ELIZABETH A. CECIL

Mapping the Pāśupata Landscape

Narrative, Place, and the Śaiva Imaginary in
Early Medieval North India

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Gonda Indological Studies

VOLUME 21

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*Narrative, Place, and the Śaiva Imaginary
in Early Medieval North India*

By

Elizabeth A. Cecil

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Cover illustration: Image of Lakulīśa from the Kālikā Mātā temple in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan. Photo by author.

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Acknowledgements

It is a formidable, yet deeply rewarding, task to have the pleasure to thank the people, organizations, and institutions that have supported the many years of research, fieldwork, and writing that have culminated in this book.

My advisors and mentors deserve a special acknowledgement for all of the time and effort they have invested in me and the development of this project. I must begin with James Fitzgerald. As my primary advisor for more than a decade, Jim has been an unwavering support, not to mention an inspiring model of academic rigor and integrity. It is no exaggeration to say that none of this would have been possible without him.

When I arrived in the Netherlands in 2011, Hans Bakker immediately made me feel welcome and I was privileged to spend two years working under his guidance at the Institute of Indian Languages and Cultures in Groningen. Hans planted the seed of this project and he has nurtured and supported its growth. In addition to studying with him in the Netherlands, I was lucky enough to spend two field seasons in India with Hans and other members of the *International Skandapurāṇa Project*. I appreciate all he did to make these fruitful journeys possible.

Peter Bisschop has been a careful, encouraging, and skeptical reader of my work during my time as a Lecturer at Leiden University and in the years after. I have benefitted greatly from his intellectual camaraderie, support, and friendship over the past years.

To acknowledge all of the people who have helped me during my fieldwork in India would be impossible. In particular, I must thank Prithviraj Ojha of Osian for the many long, hot summer days he spent helping me in the field and for always being on the lookout for Lakulīśa. I could not have visited even a third of the places I did were it not for his Honda Hero and adventurous spirit. I owe many thanks also to his lovely family for giving me a place to call home in the desert of Rajasthan.

Muzaffar Ansari of Chanderi provided me invaluable guidance during my research in Madhya Pradesh. His love of history, perpetual good humor, and beautiful calligraphy made the days in the field both productive and enjoyable. Finally, I am indebted to Narendra Simha of the ASR in Merta City and the late Virendra Kaviya of the ASI in Jaipur for helping me to gain access to important materials from reserve collections in Rajasthan's museums. To the countless others who have shown me hospitality, offered encouragement, made tea, unlocked doors, and patiently entertained my Hindi, Dhanyavad!

Figures

All photos are by the author unless otherwise noted.

Mapping a Religious Landscape

Since he was the patron deity of ascetics, hermits, and other 'outsiders,' worship of the Hindu God Śiva often evokes a vision of antinomian practices: naked mendicants with matted hair, who spend their days stalking cremation grounds, human skulls in hand. While such activities were the purview of certain specialists, early medieval literary and material sources, in fact, present a socially supported, even domesticated, body of religious practitioners whose concerns for prosperity and well-being were expressed through the veneration of images, monuments, and places associated with Śiva, and other deities affiliated with him. Far from rejecting the established norms and hierarchies of the social worlds in which they operated, these sources reflect a desire to make a Śiva-centered religion compelling to the uninitiated or lay practitioner. Attention to these modes of Śaiva devotion permits a more pixilated vision of community that is attuned to the social complexity and diversity of premodern religion in practice.

Rather than occupying a realm of norms, prescriptions, or beliefs, the worship of Śiva in the lived world of Early Medieval India (c. 6th–10th centuries CE) constituted a repertoire of spatial and material practices. The central concern of this study is to recover these practices and better understand how religion operates through landscapes by exploring the sites, memorials, and monuments where early Śiva religion was practiced and by discerning possible connections between these places. For worshippers of Śiva, community was inherently localized and belonging was something recorded tangibly in space. Interventions in the built landscape varied greatly in scale—ranging from a single memorial shrine to a monumental temple—but the social functions of these spaces display clear parallels. In the surviving literary, epigraphic, and material sources, sanctified spaces emerge clearly as loci of interaction capable of catalyzing remarkable social synergies between members of disparate groups: from kings and priests to horse traders and potters. By exploring the ties between the practices of Śiva devotees and the locales in which they were embedded, this study reflects critically upon the ways in which community building is coincident with place-making.

The places that occupy the heart of this study were sanctified spaces embedded within political and economic networks in which they served multiple purposes. Evidence of these uses is preserved in the material and textual records, the enduring and tangible marks that people and communities make on

the spaces they inhabit. Religious institutions mediated the tension between itinerancy and stasis, cultivated a sense of being grounded and at home in the world, and demonstrate how people imagined themselves as 'Śaiva' in Early Medieval India. Coming to terms with this inherent multivocality, the ability to accommodate multiple needs and concerns, not to mention devotional repertoires, is essential to recovering the spatial practices associated with the development of early Śaiva religiosity.

1   Purāṇic Topography

The early *Skandapurāṇa* (550–650 CE) has provided a critical impetus for this project of rethinking early Śaiva history. This new source affords an unprecedented glimpse into the growth of the earliest community of Śiva devotees called the 'Pāśupatas,' (a name that is derived from one of Śiva's many epithets, Paśupati, 'Lord of Creatures'). Once believed lost, the text had been known only obliquely from testimonia in digests of brahmanical customs and social regulations whose authors cited passages of this enigmatic source to support their prescriptions.[1] The earliest stratum of the text is preserved in Nepalese palm-leaf manuscripts, the oldest of which is dated 810 CE. The ongoing critical edition, based on these manuscripts, is to be distinguished from a text of the same name printed by the Veṅkateśvara Press in 1910, which records an entirely different textual tradition recovered from fragmentary 18th century manuscripts, which were identified in their colophons as pieces (*khaṇḍas*) of this earlier, authoritative *Skandapurāṇa*. Likely Pāśupatas themselves, the text's authors did advocate asceticism, together with the cultivation of somatic and mental techniques (*yoga*) that provided a means for certain accomplished practitioners to attain such a level of skill in their practice that they achieve union with the Lord upon death. At the same time, they acknowledge the values of the *laukikas*—the 'people in and of the world' (*loka*)—and praise the salvific potential of pilgrimage to Śiva's many shrines (i.e. his 'abodes,' *āyatanas*) and worship of his iconic emblem (*liṅga*), definitive features of the devotional repertoire of early medieval Śiva worshippers (*māheśvaras*), as they still are today.

Early Śaiva religiosity was inherently emplaced—that is, organized around spiritually charged natural places and the shrines that proliferated around them. Praise of these sanctified spaces, and enumeration of the merits that

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1   On these passages in the Dharmanibandha literature see SP I, 14–16.

accrue to a person who visits them are defining themes of the *Skandapurāṇa*.[2] In their mapping of the Śaiva religious landscape, the authors designate a small region of northwest India as the "primordial Pāśupata landscape" (*paśupateḥ kṣetraṃ purāṇam*),[3] an area venerated as the birthplace of the Pāśupata movement.[4] The geography of community begins in Kārohaṇa, a locale in southern Gujarat where Śiva reportedly descended to earth in each cosmic age. The sanctity of this region radiates to other important sites in northwest India through the Lord's agents, who were active in disseminating the Pāśupata doctrine far beyond the center of Kārohaṇa. In this way, the Pāśupata landscape extended beyond the narrow boundaries of Kārohaṇa to claim a larger territory that included locales within the modern Indian states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

2   Political Territory

Due to its geographic centeredness, the Pāśupata landscape was at the center of the political dynamism and religious efflorescence that defined Early Medieval India between the 6th and the 10th centuries CE. It was the meeting point for the various socioeconomic networks that crisscrossed the subcontinent via the primary routes of trade and travel. It was also a highly coveted political space where many ambitious elites vied for control of territory and resources. Until relatively recently, the early medieval was a historiographical 'Dark Age', thoroughly obscured by the Gupta Empire's so-called 'Golden Age' (4th–6th century CE). Contributions of scholars such as B.D. Chattopadhyaya, James Heitzman, Herman Kulke, and Cynthia Talbot reoriented the historiography to show that this was a time of significant social change marked by increasingly localized political and economic networks, the flourishing of regional devotional movements, and innovations in temple and image-centered religious practices. At the center of these nascent polities and emerging settlements were localized groups of traders, artisans, and mercantile guilds. Epigraphic sources attest to the autonomy of these groups, which

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2   Each of the published volumes address this theme in varying degrees. On the pan-Indian networks of holy places connected with the movement see Peter C. Bisschop, *Early Śaivism and the Skandapurāṇa: Sects and Centers* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2006); on Vārāṇasī see SP IIA; on the Vindhya region of Central India see SP III.

3   SP$_S$ 167.136. See text, translation, and discussion of this section of the *Skandapurāṇa* in Chapter 1.

4   Although *kṣetra* means "field, area, or realm" I adopt 'landscape' as a translation since this field contains various important collocations of Śaiva places and monuments.

often operated independently of ruling elites. Called by various names (commonly '*nagara*') corporate bodies and collectives exerted a considerable socio-economic and juridical influence by establishing laws as well as by using their influence to levy taxes and tithes on goods with which to support temples and religious institutions.

Discussions of political power in early India have too often emphasized exclusionary strategies; that is, authority has been viewed as concentrated in networks of personal dominance. This is evident in the historiography's pre-occupation with royal personality and genealogy, as in the persistent description of cultural activities as a means of 'legitimizing' a ruler's exclusive claims to sovereignty. One effect of this preference for exclusionary strategies is a legacy of inexact terminology to describe political formations—e.g. feudatory, vassal king, minor dynasty, etc. While these terms are common scholarly parlance, they are imprecise insofar as they suggest a stable political hierarchy rather than reflecting the reality of a highly contested political space in which multiple levels of authority were operating. If we read beyond the genealogical sections of inscriptions—and the hyperbole used to glorify particular rulers— we can see political relationships shaped equally, if not largely, by corporate tactics. This corporate concept does not deny hierarchy or imply that a society was egalitarian; rather, it encourages us to see power as enacted, claimed, materialized, and contested through multiple collective bodies and individuals engaged in evolving affiliations.

3   Social Location

This same notion of dynamism and interaction forms one of the overarching themes of the Pāśupata origin story recorded in the *Skandapurāṇa*. As the next chapter will discuss, this story provides an account of the geographic expansion of a particular religious formation via a network of cultural agents and connected places. While the *Skandapurāṇa's* presentation of a Pāśupata network is highly rhetorical, evidence from inscriptions serves to both complement and complicate the text's vision by introducing other agents, associations, and locales operating within the boundaries of the Pāśupata landscape the text's authors have drawn. These sources attest to the burgeoning of social and geographic mobility in the early medieval period: mercantile groups actively conducted trade, agriculture expanded, and areas that had previously been uncultivated or sparsely inhabited were settled. Of course, these networks did not operate in a vacuum. It is revealing that much, indeed, almost all, of what we know of the textures and rhythms of social interactions at this

time comes from epigraphic sources recording acts of pious giving to temples and religious institutions. Many of these were given to places we could properly characterize as Śaiva—meaning that an instantiation of Śiva, usually in the form of a *liṅga*, was the principal deity honored in the temple. For these reasons, the Pāśupata landscape provides a valuable opportunity to recover some of the complex interactions between the diverse groups that populated the region. And this complexity is significant since it demonstrates that networks do not always conform to an established pattern, that people cross boundaries, and that interactions may be unexpected.

Despite recent advances prompted by the presentation of newly edited texts, a social history of early Śaivism has not yet been written. The image of the Pāśupatas that has dominated the field is informed primarily by philosophical treatises and esoteric ritual manuals and, not surprisingly, that image is one of an exclusively male community of ascetics and literati removed from the larger sociocultural milieu of Early Medieval India. Some recent studies have attempted to situate the Pāśupata movement within its broader social contexts in an effort to explain a perceived dominance of Śaivism in the early medieval religious landscape. The groundbreaking work of Alexis Sanderson has loomed especially large in this regard. Sanderson's seminal 2009 study characterized Early Medieval India as the 'Śaiva Age' and, in it, he outlined a historical scenario that is now largely assumed in the field of early Śaiva studies.[5] This article attributes the popularity of Śaivism to the ingenuity of religious specialists who succeeded in adapting their religious practices and ideologies so as to be compelling to regional rulers. The adoption of Śaiva brahmin teachers in the position of royal preceptor (*rājaguru*) by regional rulers marked a significant integration of these religious specialists within spheres of political power. In return for their positions of prestige in the royal court, the *rājagurus* granted kings initiation (*śivamaṇḍaladīkṣā*).[6] The position of these initiated rulers was unique since they were exempted from the usual rigors of Śaiva practice. The textual sources Sanderson has consulted emphasize instead the king's role as "head of [the brahmanical social order of] the caste-classes and religious disciplines (*varṇāśramaguruḥ*)."[7] In Sanderson's words, "The king was considered to qualify for this less arduous route to liberation by reason of his royal obligations. He was therefore required to adhere only to the obligations of an

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5   For example, see the "Introduction" to the 2013 Special Issue of the *Indo-Iranian Journal* by Nina Mirnig and Natasja Bosma. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56 (2013): 201–204.

6   Alexis Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age: The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period" in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism* (Tōkyō: Sankibō Busshorin, Heisei 21, 2009), 41–350.

7   Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age", 255. On the textual references see n. 591 and n. 593.

uninitiated devotee of Śiva taught in the texts of the *Śivadharma* corpus, which in his case were principally to support the religion and its institutions and to sponsor and appear in conspicuous ceremonies in the civic domain."[8]

The bonds between religious specialists and spheres of political power should not be discounted; indeed, Śaivism became a popular idiom in epigraphic and visual media for expressions of political power and royal persona in India and beyond. But this is only a small part of the story. Privileging a 'top down' vision of Śaiva history has resulted in current scholarship paying too little attention to the participation of non-elite or non-royal actors—artisans, traders, rural agriculturalists, and women. I have worked to recover some of these marginalized voices through (re)readings of early medieval epigraphic sources from the region—stone inscriptions, copperplate grants, donative records, etc. Since these records detail specific events and cultural practices, they preserve valuable evidence of religion in practice that is often absent from traditional literary sources. The inscriptions that I reference in the following chapters have all been edited and published and most of them have been translated. Despite being part of the established 'Indological record' much of the rich detail these records preserve about religion as lived and practiced has gone largely unnoticed. Historians have tended to read inscriptions selectively for details of dynastic genealogy and military history and, as a consequence, the majority of early medieval epigraphs have yet to be mined for a wealth of other kinds of information.

In the paragraphs above I have referred to the agents I am concerned to study as 'marginalized' voices. This silence is the result of a prevailing focus on dynastic history in the contemporary historiography. Since this project has approached the historical sources with different questions, the contributions of individuals and groups from other social strata have emerged with a greater force and I have chosen to emphasize them. I should also clarify that describing these voices as those of 'non-elite' or 'non-royal' agents, is not meant to suggest that I am writing a history of the 'subaltern' in premodern India. The opposite may be true. The fact that these voices are present in the historical record is significant in itself and suggestive of their social ascendance and ambition. While the endowment of temples is typically attributed to ruling elites, these monuments were much more than self-aggrandizing statements of royal power and prestige. The work of endowing and managing temples catalyzed synergies between individuals and communities from a wide variety of social strata. Artisans, traders, guilds, etc. were far more active as patrons and donors than their royal counterparts. Since Indian temples were large, highly

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8   Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age", 254.

elaborate works of art carved in stone, these investments would have required access to a substantial economic surplus and the ability to mobilize resources over time to ensure the structural and ritual maintenance of the monument. In addition to requiring the expenditure of capital, these religious centers were also storehouses of wealth, both material and symbolic. They controlled significant immovable assets (for example, market stalls and agrarian lands) and participated in the monetized economy through rents paid in cash, and taxes paid to the institution by guilds and traders. As the products of collaborative endeavors that were designed to commemorate relationships and nurture social sodalities, the space of the temple occupied the center of a settlement or polity and marked the heart of the socialized early medieval world.

4   Conceptual Geography

I use the term 'landscape' to designate a "lived space,"[9] a term that encompasses the physical features of a natural landscape, the social and cultural spaces therein, and the values that the inhabitants attach to both. This study foregrounds the multivocality of the Pāśupata landscape, which was given shape and meaning vis-à-vis the myriad activities of individuals and communities.[10] But this region was not something acted upon as a passive backdrop upon which history unfolded, it was instrumental in the construction of religious and political identities and in shaping the realities of those people who lived it.

In addition to the study of narrative and epigraphic sources, on-site research has been integral to my study of this landscape as a lived space. The Śaiva temples and monuments of Early Medieval Northwest India preserve a rich material archive recording histories of the lived religious world that cannot be accessed through textual sources. Using the material record it is possible to approximate some sense of what Barbara Bender has termed the "subjectivity", of a landscape, which is to say, a material recording of human interactions in

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9   Henri Lefebvre employs "lived space" as part of a conceptual triad that also includes "conceived" and "perceived" space. Lived space is the locus of culture and of social activity. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991); W.J.T. Mitchell, "Preface: Place, Space and Landscape" in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) vii–xii.

10   In Margaret Rodman's words, "places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality, one in which meaning is shared with other people and places. The links in the chains of these experienced places are forged in culture and history." Rodman, "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality," *American Anthropologist* 94 (1992): 640–656.

a particular time and place.[11] As with the *Skandapurāṇa* narrative, I approach these other historical sources as recording an ongoing conversation in which different cultural agents—religious specialists, political elites, laywomen, artisans, merchants, and others—offer their accounts of this Śaiva landscape. In addition to human agents and collectives, this study also considers the use of material culture—monuments, memorials, images, etc.—as religious media through which notions of belonging and identity were expressed. As participants in the social worlds of the early Śaiva landscape they, too, are imbued with a kind of agency. Accessing these accounts is not done merely to create a single integrative map that corroborates what the *Skandapurāṇa* reports. Rather, these accounts reflect various vernacular geographies operating within a larger religious landscape.

5   A Map of the Present Work

This project spans a broad geographic area and attempts to synthesize multiple bodies of historical sources; as a consequence, it was necessary to limit and circumscribe the inquiry through a selective chronology, regional frame, and selective sub-regional focus. The text of the *Skandapurāṇa* provides one set of temporal parameters. The editors have dated the text to the late 6th–early 7th centuries. The 6th century thus marks the beginning of my formal inquiry. Since a primary aim was to map the growth of religious communities in both place and time, I extended my temporal frame to include sites and evidence from a period up until the early 10th century. Widening my chronological focus allowed me to engage more of the surviving evidence and use it to present a more complex historical picture in which the interactions of economic, political, and religious networks at a micro-regional level produced distinctive religious landscapes.

The *Skandapurāṇa* has also inspired the geographic scope of the project— the mapping of the Pāśupata landscape in the text provided the starting point and initial parameters for my own mapping. Although, as the authors were selective in identifying particular points in their map, I was also selective in choosing the sites to include in this study. In determining the project's spatial parameters, I worked with two basic criteria: 1) that the site falls within the boundaries of the text's Pāśupata landscape and 2) that there was sufficient material and, or, epigraphic evidence to shed some light on non-royal

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11   Barbara Bender, "Time and Landscape," *Current Anthropology* 43 (2002): 103–112.

community formation. Point two is rather straightforward, but the first qualification requires some explanation. The *Skandapurāṇa* provides only a selective overview of key locales within the religious landscape. The areas I survey, however, are places that occupied the interstices of this narrative map. Given that this textual cartography is a rhetorical and imaginative construction, I did not feel it necessary to consider only the places explicitly marked in it. My effort to recover the region as it was 'lived' required a survey with a broader scope. Many of the places I explore are those that the map merely takes for granted, since they fall within the broad parameters of the narrative geography.

Chapter 1 introduces the narrative of Pāśupata origins preserved in the most archaic layer of the *Skandapurāṇa*. The text's authors designate a small region of northwest India as the 'primordial Pāśupata landscape,' the place where Lord Śiva purportedly descended to earth and initiated the dissemination of the Pāśupata doctrine. The authors specify that Śiva assumed a human form as the teacher Lāguḍi (viz. Lakulīśa) at Kārohaṇa in southwest Gujarat. In the course of his terrestrial wandering, the teacher initiates four students, each of whom presided over a prestigious locale in northwest India—the cities of Ujjain, Mathurā, Jambumārga, and Kanauj. In my analysis of this 'imagined geography' I examine the text's rhetorical aims to present a cosmological vision of a Śaiva world, provide a normative model for community, and stake a geopolitical claim.

Using the early *Skandapurāṇa* as the *terminus post quem* for the narrative construction of the Pāśupata landscape, Chapters 2, 3, and 4 look beyond the textual horizon. In these chapters other historical sources—inscriptions, monuments, and images—become the focal points for the construction of new narratives within this geographically circumscribed area. Each of these chapters introduces a distinct sub-region within the Pāśupata landscape: northern Mālava or Uparamāla in central India, an area of northeast Rajasthan traditionally called Sapādalakṣa, and the North Konkan coast. In order to organize diverse bodies of evidence, each chapter adheres to a similar structure. I begin by introducing the region's physical terrain and outlining the important historical events, political patterns, and economic realities that contributed to its distinctiveness. Next, I situate early Śaivism within the regional social geography, by looking specifically at inscriptions for evidence of patronage of Śaiva institutions. When it is possible, I try to represent the range of donors and their motivations for donative practices in order to get a sense of the social embeddedness of the tradition. The third section presents and analyzes the material evidence with a special attention to patterns in iconography. My attempt to access the lived history of places as preserved in the material record

has involved extensive fieldwork and multiple visits to particular places. I am certain that additional study and future site visits will serve to further nuance this presentation.

Chapter 2 traces the development of Śaiva religious centers in the heartland of Uparamāla. Here I focus special attention on mapping and comparing expressions of Śaiva identity amongst socially ascendant groups in the political centers of Daśapura and Chittorgarh with those of mercantile communities settled in Kansuāñ, Jhālrāpāṭan, and Indragarh in the hills to the north. Evidence coming from both these areas highlights the flexibility of Śaivism, which was employed as a political idiom and expression of might for urban elites and invoked as a source of protection and alleviation of suffering by mercantile groups.

Chapter 3 moves northeast to Sapādalakṣa. I stress the importance of the region's unique geography, which was defined by a series of large saline lakes. Trade in salt from these lakes supported the creation of the monumental royal temple complex on Mount Harṣa and the Pāśupata religious specialists in residence there. I compare the expressions of Śaiva identity at Harṣa with those in the frontier town of Kāman where different socioeconomic formations and political patterns contributed to a distinctly irenic expression of Śaivism that diverges in significant ways from the idiom at Harṣa.

Chapter 4 concludes the survey of the *Skandapurāṇa's* mapping of a Śaiva landscape in the North Konkan coast and the Deccan hinterlands, the southernmost boundary of the Pāśupata landscape. I begin by presenting evidence to counter the dominant scholarly narrative that presents the monumental Śaiva sites as produced by the patronage of the Kalacuri rulers. I propose an alternative history by showing that unique patterns in coastal geography and regional trade in this port polity created a corporate donative culture that shaped the Śaiva religious landscape of the North Konkan, in much the same way as it had supported an earlier network of Buddhist sites.

Chapter 5 concerns the iconography of Lakulīśa, the tradition's founding teacher, and reads his appearance in images as a reflection of or response to particular concerns of the developing Śaiva religious community. This chapter revisits some significant representations of Lakulīśa images from the sites surveyed in the previous chapters, and reflects upon what these differences might reveal about the religious landscape in which they were conceived. I pay particular attention to the formal elements of the icons and their place in temple spaces in order to identify the multiple ways in which these icons could have been 'read' and interpreted. I conclude that Lakulīśa was not only a potent sign of Pāśupata identity; his various attributes signifying power, fertility, and protection reflect a multivalent persona that would have resonated with a broader religious community.

A Geographic Imaginary: the *Skandapurāṇa*, Lakulīśa, and the Localization of Tradition

> Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.
>
> EDWARD SAID[1]

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The most archaic layer of the *Skandapurāṇa* (i.e. the one preserved in the Nepalese or S-recension, SP$_S$)[2] recounts the divine origins of the Pāśupata tradition and its subsequent expansion throughout northwest India. Framed by a series of *māhātmyas* that eulogize the Śaiva *terra sancta* writ large, the text's authors designate a small region of northwest India as the 'primordial Pāśupata landscape,' a salvific region celebrated as the birthplace of the Pāśupata movement. The sanctity of this region is an effect of the presence of Lord Śiva himself: the authors report that in their present age, the Kali *yuga*, Śiva assumed a human form, as the teacher Lāguḍi (viz. Lakulīśa), and disseminated the Pāśupata doctrine via four students, each of whom presided over a prestigious locale in this sacred landscape—the storied cities of Ujjain, Mathurā, Jambumārga, and Kanauj.

Articulated through the particular rhetorical and ideological framework of the literary genre of *purāṇa*, and its sub-genre, *māhātmya*, this literary canonization of a Pāśupata geography records an authoritative effort to localize, order, and authenticate a particular vision of community and thus records

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1 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 7.

2 Detailed analysis of the interrelationships between the manuscripts of the S-recension and formation of the text corpus is given in Yuko Yokochi's Introduction to SP III, 30–55. On the editorial practices and principles that guide the ongoing edition and the manuscript tradition(s) see SP I, 36–38, 41–44; SP IIA, 10–12. On the composition and transmission of the text see Hans T. Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa: Northern India in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 137–140.

a formative moment within the larger project of Pāśupata self-fashioning. But this narrative had far broader implications. The *Skandapurāṇa's* cartography was a deeply political statement. The text's claim to colonize a region that occupied the sociopolitical heart of northwest India presents an imagined geography—not a fanciful representation; rather, a spatial rhetoric aimed at locating the Pāśupata tradition at the center of the early medieval world. This process of localization served three discrete, yet intertwined aims: it presents a cosmological vision of a sanctified world or Śaiva *hierotopy*, provides a normative model for community, and stakes a geopolitical claim.

As a consideration of the unique temporality and historical contingency of this narrative history, this first chapter lays the necessary groundwork for the detailed regional case studies presented in the chapters that follow. These case studies use the *Skandapurāṇa* narrative as the occasion to examine other layers of the sociocultural terrain, or 'vernacular geographies', within the map of the Pāśupata landscape that the text's authors have drawn. In doing so, they initiate a detailed reconstruction of this area as a lived space in Early Medieval India (c. 6th–10th centuries CE).

1   The Narrative Frame

Our story begins in a place called Kārohaṇa, identified with modern Karvan/ Kayavarohan in southwest Gujarat. Kārohaṇa was the center of a larger sacred region situated between the Mahī and the Narmadā rivers, and to the north of the Sahya Mountain, that was celebrated by the authors as the 'primordial Pāśupata landscape' (*paśupateḥ kṣetraṃ purāṇam*).[3] It was here that Śiva is reported to descend to earth in every cosmic age. The *avatāra* of the current age is a teacher called Lāguḍi (viz. Lakulīśa, the 'Lord with a Club') who disseminated the Pāśupata doctrine via his four pupils, who are described as brahmins produced from Śiva's four mouths. In the course of their wanderings, the authors report that these agents of the Lord came to occupy some of the most vital cultural, political, and economic centers of Early Medieval India—Kauśika in Ujjain, Mitra in Mathurā, Gārgya in Jambumārga,[4] and an unnamed *brahmacārin* in Kanauj [Figure 1]. By localizing the Pāśupata tradition in this salvific *kṣetra*, the text's authors offer an unprecedented new vision

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3   SP$_S$ 167.136. See text below.

4   While the precise location of Jambumārga is debated, my research identifies it with the important ancient settlement of Śākambharī located in the Salt Lakes region north of Puṣkara in modern Rajasthan. See Chapter 3.

FIGURE 1   The Pāśupata landscape

of this region, one that participates in a comprehensive effort on their part to construct an entire landscape circumscribed and dominated by the memory of the Śaiva past. In this way, the text presents itself as an iconic geography, a map of great symbolic density that claims a Śaiva world.[5] While this sacred *kṣetra*

5   I have adapted this term 'iconic geography' from Nancy Khalek's discussion of medieval *faḍāʾil* literature used to praise the sanctified spaces around Damascus. She describes these evocative literary sources as 'iconic texts.' In the case of the SP narrative, I think it is not only the text that is iconic, but the landscape as well. This region symbolizes the premier status

is not the best known in the Śaiva canon—one might think first of Vārāṇasī, Himalayan locales, or the later networks of *jyotirliṅgas*—its anonymity vis-à-vis the received tradition suggests a particular historical contingency; that it was a response to the needs of certain members of the community at a particular moment in time.

Those familiar with *purāṇas* and *māhātmyas* know that the creation and celebration of iconic geographies is part of the genre's stock-in-trade. But among medieval India's many literary constructions of sacred landscape, the SP$_S$ narrative is a significant cultural artifact and merits detailed attention. This geographic vision of Pāśupata origins is the earliest one known. It is also unique to the *Skandapurāṇa* (henceforth, SP).[6] This text also marks the debut in the historical record of Lāguḍi as an ectype of Śiva. As obscure as this last point may seem on its face, this mention of a human teacher—whose name is derived from variant spellings[7] of his signature club (*lakula*; *laguḍa*)—introduces a figure whose icons come to be emblematic of the Pāśupata tradition. The authors report that in their present time, Śiva 'Lāguḍi,' descended to the terrestrial plane in order to lead other brahmins to final beatitude.[8] Through

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that the authors wish to ascribe to the religious community and its teachings. Nancy Khalek, *Damascus After the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 136–137. On the potential of maps to communicate social values see J.B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, eds. D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1988), 277–312 (278).

6   Kauṇḍinya's *Pañcārthabhāṣya* on the *Pāśupatasūtras* mentions two of the places that also figure in the SP$_S$ version, but this account does not develop the geographic theme as does the *purāṇa*. According to Kauṇḍinya, who was writing in the 4th or 5th century, approximately two hundred years earlier than the SP$_S$ authors, the Lord (*bhagavān*) took on the form of a male brahmin in Kāyāvatāraṇa (viz. Kārohaṇa) and in this human form he walked to Ujjain where he proclaimed the teachings of the *Pāśupatasūtras*. For further discussion of Kauṇḍinya's account see, Hans Bakker, "The Gospel of Kauṇḍinya: The Descent of God in Gujarat and the Practice of Imitating God," in *Myths, Martyrs and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honor of Jan N. Bremmer*, eds. Jitse Dijkstra, Justin Kroesen & Yme Kuiper (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 517–529 (517–518).

7   'Lāguḍiḥ' is given in the S$_1$ manuscript, which is the oldest dated manuscript. S$_2$ gives 'Lākulī' which more closely approximates 'Lakulīśa', the spelling that becomes most common.

8   The SP$_S$ identifies Śiva as Lāguḍi only once in this account of the transmission of the Pāśupata doctrine. The other two recensions of the SP used by the editors in the critical edition (The Revā and Ambikā recensions—SP$_{RA}$) never mention Lakulīśa, nor any established variant of the name. The appellation Laguḍīśvara appears in one other instance in SP$_S$ 167.169. In this passage, Laguḍīśvara and his pupils are referred to in connection with eight Śiva *āyatanas* in Magadha. In this case, however, the title is not explicitly made a name of Śiva; rather it suggests a reference to a distinct person. There is no parallel for this passage in SP$_{RA}$. See Peter C. Bisschop, *Early Śaivism and the Skandapurāṇa: Sects and Centres* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2006), 108; 218. The name Lakulīśa itself is not attested until the middle of the

Lāguḍi and his pupils, the SP populated this sacred *kṣetra* with authoritative representatives of the tradition and, at the same time, elevated Kārohaṇa as the center of an expansive territory that occupied the heart of northwest India. Yet the power of this map did not derive solely from a claim to a terrestrial geography. As I will show, when articulated within purāṇic registers of primordial time and space, this localization of divine presence and revelation approximates a cosmological vision.

Designating the geographic location of the tradition gestures to a social location as well. Narrating the Pāśupata landscape reflects an aim to establish the boundaries of a community; it is a univocal expression of identity over and against the polyphony of voices on the ground. In the case of the SP, this spatial innovation records a significant historical moment in the development of the tradition, one that hints at larger processes of transformation and dynamism within a Śaiva religious milieu. Through this narrative map, the authors tell us not only *where* the community was, but also *who* it was. By establishing the boundaries of the tradition and socializing the landscape in this way, the narrative provides a model for a community—that is, a normative vision of the Pāśupata tradition and its place in the world. Seen from this perspective, the narrative cartography is not reflective of a process of documentation, in which some observable 'real' is recorded; rather, this map reflects a discursive process that proposes an idealized 'model for' reality.[9]

In addition to their cosmological and normative vision, the authors also make a geopolitical claim. The text's laying claim to a particular region of northwest India suggests that this geographic area also had an important role to play in the SP's construction of a Pāśupata identity. Since this account of Pāśupata origins comprises part of a dated text, likely of the late 6th or early 7th century CE, a rarity in the field of purāṇic studies, it affords a unique opportunity to situate the text's iconic geography within the dynamic sociopolitical history of Early Medieval India.[10] As mentioned above, the authors pinpoint

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7th century in an inscription by the king of Dakṣiṇa Kosala, Mahāśivagupta, which refers to the descent of Lakulīśanātha who is born in the house of one Somaśarman. For discussion of this inscription see, Hans Bakker, "Thanesar, the Pāśupata Order and the Skandapurāṇa: Studies in the Skandapurāṇa IX," *Journal of Indological Studies* 19 (2007): 1–16 (2). Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 143–145 presents a revised translation and interpretation of the aforementioned passage of the inscription.

9   The SP$_S$ cartography resonates with Benedict Anderson's discussion of the function of the colonial map as a 'totalizing classification.' In his words, "a map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent." Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map, and Museum," in *Imagined Communities*, Revised Edition (London: Verso Press, 1991 [1983]), 173.

10   I follow the dating proposed by the editors of the SP. See Yokochi, SP III, 30–55.

certain locales within the landscape as authoritative seats of the tradition: the cities of Ujjain, Mathurā, Jambumārga, and Kanauj are each occupied by one of Lāguḍi's students. These prestigious places were political capitals of considerable antiquity, sites of cultural production, and nodal points along the major conduits of trade and travel that extended from the west coast of southern Gujarat and the North Konkan, across North India.[11] Given the cultural potency of these places, the SP authors' claim to this space was not a neutral assertion. There were geopolitical strategies at work. On the one hand, colonizing these prominent locales reflects an effort to assert the supremacy of Śaivism and the Pāśupata tradition within the political and economic networks embedded in these places. At the same time, the inclusion of these cities within the Pāśupata topography suggests a hierarchical vision aimed at celebrating Kārohaṇa,[12] a place of comparatively little prior prestige and elevating this locale to a position on a par with more historically prominent sites.

1.1   *Text and Translation*

The narrative that outlines the geographic spread of the Pāśupata movement in the SP$_S$ is framed within a larger narrative sequence in which the sage Sanatkumāra informs Vyāsa about Śiva's many sanctuaries. He also lists the seers and other figures from traditional narrative literature who visited these places in times past and the religious merit that will accrue to a person who visits them today (i.e., short *māhātmyas* of these places).[13] Much like its frame, the Pāśupata account is, at its core, a *māhātmya* intended to praise Kārohaṇa. It was at this *tīrtha*, situated on the northern bank of the Narmadā River, and where the authors report a sanctuary of Trinetra (i.e. Śiva) is located, that they claim Vṛṣabhadhvaja (Śiva) descended to earth.

Before expanding on this Śaiva connection, however, the authors establish the sanctity of this place by presenting a cosmological frame in which the remarkable events will take place. They begin by explaining the meaning of the

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11   On the sociocultural preeminence of Kanauj in the early medieval period see André Wink, "Kanauj as the Religious and Political Capital of Early Medieval India," in *The Sacred Center as the Focus of Political Interest*, ed. Hans Bakker (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1992), 101–117. On the political significance of Kanauj during the time of the *Skandapurāṇa*'s composition see Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 77–94.

12   Called Kārohaṇa in the SP$_S$, Kāyāvarohaṇa, Kāyāvatāra, and Kāyāvataraṇa are all attested variants for this 'place of bodily incarnation.' On Kārohaṇa see also M. Hara, *Pāśupata Studies*, ed. J. Takashima (Vienna: Publications of the De Nobili Research Library XXX, 2002), 145–148.

13   For example, the preceding verses (107–109) describe an *āyatana* of Śiva established on Hariścandragiri by Rāma Jāmadagnya. The section following praises the shrine of Avimukteśvara in Vārāṇasī and details the benefits of installing a *liṅga* at this place (SP$_S$ 167.139–162).

site's name through an etymology: this location is the place where the Prajāpati Ka—referring here to the sage Kaśyapa—mounted (*āruroha*) Kā, the Earth, and so the site is called Kārohaṇa.[14] The etymology is somewhat obscure and its exact mythical referent is difficult to trace in this terse mention. Bisschop's detailed study of the *nirukti* connects it with Kaśyapa's 'mounting' or reasserting control over the earth, which had been given to him earlier as a boon from Rāma Jāmadagnya, since it was in danger of withdrawing and descending to the netherworld.[15] As obscure as the etymology is to a contemporary audience, it is the author's rhetorical aim that deserves mention. Indological studies of these so-called 'folk' etymologies tend to emphasize their function as granting access to otherwise hidden connections and esoteric wisdom.[16] This etymology may have served such a purpose, as a means to imbue this place with symbolic pregnancy by connecting it with a previous event of cosmic significance. Doing so would evoke a sense of timelessness and eternality that underlay the empirical reality of the reader's experience. We might also consider the etymology's more exoteric potential as a mnemonic device—an additional layer of significance that contributed to the listener's mental image of the landscape.[17]

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14   *uttare narmadātīre dviyojanapathāntare |*
       kārohaṇam iti khyātaṃ trinetrāyatanaṃ mahat |
       yatra kaḥ kāṃ tapasyantīm āruroha prajāpatiḥ || 110 ||
       āruroha yataḥ kāṃ tāṃ tasmin deśe prajāpatiḥ |
       tasmāt kārohaṇo nāma sa deśaḥ parikīrtitaḥ || 111 ||
       tasmin deśe 'vatīrṇaś ca bhagavān vṛṣabhadvajaḥ |
       puṇyo 'sau sarvadeśebhyo deśo yena nibodha tat ||112||

15   Peter Bisschop, "The Nirukti of Kārohaṇa in the Skandapurāṇa: Studies in the Skandapurāṇa VII," in *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures. Proceedings of the Dubrovnik International Conference on Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas III*, ed. Petteri Koskikallio (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2002), 575–596. As Bisschop also notes in his study, SP$_{RA}$ provides an alternative version of the *nirukti*, which reports that Kaśyapa ascended to heaven at Kārohaṇa. Also significant in this account is that Brahmā is said to emit the various units of cosmic time at Kārohaṇa:
       tatra brahmāsṛjat sargaṃ yugamanvantarāṇi ca/
       kāṣṭāṃ kalāṃ muhūrtaṃ ca lavaṃ saṃvatsaraṃ ritum //44//

16   Johannes Bronkhorst, "Etymology and Magic: Yāska's Nirukta, Plato's Cratylus, and the Riddle of Semantic Etymologies," *Numen* 48 (2001): 147–203 (155).

17   Fentress and Wickham explore the transmission of social memory via narrative and image. Their comment on the power of the image in transmitting memory is apt in light of the strong visual element of the SP$_S$ narrative. As they explain, "social memory is not limited to the memory of words." They also draw attention to the role of images, and explain that the "images held in social memory are composite: they are composed from a mixture of pictorial images and scenes, slogans, quips, and snatches of verse, abstractions, plot types and stretches of discourse, and even false etymologies [...] Images can be transmitted socially only if they are conventionalized and simplified: conventionalized because the image has to be meaningful for the entire group." J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory: New Perspectives on the Past* (London: Blackwell, 1992), 47.

One more notable detail follows. Kārohaṇa is identified as a place where Dharma is preserved in the face of cosmic degeneration, invoking the familiar trope of the decline of dharma with the passage of each cosmic age. Here, Dharma personified is said to decrease by one fourth (*pāda*) with the passing of each *yuga*.[18] But since the Lord Dharma, with his last remaining quarter, stayed in Kārohaṇa, it is said to be a holy (*puṇya*) place.[19] And, yet, however remarkable the reported event, the reader is assured repeatedly that these things did happen in this very place (*tasmin deśe*). This recurrent phrase functions as a tether that binds two discrete geographies, one cosmic and one terrestrial.[20] This localization of events serves as a narrative foreshadowing that sets the expectation that Kārohaṇa will continue to be a site of significant events in the future.

The authors then add a Śaiva layer to this cosmological framing of Kārohaṇa's sacred geography. We are told that in each previous *yuga* Śiva descended at this very place and offered his favor to brahmins in different forms—as Bhārabhūti in the Kṛta *yuga*, Diṇḍimuṇḍa in the Tretā *yuga*, and Aṣāḍhi in the Dvāpara *yuga*.[21] The excerpt below (SP$_S$ 119–138)[22] brings the narrative into the present age as it describes Śiva's incarnation at Kārohaṇa in the current, the Kali, *yuga*.

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18   In this trope, Dharma is often envisioned as a cow. The four legs or pillars of Dharma—
       satyam (truth), *dayā* (compassion), *tapas* (asceticism), and *dānam* (pious giving)—
       decrease one-by-one with the passing of each *yuga*. This image and the theme of cosmic
       degeneration are addressed by Heinrich von Stietencron, "Calculating Religious Decay:
       The Kaliyuga in India," in *Hindu Myth, Hindu History* (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan,
       2007), 31–49.

19   SP$_S$ 167.113–114
       kṣīṇe kṛtayuge vyāsa tretāyugamukhodaye |
       tasmin pādaṃ mumocaikaṃ dharmo 'dharmanipīḍitaḥ |
       dvitīyaṃ dvāpare prāpte tṛtīyaṃ ca kalau yuge || 113 ||
       caturthenāvasthe ca yataḥ sa bhagavān prabhuḥ |
       evaṃ sa dharmasaṃvāso deśaḥ puṇyatamaḥ smṛtaḥ || 114 ||

20   The authors use this locative reminder in three instances: Verses 111, 112, and 117. See
       below.

21   SP$_S$ 167.115–117
       bhārabhūtis tv asau bhūtvā tasmin deśe pinākadhṛk |
       bhāraṃ baddhvā dvijātīnāṃ narmadāyāṃ vicikṣipe ||
       kāruṇyena mahādevo martyajanmamumukṣayā || 115 ||
       tretāyāṃ diṇḍimuṇḍaś ca śirāṃsi vinikṛttavān |
       dvāpare cāṣāḍhir bhūtvā nṛttenānugṛhītavān || 116 ||
       evaṃ pratiyugaṃ vyāsa tasmin deśe śivaḥ svayam |
       avatīrṇaś cānugṛhya brāhmaṇāñ chuddhamānasān || 117 ||

22   The Sanskrit text is reproduced from Bisschop's critical edition in *Sects and Centres*.

vartamāne kalau cāpi jñātvā duḥkhārditaṃ jagat /
catvāraḥ puruṣān sṛṣṭvā svasmān mukhacatuṣṭayāt /
provāca parameśāno lokānugrahalipsayā //119//
yūyaṃ yāta mahīṃ sarve dvijā bhūtvā tapasvinaḥ /
mām evaiṣyatha yogīśā nītvā viprān paraṃ padam //120//
te tathoktās tathā vyāsa sambabhūvuḥ pṛthakpṛthak /
mānuṣeṣu tadā viprā mokṣadharmaparāyaṇāḥ //121//
ujjayanyāṃ gurujyeṣṭhaḥ kauśiko nāma nāmataḥ /
dvitīyo gārgya ity eva jambumārge satāpanaḥ //122//
tṛtīyaś cābhavan mitro mathurāyāṃ mahāmanāḥ /
brahmacārī caturthas tu kuruṣv eva sugotrajaḥ //123//
bhagavān api deveśaḥ paramaiśvaryasaṃyutaḥ /
atrivaṃśaprasūtasya nāmnā vai somaśarmaṇaḥ /
rūpaṃ kṛtvā sitāṅgaṃ tu jagāmātrigṛhaṃ śubham //124//
sa taṃ brahmavidaṃ vipram ātreyaṃ sakulaṃ vibhuḥ /
yogasiddhipradānena anujagrāha śaṃkaraḥ //125//
anugṛhya tadā vyāsa sakulaṃ dvijasattamam /
jagāmojjayanīṃ devaḥ śmaśānaṃ ca viveśa ha //126//
sa tatra bhasmanātmānam avaguṇṭhya vṛṣadhvajaḥ /
ulmukaṃ vāmahastena gṛhītvā samupāviśat //127//
tatra prathamam ādāya śiṣyaṃ kauśikam īśvaraḥ /
jambumārge dvitīyaṃ ca mathurāyāṃ tato 'param //128//
kanyakubje tataś cānyam anugṛhya jagatpatiḥ /
svasiddhāntaṃ dadau yogam uvācedaṃ ca lāguḍiḥ //129//
rahasyaṃ paramaṃ hīdaṃ pañcārtha iti saṃjñitam /
viprān mocayituṃ datto yuṣmabhyaṃ martyabandhanāt |
anayā dīkṣayā viprān prāpayadhvaṃ paraṃ padam // 130 //
nadītīreṣu medhyeṣu puṇyeṣv āyataneṣu ca /
śūnyāgāreṣv araṇyeṣu vāso vaḥ saṅgavarjitaḥ // 131 //
vaco bhagavataḥ śrutvā śiṣyāḥ paśupateḥ svayam /
yathājñaptam akurvanta sarve te bhavatejasaḥ // 132 //
dharmapādāṅkite deśe avatīrṇo yato bhavaḥ /
sa deśaḥ paramas tasmān mahāpuṇyatamaḥ smṛtaḥ // 133 //
āśramo yogināṃ yatra pravṛttaḥ pāpanāśanaḥ /
aṣṭāyatanam ity evaṃ sthānaṃ tatra mahātmanaḥ /
yad dṛṣṭvā manujā vyāsa prāpnuvanti paraṃ padam // 134 //
kārohaṇaṃ śivasthānaṃ ye 'bhigacchanti mānavāḥ /
garbhaśayyābhayaṃ teṣāṃ na bhaven munisattama // 135 //
mahinarmadayor madhyaṃ sahyasya ca yad uttaram /
etat paśupateḥ kṣetraṃ purāṇam ṛṣibhiḥ stutam //136 //

tadāgatya naro vyāsa yady api syāt supāpakṛt /
sarvapāpavinirmukto yatheṣṭāṃ prāpnuyād gatim // 137 //
kārohaṇaṃ kṣetram atīva puṇyaṃ śaivāni yatrāyatanāni dhīman /
gatvā narās tāni mahāphalāni saṃsāragehaṃ na punar viśanti //138 //

As the Kaliyuga was progressing, the Supreme Lord, aware of the world's affliction, created four men from each of his own four mouths.[23] Out of his desire to furnish favoring assistance to [its] populations. [119] He told them: "All of you go upon the earth as brahmin ascetics. After you have conveyed brahmins to the highest place, you Lords of Yoga will return directly to me." [120]

Vyāsa, when he had said this to them, those brahmins came, each one of them, to be highly honored among men as completely dedicated to the norms (*dharma*) leading to liberation (*mokṣa*). [121] The senior-most of these teachers was in Ujjain and named Kauśika. The second was the ascetic Gārgya in Jambumārga. [122] The third was the magnanimous Mitra in Mathurā. The fourth was a celibate student who was born in an excellent family of the Kuru lineage. [123]

And then the Blessed Lord of the Gods, endowed with his supreme lordly power, took on a bodily form (*rūpam*) that had white limbs and went to the auspicious home of one Somaśarman, born in the line of Atri. [124] The Lord Śaṃkara showed favor to that brahmin of Atri's lineage, who was learned in the Veda, and to his family, by conferring upon him perfection in *yoga*. [125]

Then, Vyāsa, after he had shown favor to that excellent brahmin and his family, the God went to Ujjayanī and he entered the cremation ground there. [126] Vṛṣadhvaja (Śiva) seated himself there after he covered his body with ashes and picked up a firebrand with his left hand. [127] The Lord accepted Kauśika as his first student there, then his second in Jambumārga, the next one in Mathurā after that, [128] and having welcomed another in Kanyakubja after that, the Lord of the World, gave them his fully established teaching of *yoga*.

Lāguḍi said this: [129] "This is truly the supreme secret; it is called Pañcārtha. I have given it to you in order to free brahmins from the bond of death. Get brahmins to the highest place with this consecration. [130]

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23   Here I translate '*mukha*' specifically as 'mouth' rather than the more general 'face'. While both translations are possible and accurate, I think that the vision of the students being emitted directly from the Lord's mouth evokes the power of the word and the authority of oral transmission that is central to the Sanskrit tradition.

Free from worldly concerns, dwell along the pure banks of rivers, in sacred shrines, in abandoned houses, and in the wilderness." [131] After they had heard these words from Lord Paśupati himself, those students, imbued with the fiery energy of Lord Bhava, all did as they were commanded. [132]

Since Lord Bhava descended in this place, marked by a quarter of Dharma, it is thus considered a supremely sacred spot. [133] The exalted one has a place there called the 'Eight-Abodes' (Aṣṭāyatana), a retreat of *yogins* where the destruction of bad deeds occurs. After seeing it, Vyāsa, mortals attain the highest place. [134] Those people who visit the abode of Śiva called Kārohaṇa have no fear of rebirth, Venerable Sage. [135] This is the primordial field of Paśupati—[located] between the Narmadā and the Mahī rivers, and north of the Sahya Mountain—celebrated by the seers. [136] Even if a man is truly an evil-doer, Vyāsa, after reaching there he would be liberated from all misdeeds and attain his desired end. [137] Kārohaṇa is an extremely sacred area where, Wise One, there are sanctuaries of Śiva. People who visit them, so richly rewarding, will never again enter the cycle of rebirth. [138]

2   An Imagined Landscape

The SP scripts a compelling emplotment[24] of divine presence and revelation using a narrative structure that adapts literary features definitive of the *purāṇa* and *māhātmya* genres to serve the authors' rhetorical aims. By narrating the divine origins of the Pāśupata movement as a series of events tied to prominent locales within a sanctified region, the SP authors created an imagined landscape. 'Imagined' is not an antonym for 'real', nor is it meant to deny that the authors themselves could have had empirical knowledge of the area, places, and social realities of the region. The ideological force of this sacred *kṣetra* would have depended, at least in part, upon the authors' and audiences' familiarity with the area, either through first-hand knowledge of certain of its features or via received tradition. Had places like Ujjain and Mathurā, or even Kārohaṇa, been completely unknown, the cultural purchase of the narrative

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24   This term, used by Hayden White (see below, n. 27) and others, was coined by Paul Ricoeur. According to Ricoeur, emplotment is a process of narrative configuration, what he called an act of 'grasping together'. This grasping organizes events into an intelligible whole in a way that lends the narrative telling a sense of unity and, through that unity, a cultural plausibility that makes it meaningful. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. McLaughlin & Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 64; 164.

would have been diminished significantly. The term 'imagined landscape' draws upon a body of scholarship on the 'social imaginary' as the shared conceptions, ideals, or ethos of a particular group that reflects a certain normative perspective. These conceptions are expressed in non-theoretical or even tacit ways as shared images, narratives, and practices.[25]

We can observe the geographic imaginary in process in the text's description of Kārohaṇa. Scholars typically identify the village of Karvan/Kayavarohan in southwest Gujarat as the site of the purāṇic Kārohaṇa, and material evidence suggests that it was an important Pāśupata site at the time of the text's composition. Yet, the authors of the text do not imagine Kārohaṇa as a particular geographic point. From the narrative description, it is difficult to discern where exactly Kārohaṇa was. One reason for this uncertainty could be the fact that the sacred center was not understood to be a single site, but a region (*deśa*) or collocation of places connected with the Lord's various descents. We can also interpret this geographic indeterminacy as intentional and reflective of the authors' aim to elevate Kārohaṇa as the site of Pāśupata origins and to imbue it with a sanctity that is not explicitly attributed to the other locales mentioned in the narrative. Kārohaṇa's borders are not clearly demarcated since it was not a city one could pinpoint on a map. It was a *tīrtha*. *Tīrthas* ('fords' or 'crossings') are the earliest examples of Indian pilgrimage sites and are held sacred because they permit pilgrims to 'bridge the gap' by serving as a point of contact between the mundane world and the celestial world of the gods.[26] In the case of the SP, the sanctity of Kārohaṇa is not only envisioned as extending vertically, to permeate the boundary that divides the human from the divine realm, it also extends horizontally, across the landscape. In the text above, verses 135–139 equate Kārohaṇa with the entire sacred *kṣetra* located between the Narmadā and the Mahī rivers. Seen in this way, Kārohaṇa *was* the Pāśupata landscape.

2.1   *Storied Places*

In addition to visual or iconic features, an equally important feature of the Pāśupata landscape as an imaginative construction is the narrative emplotment

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25   Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14 (2002): 91–124; *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Claudia Strauss, "The Imaginary," *Anthropological Theory* 6.3 (2006): 322–344.

26   Diana Eck, "India's Tīrthas: Crossings in Sacred Geography," *History of Religions* 20.4 (1981): 323–344.

of the purportedly factual data it imparts.[27] The larger social imaginary determines the localization of events and the way the sanctity of the region is storied in order to create an idealized and coherent picture, a narrative that 'works'.[28] Genres of historical writing, *purāṇa* included, are what Hayden White has termed 'discursive writing' in which a series of historical events, value neutral in themselves, become rhetorically powerful and also plausible through narrative emplotment.[29] While *purāṇa* is a kind of historiography, its mode of narrative emplotment is not typically recognized as historical, since purāṇic texts, and their sub-genre, *māhātmya*, are both literary traditions that purport to record the past while eschewing chronological historical details and obscuring the identities of individual authors. These features lend the text an aura of timelessness, as something preternaturally revealed rather than recorded by a human hand.[30] In Sanskrit, the word '*purāṇa*' signifies something ancient; but the word may also refer to the literary genre that records what is ancient, indicating the intentions of the authors to locate the events of the narratives in the 'primordial' past, to adopt James Fitzgerald's terminology.[31] As a literary genre, *purāṇa* was influenced by the earlier, related *itihāsa* tradition. *Itihāsa* narrative, which is often translated into English as 'history,' and whose title is taken from the formulaic phrase '*iti ha āsa*,' 'so it was' that was used to end such accounts, was concerned with the past and represents a system of knowledge maintained by brahmin specialists and used to resolve issues of interpretation of Vedic hymns or rules concerning the proper execution of a sacrifice.[32] They are myths that provide a template for human action.

Both *itihāsa* and *purāṇa* are narrative traditions strategically constructed and employed as tools for the dissemination of a brahmanical account of the

27   Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 9.

28   Dominik LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 30.

29   Hayden White, "Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. Geoffrey Roberts (London: Routledge, 2001), 221–236.

30   These characteristics of *purāṇa* as a mythic historiography resonate with Daniel Boyarin's description of Talmudic narratives as a 'mytho-poetic historiography' or 'mythic memory'. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 178–182.

31   James Fitzgerald, "History and Primordium in Ancient Indian Historical Writing: Itihāsa and Purāṇa in the Mahābhārata and Beyond," *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World*, ed. K.A. Raaflaub (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 41–60.

32   Jan Gonda, *Vedic Literature (Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas). A History of Indian Literature Vol. 1* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1975), 339.

past and the continued renewal of brahminic forms of knowledge and (embedded) norms. Much like Islamic *hadith*, or ancient Greek *mythos*, *itihāsa* specialists used accounts of past events and deeds as a source of authority that was brought to bear on situations in the present. In this way, the *itihāsa* tradition is comparable to Bruce Lincoln's description of the function and authority of myth in ancient Greek culture; it was an authoritative utterance to be respected and obeyed rather than a fictional account whose limitation to the realm of the fabulous excluded the possibility of veracity.[33] The defining element of these narrative reports was their authority and reliability. Like *itihāsa*, the *purāṇas* often style themselves as oral reports. Traces of this discursive structure are evident in the SP$_S$ narrative presented above, which is cast as a dialogue between the sages Vyāsa and Sanatkumāra. The use of vocative asides to punctuate narrative junctures gives the impression that the text presents a transcript of an extended conversation.[34] This presentation of orality lends the written word the *gravitas* of an authoritative utterance and, at the same time, heightens the reader's experience of the story by bridging temporal and narrative distance. The 'present' in which the revelation occurred becomes the immediate and intimate present of the audience.

