer Wandel’, but he distinguishes two types of response. In search of authenticity both responses make an appeal to a ‘göttliches Gesetz, eine Offenbarung oder auf eine ideale Urgemeinde’ (e.g. the *Rāma rājya*).

Doch kann dieses Anknüpfen an eine ursprüngliche ideale Ordnung *mythisch* oder

There is hardly a village where the consecration of bricks for Rama's temple has not been held. And almost everywhere the ceremony has evoked a popular response. Lord Rama and his controversial Birthplace is fast becoming a Hindu symbol, as no previous ones, uniting co-religionists across caste barriers.

In the elections of late November 1989 the Congress Party is defeated. Particularly in North India, where the new Hindu movement was most successful, the opposition inflicts a crushing defeat on Rajiv Gandhi's party. The Indian People's Party BJP rockets from 2 to 88 seats in the newly elected Loksaabhā (parliament). This trend is continued in the state-elections in early March 1990: the BJP even acquires an absolute majority in the state-parliaments of Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

A year after the first stone of the temple on Rāma's Birthplace was laid, the question flares up again. Hundreds of thousands of 'temple-builders' (*kār sevaks*) are called upon by the VHP and other fundamentalist Hindu groups to march on Ayodhyā. The leader of the BJP, Lal Advani, places himself at the head of this procession in 'Rāma's Vehicle' (*Rām rāth*) and is promptly arrested. Tens of thousands of soldiers seal off Ayodhyā. Photos of inflamed Hindus waving flags on the domes of the Babri Masjid make the front pages of newspapers all over the world. The whole country is in the grip of the struggle around the mosque in Ayodhyā. The secular and unitary state of India seems about to founder; the population, incited by religious emotions, seems deaf to reason, and the minority-government of the People's Front (Janata Dal)—together with the BJP the main winners of the 1989 election—seems helpless and at a loss.

The BJP withdraws its support from the minority-cabinet of V.P. Singh and precipitates yet another government crisis. Like his predecessor Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh had endeavoured to remain neutral in this conflict between members of two faiths, but he too is brought down by the new Hindu fundamentalism.

In December 1990 communal disturbances and riots claim hundreds of lives. Noteworthy is the fact that the disturbances clearly are spreading to the south as well. 'Temple-builders' are arrested in large numbers. Ayodhyā becomes a military fortress, and new fortifications in the shape of a wire-fence and barbed wire are placed around the mosque. The new minority-government, led by

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*utopisch* ausgerichtet sein. Als Mythos hat sie die Funktion einer restaurativen Krisenbewältigung. Das 'Goldene Zeitalter' soll durch Rückkehr zu seinen wörtlich tradierten Ordnungsprinzipien wiederhergestellt werden. Als Utopie dagegen dient die ideale Ordnung zu einer 'progressiven' sozialreformerischen oder sozialrevolutionären Krisenbewältigung. Nicht den Buchstaben, sondern den 'Geist' der in der Vergangenheit einmal verwirklichten idealen Ordnung gilt es unter neuen Bedingungen zu realisieren. Demzufolge ist das 'mythische' Denken tendenziell durch eine rigide Gesetzethik, das 'utopische' Denken dagegen durch eine radikale Gesinnungsethik gekennzeichnet. (*op. cit.* 20)

It is clear that Mahatma Gandhi exemplifies the 'utopic' type of movement, whereas the movement described here should be classified as 'mythic'. Riesebrodt proposes to restrict the use of the term 'fundamentalism' to the latter type of movement.

prime minister Chandra Shekhar and formed out of a faction of the Janata Dal, is completely dependent on the support of the Congress Party and seems about to fall at any moment. The idealized image referred to at the beginning of this article of a country and culture in which peace-loving tendencies are stronger than elsewhere, seems more than ever to be a mirage.<sup>38</sup>

## EPILOGUE

Our conclusions may be summarized as follows.

During a process of interaction with Islam, a new Hindu self-awareness gradually emerges, particularly in North India. This self-awareness draws heavily on the mythological material of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The worship of Rāma as the highest, personal God becomes ever more prominent. Hindus of other sects also increasingly partake in this movement, so that a shift in emphasis appears to take place towards the more monotheistic aspects of Hinduism. Related to this, the feeling of belonging to a single (religious) community spreads during the nineteenth and twentieth century from the militant monastery orders to large sections of the population. The myth of King Rāma provides a new utopic ideal of a *summum bonum* here on earth: the *Rāma rājya*. The first step towards the realization of this ideal is seen in a very concrete action, which inspires violent emotions: the ‘liberation’ of Rāma’s Birthplace in Ayodhyā. This goal not only unites Hindus of all castes all over the country, but also provides an effective instrument to harass the Muslim population, which is regarded as the major hindrance with regard to the realization of this ideal, and as an encroachment on the holy order. The result is large-scale disturbances which result in the death of large numbers of Hindus and Muslims. By imposing strict measures the state-authorities and the central government in Delhi just manage to prevent an outright civil war.

India has known countless wars, but none of them can be called ‘holy war’ in the sense defined here. The developments sketched above, however, have led to the incorporation into Hinduism of a number of elements which have been associated with the idea of a ‘holy war’. These elements are: 1 The formation of an exclusive community of Hindus who share the desire for a common good. 2 A shift in religious emphasis towards a single, personal, God, Rāma. 3 A tendency to see Islam and its adherents as agents of evil (which may be described as demonization of the enemy). 4 The regarding of Hindus who perish during conflicts with Muslims as victims for the common weal.

The question may be asked whether Hinduism is developing into a monotheistic-like religion. As a rule historians rightly refrain from making

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<sup>38</sup> The Babri Masjid was eventually destroyed on December 6, 1992, provoking another round of acrimonious Muslim–Hindu antagonism. Cf. also below, p. 485.

predictions about the future, and I too will not attempt to answer this question. We may conclude then merely by remarking that, though Hinduism has proved in the past to be a religion not prone to holy wars, recent developments in Indian society unfortunately have made the prospect of a holy war between Hindus and Muslims seem only too real and close.

# The Ramtek Inscriptions I\*

## INTRODUCTION

The hill of Ramtek (21° 28' N, 79° 28' E), c. 45 km NE of Nagpur (Maharashtra), merits special attention because it appears to be one of the few places in India where an uninterrupted historical development from the fourth century AD to the present day can be investigated through a series of archaeological monuments which, although partly restored or built over in later periods, seem never to have been exposed to destructive and iconoclastic forces. From at least the fifth century onwards the hill, also known as Rāmagiri, Sindūragiri, or Tapaṅgiri (Tapogiri), served as a regional centre of religious activity and, probably, also had a more secular function as an outstanding strategic base controlling the highway that connected, and still connects, the central and eastern part of the basin of the Ganges with the northern Deccan. This could possibly explain, at least in part, why the religious structures on top of the hill have attracted the attention and care of the rulers of the area from a very early date.

Archaeological explorations in the Nagpur Plain during the last two decades have brought to light a great number of interesting sites belonging to the culture of the Vākāṭakas (fourth-fifth centuries), notably Nagardhan and adjacent Hamlapuri (7 km south of Ramtek), generally considered to be the area of the Vākāṭaka capital, Nandivardhana. In Hamlapuri, a splendid collection of Buddhist bronzes was recently found which seems to prove, in the words of Jamkhedkar, 'that Buddhism was a living faith under the Brahmanical Vākāṭakas'.<sup>1</sup> Whereas other Vākāṭaka centres of culture fell into decay and were gradually obliterated,<sup>2</sup> Ramtek survived and to date still has four intact and one impaired Vākāṭaka temples (four of them still containing the original idol), besides a small cave-temple and a cave-reclusory, probably also dating back to this period. Moreover, at least one stone tank situated on the top of

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\* The first version of this article with the title *The Ramtek Inscriptions* was published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. LII, Part 3 (1989), 467–496.

1 Jamkhedkar 1985b, 18.

2 Nagardhan: IAR 1981–82, 49 f.; IAR, 1982–83, 137; Jamkhedkar 1987a, 339. Mandal: IAR 1975–76, 36; IAR 1976–77, 39. Mansar: Nagpur Gazetteer 57, 303; Hunter 1934; Mirashi 1959, 22. Nagara: IAR 1979–80, 56; IAR 1980–81, 40; IAR 1981–82, 49. Markandi: Jamkhedkar 1974. Paunar: Mirashi in CII V, 23 ff.; Deo and Dhavalikar 1968; Jamkhedkar 1985a.

the hill appears to preserve very old cloister constructions which could likewise go back to the Vākāṭaka period. In addition, the hill and its immediate surroundings contain at least one undamaged temple that may go back to the Cālukya period (the Kālikā Temple c. 200 m NW of the hill), and temples and tanks constructed during the Yādava period (twelfth–thirteenth centuries), the Vijayanagara period (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries), as well as the Mārāṭha period (eighteenth century and later). In view of this astonishing richness in historical monuments, it is surprising to discover that the hill has been systematically ignored in all standard works dealing with the history of Indian art and architecture.<sup>3</sup>

In two articles the present author has described the archaeological remains of Ramtek Hill on the basis of an inventory made during field-work in November 1986 and has evaluated the historical development of the religious structure of the Ramtek complex by making use of this inventory.<sup>4</sup> Among the collected data are several inscriptions which could be only referred to in the above-mentioned articles, but which deserve a more detailed treatment. This is the purpose of the present paper. For an historical evaluation of the religious content of these inscriptions the reader is referred to the second of the two articles (Bakker 1990b).

To the best of my knowledge there are four Sanskrit inscriptions to be found in temples on the Ramtek Hill, as well as two ancient pieces of graffiti. Three inscriptions and the graffiti are found on the walls and pillars of one of the two Narasiṃha temples, the so-called Kevala–Narasiṃha Temple; the other lengthy inscription is found in the Lakṣmaṇa Temple. The latter has been published by Mirashi and Kulkarni in *Epigraphia Indica*, xxv (1939-40), 7–20. However, that edition does not attempt to restore the original metrical composition of the text, nor is a translation given. The publication of the oldest inscription, found in the Kevala–Narasiṃha Temple, cannot be presented here. Its publication is envisaged by the Archaeological Survey of India, and here we can only note what has been published about it so far. In a recent article Jamkhedkar observed:

During conservation (i.e. of the Kevala–Narasiṃha Temple), an inscription, covered with lime plaster, was discovered on the temple wall beneath the thick layers of white wash. This 14-line record in nail-headed Gupta Brahmi characters, caused to be carved by Prabhavati Gupta herself, refers to the god as *Prabhavati svamin*. On the basis of the internal evidence the temple as well as the image can be dated to c. 415–425 AD [...] The presence of a cluster of stone temples enshrining different *avatāras* of Viṣṇu (viz. Trivikrama, Varāha) at Ramtek has established beyond doubt the prevalence of a Bhāgavata cult on parallel lines with that popular in the Gupta court. On architectural, sculptural and epigraphical evidence these can be

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3 I looked in vain in Cousens 1931, Brown 1976, Deglurkar 1974, Verma 1973, Deshpande 1985, Huntington 1985, Harle 1986. A short treatment of two of the Vākāṭaka temples is found in Williams 1983, 225–27.

4 Bakker 1989c and Bakker 1990b. See also Bakker 1997.

firmly dated at least to the first quarter of the fifth century AD. The stylistic characteristic observed in the images of Viṣṇu found at Nagra, Nandapuri (Ramtek) and Mandhal suggest that on art historical considerations, the introduction of Vaiṣṇavism in the Vidarbha area can be further pushed back, at least by half a century.<sup>5</sup>

One may add that the other Narasiṃha temple, which is referred to as the Rudra–Narasiṃha Temple, and is not far from the first, seems to be older still. It is similar to the first in construction as well as in having the huge Narasiṃha idol installed (cf. below, Plates 56 and 57). It is, however, less refined, lacking the two small windows and the ornamentation along the doorposts and on the outer walls. However, it has eight ‘firepits’ (?) (*kuṇḍas*) along its sides, above which are small pedestals constructed against the temple wall on which, originally, *dikpāla* deities may have been installed. Two fragments of such images have been found and are at present stored in the Central Nagpur Museum.

If the statement of Jamkhedkar quoted above proves to be correct, we should assign the earliest Narasiṃha temple to the beginning of the fifth century. However, stylistic considerations would favour a somewhat later dating, say, the middle or second half of the fifth century, a date to which the two pieces of graffiti also seem to point.<sup>6</sup>

## THE GRAFFITI

The first graffito is found on a square pillar at the temple entrance. It is written in Deccani-style characters with solid triangular head-marks (Plate 6). The letter-forms, which show a tendency to roundedness, resemble the scripts of the Deccan of the fifth-century Vākāṭakas and Kadambas.<sup>7</sup> The inscription reads: *śrīmadanalobha*, evidently the name of one of the early visitors.

The other graffito is found on the left square pillar that stands in front of the cella (Plate 7). Its characters show a mixture of solid triangular and block head-marks and have notches in the horizontal bars.<sup>8</sup> The last quadrangular letter with a dot inside resembles the *tha* of the Western Cālukya script of the sixth century.<sup>9</sup> Hence the inscription may date from the fifth–sixth century. It reads: *bharatanātha*, probably also the name of a devotee.<sup>10</sup>

5 Jamkhedkar 1987a, 340. Jamkhedkar published his edition and translation of this inscription in *Kusumāñjali* I (1987b), 217–23. We have presented an edition and translation of this inscription in BSOAS LVI, Part 1 (1993), 46–74 (see below, p. 115 ff.).

6 Cf. Williams 1983, 226.

7 Dani 1963, pl. XV; Bühler 1896, pls. VII. x–xiii.

8 Dani 1963, 80 f.

9 Dani 1963, 184 f.

10 It is possible to read *bharakanātha*, assuming that the right horizontal bar of the *ka* has been obliterated.



*Plate 6*

*Graffito on an entrance pillar of the Kevala-Narasimha Temple*



*Plate 7*

*Graffito on a pillar inside the Kevala-Narasimha Temple*

## THE TWO SHORT KEVALA–NARASIṂHA TEMPLE INSCRIPTIONS

On the same pillar on which the second graffito is found, on the side that faces the entrance, is engraved a short Sanskrit inscription. An outwardly very similar inscription is found on the parallel pillar at the right side of the cella entrance. Both pillars have recently been connected by an iron frame which screens off the entrance of that part of the temple where the image is installed. The appearance of both parallel inscriptions on the two pillars in front of the *garbhagr̥ha* strongly suggests that they somehow belong together and were engraved at about the same time.

As it happens, photographs of both inscriptions have been published in *Indian Archaeology 1982–83—A Review* (p. 167), but this might have been more or less accidental, since the description of these two plates (p. 137) confuses them with the reported ‘Prabhāvati Gupta inscription’ ‘on the southern wall of the *maṇḍapa*’. Nothing is said as to the contents of the two parallel inscriptions, and they certainly do not endorse the statement made in the IAR that the temple ‘on the basis of these inscriptions could definitely be dated to the fifth to sixth century AD’.<sup>11</sup> In fact, both inscriptions belong to the Yādava period as will be shown below. I shall refer to these two inscriptions as *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 1 & No. 2*.

*Kevala–Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 1 (Plate 8)*

Text

- [1] *trivikramapadodbhūtāvamdanīyāsarasvatī | sarvajñasyā*  
 [2] *≃ śirasāsārasālamṛtīśobhanā || kāmadevasutaḥ*  
 [3] *≃ rṅadevastārkikāśekharaḥ | trivikramakavervā*  
 [4] *dyonautiśrīnṛharimśadā || śiṃhaṇarājyeśārva*  
 [5] *≃ vatsare | aṅgaṃvaikalyatāmetirāmebhaktasya*  
 [6] *sarvadā | 2 | samudgayamaka ≃ kṛtījānātu |*

Analysed text

*trivikramapadodbhūtā vandanīyā sarasvatī |*  
*sarvajñasyā (pī) śirasā rasālamṛtīśobhanā ||*  
*kāmadevasutaḥ (śā) rṅadevas tārkikāśekharaḥ |*  
*trivikramakaver vādyo nauti śrīnṛharim śadā ||*  
*śiṃhaṇarājye śārva (rī) vatsare |*  
*aṅgaṃ vaikalyatām eti rāme (') bhaktasya sarvadā | 2 |*  
*samudgayamaka (ṃ su) kṛtī jānātu |*

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11 IAR 1982–83, 137.

## Translation

SARASVATĪ, who has sprung from the steps of Trivikrama (the speech, which arises from the words of Trivikrama), who (which) is embellished with the ornaments (figures of speech) and *rasa*, should be revered by the head of even the omniscient.

ŚĀRṄGADEVA, son of Kāmadeva, who is the crown of the philosophers and whose praises are sung by the poet Trivikrama, praises always the illustrious Nṛhari.

In the time of the reign of Siṃhaṇa, in the Śārvarin-year.

THE body of one who is devoted to Rāma will attain a state of good health /  
The body of one who is not devoted to Rāma will certainly attain a state of weakness.

Let a wise reader resolve the Samudgayamaka.

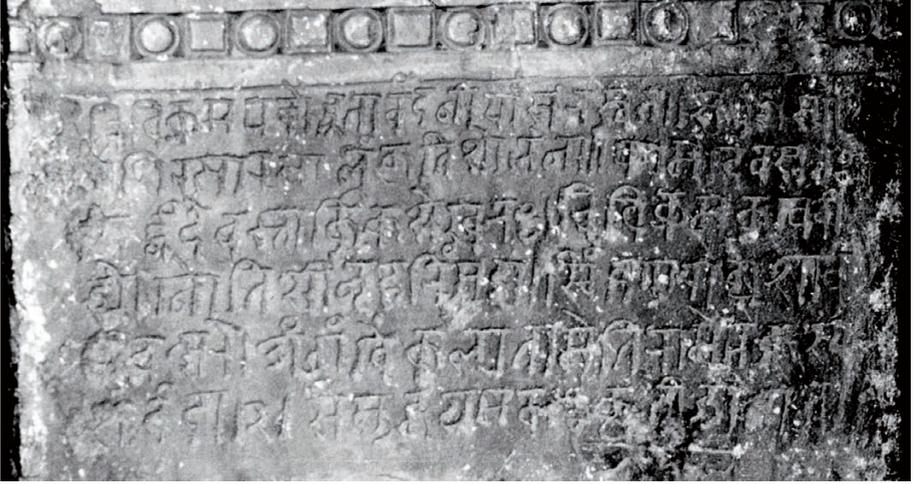


Plate 8

*Kevala-Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 1*

## Commentary

The inscription is written in clear Nāgarī script. Only a few syllables at the margins have been effaced. The type of character agrees with other Yādava inscriptions, using occasionally *pr̥ṣṭhamātrā akṣaras* for non-initial vowel signs.<sup>12</sup>

12 Cf. Med. Ind. Pal., II, 'Nagari' (W. & S. India, Yadava, 13th century). One of the few deviations appears to be the alternative form of *ra*.

The inscription can be dated in the Śārvarin-year (i.e. the 34th year of the Bṛhaspati Cycle) at the time of the reign of King Siṃhaṇa, which yields the date AD 1240.<sup>13</sup>

The text is a mixture of verse (*śloka*) and prose (i.e. of *gadya* and *padya*). The verses appear to contain several double-entendres (*śleṣa*), whereas the last hemistich is to be read twice (indicated by the figure 2 between *daṇḍas*) in a different way in order to make a complete *śloka* verse. This is made explicit by the prose statement that it should be understood as a *samudgayamaka*, i.e. that the same *akṣaras* can be grouped into two ways yielding different, in fact opposite meanings.<sup>14</sup> Thus we can read: *vaikalyatām ... bhaktasya* or *vai kalyatām ... bhaktasya*.

The text testifies to the pilgrimage to Ramtek and worship of Narasiṃha (the deity of the temple in which the inscription is found) by a certain Śārṅgadeva son of Kāmadeva. The Śrīṃṅhari who is praised may, besides the obvious Narasiṃha, also be the Yādava king Siṃhaṇa whose name marks him as a 'lion among men'. Śārṅgadeva is called *tārkikaśekhara*, which excludes the possibility of his being identical with the musician Śārṅgadeva, author of the *Samgītaratnākara*, who worked at the court of the Yādava king Siṃhaṇa and whose father we know to have been Soḍḍhala.<sup>15</sup>

The first *śloka* is an invocation of the goddess Sarasvatī. When we resolve the *śleṣa*, however, we read the poet's own praise. Moreover, it would seem that the philosopher and poet in referring to Sarasvatī's (Goddess of Learning, i.e. 'learning') descent from Trivikrama (i.e. Viṣṇu) are making a pun on their own lineages. It is well-known that the members of the distinguished and learned family that traced its origin back to Trivikrama held important offices at the court of the Yādavas, notably Caṅgadeva, who was the astronomer of King Siṃhaṇa.<sup>16</sup> Śārṅgadeva could have been a member of this family. The ancestral Trivikrama, who belonged to the Śāṇḍilya *gotra*, is called *kavīcakravartin*, 'Prince of the Poets', in the Patna Inscription,<sup>17</sup> and he is, in all likelihood, identical to the author of the *Nalacampū* or *Damayantīkathā*, viz. Trivikramabhaṭṭa, who flourished at the beginning of the tenth century AD.<sup>18</sup> This excludes the possibility that the poet Trivikrama mentioned in the present inscription who is said to sing the praise of Śārṅgadeva—which might be taken to mean that Śārṅgadeva commissioned him to compose this inscription for him—is the same as the 'Prince of the Poets' who wrote the *Nalacampū*.

Consequently, there were two poets Trivikrama, one living in the tenth century, the other in the middle of the thirteenth. Like the first, the second

13 Swamikannu Pillai 1982, table I.

14 Lienhart 1984, 186.

15 *Samgītaratnākara* 1.5 (p. 10).

16 EI 1 (1892), 338–46; Pingree 1970–81 III, 39 f.

17 EI I, 340, 343.

18 Kielhorn in EI I, 340; Bhandarkar in EI IX (1907–08), 28; Yazdani 1960 I, 596; Lienhart 1984, 267.

Trivikrama apparently made use of the *campū* style of composition. This result agrees perfectly with the outcome of an investigation of Mirashi with respect to the author of the *Madālasācampū*, who earlier had been generally held to be identical with his namesake, the author of the *Nalacampū*. Mirashi has argued convincingly that the poet Trivikrama who wrote the *Madālasācampū*, and who was a devotee of Viṣṇu rather than of Śiva, as was the author of the *Nalacampū*, was not the same as the author of the *Nalacampū*, who in his introduction ‘tells us that he was born in the Śāṅḍilya *gotra* and was the son of Devāditya (v.l. Nemāditya) and grandson of Śrīdhara’.<sup>19</sup> According to Mirashi, the second Trivikrama, who does not give any particulars about his descent in his work of the *Madālasācampū*, is ‘much inferior’ as a poet and wrote ‘apparently in a much later age’.<sup>20</sup>

If our identification of the poet Trivikrama of the inscription with the author of the *Madālasācampū* is correct, this ‘later age’ can now be determined as the middle of the thirteenth century; he may have been also the author of a verse quoted in Jalhaṇa’s *Sūktimuktāvalī* (p. 172, v. 13.),<sup>21</sup> which was composed in the court of the Yādavas in AD 1258. The possible hint at Trivikramabhaṭṭa in the first *śloka* of the inscription makes it conceivable that the second Trivikrama was well aware of his illustrious predecessor whose style he sought to imitate.

Finally, in the third verse the inscription testifies to the importance that was attached by that time to the worship of Rāma. Apart from the *samudgaya-maka*, this verse, like the first two, may also contain a *śleṣa*, since ‘Rāma’ was also the name of the chief general of King Siṃhaṇa, who had succeeded his father Kholeśvara in his military profession and who was killed in an expedition against Gujarat in the year of the present inscription or shortly before it.<sup>22</sup>

#### Kevala–Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 2 (Plate 9)

Text

- [1] *āsīdvainyapureśriyāmadhipatiścāmum*  
 [2] *danāmādviṅgaḥ putrastasyababhūvakāsarapure*  
 [3] *śrīmānkaviḥ śrīdharaḥ | tatputraḥ sukṛtītri*  
 [4] *vikramakṛtīsāhityaratnākaraścakre*

19 Mirashi 1964b, p. 2.

20 Mirashi 1964b, p. 6; cf. Lienhart 1984, 268.

21 See Sternbach 1978–80, 387, s.v. ‘Trivikrama II’.

22 *The Ambā Inscription* (AD 1240) in *Arch. Survey of Western India III*, 85–93 (by Bühler).

A similar double-entendre is found in the Ambā inscription, which records the erection of a Rāma–Nārāyaṇa Temple to commemorate the death of General Rāma, who is praised by his aunt (Lakṣmī) in the following ambiguous Sragdharā verse:

*p(ṛ)audhas tyāge sa rāmo nayavinayavidām agragaṅḡyas sa rāmo,*  
*sauryasvāmī sa rāmo harapadakamaladhyānadhīraḥ sa rāmaḥ |*  
*laṅkhādhiśas sa rāma(h) kavīrutavacasāṅ stutya ekaḥ sa rāmas,*  
*tattvajñāno sa rāmo (nī)jakulasaraso rājahaṅsaḥ sa rāmaḥ || 38 ||*

[5] *rāghavasodareṇasahitaḥ śrīrāmasaṃse*  
 [6] *vanam* ||

#### Analysed text

*āsīd vainyapure śriyām adhipatiś cāmuṇḍanāmā dvijaḥ,  
 putras tasya babhūva kāsarapure śrīmān kaviḥ śrīdharah |  
 tatputrah sukṛtī trivikramakṛtī sāhityaratnākaraś,  
 cakre rāghavasodareṇa sahitaḥ śrīrāmasaṃsevanam ||*

#### Translation

THERE once was a brahmin named Cāmuṇḍa, who was a treasurer in the city of Vainyapura. His son, the illustrious poet Śrīdhara, lived in Kāsarapura. The son of the latter, the proficient author Trivikrama, who is a 'jewel-mine of composition', has, together with his brother Rāghava, performed the worship of the illustrious Rāma.

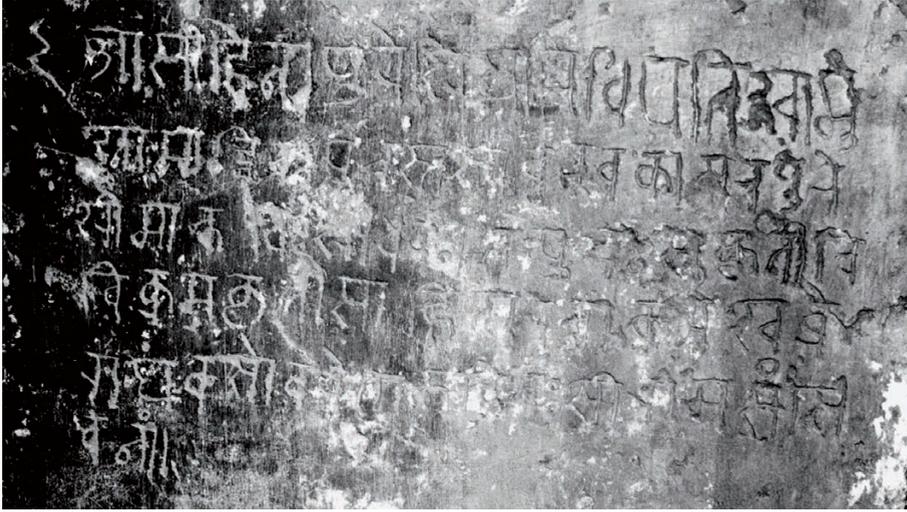


Plate 9  
 Kevala-Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 2

#### Commentary

The characters of the inscription are the same as in the previous one, the writing a little looser and less neat. Evidently less time and effort was spent on the engraving of this inscription, but on the whole, as we have already noted, the appearance of the two inscriptions gives the impression that they were made at the same occasion.

The present inscription contains one verse in Śārdūlavikrīḍita metre. Its connexion with the first inscription seems to be borne out by its contents. Its author evidently is Trivikrama, who calls himself a 'jewel-mine of composition', and this poet may be the same as the one who composed the inscription for Śārṅgadeva. Obviously, Trivikrama, after the completion of his assignment, used the occasion to have his own inscription engraved. This secondariness could explain why it was apparently carried out with less care.

If this identification is correct, the inscription supplies us with some additional information about the author of the *Madālasācampū*. He was a brahmin, son of Śrīdhara, also a poet, and grandson of Cāmuṇḍa, who is said to have been an *adhipati* in Vainyapura.

Trivikrama came to Ramtek with his brother Rāghava to worship Rāma. His place of residence is not mentioned, but could have been the court of King Siṃhaṇa to which also Śārṅgadeva might have belonged. His grandfather hailed from Vainyapura, his father from Kāsarapura, two unidentifiable toponyms.

### THE RAMTEK STONE INSCRIPTION OF THE TIME OF RĀMACANDRA

We now turn to the longest inscription found at Ramtek, the so-called *Ramtek Stone Inscription of the time of Rāmacandra*. A technical description of it has been given by Mirashi and Kulkarni, who published a first edition in *Epigraphia Indica* XXV. The historical conclusions reached by Mirashi, ascribing the inscription to the Yādava king Rāmacandra (i.e. 'last quarter of the thirteenth century AD') against the earlier opinion of Kielhorn, who identified Siṃhaṇa and Rāmacandra with homonymous princes of the Raipur branch of the Haihaya dynasty, have been corroborated by later research and need no further discussion.<sup>23</sup>

I shall give a synopsis of the contents and a metrical restoration of the text. Those verses that are sufficiently legible will be translated. For technical details of the inscription ('which is incised on a large slab let into the wall on the right hand side of the door of the *garbhagrha* in the temple of Lakṣmaṇa') the reader is referred to *Epigraphia Indica*.<sup>24</sup> The numbering of the verses is mine. The first three lines of the inscription have suffered so much that only a few words are legible, too little to restore the metre. On account of the average number of verses contained in one line we conjecture that the first three lines contained five or six verses. Our numbering therefore starts with verse 6.

<sup>23</sup> EI II, 230; cf. EI XXV, 7.

<sup>24</sup> EI XXV, 7 ff.

*Synopsis of the contents*

Verses 1–28 describe the exploits of the Yādava dynasty (v. 8) which traces its origin back to Yadu (v. 9). Vv. 12–21 seem to be concerned with the deeds of King Bhillama and his successor Jaitrapāla (Jaitugi) AD 1191–1210 (v. 15), whose victory over Rudra (probably Rudradeva of the Kākatīyas) is mentioned in v. 12.<sup>25</sup> His victories against the Andhras and Colas appear in v. 14, against the Gurjaras in v. 15.

Vv. 22–24 seem to deal with King Siṃhaṇa (v. 22), whose exploits on the battlefield are praised (v. 23) and who is said to have reached the ultimate peace (*śāntiṃ paramām avāpa*). Then the inscription passes on to his successor, who must be King Kṛṣṇa (AD 1247–60), who ruled the earth, was a tree of tranquility (*viśrāmataru*) for the petitioners who appealed to him never in vain (v. 25) and who finally, after pacifying the whole earth, made it forget its grief over the loss of King Siṃhaṇa (v. 27).

Vv. 28–29 seem to introduce King Rāmacandra (AD 1271–1310), either with or without explicitly mentioning his immediate predecessors, viz. King Mahādeva, his uncle, and Ammaṇa, the latter's son. *taṭ°* in *tatsutaḥ* (v. 29c) may hence refer to King Kṛṣṇa, father of Rāmacandra, whereas the epithet *vāyīnāyaka* (29a) could possibly allude to the ruse by means of which Rāmacandra wrested the throne from his cousin Ammaṇa. This episode is told in another inscription of Rāmacandra (EI xxv, 199–225 v. 14), where it is said that the young pretender to the throne succeeded in entering the palace of his cousin in the guise of a leader (or actor) (*nāyaka*) of a theatrical troupe which in reality consisted of his comrades. Maybe we should read *vājināyaka* ('the impetuous hero') instead of *vāyīnāyaka*, which does not seem to make sense.

V. 30 introduces Rāghavadeva on whom King Rāmacandra devolved the responsibilities for the welfare of the empire in order that he himself could enjoy the arts of his harem-ladies (v. 31). Of this Rāghava it is said that he held the office of 'superintendent of the guard of the royal bed-chamber' (*sayyāpālakulādhiśa*) (vv. 32, 38). He gained this new position, as it would seem, thanks to his devotion to Vaidyanātha (Śiva?) (v. 33), and he was married to the most lovely and virtuous lady Rājāyī, who personified happiness and beauty (v. 34). Rāghava, invested with this honourable charge, considered his foremost duty (v. 118); what this involved seems to have been expressed in the part of the inscription that has become illegible, but Mirashi's supposition appears plausible: 'some repairs done to the temple of Lakṣmaṇa where the inscription is put up. Māideva (Māyideva), who is mentioned in ll. 70 f., seems to have been a local official in charge of the work'.<sup>26</sup>

It seems likely that this Rāghava is the same as Raghu 'the deputy and minister of the late Rái Rám Deo' who joined the rebellion of Rāmacandra's

25 Cf. Bombay Gaz. I, 239, 522; Bhandarkar 1928, 186; Yazdani 1960 I, 529.

26 EI XXV, 10.

son-in-law, Harapāladeva, against the Sultan of Delhi and whose miserable death at the hand of Khusraw Khān is described in the *Nuh Sipih*r by Amīr Khusraw.<sup>27</sup> There is nothing to suggest an identity with Rāghava, brother of Trivikrama, who features in the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Ramtek Inscription* No. 2.

The main part of the inscription is concerned with the eulogy (Māhātmya) of Rāma and his most holy abode, the Sindūra Mountain (i.e. Rāmagiri, or Ramtek) (vv. 39–116). As such, the text provides an early, and what is more, datable forerunner of the *Sindūragirimāhātmya* of which only a late eighteenth-century version in 16 chapters is now available (recently edited by S.M. Ayachit and hereafter referred to by the siglum SM).<sup>28</sup>

In order to discover a way of crossing the unfathomable ocean of existence, Rāghava addressed his guru (vv. 35–37). In response the latter recites the *Sindūragirimāhātmya*. The guru starts proclaiming that of all ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, Rāma is the foremost (v. 39). He lives on this mountain, also called Tapaṅgiri, together with Hanumat (v. 40). Before (*prāg*) Rāma (i.e. in the Kṛtayuga), the mountain was resorted to by Narasimha, who killed the ‘enemy of the gods’ (i.e. Hiraṇyakaśipu) here. His blood gave the mountain its red colour (*sindūra*), hence the name Sindūragiri (v. 42). Thus Rāma and Narasimha appear to be the two principal gods of this *tīrtha*.

After these introductory remarks, Rāghava’s guru seems to expose the transmission of the Māhātmya. It would seem that Agastya (‘who had protected the ocean by keeping it in his mouth’, v. 44) heard the story in Brahmā’s

27 Elliot and Dowson III, 557 f.; cf. Yazdani 1960 II, 556.

28 Ayachit 1985. It might be useful to quote here some information concerning this Māhātmya given in Bakker 1990b, 76.

The *Sindūragirimāhātmya* as it is published by Dr. Ayachit appears to be a product of the second half of the eighteenth century. It contains sixteen chapters and is based on three MSS preserved in Ramtek and Nagpur. The Mairāl family, whom I visited in Ramtek village, claims that this text was written by one of their ancestors, Bābū Mairāl, who had lived at the court of the Gaikwars in Baroda in the service of the Peshwa. At the end of his life (c. AD 1770–1800) this Bābū Mairāl returned to Ramtek to write several books, all of which are said to have been destroyed by a fire apart from the *Sindūragirimāhātmya* in 16 chapters. This information is based on an unpublished biography written by his son, the autograph of which is kept in the Viṭṭhal Maṅḍir in Ramtek, which is owned by the Mairāl family. However, although this claim does not seem to be completely unfounded, it is very unlikely that the Māhātmya text was a new creation of Bābū Mairāl. Divergencies in the MS material speak against it, especially as presented by MS ‘U’ used by Ayachit for his edition (Nagpur University collection). Thanks to the help of Dr. Bühnemann, I have recently become acquainted with what seems to be the only MS of the *Sindūragirimāhātmya* preserved outside the region, viz. a MS kept in the Library at Trivandrum (No. 10197). This MS seems to be related to the deviating MS ‘U’. Moreover, there appears to have existed a local Māhātmya comprising 45 *adhyāyas*. A MS of it was kept in Ramtek village and has been consulted by Mirashi, but is now irretrievably lost (Mirashi in EI XXV, 8, 10, 11; cf. Hiralal 1908, 206). From all this we conclude that there may have existed a local Māhātmya tradition in Ramtek which produced a new up-to-date recension in 16 *adhyāyas* when the place was flourishing once again in the Marāṭhā period.

palace and subsequently communicated it to Rāma, who visited his hermitage (vv. 44–46). Agastya is also responsible for Rāma's installation on this hill (v. 110; cf. SM 16.63). Traditionally Agastya's hermitage is located on the southern flank of the Vindhya mountains (cf. SM 9.35: *vindhyaśya dakṣiṇe pārśve samīpe nandivardhanam | gautamasyāgnikoṇe vai nairṛtye kumbhajasya vai || 35 ||*), and today a *tīrtha* on top of the hill is considered as the place where Agastya practised his *tapas* (in the precincts of the Rāma–Kṛṣṇa temple near the Bhairava Darwāzā). The line of transmission of the Māhātmya, Brahmā–Agastya–Rāma–other sages, etc., corresponds to the one presented in the SM 6.8–14.

Vv. 47–116 contain the actual Māhātmya of Sindūragiri as revealed by Agastya. After having proclaimed the merit that accrues to one who stays on this mountain, especially after keeping a fast and vigil on a Viṣṇu-day (probably the 11th of each *pakṣa*) (vv. 47–51), the text goes on to mention the four *dvārapālas*, or guardians of the *kṣetra* (v. 52). They are the same as described in the SM 2.1, viz. Ghaṅṭeśvara, Sudheśvara (= Siddheśvara ?), Kedāreśvara and Āñjaneya (i.e. Hanumat).

Next the inscription describes the 'eight *tīrthas*' (cf. v. 64) that, according to the SM 5.4, encircle the pond Ambatīrtha (v. 60) (in SM known as Ambakuṇḍa and now called Ambālā Tālāb). This pond lies at the eastern end of the horseshoe-shaped Rāmagiri hill and is nowadays surrounded by many temples, most of which date from the Bhonsle period. The same eight holy places are described in SM 5.1–7: Gaṅgāsrotas (which must have been mentioned in v. 55; cf. SM 5.4), Śaṅkhatīrtha (v. 56), Agnitīrtha (v. 58), Ambikāpati (v. 60), Varuṇatīrtha (v. 61), Śuklatīrtha (v. 62), Nṛsimhatīrtha (v. 63), and the eighth, Kurukṣetratīrtha (v. 64).

Then a group of 'five *tīrthas*' is described (*tīrthapañcaka*, vv. 65–70), of which only three are known today and mentioned, not coherently, in the SM. The first three are Lakṣmītīrtha (v. 66), Haṃsatīrtha (v. 67), Cakratīrtha (v. 68; SM 7.25–29). According to Mirashi (1959, 101) this latter could be the pond today called Cākordā lying one mile to the south of the hill.<sup>29</sup> The fourth is Dhanustīrtha (v. 69; SM 7.29–35). Here one should offer a bow, preferably of gold (cf. SM 7.31–32). The fifth is Pitṛtīrtha (v. 70), where one should bathe and offer a *pitṛtarpaṇa*. This *tīrtha* is described at length in SM 4.3–16, where it is said that its modern name is Rāmagayā (cf. v. 80, in which this name is mentioned). It could be modern Gāyakhurī near Khimḍsī Lake (Mirashi 1959, 101), or the Ambālā tank (Hiralal 1908, 205).

Before beginning the description of the principal holy places on the mountain itself, the text seems to make another tour around the hill, starting in the west (Vājimedhatīrtha v. 71; cf. SM 7.43 where an Aśvamedhatīrtha is located in the

29 The Cakratīrtha is said to have been created by Viṣṇu's *cakra* called Sudarśana; the fact that this is made explicit in v. 68 may point to an awareness of the old name of the lake north of the hill, called 'Sudarśana' in the Vākāṭaka inscription in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple (see below, p. 144).

south), along the River Kalipā and its confluence with the Suranadī (vv. 72–74), which is to be located to the north and northeast of the hill in accordance with the present situation (cf. SM 2.16–28, 3.1–31; below, n. 71 on p. 144), and Maṇikālakunḍa (v. 75) which, contrary to what is suggested in the inscription, in the SM 2.6 is located in the west, and ending with the Mokṣakunḍa in the south (v. 76; cf. SM 2.4).

The inscription continues with a description of the *tīrthas* on or by the side of the hill. The first three are tanks: Rāmatīrtha, Sindūravāpī, and Karpūravāpī. The two latter are among the most noteworthy constructions at Rāmagiri. The Karpūravāpī lies at the foot of the northern flank of the hill (v. 82). It consists of a tank of stone with arcades on four sides (its eastern and part of its northern sides now in ruins), along with a temple complex with five cellas, three of which are crowned by *śikharas* situated on the western side. The compound is a good example of the thirteenth-century so-called Hemādpanti style.

The Sindūravāpī (v. 81) is a deep, well-constructed tank of stone with an entrance gate, which may date from the Mārāṭha period, and cloisters on its northern side, which are probably earlier than the Yādava period. The tank is situated on top of the hill to the east of the main temple complex. In its vicinity (*samīpatas*, v. 81) the Rāmatīrtha is said to be found. We hazard the idea that a predecessor of the tank that is situated beside the main temple complex might have been meant, a tank which nowadays is known as the Sītecī Nhāṇī (or Sītā's Bathing Place), since no other bathing place, let alone an old one, is found elsewhere in the close surroundings of the Sindūravāpī. If, on the other hand, as is assumed by Mirashi (1959, 102), this 'Rāmatīrtha' is identical with the reservoir northeast of the hill, which according to the SM was formerly called Īsāla and today Rām Sāgar or Rāmatīrtha (SM 15.40: *īśālākhyam purā nāmādhunā puṣkaram śubham | rāmatīrtham idānīm tu rāma snānena te bhavet*||), the fact would remain that a conspicuous tank on the Rāmagiri is not recorded in the inscription. The inscription does not make a reference to a bathing place of Sītā (a Sītākunḍa or a Sītātīrtha).<sup>30</sup> The tank near the entrance of the main temple-complex may have been restored and embellished on several later occasions. Thus the sculptured relief at its western wall seems to point to the Vijayanagara period.<sup>31</sup> The Rāmatīrtha is the only tank to which the inscription devotes three stanzas, and this, together

30 This, along with the fact that the inscription does not make any allusion to the Yakṣa of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (cf. below, pp. 349 f.), seems to imply that the thirteenth-century author was not aware of an identity of the Ramtek Hill with a Rāmagiri of which 'the waters were hallowed by the bathing of Janaka's daughter' (*Meghadūta* 1). This, again, makes Mirashi's identification more problematic. On the other hand, Rāma's footprints occur in v. 83 and a 'Nhāṇī Sīteci' is mentioned in the fourteenth-century Mahānubhāva text, the *Sthānapothī* (p. 5). The lake to the north of the hill is known to the Vākāṭaka inscription in the Kevala-Narasimha Temple as 'Sudarśana' (see below, p. 144), a name evidently no longer in use in the 13th century (but see above, n. 29 on p. 91).

31 Bakker 1989c, 97 ff.

with its location in the neighbourhood of the Sindūravāpī, points to the fact that it was a prominent holy place.

After these three tanks, sanctuaries of tutelary deities of Śaiva nature, which appear to have been connected with the access to the summit, are listed: Gajendravadana (v. 84), Dharmeśvara (v. 85; SM 5.9), Dhūmrākṣa, which is said to be the spot where the *śūdra* ascetic Śaṃbuka was killed by the sword ‘Candrahāsa’ which Rāma had taken from Rāvaṇa (v. 86; cf. *Rāmāyaṇa* 7.17; SM 14), but which originally might have been a *yakṣa* (*rākṣasa*) shrine,<sup>32</sup> and Muktiśvara (v. 87).

Having thus reached the top again the Māhātmya concludes with the eulogy of the main deities who have their abode on the hill and who appear to have been the principal objects of worship (vv. 88–116). Six *avatāras* are mentioned, the first being Viṣṇu in his incarnation of Gopāla, who is the full moon (reflected) in the ocean of bliss of the *gopīs* (v. 88). Then Narasiṃha is mentioned again, the fourth descent, who out of compassion protected the earth which was tortured by a torrent of heat (v. 89). As already observed, the myth of Narasiṃha is adduced to account for the name of the mountain, and no doubt the cult of Narasiṃha has old roots here, as is testified by the two fifth-century temples dedicated to him. The third incarnation described is that of the boar, Ādikola (Varāha), who lifted the earth on his tusk out of the flood of the seven oceans (v. 90). That the worship of Varāha also goes back to early days is evident from the huge Vākāṭaka image of a boar not far from the Narasiṃha temples (see Plate 63).

The eulogy of the family of Rāmacandra begins with his father, Paṅktiratha (i.e. Daśaratha; v. 91), who lives here after his abdication, and with Rāma’s two sons, Kuśa and Lava (v. 92), but is then interrupted by two heterologous deities, Mahāsiddhi and Mahābhairava (vv. 93 f.), which can only be accounted for if we assume that the inscription follows an actual topographical pattern. The shrine of Mahāsiddhi, where the eight Mātṛkās were installed, no longer exists, but I found an old relief of the eight mother-goddesses, evidently displaced, in the main cella of the Karpūravāpī compound. Mahābhairava likewise has disappeared, yet a temple of his, nearby Bhogarāma, is also mentioned in the *Sthānapothī*.<sup>33</sup>

The inscription reverts to the retinue of Rāma in verse 95, describing Hanumat (Pavanaḥ), partly as an incarnation of Bhairava, viz. as possessing five mouths, as moon-crested, with ten arms, three eyes, blazing ferociously like a million rising suns, and partly as Rāma’s devout servant, help and mainstay of all devotees who direct their thoughts to him. The Hanumat Temple is found in the innermost court, right next to the Lakṣmaṇa Temple which is named in the next verse (v. 96).

Lakṣmaṇa, in whose temple the present inscription is found, is said to be Śaṅkha (the serpent/the conch), whom we suppose to be homologous with

32 See Bakker 2010a (below, p. 349).

33 *Sthānapothī*, 4.

Śeṣa, though he is explicitly denied a *śaṅkha* nature.<sup>34</sup> Does the Lakṣmaṇa Temple replace an older *nāga* sanctuary? In Rāma's proximity Sitā is present, the remembrance of whose name makes a mountain of sins disappear (v. 97). And then, of course, there are several images of Rāma (Viṣṇu) himself (v. 98). They appear to be described in the next four verses (vv. 99–102).

The foremost (*ādī*) of these is referred to as Ādirāma (v. 99), in all likelihood the name of the main Rāma temple just behind the Lakṣmaṇa Mandir. The second is Bhogarāma (v. 100), which is the name of the Vākāṭaka temple that nowadays is in the possession of the Mahānubhāva sect. The third, Guptarāma, (v. 101), refers to a small (Vākāṭaka) temple partly carved into a recess in the rock below the path that leads up to the hill. And, finally, Śaṅkharāma which, in view of Lakṣmaṇa's designation as Śaṅkha (v. 96), may refer to the Lakṣmaṇa Temple, thus being an appropriate conclusion of the tour of the holy places of Ramtek as described in the inscription in question, found in this very temple.

The Māhātmya ends with a *stotra*, an Aṣṭaka praising Rāmacandra in eight Śārdūlavikrīḍita verses. The worn state of great parts of it makes it hard to read, but from what remains it appears that Rāma is thought identical with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, equated with the primordial Puruṣa (v. 111), the Lord of the Advaita doctrine (v. 104), who, next to the exploits known from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, churned the ocean of milk (v. 105), the remembrance of whose Name (*rāmeti nāma*, v. 108) leads his devotees to the realm of bliss, and who has been installed on the Sindūra Mountain by Agastya (v. 100).

The last part of the inscription is practically illegible. What it could possibly contain has already been discussed above.

### *Editorial principles*

The following edition of this inscription is based on two publications of it by Mirashi; the first one (together with Kulkarni) referred to as M(1), in *Epigraphia Indica XXV* (1939–40), the second one in an appendix of his book *Meghadūta meṃ Rāmāgiri arthāt Rāmṭek* (Nagpur 1959), referred to as M(2). Unfortunately, I was not allowed to take photographs or a rubbing of the inscription-stone and no other such material was available to me.

On the whole, M(1) is to be preferred above M(2), but occasionally the reading of M(2) seems more plausible. Mirashi does not account for the discrepancies between his two editions. M(1) gives an estimate of the number of syllables erased or illegible. This made it possible to restore the metrical composition of the text. I took advantage of the metres that were suggested by

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34 Hiralal 1908, 206 (n. 14). Śaṅkha is one of the main Nāgas mentioned in MBh 1.31.8, 5.101.12. But a *śaṅkha* nature is denied to Lakṣmaṇa, who is generally considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa, to which also the first pāda of v. 96 seems to refer ('carrying the world on his heads'). The usual absence of snake-hoods and other *nāga* characteristics in Lakṣmaṇa's iconography could possibly explain this denial (cf. Mirashi 1964a, 143), but *aśaṅkhātma* may play on the meaning of *śaṅkha*, 'conch', which would deny Lakṣmaṇa a white colour.



- 6 kiṃ varṇyate (ṽyam ya)duvaṃśajaḥ ॐ , ॐ - - - - - ॐ |  
 ॐ - - - - - ॐ , ॐ - - - - - ॐ || 9 ||  
 - - - - - kṣoṇipāla(h), kālaḥ prodyadvairiviravra - - |  
 - - - - - , - - - - - jambhaśatruḥ || 10 ||  
 bhraśyatkalāṅkavidhuma(ṅḍala) - - - - - , - - - - - ॐ |  
 7 - - - - - ॐ , - - - - - ॐ || 11 ||  
 yasyātibhīṣaṇaraṅgaṇa - - - ॐ ,  
 - - - - - ॐ |  
 - - - maṅḍalam idaṃ smarati sma rudra-  
 ko - - - - - ॐ || 12 ||  
 8 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ - - - - - , ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ - - - - - |  
 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ - - - - - līvanālītalagabhujaga - - - - - || 13 ||  
 - - - - - tvam andhrādhipa,  
 tvam re coḍavimuñca da(rpa) ॐ - - - - - |  
 - - - - - ,  
 - - - - - dharānāthaprabodha ॐ - || 14 ||  
 9 - - - - - ॐ , - - - - - (khi)labhūpatīnām |  
 śīr - - - - - ॐ , - - - - - <gurja>rendraḥ || 15 ||  
 parāṅmukho yasya puro raṇe 'bhūt, ॐ - - - - - ॐ |  
 10 ॐ - - - heṣu mahāmahīndre, jaitra ॐ - - - - - ॐ || 16 ||  
 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ - - - ryadasraprabhinna-  
 pratibhaṭavika - - - - - |  
 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ - - - <maukti>kaughair,  
 gaganam iva satāraṃ saṃdhyayā sa - - - || 17 ||  
 - - - - - ॐ , - - - - - <ka>rotkarāṅām |  
 11 saundarya - - - - - ॐ , - - - - - ॐ || 18 ||  
 ॐ ॐ <kṣo>ṇipater asya, bhūmipalo ' - - - ॐ |  
 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ , ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ || 19 ||  
 ॐ hāsinihatotkaṭapratibhaṭebhakumbhadvayī,  
 paṭudyu ॐ - - - - - ॐ |  
 12 ॐ - - - - - kamuktācchalāt,  
 amu(ṣya) ॐ - - - - - || 20 ||  
 - - - mahīruhasya yaśasā can(dra) ॐ - - - ,  
 - - - - - vācaspatēḥ |  
 tejobhir dinakṛdrucām api haṭhād ā(dhi)kya - - - ,  
 - - drālayabhogabhūmir abhavat kāla ॐ - - - - || 21 ||

9a 'yaṃ ya° conj. M 10ab kṣoṇipālaḥ kālaḥ M(1): kṣoṇipālakālaḥ M(2), kṣoṇipālaśkālaḥ E 11a conieci °maṅḍala°: E M ma 12cd rudrakolā conj. M(2) 13d °bhujagavā M(2) 14b darpa° conj. M 15b khila° M: śīla E 15c śīrassu conj. M 15d gurjarendraḥ conj. M 17c mauktikaughair conj. M 18b karo° conj. M 18c saundaryasya M(2) 19a kṣoṇi° conj. M 19b 'om. M(2) 21a candra conj. M

9 Indravajra (Upajāti) 10 Śālinī 11 Vasantatilaka 12 Vasantatilaka 13 Mālinī 14 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 15 Vasantatilaka 16 Upajāti 17 Mālinī 18 Vasantatilaka 19 Śloka 20 Prthvī 21 Śārdūlavikrīḍita

- 13    ॐ - - - - - ॐ - - - - - (gha)ṇadevanāmā |  
 guṇābhi - - - - - ॐ - - - - - || 22 ||  
 ॐ - - - - - caṇḍa-  
 kodaṇḍamuktaiḥ śítakāṇḍadaṇḍai(ḥ) |  
 vi(kha)ṇḍitārakta - - - deha-  
 (kha)ṇḍair amaṇḍi kṣitir āhavasya || 23 ||
- 14    ॐ - - - - - ॐ - - - - - |  
 (mā)sādyā śāntim paramām avāpa, ॐ - - - - - || 24 ||  
 ॐ - - - - - ,  
 ॐ - - - - - jagatīm kṣitīśaḥ |  
 śāśā(s)a viśrāmatarus tato yaḥ,  
 phalegrahir yācakapattripaṅkteḥ || 25 ||
- 15    dharācakraṃ bhrāntvā (tri)daśa - - - - - ,  
 - - - - - |  
 - - - - - dhiṣṭāya racaya-  
 ty aho nṛtyatka - - - - - || 26 ||  
 apārasaṃsārasamudrasārair, yaśaḥsudhaughair vasudhā yadīyaiḥ |  
 śrīsiṃhaṇakṣoṇipater viyogatāpaṃ jahau - - - - - || 27 ||
- 16    a ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ , ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ |  
 ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ , ॐ ॐ ॐ (ma)hītale || 28 ||  
 vājināyaka iti kṣamātale, ni - - - - - dyaśobharaiḥ |  
 tatsutaḥ sakalalokaviśruto, na śrutaḥ kvacid apīha yatsamaḥ || 29 ||  
 tasyāpy ayaṃ rāghavadeva(nāmā), ॐ - - - - - |
- 17    ॐ - - - - - ॐ - - - - - || 30 ||  
 - - - (gu)ṇagauravapraṇayinaṃ śrīrāmacandraḥ prabhur,  
 yaṃ sāmrajyasamṛddhisundararucaḥ pātraṃ vidhāya śrīyaḥ |  
 krīḍodyānatale '(khi)lojvalakalālilāgrḥastrijanā-  
 lāpa - - - - - || 31 ||
- 18    ॐ - - - - - ॐ - - - - - |  
 śrīrāmahūpatvadarasya śāyāpālīkṛtātmanam amānasa(ttva)m || 32 ||  
 śrīvaidyanāthaśivapādapayojabhakti-  
 sampādītā(khi)lamaha(ttva)padāya tasmai |
- 19    ke ke nṛpā ja - - - - - ॐ ,  
 - - - - - || 33 ||

22b *ghaṇadeva*° conj. M(1): *siṃghaṇadeva*° conj. M(2)    23b °*daṇḍaiḥ* M(1): °*daṇḍair* M(2)    23c *vikhaṇḍitā*° M: *viṣaṇḍitā*° E    23d °*khaṇḍair* M: *ṣaṇḍair* E    24c *māsādyā* conj. M    25c *śāśāsa* M: *śāśāsa* E, *yaḥ* M: *yaṣ* E    25d *phalegrahi*° M (unmetrical)    26a *tridaśa* M: *trdaśa* E    26d °*kabandha* conj. M (unmetrical)    27d after *jahau* M inserts ||    28a *a* om. M(2)    28d *mahī*° conj. M    29a conieci *vājināyaka*    30a *nāmā* conj. M    31a *guṇa*° conj. M    31c °*khilo* M: °*ṣilo* E    32d *sattvam* M: *satvam* E    33b °*ākhila*° M: °*āṣila*° E, °*mahattva*° M: °*mahatva*° E

22 Upendravajra (Upajāti)    23 Upajāti    24 Indravajra (Upajāti)    25 Upendravajra (Upajāti)    26 Śikhariṇī    27 Upajāti    28 Śloka    29 Rathodhdhatā    30 Indravajra (Upajāti)    31 Śārdūlavikrīḍita    32 Indravajra (Upajāti)    33 Vasantatilaka



- 27 vilokya sādaram jantur, mucyate (bra)hmahatyayā || 47 ||  
 govipra(bā)lapramadāvadhādipāpaughapūrṇā a || 48 ||  
 28 kṛtopavāsā harivāsare ye, kurvanti rātrau raghunandanāgre |  
 tapamgirau jāgara(ṇām) || 50 ||  
 layaparvatendre || 49 ||  
 29 ghaṇṭeśvaram caiva sudheśvaram ca kedāram īśam ca tathāñjaneyam |  
 dvāreśvaram || 52 ||  
 <ma>jjanena duritaṃ nirdhūya (ba)ndhacchidā,  
 svācchandyam manuḥ bhajanti bhavane bhargasya yat tat param || 53 ||  
 30 ma || 54 ||  
 prabhāvam |  
 31 śaknoti vaktuṃ na guruḥ surāṇām anyasya tat kasya || 55 ||  
 -- śrīśaṅ(kha)nāmni (tri)bhuvanajanatāpūjyapādāravindam || 56 ||  
 snātvā śrī [32]  
 †latyanalām † samayam abhayaḥ śaṅkhaṇṭikasthaḥ || 57 ||  
 tām agnitīrthaprabhāvam vibhūtim, [33] || 58 ||  
 || 59 ||  
 <a>m(ba)tīrthe naraḥ snātvā pūjayitvām(bi)kāpatim |  
 am(bi)kānāthasadane yāti bhogaikabhūmitām || 60 ||

47d *brahma*° M: *vrahma*° E 48a *bāla* M: *vāla* E 50c *jāgaraṇām* conj. M 52a conieci  
*siddheśvaram* (cf. SM 2.1) 53c *majjanena* conj. M, *bandha*° M: *vandha*° E 54 metre  
 uncertain 56d ° *śaṅkha*° M: ° *śaṃṣa*° E, *trī*° M: *trī*° E 57d *latyanalām* unmetrical, M(2)  
 expresses doubt about this reading; *samayam abhayaḥ* M(2): *samayamapabhayaḥ* M(1) 59  
 metre uncertain 60a *amba*° conj. M: *mva*° E 60b ° *āmbikā*° M: ° *āmvikā*° E 60c  
*āmbikā*° M: *āmvikā*° E

47 Śloka 48 Indravajra (Upajāti) 49 Indravajra (Upajāti) 50 Upajāti 51  
 Indravajra (Upajāti) 52 Indravajra 53 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 54 Śloka ? 55 Indrava-  
 jra (Upajāti) 56 Sragdharā 57 Mandākrāntā ? 58 Indravajra (Upajāti) 59  
 Śloka ? 60 Śloka

- adhigamya varuṇatīrtham, [34] <sup>~</sup><sub>~</sub> <sup>~</sup><sub>~</sub> <sup>~</sup><sub>~</sub> <sup>~</sup><sub>~</sub> - |  
varuṇādilokapālair, vanditacara(ṇam) <sup>~</sup><sub>~</sub> (ha)riśaraṇam || 61 ||  
yat śuklatīrthe 'py abhiṣekabhājām,  
jāyeta pu(ṇya)m narapuṅgavanām |  
tad aśvamedhādimahāma(khā)nām,  
oghair na labhyaṃ na tapobhi [35] r ugraiḥ || 62 ||  
tī(rtham) nṛsimhasya katham(ci)d ādyaiḥ,  
pu(ṇyaiḥ) samāsādyā viśuddhamūrteḥ |  
narasya loka(tri)taye karastham,  
kim īpsitam nāsti durāpam anyaiḥ || 63 ||  
aṣṭame ca kurukṣetranāmni tīrthavare naraḥ |  
nima(jjya) (bra)hmahatyādimṛjāsuddho divaṃ vra [36] jet || 64 ||  
tīrthapañcakam ihācalarāje yat trilokavidite vidi(tā)khyam |  
tatprabhāvakathane na samartha devasārthagurur asti na so 'pi || 65 ||  
lakṣmītīrtham teṣu mukhyaṃ durāpā,  
lakṣmīr na syān majjatām yatra tūrṇam |  
yāvajjīvaṃ pātakodbhūtihetu-  
prodyā(du)(ḥkho)drekadāridryabhājām || 66 ||  
**37** kiṃ haṃsatīrthasya tathāprabhāvaḥ prabhūtapuṇyo(jjva)laketanasya |  
vyā(khyā)yate yajjalapānato 'pi haṃso ḥṛdistho vimalatvam eti || 67 ||  
śrīcakratīrthamahimānam amānam urvyām,  
gurvī pravaktum api kasya narasya śaktiḥ |  
yasya svayaṃ bhagavatā hariṇā svacakram,  
rakṣārtham udyatam akalpi [38] sudarśanākhyam || 68 ||  
snātvā dhanustīrthajale dhanuś ca pradāya hemādikṛtam svasākyā |  
naro vidūrīkṛtapāparāsiḥ śrīśārṅgapāṇeḥ sadanam prayāti || 69 ||  
tīrthe pitṛṇām pitṛtīrthanāmni,  
snātvā ca kṛtvā pitṛtarpaṇādi |  
koṭiṃ pitṛṇām niyataḥ pavitrī-  
kṛ(tyai)ti divyaṃ hi padaṃ pitṛ [39] ṇām || 70 ||  
gīrer apācyāṃ diśi vājimedhatīrthe samarthe 'khilatīrthasārthāt |  
naro nima(jjyā)ṅganayā sametas tanūbhavān āsu labheta dhanyān || 71 ||  
yā rarakṣa kalikālato balād dharmam ūmikarapañkajair nadī |  
sā tathāsyā kalipeti viśrutā samnidhau kalimalaṃ haraty alam || 72 ||

**61** metre uncertain **61d** °caraṇam conj. M **61d** conieci hari°: ri° E, svari° conj. M(2) **62b** puṇyam M: puṇyam E **62c** °makhānām M: °maṣānām E **63a** tīrtham conj. M(1): tīrthe conj. M(2), °cid ādyaiḥ conj. M **63b** puṇyaiḥ conj. M **63c** °tritaye M: tṛtaye E **64c** nimajja M(1): nimajya E M(2), brahma° M: vrahma° E **65b** viditākhyam conj. M **66d** prodyadduḥkho° conj. M **67b** °ojjvala° M: °ojvala° E **67c** vyākhyāyate conj. M **70c** niyataḥ E: niyataṃ conj. M **70d** °kṛtyaiti M: °kṛtyeti E **71a** °āganayā M(1)

61 Gīti ? 62 Upajāti 63 Upajāti 64 Śloka 65 Indravajra 66 Indravajra 67 Upajāti 68 Vasantatilaka 69 Upajāti 70 Indravajra 71 Upajāti 72 Indravajra

- suranadī ca suraughā [40] samāśritā nikaṭato 'sya vahaty acalasya sā |  
 suraniketanabhogasarṃddhidā sakṛd ivācamanādikṛtāṃ nṛṇāṃ || 73 ||  
 kalipāsuranadyam(bu)saṅgād (g)añgārkaḥjām(bu)noḥ |  
 saṅgaṃ na gaṇayanty uccair manu(ṣya)munidevatāḥ || 74 ||  
 nāścaryam asmin maṇikālakuṇḍaṃ,  
 tīrthottame prāpya samastasiddhiḥ |  
 41 prāpnoti martyaḥ khalu muktir asya,  
 prasādataḥ sāpi na dūrasaṃsthā || 75 ||  
 (mo)kṣakuṇḍaṃ samāsādyā da(kṣi)ṇasyāṃ mahibhṛtaḥ |  
 durlabho 'pi bhaven mokṣaḥ sulabhaḥ prāṇināṃ kṣaṇāt || 76 ||  
 śrīrāmatīrthaṃ yad ihāsti tīrthaṃ,  
 sāksātsadarthaprathitaprabhāvam |  
 tasyāplutiprodभवapu(ṇya)rāśe(ḥ),  
 phalapradātā daśakandharā [42] riḥ || 77 ||  
 ekādaśivāsaravāsabhājāṃ tīrthe śubhārthe daśakaṇṭhaśatroḥ |  
 muktir varākī karapañjarasthā karoti sevāṃ gṛhasārikeva || 78 ||  
 yat kārttike māsi naro nima(jjya) śrīrāmatīrthe daśakandharārim |  
 bhaktyā prapaśyen na śārīrakośe kīṭatvam āyāti tad antarātmā || 79 ||  
 sakṛd rāmagayāśrāddhaṃ girāv iha ka [43] roti yaḥ |  
 labhante pitaras tasya muktim atyantadurlabhāṃ || 80 ||  
 śrīrāmacandrasya samīpato 'sti sindūravāpī sukṛtaprapā sā |  
 yasyā viśuddhena vilokanena vijitya nākaṃ samupaiti muktim || 81 ||  
 karpūravāpī sukṛtapravāha-  
 pūreṇa pūrṇā kim u varṇaniyā |  
 devasya sītādayitasya pārśve,  
 dāsyāṃ hi yasyāḥ kurute 'pi [44] muktiḥ || 82 ||  
 kāśī nojjayinī na cāpi mathurā no dvārakā no purī,  
 tadvat puṇyabharaṃ prayacchati nṛṇāṃ vāseṇa nityāyuṣā |  
 yadvad vāsaram ekam (āsita)kṛtāṃ sindūrabhūmīdharāḥ,  
 śrīrāmasya padāravindayugalasparśeṇa sarvottamaḥ || 83 ||  
 jaganmaṅgalam ādhatte yasya kumbhadvayī smṛtā |  
 gajendravadanaḥ [45] sāksād atrāste rāmakāṅkṣayā || 84 ||  
 āste dharmeśvaro nityaṃ sa rāmasya girāv iha |  
 pīḍitaṃ kalinā dhamaṃ yaḥ kṛpālur apālayat || 85 ||

74a °ambu° M: °amvu° E 74b conieci gaṅgā°: aṅgā° M, °āmbunoḥ M: °āmvunoḥ E 74d manuṣya° M: manukhya° E 75b tīrthottamaṃ M(2) 75d sāpi: sā 'pi M 76a mokṣa° conj. M 76b dakṣiṇasyāṃ M: dakṣaṇasyāṃ E 77c puṇya° M: puṇya° E, °rāśeḥ conj. M: °rāśeṣ E 78d sevā M(2) 79a nimaḥjjya M: mīmajya E 81a 'sti M(1): 'hi M(2) 81d samupaiti M(1): sumupaiti M(2) 83c conieci āsita°: aṣṭīti° M (expressing doubt)

73 Drutavilambita 74 Śloka 75 Upajāti 76 Śloka 77 Upajāti 78 Upajāti 79 Indravajra 80 Śloka 81 Upajāti 82 Indravajra 83 Śārdūlavikṛḍita 84–85 Śloka

śrīrāmacandrasya kareṇa candra-  
 hāsāhataḥ prāpya padaṃ murāreḥ |  
 sa śambukaḥ śūdrāmuniḥ mahīdhra-  
 rāje 'tra dhūmrākṣa iti prasiddhaḥ || 86 ||  
 paśyanti muktīśvaranāmadheyam śivam śivā [46] nātham ihācalendre |  
 śivavratasthāḥ śivavāsare ye śivatvam āyānti śivālaye te || 87 ||  
 gopījanānandasamudrapūrṇacandro vinidro(jjva)lapadmanetraḥ |  
 gopālamūrtir jagadekamūrtir vasaty asāv atra dharādharendre || 88 ||  
 atīva tejaḥprasaraprataptaṃ,  
 jagat samagraṃ kṛpayā rarakṣa |  
 yo 'yaṃ caturtho 'vataro 'cyutasya,  
 śrī [47] mān nṛsiṃho 'pi vasaty amuṣmin || 89 ||  
 saptāmbhonidhipūradūrapihitāṃ bibhrad dharāṃ daṃṣṭrayā,  
 yo 'yaṃ bhāti sarojinīdalanibho dantena yadvan (n)āyan |  
 yaṃ romāntaraguptavāsasukhino devarṣayas tuṣṭuvu(h),  
 kalpānte daśakandharārisadane so 'trādikolaḥ prabhuh || 90 ||  
 ananyalabhyām atulāṃ saparyām,  
 nityam [48] parityajya mahendradattām |  
 śrīmān nṛpa(h) pañktiratho 'pi putra-  
 prītyā vasaty atra girīndrasānau || 91 ||  
 sutau śrīrāmacandrasya girau kuśalavāv iha |  
 dadhāte kalpavṛkṣatvaṃ bhaktibhājāṃ jagatprabhū || 92 ||  
 mātaro 'ṣṭau mahāsiddhināmadheyopalakṣitāḥ |  
 atra tiṣṭhanti bhaktānām aṇimādyāṣṭakapradāḥ || 93 ||  
 kalpānte kavalī [49] karoti sakalam trailokyam alpetara-  
 jvalājālakarālakālavadano ya(h) kālikakelibhūḥ |  
 sindūrācalam iḥṣaṇam kṣaṇam api kṣīnānyavāsasprḥaḥ,  
 śrīrāmasprḥayā karoti bhagavān kiṃ vā mahābhairavaḥ | 94 ||  
 pañcāsyam candramauliṃ daśabhujam udayatkoṭibhānūgrabhāsam,  
 tryakṣam vṛkṣā ~ - [50] (ā)sivaraśaradhanuṣūla(kha)ṭvāṅgahastam |  
 hr̥tpadme bhaktalokābhayavaradakaram cintayan yaṃ naraḥ syāt,  
 trailokye siddhisamrād vasati pavanajaḥ so 'tra rāmaikabhr̥tyaḥ || 95 ||  
 mālāṃ puṣpamayim iva kṣitim imāṃ bibhrac chirobhir vibhuh,  
 śrīrāmāvatare hareḥ sahacaraḥ śāṅkho 'py aśāṅkhātmaḥ |  
 āste so ('tra) sa [51] mastabhaktajanatātattanmanovāñchitam,  
 samyacchan janakādhirājanayānāthāntike lakṣmaṇaḥ || 96 ||  
**86b** °hāsāhataḥ M(1): °hāsādhataḥ M(2), murāreḥ M(2): purāreḥ M(1) **88b** °ojjala°  
 M: °ojvala° E **90a** °apihitam M(2), daṃṣṭryā M(2) **90b** conieci yadvan nayan: yad-  
 vanmayan M, who remarks in footnote: 'Perhaps unmajayan is intended here', on which the  
 editor of EI remarks: 'This reading would involve a sandhi with the preceding word which  
 would spoil the metre. I would suggest °dalam ibho dantena yadvan nayan as the intended  
 reading.' **90c** tuṣṭuvuh M: tuṣṭuvus E **90d** deśakandharāri° M(2) **91c** nṛpaḥ M: nṛpas  
 E **94b** yaḥ M: yaṣ E **95b** tryakṣam vṛkṣā om. M(2), conieci °āsi° **96c** so 'tra conj.  
 M

86–89 Upajāti 90 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 91 Upajāti 92 Śloka 93 Śloka 94  
 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 95 Sragdharā 96 Śārdūlavikrīḍita

- yannāmasmaraṇāt prayāti ni(khi)laḥ pāpādrir uccaiḥ kṣayaṃ,  
yā viśvaikapativratādhvani gurur devī dayaikāpagā |  
yā śāpena nināya bhasmakaṇikābhūyaṃ (ca) laṅkāpatim,  
kartā me dayi(to) (‘sya) [52] nāśam iti sāpy atrāsti rāmāntike || 97 ||  
ihācalendre daśakaṇṭhaśātror vilokya mūrtiḥ khalu - ∘ martyaḥ |  
paratra kāle na karoti bhītim † kātāstamat † saṃhṛtighoramūrteḥ || 98 ||  
bhaktyā mahatyā prabhūm ādirāmaṃ jagatsu(khā)rāmātanuṃ nirīkṣya |  
naraḥ surendrādikaropanītapūjāgyapātratvam u(ḥpaiti) ni [53] tyam || 99 ||  
śrī(bho)garāmam abhirāmātanuṃ nirīkṣya,  
kṣiṇā(khi)lāghasaraṇiḥ śaraṇe murāreḥ |  
bhogā(n abhaṅgurasā)n suciraṃ vicitrān,  
prāpnoti kalpaśatam alpīdadevarājaḥ || 100 ||  
drṣṭvā prakṣṭamahimānam anantabhaktyā,  
taṃ guptarāmam atiguptapadaṃ ca kiṃcit |  
prāpnoti yat tad iha kiṃ nanu devarā(ḥjo),  
- - ∘ [54] tadgururathāṅgirasō ‘pi so ‘pi || 101 ||  
śrīśaṅkharāmam praṇipatyā martyaḥ, padaṃ samabhyeti hi śaṅkhaḥpāṇeḥ |  
viśuddhabhāvena hr̥dā mahendramukhyādidevair abhivandyamānaḥ || 102 ||  
jaganmahānandanidānam īśaṃ,  
śrīmaithilīlakṣmaṇadevayuktam |  
śrīrāmadevaṃ praṇipatyā mūrdhnā,  
namaskari(ṣye) ‘lpatarair va(cobhiḥ) || 103 ||
- 55 deva śrīraghunandana (tri)jagatām advaitavādaprabho,  
bhāsvadvamśamahāvibhūṣaṇamaṇe kāruṇyaratnākara |  
trailokyārīdaśāsyaḥkaṇṭhadaśakachedollasatpāṇaye,  
pā - - ∘ ∘ - - ∘ ∘ ∘ te te trailokyagoptre namaḥ || 104 ||  
deva kṣīrasamudrasāndralaharī(r ni)rmathya hr̥tkirtaye,  
tattādr̥gguṇa - ∘ - ∘ [56] ∘ ∘ - viśvaikabhartre namaḥ |  
śrīrāmāya hanūmadādivadanāmbhojanmaṣaṇḍaprabhā-  
bhartre śrījanakakṣitīndratānayanandaika(kan)dāya ca || 105 ||  
deva tvāṃ sphuradugraśoṣana ∘ - - - ∘ - - ∘ - ,  
- - dāraçaṭusrutipraśamitakrodhaṃ namaskurmahe |  
tatkā(lā)pacitikriyārthamilitāśeṣāmba - - ∘ [57] - ,  
dhattātyantasujātyaratnacayabhābhṛājiṣṇūpādāmbujam || 106 ||

97a *nikhilaḥ* M: *niṣilaḥ* E 97c conieci *ca: na* M 97d conieci *dayito: dayitā* M, *‘sya* conj. M 98b *mūrtiḥ* M(1): *mūrti* M(2), conieci *khalu yo ‘pi* 98d *kātāstamat* M(1) (uncertain): *kātāsamaṃ* conj. M(2) 99b *sukhā°* M: *suṣā°* E 99d *upaiti* conj. M 100a *bhogarāmam* conj. M 100b °*ākhilā°* M: °*āṣilā°* E 100c *bhogān abhaṅgurasān* conj. M 101c *devarājo* conj. M 103c *mūrdhnā: mūrddhnā* ME 103d °*karīṣye* M: °*karikhye* E, *vacobhiḥ* conj. M 104a *tri°* M: *tr̥* E 105a °*laharīr nirmathya* conj. M 105d °*kandāya* conj. M(1) 106b °*cāṭu°* M(2) 106bc *tīpraśamita°...°āmba* om. M(2) 106c *kālāpaciti* conj. M(1) 106d *dattā°* M(1) (uncertain)

97 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 98 Upajāti (Upendravraja?) 99 Upajāti 100 Vasantatilaka 101 Vasantatilaka 102 Upajāti 103 Upajāti 104–106 Śārdūlavikrīḍita

deva tvām giripādape(khi)labhujāmuṣṭiprahāro ∘ - ,  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - |  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ - nikhilaṃ trailokyanāśakṣamaṃ,  
 dhāmnā (yeṣu) sahasrapūrṇarucima - - ∘ - maṃ numāḥ || 107 ||  
 - - - ∘ [58] visarparogajagatīnāthāridāridryabhūr,  
 bhīter bhaktajanasya saṃmadapadaṃ rāmeti nāmasmr̥teḥ |  
 gavyūtipra ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - ,  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - || 108 ||  
 deva tvām karuṇā ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ - sāmantasindūrajaṃ,  
 reṇuṃ saṃśayayantama ∘ ∘ ∘ - - [59] kṣobhujāṃ tejasām |  
 kurvāṇe jagadiṣṭāvṛṣṭim amṛtāsārāṃ bhavonmāthinim,  
 - - prārthitāṭaprabhāka(ra) ∘ - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - || 109 ||  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - ,  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ṛṇikāsana ∘ - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - |  
 sindūrācalamaulikalpi ∘ ∘ - - - [60] pratiṣṭhaṃ vibhuṃ,  
 kumbhodbhūtamuniśvareṇa bhagavan vande mude nityaśaḥ || 110 ||  
 deva tvām puruṣaṃ purātanam ajaṃ tatta ∘ - - ∘ - ,  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - |  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - ,  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ - bhagavate bhaktyā namo 'stu pra(bho) || 111 ||  
 ∘ ∘ ∘ [61] rāmadevaṃ ya(h) stauti martyaḥ pavitradhīḥ |  
 sindūrācalamaulishṭhaṃ bhajate tasya ya ∘ ∘ || 112 ||  
 kāśīprabhṛ ∘ - - ∘ , ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ |  
 ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ , ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ || 113 ||  
 - - - ∘ ∘ - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - - - - ∘ - - - ∘ - , |  
 kalpāntāvadhinirmalā(khi)lajalā vṛkṣā ∘ - - ∘ [62] laḥ |  
 āste bālasamudra eṣa vilasaddevālayālīmila-  
 - - - ∘ jalo jalekṣaṇakṛtāṃ devā ∘ - - ∘ - || 114 ||  
 ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ dhanyaḥ || 115 ||  
 samabhyarcya naro bhaktyā na ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - [63] ∘ ∘ |  
 durlabhāṃ labhate kām kām na hi siddhiṃ viśuddhadhīḥ || 116 ||  
 ∘ - - - - ∘ varāṇi tāni, devāṃśu - - ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - - - - ∘ ∘ ∘ ∘ - ∘ || 117 ||

**107a** *tvāṃgi* om. M(2), *pādapekhila*° conj. M(1): *pādapeṣila*° E, °*peṣi*° om. M(2), *bhu*° om. M(2) **107c** *nikhilaṃ* M: *niṣilaṃ* E **107d** *yeṣu* conj. M(2): om. M(1) **108a** *nātha* M(2) **108ab** *ridāridrya* ... *bhīter* om. M(2) **108b** *sa saṃmadapadaṃ rāmeti* om. M(2) **109a** *karuṇāṃ* M(2), *sāmanta* om. M(2) **109b** *sa śamayantama* M(2) **109d** *prārthitadā* M(2) (uncertain), *prabhākara* M(2): *prabhāka* M(1) **110b** *ṛṇikāsana* M(1): *mvi(mbi)kāsūnu* M(2) **111d** *prabho* conj. M **112a** *yaḥ* conj. M: *ya* E **112cd** °*sthāṃ*... *ya* om. M(2) **114b** °*ākhila*° M: °*āśila* E **116b** ∘ ∘ = | *vidvān* | M(2) **117a** *ragaṇitāni* M(2) **117b** *devaścara* M(2)

107–111 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 112 Śloka 113 Śloka 114 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 115 Indravajra  
 (Upajāti) 116 Śloka 117 Indravajra (Upajāti)

- ॐ - - - - - ॐ , ॐ - - - - - ॐ |  
 ॐ - - - - bharaṇaṃ gaṛīyaḥ,  
 śrīrāghavo 'maṃsta kṛtārtham uccaiḥ || 118 ||  
**64–68** ...  
**69** ... māyideva ...  
**70** ...  
 āhūya satvaram uvāca vacaḥ sa - ॐ  
 ...  
 - - - - - maithilī-  
 nāthas tuṣyati yena me kuru ॐ - - - - ॐ - |  
 - - - - - ,  
**71** - - - - - ||  
 ... māyideva ...  
**72–75** ...

Il. **64–68** illegible    **1. 69** illegible; coniecī māyideva: māideva M(1), māideva M(2)    **1. 70**  
 āhūya ... sa om. M(2), saithilī<sup>o</sup> M(1), kuru om. M(2)    **1. 71** illegible; coniecī māyideva:  
 māideva M(1), māideva M(2)    **Il. 72–75** illegible

118 Indravajra (Upajāti)    1. 70 Vasantatilaka, Śārdūlavikrīḍita

### Translation

- 27 Owing to the nectar stream of whose glory, the essence of the boundless ocean of existence, the earth has shed her grief at the loss of the illustrious King Siṃhaṇa ...  
 29 His son, known on earth as Vāyināyaka on account of the abundance of glory ..., became famous throughout the world, and no one that equalled him was ever heard of here.  
 30 Of him again this ... (called) Rāghavadeva ...  
 31 After the illustrious lord Rāmacandra had entrusted him, who was giving due weight to the virtues ..., with the care of the magnificent prosperity of his thriving empire, he (himself), conversing in his pleasure garden with his harem-ladies, who are (skilled) in all the arts and sports of love ...  
 34 ... just as endurance (adorns) the steadfast and faithfulness the virtuous one of noble birth, so the most lovely Rājāyī, who is a store of virtues and embodies happiness and beauty, adorns him who is a receptacle of virtue ...  
 35 Thereupon he has asked a brahmin, whose illuminating splendour resembles that of the sun ..., (thinking): 'he should be my guru'.  
 36 'O Lord, you know everything; therefore I ask you with ardent desire ...'  
 38 O Superintendent of the Royal Bedchamber, listen to this word of mine; there is nothing superior to Hari to enable one to cross the ocean of existence.

- 39 Though there are ten avatars of His, Rāma is the (foremost) of them . . .
- 40 How can I describe that unsurpassed, wonderful efficacy of this mountain Tapamgiri, where he, (the scion of the Raghu race), who is the supreme object of meditation of the yogis, lives together with the Son of the Wind (i.e. Hanumat)?
- 42 Earlier, it was here that god Nṛhari had ripped open the chest of Surāri (i.e. Hiranyakaśipu) with his sharp claws; reddened by the stream of his blood, this (mountain became known as Sindūragiri).
- 43 For who else, even if he resembles Bṛhaspati, would thus know how to tell yonder . . . ?
- 44 The lord of the sages, who has protected the ocean by keeping it in his mouth (i.e. Agastya) . . .
- 45 . . . is known here as (Gauta)meśvara.
- 46 After the lord of the sages who was born in a pot (i.e. Agastya) had heard the wonderful efficacy of this mountain in the audience-hall of Brahmā . . . , (he told it) to Rāma.
- 47 A man who has seen with due respect . . . , he is liberated from the sin of killing a brahmin.
- 50 Those who fast on a day sacred to Viṣṇu and keep a vigil in front of Raghunandana on Tapamgiri . . .
- 52 Ghaṅṭeśvara, Sudheśvara (Siddheśvara?), Lord Kedāra as well as Āñjaneya (i.e. Hanumat), the Lord of the Gate (Dvāreśvara) . . .
- 53 People who, by taking a bath . . . , have removed their sins, they shall, by breaking their fetters, attain to freedom in the House of Lustre (i.e. the World of Brahmā) and what is beyond that.
- 55 The guru of the gods is not able to tell the wonderful efficacy of . . . (Gaṅgā-srotas?),<sup>35</sup> who else could do it?
- 56 . . . (in the tīrtha) called the illustrious Śaṅkha(tīrtha) . . . , whose lotusfeet are worshipped by the inhabitants of the three worlds.
- 57 After having taken a bath in the illustrious (Śaṅkhatīrtha?) . . . , he shall be without fear and abide in the proximity of Śaṅkhapāṇin (i.e. Viṣṇu).
- 58 . . . that splendid power that is manifest in the Agnitīrtha . . .
- 60 A man who has taken a bath in the Ambatīrtha and has worshipped the Spouse of Ambikā, he shall be the unique recipient of pleasures in the abode of Ambikānātha.
- 61 After having proceeded to the Varuṇatīrtha . . . , (he shall reach) the Refuge of (Hari) . . . , whose feet are venerated by the Guardians of the World, Varuṇa and others.

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35 Cf. SM 5.4.

- 62 The merit that accrues to (those) excellent men who are eager to perform their ablutions in the Śuklatīrtha, that merit is not (even) obtained by means of many great sacrifices like the Aśvamedha, nor by severe ascetic practices.
- 63 When a man has reached the tīrtha of Narasiṃha and his brilliant image—in one way or the other, thanks to his eminent merit—which desirable thing is there in the three worlds that is not within his reach, though it is difficult to obtain by others?
- 64 A man who has bathed also in the excellent eighth tīrtha called Kurukṣetra shall reach heaven, since he is purified as a result of his wiping off of (his) sins, such as the killing of a brahmin.
- 65 Not even the accomplished guru of the gods is able to expound the wonderful efficacy of the well-known 'Five Tīrthas', here on this most prominent and world-famous mountain.
- 66 Among these (five) the Lakṣmītīrtha stands out; those who are subject to life-long excessive suffering, such as poverty, caused by the ripening of their sins, for them prosperity (Lakṣmī) will quickly and easily be obtainable when they take a bath here.
- 67 And could one expound the wonderful efficacy of the Haṃsatīrtha, that bright store of abundant purity, so much so, that even the goose that abides in the heart (i.e. the soul) becomes purified by drinking its water?
- 68 Would there be a man who possesses enough power to explain the greatness of the illustrious Cakratīrtha, whose equal there is not on earth, and for whose protection Lord Hari employed his own discus, called Sudarśana?
- 69 A man who has taken a bath in the water of the Dhanustīrtha and who has offered a bow made of gold, or of other material depending on his means, his pile of sins will be destroyed and he will go to the abode of the illustrious Śarṅgapāṇin (the Bearer of the Bow, i.e. Viṣṇu).
- 70 The man who takes a bath in the tīrtha of the ancestors, named Pitṛtīrtha, and who offers oblations to his ancestors, after this disciplined man has (thus) purified a million of his ancestors, he will himself go to the heavenly abode of the ancestors.
- 71 That man shall quickly obtain healthy sons who takes a bath, together with his wife, in the Vājimedhatīrtha, which lies to the west of the mountain and which is a match for all tīrthas taken together.
- 72 The river that by its lotus-hands, viz. its waves, protects the *dharma* against the forces of the Kali Age, that river, running in the vicinity of this (mountain) and appositely known as Kalipā, is able to take away the faults of the Kali Age.
- 73 And in the neighbourhood of this mountain runs also that (river) Suranadī, which is frequented by a great number of gods and which grants to men who perform the bathing rites, beginning with sipping its water, even if

- they perform them only once, abundant enjoyments in the House of the Gods.
- 74 Gods, sages and men do not value the confluence of the waters of the Ganges and the Arkajā (i.e. Yamunā) higher than they do the confluence of the waters of the Kalipā and Suranadī rivers.
- 75 It is no wonder that, after having reached the Maṇikālakunḍa, a mortal attains all accomplishments (*siddhi*) in this most excellent tīrtha; and then, owing to its grace, final release itself is not far away either.
- 76 (And) though release is difficult to obtain, it comes within reach of the living at the very moment that he reaches the Mokṣakunḍa to the south of the mountain.
- 77 The Enemy of the Ten-necked (Rāvaṇa) (i.e. Rāma) grants a mass of merit to come forth as the reward of bathing in the illustrious Rāmatīrtha that lies here (on this mountain), a tīrtha of which the wonderful efficacy is famous for making the final goal come into view.
- 78 Those who are dedicated to stay in this holy place of the Enemy of the Ten-necked (Rāvaṇa) for goodness' sake on an Ekādaśī day, to them release becomes humble and, captured in the cage of their hands, will serve them like a domesticated maina-bird.
- 79 When a man takes a bath in the illustrious Rāmatīrtha in the month of Kārttika and, filled with devotion, pays his respect to the Enemy of the Ten-necked (Rāvaṇa), then his soul shall not become (that of) a maggot, if he returns into an earthly frame.
- 80 If one performs on this mountain only once a śrāddha-sacrifice, a Rāma's Gayā (as it were), then one's ancestors will obtain the release which is extremely difficult to attain.
- 81 In the vicinity of the illustrious (holy place) of Rāmacandra is the Sindūra pond which is a reservoir of virtue; by its purifying sight one conquers heaven and attains to release.
- 82 And how could one describe the Karpūra pond in the proximity of the God who is Sītā's beloved, which brims over with a flood of favours? For, even release acts as its servant.
- 83 The accumulation of merit that accrues from staying one day on the Sindūra mountain, which surpasses all other (mountains) because of its being touched by the lotus-feet of the illustrious Rāma, that (same amount of merit) is not even obtained by people who stay all their life in, be it Kāśī, or Ujjayinī, or Mathurā, or Dvārakā, or Purī.
- 84 Out of desire for Rāma the Elephant-faced (Gaṇeśa) abides here in person, whose pair of frontal globes, when thought of, brings worldly blessings.
- 85 And here on this mountain of Rāma also abides the Lord of the Dharma (Dharmeśvara) who, as a vehicle of compassion, protects the Dharma injured by Kali.

- 86 Here the śūdra saint Śambuka has reached the abode of Murāri (i.e. Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu) after having been killed by the sword Candrahāsa, which was wielded by Rāmacandra; and on this eminent mountain he became well-known as Dhūmrākṣa.
- 87 Those who go and see the Lord of Śivā, Śiva, known on this mountain under the name of Muktiśvara, on a day sacred to Śiva, while keeping a vow dedicated to Śiva, will attain to Śiva-hood in Śiva's abode.
- 88 Yonder God whose unique form comprises the world lives here on this king of mountains, the one who in His form of Gopāla is the full moon in the ocean of bliss of the gopī folk and whose shining lotus eyes are wide open.
- 89 The illustrious Narasiṃha also lives on that (same mountain), who is the fourth descent of the Unshakable one (i.e. Viṣṇu), who out of compassion has fully protected the world, when it was harassed exceedingly by a torrent of heat.
- 90 And here, in the residence of the Enemy of the Ten-necked (Rāvaṇa), lives lord Ādikola (i.e. Varāha) at the end of the Kalpa, the one who, while carrying on his tusk the earth which had deeply sunken into the flood of the seven oceans, appeared as a leaf in a lotus pond as it were, when he brought it up by his tooth, and whose praises were sung by the divine seers, whose excitement resided within their hairs (i.e. whose hair stood on end due to exhilaration).
- 91 The illustrious monarch Paṅktiratha (i.e. Daśaratha) has also come to live on the top of this mountain, out of love for his son, after he had forever resigned the unequalled and unique homage payed to him by the great Indra.
- 92 Here on this mountain the two rulers of the world Kuśa and Lava, sons of the illustrious Rāmacandra, act as a tree of plenty for those who are steeped in devotion.
- 93 Here reside the Eight Mothers, who are distinguished by the name Mahāsiddhi, and who bestow upon their devotees the eight occult powers, viz. that of becoming as small as an atom, etc.
- 94 And what about Lord Mahābhairava, the Place of Sport of Kālikā, whose black, gaping mouth is like a large burning net which swallows the entire universe at the end of time, and who, when he came to see the Sindūra mountain out of desire for Rāma, immediately lost his inclination to live anywhere else?
- 95 He who is Rāma's unswerving servant, the Son of the Wind, lives here. A man who visualizes him in his heart-lotus, as possessed of five mouths, moon-crested, with ten arms, blazing terribly like a million rising suns, as having three eyes, in his hands a hatchet(?) . . . , a sword, a boon (?), an arrow, a bow, a spear, and a skull-staff, and showing the *abhaya* and *varada* handgestures to his devotees, this man gains full control over the powers in the universe.

- 96 The powerful lord who carries on his heads this world as if it were a garland made of flowers, Hari's companion during his descent as the illustrious Rāma, the conch/serpent (*śaṅkha*), though without conch/serpent nature (*aśaṅkhātma*), resides here, in the proximity of the spouse of Janaka's daughter, as Lakṣmaṇa, who fulfils whatever desire is cherished by any of his devotees.
- 97 She is also present here in Rāma's proximity, she by remembering whose Name the whole mountain of sins is totally destroyed, this Goddess, single river of compassion, who is a guide on the path of all women who remain faithful to their husbands, and who reduced the king of Laṅkā to ashes by a curse: 'my husband shall effect his destruction'.
- 98 A man who has seen the images of the Enemy of the Ten-necked (Rāvaṇa) . . . here on this mountain, into him . . . of the terrifying image of the destruction of the world will no longer strike fear.
- 99 When a man full of ardent devotion comes and sees Lord Ādirāma, whose image (body) is a garden of happiness to the world, then he shall forever attain to the state of being the principal recipient of veneration offered by the hands of the Lord of the Gods and the others.
- 100 If one sees the illustrious Bhogarāma, whose image (body) is beautiful, the whole range of sins is destroyed in Murāri's (Kṛṣṇa's) refuge; and directly one shall taste all kinds of undiminishing enjoyments for a hundred world periods, dwarfing the king of the gods.
- 101 When one, filled with inexhaustible devotion, has seen Guptarāma here, who is of superior greatness and whose abode is very secret, one gets whatever (one desires)—nay, (one becomes like) the king of the gods or even Āṅgiraśa (Bṛhaspati), who is their guru . . .
- 102 A mortal who prostrates before the illustrious Śaṅkharāma reaches, indeed, the abode of Śaṅkhaṇin (the Bearer of the Conch, i.e. Viṣṇu) where he, being in a state of inner purity, will be respectfully welcomed by the great Indra followed by (the other) gods.
- 103 Bowing my head to the Lord who is the source of great happiness for the world, the illustrious god Rāma, who is accompanied by the illustrious princess of Mithilā and god Lakṣmaṇa, I shall sing his praise in modest words:
- 104 'O God, illustrious Raghunandana, Lord who proclaims the oneness of the three worlds, you who, like a great jewel, adorn your splendid dynasty, mine of compassion, obeisance to you whose hand chops off in play the ten heads of the ten-faced Enemy of the Universe (i.e. Rāvaṇa), obeisance to you, O guardian of the universe . . .'
- 105 'O God, obeisance to you whose glory of having churned the clotted waves of the milk-ocean (stirs) the heart, to you who are the unique support of all . . ., obeisance to you, illustrious Rāma, who lends lustre to a multitude

of lotus-like faces such as those of Hanumat and others, to you who are the sole root of bliss for the illustrious daughter of King Janaka.'

- 106 'O God, we pay homage to you . . . , whose anger was calmed by the flow of sweet words of . . . (his) wife . . . , whose lotus-feet radiate with the lustre of a heap of jewels . . . '
- 112 The mortal who praises Rāmadeva residing on top of the Sindūra mountain with a pure mind, to him grants . . .
- 116 When a man has devotedly worshipped . . . and his mind is purified, what difficult-to-obtain (occult) power will there be that he will not obtain?



# The Ramtek Inscriptions II\*

## The Vākāṭaka Inscription in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple

HANS T. BAKKER & HARUNAGA ISAACSON

### INTRODUCTION

In *The Ramtek Inscriptions I* (hereafter RI) mention was made of a Vākāṭaka inscription in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple on Ramtek Hill,<sup>1</sup> the discovery of which was reported in IAR 1982–83, 137. The credit for first discussing, as well as editing the text goes to the Director of the Archaeological Survey and Museums of Maharashtra, Dr. A.P. Jamkhedkar. In an article which appeared in 1986 in R. Parimoo (ed.), *Vaiṣṇavism in Indian Arts and Culture* (pp. 335–41),<sup>2</sup> Jamkhedkar attributed the inscription to Prabhāvatī Guptā (Jamkhedkar 1987a, 340), an attribution for which he adduced arguments in a subsequent article that was published in M.S. Nagaraja Rao (ed.), *Kusumāñjali*, vol. I in 1987 (Jamkhedkar 1987b, pp. 217–23). In the latter publication the text of the inscription was edited and an interpretation of it was given (*op. cit.* 220 f.). In the same year Ajay Mitra Shastri's *Early History of the Deccan* appeared, chapter V (pp. 45–81) of which deals with 'The Vākāṭaka: fresh epigraphic evidence'. This chapter is for the greater part a reprint of the author's earlier publication in the *Nagpur University Journal* (vol. 35 (1984–86), 130–64) with the exception of the *Appendix* (pp. 68–74). The appendix may have been added to the book in a late phase of its production, since the text of the endnotes

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\* The first version of this article with the title *The Ramtek Inscriptions II* was published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. LVI, Part 1 (1993), 46–74. A revised version of the Sanskrit text of the inscription by Bakker alone was included in Bakker 1997, *The Vākāṭakas*, 163–67. The inscription was discussed again and new readings were proposed in Bakker 2010c, *A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence (1)* (below, pp. 351 ff.) and Bakker 2012 *A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence (2)* (below, pp. 357 ff.). The present edition reproduces the first edition in the BSOAS, but reference to the revised readings are given in the apparatus between [ ], footnotes, and through cross-references.

1 Hans Bakker in: BSOAS LII.3 (1989), 468; above, p. 80.

2 According to the title page, this volume was published in Delhi in 1987.

pertaining to it has unfortunately dropped out. In the *Appendix* Shastri analyses the contents of the Ramtek inscription of the time of Prabhāvātī Guptā, but, owing to the omission of the notes, it remains unclear in the majority of cases on which textual reading his interpretation is founded. Since Shastri's interpretation differs significantly from that of Jamkhedkar and the two authors do not refer to each other's publications, we may not be far off the mark if we assume that both archaeologists' treatments of this inscription were written independently at about the same time. Jamkhedkar's text was unfortunately marred by numerous printing errors. A corrected version appeared in Jamkhedkar's contribution to *The age of the Vākāṭakas*, edited by Ajay Mitra Shastri, which was published in 1992 (p. 162). The changes seem to be restricted to corrections of misprints, though a few new ones have crept in.

Whereas Shastri (1987, 68) rightly observed that 'so far as it can be made out, it appears to have been composed entirely in verse', Jamkhedkar, quite astonishingly, seems to have overlooked the metrical nature of the text, proposing numerous readings which must be rejected on metrical grounds. Partly because of this serious oversight, Jamkhedkar's edition is very unsatisfactory. We therefore feel justified in presenting a new edition and a translation of this text,<sup>3</sup> which, though tantalising and puzzling in many respects,<sup>4</sup> is evidently unusual if not unique in character, and of considerable significance for fifth-century Vākāṭaka and Gupta history.

As will be argued below, the inscription was commissioned by a lady, though not Prabhāvātī herself as believed by Jamkhedkar.<sup>5</sup> She seems rather to have been the beneficiary of the pious activity recorded, which was carried out by one of her children, not however a son as suggested by Shastri,<sup>6</sup> but a daughter. The inscription refers to events in this daughter's life, in particular to her marriage with her maternal uncle the Gupta prince Ghaṭotkaca, and her

3 When RI was written, Jamkhedkar's edition had been announced but had not yet reached us; now it has, we feel that the reservation made in RI, 468 (above, p. 80) is no longer appropriate.

4 Shastri 1987, 68f.: 'And what little has escaped destruction makes little sense and gives only a faint idea of its likely object. The only thing that can be done under the circumstances is to indicate bits of information that can be made out, sometimes very doubtfully, from the preserved portion.'

5 Jamkhedkar 1987b, 221: 'References to Śrī Rudrasena [...], husband of the celebrated Prabhāvātīguptā, and to Ghaṭotkaca, probably a son of Candragupta himself, all point to the inscription having been caused to be carved by Prabhāvātīguptā herself.' See also the following note.

6 Shastri 1987, 70f.: 'The name of the person responsible for its excavation was also given, but it is damaged. The only thing that can be said with some degree of certitude is that it was a male person as would follow from the word *kārayitṛ* in masculine form (*kārayitā*) (l. 12): he may have been Pravarasena II.' Compare Jamkhedkar 1987b, 221: 'That the present inscription was caused to be written by a lady is clear from the references in line 15 and that she is no other than Prabhāvātīguptā herself is most certain [sic!] from the nail-headed characters in which the inscription is carved.' In his 1992 publication (p. 160) Jamkhedkar seems less certain of the identity of the lady in question. On Shastri's argument from the word *kārayitā* see below, p. 134.

forced return to her ancestral home after his death. Whereas Shastri missed the name ‘Ghaṭokaca’ and was hence led astray, Jamkhedkar does actually read this name, though the relationship between the persons mentioned—Candragupta, Ghaṭokaca, Rudrasena and Prabhāvātī and their daughter (see Fig. 1)—epitomized in the word *bhāgineyī* (l. 7)—escaped him too.

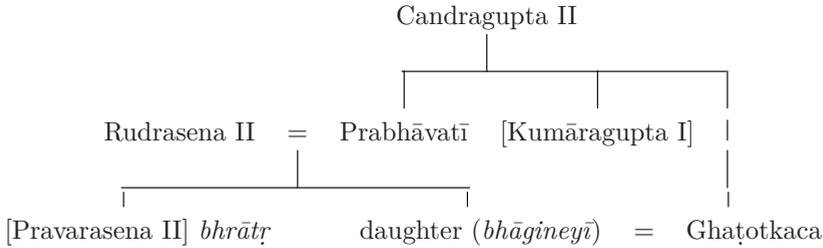


Figure 1

*Gupta–Vākāṭaka matrimonial relations*<sup>7</sup>

We shall elaborate on this scheme below on the basis of the text. For the archaeological, religious and cultural context of the present inscription we may refer to several earlier publications.<sup>8</sup> Some of the references that were made in them to this inscription do not conform with the readings and interpretations now proposed; these preliminary observations should be considered superseded by the present edition.

The inscription is found in the southern wall of the *maṇḍapa* of the Kevala–Narasimha Temple,<sup>9</sup> and was discovered when the covering plaster was removed during restoration work of the Archaeological Survey, which unfortunately led to severe damage. It is not clear whether the inscription has always been fixed to this spot or was, at a certain time, inserted in the southern wall.<sup>10</sup> When found, it covered principally two slabs of stone, fixed beneath one another. The left and upper sides of both stones are somewhat crumbled off, and the lower slab has been broken vertically in the middle. The three pieces of stone have been fitted again with mortar by the restorers. Twelve lines are carved on the upper slab and three on the lower. The height of both slabs taken together is about 50 cm, and their breadth about 100 cm. The ragged right sides of both

7 Names within square brackets do not occur in the legible part of the inscription. For a further elaboration see Bakker 2012, *The Gupta–Vākāṭaka Relationship. A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence* (2); below, pp. 357 ff.

8 Bakker 1989c, 1990b, 1991, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d (below, pp. 149 ff.).

9 For descriptions of the temple see Jamkhedkar 1988 and Bakker 1989c.

10 This question will be reexamined in Bakker 2010c, 2012, 2013b (see below, pp. 351 ff., pp. 357 ff., pp. 365 ff.).

the upper and lower slab seem to indicate that some portion was broken off which is now irretrievably lost.

Before presenting the edited text and translation and embarking on a line by line discussion of problems and uncertainties, it seems advisable, in view of the fact that the right part of the inscription is totally illegible and partly lost, to attempt to determine what its breadth originally was, i.e. how many verses (syllables) were written on one line. In this we are helped by the fact that the text appears to be totally written in verse. As can be readily determined, the legible portions of lines 2–10 are written in Upajāti metre. Each line begins at the beginning of a pāda, and in almost all of these cases it seems as good as certain that this is also the beginning of a verse. Thus the imagery of verse 5 (line 3) seems too coherent and fitting for it to be in fact parts of two different verses; the first two pādas of line 4 could hardly come elsewhere than at the beginning of a verse; in line 6 it seems highly probable that the genitive *supuṅgavasya* depends on *ghaṭotkaco nāma suto*, etc. And since on several lines, syllables or even words can be made out which clearly come after the fourth pāda of the verse with which the line begins, and these syllables or words can invariably be easily fitted into the Upajāti pattern, we conclude that on each line from lines 2–10 at least two complete verses in Upajāti metre were written. This has an important implication; since the first four pādas of Upajāti already cover approximately four-fifths of the breadth of the stone, at the time the inscription was made either the stone must have been (considerably) larger, i.e. since that time it must have been broken and a large section lost, or the inscription must have been continued horizontally on an adjacent stone or stones, just as we can see that it was continued vertically from the top stone to the bottom one. Assuming that there were two Upajāti verses (88 sylls.) to a line, the inscription would probably have covered a breadth of about 170 cm. This would already make it one of the broadest Gupta or Vākāṭaka inscriptions known. If we were to assume yet one more Upajāti verse per line (as one is tempted to do on the basis of the contents) the breadth would come to approximately 250 cm.

Proceeding on the supposition that in lines 11–15, which can be determined to be in Śloka metre, the scribe would have covered approximately the same breadth of stone as in the lines with Upajāti, one arrives at the approximation that if two Upajātis (88 sylls.) were written there, three Ślokas (96 sylls.) could be written per line. This is borne out by the fact that in line 12 an *akṣara* can be faintly made out that lies beyond where the end of the second Śloka could be, and by the fact that in the Śloka lines the *akṣaras* are written slightly closer to each other. If however we suppose that three Upajātis (132 sylls.) were written, there would have been room for four Ślokas (128 sylls.); even with more economical use of space it is hard to believe that five (160 sylls.) could have been written. The marked attempt in lines 11–15 to write more *akṣaras* in the same space therefore seems to support the first assumption of three Ślokas per line.



*Plate 10*  
*Vākāṭaka Inscription in the Kevala-Narasimha Temple (Ramtek)*

*Palaeography*

The inscription is beautifully carved, giving a gentle and rounded impression. The characters may be described as belonging to the southern variety of Brāhmī with, as Shastri remarks, ‘solid triangles, instead of square boxes, on the tops of letters’.<sup>11</sup> So bald a description will, however, give little indication of the palaeographic interest of the inscription. The feature to which Shastri has briefly called attention, the solid triangular head-marks, is particularly noteworthy, in view of the fact that for a long time the Poona copperplates of Prabhāvatī Guptā (CII V, no. 2) was the only known Vākāṭaka inscription with triangular (in this case, however, hollow) head-marks.<sup>12</sup> The large majority of known Vākāṭaka inscriptions, with their characteristic hollow square head-marks,<sup>13</sup> are admittedly on copperplates—a medium whose differences from stone influenced the palaeography to an extent which has not yet been sufficiently evaluated—but also the few Vākāṭaka stone inscriptions published in CII V (those discovered since will be discussed separately below) have square rather than triangular head-marks.<sup>14</sup> On the characters of the Poona Plates Mirashi made the following remarks (CII V, 5).

The characters are mostly of the nail-headed variety, having a triangle with its apex downwards at the top of the letters. A few letters, however, are of the box-headed type in which all other inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas were written. See, e.g. *vākāṭaka*<sup>o</sup> in line 1 of the seal and *si* of *siddham* in line 1 on the first plate. It is noteworthy that besides their boxheads, some of these letters (e.g. *v* and *s*) have forms which are different from those noticed elsewhere in the grant. They agree with those in other grants of box-headed characters. It would seem therefore that the scribe began to write the present grant in box-headed characters, but not being accustomed to them, he soon changed over to nail-headed characters with which he was more familiar. He may have hailed from North India where the nail-headed characters were in vogue.

The characters show an admixture of northern and southern peculiarities, the former predominating over the latter.

It is therefore with these plates that one might reasonably first compare the palaeography of the inscription published here. But in contrast with the Poona Plates, we here find exclusively southern forms, as far as the shape of the letters is concerned. The difference can be clearly illustrated by the *ma* for example; our inscription showing the looped southern form as opposed to the open and

11 Shastri 1987, 68; Jamkhedkar 1987b, 220 contents himself with speaking of ‘the nail-headed characters of the Gupta times’.

12 Dani 1963, 173: ‘all their [i.e. the Vākāṭakas] inscriptions are written in this style [i.e. with square head-marks at the top left of the verticals], except the Poona copperplate which has hollow triangular head-marks.’

13 Cf. Dani 1963, 175.

14 CII V, nos. 1, 20–21, 22, 25, 26 and 27. Of these, it is worth noting that only no. 1, the *Deotek Inscription of Rudrasena I*, belongs to the Eastern Vākāṭakas. Nos. 20–21 and 22 have hollow square head-marks, the others solid.

tailed variety of the Poona Plates. The only 'northern' feature is therefore the head-marks.

One more characteristic that differs from the majority of hitherto known Vākāṭaka inscriptions is the form of the medial  $i/\bar{i}$ , for which the circle type, with an additional curve inside for the  $\bar{i}$ , is used; a form which, according to Dani, 'though known in the inscriptions of Malwa and Gujarat in the fifth century AD, was not used in this region in the Vākāṭaka records' (Dani 1963, 176). This remark must definitely be qualified: Dani appears to have overlooked the inscription of Varāhadeva in Ajanta Cave XVII, in which the circle type is found (in combination with solid square head-marks), and the Ghaṭotkaca Cave inscription of the same.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, several copperplate inscriptions use the circle type, sometimes together with the looped kind.<sup>16</sup> None the less it is true that the circle type is rarer in Vākāṭaka inscriptions.

The particular combination of features here—solid triangular head-marks, exclusively southern forms of the letters, and the circle type of medial  $i/\bar{i}$ —seems to agree most closely with some specimens of Malwa epigraphy; a good example which is somewhat similar to our inscription is the famous *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvarman* of AD 437/473 (CII III (1888), no. 18). In comparison with that inscription, however, we here find e.g. the *pa* with practically equal arms, instead of the form with its left arm bent.

Other points which should be briefly noted are the use of the *jīhvāmūlīya*, here transliterated as *h* (l. 4), and the *upadhmānīya*, transliterated *ḥ* (ll. 4 and 5, both somewhat damaged), as well as the *halanta* forms, which consist of a small version of the letter written slightly below the line (*n* in l. 8, *t* in l. 10, *m* in ll. 12, 13 and 14). The only punctuation mark visible, a double *daṇḍa*, is found in l. 13, after verse 27 (printed in bold-face in the text). At a number of places, e.g. l. 8, after verse 15, it can be clearly seen that no punctuation mark was used but some extra space was given between the verses.

Some remarks should now be made as to the relation of the palaeography of our inscription with that of the other Vākāṭaka stone inscriptions discovered and published since the appearance of CII V. The first among these is the Hisse-Borala inscription of Devasena, which has been the subject of several publications since its discovery.<sup>17</sup> In his discussion of the palaeography of this inscription Kolte wrote (1965, 374):

Most of the copperplates and stone inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas discovered so far are written in box-headed characters. The present inscription is an exception to this. The letters in it have neither the headline nor any boxes at the top of the

15 CII V, no. 26; though the plate published in CII is poorly legible, and Mirashi does not make any remark on the shape of the medial  $i/\bar{i}$ , it seems to be circular.

16 See especially the *Ramtek Plate of Pravarasena II*, CII V, no. 16, pl. XVI.

17 Kolte 1965; Gokhale 1967–68; Gai & Sankaranarayanan 1967–68; Shastri 1970; Shri-mali 1987, 81. The sole photograph published so far is that in Gokhale 1967–68, this photograph is the basis for the remarks made here.

*daṇḍa* . . . However, the letter *c* seems to be an exception to this. The *c* in line 3 has been incised with a head line.

Gokhale on the other hand wrote that ‘the characters of the epigraph . . . resemble those of the Ghaṭotkaca Cave Inscription of Vyāghrasena.<sup>18</sup> They are not box-headed as found in many copperplate grants of the Vākātakas’ (Gokhale 1967–68, 2).

On the basis of the photograph published by Gokhale these observations can be corrected and rendered more precise on a few points. Many of the letters indeed appear to have no head-mark. The *ca*, which occurs twice in line three, has a solid triangular head-mark (particularly clear in the second example). Occasionally other letters too seem to have been written with headmarks, e.g. the *sa* which in line 2 appears once with apparently a solid triangular head-mark (in *sudarśanaṃ*) and once with a solid square or rectangular head-mark (in °*satva*°). This inscription therefore actually appears to mix forms without head-marks, with triangular head-marks and with square or rectangular head-marks. Though the shapes of the letters can be described (with Gokhale 1967–68, 2) as southern, several, most noticeably the *da* (curved instead of angular) and the *pa* (which has a bent left arm), differ significantly from those found in our inscription.

The other two, admittedly very short, Vākāṭaka stone inscriptions published in recent years are the two graffiti found in the very same temple as the inscription at issue and published in RI. The first of these (RI, pl. II (a); above, Plate 6) was there described as being ‘written in Deccani style characters with solid triangular head-marks’, while the second (RI, pl. II (b); above, Plate 7) has ‘a mixture of solid triangular and block [i.e. square] head-marks’ (RI, 469; above, p. 81).

Of these two graffiti, the second need not occupy us long here; it may suffice to draw attention to the *ra* with its extended lower curve and the very square *tha*, two features that distinguish it clearly from our inscription. The first graffito, on the other hand, is of interest here, since its letters can be seen to bear a certain resemblance to those of the large inscription. None the less, the appealing theory that the engraver of the latter carved his own name onto a pillar during an idle moment, must no doubt be rejected, as can be determined already by a study of the first letter of the graffito (*śrī*). As can be clearly seen in the published photograph (Plate 6), the medial *ī* is of the curved rather than the circular type, and the top of the *śa* is rather broader and definitely flat, another characteristic which may suggest ‘northern’ influence. Finally the *da* is round, resembling the *ḍa* rather than the *da* of the inscription published here.

To conclude this note on palaeography, we believe that in this respect too this inscription proves itself to be unusual, showing a combination of characteristics which has not yet been found in any other Vākāṭaka inscription. The present

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18 Sic: meant is the inscription of Varāhadeva, CII V, no. 26, which has square head-marks.

state of our knowledge of Indian palaeography is not, however, so far advanced as yet that one can, in our opinion, draw any conclusions from these facts as to the provenance of the engraver or other possible implications.

*Note on the edition and translation*

The edition presented here is based primarily on photographs we made in November 1989 (of which the photograph published here (Plate 10) is a composite). Since the individual photos overlap to some extent, it was possible to make use of stereoscopy for considerable portions of the text.<sup>19</sup> In addition, photographs kindly supplied by the American Institute of Indian Studies (Ramnagar/Varanasi) were consulted.<sup>20</sup>

While we have spared no pains in our efforts to establish the text from these photographs, it may be worthwhile to repeat the warning recently made by K.R. Norman with particular reference to Aśokan studies (Norman 1991, 245).

One problem which bedevils inscriptional studies . . . is that what is legible on one set of photographs may for various reasons, including perhaps the skill of the photographer, the lighting, the shadows, etc., be doubtful or even completely illegible on another. Even in the case of identical photographs, variations in the printing process can lead to variations in the quality of the print of the photographs.

It is in part such problems as these that have led us to give here, in addition to the text and translation, a relatively detailed commentary touching on both palaeographical and philological problems, and a separate section setting out our interpretation and its historical implications at some length. More importantly, however, this was done from a conviction that it is in these respects that much of the work done in inscriptional studies so far could be improved; and even if part of what follows may seem unnecessary, plodding or self-evident, our aims will have been fulfilled if with its help other scholars can more easily locate our mistakes and improve on them.

Those conjectures of which we felt relatively certain, that is, for which we could think of no other possibility that was at all plausible, have been placed in ⟨angular brackets⟩ in the text. Others, which seemed attractive but were less compelling, have been suggested in notes below the text, while a few more suggestions have been tentatively made in the annotation. We are of course aware of the subjective element involved in this procedure—what seems compelling to us may appear implausible to others—but feel none the less that at

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<sup>19</sup> The use of this technique was first suggested to us by Mr. M. Albers. We are also grateful to J.P. Posthumus (MA) for technical assistance.

<sup>20</sup> The four photographs (nos. 580.60–63) were placed at our disposal thanks to the kind offices of F.H.P.M. Janssen (MA). The photographs published in Jamkhedkar (1987b) and Shastri (1987) are of too poor quality as printed to be of much help.



- 2    ॐ - (pra)bhāvodgata(pā)da(pī)⟨ṭha-⟩,  
       (pra) - (dh)ṛti(sthā)lana - (ñc)i - - |  
 yasyottamāṅgair bbalayo kriyant(e),  
       (pā)de ⟨sa⟩cūḍamaṅibhir nṛ(pāṅām) ||3||  
 ta(s)yodadhiprānta ∘ la ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ||4||
- 3    ॐ ⟨d⟩(e)vateva pratipūjya⟨mān⟩(ā),  
       pitur gṛ⟨he⟩- (pra)ti(ṣ)i ∘ - ∘ |  
 ॐ - ⟨yay⟩au vṛd⟨dhi⟩ka(m) ⟨cāna⟩lasya,  
       prājyājyasiktasya śikheva - ∘ ||5||  
 tām ∘ - ∘ nābhyunnata ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ||6||
- 4    tayoh kramād āhatala(kṣaṇeṣ)u,  
       jāteṣu - - ∘ - ∘ - nvite(ṣu)|  
 y⟨aviya⟩sī candra(ma)saḥ (p)ra(bh)⟨eva⟩,  
       ॐ muṇḍanāmnī tana(yā) (ba)⟨bhūva⟩ ||7||  
 ∘ - ∘ (lekhā)mi ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ||8||
- 5    sadaiva devas trisamudranāthas,  
       sa candragup(t)a(h)paripūṛṇa⟨v⟩(ṛ)ttah |  
 ∘ - ∘ - nām adhi(pa)s su(tām tā)m,  
       śrī(ru)⟨dra⟩senāya (g)⟨u⟩ṇā ∘ - ∘ ||9||  
 (ve) - ∘ - (lī) ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ||10||
- 6    sudurvvaḥām rājyadhuraṃ samagrām,  
       dhurandharasy(e)⟨va⟩supuṅgavasya |  
 ∘ - ∘ - (syā) ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ,  
       ⟨gha⟩ṭo⟨tka⟩co nāma suto ∘ - ∘ ||11||  
 ॐ m aṅganāpā ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ , ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ ||12||
- 7    tām bhāgineyīm atha rājarājo,  
       dṛ(ṣ)⟨ṭvā⟩ ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ veśmalakṣmī⟨m⟩ |  
 ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - ∘ - (d)y⟨◇⟩,  
       ⟨u⟩pāsya pāṅgrahaṇaṃ cakāra ||13||

[3a *tikṣṇa*° conj. Bakker 1997, 163]    3b *prabhā*°    [4a °*palāyamānām* conj. Bakker 1997, 163]    5a *sā devateva*, [*yā devateva* conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    [5b *pitur gṛhītā* conj. Bakker 1997, 164, but rejected in Bakker 2010c (below, n.1 on p.352);    *pratiśiddhaśakteḥ* conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    [5c *kanyā yayau* conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    [5d *śuddhā* conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    7b *putreṣu guṇānviteṣu*    [7d *sā muṇḍa*° conj. Bakker 1997, 164;    I now conjecture: *yā muṇḍa*°]    9c *dadau* ∘ - *nām*, [*dadau prajānām* conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    9d *guṇākarāya*    [11c *prajādhīpasyā*° conj. Bakker 1997, 164]    11d *suto babhūva*





*Translation*

- 1 He is victorious, whose ⟨colour resembles⟩ the depths of a water-laden rain-cloud, who [...] clarified butter in a stream [...], whose [...] limbs are swollen at the occasion of a sacrifice ⟨that is the battle⟩, and who is looked at with gazes that tremble with fright [...].<sup>21</sup>
- 2 [...] royal seer of [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 3 To whose feet the crowned heads of kings pay tribute: [...] whose [...] receptacle for holding ⟨the lustre⟩ from (his) footstool, (a lustre) that arises from (his) might [...].
- 4 To him [...] the edge of the ocean [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 5 ⟨She⟩, being worshipped in the residence of her father like a deity [...], grew up like a [...] flame of a fire in which abundant ghee has been poured.
- 6 Her [...] raised [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 7 After (a number of) ⟨sons⟩ had been born to them in succession, famous and furnished ⟨with virtues⟩, [...] a daughter called MUṆḌĀ, resembling the lustre of the moon, was born as (their) younger sister.
- 8 [...] streak [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 9 At all times the conduct of this King (*deva*), CANDRAGUPTA, Lord of the three oceans, was perfect: the sovereign ⟨gave⟩ his daughter to the illustrious RUDRASENA, ⟨a mine of⟩ virtues. [*one verse (10), possibly two, lost*]
- 11 To (this) [...] great hero, who was like a beast of burden, (carrying) the entire burden of (his) kingdom which was very difficult to bear, [...] a son named GHATOTKACA ⟨was born⟩.
- 12 [...] woman [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 13 Then, after he had seen that niece (of his) [...], who was a palace Lakṣmī, [...] (this) king paid his respects (to her) and married her.
- 14 The lord of the gods [...] ⟨minister⟩ [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 15 ⟨He pleased⟩ the minds of wise men with refined language, [...] of [...] whose eyes were like ⟨blue⟩ lotuses [...], mendicants with floods of wealth and the peoples with (his) fame.
- 16 He [...] king [...]. [*one verse possibly lost*]
- 17 When at a certain time [...] he of desirable appearance [...] by/with Indra, [...] (her) brother brought the proud woman [...], back to his own residence with force. [*one verse (18), possibly two, lost*]
- 19 There, whatever [...], ⟨increasing *dharma*⟩, the king's daughter performed, of those [...] this share [...]. [*one verse (20), possibly two, lost*]
- 21 And she ⟨then respectfully⟩ caused to be made the Lord of the Earth and Master of PRABHĀVATĪ for the sake of everlasting merit [...].

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21 For a translation of the restored verse see below, p. 353.

- 22 [...] the origin of the world [...]. [one verse (23), possibly two, lost]
- 24 After she of extreme ⟨lustre⟩, had made in the village KADALĪVĀṬAKA a water reservoir SUDARŚANA (‘lovely to behold’) and (installed) the beautiful (*sudarśana*) god,
- 25 [...] whose hair is yellow, for the sake of merit [...]. [one verse (26), possibly two, lost]
- 27 Half of the merit assigned to the gods, for (her) father and mother [...] accruing from the deed [...].
- 28 Of (him) of infinite might who is the cause of the sustenance and destruction of the world, the [...] of the (Vedic) seers [...]. [one verse (29), possibly two, lost]
- 30 Reflecting that that temple for her beloved ⟨begetter⟩ is transitory, she free of sins, for the sake of a mass of merit for her mother alone,
- 31 [...] stone [...], resembling stone [...], for a long time [...]. [one verse (32), possibly two, lost]
- 33 By him, who was chosen by her and is carrying out her orders, (about) to proclaim this fame that will last so long as there is light,
- 34 a great *kāvya* [...]. [one or two verses possibly lost]

#### Annotation

LINE 1 Though much of the opening verse has been lost, enough remains to be able to determine with a high degree of certainty that the metre employed was Puṣpitaḡrā. The fact that the fourth pāda seems to end at approximately the same place as the fourth pādas of lines 2 and 3 is consistent with the observation that the *akṣaras* are written somewhat more closely together in line 1.

The first legible *akṣara* we read as *ya*; the left tip of the *ya* can be clearly seen though the connexion with the centre vertical is no longer visible. This leads us to the natural conjecture *sa jayati* for the opening words. Judging from the place where all the succeeding lines begin, there might have been room for one more *akṣara* before this, e.g. Oṃ. It should however be noted that neither the Ajanta Cave Inscription of Varāhadēva (CII V no. 25) nor the Ghaṭotkaca Cave Inscription of the same minister (CII V no. 26) has any benedictory syllables or formula before the first verse.<sup>22</sup> For a metrical Gupta inscription which opens with a Puṣpitaḡrā verse see CII III (1888) no. 35, the *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman and Viṣṇudharman* (beginning with the words *sa jayati jagatāṃ patiḥ pinākī*).

<sup>22</sup> These two inscriptions, together with the inscription in Ajanta Cave XVII (CII V no. 27), are in some ways the most appropriate for purposes of comparison with our inscription, since they are the only other known Vākāṭaka stone inscriptions written entirely in verse.

At the end of the first pāda we tentatively propose restoring *sa-jalāmbudodarābhaḥ*,<sup>23</sup> which would be a suitable enough adjective to describe Viṣṇu. It cannot however be determined with certainty to what (manifestation of a) divinity this *maṅgala* verse is addressed. As it is found in a Narasiṃha temple one certainly could expect Viṣṇu, perhaps even in his man-lion incarnation. This would accord well with *bhayaḥloladr̥ṣṭidr̥ṣṭaḥ*, our reading in the fourth pāda; but the comparison with a dark rain-cloud would then be inappropriate. Also °*makhasamayaidhitāṅga*°, if this reading is correct, does not seem particularly suited. The tentative suggestion *raṇamakhasamayaidhitāṅga*° would be more appropriate for a god doing battle in human form, e.g. Kṛṣṇa or Rāma.

For the second pāda of the first verse we can offer no compelling restoration. In our translation we have chosen to interpret °*rasarājya*° as containing the word *ājya* (also found in verse 5) rather than *rājya*, and this has led us to propose reading °*prasarājya*°. The syllables *miti* preceding this could, e.g. be part of the word *samiti*, but since interpretation of the pāda and indeed the whole verse is problematic, the possibility that one should rather divide the words °*m iti prasarājya*° can not be completely ruled out.<sup>24</sup>

The second verse clearly cannot be in Puṣpitāgrā metre, since the fifth syllable *ja* must be heavy, as the following *akṣara* is certainly a ligature. The sixth syllable is somewhat problematic; though we read *r(ṣ)ī*, it must be admitted that the ligature *rṣ* would in that case have here a form rather different from that which one would expect and which is indeed found in line 13.<sup>25</sup> On the basis of our proposed reading, we restore the word °*rājarṣi*°. Unfortunately, the word preceding it does not appear to be any name that is familiar to us.<sup>26</sup>

LINE 2 The main construction of verse 3 is to be found in pādas c and d, and is fortunately clear. It is unlikely that the verse also contained a correlative for *yasya*, and this in turn implies that the verse is a description of a king who was already mentioned.<sup>27</sup> The first two pādas apparently contained a long compound, the precise sense of which is difficult to make out, especially since

23 Since the following syllable is lost, and we do not have a compelling restoration, it is obviously impossible to guess what the precise form would be after application of the rules of sandhi.

24 Cf. below, p. 353.

25 The other main candidate, the ligature *rm* seems, however, still less acceptable; the two arms visible do not really resemble those of the looped *ma*, and moreover there appears to be a short vertical connecting them with the lower part of the letter.

26 One possible restoration of the first three syllables would be *mureṇa*, which at least has the advantage that the cerebral *ṇ* would be explained. On the other hand, this would suggest that the content of the verse is again mythical rather than historical, as one would expect from the word *rājarṣi* and from the fact that verse 3 seems to imply that a king or royal family had already been mentioned before.

27 Also possible, though to our minds rather less likely, is that the king is first named in the following verse which begins with *tasya*.

the termination has been lost, so that we cannot be certain who or what it qualified or described. For the first two syllables of pāda b we propose the reading °*prabhā*°; this provides assonance with °*prabhāvo*° in pāda a and would be consonant with the frequent usage of (*pra*)√*bhā* and its derivatives in the inscription.

Verse 4 no doubt told something further of this king, though its contents are practically lost. In pāda a one thinks of the possibility of restoring *tasyo-dadhiprāntabalasya*, ‘of him, whose power/army [extended to] the edge of the ocean(s)’, but this is palaeographically quite unlikely. The seventh syllable appears to have taken up quite a lot of space vertically, and may have had the vowel *i*.

LINE 3 The main image of verse 5, that of a young girl growing up and increasing in brightness like a flame shooting up from a fire on which ghee has been poured, is fortunately clear. For the word in pāda b which apparently begins with *pratiṣi*° we have no particularly convincing suggestion; it might be a bahuvrīhi adjective of the girl with *pratiṣiddha* as its first member.<sup>28</sup> Pāda d one would rather expect to end with an adjective qualifying in the first place *śikhā*, and implicitly also the girl who is the *upameya*; just one possibility, though an appealing one, would be *śuddhā*, which would continue the series of sibilants.

Of verse 6 far too little is preserved to be able to arrive at any certainty as to its syntax or contents. The first syllable *tām* no doubt refers to the girl described in verse 5. Whether *nābhyunnata*° contains the negative particle *na* or whether this is instead the termination of a word in the instrumental case, or even an a-stem which is the prior member of a compound, cannot be determined.

LINE 4 Of considerable interest in verse 7 is the word *āhatalakṣaṇeṣu*, which, although the last three *akṣaras* are somewhat damaged, and although it was misread by Jamkhedkar, can in our opinion be read with certainty in pāda a. This word was hitherto chiefly known from lexicographical works, its earliest and most important occurrence being in the *Amarakośa* (AK 3.1.10): *guṇaiḥ pratīte tu kṛtalakṣaṇāhatalakṣaṇau*.<sup>29</sup> At least one commentator of Amara, the southern author Bommagaṇṭhi Appayārya (most probably to be dated towards the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century), seems also to have known a reading *kṛtalakṣaṇāhitalakṣaṇau*.<sup>30</sup> The word *āhitalakṣaṇa*

28 Less likely, though perhaps not impossible, is *pratiṣikta*°; the passive participle of √*sic* also occurs in pāda d, and, as far as we can judge, the use of this root with the preposition *prati* is rather uncommon.

29 Amara teaches the use of the words *kṛtalakṣaṇa* and *āhatalakṣaṇa* in the sense of ‘one who is known on account of his virtues’, obviously the sense in which the latter is used by the author of the inscription. Other early occurrences of the word are found in MBh 2.48.36, 3.247.4, 7.19.63.

30 AK 16. Note that MS K<sub>5</sub> of Liṅgayasūrin’s commentary on the AK adds *āhitalakṣaṇa iti vā pāṭhaḥ* (AK<sub>1</sub> 16). The other commentaries available to us all read °*āhatalakṣaṇau*.

occurs in apparently the same sense in *Raghuvamśa* 6.71, where it is noteworthy that Mallinātha (also a southern writer) glosses it with *prakhyātagunaḥ*, and supports this by quoting Amara with the °*āhitalakṣaṇau* reading.<sup>31</sup> In the present state of Kālidāsa studies it is, however, impossible to have any certainty about such textual details, and without a thorough study of the manuscript traditions of the *Raghuvamśa* it would be rash to maintain that Kālidāsa must have used the word in the form *āhita*° rather than *āhatalakṣaṇa*. Indeed, Rāyamukūṭa (AD 1431/32), in his commentary on AK 3.1.10, quotes the relevant pāda from the *Raghuvamśa* with the reading *āhatalakṣaṇo 'bhūt* (AK<sub>2</sub> 9).

We have met with one other significant occurrence of the word. In line 4 of the Ghaṭotkaca Cave inscription of the Vākāṭaka minister Varāhadeva (CII V no. 26) the word *āhitalakṣaṇānām* occurs; as Mirashi however points out in a footnote, earlier editions of the inscription by Pandit Bhagvanlal Indraji and Bühler had read *āhatalakṣaṇānām*.<sup>32</sup> The valuable point about the occurrence of the word in our inscription, however, is that there can here be no doubt at all that the form *āhatalakṣaṇa* was used, for the *akṣara ha* is beautifully preserved on an undamaged section of the stone.<sup>33</sup>

In 7ab we obviously have an absolute locative, and there can be little doubt that after *jāteṣu* a substantive (masc. pl. loc.) meaning 'son', and another qualification of these sons must have followed. The restoration *jāteṣu putreṣu guṇāviteṣu*, while perhaps not the only metrically correct possibility, seems both simple and plausible. More compelling, to our minds, are the readings proposed in pāda c; *yavīyasī* being the only metrically correct and at the same time both syntactically and semantically natural and convincing restoration. In view of the fact that a simile is clearly intended, *prabheva* at the end of the pāda seems equally certain.

In 7d we find a personal name of a girl as the first member of a compound ending in °*nāmnī*. The name no doubt ended in *munḍā*,<sup>34</sup> though the first syllable is unfortunately illegible; it may have ended in *ā* (which would suggest Cāmunḍā), for what appears to be the right vertical of the *ā* can still be seen, together with the horizontal stroke attaching it to the head-mark. That the vowel is *o* instead is less likely, since the two arms of the *o* are generally curved rather than angular. For further discussion of the name and identity of the girl see below, p. 137.

The few *akṣaras* legible of verse 8 do not of course offer much material for interpretation. We are inclined to think that the verse contains the word

31 Cf. Vallabhadeva's gloss in his *Raghupañcikā*: *guṇasampadā vikhyātaḥ*.

32 The photograph published in CII V is unfortunately not of sufficiently good quality to confirm whether there really are, as Mirashi claims, traces of a curve above the *ha*, so that here too some doubt remains as to the correct reading.

33 A discussion of the not unproblematic etymology and semantics of *āhatalakṣaṇa/āhitalakṣaṇa* must be deferred to a later occasion.

34 The shortening of the feminine suffix *ā* to *a* is permitted here by P.6.3.36. Cf. also *prabhāvatisvāmīnam* in verse 21.

*lekhā* which suggests the possibility that the daughter introduced in verse 7 is described further, and perhaps said to grow in beauty and lustre as the crescent moon; a comparison found in Kālidāsa's description of the young Pārvatī in *Kumārasambhava* (1.25): *dīne dīne sā parivardhamānā labdhodayā cāndramasīva lekhā | pupoṣa lāvṇyamayān viśeṣāñ jyotsnāntarāñīva kalāntarāñi*. It is not possible to determine whether one should divide *lekhā mi*°, *lekhām i*°, or *lekhāmi*°.

LINE 5 Verse 9 is relatively unproblematic. On the use of the term *trisamudranātha* in pāda a see below, p. 138. The sixth and seventh *akṣaras* of pāda b are very badly damaged, but we are fairly confident of the reading *paripūrṇavṛttaḥ*. The *upadhmanīya* can be made out on the left arm of the *pa*. The word may be taken as containing a (mild form of) *śleṣa*, with a secondary meaning of 'completely full and round', which would be a suitable adjective to describe the moon (*candra*), aside from the meaning 'of perfect conduct', a description of Candragupta.

The verb has been lost, but considerations of syntax and common sense (the presence of a fem. acc. sg. besides a masc. dat. sg.), aside from known historical facts (see below, p. 138), strongly suggest a form of  $\sqrt{dā}$  or a verb with the same meaning. This must almost certainly have been at the beginning of pāda c, since the second half of pāda d hardly has space for a verb, and contains instead in all probability an adjective describing Rudrasena, for which we propose *guṇākarāya*. Aside from this verb, the illegible part of pāda c may have contained a gen. masc. pl., the final syllable of which (*nām*) is still legible, depending on the following words *adhipas* and most probably meaning either 'king' or 'man'. The alternative possibility, that °*nām* is to be interpreted as a fem. acc. sg. ending, a further qualification of the daughter, is most unlikely in view of the following *adhipas*. Since the gen. pl. must have taken up at least three syllables,<sup>35</sup> only two, at the very beginning of the pāda, remain for the verb. Hence our proposal *dadau*.

Verse 10 must be regarded as completely lost, as far as the extraction of information, or even a single word, is concerned. The second *akṣara* could be a *ta* (vowel uncertain), and two or three syllables after the *li* or *lī* which can with difficulty be made out there seems to be another *ta* (vowel again uncertain).

LINE 6 Verse 11 is again relatively well preserved. The sense seems clear; pāda c no doubt contained at least one more qualification or epithet of the king described in the first two pādas, as appears from the single *akṣara* (*syā*) that can be read. It is plausible that the verb occurred at the end of pāda d, and the most obvious candidate is *babhūva*, as at the end of verse 7.

It does not appear possible to say anything about the text of verse 12. The only point to be noted is that four or five syllables after the last legible *akṣara*

<sup>35</sup> The only at all plausible word which could yield a two-syllable gen. pl. with the metrical pattern -- is *nr* (*nṛnām*) but this, as well as other words such as *nṛpa*, *nara*, *prabhu*, etc., is impossible in view of the fact that the last syllable is clearly *nām* and not *ṇām*.

(*pā*) what could be the sign for medial *u* can be seen.

LINE 7 Of verse 13, we are fortunate in having the subject, object and verb well preserved, so that the interpretation is clear and unproblematic. Since the main verb is at the end of pāda d, it is highly probable that the *dr̥ṣ* which can be made out at the beginning of pāda b, and of which the *ṣ* appears to be the top part of a ligature, is to be interpreted as *dr̥ṣṭvā*, and this would provide a syntactically smooth construction. Pāda b may also have contained another adjective belonging with the *bhāgīneyī* and perhaps, though not necessarily, an *iva* going with *veśmalakṣmīm*. The contents of pāda c can not be reconstructed.

Little can be said of verse 14. The fourth *akṣara* could have been the horse-shoe type *ga*, but since the lower part is damaged, so that it cannot be determined whether the character has a closed bottom or not, *dha* is an equally likely reading. We have chosen for the latter possibility, simply on the grounds that words beginning with *dhan* are rather more frequent than words beginning with *gan*. In pāda b the opening syllables *amā* suggest, in a royal context, *amātya*.

LINE 8 Of verse fifteen neither subject nor verb has been preserved. The construction clearly involves a series of acc. (pl.) together with instrumentals, both singular and plural, and in pādas a and b also 2 cases of a gen. pl., presumably dependant on an acc. pl. From the general tenor, one expects the verb to have a meaning such as ‘satisfy’, ‘delight’, ‘win over’ or the like, and the subject is no doubt a king. It should be noted that very similar verses are found in two Gupta inscriptions: the *Junāgaḍh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta* (AD 457–58), where we read: *ājyapraṇāṃmair vibudhān athe-ṣṭvā dhanair dvijātīn api tarpayitvā | paurāṃs tathābhyarcya yathārhamānaiḥ bhrtyāṃś ca pūjyān suhrdaś ca dānaiḥ* || (CII III (1888), 60 (l. 19)), and the *Gangdhar Stone Inscription of Viśvarvarman*, which contains a verse reading *yajñais surān munigaṇān niyamair udāraiḥ* – – – – – | *mānena bhrtyajanam appratimena* (sic) *loke yo [']toṣayat sucaritaś ca jagat samaggram* || (CII III (1888), 74 (ll. 3–4)).

At the beginning of pāda b we read the *akṣara prī*: the left arm of the *pa* and the medial *ī* are clearly visible, and at the bottom left there is a mark which we interpret as the tip of the curved subscript *r*. On the strength of this *akṣara* we propose reading the verb form *prīṇāti* (historical present), and for the two remaining illegible syllables *nīlā*<sup>o</sup> seems a very plausible reading. This would however mean either that the acc. pl. on which the gen. pl. *nīlāmburuheṣaṇānām* depends is in pāda c or that *manāṃsi* in pāda a is to be construed again with this gen. pl. as well as with *viduṣām*. It must also be admitted that a historical present does not seem to occur elsewhere in the inscription, though its durative aspect could be quite appropriate here. The subject must have been given in pāda c, perhaps at the end, for the double *s* (*s sādihūn*) suggests that the last word of pāda c may have been a nom. masc. sg.

Verse 16 is again almost completely lost. The *akṣaras hīpa* at the end of the

first pāda strongly suggest the word *mahīpa*, probably, given the position, in the nominative, though the precise form taken after application of the rules of sandhi cannot be determined.

LINE 9 The basic outline of verse 17 is in any case clear: the first two pādas must have consisted of an absolute locative construction (on which *purandareṇa* probably depended), while pāda d contains the subject and verb. *ānināya* must govern two accusatives, the second of which (*svaṃ gr̥ham*) is in pāda d and the first no doubt in pāda c, qualified by the adjective *samānām*. The possibility that *samānām* is a gen. pl. rather than an acc. fem. sg. is in this context very unlikely.

LINE 10 The subject of verse 19 is obviously *manujendraputrī*. The reading of this word is not in any doubt, despite the fact that Shastri misread it as *manujendrapurī* (metrically impossible) and took this as a reference to the capital. The *r* visible is definitely in its subscript form, and above it the form of the *t* can still be made out. As for the grammatical construction of the verse, it is likely that *teṣāṃ* in pāda d correlates with *yān yān* of the first pāda. It is unfortunately not quite clear what the princess *akārṣīt* (note the use of the aorist which could point to the actuality of the action); °*savān* in pāda b suggests °*prasavān*,<sup>36</sup> and we conjecture that this is the final member of a bahuvrīhi compound meaning in effect ‘producing...’. The *akṣara dha* visible, and in a position where it must be metrically heavy, suggests *dharmaprasavān*.

LINE 11 With this line the metre changes to Śloka. This accompanies a noticeable change in subject matter and style; whereas till now the events related clearly seem to have taken place in a not very recent past and have been narrated, so far as can be judged, with a preponderance of perfect forms and in a fairly developed style with regular use of *alamkāras*, from this point on the events spoken of are evidently those of the very recent past, told without the use of perfect forms and in a simpler style. Verse 19, in the previous line (with the only certain use of the aorist in the inscription), though still in Upajāti metre, may be seen as a transition to the second half of the inscription.

In pāda a of verse 21 (fourth or *ra-vīpulā*) the word *prabhāvatisvāminam*<sup>37</sup> is an apposition to *lokanātham* in the following pāda, which obviously indicates an immediate connexion between Prabhāvatī Guptā and the Vaiṣṇava image/temple spoken of. The sixth syllable of pāda b is here read as *thā*; the curve inside the *th* is not visible, and the letter appears slightly damaged. Possible would also be the reading *dhā*, but we are unable to find a plausible restoration beginning with *adhā*,<sup>38</sup> whereas with *athā*° there are a number of

36 *utsavān* is metrically impossible, as well as intrinsically unlikely here.

37 The shortening of *ī* to *i* is again allowed by P. 6.3.36; cf. above, n. 34 on p. 130.

38 The possibility of a form of  $\sqrt{dhā}$ , such as *adhārayat*, may probably be rejected, since one would then require another object for *akārayat*; also the occurrence of two imperfect forms of causatives at the ends of pādas b and d is not very likely.

possibilities, of which, e.g., *athādarāt* seems appropriate.

Of verse 22 practically all that can be said is that it most probably refers to a god or an image of a god. *jaḡadutpattinā* could be either an instrumental or part of a longer compound.

LINE 12 On Sudarśana as both the name of a water reservoir and an adjective for a god (in pādas a and b respectively of verse 24) see below, p. 144 and n. 72 on p. 145). Pāda d poses a slight problem; the first four syllables appear to read *kārayitā*, and the word was so read by Jamkhedkar and Shastri. The latter drew the conclusion that the subject must have been a man, and put forth the suggestion that he may have been Pravarasena II.<sup>39</sup> While it is true that *kārayitā*, if understood as a nomen agentis from the causative of  $\sqrt{kr}$ , would be a masculine form, this would be in contradiction with the rest of the inscription, where it seems clear that the subject of various deeds is a woman, and even with the end of the same pāda where there is certainly a nom. fem. sg. ( $^{\circ}$ *vatī*). Shastri did not apparently consider the possibility that *kārayitā* might be a periphrastic future, in which case it could also be used with a feminine subject. This possibility must, however, also be rejected. A periphrastic future would be highly unexpected in the present context; even more important, however, is the consideration that *kārayitā* is also most unlikely on metrical grounds, since the second and third syllables of a pāda are not allowed to be both *laghu*. No other metrical faults are found in the legible part of the inscription, and it would be very surprising if the author—obviously a well-trained poet—had made one. We are therefore of the opinion that *kārayitā*, in whatever way it is interpreted, cannot after all be the intended word. Fitting, both metrically and otherwise, would be *kārayitvā*,<sup>40</sup> which we have accordingly restored. It should be mentioned that this would not necessarily mean that we assume the apparently very careful engraver to have made an error here, for immediately underneath the *tā* the stone has been damaged, and in such a way that it is conceivable that the subscript *v*, which would have been attached to the bottom of the right leg of the *tā*,<sup>41</sup> has been effaced.

For the final word in pāda d we propose reading *atibhāvati*: though the *akṣara bhā* cannot be read, it seems at least palaeographically possible. As an epithet, this would continue the numerous light/lustre images; on the possibility that it is a personal name see below, p. 140.

In the first pāda of verse 25 ( $^{\circ}$ *pītakeśā* (nom. fem. sg.) must be another epithet of the princess. Rather than assuming that she actually had yellow hair, we are inclined to think of the possibility that this is the second half of a bahuvrīhi compound. Pītakeśa might be an epithet of Narasiṃha, though

39 Shastri 1987, 70–71.

40 The absence of a finite verb-form in the verse is not a problem; very likely the construction continues through the next verse.

41 The ligature *tv* does not occur elsewhere in the legible part of the inscription, but cf. the *śv* in line 14.

admittedly not found in dictionaries, so the intended sense could be ‘she who worships Narasiṃha’ or ‘she who had installed/caused to be made [an image of] Narasiṃha’ or something similar.<sup>42</sup> Finally, it is important to note that at the far right of the slab, well after where one would expect verse 25 to have ended, there appears to be an *akṣara*, probably *pā* or *bā*. While this cannot of course add anything to our understanding of the content of the inscription, it is useful confirmation that there must have been three Ślokas to the line in lines 11–15, and that the inscription must originally have been broader yet.

LINE 13 The verb of verse 27 has not been preserved, but the sense is probably that the daughter assigns half of the merit arising from some deed or rite to the gods,<sup>43</sup> and half to her parents. Pāda a is somewhat problematic; first of all one would expect *arddham* to be construed with a genitive (*puṇyasya*). One would perhaps have also expected *brahmārpitam*, but, though there seems to be a mark of some kind above the ligature *rpp*, we regard this as damage to the stone and do not think it warranted to read medial *i*. *brahmārppaṇam* must therefore be taken as an apposition to (*arddham*) *puṇyam*. In pāda b there no doubt was a nom. fem. sg. qualifying or describing the princess who is the grammatical subject, which might have ended with, e.g. °śālīnī.

While the missing part of pāda c cannot of course be restored with certainty, one metrically correct and rather appealing possibility would be to read *mātā-pitr̥bhyām arddham ca* (a third or *ma-vipulā*). In pāda d we suggest the reading (°)*kriyodbhavam*; admittedly the sign for medial *i* cannot be seen, but the upper part of the character has in any case been completely destroyed. The low position of the arms of the *k* must be caused by the fact that another consonant sign was written above it, i.e. in ligature; this too however is no longer legible. From the point of view of sense, (°)*kriyodbhavam* seems more satisfactory as an adjective of *puṇyam* than *kriyodbhavam* (as read by Jamkhedkar) or *vikrayodbhavam*.

Of verse 28 one can do little more than to hazard the suggestion that it described the erection of a temple or the construction of a statue of a god, most probably Viṣṇu, described as ‘the cause of the sustenance and destruction of the world’.<sup>44</sup> The contents of pādas c and d remain a mystery.

LINE 14 An important crux is presented by the gen. in pāda a of verse 30. The syllables 4 and 5 reading *dayi* practically only allow the word *dayita* (‘beloved’), which one would expect to be used exclusively for close relatives. This is in accordance with syllable 8 °*tur*, which may be a genitive of a nomen agentis or noun of relationship probably different from *mātr̥* found in 30c. A

42 MBh 7.173.22 gives *harikeśa* as an epithet of Śiva.

43 Less probably, to the brahmins.

44 The omission of ‘creation’ is probably merely due to metrical reasons; cf. e.g. MkP 78.53 (cf. Märkpur. 81.53) in which Viṣṇu’s cosmic sleep is described as the cause of sustenance and dissolution of the world: *viśveśvarīm jagaddhātrīm sthitisamhārakārīṇīm | staumi nidrām bhagavatīm viṣṇor atulatejasah ||*

metrically correct conjecture would be *dayitādhātur*: ‘of/for her beloved begetter’.<sup>45</sup> In pāda b *taṃ* must refer to the *prāsāda* of pāda a, despite the slight awkwardness of expression. Perhaps the temple, which we take to be one erected either by or in memory of the father of the princess, i.e. Rudrasena, was already mentioned before, in verse 29 which is lost. The sentiment expressed in pāda b is unusual, and, to the best of our knowledge, without a close parallel. While royal inscriptions occasionally refer to the transitoriness of life, wealth, etc., and the changeableness of the world,<sup>46</sup> so specific a remark as that found here, made in regard to a temple (in memory) of a father,<sup>47</sup> seems only possible if prompted by the actual observation that the temple had fallen into some decay.

Verse 30 contains no finite verb form, and probably formed a syntactic unit with verse 31. The latter probably spoke of the construction of another temple for the sake of the mother of the princess.<sup>48</sup> The fourth syllable of pāda a appears to be a ligature, with a *ś* or a *g*<sup>49</sup> partly visible at the bottom right. Also partly visible is what could be the sign for medial *i* above the character, though this seems a little smaller than is usual. *cirāya* in pāda b may be intended to contrast with *vicintya tam aśāsvatam* in 30b (cf. below, p. 144).

LINE 15 The syntactical construction of verse 33 is obviously not complete. The instrumentals were most probably the logical subject of a passive construction, which must have been in verse 34. The grammatical subject would have been *kāvyaṃ* in 34a, and the verb form must have meant ‘was made/composed’.

The first word of 33a seems slightly ambiguous. Since *sthāyin(i)* at the end of a compound could already carry the meaning of ‘which is enduring as ...’, ‘which shall last as long as ...’, the meaning might be ‘fame which shall last as long as there is light (*āloka*<sup>o</sup>)’. Another possibility, however, is that *āloka* is to be interpreted as *ā lokāt* and that the intended sense is ‘fame which shall last as long as the world does’. Such tatpuruṣa compounds with

45 Nomen agentis of  $\sqrt{dhā}$  with preposition *ā* in the sense of ‘to impregnate’, ‘to make’. Cf. e.g. BhāṅP 9.24.52: *vasudevaḥ sutān aṣṭāv ādadhe sahadēvayā* || The more usual *pītur* is excluded by the long *ā*’s we read in syllables 6 and 7 and would also yield a metrically incorrect verse, in view of the short fourth syllable. Another metrically possible conjecture *dayitābhrātur* is rejected because 30b seems more appropriate, if we assume that the temple was built already some time ago, *mātur eva* (30c) suggests ‘father’, rather than ‘brother’ and, last but not least, <sup>o</sup>*bhrātur* is palaeographically almost impossible in view of the absence of the subscript ‘*ra*’ that should have been visible in the undamaged part of the stone below the syllable.

46 And it may be noted that in such cases the verb (*pra*)*vi*- $\sqrt{ci}$  is usually employed. Cf. e.g. the *Mandasor Stone Inscription of Kumāragupta and Bandhuvvarman*, CII III (1888), 82 (11. 12–13). Such references later grow more and more frequent and are often the subject of elaborate verses.

47 Inscriptions recording the building of a temple regularly express the wish that it be *śāsvata*; e.g. CII III (1888), 277 (1. 14).

48 One might also consider the possibility that instead the repair of the temple mentioned in 30a is spoken of.

49 Less probably, a *t*, since the legs appear wider and more horse-shoe shaped than the *t*.

as their prior member adverbs which are themselves indeclinable compounds with a preposition as their first member, are, while grammatically somewhat problematic, fairly common in inscriptions, and especially in the sort of context that we have here; the proclamation that something will/should last for what is practically an eternity.<sup>50</sup> In favour of the first of these interpretations is perhaps the fact that the standard expressions used in similar cases (whether with a single compound or a *yāvat . . . tāvat* construction) usually mean ‘as long as the moon and sun last’.

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

As emerges from the above, very few things can be derived with certainty as to the content and purport of the inscription. Since it is found in a fifth century Vākāṭaka temple and contains a genealogy featuring, and extending to, the children of Candragupta and Rudrasena (v. 9), it is certain however that the inscription belongs to the fifth century (a date which is also consistent with the palaeography), while the name Rudrasena and the name or title Prabhāvatisvāmin (v. 21) indicate that we are concerned with a Vākāṭaka inscription, notwithstanding the fact that the dynastic name Vākāṭaka does not feature in the legible part of the text. Comparison with other Vākāṭaka inscriptions makes clear that it does not fall into the category of official royal edicts or land-grants (*śāsana*), the structure and contents of which are very much standardized and completely different from the text under discussion. Rather, the inscription seems to report events that are related to some subordinate member of the royal family and as such is without parallel. The interpretation ventured below, in spite of all uncertainties, can claim no more than to be the most plausible hypothesis that the authors could think of.

Verse 9 tells us that Candragupta gave ‘that daughter’ (*sutām tāṃ*) to Rudrasena and this agrees with the well-known historical fact that the Gupta emperor gave his daughter Prabhāvātī in marriage to the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II in the eighth or ninth decade of the fourth century AD. What tends to disturb this interpretation, is the fact that two, possibly three verses earlier a ‘daughter’ (*tanayā*) is mentioned, the name of whom seems to end in °muṇḍā, which could yield Cāmuṇḍā or Gomuṇḍā, names not known from any other Vākāṭaka or Gupta inscription (v. 7). Family or tribal names ending in Muṇḍa are known from some seals found in Basarh (Vaiśālī) and Patna (Pāṭaliputra),<sup>51</sup>

50 Cf. e.g. CII V, 13 (1. 28) (*ācandrādityakālīya*). Of course such compounds, though rather rare, also occur in the classical works of Sanskrit literature; cf. e.g. *Raghuvamśa* 1.5.

51 T. Bloch (*ASI Annual Report* (ASIAR) 1903–04, 113, 116) reports two seals dating from the Gupta period found in Basarh with the legend ‘Gomuṇḍaka’. Thaplyal (1972, 286) lists ‘Muṇḍa’ among the name-endings ‘after races and tribes’, referring to seals found in Basarh (D.P. Spooner in ASIAR 1913–13, 131) and Patna (*Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* (JBORS) X, 192). In an inscription dating from the reign of

but Prabhāvātī Guptā in her own inscriptions claims descent from a Nāga lineage through her mother Kuberanāgā.<sup>52</sup> The daughter named [≃]muṇḍā, is praised as resembling the lustre of the moon (*candramasaḥ prabheva*), an apposite pun if the daughter of Candragupta were meant.<sup>53</sup> However this may be, in view of the *sutām tām* in 9c, it is certain that the daughter known as Prabhāvātī has been mentioned somewhere before verse 9.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise, the way Candragupta is mentioned in 9b (*sa candraguptaḥ*) implies that he had been mentioned in an earlier verse. This probably was before verse 7, since the initial *tayoḥ* of 7a entails that members of two families had already been introduced: 1) a young girl who ‘grew up like a flame of a fire in which abundant ghee has been poured’ (v. 5); 2) her (future) husband whose lineage may well have been described from v. 2 onwards, the first member being qualified as °*rājarsī*. A similar qualification (*rājādhirājarsī*) was given to Candragupta II in the Udayagiri Cave inscription by his minister Virasena (CII III (1888), 35 (1. 3)). The description in verses 3 and 4 suits the Gupta dynasty well. The imperial status ensues from the tribute (*balī*) paid by other kings, whereas the rule is said to extend to the edge of the ocean, which has also been said of Candragupta II in the Tumain inscription.<sup>55</sup> The title attributed to Candragupta in verse 9, ‘Lord of the Three Oceans’, is noteworthy in view of the *Poona Plates of Prabhāvātī Guptā* (CII V, 7 (1. 5)) where he is furnished with an honorific title generally given to his father Samudragupta, viz. *caturudadhisalilāsvāditayaśas* (‘whose fame has tasted the waters of the four oceans’).<sup>56</sup> A.M. Shastri argues that the title ‘Lord of the Three Oceans’ is ‘pertinent only in South Indian context’<sup>57</sup> and ‘indicative of the tremendous

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Mahārāja Svāmīdāsa (Kalacuri year 67 = AD 317) a *śāṅḍilyasagotramuṇḍabrāhmaṇa* is mentioned (CII IV, 7 (1. 3)). An inscription dating from the 5th regnal year of Rudrasena II is reported by Shastri (1987, 46-8) to have been recently found in Mandhal. According to Shastri it records the erection of a Viṣṇu temple dedicated to Mondasvāmin. One wonders whether there could be a connexion between °muṇḍa and ‘monda’. To be certain we have to wait for the publication of the text. A detailed treatment of this issue will be found in Bakker 2010d, 467–69 (below, pp. 326 ff.).

52 CII V, 7 (ll. 7-8) (*Poona Plates*), 36 (ll. 7-8) (*Rddhipur Plates*).

53 This reminds us of a tradition found in the Sthalamāhātmya of Śrīparvata reported by Dubreuil, Lakshman Rao and Altekar (Jouveau-Dubreuil 1920, 73 f.; Rao 1924, 51 ff.; Majumdar & Altekar 1967, 99) and repeated by Sircar (HCI III, p. 179, n. 2) to the effect that Candragupta is credited with a daughter Candrāvātī, who was a devotee of the god Śrīśaila and is by some identified with Prabhāvātī.

54 [I (H.T.B.) now consider it plausible that the *tām* in 9c correlates with a conjectured *yā* in 7d. This would imply that verse 7 is a relative clause, which runs on in verse 8 (cf. above, p. 130) and is concluded by the main clause in verse 9.]

55 *sāgarāntam*, EI XXVI, 117 (l. 1); see below, p. 139.

56 CII III (1888), 26 (l. 2), 43 (l. 1), 49 (l. 15), 53 (l. 1), 256 (l. 2). The same epithet in CII IV, 41, (l. 10), 169 (ll. 5–6). A similar expression (*catuḥsamudraparyantaprathitayaśas*) is found in CII III (1888), 89 (l. 17), 160 (l. 5). Cf. also *catuḥsamudrātīkkrāntakīrttiḥ* in CII III (1888), 220 (l. 1).

57 A similar epithet, *tisamudatoyapītavāhanasa*, found in the Nasik inscription, is given to the Sātavāhana king Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi (SI I, 204 (l. 3)). Sircar (SI I, 203, n. 4)

influence verging on political hegemony wielded by Candragupta II over a large part of the Deccan' (Shastri 1987, 69).