The purāṇic mode of emplotment is also effective because of the way it is brought to life by the text—as an image meant to be visualized and experienced. This purāṇic landscape functions as a kind of portrait of such an imagined landscape.[35] In the case of the Pāśupata landscape, it is not only the literary rendering that achieves an iconic status, but the geographically circumscribed area itself. The purāṇa's authors crafted an 'iconic geography' of great symbolic density insofar as it represented, at least at that time, an authoritative vision of the tradition's place in the world. And this vision is a memorable one in its simplicity. The map is uncluttered; the cast of characters is limited, and the account is not burdened by superfluous detail. This relatively straightforward or conventionalized presentation of a series of remarkable events allows this iconic geography to function as a narrative *aide-mémoire*, a textual image called easily to mind.[36]

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33   Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: UC Press, 1999), 13.

34   For example, up above in verses 121 & 125 before the introduction of critical passages concerning the localization of the pupils and the activities of Lakulīśa. There are also multiple instances in verses 134–138, which celebrate Kārohaṇa and emphasize its sanctity.

35   Khalek, *Damascus After the Muslim Conquest*, 137.

36   Fentress & Wickham, *Social Memory*, 47.

2.2 *Pāśupata Cosmology*

Although the *purāṇas* as written texts have shown a certain flexibility over time, there are certain distinguishing characteristics that designate a narrative as part of the purāṇic tradition, as distinct from other forms of popular narrative, and thus a reflection of a certain elite brahmin ideology. Some of the *purāṇas* define the genre as characterized by five marks (*pañcalakṣaṇa*) that provide a cosmological and genealogical frame within which the drama of the past unfolds. These five marks include: *sarga*, the accounts of the creation of the universe; *pratisarga*, the story of the recreation of the universe after its dissolution; *vaṃśa*, genealogies of the Gods and other divine beings or forces; *manvantara*, the history of a *Manu* (king) of the fourteen *Manu*-intervals in each *kalpa* (vast period of time); and *vaṃśānucarita*, a history of the kings in the particular *manvantara* in question. The *pañcalakṣaṇa* represent a particular way of understanding, organizing, and expressing views about the past.[37] What the *purāṇas* demonstrate with their genealogies and cosmogonies is that historical events are not isolated occurrences—the cultural relevance of the purāṇic account resides in its storying the past as a cyclical and continuous unfolding in time and place. On this point Fitzgerald's comments are also apt: "Some uses of the word *purāṇa* also conveyed the additional, critically important sense of *being the first instance of something that is still current*—primacy, primordiality—a sense which not only contains within it a sense of the normative but also often awakens senses of sacredness, of transcendent holiness …"[38] In the case of religious communities, this rhetoric of primordiality anchors the tradition in the timeless past and situates teachings and teachers within a larger cosmological framework of revealed knowledge.

We have already seen that the text locates Śiva's descent as Lāguḍi in the Kali *yuga*, the degraded age of the relative present in which his appearance promises the alleviation of human suffering and the possibility of salvation. The Lord's appearance in Kārohaṇa is narrated as a continuous cyclical process of appearance and revelation such that it achieves a kind of timelessness. The repetition also serves to highlight the immediacy of the past and the spatial proximity of those marvelous events, thereby adding a new, and potentially salvific, dimension to the everyday or phenomenological experience of time as the ordered succession of past-present-future. The cosmological frame is

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37   Willibald Kirfel, *Das Purāṇa Pañcalakṣaṇa: Versuch einer Textgeschichte* (Bonn: Kurt Schroeder Verlag, 1927); Fitzgerald, "History and Primordium," 40; V. Narayana Rao, "Purāṇa as Brahminic Ideology," in *Purāna Perennis: Reciprocity and Transformation in the Hindu and Jaina Texts*, ed. Wendy Doniger (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 85–100 (99).

38   Fitzgerald, "History and Primordium," 49–50.

first intimated in *ślokas* 115–117 where we are told of Śiva's previous descents in Kārohaṇa. This adaptation by the authors of the narrative serves their larger rhetorical agenda; namely, to elevate Kārohaṇa as the center of the Śaiva world.

In addition to introducing this cyclically temporal *yuga*-framework, the text's cosmological vision is also evident in the presentation of the origin of the students. The SP account does not present the *pañcalakṣaṇa, per se*, but emulates the pattern of purāṇic cosmogony through the implied rhythm of *sarga* and *pratisarga*—the pattern of creation, reabsorption, and recreation that structures each cosmic age.[39] We are told in verse 119 that Śiva 'produces'—here the authors use a form of √*sṛj*, the verbal root typically adapted to express acts of cosmic or divine emission—the four brahmin ascetics who will act as his terrestrial representatives from each of his four mouths, the ultimate source of his revealed teaching. They are extensions of the deity and the word of God in corporeal form. Then, in verse 120 they are told that after they have accomplished the task of achieving the salvation of brahmins (i.e. getting them to the *paraṃ padam* or 'highest place') they will return directly to him. This image of a divine emanation and subsequent reabsorption clearly approximates a cosmological pattern, albeit on the scale of a social microcosm. It is a synoptic cosmology.

As a final note, we may also read echoes of a cosmological rhythm in the structure of the narrative itself, and in the unfolding of the image of the sacred *kṣetra*. For just as the authoritative teachers are derived from a single source—i.e. the Lord's mouth—the cardinal points of the Pāśupata landscape are linked to the sacred center at Kārohaṇa through the continuity of the lineage deriving from Śiva as Lāguḍi. Kārohaṇa serves as both the geographical and the narrative source from which the story unfolds. As Śiva's students were sanctified by their emanating from him, so the other locales incorporated within this narrative arc are sanctified by virtue of their ties to the terrestrial source of the revelation. And similar to the way that the students will eventually return to be 'reabsorbed' by Śiva, this narrative also circles back to Kārohaṇa in the final verses to reassert the supreme sanctity of this landscape.

3   Narrating Community: Borders & Belonging

In narrating the origins of their *terra sancta*, the SP authors simultaneously offer their vision of a Pāśupata community. Like the landscape itself, this image

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39   These patterns of cosmology are discussed in Madeleine Biardeau, *Études de mythologie Hindoue. Tome 1: Cosmogonies Purāṇiques* (Paris: École Française D'Extrême Orient, 1981).

of the tradition is a carefully curated representation, a normative idealization of community. The text's account of sacred geography and lineage communicates a compelling expression of a larger imagined social identity thanks, in part, to the distinctive narrative form through which it was expressed. Much has been written about the social function of narrative and the ability of this straightforward or practical potential of the form to create a sense of coherence between character, story, audience, and teller.[40] The narrative form facilitates the formation of a social identity as individuals not bound by traditional ties like kinship or location become a 'we' through the narrative arc that tells of a group's origins and looks ahead to its future. Like the cohesive power of the place-centered vision, the narrative progression, too, organizes the story within a coherent and meaningful plot that mimics the teleological structure of events that we as humans impart to story the events of our own lives.[41]

Since the Pāśupata tradition's claim to authority hinges on its possession of a revealed and secret teaching, it is critical that the authors establish an authoritative line of transmission that derives from Śiva himself. His agents—the brahmin ascetics Kauśika, Gārgya, Mitra, and the fourth, known only by topographic reference, 'from the Kuru land'—embody the revelation. They also function as tethers that tie the places and teaching back to their divine source (here, Śiva as Lāguḍi) and to the geographic location of its origin, Kārohaṇa. In the text's cartographic icon, the four students function as a means to establish boundaries and socialize the geo-spatial parameters of the community by occupying prestigious places at its cardinal points. Furthermore, the repeated emphasis that they are male brahmin ascetics and that their message is for the salvation of brahmins establishes a set of narrow and elite sociocultural parameters. Even Somaśarman,[42] who features as the Lord's first initiate, is

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40   David Carr, "Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity," in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. Geoffrey Roberts (New York: Routledge, 2001), 143–156 (128). For similar perspectives on narrative see Carr, "Narrative Explanation and its Malcontents," *History and Theory* 47 (2008): 19–30.

41   To quote Carr, "Whatever else 'life' may be, it is hardly a structureless sequence of isolated events. It might be objected that structure is not necessarily narrative structure. But is there not a kinship between the means-end structure of action and the beginning-middle-end structure of a narrative? In action we are always in the middle of something, caught in the suspense of contingency, which is supposed to find its resolution in the completion of our project. To be sure, a narrative unites many actions to form a plot. The resulting whole is often still designated, however, to be an action of larger scale: coming of age, conducting a love affair, or solving a murder. The structure of action, small-scale and large, is common to art and to life." Carr, "Narrative and the Real World," 147.

42   On the Somaśarman element of the narrative see H.T. Bakker, "Somaśarman, Somavaṃśa and Somasiddhānta: A Pāśupata Tradition in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, Studies in

clearly situated within a revered lineage of *ṛṣis* descending from the legendary sage Atri, one of the *saptarṣi*.

Considering only the Pāśupata genealogy presents us with an unequivocally brahmin-centric community, but its geographically emplaced vision actually suggests a more inclusive tradition. In the concluding verses we learn that while the Lord's teaching and revealed doctrine of Pañcārtha are reserved for brahmins, the sacred *kṣetra* itself promises salvation for others who may not meet the social qualifications for initiation. By visiting Kārohaṇa, even an evildoer has the potential to reach the *paraṃ padam* promised to brahmins, that is, to escape from the cycle of *saṃsāra*.

While earlier studies have hypothesized that the four students were historical persons,[43] it is more likely that this set of four were designed to foster group cohesion by effectively obscuring the hybridity of religious life on the ground. From this perspective, Lakulīśa is a unifying symbol—a narrative strategy designed to join multiple lineages and religious specialists under the authority of a single teacher. The use of *purāṇa* as the medium for this Pāśupata history serves to popularize this lineage within broader social and intellectual currents. I want to add a further layer of interpretation with regard to the emplacing of tradition, an element of this process that has not yet been addressed.[44] The authors' goal of crafting a unified vision of the Pāśupata tradition hinges

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Skandapurāṇa III," in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honor of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ryutaro Tsuchida and Albrecht Wezler (Reinbek: Dr. Inge Wezler Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 2000), 1–19.

43   Kuśika appears as the Lord's student in Kauṇḍinya's account. And a lineage of *māheśvaras* going back to a teacher named Kuśika is mentioned in the 4th century Mathura Pillar Inscription of Candragupta (see below). A certain Kosikaya (Kauśikeya in Sanskrit) is mentioned in a set of Prakrit inscriptions from a site near Mumbai (see Chapter 2). Later inscriptions from the 10th, 12th, and 13th centuries are aware of the lineage relationship of Lakulīśa and Kuśika: D.R. Bhandarkar, "An Ekliṅgji Stone Inscription and the Origin and History of the Lakulīśa Sect," *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 22 (1907), 151–165; A.K. Vyas, "Paldi Inscription of Gulhila Arisiṃha; V.S. 1173," *EI* 30 (1953–1954), 8–12; G. Bühler, "The Cintra Praśasti of Sarangadeva," *EI* 1 (1892): 271–287. A 12th century inscription from Somanātha in Gujarat mentions Gārgya: V.G. Ozha, "The Somnāthpattan Praśasti of Bhāva Bṛhaspati. With an introduction by G. Bühler," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 3 (1889), 1–19. The final student possessed of a name is not known from epigraphic lineages although some speculative connections have been proposed in M.C. Choubey, *Lakulīśa in Indian Art and Culture* (Delhi, 1997), 87–88 and D. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), 181–182. See also Bisschop, *Sects and Centres*, 44–50 and Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 145–147.

44   The idea of emplacement is articulated by Edward Casey in *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). See Chapter 1 'Implacement'. By using 'emplacement' here I refer to the

not only on describing a synthetic lineage but, equally importantly, on the localization of that lineage. This revelation is one that takes place *in* Kārohaṇa. The dissemination of the revelation via the students is, likewise, place-bound. The landscape is not a passive background against which the Pāśupata history unfolds; rather, it actively helps to constitute the tradition. Together, the canonization of lineage and landscape convey a unified vision of who, what, and where the Pāśupatas were.

The image of the teacher with four students in attendance contributes effectively to the iconicity of the text and its geography. It is an archetypal image that expresses a visual plenum. The four students represent the tradition, writ large. As I will show in Chapter 5, there come to be images of Lakulīśa and his students in temples and these serve a comparable function. The central teacher figure shown with two students on either side creates a balanced and total composition. And the proximity and position of student and teacher articulate visually the same continuity of revelation and hierarchy communicated in the text. It is possible that the SP authors could have had this kind of visual archetype in mind as cultural agents drawing upon a larger set of shared images to express their particular ideology. This is not to say that historical persons did not inspire the model of the four students, but that the rhetorical force of the textual account did not depend upon such a historicity. Moreover, it is curious that the fourth student is not explicitly named; he is simply introduced as a *brahmacārin* from the Kuru land and established in Kanyakubja. It might be that this fourth student was thought to be necessary in order to complete the picture and fulfill the 'totality' of tradition that the authors had in mind.

3.1   *Community and Communities*

In hypothesizing the political motivations and social contexts that inspired this vision of community, the need for boundaries and authority is expressed clearly. But I think that the narrative does not necessarily reflect a religious community seeking to define itself or affirm its own continuity over and against competing groups. To assert that would assume that there was already a 'Pāśupata community' to speak of—a bounded group defined and recognized by some degree of commonality in belief and practice and which saw itself as distinct from other similarly demarcated communities. Did such a Pāśupata 'community' exist in this historical period? And is 'community' an apt term to describe the modalities of belonging that we may glean from the historical sources? Certainly, there were individuals and lineages of religious specialists

process of localizing and concretizing a cosmogonic origin story in a demarcated geographic space.

who were called and styled themselves Pāśupatas prior to the composition of the SP. What is less clear, however, is how these individual agents and localized lineages were connected and how they interacted with one another. The early sources offer intriguing hints about these Pāśupatas, but we lack evidence of a larger, unifying infrastructure. In attributing to the SP an imagined 'model for' a community, what I intend is a vision of this kind of larger network of associations. By populating their landscape with the select few who were representatives of an authoritative lineage and through them summoning a unified and univocal vision of a single tradition, the authors offered a narrative response to a plurality of religious groups, devotees, and specialists on the ground. Considering sources outside the text gives some indication as to the varieties of practices and people that populated the Śaiva *ecumene*. Not surprisingly, the earliest epigraphic and material sources present a Pāśupata tradition that is more multifaceted and polyphonic than the SP narrative admits.

4   Pāśupatas in Practice

The editors of the SP text corpus presume that the authors were Pāśupatas themselves, comprised of a "mixed group of the learned, *laukika* pandits and initiated *ācāryas* headed by a main redactor."[45] They note that the text contains "numerous references to 'Pāśupata-yoga' or a Pāśupata *vrata* and concludes with a section on Pāśupata yoga."[46] While the text presents the Pāśupatas as essentially comprised of male brahmins, earlier studies have also commented on the fact that the vision of Pāśupata identity in the SP seems far more inclusive—directed toward or at least cognizing a lay community—in its scope than, for example, the earlier and far more esoteric visions proffered by Kauṇḍinya.[47] According to later Śaiva classificatory schemes, the Pāśupatas fall under the heading of the ascetic Atimārga, distinguishing them from the more inclusive Siddhānta stream of the Mantramārga that welcomed married

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45   Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 151.

46   H.T. Bakker, R. Adriaensen, and H. Isaacson, "Towards a Critical Edition of the *Skandapurāṇa*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 37 (1994): 325–331 (327).

47   Peter Bisschop has outlined some of the differences between what he calls the 'esoteric' teachings of the *Pāśupatasūtras* and the 'exoteric' teachings of the SP. For example, he observes that the *Pāśupatasūtra's* recommended practice of behaving in such a way as to incur dishonor (*avamāna*) is absent from the SP section on Pāśupata praxis. Bisschop, *Sects and Centers*, 38–40.

householders as well as initiated ascetics.[48] In the SP, this division was not realized strictly. For example, in the context of praising Vārāṇasī as one of Śiva's many *āyatanas*, the text describes various Pāśupata *siddhas*, or adepts, who have attained union with Śiva (*śivayoga*) in this holy place. Here we find 'lords of yogins' (*yogīśvara*), whom the text also describes as have bright white, ash-smeared bodies, and who may have followed an ascetic regime similar to that prescribed by Kauṇḍinya. Others still keep the Vedic fires (*vaitānikavrata*), a detail that points to their status as householders.[49] Finally, there are those whose sectarian marks were not visible (*avyaktaliṅgin*), perhaps some kind of advanced initiated practitioners.[50]

This vision of the initiated specialist community described above is expanded significantly in sections of the text that follow, which situate such specialists within a more diverse vision of the community of Śiva worshippers. Whereas the passages discussed so far have made explicit reference to Pāśupatas *per se*, here the devotees are referred to simply as the Lord's *bhaktas*. Chapters 27 and 28 of the SP detail Śiva-centered devotional practice as a kind of continuum in which multiple meritorious activities are included. These sections are further differentiated by modes and levels of practice. Chapter 27 deals with devotional acts under the heading of *bhakti*, and Chapter 28 with a more rigorous and specialized mode of religious praxis termed *vrata*.

In the narrative, the excursus on *bhakti* is prompted by a question of Devī, who asks Śiva about the benefits that his devotees gain from worshipping him. In response, Śiva details the rewards associated with various pious acts—ranging from the endowment of a temple or a *liṅga*, and gifts of land and cows, to significantly more modest activities like the muttering of prayers and offering of flowers.[51] The emphasis here is not on the value of elaborate gifts or rituals. These certainly accrue merit, but equally so do efforts undertaken according to one's means and with proper intention.[52] Finally, certain acts of devotion offer the devotee the promise of becoming 'another Nandin', a boon that assures the

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48 On this division, and further divisions that emerge from later sects of the Mantramārga, see Alexis Sanderson, "The Lākulas: New Evidence of a System Intermediate Between Pāñcārthika Pāśupatism and Āgamic Śaivism," Ramalinga Reddy Memorial Lectures, *Indian Philosophical Annual* 24 (2006): 143–217.

49 SP 29.60–63. Text and synopsis in SP IIA. The significance of this passage for understanding the diversity within the early Pāśupata community is discussed in detail by Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 139–140.

50 Diwakar Acharya "Pāśupatas," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 460.

51 SP 27.10–20.

52 SP 27.21–22.

devotee the eternal grace of the presence of the Lord since he or she will act as his trusted guardian and companion.[53]

Chapter 28 focuses on the performance of ritual observances or vows (*vrata*). As in Chapter 27, this section is also framed as a dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī. The rituals enjoined here are more specific and include fasts, offerings, and oblations made on particular auspicious dates of the lunar calendar. These *vratas*, too, are framed in egalitarian terms. For example, Verse 19 specifies that the offering of a necklace proffers a happy life in Śiva's world for the man or woman who offers it, regardless of caste or social position.[54] Similar remarks appear in sections of the *Śivadharma*, in which the authors suggest that even a person without a defined gender (*napuṃsaka*) is able to reap the rewards of devotion to Śiva.[55] It is certainly tempting to read these passages, written by certain elite cultural agents, as indicative of the enlightened vision of the community, writ large. Rather than promoting inclusivity, *per se*, we might also interpret these verses as hyperbolic attestations of the power of the Lord and the efficacy of devotional practices dedicated to him—acts so effective that even the most marginal of people can benefit from them.

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the textual proscriptions outlined in Chapters 27 and 28 were borne out in practice and on the ground. Yet certain features of these passages attest to their authority. The most significant point is that the rituals and rewards described are not styled as reports transmitted after the fact. The authors lend these texts the ultimate authority since they are presented as the word of God. Moreover, these teachings are the product of an intimate and unguarded moment of conversation between the divine couple. Access to this private dialogue lends the message a heightened importance by ushering the listener into Śiva's innermost circle. This intimate access is also echoed in the rewards that the devotee is promised, which offer the same kind of direct and intimate contact (e.g. presence in Śiva's world or the opportunity to become a dear companion like another Nadin or a Gaṇapati).

4.1   *Memorials and Place-Making*

The depictions of Śiva religion introduced above present a complex and internally diverse body of practitioners. The common thread that unites them is place. Whether located in Kārohaṇa or Vārāṇasī, devotion to the Lord is inextricably bound to the places in which he resides and where defining

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53   SP 27.30–31.
54   SP 28.19.
55   *Śivadharmaśāstra* 10.192: *yaṃ yaṃ kāmaṃ samuddiśya naranārīnapuṃsakāḥ / pūjayanti śivaṃ bhaktyā tat tad eva samāpnuyāt //*

FIGURE 2
Mathura pillar inscription of Candragupta II
MATHURA GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

events in the mythology are commemorated. Casting our gaze beyond the text of the SP reveals that the centrality of place and place-making for early *māheśvaras* emerges with equal force in epigraphic and material sources as well. Practitioners materialized their Śaiva affiliations through the demarcation of shared ritual spaces, meritorious acts of pious giving, and by establishing and tending memorials for the dead. One of the earliest sources referring to these kinds of activities is the Mathura Pillar Inscription of Candragupta II

G.S. 61 (380/381 CE)[56] [Figure 2]. This inscription is a fascinating record of donative and commemorative practices involving Śaiva religious specialists. Although aspects of the text of the inscription have been subject to debate,[57] these discussions have not considered the significance of the material object on which the record is inscribed and the ritual practices that it enjoins.

First, a brief summary of the contents: The donor is a Śaiva preceptor called Ārya Uditācārya, who claims to be tenth in the line of descent from the Bhagavat Kuśika, a lineage progenitor suggestively called by the same name as that given to Lakulīśa's first disciple and initiate at Mathurā in the SP. The inscription records that Uditācārya established two memorials in honor of the teachers Upamitavimala and Kapilavimala.[58] The memorials were named after the preceptors—to their names (Upamita and Kapila, respectively) the suffix -*īśvara* was added. Given that these preceptors were Śiva devotees, these memorials were presumably *liṅgas* or small *liṅga* shrines and may have been installed at the site of their *samādhi*.[59] The inscription tells us that the memorials were housed in a *gurvāyatana*, presumably a structure or shrine erected in honor of deceased teachers. This act of commemoration provides some important early evidence for what becomes a widespread practice of installing and enshrining a *liṅga* in someone's honor, living or deceased. This act created a tangible and often enduring memorial that commemorated the deep reverence or even affinity between the individual and their chosen deity by homologizing the iconic form of Śiva with the individual being honored.[60] This act of piety benefits both the deceased and the donor. The inscription tells us that these memorials were erected for the sake of publicly commemorating (*kīrtya*[*rtham*]) the teachers as well as to augment Uditācārya's own religious

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56   D.R. Bhandarkar, "Mathura Pillar Inscription of Chandragupta II: G.E. 61," *EI* 21 (1931): 1–19.

57   Discussion of this inscription features in numerous publications on early Śaivism and debates still remain regarding certain details of the edition and translation and the identity of the small *daṇḍa*-wielding figure who appears at the base. Diwakar Acharya, "The Role of Caṇḍa in the Early History of the Pāśupata Cult and the Image of the Mathurā Pillar Dated Gupta Year 61," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 48 (2005): 207–222. On the subject of Caṇḍeśa and the Mathura pillar image see also Dominic Goodall, "Who is Caṇḍeśa?" in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. S. Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 351–423.

58   Acharya ("The Role of Caṇḍa") reads the -*vimala* suffix as indicating the affiliation of these teachers with the specific Vaimala school of Pāśupata Śaivism mentioned in the *Niśvāsaguhya* and the *Svacchandatantra*. On the Vaimalas see Bakker, "Somaśarman," 6.

59   Michael Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 134.

60   See, for example, the discussion of the Rīsthal Inscription in Chapter 2.

merit (*puṇya*).[61] As a final point, it is important to note that these shrines were not private; Uditācārya intended that the devotees of Śiva, the *māheśvaras*, would revere and tend these *liṅgas*. His wishes are communicated as follows:

> This is not written for celebrity but as a request and a directive for the devotees of Śiva (*māheśvaras*). This is the directive: "Having understood: 'This is the property of the teachers in perpetuity,' one should protect the property unreservedly accompanied by devotional worship."[62]
>   CECIL

From these lines we may reconstruct some sense of the religious practices that the *māheśvaras* in Mathurā engaged in. We may infer that the rituals of lustrating and honoring the *liṅga* (practices implied by the term *pūjā*), the veneration of Śaiva preceptors, and the meritorious donation and tending of memorials were closely intertwined. These practices were not limited to an initiated few; rather, the larger community of Śiva devotees was ritually enjoined. Although the presumed reference to the *liṅga* cult depicts a quintessentially Śaiva practice, the installation of these memorials and the commemorative practice enjoined by the inscription evokes a wider, shared repertoire of practices oriented around the creation of sanctified spaces and the propitiatory and donative activities that took place within them.[63]

While the discussion thus far has focused on the textual register of the inscription, the meaning of this object was derived equally from its materiality and its function(s) in the space in which it was displayed. The pillar is now displayed in the Mathura Museum so it is not possible to recover its original context; however, some significant observations can be made. Since the text refers to a shrine or sanctuary for the deceased preceptors (*gurvāyatana*) this pillar would have served to demarcate the sanctified space. We can imagine

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61   Bhandarkar, "Mathura Pillar Inscription," Lines 8–9.

62   *naitat khyātyartham abhili[khyate] [ǁ*] [atha*]*
      māheśvarāṇāṃ vijñaptiḥ kriyate saṃbodhaṇaṃ ca
      yathākā[le]nācāryāṇāṃ parigraham iti matvā
      viśaṅka[ṃ] pūjāpuraskāra[ṃ] parigrahapāripālyaṃ
      kuryyā[d] iti vijñaptir iti [ǁ]*
      Lines 10–14.

63   Willis suggests that the added condition that the *pūjā* for these deceased teachers be done unreservedly (*matvā viśaṅkaṃ*) is meant to assure the community that they have nothing to fear from the spirits of these teachers (compare the Bāgh inscription below). On textual evidence for propitiatory practices in early Śaivism see Peter Bisschop, "Invoking the Powers that Be: The Śivadharma's Mahāśānti Mantra," *South Asian Studies* 30.2 (2014): 133–141.

FIGURE 3   Mathura pillar, close view of figure on base of pillar

that this substantial stone marker (of approximately one-and-a-half meters) was positioned at the entrance or another highly prominent, visible spot in the shrine. The fact that the pillar is, in fact, a trident, the weapon emblematic of Śiva, indicates to the viewer that this sanctuary was a Śaiva space. The small figure carved at the base reinforces this association by serving as a personification of the weapon, perhaps a kind of precursor to a *triśūlapuruṣa* [Figure 3]. Although this figure carries a staff in his hand, the gesture is non-threatening;

he appears to be keeping watch rather than preparing to attack. Taken together, the object and the text attest to practices of demarcating and sanctifying spaces in which a community identity was enacted through ritual practices performed in honor of the *liṅgas* commemorating the deceased *gurus*, the human agents in whom the authority of the Lord was vested.

The example from Mathura suggests that the space of the shrine was envisioned as a space of Śaiva ritual activity and was clearly marked as such by the *triśūla* pillar. By contrast, early inscriptions from Bāgh—a town in what is now western Madhya Pradesh that is located within the Pāśupata landscape as outlined in the SP—point to Pāśupata religious specialists operating outside of strictly Śaiva contexts, as affiliated with Viṣṇu and *Mātṛkā* shrines.[64] Pāśupatācāryas are some of the recipients named in these donative records of the Valkhā rulers, along with other religious specialists who tended the temple grounds and cultivated the adjacent lands.[65] Notably, one grant records the donation of land in honor of a shrine to the *Mātṛs*, which had been established previously by Pāśupatācārya Bhagavat Lokodadhi. The Pāśupatas at Bāgh were not only residents and ritual specialists in temples, like Uditācārya, they also invested in the sanctification of these places by making pious donations.[66] These Pāśupatas may have also been involved in tending memorials. The mention of another shrine in honor of a deity called Bappapiśācadeva could refer to a localized form of Śiva or, as the inscriptions' editors suggest, this curious appellation refers to a deceased person, and the grant records an endowment for a memorial in his honor.[67] As permanent residents of temple sites, these Pāśupatas fulfilled priestly services in temples dedicated to non-Śaiva deities, tended memorials, and would have served a diverse population as one of several groups of religious specialists and residents. Taken together, this evidence suggests a far more extemporary and wide-ranging set of practices and social interactions than was recommended in most of the normative and prescriptive texts.

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64   K.V. Ramesh & S.P. Tiwari, *A Copper-Plate Hoard of the Gupta Period from Bagh, Madhya Pradesh* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1990).

65   In these grants the Pāśupatas are mentioned along with other temple residents and servants. Ramesh & Tiwari, *A Copper-Plate Hoard*, Plate IX, 20–21. According to the charters of the Valkhā king Bhuluṇḍa, the donations were for the maintenance of a variety of deities—Nārāyaṇa, the *Mātṛs*, Skanda, Bappapiśācadeva, and Indrasena (Plate VI, 11–14, also Plate III, 6–8, and Plate XIII, 28–30). On the *Mātṛs* see Plate X, 22–23.

66   Ramesh and Tiwari (Plate X, 22–23).

67   Bappapiśācadeva could refer to a localized form of Śiva. Ramesh and Tiwari offer the plausible hypothesis that "*piśāca*" may indicate the soul of a person who had met with an unnatural death and Bappa Piśāca may represent the soul of the father of the lady Bandhulā who had the memorial installed. Ramesh & Tiwari, *A Copper-Plate Hoard*, xiii.

5   Pāśupatas in Prestigious Places

The third rhetorical aim that informed the SP authors' mapping of the Pāśupata landscape was their desire to make a geopolitical claim by situating the Pāśupata tradition, and the sacred center of Kārohaṇa, in specific places steeped in the early Indian imagination as preeminent cultural, economic, and political centers. To gauge the broader stakes of this claim and possible motivations for it requires that we look beyond the narrative account to consider the wider sociopolitical milieu in which Lakulīśa and his disciples operated.

5.1   *Places of Origin*

In the pages above, I discussed the strategies the SP authors employed to establish and promote the sanctity of Kārohaṇa, a place that, while obviously central to the account of Pāśupata origins, did not possess the same level of prestige as some of the other historic locales in which Lāguḍi's students were established. In the geographic imaginary of the text's authors, however, Kārohaṇa was the sacred 'center'. This was the place where the Lord had descended to Earth not just once, but on four separate occasions.

The surviving material evidence at Karvan/Kayavarohan would seem to support this association. A series of brick temple foundations dating from the 3rd–7th century were excavated between 1974–78 by the Archaeological Survey of India [Figure 4].[68] The number and size of the foundations indicates a significant temple complex. One small image remains at the site, a Lakulīśa carved in a niche with a crouching figure, perhaps a devotee, on his

FIGURE 4   Karvan, site of excavated temple foundations

68   For further details see *Indian Archaeology: A Review* 1974–75: 15–16; 1975–76: 15; 1977–78: 22–23.

FIGURE 5A   Karvan excavation site, stone fragment with Lakulīśa

FIGURE 5B   Lakulīśa, close view

left. The image is abraded, but part of the signature club is still clearly visible in the figure's proper left hand. It also appears that the image was ithyphallic, which is a characteristic mark of the Śaiva ascetic and a distinctive feature of Lakulīśa iconography [Figure 5a & 5b].[69] It is evident from walking the area

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69   It seems unlikely that the image appears in its original structural context, but it could certainly belong to the excavation site and could be dated to c. 7th century.

FIGURE 6   Karvan, *liṅgas* installed in modern shrine

that Śaivism was popular in Karvan from an early period and continued to be
so through the early medieval period: numerous *liṅgas*, some of them dating
from the early medieval period are currently under worship in small modern
shrines that surround the town's central tank [Figure 6]. In addition, at the
time of my visit in January 2016, an old damaged *liṅga*, nearly two meters high,
stood exposed in the dry tank. The area of southern Gujarat immediately sur-
rounding Karvan also developed a distinctive form of Lakulīśa iconography
that depicts the teacher seated cross-legged in front of a *liṅga*. An early 7th
century example of this type from Timbarva (a village to the south of Karvan)
is currently displayed in the Archaeology Department at M.S. University in
Baroda [Figure 7]. The veneration of Lakulīśa in this unique iconic form still
persists in Karvan [Figure 8a & 8b].[70]

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70   On this form see U.P. Shah, "Lakulīśa: Śaivite Saint," in *Discourses on Śiva. Proceedings
        of a Symposium on the Nature of Religious Imagery*, ed. Michael Meister (Philadelphia:
        University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 93–102.

FIGURE 7   Lakulīśa from Timbarva
M.S.U. ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT, VADODARA

FIGURE 8A   Karvan, Lakulīśa image in temple courtyard

FIGURE 8B   Karvan, Lakulīśa currently under worship in modern temple

5.2   *Political Places*

The landscape revered by the SP authors was also a highly charged political space. The waning of Gupta-Vākāṭaka sovereignty in the 5th century created a space for local and regional networks of political elites to stake new claims and expand their territories in the period between the 6th and the 10th centuries. Inscriptions from this period record the political ambition of numerous political lineages: Aulikaras, Maitrakas, Pratihāras, Cālukyas, Kalacuris, and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, not to mention the families of *rājaputras* carving out fortified towns in the deserts and mountains of what is today the state of Rajasthan. Significantly, the urban settlements in which Lāguḍi's students were located were highly contested spaces since these centers were located along critical 'nodal points' or intersections along the major trade networks that facilitated the spread of people, goods, and ideas across the Indian subcontinent. A ruler who could assert a claim over this circumscribed region would have benefited from a strategic military position and the ability to monopolize the flow of resources along the overland channels that linked the coastal ports to the mercantile and agricultural centers in the hinterlands. As the following chapters will demonstrate, regional rulers operated according to a common political strategy aimed at controlling these major routes and nodal points that connected the ports of western India with the hinterlands.

But what has any of this to do with religious landscapes and Pāśupatas? In studies of premodern India kings are typically invoked as the primary architects of the religious landscape and integral to the advent of the 'Śaiva Age'.[71] The attribution of temples and religious institutions to 'royal patronage' is nearly axiomatic. Despite the ubiquity of this narrative, inscriptions and material evidence tell a more complicated story. For example, the Imperial dynasties that controlled much of Early Medieval North India have left rich epigraphic archives detailing donations to brahmins, but little to no evidence of temple building. In the early medieval period endowing and giving to temples was a practice that had not yet been fully integrated within the Imperial rulers' repertoire. In fact, the majority of temple dedications surveyed in this study were undertaken by localized rulers, guilds, and other corporate bodies. While we do not see political actors investing significantly in the built Śaiva landscape in the early medieval period (i.e. between the 6th–10th century), they do embrace Śaivism in other ways. Invocations of Śiva are incorporated within a

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71   It is also worth noting that much of the textual precedent for works like Sanderson's 'Śaiva Age' come from Tantric sources in which the connection between rulers and religious specialists is articulated more forcefully than in other sources relevant for the study of early Śaivism like the *Skandapurāṇa* and the *Śivadharma*.

language of power and military might, as a political idiom that becomes integral to the expression of royal personae and prestige. These idioms are adopted by rulers in their inscriptions as well as by those who aspire to power—the many ministers and other socially ascendant individuals echo these idioms as a way to enhance their own status and secure their place within regional networks of elites.

5.3   *The Cosmopolitan Marketplace*

A cursory glance at a map of the primary trade routes reveals the extent to which the movement of Lakulīśa's pupils in the SP_S account follows the arc of the major northern route.[72] These routes were conduits for ideologies, practices, and the human agents who disseminated them, as well as for material goods. While the status of ruling families in this period was dynamic, these regional nodal points and primary traffic routes serve as relatively stable points and trajectories around which we can begin to orient the development and expansion of the institutions (e.g. temples, *maṭhas*, and other monuments) that defined the built Pāśupata landscape. To thrive, these institutions and their resident religious specialists required an economic surplus. Religious specialists typically do not produce an economic surplus themselves, so we should look for them in places where such a surplus did exist and could be mobilized and diverted towards pious giving. For evidence of regional economic patterns, donative records by merchants and guilds are particularly helpful. Many such examples will be discussed in the following chapters. Here I briefly introduce two inscriptions that were found not far from Kārohaṇa. One provides an important testament to the political autonomy and power wielded by these networks of economic agents. The other establishes what will be a recurring theme in this study: namely, that temple building and maintenance were important place-making and community building practices for non-royal groups.

One important record that suggests the prominence of merchant communities is the Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa (649 VS/592 CE). It comprises a list of seventy-two allowances made for a merchant community in Lohāṭakagrāma, a village in southern Gujarat located near the port city of Broach.[73] The

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72   Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 185; Jean Deloche, *La circulation en Inde avant la révolution des transports*, Tome I: *La voie de terre* (Paris: Publications de L'École Française d'Extrême Orient, CXXII, 1980), 93. The route from Karvan to Ujjain and Jambumārga seems to track a pilgrimage route detailed in the *Mahābhārata* 3.80.59–61. On this see Bakker, "Origin and Spread," 30.

73   D.C. Sircar, "Charter of Vishnushena, Samvat 649," *EI* 30 (1953–4), 163–181; D.D. Kosambi, "Indian Feudal Trade Charters," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2 (1959): 281–293.

inscription was issued by a local ruler at the behest of the merchant community (*vaṇiggrāma*) and guarantees the protection and support of the community (*lokasaṃgrahānugrahārtham*) that was residing in the area under his rule. Various kinds of trade, merchants, and artisans are mentioned in the individual legal proscriptions, which attests to the diversity of economic activity and exchange that took place. This extensive list of rules and regulations insured the merchants' autonomy, their ability to engage in trade without restrictions and taxes, and freed them from obligations to rulers and local landowners. This record affords valuable insight into the dynamics of power that existed between local economic organizations and rulers and highlights the degree of influence that the merchant community enjoyed in this area. The early 6th century Sañjeli copper plates (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4) provide additional evidence concerning the activities of merchants and traders in religious life, more specifically.[74] Here, local traders and land-holders, together with traders from throughout India, agree to impose certain taxes on the sale of non-prestige goods (i.e. molasses, salt, cotton, and grain) and use the funds to support worship at a local Viṣṇu temple. This donation is undertaken to increase their own religious merit.

While neither of these inscriptions record donations for Śaiva institutions, specifically, they evince some important patterns in the economic landscape of this time that we will see repeated and expanded in the following case studies, which will address these and other examples in greater detail. At the center of these interactions between various networks, both local and translocal, was the temple. The motivation to create places and socialize spaces was one I interpret as being keenly felt by economic actors and those residing in what we could call 'market towns' where lifestyles were often itinerant. The creation and support of religious intuitions, and Śaiva institutions, in particular, helped to mediate some of the socio-spatial tensions that attended these lifestyles by nurturing new social sodalities oriented around an elective religious cult, rather than kinship or caste. As monuments that expressed stability and permanence, temples offered a material counterpoint to travails of travel and itinerancy.

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74   R.N. Mehta & A.M. Thakkar, *M.S. University Copper Plates of the Time of Toramana* (Vadodara: M.S. University Archaeology Series 14, 1978).

6   Conclusion

This chapter has explored the geographic imagining of the Pāśupata landscape presented in the SP, considered the rhetorical and ideological underpinnings of this narrative account, and identified some of the broader implications of the particular, emplaced vision of community that the authors presented. To initiate the larger project of contextualizing this narrative history, I included a brief discussion of contemporaneous depictions of Pāśupata communities and a summary overview of the geopolitical context of the area of northwest India in which the authors situated themselves. The Pāśupatas were certainly not the only group that endeavored to stake a claim to this landscape. Marking some of the most prestigious sites in Early Medieval India as 'Śaiva' served to elevate the status of the community and unify what were likely multiple lineages and localized traditions operating on the ground.

While the SP narrative is a historical source of critical importance, attempting to access the text's temporality as a means to recover something about the motivations of its authors and the larger sociopolitical stakes of their claims tells us only part of the story. The textual account is but one kind of memory and its historical contingency, perhaps paradoxically, makes it possible to move beyond it, to consider what it does not say, and to seek out different voices and tellings of a Pāśupata history. Acknowledging the limits imposed by this particular body of evidence requires that we consider other accounts that are preserved in the material archives and the historical voices preserved in epigraphic texts. The chapters that follow examine these other sources and, through them, access the Pāśupata landscape not only as a spatial rhetoric, but as a lived space as well.

At the Crossroads: Śaiva Religious Networks in Uparamāla

This chapter represents a crossroads: the midway point in the northwest expansion of the Pāśupata movement as charted in the SP in a region known as Uparamāla. Incorporating areas of what is today northern Madhya Pradesh and southeast Rajasthan, Uparamāla was also a crossroads in the heart of central India where many of the sub-continental trade routes converged, creating an atmosphere of social diversity and political competition. This region figures prominently in the SP account of Pāśupata origins as home to the city of Ujjain, one of the locales the Pāśupata tradition claimed as its own. As the *purāṇa's* authors report, it was in the cremation ground at Ujjain that Lakulīśa commenced with the dissemination of his Pāśupata doctrine, beginning with the initiation of his first pupil, Kauśika. Ujjain was a dynamic center of religious activity, with a particular importance as an early Śaiva center, but material and epigraphic sources that survive from the period under investigation here are relatively scare. By contrast, the surrounding landscape of Uparamāla is particularly rich in epigraphic and material sources for the study of Śaivism, which have not yet received sufficient scholarly attention.

Since Uparamāla was a meeting place for so many different people and communities, the sources from this region record a polyphony of voices—including those of artisans, merchants, women, religious specialists, and kings—that constituted early Śaiva communities in the area. This chapter situates these voices in their particular geographic and social contexts and, through this emplacement, highlights significant differences in the construction and social uses of Śaiva religiosity. I begin in the plains around Daśapura, the political center from the 5th to the early 7th century, and the imposing hilltop fortress of Chittorgarh, which replaced Daśapura as the political center from approximately the mid-7th century onwards. The second half of the chapter focuses on important religious centers northeast of Daśapura—i.e. Kansuāñ, Jhālrāpāṭan, and Indragarh. Although these places were situated on the periphery of Uparamāla in remote, hilly areas, epigraphic and material evidence attests to their integration within the regional sociocultural networks of the 6th–8th centuries.

Examining sources from these two distinct sub-regions—i.e. the political centers and borderland spaces—lends needed nuance to our understanding of Śiva religion in Early Medieval India. In the political centers the invocation of Śiva served as a shared idiom for rulers and other elites, whose inscriptions adapt Śaiva theology to expressions of military victory and social ascendancy. While the records of such actors have been a focus of the existing historiography, this scholarly emphasis is not an indication that the vision of Śaivism these voices promote was one held by the majority of practitioners. In locales removed from the royal cult centers, inscriptions evince a broad-based popular support for Śaiva institutions and Pāśupata religious specialists from pious individuals, local collectives, and merchant guilds. Here, Śiva was not the god of military might, donors mention protection, salvation, and the alleviation of human suffering as the motivations for their pious gifts.

1   A Region On-the-Move

A wide expanse of relatively flat plain, the physical terrain of Uparamāla is quite different from that of the self-contained geographies with clearly marked topographic boundaries (e.g. mountains, coastlines, and large inland lakes) that feature in the following two chapters. The borders of Uparamāla, by contrast, are far more porous. It was here that the major trajectories of human movement across the subcontinent (and beyond) converged, and this history as a crossroads made governing the region a desirable, albeit challenging, prospect for rulers and other elites seeking to control the transregional flows of commerce and culture.[1] As the *madhya deśa* (the 'land in the middle') that people were constantly moving to and through, the topography of the region was also shaped in significant ways by migrations of merchant and artisan communities. This was a region on-the-move [Figure 9].

Uparamāla also figures as crossroads in accounts of the Pāśupata movement's origins. Both the SP authors and Kauṇḍinya identify Ujjain as the place to which the Lord walked after assuming a human form. They also identify Ujjain's (in)famous cremation ground as the site of his first teachings.

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1 The city of Ujjain, for example, was connected to prominent locales in the northwest. P.H.L. Eggermont, "The Murundas and the Ancient Trade-Route from Taxila to Ujjayanī," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9 (1966): 257–296; Alfred Fourcher, *La vieille route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila*, 2 vols. (Paris: Les Éditions d'art et d'histoire, 1947).

FIGURE 9   Regional political and cultural centers in Uparamāla, c. 6th–8th centuries CE

In addition to a destination for religious adepts, Ujjain also served as a commercial hub that was linked to the port of Broach and with the major conduits leading north and south into the Deccan.[2] As the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*[3] reports:

2   Dilip K. Chakrabarti, R. Tewari, & R.N. Singh, "From the Ganga Plain to the Eastern and Western Deccan: A Field Study of the Ancient Routes," *South Asian Studies* 19.1 (2003): 57–71.

3   Lionel Casson, *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 81.

> There is in this region towards the east a city called Ozéné (Ujjain), the former seat of the royal court, from which everything that contributes to the region's prosperity, including what contributes to trade with us, is brought down to Barygaza (Bharukaccha).

In his archeological reconstruction of the Deccan routes, Dilip Chakrabarti similarly stresses the importance of Ujjain as a nodal point where routes coming from the north and east converged before making their way south, across the Vindhya Mountains and the Narmadā River, to the Deccan.[4] One of the few places where the Narmadā River could be crossed was located directly south of the city at Mahiṣmatī (Maheśvar).[5] Traveling north from Ujjain, travelers would have passed through Daśapura and, continuing on, reached Mathurā.[6] Daśapura's central position in the Indian heartland and along the major north Indian itineraries of trade and travel made this a contested political space, much like Eran, Vidiśa, and other locales in greater Mālava.[7]

While the preceding paragraph suggests a direct path between points, the archeological reconstruction of ancient routes is a complex undertaking. The idea of a 'route' does not suggest a single road so much as a general corridor that would have been supplemented by additional 'capillary networks' that carried people and ideas to and through Uparamāla, as elsewhere.[8] As was the case with Buddhism, the expansion of Śaivism and the Pāśupata movement also relied on such byways. Inferring the existence of comparable networks

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4 Chakrabarti, "Ancient Routes," 65.

5 See Chapter 4.

6 Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1977), 23–24.

7 On the complex political geographies and their implications in these places see Anne Casile, *Temples et expansion d'un centre religieux en Inde centrale: lectures du paysage archéologique de Badoh-Paṭhāri du 5ᵉ au 10ᵉ siècle de notre ère* (Unpublished PhD thesis, Paris, 2009); "Changing Landscapes in Gupta Times: Archaeological Evidence from the Area of Baḍoh-Paṭhāri in Central India," *South Asian Studies* 30.2 (2014), 245–268; Julia Shaw, *Buddhist Landscapes in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Social Change, c. third century BC to fifth century AD* (London: The British Academy, 2007).

8 I have borrowed the term 'capillary networks' from Jason Neelis, who uses the term in charting the expansion of Buddhism. In his mapping of Buddhist networks, Neelis has emphasized that routes of travel in ancient India were not as restricted as one might imagine. As he explains, 'rather than adhering to a regular pattern of diffusion from one monastic center to another on major routes where sufficient economic surpluses were available, the transmission of Buddhism across pre-modern Asia was largely due to travelers who took shortcuts in a decentralized network of capillary byways.' J. Neelis, "Overland Shortcuts for the Transmission of Buddhism," in *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-modern World*, eds. S.E. Alcock, J. Bodel, & R.J.A. Talbert (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 12–32 (16).

of byways allows us to posit connections between political centers and more peripheral sites where material and epigraphic traces of Pāśupata practices and communities remain. From this perspective, the different sites explored in the following sections are transformed from random dots on a map into traces of the complex networks (social, political, and economic) that choreographed the landscape. Tracing these networks spatially and temporally is of critical importance because it prompts us to extend our gaze beyond a single 'site'— and the all too familiar approach of considering particular places and different bodies of evidence in temporal and geographic isolation—to an intercontextualized geography of places.

1.1 *Conceiving of a Region*

In the preceding pages I have presented Uparamāla as a crossroads and a transit zone, while also referring to it as a region, a term that suggests, perhaps paradoxically, a kind of sociopolitical cohesion. My sense of region here, and in the chapters that follow, is not based primarily on the uniformity of geographic terrain. In this case, the 'region' emerges from tracing the intersections and connections between the various social networks active in the area as reconstructed by inscriptions and material evidence. As a regional designation, 'Uparamāla' may now span contemporary state borders,[9] but historical sources from as early as the 5th century suggest interregional political connections and economic ties. The diffusion of an artistic idiom similarly implies the movement of artisans and the dissemination of embodied knowledges and practices.

Of these multiple networks, the political are the easiest to access since rulers and other elites often modified the landscape in highly visible and enduring ways. Evidence of political ties and activities from the late 5th century on are clustered most densely around Daśapura, and then around Chittorgarh from the 7th century onwards. In addition to the political, we can observe echoes of other cultural flows involving the movement of kinship groups and collectives. Epigraphic references to merchants, guilds, and artisans with ties to Daśapura present it as an attractive, even prestigious, area to settle.[10] Perhaps the most famous example of the cultural magnetism of Daśapura is the late 5th century

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9   More specifically, parts of the Mandasor and Neemuch Districts of Madhya Pradesh and the Chittorgarh, Jhalawar, and Kota Districts of Rajasthan.

10   B.D. Chattopadhyaya's important study of economic development in early medieval Rajasthan has similarly highlighted the importance of southwest Rajasthan, including Uparamāla, for early medieval centers of exchange. This pattern and concentration of economic activity in southwest Rajasthan can be seen clearly in his map on p. 101 of *The Making of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

inscription recording the construction and repair of a Sun temple by a silk-weaver's guild whose members had migrated from Lāṭa in southern Gujarat.[11] The fact that this migrant group chose to build a temple to commemorate their move and mark their presence in a new locale is a significant early example that participates in a broader regional pattern.[12] The monument was a statement of a collective identity designed to commemorate the silk-weavers' claim to a new place. Although it is not stated explicitly, the temple may have also functioned as an institution for the investment and redistribution of guild wealth. In addition to praising the piety of the guild and their success in their new home, the poet devotes many verses to extolling the merits of the place, which is idealized in three primary ways: for its architecture, the beauty and desirability of its natural environs, and its exceptionally pious residents.[13] This poetic advertisement, reflects both premodern conceptions of urbanity as well as the social aspirations of the people who, by commissioning it, promoted themselves as residents of this utopian space.

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11   D.C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* vol. 1 (1965), 299–307; "Mandasor Stone Inscription of Kumaragupta and Bandhuvarman: The Malava Years 493 & 529," *CII* 3, 79–88. The inscription records repairs completed in 473/4 CE to a temple originally built 437/8 CE. On this inscription see also A.L. Basham, "The Mandasor Inscription of the Silk Weavers," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 93–106.

12   For example, the 6th-century copper plates from Sañjeli in southern Gujarat, mention a consortium of traders and artisans who joined local merchants to establish taxes on certain goods (e.g. molasses, salt, cotton, and grain) to fund ritual practices at a local Viṣṇu temple. R.N. Mehta & A.M. Thakkar, *M.S. University Copper Plates of the Time of Toramana* (Vadodara: University Archaeology Series 14, 1978); K.V. Ramesh, "Three Early Charters from Sanjeli in Gujarat," *EI* 40 (1973–74): 175–186. Similar patterns are recorded in inscriptions from Rajasthan. The mid-7th century Samoli inscription of Jetanka records that merchants (*mahājanas*) established a temple (*devakula*) of Araṇyavāsinī after moving away from Vaṭanagara (Vasantgarh) to set up a mine. Also comparable is the contemporaneous inscription from Dabok, near Udaipur, detailing donations to a religious institution in a market town (*haṭṭa*). R.R. Halder, "Samoli Inscription of the Time of Siladitya; [Vikrama-Samvat] 703," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 97–99; "Dabok Inscription of the Time of Dhavallapadeva; [Harsha] Saṃvat 207," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 122–124. These examples evince the close connections between merchant communities, market towns, and the temples around which social and economic life were oriented.

13   *prāsādamālābhir alaṃkṛtāni dharāṃ vidāryyaiva samutthitāni /*
      vimānamālāsadṛśāni yattra gṛhāṇi pūrṇṇendukarāmalāni //12// (*Upajāti*)
      yad bhāty abhiramyasarid[d]vayena capalormmiṇā samupagūḍhaṃ /
      rahasi kucaśālinībhyāṃ prītiratibhyāṃ smarāṅgam iva //13// (*Ārya*)
      satyakṣamādamaśamavrataśaucadhairyyasvāddhyāyavṛttavinayasthitibudhyupetaiḥ /
      vidyātaponidhibhir asmayitaiś ca viprair yyad bhrājate grahagaṇaiḥ kham iva pradīptaiḥ
      //14// (*Vasantatilakā*)

Here, cleaving asunder the earth, there rise up homes which are deco-
rated with successions of stories; which are like rows of aerial chariots;
and which are as pure as rays of the full moon. [12]

The (city) is beautiful being embraced by two charming rivers, with
tremulous waves, as if it were the body of Smara (embraced) in secrecy by
(his wives) Prīti and Rati, possessed of (heaving) breasts. [13]

Like the sky with the brilliant multitude of planets, it shines with
Brahmins endowed with truth, patience, self-control, tranquility, reli-
gious vows, purity, fortitude, private study, good conduct, refinement,
and steadfastness (and) abounding in learning and penances, and free
from the excitement of surprise. [14]

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Notably, the inscription also attests to the social mobility that members of this
guild enjoyed in Daśapura—they were not (or, perhaps, were no longer) so-
cially restricted by their hereditary occupation. Some continued in the family
business of weaving, while some cultivated other skills.[14]

While Daśapura and Chittorgarh were ostensibly the regional capitals, ma-
terial evidence suggests that as early as the 5th century, these locales were part
of a significantly larger region with strong ties to a northward-leading corri-
dor via Jhālrāpāṭan. Shared architectural features and iconographic conven-
tions indicate that networks of artisans, or an atelier, facilitated the spread of
embodied knowledge and practices between Daśapura and areas of northeast
Uparamāla. Joanna Williams has drawn attention to some of these regional ar-
tistic patterns in her early work.[15] In addition to the sculptures from Daśapura
that Williams has discussed, like the *Mātṛkā* and Sūrya images currently on
display in the Mandasor Museum, there are other examples that expand the
geographic connections she has traced to include the more remote areas
in the hills of Uparamāla. For example, the facial features and rendering of
the hair in these images and other 5th–6th century sculptures of Śiva, and

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14   Verses 15–19: Some of the guild members continue in the silk-weaving tradition as in-
      ferred by the reference to their own work (*svakarmaṇi*) in Verse 17. Others become
      skilled in archery (*dhanurvaidya*) or are knowers of various tales (*vicittrakathāvid*);
      some are knowledgeable in astrology (*jyotiṣa*), or occupied with the pursuit of true
      dharma (*samyagdharmmaprasaṅgaparāyaṇa*) and still others are brave in battle
      (*samarapragalbha*).

15   Williams refers to possible ties between Daśapura, Chittorgarh, and the Kota region of
      Rajasthan. See Williams, *Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province* (Princeton: Princeton
      University Press, 1982), 137; "On the Edge of What? Reconsidering the Place of Mandasor in
      the Fifth and Sixth Centuries," in *The Vākāṭaka Heritage: Indian Culture at the Crossroads*,
      ed. Hans T. Bakker (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004), 133–141.

FIGURE 10   Śiva, c. 5th–6th century
            MANDASOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

an unfinished *nāga* from Daśapura, are very similar to those observed in the
candraśālā musician from the 5th century Mukundara Śiva temple located
north of Jhālrāpāṭan [Figures 10, 11, & 12].[16] Comparable, too, are the facial
features of the Daśapura Śiva in Figure 10 and a remarkable early 7th century
sculpture of Ardhanārīśvara found near Jhālrāpāṭan. [Figures 13]. The well-
preserved sculpture shares the same wide face, heavy lower lip, and incised pupils
that are rendered in the same soft naturalistic manner in the Daśapura images.