The marriage out of which the 'moon-like' princess named [≡]muṇḍā was born in addition to a number of famous and virtuous elder princes (v. 7) must have been mentioned in verse 6 or, if we add one more verse to every line (see above, p. 116), in the verse directly following it (v. 6\*). The comparison of the princess named [≡]muṇḍā with the lustre (*prabhā*) of the moon and of her mother with a 'flaming fire' make it conceivable that [≡]muṇḍā was a maiden name that became substituted by the more illustrious 'Prabhāvātī'.

The Vākāṭaka dynasty, i.e. Rudrasena, must have been introduced in verse 8, or possibly in 8\*. And just as the offspring was mentioned directly after the description of the marriage in verse 6 or 6\*, the offspring of Rudrasena's marriage with Prabhāvātī might have been mentioned in the following verse 10.

To summarize our analysis of the first ten (partly) legible verses, we would venture the hypothesis that after an introductory verse in Puṣpitāgrā metre eulogizing a deity, probably Viṣṇu, verses 2 to 4 relate to the Gupta dynasty, in particular to Candragupta II, whereas in the second half of verse 4 and possibly in 4\* another family is introduced in which a 'flame-like' daughter was born, who in verse 6 (or 6\*) was married to Candragupta II. Among the offspring of this couple is a 'moon-like' girl named [≡]muṇḍā, who might have been no other than Prabhāvātī Gupta. Verse 8 (or possibly 8\*) may then have introduced a third lineage, viz. that of the Vākāṭakas, in particular its king Rudrasena II, to whom Candragupta gave his daughter in marriage, the offspring of that marriage being mentioned in verse 10.

Verse 11 refers to a powerful (*supuṅgava*) king mentioned earlier. His name might possibly have re-occurred in verse 10\* and may be inferred from the name of the son that was born to him, Ghaṭotkaca (11d). Considering the fact that he occurs in the middle of the inscription it is unlikely that the legendary Ghaṭotkaca Gupta, son of Śrīgupta and father of Candragupta I, known from the Gupta genealogies, is meant. Rather it would seem, that we are here concerned with the same Ghaṭotkaca who is known from the *Tumain Inscription*, who was 'of perpetual good character and fame', who 'attained the glory of his ancestors, won by (the prowess of his) arms',<sup>58</sup> and who descended from Candragupta II, but of whom the fragmentary state of that inscription does not allow us to specify whether he was his son or grandson.<sup>59</sup> The present context suggests that this Ghaṭotkaca was a later son of Candragupta II, born after several princes and the daughter [≡]muṇḍā/Prabhāvātī (v. 7). The phrase describing his father 'who was like a beast of burden, [carrying] the entire

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raises the possibility that the epithet may be connected with a *digvijaya*. Cf. *Harṣacarita* 82 (l. 22): *trisamudrādhīpataye sātavāhananāmne narendrāya*.

58 EI XXVI, 117; SI I, 298: *sa pūrvajānāṇṇi sthīrasatvaktīrtir bhujārjitāṃ kīrtim abhiprapadya*.

59 SI I, p. 298 n. 1; EI XXVI, 116.

burden of (his) kingdom, which was difficult to bear' (11ab), may point towards the end of Candragupta's reign. On the basis of the Tumain inscription we may say that Ghaṭotkaca ruled as viceroy in eastern Malwa at the time that Kumāragupta held the imperial office (AD 435–36).<sup>60</sup> There might not therefore have been too great a difference in age between the children of Rudrasena and Prabhāvātī on the one hand, and their maternal uncle, Ghaṭotkaca, on the other. This observation may serve as a clue for the interpretation of one of the key verses of the inscription, verse 13.

Verse 12 may have said more of Ghaṭotkaca and then, possibly in 12\*, his sister's daughter (*bhāgimeyī*) may have been reintroduced (as the initial *tām* of 13a seems to suggest), whom the viceroy (*rājarāja*) is said, not to have 'consoled' as Jamkhedkar paraphrases (1987b, 221), but to have actually married (*pāṇigrahaṇam cakāra*), impressed as he was with her Lakṣmī-like qualities.

If our interpretation is correct so far, this niece can have been no other than the daughter born from the marriage between the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena and his Gupta wife Prabhāvātī. She might have been mentioned in verse 10, and one wonders whether the conjectured reading *atibhāvātī* ('of extreme lustre') in verse 24d could be her personal name.<sup>61</sup> Actually, *bhāgimeyī* may here stand for half-niece, since, more likely than not, Ghaṭotkaca and Prabhāvātī had been born of different mothers. Nevertheless this matrimony is at odds with the majority of the Smṛti texts which prohibit intermarriage of cognates in the second remove. The present case, however, corroborates Kane's (II, 467) observation to the effect that 'a very striking instance of the limits of *sapiṇḍa* relationship not being observed is the practice among certain sections of even brāhmaṇa marrying their own sister's daughter'. After the alliance between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas had first been sealed by the marrying-off of Prabhāvātī, the latter may have wished to confirm the friendship by giving her own daughter in marriage to her (half-)brother (see Fig. 1).<sup>62</sup>

The following verses (14–16) seem to tell us what a good husband this Vākāṭaka princess married. Then, at a certain time (*kadācit*), something hap-

60 Thaplyal 1972, 66 (cf. Bloch in ASIAR 1903–04, 107), among other scholars, argues in favour of the identify of Ghaṭotkaca of the Tumain inscription with the Ghaṭotkacagupta of the sealing of Basarh. As to his possible identity with the 'issuer of the [gold] coin in the St. Petersburg collection which bears on the obverse the word Ghaṭo beneath the king's arm and the marginal legend ending in (*gu*)pta(h) [and] on the reverse the legend *kramādityah*', Thaplyal is more reserved and numismatists appear divided on the issue.

61 Names to which *ati* is prefixed or in which *ati* replaces another prefix are relatively infrequent, but for an example in a Vākāṭaka inscription see CII V, 125 (l. 7), where the wife of Kṛṣṇadāsa is said to have been named Aticandrā (following Mirashi's reading: Bühler had previously read Sucandrā); unfortunately the name of her father/mother is lost. Such names appear to be most usually given to younger brothers (or sisters), e.g., Māyā – Atimāyā (*Mahāvastu* I, 355), Sudānta – Atidānta (PPL p. 456, v. 38), Datta – Atidatta (PPL p. 455, v. 34), Śulkaḡulma – Atiḡulma (PPL p. 459, v. 56<sup>2</sup>), Gaṇḡa – Atigaṇḡa (BrP 165.29), Gambhīrā – Atigambhīrā (BrP 147.11), Balā – Atibalā (Rām. 3.12.12, Crit. App.).

62 Cf. Majumdar & Altekar 1967, 169 f.

pened and the mentioning of Indra in verse 17b suggests that he (*tasmin*), i.e. Ghaṭotkaca, left this world.<sup>63</sup> If this conjecture is accepted it would provide the inscription with a *terminus post quem* of AD 435–36, the year the Tumain inscription showed Ghaṭotkaca to be still alive. In the wake of this event the brother of the princess is said to have brought her back to his own residence. Epigraphical evidence has preserved the names of three sons of Rudrasena and Prabhāvatī. As has been discussed elsewhere (Bakker 1992b, 7), it is highly unlikely that Divākarasena was still alive at the time of the present inscription, and of the two remaining brothers, Dāmodarasena and Pravarasena, the latter was the actually ruling king. It therefore seems plausible that the *bhrātā* of 17d is none other than the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II, who might have been mentioned along with his sister in verse 10. Anyhow, this must have been an extraordinary deed and the word *balāt* (17d) indicates that it was not done in accord with the people involved, i.e. that it was resisted either by the princess herself, or by her Gupta relatives, or by both (see below). The principal condition on which a widow is allowed to return to her paternal home by traditional law, viz. the absence of any male relative on the side of her deceased husband, (*Nāradaśmṛti* 13.29), was obviously not fulfilled in this case.

The residence to which the princess was taken would probably have been in Pravarasena II's capital Pravaraपुरा, which has been identified by some with present-day Paunar (*pavanār*).<sup>64</sup> However, as already argued by Jamkhedkar, it is hard to derive Paunar etymologically from Pravaraपुरा.<sup>65</sup> The rich archaeological findings in Nagardhan (also know as Nandardhan), which is the Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhana,<sup>66</sup> do not give any indication that this site had been abandoned in the second quarter of the fifth century. Moreover, when

63 Respectful ways of saying that a king died frequently involve the mentioning of Indra. Cf. CII IV, 10, especially n. 2.

64 Mirashi 1954 and in CII V, xli.

65 Jamkhedkar 1985a, 84: 'The reconstructed Sanskrit form of Paunar should be Padmanagara (through the Prakrit Pomanayara, or Paūmanayara) and not Pravaranagara/Pravarapura. Cf. Skt. *padma-nāla*, Hindi *pau-nār*.' One would expect, however, Skt. *pravara*° to yield *pavar*° or *pabar*°. A not really satisfactorily identified town and district Padmapura occur in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions (cf. Shastri 1987, 74, n. 8); town: CII V, 78 (*Unfinished Durg Plate* or 'Mohallā Plate'); district: in the *Māṇḍal Plates of Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, Year 5* (Shastri 1987, 48) and the *Māsod Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 19* (Shrimali 1987, 66 (l. 19)). For a discussion of the Mandhal and Mohallā Plates see below, p. 324 ff. According to Shastri 1987, 48 the district 'should be looked for somewhere in the Nagpur–Wardha region'. For an alternative see below, n. 34 on p. 326 Another etymology would derive *pau*° from Prakrit *pavā*, Skt. *prapā* 'watering place'. The ancient site of Paunar is situated at a ford in the River Dhām. In this context it may also be noted that in our view the style of the pieces found in Paunar deviates rather significantly from the Rāmagiri/Nagardhan sculptures. This evidently also posed difficulties to Joanna Williams when she tried to connect the Paunar findings with other Vākāṭaka sculpture (Williams 1983, 230 f.). Archaeologically it would seem quite possible to date the Paunar site in the post-Vākāṭaka period, i.e. end of fifth century or sixth century (cf. Spink 1981, p. 123 n. 8).

66 Mirashi 1959, 23; Majumdar & Altekar 1967, 114; etc.

the eastern Vākāṭaka kingdom was overrun by the Nalas in the last decade of the fifth century, the victorious king Bhavadattavarman issued a charter from Nandivardhana—rather odd if that place had been deserted as capital for already over half a century.<sup>67</sup> Pravarapura, on the other hand, was never mentioned again after the death of Pravarasena II. It is therefore quite conceivable that Pravarasena merely had his capital Nandivardhana renamed for the sake of his own glory (the first inscription issued from Pravarapura dates from his 16th regnal year, when Prabhāvatī was still alive and issuing charters from Rāmagiri).<sup>68</sup> The princess might thus have been brought back to

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67 EI XIX, 102. There is uncertainty and hence controversy regarding these kings of the Nala dynasty. The grant recorded in the charter of Mahārāja Bhavattavarman (prakritism for Bhavadattavarman) was made during a pilgrimage of him and his wife to Prayāga, but it was issued from Nandivardhana. The date of the charter (7th of the dark half of Kārttika in the 11th regnal year) seems to correspond with the time the king himself, being in Prayāga, instructed his officer Culla to write it down in private (*svamukhājñ(a)yābhūlikhit(ā) rahasi niyukte(n)a cullena*). The charter was (later) engraved on a copperplate by a Mahārāja Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka, who was ‘favoured by the grace of his grandfather’s feet’ (*āryakapādaprasādānuṅghītena*), ‘for the sake of the increase in merit and fame of his father and mother’ (*mātāpitroḥ puṇyakīrtti-varhdhana°*). These copperplates were found in Rithapur along with those of Prabhāvatī Guptā. From the *Poḍagaḍh Inscription* (EI XXI, 155 f.) we know that Bhavadatta’s son [Skanda]varman recovered the lost (*bhraṣṭā*) royal fortune of his family and repopulated the capital Puṣkarī. The father of Mahārāja Arthapati might therefore have been [Skanda]varman, who was dead at the time his son published the grant of his grandfather. The expression *āryakapādaprasādānuṅghītena* probably served to authorize this deed. That king Arthapati reigned after [Skanda]varman also seems to follow from the *Kesaribeda Inscription* (EI XXVIII, 12) dating from his 7th regnal year, which was issued from the capital Puṣkarī (cf. Sircar in HCI III, 188 f.). From this epigraphical evidence we may deduce that the Nala king Bhavadattavarman conquered Nandivardhana of the Vākāṭakas, but soon afterwards was defeated and his own capital destroyed. His son [Skanda]varman succeeded in restoring the power of the dynasty, at least in its traditional homeland. His successor, Arthapati, proclaimed his grandfather’s glory as conqueror of the eastern Vākāṭaka realm. If Sircar is right in dating the *Rithapur Plates of Bhavadattavarman* ‘on grounds of palaeography to the first half of the sixth century’, this would place Bhavadattavarman’s conquest of Nandivardhana at the end of the fifth century. Only two generations later, at the time that the Vākāṭaka power had collapsed completely, Bhavadattavarman’s grandson could publish his grandfather’s grant. This could well imply that the Nalas had again taken possession of Nandivardhana in the first half of the sixth century (Sircar in HCI III, 190). When they finally met defeat at the hands of the early Cālukyas (Kīrtivarman I, c. AD 566–97), their role of suzerain of Vidarbha might have been taken over by the Kalacuris, whose feudatory Svāmīrāja ruled in Nandivardhana in AD 573, according to an inscription dated in Kalacuri Saṃvat 322 (EI XXVIII, 8).

68 CII V, 35; Shastri 1987, 51 f. His grandson Pṛthivīṣeṇa II issued charters from various places including Rāmagiri (Shastri 1977–78, 142: Mandhal Plates of his second regnal year). In this connexion it is striking to find that Pṛthivīṣeṇa II’s Māhurjharī Plates (dating from his 17th regnal year) were issued from ‘Pṛthivīsamudra’ for the sake of two inhabitants of Pṛthivīpura. Kolte 1971–72, 67 ff. thinks that Pṛthivīsamudra and Pṛthivīpura refer to one and the same place, viz. the capital of Pṛthivīṣeṇa, and he assumes that the capital had been shifted again from Pravarapura. Kolte (1971–72) proposes to identify this ‘third capital’ with the modern village of Samudrapura in the

Nandivardhana or Pravaraपुरा, in the vicinity of the temple on the Rāmāgiri in which the present inscription is found.

Back in her ancestral home, perhaps against her will (note *samānām* in 17c), the unlucky (widowed) princess (*manujendraputrī*, 19a) threw herself into charitable and pious activity (verse 19), recorded in verses 21–32 in Śloka metre.

The princess, ‘free of sins’ (30d), and ‘of extreme lustre’ (24d, see above, p. 140) ‘caused to be made the Lord of the Earth’, i.e. an image of Viṣṇu, named ‘Master of Prabhāvātī’, in recognition of her mother’s devotion to that god (21a). Prabhāvātī in her own inscriptions used to refer to the main deity of the hill as Rāmāgirisvāmin (CII V, 35; Shastri 1987, 51). Apparently the image installed is the same as the fifth-century Narasiṃha image of the temple in which the inscription is found, however explicit references to that incarnation are not found in the legible part of the inscription, unless *pītakeśā* (‘whose hair is yellow’) in verse 25a somehow would refer to him.<sup>69</sup>

Another temple (*prāsādaṃ*), the deity of which being possibly described in verse 28 as ‘of infinite might, the cause of destruction and preservation of the world’, is mentioned in verse 30. If we are correct in restoring *dayitādhātur* (see above, p. 135), we are concerned with a temple of/for the beloved father of the princess (i.e. Rudrasena), of which the transitoriness is realized. It has been argued in Bakker (1992b, 12) that the (older) Rudra–Narasiṃha Temple, which stands next to the so-called Kevala–Narasiṃha Temple in which the inscription is found, may have been built in commemoration of Rudrasena in the first part of the fifth century for the sake of his merit (*puṇya*). It seems plausible that the main clause in verse 31 contains a reference to the stone (*śilā*) temple that housed the present inscription, built by the princess in emulation of the older Narasiṃha Temple, exclusively (*eva*) for the sake of her mother’s merit.<sup>70</sup>

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Hinganghat Taluq of the Wardha District. This is rejected by Shastri (1987, 63) who states: ‘Māhurjharī itself has a strong case for identification with Pṛthivīsamudra. It has even now a large water-reservoir which could be figuratively called *samudra*. It may have been in existence at the time of Pṛthivīṣeṇa or may have been excavated and named/*renamed* by him after himself. *The township adjoining it also may have been named similarly.*’ (Italics ours). As we shall discuss below, the present inscription records the building of a water reservoir (Sudarśana) near Nandivardhana. Is it not more plausible to assume that, instead of ever shifting their capital, the Vakāṭaka kings of Nandivardhana, when at the height of their power, simply renamed it after themselves in triumph? Renaming is definitely easier than shifting. The argument advanced by Shastri (1987, 64) to explain why the present name of the village is Māhurjharī and not a derivative of Pṛthivīपुरा, viz. ‘that more often than not older names persist and survive new names’, would equally apply to Nandivardhana, which the conqueror Bhavadattavarman for obvious reasons did not want to call Pravaraपुरा or Pṛthivīपुरा.

Excavations at Mansar, c. 6 km northwest of Nagardhan/Nandivardhana, have shed new light on this issue. For the identity of Pravaraपुरा with the archaeological site in Mansar see Bakker 2010d, below, pp. 331 ff. (cf. Bakker 1997, 5; Bakker 2008).

69 See above, p. 134. In Bakker 2013b (below, pp. 371 f.) it will be argued that actually the Trivikrama image on Ramtek Hill may have been meant.

70 Cf. however above, n. 48 on p. 136.

Hence the appropriate designation of its image as Prabhāvatisvāmin (21a). The word *cirāya* (31b) may indicate that the princess, aware of the dilapidation of the older Narasiṃha temple, wished this new temple for her mother to be (more) durable.

In addition to the erection of a temple and installation of an image of Viṣṇu (on the Rāmagiri Hill itself), the inscription specifies constructions in the village Kadalivāṭaka ('Plantain Park') (v. 24), which, in all probability, is identical with modern Kelāpur, 2 km north of Ramtek Hill. Of the village Kelāpur very little remains today, since it is situated in the basin (*nālā*) of the rivulet Sura, which is flooded in the rainy season.<sup>71</sup> The Sura flows into the artificial Khindsi Lake or Rām Sāgar a little to the east. This artificial lake, which laps at the northern and eastern foot of the Ramtek Hill, may be the modern successor of the old Sudarśana reservoir (*taḍāga*) mentioned in verse 24 (see below, n. 72 on p. 145). The tradition to name storage reservoirs Sudarśana is summarized by Kolte (1965, 377):

It was the duty of the kings to construct lakes, dig wells, etc. In the Gunda inscription (Śaka 103) of the time of the Śaka Kṣatrapa Rudrasimha I, we come across a mention of such a construction (*vāpī khānitā-bandhāpitā* (sic) *ca sarvasattvānāṃ hitasukhārtham iti*) (SI I, 182). The lakes were generally named as Sudarśana, Priyadarśana, etc. One Puṣyagupta, a Rāṣṭriya of Candragupta Maurya, had constructed a lake at Junagarh (i.e. Girinagara) which he had named as Sudarśana (SI I, 176; EI VIII, 42: *idaṃ taḍākam sudarśanam girinagarād*). [...] Many a time the Sudarśana Lake at Junagarh was washed away by flood and therefore had to be repaired again and again. Puṣyagupta had constructed it originally (SI I, 171). Then the Yavana king Tuṣāspha rebuilt it for Aśoka. Afterwards during Gupta Saṃvat 136–38 (i.e. Śaka 377–79) it was again rebuilt by Cakrapālita, the son of Paṇḍadatta, who was the governor appointed by Skandagupta. It was just at this time (i.e. in Śaka 380) that Svāmīlladeva constructed the lake near Washim and probably it was therefore that it was named Sudarśana.

The last reference is to the Hisse-Borala Inscription (Śaka 380 = AD 458–59), which was discovered near the remnants of a dam near the village Hisse-Borala, c. 10 km south of the capital of the Vatsagulma Branch of the Vākāṭakas (above, p. 119). It dates from the reign of Devasena. The reservoir near Rāmagiri, like the one near Vatsagulma, might indeed have been named after the first

71 The late *Sindūragirimāhātmya* (SM) knows a Kadalivana, which appears to be a general designation of the area in which the Rāmagiri is located (SM 1.3). A Suranadī with a shrine of Suradevī is mentioned to the east of the hill (SM 2.2, 3.23), whereas a lake (*sarovara*) is said to lie north of it (SM 2.9). In its neighbourhood is a shrine of Hanumat (SM 2.11, 3.24). In the area of Kelāpur there is today still a dilapidated Hanumat temple. The Māhātmya describes a Kapilā river to the north of the hill which flows into the Suranadī. Both rivers and their confluence, but not Kadalivana/vāṭaka, occur in the *Ramtek Stone Inscription of the Time of Rāmachandra* (RI 484 (vv. 72–4), above, p. 100 f. and p. 92). Mirashi thinks that this Suranadī is the same as the river Śūlanadī mentioned in the *Nagardhan Plates of Svāmīrāja* (EI XXVIII, 8-9 (ll. 15-16)).

construction of this sort known to us in Girinagara, and both may have served a similar purpose, viz. a water storage for the nearby capital.

Our inscription informs us that near the reservoir in Kadalīvāṭaka a beautiful (*sudarśana*) image of a god was installed,<sup>72</sup> and this seems to lend support to a conjecture made by Kolte with respect to the Hisse-Borala reservoir: ‘there may have been a temple near the dam, since old bricks piled upon each other are still found at the place where this inscription was discovered’ (Kolte 1965, 378). The absolutive *kārayitvā* in 24d implies that something more was done, maybe the granting or purchase of a piece of land in the neighbourhood for the maintenance of the god of Rāmāgiri (vv. 25–26).

Of all the activities mentioned in these Ślokas the ensuing merit (*puṇya*) is notified; in verse 27 it appears to be divided into two: half of it is assigned to the gods, the other half to the father and mother of the princess, Rudrasena and Prabhāvātī. In verse 30 the merit is exclusively assigned to her mother for reasons explained above. In verses 25 and 21 it is unclear who is the beneficiary of the meritorious deeds, though in verse 21 one would expect the mother again, whose name occurs in the first pāda, whereas *mā* at the beginning of the fourth suggests the reading *mātur*. From all this it ensues that the mother of the princess, Prabhāvātī Guptā, the main beneficiary of the inscription, must have been dead at the time of its composition. Because the last known inscription of Prabhāvātī dates from the 20th regnal year of her son (Shastri 1987, 51), the above reached *terminus post quem* can be adjusted to c. AD 440.

### *Vākāṭaka Gupta relations*

The death of Prabhāvātī might have marked a change in Vākāṭaka Gupta relations. It would seem unlikely that the remarkable event described above would have taken place when the queen-mother was still alive, in view of her strong Gupta feelings and dominating personality. Consequently this episode may be dated between c. AD 440 and 452 († Pravarasena II).<sup>73</sup> Admittedly, the present inscription provides no other indications for a deterioration of these relations, but the conclusion that, because the Guptas are extensively mentioned, this relationship remained good may be a fallacy. The princess, who through her

72 *Sudarśana-deva* calls forth an association of Viṣṇu Cakrapāṇi, the tutelary deity of Rudrasena II (see CII V, 12 (1. 13)), whose discus is called Sudarśana. By virtue of this association the Sudarśana reservoir and temple may (later) have become known as Cakra-tīrtha. As such it may have been referred to in the *Ramtek Stone Inscription of the Time of Rāmachandra* v. 68: *śrīcakratīrthamahimānam amānam urvyāṃ gurvī pravaktum api kasya narasya śaktiḥ | yasya svayaṃ bhagavatā hariṇā svacakraṃ rakṣārtham udyatam akalpi sudarśanākhyaṃ ||* (RI 484; above, p. 100). The SM locates a Cakra-tīrtha—said to be a great lake (*mahat sarah*), with a shrine of Cakreśa on its bank (SM 7.26-27)—to the east (or north) of the hill; here: *brāhmaṇān bhojayed bhaktiyā prīto ’stv iti sudarśanaḥ |* (SM 7.29ab). Neither Sudarśana nor the Cakra-tīrtha are known today; both may have been obliterated by the Khindsi Lake.

73 On the basis of the legible part of the inscription it is impossible to determine, however, whether her brother (Pravarasena II) was still alive at the time the inscription was made.

marriage had become a member of the Gupta family, showed great pride in her Gupta kinship as is evident from her elaborating on the glory of her in-laws (vv. 2–4, 9–16) rather than on that of the Vākātakas, just as in her mother's inscriptions the Gupta dynasty is eulogized at length while husband Rudrasena is disposed of in one line (see CII V, 7, 36). The daughter may have taken after her mother. But does this also reflect the attitude of her brother, king Pravarasena II, and his successor, her nephew, Narendrasena? The phrasing of verse 17 leads one to doubt it and so does the *Indore Plates of Pravarasena II*.

The latter charter, of which the first plate was recently recovered (Mirashi 1982a), was issued from the king's camp (*vāsaka*) in Tripurī (= Tewar near Jabalpur in Baghelkhand) in the 23rd year of his reign (c. AD 443). Tripurī was traditional Gupta territory and Mirashi (1982a, 67 ff.) has argued that Pravarasena's sojourn there must have implied a military operation on the part of the Vākātakas.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Pravarasena's son Narendrasena (AD 452–75), of whom we (significantly) do not possess inscriptions, is not referred to as 'king' in the first charter of his successor, Pṛthiviṣeṇa II (dating from his 2nd regnal year).<sup>75</sup> The latter even explicitly claims that he has raised his sunken family's fortune, saying that Narendrasena had lost power to his 'agnate' (*dāyāda*), which could well refer to his rival of the Vatsagulma Branch, king Devasena or Hariṣeṇa.<sup>76</sup> All this points to a serious weakening of the Nandivardhana Branch

74 Mirashi draws attention i.a. to the *Bhitarī Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta*, in which Skandagupta, still during the reign of his father Kumāragupta (i.e. before AD 455), is said to have gained a victory over unspecified enemies (*yuddhy amitṛāms*; Fleet and others read *puṣyamitṛāms*) whom he identifies with the Vākātakas. This theory is rejected in Shastri 1987, 52–4, but the arguments should be reconsidered in the light of the present inscription. For such a reconsideration see Bakker 2006 (below, pp. 301 ff.).

75 Shastri (1977–78, 163 (l. 15)) where Pṛthiviṣeṇa is called the *satputra* of Narendrasena: *vākātakānām mahārājaśrīpravarasenasya sūnor narendrasenasatputrasya vākātakānām mahārājaśrī[h]pṛthiviṣeṇasya*. According to Shastri 1987, 57 this is due to the fact that 'the post-Pravarasena II *praśasti* or draft was not yet standardized at the time of this charter; alternatively, this omission may have been due to oversight'. In later inscriptions Narendrasena is referred to as *vākātakānām mahārāja* (Shastri 1977–78, 172 (l. 18); CII V, 81 (ll. 29–30)).

76 On the basis of the recently found inscription of Pṛthiviṣeṇa II in Mandhal (dating from his 10th regnal year) Shastri 1987, 60 argues convincingly (against earlier Kielhorn, Mirashi and Kolte) that one should read: *pūrvvādhigataguṇavadd(ā)yādāpahṛta-va[m]śāśriya[h]* (Shastri 1977–78, 171 (l. 17)), which he analyses as *pūrvam adhigatā guṇavatā dāyādena apahṛtā vaṃśāśrīḥ yasya tasya*.

[This], if accepted would indicate that Narendrasena had at first succeeded to his family fortune, viz. throne, but was subsequently deprived of it by a *dāyāda* or *dāyādas*. The word *dāyāda* primarily means 'heirs to property', i.e. sons or brothers in relation to each other with a claim to inheritance. [...] *Dāyāda* has, however, a secondary meaning also, viz. a distant relative or kinsman (*Amarakośa* 3.3.89: *dāyādau suta-bāndhavau*), and if this were the intended meaning, it may as well refer to a feud between the two branches (Nandivardhana and Vatsagulma) of the Vākātakas during Narendrasena's reign, in which Narendrasena was defeated and lost the kingdom or a major portion thereof. (Shastri 1987, 60)

In the latter sense, *dāyāda* is often used synonymously with *sapiṇḍa* (Jolly 1896, 84) and

of the Vākāṭakas at the end of Pravarasena's reign in the sixth decade of the fifth century, a decay that might have been triggered off by the disturbance of Gupta Vākāṭaka relations in the fifth decade.

Archaeological data as well point to a shift from Nandivardhana to Vatsagulma in the second half of the century, when under Hariṣeṇa (AD 462–82) the excavation of the Ajanta Caves is started (Spink 1981), whereas, as far as we can judge, no new buildings were erected on the Rāmāgiri Hill.<sup>77</sup> Craftsmen and engineers in the service of the Nandivardhana Branch may have been drawn to the west. Along with their expertise they might have brought with them the idea to build a water reservoir near the capital. If this hypothesis is correct, the reservoir Sudarśana in Kadalivāṭaka predates the one near Vatsagulma of the same name. This would provide the present inscription with a *terminus ad quem* of AD 458.

The last two legible Ślokas of the inscription contain its conclusion. Unfortunately the name of the *kavi* chosen by the princess has been lost, as well as the date of the composition. On the basis of the arguments advanced above, however, we may tentatively date the inscription about the middle of the fifth century. This would be in agreement with the date proposed for the Kevala–Narasimha Temple on the basis of archaeological and historical considerations in Bakker 1989c, 82–85 and 1992b.

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Narendrasena and Devasena/Hariṣeṇa were *sapinda* relatives in the fifth/sixth remove. Narendrasena might, however, have recovered parts of his kingdom, since the (later) Pṛthiviṣeṇa inscriptions credit him in one and the same breath with the overlordship of Kosalā, Mekalā and Mālāvā, though this, as Shastri 1987, 61 remarks, 'looks somewhat boastful'. If true, it certainly would have brought him into conflict with the Guptas as well (cf. HCI III, 184). This claim is also at variance with Pṛthiviṣeṇa's own title: *magnavamśoddhartṛ* (Shastri 1977–78, 172 (l. 21); Kolte 1971–72: (l. 26)). Moreover, Narendrasena's rival, king Hariṣeṇa, is credited by his minister Varāhadeva with the conquest of (Dakṣiṇa) Kosala, which is situated to the east of the traditional Nandivardhana territory (CII V, 108 (l. 14); Spink 1981, 109).

In short, the period after Pravarasena II appears to have been one of (civil) wars, in which, to judge by the archaeological remains, the Vatsagulma Branch was on top. Pṛthiviṣeṇa's later claim to have rescued his family fortune for the second time (*divi-magnavamśoddhartṛ*, CII V, 81 (l. 33), in the unfinished *Bālāghāt Plates*, which must date from after his 17th regnal year) may refer to the incursion of the Nala king Bhavadattavarman (see above, n. 67 on p. 142; cf. Shastri 1987, 61 f.).

<sup>77</sup> Bakker 1989c and 1992b.



# Throne and Temple\*

## Political Power and Religious Prestige in Vidarbha

### INTRODUCTION

In 1983 a volume of *Essays on Gupta Culture* (edit. by Bardwell L. Smith) appeared in which two articles have a special relevance for the matter discussed in the present paper. Burton Stein, in his contribution entitled *Mahānavamī. Medieval and Modern Kingly Ritual in South India* (*op. cit.* 67–90), analyses the difference in status or nature of the kings of the Gupta period (4th–5th centuries) and those of Vijayanagara one millennium later, a difference that may be understood from the different (royal) rituals performed or organized by them.

In an essay entitled *Vākāṭaka Art and Gupta Mainstream* (*op. cit.* 215–233) Joanna Williams discusses recently discovered pieces of Vākāṭaka art that put the Vākāṭaka artistic tradition on a par with the much better known Gupta style from which it appears to be largely independent.

The archaeological remains on Ramtek Hill contribute most importantly to our knowledge of Vākāṭaka art and culture. This prominent hill ‘rises 600 feet above the level of the plain [and] is at once a landmark to the surrounding country and a vantage ground from which the great Wainganga Plain may be seen spread out below, its irregularities of surface softened into smoothness by the height from which one looks down upon it.’ (Nagpur Gaz. p. 3). Add to this, that the hill controls one of the principal highways that connect the Gangetic Plain with the Deccan—the present-day Route National No.7 which passes through Nagpur, 47 km SW of the hill, and leads over the Satpura Range of which the foothills begin about 50 km to the north of Ramtek—and it becomes clear why from an early day, at least since the times of the Vākāṭakas, the hill has played a significant part in the political and religious strategies of the rulers of the Vidarbha region.

Joanna Williams inferred from a cursory investigation of two of the total of seven Vākāṭaka temple constructions that remain, that these ‘possibly go back

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\* The first version of this article was published in Bakker, Hans (ed.), *The Sacred Centre as the Focus of Political Interest*. Proceedings of the symposium held on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of the University of Groningen, 5–8 March 1989. Egbert Forsten, Groningen 1992. pp. 83–100. It was published again as Chapter 10 in: Sahu, Bhairavi Prasad & Hermann Kulke (eds.), *Interrogating Political Systems. Integrative Processes and States in Pre-Modern India*. Manohar 2015. pp. 277–300.

to the second quarter of the 5th century AD when we know that nearby Nandivardhana was the capital', viz. of the rulers Rudrasena II, Prabhāvatī Guptā and Pravarasena II (AD 375–450) (*op. cit.* 226). This capital Nandivardhana is commonly identified with the site of the present-day villages Nagardhan and Hamlapuri 5 km south of the hill, and this seems to be confirmed by recent archeological exploration.<sup>1</sup> The hypothetical date proposed by Williams is corroborated by an investigation of other Vākāṭaka remains on the hill, on which I have reported elsewhere (Bakker 1989c), and by an inscription that was discovered on the wall of one of the two Narasiṃha temples (above, p. 113).

As far as can be known, the Vākāṭaka princes were the first who succeeded in uniting under a central rule the patchwork of supposedly more or less autonomous agrarian communities of the Wainganga Plain and 'tribal' societies of the waste lands.<sup>2</sup> The area around present-day Nagpur evidently formed the heart of the realm so constituted. The rise and fall of the Vākāṭakas coincide with the classical age of Indian history, when the greatest part of northern India was under Gupta sway. In the 6th century the Vākāṭaka kingdom disappeared without a trace and with it our sources. It may be assumed that the area was ruled again on a sub-regional level, acknowledging nominally the suzerainty of the great kingdoms of the Northern Deccan, or, occasionally, of the conquering kings of Madhya Pradesh, notably of the Kalacuris of the Dahala country around Tripurī (modern Tewar, c. 12 km west of Jabalpur). Then, in the 13th century, the region became part of the empire of the Yādavas whose capital Devagiri (modern Daulatabad) was situated 500 km to the southwest. To judge from the archaeological remains of this period, Vidarbha bloomed again, and epigraphical sources resume to inform us about its history.

The Vākāṭaka and Yādava periods may roughly correspond with the different phases of South-Indian kingship as discussed by Stein in the above-mentioned article. Point of departure of Stein's argument is Robert Lingat's *Les sources du droit dans le système traditionnel de l'Inde* and it leads Stein to postulate 'a profound desacralization of kings by the medieval period of Indian history'. He continues:

By the close of Gupta times, kings were divested of the sacred stuff which they were deemed to possess, partly ascriptively, by birth as kṣatriyas, and partly by the contingent outcome of their periodic ritual regeneration; there was even a prohibition of those great royal sacrifices whose object was to infuse kings with divine power. Many Dharma forbade *aśvamedha* and *rājasūya* sacrifices. [...] What divine qualities were lost to individual kings, however, appear to have been gained by the institution of kingship. [...] Kingship is the royal function exercised by powerful, yet flawed men: men who err, who sin, and who are subject to *Karma*.

1 IAR 1981–82, 49 f.; Jamkhedkar 1985b, 18; Verulkar 1987, 2 f.; Jamkhedkar 1987a, 339; Bakker 1989c, 79. This hypothesis has most recently been further corroborated in the excavations at Nagardhan by Virag Sontakke *et al.* 2016.

2 This hypothesis has been corroborated by the archaeological fieldwork of Harriet Lacey (Lacey 2016).

This powerful agent, though finite and flawed, is nevertheless active as a protector. The powerful deity to whom the king is analogized by most medieval writers or with whom he is identified by earlier writers is infinite and perfect, but gods require the intervention of men to be active. (Stein 1983, 71 f.)

We have quoted this passage as it is the intention of this paper to reconsider this thesis in the light of the testimony left behind by the two above-mentioned dynasties which, with an interruption of 800 years, held sway over Ramtek Hill.<sup>3</sup> In particular it may be objected that this view is too one-sidedly informed by a special class of brahmanical scriptures and as such insufficiently based on the testimonies of the kings themselves. But I have to admit that Stein's position is not fully clear to me when he acknowledges at the end of his essay that the medieval 'king and god are at least homologized, if they are not equated' (*op. cit.* 87).<sup>4</sup> As will turn out, disagreement as to this initial postulate does not preclude us from joining his main conclusions.

### THE VĀKĀṬAKA PERIOD

Kālidāsa, who in all likelihood maintained close relations with the court of the Vākāṭakas,<sup>5</sup> gives in his *Raghuvamśa* the following epitome of the ideal relationship between kingly and divine power:

THE (king) milks the cow (that is the earth) in order to make the (required) sacrifices; Maghavat (i.e. Indra) milks the heaven for the sake of a (rich) harvest; both together (thus) sustain the two worlds (heaven and earth) by means of their mutual exchange of riches. (*Raghuvamśa* 1.26)

Significant in this quotation is the absence of the brahmin, something, of course, unheard-of in brahmanical texts themselves. The concept underlying

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3 Cf. Scharfe 1989, 97.

4 Cf. also Stein's discussion of the 'different perspectives' that tend to confuse scholarly communication on the issue of Indian kingship (1978, 147 ff.). By bringing archaeological and iconographical material into our analysis the present paper attempts to overcome Stein's verdict (1978, 148):

The conventional historian's approach aimed at confronting various conceptions about kings with evidence about how kings actually performed [...] provides no solution. For, it is necessary to recognize that almost all that is known of Indian kings of the ancient and medieval periods comes from normative texts, that is from documents possessing a firm value perspective. No source for understanding Indian kingship exists apart from literature of this character.

5 Mirashi in CII V, xxiv; Mirashi 1964a, 137–140. When I visited the Central Nagpur Museum in November 1989 a red sandstone image that was recently found in the Nagardhan–Hamlapuri region was shown to me. This splendid image represents a *kavi* holding a book in his left hand. There appears to have been an inscription on the 'book' which, however, has remained undeciphered. It has been suggested that the image represents Kālidāsa himself. I have dealt with this image more elaborately in Bakker 1997, 124–27.

the quoted view acknowledges two main, distinctive, agencies: 1) the nobility governing the earthly affairs, and 2) the divinity that repays the good deeds performed by the first group. The third group that is generally recognized, the clergy, whose traditional role consists in mediating between both realms, may be seen as implied in the first category, as merely instrumental to the king or *yajamāna*. This order (*dharma*), bipartite in essence, tripartite in practice, is eternal, that is sacred, and so are to some extent its constituents. To uphold and reinforce this order sacrificial rituals like the Aśvamedha may once have been performed recurrently, yet the Vākāṭaka kings of the Main or Eastern Branch thought it sufficient to refer—repeatedly, it is true—to the Vedic sacrifices that had been performed by the founder of the kingdom, the ‘emperor’ (*samrāj*) Pravaraśena I.<sup>6</sup> It may therefore be doubted whether these kings ever were actually deemed to possess ‘sacred stuff’ or ‘divine power’ (cf. Stein 1983, 70 f.).

Moreover, it may be questioned whether in the 4th and 5th centuries AD anybody, besides perhaps a small group of initiated specialists, still attributed the meaning to these rituals that Indologists have discovered in analysing Vedic texts and the subsequent brahmanical literature, and according to which the king was transformed into, or homologized with divine beings (*deva*).<sup>7</sup> On the

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6 Cf. Dirks 1976, 139:

An initial performance of one or several sacrifices could elevate the subsequent line to kingship in addition to the actual performer, as can be seen from the bunching of sacrificial references toward the early years of dynasties and the continuing references to the sacrifices of the respective primordial kings. The capacity of the sacrifice to have cross-generational effect was particularly important because there was no independent attribution to divine origin to the kings either in genealogies or in the eulogistic epithets, nor did the kings have any kṣatriya base which would have endowed them with the substance of kingship.

7 Cf. Gonda 1969, 24–33; Dirks 1976, 134 ff.; Stein 1983, 71. It may be granted that the king, being considered an extraordinary being, may be termed *deva*, since the word *deva* in common Indian parlance often denotes no more than an ‘extraordinary being’ (cf. the use of *diva* to signify ‘prima donna’). Accordingly, equation of the king with, mostly Vedic, deities in (later) Sanskrit literature (collected by Gonda *ibid.*) should be taken as symbolic language expressing the extraordinary concentration of natural (not supernatural) powers within the figure of the sovereign, which make him appear like a god. Similarly Lingat 1967, 232:

Certains versets des dharmasāstra attribuent au roi lui-même une origine divine. Cette conception, qui est étrangère aux dharmasūtra, a sans doute sa source dans certains textes védiques qui attribuent au roi une nature divine en raison de sa participation à des rites qui l’identifient à un dieu. Mais elle n’est guère reprise que pour auréoler le roi de prestige et justifier le respect dû à sa personne, plutôt qu’elle n’est présentée comme le motif essentiel de l’obéissance due à ses ordres. D’ailleurs, les mêmes dharmasāstra exposent une autre version de la création divine de la royauté *qui se réduit à des analogies entre les divers aspects de la fonction royale et les fonctions essentielles de certaines divinités.* (italics mine).

Cf. also Scharfe 1989, 98: ‘This so-called divinity of kings must be seen against the background of Indian polytheism, where *deva*-s are many and where everything is, at least potentially, charged with a higher power.’

contrary, these rituals probably continued to be performed or referred to in order to confirm the exemplary dharmic nature of the kings, that is to raise and enhance their prestige as sovereign rulers by displaying this awe-inspiring traditionality, in the hope of thus legitimizing their rule as being dharmic and hence as incontestably right.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, it may be questioned whether these boasted performances of Vedic sacrifices had anything to do with religion for the governing Vākāṭaka kings and their subjects. What the inscriptions seem to prove and what is confirmed by archaeological remains is that the actual living religion of the time was already something altogether different.

### *The Vākāṭaka inscriptions*

In their inscriptions the Vākāṭaka rulers of the Eastern Branch styled themselves as representatives and supporters of the *dharma* by calling themselves the ‘champions of the dharma’ (*dharmavijayin*) or *dharmamahārāja*, claiming to have reinstalled the dharmic ideal of the Kṛtayuga on earth—pictured by Kālidāsa in the above-quoted stanza—thanks to the grace of God (*śambhoḥ prasādadhṛti(ta)kārtayugasya*).<sup>9</sup> It is obvious that at least part of the function of these inscriptions was to broadcast this image of the Vākāṭaka ruler as the ideal dharmic, that is unimpeachable, king, who was entitled to the royal office on account of his exemplariness and the Vedic rituals performed by his ancestor (not on account of birth, since the Vākāṭakas were brahmins!), and who by this exemplary behaviour and thanks to the grace of Viṣṇu (*bhagavataś cakrapāṇeḥ prasādād* [CII V, 12 l. 13]) was able to bring prosperity to his subjects.

In other words, their prestige as rulers was greatly dependent on the extent to which, on the one hand, these kings managed to be acknowledged by their subjects as exemplary executors of an order hailed as dharmic and, on the other hand, they were successful in convincing their subjects that this acclaimed dharmic order really was the desired one. Or, in the words of Mario Erdheim, who gave a penetrating analysis of this issue in his study of Aztec society (Erdheim 1973), their prestige consisted in ‘das Wissen das die Angehörigen (ihrer) Bezugsgruppe von (ihrer) Vorbildlichkeit (hatten)’. (*op. cit.* 27). The stability of the Vākāṭaka regime during more than a century—it is very remarkable that their inscriptions hardly make mention of wars and heroic feats on the battleground—and the prosperity they brought in Vidarbha as attested by the archaeological remains, seem to warrant the conclusion that, indeed, they were quite successful in this respect.

To illustrate the values that determine the exemplariness of the Vākāṭaka king, a representative self-portrayal as found in these inscriptions may here be

8 That a ‘great deal of latitude was, in practice, allowed to the kings’ in interpreting *dharma* was convincingly argued by Derrett 1976, 607.

9 CII V, 12 ll. 15–16 (Inscr. No. 3).

quoted:

By order of the illustrious Pravarasena [II], the king (*mahārāja*) of the Vākāṭakas, who is entirely devoted to Maheśvara (*paramamāheśvara*), and who, by the grace of Śambhu (*śambhoḥ prasāda*<sup>o</sup>), has established the Kṛtayuga on earth[...]; he was born from Prabhāvatī Guptā, daughter of the illustrious emperor (*mahārājā-dhirāja*) Devagupta (i.e. Candragupta II), [...] and is the grandson of the illustrious Vākāṭaka king Pṛthivīśeṇa [...], who was endowed with the following virtues among others: truthfulness, sincerity, compassion, courage, leadership, selfdiscipline, magnanimity, wisdom, modesty, righteousness (*dharmaviṣayitva*), purity of mind, [...] and who had performed [...] four Aśvamedha sacrifices. (CII V, 12 ll. 2–17)

One cannot fail to note that, whatever ‘divine substances’ might once have believed to have been generated within the king by his passing through regenerative brahmanic rituals,<sup>10</sup> the Vākāṭaka king does not explicitly claim these; on the contrary, the qualities on which these kings pride themselves are quite human, and though, admittedly, their possession in full by one individual might appear rather extraordinary, the king’s claim is simply to be such an extraordinary, exemplary human being owing to the grace of god. This is the ideology that these charters intended to advocate.

#### *Policy of the Vākāṭaka kings*

Considering this ideology the question arises how this thus legitimized political authority was brought to bear in the Vidarbha region. A difficulty encountered in reconstructing this process is the fact that we have practically no direct information regarding the situation in the region before the Vākāṭaka age. But extrapolation from the results of research in other comparative regions makes it plausible that the fertile areas of Vidarbha situated in the vicinity of rivers were inhabited by agrarian communities under local (sub-regional) rule, and that its less arable areas were populated by what is often called with a misnomer ‘tribal’ societies, the ancestors of the Gonds, and the Gaolis or Ahirs.<sup>11</sup>

The power of the Vākāṭakas was originally based on the surplus-production of the agrarian regions which, following Stein, may be conceived of as ‘nuclear areas’ (Stein 1969). It is in this area that the ‘higher’, sanskritic form of Hinduism/Brahmanism had its strongest base, and the administrative and intellectual staff of the Vākāṭakas was primarily recruited from here. Our sources do not permit any conjecture regarding the origin of the Vākāṭakas themselves, who may either have belonged to the area or have forced themselves upon it as roaming freebooters. In either case their first success consisted in becoming recognized as central authority (*mahārāja*) by the land-owning and educated

10 Gonda 1969, 71 ff.; Stein 1983, 68 f.

11 Cf. Nagpur Gaz. 3 f.; Russell 1969 II, 18–38. Cf. below, n. 19 on p. 158.

classes of the region, as a result of which they succeeded in appropriating an important part of the surplus-production which, again, enabled them to develop their power base consisting of the military, intelligence and administrative systems.

A religious policy, no doubt, was an important device for gaining this recognition. The Ramtek Hill was reshaped into the impressive religious centre of the realm as well as, probably, into a military stronghold. Since the beginning of the 5th century numerous temples, seven of which still remain today, arose on top of the hill.<sup>12</sup> The Narasiṃha form of Viṣṇu occupied a major place besides Varāha. Two temples testify to this. In addition, archaeological exploration in the environs yielded a number of little images of the Man-lion deity, which are replicas of the main idol on the hill and which were obviously meant for domestic altars.<sup>13</sup>

Ramtek Hill thus seems to substantiate the findings of A. Eschmann in Orissa, to the effect that aside from the theriomorphic boar deity (Varāha), Narasiṃha has been the figure par excellence to accommodate non-sanskritic or so-called 'tribal' deities within the Vaiṣṇava pantheon of the 'Great Tradition'. Eschmann discovered various cases in which lion deities—who were preferably worshipped on hills or in caves at a safe distance from residential areas—were assimilated in a process of 'sanskritisation' (Eschmann 1978a, 106 f.). This certainly was the active policy of the Vākāṭaka rulers: through recognition and patronage (e.g. by means of temple construction) of local deities, large groups of the population were won over to their regime, while at the same time, by enforcing 'higher' or sanskritic cult images and ritual proceedings, the brahmanical world-view, which was the ideological basis of the Vākāṭakas, was spread among broad layers of the populace.

Charters of the Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatī Guptā were issued from Ramtek: 'Bhagavat (i.e. Lord Viṣṇu) is victorious! From the feet of the Lord of Rāmagiri (i.e. Ramtek) [...] etc.' (CII V, 35, Inscr. No. 8). Her brother, the emperor Kumāragupta, issued coins with the legend: 'the lion-king who resembles Narasiṃha is always victorious'.<sup>14</sup> Recently another Vākāṭaka inscription was discovered on the wall of one of the Narasiṃha temples which shows, according to our interpretation, that this temple was built in the second quarter of the 5th century, probably by a daughter of Prabhāvatī Guptā for the sake of her mother's merit.<sup>15</sup> As the case of Prabhāvatī Guptā herself shows, women played an important and public role in the Vākāṭaka polity and were evidently

12 Jamkhedkar 1985–86, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Bakker 1989c.

13 Four such images were shown to me in the Central Nagpur Museum, all from the Nagardhan–Hamlapuri region. Two more are said to have been found and stored in the Museum, but their present whereabouts are not known. Two such images are in a private collection (also said to be found in Nagardhan), while more images are reported to have been found at other Vākāṭaka sites in Vidarbha.

14 *sākṣād iva narasiṃho siṃhamahendro jayaty aniśam* (Allan 1914, 77). The particle *iva* is particularly significant.

15 This inscription has been edited and discussed above, pp. 113 ff.

in a position to make large endowments (cf. Dirks 1976, 141). This newly discovered inscription mentions, for instance, the construction of an artificial lake (*sudarśana*) in the village Kadalivāṭaka (modern Kelāpur, 2 km N of the Hill) and the purchase of a piece of land, probably for the maintenance of this temple (*prāsāda*) which is said to be dedicated to the 'Lord of Prabhāvatī (*prabhāvatisvāminam*), i.e. Viṣṇu (see above p. 144). Until recently, when the image in this temple was cleaned by the Archaeological Survey, thick layers of *sindūra* testified to the original nature of this deity as a bloodthirsty 'king of spirits' (*bhūtarāja*) (cf. Sontheimer 1985, 145).

When we look at the artistic products of this process, the first thing that strikes us is their earthly and stalwart, though pious character. The Narasiṃha temples and the Varāha pavillion (and image) are square and solid, like the Vākāṭaka inscriptions themselves (Plate 11). The image of Narasiṃha installed in the above-mentioned temple is a genuine masterpiece, expressing assured sovereignty, not particularly ethereal or heavenly, not hieratic, but natural supremacy, which is again accentuated by its relaxed friendly, even sweet playfulness (see below, Plate 57). It represents the peculiar Vākāṭaka style, which is largely independent of the mainstream of Gupta art, a conclusion to which the material available to Joanna Williams had already tentatively led her in the above-mentioned article.<sup>16</sup>



Plate 11  
Varāha on the Rāmagiri

<sup>16</sup> Williams 1983, 232 f.:

To my mind, the two (i.e. Vākāṭaka and Gupta) are too different and the points of contact too limited to justify uniting the dynastic terms. [...] The Vākāṭaka style seems different in broad historical terms from the Gupta. On the one hand, Vākāṭaka work continues a sense of specificity in modelling which was characteristic of the second century A.D., both in Kuṣāṇa Mathurā and Amarāvātī. At the same time, the Gupta artists had shifted the balance toward the ideal. The relationship between the image and the real world is distinctly different in the two. On the other hand, the Vākāṭaka style may well usher in elements of the medieval before these are apparent in the Gangetic north.

The Vākāṭaka century must have been a happy epoch, in which the quoted stanza of Kālidāsa may have had more than only poetical actuality.

So far we have spoken of the centre of the realm, the economic, political and religious fundament of the reigning elite of the Vākāṭaka polity. But the region also comprised extensive areas in which the economical and cultural level may have been less sophisticated: the outlying districts. How did the Vākāṭaka kings integrate these regions into their realm? The *Arthaśāstra* gives the following guidelines.

He (i.e. the king) should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down, granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing honour. Hence he should adopt a similar character, dress, language and behaviour (as the subjects). And he should show the same devotion in festivals in honour of deities of the country (*deśadaivata*), festive gatherings and sportive amusements. And he should cause the honouring of all deities and hermitages, and make grants of land, money and exemptions to men distinguished in learning, speech and piety, order the release of all prisoners and render help to the distressed, the helpless and the diseased. And discontinuing whatever custom he might regard as harmful to the treasury and the army, or as unrighteous (*adharmiṣṭha*), he should establish a righteous course of conduct (*dharmavyavahāra*). And he should cause a change of residence, not in one place, of those in the habit of robbing and of mleccha communities, and of chiefs of forts, country and army. In the place of those removed, he should establish men from his own country or those in disfavour with the enemy (*Arthaśāstra* 13.5.3–18, tr. Kangle).

From an analysis of the corpus of Vākāṭaka inscriptions it appears that, broadly speaking, the kings attempted to carry out these directives. Apart from donations to local sanctuaries and construction of temples,<sup>17</sup> for what originally sometimes might have been non-sanskritic deities, the majority of the inscriptions concern donation of land and villages to brahmins. In his *Inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas* Mirashi tentatively identified most of the villages donated, but he only plotted the find-spots of the inscriptions in a map, though many of them are engraved copperplates (CII V, xviii). If, on the other hand, we plot the donated estates on a map—as has recently been done by K.M. Shrimali (1987, Map 2)—it appears that the great majority of them are situated in these outlying districts. The foothills of the Satpura and Maikala Range appear to be particularly favoured, while none of the estates lies more than 180 km from Nagpur, which is taken as the geographical centre.<sup>18</sup>

17 E.g. a temple of Pravareśvara (CII V, Inscr. Nos. 4 & 5), of Mahāpuruṣa (CII V, Inscr. No. 13), a *dharmasthāna* (dedicated to Mahābhairava?) (CII V, Inscr. No. 1), a tank and temple called Sudarśana in the village Kadalivāṭaka (*Narasimha Temple Inscription*, see above, n. 72 on p. 145), temples in Mansar (Williams 1983, 227 f.; Bakker 2008) and Mandhal (A.M. Shastri 1977–78, 1984–86, 130–133; Jamkhedkar 1987a; Bakker 1997), and the temple complex of Ramtek Hill (Bakker 1989c, 1997).

18 Shrimali 1987, 25–30. Unlike Shrimali, I leave the donations made by the Vatsagulma Branch out of account here.

This outcome seems to prove two things. First, that the actual range of power of the Main or Eastern Branch of the Vākāṭakas was not really very wide and that what is often taken as the realm of the Vākāṭakas was in reality probably a sort of federation of collateral branches. Secondly, that the Vākāṭaka kings strived to extend their sphere of influence by means of brahmanical colonisation. The endowed brahmins, as members of the class that supplied the religious and management executives of the Vākāṭaka administration, naturally had an enormous influence on the spread of the ideology on which the prestige of these kings was based.<sup>19</sup> Often they may have been the main upholders of law and order and in this way may have proved themselves indispensable, though ultimately merely instrumental to their political masters.<sup>20</sup>

The historical sources of the Vākāṭaka age do not allow us to narrow down the exact proportion of the two strategies of dominion, viz. that of coercion and that of creation of consensus linking mutual interests that is largely based on prestige,<sup>21</sup> but it may ensue from the above that prestige was an important factor in the building up and enforcement of the authority of the Vākāṭaka kings, who seem to have been duly aware of this.

## THE YĀDAVA PERIOD

More than seven centuries after Vākāṭaka dominion, Vidarbha came under the sway of the Yādava kings. This is clear from two brief inscriptions in the Narasiṃha temple, which I have edited and discussed elsewhere (above, pp. 83 ff.), one of which is dated in AD 1240 and refers to the reign of the Yādava king Siṃhaṇa. For the Yādavas Ramtek Hill was not the centre of

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19 Cf. Shrimali 1987, 26 f.:

Who were the agents of this transformation? We see this problem in the light of the process of Sanskritisation of tribal areas, the thrust for which came mainly from the Guptas. [...] Some of the names of donees of Vākāṭaka land grants also enable us to trace the process of Sanskritisation of the tribal areas, e.g., the donee of the Indore plates is Goṇḍārya—the Gonds still constitute an important element of tribal population in the Vidarbha region.

20 Cf. Derrett's main conclusion: 'The king was not subordinated to brahmins in his actual performance of his duties: he manipulated them, and utilized them. After all, he was their principal patron.' (Derrett 1976, 607).

21 Cf. Erdheim 1973, 38:

Das Phänomen der Herrschaft wird nur verständlich, wenn man zweierlei beachtet, nämlich *erstens* jene Institutionen, die dazu dienen, Zwang anzuwenden, falls die Untergebenen die erlassenen Befehle nicht durchführen wollen, und *zweitens* jene Einrichtungen, welche Konsensus und Gegenseitigkeit schaffen und erhalten. [...] Betrachten wir das Prestige nun in diesen Zusammenhängen, so zeigt sich, daß es zu jenen Institutionen gehört, die Konsensus und Gegenseitigkeit schaffen und erhalten, und auf diese Weise das Funktionieren der Herrschaft ermöglichen.

their realm, but it was an important foothold on the periphery of their sphere of influence. We return to the question of how these kings legitimized their, super-regional, power.

The prime minister (*sarvaśrīkaraṇaprabhu*)<sup>22</sup> under two Yādava kings (Mahādeva and Rāmacandra), the brahmin Hemādri, author (or editor?) of the great encyclopaedia of the *dharma*, the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, acclaims the standing of the Yādava dynasty in his *Rājaprasāsti* that precedes the *Vratakhaṇḍa*<sup>23</sup> in the following words:

THE Dynasty of the Moon is victorious, the renowned one, in which that King Yadu made his appearance and in which in former days Murāri (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) was born in order to take away the burden of the incarnations of Asuras.

IN that dynasty of the one who caused Kaṁsa's ruin King Bhillama made his appearance; his valour, a lamp (illuminating) several continents, led the moths, his enemies, to their destruction.<sup>24</sup>

The divine nature of the kings of this lineage is asserted by King Siṁhaṇa himself less reluctantly than by the orthodox brahmin minister.

VIṢVAKSENA (i.e. Viṣṇu) who broke the arrogance of King Bali, who bestrode the universe in (three) steps, and who is held in eternal embrace by Lakṣmī, he is the towering king, the ornament of the Yadu dynasty.

MURĀRI (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) was desirous to descend to earth in the Kaliyuga also (in order to take away) its burden; thus a certain part of the Lord of the World was born on earth as its king with the name of Bhillama.<sup>25</sup>

Two significant components of the Yādava ideology are expressed in these verses: 1) Kṛṣṇa, the famous incarnation of Viṣṇu, is a member of the Yādava lineage, that is, should be reckoned among its ancestors; 2) the living kings of this dynasty are likewise at least partial incarnations of Viṣṇu, born on earth for the sake of relieving it from a burden, just as their famous, divine kinsman Kṛṣṇa. The dharmic order that regulates the exchange of divine and earthly affairs is no longer the focus of attention. Contrary to the view set forth by Burton Stein to the effect that 'what divine qualities were lost to individual kings, however, appear to have been gained by the institution of kingship' (Stein

22 Hemādri, *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* Vol. I v. 13 (p. 3).

23 Not included in the printed edition of the *Caturvargacintāmaṇi* but edited separately by Bhandarkar 1928, pp. 238–47.

24 Bhandarkar 1928, 245 (= *Rājaprasāsti* II):

*vaṁśo himāṁśor jayati prasiddho yasmin sa rājā yadur āvirāsīt |*  
*babhūva yasminn asurāvatārahārāpahārāya purā murāriḥ ||*  
*vaṁ(śe) tasmīn kaṁsavidhvaṁsanasya kṣoṇīpālo bhīllamaḥ prādūrāsīt |*  
*nīnye nāśaṁ vairibhūhṛtpatānigān yasyānekadvīpadīpaḥ pratāpaḥ ||*

25 EI III, 112 (ll. 7–8):

*viṣvakṣenaḥ prabaddhodhatabalinṛpatir vikramākrāntaviśvaḥ,*  
*śaśval lakṣmyopagūḍho yadukulatilakaḥ proddhṛtottuṅgabhūbhṛt |*  
*bhūmābhārāvatāraṁ kila kali(sa)maya kartukāmo murārer,*  
*aṁśaḥ ko 'py āvirāsīd bhuvī bhuvanavibhor bhūpatir bhīllamākhyaḥ ||*

1983, 71), these kings not only claimed to hold a holy (sacred/divine) office, viz. to liberate the earth from a (superhuman) burden, but, on top of that—and this alone enabled them to do it—they claimed a divine nature for themselves as they wished to be deemed part of the transcendent divine incarnate.

A representative passage from one of the many Yādava inscriptions may be quoted to bring out the contrast with the Vākāṭaka kings and to make manifest this change in ideology.

THE illustrious King Rāmacandra, who makes his appearance in the dynasty of Yadu like a pearl (in a shell), who is Nārāyaṇa among the earthly kings, who is the Grandsire (Brahmā) among the protectors of the earth, who equals Bhīma when he raises his arms like a rampart, a lion to the mighty elephants of the trembling master of the Mālava land, the son of King Kṛṣṇa, he is victorious! (14)  
WHICH enemy, like a deep darkness, would not flee when he, shining with the lustre of the sun, ascends the Mountain of the Gods (i.e. Devagiri), which is like the Eastern Mountain Range, and shoots his arrows, thus vying with the halo (of the sun). (15)

—In the reign of this illustrious Rāmacandra, who is the moon (above) the lotuses of the lineage of Yadu, who controls the entire terrestrial sphere and whose eminence shines forth from the honorary titles like the following: ‘he who parches the petty reservoirs of glory of inimical kings by his scorching burning brilliance’, [...] ‘he who is tumultuous like Narasiṃha when he rips up the broad chests of his mighty foes’, [...] ‘he who is courageous like Nārāyaṇa against the demons, his enemies’, [...] ‘he, who himself a Grandsire among kings, surpasses Grandsire (Brahmā) in his life’, [...] ‘lion who tears asunder the elephants of the Gurjaras’, [...] ‘the holocaust that extinguishes the light of the Mālavas’, ‘generous tree of plenty’,

—While the illustrious Hemādri [...], crest-jewel of the ministers, who has reclaimed the jungle (*nirjītajhādīmaṇḍala*), who is completely dedicated to the superintendency of (all) records, [...] who is the head of the elephant-drivers—(while) this (Hemādri) is acquitting himself of the heavy task (of administering) the whole empire consigned to him by his (i.e. the king’s) grace (*prasāda*),

THERE is this pearl in the line (*gotra*) of Gautama, the illustrious Jalhaṇa; after him there is Mūdhugi [...] who excels in virtues and who is a polemicist in the field of *śruti* and *śāstra*; to him has been born a virtuous son, the illustrious Acyutanāyaka who is blessed by the illustrious Rāmacandra. (16) [...]

And this (Acyutanāyaka), the Grandsire among the governors [...],

WHILE exercising the office of governor here in the Konkan awarded to him by the illustrious Rāma, he has bestowed upon thirty-two brahmins a village named Vaula [...] etc. (18)<sup>26</sup>

What stands out in this passage is the hierarchy among the four parties mentioned: 1) the (semi-)divine sovereign Rāmacandra whom no hyperbole can

26 EI XIII (*Thana Plates of Rāmachandra: Saka 1194*), No. 17, vv. 14–18 (pp. 201–03).

describe, 2) Hemādri, the actual ruler and superintendent of the administration and the army, 3) the ruler of the Konkan who excels among the governors, 4) the 32 brahmin donees only mentioned by name.

The inscription begins with ‘King Rāmacandra is victorious’, instead of ‘God (Bhagavat) is victorious’ as do the Vākāṭaka inscriptions. It is not the king who rules the empire by grace (*prasāda*), but his prime minister Hemādri. Instead of God blessing the king, the king blesses his proxies. Yet another conspicuous difference between the Vākāṭaka and Yādava inscriptions is the bellicose tone in the latter, completely absent in the former. On the other hand, the Yādava princes declare themselves, like some of the Vākāṭakas, great devotees of Viṣṇu. However, in variance with the Vākāṭaka practice, according to which endowments were made ‘in order to increase our merit (*dharma*), life, power, glory, and authority and for our own benefit with regard to (our) welfare in this and yonder world’,<sup>27</sup> endowments and donations of the Yādavas were professedly made ‘for our own sake to please Śār(a)ṅgapāṇi (i.e. Viṣṇu)’.<sup>28</sup>

This leads to a central theme of our study: to investigate whether there is any correlation between this change of ideology (concomitant with a change in religion) and the extent of the Yādava realm as compared to that of the Vākāṭakas. The Yādava kingdom had been established by military means and was consequently made up of different regions that had very little in common, which resulted in a political constellation that threatened to fall apart on every and each occasion.<sup>29</sup>

The new ideology emphasized the uniqueness of the monarch; his (semi-)divine status aimed at distinguishing him from all ordinary regional rulers, be they governors, vassals or puppets. If his power were legitimized in the same way as that of the Vākāṭakas, there would have been no specific reason for the populace and chieftains of a region to raise this monarch above the authority of their own political elite. In other words, the type of prestige acquired by the Vākāṭakas would not have been sufficient for the Yādavas to keep the dangerous feudal forces in check, except at the expense of great military efforts. The new form of Hinduism, the Vaiṣṇava devotion (*bhakti*), which was in the ascendent in the Yādava age and was actively supported by them, appears to have been almost the only thing in common that united the different regions. This religion, in which the divine is humanized as a corollary of the growing devotion to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, both born as the sons of kings on earth (a phenomenon that could be denominated as ‘royalisation’), and in which the human is deified concomitant with the king’s recognition as an impersonation of a part of the divine (which could be called ‘deification’)—this type of religion

27 CII V, 12 ll. 22 f. (Inscr. No. 3): *ātmano dharmāyurbalavijayaiśvāryavivṛddhaye ihāmu-trahitārtham ātmānugrahāya* [...].

28 Fleet 1885, *Paithan Plates of Rāmachandra – Saka 1193 (= AD 1272)*, p. 317 ll. 63 f.: [...]. *ātmanaḥ śrīśāraṅgapāṇīprītyartham* [...].

29 Cf. Dirks 1976, 148 f.; Kulke 1978, 131 ff.

appeared simply, in the words of Kosambi, ‘to be the best religion to hold this type of society and its state together.’<sup>30</sup>

The *bhakti* religion and the ideology based on it thus involved a change that in the terminology developed by Mario Erdheim could be defined as a shift from *virtù* to *charisma*:

Stellen wir Charisma und virtù gegeneinander, so können wir sagen: Charisma setzt neue Werte, begründet Normen und ist die Ausnahme, die neue Regeln fordert; virtù realisiert die überlieferten Werte, ist Maßstabsgebunden und ist zwar auch eine Ausnahme, aber eine solche, die die überkommenen Regeln bestätigt. (Erdheim 1973, 30 f.)

The Vākāṭaka kings in their exemplariness possessed virtù: ‘das Vorbild ist die Verkörperung der virtù; es zeigt fast wie in einem Modell, was Tapferkeit, Frömmigkeit, Weisheit, Geschäftstüchtigkeit bedeuten, wenn sie im Leben verwirklicht werden sollen. [...] Deutlich ist einmal die *Alltäglichkeit* der virtù und damit auch des Prestiges geworden’ (*ibid.* pp. 29, 31). The Yādava kings claimed, if we interpret their inscriptions rightly, to possess something extra.

Wesentlich für das Charisma ist seine Außeralltäglichkeit; seine Kräfte sind übernatürlich, über-menschlich, außer-ordentlich; sein Wirkungsbereich liegt im Außer-Gewöhnlichen, dort wo Sitte und Gewohnheit (i.e. *dharma*, H.T.B.) nicht mehr ausreichen.<sup>31</sup>

This shift in the nature of the king reveals the potential contradiction inherent in the concept of his exemplariness. This was implicitly recognized by Clifford Geertz in his analysis of Hindu kingship on the island of Bali: ‘The king, the lord, the priest, and the ascetic are all said to be *sekti* [Skt. *śakti*] (not, as often has been said, “to possess” it) to the extent that *they are, in turn, instances of what they adore.*’<sup>32</sup> In other words, in the ‘exemplariness’ of the Yādava king the two dialectical moments inherent in this concept, viz. being, on the one hand, different from *hoi polloi*, and being, on the other hand, as the ideal type, intrinsically their equal—or formulated in terms of the *bhakti* religion, being in one respect divine, in another respect the paragon of devotion (*paramabhakta*)—these two moments were developed to extreme paradoxality.

Yet, we would not be in India if we did not find that a way and style was developed to cope with this paradox, fostered as an expression of reality. Once more we ask, how did these monarchs implement their authority. Hermann Kulke proposed the following answer:

Besides investing more and more in their ever increasing army, the Hindu rājas of these loosely structured regional [in our case extended to ‘super-regional’, H.T.B.]

<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Kulke 1978, 133.

<sup>31</sup> See *op. cit.* 30, referring to ‘Max Webers Charisma-Begriff’.

<sup>32</sup> Geertz 1980, 106; italics mine.

kingdoms, in absence of a centralized bureaucracy, tried with their traditional patrimonial power to counterbalance these dangerous feudal forces by ritual measures: 1) royal patronage of places of pilgrimage of regional and all-Indian importance within their respective kingdoms; 2) a systematic and large-scale settlement of Brahmins; 3) construction of new imperial temples. (Kulke 1978, 132)

We already encountered the second method in dealing with the Vākāṭakas, so this does not seem to be specific to the Medieval period, though this does not detract from its importance.<sup>33</sup> The first and third means coincide to a large extent. Hence, broadly speaking, two developments are significant for the Yādava age: 1) expansion of military power ('Zwangsapparat') which clearly emerges from the inscriptions; 2) symbolic and ritual representation employing religious conceptions and images ('Vorstellungen') as well as sacred centres where these representations could be reified and enacted. Ramtek Hill was such a centre.

We shall finally consider how this development—this structural change in royal prestige in the wake of a shift in the balance of social and religious powers ('Potenzen')—became visible on Ramtek Hill.

### RAMTEK HILL: THEATRE OF PLENIPOTENTIARIES

In the 13th century Ramtek evolved into a place of pilgrimage which attracted votaries from far beyond the region itself. The best known of these was the founder of the Mahānubhāva sect, Cakradhara. He came to the hill sometime before AD 1264, probably during the reign of Mahādeva, and stayed in the Bhogarāma Temple, which was originally a Vākāṭaka temple enshrining Vāsudeva and Saṃkarṣaṇa, but at that time was dedicated to Viṣṇu-Rāma and his counterpart Kṛṣṇa.<sup>34</sup> The hill did not derive its fame directly from its being a Vaiṣṇava centre as such, nor from its possession of an ancient Narasiṃha temple, but from the fact that it had come to be considered as the residence of Rāmacandra. Two 13th-century inscriptions in the Kevala-Narasiṃha Temple testify to the pilgrimage of two brothers, the poet Trivikrama (who may have been the author of the *Madālasācampū*) and his brother Rāghava, for the sake of worshipping the illustrious Rāma (above, p. 86).

Two big temples had arisen to the west of the Vākāṭaka temples on the spur of the hill, giving it an impressive skyline (Plate 12). The main temple

33 Contrary to Dirks (1976, 145), I do not see significant structural changes in the character of royal donations other than quantitative ones. The underlying principle of all royal grants (*dāna*), to be distinguished from *dakṣiṇās*, in the classical as well as in the medieval period, may have been simply that of *do ut des*, notwithstanding religious justifications. It was the price kings, and intermediate dignitaries, had to pay for loyalty shown to them. In other words, its main social and political function was and remained to reinforce royal prestige through distribution of authority.

34 See Bakker 1992c; Bakker 1997, 63 f.

was dedicated to Rāmacandra, the other to his brother Lakṣmaṇa. The latter temple contains a lengthy stone-inscription, in which the praises are sung of Rāmacandra, the king and the god, and a Māhātmya is given of the holy places on and around the hill (see above, pp. 88 ff.). It was engraved under the reign of the Yādava king Rāmacandra by his plenipotentiary, the governor ruling this part of the realm, and it may have recorded some endowments or repairs made to the temple by this governor, though illegibility of the last part of the text makes this uncertain.

The governor, who styles himself the ‘superintendent of the guard of the royal bed-chamber’, proclaims that ‘the illustrious lord Rāmacandra had entrusted him, who was giving due weight to the virtues . . . , with the care of the magnificent prosperity of his thriving empire’ (v. 31). It may have been more than mere coincidence that the king’s proxy put up this inscription in the temple dedicated to the younger brother, not in the main Rāma temple itself, since he might have conceived of his relationship to the sovereign as homologous with the relation between the latter’s eponym, Rāma the god, and Lakṣmaṇa, the deity of the temple.

From the inscription it appears that, at the time, Rāma was deemed the supreme form of Viṣṇu (vv. 38–40):

... There is nothing superior to Hari to enable one to cross the ocean of existence. Though there are ten avatars of His, Rāma is the (foremost) of them . . . .  
How can I describe that unsurpassed, wonderful efficacy of this mountain Tapaṅgiri (i.e. Rāmagiri), where he, (the scion of the Raghu race), who is the supreme object of meditation of the yogis, lives together with the Son of the Wind (i.e. Hanumat)?

The text continues in the accomplished style of the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* tradition, mentioning the Aśvamedha sacrifice merely to extoll the far superior merit that accrues to the visitor of the sanctuaries on the hill (*ibid.* v. 62).

The analysis above provides, at least partly, an explanation of the so far unsolved problem why, of all incarnations of Viṣṇu or of all other Worshipful figures in the Hindu pantheon, it was Rāma (along with Kṛṣṇa) who became the central object of veneration in Hinduism of the 2nd millennium, Rāma who, in contrast with Kṛṣṇa, did not have roots in a folk deity nor had been the exclusive object of worship or cult of any consequence in the first eight centuries of his career as an acknowledged incarnation of Viṣṇu. The same devotional religion that informed their ideology provided a mighty symbol for these kings to appropriate (in the sense of a ‘personal symbol’ as introduced by Obeyesekere 1981). For, just as the Yādava king assumed transcendency and royalty in his person and as such boasted of being a reflection of divinity, so this divinity reflected had to compromise the same both aspects. And within the entire Hindu pantheon no symbol was more suitable for this than the figure of Rāmacandra, who personified kingship and godhead in one.

Appropriation by kings of this symbolism—and the analysis of the Mahānavamī ritual by Stein, for instance, seems to uncover the same phenomenon

in the Vijayanagara empire (Stein 1983, 83)—contributed naturally, in an interactive process, to the growth of this type of *bhakti*. This was the way in which the dialectics of ‘royalisation’ and ‘deification’ referred to above (p. 161) actually worked. One of its consequences was the aggrandizement of the sacred complex of the hill of Rāma, Ramtek, epitomized in the Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa temples.

Whereas the Vākāṭakas in their dealing with the cult of Narasiṃha were actually concerned with a metaphor—the divine figure of Narasiṃha and his symbolization in an icon presented the qualities of the king by *analogy*—in the days of the Yādavas this analogy developed into a *homology*. The *bhaktas* who visited the sanctuaries on top of the hill and who witnessed and participated in the elaborate ritual universe created around the idols installed, not only stood in front of their god Rāmacandra, but also faced their King Rāmacandra. Partly under the influence of the *bhakti* religion, court ritual and temple ritual had become almost indistinguishable, the idol being handled as a living king, the king treated as a deity. This conflation of different levels of meaning is constantly met with in the epigraphical material of this period, the authors of which were experts in double-entendres and equivocal expressions (*śleṣa*). Take, for instance, the *Kevala-Narasiṃha Temple Ramtek Inscription No. 1*: ‘Śāriṅgadeva, son of Kāmadeva, who is the crown of the philosophers and whose praises are sung by the poet Trivikrama, praises always the illustrious Nṛhari.<sup>35</sup> In the time of the reign of Siṃhaṇa, in the Śārvarin-year.’<sup>36</sup> Here Nṛhari may equally refer to the god of the temple Narasiṃha and to the reigning monarch Siṃhaṇa, whose name qualifies him as a ‘Lion among Men’.

The promotion of imperial sanctuaries all through the realm, especially in the periphery, thus enabled the sovereign, standing proxy for God, to be ubiquitous. This, again, created ramifications of loyalty by means of which the king and his plenipotentiaries could enact authority. Though we disagreed with Stein with regard to the starting-point of his above-quoted article, we subscribe to his conclusion:

Sovereignty is conceived as shared between powerful humans (Rājas) and powerful divinities (Devas); the sovereignty of neither is complete; the sovereignty of both, together, is perfect. Those who fall under the sovereignty of both kings [...] and gods comprise a community of reverence and worship. This is a conception of community which occurs at every level of South Indian society from the village to the whole kingdom. [...] Worship is constitutive of (it establishes or creates) community; the sovereignty of great humans [...] and gods is realized in worship events, or ritual performances, of a public kind in which all of any corporate whole (family to kingdom) express membership and in which all witness as well as compete for the honors which alone can be distributed by powerful personages and divinities. (Stein 1983, 89 f.; cf. above, n. 14 on p. 61)

35 This can either mean ‘a lion among men’ or ‘man-lion’ (synonymous with Narasiṃha), or ‘Hari in the form of man’.

36 Bakker 1989b, 470; above p. 83.

Or, in our words, the charisma built up by the king through his engagement in this type of religion—by which simultaneously the ideology that founded his authority was propagated—this prestige he again distributed as grace (*prasāda*) among the polity in the form of honours, (ritual) privileges, estates, etc. It goes without saying that the balance of power established by this policy was a delicate one, since in the absence of an objective touchstone or an endorsing authoritative institution—like, for instance, the Church of Rome in the European Middle Ages—every ruler aspiring after supremacy could, in principle, assume the same status, to which a fabricated pedigree could be helpful. That this actually was the case is abundantly attested by the inscriptions of these centuries. Hence the king's precarious condition persistently called for more investments in the military machine, testified by the remains of heavy fortifications on the Ramtek Hill.

And this brings us back to the visual material of the Yādava age that is left on Ramtek Hill. It reflects the above-sketched cultural, i.e. social, religious, and political complex in its own way. In contrast to the Vākāṭaka sanctuaries, the temples of the Yādava period seek to rise above the earth in a tiered architecture that culminates in the *śikhara* which represents the centre, or axis mundi of the cosmic *maṇḍala* that is reified in the temple compound. The image installed under the *śikhara* is of a similar hierarchic rigidity, human and non-human at the same time, embodying the transcendent but reliable unwavering pivot, the fountainhead of sovereignty.



Plate 12

*Rāmacandra and Lakṣmaṇa temples on the spur of the Rāmagiri*

# Little Kṛṣṇa's Play with the Moon\*

## THE LITERARY EVIDENCE

Within the collection of hymns (*Tirumoli*) attributed to Viṭṭucittaṅ, also known as the 'Great Saint', Periyālvār (9th century AD), we find 'a series of independent songs, [in which] Periyālvār envisages the childhood of Kṛṣṇa through various games and ceremonies such as a real South Indian child would play and go through' (Hardy 1983a, 406). Friedhelm Hardy, from whose *Viraha-Bhakti* I derive this information, styled this section the *Bālacarita*. It contains folk-songs which, Hardy observes, afterwards came to form part of the genre styled *pillaitamīl*, 'songs accompanying the games etc. of children' (Hardy *ibid.*), 'depicting the child-life of a hero or god' (Zvelebil 1974, 102). In one of the ten stages which constitute this genre, the mother, Yaśodā, calls the moon to play with the child Kṛṣṇa.<sup>1</sup> 'Whence', Hardy asks, 'did Periyālvār derive the inspiration for his *Bālacarita*?' This scholar points to the *Harivaṃśa* (HV 60.15), in which, just as in one of the Ālvār's songs (III.5), Kṛṣṇa is said to eat a 'lake of curds' with a 'whirlpool of ghee'/'marsh of ghee', and Hardy concludes 'that in the two common *rūpakas* we can safely assume direct literary dependence'.<sup>2</sup> How 'safe' is it, we may ask, to assume literary dependence on the basis of only two interconnected, and rather obvious metaphors (*rūpaka*): 'a lake of curd' and 'a whirlpool/marsh of ghee'? Hardy continues,

Northern cultural values have deeply influenced and transformed the Southern awareness. Yet this is only one aspect of Viṭṭucittaṅ's work. Much of Tamil culture has remained and in certain respects even developed further with him. [...] The mythical events are seen through the eyes of the mythical actors, particularly Yaśodā, and their literary treatment stylizes them in such a way (by using genres of folk-songs) that a real mother can identify herself with these emotions, and can sing the songs, for example when playing with her child. Again, many of the themes depicted (like the *cirril*, the sand-houses) are typical of older Tamil poetry, just

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1 *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, Book I (*Mutalāyiram*), *Periyālvār–Tirumoli* I.5 (Hardy 1983a, 406).

2 Hardy 1983a, 407. HV 60.15cd: *dadhihrado ghṛtāvartaḥ payaḥkulyāsamākulaḥ* || 15 || *Periyālvār–Tirumoli* III.5.1: *cōrru pparuppatamum tayir vāviyūm neyy aḷarum aṭaṅka* (quoted from Hardy 1983a, 407 n. 24).

as the connection of particular folk customs with mythical songs (which, we might say, are acted out in the custom), has been detected already in the *Kalittokai* and the *Āycciyarkuravai*. In language and idiom, Periyālvār comes closer to ordinary people than any other Ālvār. It is a difficult problem to find an overall explanation for the clear Northern influence on the one hand, and the closeness of our brahmin priest to the ordinary people and his deep roots in Tamil culture on the other hand. I shall not attempt an answer here (Hardy 1983a, 411 f.).

I cannot try to solve this problem, first and foremost because I do not have access to the source material, Tamil literature. However, we may observe that the alleged influence from the North does not necessarily entail literary dependence; the arguments adduced by Hardy for such dependence are rather flimsy and they are not corroborated by our investigation into the origin of one of the themes of the *pillaitamīl*, baby Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon.

### *Baby Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon*

As one might expect, the topic of Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon became connected with those currents in the *bhakti* movement that cultivated the emotions associated with motherhood, in emulation of Yaśodā, the *vātsalyabhāva*. These emotions were beautifully expressed in a poem ascribed to Sūrdās, and we may assume that by the 16th century this and similar songs were sung all over India. I present *Sabhā* 809 of the *Sūrasāgara* in the translation of Kenneth Bryant.

Again and again, Yaśodā coaxes:  
 'Come, Moon! Moon, my little one's calling you!  
 He's going to eat honey and fruit and nuts and sweets,  
 and he might give you some too!  
 He 'll play with you in his hand, and he won't  
 even drop you once;  
 Just come down and live in this bowl of water  
 I 've got here in my hand . . .'  
 She set the bowl upon the ground, and took him  
 and showed him the moon;  
 And Sūr's Lord laughed and dipped his two hands  
 again and again and again.<sup>3</sup>

If this topic originally hailed from the North, we could hope to find allusions to it in the early Sanskrit literature dealing with Kṛṣṇa's childhood; the first text to investigate is indeed the *Harivaṃśa*. However, neither here nor in the

3 Bryant 1978, 170.

*bāra-bāra jasumati suta bodhati, āu caṃda tohiṃ lāla bulāvai |*  
*madhu-mevā-pakavāna-miṭhāi, āpuna khaihai, tohiṃ khavāvai |*  
*hāthahiṃ para tohiṃ līn he khelai, naiku nahūṃ dharanī baiṭhāvai |*  
*jala-bāsana kara lai ju uṭhavati, yāhī maiṃ tū tana dhari āvai |*  
*jalapuṭa āni dharanī para rākhyau, gahi ānyau vaha caṃda dikhāvai |*  
*sūradāsa prabhu haṃsi musakyāne, bāra-bāra doṃ kara nāvaiṃ |*

*Viṣṇupurāṇa* have I been able to find the topic. Bhāsa's *Bālacarita* does not mention it either and even the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, which is certainly inspired by the South Indian tradition, does not seem to contain this theme.

A well-known collection of Sanskrit devotional verses in honour of Kṛṣṇa is the one ascribed to the poet Līlāśūka Bilvamaṅgala, the title of which in the South Indian MSS is *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta*. The identity of its author, who probably was a South Indian and who might have lived in the 14th century, is problematic,<sup>4</sup> but an anthology named *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta* was reportedly brought from South India to Bengal by Caitanya in c. AD 1510.<sup>5</sup> Neither in the South-Indian nor in the Bengali recension of this anthology do we find a verse dealing with the topic at issue. However, in addition to the Bengali one there exist other North-Indian anthologies that are attributed to Bilvamaṅgala. In Wilson's critical edition they are represented by his MSS Y. About these manuscripts Wilson remarks:

The Y version (Northern mss.) shows that the KK (*Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta*) collection reached West India and Madhyadeśa and was popular there from c. 1400–1700 AD. From a descriptive point of view the Y version is not a version of the KK: except for Y 50, the mss. of the Y version do not arrange the verses into centuries; no Y version is named *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta*; finally, about one half the verses in any Y ms. are not found in the mss. named KK and about one half of the verses in the mss. named KK are not found in any Y ms.<sup>6</sup>

Among the half that is not found in MSS titled *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta* is a verse that refers to our topic in a slightly varied form. It is preserved in a MS kept in the Chandra Shum Shere collection of the Bodleian Library (d 843), titled *Śrīgopālabālastuti* by Bilvamaṅgala, in an India Office MS (No. 564), titled *Sumaṅgalastotra* by Bilvamaṅgala, with a commentary called *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta-ṭīkā*, in a MS used for a Bengali edition of 1817,<sup>7</sup> and in 4 MSS used in the so-called Assamese version edited by M. Neog; two of the latter MSS are dated, namely AD 1803 and 1837, all other MSS are undated.<sup>8</sup> Wilson presents this verse among his *Additional Verses*:

KṚṢṆA who, seeing the moon reflected in the waters of a pot, dipped his fingers into it to taste, thinking it was fresh butter: bewildered he was, when he found none; may he protect us.<sup>9</sup>

4 Wilson 1975, 16 ff.; Gonda 1977, 31.

5 Wilson 1975, 4.

6 Wilson 1975, 5.

7 Given in S.K. De's edition of the *Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta*.

8 See Wilson 1975, 439. The same author mentions (*ibid.* 315) a MS in the Scindia Oriental Institute (Ujjain) (No. 6523) as a source for this verse (his Y 31), which seems to take the place of the Oxford and London MSS (his Y 13 and Y 33) that are mentioned as sources on p. 439.

9 Wilson 1975, p. 227:

*ghaṭodakeṣu pratimāśaśāṅkaṃ vilokya kṛṣṇo navanītabuddhyā |  
ādātum antar nihitāgrahastāḥ pāyāt tadaprāptisamakulo naḥ ||*

It would seem that in this Sanskrit version the original character of the topic as reported in the Tamil tradition and preserved in Sūrdās' poem, namely, that of a lullaby in which the moon is the object of Kṛṣṇa's fancy, has been assimilated to the famous theme of Kṛṣṇa's appetite for butter, for which he takes the moon's reflection by mistake.

Wilson reports that around Ujjain Bilvamaṅgala is identified with Sūrdās,<sup>10</sup> and though this may be just a local tradition, it may indicate the affinity that was sensed between this Sanskrit anthology and the *Sūrasāgara* tradition. Both verses, the Sanskrit and the Braj, may have come into existence independently at about the same period, articulating the popularity of the topic in circles of Kṛṣṇa *bhaktas* of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

With respect to the origin of the topic the verse ascribed to Bilvamaṅgala adds little to the testimony of the *Sūrasāgara*. We must conclude that our literary survey has not yielded any evidence that the topic of Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon was known in northern India before the fifteenth century.

### THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

We could leave it at that were it not that Indian archaeology has its own story to tell. For that reason we go to a village called Paunār on the right bank of the River Dham, 70 km southwest of Nagpur in Maharashtra. It has several mounds testifying to a long-standing occupation of the site. Excavations were carried out in 1967 under the supervision of S.B. Deo of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology of the University of Nagpur. Among other things this excavation brought to light that Paunār enjoyed its days of prosperity during the Vākāṭaka period, i.e. 5th century AD, and consecutive period, the first quarter of the 6th century, when the Viṣṇukunḍins held sway over this area.<sup>11</sup>

The major findings in Paunār, however, did not emerge from the excavation, but were recovered during the building of the Paramadhāma Āśrama of Vinoba Bhave on the left (northern) bank of the Dham. The sculptures and panels found 'while digging in the fields round Śrī Vinobājī's *āśrama*' are preserved in the Ashram.<sup>12</sup> They attest to the existence of several sanctuaries on the bank of the river, among which at least one large Viṣṇu temple. From the beginning, however, there has been controversy over their iconography and date. Mirashi, who was the first to give a systematic interpretation of the panels, thought they depict scenes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.<sup>13</sup> This view has proved to be untenable

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10 Wilson 1975, 6.

11 Bakker 1997, 89 ff.

12 CII V, lx.

13 Mirashi 1954.

and it is now generally believed that the majority of the panels (if not all) represent *līlā* scenes of Kṛṣṇa and his associates, for instance: 'Kāṃsavadhā' (Plate 13),<sup>14</sup> and 'Dhenukāsūravadhā' (Plate 14).<sup>15</sup>



Plate 13  
*Paunar: Kāṃsavadhā*



Plate 14  
*Paunar: Dhenukāsūravadhā*

Considerations of style would suggest that many of the findings preserved in the Ashram, including the panels, do not belong to the Vākāṭakas, but may date from a somewhat later period. Walter Spink ascribes them to 'a period (c. AD 500) of Viṣṇukunḍin rule over Vidarbha'.<sup>16</sup> The Viṣṇukunḍins, whose homeland was the Guntur District (AP) and the region to the north of the Śrīśaila Hills (the present Mahbubnagar District AP), became, when their kingdom began to

14 The story covers Kṛṣṇa disposing of an elephant, named Kuvalayāpīḍa, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma entering the arena and killing the wrestlers Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, and finally Kṛṣṇa dragging Kāṃsa by holding his hair.

15 Balarāma hurling the ass-demon Dhenuka on to a palmyra tree, from which he falls down, his back broken and, dying, transmutes into his anthropomorphic demon form (Bakker 1997, 157 f.).

16 Spink 1981, 123 n. 8.

emerge at the end of the 4th century, heirs to the artistic tradition of Amarāvātī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (3rd century AD), the sculptural style of which may be characterized as ‘lithe and slender’.<sup>17</sup> It is this legacy that we may recognize in the slender, natural but sensuous figures of Paunar; it may account for the stylistic undercurrent that is responsible for the ‘South-Indian flavour’ that art-historians savour when they examine these sculptures.



Plate 15  
Paunar: Little Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon

<sup>17</sup> Huntington 1985, 180 observes:

The sculptural style at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, like that at Amarāvātī, is known from the carved stone slabs that were part of the veneer of the major *stūpas*, as well as from free-standing images. By and large, the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa carvings are closely tied to the latest sculptures from Amarāvātī in style as well as range of subjects. If anything, the compositions of the reliefs are often more animated, the figures *more lithe and slender*, and the spatial arrangements more sophisticated. (italics mine)

One of the panels (Plate 15) was interpreted by Mirashi (1954, 4) as 'the birth of Rāma. The prominent male figure is Daśaratha who has taken the baby in his hands and is looking affectionately at him'. Joanna Williams (1983, 229) surmises that it 'may represent Vasudeva transporting the baby to Gokul'. Yet another identification has been proposed by Chandrashekhar Gupta, who describes the panel as follows.

The main figure standing in the centre facing right (head mutilated) is shown carrying a child. Two persons are standing on his either [sic] side and a female attendant is seated in the *Garuḍakrama* posture, holding an oval object in her hands in the lower right corner. One of the male figures is an attendant holding the staff of an umbrella and the other is some elderly person in the *varadamudrā*. The scene is described [by Mirashi] as Daśaratha receiving Rāma, brought to him by the female attendant, after the birth. The child does not appear to be a newly born one. On the other hand he looks like a 2-3 years old boy. It can be identified with the story of Kṛṣṇa's obstinacy for getting the moon. The oval object in the hands of the female attendant can be identified as a mirror or a pot filled with water to reflect the image of the moon to satisfy Kṛṣṇa. (Gupta 1992, 146 f.)

Though I find it difficult to assess the precise age of the boy held by the main male figure, I think Gupta's identification of the panel might be the correct one. At variance with Sūrdās' description, the infant Kṛṣṇa in the Paunar relief is held by Nanda, while Yaśodā kneels in front of him to hold the mirror (apparently not a pot with water). The two male bystanders in the background could be inhabitants of Gokula, the one at his right holds what seems to be a staff, possibly of an umbrella.<sup>18</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When we combine the Paunar evidence with the outcome of our literary survey, the panel thus seems to endorse the hypothesis that the topic of Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon originated in South India. The South-Indian Viṣṇukuṇḍins brought it with them when their influence spread over Maharashtra during the last phase of Vākāṭaka rule, when Pṛthivīṣeṇa II was king of Vidarbha. In order to defend his kingdom against the Nalas of the Bastar region (MP), the latter king had summoned the assistance of what probably was his son-in-law, the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king Mādhavavarman II Janāśraya in the last decade of the fifth century. As I have argued in my *The Vākāṭakas* (Bakker 1997, 55–57), the Viṣṇukuṇḍins succeeded the Vākāṭakas after the collapse of the Vākāṭaka kingdom. Mādhavavarman II declared himself emperor (*sārvabhauma*) in his Khanapur Plates which were found in the Satara District of Maharashtra.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> I do not see the *varadamudrā* of the figure to the left.

<sup>19</sup> EI XXVII, 316 l. 3.

In the inscriptions of his descendents Mādhavarman II's kingdom is said to have adjoined the waters of the Revā, i.e. the Narmadā River.<sup>20</sup>

In sum it may be observed that the materials that we have been able to survey all point to South India as the cradle, to use an apposite metaphor, of the topic of Kṛṣṇa's play with the moon. Of course it is very well possible that we have missed an early Sanskrit passage containing this topic. Moreover, further research is needed of the ancient Tamil tradition of folk songs or lullabies from which Periyālvār may have derived his inspiration. If our interpretation of the Paunar pannel is correct, though, such a song must already have been around in the fifth century AD.

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<sup>20</sup> *Journal of Indian History* 43 (1965), 734 ll. 8–9.

# Some Methodological Considerations with Respect to the Critical Edition of Puranic Literature\*

## INTRODUCTION

Remarkably, two much-debated issues appear to have had little or no consequence for the editing of classical Sanskrit texts. I am thinking of Paul Hacker's methodology for the investigation of anonymous Sanskrit literature,<sup>1</sup> as well as of a field of study that might be referred to as 'oral poetics'. Neither Hacker himself nor any of his pupils whose investigations were concerned with the historical development of Viṣṇu's avatars have provided us with solid text-editions to underpin their findings.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, although Indian literature avowedly comprises one of the world's greatest oral traditions, Sanskritists have seldom had recourse to the theories about oral poetry developed by scholars of other languages, nor has Sanskrit material been taken into account in, for instance, C.M. Bowra's *Heroic Poetry*, in A.B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, or in such general works as *Oral Poetry. Das Problem der Mündlichkeit mittelalterlicher epischer Dichtung*, or Ruth Finnegan's *Oral Poetry* (1977). If we think of the studies of Emeneau (1958), and Kailasapathy (1968), or John Smith,<sup>3</sup> we must conclude that Dravidian and New Indo-Aryan literary traditions are thought to be more appropriate for an investigation along the lines of comparative oral poetics than their Sanskrit counterparts. In this respect the neglect of classical anonymous Sanskrit literature is understandable, if we think of puranic literature of which the written nature (Schriftlichkeit) has never been seriously questioned since Kirfel's 'Erschütterung' of the 'Hypothese von der Jahrhunderte langen mündlichen Tradition grösserer Texte in Indien' in the Introduction of

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1 Hacker 1961a.

2 Hacker 1960a and 1960b; Tripathi 1968; Rüping 1970; Gail 1969, 1977a, 1977b; Bock 1984.

3 Smith 1977. Smith 1980 discusses, besides other things, the oral origin of the two Sanskrit epics with reference to the Parry–Lord theory and concludes that, in spite of initial attempts by R.K. Sharma 1964 and N. Sen 1966, 'formula-analysis of the two Sanskrit epics is an urgent desideratum' (*op. cit.* 73).

his *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*' (PPL p. II). Before going further into the matter of critically editing these texts, a few words need to be said on some characteristics of this type of literature viewed in the light of the results attained by investigators of oral literary traditions elsewhere.

### THE THEORY OF 'ORAL COMPOSITION'

Speaking of the techniques of composition of epic or similar texts inevitably means discussing the theories advanced by the school founded by Milman Parry (1971) and carried on by his pupil Albert Lord (1960). The Parry–Lord theory, as it might be called, sees the 'formulaic style' as the *differentia specifica* of orally composed epic texts.<sup>4</sup> The elaboration of this theory by Lord has inspired various scholars to investigate medieval epic texts on 'formulariness' and has led them to claim oral composition for all those texts in which they found a high percentage of formulaic diction.<sup>5</sup> This generalisation of the original thesis of Parry to the effect that formulariness is not only considered a necessary corollary of orality but an actual proof of oral composition has been criticised by several scholars among whom I wish to mention only one in the present context.

A. Hoekstra in his *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* adduces the case of the *Posthomerica*, a work of Quintus Smyrnaeus (4th cent. AD), who as far as traditional formulaic diction is concerned 'probably imitated Homer more closely than Homer followed his predecessors'.<sup>6</sup> Hoekstra goes on to say that: 'If Greek history were entirely unknown to us up to the fourth century AD and if the *Posthomerica* were the oldest surviving piece of poetry, the argument put forth in Parry's *Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making* would necessarily lead to the conclusion that this poem was an oral composition.' This argument would seem to have a particular relevance for the student of Indian epic and puranic literature, since, on account of the specific nature of this literature, in which 'originality' and personal creativity is valued less or disguised, a text like the *Posthomerica* would not be just an exception or an unsuccessful imitation, on the contrary we could say that, *mutatis mutandis*, the Indian literary tradition knows hundreds of '*Posthomericas*', and, worse, their authors are all called 'Quintus Smyrnaeus'.<sup>7</sup>

Since formulariness then does not automatically imply oral transmission, let us focus on another touchstone of oral traditions. In order to explain the formulaic and repetitive style of epic texts the Parry–Lord school holds that for texts to pertain to oral tradition they must be composed in the course of a

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4 For a criticism of Lord's circular definition see Smith 1977, 142.

5 For a survey see Curschmann 1967 and *Oral Poetry*.

6 Hoekstra 1966, 17.

7 Cf. Bonazzoli 1983, 267 f.

'live' performance. In view of the Indian evidence, however, this 'composition-in-performance' might have a variant in a written tradition which could be called 'composition-in-transmission'.

*Composition-in-transmission*

The many different versions of what basically seems to be one and the same epic or puranic text may have its origin in recomposition during the process of literary transmission rather than in a living oral tradition.<sup>8</sup> By the very nature of this genre, which recognizes divine inspiration as the only authentic source, the role of the individual composer is ignored to such an extent that every skillful author or transmitter may believe himself authorized to change, delete, or add to given text-material without conceiving of this as a personal contribution, distortion, or fraud. The aspiration to create something supra-individual is responsible for the fact that Indian puranic composers vie with each other in minimalizing the effect of empirical, historical and personal circumstances on the texts, making it a hard task for indologists to date and to determine the products.

The congeniality of both phenomena, 'composition-in-performance' and 'composition-in-transmission' ensues from the style of the texts themselves. Like orally composed epic poems, puranic texts are often highly formulaic in diction and sometimes repetitive to a degree that Westerners are likely to regard as tedious and inappropriate to written form. Yet the conclusion that puranic literature as known to us must be a product of oral tradition seems to be based on a fallacy. These texts are formulaic and repetitive, first of all because this style lends authority to the texts, and secondly, because it accounts for a process on an Indian scale of 'composition-in-transmission'. These observations entail that the techniques of composition of oral and written texts of this sort have much in common. In both instances the composer is well-trained in a traditional formulaic language and has memorized large pieces of text which he can reproduce and modify at will. The first consideration of style refers to the conservatism of the Indian cultural tradition which often disparages innovation and idiosyncrasy. A puranic author who intended to present a new subject, vision, or altered situation had rather to comply with traditional style and diction on penalty of being ignored.

Both arguments, the stylistic and the technical one, seem to point, however, to a living oral tradition from which the puranic genre once emerged,<sup>9</sup> and by

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8 Bonazzoli 1983, 260 f. That 'oral transmission' does not necessarily imply 'composition-in-performance' but may rely 'upon memory rather than improvisation' is shown by Smith 1977 discussing the Rājasthānī oral epic of *Pābūjī Rāṭhaur*.

9 Cf. Smith 1977, 151; Smith 1980, 51 f. remarks:

How, exactly, the oral epic came to form the nucleus of the inflated written text is something we shall never know; it is imaginable, but by no means certain, that at some stage there was interaction between oral and written versions.

The theory advanced here may be seen as an attempt to elucidate something of this 'unknowable' phenomenon.

which it possibly, as we may see, was sustained. Much of the technique and method of the oral composers was retained by their successors who made use of writing and written exemplars, whereas, on the other hand, the conservatism in Indian culture made the characteristics of the bygone oral tradition, such as formulaic diction, repetitiveness, and traditionality of setting and frame-stories, themes, and motives, the very yardstick of authenticity which above anything else could bestow authority upon the texts.

The phenomenon of ‘composition-in-transmission’ does not exclude scribal activity of the sort in which exemplars are more or less faithfully copied. Both activities may have been practised since the time writing was employed as a means of transmission. In the heyday of the genre, say from AD 400 to AD 1400, composition-in-transmission may have often taken the place of mere copying, and it seems likely that with the extinction of the genius of puranic creativity and fading away of its oral roots copying became the normal practice, yet, until today, specialists may feel entitled to re-compose traditional text-material without notification. The amazing persistence of the puranic technique and style of composition may also be ascribed to the custom of reciting the text. Special audiences or occasions may have required newly composed or copied texts, whereas the ambience of these sessions as well as the techniques of recitation involved preserved the professional expertise and contributed to the mnemonic capacities of the *pustakavācaka* or *paurāṇika* (see below, p. 607).

The theory advanced here poses the question of how and when the oral tradition evolved into a written one. Since the practice of ‘composition-in-transmission’ requires much of the technique and know-how of an oral tradition, and since, as we know,<sup>10</sup> the analogue practice of recitation supplanted the ‘composition-in-performance’, oral and written traditions may have co-existed for a long time. The general Indian preference for oral rather than written authority may also have contributed to the longevity of the system of combined oral and written transmission.

## THE CRITICAL EDITION OF EPIC AND PURANIC LITERATURE

In the first instance the question as to whether the diversity of recensions of puranic text-material is rooted in either oral or written forms of transmission has no direct relevance to the critical editor. For, just as, to quote Lord, ‘the truth of the matter is that our concept of “the original”, of “the song”, simply makes no sense in oral tradition’ (Lord 1960, 101), it is mostly futile to ask for the original or ‘Ur’ form of a text that is handed down to us through a process of ‘composition-in-transmission’. Reconstructing the original text is out of the

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bonazzoli 1983, 269 ff.

question, simply because we have to do with a multiple of re-compositions.<sup>11</sup> The questions that the editor should answer are, whether chronological relations can be determined between the compositions or recensions; which specific historical and cultural circumstances prompted a re-composition; and how may differences between versions be explained in terms of functionality. The recognition of these premises inspired Hacker to formulate his 'Methode'.<sup>12</sup>

A brief evaluation of the accomplishments of critical editing of Indian epic and puranic texts may elucidate the actual state of affairs. Under the influence of Western philologists and armed with the classical method of textual criticism, the edition of the *Mahābhārata* was undertaken by a team of Indian scholars in the second decade of the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> From the beginning critical noises were heard and some doubt was raised as to the applicability to such a text of the classical method of editing.<sup>14</sup>

It was, however, a long time before a frontal attack was launched. By that time the monumental critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* was completed, that of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was half finished, and the editing on the same principles of Purāṇas had begun. Supported by the first results of the Parry–Lord school and influenced by French structuralism with its notorious disregard of historicity, Madeleine Biardeau argued for an abandonment of all so-called 'critical' editing and stood up for the value of each individual recension.<sup>15</sup> Aside from a number of emotional rather than rational objections, the attitude of the Indian critical school as voiced by V.M. Bedekar (1969) and A.S. Gupta (1970) produced one irrefutable counterargument, viz. that the edition of all different versions of texts like the *Mahābhārata* is practically impossible. Consequently, the preparation of critical editions was continued along the same lines, until quite recently Giorgio Bonazzoli in charge of the All-India Kashiraj Trust gave a warning that the vessel founders as a result of overloading with incongruous text-materials.<sup>16</sup>

In Germany on the other hand, the cradle of the Indian critical school, occupation with epic and puranic texts took another course. At its basis lay Kirfel's reconstruction of the five oldest constituents of puranic literature. Unlike his Indian colleagues, Kirfel recognized the futility of an attempt at reconstructing one most original text.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, his edition contains a synoptic presen-

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11 It may be doubted whether an exception on metrical grounds such as carried out for the *Mahābhārata* by Mary Carroll Smith in an unpublished thesis, acclaimed by John Smith but unaccessible to me, will finally arrive at a single homogeneous text (see Smith 1980, 52 ff.).

12 Cf. Hacker 1961a, 487 f.

13 See Sukthankar's *Prolegomena* to the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata*, Vol. I pp. 1 ff.

14 Levi 1929, 347; Levi 1934, 282.

15 Biardeau 1968. Cf. Biardeau 1970.

16 Bonazzoli 1983, 254 ff.

17 Kirfel in PPL p. XLVIII:

Die eventuelle Annahme, dass jenseits der ältesten Textschicht unseres Pañcalakṣaṇa

tation of different recensions or ‘Textgruppen’ which are not further reducible. The extreme complexity of Kirfel’s *magnum opus* might have deterred other sanskritists from following suit.

The matter was taken up again systematically by Paul Hacker. He pointed out that many of the Purāṇas are, as such, only secondary products, compilations of ‘Einzelstücke’, or ‘components’, which often had existed independently before being intergrated into the superstructure of a Purāṇa. This led to the maxim: ‘Zunächts ist bei der Untersuchung von Texten der anonymen Literatur auf einzelne, inhaltlich einheitliche Stücke zu achten aus denen die überlieferten Werke zusammengesetzt sind.’<sup>18</sup> The works that this line of research has brought forth are well-known. However, the limitation of the method is contained in the words just quoted: ‘Untersuchung’ and ‘überlieferten Werke’. Evidently, for Hacker and his *celās* ‘Untersuchung’ did not imply ‘edition’,<sup>19</sup> and ‘überlieferten Werke’ referred in the majority of cases to printed editions of ‘complete’ works. That these limitations could easily give rise to shortcomings has recently been pointed out by Horst Brinkhaus in a review of A. Gail’s *Paraśurāma. Brahmane und Krieger*, in which he noticed that the author,

... in seiner Monographie immer wieder von den überlieferten Endredaktionen der epischen oder purāṇischen Gesamtabschnitte zu Paraśurāma oder gar der Gesamtwerke als notwendig kohärenten Einheiten aus [geht] und [...] von den Gesamttexten die Funktionen der Einzelstücke ab[leitet].<sup>20</sup>

The crux of the matter is the concept of the ‘complete Purāṇa’ (‘Gesamtwerk’) or the ‘traditional final redaction’ (‘überlieferte Endredaktion’). In several cases a puranic text is never handed down as a ‘complete’ work at all. Thus, for instance, to the best of my knowledge, there does not exist a MS containing the collection of *khaṇḍas* that could pass for the complete *Skandapurāṇa*,<sup>21</sup> and Bonazzoli has made it clear that on the basis of the MS evidence it cannot be decided what should be conceived of as the ‘complete’

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noch ein uns nicht erhaltenes Ur-Purāṇa liegen könnte [...] ist kaum mehr als eine willkürliche Annahme, da ausser ein paar sekundären Versen tatsächlich nichts Handgreifliches auf diese Möglichkeit hindeutet und wir nur von den realen Grundlagen der Textgeschichte ausgehen dürfen, um hinter das eigentliche Purāṇa-Geheimnis zu kommen.

18 Hacker 1961a, 486.

19 Cf. Grünendahl 1983–89 I, x.

20 Brinkhaus 1983, 47. Gail 1977a.

21 The comprehensive catalogue of ancient MSS in the National Archives (Nepal) (*Bṛhat-sūcīpatram*) vol. 8 ‘Purāṇa and Itihāsa’ lists s.v. ‘*Skandapurāṇa*’ an incomplete palmleaf MS of 700 verses (or should we read 7000?) comprising 229 folios, which is not assigned to any particular Saṃhitā or Khaṇḍa. It is written in ‘Licchavī’ characters and may hence date from before AD 1000 (information kindly provided by Prof. Dr. M. Witzel). However, even if a closer examination of this MS would reveal that it contains a part of an integral text that is entitled *Skandapurāṇa*, the other, in some cases very old MSS indexed in the same catalogue prove all the more that from an early date it had become common practice to signify particular texts or compilations as parts of the *Skandapurāṇa*

*Garuḍapurāṇa*.<sup>22</sup> The texts, or so-called ‘final redactions’, which we are in the habit of referring to as the ‘so-and-so-purāṇa’ more often than not have come into existence only after they rolled off the Veṅkatesvara, Vaṅgavāsī, or other 19th and early 20th century presses of India. Even if MSS of ‘complete’ Purāṇas exist, these are often to be considered as conflated products. How should we proceed when we want to produce a critical edition of such elusive material? This question was posed by Bonazzoli in an article in 1983 and a brave solution was proposed in a sample-edition of the *Garuḍapurāṇa*, handed out and discussed at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference in Philadelphia October 1984.<sup>23</sup>

Alas, apart from problems of lay-out, which are considerable, I think the proposed procedure is unsatisfactory, since no text edited in this new way can lay any claim to authenticity. In fact it is a new creation which could be best designated as a vulgate, and of vulgate editions we have already enough. It is a ‘*collectio lectionum*’ (*op. cit.* 2), which, in itself, is of course a useful thing, but it is of doubtful value for historical research. It takes as the standard text the readings ‘that have been accepted by the majority of the MSS and editions (*op. cit.* 4) and presents the variant-readings in sub-lines, on the parallel page, and in a critical apparatus. The decision to abandon the concept of the ‘original’ text is to be welcomed, yet the replacement of a pedigree as the guiding principle by only a single rule, viz. that of the *lectio plurimum codicum potior*, might lead to a phenomenon that the connoisseurs of football may know: the world-team composed of the best players of the globe looks respectable and trustworthy, yet it fails to do the trick, due to the incompatibility of its members. Besides, how can we determine what should still be included? Is there a minimum of MSS required for a text-portion to be accepted or will every MS that in its colophon claims to belong to the *Garuḍapurāṇa* be taken into account?

It is my conviction that as long as critical editions of puranic literature aim at presenting such artificial compilations as ‘complete Purāṇas’ the results will remain arbitrary. For reasons just mentioned, in the majority of cases reconstruction of an archetypal version is out of the question,<sup>24</sup> compilatory editions as now proposed by Bonazzoli seem inadequate to the demands of historical

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(e.g. *Ambikākhaṇḍa*, *Utkalākhaṇḍa*, *Kāśīkhaṇḍa*, *Kedārākhaṇḍa*), whereas evidently no attempt was made to compile or transcribe a ‘complete’ *Skandapurāṇa* comprising all (i.e. more than one) parts (*khaṇḍas/saṃhitās*) (cf. Aufrecht, *Catalogus Catalogorum* s.v.).

The manuscript referred to would become MS S<sub>1</sub> of our critical edition of the ‘original’ *Skandapurāṇa* (see below, p. 185 ff.).

22 Bonazzoli 1983, 255 ff.

23 Bonazzoli 1984.

24 An exception is to be made for some of the early Purāṇas like e.g. the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, which shows a homogeneous structure and gives the impression of being composed by a single (group of) author(s). This seems to be borne out by the critical edition of this Purāṇa by M.M. Pathak (Baroda 1997–99). Another instance of a homogeneous original Purāṇa text is the *Skandapurāṇa* preserved in some early Nepalese MSS (see below, p. 185 ff. and the *Prolegomena to Skandapurāṇa*, SP I.

research, synoptic editions of all versions and recensions are more often than not practically unrealizable, and also critical editions of only one recension may mostly appear unattainable owing to the fact that what a recension is can only be defined by comparing it with the text-material that deviates or does not belong to it.<sup>25</sup>

The solution I would suggest is to build on the principles of Kirfel and Hacker, that is to start from the basic materials or components out of which the network of puranic literature is built up and to forget about the superstructure of 'complete' Purāṇas for the time being. An assessment of a *khaṇḍa* or Purāṇa as a whole can be made when all its components are critically evaluated. The joint editions of the components can be seen as constituting the critical edition of the whole.

The proposed method entails the dissolution of the traditional texture of Mahā- and Upanurāṇas, and though the resulting fragmentation might appear confusing on first sight, it could be the only way to disclose the historical structure of this type of literature. Study of a component should be accompanied by an edition of it, because only the collation of all related MS evidence can reveal the particular text-tradition of the component. It may appear that the recension included in a certain Purāṇa represents merely one stage of its textual history. A synoptic edition of all recensions pertaining to this tradition may intersect one or more Purāṇas since, as it would seem, many a re-composition remained outside the Smṛti compilations.

### THE CRITICAL EDITION OF THE AYODHYĀMĀHĀTMYA

To illustrate the proposal I may adduce my investigation into the history of the holy town of Ayodhyā (Bakker 1986). The starting point of my research was the *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* (AM) as it occurs in the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*.

A collation of all available MS material that was somehow related to the AM, among which were texts bearing other titles such as *Kośalakhāṇḍa* or *Ayodhyā-khaṇḍa*, yielded three different text-groups as well as an epitome.<sup>26</sup> First there is the recension that is found in the printed *Skandapurāṇa* and that is secured by Dharmanibandha testimony (the '*Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension'). Then there is a second recension that extends the text-material and re-composes it. In the colophon of some of its MSS it claims to belong to the *Rudrayāmala*, probably the most chimeric of all anonymous literature.<sup>27</sup> The third group contains longer and shorter versions, both having only very few *ślokas* in common with

25 Cf. Bedekar 1969, 213.

26 Bakker 1986 II, vii ff.

27 Cf. Goudriaan 1981, 47.

the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension though they appear structurally akin to it. The texts pertaining to this group could, on text-critical grounds, be proven to have been meant as a kind of supplement to the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension. They lost their relevance when the second recension was composed which includes most of the materials of the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension and its supplements. This recension was, again, abridged in an epitome. The relative chronology of the text-groups was established by virtue of text-critical arguments only. In order to avoid a *petitio principii*, inferences from the texts regarding the historical development of the town were based on this chronology, which was subsequently given an absolute foundation by connecting it with independent evidence.<sup>28</sup>

The three basic text-groups are presented in three parallel columns. Although this gives a certain amount of duplication and sometimes triplication of the text-material, it seems justified by the fact that a proper assessment of the historical purport of one recension can only be fully grasped by means of a scrupulous comparison with the other versions. It is especially the, often minute, differences between the texts that lend significance to their contents. A problem that this type of editing brings with it is that each composition has its own sequence in which pericopes or chapters are organized. The problem is solved by accepting the sequence of the most comprehensive recension as the standard one, by splitting this text in its textual units, and presenting these along with the parallel versions of the other text-groups. To enable the reader to read the units of a text-group in their original sequence references are given at the beginning and end of each chapter to the page on which the linking text can be found. The original sequence can also be recovered with the help of detailed concordances.

A close examination of the MS evidence revealed that none of the versions was directly based upon another. They seem to represent three more or less independent re-compositions of a basic stock of text-materials. These compositions were handed down in more than one MS so that a critical edition of each of them could be attained. Comparison of several abrupt transitions and obscure references in the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension with the supplementary texts revealed that both must have drawn on the same source and that the Skanda- or *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension actually forms a selection and first redaction of this original pool of text-materials.<sup>29</sup> The latter may have been the *Māhātmya* as it evolved and was transmitted locally. This was not necessarily a well-defined text, something that could be called 'α', an archetype in the strict sense. Rather it would have been in a fluid state, modified and supplemented according to changes in local circumstances. Hence I preferred to designate it as an 'α-type-of-text'. The composer of the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* may

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28 Bakker 1986 I, 125 ff.

29 Bakker 1986 II, xxvii ff.

have had access to this pool and have given it definite form.<sup>30</sup>

If, as may well be assumed, the three other regional Māhātmyas contained in the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* appear just as accurate and detailed descriptions of local circumstances as the AM proved to be, it seems impossible that the composer of the *khaṇḍa* himself created the texts. He might, however, have done the same as the editor of the modern *Tīrthāṅk*, viz. soliciting local communities to provide him with the basic materials.<sup>31</sup> Presumably the local tradition did not breakdown after it had issued its first acknowledged Smṛti product, but continued to generate text-materials which finally resulted in a new composition at the time the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension was felt to be antiquated. Thus the second recension came into being, too late to find recognition in the traditional Smṛti literature. It was hoped that the assignment to the *Rudrayāmala* would do.

The given scheme of text-evolution confirms the well-known fact that the contents of the components of puranic texts may be considerably older than the respective *khaṇḍas* or Purāṇas in which they are included. These embryonic components may have evolved and been transmitted in local or religious communities, in the form of a pool of text-materials that we have called 'α-type-of-text', to which the Purāṇa composers had recourse. It is only on this level of the textual history of puranic literature that the question of oral versus written tradition becomes significant. Are the texts that were incorporated in a puranic superstructure the first redactions in writing? Was the genetic process of 'composition-in-transmission', which no doubt took place by means of writing, continuously sustained by small-scale oral traditions? The present state of our knowledge does not allow a general answer to these questions. However, the glimpses of the 'α-type-of-text' that we obtained through analysing the MS evidence of the AM showed textual fluidity as well as formularity to such a degree as to make at least the hypothesis that postulates local or religious communities as the oral fountain-heads of puranic literature worthy of further investigation.

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30 The nature of this 'pool' and how it evolved into an organized text is the subject of an essay included at the end of this volume (below, pp. 601 ff.).

31 The composer of the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* may have been active in the 14th century. On the basis of independent evidence, the *Vaiṣṇavakhaṇḍa* recension of the AM reflects the historical situation in the 13th century. This tallies with the date given to the *Puruṣottamakṣetramāhātmya* contained in the same *khaṇḍa*, viz. c. AD 1300 (COJ pp. 36, 54, 170).

# Pārvatī's Svayaṃvara\*

## Studies in the *Skandapurāṇa* I

### INTRODUCTION

As has been reported in various international meetings and in *Indo-Iranian Journal* (IJ) 37 (1994), 325–331, a team at the University of Groningen (consisting of R. Adriaensen, H. Isaacson and the present author) is currently working on the critical edition of the oldest extant text that calls itself *Skandapurāṇa*. Apart from the passage discussed below there seem to be few textual links between the vulgate *Skandapurāṇa* and the text we are presently editing. The oldest document on which this edition is based is a Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript dating from AD 810 (our siglum S<sub>1</sub>).<sup>1</sup> It contains a *Skandapurāṇa* (further referred to as SP) that does not yet consist of *khaṇḍas*. Of this text three recensions are known. The oldest recension is the one found in three (incomplete) Nepalese palm-leaf MSS (our sigla S<sub>1</sub>, S<sub>2</sub>, S<sub>3</sub>, jointly S).<sup>2</sup> A later recension is found in a MS that in its colophon calls itself the *Revākhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa* (our siglum R), but that is entirely different from the printed *Revākhaṇḍa*.<sup>3</sup> The third and probably latest recension is found in MSS that in their colophons style themselves as the *Ambikākhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*. Of these we have collected to date four manuscripts (our sigla A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>2</sub>, A<sub>3</sub> and A<sub>4</sub>, jointly A).<sup>4</sup> Our edition aims at reconstructing the S recension as far as possible, while the variants of the R and A recensions will be presented each in a separate register of the critical apparatus.<sup>5</sup> The *editio princeps* of the SP (abbreviated as SP<sub>Bh</sub>) was prepared by Kṛṣṇaprasāda Bhaṭṭarāi and appeared

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\* The first version of this article was published in *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie* XL (1996), 5–43.

1 For this MS see Haraprasad Shastri 1905, p. lii (reprinted with a concordance by Reinhold Grünendahl 1989); T. R. Gambier-Parry 1930, 22–25; *Bṛhatsūcīpatram*, Vol. 8, p. 278, MS No. *dvi*. 229. The MS has been microfilmed by the Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP): Reel No. B11/4. We are grateful to Prof. A. Wezler who presented us with a colour film of this MS.

2 S<sub>2</sub>: *Bṛhatsūcīpatram* vol. 8, p. 278, No. *pra*. 831. NGMPP: Reel No. B12/3. S<sub>3</sub>: *Bṛhatsūcīpatram* vol. 8, p. 292, No. *ca*. 2260. NGMPP: Reel No. B12/2.

3 Asiatic Society in Calcutta MS 3656; see Shastri 1928, No. 3909.

4 A<sub>1</sub>: Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta) MS 4554 (= Shastri 1928, No. 3922); A<sub>2</sub>: India Office Library (London) MS 662–663; A<sub>3</sub>: Asiatic Society of Bengal (Calcutta), MS 972 (= Shastri 1928, No. 3921); A<sub>4</sub>: Library of the Sanskrit College (Varanasi) MS 14311.

5 In the *Prolegomena* to our *Skandapurāṇa* edition (SP I), which appeared in 1998 after the first publication of the present article, we have reformulated the aim of our text-

in Kathmandu in 1988 (in the apparatus referred to by our siglum Bh). For further details concerning the mentioned MSS and editions the reader is referred to the *Prolegomena* and *Introductions* to our edition (SP I, II A, II B, III, IV).<sup>6</sup>

## THE WEDDING OF ŚIVA AND PĀRVATĪ

The aim of the present study is to illustrate the value of our text for the investigation of Sanskrit literature and the mythology of Hinduism by discussing a text passage in *adhyāya* 13. This chapter is concerned with the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī. Four more texts appear to be relevant to this topic; they are discussed below and, together with the passage in SP 13, presented at the end of this article. In the four critical apparatuses I have only given those variant readings that may be significant for the comparison of the texts. For more *variae lectiones* of the *Skandapurāṇa* text the reader is referred to *adhyāya* 13 in SP I.

The myth of the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī is well known to Indologists from many Sanskrit texts as well as from numerous works of art.<sup>7</sup> It is all the more surprising that the version of this myth that occurs in the printed texts of the *Brahmapurāṇa* (abbreviated as BrP; in the critical apparatus siglum B<sup>pur</sup>), *Liṅgapurāṇa* (abbreviated as LiP) and the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* of the vulgate *Skandapurāṇa* (abbreviated as MKh; in the critical apparatus siglum M<sup>kh</sup>), in which Pārvatī is allowed to choose her husband in a *svayaṃvara*, has attracted little attention of researchers of puranic literature and Śaiva mythology; at least we have neither found a reference to it in the secondary literature which we have consulted directly, nor in the indices of the unsurpassed Tübingen *Epic and Purāṇic Bibliography*. The myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* is, however, discussed by some historians of Indian art in order to explain images of a

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critical reconstruction. This modification does not directly effect the material presented here, but it may be useful to repeat the view expressed in the *Prolegomena* (SP I, 42).

Our aim in the edition has therefore been to establish a readable text based primarily on the early palm-leaf manuscripts. But we have also attempted to go at least to some extent beyond their readings to recover, to the best of our abilities, an earlier form of the text. That such an earlier form existed cannot be called into question, nor, in our view, that one should attempt, with all due caution, to reach it. We have emended (or adopted the reading of one or both other recensions) in cases where the Nepalese manuscripts offer a reading which we had good reason to think the result of, mainly involuntary, transmissional (i.e. scribal) error or variation.

6 The text of SP 13.28–57 adopted in this article conforms to the one presented in our critical edition of SP 13.28–57, which was published in 1998 (SP I, pp. 192–97).

7 For an elaborate survey the reader may be referred to the MA thesis (1991) of Ms Martina Stoye (Freie Universität Berlin), *Die textlichen Grundlagen zu Darstellungen der Hochzeit von Śiva und Pārvatī in der indischen Kunst*, which is as yet unpublished.

(lying) woman with child.<sup>8</sup> It is this *svayaṃvara* version of the holy wedding that is found in *adhyaṃya* 13 of the SP. In addition to the four texts mentioned, a cryptic passage in the *Droṇaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* appears also to be of relevance, although it does not at first sight deal with Pārvatī's 'self-choice'.

### *Śiva's exclusion from the sacrifice*

We may start our investigation by having a closer look at this chapter (173) of the *Droṇaparvan*. After the death of Droṇa and the shattering of the Kauravas, Arjuna asks Vyāsa who was the man with the lance who marched in front of him and caused such havoc on the battle field. Vyāsa answers that Arjuna had seen Śaṃkara; Vyāsa reveals Śiva's nature in a famous eulogy, in which, among other things, reference is made to his retaliation against the gods when he is not allowed his share in the sacrifice (MBh 7.173.37–51). Then Vyāsa broaches another subject. He tells how the gods asked Śiva to break the power of the three cities of the *asuras* and how Śiva accomplished this by one three-pronged arrow when an auspicious (astronomical) conjunction of the three heavenly cities had occurred (MBh 7.173.52–58). The next *śloka* makes a very harsh transition. Apparently without any connection with the fore-going the text proceeds,

AFTER herself placing the little child with five tufts of hair on her lap, Umā, as she wished to know (who he was), asked the gods 'who is this?' (MBh 7.173.59)<sup>9</sup>

This verse is directly followed by another one, not less bewildering in its abruptness.

THE lord immobilized the arm of the infuriated Śakra that held the *vajra*; this bountiful god, lord and ruler of the entire universe. (MBh 7.173.60)

Two themes are juxtaposed here which, on first sight, seem to have very little to do with one another: (1) Śiva's transformation into a little child and (2) his immobilisation of Indra who, it would seem, leads the gods in an act of aggression. The origin of both themes can be traced back to the Brāhmaṇa literature and a short survey of their evolution may help to clarify the text.

Discussing the function of the *brahmán* priest, the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* teaches:

Then, when the gods thereupon performed the sacrifice, they put the fore-portion (*prāśitra*) aside for Savitr; it cleft his hands. They restored to him two golden

8 My attention was drawn to this by the MA thesis of Ms Britta Zehmke (Freie Universität Berlin), published in 1994: *Die liegende Frau mit Kind in der indischen Steinplastik*. Zehmke refers to the work of Bhattasali 1929, Sanyal 1935, U. Agrawala 1964 and N.P. Joshi 1989. These publications were not available to me. Zehmke's investigation, however, makes it clear that the motif of the 'lying woman with child' can hardly have anything to do with Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara*.

9 The text of the critical edition is probably corrupt here. Below I will discuss another reading. The oddity of the passage was noted by Scheuer 1982, 289 f.

(hands). Therefore he is celebrated as ‘the one with golden hands’. They put it aside for Bhaga; it gouged out his eyes. Therefore they say ‘Bhaga is blind’. They put it aside for Pūṣan; it knocked out his teeth. Therefore they say ‘Pūṣan is without teeth, gruel is his share’. These gods said, ‘Indra is the most powerful, the strongest of the gods; put it aside for him’. They put it aside for him. He appeased it with (his) holy power (*brahman*). Therefore one says, ‘the *brahman* is Indra’.<sup>10</sup>

The same theme is found in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* with some significant changes. Here ‘the god who rules the animals’ (*yò ’yám deváh paśúnám íṣṭe*, ŚBr 1.6.2.3), i.e. Rudra, is asked by the gods to pierce Prajāpati, who is the sacrifice, because he had abused his daughter.<sup>11</sup> Rudra pierces him with the lance (*śalyá*). When the lance is torn out again, the gods offer that portion of Prajāpati, i.e. of the sacrifice, that has come out with the lance—that is the fore-portion of the sacrifice (*prāśitrá*), intended for the *brahmán* priest—to Bhaga etc.:

Bhaga looked at it; it burnt his eyes. And so indeed it happened. Therefore they say ‘Bhaga is blind’. They said, ‘it has not yet become appeased here, put it aside for Pūṣan’. They put it aside for Pūṣan. Pūṣan ate from it; it knocked out his teeth. And so indeed it happened. Therefore they say, ‘Pūṣan is without teeth’. Therefore they prepare the rice pudding (*carú*) that they make for Pūṣan from ground rice, just as for a person without teeth.<sup>12</sup>

Bṛhaspati next passes it on to Savitrī who appeases it.

What is the fore-portion (*prāśitrá*), that is originally this. When he cuts off the fore-portion, he metes out exactly that part of the sacrifice that has been pierced, that belongs to Rudra.<sup>13</sup>

10 *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* 6.8.8–6.9.4:

*atha yatra ha tad devā yajñam atanvata* | 8 | *tad savitre prāśitram parijahruḥ* | 9 | *tasya pāñī praciccheda* | 10 | *tasmai hiraṇmayau pratidadhuḥ* | 11 | *tasmād dhiraṇyapāñīr iti stutaḥ* | 12 | *tad bhagāya parijahruḥ* | 13 | *tasyākṣiṇī nirjaghāna* | 14 | *tasmād āhur andho bhaga iti* | 15 | *tat pūṣṇe parijahruḥ* | 16 | *tasya dantān parovāpa* | 17 | *tasmād āhur adantakaḥ pūṣā karambhabhāga iti* | 18 | *te devā ūcuḥ* | 19 | *indro vai devānām ojīṣṭho baliṣṭhas tasmā etat pariharateti* | 1 | *tat tasmai parijahruḥ* | 2 | *tat sa brahmaṇā śamayāṃ cakāra* | 3 | *tasmād āhendro brahmeti* | 4 |

11 Rudra himself is the issue of this abuse, see *KauṣBr* 6.1 (below p. 190). He avenges the incest by piercing his begetter, Prajāpati, i.e. the sacrifice (Deppert 1977, 267 f.).

12 ŚBr 1.6.2.6–7:

*tād bhāgo ’veksāṃ cakre tāksyākṣiṇī nirdadāha tāthén nūnām tād āsa tasmād āhur andhó bhāga iti* | 6 | *té hocuḥ* | *nò nv evātrāsamat pūṣṇá enat páriharatéti tát pūṣṇé paryájahrus tát pūṣá práśa tásya dató nirjaghāna tāthén nūnām tād āsa tasmād āhur adántakaḥ pūṣéti tasmād yám pūṣṇé carúm kurvánti prápiṣṭānām evá kurvanti yáthādántakāyavám* | 7 |

Cf. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 2.6.8; *Gopathabrāhmaṇa* 2.1.2. See Kramrisch 1961, 119 f.

13 ŚBr 1.7.4.8–9:

*tād etán nidānena yát prāśitrám* | 8 | *sá yát prāśitrám avadyáti* | *yád evātráviddham yajñásya yád rudríyaṃ tád evàitán nūrmīmūte* | 9 |

Thus Rudra partly takes over Indra's position as the god to whom this dangerous first portion of the sacrificial offering belongs; unlike Indra, however, he does not 'appease' it (this function is taken over by Savitr̥), but, on the contrary, he is seen as the cause of the mutilation of the sacrifice and consequently of the gods.

The theme returns in the *Sauptikaparvan* 18 of the *Mahābhārata*, where it is connected with Śiva's exclusion from the sacrifice in general.<sup>14</sup> When the gods have divided among themselves their share (*bhāga*) in the sacrifice, Rudra seizes his bow, and runs towards them. Cosmic phenomena come to a halt. Sacrifice (*yajñā*) is shot in the heart while fleeing to heaven in the form of an antelope (*mṛga*).<sup>15</sup> The gods are baffled.

The infuriated Tryambaka cut off (*vyaśātayat*) the arms of Savitr̥, (and knocked out) the eyes of Bhaga and the teeth of Pūṣan with the point of his bow (*dhanuṣkoṭi*). Then the gods and *aṅgas* of the sacrifice ran away all together; some rolled about on that very spot and became as if they breathed their last. But after he had put that entire (assembly) to the rout, Śitikaṅṭha laughed, arrested the point of the bow and halted the gods. Thereupon the cry (*vāc*) uttered by the immortals snapped the string of his bow and, due to the shock, O king, the bow, its string broken, quivered. Thereupon the gods along with sacrifice approached the foremost of the gods, who was without bow (now), and took refuge; and the lord showed compassion.<sup>16</sup>

Chapter 32 of the SP, followed by i.a. the *Liṅga-* and *Śivapurāṇas*, applies the theme to the description of Śiva's exclusion from Dakṣa's sacrifice. Here Indra and Viṣṇu are added to the group of explicitly mentioned gods that fall victim to the anger of Śiva, in this case represented by his factotum Haribhadra. The arms raising their weapons are immobilized (*stambhana*), just as the other inhabitants of heaven are said to be transfixed.

And Haribhadra, inflamed and without dismay, immobilized Śakra's hand when he raised (it); and likewise (he immobilized the hands) of the other gods. (And) before (their) eyes he, with anger on his face, knocked out Bhaga's eyes and Pūṣan's teeth, striking with the point of (his) bow. And without dismay he immobilized that dreadful discus of Viṣṇu, which shone like the apocalyptic sun, and it, (remaining) in his hand, did not move (forth).<sup>17</sup>

So much for Śiva's mutilation of the gods.

14 Cf. TaiSa 2.6.8.3:

*devā vai yajñād rudrām antārāyant sá yajñám avidhyat tām devá abhí sámagachanta kálpatām na idám íti* |

Also ŚBr 1.6.1.1–8.

15 Cf. AitBr 3.33.5. See also MBh 12.274.34–35 and SP 32.46–47, where Dakṣa's sacrifice, after having been destroyed, assumes the form of an antelope and is pursued by Śiva into heaven.

16 MBh 10.18.16–20.

17 SP 32.40–42; cf. *Liṅgapurāṇa* 1.100.15–17, 28–30 and *Śivapurāṇa*, *Rudrasaṃhitā* 2.37.34–36, 54f.

*Śiva as the cosmic child*

The origin of the other theme, viz. Śiva's transformation into a little child, can also be traced back to the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, in which Prajāpati begets a (grand)son through his four sons and daughter Uṣas (KauṣBr 6.1–3). This infant (?), 'of a thousand eyes, of a thousand feet, with a thousand fitted (arrows on his bow)',<sup>18</sup> asks his (grand)father to bestow upon him eight names.<sup>19</sup>

A new version of this myth is found in the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*,<sup>20</sup> which tells that at the dawn of creation, in the first *kalpa*, Mahādeva Rudra engendered a son in his own likeness (*ātmanas tulyaṃ sutam*). This little 'blue-red' boy (*kumāro nīlalahiṭaḥ*) appeared in the lap of Brahmā and cried (*ruroda*) terribly (*ghoram*). He asked Brahmā to give him a name, and Brahmā names him Rudra. The child kept crying until altogether eight names—the same as given to Prajāpati's son in the *Kauṣītaki* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas*—were given to him, the final one being Mahādeva. Thereupon the 'blue-red' boy requested Brahmā to bestow a domain (*sthāna*) or body (*tanu*) to each name, which resulted in the following combinations: Rudra obtained the sun, Bhava the waters, Śarva earth, Īsāna wind, Paśupati fire, Bhīma *ākāśa*, Ugra the initiated brahmin, and Mahādeva the moon. In this way the divine, primordial child in Brahmā's lap was made to personify Śiva's cosmic dimension, his eight embodiments (*aṣṭamūrti*), encompassing the entire phenomenal universe.

When we return to the two verses in the *Droṇaparvan*, we may observe that it is probably this primordial, cosmic child that sits in Umā's lap (MBh 7.173.59); his five tufts of hair (*pañcaśikha*) may symbolize his embodiment of the five elements that build the material world.

This being so, one may rightly ask what, if any, is the function of the appearance of the cosmic child in Pārvatī's lap at this junction of Tripura's de-

18 KauṣBr 6.1.13–14: *tata udatiṣṭhat sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt* | 13 | *sahasreṇa pratihītā-bhiḥ* | 14 | Udaya comments: *sahasreṇa sahasrasamkhyābhīr dhanuṣi pratihitābhīḥ saṃhitābhīr iṣubhīr upalakṣitāḥ* |

19 This incestuous son of Prajāpati is 'this great god possessed of eight names, who is composed of eight folds' (KauṣBr 6.3.49–50: *sa eṣo 'ṣṭanāmā* | 49 | *aṣṭadhā vihīto mahān devaḥ* | 50 |), i.e. Mahādeva/Rudra, whose eight forms (*aṣṭamūrti*) are described in KauṣBr 6.2–3 (cf. ŚBr 6.1.3.8–18). Apparently, the 6th *adhyaḥya* of the KauṣBr does not make a connection between this myth of the birth of Rudra (6.1–3) and the second section (6.4–11) dealing mainly with the function of the *brahmān* priest, in which context the myth of the sacrifice of the gods and their injury by the *prāśitra* is described (see above, p. 187).

The underlying connection, however, becomes clear when the ŚBr version is taken into consideration. It is Rudra, the son of Prajāpati, i.e. the sacrifice, who procures (and is) the first issue of the sacrifice, the 'fore-portion', or, in the words of the Brāhmaṇa, '[the portion] that belongs to Rudra' (*rudrīya*) (ŚBr 1.6.2.9). The underlying identity seems to be that Rudra, son of Prajāpati's seed, is the first issue (*prāśitra*) of Prajāpati's (self-)sacrifice. If we keep this identity in mind the relevance of the statement (KauṣBr 6.10.7–8) that introduces the concluding part of *adhyaḥya* 6 of the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* becomes clear: 'Prajāpati once emitted the sacrifice; he emitted seed by installing the sacrificial fire' (*prajāpatir ha yajñam sasṛje* | 7 | *so 'gnyādheyenaiva reto 'srjata* | 8 |).

20 PPL pp. 121–127, i.e. Vāyupurāna 27 and Brahmāṇḍapurāna 1.10. Cf. SP 4.1–21.

struction? And why do the infatuated gods, represented by Śakra, to whose rescue Śiva had just come and to whose wish, viz. the destruction of the triple city of the *asuras*, Śiva had just complied, why do these gods try immediately to kill their benefactor, from which evil they are only kept by the child's magic powers (MBh 7.173.60)? Even if we accept, as we are supposed to do, that the gods were struck by blindness (MBh 7.173.61), it is hard to see why the sight of Umā with a child on her lap immediately provoked such aggression, exactly at the moment that the world is rescued from a demonic threat. And what is she doing there anyway?<sup>21</sup> And how is it possible that Umā herself, mother of the world, apparently does not recognize the child? Brahmā is the only one who recognizes Śiva and bows for him (MBh 7.173.62), whereupon Śiva undoes his spell (MBh 7.173.63).

Evidently we are concerned with a conflation of at least three myths—Śiva's destruction of Tripura, his appearance as the cosmic child, and the gods' assault on him and their subsequent immobilisation—which, since they are all concerned with Śiva's majestic powers, were somehow, rather awkwardly, combined in the *Mahābhārata* text, making the latter prone to further involuntary corruption.

### *Pārvatī's svayaṃvara*

The relevance, alluded to earlier, of the *svayaṃvara* myth in SP 13 for the exegesis of the MBh passage at issue becomes evident when we study this myth in more detail. The events leading to the *svayaṃvara* in SP 13 are told in SP 12. In short the story is as follows.

In SP 12.1–20 Brahmā prophesies that Pārvatī (Umā) will obtain a husband of her choice when she stops practising *tapas*. Pārvatī ceases her *tapas* and resorts to the *aśoka* tree that has grown at the entrance of her dwelling. Hara (Śiva) approaches her in the form of an ugly dwarf, who announces that he wishes to marry her. Thanks to her yogic powers Pārvatī perceives that Śaṃkara has come to her and says that he should ask her father. Śiva, still in disguise, asks Himavat for the hand of his daughter, but Himavat, recognizing Rudra, becomes uneasy and foolishly, due to a curse, declares that he already intended to hold a *svayaṃvara* for his daughter.

Śiva returns to Pārvatī, tells her about her father's intention and is about to take his leave, when Pārvatī assures him not to despair, since she will choose him. If he has any doubt, she will choose him right there. Pārvatī plucks a flowering branch from the *aśoka* tree and laying it on his shoulder says 'you have been chosen by me'.<sup>22</sup>

21 Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary (MBhB) does not really help: *teṣu ca vardhamāneṣu rudro bālavad rāgadveṣaśūnyo brahmavidyāparanāmnṃyā umāyā vaśago bhavitīty etad atra pradarśyate* |

22 SP 12.21–63 continues with several other things, among which another myth in which Śiva puts Pārvatī to the test. He assumes the form of a crocodile who has seized a child. Pārvatī liberates the child by giving her *tapas* away to the crocodile, who reveals his true nature.

In SP 13.1-27 Himavat, though aware of the engagement of his daughter with Devadeva, proceeds to organize the *svayaṃvara*, considering that, after all, it would bring him most honour if Parameśāna would be chosen in front of all the gods. The latter, headed by Indra, assemble in the house of Himavat. Pārvatī enters the arena in a *vimāna* and takes a garland of flowers to place at the feet of the man of her choice (SP 13.28). At that very moment, in order to test his bride to be (*devyā jījñāsayā*), Śiva assumes the form of a child in her lap (SP 13.29). Due to her yogic powers she recognizes the god to whom she had pledged her word and is pleased (SP 13.30-31).

When the gods, however, see the maiden of the wedding contest with a child in her lap they, understandably enough, are bewildered, fly into passion and try to attack him (SP 13.32). Śiva repels the assault by immobilizing and mutilating the offenders (SP 13.33-38). Brahmā is the only god who sees through Śiva's disguise, and he informs the other gods about their mistake (SP 13.39-50). The gods take refuge with Śiva (SP 13.51). Śiva is pleased and lifts the spell (SP 13.52). He assumes his supreme form, seen by the gods only after receiving a divine eye (SP 13.53-54), and is elected by Pārvatī as her husband (SP 13.56), after which the wedding is celebrated. The cosmic order, sealed by Śiva's and Pārvatī's holy wedlock, is confirmed.

It is clear that the SP story of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* combines the two mythological themes at issue, viz. (1) Śiva's taking the form of a little child (in Pārvatī's lap), and (2) Śiva's immobilisation/mutilation of the gods, though now applied in a situation in which revenge of the incest or exclusion from the sacrifice is no longer the direct cause of his anger. In contrast with the *Mahābhārata* text, however, the encompassing myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* unites these two themes into a new, meaningful and logical whole. Pārvatī stands the test, as one would expect, and does not need to ask who the child is; the ignorant gods, however, go astray. Not recognizing Śiva, they are embarrassed by the child's presence at the *svayaṃvara*. They become angry and consequently are immobilized/mutilated. When their delusion is removed by Brahmā, they have no choice but to recognize Śiva's superiority and to accept that he is Pārvatī's choice. In this way the Śaiva cosmic order proved to be superior to the ancient world represented by the Vedic gods. The latter were crippled and, to bring out the contrast—and this distinguishes the epic and puranic versions from those of the Brāhmaṇas—this was effected by the supreme lord in the form of a newly born child.

The *Brahmapurāṇa*, *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* tell basically the same myth as SP 13. In the *Brahmapurāṇa* the *svayaṃvara* episode forms part of the 'story of Umā and Śaṃkara' (*umāśaṃkarayoḥ puṇyāṃ kathām*, BrP 34.55), which the *Brahmapurāṇa* has taken over from the SP in its entirety. The *Brahmapurāṇa* follows the text of the SP rather closely, showing only minor variants—often adaptation due to the fact that Brahmā has supplanted Sanatkumāra as the narrator—in addition to occasional omissions and corruptions. From the latter it is clear that the *Brahmapurāṇa* is the borrower, the SP the 'original'. The borrowed chapters in the *Brahmapurāṇa*, viz. 34.56 to

38.12 (= SP 11.1 to 15.12) fit neatly in between the preceding passage borrowed from the *Sāmbapurāṇa* (BrP 29–33) and the succeeding passage borrowed from the *Mahābhārata* and *Vāyupurāṇa* (BrP 39–40).<sup>23</sup>

The situation is somewhat different in the case of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa*. These two texts show a greater distance to the SP, having numerous omissions, additions and transpositions, whereas they are marred by textual corruptions, due to which the story has become more difficult to follow, especially in the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa*. A comparison with the SP may help to restore its meaning. It ensues from a collation that the *Liṅgapurāṇa* is closer to the SP and that the text of the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* goes back to an original that must have been related to the text as found in the *Liṅgapurāṇa*.

No such close correspondence is found between the MBh and SP, but there are some indications that, at the time the MBh passage at issue was composed, the myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* was not wholly unknown. It might actually have been the source whence the diaskeuast derived both themes, namely Śiva (Rudra) as a child and the injury of the gods, unified by Pārvatī's pivot role.<sup>24</sup> These may have been lifted out of their context and incorporated in the eulogy of Rudra to illustrate his greatness. With the destruction of Tripura they evidently lack any intrinsic relation.

## THE SYNOPTIC EDITION OF THE SVAYAMVARA MYTH

To facilitate a comparison I have presented the five text traditions in four parallel columns. The *Brahmapurāṇa* version is not given a column of its own;

23 See the Appendices 4 and 5 of the edition of Schreiner and Söhnen. Though it has been known since long that the 'Brahma<sup>o</sup>, as presently edited, is nothing more than a loose "conglomeration of portions belonging to different periods and written by different hands"' (Rocher 1986, 155), until now the source of the chapters 34 to 38 had not been identified. I am grateful to Mss Zehmke and Stoye (see above, n. 8 on p. 187 and n. 7 on p. 186), whose MA theses drew my attention to this BrP passage.

While I was preparing this article for the press, it was brought to my notice that at least fragments of the (original) *Brahmapurāṇa* quoted by Lakṣmīdhara are found in a manuscript in the Jammu & Kashmir Government Research Library (Srinagar, MS. No. 1346), the title of which is written as *ā. pu*, taken to mean *Ādipurāṇa*. On the cover of this fragment the title *Mārtāṇḍamāhātmya* has been written in another hand. The fragment itself is without colophon. The text has been edited by Yasuke Ikari & Takao Hayashi (1994), who also give a concordance with the corresponding passages in the *Kṛtyakalpataru* and *Kṛtyaratnākara* where the text is quoted as *Brahmapurāṇa*. The same fragment corresponds partly with the text of the *Nīlmatapurāṇa*.

24 The connection between (the child) Rudra and the mutilation of the gods is not completely new, since it underlies the myth of Prajāpati's (self-)sacrifice and Rudra's birth (see n. 19 on p. 190). Though the two myths are structurally akin, the trait-d'union between both themes changes from the sacrifice, i.e. Prajāpati, in the Brāhmaṇas to Pārvatī in the epic and Purāṇas.

its variant readings are given in the critical apparatus *ad* the text of SP.<sup>25</sup> The text of MBh 7.173 actually recurs in MBh 13.145; the major variant readings of the reprise have been given in the apparatus (the sigla are those of the Critical Edition). The text of SP is basically a reconstruction of the S recension (cf. above, n. 5 on p. 185), though it should be taken into account that for the passage at issue only S<sub>2</sub> is available. The sequence of *ślokas* in the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* of the Veṅkaṭeśvara (and Vaṅgavāsī) Press editions has been adapted to the SP and this already yields a slight improvement of the story line.<sup>26</sup> Significant variant readings of the Vaṅgavāsī editions of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* have been either accepted in the text or presented in the apparatus.<sup>27</sup>

When we turn our attention again to MBh 173 verse 59 we see in the apparatus that a part of the Southern Recension inserts before this verse a significant hemistich: ‘Listen to another event, O Dhanamjaya, (which happened) at Pārvati’s *svayaṃvara*.’ The insertion of this hemistich may have been prompted by the harsh transition from the Tripura battle scene to Śiva’s transformation into a child. Since this hemistich is only found in the Telugu and some of the Grantha MSS, it may be secondary and not have formed part of the original MBh text, but, all the same, it could represent a reminiscence of the original context to which the myth told in the following verses might have belonged.

Another significant variant is found *ad* 59c. This reading, although the editors of the Critical Edition have relegated it to the apparatus, is supported by a substantial part of the northern and southern MSS as well as by some of the MSS at MBh 13.145.30c, and would correspond much better with the story as told in SP. According to this reading Śiva changes into a little child ‘to test Umā’ (*umām jījñāsamāno*, subject Śiva), corresponding to SP 29a (BrP 36.28a)

25 If one of the variant readings of the BrP text that are presented in Schreiner and Söhnen’s edition corresponds with SP, the other readings are ignored. Occasionally, if these variant readings resemble the SP reading, they are also given in the apparatus with siglum B<sup>pur\*</sup>.

26 Occasionally the Veṅkaṭeśvara edition of the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* gives a variant reading—*ī(taraḥ) pā(thah)*—which is noted in the apparatus. The commentary of Gaṇeśa Nātu in the Veṅkaṭeśvara edition of the LiP has also been presented in the apparatus.

27 One may recall Friedhelm Hardy’s dictum (Hardy 1983a, 592) to the effect that ‘any analysis solely based on *one* printed edition of a *Purāṇa* will be onesided or even distorted’. It would be better still, and generally of greater significance (as too often the printed editions appear to be related to one another), to consult the MSS of the *Purāṇa* at issue. It is obvious that here practical considerations impose a limit. I am very grateful to my colleague H. Isaacson for having taken the trouble to look at a MS of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* in the Bodleian Library (MS Wilson 100). According to Isaacson ‘this MS does not look very old and has a large number of mistakes, but very strikingly it agrees in some places more closely with the SP than the printed *Liṅgapurāṇa* does’. The significant variants are given in the apparatus of *Liṅgapurāṇa* with siglum ‘MS<sup>Bod1</sup>’. The variant readings of another *Liṅgapurāṇa* MS in the National Archives of Nepal (No. 6/3393) dated NS 837 (= AD 1717), available on a microfilm of the Nepal–German Manuscript Preservation Project in Berlin (reel A 1392/6), are also presented in the apparatus with siglum ‘MS<sup>Nep</sup>’ (it concerns the folios 195<sup>v</sup> to 196<sup>v</sup>). I am grateful to Prof. Dr A. Wezler, through whose kind offices this microfilm was placed at my disposal.

*devyā jīṅnāsaya* ('in order to test the Goddess'), which has a greater intrinsic probability than Umā openly acknowledging her ignorance: *umā jīṅnāsamānā*. The editors of the MBh may have been tempted into accepting this, probably corrupt version of 59c in the critical text on account of the fact that the MBh text as we have it does not explicitly state that Umā stands the test and recognizes Śiva and because Śiva as the subject of *abravīt* in 59d seems rather odd as we would expect *ko 'ham iti*. However, also the reading of 59d is far from certain. That Umā's knowledge of the child's true nature was (originally) taken as understood may be deduced not only from the fact that the gods altogether ignore her question, but also from the fact that only they manifest their ignorance in the story that follows (MBh 7.173.61).<sup>28</sup> And neither does Brahmā, who knows the truth, inform Umā; on the contrary, Umā, together with Śiva, is the object of veneration in verse 63, directly after Brahmā's discovery in verse 62. The conclusion seems inevitable that v. 59 as a whole is corrupt beyond reliable restoration and a wavy line under the entire verse in the edition would not have been superfluous. The (later) *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvara-khaṇḍa* have replaced the (probably) original feature of 'Umā's trial' by the traditional platitude that it is just Śiva's game (*krīḍārtham*, LiP 1.102.28d, MKh 2.25.100d).

Due to textual corruption MKh 101–102 has become difficult to understand, which may have led the pandits of the Veṅkaṭeśvara Press to their note given in the apparatus *ad* 100cd–101. The *tasya* in MKh 102b and *tasyā* in LiP 29d lack an obvious antecedent (SP reads *devyā*). The two *pādas* MKh 101cd make the impression of an interpolation, the connection of which with the immediate context is difficult to determine. The relevance of the word *jaya* is obscure and may point to another context, perhaps the exegetical tradition concerning the famous verse that opens the *Mahābhārata* and, for instance, the *Māheśvara-khaṇḍa*.<sup>29</sup>

In SP 34–38 (BrP 36.33–36ab), LiP 31–39 and MKh 104–110 (missing in MBh) the theme of the mutilation of the gods is worked out, adding to the immobilized Indra other victims such as Bhaga (not in LiP) and Pūṣan (not in BrP), known as such already from the Brāhmaṇa literature. A very striking elaboration is presented in SP 36, which is without parallel in the *Māheśvara-khaṇḍa* and significantly different in *Liṅgapurāṇa*, whereas BrP (36.36cd) has omitted the second remarkable hemistich (SP 36cd). The deluded Viṣṇu angrily shakes his head, whereupon Śiva makes his hair fall out. I have not succeeded in finding any reference to Viṣṇu's baldness in Sanskrit literature and we may have here an idiosyncrasy of the ancient *Skandapurāṇa* text.<sup>30</sup> That this ex-

28 Significant may be also that Pārvatī takes the child on to her lap (59ab), but the reading of the entire verse 59 is uncertain.

29 *nārāyaṇaṃ namaskṛtya naraṇ caiva narottamam | devīm sarasvatīm caiva tato jayam udīrayet ||*

30 Note the hymn in praise of Śiva after his wedding, which is borrowed by the *Brahmapurāṇa*, and in which obeisance is paid to Śiva as *krīṣṇakeśāpahāriṇe*—clearly a reference

treme Saivism was hard to swallow for later redactors of the text may follow not only from the adaptation in the *Liṅgapurāṇa*, where Viṣṇu's head is immobilized instead of made bald, and the omission of this verse or half of it in the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* and in the *Brahmapurāṇa*, but also from the interpolations in the R and A recensions of SP *ad* 39ab (only in R) and *ad* 50cd,<sup>31</sup> in which Viṣṇu's role is mitigated when it is said, that Nārāyaṇa has known from the start that it was Śiva who fooled the gods.<sup>32</sup>

Then in MBh 62, SP 39–40 (BrP 36.36cd–39ab), LiP 40–41 and MKh 111–112ab Brahmā sees what Śiva's game is and starts praising him. Of the five *ślokas* that follow in SP 41–45 (BrP 36.39cd–44ab) and LiP 42cd–47, in which Brahmā reveals Śiva's true nature and coaxes him into undoing his spell, the MKh has retained only one (112cd–113ab), while the Northern Recension of the MBh includes three different, though appropriate verses after 62, relegated to the apparatus by the editors. The effect of this is that according to the text of the Critical Edition the gods never are informed about the true nature of the child, which again makes it unlikely that, in spite of that, they suddenly are able to satisfy (*prasādayāmāsur*) Umā and Rudra in v. 63.

The next passage, SP 46–47 (BrP 36.44cd–45) and LiP 48–49, has also been transmitted incompletely in the MKh (113cd–114). The equivalent of SP 46 and LiP 48, in which Brahmā turns to the gods, has been omitted, as a result of which the text has become unintelligible as it is no longer clear who are addressed. The corruption may have had its starting point, however, in the alternative sandhi *mūḍhā stha* for *mūḍhāḥ stha* (SP 13.47a), which we find in the SP manuscript S<sub>2</sub> and the Veṅkaṭeśvara edition of *Liṅgapurāṇa*. Although Kātyāyana *ad* Pāṇini 8.3.36 allows the elision of the final *s* before a sibilant followed by a voiceless occlusive and this practice is found regularly in manuscripts,<sup>33</sup> the loss of the hiatus between *mūḍhā* and *stha* in handwriting (reflected in the Veṅkaṭeśvara edition of the *Liṅgapurāṇa*) may have caused that the verbal second plural indicative ('you are fools') was no longer understood, which gave rise to the nominal *mūḍhās tu* (A<sub>1</sub>, A<sub>3</sub>) and *mūḍhāś ca* in

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to the episode under the discussion, since the same verse praises him also as *puṣṇo dantaharāya* and *bhaganetranipātāya* (SP 14.9 = BrP 37.9). In SP 32.116 Devī is praised as *viṣṇukeśāpahartrī*. The SP apparently refers again to Viṣṇu's baldness when it praises Śiva as *śīpiviṣṭakṛte viṣṇor*. About the term *śīpiviṣṭa* we remarked in the annotation *ad loc.* (SP II B, 45):

The surprising fate of Viṣṇu is actually modelled on a Vedic reference, as in the case of Bhaga and Pūṣan, though in this case the reference is a much more dubious one. It appears that one interpretation of the obscure Vedic epithet Śīpiviṣṭa—applied to Viṣṇu in RV 7.99.7 and especially RV 7.100.5–7—understands the word as meaning 'bald'.

For references to alternative interpretations of the Vedic word see our annotation *ad* SP 32.55.

31 See also SP I, 303 f. App. 2.

32 This uprating of Viṣṇu's position is consistently found throughout the R and A recensions.

33 Wackernagel 1896, *Altindische Grammatik* I § 287b.

BrP and MKh. The vocative *devatāḥ* in SP was accordingly interpreted as a nominative and the nominative plural masculine of the subject, *sarve* ('you all'), was taken as attributive to *devatāḥ* and adjusted to a nominative plural feminine, *sarvās* ('all the deities') in BrP, LiP and MKh.

In short, the transcriptive and intrinsic probability of the corruptions point to successive stages, of which the MKh represents the last. Thanks to the SP we are now in the position to understand what the BrP, LiP and MKh were supposed to convey.

SP 48–49 show the acquaintance of Brahmā (and the authors of the ancient *Skandapurāṇa*) with the symbolic meaning of the child as the embodiment of Śiva's cosmic dimension, which meaning is now revealed to the Vedic gods. In addition to epithets such as *kapardimat*, *ātman*, *aḥa* etc., we encounter seven of the eight names of the *aṣṭamūrti*; only Bhava appears to be missing or may be considered to be replaced by another name such as Śaṃkara or Devadeva. This revelation of the child's eightfold nature has become lost in the course of transmission as the omission of these two verses in BrP, LiP and MKh attests. The absence of the child's qualification as *pañcaśīkha* in LiP 28d and MKh 100d should probably be viewed in the same light. At the instance of Brahmā the still petrified gods turn their minds towards Śarva (*praṇemur manasā śarvaṃ*),<sup>34</sup> whereas a minor textual inconsequence in the MKh permits them to bow (*praṇatāḥ*) at that as well (MKh 115ab). The *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* then inserts a *stotra*, in which the gods apologize for their behaviour (MKh 115cd–121ab), which does not occur in the other versions and therefore may be considered an accretion.

In MBh 63, SP 52 (BrP 36.48), LiP 53 and MKh 121cd–122ab the texts converge again: the satisfied Śiva restores the gods to their normal condition. With this ends the episode in the MBh, which continues with its eulogy of Rudra.

The SP, BrP, LiP and MKh continue their story of Umā's *svayaṃvara*. The MKh inserted 5 *ślokas* (122cd–127ab) in which the *daityas* in their turn express their ignorance. By pronouncing the *bīja* HUM Śiva drives them back to their own city where they forget about the *svayaṃvara*, a fate that, unfortunately, did not remain restricted to that city and its inhabitants.

In the following verses the great god drops his disguise and manifests himself in his supreme body (*vapus*), which can only be seen by the gods after having received a supreme eye. It is noteworthy that according to the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* versions also the Goddess (Bhavānī) needs such an eye,<sup>35</sup> whereas in SP 13.54 (BrP 36.50cd–51ab)—consistent with SP 13.30 (BrP 36.29), which verse has no parallel in LiP and MKh—she evidently possesses this capacity (by virtue of her yogic powers). Yet, the superiority of the Goddess over the gods is acknowledged in the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvara-*

34 SP 51, BrP 36.47, LiP 52.

35 LiP 1.102.57b, MKh 2.25.130d.

*khaṇḍa* versions as well, when in these two texts ‘Brahmā and so forth’ are said to bow before Śiva as well as before the Goddess.<sup>36</sup>

In SP 56 (BrP 36.52cd–53ab), LiP 61cd–62ab and MKh 134cd–135ab Devī finally chooses Śiva as her husband by placing the wreath at his feet. In the next verse(s) the gods express approval by exclaiming ‘hail, hail!’ The words *saha devyā* in LiP 63a (MKh 136a) could be construed with *sarve devāḥ* in 63c (MKh 136c), which would imply that the Goddess is herself honouring instead of being honoured as is the case in SP 57. Apart from the fact that the Sanskrit construction is rather cumbersome, this does not fit the situation, all the less so, since taking *saha devyā* with the subject of *namaścakruḥ* would normally entail that the Goddess is also part of the subject of *saṃprocya* in LiP 62c and MKh 135c, which, however, is undesirable as it is totally inappropriate. If, on the other hand, we take *saha devyā* with the object clause LiP 62d, MKh 135d, this would also result in an awkward construction (*tayā* along with *saha devyā*).<sup>37</sup>

In a nutshell, the reformulation and elaboration of the final verses in LiP and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* is rather unfortunate and illustrates once more the value of the critically edited *Skandapurāṇa* (SP) for the understanding of these two vulgate Purāṇa texts.

### Conclusion

Summarizing, we may say that the corruptions and elaborations in the second part of the text which is without counterpart in the MBh confirm the tentative conclusion reached above, viz. that the *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* represents a later version of the myth as told in LiP, whereas the wording of the latter deviates again from the text as preserved in the ancient *Skandapurāṇa*, without improving upon it, however, in any respect. On the contrary, the collation clearly shows that the corresponding text portions of the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* successively derived from an archetype that represented a corrupted version of SP. The *Brahmapurāṇa* version of the myth is an independent copy of the SP text, which does not seem to have a direct connection with the archetype from which the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa* derived. Corruptions and omissions show the dependency of the *Brahmapurāṇa* on SP

36 LiP 1.102.58cd, MKh 2.25.134ab; the reading of BrP 36.52a, MS<sup>NEP</sup> and MKh 134a, *menīre*, looks like a corruption (metathesis) of the text as found in SP and LiP, whereas the reading of LiP 58d seems a corruption of the reading as found in MKh 134b, possibly caused by LiP’s transposition of this hemistich. Our placing of this hemistich after 61ab, however, does not solve the problem (note that MS<sup>NEP</sup> reads *digīśvarāḥ* to avoid the awkwardness). LiP 61c has preserved the no doubt correct reading *hr̥ṣṭā* of SP 56a, while MKh reads *dr̥ṣṭvā* (134c), echoing the mistaken conception underlying LiP and MKh, viz. that the Goddess has only just now, after receipt of a supreme eye, seen her future spouse.

37 The commentary of Gaṇeśa Nātu is equally ambiguous on this point, although it seems most natural to me that he construes *saha devyā* with the subject. The *daṇḍa* after *śirobhīḥ* is misplaced anyway.

and not *vice versa*. The textual distortions that the *Brahmapurāṇa* has in common with the *Liṅgapurāṇa* and *Māheśvarakhaṇḍa*, notably in the passages SP 35–38 and SP 48–49, seem to point to a slightly altered version of the S recension of SP that is not, or only partly represented in our MS material.

The wording of the SP, in its turn, does not show direct dependency on the MBh, but nevertheless elucidates it considerably, since it preserved the context from which the verses in the MBh may have been borrowed. We thus have stumbled upon a layer in the process of composition of the *Mahābhārata* that has been transmitted incompletely—and consequently incomprehensibly—in the MS tradition of the epic. One explanation of this phenomenon could be that in the course of this MS transmission, at an early stage, for one reason or another, a significant text passage had been lost and that only the Telugu and Grantha traditions preserved a vestige thereof. However, the hemistich *devyāḥ svayaṃvare vṛttam śṛṇuṣvānyad dhanamājaya* (ad MBh 7.173.58) makes the impression of being secondary, i.e. of being an explanatory interpolation. A copyist of the Telugu and Grantha lines of transmission may have known the myth through the Purāṇa tradition.

On the other hand, the textual incongruity at issue could itself have been caused by an early infelicitous interpolation in the text of the *Droṇaparvan*. The interpolator may have known the myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* and may have carelessly used elements of it to embellish the eulogy of Śiva, an example of what I elsewhere have called 'composition-in-transmission' (above, p. 177). If this were the case, it probably was a very early interpolation, not only because the passage is found in all major MSS, but also in the reprise in book 13.

A third possibility is that a diaskeuast who worked on the *Droṇaparvan* composed his text by drawing upon disparate texts and that one of these texts contained the myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara*. In this connection the question arises how we should conceive of the nature of this text, a question that may also be formulated as follows: how did the redactor of this part of the *Droṇaparvan* proceed? Did he have written texts at his disposal or did he collect his material from memory, that is, was he acquainted with a corpus of orally transmitted mythology out of which corpus he selected those parts that he could use? In view of the Vedic roots of two of the themes of the *svayaṃvara* myth, it seems likely to me that the myth of Pārvatī's *svayaṃvara* circulated before it found its place in the SP, or in its garbled form in the MBh for that matter. Whether this circulation had an oral or written basis, or was actually an interplay of the two, is a question that has a direct bearing on our understanding of the process of composition of the *Mahābhārata* itself, a question that falls beyond the scope of the present investigation.<sup>38</sup>

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38 A tentative answer to this question, not regarding the *Mahābhārata*, but the *Skandapurāṇa* itself is formulated in the last essay of this volume (below, pp. 601 ff.).



Pārvatī's Svayaṃvara  
A Textual Reconstruction

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बालमङ्कगतं कृत्वा  
स्वयं पञ्चशिखं पुनः ।  
उमा जिज्ञासमाना वै  
को ऽयमित्यब्रवीत्पुरान् ॥ 59

मालां प्रगृह्य देव्यां तु  
स्थितायां देवसंसदि ।  
शक्राद्यैरागतैर्देवैः  
स्वयंवरमुपागतैः ॥ 28  
देव्या जिज्ञासया शम्भुर्  
भूत्वा पञ्चशिखः शिशुः ।  
उत्सङ्गतलसंसुप्तो  
बभूव सहसा विभुः ॥ 29

अकस्मादथ तं देवी  
शिशुं पञ्चशिखं स्थितम् ।  
ज्ञात्वा योगसमाधानाज्  
जहृषे प्रीतिसंयुता ॥ 30  
अथ सा शुद्धसंकल्पा  
काङ्क्षितप्राप्तसत्फला ।  
निर्वृतेव तदा तस्थौ  
कृत्वा हृदि तमेव तु ॥ 31

\* T, G<sub>2-4</sub> insert: देव्याः स्वयंवरे वृत्तं  
शृणुष्वान्यद्धनंजय । 59a कृत्वा ] दृष्ट्वा D<sub>n,1</sub>  
T G<sub>2-4</sub> M<sub>3-5</sub> 59ab ] तं चैवाङ्कगतं  
दृष्ट्वा बालं पञ्चशिखं पुनः । MBh 13.145.30ab  
59c ] उमां जिज्ञासमानो वै Ś K<sub>3</sub> D<sub>1,8</sub> G<sub>1</sub>  
M<sub>1,2</sub> and ad MBh 13.145.30c D<sub>1,2,4,6,8-10</sub>  
T<sub>1</sub>, उमां जिज्ञासुमनसः G<sub>2,4</sub> 59d ] को  
ऽयमित्यब्रुवन्पुराः G<sub>2</sub>, शक्रः को ऽयमथाब्रवीत्  
D<sub>4-9</sub> ad MBh 13.145.30d 59d  
पुरान् ] स तां B<sub>2</sub>, तदा MBh 13.145.30d (हरः  
D<sub>10</sub> T G<sub>1,4</sub>) After 59 N inserts:  
असूयतश्च शक्रस्य वज्रेण प्रहरिष्यतः । (= MBh  
13.145.31ab)

28d उपागतैः] उपागते B<sup>pur</sup> 30a अथ ]  
एव B<sup>pur</sup> 30c योगसमाधानाज् ] तं समव-  
ध्यानाज् B<sup>pur</sup> 30d जहृषे ] जगृहे B<sup>pur</sup>,  
प्रहृषे B<sup>pur\*</sup> 31b काङ्क्षितप्राप्त° ] काङ्क्षितं  
प्राप्य B<sup>pur</sup> °सत्फला ] SBh, °सत्पतिम् R B<sup>pur</sup>  
(B<sup>pur\*</sup> सत्फलम्), °संकला{°कुला A<sub>1</sub>} A  
31c निर्वृतेव ] निवृत्ता च B<sup>pur</sup> (B<sup>pur\*</sup> निवृत्त्यैव)  
31d हृदि तमेव तु ] सा हृदि तं विभुम् B<sup>pur</sup>

Liṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

चामरासक्तहस्ताभिर्  
दिव्यस्त्रीभिश्च संवृता ॥ 26  
मालां गृह्य जया तस्थौ  
सुरद्रुमसमुद्भवाम् ।  
विजया व्यजनं गृह्य  
स्थिता देव्याः समीपगा ॥ 27  
मालां प्रगृह्य देव्यां तु  
स्थितायां देवसंसदि ।

चामरासक्तहस्ताभिर्  
दिव्यस्त्रीभिश्च संवृता ।  
मालां प्रगृह्य सा तस्थौ  
सुरद्रुमसमुद्भवाम् ॥ 99

एवं तस्यां स्थितायां तु  
स्थिते लोकत्रये तदा ।

शिशुर्भूत्वा महादेवः  
क्रीडार्थं वृषभध्वजः ॥ 28  
उत्सङ्गतलसंगुप्तौ  
बभूव भगवान्भवः । 29ab

शिशुर्भूत्वा महादेवः  
क्रीडार्थं वृषभध्वजः ॥ 100  
उत्सङ्गतलसंगुप्तौ  
बभूव भगवान्भवः ।  
जयेति यत्पदं ख्यातं  
तस्य सत्यार्थमीश्वरः ॥ 101

27a गृह्य जया तस्थौ ] प्रगृह्य सा तस्थौ MS<sup>Nep</sup>  
27cd गृह्य स्थिता ] गृह्यास्थिता MS<sup>Nep</sup> Ad  
28 the commentator Gaṇeśa Nātu remarks:  
शिवचेष्टितं कथयति शिशुरित्यादिना ॥

100cd–101 ] The editor remarks: अस्य  
सार्धंभ्रोकस्यार्थो यथार्थतस्तत्त्वतो नावगम्यते ।  
101d ईश्वरः ] ईश्वरम् Veñk. Ed. The  
pādas 101cd are clearly an accretion.

बाहुं सवज्रं शक्रस्य  
 क्रुद्धस्यास्तम्भयत्प्रभुः ।  
 स एष भगवान्देवः  
 सर्वलोकेश्वरः प्रभुः ॥ 60

ततो दृष्ट्वा शिशुं देवा  
 देव्या उत्सङ्गवर्तिनम् ।  
 को ऽयमत्रेति संमन्त्र्य  
 चुक्रुधुर्भृशमार्दिताः ॥ 32  
 वज्रमाकारयत्तस्य  
 बाहुमुत्क्षिप्य वृत्रहा ।  
 स बाहुरुत्थितस्तस्य  
 तथैव समतिष्ठत ॥ 33  
 स्तम्भितः शिशुरूपेण  
 देवदेवेन शम्भुना ।  
 वज्रं क्षेप्तुं न शशाक  
 बाहुं चालयितुं न च ॥ 34

भगो नाम ततो देव  
 आदित्यः काश्यपो बली ।  
 उत्क्षिप्य मुशलं दीप्तं  
 क्षेप्तुमैच्छद्विमोहितः ।  
 तस्यापि भगवान्बाहुं  
 तथैवास्तम्भयत्तदा ॥ 35  
 शिरः प्रकम्पयन्विष्णुः  
 सक्रोधस्तमवैक्षत ।  
 तस्यापि शिरसो देवः  
 खालित्यं प्रचकार ह ॥ 36

60ab ] सवज्रं स्तम्भयामास तं बाहुं परिघोपमम् ॥  
 MBh 13.145.31cd After 60ab N inserts  
 eight ślokas that elaborate on 61 and 62  
 (not in MBh 13.145)

32d चुक्रुधुर् ] SBh, चुक्रुधुर् R B<sup>pur</sup>, वुभुक्षु  
 A<sub>2,3</sub>, वुक्षुभुर् A<sub>1</sub> अर्दिताः ] Bh,  
 आर्दिताः S<sub>2</sub>, आस्थिताः RA, \*मोहिताः B<sup>pur</sup>  
 (B<sup>pur</sup>\* आर्दिताः) 33a आकारयत् ] SBh,  
 आभारयत् A, आराभयत् R, आहारयत् B<sup>pur</sup>  
 33c ] स्वबाहुरुन्नतस्तस्य A 34 ] om. R  
 34c न ] नो Bh (conj. m.c.) 34d बाहुं  
 चालयितुं ] वृत्रहा चलितुम् B<sup>pur</sup> 35–36ab ]  
 om. R 35c मुशलं ] आयुधं B<sup>pur</sup> 35d  
 क्षेप्तुमैच्छद् ] छेत्तुमिच्छन् B<sup>pur</sup> After 35ef  
 B<sup>pur</sup> reads 38ef 36b ] शंकरं समवैक्षत B<sup>pur</sup>  
 36cd–38cd ] om. B<sup>pur</sup> 36d खालित्यं ]  
 SBh, खानित्यं A, नित्यं R (hypometrical)

Līṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

अथ दृष्ट्वा शिशुं देवास्  
 तस्या उत्सङ्गवर्तिनम् ॥ 29cd  
 को ऽयमत्रेति संमन्त्र्य  
 चुक्षुभुश्च समागताः ।  
 वज्रमाहारयत्तस्य  
 बाहुमुद्यम्य वृत्रहा ॥ 30  
 स बाहुरुद्यमस्तस्य  
 तथैव समुपस्थितः ।  
 स्तम्भितः शिशुरूपेण  
 देवदेवेन लीलया ॥ 31  
 वज्रं क्षेप्तुं न शशाक  
 बाहुं चालयितुं तथा । 32ab

अथ दृष्ट्वा शिशुं देवास्  
 तस्य उत्सङ्गवर्तिनम् ।  
 को ऽयमत्रेति संमन्त्र्य  
 चुक्षुशुर्भृशरोषिताः ॥ 102  
 वज्रमाहारयत्तस्य  
 बाहुमुद्यम्य वृत्रहा ।  
 स बाहुरुद्यतस्तस्य  
 तथैव समतिष्ठत ॥ 103  
 स्तम्भितः शिशुरूपेण  
 देवदेवेन लीलया ।  
 वज्रं क्षेप्तुं न शक्नोति  
 बाहुं चालयितुं तदा ॥ 104

भगश्च नेत्रे विकृते

चकार स्फुटिते च ते ॥ 109cd

शिरः प्रकम्पयन्विष्णुश्च  
 चक्रमुद्यम्य संस्थितः ॥ 36cd  
 तस्यापि शिरसो बालः  
 स्थिरत्वं प्रचकार ह ।  
 चक्रं क्षेप्तुं न शशाक  
 बाहुंश्चालयितुं न च ॥ 37

29d तस्या ] तथा MS<sup>Nep</sup> 31a उद्यमस् ]  
 उत्थितस् MS<sup>Bodl</sup>, उद्यतस् MS<sup>Nep</sup> 37d  
 बाहुंश्च ] बाहुं MS<sup>Nep</sup>

102b तस्य ] तस्या conj.; °वर्तिनम् ] °वर्तिनः  
 Veñk. Ed. 109c भगश्च ] भगस्य conj.

पूषा दन्तान्दशन्दन्तैः  
 शर्वमैक्षत मोहितः ।  
 तस्यापि दशनाः पेतुर्  
 दृष्टमात्रस्य शम्भुना ॥ 37

यमस्य स्तम्भितो दण्डस्  
 तेजो वह्नेः शशेः प्रभा ।  
 बलं वायोस्तथान्येषां

न संबुबुधिरे चैनं  
 देवास्तं भुवनेश्वरम् ।  
 सप्रजापतयः सर्वे  
 बालार्कसदृशप्रभम् ॥ 61

तस्मिन्सर्वदिवोकसाम् ।

बलं तेजश्च योगं च  
 तथैवास्तम्भयद्विभुः ॥ 38  
 अथ तेषु स्थितेष्वेवं  
 मन्युमत्सु सुरेषु तु । 39ab

61d ] तस्मिन्सुमुहुरीश्वरे ॥ MBh 13.145.32d

37cd ] A reads these *pādas* after 38  
 38ef ] B<sup>pur</sup> reads these *pādas* after 35  
 39b तु ] SBh, च RB<sup>pur</sup> After 39ab  
 R inserts:  
 नारायणस्तु शर्वं तं ज्ञात्वा तिष्ठति लीलया ।

Līṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

पूषा दन्तान्दशन्दन्तैर्  
बालमैक्षत मोहितः ।  
तस्यापि दशनाः पेतुर्  
दृष्टमात्रस्य शम्भुना ॥ 38

वह्निः शक्तिं तथा क्षेपुं  
न शशाक तथास्थितः ॥ 32cd  
यमो ऽपि दण्डं खड्गं च  
निर्ऋतिर्मुनिपुंगवाः ।  
वरुणो नागपाशं च  
ध्वजयष्टिं समीरणः ॥ 33  
सोमो गदां धनेशश्च  
दण्डं दण्डभृतां वरः ।  
ईशानश्च तथा शूलं  
तीव्रमुद्यम्य संस्थितः ॥ 34  
रुद्राश्च शूलमादित्या  
मुशलं वसवस्तथा ।  
मुद्गरं स्तम्भिताः सर्वे  
देवेनाशु दिवोकसः ॥ 35  
स्तम्भिता देवदेवेन  
तथान्ये च दिवोकसः । 36ab

बलं तेजश्च योगं च  
तथैवास्तम्भयद्विभुः ।  
अथ तेषु स्थितेष्वेव  
मन्युमत्सु सुरेष्वपि ॥ 39

पूषा दन्तान्दशन्दन्तैर्  
बालमैक्षत मोहितः ॥ 108cd  
तस्यापि दशनाः पेतुर्  
दृष्टमात्रस्य शम्भुना । 109ab

वह्निः शक्तिं तदा क्षेपुं  
न शशाक तथोत्थितः ।  
यमो ऽपि दण्डं खड्गं च  
निर्ऋतिस्तं शिशुं प्रति ॥ 105  
पाशं च वरुणो राजा  
ध्वजयष्टिं समीरणः ।  
सोमो गुडं धनेशश्च  
गदां सुमहतीं दृढाम् ॥ 106

नानायुधानि चादित्या  
मुसलं वसवस्तथा ।  
महाघोराणि शस्त्राणि  
तारकाद्याश्च दानवाः ॥ 107  
स्तम्भिता देवदेवेन  
तथान्ये भुवनेषु ये । 108ab

बलं तेजश्च योगांश्च  
सर्वेषां जगृहे प्रभुः ।  
अथ तेषु स्थितेष्वेव  
मन्युमत्सु सुरेष्वपि ॥ 110

38c दशनाः ] दशना MS<sup>Nep</sup> 32c शक्तिं  
तथा क्षेपुं ] क्षेपुं तथा शक्तिं MS<sup>Nep</sup> 39c  
एव ] एवं MS<sup>Nep</sup> 39d मन्युमत्सु ] स्तम्भितेषु  
MS<sup>Nep</sup>

108b तथान्ये ] तथा न Vaṅg. Ed. 110a  
योगांश्च ] योगं च conj.

Mahābhārata 7.173

Skandapurāṇa 13 (B<sup>pur</sup> 36.27–54)

अथाभ्येत्य ततो ब्रह्मा  
दृष्ट्वा च स महेश्वरम् ।  
अयं श्रेष्ठ इति ज्ञात्वा

ववन्दे तं पितामहः ॥ 62

ब्रह्मा परमसंविग्नो  
ध्यानमास्थाय सादरम् ।  
बुबुधे देवदेवेशम्  
उमोत्सङ्गसमास्थितम् ॥ 39  
स बुद्ध्वा परमेशानं  
शीघ्रमुत्थाय सादरम् ।  
ववन्दे चरणौ शम्भोर्  
अस्तुवच्च पितामहः ।  
पौराणैः सामसंगीतैः  
पुण्याख्यैर्गुह्यनामभिः ॥ 40  
अजस्त्वममरो देव  
स्रष्टा हर्ता विभुः परः ।  
प्रधानपुरुषस्तत्त्वं  
ब्रह्म ध्येयं तदक्षयम् ॥ 41  
अमृतं परमात्मा च  
ईश्वरः कारणं महत् ।  
ब्रह्मकृत्प्रकृतेः स्रष्टा  
सर्वसृक्परमेश्वरः ॥ 42

62ab ] ततो ध्यात्वाथ भगवान्ब्रह्मा तममि-  
तौजसम् । MBh 13.145.33ab 62d  
पितामहः ] उमापतिम् MBh 13.145.33d Af-  
ter 62 N inserts (not in MBh 13.145):  
ब्रह्मोवाच ।  
त्वं यज्ञो भुवनस्यास्य त्वं गतिस्त्वं परायणम् ।  
त्वं भवस्त्वं महादेवस्त्वं धाम परमं पदम् ॥ १  
त्वया सर्वमिदं व्याप्तं जगत्स्थावरजङ्गमम् ।  
भगवन्भूतभव्येश लोकनाथ जगत्पते ।  
प्रसादं कुरु शक्रस्य त्वया क्रोधादितस्य वै ॥ २  
व्यास उवाच ।  
पद्मयोनेर्वचः श्रुत्वा ततः प्रीतो महेश्वरः ।  
प्रसादाभिमुखो भूत्वा चाट्टहासमथाकरोत् ॥ ३

39c ब्रह्मा ] अहं B<sup>pur</sup> 39e बुबुधे ] बुद्धवान्  
B<sup>pur</sup> 39f °त्सङ्ग° ] SA Bh, °त्सङ्गे R B<sup>pur</sup>  
40a स बुद्ध्वा ] ज्ञात्वाहं B<sup>pur</sup> 40c चरणौ ]  
चरणं B<sup>pur</sup> 40d ] स्तुतवांस्तमहं द्विजाः B<sup>pur</sup>  
40e पौराणैः ] पुराणैः B<sup>pur</sup> 40f गुह्य° ]  
SA B<sup>pur</sup>, देव° R 41a अमरो ] अजरो  
B<sup>pur</sup> देव ] S<sub>2</sub>, देवः R A Bh B<sup>pur</sup> 41b  
हर्ता विभुः परः ] विभुः परापरम् B<sup>pur</sup> 41c ]  
प्रधानं पुरुषो यस्त्वम् B<sup>pur</sup> 41d तदक्षयम् ]  
S, यदक्षरम् R, तदाक्षरम् A Bh, तदक्षरम् B<sup>pur</sup>  
42c °कृत् ] S<sub>2</sub> Bh, °सृक् R B<sup>pur</sup> 42d  
°सृक् ] °कृत् B<sup>pur</sup> परमेश्वरः ] प्रकृतेः परः  
B<sup>pur</sup> After 42 R A Bh insert:  
न च त्वं देवदेवेश शक्यो ज्ञातुं दिवोकसैः ।  
मुनिभिश्चापि मोक्षज्ञैर्ज्ञातुं देव न शक्यसे ॥ १  
अप्रमेयो महादेव वर्त्तसे त्वं स्वलीलया ।  
महासर्गे महाकल्पे त्वमेकस्तिष्ठसे प्रभो ॥ २  
अहमेवं न जानामि चेष्टां तव महेश्वर ।  
कथं विदन्ति त्रिदशा गम्भीरं गहनात्मकम् ॥ ३

Liṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

ब्रह्मा परमसंविग्नो  
 ध्यानमास्थाय शंकरम् ।  
 बुबुधे देवमीशानम्  
 उमोत्सङ्गे तमास्थितम् ॥ 40  
 स बुद्ध्या देवमीशानं  
 शीघ्रमुत्थाय विस्मितः ।  
 ववन्दे चरणौ शम्भोर्  
 अस्तुवच्च पितामहः ॥ 41  
 पुराणैः सामसंगीतैः  
 पुण्याख्यैर्गुह्यनामभिः ।  
 स्रष्टा त्वं सर्वलोकानां  
 प्रकृतेश्च प्रवर्त्तकः ॥ 42  
 बुद्धिस्त्वं सर्वलोकानाम्  
 अहंकारस्त्वमीश्वरः ।  
 भूतानामिन्द्रियाणां च  
 त्वमेवेश प्रवर्त्तकः ॥ 43  
 तवाहं दक्षिणाद्धस्तात्  
 सृष्टः पूर्वं पुरातनः ।  
 वामहस्तान्महाबाहो  
 देवो नारायणः प्रभुः ॥ 44

ब्रह्मा ध्यानमुपाश्रित्य  
 बुबोध हरचेष्टितम् ।  
 सो ऽभिगम्य महादेवं  
 तुष्टाव प्रयतो विधिः ॥ 111  
 पौराणैः सामसंगीतैर्  
 वैदिकैर्गुह्यनामभिः । 112ab

40d ] उमोत्सङ्गसमास्थितं MS<sup>Bod1</sup> Ad  
 40 Gaṇeśa Nātu comments: परमसंविग्नो  
 ब्रह्मा ध्यानमास्थाय उमोत्सङ्गे आस्थितं तम्  
 ईशानं सर्वनियन्तारं शंकरं देवं बुबुधे इत्यन्वयः ॥  
 41a स बुद्ध्या ] संबुध्य MS<sup>Nep</sup> 42b  
 पुण्याख्यैर् ] पुराणैर् MS<sup>Nep</sup> Ad 42 Gaṇeśa  
 Nātu comments: पुराणैः प्राचीनैः सामसंगीतैः  
 सामगायनैरित्यर्थः ॥

इयं च प्रकृतिर्देव  
 सदा ते सृष्टिकारणम् ।  
 पत्नीरूपं समास्थाय  
 जगत्कारणमागता ॥ 43  
 नमस्तुभ्यं सदेशनान  
 देव्याश्चैव सदा नमः ।  
 प्रसादात्तव देवेश  
 नियोगाच्च मया प्रजाः ॥ 44  
 देवाद्यास्त इमे सृष्टा  
 मूढास्त्वद्योगमोहिताः ।  
 कुरु प्रसादमेतेषां  
 यथापूर्वं भवन्त्वमे ॥ 45

तत एवं तदा ब्रह्मा  
 विज्ञाप्य परमेश्वरम् ।  
 स्तम्भितान्सर्वदेवांस्तान्  
 इदमाह महाद्युतिः ॥ 46  
 मूढाः स्थ देवताः सर्वे  
 नैनं बुध्यत शंकरम् ।  
 देवदेवमिहायातं  
 ममैवोत्पत्तिकारणम् ॥ 47  
 अयं रुद्रो महादेवः  
 शर्वो भीमः कपर्दिमान् ।  
 उग्र ईशान आत्मा च  
 अजः शंकर एव च ॥ 48

43a देव ] SBh, देवी RAB<sup>pur</sup> 44a  
 सदेशनान ] महादेव B<sup>pur</sup> 44b ] देव्या वै स-  
 हताय च B<sup>pur</sup> 45a त इमे ] SA Bh, तु  
 इमे R, तु इमाः B<sup>pur</sup> 45b मोहिताः ]  
 मायया B<sup>pur</sup> 46a तदा ब्रह्मा ] अहं विप्रा  
 B<sup>pur</sup> 46d आह महाद्युतिः ] चाहं तदोक्त-  
 वान् B<sup>pur</sup> 47a मूढाः स्थ ] Bh, मूढा  
 स्थ S<sub>2</sub>, मूढास्तु A<sub>1,3</sub>, मूढास्तु A<sub>2</sub>, ...ते R, मूढाश्च  
 B<sup>pur</sup> सर्वे ] सर्वा B<sup>pur</sup> 47b बुध्यत ]  
 SR Bh, बुध्यत AB<sup>pur</sup> 47cd–49cd om.  
 B<sup>pur</sup>

Liṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

इयं च प्रकृतिर्देवी  
 सदा ते सृष्टिकारण ।  
 पत्नीरूपं समास्थाय  
 जगत्कारणमागता ॥ 45  
 नमस्तुभ्यं महादेव  
 महादेव्यै नमो नमः ।  
 प्रसादात्तव देवेश  
 नियोगाच्च मया प्रजाः ॥ 46  
 देवाद्यास्तु इमाः सृष्टा  
 मूढास्त्वद्योगमोहिताः ।  
 कुरु प्रसादमेतेषां  
 यथापूर्वं भवन्त्वमे ॥ 47  
 सूत उवाच ।  
 विज्ञाप्यैवं तदा ब्रह्मा  
 देवदेवं महेश्वरम् ।  
 संस्तम्भितांस्तदा तेन  
 भगवानाह पद्मजः ॥ 48  
 मूढाः स्थ देवताः सर्वा  
 नैव बुध्यत शंकरम् ।  
 देवदेवमिहायातं  
 सर्वदेवनमस्कृतम् ॥ 49

नमस्तुभ्यं महादेव  
 महादेव्यै नमो नमः ॥ 112cd  
 प्रसादात्तव बुद्ध्यादिर्  
 जगदेतत्प्रवर्तते ।

मूढाश्च देवताः सर्वा  
 नैनं बुध्यत शंकरम् ॥ 113  
 महादेवमिहायातं  
 सर्वदेवनमस्कृतम् । 114ab

45b °कारण ] °कारणम् MS<sup>Nep</sup> 47a  
 इमाः ] मया MS<sup>Nep</sup> 47d इमे ] इते MS<sup>Nep</sup>  
 48c संस्तम्भितांस्तदा ] स्तंभितांस्तांस्तदा MS<sup>Nep</sup>  
 49a मूढाः स्थ ] मूढास्थ Veñk. Ed., मूढास्तु  
 MS<sup>Nep</sup> Ad 49ab Gaṇeśa Nātu com-  
 ments: सर्वा देवताः शंकरं न बुध्यतातो यूयं  
 मूढास्थ अविवेकेन वर्तमाना इत्यर्थः ॥ 49c  
 °आयातं ] °आयान्तं Vañg. Ed.

113a बुद्ध्यादिर् ] बुद्ध्यादि conj. 113cd ]  
 The editor remarks: किमिति प्रश्ने –  
 अध्याहर्तव्यम्. The reading of these two *pādas*  
 is no doubt a corruption of SP 47ab, but  
 due to the fact that the change in those ad-  
 dressed (from Śiva to the gods) has been  
 omitted in the M<sup>kh</sup> (i.e. the equivalent of SP  
 46) a 'correct' reading would make a rather  
 awkward transition.

देवदेवः परं धाम  
 ईशः पशुपतिः पतिः ।  
 जगत्स्रष्टा जगद्धृता  
 जगत्संस्थितिकारणम् ॥ 49  
 गच्छध्वं शरणं शीघ्रम्  
 एतमेवामरेश्वराः ।

सार्धं मयैव देवेशं  
 परमात्मानमव्ययम् ॥ 50

ततस्ते स्तम्भिताः सर्वे  
 तथैव त्रिदिवोकसः ।  
 प्रणेमुर्मनसा शर्वं  
 भावशुद्धेन चेतसा ॥ 51

50b एतम् ] R ABh, एवम् S<sub>2</sub>, एनम् B<sup>pur</sup>  
 एवामरेश्वराः ] एव महेश्वरम् B<sup>pur</sup> After 50  
 R and A insert:

ब्रह्मणो वचनं श्रुत्वा देवो नारायणस्तदा ।  
 प्रहस्य विबुधान्सर्वान्बोधयामास लोकपः ।  
 एवमेव न संदेहो यथाह पद्मसम्भवः ॥ १  
 पूर्वसर्गे ऽपि विबुधाः सृष्टायोज्य च मां शिवः ।  
 बहुरूपेण कार्येण जगद्भाष्य व्यवस्थितः ॥ २  
 पातालं दिवमाकाशमेको व्याप्य व्यवस्थितः ।  
 तस्मात्सर्वात्मना भूत्वा गच्छध्वं शरणं हरम् ॥ ३

51c शर्वं ] SBh B<sup>pur</sup>, सर्वं R, सर्वे A<sub>1,2</sub>, सर्व  
 A<sub>3</sub>

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Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

गच्छध्वं शरणं शीघ्रं  
 देवाः शक्रपुरोगमाः ।  
 सनारायणकाः सर्वे  
 मुनिभिः शंकरं प्रभुम् ॥ 50  
 सार्धं मयैव देवेशं  
 परमात्मानमीश्वरम् ।  
 अनया हैमवत्या च  
 प्रकृत्या सह सत्तमम् ॥ 51  
 तत्र ते स्तम्भितास्तेन  
 तथैव सुरसत्तमाः ।  
 प्रणेमुर्मनसा सर्वे  
 सनारायणकाः प्रभुम् ॥ 52

गच्छध्वं शरणं शीघ्रं  
 यदि जीवितुमिच्छत ॥ 114cd

ततः संभ्रमसंपन्नास्

तुष्टुवुः प्रणताः सुराः ।  
 नमो नमो महादेव  
 पाहि पाहि जगत्पते ॥ 115  
 दुराचारान्भवानस्मान्  
 आत्मद्रोहपरायणान् ।  
 अहो पश्यत नो मौढ्यं  
 जानन्तस्तव भाविनीम् ॥ 116  
 भार्यामुमां महादेवीं  
 तथाप्यत्र समागताः । 117ab

50b शक्र° ] शक्र° Venk. Ed. 51b  
 परमात्मानम् ] परत्मानम् Venk. Ed. (hypo-  
 metrical) 51d सत्तमम्] उत्तमं MS<sup>NEP</sup>

ततः प्रसादयामासुर्  
 उमां रुद्रं च ते सुराः ।  
 अभवच्च पुनर्बाहूर्  
 यथाप्रकृति वज्रिणः ॥ 63  
 तेषां प्रसन्नो भगवान्  
 सपत्नीको वृषध्वजः ।  
 देवानां त्रिदशश्रेष्ठो  
 दक्षयज्ञविनाशनः ॥ 64

अथ तेषां प्रसन्नो ऽभूद्  
 देवदेवो महेश्वरः ।  
 यथापूर्वं चकाराशु  
 देवतानां तनूस्तदा ॥ 52

63b उमां] तदा Ś K<sub>1-3</sub> D<sub>1,4-8</sub> 63cd]  
 बभूव स तदा बाहुर्बलहन्तुर्यथा पुरा ॥ MBh  
 13.145.34cd

Līṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

अथ तेषां प्रसन्नो ऽभूद्  
 देवदेवस्त्रियंबकः ।  
 यथापूर्वं चकाराशु  
 वचनाद्ब्रह्मणः प्रभुः ॥ 53

युक्तमेतद्यदस्माकं  
 राज्यं गृह्येत चासुरैः ॥ 117cd  
 येषामेवंविधा बुद्धिर्  
 अस्माभिः किं कृतं त्विदम् ।  
 अथ वा नो न दोषो ऽस्ति  
 पशवो हि वयं यतः ॥ 118  
 त्वयैव पतिना सर्वे  
 प्रेरिताः कुर्महे विभो ।  
 ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां  
 पतिस्त्वं परमेश्वरः ॥ 119  
 भ्रामयस्यखिलं विश्वं  
 यन्त्रारूढं स्वमायया ।  
 येन विभ्रामिता मूढाः  
 समायाताः स्वयंवरम् ॥ 120  
 तस्मै पशूनां पतये  
 नमस्तुभ्यं प्रसीद नः ।  
 अथ तेषां प्रसन्नो ऽभूद्  
 देवदेवस्त्रियंबकः ॥ 121  
 यथापूर्वं चकारैतान्  
 संस्तवाद्ब्रह्मणः प्रभुः ।

तारकप्रमुखा दैत्याः  
 संक्रुद्धास्तत्र प्रोचिरे ॥ 122

53b] देवदेवो महेश्वरः MS<sup>BodI</sup>120ab] cf. Bhag. Gītā 18.61cd 120c  
 विभ्रामिता] विभ्रंशिता इ० पा० (Venk. Ed.)

तत एवं प्रवृत्ते तु  
 सर्वदेवनिवारणे ।  
 वपुश्चकार देवेशस्  
 त्र्यक्षं परममद्भुतम् ।  
 तेजसा यस्य देवास्ते

चक्षुरप्रार्थयन्विभुम् ॥ 53

53e यस्य ] SRBh, तस्य AB<sup>pur</sup> देवास्ते ]  
 ते ध्वस्ताश् B<sup>pur</sup> 53f ] चक्षुः सर्वे न्यमीलयन्  
 B<sup>pur</sup>

Liṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

तत एवं प्रसन्ने तु  
 सर्वदेवनिवारणम् ।  
 वपुश्चकार देवेशः  
 त्र्यक्षं परममद्भुतम् ॥ 54  
 तेजसा तस्य देवास्ते  
 सेन्द्रचन्द्रदिवाकराः ।  
 सन्नह्यकाः ससाध्याश्च  
 सनारायणकास्तथा ॥ 55  
 सयमाश्च सरुद्राश्च  
 चक्षुरप्रार्थयन्विभुम् । 56ab

को ऽयमङ्ग महादेवो  
 न मन्यामो वयं च तम् ।  
 ततः प्रहस्य बालो ऽसौ  
 हुंकारं लीलया व्यधात् ॥ 123  
 हुंकारेणैव ते दैत्याः  
 स्वमेव नगरं गताः ।  
 विस्मृतं सकलं तेषां  
 स्वयंवरमुखं च तत् ॥ 124  
 महादेवप्रभावेन  
 दैत्यानां घोरकर्मणाम् ।  
 एवं यस्य प्रभावो हि  
 देवदैत्येषु फाल्गुन ॥ 125  
 कथमीश्वरवाक्यार्थस्  
 तस्मादन्यत्र मुच्यते ।  
 असंशयं विमूढास्ते  
 पश्चात्तापः पुरा महान् ॥ 126  
 ईश्वरं भुवनस्यास्य  
 ये भजन्ते न त्र्यम्बकम् ।  
 ततः संस्तूयमानः स  
 सुरैः पद्मभुवादिभिः ॥ 127  
 वपुश्चकार देवेशस्  
 त्र्यम्बकः परममद्भुतम् ।  
 तेजसा तस्य देवास्ते  
 सेन्द्रचन्द्रदिवाकराः ॥ 128  
 सन्नह्यकाः ससाध्याश्च  
 वसुर्विश्वे च देवताः ।  
 सयमाश्च सरुद्राश्च  
 चक्षुरप्रार्थयन्प्रभुम् ॥ 129

54a प्रसन्ने] प्रयत्ने MS<sup>Nep</sup> Ad 54 Gaṇeśa  
 Nātu comments: सर्वदेवनिवारणं सर्वदेवैरपि  
 दृष्टमशक्यमित्यर्थः । Ad 55 Gaṇeśa Nātu  
 comments: तस्य शिवस्य तेजसा प्रतिहतदृष्टय  
 इति शेषः । ते पूर्वाक्तसर्वे देवाः विभुं  
 सर्वव्यापकं शिवं चक्षुर्विव्यदृष्टिमप्रार्थयन्प्रार्थितवन्त  
 इत्यग्नि- मेणान्वयः । 56b ]चक्षुश्च{चक्षुश्चा°  
 MS<sup>PC?</sup>}प्रार्थणां विभोः MS<sup>Nep</sup>

तेभ्यः परमकं चक्षुः  
स्ववपुर्दृष्टिशक्तिमत् ।  
प्रादात्परमदेवेशः

अपश्यंस्ते तदा प्रभुम् ॥ 54

ते दृष्ट्वा परमेशानं  
तृतीयक्षणधारिणम् ।

ब्रह्माद्या नेमिरे तूर्णं  
सर्व एव सुरेश्वराः ॥ 55

तस्य देवी तदा हृष्टा  
समक्षं त्रिदिवीकसाम् ।  
पादयोः स्थापयामास  
स्रग्मालाममितद्युतेः ॥ 56

54a परमकं ] स परमम् B<sup>pur</sup> 54c  
देवेशः] देवेशम् B<sup>pur</sup> 54d प्रभुम्] विभुम्  
B<sup>pur</sup> 55c] शक्राद्या नेमिरे देवाः 56a  
हृष्टा] S A<sub>1-3</sub> Bh B<sup>pur</sup>, दृष्ट्वा A<sub>4</sub>, (दृ)ष्टा R

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Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

तेभ्यश्च परमं चक्षुः  
 सर्वदृष्टौ च शक्तिमत् ॥ 56  
 ददावम्बापतिः शर्वो  
 भवान्याश्चाचलस्य च ।  
 लब्ध्वा चक्षुस्तदा देवा  
 इन्द्रविष्णुपुरोगमाः ॥ 57  
 सब्रह्मकाः सशक्राश्च  
 तमपश्यन्महेश्वरम् । 58ab

मुनयश्च महादेवं  
 गणेशाः शिवसंमताः ।  
 ससर्जुः पुष्पवृष्टिं च  
 खेचराः सिद्धचारणाः ॥ 59  
 देवदुन्दुभयो नेदुर्  
 तुष्टुवुर्मुनयः प्रभुम् ।  
 जगुर्गन्धर्वमुख्याश्च  
 ननृतुश्चाप्सरोगणाः ॥ 60  
 मुमुहुर्गणपाः सर्वे  
 मुमोदाम्बा च पार्वती । 61ab

ब्रह्माद्या नेमिरे तूर्णं  
 भवानी च गिरीश्वरः ॥ 58cd

तस्य देवी तदा दृष्टा  
 समक्षं त्रिदिवौकसाम् ॥ 61cd  
 पादयोः स्थापयामास  
 मालां दिव्यां सुगन्धिनीम् । 62ab

तेभ्यः परतमं चक्षुः  
 स्ववपुर्दृष्टुमुत्तमम् ।  
 ददावम्बापतिः शर्वो  
 भवान्याश्चाचलस्य च ॥ 130  
 लब्ध्वा रुद्रप्रसादेन  
 दिव्यं चक्षुरनुत्तमम् ।  
 सब्रह्मकास्तदा देवास्  
 तमपश्यन्महेश्वरम् ॥ 131

ततो जगुश्च मुनयः  
 पुष्पवृष्टिं च खेचराः ।  
 मुमुचुश्च तदा नेदुर्  
 देवदुन्दुभयो भृशम् ॥ 132  
 जगुर्गन्धर्वमुख्याश्च  
 ननृतुश्चाप्सरोगणाः ।  
 मुमुहुर्गणपाः सर्वे  
 मुमोदाम्बा च पार्वती ॥ 133

ब्रह्माद्या मेनिरे पूर्णां  
 भवानीं च गिरीश्वरम् ।

तस्य देवी ततो दृष्टा  
 समक्षं त्रिदिवौकसाम् ॥ 134  
 पादयोः स्थापयामास  
 मालां दिव्यां सुगन्धिनीम् । 135ab

56cd ] तेभ्य परतरं चक्षु स्ववपुर्दर्शनक्षमा  
 MS<sup>BodI</sup> 56d शक्तिमत् ] शक्तिमान्  
 MS<sup>Nep</sup> 57b चाचलस्य ] च चलस्य  
 Veñk. Ed. Ad 57 Gaṇeśa Nātu com-  
 ments: अम्बायाः जगज्जनन्याः प्रकृतेः पतिः  
 पालक इत्यर्थः । 59b °संमताः ] °सत्तमाः  
 MS<sup>Nep</sup> 61a मुमुहुर् ] मुमुहुर् MS<sup>Nep</sup>  
 58c नेमिरे ] मेनिरे MS<sup>Nep</sup> 58d  
 गिरीश्वरः ] दिगीश्वराः MS<sup>Nep</sup> Ad 61–62ab  
 Gaṇeśa Nātu comments:

Mahābhārata 7.173

Skandapurāṇa 13 (B<sup>pur</sup> 36.27–54)

साधु साध्विति संप्रोच्य  
 देवतास्ते पुनर्विभुम् ।  
 सह देव्या नमश्चक्रुः  
 शिरोभिर्भूतलाश्रितैः ॥ 57

57b देवास्ते] सर्वे देवाः B<sup>pur</sup>

Liṅgapurāṇa 1.102

Māheśvarakhaṇḍa 2.25

साधु साध्विति संप्रोच्य  
 तया तत्रैव चार्चितम् ॥ 62cd  
 सह देव्या नमश्चक्रुः  
 शिरोभिर्भूतलाश्रितैः ।  
 सर्वे सब्रह्मका देवाः  
 सयक्षोरगराक्षसाः ॥ 63

साधु साध्विति संप्रोच्य  
 तया तं तत्र चर्चितम् ॥ 135cd  
 सह देव्या नमश्चक्रुः  
 शिरोभिर्भूतलाश्रितैः ।  
 सर्वे सब्रह्मका देवा  
 जयेति च मुदा जगुः ॥ 136

सर्वे शैलादिप्रमुखाः गणपाः मुमुहुर्हर्षव्यग्रा  
 बभूवुरित्यर्थः । हृष्टा देवी त्रिदिवौकसां समक्षं  
 तस्य शिवस्य पादयोर्दिव्यां सुगन्धिनीं मालां  
 स्थापयामासेत्यग्निमेणान्वयः । Ad 62cd–63  
 Gaṇeśa Nāṭu comments: तया पार्वत्या अर्चितं  
 मालासमर्पणेन पूजितं शिवं साधु साध्विति संप्रोच्य  
 तत्रैव तस्मिन्नेव काले देव्या सह भूतलाश्रितैः  
 शिरोभिः । सर्वे देवाः नमश्चक्रुरिति पूर्वस्थैरन्वयः ॥  
 63b °तलाश्रितैः] °तलं श्रिताः MS<sup>Nep</sup>

135d चर्चितम्] चार्चितम् conj. 136d च  
 मुदा] मुदिताः इ° पा° (Veik. Ed.)



# Mokṣadharmā 187 and 239–241 Reconsidered\*

HANS T. BAKKER & PETER C. BISSCHOP

## PREAMBLE

In his *Untersuchungen zum Mokṣadharmā (Die sāmṅhyistischen Texte)* and in the chapter on Sāmṅhya of his *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie* Erich Frauwallner has shown chapters MBh 12.187 and MBh 12.239–241 of the *Mokṣadharmā* in the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* to be of crucial importance for understanding the development of the Sāmṅhya-system.<sup>1</sup> The great Viennese scholar dealt with yet another chapter (MBhB 12.286), which however has been omitted in the critical edition, but is preserved in the critical apparatus to MBh 12.187. Conceived as different versions of one and the same ‘Grundtext’, they must, Frauwallner argued, have been held to be of great significance at the time and probably led an independent existence before they were included in the collection of doctrines of the *Mokṣadharmā*. Frauwallner attempted a reconstruction of this ‘Grundtext’ by sorting out words and passages that were judged by him not to have belonged to this text originally. He succeeded in giving a clear description of a distinctive philosophy, which he denominated ‘die epische Urform des Sāmṅhya’.<sup>2</sup> An important conclusion of his reconstruction is that the so called ‘evolution theory’ had not yet been developed; according to Frauwallner the evolution theory was adopted by the Sāmṅhya later from circles that taught an evolution out of Brahman.<sup>3</sup>

Van Buitenen (1956) also stressed the importance of these texts, but contrary to Frauwallner’s conclusions, he maintained that an evolution theory can be traced in them. Out of both texts he reconstructed a small tract, which

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1 Frauwallner 1925b; 1953. Frauwallner uses a different numbering, based on the Bombay edition of the *Mahābhārata*: MBhB 12.194 (= MBh 12.187) and MBhB 12.247–249 (= MBh 12.239–241). MBh 12.239–241 is also transmitted as part of the *Brahmapurāna*: BrP 237.43–238.14.

2 Frauwallner 1953, 288–299.

3 Two texts according to Frauwallner have been a major influence upon the development of the evolution theory: MBh 12.224 and the first book of the *Manusmṛti* (Frauwallner 1925a). Cf. Hacker 1961b and Rüping 1977.

somehow had come to be included in this text-group. He recovered this tract by isolating and arranging those verses in which the term *bhāva* has apparently an other meaning than it has in the rest of the texts.<sup>4</sup> He emphasized the evolution process taught in this tract, which, as he put it, has a ‘horizontal pattern’ in contrast to a ‘vertical pattern’: ‘Not *buddhi* into *manas*, *manas* into senses etc., but *buddhi* into *manas*, *buddhi* into senses’.<sup>5</sup> Bakker (1982) accepted van Buitenen’s reconstruction as a ‘working-hypothesis’, but criticized the interpretations of some passages; moreover he questioned van Buitenen’s claim to have discovered an authentic text. He drew attention to an agreement of the reconstructed tract with the teachings of *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 3.<sup>6</sup>

### THREE THEMES

From all these different interpretations we may infer that the chapters under discussion contain a diversity of ideas, which are not necessarily consistent with each other. In this paper we want to look at three themes central to both texts that are relevant to the question put forward by van Buitenen, viz. whether or not we encounter an evolution theory in these chapters. It will be shown that this question is related to a difference between both texts with respect to their conception of *buddhi*. The three themes are the following:<sup>7</sup>

- 1 A teaching about the five elements and their respective differentiation into sense-organ, sense-faculty and sense-impression.<sup>8</sup>

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4 Van Buitenen 1956, 153:

When we read through the two versions we are struck by the fact that the term *bhāva* occurs in two altogether different situations: first in connection with such ‘sensations, qualities and conditions’ as *sukha/prīti*, *duḥkha/śoka*, *moha*, *praharṣa* etc., *atuṣṭi* etc., *aviveka* etc.; secondly in connection with a process by which the *buddhi* modifies itself into *manas* as its *bhāva*.

5 Van Buitenen 1957a, 22.

6 Bakker 1982b, 144:

[...] The most striking agreement of the epic with the Upaniṣad appears from the fact that the act of consciousness itself, when it has actualized the senses, evolves the objects (epic: *artha* /KauṣU.: *bhūtamātra*) of the latter. Or rather, at the very moment *buddhi* (or *prajñā*) actualizes the senses it evolves (epic: *vikurute* /KauṣU.: *abhivisṛjate*) the object that is apprehended.

7 In addition to these three, there may be distinguished three more themes (in both texts): an introductory question concerning the self (*adhyātman*) which forms the beginning of both texts (MBh 12.187.1–3; 239.1–2), a teaching about the three *bhāvās* (‘states of mind’) *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (MBh 12.187.14, 21–35; 239.16, 20–25; 240.6cd–8, 10–11) and a soteriology (MBh 12.187.44–47, 51–60; 240.13–15; 241.5–14). Many of these themes, or parts of them, have parallels in other chapters of the *Mokṣadharmā*; so, for example, part of the teaching about the three *bhāvās* is found also in MBh 12.212.25–31. Study of these parallels may throw light on the composition and transmission of the *Mokṣadharmā*, as, *mutatis mutandis*, the *Nārāyaṇīya-Studien* by Peter Schreiner and others (1997) has demonstrated.

8 MBh 12.187.4–10; 239.3–12.

- 2 A teaching about the intellect (*buddhi*) and its relation to the ‘knower of the field’ (*kṣetrajñā*), the mind (*manas*) and the senses (*indriyāṇi*).<sup>9</sup>
- 3 A teaching about the relationship between the *sattva* and the *kṣetrajñā*.<sup>10</sup>

### *The five elements*

The first theme forms a coherent whole, which can be distinguished quite easily from the rest of the texts. The five elements are regarded as the (material) cause of all sentient beings. They evolve into three modifications (*guṇa*): a sense-organ, a sense-faculty and a sense-impression. So, for instance, the element *ākāśa* evolves into the ears, hearing and sound.<sup>11</sup> The characteristic feature of this treatment of the elements is the epistemological point of view, which entails that the essential qualities of the elements are characterized by their impression on the senses.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the five elements as the material cause, this section speaks of the *bhūtakṛt* (‘creator of beings’) as a kind of efficient cause (Appendix: A).<sup>13</sup> The *bhūtakṛt* appears to cause the differentiation of the elements into the triple modification of sense-organ, sense-faculty and sense-impression (MBh 187.7; MBh 239.6–7). The conclusion seems justified that in this section of both texts a consistent doctrine is presented, which considers the elements to be the material out of which sentient beings (*bhūta*) are made, a process set in motion by a *bhūtakṛt*. This section forms a teaching of its own; this is evident also from the fact that none of the words playing a key role in the rest of the texts, such as *kṣetrajñā*, *buddhi*, *manas*, *bhāva* and *sattva*, are used here.

### *The intellectual apparatus*

The transition to the next theme can be illustrated by MBh 187.10cd–11ab (Appendix: B). Whereas 10cd enumerates the five elements with the *manas* as sixth, the following verse 11ab enumerates the five senses and the *manas*; the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā* being respectively the seventh and the eighth (11cd).<sup>14</sup> These verses indicate a transition in both texts: nothing is said about the elements any more, the senses are given and the teaching about

9 MBh 12.187.11–20; 239.13–15, 17–19; 240.1–6ab, 9–10ab, 12.

10 MBh 12.187.37–43, 48–50; 240.19–22; 241.1–4.

11 MBh 12.187.8ab: *śabdaḥ śrotraṃ tathā khāni trayam ākāśayonijam* |

12 This epistemological perspective remains in classical Sāṃkhya, where the five elements are considered to originate from the so called ‘subtle elements’ (*tanmātra*). These *tanmātrās*, in fact, are the sense-impressions: *śabda*, *sparśa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha*.

13 The Appendix contains the text of some passages of the critical edition. It is meant to facilitate comparison: the left column contains a passage of MBh 12.187, the right column contains the parallel of MBh 12.239–241 and *vice versa*. A blank means there is no parallel for a passage.

14 That we are here concerned with a break is also evident from the parallel passage which omits 187.11ab, and instead of *mahābhūtāni pañcaiva* (MBh 187.10c) reads *indriyāṇi nare pañca* (MBh 239.14a).

their origin out of the elements seems to be forgotten. Whereas up to this point we had a description of material nature, after it both texts seem to be dealing with ideal nature only. Although the following teaching about the *buddhi* does not form such a clear section as the foregoing teaching about the elements, the verses which we consider to belong to this teaching all have one thing in common: they deal with a psychic or ideal principle distinct from the (material) elements.

The teaching starts with an enumeration of eight principles: the five senses, the *manas*, the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā*. Their respective functions are given:

The eye is for seeing, the mind causes reflection, the intellect serves determination, the knower of the field is called the onlooker.<sup>15</sup>

While both texts agree on these functions they disagree about the relationship between the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā*. This disagreement can be deduced from a small, but important variation in the parallel passages 187.20 and 240.6 (Appendix: C). According to both passages the ‘invisible one’ governs the senses, but whereas 187.20 uses the masculine *adrśyaḥ*, 240.6 uses the feminine *adrśyā*.<sup>16</sup> Therefore in 187.20 the term ‘invisible one’ refers to the *kṣetrajñā*, whereas in 240.6 it refers to the *buddhi*. In the parallel passages 187.13 and 239.18 (Appendix: D) there is a similar variation. Both verses deal with the question: who is the one that sees everything that is above the soles of the feet and inhabits all this? 187.13 seems to teach that it is the *kṣetrajñā*, as in the preceding verse the *kṣetrajñā* is called the onlooker. 239.18 however explicitly states it is the *buddhir uttamā* (‘supreme intellect’). These variations indicate a difference with respect to the relationship between the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā*. Whereas according to 187 the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā* are utterly distinct, in that the one is the active knowledge-principle responsible for the activity of the senses and the other an absolute, non-active onlooker or subject, in some parts of 239–241 the *buddhi* and the *kṣetrajñā* seem to be two sides of one and the same principle.

The difference between the two texts can be illustrated by comparing those verses that explain the relation of the *buddhi* to the senses (appendix: E). In 187.18–19 the senses are characterized as instruments which the *buddhi* employs for apperception:

The eye is what it sees with, what it hears with is called the ear, the nose they say is what it smells with, with the tongue it experiences flavour and with the skin it feels touches.

In the parallel passage of 240.4–5, however, it is not the instrumental case (*yena paśyati*) that is used, but the active present participle together with the finite verb *bhavati*:

15 MBh 12.239.15: *cakṣur ālocanāyaiva saṃśayaṃ kurute manaḥ | buddhir adhyavasānāya sākṣī kṣetrajñā ucyate ||*

16 Some manuscripts of 240.6 also read *adrśyaḥ*. No manuscript of 187.20 reads *adrśyā*.

While hearing it becomes hearing, while touching it is called touch, while seeing it becomes sight, while tasting it becomes taste, while smelling it becomes smell.

The *buddhi* does not employ the senses as instruments, but it is or becomes itself the senses. The word *indriyāṇi* used in both text passages (187.20; 240.6) does not seem to have exactly the same meaning: in 240 it denotes the sense-faculties, whereas in 187 its connotation seems to encompass the sense-organs as well.<sup>17</sup> In 240 a sense is not so much an instrument, as a modification of the *buddhi*, viz. a state of mind characterized by sense-perception. In this way it is said that the *buddhi* evolves the complex of the senses, just as a tortoise sticks out its limbs (239.17).

However, despite this occasional ambiguity, the verses in this section do not deal with material nature, but with ideal nature. The *buddhi* is therefore not looked upon as a material entity as it is in classical Sāṃkhya. In this connection some remarks have to be made on Frauwallner's observation—in the introduction to his translation of the reconstructed 'Grundtext', published in his *Nachgelassene Werke II*—to the effect that the *buddhi* in this text-group is ranked among material nature.

Besondere Bedeutung kommt in ihm [viz. the 'Grundtext'] der Psychologie zu. Weltseele und Materie sind nämlich nach ihm scharf getrennt. Dabei werden nicht nur die Sinnesorgane, sondern auch die psychischen Organe, Denken (*manah*) und Erkennen (*buddhih*) der Materie zugerechnet.<sup>18</sup>

In our opinion this is certainly not true for some passages in *adhyāya* 240. This becomes evident when we consider MBh 240.3 (Appendix: F). After the progressive enumeration of the *indriyāṇi*, the *arthās*, the *manas*, the *buddhi* and the *ātman*, which we also encounter with some variations in the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*,<sup>19</sup> it is said that:

The intellect is the self of man; the intellect indeed is the essence of the self; when it produces a *bhāva* it is / becomes mind.<sup>20</sup>

17 In classical Sāṃkhya the *indriyāṇi* as faculties are explicitly distinguished from the organs, which are called their 'seats' (*adhiṣṭhānāni*)—e.g. in the *Yuktidīpikā* (YD ad SK 26cd, p. 197):

*ucyate: adhiṣṭhānād indriyaprthaktvaṃ śaktiviśeṣopalambhāt | yathā śarīrāsambhavinō viśayavyavasāyalakṣaṇasya śaktiviśeṣasyopalambhād arthāntaraṃ buddhir anu-  
mīyata evam adhiṣṭhānāsambhavinō viśayagrahaṇalakṣaṇasya śaktiviśeṣasyopal-  
ambhād arthāntaram indriyam iti |*

The use of the term in these texts of the *Mokṣadharmā*, however, is ambiguous. Thus in MBh 12.239.11cd the 'complex of the senses' (*indriyagrāma*) is described as 'derived from the five elements' (*pañcabhautika*), thereby implying its material nature, whereas MBh 187.20 seems to conflate the *adhiṣṭhānāni* and the *indriyāṇi*.

18 Frauwallner 1992, 78.

19 *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* III.10–11; VI.7–8a.

20 MBh 12.240.3: *buddhir ātmā manuṣyasya buddhir evātmano 'tmikā | yadā vikurute bhāvaṃ tadā bhavati sā manah ||*

The *buddhi* is regarded as the essence of the self in this verse. In the preceding verse however the self is stated to be higher than the *buddhi*. Consequently the *buddhi* seems to exist in two ways: 1) as an absolute, non-intentional self, corresponding to the *kṣetrajñā*; 2) as an empirical, intentional activity, when it evolves through the *manas* into the senses. In the latter case the *buddhi* exists as a *bhāva*, i.e. in a ‘state of modification’. It is obvious that this doctrine differs materially from the one found in MBh 187, where the *buddhi* is treated as an hypostasis of empirical intellect, fundamentally distinct from the transcendental subject, *kṣetrajñā*, as well as separated from the senses.<sup>21</sup>

### *Sattva and kṣetrajñā*

The difference between the two texts can be illustrated further by comparing the passages that deal with the relationship between *sattva* and *kṣetrajñā* (Appendix: G). If we understand *sattva* here, not as referring to a material principle comparable to the *prakṛti*, but as referring to the *buddhi*,<sup>22</sup> a remarkable agreement with the foregoing appears. According to both texts the *sattva* creates (*srjate*) the *guṇās*, whereas the *kṣetrajñā* is only their observer. The *guṇās* are to be interpreted here as the modifications of the *buddhi*, just as in the teaching about the elements the word *guṇa* denotes the modification of the elements. The difference between the two texts lies in the relationship of *kṣetrajñā* and *sattva* to the self (*ātman*). For, whereas 187.40cd states that the self is the one who observes the *guṇās* (i.e. is the *kṣetrajñā*) but wrongly thinks himself to be their creator, according to the parallel passage 240.19ab the self in reality (*yathātatham*) is both, the observer (*paridraṣṭṛ*) and the creator (*sraṣṭṛ*) of the

21 This difference may also explain the parallel verses 187.23 and 240.8. According to 187.23 the essence of the *buddhi* consists of the three *bhāvās* (viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) and it never transcends them; according to 240.8 however it does transcend the three *bhāvās*, although its essence is said to consist in them (*bhāvātmikā*). In both chapters the passage at issue has variant readings—some manuscripts of 187.23 read *ativartate* instead of *nātivartate*, while some manuscripts of 240.8 read *nātivartate* instead of *ativartate*—yet this variance may be significant and point to an original difference of doctrine rather than being due to mere textual corruption. In 187.23 the *buddhi* does not transcend the three *bhāvās*, because only the ‘invisible one’, viz. the *kṣetrajñā*, transcends them. In 240.8 the *buddhi* does transcend them, since it is equated to the absolute self and as such is the transcendental ‘invisible one’.

22 Frauwallner (1992) translates *sattva* in this part of the texts with ‘die Güte’; Edgerton (1965) translates it with ‘essential (material) reality’. Van Buitenen (1957b, 95) distinguishes five meanings of the word *sattva* in the context of proto-Sāṃkhya: ‘1. *sattva* as the material counterpart of the *kṣetrajñā*; 2. as the *buddhi*; 3. as a *bhāva* of the *buddhi*; 4. as a state of well-being amounting to release; 5. as the first of the three *guṇās*’. Although van Buitenen takes *sattva* here in the first meaning, he observes that there is no real difference between the first and the second meaning: ‘In these early forms of Sāṃkhya creation does not necessarily start from a higher principle than the *buddhi*, e.g., *avyakta*, *pradhāna* or *prakṛti*, but from the *buddhi* itself; nor has the *ahaṃkāra* yet taken over the evolutionary functions of the *buddhi*. As the *buddhisattva* is indeed creation and thus the ‘material’ counterpart of the unaffected *kṣetrajñā*’ (1957b, 96–97). Cf. also Johnston 1937, 50–51.

*guṇās*. The doctrine underlying MBh 240 therefore seems to be that *kṣetrajñā* and *sattva* are two aspects of one and the same principle, viz. the *buddhi*, which is defined as the Self of man (MBh 240.3ab). If our analysis of these chapters is correct, it may explain a statement in the *Anugītā*.

Some wise men who are well established in knowledge declare the identity of the *kṣetrajñā* and the *sattva*, this is not correct.<sup>23</sup>

This verse may be taken to refer to those passages of 239–241 that teach the unity of the *kṣetrajñā* and the *sattva* within the self. This unity appears as two aspects (dialectical moments) of the *buddhi*: on the one hand as the transcendental subject, styled ‘*kṣetrajñā*’, on the other hand as the phenomenality (intentionality) of consciousness, styled ‘*sattva*’ (‘being’), that is intellect (*buddhi*) as activity, which comprises *manas*, the senses and their objects.

The ‘evolution theory’

We now return to the ‘evolution theory’ that van Buitenen found in his reconstructed tract. The verses van Buitenen used for his tract are those that deal with the modification of the *buddhi*. However, he mixes passages from 187 and 239–241, thereby blurring the difference between them. Frauwallner also conflates the texts, selecting material from all three dialogues and blending them into one ‘Grundtext’. The unacceptable consequences of this conflation can be seen when we look at the important difference between the *buddhi* using the sense-organs in 187 and the *buddhi* becoming the sense-faculties in 240, which difference is obliterated in the verses 18–19 of his ‘Grundtext’.

Wodurch es sieht, das ist das Auge. Hörend wird es Gehör genannt. Riechend wird es zum Geruch. Schmeckend ist es der Geschmack. Mit der Haut berührt es die Berührung. Vielfach wandelt sich das Erkennen. Wenn es etwas begehrt, dann wird es zum Denken.<sup>24</sup>

However, Frauwallner was right in his observation that the evolution theory of the Sāṃkhya is not attested in this text-group. Frauwallner has given three features of the evolution theory:

Die Vorstellung der Urmaterie (*prakṛti*), die Lehre von den drei Eigenschaften (*guṇās*) der Urmaterie und die Lehre von den 25 Wesenheiten.<sup>25</sup>

23 MBh 14.48.9: *āhur eke ca vidvāṃso ye jñāne supraṭiṣṭhitāḥ | kṣetrajñāsattvayor aikyam ity etan nopapadyate ||*

24 Frauwallner 1992, 82–83. Frauwallner’s eclectic translation finds some support in MBhB 12.286.19–20, since this text also seems to be a mixture of both theories (cf. Frauwallner 1992, 82, n. 34–36):

*yena paśyati tac cakṣuḥ śṛṇvati śrotram ucyate |  
jighratī bhavati ghrāṇaṃ rasatī rasanā rasān || 19 ||  
sparśanaṃ sparśatī sparśān buddhir vikriyate ‘sakṛt |  
yadā prārthayate kimcit tadā bhavati sā manaḥ || 20 ||*

25 Frauwallner 1953, 300.

We find none of them in these texts. What van Buitenen has styled a ‘horizontal evolution theory’ is different from what Frauwallner called an ‘evolution theory’. We would prefer to call the former a ‘teaching about the modification of the *buddhi*’. This teaching does not have a cosmological but a psychological status: it explains how the *buddhi* evolves the *manas* as its *bhāva* and subsequently differentiates into the sense-faculties. The ontological implications of this teaching conflict with the teaching about the elements in the first part of both texts, where it is said that not only the sense-organs and the sense-impressions, but also the sense-faculties have their origin in the elements. These texts therefore do not contain a consistent philosophy, but display the same diversity as so much of the *Mokṣadharmā*.

### THE MOKṢADHARMA: A PLURALITY OF VIEWS

The above analysis raises a number of questions, which—though, admittedly, they cannot all be answered—need to be addressed, if any progress into the early history of the Sāṃkhya philosophical tradition is to be made. These questions are closely connected with the source material from which we have to reconstruct that history; in this particular case: how do we conceive of the coming into being of the *Mahābhārata* text corpus, especially its largest book, the *Śāntiparvan*. Frauwallner’s hypothesis of one ‘Grundtext’ that had been transmitted independently for a long time, had consequently developed into three different recensions, before the latter were included in the text of the *Mokṣadharmā* by one or more redactors, only to be further mutilated in the course of transmission, that hypothesis proves untenable. As we have shown there are clearly different views underlying the dialogues of Yudhiṣṭhira and Bhīṣma (*adhyāya* 187) on the one hand, and that of Śuka and Vyāsa (*adhyāyas* 239–241) on the other. An irreconcilable discrepancy had also been van Buitenen’s starting point, but to explain it this scholar applied basically the same method as Frauwallner, though in more textual detail, when he constructed a new, smaller text out of both dialogues: ‘simply a text legitimately restored on the basis of two incomplete and corrupt versions’.<sup>26</sup>

However, instead of postulating or ‘restoring’ a ‘Grundtext’, we may make another assumption, namely that the redactor(s) of the *Mokṣadharmā* was acquainted with various guru-traditions (see below, p. 511), which he aimed to represent in different dialogues. These philosophical lineages may have been closely related, enough to employ the same jargon, including technical terms, expressions, metaphors and even verses; but within them different techniques to obtain inner tranquillity (*yoga*) may have developed, and accordingly different views to account for these experiences.

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<sup>26</sup> Van Buitenen 1956, 156.

A scenario opposite to the one proposed by Frauwallner may be envisaged: in the course of composition, redaction, transmission, further revision, and fixation of the *Mokṣadharmā* a tendency may have been at work to straighten out contradicting views. If this were the case, the starting point may not have been one ‘Grundtext’ that degenerated into various distorted representations, but rather a plurality of theories and views that found textual expression and was amalgamated in a *parvan* or sub-*parvan*, which became gradually more homogeneous in a process of composition-in-transmission (cf. above, p.177). This process may have been concomitant with the rise of the classical school of Sāṃkhya. In other words, rather than for an underlying unity we should search for diversity behind the apparent homogeneity. Paradoxically, greater philosophical homogeneity may have been accomplished at the cost of more textual inconsistencies. This genetic model would imply that, though the *Mokṣadharmā* as we have it offers already a bewildering diversity of often contradicting views, the historical reality at the time of its first composition was still more complex—each ashram, so to speak, having its own competing version of proto-Sāṃkhya philosophy and being keen on having it canonized in the Smṛti.

An original plurality may not only account for the essential differences between both dialogues, but also for unsolved philosophical problems within each. How does the theory of the five *mahābhūtas* and their differentiation within sensitive beings concord with the psychological or ideal world treated in the rest of both dialogues? We are here apparently concerned with a cosmological theory in which God, the *bhūtakṛt* mentioned in 187.7 and 239.6, plays a key role.<sup>27</sup> This same theory is found in other chapters of the *Mokṣadharmā*, which by Frauwallner are not styled ‘epische Urform des Sāṃkhya’.

This brings us to our final point. What justification, if any, is there to annex the two dialogues at issue to the Sāṃkhya tradition and not, for instance, the dialogue between Manu and Bṛhaspati? If the hallmark of Sāṃkhya is a rift between the material and ideal world, all three dialogues may be said to belong to the same multifarious stream from which classical Sāṃkhya emerged.

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27 Cf. MBh 12.121.55, 12.175.16.

## APPENDIX

## Some parallels of Mokṣadharmā 187 and 239–241

Mokṣadharmā 187	Mokṣadharmā 239–241
<p>A</p> <p>महाभूतानि पञ्चैव सर्वभूतेषु भूतकृत् । अकरोत्तेषु वैषम्यं तत्तु जीवो ऽनुपश्यति ॥ 187.7</p>	<p>इति तन्मयमेवेदं सर्वं स्थावरजङ्गमम् सर्गे च प्रलये चैव तस्मान्निर्दिश्यते तथा ॥ 239.5</p> <p>महाभूतानि पञ्चैव सर्वभूतेषु भूतकृत् । अकरोत्तात वैषम्यं यस्मिन्यदनुपश्यति ॥ 239.6</p> <p>शुक उवाच । अकरोद्यच्छरीरेषु कथं तदुपलक्षयेत् । इन्द्रियाणि गुणाः केचित् कथं तानुपलक्षयेत् ॥ 239.7</p>
<p>B</p> <p>ब्रेयं घ्राणं शरीरं च ते तु भूमिगुणास्त्रयः । महाभूतानि पञ्चैव षष्ठं तु मन उच्यते ॥ 187.10</p> <p>इन्द्रियाणि मनश्चैव विज्ञानान्यस्य भारत । सप्तमी बुद्धिरित्याहुः क्षेत्रज्ञः पुनरष्टमः ॥ 187.11</p>	<p>ब्रेयं घ्राणं शरीरं च भूमेरेते गुणास्त्रयः ॥ 239.11ab</p> <p>इन्द्रियाणि नरे पञ्च षष्ठं तु मन उच्यते ।</p> <p>सप्तमीं बुद्धिमेवाहुः क्षेत्रज्ञं पुनरष्टमम् ॥ 239.14</p>
<p>C</p> <p>अधिष्ठानानि बुद्धेर्हि पृथगर्थानि पञ्चधा । पञ्चेन्द्रियाणि यान्याहुस् तान्यदृश्यो ऽधितिष्ठति ॥ 187.20</p>	<p>अधिष्ठानानि वै बुद्ध्या पृथगेतानि संस्मरेत् ॥ 240.9cd</p> <p>इन्द्रियाणीति तान्याहुस् तेष्वदृश्याधितिष्ठति ॥ 240.6ab</p>

## Mokṣadharmā 187

## Mokṣadharmā 239–241

D चक्षुरालोकनायैव  
संशयं कुरुते मनः ।  
बुद्धिरध्यवसायाय  
क्षेत्रज्ञः साक्षिवत्स्थितः ॥ 187.12

ऊर्ध्वं पादतलाभ्यां यद्  
अर्वागूर्ध्वं च पश्यति ।  
एतेन सर्वमेवेदं  
विद्ध्यभिव्याप्तमन्तरम् ॥ 187.13

E येन पश्यति तच्चक्षुः  
शृणोति श्रोत्रमुच्यते ।  
जिघ्रति घ्राणमित्याह  
रसं जानाति जिह्वया ॥ 187.18  
त्वचा स्पृशति च स्पर्शान्  
बुद्धिर्विक्रियते ऽसकृत् ।  
येन संकल्पयत्यर्थं  
किञ्चिद्भवति तन्मनः ॥ 187.19

F

चक्षुरालोचनायैव  
संशयं कुरुते मनः ।  
बुद्धिरध्यवसानाय  
साक्षी क्षेत्रज्ञ उच्यते ॥ 239.15  
यथा कूर्म इहाङ्गानि  
प्रसार्य विनियच्छति ।  
एवमेवेन्द्रियग्रामं  
बुद्धिः सूष्ट्वा नियच्छति ॥ 239.17  
यदूर्ध्वं पादतलयोर्  
अवाण्मूर्ध्वञ्च पश्यति ।  
एतस्मिन्नेव कृत्ये वै  
वर्तते बुद्धिरुत्तमा ॥ 239.18

शृण्वती भवति श्रोत्रं  
स्पृशती स्पर्श उच्यते ॥ 240.4cd  
पश्यन्ती भवते दृष्टी  
रसती रसनं भवेत् ।  
जिघ्रती भवति घ्राणं  
बुद्धिर्विक्रियते पृथक् ॥ 240.5  
यदा प्रार्थयते किञ्चित्  
तदा भवति सा मनः ॥ 240.9ab

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था  
अर्थेभ्यः परमं मनः ।  
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्  
बुद्धेरात्मा परो मतः ॥ 240.2  
बुद्धिरात्मा मनुष्यस्य  
बुद्धिरेवात्मनो ऽत्मिका ।  
यदा विकुरुते भावं  
तदा भवति सा मनः ॥ 240.3  
इन्द्रियाणां पृथग्भावाद्  
बुद्धिर्विक्रियते ह्यणु ॥ 240.4ab

## Mokṣadharmā 187

## Mokṣadharmā 239–241

G सत्त्वक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेतद्  
अन्तरं पश्य सूक्ष्मयोः ।  
सृजते तु गुणानेक  
एको न सृजते गुणान् ॥ 187.37  
मशकोदुम्बरौ चापि  
संप्रयुक्तौ यथा सदा ।

अन्योन्यमन्यौ च यथा  
संप्रयोगस्तथा तयोः ॥ 187.38  
पृथग्भूतौ प्रकृत्या तौ  
संप्रयुक्तौ च सर्वदा ।  
यथा मत्स्यो जलं चैव  
संप्रयुक्तौ तथैव तौ ॥ 187.39  
न गुणा विदुरात्मानं  
स गुणान्वेत्ति सर्वशः ।  
परिदृष्टा गुणानां च  
संज्ञा मन्यते सदा ॥ 187.40

सत्त्वक्षेत्रज्ञयोरेतद्  
अन्तरं विद्धि सूक्ष्मयोः ॥ 240.19cd  
सृजते तु गुणानेक  
एको न सृजते गुणान् ॥ 240.20ab  
मशकोदुम्बरौ चापि  
संप्रयुक्तौ यथा सह ॥ 240.21cd  
इषीका वा यथा मुञ्जे  
पृथक्च सह चैव च ।  
तथैव सहितावेताव्  
अन्योन्यस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठितौ ॥ 240.22

पृथग्भूतौ प्रकृत्या तौ  
संप्रयुक्तौ च सर्वदा ॥ 240.20cd  
यथा मत्स्यो ऽद्विरन्यः सन्  
संप्रयुक्तौ तथैव तौ ॥ 240.21ab  
न गुणा विदुरात्मानं  
गुणान्वेद स सर्वदा ॥ 240.18cd  
परिदृष्टा गुणानां स  
स्रष्टा चैव यथातथम् ॥ 240.19ab

# Observations on the History and Culture of Dakṣiṇa Kosala\*

Fifth to Seventh Centuries AD

## INTRODUCTION

The historiography of the region called Dakṣiṇa Kosala, nowadays generally known as Chhattisgarh, is beset with difficulties of a predominantly chronological nature. Apart from quite a number of inscriptions, we do not possess written sources that can help us to unravel its early history. The chronological problems are due to the fact that, with one isolated exception, the charters of its kings are dated in regnal years. Moot questions, such as the dating of the kings of Śarabhapur, the relation, if any, between the Pāṇḍava dynasties of Mekalā and Kosala, or the date of King Tivaradeva, have been discussed again and again by a number of scholars during the last fifty years, a debate that has been dominated by three eminent Indian epigraphists, V.V. Mirashi, D.C. Sircar, and A.M. Shastri. A first reading of this fascinating corpus of learned articles gives the uncomfortable feeling that these three scholars disagree among themselves on almost every issue. Only laborious study makes one realize that in this debate a large body of historical evidence has been disclosed and evaluated, as a result of which we know to date considerably more about the history and culture of this region than half a century ago. Still, many inscriptions await publication and this is, unfortunately, in particular true for those on stone. Unlike copperplate charters, stone epigraphs often inform us about particular historical circumstances and details beyond the official royal records. They are less formal and regulated, but they are usually more difficult to decipher and this may have hampered their publication.

It seems a whim of fate that the only inscription belonging to this period and said to be found in this area that is dated in a known era, scil. the Gupta Era, has no apparent connection with any of the other data. I refer to the

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*Āraṅg Copper-Plate of Bhīmasena II.* Though in this case the era is known, there is uncertainty with regard to the reading of the year. Hiralal, who edited the inscription (EI IX, 342–345), read 282, which would mean AD 601/2. This would make it the latest record dated in the Gupta Era in an area in which Gupta influence had virtually disappeared one century earlier.<sup>1</sup> Mirashi has vigorously argued against this interpretation, which was accepted by Sircar and Shastri, and has made it plausible that we should read 182 instead of 282.<sup>2</sup> This would place Bhīmasena of the Śūra family in that phase of the history of Dakṣiṇa Kosala, in which it emerged as a politically and culturally autonomous state. Bhīmasena may therefore be seen as a figure who, in the turmoil of the age, hoped, by pledging allegiance to the once mighty Guptas, to secure a dominant position in the political arena of his days. However, Gupta support no longer amounted to much, and Bhīmasena and his dynasty disappeared from the scene without leaving a trace.<sup>3</sup> His inscription can therefore not be used for absolute dating of the dynastic history of Kosala,<sup>4</sup> and hence we have left it out of account in the following reconstruction.

There is another important source of the history of Kosala, viz. the archaeological materials in which this region abounds. Major contributions to their systematic and coherent treatment were made by Donald Stadtner in his thesis *Sirpur to Rajim: the Art of Kosala During the Seventh Century*,<sup>5</sup> and by Krishna Deva in the *Encyclopedia of Indian Temple Architecture* (II.1, Chapter 18, 1988). But whereas the archaeologists and historians of art concentrate on the abundance of material remains, and the historians and epigraphists on a sizeable corpus of inscriptions, very few attempts have been made to an integral treatment. Although, in my opinion, only such a study can really deepen our understanding of the cultural history of this region, the present article does

1 'The Sumandal copperplate inscription of King Prthivivigraha who was the ruler of Kaliṅga, refers to the sovereignty of the Guptas in the year 250, i.e. A.D. 569/70. This was perhaps the last flicker of an extinguishing lamp.' (Agrawal 1989, 269). Cf. Bakker 2014, 60.

2 EI XXVI, 227; see also many of Mirashi's later publications. Although the Plate is reported to have been found in Arang, this seems by no means certain. The place of issue, Suvarṇanadī, is identified by Sircar as the River Son, though the Mahānadī might be another possibility. The characters of the inscription, according to Sircar (*op. cit.* 342), 'belong to the Northern class of alphabets'.

3 A king named Harirāja, son of Niṣṭhurarāja, grandson of Bhāgraharāja (?), said to belong to the Śūra family, is known from a copperplate charter found in Vārāṇasī. The open nail-headed letters of this inscription point to Central India (possibly Dakṣiṇa Kosala), which led Michael Willis (2014, 109) to conclude that 'this plate, although belonging to the fifth century, was found outside of its first geographical context'. King Harirāja and his Queen Anantamahādevī may have belonged to the same *vaṃśa* as Bhīmasena, though the latter's inscription does not mention Harirāja and his ancestors in its pedigree. Neither the place of issue, Śāntanapura, nor the village in which land was donated, Āmbrakanagara, have been identified. See Bhattacharya 1945, 167–73. Also Chhabra 1949, 47–48 and Plates XXI–XXII.

4 In this article 'Kosala' is shorthand for Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

5 Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley 1976.

not have that pretention. It was written after a short visit to Chhattisgarh and touches only on a fraction of its historical wealth. What it does hope to illustrate, however, is that the methodology employed, consisting in utilization of sources of various sorts with the aim of cross-fertilisation, is in principle a sound and fruitful one. Whether this is borne out by the following essay is up to the reader to decide.

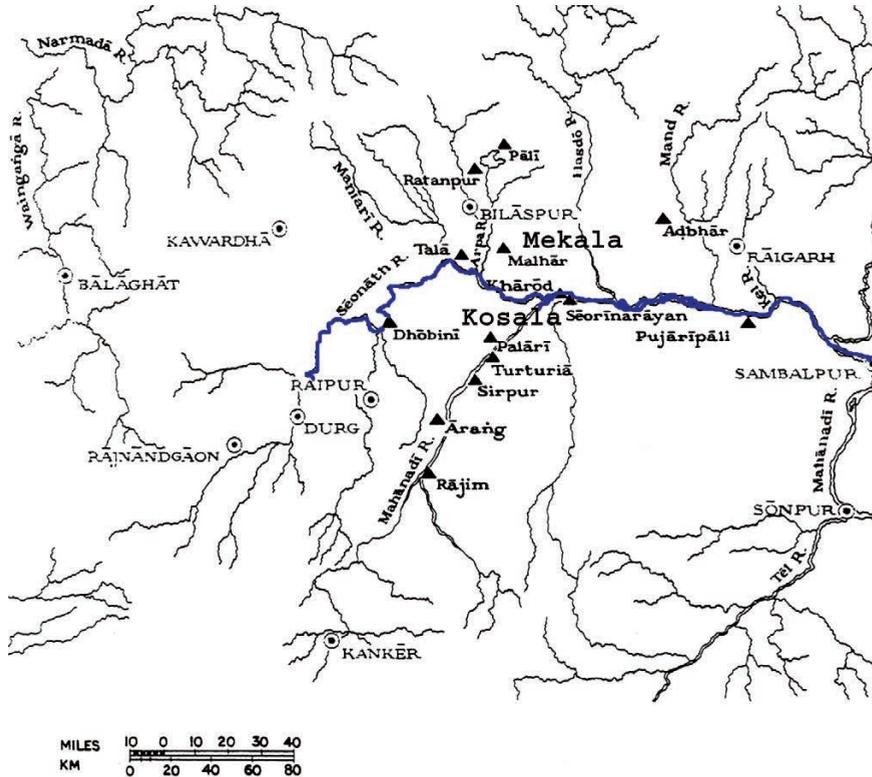


Figure 2  
Historical map of Mekalā and Dakṣiṇa Kosala

## THE PĀṄDAVAS OF MEKALĀ

This lineage of Pāṇḍavas is known from two inscriptions, both to be ascribed to the last recorded member of the dynasty, Śūrabala, alias Udirṇavaira, dating from the 2nd and 8th years of his reign.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Bamhanī Plates of Pāṇḍava king Bharatabala: year 2* (EI XXVII, 132–145; also in CII V, 82–88). This charter, found in the village Bamhani in Shahdol District, is probably

	Amarāyaka / Maukharis	Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā and Kosala	Śarabhapurīyas of Kosala
AD 450		Jayabala Vatsarāja = Droṇabhāṭṭārakā Nāgabala = Indrabhāṭṭārakā	Śarabha *Narendra (Mahendrādītya) (coins) (coins) Prasannamātra
AD 500	Jayabhāṭṭāraka *Vyāghrarāja Pravrabhāṭṭāraka	'Lokprakāśā' = (*Bharatabala / <b>Indrabala</b> ? *Śūrabala *Nannarāja I (?) *Īśānadeva (*Bhavadeva	Durgarāja *Jayarāja *Sudevarāja *Pravararāja
AD 550	*Īśānavarman	Candragupta *Tivaradeva	
(AD 554)	Sūryavarman	Harṣagupta *Nannarāja II	
AD 600	Bhāskaravarman (*Vāsaṭā = Harṣagupta *Mahāśivagupta		

Figure 3  
Dynasties of Mekalā and Dakṣiṇa Kosala

	Śarabhapur	Śrīpura (Sirpur)	Prasannapur	?	Maṇḍaka
AD 450	Śarabha (founder) Narendra (Mahendrādītya) Prasannamātra			Jayabala Vatsarāja Nāgabala	
AD 500	Jayarāja Sudevarāja	Sudevarāja (founder) Indrabala (śāmanta) Pravararāja Nannarāja I	Prasannamātra (founder) Jayabhāṭṭāraka Pravrabhāṭṭāraka	[Udayana]- Bharatabala / Indrabala (śāmanta) Śūrabala	
AD 550		Tivaradeva Nannarāja II (Harṣagupta)			
AD 600		Mahāśivagupta			

Figure 4  
Dynastic capitals of Mekalā and Dakṣiṇa Kosala

to be ascribed to Bharatabala's son Śūrabala, as a comparison with the latter's 'Malhar Plates' (JESI III, 183–193) suggests. A third, incomplete inscription in nail-headed characters, is reported by K.D. Bajpai 1977-78, 433–37. It concerns the second of three plates, found in Būrhikhar (near Malhar). It contains a prose passage, followed by two verses in praise of King Nāgabala and one incomplete verse referring to his Queen Indrabhāṭṭārīkā.

A descendant of the legendary Pāṇḍu, this king considers himself to belong to the Lunar Race (*somavaṃśa*). The first two kings in the genealogy according to both inscriptions are styled *rāja* and *nṛpati*, the later kings *mahārāja*. Son of Jayabala, founder of the dynasty, is Vatsarāja, from whose marriage with Droṇabhaṭṭārakā *mahārāja* Nāgabala is born. From the latter's marriage with Indrabhaṭṭārakā is born *mahārāja* Bharatabala, who is eulogized as a great warrior.<sup>7</sup> Bharatabala married a daughter of a family descending from Amara (*amarajakula*), a fact that is particularly emphasized. This princess, designated as 'Lokaprakāśā', is said to hail from Kosalā.<sup>8</sup> The accentuation of her origin seems to indicate that this relationship of the Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā with a leading family in Dakṣiṇa Kosala was of some importance to them. According to the inscription of the 8th regnal year, the son born out of this marriage, Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira, allowed a donation to be made by one Narasiṅha, son of Boṭa, of a village at a confluence (*saṃgama*), situated in the southern province of Mekalā (*mekalāyāṃ dakṣiṇarāṣṭre*), to a temple of Jayeśvarabhaṭṭāraka.<sup>9</sup> The Śaiva leanings of this king not only appear from the recipient of the endowment, Jayeśvarabhaṭṭāraka (i.e. Śiva), whose eulogy opens the Malhar Plates,<sup>10</sup> but also from the seal attached to them, which 'bears in relief the figure of a

7 Of the four verses eulogizing King Bharatabala in the Bamhanī Plates (EI XXVII, 141, vv. 5–8), two (7–8) are omitted, one (6) replaced by another, and one (5) retained in the Malhar Plates (JESI III, 190).

8 Of the two verses (9–10) eulogizing this princess in the Bamhanī Plates (EI XXVII, 141) the first one (9) has been substituted by a prose passage in the Malhar Plates saying that she was the mother of *mahārāja* Śūrabala (JESI III, 190 f.). The two verses are presented below, n. 23 on p. 242. The Malhar Plates read *jātā yā kosalāyāṃ*, and, in my opinion, the Bamhanī Plates read the same (cf. Mirashi in CII V, 85 f.). The feminine form 'Kosalā' could mean 'town of Kosala' (cf. Kosalā = Ayodhyā, MBh 3.75.3; Bakker 1986 I, 6,7,9), but it seems equally possible that the actual name of the area was Kosalā (see EI XXXI, 221 ll. 8–9 *kosalāmaṇḍala*; CII V, 81 l. 27 and VSMA 1971/72, 75 l. 22 *kosalā-mekalā*; however CII V, 108 l. 14 reads *kosala-trikūṭa*). There is an old village Kosalā at the Kamji River, 25 km east of Malhar. 'The antiquity of this large site, which has several mounds and the remains of a moat all round, go [sic] back at least to the Maurya period. Apart from early historical pottery, a copper coin of the Kushāṇa emperor Vima-Kadphises was acquired by us from the site.' (Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 21).

9 JESI III, 191 f. (text corrected):

*tato mekalāyāṃ dakṣiṇarāṣṭre saṃgamagrāmake grāmakūṭapramukhaṃ nāyakapramukhaṃ ca grāmaṃ samājñāpayati | viditam astu vo 'smābhir ayaṃ grāmaḥ sodraṅgaḥ [...] mātāpitrōr ātmanaś ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye yatra vaṇīkamanorathapautrasya boṭaputrasya narasiṅhasya prasādīkṛtas tad anenāpy asmadanumatyā bhagavataḥ śrījayeśvarabhaṭṭārakasya pratipāditaḥ ||*

*prasādīkṛtas* seems to imply that the village was actually held in fief by Narasiṅha, who therefore needed the permission of Śūrabala for the donation (cf. Sircar in *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* s.v. *pasāita*).

10 JESI III, 189 (text corrected):

*aparimitaguṇasamudayasya bhagavatas trisūlapāṇer varavṛṣabhavāhasya sphuradbhujagaparikarasyaṇaṅgāṅgavidhvamśinaḥ tridaśapatimutacaranābjayugalasya śrījayeśvarabhaṭṭārakasyaedaṃ śāsanaṃ likhyate śrīyudīrṇavairānumatyā ||*

couchant bull (Nandin)'.<sup>11</sup> The findspot of the inscription, Malhar,<sup>12</sup> suggests that the mentioned *dakṣiṇarāṣṭra* actually bordered on the northern parts of Kosala, which may have come under the sway of the house of Mekalā thanks to the matrimonial alliance contracted by Bharatabala. It would seem that in the 6th century the course of the rivers Sevnāth and Mahānadi running west to east was considered to be the border between Mekalā and Kosalā (see Figure 2).

The characters of Śūrabala's inscriptions, showing a mixture of square-headed (especially the letter *ma*) and triangular-headed letters, are compared with the grants of Prabhāvati Gupta,<sup>13</sup> but Sitaraman & Sharma (JESI III, 184) rightly observe that they may rather be compared with those of the Malhar Plates of Vyāghrarāja and the Malgā Plates of Sāmanta Indrarāja.<sup>14</sup> In order to specify the dynasty's links with Kosala we shall have a closer look at the evidence regarding a family (*kula*) descending (*ja*) from Amara.

### THE FAMILY DESCENDING FROM AMARA IN KOSALA

This family is known from an inscription of Vyāghrarāja, which was also found in Malhar.<sup>15</sup> The characters of the inscription are, in the words of D. C. Sircar, 'nail-headed and the triangular mark forming the top of the letters is of the linear or hollow type; [...] (they) may be assigned to the 6th century' (EI XXXIV, 45).

11 JESI III, 184. The seal is damaged; the upper half contains the image of a bull, 'the lower half bears a legend in one line consisting of four letters which may be read as *śrīpurusaḥ*'.

12 As reported above, n. 6 on p. 238, another incomplete inscription of this dynasty is said to have been found in Būrhikhar, adjacent to Malhar; it is in the possession of an inhabitant of Malhar (Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 23). In their excavation report these authors argue in favour of the identity of Malhar and Śarabhapur, and in my view they have established that of all possible candidates Malhar holds the best claim of being the ancient capital of the Śarabhapuriya kings, by virtue of its being the major findspot of inscriptions and its possession of a wealth of archaeological material, only comparable to that of Sirpur (*op. cit.* 26 ff.).

13 Chhabra in EI XXVII, 132. Mirashi (CII V, 82) remarks about the inscription of the 2nd regnal year: 'They resemble in some respects those of the Poona Plates of Prabhāvati Gupta, which also are of the same nail-headed variety, but unlike the latter, they do not contain any admixture of the northern letters.'

14 Bosma 2018, 22 ff. argues that Bharatabala and the *sāmanta* Indrabala are one and the same person. I consider this a plausible hypothesis. It would make Śūrabala the fourth, missing, son of Indrabala. That Indrabala had a fourth son, in addition to Nannarāja, Īśānadeva and Bhavadeva, seems to follow from the Mālinī verse 19 of the *Āraṅg Stone Inscription of Bhavadeva Raṇakesarin and Nannarāja* (JRAS 1905, 626; Shastri 1995 II, 97), which is only partly legible:

*suvihitavṛṣa* -----, ----- |  
 ----- lokopakāri, bhava iva bhavadevas tasya putras turīyaḥ || 19 ||

15 Mallar Plates of Vyaghraraja (EI XXXIV, 45–50).

Vyāghrarāja is the younger brother of a chieftain (*manujapati*) Pravaraabhaṭṭāraka, a son of Jayabhaṭṭāraka, who is without title except for the honorific *śrī*. The family to which they belong is said to be that of Amarārya,<sup>16</sup> on which Sircar passes the following remark,

The expression *Amar-ārya* looks like a Brahmanical personal name and names of the same type are often met with in South Indian records. It may be supposed that Jayarāja's [i.e. Jayabhaṭṭāraka's, H.T.B.] queen who gave birth to Pravara I [i.e. Pravaraabhaṭṭāraka, H.T.B.] and Vyāghra was the daughter of a person named Amar-ārya or was born in a family of which a person of that name was believed to have been the progenitor, since South Indian rulers sometimes represented themselves as belonging to the family from which their mother sprang. (EI XXXIV, 48)

If Sircar is right, the Amarārya family was partly of South Indian origin; apparently through affiliation with a family of Kosala, they came to belong to the aristocratic circles of that country. In this way they attained to the status of local chieftains in the 'umbrageous' residence Prasannapur on the bank of the River Niḍilā, 'the waters of which were divided through being struck by the round hips of the concubines of Pravara (/ of distinguished lovely women)'.<sup>17</sup> Town and river are as yet not been identified.<sup>18</sup>

The charter of Vyāghrarāja, provided with his own seal,<sup>19</sup> reading *śrī-vyāghrarājah*, is stylistically very different from the inscriptions of the so-called Śarabhapuriyas. Despite these differences Sircar argued in favour of an identity

16 *amarāryakulāmbaraśaśinaḥ* [...] *śrīpravaraabhaṭṭārakasya*. In view of the comparatively few pretensions voiced in this charter, it seems rather unlikely that a 'divine' (*amara*) origin of the family was envisaged.

17 EI XXXIV, 49: *prasanmapurād upavanavanarājirājītād amarapurakīrtivijayinaḥ pravarakāmīnīnitambimbābhigātabhinnāmbasā ca srotasvatyā niḍilayā pavitrīkṛtād* [...]

18 Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 28 identify the Niḍilā river with 'Lilāgar and the Pūrva-Rāṣṭra was the region across the left bank of this river'. I fail to see the specific connection between Niḍilā (Skt. Niṭala/niṭāla, 'forehead' ?) and Lilāgar ('play-ditch' ?). Another possibility would be the site of Kosalā at the Kaṃjī Nadī (Brown River) 18 km eastwards (below, n. 23 on p. 242). 'According to Sircar and Bhattacharya, it is not improbable that Prasannapura was situated in the neighbourhood of Śrīpura' (Shastri 1995 II, 67). Mahajan 2000, 92 identifies Prasannapura with 'Parasvani, Mahasamund tehsil, Raipur district'.

19 Sircar & Bhattacharya in EI XXXIV, 45:

The surface of the seal, which is 1.9 inches in diameter and is much corroded, has a thick line dividing it into two halves. The section above the line exhibits three symbols, viz. the side view of a *cakra* in the left, the head of an animal (probably a lion) to front in the middle, and a conch-shell in the right. The legend below the line, written in Southern characters similar to those employed in writing the text of the document on the plates, reads *śrīvyāghrarājah*. There is another symbol below the legend, which is difficult to identify, though it may be the head of an elephant to front. It will be seen that Vyāghrarāja's seal is totally unlike the seal of the Śarabhapuriya kings [...].

Shastri (JESI IX, 40) sees a 'bird (probably *garuḍa*)' instead of a lion, and a lotus flower instead of an elephant.

of the two dynasties. Ajay Mitra Shastri (1987, 179 ff.), on the other hand, who convincingly refuted Sircar's hypothesis, thinks the Amarārya family to be one of independent rulers 'contemporaneously with the later kings of the Śārabhapur family in a part of Kosala *not included in the dominions of the Śārabhapurīyas*'.<sup>20</sup> The last clause, however, is unlikely to be true. There is little in Vyāghrarāja's inscription that points to a sovereign royal dynasty. Admittedly, the charter does not refer explicitly to an overlord, but we should keep in mind that it was not issued by the *manujapati* himself, of whom we do not possess any inscription, whereas Vyāghrarāja may have thought it sufficient to mention only his direct superior, his elder brother. Anyhow, they must have ruled very near to the kings of Śārabhapur, whose charters are also found in Malhar.

The name of the residence, Prasannapur, seems to indicate that this town belonged to the dominions of the Śārabhapurīya king Prasannamātra, an issuer of repoussé gold coins, or his successor Jayarāja. Shastri himself rightly remarks, 'that Prasannamātra was a powerful ruler [who] had thrown off the yoke of the Guptas and started ruling as a sovereign monarch for all intents and purposes' (Shastri 1987, 183). Consequently it does not seem plausible that Prasannamātra or his successor would have tolerated an independent ruler in the close vicinity of his own capital. It may even cautiously be suggested that the 'right honourable royal officers of the king',<sup>21</sup> in whose presence Vyāghrarāja's grant was declared, and the year 41 of the 'reign in which victory ever increases',<sup>22</sup> should be understood as referring to the ruling king of Śārabhapur.

Whatever the exact relationship of the Amarāryakula with the rulers of Śārabhapur might have been, the marriage of the king of Mekalā, Bharatabala, with a princess of the former family seems to have furnished the hill people of the Maikala Range with a foothold in the fertile plains of Kosala, of which they were proud enough to have it explicitly mentioned in their charters.<sup>23</sup>

20 Shastri 1987, 181; italics mine.

21 EI XXXIV, 49 ll. 9–10: *rājñāḥ sumānyarājapuruṣān*.

22 EI XXXIV, 50: *iti pravardhamānavijayarājyasamvat 40 1 pauṣa-di 20* [7].

23 Sanskrit verses (Mālinī and Sragdharā) of the Bamhanī Plates praising the princess of the family descending from Amara, according to Mirashi's edition in CII V, 85 f. ll. 25–31:

*ekaiva* [i.e. Queen Lokaparakāśā],  
*sphaṭikavimalaśubhram bibhratī śīlatoyam,*  
*yamanīyamataṭāntaprāntaśuddhapravāham |*  
*praśamagunaḡaḡormir yā janaḡ pāvayantī,*  
*svayam iha suralokād āgatā jāhnavīva || 9 ||*  
*śrīmacāndrāmśūkīrter bharatabalanṛpasyottamā rājapatnī,*  
*jātā yā kosalāyām amarajakulajāḡ kīrtim uccair dadhānā |*  
*śāśvaddharmārthakāmaprativihītatamātīva lokaparakāśā,*  
*yātā pautraiḡ prapautiraiḡ nayavinayaratai rājasimhaiḡ pratiṣṭhām || 10 ||*

In 10b I read °*kulajāḡ*: °*kulajā* Mirashi (the *anusvāra* is clearly visible in the Bamhanī Plate). In 10c I read with Mirashi °*prativihīta-tamātīva* (double sandhi m.c.); an alternative would be to read a superlative: *prativihītatamā atīva*, 'deeply devoted (?) to a high degree' (cf. Shastri 1995 II, 75). Translation:

However, it did not yet bring them sovereignty over Kosala, which for the greater part remained in the hands of the rulers of Śārabhapur for at least one more generation.<sup>24</sup>

## THE RULERS OF ŚĀRABHAPUR

The kings who issued their charters from Śārabhapur, generally designated as Śārabhapurīyas in want of any other dynastic nomination, may be divided into two groups, which are linked by similarity in the style of their seals and inscriptions as well as by their capital.<sup>25</sup> Kings of both groups call themselves *paramabhāgavatas*, i.e. worshippers of Viṣṇu. To the earlier group belongs *mahārāja* Narendra, son of Śārabha, of whom we possess three epigraphical testimonies, written in 5th-century square-headed characters which we think very similar to the ones used in the charters of the Vākāṭaka kings.<sup>26</sup> Also to be included in this group is a king called Mahendra or Mahendrāditya, who is known from repoussé gold coins of the Khairtal Hoard,<sup>27</sup> and, possibly, from a

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Peerless, the chief queen of King Bharatabala, whose fame resembles the illustrious rays of the moon—she, being as it were the river Gaṅgā herself descended to earth from the world of the gods, who purifies the people, carrying the waters of her good character, bright and spotless like cristal, her pure stream contained within the two banks formed by self-control and good conduct, and her waves being a mass of virtues and tranquility—she, being born in Kosalā and holding high the fame of the family descending from Amara, and being very much the ‘Lustre of the World’ (Lokaprakāśā), by whom darkness has been counteracted by means of eternal *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*, she has attained preeminence (owing to) her grandsons and great-grandsons, princes like lions, devoted to good policy and conduct.

Cf. EI XXVII, 141; JESI III, 190 f.

24 Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 23 f. seem to argue in a quite confusing and incoherent way that Śārabhapur was the capital of the Pāṇḍava dynasty of Mekalā, in spite of the fact that the name of that town does not feature in their inscriptions.

25 On Śārabhapur see above, n. 12 on p. 240.

26 *Pīparḍūlā Copper-Plate Inscription of King Narendra of Śārabhapur* (IHQ XIX (1943), 139–146), dating from regnal year 3; *Kurud Plates of Narendra, year 24* (EI XXXI, 263–268); *Rawan Plates of Maharaja Narendra* (JESI VI (1979), 44 f.). Sircar (SI I, 488) describes the characters of the Pīparḍūlā Plates as ‘box-headed variety of the Central Indian Alphabet of the 5th or 6th century A.D.’ In IHQ XIX, 140 the same author remarked ‘Medial *ī* is of the older type and is not represented by a dot in the circle (which indicates medial *ī*) as the Āraṅṅ grant of Jayarāja and the Ṭhākurdīyā grant of Pravaraṛāja.’

27 V. P. Rode in JNSI X, 137–142:

They are all single-die coins with the device and legend embossed on the obverse. The reverse is blank. They measure .78 to .87 inches in diameter and weigh from 19 to 20.2 grains each. They bear on the obverse, inside the circle of dots along the edge, Garuḍa standing on a horizontal line with wings spread out. To his proper right are the Crescent-Moon and a Chakra encircled by dots and to his proper left the Sun symbol and Śaṅkha. Below the line is the legend “Śrī Mahendrāditya” in the box-

sealing found in the excavation in Malhar.<sup>28</sup>

In his Kurud Plates Narendra reconfirms an earlier grant of the *paramabhaṭṭāraka* and the ensuing merit is also assigned to the latter. Sircar (EI XXXI, 267) argues convincingly that the respectful manner in which the *paramabhaṭṭāraka* is mentioned shows that Narendra ‘still considered himself, howsoever nominally, a subordinate of the Imperial Guptas’. Another argument in favour of an allegiance of Śarabha and Narendra to the Imperial Guptas pursued by A. M. Shastri, who follows Sircar in this respect, has been contested by Mirashi in his later work. According to Sircar, Shastri and others, Narendra’s father Śarabha is ‘identical with the maternal grandfather of Goparāja who died in fighting on behalf of the Gupta monarch Bhānugupta at Eran [...] in the Gupta year 191 (= AD 510)’.<sup>29</sup> In his *Indological Research Papers I* (1982, 187 f.) Mirashi gives up his earlier view and argues against this identification, though, in our view, he missed the most plausible argument, which was formulated by J. Williams as follows: ‘Śarabha cannot be the maternal grandfather of Goparāja of Eran, called *śarabharāja-dauhittṛaḥ*. That term is used only when a male heir is lacking, and Śarabha of Kosala had a son’ (scil. Narendra).<sup>30</sup>

When the ‘Goparāja argument’ has thus proven to be invalid, there seems to be no longer any reason not to date King Śarabha around the middle of the 5th century, as one is inclined to do on the basis of the palaeography of the inscriptions of his son. The *paramabhaṭṭāraka* to whom Narendra refers might therefore have been Kumāragupta I himself, whose *biruda* and coinage the kings of Kosala, in particular Mahendra/Mahendrāditya, may have sought to imitate.<sup>31</sup> During the second half of the 5th century, when Mahendra and Narendra ruled—Narendra at least for 24 years—Gupta power was certainly on the wane, a fact of which the Vākāṭaka kings Hariṣeṇa and Narendrasena may have temporarily taken advantage, to judge by their claims of suzerainty over Kosala/Kosalā and Mekalā.<sup>32</sup> However, a disruption of the rule of Śarabhapur

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headed characters of the 5th–6th century A.D. Below the legend are a cluster of seven dots and a letter ‘*ru*’ (?); in one case the letter looks like *u* or *d*. [...] The legend on these coins is in box-headed characters which resemble those of the Pīparḍulā grant of King Narendra of Śarabhapur family: (*op. cit.* 137 f.)

Another hoard found in Bhandara contains one coin of Śrī-Mahendrāditya and eleven coins of Śrī-Prasannamātra (JNSI XVI, 216).

28 Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 24. The excavators ‘feel inclined to identify the Mahendra of the sealing with his namesake mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta’ (*kausalakamahendra*?, CII III (1888), 7 l. 19). If this were correct, the owner of this seal can not have been the issuer of the gold coins.

29 Sircar in EI XXXI, 267; cf. CII III (1888), 91–93; Shastri 1987, 175; Mirashi in EI XXII, 17.

30 Williams 1982, 25; cf. Kane III, 715 f.

31 Sircar EI XXXI, 268; cf. Altekar’s note at Rode’s publication of the Khairtal Hoard (JNSI X, 142): ‘All things considered I am at present inclined to think that the present coins were not issued by any Gupta emperor, but were the issues of some ruler in Mahākośala, who had adopted the *biruda* of Mahendrāditya. It is not improbable that he may have borrowed the device from the Gupta coinage.’

32 CII V, 108 l. 14; CII V, 81 ll. 27 f.; VSMA 1971/72, 75 l. 22.

did not come from the side of the Vākāṭakas, as it would seem, but may have been brought about by their enemies, the Nala kings of Puṣkarī from the Andhra country to the southeast of Kosala, when they overran the kingdom of the Vākāṭakas in the last decade of the 5th century.<sup>33</sup>

In fact the end of the 5th century marked the end of an era; when Prasannamātra succeeded in reorganizing Śarabhapur's power and started issuing gold coins in his own name, he might have done so temporarily from another residence, viz. Prasannapur, which may have afterwards been turned over to the Amarārya family. The beginnings of the 6th century may have also offered enough freedom to the kings of Mekalā to call themselves *mahārāja*, beginning with Nāgabala. The new élan of the Śarabhapurīya rulers clearly speaks from the first Malhar Plates of Prasannamātra's son Jayarāja, which dates from his 5th regnal year. Grafted on earlier formal phrases, the epigraphs contain from this time onwards high flown eulogies, not yet heard in Kosala and Mekalā, such as,

The illustrious great Jayarāja, giver of riches, land and cattle, who made the women of his enemies tear out their parted hair, whose feet are washed by the sprinkling water that is the brilliance of the crest-jewels of his feudatories who have been brought into submission by his prowess, great devotee of the Lord, favoured by his venerable father and mother.<sup>34</sup>

The same élan gave rise to the construction of stone temples, the oldest of which may date back to the first half of the 6th century. In the remains of some of them Vākāṭaka influences are still distinct, as in, for instance, the door-frame and some pillars preserved in the (later) Rāmacandra Temple in Rajim or almost identical pillars found in Turturiya.<sup>35</sup>

33 Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 68 (above, n.67 on p.142); Bakker 1997, 53–57. This would explain from where the Nalas got the idea of issuing their own gold coins, which were devised after those of Mahendrāditya (Mirashi in JNSI XI, 109f.).

34 EI XXXIII, 157 ll. 1–2:

*vikramopanasāmanta-cūdāmaṇi-prabhā-prasekāmbubhir dhautapādayugalo ripuvilāsi-nīśīmantoddharaṇahetur vasuvasudhāgopradah paramabhāgavato mātāpitṛpādānu-dhyātaḥ śrīmahājāyarājaḥ.*

35 Stadtner 1980, 47. Krishna Deva in EITA II.1, 225: 'Of two early pillars in the Rāmacandra Temple, one is Rucaka, the other octagonal with a circular fluted laśuna and crowning members. Similar pillars are known from Turturiā. These Mahākōsala art forms, which reveal the diffused impact of Vākāṭaka prototypes, can be dated c. AD 525–550.' For photographs of the pillars in the Rāmacandra Temple see EITA II.1. nos. 439–443; for those in Turturiya see ASI XIII (1882), Plate no. XVII. For another pillar, found at the entrance of the temple at Turturiya, see below, Plate 17. Krishna Deva's description of the Rucaka pillar to the effect that 'the lower two-fifths [...] is plain; the upper three-fifths is carved in three zones' is probably based on the photograph II.D 2. No. 443, since actually the lower two-fifths consists of two panels in low relief (below, Plate 16). Other (?) pillars of this temple are reported by Cunningham to have been brought here 'about 250 years ago (some say 400) by Govind Sāh, Kamāsdār of Raypur' from the Lakṣmaṇa Temple in Sirpur 'in boats' (ASI XVII, 28). See also Viennot 1958, 138–140; Dikshit 1960, 31 f.



*Plate 16*  
*Rucaka pillar (north side)*  
*Rāmacandra Temple in Rajim*



*Plate 17*  
*Pillar at the entrance of*  
*temple in Turturiya*

After the collapse of the Vākāṭaka empire artisans may have travelled and helped to create new styles to the west (e.g. Jogeśvarī, Elephanta)<sup>36</sup> and to

<sup>36</sup> EITA II.1, 87 ff.

the east (e.g. Kosala) of the old culture area. However, there seems to have been enough self-confidence to allow for revolutionary new experiments of an astonishing richness and beauty, such as are witnessed in the temples in Tālā (see below). They lay the foundation of the emerging Dakṣiṇa Kosala style of sculpture and architecture of the second half of the 6th and 7th centuries.

Jayarāja was, in all likelihood, succeeded by his nephew Sudevarāja, who soon inaugurated a second centre from where the kingdom was governed, a place named after the goddess who adorned the seals of the dynasty, Śrī (Lakṣmī), viz. Śrīpura (modern Sirpur) on the right bank of the Great River (Mahānadi). The residence of the king remained in Śarabhapur, as is evident from the fact that the charters issued from there were direct orders of the king himself (*svamukhājñāyā*),<sup>37</sup> whereas the charters from Śrīpura were issued by his proxy (*dūtaka*), the illustrious great feudatory (*śrīmahāsāmanta*) Indrabalarāja, whose office is described as that of chief minister (*sarvādhikārādhikṛta*).<sup>38</sup>

There can be little doubt that Indrabala is the same as the king of the Pāṇḍava lineage from whom the later King Tīvaradeva traced his descent (see below).<sup>39</sup> The ending of the name °*bala* as well as the fact that he belonged to a Pāṇḍava lineage are strong indications that Indrabala was somehow related to the Somavaṃśa dynasty of Mekalā, whose last ruling king, Śūrabala, was born from a princess of Kosalā and who probably ruled as a feudatory of the Śarabhapurīyas over parts of southern Mekalā and/or northern Kosala at the times of Jayarāja and/or Sudevarāja.<sup>40</sup>

Sudevarāja's successor, Pravaraarāja—probably his younger brother—may have had a rather short reign. Both of his charters date from his 3rd regnal year.<sup>41</sup> They were issued from Śrīpura, this time, however, without mediation of Indrabala or another *sāmanta*. It appears not implausible that the death of Sudevarāja was followed by a power struggle between the old family of Śarabhapur and the feudatories of the newly founded Śrīpura. Within the family of the Pāṇḍuvaṃśins of Mekalā this may also have led to a conflict of interests, in particular between Śūrabala, reigning in Mekalā, and Nannarāja, son of Indrabala, reigning in Kosala; according to Bosma's hypothesis they were brothers (above, n. 14 on p. 240; see Figure 3). The outcome of this struggle we know: the Indrabala–Nannarāja–Tīvaradeva/Candragupta lineage of the Pāṇḍavas of Kosala emerged as the new monarchs of Śrīpura and under their rule this place evolved into an imposing temple town.

37 EI XXXI, 108 l. 24; EI XXIII, 22 ll. 25 f.

38 EI XXXI, 316 l. 23 f.; JESI V, 96 l. 26 (the letters -ś *cātra dūtakaḥ* seem to have been forgotten by the engraver).

39 CII III (1888), 295 l. 16; EI XXXIV, 115 l. 16; EI VII, 104 l. 18.

40 The identity of Bharatabala and Indrabala has been argued by Natasja Bosma 2018 (above, n. 14 on p. 240).

41 EI XXII, 15–23; EI XXXIV, 51–52.

## THE PĀṆḌUVAṂŚA OF ŚRĪPURA

As has been noted above, scholars nowadays generally agree that *sāmanta* Indrabalarāja, who ruled over Śrīpura during Sudevarāja's reign, was in some way related to the Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā, but members of this lineage are never mentioned in the inscriptions of the later Pāṇḍavas of Kosala (cf. Shastri 1987, 204). The latter's ancestor is said to have been Udayana, who is mentioned in the so-called *Buddhist Inscription of Bhavadeva Ranakesarin* (which is probably to be ascribed to Nannarāja I) and in an inscription of the time of Mahāśivagupta.<sup>42</sup> This Udayana may be identical to the Pāṇḍava Udayana featuring in the Kālañjara inscription of the 8th or 9th century, in which he is said to have founded there a beautiful brick temple of Bhadreśvara.<sup>43</sup> If indeed these two Udayanas were the same, the Kālañjara inscription might indicate that the original homeland of this branch may have been the region around Rewa, but this issue has been the subject of discussion in my later work.<sup>44</sup>

42 *Āraṅg Stone Inscription of Bhavadeva Raṇakesarin and Nannarāja* (JRAS 1905, 626; Shastri 1995 II, 97):

*gacchati bhūyasi kāle bhūmipatiḥ kṣapitasakalaripupakṣaḥ |*  
*pāṇḍavavaṁśād guṇavān udayananāmā samutpannaḥ || 16 ||*  
*...°sya tanūjanmā || 17 ||*

The exact relationship between this Udayana (in verse 16) and subsequent kings is uncertain, since the Āryā verse 17 is lost, apart from the last five syllables featuring the word 'son'. The actual findspot of this inscription is much disputed (see e.g. Mirashi in EI XXIII, 116 f. and *Notes of Mirashi and Sircar* in EI XXXIII, 251–256). Shastri 1987, 229 n. 88, following Mirashi, thinks that 'the inscribed slab hails from Arang'. Actually, there might be another inscription of Bhavadeva/Nannarāja I in the Mahāmāyī Temple in Arang (see Hiralal 1932, 110 (No. 183); Shastri 1995 I, 136).

*Sirpur Stone Inscription of Śivagupta Bālārjuna* (in the Gandheśvara Temple) IA XVIII (1889), 180 l. 2; Shastri 1995 II, 150:

*āsīd udayano nāma nṛpaḥ śaśadharānviṭaḥ |*  
*abhūd balabhidā tulyas tasmād indrabalo balī || 2 ||*

For a photo-zincograph based on a rubbing see ASI XVII, Plate XVIII A.

43 ASI XXI, 40 Plate IX L; quoted in JRAS (1905), 621. This inscription has been reexamined by Peter Bisschop and Hans Bakker (see Bakker 2014, 201):

*udayana iti rājā yaḥ kule pāṇḍavānām,*  
*sakalabhuvanānāthasyāsya bhadreśvarasya |*  
*pavanalulitacihnaṃ ramyakāntiṣṭakābhir,*  
*gṛhavaram atibhaktiyā kāritaṃ tena pūrvam ||*

44 I still think that both Udayana's are the same figure, but I have given up the view that conceives of this king as a historical person. He features in these pedigrees to forge a link with Pāṇḍu and the legendary Somavaṁśa dynasty. I wrote the following in Bakker 2014, 203:

This suggestion [of an historic Udayana] now seems to me naive. The Kālañjara inscription and the two Pāṇḍuvaṁśin inscriptions from Kosala refer to one and the same legendary Pāṇḍava king Udayana of Vatsa, son of Śatānīka, descendant of Bhārata through Pāṇḍu, Arjuna, Abhimanyu, Parīkṣit, Janamejaya [...] and Śatānīka II.

Telling in this respect is that in the inscriptions of Śūrabala, which give the pedigree of the Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā, the second king of the lineage Vatsarāja is only *compared* to the famous king of Vatsa, i.e. Udayana (Shasti 1995 II, 74, 81 (v. 2)).

It is conceivable, nevertheless, that the territory over which King Indra(bala) and the Pāṇḍuvaṃśins of Mekalā ruled may have included the region of the present-day Shahdol District. This rule is apparently attested by an inscription found in Malgā (Shahdol District) of a *sāmanta* Indrarāja, dating from his first year, issued from Maṇḍaka (EI XXXIII, 209–214). The father of this *sāmanta* is only designated as ‘king’ (*ḥṣitīpati*). About this inscription A. M. Shastri 1987, 201 observed:

As we have pointed out, in respect of general appearance, formal features, drafting, the list of addresses of the royal order concerning the grant, the privileges bestowed on the grantee, the mode of recording the date as well as other matters, the Malgā Plates and the extant records of the Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā resemble each other very closely and, what is still more instructive, the scribes of these records were related to another as brothers [scil. Droṇāka (Malgā Plates) and Mihiraka (Bamhanī Plates), both sons of the goldsmith Īśvara, H.T.B.].

If the hypotheses of the identity of, on the one hand, *samānta* Indrarāja and *mahāsamānta* Indrabala, and of Indrabala and Bharatabala, on the other (above, n. 14 on p. 240), are correct, the following career could be envisaged: the young *sāmanta* Indrarāja of the Malgā Plates, feudatory chief in (northern) Mekalā, through his marriage with Lokaparakāśā, a princess from the house of Amara, feudatory chiefs in Kosalā (Prasannapur), worked himself up to the position of chief minister (*sarvādhikārādhikṛta*) of the dominant regional ruler of his days, Sudevarāja of Śarabhapur, who entrusted him with the administration of the newly founded Śrīpura.<sup>45</sup> The *mahāsamānta* of Śrīpura had himself called ‘Indrabalarāja’ in the *Dhamatari Plates of Sudevarāja, Year 3* and in the *Kauvatal Plates of Sudevarāja, Year 7*.<sup>46</sup>

However, the Pāṇḍava family settling in Śrīpura soon proved to be a cuckoo in the nest, since either Indrabala himself, or his eldest son, Nannarāja I, usurped the throne of Kosala.<sup>47</sup> That the Pāṇḍuvaṃśa did not completely

45 Cf. Mirashi in *Studies I*, 240.

46 JESI V, 96 l. 26; Shastri 1995 II, 33; EI XXXI, 316 l. 23; Shastri 1995 II, 44.

47 In the as yet not published stone inscription in the Lakhneśvara (Lakṣmaṇeśvara) Temple at Kharod of his son Īśānadeva (see below, n. 51 on p. 250), Indrabala is described as sovereign monarch. Thanks to the good services of Natasja Bosma, who took photos of this inscription, I could decipher the following in lines 22–23 (four pādas of a Vasantatilaka and the first pāda of a Sragdharā):

*sarvāvaniśvaraśiromaṇirājirājat-*  
*pādāmbujaḥ śaśikulāmbarapūrṇacandraḥ |*  
*āsīd bhuvāḥ patir avārita oī(ya) [22] - ॐ ,*  
 -- (a) *pāstaripur indrabalābhīdhānaḥ ||*  
*śrīmān īśānadevaḥ ḥṣitīpatitīlakas tasya putrottamo 'bhūd,*  
 ...

There was a lord of the earth named Indrabala, who had thrown off his enemies by ... of his unimpeded ... , who was the full moon in the sky that is the Lunar Dynasty, and whose lotus feet were shining due to a line of jewels in the crests of all the kings on earth (who prostrated before him). He had a most excellent son, an ornament of the kings, the illustrious Īśānadeva, ...

give up their control over parts of the Vindhya (Mekalā) after they had seized sovereignty over Kosala ensues from the Senakapāṭ Inscription of the time of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna, in which a certain brahmin Devarakṣita is said to have ‘obtained, apparently from King Nannarāja, the governorship of the Vindhya territory (*vindhya dhūrdharatva*)’.<sup>48</sup>

Nannarāja I had three brothers, the youngest of whom, Bhavadeva (see above, n. 14 on p. 240), was glorified in the above-mentioned inscription, as he was responsible for the repair of an old Buddhist monastery (*vihāra*) originally built by one Sūryaghoṣa.<sup>49</sup> The inscription informs us that Bhavadeva was a great warrior, hence his *birudas* Raṇakesarin and Cintādurga (vv. 20, 32), but he does not seem to have been (sovereign) king (*pr̥thivīpati*) himself, if we read one of the verses in his praise correctly,

(Though) he has not taken (her) by the hand (/ has not taken tax), and without walking around (the fire) (/ marching the surrounding (countries)), he, (already) being Lord of Lakṣmī, became an unparalleled supporter (/ husband) of the earth.<sup>50</sup>

Another brother of Bhavadeva and Nannarāja I, Īśānadeva, is reported to have built a temple in Kharod.<sup>51</sup> The Pāṇḍavas of Kosala appear to have been great

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Cf. Mirashi, *Studies in Indology* I (1960), 241 n. 1; Shastri 1995 II, 375 f.

Nannarāja had himself (probably) proclaimed *rājādhirāja* in the *Āraṅg Stone Inscription of Bhavadeva Raṇakesarin and Nannarāja* (JRAS (1905), 629 v. 40; Shastri 1995 II, 99). The redrafting of the dynastic Pāṇḍava lineage, substituting Udayana for the Bala kings of Mekalā, gives the impression that the Pāṇḍava family, after the coup d'état in Śrīpura, no longer wished to be reminded of its tribal roots in Mekalā. A similar redrafting of a pedigree took place when the Maukharis came to power in Kanauj in about the same period (see Bakker 2014, 42).

48 EI XXXI, 32, 35 v. 7. The reading and interpretation of this verse are uncertain and disputed by Mirashi and Sircar in EI XXXIII, 251–256. Sanderson 2013, 237 f. accepts Mirashi's reading (though not his interpretation): ‘...Devarakṣita, who had become a close confidant of King Nannarāja, had been appointed [by him] to govern the Vindhya region of the kingdom and had received various districts as the reward of his services.’ Cf. Bosma 2018, 34 ff., who argues that the Nannarāja mentioned may have been Nannarāja I.

49 JRAS (1905), 628 vv. 35–36; Shastri 1995 II, 98.

50 JRAS (1905), 627 v. 22 (Shastri 1995 II, 97): *karagraham akṛtvāpi maṇḍalabhramaṇād vinā | apūrvō yaḥ kṣiter bhartā jāto lakṣmīpatir bhavan || 22 ||*

51 Hiralal 1932, 125 (see also above, n. 47 on p. 249):

This inscription is in the Lakhneśvara Temple at Kharod. It was found plastered over. The *pujārī* endeavoured to take off the covering, but in doing so he damaged the record so badly, that it is now almost illegible. However, the names of the two kings, Indrabala and his son Īśānadeva of the Lunar Dynasty, are visible and there is mention of a village which appears to be Ghoṭapadrakagrāmaḥ, apparently granted for the maintenance of the temple.

Shastri 1995 II, 375 reads the name of the village as Sāṭṭhapadraka-grāma and adds: ‘It also refers to a place called Indrapura, evidently named after Indrabala, and mentions a district called Kośīra–Nandapura–viśaya, obviously named after the twin localities of Kośīra and Nandapur, and a number of villages including Mekalapadraka, which was apparently named after the Mekalā country.’ A donation and repairs were (later) made

temple builders. Many of the grants of this royal family concern the erection and maintenance of temples; Krishna Deva was right when he observed that 'if the Pāṇḍuvaṃśīs did not found Śrīpura, to them is mainly due its abundant archaeological wealth'.<sup>52</sup>

Nannarāja I was succeeded by his son Tīvaradeva, who acquired the sovereignty of the whole of Kosala.<sup>53</sup> Connected with Tīvaradeva is the conundrum of the absolute chronology of the history of ancient Kosala. Almost everything written about this king concerns his dating.<sup>54</sup>

### *The date of the Pāṇḍuvaṃśīa dynasty of Śrīpura*

Two dating criteria are thought to be relevant: 1) his capital (obviously Śrīpura, but possibly also called 'Trivaranagara') might have been alluded to in an inscription of Mādhavarman, the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king; 2) he might have been a contemporary of the (Maukhari) prince Sūryavarman, whose daughter Vāsaṭā was wedded to his nephew Harṣagupta (EI XI, 191 vv. 15–16).

With regard to the first criterium A. M. Shastri has convincingly argued, on the strength of the Indrapālanagara (Tummalagudem) charter of the Viṣṇukuṇḍin king Vikramendravarman II, which is dated in the expired Śaka year 488 (= AD 566), that the latter's great-grandfather, Mādhavarman II Janāśraya, must have ruled between the *termini post* and *ad quem* of AD 470 and 528 (Shastri 1987, 122–131). This Mādhavarman II, son of Govindavarman and married to a Vākāṭaka princess, is said in his Ipur Plates to have 'rejoiced the hearts of the young ladies in the palaces of the town of Trivara'.<sup>55</sup> In view of the highly improbable, very early date that has to be assumed for Tīvaradeva in

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by Mahāśivagupta (EI XXVII, 324) to a temple of Īśāneśvarabhaṭṭāraka in the township (*pattana*) Khadirapadra. The identification of this place is uncertain, but the identity of the temple in Kharod called today 'Lakhneśvara' with this Īśāneśvara Temple seems likely.

52 EITA II.1, 224. Cf. Beglar in ASI VII, 168–193; Cunningham in ASI XVII, 23–31; Śrīvāstava 1984. Many of the temples of South Kosala have been constructed and reconstructed during several generations. Among the oldest remains (apart from Tālā, see below) Krishna Deva reckons the Rājīvalocana Temple at Rajim, which 'should be at least a generation earlier than the Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Sirpur and is assignable on ground of style to c. AD 600 [...]' (EITA II.1, 231 f.; cf. Meister 1984a, 121). In Sirpur itself the oldest surviving construction appears to be the Buddhist *vihāra* (see IAR 1954–55, 24–26; IAR 1955–56, 26 f.; EITA II.1, 232 f.). The so-called Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Sirpur was, according to a large stone inscription recovered from it, built by the queen mother of Mahāśivagupta in memory of her deceased husband Harṣagupta. Krishna Deva observes: 'Paleographically, this epigraph belongs to c. AD 625–650 and the temple is also assignable to the same period.' (EITA II.1, 235 f.; cf. Stadtner 1980, 39: 'ca. A.D. 595–605').

53 EI VII, 105 l. 19: *prāptasakalakosalādhipatyaḥ*.

54 E.g., Mirashi in EI XXII, 19; EI XXVI, 229; *Indological Research Papers I* (1982), 179–190; Sircar in EI XXXIV, 112; Shastri 1987, 211–230.

55 EI XVII, 336 ll. 4–5: *trivaranagarabhavanagatayuvatihṛdayanandanah*. Cf. the *Polamuru Plates* (Journal of the Dept. of Letters, University of Calcutta XI (1924), 59 ll. 8–9).

order to make his residence the scene of Mādhavarman's conquests, Shastri concludes that, whatever might have been meant by the expression, it had nothing to do with the Pāṇḍava king Tivaradeva and his capital Śrīpura.<sup>56</sup>

Regarding the second criterium, A. M. Shastri, following Sankaranarayanan 1977, argued that the father of Tivaradeva's nephew's wife Vāsaṭā, Prince (*nṛpa*) Sūryavarman, who is said to belong to a family of Varmans that had attained sovereignty over Magadhā,<sup>57</sup> has nothing to do with the homonymous Maukhari prince, son of Īśānavarman, who is known from the Haraha Inscription (EI XIV, 110–120). Shastri's arguments (1987, 215–217) fail to carry conviction. They had already all been cogently discussed by B. P. Sinha (1977, 116–119) and shown to be invalid. Shastri's assertion to the effect that 'history knows of several other dynasties like the Pallavas, all the members of which had names ending with *varman*; but that was never employed as a dynastic name'<sup>58</sup> and that, consequently, no dynasty, including the Maukharis, was ever designated as 'Varman', is *ipso facto* refuted by the Sirpur inscription, unless we accept that only completely unknown 'Varman' families could be denoted *varmaṇām kulam*. Secondly, Shastri's assessment that the Maukharis at the time of Īśānavarman were not in actual control of Magadhā is beside the point. They were certainly claiming to be sovereigns of this province and were about to realize it; epigraphical *praśastis* serve to promulgate this sort of claims, not to report truthfully about the often less rosy historical reality. Moreover, when Vāsaṭā/Mahāśivagupta made this claim, about half a century had passed since Īśānavarman.

Sinha's conclusion that "the Varman dynasty famous for its supremacy over Magadha" on strong circumstantial evidence can be no other than the imperial Maukhari dynasty which ruled over Magadha for many generations' should be accepted as the most plausible interpretation of the evidence furnished by the Sirpur stone inscription (Sinha 1977, 118). Because the Haraha inscription of Sūryavarman has been shown to date from AD 554,<sup>59</sup> we may safely conclude that his contemporary, Tivaradeva, ruled in the middle of the 6th century, a conclusion that is fully consistent with the archaeological dating of the monuments in Sirpur that were built by Vāsaṭā and her son Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna two generations later (AD 600–650).<sup>60</sup>

56 Shastri 1975-76; Shastri 1987, 117–220. Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977, 224–230:

Therefore it is certain that Trivaranagara was the capital of the Viṣṇukuṇḍins. We have also seen earlier how both Mādhavavarmans of the Ipur (I) and Polamuru (I) plates brought prosperity to this capital Trivaranagara. We have identified this Trivaranagara with the modern Tiruvuru (17° 10' North and 30° 35' East), the headquarters of the taluk of that name in the Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh. (*op. cit.* 229)

57 EI XI, 191 v. 16: *magadhādhīpatya*.

58 Shastri 1987, 216; Cf. Sankaranarayanan 1977, 227 f.

59 *Haraha Inscription of the Reign of Īśānavarman [VS] 611*, EI XIV, 113.

60 See above, n. 52 on p. 251.

*Tīvaradeva*

To judge by his inscriptions, Tīvaradeva was a great warrior. In his military campaigns he may have been supported by the alliance which had evidently been forged between the Maukharis and the rulers of Dakṣiṇa Kosala.

There was enough geographical proximity for the Maukharis and Somavaṃśīs to come into contact. Śarvavarman [reigning brother of Sūryavarman, H.T.B.] was overlord of Kalanjar region and probably held the Vindhyan fort Asigarh;<sup>61</sup> and the Somavaṃśī kings of Mahākosala were associated with Mekala region. It is likely that [the Maukhari king] Īśānavarman was helped by the Somavaṃśī king in his campaign against the Viṣṇukuṇḍins of Āndhra.<sup>62</sup> Tīvaradeva who was master of the entire Mahākosala region must have facilitated Īśānavarman's march into the interior of Orissa and Āndhra.<sup>63</sup> (Sinha 1977, 118 f.)

Tīvaradeva may have actively participated in the exploits of his northern ally, since his successor, Nannarāja II, credits him with sovereignty over Orissa (Utkala) etc.<sup>64</sup>

Irrespective of how much these campaigns (or raids) may have contributed to the wealth of Kosala, they did not result in a lasting expansion of the kingdom. Nannarāja II, who in his own charter calls himself 'son',<sup>65</sup> but who might actually have been the son-in-law of Tīvaradeva,<sup>66</sup> only claims the sovereignty of the Kosalāmaṇḍala (EI XXXI, 221 ll. 8–9). This 'modesty' of Nannarāja II, also apparent from the comparison of his 'father' with Viṣṇu (Kaiṭabhāri), himself with Pradyumna (EI XXXI, 221 l. 7), and the fact that the charter does not feature a regnal year, may all point to the comparative insignificance of his reign. Whether brought about by force or not, after him the line of succession switched again to the collateral branch. It must also remain uncertain whether Candragupta, brother of Tīvaradeva,<sup>67</sup> and his son Harṣagupta, who was married to Vāsaṭā, ever really ruled, as long as we do not possess their inscriptions. Anyway, the exceptionally long reign (c. AD 590–650) of Harṣagupta's son Mahāśivagupta (at least 57 years) indicates that he ascended the throne as a boy or young man.<sup>68</sup>

61 Cf. CII III (1888), 219–221; HCI III, 69 n. 3.

62 Cf. Bakker 2014, 56.

63 Haraha Inscription (EI XIV, 117 v. 13). Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 22: 'The ancient main route joining north India with south-eastern sea-coast passed from Kauśāmbī via Barhut through the present districts of Satna, Shahdol, Bilaspur and Raipur. [...] The region of South Kosala had thus close contacts with Kaliṅga from very early times.'

64 EI XXXI, 221 l. 6: *kosalotkalādimaṇḍalādhipatyaprāpta*°.

65 EI XXXI, 221 ll. 7–8: *ātmaja*.

66 EI VII, 105 ll. 25–26: *priyajāmātrśrīnannarāja*.

67 In the *Sirpur Stone Inscription of the Time of Mahāśivagupta* (i.e. Vāsaṭā's inscription in the Lakṣmaṇa Temple), Tīvaradeva is only anonymously referred to by the words *rājādhikāradhavalah sabalo* [...] *agrajo* (scil. *candraguptarājasya*); EI XI, 190 v. 6 (Shastri 1995 II, 142).

68 On the basis of the *Bonda Plates of Mahāśivagupta*, year 22 (EI XXXV, 60–65) Mirashi and Pandeya argue that this 'king came to the throne in 595 A.D'. The editor, D. C.



Plate 18  
Narasimha in Site Museum  
Lakṣmaṇa Temple Sirpur

*Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna*

Under Mahāśivagupta Śrīpura evolved into a centre of culture which deserves a monograph of its own in order to do it full justice.<sup>69</sup> In the present context we must confine ourselves to only the most outstanding achievements. Queen Mother Vāsaṭā built the splendid ‘Lakṣmaṇa Temple’: ‘She caused this eternal abode of Lord Hari to be constructed, so that it resembles exactly (the abode) in which he lives in perpetual adoration of the imperishable one (i.e. Viṣṇu).’<sup>70</sup> This temple was probably dedicated to Viṣṇu–Narasimha as the first three verses of the inscription suggest. Narasiṃha,

[...] who, bending his eyes eagerly to his nails—thinking that they had not (yet) taken hold of the enemy to tear up—caught sight of the demon that was hiding out of fear in the opening of the fissures (underneath) those (nails), and who contemptuously bursting into laughter, all of a sudden tore (him) up with the nails of his other hand and cast him away in rage, as if (he were just) dirt under them (i.e. nails).<sup>71</sup>

An image of Narasiṃha tearing the demon Hiranyakaśipu apart is preserved in the museum next to the temple (Plate 18).

Sircar, however, sees a flaw in the reasoning, as he usually does if Mirashi is involved (EI XXXV, 61 n. 7). Cf. Meister 1984a, 140 n. 6.

69 Maheśacandra Śrīvāstava’s *Sirpur*, Bhopal 1984, needs reinforcement in this respect. The work of Natasja Bosma (2018) fills this desideratum. The reports on his excavations in Sirpur by A.K. Sharma, published in *Purāmanthana*, are entirely unreliable, since this archaeologist abuses his exclusive rights in Sirpur to build an archaeological theme park.

70 EI XI, 192 v. 20: *tayā nijah pretya patir yathāvidhe vasaty asau nityam upāsītācyutah | prakāśitam tādṛśam eva kāritam vibhor idam dhāma hareḥ sanātanam ||* For a description of this temple see EITA II.1, 233–236. Cf. Krishna Deva 1960.

71 EI XI, 190 v. 2:

*labdho nirbhettum ebhir na ripur iti rasād dattacakṣur nakheṣu,  
trāsāt tatkroḍarandhrodarakuharadarim eva līnam vilokya |  
hāsollāsāvahelaṃ tadītarakarajagreṇa nirbhidya sadyah,  
krośāc cikṣepa tajjam malam iva danujam yah sa vo ’vyān nṛsimhaḥ || 2 ||*

Mahāśivagupta, who, unlike his ancestors who were *paramavaiṣṇavas*, was a *paramamāheśvara* (EI XXVII, 323 l. 5), evidently pursued a policy of active patronage of various religious currents of his day, as is apparent from his grant to a Buddhist monastery in Taraḍaṃśaka (at the request of his maternal uncle Bhāskaravarman),<sup>72</sup> and, indirectly, from the Buddhist monasteries a little south of Śrīpura. The inscription found in one of them records the donation by a monk called Ānandaprabha of a ‘free-feeding establishment for the *yatis* or monks’ under the reign of Mahāśivagupta.<sup>73</sup>

Among the major constructions of this period, however, is the Gandheśvara Temple on the bank of the Mahānadī. According to Hiralal this temple was,

Repaired by the Bhonsalas who took all kinds of old material from the ruins of other temples and used it in making the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. We therefore find here a number of inscriptions, some of which do not really belong to this temple. [...] Altogether there are six inscriptions, of which perhaps 2 or 3 only may be said to belong to Gandheśvara Temple. The one which specifically mentions the name Gandharveśvara is built into the plinth (on the right side as you enter). It records the arrangement made for the offerings of flowers for the *pūjā* of Gandh[arv]eśvara by one Jejuraka, a subject of prince Śiva Gupta in whose kingdom pious people lived.<sup>74</sup>

The prospering capital of Kosala under the reign of Mahāśivagupta was visited by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, who gave the following description,

The capital is about 40 li round; the soil is rich and fertile, and yields abundant crops. [...] The population is very dense. The men are tall and black complexioned. The disposition of the people is hard and violent; they are brave and impetuous. There are both heretics and believers here. They are earnest in study and of a high intelligence. The king is of the Kshatriya race; he greatly honours the law of Buddha, and his virtue and love are far renowned. There are about one hundred *saṅghārāmas*, and somewhat less than 10,000 priests: they all alike study the teaching of the Great Vehicle. There are about seventy Deva temples, frequented by heretics of different persuasions. Not far to the south of the city is an old *saṅghārāma*, by the side of which is a stūpa that was built by Aśōkarāja. (Beal 1884 II, 209 f.)

Mahāśivagupta’s reign marks the acme of the early history of South Kosala. No inscriptions of his successors have come to light and we may conveniently end our survey at this point. It is meant to provide some sort of dynastic and chronological framework, in which the cultural history of South Kosala has

<sup>72</sup> EI XXIII, 120 f. ll. 11–13.

<sup>73</sup> EI XXXI, 197 n. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Hiralal 1932, 98. Cf. Beglar in ASI VII, 168–170; Cunningham in ASI XVII, 23–31; Shastri 1995 II, 152 f., 160 f., 382. One of these inscriptions has been edited in IA XVIII (1889), 179–181; two more have been published by A. M. Shastri in *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal* Vol. XVII (1979), 196–202 (not available to me). For the others see ASI XVII, 25–27, Plates XVIII A, B and XIX C, D and XX E. Cf. Hiralal 1932, 97–99.

to fit.<sup>75</sup> To conclude we may select just one of its highlights for a tentative examination, the temples of Tālā.

## TĀLĀ

Tālā is a tiny village in the Bilaspur District, situated a little north of the confluence of the Maniārī and the Sevñāth rivers; the junction of the latter with the Mahānadi is c. 50 km downstream. The hamlet lies at a distance of 25 km to the west of Malhar as the crow flies. Near the village, on the left bank of the Maniārī are two stone temples known under the names Jīṭhānī and Devarānī. Bajpai suggested that one of these temples was the Jayeśvarabhaṭṭāraka Temple, which was endowed with the village at the confluence by one Narasiṅgha and King Śūrabala Udīrṇavaira (see above, p. 239).<sup>76</sup>

At the time of the grant this ‘confluence-hamlet’ (*saṃgamagrāmaka*) belonged to the southern province (*dakṣiṇarāṣṭra*) of the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas of Mekalā. As we have argued above, this dynasty may have extended its territory to the north of Kosala since the times of Śūrabala’s father, who had married a princess of Kosalā. This princess, as has been shown, probably came from the Amarārya family, who were petty chiefs in Kosala. Their progenitor was Jayabhaṭṭāraka. In view of the common practice to name temples after their builders, we would venture the hypothesis, that this Jayeśvarabhaṭṭāraka Temple was founded by Jayabhaṭṭāraka of the Amarāryakula. From this it would follow that Śūrabala made a grant to the temple built by either his maternal grandfather or, less likely, his maternal uncle (depending on whether the princess ‘Lokaprakāśā’ was a daughter or (younger) sister of Jayabhaṭṭāraka). And this would place this temple around 500 AD, according to the dynastic history of Kosala that has been reconstructed above on the basis of epigraphical testimony. Pending new epigraphical discoveries that throw fresh light on this issue, we shall now have a look at the archaeological evidence of the two temples themselves.

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75 In addition to A.M. Shastri, Thomas E. Donaldson may be mentioned as an art-historian who has argued in favour of a much later historical framework for the Kosala temples (*Hindu Temple Art of Orissa I* (1985), 188 ff.). One of his main arguments is the dynastic gap or dark period of the region that follows the reign of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna. Apart from the fact that shifting the whole dynastic and art history with 200 years to fill this gap only results in another gap, beginning at the time that Vākāṭaka and Gupta hegemony ended (c. 500 AD), it may be assumed that, after the Pāṇḍuvamśa, a re-emerged Nala dynasty ruled over parts of Kosala including Rajim, where Vilāsatuṅga reconstructed the Rājīvalocana Temple (EI XXVI, 49–58; cf. Krishna Deva in EITA II.1, 224 f.).

76 Bajpai & Pandey 1977, 23: ‘I have identified the village *saṃgamagrāma* with the village Tālā (also called Saṅgama) near the confluence of the rivers Maniārī and Śivanātha in the Bilaspur district.’ Cf. Risbud 1984, 60 f.



*Plate 19*  
*Devarānī Temple at Tālā seen from the south*



*Plate 20*  
*Jīthānī Temple at Tālā seen from the south*

With regard to the relative chronology of the two temples, it would seem that the better preserved Devarānī is somewhat later than the Jīṭhānī Temple, by virtue of the former's more refined carving and more conventional structure (Plate 19). The enormous slabs of stone of the Jīṭhānī ruin give the impression that this temple was a not wholly successful experimental construction that finally collapsed under its own load (Plate 20).<sup>77</sup> The brick buttresses that are found at the base along the west, north and east sides and the square brick prop in the centre of the southern stairs could have been meant to prevent the temple from falling down (Plate 21).<sup>78</sup> In the building of the Devarānī Temple these constructional errors were evidently remedied.



*Plate 21*

*Brick buttresses at the western side of the Jīṭhānī Temple at Tālā*

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Williams 1982, 125: 'The temple known locally as the Jēṭhānī is in ruins, perhaps because it had an unstable stone superstructure, indicated by fragments of large *āmalakas*.'

<sup>78</sup> This has first been suggested to me by the two excavators G. L. Raykwar and R. K. Singh. These brick supports may, possibly, date from the beginning of the 7th century when, as e.g. the Lakṣmaṇa Temple of Sirpur shows, brick had become the building material in Kosala.

So far it is mainly the Devarānī Temple that has been discussed in the Indo-logical literature. Donald Stadtner was the first to propose a date for it, viz. AD 525–550 (Stadtner 1980, 47). Two years later Joanna Williams observed: ‘To establish a precise date for temples of Tala is impossible, for nothing in the area is preserved to which they can be significantly related. [...] The position of about 480 to 530 is a reasoned guess’ (*op. cit.* 128). Krishna Deva, finally, dates the Devarānī Temple to c. AD 550–575 (EITA II.1, 229 f.).

The dynastic chronology that we have tried to establish seems to support the early dating of Joanna Williams. Viewed from the dynastic perspective and considering the relative chronology of the two temples we are inclined to assign the Jīṭhānī Temple to the last decade of the 5th century. Keeping in view a margin of uncertainty in the dating of at least 25 years, however, it is virtually impossible to determine with certainty whether Jayeśvarabhaṭṭāraka of the Malhar Plates of Śūrābala refers to the deity of the Jīṭhānī or to that of the Devarānī Temple, if indeed Jayabhaṭṭāraka lent his name to one of these temples.

Williams (1982, 127) observes that the motifs found on both temples are on the whole ‘basically orthodox Gupta’. This observation should now, in view of the sculptures that have been discovered in Vidarbha since 1982 (Mandhal, Ramtek, Nagardhan, Mansar) be qualified to the effect that the artefacts of Tālā, especially the *gaṇa* type images, bear just as much or more relation to the Vākāṭaka as to the Gupta idiom.<sup>79</sup> However, it has been noted that the basal wall-mouldings and niched walls of the Devarānī Temple in particular have a definite South Indian flavour.<sup>80</sup> Krishna Deva (EITA II.1, 229) speaks of ‘some features reminiscent of Calukya and Pallava temples’. This theme had earlier been elaborated by Stadtner (1980, 39–41) who observes about the Devarānī Temple that,

Vertical exterior niches alternating recessed and projecting and with or without images, are a characteristic of early temples of the Deccan and of South Indian architecture in general. [...] Certain elements of the base (*adhiṣṭhāna*) moldings of the Devarani also indicate a relationship between the temple and South Indian forms. [...] The presence of these distinctly southern features in Kosala should probably be interpreted as a borrowing of architectural forms that probably existed in the sixth century in the Deccan and in South India but that appeared on temples constructed of perishable materials and therefore have not survived. It is highly unlikely that these forms originated in Kosala during the sixth century in light of Kosala’s rather provincial and isolated position.

79 Cf. K.K. Chakravarty in the *Abstract* of his dissertation (see below, n. 84 on p. 261): ‘As such, I have attributed the continuing volume of Tala art to the influence of the vigorous style of neighbouring Vidarbha and detected seeds of the medieval rarefication and complexity in Tala style.’

80 Stadtner 1980, 38: ‘The magnificent sculptures surviving at Tala bear strong affinities with Gupta art of the north; at the same time architectural and iconographic features of the temple reveal important connections with so-called Dravidian, or south Indian forms.’

Joanna Williams (1982, 26), though agreeing with Stadtner that the architecture of Tālā may go back to wooden archetypes and that ‘these forms are in a general way akin to slightly later buildings to the south, both Calukya and Pallava’, disagrees with Stadtner’s emphasis of the southern origin of these forms.

Stadtner describes these (scil. base moldings) as forming a typically Dravidian base of the type known as *pratibandha*, citing the authority of M. A. Dhaky. [...] The *makara toraṇas* of the exterior, another seemingly south Indian element, are also found at Ajaṇṭā (Cave 6, lower). I would prefer to think of such forms as indigenous to Kosala in wood, rather than as resulting from influence from the South, where such forms are not known at this point. (*op. cit.* 125, n. 81)

We are not in the position to make a final assessment on this issue, which should be settled by historians of Indian architecture. However, the hypothesis advanced above, making a ruler of the Amarārya dynasty primarily responsible for the origin of these monuments, could provide an historical explanation of some South Indian influence in the architecture of Tālā in virtue of the possible South Indian descent of this family.

### *The Jīṭhānī Temple*

Bajpai & Pandey 1977 are again the first to report on this temple. They noticed ‘the colossal nature of the stone-sculptures lying around the ruined Jethani Temple. [...] Some of the sculptures have a height of 4 m to 5 m. The images of Narsimha, Buddha and a few other deities have been identified. The temple may have been a Daśāvātāra shrine. In point of time this temple is earlier than the Devrani Temple. It can be assigned to the 4th century A.D.’<sup>81</sup>

The archaeological exploration of the Jīṭhānī Temple mound was initiated in 1986 according to the *Indian Archaeological Review* of that year (IAR 1985–86, 48 (published in 1990)). Here it is said that ‘the unearthed temple has a large, simple but typical plan. Amongst antiquities mention may be made of silver coin of Prasannamātra Sarabhपुरiya king of Dakshina Kosala [...].’<sup>82</sup> This seems to confirm a dating of the site to the end of the 5th, beginning of the 6th

81 *Op. cit.* 37. Cf. Stadtner 1980, 46 f.:

The style of the sculptures surrounding the Jithani conforms to that of the Devarani, and it can be concluded that both temples were constructed at the same time. However, the fragments of architectural members reveal that the Jithani probably differed in construction from the Devarani. The most important of these are at least three large stone amalakas which, if they were used in the superstructure, may indicate that the temple adopted a form more consistent with north Indian standards.

Risbud 1984, 61:

Jīṭhānī maṁḍir kī bhārī bharkam pratimāḥ Kuṣāṇakālīn pratīṭ hotā haiṁ. Saṁbhavataḥ unke lakṣaṇ meṁ śilpakār ke sāmne Kuṣāṇa kālīn yakṣa-pratimāoṁ kā svarūp rahā hogā. Is ādhār par Devarānī maṁḍir kī tithi īsvī pāṁcviṁ chaṭhīṁ śatī evaṁ Jīṭhānī maṁḍir kī tithi īsvī cauthī śatī nirdhārit kī jā saktī hai.

82 I am not fully certain whether the section that begins with ‘Amongst antiquities ...’ really refers to Tālā.

century. The final clearance of the mound was conducted during three seasons from 1985–86 under the supervision of G.L. Raykwar and Rahul Kumar Singh (Nigam 2000, 46). R. K. Singh published a short note on the uncovered temple in *Purātan* vol. 6 (1989), 169 in which he observes that, though the image of the deity enshrined in the *garbhagrha* seems lacking, the whole collection of images definitely prove the temple to be of Śaiva stamp. Among the free-standing images found at the site mention is made of that of Kārttikeya, a Śiva head, a torso of Ardhanārīśvara, a head of an emaciated devotee, a head of Nandikeśvara and a stele of Gaurī.<sup>83</sup> As part of the architecture Singh lists images of Gaṇeśa, Nandin and Śivagaṇas.

K. K. Chakravarty devoted his PhD thesis to the subject: *The temples at Tala and the art of Dakṣiṇa Kośala*.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately this thesis was not available to me. I had the privilege of visiting the site in November 1992 in the company of the two excavators R. K. Singh and G.L. Raykwar along with Dr L. S. Nigam of Raipur University. To all three of them I owe many valuable observations.

First of all I fully agree with R. K. Singh's observation that the temple is decidedly Śaiva although the overall scheme of the monument has yet to be established. Bajpai and Pandey's conjecture to the effect that the temple was a Daśavatāra shrine is based on very shallow evidence, made obsolete by the clearance of the mound. The large slabs of stone lying to the west of the temple are too much damaged (they look as if their front sites are sliced off by a razor, probably caused by fractures in the stone) to allow identification as Narasiṃha and the Buddha, though one of them (measuring 110 x 265 cm) does seem to have an *uṣṇīṣa* (Plate 22). A smaller image of a seated Narasiṃha is found in low relief on a stone architrave lying to the southwest of the mound (Plate 23).

One of the remarkable aspects of this temple is its lay-out. There appear to have been three entrances reached by steps. The major entrance is a flight of steps, more than 7 m in width, at the bottom of which four huge pillars (measuring between 70 to 80 cm on each side, one still standing) must have supported a roof like projection (Plate 20). The space between these pillars is 114, 206 and 108 cm. This propylaeum faces south. The two pillars in the middle of the frontside rest on plinths that are bolstered by atlantid *gaṇas* (*bhārarakṣakas*) (Plate 24). The plinths of the two outward pillars are formed by lions (Plate 25). The bases of the two central pillars are formed by *kumbhas* on four sides, out of each of which two horses jump (Plate 26). The broadness

83 Some of these images are now in the Bilaspur Museum (State Archaeology in Bilaspur). For photos see Bosma 2018, Plates 3.17, 3.26, 3.25, 3.29.

84 Harvard 1992. For an abstract of this thesis see *Dissertation Abstracts International. A: The Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol. 53 No. 5, November 1992, 1297-A. Here Chakravarty states: 'The coexistence of classical and medieval features, volumetric and linear styles in Tala art stamps it as one of the most important missing links in the transition from classical to medieval art.' Publication of this thesis (Chakravarty 2018) came too late to be of use for the present volume.

of the steps and their direction to the south suggest that this temple faced the nearby waters of the confluence, which at those days may have been closer to the temple than it is to date.

The other two entrances are at the rear of the temple, facing east and west respectively (Plate 21). Near the steps of the western entrance lies a pillar that is deliciously carved with oblique bands of floral and foliage patterns (Plate 27). On these bands a mouse or rat is sculptured as if running down the pillar (Plate 28). A similar motif recurs in the Devarānī Temple. Along the north and east sides of the moulded base of that temple a snake emerges repeatedly out of the stone in chase of a mouse. The distance between snake and mouse gradually decreases until the mouse is caught.

Several 'sliced off' slabs of stone flank the eastern steps (Plate 29). A standing pillar, which seems to have split along its vertical axis, has different bands of ornamentation. The upper portion consists of a 'convex-lobed *āmalaka*' that rests upon a vase decorated with festoons hanging from lions (cf. Williams 1982, 127 Plate 197). At the rear side of this pillar a figure with bird-like legs and ram-like head is carved standing against the vase (Plate 30). The sculpture work evokes a strong flavour of wood carving. At the bottom of the steps stands a torso clad in a tiger skin covering a pronounced scrotum and erect penis (Plate 31). A claw and the face of the tiger is sculptured on the right thigh next to what seems to be a trident. Along the left thigh the tail of the animal runs downwards starting next to the phallus. Two huge elephant heads buttress the temple platform on the northern side (Plate 32). To compare, an image of Gaṇeśa with trunk to the left and holding a *danta* in his right hand is found at the northern base (i.e. right side) of the steps leading up to the Devarānī Temple (Plate 33).

The mound of the ruined temple is strewn with very lively carved images of *makaras* and *ganās*, which once supported pillars and other figures (Plates 34–39). These jolly, delicately sculptured, pot-bellied figures, all markedly different, are in a way reminiscent of Vākāṭaka and Gupta examples, yet they definitely breathe an atmosphere of their own. Luxuriant patterns of flowers and foliage decorate the faces of the stone remains as far as these are not damaged and 'sliced off'.