16   These ties are also observed by Cynthia Atherton who also connects the Mukundara tem-
      ple with architectural embellishments at Chittorgarh. C. Atherton, *The Sculpture of Early
      Medieval Rajasthan* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

FIGURE 11   Nāga, c. 5th–6th century
              MANDASOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

A remarkable Lakulīśa image found near Indragarh (c. late 6th century), exhibits very similar features and echoes the naturalistic details in physicality that Williams observed in the figural sculpture from Daśapura which, she argues, distinguishes this later work from more 'generalized' bodies in earlier Gupta period art.[17]

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17   For this image see Chapter 5. Joanna Williams, "On the Edge of What?" 133–141. Compare also the similarly rendered hair and incised pupils in the images of the eight-faced *liṅga* from Daśapura (pre-restoration) published in Williams, *Art of Gupta India*, Plates 10.2 & 10.3.

FIGURE 12   *Candraśālā* musician from the Mukundara Śiva temple
PALI ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM (AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF
INDIAN STUDIES PHOTO ARCHIVE)

FIGURE 13
Ardhanārīśvara, c. 7th century
JHALAWAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM (AMERICAN
INSTITUTE OF INDIAN STUDIES PHOTO ARCHIVE)

2   Shifting Centers: from Daśapura & Madhyamikā-Nagarī to Chittorgarh

Having sketched the regional boundaries, the pages that follow look specifically at the development of the political and the religious landscape. This story begins in the metropolitan areas of Daśapura and Chittorgarh and concludes in Indragarh, to the north.

From the late 5th–6th century three allied kinship groups, calling themselves Aulikaras, Mānavāyanis, and Naigamas, respectively, controlled the Daśapura area. The Aulikaras were the most powerful of these three clans and their capital was presumably in Daśapura itself. The Naigamas occupied positions of power in Daśapura and near the fortress of Chittorgarh. Mānavāyani inscriptions were found in Daśapura, in Chhotī Sādṛī, and in Nagarī. While it is most likely that the Aulikara clan(s) first came to power as allies of the Imperial Guptas, they asserted their independence by the early 6th century under Prakāśadharman, a power further augmented by his successor Yaśodharman.[18] The Aulikaras enhanced their prestige under Yaśodharman, whose victory over Toramāṇa's successor, the Hūṇa Mihirakula, was memorialized with a pair of monumental inscribed columns erected 4 km south of Daśapura near the village of Sondhni.[19] These pillars, and the contemporaneous sculptural remains from Sondhni, are the most significant material traces of Aulikara sovereignty and patronage [Figures 14 & 15]. Despite their impressive military feats, the period of Aulikara rule was relatively short-lived. The circumstances contributing to the decline of the lineage are not known, but they may have succumbed to pressure from competing political groups such as the Maukharis and Vardhanas. By the late 7th century, the locus of political

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18   Presumably, they were allied in the 5th century, but the fact that the Aulikaras use the Mālava rather than the Gupta era to date their records could suggest a degree of independence. The debates on this Gupta-Aulikara relationship are summarized in Richard Salomon, "New Inscriptional Evidence for the History of the Aulikaras of Mandasor," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 32 (1989): 1–36 (25–27). More recently, Hans Bakker has made further strides in untangling these relationships. See Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 34; "Theatre of Broken Dreams: Vidiśā in the Days of Gupta Hegemony," in *Interrogating History, Essays for Herman Kulke*, eds. M. Brandtner and S.K. Panda (New Delhi: Manohar, 2006), 165–187.

19   "Mandasor Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman," *CII* 3, 142–148; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* vol. 1, 418–420; "Mandasor Duplicate Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman," *CII* 3, 149–150; "Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman (Mālava 589 = 532 CE)," *CII* 3, 150–158; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* vol. 1, 424–246.

FIGURE 14   Yaśodharman's victory pillars at Sondhni. The pillar on the left is no longer standing, but the fragments are preserved at the site (right side foreground).

power had shifted from the plains of Daśapura to the northwest and the hilltop fortress of Chittorgarh.

Chittorgarh's location along the western boundary of Uparamāla made it a centralized stronghold for rulers seeking to control areas further to the west and the south.[20] The early political history of Chittorgarh is difficult to reconstruct since the current location of the early inscriptions reported from the site are unknown and no estampages of these inscriptions were made. The fragmentary 6th century Naigama records found in the fort were mentioned above and attest to political links with Daśapura. A family calling themselves Mauryas may have succeeded the Naigamas in the late 7th or early 8th century.[21] An

20   K.C. Jain, *Malwa Through the Ages: From the Earliest Times to 1305 A.D.* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), 323–325.

21   The inscription was reported on a column near the Suraj Kund. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1830), 703. Bhandarkar's list calls this inscription the 'Mānasarovara Column Inscription' and reports that it gave the lineage: Māheśvara—Bhīma—Bhoja—Māna. The other inscription referring to one Mānabhaṅga (perhaps the same Māna Maurya of Tod's record) was reported by N.P. Chakravati near

FIGURE 15
Dvārapāla, Sondhni site

inscription reported by James Tod (dated VS 770/713 CE) referred to one Māna, whom Tod understood to be Māna of the Maurya lineage who, according to the later bardic tradition of Rajasthan, was the founder of the fort.[22] If the Mauryas continued to control the area into the late 8th century, they would have competed with Gurjara-Pratīhāra rulers like Nāgabhaṭa I and his successor Vatsarāja.[23] In the early 9th century Nesarika grant (VS 727/805 CE), Rāṣṭrakūṭa Govinda II claims to have overtaken Mālava and to have subjugated the region's rulers, the Gurjaras included.[24] The struggle between the Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Gurjara-Pratīhāras for control of the fort continued in the 9th century.

2.1 *What a Tangled Web: Political Networks in Daśapura*

The early historiography has cast Aulikara Yaśodharman as a pivotal figure in the post-Gupta political world, to the exclusion of the broader political networks in which he was enmeshed and which presumably supported his rise to power.[25] Yaśodharman's inscriptions may suggest a universal sovereign, but these self-aggrandizing claims are rhetorical flourishes of the *praśasti* genre, rather than indications of an historical reality. Richard Salomon's study and translation of the Rīsthal Inscription of Yaśodharman's predecessor, Prakāśadharman, made

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the Śaṅkar ghat. N.P. Chakravarti, "Report on Epigraphy," *ASI Annual Report* 1934–35: 56–57. The Śaṅkar ghat inscription reportedly mentioned the building of structures within the fort, but the portion of the inscription recording the date was damaged and VS 7[??] was all that could be read, indicating it dated to a period between 644–743 CE.

22   A ruler by the name of Dhavala of the Mauryas is also referenced in the early 8th century Kansuāñ inscription (see below) and may have been the same person called Dhavallapadeva in an inscription found northeast of Chittorgarh at Dhoḍ (GE 407/726 CE). R.R. Halder, "Samoli Inscription of the Time of Siladitya; [Vikrama-Samvat] 703," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 97–99; "Dabok Inscription of the Time of Dhavallapadeva; [Harsha] Saṃvat 207," *EI* 20 (1929–30): 122–124.

23   According to later bardic sources compiled by Tod, it was Bappa Rāval of the Guhila clan who claimed control of the fortress from 'Mān-mori' (Maurya?) before 753 CE. Sircar, however, in his work on the early history of the Guhila clan has shown the connection of Bappa Rāval to Chittor is claimed for the first time in the *Rājapraśastimahākāvya*, a text of the 17th century (1675 CE). Bappa's earliest mention comes in the Ekliṅgjī Inscription (971 CE), which locates his rule in Medapāṭa in the Nagda/Ahar area near Udaipur. However, the Guhilas do come to control Chittor in the 13th century. Claiming Bappa Rāval conquered the fort as early as the 8th century likely reflects an effort to further legitimate their claim to the site. This is also reflected in the *Ekliṅgjī Māhātmya*. D.C. Sircar, *The Guhilas of Kiṣkindhā* (Calcutta, 1965). See also Ulrike Teuscher, "Changing Ekliṅgjī," *Studies in Indian History* 21.1 (2005): 1–16.

24   Sircar, *The Guhilas of Kiṣkindhā*, 35.

25   Salomon, "Aulikaras of Mandasor," 1–36. Salomon challenges the established narrative reflected in the repeatedly quoted statement by R.C. Majumdar that Yaśodharman 'rose and fell like a meteor.'

significant strides in situating the Aulikaras within the region's political net-
works by showing that the Aulikara dynastic title was shared by as many as
four familial sub-groups.[26] Normalizing Yaśodharman—that is, seeing him as
integrated within a larger corporate network of power—is also helpful in un-
derstanding the endowments recorded in the region's inscriptions, in which,
as shown below, the Aulikara's allies emerge as prominent donors. While the
royal genealogies have been mined extensively, the significance of the dona-
tive details of the records, in terms of what they tell us about the politics of
pious giving and the role of the Aulikaras and the other elites of Daśapura in
the development of a Śaiva religious landscape, have not yet been explored.

In addition to the Aulikaras, two other clans—i.e. the Mānavāyanis and the
Naigamas—played a particularly vital role in regional religious life. The most
important evidence showing the imbrication of regional economic and politi-
cal networks in the area concerns the Naigamas,[27] a merchant family that oc-
cupied a hereditary position as ministers to the Aulikara rulers in Daśapura
and exerted some political power in the Chittorgarh-Nagarī area as well.[28] In
the so-called 'Mandasor Inscription of Yaśodharman,' Verses 10 & 11 eulogize
Ṣaṣṭhidatta, of the 'pure' Naigama lineage.[29]

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26   The connections between these clans, and possible overlapping of their dates, is difficult
      to determine although Salomon notes that it is unlikely that they followed each other in
      neat succession. Rule over this region was likely shared by a number of these kings at one
      time. Salomon, "Aulikaras of Mandasor," 11–12; Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 33,
      Figure 3.

27   Salomon takes Naigama as a family or lineage name, although he acknowledges that
      naigama can designate a merchant. The word is derived from *nigama*, a term used to
      denote a market center occupying a somewhat intermediary position between a village
      and a developed township. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, 134;
      A. Ghosh, *The City in Early Historical India* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study,
      1973), 38; 46–7.

28   Bhagavaddoṣa of the Naigama line served as the *rājasthānīya* under Prakāśadharman,
      his brother, Abhayadatta under Prakāśadharman or Yaśodharman, and Abhayadatta's
      son, Dharmadoṣa, under Yaśodharman. See Salomon's 'Genealogical Chart 2' ("Aulikaras
      of Mandasor," 16). Administrators with names ending in -*datta* also appear in a set of
      5th century copper-plate inscriptions found at Darmodarpur in Bangladesh, which re-
      cord land transactions under three Gupta rulers in the area. See Bakker, *The World of the
      Skandapurāṇa*, 241–247.

29   "Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśodharman," Verses 10–11:
      tasya prabhor vvaṁśakṛtāṃ nṛpāṇāṃ pādāśrayād viśrutapuṇyakīrttiḥ /
      bhṛtyaḥ svanaibhṛtyajitārṣaṭka āsīd vasyān kila ṣaṣṭhidattaḥ // 10// (Indravajrā)
      himavata iva gāṅgas tuṅganamraḥ pravāhaḥ śaśabhṛta iva revāvārirāśiḥ prathīyān /
      param abhigamanīyaḥ śuddhimān anvavāyo yata uditagarimnas tāyate naigamānām
      //11// (Mālinī)

The servant of the kings who founded the family of that lord [i.e. Yaśodharman] was Ṣaṣṭhidatta, the fame of whose religious merit was known far and wide through the protection of (their) feet; who by his resoluteness conquered the six enemies (of religion) (and) who was indeed very excellent. [10]

As the torrent, flowing high and low of the Gaṅgā (spreads abroad) from Himavat, (and) the extensive mass of the waters of Revā from the moon, (so) from him, whose dignity was manifested, there spreads a pure race of Naigamas, most worthy to be sought in fellowship. [11]

FLEET

Given that the poet offers no further geographic data or a more specific family name, I suggest we understand this designation as both a clan name and an occupational title. It could be that the *nigama* (market town) this group hailed from was the well-established commercial center of Daśapura itself. Other members of this Naigama group are mentioned in two early 6th century fragmentary inscriptions from Chittorgarh that record donations by one Viṣṇudatta and his son.[30] Viṣṇudatta is described as the 'best of merchants' (*vaṇijāṃ śreṣṭho*)[31] and Viṣṇudatta's son is named as govener (*rājasthānīya*) of Daśapura and Madhyamā (Madhyamikā-Nagarī).[32] An alliance with a newly independent and successful group of political elites like the Aulikaras would certainly have elevated the social status of the Naigama family. The Aulikaras, too, would have benefitted from their ties to this prominent local merchant group, who may have helped them to control the surplus from trade and commerce in the area.

The relationship among the Aulikaras, Naigamas, and a third group, the Mānavāyanis, is more challenging to parse. Sircar has suggested that members of this family, calling themselves descendants of 'Manu', were aspirational *kṣatriyas*, who claimed descent from the mythic progenitor Manu to legitimize their claim to an elevated social status. One particular ruler from this clan, Gauri, is mentioned in a donative record from Chhotī Sādrī, and another from Mandasor in which he appears to be allied with the Aulikara

30   D.C. Sircar and G.S. Gai, "Fragmentary Inscriptions from Chittorgarh," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 53–57. Inscriptions are dated paleographically by their resemblance to the script of Yaśodharman's inscription of 532 CE.

31   Sircar & Gai, "Chittorgarh," 57, A side, Line 3.

32   Sircar & Gai, "Chittorgarh," 57, B side, Line 3.

rulers.[33] Following Sircar's suggestions, it is plausible that the upwardly mobile Mānavāyani sought to increase their own prestige though an Aulikara alliance.

3   Inscribing Śaivism: a Metropolitan Scenario

The religious landscape of the greater Daśapura area in the early 5th–6th century was extremely diverse: inscriptions commemorated temples to Viṣṇu, pious donations to Buddhist monastic communities and temples to enshrine the bellicose mother goddesses.[34] We can, however, see Śaivism gaining in prominence among the rulers and elites of the 6th century. Invocations of Śiva and Śaiva theology become part of a political idiom employed in Aulikara inscriptions and in those of the Naigamas and Mānavāyanis. Close examination of the donative inscriptions reveals the ways in which Śaiva idioms were mobilized in political discourse as a means to elevate particular rulers, clans, and social practices.

3.1   *Divisions of Donative Labor*
To commemorate his victory over the Hūṇas, Prakāśadharman's Rīsthal Inscription (515 CE)[35] records the offering of certain commodities and spoils of war taken from Toramāṇa as ritual gifts.[36] He also commissioned a tank for the

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33   This alliance is assumed on the possibility, still arguable, that the Ādityavardhana mentioned in this grant is an epithet for Gauri. Given the prevalence for names ending in *-vardhana* amongst the Aulikaras, it could be evidence of an alliance or association. See Salmon, "Aulikaras of Mandasor," 21; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* vol. 1, 130.

34   For instance, the dedication of a Viṣṇu temple in 404/5 CE: H.P. Shastri, "Mandasor Inscription of the time of Naravarman; Malava Year 461," *EI* 12 (1913–14): 315–321; a reservoir for Buddhist monks (417/418 CE): S.N. Chakravarti, "Bihar Kotra Inscription of Naravarman's Time; Malava Year 474," *EI* 26 (1941–2): 130–132; a shrine for fierce *Mātṛs* and a Viṣṇu temple 423/4 CE: "Gangdhar Inscription," *CII* 3, 72–78; a Buddhist *stūpa* (467/8 CE): M.B. Garde, "Mandasor Inscription of Malava Samvat 524," *EI* 27 (1947): 12–15; D.C. Sircar, "Two Inscriptions of Gauri," *EI* 30 (1953–54): 120–132.

35   The edition and translation referred to here are from Salomon's edition, "Aulikaras of Mandasor," 1–36.

36   *ā toramāṇanṛpater nṛpamauliratnajyotsnāpratānaśabdalīkṛtapādapīṭhāt/*
hūṇādhipasya bhuvi yena gataḥ pratiṣṭhāṁ nīto yudhā vitathatām adhirājaśabdaḥ //16//
saṁgrāmamūrddhani vipāṭhanipātitānāṁ tasyaiva yena madavārimucāṁ gajānām/
āy(ām)idantaghaṭitāni taponidhi(bh)y(o) bhadrāsanāni rucimanti niveditāni //17//
tasyaiva c(ā)havamukhe tarasā jitasya yenāvarodhanavarapramadāḥ pramathya/
lokaprakāśabhujavik[r]amacihnahetor viśrāṇitā bhagavate vṛṣabhadhvajāya //18//

sake of augmenting the religious merit of his grandfather, Vibhīṣaṇavardhana.[37] Following these donations, Verse 20 mentions a temple (*sadman*) constructed in honor of Śiva initiated by Prakāśadharman.[38] In Verse 22 a temple of Śiva is mentioned again, here called the Prakāśeśvara temple (*prakāśeśvarasadman*).[39] While the ritual gifts were varied, this specific donation of a temple dedicated to Śiva figures as the donative act with the most symbolic density, since it materializes a matrix of sociopolitical relationships.

> And he also built this temple, which resembles the slopes of the snowy mountains (the Himālayas), of Sthāṇu (Śiva), the source of creation of the entire three worlds, whose dark throat shines with the mingling of the rays poured forth by the crescent moon that has slipped down (from his head) in the violence of his dance. [20]
> When five hundred years, to which is added seventy years plus two more, had passed [i.e. in the year 572], in the summer when Puṣpaketu

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'He falsified in battle the Hūṇa overlord's title of "Emperor," which (had) become established on the earth up to (the time of) Toramāṇa, whose footstool was colored by the rays of light from the jewels in the crowns of kings. [16] He presented to holy ascetics beautiful (ivory) seats made from the long tusks of the rutting elephants of that same (Toramāṇa), which he brought down with his arrows at the forefront of the battle. [17] And he carried off and dedicated to Lord Vṛṣabhadhvaja (Śiva) the fairest ladies of the harem of the same (Toramāṇa) whom he had defeated easily in the thick of battle, as a token of the power of his arms which illuminate the world. [18]' (Salomon)

37   *rājñe pitāmahavibhīṣaṇavarddhanāya ślāghyānubhāvagurupuṇyaphalaṃ nivedya /*
     vistāri bindusarasaḥ pratibimbabhūtam etad vibhīṣaṇasaras samakhāni tena //19//
     'He (had) constructed this broad Vibhīṣaṇa lake, which is a mirror-image of the Bindu Lake, dedicating to his grandfather, King Vibhīṣaṇavardhana, its great meritorious fruit of excellent dignity [19]' (Salomon)
     As Salomon notes, the comparison here is to the Himalayan Lake Bindusaras near Gangotri.

38   *etac ca nṛttarabhasaskhalitendulekhāvāntāṅsuvicchuritamecakakaṇṭhabhāsaḥ /*
     sthāṇos samagrabhuvanattrayasṛṣṭihetoḥ prāleyaśailataṭa(ka)lpam akāri sadma //20//
     sadvyabdasaptatisamāsamudāyavatsu pūrṇṇeṣu pañcasu śateṣu vivatsarāṇām /
     grīṣmerkkatāpamṛditapramadāsanāthadhārāgṛhodaravijṛmbhitapuṣpaketau //21//
     lakṣma bhāratavarṣasya nideśāt tasya bhūkṣitaḥ/
     akārayad daśapure prakāśeśvarasadma yaḥ //22//

39   This verse does not explicitly identify the temple as a Śaiva dedication, but I think the inference is justified considering the common practice of naming a *liṅga* in honor of a particular individuals. Moreover, it seems quite likely that the reference in Verse 27 to a temple of Śiva (*śūlinas sadma*) refers to the same shrine as in Verses 20 & 22 since it is not preceded by any reference to a second temple.

(Kāma) was blooming within the fountain rooms that were peopled by young women who were overcome by the heat of the sun. [21]

He (Bhagavaddoṣa) had constructed in Daśapura the Prakāśeśvara Temple, the symbol of Bhāratavarṣa (India), at the command of that King (Prakāśadharman). [22]

<div style="text-align:right">SALOMON</div>

Although the connection between the shrine introduced in Verse 20 and that of Verse 22 is not entirely explicit, I think they refer to the same monument. Verse 21 marking the date also marks the beginning of a new section of the inscription in which certain donative acts promised or intended by Prakāśadharman, are actually carried out by his Naigama minister, Bhavagaddoṣa. As with the temple, it appears that the excavation of the Vibhīṣana Lake intended to honor the memory of Prakāśadharman's grandfather, was actually undertaken by Bhagavaddoṣa as recorded in Verses 26 & 27.[40] Bhagavaddoṣa made a series of other donations, apparently of his own volition, that included a temple (*mandir*) for Brahman, learned institutions to shelter devotees and ascetics who practiced Sāṃkhya and Yoga,[41] as well as gardens, monasteries, wells, shrines for unnamed deities, and other pious gifts (*deyadharma*-s).[42]

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40   *tenaiva nṛpates tasya pūrvvajāmātyasūnunā/*
      rājasthanīyabhagavaddoṣeṇādoṣasaṅginā //26//
      etaj jalanidhihrepi viśālam khānitaṁ saraḥ/
      idañ ca jaladollekhi śūlinas sadma kāritam //27//

41   *āśrayāya yatīnāṁ ca sāṅkhyayogābhiyog(in)ām/*
      vyadhatta kṛṣṇāvasathaṁ bujjukāvasathañ ca yaḥ //24//
      sabhākūpamaṭhārāmān sadmāni ca divaukasām/
      yonyāṁś cānyāyavimukho deyadharmmān acīkarat //25//
      Salomon translates 'shrine to Kṛṣṇa and Bujjuka as a refuge for ascetics who devoted themselves to (the practice of) Sāṅkhya and Yoga.' As a definition for *avasatha* Sircar's *Glossary* includes "*dharmaśālā*" or a "college". As an alternative translation, I would suggest instead: 'and he established the learned institutions of Kṛṣṇa and Bujjuka to shelter students intent upon the (study of) Sāṅkhya and Yoga'. Rather than take Kṛṣṇa and Bujjuka as names of deities as Salomon does, I think they may refer to the head teachers or administrators of the *avasatha*-s. See Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. *avasatha*.

42   Peter Bisschop has also discussed these passages from the Rīsthal inscription. According to his interpretation, these donative acts articulate a hierarchical religious vision in which Śiva is presented as the foremost deity. In his view, this notion of hierarchy, or rather a re-ordered and distinctly Śaiva hierarchy, is central to the success of Śaivism in the medieval period. This Śaiva supremacy, he argues, is evident in the inscription by the fact that the Śiva temple, the "symbol of Bhāratavarṣa" is established in the name of the king. The many other donative acts in the list are paid less attention. I agree with Bisschop's general point, but I would also argue that the social dimensions and implications of this

These donative details, while perhaps mundane, are significant because they evince the levels of social participation that accompanied the building of a temple or religious monument and highlight the multivalent character of the gift itself. Prakāśadharman's offerings of prestige items to honor ascetics, his ancestors, and Śiva, his chosen deity, underpin the notion of an ideal and righteous sovereign. These donations might also signal a kind of redistribution of wealth if we assume the monuments were funded, in part, from the spoils of war. Bhagavaddoṣa's participation in these donative acts serves to elevate and idealize him and, by extension, the Naigama lineage; not as a ruler, but as a 'model citizen' by materializing his commitment to social welfare through charitable acts. Bhagavaddoṣa's construction of the *liṅga* shrine in the name of the king contributes an additional layer of meaning as an act of memorialization that linked the minister, his overlord, and the deity in a highly visible and tangible way. This example makes clear the ways in which devotion to Śiva could be integrated within discourses of power and political hierarchy.

3.2   *Piety as Political Idiom & Aspirational Practice*

Prakāśadharman's inscription employs Śaiva devotion as a political tool by opting to commemorate a significant military victory with a temple to the deity. This connection between Śiva, power, and military victory is expressed even more forcefully in the pillar inscriptions of the Aulikara ruler Yaśodharman in the first half of the 6th century.[43] These inscriptions begin with the praise and invocation of Śiva as Paśupati, the god to whom even the Hūṇa kings bowed down.[44] It is clear from the language and imagery throughout the inscription that the god whom Yaśodharman invoked was one representing unassailable power and dominion.

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inscription are of equal significance—particularly if we want to account for the popularity of Śaivism as a religious movement. Here Śaivism clearly functions as a political idiom, and the collaborative acts of piety converging around the Śaiva temple also serve to manifest publicly the relationships between the ruler and those who, like the merchant ministers, are close to him. Peter Bisschop, "Śaivism in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka Age," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20.4 (2010): 477–488 (481–482).

43   "Mandasor Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman," *CII* 3, 142–148. The inscription recorded on this pillar is reproduced in duplicate on a second pillar about 20 yards away; "Mandasor Duplicate Pillar Inscription of Yaśodharman," *CII* 3, 149–150.

44   See Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 38–39. Yaśodharman's Pillar Inscription refers to this ruler as the one to whom Mihirakula was bowed, having before only bowed to Śiva. This is perhaps a reference to the latter's Gwalior Stone Inscription, which refers to Mihirakula's own bowing in devotion to Paśupati. Fleet, *CII* 3, 162, v. 4; 143–5.

> May that flying banner of Śūlapāṇi (i.e. Śiva) destroy the forces of your
> enemy; the banner that bears the Bull, who is marked by the five fingers
> of the daughter of the mountain (i.e. Pārvatī), due to whose terrific bel-
> lowing the quarters vibrate and the demons are gripped with fear, and
> who cracks the rocks of the cliffs of Mount Sumeru by the pounding
> of his horns.[45]
>
>> BAKKER

In the text's eulogy, Yaśodharman's power as sovereign is homologized to the
majesty of his clan deity. These sentiments are communicated, arguably even
more forcefully, in the material form of the massive columns upon which the
inscriptions are engraved. These monuments must have been an intimidat-
ing symbol of the king's power and authority, particularly for those people
for whom such massive free-standing monuments would have been a novelty.
Although the inscription does not directly homologize the column to a *dhvaja*,
the reference to Śiva's banner as bearing the Bull-insignia certainly encourages
such an interpretation. Such an association would also participate in the wider
deployment of the *dhvaja*-symbolism observed at contemporaneous sites.[46]
The crowning elements of both of Yaśodharman's columns are now missing,
but I think that each would have been topped with the image of the bull.[47]

   In composing the verses that would be engraved upon the column(s), the
poet clearly had the object in mind. The text was deliberately designed to com-
plement the object upon which it was carved and one could even imagine that
the sight of the column inspired the poet's verse. The language of the inscrip-
tion highlights and adds to this visual language by repeatedly and poetically
evoking the physicality of the object. The column is likened to the arm of the
king: the strong arm of the warrior, calloused by the rub of the bowstring; the
arm that supports the earth when she is weary from the oppressive energies
of unrighteous rulers. The metaphor is driven home in the final verses, which

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45   *vepante yasya bhīmastanitabhayasamudbhrāntadaityā digantāḥ*
     śṛṅgāghātaiḥ sumeror vighaṭitadṛṣadaḥ kandarā yaḥ karoti /
     ukṣāṇaṃ taṃ dadhānaḥ kṣitidharatanayādattapañcāṅgulāṅkaṃ
     drāghiṣṭaḥ śūlapāṇeḥ kṣapayatu bhavatāṃ śatrutejāṃsi ketuḥ //1// (*Sragdharā*)
     Translation of Hans Bakker, *Monuments of Hope, Gloom, and Glory*. 24th J. Gonda Lecture
     (Amsterdam: KNAW, 2017), 30.

46   Elizabeth A. Cecil and Peter C. Bisschop, "Columns in Context: Venerable Monuments
     and Landscapes of Memory in Early India," *History of Religions* 58.4 (2019): 355–403.

47   Since the crowing elements of one of the columns are displayed at ground level at the
     site, it is possible to see the circular pattern of carved joins set around a central socket on
     top of the lion-carved abacus. This is a clear indication that there was a final crowning
     element, which has been lost.

liken Yaśodharman's arm to the column, and to the particular column he erects as an arm of the earth, raised up in testament to his greatness.

> By that illustrious Yaśodharman, who reigns the earth with a steady, club-like arm as beautiful as a column, this column (*stambha*) that will last till the end of the Age, has been erected here, as if to measure the earth from above, to count the multitude of stars, and to point out to the highest skies, as it were, the path of his glory achieved by his heroic deeds." (A column) that is, as it were, a raised arm of the earth....[48]
>
> BAKKER

This poetic metaphor, while suited perfectly for the two columns, is not unprecedented. The inscribed column of Samudragupta at Allahabad evokes the same image in remarkably similar language some two-hundred years earlier.[49]

But the language of Śaivism was not exclusively or even primarily used to express the 'language of war.' It was also adapted and employed to suit other cultural registers. For a compelling example of this we can return to the Naigama family of Daśapura, whose 6th century inscription from Mandasor commemorates the excavation of a well by Dakṣa, the nephew of Bhagavaddoṣa's successor, Abhayadatta. This record invokes a supremely powerful, but seemingly benevolent Lord, who is imagined smiling.[50]

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48   [*gā*]*m evonmātum ūrdhvaṃ vigaṇayitum iva jyotiṣāṃ cakkravālaṃ*
      nirddeṣṭuṃ mārggam uccair diva iva sukṛtopārjjitāyāḥ svakīrtteḥ /
      tenākalpāntakālāvadhir avanibhujā śrīyaśodharmmaṇāyaṃ
      stambhaḥ stambhābhirāmasthirabhujaparigheṇṇocchritiṃ nāyito ttra //7//
      Translation: Bakker, *Monuments of Hope, Gloom, and Glory*, 30.

49   *mahārājādhirājaśrīsamudraguptasya   sarvvapṛthivīvijayajanitodayavyāptanikhilāvanit*
      alāṃ kīrttim itas tridaśapatibhavanagamanāvāptalalitasukhavicaraṇām ācakṣāṇa iva
      bhuvo bāhur ayam ucchritaḥ stambhaḥ. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* vol. 1, 262–68, ll. 29–30.

50   "Mandasor Stone Inscription of Yaśovarman," Verses 1–3:
      sa jayati jagatāṃ patiḥ pinākī smitaravagīteṣu yasya dantakāntiḥ /
      dyutir iva taḍitāṃ niśi sphurantī tirayati ca sphuṭayaty adaś ca viśvaṃ //1// (*Puṣpitāgra*)
      svayaṃbhūr bhūtānāṃ sthitilaya[*samut*]*pattividhiṣu prayukto yenājñaṃ vahati*
      bhuvanānāṃ vidhṛtaye/
      pitṛtvaṃ cānīto jagati garimāṇaṃ gamayatā sa śambhur bhūyānsi pratidiśatu bhadrāṇi
      bhava[*tām*] *//2//* (*Śikhariṇī*)
      phaṇamaṇigurubhār[*ākk*]*r*[*ā*]*ntidūrāvanamraṃ sthagayati rucham indor mmaṇḍalaṃ*
      yasya mūrdhnām /
      sa śirasi vinibadhnan randhṛṇīm asthimālāṃ sṛjatu bhavasṛjo vaḥ kleśabhaṅgaṃ
      bhujaṅgaḥ //3// (*Mālinī*)
      On this inscription see also Bisschop, "Śaivism in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka Age," 481. He draws attention to the reinterpretation of the typical divine hierarchy. Here it is Śiva who is imagined as the supreme deity and Brahmā owes his position to him. Bisschop points

Victorious is he (the god) Pinākin, the lord of the worlds, in whose songs, hummed with smiles, the splendor of (his) teeth, like the luster of lightening sparkling in the night, envelops and brings into full view all this universe. [1]

May Śambhu, confer many auspicious gifts upon you, employed by whom in the rites of (effecting the) continuance and the destruction and the production of all things that exist, Svayambhū is obedient to (his) commands, for the sake of the maintenance of the worlds; and by whom, leading (him) to dignity in the world, he has been brought to the condition of being the father (of the universe). [2]

May the serpent of the creator of existence accomplish the allayment of your distress, (that serpent) the multitude of whose foreheads, bowed down afar by the pressure of the heavy weight of the jewels in (their) hoods, obscures the radiance of the moon [on Śiva's head] (and) who binds securely on [Śiva's] head the chaplet of bones which is full of holes (for stringing them). [3]

FLEET

In this case, the Naigama donative record suggests a full-fledged theology that promises the potential for protection and the alleviation of pain through Śiva. The verse immediately following introduces their gift of a well (*udapāna*).[51] This donation, it is explained later, was to honor Abhayadatta who had died prematurely. In the salutary praise offered in his memory, he is likened to a tree (*druma*) that afforded pleasant shade and yielded sweet and wholesome fruits.[52] It would be difficult to imagine a less threatening or more benevolent image. By beginning the inscription in this way, the donative act undertaken in Abhayadatta's memory is framed by the poetic theology of Śaiva devotion. The Naigamas' charitable gift is thereby imbued with a deeper resonance as an extension, or further manifestation, of the Lord's divine benevolence. The stone medium lends this message an added *gravitas*. Finally, we should not lose sight of the larger connection: that the well and the literary praise in the inscription both serve to construct and communicate the Naigamas' identity as trustworthy merchants, generous patrons, and government servants—the

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out an even stronger articulation of this hierarchical inversion from the *Skandapurāṇa* in which Brahmā realizes he is, in fact, Śiva's son.

51   Verse 4; Verse 22.

52   *sukhāśreyacchāyaṁ pariṇatihitasvāduphaladaṁ*, Verse 23.

very same ideals expressed succinctly in the description of the lineage progenitor Ṣaṣṭhidatta.[53]

Like the Naigamas, the Mānavāyanis employ Śaivism in a similarly aspirational manner. This lineage group also invokes Śiva, but somewhat indirectly.[54] For example, in the late 5th century record (VS 547/491 CE) from Chhotī Sādrī,[55] Gauri of the Mānavāyani family praises Śiva as Ardhanārīśvara (the 'Lord who is half female') in which form he is fused with the powerful Devī, whose temple the inscription endows.[56] In this case, the social status aspired to is that of the warrior as is made clear in Verse 3 of the record. This lineage could be an early example of the later warrior clans who styled themselves *rājaputras* (i.e. Rajputs).[57] This temple commissioned by Gauri, for the sake of gaining the grace of the goddess (*devyāḥ prasādārthinā*)[58] was likely built to enshrine the Mānavāyanis' lineage deity (*kuladevī*).

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53   See above.

54   The record is fragmentary so it is uncertain what the donation is. Sircar and Gai suggest Śiva shrines based on the opening invocation of this deity. D.C. Sircar and G.S. Gai, "Fragmentary Inscriptions from Chittorgarh," *EI* 34: 53–57, B-side, Line 1.

55   Sircar, "Two Inscriptions of Gauri: Fragmentary Inscription from Mandasor." The inscription was found above a ventilator in the Bhramaramātā temple in Chhotī Sādrī. I visited the site in March 2014, but the temple has been extensively renovated and I found no material evidence that dated to this early period.

56   *devī jayaty asuradāraṇatīkṣṇaśūlā prodgīrṇṇaratnamakuṭāṃśucalapravāhā /*
siṃhograyuktaratham* āsthitacaṇḍavegā bhrūbhaṅgadṛṣṭivinipātaniviṣṭaroṣā //1//
bhūyopi sā jayati yā śaśiśekharasya de[hā]rddham udvahati bhaktatayā harasya /
yā bhaktavatsalatayā prabibhartti lokān māteva [svā]kyasutapremṇaviv ṛddhasnehā**
//2//
tasyai praṇamya prakaromy aham eva jasraṃ kīrttiṃ śubhāṃ guṇagaṇaughamayīn nṛpāṇām /
ye māṇavāyaṇikulodbhavavaṃśagaurāḥ kṣātre pāde satatadīkṣitayuddhaśauṇḍāḥ //3//
(*Vasantatilaka*)
*Read *rathāsthita*, following Sircar's comment that *samāsa* was not used to preserve the metre. Sircar note 3, p. 124.
**Editor reads *premṇa* as *prema* and *svākya* in the sense of *svākīya*. Sircar, notes 7 & 8, pg. 124.

57   But like the Naigamas, Gauri and the Mānavāyanis commission other pious gifts such as wells, tanks, and public buildings presumably around the city of Daśapura where one of their inscriptions was found. The example below refers to donation by Gauri that were made in honor of his (deceased) mother. Sircar, "Two Inscriptions of Gauri: Fragmentary Inscription from Mandasor."

58   Verse 12.

Victorious is the Goddess who bears a sharp spear that tears asunder the demons (or the demon Mahiṣāsura); the luster emitted from whose jeweled crown makes a tremulous flow; whose rapidity is impetuous owing to her being seated on a chariot attached to a fierce lion; (and) whose anger is concentrated in her frowning glance. [1]

Victorious again is she who, out of devotedness (to the god) assumes half of the body of the moon-crested Hara (and) who, out of her kindness to the devotees, sustains the worlds just like a mother full of tenderness arising from her affection for her own children. [2]

After having bowed down to her, I am dealing, just a little, with the bright glory of the kings (the glory) that is made of a mass of good qualities; (the kings) who were born in the Mānavāyani family (and) made their race pure (by their deeds); who dedicated themselves permanently to the dignity of the Kṣatra status (and) were skilled in war. [3]

SIRCAR

While these invocations reflect a personal preference for a deity, as permanent records of a ritualized act of donation by individuals with ties to the region's ruling family, they are also potent identity markers that communicate the ties between these ambitious families and the established political elites. The tutelary deity of this warrior clan is clearly the martial Goddess, but the poet's praise of her incorporates her within a broader Śaiva theology through the reference to Ardhanārīśvara. In this case, the creation of this popular composite form of Śiva is attributed to the agency of the Devī, who becomes Śiva's 'other half' out of her devotion to him.[59]

4　Material Traces: Religion in the Cosmopolitan Centers

The previous sections have already introduced the pair of columns that bear Yaśodharman's inscriptions. These remarkable monuments did not stand in isolation, but provided an architectural and ideological frame for a Śiva

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59　It is perhaps not surprising that we find a reference to Ardhanārīśvara in the opening verse of the Aulikara's Rīsthal inscription as well.
vāmena sandhyāpraṇipātakopaprasaṅginārddhena vighaṭṭyamānam /
pinākinaś śānt(i)v[*i](dheya)m a[*r]ddha[*m] v[*ā]m[*e]taraṁ vaś śivam ādadhātu //1//
'May that peaceable right half of Pinākin (Śiva), which is being rent from his left half that grows angry at his bowing to Sandhyā (the Twilight), bestow blessings upon you. [1]'
Translation Salomon, "Aulikaras of Mandasor."

temple. Structural remains have not survived, but a partial reconstruction is possible using the material remains that survive on site alongside the earliest reports and photos made by C.E. Luard.[60] Luard's reports provide a larger material context for the columns and the inscriptions, which do not mention a temple or other donative media explicitly. Luard surveyed and photographed the area immediately surrounding the two columns in 1908.[61] Drawing upon local memory of the place, he identified the remains of two pillars, that may have supported a doorframe, and two massive *dvārapālas* (whose *jaṭā*, third eye, and accompanying *triśūlapuruṣas* clearly evince a Śaiva affiliation). Most significant, however, was Luard's discovery of the foundation of a brick structure to the west of the columns, built upon a terraced mound approximately one-and-a-half meters above the surrounding land. This terraced mound is still clearly visible at the contemporary ASI protected site where a small staircase conveys the visitor down the small hill to the re-erected columns. According to Luard's report, the mound was formed from a brick foundation of what was likely a larger brick structure. The remains of that structure were already lost at the time of his visit. Within the remains of the brick foundation, a massive *sahasra liṅga*—a phallic emblem of Śiva covered with innumerable smaller *liṅgas*—was found. The *liṅga* is still visible on top of the mound at the base of a pipal tree.[62] If we assume that the *liṅga* is contemporaneous with the rest of the 6th century remains of the site, it would be the earliest known example of this iconographic form.[63] [Figure 16]. Considered in light of other remarkable material remains and architectural fragments found scattered around the fields, the temple at Sondhni would have been dedicated to Śiva and the *sahasra liṅga* mentioned above may well have been the cult icon under worship.[64]

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60   Luard's research notes and drawings are collected in the Luard Archive at the British Library and his photos in the Kern Collection in Leiden University Library Special Collections.

61   C.E. Luard, "Gazetteer Gleanings in Central India," *IA* 37 (1908): 107–110.

62   This *liṅga* was not reported by Fleet or Luard and the circumstances of its discovery remain unknown. Given its current location, under the pipal behind the terraced area, and given its massive proportions, it is likely not far from its original location.

63   According to von Mitterwallner, the *liṅga* is likely contemporaneous with the other early 6th century remains. See Gritli von Mitterwallner, "Evolution of the *Liṅga*," in *Discourses on Śiva: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Nature of Religious Imagery*, ed. Michael Meister (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 12–31 (22).

64   Cecil and Bisschop, "Columns in Context," 387–392.

FIGURE 16   *Sahasra liṅga,* Sondhni site

The most unique feature of Sondhni has yet to be addressed: namely, why are there two seemingly identical columns with the same inscription at the same site? The repetition of an epigraphic text on paired columns in the same location has few precedents or comparanda.[65] This doubling could represent a desire for visual symmetry within the site effected through the framing of the temple with the two columns topped with images of the bull. We could also interpret the doubling as a materialization of the inscription's poetic metaphor—i.e. that the columns were the two arms of the earth raised up in testament to Yaśodharman's greatness. To the structural and symbolic functions of this pair of columns, I would add a third layer of significance. Given that the Aulikara epigraphic corpus attests to the strong alliance between the Aulikara ruling house and the Naigama merchant ministers, and their history of corporate donative efforts, these twin monuments could stand in commemoration of this political partnership. The decision to erect the columns in front of a temple to Śiva provides a way of framing the relationship between these two groups by asserting a religious preference. Affiliation with an elective religious cult, like Śaivism, here provides a means to cement relationships between people who did not share the kinship or caste bonds that traditionally constituted group identity.

The material evidence shows clearly that Daśapura and its environs constituted a major center of Śaiva activity. Given that Daśapura was such a diverse and dynamic place, we might infer that networks of Pāśupata specialists were also part of the scene, although the epigraphic evidence does not mention communities of ascetics or lineages of preceptors. The earliest evidence for Pāśupata lineages in the region comes from an early 8th century inscription found in Indragarh, north of Daśapura (discussed below). If we take the presence of Lakulīśa images as a sign of Pāśupata activity, then this also appears to be a slightly later development. The two temple lintels at the Mandasor museum, which display Lakulīśa in the central niche date from the 8th or early 9th century [Figure 17].

Other remarkable sculptures,[66] examples of Daśapura's artistic legacy, were found along the Shivana River in the Gajendra Ghat area, among them the massive eight-faced *liṅga* currently enshrined in the Paśupatināth Temple

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65   The Gupta period temple at Bhilsad provides the only comparable case according to my research. Cecil and Bisschop, "Revisiting Eran and Sondhni: Innovation and Idiom in the 'Gupta Period'," forthc.

66   These sculptures are the subject of a forthcoming study.

FIGURE 17   Fragmentary temple lintel with Lakulīśa in the central niche, c. 8th–9th century
              MANDASOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

[Figure 18].[67] Williams dates these material traces to be more or less contemporaneous with the Yaśodharman pillar inscriptions and the monumental *dvārapālas* found *in situ* at Sondhni. The Daśapura sculpture is likely also contemporaneous with the Nagarī *toraṇas*, which provide important evidence for the establishment of early Śaivism in this area (c. 5th–6th century). The sculpted panels depict foundational narratives: one shows Arjuna's obtaining of the Pāśupata weapon from Śiva, who was disguised as the *kirāta*, and the other represents scenes from the Devadāruvana myth, which gives an account of the origins of *liṅga* worship.[68]

4.1   *Religious Cosmopolitanism at Chittorgarh*

The earliest material remains at Chittorgarh add a further layer to the already complex picture presented in Daśapura. The oldest temples within the fort were constructed in the late 7th or early 8th century, but they have been extensively rebuilt and renovated as construction at the site continued well into the late medieval period (c. 15th–16th century). Examples of early medieval sculpture are often removed from their original architectural contexts and can be seen scattered throughout the many still-active temples within the fort and repurposed to adorn various archways and gates. Art historians generally connect the fort's earliest monuments to the Maurya rulers, but this is

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67   Based on the other sculptures found here—including the Kārttikeya and an enigmatic double-liṅga figure sometimes identified as Lakulīśa—Williams suggests that this may have been the site for a number of 6th century Śiva shrines; Joanna Williams, "On the Edge of What," 135–137. See images 10.12 & 10.13.

68   Hans T. Bakker and Peter C. Bisschop, "The Quest for the Pāśupata Weapon: The Gateway of the Mahādeva Temple at Madhyamikā (Nagarī)," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 59 (2016): 217–258.

FIGURE 18   Recut eight-faced *liṅga*, c. 6th century, enshrined in the Pāśupatināth Temple, Mandasor

speculative. We have no dedicatory inscriptions with which to prove such ties.[69] The issues of rebuilding and questions of patronage aside, the earliest monumental structures—the Kālikā Mātā and Kumbhaśyāma temples—strain the

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69   *EITA* 2.2 labels Chittorgarh a Maurya site.

FIGURE 19   Remains of temples at the '*satī* ground,' Chittorgarh Fort

canonical art historical frameworks of style and idiom. As Cynthia Atherton observes, 'The temples present a hybrid assemblage of stylistic and iconographic elements that reflects the shifting realities of this politically confused era and the site's location at a geographical interface.'[70] It is not only political competition that has shaped the religious landscape at the fort, the spatial distribution and variation in the placement and size of the oldest structures reflect a space in which multiple religious communities interacted and where people of various economic means participated in donative practices. Within this complex space, it is possible to discern that many of the earliest built interventions were commissioned by donors with Śaiva affiliations, broadly conceived.[71]

Traces of wide-ranging and 'unscripted' donative and building practices can be seen throughout the massive fort area—tanks, stepwells, and remains of small shrines cover nearly every inch of ground. One particularly interesting group of shrine foundations and remains is clustered in an area of the fort popularly called the '*satī* ground' and near the natural spring called the Gomukh Kuṇḍ, which is still an active place of pilgrimage today [Figures 19 & 20]. These

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70   Atherton, *Sculpture of Early Medieval Rajasthan*, 89.

71   This is not to say the earliest layers are exclusively Śaiva. There is also a mid-9th century shrine called the 'Kṣemankarī Temple' by art historians after the prominent image of this goddess on back exterior niche of the shrine. Small votive *stūpas* were also found within the complex. *EITA* 2.2, 284; Plate 635.

FIGURE 20   *Liṅga* shrine in the '*satī* ground,' Chittorgarh Fort

structures evince modes of patronage that stand in contrast to the monumental, royal dispensations like the Kālikā Mātā and Kumbhaśyāma temples. A number of these small temples enshrined *liṅgas* that may have been commissioned as family shrines or memorials for religious specialists. The fact that

only the stone foundations of some of these small shrines have survived may be because the upper portions were constructed of a more perishable, (i.e. cost effective) material like brick or wood. Discussing one of these shrines, Cynthia Atherton points to what she views as a curious mix of deities carved on the exterior of the shrine—Śiva mounted on the bull, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa, Brahmā, and Sarasvatī are all represented along with the traditional *dikpālas*. Atherton describes the shrine as an 'ecumenical' blending of deities. I prefer to interpret the distinctive iconographic patterns as indicative of individual preferences, rather than a conscious effort to unite different 'sectarian' programs or deities within a single monument as the term ecumenical suggests. As a concluding aside, given that a number of these structures are *liṅga* shrines, the large residential structure nearby could have been originally conceived as a Śaiva *maṭha* like comparable structures found at the nearby temple complex of Menal.[72]

Another of the oldest Śaiva layers in the fort is the small *liṅga* shrine called Kukkreśvara, which is surrounded by a stepwell. The shrine itself has been extensively rebuilt, but judging by some of the pillars and noteworthy early sculpture found in the niches around the stepwell, it is contemporaneous with some of the oldest surviving structures in the fort [Figure 21]. The image of Śiva and Pārvatī from the stepwell niche dates from the 7th or early 8th century, as does a Gaja-Lakṣmī with a nearly identical hairstyle and ornamentation, preserved in a modern Devī temple nearby [Figure 22].[73]

The previous examples have highlighted small scale or sub-monumental constructions, but the fort's oldest monumental temples, the Kālikā Mātā (c. late 7th century) temple and the Kumbhaśyāma temple (c. early 8th century), can also be classified as having Śaiva layers since both include images of Lakulīśa in their iconographic programs. Now dedicated to the Goddess, the Kālikā Mātā temple was clearly constructed as a Sūrya temple and multiple images of this deity grace the interior and exterior niches as well as the doorway to the inner sanctum[74] [Figure 23]. Within this Sūrya-centered iconographic program, the artists also included an image of Lakulīśa bearing his signature club as well as the lotus flower emblematic of the Sun god. The Kumbhaśyāma

72   Tamara Sears, "Śaiva Monastic Complexes in Twelfth-Century Rajasthan: The Pāśupatas and Cāhamānas at Menāl," *South Asian Studies* 23 (2007): 107–126.

73   Note also the similarities between the hairstyles and the circular 'ring' formed of hair (or perhaps other ornamentation) on the two goddesses with a similar convention on the Lakulīśa from the Kālikā Mātā temple.

74   *EITA* 2.2, 285–291; Plates 645–665.

FIGURE 21 Stepwell surrounding Kukkreśvara Temple, c. late 7th–8th century, Chittorgarh Fort

FIGURE 22   Gaja-Lakṣmī, c. late 7th–8th century, preserved in Devī Temple, Chittorgarh Fort

FIGURE 23   Kālikā Mātā Temple, c. late 7th century, Chittorgarh Fort, image of Sūrya above
            the *garbhagṛha*

temple also has a complex, layered history[75] [Figure 24]. The temple's icono-
graphic program suggests an original Śaiva dedication and the attributes of
many of the *alaṃkāradevatās* on the walls surrounding the *garbhagṛha* and
the temple exterior bear Śaiva attributes as noted by Meister (e.g., *triśūla*,
nāga, and *vṛṣa* mount).[76] The temple was later rededicated to Viṣṇu, but ex-
actly when this transformation took place is uncertain. The 15th century is the
terminus ante quem, based on inscribed Vaiṣṇava images in the temple that

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75   *EITA* 2.2, 291–297; Plates 666–683.
76   Meister comments that "the iconography of the sanctum's *dikpāla*s, of *vedibandha* niches,
      and of the outer wall's images should make clear that the original intentions of its build-
      ers were for this to be a Śaiva shrine." *EITA* 2.2, 295–296.

FIGURE 24   Kumbhaśyāma Temple, Chittorgarh Fort, unfinished image of Skanda in exterior
niche

date from the rule of Rana Kumbha of Mewar, but the transition could have been initiated earlier. If the Mauryas did, in fact, cede control of the fortress to the Gurjara-Pratīhāras in the 9th century, the change in dedication could have been tied to a broader political shift. Another possibility is to see this rededication as evidence of the revival of Vaiṣṇavism in the later medieval period, in part a reaction against an increasingly esoteric Śaivism. Observing that certain details of the deities on the exterior appear incomplete or unfinished, and that some of the Vaiṣṇava icons appear to date to an early period, Meister questions whether the temple as a Śaiva monument was fully realized before its rededication to Viṣṇu commenced.[77] One could also question whether the standing Lakulīśa image, with the attendant figures and garland drapery typical of Viṣṇu icons, was conceived (or perhaps even recut) to reflect a Vaiṣṇava context.[78] Two other Lakulīśa images were found within the fort, but they are no longer positioned in their original architectural contexts. Judging by the size of the images, however, I think it is reasonable to assume that, like the Kālikā Mātā and Kumbhaśyāma icons, these were positioned in exterior niches or as *alaṃkāradevatās*.

As the emblematic figure of the Pāśupata tradition, the presence of early Lakulīśa icons is a compelling indication of Pāśupata activity within the fort in its earliest material layers.[79] Yet the place of these images within the temples themselves and within the wider religious landscape of the fort raises many questions, which are considered in greater detail in Chapter 5.

5   Śiva on the Periphery: Jhālrāpāṭan, Kansuāñ, and Indragarh

The previous section has shown how Śaivism was adapted to express ideologies of power and social prestige by elite groups in the cosmopolitan centers like Daśapura and Chittorgarh. The rulers of the region championed Śiva as their emblem of war and victory. Socially ascendant merchant groups and

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77   *EITA* 2.2, 296–297. Meister comments specifically on the icons of Trivikrama and Narasiṃha framing the *prāggrīva* and an image of Balarāma in a south exterior niche, which in his view appear contemporaneous with the temple's early iconography. He tentatively suggests that "the temple was never completed as a Śaiva shrine but rather was converted at an early period to Vaiṣṇava worship."

78   On this image see Chapter 5.

79   The later Śiva temples in Chittorgarh, like the renovated Samidheśvar temple, also lack Lakulīśa images. The temple now called the Samidheśvar was originally a Jain temple of Jina Ariṣṭanemi built c. 1230–1235. After its desecration in the fourteenth century is was rededicated as a Śiva temple. M.A. Dhaky, "The Creed-Affiliation of the Samidheśvara Temple in Chittodgadh," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 14 (1984–85), 25–42.

other clans with political aspirations similarly invoked Śiva in their donative records, perhaps as a means to enhance their own prestige by participating in the religious culture favored by the region's elites. Outside of the political center of Daśapura, however, the language of Śaivism was employed to express different kinds of social aspirations and ideologies. Donative inscriptions that commemorated the construction of Śiva temples in Jhālrāpāṭan, Kansuāñ, and Indragarh give voice to facets of the early Śaiva community for whom pious giving provided a means to ensure protection and personal salvation.

In order to contextualize these voices, this section moves away from the center to explore expressions of Śaiva religiosity in places peripheral to the political capitals. To better understand why Śaivism was a compelling ideology in these places, I focus on a group of three contemporaneous inscriptions from northwest Uparamāla, which are some of the region's most valuable, yet undertheorized, sources for our knowledge of early Śaivism and the Pāśupata tradition in practice: The Durgāgaṇa Stone Inscription from Jhālrāpāṭan (VS 746/689–90 CE); the Kansuāñ Stone Inscription of Śivagaṇa (VS 795/738 CE); and the Indragarh Stone Inscription of Naṇṇapa (VS 767/710–11 CE).

5.1   *Precatory Religion: Ideologies of Prosperity and Protection*

The inscriptions from Kansuāñ and Jhālrāpāṭan share certain features and the temple remains that have survived in these respective places are also comparable. Both of these record the gifts of pious individuals with only the faintest ties to political elites. These donors were not explicitly motivated by political aspirations and the tone of their records is somber rather than hyperbolic. Here, Śiva is invoked as a refuge, protector, and bringer of prosperity in a world were such things were fleeting, at best.

The Kansuāñ Inscription[80] remains *in situ* on the exterior of the Mahādeva temple located in a scenic spot along the banks of a spring a few kilometers outside of Kota in Rajasthan. At the time of the inscription's composition the temple was reportedly located in the hermitage of the sage Kaṇva (Kaṇvāśrama) from which the modern Kansuāñ is derived. While the donor, Śivagaṇa, praises the rulers of the Maurya line, he appears to have no official relationship with the current ruler identified as Dhavala. The focus of the inscription is to record the construction of a temple to the benevolent and protective Śiva.[81]

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80   F. Kielhorn, "Kanaswa Inscription of Śivagaṇa," *IA* 19 (1890): 55–61.