Two fragmentary images merit particular attention. One is a complex, broken image, about 1.50 m as it stands now, fixed in concrete and resting against the brick prop at the middle of the southern staircase (Plate 40). It shows a group of three figures; the main one is a male deity broken just below the waist, against whose breast two *makaras* rise up (the right one has lost the upper portion of his trunk-like jaw).<sup>85</sup> The left arm of the main deity is broken off, but part of what seems to be his underarm in an upwards position is

85 Under the left *makara* a fan-shaped fold protrudes, which in a way resembles the sole of a left foot. If indeed it is that it must, in view of its position, have been attached to the image by those who are responsible for fixing the sculpture in concrete. Or it may belong to the *makara* itself which, anyway, is not complete as we see it now.

preserved under his shoulder. The right arm is broken off at the elbow. The fracture above the bent elbow indicates that originally the right underarm also was directed upwards. This right underarm is preserved on a slab of stone that is placed to the left of the image (Plate 41). The right hand holds braided curls of hair, also seen at other images found in Talā, which may have belonged to the female figure that rises above the hood-like halo of the main image. This hood consists of layers of petals, on the outer rim of which (lotus) buds are placed in a row. Altogether I count eleven buds, two preserved on the slab that contains the right underarm. The head of the female figure is missing. To her right, placed a little below her, stands a male figure, apparently making an *añjali*.

The head of the main deity is slightly slanted to the left. His round face, with eyes half closed as he looks downwards, with rather flat nose and thick lips, seem to express forbearance. He wears a broad necklace (*graiveyaka*) adorned with pendants. The female figure rising above his head wears a simple necklace and bangles on her right wrist.

The group of figures as it stands now is flanked by two round pillars, profusely decorated with scroll-work. The preserved upper portion of the right pillar consists of abacus, *āmalaka*, a vase and (damaged) capital, a sequence that recurs in other fragmentary pillars preserved at the site.

The interpretation of this sculpture poses many problems. There are few, if any, clues that connect it with other known iconographic material. In discussions with the excavators the suggestion arose that the image could be that of Varuṇa, i.e. the ocean, out of which Śrī arises. The apparently invariable attribute of Varuṇa, the noose (*pāśa*), is absent. It can not be excluded that it was held in the left hand which is missing. The *makaras* (the traditional *vāhana* of Varuṇa), and possibly, the scroll-work on the pillars (waterplants / waves) may point to the ocean.<sup>86</sup> His expression of forbearance would be appropriate if we assume that the goddess Śrī arises out of him while he is being churned. The halo of lotuses encircling his head serves the goddess above as *pīṭha*, the traditional one of Śrī/Lakṣmī.

The other sculpture is also incomplete and apparently composed of at least three figures. It is hewn out of a large slab of stone that lies on top of the Jiṭhānī Temple mound (Plate 42). The main figure is a large decapitated male deity wearing a belt, *keyūra* adorned with lion's head on his left arm, a *kankana*, and a *graiveyaka*. His left arm seems to hold at the waist another, smaller male figure, who is positioned on the main image's right side and of whom only the upper part of the head and left arm are preserved. The head is deliciously sculpted showing a youthful face, almond eyes, snail-like curls, and a cranial bumb (Plate 43). At both sides of the cranial bumb the feet are preserved of a third figure that must have stood on top of his head. The left

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86 For the iconography of Varuṇa see Sahai 1975, 45–52.

arm, wearing bangles at the wrist, holds this third figure at his/her left ankle.<sup>87</sup> The identification of this group is hampered by the fact that, in the state it is in now, it lacks all significant attributes.

To conclude I would venture a tentative interpretation of this image group by directing attention to a passage from the *Mahābhārata* that describes the god Skanda and his offspring.

Deserted by the gods Śakra then hurled (his) thunderbolt (*vajra*) at Skanda. That (thunderbolt), being hurled, directly hit the right side of Skanda and split open the side of that noble one, O great king. Through the stroke of the thunderbolt another person (*puruṣa*) was born from Skanda, youthful, with golden armour, wielding a spear and wearing divine earrings; he became Viśākha, because he was born from the entering (*viśanāt*) of the thunderbolt. Then, when he saw (still) another one emerging, whose splendour resembled doomsday-fire, Indra folded his hands and took refuge with Skanda out of fear. Skanda put him and his army at ease, O foremost of men, and thereupon the Thirty (Gods) rejoiced and sounded their instruments. (MBh 3.216.12–15)

I would conjecture that the main figure is Skanda/Kumāra, the smaller deity at his right side Viśākha.<sup>88</sup> MBh 3.217 continues by describing the other deities that were born ‘from the thunderbolt’s impact on Skanda’, maidens (*kanyās*) and Kumārakas, whose father is Viśākha. MBh 1.60.23 lists three sons of Kumāra: ‘Śākha, Viśākha, and Naigameśa, born from his back’.<sup>89</sup> Whether Naigameśa (Naigameśa or Naigameya), the ram-headed deity, also formed part of this group is impossible to determine. That his existence was well-known to the sculptors, however, is proved by the image of Naigameśa that is found at the left side of the steps leading up to the Devarānī Temple (Plate 44).<sup>90</sup> An early parallel for this sculpture is found among the Vākāṭaka images discovered in Mandhal (Plate 45).<sup>91</sup>

Another origin myth relating to the various forms of Skanda/Kumāra, possibly relevant to the Jīthānī Temple, is told in MBh 9.43–46. In the course of his pilgrimage Baladeva (Balarāma) arrived at Sthāṇṭir̥tha at the Sarasvatī (MBh 9.41.4). It is told how once the consecration of Kumāra as general (*senāpati*) took place here (*kumārasyābhiṣekam*, MBh 9.43.1). The curious birth of Kumāra is briefly related. Then it is said that Kumāra, in order to venerate his four parents (Rudra, Devī, Agni and Gaṅgā) splits himself up into four figures.<sup>92</sup>

87 Below the gripping hand an anklet seems to be preserved, which would make the figure most probably a female one.

88 Cf. *Mahābhāṣya* ad P 5.3.99.

89 MBh 1.60.22cd–23ab: *agneḥ putraḥ kumāras tu śrīmāñ śaravaṇālayaḥ* || 22 || *tasya śākho viśākhaś ca naigameśaś ca prṣṭhajaḥ* | Van Buitenen translates *prṣṭhajaḥ* with ‘as the last born’. Some MSS read, however, *prṣṭhataḥ* and this is also the reading of MBh 9.43.37, where they are said to be simultaneous (*kṣaṇena*) manifestations (see below, n. 92 on p. 264). See also *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa* (PPL p. 212, v. 27).

90 Cf. EITA II.1, Plate no. 446.

91 See Shastri 1977–78, 147 f.; Bakker 1997, 110 f.

92 MBh 9.43.37: *tato ’bhavac caturmūrtiḥ kṣaṇena bhagavān prabhuḥ | skandaḥ śākho viśākhaś ca naigameśaś ca prṣṭhataḥ* || 37 ||

All gods come together for Kumāra's consecration, bringing with them all necessary requisites (*saṃbhāra*). The text continues by saying that earlier at this site the consecration of Varuṇa as 'Lord of the Waters' (*jaleśvara*, MBh 9.44.20) had taken place, as is indeed described in MBh 9.46.5–11. Kumāra is consecrated and he is equipped with an army:

And the gods gave him the army, which thronged together in the southwest (?), to destroy the enemies of the gods, invincible, containing all sorts of beings. Then all the gods and descendants of Vasu, Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Rakṣas, sages and ancestors exclaimed the word 'Jaya!' ('Victory!').<sup>93</sup>

They each present him with two servants and then the text embarks on a lengthy description of the soldiers making up Skanda's army (MBh 9.44.51–108), among whom we encounter all sorts of *gaṇas* (a summary is given by Dhaky 1984, 246 ff.). After also the host of mothers (*mātrgaṇa*), which surrounds Kumāra (MBh 9.45.1–40), is described, the major gods present him with special gifts, a ceremony concluded by Varuṇa and Brahmā.

And King Varuṇa gave the noose provided with strength and courage, and Lord Brahmā gave Brahmaṇya (i.e. Kumāra) the skin of a black antelope, and the Creator of the World also gave victory (*jaya*) in battle.<sup>94</sup>

Thus equipped Kumāra/Skanda gained victory over the enemy of the gods.

We have rendered this passage from the *Mahābhārata* in some detail because it seems to fit with the materials we find in and around the ruins of the Jīṭhānī Temple. Two divine figures play a major part in the Māhātmya of Sthāṇṭīrtha, Skanda/Kumāra and Varuṇa, and the two major images found at the Jīṭhānī mound could, tentatively, it is true, be identified with these two gods.<sup>95</sup> And to this could be added the recurrent motif of *makaras* and the abundance of *gaṇa* images at the site, the latter concurring with the prominence of these figures in the epic story. Further research is needed to support the correspondence found. For the present purpose, the introduction of Tālā in its cultural-historical setting, may it suffice to end with a speculation, viz. that the name 'Jayeśvara', referring simultaneously to Lord Śiva as well as to the great victory obtained by Kumāra in his stead, could have been thought to be an appropriate name for the 'Jīṭhānī Temple' at Tālā.

93 MBh 9.44.25-26:

*tathā devā dadus tasmai senāṃ nairṛtasamkulām |*  
*devaśatruṣayakarīṃ ajayyāṃ viśvarūpiṇīm || 25 ||*  
*jayaśabdaṃ tataś cakrur devāḥ sarve savāsavāḥ |*  
*gandharvayakṣarakṣāṃsi munayaḥ pitaras tathā || 26 ||*

94 Mbh.9.45.47:

*pāśaṃ tu varuṇo rājā balavīryasamanvitam |*  
*kṛṣṇājīnaṃ tathā brahmā brahmaṇyāya dadau prabhuh |*  
*samareṣu jayaṃ caiva pradadau lokabhāvanaḥ || 47 ||*

95 This is not to suggest, of course, that the Sthāṇṭīrtha of the *Mahābhārata* is to be identified with Tālā. For the Sthāṇṭīrtha and its mythology see below, p. 535 and Bakker 2014, 160 ff.



*Plate 22*  
*Image (with uṣṇīṣa ?) lying west of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 23*  
*Image of Narasiṃha on architrave lying southwest of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 24*  
*Bhārarakṣakas supporting central entrance pillar of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 25*  
*Lions supporting outer entrance pillar of Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 26*  
*Base of central entrance pillar of Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 27*  
*Pillar lying at the western entrance of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



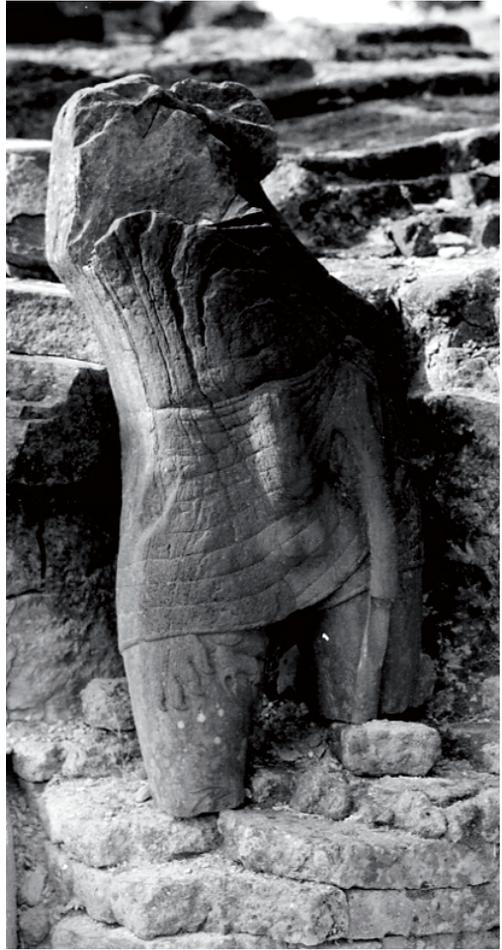
*Plate 28*  
*Mouse/rat on pillar at the western entrance of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 29*  
*Eastern side of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 30*  
Rear side of pillar at eastern  
entrance of Jithānī Temple



*Plate 31*  
Figure at eastern entrance  
of Jithānī Temple



*Plate 32*  
*Elephant's head at the northern side of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 33*

*Gaṇeśa at the northern side of the entrance of the Devarānī Temple at Tālā*



Plate 34  
*Supporting makara head and gaṇa (Jīṭhānī Temple)*



*Plate 35*  
*Supporting makara (Jīṭhānī Temple)*



*Plate 36*  
*Supporting gaṇa (Jīṭhānī Temple)*



*Plate 37*  
*Supporting gaṇas (Jithānī Temple)*



*Plate 38*  
*Gaṇa supporting standing image (Jithānī Temple)*



*Plate 39*  
*Supporting gana (Jithānī Temple)*



*Plate 40*

*Image standing at the southern staircase of the Jīṭhānī Temple*



*Plate 41*

*Broken right underarm of image at southern entrance of the Jīthānī Temple*



*Plate 42*  
*Sculpture on top of the Jīṭhānī Temple mound*



*Plate 43*

*Profile of the head of the minor figure of the sculpture on top of the Jīṭhānī Temple mound*



*Plate 44*

*Naigameṣa standing to the left (south) of the entrance of the Devarānī Temple*



*Plate 45*  
*Naigameṣa image found in Mandhal (Vidarbha)*

Somaśarman, Somavaṃśa and Somasiddhānta  
A Pāśupata tradition in seventh-century  
Dakṣiṇa Kosala\*

Studies in the *Skandapurāṇa* III

HARĀYA NAMAḤ

The first fruit of Minoru Hara's life-task-project to clarify the early history of the Śaiva religion appeared in the *Indo-Iranian Journal* of 1958 under the title *Nakulīśa-Pāśupata-Darśanam*. This was followed by the submission of his dissertation, *Materials for the study of Pāśupata Śaivism*, to the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies of Harvard University in 1966 (Hara 1967). Ever since, Hara has contributed to the research into the history of the Pāśupata religion by a continuous series of meticulous studies.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to these studies our knowledge of this enigmatic but fascinating branch of early Hinduism has significantly increased. Paucity of sources, however, has inevitably hampered our understanding of the process of origin and spread of this religious movement. Hara, like other scholars before him, duly recognized that the puranic text corpus contains numerous references to the Pāśupata religion. Yet, due to inconsistencies of all sorts and uncertainty as to their exact dates, he considered, rightly, the use of these texts for historic purposes a hazardous affair and consequently assigned them to the periphery of historical research. That is to say, for the time being, since,

Some day in the future, when all Purāṇic texts are critically edited and the inter-relationships among them established, they may help us in tracing the history of Pāśupata Śaivism. (Hara 1967, 12f.)

This day is, after thirty-four years, still far off. Critical editions of some Purāṇa texts have indeed been prepared since, by the All-India Kashiraj Trust in Ramnagar, the Oriental Institute in Vadodara (*Viṣṇupurāṇa*), and the Institute of

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\* The first version of this article was published in Wezler, Albrecht & Ryutaro Tsuchida (eds.), *Harānandalaharī*. Volume in Honour of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday. Inge Wezler Verlag, Reinbek 2000. pp. 1–19.

1 A collection of his contributions appeared in 2002 (Hara 2002).

Learning and Research in Ahmedabad (*Bhāgavatapurāṇa*), but they have not really brought the progress in Purāṇa studies that one should wish. Partly this is due to the unwieldiness of the puranic text corpus, partly to the fact that no old manuscript material has been used for these editions. How valuable ancient manuscripts are for gaining insight in the puranic text tradition itself and for the assessment of these texts as historical sources may be shown by the original *Skandapurāṇa* (SP), the edition of which is a long-term project of the Institute of Indian Studies in Groningen. Because the oldest manuscript of this text is dated AD 810, we can be certain that the information it contains dates from the eighth century or earlier. But even in this particular case the use of the Purāṇa text as a source of historical information remains a venturesome undertaking. Its historical value is greatly enhanced, however, when it proves possible to relate its data to other historical sources such as inscriptions. It is a matter of good fortune that this turns out to be the case in chapter 167 of the original *Skandapurāṇa*, a chapter—transmitted in two old Nepalese manuscripts, among which the one dated in AD 810—which deals with the traditional history and holy places of the Pāśupata and which is, as we will show, partly in agreement with epigraphical evidence of the seventh century. In this tribute to Hara I intend to make a modest contribution to the objective envisaged by the great Japanese scholar, viz. ‘tracing the history of Pāśupata Śaivism’.

## ŚAIVA COSMOLOGY

The cosmology developed in mainstream early tantric Saivism distinguishes between the Pure (*śuddhādhvan*) and the Impure Universe (*aśuddhādhvan*). Both universes are hierarchically structured; the different levels of reality or domains are called *tattva*. A standard hierarchy counts thirty-one domains in the Impure Universe and five domains in the Pure one.<sup>2</sup> The domain that forms the trait-d’union between both universes is the Māyātattva. According to the *Svacchandatantra*, this reality can be divided into two layers (*puṭa*), which are separated by a knot or barrier (*granthi*).<sup>3</sup> Each layer comprises six ‘worlds’ (*bhuvana*) that are reigned over by altogether twelve Rudras. The barrier or *granthi* seems actually to be the border between both universes and may be considered a layer or *madhyapuṭa* by itself (SvT 10.1122–1131).

2 See e.g. Davis 1991, 45. The canonical list of 36 *tattvas* is, as has been demonstrated by Goodall 1998, LI–LV, in fact a consensus only reached ‘in the post-scriptural Śaiva Siddhānta of the commentators’ (*ibid.* LII).

3 The *Svacchanda* is a Bhairava (Mantrapīṭha) Tantra and does not belong to the tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta, though it seems to be quite close to this tradition (Sanderson 1988, 669f.). The *granthi* is not a universally shared feature of the Śaiva cosmos (no mention of it is made in the *Mrgendratāntra*, for instance).

The first Rudra on our side of the barrier is Gopati and the Rudra reigning the lowest ‘world’ of the sub-barrier layer of the Māyātattva is Gahana.<sup>4</sup> Directly underneath him spreads the ‘net of bonds’ (*pāśajāla*),<sup>5</sup> the created world that emerges from the Māyā Reality, assuming material form through the *tattvas* including those known from the Sāṃkhya system. The first Rudra on yonder side of the barrier is Kṣemeśa, followed by Brahmasvāmin; the principal Rudra of the Māyā Reality is Ananta.<sup>6</sup> The *Svacchanda* and its commentator seem to be confused as to whether the supra-barrier layer of the Māyā Reality still pertains to the Impure or to the Pure Universe (SvT 10.1129–31); the *Niśvāsamukha*, however, considers it still all part of the *aśuddhādhvan* (4.121–25).<sup>7</sup> In the middle, according to the *Svacchanda*, that is on the barrier itself, at the very top of the Impure Universe, reigns the bountiful lord Ananta, the Master of the World (*bhagavān ananteśo jagatpatiḥ*), who creates at will, is omniscient, maker of all, and dedicated to meting out confinement and grace (SvT 10.1127–28). Commenting on this passage Kṣemarāja observes that the *Mataṅgaśāstra* situates Vighraheśāna in this *madhyapuṭa*, who is surrounded by eight Rudras: Śarva, Bhava, Ugra, Bhīma, Bhasman, Antaka, Dundubhi, and Śrīvatsa.<sup>8</sup> The *Niśvāsamukha* places Vighraheśa immediately above Gahana.<sup>9</sup>

In the Pure Universe, above the reality (*tattva*) of Śuddhavidyā (Vāgīśvarī) are, according to the *Svacchanda*, the worlds of the eight Rudras who are

4 SvT 10.1124. Cf. *Mataṅga* 1.8.86–89.

5 *Niśvāsamukha* 4.119–123 (Kafle 2015, 190 f.). This text is part of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* (NiTS) corpus. A critical edition of the *Mukha* has been prepared by Nirajan Kafle and has been defended as part of his thesis in Leiden on 15 October 2015. I refer to this thesis, which eventually will appear in the Early Tantra Series published in Pondichéry. See also below, n. 7 on p. 285.

6 SvT 10.1125–26. Cf. *Mataṅga* 1.8.79–81.

7 In *Niśvāsamukha* Paṭala 4 the text deals with the Atimārga. My treatment of this intricate subject in the original publication of 2000 was based on a letter by Alexis Sanderson (Oxford) to the author (21–7–97), in which he generously placed at my disposal a preliminary edition of a portion of this text with an elaborate apparatus of testimonia. Since then much progress has been made in the edition and study of the *Niśvāsatattvasaṃhitā* corpus, and a critical edition of the three oldest Sūtras of this corpus—the *Mūla*, *Uttara*, and *Naya*—made by Dominic Goodall and others (including Alexis Sanderson), was published in Pondichéry in 2015. For further details I refer to the *Prolegomena* of this edition. For an assessment see Bakker 2018. See also Kafle 2015 for a critical edition of the *Niśvāsamukha*.

8 Kṣemarāja *ad* SvT 10.1127ab. Kṣemarāja adds that the *Śrīpūrvaśāstra* (i.e. *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 5.28–29) speaks of only eight deities (*īśvarāṣṭa*) in the Māyātattva that form a *maṇḍala* of the size of a thumb, the first one of them being Mahādeva. *Mataṅga* 1.8.83–85:

*etebhyo 'dhaḥ saṃsthīto granthir durbhedyāś cātivīstrtaḥ |*  
*yatrāsau vighraheśānaḥ sthītaḥ paramadurjayaḥ || 83 ||*  
*vṛto rudrair mahābhāgaiḥ svaśaktibalaśālībhiḥ |*  
*bhuvanaṃ bhuvaneśasya vinodaśatasamkulaṃ || 84 ||*  
*yatra śarvo bhavaś caiva hy ugro bhīmaś ca vīryavān |*  
*bhasmāntako dundubhiś ca śrīvatsaś ca mahābalaḥ || 85 ||*

9 *Niśvāsamukha* 4.121cd: *gahanaṃ ca tatordhvaṃ tu, vighraheśaṃ tatordhvataḥ.*

incarnated in the eight Pramāṇa texts of the Pāśupata: *Pañcārtha* etc.<sup>10</sup> Though none of these texts has come to light so far, we have a glimpse of the *Pañcārthapramāṇa*, as this text is quoted by Kṣemarāja *ad Svacchanda* 1.41–43. This fragment establishes that also the prime Pramāṇa of the Lākula division of the Pāśupata (see below)—in contrast with the system known from the *Pāśupatasūtra* and its commentary—acknowledges the ascending hierarchy of Rudra worlds; these are classified into three categories, namely *aghora*, *ghora*, and *ghoraghoratara*. Here we meet the very same Rudras again: ‘Those Rudras who have been mentioned, beginning with Gopati and ending with Gahana, they, however, are designated ‘terrible’ (*ghora*); they live in various worlds.’<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the fourth of these Pramāṇa texts, the *Hṛdaya*, Kṣemarāja makes an interesting remark. From this text six other Pramāṇa texts have been extracted that deal with ritual acts (*kriyā*) and in this respect differ from the other eight Pramāṇas, which deal with knowledge (*jñāna*).<sup>12</sup> These ritual Pramāṇas are said to have been revealed by a pupil of Laku(leśa), Musulendra.<sup>13</sup>

This brings Kṣemarāja to the difference between two divisions within the Pāśupata movement (referred to as ‘Tantra’), namely between the Pāśupata proper, founded by Lakuleśa, and hence designated ‘Lākula’, and the Mausula, founded by the eponymous pupil of Lakuleśa, Musula or Musulendra. These Mausulas, though Pāśupatas in the wider sense—after all they too stem from Lakuleśa—are put on a lower scale by the *Svacchanda* and its commentator. Whereas the observance of the Mausulas leads them finally to the Māyā Reality (SvT 11.71cd), the Pāśupatas who base themselves on the eight Pramāṇas and belong to the Lākula division reach the Īśvara Reality in the Pure Universe (SvT 10.1169cd–70ab, 11.71ab).

## THE PĀŚUPATA MOVEMENT

The differences between the various traditions that form the Pāśupata movement become more clear from the treatment (in *Svacchanda* Paṭala 11) of the ascending hierarchy of highest stations (*para(ma)ṃ padam*) that can be reached

10 The eight Pramāṇa texts are: *Pañcārtha*, *Guhya*, *Rudrāṅkuśa*, *Hṛdaya*, *Lakṣaṇa*, *Vyūha*, *Ākarṣa*, *Ādarśa*. Kṣemarāja *ad* SvT 10.1134: *ete rudrā etannāmakapāśupatasāstrāvātārakāḥ* (SvT II, 275).

11 *Pañcārthapramāṇa*: *proktā gopatipūrvā ye rudrās tu gahanāntagāḥ | te tu ghorāḥ samākhyātā nānābhuvanāvāsinaḥ ||* (SvT I, 16).

12 One wonders whether these ritual acts are subsumed under the six forms of worship specified in the *Pāśupatasūtra* (PS) 1.8: laughter, song, dance, bellowing, making obeisance, and muttering (PS 1.8: *hasitagītanṛtadūṃḍuṃkāranamaskārajapyopahāreṇopatiṣṭhet* ).

13 The names of these texts are given as (SvT II, 275): *Purakalpa*, *Kanaka*, *Śālā*, *Niruttara*, *Viśva*, *Prapañca*. They are no longer extant.

by the followers of the various sects.<sup>14</sup> The Mausula is here grouped together with the Kāruka,<sup>15</sup> of which Kṣemarāja only notes that it has been founded by someone else, descended in the place Kārohaṇa.<sup>16</sup> The followers of both sects, whose observances (*vrata*) deal with a multitude of rituals, reach the worlds of the Rudras Kṣemeśa and Brahmasvāmin, whom the *Svacchanda* (10.1125) had situated on yonder side of the barrier (*granthi*), though still in the Māyā Reality.<sup>17</sup>

Within the Lākula division the *Svacchanda* seems to distinguish between the Vaimalas and those who follow the eight Pramāṇas, more specifically the *Pañcārtha*, according to Kṣemarāja; both reach the Īśvara Reality, but the former's highest station is the world of the Rudra Tejeśa, while of the latter it is that of Dhruveśa.<sup>18</sup> The *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61* (i.e. AD 380/81, or AD 388, according to Falk 2004, 173) reports that a tradition of preceptors (*guru*) whose names end in *vimala* and who may have hence belonged to the Vaimala division, were affiliated to a lineage of teachers (*ācārya*) that traced its origin back to Kuśika, supposedly the first disciple of Lakuliśa. The sacred memory of these *gurus* was kept alive in a 'preceptor's shrine' (*gurvāyatana*), where cult objects were installed bearing their names (Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara), objects which were to be worshipped by the Māheśvaras.<sup>19</sup> The Vaimalas may therefore have adhered to the Pāśupata school that followed the Pañcārtha doctrine as laid down in the *Pāśupatasūtra* (see below, p. 295). Finally, the *Svacchanda* specifies a group within the Lākula division that practises the observance of the skull (*kapālavrata*). This group

14 A similar hierarchy, though unfortunately without the allocation of the Pāśupata sects by name, is given by Rāmakaṇṭha in his sub-commentary (*upanyāsa*) of the (lost) partial commentary on the *Raurava* by Sadyojyotis, the *Sarvāgamaprāmānya*, reconstructed by Goodall 1998, xxii–xxv.

15 SvT 11.71cd quoted by Jayaratha *ad Tantrāloka* 1.34 (I, 70): *mausule kāruke caiva māyātattvaṃ prakīrtitam* || 11.71cd ||

16 Who this founder is does not become clear. He might be 'Kāruka' whose name evidently connects him, in the view of Kṣemarāja, with the place of his descent, Kārohaṇa. Bhandarkar 1913, 121 identifies this sect with the Kālāmukha (Kālānana) and conjectures that 'the word Kāruka is probably a corruption of Kauruṣya, the name of the third of the four (according to the Purāṇas) pupils of Lakuliśa, or this last name may be the Sanskritised form of the original Kāruka'. Cf. Pathak 1960, 10. Lorenzen 1991, 84 rejects this identification. Cf. below, n. 3 on p. 527.

17 Kṣemarāja *ad* SvT 11.71cd:

*śrīlakuleśaśiṣyeṇa musulendreṇa kārohaṇasthānāvātīrṇeṇa cāpareṇa māyātattvagata-kṣemeśabrahmasvāmiprāptihetukriyābahulāḥ sve sve śāstre vrataviśeṣā uktā iti māyātattvam eva tatra paraṃ padam |*

Cf. above, n. 15 on p. 287.

18 SvT 11.72. Kṣemarāja (II, 328):

*ye 'pi vaimalākhyāḥ pāśupatabhedāḥ, tathā pañcārthapramāṇāṣṭakoktopāsāparāḥ pare, teṣāṃ īśvaratattvagatatejeśadhruveśau paraṃ padam ity āha: tejeśo vaimalānāṃ ca pramāṇe ca dhruvaṃ padam* || 72 ||

Cf. SvT 10.1174ab, where Tejeśa and Dhruveśa are both said to be the highest station for the followers of the Pramāṇas (see below, n. 20 on p. 288).

19 Sircar, SI I, 277–279; Bakker 1997, 68; below, p. 494.

seems to coincide with or to encompass the Vaimala, though Kṣemarāja's commentary does not make this very clear.<sup>20</sup> So far as to the Lākula division.

The question now arises: who is this disciple of Lakuleśa, Musulendra or Musula, who initiated a sect designated 'Mausula'? Evidently we are here concerned with a group within the Pāśupata movement that was chiefly engaged in ritual (worship) activity, forsaking the more rigorous portion of the Pāśupata praxis. As such it might be a group that stood between the lay Māheśvaras (*laukikas*) and the tough ascetics with their transgressive practices. Unfortunately, none of the Pramāṇa texts ascribed by Kṣemarāja to this school has survived and little more information about the sect is known from the later Śaiva Siddhānta, which, in view of its ritualistic orientation, in a way may be conceived of as its successor (see below, p. 296). However, the alleged dependence of the Mausula text corpus on the Lākula Pramāṇas seems to allow the inference that this sect also acknowledged the hierarchy of Rudra worlds and as such deviated from the Pañcārtha school.

20 Kṣemarāja *ad Svachchanda* 11.73–74ab:

*vaimalapramāṇasaśtraniṣṭho hi:*

*dīkṣājñānaviśuddhātma dehāntaṃ yāva caryayā |*

*kapālavratam āsthāya svaṃ svaṃ gacchati tat padam || 11.73 ||*

*dīkṣājñānaviśuddhātmeti padena proktakriyāpradhānavratamātraniṣṭhamausulakāru-*  
*kebhyo 'tra viśeṣo darśitaḥ | svaṃ svaṃ proktatejeśadhruveśarūpam | yad uktaṃ pu-*  
*rastād:*

*tejeśaś ca dhruveśaś ca pramāṇānāṃ paraṃ padam [SvT 10.1174]*

*iti || 73 ||*

*ye tu kapālādyaśthivratadhāriṇaḥ pūrvoktalākulāmnāyāt — 'bhasmani śayīta' [PS 1.3]*  
*ityādīpāśupataśāstracodanātaḥ:*

*japabhasmakriyāniṣṭhās te vrajanty aiśvaraṃ padam || 11.74ab ||*

For, he who follows the Pramāṇa Śāstra and the Vaimala,

His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge, by (keeping to) the prescribed praxis until death, while abiding by the Kapāla observance—he goes to that station that is his own. [SvT 11.73]

The quarter-verse 'His soul is purified by initiation and knowledge' indicates the difference here from the afore-mentioned Mausulas and Kārukās, who are devoted only to observances that are chiefly ritualistic. 'His own (station)', that is to say the afore-mentioned Tejeśa or Dhruveśa; this has been stated above:

Tejeśa and Dhruveśa are the highest station (for those who follow) the Pramāṇas. [SvT 10.1174]

But those, (issuing) from the afore-mentioned Lākula stream, who practise the observances of bones like the skull (*kapāla*), on account of injunctions in the Pāśupata Śāstra such as 'One should lie in ashes' [PS 1.3],

They, devoted to japa, ashes, and ritual, proceed to the station of Īśvara. [SvT 11.74ab]

## THE EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE FROM MALHAR

The antiquity of a tradition that traced its origin back to a certain Mugalisa who was initiated by Lakuliśa is secured by an inscription of which the text has recently become available. I refer to the Malhar Plates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57 (c. AD 650), actually found in Junvānī (near Malhar) and hence also known as *The Junvānī Copperplate Inscription of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57*,<sup>21</sup> which was published by G.L. Raykwar and Rahul Kumar Singh in *Purātan* (Vol. 9 (1994), 146 f.).<sup>22</sup>

I take 'Mugalisa' to be a variant or prakritism of Mudgaliśa or Musaliśa, both names meaning 'Club-bearing Lord'. Musaliśa again may be a variant of Musaleśa/Musuleśa and, having the same meaning, it might not seem too far-fetched to identify the 'Musulendra' of Kṣemarāja with the 'Mugalisa' of the inscription.<sup>23</sup>

I present here my edition of 2000, which gave a Sanskrit text that was slightly emended according to its intended reading. Since then, however, I have reconsidered this edition and proposed some alterations in Bakker 2014, 143 f. These are presented in the notes.

Before discussing this inscription any further, I give the text of that portion of it that is relevant for the present study. This portion starts with the last word on the first plate (second side), line 8, and ends in line 23 on the second plate, second side.

21 For the early chronology of Dakṣiṇa Kosala, the Pāṇḍuvaṃśa dynasty of Śrīpura and the reign of Mahāśivagupta (c. AD 590–650) see Bakker 1994b; above, pp. 235 ff.

22 My edition of this inscription in Bakker 2000 was based, in addition to Raykwar and Singh's edition of 1994, on a draft of a new edition by Ajay Mitra Shastri (Nagpur), which was published in 2001 (cf. Shastri 1995 II, 380 f.). Since then the original edition of Raykwar & Singh has been republished in Raykwar & Singh 2005, 188–192. The inscription was again edited by Susmita Majumdar in 2007. This set of three plates of copper is presently in the collection of Shri Raghunandan Prasad Pandeya (Raykwar & Singh 2005, 188; Majumdar 2007, 285). Shastri, unlike Raykwar and Singh, worked from photographs. Majumdar saw the plates herself and made use of photographs provided by Rahul Kumar Singh (Majumdar 2007, 293 n. 1). The text starts on the verso side of the first plate and comprises altogether 40 lines.

23 I consider *musula/mausula* to be a variant of *musala/mausala*. Cf. Rāmakaṇṭha's introduction to *Mataṅga* 1.1.1 (p. 2) reading: *lākulamausalādībhyaḥ*. That we are concerned with an ancient historic tradition seems to be confirmed by graffiti found in the caves at Padaṇa Hill (Bombay), reading: *sadhamusala (siddhamusala)*, and twice *musaladatta*. See Indrajī 1881–82; Bakker 1991, 23; Bisschop 2006, 47. The site has been destroyed by building developments.

*Malhar (Junvānī) Copperplates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57: ll. 8–23*<sup>24</sup>

[8] viditam a [9] stu bhavatām yathāsmābhir ayaṃ grāmaḥ  
 sa-KURAPADRAKAḤ,  
 vājasaneyaca [10] raṇād abhyartha BHĀṆḌĀGĀRATULAPADRAKAM\*  
 OṆI-bhogīyaṃ parivartena dattvā,  
 [11] saṃprati sanidhānaḥ sopanidhānaḥ sarvakarādānasametaḥ  
 sarvapīḍā [12] vivarjitas sadaśāparādhaḥ pratiṣiddhacāḥaḥapraवेशḥ,  
 asyām [13] mā(gha?)\*-paurṇamāsyām,  
 atraivātmakārīśrī-BĀLEŚVARABHAṬṬĀRAKA-tapo [14] vanapratipālanārtham  
 āropitebhyaḥ—  
 śivasya mūrtinām aṣṭau vighraheśvarāṇām,  
 ga [15] hanēśasya mūrtayo rudrāḥ ṣaṣṣaṣṭy anugrahakā yuge yuge  
 parivartamā [16] nā,  
 adhunā kalikālam āsādyā,  
 śrīmal-LAKULĪŚANĀTHO 'vatīrya,  
 SOMAŚA [17] RMĀ-khyabrāhmaṇakule bhūtvā,  
 mahāvrate (te)na\*\*\* dīkṣito jagadindus,  
 tenāpi [18] MUGALISAS\*\*\*\*,  
 tataḥ somādipāraṃparyakrameṇa,  
 sthāne guru\*\*\*\*\* śrī-RUDRASOMA-pra [19] śiṣyaśrī-TEJASOMA-śiṣyebhyaḥ  
 śrīmad-BHĪMASOMA-pādebhyaḥ,  
 śiṣyapraśiṣyāṇām [20] yāgadīkṣāvyaḥkhyānavasatipravartanāya  
 bhagnavidirṇadevakula [21] saṃskṛtaye ca |  
 mātāpitror ātmanaś ca puṇyābhivṛddhaye,  
 samakālopa [22] bhogārtham ācandratārakārkam,  
 udakapūrvakaṃ tāmraśāsanena pratipādi [23] ta ity [...]

\* Majumdar reads (typo?): *bhāṇḍagāra*°. Shastri takes this as the name of two villages: 'Bhāṇḍagāra may have been Boḍor in the same tahsil (i.e. Mahāsamund tahsil of the Raipur District), and T(ū)lapadraka may have been a suburb of this locality.' Their names seem to indicate villages where cotton (*tūla*) was cultivated and stored.

\*\* Singh, Shastri and Majumdar read *māpu*°.

\*\*\* Singh, Shastri and Majumdar read: *mahāvratena*. The emendation *mahāvrate tena* (haplography) in Bakker 2000 was proposed by H. Isaacson. In Bakker 2014, 144 this emendation has been again rejected.

\*\*\*\* Majumdar reads *mugalīsas*; Singh and Shastri: '*mugalīsas* (?)'. Mugalisa may be a variant/prakritism of Mudgalīśa or Musalīśa.

\*\*\*\*\* In Bakker 2014, 144 I have followed Majumdar's emendation: *sthānaguru*°.

### *Translation*

Let it be known to you that—after we have earlier asked permission of the Vājasaneyya branch (of the White Yajurveda) and have given the village

24 Critical edition based on Raykwar and Singh 1994 (Bakker 2000). Cf. Shastri 2001; Majumdar 2007, 292; Bakker 2014, 143 f.

Bhāṇḍāgāra-Tulapadraka in the district of Oṇī in return—this village (scil. Pāśīpadraka) together with Kurapadraka, along with the rights to hidden treasures and deposits, the right to collect all taxes, immunity from all impositions, the right to impose fines for the ten offences, and the exemption from being entered by officials and constables, starting immediately, has been bestowed by us here and now, on the day of full moon of Māgha (?) with the offering of a libation and by (this) copperplate charter, upon the feet of the illustrious Bhīmasoma, for the increase of merit of father, mother and ourselves and to be enjoyed as long as moon, stars and sun will last:

There are eight embodiments of Śiva, the Vighraheśvaras; the embodiments of Gahaneśa are the sixty-six Rudras who bestow grace (initiation) and who roam about in successive *yugas*. Now the Kali Age has come and Lakulīśanātha has descended. He was born in the family of a brahmin named Somaśarman; after having been initiated by him (i.e. Somaśarman) in the Great Vow he became a moon on earth.<sup>25</sup> And he again (i.e. Lakulīśanātha) initiated Mugalisa. Then, in due succession of the lineage that started with Soma ('the Moon'), the afore-mentioned Bhīmasoma—the pupil of the illustrious Tejasoma and grand-pupil of the illustrious *guru* Rudrasoma<sup>26</sup>—has been (justly) raised to the position responsible for the protection of the *tapovana* attached to the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka (Temple), which has been erected by ourselves. The donation is made to meet the expenses of ceremonies, initiations, teaching and housing of pupils and grand-pupils and to restore the shrines that have fallen into decay and are in need of repair.

### Interpretation

The inscription is of paramount importance for more than one reason. One of them is that, in addition to the lineage of preceptors, it gives doctrinal arguments to legitimize the claims of the recipient Bhīmasoma. These doctrinal arguments should be compared with what we know of Pāśupata theology. In order to follow the *paraṃparā* of teachers back to Śiva himself, the text refers first to the latter's eight forms that are designated 'Vighraheśvaras'. As we have seen above, Vighraheśvara is, according to one tradition,<sup>27</sup> the name of the deity who stands at the apex of our cosmos, in the *granthī*, where it borders on the Pure Universe. There he is surrounded by eight Rudras, four of whom bear names that mark the Aṣṭamūrti according to *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* 6.2–3. Just

25 Having reconsidered the issue, I have accepted the reading of the epigraph in my 2014 publication, against the emendation accepted in Bakker 2000 (reproduced here). This has led to a new interpretation in Bakker 2014, 144:

Consecrated by the Great Vow (Mahāvratā), He (i.e. Lakulīśanātha) became a 'Moon on Earth' (Jagadindu). By Him again Mugalisa [was initiated].

26 If we follow Majumdar's emendation we should translate: 'the illustrious Sthānaguru Rudrasoma'.

27 This seems to be the tradition of the Śaiva Siddhānta as represented by the *Niśvāsa-mukha* and the *Mataṅga* (see above p. 285).

like Rudra, the (grand)son of Prajāpati, through his eight forms, is the actual manifestation of God in the created cosmos, sometimes represented as the divine child,<sup>28</sup> so, it seems, is Śiva in his eightfold form of Vighraheśvara ('the Lord of Form') considered the fountain-head of our universe in the theology underlying the inscription at issue. Then the inscription mentions Gahaneśa ('the Lord of the Abyss'), the Rudra who rules the lowest world of the Māyā Reality in the sub-barrier layer, directly above the 'abyss' or 'net of bonds', the material world. He is said to roam about in sixty-six embodiments in successive *yugas* and Lakulīśa is just the last of these incarnations in the present Kaliyuga.

In a letter already mentioned (see above, n. 7 on p. 285) Professor Alexis Sanderson brought an unpublished text to my notice, the *Jayadrathayāmala* (JRY), which belongs to the (later) Bhairava scriptures of Agamic Saivism. Sanderson kindly placed at my disposal a portion of the edition he made of this text (4.449–460), based on a MS in the National Archives in Kathmandu.<sup>29</sup> He drew my attention to the fact that this text describes the sixty-six embodiments as 'the Bhavas who reside in the sixty-six Māna (i.e. Pramāṇa) [worlds]'.<sup>30</sup> These embodiments or manifestations are divided into two lines of gurus (*gurupaṅktis*), a set of twenty-eight Śivas and one of thirty-eight Rudras, which are associated with different levels of Śaiva teaching. The first set, which begins with Śveta and of which the last two gurus are Someśa and Lakulīśa, is said to bestow both exegesis of the scriptures and, occasionally, initiation, following the division of the Pramāṇajñāna.<sup>31</sup> The second line of thirty-eight Rudras, which begins with Vareśvara and ends with Vaṣaṭkāra, is said to be authorized to granting initiation and is described as propounding the teachings of Bhairava.<sup>32</sup> It may be that the Pāśupata ascetic Udbhavarāśi, who is known

28 See Bakker 1996, 9 ff., above, p. 197. Cf. the *Śrīpūrvaśāstra* (5.28-29), referred to by Kṣemarāja (see above, n. 8 on p. 285), which assigns eight deities (*iśvarāṣṭa*) to this reality, forming a *maṇḍala* of the size of a thumb and headed by Mahādeva, the first of the Aṣṭamūrti.

29 *Bṛhatsūcīpatram* Vol. 5, MS No. 4650.

30 JRY 4.449 (edition A. Sanderson):

*adhunā gūḍhanirgūḍhān paṅktiyugmagatāñ śṛṇu |*  
*śvetādīvaṣaṭkārāntān bhavān ṣaṣṣaṣṭimānagān || 449 ||*

31 JRY 4.453–454ab (edition A. Sanderson):

*someśo lakulīśaś ca hy aṣṭāvīmśaty amī śivāḥ |*  
*vyākhyānānūgrahakarāḥ pramāṇajñānabhedatāḥ || 4.453 ||*  
*prāsaṅgikī tv asau teṣāṃ sadyo 'nūgrahakārītā |*

This list of twenty-eight manifestations of Śiva conforms by and large with similar lists of *avatāras* known from several other texts dealing with the Pāśupata system as founded by Lakulīśa; see e.g. Dviveda 1982 for a summary and comparison of these lists; Bakker 2014, 214.

32 JRY 4.454cd–455ab, 459 (edition A. Sanderson):

*dvitīyā gurupaṅktir yā vareśādyāṣṭatrimśikā || 4.454 ||*  
*sadyonūgrahakarṛtve tasyā devy adhikārītā | [...] |*  
*vaṣaṭkāro vaṣaṭkārah kathitās tu gurūttamāḥ |*  
*bhairavāptappravaktārah svādhaṣṭhānagatāṇuśaḥ || 4.459 ||*

from an inscription from the Gandharveśa Temple in Sirpur (Śrīpura) (c. AD 600), claimed to belong to this lineage, since he is explicitly called a Rudra (see below, p. 532).

There can be little doubt that the inscription at issue in mentioning the sixty-six Rudra manifestations descending from Gahaneśa, ‘who roam about in successive *yugas* to bestow grace (initiation)’, refers to the doctrine mentioned in the *Jayadrathayāmala*. This is again reinforced by the fact that the last two of the twenty-eight Śiva manifestations, Someśa and Lakulīśa also figure prominently in the inscription.<sup>33</sup> To Someśa or Somaśarman, as he is called in the inscription, we will return below.

Lakulīśanātha, unlike Somaśarman, is explicitly said in the inscription to be an *avatāra* and through him the lineage of the donee Bhīmasoma is directly connected with the divine (Rudra) *paraṃparā*: Gahaneśa, Vighraheśvara, Śiva. Bhīmasoma’s lineage, namely, is said to stem from Lakulīśa through the latter’s pupil Mugalisa, who was initiated by the ‘Moon on Earth’, Lakulīśa, and whom we have identified with Musula or Musulendra, the founder of the Mausula sect. If this identification is right, the conclusion would be natural that the lineage of Bhīmasoma belonged to the sect of the Mausulas, who, as we have seen, probably acknowledged the theology of an hierarchy of Rudra worlds, which plays such an important role in the inscription.

## SOMAŚARMAN AND THE SOMASIDDHĀNTA

Here, however, we encounter a difficulty. Though Bhīmasoma and his predecessors no doubt belonged to the Pāśupata fold, the designation ‘Mausula’ does not occur in the inscription. With the Mausulas these *ācāryas* may have in common, it would seem, that they were engaged with ceremonies (*kriyā*) and worship rather than with ascetic practices, though they were in charge of the *tapovana* attached to the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka Temple in Śrīpura. But how do we explain that their names end in *soma*? On account of these names I have argued (Bakker 2000a, 1159) that these *ācāryas* probably belonged to the Pāśupata sect known as Somasiddhānta, a sect that hardly, if at all, features in Agamic literature where it is concerned with the Atimārga, but which in later sources is often equated with the Kāpālikas.<sup>34</sup> Pāśupata ascetics whose names

33 From this evidence we may infer that a distinct Bhairava tradition within Saivism was acknowledged by the middle of the 7th century; it would seem, however, that Bhīmasoma did not himself belong to this tradition, since he affiliates himself to the first lineage of ‘Śivas’.

34 In the play *Prabodhacandrodaya* by Kṛṣṇamiśra (c. AD 1050–1100), the doctrine of the Somasiddhānta is identified with that of the Kāpālikas (Handiqui 1965, 640–645). Further see Lorenzen 1991, 82 ff., 215 ff.; Pathak 1960, 25. Alexis Sanderson pointed out to me that the Kapālin Satyasoma and his companion Devasomā feature in the *Mattavilāsaprahasana* of the Pallava king Mahendravarman (cf. Lorenzen 1991, 53).

end in *soma* are known from several inscriptions in which they are said to be engaged in the Mahāvratā, the observance in which, according to the Malhar inscription, Lakulīśa was initiated.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, another question arises: who was Somaśarman?

The name Somaśarman was already known from the *Vāyu°* and *Liṅgapurāṇas* and he is evidently the same as the Someśa named in the *Jayadrathayāmala* as Lakulīśa's predecessor (see above, p.293). These Purāṇas describe him as the 27th incarnation of Śiva, born in Prabhāsatīrtha, a holy place in Saurashtra near the Arabian Sea, famous for its Somanātha Temple, an assignment that makes the impression of being secondary.<sup>36</sup> The legend told in the Malhar Plates, however, is apparently somewhat different. It says that Lakulīśanātha was born in the brahmin family of Somaśarman, who therefore may have been a senior contemporary of his. Moreover, Lakulīśa is said to have been initiated by this Somaśarman in the Mahāvratā and so became the 'Moon on Earth'.<sup>37</sup>

Somaśarman and his family (*kula*) thus appear, in the religious imagination of the believer, to have been the House (*śarman*) from which the Moon (*soma*) rose over the world (*jaḡadindu*). The play of words may allude to 'Soma' as a name of Śiva and the transfiguration undergone by Lakulīśa in the initiation ritual, which, when he underwent the anointment with ashes, made him shine like the moon.

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE SKANDAPURĀṆA

The tradition recorded in the inscription seems also to have been known to the author(s) of the original *Skandapurāṇa* (SP). This text, too, places

35 Alexis Sanderson kindly provided me with the following information. The Indargarh Pāśupata stone inscription of AD 710–11 was engraved by a Mahāvratin with the name Cāmuṇḍasoma (*Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 1955, 249–261). A Mahāvratin Somibhaṭṭāraka/Sobadeva of the Kolanupākā inscription of AD 1050 is described as proficient in expounding the Somasiddhānta (*Select Epigraphs of Andhra Pradesh No.4*). Two inscriptions of the time of the Cola king Rājādhirāja II (Nos. 403 of 1896 and 206 of 1912 of the Madras Epigraphical Collection), mention a Somasiddhāntin, though 'soma' is not affixed to his name: Vāgīśabhaṭṭa (EI XXVII (1947–48), 297 f.). The predecessors of this and other priests associated with the Tiruvorriyur Temple, 'five hundred Brāhmaṇa *Mahāvratins*', were, according to the account of the Sthalapurāṇa, 'brought from the banks of the Ganges' (EI XXVII, 300 n. 1). See also Bakker 2014, 149 f. for °Soma priests belonging to the Muṇḍa-Śrīṅkhalika Pāśupatas serving at the Pāśupatinātha Temple in Nepal.

36 VāP 23.214–217; LiP 1.24.120–124. Another feature that makes the impression of being secondary is that Akṣapāda (=Gautama?), Kumāra (or Kaṇāda), Ulūka and Vatsa are mentioned as his pupils. Dviveda 1982 remarks about him: 'Prabhāsatīrtham āsādyā somaśarmā prādurbhūtaḥ | nāsti pāṭhāntaram atra |'

37 By accepting the reading *mahāvratena* in l. 17 instead of the conjecture *mahāvrate tena*, our interpretation (Bakker 2014) has significantly changed. I now think that the inscription tells us most likely that Lakulīśanātha became a 'Moon on Earth' thanks to his commitment to the Mahāvratā.

Somaśarman in the Kali Age and he and his family are said to have been the first ones blessed with Lakuliśa's grace; the text apparently implies that the latter was born in Somaśarman's, i.e., Atri's House. The spot where the incarnation took place is called Kārohaṇa.<sup>38</sup> The relevant passage reads:

And God, the Lord of the gods, who is possessed of supreme sovereignty, after having assumed a white-bodied form (i.e. a body like that of the moon), went to the auspicious House of Atri, (that is to say, he went to the house of a man) named Somaśarman, who was born in the lineage of Atri. That lord, i.e. Śaṃkara, blessed/initiated that *brahman*-knowing brahmin belonging to Atri's lineage together with his (whole) family by bestowing upon him perfection in yoga. Thereupon, after he had initiated this excellent brahmin and his family, O Vyāsa, God went to Ujjayanī (Ujjain) and entered the cremation ground. There the bull-bannered God took a bath in ashes, took a torch in his left hand and sat down (in meditation).<sup>39</sup>

In Ujjain the God-man accepted Kauśika as his first disciple,<sup>40</sup> and then this 'white-bodied' or moon-like incarnation went to Jambūmārga, Mathurā and Kanyakubja, where he initiated Gārgya, Mitra and a fourth person who is only said to have been born in a good *gotra* in the Country of the Kurus, whose name may have become Kauruṣ(y)a (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.122–123). Then the Lord, here named Lāguḍi, taught them his own doctrine (*svasiddhānta*), known as 'Pañcārtha', which, as the *Skandapurāṇa* suggests, was different from the doctrine of his senior, the blessed Somaśarman.<sup>41</sup> I take this as an indication that the author(s) of the *Skandapurāṇa* belonged to circles that were closer to the Lākula than to the Mausula division.

38 Cf. Kauṇḍinya *ad Pāśupatasūtra* 1.1 (p. 3); Hara 1967, 157 n. 1.

39 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.124–127 (edition Peter Bisschop 2006):

*bhagavān api deveśaḥ paramaiśvaryaśaṃnyutah |*  
*ATRIVAMAŚAPRASŪTASYA NĀMNĀ VAI SOMAŚARMAṆAḤ |*  
*rūpaṃ kṛtvā sitāṅgaṃ tu jagāmātrigrhaṃ śubham || 124 ||*  
*sa taṃ brahmavidam vipram ātreyaṃ sakulaṃ vibhuḥ |*  
*yogasiddhīpradānena anujagrāha śaṃkaraḥ || 125 ||*  
*anugrhya tadā vyāsa sakulaṃ dvijasattamam |*  
*jagāmojjayanīṃ devaḥ śmaśānaṃ ca viveśa ha || 126 ||*  
*sa tatra bhasmanātmānam avagunṭhya vṛṣadhvajah |*  
*ulmukaṃ vāmahastena grhītvā samupāviśat || 127 ||*

40 Cf. Kauṇḍinya *ad Pāśupatasūtra* 1.1 (p. 3f.).

41 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.128–130:

*tatra prathamam ādāya śiṣyaṃ KAUŚIKAM īśvaraḥ |*  
*jambūmārge dvitīyaṃ ca mathurāyāṃ tato 'param || 128 ||*  
*kanyakubje tataś cānyaṃ anugrhya jagatpatiḥ |*  
*svasiddhāntaṃ dadau yogam uvācedaṃ ca LĀGUḌIḤ || 129 ||*  
*rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hīdaṃ PAÑCĀRTHA iti saṃjñitam |*  
*viprān mocayitvaṃ datto yuṣmabhyaṃ martyabandhanāt |*  
*anayā dīkṣayā viprān prāpayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam || 130 ||*

## SOMAŚARMAN, SOMAVAMŚA AND SOMASIDDHĀNTA

When we return to the Junvānī inscription and combine its evidence with that of the *Skandapurāṇa*, we may say that there evidently was a tradition within the Pāśupata fold that recognized a, what we may call ‘Pāśupata milieu’ before the appearance of Lakulīśa. Somaśarman belonged to this milieu. In the Pāñcārthika-Pāśupata context he was mostly either ignored, or relegated to a previous *yuga* by being promoted to an *avatāra* of Śiva himself. Both our sources, however, the inscription and the *Skandapurāṇa*, emphasize that, though they recognize Somaśarman as a patriarch, Somaśarman is not an incarnation, and he or his tradition derived legitimacy only from the belief that Lakulīśa was born in or resorted to his House. According to the *Skandapurāṇa*, Somaśarman himself was favoured with initiation by Lakulīśa, according to the inscription it was the other way round,<sup>42</sup> but, the inscription adds, the lineage of Bhīmasoma, received its ‘certificate of divinity’ through Mugalisa, who was initiated by the incarnated Śiva himself.

The combined evidence of both sources thus seems to suggest that there existed an early Śaiva tradition that, on the one hand, recognized the uniqueness of Lakulīśa’s incarnation, but that, on the other hand, distanced itself from the Pāñcārthika and Lākula divisions. In its initial stage this tradition, or one strand of it, may have been named after its putative preceptor: ‘Mausula’. In the course of time other groups may have been assimilated, and gradually a distinct theology and praxis may have been developed, which became known as the Somasiddhānta, thus preserving a reference to a distant saint who was halloved as its founder, Somaśarman. Part of this tradition, again, may eventually have merged with groups that produced the Bhairava texts such as the *Jayadrathayāmala*, that is to say, became indistinguishable from the Kāpālikas.<sup>43</sup> Others may have joined the Śaiva Siddhānta, of which a *mathikā* was attached to the very same temple complex of Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka in Śrīpura.<sup>44</sup>

42 This clause is no longer valid according my 2014 interpretation; above, p. 290.

43 Sanderson 1988, 668.

44 A hoard of nine copperplate grants of Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna was found in Sirpur (Shastri 1995 II, 376–379; see also Shastri 1992a and Shastri 2001). These nine charters have been edited and published by Rahul Kumar Singh in Raykwar & Singh 2005, 196–217. It appears that in this Sirpur hoard there are altogether seven charters that record grants made to Śaiva *ācāryas* said to issue from Nandapura, but who were living in this *mathikā* in Śrīpura. The lineage of these *ācāryas* should therefore been seen as a subbranch of the Nandapur one; it can be reconstructed from these grants: 1) *śaivācārya* Aghoraśiva, 2) *bhagavatpāda* Dīrghaśiva, 3) *bhagavatpāda* Vyāpaśiva, and 4) *sthānaguru* Astraśiva. All the donations were made to meet the expenses on repairs, daily worship and musical performances. From these inscriptions and the names of the Śaiva *ācāryas* ending in *śiva* it becomes clear that the Śaiva Siddhānta was firmly established in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, at least from the second half of the 6th century onwards. The original headquarters may have been in Nandapura, a place not properly identified, but probably an administrative division within the Pāṇḍava Kingdom. The charters of the Sirpur hoard and their significance for our understanding of the Bāleśvara-bhaṭṭāraka Temple complex in Sirpur have been evaluated in Bosma 2018, 75–87.

The *Skandapurāṇa* goes a step further in its mystification of the origins by affiliating Somaśarman to the lineage of Atri, the father of the Moon, that is to the Lunar Race, the Somavaṃśa.<sup>45</sup> There are indications that this powerful symbolism was not lost on the rulers of Dakṣiṇa Kosala. It can hardly be coincidence that the Junvānī inscription is a charter issued by a king who proclaims to belong to the Somavaṃśa.<sup>46</sup> After the theological and legendary superstructure, the actual *paraṃparā* of Bhīmasoma is said to begin with Soma, thus creating, possibly intentionally, a profound ambiguity: Soma who? Soma that is Śiva, Soma that is the son of Atri, the Moon, Soma that is Somaśarman, Soma that is Jaḡadindu (i.e. Lakulīśanātha), or just a preceptor named Soma who lived long after the times of Lakulīśa and Mugalīsa, but who happened to start a tradition of ascetic teachers within the Pāśupata fold?

The intimate relationship of the royal Soma dynasty with this particular branch of Pāśupatas may thus have been endorsed by an ideology according to which both claimed descent from Soma—the dynastic one from Soma, the son of Atri, the sectarian one from the ‘Moon on Earth’ that appeared in the family of Somaśarman, that is in the House of the Moon. This House may therefore have been conceived by the mythmakers of the time as the joint cradle of two lineages: a worldly one culminating in Mahāśivagupta, the Somavaṃśin king of Kosala, and a religious one headed by Bhīmasoma, an *ācārya* living in the temple complex founded and patronized by his royal counterpart.

45 That this tradition was not completely obliterated in later centuries, but locally survived well into the second millennium is shown by the *Kāraṇamāhātmya*. This late text sings the greatness of the Kārohaṇa *tīrtha*, which is unanimously identified with the village Karvan c. 30 km north of Baroda (D.R. Bhandarkar 1906–07; Lorenzen 1991, 177). We encounter the following pedigree of Śiva’s incarnation in the fourth *adhyaīya* of this far from homogeneous text, spoken by Mahādeva (edition in Dalal 1920, 51):

*kāyāvarohaṇe puṇye tīrthe tīrthavarottame |*  
*bhṛguḷṣṭrapavitrārtham avatīrṇo yuge yuge ||*  
*ādikalpāvasāne tu brahmakalpe purātane |*  
*brahmaṇo manasaḥ putro atrināmā ca viśrutaḥ ||*  
*atris tu janayāmāsa ātreyaṃ nāma nāmataḥ |*  
*ātreyād agniśarmo 'pi agniśarmasutaḥ śuciḥ ||*  
*somaśarmeti vikhyaṭo dharmasūlo jītendriyaḥ |*  
*somaśarmasuto jāto viśvarūpo dvijottamaḥ ||*  
*viśvarūpād ahaṃ jāto bālarūpadharo haraḥ |*  
*yena vyāptaṃ jagat sarvaṃ trailokyaṃ sacarācaram ||*

46 Malhar (Junvānī) Copperplates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57, ll. 4–5: *somavaṃśa-sambhavaḥ paramamāheśvaro mātāpitṛpādānudhyātāḥ śrīmahāśivaguptarājadevaḥ*. The likelihood of such a connection was first suggested to me by Rahul Kumar Singh.



PART II

Studies  
in the Early History and Culture of  
North India



# A Theatre of Broken Dreams\*

Vidiśā in the Days of Gupta Hegemony

## PROLOGUE

In his monumental *Geschichte Indiens* Hermann Kulke depicts the relationship between the Gupta and Vākāṭaka dynasties as basically an unproblematic one, an alliance that was dominated by the Guptas and secured a peaceful coexistence till their fall.

Vermutlich in der Phase der Vorbereitung seines Krieges gegen die Kshatrapa gab dann aber Candragupta seine Tochter dem König Rudrasena II. zur Ehe, um den Rücken für seinen Kampf im Westen frei zu haben. Rudrasena starb jedoch schon nach fünfjähriger Regierung etwa im Jahre 390 n. Chr. Auf Candraguptas Rat hin übernahm daraufhin seine Tochter Prabhavatigupta die Regentschaft für ihre Söhne. Während ihrer etwa zwanzigjährigen Regentschaft geriet das Vakataka-Reich zunehmend unter direkten einfluß der Gupta und gehörte *de facto* bald zu deren Reichsverband. Zwar wurde die Unabhängigkeit der Vakatakas unter Pravarasena II. (ca. 410 bis 440 n. Chr.), von dem eine große Zahl Inschriften bekannt ist, wiederhergestellt. Doch hatte das Reich der Vakatakas aufgehört, eine potentielle Bedrohung für die Guptas zu sein. Bis zum Untergang der Guptas bestanden statt dessen überaus enge Beziehungen zwischen beiden Reichen, so daß man in der Geschichtsschreibung bisweilen sogar vom Vakataka-Gupta-Zeitalter spricht. Diese engen Beziehungen trugen wesentlich zur Ausbreitung der Gupta-Kultur nach Zentralindien bei. (Kulke 1998, 114)

This representation (including the chronology) reaches back to a powerful, historical theory set forth by A.S. Altekar in a book which he edited together with R.C. Majumdar and which was first published in 1960 under the title *The Vākāṭaka-Gupta Age*. The evidence that has come to light in the last forty years justifies a reassessment of it. In *Religion and Politics in the Eastern Vākāṭaka Kingdom* (Bakker 2002) I investigated the actual lines along which Gupta culture reached the Deccan and how Gupta examples of religious and artistic expression informed those of the Vākāṭakas. This study has confirmed the last quoted statement of Hermann Kulke to the effect that the close relations between both kingdoms significantly contributed to a process of acculturation.

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The historical question that should next be investigated is for how long, and in which way, these close relations prevailed between both kingdoms. Did they really last till the fall of the Guptas? We shall try to answer this question in the following pages as a tribute to the great historian. We shall focus in particular on Eastern Malwa and its capital Vidiśā, since this appears to have been the theatre in which aspirations to the Gupta throne were fostered and shattered and in which Vākāṭaka presence made itself most expressly felt.

## ACT 1 RĀMAGUPTA

In our reappraisal of the historic image sketched above, we may start on the war of Candragupta II with the Kṣatrapas or Śakas. Candragupta's father, Samudragupta, had extended his home territory—to be located along the Ganges, around Kauśāmbī-Prayāga, with Sāketa (present Ayodhyā) in the north and Pāṭaliputra (present Patna) in the east—towards the west by subduing i.a. the Nāga kingdom and its capital Padmāvātī (modern Pawaṃya), a kingdom or confederacy which seems to have comprised local Nāga families ruling from the cities of Kāntipurī (modern Kutwar) and Vidiśā (modern Besnagar).<sup>1</sup> The confederacy, if that it was, may have been led by the king of Padmāvātī, Gaṇapatināga, who, according to the famous Allahabad Pillar Inscription, was forcefully dethroned (*prasabhoddharaṇa*).<sup>2</sup> The three Nāga cities, Kāntipurī to the North and Vidiśā to the South of Padmāvātī, mark roughly the broad stroke of land to the West of Bundelkhand, south of the Chambal River and north of the Narmadā. The southern part of this country includes the north-eastern Malwa Plateau, the fertile land around Vidiśā known as Daśārṇa; its western frontier borders on the central Malwa Plateau with its capital Ujjayinī (Ujjain). This plateau, which came to be called (Western) Malwa, was apparently not annexed by Samudragupta to his kingdom. Behind the tribes of the Mālavas, Ārjunāyanas, and Yaudheyas, listed in the Allahabad Inscription and said to be ruled by tributary 'frontier-kings' (*pratyantanṛpati*), loomed a more formidable enemy, the Śaka king, probably *mahākṣatrapa* Rudrasena III, who in the same inscription is said to have acknowledged Samudragupta by paying his respect (°*sevākṛta*°). The city of Vidiśā thus appears to have been some sort of a frontier town by the end of Samudragupta's reign and this may partly explain the great importance attached to control over it and the surrounding country throughout the rest of Gupta history.

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1 Trivedi 1957, xxxiii–xxxviii.

2 CII III (1888), 7. Many coins of Gaṇapati (Gaṇapatīndra, Gaṇendra) have been found in Pawaṃya (Trivedi 1957, 5', xxii–xxiii, 49–54). The *Harṣacarita* (ed. Kane p. 50 ll. 18 f.) mentions as the ruler of Padmāvātī that was killed Nāgasena (who also figures in the Allahabad Inscription), but so far no coins of him have been found. Cf. Bakker 1997, 10 f.

It is very much probable that the Mahākṣatrapa was little pleased with his subordinate status and his disaffection may have led to a military campaign when he judged the situation to be most favourable, that is, directly before or after Samudragupta's death in c. AD 376. That such a campaign and the ensuing Gupta-Śaka war(s) took place we only know from circumstantial evidence. More than 250 years later a general of Harṣa's army narrates in Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* the treachery and intrigue that befell earlier kings, among which the renowned act of Candragupta who 'cut down the lord of the Śakas, who desired another man's wife, by disguising himself in her dress'.<sup>3</sup> Rather than remembering an historical event, Bāṇa may have discussed what was known to him from a play, written only a few decades before by a dramatist at the court of one of Harṣa's predecessors (the Maukhari king Avantivarman), namely the *Devīcandragupta* of Viśākhadatta.<sup>4</sup>

#### *The story of the Devīcandragupta*

The reconstruction of events directly after Samudragupta's death almost fully depends on an historical assessment of this play, which itself, unfortunately, is lost, but which has been reconstructed from quoted fragments and brief references to it in other sources (among which the *Harṣacarita*). This reconstruction, admirably carried out by V. Raghavan (1963, 858–80), and discussed by many scholars (e.g. Warder 1989–92 III, 260–64), may be briefly summarized as follows.

A Gupta rāja, named Rāma, is threatened in his military camp by a ruler (*pati*) of the Śakas. He is forced to surrender his wife Dhruvadevī to the Śaka ruler. His younger brother (*kumāra*), called Candra, is unable to accept the disgrace and resorts to a ruse to kill the Śaka chief. In the disguise of the queen he enters the camp of the enemy and kills the Śaka. This act of boldness (*sāhasa*) earns him the title Sāhasāṅka. For reasons unknown Candra, after his heroic deed, seems to be in danger again, which this time is coming from within the Gupta camp. He resorts to feigning madness. The end of the play is not known.

The main characters of this play are known as historical persons: Rāmagupta, his (younger) brother Candragupta, the latter's wife Dhruvadevī, and the Śakapati, not mentioned by name, but who may have been thought to be Rudrasena III. The play thus seems to have an unusually high historic profile.

3 *Harṣacarita* Uchchvāsa 6 p. 51 ll. 10f.: *aripure ca parakalatrakāmukaṃ kāmīnīveśaguptaś ca candraguptaḥ śakapatim aśātayat.*

4 Warder 1989–92 III, 257. Winternitz 1920, 210, especially n.3 with regard to the date of Viśākhadatta in connection with the featuring of the name 'Candragupta' in the final blessing spoken by the chief actor (i.e. Rākṣasa) in some MSS of another of Viśākhadatta's plays, the *Mudrārākṣasa* (in which Candragupta Maurya is one of the principal characters); other MSS read 'Avantivarmā' instead (discussion by Dhruva in his edition pp. ix–xv). I follow Dhruva and Warder in this matter.

The historical assessment is complicated by two allusions made in Rāṣṭrakūṭa inscriptions dating from AD 871 and 933. The *praśastis* of the kings Amoghavarṣa I and Govinda IV seek to elevate their protagonists by comparing their deeds with the miserable behaviour of the foremost of the Gupta dynasty. The two verses run as follows.

AFTER killing his brother, he took (his) kingdom and (his) wife; even so the wretch had recorded surely, a thousand billion times, in the Kali Age: ‘A member of the Gupta family, he is the donor.’ The man (on the other hand), who gave his kingdom away more than once, a trifling thing (for him)—not to mention (other) external objects—he blushed, when merely the report went that their donor was the exalted ornament of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty (i.e. Amoghavarṣa).<sup>5</sup>

THOUGH it was within his power, neither did he contrive outrageous cruelty against his elder brother, nor did he (ever) bring shame (upon himself) by despicable acts such as sleeping with the wife of his next of kin, nor did he betake himself out of fear to demoniac behaviour, irrespective of the holy and unholy alike—by liberality and unequalled acts of boldness that (king Govinda) became on earth a (true) ‘man-marked-by-boldness’ (Sāhasāṅka).<sup>6</sup>

To go by these verses, Candragupta not only killed the Śakapati and then feigned madness, but he killed his brother Rāmagupta as well, took his wife, and usurped the throne. There is nothing in Viśākhadatta’s play that suggests that its hero Candra in the last, lost act turned into such a villain all at once; or as Warder remarks:

As for Viśākhadatta, it would seem to have been very difficult to have concluded his play with such an action by his hero. He surely arranged the plot in such a way as to free Candra from guilt.<sup>7</sup>

Though the *praśastis* are of course specimina of blatant propaganda couched in poetry, it is equally difficult to imagine that the two Deccan kings actually invented such disgraceful acts altogether. In view of what was at stake at this crucial junction, viz. the preservation of the paternal heritage established at great costs, and in the light of similar events later in the Gupta history that we are going to discuss, it seems not wholly unlikely that the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings

5 EI XVIII, 248 (emended):

*hatvā bhrātaram eva rāyjam aharat devīm ca dīmas tathā,  
lakṣaṃ koṭim alekhyat kila kalav dātā sa guptānvayah |  
yenātyāji tanuḥ svarājyam asakṛd bāhyārthakaiḥ kā kathā,  
hrīś tasyonnatirāṣṭrakūṭatilako dādeti kīrtyām api ||*

Cf. Sircar SI II, 487.

6 Fleet in IA XII, 250 (emended):

*sāmarthyē sati ninditā pravihitā naivāgraje krūrātā,  
bandhustrīgamanādibhiḥ kucaritair āvarjitam nāyaśaḥ |  
śaucāśaucaparāṇmukhaṃ na ca bhīyā paśācyam aṅgīkṛtam,  
tyāgenāsamasāhasaiś ca bhuvane yas sāhasāṅko ’bhavat ||*

Cf. Sircar SI II, 495 ff.

7 Warder 1989–92 III, 263 f.

did actually divulge an historic stain on the otherwise so glorious reputation of the Gupta dynasty. That Rāmagupta ruled for a short period is undeniable. Candragupta's chief wife was called Dhruvadevī, and her husband became master over the Gupta Empire, including not only Vidiśā, but, eventually, also the realm of the Śaka kings.

There is therefore every appearance that Samudragupta's old age or death initiated a struggle for power in which at first the elder son, Rāmagupta, who as a viceroy might have been in charge of his father's troupes at the western frontier, was on top. To mark his position and to finance it he had begun issuing his own coinage, for which he used the local mints that earlier struck the copper coins of the Nāga kings.<sup>8</sup> Rāmagupta did not succeed, however, in extending his control over the whole of the Gupta kingdom. As Ellen Raven (1994a, 163 n.4.66) remarks: 'Perhaps the copper coins of King Rāmagupta also belong to the imperial currency, but the lay-out of their devices does not support such an attribution.' The imperial mints still beyond his reach, at home, in his own power base Vidiśā, Rāmagupta could adorn himself with the grand titles to which he claimed the right. *Mahārājādhirājaśrīrāmagupta* was engraved on the pedestals of three Jaina images found in the village of Durjanpura in Vidisha District, 2 miles from Besnagar, proclaiming that these three images were ordered (*kārita*) by the 'emperor' himself.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Candragupta's matrimonial policy and the triangle of power*

The failure on the part of Rāmagupta to consolidate his power may have been caused by adverse developments in his war against the Śakas. As the drama *Devīcandragupta* and references to it suggest, Candragupta's coup d'état followed after he had rescued the course of the Guptas. Subsequently, in addition to silver and copper coins minted locally in Malwa, Candragupta, as has been suggested,<sup>10</sup> began issuing his so-called Lion-slayer Type of imperial gold coins

8 Bajpai 1992, 84: 'The excavations at Vidisha, conducted by the ASI have also brought to light copper coins of Rāmagupta, similar in size and fabric to the Eraṇ coins of that ruler. . . . After the conquest of the Nāga territories and after the death of Samudragupta, coins of Rāmagupta were struck in mints of the region previously occupied by the Nāgas.'

9 Gai 1969. Mirashi 1982b. The three inscriptions on the pedestals read basically the same:

*bhagavato (')rhataḥ puṣpadantasya [image A & C: candraprabhasya] pratimeyaṃ kā-  
ritā mahārājādhirājaśrīrāmaguptena upadeśāt pañipātrikacandrakṣam(aṇ)ācāryakṣa-  
maṇaśramaṇaprasīṣya-ācāryasarpasenaḥkṣamaṇaśīṣyasya golakyāntiṣyā(h) satputrasya  
celūḥkṣamaṇasyeti ||*

It seems that image B (or C) served as an exemplar for the image A, because the irregular saṃdhi between *rāmaguptena upadeśāt* is explained by B, where these words are separated by an image of a *cakra*; similar the irregular saṃdhi between *prasīṣya-ācārya* in A can be explained by the assumption (but the text has been erased here) that in B the word *ācārya* was written on a new line. The reading in A *candrakṣamācārya* seems haplography of reading in B: *candrakṣamaṇācārya*. For a translation and discussion of these lines see below, p. 321.

10 Majumdar 1954, 22. Cf. Raven 1994a I, 48 f., n. 2.125.

to commemorate this victory, though this remains highly conjectural. If Candragupta thus appeared successful where Rāmagupta failed, this may have had to do with the greater political skills of the former. Candragupta was in a better position to hold on to the enemies defeated by his father, because he was married to one of their princesses, Kuberanāgā, on whom he conferred the title of *mahādevī*.<sup>11</sup> These Nāgas remained a local force to be reckoned with, despite their subjugation, and their help against their former arch-enemies, the Śakas, may have been a decisive factor. The same political skill, namely to turn old enmities into effective alliances through matrimony, was again displayed by Candragupta when he, after he had consolidated his power, married off his own daughter by his Nāga wife to the house of the Vākāṭakas, another old enemy of his father. The marriage between Candragupta's daughter Prabhāvātī Guptā and Rudrasena II took place around AD 388.<sup>12</sup> It seems plausible that especially Candragupta's relation with the Nāgas through his wife secured him victory over the Śakas at long last, whereas his alliance with the Vākāṭakas may have provided the necessary backing, as has been argued by Kulke.<sup>13</sup> This alliance may be viewed as a display of strength rather than of weakness. It not only established family ties between the Guptas and the Vākāṭakas, but also tied together the Vākāṭakas and the Nāgas. In all her inscriptions Prabhāvātī took great pride in her Gupta and Nāga ancestry.<sup>14</sup>

In this way came into being the geopolitical triangle that would determine the ramifications of power in the Gupta Empire during the greater part of the fifth century: 1) the Gupta homeland along the Ganges (centring on Kauśāmbī-Prayāga), 2) the strategic southern part of the homeland of the Nāga dynasty (the area around Vidiśā), 3) Vidarbha to the south of the Narmadā, across the Satpura Range (centring on Nandivardhana, residence of the Eastern Vākāṭakas).

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11 Bakker 1997, 11 f. Below, n. 14 on p. 306.

12 Bakker 1997, 16.

13 Jain 1972, 236:

The great success achieved by the Gupta emperor is indirectly attested to by his coins. The long series of coins testifying to the almost unbroken rule of the Western Kshatrapas, for more than three hundred years, comes to an end between 388 and 397 AD, and is replaced by the coin of a similar design, issued by Candragupta II. The earliest silver coins of Candragupta are of the year 409 AD, issued to replace the coins of the Western Kshatrapas in Malwa.

It would thus appear that Candragupta did not deal the final blow to the Śakas before the middle of the first decade of the 5th century. This is indirectly confirmed by the late date by which Candragupta established his authority over Mandasor (see below, n. 17 on p. 308).

14 CII V, 7 ll. 7–8, 36 ll. 8–9: [. . .] *mahārājādhirājaśrīcandraguptas tasya duhitā dhāraṇasa-gotrā nāgakulasambhūtāyām śrīmahādevyām kuberanāgāyām utpannobhayakulālaṅkāra-bhūtāyantabhagavadbhaktā* [. . .].

## ACT 2

### GOVINDAGUPTA

Candragupta, thus in charge of the greater part of northern India, appointed another viceroy (*mahārāja*) in Vidiśā to succeed Rāmagupta. There may have been several viceroys during his reign about whom we do not possess any information at all, but it seems likely that Mahārāja Govindagupta, son by his chief queen Dhruvadevī, was prominent among them. Govindagupta is known from a clay seal of Dhruvasvāminī found from Vaiśālī which reads: ‘The illustrious Mahādevī Dhruvasvāminī, wife of the illustrious emperor Candragupta and mother of the illustrious Mahārāja Govindagupta.’<sup>15</sup> The title *mahārāja* may designate the status of governor or viceroy, whereas the fact that the queen-mother mentions him explicitly on her seal seems to suggest that he might even have been heir-apparent.

#### *The testimony of Prabhākara*

And there is more evidence. An inscription of a feudatory chieftain (*bhūmipati*) of Skandagupta, Prabhākara, found in Daśapura (modern Mandasor) in western Malwa (dating from AD 467/68), makes it probable that Govinda was governor of the western division of Candragupta’s empire, i.e. Malwa. The *Mandasor Inscription of Mālava Saṃvat 524* reports:

There was a king that resembled the moon (*candra*) in the firmament of the Gupta lineage by the renowned name of Śrī Candragupta; he captured the eyes of the people like the rising moon. After he had snatched away from (many local) princes (*pati*) their kingship over the earth by brilliant and powerful means, he ensnared the earth with the help of members of his own dynasty; until today it has not yet liberated itself (from these bonds). That Lord of the Earth (i.e. Candragupta), the majesty of whose virtues resembled that of Govinda (i.e. Kṛṣṇa), begat a son who well-deserved the name of Govindagupta and who equaled the sons of Diti and Aditi (i.e. the Asuras and Devas). When kings bowed their heads to his (i.e. Govindagupta’s) lotusfeet—their splendours sinking down—even the Lord of the Gods (i.e. Indra), beset by doubts, ascended the swing of (fearful) deliberation.<sup>16</sup>

The commander of Govinda’s army that held these feudatory kings in check, the inscription tells us, was Vāyurakṣita. The chieftain Prabhākara came to employ

15 Archaeological Survey of India, *Annual Report 1903-4*, 107: *mahārādhirājaśrīcandraguptapatnī mahārājaśrīgovindaguptamātā mahādevī śrīdhruvasvāminī*.

16 EI XXVII (1947-8), 15 (emended):

*guptānvayavyomani candrakalpaḥ, śrīcandraguptaprathitābhīdhānaḥ |*  
*āsīn nṛpo lokavilocanānām, navoditaś candra ivāpahartā || 2 ||*  
*bhūvaḥ patinām bhūvi bhūpatitvam, ācchidya dhivikramasādhanena |*  
*nādyāpi mokṣaṃ samupaiti yena, svavaṃśyapāśair avapāśitā bhūḥ || 3 ||*  
*govindavatkhyaṭaḥprabhāvo, govindaguptorjitanāmadheyam |*  
*vasundhareśas tanayaṃ prajājñe, sa dityadityos tanayais sarūpam || 4 ||*  
*yasmīn nṛpaṭir astamitapratāpāis, śīrobhir āliṅgitapādapadme |*  
*vicāradolām vibudhādhipo ’pi, śārikhāparītaḥ samupāruroha || 5 ||*

Cf. Sircar SI I, 406-09.

his son Dattabhaṭa as his general. There is something strange about this inscription. Its author explicitly pledges allegiance to the Gupta emperor, who, at Prabhākara's time, was Skandagupta, and sings the praises of Candragupta and Govindagupta, but is silent on Kumāragupta, Govindagupta's brother. The inscription strongly suggests that the military services of Vāyurakṣita and his son Dattabhaṭa were not needed during the reign of Kumāragupta. Evidently the family fell into disgrace when Kumāragupta established suzerainty. This is corroborated by the fact that during Kumāragupta's reign another feudatory family was in charge of Daśapura, viz. the Varmans or Early Aulikaras.<sup>17</sup> All this indicates that Candragupta's succession had not been without a struggle. The contender for the imperial throne had again been an elder brother, the viceroy of Vidiśā, viz. Govindagupta. His general, Vāyurakṣita, thus turned out to have been on the losing side.

The *Mandasor Inscription*, though prima facie loyal to Gupta rule, shows some ambiguities that might hint at Prabhākara's uneasiness. First, in this charter this prince speaks of the snares (*pāśa*) laid over the earth (*avapāśita*) by the Guptas, from which it has not yet been able to free itself (*mokṣaṃ samupaiti*); on the lips of a feudatory, this has a dubious ring. Second, he tells us that Indra trembled at the sight of all the feudatories who bowed before Govindagupta. As has been suggested by Thaplyal (1972, 66), the allusion to Indra's (Vibudhādhipa) fear, although a hyperbole not uncommon to this genre, may hint at Kumāragupta, whose *biruda* is 'Mahendra'.<sup>18</sup> The assumed war of succession may have taken place in AD 415-416,<sup>19</sup> too short a period, it seems, for Govindagupta to issue his own coins. Kumāragupta, on the other hand, may have issued a special coin to commemorate his victory and to herald his 'legitimate' ascension to the imperial throne: it showed him (anachronistically) as an invincible (*apratigha*) youth blessed by his parents.<sup>20</sup>

17 Viśvavarman (Mālava Era 480 (AD 424): CII III (1888), 72-78) and Bandhuvarman (Mālava Era 493 (AD 437): CII III (1888), 79-88). This family reigned already in Daśapura before it was annexed by Candragupta to his kingdom, as the earliest inscription of Naravarman seems to show: *Mandasor Inscription of the Kṛta Year 461* (AD 404-05). In this inscription no reference to Gupta rule is found and I doubt whether the epithet *siṃha-vikrānta-gāmin* (clearly a pun on the name of his father Siṃhavarman) 'shows that he (i.e. Naravarman) was a feudatory of Candragupta II' as Bhandarkar, Chhabra and Gai want us to believe (CII III (1981), 263, 264 l. 5; cf. Sircar SI I, 398 n. 1).

18 In the Tumain Inscription Kumāragupta, son of Candragupta, is styled *mahendrakalpaḥ* (CII III (1981), 278; see below, n. 21 on p. 310). The gold coins of Kumāragupta carry the *biruda* '*śrīmahendra*' (Raven 1994a II, 104 ff.).

19 The last dated inscription of Candragupta is from the Gupta year 93 (AD 413) (CII III (1888), 29-34: *Sāñchi Stone Inscription*), the first of Kumāragupta from Gupta year 96 (AD 416) (CII III (1888), 42-45: *Bilsaḍ Stone Pillar Inscription*).

20 Ajit Gosh in JNSI XXII, 180. Raven 1994b, fig. 12. Cf. Ashvini Agrawal 1992, who in discussing this type of coin remarks (p. 170): 'The coin in the collection of the British Museum weighs only 115 grains and those of the Bayana hoard weigh between 120.5 and 123 grains, which is the lowest in the series of Kumāragupta's gold coins except for a few



Plate 46  
Kumāragupta I: Apratigha Type gold coin

In view of the postulated geopolitical triangle, it might be asked what role Vi-darbha played in this power struggle. Kumāragupta's sister, Prabhāvatī, ruled as a regentess for her minor sons in Nandivardhana at the time. Unfortunately our sources do not allow us to say anything with certainty in this matter. However, considering her close and peaceful relations with Kumāra throughout her life, one may speculate that Prabhāvatī stood on his side and it is not impossible that this may have contributed to his success. Her choice may have ensured that the local Nāgas in eastern Malwa too supported Kumāragupta's claim to the throne. That Prabhāvatī and Kumāra were two hands in one glove may also be inferred from the following.

### ACT 3 GHAṬOTKACAGUPTA

After he had ousted his brother Govinda, Kumāragupta needed another viceroy in Vidiśā. Again it must be noted that there might have been viceroys during his reign of whom we do not possess any information at all, yet it is nearly certain that his younger brother, Ghaṭotkacagupta, was a prominent one among

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specimens of the Archer Type. Considering the fact that there was a gradual increase in weight of the Gupta gold coins till the time of Skandagupta, the Apratigha Type of coins have to be the earliest issues of Kumāragupta I.' For another elaborate discussion in favour and against this interpretation see also Raven 1994a I, 41–44. Though the Apratigha coins were issued after the death of Candragupta, his image on the coins served the imperial propaganda by proclaiming that the young prince was elected by his father (and mother) himself. When studying this type of coin in the collection of the British Museum (Allan 1914, No. 257), I noticed that the male figure to Kumāra's right, presumably his father King Candragupta, with a gesture of his right hand shows him the Garuḍa standard; the female figure to the left, his mother, in a similar hand gesture shows a small, indistinct object between thumb and index-finger, which I think could be a signet-ring (Plate 46). Cf. Raven 2004–05, 83; below, n. 36 on p. 316.





father, with whom relations are good, is at loggerheads with his southern neighbour, the kingdom of Vidarbha. It appears that this kingdom is the domain of two rival branches of a family divided over the question how to deal with the new mighty northern neighbour. One branch had pledged allegiance (*pratiśrutasaṃbandha*) and had wished to enter into a matrimonial alliance, but this was initially prevented by the ruler of the other branch, who was temporarily in power and, through his in-laws, allied to the party that was overthrown by the *senāpati* when he established his rule over northern India.

The rāja of Vidiśā sends his brother-in-law, a bastard brother of Dhāriṇī (*varṇāvāra*), to command a frontier post (*antapāladurga*) on the River Narmadā, evidently the border between the kingdoms of Vidiśā and Vidarbha. After an exchange of unsuccessful diplomatic missions, war breaks out between them. The inimical ruler (*pati*) of Vidarbha is conquered. The kingdom of Vidarbha is divided into two, and both rulers are installed as joint vassals of the rāja of Vidiśā, one ruling to the south, the other to the north of the Varadā River (the Warda). Peace is sealed by matrimony, when the rāja of Vidiśā marries the co-uterine sister (*sodaryā*) of the friendly ruler of Vidarbha, who thus lives up to her name, Mālavikā, and becomes a princess of the country of Mālava.

No doubt the reader has recognized the play as the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, about which Warder remarks that its ‘modernity’, as claimed by Kālidāsa in the Prologue, perhaps consists in ‘this critical presentation of a prince, or perhaps in the presentation in the theatre of the new Gupta-Vākāṭaka politics of marriage alliances and vassal kingdoms, though in the guise of ancient history’ (Warder 1989–92 III, 129).

The *Mālavikāgnimitra* was written for a Gupta audience rather than for a Vākāṭaka one. This is inferred from the fact that supremacy of the northern rulers, though challenged, is gloriously confirmed and the relationship between the sovereign and the viceroy in Vidiśā, despite the latter’s moral flaws, is represented as unproblematic, unlike the representation thereof in the post-Gupta play *Devīcandragupta* (see above).

An analysis of the background, against which the play is set, reveals the following elements that reflect the political arena of the first half of the fifth century that we have tried to sketch above.

- 1 The major powers of the time are the northern empire and the kingdom of Vidarbha. The border between both kingdoms is formed by the River Narmadā.
- 2 The political centre of the western part of the northern empire is Vidiśā, where the heir-to-the-throne rules as viceroy.
- 3 This viceroy has tied the indigenous rulers of Malwa to his throne by taking one of their princesses as his chief wife. In Kālidāsa’s play this wife is called Dhāriṇī, a name that echos the *gotra* name, Dhāraṇa, of Prabhāvatī Guptā. The signet-ring of Dhāriṇī, which features a *nāga*, and plays an important role in the plot, reinforces this Nāga descent. The historicity of this detail may be

illustrated by the signet-ring of Mahārāja Maheśvaranāga, son of Nāgabhaṭṭa (Plate 47).<sup>27</sup>

4 The attitude of the Vidarbha rulers (whose coronation names end in Sena) against their northern neighbours is ambivalent. One faction is inclined to come to terms with northern overlordship, the other has not forgotten its allegiance to the ancien régime, to the rulers who had been overthrown by the new sovereign.

5 After hostilities between both kingdoms—the Narmadā is crossed—northern suzerainty is established by dividing the Vidarbha kingdom into two vassal states, one ruling to the north of the Varadā River, the other to the south of it.

6 The establishment of the balance of power is sealed by the marriage of a Vidarbha princess with the viceroy of Vidiśā.



Plate 47 A & B

Signet-ring of Mahārāja Maheśvaranāga, son of Nāgabhaṭṭa (B mirrored)

Attempts to read more in Kālidāsa's drama and to connect its protagonists and actions with historical individuals and events is doomed to fail. The play is not an historic drama, and, if one wants to see it as such, it explicitly professes to be one concerned with a more distant past. The audiences of the fifth century may have recognized the general political reality of their times, though. It gave the play an exciting dimension and in that, as Warder remarked, its avowed innovation vis-à-vis the works of the poet's predecessors may have consisted.

<sup>27</sup> This copper seal in the form of a signet-ring was purchased by Cunningham from a local dealer in Lahore and to date forms part of the Cunningham Collection of the British Museum. It was published in CII III (1888), 282f. and Plate XLIII A. It reads: [1] *mahārājanāgabhaṭṭa* [2] *putramahēśvaranāgaḥ*. The crescent to the left and bull in front of a *linga* in the upper half of the seal confirm that the Nāga kings were Śaivas. The name of the king is not known from other sources. It is conjectured that the indistinct tiny objects held in the right hands of the mothers of Kumāra and Skandagupta are such signet-rings (see n. 20 on p. 309 and n. 36 on p. 316).

There is one element in the play that we have not yet encountered. This concerns the internal division within the kingdom of Vidarbha and its partition. Returning from literature to history, we may observe that from the fourth century onwards one branch of the Vākāṭaka family ruled in Nandivardhana (near modern Ramtek), the other in Vatsagulma (modern Wasim). The border between both kingdoms was the River Varadā (modern Warda). We do not have enough evidence to know whether the Vākāṭakas were unanimous in their friendship towards their northern neighbours. A priori, this seems unlikely, particularly because the dynasty had lost much of its original land to Samudragupta (Bakker 1997, 9–15). We do not know how much resistance there was against Prabhāvati's regency over her sons and whether there was resentment from the side of these sons against their mother, who seemingly indefinitely postponed (from c. AD 405 to 419) their ascension to the throne (Bakker 1997, 15f.). Is it pure accident that in the aftermath of the power struggle between Govinda and Kumāragupta the Vākāṭaka crown-prince (*yūvarāja*) and eldest son of Prabhāvati, Divākarasena, vanished from the scene, never to be heard of again?<sup>28</sup> And, finally, we do not know at what costs Prabhāvati enforced the marriage of her daughter with her maternal uncle, Ghaṭotkaca. What we do know, however, is that after the death of this formidable lady (c. AD 443) Gupta–Vākāṭaka relations quickly deteriorated.

#### *The Vākāṭaka–Gupta conflict*

About AD 445 Prabhāvati's youngest son Pravarasena crossed the Narmadā and pitched his army camp (*vāsaka*) in Tripurī (modern Tewar) on the northern bank of this river, i.e. in Gupta territory.<sup>29</sup> To all appearances the tripartite alliance between Guptas, Nāgas, and Vākāṭakas, was beginning to erode. This might also have had to do with a new player that had entered the arena, Skandagupta, a bastard son of Kumāragupta. The Gupta emperor was growing old and the jockeying for the best position to succeed him had begun. As far as we know, there were at least three contenders for the throne. 1) Kumāra's legal son by his chief wife Anantadevi, Pūrugupta, who at the time might still have been too young to play a significant part. 2) The emperor's younger brother

28 In the 13th year of Prabhāvati's regency (c. AD 417) Divākarasena was still recognized as *yūvarāja*. CII V, 7 ll. 9–10: *yūvarāja[śrī]divākarasenajanani*. The seal of these Poona Plates of Prabhāvati runs (CII V, 8): '[By] the enemy chastising order of the Mother of the crown-prince, who is the ornament of the Vākāṭakas and has attained royal fortune by inheritance: (*vākāṭakalalāmasya [kra]maprāptanṛpaśrīya[h] | jananyā yūvarājasya śāsanam ripuśāsa[nam ||]*). Divākarasena is no longer mentioned as a son or king in the later charters of Prabhāvati; in his stead two other sons of hers are called Mahārāja in two charters of land donations made in the nineteenth and twentieth regnal year of her son Pravarasena. In these inscriptions (CII V, 36 l. 10 (*Riddhapur Plates of Prabhāvati-guptā*); Shastri & Kawadkar 2001, 135–151 (*Miregāon Plates of Prabhāvati Gupta, Year 20*)), she describes herself as the 'Mother of the Mahārājas of the Vākāṭakas, the illustrious Dāmodarasena and Pravarasena'. See below, n. 59 on p. 332. The *Setubandha* may contain an indication that the younger brother Pravarasena had a hand in Divākarasena's disappearance (see Bakker 2008, *Introduction*).

29 Bakker 1967, 25.

Ghaṭotkaca, ruling in Vidiśā, and, 3) the outsider, a boy from the harem, Skandagupta.

To stake his claims, Ghaṭotkaca may have begun to issue his own gold coins; one such coin can, with some amount of confidence, be ascribed to a Ghaṭo(tkaca), on which he wields the imperial Garuḍa standard and takes the *biruda* 'Kramāditya'.<sup>30</sup> For the third time the Gupta Empire threatened to fall apart. I have analysed this episode elsewhere (Bakker 1997, 25–29). Here it may suffice to refer to the *Bhitārī Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta* in which, following Mirashi, we may find references to three wars conducted by Skandagupta. The first one records how Skandagupta, while his father Kumāra was still emperor, raised again the faltering fortune of his family (*vicalitakulalakṣmī*) by vanquishing his enemies. Mirashi took this as a reference to the Vākāṭakas and Pravarasena's campaign on the northern banks of the Narmadā may have had to do with it.<sup>31</sup> I consider it most plausible that in the struggle for power between the centre—the *yuvarāja* Skandagupta (in lieu of Kumāragupta)—and the viceroy of Vidiśā, Pravarasena had chosen the side of his brother-in-law, Ghaṭotkaca. Another ally of the Vidiśā party was in all likelihood the faction of the local Nāgas. The civil war may have dragged on for a decade and may have intensified after the death of Kumāragupta when Skandagupta's fortunes reached rock bottom (*viplutām vaṃśalakṣmīm*),<sup>32</sup> but the end was a total defeat of Vidiśā. Skandagupta's *Junagadh Rock Inscription* contains a verse in which Skandagupta boasts about how 'he was for ever triumphant, (when) he took the antidotal herb, namely the Garuḍa/imperial command, to fight against the Serpent Kings (i.e. the Nāgas) whose hoods were uplifted in pride and arrogance'.<sup>33</sup> and the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription* reports the death of Ghaṭotkaca.

30 P.L. Gupta 1946, 316: 'The Leningrad Museum [possesses a coin] with the king on the obverse (nimbate, standing to left, holding bow in left hand and arrow in the right), Garuḍa standard is on the right of the king; beneath the left arm is inscribed *Ghaṭo* with a crescent above. It bears traces of marginal legend ending in (*gu*)*pta(h)*. On the reverse of the coin is the Goddess (holding lotus in left hand and *pāśa* (fillet) in outstretched right hand) with a symbol on the top left corner. The legend on this side is not certain but seems to be *kramāditya*.' Cf. Altekar 1954, 310. On account of its weight, 9.16 g (141.2 grains), Tandon 2014, 4f. argues that this coin was 'almost certainly issued some length of time after the accession of Skandagupta'.

Another coin ascribed to Ghaṭotkaca was published by Ajit Ghosh in JNSI 22 (1960), 120f. The attribution of this coin to Ghaṭotkaca is dubious; Ellen Raven reads *skanda* instead of *ghaṭo* and ascribes this coin to Skandagupta (personal communication).

31 Mirashi 1982a, 70f.; cf. Mirashi in JESI (1980), 86ff. The interpretation of this verse is controversial. Fleet in CII III (1888), 53–54, ll.10–11 reads: *samuditaba(la)koṣān pu(ṣya)mitrāṃś ca (j)itvā*; he takes this as a reference to the tribe of the Puṣyamitras. Fleet admitted in a note that the second syllable of the name was damaged. Mirashi 1982a (IRP I, 70), following a proposal of Divekar, conjectures the reading: *samuditaba(la)koṣā(n yuddhy a)mitrāṃś ca (j)itvā*; that is, 'after having vanquished in battle (*yudhi*) his enemies whose wealth and power had increased', a reading accepted in the revised edition (1981) of CII III (p.315 v.4), but rejected by Agrawal 1989, 211.

32 *Bhitārī Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta* l. 13 (CII III (1888), 54). See below, n. 35 on p. 316.

33 CII III (1981), 302. Cf. Bakker 1997, 27.

When at a certain time [...] he of desirable appearance (i.e. Ghaṭotkaca) [...] by/with Indra, [...] (her) brother (i.e. Pravarasena) brought the proud woman (i.e. Atibhāvātī) [...] back to his own residence with force (17).<sup>34</sup>

### Finale

Confronted with defeat, the political triangle, on which the stability and power of his kingdom was based, in ruins, the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena made the most of a hopeless situation, marched on Malwa, brought his widowed sister back to Vidarbha in a military campaign, and died soon thereafter. In AD 455 Skandagupta officially succeeded his deceased father and proudly declared himself emperor. Frustration concerning his birth may have bred this great pride. In verse 6 of the Bhitārī Pillar Inscription, Skandagupta, after his victory (over his uncle Ghaṭotkaca), is said to have run towards his mother, ‘which made her weep like Devakī after Kṛṣṇa had killed his enemy’, namely his uncle (Kaṃsa).<sup>35</sup> This scene, as has been rightly suggested by Goyal, is depicted on Skandagupta’s so-called ‘King-and-Lakṣmī Type’ of gold coins, on which the lady to the left of the victorious warrior king, smaller than him and without a nimbus, may represent not the goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī, but his anonymous mother.<sup>36</sup>



Plate 48  
Skandagupta: King-and-Lady Type gold coin

34 Bakker 1997, 165:

*tasmīn kadācīt kamanīyarūpe, ॐ - - - - - purandareṇa |*

*(t) - - (y) - - - (s) (sa)mānām, bhrātā balāt svaṃ grham ā(ni)nāya || 17 ||*

Cf. Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 53–56 (above, p. 124).

35 Bhitārī Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta (CII III (1981), 315 ll. 12–14) v. 6:

*pitari divam upe(te) viplutām (va)ṅśalakṣmīm,*

*bhujabalavijitārī yaḥ pratiṣṭhā(pya) bhūyaḥ |*

*jitam iti paritoṣān (m)ātaraṃ sāsraneṭrām,*

*hataripur iva (kṛ)ṣṇo devakīm abhyu(peta)h || 6 ||*

36 Raven 1994b, fig. 2. Goyal 1967, 265 f. n. 2. This lady, Skandagupta’s mother, is depicted with a single braid (*ekavenī*), which indicates her widowhood (Bakker 1997, 114f.). She holds an indistinct object that seems to stick to the raised index-finger of her right hand, which she extends towards the warrior king, her son. I conjecture that both indistinct, small objects, held in the right hands of the mothers of Kumāra (see above, n. 20 on p. 309) and Skandagupta respectively, notwithstanding the slightly different hand-gestures, is one and the same thing, the imperial signet-ring. Cf. Raven 2004–05, 82.

## EPILOGUE

Our reappraisal of Gupta history in the light of the recurrent events in Vidiśā and the role of the Vākāṭakas in them has come to an end. The idyllic picture to the effect that the Gupta–Vākāṭaka relations were close till the fall of the imperial Gupta dynasty, i.e. till the end of the 5th century, stands in need of revision. It has emerged that these relations were only intimate and peaceful during the lifetime of Prabhāvātī Guptā. Before and after the long period of more than half a century that this formidable lady dominated the stage (AD 388–443), these relations were marred by conflicting interests, which led to war at least twice, first under the reign of Samudragupta, when the Vākāṭakas lost much of their original territory in the Vindhya, then again under his great-grandson Skandagupta, when they were forced to give up their influence at the court of the viceroy of Vidiśā. Loss of the Malwa connection, and therewith of Gupta support altogether, resulted in disaster for the Eastern Vākāṭakas, who soon became subordinate to their relatives in Vatsagulma.

Thus was Vidiśā, as we hope to have demonstrated, for at least eighty years (AD 375–455) a theatre of broken dreams, a stage on which three Gupta viceroys paid with their lives for their imperial aspirations, and from which, in a grand finale, a widowed Vākāṭaka princess was hurried away and brought to safety across the Narmadā River by the faltering troupes of her brother.

GENEALOGY

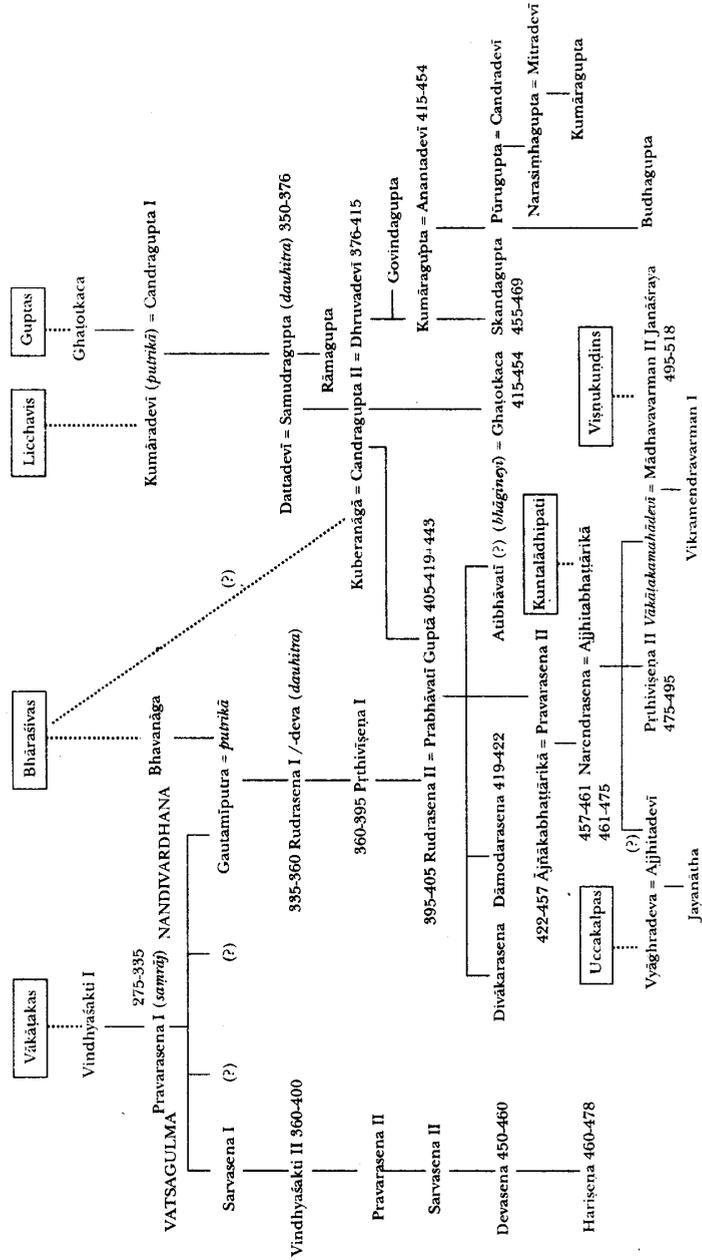


Figure 5  
Genealogy of the Gupta and Vākāṭaka dynasties

# Royal Patronage and Religious Tolerance\*

## The Formative Period of Gupta–Vākāṭaka Culture

### UDAYAGIRI

When, at the beginning of the 5th century, the royal elephant carrying his majesty climbed the slopes of the Udayagiri for a visit to the sacred complex, Emperor Candragupta made sure not to give offence to any of the parties involved in his grand project. His aim was clearly defined in the inscription that records his visit, namely the winning of the entire earth:

He (Vīrasena) has come here in the company of the king himself, who was on his way of winning the entire earth, and he has commissioned this cave out of devotion for Lord Śambhu.<sup>1</sup>

Though himself a devotee of Viṣṇu and so a Bhāgavata, the king paid his respect to his learned chief minister Vīrasena, who came from Pāṭaliputra, by visiting the cave dedicated to Lord Śambhu, i.e. Śiva, which had recently been completed under the patronage of the chief minister. The chief minister was content and proudly recorded the honour that had been bestowed upon him in an inscription at the back of the cave. However, this rather insignificant Cave 8, which probably enshrined a *liṅga*, can hardly have been the main purpose of Candragupta's visit.<sup>2</sup> For, next door, around the corner, a truly grandiose scheme had just been, or was about to being accomplished, a work of art that was designed to broadcast the king's larger ambition: 'the winning of the entire earth', expressed allegorically in the great Varāha panel of Cave 5.

As Michael Willis (2004, 2009) has shown, the Varāha panel was intrinsically connected through a system of hydrological engineering with a natural cleft in the central ridge of the mountain. Water once cascaded down through this narrow passage, flowing underneath a large image of Viṣṇu–Nārāyaṇa. This panel shows the god in his cosmic sleep while resting on the primordial snake (Anantaśayana), floating on the cosmic ocean. At the bottom of the cascade, the water was collected in a reservoir at the feet of the Varāha sculpture of Cave 5, making the cosmic boar rise out of the waters.

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1 CII III (1888), *Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Candragupta II*, p. 35: *krtsnaprṥthvījayārthena rājñāiveha sahāgatah | bhaktyā bhāgavataś śambhor guhām etām akārayat ||*

2 This cave is referred to as Cave 8 in the archaeological literature (Willis 2009, 39). Williams 1982 refers to it as Cave 7.

It will not be our aim here to analyze the iconography and the allegorical double-entendre of these two panels, the Varāha and the Nārāyaṇa, which most recently has been done by Willis in a penetrating study referred to above.<sup>3</sup> What concerns us here is the ecumenicity of the situation: a Vaiṣṇava king, ‘whose prowess is [Viṣṇu’s] Cakra’,<sup>4</sup> selects a prominent spot at the centre of the holy mountain of Udayagiri for celebrating his faith and political mission, and allows at the same time two leading figures of his kingdom, a minister (Virasena) and a vassal king (the Sanakānika *mahārāja* Soḍhala (?)), to construct next door cave-sanctuaries (Caves 6 and 8) dedicated to Śīva, the other high god of Hinduism. Inscriptions in both shrines duly recognize the sovereignty of Candragupta.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, we cannot be certain as to the original dedication of the sanctuary of Cave 6—the cave no longer contains its original sculpture—but the two Viṣṇu images at the outer wall, flanking the two Dvārapālas, as well as the image of Gaṇeśa overlooking the entrance at the left and a shrine of the seven mothers at the right of the sanctum, strongly suggest that Cave 6 was also a Śīva sanctuary,<sup>6</sup> in which the two Viṣṇu images, in the words of Joanna Williams, were merely ‘attendant upon the greater glory of Śīva’.<sup>7</sup>

And, to complete the picture, adjacent to the Varāha cave on the other, southern side, was one more Śāiva cave (4), enshrining an *ekamukhalinga*.<sup>8</sup> Thus it cannot have escaped the attention of the contemporaneous visitor that, with the establishment of Gupta power over the area, the Bhāgavata religion had taken pole position, not by ousting its Śāiva rivals, but rather by including them in a subordinate position. By doing so the three caves together mirrored the situation in Cave 6 on a larger scale: Śīva (Caves 4 & 6) ‘attendant on the greater glory of’ the Bhagavat (Cave 5). Although the majority of the temple structures on the Udayagiri can be assigned to Hindu gods, this by no means excluded other persuasions to establish their own sanctuary on the hill. At the top of the north side of the hill is a cave of the heterodox Jains, which an inscription dates to the reign of Candragupta’s son Kumāragupta (GE 106 = AD 436). ‘The inscription records the dedication of an image of Pārśvanātha.’<sup>9</sup>

3 Willis 2004, 41 ff.; Willis 2009, 30–46.

4 Willis 2004, 55 n. 52.

5 For the inscription in Cave 6 see *Udayagiri Cave Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 82*, CII III (1888), 21–25. The name of the king, ‘Soḍhala’, is a conjecture of D.C. Sircar (SI I, 279 n. 5.). No king of that name is known otherwise. It is uncertain whether ‘Soḍhala’s’ inscription refers to the construction of the cave sanctuary 6 as a whole. The inscription is placed above the Mahiṣāsura-mardini and one of the Viṣṇu images on the outer wall.

6 Cf. Willis 2009, 142 f.

7 Williams 1982, 41 n. 64.

8 According to Joanna Williams (1982, 86) this cave may be slightly later than the excavations of caves 5 to 8, but she concedes that ‘the *linga* inside seems more conservative [...]. The round face, sharply defined features, and wide foliate necklace are still close to the Viṣṇu images of Cave 6 or of Besnagar’.

9 Williams 1982, 87. *Udayagiri Cave Inscription, Year 106*, CII III (1888), 258–60.

Jainism had been favoured in this region by Candragupta's ill-fated elder brother, Rāmagupta, who commissioned the three images that were reportedly found inside old Besnagar (Durjanapura), 1.5 km from Udayagiri.<sup>10</sup> Three inscriptions on the pedestals record basically the same dedication:

This image of the Lord, the venerable Puṣpadanta/Candraprabha, was commissioned by the Mahārājādhirāja Śrī Rāmagupta, at the instigation of Celūkṣamaṇa, son of Golakyāntī, who is the pupil of the preceptor Sarpasenakṣamaṇa and the grand-pupil of the *pāṇipātrika*<sup>11</sup> Candrakṣamaṇa, preceptor (*ācārya*) and forbearing monk (*kṣamaṇasramaṇa*).<sup>12</sup>

No direct evidence of Buddhist presence in Udayagiri has come to light, the reason for which is not difficult to see: the great, ancient centre of Sanchi, 5 km to the south, naturally attracted all Buddhist devotion. This was, for instance, the case when another favourite of Candragupta, Āmrakārdava, donated in GE 93 (= AD 413),

An allotment of land, called 'Īśvaravāsaka', and a sum of money to the Āryasaṅgha, or community of the faithful, at the great *vihāra* or Buddhist convent of Kākanādaboṭa, for the purpose of feeding mendicants and maintaining lamps.<sup>13</sup>

Candragupta's favours are explicitly said to have contributed to Āmrakārdava's way and means of life.<sup>14</sup>

Thus we possess within a circle of five kilometers from the Udayagiri Caves and within a time frame of a few decades around AD 400, plenty of epigraphical and sculptural evidence that proves that the reign of Samudragupta's successors ushered in a period of royal patronage that was not limited to one religious denomination only, but was beneficial to all the four major religions of the times: Bhāgavata (Visnuism), Māheśvara (Saivism), Jaina (Jainism) and Bauddha (Buddhism). This is not to say, of course, that the Guptas invented religious patronage, but their rule marked the emergence of kings and courtiers as a major class of patrons, whereas earlier 'groups of lay people' were the prominent sponsors.<sup>15</sup> And in contrast to most of the earlier patrons, their patronage

10 The images are presently stored in the State Museum, Bhopal. See Gai 1969; Williams 1982, 25f, 28 f. Bakker 2006, 169, n.9.

11 In an email dated 17 September 2009, Paul Dundas explained this term to me as follows: *pāṇipātrika* I would not take as a title but rather as a eulogistic epithet signifying an ascetic who uses his cupped hands as an alms bowl and thus follows the *jñakalpa*, the rigorous mode of life of the Jinas. The term usually designates, or came to designate, a Digambara monk.

12 CII III (1981), 231–34. The emended reading (above, n.9 on p.305) is based on a collation of the three inscriptions (cf. Bakker 2006, 182 n.9).

13 Fleet in CII III (1888), 31, interpreting the *Sāñchi Stone Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 93*.

14 CII III (1888), 31: [...] *candraguptapādaprasādāpyāyitajīvitāsādhanaḥ*.

15 Barbara Stoler Miller in her *Introduction to The Powers of Art. Patronage in Indian Culture* (Miller 1992, 5f.).

extended to religions other than their personal persuasions, thus spreading an atmosphere of religious tolerance throughout the realm.<sup>16</sup>

*Royal patronage*

As we will see, this patronage could take the form of financing prestigious building projects as well as lending financial support to religious groups and individuals through gifts of money or land. We do not possess much direct evidence of courtly patronage of individual sculptors, decorators, architects or other artisans who worked in the visual arts, although this must have been substantial. They were paid, of course, and some artists more than others, no doubt. Since the king himself was the centre of the patronage system, it is remarkable that we do not possess epigraphical testimonies of Candragupta's own building projects. It looks as if he was satisfied with being credited by his subjects for his goodness, whereas the ones that appear to have been his own monumental plans, such as the Varāha and Nārāyaṇa panels, were apparently so obvious that they needed no special commemoration in the form of dedicatory inscriptions.

This large-scale and broad-minded religious patronage practised by the court, which involved the king, his courtiers and officials (*amātya*), favourites and so-called feudatories (*sāmanta*),<sup>17</sup> enhanced the development of the classical forms of the Indian religions, as well as their sacred architecture and art. It formed part of a wider system of patronage, which operated as a powerful political strategy, through which the king could advance and visualize a religiously sanctified social order (*dharma*), from which his authority as a ruler by God's grace was deduced.<sup>18</sup> Partly due to this policy, North India became covered with religious monuments of various sorts, a small number of which survived the ages. The Gupta court and its satellites promoted a lifestyle and devotional ethos that obviously was appealing to a broad section

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16 Cf. A.K. Narain (1983) in *Religious Policy and Toleration in Ancient India*:

'Toleration' in this context means a state's recognition and protection of the right of private judgement in matters of faith and worship, and a lack of persecution or obstruction of the beliefs and practices of sects and religions other than the king's own. Often the king of ancient India does not get credit for his act of toleration by modern historians because it is wrongly assumed that toleration is an essential part of his religious practice or of *rājadharma*. (Narain 1983, 50)

17 Ali 2004, 8: 'It was the activities of the king's court, composed of dependents and retainers, and attended by underlords and vassals, which constituted "government" rather than a putative "administration".'

18 See Bakker 1992d (above, p. 153). This should not be taken as support of a legitimization theory which, in the words of Daud Ali, 'suggests the rather unlikely and even anachronistic scenario of the court acting collectively on the basis of certain principles, and then representing them back to itself in order to legitimate them'. On the contrary, we subscribe to Ali's insight that 'the ideas enshrined in art and literature are in fact identical to the key concepts found in the texts which urge the king and his men to constitute their political actions, which is to say that the supposedly non-ideational realm of power and politics is in fact already ideational'. (Ali 2004, 14)

of the population; it proved not only to be politically effective, but it lent stability and grandeur to Gupta reign, thanks to which some still speak of 'the golden age', or 'the classical age'.<sup>19</sup>

## MANDHAL

This successful model set an attractive example for other dynasties to follow. Influence emanating from the Gupta realm becomes best visible in a dynasty to the south of the Vindhyas with which close relations were established, the Eastern Vākāṭakas of Vidarbha.

Candragupta had married a princess of the Nāga dynasty (an old enemy of his father Samudra) named Kuberaṅgā, by whom he had a daughter. This princess, who came to be known from her own inscriptions by her dynastic name Prabhāvatī Guptā, was married to the Vākāṭaka prince Rudrasena II in about AD 388.<sup>20</sup> The Nāgas had been a major force in Eastern Malwa and the region around Udayagiri–Vidiśā till the Gupta conquest, and the marriage of a Gupta–Nāga princess with the crown-prince of the Vākāṭakas established a triangular political relationship between the centre of Gupta power in the Gaṅgā–Yamunā doab in the north, Vidiśā in the west, and the Eastern Vākāṭaka kingdom in the south.<sup>21</sup>

Rudrasena, once king, inspired it would seem by the example of his in-laws, reinforced a tradition of large-scale religious patronage within the Vākāṭaka kingdom.<sup>22</sup> Two inscriptions of Rudrasena himself bear testimony to this: the *Deotek Stone Inscription of Rudrasena* and the Mandhal Plates, Year 5. The Deotek palimpsest stone inscription (Rudrasena overwriting an inscription that

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19 Although Daud Ali admits that he has 'bracketed out the question of religion', he makes an important observation that is relevant to our subject:

In fact, religious and political notions of lordship differed more in degree than kind. They formed part of a continuous and homologously structured 'chain of being' which linked the entire cosmos. This, on the one hand, meant that the king's authority and mystique resembled and participated in that of the temple god, giving a theological dimension to relationships at court. On the other hand, however, it meant that the life of gods, housed in their sumptuous palaces, shared striking resemblances to those of princes. (Ali 2004, 104)

I have earlier argued in a similar line, pointing out, however, that this notion of 'lordship' was itself part of a historical process, or, that the 'degree' of homology between gods and kings can be demonstrated to have evolved from an analogy in The Gupta/Vākāṭaka age to a full homology in the centuries before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (Bakker 1992d, 99; above, p. 165).

20 Bakker 1997, 16.

21 See above, pp. 301 ff. (Bakker 2006). For a family tree of the Vākāṭakas, Guptas and Nāgas see above, p. 318 and Bakker 1997, 168.

22 The *Pāṇḍhurṇā Plates of Pravarasena II* mention an earlier land grant made by Rudrasena II's father Prṥhiviṣeṇa I (CII V, 66 l. 19).

apparently pertains to the reign of Aśoka) records the erection of a Dharmasthāna, evidently in the vicinity of present-day village Deotek on the Beṇṇā or Wainganga River. No further details of this building are known. Forty kilometers to the north of it is the findspot of the second Rudrasena inscription, which was found while ploughing a field near the village of Mandhal.<sup>23</sup>

The locations of both inscriptions indicate that the earliest political heart of the Vākāṭaka kingdom was along the Wainganga, to the south of Nagpur. This may have been the Padmapura District that is known from two inscriptions, one of which is Rudrasena's Mandhal Plates, the other the *Māsod Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 19*. Although the exact size and location of this district is unknown, the area around the present village of Mandhal no doubt belonged to it.<sup>24</sup> Padmapura itself must have been the capital of this district. This capital features in the so-called 'Unfinished Durg Plate' or Mohallā Plate.<sup>25</sup> Closer consideration of the Mohallā Plate leads to the hypothesis that Padmapura was the political centre of Rudrasena II's reign.

### *Padmapura*

After mentioning Padmapura as the place of issue, *padmapurāt*, the Mohallā Plate begins the dynastic genealogy, i.e. the *praśasti* of the Eastern Vākāṭaka kings in words that are identical to Rudrasena's Mandhal Plates up to *bhavanāgadauhitrasya* (ll. 2–7), which refers to Rudrasena I.<sup>26</sup> The inscription breaks off abruptly; no other plates have come forward and the single plate found in Mohallā lacks the mark of approval: *dr̥ṣṭam*, although space had been reserved for it.<sup>27</sup> Until now the Mohallā Plate was either ascribed to Pravarasena II or his son Narendrasena (proposed by Mirashi in: CII V, 77), or to Pr̥thiviṣeṇa I or his son Rudrasena II (Shastri 1997, 8), or to 'a successor of Pravarasena II' (Shrimali 1987, 113 n. 109).

The discovery of Rudrasena II's Mandhal Plates has revealed that the *praśasti* of the dynasty of the Eastern Vākāṭakas was already fully developed by Rudrasena II's time, thus taking the edge off Mirashi's argument (in: CII V, 77) that the *praśasti* of the Mohallā Plate resembles that of the grants of Pravarasena II. The wording of the *praśasti* resembles indeed the one found in Pravarasena II's inscriptions, but it equally resembles the one of Rudrasena II's charter. The box-headed palaeography of the Mohallā Plate does also not significantly differ from the Mandhal Plates of Rudrasena, nor from Pravarasena's plates for that matter.<sup>28</sup> However, Pravarasena's charters

23 *Māṇḍhal Plates of Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, Year 5*, Shastri & Gupta 1997, 143; Shastri 1997, 85–88.

24 Rudrasena's Mandhal Plates mention the *pūrvamārga* (Shastri 1997, 86), Pravarasena's Māsod Plates (*Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* X (1983), 108–16) the *aparamārga* of this district (Shastri 1997, 90).

25 Mirashi in CII V, 76–78.

26 Cf. CII V, 78 and Shastri & Gupta 1997, 155.

27 CII V, 77; Shastri 1997, 6.

28 Shastri 1997, 7.

were issued from either Nandivardhana or Pravarapura.<sup>29</sup>

Pr̥thiviṣeṇa I, the most likely author of the Mohallā Plate according to Shastri,<sup>30</sup> is an unlikely candidate in my view, since it is questionable whether this king already used the medium of copperplates to record his charters<sup>31</sup>—at least nothing has been found—although, admittedly, he might have been the founder of Padmapura.<sup>32</sup>

To finish our review of possible authors of the Mohallā Plate, there is Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II, the only successor of Pravarasena II of whom we have inscriptions. His charters were issued from, a) the Rāmāgiri (*Māṇḍhaḷ Plates of Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II, Year 2*), or b) Pr̥thivīsamudra (*Māhurjharī Plates of Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II, Year 17*), which is unidentified, but may have been a new residence of Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II, or c) the Beṇṇātaṭasthāna (*Māṇḍhaḷ Charter of Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II, Year 10*), but nowhere does this king name Padmapura.<sup>33</sup> The Beṇṇātaṭasthāna, called a *vaijyika dharmasthāna*, was a place on the banks of the Wainganga, probably not far from Mandhal, and this Dharmasthāna may have been the same as the one reported by Rudrasena in his Deotek inscription.<sup>34</sup> Pr̥thiviṣeṇa II was, like Rudrasena II, a Bhāgavata.

29 Two charters of Pravarasena were issued from military camps (*vāsaka*), Tripurivāsaka (*Indore Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 23*), and Hiranyānavāsaka (*Wadgāon Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 25*). One, the *Tiroḍī Plates of Pravarasena II*, was issued from what most likely was a holy place: Narattaṅgavāriṣṭhāna (CII V, 49 f.). Pravarasena may have made an offering for the salvation of his mother Prabhāvatī at this *tīrtha*. I take the fact that only the ‘increase of merit of mother’ (*mātrpūṇyopacayārtham*, CII V, 50 l. 16) is mentioned, not that of his father, not as an indication that she was still alive, as does Mirashi in CII V, 49, but, on the contrary, as an indication that she might have recently passed away (c. AD 444). This interpretation is suggested not only by the name, which connects the (holy) place with water, but especially by the day on which the grant was made: the twelfth of the dark fortnight of the month Māgha, i.e. Śaṭtilādvadaśī, a day particularly suitable for a sesame and *piṇḍa* offering to the ancestors (Kane V, 434). In the same 23rd year of his reign, Pravarasena II had invaded Gupta territory, as we know from the charter that was issued from the military camp at Tripurī, and it is unlikely that he had done so when his mother was still alive (cf. Bakker 1997, 25).

30 Shastri 1997, 6–9.

31 For the earliest Sanskrit copperplates, which belong to the second half of the 4th century, see Salomon 1998, 114. To the evidence mentioned there should be added the Copper Plate Hoard from Bagh: Ramesh & Tewari 1990. The oldest inscription in this hoard dates from year 47, presumably Gupta Era, i.e. AD 367. The oldest known copperplate grant is the *Pātagaṇḍigūḍem Copper Plate* of the Ikṣvāku king Ehalava Cāntamūla (late 3rd century AD), for which see Falk 1999–2000, 275 ff. Use and spread of copperplate charters under Gupta rule is discussed by Willis 2009, 81 f. The Vākāṭaka copperplate grant of Vindhyaśakti II (Year 37) of the Vatsagulma Branch (CII V, 93–100), might be slightly earlier than, or contemporaneous with Rudrasena’s Mandhal Plates, i.e. c. AD 400.

32 Cf. Shastri 1997, 8.

33 Shastri 1997, 97–106.

34 See above, p. 323. The exact meaning of the terms *dharmasthāna* and *vaijyikadharmasthāna* stands in need of further investigation. According to Sircar’s *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* s.v. it means ‘temple’, ‘a holy place’. Mirashi CII V, 4 translates ‘place of religious worship’. Shastri 1997, 4 f. argues that the term ‘was never used in ancient

On account of the above considerations it is our best guess to ascribe the unfinished Mohallā Plate to the same Rudrasena II who issued the Mandhal Plates, Year 5. However, instead of mentioning Padmapura as the place of issue, as one might have expected on the basis of this hypothesis, these Mandhal Plates specify the god ‘Mondasvāmin’ as the issuing agency. Yet, there is archaeological and historical evidence that makes it plausible that this authority relates to a Viṣṇu temple in the Mandhal area, that is, arguably, in the vicinity of Padmapura, as we will see below.

### *Muṇḍasvāmin*

In his Mandhal Plates Rudrasena II styled himself as someone ‘whose rule is based on the *cakra*, the emblem of the Bhagavat’,<sup>35</sup> i.e. Viṣṇu; in other words, just like his father-in-law Candragupta, Rudrasena professed to be a *bhāgavata*. The Vākāṭaka kings before and after him, with the exception of Pṛthivīṣeṇa II, were all devotees of Maheśvara (Śiva), i.e. they were Māheśvaras, so it seems that his conversion to Bhagavatism had been part of an antenuptial contract. And there is more in this inscription, which may be dated to c. AD 400, that links up with Candragupta, who, at about this time, was engaged in his grand Udayagiri project. The opening of the Mandhal inscription runs as follows:

Success! Approved. By order of Lord Muṇḍasvāmin, God of gods, who holds the conch, discus and sword; after He had made the Nāga king stretch out on the waters of the ocean, He has entered a state of yogic sleep, while lying on the serpent coils of that (king) Ananta (the Infinite One)—a bundle of expanded hoods bending (over Him by way of canopy).<sup>36</sup>

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times in the sense of a temple or place of worship’; it refers to a ‘court of justice’, whereas *vaijayīka* (victorious) is to be taken as ‘an honorific’. The location of Padmapura, like that of the Victorious Dharmasthāna, is unknown (cf. above, n. 65 on p. 141). A plausible conjecture, however, identifies the town with the ancient Sātavāhana site of Paunī in the Bhandara District on the right bank of the Wainganga; Paunī ← Prakrit *paūminī*, Skt. Padmini(pura).

- 35 Shastri & Gupta 1985, 227 l. 11: *bhagavataś cakralakṣmapratīṣṭhitaśāsanasya*. This expression is changed in the inscriptions of Rudrasena’s son Pravarasena into: ‘whose royal fortune was obtained by the grace of Cakrapāṇi, the Lord’: *bhagavataś cakrapāṇeḥ prasādupārjitaśrīsamudayasya* (CII V, 12 ll. 13–14)—not merely because, as Shastri observes, this is ‘grammatically more acceptable’, but also because Pravarasena, who had again embraced the Śaiva faith of his ancestors, thought it politically more acceptable; for as a Māheśvara he could not officially declare that the rule of his father, or of his House for that matter, was based (*pratīṣṭhita*) on Viṣṇu’s *cakra*. For similar reasons Rudrasena II may have left out the religious affiliation of his father.

- 36 Shastri & Gupta 1997, 155 ll. 1–2 (emended):

*siddham | dr̥ṣṭam | bhagavato ekārṇavasalilavistāritanāgarājño ’nan(t)asya tasya va-(kr)asphuṭaphaṭāj(ā)labhogaśāyi(ṇo) yoganidrām upagatasya śaikhacakrāsīdhārī(o) devadevasya (muṇḍa)svāminas sandeśāt ||*

Cf. the *Grant of Bhuluṇḍa*, year 47 (AD 367), in which the feudatory of Samudragupta, Bhuluṇḍa pays respect to Viṣṇu (Ramesh & Tewari 1990, 1; Willis 2009, 71):

*bhagavataḥ [...] ekārṇavavīpūlavimalaparyāṅkatalaśāyīnaḥ nābhīsambhavāravinda-ṣaṭpadopagīyamānanidrasya [...]*

The reading of the first lines of the first plate are difficult due to severe damage. The editors Shastri & Gupta read in the middle of line 2: *mondasvāminas*<sup>o</sup>; in the published photograph of Plate 1, I can read *svāminas*<sup>o</sup>, but the reading ‘*monda*’ is impossible to confirm. The word *monda* gives apparently little sense. Dental and cerebral *nd* are identical but for their top part, in which the square head-mark is replaced by two short curved strokes. Assuming that the reading *monḍa* is correct, we could think of Prakrit influence by which *ḍ* replaced *u* before a double consonant without much change of pronunciation.<sup>37</sup> If *monḍa* is not the correct reading—the upper and lower part of the *akṣara* are illegible—one could think of reading *mau* instead of *mo*, the difference between *mo* and *mau* being only that the right top stroke is making an upward curve rather than being a horizontal curve. Or, more likely perhaps *mu*, in which the straight stroke down forming the short syllable *u* has become erased. I tentatively conjecture the reading *muṇḍasvāminas*<sup>o</sup>, but *mo(au)ṇḍasvāminas*<sup>o</sup> cannot be excluded either.

The image described is that of the great Nārāyaṇa relief in Udayagiri. But who is this Monda- or Muṇḍasvāmin who gave the instruction (*saṃdeśa*)? Certainly this refers to Viṣṇu–Nārāyaṇa, but it remains unclear whether it signifies a local deity (i.e. image) installed in a temple in Mandhal or Padmapura. The editors of the inscription do not come forward with a satisfactory explanation of this name.<sup>38</sup> I would like to suggest that the first part of the name *muṇḍa* refers to an eponymous person who envisaged and installed this manifestation of the Bhagavat.

As Isaacson and I have shown elsewhere, the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* on the Rāmāgiri mentions the princess that was wedded to Rudrasena by the name of ‘Muṇḍā’—‘a younger daughter who resembled the lustre of the moon’,<sup>39</sup> the same lady who, from her own inscriptions, came to be known as the ‘Lustrous One’, Prabhāvatī. This queen may have used the name Muṇḍā as long as her husband was still alive and may then have changed it into the dynastic ‘Prabhāvatī Guptā’, after she had assumed power in Vidarbha as the regentess of her minor sons in about AD 405.<sup>40</sup> Muṇḍa- or Muṇḍasvāmin, and even Maṇḍasvāmin may thus be taken to mean ‘Lord of Muṇḍā’, ‘Muṇḍā’s

37 Von Hinüber 2001, 121.

38 Shastri & Gupta 1997, 149 propose to connect it with a toponym by pointing to two present-day villages in the neighbourhood called Maudā and Ḍoṅgar Maudā. It seems more likely, however, that the toponyms preserve the ancient name of the temple than that the temple-name derived from these toponyms.

39 *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* (KNT) v. 7: *y(avīya)sī candra(ma)saḥ (p)ra-(bh)eva* ⟨*yā*⟩ *muṇḍanāmnī tana(yā)*. Bakker 1997, 164; cf. Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 53 (above, p. 123).

40 Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 53; Bakker 1997, 16. The KNT inscription may hint at the dynastic name, when it compares the girl Muṇḍā with the light (*prabhā*) of the moon (*candra*): Prabhāvatī is ‘the one who possesses the lustre’, scil. of Candra, her father. Tedesco 1945 proposes to derive MI *muṇḍa* from Skt. *vrddha*. This is not taken over by Mayrhofer EWA s.v., who gives as first meaning: ‘kahl’ (‘– Unklar’).

As an appellation of a princess, the name ‘*muṇḍā*’ (‘the bald one’) is odd. One may

Lord', that is the 'God of Prabhāvātī'. As far as I am aware, this would be the first attestation of the practice to name the installed deity after a founder who was still alive (*svanāmnā*).<sup>41</sup>

The aim of Rudrasena's Mandhal inscription is not the installation of this deity, but rather the donation by the king of four villages in the eastern division of Padmapura District to a pair of settlements (*adhivāsadvaya*) of the Sātvata *caraṇa* (branch/school), which came from Vatsagulma, the capital of the Western Vākāṭakas.<sup>42</sup> This is the earliest attestation of royal support of a Bhāgavata organisation named Sātvata, a religious sect known, for in-

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conjecture that the name refers to the tribal background of the princess, the Muṇḍas, in which case these Muṇḍas must have been part of the Nāga confederation mentioned in Prabhāvātī's inscriptions; the Muṇḍas are known, for instance, from MBh 3.48.21 (present at Yudhiṣṭhira's consecration), MBh 6.52.9b (App.), MBh 7.95.20 and VāP 45.123. Cf. Muruṇḍa-devī/svāminī, mother of the Uccakalpa king Śarvanātha (CII III (1888), 127, 131), a queen obviously named after the Muruṇḍa people from which she came; this people is mentioned among the 'foreign countries' in Samudragupta's Allahabad Pillar Inscription (CII III (1888), 8). We possess no epigraphical corroboration of the existence of the Muṇḍas, however.

Another explanation for the name Muṇḍā could be: the girl was bald (*muṇḍa*), i.e. suffered from alopecia. Her bald head may have resembled the lustre of the full moon. Lüders 1961 classified the name Muṇḍa (Prakrit: Muḍa), which is found as the name of a donor on a railing at Bharhut (A 102 (827)), in the category of 'names derived from the appearance of the body' (CII II.2 (1998), pp. 53, 6). That the name Muṇḍa could be a brahmin name (Prabhāvātī belonged to the Dhāraṇa *gotra*) is proven by the Grant of Svāmīdāsa, Year 67 in the copper-plate hoard from Bagh, which has preserved the name of a donee, Muṇḍa, a brahmin belonging to the Śāṅḍilya *gotra* (Ramesh & Tewari 1990, 65).

- 41 Cf. the Prabhāvatisvāmin mentioned in the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription* v. 21, installed after the same queen's death for the sake of merit transfer. Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 54, 69 (above, p. 124); Bakker 1997, 30, 140–42. The shortening of the feminine suffixes *ā* and *ī* to *a* and *i* is permitted by P. 6.3.36. This naming practice created a legal fiction, individualizing the god so that he could be endowed with property and authority (cf. Sanderson 2003–04, n. 250). For naming deities after the donors see also Willis 2009, 139. The two *liṅgas* (?) Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara mentioned on the Mathura Pilaster (AD 380) were named after the deceased *ācāryas* Upamita and Kapila (CII III (1981), 240); below, p. 494.
- 42 Shastri & Gupta 1997, 155, Mandhal Ins. ll. 13–20 (emended):

*ihāsmābhir ātmano dharmāyurbalavijayaiśvavyavivṛddhaye ihāmūtrahitārtham ātmānugrahāya vaijayake dharmasthāne [...] aragrāmakānāmagrāmaḥ vātsagulmakārya-sātvatacaraṇādhivāsadvayasya apūrvadattiyā udakapūrvam atisṛṣṭaḥ | ucitāṃś cāsya brāhmaṇānāṃ nānāgotracaraṇānāṃ svādhyāyaniratānāṃ pūrvarājñānumatān caturvedyāgrahāramaryādāparihārān vitarāmaḥ ||*

At this occasion here in the Victorious Dharmasthāna, after an oblation of water, in order to show our favour and for the sake of the increase of our sovereignty, rule, power, life, and merit, on earth as well as in the afterlife, the village [...] named Aragrāma has been donated by us as a gift not earlier donated to the respectable men coming from Vatsagulma who belong to a pair of settlements of the Sātvata School. And we grant to this (pair of settlements) the usual exemptions which are customary to Agrahāra villages of Caturvedins and which have been approved by earlier kings for brahmins of various *gotras* and branches who are devoted to study.

stance, from *Mahābhārata* 12.332.13–18 and the *Tusām Rock Inscription*.<sup>43</sup> The Sātvatas worshipped Vāsudeva and the four other members of the Vṛṣṇi clan; they originated from western India.<sup>44</sup> The invocation of the god of his wife strongly suggests that Rudrasena was acting on her behalf: the queen hiding herself behind the god Mu(o/au)ṇḍasvāmin at whose command the grant was made. The heuristic principle *cherchez la femme* has again proven its value.

The Mandhal inscription thus seems to prove that the Vākāṭaka queen (née Gupta) followed in her father's footsteps by favouring religious organisations and building temples. She may have been the major source of inspiration of her husband and have brought the Sātvata ritual experts from Vatsagulma to the Padmapura District in order to serve in her new temple.

Archaeological excavations in Mandhal have brought to light three temples, the most prominent of which stood on top of a hillock named Boṃgī Huḍkī (BHK II); this temple was built on a massive platform (11.70 × 14.70 m), with a *garbhagr̥ha* and *maṇḍapa*. The platform was partly built into the surface of the rock, which was levelled by 32 layers of brick at the southern side.<sup>45</sup> At the foot of this hillock excavations revealed another building (BHK I); underneath its brick floor a dozen of Hindu sculptures were found, among which two or three images of the Sātvata deities: Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, and (possibly) Sāmba (Āditya).<sup>46</sup> Whether or not this Vāsudeva image represented the Muṇḍasvāmin is impossible to say. The fact that, next to these three Vaiṣṇava images, five stylistically very similar images of markedly Śaiva nature were discovered,<sup>47</sup> testifies to the apparently harmonious way by which the Bhāgavatas and Māheśvaras existed side by side, tapping the same royal source of subsistence.

## RĀMAGIRI

Rudrasena died young. His sudden death may account for the fact that the Mohallā Plate remained unfinished. His Gupta queen assumed power, officially as regentess of her minor sons. Her Poona Plates, dated in the 13th year of the *yvvarāja* Divākarasena, i.e. around AD 418, show that momentous decisions had been taken since the Mandhal foundations.<sup>48</sup> The dowager queen had her residence moved northwards, to Nandivardhana at the foot of the Rāmāgiri, which hill she was developing into a state sanctuary that could match her father's Udayāgiri. Again a hilltop was chosen; two minor caves were excavated

43 CII III (1888), 269–271; Willis 2009, 223 ff.

44 Bakker 1997, 59–62.

45 Shastri 1975–76, 144; Bakker 1997, 80 f.

46 Bakker 1997, Plates XIX–XXIV.

47 Bakker 1997, Plates VII–XIV, XXVa.

48 *Poona Plates of Prabhāvatīguptā*, CII V, 5–9.

on its slope, but the main Bhāgavata sanctuaries were stone temples on the top, five of which survive till today.

The Poona Plates convey the impression that Prabhāvatī was personally involved in promoting the cause of the Bhāgavata religion. The charter was issued on the 12th of the bright half of Kārttika, after breaking the fast of Prabodhinī Ekādaśī, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's awakening from his cosmic sleep (earlier referred to in Rudrasena's Mandhal Plates). This festival of cosmogonic re-awakening had an important political dimension, as has been shown by Michael Willis in the case of Candragupta and Udayagiri,<sup>49</sup> a case that must have been very well known to the queen. Styling herself as entirely devoted to the Bhagavat (*atyantabhagavadbhaktā*), at this occasion she bestowed land upon another *bhagavadbhakta*, the *ācārya* Canālasvāmin, who may have been one of the priests employed in the waking rite and who may have been the queen's own teacher.<sup>50</sup> The grant was first ritually offered (*nivedya*) to the *bhagavadpādamūla*, the feet of the Lord. As we learn from Prabhāvatī's Riddhapur Plates, which mention the *pādamūla* of the Lord of the Rāmagiri (*rāmagirisvāmin*),<sup>51</sup> this may be taken to refer to the main sanctuary on top of the Rāmagiri.<sup>52</sup> The parallel with Udayagiri can even be extended further, since the oldest image that survives on the hill is that of the Boar, Varāha, lifting the world (Bhūdevī) on his tusk out of the cosmic ocean (Plate 11). That the idea was taken over but not slavishly copied, appears from the fact that the Rāmagiri Varāha is theriomorphic instead of half man half boar.<sup>53</sup>

At Nagardhan and environs, the area identified with Prabhāvatī's residence Nandivardhana, (fragmentary) images have been found of Viṣṇu, but also of Gaṇeśa and the goddess Mahiṣāsūramardinī, whereas the discovery of a hoard of three splendid Buddhist bronzes along with three *prabhāvalis*, a parasol, a bell and an incense-burner at Hamlapuri, a village near Nagardhan, testifies to the presence of the Buddhist Saṅgha close by the court of the Vākāṭaka queen.<sup>54</sup> Within this court Prabhāvatī's three sons grew up, but of only the youngest of them, Pravarasena, we possess records. These show that the prince had returned to the faith of his ancestors, since he called himself entirely devoted to Maheśvara.<sup>55</sup>

49 Willis 2004, 37–41; Willis 2009, 46.

50 CII V, 7 f. Willis 2009, 222 f.

51 CII V, 35.

52 Sircar has pointed out (SI I, 512 n. 2) that *pādamūla*, literally meaning 'sole of the foot', is frequently used in inscriptions as a metaphor of a deity in a temple to whom respect is paid. This deity may have been represented by an image (iconic), not necessarily by his (aniconic) footprints. Cf. Bakker 1997, 136 f.

53 Bakker 1997, 138 f.

54 Jamkhedkar 1985b, 13. The loose pedestal is inscribed in nail-headed 4th/5th century script (emended): *deyadharmo 'yaṇ śākyabhikṣo(r) bha(ṭṭa)saṅghasenasaya, yad atra puṇyaṇ (ta)d bhavatu mātāpitroḥ* (Jamkhedkar 1985b, 15).

55 CII V, 12 l. 16 (*Jāmb Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 2*).

## MANSAR

For several years Bhāgavatas and Māheśvaras were living together in the Nandivardhana residence, but somewhere between the eleventh and sixteenth years in the reign of Pravarasena, the latter had decided that he should construct his own residence, Pravaraपुरa, and his own state sanctuary, Pravareśvara, both named after the king himself.<sup>56</sup> For these two building projects wonderful sites were found, which mirrored, as it were, the old residence and the Rāmagiri: The Pravareśvara complex was erected five kilometers to the west, on a hill again (Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī), facing the Rāmagiri, whereas at its foot the residence Pravaraपुरa arose. Excavations at these two sites near the village of Mansar (MNS 3 and 2) during the last ten years have brought to light a wealth of material, which has been the subject of a symposium in the British Museum in 2008.<sup>57</sup>



*Plate 49*  
śrīprabhākā  
*Seal of Prabhāvatī*  
*A & B (mirrored)*

*Plate 50*  
pravarasya  
*Seal of Pravarasena*  
*A & B (mirrored)*

<sup>56</sup> CII V, 23, 59.

<sup>57</sup> For Proceedings, full documentation, and bibliography see Bakker 2008: <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/dbi/4ccec5f085aa0>. Also Bakker 2004d.

The personal seals—both, of Pravarasena and Prabhāvatī—found in MNS 2 (Plates 49 & 50),<sup>58</sup> suggest that the Vākāṭaka king stayed close to his mother and that she, at an advanced age, remained a powerful figure behind the scenes, also in the new palace of her youngest son, which was her third and last residence since she had left the Gupta court of her youth—Padmapura, Nandivardhana, Pravaraपुरा.<sup>59</sup> When the Gupta-Nāga princess, the queen mother of the Vākāṭakas, eventually died in her early seventies in c. AD 444, a funeral monument (*eḍūka*) was erected, as I have argued elsewhere, at a location in between the Rāmagiri and Pravaraपुरा, a monument that was appropriately guarded by a Nāga.<sup>60</sup>

In the present context it may suffice to evaluate the recent discoveries at Mansar in as far as they throw light on the theme of this essay, royal patronage, religious tolerance, and the formation of Gupta-Vākāṭaka culture.

The magnificent state sanctuary (*devakulasthāna*) Pravareśvara, erected on the Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī near the village of Mansar (MNS 3), served as the place where the ceremony of issuing royal charters was performed, as attested by the *Pāṇḍurṇā Plates of Pravarasena II, Year 29* (AD 441).<sup>61</sup> A generous land-donation was granted to a group of Vājasaneyā brahmins, and the same inscription records that one of the donees (Somārya) received some more land later, after a ceremonial offering of sesamum (*tilavācanaka*), i.e. a *śrāddha* ritual, had been performed in that same Dharmasthāna.<sup>62</sup> The king's largesse towards his subjects was immortalized in the benign smile of the main Śiva image of this temple (Plate 113), the god who bestowed life on his devotees by extending a right hand filled with flowers to them, in a gesture of benevolence (*varadamudrā*).<sup>63</sup>

58 For these seals see Kropman 2008 on <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/dbi/4ccec5f085aa0>.

59 The last land-grant by the queen mother was made in the 20th regnal year of her son Pravarasena, c. AD 442. Shastri & Kawadkar 2001; see also <http://siddham.uk/object/OB00172>. In the seal of these *Miregāon Plates of Prabhāvatī Guptā, year 20* Prabhāvatī calls herself the 'mother of two powerful kings':

*vīkrāntayor jananyās tu  
vākāṭakanarendrayo(h)  
śrīprabhāvatīguptāyā(h)  
śāsanaṃ ripuśāsanam*

Within the charter these two kings are specified by name: *vākāṭakānām mahārāja-śrīdāmodarāsenapravarasēnananī*. This charter was issued from Vainyāpurasthāna, probably a ceremonial place in a town (*purā*) on the banks of the Wainganga. Shastri & Kawadkar 2001, 143 think it might be the same as Pṛthiviṣeṇa II's Beṇṇātaṣṭhāna, the Sthāna on the banks of the Beṇṇā or Vainyā River, which again may be the same as the Dharmasthāna erected by Rudrasena II (see above, p. 325) in or near Padmapura on the Wainganga. Did Prabhāvatī go back to the place where she, as newlywed queen, stayed with her husband Rudrasena for a donative function?

60 Bakker 2007a (below, pp. 438 f.); cf. Bakker 2008a.

61 CII V, 65 f.

62 CII V, 66, l. 30. Kane 1930–62 IV, 418 f.

63 Bakker 1997, 149–151, Plate XXXVII.

## CONCLUSION

In the four decades following Candragupta's inauguration of his Udayagiri monument at the turn of the 5th century, (1) his daughter (Muṇḍā/Prabhāvati) founded a sanctuary, dedicated to Muṇḍasvāmin, in Mandhal, probably on the Boṃgī Huḍkī, whereafter the dowager queen began the building of a series of sanctuaries on the Rāmagiri among which the state sanctuary of Rāmagirisvāmin, and (2) his grandson Pravarasena II erected his own state sanctuary Pravareśvara, on a hilltop near the village of Mansar. Yet, as is the case in the Gupta kingdom, we have hardly any charters of foundation regarding these royal sanctuaries by these monarchs themselves.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless it is fair to say that the policy of religious patronage initiated by Candragupta and his court was vigorously followed by the rulers in the Eastern Vākāṭaka kingdom. The following facts bear witness to it: 1) sanctuaries bore the names of their royal founders, Muṇḍasvāmin and Pravareśvara; 2) they were alternatively dedicated to either the Bhagavat or Maheśvara; 3) they served as hallowed places for making large donations to various religious groupings (Sātvatas and Vājasaneyins), mostly in the form of land grants.<sup>65</sup> And later, a similar policy was practised by the Dharmamahārājas of the Western Vākāṭaka branch in Vatsagulma, in whose kingdom we find the famous Buddhist cave monuments of Ajanta. However, here too we witness the same curious phenomenon: a lack of charters of foundation issued by the reigning king Hariṣeṇa himself.

Although the kings showed clearly their religious orientation, we have no evidence whatsoever that could point to great enmity between the religious organisations, despite the fact that rivalry for patronage as well as clients no doubt played a role. The first four decades of the fifth century, dominated by the rule of Candra- and Kumāragupta in the north and Prabhāvati Guptā and Pravarasena in the south, may be counted among the most stable and peaceful periods in ancient Indian history. It is this stability established by good policy and tolerance that created the conditions for an unprecedented development of the imagination, reflected in the literary and visual arts, achieving a perfection that still impresses today.

The iconographic programme developed on the Udayagiri mountain was only partly taken over in the Vākāṭaka kingdom: images of Viṣṇu, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Gaṇeśa, and Mahiṣāsura-mardini are found at both locations, all nearly in the classical form that would remain normative for the centuries to

64 We possess a deed of foundation of Skandagupta, viz. his *Bhitarī Stone Pillar Inscription*, in which the Gupta king records his installation of the deity Kumārasvāmin (see Bakker 2005, 249; below, p. 375; cf. Willis 2009, 144 ff.). And we possess a document of Prabhāvati's daughter Atibhāvati (name uncertain), viz. the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription*, which records the installation of Prabhāvatisvāmin (Isaacson & Bakker 1993, 54; Bakker 1997, 30–33; above, p. 124; below, p. 354).

65 For a survey of the Vākāṭaka land donations see Shrimali 1987.

come. However, in Vidarbha this sophisticated artistic tradition blended with a local form of craftsmanship which lent to it its peculiar, somewhat rustic flavour and which gave rise to creative experiments that were not all equally successful. The sculptures found in Mandhal are a good example of this. But in the course of a few years since the Mandhal inception, the classical images on the Rāmagiri of Varāha, Trivikrama, and Narasiṃha were created in the mature Vākāṭaka idiom, which matched their Udayagiri counterparts in artistic quality and refinement.

The workshop set up by Prabhāvatī for the production of high quality, red-sandstone sculptures continued to work under her son and reached an unequalled level of sophistication and originality in the sculptures that once adorned the Pravareśvara Temple. Although the research of these sculptures is still in its infancy and their iconography is still little understood, it may be observed that their appeal lies in their tranquility, which expresses mood and emotional state (*bhāva*) rather than action (*vikrama*), sentiment and emotion (*rasa*) rather than force (*bala*), and as such they are characteristic of the best that Indian art has produced.

# Rāma's Hill\*

## Transgression and Atonement on a Hill in the South and the Inadequacy of Substitutes

### PREAMBLE

Coming from a part of the world where there are neither holy places nor mountains, it may seem strange that my professional career has been marked by the research of these two phenomena. Curiosity to discover unknown fields, no doubt, lies at the base of every scholarly endeavour, but in my case there may have been a more compelling factor, namely the fascination for the cultural and religious world of India. Studying the religious heritage of the Subcontinent means that one cannot miss the holy places: they are simply ubiquitous, and many of them are mountains.<sup>1</sup>

The symbolism of holy mountains in the Hindu tradition has been well covered by Laura Giuliano in her contribution to the proceedings of the conference on *Religioni e Sacri Monti*. As she points out, the idea of the holy mountain is interchangeable with concepts such as, for instance, 'the world pillar' (il pilastro del mondo or *axis mundi*) and 'the world tree' (l'albero cosmico).<sup>2</sup> This symbolism is not limited to mountains as such, as Giuliano demonstrates, but underlies the very idea of the Hindu temple and its architecture.

Rather than repeating what has been competently put forward, I would like to concentrate here on a single holy mountain, the Rāmāgiri or Rāma's Hill, right in the heart of India, in the region known as Vidarbha (47 km north of Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra). As we will see, the nexus of ideas pointed out by Giuliano will gain relevance, when we fix our attention on the significance that this hill had, and still has for the pilgrim who visits it today. This pilgrim will, no doubt, think of the classical Sanskrit epic, which has contributed so much to the Indian culture through the ages, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its main hero, Rāma, son of Daśaratha, king of Ayodhyā.

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1 Cf. Bakker 2010b, where I deal with the mountain: Rohitāgiri.

2 Giuliano 2006, 177.

## THE ŚAIVALA MOUNTAIN OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA

In the seventh and last book of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, after Rāma had been crowned king in Ayodhyā and a period of golden rule, referred to as the Rāmarājya, had been ushered in, a nasty incident occurred, which could have been meant to remind the reader of the *Rāmāyaṇa* of the fact that the golden age was nearing its end. Bad behaviour, which would become endemic in our own Kali Age, was already occasionally practised in the Dvāparayuga and forbodings thereof appeared in the Tretāyuga, thus posing a threat to the universal happiness that characterized Rāma's rule.

A brahmin arrived at the palace gate in Ayodhyā and loudly bewailed the fate of his only son, who had died before having come of age. As the brahmin himself was absolutely blameless, this stroke of misfortune must have been caused by some other mean creature who had abused the *dharma* (Rām. 7.64). The possible cause of this tragic event was revealed to Rāma by his counsellor, the seer Nārada. Could it be that somewhere in his realm a *śūdra* might have had the nerve to practise asceticism, thereby setting a trend that was only permissible in the Kaliyuga (Rām. 7.65)? The righteous king ordered the preservation of the boy's body by having it laid in oil, a method that worked so well in the case of his own father, and called for his celestial chariot, the Puṣpaka. The following reconnaissance flight affirmed that the *dharma* reigned supreme in the west, north and east of his kingdom, but in the south, the region associated with death, on the slope of the Śaivala mountain, which the *Rāmāyaṇa* situated to the south of the Vindhyas,<sup>3</sup> at the border of a lake,<sup>4</sup> something questionable seemed to be going on.<sup>5</sup>

An ascetic was hanging upside down, a form of severe *tapas* that was evidently not customary in the golden age of the Tretāyuga, since those entitled to practise austerities did not need such extreme mortifications to attain their aims. The Puṣpaka landed and Rāma questioned the hanging man, asking whether he was by any chance a *śūdra*. The honest ascetic frankly admitted his humble descent, saying that he had been taken to this severe asceticism by the wish to reach the status of a god. While he was still speaking with his head hanging down—'know that I am a *śūdra*, O Rāma, named Śambūka'<sup>6</sup>—the righteous king drew his sword and chopped off his head (Rām. 7.67.3–4). Rāma was praised by the gods for having prevented a *śūdra* from reaching heaven and a rain of celestial flowers fell down at the spot.<sup>7</sup> Pleased that the

3 See below, n. 8 on p. 337.

4 Śaivala is the name of a water plant. Meulenbeld 1974, 604 mentions 12 identifications of this plant, the major ones are *Vallisneria spiralis* Linn. and *Blyxa octandra* Planch.

5 Rām. 7.66.12–13. The commentaries *ad* 7.66.12 identify the Śaivala as a *giri* in the vicinity of the Vindhyā.

6 Rām. 7.67.3cd: *śūdraṃ mām viddhi kākutstha śambūkaṃ nāma nāmataḥ*.

7 Rām. 7 App. I, No. 11.

danger of having to accept a *śūdra* in their midst had been warded off, the gods granted that the dead brahmin boy was restored to life on Rāma's request.

Thereupon Rāma accepted the invitation of the gods to visit the hermitage of Agastya, which, as the text suggests, was thought to be somewhere in the neighbourhood, south of the Vindhya mountains.<sup>8</sup> It was his second visit to the *āśrama*; previously, during the period of exile, Rāma had been there in the company of his wife Sītā and younger brother; Agastya had then pointed out their way to Pañcavaṭī (Rām. 3.12.13).

In earlier publications I have repeatedly tried to demonstrate the futility of the attempts by the Archaeological Survey of India to plot the epic geography of the *Rāmāyaṇa* on the historical map of South Asia.<sup>9</sup> The problem is comparable to tracing the itinerary of Ulysses in the Mediterranean basin. Though much has been written since to prove that I was wrong, especially with regard to the location of Ayodhyā and Rāma's Birthplace (Rāmājanmabhūmi) in connection with the dispute over the Babri Masjid (Plate 4),<sup>10</sup> I have not come across valid arguments that have made me give up my view.

In my opinion, therefore, the question is not where exactly the hill was on which Śambūka was beheaded, or where this hermitage of Agastya was, but the scholar should ask where and when traditions emerged that identified specific topographic sites with localities of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Or to put it differently, when and where did sacred places emerge that derived their fame and holiness from their believed connection with places mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In the case of Agastya's *āśrama* Dey in his *Geographical Dictionary* (s.v.) enumerates eight such traditions and in the case of the Śaivala mountain this author refers to 'Rāmāgiri or Rāmtek mountain' (Plate 51), 47 km north of Nagpur, the evidence for which we shall discuss.

## THE RĀMĀGIRI

We possess a testimony from the 13th century, not yet known to Dey, which records a local tradition that associates a particular site on Ramtek Hill with this episode of Śambūka's penance. The *Ramtek Stone Inscription of the Time*

8 Rām. 3.10.80-84; Rām. 7.67.5 (1127\*). The region between the Vindhya and the Śaivala had become deserted after the fall of King Daṇḍa, youngest of the hundred sons of Ikṣvāku, and had become known as Daṇḍakāraṇya (Rām. 7.72.17-18; cf. Rām. 7.70.16-17). In this region the king of Vidarbha, Śveta, is said to have practised asceticism (Rām. 7.70.2-3). The hermitage of Agastya is said to have been in the centre of this wilderness situated at a lake, and here Agastya's meeting with the former king of Vidarbha, Śveta, took place (Rām. 7.68.1-7). The *āśrama* of Agastya, the *Rāmāyaṇa* suggests, replaced the hermitage known as Janasthāna, which was earlier deserted at the end of Daṇḍa's reign (Rām. 7.72.17-18).