81   *namaḥ sakalasaṃsārasāgarottārahetave /*
       tamogartābhisaṃpātahastālambāya śambhave //1//
       While this inscription does not refer to specific visions of hell or different hells, the idea is that Śiva saves his devotees from hell as well as the ancestors of those who offer him

> Adoration to Śambhu, who makes (men) cross the whole sea of mundane existence, (and is) a support for (their) hands when they fall into the pit of darkness (that is hell). [1]
>
> KIELHORN

The ethic of protection is echoed in subsequent verses with the repeated request that Śambhu be a source of protection and preservation for the world.[82] The act of piety and the precative tone of the inscription are apparently inspired by Śivagaṇa's personal preference for Śiva. Verse 14 tells us that his name, designating him one of Śiva's *gaṇas,* is fitting given his devotion to the Lord.[83] It is also possible that this name, with the *-gaṇa* suffix, signals his affiliation with a Śaiva community.[84] The inscription closes with a sentiment similar to those expressed in the opening, with the hope that the pious gift of the temple will be a source of salvation in a world characterized by suffering.[85]

> Having found out that life is burdened with every affliction, old age, separation, and death, (and being aware that) this is the only fit employment of one's wealth, well known all over the world to the good—he, pious minded, had this dwelling of the supreme Lord made, having but set eyes on which everybody in the world is freed from the stain of the Kali-age. [16]
>
> KIELHORN

It is worth noting that the salvific potential of the pious gift Śivagaṇa offers is not restricted to the donor and his immediate family. According to the

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devotion. Those people are granted the status of being his *gaṇas*, a privileged position in which one is freed from suffering. On this theme see SP IIB, especially the story of Sukeśa and his ancestors that precedes the detailed accounts of the various hells (SP 35.1–37).

82   The phrase *śambhor jaṭāḥ pāntu vaḥ* ('may Śambhu's matted hair protect you') is repeated twice, and *sthāṇor vaḥ pātu mūrddhā* ('may Sthāṇu's head protect you') is given once.

83   *śivasya nūnaṁ sa gaṇo yena tadbhaktatāṁ gataḥ.*

84   Names ending in *-gaṇa* can be indicative of initiation in Śaiva Siddhānta. See *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*, eds. H. Brunner, G. Oberhammer, & A. Padoux (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenshaften, 2004), s.v. *gaṇa.*

85   *jñātvā janma jarāviyogamaraṇakleśair aśeṣais citam*
     svārthasyāpy ayam eva yogocito loke prasiddhaḥ satāṁ /
     tenedaṁ parameśvarasya bhavanaṁ dharmātmanā kāritaṁ
     yaṁ dṛṣ[ṭ]vaiva samastalokavapuṣāṁ naṣṭam kaleḥ kalmaṣam // 16//
     (Śārdūlavikrīḍita)

FIGURE 25   Kansuāñ Temple and surroundings, Kota District, Rajasthan

inscription, even the rulers of the land who are entreated to protect the temple will, through that act of piety, reach Śiva's abode.[86]

The temple at Kansuāñ has been extensively rebuilt, although traces of the original moldings and repurposed pillars can be found throughout the complex. The open area facing the central *liṅga* shrine is also significantly rebuilt and now bordered by stone walls that have created narrow borders around what would have been a larger complex of smaller shrines and possibly a *maṭha* as well [Figures 25–27]. The structure that can be seen to the left of the temple is rebuilt, but it was at one point a simple two-storied building that could have served as a monastic dwelling.[87] Early images of Lakulīśa preserved on-site are a stong indication of the activites of Pāśupata ascetics or religious specialists within the larger complex [Figure 28]. The most important sculptural remains of the larger complex are two *caturmukha liṅgas*. Most of the

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86   "Kanaswa Inscription of Śivagaṇa," Verse 21:
         pālayantu nṛpāḥ sarvve yeṣāṁ bhūmir iyaṁ bhave[*t*]/
         evaṁ kṛte t[*e*] *dharmmārthaṁ nūnaṁ yānti śivālayaṁ* //

87   The assessment is based on the similarity of this structure to that of contemporaneous Śaiva *maṭhas* in Rajasthan. On these see Tamara Sears, "Pāśupatas and Cāhamānas at Menal."

FIGURE 26   Kansuāñ inscription of 738 CE preserved *in situ* on temple wall
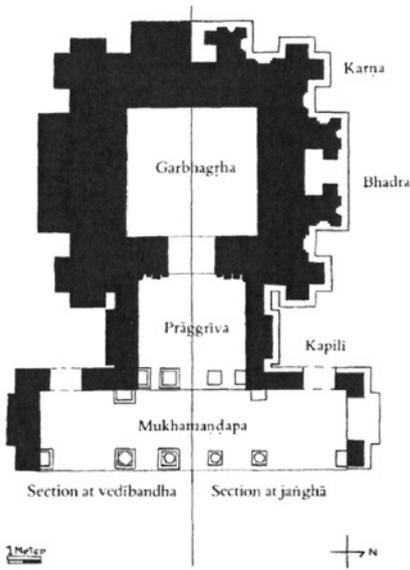
5. Candrabhaga, Sitalesvara temple, plan with later accretions removed.
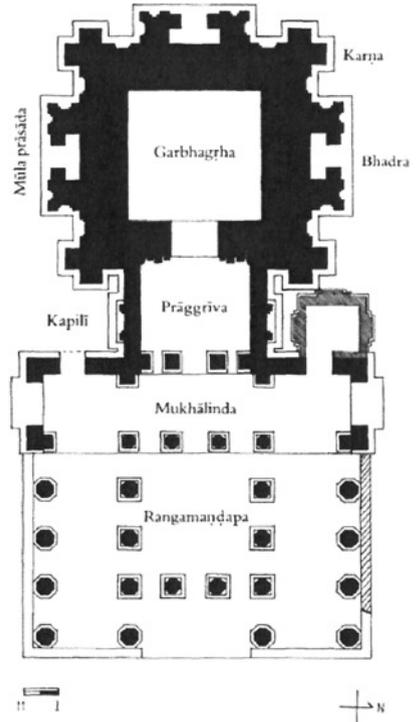
7. Candrabhaga, Sitalesvara temple, plan with later mandapa (attached ca. tenth century A.D.).
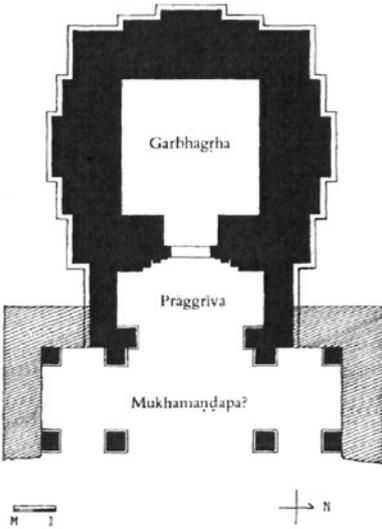
6. Kansuan, Siva temple, plan with later accretions partially removed.
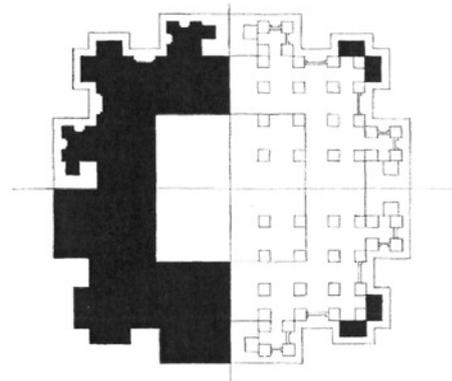
8. Candrabhaga, Sitalesvara temple. Plan showing the range of pillars implied by the pilaster ornament on the walls.

FIGURE 27   Plans of the Kansuāñ Temple and Śitaleśvara Mahādeva Temple
AFTER MEISTER, 1981

FIGURE 28   Lakulīśa on exterior of Kansuāñ Temple, c. late 7th–early 8th century

FIGURE 29
Caturmukha liṅga c. 8th century,
Kansuāñ Temple complex,
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INDIAN
STUDIES PHOTO ARCHIVE

faces that adorn these *liṅgas* have been recut, but the original images that do survive are broadly contemporaneous with the temple [Figure 29].

The context and expressions in the late 7th century stone inscription from the Śītaleśvara temple in Jhālrāpāṭan resonate with those of the Kansuāñ inscription.[88] The opening lines provide little with which to contextualize the donor. The poet refers to the reign of Durgāgaṇa, who is not known from other records. I assume he was a localized ruler or landholder. The donor himself is named Voppaka, who is mentioned along with his brother, Deva. While we might expect a more extensive genealogy or laudatory praise of the family's accomplishments, as was the case in the inscriptions from Daśapura, the tone of this record is quite modest. We are told that Deva was grateful (*kṛtajña*) and a man of his word (*sthiravāc*).[89] Voppaka is a treasurer in a dicing hall of wealthy princes (*pravṛddhakośakṣitipadyutasabhā*). Voppaka's occupation, along with his sponsorship of the temple and inscription, are a clear indication that he was a person of means, but the language of his donative record expresses disillusionment with material wealth and, much like Śivagaṇa's inscription, comments on the pitiable human condition. Voppaka's pious donation of a temple

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88   G. Bühler, "Two Inscriptions from Jhālrāpāṭan," *IA* 5 (1876): 180–183.
89   Verse 6.

for Śiva is undertaken following the cognition that this act of piety is a means to escape the suffering to which humans are inevitably subject.[90]

> He, seeing that a chain of sufferings, produced by old age and separation, clings to embodied beings, built this temple of the moon-crested God, in order to avoid future births and deaths. [8]
>
> Spiritual merit alone is a constant friend, protects the steps of the pious, and follows them even in death, After men die, friends and—how much more!—their possessions leave them. [9]
>
> BÜHLER

The similarities between the Kansuāñ temple and the shrine memorialized in the Jhālrāpāṭan record extend to their physical settings as well. Today called Śītaleśvara Mahādeva, the temple in Jhālrāpāṭan is positioned along a scenic bend in the Candrabhāgā River. Little of the original structure and iconography have survived, with the exception of some early incised pillars within the shrine interior that likely date to the 7th century [see Figure 27]. The architectural frame surrounding the *garbhagṛha*, with a small image of Lakulīśa in the central niche also dates to an early phase in the life of the temple. [Figures 30 & 31]. An early *sahasra liṅga* is under active worship in a small shrine along the riverbank. Remains of some ancillary shrines of a later period (c. 8th–9th century) survive within the complex, and there may have been others that were destroyed or built over. Like its counterpart in Kansuāñ, the Śītaleśvara complex has had a long and rich life as a religious center. Monumental 9th century sculptures of Durgā Mahiṣāsuramardinī, Cāmuṇḍā, and Śiva Naṭeśa held in a storage shed on site and in the Jhalawar Museum attest to the continued vitality of artistic production in the area.

5.2   *Pāśupatas in Practice: the Religious Community of Indragarh*

Neither of the inscriptions from Jhālrāpāṭan nor Kansuāñ mentions Pāśupatas directly, but the images of Lakulīśa placed prominently at both of these sites are compelling indications of a Pāśupata influence. These material links are corroborated by an early 8th century inscription from Indragarh (dated VS 767/710–711 CE)—a site approximately 70 km northeast of Daśapura, and

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90   Verses 8–9:
      tenedam akāri candramauler bhavanaṃ janmabhṛtiprahārahetoḥ/
      prasamīkṣya jarāviyogaduḥkhapratatiṃ dehabhṛtām anuprasaktām //8// (Aupacandasika)
      dharma eva sakhāvyabhicārī rakṣa_ _ ākṛtinaskhaliteṣu/
      prāyaṇe 'py anugatiṃ vidadhāti parya yanti sukhahṛdaḥ kim utārghā //9// (Gītāryā)

ENTRANCE TO THE SANCTUARY OF A TEMPLE AT CHANDRAVATI.

To face page 1792.

FIGURE 30   Doorway to inner sanctum of Śitaleśvara Mahādeva Temple complex with outline
of Lakulīśa figure faintly visible, Jhālrāpāṭan, Rajasthan
AFTER TOD, 1920

FIGURE 31   Doorway to inner sanctum of the Śitaleśvara Mahādeva Temple with Lakulīśa in
               the central niche, c. 7th–early 8th century

40 km west of Jhālrāpāṭan [Figure 32]. This record has not yet been translated, nor have previous discussions considered it in light of its material and historical context. In fact, scholars have focused only on the first few lines, which name a Rāṣṭrakūṭa king called Naṇṇapa as the ruler at the time of the record's composition.[91]

Since earlier studies have considered only this small portion, the majority of the record, and its significance for the reconstruction of religious life in this region, remain unexplored. The inscription commemorates the building of a temple though a collaborative process that united an enigmatic lineage of Śaiva religious specialists, a local collective, a merchant community, and three pious women in the construction and maintenance of an enduring edifice to Śaiva community. Since it memorializes the contributions of actors whose roles in shaping the religious landscape are often relegated to the margins of the scholarly purview, this is an important source for reconstructing the social history of Śiva religion. In addition, the involvement of a local merchant family

91   The identity of Naṇṇapa has proved elusive and efforts to determine his place within the
        complex Rāṣṭrakūṭa lineage(s) have been inconclusive. At best, we may assume that he
        was a local ruler of a subsidiary branch of this expansive dynasty. K. Deva, "Indragaḍh
        Inscription of Naṇṇapa, V.S. 767," *EI* 32 (1957–58): 112–117; H.V. Trivedi, "The Indragarh
        Stone Inscription of the Time of Naṇṇapa," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society* 41 (1955),
        249ff.; H.V. Trivedi, "New Light on the Rāṣṭrakūṭa House," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 30
   (1954): 194–195.
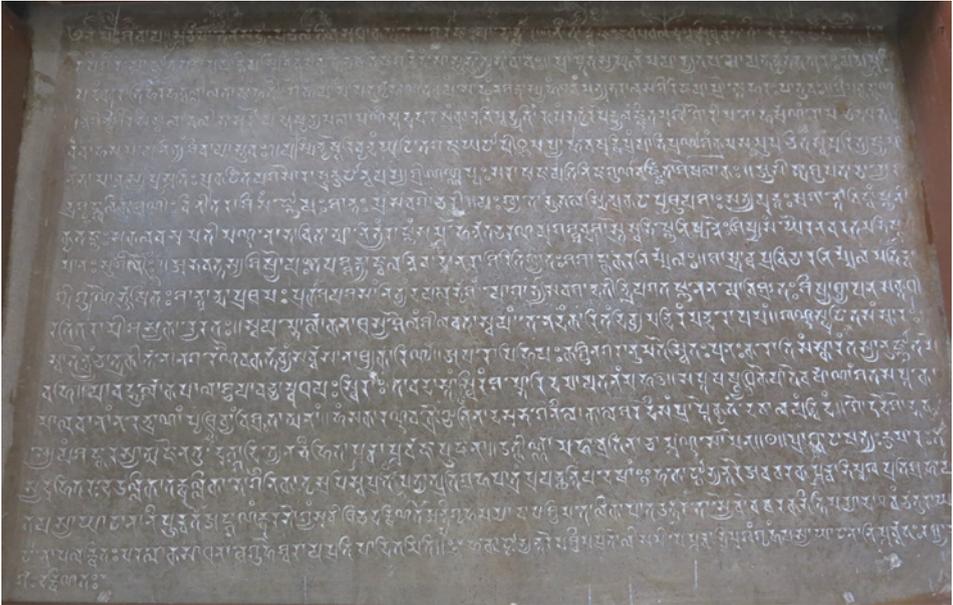
FIGURE 32   Indragarh inscription of Naṇṇapa, VS 767
INDORE GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

and a town corporation in the maintenance and support of this temple high-
light the extent to which Śaiva religious institutions were embedded within
local administrative networks and regional economy.

Following the opening lines in praise of Śiva, and the aforementioned
Naṇṇapa, the inscription introduces two Śaiva religious specialists, a Pāśupata
ācārya named Vinītarāśi and his student Dānarāśi—both with names ending
in the suffix *-rāśi* commonly ascribed to Pāśupatas. Verses 5–8 provide some
further details concerning the identity of these Pāśupatas. In Verse 5, Vinītarāśi
is described as the foremost of the Rudra Śṛṅkhalikas. The only other attesta-
tions of the Śṛṅkhalika community, or sect, of Pāśupatas, are found in inscrip-
tions from Nepal. A mid-7th century inscription records donations made to
an assembly of *muṇḍa-śṛṅkhalika-pāśupatas*.[92] In a contemporaneous record,
gifts are made to *śṛṅkhalika-pāśupatas*.[93] Following Hans Bakker's discussion of
these Nepalese inscriptions, I understand Śṛṅkhalika to designate a particular

92   During the reign of King Jiṣṇugupta (624–632 CE). T.P. Verma and A.K. Singh, *Licchavi
        Inscriptions of Nepal* (New Delhi, 1994), 119. Also D.R. Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*
        (New Delhi: Shakti Malik, 1983), 177–178.

93   Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient Nepal*, num. 118—undated inscription of Narendradeva's
        time (643–79 CE).

Pāśupata tradition, and the additional designation of *muṇḍa*, to specify a particular sub-group within this larger network.[94] Perhaps these *rudra* Pāśupatas belonged to a regional lineage or advocated a particular practice or teaching that distinguished them within the more expansive Śṛṅkhalika tradition to which they belonged.[95]

> There was a Pāśupata teacher who was known as Vinītarāśi, the foremost of the Rudra branch of the Śṛṅkhalika Pāśupatas; a married (yet) dispassionate householder. [5]
>
> He whose extensive glory was familiar to all on this earth, intent upon the truth, tranquil, learned, intelligent, grateful, (and) whose soul was fully developed (through meditative practice); he was an ornament of the entire world. He whose feet were always saluted by multitudes of kings, highly skilled in the science of language, pious, (and) lauded incessantly by the groups of students (that) descended from him. [6]
>
> He (Vinītarāśi) has a student called Dānarāśi, who seems on fire with the power of his ascetic heat (and) who is as bright white as the rays of the moon.[96] [7]
>
> He whose mind is clear in reflecting upon the meaning of authoritative texts, eloquent, adorned with virtues, (and) tranquil, the foremost of those whose glory is bright, always greatly compassionate. He who is celebrated by virtue of (his) knowledge that transcends the senses through

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94 Reference is to the fact that these particular ascetics shaved their heads. Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 149.

95 *āsīt pāśupatācāryo rudraśṛṅkhalikāgraṇīḥ /*
vinītarāśisaṃjño yaḥ śāntaḥ prasavagocarī // 5 //
yaḥ khyāto bhūtalesmin prakaṭapṛthuyaśāḥ satyayuktaḥ suśānto
vidvāñ jñānī kṛtajñaḥ sakalavasumatīmaṇḍano bhāvitātmā /
nityaṃ rājñāṃ samūhair naṭacaraṇayugaś śabdaśāstre svabhijño
niṣpannaiḥ śiṣyasaṃghair anavaratam abhiṣṭūyamānaḥ suśīlaḥ // 6 // (Sragdharā)
abhavat tasya śiṣyo yas tapaśśāktyā jvalann iva /
*dānarāśir iti khyātaḥ śaśāṅkakaranirmalaḥ** // 7 //*
śāstrārthapravicāranirmalamatir vāgmī guṇair bhūṣitaḥ
śāntātmā prathamaḥ prakāśayaśasāṃ nityaṃ dayālur bhṛśam /
yogābhyāsavaśād atīndriyagatajñānena yo viśrutaḥ
śiṣyādhyāpanasaktadhīr atitarām īśasya kārye rataḥ // 8 // (Śārdūlavikrīḍita)
svayambhor lokanāthasya śailaṃ śīlavatā svayaṃ /
tenedaṃ kāritaṃ divyaṃ mandiraṃ mandaropamaṃ // 9 //
***Edition reads *śaśāṅkaranirmalaḥ*

96 The reference to Dānarāśi being as bright or white as the rays of the moon could be a reference to the Pāśupata practice of smearing one's body with ash, which gives it a bright white appearance.

the power of yogic practice, whose mind is intent upon the instruction of
his students, who takes extreme pleasure in the service of the Lord. [8]

This holy stone temple of the Self-Existent 'Lord of the World,' which is
the equal of Mt. Mandara, is commissioned by this pious one himself. [9]

CECIL

Following the praise of these learned Pāśupata teachers, Verse 9 records the
endowment of the temple itself, which is credited to Vinītarāśi's student
Dānarāśi. Dānarāśi's central role in the establishment of the temple marks a
shift from the endowments of the preceding centuries. It is also important to
note the role of these Pāśupatas in popular forms of temple-centered religious
practice. While early 4th century inscriptions from Mathurā and Bāgh show
that Śaiva religious specialists were involved in the creation of memorials for
deceased teachers and resided in temple complexes, the Indragarh inscrip-
tion is the earliest in North India to credit Pāśupatas with the endowment of a
temple to Śiva.

Dānarāśi's endowment was the impetus for the temple's construction.
Verses 10 and 11 include further details regarding its maintenance.[97]

The repair of whatever is broken or damaged, and the independence with
regard to worship[98] here are done by the Corporation itself, which is pro-
viding full assistance. [10]

But even someone else, standing with the permission of the Cor-
poration, can make a repair that has been authorized by it (i.e. by the
Corporation). [11]

CECIL

The maintenance of this structure was the responsibility of the *'nagara.'* By
'nagara' I infer a collective or corporation composed of local residents, or per-
haps members of a mercantile association. James Heitzman has addressed the

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97 *khaṇḍasphuṭitasaṃskāraḥ svātantryaṃ cātra kīrtane /*
    nagareṇaiva kartavyaṃ sarvasānāthyakāriṇā // 10 //
    aparo 'pi hi yaḥ kaścin nagarānumate sthitaḥ /
    punaḥ karoti saṃskāraṃ tasyānujñātam eva hi // 11 //

98 I am interpreting *kīrtana* in Verse 10 as referring to the religious practices and rituals per-
    formed in the temple. While the term *kīrtana* (also *kīrtanā; kīrti*) is commonly used to
    refer to temples or monuments, this term could be used to refer to meritorious deeds or
    pious activities like the funding of temple rituals. These acts, like the building of a monu-
    ment, could be considered as enhancing one's reputation and augmenting the fame of
    the patron, which is the common idea behind these words. See Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical
    Glossary*, s.v. *kīrtana.*

ties between such *nagaras*—as administrative bodies—and temples in his work on early Chola period South India.[99] B.D. Chattopadhyaya's study of epigraphic records in early medieval Rajasthan also underscores the active role of mercantile and trade collectives in supporting temples—often by donating shops and using the revenues to fund temple activities.[100] These corporate bodies are comparable to the modern temple 'trusts' that administer the financial affairs and maintenance of many temples in India today.

My hypothesis regarding the ties between the temple and local merchants gains further support with the mention of the Prāgvāṭa *jāti* in the concluding prose section of the inscription.[101] These lines record an additional donation of a shop to the deity Guheśvara by the three daughters of Kumāra of the Prāgvāṭa *jāti*.[102] The donation here is not as explicitly precative as those from Jhālrāpāṭan and Kansuāñ, which sought an end to suffering through devotion to Śiva; yet, the daughters' gift to honor their deceased father is expressed in soteriological terms.

> There was one Kumāra of the Prāgvāṭa *jāti*. His three daughters—Deullikā, Takṣullikā, and Bhoginikā—present, of their own initiative, (this) donative 'vessel.' This eastward-facing shop, which belongs to them, here within the fortified area, is given as a gift. The shop of which

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99   Heitzman describes the *nagara* as an organization that dealt with '… corporate responsibilities toward the temple, collected deposits that yielded interest for temple rituals, and guaranteed supplies for temple worship.' James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9–10; 92.

100   Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, 111–113; 89–119.

101   K. Deva ("Indragaḍh Inscription") suggests that the concluding prose section was likely not created by the same person who drafted the verse, but the uniformity in the incising of the characters suggests that the engraver was the same.

102   *prāgvāṭajātīyaḥ kumāraḥ tasya duhitaraḥ deullikā takṣullikā bhoginikā tisro'pi svaprati-patyā pratigrahapātraṃ prayacchanti ya āsāṃ** iha koṭṭābhyantare āvārikaḥ*** pūrvābhimukhaḥ saḥ pratigrahāya dattaḥ yasyāghāṭanāni [//] pūrvataḥ aṅgaṇaṃ kṣura-bhogyaṃ suvīthi ca dakṣinataḥ antimagṛhamaryādā paścimapratolikāpāṭa uttaratas**** asyaivāvavarakabhittimaryādā [//] evaṃ caturāghāṭanopalakṣitaḥ paralokasādhanārthe guheśvarāya pratipādita iti // iha koṭṭābhyantare paścimapratolīsamīpe pūrvābhimukhaṃ gṛhaṃ yasyāghāṭanāni pūrvataḥ rathyā mārgaḥ dakṣinataḥ*
      ** Inscription reads *deṣāsām*; K. Deva amends to *dāsām*
      *** Edition reads *avavarakaḥ*. K. Deva takes *avavaraka* as synonymous with Pali *ōraraka* meaning 'store room.' I take it as a variant spelling of *āvarikā*, 'shop; stall'.
      **** Edition reads *paścimato likāpāṭa*. Perhaps a case of haplography given that *paścimapratolī* is written in the following line. 'pratolikā' is attested in Sircar, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary* as synonymous with 'pratolī'. Perhaps *pāṭa* means something like a 'corner' or 'edge.'

the boundaries (are): to the east, a courtyard with a barber-shop[103] and a proper street; to the south, the border of the last house; to the west, the edge of the western gate; to the north, the border of the wall of the same shop. (This shop) its four boundaries specified in this way, has been offered to [the deity] Guheśvara for the sake of attaining the highest world. Here in the fortified area, in the vicinity of the western gate, there is an eastward-facing dwelling whose boundaries are the chariot-road to the east and the path to the south. [Lines 15–19]
CECIL

The inscription also provides an important detail regarding the identity of these female donors. The title, Prāgvāṭa is a geographic designation for the Mewār region of south-central Rajasthan and it also came to designate the merchant class that originated in this area.[104] Donations by members of the Prāgvāṭa *vaṇikjāti* are found in a number of inscriptions from the 10th and 11th century, which attest to the importance of members of this group as donors and patrons whose endowments supported both brahmanical and Jain temples across Rajasthan and Gujarat.[105] I infer that this Prāgvāṭa family was affiliated with the '*nagara*' mentioned in the previous lines. The revenues of the shop donated to the temple would have supported the activities of ritual and structural maintenance. Since the shop donated to Guheśvara was located within a fortified area (*koṭṭābhyantara*) and in proximity to a large road (*rathyā*) and a smaller road or footpath (*mārgaḥ*), it would have been an ideal location from which to attract both locals and travelers en route to the markets of northwest India.

The inscription was discovered during the course of a series of excavations at Indragarh during the mid to late 1950's.[106] Indian archeologists reported the remains of a modest sized, yet thriving, settlement of which ramparts, fortifications, and many structural remains survived. Within this settlement area, they also discovered the remains of a sandstone temple with a *liṅga* reportedly

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103   The meaning of *kṣurabhogya* is not entirely clear. I take it as a further description of the courtyard (*aṅgaṇa*) which has an area that is used for shaving (i.e. a place where a barber is conducting business). I thank Peter Bisschop for suggesting this interpretation to me.

104   Dasaratha Sarma, *Rajasthan Through the Ages* (Bikaner: Rajasthan State Archives, 1966), 16. Similar examples of merchant families deriving their caste name from their region of origin include the Śrīmālas and Oswāls.

105   Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, 111–113. F. Kielhorn, "Mount Abu Vimala Temple Inscription of [Vikrama-] Samvat 1378," *EI* 9 (1907–08), 148–159 (149); D.R. Bhandarkar, "The Chahamanas of Marwar," *EI* 11 (1911–12): 26–51 (43–46); F. Kielhorn, "The Chahamanas of Naddula," *EI* 9 (1907–08): 62–83 (62–63).

106   *Indian Archaeology: A Review* 1956–57: 11; 1957–8: 26; 1958–59: 27–29.

FIGURE 33   Temple foundation at Indragarh excavation site

FIGURE 34   Sculpture of Lakulīśa on fragment at Indragarh

found in situ.[107] Based upon the large number of ancillary shrines excavated around the temple and the variety of iconographic remains—including images of Śiva, Bhairava, Pārvatī, as well as sculptures of the *Mātṛkās*, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and Kubera, dating from the 8th to the 11th century—this place had a long and active history as a religious center. During my visit to the site in 2016, the foundation of a temple and a few sculptural fragments were still visible. Among the surviving images was a Lakulīśa icon not noted in the earlier report [Figures 33 & 34].

6   Conclusions

From the early political centers of Daśapura and Chittorgarh to the idyllic riverside temples of northeast Uparamāla, this chapter has worked to situate the early Śaiva communities of the 6th–8th century in their geographic contexts and to consider the sociocultural milieus in which they were embedded. The multivocality of the early Śaiva community emerges with great clarity in the historical sources from this region. Evident, too, is the adaptability of the Śaiva tradition, which served as a means to commemorate military triumph for those in power, while offering solace and hope to others whose eyes were opened to a world characterized by suffering. In the earliest evidence from Daśapura, Śaivism is adopted as a political idiom, a language of power used to commemorate the victories of the Aulikara rulers while also commemorating and publicizing a complex network of political relationships between these kings and other ambitious lineage groups. Moving away from the center, Śaivism was adapted to address the concerns of those in the market towns, for whom it offered a respite from life's suffering. It is also in these areas, and in Indragarh in particular, that we see the earliest evidence for a Pāśupata presence. Pāśupata ties are expressed visually in the iconography and recorded in the Indragarh inscription. This evidence suggests that these remote, yet prosperous, locales provided the economic stability needed to support religious institutions and networks of religious specialists.

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107   The copious sculptural remains (c. 7th–12th century) from the area are now housed in the Government Museums in Indore and Bhopal Museum as well as the Yaśodharman Museum in Mandasor and the Y.R. Holkar Museum in Bhanpura.

The Salt Lakes: Pāśupatas and Śaiva Centers in Jambumārga

This chapter continues the survey of the *Skandapurāṇa's* mapping of the Pāśupata landscape in the area of northeast Rajasthan traditionally known as Sapādalakṣa. A vast, arid region dominated by spurs of the Aravelli Mountain Range, Sapādalakṣa is home to three large salt lakes: Ḍīḍvānā, Sāmbhar (Śākambharī), and Sikar. These lakes and their environs constituted a critical zone of economic, political, and religious development from the 7th through the 10th century CE as active centers of exchange along the northern caravan routes, where trade in salt, horses, and other goods flourished. Asserting dominance over the Salt Lakes region facilitated the rise of the early Cāhamāna rulers, whose descendants were the Chauhan clan of Rajputs celebrated in the later bardic chronicles of Rajasthan. The prosperous regional economy also attracted Śaiva religious specialists, who found generous patrons among the socially ascendant merchant families and local elites. While the precise location of Jambumārga remains uncertain, I propose that this Salt Lakes region presents a compelling possibility for the locale that the SP identifies with Lakulīśa's third student, Gārgya.

Epigraphic and material sources indicate that Sapādalakṣa was a preeminent center for the institutionalization of Śaiva religiosity in the early medieval period and, by the early 10th century, networks of Pāśupata religious specialists occupied positions of social prominence. The most important sites for Pāśupata activity in the region were Mt. Harṣa, an extensive royal religious complex near Sikar, and Kāman, a frontier merchant town located 275 km to the east. The historical sources from these places show the ability of Śiva religion to catalyze remarkable social synergies between individuals and communities from a wide variety of social strata. At the same time, each of these places developed a distinct and locally inflected religious landscape. At Mt. Harṣa, the public works converging around Śaivism proved a powerful tool for the earliest articulations of the Cāhamāna royal personae as well as the piety of the resident Pāśupata ascetics. By contrast, sources from Kāman articulate an irenic and socially supported vision of Śaivism adapted to model the aspirations of an upwardly mobile community of merchants and artisans.

1   **Geographic Context**

The economic and political development of the 'Salt Lakes' region exempli-
fies well the patterns that characterized Early Medieval India: the expansion
of agrarian and settlement areas in what had previously been uncultivated or
sparsely-inhabited regions, combined with the increased power and influence
of localized political elites, many styling themselves *rājaputras*. The move of
the Imperial Pratīhāras from their early capital at Mandor, north of Jodhpur
in Rajasthan, toward the highly coveted city of Kanauj, created an opportunity
for local clans to pursue new political aspirations, and marked the inception
of the Rajput dynasties that would come to dominate the area in subsequent
centuries. Inscriptions from Sapādalakṣa attest to the active socialization and
economic growth in new spaces of what had once been the edges of the north-
west frontier—a pattern indicated by the increased use of terms for small mar-
ket towns (e.g. *haṭṭa*; *maṇḍapikā*)[1] and reference to fortified areas (e.g. *koṭṭa*).
The fortified towns founded by local rulers became active commercial centers
for merchants and traders (e.g. *vaṇiks*; *śreṣṭhīs*) who established new commu-
nities in these emergent settlements.[2]

The growth of religious institutions in Sapādalakṣa[3] was intimately con-
nected with patterns in the regional economy and settlement expansion. By
the 8th century the building and endowing of temples to Śiva became increas-
ing popular, a development represented in the epigraphic sources as a cooper-
ative enterprise involving religious specialists, merchant communities, guilds,
artisans, and local political elites. These religious centers controlled significant
immovable assets (i.e. market stalls and fields) and participated in the mon-
etized economy through rents paid in cash and taxes paid to the temple by
guilds and traders. The region's remarkable artistic legacy is indicative of an

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1   While *maṇḍapikā* is typically understood as a 'toll-station' or 'customs house,' it came to
    refer to the larger marketplace and the surrounding settlement as well. D.C. Sircar, *Indian
    Epigraphical Glossary*, s.v. *maṇḍapikā*.

2   For examples from Early Medieval Rajasthan see e.g. D.C. Sircar, "Khandela Inscription of
    Year 201," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 159–163; B.Ch. Chhabra, "Mandkila Tal Inscription," *EI* 34 (1961–62):
    77–90; B.Ch. Chhabra, "Sakrai Stone Inscription; V.S., 699," *EI* 27: 27–33. See Chapter 11 for
    similar examples from Uparamāla.

3   The term '*sapādalakṣa*' is a general heading used to refer to territories with 1¼ lakh vil-
    lages. The *Kumārīkhaṇḍa* of the *Skandapurāṇa* refers to several such '*sapādalakṣas*'. The
    Cāhamānas belonged specifically to the *Śākambharasapādalakṣa*. See Dasaratha Sharma,
    Early Chauhan Dynasties (New Delhi: S. Chand & co, 1959), 11–12. Sharma cites later Muslim
    historians who call this territory 'Siwālik,' which contained 125,000 towns and villages and
    had Ajmer as its capital.

FIGURE 35   Satellite map showing Mt. Harṣa and Śākambharī Salt Lake
          GOOGLE EARTH

economic surplus substantial enough to support ambitious public works and monumental religious institutions.

My research has revealed strong connections between the siting of Śaiva religious centers and the area west of the Aravelli Mountains where there are numerous salt lakes.[4] The largest of these lakes are Ḍīḍvānā (ancient Ḍeṇḍavānaka), Sāmbhar (Śākambharī), and Sikar [Figure 35]. The production, harvesting, and sale of salt has been, and continues to be, the major commercial enterprise dominating the regional economy, not to mention a source of political competition.[5] Architectural and iconographic remains from

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4   M.D. Kajale & B.C. Deotare, "Field Observations and Lithostratigraphy of the Three Salt Lake Deposits in Indian Desert of Western Rajasthan," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 53 (1993): 117–134; V.C. Misra, *The Geography of Rajasthan* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1967).

5   Competition for control over this area and salt industry raged fiercely in the 14th century between the Sultans of Delhi, rulers of Gujarat, and the Rāṇās of Mewar. See K.C. Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan: A Study of Culture and Civilization* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972), 192–3. Complex networks for salt manufacture and trade were also observed and reported by colonial officials in Rajputana. It is not surprising that establishing a monopoly on salt production and trade was one of the first undertakings of the British East India Company in 1780. See Richard M. Dane, "The Manufacture of Salt in India," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72 (1924): 402–418.

FIGURE 36   Naliasar excavation site

the southern border of Sapādalakṣa (i.e. the area around the modern capital of Jaipur) also preserve an invaluable material archive of the region's artistic traditions.[6] There is, however, little evidence for a dominant Śaiva presence, or a specifically Pāśupata influence, in this area. Although one could invoke the common criticism that the evidence from this historical period is too fragmentary to support any firm conclusions, it is nonetheless significant that in the material record from the southern areas of Sapādalakṣa there is little that points to an institutionalized Śaivism. The most significant Śaiva material is preserved in the Salt Lakes region where the social, political, and economic conditions supported a flourishing Śaiva religiosity and networks of religious specialists.

The largest of the salt lakes, Śākambharī was also the site of an extensive ancient settlement known as Naliasar. Much of the roughly 6 km excavation area has been filled in, but some remains of the habitation area are still visible [Figure 36]. Reports published from a series of excavations record the

6   Important monumental sites from this area include the stepwell at Choṭī Khāṭū (c. 8th cen-
     tury), the massive stepwell at Ābānerī (c. 8th century) and the slightly later temple of Harṣat-
     mātā (c early 9th century).

discovery of a large settlement and industrial center—e.g. extensive structural foundations from the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods, large finds of terracotta, pottery, and materials for stone-cutting and polishing, as well as terracotta votive sculptures.[7] The enormous deposits of iron slag, the refuse of large-scale craft production, found in the course of excavation suggests craft specialization and production. Site stratigraphy dates the earliest layers of activity from the 3rd–4th century CE, with a peak of activity and building expansion between the 5th and the 7th centuries. Settlement continued in subsequent centuries, but the stratigraphy indicates that new construction slowed after the 8th century. The chronology of the site supports my working hypothesis that Naliasar was the Jambumārga of the SP.[8] In addition to conforming to geographical indications for Jambumārga found in the *Mahābhārata*, Naliasar's stratigraphy indicates a high point of activity between the 5th and the 7th century, temporal horizons that accord with the rise and fall of Jambumārga's popularity in the literary sources. Jambumārga was evidently a well-known locale at the time of the *Skandapurāṇa's* composition in the late 6th-early 7th century, yet the absence of references to this place in later sources suggests it had declined as a prosperous and culturally significant locale. While the prominence of Nailasar may have waned after the 8th century, regional economy and religion continued to be oriented around the Śākambharī Salt Lake.

2   Politics & Prestigious Places

By the 8th century, a substantial expanse of northwest India was controlled by the Imperial Pratīhāras, whose power was augmented significantly by Mihira Bhoja (c. 836–892) in the second half of the 9th century. The success of this ruling family was due, in large part, to the relatively stable network of local clans they were able to mobilize in their support. These networks would have been of critical importance as the Pratīhāras sought to enhance their royal prestige

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7   I summarize the findings reported in T.H. Hendley, "Buddhist Remains near Sambhar, in Western Rajputana, India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17.1 (1883): 29–37; D.R. Sahni, *Archaeological Remains and Excavations at Sambhar* (Jaipur: Jaipur State Dept, undated); A. Ghosh, *An Encyclopedia of Indian Archaeology,* vol. 2 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989), s.v. Sambhar.

8   The precise location of Jambumārga is unknown. According to the *Mahābhārata* 3.80.59–61 it lay somewhere on a trade and pilgrimage route linking the ancient port of Broach in Gujarat (located to the south of Karvan on the mouth of the Narmadā River) with Puṣkara in modern Rajasthan. References to Jambumārga in the *purāṇas* are presented by Bisschop (*Sects and Centers*, 209). See also N.L. Dey, *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India* (3rd ed. Delhi, 1971).

by leaving their early stronghold at Mandor (i.e. Māṇḍavyapura) to establish a capital much further east, at Kanauj, the political center of the Gangetic north for centuries to come. The Śākambharī Cāhamānas were one such local family whose military feats and marriage alliances served to distinguish them within the Pratīhāra court.[9] Notably, the Cāhamāna Gūvaka II solidified his ties to the Pratīhāras through the marriage of his sister, Kalāvatī, to Bhoja. But the Cāhamānas were not destined to remain subordinate to the Pratīhāras. By the 11th century they controlled much of northeast Rajasthan. Gaining control over the Salt Lakes region and the Śākambharī Lake, specifically, provided the catalyst for their political ascendancy.

The early history of the Śākambharī Cāhamānas is rather obscure.[10] The literary and epigraphic sources most commonly cited in the historiography were composed centuries after their rule.[11] Certainly we must be cautious in using these accounts; but if we overlook the vagaries of dynastic genealogies and accounts of military exploits, the one stable feature of the Cāhamāna narrative is geography. In both the literary sources and in their earliest inscriptions, the Cāhamānas are represented as an emplaced polity deeply rooted in the Sapādalakṣa region and, more specifically, the area between Puṣkara and their ancestral homeland, a tract called Ananta, near Sikar.[12] Ananta is used as a toponym first in the mid-10th century Harṣa inscription that identifies it with the Cāhamāna homeland and as the place where Vākpati, grandfather of Cāhamāna Vigraharāja II, was attacked by a rival named Kṣamāpāla. Epigraphic and material evidence permits an even more precise localization of Cāhamāna sovereignty around two prominent features of the landscape of

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9   Members of the Guhila clans were important players in the expansion and support of the Pratīhāra court. The inscription of Guhila Bālāditya records the various deeds undertaken in service of the Pratīhāras. D.R. Bhandarkar, "Chatṣu Inscription of Baladitya," *EI* 12 (1913–14): 9–17; Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 26.

10   The Cāhamānas, like other medieval kinship groups, were comprised of a number of regionally specific lineage groups. Other, later Cāhamāna lineages occupied Broach in Gujarat and Pratapgarh, and Nadol in Rajasthan.

11   D.S. Sharma's authoritative study of the Cāhamānas relies on late medieval literary sources like the *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*, *Prabandhakośa*, and the *Khummāṇa Rāso*. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 14–22. The genealogy recorded in the Bijolia Inscription (VS 1226/1170 CE) is also relatively late. A.K. Vyas, "Bijolia Rock Inscription of Chahamana Somesvara V.S. 1226," *EI* 26 (1941): 84–112.

12   See below; Verse 16. This place is mentioned again in the 13th century Bijolia Inscription as the homeland of the Cāhamāna Sāmanta. Here it also appears to be a regional designation as Sāmanta is reportedly from Ahichatrapura within the Ananta region. Vyas, "Bijolia Inscription," Verses 11–12; Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 10–13.

Ananta: the Śākambharī Lake[13] and Mt. Harṣa. From atop the imposing Mt. Harṣa, the Cāhamānas proclaimed their status as independent rulers in a massive stone inscription (dated VS 1030/973 CE) memorializing the endowment of a monumental temple for their tutelary deity (*kuladeva*), Śiva, eulogized as the Lord Harṣa.

Existing historiography on the period attributes this elevation in Cāhamāna rank to their Pratīhāra ties, yet these decontextualized perspectives minimize the critical role of geography and landscape in this history.[14] I propose an alternative hypothesis that emphasizes geopolitics. The Cāhamānas' political success was contingent upon the ability of these rulers to exert control over places of regional economic and political prestige within the topography of Sapādalakṣa and to shape these places both symbolically and materially, though building and donative practices. Claiming two of the regional landscape's most prominent features was a deft political maneuver that allowed the Cāhamānas to reinforce and materialize their own royal power through control of the physical terrain itself. This political strategy was not simply a symbolic gesture. By commanding the Salt Lakes region, the Cāhamānas would have been able to monopolize the lucrative salt trade so integral to the regional economy. At the same time, by overseeing the Śākambharī-Harṣa route, they could monitor the critical transregional flow of goods that ran north from Ujjain, via Puṣkara, to the market towns of the northwest and east to Mathurā. The regional economy contributed to the religious landscape as well. As I discuss below, taxes remitted by salt merchants and horse traders were used to fund the temple complex at Mt. Harṣa.

Religious life in medieval Sapādalakṣa was inextricably bound up in the region's politics, the textures and complexities of which tend to be obscured by a scholarly focus on the fortunes of the Pratīhāras. While these rulers left a significant corpus of inscriptions, the majority of these are copper plates recording gifts to brahmins. No inscriptions recording the construction of temples

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13   The earliest of the Cāhamāna rulers that can be connected with the Lake is Vigraharāja II, but as Sharma notes, the fourth chapter of the *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* explicitly connects the 7th century Cāhamāna ruler, Vāsudeva with the Sāmbhar Lake, which was supposedly given to the king as a gift by a *vidhyādhara*. Sharma, *Early Chauhan Dynasties*, 23.

14   The Śākambharī Cāhamānas are discussed in Chapters 33 of EITA 2.2 and Chapters 50, & 60 of EITA 2.3. M.A. Dhaky's entry (Chapter 50, p. 95) is particularly imaginative in charting the expansion of the Cāhamāna power through the defeat of various Pratīhāra generals and subordinates. Since Dhaky cites no primary sources to support his account, we must assume he is expanding upon and embellishing the narrative given in Sharma's monograph.

have survived.[15] The seeming reluctance of rulers of such expansive powers to engage in temple-based donative practices and the quotidian activities of temple care and management is a widespread historical phenomenon that, no doubt, has multiple explanations and contingencies. With that caveat, it is important to note that the act of endowing a temple or enshrining a deity created a tangible, and often enduring, link between the donor and a specific place or monument. Such practices would have served the interests of an emerging, emplaced polity like the Śākambharī Cāhamānas, whose ability to inscribe themselves upon the regional landscape served as a highly visible manifestation of their political prowess. When they became independent sovereigns in the 9th–10th century, the rulers designated Mt. Harṣa as their royal center. This act implies that both this remarkable site of cultural magnetism and Śaiva devotion, and the established network of religious specialists in residence there, were tied closely to an ascendant Cāhamāna political persona.

3   Śiva and the Mountain

The remains of the temple complex at Mt. Harṣa preserve significant evidence for religious life in Sapādalakṣa and reflect the ways in which monuments were used to materialize ties between the power of a deity and that of pious patrons. At Harṣa, these connections were communicated through the architecture and iconography of the temples and via the medium of a monumental stone inscription[16] [Figure 37]. Like the temple to which it was affixed, this inscription evokes power, substance, and permanence. In addition to contributing a new material presence, the inscription also provides a new rhetorical frame

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15   The only clear epigraphic evidence for Pratīhāra building practices comes from the inscription at Sāgar Tāl, a tank just outside Gwalior. This record refers to the building of a palace complex or seraglio (*antaḥpurapuraṃ*). R.C. Majumdar, "The Gwalior Prasasti of the Gurjara-Pratihara King Bhoja," *EI* 18 (1925): 99–114; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* II, 242–46. This record is also discussed in M. Willis, "Royal Patronage," in *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers*, eds. V. Desai & D. Mason (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1993), 49–65.

16   The inscription was originally found on the mountain amongst the rubble of the central temple and is now housed in the Sikar Government Museum. The text has been edited three times: E. Dean, "Description of the Ruins of an Ancient Temple at Harsha, in Shekáwatí," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 4 (1835): 361–400; F. Kielhorn, "Harsha Stone Inscription of the Chahamana Vigraharaja," *EI* 2 (1894): 116–140; D.R. Bhandarkar, "Some Published Inscriptions Reconsidered. 1. Harsha Stone Inscription of Vigraharāja," *IA* 42 (1913): 57–64. As reported by Kielhorn, the inscription was discovered by G.E. Rankin and E. Dean in 1834.
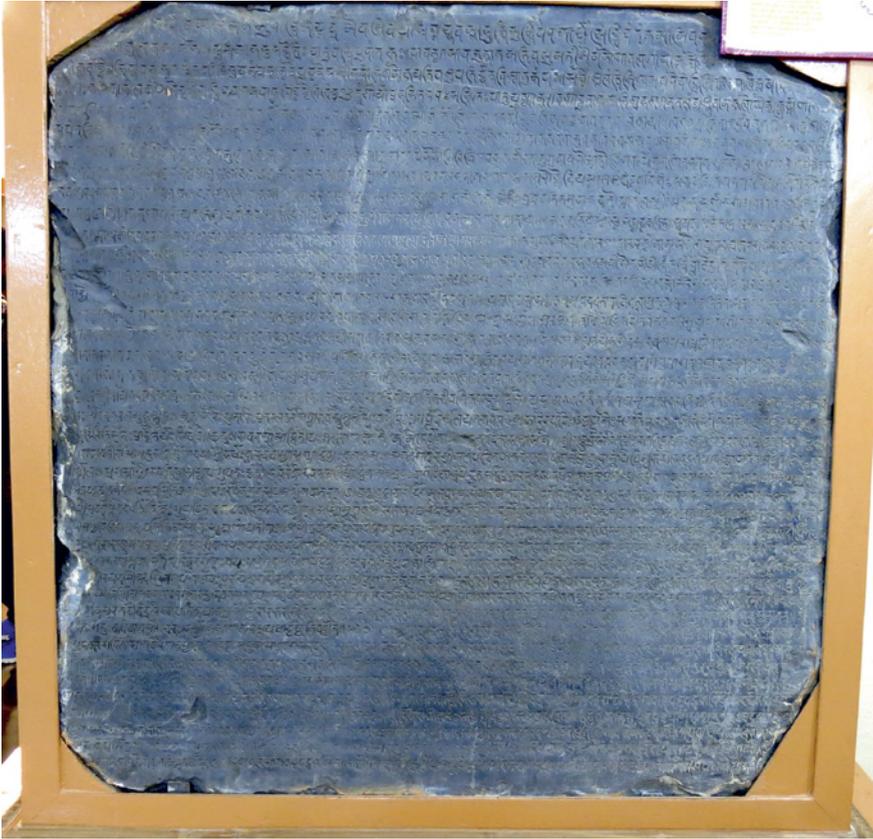
FIGURE 37   Harṣa stone inscription
SIKAR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

for the mountain by transforming it into the sanctified space of the Cāhamāna tutelary deity.

The text can be divided into four thematic sections. The first of these includes praise of Śiva and the beauty of the mountain itself. This is followed by an extensive royal eulogy detailing the exploits and victories of the Cāhamānas and their donations to the shrine of their *kuladeva*, Lord Harṣa. The temple that the inscription commemorates was reportedly completed in VS 1013/956 CE.[17] The third section praises the lineage of resident Pāśupatas and commemorates

17   There are three dates recorded in the inscription: 1) VS 1013/956 CE, the date at which the temple constructed by Allaṭa was reportedly completed. 2) VS 1027/970 CE, the date of Allaṭa's death. 3) VS 1030/973 CE, the concluding date for subsequent donations made to the temple after its completion.

their donations and pious acts. The concluding prose section records subsequent donations made prior to VS 1030/973 CE.

3.1   *Locating Lord Harṣa*

Following the opening invocation of Gaṇeśa, the poet begins a eulogy of the Lord Paśupati who dwells on the mountain peak as the Lord Harṣa. The epithet Harṣa refers to a specific manifestation of Śiva as the tutelary deity of the mountain. The poet then expands upon this regional significance with a creative etymology that explains the origins of the epithet 'Harṣa' using the tale of Śiva's destruction of Tripura, the triple city of the demon sons of Tāraka. A famous deed of Śiva popularized in the *Mahābhārata*, here the legend is expanded to include a scene at Mt. Harṣa.[18]

> He who—full of joy (*harṣa*) after he incinerated the enemies of the gods at Tripura with his burning arrow (and) was worshipped by a multitude of joyful gods led by Indra, who praised and bowed to him—took up residence on the two mountain peaks under the very name Harṣa out of favor for Bhārata, may that moon-crested one, now with a second residence, dwell (here) in the form of the *liṅga* for your well-being. [7]
>
> When the gods had seen his true form emerging, bewildering the creatures with its explosion of light in the form of the mighty fire from the socket of his eye, clouding the quarters of the earth with dense thick smoke from the trees licked by flames all around, making a terrible noise in the fury of its course, [the form that] pierced the five-arrowed god [Kāma]—they feared, "could this really be the apocalypse come ahead of schedule?" [8]
>
> Let this mountain called Harṣa, which grazes the clouds on high (and) on which the deity named Harṣa, the destroyer of Pura, resides, purify you! [9]
>
>   CECIL[19]

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18   *Mahābhārata* 8.24.

19   These and all subsequent citations of the text are reproduced from Kielhorn's edition. The translations are my own.
nūnaṃ vāṇāgnidagdhattripurasuraripu[rjā]taharṣaḥ saharṣair
indrādyair devavṛndaiḥ kṛtanutinatibhiḥ pūjyamāno 'tra śaile /
yo 'bhūn nāmnāpi harṣo giriśikharabhuvor bhāratānugrahāya
sa stād vo liṅgarūpo dviguṇitabhavanaś candramauliḥ śivāya // 7//
(Sragdharā)
niryannettrā[ṇḍa][bhā]ṇḍānaṇudahanaruciploṣasaṃbhrāntasattvaṃ
prāntajvālāvālīḍhadrumabahalamahādhūmadhūmrāyitāśam/
saṃraṃbhāraṃbhabhīmasvanam asamaśārocchedi yasyāśaśaṅke
dṛṣṭvā devaiḥ [sva]rūpaṃ kim iya[m] asamaye saṃhṛtir bbobhuve[dya] //8//

In a manner characteristic of the literary genres of *purāṇa* and *māhātmya* these verses work to incorporate the specific locale of Mt. Harṣa within the Śaiva mythic topography, writ large. This localization of sanctity involved the mapping of a rhetorical landscape in which temporal and geographic distinctions were effectively collapsed in order to elevate this site of regional sanctity by subsuming it within the established Śaiva mythology. This was accomplished in a threefold manner: 1) by the repetition of the name Harṣa, which effectively assimilates the physical terrain of the mountain with the deity, Śiva, who is said to dwell there in person. 2) The epithet 'Harṣa' (i.e. joy) is then used to create a further layer of significance, as this 'joy' was expressed following Śiva's victory over Tripura, a victory also celebrated on Mt. Harṣa 3) Finally, the text expresses yet another level of connection in Verse 7 by introducing Mt. Harṣa as Śiva's second mountain abode, a terrestrial counterpart to his celestial mountain home. Moreover, the compound *dviguṇitabhavana* in Verse 7 can also refer to his specific manifestation as the *liṅga* enshrined in the temple (i.e. his *liṅgarūpa*) *and* his divine form that dwells on the mountain. The two kinds of abodes then being the *liṅga* and the mountain. A similar duality is expressed in the compound *giriśikharabhuvos* which I interpret as a reference to the two peaks of Mt. Harṣa and Mt. Kailāsa.[20] This verse expresses the poet's and patrons' desire to model Mt. Harṣa as a sanctified space on earth that replicates Śiva's divine landscape—precisely the sentiment expressed in Verse 44, which refers to the temple as being "like a part of heaven" (*svargakhaṇḍam iva*).

The verses quoted above make clear that the mountain is empowered and sanctified by virtue of its affiliations with Śiva and important events in his mythology. The concluding verses of the opening section propose an even more intimate association that is derived from the presence of the Lord himself and the inseparability of the deity from the physical landscape. While acknowledging that the landscape itself appears far from paradisal, the poet explains that Śiva's presence transforms the mountain into a supremely beautiful place.

> The cascades of the Ganges do not flow here, nor is there found the rich beauty of Indra's garden, and here there are not the [palaces] that sparkle

---

(*Sragdharā*)
devaḥ puradhag adhyāste yam abhraṁkaṣam uccakaiḥ /
harṣakhyātiḥ sa harṣākhyo girir eṣa punātu vaḥ //9//
(*Anuṣṭubh*)

20   Here I disagree with Bhandarkar's argument for a literal interpretation that there were two shrines. There is no indication of a second, distinct temple in another location on the mountain, nor does the mountain have two distinct peaks. Although the Himalayan abode of Śiva is not named explicitly in these verses, his identity as the 'Mountain Lord' was a long-standing topos in his mythology and iconography.

brightly with jeweled and golden turrets; however, this mountain possess a different, superior [and] unparalleled beauty. For that Śambhu dwells here in visible form is the true source of its delightfulness. [10]

The eight-formed Lord of the eight perfections resides here himself: […] of the mountain's superior majesty. [11]

CECIL[21]

These verses describing the beauty of the mountain itself are followed by a more specific description of the glorious temple of Lord Harṣa. While the poet's praise of the monument as being comparable to Mt. Meru employs familiar epigraphic hyperbole, the repeated evocation of sacred geography again functions to underscore the centrality of place.[22]

Glory to this palace of the Lord Harṣadeva, with its many true delights! Blessed in its precincts and its most excellent main pavilion, which is resplendent like the golden egg. Charming like the (five) sons of Pāṇḍu, its enclosure furnished with a ring of raised structures on its edge. Lovely with the well-crafted bull at its arched entry—looking like the peak of Meru! [12]

CECIL

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21   *gāṁgaṃ no nirjha[rāṁbha]ḥ pravahati na śubhā nandanodyānalakṣmīḥ*
     *sadratnasvarṇṇaśṛṅgāmalavividharuco naiva __ __ *[s ta]thāttra /*
     anyāṃ dhatte tathāpi śriyam atiśayinīm eṣa śailo 'dvitīyāṁ
     sākṣāc chaṁbhur yad āste tad api hi paraṃ kāraṇaṃ ramyatāyāḥ//10//
     aṣṭamūrttir yam adhyāste siddhyaṣṭakavibhuḥ svayam/
     mahimā bhūdharasyāsya paramaḥ kopi __ U U //11//
     *The reading of 'palaces' is based on Kielhorn's conjecture that the two missing *akṣaras*
     read *saudha*.