9 Bakker 1986; Bakker 1986b.

10 See the *Bibliographie zum Konflikt um Ayodhya und seinem Umfeld*, Brandtner 1994.

of *Rāmacandra* found in the Lakṣmaṇa Temple (Plates 12 and 53) on top of this hill tells us in verse 86:

HERE the *śūdra* saint (*muni*) Śambuka had reached the abode of Murāri after having been killed by the sword Candrahāsā which was wielded by Rāmacandra; and on this eminent mountain he became well-known as Dhūmrākṣa, the ‘smoke-eyed one’.<sup>11</sup>

The sanctuary of Dhūmrākṣa is still pointed out today (Plate 52).



Plate 51  
The Rāmagiri

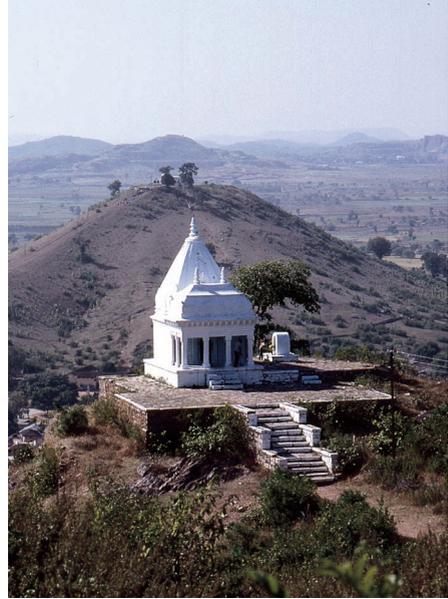


Plate 52  
The Dhūmrēśvara Temple

The same *tīrtha* is also described in a (late) text called *Sindūragirimāhātmya* (13.9–16, 48–52, 14.1–65).<sup>12</sup> In this *Māhātmya* the *śūdra* is described as a *bhūmipālaka* (*op. cit.* 13.10) and an explanation is given for his name

11 Bakker 1989b, 493; above, p. 102. The inscription, as far as legible, does not mention the name Śaivala.

12 For this text, of which a longer recension also seems to have existed, see Bakker 1990b, 76; above, n. 28 on p. 90. Mirashi and Kulkarni (1939–40) refer to this longer recension in EI XXV, 11 n. 7:

The larger *Sindūragirimāhātmya* mentions Mahāśaivala as a name of the hill at Rāmṭek in addition to the two names noticed above, and explains it as being due to Śiva bringing the Śaivas to the hill. According to the colophon the *Māhātmya* has been taken from the *Kaumārakhaṇḍa* of the *Padmapurāṇa*; but the portion dealing with Śambuka’s story seems to have been copied *verbatim* from the *Rāmāyaṇa* of

*dhūmrākṣa*, which says that while hanging above a firepit (*kuṇḍa*) he was throwing therein leaves of bilva, drinking the smoke through his eyes (*op. cit.* 13.13). Rāma, after cutting off his head, allowed him to stay on the mountain in the form of a *liṅga* known as *dhūmrapaśiva* (*op. cit.* 14.53). Today this *liṅga* is referred to as Dhūmreśvara.



Plate 53

*The Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Temples on Rāma's Hill*

Evidently the Rāmagiri tradition as reported in the Yādava inscription identified the *śūdra* who was beheaded by Rāma with a local deity Dhūmrākṣa.<sup>13</sup> We note also that this tradition had mitigated the most cynical part of the *Rāmāyaṇa* legend by allowing Śambuka/Śambūka at least to reach heaven, the abode of Murāri, i.e. Viṣṇu.<sup>14</sup> The same Yādava inscription testifies to Agastya's association with the hill, though the exact relation remains obscure

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Vālmīki. We have not been able to trace the *Kaumārakhaṇḍa* in the printed edition of the Purāṇa. Yet, this description lends support to our inference that Śaivala was one of the old names of the hill at Rāmṭēk.

13 This name is also known from the epics, namely as that of a courtier of Rāvaṇa. MBh 3.270.5; Rām. 5.5.21.

14 The *Sindūragirimāhātmya* 14.5–8 further mitigates Rāma's role, since the beheading of the *śūdra* is said to have taken place only after the latter had attacked and slain (*hata*) Hanumat, who had accompanied Rāma.

due to the fact that damage has made parts of the inscription illegible.<sup>15</sup> Finally the epigraph records the tradition that the mountain had been ‘touched by the lotus-feet of the illustrious Rāma’ (v. 83), due to which it is called ‘Rāma’s Hill’.<sup>16</sup> As we shall argue below, this local tradition that connected the hill with events in the life of the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* probably existed already at the beginning of the 5th century.

### *The epigraphical evidence*

Two 5th-century Vākāṭaka inscriptions refer explicitly to a ‘Rāmagiri’ and a sanctuary thereon.<sup>17</sup> That this epigraphical ‘Rāmagiri’ is the hill a few kilometers to the north of the Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhana, i.e. the present-day Ramtek, the same hill on which the mentioned Yādava inscription is found, is now generally accepted by all historians dealing with the history of the Vākāṭakas.<sup>18</sup> In one of these 5th-century inscriptions the Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatī Guptā gives some additional information regarding the nature of the sanctuary on top of the hill, when she declares that her charters were issued from the ‘soles of the feet (*pādamūla*) of Bhagavat, the Lord of Rāmagiri’,<sup>19</sup> which echoes an earlier charter by her in which it is said that the grant had first been offered to the ‘soles of the feet of the Lord’.<sup>20</sup>

These epigraphs agree with a tradition that seems to underly the famous verses in Kālidāsa’s *Meghadūta*, the ‘Cloud Messenger’, written in the first half of the 5th century AD, in which a Rāmagiri is said to be the place of exile of a Yakṣa who used a cloud as postillion d’amour to bring a message to his beloved, whom he had left behind in the northern Himālaya mountains.

A YAKṢA, who had neglected his duties, had lost his powers by his master’s curse— heavy to bear, since he had to live separated from his beloved for one year; he took up his abode in the hermitages on the Rāmagiri, where the trees (spread) a gentle shade and where the waters were hallowed by the bathing of Janaka’s daughter.  
[...]

AFTER having embraced that lofty hill, you, (O cloud), should take leave of your dear friend, who, on his slopes, is marked by Raghupati’s footprints, venerated by mankind; every time when you and he meet, the shedding of warm (tear)drops born of long separation betrays his affection.<sup>21</sup>

15 Bakker 1989b, 482, 488 (vv. 44–46, 110; above, p. 98). The *Sindūragirimāhātmya* (9.35) also refers to the *āśrama* of Agastya (Kumbhaja).

16 Bakker 1989b, 485; above, p. 101 (v. 85): *rāmasya girāv iha*.

17 The *Ṛiddhapur Plates of Prabhāvatīguptā* (CII V, 35 f.) and *The Mandhal Plates of Pṛthivīśeṇa II, Year 2* (EI XLI, 169). See Bakker 1997, 21, 24.

18 CII V, 7; Bakker 1997, *passim*. The *Sindūragirimāhātmya* 13.8 situates the city (*pura*) of Nandivardhana to the south of Rāmagiri: *gīrer dakṣiṇapārśve*.

19 *rāmagirisvāmināḥ pādamūlāt*, CII V, 35.

20 *bhagavatpādamūle nivedya*, CII V, 7. For the meaning of *pādamūla* see above, n. 52 on p. 330.

21 *Meghadūta* vv. 1 and 9 in Hultsch’ edition (with comm. of Vallabhadeva).

After an examination of the itinerary of the cloud as described by Kālidāsa, the great Maharashtra scholar, V.V. Mirashi, identified the Rāmagiri of the *Meghadūta* with Ramtek Hill. He argued that the route that was followed by the cloud corresponds closely with the geography of Middle India and this left, in his view, only one possibility open.<sup>22</sup> The coherence of Mirashi's arguments and the apparent consistency of the evidence give his conclusions a great plausibility.

From the combined evidence of the Vākāṭaka inscriptions on the one hand, and Kālidāsa's poetic description on the other, we may deduce the following hypotheses regarding the situation on this hill in the first half of the 5th century:

- 1 The Lord of Rāmagiri was Bhagavat, i.e. Viṣṇu, known as Rāmagirisvāmin.
- 2 The hill was associated with the perigrinations of Raghupati, i.e. Rāma, the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and for that reason was called 'Rāma's Hill'.
- 3 The hill may have contained a tank or pond named Sītakuṇḍa or Jānakīrtha.<sup>23</sup>
- 4 The hill may have contained a sanctuary where Viṣṇu-Rāma's footprints (*pada*) were worshipped.

#### *Viṣṇupada*

Since the time Mirashi advanced his theory, many new Vākāṭaka artefacts have come to light.



Plate 54  
Footprint tablet, Nagardhan (c. 12×12×4 cm)

<sup>22</sup> Mirashi 1964a, 138.

<sup>23</sup> This tank may have been referred to in the Yādava inscription under the name of Rāmatīrtha (see above, p.92).

I have selected two of them for discussion here.<sup>24</sup>

A tablet containing a pair of footprints was reportedly found in the Nagar-dhan area, i.e. at the foot of Rāma's Hill (Plate 54).<sup>25</sup> On account of the style compared to other findings of the same site, the tablet is probably to be dated to the Vākāṭaka period (5th century). The iconography of the tablet merits a closer examination.

In addition to the pair of footprints, it contains the Vaiṣṇava symbols of the conch (*śaṅkha*) and club (*gadā*). From this we conclude with certainty that we are concerned with an icon representing the footprints of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇupada).

An investigation into the early evidence of Viṣṇupada shrines has established that such shrines were preferably situated on hill- or mountaintops. And this makes sense, since it may have its origin in the idea that the three cosmic strides of Viṣṇu Trivikrama were taken along the *axis mundi*, represented either by the primordial hill of Vedic cosmogony or by the sacrificial post or *yūpa* in Vedic ritual. To this effect the Dutch scholar F.B.J Kuiper has observed:



Plate 55  
*Viṣṇu Trivikrama, Rāmagiri*

From a purely mythological point of view Viṣṇu, who by his position in the center must also in Vedic belief have been immediately associated with the cosmic pillar (*skambhā*), must have ascended along the pillar at the beginning of the year and descended in the second half of it. [...] There is clear evidence of Viṣṇu's connection with the mountains: he is 'dwelling' or 'standing' on the mountain(s) and 'regent of the mountains'. [...] he stands on the summit of the mountain (*Ṛgveda* 1.155.1). [...] Later art represents him standing on Mount Mandara, and arising from it as the cosmic pillar. In the middle of the seventh century A.D. an artist at Māmalapuram portrayed the god, while taking his three strides, as being the supporting pillar of the universe. (Kuiper 1983, 49)

The idea of Viṣṇu Trivikrama leaving a footprint behind on earth was eventually extended to Viṣṇu in general and to his human incarnations in particular.

<sup>24</sup> I have earlier dealt with these findings separately in more detail in Bakker 1991, 1993b, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Bakker 1991, Plate facing p. 19. Bakker 1997, 136 f., Plate XXXI B.

Rāmagiri appears to be an example as may be inferred from the evidence presented here. The Vākātakas' familiarity with this cosmogonical nature of Viṣṇu is proven by a 5th-century Trivikrama image of this god which still stands on top of the hill (Plate 55).

Returning to the iconography of the tablet, we observe that in between the two footprints an enigmatic symbol is engraved. It consists of a vertical axis to which horizontal strokes, slightly turning upwards, are attached on both sides, rounded off in the apex. In earlier publications I have suggested that this may represent a (cosmic) tree. Although the tree would fit perfectly in the symbolism described above, this view should now be given up in favour of an interpretation that sees in the object a *cakra* in upright position, thus completing the Vaiṣṇava iconography of conch, club and wheel. Viṣṇu's footprint, referring to his three strides to separate heaven and earth along the cosmic pillar (*skambha*) fits his 'connection with the mountains', as observed by Kuiper. The symbolism of the footprint tablet would thus be complete, if we could assume that the tablet found at the foot of the hill reflects, in miniature format, a shrine that once crowned the hill.

This hypothesis helps us to understand the significance of the squares within which the footprints are enclosed: they may mirror the ground plan of the open-air shrine that once crowned Rāma's Hill, the *rāmagīrisvāmināḥ pādāmūlam* sanctuary, in which Prabhāvātī Guptā worshipped and from where she issued her charters: a square enclosure giving access to a square platform on which an altar containing the footprints of the Lord was installed, squared in by a low railing or wall.<sup>26</sup> The tradition that connected the hill with a visit of Rāma naturally saw in it the footprints of Raghupati.

The above reasoning rests on the assumption that smaller replicas were made of the images which were enshrined in the temples on top of Rāma's Hill in the 5th century. Replicas that may have served personal devotional purposes. They may have been for sale in the local bazars, as they generally still are today, and they may have been purchased by the pilgrim to put in his satchel for carrying home as a sacred memento. For this assumption we possess further evidence.

### *Narasimha*

Among the most prominent remains of the fifth century are the two Narasimha temples on top of the hill. In one of these temples a Vākāṭaka inscription has been discovered which says that the image of Prabhāvatisvāmin had been installed by the daughter in memory of and for the transfer of merit to her deceased mother, the dowager queen Prabhāvātī Guptā. It is uncertain whether the Narasimha image in the temple where the inscription was found actually corresponds with the named Prabhāvatisvāmin, since the inscription may have originally belonged to another temple on the hill, for instance the

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26 For the evidence of footprint shrines in the Gupta/Vākāṭaka period see Bakker 1991.

one of Trivikrama. The discussion of this possibility will be postponed; it will be investigated in Bakker 2010c, 2012, 2013b (see below, pp. 351 ff., pp. 357 ff., pp. 365 ff.). For the sake of our present argument we concentrate on the Narasiṃha image.

This image (Plate 57) is very similar to a slightly earlier specimen which we find in the adjacent temple (Plate 58) and of which we have conjectured that it was installed by Prabhāvatī herself for her deceased husband Rudrasena II.<sup>27</sup> The temple is still known as Rudra–Narasiṃha. Both these temples and their impressive images thus testify to the grandeur of the Vākāṭaka royal family and its god: Bhagavat Viṣṇu. In front of them, the fifth-century pilgrim must have stood in awe, as we still do today. What is more natural than the wish to carry it home in portable format?

At the foot of the hill, in the same area where the Viṣṇupada icon has been found, about nine small Narasiṃha images have come to light and of these we can be certain that they are miniatures of the two large Narasiṃha images preserved in the temples on top of the hill (Plate 56). The devout practice of making and distributing replicas of the main images on the Rāmagiri in the 5th century thus seems to be proven beyond reasonable doubt.



*Plate 56*  
*Miniature Narasiṃha, Nagardhan*  
*(c. 21 × 23 cm)*

<sup>27</sup> Bakker 1997, 22; cf. above p. 144.



*Plate 57*  
*Narasiṃha in the Kevala-Narasiṃha Temple, Rāmagiri*  
(c. 200 × 204 × 102 cm)



*Plate 58*  
*Narasiṃha in the Rudra-Narasiṃha Temple, Rāmagiri*  
(c. 198 × 198 × 62 cm)

## THE PILGRIM'S SATCHEL

Coming to the end of our study, we are now in the position to address that aspect of the phenomenon of pilgrimage that has been chosen by the organizers, A. Barbero & S. Piano, as theme of the conference.

Once they return to their home countries, pilgrims make great efforts to reproduce, either wholly or in part, the buildings and environment that they have seen. [...]

Can this phenomenon of imitation, we may ask, be demonstrated by means of samples taken from the classical Indian heritage, that is, for instance, from the material that we have surveyed? The footprint tablet is less suited to this aim, on account of its rather general nature. The Narasiṃha icon, on the other hand, may be a better index. The iconography of this type of Man-lion icon is unique enough to serve as a marker, and the Rāmagiri one is apparently the first specimen of this type. Soon, that is from the sixth century onwards, a new iconography of this *avatāra* of Viṣṇu became fashionable all over India, one in which the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu is lying across the knees of the Man-lion, his belly ripped open by the lion's claws (Plates 18 and 59).



Plate 59

*Narasimha slaying the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu*  
Rājīvalocana Temple, Rajim (7th–8th cent.)

Moreover, the Vākāṭaka culture and its religious and artistic achievements rapidly sunk into oblivion after the fall of this dynasty by the end of the 5th century, and we hardly have any evidence that Rāma's Hill retained more than local significance, until it re-emerged as a regional centre of pilgrimage in the 12th and 13th centuries, in the wake of the rise of the cult of Rāma as the supreme form of God (above, pp.161 ff.) It is in that period, we presume, that the old 5th-century footprint shrine was replaced by the large temples of Rāma and Lakṣmana, which still stand today on the promontory of the hill. For imitations of the Narasiṃha icon we therefore have to look for 5th or 6th century specimens in the area covered by the Vākāṭaka kingdom and its neighbours (Figure 6).

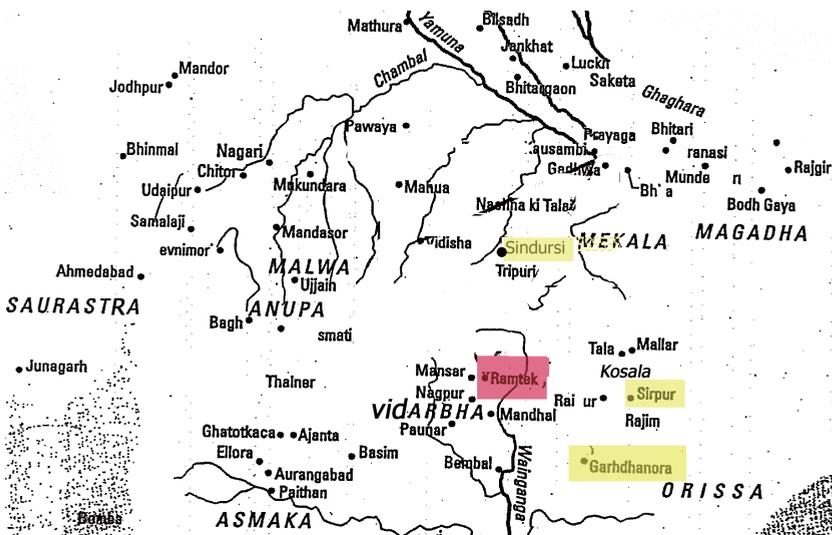


Figure 6  
Map of Vidarbha and surrounding countries

I know of three specimens belonging to the early 6th-century that are clear imitations of the Rāmagiri icon. They are found in regions that have been in close contact with the Vākāṭaka kingdom. The first one (Plate 60) is carved in the rock at Sindursi near Bahuriband (Madhya Pradesh), c. 20 km west from Sleemanabad on highway No. 7, which connected and still connects Vidarbha with the Gangetic plain.

The other two have been found in Garh-Dhanora (c. 140 km south of Raipur) in the Bastar District of neighbouring Chhattisgarh,<sup>28</sup> an archaeological site identified with the ancient capital Puṣkarī of the Nalas, whose expanding kingdom contributed to the collapse of the Vākāṭaka kingdom at the end of the

28 Nigam 2004, 151 f.

5th century (Plate 61).<sup>29</sup> In Chhattisgarh this type of Narasiṃha icon lived on still a little longer as is shown by a 7th-century specimen from Sirpur that has very recently been found (Plate 62).



*Plate 60*  
*Narasiṃha carved in the rock at Sindursi*



*Plate 61*  
*The two Narasiṃha images from Garh-Dhanora (5th–6th cent.)*

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<sup>29</sup> Bakker 1997, 52–57.



Plate 62  
*Narasimha image, Sirpur (7th cent.)*

Especially the Sindursi image, which is found without much sacral context, may have been carved in the rock as a sort of, in the words of Barbero and Piano, 'substitute model that evoked and reminded visitors of the distant place of worship', viz. the Rāmagiri in Vidarbha.

## CONCLUSION

We briefly return to Kālidāsa's *Cloud Messenger*. We shall never know whether the poet, when he introduced the anonymous Yakṣa living in exile on the Rāmagiri, was thinking of a local deity on Ramtek Hill, a predecessor of the one

whom the 13th-century Yādava inscription called ‘Smoke Eye’, Dhūmrākṣa, and who, in that inscription, was identified with the *śūdra* Śambūka of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. A feature that these two have in common, Kālidāsa’s *yakṣa* and the deity Dhūmrākṣa/Śambūka, is that both were punished for a transgression of the law (*dharma*). However, what the poet knew very well, and what seems to have a special relevance in our age of virtual reality, was that ‘substitutes’ can never replace the real thing. This he expressed beautifully in a verse that the Yakṣa gave to the Cloud to convey to his beloved:

WHENEVER I draw your picture on a rock in natural colours and wish to throw myself at your feet, you who are wounded by love, time and again my eyes become misted with a flood of tears: cruel fate prevents our meeting even there.<sup>30</sup>

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30 *Meghadūta* 102:

*tvām ālikhya praṇayakupitāṃ dhāturāgaiḥ śilāyām,  
 ātmānaṃ te caraṇapatitaṃ yāvad icchāmi kartum |  
 asrais tāvan muhur upacitair dr̥ṣṭir ālipyate me,  
 krūras tasminn api na sahate saṃgamaṃ nau kṛtāntaḥ || 102 ||*

# A New Interpretation of Rāmagiri Evidence

## 1 TRIVIKRAMA: WORD AND STATUE\*

### *Preamble*

A long series of seminars at the Institute of Indian Studies of the University of Groningen came to its preliminary conclusion in 1993. In these seminars, in which Rob Adriaensen, Harunaga Isaacson and Hans Bakker took part, the newly discovered stone inscription in the Kēvala–Narasimha Temple (KNT) on top of the Rāmagiri (Ramtek Hill) had been studied; this study resulted in the publication of the inscription with a translation and commentary (Bakker & Isaacson 1993; above, pp. 113 ff.).

The greater part of the inscription was illegible due to severe damage, but we were and are pretty confident that what was readable was read correctly. The main problem, namely that of the interpretation of the inscription, could only partly be solved. The large gaps in the legible text left ample scope for conjecture. A modest beginning was made by presenting conjectured syllables between angular brackets, and some conjectures, of which we were less certain, were given in the footnotes and annotation. Nevertheless it remained unresolved whether the inscription originally had contained the 34 verses edited or whether another 15 or 16 verses were missing due, to the fact that a right portion of the slab of unknown size had broken off and had been lost. Also the overall dedication of the inscription, which largely depends on the interpretation of its first verse, remained problematic.

When I was working on the history of the Vākāṭakas, I decided to reedit the inscription, that is to say, to carry on with conjectural interpretation. Some conjectures earlier carefully regulated to the footnotes were included in the text and some new conjectural readings were proposed. This second revised edition appeared as Appendix I: *The Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription (second revised edition)*, in Bakker 1997, pp. 163–167. Another round of discussions followed. Isaacson, for one, pointed out that some of my new conjectures were

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\* The first version of this article was published as the first in a series of three under the title *Trivikrama: Word and Statue. A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence (1)*. in: *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*. Volume 63.3 (2010), 241–247.

I am much obliged to Harunaga Isaacson, who has been willing to discuss the evidence with me again and again, and whose valuable suggestions have helped to shape my thoughts as presented below.



The second edition built on the hypothesis advanced in the first edition, viz. that the deity of this verse is the Bhagavat, Viṣṇu, whose dark-blue colour resembles the rain cloud, but, more clearly than in the first edition, it makes explicit that at least one of the deeds referred to concerns the Vāmana *avatāra*, in which King Bali is outwitted by Trivikrama. Whether this caused the fear of the wife/wives of the demon in pāda d, or another one of Viṣṇu's deeds, could not well be decided, as long as the meaning of pāda b remained opaque. Afterall, the inscription is found in a Narasiṃha temple and the wife of the *ditiija* Hiraṇyakaśipu could also possibly have been intended.<sup>3</sup>

I would now propose a reading of the remaining lacuna that would give this verse a significant coherence (changes to the 1997 edition in bold face):

- 1 (sa ja)(ya)ti sajalāmbudodarā⟨bha⟩(s), [2010]  
 (su)⟨rasa⟩miti⟨p⟩rasarājya⟨pā⟩na⟨laujāḥ⟩ |  
 ⟨ba⟩(l)⟨i⟩(ma)khasamayaidhitāṅga(śo)⟨bho⟩,  
 ⟨ditijavadhū⟩bhayalo⟨la⟩dr̥ṣṭi(dr̥)⟨ṣṭa⟩ḥ || 1 ||

THE ONE whose colour resembles the depths of a water-laden rain-cloud and whose vigour is (like) a sacrificial fire drinking the clarified butter (poured) in streams within the divine assembly; the splendour of whose body is enlarged at the time of Bali's sacrifice, and who is looked at by the wives of Diti's son with gazes that tremble with fright, that one is victorious. (1)

The conjectured reading divides the verse clearly into two halves: the first hemistich regards Bhagavat Viṣṇu under some of his general aspects, his dark-blue colour symbolizing his bounty, just as the blue rain cloud is a boon of nature;<sup>4</sup> his vigour and splendour is like a flash, just as fire blazes up when ghee is poured into it. The hemistich evokes the beautiful and powerful image of flashes/lightning against the background of dark monsoon clouds and connects Viṣṇu's bounty with the (Vedic) sacrifice. The second half specifies one particular aspect of his, viz. his rescue of the world from the hands of the demon king, the son of Diti, Bali, by a powerful display of his cosmogonic dimension, the three strides, Trivikrama. From this hypothesis I infer that the piety listed in the inscription is integrally dedicated to Viṣṇu Trivikrama. The verse is consistent and cogently voices orthodox Bhagavatism.

The conjectured reading *ājyapa*, 'drinking clarified butter', is well attested and may be illustrated by a passage in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (translation Eggeling):

He then says 3), 'Svâhâ Agnim!' with reference to Agni's butter-portion;—'Svâhâ Agnim Pavamânam!' if they determine upon (offering to) Agni, the blowing 4);

3 Cf. Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 57; Bakker 1997, 30 n. 94.

4 Cf. VDhP III, Vol. 1, 3.44.10.

or ‘Svāhā Agnim Indumantam!’ if they determine upon Agni, the drop-abounding 5);—‘Svāhā Agnim!’—‘Svāhā, the butter-drinking Agnis! May Agni graciously accept of the butter!’—this is the offering-prayer he (the Hotri) pronounces.<sup>5</sup>

In post-Vedic Sanskrit *ājyapa* is mostly used as a proper noun, but the slightly archaic attributive usage of the word in the 5th century inscription may have been intended as a show of orthodoxy. After all, the sacrificial myth at issue, Viṣṇu’s three strides (Trivikrama), is a *Ṛgveda* one, and the Vāmana myth is told in the same text (ŚBr 1.2.5; 1.9.3.8 ff.) that calls Agni *ājyapa*. The reading *ojas* (if the conjecture is correct) also may recall the *Ṛgveda* myth: *yadā te* [scil. Indra] *viṣṇur ojasā trīṇi padā vicakrame* | (RV 8.12.27). The *kavi* who composed the *praśasti* (referred to in vv. 33, 34) knew his *śruti*.

The above observations prompt us to speculate about the group of priests (to which also the *kavi* may have belonged), which performed the various rituals that accompanied the described activity and which may have (indirectly) benefited from it. These pious acts were for the greater part performed for the exclusive benefit (merit) of the (deceased) mother, whom, as we have argued, is queen Prabhāvati.<sup>6</sup> It would be natural that for this purpose the daughter employed priests (not mentioned in the readable part of the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription*), who had been closely connected to her mother; some of those we know from Prabhāvati’s last charter dated in the 20th regnal year of her son Pravarasena II (c. AD 442), that is shortly before she died, when the dowager queen was about seventy years old: they were brahmins belonging to ‘the Kaśyapa *gotra* and the Mādhyandina *śākhā* of the Vājāsaneyī *saṃhitā* of the *Yajurveda*’, in other words, brahmins to whose sacred text corpus the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* belonged.<sup>7</sup> It can therefore hardly be surprising if idiom of this corpus would show up in the inscription, as our conjecture suggests.

#### *The KNT Inscription verse 21*

We now turn to a portion of the inscription that describes the deeds performed for the sake of merit, which was the main object of the activity of the princess (v. 19: *manujendraputrī*), verses 20 ff. Being not part of the *praśasti*, it is in the simpler metre of the Śloka. In the second edition of 1997 verse 21 runs as follows (changes to the edition of 1993 in bold face):

[1997] 11 prabhāvatisvāminaṃ ca, lokanā<tha>m a<th>ā<la><ye> |  
 puṇyam akṣayam uddīśya, (mā)<tuḥ> ≈ ≈ <a>k<ā>raya<t> || 21 ||

5 The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* transl. by Julius Eggeling. ŚBr 2.2.3.20:

*atha svāhāgnim ity āha — āgneyam ājyabhāgaṃ svāhāgnim pavamānam iti yadi pavamānāya dhriyerant svāhāgnim indumantam iti yady agnaya indumate dhriyerant svāhāgnim svāhāgnim ājyapāñ juṣāṇo agnir ājyasya vetv iti yajati*

6 Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 66 ff. Bakker 1997, 29 f.

7 *Miregāon Plates of Prabhāvati Gupta*, Year 20, Shastri & Kawadkar 2001, 141, 147. Cf. the *Pañḍurṇā Plates of Pravarasena II*, Year 29, above, p. 332.

The conjectures accepted in the revised text make the references to the temple (*ālaya*) of Prabhāvatisvāmin and the beneficiary, viz. the mother (*mātuḥ*) explicit. I now propose to read *śubham* in the syllables 3 and 4 of the fourth pāda of verse 21. This is metrically correct—pāda 21a being a *ra-vīpulā* and a *ra-gaṇa* (a cretic: - ◡ - ) is avoided in the positions 2 to 4 of the even pāda 21d—and it would give us the following text (changes to the 1997 edition (above, p. 124) in bold face):

11 prabhāvatisvāminam ca, lokanā
 puṇyam akṣayam uddīśya, (mā)⟨tuḥ **śubham** a⟩k⟨ā⟩raya⟨t⟩ || 21 ||

THEN (the princess) commissioned the splendid ‘Master of Prabhāvati’, (the image of the) Lord of the World, within the temple, for the sake of undecaying merit of (her) mother. (21)

The principal deed recorded in the inscription, the foundation of the temple (*ālaya*) itself, may have been duly mentioned as the first item in the list of pious acts; it may have been expressed in the illegible verse 20. The installed deity, represented by the image within this temple, is Viṣṇu Lokanātha, designated as Prabhāvatisvāmin.

Because the inscription was found in a Narasiṃha sanctuary, we have hypothesized that the splendid Narasiṃha image in this temple (Plate 57) represents Prabhāvatisvāmin.<sup>8</sup> However, in both editions already some doubt had been expressed regarding this identification,<sup>9</sup> and now, as we have reached a complete understanding of the first *maṅgala* verse, which unambiguously seems to refer to Trivikrama, not to Narasiṃha, this doubt has turned into a firm belief: originally the inscription did not belong to the Kevala–Narasiṃha Temple.

#### *The discovery of the KNT Inscription*

Let us re-examine the present condition of the stone inscription. The inscription was found ‘in the course of cleaning the walls of the Narsimha Temple at Ramtek ... on the southern wall of the *mandapa*’ by the Central Museum, Nagpur, as reported in *Indian Archaeology—A Review* 1982–83, 137. The removing of the layers of plaster caused great damage to the inscription. The latter was engraved in two stone slaps, the lower one (containing lines 13 to 15) was broken in the middle. Altogether these three parts were walled up again during the restoration work by means of cement.<sup>10</sup> The total height of the stone is about 50 cm, the breadth about 100 cm. The ragged right sides of

<sup>8</sup> Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 69; Bakker 1997, 30, 141 f.

<sup>9</sup> Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 57 (above, p. 128); Bakker 1997, 30 n. 94, 145.

<sup>10</sup> Jamkhedkar 1992, p. 164 n. 18 notes: ‘The removal of the whitewash and the location of the inscription on the original blocks of stone showed that the wall was intact.’

both the upper and the lower slab indicate that some portion of the stone had earlier been broken off, a portion that was obviously not recovered during the restoration work and is to be considered as irretrievably lost.

In other words, when the inscription originally was inserted into the southern wall of the *maṇḍapa* of the Kevala–Narasimha Temple it was already incomplete.<sup>11</sup> In an unknown state of the temple's history, possibly the Bhonsle period (18th century), when the temple was being repaired or rebuilt, the remaining slabs of the stone inscription must have been brought to the Kevala–Narasimha Temple.<sup>12</sup> The inscribed slabs of black stone thus came from elsewhere, possibly along with other building blocks of red sandstone, and their source may have been a similar, though ruined temple in the neighbourhood that was used as a quarry. Such a ruin does still exist on the Rāmagiri, viz. a 5th-century temple of which, apart from two *maṇḍapa* walls, little remains today. Only its image has miraculously survived the ages *in situ*, and, although it is heavily damaged, this statue conclusively proves that this ruin once was a Trivikrama Temple.<sup>13</sup>

From the evidence presented we infer that this Trivikrama image (Plate 55) is the one that is named 'Prabhāvatisvāmin'. The *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* may thus originally have belonged to this, now ruined, Trivikrama Temple on the Rāmagiri. Other arguments that substantiate this inference are presented below, pp. 365 ff. (Bakker 2013b).

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11 See Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 62; above, p. 135.

12 According to Jamkhedkar 1992, 159:

Raghuji (Bhonsle), after establishing himself in the Nagpur region, created an *agrahāra* and religious endowments for the maintenance of the monuments and worship there. At least at that time some repairs must have been executed.

In n. 15 (*ibid.*) this author writes:

When Raghuji set out on his expedition of Deogarh, he had camped at Rāmṭek. On seeing that the main temples are devoid of images, he made a vow that he would restore the images in their places if he was blessed with victory. In fact, he had got new images made at Jaipur, but ultimately consecrated old images (1753 A.D.) retrieved from the waters of the river Sur.

If this statement were true, it is not even certain that the Narasimha image originally belonged to the Kevala–Narasimha Temple. One wonders which and how reliable the sources are of Jamkhedkar's above statement. The description of the temple after restoration and the first edition of the inscription were given in Jamkhedkar 1987b. In this publication (pp. 219, 222 f. nn. 17–19) Jamkhedkar describes the earlier 'conservative repairs' that were removed in the latest restoration. All this conveys the impression that the KNT temple has frequently been tampered with over the centuries.

13 See A.P. Jamkhedkar 1988, 85 f., Plates 103–09; Bakker 1997, 142–45, Plate XXXIV; above, Plate 55; below, Plates 64, 65.

# A New Interpretation of Rāmagiri Evidence

## 2 THE GUPTA–VĀKĀṬAKA RELATIONSHIP\*

### *Preamble*

The 5th-century stone inscription preserved in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple (KNT) on top of the Rāmagiri (Ramtek) has been edited thrice: by A.P. Jamkhedkar in 1987b, by Bakker & Isaacson in 1993, and by Bakker 1997.<sup>14</sup> Its interpretation is hindered by the fact that only one third of the text is legible. Recently the present author has studied the inscription again and has proposed some new conjectural readings, which seem to clarify the overall dedication of the pious activity recorded in the inscription (Bakker 2010c; above, pp. 351 ff.).

According to this latest reconstruction, the pious activity recorded in the inscription seems to have been dedicated to Viṣṇu Trivikrama. Consequently, it has been argued that the inscription does not originally belong to the Kevala–Narasimha Temple in which it is presently found, but to the adjacent ruin of the Trivikrama Temple. The surviving Trivikrama image of this ruin may represent the Prabhāvatisvāmin, the commission of which by a princess (*manujendraputrī*) is recorded in the KNT inscription (v. 19, above, pp. 354 f.).

### *The Praśasti. KNT Inscription verses 2–19*

In the present contribution I would like to reconsider the narrative structure of the *praśasti* part of the inscription, i.e. its verses 2 to 19, in order to obtain a better understanding of the royal pedigree that it proclaims. Because the right-hand portion of the slab of stone on which the inscription has been engraved is missing, it could not be determined with certainty what the original number of verses may have been. A conservative estimate assumes that the inscription comprised 34 verses, of which the *praśasti* part counted 19 (including the Maṅgala verse). This estimate is based on the assumption that there were two Upajāti verses (88 syllables) to a line, each line beginning a new verse. The present slab measures c. 50 cm in height and 100 cm in width. The conservative estimate implies that the original stone must have covered a breadth of about 170 cm.

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\* The first version of this article was published in 2012 as the second in a series of three under the title *The Gupta–Vākāṭaka Relationship. A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence (2)*. in: *Religions of South Asia* 5.1–2 (2011), 293–302.

<sup>14</sup> Jamkhedkar 1987b; Bakker & Isaacson 1993; Bakker 1997, Appendix I, *The Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* (second revised edition), pp. 163–167.

However, in our first edition we did not exclude the possibility that the inscription originally had 3 Upajāti verses to a line, which would make the breadth come to approximately 250 cm—very broad indeed (above, p.116). The reason for this speculation was the contents of the inscription, since apparently much vital information, which we thought must have been in the original, was not found in the legible portion.<sup>15</sup>

Rethinking the contents and structure of the *praśasti*, I now think that the conservative estimate leaves enough room for providing all information that is needed to make the story told in the inscription an intelligible and meaningful unity. The *praśasti* does not contain the standard genealogy as do the copperplate charters of the Vākāṭakas; instead it gives an unusually detailed historical account of the extraordinary life of its patroness, the princess (*manujendraputrī*) mentioned in v. 19, the last verse of the *praśasti*, after which the record of her pious deeds begins (vv. 20–34).

We take as our point of departure that the *praśasti* originally counted only one Puṣpitaṅgrā verse (1) and 18 Upajāti's (2–19). For the Sanskrit text and translation see above, p. 122 ff. We may present its hard core, that is the legible information contained in the inscription, as follows (verses are grouped in pairs when the subject is surmised to be divided over two verses and we have too little information to distinguish between the individual verses).

Verse	Number	Subject
1	1	Viṣṇu Trivikrama
2, 3	2	<i>rājarṣi</i> , mighty king
4	1	
5	1	girl who grows up like a flame in father's house
6	1	
7	1	birth of sons and youngest sister named Muṇḍā
8	1	
9	1	Candragupta ... <i>sutā</i> ... to <i>śrī</i> Rudrasena
10	1	
11	1	king ... gets son Ghaṭotkaca
12	1	
13	1	wedding of <i>rājarāja</i> ... with <i>bhāgineyī</i>
14, 15	2	praise of ...
16	1	
17	1	<i>bhrātṛ</i> brings ... home with force ( <i>balāt</i> )
18, 19	2	<i>manujendraputrī</i> resolves on pious activity

Our first conjecture is that Candragupta mentioned in v.9 is introduced in

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<sup>15</sup> Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 48; above, p. 116.

the verses 2 and 3. Either he, or possibly his father Samudragupta,<sup>16</sup> is the one who is called *rājarṣi* in v. 2. This king Candragupta II gives his daughter named Muṇḍā to Rudrasena. Our second conjecture is that the king who in v. 11 is said to get the son Ghaṭotkaca is also Candragupta and that this son Ghaṭotkaca is the subject of v. 12 and is the same as the *rājarāja* who is said to marry his sister’s daughter, that is his niece (*bhāgīneyī*) in v. 13.

These set of conjectures is based on a postulate, that is, a premise that we cannot deduce from the inscription itself, but that we need, in order to give coherent meaning to its diverse pieces of information. The postulate is that the inscription is concerned with the genealogical relationship of the Gupta and Vākāṭaka dynasties, neither of which is mentioned as such in the legible part of the inscription, and that this relationship underlies the contents of the illegible verses 4, 6, and 8. This relationship is known from other sources to be as follows.

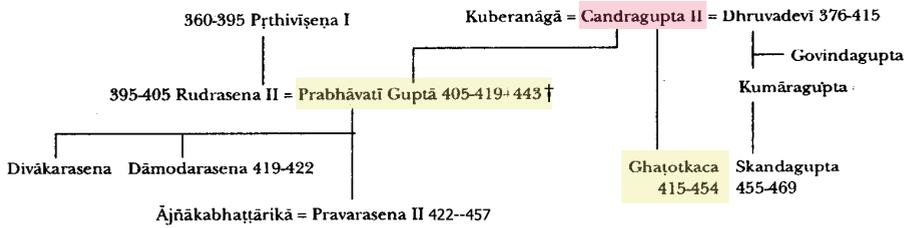


Figure 7

*Gupta Vākāṭaka relationship as known before the KNT Inscription*

Candragupta II’s daughter Prabhāvatī Guptā is married to the Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena II. Ghaṭotkaca is known as the viceroy of Vidiśā during the reign of his senior half-brother Kumāragupta.<sup>17</sup> We assume that this relationship underlies the illegible verses 8 and 10, that is to say that in v. 8 Rudrasena of the Vākāṭaka dynasty is introduced and that in v. 10 the birth of a son (or sons) and one daughter in the marriage of Candragupta’s *sutā* and Rudrasena (v. 9) is described. If this assumption is correct, it implies that the princess Muṇḍā given to Rudrasena is no one else than Prabhāvatī Guptā, of whom Muṇḍā may be the personal name (see below, p. 362).

On account of these premises we conclude that the niece (*bhāgīneyī*) of verse 13 is a daughter of Prabhāvatī Guptā and Rudrasena, who married her maternal

16 In my revised edition of this inscription (Bakker 1997, 163), I conjectured to read ‘*samudraguptaḥ*’ in pāda 1 of verse 2, but I now think this is less probable (above, n. 2 on p. 352). Candragupta II may be the only subject of the verses 2 and 3.

17 See the *Tumain Inscription of Kumāragupta and Ghaṭotkacagupta*, *G.E. 116* (AD 435), in: *Epigraphia Indica XXVI* (1941–42), 118; *CII III* (1981), 276–79; Bakker 2006, pp. 172 ff., above, p. 309 ff.

uncle Ghaṭotkaca. The praise of this Ghaṭotkaca is probably sung in the verses 14–15. The inscription, if thus interpreted correctly, allows us to complete the Gupta–Vākāṭaka genealogical relationship.

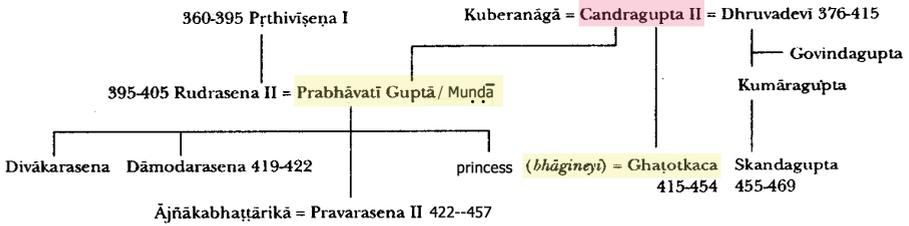


Figure 8

*Gupta Vākāṭaka relationship as deduced from the KNT Inscription*

For the above reasoning to be correct, it is necessary to assume that the illegible verse 6 describes the wedding of Candragupta and the Nāga princess Kuberaṇāgā, the parents of Prabhāvatī. The ‘father’s house’ of verse 5 then presupposes that the dynastic house of the Nāga king, father of Kuberaṇāgā, in which she ‘grew up like a flame’, is introduced in verse 4.

The above premises allow the inference that the ‘brother’ of verse 17 is the brother of the ‘niece’ that was married to Ghaṭotkaca, who must be the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II, who may have been introduced either in verse 10 or verse 16. This inference is based not only on the above premises but also on the assumption that the illegible verse 16 refers, in guarded terms maybe, to a conflict leading to the death of Ghaṭotkaca in verse 17, as the mentioning of Indra/Purandara suggests; this event turned the ‘niece’ into a widow. The fact that he brings his widowed sister home ‘with force’ (*balāt*, v. 17d) could be explained by assuming that Pravarasena II sided with Ghaṭotkaca against a common enemy. The *manujendraputrī* of v. 19 refers to this widow, daughter of Rudrasena and Prabhāvatī, who had returned to her paternal home; from verse 24d we conjecture that her name was Atibhāvatī.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Conjectured narrative structure of the KNT Inscription*

The above argumentation can be summarized in the following schematic presentation of the contents of the *praśasti* of the KNT Inscription. The postulated premises are given in small capitals, the conjectures derived from the legible text and based on these postulates are given in bold face.

18 See Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 67; above, p. 140.

Verse	Number	Subject
1	1	Viṣṇu Trivikrama
2, 3	2	<i>rājarṣi</i> , mighty king, <b>Candragupta</b>
4	1	NĀGAS → FATHER (OF KUBERANĀGĀ)
5	1	girl ( <b>Kuberanāgā</b> ) who grows up like a flame in father's house
6	1	WEDDING OF CANDRAGUPTA AND KUBERANĀGĀ
7	1	birth of sons and youngest sister named Muṇḍā
8	1	VĀKĀṬAKAS → RUDRASENA
9	1	Candragupta <b>gives</b> <i>sutā</i> ( <b>Muṇḍā</b> ) to <i>śrī</i> Rudrasena
10	1	BIRTH OF BROTHER(S) AND SISTER
11	1	King <b>Candragupta</b> gets son Ghaṭotkaca
12	1	<b>Ghaṭotkaca</b>
13	1	Wedding of <i>rājarāja</i> ( <b>Ghaṭotkaca</b> ) with <i>bhāgīneyī</i> ( <b>manujendraputrī</b> )
14, 15	2	praise of <b>Ghaṭotkaca</b>
16	1	DEADLY CONFLICT OF GHATOTKACA
17	1	<i>bhrātṛ</i> <b>Pravarasena</b> brings <b>princess</b> ( <b>manujendraputrī</b> ) home with force ( <i>balāt</i> )
18, 19	2	<i>manujendraputrī</i> ( <b>Atibhāvātī</b> ) resolves on pious activity

It goes without saying that the above schematic interpretation of the inscription is a hypothesis. If, to conclude, this hypothesis is correct, there is no need to suppose that a third Upajāti verse is missing at the end of the lines. The reconstructed narrative structure would allow the conclusion that the *praśasti* counted 19 verses only.

#### *The Daughter named Muṇḍā*

A key assumption in the theory advanced above is the identity of the daughter named Muṇḍā and the dowager queen known from her own inscriptions as Prabhāvātī Gupta. This identity seems reinforced by independent evidence, viz. the *Māṇḍhal Plates of Vākāṭaka Rudrasena II, Year 5*, which open as follows:

Success! Approved. By order of Lord Muṇḍasvāmin, God of gods, who holds the conch, discus and sword; after He had made the Nāga king stretch out on the waters of the ocean, He has entered a state of yogic sleep, while lying on the serpent coils of that (king) Ananta (the Infinite One)—a bundle of expanded hoods bending (over Him by way of canopy).<sup>19</sup>

To make sense of this opening statement, we take it that the presiding god Devadeva (Viṣṇu), on whose *cakra* Rudrasena's rule is said to be based (above,

<sup>19</sup> Based on Shastri & Gupta 1997, 155 ll. 1–2. For Sanskrit text and discussion see Bakker 2010d; above, n. 36 on p. 326.

p. 153, p. 326), is here designated ‘Muṇḍasvāmin’; and, in accordance with the practice of the age to prefix the names of the temple deities with the names of their founders, it follows that this deity had been installed by Muṇḍā (cf. above, n. 41 on p. 328).

Although this is obviously the primary meaning of the opening statement, some double-entendre seems to be implied, since Muṇḍasvāmin may be taken to mean ‘the husband of Muṇḍā’, that is king Rudrasena, who is the actual author of the inscription. And the Nāgarāja who supports him could be taken to mean a ruler of the Nāga House, the house in which his mother-in-law, Kuberanāgā, ‘grew up like a flame’. From the Māṇḍhaḷ Plates it thus seems to emerge that Rudrasena’s wife used her personal name Muṇḍā as long as her husband was alive. The dynastic name ‘Prabhāvatī Guptā’ was adopted when she, as a dowager queen, assumed the regency over her sons.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Gupta–Vākāṭaka relationship*

The matrimonial relations of the Gupta and Vākāṭaka dynasties can thus finally be presented as follows.

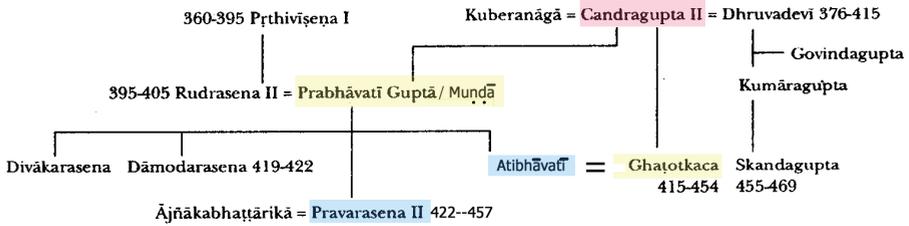


Figure 9  
*The Gupta Vākāṭaka relationship*

After we have thus established the contents of the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* to the best of our ability, it is time to be astonished at the story it tells.

### *The narration of the KNT Inscription*

First of all it needs to be noted that, despite the fact that the inscription is found in Vākāṭaka territory and celebrates foundations within the complex

20 Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 53; Bakker 1997, 16. The KNT inscription may hint at the dynastic name, when it compares in verse 7 the girl Muṇḍā with the light (*prabhā*) of the moon (*candra*): Prabhāvatī is ‘the one who possesses the lustre’, scil. of Candra, her father. For a discussion of this name (meaning ‘the bald one’) see above, n. 40 on p. 327. Is it coincidence that Muṇḍā’s younger brother is named the one who is ‘Bald-like-a-pot’ (Ghaṭotkaca)?

of Vākāṭaka state sanctuaries on the Rāmāgiri, the document may be called ‘Gupta’ rather than ‘Vākāṭaka’. The *praśasti* devotes ten verses (2–3, 6–7, 11–16) to the Gupta lineage against only three (8–9, 17) to the Vākāṭaka family members. Clearly the Gupta princess, née Vākāṭaka, remained loyal to her in-laws, also after she had returned to the Vākāṭaka kingdom. This emerges from the fact that, if our theory is correct, four or five verses deal with her deceased husband Ghaṭotkaca. And like her mother Prabhāvātī in *her* inscriptions, the princess Atibhāvātī does not waste words on the Vākāṭaka kings, mentioning her father Rudrasena only in passing and apparently omitting his ancestors. By contrast, however, she elaborates on her maternal lineage, the Nāgas in vv. 4 and 5, the birth of her mother in vv. 6 and 7, and her own birth and wedding in vv. 10 and 13.

Like her mother Queen Prabhāvātī, the princess took great pride in being a descendant of Candragupta II, her maternal Gupta grandfather, who also happened to become her father-in-law. That the princess followed in the footsteps of her celebrated mother Prabhāvātī is also evident from another important fact revealed by the inscription: women, queens and princesses, had obviously a direct say in state affairs and had access to the financial recourses of the state, which they could apply to their own works of charity. It is unthinkable that temples, images, and a water reservoir could have been financed out of the traditional *strīdhana*. To have permitted such a degree of freedom to the women of their family is entirely to the credit of the Vākāṭaka kings Rudrasena II and Pravarasena II. To this freedom we owe the magnificent monuments on the Rāmāgiri.

Another astonishing fact revealed by the inscription is that marriages between uncle and niece (*bhāgīneyī*) were, occasionally probably, permitted in the aristocracy, even under a brahmin king who boasted to have brought back to earth the Kṛtayuga, the golden age, in which the *dharma* was supposedly uncorrupted.<sup>21</sup> Here we are not concerned with cross-cousin marriage that is known from the Dravidian South. This once-removed filiation served to consolidate political power and territory. In this respect the Gupta–Vākāṭaka matrimonial policy was not different from that practised within European royal courts.<sup>22</sup> The genealogy constructed by matrimony thus served a Machiavellian scheming for power in 5th-century India. I have described this scheming elaborately in my *Theatre of Broken Dreams* (Bakker 2006; above, pp. 301 ff.).

At the end, the inscription reports an act of violence, the forceful removal of a widow from the house of her in-laws. This implies war between the Guptas and Vākāṭakas. Obviously the political objective of this non-dharmic union had grown stale when the Gupta–Vākāṭaka relationship deteriorated. The

21 See e.g. Pravarasena’s *Jāmb Plates*, in CII V, p. 12 lines 15–16.

22 Two European examples that spring to mind are found in the House of Habsburg: Charles II of Austria’s marriage to his niece Maria Anna of Bavaria (daughter of his sister Anna of Habsburg), and Phillip II of Spain’s (fourth) marriage to his niece Anna of Austria (daughter of his sister Maria of Spain).

death of Ghaṭotkaca probably happened in a conflict over the royal succession after Kumāragupta. Ghaṭotkaca, viceroy in Vidiśā under Kumāragupta, was prevented from succeeding his brother to the throne by the latter's bastard son, Skandagupta. Evidently the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II took the side of his brother-in-law Ghaṭotkaca, and when this party lost the war of succession, he abducted his sister from the palaces of his enemy.<sup>23</sup> The war may have started with Pravarasena's crossing of the Narmadā in c. AD 445,<sup>24</sup> and ended with the return of the widow to his capital Pravarapura/Nandivardhana. Skandagupta acceded to the Gupta throne in c. AD 455.

It cannot be excluded that yet another motive incited Pravarasena to this unprecedented act. His sister was given in marriage to her maternal uncle by Pravarasena's mother Prabhāvatī during the latter's regency. It could well be that the young prince Pravarasena had never been too happy about this breach of the *dharma* and the subordination to the Gupta dynasty that it entailed. By bringing her back to her place of birth, King Pravarasena may have strengthened his image of a righteous king. This image was boosted further by allowing his sister to spend great sums on meritorious activity, the most significant of which may have been the building of the Trivikrama Temple and the installation of the image of Prabhāvatisvāmin in memory of their mother, Prabhāvatī Guptā.

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<sup>23</sup> For more details see Bakker 2006.

<sup>24</sup> In the *Indore Plates* dating from Pravarasena's twenty-third regnal year, i.e. soon after Prabhāvatī's death, it is reported that Pravarasena II pitched his army camp (*vāsaka*) in Tripurī (modern Tewar) on the northern bank of the Narmadā River, i.e. in Gupta territory (Mirashi 1982a, 69, 72 l. 1; Bakker 1997, 25; above, p. 314).

# A New Interpretation of Rāmagiri Evidence

## 3 THE TRIVIKRAMA TEMPLE\*

### *Preamble*

This essay is the last of a series of three.<sup>25</sup> In the first two sections it has been argued that the pious activity recorded in the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* was actually dedicated to Viṣṇu Trivikrama, not to Narasiṃha, the deity installed in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple on top of the Rāmagiri (Ramtek) where the inscription has been found. From this and other circumstantial evidence it has been inferred that the KNT inscription does not originally belong to the Kevala–Narasimha Temple, but to the adjacent ruin of the Trivikrama Temple and that Prabhāvatīsvāmin, the deity named in the inscription, actually refers to the Trivikrama image preserved in this ruin (above, p. 356). The KNT Inscription may have been placed in the Narasiṃha Temple together with other building blocks when this temple was reconstructed in the Bhonsle period (18th century). The ruins of the Trivikrama Temple in its vicinity may have served as a quarry. In the present study I will substantiate this inference by comparing the evidence of the inscription with the material remains of the Trivikrama Temple which are still *in situ*.

### *The Trivikrama Temple*

As shown by the Google Earth satellite picture in Plate 63, both temples, the Kevala–Narasimha and the Trivikrama, are situated somewhat outside the main temple complex on the spur of the hill, which may be an indication of the relative late date of these two temples. This applies in particular to the Trivikrama Temple at the edge of the hill, c. 200 m northeast of the Varāha Temple (Plate 11), which marks the entrance to the spur of the hill.

Of the Trivikrama Temple only parts of the vestibule (*maṇḍapa*) are still standing (Plate 64). The main temple idol has been miraculously preserved (Plate 65), although it is heavily damaged and seems to occupy still its original position, facing west like the Varāha and Narasiṃha images.

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\* The first version of this article was published in 2013 as the third in a series of three under the title *The Trivikrama Temple. A new interpretation of Rāmagiri evidence* (3). in: *South Asian Studies* 29.2 (2013), 169–76.

25 For the first two see above, pp. 351 ff., and pp. 357 ff. (Bakker 2010c and 2012).



*Plate 63*  
View of the Vākāṭaka temples on the Rāmagiri



*Plate 64*  
Ruins of the Trivikrama Temple, Rāmagiri (view to the east)



*Plate 65*  
*Main image of the Trivikrama Temple*

The style and ornamentation of the walls and pillars of the vestibule have been described and illustrated by Jamkhedkar 1988. A stylistic comparison with the other 5th-century remains on the hill also indicates a relatively late date of this temple. In this respect it seems relevant to refer to Joanna Williams' *Vākāṭaka Art and the Gupta Mainstream*, in which she observed the following:

The pillars [of the Trivikrama Temple] are similar and might be compared to examples from Nachna and Deogarh in the late fifth and early sixth centuries AD, although the resemblances are not very specific. The only peculiarity is a flat, anchor-shaped element below the lower vase, perhaps a simplified version of the palmette which often appears in this position. (Williams 1983, 225 f.)

This anchor-shaped element and its counterpart in Deogarh are illustrated in Plates 66 and 67.



Plate 66  
Pillar with anchor-shaped element  
at the bottom (Trivikrama Temple)



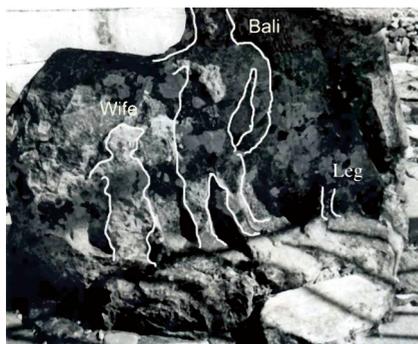
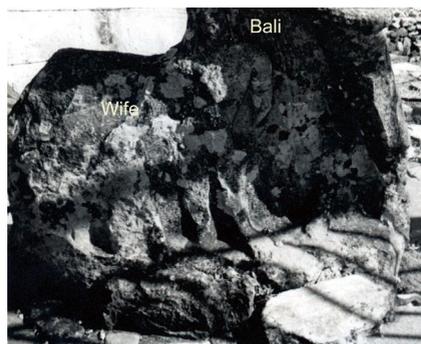
Plate 67  
Ornamented pillar of the  
temple in Deogarh

*The iconography of the Trivikrama image*

The Trivikrama image is made of red sandstone and measures 178×119 cm. Mirashi was the first to give a description of this idol.

The god has a crown on his head, with a halo round his face. He wears the *kuṇḍalas* on his ears and a pearl-necklace with a large pendant round his neck. His *vaijayantī* garland is shown falling on both his legs. He wears an *udarabandha*. His lower garment, which is fastened at the waist with a girdle, hangs down in folds in front. His arms are now broken on both the sides, but their jewelled *aṅgadas* (armlets) can still be seen. His left foot is planted on the ground, while the right foot, which was raised to measure the sky, is now broken at the knee. (Mirashi 1963, lx)

The deity had eight arms, all sadly broken off, which makes it impossible to say anything directly about the attributes he must have carried. He wears the double *muktāyajñopavīta*, of which the six strings of pearls have been almost completely erased at the front side of the image, but are still clearly visible at the back. A significant feature of the Trivikrama image of the Rāmagiri is the 'pleated' *śiraścakra* that encircles his head, the origin of which James Harle (1987) has traced to the fan-shaped tufts at the end of the band holding the crown.



*Plates 68 and 69*

*Relief at the bottom of the Trivikrama sculpture*

In the present context, the most significant part of the image—iconographically speaking—is the relief at the bottom of the striding Trivikrama. This relief is rather worn off, but enough remains to identify the depiction (Plates 68 and 69). Clear and relatively well-preserved is the figure of King Bali standing underneath the stretched right leg of Trivikrama (Plate 71). To the right of the Daitya king we see the outline of a smaller figure, which, I presume, represents his wife (Plate 70).

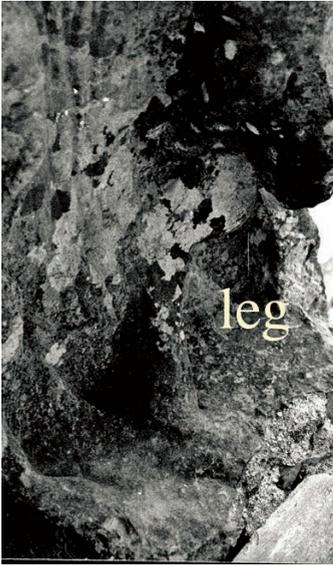


*Plate 70*  
*Contour of Bali's wife*  
*at his right side*



*Plate 71*  
*King Bali underneath the*  
*stretched leg of Trivikrama*

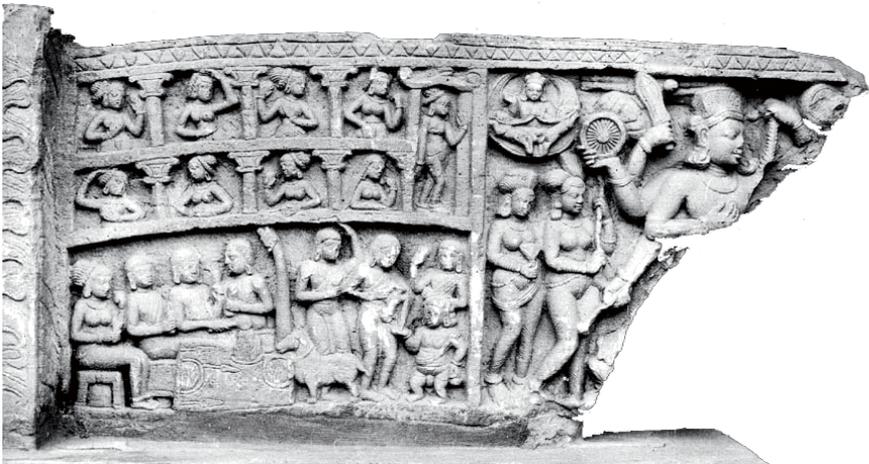
To Bali's left, against the left leg on which Trivikrama stands, is the lower leg visible of a small figure (Plate 72).



*Plate 72*

*Lower leg visible of Vāmana between Bali and Trivikrama*

The iconographic programme becomes clear if we compare it with the well-known lintel from Pawaya (Plate 73), which depicts Bali's sacrifice and Viṣṇu Trivikrama. If we ignore the representation of the sacrifice itself along with its three priests and the two priestly helpers who welcome Vāmana by pouring water upon his hands, this lintel depicts from left to right: Bali's wife (seated), king Bali (his left arm raised), the dwarfish figure of Vāmana, and the (eight-armed) cosmic god Trivikrama. In other words, the positioning of the protagonists of the myth in the Pawaya lintel conforms to the one in the Trivikrama image of the Rāmagiri. We therefore take the small lower leg standing in between Bali and Trivikrama as belonging to the latter god in his Vāmana form.



*Plate 73*

*Trivikrama lintel from Pawaya*

*The pious works of Atibhāvātī*

Although the relief is admittedly too worn to see the frightened eyes of the Daitya's wife, the Rāmagiri Trivikrama sculpture conforms to the depiction of the myth in the dedicatory verse of the KNT Inscription when it says of Viṣṇu:

THE SPLENDOUR of whose body is enlarged at the time of Bali's sacrifice, and who is looked at by the wives of Diti's son (i.e. Bali) with gazes that tremble with fright, that one is victorious. (above, p. 353)

This inscription, as we have discussed in Bakker 1997, 2006 and 2012 (above, pp. 301 ff., pp. 357 ff.), relates the life and pious deeds of Prabhāvātī Guptā's daughter Atibhāvātī after the Eastern Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II had brought home his widowed sister from Vidiśā. Atibhāvātī erected the Trivikrama Temple in commemoration of her deceased mother, naming the deity after her mother Prabhāvatisvāmin in order to transfer merit to her, as v. 21 of the inscription records:

THEN (the princess) commissioned the splendid 'Master of Prabhāvātī', (the image of the) Lord of the World, within the temple, for the sake of undecaying merit of (her) mother.<sup>26</sup>

And after the building of this main temple and the installation of its main image, the princess commissioned other works. The most evident among them was the building of a flood-control dam, which yielded the water reservoir Sudarśana (v. 24):

SHE of extreme lustre (*atibhāvātī*) had a water reservoir Sudarśana made, along with the beautiful god (Sudarśana) in the village of Kadalīvāṭaka.<sup>27</sup>

Kadalīvāṭaka may be the modern hamlet Kelāpur, 2 km north of Rāma's Hill and the artificial lake is, after the dam had been rebuilt in recent times, again (or still) there, known under the name of Khindsi Lake. The Trivikrama Temple towers high above this beautiful sight, Sudarśana (Plate 74).

*Conclusion*

Summarizing, it may be observed that the identification of Prabhāvatisvāmin with Viṣṇu Trivikrama and, consequently, the assignment of the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription* to the Trivikrama Temple are corroborated by:

- 1 The perfect match of the Maṅgala verse and the iconography of the Trivikrama image.
- 2 The location of the Trivikrama Temple, somewhat outside the main temple area, which links this temple closely to the other work of Atibhāvātī, the artificial Sudarśana Lake.
- 3 The relatively late date of the Trivikrama Temple and sculpture, which are stylistically the latest of all Vākāṭaka remains at Rāmagiri.

<sup>26</sup> For the Sanskrit text see above, p. 124 and p. 354.

<sup>27</sup> For the Sanskrit text see above, p. 124.



*Plate 74*

*View of the reservoir Sudarśana (Khindsi Lake) from the Trivikrama Temple on the top of the Rāmagiri (view to the north)*

As has been argued, the activity of Atibhāvātī must have taken place between the death of her husband Ghaṭotkaca Gupta (c. AD 453–54) and that of her brother Pravarasena II (c. AD 456–57). Atibhāvātī's example was copied, when power shifted from the Eastern to the Western Vākāṭaka kings following the death of Pravarasena II. An inscription found in Hisse-Borala near Wasim of Devasena, Vākāṭaka king in Vatsagulma, dated in the year 380 of the Śaka Era, i.e. AD 457–58, records 'the construction of a water storage (*saras*) called Sudarśana by a noble named Svāmīladeva, for the welfare of all living beings' (Bakker 1997, 32).

The building of the Trivikrama Temple and the installation of its deity Prabhāvatisvāmin took place before this and may thus be dated between AD 453 and 457. The Trivikrama sculpture (Plates 55 and 65) was made in those years, probably in the same workshop in which the images of the Pravareśvara Temple in Mansar (5 km to the west) were sculptured. The latter temple was the grand project of the princess' brother, King Pravarasena II, and by this time the sculptors had exchanged the dark basalt stone, used in the earlier images of Varāha and Narasiṃha, for the red sandstone that gave the hill its other name, Sindūragiri.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For the *Sindūragirimāhātmya* see above, p. 338. For the Pravareśvara Temple in Mansar and its images see Bakker 2008, <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/dbi/4ccec5f085aa0>.

# A Note on Skandagupta's Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription, verses 8–12\*

Commemorating the Dead

AJAY MITRA SHASTRI

One of the dear memories I have of Prof Dr Ajay Mitra Shastri is the moment that the doors of the arrival hall of Amsterdam Airport opened and I saw my learned friend leaving the 'nothing to declare' behind him. He came as an invited speaker of the biennial conference of the European Association of South Asian Archæologists, held in Leiden in the summer of 1999. The journey had been a safe one and evidently Ajay was much relieved when he saw a familiar person at the place of landing. A happy smile passed over his face. And I was glad that, finally, I had an opportunity to return some of the kind hospitality that had been bestowed on me every time I had come to Nagpur. Taking its start from a common interest, our relationship had developed from mutual respect to friendship.

Ajay's contribution to the conference, *Sātavāhana-Kṣatrapa Chronology and Art-history*, was a brilliant one, displaying a learning in history, numismatics and epigraphy that only few people can match. To invite my friend had proven to be an excellent idea. For myself he had a surprise in store. When I spoke of the role the archaeological site of Mansar could have played in Vākāṭaka history and had made the conjecture that the temple that the ASI had only just unearthed (MNS 3) could have been Pravareśvara, known from inscriptions, Ajay rose and informed the audience that this conjecture had been confirmed by recently found sealings, which had been brought to him from the site by the excavators for deciphering: they read that very temple's name.<sup>1</sup>

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\* The first version of this article was published in Sharma, R.K & Devendra Handa (eds.), *Revealing India's Past (Recent Trends in Art and Archaeology)*. Prof. Ajay Mitra Shastri Commemoration Volume. Aryan Books, New Delhi 2005. 2 vols. The editors made the decision to publish this article in two parts. Its first part they gave the title: *Commemorating Prof. Ajay Mitra Shastri*; it appeared in Volume I, p. lxii. Its second part, *A Note on Skandagupta's Bhitari Inscription vv. 8–12* was published in Volume II, 248–51. These two parts were originally drafted as a whole and for that reason are reassembled here.

<sup>1</sup> See Kropman 2008.



*Plate 75*

*Sealing (seal impression) found in MNS 3 reading: pravareśvara*

After the conference I had the honour and pleasure to be Ajay's host for some more days. The weather was beautiful, we did some sight-seeing and drunk tea in our garden. It was there that we discussed for the first time the idea to organize a joint conference on the Vākāṭakas. Plans were worked out in the years that followed. The conference was scheduled to take place in Groningen in June 2002. On Saturday 12 January 2002 the news reached me that Ayaj Mitra Shastri had passed away a day earlier.<sup>2</sup> The shock was great. Shastri's death meant that Vidarbha had lost one of its great historians, a scholar whose work crowned the famous, learned tradition of V.V. Mirashi and V.B. Kolte. And I had lost a friend.

As a tribute to the eminent savant I present a note on an inscription that is of great importance for our understanding of the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period of Indian history, the *Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta*.

### SKANDAGUPTA'S BHITARĪ INSCRIPTION vv. 8–12

This inscription has been published several times:<sup>3</sup> by Fleet in CII III (1888), 52–56, by Sircar in SI I, 321–324, by Bhandarkar in CII III (1981), 312–317,

<sup>2</sup> The conference went ahead, sadly without A.M. Shastri, in Groningen from 6 to 8 June 2002. The proceedings were published in 2004 (Bakker 2004d).

<sup>3</sup> See CII III (1981), 312f.

and most recently by Dániel Balogh *forthcoming*. In addition, the inscription has been discussed by several scholars, among whom Chhabra 1963, Mirashi 1982a, Agrawal 1986, 54–66, and Willis 2009, 144–49.

In his *New Light on a Period in Gupta History* Mirashi focused his attention on the verses 4 to 8 and argued that these verses 'refer to three different struggles in which Skandagupta was involved'.<sup>4</sup> Broadly speaking, I have followed Mirashi's argument,<sup>5</sup> and I would now like to discuss the concluding part of the inscription, verses 8 to 12, in which the immediate reason of the epigraph is given.

In verse 8, in which Skandagupta's victory over the Hūṇas is reported, the twanging sound of a bow is referred to in a simile that is part of Skandagupta's swagger.<sup>6</sup> It appears natural that the mentioning of the bow (*śārṅga*) implies Skandagupta, which would mean that his bow is meant.

Verse 9 is nearly completely illegible, but a connection is made in it between Skandagupta's deeds and his father (*svapituh*) Kumāragupta. It should be observed that *kīrtti*, apparently the first word of a compound, could refer to fame or anything that brings fame, e.g. a temple.

The first three syllables of pāda a of the next verse (10) are lost. Fleet and Sircar conjectured *kartavyā* (Bhandarkar *prakāryā*), but an ingenious conjecture was made by Chhabra 1963, 546: *na yasya* (quoted with approval by Agrawal 1986, 63). It gives significance to the double occurrence of the word *pratimā* in the first hemistich—more meaningful, in my view, than the pedestrian 'an image should be made' of Fleet, Sircar, and Bhandarkar—to the effect that, although God Viṣṇu is admittedly transcendent, that is without form (*na yasya pratimā kācīt*), a material image of Him in his manifestation of Śārṅgin can be made. I therefore take the genitive, 'of that wielder of the bow' (*tasya śārṅgiṇaḥ*) in 10b as depending on (*pratimām*) and referring to the deity; the form chosen, that of the archer, implements a comparison with Kumāragupta or Skandagupta (cf. 8b, 8d)—both certainly mighty bowmen to judge by their coinage.<sup>7</sup> The *pratimām... imām* (10bc) of Viṣṇu-Śārṅgin is the deity installed, whose name, as proposed by Bhandarkar, may have been Kumārasvāmin.<sup>8</sup>

In the *Mahābhārata* Vāsudeva's and/or Kṛṣṇa's bow is called Śārṅga. It is the divine *vaiṣṇava* bow.<sup>9</sup> Curiously enough, the term or name Śārṅgin does

4 Mirashi 1982a, 70 related the first of this struggles to the *Indore Plates of Pravarasena II*, Year 23 and argued that the 'un-named enemies of the Guptas included the Vākātakas' (cf. above, p. 146 and n. 29 on p. 325).

5 Bakker 1997, 25–28. Cf. Bakker 2006.

6 8d: *śārṅgadhvaniḥ*, read by Fleet as *gāṅgadhvaniḥ*. The correct reading has been suggested by Jagan Nath and was taken over by Bhandarkar and Sircar in their editions.

7 See Kumāragupta's and Skandagupta's Archer Type and Skandagupta's so-called 'King-and-Lakṣmī Type' of gold coins (above, p. 316 and Plate 48).

8 Fleet suggested *yāvādācandratārakam*, accepted by Sircar, but rejected by Bhandarkar, who points out that 'if *yāvat* is used, *ā°* is superfluous' (CII III (1981), 315 n. 4.). On top of that, the expression seems to be out of place here.

9 MBh 5.155.6, 9. Cf. MBh 2.2.12, 3.21.18.

not occur in the critical text of either the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It does occur, however in the \*-passages in the critical apparatus and appendices of the MBh edition as a name of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa.<sup>10</sup> From this it follows that the word Śārṅgin as a name of Vāsudeva is comparatively late, attested only in the later phase of the composition of the epic, that is the 3rd to 5th centuries AD. This agrees well with the evidence of the inscription. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Śārṅgin mentioned in verse 10 is considered to be a form of Vāsudeva, the Bhagavat (v. 12).<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that in verse 10 Skandagupta is credited with the making of an image of a deity that is known to be a mighty archer and as such reflects the qualities of himself and his father. In view of the fact that the merit of this act is assigned to the deceased father, Kumāragupta, the name suggested for the installed image, Kumārasvāmin, is a plausible conjecture. It has a contemporary parallel in the *Kevala-Narasimha Temple Inscription*, in which the merit of the installation of the deity Prabhāvatisvāmin is assigned to Kumāragupta's sister, the deceased Vākāṭaka queen, Prabhāvatī Guptā.<sup>12</sup>

The puzzle in v. 11 is to whom/which (the masculine) *enam*, as read by Fleet, Sircar and Bhandarkar, in pāda a refers. It would normally be something that is already mentioned (*anvādeśa*), something that is now being installed at the site (*iha*). It can hardly be anything else but the deity (*devam*), supposedly mentioned in 10d, i.e. Kumārasvāmin. A good suggestion made by Dániel Balogh is to read (feminine) *enām*, which naturally refers to the *pratimā* of the preceding verse. Pādas 11cd add that a village or community (*grāma*) is assigned (*vidhā-*) to the deity (i.e. to the temple and its priests) and that the merit of this deed accrues to Kumāragupta.<sup>13</sup>

This appears to be one of two (*ubhayam*) acts that are performed for the benefit of the father (12cd). Which is the other one? I think we can exclude the erection of the column itself, as proposed by Bhandarkar,<sup>14</sup> since the inscription does not say anything explicit about it. This would leave the following possibilities: 1) the making (*cakāra*) of the image, or, 2) the installation (*pratiṣṭhāpya*) of the image, or, 3) a combination of 1) and 2). The last possibility seems the most plausible one, that is, if we analyse verse 12 correctly.

Verse 11 is a syntactically independent clause: 'having done so and so, he assigned the village/community...'. This suggests that v. 12 is also a syntactically complete clause, consisting of a relative clause (12ab), in which two things

10 MBh 1 App. I No. 114 l. 339, 7.59 \*440, 12 App. I No. 6 l. 29, 17.1 \*3, 18.5 \*30. Cf. Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* 1.46 and *Amarakośa* 1.1.19.

11 Vāsudeva is used synonymously with Kṛṣṇa (sometimes equated with Viṣṇu). It is extremely unlikely that it refers to Rāma.

12 Bakker 1997, 166 v. 21; above, p. 124.

13 The *grāma* is not specified in the legible part of the inscription, but, in view of the use again of the pronoun *enam* in 11c, it has probably been mentioned earlier as well, maybe in v. 9; the place of residence may have been the site where the inscribed column is found, i.e. the present Bhitārī.

14 CII III (1981), 317 n. 4.

are mentioned, and a main clause (12cd). The crux of the verse is pāda b. Fleet and Sircar read '*īyaṃ yaś cātra saṃsthitaḥ*' (with question marks), Bhandarkar (Chhabra and Gai) proposes: '*īyaṃ yaś cātra [saṃskri(ṛ)taḥ]*' (*op. cit.* 316). One would assume that the act of *saṃskṛ-* (consecration) is normally comprised in the ritual of *pratiṣṭhā-* (installation) and plays no role here. *īyaṃ* is significant: it may correspond to *mūrtir* in pāda a, but it stands after the caesura in the next pāda. This means that pāda 12b actually recapitulates the two things that are referred to by *ubhayam* in 12c: 1) this one here (namely, the image), and (ca) 2) 'who/that which is here *saṃ. . .*'. This interpretation takes pāda 12a in apposition to *īyaṃ*. Fleet's and Sircar's reading *saṃsthitaḥ* could be understood as a periphrase of *grāmaḥ*: 'the one who is living here, (i.e. the community)', although it remains slightly unsatisfactory. Willis 2009, 148 f. has reexamined the case in detail and reads *saṃśrītaḥ*, which gives the better sense: that which has been 'attached' or 'consigned', viz. to the installed deity.

My comprehensive understanding of the proclamation made in vv. 8–12 is presented in a critical edition and translation of the text in the Appendix.

#### *Concluding remarks on the inscription and the site of Bhitari*

To sum up, the purport of the inscription is to proclaim, in addition to Skandagupta's victories on the battle field, that Skandagupta installed an image of Vāsudeva-Śārṅgin, possibly named Kumārasvāmin, a deity who is a great archer and as such reflects the qualities of the emperor and his father. For the maintenance of the image/temple Skandagupta assigns a village or community to the deity, that is to say, he exempts this community from taxes, so that its surplus production from now on may be used for worship of the deity and maintenance of the temple. Both beneficial acts are performed to increase the merit of his deceased father, Kumāragupta.

Finally I would like to draw attention to an important remark made in the Introduction of the 1981-edition of CII III. On page 83 it is observed: 'In fact, Bhitari is studded with so many mounds that it is not impossible that it was the mausoleum or *pratimā-grīha* of the Gupta family.'<sup>15</sup> This hypothesis has only partly been corroborated by the excavations carried out by the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, between the years 1968 and 1973, and 1995.<sup>16</sup> A proper assessment of these excavations reported by Vidula Jayaswal (2001), would go beyond the scope of this article. One photograph, taken from the excavator's website,<sup>17</sup> may give an impression of the situation (Plate 76).

15 For the concept of the *pratimāgrīha* and memorial temples see below, p. 415 (Bakker 2007a, 19–23).

16 Jayaswal 2001, vii.

17 <https://www.cse.iitk.ac.in/users/amit/books/jayaswal-2001-royal-temples-of.html>.

Above we adduced the parallel example of the foundation of the Prabhāvati-svāmin temple on the Rāmagiri. In discussing this and neighbouring temples on this hill, I have argued that these sanctuaries were erected to transfer merit to the deceased members of the Vākāṭaka family.<sup>18</sup>



Plate 76

*Bhitari. Pillar with Skandagupta's inscription and adjacent excavation of site 2*

I would be hesitant to call these temples 'mausoleums', since they were certainly no tombs or cenotaphs, nor is it at all likely that portraits (otherwise than through metaphor) of the deceased were set up, and maybe even the designation 'memorial' is misleading, but these temples seem to have served some funerary or commemorative function, namely to ensure the salvation of the deceased by means of a transfer of merit.<sup>19</sup> An evaluation of the results of the excavations by Vidula Jayaswal and his team and further research must establish whether or not the site of Bhitari served such aims in Gupta times. I for one conclude with a paraphrase of Skandagupta's words:

अतो मदीयमीमांसा इयं यच्चात्र मुद्रितम् ।  
उभयं निर्दिदेशाहं शास्त्रिणः पुण्यवृद्धये ॥

<sup>18</sup> Bakker 1992b and 1997, 30 f., and above, p. 371.

<sup>19</sup> For the phenomenon of merit-transfer see Wezler 1997.

## APPENDIX\*

*Skandagupta's Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription vv. 8-12*

text

hūṅair yasya samāgatasya samare dorbhyāṃ dharā kampitā,  
 bhīmāvartakarasya śatruṣu śarā - - ∪ - - ∪ - |  
 - - - ∪ ∪ - ∪ - (viracitaṃ) prakhyāpito ⟨dīptimān⟩,  
 na (dyo)ti ∪ na - ∪ lakṣyata iva śrotreṣu śārīṅgadhvaniḥ || 8 ||  
 (sva)pituh kīrtti ∪ ∪ ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ ∪ |  
 ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ , ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ ∪ - ∪ ∪ ∪ || 9 ||  
 ⟨na yasya⟩ pratimā kācit pratimāṃ tasya śārīṅgaṇaḥ |  
 s(u)pratitāś cakāremāṃ ⟨kumārasvāmināmikām⟩ || 10 ||  
 iha cain(ā)ṃ pratiṣṭhāpya supraṭiṣṭhitaśāsanāḥ |  
 grāmam enaṃ sa vidadh(e) pituh puṇyābhivṛddhaye || 11 ||  
 ato bhagavato mūrtir iyaṃ yas cātra (saṃśritaḥ) |  
 ubhayaṃ nirdideśāsau pituh puṇyāya puṇyadhīr || 12 ||  
 iti

8 Śārdūlavikrīḍita 9-12 Śloka (11c na vipulā)

8c *dīptimān* ] conj. Bhandarkar : - i ∪ i - Fleet, *dīptidā* conj. Sircar 8d *dyoti* ∪ na - ∪ ] Sircar : *dyo(?)ti* ∪ *nabhī(?)ṣu* conj. Fleet *śārīṅgadhvaniḥ* ] Jagan Nath, Sircar : *gāṅgadhvaniḥ* conj. Fleet 10a *na yasya* ] conj. Chhabra (accepted by Agrawal) : *prakāryā* conj. Bhandarkar, *kartavyā* conj. Fleet, Sircar 10d *su°* ] conj. Fleet, Sircar, Bhandarkar : *sa* conj. Chhabra, Agrawal *kumārasvāmināmikām* ] conj. Bhandarkar (accepted by Agrawal and Willis) : *yāvad ācandratārakam* conj. Fleet, Sircar 11a *cainām* ] conj. Balogh : *cainam* Fleet, Sircar, Bhandarkar 12b *saṃśritaḥ* ] Willis : *saṃsthitāḥ* Fleet, Sircar, Agrawal

translation

When he (Skandagupta) joined in close conflict with the Hūṅas, the earth was made to tremble due to (the power of) his arms, since he caused a terrible whirlpool among the enemy by ... of arrows; the brilliant ... is proclaimed ..., (which) sounds like the twanging of (his) bow (*śārīṅga*) in (their) ears. (8)

Of his father ... fame/temple ... (9)

He (i.e. Skandagupta), as he is a celebrated (archer), has made an image of that 'Wielder of the Bow', Śārīṅgin (i.e. Viṣṇu), the One who is (actually) beyond form (*pratimā*)—this (image) here, (which carries the name Kumārasvāmin). (10)

And after this image had been installed by him at this site, he (i.e. Skandagupta), as his orders are well-obeyed, has assigned this village (to the installed deity) for the sake of the increase of his father's merit. (11)

Hence the manifestation of the Lord, this (image/manifestation) here (i.e. Kumārasvāmin) and that which here has been consigned (to it) (i.e. the *grāma*), he (i.e. Skandagupta) has destined both for the merit of (his) father, since he is determined upon merit. (12)

\* This Appendix has been added and is not contained in the original publication of 2005.



# The So-called 'Jaunpur Stone Inscription of Īśvaravarman'\*

## PREAMBLE

Few scholars can claim mastery of such a wide range of different fields within the discipline of Indology as Prof Dr Oskar von Hinüber. One of the branches of learning that owes a great deal to his studies is Indian epigraphy. My contribution here is meant as a humble tribute to Oskar and his work.

## INTRODUCTION

We possess two inscriptions that undisputably belong to that branch of the Maukhari family which eventually turned the ancient Kānyakubja (Kanauj) into their new capital, viz. the well-known *Haraha Stone Inscription of Īśānavarman* of Vikrama Samvat 611 (AD 554), in which Īśānavarman's son Sūryavarman records his renovation of a dilapidated Śīva temple, and an inscription found in Jaunpur.<sup>1</sup> The *Jaunpur Inscription* is merely 'a fragment of a very much larger inscription'.<sup>2</sup> It deserves a detailed examination.

It is estimated that only about one-third of the width of the inscribed stone has been preserved (Plate 77), and it is unknown how many lines would have been below the last line extant. Fleet remarks that 'the probability is [...] that the larger number (seventy-two) has been lost at the beginning of this (i.e. first) line, and in proportion all the way down'.<sup>3</sup> The other option considered by Fleet is that only thirty-eight syllables are missing at the beginning of each line. This option is invalidated by the Śārdūlavikrīḍita verse in line 3, of which the end coincides with the right side of the stone. From this and the preceding incomplete Mālinī verse of line 2 it can be deduced that altogether 69 syllables have been lost in line 3. This would bring the total number of *akṣaras* in line 3

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\* The first version of this article was published in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 52.2–3 (2009), 207–16. The article in this double issue of IIJ was dedicated to Oskar von Hinüber.

1 For the *Haraha Inscription of the Reign of Īśānavarman, Year [VS] 611* see: Śāstri 1917–18; Sircar SI I, 385–389; Thaplyal 1985, 141–146. For the *Jaunpur Stone Inscription of Īśvaravarman* see: J.F. Fleet in CII III (1888), 228–230; Thaplyal 1985, 139–40.

2 CII III (1888), 228.

3 CII III (1888), 229 n. 2.

to 91.<sup>4</sup> Since the whole inscription consists of verses, it should be possible to estimate how many *akṣaras* have been lost in each line, notwithstanding Fleet's admittance that he has 'tried several ways of arranging the verses, [...], but without being able to satisfy myself'.<sup>5</sup> It appears that the number of *akṣaras* per line varied between 91 and 99.

The inscription was published again in Thaplyal 1985, but he too refrained from a restoration of the distribution of verses. Earlier Sircar had reconstructed three verses along the lines we propose to follow here for the inscription as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

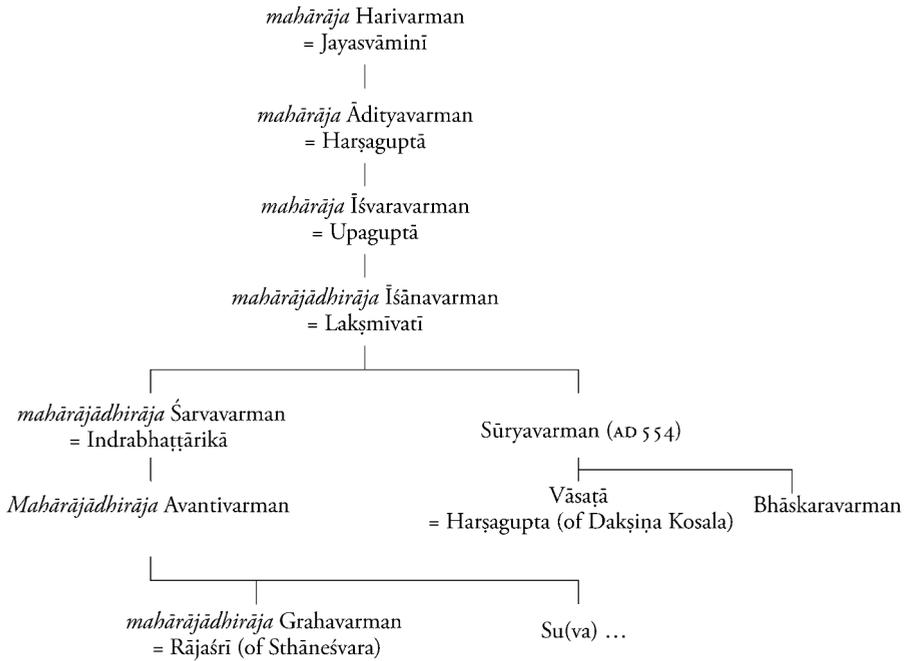


Figure 10

The Maukharis of Kanauj

4 That a line could contain slightly more syllables than 91 emerges from 'scroll-work to fill up the line' that follows the punctuation mark that concludes the Śārdūlavikrīḍita verse (CII III (1888), 229 n. 7).

5 CII III (1888), 229 n. 2.

6 Sircar 1964, 127–130.

The inscription had been ascribed to Īśvaravarman, on account of the fact that he is the only king mentioned by name in the fragment. When we collate our reconstruction with the *Haraha Inscription*, it appears that a similar pattern underlies both *praśastis* and that it is highly unlikely that Īśvaravarman was the last king mentioned, a conclusion also reached by Sircar 1964, though on other grounds.<sup>7</sup> Both *praśastis*, however, are independent compositions and it is impossible to say which one of them is the older, although the *Haraha Inscription* seems to be slightly more ornate, having e.g. two *maṅgala* verses (the second one apparently drawing inspiration from the Kṣemeśvara Temple, the object of the inscription) against one in the *Jaunpur Inscription*. In the underlying pattern two verses are reserved for Harivarman and Ādityavarman in both inscriptions; Īśvaravarman has three verses in the *Haraha Inscription* and three or two in the Jaunpur one, depending on whether one assigns verse 8 to him or to his son Īśānavarman. The latter possibility is the most likely, in view of the explicit mention of the 'lion throne', which we also encounter in the *Haraha Inscription* verse 13. In the *Haraha Inscription* Īśānavarman has five verses dedicated solely to him, whereas in the sixth his son Sūryavarman is introduced. The pattern we conjecture in the *Jaunpur Inscription* gives to Īśānavarman at least five verses, while it remains unclear whether a son is introduced in verses 12 or 13. The Jaunpur inscription may therefore have belonged to either Īśānavarman or to one of his successors.

An edition of the thus reconstructed text of the inscription is presented below, which is followed by my translation. In the footnotes to this translation the parallel verses of the *Haraha Inscription* are given together with my translation thereof.

## THE JAUNPUR STONE INSCRIPTION

The reconstruction follows basically the text of Fleet with some minor adaptations, using, for instance, standard orthography. The bold figures between square brackets are the line numbers. Angular brackets (in edition and translation) are used to indicate that the reading is conjectured. Commas indicate the end of uneven pādas. The verse numbering is mine.

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7 Sircar 1964, 129 draws this conclusion from verse 11, in which the king's victory over the Andhras is celebrated. This victory was obtained by Īśānavarman, as *Haraha Inscription* verse 13 tells us (see below, n. 26 on p. 388).







the mighty... (2)<sup>22</sup>

... (Who was born) in the rising dynasty of the MUKHARA kings; the strength of whose bow was fully revealed by his manliness... (3)<sup>23</sup>

[Ādityavarman]

... due to (his) activity ... a mass of clouds, being the canopy of smoke (that rose from his sacrificial fires), spread his sacrificial merit unto heaven. (4)<sup>24</sup>

... the tip (of his) curls falling ... profusely. (5)

[Īśvaravarman]

The son of this (king), whose spotless fame spread worldwide, was ĪŚVARAVARMAN ... (6)

... who, indeed, ... of the virtuous people (would equal him in) virtues, (virtues) which brought happiness into the world and alleviated the distress caused by the arrival of cruel (people) through compassion and love? (7)<sup>25</sup>

22 For the verses 2 and 3 compare the *Haraha Inscription* verse 4:

*teṣv ādau harivarmaṇo 'vanibhujo bhūtir bhuvo bhūtaḥ,  
ruddhāśeṣadigantarālayaśasā ruṅnārisampattviṣā |  
saṃgrāme hutabhukprabhākapiśitaṃ vaktraṃ samikṣyārībhir,  
yo bhūteḥ praṇatas tataś ca bhuvane jvālāmukhākhyāṃ gataḥ || 4 ||*

AMONG them (there arose) at the beginning, for the well-being of the world, a ruler of the earth, the (powerful) being (called) Harivarman, (a powerful being) measured by his fame, by which all quarters of space were besieged, and his brilliance, which destroyed the happiness of his foes; for whom the enemies bowed in fear, when they saw his face at the battlefield, as this was aglow with the lustre of (sacrificial) fire, and who for that reason obtained the name Jvālāmukha (Flame-face) on earth. (4)

23 Cf. *Kirātārjunīya* 13.14: *cāpanāma prathamam pauruṣacihnam.*

24 Cf. the *Haraha Inscription* verse 7:

*hutabhujī makham adhyāsaṅgini dhvāntalīlam,  
viyati pavanajanmabhrāntivikṣepabhūyaḥ |  
mukharayati samantād utpatad dhūmajālam,  
śikhikulam urumeghāśaṅki yasya prasaktam || 7 ||*

WHEN his (Ādityavarman's) fire was kindled for sacrifice, the thick smoke, black as the night, rising up to the sky on all sides and swelling through its whirling and tossing in the wind, continuously made the peacocks cry (*mukharayati*), since they mistook it for a large rain-cloud. (7)

25 Cf. the *Haraha Inscription* verse 8:

*tenāpīśvaravarmaṇaḥ kṣitipateḥ kṣatraprabhāvāptaye,  
janmākāri kṛtātmanaḥ kratugaṇeṣv āhūtavṛtradviṣaḥ |  
yasyotkhātakalivabhāvacaritasyācāramārgaṃ nṛpā,  
yatnenāpi yayātītulyayaśaso nānye 'nugantuṃ kṣamāḥ || 8 ||*

BY HIM (i.e. Ādityavarman) was begotten, destined to gain the power of nobility, the lord of the earth Īśvaravarman, whose soul was well-disciplined and who invoked the Enemy of Vṛtra (i.e. Indra) in many sacrifices; other kings, no matter how they tried, were unable to match his way of conduct, he whose deeds eradicated the very nature of the Kali (Age) and who equalled Yayāti in fame. (8)

[*Īśānavarman*]

... by (whom), lion to (other) kings, the lion throne was ascended ... (8)<sup>26</sup>

Spark(s) of fire from the course of the rim (of the wheels) ... (9)<sup>27</sup>

Having made cavity after cavity of the Vindhya mountains his retreat, the Lord of Andhra, seized by fear, (finally) fled to Mount Raivatata ... (10)<sup>28</sup>

When the soldiers of the army of Andhra lay scattered (all over the battlefield) with their arms, pronounced by the glow of the swords (they still held), torn off, (and ?) the troops of elephants (were destroyed)... (11)

... bathed by the waters cascading from ... , scenting of camphor, and (washed by streams) of cool water that springs from the snow mountain, ... (12)<sup>29</sup>

... the day of whom, even at the following dawn (?), ... by ... of which the pollen, filled with the crested waves of swollen mountain streams, rising up, ... (13)

## CONCLUSION

From the collation of the Jaunpur fragment and the *Haraha Inscription* it becomes clear that both Maukhari inscriptions follow a similar tradition. This tradition assigned to Harivarman great military prowess, to Ādityavarman piety,

26 For the verses 8 to 11 compare the *Haraha Inscription* verse 13:

*jītvāndhrādhīpatiṃ sahasraganītatredhākṣaradvāraṇaṃ,  
vyāvālganniṣyutātīsaṃkhyaturagān bharīktvā raṇe sūlikān |  
kṛtvā cāyatim(o) citasthalabhūvo gauḍān samudrāśrayān,  
adhyāsiṣṭa nataksītiśacaraṇaḥ śiṃhāsanaṃ yo jīti || 13 ||*

[ĪŚĀNAVARMAN] is victorious, he who has ascended the lion throne, his feet bowed to by the rulers of the earth, after having vanquished the sovereign of Andhra of whom the elephants, counted by the thousands, were passing triple fluid (scil., temple-must secretion, urine and faeces, due to excitement), after having routed in battle the Sūlikas and their galloping arrays of innumerable horses, and after having made the Gauḍas, driven from their territory by (his) might, take refuge at the ocean. (13)

27 Sircar 1964, 130 is right when he notes that, ‘The word *dhārā* commonly means *khaḍgāder niśitamukham* (*Medinīkoṣa*), so that the passage *dhārāmārgavinirgatāgnikaṇikā* means “the sparks issuing from the passage of the [hero’s] sword” and has nothing to do with the city of Dhārā.’ However, the use of the word *mārga* in this interpretation remains problematic. For *dhārā* in the sense of ‘rim of an (iron) wheel’ see *Raghuvamśa* 13.15.

28 Sircar 1964, 128 conjectures that it was an unknown enemy, other than the Lord of Andhra, who fled to the Raivatata hill. The hill has not satisfactorily been identified. To go by its name it may have been a hill along the Revā (= Narmadā) River. A hill of this name is mentioned in the *Junāgaḍh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta*. Fleet identifies this Raivatata with the hill ‘opposite to Ūrjayat or Girnār’ in Kathiawar, Gujarat ( CII III (1888), 64 n. 1).

29 This seems to refer to an expedition to the northwest, possibly corresponding with the Sūlikas mentioned in the *Haraha Inscription* (see above, n. 26 on p. 388).

to Īśvaravarman virtuousness, and to Īśānavarman emperorship. The latter was credited with the title Mahārājādhirāja in the seals of his successors and in the inscriptions he is said to be seated on the lion throne. His son Sūryavarman was a young man in Vikrama Saṃvat 611 (=AD 554), the date of the *Haraha Inscription*. Īśānavarman's exploits may therefore have taken place in the second quarter of the 6th century. Whether or not the heroic deeds of one of Īśānavarman's descendants were described in the missing part of the inscription will forever remain unknown.

By placing the two Maukhari inscriptions side by side, we have won a more secure basis from which the individual achievements of each of the Maukhari kings and the Maukhari history as such can be studied. The results of this study are found in Bakker 2014, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*. The sixth century is generally considered as a 'dark age' and for that reason every piece of evidence should be treasured. It is hoped that the present preliminary study of the source material will contribute to the historiography of the Maukharis in general and may be of use to scholars who, like the present author, are fascinated by an age that started with the fall of a great empire and culminated in the magnificent rule of Harṣavardhana.



# The Temple of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin\*

## The Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription of the Time of Udayasena Reconsidered

### INTRODUCTION

The hill near the village Ramgarh, on whose top (height 184 m) the so-called ‘Muṇḍeśvarī Temple’ is found,<sup>1</sup> belongs to the northern spurs of the Kaimur Range, the eastern embranchment of the Vindhya. It is situated in the Kaimur District of southwest Bihar, 70 km SE of Vārāṇasī, 170 km SW of Patna, 60 km NW of Rohtasgarh on the River Son, and 8 km SW of Bhabua, as the crow flies.

The present octagonal temple has attracted the attention of scholars since the early days of Francis Buchanan, whose description had been used by Montgomery Martin in his *Eastern India*, which appeared in 1838. Buchanan reports that his description is based on the drawings of a painter whom he had sent up to the place, which might have taken place in January 1813.<sup>2</sup> A print based on this was included in Martin’s *Eastern India* (Plate 78). Earlier a drawing of the temple had been made by Thomas Daniell (Plate 79), who probably visited the site in February 1790,<sup>3</sup> and whose engraving, published in 1808, might have been known to Buchanan.<sup>4</sup> As can be derived from both pictures, the temple was largely covered by a mound of rubble overgrown with plants and trees. The site was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) after a visit of Theodor Bloch in 1902.<sup>5</sup> Bloch was also the first to report on the inscription that is the subject of this paper. He notes the following (*op. cit.* 43):

[...] Among the *débris* the second half of an inscribed stone has been found, the first half of which had been sent to the Indian Museum Calcutta in 1891.

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\* The first version of this article was published in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56.3–4 (2013), 263–77. This double issue of IJ contained the articles based on papers given at the symposium *Epigraphical Evidence for the Formation and Rise of Early Śaivism*, which was held at the University of Groningen, 4–5 June 2012.

1 The temple and hill are named after the goddess who today is the central focus of worship (see Jayasāl 2017, 117 Fig. 340).

2 Neuss 2003, 533 (based on Oldham 1926). Martin 1838 I, 456: ‘I could not conveniently visit the place, but sent a painter, who drew the most remarkable part. The temple, now very ruinous, has been an octagon supported by four columns (E).’

3 Neuss 2003, 533 (based on Archer 1969).

4 The drawing was engraved by Thomas and his brother William and published in *Antiquities of India*, December 1808.

5 Bloch 1902–03, 42 f. Neuss 2003, 533 f.

This stone is dated year 30, the 22nd of Kārttika, which must be referred to the Harṣa Era, thus corresponding with 635 A.D.

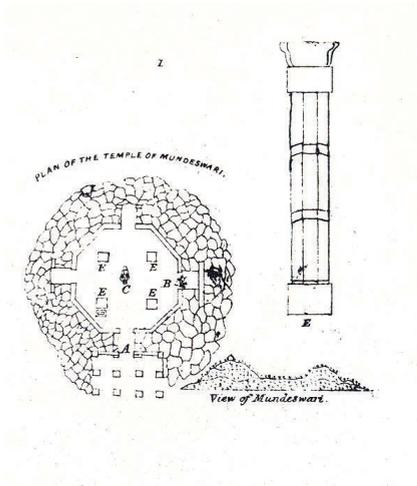


Plate 78

Buchanan: sketch AD 1813<sup>6</sup>



Plate 79

Daniell: drawing AD 1790<sup>7</sup>

The two halves of the stone have been combined and were first edited and published by R.D. Banerji in *Epigraphia Indica* IX (1907–08).

This *Mundeśvarī Inscription of the Time of Udayasena, Year 30* has gone through altogether five editions (R.D. Banerji 1907–08, N.G. Majumdar 1920, P.K. Agrawala 1987, P.R. Srinivasan 1991, J. Neuss 2003), but in spite of the work done by these excellent epigraphists, I think there is still room for improvement.<sup>8</sup>

#### *The temple on Mundeśvarī Hill*

Before discussing the inscription in more detail, however, a few words should be said about the temple. Joanna Williams gives the following assessment.

Fragments at the site extend from the sixth century until the eighth or later. On stylistic grounds the surviving octagonal shrine should belong to the first half of the seventh century. [...]<sup>9</sup>

6 Martin 1838, Vol. I, opposite p. 474 (Pl. V No. 1, ‘Temple of Mundeswari’).

7 ‘The Temple of Mandeswara near Chaynpore, Bahar’. Cf. Archer 1980, Plate 76.

8 A recent new edition was made by Arvind Kumar Singh, which is included in Jayaswal *et al.* 2017. I will refer to this as Singh (2017).

9 Williams 1982, 166f. Cf. Deva 1988 in EITA II.1, 119: ‘If the foundation inscription

The interior of the temple consists of a central pavillion supported by four *rucaka* pillars and encircled by a *pradakṣiṇapatha*, which enshrines a tall, c. 13th-century *caturmukhaliṅga*.<sup>10</sup>

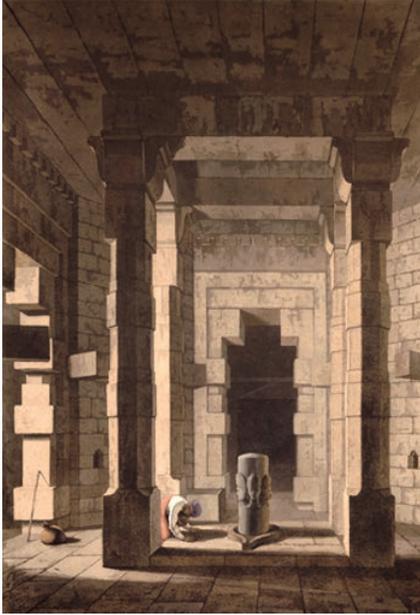


Plate 80

Daniell: drawing AD 1790<sup>11</sup>



Plate 81

The linga in AD 2008

The hill, temple, surrounding débris, and the inscription have been thoroughly examined by Jürgen Neuss (2003).<sup>12</sup> Neuss subscribes to the almost universally accepted theory that dates the oldest elements of the architecture of the present

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refers to the Harṣa Era, yielding a date of A.D. 636, the temple stylistically can be assigned to the same period.'

10 Deva 1988 in EITA II.1, 119.

11 'Interior of the temple of Mandeswara near Chaynpore, Bahar.' Cf. Archer 1980, Plate 77.

12 More recently another inventory of the remains on the hill was made by Fiona Buckee (2008). She generously shared her photo documentation with me. In 2018 Buckee presented a paper *The Curious Case of the Octagonal Temple: A Revised History of the Temples of Mundeshvari Hill* in the 24th Conference of the EASAA in Naples, 2–6 July 2018. I refer to this as Buckee *forthcoming*. Again another extensive survey of the archaeological remains of the hill, *in situ* and in museums, was made by Meera Sharma 2017. It is included in Jayaswal *et al.* 2017. This latest inventory is not incorporated in the present essay. Finally an extensive treatment of the historic evidence regarding Muṇḍeśvarī Hill is found in Bakker 2014, 221–39.

temple to the first half of the seventh century.<sup>13</sup> However, Neuss rejects one piece of evidence used to endorse this theory, viz. the alleged contemporaneity of the temple and the inscription.<sup>14</sup>

*The date of the Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription*

Neuss's main arguments run as follows. Firstly, there is no reason to assume that 'the year 30' refers to the Harṣa Era, as has been done by all scholars following Bloch (see above), apart from Majumdar, who takes it to refer to the Gupta Era. Neuss refers to Asher, who had argued 'that in the ancient written documents of eastern India, time was almost invariably marked according to the regnal year of a current monarch',<sup>15</sup> and, Neuss continues, 'that there is thus no basis to connect the date of our inscription with any known era'.<sup>16</sup>

Secondly, a detailed palæographic investigation leads him to the final observation that,

As the Muṇḍeśvarī record still uses the older tripartite *ya*, I would suggest that the Muṇḍeśvarī inscription must have been engraved between A.D. 570 and A.D. 590, and that the script shows influences from writing habits developed in Western India.<sup>17</sup>

I subscribe tentatively to Neuss's analysis and would therefore propose to date the inscription to the second half of the sixth or early seventh century. It follows that the otherwise completely unknown Mahāsāmanta Udayasena was a feudatory, not of Harṣavardhana, but of the Maukharis of Kanauj, and most likely ruled under Avantivarman, the last of the great Maukhari kings of Kanauj, whose reign spanned the final decades of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century. The inscription is not the foundation charter of the main temple itself, but it testifies to a historical process in the second half of the 6th century, in which the building of a new religious complex on the hill was in full swing.

Neuss presents a new edition of the inscription and his interpretation thereof has important consequences for his understanding of the type and development of the sacred complex on the hill. The reading and interpretation of the inscription that I present here differ significantly from the one given by Neuss. Our disagreement is mainly the result of a different interpretation of the signs that are found at the end of line 6 and 11 and in the middle of line 16: . Neuss, following Majumdar, takes these as *daṇḍas* that conclude a sentence.

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13 Neuss 2003, 543. The temple has a long history of reconstructions. Its architectural history has been investigated by Adam Hardy and Fiona Buckee. Buckee (*forthcoming*) concludes that the present octagonal shape of the temple may go back to a reconstruction, influenced by nearby Suri tombs, made in the 16th or 17th century. The present appearance of the temple is due to a 'creative restauration' made between 1913–1916.

14 Neuss 2003, 535.

15 Asher 1985, 133.

16 Neuss 2003, 534 f.

17 Neuss 2003, 538.

In my view this interpretation is untenable, because it would break up the sentence construction. In line 6 the Sanskrit syntax requires that we do not read a pause after °*devakulasya*, since this is the adject of *upanibandhaḥ kārtaḥ* in line 9. If we would take this sign as a *daṇḍa* in line 11, it would separate the subject from the predicate: ... °*upakaraṇāni* ... *dattāni* (l. 12). For these reasons I follow the suggestion first made by Banerji to the effect that, ‘The sign at the end of this line has been added in order to fill up the vacant space.’<sup>18</sup> Similar scroll-work is, for instance, found at the end of line 3 (after the double *daṇḍa* that concludes v. 4) of the so-called ‘Jaunpur Stone Inscription of Īśānavarman’.<sup>19</sup> In line 16 of our inscription the double scroll sign is used to fill up the line and, concomitantly, to mark a new paragraph, *uktaṃ ca*, so that the concluding, exhortative verse could begin on a new line.

My edition is presented in two ways: first, a literal transliteration of what is readable; second, an edited version with conjectural emendations and standardized orthography. My study is based on the estampage supplied by Sten Konow and published by Banerji in *Epigraphia Indica* IX (Plate 82).



Plate 82  
*Muṇḍeśvarī* Inscription, Year 30

18 Banerji 1907–08 in EI IX, 220 n. 1.

19 CII III (1888), Pl. xxxii; Bakker 2009b, 210 f. above, Plate 77

## THE MUṆDEŚVARĪ INSCRIPTION, YEAR 30

*Transliteration*

- 
- [ ] editorial rendering  
 ( ) reading uncertain  
 < vowel part of syllable  
 ◊ consonant part of syllable  
*halanta* characters are given in bold face  
 ˇ , - and ː : metrical quantity of illegible syllables
- 

- 1 [symbol] sambatsa(r)e triṅśati ː kārttikadi(va)se dvāviṅśatime  
 2 asmi(n s)ambatsaramāsa(d)i ː (sa)pūrvvāyā**m** śrīmahāsāmanta  
 3 mahāpratīhāramahārāj(o) ː yasenarājye kulapatibhā(nudayim) <sup>20</sup>  
 4 (ssa)devanikāyā**m** daṇḍa ː yakagomibhaṭena prārthayitvā  
 5 mātāpittor ā(tma)naś ca pu(ṅ)◊<bhivṛddhaye vinīteśvaramaḥsamā  
 6 veśaṃ ma(ṭham) etat kārītakam ː nārāyaṇadevakulasya [scroll]  
 7 śrīmaṇḍaleśvarasvāmī(pā) ː yakoṣṭhikātaḥ ācandrārkkasama  
 8 (k)āliyam akṣayam prati ː ː naivedyārtham taṇḍulaprasthadvayam  
 9 dipatāilapalasya co ː ː bandhaḥ kārītaḥ śrīmaṇḍaleśvara  
 10 svāmipādānām vici ː ː (rmmānta)tantrasādhāraṇam pañcāśatām  
 11 dīnārāṇam gobā ː ː ː bhaktādyupakaraṇāni [scroll]  
 12 devanikāyasya dat< ː ː vaṃ viditvā yathakālādध्यā(s)icī  
 13 tāpovanikair vṛā ya ː ː (ni)baddhasya vighāto na kācy<  
 14 (e)vam abhiśrāvito y(o) ː ː kuryāt sa mahāpātākais sa ː  
 15 ː ː ke vaset e(vaṃ) ː ː ː dhāraṇayā madhya  
 16 ː ː (bh)āka ː ː ː ː tam iti [scroll, scroll] uktañ ca  
 17 ː ː ː ː ˇ - - ː yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira  
 18 ː ː ː ː ˇ - - ː dānāc chreyo nupālanam (|)

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20 This can be read variously. Banerji, Majumdar, Agrawala & Singh read °bhāgudalana-, and s-sa on line 4 (Majumdar s-sa°, Agrawala and Singh emend to °sya) and note that na has been written above the la. Srinivasan reads: °bhāgudalanes, s-sa°. Neuss reads: °bhā[nu]dalana°, and sva° at the beginning of line 4. I do not see the na (according to Banerji added above the line), but rather think that this is the vowel mātrā i (similar to the i above the n in nikāyaṃ in the next line) of the akṣara ya, of which the third vertical stroke may have broken off. It looks as if there is an anusvāra above this i-mātrā, but this may be just damage or there might have been one more akṣara on this line, pressed together due to lack of space (cf. the haplography that occurs at the end of line 8 where °dvayam should be read as °dvayasya).

## Emended, orthographic edition

- ( ) editorial addition  
 ( ) conjectural reading  
 ∘, – and ≍ : metrical quantity of illegible syllables

Where the inscription has a *halanta* character, or where absence of *saṃdhi* indicates *pausa*, a comma has been inserted. Where the interpretation requires a *daṇḍa* or double *daṇḍa*, these have been inserted between ( ) marked by \*. Line numbers are inserted in bold between [ ].

[1] siddham<sup>21</sup>

saṃvatsare trimśati(me)<sup>22</sup> kārttikadivase dvāvīṃśatime,

[2] asmin<sup>23</sup> saṃvatsaramāsadivasapūrvāyām,  
 śrīmahāsāmanta[3]mahāpratīhāramahārājo(da)yasenarājye<sup>24</sup>

kulapatibhā(nūdayiṃ)<sup>25</sup> [4] (sa)devanikāyam,  
 daṇḍa(nā)yakagomibhaṭena prārthayitvā

[5] mātāpitror ātmanaś ca pu(ṇyā)bhivṛddhaye  
 vinīteśvaramaṭhasamā[6]veśaṃ maṭham etat kārītakam<sup>26</sup> (\* |)

(śrī)nārāyaṇadevakulasya [7] śrīmaṇḍaleśvarasvāmipā(dī)yakoṣṭhikātaḥ,

ācandrārkasama[8]kāliyam akṣayam prati(dinam) naivedyārtham

taṇḍulaprasthadvayaṃ<sup>27</sup> [9] dīpatailapalasya co(pani)bandhaḥ<sup>28</sup> kārītaḥ (\* |)

21 Expressed by spiral symbol.

22 Irregular for *trimśattame*, maybe under influence of the following *dvāvīṃśatime*, which is haplographic for *dvāvīṃśatitame* (Oberlies 2003, 127). As argued above the year 30 is best explained, if we assume that it refers to regnal years. The only dated Maukhari inscription (the *Haraha Inscription of Īśānavarman*, EI XIV, 110–20) is assigned to the Vikrama Era, 611 (AD 554). The dates on the Maukhari coins are problematic: difficult to read and difficult to assign to any known era (see Burn 1906; EI XIV, 113; HCI III, 70). I presume with Asher, Neuss, and Singh that the present ‘year 30’ refers to the thirtieth year of Udayasena’s governorship (*rājya*).

23 Maybe to be emended to *asyāṃ*. As it stands, I take this synonymous with *atra* or *iha*.

24 The reading °*rājodayasena*° was first proposed by Banerji and taken over by all later editors. That we are here concerned with a feudatory rather than a sovereign king follows from his titles (three (of five) Mahāśabdās), bestowed upon him by a suzerain: *mahāsāmanta*, ‘feudatory’; *mahāpratīhāra*, ‘chief chamberlain’; *mahārāja*, ‘viceroy’. The monarch who had bestowed these titles may have been either Śarvavarman or Avantivarman, Maukhari kings of Kanauj, who were themselves called great on account of their overlordship of Magadhā’ (*magadhādhipatyamahatām*), in the *Sirpur Lakṣmaṇa Temple Stone Inscription of the time of Śivagupta Bālārjuna* (Shastri 1995 II, 143; EI XI, 191).

25 For this reading see above n.20 on p.396. As has been remarked by Sanderson (e-mail 15-2-2012), the beginning with *bhā* suggests a Pāśupata name, but no satisfactory interpretation has suggested itself. I conjecture *bhānūdayiṃ*, assuming that the curve to the left at the bottom (note also the little vertical stroke above the *akṣara*) indicate the long vowel *ū*; cf. *nu* in line 18. The noun *udayin* is declined here as a vowel stem in *i* (Oberlies 2003, 94).

26 Banerji reads *maṭham etat kārītakam*, but Majumdar noted that the inscription actually reads *mayetat kārītakam*. We agree with Banerji, just as Neuss (cf. Srinivasan 1991, 315). The end of this sentence *kārītakam* remains noticeable (cf. Fleet in CII III, 69, 113, 135; Oberlies 2003, 267 n. 3).

27 The syntax requires that we read °*dvayasya*, as first suggested by Majumdar.

28 The reading *copanibandhaḥ*, proposed by Banerji, was taken over by all later editors.

śrīmaṇḍalesvara[10]svāmipādānām vici(traka)(rmānta)tantrasādhāraṇam<sup>29</sup>  
 pañcāśatam [11] dīnārāṇam goba(lisraja)bhaktādyupakaraṇāni<sup>30</sup>  
 [12] devanikāyasya dat(tāni) (\* ||)<sup>31</sup>

(e)vaṃ viditvā yathākālādhyāsi(bh)i(s) [13] tāpovanikair vā

ya(thopa) nibaddhasya<sup>32</sup> vighāto na kāryaḥ,

[14] evam abhiśrāvito yo (nyathā)<sup>33</sup> kuryāt sa mahāpātākais sa(ha)

[15] (nara)ke<sup>34</sup> vaset,

evam ॐ ॐ ॐ dhāraṇayā<sup>35</sup> madhya [16] ॐ ॐ (bh)āka ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ ॐ tam iti (\* ||)

uktaṃ ca,

[17] (svadattām paradattām vā), yatnād rakṣa yudhiṣṭhira (\* |)

[18] (mahīm mahīmatām śreṣṭha), dānāc chreyo 'nupālanam ( ||)<sup>36</sup>

### Translation

Success!

In the thirtieth year, at the twenty-second day of Kārttika; here, at the above year, month and day—within the reign of the illustrious Mahāsāmanta, Mahāpratīhāra, Mahārāja Udayasena—after having requested the permission of the head of the community (*kulapati*), Bhānūdayin (?), and the Temple Council, General Gomibhaṭa has commissioned the building of this accomodation as part of the Vinītesvaramaṭha, in order to increase the merit of his father, mother, and himself.

He has made an assignment to the temple of the illustrious Nārāyaṇa of a *pala* of lampoil and two *prasthas* of rice for the daily food-offering (to the deity), permanently, for as long as sun and moon exist, to be taken from the storeroom that belongs to the temple of the illustrious Maṇḍalesvarasvāmin.

(And) to the Temple Council he has given the means, such as cows, offerings, garlands, and food, at the value of fifty *dīnāras*, meant collectively for the

29 This is a real *crux interpretum*. Banerji (followed by Singh) proposed to read: *vicchitti-viśrānta*<sup>o</sup>. Majumdar read *vicchitti - -nta*<sup>o</sup> and acknowledged that he was 'unable to interpret this passage'. Srinivasan reads: *vici (chehitti)* . . . Agrawala: *vicchitti-nimitta*<sup>o</sup>; Neuss: *vicchittimānta*<sup>o</sup>. I tentatively read: *vicitrakarmāntatantra*<sup>o</sup>.

30 The reading *gobalīśrajabhaktādy*<sup>o</sup> was first proposed by Majumdar and was taken over by Neuss. After this follows scroll-work to fill up the line.

31 Banerji proposed to read here (see also beginning of next line): *dattam etad evam*, corrected by the editor of EI (Sten Konow), to *dattāny etad evam*, which was taken over by Majumdar and Neuss. I see no reason to conjecture *etad*. If there is room for one more syllable I would conjecture: *dattānītyevam*.

32 Banerji conjectured *yathānibaddhasya*, corrected by Majumdar to *yathopanibaddhasya*, taken over by Neuss.

33 *'nyathā* first conjectured by Banerji and taken over by all later editors.

34 *saha narake* first conjectured by Banerji and taken over by all later editors.

35 The *akṣara* preceding *dhā* (just after the gap) was read as *va* by Banerji and Srinivasan (reading *ava*<sup>o</sup>), and *vā* by Majumdar, who conjectures *yathāvadhāraṇayā*, taken over by Neuss. None of the editors has been able to restore this sentence.

36 Restored according to Sircar's *Indian Epigraphy* (1965), No. 131.

regular set of various observances for the sake of the illustrious feet of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin.

Having learned so, there should not be a disruption of what has thus been assigned, neither by future incumbents nor by the ascetics.

The one who, having thus been informed, acts otherwise, will live in hell with great sins.

Thus [...]

And it has been declared,

O YUDHIṢṬHIRA, zealously protect the land, whether it has been given by yourself or by others. O foremost of the landlords, protection is superior to giving.

### Interpretation

General Gomibhaṭa made altogether three donations, for which he had to make two formal requests, namely one to the head (*kulapati*) of the Vinīteśvara(maṭha), and the other to the Temple Council (*devanikāya*), of which he himself may have been a member.<sup>37</sup> The task of the Devanikāya may have been to supervise and administer the temple properties on the hill and that of the Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin temple complex (*devakula*) in particular. The membership of general Gomibhaṭa of such a council would not be surprising, if we consider the people who are reported to sit on such a council. To this effect the *Taleśvara Copperplate Grant of Dyutivarman* provides information.<sup>38</sup> The latter grant was made at the request of the Mahāsattrapati Trāta and the Devanikāya, ‘which was headed by the minister Bhadraviṣṇu, the governor of the fort, the officer in charge of the king’s betel-box, the custodian of the sacrificial fire, and the head of the royal guard’.<sup>39</sup>

Gomibhaṭa needed the permission of *kulapati* Bhānūdayin for his first donation, viz. accomodation or housing (*maṭha*) for the ascetics, since that was to be built on the premises of the Vinīteśvaramaṭha. The word *kulapati* poses a problem. Literally it signifies ‘head of a community’. Because the community here is defined as that of a *maṭha*, a likely interpretation is that the *kulapati* is

37 If we read with Neuss *svadevanikāya* in l. 4, this membership would be explicit.

38 EI XIII No. 7, 109–21: *Two Talesvara Copperplates* by Y.R. Gupte (1915–16). These two copperplates have been found in Taleśvara in the Almore District, United Provinces (modern Uttarakhand). Though they appear to be forgeries, they are nevertheless documents pertaining to the period ‘between the middle of the 6th and second quarter of the 7th century’ (Gupte *op. cit.* 113), i.e. to the same period as to which the Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription belongs.

39 EI XIII, 115 ll. 6–8: *rājadauvārikāgnīsvāmīkāraṇīkakoṭādhikaraṇīkāmātyabhadraviṣṇu-puraḥsareṇa ca devanikāyena vijñāpitaṃ*, which is rendered by Gupte as ‘preceded by royal doorkeepers, the attendants of the sacred fire, the *kāraṇīkas*, the superintendent of the female (temple) slaves, the minister Bhadraviṣṇu’.

the Mahant or abbot of the community of ascetics (*tāpovanikas*) of the Vinīteśvaramaṭha.<sup>40</sup> Alternatively, as was pointed out to me in the conference, *kulapati* may be shorthand for *devakulapati*, ‘head of the temple’, in which case probably the temple connected to the *maṭha* was meant.

He needed the approval of the Temple Council for his second donation, viz. a daily offering of lampoil and rice meant for the Nārāyaṇa Temple (*devakula*), since this was to be taken from the storeroom (*koṣṭhikā*) connected to the Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin Temple. How this was paid for remains unclear, unless we assume that the third donation to the Temple Council was considered to be sufficient to cover the costs of this as well.

His third donation to the Temple Council, for which he also needed approval, was meant for the worship of Maṇḍaleśvarasvāmin himself and is said to have had a value of 50 *dīnāras*. For this amount he provided the means needed for worshipping the deity, such as milk (a cow), food and garlands, epitomized in the words *vicitrakarmāntatantra*<sup>o</sup> (regular set of various observances), if our conjecture (l. 10) is correct.

The inscription attests to the existence, in the second half of the 6th century, of a main Śaiva temple complex, called Maṇḍaleśvara. Connected to this temple was a storeroom, which could also supply the daily offerings for a minor Vaiṣṇava sanctuary dedicated to Nārāyaṇa. In addition, and possibly closely connected to the Maṇḍaleśvara complex, was a monastery of Śaiva ascetics, named Vinīteśvaramaṭha. Whether there was a temple or shrine of Vinīteśvara cannot be deduced from this inscription with certainty, but the existence at the time of such a temple is very likely indeed. The monastery or/and its temple was headed by Bhānūdayin.

## MAṆḌALEŚVARA AND THE ŚKANDAPURĀṆA

This is as far as epigraphy (and archaeology) can bring us. It does not tell us why ascetics and pilgrims flocked to this hill in great numbers. Why the site was considered holy. In order to answer these questions we need texts, and such a text has become available. I refer to the original *Skandapurāṇa*.

In the context of the Kauśikī Cycle the *Skandapurāṇa* contains a *Maṇḍaleśvara Māhātmya*.<sup>41</sup> This *Māhātmya* tells the story of the demons Sunda and Nisunda and the nymph Tilottamā, also known from the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>42</sup> which serves as an aetiological myth of the origin of the *caturmukhalīṅga*.

40 Cf. Vallabhadeva *ad Raghuvamśa* 1.94, who glosses *kulapatinā* as *āśramaguruṇā*. Parallels for this usage are also found in Khmer inscriptions (Coedes 1937–66) K 95, K 309, K 362.

41 The credit for the discovery of the relevance of this text for the Muṇḍeśvarī Hill goes to Yuko Yokochi (Yokochi 2005, 88 n. 28).

42 MBh 1.200.18–204.26; Mbh 13.128.1–6. See Bakker 2001; below, pp. 489 ff.

Tilottamā, her creator Brahmā, and the other gods assemble in the Vindhya for worshipping Śiva, but he is invisible at first. Then Śiva appears on the scene in the form of a *līṅga*. When Tilottamā makes her *pradakṣiṇā* around him (and the gods), four faces emerge on the four sides of the *līṅga*, which gives her the power of sexual desire, the *tejas*, namely, that had been stored within Śiva ever since he had burnt Madana. Thus the *caturmukhaliṅga* comes into being (SP 62.8–26). Then Śiva says that,

Because she [Tilottamā], as well as the gods, has circumambulated Him in a circle (*maṇḍala*), this place on Mt. Vindhya, which is sacred to Him, will be called Maṇḍaleśvara, and He will always be present here.<sup>43</sup>

The story continues, again in the words of Yokochi.

After sending Tilottamā to the demons, all the gods huddle together. They see Parameśvara in their midst. Because He appeared in the midst of the gods while they were huddling together (*piṇḍyamāna*), He was called Piṇḍāreśvara there.<sup>44</sup>

A holy place called Piṇḍāraka is known to the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 13.26.54), and other places with this name are known to several Purāṇas. The Piṇḍāreśvara at issue, however, must be located in the vicinity of Maṇḍaleśvara. The word *piṇḍāra* means mendicant and the aetiological myth told in the *Skandapurāṇa* probably refers to a local *līṅga* that was worshipped by Śaiva ascetics.

The place where our text locates these two *līṅgas* is in the northern part of the Vindhya, since Tilottamā is said to go to the south to find the two demons in the foothills of the Vindhya (*vindhyapādeṣu*). Our investigation thus seems to corroborate Yokochi's hypothesis, to the effect that both *Skandapurāṇa līṅgas* are to be situated on the Muṇḍeśvarī Hill—the Maṇḍaleśvara being the ancient *caturmukhaliṅga* preserved on the site near the main, octagonal temple and named as such in the *Muṇḍeśvarī Inscription, Year 30*, and the Piṇḍāreśvara being one of the many of 5th to 7th century *līṅgas* that are scattered all over the hill, possibly the 5th or 6th century *ekamukhaliṅga* found at site A.<sup>45</sup>

43 Yokochi 2005, synopsis; SP 62.27–28:

*abravīc ca surān sarvāms tatredaṃ vacanaṃ śivah |*  
*yasmād iyaṃ māṃ yūyaṃ ca maṇḍalena pradakṣiṇam || 27 ||*  
*cakre sarve suraśreṣṭhāḥ sthānaṃ tasmād idaṃ mama |*  
*bhaviṣyati girau vindhye maṇḍaleśvarasaṃjñitam |*  
*sāmnidhyaṃ sarvadā hy asmīn kariṣyāmi varapradam || 28 ||*

44 Yokochi 2005, synopsis; SP 62.36–38:

*atha sampreṣayitvā tu devatās tāṃ tilottamām |*  
*ātmanaṃ piṇḍayāmāsur devās te sarva eva hi || 36 ||*  
*kaḥ kaḥ katama āyāta ihādyeti surarṣabhāḥ |*  
*tato madhye sthītaṃ bhūyas te 'paśyan paramēśvaram || 37 ||*  
*piṇḍyamāneṣu deveṣu yasmān madhye samāsthitaḥ |*  
*piṇḍāreśvara ityeva tatrāsāv abhavat tataḥ || 38 ||*

45 For this site A on the hill see Neuss 2003, 546, 558–60, Fig. 2; Bakker 2014, 231 ff.



Plate 83  
Old *caturmukhaliṅga*<sup>46</sup>



Plate 84  
*Ekamukhaliṅga* of site A<sup>47</sup>

Once the hill had established its reputation, it began to attract patronage of the elite. Gomibhaṭa exemplifies this development and we have suggested elsewhere that the Vinīteśvara temple may have been founded by someone named Vinīta, who may have ruled from the stronghold of near-by Rohitāgiri, Rohtasgarh.<sup>48</sup> The inscription and earliest archaeological material on the hill belong to the period in which we date the beginning of the *Skandapurāna* composition, that is after AD 550, when North India became united again, for the first time since the fall of the Gupta Empire, under the Maukhari rulers, whose homeland was in the near-by valley of the River Son. It is the period in which the Śaiva movement was beginning to organize itself through sectarian settlements

46 This *liṅga* is found in the temple compound, near the entrance. Neuss 2003, 546 n. 37: 'This *caturmukhaliṅga* seems to be the model for the one which is at present in the temple and which most likely is a substitute for the former.' Photo by the author (2011).

47 This *liṅga* is presently stored within the temple. For its history see Neuss 2003, 546 f. It came from 'site A'. Photo courtesy of F. Buckee (2008).

48 In inscriptions of the Tuṅga dynasty, ruling in the tenth century as feudatories of the Bauma-Kara kings of Orissa in the Yamagarta-maṅḍala in the Dhenkanal District of Central Orissa, this dynasty of petty kings claims that its ancestor, named Vinīta, came originally from the Rohitāgiri. See Bakker 2010b.

or *mathas* in centres of pilgrimage that were on the rise, such as Vārāṇasī. Muṇḍeśvarī Hill, that is Maṇḍaleśvara, may have been a knot in the emerging network of Pāśupata ascetics, important enough to deserve a Māhātmya of its own in one of the movement's greatest literary undertakings, the Purāṇa of Skanda.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For further reading see Bakker 2014, 221–39.



# Monuments to the Dead in Ancient North India\*

## PREAMBLE

The scope of this study is limited to funerary practices within the brahminical (Hindu) fold of the ancient period, i.e. North India from the Vedic Age to the reign of King Harṣavardhana (7th century). Funerary practices in South India, Dravida country, and Southeast Asia seem to have differed significantly from those in North India.<sup>1</sup> They deserve a study of their own. In late medieval North India new forms of commemoration (*samādhis*, *chatarīs*) emerged, possibly under Islamic influence.<sup>2</sup>

## THE FUNERARY MONUMENT IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

We possess a moving literary description of what the death of a king—great in the eyes of his contemporaries—brought about, how it was experienced by the court, and which ritual and ceremonies were performed to cope with the calamity. Bāṇa in *Harṣacarita* 5 tells us that, even before the actual demise of Harṣa's father, Prabhākaravardhana, the latter's first wife, Queen Yaśovatī, was so overwhelmed by grief and the prospect of widowhood that she, against the express wish of her son, committed herself to the flames (i.e. became a *satī*), while her husband was still alive.

After the death of his mother Harṣa goes to his dying father and clasps his feet in despair. The latter comforts him, recommends him to his royal duties, and utters his last words: 'enemies should be exterminated'.<sup>3</sup> The body is brought to the bank of the Sarasvatī on a bier, a funeral pyre is built and the cremation ritual is performed at dusk. It is suggested that the remaining ladies of the king's harem also commit *satī*. Harṣa keeps a vigil and next morning goes to the Sarasvatī to bathe, offers an oblation of water to his father, and goes home in distress (p. 293). A brahmin eats the first *piṇḍas* offered to the ghost (*preta*) and the period of impurity passes.

The deceased king's paraphernalia are given to the brahmins; the collected bones are brought to holy places. Then it is said that a 'stab of pain' is set up

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1 See below, n. 23 on p. 410, n. 27 on p. 411, and n. 84 on p. 431.

2 Cf. below, n. 84 on p. 431.

3 *Harṣacarita* (HC\* 5 p. 288): *niravaśeṣatām śatravo neyāḥ*.

in the form of a monument at (the place of) the funeral pyre made of a mass of bricks.<sup>4</sup> Finally the royal elephant is set loose and gradually the lamentations subside. The metaphor used by Bāṇa, ‘a stab of pain’ (*śokaśalya*)—the primary meaning of *śalya* being ‘dart’—suggests that the monument had the form of a needle.<sup>5</sup> Such a monument seems to be known from the Sanskrit literature, viz. the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*’s chapter on the so-called *aiḍūka*.

*The aiḍūka of the Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*

*Viṣṇudharmottara* 3.84.1–15 describes the *aiḍūkarūpa* as follows.<sup>6</sup>

A structure is built of three (receding) square platforms (*bhadrapīṭha*), with steps on four sides. On the third platform a *liṅgarūpa* is erected, but one not decorated with lines (*rekhā*, i.e. without the *brahmasūtra* and the *pārśvasūtra*). In the middle of this *liṅgarūpa* an immovable square column (*yaṣṭi*) is fixed. On that thirteen *bhūmikās* are made.<sup>7</sup> On top of this is an *āmalasāraka* (= *āmalaka*?) and on that again a round column, *yaṣṭi*, is fixed. This column is decorated with a medallion (*candraka*).<sup>8</sup> In between the *bhūmikās* and the *liṅga* (i.e. on the square column?) the four Lokapālas are situated, Virūḍha, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūpākṣa, and Kubera, with lances (*śūla*) in their hands, wearing armour and ornaments.<sup>9</sup> It is said that in this construction Virūḍha is Śakra, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is Yama, Virūpākṣa is Varuṇa, and Kubera is Rājarāja. This *aiḍūka* is named ‘Prajāhita’; men who worship it obtain happiness and heaven after death.

Shah in her commentary emphasizes that this Aiḍūka structure is not a particular deity but is designed to embody the whole universe. As to the names of the Lokapālas she remarks: ‘These are known to Buddhist mythology as the four Buddhist Yakṣas who do the work of the Lokapālas.’<sup>10</sup> Shah assumes that

4 *Harṣacarita* (HC\* 6 p. 300): *kalpitaśokaśalye sudhānicayacīte citācaityacihne*, which Śaṅkara glosses: *citāyām caityacihnas tadākāraṃ cihnam, śmaśānadevagrhaṃ vā*

5 Cf. *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* III, 62, *Sokasallaharaṇa*, name of the discourse (*dharmapariyāya*) that takes away the grief of bereavement, taught to king Muṇḍa.

6 For the Sanskrit text of VDhP 3.84.1–15 see Appendix.

7 It is unclear whereon exactly, the *liṅgarūpa* or the *yaṣṭi*; *liṅgarūpa* is neuter, *yaṣṭi* feminine. *tasyopariṣṭāt* (84.5c) refers to the *liṅgarūpa*, unless we assume double sandhi. A similar sloppy construction is seen in 6a. Shah cites Kramrish, who interprets the *bhūmikās* as ‘steps’.

8 I read *samārdhacandra*° instead of *samārkacandra*°, meaning that the medallion is situated in the middle of the horizontal (*sama*) crescent moon. The thirteen *bhūmikās* and the *āmalasāraka* are said to represent the 14 *bhuvanas*. The *liṅga* represents Maheśvara, the round column Pitāmaha and the square column Janārdana. The three platforms represent the three *gūṇas*.

9 In accordance with the oldest MS C, I take ‘the apparel of the sun (Sūrya)’ in 12b singular, corresponding with Kubera.

10 See *Barhut Inscriptions* (CII II, pt. ii), p. 73:

As Kupira (*Kubera*) and Virūḍaka (*Virūḍhaka*) are the guardians of the Northern and Southern region respectively we can assume with certainty that on the lost corner pillars of both the quadrants Virūpākṣa and Dhatarāṭha, the guardians of the West and East, were represented, each one with two companions. Vogel, *Indian Serpent-*

the *aiḍūka* of the VDhP is without ashes or bones and is therefore acceptable to be worshipped, whereas originally such monuments would have contained bones or relics. This plausible assumption as well as the naming of the four Buddhist Lokapālas strongly suggest that Buddhist examples lie at the root of the Purāṇa's description of the *aiḍūka*.<sup>11</sup> We may add that the use of the word *aiḍūka*, instead of *eḍūka*, could also point to this, meaning 'derived from/related to/of the nature of the *eḍūka*', not the original (Buddhist) 'ossuary'. The view that sees in the *aiḍūka* an appropriation by the author of the VDhP of a Buddhist architectural tradition finds support in the outcome of Gustav Roth's investigation into the *Symbolism of the Buddhist Stūpa*.<sup>12</sup>

### The *eḍūka*

We have some more literary evidence regarding the *eḍūka*. The *Mahāvastu* refers to an anticipated funerary monument of Princess Sudarśanā, who tells her mother:

Mother, when the seven Kṣatriyas, after fighting one another, shall have caused my death, then, after having performed the cremation rite and collected the bones, you should next erect for me a monument (*elūkā*). And at the entrance of that monument you should plant a karṇikāra tree. Thereupon, when the first month of the rainy season has come after the hot season, that karṇikāra tree will be wrapped in a golden colour as it is covered abundantly by blossoms. Then you shall remember me, thinking to yourself: 'I had a daughter whose complexion was beautiful (*sudarśanā*) like this'.<sup>13</sup>

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*Lore*, p. 212, is of the opinion that the names of the four world-guardians do not occur in the older Pāli texts, but they are given in the *Mahāsamayasutta* (D II, 257–258) and in the *Āṭṭānāṭṭiyasutta* (D III, 197 ff.) in accordance with their fixed distribution in the four directions.

In the *Aiḍūka* construction it seems that Virūḍha represents the East (= Śakra) and Dhṛtarāṣṭra the South (= Yama). This would make a *pradakṣiṇā*: Virūḍha East, Dhṛtarāṣṭra South, Virūpākṣa West, Kubera North. This is a deviation from the standard Buddhist doctrine; cf. Banerjea 1956, 521 f.:

In Buddhist mythology too we find a group of four divine beings associated with the four principal quarters, and the Sanskrit Buddhist texts give us a stereotyped list of four; they are Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the Gandharva king (east), Virūḍhaka, the king of the Kumbhāṇḍas (south), Virūpākṣa, the Nāga monarch (west) and Vaiśravaṇa, the Yakṣa king (north). They are the Catur-mahārājas of some Buddhist texts, and Pāṇini seems to have had them in his mind when he referred to their bhaktas in one of his *sūtras* (P 4.3.99): *mahārājātṭhān*.

11 If we compare this description with that of the *Divyāvadāna* (see below, n. 77 on p. 428) we observe another correspondence: the stairs at the four sides. The three *bhadrapīṭhas* may reflect the three *medhīs* or platforms (see Roth 1980, 200 f.).

12 Roth 1980. In a *Postscriptum* Roth draws a comparison between the description in the VDhP and some Buddhist texts and refers, for instance, to a bronze *stūpa* (ca. 10th century) kept in the Patna Museum (Plate XIV/3; cf. *op. cit.* 208). Roth concludes that the VDhP 'follows an older Buddhist tradition which is found in the above quoted chapters of *Caityavibhāgavinayodbhāvasūtra*, *Stūpalakṣaṇakārikāvivecana*, and *Kriyā-saṃgraha*' (*op. cit.* 200).

13 *Mahāvastu* II, p. 486 15:

Evidently the word used here for the monument, *elūkā*, refers to a funerary monument of laymen. Emeneau, discussing the word in a review of Mayrhofer's KEWA,<sup>14</sup> and referring to Edgerton's BHSD s.v. *eluka*, remarks:

The word in Buddhist texts seems clearly to be *eluka* or *elūka* and to mean 'monument containing the ashes or bones of a dead person'. [...] Considering the clear meaning in the Buddhist texts (bones are specifically mentioned in one passage) and the *l* of the word there, one must at least consider again Kittel's old suggestion. . . of connection with the Dr[avidian] words for 'bone'. . .

Shah quotes Helmer Smith who derives it from the Canarese root *el-* 'to stand up, to rise'.<sup>15</sup> This meaning of the word *eḍūka* is confirmed by the *Amarakośa*, in which it occurs in connection with 'wall': 'An *eḍūka* is (a wall) wherein bones are placed, i.e. an ossuary.'<sup>16</sup>

From the evidence surveyed above it seems to appear that the erection of funerary monuments was not strictly limited to the heterodox traditions. However, being from its inception connected with the remains of the dead, the *eḍūka*

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*ambe yadi me sapta kṣatriyā parasparam virudhitvā ghātayiṣyanti, tataḥ bhasmāyitvā asthīni saṃharyitvā tato me elūkām kārāpayasi | tatra ca elūkādvāre karṇikāravṛkṣaṃ ropāpayasi | tato grīṣmāṇām atyayena prathame prāvṛṣamāse vartamāne so karṇikāravṛkṣo sarvapariphullo bhavyeḥ hemaprakāśavarṇaḥ | tato me smarasi | eḍṣā me varṇena dhītā sudarśanā āsīti ||*

Cf. the *thūpa* (*stūpa*) erected for Queen Bhaddā by her husband, King Muṇḍa of Pāṭaliputra, *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* III, 62 (I thank Oskar von Hinüber for referring me to this passage).

Kane IV, 255 n. 580 draws our attention to a passage in the Brahmanical literature where a tree and *eḍūka* are mentioned. It concerns a passage found in Aparārka's commentary on the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (vol. II, pp. 885 f.) ascribed to the *Brahmapurāṇa*:

It is stated that the charred bones of a cremated person should be collected in an urn and deposited at the root of a tree or cast in the Ganges, that the place of cremation should be purified with cowdung and water, that a puṣkaraka tree should be planted there or an *eḍūka* (a structure) should be built over it.

. . . *bhūmer ācchādanārthaṃ tu vṛkṣaḥ puṣkarako 'tha vā | eḍūko vā prakartavyas tatra sarvairiḥ svabandhubhiḥ ||*

14 Emeneau 1988 (*Selected Papers*), 184 f. See also Allchin 1957.

15 Shah VDhP p. 173. She further speculates about the etymology and concludes: 'If this is correct, it would lead us to the conclusion that the Deśya word *eḍūka*, which later on became sanskritised and accepted in sanskrit lexicons, originally must have meant a structure containing bone relics.' (p. 172). Allchin 1957, 3 refers to Tamil *īṭu*, meaning 'bury' since very early times and *īṭu-kāṭu*, 'burial ground'. The same author refers to the ubiquitous stone cists found in Dravida country: 'The stone cists have been found to contain almost every possible combination of relics including the collected bones of many persons'. . . 'The cist was sometimes built on the bare rock, or sometimes partly or entirely buried in a pit. Over and around it was placed a cairn of small stones, granite chips, etc. and around the cairn was frequently placed one or more circles of large boulders.' (*op. cit.* 3); cf. Falk 2000, 73.

16 *Amarakośa* 2.2.4: *bhittir strī kudyam eḍūkam yadantarnyastakikasam | grhaṃ gehodavasite veśma sadma nikanam || 4 ||*

Līngayasūrin glosses: *ilyate kṣipyate 'sthi antar iti eḍūkam | 'ila svapnakṣepaṇayoḥ' | sāsthibhittināma ||* Mallinātha glosses: *eḍūkam-kikasam | antargatāsthikudyānāma | 'mettinakoda' | eḍūkam ity apy asti | 'eḍūkam antargatāsthikudyāṃ syāt' iti ratnakośaḥ ||*

was, for obvious reasons, not much in vogue in orthodox circles, as the following passage demonstrates. *Mahābhārata* 3.188 pretends to describe the period of total disruption at the end of the Kali Age, but, as is often the case with such passages, its hidden agenda seems to be to attack contemporaneous practices.<sup>17</sup>

And this perverted world shall be upside down: at the dissolution of the yuga (people) will venerate charnel-houses (*edūkas*) and abandon the gods, (whereas) śūdras will not serve the brahmins. When the yuga expires, the earth shall no longer be decorated by temples, but marked by charnel-houses (*edūkas*): in the hermitages of the great seers, in the settlements of brahmins, in the dwellings of the gods, in hallowed places (*caitya*), and in the abodes of the Nāgas. That is the sign that the yuga has come to an end. When men, fierce and devoid of dharma, will be constantly eating meat and drinking liquor, then the yuga will collapse.<sup>18</sup>

Although not popular with the orthodox, the custom of erecting a monument for the dead goes back to megalithic times and was partly sanctioned by Vedic literature.<sup>19</sup> Kane, dealing with funerary rites, observes (IV, 255): ‘It will be seen that the disposal of the dead in ancient India was divided into four stages, viz. cremation, collecting the charred bones and depositing them underground in an urn, expiatory rites (called Śāntikarma) and erection of a monument over the bones. The last was not necessarily done in every case.’ Caland in his *Die altindischen Todten- und Bestattungsgebräuche* describes this optional procedure. On the ground where the cremation had taken place (*śmaśāna*) a plot of land of the size of a man is demarcated, square or, according to others, round. The land is ritually ploughed.

Mitten in die gepflegte Stelle wird der Aschenkrug hingestellt ... (*op. cit.* §93) Darauf wird die Śmaśāna-stätte besprengt und besät (*op. cit.* §95)... Ganz wie bei der gewöhnlichen ‘Feuerschichtung’ wird das Śmaśānafeld jetzt mit kleinen Steinen umschlossen (*op. cit.* §96)... Jetzt, da das Terrain für die ‘Schichtung’ gehörig zubereitet ist, wird die Stelle des *śmaśāna*, wo die Gebeine niedergelegt werden sollen, zur Aufnahme derselben zurechtgemacht (*op. cit.* §98). ... Jetzt endlich das in allen Kalpas beschriebene Ausstreuen der Knochen. ... Der *Mādhyandina* verwendet

17 Madeleine Biardeau (2002 I, 607) is the latest in a long tradition starting with Lassen that sees in this passage a reference to Buddhist practice (below, n. 81 on p. 429).

18 MBh 3.188.64–67:

*viparītas ca loko ’yaṃ bhaviṣyaty adharottaraḥ |*  
*edūkān pūjayiṣyanti varjayiṣyanti devatāḥ |*  
*śūdrāḥ paricarīṣyanti na dvijān yugasamkṣaye || 64 ||*  
*āśrameṣu maharṣīṇāṃ brāhmaṇāvasatheṣu |*  
*devasthāneṣu caityeṣu nāgānām ālayeṣu ca || 65 ||*  
*edūkacihnā pṛthivī na devagrhabhūṣitā |*  
*bhaviṣyati yuge kṣīṇe tad yugāntasya lakṣaṇam || 66 ||*  
*yadā raudrā dharmahīnā māṃsādāḥ pānapās tathā |*  
*bhaviṣyanti narā nityaṃ tadā samkṣepsyate yugam || 67 ||*

19 For a survey of megalithic and prehistoric burial practices in ancient India see Singh 1970; Gupta 1972; Falk 2000.

folgenden: ‘Gott Savitar soll dein Gebein in den Schoß der Mutter ausstreuen, O Erde, sei du günstig ihm’ (*op. cit.* §102). . . . Die Knochen sollen jetzt so auseinander gelegt werden, dass eine menschliche Gestalt hergestellt wird (*op. cit.* §103). . . . Der Aschenkrug wird darauf vernichtet (*op. cit.* §105). . . . Die eigentliche Schichtung kann jetzt einen Anfang nehmen (*op. cit.* §107). . . . Jetzt ist die *citi* mittelst der ‘raumfüllenden’ Ziegel zur erforderlichen Höhe aufzuschichten. Ihre Anzahl ist abhängig von der Größe, die man der *citi* geben will; meistens ist die Gesamtzahl der Ziegel tausend (*op. cit.* §112).<sup>20</sup>

Despite the attention paid to these barrows (*citi*) in the Kalpaśāstra, we, *pace* Giuseppe de Marco, find little hard evidence that this Vedic tradition was continued in historic times in classical North India. Disposal of the remains in holy water (*tīrtha*)—be it the ashes/bones, or the body as a whole (as in the case of ascetics)—seems to have replaced the older practices of inhumation and exposure.<sup>21</sup> This tallies with the virtual absence in the *Mahābhārata* of any reference to the erection of monuments to the dead, apart from the quoted passage regarding the alleged worship of *edūkas*.<sup>22</sup>

The Sanskrit literature knows, however, yet another type of monument to commemorate the deceased; it is said to appertain in particular to the kṣatriya class.<sup>23</sup> The *Pratimānāṭaka*, traditionally ascribed to Bhāsa, describes how Bharata on his return to Ayodhyā pauses at a building, outside the city, tucked away amidst the trees, on the walls of which sandal imprints of hands are found, of which the doors are decorated with floral wreaths, and where he finds offerings (*balī*), evident from flowers and parched rice grains that are well-arranged, and a floor strewn with sand.<sup>24</sup> Little wonder that, when he also fails to see a *dhvaja* or other emblem of a god (*cihna*), Bharata is puzzled: could this be a ‘house of the gods’ (*devakula*)? Inside there are images, well made and true to life, which makes one believe that they are human beings. And this they

20 Caland 1896; cf. Falk 2000, 75 ff. Saindon 2000.

21 Cf. de Marco 1987, 219 ff.

22 In an interesting study, *Disposal of the Dead in the Mahābhārata*, Tiwari 1979, 23 f. observes the following:

It has already been remarked that the *Mahābhārata* seems to contain no clear reference to the rite of *asthi-sañcayana*, which formed an essential element of *antyeṣṭi* as described in several ritual texts. This rite involved the collection of charred bones and ashes some days after the cremation and disposal of them in various ways—hanging in a bundle on the branch of a tree, or re-cremating in some special cases, or depositing at the foot of a tree, or, more generally, burying them in a hole dug in the ground and sometimes also building some kind of memorial mound (*śmaśāna*) over them. Apparently this practice gradually went out of vogue, and, already towards the close of the epic, the custom of depositing the bones in holy river had probably become more common.

23 The South-Indian *Dīptāgama* Pātala 52, *Kṣatriyasthāpana*, gives a description of the installation of images of the king, his queen and the ministers (*Dīptāgama* II, 347–56). For the South-Indian tradition of royal portraiture see also Lefèvre 2006, Part 3 Ch. 8. See also below, n. 27 on p. 411.

24 *sādhumuktapušpalājāvīṣkr̥tā balayah, dattacandanapañcāṅgulā bhittayah, avasaktamālyadamaśobhīnī dvārāṇi, prakīrṇā bālukāḥ* | (*Pratimānāṭaka* 3.5).

prove to be. Bharata has come upon a statue gallery, *pratimāgr̥ha*, in which images of the deceased kings of the Ikṣvāku race are set up; his uncertainty seems to indicate that it is an uncommon phenomenon.<sup>25</sup> The keeper tells him that a brahmin should not salute or worship them as they do not represent gods (*daivata*), but kings (*kṣatriya*) who have passed away. When Bharata discovers an image of Daśaratha among them, he understands that his father has died.<sup>26</sup>

The problem with this testimony, however, is its date and place of origin. The issue has been discussed by many scholars, and Tieken 1993, summarizing much of this discussion, argues that the so-called ‘Trivandrum Plays’, to which the *Pratimānāṭaka* belongs, may be late and of South-Indian origin.<sup>27</sup>

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE FUNERARY MONUMENT

If we turn to archaeology, it becomes immediately clear that, despite the literary evidence, material testifying to the actual practice of erecting funerary monuments in the Brahminical tradition in ancient India is rare.<sup>28</sup> A. Ghosh

25 *Pratimānāṭaka* 3.6.

26 *Pratimānāṭaka* 3.7–9.

27 On account of a formal statistical analysis, van der Geer 1998 dates this particular play to the 4th or 5th century AD (*op. cit.* 177) and also thinks a South Indian author most likely (*op. cit.* 187). The *Pratimānāṭaka* may reflect a South-Indian custom. That South-Indian funerary practices differed from the ‘Aryan’ North may also be deduced from the description of a cemetery in the early Tamil epic *Maṇimekalai* (Daniélou 1989, 24 ff.). The practice to install commemorative images of Śivabhaktas is prescribed in the relatively late South-Indian redaction of the *Ajitāgama*, not known to (12th-century) Aghoraśiva (Goodall 2004, cx), which text tells us that this sort of images may be installed at holy places or in a Śiva temple where they should be worshipped. According to *Dīptāgama* 52.59 images of bhaktas should follow the rules of the images of the king (above, n. 23 on p. 410). The *Ajitāgama* gives the following description 63.39–42:

*śivālaye viśeṣeṇa śivabhaktān kṛtāñjalīn || 39 || savālacāmarakarāṅḡl liṅgahastān sa-  
lakṣaṇān | bimbarūpān vidhāyātha mahāmaṅṭapadeśataḥ || 40 || maṇimaṅṭapadeśe  
vā prakārābhyanatareṣu vā | tasmāt sarvaprāyatnena pratiṣṭhāpya yathāvidhī || 41 ||  
śivāgamavidhānena nityapūjām samācaret | pratiṣṭhānām bhaktānām ālaye bimba-  
rūpīnām || 42 || nityam naimittikaṅ kāmīyam utsavam ca samācaret |*

The editor of the *Ajitāgama*, N.R. Bhatt, quotes the *Acintya-* and refers to the *Uttara-kāmikāgama ad loc.* The underlying idea seems to be that these bhaktas have reached *sārūpya* with Śiva and can therefore be depicted with four arms, though they keep the distinct (iconographic) characteristics of the devotee: two hands forming an *añjali*, as a true devotee should, two others holding *liṅga* and chowry.

Along with this South Indian custom one may consider funerary practices in Indianized Southeast Asia. Thus there is substantial evidence that in Cambodia as well as on Java and Bali temples and statues were erected for deceased kings and their families; see i.a. Coëdès 1940, 320 ff. (I thank Arlo Griffiths for this reference).

28 Cf. Malamoud 1982, 442:

Or, la suppression physique du cadavre s’accompagne de procédures qui aboutissent à l’abolition du souvenir de la personne du mort. Notons d’abord qu’après la dispersion des restes du défunt nul tombeau, bien sûr, mais aussi nul cénotaphe n’est mis en place qui pourrait prolonger son existence terrestre en lui réservant un morceau d’espace.

observes the following: ‘As by the time cremation had virtually replaced inhumation there is hardly any archaeological evidence of the practices concerning the disposal of the dead. [The Buddhist (and Jaina) *stūpas* form an entirely different category.]’<sup>29</sup> From the following it will emerge that this sweeping statement should be qualified on two points: the Buddhist and Jain customs are not so categorically different from the Hindu ones (see p. 425), and there is more archaeological evidence of Hindu funerary practice than supposed by Ghosh (see below, p. 430).

In discussions regarding this apparent absence reference is often made to excavations at Lauriya–Nandangarh (W. Champaran District, Bihar),<sup>30</sup> which, since T. Bloch’s excavations in 1905,<sup>31</sup> are supposed to show ‘Vedic burial mounds’. Ghosh assesses the evidence unearthed by Bloch, refers to the re-examination by N.G. Majumdar,<sup>32</sup> whose excavation he himself continued after the demise of Majumdar, and concludes:

He (i.e. Majumdar) found that all of them were earthen burial memorials with burnt-brick revetment, two being faced with a brick lining in a double tier, so that there was no justification for regarding them as more earthen barrows. He also pointed out that the gold leaves found by Bloch [containing a female figure in frontal pose] had their exact replica in the *stūpa* at Piprawa, which is definitely a Buddhist *stūpa* of 300 BC or earlier. The respective Lauriya *stūpas* might be of a comparable date and there is nothing to connect them with Vedic burial rites.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, the question is justified whether cremation completely replaced inhumation. It certainly did not for certain categories of persons such as children, yogins or ascetics (*yatī*), and pregnant women.<sup>34</sup> The evidence of eighteen Gandhāra reliefs containing depictions of cemeteries and burial monuments discussed by de Marco 1987 seems to indicate that burial was still customary long after the Vedic period at least in certain parts of India and for certain categories of persons. We shall come back to this below (p. 424 ff.).

In order to improve our understanding of the phenomenon of memorials to the dead it might be useful to distinguish between categories of monuments.

1 Temples dedicated to a particular god, erected in order to transfer the merit thereof to the deceased, often recorded in epigraphs. Many temples may actually fall into this category, for which there is, to the best of my knowledge, no

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29 *Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology* I, p. 267.

30 E.g. Kane IV, 254; Das 1968, 59–63; Singh 1970, 133.

31 *ASI Annual Report* 1906–07, 119–126. See below, p. 427.

32 *ASI Annual Report* 1935–36, 55–66; 1936–37, 47–50.

33 Ghosh in *Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology* II, 254 f., s.v. Lauriya-Nandangarh. In 1912 Caland had already raised serious doubts about Bloch’s identification.

34 De Marco 1987, 221–226 discusses various categories of people liable to be buried and evidence of the burialgrounds. As to the burial of pregnant women he concludes (*op. cit.* 222, n. 59): ‘Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the practice of burial for deceased pregnant women, even if not explicitly traceable in the texts, has always been considered, from an unspecified epoch, as both necessary and legitimate.’ Cf. Kane IV, 227–233.

specific Sanskrit word, but which in the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* is referred to with the generic term *prāsāda*.<sup>35</sup> A special relation between the god and the deceased indicates that this type of buildings has a commemorative function, at least for contemporaries, and I therefore propose to refer to this type of monuments as ‘memorials’.

2 Sanctuaries/buildings that contain an image/images of the deceased. They are known in Sanskrit as *pratimāgṛha*, or ‘statue galleries’.

3 Hero-stones, including satī-stones, which are found in particular in the Decan in great number, and which commemorate the place where a heroic death took place. They could be classified as ‘memorial stones’.

4 Structures that have some formal correspondences with the funerary monuments of the following category (5), but which do not contain the actual mortuary remains; these seem to have been described in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* under the name of *aīḍūka*.

5 Burial mounds or sepulchral monuments that actually contain the ashes and/or bones, or the bodies of the deceased, in Sanskrit literature referred to as *eḍūka*.

### *Memorials*

This category may be illustrated by two examples, the first one being the Vākātaka temples on the top of the Rāmagiri, the other a temple built by Skandagupta for his father Kumāragupta in Bhitarī.<sup>36</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere (Bakker 1992b and 1997, 30 f.), the 5th-century Vākātaka temples on the Rāmagiri were erected to transfer merit to the dead. The choice of the temple-deity was not arbitrary; it was made on the basis of an envisaged similarity or affinity of the god and the deceased queen and kings (Bakker 1992b). This theory builds on the evidence of the inscription found in the Kevala–Narasimha Temple on the Rāmagiri, in which Prabhāvatī’s daughter, Princess Atibhāvatī, widow of Ghaṭotkacagupta, records the good works she has done. The text is very fragmentary and problematic. A translation of the relevant passage may run as follows.

Then (the princess) commissioned the splendid ‘Master of Prabhāvatī’, (the image of the) Lord of the World, within the temple, for the sake of undecaying merit of

35 Above, p. 125; Bakker 1997, 167. Granoff 1992, 187 refers to a temple built after the cremation of the Jain minister Vastupāla on Mt Śatruñjaya called ‘Svargārohanaprāsāda’. Granoff 1992 (*passim*) proves that the building of memorial temples was just as popular in Jainism as it was in Hinduism. This type of memorial temple seems to be referred to under the Cōlas as *palli-paṭai* in Tamil: ‘temple erected in memory of kings’. Huntington 1985, 310 conjectures that the famous Dharmarāja shrine in Māmallapuram may have been such a *palli-paṭai*, since it contains a portrait image of the Pallava king Nṛsiṃhavarman I himself on its southern face.

36 The wide-spread practice to install *liṅgas* in commemoration of the deceased, which could be comprised in the category of ‘memorial’, is left out of account here. An example hereof is e.g. attested by the *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61*, above, p. 287, below, p. 494. For this practice in Nepal, centering around Paśupatinātha, see Mirnig 2016.

(her) mother. (21) ... [text lost]

After she of extreme (lustre) (Atibhāvātī), had made in the village Kadalīvātaka a water reservoir Sudarśana ('lovely to behold') and (installed) the beautiful (*sudarśana*) god, ... for the sake of merit (24, 25) ... [text lost]

Half of the merit (she) assigned to the gods, for (her) father and mother ... accruing from the deed ... (27)

Of (him) of infinite might who is the cause of the sustenance and destruction of the world, .... (28) [text lost]

Reflecting that that temple for her beloved ... is transitory, she free of sins, for the sake of a mass of merit for her mother alone, ... (30) [text lost]<sup>37</sup>

On account of this evidence we assume that either the Kevala–Narasimha Temple, in which the inscription is found to date, or the adjacent Trivikrama Temple, to which the inscription originally may have belonged,<sup>38</sup> had been erected around the middle of the 5th century to transfer merit to the Vākātaka queen Prabhāvātī Guptā, who may have died a little earlier. This queen took great pride in her descent from two famous families, her father being the Gupta emperor Candragupta II, her mother Kuberanāgā born in the Nāga House and belonging to the Dhāraṇa *gotra* (Bakker 1997, 12). It may therefore not be coincidence that in front of the Kevala–Narasimha Temple entrance an image of a serpent, Nāga, is found. We will come back to this below, (p. 434).

A reference to another specimen of a memorial temple erected to transfer merit to a deceased king can be found in the *Bhitari Stone Pillar Inscription of Skandagupta*.<sup>39</sup> The inscription of Prabhāvātī's nephew, Skandagupta, is not without difficulties. The temple to which it may refer has been excavated,<sup>40</sup> but the image installed has not been found. Though somewhat elliptical, verse 12 may be read as follows.

Hence the manifestation of the Lord (Bhagavat), this (image/manifestation) here (i.e. Kumārasvāmin) and that which here has been consigned (to it) (i.e. the *grāma*), he (i.e. Skandagupta) has destined both for the merit of (his) father, since he is determined upon merit.<sup>41</sup>

The inscription tells us that Skandagupta installed an image, probably of Vāsudeva and possibly named Kumārasvāmin,<sup>42</sup> a deity who is said in verse 10 to be a great archer, Śārṅgin, and as such reflects the qualities of the emperor

37 *Kevala–Narasimha Temple Inscription* lines 11–14: Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 54 (above, pp. 125 f.); Bakker 1997, 166 f.; Bakker 2010c (above, p. 354, v. 21). For a detailed philological treatment of this text see Bakker & Isaacson 1993, 61–64 (above, pp. 133 ff.) For an analysis and discussion of its contents see *ibid.* 64–72 (above, pp. 137 ff.) and Bakker 1997, 28–31.

38 See Bakker 2010c. 2013b (above, pp. 351 ff., pp. 365 ff.).

39 CII III (1888), 52–56, SI I, 321–324. For my edition of the verses 8 to 12 see above, p. 379 (Bakker 2005).

40 Jayaswal 2001, Temple No. 2; see above, p. 378, Plate 76.

41 For a detailed discussion of this and the preceding verses see above, p. 376 (Bakker 2005).

42 A parallel that suggests this name is the Prabhāvatisvāmin of the *Kevala–Narasimha Temple inscription*.

and his father. In verse 8, in which his victory over the Hūṇas is reported, the twanging sound of a bow (*śārṅgadhvaniḥ*) is referred to in a simile that seems to express Skandagupta's prowess. For the maintenance of the image/temple Skandagupta assigned a community/village (*grāma*) to the deity, that is to say, he exempted this community from taxes, so that its surplus production could be used for worship and maintenance. Both beneficial acts were performed to increase the merit of the deceased father, Kumāragupta.

### *Pratimāgrhas*

When searching for galleries where effigies of kings were installed, the *pratimāgrha*, our second category, two sites spring to mind: Māt near Mathurā, and a cave at Nāṇeghāt, a pass leading from the Konkan to Junnar (Pune Dist.). The latter site has been discussed by Ajay Mitra Shastri. In this cave two sets of inscriptions are found:<sup>43</sup>

One of them, a large but fragmentary one is inscribed partly on the left and partly on the right walls. On its [i.e., the cave's] back wall were put up statues of eight personages which have all disappeared almost completely and over their heads there were inscribed what may be called labels of which also only six are now extant enabling us to identify the figures originally carved below them. Going by the preserved labels there were installed statues of Simuka Sātavāhana, the founder of the dynasty, queen Nāganikā and her spouse king Sātakani (Sātakarṇi), *Kumāra* (prince) Bhāya, Mahārāṭhi Tranakayira, *Kumāra* Hacusiri and *kumāra* Sātavāhana.<sup>44</sup>

According to Shastri the gallery was initiated by King Kṛṣṇa, who set up the image of his elder brother Simuka, and continued by Vediśrī, who set up the images of his father and mother Sātakarṇi and Nāganikā. Shastri argues, on the basis of the *Pratimānāṭaka*, that all images were erected after the death of the person involved. If his identification of these early Sātavāhana kings is correct, it would mean that this *pratimāgrha* predates the one at Māt and therefore cannot have been inspired by the Kuṣāṇa example. The epigraphs found in Nāṇeghāt do not give any reason to believe that these images were worshipped. The long inscription enumerates many Vedic sacrifices and their *dakṣiṇās*, but is silent as to the images.

The situation seems different at Māt. The archaeological remains of a building and the inscribed images of the Kuṣāṇa kings Vima/Vema (Kadphises), Kaniṣka, Huviṣka (?) and others, belong to the most well-known India has produced. The epigraphs have been competently dealt with by Lüders (posthumously published by Janert 1961). The building that housed these images is referred to as *devakula* in the inscriptions themselves. About this Lüders remarks:

43 For these inscriptions see also Sircar SI I, 190–197.

44 Shastri 1998, 102. Cf. Verardi 1983, 244–50.

There can be little doubt that the *devakula* at the Māt site, similarly to ‘Bhāsa’s’ *devakula*, served chiefly as a hall for the statues of members of the royal Kuṣāṇ family, although, as proved by the life-size image found together with the Kaniṣka statue, images of gods were mixed up with them.<sup>45</sup>

The latter concessive clause may mark a significant difference with the situation in Nāṇeghāt and the depiction in the *Pratimānāṭaka*. It may account for the term *devakula* used in the Māt inscriptions. ‘Bhāsa’ speaks also about a *devakula*, but that word is used when Bharata does not yet know whether he has to do with a ‘house of the gods’ or not. When he discovers the true nature of the monument the text uses the word *pratimāgr̥ha*.<sup>46</sup> Another important difference may be related to this. Lüders remarks,

In one respect, however, the collection of the Kuṣāṇ statues seems to have differed from the gallery described in the *Pratimānāṭaka*. Bhāsa tells us that only deceased kings were honoured by setting up their images. This restriction does not seem to have prevailed in the case of the Kuṣāṇ *devakula*. The present inscription was engraved on the pedestal of a statue, and we may reasonably assume that, in addition to the repair of the *devakula*, the gift of the statue was recorded in the inscription. The statue cannot have represented the grandfather of Huviṣka, nor is it likely that it was the second image of Kaniṣka. As the donation was made for the increase of the life and strength of Huviṣka, it becomes very probable that it represented that king, but that benedictory phrase shows at the same time that the statue was set up during the lifetime of Huviṣka.<sup>47</sup>

From this combined evidence it may appear that the images of the Kuṣāṇa kings were worshipped like those of gods, even when still alive. The true nature of the *devakula* was the subject of an interesting essay by Gérard Fussman, who compared the Māt sanctuary with a similar one in Surkh-Kotal, also containing images of Kuṣāṇa kings.<sup>48</sup> He argues that we should conceive of these temples as ‘shrines where the king, his family and high officials worshipped the deity who protects the king and his family, not the temple of the godlike king’.<sup>49</sup> A *devakula* is, according to the French scholar, ‘a royal family shrine’.<sup>50</sup> This

45 Lüders 1961, 144.

46 *Pratimānāṭaka* 3. 5, 6. Cf. *ibid.* 3.1 *paḍimāgeha*, 3.13 *idaṃ gr̥haṃ tat pratimānr̥pasya*. It has to be admitted, though, that the keeper is called *devakulika*.

47 Lüders 1961, 144 f.

48 Fussman 1989; cf. Rosenfield 1993, 154–172. Shastri 1998, 109 refers to similar ‘small sanctuaries in the Swāt region of Afghanistan’.

49 Fussman 1989, 199.

50 Fussman 1989, 198. Cf. Frantz Grenet 2015, 209 f. discussing the Rabatak Temple and its inscription:

The temple is said to contain images of Kaniṣka’s three direct ancestors and predecessors (Kujula Kadphises, Vima Taktu, Vima Kadphises), and of himself: as in the Surkh Kotal temple, and also at Māt in Mathura, another royal foundation, the royal statues are commemorative and not in themselves an object of worship (despite the enduring theory of the Kushan dynastic cult). In the Rabatak inscription gods, clearly distinguished from deceased kings, are mentioned in two contexts.

connotation accords well with the use of the term in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions, in which the state sanctuaries are referred to as ‘places’ (*sthāna*) of the *devakula* (above, p. 332). However, the idea of installing in these sanctuaries life-size images of the royal family itself is clearly imported into North India. Fussman’s contention that these royal images were not meant for worship in their own right remains open to doubt; the word *devakula* may have been used precisely because the Kuṣāṇa kings thought of themselves, or wanted their subjects to believe that they were members of the divine family (*kula*).<sup>51</sup> Their title, *devaputra*, also seems to endorse this.<sup>52</sup> Apparently the Brahmanical tradition represented by ‘Bhāsa’ found this too much to swallow, in view of the shift from *devakula* to *pratimāgrha*, and, to judge by our archaeological evidence, the idea of a statue gallery as a whole became obsolete, at least in North India during the period under review.<sup>53</sup>

### Memorial stones

The third category, ‘hero-stones’, has been the subject of a seminar at Dharwad, the papers of which have been edited by S. Settar & Günther D. Sontheimer (1982). In this volume D.R. Patil studies *The Origin of Memorial Stones*. Patil (*op. cit.* 48) observes that ‘... a memorial stone, in its basic conception, is commemorative in character, raised in memory or honour of the dead, and did not form part of the actual practice of the disposal of the dead’. Nevertheless Patil traces its origin back to this very practice by referring to early Buddhist monuments containing mortuary deposits, because in some of them a wooden post was found (Lauriya-Nandangarh), whereas an inscription in another Buddhist monument (Sui Vihar) seems to refer to such a post as a *yaṣṭi* raised in honour of the deceased (see below, p. 426). Typical of this type of stones seems to be that they contain a visual representation or symbol referring to the fate of those commemorated, in addition to, occasionally, a brief text.

Early specimens of ‘memorial stones’ as defined above seem to have been the so-called *chāyāstambha* or *chāyāskambha* (‘shade-pillar’) from Nāgārjunakoṇḍa

51 Von Hinüber 2004, 172 n. 234. Rosenfield 1993, 202 thinks that Iran is the most likely source of the tendency to deify the Kuṣāṇa kings. The term *devakula* literary means the ‘family seat of the god(s)’. When one installs a life-size image of oneself in this ‘seat’, does that not suggest that one wants to be regarded as part of that family?

52 Cf. Rosenfield 1993, 202 ff. Differently Grenet 2015, 209 n. 27:

The Kushan royal title ‘son of the god(s)/son of the lord(s)’, Bactr. *bagopouro*, Indian *devaputra*, are no more real proof of a claim to divine filiation as *theopatōr* on some Arsacid coins, probably corresponding to a genuine Parthian word *\*bagpuhr*. It can just as well allude to the legitimate royal filiation, eventually to the divine election. A critical examination of this difficult issue is found in Verardi 1983.

53 Cf. above, n. 27 on p. 411. Granoff 1992, 190 reports that ‘... images of tīrthaṅkaras were often made for the welfare of the dead. Bharata’s funerary monument to his father also bears striking resemblances to actual funerary monuments for Jain monks in having a portrait image of the deceased...’ See also below, n. 72 on p. 425. Von Hinüber 2004, 172 refers to the inscribed portrait images of Pallava kings and queens (7th century AD) in South India (see above, n. 35 on p. 413; Huntington 1985, 310; Lefèvre 2006).

discussed by H. Sarkar in the same volume.<sup>54</sup> These pillars were raised during the rule of the Ikṣvākus in the third century AD. They commemorate the death of members of the ruling class, religious personages and soldiers. One may serve as an example. King Rudrapuruṣadatta erected in the 11th year of his reign a memorial stone (*chāyakaṃbha*) for his mother, Mahādevī Varmabhaṭā (Vaṃmabhaṭā) belonging to the Bahaphala (i.e. Bṛhatphalāyana) *gotra*, who was the daughter of the Mahākṣatrapa, probably a Śaka king from Ujjain.<sup>55</sup> The pillar on which the inscription is found is decorated by one panel depicting the queen. The queen 'is seated on a stool [and] holding a mirror in her hand. She is dressed like a foreign lady, accompanied by two female attendants'.<sup>56</sup> Sircar (*op. cit.* 20) argues that the word *chāyā* in this context means 'image', and thus refers to the portrait of the deceased queen above the inscription.<sup>57</sup> Most *chāyāstambhas* belong to a Buddhist milieu, but this pillar seems to be the only one that 'was found in the precincts of a Buddhist monastery' (Sarkar *op. cit.* 202).<sup>58</sup>

The Śaka connection is reinforced by a find in Paunī, a Sātavāhana site in the Bhandara District of Maharashtra. The inscription on a memorial pillar (*chāyā-khaṃbha*) mentions a prince (*kumāra*) Rupiaṃma of the Mahākṣatrapa.<sup>59</sup> Shastri (1998, 66) does not believe that Rupiaṃma actually ruled over Vidarbha, as does Mirashi, but surmises that 'he might have come over there as a pilgrim as Paunī was an important religious centre, especially for the Buddhists...'. In view of this evidence, Sarkar (1982, 205) tentatively suggests that the memorial in this form, i.e. our third category, may have originated in and spread from the area under Śaka rule in the first centuries of the Christian era.

54 Sarkar 1982, 199–207.

55 Sircar in EI XXXIV, 21.

56 Sarkar 1982, 202. Cf. Sircar in EI XXXIV, 21: 'She has a head-dress; but her locks are not tied in a knot. She wears an upper garment covering her bust and a long scarf covers her right shoulder and upper right arm and also her left forearm. The queen appeared to be dressed like a foreign lady which she really was...'.  
57 For an illustration see Fig. 1 of Sarkar's contribution to Settar & Sontheimer 1982. The usage of the word *chāyā* in this funerary context has a close parallel in the related Greek σκιά, ('shade'). For *chāyā* meaning 'portrait' see Granoff 2001, 68 n. 10.

58 Another, somewhat later (5th century?), specimen of a memorial stone with portrait has been found in Sangsi (Kolhapur District). It depicts a funeral scene showing the figure of the queen and attendants. The inscription on it reports the erection of a stone funerary monument (*śailaṃ caityakam*) (i.e. the slab of stone itself, referred to by *idam*) by her loving husband, King Pu..., in order to protect/preserve (her) merits/virtues. The Śārdūlavikrīḍita verse runs (EI 28 (1949–50), 132 f., emended):

*śrīpu - - - lāñchanasya nṛpater yā hālidevīty abhūt,*  
*bhāryā saccaritena bhartṛ - - - - - - - - - |*  
*puṇyānāṃ parirakṣaṇārtham ajaraṃ tasyā gatāyā divam,*  
*prītyā śailam idaṃ svayaṃ nṛpatinā saṃsthāpitaṃ caityakam ||*

59 EI XXXVII (1967), 201–03; Mirashi 1966, 111: *sidhaṃ mahakhattavakumārāsa rupiaṃmasa chāyakkambo*.

It is indeed in the Śaka territories that we find corroborative evidence for this hypothesis. It has the form of six ‘long narrow slabs of stone’ that were discovered ‘standing as monuments on a hillock’ at the village Andhau on the Rann of Cutch (Gujarat).<sup>60</sup> These stones had been erected in the (Śaka) year 52, i.e. AD 130, under the rule of Rāja Rudradāman, who is none other than the Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman I.<sup>61</sup> Four stones still carry inscriptions, one of which records that the inscribed slab of stone, referred to as *laṣṭi* (= *yaṣṭi*) in the inscription itself, had been erected (*uthāpita*), by Madana for his sister Jeṣṭhavirā belonging to the Opaśati (Aupaśatika) *gotra*. This Madana erected in the same year similar monuments for his brother Ṛṣabhadeva and his wife Yaśodattā, who is called a novice nun (*śrāmaṇerī*). Patil and Sarkar (*op. cit.* 54 f., 204 ff.) discuss a number of similar pillars, all of them from areas ‘where the Śakas were ruling’, and Patil concludes that they are ‘funerary monuments. . . presumably intended to commemorate the dead’.<sup>62</sup> We have no indications that the memorial stones (*yaṣṭis*), such as found in Andhau, marked the spot where mortuary remains were deposited, although this may be deceptive, since the sites have not been subject to archaeological scrutiny.<sup>63</sup> If this is correct, however, and there are no deposits, we are here concerned with funerary monuments that may be thought of as forerunners of the ‘hero-stones’ (category 3), not yet carrying a picture; strictly speaking, they should be classified in our fourth category: funerary monuments without mortuary deposits. On the other hand, although the term *yaṣṭi* is used to refer to these steles, these monuments differ widely from the constructions composed of square and circular *yaṣṭis* as described under the heading *aiḍūka* in the VDhP.

### *Aiḍūkas*

#### Ahicchatra

There exists a brick monument that has been thought to conform to and has been identified as an *aiḍūka* in the sense of the VDhP. This is the ‘Śiva temple’ at Ahicchatra (ACI), which is, in the words of Agrawala (Plate 85):

A massive brick structure unique of its kind in North India. On plan it is similar to the quadrangular Buddhist *stūpas* raised in several tiers, diminishing upwards like a gigantic staircase. The structure answers closely to what the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* describes as an *eḍūka* (sic) built in three terraces (*bhadra-pīṭhas*), one above the other, with four stepped approaches and surmounted on the top by

60 EI XVI (1921-22), 19 ff.

61 Shastri 1998, 156 f.

62 Perhaps the stone slab with inscription, in which a Kosala king called Dhana(deva) is said to have erected a *ketana* for his father Phalgudeva, falls within the same category, as suggested by Shastri 1998, 108 (see Bakker 1986 I, 21 n. 5).

63 The Central-Asian tribes of the Altai Mountains, variously known as Scyths or Śakas and related to the Indian Śakas, are known for their extraordinary burial practices. Reference may be made to the burial mounds, or ‘kurgan’, found in Pazyryk (Korolkova 2017; cf. *Het Rijk der Scythen*, 74 ff.).

a Śiva-liṅga. The monument, still having a colossal Śiva-liṅga on its top, must therefore be identified as an *eḍūka* dedicated to Śiva.<sup>64</sup>

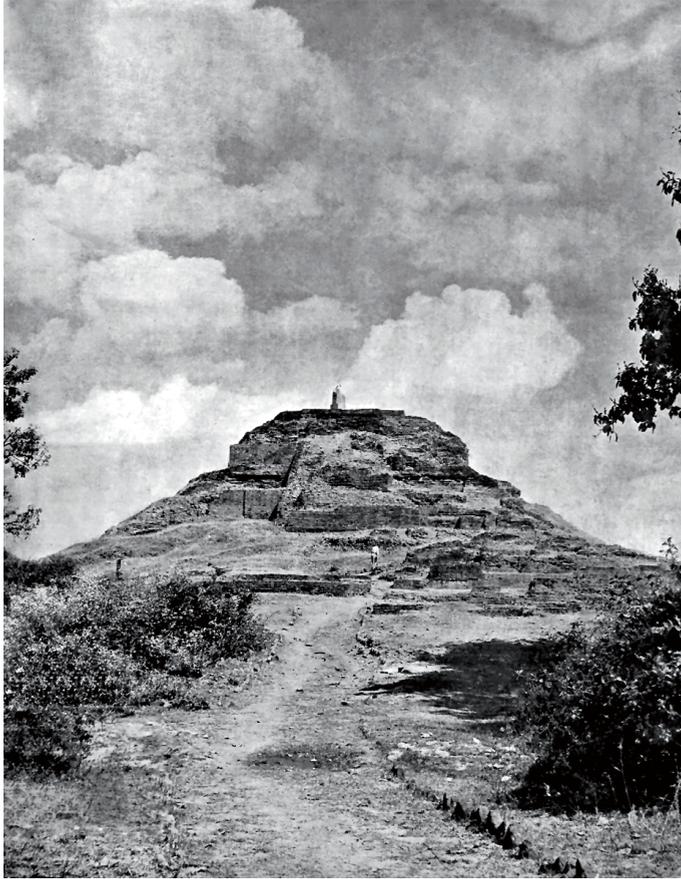


Plate 85  
*Ahicchatra (AC I) during excavation (1940–44)*

The identification of this structure as an *eḍūka* or *aiḍūka*, is open to doubt. Within the structure in AC I a few terracotta sculptured panels were found with depictions of Śaiva mythology, such as Gaṇas destroying Dakṣa's sacrifice (No. 298), a 'Bhairava' figure (No. 300), and the so-called 'Dakṣiṇāmūrti' of Śiva (No. 302b; below, Plate 149), which are supposed to have decorated 'a frieze running round its upper terrace'.<sup>65</sup> The *aiḍūka* of the VDhP, on the

<sup>64</sup> V.S. Agrawala in *Ancient India* 4 (1947–48), 167. This identification has been taken over by several authors, among whom Shah in the 'critical notes' to her edition of the Third Khaṇḍa of the VDhP (1994), I p. 405.

<sup>65</sup> Agrawala 1947–48, 167.

other hand, is explicitly not a temple and not dedicated to one god in particular. Moreover, there seem to be more terraces than the three *bhadrapīthas* of the VDhP, whereas there is apparently not a trace of the four Lokapālas, the thirteen *bhūmikās*, the *āmalasāraka*, and, worst, the square and circular *yaṣṭis* seem to be missing. A note of caution is in place here. I have not visited the site myself and base my assessment on the excavation reports. The ‘colossal Śiva-liṅga’ originally may have been enshrined, as foundation walls found atop the uppermost terrace seem to indicate. In view of these incongruities and uncertainties the structure crowning mound AC I and a similar one at mound AC II may therefore have been more adequately characterized by A. Ghosh who describes them as:

Terraced temples of brick, each terrace made on foundation cells round a square frame, filled with earth. Both of them underwent many restorations and extensions resulting in the increase of their dimension. The larger of them [i.e. AC I] was founded on a layer with typical Stratum IV (Kushan) pottery and could not therefore have been founded before the early Gupta age.<sup>66</sup>

On the other hand, the mass of bricks ordered in a pyramidal, i.e. tapering framework, ending in a column or *liṅga* has an outward similarity with the structure described in the VDhP. It could be that Bāṇa (above, n. 4 on p. 406), describing the ‘funerary monument’ (*citācaitya*) of King Prabhākaravardhana in Thanesar as a ‘mass of bricks’ (*sudhānicaya*) resembling the form of a dart or needle (*śalya*), was thinking of a monument similar to the one uncovered in Ahicchatra, 300 km to the southeast of Thanesar, 150 km north of Kanauj. According to Bāṇa the ashes and bones (*kīkasa*) had been sent off for dispersal in holy places (*tīrthasthāna*), and this too would conform to the description of the *aiḍūka* in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, which does not mention nor refers to mortuary deposits. As far as one can tell—the description of this monument in the excavation report being very brief indeed—this would agree with the archaeological state of affairs in AC I, where no mortuary deposits have been reported.<sup>67</sup>

Mansar

‘Unique’ as the structure may have appeared to the excavators at the time, I would like to draw attention to a recent excavation that has surprisingly much

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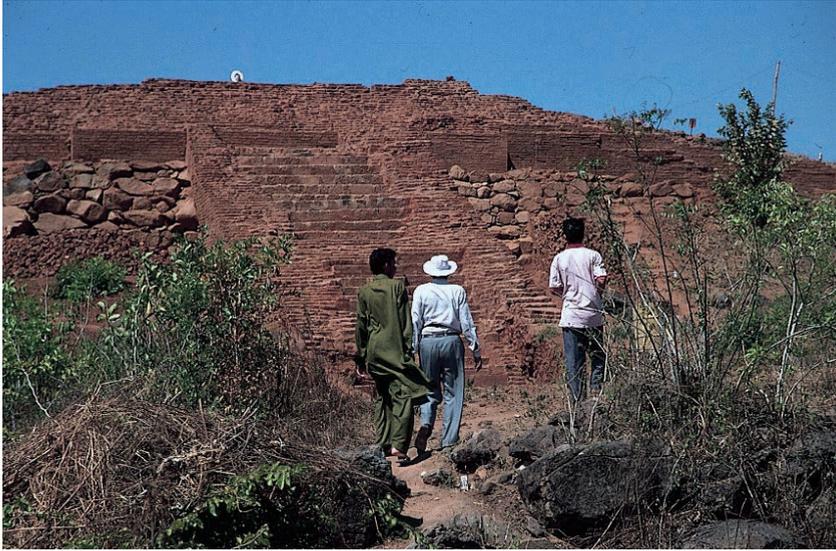
66 Ghosh in EIA II, 7. Cf. Shrimali 1983 I, 149: ‘Even if it was an *eḍūka*, the existing structure could not be identified with that of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. The nucleus of the structure appears to be pre-Gupta—even the sizes of the bricks used are those, which were popular in the period between c. 100 BC and c. AD 300.’

67 Ahicchatra has most recently been investigated by Laxshmi Greaves (2015). She concludes (p. 219):

Neither the shaft at the heart of the monument, nor the foundations of AC I have been fully excavated so we cannot be entirely sure that no mortuary remains exist. Nevertheless, without further evidence being brought to light, we cannot designate AC I at Ahichhatra an *aiḍūka* with any confidence.

in common with the Ahicchatra one. These are the excavations at Mansar: MNS 3 (Plate 86). The brick structure uncovered at a mound there, the so-called *Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī*, has been interpreted by the excavators, who failed to refer to Ahicchatra, as a mixture of Hindu temples and Buddhist *stūpas*.

Elsewhere I have shown the untenability of this conflation (Bakker 2004a). As in Ahicchatra, the Mansar mound shows a series of terraces built of brick, constructed over and against a natural hillock, which makes the whole thing look like a pyramid of brick. As in Ahicchatra, the various platforms are constructed over brick boxes filled with rubble, earth and stones, a construction device also known from *stūpa* domes. The mistake the Mansar excavators have made is that they have confounded similarity with identity. Mansar, like Ahicchatra, is definitively a Śaiva sanctuary, identities corroborated at both sites by beautiful 5th-century Śaiva sculptures, of terracotta in Ahicchatra, of red sandstone in Mansar. Are we to classify the Mansar structure as an *aīḍūka*?



*Plate 86*  
*Mansar (MNS 3)*

The same reasons that speak against such an identification in Ahicchatra also apply to Mansar, but the Mansar site is characterized by some intriguing features of its own.

One of these is ‘the figure of a Puruṣa made of lime’ (Plate 87).<sup>68</sup> This figure is truly out of the ordinary and various interpretations are possible. In Bakker 2007b and 2009a (below, p. 458) I have made a case for seeing this Man

<sup>68</sup> Joshi & Sharma 1999-2000, 128. Cf. Bakker 2004a, 81.

of Mansar as part of a construction sacrifice, in which the clay man replaced a human victim. The excavators report that ‘a *vedi* in the chest portion with a hole for fixing a *yaṣṭi* over it was made [below, Plate 105], and an earthen lamp was found nearby’.<sup>69</sup> Two pots have also been found near the knee of the Puruṣa, but we do not know what they may have contained. Could they have been filled with ashes? Near the figure’s left foot a small iron image of a snake was found (Plate 104).

In addition, though not mentioned in the excavation report, during my stay at the site (1999) some bones were said to have been recovered from one of the two natural caves in the rock at the northern side of the hill. In the excavation report these caves are identified as a ‘shrine’ and ‘meditation chamber’ (*ibid.* 129); due to lack of any further information, it is impossible to say with what sort of bones we are concerned and to which period they may have belonged. Anyway, there seems to be no intrinsic connection with the brick monument on top of the mound.



Plate 87  
MNS 3: ‘The Man of Mansar’

69 Joshi & Sharma 1999-2000, 128. Cf. Bakker 2004a, 81. The Puruṣa lies with his head towards the west or southwest; his trunk is partly twisted and his knees are bent. This posture seems to resemble that of some of the skeletons found in Ujjain, especially ‘skeletons Nos. 14 & 38’ depicted in Plates VIIIc and IXa (AAR 1938-39, p. 16); see below, n. 82 on p. 430 and Plate 127.

Despite the *Puruṣa*, the urns, the hole to fix a *yaṣṭi* (here meaning ‘sacrificial post’ or *yūpa*), the alleged bones, and the terraced, pyramidal structure, I would be very reluctant to speak of this temple complex, referred to in inscriptions and seals as ‘*Pravareśvara*’ (above, p. 373, Plate 75) and called a *devakulasthāna*, in terms of an *aīḍūka*, or *eḍūka* for that matter.

For the time being our conclusion should be that so-far there have not been discovered in the Hindu sphere structures that conform, more than superficially, to the description of the *aīḍūka* in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*.

*Funerary monuments with mortuary deposits*

It remains to discuss the funerary monuments in which actual mortuary deposits have been found, the *eḍūka*, our fifth category.

As has been briefly noted above, Giuseppe de Marco brings together in an interesting article eighteen Gandhāra reliefs in which we find depictions of funerary monuments. Fifteen of them relate to the Buddhist legend of Sudāya, known from the Chinese canon.<sup>70</sup>

The story is briefly given by Zwalf in his catalogue of *Gandhāra Sculpture in the British Museum* (I, p. 202, ad 225 = below, Plate 88):

A king of Candravatī (?), his mind poisoned by the jealousy of his other wives, caused his pregnant youngest wife to be killed and buried. A posthumous son [name restored as Sudāya], however, nourished himself from one breast on a half of his mother’s corpse not decomposed; when he was three the collapse of part of the tomb released him, and when he was six he met the Buddha and became an *arhat*.



Plate 88  
*Kāfir-koṭ (Gandhāra)*  
*Sudāya meets the Buddha*

The reliefs depict Sudāya in the tomb at his mother’s side and his meeting of the Buddha. The representations of the tombs themselves, though preserved in a Buddhist context, have nothing intrinsically Buddhist about them; they may be based on contemporaneous examples of funerary monuments in Gandhāra belonging to no religious persuasion in particular, but which served the artist to illustrate a Buddhist legend. The reliefs testify to the fact that, at least in Gandhāra and at least in the first centuries of the Christian era, a pregnant woman, and one who had met a violent death to boot, was not always cremated.

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion of this source see de Marco 1987, 191 f. n. 2.

The funerary monuments shown on the reliefs are divided by de Marco into four types. The most common one (de Marco: type 1) is described as a (closed) ‘tumulus’ made of bricks. De Marco does not explicitly link this type with the (*loṣṭa*)*citi*, but it would seem to me that the burial mound made of bricks, known from the Kalpaśāstra, may be considered as its prototype. The other common type (de Marco: type 3) is described as a ‘hut’, ‘*vihāra*’, or ‘*caityagrha*’. De Marco (*op. cit.* 232) observes: ‘It is difficult to determine why the funerary monuments displayed on these reliefs are this shape.’ It appears to me that some influence from outside the Indian world could be considered as a possible explanation: the sarcophagus or stone coffin, moulded according to the simplest form of a ‘dwelling’ in the Indian artistic idiom, the *kuṭi* or ‘hut’—the heavy, arched cover of the sarcophagus being interpreted as the ‘attic story’ or vault above a cubical chamber.<sup>71</sup> However, apart from these reliefs, no archaeological attestation of either of these two types is known to me. The question seems justified whether we are here concerned with a real historic phenomenon or an artistic convention.

The above two types of tombs are particularly appropriate to burial of the body. This is less obviously the case in the two remaining types (de Marco’s types 2 and 4), which consist each of one specimen only (A-2 and B-10). In one of these instances (B-10), the subject of the Sudāya legend requires the depiction of a corpse, but the monument seems incongruous (below, p. 436 and Plate 94). The other specimen (A-2), illustrating the *śmaśāna*, does not show a corpse at all. We shall treat these two in more detail below, when we deal with what still remains to be discussed: funerary monuments connected with the remains of cremation, i.e. ashes. It will appear that, if conceived in this way, a link of these two types with other archaeological evidence can be made.

Since we are particularly concerned with monuments in the Hindu sphere, we will not dwell upon the Buddhist *stūpas* at great length.<sup>72</sup> But, since the Buddhist cult of the *stūpa* developed out of more general South-Asian practices

71 See Foekema 2003, 11. Zwalf (*op. cit.* I, 202) describes the tomb on the relief (Plate 88) kept in the British Museum (No. 225 = de Marco’s B-2) as: ‘The hut is a cubic structure with a high arched roof covered with a leaf pattern and surmounted horizontally along its ridge by a hemi-cylindrical element supporting a large bird; it seems double-roofed like the structures underlying the false gable panel but with the upper part unusually small.’

72 Jaina *stūpas* are left out of account altogether. Jaina texts refer to *stūpas* and ‘*stūpa* worship has been depicted in a number of sculptures... Actual Jaina *stūpas* were very few, but the most important of them was that of Mathurā at Kaṅkālī Tīlā’ (Joshi 1989a, 333). For this *stūpa* and its interpretation see also Folkert 1989. Phyllis Granoff, asked about this subject, kindly wrote to me the following (email 22-5-05):

In the Jain stories there is no relic worship. The gods take the relics to heaven and worship them there [cf. Granoff 1992, 189; *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra* I, 364]. In the medieval period *stūpas* are regularly built for monks and images of the monks are made. They are both worshipped. The story about the first Jain images is that they are funerary images, but the accounts are pretty late [e.g. *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra* I, 365–370]. It is a very interesting topic. There are also the memorials constructed where Jain monks fasted to death.

of mortuary ritual and disposal of the dead, and the Brahmanical or Hindu tradition evolved from the same breeding ground, it may be informative to begin with an example from the Buddhist fold, the interesting case of the Sui Vihar *stūpa* in Bahawalpur (Pakistan).

### Sui Vihar

In the remains of this *stūpa* a copperplate inscription has been found, dated in the 11th year of the reign of Kaniṣka, i.e. AD 138. The inscription attests the word *yaṣṭi* in a funerary context and this time there is an actual connection with mortuary deposits.



a. POSITION OF COPPER-PLATE  
From *Journal A. S. Beng. Vol. XXXIX.*

### Plate 89

#### *Sui Vihar Stūpa in Bahawalpur*

The inscription tells us that the wife of Balanandin, an *upasika* who was mistress of the *vihara*, raised in Damana a *yaṣṭi* for the *bhikṣu* Nagadatta and that

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It seems that in later Jainism the cult of image worship is explained and justified by the doctrine that the images of the *tīrthaṅkaras* are actually memorial statues. Granoff 1992, p. 191:

The fact that temples are memorial monuments and images of the *tīrthaṅkaras* are funerary statues has a certain appropriateness in the Jain tradition. The *tīrthaṅkaras* are above all martyrs, who have suffered what others might have found unendurable in their quest for religious salvation: they have also died a special death, in meditation and voluntary renunciation of all food and water.

This ideology did not remain uncontested (Granoff 1992, pp. 194 f.; 2001, 64 f.).

the mother of Balajaya, after having established the 'foundation' (*pratīṭhana*) of the *yaṣṭi*, donated the 'enclosure' (*anuparivāra*).<sup>73</sup>

From the not all too clear description by Major Stubbs quoted by Konow and a drawing in *Indian Antiquary* (Plate 89),<sup>74</sup> it appears that out of an earthen mound rises a brick tower of 15 m high. About half way up the tower is a room of 8 ft. square, i.e. measuring c. 85 by 85 cm; its height seems to have been 2 ft., i.e. 60 cm. The inscription was found at the bottom of this chamber, apparently covering a *square brick shaft* of 16 inch, i.e. 40 by 40 cm, going down to the mound, i.e. having a length of at least 6 m. In the chamber were found 'coins, mixed with some pieces of iron, a few beads, fragments of ornaments, all mixed up with ashes and earth'.<sup>75</sup> It is unknown whether the shaft ends precisely at the mound or continues into it. The chamber may have been the relic chamber, as Konow surmises, but, in view of the other occurrences of the word *yaṣṭi*, we cannot follow him when he takes over Hoernle's suggestion (Hoernle 1881, 327) and proposes that the word here refers to the monk's staff of Nāgadatta 'set up' or 'assumed' (like a bishop's staff) at the occasion when he assumed 'a high clerical office'. Rather it would seem, as has been proposed by Schopen,<sup>76</sup> that the *yaṣṭi* mentioned refers somehow to the brick shaft on top of which the chamber is found and which forms the central axis or *yūpa* of the monument. If this is the case, the structure of the Sui Vihar monument resembles closely the two mounds M and N of Lauriya-Nandangarh, in which was found,

A hollow shaft, about 10 in. (25.4 cm) in diameter, running right through the centre from the bottom up to a little below the deposits of burnt human bones and a gold leaf. The shaft most probably indicates the position of the wooden post which had perished. At the bottom of the mound N, which was dug down to the natural soil, was actually found the stump of a wooden pillar *in situ* [Plate 90]. Significantly

73 This interpretation follows mainly Sircar's rendering in SI I, 139 f.

*maharajasya rajatirajasya devaputrasya ka[niṣkasya] saṃva[tsa]re ekadaśe saṃ  
10 (+\*) 1 ... bhikṣusya nagadattasya ... yaṣṭim aropayata iha da[ma]ne vihara-  
svamiṇim upasika [ba]lanamdi[-ku]ṭimbini balajayamata ca imaṃ yaṣṭipratīṭhanam  
ṭhapa[i]cam anu parivaram dadarim (\*) ...*

Rendered in Sanskrit by Sircar as:

*mahārājasya rājātirājasya devaputrasya kaṇiṣkasya saṃvatsare ekādaśe saṃ 11 ...  
bhikṣoḥ nāgadattasya ... yaṣṭim āropayati iha damane vihārasvāminī upāsikā bala-  
nandikuṭumbinī, balajayamātā ca idaṃ yaṣṭipratīṣṭhānam sthāpayitvā anu parivāram  
dadāti]...*

Konow in CII II A, 141 and Schopen 1997, 157 suggest that *parivāra* here might mean the room or chamber, i.e. the chamber in which the mortuary deposits and the inscription have been found. I diverge from Sircar *et al.* by taking *anu* in compositio with *parivāra*, a noun related to *anupariṅgārayati*: 'to encircle' (see Edgerton's BHSD s.v.).

74 Konow in CII II A, 138; drawing in *Indian Antiquary* X (1881) facing p. 324., copied from the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* XXXIX.

75 CII II A, 138; italics mine.

76 Schopen 1997, 50 n. 61, where also textual sources and the secondary literature regarding *yaṣṭi/yūpa* are given and briefly discussed.

enough, the *Divyāvadāna* mentions the setting up of a pillar, called *yūpa*[*yaṣṭī*], in the interior of the dome.<sup>77</sup> King Devānaṃpiyatissa, Ceylonese contemporary of Aśoka, is stated in the *Mahāvamsa*, a Ceylonese text, to have erected a stone column to mark the site of the Mahāthūpa to be constructed in future by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.<sup>78</sup>



Plate 90  
Wooden pillar  
Lauriya-Nandangarh, mound N

It remains uncertain whether the brick shaft in the Sui Vihar monument originally enclosed a wooden column, though the use of the word *yaṣṭī* in the inscription strongly suggests that. If this is the case, it may be conjectured that the *yaṣṭipraṭiṣṭhāna* that was built refers to the still present brick 'casement of the column'.<sup>79</sup> The building activity described in the inscription may thus be conceived as follows: On an earthen mound a wooden pole or column (*yaṣṭī*) of a diameter of c. 40 cm and a height of 6 m was erected (*āropayati*) by Balanandin's wife; then the brick casement (*yaṣṭipraṭiṣṭhāna*) around the column was built (*sthāpayitvā*) by the mother of Balajaya; subsequently the same mother donated (*dadāti*), on top of the casement or shaft, a chamber or safe (*anuparivāra*), containing the coins, ornaments, etc., and the remains of Nāgadatta, after which she had it all dedicated, as recorded in the inscription

77 *Divyāvadāna* XVIII (p. 244):

*yatas tena mahāśreṣṭhīnā saṃcintya yathaitat suvarṇaṃ tatraiva garbhasaṃsthaṃ  
syāt tathā kartavyam iti tatas tasya stūpasya sarvair eva caturbhiḥ pārśvaiḥ  
pratikanṭhukayā catvāri sopānāny ārabdhāni kārayitum | yāvad anupūrveṇa prathamā  
medhī tato 'nupūrveṇa dvitīyā tatas trītiyā medhī yāvad anupūrveṇāṇḍam | tathā-  
vidhaṃ ca bhūpasyaṇḍam kṛtaṃ yatra sā yūpayaṣṭīr abhyantare pratipādītā | paścāt  
tasyātīnavāṇḍasyopari harmikā kṛtānupūrveṇa yaṣṭyāropanaṃ kṛtaṃ varṣasthāle  
mahāmaniratnāni tāny āropitāni |*

The second *yaṣṭī* is clearly the post on top of the dome (*aṇḍa*). The *yūpayaṣṭī* is the pole within the *aṇḍa*.

78 Mitra 1971, 24 n. 12. Cf. Bloch 1906–07, 123, plate xl (= Plate 90). A difference between the shaft in Lauriya and Sui Vihar is that the one in the latter site is square and made of bricks, whereas the one in Lauriya is circular, apparently informed by the wooden column itself.

79 If *pratiṣṭhāna* would have its common meaning and refers to the 'pedestal' or 'foundation' of the *yaṣṭī*, the inscription does not record the exact sequence of building activities; in that case *anuparivāra* may refer to the casement (plus chamber?).

per se. This must have been the cardinal phase of the construction. The enveloping brick construction, which remains today in the form of a 'tower', and which always may have had a more tower- than dome-like appearance,<sup>80</sup> was built after the donation recorded in the inscription.

It is evident that in the case of Sui Vihar we are concerned with a monument belonging to our fifth category: funerary monuments containing ashes of the deceased. Is anything similar to be found in the non-heterodox traditions? Or, we may ask, what had become of the Vedic option to build a *citi*, a pile of bricks over the bones and ashes? The *citi* may have occasionally lived on in burial mounds as these are attested in the Gandhāra reliefs, but when the *Mahābhārata* (above, n. 18 on p. 409) describes the situation at the end of the Kali Age by saying that *eḍūkas* have replaced temples, this expresses the concern of the author that too many people are being converted to heterodox religions,<sup>81</sup> not the fear that *eḍūkas* would eventually be worshipped all-out by those who were supposed to belong to the Brahmanical tradition. The few Gandhāra reliefs aside, evidence of monuments containing mortuary deposits belonging unambiguously to the Hinduized tradition in the period under investigation is very rare indeed.

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ŚMAŚĀNA

We shall leave the monuments aside for the moment and will focus on archaeological sites that attest the practice of cremation and inhumation. In his *Burial Practices in Ancient India*, Singh (1970, 131) sums up the situation of iron-age burials in North India as follows:

Evidence regarding the disposal of the dead during this period has been obtained from Sonapur, Rajgir and Lauria Nandangarh—all in Bihar; Rajghat (district Varanasi, U.P.) and Amreli in Gujarat. Besides, a large number of megalithic graves, tentatively datable to this period and later, have been located in the Vindhyan ranges, Chotanagpur plateau, the Aravalli ranges and north-western India. The predominant mode of the disposal of the dead seems to be cremation and a limited quantity of charred human bones have been found buried either in urns or pits in the habitation-area itself.

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80 See Franz 1978, 1–18, Figs. 1–17 illustrating the 'Turmstupa'.

81 Allchin 1957, 1:

Since Lassen it has been generally accepted that this description of the *Kali-yuga* refers to the spread of Buddhist practices and the popular desertion of Brahmanical temples.

This is not to say, however, that the composer of this passage was exclusively thinking of Buddhism. He might have lashed out at all pan-Indian practices frowned upon by the orthodox that involved the erection of monuments over mortuary remains. *Eḍūka* thus seems to be a wider term than, for instance, *stūpa*, and it clearly has here, if not in all cases where it occurs, a pejorative connotation (cf. discussions in Goswamy 1980, 5 ff.; de Marco 1987, 228 f.).

One of the major sites seems to have been missed by Singh, who does not refer to the excavations at Ujjain.

*The Kumhāra Ṭekḍī in Ujjain*

The archaeological findings at the Kumhāra Ṭekḍī in Ujjain are interesting enough to deserve our attention. This mound has been the subject of a preliminary exploration by M.B. Garde in the season of 1938–39. It is a longish mound of about 67 m long, 33 m wide and 3 m high. Trial excavations exposed about forty-two skeletons, some of them laying on their bellies others on their backs, most of them north-south with the head towards the north, but two of them with heads pointing to the southwest (below, Plate 127).<sup>82</sup> Garde reports the following (AAR 1938–39, 16):

One large urn with the neck broken off, another small urn complete, and pieces of two or three large urns were found buried in the midst of skeletons. The large urn contained a few bones, ashes and smaller pottery mostly cups and dishes. The contents of the small urn consisted of ashes and bones. A large stone mortar and quite a number of stone pedestals were found in association with the burials. [...] Innumerable fragments of large and small jars, cups and dishes with which the mound is literally made up can be easily explained by this custom of burying a large number of earthen vessels and cups along with the dead body.

Signs of cremation were also unearthed along the lower stratum reaching down to four or five feet below the surface of the mound. Thus the customs of cremation, post cremation partial burial, and simple and complete burial appear to have been in vogue almost simultaneously during the period to which this cemetery belongs.

On account of the coins found—‘cast coins notably with the elephant or tree in railing on the obverse and the *chaitya* or mountain with a crescent above on the reverse’—Garde dates this *śmaśāna* to the 3rd or 2nd century BC (*ibid.* p. 16), but the actual time it may have been in use could be many centuries longer. In addition to the skeletons and earthenware, ornaments were found, such as earrings and beads, and one wonders which purpose the ‘pedestals’ may have served. However tentative Garde’s excavation may have been, there can be little doubt that the mound revealed a prominent *śmaśāna* in the sense of ‘burial-cum-cremation ground’. We know of one prominent *śmaśāna* at Ujjain from the Sanskrit literature: it was allegedly the birthplace of the Pāśupata

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82 *Annual Administration Report of the Archæological Department Gwalior State* (AAR) 1938–39 p. 16:

The faces of many were turned to the West, of some to the East, and of others upwards to the sky. The poses of a few were quite unusual for ordinary burial. Thus two skeletons had the knees bent and raised up. One of them was in a seated posture with the trunk folded and the head bent forward. Another again had the trunk twisted to right, the knees bent, and legs folded to the left. Still another was seated in a meditating attitude almost like a Buddhist monk or a jain *Sadhu*. A few of the skeletons, judging from their short stature and the development of pelvic cavity appeared to be females, while a few others distinctly represented youngsters.[...]

movement, the site where Kuśika/Kauśika was believed to have been initiated by the Lord (*bhagavat*) Himself.<sup>83</sup>

Although this accumulation of evidence may seem substantial, if we take stock of the extent of the Subcontinent and the many centuries involved, it indicates that burial, of the complete body or partial after cremation, was a marginal rather than a central phenomenon in classical India. And, unfortunately, it does not furnish us with factual information on the monuments to the dead outside the Buddhist sphere.<sup>84</sup> We don't know how the Ujjain *śmaśāna* looked aboveground when it was still in use. The following find in Mansar may not solve this question definitively, but it has enough fascinating characteristics to warrant a separate treatment, which, in combination with the material collected by de Marco, may give us some idea as to what a funerary monument of a person of consequence may have been.

83 Kauṇḍinya *ad Pāśupatasūtra* (PS) 1.1 (pp. 3f.). SP 167.126–128ab:

*anugṛhya tadā vyāsa sakulaṃ dvījasattamam |*  
*jaḡāmojjayinīm devaḥ śmaśānaṃ ca viveśa ha || 126 ||*  
*sa tatra bhasmanātmānam avagunṭhya vṛṣadhvajah |*  
*ulmukaṃ vāmahastena grhītṵā samupāviśat || 127 ||*  
*tatra prathamam ādāya śiṣyaṃ kauśikam īśvaraḥ |*

For the edition of this chapter of the original *Skandapurāṇa* (SP) see Bisschop 2006, 104, 211.

84 I find it difficult to be so sure about the scene on the eastern gateway of Stūpa 1 at Sanchi, which, according to de Marco (1987, 226, Fig. 22), 'is *certainly* the tomb of a *yogin* belonging to the same community represented in the relief'. How to explain that we have no archaeological evidence of this sort of ancient monuments of yogins, whereas we have innumerable ones of Buddhist saints? And even if it were a tomb of a yogin, I find it hazardous to conclude from this piece of 'evidence' (and this tentative piece alone), that the *samādhis* of yogins found in South Asia to date existed all throughout Indian history (de Marco 1987, 228 n. 76).

The situation appears significantly altered in the later (post AD 1200) period, in which we find *samādhis*, chiefly of yogins and saints—e.g. the '*śmaśāna* of Pāśupatanāth' illustrated in de Marco 1987, Figs. 18f., or the *samādhis* of Gorakhnāth yogis, *ibid.* Figs. 20f.—and mausoleums or *chatarīs* of princes (Mishra 2003). This change may be partly due to Islamic influence; it falls outside the scope of the present investigation. For the burial practice of the Gorakhnāth yogis see Briggs 1938, 39–43. For the development of the (esoteric) Śaiva tantric concept of the 'eight (nine) great cremation grounds' (Sander-son 2003–04, n. 208) in the syncretistic religion of Nepal see Bühnenmann 2007 (cf. Mirnig 2016).

For South India this practice is attested in the *Ajitāgama* (see above, n. 27 on p. 411), which reports that a *liṅga* may be erected for Śivabhaktas (*op. cit.* 63.44f.):

*samādhibhūmau liṅgaṃ ca manojñaṃ ca sulakṣaṇam || 44 ||*  
*pratiṣṭhāpya yathānyāyaṃ nityapūjādikaṃ caret |*

The Pāraśaivas and Āntarālikas are excluded from this practice (*op. cit.* 63.45f.):

*śaivānāṃ pārapūrvāṇāṃ āntarālikasaṃjñinām || 45 ||*  
*pūrvoktavidhinā teṣāṃ pratiṣṭhādīn na kārayet |*

This practice is confirmed by other (late) sources (e.g. *Varṇāśramacandrikā*) given in Bhatt *ad Ajitāgama* 63.44ff.

*The eḍuka at Mansar*

I have dealt with the Vākāṭaka site of Mansar in several earlier publications. In Bakker 2004a I have drawn attention to the important publication of T.A. Wellsted in the JASB XXIX, in which he reports that,

In 1928 a certain amount of interesting material came to light and led to the examination of the whole area surrounding Mansar tank, with the result that the traces of an extensive townsite were discovered.<sup>85</sup>

Wellsted carried out a careful archaeological survey and some of the finds described in his report were donated to the British Museum. In the present context Wellsted's site 'T' (Figure 11) deserves special attention.

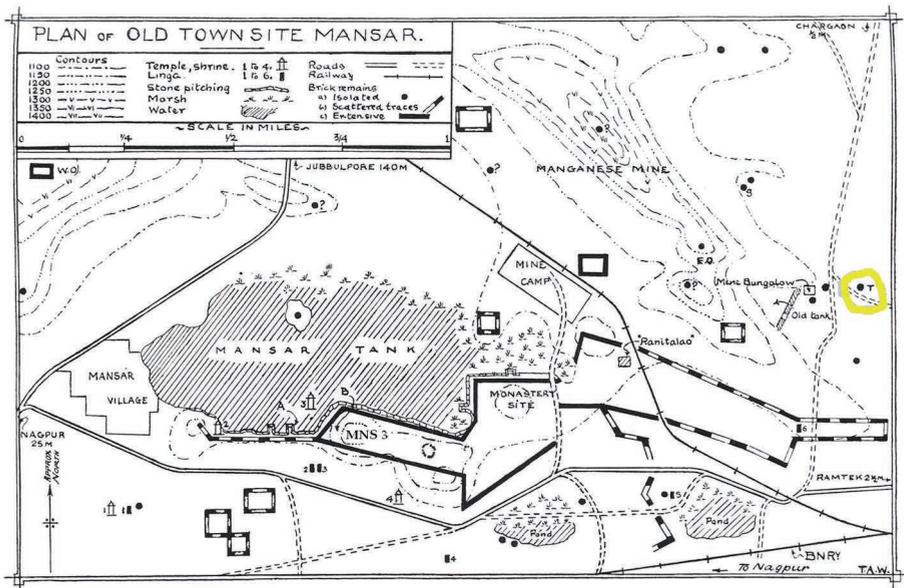


Figure 11  
Wellsted's survey map of Mansar

This site (encircled on the map) is situated on a direct line between the Pravareśvara Temple on the Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī (MNS 3), about 2 km to the west, and the Vaiṣṇava monuments of the Rāmagiri, 3.5 km to the east, that is to say, virtually in the middle of these two great Vākāṭaka state sanctuaries, the former built by King Pravarasena II, the latter by his mother, Prabhāvātī Guptā, both in the first half of the fifth century AD. The site as described by Wellsted concerns a brick shaft, uncovered and destroyed during mining work.

<sup>85</sup> Wellsted 1934, 161.

This shaft reached to within 2 feet [60 cm] of the surface and extended downwards to the junction of the surface soil with bedrock 14 feet [4.2 m] from the surface, its total height therefore was 12 feet [3.6 m]. Of square plan, with walls of single brick construction, the space enclosed was about 4.5 sq ft [ $\approx 65 \times 65$  cm]. The bricks were of large size, 18"  $\times$  9.5"  $\times$  3.5" [ $\approx 45 \times 24 \times 9$  cm]. Near the bottom, making a lower chamber 15" [38 cm] deep, was a false floor of brick. The bottom of the lower chamber was paved with brick and rested directly on bedrock. In the upper part of the shaft was filled earth from which was recovered a small snake image of greenish soapstone and some pottery. Beneath the false floor was a large spherical pot, 1 ft [30 cm] in diameter containing ashes; with it also were several small pots. (Wellsted 1934, 164)

On the face of it, the brick construction described resembles a mirror image of the Sui Vihar monument, but there are fundamental differences. There is no subterranean tower- or dome-like construction, something hardly to be expected, whereas another, possibly more significant difference is, that the burial gifts that accompany the urn with ashes are not so much beads and ornaments as in Sui Vihar, but ritual implements such as vessels, pots, bowls (Plate 92), a lamp, two tubular, subconical pieces of red-polished ware,<sup>86</sup> and the Nāga image (Plate 91).



*Plate 91*  
*Nāga (front and back) found at site T in Mansar*

<sup>86</sup> BM 1930.10.7.2, 3. The measurements of these two objects are 3.6" (= 9.14 cm) and 3.8" (= 9.65 cm) in height respectively (the tops of both are damaged).



*Plate 92*  
*Pottery found at site T in Mansar*

It is important to note that partly the same items have been found at the adjacent site of MNS 3, in the hypogeum which contains the so-called Man of Mansar, viz. two pots, an oillamp and an image of a snake (Bakker 2004a, 81 f.; above, Plate 87). And, finally, in contrast to Sui Vihar, no dedicatory inscription has been discovered in the burial chamber. There might have been nothing to dedicate. The shaft is likely to have ended in a monument above the ground, not an object of worship.

The pottery and the Nāga image were stored in the British Museum in 1930,<sup>87</sup> but not the urn with ashes, which has disappeared. The coarse red ware, the size of the bricks and the smooth, perfectly sculptured soapstone image of a rising cobra (Nāga), its central hood crowned by the typical Vākāṭaka flower cap, leave little doubt that the finds are Vākāṭaka.<sup>88</sup>

As to the form of the Nāga sculpture, this differs completely from the iron snake found near the Man of Mansar (Plate 104), but it conforms to an image found in front of the entrance of the Kevala-Narasimha Temple on the Rāmagiri.<sup>89</sup> The size of the two Nāga images is different, but the similarity of concept is rather striking (Plate 93).

The function of the Nāga may have been a protective and supportive one, representing the Vāstunāga, a concept somewhat parallel to that of

<sup>87</sup> The pottery: BM 1930,10.7.2-25; the Nāga image: BM 1930,10.7.1.

<sup>88</sup> The height of this Nāga image including pedestal is 7.6" (= 18 cm).

<sup>89</sup> For the iron snake found in MNS 3 see Bakker 2004a, Plate 6.24 = below, Plate 104: it is a crawling snake. The Nāgas found in front of the Kevala-Narasimha Temple and at site T, on the other hand, are frozen in a position in which the hood is raised and expanded to ward off danger; the snake hood in this position may be imagined to support what is placed on top of it (*ādhāraśakti*).

the Vāstupuruṣa: a local snake-deity of the site, ritually converted to the guardian of the *vāstu*, homologized with the cosmic Ananta, who carries the building/earth on his hoods. The major difference between both images is the number of the hoods (heads)—three in the case of the burial shaft Nāga, five in the case of the temple one—which may be explained by the difference in status of the two: one protecting a funerary monument, the other the house of a god, i.e. temple.

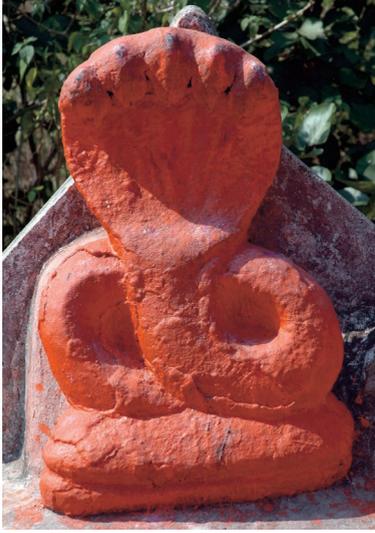


Plate 93

*Nāga Rāmagiri (left), Nāga Mansar (right)*

The idea that a site belongs to and is protected by a Nāga, who underlies it, is common to the Hindu as well as the Buddhist traditions.<sup>90</sup> However, I conjecture that at site T we are not concerned with a Buddhist or Jain monument, but with a funerary monument belonging to the mainstream tradition, to which the Vākāṭaka royal family belonged, and this on the following grounds: 1) the significant differences with the Sui Vihar monument; 2) the burial gifts, which at site T show correspondences with those found next to the Man of Mansar in MNS 3—viz. the pottery and the serpent—and the finds at the *śmaśāna* in Ujjain—the urn with ashes and the pottery; 3) the striking similarity of the Nāga of the burial shaft and the one found at the entrance of the Kevala-Narasimha Temple; 4) the situation of the site in between two Hindu state sanctuaries (*devakulasthāna*).

90 E.g. Bose 1932, 29: ‘According to the Śilpaśāstras, it is imagined that a great serpent (Nāga) lies encircling every building-site.’ Rāmacandra Kaulācāra’s *Śilpaprakāśa* 1.55–60 (Boner & Śarmā 1966, 4 f. (14 f.)). Cf. the Buddhist *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*, discussed in Tanemura 2004, 24 ff.; Cohen 1998.

The aboveground monumental part of this grave is irretrievably lost and thoughts as to what it may have looked like are necessarily of a speculative nature. The plausibility of such speculation would be increased, though, if we could connect what still remains with other instances of funerary monuments. As such I would like to adduce the two Gandhāra reliefs left out of account so far, in particular the monument shown in de Marco's relief B-10, a specimen that by itself makes up this author's type 4 (Plate 94).<sup>91</sup> This is the only specimen that shows a subterranean and an aboveground part, and the subterranean part consists of a brick shaft.



Plate 94

*Tomb of the mother of Sudāya and the latter's meeting with the Buddha*

At the lower end of this shaft is an arched opening out of which sticks the body of Sudāya's mother, but, as de Marco justly remarks, as in the case of the tumuli (type 1), this 'is clearly a representational device' (de Marco 1987, 234). The brick shaft seems badly fitted to contain a body anyway, and the thought thrusts itself upon us that we are here concerned with what is actually a burial shaft meant to contain an urn with ashes and/or bones appropriated by the artist to illustrate the legend of Sudāya. The aboveground structure is described by de Marco as follows:

A high podium (*adhovedikā*) quadrangular in form (*cāturāṣra* sic), framed at the extremities by a moulded plinth and cyma, a basement with two tambours moulded

<sup>91</sup> This relief had been photographed when it was in the Karachi antique market; its present location is unknown (de Marco 1987, 210).

at the summit, and a cupola (*aṇḍa* or *kumbha*) from the centre of which rises a short pole (*yaṣṭi*) supporting a single umbrella 'disc' in the form of a spheroidal vault, similar to the topmost element (*uṣṇīṣa*) of the *stūpa* itself.<sup>92</sup>

De Marco argues laboriously that we are here concerned with a sort of *Buddhist* memorial, but his argument is not entirely convincing. It seems to me that the structure as such is non-denominational. Aside from a general resemblance with a *stūpa*, there are conspicuous resemblances with the *aiḍūka* structure of the VDhP: three receding platforms (*bhadrapīṭhas*), admittedly the upper two circular (the 'tambours') and not square, on which stands an *aṇḍa* (the 'cupola'), which, in another context, could also be interpreted as a *liṅga*-like (*liṅgarūpa*) column; from this rises again a column or *yaṣṭi* that is crowned by a spherical element, interpreted by de Marco as a (single) 'umbrella' (*chattri*). Note, not the triple umbrella usual for a Buddhist *stūpa*.<sup>93</sup>

Since Gustav Roth's *Symbolism of the Stūpa* (Roth 1980), we may take it for certain that the author of the VDhP calqued his Hindu *aiḍūka* on a Buddhist example, but by doing this he elaborated on what must have been a monumental tradition that was common to all Indian religions, most pronounced within Buddhism, less in Jainism, and inconspicuous in the Hindu mainstream.

It might be useful to draw a comparison here with the monument depicted in de Marco's relief A-1, classified by him again as a type by itself (type 2: 'square plan monuments'), which lacks the subterranean part of B-10, since the myth represented did not require its depiction (Plate 95). The *śmaśāna* scene of this relief makes it clear that it represents a funerary monument.<sup>94</sup> It consists of,

A high quadrangular stone podium, decorated, on the visible side, with a sort of disc or circular emblem. From the platform rises a cylindrical structure terminating in a cupola, slightly compressed at the sides and flattened at the top, with a similar element of smaller dimensions rising from the summit.<sup>95</sup>

92 De Marco 1987, 212.

93 Similar structures are depicted in the petroglyphs found in Oshibat on the upper Indus River in northern Pakistan. Bemann & König (1994) classify these pictures, given in Tafel 24–27, as '*stūpas*', but they may rather be funerary monuments of a more general nature, as the crowning with a trident (18:227), the crescent and sun (18:127, 18:199, 18:156), or a pennant (18:269, 20:2) seems to indicate. Also the pictures in Tafel 32, classified as 'Scene', are monuments rather than Buddhist *stūpas*.

94 This regards a relief that is kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum (IS.1-1945) and has been described by Ackermann 1975, 107–109. The scene is found in the lowest of three registers that make up this relief; it depicts the episode of a boy bound in the cemetery (i.e., *śmaśāna*) who takes refuge with the Buddha. For the identification of this scene see Santoro 1980, 106 f., who bases herself on the Chinese Tripiṭaka (*Tsa p'i-yü ching* II, 20 = *Taishō Issaikyō* IV, nr. 205, pp. 507, c, 7-508, a, 1), translated by P. Daffinà. Ackermann 1975, 107 had described this funerary monument as a 'miniature *vihāra*'.

95 De Marco 1987, 196. Cf. the description given by Ackermann 1975, 107 f.:

The *vihāra* between the Buddha and the boy stands on a cubic block of stone, its visible side is decorated by a round, shield-like protuberance. The *vihāra* itself consists of a cylindrical body and the double, vaulted roof, decorated with a rhomboid pattern. The opening of the *vihāra* is assumed to be on the side turned towards the child.



Plate 95  
Funerary monument  
in Śmaśāna

This structure too, with its alternation of square and round vertical elements—there seems to be one more quadrangular podium below the one that is decorated by the ‘protuberance’—echoes the VDhP description, or rather the other way round. Although certainly different in many details, I think that the structures of A-1 and B-10 are basically the same, and that they are variants of the modest beginning that in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, under Buddhist influence, has evolved into the phantastic *aiḍūka*. Another variant of such a structure, a true *eḍūka*, might have once crowned the burial shaft in Mansar, as it might have done the *śmaśāna* at Ujjain.

#### A funerary monument to Prabhāvatī Guptā?

The prominent situation of the findspot of the burial shaft, site T in Mansar, in between the two Vākāṭaka (Hindu) state sanctuaries, suggests the prestigious character that the funerary monument must have had in the eyes of contemporaries; it may have called to mind an important public figure. In an earlier publication I have conjectured, on account of the Nāga guarding the burial chamber, that this public figure may have been Prabhāvatī Guptā herself, ‘Pravarasena’s remarkable Bhāgavata mother, the queen who styled herself as belonging to the Dhāraṇa *gotra*, a princess who was, on her own account, an ornament of both dynasties, the Gupta and the Nāga’.<sup>96</sup>

I would like to be more cautious here. If the ashes were those of Prabhāvatī she would have had two monuments, a memorial temple on the Rāmagiri and the *eḍūka* at issue. The latter may have marked the spot where she was cremated, the former was the place where merit was transferred to her in the next world. The two similar Nāgas found at both sites seem to underpin this hypothesis. However, a serpent underneath a structure is a common rather than a specific feature, and, apart from that, there is little that points to any person in particular. It is therefore possible altogether that the burial shaft belonged to someone else, another king, another important person of the fifth century. The anonymity of this grave illustrates again what Malamoud sees

<sup>96</sup> Bakker 2004a, 84. *Poona Plates of Prabhāvatīguptā* (CII V, 7 ll. 7–8, 36 ll. 8–9):

[...] *mahārājādhīrājaśrīcandraguptas tasya duhitā dhāraṇasagotrā nāgakulasam-  
bhūtāyāṃ śrīmahādevyāṃ kuberanāgāyāṃ utpannobhayakulālaṅkārabhūtātyantabha-  
gavadbhaktā* [...]

as the 'l'idéologie funéraire dans le brâhmanisme': 'La durée de vie des mânes est brève. Le culte qui leur est rendu n'est pas fait pour leur donner ou leur permettre de garder un visage' (Malamoud 1982, 449).

## CONCLUSION

The natural human inclination to erect monuments to the dead has been recognized within the Brahmanical tradition since Vedic times. However, it did not really take root within Hinduism. Abhorrence of everything connected with death owing to its pollutive potential may be one of the explanatory factors.<sup>97</sup> Worship was reserved for those powers which could enhance the human condition and mortuary remains were not counted among them. In this respect the Buddhist tradition with its human founder distinguished itself fundamentally from the Hindu mainstream. The funerary structures pertaining to the Brahmanical sphere that we have surveyed were all, with the exception of the last one at site T in Mansar, 'cenotaphs' in essence. In order to reconcile the inclination to commemorate the dead with the religious propensity to increase merit through worship, the memorial temple, our category one, came into being. This became a resounding success. Literary and archaeological evidence for the other four categories, however, remains meagre within the period under review, the ancient and classical age.

To erect stone steles (*yaṣṭis*) in memory of a dear one who had passed away may have been a wide-spread custom in South Asia from neolithic times or earlier. It was apparently unknown to Vedic religion, but was accommodated to Hindu and Buddhist practices; within both religions, however, it developed in quite divergent ways. The *yaṣṭis* of Andhau and the one of Sui Vihar have in common that both commemorate the death of a venerated person; one of the Andhau steles was erected for a novice nun (*śrāmaṇerī*). A significant difference, however, is that in Sui Vihar the deceased was an initiated Buddhist monk (*bhikṣu*), whose ashes were deposited on top of the *yaṣṭi*, thus turning the monument into an object of (relic) worship, comparable to the cult of saints in Christianity; accordingly the monument was expanded into a *stūpa*.<sup>98</sup> The *yaṣṭi*, combined with bones or ashes and appropriating, as it would seem, the Vedic idea of the burial mound (*citi*), thus became the *stūpa* of the heterodox traditions; without mortuary deposits it evolved into the memorial stones of

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97 Malamoud 1982, 451 n. 3:

Le cadavre est une source majeure d'impureté, pour les objets et les lieux, mais aussi pour les hommes. Les survivants sont atteints d'une souillure d'autant plus grave et durable qu'ils sont plus étroitement apparentés au mort.

98 The difference between monks and laymen should not be taken to be absolute. 'Burial *ad sanctos*' was, as Schopen 1997, 114–147, has shown, a common phenomenon in Indian Buddhism.

Indian folk religion.<sup>99</sup> The former development is earlier than the latter. The Śaka tribes, who came from a background with a rich funerary tradition, may have acted as a catalyst of the second development, which did not meet with great acclaim from the side of the orthodox.

Foreign influence may also account for another exceptional phenomenon in ancient and classical North India: the installation of human effigies within holy space, i.e. a temple. Although one indigenous example of a statue gallery has been found, this cave at Nāṇeghāṭ differs substantially, as we have argued, from what the Kuṣāṇa kings had made for themselves. The *devakulas* at Māṭ and Surkh Kotal are *sui generis*.

Finally the *aiḍūka* and *eḍūka*. The latter, if not a pejorative for a Buddhist *stūpa*, is nearly as elusive as the former. In both cases we should think of vertical, elongated or needle-like constructions, mostly of brick (in which one could see an echo of the Vedic *citi*), combined with one or more *yaṣṭis*, round or square pillars or poles, raised by way of a commemorative column. The general Hindu reluctance to connect it with actual remains of the dead rendered it futile: being neither temple nor relic sanctuary there were not enough incentives to construct, worship and maintain it; the Hindu funerary monument or *aiḍūka* never really came off the ground. The only specimen recognized as such by some scholars is the one preserved in Ahicchatra, where no mortuary deposits seem to have been found (for this we reserve the word ‘*aiḍūka*’), but this identification is spurious. The *aiḍūka* of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* is a hybrid product of śāstric imagination, calqued on a Buddhist example.

The remains of an *eḍūka* seem to have been preserved at site T in Mansar, where ashes have been found (hence our reference to it as ‘*eḍūka*’) and a subterranean brick shaft was excavated, but where there is no longer a column above the ground. With the help of some Gandhāra reliefs we have made an attempt to visualize a structure that possibly once stood on top of the burial shaft and which to contemporaries may have been a ‘stab of pain’ (*śokaśalya*), reminding them of one of the great (wo)men of their age.

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99 Cf. Irwin 1980, 12:

In my first lecture—entitled *The Stūpa and the Cosmic Axis: the archaeological evidence* [not available to this author]—it was shown that the primary component of the early *stūpa* had been an axial pillar of wood. In the earliest stage, this pillar had not been erected simply to mark the centre of the mound: it had taken structural precedence over the raising of the mound itself, the latter serving as an envelope to enclose it. Later, when earthen *stūpas* were superseded by more permanent structures in brick or stone, the axial function of the original type of monumental pillar was taken over by a comparatively slender pole or staff (*yaṣṭi*) bearing one or more umbrellas at its summit.

## APPENDIX

## Aidūkarūpanirmāṇa

*Viṣṇudharmottara 3.84.1–15 (emended)*

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca |  
 aidūkarūpanirmāṇaṃ śṛṇuṣva gadato mama |  
 aidūkapūjanāt pūjā kṛtāsya jagato bhavet || 1 ||  
 bhadrapiṭhaṃ budhaḥ kuryāt sopānaih śobhanair yutam |  
 caturbhir yādavaśreṣṭha yathādīśam arindama || 2 ||  
 tasyopariṣṭād aparaṃ bhadrapiṭhaṃ tu kārayet |  
 tasyopariṣṭād aparaṃ tādr̥gvidham arindama || 3 ||  
 tasyopariṣṭāt kartavyaṃ liṅgarūpaṃ vijānatā |  
 na tu tatrāpi kartavyaṃ liṅgaṃ rekhāvirājitam || 4 ||  
 tasya madhye dhruvāṃ yaṣṭiṃ caturasrāṃ tu kārayet |  
 tasyopariṣṭāt kartavyā bhūmikās tu trayodaśa || 5 ||  
 tasyopariṣṭāt kartavyaṃ tathaiṅgmalasāraṅgam |  
 tasyopari punar yaṣṭiḥ kāryā rājan suvartulā || 6 ||  
 samārdhacandramadhyasthacandrakeṇa virājitā |  
 bhūmikā yā mayā proktā tathaiṅgmalasāraṅgam || 7 ||  
 bhuvanās te tvayā jñeyāḥ tathā rājamś caturdaśa |  
 liṅgaṃ maheśvaro devo vṛttā yaṣṭiḥ pitāmahaḥ || 8 ||  
 caturasrā tu yā yaṣṭiḥ sā ca devo janārdanaḥ |  
 guṇarūpeṇa vijñeyaṃ bhadrapiṭhatrayaṃ tathā || 9 ||  
 guṇādhānam iti proktaṃ trailokyaṃ sacarācaram |  
 adhastād bhuvanānāṃ tu liṅgopari tathā nṛpa || 10 ||  
 lokapālās ca kartavyāḥ śūlahastās caturdīśam |  
 virūḍho dhṛtarāṣṭraś ca virūpākṣaś ca yādava || 11 ||  
 kuberaś ca mahātejāḥ sūryaveśadharaḥ śubhaḥ |  
 sarve kavacinaḥ kāryās śubhābharanābhūṣitāḥ || 12 ||  
 virūḍhakaṃ vijānīhi śakraṃ devagaṇeśvaram |  
 dhṛtarāṣṭraṃ vijānīhi yamaṃ bhuvanānāyakaṃ || 13 ||  
 virūpākṣaṃ vijānīhi varuṇaṃ yādasāṃ patim |  
 rājarājaṃ vijānīhi kuberaṃ dhanadaṃ prabhum || 14 ||  
 aidūkarūpaṃ kathitaṃ mayaitat, prajāhitākhyam yaduvaṃśamukhya |  
 aidūkapūjāniratā labhante, sukhaṃ manuṣyā divi vāsam ante || 15 ||



# Puruṣamedha, Manasarapurusa, Vāstupurusa\*

## The Image of Man in the Sacrificial Context

### THE IMAGE OF MAN

To the Greek philosopher Xenophanes (6th century BC) the following insight is ascribed:

But if cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw with their hands and do the works that men can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves.<sup>1</sup>

One of the fascinating aspects of early Indian thought as come down to us in the tenth book of the *Ṛgveda* is that such naive representation of the divine or of the anthropomorphic nature of the gods of the conventional religion had been transcended centuries before Xenophanes, in the masterly, mystical vision of the poet of the *Hymn of Creation* who observed:

NON-EXISTENT THERE WAS NOT, existent there was not then. There was not the atmospheric space, nor the vault beyond. What stirred, where, and in whose control? Was there water, a deep abyss?

NOR DEATH NOR IMMORTALITY (mortals nor immortals) was there then; there was no distinction of night or day. That One (*tad ekam*) breathed without breath by inner power; than it verily there was nothing else further.

[...]

WHO TRULY KNOWS? Who shall here proclaim it—whence they were produced, whence this creation? The gods (arose) on this side (later), by the creation of this (empiric world, to which the gods belong); then who knows whence it came into being? [...]<sup>2</sup>

Yet, in the same book we encounter another cosmogonic idea which makes it clear that transcendental thought and human imagery could exist side by side; to which of these two visions preference was given depended evidently on the

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1 Fr. 15, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* V, 109, 3; translation by G.S. Kirk in: Kirk & Raven 1975, 169 (first published in 1957).

2 *Ṛgveda* X.129.1–2,6; translation by F. Edgerton in: Edgerton 1965.

sphere of life to which they were applied, the philosophical or the sacrificial one, both supposed to be equally valid in their own right.

THE PURUṢA has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet. He, encompassing the world on all sides, stood out ten fingers' lengths beyond.

THE PURUṢA alone is all this universe, what has been, and what is to be. He rules likewise over (the world of) immortality (viz. the gods), which he grows beyond, by (sacrificial?) food.

[...]

WHEN THE GODS, with the Puruṣa as oblation, extended (performed) the (cosmic) sacrifice, Spring became the butter for it, Summer the firewood, Autumn the oblation.

THEY CONSECRATED on the sacred grass this sacrifice, (namely) the Puruṣa, born in the beginning. With him the gods sacrificed, the Sādhyas, and the Seers. [...] <sup>3</sup>

It is to this sphere of sacrifice that we shall confine ourselves in the following essay. And, as may be derived from the *Hymn of Cosmic Man*, sacrifice of Man or human sacrifice, real or symbolic, is an integral part of the Indian ritualistic world. Philosophers may draw the forms of the world like abstract principles, ritualists prefer to draw them like tangible substances of flesh and blood or their homologous substitutes. But as we will see, the Indian genius of speculation and abstraction operated not only in the philosophical sphere. It may also take credit for the transformation of the cruelest of all sacrifices into a vision that synthesizes the realms of god and man. What evidence, the sceptic may ask, do we have for human sacrifice in India?

## HUMAN SACRIFICE IN INDIA

William Crooke, one of the great connoisseurs of the living traditions of India of his time and reporter of many a crooked thing, notes in his delightful book *Things Indian* under the heading 'House':

Very similar to these [scil. houses] was the earliest Indo-Aryan house, the form of which has been handed down in the marriage shed of our days. The materials were wood, basket-work, and clay. The main feature was the corner-posts, which were fixed in the ground with rites, sometimes including human sacrifice, intended to conciliate the earth-spirits, and were always regarded as, in some sense, sacrosanct. <sup>4</sup>

*Sub voce* 'Human Sacrifice; Cannibalism' Crooke adds to this,

<sup>3</sup> *R̥gveda* X.90.1–2,6–7; translation by F. Edgerton in: Edgerton 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Crooke 1906, 258.

All through the later course of history we meet occasional instances of the custom [i.e. of human sacrifice]. First we find the foundation sacrifice, either, as some believe, intended to appease the earth-deities of the place, or as a deliberate piece of god-making, to create a divine protector of the building. Many a fort and tank, as legend tells us, were guarded in this way. [...] Whenever we [i.e. the British] build a great bridge or harbour mole, our engineers are suspected of being on the look-out for victims, and people are careful not to wander abroad at night during the time the foundation is being laid.<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that all this ‘information’ is merely based on hear-say, but the fact that it was said and heard may be an indication that at least the notion of killing a human victim in the context of a construction sacrifice or *Bauopfer* was well-known. That the practice was actually wide-spread in the rest of Asia, SE and E Asia including Japan, is well attested in the scholarly literature regarding the subject.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to South Asia, however, the evidence is apparently more problematic, as already indicated by the title of a recent article by two Dutch anthropologists, Jordaan and Wessing—calqued on the title of an article by the French scholar Paul Mus<sup>7</sup>—*Construction Sacrifice in India ‘seen from the East’*.<sup>8</sup> The reason why it is ‘seen from the East’ is that, on the one hand, the two anthropologists find abundant (archaeological) evidence for the practice in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia; this leads them to infer (*op. cit.* 229) that this violent custom may actually have received impulses from South Asia, the cradle of the Indianized cultures and religions of Southeast Asia. In South Asia itself, on the other hand, the two anthropologists have ‘seen’ comparatively little hard evidence that could support their inference. They suspect, however, that this is not so much due to the absence of the practice itself, than to prejudice on the part of indologists—after all South and Southeast Asia share, according to them, ‘common prehistoric origins in Mus’ monsoon Asia’ (*op. cit.* 229), a dubious argument on which the two anthropologists set great store. Hence their exhortation: ‘Further archaeological research is obviously needed into various aspects of (human) sacrifice, without dismissing possible indicators out of hand as has been done in the past’ (*op. cit.* 228 f.).

Jordaan and Wessing make a distinction into two types, which partly overlap,

Namely appeasement sacrifice, aimed at gaining title to the land to be used from the spirits that are believed to own it, and animation sacrifice used to give the structure strength and protection by animating it with the spirit of the sacrificial victim.<sup>9</sup>

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5 Crooke *op. cit.* 262 f. Cf. Winternitz 1887, 39 f.; Malamoud 1999, 27 f.

6 See *i.a.* Winternitz 1887, 40; Jordaan & Wessing 1999, 211–47. Bremmer 2007. I take ‘construction sacrifice’ as synonymous with ‘foundation sacrifice’.

7 Paul Mus, *India seen from the East: Indian and indigenous cults in Champa*, 1975.

8 Jordaan & Wessing 1999.

9 Jordaan & Wessing 1999, 219.

In the Indian context the former type of rites could be subsumed under the category of *Vāstuśānti* or *Vāstuśamana* ('Appeasement of the House') rituals. These rituals, to be performed whenever one begins the construction of and/or enters a newly built house are summarized by Kane in his *History of Dharmasāstra*, Volume V, 790f. They derive from prescripts in various texts pertaining to the Vedic tradition dealing with domestic sacrifices—the *Gr̥hyasūtras*—and develop in later digests to 'a very elaborate affair', which we, like Kane, pass over here, not 'for reasons of space' though, but because human sacrifice is not touched upon in this context.

*Installation of the house or Vāstupratīṣṭhā*

The second type of sacrifice may be subsumed under the category of *Vāstupratīṣṭhā* ('Installation of the House'), which is described by Kane (*op. cit.*) in Volume II, 833–36 (conflated with *Vāstuśānti* rites). This type of ritual also reaches back to Vedic times and is canonized in the same *Gr̥hyasūtra* literature.

A central role in these rituals is reserved for the 'Lord of the Homestead', *Vāstoṣpati*, already hymned in *R̥gveda* 7.54.1–3, a power who is represented by a firm post. Kane gives the following description of this House Sacrifice (*Vāstuyajña*).

On an auspicious day and moment, the stone should be laid over jewels and all seeds; similarly the post is to be worshipped at the hands of four *br̥hmaṇas*; the priest who should wear white garments, should be master of the Veda and should be accompanied by the artizans, should fix the post that is washed with water mixed with all herbs and covered with many whole rice and decked with clothes and ornaments to the accompaniment of Vedic mantras and the tunes of auspicious music; he should perform a *homa* with honey and clarified butter and should repeat the mantra '*vāstoṣpate prati*' (*RV* 7.54.1); then the owner should feed *br̥hmaṇas* with a dish of rice-milk.<sup>10</sup>

All this appears to give us little more than the usual harmless Brahminical ritualism, and seems remote from the gruesome practices in which animals or humans are slaughtered in order to lend their strength to the construction, as reported by Crooke and surmised by Jordaan and Wessing. Yet, appearances may be deceptive, especially in India.

The two anthropologists have recourse to an authority, Stella Kramrisch, who refers to *Śatapathabr̥hmaṇa* 1.2.3.6–7, in order to underpin the homology of, on the one hand, the seeds placed underneath the foundation-stone and the rice offered to the *Vāstoṣpati*, and, on the other, the sacrificial animal (*paśu*). This homology is believed to exist, because the grain 'has the nature of the sacrificial victim; this essence passed to sacrificial animals, it entered into

10 Kane II, 834f. Gonda 1980, 154: 'An offering (*sthālīpāka* cooked in milk) is made to *Vāstoṣpati* with the formula "drive away evil; make our wealth increase; protect us always etc"'. Cf. Bodewitz 1977–78, 59–68; Ray 1960, 311.

the horse, ox, sheep and goat, and lastly into the earth with its rice and barley, etc'.<sup>11</sup> This at first sight curious doctrine goes back to early brahmanical speculation regarding the life-sustaining substance (*medha*) embodied in the sacrificial victim and transmitted in the sacrificial act. The primordial cosmic Puruṣa (RV X.90, see above) is the fountain-head of the *medha*. By his being sacrificed in the cosmic Puruṣamedha the *medha* of the Puruṣa passed on to the horse, empowering the horse-sacrifice (Aśvamedha) etc., a lineage that finally makes the seeds of the earth fit for sacrifice (*medhya*).<sup>12</sup> Speaking of this conception, the French scholar Charles Malamoud warns against misinterpretation, observing that, rather than with a historical development, we are here concerned with a peculiarity of brahmanical thought, in which each part of a structure is at the same time equivalent of and comprising the whole.<sup>13</sup>

All the same, it seems possible, if we take an orthodox brahmanical view, to see in the innocent *vāstuyajña*, House Sacrifice, its link with a less gentle, more bloody prototype, which, however, as far as house and temple building is concerned, is not attested in the texts, unless perhaps wrapped up in highly symbolic language that can be decoded only by learned brahmins and well-trained indologists. Yet, to infer from this the unhistoric nature of such a bloody prototype may be a fallacy.

The Vedic text corpus knows of an 'animation sacrifice', to use Jordaan and Wessing's terminology, not to install a house or other permanent building, but to build a make-shift sacrificial fire-altar in the Agnicayana ceremony. Archaeological evidence confirms the historic reality of this type of altars in ancient India. I refer to the three Agnicayana altars found in Jagatgram (Dehra Dun District, UP).<sup>14</sup>

The building of the fire (*agnicayana*) and its altar is an elaborate and complicated affair, which is comparatively well researched. The following summary therefore does not pretend to add anything new, but rather serves as an aide-mémoire.

11 Kramrisch 1977 Vol. I, 16; Jordaan & Wessing 1999, 222.

12 Malamoud, 'Modèle et réplique', 29–31, rendering *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* II.8.

13 Malamoud 1999, 30:

Le lecteur moderne peut même être tenté d'y voir le récit d'une évolution historique: du sacrifice humain à l'offrande végétale, le progrès de la civilisation suit le déplacement du *medha*. En fait, les événements ... portent sur les pièces d'une structure qui a cette particularité ... de comporter un élément qui est aussi l'équivalent et le contenant du tout.

14 *Indian Archaeology—A Review* [IAR] 1953–54, 10 f. Plates XIII–XV; Ramachandran 1951–52, 28–31. Cf. Thapar 1983, 2–40.



Plate 96  
Jagatgram, Altar Site I

### EXCURSUS UPON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AGNICAYANA ALTAR

The ritual of placing a golden (i.e. immortal) man at the base of the fire-altar is i.a. described in *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra* 16.22.3-4. Taken by and large, the procedure is as follows (leaving out the mantras to be recited with every act).

After preparing the ground of the fire-altar, a knobbed, gold disk or plate is laid on a lotus-leaf; on this (plate) a man of gold is laid, directed towards the east, stretched out on his back, to the right of the hole (in the plate). Then the *Puruṣasāman* should be sung.<sup>15</sup> According to the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*:

He puts down a gold disk; gold is immortality; verily in immortality he piles the fire, for propagation. He puts a golden man, to support the world of the sacrificer; if he were to put it over the perforation in the brick, he would obstruct the breath of cattle and of the sacrificer; he puts it down on the south side with head to the east: he supports the world of the sacrifice; he does not obstruct the breath of cattle and the sacrificer.<sup>16</sup>

Next, after the golden man has been ‘touched’ by a verse—‘The drop hath fallen on the earth, the sky, on this seat, and on the one which was aforetime; the drop that wandereth over the third seat I offer in the seven *Hotrās*’<sup>17</sup>—the serpents (*sarpa*) should be saluted with three verses.

Homage to the serpents which are on the earth, the serpents in the atmosphere, in the sky, to those serpents homage etc. [...] <sup>18</sup>

15 *ĀŚS* 16.22.3:

*brahma jajñānam iti puṣkaraparṇa upariṣṭān nirbādhaṃ rukmam upadhāya hiraṇya-garbhāḥ sam avartatāgra iti tasmīn hiraṇmayam puruṣam prācinam uttānam dakṣiṇenātṛṇnam prānimukha upadhāya puruṣasāma gāyeti saṃpreṣyati || 3 ||*

Cf. *ŚBr* 7.4.1.7–21.

16 *TaiS* 5.2.7.2 (transl. Keith).

17 *TaiS* 4.2.8.f (transl. Keith).

18 *TaiS* 4.2.8.g-i (transl. Keith). Cf. *Vārāha Śrautasūtra* 2.1.6.16. *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra* misses this element.

Ghee is sprinkled over the man. On either side of the man a sacrificial ladle is laid.<sup>19</sup> Hereafter the laying of the bricks is begun, the first one being the *svayamātrṇṇā* ('the naturally pierced one') placed on the gold man to allow him to breathe. Within the altar also a living tortoise is built.

Then, after a square mortar (*ulūkhalaka*) made of udumbara wood is installed at the 'northern shoulder' (*uttare 'mṣe*) (of the fire-altar) and the fire-pot (*ukhā*) is placed in the middle (*madhye*),<sup>20</sup> the heads of the five sacrificial victims (*paśus*) are installed, the human head in the middle of the fire-pot, the head of a horse towards the west, of a bull towards the east, of a ram towards the south, and of a goat towards the north, while seven gold pieces are laid in the seven orifices of the human head.

Hereafter Āpastamba prescribes that a snake head (*sarpaśiras*) should be put on the right shoulder (*dakṣiṇe 'mṣe*, i.e. south side) of the fire-altar (with the same verse 'Homage to the serpents'), which is turned away from the other sacrificial heads lest, the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (5.2.9.5) remarks, it should bite these domesticated animals instead of wild ones.<sup>21</sup> After the snake, Āpastamba (ĀSS 16.28.1–3) enjoins that a human figure (*puruṣākṛti*) should be assembled (*cinoti*) by means of twelve 'turns' (*paryāya*) each spoken trice, a (virtual?) body stretching from east to west, the head of which coincides with the head of the golden man (*puruṣaśiras*). The sacrificer gives praise to this construction (*upahitā*) by the Puruṣa Nārāyaṇa.<sup>22</sup>

Though they seem to differ with respect to where exactly the *puruṣa* and the *sarpaśiras* are to be constructed,<sup>23</sup> both Black Yajurveda branches (the

19 ĀSS 16.22.4:  
*drapsaś caskandeti puruṣam abhimṛśya namo astu sarpebhya iti tisṛbhīr abhimantrya kṛṇuṣva pāja iti pañcabhīr uttaravedivat puruṣaṃ vyāghārya srucāv upadadhātīty uktam* || 4 ||

20 According to the tradition of the Vājasaneyins it is placed on the mortar (see ŚBr 7.5.1.26).

21 ĀSS 16.27.22: *namo astu sarpebhya iti dakṣiṇe 'mṣe sarpaśira upadadhyād viṣūcīmaṃ paśuśīrṣaiḥ*. The verb *upadhā* is used for piling bricks as well as for the installation/placing of other items. It is therefore not clear whether a representation in brick (*citi*) or a real snake head is intended here. Tsuji 1983, 156 takes *Mānavaśrautasūtra* 8.3 to mean 'piling of a serpent head'. Baudhāyana speaks of a 'real' snake head (BSS 10.9, *Agni* II, 499) that should be placed on the right (southern) part of the forehead. It may be directed towards the direction from which danger threatens the country (BSS 10.30; *Agni* II, 539).

22 The Puruṣa Hymn, TaiĀr 3.12 (= RV X.90; above, p. 444). As has been observed by Caland, this element may have been derived from the tradition of the Maitrāyaṇīyas (*Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 3.5.1), as it is not found in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* nor in *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra*. The Śrautasūtra of the Maitrāyaṇīyas, the *Mānava Śrautasūtra*, indeed reads as follows (6.1.8.1, 3): 'He should construct the 'man-layer' (*puruṣaciti*) on the northern shoulder (*uttarasmīn amṣe*). [the same formulas] Aloof from the upper part of the body (*uttarārdhāt*) he should construct the head of the snake (*sarpaśiras*) turned away (from the body) by means of the 'Homage to the serpents' verses (*sarpaṇāma*); or he should assign it (only) and not (actually) construct it.' (The same alternative in ĀSS 16.27.23).

23 The *Hiranyakeśī Śrautasūtra* places the serpent head on the left shoulder (see Caland

Maitrāyaṇīyas and Taittirīyas) differ from the Vājasaneyins (represented by the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* and *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra*) in that the Śrautasūtras of both Black Yajurveda traditions prescribe this human figure and serpent head to be part of the first layer of the fire-altar. The uncertainty regarding the positioning, however, the alternative allowed by two Śrautasūtras (Āpastamba and Mānava) to construct the serpent head only virtually, by means of formulas, and the omission of the human figure in Baudhāyana bespeak the idiosyncrasy of this part of the ritual.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear that the central role of the human head (and the four animal heads) in the piling up of the fire-altar presupposes sacrificial slaughter of some sort. According to the Śrautasūtras of the Black Yajurveda, the human head should be cut off of a *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* killed by an arrow or the thunderbolt,<sup>25</sup> after which it has to be covered with clay and set aside.<sup>26</sup> The tradition of the White Yajurveda is more explicit that this ritual requires a human sacrifice. The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (6.2.1.18) unambiguously declares that ‘a man (*puruṣa*) should be sacrificed first, for man is the first of the sacrificial animals (*paśu*)’. The *Kātyāyana Śrautasūtra* states that the victim, a *vaiśya* or *rājanya* (16.1.17), should be suffocated in a special secluded place,<sup>27</sup> after which his head is taken (16.1.18), though it allows the option that a head of gold or clay is used as a substitute.<sup>28</sup> This may have become common practice when animal

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*ad* ĀŚS 16.27.22). As to the place of the human figure Caland (*ad loc.*) remarks: ‘Art und Weise ihrer Schichtung sind undeutlich.’

24 It is conceivable that the theologians of the White Yajurveda, the Vājasaneyins (as well as Baudhāyana), in view of their identification of the altar with the Puruṣa (ŚBr 6.1.1.3-7), took the totality of the bricks of the first layer itself as a representation of the *puruṣa*, which would render another *puruṣa* figure, in addition of the man of gold and the altar itself, redundant. On the other hand, though, the omission of the serpent head remains intriguing. As we have seen, the serpents were earlier invoked, by the same verses but without the exemplifying head, after the man of gold had been installed and the *Puruṣasāman* had been sung.

25 ĀŚS 16.6.2-3; cf. VŚS 2.1.1.50 and MŚS 6.1.2.23 (*vaiśya* and *rājanyabandhu*). According to *Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra* 10.9 it should be the head of a *vaiśya* killed in battle (*Agni* II, 499).

26 *mṛdā pralīpya nidadhāti*, ĀŚS 16.6.7; cf. BŚS 10.10 (*Agni* II, 501). The ritual according to Caland’s translation of Āpastamba (ĀŚS 16.6.2–4) is as follows:

Dann geht er mit sieben oder einundzwanzig Bohnen in der Hand, um einen Menschenkopf zu holen, der von einem Vaiśya oder Kṣatriya herrührt, welcher durch einen Pfeil (im Kriege) oder durch den Blitz getötet worden ist. Nachdem er die Bohnen in der Nähe (des Körpers) hingeworfen hat, haut er den Menschenkopf ab mit der Formel: ‚Der du hier bist, dem dir dieses Haupt angehört, durch dieses Haupt sollst du dort im Besitze eines Hauptes sein‘ und legt dann an die Stelle des Kopfes einen siebenfach durchlöcherten Ameisenhaufen nieder. Er singt, während er rechts um das Haupt herumgeht, die drei an Yama gerichteten Verse. [...]

27 KŚS 16.1.14: *parivṛte puruṣasamjñāpanam*.

28 KŚS 16.1.32: *anyāni vā hiraṇmayāni vā mṛṇmayāni vānālabhyaitān*. Cf. *Dvaidha Sūtra* (BŚS 22.2): ‘As for the preparation of the heads of the sacrificial victims: Baudhāyana says they should be either real or made of clay. Śālīki says that they should be real ones only. Aupamanyava says that they should be made of gold.’ (*Agni* II, 613)

sacrifice, not to speak of human sacrifice, had become tabu. The bodies of the four animal victims are thrown into the water from where the clay is taken to make the bricks.<sup>29</sup> What is done with the decapitated human corpse remains unclear in the Śrautasūtras. The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* strongly suggests that all trunks are thrown into the water:<sup>30</sup>

As to these glories (*śriyaḥ*), [identified with the elixir of life (*rasa*) in ŚBr 6.1.1.4.], they are these very heads of the sacrificial victims and these trunks are the five (altar) layers (*citi*). Therefore, after having placed the heads of the sacrificial victims, one piles up the layers; then one unites these trunks with these same heads.<sup>31</sup>

Although the obvious interpretation takes the layers as a substitute of the trunks, it cannot be excluded that, especially in the case of the human *paśu*, the body of the victim was, occasionally perhaps, interred into the altar, to the effect that the *Puruṣa*, i.e. 1) the Demiurge Prajāpati, 2) the sacrificial victim, and 3) the sacrificer (*yajamāna*), became reintegrated in the sacrificial sphere, a reintegration that is the alpha and the omega of the Agnicayana, for instance reflected in the golden man.

In total the altar consists of five layers of brick, which may have the shape of a bird, especially the *śyena* (hawk), which is the default, but optionally also that of a triangle, a chariot-wheel, a trough, a circle, or a burial mound (i.e. square).<sup>32</sup> When this brick altar has been completed the *āhavanīya* fire is established on it.



*Plate 97*  
*Jagatgram, five layers of brick forming the Agnicayana altar*

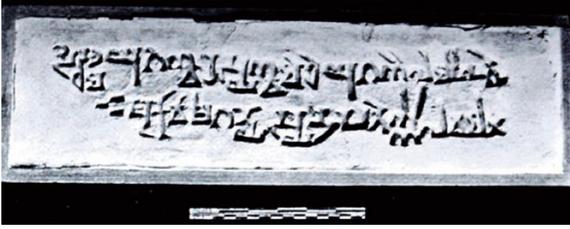
29 KŚS 16.1.19–20: *caturṇām apsu kāyaprāsanam* || 19 || *tato mṛd iṣṭakārthāpaś ca* || 20 || Cf. ĀŚS 16.8.1.

30 ŚBr 6.2.1.7. Cf. *Karmānta Sūtra* (BŚS 25.29) which refers to this practice (*Agni II*, 653f.).

31 ŚBr 6.2.1.11.

32 TaiS 5.4.11. See BŚS 17.28 (*Agni II*, 666–675).

The remains of the three Agnicayana altars, found in Jagatgram apparently do have the shape of a hawk, but whether they include human and animal bones remains as yet unknown. According to the two 3rd-century inscribed sacrificial bricks, which mention an otherwise unknown king Śīlavarman, lord of Yugaśaila, they were used for the performance of altogether four Aśvamedha sacrifices.



*siddham om |*  
*yugeśvarasyāśvamedhe*  
*yugaśailamahīpateḥ |*  
*iṣṭakā vārṣagaṇyasya*  
*nṛpateś śīlavarmaṇaḥ ||* <sup>33</sup>

*Plate 98*  
*Inscribed brick from Jagatgram*

#### *Preliminary conclusion*

From their inception the Indian higher, i.e. literate, religions (I am limiting myself here to Vedism and Hinduism) know of and prescribe construction sacrifices, mostly of a highly symbolic nature. To judge by the texts, human sacrifice seems only to have played a role in the construction of a make-shift fire-altar, not in that of permanent constructions.

Theoretically, it is quite possible to conceive of an Indian construction sacrifice, including human victims, that evolved from ideas and practices developed in the context of the building of the Agnicayana altar, but if such an evolution took place, it did not find expression in Sanskrit texts dating from before the sixth century AD. It is remarkable, for instance, that the classical Indian Book of the State, the *Arthaśāstra*, though elaborately describing the lay-out and building of cities and fortifications (2.3), does not spend one word on construction sacrifices. It is of course perfectly conceivable that blood-sacrifices of this sort belonged to a realm less well represented by Brahmanical and Hindu scriptures, but if this were the case on the scale suggested by Jordaan and Wessing, this would have become obvious long time ago through archaeology. Of course, we subscribe to their exhortation to do more unbiased archaeological research, but much of this type of research has been done, and its outcome seems to be that human remains as part of the foundations of stone buildings in India occur only rarely.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> IAR 1953–54, p. 11, pl. XV.

<sup>34</sup> My colleague Dr Anna Ślaczka drew my attention to two sites where a skeleton has been found underneath a construction. The first ‘much decayed human skeleton’ was found

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CONSTRUCTION SACRIFICE

Yet, unnoticed instances do occur, and I wish to draw attention to two of them here. Both of them have so far not been seen as examples of construction sacrifices, but I would like to argue that their evidence is best explained by interpreting them as such. And both could be seen as ‘construction variants’ of the Agnicayana altar, the intellectual feasibility of which was postulated above.

*Kauśāmbī*

In his report of the excavations in Kauśāmbī, G.R. Sharma claims to have uncovered the remains of a genuine Agnicayana altar, outside of the eastern gate, within an enclosure-wall, sandwiched between the ramparts and the moat of this ancient town. This structure is assigned to the 2nd century BC.



Plate 99

‘General View of the Kauśāmbī excavations (1957–59)  
the Śyenaciti in the foreground’

in the excavation of a mound known as Meḍh in the village of Gokul near Mahāsthān in the District Bogra, West Bengal. In addition to this skeleton, a gold leaf with the figure of a bull has been found. The excavation is reported by N.G. Majumdar in *ASI Annual Report* 1935–36, 67–69. This very interesting site requires another study, especially because there seem to be striking parallels with the Mansar excavations (see below).

The second site is at Keesargutta, District Hyderabad of Andhra Pradesh, reported in *IAR* 1978–79, 63 f.: ‘The skeleton, the head facing down and hands joined together above the head, in *anjali-mudra*, probably represents *narabali* performed before the construction of the shrine.’

Within the alleged five layers of the altar ‘a large number of human skulls and bones of animals of different species, meticulously arranged’ were found.<sup>35</sup>



Plate 100  
Kauśāmbī excavation:  
‘Human skull on the tail of the Śyenaciti’

In layer one the excavators found, inter alia, a ‘human skull’, ‘the shell of a tortoise’ and ‘the iron model of a snake’.<sup>36</sup>



Plate 101  
Kauśāmbī excavation: Iron Snake

Layer three ‘yielded the largest number of bones with a preponderance of human bone’: ‘three complete human skulls, ten skull pieces and other skeletal material’.<sup>37</sup> Summarizing, Sharma states that,

There is sufficient evidence to conclude that this fire-altar was piled up for the performance of the *Puruṣamedha*. (*op. cit.* 126)

<sup>35</sup> G.R. Sharma 1960, 118.

<sup>36</sup> Sharma 1969, 122 f. See Plates 33, 43 No. 38.

<sup>37</sup> Sharma 1969, 125. See Plates 36–38.

Sharma's conclusions have been challenged by Schlingloff, whose criticism is in particular directed against the alleged historicity of the human sacrifice (*puruṣamedha*).<sup>38</sup> The criticism of Romila Thapar takes a different route. She not so much doubts the historicity of the *puruṣamedha*, but calls the 'fire-altar' itself into question.

The identification of the site as a fire-altar does raise some problems. The location of the altar so close to the ramparts of the city seems unusual. [...] The shape of the bird as presently reconstructed appears to be rather curvilinear, whereas the bricks used for the altar would indicate a more rectilinear form. The interpretation of the objects found is also not convincing. [...] The frequency of human skulls and bones would also seem to suggest a ritual different from that described in the texts and it certainly is in excess of what is required. [...] there can be little doubt that the structure did represent some kind of sacrificial or funerary site.<sup>39</sup>

Comparison of the Kauśāmbī brick structure with the fire-altar remains in Jagatgram makes it clear at a single glance that the two are completely different. Thapar is right when she notes that the location where this brick construction was found, at the foot of the ramparts, is unusual and I would like to go one step further, saying that this location virtually excludes the possibility that we are here concerned with an Agnicayana altar, which has to and can only be constructed in an open field. The great number of animal and human remains also seems incompatible with the Agnicayana ritual. Neither can I accept Schlingloff's suggestion that we may here be concerned with a ritual 'Grabstätte' or cemetery just like that. The location speaks against it and what to do with all the animal bones? The excavation is in need of a thorough reassessment, but my tentative suggestion would be that the uncovered brick structure represents the material remains of a construction sacrifice performed to 'animate', i.e. strengthen the defence constructions of the town. Taking its clue from the paradigmatic Agnicayana, this sacrifice entailed that animals and humans were slaughtered and bricked into an altar-like structure, yielding a 'Grabstätte' of a very peculiar kind. And what remains valid of Sharma's conclusions, against Schlingloff, is that the site does indeed testify to the practice of a *Puruṣamedha*, human sacrifice.

### *Mansar*

My other example is taken from the excavations in Mansar, 5 km west of the Rāmagiri/Ramtek, Maharashtra. We shall focus here on the excavation of the site MNS 3, the so-called Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī, where a large and complicated temple complex has been unearthed. I have dealt with this excavation extensively at other occasions.<sup>40</sup>

38 Schlingloff 1968–69, 188.

39 Thapar 1983, 27.

40 Bakker 2001a, 2002, 2004a, 2008.

Here I shall concentrate on the alleged ‘two sacrificial altars, one in the shape of a *śyena-citi* [hawk] and the other a *kūrma-citi* [turtle], made of bricks’,<sup>41</sup> exposed by the excavators A.K. Sharma and J.P. Joshi in excavations carried out between 1998 and 2000.<sup>42</sup> These two putative ‘altars’ have been found half-way up a natural hill that is completely covered by brick constructions, the nature of which is controversial, but the most plausible interpretation of which takes them as the remains of a large Hindu temple complex (above, p. 421, Plate 86). The ‘altar’ layer is assigned to the 3rd century AD by the excavators, but, as we have argued, may be one or two centuries later.



*Plate 102*  
*MNS 3 (Hiḍimbā Tekḍī): Altar Site*

As in the case of Kauśāmbī, the location—on a hillock, at the foot of, or underneath a Hindu temple—makes it very unlikely *a priori* that we have to do with a Vedic Agnicayana altar, as suggested by the excavators. No animal or human bones have been found in connection with these ‘altars’, but the area has yielded a most extraordinary and unique find (see above, p. 422, Plate 87).

<sup>41</sup> J.P. Joshi & A.K. Sharma 1999–2000, 128.

<sup>42</sup> Joshi & Sharma 1999–2000, 2005; Sharma 2002; IAR 1994–95 [2000], 55–57, IAR 1997–98 [2003], 129–133, IAR 1998–99 [2004], 114–118.

In the *śyenaciti*, [a more than life-size] figure of a Puruṣa made of lime has been found sacrificed with his head smashed. The head of the figure is oriented towards west, whereas the legs are put towards east. A *vedi* in the chest portion with a hole for fixing a *yaṣṭi* over it was made and an earthen lamp was found kept nearby. Two pots have also been kept near the knee region of the figure which lies on his right side with an iron snake kept near his left toe, looking towards the human figure.<sup>43</sup>

How rapidly the decline of this unique find has set in may become apparent from photos taken three months after the discovery in 1999 (Plate 103, cf. Plate 87).



*Plate 103*

*MNS 3: Man of Mansar (Manasarapuraṣa)*

When we collect all the unearthed evidence carefully and compare this with the ritual of building an Agnicayana altar as described in the literature, only one conclusion is possible: the Mansar site is not an Agnicayana location. The most serious objection against such an identification is perhaps that the ‘altars’, though fantastic constructions, do not consist of five layers of bricks. All the same, like in Kauśāmbī, much of the evidence seems to reflect an Agnicayana paradigm. One of the conspicuous points in common with Kauśāmbī (Plate 101) is the discovery of a little iron snake (Plate 104, cf. Plate 101).

43 Joshi & Sharma 1999–2000, 128.



Plate 104

MNS 3: snake at the left foot of the Manasarapuraṣa

Whereas in Kauśāmbī in the 2nd century BC the foundation structures may still have been reinforced by real animal and human victims, 600 years later, in the heyday of India's classical culture, when the doctrine of no-injury, *ahiṃsā*, was fully developed, the same effect may have been thought obtainable by an effigy, the Man of Mansar, or *Manasarapuraṣa*. To cut a long story short, I believe that the excavators of Mansar hit upon the remains of a construction sacrifice.

The meaning and function of the Man of Mansar, the ceremony with which he was installed, and the purport of his makers may have comprised elements from the interpretation schemes that we have discussed:

- 1 The idea of reintegration of man and God through the sacrificial insertion of a (substitute) human figure into the brick fundament of an altar or sacred building, as the case may be.
- 2 The idea of a (human) sacrifice to safeguard the building, by warding off *genii loci*, on the one hand, and by embedding it in a recreated micro-macrocosmic unity, on the other.

The Lord of the Homestead, *Vāstoṣpati*, who was subsequently installed and worshipped, may have been represented by a firm wooden post that was placed in the hole in the breast of the clay figure (Plate 105).

Earlier we envisaged the theoretical possibility that a new concept of a construction sacrifice could have evolved from ideas and practices developed in the context of the Agnicayana altar, but added that, if such an evolution took place, it did not find expression in Sanskrit texts that date from before the

sixth century AD. We have seen next that the evidence of at least two archaeological sites is indicative of such an evolution: Kauśāmbī and Mansar, to which, maybe, Gokul (above, n. 34 on p. 452) is to be added.



*Plate 105*

*Breast of the Manasarapuraṣa with hole to fix the Vāstoṣpati*

Discussing this material with my friend Phyllis Granoff, she made a significant observation which I would like to quote. She refers to Jain stories,

In which people have to undergo tremendous troubles in order to build a temple. In fact, they often have to die. I think this may also be a reworking or memory trace of a construction sacrifice. Sometimes the donor or *yajamāna* has to die; in a few cases he has to give up the possibility of having children, which is also a kind of death.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, Granoff (*op. cit.* 316) refers to the ‘common belief that a temple built over bones of a dead person was doomed to collapse’. This belief may reflect the historical process, in which blood sacrifice gradually became tabu and was replaced by symbolic representations as described here.

## THE VĀSTUPURUṢA

The restrictive clause limiting our search to texts from before the sixth century AD is deliberate. This is because I am of the opinion that from that century onwards we see a new concept gradually taking shape in the religious literature, an idea which raises the Kauśāmbī–Mansar progression that we tentatively elaborated to a higher level of doctrinal abstraction, so characteristic

<sup>44</sup> See Granoff 1992a, 315.

of medieval Hinduism. I mean the idea of the Vāstupuruṣa, the ‘Man of the Homestead’, first encountered in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.<sup>45</sup>

The author Varāhamihira (mid 6th century) begins his chapter on ‘Architecture’ with the following two verses, after having said that the science of house-building (*vāstujñāna*) came down from Brahmā.

To be more precise, there was a being that by his body obstructed the earth and the sky; that being was forcibly seized by the immortals, who felled him, head-down. And wherever a god held it, there that god became established; the Creator ordained that the House Man (*vāstunara*) was to consist of those immortals.<sup>46</sup>

This myth, which still strongly shows the mark of the Vedic concept of the Cosmic Man (Puruṣa), became the basis of an ideology that we find in nearly all Sanskrit texts dealing with the Hindu temple, be they sectarian religious scriptures (Āgamas), or technical treatises concerned with architecture and the like, Śilpaśāstra. The central idea is that underneath the Hindu temple lies a diagram, a *maṇḍala*, that embodies the cosmic Puruṣa and houses all divinities. The temple, thus founded on a macrocosmic grid, is a junction of this world and the other, a fusion of micro- and macrocosm. Seen in this way the ideology of the temple continues that of the Agnicayana altar.<sup>47</sup>

The ritual application of the theoretical concept of the Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala is described by N.R. Bhatt as follows.

The performer of the installation ceremony then draws a diagram called Vāstumaṇḍala on the site made even and clean and performs a fire ritual to please the deities of the lords of this maṇḍala. Vāstu means a site for dwelling. Vāstupuruṣa is a deity who governs the site and is lying on the site, and his limbs are occupied by different deities. Before construction, these deities are to be pleased and permission to use the site is to be obtained. This ritual is named *vāstupūjā*.<sup>48</sup>

### *Kandhar*

Occasionally a human-shaped figure in lieu of a *maṇḍala* may be found. Such a stone structure has been discovered, for instance, at Kandhar (Dist. Nanded, Maharashtra) in excavations conducted by M.K. Dhavalikar and A.P. Jamkhedkar.<sup>49</sup>

Excavation revealed the remains of a unique stone structure which is human shaped (22 m long and 7 m wide) and is enclosed by a double stone wall (37 m × 33 m). It is provided with an entrance on the east. [...] The structure is built of dressed

45 Shastri, 1991, 143–157.

46 Varāhamihira, *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 53.2–3:

*kim api kila bhūtam abhavad rundhānaṃ rodasī śarīreṇa | tad amaraḡaṇena sahasā  
vinigṛhyādhomekhaṃ nyastam || 2 || yatra ca yena gṛhītaṃ vibudhenādhiṣṭhitaḡ sa ta-  
traiva | tadamaramayaṃ vidhātā vāstunaraṃ kalpayāmāsa || 3 ||*

47 Kramrisch 1977 I, 95. Cf. Apte & Supekar 1984.

48 N.R. Bhatt 1984, 15.

49 *Indian Archaeology—A Review* 1983–84, 58 f. Plate 45.

stones in mud masonry, the intervening space being filled in with pebbles. The maximum length from head to toe is 23.05 m and the head portion, which is in the northwest, is 6.35 m long and 4.85 m wide. The legs, which are in the southeast direction, are 10.88 m long and their maximum width at the thigh is 2.20 m. [...] The left-half of the head is destroyed. Around the head was a pavement of stone rubble in mud masonry which is 0.88 m wide. Near the legs was noticed a circular pit, which is now full of fallen stones. (IAR 1983–84, 58 f.)



*Plate 106*

*Human figure underneath temple in Kandhar*

This remarkable structure may be half a millennium later than the Manasarapuraṣa—dating from the Rāṣṭrakūṭa period—and lacks the latter’s sophistication, but it more clearly reflects the literary idea of the Vāstupuruṣa. A conspicuous agreement between both figures is the direction of head and legs: northwest/southeast.

#### *Curdi*

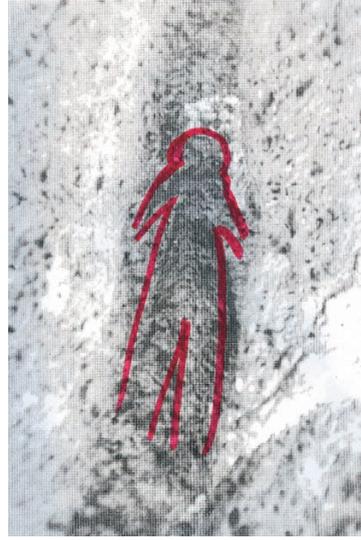
Finally I would like to discuss briefly a figure found in Curdi (Goa). I am obliged to my friend Frans Janssen for sharing this information with me. The more than life-size image is made of laterite stone and is situated between a temple and a tank. In between the left arm and the trunk is the effaced image of a child still visible.

The featuring of the child proves that we are here concerned with another type of image that may rather be classified as a fertility icon. In that respect

the brief description of Dr Shirodkar in the *Purabhilekh-Puratatva*<sup>50</sup> may be correct, when he calls the image a Lajjā Gaurī, although we usually understand a completely different type of icon by that term.



*Plate 107*  
*Curdi: Human figure with child*



*Plate 108*  
*Curdi: child underneath left arm*

## FINAL REMARK

Apart from a few rare exceptions, the idea of the Vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala is first and foremost a mythological and theoretical, ritualistic concept, which has hardly, if at all, had demonstrable effects on the actual architecture of the temple, or its archaeology for that matter.

As such it is one more ingenuous product of brahmanical ritualistic speculation, and it carries its hallmark: abstraction. Taking its origin from the construction sacrifice, such as represented by the Manasarapuraṣa, and ultimately from the Puruṣamedha in the context of the make-shift fire-altar, the sacrifice of Man or sacrificial man is thus preserved in the concept of the Vāstupuruṣa. It testifies to the civilizing force of brahmanical culture, which first banned human and then animal sacrifice, and which teaches us that even the most gruesome of religious practices can be viewed under the perspective of the sublime. Pace Xenophanes.

<sup>50</sup> *Journal of the Directorate of Archives, Archaeology and Museum, Panaji, Goa.* This journal is unavailable to me. Information kindly provided by Frans Janssen.

# Rāma Devotion in a Śaiva Holy Place\*

## The Case of Vārāṇasī

I DO homage to Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā,  
both holy and enchanting streams;  
the latter washes away the sin of him  
who bathes therein and drinks of its waters;  
the former destroys the ignorance  
of him who speaks or hears of it.  
(RCM 1 C15.1, tr. Hill)

### INTRODUCTION

In the eulogizing stanzas that precede the *Acts of Rāma*, Tulsīdās makes a curious remark:

[I DO homage] to Hara, too, and Girijā, who for the good of the world and with regard to the evil of this age composed a number of spells in a barbarous tongue, incongruous syllables, meaningless mutterings, whose influence is manifest by the power of Maheśa. (RCM 1 C15.3, tr. Hill)

When Śiva can empower even meaningless mutterings, how great then would be the effect if he empowered meaningful truths?

If the grace of Hara and Gaurī be at all truly with me, then all the influence I claim for my verses, composed in common speech, will be a reality.  
(RCM 1 D15, tr. Hill)

These words have a special significance, since they touch upon a general development in the religions of northern India, an evolution from an increasingly abstruse, technical tantric religion taught in the Śaiva Āgamas in a language that ever fewer people could understand—sometimes even resorting to *samdhyaḥbhāṣa* or obstruse language—to a more simple religion of the heart, a devotion expressed in plain words of the vernaculars that have an immediate appeal to human emotions.

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\* The first version of this article was published as *Chapter 5* in: Pauwels, H.R.M. (ed.), *Patronage and Popularisation, Pilgrimage and Procession. Channels of Transcultural Translation and Transmission in Early Modern South Asia*. Papers in Honour of Monika Horstmann. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2009. pp. 67–80.

Śiva as lord of the mantra preserved his position of eminence, but how much more effective would he be, if he employed meaningful language, Tulsīdās seems to say. The *Rāmācaritamānasa* (RCM) is itself a specimen of this development, which we can trace several centuries back; seen in that perspective we may consider the *Mānasa* as an end-point rather than a beginning.

Yet another, older conflict is hidden behind this evolution, viz. the rivalry between the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions. Although some schools of Vaisnavism had borrowed the technical ritualistic formalism from Āgamic Saivism,<sup>1</sup> Vaisnavism, by its nature, could more easily accommodate to less elitist, more emotional forms of worship that were on the rise in northern India from the 11th century onwards. This advantage had its effect especially in Hindu holy places, where great interests were at stake, and which were frequented by a growing stream of devotees expressing popular forms of religion. Unlike newly emerging holy places like Ayodhyā and Braj, which were predominantly within the Vaiṣṇava domain from the beginning, an old, overall Śaiva holy place like Vārāṇasī must have been the theatre par excellence, in which this competition came to the fore.

### TULSĪDĀS, ŚĪVA, AND THE NAME

In all his writings Tulsīdās gives Śiva his due, and more than that, he beseeches Śambhu to grant him attachment to Rāma's feet. Śiva's divine grace operating in Vārāṇasī is fully acknowledged, for instance, in the opening verses of Tulsī's *Vinayapatrikā*:

THAT state which saints, scriptures and all the Purānas tell as hard won, even by great sages,  
That salvation eternal Shiva gives to all alike whose hour of death is in his city.  
(VP v. 3, tr. Allchin)

Indeed, it is an ancient tradition that bestows on Vārāṇasī the power to release those who die within its precincts, a power derived from Śiva's grace. We shall examine the history of this doctrine, but for doing this we take our cue from the *Rāmācaritamānasa*.

In the prologue of the *Bālakhanda* Tulsī sings the praise of the holy Name consisting of two *akṣaras*: RĀ-MA. To highlight its effectiveness he attributes all sorts of miraculous powers to it, including Śiva's grace. Then, coming to Vārāṇasī, Tulsī says:

I DO homage to RĀMA, the Name of Raghubar, signifying fire and sun and moon; essence of Brahmā, Hari and Hara; vital breath of the Veda; impersonal, unique, treasure-house of all perfections; the Great Spell (Mahāmantra) uttered by Maheśa, who teaches it as effecting final release at Kāśī. Gaṇeśa knows its power, for by the might of the Name he is first to be worshipped. (RCM 1 C19.1–2, tr. Hill)

1 Sanderson 2001, 35–41.

A little further on Tulsī is even more precise and specifies that it is this Mahāmantra, equated with the Name, that grants release to the dying, when it is compassionately bestowed upon them by Śiva himself:

THE immortal Śaṁbhu, Śiva, the Blessed Lord, sum of all knowledge and perfection, continually repeats it, and the four kinds of creatures that are in the world win to the highest realm if they die at Kāśī; (2)

AND that too, O prince of sages, is due to the greatness of Rāma, for Śiva of his compassion instructs them in the power of the Name. I ask you, lord, which Rāma is this? Tell me and explain, O treasure-house of grace! (3)

(RCM 1 C46.2–3, tr. Hill)

More pedestrian as we are, our answer differs from that of the prince of sages, Yājñavalkya; we will look for the origin of this doctrine to the beginnings of the Rāma *bhakti* in northern India in the 11th and 12th centuries AD. This new form of devotion that envisaged the hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the highest form and manifestation of Viṣṇu was from the start, it would seem, intrinsically linked to the cult of the divine Name. Tulsī reports the outcome of the development in which Name and God became equated: the Name of Rāma is the supreme mantra, which alone can deliver the supreme goal, final release.

The claims of Śaiva texts and pandits in Vārāṇasī to the effect that it is Śiva who mercifully whispers the Mahāmantra into the ear of the dying, as a sort of last sacrament, is not false by itself, so the reasoning goes, but this Mahāmantra cannot be another than the supreme mantra, the Name of God. So all the Śaiva followers who had always believed that this release-granting formula would be a Śaiva mantra had been mistaken and they must have been in for a big surprise in their hours of death.

The syllables of this mantra were not given in the early Śaiva texts, as far as I am aware, being a mystery to be revealed by Śiva himself at the moment of dying. From this mystery the Vaiṣṇavas cleverly made use when they claimed the mantra.

### *The Agastyasamhitā*

The earliest text that bears testimony to this reframing of an ancient doctrine is the *Agastyasamhitā*. I have dealt with this text extensively in Bakker 1986, and a critical edition of it was prepared by Roelf Barkhuis as his PhD thesis (1995). For the first twenty-three chapters I am using his edition. We have dated the text before the Islamic revolution and its place of origin, it has been conjectured, may well have been Benares.

In chapter 7 we read that many devotees (*upāsakāḥ*) resort to Vārāṇasī, wishing to obtain release (*mumukṣavaḥ*). Continuously they repeat ‘ŚIVA ŚIVA’, and Śiva, hearing this, thinks to himself: ‘how could I bestow *mukti* to them?’ Śiva asks Brahmā, who tells him that a means (*upāya*) does exist. Brahmā initiates Śiva in the Ṣaḍakṣara, the Mantrarāja, on the bank of the Gaṅgā in Vārāṇasī at Lolārka on a Sūryaparvan day (AgS 7.14–15). After *japa* and other devout practices for a long period, Rāma appears to Śiva and is ready to fulfil

his wishes:

Rāma said:

THEY, indeed, who have died in your holy field, O Lord of the gods, no matter where, even worms, insects and the like, they shall immediately attain release and this will not be otherwise. (26)

THOSE who obtain, either from you or Brahmā, the Six-syllable Mantra, they shall be *mantrasiddhas* during their lifetimes and, when they die, shall reach me. (27)

AND, O Śaṅkara, when one worships devoutly in this holy field with this mantra, there I shall be present, in stones, images etc. (28)

OR, when you yourself specifies my mantra in the right ear of one who longs for release, no matter who he is, he shall be released, O Śiva. (29)

WHEN the God of gods had thus spoken, Śaṅkara answered: My pretenion is great here, in this unique holy place, (30)

MAY final release be the fruit for everyone, O God of gods; and I shall give the supreme boon to all those who are about to die: the mantra. (31)<sup>2</sup>

In reading the *Agastyasamhitā* again, it struck me that the text actually seems to distinguish between the so-called Ṣaḍakṣara mantra (*rāṃ rāmāya namaḥ*), in which Brahmā and Śiva were initiated and which mantra should be used to call Rāma's presence in all sorts of ritual circumstances, and 'my mantra' (*manmantra*), in which *mad* refers to Rāma and which Śiva whispers into the ear of the dying. Until now I had assumed that these two mantras were one and the same, but the tradition of the NAME as expressed by Tulsī and the AgS itself,<sup>3</sup> and the fact that the AgS refers to the powerless Śaiva equivalent as ŚIVA, now suggest to me that the text may have actually meant RĀMA.<sup>4</sup>

2 AgS 7.26–31:

*śrīrāma uvāca |*  
*tvatto vā brahmaṇo vāpi ye labhante ṣaḍakṣaram |*  
*jīvanto mantrasiddhāḥ syur mṛtā mām prāpnuvantu te || 27 ||*  
*kṣetre 'smīn yo 'rcayed bhaktyā mantreṇānena śaṅkara |*  
*ahaṃ samnīhitas tatra pāśānapratimādiṣu || 28 ||*  
*mumukṣor dakṣiṇe karṇe yasya kasyāpi vā svayam |*  
*upadekṣyasi manmantram sa mukto bhavitā śiva || 29 ||*  
*ity uktavati deveśe punar apy āha śaṅkaraḥ |*  
*mahān mamābhimāno 'tra kṣetre trailokyadurlabhe || 30 ||*  
*phalaṃ bhavatu deveśa sarveśāṃ muktilakṣaṇam |*  
*mumūrṣūṇāṃ ca sarveśāṃ dāsye mantravaram param || 31 ||*

The *Rāmottaratāpanīyopaniṣad* § 4 21–25 borrows this passage from the AgS.

3 See e.g. AgS 3.25: *rāma rāmeti rakṣeti ye vandanty api pāpīnaḥ | pāpakotīśahasrebhyas tān uddharati nānyathā || 25 ||* (half of the MSS read *rāmeti* instead of *rakṣeti*); AgS 28.22–23: *śrīrāma rāma rāmeti ye vadanty api sarvadā || 22 || teṣāṃ bhuktis ca muktiś ca bhaviṣyanti na samśayaḥ |*

4 Cf. the (late) *Padmapurāṇa* 243.39–40, which reads in a Stotra addressed to Rāma (and Sītā) and spoken by Mahādeva:

*āvāṃ rāma jagatpūjyau mama pūjyau sadā yuvām |*  
*tvannāmajāpīnī gaurī tvanmantraḥpavān aham || 39 ||*

This was really a dashing feat of the Vārāṇasī Ramaite pandits: to tell their clientele that in the hour of death Śiva will come to their rescue by whispering RĀMA into their right ears. This is no longer a specimen of 'Inklusivismus', for which the Indian religions are renowned, this is downright appropriation.

### *Lolārka*

The choice for Lolārka as the place of Śiva's own initiation into the Six-syllable mantra may not have been arbitrary. Dedicated to Sūrya, it was one of the main, non-Śaiva temples in Vārāṇasī in the 12th century. The inscriptions of the Gāhaḍavāla kings, who were staunch Vaiṣṇavas, mention only two Vārāṇasī temples by name in which the royal family performed *pūjā*, Ādikeśava and Lolārka, on the two extreme ends, north and south, of the Avimuktakṣetra. A queen of Govindacandra, Gosaladevī, issued a charter, after a bath in the Ganges, in front of the deity Lolārka in AD 1150.<sup>5</sup> The same deity was the recipient of a grant given by Jayacandra in AD 1177 (EI IV, 128 f.). The important Lolārka is located near the confluence of the Ganges with the so-called Asi River at the southern tip of the holy *kṣetra*.

Somehow this area of Benares remained connected with the worship of Rāma. Tulsīdās is said to have settled at what is now called Tulsī Ghāṭ, adjacent to the Lolārka compound and tradition has it that he died at the neighbouring Asighāṭ in 1623 at the age of 80 (*assī*).

## THE TRADITION OF THE SAVING MANTRA

For the origin of the doctrine of salvation, which has contributed so much to the greatness of Vārāṇasī as a centre of pilgrimage, we have to examine the Śaiva sources concerned with this holy place.

### *The Kāśīkhaṇḍa*

To the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* (KKh) this great mantra is known as the Tāraka *brahman/mantra*, 'the saving formula'. KKh 1.7.79 reads in the eulogy that is a *nirukti* of Maṇikarṇikā:

BECAUSE Śiva, thought-gem (*maṇi*) to (all) those who are floating on the ocean of existence, speaks here (in Maṇikarṇikā), all at once in the hour of death, that

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*mumūrṣor maṇikarṇyāṃ tu ardhodakanivāsinaḥ |*  
*ahaṃ dīśāmi te mantraṃ tārakam brahmadāyakam || 40 ||*

The second of these two verses (with minor variants) is quoted by Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa (c. AD 1513–1570) in his *Tristhalīsetu* p. 291 together with an additional half verse (not found in the Venkatesvara edition of the *Padmapurāṇa*):

*śrīrāmarāmarāmeti etat tārakam ucyate || iti ||*

See also Bakker 1986 I, 76.

<sup>5</sup> EI V, 118 l. 20: *devaśrīlolārkaḡre*.

saving (mantra) into the ear (*karṇikā*) of the good people, for that reason that (place here) is hailed as Maṇikarṇikā.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly in the Māhātmya of Avimukta:

WHEN one departs from life there, Viśveśvara himself recites the saving formula, due to which one becomes consubstantiate with him.<sup>7</sup>

How successful the Vaiṣṇava pandits have been in their appropriation of a golden Śaiva formula, may become evident from Rāmānanda's commentary *ad locum*, in which *tārakaṃ brahma* is glossed as *tārakaṃ praṇavaṃ śaḍakṣara-rāmamantrarājaṃ vā* (similar *ad* KKh 1.7.79); this is again taken over, without mentioning of the source and with omission of the *praṇava* option, in the translation of G.V. Tagare in the *Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology Series*: 'Rāma Mantra of six syllables.' The composer of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* himself seems to have identified the Tāraka mantra with the syllable OM.<sup>8</sup>

The *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* is a text that is to be dated after the regime change of AD 1193. It reflects the recovery of the town and the resilience of the Hindu religious spirit in the 13th and 14th centuries, reconstructing the holy place on an unprecedented scale. The composer of the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* made use of older sources, first of all Lakṣmīdhara's *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* (TVK), which quotes the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the *Matsyapurāṇa* (MtP) nearly in its entirety. The latter Māhātmya may be one of the earliest in which we find the doctrine of the saving mantra. MtP 182.23cd–24ab, quoted by Lakṣmīdhara in TVK p. 17, calls it the *karṇajāpa*:

FOR in Avimukta at the hour of death Īśvara himself presents to those who are propelled by their *karma* the 'ear-whispering' (*karṇajāpa*).<sup>9</sup>

Until recently this was as far as we could get in tracing back this redeeming article of faith. Since the 1990s, however, an old Śaiva source has become available that sheds light on the origin of this doctrine, namely the *Skandapurāṇa* (SP). I have reported on this long text in many publications and in 2004 the second volume of the critical edition of this Purāṇa has appeared. This volume

6 KKh 1.7.79:

*saṃsāricintāmaṇir atra yasmāt taṃ tārakaṃ sajjanakārṇikāyām |*  
*śivo 'bhīdhatte sahasāntakāle tad gīyate 'sau maṇikarṇiketi || 79 ||*

7 KKh 1.25.73:

*tatrotkramanakāle tu sāksād viśveśvaraḥ svayam |*  
*vyācaṣṭe tārakaṃ brahma yenāsau tanmayo bhavet || 73 ||*

8 The verse that precedes KKh 1.7.79 specifies what is meant by *taṃ tārakaṃ*:

*na varṇyate kaiḥ kila kāśīkeyaṃ jantoḥ sthitasyātra yato 'ntakāle |*  
*pacelīmaih prakṛtapuṇyabhārair oṃkāram oṃkārayatīndumauliḥ || 78 ||*

9 MtP 182.23cd–24ab:

*avimukte hy antakāle bhaktānām īśvaraḥ svayam |*  
*karmabhiḥ preryamāṇānāṃ karṇajāpaṃ prayacchati ||*

contains the Māhātmya of Vārāṇasī, and we estimate that it is the oldest text of its kind.

### *The Skandapurāṇa*

Let me briefly recall a few important facts about this text. We call it ‘the original *Skandapurāṇa*’, because the text appears to be about a half millennium older than the oldest *khaṇḍas* of the printed *Skandapurāṇa*, with which it has hardly anything in common apart from its name.<sup>10</sup> We think it is the first textual composition that carries the name ‘*Skandapurāṇa*’, which is what the adjective ‘original’ is meant to indicate, nothing more and nothing less.

From the 12th century onwards, this original *Skandapurāṇa* was gradually replaced by a series of texts that style themselves as *khaṇḍas* of the *Skandapurāṇa*. Our text, in the colophons of the three oldest manuscripts, does not refer to itself as a *khaṇḍa*, but simply as ‘the *Skandapurāṇa*’. In the 14th century this replacement had advanced so far that our text was nearly obliterated.

We can be so certain about the early date of our text because the National Archives in Kathmandu possesses three nine-century manuscripts of this Purāṇa, one of which is dated in Aṃśuvarman Saṃvat 234, i.e. AD 810. The authenticity of this text is warranted by Lakṣmīdhara, the minister and pandit at the court of the Gāhaḍavāla king Govindacandra in the 12th century, who in his description of Benares quotes extensively from a ‘*Skandapurāṇa*’. All his quotes turn out to be from our text, none from the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* or any other *khaṇḍa* for that matter.

When the text had reached the point of near-oblivion due to its replacement by later texts styled *khaṇḍas*, copyists in northeastern India preserved it, be it in the very margins of the Purāṇa text corpus, by renaming it the *Ambikā*, or in one case, by mistake probably, *Revākhāṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa*. Collation of these later manuscripts so named with the three manuscripts from Kathmandu has established that the text had evolved into a new recension that substantially differs from the ‘Nepalese’ text. We refer to this new recension as the RA recension to distinguish it from the S recension, which refers to the text as found in the Nepalese manuscripts. When we collate the quotations in Lakṣmīdhara’s *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* with the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the original *Skandapurāṇa*, it becomes clear that an early form of this RA recension already existed in the 12th century and was used by the Nibandha author (Bisschop 2002). Further research into the history of this text has made it plausible that the new recension was created in one major redaction that took place somewhere in North India, most likely in the ninth century.<sup>11</sup>

The original text, we estimate, was composed either under the Maukhari kings or Harṣavardhana of Kanauj, in the second half of the sixth or first half of the seventh century.<sup>12</sup>

10 Cf. above, pp. 185 ff.; for borrowings from the SP by the *Āvanyakhaṇḍa*, Yokochi 2004.

11 Bakker 2014, 138.

12 In Bakker 2014, 137 I argued that the most likely time span is AD 570 to 620.

## Textual criticism

Different from what some believe, this philological work is not a blind hunt for ‘the original’ in which all readings of later recensions,

Are damned to the rubbish heap of the ‘critical apparatus’, which appears in published form as a mystifying jumble of characters and symbols creeping along the bottom of the pages.<sup>13</sup>

Our method aims at precisely the opposite, namely to distinguish between various layers in the text transmission, in order to be in a position to value each stage through which the text evolved on its own merits as a reflection of its time. And in this assessment the later recensions are equally valuable to us as ‘the original’ or what comes closest to it. Far from being a ‘rubbish heap’, the critical apparatus thus appears to be a precious store house of historical information.

At the risk of being decried an inveterate ‘orientalist’, I would like to illustrate this method, finally, by tracing the doctrine of the saving mantra in the text tradition of the *Skandapurāṇa*.

*The saving mantra in the Skandapurāṇa*

In *adhyāya* 30 of the SP, that is in the middle of the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya*, we read in verse 50 that ‘the devotee who dedicates all his activity to Śiva attains final release here in the Avimuktakṣetra, more easily than anywhere else’. This verse is found in all MSS. Immediately following this verse, however, the RA recension has two interesting verses, which are given in the critical apparatus.

MEN who are dedicated to *japa* and meditation as well as those who are slow-witted and deluded in matters of knowledge—their minds orientated towards external things—they (all) reach their goal in Vārāṇasī:

HERE, in the hour of death, Maheśvara himself gives (them) the saving mantra (*tārakaṃ brahma*), thanks to which one becomes consubstantiated with Him.<sup>14</sup>

The second of these verses we have already encountered in a slightly modified form in the *Māhātmya* of Avimukta in the *Kāśīkhaṇḍa* (KKh 1.25.73). This verse corresponds also closely with a prose passage in the *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (JābU 1). This prose passage contains two metrically correct uneven Śloka pādas (beginning with *prāṇe*<sup>o</sup>... and *yenāsāv*..., below n.15 on p.470f.), which may be an indication that the Upaniṣad text derived from a metrical exemplar, which might have been close to the verse found in the RA recension.<sup>15</sup>

13 Smith 2006, 25.

14 *Skandapurāṇa* RA Recension 30.50 (1–2):

*japadhyānodyatānām ca jñāneṣu bāhyacetasām |*  
*tamomohahatānām ca vārāṇasyām gatir nṛṇām ||*  
*atrotkramaṇakāle tu svayam eva maheśvaraḥ |*  
*dadāti tārakaṃ brahma yenāsau tanmayo bhavet ||*

15 The prose text runs (correspondences with the RA recension of the SP in bold face):

It probably was a Śloka that people knew by heart and had a more or less independent, floating existence, and so found its way into the Upaniṣad on the one hand, and into the *Kāśikhaṇḍa* on the other. The RA recension of the *Skandapurāṇa* might be its first attestation.

As already observed, the doctrine of the saving mantra is also known to the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the *Matsyapurāṇa* where it is called the *karṇajāpa*. A collation of the *Māhātmyas* in the *Matsyapurāṇa* and the *Skandapurāṇa* has proven beyond reasonable doubt that the *Matsya* borrowed from the *Skanda*, but it used the older Nepalese recension.<sup>16</sup> This, combined with the fact that both the *Matsya* and the revised *Skanda* record this doctrine of the saving mantra independently, has led us to the hypothesis that the RA redaction and the composition of the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the *Matsyapurāṇa* belong approximately to the same period: the 8th to 9th centuries AD.<sup>17</sup>

It is during this period that this doctrine became widely accepted and met with the approval of orthodox brahmins and Paurāṇikas. Its origin might have been earlier. This new doctrine, namely, is connected with the inclusion of the cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) within the sacred fabric of *Vārāṇasī*. It may be conceived as a landmark in the history of the holy town: a change of paradigm by which the cremation ground, from being tabooed, became hallowed and was accommodated to the holy *kṣetra*. This last remark requires some explanation, and for that we turn to the oldest, ‘Nepalese’ or S recension of our text.

#### *Avimukta*

*Vārāṇasī*’s connection with death, the catering for the needs of the moribund, goes back at least to Gupta times and is a dominant feature until today. It is strongly represented in the oldest form of the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the *Skandapurāṇa*. This *Māhātmya*, which dates back to the 6th or 7th century, describes first the primordial situation, when the holy field was covered by a divine garden called *udyāna* or *devodyāna*. Śiva, who has taken residence there forever (a *nirukti* of *avimukta*), shows Pārvatī the garden and the *liṅgas* in it, which are either *svayambhu* or have been installed by various gods, twelve altogether. Avimukteśvara is not included within this dozen, as it is conceived of as Śiva’s own residence in *Vārāṇasī*.

The twelve primordial *liṅgas* on the other hand are enumerated in such a way that they may be seen as forming a pattern, some sort of circuit around the Avimuktakṣetra, i.e. around the Avimukteśvara sanctuary (Figure 12).<sup>18</sup>

**atra hi jantoh prāṇeṣūtkramamāṇeṣu rudraḥ tāraḥ brahma vyācaṣṭe, yenāsāv  
amṛti bhūtvā mokṣi bhavati** (JābU 1).

Cf. also KūP 1.29.59:

**yatra sākṣān mahādevo dehānte svayam īśvaraḥ |  
vyācaṣṭe tāraḥ brahma tatraiva hy avimuktakam || 59 ||**

16 See SP II A, p. 42, 267.

17 SP II A, 48–54.

18 Bakker 2006a; SP II A, 44–46; SP 29.58–59.

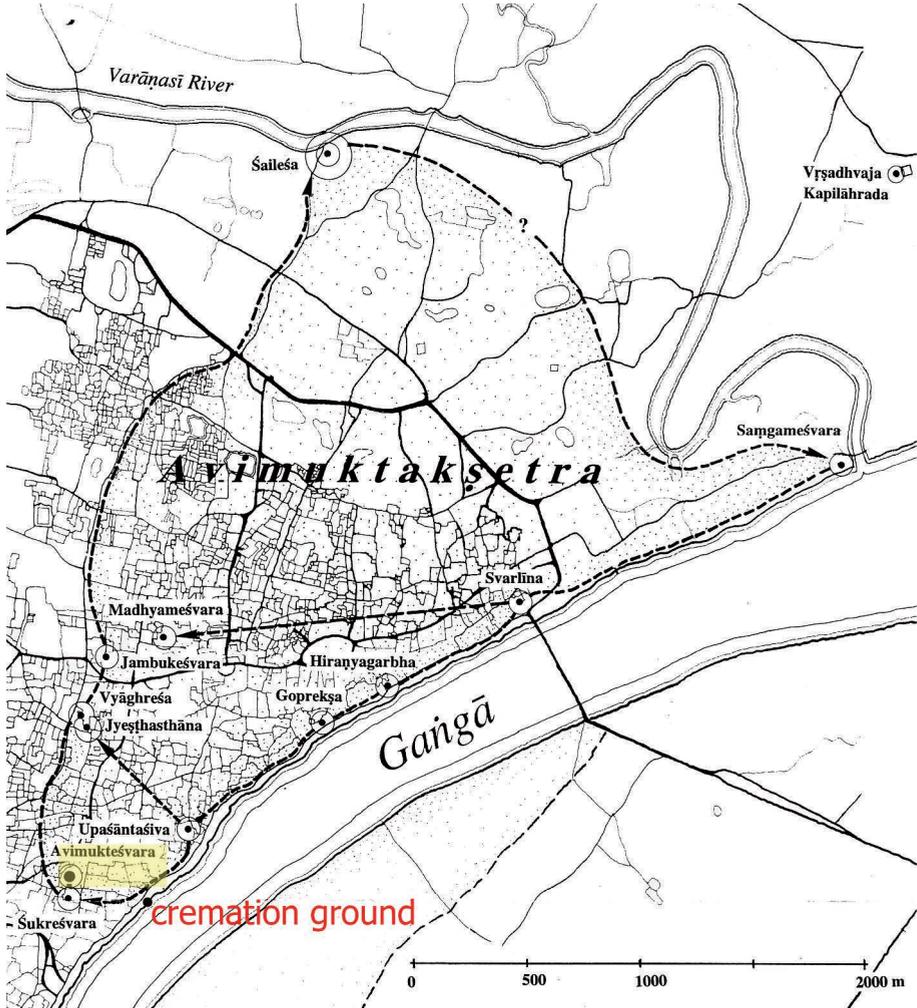


Figure 12  
*Avimuktakṣetra*  
 The twelve *liṅga* sanctuaries encircling *Avimukteśvara*

The town is, on the one hand, described as a meeting place of yogis, in particular of the Pāśupata variety, on the other hand as a place where one should wish to die, as this promises immediate release. It is therefore all the more conspicuous that the cremation ground itself, the Śmaśāna, is not mentioned with one word. That is to say, it is not mentioned in the recension that is preserved in the Nepalese manuscripts (S). The later RA recension has, in addition to the two verses that we have quoted (above, n. 14 on p. 470), made some other highly

significant changes. Outside the Māhātmya proper, in SP 167, which gives a survey of the major Śaiva *āyatanas* including Vārāṇasī, and of which the texts in S and RA diverge widely, the eulogy of Avimukta of the S recension is replaced in RA by a passage mentioning the *śmaśāna*, known under the name of 'Avimuktaka'. This brings the RA recension of the SP again alongside the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* of the *Matsyapurāṇa*, which is for the greater part a eulogy of Avimukta as cremation ground.

## CONCLUSION

Although Benares from its inception as a holy place has been connected with death and the belief that dying in the vicinity of the Avimukteśvara Temple would bring immediate release, attested already in the *Mahābhārata*,<sup>19</sup> the strongly felt polluting nature of the dead themselves and the disposal of their bodies made that originally the *śmaśāna* was considered beyond the pale of sanctified ground.

This cremation ground was there, as it was in every Indian city, and in one of the earliest Purāṇas, the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, it is depicted as the unholy place on earth, the place where king Hariścandra passed his doleful days as a *caṇḍāla*.<sup>20</sup> If we assume that its location has not altered over the centuries, a location that is known in later sources as Maṇikarṇikā, it lay in the early days at the southern fringe of the then holy field, as it should do.<sup>21</sup> With the growth of the town, however, and the omnipresence of the dying along with the industry that surrounded them, this is beginning to change in the seventh and eighth centuries. An important factor in this process has been the spread of the belief that salvation would be available to all, if only the dying days were spent in the holy town. The doctrine of the saving mantra, administered there, and only there, *all'ultimo momento*, made Vārāṇasī stand out against all other competing holy places that promised *mokṣa*; this doctrine has thus greatly contributed to the reputation of the city as the most holy place on earth.

No wonder therefore that, when a wind of change was blowing through northern India in the 11th and 12th centuries, new religious communities jumbled on the bandwagon. The pandits of the emerging Ramaite faith and the cult of the Name in particular were most successful. The ingenuity and flexibility of the Indian religious mind created fresh forms of devotion, in which the old was preserved and the new could flourish. Awareness of this historical process makes that we can now fully appreciate the opening couplets of Tulsīdās' *Vinayapatrikā*, which may have been composed in Vārāṇasī, when the poet felt that 'his

19 MBh 3.82.69 419\* ll. 1-3.

20 See the description in MkP 8.109-130.

21 See Figure 12; SP II A, 48 f.

life's end [was] very near' (VP 273), not long before he would reach salvation (AD 1623) on the bank of the Gaṅgā with the Name, RĀMA, whispered into his ear.

WHOM else to beg from saving Shambu? Compassionate on the wretched, dispelling the afflictions of devotees, in all ways worthy, blessed Lord;

WHEN gods and demons burnt in the deadly Kālakūta's fury, keeping your vow you drank that poison; When the horrid demon made sorrowful the world, you struck him and his three cities with one arrow down;

THAT state which saints, scripture and all the Purānas tell as hard-won, even by great sages, That salvation eternal Shiva gives to all alike whose hour of death is in his city;

IN serving easy of access, noble wish-granting tree, lord of Pārvatī, most wise, Abode of mercy, enemy of the Love god, give Tulsī Dās attachment to Rām's feet!  
(VP 3.1-4, tr. Allchin)<sup>22</sup>

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22 Vinayapatrikā 3:

*ko jāṃciye sambhu taji āna |*  
*dīnadayālu bhagata-ārati hara, saba prakāra samaratha bhagavāna || 1 ||*  
*kālakūṭa-jura jarata surāsura, niṣa pana lāgi kīnha viṣa pāna |*  
*dārūna danuja, jagata-dukhadāyaka, māreṇu tripura eka hiṃṣā bāna || 2 ||*  
*jo gati agama mahāmuni durlabha, kahata santa, śruti, sakala purāna |*  
*so gati marana-kāla apāne pura, deta sadāsiva sabahim samāna || 3 ||*  
*sevata sulabha, udāra kalapataru, pāravatī-pati paramasujāna |*  
*dehu kāma-ripu rāma-carana-rati, tulasidāsa kahaṃ kṛpānidhāna || 4 ||*

# The Hindu Religion and War\*

## PREAMBLE

Although, since Mahatma Gandhi, India is known by many as the country where the principle of *ahiṃsā*, ‘not killing’, has been invented and implemented, this ancient principle had originally little or nothing to do with how warfare was conducted and conceived in Hindu society. War was endemic in South Asia and seen as the right and duty of the Hindu king. This warfare, however, was regulated by some rules, which were humane in some respects. Battle was sometimes conceived of as a form of ritual, in which the soldiers were the sacrificial victims, but this does not entail that Hindu kings went to war for the sake of religion.

By the 11th century the traditional Hindu view of war was seriously challenged by Islamic invaders. This essay investigates the impact of this confrontation. The conflict between both communities, Hindu and Muslim, has flared up again in recent years. It is argued that the communal unrest in India since its independence tends to alter the Hindu self-perception and its values.

## AŚOKA AND ANCIENT WARFARE IN INDIA

What warfare could mean in India in the 3rd century BC we learn from Aśoka’s Thirteenth Rock-Edict.

When king Devānāmpriya Priyadarśin (i.e. Aśoka) had been anointed eight years, (the country of) the Kaliṅgas was conquered by (him). One hundred and fifty thousand in number were the men who were deported thence, one hundred thousand in number were those who were slain there, and many times as many were those who died. (CII I, 68)

The same Edict, however, shows that ethical principles were considered to have a relevance with respect to wartime conditions, when Aśoka continues,

After that, now that (the country of) the Kaliṅgas has been taken, Devānāmpriya (is devoted) to a zealous study of morality (*dhramaśīlana* = *dharmaśīlana*), to

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the love of morality, and to the instruction (of people) in morality. [...] For, this is considered very painful and deplorable by Devānāmpriya, that, while one is conquering an unconquered (country), slaughter (*vadha*), death (*maraṇa*) and deportation of people (are taken place) there. [...] For Devānāmpriya desires towards all beings abstention from hurting (*akṣati*), self-control, (and) impartiality in (case of) violence. (CII I, 68 f.)

### *The Arthaśāstra*

The campaigns of Aśoka and his military objectives appear, generally speaking, not out of tune with what is recommended to the ‘ruler who wishes to conquer’, the *vijigīṣu*, in the ancient ‘Treatise on Polity’, the *Arthaśāstra*, which has the following to say on warfare.

Fighting (*yuddha*) is said to be of three kinds—*prakāśa-yuddha* ‘open fight’ in the place and at the time indicated, *kūṭa-yuddha* ‘concealed fighting’, involving the use of tactics on the battlefield, and *tūṣṇīm-yuddha* ‘silent fight’, implying the use of secret agents for enticing enemy officers or killing them (AŚ 7.6.40–41).

It is stated that when the *vijigīṣu* is superior in strength and the season and terrain are favourable to him, he should resort to open warfare (AŚ 10.3.1). In fact, a fight, about the place and time of which notice has been given, is considered righteous, *dharmiṣṭha* (AŚ 10.3.26).

If the *vijigīṣu* is not superior to the enemy and the terrain and the season are unfavourable to him, he may resort to *kūṭa-yuddha* [...].<sup>1</sup>

The same *Arthaśāstra* that defines the ruler as the ‘one desirous of conquering’ and defines the specific duty (*svadharmā*) of the *kṣatriya* as ‘living by the profession of arms (*śāstrāṅjīva*) and protecting the beings’ (AŚ 1.3.6) enumerates among the duties common to all classes of society, including the *kṣatriyas*, the ‘abstaining from injury’, *ahimsā* (AŚ 1.3.13). From this it follows that the duty of *ahimsā* is a duty that concerns the individual, but does not relate to the state, nor to the ruler of the state, the *vijigīṣu*, nor to those, the warriors and soldiers, who are engaged by the state to realize its aims, defence and conquest.

Although Aśoka’s morality seems to break with this conception in that it apparently advocates bringing ethical principles to bear on the apparatus of government, he formulates this new policy of ‘conquest by morality’ (*dharmavijaya*) and the purpose of his proclamations—viz. ‘in order that the sons (and) great-grandsons (who) may be (born) to me, should not think that a fresh conquest ought to be made’ (CII I, 70)—only after he himself had conquered all there was to conquer. And he is not slow to add that those subjugated by him ‘should be told of the power (to punish them) which Devānāmpriya (possesses) in spite of (his) repentance, in order that they may be ashamed (of their crimes) and may not be killed’ (CII I, 69).

In other words, the policies envisaged in Kauṭīliya *Arthaśāstra* and Aśoka’s Edicts are not as different as they may appear at first sight: both aspire to

1 Kangle 1963–65 III, 258.

bring violence (*hiṃsā*) firmly under government control, reserving the right to kill to the state.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF AHIMŚĀ AND THE RULES OF WAR

### *Ahiṃsā*

All this is not to say that Aśoka's conception of 'abstention from killing animals and from hurting living beings' (*avihiṃsā*) and Kauṭilya's maxim of *ahiṃsā* cover exactly the same ground. It is clear that the former is inspired by a Buddhist ethos,<sup>2</sup> while the second relates to a discourse of Brahmanical jurists. Hanns-Peter Schmidt's article on *The Origin of Ahiṃsā*, Heesterman's *Non-Violence and Sacrifice*, and Bodewitz's *Hindu Ahiṃsā and its Roots*, to mention some of the main discussants, have shown that the development of this concept is an intricate one,<sup>3</sup> one which we shall leave aside here however, since from these studies it emerges that, whatever the origin of the concept and whatever a Dharmasāstra author may have understood by *ahiṃsā*, it had no bearing on the policies of the state and the right, nay the duty of the king to wage war.<sup>4</sup> This right, and hence the right to stage organized killing in the interest of the state, has, to the best of my knowledge, never been questioned in the brahmanical tradition, before Mahatma Gandhi—and foreign influences play a role here—gave a new meaning to this old concept.<sup>5</sup> Before him, and sadly also after him, war was rather considered to be part and parcel of organized society, sanctified by those who had probably most to win and least to lose by it, the brahmanical elite.

### *The Bhagavadgītā*

One example, a very early one that has however retained its unquestioned authority until today, may suffice to illustrate the point. After Arjuna had

2 For this ethos and its implementation see Schmithausen 1999; on Aśoka *op. cit.* 55.

3 Schmidt 1968, 1997; Heesterman 1984; Bodewitz 1999. For a survey and bibliography of this discussion see Bodewitz 1999. Bodewitz concludes (*ibid.* 41):

One may rather assume that *ahiṃsā* originally belonged to the ascetic antiritualism, which was especially represented by the heretics (Buddhist and Jains) and only hesitantly obtained a foothold in the older Vedic Upaniṣads, where, however, it [scil. antiritualism] was never associated with *ahiṃsā*.

4 Bodewitz 1999, 20:

Killing in war was a prescript for the relevant social class and therefore pacifism can be ruled out as a decisive factor in the development of at least the Hindu concept of *ahiṃsā*.

5 Schwab 1950, 474:

Après quoi c'est le façonnement slave de l'*ahiṃsā* qui va frapper en retour les détenteurs de la croyance: Gandhi demande à Tolstoï sa propre inspiration, et par lui retrouve sa voie vers la loi d'amour et de passivité; lui écrivant de Londres en 1909, il signe 'votre humble disciple', en reçoit le conseil de lire la *Lettre à un Hindou*, où la filiation était le plus explicite, et dont il avouera l'action décisive sur sa méditation.

expressed his reservations with respect to killing his kinsmen, the Lord himself has this to say in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

This embodied (soul) is eternally unslayable in the body of every one, son of Bharata; therefore all beings thou shouldst not mourn. Likewise having regard for thine own (caste) duty (*svadharmā*) thou shouldst not tremble; for another, better thing than a fight required of duty exists not for a warrior. Presented by mere luck, an open door of heaven—happy the warriors, son of Pṛthā, that get such a fight! Now, if thou this duty-required conflict wilt not perform, then thine own duty and glory abandoning, thou shalt get thee evil.<sup>6</sup>

The continuity of the Indian tradition in this respect could not be better illustrated than by a speech given by Bal Gangadhar Tilak at the occasion of the Shivaji Festival in 1896, organized by him to strengthen Hindu solidarity against British Rule, but simultaneously directed against the Muslim community. In the Festival Shivaji's murder of the Mogul general Afzal Khan was particularly celebrated. Tilak addresses his audience as follows.