22   *[eta]t svarṇṇāṇḍakāṁtipravaratamamahāmaṇḍapābhogabhadraṁ*
     prāṁtaprāsādamālāviracitavikaṭāpāṇḍuputrābhirāmam/*
     meroḥ śṛṁgopamānaṁ sughaṭitavvṛṣasattoraṇadvāraramyaṁ
     nānāsadbhogayuktaṁ jayati bhagavato harṣadevasya [harmmyam] //12//
     *The edition reads *vikaṭā* (*metri causa*). Although the meaning of '*vikaṭa*' as enclosure
     is not attested from other (lexical) sources, it is used again with this meaning, and with
     short 'a', in Verse 33, which describes the well-crafted enclosure (*sughaṭitavikaṭam*) made
     for the Harṣa temple by the Pāśupata Allaṭa. I take this to mean the area immediately
     surrounding the temple (i.e. the *pradakṣiṇapatha*) along which a series of smaller shrines
     had been built. Since renovations to the larger courtyard (*prāṅgaṇa*) are described in
     Verse 42, I think there is a distinction to be made between the temple enclosure and the
     courtyard.

3.2   Mt. Harṣa as Royal Center

In addition to praising Śiva as the Lord whose dancing animates and directs the cosmos,[23] the poet also invoked Śiva as a victorious warrior, whose destruction of Tripura was celebrated by the gods. This reference to Śiva's martial prowess would have been a compelling image for the Cāhamānas, who used the same locale to memorialize the military victories of their own lineage. It is certainly no accident that this inscription also records the first instances of Cāhamāna Siṁharāja's use of the title 'Supreme King of Kings' (mahārājādhirāja).[24] Siṁharāja is also credited with donating funds for the construction and decoration of a monumental temple to honor his kuladeva, who was the source of the clan's success. The poet tells us in no uncertain terms:

> This line of great kings had their virtues augmented through devotion to Śambhu. The Lord Harṣa is their tutelary deity [kuladeva]; the lineage has become blessed because of him. [27]
>   CECIL[25]

In the verses that follow, the poet further describes how the sanctity of Mt. Harṣa was amplified by various actors and built interventions, beginning with the Cāhamāna kings. In the language of cultural geographers, the lines evince of the use of the mountain temple as 'cultural capital.' Where here the term 'capital' refers both to money and to monumental sites that, as cultural resources, were manipulated by various elites.[26] In order to reinforce the connection between the Cāhamāna lineage, the Lord Harṣa, and the monument itself, the poet repeatedly identifies the splendor of the lineage with that of the deity; the fame of one enhancing that of the other. This is done

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23   pādanyāsāvanunnā namati vasumatī śeṣabhogāvalagnā
     [vā (bā)]hutkṣepaiḥ sa[maṁ ?]__ UUUUU __ __ U __ __ rkkacandraiḥ /
     bhinnāvasthaṁ samastaṁ bhavati hi bhuvanaṁ yasya nṛtte pravvṛtte
     sa śrīharṣābhidhāno jayati paśupatir ddattaviśvānukaṁpaḥ // 3//

24   This epithet is used in the concluding prose section (Line 34).

25   [mahā]rājāvalī cāsau śambhubhaktiguṇodayā/
     śrīharṣaḥ kuladevo 'yās tasmād divyaḥ kulakramaḥ //27//

26   Chris Philo & Gerry Kearns, "Culture, History, Capital: A Critical Introduction to the Selling of Places," in Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital Past and Present (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), 1–32.

first by describing the temple as a manifestation of the fame of the lineage progenitor Gūvaka.[27]

> First came the lord of men known as the illustrious Gūvaka, of the Cāhamāna family, who attained preeminence as a hero in the assemblies of the foremost princes of the world, the illustrious Nāgas and the rest; whose fame remains on the earth in material form as the excellent temple for Lord Harṣa, [which] still endures here today and illumines with great [....] [13]
>
>   CECIL

Although the structure would likely have postdated this ruler's time, it is still invoked as a tangible trace of early Cāhamāna sovereignty. The material connection between temple and lineage is again reinforced in Verse 18,[28] which records that Siṃharāja undertook further improvements to the temple, this time by augmenting the structure with gold.

> He affixed gold atop Śiva's dwelling, his own royal splendor materialized, resembling the full moon. [18]
>
>   CECIL

It is likely that the verse refers to the gilding of the ceiling of the *mahāmaṇḍapa*. These intricately carved ceilings are typically arched or vaulted, so the allusion to a bright and shining full moon makes sense in the context. And since the *mahāmaṇḍapa* was a gathering place for devotees and the site of ritual practices it would have been a fitting place for a wealthy patron to display a gift.

3.3   *Pāśupatas and 'Pious People'*

While the inscription emphasizes the Harṣagiri as the Cāhamāna cult center, these political elites were only one group that invested in the site. The Harṣa inscription served as a medium to communicate different registers of belonging, sodality, and community. The third and fourth sections of the record

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27   *ādyaḥ śrīgūvakākhyāprathitanarapatiś cāhamānānvayo 'bhūt*
      śrīmannāgādyalokapravaranrpasabhālabdhavīrapratiṣṭhaḥ /
      yasya śrīharṣadeve varabhavanamayī bhautalī kīrttimūrttir
      lloke 'dyāpi sthiraiṣā pratapati paramaiḥ __U__ __ U__ [gai?]: //13//

28   *haimam āropitaṃ yena śivasya bhavanopari /*
      pūrṇṇacandropamaṃ svīyaṃ mūrttaṃ ya[śa] U [piṁ?]ḍaka[m]// 18//
      Kielhorn interprets this passage to refer to the installation of a golden dome on top of the temple, which is likened to a physical manifestation of the ruler's *yaśas*.

commemorate the pious works of religious specialists, mercantile communities, and lay devotees.

After the royal eulogy, the inscription praises the Pāśupata ascetics associated with the temple. In the Harṣa record the religious specialists appear autonomous—their activities are not explicitly connected with those of the Cāhamāna rulers, nor do the rulers attempt to bolster their own reputations through association with the Pāśupatas—which could be taken as an indication that they operated within somewhat distinct networks of social control. There is, however, a significant geographic connection. The Pāśupata lineage preceptor, Viśvarūpa, is said to hail from *anantagocara*, the area near Harṣa that the Cāhamānas claimed as their homeland. Another preceptor, Allaṭa, migrated from a village nearby Harṣa. Since it is likely that Mt. Harṣa's history as a regional religious center predated the construction of the temple, this Pāśupata genealogy could attest to a regional tradition with deep ties to the local topography.

The verses that describe the Pāśupata preceptors included in Viśvarūpa's lineage offer a valuable perspective on the self-styling of these gurus as both adherents of an idealized renunciatory lifestyle while, at the same time, important donors orchestrating the development of the temple complex.[29]

> Hailing from the Ananta region, where the hereditary tradition was Lakulīśa's teaching of Pañcārtha, was the revered teacher called 'Omniform' [Viśvarūpa], the learned disciple of 'Powerful Lord' [Uttareśvara], [28]
>
> His student was a learned Pāśupata known as 'Praiseworthy' [Praśasta], the clarity of whose knowledge was resplendent, all taint having been cleansed though his rite of initiation. [29]

---

29   *anantagocare śrīmān paṇḍita auttareśvaraḥ/*
pañcārthalākulāmnāye viśvarūpo bhavad guruḥ // 28
dīkṣājātamaladhvaṅsavisphurajñā[nani]rmmalaḥ /
praśastākhyo bhavac chiṣyas tasya pāśupataḥ kṛtī // 29
bhā[va]rakto [bha]vat tasya śiṣyo dvināmatollaṭaḥ /
vārgaṭikānvayodbhūtasadviprakulasaṃbhavaḥ // 30
harṣasyāsannato grāmaḥ prasiddho rāṇapallikā /
sāṃsārikakulāmnāyas tato yasya vini[rgamaḥ] // 31
allaṭacchadmanā nandī śivāsannasthitikramaḥ /
śrīharṣārādhane nūnaṃ svayaṃ marttyam avātarat // 32 //
āsin naiṣṭakarūpo yo dīptapāśupatavrataḥ/
tī[vra]vegatapojātapuṇyāpuṇyamalakṣayaḥ // 35
sadā śivasamākāras tasyeśvarasamadyuteḥ /
bhāvadyoto bhavac chiṣyaḥ saṃdīpitagu[rukra]maḥ // 36

His student was 'Impassioned by Bhāva' [Bhāvarakta], whose nick-
name [*dvināma*] was Allaṭa, born in a family of proper brahmins arisen
from the Vārgaṭika lineage. He migrated from the celebrated village of
Rāṇapallikā, located nearby [*āsanna*] Mt. Harṣa, where the hereditary
tradition addressed 'worldy' [*sāṃsārika*] concerns. [30 & 31]

In the guise of Allaṭa, surely Nandin, who keeps himself nearby
[*āsanna*] Śiva, has assumed a human form in service to Lord Harṣa. [32]

He [Allaṭa], who shared in the lustre of the Lord, had a student called
'Brilliance of Bhāva' [Bhāvadyota], a life-long celibate who is illuminated
through his Pāśupata practice [*vrata*], part of a succession of luminous
teachers, always like Śiva, he effected the destruction of the taint of both
virtue and vice through the vehement intensity of his asceticism. [35 & 36]

CECIL

In addition to the localization of the lineage, the description of Viśvarūpa in-
cludes an important description of the doctrine connected to this region as
that of Lakulīśa's teaching of Pañcārtha. This detail is particularly significant
for this study since 'Pañcārtha' is the same term used to describe the Pāśupata
doctrine expounded by Lakulīśa in the SP.[30] The doctrine of the others in the
lineage is not explicitly called Pañcārtha, but the preceptors are clearly identi-
fied as Pāśupatas. In Viśvarūpa's lineage, comes Praśasta, who is not connected
with a specific doctrine or lineage. He is described as a Pāśupata who has un-
dergone initiation (*dīkṣā*).[31] Allaṭa's student Bhāvadyota, is described as being
engaged in the Pāśupata practice (*vrata*), which could lend another, literal,
interpretation to his being 'illuminated' by reference to a body that appears
white or glowing due to its being smeared with ash.

With the introduction of Praśasta's student Bhāvarakta (a.k.a. Allaṭa) in
Verse 30, the poet begins to describe the religious specialists who were in-
volved directly in the building and renovations of the Harṣa temple. The
description of Allaṭa contains important and intriguing details. The first con-
cerns his name(s). The first name given is Bhāvarakta, a name with the *bhāva-*
prefix common amongst Pāśupatas.[32] Although this 'official' name was the one
that signaled his Pāśupata identity, subsequent mentions of him in the record
use his second name, Allaṭa. This appellation has no meaning in Sanskrit, but

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30   And Pañcārtha is the same name given to the teaching by Kauṇḍinya in his
       Pañcārthabhāṣya on the *Pāśupatasūtra* as well. See Chapter 1.
31   Verse 29.
32   Cf. Dominic Goodall, "On K. 1049, A Tenth-Century Cave-Inscription from Battambang,
       and on the Sectarian Obedience of the Śaiva Ascetics of Non-Royal Cave-Inscriptions in
       Cambodia," *UDAYA, Journal of Khmer Studies* 13 (2015): 3–34 (26–28).

it must have had a specific resonance in the local language that made it important enough to warrant inclusion in the Sanskrit inscription. It is also significant that the reference to his second 'nickname' (*dvināma*) employs the same language and notion of doubling used earlier to describe Śiva's localized manifestation on Mt. Harṣa. Allaṭa's initiation name offers him legitimation via his ties to a respected lineage, but like Śiva's particular manifestation as Harṣa, it is his local appellation that is given greater weight. Allaṭa's identity as a local is also emphasized through spatial metaphors. In Verse 31 his hometown is described as being nearby (*āsanna*) Harṣa. The same term for nearness is repeated in the following verse to express an emotional affinity and dedication to the Lord.

The description of Allaṭa's hereditary or lineage doctrine sets him apart from the other preceptors eulogized in the inscription. Given that he is included in the line of Viśvarūpa, we may infer that Allaṭa, too, was initiated in Lakulīśa's teaching of Pañcārtha. Along with the inclusion of his second name, Verse 31 mentions a second doctrine specific to the village of Rāṇapallikā, called the *sāṃsārika* tradition. The nature of this doctrine is obscure, although it must have been considered a detail essential to Allaṭa's identity. There are two primary ways in which we can interpret the name of this 'worldly' doctrine. On the one hand, it could refer to teachings that help the aspirant to escape *saṃsāra* and the impediments to spiritual liberation that attend attachment to the mundane world. A second option would be to interpret *saṃsāra* in a more neutral way, as referring simply to mundane or worldly concerns. Allaṭa's village may have been celebrated because it was home to brahmin ritual specialists who were skilled in the performance of rituals that addressed the community's quotidian needs—i.e. concerns for health, fertility, and prosperity. Much like some of the early examples of Pāśupata religious specialists integrated within temple-centered communities,[33] the gurus in residence at Harṣa likely performed a variety of ritual functions, some of which would have involved non-Śaiva deities. Indeed, their own donations allude to broader concerns for the overall ambiance of the site and general well-being of the community. Read in a broader social context, the mention of the *sāṃsārika* tradition designated Allaṭa as a religious specialist who was skilled and attuned to the needs of a wider lay community outside of the initiated elite within his prestigious lineage.

The inscription reveals the ways in which these religious specialists, who are described as free of attachments to material and worldly concerns, reconcile their ascetic values with their investments in the monumental landscape of

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33   These inscriptions are discussed in Chapter 1.

Mt. Harṣa. The poet begins with Allaṭa. While the Cāhamāna rulers are credit-ed with significant donations to Lord Harṣa, it was the Pāśupata teacher Allaṭa who reportedly commissioned the temple using funds obtained from pious donations. After his death, Bhāvadyota followed his teacher's command to continue work on the temple by making further improvements to the grounds: including a courtyard, garden, well, and stone cistern to provide water for cattle.[34] These details hint at a kind of qualitative division of 'donative labor.' Whereas the connection of the rulers to the temple was primarily through monetary donations or gifts of land, the specific constructions undertaken by the religious specialists are recounted in detail. The following two verses de-scribe Allaṭa.

> A celibate student from birth, clad in nothing but the spotless sky, an ascetic with his spirit controlled, he had taken birth [as] a friend to those whose minds are set upon traversing *saṃsāra* […] he had abandoned the delusion of worldly existence [and] his resplendent mind was occu-pied solely with service to Lord Harṣa. He commissioned this palace for [Śiva as] Harṣa, with its well-executed complex, using funds from pious donors. [33]
>
> Upon seeing the unrivaled temple of Paśupati, celebrated by the name Lord Harṣa, that he commissioned on this mountain of the moon-marked god that licks that path of the stars with its peak—[the temple that] re-sembles a celestial palace, the abode of numerous deities, furnished with every enjoyment—clearly there is nothing that cannot be obtained through their asceticism for ascetics who are without desire. [34]
>
> CECIL[35]

These two verses perfectly juxtapose the life of the ascetic, who is free of pos-sessions and attachments to mundane world, with a monumental palace to the Lord, in which no expense has been spared. Although these images may ap-pear to be incongruent at first, Verses 33 and 34 make clear that commissioning

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34   Verses 37–39 & 42.

35   *ājanmabrahmacārī digamalavasanaḥ saṃyatātmā tapasvī*
      śrīharṣārādhanaikavyasanaśubhamatis tyaktasaṃsāramohaḥ /
      āsīd yo labdhajanmā bhavatara[ṇadhi]yāṃ _ U_ [ṣī]subandhus
      tenedaṃ dharmavittaiḥ sughaṭitavikaṭaṃ kāritaṃ harṣaharmmyam // 33 //
      asmiṃś candrāṃkaśaile gaganapathalihottungaśṛṅge 'prameyaṃ
      harmmyaṃ śrīharṣanāmaprathitapaśupateḥ sadvimāno[pa]mānam/
      dṛṣṭvā sadbhogayuktaṃ bahusurabhavanaṃ kāritaṃ yena _ _
      nāsādhyaṃ kiṃcid asti sphuṭam iti tapaso niḥsphṛhāṇāṃ yatīnām // 34

the temple was not an act of personal promotion on the part of the Pāśupatas; rather, it was done out of their desire to be of service to and honor the Lord. The poet also explains that the support for the monument came from pious donations, thus mitigating speculation that the resources came from the ascetics' personal resources. It is this unselfish action that made the astonishing monument possible. The verses below commemorate Bhāvadyota's contribution in a similar rhetorical style. The image of the ascetic without any possessions to tie him to the world provides a stark contrast to the sense of permanence of the heavy stones that surround the temple.

> These were his 'possessions': the sky for clothes, a mass of matted hair, ashes, the earth as his broad bed, alms for food, and his hand as a cup. [41]
>
> After he had filled completely that deep [...] which was [...] of Śiva's temple with a heap of rocks, he commissioned a beautiful courtyard paved with smooth stones that gave it a level surface pleasant for walking [42]
>
> CECIL[36]

We learn more about the donative patterns at Harṣa in the inscription's concluding section, which memorializes gifts received before VS 1030/973 CE. The summary list begins with villages[37] donated by the Cāhamāna kings and their officers. Following these royal dispensations, donations made by two different merchant groups are mentioned. The first are dealers in salt from Śākambharī who agreed to donate one *viṃśopaka* on every measure (*kūṭaka*) of salt that they sold.[38] In addition, horse traders 'from the north' (*uttarāpatha*) agree to contribute one *drama* on every horse.[39] Although the reference to the provenance of the horse dealers is vague, a contemporaneous inscription from Pehowa records comparable acts of tithing by a confederation of horse traders coming

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36   *digaṃbaraṃ jaṭā bhasma talpaṃ ca vipulaṃ mahī /*
      bhikṣā vṛttiḥ karaḥ pāttraṃ yasyaitāni parigrahaḥ // 41 //
      śivabhavanapu _ _ U [pā]raṃ yad āsīt tad akhilam upalaughaiḥ pūrayitvā gabhīram /
      samatalasukhagamyaṃ prāṅganaṃ tena kāntaṃ maṣṛṇataraśilābhiḥ kāritaṃ bandha-
      yitvā //42//

37   Some of these villages end with the suffix *-kūpaka/kūpa* that likely refers to a well (Line 38). Another ending in *-lāvaṇapadra* could indicate a place of salt production or salt trade (Line 40).

38   The title given for this collective is *samastaśrībhammahadeśya* (Line 38).

39   These horse merchants called *heḍāvikas* (variant *heṭāvuka*) are known from other epigraphic sources. C. Gupta, "Horse Trade in Northern India: Some Reflections on Socio-Economic Life," *Journal of Ancient Indian History* (1983–4): 86–206.

from various locales.[40] Despite these very terse descriptions, the mention of these two high-profile trading networks suggests that the Harṣa temple had attained sufficient renown to solicit patronage from local and supra-local groups at a prominent site at the junction of trade routes. It is likely that the sheer size of the mountain would have contributed to its importance as a regionally important landmark and point of convergence for traders and travelers.[41]

The donative charter concludes with gifts by unnamed individuals, presumably persons without a specific social rank. The donations of 'fields for the enjoyment of the god' by these 'pious people' (*puṇyātmabhir dattāni devabhujyamānakṣettrāni*) is further evidence for an established pattern of lay patronage at Mt. Harṣa.[42] We might infer the same from the names of the craftsmen mentioned in the inscription—Caṇḍaśiva and his father Vīrabhadra— whose names indicate a preference for Śiva. The donors are anonymous, but the fact that these gifts are mentioned alongside those of the ruling family indicates that they were deemed significant enough to feature in the public record.

4   Materializing Śaivism on the 'Mountain of Joy'

The inscription from the Harṣagiri commemorates publicly the enduring ties between royal power, Pāśupata identity, and various other local and supra-local groups through the common idiom of Śiva devotion. But these acts of commemoration were not restricted solely to linguistic or textual expressions. The temples, monuments, and images that populate the site serve a corroborative function. They are the material traces of these collaborative expressions of

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40   G. Bühler, "The Peheva Inscription from the Temple of Garībnāth," *EI* 1 (1889–92): 184–190. An inscription from Kiradu (1161 CE) in northwest Rajasthan mentions horse trade: B.N. Reu, "Kirādu Inscription of the Time of Chaulukya Kumārapāla and his Feudatory Paramāra Someshvara dated V.S. 1218," *IA* 61 (1932): 135–136.

41   Although I cannot confirm this, in his description of the site Dean claims that the mountain, and even the face with the temple, is visible from as far as Jaipur. As described in his report: "On arriving at the building which had principally excited my curiosity from the plain below, I found it occupied a site about quarter distant from the southwesterly end of the top of the hill, and on the precipitous verge of the northern face. The guide and officiating brahmans informed me, that it may be distinctly seen from the hills round Jaipur, thirty-five coss S.E. from Sambhar, thirty coss south of Midag, and when standing in relief against the dark background of a rainbow, it has frequently been seen from thence and Baudra, two villages or towns in the said territory, distant forty-five coss N.E. by E. Such is the native account, which I think is entitled to belief, as I have myself seen it from Taen, a distance of about forty miles, at least I imagine so, without taking much trouble to find it out." (Dean, "Ruins of an Ancient Temple at Harsha," 168).

42   Verse 43.

piety. The remains from Mt. Harṣa are particularly important because they afford us the relatively rare opportunity, in premodern North India, to integrate the literary and material constructions of a landscape.

According to the earliest reports, the inscribed stone was found in the rubble surrounding the remains of a massive medieval temple. Since the epigraph credits the Cāhamāna ruler, Siṃharāja, with renovating a monumental temple to honor his family's lineage deity, today this shrine is regarded as the old Cāhamāna temple, the same structure referred to in the inscription. This central temple has been extensively rebuilt and renovated over time. In its current state, this temple enshrines what may be a medieval *caturmukha liṅga*; although a second shrine, directly behind the rebuilt temple, also preserves an early *liṅga*. As described in the inscription, smaller shrines within the courtyard surround the central temple. The remains of a *maṇḍapa* with a massive carved bull sitting at the entrance also echo the descriptions of the Cāhamāna temple given in Verse 12 of the inscription [Figures 38 & 39].[43]

The atmosphere of joy and celebration evoked by the name of the mountain and its tutelary deity is materialized in the iconography from the site itself, examples of which are preserved within the complex and in the Government Museum in Sikar. Depictions of joyful devotion, dance, and music provide one of the dominant themes of the iconographic program. Images of a dancing Śiva also appear as a repeated iconographic *topos* and materialize the vision of Śiva recorded in the inscription [Figure 40]. In addition to the many sculpted panels of dance and devotion, repeated scenes depicting different kinds of people worshipping the *liṅga* gesture to the multivocality of the larger *māheśvara* community that used the space. For example, the numerous small, sculpted panels that adorn the rows of pillars within the central hall of the main temple include scenes of *liṅga* worship in which ascetics and gurus as well as members of a broader *laukika* community comprised of both men and women are depicted together engaged in the quintessential Śaiva practice of *liṅga pūjā* [Figure 41]. While these images are not works of art on a par with some of the other sculptures at the site, their position within the communal space of the central temple would have made them highly visible representations of the community.

Though the *māheśvara* community was clearly diverse, specific emblems of the Pāśupata community also figure prominently in the many images of Lakulīśa, the tradition's founding teacher. These icons consistently show Lakulīśa with multiple arms, wielding the club and other familiar Śaiva attributes (*triśūla*, *nāga*, etc.). Since the temple complex is still an active devotional

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43   See Verse 12, p. 72.

FIGURE 38A   Remains of c. 10th century temple complex on Mt. Harṣa

FIGURE 38B   Bull in courtyard, Harṣa Temple complex, c. 10th century

FIGURE 39A   Entry to temple sanctum, Harṣa Temple, c. 10th century

FIGURE 39B   Interior *liṅga* shrine, Harṣa Temple, c. 10th century

FIGURE 40   Dancing, two-armed Śiva from Mt. Harṣa, c. 9th–10th century
SIKAR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

FIGURE 41   Panel depicting *liṅga* veneration, Harṣa Temple, c. 10th century. See also
Chapter 5, Figure 103, pp. 238–239

FIGURE 42   Repurposed lintel with central Viṣṇu image, Harṣa Temple, c. 9th–10th century

space, many of the structures have undergone significant renovations and re-
building. This is evident, for example, in the lintel of the main *liṅga* shrine. The
temple is still under active worship as a Śiva temple, but as a result of ongoing
renovations and repairs, a portion of a Viṣṇu temple has been repurposed with-
in the Śiva shrine. Given that this temple was originally a Śaiva dedication, an
image of Śiva or one of his manifestations should appear in the central niche
of the lintel. Yet, it is Viṣṇu who now occupies this prominent place. Based
upon the dimensions of the doorframe, I think the broken lintel preserved
within the temple courtyard, in which Lakulīśa appears in the central niche,
would have originally appeared in the doorframe above the central *liṅga* shrine
to signal its Pāśupata affiliation. [Figures 42 & 43]

4.1   *'Śaiva' Place as Lived Space*

Given that the rhetorical aim of the Mt. Harṣa inscription was to praise the
Cāhamāna's temple and homologize the mountain with Śiva, the poet does
not explicitly mention the worship of other deities within the sanctified space.
This preference on the part of the rulers and religious specialists does not
imply, however, that Śiva was the only deity enshrined on the Harṣagiri. The
temple dedicated to the Cāhamāna *kuladeva* was one of many in the exten-
sive complex and the material record preserves evidence of Śaivism along-
side a broader and dispersed set of religious practices and concerns. During
my fieldwork, I noted the remains of at least twelve temple foundations

FIGURE 43   Original lintel with Lakulīśa, loose sculpture at Harṣa Temple complex,
                 c. 9th–10th century

(c. 9th to 11th century).[44] Some of these foundations are significantly smaller
and simpler than the Cāhamāna shrine, which could indicate that they were
dedications by non-royal donors and serve as further evidence for the wide
range of social participation on this sacred mountain—that is, to its life as
a lived space. In this way, the built landscape similarly reinforces the invest-
ment of these various groups in participating and celebrating the sanctity of
Lord Śiva's abode.[45] The presence of these other temples is a clear indication
that religious hierarchy and authority were not expressed through strategies of
exclusion. The dispersion of temples and images attests to a richly varied and
complex religious center, one that would have accommodated a range of ritual

44   *EITA* editors also note the smaller shrines, which they take to be roughly contemporane-
      ous with the main temple. They also confirm that the uneven arrangement and size of
      the smaller sub-shrines shrines means it was not originally conceived as a *pañcāyatana*
      complex. *EITA* 2.3, 107.

45   Given the richness of the sources, continued effort is needed to map patterns in the icono-
      graphic program across the site, to identify communities using the spaces, and to explore
      the relationships between the various structures that comprise the complex. I began this
      process during my fieldwork and published my findings in 2017. See Elizabeth A. Cecil,
      "The Medieval Temple as Material Archive: Historical Preservation and the Production
      of Knowledge at Mt. Harṣa," *Archive Journal* (2017) http://www.archivejournal.net/essays
      /the-medieval-temple-as-material-archive/.

FIGURE 44   Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī from Mt. Harṣa, c. 9th–10th century
SIKAR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

concerns and practices. Since this multivocality is not given expression in the epigraphic record, it is only through analysis of the structures and sculptures on site that these voices may be heard.

Judging from iconographic remains, some of the smaller temple foundations mentioned above would have been dedicated to Viṣṇu, one of the major deities of the Hindu pantheon and Śiva's primary competitor. During my fieldwork, I identified three displaced temple lintels deposited within courtyards at the site in which Viṣṇu—easily recognized by his signature attributes of club (*gaḍā*) and discus (*cakra*)—appears as the central deity. One of these was also repurposed in the Harṣanātha *liṅga* shrine as noted above. His central position is a strong indication that the shrines these lintels framed were dedicated to Viṣṇu. While the ruling elites aligned themselves closely with Śiva, the smaller Vaiṣṇava structures attest to the broad-based support of other cults within the shared space of the temple complex. Small icons depicting specific manifestations (*avatāras*) of Viṣṇu have been repurposed throughout the site. In addition to these, large sculptures of Viṣṇu in his Śeṣaśāyī, Gajendramokṣa, and Vaikuṇṭha forms are preserved in the Sikar Museum [Figure 44]. The presence of these images is significant since they attest to the activities of artisans and donors with a detailed knowledge of Vaiṣṇava mythology and theology.

Along with Viṣṇu, the Sun god, Sūrya, is also represented prominently at the site. Based upon the range and scale of the images collected within the complex, it is likely that there were also temples for this deity on the mountain. One of the on-site storage sheds also contains a rare image of Chāyā, one of Sūrya's

FIGURE 45   Chāyā, wife of Sūrya, Harṣa Temple complex storeroom,
                c. 9th–10th century

wives [Figure 45]. Chāyā's iconography bears a strong resemblance to that of her husband. She is depicted holding a lotus flower in each hand. The horses that draw the chariot of the Sun are shown at her feet. In addition to these attributes that convey her association with Sūrya, Chāyā also holds a trident in one of her left hands. As Śiva's signature weapon, the inclusion of the tri-dent expresses a visual link between Chāyā and Śiva. The intervisibility of Śiva and Sūrya in early medieval Rajasthan marks a significant regional pattern,

and the remains at Harṣa are but one example of the prominent trend.[46] The Sikar museum collection includes icons that blend key iconographic features of these deities to produce composite forms. When seen as objects from a coherent collection, the Chāyā icon, composite images, and the Sūrya sculptures repurposed in the temple complex provide a clear indication that Mt. Harṣa was a regionally prominent center for the Sun cult.

4.2   *Śiva and the Goddess(es)*

Having considered the inclusion of competing religious cults within the Harṣa complex, there are also many deities traditionally included within the Śaiva pantheon that occupied important places within the site. The most prominent and widely worshiped of these was the Goddess in her various manifestations: as Śiva's wife Pārvatī, the demon-slaying Durgā, the fearsome Cāmuṇḍā, with her necklace of skulls, as well as Ardhanārīśvara, a representation of the union of Śiva and Pārvatī, popular in the region.[47] The artists of the Salt Lakes region were particularly fond of scenes depicting Pārvatī's acts of asceticism [Figure 46] These icons were popular at Mt. Harṣa and also at an 8th century shrine located just adjacent to the Dīḍvāṇā Salt Lake. This goddess temple has been extensively rebuilt, but within its narrative panels are preserved scenes of Pārvatī's austerities and subsequent transformation on Gaurīśikhara.[48]

In addition to the Goddess *par excellence* as embodied in Pārvatī, Harṣa's sanctified spaces abound in representations of the various subordinate, yet still powerful, goddesses sometimes associated with her, i.e. *Mātṛkās* (Mother goddesses) and *yoginīs.* [Figures 47 & 48]. These ambivalent goddesses were seen as sources of power that were worshiped by religious adepts and connected with fertility cults, invoked for the protection of expectant mothers and young children. At present, nearly all the images of these goddesses are rebuilt in walls and under worship in small shrines within a circular open-roofed structure on the eastern end of the complex [Figure 49]. The original purpose and date of the structure are impossible to determine; its architectural layers preserve numerous historical moments and building phases. Yet, it is significant to note that the building recalls the structure of early *yoginī* shrines, which typically enshrined sixty-four goddesses in a circular temple that was open to the sky. Ritual activity at this place today is centered on an underground temple to Bhairava, a particularly fearsome manifestation of Śiva who is propitiated by couples to ensure the protection of their children. It is

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46   The remains from Kāman and Satwas evince a similar affinity (see discussion below).

47   On the popularity of this form see also Chapter 2.

48   See Michael W. Meister, "Gaurīśikhara: Temple as an Ocean of Story," *Artibus Asiae* 69.2 (2009): 295–315; Yokochi, "Introduction," SP III.

FIGURE 46   Repurposed sculpture depicting Pārvatī undertaking *pañcāgnitapas*, interior
of Harṣa Temple, c. 9th–10th century

FIGURE 47   *Mātṛkā* sculpture from Harṣa Temple complex, c. 9th–10th century
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FIGURE 48   Elephant-headed *yoginī* with wine cup, sculpture repurposed in niche outside
                Bhairava shrine, Harṣa Temple complex, c. 9th–10th century

plausible that the contemporary use of this area and its association with the
goddesses preserve echoes of a much earlier and enduring association of this
place with the Mothers and the *yoginīs*.

FIGURE 49   Open-air complex, now an active Bhairava shrine, Harṣa Temple complex

In light of the numerous images of Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and the Goddess preserved at Harṣa, monumental sculptures of Śiva himself are conspicuous in their absence. I have identified the remains of only one large icon on site—the upper portion of a five-faced Sadāśiva displaying a fearsome expression. Those taken to the Sikar museum are part of architectural fragments suited to adorn external temple niches, but not to serve as the primary image under worship in the temple. The only other icon I have found that fits this latter description is now on display at the State Archaeological Museum in Ajmer. The remarkable image depicts a four-faced (*caturmukha*) Śiva *liṅga*, with the major deities of the Hindu pantheon—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and Śiva—positioned around the base [Figure 50]. This iconic representation of Śiva and arrangement of deities in a single sculpture is rare. Given that the central image is the *liṅga*, it materializes a Śaiva theology. At the same time, the presence of the other deities encircling the base suggests a more inclusive religious vision whereby these deities are incorporated within the Śaiva religious hierarchy. One other important image from Harṣa on display in Ajmer materializes a similar hierarchical, yet ultimately inclusive vision [Figure 51]. The image, called a *liṅgodbhavamūrti*, represents an important event in Śaiva mythology in which

FIGURE 50   *Pañcāyatana liṅga* from Mt. Harṣa Temple
complex, c. 9th–10th century
AJMER GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

FIGURE 51   *Liṅgodbhavamūrti* from Mt. Harṣa Temple
                 complex, c. 9th–10th century
                 AJMER GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

Śiva manifests himself to Viṣṇu and Brahmā as a fiery, endless *liṅga* of light.[49] The two gods are confounded by Śiva's infinite power and forced to admit his supremacy. Considering these displaced sculptures as part of the larger material archive, an important resonance between visual and spatial expressions of religious hierarchy at Mt. Harṣa becomes evident: the position of Śiva at the center of the monumental *liṅga* echoes the articulation of shrines on Mt. Harṣa. The dominance of Śiva was established by locating the *liṅga* shrine at the center of the complex, where it served as the primary focal point around which the other smaller shrines dedicated to other deities were clustered.

5   Pāśupatas on the Frontier

This chapter has shown how Śaiva religiosity provided a powerful vocabulary for sovereignty that served to legitimize the Cāhamāna's fledgling royal identity while also publicizing the pious works of Pāśupata religious specialists. Whether deployed in support of rulers or to champion the ascetic ideal, these expressions were inextricably tied to the regional landscape. The temple to Lord Harṣa served as a materialization of this identity of lineage, place, and deity. But political elites and religious specialists were not the only groups who expressed belonging though investment in Śaiva institutions. For the merchant groups expanding their communities in new settlement areas in the northwest frontier, establishing temples to localized manifestations of Śiva also initiated processes of community-building and place-making. To illustrate these processes in practice, the concluding section of this chapter introduces the village of Kāman, a thriving merchant settlement oriented around the temple to Śiva as Kāmyakeśvara, the town's tutelary deity. Although contemporaneous with Harṣa, the representations of Śiva devotion at Kāman developed a distinct, locally inflected character that reflected the economic mobility and social aspirations of the residents of the market town.

Located in an area that straddles the borders of the Bharatpur and Alwar Districts of Rajasthan, approximately 300 km east of Harṣa, Kāman's position at a geographic interface between the desert and the urban centers along the

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49   For this myth, see Nirajan Kafle, "The *Liṅgodbhava* Myth in Early Śaiva Sources," in: *Puṣpikā. Tracing Ancient India Through Texts and Traditions. Contributions to Current Research in Indology*, eds. N. Mirnig, P.-D. Szántó & M. Williams (Oxbow: Oxbow Books, 2013), 241–263.

Yamunā River made it an unlikely political capital, but ideal as a center of economic exchange. Architectural and epigraphic evidence indicates that in the late 8th century Kāman emerged as a frontier 'boomtown'—a settlement characterized by a burgeoning and newly affluent population.[50] Evidence of Kāman's economic boom is preserved in a rich material archive that includes remains of monumental architecture, stone inscriptions, and finely crafted sculpture. The medieval residents appear as great patrons who gave liberally to religious institutions, including to temples of Viṣṇu, Śiva, the Goddess, and Sūrya. This remarkable artistic legacy would have required an economic surplus sufficient to support ateliers of skilled artisans and craftspeople. The most significant remains have been dated to the late 8th and early 9th century CE.[51] Judging by the material record, this prosperous period extended to the 11th century, after which point there is little evidence for the continued construction of brahmanical temple architecture.[52]

Despite the richness of the sources, there has not yet been an effort to evaluate the early material legacy of this place together with the epigraphic sources or in light of the contemporaneous material evidence from Satwas, a village located only a few kilometers away. I think there are two reasons for this historiographical anonymity. Kāman was not a major political capital, nor are its inscriptions revelatory of Imperial dynastic history or genealogy. Second, nothing is where it once was. The material remains are all removed

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50   While the phrase 'frontier boomtown' may evoke a vision of lawlessness characteristic of the Wild West of American folklore, this term is used more precisely here to describe a scenario of rapid population growth and development inspired by economic opportunity. On this term see Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); E. Bradford Burns, "Manaus 1910: Portrait of a Boom Town," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 7.3 (1965): 400–421.

51   The epigraphic corpus records donations made between 787–906 CE. Michael Meister observes shared architectural and iconographic patterns between Kāman and temples from 8th–9th century CE in Marwar, Kanauj, Gwalior, and important sites like Abhaneri and Harṣa in Cāhamāna-controlled regions of Rajasthan. These parallels are discussed in further detail in the pages that follow. See Michael Meister, "Śūrasenas of Śrīpatha," 217–221 in *EITA* 2.2.

52   This break in the development of the built religious landscape coincides with the intensification of Islamic activity in the region, which likely disrupted the established economic networks that had supported artistic production in the area. By the early 12th century, Kāman's largely Śaiva institutions had been repurposed and reimagined in the creation of Ghurid Islamic architecture. Alka Patel, "Recasting the Architectural Landscape: The Late 12th–Early 13th-century Ghurid Annexations of Northern India," in *Prajñādhara: Essays in honor of Gouriswar Bhattacharya*, eds. Arundhati Banerji and Gerd J.R. Mevissen (Delhi: Kaveri Books, 2009), 122–135.

from their original architectural contexts. The town is a palimpsest, layered with hybrid structures that were refashioned over time with materials from different historical periods. Other important sculptures from Kāman are distributed across several of Rajasthan's Government Museums, which makes it difficult to discern particular collections in the material archive. Despite these challenges, working to recover a particular historical moment—a period from approximately the end of the 8th century to the early years of the 10th century when this area was truly booming—reveals the impact of regional economy and economic actors in the growth of religious institutions in Kāman and the role of these institutions in processes of place-making.[53] Doing so reveals a socially supported and irenic vision of Śaiva religiosity not represented at Harṣa. In Kāman, Śiva was neither fearsome warrior nor renunciant; rather, he was imagined as a prosperous family man.

5.1   *Kāmyaka & Kāmyakeśvara*

Inscriptions found in and around the village describe Kāman (or Kāmyaka, as it was called) as a fortified town (*koṭṭa*) and as a market or exchange center (*haṭṭa*). Small fortified settlements like Kāman became active commercial centers that attracted collectives of merchants and traders who established new communities in these places.[54] While participating in the shifting trajectories of early medieval settlement and economy, Kāman's particular prosperity resulted from its position within regional and transregional networks of mobility and exchange.[55] With Delhi and Mathura to the north and east and Gwalior to the south, Kāman was positioned at the intersection of major political

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53   The definition of place-making proposed by Pierce, Martin, and Murphy informs my use of the term. "Place-making—the set of social, political and material processes by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live—is an important but oft-neglected part of political theory. Place-making is an inherently networked process, constituted by the socio-spatial relationships that link individuals together through a common place-frame." Joseph Pierce, Deborah G. Martin and James T. Murphy, "Relational Place-Making: The Networked Politics of Place," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* New Series, 36.1 (2011): 54–70.

54   Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, 89–119. For example, groups like the Dhūsara and Dharkaṭa merchants (*vaṇiks*; *śreṣṭhīs*) figure as temple donors in inscriptions from Khandela, Mandikila Tal, and Sakrai in northeast Rajasthan: D.C. Sircar, "Khandela Inscription of Year 201," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 159–163; B.Ch. Chhabra, "Mandkila Tal Inscription," *EI* 34 (1961–62): 77–90; B.Ch. Chhabra, "Sakrai Stone Inscription; V.S., 699," *EI* 27: 27–33.

55   I emphasize the geographic and economic factors since there is no evidence in inscriptions to suggest it was the capital of an imperial lineage.

borders and networks of economic exchange that linked these polities to sites in the northwest frontiers of Rajasthan. The town was also located along the highway that linked Delhi to Bāyāna, the regional customs and toll house. The surrounding physical terrain protected the settlement, which was positioned within a naturally fortified area, enclosed by a run of low-lying hills and a river on the northeast side.

In addition to marking a clear geographic center within the settled area, Kāman's religious institutions also provided an ideological center where expressions of social identity and belonging were enacted and materialized. Among the donors whose acts of pious giving have survived through the enduring medium of stone, the voices of merchant groups, traders, and artisans are particularly prominent. And the area's remarkable artistic legacy—preserved in the remains of monumental architecture and finely crafted sculpture—similarly indicates an economic surplus sufficient to support ateliers of skilled artisans and craftspeople. The most compelling evidence for the imbrication of community and place comes from two 'collective' inscriptions that record a series of donations made between the late 8th and early 10th century. Collective records like this one, for which comparable examples have been found at Āhār and Sīyaḍonī,[56] were composed over a considerable period of time and demonstrate the extent to which a sanctified center becomes a site for community building by recording a wide range of social participation. In this case, the majority of donative activity was directed to the temple of Kāmyakeśvara—presumably a *liṅga* shrine dedicated to a locally venerated form of Śiva, the tutelary deity of the eponymous town. There is still an old *caturmukha liṅga* called Kāmyakeśvara under active worship within the fortified center of the town [Figure 52]. The *liṅga* is worn from ritual activity and difficult to date with certainty, but given the position of the temple in a place of prominence beside the entrance to the old fortified center, it could plausibly preserve remains from the early medieval temple to the locally venerated Śiva.

5.2   *Corporate Religion*

The centrality of Kāman's religious institutions for social life and community-building is evident also in the siting of the architectural remains, which provided a point of orientation, a central axis around which the market town developed. The old settlement mound is surrounded by remains of walls and other fortifications. It is within this fortified center that the majority of the

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56   D.R. Sahni, "Ahar Stone Inscription," *EI* 19 (1927): 52–54; F. Kielhorn, "Siyadoni Stone Inscription," *EI* 1 (1892): 162–179.

FIGURE 52   *Liṅga* called Kāmyakeśvara under worship, Kāman

remains of temples and other forms of material evidence are preserved. In his
1882–83 report, Cunningham describes the massive mound of the old fortified
settlement extending 30 feet in height on the east and 50 feet on the west.[57]
R.D. Banerji gives a similar assessment and comments that the high mound
consists primarily of the remains of temples.[58] Atop this mound stands the
Chaurāsī Khambhā (the 'Hall of 84 Pillars') one of the earliest mosques of India
built from the repurposed elements of earlier Hindu monuments [Figure 53].
As a monument of critical importance for early Islamic architecture in India,
the Chaurāsī Khambhā has been the subject of important scholarly works.[59]

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57   Alexander Cunningham, *Report of a Tour in Eastern Rajputana* 1882–1883 (Calcutta:
          Archaeological Survey of India), 54–60.

58   *Progress Report, Archaeological Survey of India, Western Circle*, 1919, 64–65.

59   Notably by Alka Patel, "Recasting the Architectural Landscape"; Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects
          of Translation: Material Culture and the Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton:
          Princeton University Press, 2009), 144; Michael Meister, "Indian Islam's Lotus Throne:
          Kaman and Khatu Kalan," in *Islam and Indian Religions*, 2 vols., eds. A.L. Dallapiccola and
          S. Zingel-Ave Lallemant (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), 445–452. As the latter two
          scholars note, the Chaurāsī Khambhā preserves the earliest in situ *minbar* in India.

FIGURE 53   Chaurāsī Khambhā, view of *minbar* made of repurposed temple elements, Kāman

Judging from the 1204 CE date of the dedicatory inscription framing the *miḥrāb*, this transition of the monumental religious centre from a brahmanical to an Islamic space was completed by the late 12th or early 13th century.[60]

This mosque was built of repurposed architectural fragments from Hindu temples with some surviving Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava iconography [Figure 54]. From the color and varieties of stone—ranging in shades of buff, tan, pink, and red—and the different decorative elements and patterns of embellishment on the reused pillars and fragments, we may assume multiple temples and monuments were utilized in the construction of this mosque. The elements of the surviving fragments also attest to the position of Kāman vis-à-vis artistic currents at contemporaneous sites. For example, Michael Meister notes parallels between the decorative elements at Kāman and those from pillars at Osian, Chittorgarh, and Menal in Rajasthan from the mid-8th to late 8th century.[61]

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60   Z.A. Desai, "Islamic Inscriptions: Their Bearing on Monuments," in *Indian Epigraphy, its Bearing on the History of Art*, eds. Frederick M. Asher and G.S. Gai (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1985), 252.

61   *EITA* 2.2, 217–221.

Scene of *liṅga* veneration on pillar in the Chaurāsī Khambhā

Three stone inscriptions have been reported from Kāman.[62] For the purpose
of convenience, I have referred to these as K1, K2, and K3 in the pages that fol-
low. Two of these (K1 and K3) are now rebuilt within the Chaurāsī Khambhā.
Inscription K2 was reportedly found in a well outside of the city. The mosque
featured a number of prominently placed inscriptions of verses from the
'Qur'āṇ, and it may be that this attention to the Islamic monuments epigraphic
program motivated the display of medieval Sanskrit inscriptions that refer to
the earlier lives and contexts of the architectural elements. The inscriptions
thus serve as a visual display of the replacement of one religious ideology by
another. The two repurposed epigraphs are 'collective' inscriptions that re-
cord a series of donations made between the late 8th and early 10th century.

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62   Three early medieval inscriptions have been reported: two on repurposed temple frag-
      ments now built the Chaurāsī Khambhā. The first is undated but assigned to the 8th or
      9th century based on paleography. It records the donation of a Viṣṇu temple by grand-
      mother of Śūrasena ruler Vatsadāman. The second, dated H.S. 263/869 CE records the
      pious works of a collective body of trustees who are evidently devotees of Śiva. The
      third is a record of collective donations made to temples, among them the temple for
      Kāmyakeśvara. These records are discussed in further detail below.

Undertaking these acts as community activities allowed people of comparatively modest means the opportunity to participate in donative activities far beyond their economic reach as individuals.

In the collective records from Kāman, donative activity was directed, in particular, toward the temple of Kāmyakeśvara. All three of the inscriptions are heavily damaged, but we can still recover some details. The endowing of temples is represented in these epigraphic sources as the result of cooperation between Śaiva religious specialists, merchant communities, guilds, artisans, and local political elites. These religious centers were storehouses of wealth, both material and symbolic. They controlled significant immovable assets (for example, market stalls and fields) and participated in the monetized economy—through rents paid in cash, and taxes paid to the temple by guilds and traders. I will illustrate some of these interactions with a few examples.

K1—This inscription is positioned on its side built in the interior of the entryway [Figure 55]. It is undated, but has been assigned to the 8th or 9th century based on paleography. It records the donation of a Viṣṇu temple by Vachikā, the grandmother of Śūrasena ruler Vatsadāman.[63] The inscription also provides a genealogy of seven rulers of this 'dynasty,' as it has been termed, although this record is the only one of two inscriptions attesting to their rule.[64] The record suggests that Kāman, while not a regional seat of power, was integrated within political networks. Perhaps as a kind of satellite marker center connected to the main Śrīpatha Maṇḍapikā at Bāyāṇa.[65]

K2—This stone inscription, with dates recorded between H.S. 180–299/786–87—905–6 CE, was found in a well outside the city.[66] The record is extremely fragmentary and difficult to reconstruct in full, but some important details have been preserved. It begins with an invocation to Śiva and praise of a brahmin by the name of Kakkuka who, together with his sons, contributed to the construction of a *maṭha*. This *maṭha* appears to have been a Pāśupata centre. Although it is badly damaged, the names of two of the *ācāryas* end with the *-rāśi* suffix common amongst initiated Pāśupata—for example, we

63   Bhagawanlal Indraji, "Inscription from Kāmā or Kāmavana," *IA* 10 (1881): 34–36.
64   R.D. Banerji, "The Bayana Inscription of Chittralekha: V.S. 1012," *EI* 24 (1933–34): 120–127. This 10th century inscription from Bayānā mentions the Śūrasena family again in the context of Viṣṇu worship and records the implementation of taxes at market places to support the worship of the deity.
65   Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India*, 9.
66   V.V. Mirashi, 'Kaman Stone Inscription,' *EI* 24 (1937–38): 329–335.

FIGURE 55   Chaurāsī Khambhā, inscription in interior wall

have mentioned here Guṇarāśi and Pramāṇarāśi.[67] After the record of the endowment of the *maṭha* and the Pāśupata lineage, seven individually dated sections follow commemorating donations made to the temple of the deity Kāmyakeśvara, the locally venerated form of Śiva. It seems that the monastic complex was part of, or perhaps a later addition to the temple complex.

Kāman was also a regional commercial center. A donation from the same collective record, made in 905 CE, mentions a cattle market (*kambalī-haṭṭa*) that had enclosures (*āvārikās*) with shops (*vīthīs*), details that seem to suggest that this was not a seasonal or moving fair, but, rather a permanent market. This would accord with the records of endowments of land, wells and money by individual merchants, artisans, and collectives (*goṣṭhikas*) preserved in the inscription. Some of these donations were in the form of a voluntary tax or tithe. Others were permanent endowments by artisan collectives or guilds (*śreṇi*). For example, a potter's guild agreed to pay one *pana* per wheel each month for the maintenance of the temple.[68] A guild of gardeners pledged a permanent endowment of garlands to shrines of Viṣṇu and Cāmuṇḍā, presumably located within the same Śaiva temple complex.[69] The carpenters (*sthapati*) living in Kāman also give a tithe of one *dramma* per month. Other donations were made by individuals and included small measures of land and market enclosures. The final section of the record contains some interesting evidence attesting to the entrepreneurial spirit of the Śaiva religious specialists—here a donation to the temple deposited with the Pāśupata Pramāṇarāśi, was, after his death, invested with a *goṣṭhī* by his successor, Cāmuṇḍaka.[70] The donations attest clearly to the integration of the Kāmyakeśvara temple within the local economy[71]—even the Śaiva *ācāryas* were investing in local market real estate. In addition to an economic activity, the community-wide investment in the Kāmyakeśvara temple also functions as an act of place-making. When recording their donations, the guilds and artisans specifically identify themselves as residents of Kāmyaka. This emphasis on place can be read as an expression of identity between the residents, the town, and patron deity and an effort to ensure tangible and enduring links between them.

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67   Guṇarāśi appears in Line 10 end–Line 11. Pramāṇarāśi is mentioned in the final donation at Lines 22–24.

68   Donation made in H.S. 229; Lines 13–17.

69   Donation made in H.S. 232; Lines 17–18.

70   Donation in H.S. 299; Lines 22–24.

71   Lines 13–17 record a donation in H.S. 229 to Kāmyakeśvara for two sections of land in the fortified area (Line 13; Line 15 refers to the *koṭṭa*) of the town made by one *vaṇik* named Vajjrata (Line 13). Further references to the structures within the city area in Line 22–24; Donation from H.S. 299.
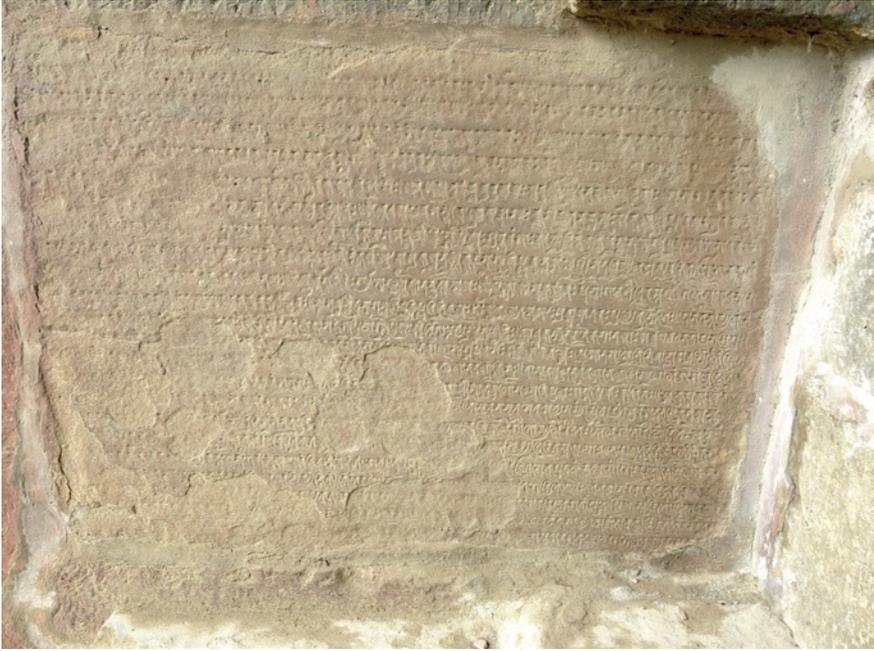
FIGURE 56   Chaurāsī Khambhā, inscription in exterior wall

K3—An inscription on the exterior framing wall of the Chaurāsī Khambhā, dated H.S. 263/869 CE, records the pious works of a collective body of trustees who are evidently devotees of Śiva (*maheśapriyā goṣṭhikāḥ*) [Figure 56].[72] In particular, three sons of Iśāna are mentioned (Nāgaṭa, Siddhanāga, Śivaviṣṇu) who oversee the building of a tank (*vāpī*) and a monastic residence (*maṭha*) in honor of their father.[73] Line 20, *padas* c and d in Śārdūlavikrīḍita meter refer to a temple or institution established for (at least) three deities:

> *kaścin madhyakṛtālaya* U U U _ _ _ U _ _ U _ _ _ _ U *harau hariś ca bhagavān sadgoṣṭhikai sthāpitāḥ*

Two of the deities, Hara and Hari (i.e. Śiva and Viṣṇu) are named and I suggest that we consider Sūrya as the third member of a presumed triad of deities. We could then amend the line to read: *pūjyau sūryaharau hariś ca bhagavān.* In addition to conforming to the meter—which Umā or Pārvatī does not; Brahmā

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72   D.C. Sircar, "Three Inscriptions from Rajasthan," *EI* 36 (1961): 47–56. Line 11.
73   Line 10.

is also unlikely since he is very rarely the recipient of a temple—the addition of Sūrya fits well with the material remains from Kāman, as well as larger regional patterns, which articulate a close association between Sūrya and Śiva as described earlier in relation to material from Harṣagiri.

5.3   *Sūrya and Śiva in Satwas*

Satwas, a small village just a few kilometers north of Kāman preserves remains of two Sūrya temples, one pictured here, framed by a lintel that displays Lakulīśa in the central niche. Directly beside it are remains of a Śiva temple with an enshrined *liṅga* [Figures 57 & 58]. In this temple, an image of Sūrya adorns the central niche of the doorframe. These temple doorframes are clearly rebuilt with contemporary structural elements, and my initial impression was that in the process of rebuilding they may have been switched and, as a result, the doorframe with Sūrya in the niche frames a *liṅga* shrine, and Lakulīśa, the emblem of the Pāśupata Śaiva tradition, frames the Sūrya shrine. Switched or not, I do not think that these doorframes have travelled far from their original contexts. In addition to their spatial proximity, other features suggest they were conceived as part of a set. For example: their nearly identical size and shared artistic features: framing *vyālas*, decorative elements,

FIGURE 57   *Liṅga* shrine with Sūrya in central lintel niche, Satwas village, c. 8th–9th century

FIGURE 58   Sūrya shrine with Lakulīśa in central lintel niche, Satwas village,
                   c. 8th–9th century

FIGURE 59   *Hariharapitāmahamārtaṇḍa* from Mt. Harṣa, c. late 9th–early 10th century
SIKAR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

the proximate size of the central images, and the shared *navagraha* frame. The spatial proximity of the *liṅga* and Sūrya shrines similarly suggests an affinity, or 'intervisibility', between these deities.

A comparable expression of this intervisibility appears in incorporative forms of Śiva and Sūrya, that begin to appear in this region in the 9th century. In images from the nearby site of Mt. Harṣa, Sūrya appears consistently as the central deity [Figure 59]. By contrast, in a monumental *liṅga* from Kāman, a quartet of major Hindu deities, including Sūrya, encircle the emblem of Śiva [see Figure 50]. Albeit manifestations of different religious hierarchies, we can read the impetus for inclusion as a strategy that incorporated both a growing community of Śiva worshippers while acknowledging the long history of Sūrya worship in the area. Kāman's paired Śiva and Sūrya shrines could anticipate this regional trend. Following my interpretation, the juxtaposition of the Śaiva

and Saura icons and images in these temples reflects a conscious decision on the part of the artists or donors to give visual expression to a theological concept. The intervisibility expressed through the framing images in the lintels is then another artistic strategy used to express the same religious ideology that we see communicated through incorporative icons like that of Figure 59.

In addition to attesting to a possible connection between mention of Śiva and a third deity (possibly Sūrya), the inscription explicitly mentions Viṣṇu as well. I did not find evidence for a third shrine in the temple complex mentioned above, but the importance of Viṣṇu worship is clearly suggested in the epigraphic and iconographic remains. One of the most remarkable sculptures from Kāman is that of Viṣṇu's boar *avatāra*, Varāha. Following my argument that we can read Kāman's art and architecture as both 'models of' and 'models for' community, uniquely inspired by and adapted to address the concerns of the people who used them, a triadic temple structure could well have been another strategic effort toward an integrative hierarchy in which Śiva, in the middle, central position was flanked by Sūrya and Viṣṇu, respectively. It could be that a triple-celled shrine housing these three deities is what the record describes. Temples of this sort are rare, but not unprecedented. Two significant and contemporaneous examples are preserved in Rajasthan: one at Amvan and the other at Menal. The shrine from Amvan preserved three lintels with Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu and Sūrya occupying the central niches of the three lintels.[74] In the case of Menal, the triple-celled shrine comprises the historic nucleus of the site.

5.4   *Irenic Śaivism*

The inscriptions from Kāman acknowledge a number of deities and shrines, but it is Śiva as Kāmyakeśvara who figures as the town's patron deity. Unfortunately, the inscriptions do not provide us with descriptions of the God or references to mythological events and narratives that might indicate how his devotees imagined him. For these clues we must rely on the iconography

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74   This temple 3 has been studied in detail by Odette Viennot, who comments that the deities represented in the three shrines attest to the 'syncretic' religious landscape. While certainly diverse, the invocation of syncretism suggests a uniform move toward amalgamation that obscures the work of strategy and design in monumental architecture. While the intention or agency that informed the design of the structure may be impossible to recover that does not mean that we should deny its existence. Pia Brancaccio refers to the shrine as 'Vaishnava', a sectarian affiliation that is poorly evidenced. Odette Viennot, "Un type rare de temple à trois chapelles au site d'Āmvān (Rājasthān)," *Arts Asiatiques* 26 (1973): 125–156.

FIGURE 60   *Kalyāṇasundara* from Kāman, c. 9th century
NATIONAL MUSEUM NEW DELHI

and, in this respect, the artists are remarkably consistent in their vision. All of the images I have identified from Kāman depict Śiva as a family man using two popular iconographic topoi: 1). his marriage to Pārvatī (Kalyāṇasundara)

FIGURE 61   Umā-Maheśvara from Kāman, c. 9th–10th century
                 BHARATPUR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

FIGURE 62   Umā-Maheśvara from Kāman, c. 9th–10th century
                   ALWAR GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

and 2) the affectionate Umā-Maheśvara-type with Skanda and Gaṇeśa at the couple's feet [Figure 60]. Neither of these visualizations is particularly unique for this time period or region. What is significant is that they are deployed exclusively and consistently in Kāman. This iconographic program communicates a distinctly irenic vision of Śaivism; that is, a peaceful, institutionalized, and socially supported religion. This articulation of Śaiva religiosity stands in marked contrast to nearby sites like Harṣa. The cult site of the Cāhamāna clan ruling from Śakāmbarī, Harṣa was similarly a centre of early Śaiva, and specifically Pāśupata activity. The iconographic program at Harṣa, however, includes images of Bhairava and other fearsome depictions of Śiva, groups of *yoginīs* adorned with garlands of skulls, and scenes suggestive of asceticism and penance—notably, icons of Pārvatī performing the 'five-fire penance' (*pañcāgnitapas*). In my visits to the site, storerooms, and regional museums I have not found a Kalyāṇasundara or Umā-Maheśvara icon from Harṣa.

Among the collection of sculptures from Kāman, one image stands out as particularly unique: an Umā-Maheśvara image now displayed in the Bharatpur museum and dated to the 10th century [Figure 61]. This image is nearly identical to a contemporaneous icon now in the Government Museum in Alwar [Figure 62]. Both images are comprised of three registers, with depictions of the divine couple occupying the center and their figures emphasized through the use of negative space. In both, Śiva and Pārvatī are turned toward each other in a loving gaze. Gaṇeśa and Skanda occupy the bottom register on the left and right and Śiva's bull and the skeletal Bhṛṅgin occupy the centre. Attendants flank the pair. Śiva also holds a round object in his proper right hand in the Alwar image. Although damaged, in the Bharatpur sculpture Śiva appears to be holding a similar item. This could have been a sitaphal, the seed-filled fruit that becomes a popular attribute of Lakulīśa, although these fruits are typically represented as more conical in shape and with a striated or bumpy exterior. This smooth round object recalls the ball of earth that is an attribute of Hindu creator deities in Khmer and South Indian sculpture. In both of the images, Śiva's *yogapaṭṭa*, a visual gesture to his ascetic persona, remains visible to us, but his gaze is fixed on his beautiful wife.

The notable difference between the two images is evident in the upper register of the icons. I will discuss the Alwar icon first and contrast it with the Bharatpur icon below. Of the two, the Alwar icon conforms to popular iconographic convention. Brahmā and Viṣṇu appear in the upper left and right corner. The center depicts two celestials or *vidyādhara*s elevating a *liṅga*. The base

FIGURE 63   Umā-Maheśvara, *liṅga pratiṣṭhā* panel, close view

of the *liṅga* is encircled by a garland with an ornament or decorative element in the middle. This visual reference to Śiva's phallic emblem occupies the celestial upper register of the image where it appears at the center of the composition along with the other major deities Brahmā and Viṣṇu. This elevated position could be interpreted as an indication that the *liṅga* here represents a more abstract form that, while clearly revered, is not the focus of devotional attention. That attention is directed toward the large central panel where the anthropomorphic Śiva and the Goddess are shown in an embrace. This focus on the divine couple also suggests the importance of the Goddess in the region, as well as a preference for the anthropomorphic image of the deity. When displayed in the exterior niche of a temple or in an elevated space for worship, the devotee's gaze would fall first on the lower register occupied by Śiva's 'children', the affiliated and attendant deities that comprise his entourage. Moving upward, the eye of the viewer would then fall on the Lord's feet—the left foot clasped affectionately by the goddess—then on the divine couple, and culminate with the elevated and more abstract manifestation of the deity in the *liṅga*. In this way, the Lord moves from concrete to abstract through the vertical composition.

When compared to the Alwar sculpture, the Bharatpur icon seems, at first glance, to depict a similar scene. The lower and center registers are nearly identical, as was mentioned above. It is in the upper most panel that the latter tells a more complicated story [Figure 63]. Rather than a single *liṅga* held aloft, the artists here present four consecutive scenes of a *liṅga* under active worship by a pair of devotees. When viewed from left to right, I argue that these icons were intended to represent a progression, a series of devotional acts that effect the presence of the deity in the object—i.e. the scene depicts a *pratiṣṭhā*. The *liṅga*, on the far left, rough and unfinished, gradually expands, the edges are smoothed, and the characteristic markings emerge in the second scene and are distinct in the third scene. The fourth scene witnesses the culmination of this process: the object is fully enlivened and the face of the deity emerges from the *liṅga*.

Viewed as a discrete element, this panel represents the efficacy of the ritual actions undertaken by the two devotees—likely temple priests and not ascetics judging by their appearance—whose acts of lustration and garlanding appear as the catalyst for the formation of the *liṅga* as a discernable object and visible manifestation of the deity. But how was this vision intended to inform the viewer's reading of the central panel and vice versa? There are certainly

multiple layers of scrutability in this image: didactic, rhetorical, proscriptive. We could, for example, read the upper panel as instructive—that is, a scene that outlines a recommended course of ritual action and its efficacious result. The motivation for undertaking this action can be inferred from the center panel, which depicts a peaceful and well-disposed Lord with his entourage. In this interpretation, the ritual is an act of pacification or propitiation that makes the irenic scene possible. A second possibility is to understand this icon as articulating a comprehensive and inclusive vision of Śaiva religiosity. The devotee may access the Lord through his affiliated deities located in the lower register or through worship of his more abstract form, as seen in the upper panel. Yet, the focus of both the artists' and the audience's attention is the central panel in which the happy partnership of Śiva and Devī is emphasized. This is not an image of power or military might designed to intimidate; rather, it is an image of comfort and affection intended to materialize the *laukika* aspirations of Kāman's working class.

6   Conclusions

As with the other prestigious places pinpointed in the SP mapping of the Pāśupata landscape, Sapādalakṣa was integral to the regional nexus of settlement, commerce, and politics. Epigraphic and material evidence from the region provides compelling evidence to posit that this area was of foremost significance for the institutionalization of Śaivism in the early medieval period. Rather than Imperial powers, rulers of what I have termed 'emplaced polities' were instrumental in the development of temple-centered religion. These temples were not simply places of worship, but institutions through which new social sodalities and communities were constituted. The richness of the iconography and the variety in the structural articulation of the religious monuments similarly reflects the wide range of religious concerns and practices that were accommodated within what were ostensibly 'Śaiva' spaces.

The success, and indeed dominance, of Śaivism in this particular region was tied to these powerful places where networks of political elites, religious specialists, and economic actors converged. In light of this evidence, one could ask if Sapādalakṣa was the site of Jambumārga? My working hypothesis that the large settlement excavated near the Sambhar Salt Lake could correspond to

this purāṇic locale is certainly speculative, but the chronology of the site confirms that it was thriving at the around the same time the text was composed. And like the Jambumārga of the SP, the importance of Sambhar declined after the 7th century when the regional political and economic networks moved north.

The Sahya Mountain: Śiva Religion in the Port Polity of the North Konkan

This chapter concludes the project of materializing the *Skandapurāṇa's* literary imagining of a Pāśupata landscape by examining the development of Śaiva institutions in the area of the Sahya Mountain (i.e. the North Konkan and the western Deccan), which is the southernmost limit of the authors' map. This region, now occupied by the modern metropolis of Mumbai, is home to three monumental Śaiva religious centers: the cave-temples located on Elephanta Island, the Jogeśvarī caves, and the Maṇḍapeśvar caves. These sites are vital material archives for the study of early Śiva religion, mythology, and iconography, yet little is known about their history, the patrons who initiated their construction, and the communities that worshiped within them. In the absence of any dedicatory inscriptions, the challenge of dating these sites has fallen to art historians who, through comparative stylistic analysis with other rock-cut monuments in the region, have approximated the mid-6th to the late 7th century CE as the period when their construction commenced. It is widely assumed that these cave temples were commissioned by the early Kalacuris, a ruling family active in northwest and central India between the mid-6th and early 7th century. Despite the popularity of this hypothesis, a critical review of the historical sources offers little with which to tie these rulers to the North Konkan or these three sites. As an alternative scenario, this chapter shows that the growth of early Śiva religion in this region was not contingent upon the fortunes of ruling elites; rather, religious institutions were deeply enmeshed in the flourishing trade networks of the cosmopolitan North Konkan coast where they were supported by multiple, corporate patronage networks consisting of merchants, traders, and other local collectives that dominated this port polity.

The chapter begins by introducing the North Konkan's distinct physical geography and situating the Śaiva cave temples within the larger religious, economic, and political topographies of the area. This contextualization reveals significant, yet underappreciated, ties between regional and religious economies, and between the siting of Buddhist and Śaiva religious centers. Next, I address the question of patronage and the roles of political elites in the creation of the North Konkan monuments. In their epigraphic records, the Kalacuris and other rulers of the period adopted the epithet '*paramamāheśvara*', 'supremely

devoted to the Maheśvara' (Śiva). Only rarely, however, do these inscriptions commemorate donations or endowments to Śaiva temples or religious institutions. Rather than allusions to investments in monuments, these epithets functioned as part of a larger, shared discourse of royal power and prestige. Evidence from contemporaneous inscriptions indicates that, prior to the 11th century, the patronage and management of temples was the purview of local communities and merchant collectives, for whom religious giving was part of a repertoire of practices that created new sodalities from among diverse social groups. Echoes of this diversity are materialized in the imagery and spatial articulation of the caves, which display evidence for Pāśupata activity as well as a range of other practices oriented around such deities as Buddhas, bodhisattvas, goddesses, and *gaṇas*.

1 The Sahya Mountain and Śaiva Centers

Purāṇic locales are often indicative of a region or direction rather than a specific pinpoint on a map.[1] For example, I understand the SP authors' use of the phrase 'Sahya Mountain' to mark the southern limit of the Pāśupata landscape as a regional label that refers to the area surrounding the Sahyādri range[2]—the northern portion of the Western Ghats that divides the North Konkan coast from the Deccan hinterlands.[3] While the Sahya Mountain resides at the limits of the SP imaginary, the North Konkan and the western Deccan are criti-

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1 For example, the SP authors use 'Kārohaṇa' as a heading that refers both to the specific *tīrthas* where Śiva is incarnated in each *yuga* and, more broadly, to designate the entire sacred *kṣetra* between the Mahī and the Narmadā rivers. For the literary outline of the Pāśupata landscape in the SP$_S$ 110–119 see Chapter 1.

2 According to Das's survey of traditional geographies, the title 'Sahyādri' refers specifically to the portion of the Western Ghats that extends from the Tapti River south to the Nilgiri Mountains. Hans Bakker notes the reference to Ajanta Cave XVII as the Sahya Mountain in an inscription of Vākāṭaka Hariṣeṇa. Local residents of the Nasik District also refer to the portion of the Ghats in their region as the Sahyādri or Sahya. Dipakranjan Das, *Economic History of the Deccan* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967), 8; Hans T. Bakker, *The Vākāṭakas: An Essay in Hindu Iconology* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1997), 35–36.

3 The term 'Deccan,' derived from the Sanskrit *dakṣiṇa* (right hand/ south), can be taken to refer to the whole of peninsular India south of the Narmadā River or to only the region of the Deccan Plateau. For the purposes of my study, I have focused on the northwest Deccan traditionally called Aśmaka (i.e. the region of the Western Godavari River valley directly connected to the North Konkan via the passes in the Ghats). According to contemporary state divisions, this includes portions of the Nasik, Aurangabad, Pune, and Ahmednagar Districts of Maharashtra. On the history of the use of term Deccan see Das, *Economic History of the Deccan*, 1–18.

cally important for the historiography of early Śaivism because some of the earliest surviving monumental Śaiva religious centers—extensive rock-cut cave temple complexes—are located in these regions. The three most important North Konkan sites are incorporated within the metropolis of Mumbai: the cave-temples on Elephanta Island in Mumbai Harbor, the Jogeśvarī caves on Gupha Tekdi in the suburb of Jogeśvarī East, and the Maṇḍapeśvar caves on Mt. Poinsur in Borivili West. In addition to these coastal sites, the network of Śaiva religious centers extended into the Deccan.[4] Cave temples were excavated near Aurangabad, Bhokardhan, and the village of Takli-Dhokeśvar in western Maharashtra.[5]

The absence of donative inscriptions from the North Konkan sites, and from contemporaneous sites in the northwest Deccan, has made the attribution of patronage a particularly vexed question.[6] Despite such significant lacunae in the historical record, it is widely accepted that the North Konkan cave temples were commissioned by the early Kalacuris, a political lineage active in northwest and central India between the mid-6th and early 7th century.[7] The 'Kalacuri hypothesis' was first proposed by the eminent Indian historian V.V. Mirashi and elaborated further by the prolific American art historian Walter Spink in the 1980's.[8] The pervasive influence of Spink's work is reflected

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4   The extent to which the Deccan sites can be classified as 'Śaiva' is addressed in the final sections.

5   The network of caves temples is not restricted to the examples mentioned here. Caves were also excavated near the villages of Mahur and Ter, in Pune, and at Hariścandragad in Maharashtra. Additional monumental sites were established under the patronage of the Cālukya rulers—the religious centers at Bādāmi (the Cālukya capital of Vātāpi), Aihoḷe, Paṭṭadakal, and Siddanakoḷḷa in addition to another center, Bhairavakoṇḍa, to the east of Bādāmi. Since these sites fall outside the geographic scope of this project, they are not discussed here. See *EITA* 2.1: 276–315. K.V. Soundara Rajan, *Architectural Survey of Temples, No. 3: Cave Temples of the Deccan* (New Delhi: ASI, 1981), 298–312; Hemanth Kadambi, "Sacred Landscapes in Early Medieval South India: The Chalukya State and Society (AD 550–750)," unpublished dissertation (University of Michigan, 2011).

6   The account of the Portuguese explorer Diogo de Couto (1603) mentions an inscription that was reportedly taken from the Elephanta Caves to be translated. As the removal of the inscription allegedly took place before de Couto's visit to the island, and has not been seen since, its existence is impossible to confirm. De Couto's report is summarized in *Maharashtra District Gazetteer, Kolaba District*, 785–787. See also Charles Dillard Collins, *The Iconography and Ritual of Śiva at Elephanta* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), "Appendix A. Evidence for a Dedication Panel at Elephanta," 151–155.

7   See V.V. Mirashi, *CII* 4, cxlvii; Walter Spink, "Monuments of the Early Kalacuri Period," *Journal of Indian History* (1968): 263–70; "The Great Cave at Elephanta: A Study of Sources," in *Essays on Gupta Culture*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983), 238.

8   Spink, "The Great Cave at Elephanta," 257–76; "Bāgh: A Study," *Archives of Asian Art* 30 (1976–77): 53–84 (55–59); V.V. Mirashi, *CII* 4, cxlvii. The Konkan Mauryas, and Western Cālukyas have

throughout the canon of scholarly studies on this region and period, which have echoed his hypothesis and expanded upon it to attribute the construction of Śaiva sites in the Deccan and northwest India to Kalacuri patronage.[9] Spink has identified the Kalacuri ruler Kṛṣṇarāja as the patron of the Konkan monuments since, he argues, the "very grandeur of the Great Cave at Elephanta, which could only have resulted from a vast expenditure of time, labor, and money, suggests that it is a royal monument."[10] The excavation of the cave temples did, certainly, require significant economic surplus, not to mention the work of many highly skilled artisans, but the underlying assumption that sponsoring monumental architecture was a practice restricted to ruling elites needs rethinking. As the following pages will show, there is little evidence that places the Kalacuris in the North Konkan during the time the caves were supposedly constructed, nor do their inscriptions mention any such endowments.

Given that it is not based directly upon warranting evidence, I think that the attribution of the North Konkan sites to Kalacuri patronage reflects instead the prevailing historiographical focus on dynastic history and royal personality.[11]

also been suggested as possible patrons of the cave sites, but these theories have been far less popular and influential. Sadashiv Gorakshakar and Karl Khandalavala attribute the Konkan cave temples to the patronage of the Konkan Mauryas. See S. Gorakshakar, "A Harihara Image Recovered from Jogeshwari and the Problem of Dating Gharapuri (Elephanta)," in *Madhu: Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History*, ed. M.S. Nagaraja Rao (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1981), 247–52; Karl Khandalavala, "Rock-Cut Temples," in *Maharashtra*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Mārg Publications, 1985) K.V. Soundara Rajan connects the caves to Cālukya patronage. Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, Introduction.

9   For evidence of the long-ranging influence of Spink's theories see C.D. Collins, *The Iconography and Ritual of Śiva at Elephanta*, 4–9; Pia Brancaccio, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), 205; Sara L. Schastok, *The Śāmalājī Sculptures and 6th Century Art in Western India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 44; 96–97; Geri Hockfield Malandara, *Unfolding a Maṇḍala: The Buddhist Cave Temples at Ellora* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 5–6. These studies have extrapolated the influence of the Kalacuris from the North Konkan caves to early stages of building at Ellora, sculpture in Aurangabad, in the Mandasor area of Madhya Pradesh, and at Śāmalājī in Gujarat.

10   Spink, "The Great Cave at Elephanta," 242. In his conclusion, Spink builds upon the previous work of V.V. Mirashi who identifies the Kalacuris as the probable patrons of Elephanta. See Mirashi, *CII* 4.1, cxlvii–cxlviii. In his work, Mirashi cites a Marathi-language source by Y.R. Gupte (1942).

11   Aside from cautionary remarks, like that of Sara Schastok that the "broader cultural and commercial ties between Mālwā and the corridor to the south should not be overlooked," (*The Śāmalājī Sculptures*, 97) and the questions raised about Kalacuri patronage in the MA Thesis of Jack C. Laughlin "A Reconsideration of the So-called Kalacuri Monuments of the Deccan and Konkan" (McMaster University, 1993) discussed below, there has been

This preoccupation has often relegated the activities of other social groups to the margins of scholarly attention. A critical review of the historical sources reveals that the rulers' connection to these sites was tenuous, at best. At the height of their power, the North Konkan occupied the periphery of Kalacuri territory, which was confined to central Mālava and extended only as far as the northwest Deccan, making it unlikely that they ever had direct control over the coast. More importantly, their inscriptions contain no references to the construction of temples or religious monuments; rather, all of their donations were land grants to brahmins recorded on copper-plates. A survey of inscriptions from the North Konkan and the surrounding area shows that during the early medieval period, endowing temples had *not yet* become a ubiquitous feature of a ruler's religious repertoire. Of the royal inscriptions that do record acts of temple patronage, examples of Śaiva temples are actually quite rare. Epigraphic sources from this particular region indicate that the work of temple building, funding, and maintenance was often a corporate enterprise.

1.1   *The North Konkan Port Polity*

To understand the history of the cave temples requires that we first see them in their geographic context and as an integral part of the North Konkan's port polity—a political entity defined by its coastal commercial networks. An alluvial strip of land, barely 50 km wide, on India's western coast, the North Konkan (or Aparānta, as it was traditionally known) is bordered by the Arabian Sea on the west, the Sahyādri Mountains on the east, and the Narmadā and Tapti rivers to the north. With the exception of coconut and betel palm, this region is ill suited for agriculture and, from approximately 200 BCE, trade has driven the regional economy.[12]

The success of the North Konkan as an exchange center can be attributed to its distinctive terrain. Prior to the efforts of land reclamation initiated by British and Portuguese colonial powers, the coastal area was a cluster of islands dotted with numerous estuaries, littoral ports, and navigable tidal

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not been, to my knowledge, a published study that reconsiders the history of these sites. A survey of the secondary literature shows that even when the history of the North Konkan caves is disputed, due to lack of epigraphic or other evidence supporting a particular dynasty as patron, the issue is resolved by ascribing the construction of these monuments to a different ruling family. These patterns are not unique to studies of the North Konkan sites. For an overview of similar patterns in scholarship on Ellora's patronage see Lisa N. Owen, *Carving Devotion in the Jain Caves at Ellora* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 160–163.

12   The coconut palm was an important cash crop. Note the inscription from the Nasik Caves about the donation of a grove of coconut trees. Senart, "The Inscriptions at the Caves at Nasik," *EI* 8 (1905–6): 59–96.

rivers that extended deep into the interior[13] [Figure 64]. Many of these littoral ports were small trading posts that serviced local networks, while others, like Sopara, Kalyan, Chaul, Sanjan, and Elephanta, were cosmopolitan centers of long-distance and international exchange.[14] Analysis of settlement patterns in the region reveals close ties to the regional economy.[15] Excavations by marine archeologists around Elephanta Island in the late 1990's documented material and numismatic evidence indicative of settlement, commerce, and long-distance exchange from as early as the 1st century BCE through the 16th century.[16] Archeologists S. Tripati and A.S. Gaur discovered that the island had three jetties—Mora Bander, Raj Bander, and Shet Bander—that were active at different historical periods as evinced by the range of structural, material, and numismatic evidence. They also noted the remains of an extensive brick wall, now largely submerged in the intertidal zone, which they date to the Gupta Period based upon the dimensions of the bricks used in the construction. Other discoveries of Chinese pottery and Roman amphorae and premodern anchors found submerged around the island, provide further evidence of ship-going trade. Many varieties of copper and silver coins, including Roman, Sātavāhana, Kshatrapa, Traikūṭaka, and Kalacuri issues, were also discovered.[17]

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13   On the different varieties of ports in the Konkan see Jean Deloche, "Geographical Consideration in the Localization of Ancient Sea-Ports of India," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 20 (1983): 439–448 (especially 441–2); Deloche, *La Circulation en Inde*, 93. On the ecological history of Mumbai and its wetland environs see Anuradha Mathur & Dilip de Cunha, *Soak: Mumbai in an Estuary* (Bombay: Rupa & Company, 2009).

14   See V.K. Jain, *Trade and Traders in Western India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1990), 18. Excavations undertaken at some of these ports provide evidence for international commercial activity and extended periods of habitation. For studies on particular ports see A.K. Ranade: "Contribution of Kalyān to the Cultural Development of Konkan," *Studies in Indian Epigraphy* 27; Vishwas D. Gogte, "Discovery of the Ancient port of Chaul," *Man and Environment* 28.1 (2003): 67–74; also on Chaul, Rahul Oka, "Resilience and Adaptation of Trade Networks in East African and South Asian Port Polities," unpublished dissertation (University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008), 30–41. On Sanjan see the series of articles by Ranabir Cakravarti in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* (1986, 1990, 1998); Rukshana J. Nanji, *Mariner and Merchants: A Study of the Ceramics from Sanjan, Sanjan Reports vol. 1* (BAR International Series, 2011), 8–22.

15   Deloche, "Local of Sea Ports," 442: "Together with the towns in the estuaries at points where the tides carry in the boats, are formed two, sometimes even three degrees of marine penetration. At no other part of the western coast is this parallelism so obvious."

16   S. Tripati and A.S. Gaur, "Onshore and Nearshore Explorations along the Maharashtra Coast: With a View to Locating Ancient Ports and Submerged Sites," *Man and Environment* 22.2 (1997): 73–83; "Exploration of an Ancient Port: Elephanta Island (Bombay)," in *Hemakuta: Recent Researches in Archaeology and Museology*, ed. Narasimha A.V. Murthy (Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2001), 89–95.

17   *Indian Archaeology: A Review* (1956–57): 81.

FIGURE 64   Islands of Bombay prior to land reclamation
CONSTABLE'S HAND ATLAS OF INDIA, 1893 EDITION

Elephanta Island is not a unique case. Ongoing excavations at the nearby port of Sanjan have similarly demonstrated that coastal settlement was oriented around the littoral ports.[18]

Following the pattern of coastal settlement, the growth of sanctified spaces was also conditioned by the distribution of the ports. Prior to the excavation of the Śaiva caves, Buddhist communities had established an extensive network of religious institutions in the region.[19] In the North Konkan, the patterned siting of Śaiva centers in close proximity to Buddhist caves—both excavated in hills overlooking navigable coastal rivers and in close proximity to littoral ports and centers of trade—created a multi-layered, shared religious landscape suggestive of deep ties to the regional economy. The earliest evidence attesting to this pattern is a group of eleven fragmentary Prakrit inscriptions and symbols dating from the 1st to the 6th century CE engraved around a natural cave at a site called Padana Hill.[20] Now located within the suburban area of Goregaon, three km west of the Kanheri caves, Padana Hill overlooked the Mithi River, which flows into Mahim Bay. The inscriptions suggest the presence of Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Buddhist practitioners. For example, Inscription K records the Buddhist creed, Inscription G records the 'step of Rāma', and Inscriptions E and I refer to a religious specialist (*siddha*) named Musala.[21] Several sets of footprints engraved in the rock are accompanied by the names of sages. Finally, Inscription C refers to the hill as 'the abode of *siddhas*' (*pavato abhuṁto sidhavasati / parvatebhyantaḥ siddhavastiḥ*) [Figure 65].

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18   Rukshana Nanji, *Mariners and Merchants: A study of Ceramics from Sanjan* (British Archaeological Reports, 2011), 8–22; 212–223.

19   For example, details of the excavation of the settlement mound and Buddhist *stūpa* at the port of Sopara—dated to approximately 160 BCE based on B.L. Indraji's analysis—are summarized in the *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, *Thana District* Revised ed. 1982 (First ed. 1882). On the siting of Buddhist centers such as Kanheri see H.P. Ray, "Early Historical Urbanism: The Case of the Western Deccan," *World Archaeology* 19.1 (1987): 94–104; "Kanheri: the archaeology of an early Buddhist pilgrimage centre in western India," *World Archaeology* 26.1 (1994): 35–46.

20   H. Lüders, "A List of Brahmi Inscriptions from the Earliest Times to about A.D. 400 with the exception of those of Asoka," *EI* 10 (1912): 973–983; Bhagavanlal Indraji, "Antiquarian Remains at Sopara and Padaṇa," *The Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15 (1881–1882): 323–325.

21   Hans Bakker has suggested a possible connection between the name Musala (mentioned in inscriptions E & I) and the Pāśupata sect called the Mausalas derived from the teachings of Musulendra, who was said to be a pupil of the Pāśupata founder Lakulīśa. H.T. Bakker, "Somaśarman, Somavaṃśa, and Somasiddhānta: A Pāśupata Tradition in Dakṣiṇa Kosala, Studies in *Skandapurāṇa* III," in *Harānandalaharī: Volume in Honor of Professor Minoru Hara on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ryutaro Tsuchida & Albrecht Wezler (Reinbek: Dr. Inge Wezler Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 2000), 1–19 (5).

FIGURE 65   Drawing of inscriptions and symbols from Padana Hill
                  AFTER INDRAJI, 1881

Despite its rather insular geography, the north Konkan maintained ties to the
Deccan via three important passes in the Sahyādri Mountains—the Thalghat,
Nanaghat, and Bhorghat [Figure 66]. Travel via these passes and routes fos-
tered interregional economic ties between the North Konkan and the agrarian
hinterlands of the Deccan, which produced cotton as well as valuable min-
eral resources and precious stones from its rich 'black cotton' soil.[22] Via these

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22   Rich in nutrients, particularly lime, and extremely moisture retentive, this volcanic soil
      is excellent for growing cotton as well as wheat, millet, and pulses. Numerous historical

FIGURE 66   North Konkan ports, cave sites, and mt. passes
                   GOOGLE EARTH

overland routes, and through intercostal trade with the famous port of Broach in southern Gujarat (Lāṭa), the North Konkan was integrated within pan-Indian itineraries.[23] To reach the coastal area of Lāṭa from the Deccan via overland routes, travellers would have faced formidable natural boundaries, most significantly the Narmadā River, which limited travel to particular routes. The primary point of crossing was at Māhiṣmatī (also called Māheśvar),[24] a significant landmark in the geography of premodern India. This important crossing

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sources also refer to the mining of gemstones and gold in the Deccan. As reported in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, mineral wealth and cloth produced from Deccan cotton eventually made its way to coastal Gujarat and Broach. Lionel Casson, *Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989), 83; Das, *Deccan*, 91–171; D. Schlinghoff, "Cotton Manufacture in Ancient India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17.1 (1974): 81–90.

23   In addition to the major passes, other small passes or trails were also utilized for trade and transport between the Konkan and the Deccan. Some of these are mentioned in the *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kolaba District*, 114–116; *Nasik District* 125–137. See also D. Chakrabarti, *The Archaeology of the Deccan Routes: The ancient routes from the Ganga plain to the Deccan* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2005), 114–118.

24   H.D. Sankalia, B. Subbarao, S.B. Deo, *The Excavations at Maheshwar and Navdatoli, 1952–53* (Deccan College, Pune & M.S. University, Baroda, 1958); O.P. Misra & R.K. Sharma,

point facilitated travel between the agricultural and commercial centers of the Deccan and the cities of Ujjain and Mathura, nodal points along the major northern routes.[25]

1.2   *Regional Economy and Religious Landscape*

The dense clustering of both Buddhist and Śaiva caves sites along the North Konkan coast is compelling evidence that the area, with its many busy ports, provided a sufficient economic surplus to fund the construction of elaborate religious and residential centers and provide support to the populations of religious specialists that inhabited them, either permanent or seasonal residents [Figure 66].[26] The historiography on the early historic period (500 BCE–500 CE)[27] of this region, by H.P. Ray and others, has emphasized the patterned embedding of Buddhist religious centers and monastic establishments at the heads of mountain passes and at crossroads along caravan routes.[28] A pattern that is interpreted as evidence of the close association, even interdependence, of monastic communities and trade economy. Inscriptions from the Buddhist caves at Kanheri recording donations from merchants and guilds, some of them from places a great distance from the religious center itself,

Archaeological Excavations in Central India: Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (New Delhi: Mittal Pub., 2003).

25   For studies of these routes see M. Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India* (New Delhi: Abhinav Pub, 1977); N. Lahiri, *The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes up to c. 200 BC: Resource Use, Resource Access and Lines of Communication* (Delhi: Oxford University, 1992); D.K. Chakrabarti, *Archaeology of the Deccan Routes*; Jean Deloche, *La circulation en Inde avant la révolution des transports*, Tome I: *La voie de terre* (Paris: Publications de L'École Française d'Extrême Orient, CXXII, 1980).

26   At both the Buddhist and Śaiva sites there is evidence of settlements nearby. All of the North Konkan cave sites, Buddhist and Śaiva, have extensive facilities (e.g. tanks, cisterns, and wells) for the collection and storage of water, they likely served an important practical function as well. Water storage was critically important in the Konkan and the lack of fresh water outside of the monsoon period (June–September) has been the primary factor barring extensive industry and agriculture in the region. H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Sātavāhanas* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 17.

27   Special attention is paid to the period between the 1st and the 4th centuries CE as it was during this time that the excavation of Buddhist caves flourished and trade between India, Rome, and Egypt also flourished under the Sātavāhana rulers who had established their capital at Paithan.

28   Ray, *Monastery and Guild*, 87; James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 131; Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange Within and Beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 215–217.

FIGURE 67   Elephanta Island
                   GOOGLE EARTH

further support the interconnectedness of Buddhism and trade in this area.[29] The spatial logic of the Śaiva religious landscape gestures to the Buddhist model—both were designed to capitalize on the economic surplus generated by the coastal economy.

Buddhist and Śaiva religious centers developed in close proximity to one another and some Buddhist centers, such as Kanheri, remained active in the 6th and 7th centuries when the Śaiva caves were also in use. The multi-layered character of the religious landscape is most clearly evident on Elephanta Island [Figure 67]. The Śaiva excavations at Elephanta represent only the best preserved of several religious sites on the island. An earlier

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29   A number of inscriptions from the Buddhist caves at Kanheri mention donors from the surrounding port cities of Chaul, Kalyan, and Sopara, as well as Nasik and range in dates from the 1st through the 6th centuries CE. H. Lüders, "A List of Brāhmī Inscriptions from the earliest times to about AD 400. With the exception of those of Aśoka," *EI* 10 (1909), Appendix A, 1–226 (nos. 100, 996, 988, 985); "Kanheri Plate of the Traikūṭakas: K.S. 245 (493/4 or 494/5 CE)," *CII* 4, 29–32. In particular, note the inscription from Kanheri Cave 3 that records the collaborative donative efforts of merchants and monastics in the excavation of a *caitya*. G. Bühler, "Kānheri Inscriptions," *ASWI* 5, 74–87 (no. 4); Lüder's List, no. 987.
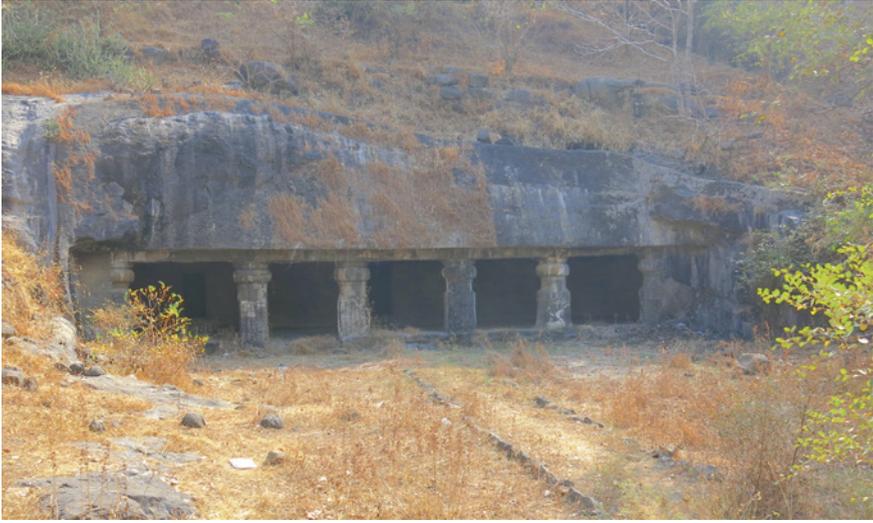
FIGURE 68   Excavated caves near *stūpa* site, Elephanta Island

Buddhist site dominated the hill directly opposite the Śaiva caves in the vicinity of Mora Bandar, the oldest of the island's three jetties, where the remains of a Buddhist *stūpa* and an early settlement site were excavated [Figures 68]. A series of simply excavated caves occupied this same hill, along with tanks for collecting water. It is difficult to ascertain whether these caves were originally affiliated with the Buddhist community or the Śaiva community. At the time of the Portuguese explorer De Couto's report one cave contained an active *liṅga* shrine and two multi-armed goddesses occupied another. The reports of De Couto, Burgess and Cousens, and other 19th century reports summarized in the Bombay Gazetteers mention the remains of small brick shrines along the island's coast where a number of *liṅgas* and other loose sculptures were found. These include the images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Mahiṣāsuramardinī recovered from the island and now held in the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai[30] [Figures 69–71].

Like the Elephanta caves, the Śaiva caves of Jogeśvarī and Maṇḍapeśvar were also constructed in close proximity to Buddhist institutions and strategically placed in economically advantageous areas near ports and navigable coastal rivers. Śaiva communities may have even co-opted earlier Buddhist excavations. For example, K.V. Soundara Rajan suggests that the southernmost cave at Maṇḍapeśvar was originally a simple Buddhist excavation that was further excavated and expanded by communities of Śiva devotees. Unlike Elephanta

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30   *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Thana District* Revised ed. 1982 (first ed. 1882).

FIGURE 69   Sculpture of Brahmā from Elephanta Island,
              c. 7th century
              CSMVS MUMBAI

FIGURE 70   Sculpture of Viṣṇu (lower portion) from Elephanta Island, c. 7th century
CSMVS MUMBAI

FIGURE 71   Sculpture of Mahiṣāsuramardinī from Elephanta Island, c. 7th century
                 CSMVS MUMBAI

and Jogeśvarī, it does not seem that the main temple sanctum originally held a
liṅga.[31] Given that workable sites for constructing monuments were limited by

31   Rajan reports, "Within the door-frame is a square chamber [...] without any apparent
      indication of a provision for *liṅga pīṭha* or *liṅga* of the monolithic type on its floor [...]
      Although there is a pestle like stone kept in its center inside the depression, it has no re-
      lationship either with the pit as cut original or with the pristine character of the chamber
      itself." Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, 94–98.

various conditions of the physical geography, it would make sense that members of the Śaiva community would repurpose a locale used by earlier patrons.[32]

While economic realities have been emphasized in studies of Buddhism, studies of brahmanical religions in the early medieval period remain influenced by the historiography of what is commonly termed medieval 'feudalism' and the assumption that trade and commercial networks declined following the end of the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period. This perceived decline in market economies is thought to have made the village an autonomous and non-monetized economic center.[33] In this view, villages were "individually self-sustaining units, devoid of channels connecting them with other kinds of production or with centers of commodity exchange."[34] Recent work of archeologists and historians shows that the theory regarding the dearth of trade in the early medieval period is inaccurate.[35] In fact, long-distance trade continued to flourish along new and dynamic trajectories.[36] Studies of ceramics provide corroborating evidence for these patterns of exchange as early as the 6th and 7th centuries. Roberta Tomber's work on the distribution of amphorae in India demonstrates that while the circulation of Early Roman amphorae was concentrated in the 1st century BCE to 2nd century CE around the port of Chaul, and the nodal trade centers of Nasik and Paithan in the Deccan, later styles of amphorae—such as Red Sea amphorae and Torpedo jars produced in modern Aqaba in

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32   On the workability of stone and processes of creating rock-cut sites see Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell, *The Unfinished: Stone Carvers at Work on the Indian Subcontinent* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2016), 14–27.

33   B.D. Chattopadhyaya, "State and Economy in North India," in *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, ed. Romila Thapar (Delhi: Popular Prakashan, 1995), 322–23.

34   Chattopadhyaya summarizing (rather polemically) the position of D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1956), R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism, c. 300–1200* (Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta, 1965), and others. See also Anjali Malik, *Merchants and Merchandise in Northern India AD 600–1000* (Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1998), 93.

35   For example, see H.P. Ray, "The Artisan and the Merchant in Early Gujarat, Sixth-Eleventh Centuries," *Ars Orientalis* 34 (2004): 39–61. Ray stresses the autonomy of merchants and artisans in relation to state and political power. Also, André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of an Indo-Islamic World* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1990), 45–64. Wink rejects even the hypothesis that Roman trade declined during this period and cites the continued activity of Greek and Byzantine traders in Indian Ocean commerce.

36   Overseas trade with the Roman Empire and the Mediterranean declined, yet studies of Arab and Persian sources show that international trade continued and that new networks were established, particularly from the 8th and early 9th century. Patterns in early medieval trade in the North Konkan are addressed in a series of articles by Ranabir Chakravarti, starting with "Merchants of Konkan," *The Indian & Economic Social History Review* 23.2 (1986): 207–215. On broader Indian Ocean patterns see K.N. Chaudari, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985), 15.

Jordan from the 4th through the 7th century—are found almost exclusively at Elephanta and the ports of southwest Gujarat.[37] The presence of these unique pottery styles attests to the continued dynamism of exchange networks along the North Konkan coast in the 6th and 7th centuries, in which places like Elephanta played a central role.

2   Politics and Patronage

Control over the North Konkan and northwest Deccan offered a considerable economic advantage for the many lineage groups aspiring to political power in the centuries following the decline of Gupta-Vākāṭaka sovereignty As a borderland between more stable polities to the north and the south, this area was a repeated site of contestation in which political boundaries were routinely redrawn as a result of military incursions and raids, and political hierarchies ever shifting as political alliances were dissolved and reconfigured.[38] Inscriptions from multiple ruling families between the 6th–9th centuries— including the Traikūṭakas, Mauryas, Sendrakas, Kalacuris, Cālukyas, Gurjaras and Rāṣṭrakūṭas, among others—record competing claims of sovereignty. The distribution of epigraphic records indicates that the influence of the region's ruling elites was narrowly constrained, and political competition was most fierce around the nodal points along the regional trajectories at the heart of the northwest Indian economy (i.e. in Lāṭa around Broach, Ujjain, and the Nasik District of the northwest Deccan). In addition to these ruling dynasties, inscriptions also record the activities of various generals, local elites, merchant collectives and guilds who emerge as important players in the political arena, often operating with a great deal of autonomy.[39] It is striking, however, that royal inscriptions are not found in significant number in the North Konkan itself. I interpret this epigraphic pattern as evidence that the coastal area was a distinct, and relatively autonomous, commercial zone.[40]

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37   See Roberta Tomber, "Beyond Western India: The Evidence from Imported Amphorae," in *Indian Ocean Commerce and the Archaeology of Western India*, ed. R. Tomber, L. Blue, and S. Abraham (London: British Association for South Asian Studies, 2010), 42–57.

38   On the larger political context of this historical period see H.T. Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, especially "Part 1: The World of Power," 25–133.

39   Romila Thapar, *A History of India* Vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1966), 110–112; K.K. Thaplyal, *Guilds in Ancient India: A Study of Guild Organization in Northern India and the Western Deccan from 600 BC to 600 AD* (New Delhi: New Age International), Chapter 7 "Guild and the State," 121–139.

40   This hypothesis is developed further in a separate article. Elizabeth A. Cecil, "Power and Piety in 'Emplaced Polities': Temple Patronage and Donative Practice under the North

After a brief survey of the political terrain, this section explores the religious landscape and considers what role regional political elites may have played in the construction of Śaiva sites. Although the Kalacuris, and other ruling elites, proclaim devotion to Śiva in their records, a closer look reveals these professions of religious identity are less straightforward than has been assumed, and in their acts of patronage rulers tended to favor gifts to brahmins over temples. To understand the patterns in religious giving that could have contributed to the creation of the monumental Śaiva cave temples, I focus on the networks of merchants and local collectives also active in these regions. The sources indicate that these communities were more invested in religious life 'on the ground' than were rulers at the time. Examining these alternative networks of patronage will afford us a new perspective on the development of the North Konkan's built religious landscape.

2.1   *The Political Landscape*

In the late 5th and early 6th century, inscriptions of the Traikūṭaka rulers found in southern Gujarat, around Nasik, and in the South Konkan record some of their activities in the greater Konkan region. Four sets of Traikūṭaka copper plates are known. Three were issued by the rulers themselves, and the fourth, a set of copper plates from the Kanheri caves in Mumbai, locates itself in the period of their rule.[41] These kings claimed a city called Aniruddhapura ('The Unassailable City') as their capital, but the location of this city is uncertain. Previous scholars have proposed a location on the west coast, perhaps Surat in southern Gujarat.[42] While Surat cannot be dismissed as a possibility, my study of the regional political geography supports a new, and more plausible hypothesis. The Traikūṭakas positioned their political center around Nasik

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Konkan Śilāhāras (9th–12th CE)," in *Puṣpikā: Tracing Ancient Indian Through Texts and Traditions*, eds. Lucas den Boer & Daniele Cuneo (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 213–231.

41 These include the Surat Plates of Vyāghrasena KS 241 (490 CE) and the Pārḍī Plates of KS 207 (457 CE), found 50 miles south of Surat. The first was issued from their capital at Aniruddhapura, and the second from a victorious military camp, Āmrakā, presumably in the Surat District. Both record the donation of land to brahmins. Two additional grants were found south of Mumbai in Maṭvan (Ratnagiri District of Maharasthtra), the first issued by Madhyamasena in 256 A.S. (505 CE) and the second by Vikramasena in 284 A.S. (533 CE). *CII* 4, 22–32, and Plates.

42 Mirashi suggests a location in the Surat district for Aniruddhapura since two of the Traikūṭaka grants were issued from villages near Surat, but these locations are referred to as military camps rather than permanent settlements. Mirashi, *CII* 4, xliv; 27–28. The name of the city could be a reference to its being somehow unconquerable (*aniruddha*). The name *aniruddha* could also refer to one of the Vṛṣṇis as a way to signal the Vaiṣṇava affiliations of the rulers.

and the Thalghat, and near the 'three-peaked mountain' (*trikūṭa*) that served as their dynastic namesake. Epigraphic and literary sources use the designation 'Trikūṭa' to refer to the range of the Sahyādris on the western border of the Nasik District and the administrative entity located there.[43] The Nasik area was a central locale from which these rulers could expand their power-base in the northeast, around Surat, where they had established military camps, and southeast, toward the Ratnagiri distinct of the South Konkan, where their copper plates were also found. As far as their religious identity and donative practices are concerned, the Traikūṭakas identified themselves as devotees of Viṣṇu (i.e. Bhāgavatas) in their coins and inscriptions. In both the Surat and Pārḍī Plates, for example, the rulers Vyāghrasena and Dahrasena are eulogized with the epithet *bhagavatpādakarmakara* (servant at the feet of the Bhagavat, i.e. Viṣṇu).

The Traikūṭakas faced considerable competition for control over their namesake region from political rivals to the south, east, and north. For example, Viṣṇukuṇḍin Mādhavavarman III claimed to have been the lord of Trikūṭa in the mid-5th century.[44] A similar claim was made by the Vākāṭaka Hariṣeṇa in an inscription from Ajanta Cave XVI in the late 5th century.[45] Inscriptions of the Mauryas found in the South Konkan attest to the political ambitions of these regional rulers.[46] And to the north, around Broach, a ruler named Saṅgamasiṃha issued a grant in KS 292 (541 CE) donating land in the '*antar narmadā viṣaya*' (the administrative zone through which the Narmadā River flows) to brahmins from Broach.[47] Since this area would have included land

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43   Mirashi and Rajgor follow Kalidāsa (*Raghuvaṃśa* 4.58–59) in identifying *trikūṭa* with the Sahyādri, i.e. the Sahya Mountain. The reference to the *pūrvatrikūṭaviṣaya* in the eighth century Anjaneri Plates (Nasik District) supports this identification. The Nasik Cave 10 inscription refers to the mountain there as *triraśmi* (three-rayed), which could allude to the three peaks (Mirashi, *CII* 4, xli).

44   Though the Viṣṇukuṇḍin central locus of power was in Andhra, their power may have extended into the southwestern Deccan as suggested by an inscription found in Khanapur in the Satara District of Maharashtra. V.V. Mirashi & Y.R. Gupte, "Khanapur Plates of Madhavavarman," *EI* 27 (1947): 312–318.

45   Bakker, *Vākāṭakas*, 1997, 34–35; Sircar, *Select Inscriptions* I, 453 (vs. 18).

46   G.S. Gai, "Bandora Plates of Maurya Anirjitavarman, Year 29," *EI* 33 (1960): 293–297; D.C. Sircar, "A Note on the Goa Copper Plate Inscription of King Candravarman," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (1942): 510–514.

47   Saṅgamasiṃha calls himself a *mahāsāmanta*, suggesting he was a political subordinate to a larger power, but this superior is unnamed making it difficult to situate Saṅgamasiṃha within the broader political landscape. Saṅgamasiṃha may have been a subordinate of the Kalacuris since the area around Broach was claimed by the Kalacuri Śaṅkaragaṇa in the late 6th century. *CII* 4, "Sunao Kala Plates of Saṅgamasiṃha: K.S. 292" (541 CE),

on both sides of the Narmadā River, it would have bordered the Traikūṭaka-controlled region quite closely.

In addition to the political rivals mentioned above, a reference in the Matvan Plates of the Traikūṭaka king Vikramasena (KS 284) 533 CE introduces yet another claim to Traikūṭaka territory by the Kalacuri rulers. These plates, along with an earlier set found at the same location, allude to a transition or struggle for power between the Kalacuris and the Traikūṭakas. The first set of Matvan Plates was issued from Aniruddhapura in 506 CE, which is described as the "victorious city of the Traikūṭakas" (*vijayāniruddhapurāt traikūṭakānām*). In the second set of Matvan Plates, issued in 533 CE, the name of the Traikūṭakas was replaced with the Kalacuris [variant spelling] (*vijayāniruddhapurāt kaṭaccurīṇāṃ*). The Traikūṭaka king, Vikramasena, is still identified as the ruling sovereign, but Aniruddhapura is called the 'victorious city of the Kalacuris'.[48] Based upon this change, Mirashi and Gokhale suppose that the Traikūṭakas became political subordinates of the Kalacuris in the 6th century. It is difficult to gauge the political situation from this single reference, a difficulty compounded by the fact that the exact location of the city is contested. Following my hypothesis that Aniruddhapura was located near Nasik, then the Kalacuri claim to this area fits within the general geographic distribution of their inscriptions, as shown below.

While it is uncertain if the Kalacuris ever had a capital city to speak of, the historiography of the period associates them closely with the town of Māhiṣmatī on the Narmadā River.[49] This connection is plausible since the sphere of Kalacuri political influence was northwest and central India, specifically around Ujjain, Vidiśā, and sites in south-central Gujarat where they had established military camps [Figure 72]. To control sites both north and south of the Narmadā would have necessitated some control of Māhiṣmatī since this prominent *tīrtha* was one of the few places where the Narmadā could be

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33–37. On the '*antar narmadā viṣaya*' see J.F. Fleet, "Note on Indian History and Geography," *IA* 32 (1903): 40–57 (56).

48   Mirashi, *CII* 4, clxvii; "The Riddle of the Māṭvan Plates of the Traikūṭaka King Vikramasena: Ābhira year 284," in *Literary and Historical Studies in Indology* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), 125–130; Shobhana Gokhale, "Matvan Plates of the Traikutaka king Vikramasena: K.S. 284," in *Studies in Indology and Medieval History: Professor G.H. Khare Felicitation Volume*, Mate and Kulkarni eds. (Poona: Joshi & Lokande Prakashan, 1974), 86–94.

49   In the relatively short temporal span represented in the records, the Kalacuris were operating from military camps in northwest and central India and these rulers had no fixed capital city to speak of. The connection of the early Kalacuris with the town of Māhiṣmatī on the Narmadā is likely anachronistic as it is based on the reading of later Kalacuri (i.e. Haihaya) records in which the rulers claim descent from Arjuna Kārtavīrya, legendary king of Māhiṣmatī. See Mirashi, *CII* 4, xliv.

EARLY KALACURI
INSCRIPTIONS:
FIND SPOTS &
GRANTED LANDS

Vidisha   *Narmada River*

Vadodara   Ujjain

Broach

Mahishmati

Elephanta Island

Bhokardan

Nasik

○ Orienting Points
● Granted Lands
● Epigraphic Find spots
● Military Camps
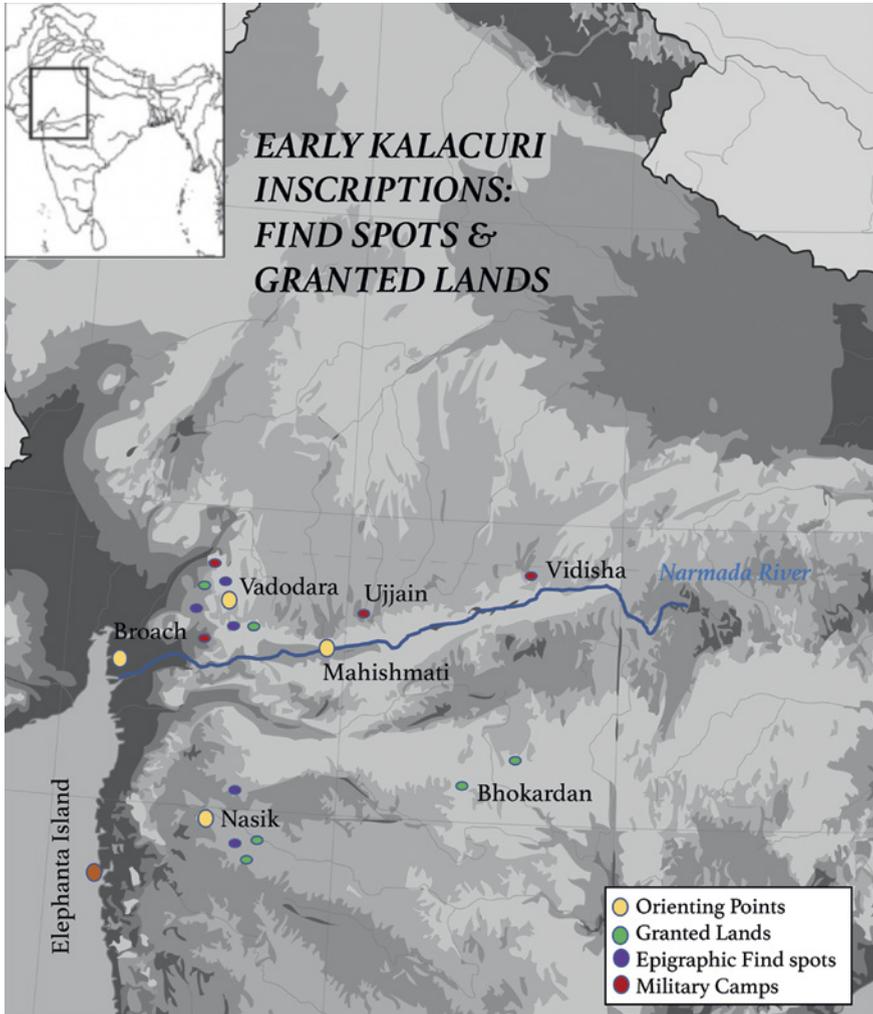
FIGURE 72   Map of Kalacuri epigraphic find spots and granted lands

crossed. Some of the lands granted in the inscriptions were located in what is
now the Nasik District of Maharashtra, an indication that their political influ-
ence extended to the western Deccan as well. The villages granted in the Nasik
District were a considerable distance away from their military encampments,
but would have afforded access to the Thalghat, one of the three major passes
through the Western Ghats. The Kalacuris were not unique in adopting this
strategy of economic control. Control over the Deccan routes was integral to
the success and expansion of Sātavāhana polity and inscriptions of Kalacuri
contemporaries were also found near the same nodal points.