Let us even assume that Shivaji first planned and then executed the murder of Afzal Khan. Was this act of the Maharaja good or bad? This question which has to be considered should not be viewed from the standpoint of the Penal Code or even of the *Smritis* of Manu. [...] The laws which bind society are for common men like you and me. [...] Great men are above the common principles of morality. These principles do not reach the place on which great men stand. Did Shivaji commit a sin in killing Afzal Khan? The answer to this question can be found in the Mahabharata itself. Shrimat Krishna preached in the *Gīta* that we have a right even to kill our own *guru* and our kinsmen. No blame attaches to any person if he is doing deeds without being actuated by a desire to reap the fruit of his deeds. [...] If thieves enter our house and we have not strength enough in our fists to drive them out, we should without hesitation lock them up and burn them alive. God has not conferred upon the foreigners the grant inscribed on a copperplate to the Kingdom of Hindustan.<sup>7</sup>

Tilak's words eerily resound in the reports of what happened during the communal riots that were sparked off by the dispute over the Babri Masjid in Ayodhyā one century later, when hundreds of Indians, mostly Muslims, were burnt alive when their houses were set ablaze by their fellow-villagers.<sup>8</sup>

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6 BhG 2.30–33 (translation by Franklin Edgerton). Elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata* (MBh 12.15.20) the principle of non-injury is downright declared to be impossible in the world. Cf. Basham 1967, 123:

In several passages of the *Mahābhārata*, notably in the famous *Bhagavad Gītā*, the evil and cruelty of war are referred to, and it is suggested that the life of the soldier is a sinful one. But such arguments are only put forward to be demolished by counterarguments, most of which are based on the necessities of this dark age of the world and on the dangers of anarchy. Positive condemnations of war are rare in Indian literature.

7 Quoted from Wolpert 1962, 86 f.

8 Bakker 1991a, 99 f.; above, p. 75

*The rules of war*

All this looks pretty grim, and no doubt India has had its share of carnage and distress caused by never ending wars between states and various communities, but the picture should not be made more gruesome than necessary. There were rules that regulated warfare and that limited its destructive potential.

The *Arthaśāstra* lays down that, ‘when attacking the enemy in the open battlefield or when storming a fort, care should be taken to see that the following categories of persons are not attacked: (1) *patita*, those who have fallen down, (2) *parāṇimukha*, those who have turned their back on the fight, (3) *abhipanna*, those who surrender, (4) *muktakeśa*, those whose hair are loose (as a mark of submission), (5) *muktaśastra*, those who have abandoned their weapons, (6) *bhayavirūpa*, those whose appearance is changed through fear, and (7) *ayudhyamāna*, those who are taking no part in the fight.’<sup>9</sup> These restrictions agree with the view expressed in the *Mokṣadharmaparvan* which ordains that,

A king should not hurt (*himsyād*) children or elderly people, nor him who is exhausted, who is frightened, who has lost his weapons, who cries, who flees, who is without means, inactive, ill or begs for mercy.<sup>10</sup>

These rules sound particularly humane and in some respects even seem to anticipate the Geneva Convention, though one may be sceptical about their implementation in actual battle as one may be of the Geneva Convention today. Even without a statistical investigation one senses that the avowed chivalry was renounced, more often than not, also in the *Mahābhārata* itself.

*The reports of Megasthenes and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*

However, unexpected though it may seem, this ‘civilized’, or one should rather say ‘ritualized’ form of warfare is confirmed by a foreign observer who lived in India in about the same period in which the *Arthaśāstra* was beginning to take form and Aśoka reported his conquests, namely by the Greek Megasthenes, ambassador of Seleucus to the court of Candragupta Maurya, Aśoka’s grandfather. As is well known, Megasthenes’ own book on India is lost, but much of it is preserved in Arrian’s *Indika* which has the following to say on the issue.

The fifth caste among the Indians consists of the warriors, who are second in point of numbers to the husbandmen, but lead a life of supreme freedom and enjoyment. They have only military duties to perform. Others make their arms, and others supply them with horses, and they have others to attend on them in the camp, who take care of their horses, clean their arms, drive their elephants, prepare their chariots, and act as their charioteers. As long as they are required to fight they fight, and when peace returns they abandon themselves to enjoyment—the pay which they receive from the state being so liberal that they can with ease maintain themselves and others besides.

9 Kangle 1963–65 III, 259 f. (AŚ 13.4.52).

10 MBh 12.286.3–4. Cf. MBh 3.19.13–14.

[...] the second caste consists of the tillers of the soil, who form the most numerous class of the population. They are neither furnished with arms, nor have any military duties to perform, but they cultivate the soil and pay tribute to the kings and the independent cities. In times of civil war the soldiers are not allowed to molest the husbandmen or ravage their lands: hence, while the former are fighting and killing each other as they can, the latter may be seen close at hand tranquilly pursuing their work,—perhaps ploughing, or gathering in their crops, pruning the trees, or reaping the harvest.<sup>11</sup>

The picture is too good to be true, since, for instance, the destruction of crops in the country of the enemy seems to have been common practice; but even if Indian historic reality was less idyllic than Megasthenes wanted us to believe, the essence of his observations seems to be that within the traditional Indian constellation war was primarily conceived as a gallant pastime of kings, a kind of sport that was directed towards eliminating rival kings and acquisition of glory, land and riches, not towards the destruction of neighbouring countries that were hated. An unexpected confirmation of this chivalrous ethos is found in the Travelogue of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who stayed in India for 15 years (c. AD 1335–1349) and who tells us, when once he was in dire straits:

I was afraid that they would all shoot at me at once if I fled from them, and I was wearing no armour so I threw myself to the ground and surrendered, as they do not kill those who do that.<sup>12</sup>

Hence war could be viewed as perfectly within the precincts of the *dharma* and was generally not associated with evil (*pāpa*), though, admittedly, there were grades of righteousness. The historic reality is reflected in Indian mythology, in which heroes and gods, if they are not practising self-mortification (*tapas*), are continuously concerned with fighting each other, and in which monstrous atrocities are described with great gusto and approval. The epic by the mouth of Kṛṣṇa even openly defends the use of foul means in battle by holding up the gods as an example,

Enemies of superior number are to be killed falsely and by (foul) means. This path has formerly been followed by the gods when they slew the Asuras; and a path followed by the good ones may be followed by all.<sup>13</sup>

This opportunistic and rather naive view of a privileged elite must have suffered serious blows when the kingdoms of northern India were confronted with foreign invaders. It may partly account for the fact that in these confrontations the Indian armies were often the losing party. The adversaries did not play the game by the same rules, while the Indian kings and generals appear to have been very reluctant to change them. On the other hand, when invaders came to stay they were accommodated to the Indian system and gradually dissolved

11 Arrianus, *Indika* 12.2–4, 11.9–10. Translation quoted from McCrindle 1877, 210 f.

12 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa Vol. IV, 777.

13 MBh 9.60.61–62.

therein. I am thinking, for instance, of the Śakas (the Scyths), the Kuṣāṇas, and the Hūnas.

*The idea of a 'just war'*

War thus seemed to some extent to be a natural phenomenon and needed no justification; consequently the concept of a 'just war' did not arise. And the multifarious and sponge-like character of the Indian religions, lacking a central authoritative agency, simply did not give rise to the idea of religious wars.<sup>14</sup> The *Arthaśāstra*, on the contrary, recommends that a king adapts himself to the religious customs of the countries he has brought under his control.

After gaining new territory, he should cover the enemy's faults with his own virtues, his virtues with double virtues. He should carry out what is agreeable and beneficial to the subjects by doing his own duty as laid down, granting favours, giving exemptions, making gifts and showing honour. [...] Hence he should adopt a similar character, dress, language and behaviour (as the subjects). And he should show the same devotion in festivals in honour of deities of the country (*deśadaivata*), festive gatherings and sportive amusements. [...] And he should cause the honouring of all deities and hermitages, and make grants of land, money and exemptions to men distinguished in learning, speech and piety, order the release of all prisoners and render help to the distressed, the helpless and the diseased. [...] And discontinuing whatever custom he might regard harmful to the treasury and the army, or as unrighteous (*adharmiṣṭha*), he should establish a righteous course of conduct (*dharmavyavahāra*).<sup>15</sup>

Though this policy seems to have been practised by many Indian kings, it did not preclude that the possession of a holy place, temple or idol could be the target of a military campaign. Yet, we should be reluctant to designate such a campaign or war a 'religious' or 'holy war', since its objective was to divert a religious asset to the use of the state rather than to enhance or defend the cause of religion itself.

*The battle and the sacrifice*

However, it will cause no surprise that in a culture that was entirely permeated by religion and that to some extent ritualized warfare, war was considered to be sanctified in another sense. The Sanskrit literature abounds in comparisons of the (ritual) battle and the sacrifice. Battlefields are seen as sacrificial grounds and the warriors killed are the sacrificial animals (*paśus*). Like the latter they are believed to go straight to heaven. Thus Kṛṣṇa speaks to Arjuna: 'Either slain thou shalt gain heaven, Or conquering thou shalt enjoy the earth.'<sup>16</sup> And like the instruments of sacrifice, the implements of war needed consecration. To this end a lustration (*nīrājanā*) ceremony was traditionally performed at

<sup>14</sup> Cf. above, pp. 56 ff.

<sup>15</sup> AŚ 13.5.3-4, 7-8, 11, 14. Translation Kangle 1963-65 II, 491 f.

<sup>16</sup> BhG 2.37 (translation Edgerton).

the end of the autumnal Navarātra festival, on the ‘Tenth of Victory’ (*vijayā-daśamī*, Dasarā), in which the ‘Invincible Goddess’ (Aparājitā) was worshipped and the king’s arms, his soldiers, horses and elephants were purified before they took to the field.<sup>17</sup> The festival preceding this lustration of arms, the Navarātra, is dedicated to Durgā, who became also the Hindu goddess of war.<sup>18</sup> When Vākpatirāja (first half of eighth century AD) in his *Gauḍavaha* (vv. 285–338) describes the worship of Durgā by his hero, Yaśovarman of Kanauj, before this king set out on his conquest,<sup>19</sup> this may refer to actual practice. All this, however, does not imply that the kings went to war because of this Goddess, or for the sake of religion. In this respect Hinduism differed fundamentally from the Abrahamic religions. I will conclude this essay with some observations on what actually happened, when these two types of religions came into conflict.

## HINDUISM AND ISLAM

### *The conquest of northern India*

From the eleventh century onwards North India was regularly confronted, perhaps for the first time, with an enemy that did not adapt itself to Indian customs and did not ‘show the same devotion in festivals in honour of the deities of the country’. Instead that country was infested with marauding bands of Turuṣka warriors, after Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazni had pointed the way in his raid on Somnath (Gujarat) in AD 1024–1025. The reports in the *Kāmilu-t Tawārīkh* by Ibn Asīr and the *Tārīkh-i Alfī* inform us that in the defence of the temple of Somanātha fifty thousand Hindus were killed.<sup>20</sup> One would have expected that in the face of such catastrophe Hindu kings would have joined hands and made common cause to defend their country and their holy places. However, ‘India’ was not conceived as an entity to be defended and Hinduism was not organized in such a way that it could offer a framework for its own defence. Hindu kings kept fighting amongst themselves and when at the end of the 12th century the Cāhamānas, who had borne the brunt of the attacks of the Muslim armies,

17 Kālidāsa, *Raghuvamśa* 4.25–26:

The sacrificial fire, properly fed in the ceremony of the lustration of the cavalry (*vājinīrājanā*), destined him (i.e. king Raghu) for victory, when, by resembling a hand as it were, its flames made the auspicious right turn (*pradakṣiṇā*). Leaving the centre and frontiers (of his realm) well-protected and his rear safeguarded (against inimical attacks), he marched at the head of the six units of his army, joined by fortune, impelled by desire to conquer the earth.

Cf. AŚ 2.30.51 and Varāhamihira’s *Bṛhatsamhitā* 44.1–2, where this ceremony is prescribed for the 8th, 12th or 15th day of the bright half of the lunar month of Kārttika or Āśvina. See Kane 1930-62 III, 230 f., V, 188–194; Einoo 1999, 51 ff.

18 Einoo 1999, 40 ff. Yokochi 1999a, 87 ff.

19 Yokochi 1999a, 89. Stein 1983, 77 ff. summarizes the eye-witness accounts that we possess of this festival as celebrated at the late-medieval South-Indian capital of Vijayanagara.

20 Elliot & Dowson 1867-77 II, 468 ff. and 471 f.

were on the brink of collapse, their eastern neighbours, the Gāhaḍavālas did not come to their rescue. The army of the Cāhamānas under king Pṛthvīrāja was destroyed in the second battle of Tarain (AD 1192). The Gangetic Plain lay open for conquest.

*The case of Vārāṇasī*

It would be unfair to deny the Indian kings any foresight of the events to come. It would seem that the Gāhaḍavāla kings, who had seized power in Kanauj, until then the political centre of Northern India, made an effort to employ all available means to counter the Mlecchas, the Barbarians. Apparently in response to the ‘Turuṣka’, i.e. Muslim threat from the west, they moved their capital to Vārāṇasī.

Vārāṇasī had evolved into the most holy place of the country without being or developing into a political capital, and this appears to have been in conformity with the normal situation in South Asia, where sacred and political space customarily have different centres.<sup>21</sup> Hermann Kulke’s explanation of this phenomenon is that, if both were to coincide, rulers over the holy town would have to admit their enemies into their own political centre of power, due to considerations of *dharma*.<sup>22</sup> If territory coincides or is identified with sacred space, wars in defence or conquest of this territory could be defined as holy wars. Yet, as we have seen, the concept of religious, or holy war for that matter, was conspicuously absent in traditional Indian political thought and so was the idea of solidarity based on a common faith and the practice of propagating war by appealing to religious sentiments more general than those conforming to the sanctified principles of *dharma*.<sup>23</sup>

Hence the question may be raised why the Gāhaḍavālas moved their actual seat of power towards the sacred Vārāṇasī rather than staying within the prestigious imperial capital Kanauj.<sup>24</sup> This might have been caused by the fact that Kanauj lay in ruins after having been sacked twice by the Ghaznavite invaders (AD 1018 by Sultan Maḥmūd, AD 1086–90 by Prince Maḥmūd, governor of the Panjab). But it could have been rebuilt, just as Vārāṇasī itself had recovered from its first contact with Muslim forces. A more plausible explanation for the Gāhaḍavālas’ deviation from customary practice in choosing Vārāṇasī as their power base may be sought in the circumstance that the nature of the enemy had changed, an enemy which held completely different views on territorial warfare as well as on religion. That the Gāhaḍavālas were well aware of this from the beginning is shown by their levying of the ‘Turks tax’ (*turuṣkadaṇḍa*), a war

21 Bakker 1993a and 1996a.

22 Kulke 1982, 15.

23 In this respect Hinduism does not differ from the other great Indian religion, Buddhism. Cf. Schmitthausen 1999, 63: ‘Finally, it should be pointed out that religious wars for the sake of spreading the Buddhist religion by force to non-Buddhist regions seem to have occurred very rarely, if at all.’

24 EI IX, 304; SI II, 280 f.

tax that is without parallel in India.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the move to Vārāṇasī may be viewed as part of the Gāhaḍavālas' reaction to the challenge of Islam, a novel strategy to enhance prestige, boost morale and rally support. In all their inscriptions the Gāhaḍavāla kings proclaimed themselves 'protectors of the (North) Indian holy places' (*tīrthas*), to begin with those in Kāśī, and in all of them they boast of their own piety.<sup>26</sup>

However, if the Gāhaḍavālas had chosen Vārāṇasī as their capital in order to profit from the (religious) prestige that was connected with it, this strategy failed. It did not bring them the support of their neighbouring (Hindu) kings. On the contrary, at the eastern border they were confronted with a new powerful enemy, the dynasty of the Senas, whose king Lakṣmaṇasena (AD 1179–1206) claimed a victory over the king of Kāśī, a success that in all likelihood refers to his conquest of Magadhā.<sup>27</sup> Just as the Gāhaḍavālas for their part did not come to the rescue of the Cāhamānas, they themselves were not supported by their eastern neighbours in their war against the Muslim invaders. Consequently they were defeated by the Ghūrī army at Chandawar, and Jayacandra, 'Rāja of Benares, the chief of idolatry and perdition' was killed on the battlefield.<sup>28</sup> According to the Chronicle of Ḥasan Niẓāmī the victorious troops of Quṭb al-Dīn Aybak plundered the state treasury at Āsnī and,

Proceeded towards Benares, which is the centre of the country of Hind, and here they destroyed nearly one thousand temples, and raised mosques on their foundations; and the knowledge of the law became promulgated, and the foundations of religion were established.<sup>29</sup>

It is perhaps one of the most remarkable, if not tragic qualities of holy ground that it holds a special attraction for believers of other religions. From the 13th century the Hindus had to share it with the Muslims, who selected the Hindus' most holy spots to build their mosques, and this has been a source of

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25 Niyogi 1959, 180 f.

26 EI XIV, 197; Niyogi 1949, 36. The Vasantatilaka verse eulogizing Candradeva's pious and generous conduct is included in the standard text of all land grants (Sircar in EI XXXV, 202).

27 *Mādhāinagar Copper-plate Inscription of Lakṣmaṇasena* (date illegible) in SI II, 127 v. 11. See also the Bowal (i.e. India Office) plate dating from the 27th regnal year (EI XXVI, 6; cf. R.C. Majumdar 1971, 233).

28 Elliot & Dowson 1867-77 II, 223.

29 Elliot and Dowson 1867-1877 II, 223 (translation from the Turkish by H.M. Elliot). For a critical assessment of the testimony of Ḥasan Niẓāmī, the first part of which was composed between AD 1205 and 1217, it is good to keep the following words of Dowson in mind (*op. cit.* 210):

Beyond the praise which the author bestows upon his heroes, there is nothing to indicate that he was contemporary with the events which he describes, and the absence of all particulars, as well as a certain confusion and indistinctness about some of the dates, show that he was no active participator in any of his patrons' campaigns. It is singularly strange that he says nothing of the transactions of Quṭb al-Dīn's actual reign, for the same short chapter records his accession and his death.

endless conflict until today. The mosque erected in the time of the first Mogul emperor Babur in 1528, the so-called Babri Masjid on the site in Ayodhyā that was believed to be the Birthplace of Rāma, the Rāmājanmabhūmi, is a case in point.<sup>30</sup>

## EPILOGUE

We have seen that the notion of ‘holy war’ had not emerged within ancient India. And despite an uncompromising regime in northern India since AD 1200, which was hostile towards the quintessence of Hinduism, the temple cult, this idea was only very slow to develop, if at all. However, a constant infringement on central Hindu religious institutions must sooner or later have given rise to resistance that was inspired by religion and for which religion offered a justification; and, probably more important, it almost inevitably created a cause that could unify Hindus beyond caste, language and regional barriers. Strangely enough though, such a cause took a rather long time to develop and gathered social momentum only after Muslim authority had considerably weakened.

Elsewhere I have discussed the outcome of this development—the transformation of the utopian ideal of Rāma’s Rule (*rāma rājya*) into a political programme of the extreme right and the movement to liberate Rāma’s Birthplace in Ayodhyā, which finally led to the destruction of Babur’s Mosque on December 6 1992.<sup>31</sup>

Yet, although the Babri Masjid/Rāmājanmabhūmi case has made it clear that a number of elements have crept into the Hindu religion which were not there before, a downright civil war in which Hindu and Muslim were taking up arms for the sake of their faiths failed to materialize. As such new elements in Hinduism one may distinguish:

- 1 The formation of an exclusive community of Hindus who share the desire for a common good.
- 2 The view that history has an ultimate, religiously defined goal, the Rule of Rāma or *rāma rājya*.
- 3 A tendency to see Islam and its adherents as agents of evil, implying a demonization of the enemy.
- 4 Regarding Hindus who perish during the conflicts as martyrs for the common weal.<sup>32</sup>

To conclude, a religion that is alive—and Hinduism certainly is such a religion—changes continuously under the influence of shifting socio-economic conditions

30 Bakker 1986 I, 134. Above, p. 65.

31 Bakker 1991a; above, pp. 64 ff. For a survey and analysis of the Ayodhyā issue (with an extensive bibliography) the reader is referred to the *Internationales Asienforum* 3-4/94.

32 Bakker 1991a, 102; cf. above, p. 77.

and the challenges posed to it by rival world-views. The impact of a secularized culture on the one hand and a world-wide tendency towards fundamentalism on the other are two factors that do not fail to alter the way in which Hindus conceive themselves and the way they experience their own religion vis-à-vis that of their Muslim countrymen. It makes the study of Hinduism such an engaging activity. For the inhabitants of India it is much more than that: the development of Hinduism shapes their lives and their future. We can only hope that the Hindus will not take example from the bloody history that joins the three great Abrahamic religions.

PART III

## Studies in Early Saivism



# Sources for Reconstructing Ancient Forms of Śiva Worship\*

## ŚIVA CATURMUKHA

### *The myth of Tilottamā*

In chapter 203 of the *Ādiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* we are told that, in order to kill the Asuras Sunda and Upasunda, who could only be killed by each other, Viśvakarman, ordered by Brahmā, creates a woman of unparalleled beauty. The Grandfather tells her to go to the two demons and to seduce them in order that they may kill one and other in their rivalry over her. This beauty, named Tilottamā, promises to do so and takes her leave of the gods by making a circumambulation. Among those gods is Bhagavat Maheśvara, who sits to the south (scil. of Brahmā) with his face turned east, whereas the gods sit to the north (of him) and the *ṛṣis* all around (see below *Textual Sources* No. 2 (TS 2) v. 21). Only Indra and Bhagavat Sthāṇu (i.e. Maheśvara) are able to preserve their composure, but the latter's excessive desire to watch her (*draṣṭu-kāmasya cātyartham*) leads to the coming forth of three more faces (*mukha*), one directed towards the south, which is possessed of curling lashes (*añcita-pakṣmāntam*), one to the west and one to the north, the latter two not further qualified (TS 2 vv. 22–24). In this way Sthāṇu Mahādeva became four-faced (*caturmukhaḥ*). Indra, on the other hand, issues forth eyes on all sides up to a thousand (TS 2 vv. 25–26).

The curling eyelashes apart, the myth in this form does not yet refer to different aspects of Śiva that are represented by these faces, but his qualification of 'Post' (*sthāṇu*) may hint at his ithyphallic nature. That the appellation 'Sthāṇu' may have a phallic connotation emerges from the ambiguous and rather obscure *nirukti* in MBh 7.173.92 (TS 5 v. 92): 'Because he burns (/destroys) when standing erect, and, because his standing (erect) is the arising of the vital breath, and, because his phallus is always standing, therefore is he known as "Post"'.<sup>1</sup>

The myth of Tilottamā is taken up in the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, where significant iconographic features are added. An allusion to his ithyphallic nature

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\* The first version of this article was published in Grimal, François (ed.), *Les sources et le temps/Sources and Time. A colloquium*. Institut français de Pondichéry, EFEO, Pondichéry 2001. pp. 397–412. Publications du département d'indologie 91.

1 The same verse with variant readings is found in MBh 13.146.10.

is absent here. Instead it is explained how Śiva assumed a quadruple form (*caturmūrtitva*), which may not be exactly equivalent to ‘a form with four heads’ (TS 7 vv. 3–6).

Wherever she with beautiful teeth (i.e. Tilottamā) came into my vicinity, there, O Goddess, emerged a lovely head of mine. Wishing to watch her, I assumed a quadruple form with the help of yoga. Having become four-faced, while showing my own yoga, I exercise sovereignty (*indratva*) with my eastern face, with my northern one I sport (*ramāmi*) with you, O blameless one (Umā); my western face is gentle (*saumya*) and conveys happiness to all living beings; my southern face, which has a terrifying appearance and is fierce (*raudra*), destroys the creatures.

Translating this description into iconography, we may tentatively infer that the main head, which faces east, has the stern countenance of the yogin, that the southern face expresses the ferocious (*ugra*) aspect, that the northern face expresses delight ( $\sqrt{\text{ram}}$ ), whereas the western benevolent (*saumya*) face, which bestows happiness to the world, may have, by virtue of this function, a regal appearance, which may be symbolized by the turban (*uṣṇīṣa*), although the text does not explicitly specify this headgear. The *Mahābhārata* text seems to assign these four aspects—asceticism (*yogin*), ferociousness (*ugra/raudra*), benevolence (*saumya*) towards the world (i.e. *uṣṇīṣin*), and delight—to an anthropomorphic form of Śiva Maheśvara, who describes himself further as possessed of matted hair (*jaṭila*), celibate (*brahmacārin*), with the Pināka bow in his hand, and with a lustrous throat, *śrīkaṇṭha* (TS 7 vv. 7–8). It is this quartet of aspects that seems to underlie, admittedly with some variations, the early sculptural representations of Śiva, no matter whether we are concerned with a *caturmukhalīṅga* (aniconic) or with an anthropomorphic image. This may be illustrated by some early examples.

#### *Images of Śiva in his quadruple form*

In the statue found in Bhita, datable around the beginning of the Common Era,<sup>2</sup> Śiva’s main characteristic, viz. his ascetic, i.e. *yogin* nature, is represented by the central anthropomorphic figure, who is provided with matted locks (*jaṭila*) and penis erectus (Plate 109). Unlike his description in the *Mahābhārata* quoted above this central figure does not carry the bow Pināka, but rather seems to conform to devotional demands in that he carries the vessel (*kalaśa*) of *amṛta* in his left hand, while the right hand seems to be raised in *abhayamudrā*.<sup>3</sup>

This main deity is further characterized by four distinctive aspects symbolized by a ‘girdle’ of four heads around his waist, only partly in conformity with the *Mahābhārata* description. One of the heads clearly represents

2 Kreisel 1986, 54 f.; Abb. A 1a–f; State Museum Lucknow H 4.

3 Kreisel 1986, 57. Cf. the Śiva image found in Rishikesh: Kreisel 1986, 89 f. Abb. 70; Srinivasan 1997, 223, Pl. 17.10; Bakker 2014, 181 Plate 19.

his ferocious aspect (*ugra*) and may therefore be directed towards the south, which would entail that the main central figure is facing southwest.<sup>4</sup> The head to the left of the *ugra* face—i.e. the one directed towards the east, if the main image faces southwest—is described by Kreisel in *Die Śiva-Bildwerke der Mathurā-Kunst* as follows.

Als einziger der Häupter ist er ohne Ohr- und Halsschmuck dargestellt. Der Haaransatz ist nur als leichte Aufwölbung erkennbar, das offenbar kurzgeschorene Haar liegt ohne Zeichnung glatt am Schädel—sofern nicht ein Kahlkopf (*muṇḍa*) gemeint ist. Die schmucklose Darstellung läßt auf den asketischen Charakter dieses Kopfes schließen, allerdings in einem anderen Sinne als beim ekstatischen Yogin.<sup>5</sup>

The ‘ecstatic *yogin*’ differs from the ‘ascetic’ one, according to Kreisel; with the latter ‘scheint der gelehrte brahmanische Asket, wahrscheinlich der—nicht notwendig jugendliche—keusche Brahmacārin oder Saṃnyāsīn gemeint zu sein’ (*ibid.*). Kreisel and others consequently arrive at a fivefold scheme, which is supposed to underly the Bhita sculpture.

However, the differentiation of the *yogin* into two forms within the context of a spatial ramification fails in the *Mahābhārata* description and in any other early text and it may hence be doubtful whether a fivefold scheme really informed the early sculptures. The image seems rather to express the idea of one central deity not counted as an aspect, a deity who is possessed of or shaped by four aspects, the ones specified in the *Mahābhārata*, of which the *yogin* aspect in the present image is symbolized by the head of the *saṃnyāsīn*/*muṇḍin*, which is facing east in case of a southwestern orientation of the main deity.<sup>6</sup>



Plate 109  
Image found in Bhita

4 If the main figure faces east, the *ugra* head would face northeast, which is not plausible. See below, p. 507.

5 Kreisel 1986, 58.

6 This orientation of the Bhita sculpture is based on the assumption that the *ugra* head faces south. Kreisel *op. cit.* 60 f. takes as the most likely direction of the main figure the south, which entails that the four heads are facing the intermediate quarters. Kreisel explains this unusual orientation by the hypothesis, earlier proposed by J.N. Banerjea 1935, 36 ff., that the Bhita sculpture represents an ancestor monument (Kreisel 1986, 55, 60). This assumption would not be contradicted, but rather reinforced, by an orientation

The aspects represented by the remaining two heads of the Bhita sculpture, described by Kreisel as *saumya* and *uṣṇīṣin*, agree with the two other aspects assigned to Maheśvara in the quoted *Mahābhārata* passage, if we are allowed to equate the face qualified as *saumya* by Kreisel with the one that in the *Mahābhārata* is said to sport with Umā (*ramāmi*). The relation to the quarters remains problematic however; evidently the orientation of the *uṣṇīṣin* and *saumya* faces were not yet fixed. On the basis of the text one would expect that the head with which he sports with Umā (said to face north), is placed opposite of the *ugra* face (said to face south), which position in the Bhita sculpture, however, is occupied by the turbaned head, which, according to our interpretation of the *Mahābhārata* text, should face west. An *uṣṇīṣin* head in the western quarter is indeed found in an early *caturmukhaliṅga* to which we turn now.



Plate 110  
Mathurā: Caturmukhaliṅga

The probably oldest Caturmukhaliṅga that has been found is the Mathurā *liṅga* preserved in the National Museum Delhi (NM 65.172), which according to Kreisel is datable to about AD 100 (Plate 110).<sup>7</sup> Its faces in eastern, southern and western directions conform to the *Mahābhārata* description in that they express Śiva's *yogin*, *ugra* and *uṣṇīṣin* aspects. The northern head deviates from the text as well as from the Bhita sculpture in that it shows a shaven head and as such may be denoted as *muṇḍin*. This head replaces 'the one that sports with Umā' of the epic, but again we are basically concerned with a differentiation of four aspects.

Attempts to explain these earliest Śaiva images according to a fivefold scheme should be considered as anachronistic (Bakker 1999). The *liṅga* or central figure itself was, when Śaiva theology developed, interpreted as the 'fifth' (invisible) aspect in order to bring the fourfold spatial arrangement into line with the *non-iconographic* fivefold division known from the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (TS 1), which associates five mantras, i.e. five cosmic dimensions or functions with Sadāśiva; the first word of each mantra is explained by the commentator Sāyaṇa as the name of a face (*vaktra*) of God (Parameśvara), viz. Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa,

of the main figure to the southwest (*nairṛti*). According to the *Gobhilaḅhāgryasūtra* 4.7.41 a *bali* offering to the *pitṛs* should be made to the southwest. Cf. Gonda 1980, 55 f. on 'the region of Nirṛti (southwest), the awful goddess of decay'.

<sup>7</sup> Kreisel 1986, 65; Abb. 57a–d.

and Īśāna.<sup>8</sup> This synthesis of a spatial and a cosmological order postdates our earliest Śaiva sculptures; it is, to the best of my knowledge, for the first time presented in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 3.48.1–7 (TS 16). Consequently, there is in our view nothing remarkable (‘auffallend’) about the absence of the fivefold form of Śiva in the *Mahābhārata* as observed by Kreisel, since this form is equally absent in the early sculptures.<sup>9</sup>



Plate 111

*Mathurā: Architrave with scene of liṅga worship*

What, on the other hand, is very remarkable is the comparatively little attention paid to the *liṅga* as a Śaiva cult object in our early Sanskrit texts. There is ample evidence which demonstrates that aniconic Śiva worship was widespread throughout the Indian continent at the beginning of the Common Era. Not only do we have, for instance, the testimony of the unequivocally phallic representation of Śiva from Gudimallam,<sup>10</sup> which possibly dates from before the Common Era, but we also have an architrave from Mathurā, datable to the late Kṣatrapa period (middle of first century AD), which shows a *liṅga* sanctuary (Plate 111).<sup>11</sup> To this may be added the late-Kṣatrapa Caturmukhaliṅga that we have just discussed and numerous *liṅgas* pertaining to the Kuṣāṇa period &c.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Epigraphic sources attesting the worship of Śiva*

Due to this rich archaeological evidence of *liṅga* worship, some other data of the early period have also been interpreted as referring to Śiva’s *liṅga*, such as the

8 These five aspects, known in the scriptures of the Śaiva Siddhānta as ‘the five Brahmans’, are conceived of as being comprised in or as being the embodiment of Sadāśiva, an idea also reaching back to the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, which concludes the fifth formula of Īśāna with the words *sadāśivom*, glossed by Sāyaṇa as *sa eva sadāśiva om*.

9 Kreisel 1986, 21 n. 43: ‘Auffallend ist jedoch, daß im Epos die Fünfgestalt Śivas fehlt.’

10 Kreisel 1986, Abb. A2a–b.

11 Kreisel 1986, Abb. 1a–c.

12 Kreisel 1986, Abb. 2–33.



Plate 112  
Mathurā: Pilaster

two cult objects mentioned in the *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61* (AD 380/81),<sup>13</sup> named Upamiteśvara and Kapileśvara, which were installed in a sanctuary dedicated to the Pāśupata masters in the *guruparamparā* of Kuśika (Plate 112). The latter may have been thought to be the pupil of Śiva's Kārohaṇa *avatāra*, known as Lāguḍi or Lakulīśa from the fifth century onwards (above, p. 287). Probably on account of the ending 'īśvara', which later indeed mostly refers to a *liṅga*, these two objects are unanimously assumed to have been *liṅgas*, be it, according to D.R. Bhandarkar (followed by D.C. Sircar), *liṅgas* of a very peculiar type, viz. those that contain the 'portraits of the teachers'.<sup>14</sup> The text on the pillar reads (TS 12):

[...] āryoditācāryeṇa svapuruṅyāpyāyananimittaṃ  
gurūṅāṃ ca kīrtyartham upamiteśvarakapileśvarau  
gurvāyatane guru ... pratiṣṭhāpito [!]\*<sup>15</sup>

The illegible portion indicated by ... provides room for four, possibly five syllables of which the second seems to have been a ligature; Bhandarkar conjectured to read five: °*pratimāyutau*, evidently conceived as an attributive adjunct of *upamiteśvarakapileśvarau*. To me this conjecture does not appear very plausible, for reasons of Sanskrit construction—one would expect the conjectured adjunct before and not after *gurvāyatane*. On the other hand, the position of *guru ...* directly before *pratiṣṭhāpītau* suggests an adverbial adjunct, saying that the installation was for the benefit/to the memory of the *gurus* or something like that. Moreover, to my knowledge, we do not possess archaeological evidence of *liṅgas* that are adorned with portraits of human teachers. Nor is Sircar's speculation to the effect that, 'the representations showed as if Upamita and Kapila were standing each with a *Liṅga* on the head', more plausible, in want of any archaeological basis.<sup>16</sup> Apart from the names ending in *īśvara*, there is no evidence that the two objects installed were actually *liṅgas*.

That iconic images of Śiva were installed as main objects of worship in temples of this period may not only follow from the great number of early iconic images of Śiva (Maheśa) from Mathurā as described by Gerd Kreisel (Abb. 65–126), it may be illustrated also by an image commissioned by a Māheśvara for a Śaiva temple in the first half of the fifth century, viz. the image installed by

13 Kreisel 1986, Abb. 126a–b. For the figure carrying a stick (Daṇḍapāṇi) at the bottom see below, p. 558 and Plate 126.

14 Bhandarkar 1931–32, 5; cf. CII III (1981), 241; Sircar in SI I, 278 n. 5.

15 Sircar in SI I, 278; instead of °*ṣṭhāpīto* we should read °*ṣṭhāpītau*.

16 Sircar SI I, 278 n. 5.



Plate 113  
Mansar: Caturbhuja Śiva

Candragupta's grandson, the Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena II (Plate 113). This king refers to the deity in inscriptions as 'Pravareśvara'.<sup>17</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, there are reasons to assume that this beautiful, four-armed Śiva image discovered on a hillock called the Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī, 5 km due west of Ramtek Hill, in 1972, which to date embellishes the entrance hall of the National Museum in Delhi, represents this deity Pravareśvara. It may have been the main object

<sup>17</sup> CII V, 19 l. 13: *pravareśvara-ṣadvimśakavāṭaka*, and *op. cit.* 65 l. 1: *pravareśvaradeva-kulasthāna*. See also the sealing of Pravareśvara that came to light during the excavation of the Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī (MNS 3); above, pp. 373 f., Plate 75.

of worship in the Vākāṭaka state sanctuary (*vaijayikadharmasthāna*) named after the king 'Pravareśvaradevakulasthāna' (TS 13), which was situated on this hillock, near the present-day village of Mansar.<sup>18</sup>

Though in recent years a wealth of Śaiva sculptures have come to light pertaining to the eastern Vākāṭaka kingdom, no *liṅga* has been found among them.<sup>19</sup> The Vākāṭaka kings were brahmins and the majority of them Māheśvaras, but their apparent reserve to patronize *liṅga* temples tallies with the Sanskrit texts of this period, in which *liṅga* worship is only reluctantly acknowledged.

## EARLY SANSKRIT SOURCES OF LIṄGA WORSHIP

### *The Pāśupatasūtra and its commentary*

First of all, the authoritative text of the Pāśupata sect itself, the Sūtras and their commentary, do not mention *liṅga* worship with a single word. On the contrary, the commentator Kauṇḍinya describes a manifestation of Śiva (*mūrti*) in iconic terms; his form (*rūpa*) is said to be characterized by the bull-banner etc.:

'Image' (*mūrti*): Either this (*yad etad*) form (*rūpa*) that is perceived by him who is standing at the right side of God, his face turned north, in (His) proximity, a form that is characterised by the bull-banner, the lance in hand, Nandin, Mahākāla, erect phallus etc., or to which (*yad vā*) the laymen resort.

The sanctuary is 'of the Great God' (*mahādevasya*). This is the answer (*iti*). There is the object to be worshipped.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Mahābhārata*

Though Rudra's phallic aspect is recognized in MBh 10.17.21, 12.160.46, and 13.17.74, there are only a few passages in the *Mahābhārata* where *liṅga* worship as such is acknowledged, the oldest of which may be the verses in *Droṇaparvan* 172 and 173 (TS 3, 4 and 5), although these too are a matter of dispute. Discussing these passages Jacques Scheuer remarked,

Hopkins considère que la fin du Droṇaparvan est une addition tardive à ce livre. D'ailleurs, tout ce qui se réfère au *liṅga*, écrit-il encore, n'appartient pas aux

18 Bakker 1997, 4f., 87f.

19 Excavations in Mansar after the writing of the present article have shown me wrong. Although I still think that the Mansar Śiva image in the National Museum has been the main image of the temple complex unearthed at the Hiḍimbā Ṭekḍī, this complex contained at least six minor *liṅga* shrines. In the immediate surroundings of this complex also at least two other *liṅga* sanctuaries have been found. See Bakker 2004a and Bakker 2008.

20 Below, *Textual Sources* 10. This difficult passage deals with the concept of the Dakṣiṇā-mūrti. It is the vision of the initiated Pāśupata at the right side of the object of worship. This does not preclude that the latter itself is an aniconic representation of Śiva. This will be the subject of further discussion below, pp. 516f.

couches les plus anciennes de l'épopée. Dans une "critical note" de l'édition critique, S.K. De rejette la "conjecture" de Hopkins: le passage n'est pas si récent qu'il ne soit attesté par les principales familles de manuscrits. Cela est indéniable. A notre point de vue, cependant, il est plus intéressant de remarquer que le culte du *liṅga* ne semble jamais intervenir dans des passages se rattachant immédiatement au mythe central. Qu'il suffise ici de noter ce clivage. Il serait sans doute prématuré d'en proposer une explication. La mention du culte du *liṅga* est relativement claire. Les relations de Kṛṣṇa et de Rudra le sont moins.<sup>21</sup>

The *Mahābhārata* passages at issue run (TS 3 and 4):

Birth, *karman*, *tapas*, and *yoga* of these two (i.e. Nara and Nārāyaṇa) and of you (i.e. Aśvatthāman) are eminent; God has been adored by these two in the phallus (*liṅga*), by you in an image, during the various world-periods. He who adores the Lord in the *liṅga*, knowing Bhava to assume all forms, in him the disciplines concerning the self and the disciplines concerning learning are everlasting. For the gods and Siddhas and great seers, by worshipping in this way, strife to attain the highest in the world and the everlasting station. And this very Keśava (Kṛṣṇa) is a votary of Rudra, being born from Rudra; this Kṛṣṇa who is eternal is also to be worshipped with sacrifices. He who adores the Lord in the phallus, knowing Him to exist in all creatures, in him the One whose emblem is the bull (i.e. Śiva) takes an extraordinary delight.

Because his phallus stands erect in perpetual celibacy and the people worship greatly (*mahayanti*), (therefore) is he known as the Great Lord (Maheśvara). Seers, gods, Gandharvas and Apsarases also have adored his phallus, and that one also stood erect. Therefore that Great Lord (Maheśvara) rejoices when his (phallus) is worshipped; Śaṅkara becomes happy and gratified and he is delighted.

The latter text is with some minor variants found again in *Anuśāsanaparvan* 146.15-18 (TS 8), which may indicate that the *Droṇaparvan* passage belongs to an older stratum of the epic. An explicatory *śloka*, which is also found in the *Droṇaparvan* but in another context (MBh 7.173.94; TS 5), and which seems to echo MBh 7.172.87 and 90 (TS 3), has been inserted (MBh 13.146.16), somewhat disturbing the syntax, since the relative pronoun *yo* in 16a lacks a clear antecedent.<sup>22</sup> This verse unequivocally refers to the *liṅga* as a particular cult object distinct from an iconic image (*vigraha*). It says (TS 8 v. 16),<sup>23</sup>

One who worships the body (i.e. image) of the magnanimous one (i.e. Śiva), or otherwise his phallus (*liṅga*)—the constant worshipper of the phallus shall obtain great prosperity.

The fourth, or, if we count the *Droṇaparvan* passage and its reprise in the *Anuśāsanaparvan* as one, third passage advocating *liṅga* worship is also found

21 Scheuer 1982, 277.

22 This also holds true for MBh 7.173.94.

23 Cf. the *Gṛhyapariśiṣṭasūtras* of Baudhāyana (3rd–4th centuries AD?), which say that if Śiva is worshipped in an image there is an eye-opening rite, when in a *liṅga* there is not (TS 11). Cf. *ibid.* II.17 (Harting 1922, 10 l. 23).

in book thirteen. On the question of Śakra why he does not wish *prasāda* from anybody but Śiva, Upamanyu answers (TS 6 vv. 100–102),

What other reasons do you need, the Lord is the primary cause. It has not been revealed to us that the gods adore the phallus (*liṅga*) of anybody else; of whom else than Maheśvara is the phallus worshipped by all gods, or has ever been worshipped? Tell me if it has been revealed to you. Whose phallus Brahmā, Viṣṇu and you too with the gods should always adore, that one is the chiefest for that reason.

### *The Rāmāyaṇa*

The *Rāmāyaṇa* confirms the impression obtained from the *Mahābhārata*: though a later tradition ascribes to Rāma the foundation of the Rāmeśvara *liṅga*, this is not found in the critical edition of the *Ādikāvya* itself.<sup>24</sup> *Liṅga* worship is only ascribed to the Rākṣasas led by Rāvaṇa (TS 9), who worships with incense and fragrant flowers a golden *liṅga*, which he had installed on an altar of sand on the bank of the Narmadā River. ‘And after the worship he sung and danced, waving and spreading his hands’ (TS 9 v. 40). It may be significant that in the *Mahābhārata* passages great emphasis is laid on the fact that gods and other divine beings also worship Śiva’s *liṅga*,<sup>25</sup> which sounds like a sort of justification, whereas the *Rāmāyaṇa* confines *liṅga* worship to Rākṣasas in a tone of scarcely concealed dismay.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The overall impression that we may gather from the material surveyed is that, during the first centuries of the Common Era, the brahmanical elite, whether priest, king or renouncer, preferred to venerate Maheśvara in iconic form and frowned upon *liṅga* worship.<sup>26</sup> Its gradual acceptance in the 5th and 6th centuries by those circles that earlier rejected it may be illustrated again by the myth of Tilottamā.

### *The evidence of the Skandapurāṇa*

This myth recurs in what we think is the original *Skandapurāṇa*, which we date in the sixth or seventh century, and which may have been composed in Pāśupata circles.<sup>27</sup> Here explicit reference is made to Śiva in his *liṅga* form (TS 14): ‘There arose amidst these celestials a *liṅga*, solid, massive, a bundle of *tejas* as it were.’ From this *liṅga* four faces emerged when Tilottamā made her circumambulation, the eastern one lustrous, with lips gracious as the bimba

24 Eck 1991, 62f.

25 MBh 7.172.88; 7.173.84; 13.14.101 f.; 13.146.17.

26 Gonda 1960, 256: ‘Möglicherweise ist dieser Phallus ursprünglich nicht mit dem Śiva-dienst verbunden gewesen, wie denn auch gebildete Kreise öfters Bedenken gegen dessen Verehrung getragen haben.’

27 See Bakker & Adriaensen & Isaacson 1994. Bakker 2014. Above, pp. 185 ff., p. 469.

fruit (*prasannabimbauṣṭha*) and with three eyes (*tryakṣa*) (TS 15 vv.16–17); the southern one ‘possessed of the colour of a languid cloud laden with water, having a ferocious voice, with dreadful teeth shining (in an open mouth), and the corners of the eyes bloodshot and glittering’ (v. 19); the western face was perfect (*anuttama*) having three eyes, and the northern one was very full (*su-sampūrṇa*) and very gracious (*suprasanna*) (vv. 21–24). Thus runs the oldest description of the Caturmukhaliṅga in the Sanskrit literature known to me, at least half a millennium after the Indian sculptors had begun to materialize the idea in stone (see also below, p. 521).

### Conclusions

The various sources surveyed above lead to the following conclusions.

- 1 The historic reality of ancient Śiva worship, which is taken here as a specimen of a wider issue, cannot be reconstructed by relying on one type of source only. If we would base ourselves on texts alone, we would hardly be aware that *liṅga* worship was practised on a large scale throughout the Subcontinent during the first centuries of the Common Era. If, on the other hand, we would not have texts, we would be at a loss how to interpret the phallic stones provided with four heads of different countenances.
- 2 When the visual material is interpreted with the help of written sources it is of paramount importance that both sources date from about the same time. More often than not art-historians describe their visual material on the basis of textual material that dates from half a millennium later, such as when early sculptures are explained by having recourse to the iconographic treatise of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* or still later texts, while, as we have seen, contemporaneous descriptions are sometimes to be found in, for instance, the *Mahābhārata*.
- 3 The incongruity that is frequently found between the archaeological material and textual descriptions may have its root in the different sections of the society to which these sources pertain. This makes us realize how tentative our assessments are and how little we actually know about the early history of the religions of India.
- 4 If these three conclusions are accepted it follows finally that, in view of the scarcity of sources at our disposal, we simply cannot afford to disregard any of them. When, however, we evaluate them and try to construe an integral picture of the past, we should never lose sight of their innate differences and we must proceed with the utmost caution, in the knowledge that the complexity of the historic reality of ancient India is far greater than we can ever hope to recover.

## TEXTUAL SOURCES (TS)

## 1 Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 10.43–47

*sadyojātam prapadyāmi sadyojātāya vai namaḥ |*  
*bhave bhave nātibhave bhajasva mām | bhavodbhavāya namaḥ || 43 ||*  
*vāmadevāya namo jyēsthāya namaḥ śreṣṭhāya namo rudrāya namaḥ*  
*kālāya namaḥ kalavīkaraṇāya namo balavīkaraṇāya namo*  
*balapramathanāya namaḥ sarvabhūtadamanāya namo*  
*manonmanāya namaḥ || 44 ||*  
*aghorebhyo 'tha ghorebhyo ghoraghoratarebhyaḥ |*  
*sarvataḥ śarva sarvebhyo namas te astu rudrarūpebhyaḥ || 45 ||*  
*tatpuruṣāya vidmahe mahādevāya dhīmahi |*  
*tan no rudraḥ pracodayāt || 46 ||*  
*īśānaḥ sarvavidyānām īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām brahmādhipatir*  
*brahmaṇo 'dhipatir brahmā śivo me astu sadāśivom || 47 ||*

## 2 Mahābhārata 1.203.21–26

*prānī mukho bhagavān āste dakṣiṇena mahēśvaraḥ |*  
*devās caivottareṇāsan sarvatas tv ṛṣayo 'bhavan || 21 ||*  
*kurvantyā tu tayā tatra maṇḍalaṃ tatpradakṣiṇam |*  
*īndraḥ sthāṇuś ca bhagavān dhairyeṇa pratyavasthītau || 22 ||*  
*draṣṭukāmasya cātyarthaṃ gatāyāḥ pārśvatas tadā |*  
*anyad aṅcitapakṣmāntaṃ dakṣiṇaṃ niḥśṛtaṃ mukham || 23 ||*  
*prṣṭhataḥ parivartantyaḥ pāścīmaṃ niḥśṛtaṃ mukham |*  
*gatāyās cottaraṃ pārśvam uttaraṃ niḥśṛtaṃ mukham || 24 ||*  
*mahendrasyāpi netrāṇām pārśvataḥ prṣṭhato 'grataḥ |*  
*raktāntānām viśālānām sahasraṃ sarvato 'bhavat || 25 ||*  
*evaṃ caturmukhaḥ sthāṇur mahādevo 'bhavat purā |*  
*tathā sahasranetraś ca babhūva balasūdanaḥ || 26 ||*

## 3 Mahābhārata 7.172.86–90

*janmakarmatapoyogās tayos tava ca puṣkalāḥ |*  
*tābhyāṃ liṅge 'rcito devas tvayārcāyāṃ yuge yuge || 86 ||*  
*sarvarūpaṃ bhavaṃ jñātvā liṅge yo 'rcayati prabhum |*  
*ātmayogās ca tasmīn vai sāstrayogās ca śāśvatāḥ || 87 ||*  
*evaṃ devā yajanto hi siddhās ca paramarṣayaḥ |*  
*prārthayanti paraṃ loka sthānam eva ca śāśvatam || 88 ||*  
*sa eṣa rudrabhaktaś ca keśavo rudrasaṃbhavaḥ |*  
*kṛṣṇa eva hi yaṣṭavyo yajñaiś caīṣa sanātanaḥ || 89 ||*  
*sarvabhūtabhavaṃ jñātvā liṅge 'rcayati yaḥ prabhum |*  
*tasmīn abhyadhīkāṃ prītiṃ karoti vṛṣabhadhvajaḥ || 90 ||*

## 4 Mahābhārata 7.173.83–85

*nityena brahmacaryeṇa liṅgam asya yad āsthitam\* |  
mahayanti ca lokāś ca maheśvara iti smṛtaḥ || 83 ||  
ṛṣayaś caiva devāś ca gandharvāpsarasas tathā |  
liṅgam asyārcayanti sma tac cāpy ūrdhvaṃ samāsthitam || 84 ||  
pūjyamāne tatas tasmīn modate sa maheśvaraḥ |  
sukhī prītaś ca bhavati prahr̥ṣṭaś caiva śaṅkaraḥ || 85 ||*

\* The edition reads *yadā sthitam*.

## 5 Mahābhārata 7.173.92–94

*dahaty ūrdhvaṃ sthito yac ca prāṇotpattisthitaś\* ca yat |  
sthitalingaś ca yan nityaṃ tasmāt sthāṇur iti smṛtaḥ || 92 ||  
viśamasthaḥ śarīreṣu samaś ca prāṇinām iha |  
sa vāyur viśamastheṣu prāṇāpānaśarīreṣu || 93 || \*\*  
pūjayed viśamaṃ yas tu liṅgaṃ vāpi samarcayet |  
liṅgaṃ pūjayitā nityaṃ mahatīm śriyam aśnute || 94 || \*\*\**

\* The editors of the *Anuśāsanaparvan*, where the same verse is found (MBh 13.146.10), opted for another reading: *prāṇotpattiḥ sthitiś*. \*\* MBh 13.146.20 has an important variant reading: *viśamasthaḥ śarīreṣu sa mṛtyuḥ prāṇinām iha | sa ca vāyuh śarīreṣu prāṇo 'pānah śarīrinām || 20 ||* \*\*\* Cf. MBh 13.146.16 (TS 8 v. 16).

## 6 Mahābhārata 13.14.99–102

*śakra uvāca |  
kaḥ punas tava hetur vai īśe kāraṇakāraṇe |  
yena devād rte 'nyasmāt prasādaṃ nābhikāṅkṣasi || 99 ||  
upamanyur uvāca |  
hetubhir vā kim anyais te īśaḥ kāraṇakāraṇam |  
na śuśrūma yad anyasya liṅgam abhyarcyate suraiḥ || 100 ||  
kasyānyasya suraiḥ sarvair liṅgaṃ muktvā maheśvaram |  
arcyate 'rcitapūrvaṃ vā brūhi yady asti te śrutih || 101 ||  
yasya brahmā ca viṣṇuś ca tvaṃ cāpi saha daivataih |  
arcayadhvaṃ sadā liṅgaṃ tasmāc chreṣṭhatamo hi saḥ || 102 ||*

## 7 Mahābhārata 13.128.3–8

*yato yataḥ sā sudatī mām upādhāvad antike |  
tatas tato mukhaṃ cāru mama devi vinirgatam || 3 ||  
tām didṛkṣur ahaṃ yogāc caturmūrtitvam āgataḥ |  
caturmukhaś ca saṃvṛtto darśayan yogam ātmanaḥ || 4 ||  
pūrveṇa vadanenāham indratvam anuśāsmi ha |  
uttareṇa tvayā sārthaṃ ramāmy aham anindite || 5 ||  
paścīmaṃ me mukhaṃ saumyaṃ sarvaprāṇisukhāvaham |  
dakṣiṇaṃ bhīmasaṃkāśaṃ raudraṃ saṃharati prajāḥ || 6 ||  
jaṭilo brahmacārī ca lokānāṃ hitakāmyayā |  
devakāryārthasiddhyarthaṃ pinākaṃ me kare sthitam || 7 ||*

*indreṇa ca purā vajraṃ kṣiptaṃ śrīkāñkṣiṇā mama |  
dagdhvā kaṅṭhaṃ tu tad yātaṃ tena śrīkaṅṭhatā mama || 8 ||*

8 Mahābhārata 13.146.15–18

*nityena brahmacaryeṇa liṅgam asya yad āsthitam |  
mahayanty asya lokās ca maheśvara iti smṛtaḥ || 15 ||  
vigrahaṃ pūjayed yo vai liṅgaṃ vāpi mahātmanaḥ |  
liṅgaṃ pūjayitā nityaṃ mahatīm śriyam aśnute || 16 ||  
ṛṣayaś cāpi devās ca gandharvāpsarasas tathā |  
liṅgam evārcayanti sma yat tad ūrdhvaṃ samāsthitam || 17 ||  
pūjyamāne tatas tasmīn modate sa maheśvaraḥ |  
sukhaṃ dadāti prītātmā bhaktānāṃ bhaktavatsalaḥ || 18 ||*

9 Rāmāyaṇa 7.31.38–40

*rāvaṇaṃ prāñjalīm yāntam anvayuhḥ sapta rākṣasāḥ |  
yatra yatra sa yāti sma rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ |  
jāmbūnadamayaṃ liṅgaṃ tatra tatra sma nīyate || 38 ||  
bālukāvedimadhye tu tal liṅgaṃ sthāpya rāvaṇaḥ |  
arcayāmāsa gandhaiś ca puṣpaiś cāmṛtagandhibhiḥ || 39 ||  
tataḥ satām ārtiharaṃ haraṃ paraṃ,  
varaṇaṃ candramayūkhabhūṣaṇam |  
samarcayitvā sa niśācaro jagau,  
prasārya hastān praṇanarta cāyatān || 40 ||*

10 Kauṇḍinya *ad Pāsupatasūtra* 1.9 (Sastri's ed. p. 15)

*mūrtir nāma yad etad devasya dakṣiṇe pārśve sthitenodarimukhenopānte  
yad rūpam upalabhyate | vṛṣadhvaśaśūlapāṇinānandimahākālordhvaliṅgā-  
dilakṣaṇam | yad vā laukikāḥ pratipadyante | mahādevasyāyatanam iti |  
tatropastheyam |*

11 Gṛhyaparīśiṣṭasūtras of Bauddhāyana II.16 (Harting 1922, 7 ll. 16f.)

*hiraṇyena tejasā cakṣur vimocayet tejo 'sīti |  
liṅge cen nivartate cakṣuṣor abhāvād |*

12 Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61 (Sircar SI I, 278 ll. 5–10; cf. CII III (1981), 240)

*asyāṃ pūrvvā[yām] [bha]gava[tku]śikād daśamena bhagavatparāśarāc  
caturthena [bhagavatka\*]pi[la]vimalaśiṣyaśiṣyeṇa bhagava[dupamita\*]vi-  
malaśiṣyeṇa āryyodi[tā\*]cāryye[ṇa\*] [sva\*]pu[ṇyā]pyāyananimittaṃ  
gurūnāṃ ca kīrtya[rtham upamīteśva]rakapileśvarau gurvāyatane guru  
... pratiṣṭhāpito [read: °tau] (|\*)*

Bhandarkar conjectures *gurupratimāyutau* for *guru* ...

## 13 Pāṇḍhurnā Plates of Pravarasena II (CII V, 65 ll. 1 &amp; 34–36)

*dr̥ṣṭam | pravareśvaradevakulasthānāt | [...]  
viditam astu vo yathehāsmābhir dharmāyurbalavijayavivṛddhaye ihāmu-  
tra hitārtham ātmānugrahāya vaijayike dharmasthāne apūrvadattya uda-  
kapūrvam atisṛṣṭaḥ |*

Readings corrected with the help of other similar inscriptions. Mirashi notes that we should read *atisṛṣṭā*, 'if it has to qualify some word like *bhūmiḥ*'.

## 14 Skandapurāṇa 62.12 (SP III, 260)

*atha liṅgaṃ samuttasthau teṣāṃ madhye divaukasām |  
susamhataṃ susaṃśliṣṭaṃ samūhas tejasām iva || 12 ||*

## 15 Skandapurāṇa 62.16–24 (SP III, 261 f.)

*neme mūrtiṃ tadā pūrvāṃ niḥsasāra tato mukham |  
tryakṣaṃ prasannabimbauṣṭham amitadyutikāntimat || 16 ||  
atha tejo viniḥsṛtya vadanendoḥ pinākinah |  
tāṃ viveśāṅganām āśu śaradbhāskarabhāsavaram || 17 ||  
atha sā dakṣiṇāṃ mūrtiṃ praṇeme cārudasānā |  
nirjagāma tadā dīptaṃ mukhaṃ suraguros tataḥ || 18 ||  
vāribhārālasāmbhodarucimad bhīmanisvanam |  
karāladaśanodbhāsi dīptaraktāntalocanam || 19 ||  
atyādityaṃ tatas tejo mukhān niḥsṛtya dakṣiṇāt |  
dr̥śyamānaṃ suraiḥ sarvair viveśa pramadottamām || 20 ||  
praṇeme sā tatas tasya paścimāṃ mūrtim añjasā |  
niścakrāma tatas tasyā mukhaṃ tryakṣam anuttamam || 21 ||  
tatas tejo viniḥsṛtya mukhendora madanadvīṣaḥ |  
dīpyamānaṃ viveśāśu tām eva pramadottamām || 22 ||  
uttarāṃ mūrtim āgamya praṇeme sā kṛtāñjaliḥ |  
tasyā mukhaṃ susaṃpūrṇaṃ suprasannaṃ viniryayau || 23 ||  
tasmāt tejo viniḥsṛtya sūryadīptānalaprabham |  
viveśa pramadām āśu tām eva varavarṇinīm || 24 ||*

## 16 Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa 3.48.1–7

*sadyojātaṃ vāmadevam aghoraṃ ca mahābhujā |  
tathā tatpuruṣaṃ jñeyam īśānaṃ pañcamaṃ mukham || 1 ||  
sadyojātaṃ mahī proktā vāmadevaṃ tathā jalam |  
tejas tv aghoraṃ vikhyātaṃ vāyus tatpuruṣaṃ matam |  
īśānaṃ ca tathākāśam ūrdhvasthaṃ pañcamaṃ mukham || 2 ||  
vibhāgenātha vakṣyāmi śambhor vadanapañcakam |  
mahādevamukhaṃ jñeyaṃ pūrvaṃ śambhor mahātmanaḥ |  
netrāṇi trīṇi tasyāhuḥ somasūryahutāśanāḥ || 3 ||  
dakṣiṇaṃ tu mukhaṃ raudraṃ bhairavaṃ tat prakṛtitam |  
paścimaṃ yan mukhaṃ tasya nandivakraṃ tad ucyate || 4 ||  
umāvakraṃ ca vijñeyaṃ tasya devasya cottaram |*

*sadāśivākhyam vijñeyam pāvanam tasya pañcamam |*  
*trilocanāni sarvāṇi vāmadevam dvilocanam || 5 ||*  
*mahādevamukham bhūmis\* tejaḥ syād bhairavam mukham |*  
*nandivaktram tathā vāyur\* aumeyam cāpa ucyate |*  
*sadāśivākhyam vijñeyam ākāśam yadunandana || 6 ||*  
*dīśo daśa bhujās tasya tadvayam\*\* vadanam prati |*  
*mahādevakare jñeyāv akṣamālākamaṇḍalū || 7 ||*

Text as given in Shah's edition; *śloka* numbering mine. \* It might be argued that *bhūmis* and *vāyur* have been interchanged. \*\* I follow the MSS A and B of Shah's edition; this editor opted for the unintelligible *vijñeyam*.

# At the Right Side of the Teacher\*

## Imagination, Imagery, and Image in Vedic and Śaiva Initiation

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand,  
Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom  
prepared for you from the foundation of the world.  
Matthew 25:34 (cf. Ecclesiastes 10:2)

### INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the Vedic religion into new systems of belief and practice, early Hinduism for short, is a process of cultural change that, despite two centuries of research, has only partly been understood. The replacement of the sacrificial fire by images of wood and stone is among the most obvious innovations. As has been convincingly argued by Phyllis Granoff (2006), this innovation was only reluctantly accepted in some circles of brahmanic orthodoxy. On the other hand, there can be little doubt that Vedic imagination informed the concept of God and His image (*mūrti*) in the newly emerging religions. It found expression in the Sanskrit texts of early Hinduism. The confrontation of this textual evidence with the material images of the archaeologist is often perplexing, however.

An example of such a conundrum is the so-called Dakṣiṇāmūrti, mentioned in the Pāśupata texts, the *Mahābhārata*, and the later Śaiva literature of the Mantramārga. In this essay, we will examine the Vedic origins of the imagery of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti. This *mūrti* appears first and foremost to be an ideal image embedded in the ritual of initiation. The Vedic *upanayana* ceremony laid the structural foundations for the initiation rites of the later religious orders. The Dakṣiṇāmūrti appears to be a token of the theistic transformation of the Vedic imagination. It illustrates how literate Śaiva brahmins took the Hinduistic turn. At first material images played, if at all, only a secondary role in this transformation. However, in a religious world that was increasingly pervaded by material images of the divine, it was bound to happen that the visionary

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image became an archetype of visual representation, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti as an iconographic category. In this process, an essential characteristic of the vision of God as revealer was reinterpreted: His right side became interpreted as His southern face. The incongruity of this representation with the age-old religious idea of the south as being terrifying, inauspicious,<sup>1</sup> was to make a conundrum.

## THE SITTING POSITION OF TEACHER AND PUPIL IN THE VEDIC UPANAYANA RITUAL

### *The Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*

The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 11.5.4 is our earliest source for the ancient *upanayana* ritual; a brief summery may highlight its major features.

- 1 The pupil approaches a teacher and expresses the wish for apprenticeship by saying: I have come for *brahmacarya* (*brahmacaryam āgām*). He commits himself to be a *brahmacārin*.
- 2 The teacher (*ācārya*) asks his name. The question implies the answer: ‘who’ (*ka*) conceived as another name of Prajāpati.
- 3 The teacher takes the pupil by the hand, implying that he accepts him as a student, saying *indrasya brahmacāry asy, agnir ācāryas tavāham ācāryas tavāsāv iti*. Thus the *ācārya* and Agni are seen as homologous.
- 4 He consigns the student to Prajāpati and Savitr and to all beings in heaven and earth.
- 5 He consigns him to *brahman*, that is, he makes him a *brahmacārin* by saying *brahmacāry asi*, while he lets him sip water, which embodies the elixir of life (*amṛta*). Thus the pupil is initiated into the life eternal, and becomes a ‘wanderer in *brahman*’.
- 6 After this initiation—with or without delay (see below n. 11 on p. 508)—the *ācārya* teaches the Veda by making him repeat its quintessence, the *Sāvitrī*.

The importance attached to the position of pupil and teacher during the Veda instruction is apparent from the fact that it is singled out for specification in the *Brāhmaṇa*; there appear to be two different traditions. According to one tradition the student sits or stands at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*) of the teacher, who, as is understood, is facing east. The position of the pupil is characterised by the term *bulva/bulba*. This word, apparently a hapax legomenon, is given by Mayrhofer EWA s.v. as ‘etwa “seitwärts”’ (with the remark: ‘nicht klar’). Because of this sideway position, this tradition is rejected in the *Brāhmaṇa*, which opts for the alternative: the student should sit opposite the teacher looking at him from east to west.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bodewitz 2000, 22 f.

<sup>2</sup> ŚBr 11.5.4.14:

Which direction, we may ask, faces the pupil in the situation that is rejected? The commentary of Śāyaṇācārya does not resolve the question.<sup>3</sup> There can be little doubt that the teacher, homologous to Agni, is facing east;<sup>4</sup> the student, on the other hand, may be thought to be looking at his teacher in profile, i.e. he may be facing north, for that is the region of the gods,<sup>5</sup> the region of living men as opposed to that of the deceased.<sup>6</sup> Or, he may face the northeast, since standing towards that direction Prajāpati created the creatures, there the gate of heaven is believed to stand.<sup>7</sup> The northeast may be particularly appropriate in the present case, because it not only is the direction into which Prajāpati issued the beings—Prajāpati to whom the student has just been consigned—but also is the point of the compass where the Sun (Savitṛ) rises at the summer solstice to begin a new year, the Sun to whom the student has just as well been consigned and into whose mantra (*Sāvitrī*) he is actually being initiated, that is, whose mantra he is reciting. If directed to the northeast, the student is seated obliquely, not transversely, with respect to the teacher. It is difficult to determine whether *bulva* means ‘oblique’ or ‘transverse’.

Consequently, the first of the two alternatives discussed in the *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*, the one that is rejected by the Brāhmaṇa itself, namely that the student is sitting at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*) of the teacher, allows for two interpretations: (1a) teacher is facing east and student is facing north, or (1b)

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*átha hañke dakṣiṇatáh[|] tiṣṭhate vāsṇāya vānvāhur ná táthā kuryād yó hainaṃ tátra brūyād bulbáñ nv á ayam imám ájījanata bulbo bhaviṣyatītīśvaró ha táthaivá syát tásmāt purástād evá pratīce samūkṣamāñāyāñubrūyāt || 14 ||*

Now some recite (to the pupil) while the latter is standing or sitting at the right side (of the teacher). One should not do so. One would be able to say to him in that case: ‘Yes indeed, he (the teacher) has begotten him (the student) sideways, and sideways (i.e. wayward) he (the student) will be’; and so, indeed, it will come to pass. Therefore he should recite to (the pupil) sitting in front of him, while the former is westwards looking.

- 3 Śāyaṇa glosses: *ayam ācārya imam śiṣyam atha bulvaṃ tiraścīnaṃ prāṇmukham ajījanat tathā cāyaṃ [b]ulvaṃ parāṇmukho bhaviṣyatītier* I take *prāṇmukham*, like *bulvaṃ tiraścīnaṃ*, as an adverb qualifying *ajījanat*: ‘*bulva*, i.e. transversely, while facing forward/eastwards (*prāṇmukham*), he has begotten (the pupil)’; this adverb, referring to the position of the teacher, serves to pronounce the contrast with the pupil, who will turn away (*parāṇmukha*), will be adverse. *Bulva* thus means transverse (*tiraścīna*), adverse (*parāṇmukha*), which, again, suggests that teacher and pupil sit at right angles.
- 4 This is the default position. ‘In the domestic rites the sacrificer stands to the west of the fire facing the east’ (Gonda 1980, 52). Cf. Bodewitz 2000, 25, 49.
- 5 ŚBr 12.7.3.7: *úttaro vai devalokó, dáksīṇaḥ pitṛloká[h]*.
- 6 ŚBr 13.8.1.6: *údici vai manusyāñāñ dák*. Cf. Gonda 1980, 53; Bodewitz 2000, 23.
- 7 ŚBr 6.6.2.2-4:

*údan prāñ tiṣṭhan | údan vai prāñ tiṣṭhan prajāpatiḥ prájā asṛjata || 2 || yádve(v)ódan  
prāñ tiṣṭhan | eśá hobháyeṣāñ devamanusyāñāñ díg yád údici práci || 3 || yádvevódan  
prāñ tiṣṭhan | etásyāñ ha díśi svargásya lokásya dvārañ tásmād údan prāñ tiṣṭhan  
áhutīr juhoty údan prāñ tiṣṭhan dáksīñā nayati dvāraiva tát svargásya lokásya vittāñ  
prápādayati || 4 ||*

Cf. Gonda 1980, 53; Bodewitz 2000, 24.

teacher is facing east and student is facing northeast. (1b) is clearly a variant of (1a) and a combination of both is perfectly feasible: the pupil faces north, but, if appropriate, may look towards the northeast.<sup>8</sup>

That the Brāhmaṇa prefers alternative (2)—teacher and pupil sitting opposite to one another, directed to the east and west respectively—may above all have practical reasons, since the teacher bestows more than only learning upon the neophyte at this occasion; a change of position may have been thought to be cumbersome.<sup>9</sup> The first alternative (1a–b), on the other hand, because it makes sense in terms of the mystique of the quarters, may have preserved original traits. Moreover, the right side of the teacher has symbolic meaning. ‘There is ample evidence that the right hand or the right side of the body was decidedly preferred to the left.’<sup>10</sup> We will return to this below.

The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* does itself refer to earlier modalities of the ritual recitation of the *Sāvitrī*, when it reads: ‘In former days, however, they recited that same verse (the *Sāvitrī*) at the end of the year (*saṃvatsare*), thinking “being as old as a year, indeed, children are born; as soon as born, we impart speech to him”:<sup>11</sup> The appropriate direction in this ritual is, or so it seems, the northeast, in which direction Prajāpati gave birth, Prajāpati who is equated with the year (Gonda 1984).

### *The Gṛhyasūtras*

The two traditions indicated briefly in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* can be followed in the Gṛhyasūtra literature. As one would expect, the only Gṛhyasūtra that

8 Gonda 1980, 54 gives a confusing rendering of this position:

On the other hand, the *brahman* (priest) is placed or sits south. . . . The *same* position is prescribed to the boy who is to be initiated before a girdle is tied round his waist, which is to protect him against evil influences.

The boy is not said to sit in or face the south, but to sit at the right side of the teacher. That this coincides with the south is secondary and as such does not play a symbolic role, as I will argue in this article (cf. Bodewitz 2000, 26).

9 According to the Gṛhyasūtras the pupil receives, among other things, a girdle and a staff, to which the sacred thread may be added. All three items are missing in the ŚBr account. It seems that bestowing the *yajñopavīta* upon the novice at this occasion is a relatively late addition (see Gopal 1959, 296). There is obviously a loss of symbolic significance in this second position of the pupil compared to the first alternative. Surveying the meaning of the western direction in Vedic ritual Gonda 1980, 55 observes: ‘It follows that facing eastwards whilst standing in the west [as does the *ācārya*, H.T.B.] results in a desired effect, so that in the west one can be prosperous; facing the west does not however produce results.’

10 Gonda 1977a, 624; Gonda 1980, 57–60. ‘In the case of male beings the right side was auspicious, most probably because it was the ‘male’ side. *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 70 c 25, 5 a royal sacrificer seeing that the flame of a (sacrificial) fire points to the right will be victorious. The side of strength and auspiciousness is also widely regarded as that of benignity, allegiance, benediction’ (*op. cit.* 60).

11 ŚBr 11.5.4.6: *tām ha smaitām purā saṃvatsarē ’nvāhuḥ saṃvatsarasammitā vai gārbhāḥ prājāyante jātā evāsmiṃs tād vācaṃ dadhma iti* | Sāyaṇa *ad loc.* takes this to mean that the teaching of the student of the *Sāvitrī* took place a year after the initiation (or after a shorter period as specified in the following paragraphs).

belongs, like the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, to the White Yajurveda, the *Pāraskara-gr̥hyasūtra*, follows the accepted tradition of the Brāhmaṇa, though it mentions the alternative. The place where the teaching takes place is specified: north of the sacrificial fire.

After (the pupil) has made a *pradakṣiṇa* around the fire he takes his seat. The teacher, touched (by the pupil), pours oblations of ghee into the fire; when the remains have been eaten, he instructs him: ‘You are a *brahmacārīn*, drink water, do your service, may you not sleep in the daytime, restrain your speech, put fuel on the fire, drink water.’ Then he recites to him the *Sāvitrī*, north of the sacrificial fire, while (the pupil) is sitting near him with his face turned west, looking (at him) and being looked at. Some: ‘to him while standing or sitting to his right side’.<sup>12</sup>

The Gr̥hyasūtras of the R̥gveda, the *Āśvalāyana*- and *Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtras*, although different in details and sequence, seem basically to follow the accepted tradition of the White Yajurveda with regard to the place of teaching, to the north of the fire, and the vis-à-vis position of teacher and pupil.<sup>13</sup> The same goes for the *Gobhilagr̥hyasūtra* of the Sāmaveda.<sup>14</sup>

12 PārGS 2.3.1–5:

*pradakṣiṇam agniṃ parītyopaviśati* || 1 || *anvārabdha ājyāhutīr hutvā prāśanānte 'thainam samśāsti* || 2 || *brahmacāry asy apo 'śāna karma kuru mā divā suṣupthā vācam yaccha samidham ādhehy apo 'śāneti* || 3 || *athāsmāi sāvitrīm anvāhottarato 'gneḥ pratyānimukhāyopaviṣṭāyopasannāya samikṣamāṇāya samikṣitāya* || 4 || *dakṣiṇatas tiṣṭhata āśināya vaike* || 5 ||

Words in **bold face** are literal quotations from the ŚBr 11.5.4.5, 14. Stenzler in his translation (1878, 44) leaves *dakṣiṇatas* out altogether. Oldenberg in his translation (1886, 306) takes *dakṣiṇatas* as referring to the fire: ‘to the south (of the fire)’, which, since we are here concerned with a literal quote from the ŚBr, is certainly wrong.

13 The *Āśvalāyana* gives the following procedure. The teacher, touched (by the pupil), after having poured (oblations of ghee into the fire), stands to the north of the fire, his face turned east; opposite of him, with his face turned west the other (ĀśvGS 1.20.2–3: *samanvārabdhe hutvōttarato 'gneḥ prānimukha ācārya 'vatiṣṭhate* || 2 || *purastāt pratyānimukha itaraḥ* || 3 ||). Then, while pouring the water of his *añjali* into that of the pupil, the teacher consigns the pupil to Savitr and to Prajāpati. After this the pupil puts on fuel and touches the fire. Then, without mentioning another position, the text continues by saying that the pupil, while reciting mantras, ‘approaches (the teacher), bends his knee, touches (the feet of the teacher), and should say: “O lord, teach the *Sāvitrī*, O lord, recite”’ (ĀśvGS 1.21.4: [...] *upasthāya jānv ācyopasaṃgr̥hya brūyād adhīhi bho sāvitrīm bho3 anubrūhīti* || 4 ||). Cf. *Śāṅkhāyanagr̥hyasūtra* 2.5.8–12:

[...] *uttareṇāgnim upaviśataḥ| prānimukha ācāryaḥ pratyānimukha itaro| adhīhi bho3 ity uktvā| ācārya oṃkāraṃ prayujyāthetaraṃ vācayati sāvitrīm bho3 anubrūhīti| athāsmāi sāvitrīm avāha tat savitur vareṇyam ity etām paccho 'rdharcaśo 'navānam* || 5 ||

14 GoGS 2.10.31–35:

*udañ agner utṣṛpya prāñ ācārya upaviśaty udagagreṣu darbheṣu* || 31 || *pratyāni māṇavako dakṣiṇajānvakto 'bhīmukha ācāryam udagagreṣu eva darbheṣu* || 32 || *athainam triḥ pradakṣiṇam muñjamekhalāṃ pariḥaran vācayatiyaṃ duruktāt paribādhamāneti ṛtasya goptrīti ca* || 33 || *athopasīdaty adhīhi bhoḥ sāvitrīm me bhavān anubravitv itī* || 34 || *tasmā anvāha paccho 'rdharcaśa ṛkṣa itī* || 35 ||

The other tradition, rejected in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*, we find in some Gr̥hyasūtras affiliated with the Black Yajurveda, though not in all.<sup>15</sup> For an assessment of the *upanayana* ritual according to this tradition, we turn to the elaborate description in the *Bhāradvājagṛhyasūtra*. Its procedure may be epitomized (with cross-references to the *Hiraṇyakeśigṛhyasūtra*).

The teacher prepares for the *homa* sacrifice by consecrating the implements etc. (BhGS 1.3). He prepares west of the sacrificial fire a seat of grass (*kūrca*), of which the grassblades are turned to the north. There the teacher takes his seat, his face turned to the east; the pupil (*kumāra*), who has put on the *yajñopavīta* and sipped water, takes his seat at the right side (of his teacher) (*dakṣiṇatas*).<sup>16</sup>

The teacher performs the *homa* sacrifice (BhGS 1.4). Then he gives the pupil a new cloth, a girdle of muñja grass (*mauñjī mekhalā*), and a skin of the black antelope (*ajina*) (BhGS 1.5–6). Next (BhGS 1.7) (the teacher) strews to the west of the sacrificial fire darbha grasses, on which the two (teacher and pupil) take their stand, one facing east, the other west. The one facing east takes the hand of the one facing west and vice versa. A servant fills the *añjalīs* of both with water. By his *añjali* (the teacher) transfers the water into the *añjali* (of the pupil).<sup>17</sup>

A formal interview takes place in which the teacher asks for the name of the pupil and subsequently leads him (*upanayāmi*) to Prajāpati (Ka) (BhGS 1.7).

15 Not, for instance, in the ĀpGS 4.11.7–8:

*pariṣecanāntaṃ kṛtvāpareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn uttarena yaju-  
ṣopanetopaviṣati || 7 || purastāt pratyāñi āsīnaḥ kumāro dakṣiṇena pāṇinā dakṣiṇaṃ  
pādān anvārabhyāha sāvitrīṃ bho anubrūhīti || 8 ||*

The commentator Sudarśanārya, reading *pratyāñāsīnaḥ*, glosses: *pratyānimukhaḥ*. Similarly the *Baudhāyanagṛhyasūtra* 2.5.38–39:

*apareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn prānimukha ācārya upaviṣati—  
raṣṭrabhṛd asy ācāryāsandi mā tvad yoṣam iti || 38 || tasyāgreṇa kumāro darbheṣu  
pratyānimukha upaviṣya pādāv anvārabhyāha—sāvitrīṃ bho anubrūhīti || 39 ||*

Although the site of the teaching is said to be to the west side of the sacrificial fire, the pupil is said to sit opposite (i.e. east) of the teacher while facing west, that is he sits with his back towards the fire blocking the teacher's access to it. This evidently hybrid version of the ritual appears to be a conflation of the tradition of the White Yajurveda (and R̥g- and Sāmaveda, as we saw above) and the alternative tradition (see below). The *Gautamadharmasūtra* adds to the confusion when it declares that the student should sit at the right side of the teacher, but may face either east or north; in the former case he sits parallel to the teacher: *prānimukho dakṣiṇataḥ śiṣya udānimukho vā ...* (GauDhS 1, in Dutt 1988).

16 BhGS 1.3 (cf. HirGS 1.2.5–6):

[...] *apareṇāgnim udagagraṃ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmīn prānimukha upaviṣati | yajño-  
pavītaṃ kṛtvāpa ācamya dakṣiṇataḥ kumāra upaviṣyānvārabhate || 3 ||*

17 BhGS 1.7:

*apareṇāgnīṃ dvayān darbhan pūrvāparān udagagrān stṛṇāti | teṣu pūrvāparāv upa-  
tiṣṭhete | prānimukhaḥ pratyānimukhasya hastaṃ gṛhṇīyād ity ekam | pratyānimukhaḥ  
prānimukhasyetye param | athainayoḥ praṣakṛd añjalī udakena pūrayati | athāsyañja-  
lināñjalāv udakam ānayati |*

The teacher consigns the pupil to several other deities. The teacher asks him to step on a stone (*aśman*) and to put fuel on the fire (BhGS 1.8).

Then the pupil makes a *pradakṣiṇa* around the fire, takes his seat at the right side (*dakṣiṇatas*), scil. of the teacher, while he turns to the north, touches (the feet of the teacher), and asks: ‘O lord, recite the *Sāvitrī*.<sup>18</sup> The place where the teacher is seated is not again specified, but presumably he is still seated west of the fire facing east, that is the place where he performed the *homa* sacrifice, took the interview accompanied by the *añjalīs*, and consigns the pupil to Prajāpati etc. This is corroborated by the *Hiraṇyakeśigr̥hyasūtra*.<sup>19</sup>

### *The sitting position of the preceptor and his audience*

Veda study is of course not restricted to the *brahmacārin*. Outside the village, retreated into the wilderness (*araṇya*), brahmins devoted themselves to study and, if they became known for their learnedness, attracted students. In this way we conceive of the origin of the different Upaniṣad teaching traditions and of other early Indian schools of philosophy (above, p. 230). The subject of study and teaching may have changed accordingly, but the setting is traditional and had a long life. We find such an idyllic setting, for instance, in the *Śāṅkhāyana-gṛhyasūtra*, where it describes ‘the rules for the forest-dweller regarding his (Veda) study’.<sup>20</sup>

For this study (*svādhyāya*) the forest-dwellers should go to a pure spot in the northeast that is open at the eastern side. The site is circular or marked by a circle with an entrance to the east or the north. After some preliminary rites, they may take up their studies.<sup>21</sup>

The next section describes the teaching situation.

*atha praviśya maṇḍalam | prāṇmukha ācārya upaviśyaty udān̄mukhā dakṣiṇata itare yathāpradhānam | asaṃbhave sarvatomukhāḥ | pratikṣerann udayam ādityasya | vijñāya cainam dīdhitimantam | adhīhi bho? iti dakṣiṇair dakṣiṇam savyaiḥ savyam dakṣiṇottarair̄ pāṇibhir̄ upasaṃgr̥hya pādāv̄ ācāryasya nir̄ṇiktau |* (ŚāṅGS 6.3.1–6)

Then, after having entered the circle, the teacher is seated with his face turned to the east; the others sit with their faces turned to the north at the right side (of the

18 BhGS 1.8 (cf. HirGS 1.6.10, below, n. 19 on p. 511):

[...] *pradakṣiṇam agniṃ parikramya dakṣiṇata udagāvṛtyopaviśyopasaṃgr̥hya pṛcchati || 8 || sāvitṛm̄ bho anubrūhīti |*

19 HirGS 1.6.9–10:

*aparenāgnim̄ udagagram̄ kūrcaṃ nidhāya tasmin̄ prāṇmukha upaviśati | rāṣṭrabhr̄d asy ācāryāsandī mā tvad yoṣam || iti || 9 || ādityāyāñjalim̄ kṛtvācāryāyopasaṃgr̥hya dakṣiṇataḥ kumāra upaviśya | adhīhi bho | itȳ uktvāthāha | sāvitṛm̄ bho anubrūhīti || 10 ||*

20 ŚāṅGS 6.1.1:

*athāto brahmāṇam̄ brahmar̄ṣim̄, brahmayonim̄ indram̄ [...] sarvān̄ eva pūrvācāryān̄ namasya svādhyāyār̄anyakasya niyamān̄ udāhariṣyāmaḥ |*

21 ŚāṅGS 6.2.3–10:

*pṛāḡgyotiṣam̄ aparājītāyām̄ diśi puṇyam̄ upagamya deśam̄ | ... maṇḍalam̄ tu pṛāḡdvāram̄ udagdvāram̄ vā ... bahīrmaṇḍalasthābhīr̄ ācamya | pṛādhīyīran̄ kṛtaśāntayaḥ |*

teacher), according to rank; if this is impossible (i.e., if there is not enough space) they may face all directions. They should wait for the rising of the sun. And when they have seen it (rise) in all its splendour, they say: ‘Sir, recite’, while touching with their right and left hands the hallowed feet of the teacher—his right (foot) with their right, his left (foot) with their left hands.<sup>22</sup>

The *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, which, as we have seen, agreed with the tradition of the White Yajurveda in opting for the face-to-face position of teacher and pupil north of the sacrificial fire in the *upanayana* ritual (see above n. 13 on p. 509), reserved the alternative position, in which the student sits at the right side of the teacher facing north, for the traditional school of the hermitage.

It is to be expected that this time-honoured traditional setting of religious education may be met again in the *Mahābhārata*. The practice to stand with one’s face turned to the east when making a solemn pronouncement or to reveal a secret is attested in the great epic, as the following example may show.

But then, when Kṛṣṇa, haven of brahmins, heard the cause of Pārtha’s (i.e. Arjuna’s) sorrow, he touched water and stood still, his face turned to the east; and the mighty lotus-eyed one spoke this word for the benefit of Pāṇḍu’s son, intent upon killing the army of Jayadratha: ‘O Pārtha, there is a supreme unfailing weapon called “Pāśupata”, by which god Maheśvara killed all the Daityas in battle.’<sup>23</sup>

However, I have not found in the *Mahābhārata* an exact parallel of the situation described in the *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra*, in which the position of the audience is specified.

## THE SITTING POSITION OF GURU AND NOVICE IN EARLY ŚAIVA INITIATION RITUAL

We may next investigate whether the tradition of Vedic initiation and instruction informed similar rites in the emerging religious communities. In his *Change*

22 Cf. *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 1.(2).6.24: *ekādhyāyī dakṣiṇaṃ bāhuṃ pratyupāsīdet* || 24 || *yathāvākāśaṃ bahavaḥ* || 25 ||, which is translated by Olivelle (1999), 14: ‘A single student should sit on his teacher’s right, while a group may sit as space permits.’

23 MBh 7.57.14–16:

*śokasthānaṃ tu tac chrutvā pārthasya dvijaketanaḥ |*  
*saṃsprṣyāmbhas tataḥ kṛṣṇaḥ prāṇmukhaḥ samavasthitaḥ* || 14 ||  
*idaṃ vākyaṃ mahātejā babhāse puṣkarekṣaṇaḥ |*  
*hitārthaṃ pāṇḍuputrasya saindhavasya vadhe vṛtaḥ* || 15 ||  
*pārtha pāśupataṃ nāma paramāstraṃ sanātanam |*  
*yena sarvān mṛdhe daityāñ jaghne devo maheśvaraḥ* || 16 ||

Cf. MBh 12.333.14cd–16ab:

[...]  
*saṃkalpayitvā trīn piṇḍān svenaiva vidhinā prabhuḥ* || 14 ||  
*ātma-gātrośmasambhūtaiḥ snehagarbhaiḥ tilair api |*  
*prokṣyāpavargaṃ deveśaḥ prāṇmukhaḥ kṛtavān svayam* || 15 ||  
*maryādāsthāpanārthaṃ ca tato vacanam uktavān |*  
[...]

and *Continuity in Indian Religion* Jan Gonda elaborates the theme of the book with regard to the Vedic *upanayana* and the initiation (*dīkṣā*) in the monastic orders.

Instead of *upanayana* and the renewable *dīkṣā* we find in the monastic orders an ordination proper—sometimes called *dīkṣā*—which is to be preceded by a novice beginning with a ceremony which is a parallel of the *upanayana*, and in various Hindu sects and communities an admission to full membership, to priesthood or guruship, which is also known as *dīkṣā*. (Gonda 1965, 317)

And describing the initiation ritual of ascetics, he makes the following remark.

... *dīkṣā*. This term is translated by ‘consecration’ and ‘renouncement of the world’. On this occasion one is *inter alia* given a new name. During important acts, such as study, confession, one has to turn east- or northward; as is well known these directions are of special importance in brahmanic rites, the ‘door of heaven being in the northeast’. (Gonda 1965, p. 385)

We shall confine ourselves here to the Śaiva orders and investigate whether these traditional directions of teacher and student can actually be found in their early texts.

#### *Initiation in the Pāśupata tradition*

The earliest text of a Śaiva order that we have is the *Pāśupatasūtra* with the commentary of Kauṇḍinya. The initiation in the order is briefly described by Kauṇḍinya when he explains the future tense used in the first Sūtra (*vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*, ‘we shall expound’).

‘SHALL’ (*syā*) refers to the time required, namely the time that is required (before the exposition can begin) by the *ācārya*, to consecrate a brahmin at Mahādeva’s ‘southern *mūrti*’ with ashes that are consecrated with the (five) mantras, ‘Sadyojāta’ etc., and to initiate him in the mantra, after he has made him relinquish the signs of his origin—a brahmin whose (antecedents) have earlier been screened, as follows from the word ‘therefore’ (*ataḥ*) in the Sūtra, who comes (to him) from amongst the householders etc., and who has (already) engaged himself in fasting and observances.<sup>24</sup>

The other Pāśupata text that has survived is the *Gaṇakārikā*. The *Ratnaṭīkā*, commenting on *Gaṇakārikā* 5, in which the elements of the initiation are

24 Kauṇḍinya *ad PS* 1.1 (p. 8):

*syā ity eṣye kāle | yāvad ayam ācāryo gṛhasthādibhyo ’bhyāgataṃ pūrvam ataḥ-śabdāt parīkṣitaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ vratopavāsādyam\* mahādevasya dakṣiṇasyāṃ mūrtau sadyojātādisaṃskṛtena bhasmanā saṃskaroti utpattiliṅgavyāvṛttiṃ kṛtvā mantraśrāvaṇaṃ ca karoti tāvad eṣyaḥ kālaḥ kriyate |*

\* read: ° *ādhyam*, instead of ° *ādyam*.

I consider the interpretation that takes the locative *mūrtau* as depending on ° *saṃskṛtena*, rather than on *saṃskaroti*, possible, though less likely in the present context for reasons given below (cf., however, the Ṭīkā quoted in n. 38 on p. 518).

summed up—the (right) materials, the (right) time, the ritual (of consecration), the image (*mūrti*), and the preceptor (*guru*)<sup>25</sup>—explains what in the context of the consecration ritual (*saṃskāra*) is meant by *mūrti*. It reads:

The word IMAGE (*mūrti*) in the Kārikā aims at (*abhipretaḥ*) the spot (*bhūpradeśaḥ*) a little to the right (*dakṣiṇa*) of that, which [by Kauṇḍinya], in [his commentary on] the ‘Sūtra on offering’ [i.e. PS 1.8–9], is described (*vyākhyātaṃ*) as the locus (*sthāna*) of worship of Mahādeva that is characterized by the erect phallus etc.—a spot not separated from it by a wall (*kuḍya*) or the like.<sup>26</sup>

‘*Mūrti*’ is here to be interpreted as a location, ‘at the *mūrti*’, referring to the site of consecration, said to be by the right side of (°*dakṣiṇa*°), close to °*samīpa*° and not separated °*avyavahito* from that which in *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.8–9 is qualified as Mahādeva’s manifestation (*rūpa*). If we assume that the commentator of the *Gaṇakārikā* and Kauṇḍinya both describe the same initiation tradition, we may deduce from the Ṭikā that the words of Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1, *mahādevasya dakṣiṇasyāṃ mūrtau*, are to be understood as saying that the novice is seated on the right side of Mahādeva.<sup>27</sup>

Though the esoteric intention of both authors clearly hampers our understanding, I would hazard the conjecture that the guru, who initiates the student into the Pāśupata observance (*vrata*) by communicating to him the doctrine as revealed by Śiva himself in the *Pāśupatasūtra*, embodies Śiva. The novice is seated next to him on his right-hand side, that is, he is situated ‘at the *mūrti*’; and this designation is understandable as it refers to a situation in which the neophyte envisages the image (*mūrti*) of the divine preceptor in his guru, that is, he sits at Mahādeva’s visual manifestation and sees Him, His *rūpa*, His benign epiphany, in front of him, in profile. The two natures of the teacher, the learned and pious person of flesh and blood, and the divine archetype are explicitly stated in the Ṭikā on the word ‘*guru*’.

‘GURU’ is the preceptor (*ācārya*); he has two forms, on account of the distinction supreme and not-supreme. With regard to these (two forms) not-supreme is he as

25 *Gaṇakārikā* 5cd: *dravyaṃ kālāḥ kriyā mūrtir guruś caiveha pañcamah*.

26 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad Gaṇakārikā* 5c (p. 9):

*mūrtiśabdena yad upahārasūtre mahādevejyāsthānam ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇaṃ vyākhyātaṃ tatsamīpadakṣiṇabhūpradeśaḥ kuṭyādyavyavahito\* ’trābhipretaḥ*

As Harunaga Isaacson has suggested to me, we should read *kuḍyādya*°, instead of *kuṭyādya*°.

I cannot subscribe to the translation of Oberhammer (1984, viii), which makes *mūrtiśabdena* the logical subject of *vyākhyātaṃ* (‘Mit dem Wort *mūrti*ḥ, das im Verehrungs-sūtram [vorkommt], wird der große Gott als [sichtbares] Object der Verehrung (*mahādevejyāsthānam*) genannt, das [ikonographisch] durch das auferichtete Glied gekennzeichnet ist [*ūrdhvaliṅgādīlakṣaṇam*]’). The commentator’s wording seems to me on the other hand a sign that he tried to avoid saying that the *mūrti* meant here is a sculpture that has the actual iconographic characteristics of *ūrdhvaliṅgādī*.

27 To interpret the word *mūrtau* here (above, n. 24 on p. 513) in conformity with the commentary on the *Gaṇakārikā* was first suggested to me by Dr Gérard Colas.

being circumscribed by the knowledge of the five categories. The supreme guru is the lord Maheśvara, who empowers the former.<sup>28</sup>

If we turn to the *Svacchandatantra*, describing the *samayadīkṣā*, we find the above interpretation confirmed.

After he has performed the (preliminary) rites, he [i.e. the guru], rejoiced at heart, makes the pupil, whose eyes are full of joy, stand up and, taking him by his hand, leads him towards the ‘southern *mūrti*’: Having made a circle there into a seat (consisting) of the syllable *om* with the help of a flower, he places the pupil upon it, his body erect, his face turned to the north. After the guru has installed himself whilst facing east, he performs the sprinkling and subsequent rites.<sup>29</sup>

### THE DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI

From the place of initiation where Śiva manifests himself to the novice for the first time in that He assumes the form of guru, we now proceed to the public domain of the temple. In that context the word *mūrti* is used to refer to the physical object of veneration. This connotation underlies the Ṭikā’s description of the daily worship of the initiated Pāśupata, who, after his bath in ashes,

enters slowly the sanctum. Then he falls to his knees on a spot to the right of the image (*mūrtidakṣiṇe bhūpradeśe*), makes an *añjali* before his heart, and looks at Śiva in the image as if He were there in His very person,

and which means that,

he, fully concentrated and with his head turned towards the north, practises *japa* with the aim of that (*viśeṣa*) detachment from the sensual world, after which *japa* he sinks into meditation on Śiva; only then (*eva*) he should burst into repeated boisterous laughter.<sup>30</sup>

28 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad Gaṇakārikā* 5c (p. 9):

*gurur ācāryaḥ sa dvividhaḥ parāparabhedāt | tatrāparaḥ pañcārthajñānamaryādānvī-  
taḥ | ... tasyādhiṣṭhātā bhagavān maheśvaraḥ paro guruḥ |*

29 SvT (Bombay ed.) 3.129–131ab:

*kṛtakṛtyaḥ prahrṣṭātmā prahrṣṭānayanam śiśum |  
utthāpya hastāt saṃgrhya dakṣiṇām mūrtim ānayet || 129 ||  
tatra maṇḍalakaṃ kṛtvā puṣpeṇa praṇavāsanam |  
tasyopari śiśum nyasya ūrdhvakāyam udānimukham || 130 ||  
guruḥ pūrvānanaḥ sthītṛvā prokṣaṇādāni kārayet |*

Kṣemarāja *ad SvT* (Bombay ed.) 3.129d (I, p. 212): *dakṣiṇām anukūlām śivātmikām e-  
va, na tu pāśavīm dehamayīm* (‘‘*dakṣiṇām*’’, i.e. favourable, purely of Śiva’s/auspicious  
nature, but not a *paśu*-type, corporeal (*mūrti*’)). See also SvT 4.496 (*sādhakābhīṣeka*)  
and SvT 4.468–9 (*ācāryābhīṣeka*). Cf. MṛĀ Kr. 7.61–62, 8.198–202ab.

30 Bhāsarvajña (?) *ad Gaṇakārikā* 7 (p. 18):

*... śanaīr garbhagrhaṃ praviśet | tad anu mūrtidakṣiṇe bhūpradeśe jānunī pātayitvā  
hr̥di cāñjaliṃ baddhvā mūrtisthaṃ sāksād iva śiva(ṃ) paśyan ... saṃyatātmano-  
ttarābhīmukhena pratyāhāraviśeṣārthaṃ japtavyaṃ japtvā tu śivadhyanāsakta evātta-*

Analogous with the situation of initiation, the Pāśupata envisages Śiva in front of him, this time, however, in the physical object of worship. It is towards this manifestation of God that the Pāśupata turns and in whom he is sunk, an idea we also find in the following passage of the Southern Recension of the *Mahābhārata* where broad-minded Vāsudeva teaches.

The holy man who has reached Me (i.e. Vāsudeva) fixes himself upon My body (*mūrti*), or on Rudra's Dakṣiṇ(ā)mūrti, especially on the fourteenth (*tithi*). He, the great ascetic, while he is venerated by Siddhas, Brahmarṣis and celestial folk, and while his praises are sung by Gandharvas and choirs of Bhūtas, he of great splendour enters either Me or Śaṅkara.<sup>31</sup>

We thus observe that the term *mūrti* in the Pāśupata context on the one hand refers to the 'image' (meaning bodily manifestation) and, on the other hand, when used in the locative (or when the locative is meant), refers to 'a particular spot near the image', that is not to the image itself. Both meanings are, as we will argue, comprehended by the technical term *dakṣiṇāmūrti*, literally 'southward/rightward image/body/figure'. This term is explained by Kauṇḍinya when he comments on *Pāśupatasūtra* 1.9: *mahādevasya dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* |

'OF THE GOD' (°*devasya*) is a genitive. This is a syntactic feature that expresses the relationship of owner and property; it signifies possession/grace (*parigraha*) only.

'SOUTHERN' (*dakṣiṇā*°) in the Sūtra is in the sense of a specific point of the compass. The sun divides the quarters and the quarters divide the *mūrti*.

'IMAGE' (*mūrti*): Either this (*yad etad*) form (*rūpa*) that is perceived by him who is standing at the right side of God, his face turned north, in (His) proximity, a form that is characterised by the bull-banner, the lance in hand, Nandin, Mahākāla, erect phallus etc., or to which (*yad vā*) the laymen resort.

The sanctuary is 'OF THE GREAT GOD' (*mahādevasya*). This is the answer (*iti*). There is the object to be worshipped.<sup>32</sup>

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*hāsam punaḥ punaḥ kuryāt* |

The commentator rejects the view of some (*ity eke*) who say that he may burst into boisterous laughter as soon as he got to the temple, if his detachment has not ceased (*yady anivṛttapratyāhāras tadā gatamātra eva hasitaṃ kuryād ity eke*).

31 MBh 14 Appendix I No. 4 ll. 1454–58:

*niveśayati manmūrtiā(m) ātmānaṃ madgataḥ śuciḥ |*  
*rudradakṣiṇamūrtyāṃ vā caturdaśyāṃ viśeṣataḥ ||*  
*siddhair brahmarṣibhiś caiva devalokaiś ca pūjitaḥ |*  
*gandharvair bhūtasamṅghaiś ca gīyamāno mahātapāḥ |*  
*praviśet sa mahātejā māṃ vā śaṅkaram eva ca ||*

Cf. *ibid.* ll. 3067 f. *dakṣiṇāmūrti* here instead of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* for metrical reasons. I am grateful to Phyllis Granoff who pointed these passages out to me.

32 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.9 (p. 15):

*devasya iti ṣaṣṭhī | svasvāmibhāvaḥ sambandhaḥ | parigrahārtham evādhikurute |*  
*atra dakṣiṇeti dikprativibhāge bhavati | ādityo diśo vibhajati | diśaś ca mūrtiṃ vibhajanti |*

For the initiated Pāśupata like Kauṇḍinya the term *dakṣiṇāmūrti* thus seems rather to refer to a situation or state than to a particular ‘image’, namely the state in which God appears to him who sits or stands at His right side and sees Him in front of him (for instance in the temple image). It is the situation in which Śiva reveals himself ‘towards him who is at His right side’ (*dakṣiṇā*),<sup>33</sup> namely, by turning His auspicious, gracious side towards him who is facing north—the sitting position of the novice since Vedic times.

The strength of this tradition obviously rests on the religious idea of the right side. To turn one’s right side upon someone is an auspicious act; in the case of God it is an act of grace in which He reveals Himself and His doctrine ‘unto them on his right hand’. It happens to the blessed ones in His proximity, that is in heaven on the Himavat, and as such to the initiated Pāśupata in his *yoga* with God, who may be represented either by the image or by the guru. In sum, the Pāśupata *Dakṣiṇāmūrti* is a state in which God reveals one quarter of Himself, the form to which He grants access, i.e. *yoga*; it is Śiva’s figure of grace.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of the use of the word *mukha*, used here in figurative sense, I think the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* 4.21 expresses this very idea:

‘Unborn is He’, so saying, Let a man in fear approach Him: O Rudra [show] thy right [auspicious] cheek, Protect me with it ever!<sup>35</sup>

In the direct vision that is granted to the Pāśupata the ideal image of Mahādeva is visualized as being accompanied by his acolytes Nandin and Mahākāla, the

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*mūrtir nāma yad etad devasya dakṣiṇe pārśve sthitenodanmukhenopānte yad rūpam upalabhyate vṛṣadhvajaśūlapāṇininandimahākālordhvaliṅgādilakṣaṇaṃ yad vā laukikāḥ pratipadyante []*

*mahādevasyāyatanam iti tatropastheyam |*

I propose to read a *daṇḍa* after *pratipadyante*.

33 The adverbial *dakṣiṇena* (cf. MBh 1.203.21, above, p. 500) is equivalent to *dakṣiṇā*, which is the OIA instrumental in *ā* preserved in some adverbs. Wackernagel 1930, III § 41b s.v. *dāksīṇa*: ‘*dakṣiṇā* zur rechten Seite.’ The phrase *dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt* in his commentary *ad* PS 1.9 shows that Kauṇḍinya takes *dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* as a compound, although he does not explain it. However, his speaking of ‘eastern’, ‘northern’, and ‘western’ *mūrtis* (below, n. 34 on p. 517) implies that he takes the compound as a Karmadhāraya. In the gloss (above, n. 32 on p. 516 f.) he makes clear that ‘southern’ is to be understood as ‘at the right side of’ (*dakṣiṇe pārśve*). This is his explanation of the adverbial *dakṣiṇā* (cf. below, n. 39 on p. 518).

34 In this way the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* continues the Ṛgvedic idea that the supreme deity manifests only one fourth of himself. ṚV 10.90.3–4:

*etāvān asya mahimā āto jyāyāṃś ca pūruṣaḥ |*  
*pādo ’sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṃ divī || 3 ||*  
*tripād ūrdhvā ūd ait pūruṣaḥ pādo ’syehābhavat pūnaḥ |*  
*tāto viśvān vyakrāmat sāśanāśānē abhī || 4 ||*

This seems to be the purport of Kauṇḍinya’s remark (*ibid.* p. 15): *dakṣiṇāmūrtigrahaṇāt pūrvottarapaścimānāṃ mūrtināṃ pratiśedhaḥ |*

35 R.C. Zaehner’s translation in *Hindu Scriptures*, p. 197: *ajāta ity evaṃ kaścīd bhīruḥ prapadyate | rudra yat te dakṣiṇaṃ mukhaṃ tena māṃ pāhi nityam || 21 ||*

bull-banner etc., in short, a ‘tableau de la troupe’. The physical image in the sacred compound is not defined. If our interpretation is correct, it may be any image, most often a *līṅga*, considered by the Pāśupata laymen as ‘the image’ (*mūrti*) of Mahādeva, a designation that for the initiate is true only in metaphorical sense.<sup>36</sup>

*The definition of God’s figure of grace*

The concept of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* thus comprises the manifested form (*rūpa*) of God, the (physical) image or body (*mūrti*) in which it may be envisaged, and the right side (*dakṣiṇe pārśve*), which indicates the Pāśupata’s position with respect to Mahādeva and his embodiment. As such the term is applicable to every situation in which the Pāśupata enters into contact with his object of worship. And this appears to have been the intention of the author of the *Pāśupatasūtra* when we read PS 1.8–9 coherently (as also the author of the *Ṭikā* seems to have done: *upahārasūtra*, above, p. 514): ‘He should worship with offerings of laughter, singing, dancing, bellowing, obeisance, and muttering to the figure of grace (*dakṣiṇāmūrti*) of Mahādeva.’<sup>37</sup> The same idea underlies the *Ratnaṭikā*, where it says that the Pāśupata should consecrate the ashes with mantras in the temple ‘at Śiva’s Dakṣiṇāmūrti’,<sup>38</sup> or the *Skandapurāṇa* when it advises that one should offer rice pudding with ghee at the ‘southern *mūrti*’ during one year in order to become like Nandin.<sup>39</sup>

It seems obvious that the same idea underlies the initiation rite, in which the place of the physical image, i.e. the *mūrti*, may be taken by the guru who

36 This position conforms best with the view of images maintained in the Nyāya school, which is generally believed to have had close links with the Pāśupata. In Colas 2004, 163 this author describes Udayana’s point of view as follows: ‘The rite does not specifically invest the image with a divine presence or power through a mechanical process, but occasions the conscious reflection, by deities, of themselves as being present in the image.’ In other words, Śiva’s presence in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti is an act of grace (*parigraha*).

37 PS 1.8–9: *hasitagītanṛttadūṃḍumkāranamaskārajapyopahāreṇopatiṣṭhet mahādevasya dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* || 8–9 || I take *dakṣiṇāmūrteḥ* here as *genitivus pro dativo* depending on *upahāreṇa* (see Speijer 1889, § 132). Alternatively, we may read an accusative, *dakṣiṇāmūrtim*, in accordance with the Benares and Calcutta MSS of the Sūtras and some testimonies. See Bisschop 2006a, 5.

38 *Ratnaṭikā* at *Gaṇakārikā* 7 (p. 18): ... *śivadakṣiṇāmūrtau mantraiḥ saṃskṛtya* ... Cf. Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 (above, p. 513).

39 SP 27.31:

*dakṣiṇāyāṃ tu yo mūrtau pāyasaṃ saghṛtaṃ śubhe |  
nivedayed varṣaṃ ekaṃ sa ca nandisamo bhavet* || 31 ||

Cf. SP<sub>S</sub> 167.15 (Bisschop 2006, 92):

*tasmīn āyatane rudraṃ tṛṇāṅgaḥ sa mahān ṛṣiḥ |  
dakṣiṇām mūrtim āsthāya stauti nityaṃ kapardinam |  
divaukasaṃ tam abhyarcya bhavanti gaṇapādhīpāḥ* || 15 ||

When the compound *dakṣiṇāmūrti* is dissolved, *dakṣiṇa* is taken as an adjective—sometimes inflected nominally (above), sometimes pronominally (e.g. Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1, quoted in n. 24 on p. 513)—which shows again that we should read *dakṣiṇāmūrti* as a Karmadhāraya compound. However, when dissolved, the original use of the adverb *dakṣiṇā* (= *dakṣiṇena*) is ignored.

represents Śiva (as the *ācārya* represents Agni in the *upanayana*). In fact, it appears most likely that the concept of *dakṣiṇāmūrti* originated from this ritual in which Śiva as supreme teacher reveals himself. To this primordial figure—a god who is facing towards the east, but who confers his blessings, that is his ‘right’ side, on his creatures, be they gods, Siddhas, or worshippers in Bhāratavarṣa—the pseudo-Śaṅkara pays homage:

*tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye ||*

THIS obeisance is to Him who has the form of the illustrious teacher,  
to the illustrious figure of grace.<sup>40</sup>

## THE DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTI AND ICONOGRAPHY

Having thus established the original meaning of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, we may proceed to its current iconographic denotation.

Among the earliest texts that describe the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* in iconographic terms may be the two Upajāti verses that are quoted by Gopinatha Rao, which he ascribed to the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, but which are not found in the printed text of that name.

His right (lower) hand shows the (*jñāna*) *mudrā* and in his (right) upper (hand) he (holds) a white rosary; in his left (lower hand) he is holding a book comprising all the Āgamas and more, and with his upper (left hand) he holds the cup with nectar.

HE is seated on a white lotus, his colour is white, powerful, with white cloth and ointment, and crowned by the crescent, teaching knowledge to the sages: that is what they call his Dakṣiṇāmūrti.<sup>41</sup>

On this and other, predominantly late South-Indian texts Rao based his description, which was repeated without any significant change by almost all later indological writing on this subject. It may be significant to note, though, that in the above passage the southern orientation of the image is not mentioned. To substantiate his view, however, Rao wrote:

One account gives an explanation regarding the etymology of this name; it states that because Śiva was seated **facing** south when he taught the *ṛishis yōga* and *jñāna* he came to be known as Dakṣiṇāmūrti. This aspect of Śiva is always invoked by students of science and arts.<sup>42</sup>

40 T.M.P. Mahadevan (1980), *The Hymns of Śaṅkara*, p. 2 ff. Śaṅkara’s authorship of this hymn is doubtful, see Potter 1981, 317.

41 Rao 1914, II.2, Appendix B, p. 140 (cf. *Mayamata* 36.98–101):

*dakṣeṇa mudrāṃ pratipādayantaṃ sitākṣasūtraṃ ca tathordhvabhāge |*  
*vāme ca pustāṃ akhilāgamādyāṃ bibhrāṇam ūrdhvena sudhādharāṃ ca ||*  
*sitāmbujasthāṃ sitavarṇam īśaṃ sitāmbarālepanam indumaulim |*  
*jñānaṃ munibhyaḥ pratipādayantaṃ taṃ dakṣiṇāmūrtim udāharanti ||*

42 Rao 1914, II.1, p. 273 (bold face mine).

Unfortunately, however, we are not informed about this ‘account’,<sup>43</sup> but Rao, without any doubt, was following an Indian iconographic convention, which prescribes ‘that in all Hindu temples, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, the niche on the south wall of the central shrine should have the figure of Dakṣiṇāmūrti enshrined in it’.<sup>44</sup> Bruce Long, who devoted an article to the subject, relied heavily on Rao, but he put his finger on the problem, when he professed that he was puzzled,

As to why the southern direction, which is believed almost everywhere in India to be sinister and inauspicious, should in this instance be evaluated as auspicious and benign.

It is not beyond reason that we explain this curiously positive evaluation of the southern direction on the basis of the same religious principle by which the Furies in Greece came to be called the ‘Eumenides’, and Rudra, the ferocious Howler, came to be addressed as Śiva, the Auspicious. Perhaps the worshippers of Śiva hoped that by having the Divine Preceptor face the southern direction, that area would, thereby, lose its sinister qualities and become benign.<sup>45</sup>

Although I shall not deny that considerations such as the above may have played some role, at least in coming to terms with the apparent incongruity once established, it is important to recognize that, if they played a role, they did so in retrospect. The cause of the alleged incongruity, I would like to argue, is a reorientation of the tradition. A cult concept was transposed to iconography. Part of the original meaning was retained—Śiva as the source of knowledge—part of it was reinterpreted, namely, the direction God faces when expounding His wisdom: His ‘right side’ became his ‘southern face’. The southern temple walls were consequently thought most suitable for showing images of Śiva in his role of teacher.<sup>46</sup> Thus the *dakṣiṇāmūrti* entered the textbooks of Indian architecture, for instance the *Mayamata*, which divided Kauṇḍinya’s vision into two.

A chacun des paliers des temples il faut disposer aux points cardinaux des (images des) dieux. Au rez-de-chaussée on place à l’Est les deux gardiens de la porte, Nandi et Kāla; au Sud c’est la Dakṣiṇāmūrti, à l’Ouest Acyuta ou Liṅgasambhūta et au Nord Pitāmaha.<sup>47</sup>

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43 I could not find this ‘account’ in the texts at issue presented in Rao’s Appendix B (II.2, pp. 137–146).

44 Rao 1914 II.1, p. 273.

45 Long 1971, 69; *ibid.* n. 1.

46 Harle 1986, 301:

All the principal images of the Brahmanical pantheon are represented in South India during the Coḷa period. There is a particular predilection for Bhikṣāṭana, Śiva as the naked young ascetic, and for Śiva as Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the expounder of yoga, music and the śāstras, who is always, where possible, facing south (*dakṣiṇa* means ‘south’, and although there is no very convincing explanation of the name, it may account in part for the popularity of this image in South India).

47 *Mayamata* 19.39–40 (Translation Bruno Dagens):

*tale tale vimānānām dikṣu devān nyaset kramāt |*

*The development of a cult concept into an iconic image*

Finally the question must be briefly addressed when and where this cult concept turned into an iconographic one. This development may actually have had two moments.

- 1 An anthropomorphic (iconic) representation of Śiva who through attributes, a book for instance, a *mudrā* (*vitarka-*, *vyākhyāna-mudrā*), or some other gesture, or because he sits alongside a pupil, is identifiable as the supreme teacher. This image, or at least Śiva as its main character, faces the east.
- 2 An anthropomorphic representation of Śiva, two- or four-armed, with one or more of the attributes of (1), but whose main characteristic is that he is directed towards the south without showing the terrifying aspect.

The transition of 1 to 2 calls forth the ‘incongruity’.

This incongruity may be considered to have been solved when the image of the Dakṣiṇāmūrti began to evolve an autonomy of its own, next to and independent of that of Aghora/Bhairava. Given the fact that the central image in the *garbhagr̥ha* is orientated towards the east, the image at the southern wall may be seen as an original ‘visualisation’ of the right side, expressing one aspect of the god enshrined, from whom it became spatially detached. Buddhist influences (e.g. the deer at Śiva’s feet, the tree above his head) are discernible in this process of iconographic composition.<sup>48</sup>

The genesis of the iconic representation of the teaching Śiva thus ended with his ‘banishment’ outside the cultic sphere. The idea of the guru as the locus (*sthāna*) or support of the divinity was transferred onto the central cult object in the sanctum, the *liṅga*. Therewith the Dakṣiṇāmūrti on the southern outer temple wall lost its original ritual setting. It became part of the iconographic programme of the Śiva temple.

The process of transformation from cult concept into an iconic image seems to have been completed (in South India at least) by the tenth century (i.e. the early Coḷa period), but may have started much earlier. An early textual testimony of this process is found in the *Skandapurāṇa*. It tells the myth of Tilottamā that we discussed above, pp.498 f. When the nymph bows to Śiva’s southern appearance (*dakṣiṇāṃ mūrtiṃ*), the face of the guru of the gods (*mukhaṃ suraguro*) emerged, ‘possessed of the colour of a languid cloud laden with water, having a ferocious voice, with dreadful teeth shining (in an open mouth), and the corners of the eyes bloodshot and glittering’ (SP 62.18–19). The ‘incongruity’ is obviously not yet solved, since the description of this face suits the figure of Aghora/Bhairava, not that of the teacher or guru.

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*pūrvāyāṃ dvārapāḷau tu nandikāḷau ca vinyaset || 39 ||*  
*dakṣiṇe dakṣiṇāmūrtiṃ paścime ’cyutam eva hi |*  
*athavā liṅgasambhūtam uttare tu pitāmaham || 40 ||*

For a survey of later texts see, in addition to Rao 1914, II.2 (Appendix B), the *Pratima-Kośha* III, s.v. (pp. 73–80).

<sup>48</sup> Gail 2008; cf. Kalidos 1991.



Plate 114  
Tiruttani: Dakṣiṇāmūrti

To assess the above-sketched development properly requires an art-historical scrutiny of the available archaeological material examined for the above features; this cannot be done here. Material representing moment 2 is not hard to find. A relatively early example dating from the late Pallava period (AD 875–900) is illustrated in Plate 114. It shows a four armed Śiva as teacher on the outer southern wall of the *garbhagrha* of the Virāṭtāneśvara Temple in Tiruttani. His hands show the *vitarkamudrā* combined with rosary, *abhayamudrā*, book, and lotus-stalk.<sup>49</sup>

The question when and where exactly this type of ‘southern image’ is found for the first time is more difficult to establish, partly for the same reasons as why the material representing moment 1 proves so hard to identify. It is often difficult to establish which direction the teaching Śiva is facing, if the image or relief is no longer part of a spatial construction or has been reemployed.

It may even be doubted, whether our moment 1 is an historic reality at all; possibly, the teaching Śiva, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti as an iconographic category, was from the beginning conceived of as facing the south.

#### *A Dakṣiṇāmūrti on a crossbar found in Nagarī*

To conclude I wish to present an image that may alleviate our doubts somewhat. It concerns a crossbar found in Nagarī (Rajasthan) illustrated in Williams 1982, Pl. 216. On p. 140 f. this scholar gives the following description.

The most impressive carvings at Nagarī are the remains of a gigantic gateway or *torana* that must belong to the early sixth century on the basis of its relationship to works from Mandasor.

The lintel has sculptures on both sides. The reliefs on what appears to be the reverse (mistakenly said in *op. cit.* 141 to be illustrated in Pl. 216) are identified by Williams as scenes from ‘the story of the encounter between Arjuna and the *kirāta* or hunter’. After his fight with Śiva incognito, Arjuna receives the

49 Dumarçay & l’Hernault 1975, photo 54. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture* I, plate 77. For the few images classified as Dakṣiṇāmūrti found in Uttar Pradesh see Singh 1976.

Pāśupata weapon, a scene that is unfortunately missing, but may have been depicted in a relief that belonged to the part of the crossbar that has broken off and is missing.<sup>50</sup>



Plate 115  
Nagarī: Crossbar of toraṇa

About the obverse side of the lintel (Plate 115; see also below, Plates 141–142) Williams observes:

The subjects of the [obverse] of this same crossbar remain to be identified. The third panel from the right (not the center of the lintel) [below, Plate 154] shows a seated figure with twisted locks in meditation, surrounded by four worshippers; despite the lack of the club, this might represent Lakulīśa. If so, the remaining scenes are presumably Śaiva.<sup>51</sup>

50 The end of the story may be supplied as it is told in the *Mahābhārata* (see also below, pp. 592 ff.). Mahādeva reveals himself and Arjuna falls to his knees MBh 3.40.55–56:

*tato devaṃ mahādevaṃ giriśaṃ śūlapāṇinam |*  
*dadarśa phalgunas tatra saha devyā mahādyutim || 55 ||*  
*sa jānubhyāṃ mahīm gatvā śīrasā praṇīpatya ca |*  
*prasādayāmāsa haraṃ pārthaḥ parapuraṃjayaḥ || 56 ||*

Arjuna asks for forgiveness and receives a boon. Arjuna asks for the terrible Pāśupata weapon also called ‘Brahmaśīras’ (MBh 3.41):

*bhagavan dadāsi cen mahyaṃ kāmam prītyā vṛṣadhvaṃja |*  
*kāmaya divyam astraṃ tad ghoraṃ pāśupataṃ prabho || 7 ||*  
*yat tad brahmaśīro nāma raudraṃ bhūmaparākramam |*  
*yuḡānte dāruṇe prāpte kṛtsnaṃ saṃharate jagat || 8 ||*

This is granted. Then Arjuna, purified, embraces the feet of the Lord and the latter says ‘learn’:

*tac chrutvā tvaritaḥ pārthaḥ śucir bhūtvā samāhitaḥ |*  
*upasaṃgrhya viśveśam adhīsveti ca so ’bravīt || 17 ||*

Though the text omits it, we have to assume, after the above and in view of the other side of the lintel, that Arjuna takes his seat at the right side of the Lord. Then Śiva explains the secrets of the weapon:

*tatas tv adhyāpayāmāsa sarahasyanivartanam |*  
*tad astraṃ paṇḍavaśreṣṭhaṃ mūrtimantam ivāntakam || 18 ||*

51 Williams 1982, 141.

In a letter (e-mail d.d. 10-3-2001) Joanna Williams informed me that she ‘wonders whether the scene at the left end of this face (below, Plates 145–146) might not represent the destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice’. This proposition is further pursued in the present article, but an elaborate study of the crossbar by Bakker & Bisschop 2016 intends to show that it is untenable after all.<sup>52</sup>

Dakṣa’s sacrifice and his instruction in the Pāśupata observance

The story of Śiva’s destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice is told in *Mahābhārata* 12 App. I No. 28 (= Northern Recension); it may be briefly recapitulated here.

Virabhadra and Bhadrakālī etc. destroy Dakṣa’s sacrifice in Gaṅgādvāra. Dakṣa takes refuge with Maheśvara (ll. 123 ff.). Devadeveśa himself appears (ll. 140 ff.). Dakṣa begs him that not all his sacrificial toil may have been in vain (l. 151). This is granted by Hara. Then the text reads (ll. 154 f.):

*jānubhyām avanīm gatvā dakṣo labdhvā bhavād varam |  
nāmnām aṣṭahasreṇa stutavān vṛṣabhadhvajam ||*

DAKṢA fell to his knees, having received (this) boon from Bhava.

Then he praised Vṛṣabhadhvaja by his Thousand-and-eight Names.

The stotra of Śiva’s thousand-and-eight names follows (ll. 160–389). Śiva expresses his satisfaction and promises Dakṣa that he will gain the benefit of thousand Aśvamedha and hundred Vājapeya sacrifices, thanks to his grace (ll. 390–94.). Then Mahādeva bestows upon him another boon (ll. 395–409): the *vrata*, based on the Veda with its six *aṅgas* and on the Sāṃkhya-yoga, arduous on account of its *tapas*, which is transgressive of, in some cases conformable to the ordinary *dharma*, which is practised by those who are nearing the end, and which is beyond the (ordinary four) stages of life (*atyāśrama*).<sup>53</sup> Mahādeva promises him the reward of this *vrata* (ll. 407–09):

*mayā pāśupataṃ dakṣa yogam utpāditaṃ purā |  
tasya cīrṇasya tat samyak phalaṃ bhavati puṣkalam |  
tac cāstu te mahābhāga tvajyatām mānaso jvaraḥ ||*<sup>54</sup>

52 See below, pp. 567 ff. and pp. 576 ff.

53 MBh 12 App. I No. 28 ll. 395–406:

*athainam abravīd vākyam trailokyādhipatir bhavaḥ |  
āśvāsanakaraṃ vākyam vākyavid vākyasaṃmitam ||  
dakṣa dakṣa na kartavyo manyur vighnam imaṃ prati |  
ahaṃ yajñaharas tubhyaṃ drṣṭam etat purātanam ||  
bhūyaś ca te varaṃ dadmi taṃ tvaṃ grhṇīṣva svurata |  
prasannavadano bhūtvā tad ihaikamanāḥ śṛṇu ||  
vedāt ṣaḍaṅgād uddhṛtya sāmkyayogāc ca yuktitāḥ |  
tapaḥ sutaptaṃ vipulaṃ duścaraṃ devadānavaiḥ ||  
apūrvam sarvatobhadraṃ viśvatomukham avyayam |  
abdair daśahasamyuktaṃ (?) gūḍham aprājñaninditam ||  
varṇāśramakṛtair dharmair viparītaṃ kvacit samam |  
gatāntair adhyavasitam atyāśramam idaṃ vratam ||*

54 *tasya* in l. 408 refers to *vratam* mentioned in l. 406. The gender of *yogam* is neuter here

LONG ago, O Dakṣa, the Pāśupata *yoga* was created by me: that (*tat*, scil. *yoga*) is the eminent reward of properly practising that (*tasya*, scil. *vrata*), and that (*yoga*) shall be yours, O blessed one. Throw off the fever of (your) soul!

In other words: Mahādeva instructs/initiates Dakṣa in the Pāśupata observance; this is the boon that will lead him eventually to the end of suffering (*duḥkhānta*), the Pāśupata *yoga* or union with God.

In view of the material discussed in the present article, it is obvious to see in the first panel from the right on the lintel (Plate 116; cf. Plate 156) an example of a Dakṣiṇāmūrti. If we assume that the *torāṇa* was facing east and that this is the obverse side of the lintel, Maheśvara, accompanied by his wife,<sup>55</sup> sits facing east, leaning towards the right, where his suppliant sits on his knees, facing north.

This interpretation is corroborated by our later study of the crossbar. However, although the two panels to the left (above, p. 524) initially suggested that the suppliant in question might be King Dakṣa (Bakker 2004c, 133), there are good reasons to reconsider this interpretation and to see in the person who receives instruction, not Dakṣa, but Arjuna.<sup>56</sup>



Plate 116  
Nagari: a Dakṣiṇāmūrti

(cf. MBh 13.17.18). Yoga in the Pāśupata system is defined by Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 as ‘union with god’: *ucyate yogam | atra ātmeśvarasamyogo yogaḥ |* My interpretation differs from that of Mertens 1998, 76 f., who assumes a conflation of concepts: ‘Im selben Satz wird das *pāśupatavrata* als *yoga* bezeichnet (407); die beiden Begriffe *tapas* und *yoga* werden hier also synonym verwendet. Für bestimmte Schichten des Mahābhārata ist die Vermischung beider Begriffe üblich.’ However, no examples from the MBh are adduced to corroborate this contention.

55 Cf. MBh *ibid.* 1.410: *evam uktvā mahādevaḥ sapatnīko vṛṣabhadraḥ |*

56 Bakker & Bisschop 2016, 239 f.; below, p. 586.

It thus appears that the central theme of both sides of the crossbar is the acquisition of a Pāśupata good: the instruction in the Pāśupata observance and the procurement of the Pāśupata weapon. The *torāṇa* may have stood at the entrance of a Pāśupata temple. The depiction of the instruction scene, the Dakṣiṇāmūrti or Śiva's figure of grace, would therefore be appropriate, if our analysis is correct.

# Thanesar, the Pāśupata Order and the Skandapurāṇa\*

## Studies in the Skandapurāṇa IX

### THE TRADITION OF THE FOUR PUPILS OF LĀGUḌI

By the middle of the sixth century the city of Kanauj seems to have emerged as the capital of the rising dynasty of the Maukharis under its king Īśānavarman.<sup>1</sup> This town, in the Sanskrit tradition named Kānyakubja/ Kanyakubja, is known from the *Skandapurāṇa*, and from this text only, as the seat of one of the Pāśupata lineages.

The *Skandapurāṇa* (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.123–29) informs us that the fourth pupil of Lāguḍi was a *brahmacārīn* who came from a distinguished family in the (Land of the) Kurus.<sup>2</sup> He received initiation in Kanyakubja and, as implied by SP<sub>S</sub> 167.130, established the fourth lineage of Pāśupata teachers there. Lāguḍi bestowed on him (and the other three pupils) ‘His own doctrine’ (and) *yoga*.<sup>3</sup>

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1 As far as I am aware, there exists no direct evidence for this statement. There is circumstantial evidence, though, which has led the majority of historians to accept it as the most plausible hypothesis. Tripathi 1964, 32–36; Majumdar in HCI III, 69 f.; Goyal 1967, 363; Thaplyal 1985, 19 f. Among this evidence is the clay seal-matrix, probably to be ascribed to Avantivarman, that was found in Kanauj (Thaplyal 1985, 153). The major argument for Kanauj being the Maukhari capital, at least at the time of Grahavarman, is based on the evidence of Bāṇa’s *Harṣacarita* (see Tripathi 1964, 32–36).

2 We deduce from this evidence that the name of the fourth pupil was unknown to the composer of the SP, but that there was a living tradition that connected him with the Kurus or Kurukṣetra. In order to supply a name for the founder of this lineage, this tradition later invented the name Kauruṣya (LiP 1.7.51, 1.24.131, ŚiP *Śatarudrasaṃhitā* 5.49) or Kauruṣa (see above, n. 16 on p. 287).

3 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.122–123, 129:

*ujjayanyāṃ gurujyesthaḥ kauśiko nāma nāmataḥ |*  
*dvitīyo gārgya ity eva jambumārge satāpanaḥ || 122 ||*  
*ṭṭīyāś cābhavan mitro mathurāyāṃ mahāmanāḥ |*  
*brahmacārī caturthas tu kuruṣv eva sugotrajaḥ || 123 ||*  
[...]

*kanyakubje tataś cānyam anuḡṛhya jagatpatīḥ |*  
*svasiddhāntaṃ dadau yogam uvācedaṃ ca lāguḍīḥ\*\* || 129 ||*

\* The reading of SP<sub>S</sub> 167.123d is uncertain. The syllables *ku-ru* are relatively certain as they are attested in all manuscripts: both SP<sub>S</sub> MSS (S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub>) and all SP<sub>RA</sub> MSS (R before

The route along which the Pāśupata movement had reached the Land of the Kurus may also be deduced from the *Skandapurāṇa*: 1) Kārohaṇa (where Śiva's incarnation took place), 2) Ujjayanī (initiation of Kauśika), 3) Jambumārga between Ujjayanī and Puṣkara (initiation of Gārgya), 4) Mathurā (initiation of Mitra), 5) Land of the Kurus, 6) Kanyakubja (initiation of the Kuru).<sup>4</sup>

The major city in the 'Land of the Kurus' in the 5th and 6th centuries was Thanesar. In his *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa depicts Thanesar (Sthāṇvīśvara) under (the legendary) King Puṣyabhūti as a country completely devoted to Maheśvara.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore not impossible, at least it is suggested by the *Skandapurāṇa*, that the Pāśupata movement had reached Kanauj from Gujarat via Kurukṣetra and had thus passed through Thanesar.



Plate 117

Thanesar: Excavations at the Harṣa kā Ṭilā

correction). The S MSS read the corrupt °śvava instead of °śveva, but the latter reading is supported by all A MSS. The latter MSS read *sa gotrajaḥ* instead of *sugotrajaḥ*. \*\* In 129d S<sub>1</sub> reads *lāguḍiḥ*; S<sub>2</sub> *lākulī*.

'And' (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.129d) Lāgudi declares:

*rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hīdaṃ pañcārtha itī saṃjñitam |*  
*vīprān mocayitum datto yuṣṭabhyam martyabandhanāt |*  
*anayā dīkṣayā vīprān prāpayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam || 130 ||*

SP<sub>S</sub> 167.130 thus defines the *svasiddhānta* doctrine as 'Pañcārtha' and explicitly declares that these four pupils have the right to initiate, i.e. that they are established as the founders of four lineages.

4 Above, n. 3 on p. 527. For a discussion of this route see below, p. 563.

5 HC\* p. 164 *grhe grhe bhagavān apūjyata khaṇḍaparaśuḥ |* A seal reading 'śrīrudraḥ' in 'first-second century characters' was reportedly found in the Kushana layers of the so-called Harṣa kā Ṭilā in Thanesar (IAR 1987–88, 29).

Some information about this ‘Kuru lineage’ seems to have survived the ages. The (Jaina) tradition—preserved in Guṇaratna’s (fourteenth century) commentary on the *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* of Haribhadra (ninth century) and Rājaśekharaśūri’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (fourteenth century)—records the first four names of the teachers in each of the four lineages that are said to derive from Lakulīśa. The fourth teacher, here named Kauruṣa, was succeeded by Manuṣyaka, Puṣpaka and Rāśīkara.<sup>6</sup>

### *Lāguḍi*

The idea of a guru with four pupils named Lāguḍi/Lākulin or Lakulīśa seems to be an example of ‘invention of tradition’. Kauṇḍinya does not know a teacher (incarnation) by the name of Lakulīśa, but speaks only about the Lord (*bhagavat*) descending in Kāyāvatarāna (= Kārohaṇa), who initiated only one pupil, Kuśika, in the city of Ujjayanī.<sup>7</sup> Nor does the name Lakulīśa, or any of its variants, occur in the *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61*.<sup>8</sup> It may have been coined in the fifth century to refer to the (divine) teacher who carried a club (*laguḍa*), portrayed in several fifth-century images, and as such came to be attested in the *Skandapurāṇa*.<sup>9</sup>

The apparently oldest image of an ithyphallic Śaiva teacher with a *lakula* resting against his left shoulder is accompanied by only two pupils and may date from the 5th century (Plate 118).<sup>10</sup>

6 Guṇaratna *ad* Haribhadra’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya* (Dalal 1920, 29):

*tasya cāṣṭādaśāvatarā amī | nakulīśo ’tha,*  
 [1.1] *kauśīkah,* [1.2] *gārgyah,* [1.3] *maitryah,* [1.4] *kauruṣah,*  
 [2.1] *īśānah,* [2.2] *pāragārgyah,* [2.3] *kapilāṇḍah,* [2.4] *manuṣyakah,*  
 [3.1] *kuśīkah,* [3.2] *atīh,* [3.3] *piṅgalah,* [3.4] *puṣpakah,*  
 [4.1] *brhadāryah,* [4.2] *agastih,* [4.3] *santānah,* [4.4] *rāśīkarah,*  
*vidyāguruś ca |*

Cf. Rājaśekharaśūri’s *Ṣaḍdarśanasamuccaya*, Dayal *op. cit.* 35.

For an elaborate discussion of this *paramparā* see Bisschop 2006, 48 ff. The commentator of the *Pāśupatasūtra*, Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 4.10, apparently placed himself in the lineage of Kuśika and Īśāna: *kuśīkeśānasambandhāt*. No doubt the lineage of Kuśika is the oldest Pāśupata tradition (Indraji 1881–82, 322 f., 327; Sircar: SI I, 278), a fact corroborated by the *Skandapurāṇa* itself (see above, n. 3 on p. 527).

7 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1 (for translation see below, p. 542):

*kāmītūād ajātatvāc ca manuṣyarūpī bhagavān brāhmaṇakāyam āsthāya kāyāvatarāṇe*  
*avatīrṇa iti | tathā padbhyām ujjayanīṃ prāptaḥ | [...] ato rudrapracoditaḥ ku-*  
*śīkabhagavān abhyāgatya [...] kāle vaidyavad avasthītam āturavad avasthītaḥ śi-*  
*ṣyah prṣṭavān: bhagavan kim eteṣām ādhyātmikādhībhautikādhīdāivikānāṃ sarvaduḥ-*  
*khānām aikāntiko ’tyantiko vyapoho ’sty uta neti ||*

8 Bhandarkar 1931–32. Above, p. 494.

9 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.129 (above, n. 3 on p. 527). See further below, p. 554 ff. and p. 559 f.

10 Shah 1984, 97, Pl. 81: ‘Mathurā, Svāmīghaṭ, Lakulīśa with two disciples, ca. fifth century A.D.’ See Kreisel 1986, 167–169; Bisschop 2004, 46. The image (below, Plate 121) of a (non-ithyphallic) Śaiva ascetic holding a staff or club in his right hand and vessel (*kalaśa*) in his left, dating from the Kuśāṇa period and preserved in the Mathura Museum, may be ‘a prototype of the figure of Lakulīśa’ (Shah 1984, 97, Pl. 80).

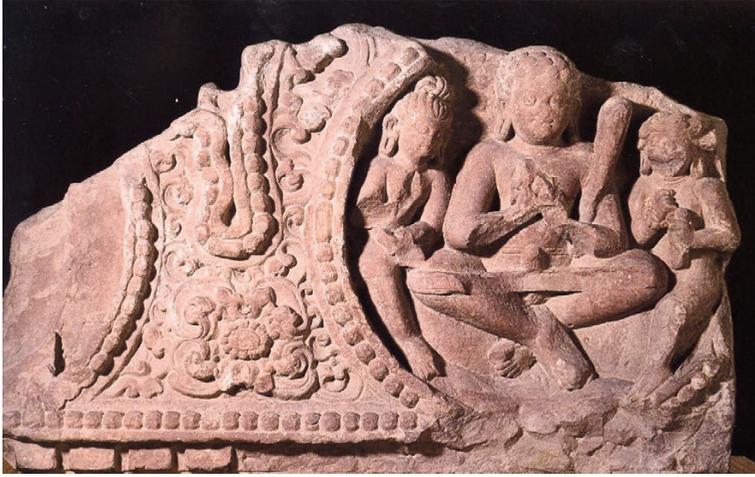


Plate 118  
Mathurā: Lakulīśa with two pupils

In the first half of the 6th century images of Lakulīśa surrounded by four pupils began to appear, such as the one in the Yogeśvarī Cave near Bombay (below, Plate 128).<sup>11</sup>

In short, at some stage in the process by which the Pāśupata movement was gathering momentum, the *avatāra* of Śiva/Paśupati received the name Lāguḍi/Lākulin/Lakulīśa. It became an article of faith common to various traditions, on the one hand serving to account for the spread of several guru lineages that claimed to go back to Śiva's incarnation and, on the other hand, uniting these into one coherent religious movement.

#### *The Kuru lineage*

Puṣpaka in the Kuru (Kauruṣa) lineage evokes the name of the (alleged) founder of the Paśupatinātha Temple in Nepal, Supuṣpa.<sup>12</sup> It may also remind one of

11 Shah 1984, 98, Pl. 88.

12 The foundation of this temple is credited to a (legendary) king of the Licchavi dynasty, named Supuṣpadeva in the (corrupt) *Gopālarājajavaṃśāvalī* (ff. 19v–20r):

*rājā śrīsupuṣpadeva varṣa 76 || tena hi nepālabhūmīs cāturvarṇakṛtā || śrīpaśupati-  
bhaṭārakasya devālaya kṛtaṃ saṅkhalīsaṃchādanam || tata sundarīṇīrmitānagaram  
sakalarājyamarjjādā kṛtyaḥ nyāyena prajāḥ samasta pratipālītānīḥ svasvasvakīyena  
bhūmī ॐ ॐ samtha ॐ ॐ vyavahāra pravartate ||*

This Supuṣpa is also known from the genealogy of King Jayadeva, the same who recorded the name of his maternal grandfather, the Maukhari prince Bhogavarman (see below, p. 538): *tasmāl licchavitāḥ pareṇa nṛpatin hitvā parān dvādaśā śrīmān puṣpaśarākṛtīḥ kṣitipatir jātaḥ supuṣpas tataḥ |* (Verma & Singh 1994, 238). According to Slusser 1982, 227 this king is 'alternately known as Paśuprekha (he who has seen Paśupati)'. A later (equally legendary) Licchavi king, Supuṣpavarman, is said in the *Gopālarājajavaṃśāvalī* to have renovated the temple of Paśupati:

Puṣyabhūti, a name spelled in some MSS as Puṣpabhūti, the legendary founder of the dynasty of Thanesar to which King Harṣavardhana belonged.<sup>13</sup>

Puṣyabhūti is depicted in the *Harṣacarita* 3 (pp. 49–55) as being deeply involved in a Śaiva ritual of black magic (Vetālasādhana) in the cremation ground (Mahāśmaśāna), under the guidance of a Mahāśaiva preceptor (*bhuvanaguru*) hailing from the South (*dākṣiṇātya*), Bhairavācārya.<sup>14</sup> In this ritual the deity (*vāstunāga*) of the land (*janapada*) Śrīkaṇṭha, in which Sthānviśvara (Puṣyabhūti's capital) is situated,<sup>15</sup> the Nāga Śrīkaṇṭha is conjured up by the *ācārya*;<sup>16</sup> he is forced into submission by the king, who is about to kill him with the magic sword Aṭṭahāsa, a gift of Bhairavācārya. Then, when the king is prepared to let him go because of his brahminhood, a goddess dressed in white, evidently Lakṣmī (Rājyaśrī),<sup>17</sup> emerges from the sword, annoints the king and grants Puṣyabhūti to become the founder of a mighty dynasty. This dynasty is therefore believed to have acquired its legitimacy and authority over the land of Kurukṣetra thanks to the magic of the Śaiva preceptor.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth teacher in the Kuru (Kauruṣa) lineage, Rāśīkara, is known from the *Ratnaṭīkā* (9th century?).<sup>19</sup> It would seem a plausible hypothesis to

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*rājā śrīsupuṣpavarmā varṣa 56, tena nepālabhūmi dharmeṇa vṛdhikṛtam || puna śrī-  
paśubhaṭṭārikasya devālaye atisundara nīrmitam || (ibid. f. 20v)*

The first firm evidence of Pāśupata presence in Nepal comes from the reign of King Jiṣṇugupta (AD 624–632). It is found in the Paśupatinātha Temple in a shrine called Chatracaṇḍeśvara, in which the pillar next to the image of Chatracaṇḍeśvara is engraved with an inscription, which records a donation by a (Pāśupata) teacher (*ācārya*) called Bhagavat Pranardana-prāṇa Kauśika (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 119). The donation was made to some ascetics of the *muṇḍaśrīkhalīkapāśupatācāryaparṣad* (the assembly of Pāśupata teachers belonging to the Muṇḍa-Śrīkhalikas). See Bakker 2014, 149f. The *ācārya* Bhagavat Pranardana informs us in another inscription on the pedestal of the same image that he is *varṇāśramadvāsita*, i.e. living outside the *varṇāśrama* confines of society (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 120). The Licchavi inscriptions further provide information about the Śrīkhalika-Pāśupatas who care for the sick (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 132), and Pāśupata *ācāryas* (Verma & Singh 1994, no. 147 l. 8), for whom see below, n. 44 on p. 539.

13 The *Nalanda Clay Seal of Harṣa* describes Harṣa as: *paramamāheśvaraḥ maheśvara iva sarvasattvānukampakaḥ paramabhaṭṭārakamahārājādhirājaśrīharṣaḥ* (Thaplyal 1985, 186). The report on the excavations of the Harṣa kā Ṭīlā at Thanesar informs us that the 'Pushyabhuti or Vardhana period (middle of the sixth to end of seventh century) was distinguished by a massive brick building and other structural remains' (IAR 1987–99, 29; see Plate 117).

14 Bāṇa gives a flowery description of this teacher (HC\* 3, pp. 169–73). See also Bakker 2014, 78.

15 The *Gaiḍavaho* refers to Śrīkaṇṭha, as *Siriāṃṭha* (v. 484). Vākpatirāja describes it as the site where Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice took place (vv. 472–484). Verse 485 makes it clear that Kurukṣetra is meant.

16 The Nāga or goblin/deity (*veṭāla*), whose submission is sought, is evoked by the *japa* of the Mahāmantra named 'Mahākālahṛdaya' (HC\* 3, pp. 178, 184 ff.).

17 HC\* 3, p. 189: *viddhī māṃ nārāyaṇoraḥsthalīlāvīhārahariṇīm*.

18 For the gradual take over of the function of the royal Purohita by Śaiva officiants see Sanderson 2004. Here we are concerned with an early instance of this historic process.

19 Dalal 1920, *Ratnaṭīkā* p. 19 ll. 7–9: *tato 'vabhṛtyasnanam kṛtvā bhagavamllakuliśādīm*

connect the branch of Pāśupata teachers with names ending in °*rāśī* to this Rāśikara, and it might perhaps be not too far-fetched to imagine that, by the time that the SP was composed, Kanauj/Kanyakubja possessed a Pāśupata Maṭha of the Rāśī branch, which derived its authority from a *paramparā* that was conceived of as going straight back to Lakulīśa through the guru who came from Kurukṣetra.<sup>20</sup>

*Rāśī ascetics and ‘His own doctrine’*

Rāśī ascetics are known from inscriptions to have been living in various places. The first epigraphical attestation (c. AD 600) is that of an ascetic called Udbhavarāśī, said to be a Rudra, in an inscription from the Gandharveśvara Temple in Sirpur (Śrīpura) of the time of King Mahāśivagupta Bālārjuna, who ruled from c. AD 590 to 650.<sup>21</sup> This Udbhavarāśī Rudra, called ‘an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine’, might have reached Dakṣiṇa Kosala in the train of Bālārjuna’s mother Vāsaṭā, who was a Maukhari princess, daughter of Sūryavarman, and who had come from Kanyakubja to Śrīpura as the wife of the Pāṇḍuvamśī prince Harṣagupta in the last quarter of the sixth century.<sup>22</sup>

*rāśīkarāntāṃś ca tīrthakarān anukrameṇa yathāvad bhaktyā namaskuryāt tad anu pradakṣiṇam ekam iti* |

- 20 The *Skandapurāṇa* (SP<sub>Bh</sub> 162.45) refers to Śiva as *rāśīvidāṃ varaḥ*, ‘Best of the Astrologers’, or a reference to the Rāśī ascetics? In this connection attention should be drawn to a passage in the *Skandapurāṇa*, SP 32.103–110. It tells us that the gods out of fear for Kālakarṇī, a personification of death, dive into a heap (*rāśī*) of ashes (*bhasman*), due to which they become Pāśupatas and enjoy the protection of Śiva. Could this myth reflect the initiation rite in which the novice takes his first bath in a heap of ashes (*bhasmarāśī*) and receives a sectarian name ending in *rāśī*? (this was suggested to me by Peter Bisschop).

- 21 EI XXXIX, 151, v. 3 (metre Indravajrā):

*śrīmān svasiddhāntadhunīpayo - , - paprabhodbhāsitaśuddhabhūtiḥ |  
atrābhavad vāgamṛtena lokān, yas t[ōṣa]yaty udbhavarāśīrudraḥ || 3 ||*

3ab conieci: °*payodhis, tāpa*°.

There (i.e. in Śrīpura) arose Udbhavarāśī, a Rudra, the one who is an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine, whose pure splendour/ash was illuminated by the light of his asceticism, and who satisfies the people with the nectar of his speech.

I take ‘Rudra’ as a title, which, on the one hand, may be connected to the doctrine, attested in the *Malhar (Junvānī) Plates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57* (l. 15; above, p. 290), which acknowledges a lineage of sixty-six Rudras (embodiments on earth of Gahaneśa, the Rudra who, in Śaiva cosmology, reigns the ‘net of bonds’ (*pāśajāla*)), on the other hand, with a development within the Pāśupata fold of a Bhairava tradition, to which the ‘Rudra’ teachers in particular belong (see above, p. 292, and below, n. 22 on p. 532).

- 22 Bakker 1994b, 14 ff. (above, p. 252 f.). Another early attestation of a Rāśī ascetic is found in the *Indragarh Stone Inscription* of VS 767 (AD 710/11) found in the Mandasor District, which records the erection of a Śiva temple, Guheśvara, by a Pāśupata named Dānarāśī. He is said to be a disciple of the Pāśupata *ācārya* Vinītarāśī, the foremost of the Rudra Śrīṅkhalikas (*rudraśrīṅkhalikāgraṇīḥ*) (JBRS XLI (1955), 260 vv. 5–7). To mention one more instance of Rāśī ascetics in the kingdom of Kanauj, we may refer to the stone inscription found in Sirsa (Haryana) of the time of the Pratīhāra king of Kanauj, Bhojadeva (middle of the ninth century), which features the name of Ratnarāśī: *ratnarāśīs tapomayapāśupatāgraṇīs ca* (EI XXI, 295 l. 4).

Although, admittedly, ‘his own doctrine’ (*svasiddhānta*) would normally be taken to mean ‘the doctrine of/adhered to by Udbhavarāśi’, it may be significant to note that SP<sub>S</sub> 167.129–30 refers to the Pañcārtha doctrine imparted by Lāguḍi to his disciples as ‘His own doctrine’: *svasiddhānta* (above, n. 3 on p. 527). Possibly the phrase ‘his own doctrine’ within this lineage was a shibboleth, a denomination signifying ‘His own doctrine’, thereby claiming that the doctrine was the only true one, revealed directly by Lord Lāguḍi himself. The phrase ‘an ocean for the streams of his own doctrine’ makes sense, if the ‘ocean’, i.e. the ascetic, is conceived a receptacle of the streams that make up the Pāśupata/Pañcārtha tradition. We will come across another Pāśupata ascetic who was devoted to ‘his own doctrine’ below, (p. 539).

## THE SKANDAPURĀṆA AND THE PĀŚUPATA MOVEMENT

### *Vārāṇasī*

It is obvious that the *Skandapurāṇa* is an important source for reconstructing the history of the Pāśupata movement, a text composed during the second half of the 6th and first half of the 7th century.<sup>23</sup> The holy town of Vārāṇasī plays an important role in this text and its *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* shows detailed knowledge of the local situation. It is the only holy place that is eulogized in much detail and at great length.<sup>24</sup> The Māhātmya describes a *kṣetra* that seems to correlate with the historic situation in the late Gupta and early medieval period. The sanctuary of Avimukteśvara takes centre stage. Around it are said to be twelve *līṅgas* of lesser importance (above, p. 471; Figure 12), none of which is known from seals.

The *Skandapurāṇa* testifies to the establishment of a Pāśupata community of ascetics and *ācāryas* in Vārāṇasī, who may well have been in charge of most of the sanctuaries described in the text. Being united in the kingdom of Kanauj by the time the SP was composed,<sup>25</sup> the Vārāṇasī Pāśupatas entertained probably manifold relations with their brethren in Kanyakubja. This sectarian affiliation may partly explain why, with the exception of Avimukteśvara, the *tirthas* mentioned in the SP do not feature in other sources, before their inclusion in the *Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* of Lakṣmīdhara who, by quoting the *Skandapurāṇa*,

23 Above, pp. 185 ff., p. 469. See also Bakker 2014, 137f.

24 See *Introduction* to SP II A.

25 Being so near to their homeland in Baghelkhand, Vārāṇasī may have been part of the Maukhari territories from the moment that these kings began to assert themselves in the Gaṅgā Valley, that is during the course of the first half of the 6th century. The three inscriptions of the Maukhari kings were found within a circle of 220 km around Vārāṇasī: in Shankarpur, 200 km SW (Harivarman), Jaunpur, 52 km NW (ascribed to Īśvaravarman, but probably of Īśānavarman or one of his successors), Haraha, 220 km NW (Sūryavarman/Īśānavarman).

canonized them, so to speak.<sup>26</sup> The spread of the Pāśupata order itself towards the east, to Vārāṇasī and Magadhā, may have taken off from Kanyakubja earlier, during the period when North India was united in the Gupta kingdom.

In view of the learned tradition of the town, duly observed, for instance, by Xuanzang, it has a certain probability per se that the *Skandapurāṇa* was composed either in Vārāṇasī, or in a (Pāśupata) centre that had close contacts with this city. If the above dating is correct, the text was composed under the rule of either the Maukharis or Harṣavardhana of Kanauj (see below, pp. 601 ff.).

### *The Māhātmya of Sthāneśvara*

The historic relations between the Pāśupatas of Vārāṇasī and those in Kanauj and Thanesar at the time of its composition also seem to emerge from the *Skandapurāṇa* itself. It might be significant in this respect that—after a brief intermezzo (SP 31.15–47) in which Śiva makes Mount Mandara his House (named Vṛṣṇa) and the question arises why, after having first made Yajña in the form of a cloud his vehicle, he has exchanged him for Vṛṣa, the bull (which again is a prelude to the myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice told in SP 32)—the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya* is followed by a section (SP 31.48–115) that tells the mythology related to and the Māhātmya of Sthāneśvara.<sup>27</sup>

This mythology relates that the Śaiva sage Dadhīca (son of Cyavana, grandson of Bṛḥgu, whose *āśrama* is on the Sarasvatī River, defeats his Vaiṣṇava rival Kṣupa with Śiva's help.<sup>28</sup> To commemorate this victory the site (*sthāna*) named 'Sthāneśvara' is established, one *krośa* in circumference, full of flowers (*puṣpa*) and creepers.<sup>29</sup> It is evident that the foundation myth of Sthāneśvara, i.e. Thanesar, is told.

26 TVK pp. 130–135. An exception is Svarlīna, which had passed into the hands of *ācāryas* of the Śaivasiddhānta, at least by the 12th century. One of its incumbents left us an inscription (the *National Museum Kathamandhu Stone Inscription of NS 264* (AD 1144), edited in Acharya 1997), in which an Ācārya Rudraśiva reports, among other things, that he initiated several princes in Nepal. See SP IIA, 72 ff., SP 29.28. The modern Svarlīneśvara Mandir is situated at Prahlāda Ghāṭ in the north of Benares (A 11/29).

27 This Māhātmya is intricately positioned between the prelude to the Dakṣa myth (SP 31.15–47) and this myth itself (SP 32); see SP IIB, 27. It provides the cause (*kāraṇa*, SP 31.49) of Śiva's victory over all the gods in the Dakṣa myth. This cause is the boon asked by Dadhīca after his victory over the Vaiṣṇava Kṣupa: *bhagavan yadi tuṣṭo 'si yadi deyo varaś ca me | icchāmi viṣṇunā sārḍhaṃ sarvān devāṃs tvayā jītān ||* 31.101 ||

28 The fight (*vaira*) between Dadhīca and Kṣupa, who argue about the superiority of either the *brahman* or the *kṣatra* principle, resembles in many respects that between Vasīṣṭha and Viśvāmitra, whose *āśramas* are also said to be in Sthāṇuṭīrtha (MBh 9.41.4). MBh 3.81.163–64 locates Dadhīca's *āśrama* in Kurukṣetra, where also the Sthāṇuṭa is said to be (MBh 3.81.54).

29 SP 31.106: *deva wāca |*

*sthāneśvaram iti khyātaṃ nāmnaitat sthānam uttamam |  
bhavitṛ krośaparyantaṃ nānāpuṣpalatākulam ||* 106 ||

Dadhīca's own āśrama is here called 'Sthāṇutīrtha', where the famous Sthāṇuvaṭa is said to stand,<sup>30</sup> both already known from the *Mahābhārata*. Sthāṇutīrtha is said to have been established by Lord Sthāṇu (MBh 9.41.6) and is the place credited in the *Mahābhārata* with the birth of Skanda and his consecration (*abhīṣeka*) as *senāpati*.<sup>31</sup> In MBh 9.43.51 this place is defined as situated on the Sarasvatī in Samantapañcaka (= Kurukṣetra). As has been noted in the *Prolegomena* of SP I (p. 26), one of the few direct borrowings from the *Mahābhārata* by the *Skandapurāṇa* is this description of Skanda's consecration in Samantapañcaka.<sup>32</sup>

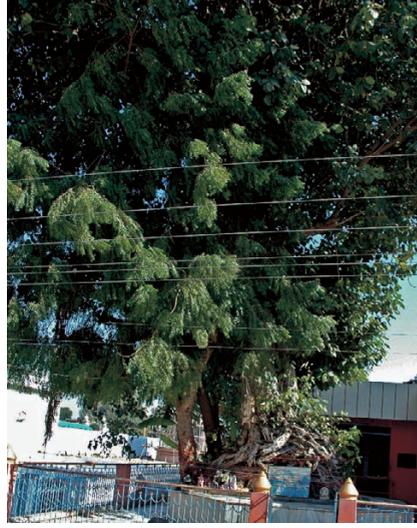


Plate 119  
Thanesar: the Sthāṇuvaṭa

#### *Bāṇa's relationship with Dadhīca, the founder of Sthāṇeśvara*

The Māhātmya in the *Skandapurāṇa* thus reformulates the significance of Sthāṇutīrtha and adds to its glory the newly established site Sthāṇeśvara. In his *Harṣacarita* Bāṇa ingeniously adapted this mythological complex by linking his own descent to Dadhīca, when he made the latter's son (by his divine wife Sarasvatī), viz. Sārasvata, the foster brother of another scion of the Bhārgava lineage, namely Vatsa; Vatsa again is the ancestor of the Vātsyāyanas to whom the author of the *Harṣacarita* belongs on his own account (see Figure 13). When he embroidered on the story of Dadhīca's mother Sukanyā, told in *Mahābhārata* 3.121–25, Bāṇa and his audience may have been aware of the mythology that attributed the foundation of Harṣa's native city Thanesar to Dadhīca as told in the *Skandapurāṇa*.<sup>33</sup> It may actually have been the very reason why he gave

30 SP 31.109–10:

*sthāṇutīrthaṃ ca bhavitṛ tavaiva pāpanāśanam |*  
*aśvamedhaphalaṃ hy atra snātaḥ prāpnoti puṣkalam || 109 ||*  
*ayaṃ cāpi vaṭaḥ śrīmān sthīto 'haṃ yatra sāṃpratam |*  
*varam dātuṃ madākhyaṭo namnā sthāṇuvaṭo mahān |*  
*bhaviṣyati na saṃdehaḥ phalaṃ cāsyāpi me śṛṇu || 110 ||*

31 MBh 9.41.6–7; MBh 9.43–46.

32 See also Bakker 2014, 163 f. For an exciting explanation of the connection between the *Skandapurāṇa* and Thanesar, hometown of Harṣavardhana, see Kropman 2018.