There are five known early Kalacuri inscriptions. The earliest of these were issued by Śaṅkaragaṇa, who is thought to have ruled from approximately 575–600 CE.[50] In his records he praises his father Kṛṣṇarāja, the first known Kalacuri king. No records issued by Kṛṣṇarāja have survived, but copper coins bearing the legend 'Śrī Kṛṣṇarāja' with a couchant bull on the reverse have been found in the Deccan and the North Konkan.[51] His silver coins, dispersed even more widely, were found in Rajasthan, the North Konkan, and in Vidarbha. Śaṅkaragaṇa's son, Buddharāja issued two grants in the early 7th century, one from a military camp at Vidiśā, and the other from a military camp at Ānandapura (modern Vaḍnagar, approximately 100 km north of Ahmedabad in northern Gujarat).[52] Following the defeat of Buddharāja in the early 7th century, likely at the hands of Cālukya Pulakeśin II (see below), the identity of his successors and their activities is difficult to trace with certainty.[53]

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50   Śaṅkaragaṇa's inscriptions include the Lapkaman grants K.S. 345, 347 (595 CE, Ahmedabad District), which record the donation of lands in south-central Gujarat. These were followed by the Abhoṇa grant K.S. 347 (596–97 CE) issued from a military camp at Ujjain and found at Abhona in the Nasik District and record the donation of lands in Bhogavardhana (Bhokardhan), the specific village named is Vallisika (Valsa) 7 miles south of Bhokardhan in Aurangabad District. The Saṅkheda grants (Baroda District, northwest of Broach) were issued from a military camp at Nirguṇḍīpadraka, in southeast Gujarat, by Śaṅkaragaṇa's general Śantilla. This record is undated, but is thought to be from the late 6th century based upon the dates of Śaṅkaragaṇa's other inscriptions.

51   *CII* 4, xlvi; R.K. Sharma, *Coinage of Central India: Early Coins from the Narmada Valley* (New Dehi: Aryan Books International, 2011), 5; 33–34; On the silver coins see J.F. Fleet, "On the Silver Coins of the Early Guptas and others connected with them," *IA* XIV (1885): 65–68 (68).

52   His Vāḍṇer Plates K.S. 360 (610 CE, Nasik District) issued from a military camp at Vidiśā and his Sarsavni Plates K.S. 361 (610 CE, Vadodara District) issued from a military camp at Ānandapura (modern Vaḍnagar in northern Gujarat). *CII* 4, 47–56. The Kalacuris may have cultivated alliances in southern Gujarat. A grant dated (KS 346) 595–6 CE mentions an individual named Taralasvāmin who is described as the 'light in the house of the Kalacuri family' (*kaṭaccurikulaveśmapradīpa*). Mirashi deems the grant spurious, since Taralasvāmin does not mention his political superior who, judging from the Abhona grant issued in the following year, would have been Kalacuri Śaṅkaragaṇa. But it may be that Taralasvāmin was a member of a subordinate (or even a competing) family that was also attempting to lay claim to Broach. "Spurious Māṅkaṇī Plates of Taralasvāmin: K.S. 346," *CII* 4, 160–165. R.C. Majumdar, *The Classical Age*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), 197.

53   It may be that they continued to rule under the control of the Cālukyas or they moved east toward Jabalpur (Tripuri) where later branches of the dynasty are attested from inscriptions in the mid-8th century. According to Mirashi, the next known actor from the Kalacuri camp is Vāmarāja (675–700 CE) who, after the death of Harṣa in the latter half of 7th century, took control of Kālañjara fort, which had long been a site considered sacred to Śiva. See Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 213.

Given the key locales mentioned in their inscriptions it is evident that the Kalacuri military and political strategy was aimed at controlling 'nodal' points along the major trade routes and, more specifically, those points at which regional, subsidiary routes joined with the major north-south trajectories (for example, Broach, Ujjain, and Vidiśā). Kalacuri control over these places also accounts for the widespread distribution of Kṛṣṇarāja's coins, including those found on Elephanta Island. The presence of Kalacuri copper coins on the island is commonly cited as proof of Kalacuri patronage of the cave temples. Shobana Gokhale and Spink offer the unconvincing hypothesis that these coins were paid to the laborers working in the caves.[54] These coins are, in fact, not unique to Elephanta. Kṛṣṇarāja's copper coins were found elsewhere in the Deccan, and his silver coins have been found throughout northwest and central India where they could have been circulated via commerce between the Konkan ports and the Kalacuri-controlled hinterlands.[55] As a final point, since Kṛṣṇarāja's coins were still in use in the Deccan 150 years after the period of his rule—as evinced by the mention of taxes paid in '*kṛṣṇārāja-rūpakas*' in an early 8th century inscription—we need not assume the distribution of the coins indicates the geographic extent of Kṛṣṇarāja's territory.[56]

2.2   *What's in a Name: the Politics of Religious Identity*

Considering the dynamism of the political landscape around the Sahya Mountain, it is unlikely that the construction of the Śaiva monuments was the work of one particular ruling family. Although the Kalacuri rulers identified themselves as devotees of Śiva—an affiliation expressed consistently through epithets given in their inscriptions—their donative records contain

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54   One of Kṛṣṇarāja's silver coins was found in the courtyard of the Rāmeśvara cave temple at Ellora and this find has been cited by Spink as evidence for Kalacuri patronage there. Shobhana Gokhale, "Elephanta Hoard of Copper Coins of Kṛṣṇarāja," *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India* 38.2 (1976): 89–91; Mirashi, *CII* 4, xlvi.

55   Nor are finds of copper coins unique to Elephanta as Spink has claimed Spink, "Elephanta," 236. Since Spink reports that many, if not most, of the copper coins found at Elephanta are extremely corroded, it is possible that they are not all Kalacuri issues. Burgess and Indraji reported the discovery of more than one thousand copper coins at Lake Vihar near the Kanheri caves on Salsette Island in the mid-19th century, some of which are comparable in size to the Kalacuri copper coins. According to Burgess's report, "During the excavations in making a path round the upper contour of the great reservoir at Vihar in Salsette, in January 1855, upwards of a thousand copper coins were dug up in an earthenware pot … Many are corroded, half a dozen are distinctly Muhammadan, others have some variation of a cross symbol with four cardinal points marks." Dimensions reported by Gokhale: round diam: 1.02 cm to 1.5 cm. See Burgess and Indraji, *Inscriptions of the Cave Temples of Western India* (Bombay: Government and Central Press, 1881 [1976]), 66.

56   "Anjaneri Plates (First Set) of Bhogaśakti: K.S. 461" (709/10 or 710/11 CE), *CII* 4, 146–159.

no mention of temples or religious monuments. To resolve this apparent disconnect between royal epithets and the reality of donative practices requires that we reconsider the politics of religious identity in this historical period.

Religious identity was clearly an important facet of the Kalacuri political persona. Śaṅkaragaṇa, for example, describes himself as a *paramamāheśvara*, "completely devoted to the Maheśvara, (namely, Śiva)" and declares that his father, Kṛṣṇarāja, was devoted to Paśupati (*paśupatisamāśraya*) from birth.[57] No inscriptions issued by Kṛṣṇarāja have survived, but his coins bear the legend *paramamāheśvara* and the image of a bull on the obverse has been interpreted as representing Śiva's iconic vehicle. The family preference for Śaivism is affirmed by Śaṅkaragaṇa's son, Buddharāja who also identifies himself as a *māheśvara* and copies verbatim the Pāśupata affiliation from his father's inscriptions. Buddharāja's wife, Anantamahayī, follows suit, calling herself *pāśupatarājñī*.[58] The names of many of the individuals involved in the issuing of their inscriptions further indicate the influence of Śiva devotion within their political circle.[59] In light of this preference for Śaivism, the fact that none of the known Kalacuri inscriptions allude to the construction of religious monuments or temples is significant. If Kṛṣṇarāja had sponsored a monument on a par with Elephanta, one would expect some mention of it in records of his successors, which praise him at length.[60]

The widespread use of the epithet *paramamāheśvara* among political elites indicates that it was becoming a political idiom. Contemporaneous epigraphic records show that the Kalacuris were in esteemed company in adopting this title. Members of competing and ruling families in northwest India—including the Maitrakas, Gurjaras, and Sendrakas—also adopted the moniker,[61] but the majority of these records commemorate land-grants to

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57 *CII* 4, "Ābhoṇa Plates of Śaṅkaragaṇa: K.S. 347," 38–43. In addition, the suffix *-gaṇa* in the name Śaṅkaragaṇa suggests a Śaiva affiliation. See Chapter 2 n. 84.

58 *CII* 4, "Vaḍner Plates of Buddharāja: K.S. 360," 47–50.

59 The composer of the Sarsavni inscription was named Śivarāja. The *dūtaka* for the Lapkaman and Abhona Plates was named Pāśupata. On this topic see also Annette Schmiedchen, "Patronage of Śaivism and Other Religious Groups under the Dynasties of the Kaṭaccuris, Gurjaras and Sendrakas from the 5th to the 8th centuries," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56 (2013): 349–363.

60 In the Abhona Plates, Kṛṣṇarāja is lauded primarily for his military prowess. Mention is made of his generosity and charitable donations made for the sake of gaining religious merit, but these statements are communicated in a general way and no specific donations or events are mentioned.

61 For example, some of the Maitraka rulers called themselves *māheśvaras*: In the Maila Plates of Dharasena II the king describes the lineage progenitor, Bhaṭaraka as a *māheśvara* (*CII* 3, no. 38. Plate XXIV). Guhasena adopted both the epithets *paramopāsaka*

brahmins.[62] Royal patronage of Śaiva institutions in this particular area did not flourish until the 10th century under the Śilāhāra rulers.[63] In their donations, the Kalacuris chose, like their political contemporaries, to extend their patronage to brahmins through grants of land and villages to support the continuation of their ritual practices. Rather than endowing monuments, showing support for brahmins and acting as the patron of their sacrifices remained some of the defining aspects of the king's royal persona. By normalizing this popular royal epithet, my intention is not to exclude the possibility of Kalacuri donations to temples or religious institutions. Rather, I wish to question the prevailing assumptions that expressions of Śaiva religiosity necessarily entailed the 'monumental' context of a temple, and that every temple constructed during this period functioned as a 'royal center'. The construction of the Śaiva cave temples would have required a surplus of time and capital and such undertakings may not have aligned with the larger Kalacuri political strategy as they worked to maintain their control over the nodal centers of trade and exchange in central India and the Deccan.

2.3   *Building Temple & Community*

Even if the patronage of Śaiva religious institutions was not yet a ubiquitous part of the donative repertoire of rulers, the question of who sponsored the Śaiva caves, and why, remains unanswered. Given the paucity of epigraphic evidence from the sites themselves, an historical alternative must be constructed inferentially. This requires returning to the epigraphic records and considering what evidence survives of patronage by groups and individuals outside, or on the peripheries, of the political sphere (i.e. merchant groups, guilds, artisans, village collectives, etc.). Donors from such groups contributed significantly to Buddhist institutions in the North Konkan and Deccan in the early centuries CE. In inscriptions from the North Konkan Buddhist site

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and *paramamāheśvara*, suggesting affiliations with both Buddhist and Śaiva communities (G. Bühler, "Additional Valabhî Grants, Nos. IX–XIV," *IA* 7: 66–86 [66]; "A Grant of King Guhasena of Valabhî," *IA* 4: 174–76). Beginning in the mid–late 7th century the Śaiva epithet is also adopted by the Gurjara rulers beginning with Dadda III and Jayabhaṭa III (Mirashi, *CII* 4, liv). Sendraka Allaśakti also professes to be a devotee of Maheśvara in his Kasare Plates (K.S. 404; 653 CE), *CII* 4, no. 25, Plate XVIII.

62   Annette Schmiedchen similarly concludes that there is little evidence for the patronage of Śaiva groups by rulers in these regions. Exceptions being the aforementioned Sendraka grant of Allaśakti, which records the donation of land to a Yajurvedic brahmin to support the worship of a local form of Śiva called Alaṅghyeśvara and a Cālukya grant by Dharāśraya Jayasiṃha to support worship of Śiva under the name of Kāpāleśvara. Schmiedchen, "Patronage of Śaivism," 355–356.

63   Cecil, "Power and Piety," 222–224.

of Kanheri, for example, merchants, traders, and craftsmen are mentioned as donors, along with the monastic residents themselves.[64] Although the inscriptions at Kanheri largely predate the supposed mid-6th–early 7th century date of Elephanta, the preceding pages have shown that trade and commerce in the area had not significantly diminished, as has been assumed. Given the relative stability of the region's economy, it is possible that these well-established patronage networks and patterns sustained the Śaiva community as well.

As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, merchants, traders, and other collective bodies held positions of considerable influence in the early medieval period and they were instrumental in the support and management of temples. Religious giving and the growth of temple centered practices forged connections between 'local' people and broader, supra-local networks and institutions. That the cave temples of the north Konkan supported these kinds of social networks accords with the patterns observed in the surrounding area, as well as with the patterns of patronage that can be observed in later records from the 9th and 10th centuries.[65] I provide a few summary examples below.

The late 6th century Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa (VS 649/592 CE)[66] affords valuable insight into the dynamics of power that existed between local economic organizations and rulers and highlights the degree of influence that the merchant community enjoyed in this area. Composed by a local ruler who would have been a contemporary of the Kalacuris, this inscription comprises a list of seventy-two allowances made for a merchant community in Lohāṭakagrāma, a village in southern Gujarat—perhaps the ancient port of Lothal, approximately 150 km northwest of Broach on the Gulf of Khambhat. This extensive list of

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64   Lüders, "List of Brāhmī Inscriptions," nos. 984–1034. Many of these donors were residents of the nearby ports—Kalyan, Chaul, and Sopara are mentioned in the donative records—and from the Deccan around Nasik. Their gifts included money, agricultural tracts, and they sponsored construction projects of water cisterns and halls.

65   For example, a series of records from the port of Sanjan records the creation and maintenance of a Devī *maṭha*. Endowed by a family of brahmins at the beginning of the 10th century, the administration of the *maṭha* also involved the local governor of Arab origins, Madhumatī. Since Madhumatī is further qualified as *tājikānvaya* (of Arab descent, in Verse 17), Sircar is no doubt correct in understanding this name as a Sanskritized version of Muhammad. In his duties, Madhumatī was assisted by collectives of goldsmiths, stonemasons, carpenters, and others. See Cecil, "Power and Piety," 219–220; D.C. Sircar, "Rāṣṭrakūṭa Charters from Chinchani," *EI* 32 (1957–8). 45–76.

66   D.C. Sircar, *EI* 30: 163–181; D.D. Kosambi, "Indian Feudal Trade Charters," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 2 (1959): 281–293. The charter was then ratified in K.S. (605 AD) by another local ruler in the area. We may also infer the proximity of Lohāṭā to a port from the mention of various taxes levied on goods carried by boat in regulations 53–61. See also Harald Wiese and Sadananda Das, *The Charter of Viṣṇuṣeṇa* (Halle: Universitätsverlag Halle-Wittenberg, 2019).

rules and regulations insured the merchants' autonomy, their ability to engage in trade without restrictions and taxes, and freed them from obligations to rulers and local landowners.[67]

In addition to reflecting the autonomy of merchant communities, a set of early 6th century copper plates from Sañjeli in southern Gujarat show clearly the extent to which economic actors and local collectives were involved in the religious life of the area.[68] These records make provisions for the support of a local Viṣṇu temple dedicated to the deity Jayasvāmī. The temple was endowed by Virādhyikā, the mother of local ruler Mahārāja Mātṛdāsa, but the records show that the maintenance and support of this religious center involved people from various social strata and economic means. The first plate mentions donations by a group of local residents and foreign businessmen—coming from as far as Daśapura, Ujjain, and Kanauj—who agree to impose certain taxes on non-prestige goods (i.e. molasses, salt, cotton, and grain) to support worship at the temple.[69] This was done for the increase of their own religious merit. The temples in this area were clearly important *loci* of social interaction between merchant groups, both local and supra-local, craftspeople, agriculturalists, as well as political elites. In addition to the various pilgrims, religious specialists, and temple servants who resided on the temple grounds.[70]

In the village of Jayapura near Anjaneri in the Nasik District,[71] Bhogaśakti, a ruler from a branch of the Cālukya family, issued two sets of copper plates along with an affiliated officer named Tejavarmarāja in 710 CE. In the first set of plates, Bhogaśakti donates eight villages to the temple of Nārāyaṇa called Bhogeśvara. The naming of the deity after the local ruler memorializes him and his pious donation. The care of the enshrined deity, temple, and its property

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67   For example, the first item (Lines 1–2) concerns the inheritance of property and ensures that property of one without an heir would be inherited by the guild rather than by a local ruler. Lines 11–13 state that guild members would not be required to pay taxes and dues to rulers, nor could they be called to labor for the rulers without pay. Line 24 prohibits the seizure of peasants traveling to markets by rulers or local landowners for labor in their fields. The inscription also records some of the duties and requirements for guild members along with detailed lists of the permissible taxes on different kinds of merchandise from bamboo to wine (Lines 25–72).

68   R.N. Mehta & A.M. Thakkar, *M.S. University Copper Plates of the Time of Toramana* (Vadodara: M.S. University Archaeology Series 14, 1978); K.V. Ramesh, "Three Early Charters from Sanjeli in Gujarat," *EI* 40 (1973–5): 175–186.

69   Mehta & Thakkar, *University Copper Plates*, 14 (plate of regnal year 3), lines 3–4.

70   These people are mentioned in lines 3–5 of the plate of regnal year 6, which specify provisions to be made for their care and special meals. Mehta & Thakkar, *University Copper Plates*, 15, lines 3–5.

71   "Anjaneri Plates (First Set) of Bhogaśakti: K.S. 461" (709/10 or 710/11 CE), *CII* 4, 146–153.

is then entrusted to the collective body of the town's merchants. The inscription also mentions that the interest acquired from the rental of temple-owned lands was to be used by the same collective to supply incense for the temple rituals.[72] A contemporaneous inscription from nearby Thane in the North Konkan records similar modes of corporate patronage. The Mānor Plates dated (SS 671/749–50 CE), praise the donation of a village to the Śiva temple of Bādeśvara by a collective (*mahājana*) of local brahmins.[73] While the donors acknowledge the sovereignty of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa ruler Dantidurga, the king was not involved directly in the endowment.

3   Śaiva Spaces in the North Konkan

Understanding the North Konkan caves as the work of diverse networks of donors and patrons aids in analyzing the structure and execution of the area's three prominent cave complexes—Jogeśvarī, Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta. The articulation of these spaces is evidence of the different social purposes they served and the communities that they supported. While drawing attention to the unique features of each excavation, the discussion that follows also emphasizes continuities in their artistic features and style. This aesthetic resonance could reflect the work of an atelier of artists active in the region for generations. In contrast with previous studies of the caves that assume a chronological frame in which the sites operated in chronological succession—Jogesvarī as the oldest, followed by Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta—I argue that their shared iconographic themes and idioms provide a strong case for viewing these monuments as broadly contemporaneous institutions within a shared religious landscape.[74]

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72   In the second set of plates from approximately the same time, Bhogaśakti granted additional privileges to the merchant communities in villages under his jurisdiction ("Anjaneri Plates (Second Set) of Bhogaśakti," *CII* 4, 154–159). These inscriptions are not dated, but based on the repeated mention of Tejavarmarāja from the first Anjaneri inscription, Mirashi concludes that these two sets of plates were composed around the same time. Mirashi, *CII* 4, 156.

73   V.V. Mirashi, "Mānor Plates of Rāṣṭrakuṭa Dantidurga: Śaka Year 671," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 35 (1959): 183–188.

74   Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*; *EITA* 2.1, 85–92; Spink, "Monuments of the Early Kalacuri Period"; Spink, "The Great Cave at Elephanta"; Collins, *Śiva at Elephanta.*

FIGURE 73   Approach to Jogeśvarī caves

3.1   *Tracing a Pāśupata Presence: Jogeśvarī*

Of the three North Konkan sites, the cave complex at Jogeśvarī is the largest
and, in many respects, the most complex of the three sites. And, perhaps of
greatest significance for this study, Jogeśvarī is the only one of the three cave
temples that preserves compelling evidence for a Pāśupata affiliation. The caves
are oriented along an east-west axis, with the primary access point being the
east descent [Figure 73]. That the east was intended to be the main entrance
is clearly articulated by the structure of the monument and accompanying
iconographic program, which guide the devotee through a series of entryways
punctuated by important iconic scenes from the mythology of Śiva. This ex-
tended processional path into the center of the cave structure culminates with
the central *liṅga* shrine. The first doorway is framed by a *Rāvaṇānugrahamūrti*
panel, now largely destroyed. The visitor then enters a long hall with subsid-
iary shrines on each side framed by a series of pillars. On the left, there are
faint traces of a *Mātṛkā* panel, which can be inferred by the series of areolae
and the remaining female head with a child's head on the proper lower left
side. Opposite the *Mātṛkās*, on the other side of the hall, are three panels of
which only the Gaṇeśa in the central niche can be clearly identified. The image
is under active worship [Figure 74]. Images of Durgā and Skanda may have

FIGURE 74   Gaṇeśa shrine, Jogeśvarī caves

occupied the spaces to the left and right, respectively, of Gaṇeśa, but these are
too damaged to identify clearly.[75] The inclusion of these deities within a space
so clearly framed as Śaiva serves to integrate them, and presumably their wor-
ship, within the monument as a whole. The next doorway is framed by a danc-
ing Śiva, with two kneeling figures visible in the foreground. On either side
an extended scene was carved, but only three stout *gaṇas* on the left remain.
Passing through the final entryway the devotee again encounters images of im-
portant mythological scenes: the depiction of the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī,
and the couple playing dice [Figures 75 & 76].

Much of the rich iconography in the caves has been eroded by water and
lost due to the porosity of the stone, making it difficult to reconstruct the full

75   The sculptures in the panels to the left and right of the Gaṇeśa are heavily damaged. The
       far left may have contained an image of Durgā, as Collins suggests. An image of Yogeśvara
       is a second possibility—there are remains of what looks like a human torso seated on a
       kind of pedestal. The right contained a standing male figure with three smaller figures
       positioned in front. One of these smaller figures has a goat's head, perhaps Naigameṣa.
       An image of Skanda with attendants could have occupied this panel. See Collins, *Śiva at
       Elephanta*, Figure 85.

FIGURE 75   Panel depicting Śiva and Pārvatī playing dice, Jogeśvarī caves

program. The spatial articulation of the excavation, however, allows for a partial reconstruction of the physical experience of the site. The prolonged approach and descent accentuate the experience of entering a cave and the multiple entryways with their carved architraves encourage the visitor to pause and linger at these junctures. The carved panels in the pillared hall similarly encourage the visitor to stop, and they contribute to the slow and graduated flow of the monument as a whole. The incorporation of smaller shrines to Gaṇeśa and the *Mātṛkās* in an ancillary space, preceding the main *liṅga* shrine, gives spatial expression to a divine hierarchy. These deities are included within the cave's pantheon, but the central shrine is reserved for Śiva. We might assume that the deities depicted in these large panels would have been subjects of individual worship and ritual practices, much as the Gaṇeśa image remains a focus of *pūjā* today.

After processing through the entries and ancillary shrines, the visitor arrives at the inner sanctum, where the Pāśupata affiliation is expressed visually. The *liṅga* shrine is framed by two images of Lakulīśa. One appears in the doorframe to the main (east) entrance. The other is carved on the west side of the *liṅga* shrine [Figure 77]. In the image that frames the shrine on the east side, the teacher is shown surrounded by four figures who may have been intended to represent his four students. While I earlier suggested that the textual icon of

FIGURE 76   Panel depicting wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī, Jogeśvarī caves

the four students in the SP gestures to a kind of totality or visual plenum, I think we can see a comparable idea articulated visually in this icon. The inclusion of the four surrounding figures creates a totality or a 'set.' The fact that these accompanying figures are not depicted in exactly the same way also indicates a certain diversity within this set. I would suggest that these figures were intended to represent not only Lakulīśa's students, but different registers of the Pāśupata community as well. The figures in the upper left and right corner appear aged and their beards and matted hair suggest asceticism. By contrast, the figures in the foreground appear youthful and they do not bear ascetic marks. Perhaps these two represent a younger generation of initiates or even laypeople. The image of Lakulīśa here is also unique. He projects a powerful physical presence and, notably, he does not appear to be ithyphallic. Thus he is absent one of Lakulīśa's key iconographic features that is also a significant marker of the Śaiva ascetic. The image is a synoptic icon, a visualization of the community that gestures to a totality while also acknowledging the internal diversity of the community. The Lakulīśa on the back of the shrine is shown alone and framed by a floriated arc. It is also worth noting that this icon is not ithyphallic.

FIGURE 77A   Lakulīśa with four attendants, Jogeśvarī caves

FIGURE 77B   Lakulīśa, west side of *liṅga* shrine, Jogeśvarī caves

FIGURE 78   Exterior of Maṇḍapeśvar caves

3.2   *Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta*

While the Jogeśvarī temple is gradually revealed as the visitor is slowly ushered through the cave, the temples of Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta are articulated in a very different manner. Rather than using the cave to heighten the experience of interiority, these sites oppose the physical confines of the rock to create more open and accessible spaces. Maṇḍapeśvar is a relatively simple excavation framed by a pillared hall [Figure 78]. The main cave at Elephanta, a far grander and imposing a monument in scale, displays a similar concern for openness and movement.

In their iconography, the three North Konkan sites depict many of the same key mythological tableaus. For example, the icon of the dancing Śiva, which appeared above the second doorframe at Jogeśvarī also appears, and is rendered in remarkably similar fashion, at Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta [Figure 79]. The *Mātṛs* are incorporated prominently within the program at Elephanta as well. Charles Collins has explored the overall iconographic programs and stylistic resonance between these sites in great detail. Yet, for all their shared artistic features, neither Elephanta nor Maṇḍapeśvar present compelling evidence of a Pāśupata presence. I do not agree with Collins' identification of the Yogeśvara icon, located in the west wing of the main cave at Elephanta, as Lakulīśa since there is no clear indication that the figure held a club.[76] Maṇḍapeśvar, however, does include a Lakulīśa [Figure 80], but the position and presentation

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76   Collins, *Śiva at Elephanta*, Figure 18.

FIGURE 79   Śiva Naṭeśa panel, Maṇḍapeśvar caves

FIGURE 80   Lakulīśa, Maṇḍapeśvar caves

of the image suggest that it was not a significant component in the overall program at the site. For one, the 'cut-in' technique used to carve this sculpture is different than the relief style of carving in the other panels. This difference in execution could indicate that the image was carved at a different time; that is, it was not conceived as part of the program. And rather than occupying a place of prominence over the *liṅga* shrine, as we saw in the case of Jogeśvarī, at Maṇḍapeśvar Lakulīśa appears as an iconographic afterthought, nearly hidden on an interior wall adjacent the dancing Śiva panel. Locating a Pāśupata presence in the North Konkan clearly requires further consideration. It is evident that both Maṇḍapeśvar and Elephanta were important places for the early medieval *māheśvara* community, along with other locales in the vicinity like Parel, where monumental images of Śiva were recovered. Despite the popularity of Śaivism in the early medieval North Konkan, only Jogeśvarī presents us with compelling evidence for a Pāśupata affiliation.

4   Alternative Cartographies: Śaiva Centers in the Deccan

A single theory is not sufficient to explain the geographic distribution of both the North Konkan and the Deccan sites. Unlike the North Konkan caves, the Deccan Śaiva centers do not align as easily with the major caravan routes. The clusters of rock-cut caves in the hinterlands were dispersed much more widely, often at a considerable distance from one another and from the major trade routes. The pages that follow offer only a preliminary analysis since the material is too copious and the geographic range too expansive to permit a detailed treatment at this stage. The discussion following presents the Deccan sites as an illuminating set of comparanda that supports my hypothesis about the North Konkan by showing how the growth of Śaivism was shaped by regional geographies.

The connection between Buddhist centers and trade is also less apparent in the Deccan than in the North Konkan, and efforts to argue such linkages display a certain degree of circularity: since the Buddhist caves of the Deccan are assumed to have developed along trade routes, the presence of a Buddhist cave site is thus taken to indicate the presence of a trade route.[77] The major Buddhist sites are not always positioned along the most direct or geographically accessible routes between the market towns and settlements, but since Buddhist sites are taken as "fixed points" on the route, they must be accommodated

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77   Chakrabarti, *Deccan Routes*, 65.

within the itinerary.[78] As Kathleen Morrison has noted, remains of Buddhist centers are conspicuously absent from the Sātavāhana political centers of the Deccan, like Paithan.[79] This contrasting pattern in the siting of religious centers (both Buddhist and brahmanical) conveniently along the major routes does not mean that these places were isolated from economic networks. Local and regional routes would have provided alternative channels. Evidence from archeological excavations at Deccan sites like Kaundinyapur, Shisupalgar, and Nevasa also highlights the vitality of localized patterns of mobility. Analysis of the material evidence shows that while these hinterland areas were not cosmopolitan centers for the exchange of exotic or 'prestige goods,' short-distance trade flourished.[80] In terms of how they are embedded within the physical terrain, however, the Deccan sites were, like their North Konkan counterparts, placed in elevated areas and nearby water sources. And like the coastal caves, systems of water collection and storage suggest the important social function of these sanctified spaces, particularly in the dry season.

4.1   *Śaiva Caves? Questions of Community and Identity*

The Deccan sites have garnered far less scholarly attention than the Konkan caves. This is, in part, because they are not as well preserved and because their artistic features make an easy classification impossible. The most important recent study of the region is Pia Brancaccio's work on the Aurangabad caves,

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78   Chakrabarti, *Deccan Routes*, 65.

79   Kathleen Morrison, "Trade, Urbanism, and Agricultural Expansion: Buddhist Monastic Institutions and the State in the Early Historic Western Deccan," *World Archaeology* 27.2 (1995): 203–221, 216. P.K. Reddy also challenges the idea that Buddhist sites were located consistently along trade routes and similarly calls for consideration of other factors influencing the development of the Buddhist landscape in Andhra. Reddy, "God, Trade, and Worship: A Glimpse into the Religion of Early Āndhradeśa," *East and West* 48.3 (1998): 291–311.

80   For example, Monica Smith's analysis of ceramics from Kaundinyapur shows that the region developed its own traditions of pottery making. Summarizing the results of her excavation, Smith concludes, "it is not surprising that pottery and other durable goods were made of local materials rather than transported hundreds of kilometers from the coasts. The trade networks of central India were constructed primarily to meet the local demands with regional materials, and did not depend on coastal peoples for any but the most exotic of goods (such as shell for bangles)." This evidence suggests that regional networks of exchange contributed a significant amount of the daily use and household goods excavated at the site. Monica Smith, "Systematic Surface Survey at the Early Historic Site of Kaundinyapur, India," *Man and Environment* 25.1 (2000): 75–87; *The Archaeology of an Early Historic Town in Central India* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International Series 1002, 2001). The results of these surveys relating specifically to trade are summarized in Monica Smith "Role of Local Trade Networks in the Indian Subcontinent," *Man and Environment* 27.1 (2002): 139–151.

which provides an illuminating study of Buddhist religious life at the site. In her discussion of patronage in the Deccan, Brancaccio relies on Spink's Kalacuri hypothesis and concludes, based upon stylistic connections between Konkan monuments and those of Aurangabad, that the "early Kalacuri dynasty may have functioned as a bridge between these regions not only for the diffusion of a new visual idiom but also for the dissemination of the Śaiva ideology it expressed."[81] While stylistic analysis may indeed point to connections between the Aurangabad and North Konkan caves, inferring the movement of artisans and ateliers provides a more likely explanation than political activities of the Kalacuris. Further, Rajan's useful analysis of stylistic connections between the Deccan sites and those further south is an indication that this region was an artistic crossroads, preserving traces of multiple influences and inspirations.[82]

Since we lack documented evidence for patronage at any of these sites, and the Kalacuris have been discussed at length above, in this final section I focus on what the organization of these spaces and the variety of religious imagery preserved might reveal about Śaivism in the early medieval Deccan, looking specifically at evidence from the caves at Aurangabad, Bhokardhan, and Takli-Dhokeśvar. When compared with the iconography of the North Konkan caves, those of the Deccan show a greater degree of diversity and eclecticism. In the North Konkan sites, the high level of skill displayed in the carving and the relatively univocal presentation of the iconographic program, in which key scenes from Śaiva mythology were repeated across the three sites, suggests that this region was developing a Śaiva religious community as distinct from among the larger religious milieu. In contrast, the Deccan caves reflect a more multivocal religious identity in which quotidian concerns for protection, fertility, and prosperity are foregrounded. The absence of Lakulīśa images at these sites also suggests that these places were not integrated within a Pāśupata network.

4.2   *The Brahmanical Cave at Aurangabad*

The so-called 'Brahmanical cave' in the series of cave temples on the outskirts of Aurangabad preserves important traces of a shared religious landscape. The Aurangabad cave complex was part of the extensive network of such Buddhist sites in the Deccan, such as the well-known caves at Ajanta and Ellora.

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81   Pia Brancaccio, *The Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 205. For an overview of similar patterns in scholarship on Ellora's patronage see Lisa N. Owen, *Carving Devotion in the Jain Caves at Ellora* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 160–163.

82   In Rajan's catalogue, these sites are connected with the patronage and influence of the Cālukyas—albeit somewhat tentatively qualified as 'Provincial,' a designation that distinguishes them from the royal centers like Ellora or Bādāmi. Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, 160–167.

FIGURE 81   Aurangabad, Brahmanical cave, 6 of the *Saptamātṛkās* with Vīrabhadra

The series of nine completed caves occupy the western and eastern faces of the hills and were excavated between the late 4th and early 7th centuries CE.[83] Only one of these caves in the eastern group contains iconographic evidence of brahmanical and, more specifically, Śaiva-related religious activity. The front-facing wall contains a large image of Gaṇeśa and an image of Durgā *Siṃhavāhinī* on the proper left side of Gaṇeśa. The left interior wall contains a large panel depicting the *Mātṛs* flanked by Śiva as Vīrabhadra. Perhaps due to a lack of space, the image of Cāmuṇḍā is carved on the adjacent wall to the right side of Gaṇeśa [Figure 81]. This simple cave shows evidence of a series of additions over time; for example, in the different carving styles used to create the two Buddha images seated in *padmāsana* in the right interior wall: one placed upon a projected platform and the other, adjacent image, now severely damaged, is a set-in carving [Figure 82].

    In his analysis of the iconographic program, Rajan interprets the inclusion of the *Saptamātṛkā* panel as evidence of the superseding of Buddhism by the brahmanical tradition. He comments, "The importance of the cave would perhaps lie in the fact that it presents a striking evidence of a supplanting by brahmanical art of the Buddhist in the same cave, thus marking the twilight

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83   I have followed the chronology and dating of the caves proposed by Brancaccio, *Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad.*

FIGURE 82   Aurangabad, Brahmanical cave, sculpture of the Buddha

hours of Buddhist activity at Aurangabad and around Ellora [...]"[84] Rajan's as-
sessment that Buddhist activity was in a state of decline in the Western Deccan
by the end of the 7th century may be accurate, but the language of 'supplanting'
is too strong in this case. The presence of Śaiva-related deities in a single cave
of a much larger Buddhist complex does not seem sufficient evidence to infer

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84   Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, 157.

a general dominance of the brahmanical pantheon over the Buddhist.[85] The placement of the Gaṇeśa image in the center of the front panel is suggestive of a hierarchy, as the devotees' eyes would fall first upon this deity. But the images of the Buddha on the right side remained undisturbed, a suggestion that the engagement with the Goddesses, their accompanying members of the Śaiva pantheon, and the Buddha did not present a problematic incongruity to the visitors who used the space.[86] Brancaccio similarly characterizes the relationship between the Śaiva and the Buddhist communities as essentially agonistic and she interprets the prominence of the Buddhist deity Vajrapāṇi within the sculptures of the eastern caves as evidence of a Buddhist iconographic retaliation (via the militant deity) to a growing Śaiva presence.[87] Yet the fact that Vajrapāṇi's iconography incorporates characteristic Śaiva elements (snake armlet and *āyudhapuruṣa*) suggests a dialogue rather than a confrontation. Alternatively, we could interpret the iconographic program in this cave as important evidence of a shared and even competitive ritual space rather than an overtly hierarchical expression of Brahmanism over Buddhism.

In her work on the site, Brancaccio has also emphasized the strong presence of a diverse Buddhist lay-community, traces of which she observes in the incorporation of images of Lajjā Gaurī, in the repetition of votive panels, and in the artistic depiction of lay devotees, many of them women.[88] In a similar vein, the inclusion of the Śaiva *Mātṛkās* is not anomalous if we also consider the iconography of the surrounding caves on the eastern slope and the prevalence of female deities in them. In Cave 7, for example, a sculpture of Avalokiteśvara is depicted with six accompanying goddesses with lotuses and an image of the Buddha in the gesture of granting boons (*varadamudrā*). Brancaccio identifies these females as the six *vidyārājñīs*, goddesses associated with the power

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85   In her study, Brancaccio also comments on this anomalous cave and the challenges posed by its iconographic program, as well as its place within the larger chronology of the Aurangabad caves. (*Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 202.)

86   At the time of Rajan's work both of the Buddha images in the cave were intact and largely undamaged. This has changed since, at the time of my visit in 2013, one of the images had been badly damaged.

87   "The growing popularity of Vajrapāṇi in the caves of the western Deccan during the sixth century may be directly linked to the growing challenges that Buddhism faced in the area from the Śaiva tradition, strongly supported by the Kalacuris and the feudal elite at the time. In order to survive, Buddhism had to come to grips with the other religious traditions and use all weapons available, including Vajrapāṇi's *vajra* to protect the dharma and those that opposed it." Brancaccio, *Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 171.

88   Brancaccio, *Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 127.

of mantras and magic.[89] As she also notes, the goddesses of Cave 7 appear "to have been created after the blueprint of the Śaiva *Mātṛkās*."[90] This resonance between the Śaiva imagery and the panel of Cave 7 could also indicate a shared set of values (i.e. fertility, protection, etc.) connected to these female figures and reinforced by the images of Avalokiteśvara, the protective deity *par excellence*, and the wish-granting Buddha.

The groups of *Mātṛkās* or 'mother goddesses' are a feature shared by many, though not all, of the Śaiva caves of the North Konkan and Deccan. Guided by Katherine Harper's work, Laughlin interprets the presence of the *Mātṛkās* as a sign of royal patronage and their presence is one of his criteria for classifying a site as a 'royal' religious center as opposed to a popular center.[91] But the martial potential inherent in the *Mātṛkā* figures, a potential which would have made them attractive to rulers or those seeking power, is, as I have argued in a previous study, an echo of their ambivalent or ambiguous character.[92] Thus, while the mothers would have been compelling figures for those aspiring to power, we must also acknowledge that these highly charged female figures would have resonated with a much wider audience. As figures intimately connected with the fears and anxieties surrounding fertility, childbirth, and the health and well-being of children, the larger community would have also had been invested in the propitiation of these powerful, but deeply ambivalent females.

4.3   *The Bhokardan Caves*

Approximately 75 km northeast from Aurangabad another cave complex was excavated at Bhokardan that dates to the mid-7th century. The main series of caves were excavated in a low-lying area on the left bank of the Kelnā River.[93]

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89   Brancaccio, *Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 175–177; citing the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* in which the goddesses are named as Pāṇḍaravāsinī, Tārā, Bhṛkuṭī, Prajñāpāramitā, Locanā, Uṣṇīṣarājā.

90   Brancaccio, *Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 174.

91   Laughlin, "Kalacuri Monuments," 84–109. Brancaccio also draws a connection to the presence of the *Mātṛkās* and religious sites associated with the Kalacuris and early Cālukyas, implying that the ubiquity of the mothers' images at these places could be evidence linking the rulers to the sites (*Buddhist Caves at Aurangabad*, 202). However, the popularity of the *mātṛs* at early medieval temples was common throughout northwest India, not only at places associated with these ruling families.

92   Elizabeth Cecil, "Childless Mothers and Rejected Wives: A New Perspective on the *Mātṛs*," Paper presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the American Oriental Society.

93   Based upon the excavation reports, the ancient settlement is represented by a series of mounds that spanned both the right and left banks of the Kelnā, where the modern town of Bhokardan is situated. The village of Alapur now sits atop the left bank mounds. S.B. Deo (ed.), *Excavations at Bhokardan (Bhogavardhana) 1973* (Aurangabad: Marathwada University, 1974), 6.

FIGURE 83   Bhokardan caves, carvings in interior showing Durgā,
                   Sūrya, and female chowrie-bearer

FIGURE 84   Bhokardan caves, carvings in interior showing
                   Saṃkarṣana and Revatī

FIGURE 85   Bhokardan, cave entry interior hunting scene and panel depicting *liṅga* veneration

Additional caves in varying states of excavation line the rock facing the river. The main excavation consists of a series of seven small shrines, roughly equal in size, approached through an entryway of two rows of six unadorned pillars. The walls on both sides of the entry courtyard are filled with a variety of images carved in relief, some of which can still be identified [Figures 83 & 84]. No images remain within the seven shrines. The images in the caves represent a variety of Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Goddess-centered themes and it may be that the seven shrines housed a variety of such deities as well. Rajan suggests they may have contained an image of Viṣṇu in the center and images of Sūrya, Durgā, Kārttikeya, Gaṇeśa, Śiva, and Brahmā in the surrounding shrines.[94] In Rajan's assessment, the affiliation of the caves would have been predominately Vaiṣṇava.[95] This characterization does not acknowledge the three relief carvings depicting *liṅga* veneration, which Rajan does not mention in his report. One of these scenes appears clearly in a frieze in the entryway wall. The other two appear in a panel on the opposite wall. They are badly damaged; only one can still be seen clearly in a photograph [Figure 85].

4.4   *The Takli-Dhokeśvar Śaiva Caves*

In comparison to the caves at Bhokardan and Aurangabad, the excavation at Takli-Dhokeśvar[96] can be properly classified as 'Śaiva' since religious life at the site was oriented around the *liṅga* shrine that occupies the center of the cave.

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94   Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, 164.
95   Rajan, *Cave Temples of the Deccan*, 163.
96   These caves are set up in the hills overlooking the Kalu River and reservoir a few kilometers north-east of the village of Takli, off of the Poona highway in the Ahmednagar District.

FIGURE 86   Takli-Dhokeśvar caves, Saptamātṛkā panel with Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa

This site is interesting because we can still observe traces of the various religious concerns and values articulated within this space.

The cave opens to the east and is accessed via an entryway framed by sculptures of the river goddesses Gaṅgā and Yamunā. The interior is dominated by a single *liṅga* shrine that is still in active use. In the interior entryway (*mahāmaṇḍapa*), the north and south walls are adorned with sculpted panels. On the south side a large panel depicting the *Mātṛs*—Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Aindrī, and Cāmuṇḍā, each with her signature animal vehicle carved in the lower register—flanked by Vīrabhadra and Gaṇeśa [Figure 86]. The lush foliage and fruiting mango trees carved in the upper register of the panel and the children in their arms convey clearly their associations with fertility and prosperity. Their place of prominence in the *mahāmaṇḍapa* indicates the important role these goddesses played in the devotional life of this site. The inclusion of the *Mātṛs*, could suggest royal patronage as some scholars have argued, but in my judgment, it is more likely that these powerful goddesses symbolize widespread concerns for fertility, prosperity, and protection that were not restricted to a particular class or social group. On the east-facing wall just adjacent the panel a skeletal figure is shown, perhaps Bhṛṅgiriṭi. Opposite the *Mātṛkā* panel, the north wall of the entrance shows an eight-armed image of Tāṇḍava Śiva.

The images to either side of the door guardians are not immediately recognizable. On the proper right, the stout seated figure, flanked by *mālādharas*,

FIGURE 87   Takli-Dhokeśvar caves, *nidhi* figure with four small figures beneath

is carved over a niche containing four smaller figures [Figure 87]. The imag-
es are highly abraded and, as such, there are few visual clues with which we
can reconstruct their identities. The seated figure has the right hand raised in
what could have been a gesture of teaching. The presence of the four smaller
figures below—their smaller stature and subordinate position are a cue that

they could be devotees or attendants of the larger seated figure—could convey that the larger figure represents the charismatic and venerable persona of a guru. At the same time, the active postures of the attendant figures, which appear to be carrying things, do not resemble the meditative or devotional poses typically assumed by students in such tableaus depicting the teacher/disciple relationship.[97] I think that this figure was intended as a *nidhi*, a figural embodiment of prosperity, richness, and the fecundity of the natural world.[98] The stoutness of the figure and his seated posture does bear some resonance to images of Kubera, although the coin-purse and other defining attributes of this deity are missing. As a more generalized representation of some of the same ideals that Kubera represented, the decision to depict this *nidhi* figure in such close proximity to the *liṅga* shrine is an indication of the importance placed upon values of prosperity and fertility and a desire to articulate a clear association of these values with Śiva.[99]

The image on the right side of the shrine is also not easy to identify [Figure 88]. Commenting on the heavy bags the figure is carrying over the left shoulder, Rajan tentatively suggests that this figure could represent Kubera. If so, this would be an anomalous representation of this deity, whose mongoose moneybag is typically much smaller and held in one hand. In addition, the thin body of this figure does not connote wealth and prosperity, as does Kubera's large belly. As an alternative interpretation, I suggest this figure represents what is called today a Bhiśṭī, a professional water carrier, who traditionally transported water in large goat-skin bags. Often, two of these bags were strung together and carried over the shoulder in exactly the fashion shown in this sculpture.[100] The image of this water bearer also gestures visually to the ritual

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97   Compare the depictions of Lakulīśa with the four students surveyed in Chapter 6. See also Tamara Sears, "In the Gaze of the Guru: Shikshadana Scenes at Khajuraho," in *Art, Icon, and Architecture in South Asia essays in honor of Dr. Devangana Desai*, ed. A. Verghese and A.L. Dahmen-Dallapiccola (Delhi: Aryan Book International, 2015), 151–168.

98   For a discussion of the *nidhi* vis-à-vis comparable figures like *yakṣas* in a Buddhist context see Claudin Bautze-Picron, "Nidhis and other Images of Richness and Fertility in Ajaṇṭā," *East and West* 52 (2002): 225–284.

99   It could be argued that a similar resonance is observed in the famous Mansar Śiva (Bakker, *The Vākāṭakas*, 149–151), which has been compared (even identified) as a *nidhi* and as a representation of Kubera. See Robert L. Brown, "Vākāṭaka-Period Hindu Sculpture," in *The Vākāṭaka Heritage. Indian Culture at the Crossroads*, ed. Hans T. Bakker (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004), 59–69.

100   The Takli water-bearer is comparable to figures, called simply 'carriers' by Bakker, found carved at multiple places on Kalinjar hill. I think the Kalinjar images may also refer to the *kavad* ritual. Bakker, *The World of the Skandapurāṇa*, 205–209.

FIGURE 88   Takli-Dhokeśvar, Bhiṣṭī (water carrier)

FIGURE 89   Takli-Dhokeśvar, *liṅga* shrine with framing guardians and *triśūlapuruṣa*

of *kavad* in which water is carried from sacred rivers, often at a long distance, and used to bathe the *liṅga*.[101] The placement of the water carrier within the iconographic program at Takli would have been fitting considering the importance of the site as a major water collection facility. At short distance from the cave, channels were cut in the rock face to direct water that flows down from the hilltops in the rainy season into vast caverns where it is collected and stored beneath the excavated site [Figure 89].[102] The presence of small, simply excavated caves to the south of the *liṅga* shrine accessed via carved footholds in the rock face could have been residential, a development that was perhaps also connected to the presence of water.

5   Conclusions

Analysis of the siting of Śaiva religious centers in the North Konkan supports the existence of strong ties between religious institutions and the dynamics of

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101   On these rituals in Maharashtra see Anne Feldhaus, *Water & Womanhood* (New York/ Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

102   During my visit during the height of the dry season, the collection area was still quite full. The caretakers reported that this was consistently the case.

regional economy and ruling powers, which I postulate to be evidence that, as with the Buddhist communities that preceded them, the growth of the Śaiva centers was conditioned by this cosmopolitan port polity. While the lack of epigraphic data from the North Konkan and the Deccan sites poses a significant challenge, this absence provides certain opportunities as well. It serves to redirect the scholarly gaze and to encourage us to consider these places not as the product of a particular dynasty, but as part of a much larger and diverse social landscape. When we consider the North Konkan sites within the larger region, it is not surprising that the monumental cave temples of Elephanta, Maṇḍapeśvar, and Jogeśvarī developed in such a commercially active and cosmopolitan area. Much like the urban melting pot of modern Mumbai, this region attracted people from across the subcontinent and beyond, provided religious specialists with ample opportunities for patronage, while furnishing highly skilled artisans to call these monumental centers into material form. And it was at these sites, where religious competition was the most intense and in which the religious landscape was most dense, that a Śaiva presence was articulated most distinctly in the iconographic program. And, in the case of Jogeśvarī, it is where we see the strongest evidence for a Pāśupata presence through the strategic placement of Lakulīśa images.

The patterns that characterize the North Konkan, however, do not emerge as strongly in the Deccan sites. The more modest Deccan caves serve as an illuminating contrast and illustrate the ways in which differences in regional geography, settlement patterns, economy, and politics conditioned the development of the religious landscape. The hinterland sites represent the polysemy of religious identity and accommodated a variety of religious concerns. While much more work is needed to flesh out the biographies of these sites, this brief survey initiates the process by showing that the Śaiva communities of the northwest Deccan may have developed in relative independence from the Konkan sites and in conversation with the regions further south.

The distinction that has emerged between the Konkan and Deccan sites also serves to delineate the borders of the Pāśupata landscape and the trajectory of the Pāśupata movement with a greater clarity. I interpret the presence of Lakulīśa images at Jogeśvarī as an indication of Pāśupata activity at the site. We might assume some Pāśupata presence at Maṇḍapeśvar based upon the single Lakulīśa image, but here the traces become much fainter. The western Deccan sites I surveyed preserve no material traces of Pāśupata activity. Clearly the worship of Śiva around the Sahya Mountain took multiple forms and accommodated a wide range of religious values and concerns. Evidence of a specifically Pāśupata presence, however, indicates that the development of that particular religious network was oriented in the vicinity of the cosmopolitan economic centers.

Seeking the 'Lord with a Club': Encountering Lakulīśa in the Pāśupata Landscape

Representations of the deified teacher called Lakulīśa (the 'Lord with a Club') became a prominent feature of Śaiva religious centers in Early Medieval Northwest India. This chapter recovers some of Lakulīśa's historical contingency by reading his images as a reflection of or response to particular concerns of emergent Śaiva religious communities by tracing significant patterns in the evolution of his visual biography. This intervention is timely since the majority of the available work on Lakulīśa's iconography was produced long before the recovery of the *Skandapurāṇa* and thus does not take this important textual evidence into account. Since the *Skandapurāṇa* presents a textual *terminus ante quem* for Lakulīśa, we are now able to situate his iconographic inception within a particular historical period and, in doing so, begin to trace the ways in which the textures of early medieval society and polity may have conditioned articulations of his visual identity.

The early medieval period marked a gradual shift in Lakulīśa's material imagining, whereby icons of a distinctly human, ascetic teacher were gradually replaced by a divinized figure that is nearly indistinguishable from Śiva. In this process, Lakulīśa's icons also moved from the sanctum doorway, where he served as a Pāśupata emblem guarding the *limen*, to the temple exterior where he was integrated within a larger pantheon of deities adorning a monument. These transformations indicate the subsumption of a Pāśupata identity within more widely intelligible and culturally compelling articulations of Śiva devotion. To illustrate this process, this chapter locates Lakulīśa images more precisely within the regional landscapes and sanctified spaces surveyed in Chapters 2, 3 & 4. Given the multivocality of these places, Lakulīśa images would have been subject to multiple interpretations. This chapter explores changes in his iconography over time—from a potent sign of Pāśupata identity to a multivalent persona with attributes signifying power, fertility, and protection that resonated with a broader religious community—and frames these transformations as moments in an ongoing dialogue between religious communities and cultural agents.

1   An Objectified History

The consideration of images and the values that inhere in them is integral to the project of studying the past since interactions with material culture are constitutive of social identities and communities. Taking seriously the ties between image and community, this chapter returns to the narrative of Pāśupata origins introduced in Chapter 1 and considers the visual objectification of that narrative in iconographic depictions of Lakulīśa and his students. In the case of Lakulīśa, attention to material objectification extends to personification as a particular and powerful kind of objectification. Yet his images were not only constitutive of the 'person' or persona they represented. These icons also became media for the objectification of other kinds of social identities and relationships and, in doing so, possessed a kind of effective agency.[1] Images of the teacher did not reproduce a static vision of a Pāśupata identity; rather, they were sites where multiple, and even competing, visions of identity were negotiated. The majority of the images I will discuss in the following pages date from the early 8th to the early 10th centuries CE, a period in which we see the greatest variation and dynamism in Lakulīśa's iconography. These changes encourage us to view Lakulīśa not only as an emblem of Pāśupata identity, but also an agent of transculturation; i.e. a figure through which pivotal moments in an extended dialogue between religious communities, cultural agents, and sanctified spaces were recorded.[2]

    As the three preceding chapters have demonstrated, expressions of early Śiva devotion and community were not univocal. Regionally distinct historical geographies, formed by the interactions of social, political, and economic networks over time, engendered different modes of expressing belonging that were not always in accord. The 'Lord with a Club' has figured prominently in these chapters, all of which examined images of Lakulīśa as they appeared in the frame of temples and sanctified spaces. Since the majority of the sites explored in the case studies occupied the interstices and peripheries of the SP

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1   My emphasis on the effective agency of objects is informed by the work of Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75–76.