33 SP<sub>5</sub> 167.81:

*dadhīcena mahad divyam puṇyam āyatanam kṛtam |*  
*sthāṇeśvaram iti khyātam lokeṣu triṣu viśrutam || 81 ||*

Dadhīca such a prominent role in the first chapter of his history and why he linked his own descent to him.<sup>34</sup>

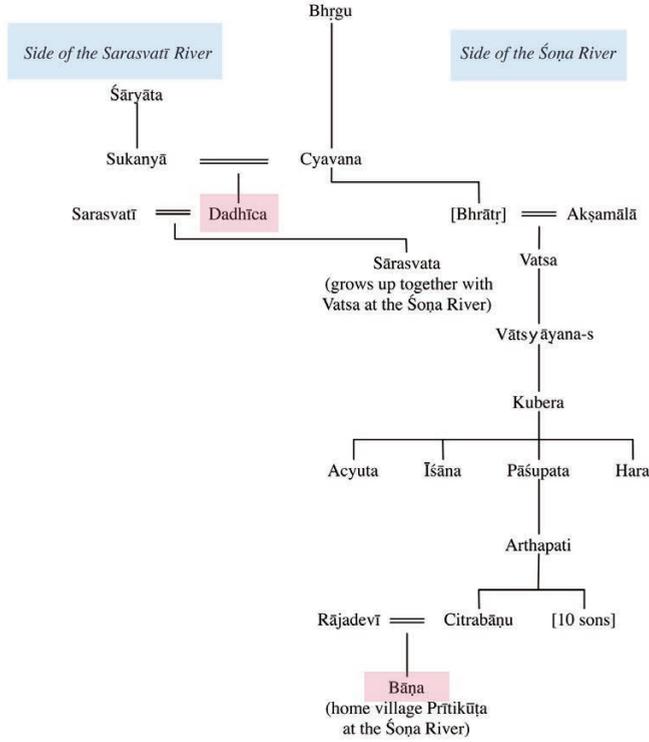


Figure 13  
Bāṇa's Pedigree

Compare the version in SP<sub>RA</sub> 167.4.10, 20:

*tapahkṣetre kurukṣetre dharmakṣetre sanātane |*  
*dadhīcena mahad divyaṃ puṇyam āyatanaṃ kṛtam |*  
*dadhīcasyālayaḥ khyātaḥ sarvapāpaharaḥ paraḥ || 10 ||*  
 [...] *dadhīcena yatas tatra kṛtam āyatanaṃ śubham |*  
*sthāneśvaram iti khyātaṃ tena lokeṣu triṣv api || 20 ||*

- 34 The pedigree constructed by Bāṇa not only links the Vātsyāyanas to the collateral Bhārgava branch of Dadhīca, it seems also to have a geo-political dimension in that it connects two regions: the one along the Sarasvatī and the one along the Śoṇa River. The Puṣyabhūti belonged to the former area, the Maukharis to the latter. Bāṇa's hero Harṣa united both regions within his kingdom. Cf. HC\* 4 (p. 244), where the wise brahmin Gambhīra says to Harṣa's brother-in-law Grahavarman, when the latter is about to enter the house of his bride Rājyaśrī:

*tāta, tvāṃ prāpya cirāt khalu rājyaśrīyā ghaṭitau tejomayau sakalajagadgīyamāna-*  
*budhakarṇānandakāriḡuṇagaṇau somasūryavaṃśāv iva puṣyabhūtimukharavaṃśau |*

## THE SKANDAPURĀṆA REACHES NEPAL

It has been argued by Yokochi in the *Introduction* to SP III, taken up in Bakker 2014, 137f., that a major new redaction of our text, the ancestor of the RA recension, came into being in the ninth century.<sup>35</sup>

It is likely that before this major new redaction took place the *Skandapurāṇa* had reached Nepal, where it became our S recension. This so-called S or ‘Nepalese recension’ has a few particularities of its own. The end of chapter 167 in this recension features two remarkable passages in what is in all probability an accretion to the original text (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.163–187), two passages that may betray the background against which this recension S came into being: in one it is said that there are eight places in the country of Magadhā where Laguḍīśvara (Lakuliśa) roamed about together with his pupils (cf. below, p. 564), and in the other, at the end of this interpolation, Paśupati in Nepāla is mentioned together with another sanctuary called Naikatuṅgādhipēśvara, which calls forth associations with the king of Nepal, the lord supreme of many mountain peaks/thrones.<sup>36</sup> Could it be that there is a nexus that links both additions to the original text?

It has been argued by Yokochi that this interpolation in what would eventually develop into our ‘Nepalese recension’ was made ‘in an early text of the S recension in northeastern India before it bifurcated and came to be transmitted to Nepal’.<sup>37</sup> Since the earliest transmission to Nepal relates to an ancestor of our MS S<sub>1</sub>, this transmission must, according to Yokochi’s theory, have taken place before AD 700.<sup>38</sup>

We know of a formal exchange between North India and Nepal in the decades before AD 700, namely when the grand-daughter (*dauhitrī*) of the Later–Gupta

35 As noted in Bakker 2014, 138 n. 425 this is ‘a slight modification of the date proposed for this redaction in the *Introduction* to SP II A, p. 54, where we had argued that it may have taken place in the eighth, possibly first half of the ninth century’. The earlier date featured also in the original version of the present article, published in 2007.

36 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.169 & SP<sub>S</sub> 167.186–187:  
*magadhāsu smṛtāny aṣṭau sthānāni śaśīmaulinah |*  
*śiṣyair parivṛto yāni babhrāma laguḍīśvaraḥ |*  
*tāni dṛṣṭvā bhavet sadyaḥ pumān pāpavivarjitaḥ || 169 ||*  
 [...]  
*nepāleṣu ca deveśaṃ dṛṣṭvā paśupatiṃ prabhum |*  
*daśāśvamedhān āpnoti rudralokaṃ ca gacchati |*  
*dehahedaṃ ca samprāpya paśutvād vipramucyate || 186 ||*  
*anyad dhimagirau sthānaṃ naikatuṅgādhipēśvaram |*  
*taṃ dṛṣṭvā na punarmartyo jāyate munisattama |*  
*bhaktānāṃ praṇatānāṃ ca sarvakāmapradaṃ smṛtam || 187 ||*

See Bisschop 2006, 15–17, 222f. Bisschop 2006, 218 observes about this interpolation: ‘Although the list starts with places in the northwest, the number of toponyms in the northeast is striking’, e.g. Gṛdhrakūṭeśvara and Pāṭalīputra in Magadhā, where the Prahāsīteśvara *līṅga* is mentioned (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.166–169). The same Prahāsīteśvara is apparently mentioned in a Khmer inscription (Sanderson 2003–04, 408).

37 Yokochi in SP III, 52. The ‘bifurcation’ refers to the ancestors of our MSS S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub>.

38 Yokochi in SP III, 57f. Cf. Bakker 2014, 138.

king Ādityasena of Magadhā (3rd quarter 7th cent.), Vatsadevī, married the Licchavi king of Nepal, Śivadeva II, father of Jayadeva. This Jayadeva and his Indian mother recorded this fact in their *Paśupati Temple Inscription*, [Aṃśuvarman] *Śaṃvat 157* (AD 732).<sup>39</sup>

Vatsadevī was the daughter of a Maukhari prince, called Bhogavarman (see Figure 14).<sup>40</sup> The inscription, *ipso facto*, proves that the family of the Maukharis outlived the reign of Harṣa, in one way or the other. If our conjecture above is right and the composition of the SP was begun under the Maukharis of Kanauj, it is conceivable that the princess, or someone in her entourage, took this text to Nepal as part of the Maukhari heirloom. And her Magadhā background was also not forgotten, as the interpolation shows.

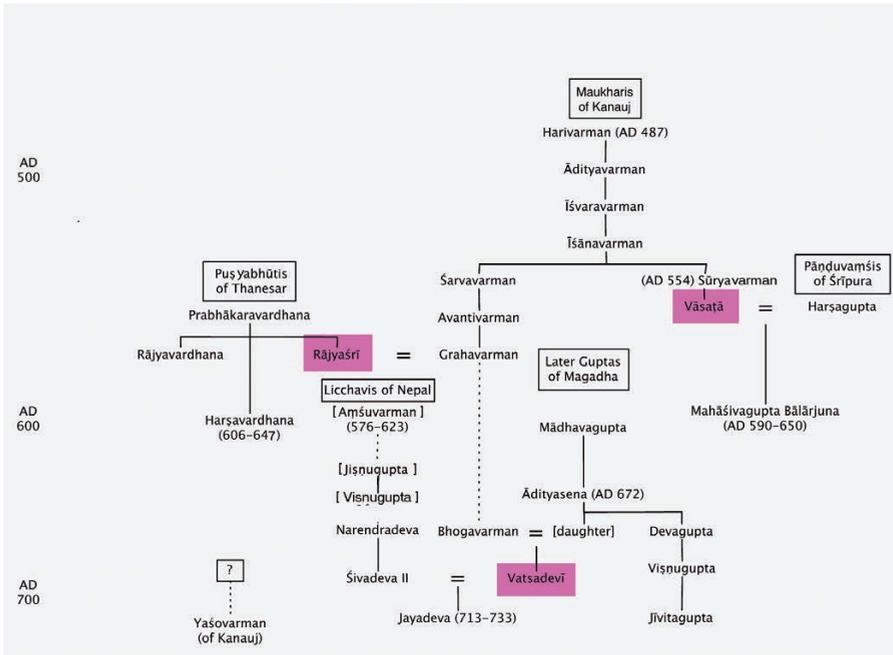


Figure 14

*Matrimonial alliances of the royal houses of North India in the 6th and 7th centuries*

39 IA IX, 178 ff. Indrajī & Bühler read 153 (= AD 728); Verma & Singh 1994, 238 f. (see *ibid.* pp. xlix f.). Verse 13 (Śārdūlavikrīḍita):

*devī bāhubalādhyamaukharikulāśrīvarmacūḍāmaṇi-  
khyātihreṇpitavairibhūpatigaṇaśrībhogavarmodbhavā |  
dauhitrī magadhādhipasya mahataḥ śryādityasenasya yā,  
vyūḍhā śrīr iva tena (i.e. Śivadeva) sā kṣitībhujā śrīvatsadevy ādarāt || 13 ||*

40 This Bhogavarman cannot be the same as the son of Śūrasena and nephew of the Mahāsānta Aṃśuvarman, who is mentioned in the *Deopātana Inscription*, *Śaṃvat 39* (AD 615); Verma & Singh 1994, 140.

The Later Guptas of Magadhā, from whose family the princess stemmed, were well familiar with the Pāśupata tradition.<sup>41</sup> This follows from an inscription of the time of another grandchild of Ādityasena (Vatsadevī's cousin), the Later-Gupta king Viṣṇugupta. In this inscription we are told that the pilgrim Avimuktajja (Skt. Avimuktārya),<sup>42</sup> who had visited numerous Śaiva holy places inhabited by Siddhas (*anekaśīvasiddhāyatana*<sup>o</sup>), was devoted to 'his own doctrine' (*svasiddhāntābhirata*).<sup>43</sup> It is therefore possible, even likely, that one or more Pāśupata teachers from Magadhā had traveled to Nepal, some of whom may have reached it in the company of the Later-Gupta princess.<sup>44</sup>

When the *Skandapurāṇa* text was thus brought to Nepal, it had undergone the two additions quoted above, (n. 36 on p. 537 f.) as part of a wider interpolation, in order to make good for what were, in the eyes of its conveyers and receivers, two neglected issues: the authenticity of the Pāśupata tradition within Magadhā, now said to have been founded by Lakulīśa himself, and the prominence of the holy state sanctuary of Nepal, Paśupatinātha.

#### *Matrimonial alliances and the spread of culture*

Historians are used to judge royal matrimonial alliances by their political implications. If our reconstruction holds any water, the cultural implications may also have been significant and may have had a more lasting effect than the political ones. Next to their husbands, princesses on their way to the residences of their grooms were accompanied by a cortège of ladies-in-waiting and dignitaries of all sorts. Among these there may have been religious virtuosi and literati, who, in the train of the two newlywed queens, Vāsaṭā and Vatsadevī, brought the Pāśupata order to Dakṣiṇa Kosalā and the *Skandapurāṇa* to Nepal.

41 A post-Gupta Lakulīśa image was found in Benisagar, southeastern Bihar (Panigrahi 1956, 3). Other Lakulīśa images in Bihar are reported in Mitra 1984, 116, n. 16.

42 See von Hinüber 2001, 141.

43 EI XXVI, 246; Thaplyal 1985, 168. Cf. above, n. 3 on p. 527.

44 Vatsadevī's Nepalese husband, King Śivadeva, is known from the *Laganaṭola Inscription* (AD 694/95) to have himself patronized the *ācāryas* of the Pāśupata order, since he handed over to the Pāśupata *ācāryas* the village of Vaidya as an *agrahāra* settlement for the maintenance of the temple (*devakula*) of Śivadeveśvara Bhaṭṭāraka, which the king had built himself. Verma & Singh 1994, no. 147, ll. 5–9:

*ayaṃ grāmaḥ śarirakoṭṭamaryādo(papanna)ś cāṭabhaṭānām apraveśyenācandrārkāvanikālīko bhūmicchidranyāyenāgrahāratayā mātāpitror ātmanaś ca vipulapūṇyopacayahetor asmābhīḥ svakārītaśrīśivadeveśvaraṃ bhaṭṭārakaṃ nimittīkrtya taddevakulakhaṇḍasphuṭitasamskārakaraṇāya vaśapāśupatācāryebhyaḥ\* pratipāditaḥ |*

\* Diwakar Acharya informed me that it is possible to read <sup>o</sup>*karaṇāyāvamaśapāśupatācāryebhyaḥ*, 'Pāśupata *ācāryas* who are without family'. Cf. Bakker 2014, 132 f.



# The Gospel of Kauṇḍinya\*

The Descent of God in Gujarat and the Practice of Imitating God

## KAUṆḌINYA'S PAÑCĀRTHABHĀṢYA

### *Kuśika and the divine revelation*

When we speak of the gospel of Kauṇḍinya, we call forth an association with texts which describe the birth, life, and deeds of a saviour, texts which are meant to bring good news, an *evangelium*, into the world. This evocation is deliberate. As a tribute to Jan Bremmer's life-long engagement, scholarly and otherwise, with gospels and kindred texts that have just failed to reach that status, I would like to show, that a text called 'The Five Topics', *Pañcārtha*, which has the form of a commentary (*bhāṣya*) on the Sūtras of the Pāśupata school (the *Pāśupatasūtras* (PS)), resembles a gospel in many respects. Not only by the dramatic facts which it professes to report, but also by its apodictic style, and its pretence to communicate a divine revelation, presenting a unique path (*sādhana*), which alone is able to promise and deliver hope and salvation to the faithful. Its author, Kauṇḍinya, who may have lived in the 4th century AD, puts himself in the lineage of preceptors that descends directly from the divine teacher's first disciple, Kuśika.<sup>1</sup>

It is generally accepted that this Kuśika has been a historic person, who may have lived in the 2nd century AD. He is mentioned by name as the fountainhead of a lineage of ten teachers in the *Mathurā Pilaster Inscription of Candragupta II, Year 61* (i.e. AD 380/81, or AD 388, according to Falk 2004, 173).<sup>2</sup> Kauṇḍinya describes how and why this Kuśika came to be elected to receive and spread the divine word. He begins by defining the nature of God.

And accordingly, since His nature is play (*krīḍā*) . . . (it is certain that) the activity of God is springing from play. And (His) activity, insomuch as this consists in proclaiming the doctrine, is for the sake of bestowing favour (*anugraha*). (Kauṇḍinya *ad PS* 1.1)

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\* The first version of this article was published in Dijkstra, Jitse, Justin Kroesen, & Yme Kuiper (eds.), *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity*. Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan N. Bremmer. Brill, Leiden – Boston 2010. pp. 517–529. Numen Book Series. Studies in the History of Religions 127.

1 Kauṇḍinya *ad PS* 4.10: *kuśikeśānasambandhāt*. Cf. above, n. 6 on p. 529 and Bisschop 2006, 49 f.

2 CII III (1981), 240. See above, p. 287 and p. 494.

The emphasis Kauṇḍinya lays upon the true nature of God as play is to safeguard His sovereignty, His omnipotence (*prabhutva*). This nature of God, here defined for the first time, will remain an integral feature of nearly all Hindu conceptions of god, and we will meet it again below in this essay. Bestowing favour is God's free choice, not induced by anything outside Him. His absolute freedom is without beginning and end, but, in order to fulfil His wish, He takes birth.

So, on account of His ability to do whatever He wishes, and His being unborn, God, having taken upon Him a body of a brahmin, has descended in Kāyāvataṛaṇa in human form. And He has reached Ujjayanī by foot. How do we know that? (We know that) on account of the authoritativeness of learned persons (*śiṣṭa*), and because we (still) see and hear the proofs thereof. (Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1; above, n. 7 on p. 529)

This event is of a completely different nature as the mythic *avatāra* stories that we know from the Vaiṣṇava religion. Its measure is human and it has a ring of historicity. Imagine Viṣṇu's descent as the Boar or the Tortoise, going *on foot* from one historical site to another, a distance of 290 km as the divine aerial chariot (*vimāna*) flies!

Kauṇḍinya continues by telling that this divine brahmin smeared himself with ashes and selected a sanctuary in Ujjain as his place of residence. Unfortunately the name of the sanctuary is not mentioned and the later tradition of the *Skandapurāṇa* locates this residence in the cremation ground (*śmaśāna*) of Ujjain.

Thereupon Lord Kuśika arrived, impelled by God; he saw the signs of perfection, such as complete contentment, in the preceptor and the opposites thereof in himself; falling at his feet he informed him properly about his caste, *gotra*, Vedic affiliation, and his being free of debts; then, at an appropriate moment, (this) pupil, who was like a patient, consulted the preceptor, who had bided his time, and who was the doctor as it were: 'Lord, is there a remedy that is effective and final for all those pains which fate, the world and we ourself afflict upon us, or not?' (Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1)

On this pertinent question, the holy brahmin, the incarnation of God, said: *atha*, 'well'. Kauṇḍinya explains:

Here the word 'well' relates to what earlier had happened. In what way [a student may ask]? He has said 'well' in relation to the earlier question put by the pupil. Thus this word *atha* ('well') signifies the answer to what has been asked: that end to suffering (*duḥkhānta*) does exist. (Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1)

'Well' is the opening word of the gospel, being the first word of the first Sūtra. It is followed by the word *ataḥ*, for which see above, p. 513. Then follows the word *paśupatiḥ*, 'of Paśupati', i.e. 'of God'. This expression Kauṇḍinya takes as the answer to a further question: 'due to what is this "being without suffering" reached?' It is reached, Kauṇḍinya preaches, due to the grace (*prasāda*) of God, which initiates union (*yoga*) with Him.

That (union), (according to some), comes about by the act of one only—as in the case of a post and the falcon—because it is (said to be) effected by meditation, study etc. of a human being (*puruṣa*). [However, we believe that] it comes about by the act of both—as in the case of (two fighting) rams. (Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1)

This mystical union, therefore, lies not entirely in the hands of the aspirant. The difference, Kauṇḍinya observes, between his and other salvation doctrines is precisely this: only Śiva's grace saves. In order that man may receive it, God has descended in an act of mercy and taught the doctrine as worded in the *Pāśupatasūtras*. In biblical terms: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14). These Sūtras are therefore seen as divine revelation and Kauṇḍinya's task it is to proclaim and explain them, that is, like Kuśika before him, to bring the good news. When its contents is fully understood and put into praxis (*viddhi*), the believer becomes qualified (*adhikāraḥkṛtatva*) to receive that grace, which is concomittant with the removal of his separation (*viyoga*) from God. United with God he shares in His omniscience and omnipotence, and all his suffering comes to an end. He experiences, in Byzantine terms, *theōsis* (θεώσις).

#### *The power of the word*

Intrinsically connected with the soteriological claim of the Pāśupata faith is the tradition that the holy word is passed down a lineage of accomplished teachers, who all, at the moment that they divulge the truth in the appropriate ritual setting, impersonate the divine incarnation, a doctrine not altogether different from Jesus' message to his apostles: 'For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you' (Matthew 10:20).

However, in my view the Indian type of religion, to which the Pāśupata faith belongs, pushes this idea further than Catholicism, notwithstanding the Fourth Lateran Council and that of Trent on the Eucharist, and this has to do with its concept of primordial sound (*śabda*). Despite some similarity, but essentially unlike the evangelist John's *logos*, the revealed word, or rather its sound, is conceived of as an embodiment of divine power that has, we could say, the magic potency to actualize or reify the divine and to deify those by whose mouths it is pronounced. This feature of the Indian religions, the idea of *śabdabrahman*, is the legacy of the Vedic brahmins. It has given rise to much hocus-pocus, on the one hand, and to sublime monuments of spirituality on the other.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, this magic potency accounts for the fact that the revelation is not thought to be meant for everybody's ears. After pronouncing the word

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3 As an instance of the former I see the doctrine of the school of the Śaiva Siddhānta, which assumes that final release may be obtained through the ritual of initiation, in which the bodily and mental flaws are articulated and magically (i.e. through *mantras*) collected on a rope in order to be burnt in the sacrificial fire. As an example of the latter may pass Kashmir Saivism, which culminates in the work of the intellectual giant Abhinavagupta.

‘well’ and promising to reveal the divine doctrine, the teacher performs the initiation ceremony of the pupil, who has to take off all his worldly insignia (above, p. 513). From now on he should go naked or with a loincloth only, smeared with ashes, and without any personal belongings. Only then the teacher will impart the revelation. This divides the community of Śiva worshippers (Māheśvaras) into two, just as in Buddhism—which seems to have been a major source of inspiration to the Pāśupatas anyway: the laymen (*laukikas*), whose task it is to gather merit by supporting the order of initiates and by worshipping God in the temple, and the elite group of consecrated ascetics. Only these ascetics are entitled to practise in order to obtain union (*yogavidhī*), which is the main subject of the subsequent Sūtras.

## THE PĀŚUPATA PRAXIS

### *The imitatio dei*

When we have thus seen the lofty religious ideals promulgated by Kauṇḍinya’s gospel, we may be in for a surprise, when we learn more about the specific practices by which these were believed to be realised. On the whole, these practices can be described as an ever steeper staircase to complete effacement of the phenomenal self. In this respect Kauṇḍinya shares many of the ascetic aims and practices that are known from other Indian religions. In all ascetic movements, whether in India or abroad, self-mortification serves to destroy the ego in the expectation that it makes one more susceptible to the divine. In the brahmanical tradition this is generally seen as the unveiling of a true Self, which is itself thought to be godlike. The Pāśupata doctrine is no exception to this.

The first of five ‘steps of ascension into God’ (*gradus ascensionis in Deum*), to paraphrase Bonaventura,<sup>4</sup> requires that the initiated ascetic identifies himself with the deity of his devotion by imitating him, an *imitatio dei* that is enacted in the liturgy within the temple. This concerns some aspects of Śiva that are known from the corpus of mythological Sanskrit texts, and this mythology clearly informs the conduct of the ascetic. In this corpus of mythology Śiva often appears as a trickster god, whose loud laughter (*aṭṭahāsa*) puts his subjects, including his wife, in their proper place.

But there is another side of Śiva, more ancient, going directly back to the Vedic form of him as Rudra, namely his association with cattle and the bull in particular. Paśupati, though in Kauṇḍinya’s gospel used as a metaphor for

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4 Bonaventura, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, 1.5–6. The five steps in the career of the Pāśupata ascetic are: 1) living within the precincts of a sanctuary and worshipping Śiva, 2) moving about and seeking dishonour, 3) retreating within a lonely place for meditation, 4) living in the cremation ground until death, 5) the end of suffering through God’s grace.

‘Lord (*pati*) of the bound human soul’ (*paśu*), literally means ‘Lord of Cattle (*paśu*)’. This is a god of nature and fertility, powerful and terrifying, who joined in with the indigenous phallus cult, which sophisticated brahminical thinking transformed eventually into the abstract *liṅga*. In this aspect, Śiva is associated with the bull, nay, he is the bull. This aspect of his character explains the, at first sight, puzzling injunction in the *Pāśupatasūtras* where it says, that the initiate should offer, along with laughter, the sound *huḍuṃ* (PS 1.8). Kauṇḍinya explains: ‘The word *huḍuṃ*: the auspicious noise which resembles that of a bull and which originates from holding the tip of the tongue against the palate, that is what (is meant).’<sup>5</sup>

Just as serious is Śiva’s role as *fons et origo* of the fine arts, in particular of music and dance.<sup>6</sup> One of the Hindu gods best known to Western audiences is probably Śiva, king of the dance (*naṭarāja*). A God who himself dances and sings, then we have really left the world of the Abrahamic religions! The *imitatio dei* practice of the aspirant consists in laughing loudly, bellowing, and singing and dancing in trance at the right side of the cult image in the sanctum in worship of God.<sup>7</sup> How could one worship Him better than by mimesis?

The temple worship of the initiated ascetic ends with complete absorption in God by the constant muttering of a prayer (*japya*), which, seen as a *mantra*, is, as we have observed above, to be conceived of as His quintessence actualized in the form of sound. This prayer runs:

I resort to the Eternal, Primordial One, Who is Unborn (*sadyojāta*), glory, glory to the Eternal, Primordial One, Who is Unborn!

In existence after existence, not in too many existences, You should be merciful to me, You from Whom existence springs.<sup>8</sup>

### *The seeking of dishonour*

Although the initiate ‘looses himself’, so to speak, in his mimetic worship, this is a temporary state. For the second stage of the ascetic’s career Kauṇḍinya prescribes a behaviour that deepens the effacement of the person by a process of self-mortification that goes further than most of the rivalling practices. I

5 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.8. This practice may go back to a Vedic *govrata* or *anaḍudvrata*; see Acharya 2013.

6 *Bhāratīya-Nāṭyaśāstra*, chapter 4. Cf. Long 1971, 77.

7 For the significance of ‘the right side’ in this context see Bakker 2004c; above, pp. 505 ff.

8 My translation follows Kauṇḍinya’s interpretation of PS 1.40–44:

*sadyojātaṃ prapadyāmi sadyojātāya vai namaḥ |  
bhave bhave nātibhave bhajasva mām bhavodbhavaḥ ||*

This verse (Anuṣṭubh) corresponds to *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 10.43. It has some variants (see Bisschop 2006a, 7 f.), the most important of which is the reading *bhavasva* instead of *bhajasva*. The *Mahā-Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 17.1 (Varenne 1960, 277–78) reads *bhavasva*. This verse is translated by Varenne 1960, 71, with a little too much Cartesian flavour, as: ‘Je cherge refuge auprès du nouveau-né; hommage au nouveau-né! Hommage! Je suis! Je suis! Je n’excele pas! Sois pour moi! Hommage à celui qui est l’origine de l’existence!’

refer to the notorious doctrine of seeking dishonour (*avamāna*). To initiate its discussion in his commentary on PS 3.3, reading ‘despised’ (*avamataḥ*), Kaunḍinya quotes two verses which are in slightly modified form known from older sources, the *Mahābhārata* (12.222.20–21) and the *Manusmṛti* (2.162–163).

The wise brahmin should seek dishonour as if it were ambrosia and he should always beware of honour as if it were poison. For, while being despised, he rests in happiness, excluded from all society; a sage should not think of the faults of the other, (but) always of his own evil. (Kaunḍinya *ad* PS 3.3)

Kaunḍinya’s quotation of older sources in this context and the fact that this stage of the path to salvation dealing with dishonour disappears soon from the repertoire of Śaiva soteriological texts seem to indicate that we are here concerned with an archaic practice accommodated to the early Pāśupata movement.<sup>9</sup> The practice involves that the aspirant seeks dishonour when, in public and without making himself known as a Pāśupata ascetic,

He should go about as a mad man, who snores, trembles, limps, leches, and acts and speaks improperly, so that he may come to be ill-treated. For a wise man, being ill-treated, accomplishes thereby all asceticism. (PS 3.11–19)<sup>10</sup>

It is to the credit of Daniel Ingalls to have put this weird doctrine into a wider perspective by pointing out its similarity with the practice of dishonour (ἄδοξια) of the Greek Cynics, in an article that appeared in the *Harvard Theological Review* in 1962, but which remained largely unknown outside a select group of indologists. As Ingalls points out,

Diogenes’ [‘the Dog’ (κύων)] favourite method of attracting attention and opprobrium, if we are to believe the anecdotes, was by performing in public those acts of nature which should remain hidden: spitting, defecation, and the act of sex. By means of public censure the Cynics sought to attain hardness, apathy and freedom.<sup>11</sup>

And we could go further along the path pointed out by Ingalls. I trust that the reader allows me to take him on a little excursus into the Realm of the Holy Fools, a realm explored most recently in a thesis by Jan Hofstra (2008).

### *Fools through the Ages*

A letter of Paul to the Corinthians is often seen as a point of departure of this phenomenon in Christianity:

9 Oberlies 2000 points out that this practice, as part of the wider context of the *brahmodya*, is already attested in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.3.9.9 and that an influence of Cynicism as argued by Ingalls (see below, p. 554) is very unlikely. Cf. Acharya 2013. In Bakker 2011 (below, p. 553 ff.) I argue that the Pāśupata doctrine, practice and iconography (Lakuliśa) are to be conceived as orthogenetic.

10 Translation based on Ingalls 1962.

11 Ingalls 1962, 283. For an assessment of Ingalls’ arguments see below, pp. 554 ff.

For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. (1 Corinthians 4:9-10)

To what extremes this could evolve, we read, for instance, in the *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool* by Leontios, bishop of Neapolis, Cyprus (first half of 7th century AD):

His entry into the city of Emesa was as follows. Outside the city the illustrious one found a dead dog on a dunghill. He unleashed his cord, tied it to a leg of the dog, and tugged the animal behind him, while he was running through the city gate near the school.<sup>12</sup> . . . By everything he did he suggested to be mad or unbecoming. . . . He made it his habit, sometimes to limp, sometimes to spring around, or to shuffle on his bottom, or to trip someone up. Sometimes he watched the sky at new moon, upon which he dropped to the ground and began kicking around; sometimes he acted as if he were raving mad. . . . He had become completely incorporeal and innocent with respect to what is appropriate among men. When he wanted to answer a call of nature, it often happened that he was ashamed of nobody and defecated at the market square in full view. . . . The blessed one had reached such a degree of purity and sacrosanctity that he often danced and sprung around, having a harlot on each hand. Etcetera.<sup>13</sup>



Plate 120  
*Symeons's entry into the city of Emesa*

- 12 Contra Hofstra 2008, statement 3 (publicly defended at the University of Groningen on 18 September 2008), this scene cannot be explained from the *Scala Paradisi* 29/14, but is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Cynics.
- 13 English paraphrase after the Dutch translation from the Greek by Aerts and Hokwerda 2006, 90, 92, 98.

We could continue to the *yurodivyj* (юродивый) of the Russian Orthodox Church, but it might be wise to return to the Pāśupata and to explain what is common to its tradition of seeking dishonour (*avamāna*) and apparently similar practices in the Greek and Christian traditions, and what is different. Common to all traditions, it would seem to me, is the feeling of ecstatic power, when freedom from all forms of (social) bondage is experienced, when the social ego is destroyed. It is the εὐδαιμονία and ἀπάθεια of which the Cynics speak, and which, for modern man, has been worded brilliantly by Thomas Mann in his *Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*):

Da seine Betrachtungen dumpf und verworren waren, so ist es schwer, sie zu präzisieren. Hauptsächlich schien ihm, daß die Ehre bedeutende Vorteile für sich habe, aber die Schande nicht minder, ja daß die Vorteile der letzteren geradezu grenzenloser Art seien. Und indem er sich probeweise in Herrn Albins Zustand versetzte und sich vergegenwärtigte, wie es sein müsse, wenn man endgültig des Druckes der Ehre ledig war und auf immer die bodenlosen Vorteile der Schande genoß, erschreckte den jungen Mann ein Gefühl von wüster Süßigkeit, das sein Herz vorübergehend zu noch hastigerem Gange erregte.<sup>14</sup>

Kauṇḍinya describes at length the supernatural powers that the aspirant attains in the course of his ascetic training. However, the Sūtras that form the introduction to his treatment of dishonour run: ‘He gives his bad *karma* to them and from them he takes their good *karma*.’ (PS 3.8–9). The provocations that apparently heap shame upon the practitioner induce a transfer of merit: the provoked bourgeois, who is tricked into mistaking the ascetic for a madman, loses good *karma* due to his mistake, which *karma* is booked at the *karma* credit side of the Pāśupata: a sort of credit swap *avant la lettre*. This highly individualistic motive, or should we say immoral, selfish ideology, although still well recognizable in its present-day forms, makes the gospel of Kauṇḍinya stand out amongst its sort.

The question arises whether this second stage of the Pāśupata praxis is also to be seen in the perspective of the *imitatio dei*, which so clearly informed the first one. I think this is possible, although the antinomian praxis evidently had a long history outside the Pāśupata movement. But antinomian behaviour suited certain aspects of Śiva very well. From Vedic times Rudra-Śiva has been seen as an outsider, a dangerous god that should be kept at a distance. To propitiate him he was given the name ‘the auspicious one’ (i.e. *śiva*). His provocative and nonconformist conduct is well expressed in one of the paradigmatic Śaiva myths: ‘Śiva in the Pine Forest’ (Devadāruvana). This myth differs significantly in various sources, but I present here the epitome given by O’Flaherty:<sup>15</sup>

Śiva then wandered into the Pine Forest, and the wives of the sages there fell in love with him and followed him everywhere. Śiva was naked, ithyphallic, dancing, and begging with a skull in his hand. The sages became furious and cursed his *liṅga*

14 Thomas Mann (1952), *Der Zauberberg*, 115.

15 O’Flaherty 1973, 32. Cf. below, p. 578.

to fall to the ground. The *liṅga* fell but began to cause a terrible conflagration; Brahmā and Viṣṇu tried in vain to find the top and bottom of it, and peace was only restored when the sages agreed to worship the *liṅga*, together with their wives.

Antinomian conduct has remained a feature of Śaiva ascetics until the present day.

### KAUṆḌINYA'S ESCHATOLOGY

Like the aspirant, we should leave this provocative, foolish phase in the discipline behind us and move on towards the final goal. The next step in the career of the practitioner is to retreat into solitude, which ends in his move to the cremation ground. By choosing this, for ordinary Hindus most pollutive and horrifying place, as his last residence on earth (while still alive), the accomplished Pāśupata saint proves his complete detachment from all earthly things. Like God Himself, he has transcended the relative world of opposites, of pure and impure, of good and evil, and as a monad, steeped in meditation, he awaits the moment that God's grace will fall upon him and his suffering comes to an end. This signals in the completion of the practice of imitation. With this, at the moment of death, the saint becomes god.

The *Pāśupatasūtras* finish when the divine speaker, that is Śiva the author of the *Sūtras*, instructs the practitioner in the penultimate stage to meditate on Him by repeating the following prayer:

THE Lord of all knowledge/ spells, the Master of all beings/ spirits;  
the Overlord of *brahman*, God (Brahmā), (who is) the Overlord of the demiurge  
(Brahmā), Eternal Śiva (Sadāśiva), He must be (for ever) auspicious (*śiva*) toward  
me!<sup>16</sup>

This is followed in the Calcutta manuscript by the syllable OM,<sup>17</sup> which should be seen in this context as a declaration of affirmation, AMEN, from the side of God. Kauṇḍinya too, although he apparently omits this syllable OM, seems to take this prayer in an eschatological way. The fact that God Himself instructs the devotee to entreat Him to be gracious holds a great promise: the end of suffering is at hand; it will be realized at the moment of death (the last stage) and will be for ever. Typical for Kauṇḍinya's style, this vision of hope is prompted by a question:

16 TaiĀ 10.47 (= *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 17.5 (Varenne 1960, 285–86)). This *mantra/brahman* is found in PS 5.42–47 with some variation. I follow the Calcutta MS (C) that conforms to the TaiĀ text (Bisschop 2006a, 18):

*īśānaḥ sarvavidyānām īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām*  
*brahmādhipatīr brahmaṇo 'dhipatīr brahmā śivo me astu sadāśivom |*

17 See Bisschop 2006a, 18. OM also in the TaiĀ text, see note above.

'Is it so that here (in this gospel), that is in this prayer, only the majesty of the Creator<sup>18</sup> with respect to the created world (*kārya*) is considered, but not the aspirant's longing for or obtaining of (Śivahood)?' The answer is 'No'. Just because He sees that those who are not yet in His ultimate grace, due to their office of being aspirant, lack Śivahood/blessedness (*aśivatva*), while those who have reached (the ultimate) state of being without suffering possess Śivahood/blessedness, He proclaims this last Sūtra. The words in this Sūtra '(He) must be' express a wish: he wishes, he is longing, he pursues. . . . And because it is the Eternal Śiva (Sadāśiva) who gives the instruction, the state of being without suffering (*duḥkhānta*) is eternal. (Here) ends His office of Creator. Therefore it is certain: this end of suffering is for good. (Kaunḍinya *ad* PS 5.45–47)

This doctrine, scholastic, technical, and elitist as it may be, of a personal gracious God, who has descended to earth in order to save all those from suffering who have the courage and stamina to give up their own person for the sake of attaining Him, was something of a religious revolution in the first centuries AD in northern India.

In one important aspect the *imitatio dei* of the Pāśupata differs from other practices of this sort in later Hinduism as well as in Christianity. The imitation of the ascetic is meant to efface all human individuality, to destroy the ego and all worldly sensual experiences. Along this path, accessible only to ascetic virtuosi, the *imitatio* ends in an *aequatio*. The human soul, the *paśu*, as such ceases to exist; it has 'transubstantiated' into god. As so many products of the Indian mind, this ideal has never vanished, but remained part and parcel of the Indian cultural heritage. However, it has become relatively marginalized and eclipsed by modern forms of mass devotion, in particular by Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*.

## MODERN FORMS OF HINDU DEVOTION

I would like to finish with a few words on these modern forms of Hindu worship. We may say that the idea of the imitation of god as a path to reach him has retained a normative value in Saivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Hinduism in general, ever since its earliest formulation in the Pāśupata religion. We have limited ourselves here to an early Śaiva movement, but instances of the *imitatio dei* practice within modern Vaiṣṇavism are not hard to come by.

One could even maintain that the modern devotional schools of Viṣṇu worship are nothing but imitations of the divine play (*līlā/krīḍā*), be it the sports of Rāma and Sītā in Ayodhyā, or those of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Braj. In order to enact the eternal *līlā*, devotees make pilgrimages to the places where the mythology is believed to be topographically embedded. It is a strategy practised by hundreds of millions to remove the painful separation (*viraha*) of the human soul and God. In contrast to what the Christian pilgrim may experience

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18 I read *kāraṇa* instead of *karaṇa*.

on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, the imitation of Kṛṣṇa in Braj and Vrindavan usually results in great exuberance. Modern Hinduism, in particular Vaiṣṇava *bhakti*, is a religion celebrating the joys of life rather than its sufferings (cf. above, p. 17). It is this character, unexpected as it may be to some readers, especially after reading this essay—it is this life-affirming attitude, which seeks to imitate the sports of a *happy* god, that sat in the way of a warm reception by Christian missionaries. It made Hinduism in the eyes of many of them a shallow, silly, and naive religion, a too childish way of life to compare in earnest with the grave and deadly serious, revealed religion whose ceremonialism emphasized the doleful side of life and banished, like the Pāśupata faith, *the end* of suffering to a realm beyond death.

### *Epilogue*

Comparison is central to the systematic study of religion. The comparative method, however, carries a great risk. As the scope widens, the collected insights tend to become more shallow and this not infrequently results in an arid display of learnedness. A balance should be struck between collecting comparable phenomena in different religions and bringing to light the great divisions that do exist, despite superficial resemblances. It will not lead us to the essence of religion, but it will enhance our understanding and debunk absolute claims, since it is due to explode naive ethnocentricity and academic parochialism. Thus is the task of the historian of religion, and this task has been accomplished in an exemplary way by Jan Bremmer in his distinguished career as professor of religious studies.

Many scholars in the humanities today will agree that god as an entity is unwarranted. God is not an ontological category in the sense of an *ens realissimum*, but a human ideal, that is a mental, social and cultural figuration that gives meaning to life and guides the conduct of the community of believers. As such, the idea of god, which a community creates and sustains, is quintessential to the culture of that community. For this reason the study of religion is such a rewarding enterprise: it allows us access to key notions of a culture. A comparative perspective may help to bring these notions into prominence.

I wrote, the conception of god guides the conduct of the believer, and nowhere is this more obvious than in the practice of imitating god. Look at the ritualized behaviour of the believers and you will find their idea of god. Look at the idea of god and you will understand the behaviour. Imitation of god is at the heart of every traditional, religious society, of Christianity as much as of Hinduism. To emulate a happy god brings greater happiness among the faithful; to emulate a suffering god may offer more consolation in our darkest hours, or, in the words of the Goncourt brothers (1 December 1860): ‘La religion chrétienne sert quand on pleure.’<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Journal des Goncourt : Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, Bibliothèque–Charpentier, 1891. Tome premier : 1851–1861. E-text: [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Journal\\_des\\_Goncourt/I/Ann](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Journal_des_Goncourt/I/Ann) (accessed 3-12-15).



# Origin and Spread of the Pāśupata Movement\*

About Heracles, Lakuliśa and Symbols of Masculinity

LĀGUḌI

The study of the origins of organized Saivism received a completely new perspective with the publication of the *Pāśupatasūtras* (PS) and Kaunḍinya's commentary thereon, the *Pañcārthabhāṣya*, by R. Ananthakrishna Sastri in 1940. Research by Minoru Hara, Daniel Ingalls, Alexis Sanderson, Thomas Oberlies, Peter Bisschop, and Diwakar Acharya, to mention just the major players in this field, built on this new evidence and has paved the way for our present investigation, which draws heavily on their work.<sup>1</sup>

For the last fifteen years we have also been fortunate to possess another source that comes from the same Pāśupata tradition and is chronologically not too far removed from Kaunḍinya. This text reflects the layman's, *laukika*, view, rather than that of the initiated ascetic, who is the primary person treated by Kaunḍinya. This text is the *Skandapurāṇa* (SP), whose composition we date between AD 550 and 650, which means that the text is probably about 200 years later than Kaunḍinya's commentary. Much had happened in India in those 200 years: it saw the rise and fall of the great Gupta Empire, the intrusion of Hunnic peoples, and the gradual recovery of centralized power in the new capital Kanauj (Kanyakubja) under the Maukharis and the great Harṣavardhana of Thanesar.

The first thing that strikes us, when we compare the *Skandapurāṇa*'s account of the well-known descent of Śiva in Kāyāvatarāṇa (called Kārohaṇa in SP and known today as Karvan in Gujarat) with that given by Kaunḍinya, is that the uniqueness of this mystical event is no longer maintained. Reflecting the general Hindu and Buddhist conception of the time, viz. that a Buddha or a god incarnates on earth again and again in various forms and persons, the *Skandapurāṇa* makes Śiva's descent in Gujarat a cyclic event: each world period

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<sup>1</sup> Hara 2002; Ingalls 1962; Sanderson 2006; Oberlies 2000; Bisschop 2006, 2006a; Acharya 2005, 2007, 2013.

(*yuga*) had its own incarnation: Bhārabhūti in the Kṛtayuga, Diṇḍimuṇḍa in the Tretā, Āṣāḍhi in the Dvāpara, and Lāguḍi in our Kali Age.<sup>2</sup>

Another development that apparently took place or gained prominence in the 5th to 6th centuries is that the *avatāra* story in Kārohaṇa itself was revised. God is said in the *Skandapurāṇa* to have been born into the house of a certain Somaśarman, who is said to belong to the lineage of the ṛṣi Atri, father of Soma, the Moon.<sup>3</sup> This new tradition may have been invented to account for a lineage of Pāśupata teachers who traced their pedigree back to Somaśarman, a topic that I have discussed in my paper *Somaśarman, Somavaṃśa and Somasiddhānta* (above, p. 283 ff.). The *Skandapurāṇa* is, in all likelihood, the first extant text that attests the name Lāguḍi (variant: Lākulin), meaning ‘club bearer’ (*laḡuḍa/lakuḷa*: ‘club’; see above, p. 529). However, this relatively late first attestation of the name ‘club bearer’ does not preclude the possibility that the association of this incarnation with the attribute of the club is much older. For this we have some indications.

*Early images of a club bearing ascetic or teacher*

To begin with, there is an image found in Mathurā,<sup>4</sup> usually dated to the third century AD on stylistic grounds, of a rather glum-faced, club-bearing ascetic. This figure might represent, either an ascetic associated with the Pāśupata sect, or—less likely, because characteristic iconographic signs are absent—the incarnation of Śiva himself (Plate 121).<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, the American scholar Daniel Ingalls, who compared the Pāśupata sect with the school of the Greek Cynics, broke new ground in his paper *Cynics and Pāśupata: the Seeking of Dishonor*, when he conjectured that the name Lakulīśa, the Lāguḍi of the *Skandapurāṇa*, may have been derived from the Greek name Heracles, Ἡρακλῆς, ‘if it lost its first syllable in order to help out a folk etymology’.<sup>6</sup> If this were correct, it might point to an (iconographic) influence of the Hellenistic school of the Cynics, whose patron saint was the club-bearing Heracles, on the movement of the Pāśupata.

Ingalls’ wider suggestion, namely that the Pāśupata practice of seeking dishonour may have originated under the influence of the Cynics, has been met with scepticism by contemporary scholarship. Thomas Oberlies (2000) argued in his *Kriegslisten und ungeziemendes Benehmen: Die Askesepraktiken der Pāśupatas* that antinomian praxis, as part of the context of the *brahmodya*, is already attested in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (2.3.9.9); the influence of Cynicism in this particular respect, something that was conjectured by Ingalls, is therefore not required to explain the phenomenon. Though it may indeed be the case that the Pāśupata antinomian praxis in the second stage of the ascetic’s

2 *Skandapurāṇa* S recension (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.112–117) in Bisschop 2006.

3 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.124 (above, p. 295).

4 Meister (ed.) 1984: plate 80.

5 U.P. Shah 1984, 97.

6 Ingalls 1962, 296 n. 30. Accepted, with some reservation, in Hara 2002, 129 f.



Plate 121  
Mathurā: Club-bearing ascetic



Plate 122  
Mathurā: Lakulīśa

career is an orthogenetic Indian development, the eponymous attribute of the saint, the *laguḍa* or club, remains as yet unexplained. Let us reconsider the earliest iconographic evidence.

#### *The laguḍa or club*

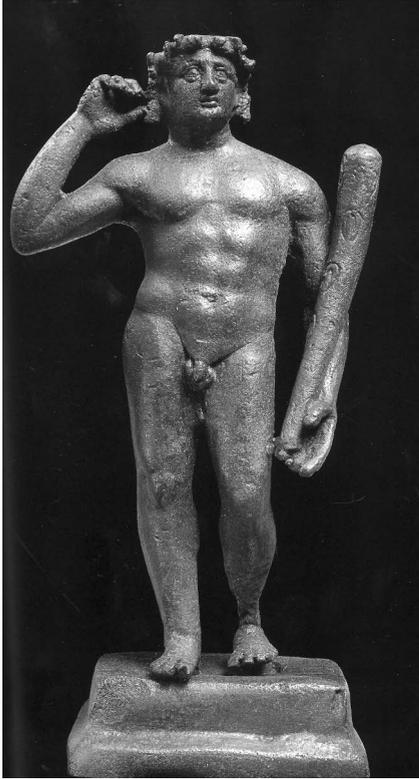
The first unquestionable visual representation of the divine Śaiva teacher with the attribute of the club is a fifth-century image from Mathurā. This sculpture is understood to be an image of Lāguḍī or Lakulīśa (Plate 122).<sup>7</sup> For reason of comparison, and in order to explore further Ingalls' supposedly Greek connection, I would like to draw attention to an image of Heracles found in Aī Khanum on the Darya-i Pandj River. This little bronze statuette (height: 18.2 cm) from the National Museum of Afghanistan (G 04.42.8) has been on display in the Musée Guimet (Paris) in 2007 and has since been touring in Europe and the USA (Plate 123).<sup>8</sup>

The natural gnarls, which usually characterize Heracles' cudgel and which in stylized form are visible on the club of the Aī-Khanum Heracles, resemble the phallic line pattern on the club of the Mathurā image (Plate 125): a Greek symbol of masculinity encounters an Indian symbol of virility.

7 Meister (ed.) 1984: plate 82.

8 *Afghanistan* 2008, 113: plate 14.

Aï Khanum, whose excavation by a French mission began in 1965, represents an important Hellenistic city founded in the wake of Alexander's conquests in Central Asia (329–27 BC).<sup>9</sup> This city, possibly Ptolemy's 'Alexandria on the Oxus',<sup>10</sup> was once the centre of a hybrid culture in which East met West.



*Plate 123*  
*Aï Khanum: Heracles*



*Plate 124*  
*Mathurā: Heracles & Nemean Lion*

This is clear from, among other things, coins found of the Indo-Greek king Agathokles (c. 170 BC). They show two Indian deities, who have been identified as Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa), obverse, and Saṃkarṣaṇa (Balarāma), reverse. As Härtel has observed, 'these coins are the oldest examples at all of the pictorial representation of Hinduistic gods, a fact which cannot be emphasized enough'.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Paul Bernard in *Afghanistan* 2008, 81 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Karttunen 1997, 47, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Härtel 1987, 574.

Elements of the syncretistic culture of Bactria reached western India with the entrance into the Subcontinent of Śaka tribes, who built a kingdom from Mathurā to southern Gujarat in the last decades before the Common Era. That Heracles remained a popular figure there till Kuṣāṇa rule is attested, for instance, by the so-called Hercules-type of coins of the Śaka ruler Rajuvula (1st quarter 1st cent. AD), some of which were found in Mathurā,<sup>12</sup> and a second-century AD image of Heracles and the Nemeian Lion, which was also found in Mathurā (Plate 124).<sup>13</sup>



Plate 125

*Ai Khanum: Heracles' club (left) Mathurā: Lakulīśa's club (right)  
details of Plates 122 & 123*

12 Allen, 1936, 187; Singh 1989, 150; Karttunen 1997, 313. See also, for instance, [http://grifterrec.rasmir.com/indoscythian/indoscythian\\_2.html](http://grifterrec.rasmir.com/indoscythian/indoscythian_2.html) (accessed 19-11-15): 'Coin of Rajuvula (circa 10 - 20 AD (?)). Senior ISCH 153.6a, 15 x 14 mm, 3.29 gm. Obverse: Lion right; corrupt Greek legend, Reverse: Crude Hercules standing left. Kharosthi legend.'

13 Vogel 1930, pl. XLVII, b. Vogel remarks (*ibid.* p. 118):

Cette pièce de sculpture est évidemment l'imitation assez faible d'un thème bien connu de l'art hellénistique. M. Foucher pense qu'on a voulu représenter quelque scène de la légende krishnaïte.

Cunningham in *ASI Reports*, Vol. XVII (1884), pp. 109 f. notes:

The head of Herakles is unfortunately wanting; but the pose and muscular development of the body are infinitely superior to any purely Indian sculpture that I have seen. Herakles has his left arm wound about the lion's neck, while with his right he is raising the club, which appears behind his back, to strike a blow. The raised arm is also gone. The lion is rather a weak animal. The group is not cut in the round, but is an *altro-relievo* with a rough back, and has apparently formed one side of an altar. Cf. Harle 1986, 67 f. The 'Indian Heracles' of Greek sources, mentioned by Megasthenes *et al.*, is mostly identified as Kṛṣṇa, a deity very well at home in Mathurā (Karttunen 1989, 211 f.).

*The origin of the Pāśupata movement*

The Pāśupata movement originated under Śaka hegemony in that part of India where the figure of Heracles was known at the time. If the iconography of Heracles had exerted some influence on, or had moulded the figure of the club-bearing divine teacher, we would have expected this to become apparent in the sources that date to the period in which both, the figure of Heracles and the Pāśupata teacher, existed side by side, viz. the first centuries of the Common Era. However, neither our oldest source, the *Pāśupatasūtras*, nor Kauṇḍinya's commentary knows, either the club as an attribute, or the name Lāguḍi.<sup>14</sup> Ingalls' hypothesis, therefore, which assumes that the Greek Heracles launched the Indian Lakuliśa, is just as unlikely as his assumption that the Hellenistic school of the Cynics influenced the development of the Pāśupata practice.

An orthogenetic root of the club-bearing deity seems therefore to be more obvious. The *Amarakośa* (3.3.42) mentions *laḡuḍa* as a synonym of *daṇḍa*. It is but natural to conceive of the club as a variant of the traditional stick or staff (*daṇḍa*) of the brahmin ascetic. The earliest Pāśupata monument known to us, the *Mathurā Pilaster of Candragupta II of the Gupta Year 61*, i.e. AD 380 (above, Plate 112),<sup>15</sup> depicts a naked three-eyed figure with a *daṇḍa* in his right, and what is possibly a *kamaṇḍalu* in his left hand (Plate 126).<sup>16</sup>



Plate 126  
*Daṇḍapāṇi on Mathurā pilaster, GE 61*

14 The *Mahābhārata* knows the Pāśupata sect, its vow (*vrata*), doctrine (*jñāna*), and practice (*yoga*); it also knows the Pāśupata weapon (*astra*), which Śiva gave to Arjuna; for this weapon see below, p. 567. Lāguḍi/Lakuliśa is unknown to the MBh and so is his club.

15 CII III (1981), 240.

16 The identity of this figure is disputed. That we are concerned with a divine figure follows from the third eye. Acharya 2005, 209 proposes to read the name of this deity as Caṇḍa. My designation 'Daṇḍapāṇi' is descriptive, it is not the proper name of the deity.

Admittedly, the origin of the word *laguḍa/lakuṭa*—attested, for instance, in *Manusmṛti* (8.315) and *Mahābhārata* (7.29.16) in the sense of ‘cudgel’ or ‘club’—remains as yet unclear.<sup>17</sup> But even if we do not accept Przyluski’s etymology that links the word to the Austro-Asiatic *lāṅgula*, meaning ‘stick’ or ‘penis’,<sup>18</sup> we may assume that phallic symbolism easily suggested itself to the Indian mind and came to be associated with this particular attribute. The phallic shape of the club in the earliest representations of the divine teacher, evident from the line pattern and its upright position (Plate 125), may have been prompted by the ithyphallic nature of this teacher and his prototype, Śiva. Thus, the club may have replaced the ascetic *daṇḍa*, by virtue of its more outspoken phallic, i.e. Śaiva connotation.<sup>19</sup> The name Lāguḍi, ‘club-bearer’, in *Skandapurāṇa* (SP<sub>S</sub> 167.129), Laguḍīśvara in SP<sub>S</sub> 167.169 (interpolation), Lākuli in *Niśvāsamukha* 3.19 (Kafle 2015, 149) and Lakulīśa, i.e. ‘Lord of the club-bearers’, in slightly later sources, e.g. the *Guhyasūtra* (12.18) of the *Niśvāsattvasaṃhitā*, derive all from this eponymous attribute.<sup>20</sup>

## THE FOUR DISCIPLES

Another major development (in addition to the invention of the figure of Lāguḍi) that took place in the 4th to 6th centuries is also attested by the *Skandapurāṇa*: Kuśika is no longer the only disciple. The number of disciples that is said to have been initiated by Lāguḍi himself has increased to four. These four are considered to have a semi-divine status; our text declares them to have sprung from the four faces of God (Parameśāna), out of His desire to bestow grace (*anugraha*) upon the world:

17 See Manfred Mayrhofer, EWA s.v. ‘*lakuṭa*’: ‘Nicht erklärt’.

18 Turner, CDIAL s.v. ‘*lakuṭa*’: ‘Ac. to J. Przyluski Pre-Aryan in sense “penis” is of same origin as *lāṅgula* & c ← Austro-as.; but prob. same word as “stick”’. Cf. Mayrhofer, KEWA s.v.

19 The *Atharvavedapariśiṣṭa* 40, dealing with the Pāśupatavratā, contains the following interesting passage, specifying what should be given to the initiated brahmin:

*tato 'sya mauñjīm prayacchati ||  
 śavitryā tu daṇḍam pālāśam bailvam āśvattham vāsiṃ lakuṭam khaṭvāṅgam paraśum  
 vā ||* (40.3.2)

For translation and explicatory notes see Bisschop & Griffiths 2003, 331 f. These authors date this text to the 2nd half of the 1st millennium (*op. cit.* 324).

20 Lakulīśanātha in the *Malhar (Junvāni) Copperplates of Mahāśivagupta, Year 57* (above, p. 290). The names Lakulin/Lakulīśa/Lakuladhārin are also known to the Pāśupatavidhi texts discovered and published by Diwakar Acharya; for instance the *Śaṃskāravidhi* (Acharya 2007). The name ‘Nakulin/Lakulin’ is known from the list of 28 incarnations of Śiva as given in the *Vāyupurāṇa* 1.23 and *Liṅgapurāṇa* 1.24. However, as Bisschop 2006, 43 ff. has argued convincingly ‘this list of twenty-eight *avatāras* did not yet form part of that text [i.e. the *Vāyupurāṇa*] at the time of composition of the *Skandapurāṇa*’. The earliest attestation of a group of ascetics named Lākuḍas seems to be a graffito on Mount Kālañjara (Bakker 2014, 196).

You four should descend to earth to become twice-born ascetics.  
 And after having led the brahmins to the supreme station,  
 you, O masters of yoga, should return to Me. (SPs 167.120)

The first disciple, Kuśika/Kauśika, is born in Ujjain and initiated there by Śiva's incarnation himself, just as is in Kauṇḍinya's version of the story (above, n. 7 on p. 529 and p. 542). But the venue has changed. The initiation according to the *Skandapurāṇa* takes place in the cremation ground instead of a temple. The Lord, smeared with ashes, is said to hold a firebrand (*ulmuka*) in his left hand (SPs 167.127 f.). This seems appropriate for a cremation ground and may suggest that the initiation included branding. Although it is tempting to hypothesize that the ascetic's club has been mistakenly interpreted for what was originally a firebrand, this hypothesis has to be discarded, not only because of what has been said above, but also, more importantly, because images of Lakulīśa with a firebrand have never come to light and the *ulmuka* is elsewhere never mentioned as one of his potential attributes. On the other hand, the firebrand as an attribute is found in some later images of Śiva as a teacher, in his so-called 'Dakṣiṇāmūrti'.<sup>21</sup>

The ancient cremation ground in Ujjain has been identified. Locally known as Kumhār Tekḍī, this site was the subject of preliminary explorations by M.B. Garde in the season of 1938–39. Discovered there were skeletons in sitting posture, reflecting the normal way of interring yogins. Kuśika may have been one of them.<sup>22</sup> The specification of these four disciples in the *Skandapurāṇa* allows us to catch a glimpse of the spread and ramification of the movement; it will be our subject in the final part of this essay.



Plate 127  
*Ujjain: The Cremation Ground*

21 For instance in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the Kailāsanātha temple in Kanchi. See Bisschop 2006, 211.

22 Garde 1940, Plate VIII (b) & (c). See also above, p. 430.

*Spread and ramification of the Pāśupata movement*

From the Mathurā Pilaster of AD 380 we deduce that the Pāśupata movement had spread from South Gujarat to Mathurā before the end of the fourth century. This is true for at least one tradition of gurus, the so-called ‘Vaimalas’, who traced their pedigree also directly back to Kuśika. In an image found in Mathurā that might be slightly later than the pilaster, the ithyphallic divine teacher—who, to judge by his attribute, is to be identified as Lāguḍi—is shown with two disciples (above, Plate 118).<sup>23</sup> Evidently the Kuśika lineage (*param-parā*) as attested in Kauṇḍinya’s commentary needed to compete with one or more rival traditions that also claimed direct descent from Śiva’s incarnation.<sup>24</sup>

The *Skandapurāṇa*’s account of the four disciples of Lāguḍi, which would become the standard, reflects this bifurcation, which may have started already in the 4th century, if not earlier. The earliest known image that shows four disciples seated around a divine teacher, however, comes only in the 6th century (Plate 128); it is found ‘above the doorway in the east vestibule to the great cave at Yogeśvarī near Bombay’, which is dated by Walter Spink to c. AD 525.<sup>25</sup>



Plate 128

*Yogeśvarī Cave (Mumbai): Lakulīśa with four disciples*

23 Shah 1984, 97; Meister (ed.) 1984, Pl. 81.

24 Cf. above, n. 6 on p. 529 and p. 541.

25 Spink 1983, 243. Shah 1984, 88. The divine figure in the Yogeśvarī Cave seems to be four-armed: the left upper hand holds the rosary, the left lower hand the club, the right lower hand seems to make a *vyākḥānamudrā*, whereas the right upper arm is missing (cf. Shah 1984, 98). This early Śaiva monument, just as the monuments at Mandapesvar and Elephanta, shows the flourishing of the Pāśupata movement in the middle of the 6th century, when the movement’s home country came under the control of the early Kalacuris, who extended their rule to the northern Konkan, where these monuments are preserved (Spink 1983; cf. Mirashi in CII IV.1, xlvi f., cxlvii f.). The Kalacuri king Kṛṣṇarāja in an inscription of his son (Śaṃkaragaṇa) datable to AD 597, is said to have been devoted to Paśupati from the day of his birth (*janmana eva paśupatisamāśraya-parah*, CII IV.1, 41).

The account in the *Skandapurāṇa* tells us that the third disciple, who was initiated in Mathurā, was named Mitra. No doubt there were many Mitras in Mathurā, but the mentioning of this name in this context may betray some historical awareness of the fact that the city of Mathurā, before the coming of the Śakas, had been governed by a Mitra dynasty.<sup>26</sup> Making a (legendary) Mitra the fountainhead of a lineage of Pāśupata gurus in Mathurā would only add to the authenticity of this tradition.

The *Skandapurāṇa* suggests that before the Pāśupata teachers had settled in Mathurā, the movement had reached the city of Jambumārga, to be located between Ujjayanī and Mathurā.<sup>27</sup> In this city, the divine incarnation is said to have initiated his second disciple Gārgya. The exact location of Jambumārga is unknown, but it must have been an important Śaiva centre. Professor Tsuchida (Tokyo) has suggested to me that it may be the town called Mo-hi-shi-fa-lo-pu-lo, Maheśvarapura, visited by Xuanzang in the first quarter of the seventh century. The Chinese pilgrim describes the place as follows.

The produce of the soil and the manners of the people are like those of the kingdom of Ujjayanī. They greatly esteem the heretics and do not reverence the law of the Buddha. There are several tens of Dēva temples, and the sectaries principally belong to the Pāsupatas. The king is of the Brāhman caste; he places but little faith in the doctrine of Buddha.<sup>28</sup>

The itinerary of the Chinese pilgrim suggests that Maheśvarapura lay on the route from Ujjain to the north through Chitor, that is on the axis Ujjain, Mandasor, Chitor, Puṣkara, Mathurā.<sup>29</sup> The research of Elizabeth Cecil (2016, 150 ff.) has shown that the salt lake region north of Puṣkara, around Sikar–Sambhar, traditionally known as Sapādalakṣa, in particular the excavation site at Naliasar, 6 km from Sāmbhar (Śākambharī), may be another good candidate for Jambumārga.

In between Puṣkara and Ujjain is the village presently known as Nagarī, corresponding to the ancient town of Mādhyamika, which is located near Chitor (Xuanzang's Chi-ki-to) in Rajasthan. Just as in Maheśvarapura, Xuanzang reports a strong Śaiva presence in Chi-ki-to: 'There are about ten Dēva temples, which some thousand followers frequent' (Beal II, 271). The archaeological remains in Nagarī (Mādhyamika) testify to its importance as a Śaiva centre in the 5th and 6th centuries, predating Chitor.<sup>30</sup> We discuss the Nagarī remains in more detail elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

26 Gupta 1989, 129–131.

27 Cf. Bisschop 2006, 209.

28 Xuanzang in Beal II, 271.

29 See also Deloche 1980 I, 60 & Fig. 8. This appears to be the same route that is described in the *Tīrthayātrāparvan* (MBh 3.80.59–71). Another candidate for Maheśvarapura has been proposed by Michael Willis (1997, 17), who identifies this place with the village of Shivpur (Shivpuri/Sipri), c. 100 km west of Jhansi (MP), c. 240 km south of Mathurā.

30 An image of Lakūṣa with four disciples is found built into the Rampol Gate of Chitorgarh, which is dated to 'ca. seventh century' by Shah 1984, 97 f., Pl. 84.

31 Below, pp. 567 ff. Cf. above, pp. 522 ff., Plates 115, 116. Bakker 2004c, 131–134; Bakker & Bisschop 2016.

*The route along which the Pāśupata religion moved north*

Combining the evidence and the above conjectures, tentative as much of it may be, we could try to reconstruct the route along which the Pāśupata religion moved north in the fourth century. Coming from Karvan in Gujarat, and after having established itself in Ujjain in Western Malwa (Madhya Pradesh), it moved northwards along the ancient caravan route that connected the port of Bharukaccha (Bharuch) at the mouth of the Narmadā River, through Ujjain, with Puškara in Rajasthan and the town of Mathurā further-on in Uttar Pradesh. On this route Jambumārga, Maheśvarapura, became a Pāśupata stronghold like Ujjain and Mathurā (Figure 15).

The movement did not end in Mathurā. The *Skandapurāṇa* speaks of the fourth disciple of Lāguḍi as a man born in the Kuru country, i.e. Kurukṣetra, but it stops short of mentioning him by name (see above, p. 527). This *puruṣa* issued from the fourth face of Śiva is said to have been initiated by Lāguḍi in Kanyakubja, the city of Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh (SP<sub>S</sub> 167, 129). We take this as an indication that Kanauj had become another important centre of the Pāśupata sect in the 5th or 6th century. The explicit mentioning of the birth of the fourth disciple in the Land of the Kurus strongly suggests that this region too, with its capital Thanesar (Sthāneśvara), had become a mainstay of the new faith. The rise of the city of Kanauj as the political (and cultural) capital of Northern India in the 6th century, made that it became the base from where the movement spread over North India and beyond, into Magadhā, Nepal and Southeast Asia (Cambodia).

## THE ORIGIN OF A PAN-INDIAN RELIGION

The *Skandapurāṇa* describes the four disciples, after they had been initiated (*anugṛhya*), as apostles of the Pañcārtha doctrine.

Lāguḍi (the divine incarnation) bestowed on them ‘His own doctrine’ (Svasiddhānta) and *yoga*, and spoke:

This is the final mystical teaching known as *Pañcārtha*. It has been proclaimed to you in order that you liberate the brahmins from the fetters of death. You should make the brahmins reach the highest station by initiating them (in this teaching). Your dwelling places shall be on sacred river banks, in holy sanctuaries, as well as in deserted houses and forests, excluded from society.

Having heard this word of Lord Paśupati Himself, all these four disciples, being enlightened by God, did as they were told.<sup>32</sup>

To pursue the further course of the Pāśupata religion will remain a future task. I would like to conclude by briefly illustrating how a possibly historic, and

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32 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.129cd–132. Above, p. 527 and n. 3 on p. 528.

in many respects unique, mystical event, the religious enlightenment of the brahmin saint Kuśika in Ujjain, developed into a pan-Indian cult of Lakulīśa.

The author Kauṇḍinya gives the impression of still being in direct touch with the origins of the movement. He relates how the divine incarnation reached Ujjain by foot, a touching detail, and suggests that the authenticity of this event can be confirmed by the still visible traces that have been left behind.<sup>33</sup> In the two hundred years between Kauṇḍinya and the composition of the *Skandapurāṇa* great developments had taken place. There had risen a number of gurus, no doubt rivals with one another, who claimed that their respective lineages (*paramparā*) hailed back to a disciple of the divine incarnation. To unite them, the idea of multiple disciples—first two, and then four—was invented.

In an orthogenetic process—or, less likely, a heterogenetic one through the influence of the Hellenistic figure of Heracles—the divine incarnation who was believed to have initiated these four disciples somehow came to be called Lāguḍi or Lakulīśa. Once the idea was accepted that this Lāguḍi had operated not only in Kārohaṇa and Ujjain, but had initiated in Śaiva centres such as Jambumārga, Mathurā and another as far off as Kanyakubja, there was no longer a reason not to claim that he had operated in other places as well. The last vestige of historicity vanished. It was replaced by the belief that there had been incarnations of Śiva in all world periods: Lakulīśa was just one of them. And why should God limit his range to western India? This new view is evident in a passage in the *Skandapurāṇa* that has been shown by Peter Bisschop to be an interpolation in the earliest extant recension of the text, the one preserved in Nepal (SP<sub>S</sub>).<sup>34</sup> This passage runs as follows:

Tradition has it that there are eight holy places of Śiva (Śaśimaulin) in the land of Magadhā, through which Laguḍīśvara wandered, surrounded by his pupils. When one has visited those, a man will be at once redeemed from sins.<sup>35</sup>

Thus developed an elitist faith of ascetic virtuosi into a catholic religion. The anonymous saviour of Kauṇḍinya turned into just another manifestation of the divine, his worship into just another form of Śiva devotion.

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33 Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1. Sastri's edition pp. 3f. Above, p. 542.

34 Bisschop 2006, 15–17. Above, p. 537.

35 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.169; above, n. 36 on p. 537.

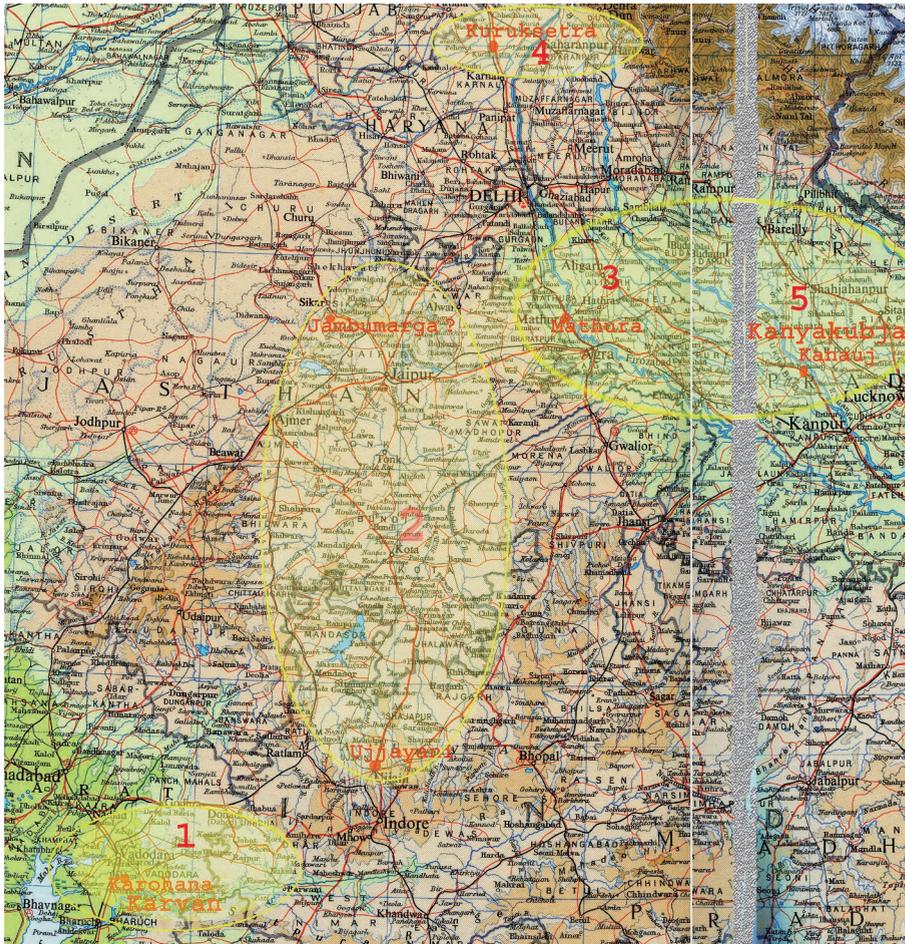


Figure 15

Map of northwestern India: spread of the Pāśupata movement



# The Quest for the Pāśupata Weapon\*

## The Gateway of the Mahādeva Temple at Madhyamikā (Nagarī)

HANS BAKKER & PETER BISSCHOP

### INTRODUCTION

The village of Nagarī is situated in the Chittorgarh District (Rajasthan), 11 km north of the famous fort. The present archaeological site lies to the south of the village on the right bank of the River Berach. The original citadel along the river extended further northwards and included the space presently occupied by the village (Plate 129).



*Plate 129*

*The citadel of the old town of Madhyamikā*

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\* The first version of this article was published in *IJ* 59 (2016): 217–258. It was the outcome of the joint visit of Bakker and Bisschop to the village of Nagarī in January 2016. We are much obliged to Véronique Degroot for preparing the drawings of the architraves illustrating this article.

The remains of the Mahādeva Temple are found in the southern part of the archaeological site (Plate 130).



Plate 130  
The site of the Mahādeva Temple

These remains consist of a reconstructed brick platform surrounded by some stray pieces of architecture: parts of a *dhvajastambha* (pillar), pillar capitals having bull and lion, a pedestal, an architrave of a *toraṇa*, a beam with *gavākṣas* and *makara*, and a *torāṇa* post (Plate 131).



Plate 131  
Remains within the precincts of the Mahādeva Temple

The architrave and post have sculptured panels on both sides, indicating that

they must have been part of a free standing gateway, as the following (partial) reconstruction may show (Plates 132, 133):<sup>1</sup>



Plate 132  
*Toraṇa east face*

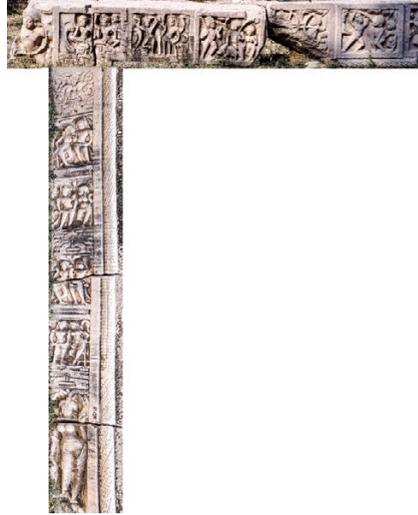


Plate 133  
*Toraṇa west face*

Before we discuss the iconography of the *torāṇa*, we will give a brief sketch of the historical setting of the site.

## THE HISTORY OF THE NAGARĪ SITE

### *Inscriptions and coins*

Many coins are reported to have come from Nagarī. Bhandarkar found in his excavations sixteen legible punch-marked coins pertaining to the Śibi-janapada. The legend of these coins reads: *majhimikāya śibijanapadasa*.<sup>2</sup> Bhandarkar (*op. cit.* 123 f.), following an earlier suggestion by Kielhorn, identified this Majhimikā ‘with the Madhyamikā mentioned by Patañjali as having been invested in his time by a Yavana king’,<sup>3</sup> and takes it to be the old name of Nagarī. He

1 For another, well-preserved example of such a gateway from the same period and area, compare the tall post found at Khilchipura, now at Mandasor Fort (below, p. 573). Joanna Williams (1982, 142) draws attention to the striking similarity; she considers the Khilchipura piece to be slightly later.

2 Bhandarkar 1920, 122; Allan 1936, CXXIII f.

3 Patañjali *ad* P. 3.2.111: *aruṇad yavano madhyamikām*.

translates the legend as ‘Coin of the Śibi *janapada* of the Madhyamikā country’. This distinguishes the Śibis of Nagarī from those of the Punjab. Bhandarkar (and historians after him) had little doubt that Madhyamikā ‘was the old name of Nagarī and also the district around it’.<sup>4</sup>

Five inscriptions have been reportedly found in Nagarī and surroundings, one of them is the famous *Ghoṣūṇḍī Well Stone Inscription*,<sup>5</sup> recording the establishment of a stone enclosure around the Nārāyaṇa Vāṭikā, which was dedicated to the two gods Saṃkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. The site of this Vāṭikā has been identified by Bhandarkar (1920, 128 ff.) with the so-called Elephant Pen of Akbar (Hāthī-bāḍā), ‘half a mile east of the village [Nagarī]’. Bhandarkar found here, among other things, a stone with grafitto reading: *śrīviṣṇupādābhyāṃ* in seventh-century characters.<sup>6</sup>

For our present purpose, the inscription reportedly found ‘not far from the shrine of Mahādeva’ is of greater relevance. It is dated 481 in the Kṛta (= Vikrama) Era, corresponding to AD 424. It records ‘the erection of a temple to Vishnu by the three Baniā brothers’, Satyaśūra, Srugandha (Śrīgandha?) and Dāsa, and thus testifies to a Viṣṇu temple, established at or near the site of the Mahādeva temple during the reign of Emperor Kumāragupta.<sup>7</sup> At this time Western Mālava was under control of the feudatory Early Aulikara prince (*nṛpatī*) Viśvavarman, who was ruling from Daśapura (Mandasor), c. 100 km to the south of Nagarī.<sup>8</sup>

Some fragments belonging to the Gupta period were discovered by Bhandarkar in the area: two capitals of pillars with addorsed lions and bulls (in the Kaṅkāli Mātā shrine in Nagarī village). Other pillars and images were found c. 4 km southeast of Nagarī at the shrine of Sāḍū Mātā.<sup>9</sup>

One more inscribed stone relevant to our present discussion was found in Chittorgarh in 1959, ‘while clearing debris in the fort area’. This stone, containing two brief fragmentary, but related inscriptions, was published by Sircar

4 Bhandarkar 1920, 123 f.

5 The Ghoṣūṇḍī village lies c. 6 km NE of Nagarī, but the inscribed stone came originally from the so-called Hāthī-bāḍā at Nagarī. There exist apparently three copies of this inscription, one still *in situ*. EI 16, 25–27; EI 22, 198–205; Sircar in SI I, 90 f.: ‘2nd half of the 1st cent. BC’.

6 Bhandarkar 1920, 129; Agrawala 1987.

7 Bhandarkar 1920, 121. The text of this inscription has not been published, although it is referred to in several publications. We only know about the basic contents of this inscription from Bhandarkar’s original description. According to Bhandarkar it was ‘deposited in the Rajputana Museum, Ajmer’. Although the line of the inscription that mentions the Kṛta Era has been extensively discussed in CII III (1981), 192 ff., and the inscription clearly falls within the category of ‘Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings’, the editors of the revised edition of Volume III of the CII (B. Chhabra & G.S. Gai) refrain from including and editing this inscription in their volume, nor do they give any more information about the inscription itself and its whereabouts. It shows again the limited value of this ‘revised edition’.

8 CII III (1880), 72–78; SI I, 399–405; Salomon 1989, 19 f.

9 Bhandarkar 1920, Plates XIV (a), XV (b).

and Gai in *Epigraphia Indica* 34 (1961–62). The second inscription attests to the building of a temple, which was, in all likelihood, dedicated to Śiva, since the *maṅgala* verse speaks of ‘the one who hides the moon in the pile of his curling, tawny matted locks’.<sup>10</sup> Its construction seems to have been commissioned by a *rājasthānīya* or viceroy who was ruling in Daśapura and Madhyamā. The (Śiva) temple is said to be located to the north of the (Viṣṇu) temple of Manorathasvāmin.<sup>11</sup>

Madhyamā has been identified with Madhyamikā, and the *rājasthānīya*, son of Viṣṇudatta and grandson of Varāha(dāsa), belonged to the powerful merchant (Naigama) family that kept the office of chief minister or viceroy under the Later Aulikara kings of Daśapura, in particular Prakāśadharman and Yaśodharman (between AD 510 and 533).<sup>12</sup> The two Chittorgarh inscriptions belong to this period and record the importance of the Madhyamā/Madhyamikā province within the kingdom of Daśapura in the first four decades of the sixth century. They also testify to shifting religious affiliations amongst regional rulers: the Early Aulikaras, like their Gupta overlords, were Vaiṣṇavas; the Later Aulikaras, who came to power after the turbulent period that saw the fall of the Gupta Empire, were devotees of Śiva. It would seem that the archaeological remains in Nagarī reflect this revolution.

The fort of Chittorgarh dates from the post-Aulikara period, when Daśapura and Madhyamikā had lost their prominence. It is conceivable that the inscribed stone slab came from nearby Nagarī along with other materials, when the newly built fort provided safety to a successor state, possibly that of the Mori Rajputs (Mauryas) in the seventh century.<sup>13</sup>

### Archaeology

Excavations at Nagarī were conducted by D.R. Bhandarkar in the ‘second decade of the [20th] century’, and after him by K.V. Soundara Rajan in 1962–63.<sup>14</sup> The archaeological situation is summed up by R.P. Sharma in A. Ghosh’s *Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, volume II s.v. ‘Nagari’.

[...] Three periods were distinguished, the first two being anterior to the stone fortification and seemingly without baked-brick structures, though limestone structures were known. They had both red and grey wares; the occurrence of the NBPW was negligible, though associated red ware was available. The settlement seems to have originated in c. 400 B.C. [...] Period III was marked by the presence of the Red Polished Ware. The other finds of the site include terracotta human and animal figures in Śuṅga and Gupta styles [...] The fortification probably originated in Gupta times.

10 EI 34, 57: *āpiṅgabhaṅgurajaṭācayalīnacandram*.

11 It is impossible to say whether this temple is the one erected by the Baniā brothers in the fifth century.

12 Sircar & Gai in EI 34 (1961–62), 53–58; Salomon 1989, 18.

13 Cecil 2016, 116 f. HCI III, 161 f.

14 Bhandarkar 1920; IAR 1962–63, 19.

The main site of Bhandarkar's excavation was around the small Mahādeva Temple. This temple itself is of recent date, but the installed *liṅga* may be old (Plate 134).



*Plate 134*  
*Liṅga of Mahādeva Temple*

The structure exposed in the excavations consists of a square brick platform (Plate 135).



*Plate 135*  
*Excavated brick platform in Nagari*

It will be seen from the plan that the east side was unlike the other sides of the platform and shows that it and its superstructure faced that direction. The maximum height preserved of its moulded walls is 4' [122 cm] and is found in the west wall. This seems to be nearly half of the original height of the platform. Though the upper half of its walls has fallen down, it appears from the terracottas picked up from the débris, to have been covered with decorative tiles of at least three types, some of them probably arranged in string courses. One type is represented by what may be styled bird terracottas. [...]

The centre of the platform was originally occupied by a superstructure, very little of which has now survived. It is 43' 6" [13.30 m] square at the base. Immediately below each side of this square is a foundation wall, 6' [1.80 m] thick. [...] Of the superstructure only the lowermost moulding has been preserved, which is nearly two feet high. (Bhandarkar 1920, 135 f.)

The original temple of the Gupta period may have been of brick, but, as observed by Bhandarkar (*op. cit.* 138), 'to the second period of additions characterised by the introduction of stone work, or possibly to a period slightly later, belong the remains of a stone *torana* exhumed in front of the mound'. It is this *torana* which is the subject of this article.

## THE TORANA OF THE MAHĀDEVA TEMPLE

In describing this gateway Joanna Williams (1982, 140 f.) observed that,

The most impressive carvings at Nagarī are the remains of a gigantic gateway or *torana* that must belong to the early sixth century on the basis of its relationship to works from Mandasor. The decorative side face of the post bears fluted bands and medallions [Plate 136], which elaborate upon forms found at Mukundara.

Passing through the temple gateway is entering a new world. The *torana* as such epitomizes the rite of passage and the symbolism of this rite informs the iconography of the gateway (below, p. 599). It begins with the gatekeeper and his trident at the bottom of the gate post, eastern side, at the entry of the temple compound, which is oriented toward the east (Plate 137).<sup>15</sup>

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15 That this is the eastern, that is entry side, follows from the fact that it has the figure of a Dvārapāla, and because it fits only the eastern face of the architrave. The latter face is the eastern one, because it contains a Dakṣiṇāmūrti, which would be without meaning if it faced west (Bakker 2004c), and an image of Śiva in meditation (Yogeśvara), which should likewise face east. It also seems to follow from the iconographic programme of the architrave itself, which begins, as we will see, in the panels at the entrance, that is the eastern side, and continues with the panels at the exit, that is the western side.



Plate 136  
Side face of toraṇa post



Plate 137  
Gatekeeper with trident facing east

Just as Bhandarkar, Williams assumes that the fragment with *candraśālā* arches lying near the architrave is part of a second tier of the *torāṇa* (Plate 138). She observed that ‘the top half of the double-*candraśālā* arches have diagonal projections from their lower corners, a detail mentioned as characteristic of pieces found in Deogarh’.<sup>16</sup>



Plate 138  
*Candraśālā* arches in the second tier of toraṇa

The original Mahādeva Temple in Nagarī may have resembled the architectural structures that are depicted next to the *candraśālās* (Plate 139).<sup>17</sup> An

<sup>16</sup> Williams 1982, 140f. Cf. Williams 1982, Plate 202 (Deogarh).

<sup>17</sup> This feature/structure has been described by Michael Meister in EITA II.1, 143:

*āmalaka* (1' 9" high), like the one depicted, has been found in Nagarī village (Plate 140).<sup>18</sup>



Plate 139

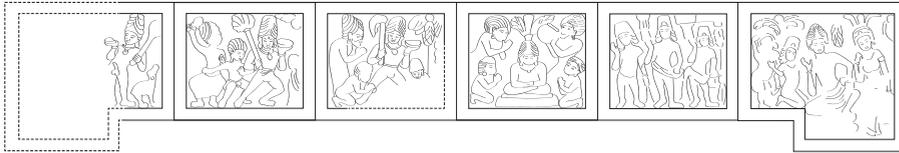
Miniature temple; detail of Plate 138



Plate 140

Āmalaka found in Nagarī

The eastern face (E) of the gateway architrave



S

Plates 141–142

N

Architrave of the gateway, facing east

Reconstruction of the architrave of the gateway, facing east

The upper cross-beam had makara heads at each end with architectural representations on the cross-lintel that show dvibhūma Phāṃsanā structures [i.e. 'tiered, pyramidal roof-type'] faced with candraśālās and with small, square, stone platforms supporting globular āmalakas represented to either side of the upper bhūmi. Such units have been found at Bhūmarā and Sārnāth, are suggested at Sōndani and earlier at Bilsaḍ, are still utilized on structures in Surāṣṭra in the seventh century, and contribute conceptually to the formation of the Nāgara superstructure, where they become incorporated as bhūmikhaṇḍas.

18 Bhandarkar *op. cit.* 125, Plate XIV(b) (probably upside-down).

The full length of the architrave must have measured about 4 metres, but the southern-most panel has broken off at one-third and the concluding sculpture of a garland bearer is missing at that end (Plates 141–142; cf. Plate 115). The whole architrave consisted, in our reconstruction, of two garland bearers on either end and six panels in between. The middle of the architrave must have been between the third and the fourth panel, which we deduce from the turn of the torsion in between the third and fourth panels in the garland at the bottom of the crossbar. The height of the architrave is 65 cm, its width 38 cm. The architrave is broken at two places: in the first panel at the northern end and in the middle, between the third and fourth panels.<sup>19</sup>

The iconography of the eastern face of the architrave, seen by visitors when they entered the temple complex, has been discussed in Bakker 2004c, 131–34, in particular its panel at the northern end, which, it was argued (above, p. 525), contained a Dakṣiṇāmūrti. The latter interpretation still stands, but the person who is instructed in this *mūrti* has to be reconsidered.

At the time Bakker worked from a photograph kindly sent to him by Joanna Williams, which he re-published.<sup>20</sup> Williams (1982, 141) had observed that: ‘The subjects of the reverse [i.e. eastern face] of this same crossbar remain to be identified.’ In a letter to Bakker she added to this that she wondered ‘whether the scene at the left end of this face might not represent the destruction of Dakṣa’s sacrifice’.<sup>21</sup> Bakker (2004, 132 ff.) accepted this suggestion and interpreted the Dakṣiṇāmūrti scene as representing the initiation of King Dakṣa in the Pāśupatiavrata.

The present revision of this interpretation has been prompted by a visit to the excavation site at Nagarī by Bakker and Bisschop and a study of the architrave in the field (15 January 2016). For it turned out that the panel at the southern end (E 1), although incomplete since it has broken off at one-third,

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19 Bhandarkar 1920, 139 thinks that ‘enough has been recovered to show that each broader side was originally divided into nine panels [including garland bearers]’. Bhandarkar’s reconstruction in Plate XXIII shows that he conjectures that one complete panel plus garland bearer is missing at the southern end. In view of the turn of the torsion between the third and fourth panels (E 3–4, W 3–4), we think this is less likely. An argument against our assumption, as voiced by Véronique Degroot, is that the architrave panels show alternating indentation and protrusion: panels E 2/W 5, E 4/W 3 and (northern-most) E 6/W 1 are protruding and so, assuming symmetry, one might expect a southern-most panel to be protruding as well. Another argument, however, against a missing 7th panel, in addition to the change in torsion, seems to be that the breaking point in the southern-most panel (E 1/W 6) corresponds with the crack in the northern-most panel (E 6/W 1), the positions where the architrave supposedly rested on its two posts. The collapse of the *torāṇa* thus seems to have taken place by a break in the middle and at the two junctures. Six panels on each side makes sense according to the iconographical analysis offered in this article. If a 7th, lost panel was originally part of the architrave, the iconography of panels E 1 and W 6 that we conjecture may have been divided, broadly speaking, over two panels.

20 Williams 1982, Plate 216; Bakker 2004c, Figure 4.1 (above, Plate 115).

21 Letter dated 10 March 2001, quoted above, p. 524 (Bakker 2004c, 132).

actually contains significant information that had been invisible in the above-mentioned photograph. This evidence was spotted by Bisschop and debated in the field. It resulted in the acknowledgement that the earlier interpretation of the panels of the eastern face as depicting the Dakṣa myth needed to be reconsidered.

The incomplete panel at the southern end (E1) deserves a full discussion (Plate 143).

Two features of this sculpture catch the eye and suggest a new identification. The pronounced ithyphallic character and the brush with peacock feathers, which is held in the ascetic's left hand. It invites comparison to an image found at the bottom of the seventh-century doorpost built into the Deur Temple in Malhar, Chhattisgarh (Plate 144).<sup>22</sup>



*Plate 143*  
*The first panel of the eastern face of the architrave (E1)*

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<sup>22</sup> This Deur Temple in Malhar and its ancient doorposts is discussed in Bosma 2018, 193 ff.



Plate 144  
Lower-most panel in Malhar doorpost

As emerges from this and other panels of the same doorjamb, the Malhar panel depicts Śiva's entry as a naked ascetic into the Devadāruvana. The earliest account of this myth is found in the *Skandapurāṇa*. The description of his appearance there matches the present panel:

THE Trident-bearer once entered that forest for the sake of alms. The sages saw the Lord of Gods there with his phallus erect.<sup>23</sup>

Like in the Nagarī panel, Śiva carries the ascetic attribute of a brush and is ithyphallic, while his left hand holds a begging bowl ready to receive alms.<sup>24</sup> These features do not figure in the Dakṣa myth.

In the Nagarī panel E1 the protagonist carries something in his raised right hand. The elevated position suggests the object is significant, auspicious it would seem. It is held in such a way as if it is being shown to an audience

23 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.74: *bhikṣāhetor vanaṃ tat tu prāviśat kila śūladhr̥k | sa dṛṣṭas tatra deveśo munībhīḥ stabdhamehanaḥ ||* For the Devadāruvana myth in the *Skandapurāṇa* etc. see Bisschop 2006, 195 f. Cf. above, p. 548.

24 Although the ascetic brush (*sthalapavitra*; *picchikā* in Jaina texts) is usually associated with Jainism, it was a mark of mendicants in general and of Pāśupatas as well. Cf. *Pañcārthabhāṣya ad Pāśupatasūtra* 1.6: *tathā bhikṣos tridaṇḍamuṇḍakamaṇḍalukāṣāya-vāsopajalapavitrasthalapavitrādi liṅgam*. The sieve and brush are listed as donations to be given to the *śivayogin* in *Śivadharmasāstra* 12.70 (De Simini 2013, 291). On the adoption of the principle of *ahimsā* by the Pāśupatas, see Hara 2002, 67–76. For Bhikṣāṇamūrtis with staff (trident) with peacock feathers see Donaldson 1986, 56.

that populated the missing two-thirds of the panel. This interpretation of the gesture is reinforced by the two following Nagarī panels (E2 & 3), in which apparently the same object is raised, but in the left hand this time, in order to hold it away from the attackers, whereas the right hand now holds the ascetic brush. Moreover, the object seems to contain something in the first panel whereas it appears empty in the second and third, a difference that might have significance and which we will discuss below. A deer in the incomplete first panel (E1) and a clearly visible tree in the third one (E3) suggest a forest setting (Plates 143, 146).



Plate 145

Second panel from the left (E2)



Plate 146

Third panel from the left (E3)

That this forest in the Nagarī panel is also the Devadāruvana, follows from another significant difference between the first panel on the one hand and the second and third panels on the other: the protagonist in the latter two is no longer ithyphallic, or phallic at all. This is not due to damage, but seems to be an intrinsic part of the sculpture. This feature proves, in our view, that the myth depicted on the eastern face of the Nagarī architrave is, like its Malhar counterpart, that of Śiva in the Pine Forest:

OUT of envy the bewildered sages felled the great *liṅga* of the god, O Vyāsa, in the Pine Forest hermitage.<sup>25</sup>

A problem remains: what is the object that Śiva holds first in his raised right and then in his left hand? Erosion of the object in all three panels hampers its identification. The earlier view that saw in these panels the depiction of the Dakṣa myth naturally interpreted this object as the sacrificial cake (*puroḍāś*), seized from the sacrifice, but this could apply to the second and third panels only (E2 & 3), not to the first one (E1), in which the object is shown by Śiva.<sup>26</sup>

25 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.75: *īṣayā munibhir liṅgaṃ tasya devasya tan mahat | vimūḍhaiḥ pātitaṃ vyāsa devadāruvanāśrame ||*

26 Cf. below, n. 57 on p. 595.



Plate 147  
Fertility goddess, Mathurā



Plate 148  
Gaṅgā, Ahicchatra<sup>27</sup>

The hand gesture in this panel recalls images of goddesses of life and natural fertility holding a vase or pot with *amṛta*, the elixir of life, such as, for instance, the maiden on the stūpa railing found in Bhūteśvara, or the terracotta image of Gaṅgā found in Ahicchatra (Plates 147, 148). This *pūrṇakalaśa* carried in the raised palm of the hand symbolizes vitality and natural growth. And although the Devadāruvana myth is all about life, growth and natural reproduction, depictions of this myth in which Śiva carries a vase are not known to us.<sup>28</sup>

Another terracotta piece found in Ahicchatra may be considered in this connection. It has been described by Agrawala and Banerjea as a panel depicting a Śiva Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Plate 149),<sup>29</sup> an identification that is, however, untenable in our understanding of a Dakṣiṇāmūrti (Bakker 2004c). This panel shows

27 Photo courtesy National Museum New Delhi. <http://www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in/prodCollections.asp?pid=24&id=2&lk=dp2> (accessed 17-5-2016).

28 In depictions of Śiva as a beggar he generally holds the begging bowl in his hand held low, but a strikingly similar sculpture from Alampur shows him displaying a filled object in his raised, left hand and holding a brush in his right. See Parlier-Renault 2007, 135, fig. 89.

29 V.S. Agrawala in *Ancient India* 4, pp. 169–170. Banerjea 1956, 471 Pl. 7:

The four-armed god seated in the *ardhaparyāṅka* pose holds a rosary in the back right hand and a vase with foliage in the left; the lower right hand (broken) seems to have been either in the *jñāna* or *vyākhyāna* pose, the front left hand resting on the thigh.

a four-armed deity represented as an ascetic (matted hair, rosary), holding a *pūrṇakalaśa* with foliage in his back left hand. Apart from the general characteristics of the ascetic, none of Śiva's usual iconographic markers is apparently present and the question is justified whether we are really concerned with an image of this god.<sup>30</sup>



Plate 149  
Terracotta panel, Ahicchatra

There are two figures on the left of the god, one male and the other female with hands in the *namaskāra mudrā*.

- 30 A new interpretation of this panel has recently been proposed by Laxshmi Greaves (2015, 308–13, 450–55). After a comparison of this plaque with the depiction of the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa on the east face of the Gupta temple at Deogarh and a terracotta plaque from Bhitargaon, Greaves proposes to identify the four-armed figure in the Ahicchatra panel with Nārāyaṇa. The nymph standing to his left, Greaves argues, is the Apsaras Urvaśī, and the panel depicts the myth told in the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* 1.129.1–19, 3.35.1–18), which describes how the sage Nārāyaṇa created Urvaśī by drawing her outline in mango juice on his thigh: ‘It is apposite then that Sage Nārāyaṇa has been depicted with his left hand on his thigh, perhaps illustrating that the creation of Urvaśī has just taken place’ (Greaves *op. cit.* 454). We consider this interpretation interesting, but conclude that for the moment the Ahicchatra panel, whether Nārāyaṇa or Śiva, cannot help us to decode the iconographic programme of the Nagarī architrave. One of our doubts concerns the *upanayana* cord. Could this be a snake, whose head appears at the deity’s left ear? If so, this would point to Śiva, rather than Nārāyaṇa. In the present state of conservation it is impossible to see if the deity is ithyphallic. However, his vexed look and the way the vessel in the left upper hand is kept off suggest a certain similarity with the Nagarī panels E2 and E3 (Plates 145–46); they may point to a Devadāruvana scene, in which the male in the background is the seer in a pose of resignation, while his wife in front of him is full of admiration for the intruder.

We will return to the unidentified object in Śiva's raised right/left hand later, but first we should have a look at the remaining panels of the architrave.

The second and third panels of the eastern face of the cross-beam correspond closely to the second and third panels from below in the Malhar doorpost and thus reinforce the Devadāruvana interpretation (Plates 150–153).



Plate 150  
Second panel from left (E2), Nagarī

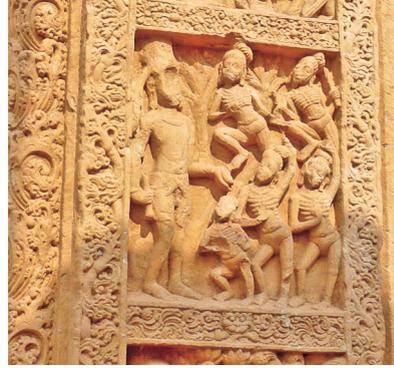


Plate 151  
Second panel from bottom, Malhar



Plate 152  
Third panel from left (E3), Nagarī

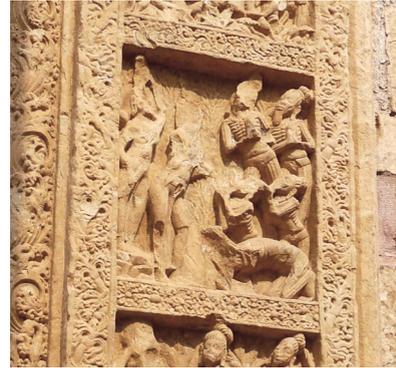


Plate 153  
Third panel from bottom, Malhar

In both cases Śiva is attacked by furious sages and in both cases the latter realize their mistake, fall to his feet and cry forgiveness:

THEREUPON the gods, beginning with Brahmā, and the sages striving for liberation realized that the terrible calamity was all caused by Śaṅkara. After praising him with various hymns, they propitiated Śaṅkara.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> SP<sub>S</sub> 167.77: *brahmādayas tato devās te ca siddhā mumukṣavaḥ | jñātvā śaṅkarajaṃ sarvaṃ tad apāyaṃ sudāruṇam | saṃstutya vividhaiḥ stotraih śaṅkaraṃ paryatoṣayan ||*

In the fourth and fifth panels the Nagarī and Malhar stories go separate ways. The Malhar panels refer to the Devadāruvana myth as told in the *Saromāhātmya*, in which Śiva in the form of an elephant plays a central role in re-installing the *liṅga*.<sup>32</sup> We will focus on the Nagarī story.

When we pass from the third (E3) to the fourth panel (E4) we cross the middle of the architrave and therewith, it seems, we leave behind the Devadāruvana myth proper. The right half of the architrave is rather concerned with the consequences of the events told in the myth: Śiva is recognized as supreme god, who alone is capable of bestowing power (*siddhi*), grace (*prasāda*) and deliverance from all suffering (*duḥkhānta*). This is what the begging sages in the third panel (E3) realize; the fourth panel (E4) shows this new insight. God is depicted sitting under a tree, deep in concentration, as the master of yoga, Yogeśvara (Plate 154).<sup>33</sup>



Plate 154  
Fourth panel from the left (E4), Nagarī

The reason that his Yogeśvara form and not the *liṅga* is chosen to represent him may have its origin in the fact that the designer of the architrave wanted to

32 VmP *Saromāhātmya* 23.29–35. Cf. Donaldson 1986, pp. 53–54.

33 The iconography of Śiva steeped in meditation underneath a tree is obviously derived from Buddhist examples.

tell another story. Realization of one's aim in this world and the acquisition of (yogic) power is achieved by following the path (*sādhana*) that he contemplates and is ready to communicate to the world of men. The four acolytes around Yogeśvara may intimate the spread of this *sādhana* over the earth, since they evoke the image of the four disciples:

AND in the present age as well, when the Supreme Lord had seen the suffering in the world, He emitted four men (*puruṣa*) from His four faces and spoke to them, since it was His wish to bestow grace upon mankind:  
 'YOU four should go to earth and become twice-born ascetics; O Masters of Yoga, return to me after you have led the brahmins to the highest station.<sup>34</sup>

These *puruṣas*, the *Skandapurāṇa* (SP) continues, will become the four disciples (*śiṣya*) of Śiva, whose own incarnation on earth is known as Lāguḍi in the SP or Lakulīśa in later literature. This incarnation, characterised by his attribute the club (*lakula*), is not depicted on the architrave, but any *guru* pertaining to the four *paramparās* inaugurated by him, may be imagined to be implicitly involved in the last panel of the eastern face, since these *ācāryas* are believed to impersonate Śiva when they initiate and instruct their pupils.<sup>35</sup> The four acolytes around Yogeśvara perform different acts of veneration and they do not seem all to be of the same standing. The one at the viewer's lower right may be a householder, indicating that not only ascetics, but the whole world had come to recognize Śiva as supreme god.

The following, penultimate panel (E5, Plate 155) shows someone set on the path towards instruction in the doctrine, which is the subject of the last panel (E6, Plate 156, cf. Plate 116).

The interpretation that conceived of these east-facing panels as depicting the myth of the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice obviously saw in the central figure King Dakṣa (Bakker 2004c). In our present understanding of the iconographic programme, however, this is no longer evident.

Of the three figures in a row, the one at the viewer's right seems to stand within a architectural structure of which roof and pillars are still partly visible. In his left hand he carries something that looks like a quiver. If this is the case, we could expect that there would be a bow somewhere, but the panel is too much eroded to make it out. Twisted locks of hair fall from under his crown-like headgear. This feature recurs in the next panel in the kneeling figure and we infer that both depict the same person.

34 SP<sub>S</sub> 167.119–120:

*varṭamāne kalau cāpi jñātvā duḥkḥhārditaṃ jagat |*  
*catvāraḥ puruṣān sṛṣṭvā svasmān mukhacatuṣṭayāt |*  
*provāca paramēśāno lokānugrahalīpsayā || 119 ||*  
*yūyaṃ yāta mahiṃ sarve dvijā bhūtvā tapasvinaḥ |*  
*mām evaiśyatha yogīśā nītvā viprān paraṃ padam || 120 ||*

35 Bakker 2004c, 124 f. (above, p. 514). Kauṇḍinya *ad* PS 1.1. Dalal 1920, p. 9: *Ratnaṭikā ad Gaṇakārikā* 5c.



Plate 155  
Fifth panel from the left (E 5), Nagari

The figure at the viewer's left seems to be of a different standing than the two persons to the right. He is naked and of plump build. His headdress seems plain and his right hand makes the 'do-not-fear' gesture. His left hand is something of a puzzle. It would seem that this hand is raised and holds an object at head height, if this is not the raised right arm of the central figure.

The tallest figure in the middle is clearly a senior person. His left hand holds the knot of his *dhoti*. His right arm, if it is not raised, appears to lean on the left arm of his companion to the right, while his hand seems to hold something; a stick? It is clear that he wears a high crown with an ornament.

As a working hypothesis we conjecture that the figure carrying the quiver and who reappears in the next panel is Arjuna, who is being dispatched by his elder brother Yudhiṣṭhira, the figure in the middle, on the advise of Vyāsa, who stands on the (viewer's) left side.

*Mahābhārata* 3.37–38 tells the story.<sup>36</sup> Vyāsa instructs Yudhiṣṭhira to pass on to Arjuna a spell, a *vidyā* named Pratismr̥ti, also referred to as *yogavidyā* or *brahman*, which will enable him to acquire the necessary weapons from Indra, Rudra, Varuṇa, Kubera and Dharmā.<sup>37</sup> Yudhiṣṭhira explains to Arjuna that their enemies possess mastery in the use of all sorts of weapons and therefore, for the Pāṇḍavas to win the war, it is necessary to obtain superior weapons. He will initiate him into this secret knowledge (Upaniṣad) received from Vyāsa,

36 Cf. *Kirātārjuniya* (KA) 3.10–29.

37 MBh 3.37.25–28.

thanks to which the whole world will become visible to him and through which he should seek the grace of the gods.<sup>38</sup>

AFTER these words the lord King Dharma (i.e. Yudhiṣṭhira) taught him (i.e. Arjuna) that magic, when he was ritually consecrated and controlled in word, body, and thought; then the elder brother told his heroic brother to depart.<sup>39</sup>

In the *Mahābhārata* Indra is the first person that Arjuna visits on his quest, but the Śaiva world view, which conceived this temple and architrave, shifted the Vyāsa–Yudhiṣṭhira line of initiation onto Śiva, as we will see in the next panel. It is Śiva's help that is sought first, since only instruction in the Pāśupata path will enable Arjuna to reach his goal. This is the lesson that the seers on earth had learned in the Devadāruvana, illustrated in the first three panels. We move on to the last one (E 6, Plate 156).



Plate 156

Sixth panel from the left (E 6): a Dakṣiṇāmūrti

This panel shows Śiva facing east, with Pārvatī to his left. The necklace and headdress are the same as that of Yogeśvara in the fourth panel (E 4). And the twisted locks of hair falling from under a crown-like headgear with ornament

38 MBh 3.38.9–10:

*kṛṣṇadvaiṣṭhānāt tāta gṛhītopaniṣan mayā |*  
*tayā prayuktayā samyag jagat sarvaṃ prakāśate || 9 ||*  
*tena tvam brahmaṇā tāta saṃyuktaḥ susamāhitaḥ |*  
*devatānāṃ yathākālaṃ prasādaṃ pratipālaya || 10 ||*

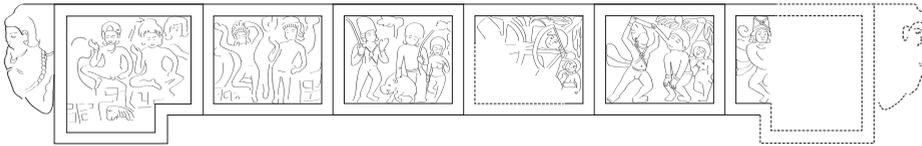
39 MBh 3.38.14 (tr. van Buitenen): *evam uktvā dharmarājas tam adhyāpayata prabhuh |*  
*dīkṣitaṃ vidhinā tena yatavākkāyamānasam | anujajñe tato viraṃ bhrātā bhrātaram*  
*agrajaḥ || 14 ||* Cf. Kirātārjuniya (KA) 3.24–29.

identifies the figure to Śiva's right (*dakṣiṇā*), towards whom he slightly bends, as the same princely figure that we have tentatively identified as Arjuna in the preceding panel (E5). Arjuna is on his knees now, facing north, receiving instruction. The scene is set on a mountain, in a forest. A powerful *gaṇa*-type of figure stands behind him, bending the hero's arms behind his back by his front hands, or so it seems; his right back hand sticks up holding something above his head, whereas the contour of his raised left back arm is only vaguely visible. We will discuss below who this four-armed helper of Śiva could be.

As we have argued earlier, this panel (E6) shows a Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the original meaning of the term (Bakker 2004c, 132 f.; above, p. 525). The neophyte who is instructed or initiated in the Pāśupata doctrine is not Dakṣa, according to our present understanding, but the princely figure depicted in the penultimate panel E5, who is there about to be dispatched by his elder brother and a saintly advisor.

The Devadāruvana myth that is told in the first three panels (E1–3) does not immediately suggest a figure that would be the recipient of Śiva's instruction, let alone the figure of Arjuna. Our tentative interpretation of this panel E6, which sees in it Arjuna's instruction in the Śaiva *sādhana*, needs further underpinning. This will be furnished by the iconographic programme of the western face of the architrave, which will make clear that we should read both sides of the architrave as one continuous story.

*The western face(W) of the gateway architrave*



N

S

*Plates 157–158*

*Architrave of the gateway, facing west*

*Reconstruction of the architrave of the gateway, facing west*

The panels of the reverse side of the architrave (Plates 157–158), which faced west and were seen by visitors leaving the temple complex, have been identified by Joanna Williams (1982, 141); they depict scenes from the Kirātārjunīya myth. This interpretation has been accepted by Bakker 2004c and still stands.

It accords well with the fact that the poet Bhāravi probably wrote his famous *Kirātārjunīya* at the court of the Later Aulikara king Yaśodharman, also known as Viṣṇuvardhana.<sup>40</sup> Either he or, more likely, his father, King Prakāśadharman, was responsible for the building of this temple and its gateway.

The first or northern-most panel (W 1, Plate 159) shows, according to Williams, ‘Nara and Nārāyaṇa seated in the wilderness’. She compares it with the great Deogarh relief (Plate 160).

The scene interpreted in this way may represent the dialogue between both seers as given in the *Mahābhārata*.<sup>41</sup> The function of this piece of Vaiṣṇava philosophy, however, within the story told in the Nagārī architrave remains entirely obscure. In the Deogarh relief, the scene is overseen by Brahmā, who had sent both seers to earth to fight demons.



Plate 159

Nagārī:

First panel on the western face (W 1)



Plate 160

Deogarh:

Panel on the eastern face

In the Nagārī panel there appears in the viewer’s right top corner a third figure. His left hand is visible and holds something rounded. Nothing points to Brahmā. And also unlike the Deogarh relief, Nara or Arjuna sits to the right of the ascetic figure with whom he has an argument and who seems to be two-

<sup>40</sup> Bakker 2014, 35–37.

<sup>41</sup> MBh 3.13.37–41 (tr. van Buitenen):

After the Pāṇḍava (i.e. Arjuna), who was the very self of Kṛṣṇa, had thus spoken to himself, he fell silent and Janārdana (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) said to the Pārtha (i.e. Arjuna). ‘You are mine and I am yours, and my people are yours. He who hates you hates me; who follows you follows me. You, invincible hero, are Nara and I am Hari Nārāyaṇa. Nara and Nārāyaṇa, the seers, have come from their world to this world. You are no other than I, Pārtha, I none other than you, Bhārata, no difference can be found between the two of us, bull of the Bharatas.

armed. The scene is set in the mountains, where the rest of the Kirātārjunīya myth takes place. A lion is visible in a mountain cave at the foot.

Despite the striking similarities between the Deogarh and Nagarī panels, we are not convinced that the figure to the left of Arjuna is indeed Nārāyaṇa. Instead we think it more likely that the person Arjuna is speaking to is ‘the ascetic (*tapasvīn*), blazing with the lustre of *brahman*, tawny, with matted hair and lean’,<sup>42</sup> who is no other than Indra in disguise. This brahmin asks Arjuna why he has come in full armour and requests him to leave behind his bow (MBh 3.38.32–34). The bow may indeed be visible in the present panel to Arjuna’s right side.

After this brahmin failed to have Arjuna give up his resolve, he reveals his true identity and offers a boon. Arjuna replies:

I DO not want wishes of worlds, or divinity, still less happiness, nor the sovereignty over all the gods, overlord of the Thirty! If I leave my brothers in the wilderness without avenging the feud, I shall find infamy in all the worlds for time without end.<sup>43</sup>

These are the proud words of the Kṣatriya, the quintessence of the Kirātārjunīya. Confronted with so much self-confidence, Indra can think of nothing better than to refer Arjuna to ‘the three-eyed, trident-bearing Lord of Beings, Śiva’.<sup>44</sup>

The similarity of the Nagarī panel with the one in Deogarh and other Nārāyaṇa representations is, however, not coincidence, but serves as a reminder to the onlooker that Arjuna is Nara. In Bhāravi’s *Kirātārjunīya* (12.33) Śiva explains to the seers that Arjuna is in fact an incarnation of Nara, a part of the Primaeval Man (Ādipurūṣa). And, he says, there is Acyuta. Nara and Acyuta have been asked by Brahmā to go among men to protect creation by killing demons,<sup>45</sup> but ‘Nārāyaṇa’ as such does not figure in Bhāravi’s work.

Nara is said to have been created by Deva Nīllohita in *Skandapurāṇa* 6. He had issued from the mirror image of Viṣṇu, who was reflected in the blood that the latter had himself donated to Nīllohita’s begging bowl. This begging bowl is said in SP 6.1 to be Brahmā’s Head (*brahmaṇaḥ śiraḥ*), that is, his fifth one, which had been chopped off in SP 5 and was then used by Śiva/Nīllohita on his rounds for alms.<sup>46</sup>

AFTER Deva (i.e. Nīllohita) has seen (Viṣṇu’s) reflection in the liquid (*rasa*) within the skull (*kapāla*), he issues forth (a) man (*puruṣa*) resembling Viṣṇu in strength.

42 MBh 3.38.31: *tato ’paśyat savyasācī vṛkṣamūle tapasvīnam | brāhmyā śriyā dīpyamānaṃ piṅgalaṃ jaṭīlaṃ kṛśam || 31 ||*

43 MBh 3.38.40cd–41 (tr. van Buitenen): *na lokān na punaḥ kāmān na devatvaṃ kutaḥ sukham || 40 || na ca sarvāmaraśvaryaṃ kāmāye tridaśādhipa | bhrātṛṃs tān vipīne tyaktvā vairam apratīyātya ca | akīrtiṃ sarvalokeṣu gaccheyam śāsvatīḥ samāḥ || 41 ||*

44 MBh 3.38.43: *bhūteśaṃ tryakṣaṃ śūladharaṃ śivam.*

45 KA 12.35–36; Warder 1989–92 III, 206.

46 SP 6.2d: *bhaikṣāya pracacāra*, see below, n. 55 on p. 594.

HE says to him: You (shall) be immortal, exempt from old age and decay and invincible on the battle field; Viṣṇu will be your best friend, and you (shall) live with him performing divine tasks.

BECAUSE you are born from the ‘waters’ (*nārā*) that rose from Viṣṇu’s body, you shall be called Nara (i.e. ‘man’) and be dear to him.<sup>47</sup>

Evidently these two sixth-century Śaiva, i.e. Pāśupata, texts play down Viṣṇu’s role; the story told in the Nagarī architrave might do just the same.

With Arjuna we move from Mount Indrakīla, where the meeting with Indra had taken place (MBh 3.38.30), to Mount Himavat (MBh 3.39.11), where the extreme *tapas* will take place, illustrated in the second panel (W 2, Plate 161).



Plate 161

Second panel from left (W 2): Arjuna’s penance

The overall idea of this panel W 2 is clear: it shows Arjuna’s severe asceticism by standing on one leg in order to propitiate Śiva.<sup>48</sup> Nārāyaṇa does not belong to this context, nor has Indra a role to play any longer. It is not immediately clear, however, who the figure to his left could be.

<sup>47</sup> SP 6.10–12. For Sanskrit text and notes see SP I, 71, 144.

<sup>48</sup> MBh 3.39.23: *caturthe tv atha samprāpte māsi pūrṇe tataḥ param | vāyubhakṣo mahābāhur abhavat paṇḍunandanah | ūrdhvabāhur nīrālambaḥ pādāṅguṣṭhāgraviṣṭhitaḥ || 23 ||*

If we follow the *Mahābhārata* story, the seers, afraid of Arjuna's ascetic powers, go to Mahādeva, who acknowledges Arjuna's mortifications and gives his approval:

THE Great Lord said: 'Swiftly return in joyous spirit and unwearied whence you have come. I do know the intention that is lodged in his mind. He does not desire heaven, nor sovereignty, nor long life; this very day I shall accomplish what he desires.'<sup>49</sup>

We tentatively propose that it is this important moment of Śiva's consent (and his resolve to put him to the test first) that has been depicted in this panel. It is also conceivable that the figure of Śiva here is a representation of Arjuna's thought.

The figure seems to be four-armed, though only three are visible; his left back hand, if that is what it is, is raised and carries an object not unlike the mysterious object in the first three panels of the eastern face of the architrave (E 1–3). We postpone the discussion of this object and move on to the third panel (W 3), in which the test starts off.

The scene in this third panel from the left is without problems (Plate 162).



Plate 162  
Third panel from left (W 3): Who shot the boar?

It shows the boar and the Kirāta with his wife, a disguise that Śiva and Pārvatī had taken on. Arjuna and the hunter argue about whose arrow pierced the boar.

49 MBh 3.39.28–29; tr. van Buitenen. Cf. *Kirātārjunīya* canto 12.

The Kirāta is about to pull out the arrow, which enrages Arjuna and a fight is inevitable (Plate 163).<sup>50</sup>



*Plate 163*

*Fourth panel from the left (W4)  
Arjuna's bow-fight with the Kirāta*



*Plate 164*

*Fifth panel from the left (W5)  
Arjuna assails the Kirāta*

SHOUTING again and again, they bored each other with arrows like poisonous snakes. Arjuna shot at the mountain man (Kirāta) a shower of arrows and Śaṅkara received them with a tranquil mind. (MBh 3.40.25–26; tr. van Buitenen).

Then, in the following panel (Plate 164):

MY arrows are gone. Who is this man who devours all my arrows? I shall attack him with the nock of my bow, as one attacks an elephant with the point of a spear, and send him to the domain of staff-bearing Yama! (MBh 3.40.37–38; tr. van Buitenen.)

We arrive at the dénouement in the sixth panel (W6, Plate 165), at the southern end of the western face of the architrave.

The Kirāta had been a form adopted by Śiva to test his devotee Arjuna. The latter is allowed a vision of the Great God. In the *Mahābhārata* version of the story Mahādeva reveals himself as the god carrying the trident, dwelling in the mountains together with Devī; in the *Kirātārjunīya* he assumes 'his own form', smeared with ashes and ornamented with the crescent.<sup>51</sup> Neither of these are visible to us, since, like its counterpart E1, the panel is broken off at one-third. But we do see Arjuna, no longer as an ascetic, though, but as a princely figure, wearing his ornamental crown from which his locks fall down, very similar to his representation in the two panels at the end of the eastern face of the architrave (E5 & 6). This is one of the elements that convinces us

50 Cf. Bakker 2014, 36 f., in which Bhāravi's *Kirātārjunīya* 14.14 is quoted to illustrate the scene.

51 MBh 3.40.55–56, see above, n. 50 on p. 523. Bhāravi gives the following description: *atha himaśucibhasmabhūṣitaṃ śirasi virājitam indulekhayā | svavapuḥ atimanoharam haram dadhatam udikṣya nanāma pāṇḍavaḥ ||* (*Kirātārjunīya* 18.15).

that the eastern and western faces of the architrave tell a continuous story, the story of Arjuna and his quest for the Pāśupata Weapon. The other element is this weapon itself.

Just as in the first panel of the obverse (E 1), we cannot but speculate on what has been depicted in the missing two-thirds of the reverse side (W 6). The motive and theme of the *Kirātārjunīya* story is Arjuna's quest for the Pāśupata *astra*, the weapon which alone is powerful enough to counteract all other weapons and which leads its owner to victory over his foes. Arjuna asks Śiva for it:

If it pleases you to grant me my wish, Bull-bannered God, then I wish that divine weapon (*astra*), the dreadful Pāśupata Weapon, my lord, which is called Brahmā's Head (*brahmaśiras*), gruesome (*raudra*), of terrible power, which at the horrible end of the Eon will destroy the entire world. With it I may burn down in battle the Dānavas and the Rākṣasas, the evil spirits and Piśācas, Gandharvas, and Snakes. From its mouth (*yataḥ*), when properly spelt (*anumantritāḥ*), issues forth thousand of tridents, awful-looking, clubs and missiles like venomous snakes. With it I shall embattle Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and Kṛpa, and the always rough-spoken son of the *sūta* (Karna). This is my wish, my lord, who took Bhaga's eyes, so by your grace I may go forth competent!<sup>52</sup>



Plate 165  
Sixth panel from the left  
(W 6, southern end)  
Arjuna receives the Pāśupata Weapon

Śiva gives this powerful weapon to Arjuna,<sup>53</sup> but warns him to use it cautiously, since launched against a person of insufficient strength it may have apocalyptic consequences. If the panels of the architrave are to make any sense, this gift of the Pāśupata Weapon must have been represented somehow. Aside from final release (*duḥkhānta*), it is the ultimate boon for the Māheśvaras.

52 Tr. van Buitenen. MBh 3.41.7–12 (above, n. 50 on p. 523).

53 In the *Kirātārjunīya* 18.44 Śiva gives Arjuna the Raudra Weapon, encompassed by flaming fire (*jvaladanalaparītaṃ raudram astram*).

*The Pāśupata Weapon*

If we work on the assumption that this boon must have been represented in the narrative of the architrave, we should answer the question how it has been depicted in its iconographic programme. The weapon (*astra*) is called ‘belonging to Rudra’ or ‘fierce’ (*raudra*), but more significantly: ‘Head of Brahmā’. This may refer, as we have seen above (p. 589), to one of the Pāśupata key myths, namely the cutting off of the fifth head of Brahmā by Śiva/Nīlahohita. This myth was known in the last phase of the *Mahābhārata* composition, where Śiva is called Brahmaśīropaharta (sic).<sup>54</sup>

The full story is first told in the *Skandapurāṇa*.

THEN, ordered by Parameśvara, this lord Nīlahohita, his (matted) hair coiled into a top-knot (*kapardīn*), took the Head of Brahmā.

AFTER he had taken that shining head, he assumed a disguise, entered a playful state of yoga and started going around begging.<sup>55</sup>

This ‘Head of Brahmā’ is Śiva’s begging bowl and, according to the *Mahābhārata*, the Pāśupata Weapon seems to be just that, the Holy Grail of Saivism.<sup>56</sup> We should therefore look for a (begging) bowl, and this leads us to the mysterious object that we encountered in the first three panels of the eastern face (E 1–3) and in the second one of the western (W 2).

We return to E 1, the first, incomplete panel of the eastern face. What we see in Śiva’s right, raised hand could agree to the shape of a begging bowl or skull. The function of the bowl/skull shown here is not so much the collecting of alms, rather than exposing it to an audience. This makes sense only if the begging bowl is more than just that. We consider it a rebus, representing the word *brahmaśīras* in visual (iconographic) form.

54 MBh 13 App. I, No. 6 l. 45. Yuko Yokochi (personal communication) has questioned van Buitenen’s translation of *brahmaśīras* with ‘Brahmā’s Head’ in MBh 3.41.8a (above, n. 50 on p. 523). Admittedly, there is no reference to the myth of the decapitation of Brahmā here. The Brahmaśīras, like all divine weapons, is a *mantra* weapon and should be ‘properly spelt’ (*anumantrita*) to yield the desired result, that means that this skull of Brahmā (*kapāla*)/begging bowl has the potency to issue forth the most powerful weapon. As such the word may signify ‘the foremost (*śīras*) of the Vedic *mantras* (*brahman*)’. We consider it plausible that the ambiguity was deliberate and was made use of by the designer of the architrave.

55 SP 6.1–2 (only in the R and A recensions):

*tataḥ sa bhagavañ devaḥ kapardī nīlahohitaḥ |*  
*ājñāyā paramēśasya jaḡraha brahmaṇaḥ śīraḥ || 1 ||*  
*tad ḡḥītīvā śīro dīptaṃ rūpaṃ vikṛtam āsthitaḥ |*  
*yogakṛdāṃ samāsthāya bhāikṣāya pracacāra ha || 2 ||*

56 MBh 3.41.7–8 (above, n. 50 on p. 523); cf. MBh 14.62.15, 133\* ll. 3–4. According to MBh 3 App. 27, l. 1 the Pāśupata weapon is an arrow (*śara*); the *brahmaśīras* may be thought to be the *mantra* that makes this weapon so effective. SP<sub>Bh</sub> 98.7–8ab seems to distinguish between the Pāśupata Weapon and the Brahmaśīras when it lists the four weapons that form the four tusks of Varāha:

*catvāry astrāṇi daṃṣṭrās ca kṛtāni sumahānti vai |*  
*astram pāśupataṃ pūrvaṃ dvitīyaṃ cakram eva ca || 7 ||*  
*brahmadanḍam tṛtīyaṃ ca caturthaṃ brahmaṇaḥ śīraḥ ||*

If our analysis is correct, it represents the ne plus ultra, the power that devotees who pursue the Pāśupata *sādhana* aspire to obtain in this world: the Pāśupata Weapon or ‘Head of Brahmā’, the Śaiva equivalent of the *pūrṇakalaśa*, the source of life (*nara*) and death (*antaka*).<sup>57</sup> This equivalence is further expressed by the fact that in the first panel the bowl seemed to have been filled, whereas the bowl appears empty in the following two panels, when it is withdrawn.

The token that was held out at the beginning in the first relief (E 1) was thus finally obtained by Arjuna in the addorsed panel at the end of the architrave’s narrative (W 6). It is the *kṣatra* or fighting spirit of Arjuna and his unswerving devotion to Śiva that won him this award at long last, the Pāśupata Weapon, and therewith the power to defeat all enemies. The *Mahābhārata* again describes the scene.

HEARING this, the Pārtha (Arjuna) hurriedly and attentively purified himself; and when he embraced the feet of the lord of the universe, the God said to him, ‘Now learn!’ Then he taught the best of the Pāṇḍavas about the missile (*astra*), along with the secrets of its return, this missile that is Death incarnate (*mūrtimantam ivāntakam*). [...]

WHEN the moment came, there was an outcry of conches, drums, and kettledrums by the thousands, and a huge quake occurred. The Gods and the Dānavas witnessed how that fiercely burning dreadful missile stood bodily deployed (*mūrtimat*) at the side of the boundlessly lustrous Pāṇḍava.<sup>58</sup>

And we believe the visitors to the Mahādeva Temple in Nagarī witnessed it too. Arjuna’s pose in the final panel (W 6) is one of vacillation. The ends of his cloth flutter. His knee is bent, as if he is taken aback. In front of him, we speculate, the Pāśupata Weapon may have stood in bodily form, next to Śiva in all his glory. What the weapon may have looked like, we know from another sculpture telling the same story.

Joanna Williams discusses ‘a pair of pillars found at Rajaona, 60 km east (and slightly north) of Rajgir’, Bihar (Plate 166). Its subject matter, according to her, ‘resembles that of the Nagarī lintel’. ‘The remaining face shows Śiva seated with Pārvatī on his mountain, whilst in front Arjuna kneels before the chubby four-armed personification of the Pāśupatāstra, the weapon that has been his goal throughout the story.’<sup>59</sup>

Arjuna, however, is not *on* his knees in Nagarī; in that pose he had been depicted when he was brought to Śiva for instruction by a four-armed figure in the last panel of the eastern face (E 6).

57 Above, p. 589, and below. SP<sub>Bh</sub> 84.3 compares the battle with the sacrifice. The ‘heads’ are the ‘sacrificial cakes’ (*puroḍāśāḥ śirāṃsi*), the divine weapons are the *mantras* (*mantrās cāstrāṇi divyāni*).

58 MBh 3.41.17–22 (tr. van Buitenen). [...] *athāstraṃ jājvalad ghoram pāṇḍavasyāmī-taujasah | mūrtimad viṣṭhitam pārśve dadṛśur devadānavāḥ || 22 ||*

59 Williams 1982, 151, Plate 240. Lutzker 1984, 36 f. This fragment is presently located at Calcutta, Indian Museum: A 25106.



Plate 166

*Rajaona, column: the presentation of the Pāśupata Weapon*

We now conjecture that the four-armed figure in that panel E 6 (Plate 156) may be the Pāśupata Weapon personified, not waiting on the Pāṇḍava hero, but conducting him to deference. The vigorous way in which this seems to be done could point to the forceful nature of the allegorical figure. The object that he seems to hold above his head may have been the skull, although the sculpture is too much worn to be certain about it. But if so, it would make this four-armed ‘chubby figure’ in the Dakṣiṇāmūrti panel a true *āyudhapuruṣa*.

A similar allegorical figure must, if our theory is correct, have been depicted in the missing part of the final panel (W 6), this time, however, ‘waiting on the great hero’ (*upatasthe mahātmānaṃ*).<sup>60</sup>

The Pāśupata Weapon thus seems to be the true subject of the Nagarī architrave. It is represented as a begging bowl made of Brahmā’s fifth head (Brahmaśiras), and in personified form as *āyudhapuruṣa*. In either form it appears throughout the iconographic programme: in the eastern-face panels E 1–3, and E 6 (embodied), and in the western-face panels W 2 and W 6 (embodiment conjectured). A close comparison may illustrate this point (Plate 167).



Plate 167

*Beggling bowls in panels 1, 2, 3 (east), and in 2 (west)*

<sup>60</sup> MBh 3.41.19: *upatasthe mahātmānaṃ yathā tryakṣam umāpatim | pratijagrāha tac cāpi prītimān arjunas tadā || 19 ||*

The showing of the begging bowl or skull in the second panel of the western face (W 2) makes sense. It is not offered to Arjuna yet—as it had been to the ascetics in the first panel of the eastern face (E 1), who, however, rejected it in their ignorance—but raising it in the back left hand means that it is displayed as a boon that will be awarded, if Arjuna stands the test.

Having reached this point in our analysis, we venture the suggestion that within the first panel of the western face (W 1) the figure of which only a head and a left forearm are visible (to the viewer's right, above the ascetic who is Indra in disguise), may be the Pāśupata Weapon, presenting itself in iconic, that is bodily, and in aniconic form, as the begging bowl in his left hand (Plate 168).<sup>61</sup>



Plate 168  
W 1 (detail of Plate 159): the Pāśupata Weapon?

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Like the composers of epic and puranic lore, the architect of the Mahādeva Temple and the designer of the iconographic programme of the *torana* shared in the universe of myths. Like textual composers, the designer made his selection from this universe to compose his narrative. And like written texts, his visual narrative is inevitably an incomplete rendering of the stock of myths that circulated in his days. Like a textual author he extracted from this stock, adapted it to his needs and in this way contributed to its evolution. A textual source that tells exactly the same narrative as the architrave and that would

61 An alternative sees in this figure the Yakṣa (*rājarājānucara*, KA 3.30) who leads Arjuna to Indra in Bhāravī's *Kirātārjuniya*.

thus be considered to be its source is not likely ever to turn up. The narrative of the architrave is the text, and as such it shows instances of intertextuality, thanks to which we can try to understand its message.

Without doubt the designer was well acquainted with the *Mahābhārata*, whose story of the Kirātārjuniya was at the basis of his work.<sup>62</sup> He could not yet know the *Skandapurāṇa*, since we believe that its composition only began in the second half of the sixth century, but the universe of Śaiva myths had substantially expanded from the days that the composition of the great epic was coming to a close. The myth of Brahmā's decapitation by Śiva, for instance, is only referred to through an epithet of the Great God in an Appendix passage of the epic, but the full story must have been around in Pāśupata circles before it was put down in the *Skandapurāṇa*. The same is true of the Devadāruvana myth. Familiarity with this lore is to be presupposed, not only for the designer, but for the general visitor at the time.

Arjuna's quest for the divine Pāśupata Weapon and the Devadāruvana story are both mythical in nature and as such convey general, timeless truths. As all myths, however, they may serve as templates for human action and their depiction in art may function as historical allegory.

It is appealing therefore to read the architrave as a metaphor and to speculate on its connection with the *rājasthānīya*, the Aulikara viceroy who ruled in Madhyamā/Madhyamikā under Prakāśadharman and Yaśodharman (between AD 510 and 533), and who had, according to the Chittorgarh inscription (above, p. 570), commissioned the building of a Mahādeva temple. The educated contemporary onlooker may have seen in its iconographic programme evidence of his governor or king embracing the Śaiva religion by being instructed in its observances; other visitors may have seen only the template, the myth, an ambiguity inherent in Indian—and not only Indian—plastic art in general.

We have discovered the central theme of the Nagārī architrave, the one that connects both faces. It appears to be the recovery of the Pāśupata Weapon, which alone was believed to secure victory in difficult times. It helped the Pāṇḍavas to win back their kingdom, and it may have been thought to bring victory to the Later Aulikara kings Prakāśadharman and Yaśodharman of Daśapura and their allies in Madhyamikā, when they were locked in a deadly conflict with their archenemies, Toramāṇa and Mihirakula, who were commanding the dreaded armies of the Huns.

This theme also links the Devadāruvana myth to the Kirātārjuniya. In addition to Śiva's stark naked and ithyphallic appearance, misunderstood and causing offence, it is the bowl made out of Brahmā's head and symbolizing the Great God's benevolence, that the seers failed to recognize in the first panel (E 1). Standing alone and being despised is, after all, the fundamental attitude

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62 We have not found references specific to Bhāravi's *Kirātārjuniya*, which was being composed at about the same time or slightly later (above, p. 588; cf. n. 61 on p. 597).

of the Pāśupata ascetic.<sup>63</sup> When the seers attack him in the next panel (E 2), he keeps it away from them.

In the earliest written version of the Devadāruvana myth that we possess,<sup>64</sup> *Skandapurāṇa* 167.72–80, the ‘audience’ are the Vaikhānasa hermits. It is quite possible that only these or similar sages were depicted in the missing part of the first panel. The role of the wives of the sages may have come more to the fore in later versions, such as the narrative on the doorpost in Malhar, when the connotations of ‘Brahmaśiras’ either were no longer recognized, as ‘Brahmā’s Head’ had subsided into just a bowl to collect alms, or had come into bad grace due to its association with the Kāpālikas.

The exclusive focus in the Pine Forest myth on the *liṅga* may therefore have been the result of a development, which gradually replaced the idea that underlies the Nagarī architrave. This would explain that the *liṅga* as object of worship does not feature in the architrave. Instead, it was the supreme good that only Śiva can bestow, object of his meditation in E 4, and symbolized in his Brahmaśiras attribute, that took centre stage.

The irony that will not have been lost on the designer of the architrave and the educated Pāśupata visitor of the temple thus seems to be that, if we follow the *Skandapurāṇa*, Arjuna at the end of his quest recovers the *fons et origo* from which he, as Nara (above, p. 589), had once emerged, namely the Head of Brahmā. This cycle illustrates the superiority of the high god of the age, Mahādeva.

When they passed through the temple gateway, the king and his subjects were reminded of the major realities of Śiva’s World—asceticism, His benevolence, His revelation of the doctrine. After worshipping God, they saw, while they were leaving through the gate, the path which would lead to His grace and which held out to them the prospect of the acquisition of the highest good in this world, the Pāśupata Weapon—through steadfastness, self-control and bravery.

It was this faith, embraced by the Later Aulikara kings and their court, that was imparted to the visitors of the Mahādeva Temple in Madhyamikā, at the moment that they came to be involved in the powerful World of the Great God.

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63 *Pāśupatasūtra* 3.3: *avamataḥ*.

64 Bisschop 2006, 195 f. In MBh 13 App. I No. 4 ll. 66–67 it is only said that Śiva ‘sports with the daughters and wives of the sages, with bristled hair, with a great penis, naked, with distorted eyes’. No doubt, an idea like this was the source of the Pine Forest myth.



# Composition and Spread of the Skandapurāṇa \*

## An Artist's Impression

मित्राणि !

अपारे काव्यसंसारे कविरेकः प्रजापतिः ।  
यथास्मै रोचते विश्वं तथेदं परिवर्तते ॥

Friends, if you will permit me, let me be that *kavi* today.<sup>1</sup> Allow me to take advantage of this unique occasion to read an essay in the indicative mood. No modal auxiliaries: neither 'would' nor 'should'; neither 'may' nor 'could'. In other words, a thoroughly unscholarly exposition, but a, hopefully light, and delightfully careless artist's impression, which puts 'how beautiful it may have been, possibly' into an apodictic style: 'so beautiful it was, definitely'. After all, an artist's impression is, according to the infallible Wikipedia, 'the representation of a scene created by an artist, when no other accurate representation is available'.

So it came to pass,

When Avantivarman ascended the Maukhari throne in Kanyakubja in the last quarter of the sixth century, it may have appeared as if the old days of stability and prosperity had returned to Madhyadeśa. Thanks to the incessant war efforts of his grandfather, Īśānavarman, the cruel intruders called Hūṇas had been driven back to the foothills of the western Himālayas after a long and devastating period of war. A close friendship had developed between the rulers in Kanyakubja and Sthāneśvara, where the dynasty of the Vardhanas guarded the western part of the kingdom. The eastern enemies, the Gauḍas and their allies the Guptas, had been forced to take refuge at the borders of the ocean, where they were being kept in check by Kanyakubja's powerful southern allies in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, who traced their respectable pedigree straight back to Pāṇḍu and his mighty son Arjuna.

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\* This is the text of my valedictory on the occasion of my retirement as professor of *The Interpretation of Hinduism in the Sanskrit Tradition and Indian Philosophy* at the University of Groningen. It concluded the VVIK Indologendag 2013 in Leiden, 28 September 2013. Parts of this lecture have been included in the *Introduction to The World of the Skandapurāṇa* (Bakker 2014).

1 For the above Sanskrit verse see below, p.609.

The ancient land of the Buddha and the cradle of empire was firmly under control. Avantivarman proudly bore the title 'sovereign of Magadhā'. A Buddhist settlement there was developing into a place of learning of high international repute. The university of Nālandā attracted students and scholars from all over India and abroad, and the Maukhari king, though not a Buddhist, prided himself on being its chancellor.

The monarch watched over the Bull of the Dharma, which was shepherded by his countrymen. The Bull, shown on the royal seal, had in recent years become a forceful emblem, a symbol appropriated by another religion, one to which the Maukharis had confessed ever since they had thrown off the yoke of the Imperial Guptas with their state deity Viṣṇu. Worship of Śiva had opened up new avenues for the imagination and enshrined royal authority in burgeoning forms of early tantric Hinduism.

Though familiar with all sorts of asceticism, northern India in the sixth century saw a new type of strange sādhus travelling around, who smeared themselves with ashes and imitated the god of their devotion, Śiva Paśupati. A lineage of *gurus* pertaining to this movement had settled in Kanyakubja, an establishment founded in the capital by a saint from Kurukṣetra, the ancient battlefield, now firmly under the control of the friendly Vardhanas or Puṣya-bhūti, who themselves had become staunch followers of this type of religion. Avantivarman, too, was well disposed towards them and invited some of them to his court.

The Pāśupatas, as these Śiva worshippers were called, made good use of the patronage that fell to their lot. They set up religious centres (*sthāna*), temples (*āyatana*) and monasteries (*maṭha*) at the country's holiest grounds, such as the Kapālasthāna in Kurukṣetra, Bhadrēśvara near Gaṅgādvāra, the great Deva temple, *āyatana*, in Prayāga, and the *siddhasthāna*, 'home of the saints', called Madhyameśvara, *circa* one kilometer north of the renowned cremation grounds of Avimukta or Vārāṇasī.

A network of itinerant sādhus connected these centres, which became well integrated with the local religious infrastructure and developed into junctions within a fabric of yogins and religious teachers. The Pāśupatas had had a good look at their Buddhist counterparts and had copied their formula for success, namely a standing organisation of professional religious specialists—yogins, ascetics, and *ācāryas*—supported by a following of ordinary devotees, the Māheśvara community at large, to whose spiritual needs it catered. One of the peculiar facilities offered to the community of *laukikas*, by at least some of these Pāśupata ascetics, was to extend services in and around the cremation grounds. Living in the cremation ground was a highly acclaimed strategy within Pāśupata asceticism. Mahākāla in Ujjain, Mahākapāla in Thanesar, Avimukteśvara in Benares, Paśupatinātha in Nepal, to mention just the best known, were run by Pāśupatas and became key to their success.

Avantivarman, therefore, acted in tune with the spirit of his time when he supported the movement. Earlier his uncle Sūryavarman had spent large sums

on the rebuilding of a dilapidated temple of the 'Foe of Andhaka', whose images were beginning to appear around this time. The prince had hired a poet to sing the praises of the god as well as of himself, chiselled into stone, for everyone to read:

MAY that figure of Andhaka's Foe, on whose body snakes glimmer, offer you a stable abode—a figure who wears a lion skin that is slightly crimsoned by the light of the jewel in the hood of the serpent [that is his sacred thread], and who reddens the white line of skulls that is the chaplet by the radiance from his third eye, and who bears on his crest the slender, darkness dispelling digit of the moon.

HE (the prince) had youth that was beautiful like the waxing moon and dear to all the world; he was at peace and his mind was devoted to reflection on the branches of learning; he had mastered fully (all) the arts; it was as if Lakṣmī (fortune), Kīrti (fame) and Sarasvatī (learning), among others, vied with one another for his patronage: in the world, women in love experience the feeling (of love) all the more, if their lover is beloved.<sup>2</sup>

Poets were held in high esteem and Avantivarman invited them to his court. Imagine the glamorous world in which plays like the *Mudrārākṣasa* were staged, attended by the playwright Viśākhadatta in person, or the *Kaumudīmahotsava*, to mention another play, in which the entrance of the ruler himself is announced:

A SON of the House of Magadhā has arrived, thronged by hundreds of eminent ministers, like the moon enhanced by an aureole of stars, that prince, who is a feast for the eyes of his delighted subjects.<sup>3</sup>

This is the world in which Sanskrit flourished, the world in which the *kavi* Bhatsu, Bāṇa's respected teacher, was honoured by crowned heads. This court was sustained by the inhabitants of Kanyakubja who, in the words of the famous Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang, were 'honest and sincere, noble and gracious in appearance, clothed in ornamented and bright-shining fabrics', inhabitants who 'applied themselves much to learning, and in their travels were very much given to discussion on religious subjects, whereas the fame of their pure language was far spread'.<sup>4</sup> To this court the leading figures of the community of Māheśvaras were also welcomed. Sanskrit was their language and in Sanskrit they composed their learned treatises and witty mythology.

For learned treatises and religious expositions the educated classes of northern India looked to Vārāṇasī. This trading town on the River Ganges had emerged under the Guptas in the preceding century as a centre of traditional Hindu learning. The arrival of the Pāśupata movement added to its reputation for holiness, whereas the collective Sanskrit learning of the town added to the literary achievements of the Māheśvaras.

2 EI XIV, 115, 117 vv. 2, 17.

3 *Kaumudīmahotsava* Act 4 v. 18.

4 *Xiyuji* I, 206 f.

The composition of the two classic Sanskrit epics was closed by the fourth century. Some of the new religious ideas concerning the god Śiva had still made it into the latest layers of the *Mahābhārata*. After the *Rāmāyaṇa* had been completed, mythology related to the tutelary deity of the Gupta Empire, Viṣṇu, and his popular manifestation of Kṛṣṇa in particular, had found expression in an Appendix to the great epic, the *Harivaṃśa*, as well as in a new type of Sanskrit text styled 'Ancient Lore', i.e. Purāṇa.

The Purāṇa as a literary genre in its first stages of development dealt with the creation of the universe, the origin of the world and its royal dynasties. However, as for instance the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* had shown, the genre also lent itself perfectly to the circulation of popular, religious and mythological material. After the civilized world had recovered from a period of devastating wars and invasions, and now that Viṣṇu had ceded his place of prominence to Śiva, the sixth century embraced a new form of devotion. The time had come to collect the mythology of the Great God. In the words of the *Skandapurāṇa*: 'Having heard the story of *Bhārata* as well as the Ancient Lore, we wish to hear about the birth of Śiva's son, Kārttikeya.'

A senior brahmin member of the Māheśvara community in Vārāṇasī, well-versed in Sanskrit literature, an expert on the epic tradition, initiated in the Pāśupata sacred texts, in short, a brahmin with great prestige among his fellow believers, charismatic and dynamic, that man, let us call him the Sūta, took the initiative to fulfil this wish and to compose a Purāṇa text that would do justice to the rich mythology of Śiva and his family, that would be accessible to the whole community, and, last but not least, that would validate local claims of the sanctity of holy ground by telling their Māhātmyas. In order to possess this authority, the text should be in the anonymous, pseudohistoric style of the Purāṇa, reportedly spoken by a sage of yore with intimate knowledge of the Great God's own thoughts and deeds.

It happened in the days of Avantivarman's reign that a group of kindred spirits and literary talents convened in an institution of the community in Benares. They discussed the plan and pledged their commitment. The Sūta, the editor-in-chief, began his composition in Śloka verses, while an inventory was being agreed on of the myths, stories, topics and places that had to be treated in the course of the work, a narrative that was designed to lead to the birth, consecration and heroic deeds of Kārttikeya, but could not reach that point before an extensive cycle of Andhaka myths had been told first—Andhaka who, like the Mleccha foes of the Maukharis, could not be slain until after an endless series of battles.<sup>5</sup>

The materials were arranged in a preliminary order in versified form. This inventory or blueprint, Anukramaṇikā as it was called, has survived and come down to us in the second *adhyāya* of the *Skandapurāṇa*. The editor-in-chief was assisted by some editors who were assigned specific portions of the com-

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5 SP<sub>Bh</sub> 130–56.

position. The Pāśupata network was called in to assemble information about places sacred to the Māheśvara community. Sometimes this resulted in new collaborators entering the group, bringing in local knowledge couched in Māhātmya-style texts, sometimes the editor himself used the information to compose the story. Rarely were ready-made texts taken from existing literature. The Sūta guaranteed the unity of literary style and the quality of the Sanskrit, but this could not prevent minor differences remaining. He also took great care that the arrangement of stories, the complex narrative structure of the text, remained consistent and logical. However, soon it appeared that the original blueprint could not be implemented except in broad outline; the myths and stories composed had too powerful a dynamic of their own to link up with each other perfectly. Here the genius of the Sūta was most needed and he did a brilliant job.<sup>6</sup>

The Pāśupata network was strongest along the east-west axis, Vārāṇasī–Kanyakubja–Kurukṣetra. It had been decided to begin in the west, since it was one of the underlying aims of the work to cover, or rather to recover the entire landscape of northern India, transforming it into sacred space, a landscape on which the deeds of the Great God and his entourage had bestowed holiness at the beginning of time. The work was well under way—the myths relating to Kurukṣetra and the Sarasvatī, Sthāneśvara, Bhadreśvara and Kanakhala, and Vārāṇasī itself had been composed, and the Vindhyaśāsinī Cycle was drafted—when political reality threatened to disrupt the literary activity. A joint attack from the east and the southwest brought to an end the rule of the Maukharis, just when Grahavarman had succeeded his father Avantivarman, while that of its allies in Thanesar was shaking on its foundations. For a while Benares came under the control of the easterners, the Gauḍas.

A young prince, a *kumāra* from Sthāneśvara, installed as chief of the army on the banks of the Sarasvatī, as it were the embodiment of Skanda himself, came to the rescue of the kingdom of Kanyakubja. In a war that lasted several years, Harṣavardhana succeeded in pushing the Gauḍas under their king ‘Moon’, Śaśāṅka, back across the rivers Soṇa and Gaṇḍakī.

In about AD 606, the political situation had stabilized enough to organize a magnificent royal coronation ceremony. Harṣavardhana was enthroned in Kanyakubja. It would take Harṣa six more years, however, to consolidate his sovereignty over the combined hereditary lands of the Vardhanas and Maukharis, including Magadhā, and before finally, to paraphrase the closing metaphor of *Harṣa’s Deeds* sung by the greatest writer of the time, Bāṇa—‘After a day of bloody contest, at the fall of night, while the sinking sun crimsoned the sky and the waters of the ocean, the Fame of his House, the Glory of his Rule, and the Force of his Destiny united to hand over to him a pale-looking Moon.’

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6 An illustration of this intricate process is the inclusion of the legend of the seven brahmins into the Vindhyaśāsinī Cycle, for which see Yokochi’s *Introduction* SP III, 15–22.

Vārāṇasī was back in the kingdom of Kanyakubja, but the new political situation had an effect on the perspective and scope of the composition in progress.

To begin with, the historical consecration of a young prince (*kumāra*) on the banks of the Sarasvatī to lead an army against the Gauḍa king Moon (*śaśāṅka*), reflected the mythology of Skanda, the main subject of the Purāṇa—Skanda, the god of war, who, after his consecration as General (*senāpati*) on the banks of the same river, led the Devas against the Asuras in order to destroy the demon king Star (*tāraka*).<sup>7</sup> The composers decided to bring their work to the attention of King Harṣavardhana, soliciting his blessing. After all, Harṣa himself confessed to be a *paramamāheśvara*, and his court offered a venue to the most promising literary men of the country, among whom was the king himself.

Secondly, the king's military successes against Gauḍa called attention to the east, bringing a Śaiva settlement in western Gauḍa within the purview of the composers. The Sūta, or his successor, made the decision to conclude the sanctification of the sacred landscape of northern India in Koṭivarṣa, an important commercial and religious centre in the province of Puṇḍra, which was situated 80 km northeast of the army camp of King Harṣa on the Lower Ganges, the camp where the king would eventually meet the Chinese pilgrim. The concluding chapters of the Purāṇa were reserved for philosophy and an exposition of Pāśupata yoga, which, along with devotion and pilgrimage, would bring the Māheśvara, yogin and layman alike, to paradise, the City of Śiva at the top of the universe (SP<sub>Bh</sub> 183).

The day arrived when the composition of the Purāṇa was concluded and the text could be copied into a carefully prepared book, a *pustaka*, that could be offered to the Great God and donated to the king and the community of the Māheśvaras. As usual when a work of such magnitude was completed, a solemn occasion had to be found when parts of the work could be recited and the book could be consecrated and ritually entrusted to a temple. Such an occasion was King Harṣa's 'arena of charitable offerings', a spectacular event that was staged every five years at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The great *āyatana* or temple of Deva there would be an excellent repository.

The permission was obtained. In the middle of Harṣa's reign, when he was at the pinnacle of power, a great assembly of feudatories, Śramaṇas, and Brahmins, convened in Kanyakubja around the beginning of the New Year, in preparation of the quinquennial event. The procession to Prayāga and the festivities there were part of the Festival of Spring in the month of Caitra. The king rode on his magnificent elephant Darpaśāta towards Prayāga, scattering pearls and other riches, while dressed as Indra. His mobile court offered splendid opportunities for staging theatrical productions, first and foremost, of course, those of

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7 SP<sub>Bh</sub> 163–65.

his own. The Sūtradhāra in the *Ratnāvalī* and *Priyadarśikā* introduces Harṣa's plays:

Today, on the occasion of the Spring Festival, I have been respectfully called by the assembly of kings, which has convened from all quarters of the world, and which is subservient to the lotus-feet of King Śrī-Harṣadeva. I have been addressed as follows: 'We have heard by hearsay that a play entitled *Ratnāvalī*, which is embellished by an unprecedented arrangement of the material, was composed by our lord Śrī-Harṣa, but we have not yet seen it performed.'<sup>8</sup>

The play turned out to be a great success, and would stand the test of time. But Harṣavardhana was too great a king to hear only his own voice. A date for the first recitation of the *Skandapurāṇa* was agreed on. The Sūta and his team were offered their platform. In order to sustain the illusion of its being a work from time immemorial, an essential feature of the genre of Ancient Lore, a professional reader, a *pustakavācaka*, was asked to recite it. The first presentation of the work went ahead before an audience including the king, courtiers, sādhus, monks, literati of all sorts, pandits and a selection of educated Māheśvaras. It was a great *tamāśā*, going by the consolidated words of the Sūta and his fellow *kavi*, Bāṇa:

The sages, assembling in Prayāga to bathe in the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā on the day of full moon, see the Singer of Ancient Lore coming towards them to pay his respects.

Dressed in white silk made in Puṇḍra, his forehead marked by a *tilaka* consisting of lines of orpiment on a white clay coating, his topknot ornamented by a small bunch of flowers, his lips reddened by betel, and his eyes beautified by lines of collyrium, he takes his seat and begins his performance.

He pauses for a moment before he places, on a desk made of reed stalks that is put in front of him, a *pustaka*, which, although its wrapping has been removed by that time, is still wrapped, as it were, in the halo of his nails, which shine softly like the fibres of a lotus.

They ask him about the birth of Kārttikeya, a story that equals the *Mahābhārata* and surpasses the *Purāṇa*, both of which he had recited in the Naimiṣa forest on the occasion of a *brahmasattra*.

Then, while he assigns two places behind him to two flautists, Madhukara, 'the bee', and Pārāvata, 'the turtle-dove', his close associates, he turns over the frontispiece, takes a small bundle of folios, and announces the story of the birth of Skanda, of his friendliness towards brahmins, his glory and his heroism, greater than that of the gods.

By his chanting he enchants the hearts of his audience with sweet intonations, evoking as it were, the tinkling of the anklets of Sarasvatī, as she presents herself in his mouth, while it seems as if, by the sparkling of his teeth, he whitewashes the ink-stained syllables and worships the book with showers of white flowers.<sup>9</sup>

8 Harṣadeva's *Ratnāvalī* (ed. Cappeller) p. 327.

9 This is a coalescence of two passages, SP 1.4–13 and HC 3 p. 137 f.

The performance received favourable reactions. After having done their ritual duties, attended the great potlatch ceremony at the confluence, and paid obeisance to the Great God in his temple and the king in his court, the Sūta and his entourage returned to Vārāṇasī. More copies of the book were produced. Small emendations were made and the first transcriber's faults slipped in. The different versions of the text were born.

The subsequent transmission and distribution of the Purāṇa over various centres of the Māheśvaras added more flaws. The copying took place in focal points of Sanskrit learning, to the west and the east of Vārāṇasī. In Magadhā, some Pāśupata *ācāryas* were not entirely satisfied with the text. They missed in particular an account of the Lakulīṣa tradition in their own country, and, in general, they felt that the holy places in the east and in the north, in Magadhā, Orissa and Nepal, had not been done justice. They decided to amend this shortcoming by inserting an additional list of *tīrthas* in an *adhyāya* that appeared to be the right place for it.<sup>10</sup>

While these processes were underway, the political situation in India changed dramatically. What a few years earlier had still seemed far away or downright impossible, happened. Harṣa's empire collapsed. Chaos prevailed all over northern India, whereas the Northeast was confronted by an unprecedented military invasion from Nepal and Tibet.

Magadhā was the first country in which order was restored under the authority of the dynasty of the Later Guptas. The daughter of Ādityagupta married the Maukhari prince Bhogavarman, a wise move, contributing significantly to political stability. And while the kingdoms of Kanyakubja, Puṇḍra and Kāmārūpa were still in disarray, the Gupta House of Magadhā consolidated its power further by re-establishing good relations with its northern neighbour, the Licchavi kingdom of Nepal. A daughter born of the marriage with the Maukhari prince, Vatsadevī, was married off to the Licchavi king Śivadeva.

During the last two decades of the seventh century, relations with Nepal became close and cultural exchange between the two countries intensified. Pāśupata yogins and *ācāryas* wandered from Magadhā into Nepal to visit the great shrine of Paśupatinātha, which had developed into a state sanctuary and received substantial financial support from Vatsadevī and her Nepalese husband. The priesthood of this temple was firmly in the hands of a local branch of Pāśupatas. They were happy with the growing reputation of their temple. It brought them pilgrims from afar and their coffers filled accordingly. At the same time the intensive traffic kept them up-to-date with new religious developments and informed about the latest literary productions.

Thus the reputation of the *Skandapurāṇa* spread to Nepal, and friends in Magadhā were asked for a copy. They brought one, naturally a manuscript that contained the insertion mentioning Paśupatinātha in Nepāla. The new acquisition was treasured. In order to preserve the text, the manuscript was

<sup>10</sup> SP<sub>S</sub> 167.163–87.

copied in the century that followed. And so it happened that on the twelfth day of the bright half of the month of Caitra in the year 234 (= AD 810/11) a scribe in Nepal could complete his work on the *Skandapurāṇa*, a labour that he had undertaken for the sake of the perfection of all beings. It would become our manuscript S<sub>1</sub>. And, if it has not contributed to our perfection, we ourselves are the only ones to blame.

I began my lecture today with a quote from Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*: 'In the boundless universe of literature the author alone is god. In it the world revolves as per his liking.'<sup>11</sup> The scenario presented here is indeed to my liking, but as you have, no doubt, understood, it is just one possible scenario among others. I hope that the reader can appreciate it for what it is and will not lose sight of its speculative nature. Nevertheless, it is the most plausible one that I can come up with after twenty years of study of the text and context of the *Skandapurāṇa*. It was a work of the *longue durée*, too long maybe for modern adepts of bibliometrics, but not so for building a dedicated team of fellow students. A day like this proves that I am right at least in that respect.

Western indologists usually leave the pre-modern history of the Subcontinent to their Indian colleagues. For this there are no good arguments, especially not, if we realize that classical Indian culture and religion cannot be fully comprehended without situating them in their proper historical and geographical context. I am fortunate in having two friends who share this view with me. Michael Willis, the active curator of South Asia at the British Museum, and Ellen Raven, just as active, working in the University of Leiden. Walking together in the field, or down in the storage rooms of the BM, Michael has always surprised me with cute and innovative insights. They have influenced my view of Gupta India to no small degree.

Without Ellen and her work I would have been a blind man in another field, one which forms a most important source of early Indian history and iconography, numismatics. Not only has Ellen opened my eyes for the beauty of the Gupta coinage, she has also always found time to answer my many queries and has been willing to help me out with splendid photos from her incredible database of Indian coins. But maybe most importantly, Ellen's scholarly cautiousness and meticulousness has often kept me from rash conclusions. As a pair, if I may say so, Michael and Ellen are a student-of-Indian-history's best friends.

Our study of the *Skandapurāṇa* has been team work from the early nineties of the last century. It is entirely to the credit of Harunaga Isaacson and Rob Adriaensen that this project got off the ground. Rob had been my mainstay and support from my college days. His spirit lives on in all we do until this very moment. And just as great a privilege it has been to have Haru among my students and soon as a great colleague and team member. The critical edition

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11 Ānandavardhana: *Dhvanyāloka* 3.42.

of the *Skandapurāṇa* as it has crystallized over the long years of intensive collaboration is unthinkable without his genius.

One of the wonders of my career has been that time and again generations of students showed the interest, capacity, and stamina to join our work on the world of the Purāṇa. Yuko Yokochi, Peter Bisschop and Natasja Bosma, you have brought the *kalpavṛkṣa* into blossom. Without your studies hardly a word of what I have said this afternoon could have been spoken. To quote an old love of mine, the philosopher Aristotle: ‘In the case of all things which have several parts and in which the whole is not, as it were, a mere heap, but the totality is something besides the parts, there is a cause of unity; [...]’<sup>12</sup> This cause of unity, I would like to argue, is the form (εἶδος) of scholarship that you embody. I am deeply obliged.

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12 Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, VIII 1045a 8–11: Πάντων γὰρ ὅσα πλείω μέρη ἔχει καὶ μὴ ἔστιν ὅλον σωρὸς τὸ πᾶν ἀλλ’ ἔστι τι τὸ ὅλον παρὰ τὰ μέρη, ἔστι τι αἷτιον, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν τοῖς σώμασι τοῖς μὲν ἀφ’ αἰτίας τοῦ ἑν εἶναι τοῖς δὲ γλισχρότης ἢ τι πάθος ἕτερον τοιοῦτον.  
Translation W.D. Ross.

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