2   In his recent work, Finbarr Barry Flood uses the idea of transculturation to explore a broadly comparable social process. He explains, "… *transculturation* denotes a complex process of transformation unfolding through extended contact between cultures … Like the French *trastornée*, with its connotations of a simultaneous movement across and within, this notion of *transculturation* acknowledges that cultural formations are always already hybrid and in process, so that translation is a dynamic activity that takes place both *between* and *within* cultural codes, forms, and practices." Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and the 'Hindu-Muslim' Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 9.

text's canonical landscape, they give a representative survey of the local inflections that have imbued his icons with a varied visual cadence. Thus, from the initial consideration of Lakulīśa's debut in the purāṇic landscape of the SP, to tracking his manifestations within various vernacular geographies, this project has provided an indication of the many faces this 'founding figure' has adopted. Earlier works have produced useful typologies and relative chronologies of Lakulīśa imagery, but the discussion has rarely moved beyond the description of surface features to reflect critically upon the multiple ways in which these images would have been viewed and interpreted when encountered within sanctified spaces.[3]

Two significant shifts in the articulation of his persona can be observed across the various northwest Indian locales my project considers. The first concerns the formal features of the icons and identifies a gradual supplanting of the image of the human club-bearing teacher in favor an image displaying the 'multiplicity'[4] and accouterments of Śiva. That is, an icon that uses visual idioms such as multiple limbs and attributes as a means to communicate the immense creative potential that characterizes a deity. Judging from the evidence I have gathered, this transformation was underway in the 8th century and continued with a resolution by the early 9th century, after which time icons of Lakulīśa that depict him as a human teacher become extremely rare in the regions of northwest India I have studied.[5] In Chapter 1, I proposed that the SP authors introduced the Lāguḍi ectype as a way to co-opt or acknowledge an existing figure. The presence of early Lakulīśa icons from Mathura supports this hypothesis by attesting to the regional popularity of such a club-bearing teacher prior to the time the SP text was in wide circulation [Figure 90]. By adopting Lāguḍi, the text implies the incorporation of the identity of this figure within the more expansive persona of Śiva. The material evidence records a parallel conversation in which the distinct persona of the 'Lord with a Club' is alternately emphasized and deemphasized in different contexts. By the end of the 9th century, however, the conversation had moved on. Lakulīśa's icons

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3 For example, M.B. Choubey, *Lakulīśa in Indian Art and Culture* (Delhi: Sharada Publishing House, 1997); U.P. Shah, "Lakulīśa: Śaivite Saint," in *Discourses on Śiva: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Nature of Religious Imagery*, ed. by M. Meister (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 93–102; N.P. Joshi, "Early Forms of Śiva," *Discourses on Śiva*, 47–61.

4 Here I refer to the so-called 'multiplicity convention' as it has been termed by art historian Doris Srinivasan. Doris M. Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms, and Eyes: Origin, Meaning, and Form of Multiplicity in Indian Art* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

5 One exception to this general pattern can be seen in Karvan, Gujarat. An early example of this iconic style was discussed in Chapter 1 and the modern image installed in the Lakulīśa temple in Karvan still adheres to the same pattern.

FIGURE 90   Lakulīśa with two attendants, c. 5th century
MATHURA GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

depict him as a visual ectype of Śiva, and the club becomes one of the many weapons in the Lord's arsenal.

The second point considers changes in the ways Lakulīśa's icons were displayed. While the relationship between text and image is a topic of considerable importance for this study, it is certainly not the only issue critical for understanding how Lakulīśa's images were 'read'. Some visitors to temples would not have recognized Lakulīśa as a figure with a distinctive Pāśupata affiliation since this identification reflects a specialist reading informed by a certain initiated point of view. When encountered within the temple, the interpretation of Lakulīśa's images would have been informed by his various iconic attributes and by the larger contextual frame in which they were encountered. For example, an image placed over the sanctum door and one placed in an exterior niche could be experienced at different moments in a temple visit, be incorporated within different stages of a ritual practice, and, as a result, be subject to divergent interpretations. A consideration of structural

context is particularly pertinent for this study since, in the 8th and 9th centuries, Lakulīśa images were no longer confined to the niche above the temple sanctum, but incorporated in new places within temple complexes.

1.1   *Lakulīśa Present and Absent*

Until quite recently, the inception of the Lakulīśa manifestation of Śiva was difficult to trace. According to Kauṇḍinya, who was writing in the 4th or 5th century CE, the Lord assumed the form of a male brahmin and descended in Kāyāvataraṇa (i.e. Kārohaṇa). While Kauṇḍinya's account of Śiva's manifestation as a human teacher bears some resemblance to the Lakulīśa of the SP$_S$, he is not mentioned by name in this early account of Pāśupata origins.[6] The late 4th century Mathura Pillar Inscription of Candragupta II provides a further indication that the histories of the Pāśupata movement, and that of Lakulīśa were not yet adjoined.[7] The genealogical list of ten Śaiva *ācāryas* recorded in this inscription does not mention Lakulīśa; these *māheśvaras* trace their lineage back to the Bhagavat Kuśika. This early textual absence makes Lakulīśa's appearance in lists of the twenty-eight incarnations of Śiva included in the later *Vāyu*, *Kūrma*, *Liṅga*, *Śiva*, and (later) *Skanda Purāṇas* all the more striking.[8] The identification of Lakulīśa as the twenty-eighth and final incarnation of Śiva and proponent of Pāśupata doctrine in these lists reflects a more fully realized Pāśupata lineage, which was likely the product of centuries of Sanskrit narrative historiography. The SP$_S$ provides a differing history that represents the intermediate period, between Kauṇḍinya's writing and these later purāṇic systemizations. In Chapter 1 I suggested that the author's introduction of 'Lāguḍi' as an ectype of Śiva was a strategic innovation. The textual icon of the Lord-as-teacher and his agents claiming the cardinal points of the Pāśupata landscape was intended to represent the Śaiva ecumene as it was imagined by a particular group of literate cultural producers at a particular historical moment, a formative period when Lakulīśa's role within the tradition was still nascent. Certainly, one could argue that Kauṇḍinya's account of God enfleshed as an itinerant teacher anticipates Lakulīśa, but this human founder still does not have an identity distinct from that of the Lord.

As a final point in this brief review of the textual sources, it is a significant and also a curious feature of textual transmission that only the oldest layer of the text, preserved in the Nepalese recension, mentions Lakulīśa. In the critical edition, the later recensions of the text, labeled 'R' and 'A', form an edition

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6   See Chapter 1.
7   D.R. Bhandarkar, "Mathura Pillar Inscription". See Chapter 1.
8   For a comprehensive discussion of these lists see Bisschop, *Sects and Centers*, 41–44.

distinct from the 'S' manuscripts. In SP$_{RA}$ Śiva is said to descend at Kārohaṇa and he offers instruction to four pupils. The names of the students and their respective locations match the account in SP$_S$, but here the Lord, who is not identified as 'Lāguḍi', offers the teaching. The Lord's teaching is also not referred to as specifically Pāśupata, nor is it called Pañcārtha as it was in SP$_S$. In the case of SP$_{RA}$, the teaching is called simply *dharma*.[9] This is a puzzling omission. One would expect the later versions of the narrative to expand or build upon the contributions of the previous authors, thus producing the voluminous literary traditions so typical of the purāṇic genre. That this did not happen in the SP$_{RA}$ version of the Pāśupata movement's history suggests that this recension reflects a different phase in the growth of Śaivism and perhaps the work a different (non-Pāśupata) community, for whom this symbol of a distinctly Pāśupata identity held no value.

To summarize, the appearance of Lakulīśa at a particular historical moment in the development of the Pāśupata tradition reflects a time when this growing Śaiva community worked to articulate a distinct identity and secure patronage in a highly competitive religious landscape. Lakulīśa's iconographic inception preceded his textual debut in the SP and the dynamism and variation in the subsequent articulation of his image materializes an ongoing dialogue about who this teacher was, why he was venerable, and how he related the Pāśupata movement to Śiva.[10] But just as Lakulīśa's appearance and disappearance in the SP indicates the contingency of his popularity as a symbol of Pāśupata identity, the social value of images of Lakulīśa as a human teacher also declined and gradually his image was phased out of temple iconography altogether.

2   Embodying the Teacher

Lakulīśa played a critical role in the project of Pāśupata self-fashioning. This was not only a case of certain Pāśupatas representing themselves to a broader world of Śiva devotees; they also had to distinguish themselves from amidst the competing religious communities that occupied the region. Northwest India of the 6th and 7th centuries was a locus of intense political and religious competition, much of which was localized in the prestigious locales that the SP claimed as seats of the tradition occupied by Lāguḍi and his pupils. These places were instrumental in the geographic expansion of the Pāśupata movement, much as they were for contemporaneous religious movements

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9   SP$_{RA}$ 5.83–89; Summary in Bisschop, *Sects and Centers*, 85.
10   Shah, "Lakulīśa," 97; Choubey, *Lakulīśa*, 115.

and communities that also occupied these shared spaces.[11] Epigraphic records attest to the wide range of religious communities supported by the political elites that controlled key locales within the Pāśupata landscape.[12] Prominent members of medieval political families identified themselves as devotees of Śiva (*māheśvaras*), but they also extended patronage to Buddhist and Jain communities. The introduction of Lakulīśa as a visual marker of the Pāśupatas may have been one way for communities to distinguish themselves and their religious places within the pre-existent religious topography of the region in which the boundaries between sanctified spaces and ritual repertoires were often blurred. The visible and public marketing of religious institutions would have served a strategy to attract and monopolize resources from political elites and the established merchant and trade communities settled in the area.

2.1   *Crossing Boundaries*

Some early depictions of Lakulīśa as renunciant teacher are clearly informed by the same iconographic vocabulary used to craft representations of human teachers and holy men in Buddhist and Jain imagery. The visual resonance between the seated, meditative figures is immediately evident. The use of conventional gestures (*mudrās*) to represent the act of teaching is also a shared feature of some images of the Buddha and Lakulīśa [Figures 91 & 92]. These similarities reflect the shared cultural spaces that these communities inhabited. Representing Lakulīśa in ways that parallel images of the founding figures of these traditions may have been a particularly efficacious strategy for communicating his authority as a teacher and ascetic in areas where Buddhist and Jain communities were also well established. Sculpture from Mathura attests to the importance of this place as a shared religious space from an early period. We also have evidence of sites of cultural contact in north-central India (Uparamāla) from the 7th and 8th centuries. For example, the area surrounding Daśapura preserves numerous excavated Buddhist cave sites. Some, like the monastic cave complex at Dhamnar share the hillside with Śaiva temples. Votive *stūpas* were reported in the Chittorgarh fort.[13] Jainism was also beginning to flourish in places like Vasantgadh (northeast of Mt. Abu in the Sirohi

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11   On these patterns in the Buddhist landscape see Jason Neelis, *Early Buddhist Transmission and Trade Networks: Mobility and Exchange within and beyond the Northwestern Borderlands of South Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

12   Annette Schmiedchen has addressed these patterns in patronage in a recent article. A. Schmiedchen, "Patronage of Śaivism and Other Religious Groups in Western India under the Dynasties of the Kaṭaccuris, Gurjaras, and Sendrakas from the 5th to the 8th centuries," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 56 (2013): 349–363.

13   *EITA* 2.2, 284; Plate 635.

FIGURE 91   Panel with Buddha image, Aurangabad caves, Maharashtra

District of Rajasthan) where a massive hoard of inscribed bronze Jain images
was discovered, some dating as early as the 7th century.[14] Vilasgarh, a village
near Jhalawar, Rajasthan was another important Jain center where hundreds
of recently uncovered early medieval Jain images found in the area were being
collected in a newly built museum during my visit in 2014.

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14   U.P. Shah, "A Bronze Hoard from Vasantgadh," *Lalit Kala: A Journal of Oriental Art, chiefly
        Indian* 1–2 (1955–56): 55–65.

FIGURE 92   Lakulīśa, Ellora caves, Maharashtra

The connections between Lakulīśa images and those of other charismatic teachers may suggest, on the one hand, a self-conscious imitative strategy intended to popularize a Śaiva figure through the use of visual idioms popular amongst 'the competition'. This strategy may have aided the Śaiva community in attracting devotees from among their religious contemporaries. Yet given the reservations expressed earlier about presenting religious communities as so clearly boundaried and distinct, I interpret this visual resonance as indicative of a shared idiom for expressing sanctity, holiness, and the authority of the teacher, rather than one community deliberately appropriating the iconographic vocabulary of another. The spatial proximity of these religious groups also points to a common cultural world that we see manifest in the intervisibility of visual and material cultures.[15] Of course, intervisibility does not imply univocality; cultural agents were self-aware and strategic in their decisions. The incorporation of the club as an attribute signals that Lakulīśa was a distinct persona not to be confused with other similar representations of 'the teacher'.

2.2   *Negotiating Humanity & Divinity*

In addition to evidence of shared idioms that cut across communal contexts, evidence for an internal dialogue can also be read in the iconography. As the religious landscape of Early Medieval India assimilated a growing and gradually more institutionalized form of Śaivism with its many shrines and temples, the charismatic authority that Lakulīśa represented was 'fleshed-out' in regional and site-specific processes of bricolage that situated this relatively 'new' deity by using visual tropes that were common to the wider religious landscape. This sense of iconographic process and change over time has been neglected in earlier studies, which cast him quite narrowly as a teacher and emblem of Śaiva asceticism with fixed attributes.[16] But even when depicting the club-bearer as

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15   Nancy Khalek's characterization of material interactions between Christian and Muslim communities in medieval Syria is applicable to the Indian context as well. "The intervisibility of these two groups, then, came … not as a result of their being able to stand apart and gaze upon one another's worlds with the detached view of outsiders, but from their intimately familiar and intensely connected lives." Nancy Khalek, *Damascus after the Muslim Conquest: Text and Image in Early Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 165.

16   Tamara Sears' work, while sensitive to issues of space and context, does not consider the different meanings these images would have conveyed to different viewers. For example, her focus on Lakulīśa as reinforcing or embodying the values of the ascetics living in monastic dwellings (*maṭhas*) is perhaps apt, but it is also important to remember that these monastic complexes were only one feature of larger, elaborate temple complexes. And while the *maṭha* may have been closed to outsiders, the rest of the temple complex

the human teacher, early instances show that there was not yet a clear consensus as to how this image should be depicted.[17]

The variability of early Lakulīśa images is well illustrated by comparing, for example, an early 7th century image from Indragarh in northwest Madhya Pradesh (now preserved in the Bhopal State Archaeological Museum) [Figure 93] with another image of Lakulīśa, c. 6th century, from the Jogeśvarī Caves in coastal Maharashtra [see Figure 77]. Both of these regions contain extensive material remains that suggest they were important Śaiva religious centers from as early as the 6th century, but the representations of the Pāśupata teacher diverge in significant ways. The image from Indragarh is strikingly naturalistic and generally conforms to the vision we might expect based on his description in the SP—the matted hair, third eye, and erect phallus all characteristic of a Śaiva ascetic—while the framing aureole designates him a venerable figure. In the North Konkan, where the religious landscape was so densely populated with Buddhist and Śaiva centers, it is striking that the Lakulīśa panel from Jogeśvarī departs from the ascetic model. Here, the teacher's powerful physicality, elaborate hairstyle, and heavy ornamentation evoke wealth, power, and a royal ease. His club bears a closer resemblance to a royal scepter or mace than the *lakuṭa* of his counterpart from Indragarh. Also notably absent in the Jogeśvarī image is the erect phallus characteristic of the ascetic. Unlike the Daśapura image, however, the panel from Jogeśvarī includes a significant detail: this is the earliest known image that depicts Lakulīśa with the four attendant figures that could be read as his four students. In addition to gesturing to the four students of the SP, these attendants might also have been intended as a representation of the Pāśupata community. The differences in

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was largely a public space shared by devotees from different social strata. It is also worth noting that images of Lakulīśa do not appear in the space of the *maṭha*, rather, they appear on the temple. Tamara Sears, "From Guru to God: Yogic Prowess and Places of Practice in Early Medieval India," in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, ed. Debra Diamond (Washington, D.C.: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2013), 47–57; "Encountering Ascetics On and Beyond the Indian Temple Wall," in *History and Material Culture in Asian Religions*, ed. Benjamin Fleming and Richard Mann (London: Routledge, 2014), 172–194.

17   In their respective studies of Lakulīśa, both U.P. Shah and M.C. Choubey cite the *Viśvakarma Vāstuśāstram*, a text of the 11th to 12th century, which specifies that images should depict this figure as ithyphallic (*ūrdhvameḍhra*), sitting on a lotus in *padmāsana*, holding a club (or *daṇḍa*) in his left hand and a citron in the right. The *yogapaṭṭa* supporting the knees in meditative posture is another common feature of his images. Despite the gradual crystallization of his iconography in the form outlined above, images from the 7th to 9th century did not always conform to this pattern. Shah, "Lakulīśa," 96; Choubey, *Lakulīśa*, 114; R.C. Agrawala, "Some Interesting Sculptures of Lakulīśa from Rājasthān," *Artibus Asiae* 21 (1958): 43–46 (43–44).
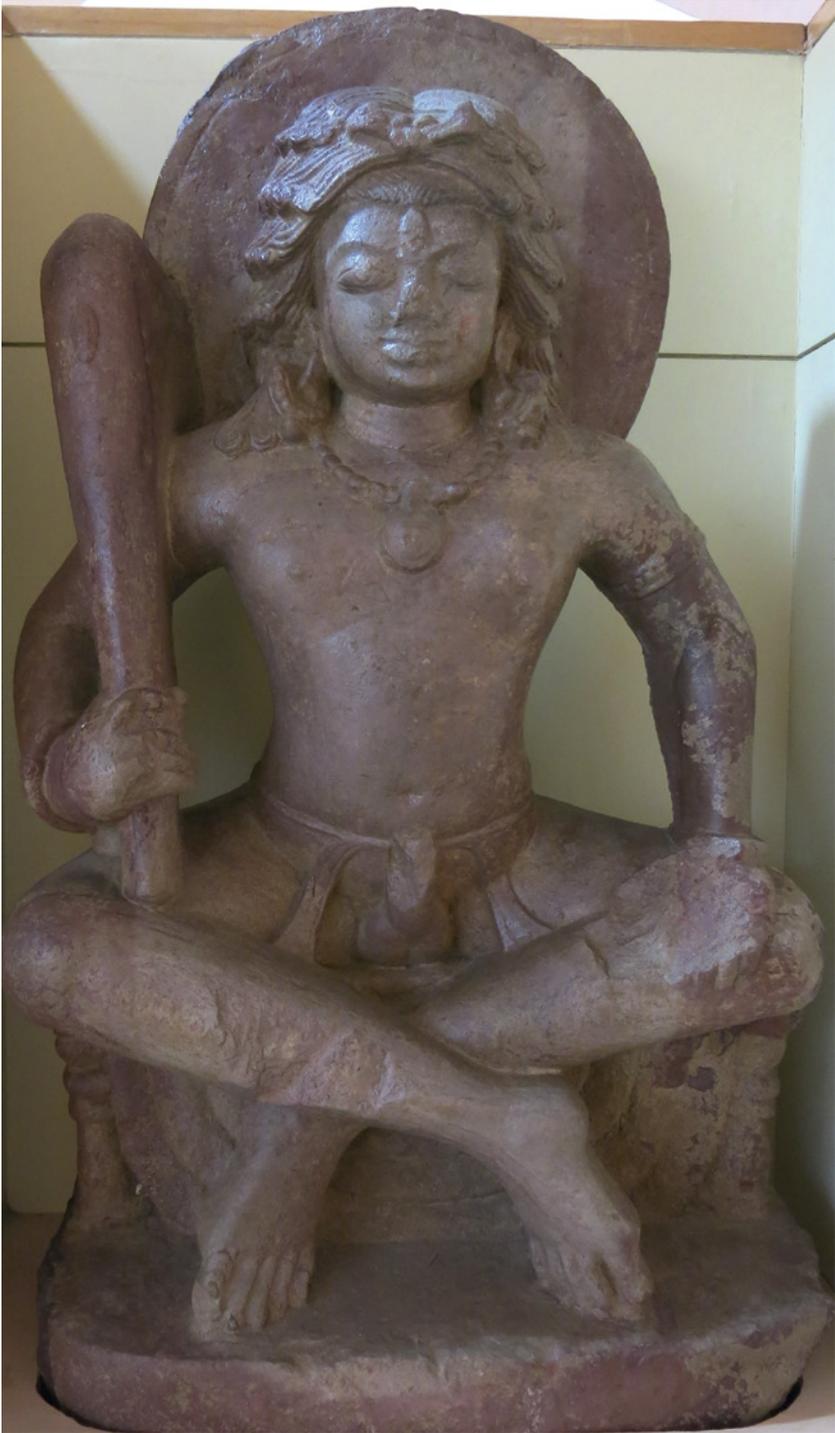
FIGURE 93   Lakulīśa from near Indragarh, Madhya Pradesh, c. 7th–8th century

their appearance—the upper two resemble aged ascetics with their thin limbs, matted hair and beards, while the lower pair appear youthful and absent the typical markers of asceticism—is a visual indication of the internal diversity of the community. The result is a kind of synoptic icon that could be read as encompassing the initiated and lay facets of the tradition.

Although broadly contemporaneous, the images from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra represent different regional contexts. Variety also occurred within the same region. Images from 8th century sites in Uparamāla show that even within a circumscribed geographic area Lakulīśa was subject to multiple visual interpretations.[18] The Gupteśvara Cave temple—located along a rocky outcrop in the deep ravine behind the fort in Mandalgarh, Rajasthan, approximately 80 km northeast of Chittorgarh—contains two early Lakulīśa images.[19] Both of these sculptures depict a two-armed ascetic with hair in *jaṭāmukuṭa* and knees supported by the *yogapaṭṭa.* Another image from the 8th century Karṇeśvara temple in Kansuāñ (100 km east of Mandalgarh) similarly depicts an ascetic figure framed by two *mālādharas*, but the presence of four arms, rather than two, suggests a divine rather than a simply human figure.[20]

Iconographic variety also reflects a blurring of the lines that separated Lakulīśa from, for example, other weapon-bearing figures of the broader Śaiva pantheon, like Caṇḍeśvara, a deified Śiva *bhakta* whose icons are widespread throughout South India.[21] Forms of Śiva, such as Yogeśvara are often similarly

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18   These images are published and discussed further in Elizabeth A. Cecil, "Seeking the 'Lord with a Club': Locating Lakulīśa in the Early History of Pāśupata Śaivism," *South Asian Studies* 30.2 (2014): 142–158.

19   The Lakulīśa images were repurposed in the cave temple (c. early 16th century) along with two sculpted doorframes and other loose images dating to the 7th or the 8th century. During my visits to the site in 2014 and 2016, I observed extensive architectural fragments, dressed stones, and pieces of broken sculpture scattered around the cave temple, along the bottom of the ravine, and around the old tank. It is possible that the early doorframe and images reused in the cave were previously part of an earlier temple at the site. On Mandalgarh see *EITA* 2.2, 283.

20   The Karṇeśvara temple is dated by a foundation inscription. F. Kielhorn, "Kanaswa Stone Inscription of Sivagana; The Malava Year 795 Expired," *IA* 8 (1890): 55–62.

21   A number of recent articles have addressed aspects of this iconographic overlap and the often-blurred identity of Lakulīśa and Caṇḍeśa (or Caṇḍeśvara): E. af Edholm, "The Lakulīśa of Ariṭṭapaṭṭi," in *Being Religious and Living Through the Eyes: Studies in Religious Iconography and Iconology. A Celebratory Publication in Honor of Professor Jan Bergman*, ed. by P. Schalk (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1998), 43–55; P.C. Bisschop, "Once Again on the Identity of Caṇḍeśa in Early Śaivism: A Rare Caṇḍeśvara in the British Museum?" *Indo-Iranian Journal* 53 (2010): 233–249; D. Goodall, "Who is Caṇḍeśa?" in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. by S. Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 351–423; D. Acharya, "The Role of Caṇḍa in the Early History of the

ithyphallic and meditative in posture. So closely do they approximate the image of Lakulīśa as teacher that some have been identified as such, even when the namesake club is missing. The 8th century image from Jhālrāpāṭan, Rajasthan, now preserved in the Jhalawar Government Museum, provides a good example of this overlapping of identities.[22] The image shares much in common with Lakulīśa including the meditative posture and the connection with teaching and knowledge as represented in the manuscript held in the proper upper left hand—but the namesake club is missing. Examples of iconographic blending serve as a visual testament to Śiva's 'composite' nature as a deity possessed of a dynamic identity that expanded to accommodate the many other related deities that his cult absorbed over time.[23] A similar argument could be made for viewing Lakulīśa's iconographic persona as a hybrid.

3   Multivocal Sites

Thus far we have seen variations in Lakulīśa's images within regional contexts. Now, I narrow the frame even further to explore what I argue is significant variation within particular temple complexes using examples from Chittorgarh and the temple complex atop Mt. Harṣa. The hilltop fortress at Chittor provides the most striking examples. Four broadly contemporaneous Lakulīśa images are preserved from Chittorgarh—three of these remain in the fort and one is now displayed in the National Museum in New Delhi—and each of these is distinct. Like so many of the rebuilt monuments and repurposed images at the site, the icons are difficult to date with certainty, but I suggest a date of c. 8th century for all four of them. To attempt a working chronology, the earliest of the four is the one now affixed to the exterior of the Rampol, one of the four gates that punctuate the extended ascent to the top of the hill. The panel presents us with a human ascetic teacher, seated on the lotus, ithyphallic, knees supported in the *yogapaṭṭa*, and with no attribute other than the club cradled in the crook of his left arm [Figure 94]. But in this case the ascetic elements are not emphasized forcefully. The hair is not matted, but carefully styled in rows of small corkscrew curls with a diadem in the center. Similarly, the heavy earrings, necklace, and armlets suggest wealth rather than renunciation. This

Pāśupata Cult and the Image on the Mathurā Pillar dated Gupta Year 61," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 48 (2005): 207–222.

22   See Cecil, "Seeking the 'Lord with a Club,'" 146.

23   Phyllis Granoff, "Mahākāla's Journey: From Gaṇa to God"; *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 77 (2004): 95–114 (95).

FIGURE 94   Lakulīśa with four attendants, c. late 7th century Rampol, Chittorgarh fort

representation of the teacher stands in contrast with the smaller, subordinate attendants that surround him, presumably intended to represent his four students. The set of four figures are clearly styled as ascetics with their hair in *jaṭā* and clad in only a simple loincloth and sacred thread. Some of their features are distinct, but they are nearly mirror images of one another.

The two figures seated at the bottom corners of the image hold manuscripts in their proper left hands and the one on the left holds a rosary in the proper right [Figure 95]. The two standing figures have different attributes than the sitting figures. They are both shown hefting large objects above their shoulders [Figure 96]. The objects are likely fruits or leaf bowels filled with a fruit or vegetal offering. The jackfruit (or other, similar fruit), as I discuss below, becomes one of Lakulīśa's, as other deities', iconic accessories, and it has had a long-standing cultural relevance as a symbol of prosperity and plenty. The precise identity of the object aside, the scene presents the viewer with a substantial or 'heavy' image of plenty and prosperity, and the gesture of display with which it is presented appears as the tangible 'reward' for the ascetics' hard work. This image would have been placed in an exterior niche of a temple above the sight-line of the viewer, which would serve to heighten the sense of the gesture as one of display rather than offering.

FIGURE 95   Rampol Lakulīśa, close view of attendant figure

FIGURE 96   Rampol Lakulīśa, close view of attendant figure

The student on the left also holds a small box. Perhaps this, too, was intended to hold a manuscript. Taken as a total composition, the figures' gestures suggest a bi-directional movement. With one hand, they clearly and publicly display the manuscripts and the fruits to the viewer. Perhaps we could understand the fruit as representative of a boon that Lakulīśa offers—i.e. the boon of his teachings and the 'fruits' that this knowledge will yield. At the same time, the students' other arms are kept close to the body engaged in the private act of counting the rosary. The box cradled close to the body of the upper left figure is rather mysterious and this could, indeed, have been the artist's intent. This image of secrecy and concealment could hint at another facet of Lakulīśa's beneficence that is intended only for a privileged audience.

In contrast to the image repurposed in the Rampol, the other three early Lakulīśa images from Chittorgarh emphasize the figure's divinity, albeit in different ways. One from the Kālikā Mātā temple is four-armed with the front proper right in the gesture of granting boons (*varada mudrā*) while the left wields the club. His upper left and right hands display a lotus flower and a rosary [Figure 97]. The second, a standing Lakulīśa image from the Kumbhaśyāma temple has only two arms—one bearing a serpent-entwined club and the other a fruit called *sītāphal* (discussed in the following section)—but the image of the standing figure framed by aureole and flanked by two small attendants similarly suggests divinity [Figure 98]. The third and final image, now displayed in the National Museum in Delhi is the most overtly martial of the three, although the museum placard reads 'Śiva as Teacher' [Figure 99]. Here Lakulīśa is shown standing, ithyphallic, with three of his four arms holding weapons: the trident, axe, and club.[24] Based on its size (84 cm × 69 cm), I think this third image would also have occupied an external temple niche. The variation in the number of arms and postures of these images points to a process of negotiation through which Lakulīśa's identity(ies) as the peripatetic teacher, Pāśupata ascetic, and manifestation of Śiva were alternately emphasized.

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24   It is uncertain what was displayed in the fourth hand (proper lower right). It would seem to have been something small since no indication of the object or gesture is visible in the upper part of the image.

FIGURE 97   Kālikā Mātā Temple, Chittorgarh Fort, image of Lakulīśa in exterior niche,
                 c. late 7th–8th century

FIGURE 98   Kumbhaśyāma Temple, Chittorgarh Fort, image of Lakulīśa in exterior niche,
               c. late 7th–8th century

FIGURE 99   Lakulīśa from Chittorgarh Fort, c. 8th century
NATIONAL MUSEUM NEW DELHI

3.1   *Iconic Affinities: Chittorgarh*

In addition to showing variation in the representation of Lakulīśa as human, divine, or somewhere in between, the structural contexts in which the Chittor images are found raise interesting questions about the place of this figure in the broader religious landscape.

Now dedicated to the Goddess, the Kālikā Mātā temple was clearly constructed as a Sūrya temple and multiple images of this deity grace the interior and exterior niches as well as the doorway to the inner sanctum.[25] Sections of this temple have been rebuilt and not all of the structural features are original to the 8th century building. Having acknowledged the temple's hybrid character it is still remarkable that a Lakulīśa icon appears in a niche on the exterior on the front left side. Given the rededication of the temple, it might be tempting to consider this image as a somewhat later addition as we would not typically expect this figure to be incorporated within the program of a Sūrya temple. Yet, given the affinity between Śiva and Sūrya that is suggested in other sites from northeast Rajasthan, like Kāman, Harṣa, and Jhālrāpāṭan, and without firm evidence to the contrary, I will assume that Lakulīśa was originally part of the program.[26] The most compelling evidence for his original affiliation with the Sūrya temple is the lotus flower he presents in his proper upper left hand. While the discussion so far has served to emphasize the variation possible in Lakulīśa iconography, the lotus is unconventional and I know of only one other example (see below). Given the ubiquity of this symbol in images of the Sun god, I propose we interpret it as a visual cue that serves to integrate this image within the temple hierarchy. Within the temple, we find the motif of the lotus attribute repeated and presented in the hands of *dikpālas* like Indra, Yama, and Varuṇa for whom it is also as an unconventional attribute [Figure 100]. It seems evident that the artists deployed this symbol deliberately to signal that Lakulīśa, like the other deities bearing the Sun god's signature lotus, was integrated within the larger hierarchy of the Sūrya temple. The 'Lord with a Club' retains his namesake attribute, but his position in the temple exterior, and the lotus in his hand, creates a visual homology with Sūrya, the deity enshrined in the temple. Artists employed the lotus attribute in a comparable way in Jhālrāpāṭan. In the 8th and 9th centuries, Jhālrāpāṭan was an important regional center for the worship of Sūrya and Śiva and icons of Lakulīśa from this locale also display Sūrya's lotus emblem [Figure 101].

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25   *EITA* 2.2, 285–291; Plates 645–665.

26   Chapter 3 presents evidence from Harṣagiri and Kāman that supports the close association or regional integration of these two deities. The popularity of Revanta—a son of Sūrya with regional Śaiva associations—at Chittorgarh provides further evidence of a Śiva-Sūrya connection.

FIGURE 100   Indra with lotus in proper left hand, c. late 7th–early 8th century, Kālikā Mātā
Temple

Like Chittorgarh's Kālikā Mātā temple, the Kumbhaśyāma temple also has a complex, layered history.[27] The temple's iconographic program suggests an original Śaiva dedication and the attributes of many of the *alaṃkāradevatās* on the walls surrounding the *garbhagṛha* and the temple exterior bear Śaiva attributes as noted by Meister (e.g., *triśūla*, *nāga*, and *vṛṣa* mount).[28] The temple was later rededicated to Viṣṇu, but exactly when this transformation took place is uncertain. The 15th century is the *terminus ante quem*, based on inscribed Vaiṣṇava images in the temple that date from the rule of Rana Kumbha of Mewar, but the transition could have been initiated earlier. Observing that certain details of the deities on the exterior appear incomplete or unfinished and that some of the Vaiṣṇava icons appear to date to an early period, Meister questions whether the temple as a Śaiva monument was fully realized before its rededication to Viṣṇu commenced.[29] Given this period of transformation, it is possible that the standing Lakulīśa image, with the attendant figures, crowning headdress, and garland drapery typical of Viṣṇu icons, was conceived to reflect a Vaiṣṇava context.

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27   *EITA* 2.2, 291–297; Plates 666–683.

28   Meister comments that "The iconography of the sanctum's Dikpālas, of vedibandha niches, and of the outer wall's images should make clear that the original intentions of its builders was for this to be a Śaiva shrine." *EITA* 2.2, 295–296.

29   See Chapter 2.

Images of Lakulīśa from Chittorgarh show that multiple interpretations were possible even within the same historical period and site. Since Chittor was a massive complex that would have attracted artisans from throughout India, this variety may reflect different regional conceptions. At the same time, it could show that even in the 8th century, Lakulīśa's persona retained a degree of fluidity. While Lakulīśa is perhaps most commonly seen as an emblem of the Pāśupatas, his inclusion within the iconographic program of the Chittorgarh temples is a significant indication that in the early 8th century his identity was not so narrowly circumscribed. He was also recognized as a deity, or venerable figure, outside of exclusively 'Śaiva' circles.

3.2   *Divine Hierarchies: Harṣagiri*

As a final example, the inclusion of Lakulīśa within a larger icon of Pārvatī performing the five-fire penance (*pañcāgnitapas*) at Harṣagiri is also striking and unconventional in its depiction.[30] This icon, which depicts the Goddess performing asceticism, appears at several early medieval sites in Northern Rajasthan. Pārvatī holds a lotus flower in each of her hands and the blooming flowers typically reveal the fruits born of her *tapas*, i.e. her two children Skanda and Gaṇeśa. In the Mt. Harṣa exemplar, Skanda has been replaced by the club-bearing Lakulīśa [Figure 102; See Figure 46]. This image is not easy to contextualize since the other example of a similar icon from Mt. Harṣa is damaged, making it impossible to determine if Lakulīśa would have appeared in the lotus opposite Gaṇeśa in this case.

If we compare the other three Lakulīśa images from Harṣa, the depiction of Lakulīśa with Pārvatī appears all the more unique. Judging by their dimensions and the remnants of the architectural framing that surrounds them, Mt. Harṣa's Lakulīśa images were part of shrine lintels.[31] These images are uniform in size and style and in their depiction of the figure—the club, *triśūla*, and *nāga* are standard attributes of the ithyphallic and matted-haired figure.[32] Unlike in Chittorgarh, the Lakulīśa icons from Mt. Harṣa are deployed in a consistent manner as Pāśupata emblems presiding over the sanctum. This

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30   This image is discussed briefly in Chapter 3. As nearly all the materials from Harṣa, the sculpture is no longer in its original context, but appears affixed to the rear wall of the *liṅga* shrine alongside other *surasundarī* images that may once have appeared on the temple exterior.

31   There are three in total. One is removed from its original architectural context, but is still *in situ* on the mountain. This image was discussed in Chapter 3 where I suggested it was originally placed in the doorframe of the central *liṅga* shrine. The other two are displayed in the Sikar museum.

32   The only variety is in the gesture of the front, proper right hand. Two display the gesture of teaching and the other holds a fruit.

FIGURE 102
Lakulīśa seated in the lotus, close
view

uniformity makes the Pārvatī image even more striking as a departure from the
norm. Given the prevalence of Goddess and *yoginī* imagery at the site, as was
discussed in Chapter 3, the incorporation of Lakulīśa in this icon could be read
as asserting a clear hierarchy. The diminutive figure dwarfed by the Goddess
becomes subordinate to her and part of her retinue.

There are, of course, many more examples to mention and comments to
make on the interesting cases already presented. But perhaps it is a good mo-
ment now to pause and consider what all of this might mean. On a funda-
mental level, all of these images depict Lakulīśa—that is, his namesake club
is present in all of these icons. Beyond this, what common thread or sense of
'identity' holds all of these images together? The images from the Mt. Harṣa
permit a more straightforward analysis. We know from the dedicatory inscrip-
tion that this site was a Pāśupata center where lineages of religious special-
ties were in residence. The three Lakulīśa icons from the shrine lintels support
this affiliation by conforming to the function we typically expect a Lakulīśa
to perform—i.e. he frames the *liṅga* shrine. The images also conform to the
general post-9th century form in that they clearly approximate Śiva through
the incorporation of multiple arms and attributes. The figure in Pārvatī's lotus,
however, is a notable departure from this model. Here the Pāśupata emblem is
put to work for the Goddess. He retains a privileged and elevated position, but

his identity is clearly derivative and subordinate to hers. When encountered within a site with such strong Pāśupata affiliations, this must have been a striking image. Chittorgarh presents a far more complex case. This may be because the Pāśupata institutions and lineages were not as prominent at Chittorgarh as they were at Mt. Harṣa. The site itself is more polyphonic and diverse and this is clearly echoed in representations of Lakulīśa. He appears as a human teacher, visual epithet of Śiva, and as part of the regional pantheon, more broadly. Unlike at Mt. Harṣa, I think that the integration of his images in the Sūrya and Viṣṇu temples at Chittorgarh is a gesture to a kind of comprehensiveness rather than a hierarchical expression. Given his regional popularity, Lakulīśa's inclusion in the iconographic program was perhaps deemed necessary.

4   A Wider World: Expressions of Protection, Prosperity, and Fertility

Although the preceding pages have presented Lakulīśa primarily as a Pāśupata emblem, albeit one whose presentation was adapted to particular contexts, Lakulīśa's multivalent persona would have resonated with those outside of the Pāśupata milieu as well. To recover some of the alternative readings these images could have received, it is helpful to reflect upon how the symbolic associations of his iconographic attributes and the placement of his images within their structural frames contributed to the construction of his identity. Here Richard Davis's conception of 'communities of response' is useful. Davis argues that, much like texts, images are subject to multiple interpretations or 'readings.' The larger setting or context in which an image is experienced and viewed, as well as the particular concerns and 'interpretive strategies' of the viewer, condition these readings.[33] Since early medieval temples were vital *loci* of interaction across a spectrum of social groups and religious communities, Lakulīśa images could have been subject to multiple interpretations.

While the SP presents a more inclusive and accessible Pāśupata Śaivism than the esoteric texts, like Kauṇḍinya's writings, which imagine an audience of initiates—as, for example, in the description of Somaśarman being favored by the Lord together with his family and the text's emphasis on emplaced practices like establishing *liṅgas* and going on pilgrimage—it tends toward a brahmin-centered vision of the early community. The community on the ground was more socially complex and varied than these texts admit. Visual evidence portrays a tradition in which women and perhaps other non-initiates participated. Sculpted panels depicting *liṅga* veneration from early medieval

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33   Davis, *Indian Images*, 9–10.

FIGURE 103   Panel depicting *liṅga* veneration, Harṣa Temple, c. 10th century

temples depict varied groups of people involved in this definitive Śaiva ritual practice [Figure 103]. Groups of ascetics, women, couples, and lay people are all shown venerating the *liṅga*. And we have seen in the previous chapters that temples complexes were only rarely, if ever, exclusively Śaiva.

The club is Lakulīśa's defining attribute and a seed-filled fruit becomes a standard accessory by the end of the 8th century.[34] The semantic range of these ubiquitous attributes has not yet been given sufficient attention. The club (*lakuṭa*) is clearly a defining feature of Lakulīśa and a mark of the ascetic, but what might this attribute have communicated to the layperson or uninitiated devotee? An ethic of protection seems the most natural. Wielding his club, Lakulīśa is not unlike the many attendant and guardian figures that populated shrines and temples in the early medieval period. Śiva's own trademark *triśūla* was personified in iconography and Śiva's *gaṇas* are also commonly

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34   In my fieldwork and survey of Lakulīśa images in Rajasthan and northern Madhya Pradesh I have not seen the fruit incorporated in Lakulīśa images prior to the early eighth century. Shah ("Lakulīśa," 94) has identified the sixth or seventh century as the period when it became a common attribute of Lakulīśa, but based on my research I think this is far too early.

FIGURE 104   Lakulīśa, Pali District, c. 7th century
               AJMER GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

depicted as holding weapons, clubs and staffs, among others. Revealing examples include the image of the *daṇḍa*-holding figure on the base of the 4th century Mathura pillar that recorded a donation in memoriam of deceased Śaiva preceptors [See Figure 3]. Such figures do not represent Lakulīśa *per se*, but I think they anticipate his iconography and provide a context for interpreting the later images. In addition to contributing to the power of his persona as teacher and holy man, Lakulīśa's club would have also communicated an ethic of protection commensurate with the wider range of deities and attendant figures who, with their respective weapons, protected devotees and shrines from potentially harmful forces. Particularly when combined with the gesture of protection (*abhaya mudrā*), as in this 8th century image from the Ajmer Museum it is clear that for Śiva's devotees the club was not to be seen as a threat[35] [Figure 104].

A second common attribute of Lakulīśa icons, a later addition that becomes popular in the mid to late 8th century, is the fruit typically called a citron, [See Figure 101, proper lower left hand of image]. This is a somewhat misleading appellation since the fruit does not belong to the citrus family. I have earlier argued that this fruit is the *sītāphala* or 'custard-apple' found in western India

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35   The museum placard identifies the images as dating from the 8th century. I think it may be earlier than this, perhaps 7th century. This assessment is based on the similarities between this image and its surrounding ornamentation and another image of Lakulīśa dated to the Gupta period and preserved in the Government Museum in Mathura.

FIGURE 105   Panel depicting Gandharvas worshipping the *liṅga*, jackfruit visible in far
                    upper left corner, Śuṅga Period
                    MATHURA GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

and the Deccan. Made up of myriad seeds enclosed by a sweet edible flesh, its lumpy outer rind is similar to the texture often given to Lakulīśa's fruit. A second possibility is to read this attribute as a depiction of a young jackfruit. Michael Meister has presented a detailed study of the jackfruit and its uses in Indian iconography as a symbol of plenty and prosperity.[36] I find his interpretation compelling because he is able to show an iconographic precedent for the use of the fruit in scenes of *liṅga* veneration and devotion, such as in these images from the Government Museum in Mathura [Figure 105]. Moreover, the large size of the jackfruit seems a better match with the icons, many of which depict a very substantial fruit nearly half the size of the figure's torso.[37]

It may be impossible to arrive at a precise identification of the fruit. In my opinion, this is not a critical point since both the *sītāphala* and the jackfruit, as with other fruits incorporated within iconographic contexts, like the mango, communicate a shared set of symbolic associations. Regarding Lakulīśa's attribute, Choubey has commented that its many seeds represented the countless atoms of the universe.[38] This understanding may have held for some, but for other viewers, the significance of this multiplicity may have had a less cosmic and more quotidian connotation. Images of fruit and fruit-bearing and

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36   Michael Meister, "Exploring Kafirkot: When is a Rose-Apple not a Rose," *Pakistan Heritage* 1 (2009): 109–128.

37   The jackfruit can weigh more than 30 lbs when fully ripe. A *sītāphala* is roughly the size of a baseball.

38   Choubey (referring to *Viśvakarma Vāstuśāstram*), *Lakulīśa*, 116.

FIGURE 106   Image of club-bearing figure in panel on Mahānaleśvara Temple in Menal,
                c. 11th century

flowering trees were commonly used in Indian temples as a decorative motif
to represent fecundity and the rich creative potential of nature.[39] In addition
to becoming a common attribute of Lakulīśa, a similar fruit is a common fea-
ture of *yakṣa* imagery, specifically Gomukha and Kubera. In her work on the
Jain caves at Ellora, Lisa Owen has drawn attention to the use of the jackfruit
as an attribute of Jain *yakṣas*. According to her analysis, this fruit, bursting
with plentiful seeds, was a familiar image connoting prosperity and fecundity.[40]
Frequently, images bearing the fruit and a heavy coin-purse greeted devotees
as they entered the shrines. It may be that Lakulīśa's fruit served a similar pur-
pose as a sign that he, too, was a potential source of well-being, prosperity, and
fertility for devotees of Śiva. This notion of the conferral of boons may have
informed the Chittorgarh image from Rampol gate in which Lakulīśa's atten-
dants prominently display the fruit.

   A connection with quotidian values would have made Lakulīśa a compel-
ling figure since fertility was, as it still is today in India, of paramount con-
cern for married couples, and the worship of the *liṅga* has long ties to cults

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39   For example, Chapter 4 notes the motif of fruit trees and rich foliage framing the entry to
      the *liṅga* shrine in Jogeśvarī and the *Mātṛkā* panel in the Takli-Dhokeśvar caves.

40   L. Owen, *Carving Devotion in the Jain Caves at Ellora* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 95.

of fertility. A similar idea is communicated in a panel from the 10th century Śiva temple in Lonad, north of Thane in Maharashtra, through juxtaposed images of *liṅga* veneration, a stout ascetic, and an image of the fertility goddess typically called Lajjā Gaurī.[41] We could interpret the same association of Lakulīśa with quotidian values in some of the panels that embrace the exterior base of the 11th century Mahanaleśvara temple in Menal, where images of a club-bearing figure are interposed with depictions of *liṅga* veneration and amorous couples [Figure 106].

4.1   *Location, Location, Location*

The old adage that the value of a property is determined solely by its location can be applied to temple real estate as well. Just as Lakulīśa's iconographic accessories explicate certain facets of his persona, the placement of his images in their temple contexts is equally important. Attention to location provides cues as to how visitors would have encountered his images within the physical space of the temple and determined the meaning of those images vis-à-vis the synesthetic experience of the temple as a whole. A shift in an icon's placement would have also implied a shift in the symbolic value attached to that image. This is relevant when considering the gradual movement of Lakulīśa's images from their place in the temple interior to the niches on the exterior of the monument.

With the exception of Karvan's temple,[42] Lakulīśa images were not enshrined in the sanctum of Śaiva temples; the *garbhagṛha* was typically occupied by a *liṅga*. In the majority of the early examples from the 7th and early 8th centuries he appears in the door lintel, in entryways or thresholds. The significance of this pattern of placement is not difficult to discern, but it has not been made explicit in the existing scholarship. At intermediate places of transition and crossing (i.e. 'liminal' spaces) apotropaic images are a familiar adornment of doorways and thresholds in India as elsewhere. Accompanied by his attributes of power and protection (*lakuṭa*) as well as prosperity (seed-filled fruit), Lakulīśa served as a guardian of the *liṅga* within the sanctum. These thresholds were elaborately adorned with floriated patterns, symbols of plenty (*pūrṇaghaṭa*), and other auspicious images (e.g. *nāgas*, *makaras*, and *kīrttimukhas*). His place of prominence within these larger decorative frames further points to his role in the glorification of Śaiva space. For devotees entering the shrine, the icon of the 'Lord with a Club' and the *liṅga* would have been encountered simultaneously in a single visual frame. This intervisibility would have reinforced their mutual connection. For those initiated members

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41   See Cecil, "Seeking the 'Lord with a Club,'" 152.
42   On this temple and Karvan's distinctive icons, see Chapter 1.

of the Pāśupata community, Lakulīśa's presence would have served as a potent symbol of a shared identity. For those uninitiated devotees, he could have signified the well-being and prosperity the benevolent Lord conferred upon his devotees.

Over time, Lakulīśa's presence becomes manifest in new contexts within the temple structure as he moves from the interior to the exterior niches. This shift in location is not articulated at the same historical moment or in the same manner across the sites I have studied; however, it is a development that occurs in the 8th and 9th centuries and thus is broadly coincident with the phasing-out of the human representations of the teacher. The move of Lakulīśa icons from the doorway where he functions as the Pāśupata emblem guarding the *limen*, to the temple exterior where he becomes part of the larger pantheon of deities adorning the monument is a significant transition and change in his status. In the discussion of the Chittorgarh images, we have seen that Lakulīśa appears on the exterior of temples along with the familiar *dikpālas*. That some of these were not original Śaiva dedications suggests that, over time, Lakulīśa's appeal was recognized outside of the Śaiva milieu. On the temple exterior, his icons would not have been encountered together with the enshrined *liṅga*. This visual and spatial disassociation could indicate a wider popularity; such that the earlier connection with the *liṅga* was no longer possessed of the same kind of potency. At the same time, I think this wider popularity also signifies a certain dilution of his symbolic value as an emblem of Pāśupata identity and could reflect a broader social reality in which the Pāśupata movement was superseded by other Śaiva communities and traditions.

4.2   *Identity Crisis*

This chapter proceeded from the assumption that the earliest Lakulīśa images had a specific and shared resonance for those who viewed them—they depicted an image of a human ascetic teacher and were potent markers of Pāśupata identity. I think the early uniformity of the images and their consistent deployment in the temple lintel supports this interpretation. As we saw in the preceding discussion, however, the particular meaning that the icons express is not stable. Shifts in Lakulīśa's attributes and location indicate a gradual transition from a specific emblem to a more widely accessible figure. This process can also be tracked in space and time as Lakulīśa transitioned from the door lintel to the temple exterior. His iconographic identity becomes nearly indistinct from that of Śiva or is leveraged to articulate new hierarchies and glorify other deities. In the later examples from Menal, the repetition of the club-bearing figures on the external panels points to a significantly diluted symbolic value that resulted in Lakulīśa becoming a kind of iconographic trope or motif.

This reduction to a visual trope presages the eventual disappearance of Lakulīśa from the temple altogether. Some of the latest Lakulīśa icons I have found from the region come from Hinglajgarh in Uparamāla and date c. 11th or 12th century. Later Śiva temples in Chittorgarh, like the renovated Samidheśvar temple, also lack Lakulīśa images.[43] As Lakulīśa decreased in popularity, the niche above the sanctum door was most commonly filled by Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa), another potent symbol of protection, prosperity, and well-being. The curious figure of a seated, ithyphallic Gaṇeśa above the shrine door in the 9th century Jaleśvara temple in Mandalgarh could have been a Lakulīśa image recut to depict the elephant-headed god.[44]

5   Conclusions

Considering the ways in which communities have engaged and used material and visual forms to express notions of identity and belonging is an essential component of this project. In this brief survey of images, I have worked to show that Lakulīśa was a multivalent persona, whose icons would have been intelligible to a Śaiva audience, as well as to the many others who encountered him in the bustling religious centers of northwest India. As a representation of the authoritative teacher, ascetic, and holy man, his images blend recognizable attributes of a Śaiva ascetic with those used to express similar ideals in Buddhist and Jain imagery. Bearing fruit and club while guarding the threshold of the temple sanctum, Lakulīśa would have also been a widely recognizable symbol of protection, fertility, and well-being. The process of transculturation reflected in his imagery is evidence of the larger processes by which Śaiva communities adapted shared iconographic idioms in order to communicate their relevance as a source of authority and sanctity to a diverse audience.

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43   The temple now called the Samidheśvar was originally a Jain temple of Jina Ariṣṭanemi built c. 1230–1235. After its desecration in the fourteenth century is was rededicated as a Śiva temple. Dhaky has identified some inscribed columns repurposed in the building as belonging to the original Samidheśvar temple, which was probably north of the current temple near the Gomukha Kuṇḍa. M.A. Dhaky, "The Creed-Affiliation of the Samidheśvara Temple in Chittodgadh," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* 14 (1984–85): 25–42.

44   At the time of my visit in May 2014 the image had been coated with layers of paint, which made the details difficult to capture in a photograph. A clearer image is published in the entry on Mandalgarh in *EITA* 2.2, 304–307; Plates 691–694.

Temple, Community, and Heritage-Making

The preceding chapters have explored the ways in which the creation of a Pāśupata identity was communicated through text and materialized in places. Examining the narrative mapping of the Pāśupata landscape in the SP, I proposed we read the text's geographic imaginary as an effort to constitute a community and claim a place for that community in time and in space. In addition to articulating a powerful rhetorical vision, this imagined landscape served to stake a geopolitical claim. The previous case studies have considered the implications of that claim by mapping the patterned interactions between Pāśupata communities and Early Medieval India's political and economic networks. This historical mapping looked beyond the textual horizon to consider the vernacular geographies that existed on the ground using inscriptions and material evidence from the built landscape (i.e. temples, monuments, and images). Finally, I examined the iconography of Lakulīśa, the ascetic teacher and emblem of Pāśupata identity and interpreted transformations in his material representation and display within temple spaces as recording significant moments in an ongoing conversation between Pāśupata communities and the polyphonic regional religious landscapes in which they were embedded.

In each of the preceding chapters, attention to place has been a central concern. By examining the inscriptions that record evidence of temple donation and maintenance, I have shown that endowing and constructing temples in Early Medieval India was one facet of a larger repertoire of practices centered around ritualized and often public acts of donation, commemoration, and memorialization. Donations were motivated by the desire to gain religious 'merit' which accrued to the donors and their family members, living and deceased, by virtue of these acts of piety. Thus, investments in places held salvific potential and donative records were often framed in soteriological terms. While augmenting the merit of particular donors, investments in temple complexes were not necessarily individual undertakings. Collective or corporate donations by trading diasporas, artisans, and guilds, created tangible links to places where community identities and connections could be expressed and renewed. The various motivations that informed these pious acts reflect different facets of the social function of temples as media through which a wide range of social relationships and senses of 'belonging' were affirmed and reaffirmed (i.e. kinship groups, community identities, political alliances, economic bonds, and so

on). Finally, in addition to serving as material instantiations of interpersonal relationships, religious institutions also served to socialize space by marking the geographic center within the lived spaces of settlements and polities.

As has also become evident through the sources surveyed in the preceding chapters, commissioning a temple was not a singular act, but a process that was realized over an extended period of time. As monuments intended to last 'as long as the sun and the moon should endure' according to a common epigraphic trope, medieval temples required regular maintenance and temple complexes were periodically augmented and renovated. These repairs and additions were funded through various means—pious donations as well as taxes on trade goods, tithes, and revenues from real estate and agrarian landholdings. Some of the inscriptions surveyed in the previous chapters—the Indragarh record, for example—explicitly mention such additions. In other cases, as at Kāman, we can observe the process 'in action' through records of donations made over extended periods of time. While a foundation inscription may name an individual donor, the task of maintaining the life of a temple required a collaborative effort. These examples show temples to be dynamic parts of equally dynamic religious landscapes that provided potential for merit making long after their foundations were laid.

Now some one-thousand years or more after their construction began, many of the early Śaiva temples I have studied are listed as protected monuments by the Indian government. These protected temples have become vital media for the expression of highly politicized representations of India's 'primordial' culture and its enduring 'national heritage.' The marketing of these early temples as heritage has introduced global networks of transnational agencies (like UNESCO) and new flows of people and economies via tourism. While the source of certain socioeconomic benefits, heritage-making often involves fraught politics. I have witnessed the tensions between the values of local communities who want to continue to use, maintain, and worship within these monuments, and the machinations of state and government funded agencies, which often marginalize the role of these communities as the custodians of the nation's tangible heritage. These debates about heritage-making take many forms, but the central issue, and the source of much of the conflict, converges around practices of preservation. Practices and modes of temple repair often put local communities at odds with these organizations and agencies since the very notion of what it means to 'preserve' is so deeply contingent. For heritage agents, the monuments are a symbol of the past conceived as a static entity, the integrity of which depends on its preservation as something unchanging and fundamentally distinct from the vicissitudes of the present. For many

communities, however, the conception of the past that informs their engagement with material culture is more akin to *purāṇa*—i.e. something rooted in the primordial but, at the same time, renewable, able to be made and re-made. Albeit brief, this reflection on the complex materiality of the Pāśupata landscape opens up a space for new questions and considerations of the ways in which the value of the past inheres in material culture.

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